

CFOA NEWS

Volume 2

.CFOA Members,

I know it has been hectic digging into the rule book in preparation for the upcoming season. One of the keys for you to create consistency in your game is preparation, knowledge and concentration. I am sending this bulletin out a week early because Steve Coover has included the exact language provided by NFHS regarding the new rule for correcting a down.

Regards,

Bobby Kennedy

California Football Officials Association

Instructional Chairman

A message from Steve Coover, CIF Football Rules Interpreter

Below is the exact language provided by NFHS regarding the new rule for correcting a down. This interpretation provides specific instruction on how to handle fouls during and after the 5th down, plus timing issues that may need to be corrected.

Rule 5-1-1b (NEW) Correcting A Down

5-1-1b gives the Referee the authority to correct a down prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs is awarded. Casebook Situation 5.1.1A is clear as to procedures when dealing with an extra down or those involving being shorted a down but fails to speak to penalty enforcement, timing, or change of possession issues that may occur during the improper down. The following interpretations will be in effect for the 2015 season related to these areas.

Penalty enforcement if occurring on an improper down: All personal fouls, unsportsmanlike fouls, and non-player fouls will be enforced as dead ball fouls but all other penalties that may have occurred will be disregarded.

Any change of possession that occurs during an improper down, including fumble recoveries, interceptions, and scoring plays are removed when an improper down is corrected.

Timing issues on improper downs may be corrected – including those occurring at the end of any quarter by invoking Rule 3-3-5d. The Referee must verify prior to raising the ball above his/her head that “no irregularities” have occurred – this gives us opportunity to fix a timing issue occurring on the last play of any quarter. Please note that once the ball is above the Referee’s head no timing issues may be corrected.

This rule change gives all of us the opportunity to remind game officials about use of consistent mechanics involved in end of the period mechanics. NFHS mechanics related to end of the period can be found on page 55 of the NFHS Officials Manual.

“Football officials get themselves into twice as much trouble for what they say than what they do. You can’t misquote silence!”

- Don Wilson

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MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Force is of significance only when the ball crosses the goal line and only when it goes from the field of play into the end zone. The initial force results from a carry, fumble, kick, pass, or snap. A new force cannot be imparted to a ball in flight, but once it is grounded a new force may result from a bat., illegal kick, or muff. Merely touching, deflecting, or being struck by a ball does not provide a new force.

Definitions

These definitions can be found under Rule 2.

SECTION 13 FORCE

ART. 1 ... Force is the result if energy exerted by a player which provides movement of the ball. The term force is used only in connect with the goal line and in only one direction, i.e., from the field of play into the end zone. Initial force may result from a carry, fumble, kick, pass or snap. After a fumble, kick or backward pass has been grounded, a new force may result from a bat, an illegal kick or muff.

ART. 2 ... Responsibility for forcing the ball from the field of play across a goal line is attributed to the player who carries, snaps, passes, fumbles or kicks the ball, unless a new force is applied to either a kick, fumble or backward pass that has been grounded.

ART. 4 ... Force is not a factor;

A. On kicks going into R's end zone, since these kicks are always a touchback regardless of who supplied the force.

B. When a backward pass or fumble is declared dead in the end zone of the opponent of the player who passed or fumbled, with no player possession.

SECTION 2

Batting is intestinally slapping or striking the ball with the arm or hand.

SECTION 18 FUMBLE

A fumble is any loss of player possession other than by handling, passing or legal kick.

Sample Plays

Team A ball 1/10 at the A4 (going out). The QB to RB exchange is fumbled. The ball is nearly at rest at the A@. Linebacker B56 in an attempt to scoop up the ball deflects the ball into the end zone. The ball crosses the goal line and goes out the side of the end zone. it is the judgement of the covering official that the ball would clearly have not crossed the goal line on its own.

Answer—The muff of the grounded fumble nearly at rest is a new force. Result of play is a touchback. A's ball 1/10 at the 20, clock starts on the snap.

Team A ball 1/10 at the A4 (going out). The QB to RB exchange is fumbled. The ball is bouncing at the A2. linebacker B56 in an attempt to scoop up the ball deflects the ball into the end zone. The ball crosses the goal line and goes out the side if the end zone. The covering official has some level of doubt as to whether or not the moving ball would have stayed out of the end zone on its own.

Answer—When there is any doubt, there is no new force. The fumble is the last force on the ball. Result of the play is a safety. A kicks from the A20.

Team A ball 1/10 at the A4 (going out). The QB to RB exchange is fumbled. The ball is nearly at rest in the middle of the end zone. Linebacker A56 attempts to fall on the ball, but the ball squirts free and out the back of the end zone. It is the judgement of the covering official that the ball would clearly not have gone out the end zone on its own.

