



2023 Football Memo – Week 9

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Again, Thank You!!!

The football season is an extremely busy time for every one of you. It takes hard work to become a good official. We appreciate your investment in time and your time spent away from family. We would like to give you all a heartfelt thank you for the job you are doing as an official.

Thank You – You All Make a Difference

Continue to Address Equipment Issues – 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.

Prior To Starting the Game

All officials shall observe players in their pregame warm-ups. If an official observes any equipment violations, including but not limited to an exposed knee, he shall verbally notify the Head Coach, and the player(s) shall not be allowed to participate in the subsequent game until correction has been made. Officials are encouraged to use preventive officiating techniques and good communication skills to avoid unnecessary penalties throughout the game.

IMPORTANT – Clock Management – Entire Crew Responsibility

Stating the obvious, clock management is critical. Especially in the last two minutes of each half. All officials need to heighten their awareness of making sure the clock starts and stops when appropriate by rule. This is a time in the game when signals need to be extremely clear that clock operators, coaches and players and the entire stadium knows the status of the clock. This is NOT just one official's responsibility but an entire crew. Often we have only 1 game clock and either the B or the R are looking directly at it. Signals, O2O and verbal communications are key. Take pride in clear signals near the sideline, in or out, wind or dead. Communicate to all and be exact.



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Reminder – We still seem to struggle here

New Rule in 2022 (Last Year) – 3-4-7: Clarified the Offended Team's Game Clock Options

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

ACCEPTED PENALTY INSIDE TWO MINUTES OF EITHER HALF

3.4.7 SITUATION A:

With time expiring inside the last two minutes in the second or fourth period and A behind in the score, A1 intentionally throws the ball forward to the ground in order to stop the game clock. A1's action took place: (a) immediately after receiving the snap while A1 was lined up 3 yards deep; or (b) immediately after receiving the snap; or (c) after A1 delayed and throws an illegal forward pass.

RULING: In (a) and (b), the grounding is legal, and the game clock remains stopped until the subsequent snap. Illegal forward pass in (c), and the game clock shall be started on the ready-for-play signal unless Team B chooses to start the game clock on the snap. ([7-5-2d](#) EXCEPTION)

3.4.7 SITUATION B:

With less than a minute remaining in the game, the score is [21-20](#) in favor of B. The game clock is running and the ball is on B's 10-yard line. An option play on third down gains 5 yards, but is short of a first down. Following the tackle, the tackler B1 holds A1 down for a few moments, but the covering official does not judge the action to be illegal.

RULING: Though B1 may have held A1 down momentarily, the game clock will continue to run because no foul was called.

COMMENT: In some situations, there is a delay in un-piling and no individual player or team is to blame. In such situations the referee is authorized to stop the game clock momentarily so no more clock time than normal is used in getting the ball ready for play. ([3-4-3h](#))

3.4.7 SITUATION C:

With less than a minute remaining in the game, Team B trails [21-20](#). B1 commits a holding foul during the down. Following the play, A2 commits an unsportsmanlike conduct foul.

RULING: The fouls are administered separately and in order of occurrence. In addition, Team A is given the choice of starting the game clock on the snap. If Team A declines to start the game clock on the snap, Team B is then given the option of starting the game clock on the snap. With Team B trailing, Team B will likely choose to start the game clock on the snap. ([10-1-3](#))

3.4.7 SITUATION D:

Team B is trailing with less than two minutes remaining in the game. On third down, A53 commits a holding foul and Team A is stopped short of the line to gain inbounds.

RULING: Whether or not B accepts A's foul for holding, B may choose to start the clock on the snap. ([3-6-1](#))



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Onside and Pop-up Kick Situations

Allow me to re-iterate the following:

- When an onside kick is imminent, move into position that gives us the best opportunity to cover the kick – Bottom line is we need to be on high alert.
 - B and L on kickers line – watch for offside (breaking the plane – dead ball foul) and the manner in which the ball is kicked off of the tee. We must know if it is kicked directly into the ground or from the tee directly into the air. We must see this action and be ready to rule immediately if a grounded kick goes into the air. I want us to use at least waist high as the guideline for into the air. This is a player safety situation.
 - Kickers must be coached that if the ball is kicked directly into the ground it must bounce or touch the ground more than one time before it pops into the air to not be considered a pop-up kick. Imagine rolling, dribbling, spinning on the ground, not kicked into and immediately bounces up.
 - U and H on the receivers restraining line. Watch for touches, blocks before legally allowed, low blocks (illegal) and help with how the ball is kicked
 - R – positioned deep – you have the entire goal line should the ball be kicked deep – You also have the responsibility of 4 (3 in the 9 man game) on each side of the kicker when the when the ball is kicked
- **Rule 6-1-11** – Review as a crew. Pop up kicks are illegal – It is a dead ball foul if a free kick is immediately driven into the ground, strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of the ball being kicked directly off of the tee (pop-up kick) (2-24-10, 6-1-11). If the ball is kicked directly off of the tee and into the air (not grounded) the ball remains alive and the receiving team must be given an unobstructed opportunity to catch the untouched free kick. A fair catch signal can also be used by R and the kick/ball/play is dead immediately when possessed (not simply touched).
- **Rule 2-24-10 (NFHS Football Rules Book 2022)**
 - A pop-up kick is a free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately into the ground, the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee
- **Rule 6-11-1 (NFHS Football Rules Book 2022)**
 - A pop-up kick is illegal
- **Penalty**
 - The ball is immediately dead when a pop-up kick is made. Team K is penalized five yards and will re-kick

