



2023 Football Memo – Week 6

September 27, 2023

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I am ranting a bit – let's get this right...

Unsuccessful FG – Treat it as a Punt in the NFHS Rules

This exact item was in the last 2 memos – weeks 4 and 5. I have again been made aware that we had instances where officiating crews spotted the ball at the previous spot for the succeeding snap after a missed FG. **Officials this is this is incorrect and unacceptable.** This is easy, let's get it right.

If an attempted field goal is unsuccessful, it is treated the same as a punt. If the ball breaks the plane of Team R's goal line, it is immediately dead and the result is a touchback. If the kick goes out of bounds in the field of play, or becomes that inbounds, the ball belongs to Team R where it was declared dead.

Equipment: Jersey Numbers

All players must be numbered **0 through 99**. The numbers 00 (double zero) is an illegal number. Any number that "0" precedes is also an illegal number – example "07" is an illegal number. Officials catch this infraction in warm-ups and address with the coaches/trainers and give them an opportunity to correct.

Thank you and Keep Them Coming...

Some of the best information that is shared across our great state comes from your feedback. Thank you for the text messages, calls, and emails regarding what you have encountered and experienced the previous week. It makes for great bulletin items and information for consistency rule rationale and mechanics. A continuous work in progress. Keep the information coming as we head into the home stretch of our regular season

Game Clock: Starts after Penalty

When a foul is the only reason for stopping the game clock, it will start on the ready for play. Here are the rule exceptions in NFHS football:

- When there is a delay of game foul, the game clock starts on the snap **if the penalty is accepted** (3-4-3,i; 3-4-4, 3.4.3,b).
- 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 (3-4-7)
- Also, if a team has **attempted to conserve or consume time illegally**, the referee may apply his discretion (3-4-3, 3-4-6)

Don't ever think you're so good you can't get better.

Never think you are as good as you can be –

Be A Little Better!



2023 Football Memo – Week 6

Cancer Awareness

The SDHSAA has designed the month of October to allow football teams an opportunity to dedicate a game with the “Calling for the Cure” theme for Cancer Awareness. These are some permissible options football teams may consider for the special event: a team may wear pink socks, or pink shoelaces, or pink wristbands. Teams must be in their regular school-issued uniforms for competition. Please remember that the intent of the wristband rules will still need to be followed, such as only one wristband may be worn on each wrist and must be moisture absorbing. They may not exceed four (4) inches in width and only one manufacturer’s logo not more than 2 ¼ inches. If wearing a wristband, team uniformity would be expected. Officials will be expected to wear their official uniform for the game (black and white striped shirt with black pants). Officials may use a pink lanyard and/or whistle, pink wristband and use a pink flag. Should you have any questions concerning the event, please call the SDHSAA office.

Holding Notes

The hold must restrict the defender’s ability to participate in the play. The hold must turn the defender; take his feet; and/or change the direction of the defender’s path at the point of attack.

If an offensive lineman takes out the feet of a defensive player by tackling him, pulling or taking him to the ground, then a holding penalty should be called. If the hold is at the point of attack and significantly restricts the defender’s ability to move and participate in the play by taking his feet or turning him from his intended path to the ball, then a hold should be called. Players “dancing” with one another when no advantage has been gained are not guilty of holding. If an offensive blocker’s hands are inside the frame of the defender’s body, and the offensive blocker has not changed the defender or changed the direction of the defender’s path of travel, then the hold should not be called even if that offensive linesman has grasped the defender’s shirt. If the offensive player’s hands grasp the shirt of his opponent outside the frame of the defender’s body, and the defender has not turned or spun, or his path to the ball carrier has not changed, a hold should not be called. Football officials must judge whether the defender was still able to get up the field to the quarterback or ball carrier, or whether the defender can still participate in the play. If so, a hold should not be called. An umpire can make his job easier by talking early and often to the offensive and defensive players about holding. Sharing information with both lines lets the players know what to expect and what will and will not be called. In that way, much of the holding can be avoided. The hand(s) cannot be thrust forward above the opponent’s frame to contact an opponent on the neck or face area.

The Try

When Team B fouls during a successful kick try, Team A has the option of declining the score and replaying the try after the penalty is enforced or keeping the score with enforcement from the succeeding spot (ensuing kickoff).

