

# CFOA



## California Football Officials Association Newsletter

### CFOA Instructional Chairman's Message

Welcome to the 2015 Football Season. There has been some exciting developments in the offseason. For years, there has been discussion of the possibility of using 7 man mechanics for the semi and final rounds in the CIF Southern Section. It is now a reality. During the offseason the CFOA has created a training module and presented it to the CIF Coaches' Advisory committee and it was unanimously approved. Now it is up to us put a quality officials on the field for these games.

The 2015 season is also going to be a great challenge for football officials. Excessive Contact has been added to Unnecessary Roughness (9-4-3g). With an emphasis on Risk Minimization, the unnecessary roughness provisions were expanded. No player or non-player shall make any other contact with an opponent, including a defenseless player, which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness.

Game officials need to be aware of situations that are likely to produce unnecessary or excessive contact. Blindside blocks, peel-back blocks, and airborne receivers attempting to secure the ball oftentimes provide windows of opportunity for these potentially dangerous contact situations to occur. Players leaving their feet (launching) and initiating contact with opponents should be penalized immediately as unnecessary or excessive contact..

I look forward to another great season and wish you all the success on and off the field

Regards,

Bobby Kennedy

CFOA Instructional Chairman

## THE RULES ARE JUST INK ON PAPER

Without us, they are easily bent and broken. We relish the challenge of using them to craft a game fairly played

*"Some people think football is a matter of life and death. I assure you, it's much more important than that."*

*- Bill Shankley*

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## RISK MINIMIZATION

Football is a game with the stated objective "of one team carrying or passing the ball across the opponent's goal line or kicking the ball through the opponent's goal by a place kick or drop kick. The game is won by the team which accumulates the most points." NFHS Football Rules Book, Rule 1-1-1.

While this may sound like a simple concept, the game of football has changed with the addition of new offensive and defensive schemes. The blocking and tackling techniques used by high school teams have placed an emphasis on expanding the length and width of each play, resulting in more opportunities for unnecessary or excessive contact to occur between players. As the game of football continues to evolve, coaches, players, game officials and spectators must respect the simplicity of Rule 1-1 and commit to keep the game as safe as possible for all participants.

Coaches should continue to educate their players about the risks of unnecessary or excessive contact regardless of whether or not the contact occurs during a legal block or tackle. While the committee does not believe players are coached to make unnecessary or excessive contact with opponents, coaches should clearly instruct players to avoid such unsafe contact. Risk minimization applies equally to players on both teams.

Players need to have respect for the game and their opponents. Any action which includes identifying and taking aim on an opponent who is not aware of any pending contact increases the potential for serious injury to one or both of the players and must be avoided. If the contact is judged as flagrant, the offending player will be disqualified and, in most states, will miss the next contest. Players can't help their team be successful if they are not in the current or future contests.

Game officials need to be aware of situations that are likely to produce unnecessary or excessive contact. Blindside blocks, peel-back blocks, and airborne receivers attempting to secure the ball oftentimes provide windows of opportunity for these potentially dangerous contact situations to occur. Players leaving their feet (launching) and initiating contact with opponents should be penalized immediately as unnecessary or excessive contact.

Spectators, players and coaches should not promote nor celebrate any act that endangers the safety, health and welfare of an opponent. Players of both teams should always be treated with the utmost respect. The safety, health and welfare of all players should be everyone's priority.

### What is Excessive?

While the NFHS Football Rules now expressly preclude conduct that is "excessive" and "unnecessary," the rules have always barred efforts to injure or "take out" an opponent. Situations involving contact that exceed what is usual, normal or proper must be eliminated from the game.

Considering this potential for serious injury, it is critical that those situations involving unnecessary or excessive contact on players are eliminated whether or not that contact is otherwise deemed legal. While unnecessary or excessive contact can occur between any players, special attention must be given to those players whose focus of concentration makes them especially vulnerable to injury. The "glamour" associated with these types of hits must be removed in order to minimize risk for all participants.