Answer—The fumble is the force that brought the ball across the goal line. B's muff in the end zone cannot be a new force. Result of the play is a safety. A kicks from A20.

Ten Commandments of Officiating

1. Thou shall be a great perimeter official- stay wide- keep players in front of you to give a better perspective. Only pinch in if there is a 1st down, goal line situation, or to break up a fight.

2. Thou shall always watch thy primary responsibility- players going out of bounds, staying with receivers after completions or interceptions, after touchdowns turn and watch players as they go into end zone, escort players out of bench areas.

3. Thou shall be a great dead ball official, don't be too quick to get a new ball, see players separate.

4. Thou shall always be an official on the goal line when a touchdown is scored

5. Thou shall not blow the whistle without a good reason—1. You are the ruling official and you the ball in control of a player that is down. 2. There is a dead ball foul prior to a snap. 3. You need to get the attention of the Referee.

6. Thou shall use cross-field mechanics for forward progress spots. Use the official across the field to get forward progress spots on passes, when players go out of bounds, when you get pushed back, and to assist in mirroring progress.

7. Thou shall concentrate at all times—you should be mentally exhausted at the end of every game, you should constantly be going through your ritual, looking at formation, down and distance, find and watch keys so that when the play starts you are with your keys. When the play ends and you didn't see everything you know you need to concentrate more. The absolute key to getting things right is concentration. It is easy to lose concentration after a tough play. You need to regain your concentration as soon as possible. The best way to regain it, is to use your ritual

8. Thou shall understand and appreciate the coaches at all times. You don't have to prove to the coaches that you are in charge with a flag. Demonstrate respect to players and coaches. If a player or coach becomes upset talk to him. We are the ones paid to keep our emotions in check. Let coaches vent and then let's "get back to football"

9. Thou shall always strive for perfection—Perfection is impossible, excellence is not. We can be excellent by striving for perfection. Listen to constructive criticism and work to get better. Study rules, watch film, and attend clinics.

10. Thou shall always be professional in everything we do. Take pride in officiating. Challenge yourself for this season, this game, this series, this play.

Why We Officiate

Why?

It's standing on the field listening to the National Anthem with your eyes closed and your hat over your heart, thanking God for your life and your country.

It's walking onto the field and seeing the relieved look on the face of a coach that knows he's got a great crew tonight.

It's the long drive to the game reviewing every detail of rules and mechanics and yet having time for a joke or two.

It's walking around the school or stadium looking for your locker room because the AD forgot to have someone meet you.

It's every story that begins with, "remember when..."

It's the genuine look of concern on your crew mates faces when one of your brothers has fallen, and the round of laughter shortly thereafter when it's obvious he's alright.

It's sitting silently at the an association meeting listening to others figure out a complicated ruling and then having them turn to you and ask, "is that right?"

It's leaving your family for a 3 day clinic, and your wife supporting you in that decision and your dream, because she understands that if "it's not good for me, then it's not good for us."

It's meeting someone and finding out he's an official and immediately becoming friends because of that fact.

It's working through the sore muscles, bad knees and the smell of "Ben-Gay."

It's lost job wages, small game fees, and that smile on your face when someone says, "Your just doing this for the money."

It's the feel of your heart pounding before the coin toss as you reach into your pocket for the coin that isn't there.

It's hearing that a coach was putting you down behind your back, and that another official defended you by saying "he's the best official in the state."

PACING THE GAME

By Doug Wilson

It's no secret that a good pace makes for a better football game. When we achieve a pace that puts the game on cruise control players play better, coaches coach better and of course we officiate better. Everyone is locked in and focused on their responsibilities and our routine is smooth. We've all felt it.

We've all felt the opposite as well; that herky-jerky game that just can't seem to get going. Seems like every play is an incomplete pass, a complicated penalty enforcement or some other administrative challenge. Cruise control just never gets set.

In both situations we need to focus on what is within our control. With today's complicated offenses and record numbers of plays being run per game, we serve the game better when we manage our time and dead-ball periods with the utmost efficiency. When our game is cruising, we need to keep it cruising. When our game is spitting-and-sputtering it is imperative we focus in getting the ball ready for play.

And it all starts with kicking off on time.

KICKOFF – Kicking off on time sets the tone for how your crew is going to administer the ball-game. If kickoff is schedule for 7:00PM, the crew must make necessary adjustments to ensure that all of the pregame duties are handled on time and the ready for play is promptly given at 7:00PM, not 7:01.

PENALTY ENFORCEMENT – As a crew, each member should be clear on his or her responsibilities so as to quickly and efficiently dispose of the penalty. Solid rules knowledge by involved crewmembers expedites the procedure. Balancing being both 'quick and correct' is the art penalty enforcement. Your crew should honestly critique itself during every postgame discussion – with or without the help of an observer.

