



2023 Football Memo – Week 1

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SDHSAA Resource Links: [SDHSAA Football Officials Links](#)

Equipment Issues to be Addressed – Stay with it...

It is critical for all game officials to continue to strengthen their efforts to address all issues that deal with the current equipment requirements. Game officials must focus on these three areas of concern:

- (1) required equipment not worn properly (i.e., pants that do not cover the knees)
- (2) required and/or legal equipment missing or not being used correctly (no knee pads, thigh guards or hip pads)
- (3) wearing illegal equipment (a hard cast not properly covered).
 - a. BE PROACTIVE in our pre-game warm-up to ask for help from the coaches. We want the student athletes to participate but do so legally equipped.

Crew members are encouraged to be observant throughout their pre-game responsibilities and to be prepared to immediately address any equipment issues with the player and a coach in a professional, calm manner. Appropriate communication with the player in the presence of the coach allows for correction to be made prior to the beginning of the contest and avoids problems during the game. **Do NOT leave this for next week's crew to handle.**

2023 Football Region Meetings

The annual region meeting requirement must be completed by September 30 (date of our last meeting this year in SD). Each football official must attend a region football officials meeting to be eligible to officiate football play-off games.

Penalty Options for Fouls by Kicking Team

If the kicking team commits a foul other than kick-catching interference during a free kick or scrimmage kick, and the kicking team will not be next to snap the ball, the receiving team may choose to have the penalty enforced at the end of the down. The receiving team has all the previous options as well as accepting the distance penalty at the end of the down.

PLAY: Team K's free kick from its 40-yard line goes out of bounds untouched at team R's 20-yard line.

RULING: Team R may accept a five-yard penalty from the previous spot and have K re-kick; put the ball in play at the inbounds spot 25 yards beyond the previous spot (in this case, its own 35 yard line); decline the penalty and put the ball in play at the inbounds spot; or accept a five-yard penalty enforced from the dead-ball spot (in this case, that would be at Team R's 25 yard line).

PLAY: Fourth and 10 from Team K's 20-yard line. At the snap, Team K is flagged for an illegal formation. K1's punt is caught by R2 at the 50-yard line and returned to Team K's 40-yard line.

RULING: Team R may have the five-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot, or have the penalty enforced from the end of R2's run.



2023 Football Memo – Week 1

Kick-Catch Interference: Penalty

When you have fair catch interference, the receiving team has three options:

- Team R may accept the results of the play
- An awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul
- A 15-yard penalty from the previous spot and a replay of the down

Blocking After a Fair Catch Signal

A Team R player who has given a fair catch signal (valid or invalid) is prohibited from blocking an opponent until the kick has ended. The kick ends when a player gains possession or when the ball becomes dead by rule. The rule prohibits the receiver from signaling for a fair catch near his goal line, purposely making no attempt to catch the kick and then blocking an opponent to prevent the opponent from downing the ball before it goes into the end zone. Violations of that rule result in a 15-yard penalty enforced using post-scrimmage kick enforcement.

Kick Catch Interference

The kicking team is responsible to know the location of the kicked ball. If a receiver must run around a kicking team player while moving toward the ball and attempting to catch it, it is kick catch interference even if there is no contact. The receiver has a right to an unimpeded path to the ball and unhindered opportunity to catch the kick. It is kick catch interference if the kicking team contacts the receiver before or simultaneous with his first touching of the ball. A kick receiver is defenseless and most vulnerable when (1) his attention is on the downward flight of the ball or (2) he has just touched the ball. Kick catch interference can also include a kicking team member standing close to a receiver; running in front of him; waving his arms at him; yelling, shouting, or screaming at him; or otherwise obstructing his path to the ball. This means you do not have to have contact to have a foul. A receiver need not give a fair catch signal to gain this protection.

Kick catch interference is strictly a judgment call. There is no “halo” or hard and fast distance to be used as guide.

Option Involving the Game Clock

RULE 3 – SECTION 4 STARTING AND STOPPING THE GAME CLOCK ...

ART. 7 . . . When a foul is committed with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team will have the option to start the game clock on the snap.

Rationale:

Changed the offended team's game clock options following a foul committed with less than two minutes remaining in either half.

The converse is not true – a team never has the option to start the clock on the ready when it is to start on the snap by rule.

A Weekly Review – 10 Observer Comments from Week Zero

1. LOS official – back pedal to the sidelines – do not turn you back on players and stroll to the sidelines – this is being lazy
2. Down and Distance on every play – pre-snap routine we must know the D/D on every play. Do not find yourself searching for the line to gain stakes or turning from the players to find the stakes
3. Count players every play – this includes all kicks



2023 Football Memo – Week 1

4. Ball relay – make it look smooth, short tosses, crisp movements. Keep the ball off the ground. Make sure you as a crew are consistent in your pace. You control this, not the teams.
5. Be great communicators with the sidelines, answer questions when asked, inform in statements and with confidence
6. Every free kick can be on on-side kick situation. Never be surprised by a “pop-up” or on-side in an unusual situation
7. Officials under the uprights on scrimmage kicks (FG and PAT), be in sync. Start 1 yard off the endline, 1 step to signal good or no good
8. When using O2O headsets, use them to your benefit and huddle only when needed. The headsets are NOT a replacement for great crew communication. Get together when needed to avoid mistakes and getting in a hurry on unusual plays, change of position plays or when we have multiple flags down
9. Forward progress, be great at marking this spot. Give the player all that is earned, Kill the play when the runner's progress is stopped. Do not let unnecessary pushing of the pile occur
10. Never get caught not hustling, I did not say hurrying, I said hustling, movement with purpose

Last year I shared this article from Jon Bible, that had many positive comments. Allow me to put it back in front of all of you to serve as great crew reminder early in our season...