- This rule was adopted in the interest of safety. There were cases of roughing the kicker and/or holder on a try as the defenders made an all-out effort to block the kick. Also, the possibility of a “free shot” on a two point try has been eliminated.

If Team B fouls during a successful two-point try, the option to replay the try will not be selected and the penalty will be carried over to be enforced from the succeeding spot.

If Team B fouls during an unsuccessful try, the try will be replayed.

If Team A fouls during a successful try, Team B will accept the penalty and replay the down. If the penalty for Team A’s foul includes a loss of down, the try is over, any score is nullified, and the down is not replayed.



2023 Football Memo – Week 6

If both teams foul, the fouls offset and the down is replayed. The offense may choose to snap anywhere between the hash marks.

Sideline Interference

The head coach is responsible for the team box; fouls for sideline warnings and team box warnings that are either contact or non-contact are all assessed to the head coach.

Teams whose players and coaches wander outside their designated areas are penalized as follows:

- An officials sideline warning
- A five-yard penalty for the next infraction
- A 15-yard penalty for each additional infraction; this is an unsportsmanlike foul charged to the head coach regardless of whether or not he was one of the people in the restricted areas.

REMINDER: Each of the above situations are where no contact occurs between the official and sideline personnel. If, during a live ball, an official is contacted by a non-player, coach, etc., the first such violation is a 15-yard penalty from the succeeding spot (personal foul, illegal personal contact), and a second such violation is a 15-yard penalty from the succeeding spot AND the disqualification of the head coach, regardless of the offender(s). Again, these are the penalties if contact is made with the official, and can be upgraded to “flagrant” if deemed necessary on the first offense (which includes disqualification). This is perhaps the lone situation in the NFHS Rule Book where cumulative Personal Fouls result in an ejection – contacting an official in the restricted area.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

If an assistant coach is vociferously criticizing an official the foul for unsportsmanlike conduct is assessed directly to the individual who actually committed the violation. The conduct foul is charged to the assistant coach NOT, the head coach. Two unsportsmanlike fouls charged to the same person/player results in disqualification.

Ending a Series

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 Team B, if at the end of the fourth down, the ball belongs to Team A behind the line to gain. When a new series of downs is awarded, the penalties for all fouls (including nonplayer and unsportsmanlike) committed prior to the ready-for-play signal shall be administered before the line to gain is established.

PLAY: Team A has ball fourth and eight. Player A24 gains six yards when he is tackled. After the whistles sounds, R73 is flagged for a late hit.

RULING: The series for Team A ended short of a first down. A new series is awarded Team B. The penalty for the late hit by R73 will be administered then the line-to-gain chains will be established. First and 10 for Team B.

Face Mask Penalties

Simply touching the facemask is not a foul. However, it is a foul for any player to grasp an opponent’s facemask, helmet opening, or chinstrap. If a foul is committed, the penalty is five yards for incidental grasping, or 15 yards (give personal foul signal, then facemask signal) for twisting, turning or pulling. Neither penalty has provisions for awarding an automatic first down. The five- or 15-yard option applies whether the offending player is on Team A or Team B.



2023 Football Memo – Week 6

RATIONALE: It is illegal to grasp the helmet opening as well as the face mask because it is just as dangerous to use the edge of the helmet opening to wrench the neck of an opponent as it is to grasp the face mask. Neither the helmet nor face mask was intended to provide a handle for the tackler. The rule does not prohibit tackling a runner around the head, or even grabbing the helmet, as long as the tackler's hands do not grasp the face mask or any edge of the helmet opening.

The runner may ward off would-be tacklers as long as he does not deliver a blow. He may use a stiff-arm and put his hand on an opponent's helmet or facemask. The hand must be open and in advance of the elbow.

Grasping and twisting an opponent's facemask is a personal foul. If a player commits any of the illegal personal contact fouls against the passer, the foul is considered roughing the passer.

Why the distinction? The penalty for a personal foul is 15 yards only. The penalty for roughing the passer is 15 yards and an automatic first down.

Play: Second and 20 for Team A from its own 20 yard-line. During A12's run, which end at Team A's 22 yardline, B34 is flagged for a facemask foul for (a) just briefly grabbing A12's mask, or (b) grabbing A12's mask and giving it a good twist.

