

October Newsletter, 1.2

Kickoff

The season is rapidly slipping away and the playoffs are right around the corner. This is the time of year the teams, players and coaches are all wound just a little bit tighter and there is a little more on the line than at the start of the season. As officials, we must remember to work our games dispassionately and with the utmost professionalism. Like the old saying goes, "Maintaining your head while those about you are losing theirs." Consider how personal the game is to the participants. Consider how much energy, planning and preparation went into their efforts. Consider also where their passion comes from and why you're proud to be an official—we all love this great game. The coach in your ear, the fan from the stands, the player that is just a little more fired-up than usual all come from the same place. Let's not join them in that place. Let's keep our heads about us and give them our best effort and judgment.

Reminders and Points to Consider

From State Evaluator Jeff Wolf, a few reminders and tips:

1. Hold the Pre-game Coin Flip off the field, not in the middle.
2. The crew listed on the NSAA website, including names and positions, should match the crew being evaluated on Friday night.

This is primarily a professionalism issue and shows the attention to detail that separates the middle of the road crew from those crews that aspire to achieve or have better playoff assignments or state finals.

3. Too many whistles on a play...let's just have the covering official/officials sound whistles.

When the ball is outside of your primary coverage area, your eyes are to be focused on the action within your zone. Remember, it's the action during a down that kills a play, not your whistle. The evaluator, coach or informed spectator is made aware that you're ball watching instead of covering your zone when too many whistles are sounded. **Best Practice:** Better no whistle than an inadvertent one!

From State Evaluator, Kelly Classen,

A Couple Reminders: Please review the Points of Emphasis and the PowerPoint slides to review positioning of officials during pre-game observation and **coin toss mechanics**.

Finally, **Wing Officials:** when the ball is being snapped inside the 5 yard line, immediately release to the goal line and officiate back and inside the 10 yard line stay ahead of the runner.

Mechanics Corner

From Jeff Wolf: The Dreaded Inadvertent Whistle

It's bad enough that such a heinous crime occurred. Don't compound the issue by not understanding the rules and how to apply them.

Let's Review the Basics: Rule 4-2-3a-d covers the proper procedure following an inadvertent whistle.

The inadvertent whistle ends the down. Basically: a) while a pass or kick is in flight, the down will be replayed; b) the team previously in possession may put the ball in play where it lost possession or replay the down if the inadvertent whistle sounded while the ball was loose; c) the team in possession can take the action of the play prior to the inadvertent whistle or have the down replayed from the previous spot if they still have possession; and d) if a penalty occurs prior to the inadvertent whistle, it takes precedence over the inadvertent whistle, if such penalty is accepted.

Key Factors: Possession of the ball, type of play prior to IW, penalties prior and basic spot.

Best Practice: Carry your whistle in your hand during a live ball. Sound your whistle **only** when you see leather, the down has ended and only when it is in your area.

From State Evaluator, Tom Moates:

Of course my favorite is “wings take care of your sideline.” Wings should start out of bounds before every play and move there while following a play in their side zone. This establishes their ownership of the restricted area and enables them to have firsthand knowledge about this area. Don’t be afraid to flag early and give the sideline warning. It’s amazing how that will get the coaching staff’s attention. If not, I’ve never seen it be a problem after the five yard sideline interference penalty.

Key Factor: Remember, the two yard belt is called the “Restricted Area” and is no longer referred to as the “Coaches Box”.

Best Practice: Wings start out of bounds, clear your sideline and come into the field of play as the offensive alignment dictates.

Game Time

From the NSAA:

K punts the ball on 3rd and 20. The punt is shanked out of bounds untouched by either team. The ball does not cross the neutral zone and goes out of bounds behind K’s line of scrimmage.

Does K retain possession and now have 4th down, or does R take possession?

Rule 5-1-3e states: When a scrimmage down ends with the ball in the field of play or out of bounds between the goal lines, a new series is awarded to: **e)** R, if K legally kicks during any scrimmage down and the ball is recovered by R, is in joint possession of opponents, goes out of bounds or becomes dead with no player in possession.
Result: R ball where the ball went out of bounds.

From State Evaluator, Tom Moates:

K free kicks following a touchdown. While the kick is in the air, R67 dives at the knees of K23 at R’s 47 yard line, resulting in a flag for illegal block below the waist. R14 returns the kick out to the 28 yard line.

Question: From where is the penalty imposed and what type of play follows penalty enforcement?

A) R’s ball on its 14 yard line following the half-the-distance penalty; B) 15 yards from K’s 40 yard line with K re-kicking on R’s 45; C) K re-kicks from R’s 38 yard line following the 15 yard penalty from the spot of the foul?

Key Factor: Loose ball play basic spot is the previous spot. **Rule: 10-4-2b** B) 15 yards from the previous spot, K’s free kick line, puts the ball on R’s 45 with K being allowed to replay the down, another free kick.

From your colleagues around the state:

Coach has proof you’re wrong. (Names were omitted)

During our contest, Head Coach was observed viewing a picture in the team area. This picture was taken by a photographer from the local newspaper. This picture was of a catch I called out of bounds in the end zone. After the coach viewed the picture, he made a comment to me that he had a picture he was going to send me. After a few minutes, I told him I was going to contact the state about this.