TIME OUTS – If we're not on top of timing here, there is potential we add several minutes of wasted time throughout the game. Often, one minute turns into 1:30 or even more simply because we're not ready to go. This interval is one minute. The pace of game will be well served have coaches off in time for a ready for play at one minute.

CHANGE OF POSSESSION – LOS officials will want to be very active in their respective team areas to get them on the field and ready for play. If a team does not immediately send their team on the field and huddles near the sideline, be near their huddle vocally encouraging them to take the field.

AFTER A SCORE/TRY – This is probably one of the most painfully observed periods of time that we can always improve upon. This is not a time for us to walk around looking for a drink of water, but a time for us to have a sense of urgency for the next kickoff.

From the minute the ball is declared dead after a try or successful FG, the one minute interval starts ticking. After clearing all players, the crew must hustle with a focus on actively working with their teams to get them ready for the succeeding kickoff. This is a one minute interval and our goal should be a ready for play at – you guessed it, one minute – sharp.

Speeding up this interval has the potential to save wasted time during the course of an entire game and will illustrate the crew's game control. Keeping this interval to one minute also lends itself to getting, or keeping the game on cruise control.

SECOND HALF KICKOFF – Like the opening kickoff, starting on time sets the tone for how game administration will be handled. The goal here is a ready for play immediately after the game clock has run down and has been reset to 12:00 minutes. The crew will need to be back on the field in plenty of time to ensure that all administrative issues and the mandatory warm up period are handled in time for an on time kick.

Add some or all of these thoughts to your crew routine and you will certainly see results. We can't control today's sophisticated offenses, but we certainly can control a significant amount of game time with hustle and efficient management.

Doug Wilson has 32 years of football officiating experience and currently works in the PAC12 Conference. Along with multiple D1 Bowl games he has worked in NFL Europe, Arena Football League and United Football League.

Free-Blocking Zone

For many years, the NFHS Football Rules Committee has addressed a variety of rules related to the free-blocking zone and blocking below the waist. Currently, the rules have been modified and updated to allow blocking below the waist in a specific zone and within a very short period of time. Low blocks can sometimes result in lower leg injuries. On the other hand, blocking below the waist helps to level the playing field for those players who are at a size disadvantage compared to that of their opponents. The committee continues to stress the importance of officiating the rule as written, instead of prohibiting blocking below the waist completely.

The free-blocking zone is a rectangular area extending laterally four yards either side of the spot of the snap and three yards behind each line of scrimmage. A player is in the free-blocking zone when any part of his or her body is in the zone at the snap. All players involved in the block must be on the line of scrimmage, in the zone at the snap and the contact must take place within the zone. Blocking below the waist is permitted from the time the ball is snapped until the ball leaves the zone. When the free-blocking zone exists, offensive and defensive linemen may block each other below the waist. Backs, linebackers and receivers are not permitted to block below the waist.

When the ball is directly snapped hand-to-hand to a back, a block below the waist is legal as long as the blocks are between linemen who were in the zone at the snap, the contact is in the zone, and the ball has not left the zone. As long as the ball remains in the zone, those players may legally block below the waist.

When the ball is snapped to a back in shotgun formation, however, the ball leaves the zone, and the zone disintegrates almost immediately. To be legal, a block below the waist must occur immediately after, and nearly simultaneously with, the snap. Any delay would cause the block to occur after the ball has left the zone. **It is nearly impossible for a lineman in a two-point stance to legally block below the waist in this situation because of the time required for the lineman to drop from an upright position and block an opponent below the waist.** For linemen in three- or four-point stances, they must block their opponents immediately after the snap in order for a low block to be legal in this situation.

Prior to the snap, game officials should be aware of whether the ball will be snapped hand-to-hand or to a back in shotgun formation, player positioning and alignment, and which players may legally block below the waist.

What is your pre-snap routine?

It's different for each position...have you developed your own? Have you borrowed one from someone else?

Pre-Snap begins with the previous dead ball period. Be a great dead ball official!

Don't be in a hurry to chase the ball. Make sure you've completed your dead ball officiating.

Know your ball mechanics for returning the ball or obtaining a new ball when you're ready.

Know the status of the clock. The crew must check the clock during each dead ball period and know how to correct any timing errors... especially at the end of half and game!

Observe substitutions

Know & think (down & distance)

Move to proper position for snap (based upon formation?)

Count offense or defense (Once? Twice?)

Recognize formations and strengths of formations

Identify your key(s) – number(s) – location in formation

Know team tendencies

Identify where the best players are in the formation

Look for mismatches

You are ready for the Snap!!