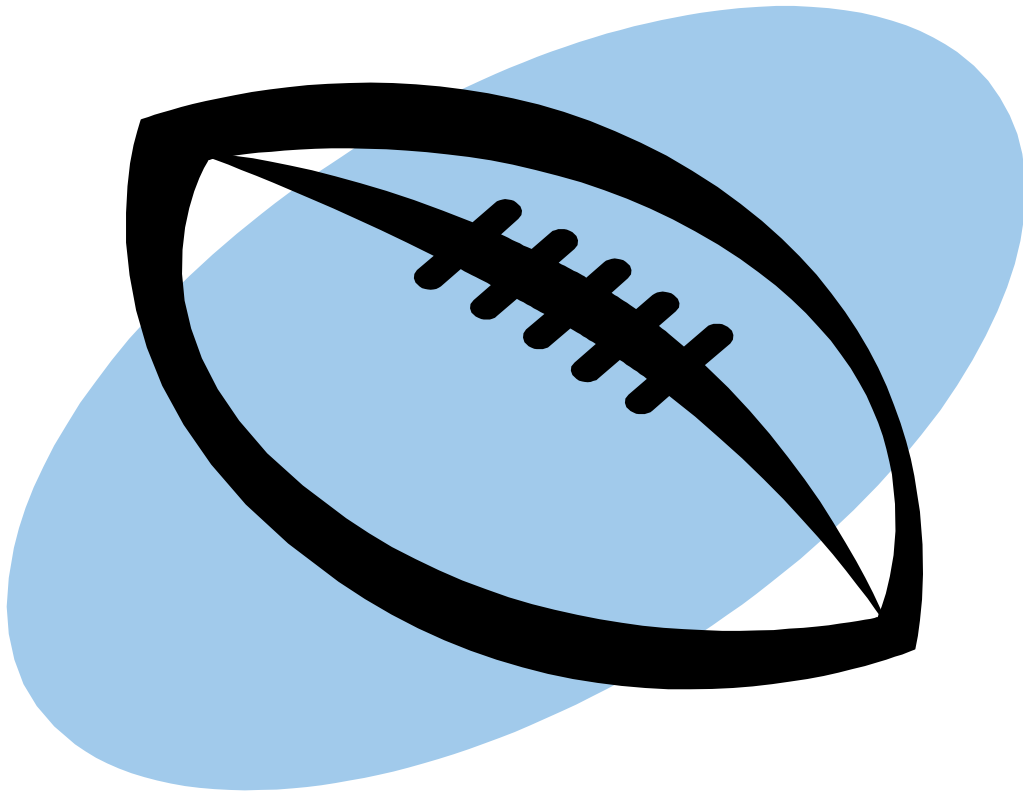


Football Basics

Linda G. Hengerer



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the following people, for sharing their knowledge and season tickets with me: my husband, Ray Hengerer; my father, Richard Gordon; my uncle, Donald Gordon; Debbie Murphy; and the other football fans who've shared their love and knowledge of the game.

Any mistakes in this guide are mine.

Football Basics

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INTRODUCTION

Football should be an easy game to understand. Run the ball, throw the ball, kick the ball, score. One hour and 12 minutes later the team with the most points wins. Not quite. Add players performing amazing feats of athleticism, players making errors, factor in rules and regulations, injuries, timeouts, commercials, and NOW you have a football game.

A college football game first caught my interest. The ball was received by a player near the goal line, and he ran all the way up the field and made a touchdown. Wow, I thought, this game is great! This doesn't happen often, as players and fans know, but we all enjoy the exciting plays.

I grew up in New Jersey, following the Giants. The years my father and uncle had season tickets and neither wanted to use them, my sisters and I would go. Being at any game is a thrill, and I've attended games in all sorts of weather: Giants Stadium in quintessential fall weather (Jets and Giants games); wind and snow of a New Jersey winter (Giants games); warm sun at Joe Robbie Stadium (Dolphins games); and the shelter of the Trans World Dome (St. Louis Rams game).

Having a team to follow (or player, or coach) makes it more interesting when you are watching a game. My first roommate was--still is--an Eagles fan. When we'd watch, she'd root for the Eagles, I would root for the Giants, and if neither team was playing, we'd root for the team with the cutest quarterback.

I will always be a Giants fan, but I've picked up some other teams along the way. When I got engaged to my first husband, I adopted his team, the Dolphins. My second husband is from Buffalo, and I root for the Bills if they're not playing the Giants.

Understanding football makes it more enjoyable to watch. The men I've been around for most of my football watching were usually too caught up in the game to explain how it's played. I learned a lot from my first roommate, who knew a lot about football because her brother played in high school and college. I learned more when I was married to my first husband, from the total immersion that began in our house with the annual draft and continued through training camp, pre-, regular and post-season play. Spreads, over/under, who was favored, who was injured, who would win and why, how the Dolphins did in the past season, what their prospects were in the next season - there was football talk all year. My ex-husband subscribed to [Dolphin Digest](#), reads [The Sporting News](#), watches all the games televised, attends Dolphin games (and tapes those that are televised), and reads whichever newspaper has the best sports coverage. When I lived in Fort Lauderdale, a group of guys (Don, Rick, Gary, Arun, and Russ, occasionally Ron, Chuck, John, and Carl) would watch the games at our house. (And yes, they did this for college games too.) Fortunately I enjoyed the game, and learned a lot from all this.

The result is this guide.

I hope you learn to enjoy football as much as I do.

For everyone who's ever watched a football game and wanted to know what happened, or what the analysts just said, this is the book for you.

- Glossary of terms
- Field layout
- How the game is played
- National Football League, Conferences and Divisions

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