Great Mechanics

Good mechanics make the difference between a football game that is well officiated and one that is not. It is one thing to know the rules, but another to know where to position yourself on the field, what to look at and then, how to interpret what you observe. Movement and compromise are the characteristics of football officiating. Twenty-two or eighteen players moving around, competing for space and position; the officials must utilize hustle, angles, distance and planned compromises to observe and control the action. This



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newsletter will deal with mechanics only based on the National Federation Officials Manual and any SDHSAA approved exceptions (i.e. scrimmage kicks)

Insights and Notes from our Observers

Thank you observers –great job throughout the season...

- Count players on every down, no “me too” signals – recount anytime you have to
- Make an incomplete pass bounce twice before you blow the whistle. Have patience.
- Keep your head up after the play has ended, be aware of what happens around you. Great dead ball officiating is a must.
- Officiate your keys every down. Be knowledgeable of down and distance.
- Communicate and make every effort to get it right on the field.
- See Leather—See Leather—See Leather, before blowing the whistle.
- Slow Whistle, Slow Flag, Slow Bean Bag
- Wings—run between hash marks—let the ball carrier take you up the field.
- When play goes out of bounds on your side of the field—turn all the way to face out of bounds area to view player action—your primary responsibility is the out of bounds spot and safety of players who have went out of bounds. Once those two responsibilities have been satisfied then – and only then – do we worry about getting a football back onto the field
- Don’t ever toss a ball to a wing official to place the ball for a measurement. The ball should be taken/run over to the wing official and so they can place it at their feet for the measurement.
- See the whole play when calling an infraction. Make the fouls be solid before making a call.
- Signal professionally – incomplete or “no good” sign should be given at chest level.
- Tuck your flags in. Do not give the impression of looking for trouble.
- Continue to officiate after throwing the flag.
- Square up when marking forward progress.
- Linesmen don’t look back over your shoulder to see if the player achieved the line-to-gain. The line judge should stop the clock if he feels player has reached the line-to-gain. Know the line to gain yard line.
- When an offensive player’s forward progress has stopped and the defense starts driving the player backwards, get on the whistle, and get the play stopped.
- Use bean bag on fumbles – beanbag fumbles, not a backward pass – a snap is a backward pass
- Wings—inside the five yard going in or going out first move is to the goal line
- Wings—Don’t ever give up the goal line. If you are responsible for the goal line—hold your position. You may have to back off for safety or perspective but never give it up if there is the possibility of it coming into play.

Motion

Double wing formation: If both backs go in motion at the same time and have not made any movement that simulates the beginning of a play the play would continue because both backs could stop --reset--and remain motionless for one second before the snap which makes the play legal.

If both backs are still in motion or if one back stops and the other stays in motion you would have an illegal shift foul at the snap which is a live ball foul that carries a five-yard penalty from the previous spot. The defensive team could accept the five-yard penalty from the previous spot and replay the down or decline



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the penalty and take the result of the play. The philosophy is some acts can be corrected before the snap and are not a foul until the ball is snapped.

Officials Preparation

Preparation and concentration are most important for great high school football officiating. The SDHSAA asks and expects those two things each game from each and every official. Preparation begins prior to game day and escalates when you arrive at the game site. Pre-game preparations are important. Each official must be adept at reading his keys on each and every play. Breakdowns in this area cannot be tolerated as a breakdown in one position leads to a breakdown for the entire crew.

Before the ball is snapped each official has specific duties that must be performed. Failure to do so may provide an unfair advantage for one team or inhibit the crew's ability to cover a play correctly. Basic positions may vary depending upon play situations, team formations, the field and weather conditions.

Awarded First Down

Fouls by Team B that give Team A an automatic first down are roughing the kicker or holder, roughing the passer, or roughing the snapper.

Loss of Down

Fouls by Team A that include loss of right to replay a down are illegally handing the ball forward; illegal forward pass; and illegal touching of forward pass by an ineligible receiver

Offensive pass interference is not a loss of down and defensive pass interference is not automatic first down

**We Wish Each of You
A Great End to the 2023 Season**