Key Points: 1) Coach using unauthorized equipment in the team box during a contest. 2) Sportsmanship of the coach and his attempts to intimidate or at a minimum, influence the opinion of the official.

Rule 1-6-1 states: Communication devices, other than audio recorder, Local Area Network (LAN) phone and/or headsets, including but not limited to mobile phones, *still photograph(s)*, film, analog or digital video(s) and/or Internet depictions, shall not be used for coaching purposes during the game or between periods. Also on point: **Rule 9-8-1** states: No coach, substitute, athletic trainer or other team attendant shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the game officials assume authority for the contest. Examples are, but not limited to: **b)** attempting to influence a decision by a game official. **c)** Disrespectfully addressing a game official. **e)** Using any illegal communication equipment as outlined in 1-5-3c(2) and **1-6**. **Best Practice:** Move on. "*Coach, we all make mistakes. I saw him out of bounds.*" And then move on. The exchange of threats, comments or anything further in this tense situation only stands to make matters worse. Make sure you're in position. Apply proper mechanics to put yourself in the proper position and make the call based on your best judgment.

Chronic DPI:

During our game tonight, the home team was using their body to force receivers off their routes. They would make contact at the line of scrimmage, and then pretty much run beside the receiver as if "herding" them out of bounds. When we called pass interference, the coach became very frustrated with us because he said his defenders had a right to "the field", and could contact the receiver anywhere, before the ball was in the air. I explained to him that after initial contact on the line, there could be no further contact down the field. He was not satisfied with that answer, and it caused 3 pass interference fouls against them.

Rule 7-5-7: Pass interference restrictions only apply beyond the neutral zone and only if the legal forward pass, untouched by B in or behind the neutral zone, crosses the neutral zone. Pass interference restrictions are in effect for all A and B players until the ball is touched or the pass is incomplete.

Rule 7-8: Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass begin for: a) A with the snap; b) for B when the ball leaves the passer's hand.

Question submitted by official, Bill Dutton

Situation: R1 signals a fair catch and it is awarded at K's 35 yard line with 0:03 left on the clock. Can the receiving team then choose to have a free kick from the 35 yard line that is uncontested (with the 10 yard neutral zone) from any legal kicking tee and have the field goal count as 3 points if the kick goes through the uprights? If they can choose to do this, when would the clock start?

Let's Review the Rules governing Free Kicks and the Fair Catch or Awarded Fair Catch:

Rule 6-1-1c & 6-1-1d: For any free kick, a free-kick line, corresponding to a scrimmage line, is established for each team. These lines are always 10 yards apart. Unless moved by penalty, K's free-kick line is:

c) The yard line through the spot of the catch after a fair catch.

d) The yard line through the spot of an awarded fair catch.

Rule 8-4-1a: A field goal is scored as follows: **a)** The field-goal attempt shall be a place kick or a drop kick from scrimmage, or *from a free kick following a fair catch or an awarded fair catch.*

Mechanics for Field Goal after a Fair catch: **R** behind upright; **U** behind upright and rule on crossbar; All other officials mechanics same as kickoff.

Starting and Stopping Clock: As with a regular kickoff, start the clock when first touched by R between the goal lines. Should the ball travel beyond the goal line during the kick, the clock will not start and there may still be 0:03 seconds on the clock for the play following this action.

Thanks for the question Bill.-Ed.

From a submitted question for interpretation by Brian Vogelsang - Ref. Bassett Crew

Shot-gun Formation, the Free-blocking Zone and Cut Blocks:

“In a recent pregame with a coach, we were asked how we interpret rule 2-17[2-17: Free-Blocking Zone—Legal Blocking Below the Waist, Legal Clipping, Legal Block Below the Waist], when a team is in shotgun formation. We told him that since all the linemen know the snap count and would be blocking at the same time the ball is snapped and still in the zone we would allow a block below the waist on the initial charge (assuming both players are in the zone at the snap). He was of the opinion that no block below the waist could occur since it was impossible for the contact to be made before the ball left the zone. We agreed to disagree. I can see his point but still think our interpretation is more in line with the intent of the rule. What's your opinion?”

Great Question Brian! **Rule 2-17-1** establishes the size of the Free-Blocking Zone as a rectangular area 4 yards either side of the ball and 3 yards behind each line of scrimmage. **Rule 2-17-5** explains the zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone, and all exceptions for illegal blocking within the zone disintegrate with it.

Overtime

Thank you for all of your submissions. There are some truly odd happenings for even the most seasoned officials. The need to continually read the Rules and Case Books allows the official to confidently rule on some of these abstract situations. Continue to further review the Points of Emphasis and the PowerPoint slides on this site also to further your mechanics knowledge and sharpen your skills.

It's home stretch time! Please continue to send us your situations, ideas for how we can help you and any area seeking clarification or assistance. This season is always over far too quickly.

Continued Best Wishes and Good Officiating from NHSSOA