Ball-Watching Afflicts Veterans and Newer Officials Alike **by Jon Bible**

Two huge mistakes that officials can make are ball-watching and officiating air. The former means watching the runner to the exclusion of what's happening around him. The latter means focusing on areas where nothing is going on instead of shifting our eyes to where something is happening. Both prevent us from seeing things we need to see. That problem, moreover, afflicts veterans and newer officials. At times, to be sure, we must watch the runner and especially the ball. The wing officials and umpire know if there's an illegal snap, player in the neutral zone or false start. We must know if a runner's body part (other than hand or foot) is down before the ball comes loose, he's hit late, or his facemask is yanked. Ball-watching is needed on close line-to-gain and goal line plays, including when an exuberant runner, thinking he has scored, drops the ball just before crossing the line. And so on. What's a no-no is when an official — worse, several — watches a runner when he's in the wide open with no one near him. Take punt returns. We must look for a fair-catch signal and whether the ball is possessed cleanly. But when the returner starts up field it can be easy to stay with him and miss takedowns, blocks in the back, and low and blindside blocks just a few feet away.

That can also happen when an H-back runs a sweep around end. Sometimes a wing official may be so focused on the back coming at him that he misses fouls in the immediate vicinity. We must learn to shift our focus from him to the action around him, while sensing where he is and who's near him, shifting back only when he's about to be tackled. Too often we become spectators mesmerized by his ability to dart here and there instead of officials who see the larger picture.

Another example is when a quarterback drops back to pass and the referee's eyes stay on him, although he is not yet pressured by the defense. That accomplishes nothing and is a sure-fire way to allow fouls such as holding, illegal hands to the face and chop blocks to go undetected because no other official can pick them up. What the referee should do is watch the action around the quarterback while sensing where he is, what he's doing and when he begins to be pressured so his eyes can transition back to him only when necessary to protect him.



2023 Football Memo – Week 1

Sometimes, unfortunately, that transition does not occur quickly enough. Early in my time as a college referee my eyes went to my initial key, the right tackle, after the snap and stayed there so long that I missed a hit to the quarterback's head that put him in la-la land. I failed to sense where he was so my focus could shift to him when he was threatened. After that I vowed that if it's a toss-up between staying with a tackle who looks like he might hold because, for example, he's getting beat and going to the quarterback when he's threatened, I would do the latter. Safety comes first, so it's better to miss a hold than a foul on the passer. When we "officiate air" we're not ball-watching, but our eyes are not in a helpful place. Returning to the H-back end-sweep, if any of the covering officials simply watch the area (or air) in front of the back they're not doing anything useful. What they must do is recognize (quickly), based on the defenders' movement and the blockers' bodies, hands, and arms, where the first threat of a foul is and focus on it. If nothing happens there, go to the next threat and so on.

Assume that as a referee, I process that the quarterback cleanly takes the snap, so my eyes shift to the tackle. But I continue to stay on him although the play goes the other way, he goes to the second level, or he and a defender "dance" with neither trying to do anything. That is a step removed from officiating air because I am watching something, but it's equally unproductive. When any of those things happens, my focus should shift to where the next threat may be, which might involve a back, the right guard or center, or possibly players on the center's other side, depending on how the play develops.

The bottom line is that just as officials don't help the crew if they watch the runner when he's in the wide open, they're derelict if their eyes stay where action is neither happening nor likely to happen. Even in smaller crews each official has keys to watch pre-snap, at the snap and post-snap, but sometimes we forget that they are our initial keys, and we can't lock in on them forever. We must learn how to quickly shift our focus to some place useful, all the while sensing where the runner is so we can get back to him when necessary. If we watch him when no one's around, focus on areas occupied only by air, or linger too long on our key or other players who aren't presenting a threat of a foul, we may miss something that even a blind person could see.

I believe in visualization in officiating. I study rules by seeing plays in my mind's eye and applying the relevant rules. Same here. No matter what position you work, imagine plays developing in all kinds of ways. Where are you focused? Where should you focus? If you practice keeping your eyes off the runner until there's a reason to put them there and transitioning from where no action is taking place to where something important might happen, you'll become more adept at doing that in games. If everyone on the crew does that, they will likely turn in one heckuva performance.

**Be the Football Official to Save The Crew
If Penalty Enforcement Is NOT Correct.**