Another area where contact may be deemed excessive is where players heed the old adage provided by coaches, "Play until you hear the whistle!" The whistle rarely causes the ball to become dead; it only confirms a player's action that has caused the ball to become dead (knee on ground). Playing and hitting until the whistle blows can cause unnecessary contact to opponents who have begun to "let up."

Situations where momentum has slowed or stopped and there is a group of players making the play and someone comes in and drills the pile could be prevented by a timely whistle. Even in the event of a "slow whistle," such conduct should be penalized. In addition, coaches and players need to be aware that this type of contact is unnecessary, unwarranted and is against the rules

### Excellent advice on what to do and not to do with whistles.

1. Never work with the whistle "in your mouth."
2. Never blow outside your area.
3. When you see the runner down, make sure you also see the ball. If you do not see both, then do not blow the whistle.
4. For the downfield guys especially; count "one-thousand-one," before blowing the whistle on fair catches. The signal the punt returner gives puts the defense on notice to avoid contact, not the official's whistle. Same holds true on "catches" in the end zone. Make sure it is a "catch" before blowing the whistle and signaling. Remember "touchdowns are forever."
5. If you do not blow the whistle, then do not signal anything either, as an inadvertent signal will also "kill the play" and get you in just as much trouble.
6. If despite these caveats, you succumb to the "plague," and have an inadvertent whistle, own up to it immediately and adjudicate it properly and get the game moving...

Finally no one; rookie, seasoned, experienced official, etc.; is immune from the "Inadvertent Whistle Plague." So be prepared and concentrate on every play. Remember, "slow whistles" are preferred, and "no whistles" can be explained, but "inadvertent whistles" are suicide; so don't bring them with you!

## Seven C's of Officiating

**Communication-** A majority of the problems experienced by an officiating crew can be attributed to a breakdown in crew communication. It is essential that individual crew members communicate, both verbally and visually, throughout the game. Goal line situations, sideline catches, player possession, timing procedures are all instances in which good crew communication is vital.

**Concentration-** Total concentration is the most difficult good habit an official can develop. Lack of concentration is a contributing factor to officiating mistakes. Total involvement in each and every play is required. By doing so, the mind doesn't wander, and distractions are kept away. Mental control is the key and a good official should be as tired mentally as he is physically after a well officiated game.

**Comportment-** Good comportment begins with good physical condition and appearance. Officials portray confidence to players, coaches, and fans by sharp appearance, hustling, movements, and effective use of signals and voice. Officials who look professional are perceived as professional.

**Consistency-** One of the most voiced complaints from coaches through the years has been lack of consistency by the officials. The most consistent officials are the ones who get the big things that happen and forget the little ones. It is impossible to be consistent when an official "nit-picks" the rules. Consistency is closely related to the next "C"...

**Common Sense-** The most important attribute an official can have is an abundance of common sense. The ability to read the tempo of a game is vital. Like a good traffic cop in a busy intersection who keeps traffic moving without actual arrests, a good official keeps the game moving by using every power at his command to prevent fouls from occurring. The intent of a rule should be understood. Simply stated our role, as officials is to protect the players' safety and penalize any player who fouls and gains an advantage.

**Calming Influence-** The official must be the one that stays calm in any coach or player interchange. When things look tough or could get out of control- we need an official to enter the picture and have a calming influence. Get things under control—stay calm.

**Courage-** The attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult, or painful. Step up and do your job, make the call- the correct call.

## 2015 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

**SPEARING DEFINITION REVISED (2-20-1c):** The definition of spearing was revised to continue the focus on minimizing risk of injury. Spearing is an act by any player who initiates contact against an opponent at the shoulders or below with the crown (top portion) of his/her helmet.

**CORRECTING A DOWN NUMBER ADDED (5-1-1b NEW):** The referee is granted authorization to correct the number of the next down prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs is awarded.

**FREE-KICK FORMATIONS REVISED (6-1-3; 6-1-4 NEW; 6-1 PENALTY):** In a revision of the 2014 rule change regarding free-kick formations, the timing of the foul for not having at least four players on each side of the kicker now occurs when the ball is kicked.