Ruling: In (a), add five yards to the end of A12's run. The result is second and 13 from Team A's 27 yardline. In (b), add 15 yards to the end of A12's run, resulting in second and three from Team A's 37 yardline. In both (a) and (b) the down will be replayed after enforcement of the penalty.

Play: As B55 attempts to tackle A33, he has his hand on the helmet but does not have his fingers in the face mask or inside the helmet.

Ruling: No foul as B55 did not grasp the face mask/helmet opening or attached tooth and mouth protector.

Police the Pile

How does the runner usually react when he's been tackled? The norm in college and pro football is that runners lay patiently after they are tackled and tacklers arise in orderly fashion. That protocol is a learned response. Players at the high school level don't always abide by that practice. In effect, they have to learn it, and some of them are reluctant learners. Some high school runners squirm and thrash when they've been put on the ground, especially if they're angry at being dumped for a loss. A number of problems can be prevented if an official is at the dead-ball site within two or three seconds. Moreover, that official will take charge and use his voice to let the players know he is there. "I'll take the ball. Use the ground, not a player. One at a time."

For some reason, it is hard for officials to adopt that practice. Most will be gnawing on their whistles. Only a few will feel compelled to police the pile quickly. That is because coverage in the side zone isn't as prompt as it could be due to uncertain responsibilities. If the umpire refuses to cross the hashmark and the wing officials decline to move into the field of play, any runner downed in a side zone will rest

temporarily without an official covering immediately. Some referees will move to the side zone and retrieve the ball with the wing official poised at a progress spot some distance away, perhaps even remaining on the sideline.



2023 Football Memo – Week 6

One accepted practice is for the umpire to move into the side zone and get the ball while wing officials hold a spot. The umpire then runs back to place the ball at the hashmark. That practice has the umpire virtually running sideline to sideline while wing officials freeze at progress spots, not picking up the ball. Here's a system in five-official mechanics that guarantees nearly instant coverage of downed runners in a side zone from the sidelines to the hash.

After squaring off on a play that gains zero to seven yards, the wing official moves onto the field quickly and secures the ball while at the same time obtaining a progress spot. It's that simple. The object is to provide rapid coverage. But that's not all. The referee follows the play, swinging outside into the side zone and stays behind the play preparing to receive the relay. He tosses the ball to the umpire for placement at the hash. The umpire also moves toward the dead ball; if it is within several yards of the sideline, he crosses the hash and observes follow-up action at the dead-ball spot. The back judge also moves toward the play. If the gain on the play is more than seven yards, he'll expect to be the middle person on the relay back to the hash.

That form of coverage has several purposes, one of which is immediate coverage of dead-ball action combined with an accurate progress spot. A second purpose is that four officials are actively closing in on the play, although three of them will stop before getting there. The third purpose is that all four officials will be in a useful proximity to spot post-play behavior by players. A fourth purpose is to decrease the distance between officials for passes that return the ball to the hash. No official should be making a pass of more than several yards. The prescribed starting position for the wing officials is off the field. That is a sensible procedure, because it isolates the wings away from initial play action. The persistent "accordion" movement on the part of wing and downfield officials on every play. Starting from out of bounds does not mean staying off the field entirely.

Most high school crews don't have the luxury of one or two crewmates to help coverage. That's why a back judge in a crew of five has to be hustling toward the side zone on plays that end near or across the sideline. The back judge should be responsible for coverage out of bounds off the field whenever possible. An oft-heard expression is, "You can't be killing grass back there." In college and pro football, when the ball comes dead in a side zone halfway or past the numbers on the field, the deep officials initiate a ball exchange. Therefore, the wing official doesn't have to get the ball at once. If he does get it, he merely puts it at his feet for a spot. A variation in the four-person side zone coverage may be required when a sweep moves away from the referee's established spot on the quarterback's throwing arm. In such cases — say a three- or four-yard gain — the umpire can move farther into the side zone. The referee can get the second relay pass and place the ball at the hash. The combined coverage is an effective way to show hustle and coordination for an officiating crew, but more important it is a solid way to cover all action around the runner and to get the ball back in play promptly.