**EXCESSIVE CONTACT ADDED TO UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS (9-4-3g):** With an emphasis on risk minimization, the unnecessary roughness provisions were expanded. No player or non player shall make any other contact with an opponent, including a defenseless player, which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness.

**ROUGHING THE PASSER PENALTY CLARIFIED (9-4 PENALTY):** An automatic first down is not awarded for a 5-yard incidental face-mask penalty against the passer.

**DEAD-BALL PENALTY ENFORCEMENT MODIFIED (10-2-5):** The distance penalties for unsportsmanlike, non player or dead-ball personal fouls committed by teams can offset. Equal numbers of 15-yard penalties by both teams will cancel and remaining penalties may be enforced.

## Working with Head Coaches

Make eye contact. A coach wants to be assured that he has your attention. Don't act distracted.

Never call coaches by their first names. They'll feel most comfortable, particularly in front of their players, simply by being called "coach." If you know their last name, it's ok to say mister.

Show respect to get respect. That means using formal language, keeping communication brief, adopting a neutral tone and avoiding any personal remarks. Stick to the issue at hand in a straightforward way.

Ask them to deal with problem players. Be sure to identify the problem in explicit terms, without making the player to be an evil person. Sometimes it's hard to do, but it can be accomplished with a careful choice of language.

Remain calm under all circumstances. If a coach moves toward you to "get in your face", pivot sideways so that you are shoulder-to-shoulder. It is hard for someone to speak in an aggressive, confrontational way when the proximity between parties is side by side.

Let coaches have their say. When a coach approaches to protest or argue, adopt an instant "listening mode" and let the aggrieved individual finish his remarks. Don't interrupt.

Use non-confrontational body language. To be aware of body posture, facial expression, head tilt and arm position, one must say, "I am going to appear receptive and contemplative. I can think best and measure my words that way. I am determined to not escalate the problem."

If you make a mistake, admit it. A simple apology is sufficient; do not elaborate or rationalize (i.e. make excuses)

When a coach raises their voice, lower yours. A soft voice has a way of triggering a reciprocal soft reply.

Get both coaches together when necessary. Sometimes there is a need to reach uniform agreement in a joint consultation. Weather problems are an example.

Support fellow officials. Never betray partners by showing that you doubt their judgment. Instead indicate faith in someone else's decision by saying the partner had a better view of a more favorable angle than the responding official or partner.

Acknowledge the coach: "I hear what you're saying." "I understand." Or "I see what you mean." Are all equally effective. If the next sensible step is to confer with a partner over a controversy, make that next move firmly.

Give praises when proper, promote sportsmanship. When a coach makes a gesture of consideration for the opponents or towards the official, be sure to acknowledge it. Sometimes a smile and nod of the head are enough.

Determine from where the coach is coming. Put yourself in their shoes just as you would in trying to understand a player's viewpoint. That means having some insight about a coach's motivation and overall goal. Sometimes how the coach will be viewed in the eyes of the players and team supporters is the primary stimulus for behavior.

Keep your ego under control. Often a mere glance will carry a significant message, whether it's negative or positive, whether it is meant to curtail dialogue or to encourage it. A quizzical expression can signal a desire for additional input, whereas a frown may denote closure.

Permit the coach to disengage. Recognize (through facial expression, body language, and terminating vocal patterns) when it is time to cease a dialogue. Nothing is gained by insisting on the last word.

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Remember that a coach's job depends on many factors and doing your best is one of them. He prepares hard for many hours, so you should work hard in being consistent and fair. Help the coach to be a better coach by allowing him to coach and not be overly concerned with officiating. Listen to him, answer his questions honestly, and provide him the respect that he deserves, within the spirit and intent of the rules, and you will reduce his anxieties about one aspect of the game that he cannot control and should not be focused on—officiating. Refereeing a game is not brain surgery, but managing people in a highly emotional environment takes constant awareness and skills. The most successful officials have these skills.