

# South Dakota High School Activities Association

# 2018 Football Newsletter No. 10

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## Good 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 newsletter will deal with mechanics based on the National Federation Officials Manual.

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## 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.

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## Video Review

The SDHSAA is excited to bring a new opportunity to help progress football officiating in our state. The SDHSAA has found that the most effective training tool for promoting consistency and improved officiating is through video review.

With the help of SDHSAA coaches and Mark Smith of Pierre, the SDHSAA is working on compiling a video review of unique plays and situations.

The SDHSAA is hoping the plays will allow discussion areas of mechanics, crew communication and rules study with football officials on high school mechanics and rules.

The plays are not meant to pick on any one official, crew or team. These plays are meant to be a learning tool to help promote what we all want to see from our officials.

Take ideas from these plays that you find helpful and apply them to your football officiating game. This week's video plays:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESi\\_SsG6o2E&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESi_SsG6o2E&feature=youtu.be)

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## Mechanics Position - Review

### REFEREE

- The referee shall be 15 yards deep and just outside the normal tight end position, on the throwing arm side of the QB on a scrimmage play.
- The referee and umpire shall count Team A players on every down. They should use a straight arm and fist to indicate 11 players. Hold signal to verify with the umpire.
- Starts clock or gives ready when down box is set.
- Maintains a consistent and “brisk” tempo.
- Tempo does not change in a hurry up offense.
- HL/LJ will help with the spot on tackles for loss, including sacks. Referees, don’t worry about the spot, officiate players.
- Gives both preliminary and final signals on penalties that are not obvious.
- 8-10 yards to the side and 2 yards behind the kicker on scrimmage kicks, field goals, and tries.
- Make sure that the Linesman or Line Judge knows the details of the penalty so they may communicate it to the head coach on his sideline.
- Do not go to the line of scrimmage to give the ready-for-play. Eight or ten yards back allows for a better view of action close to the ball and you are visible to the clock operator.
- A crisp ready-for-play signal shows confident leadership.
- DO NOT follow the ball when released by the passer—continue to focus on the passer until he is not threatened
- After snap-- You get in trouble if you don’t move your feet in the direction of the quarterback. Pass read—drop back at 45 degree angle as QB begins to fade back
- Check action on quarterback after handoff—remain with him until action has cleared away
- Avoid “walking through” penalty signals. Come to a complete stop before signaling. Have no facial expression; slowly give the signal and point to the offending team; avoid jabbing the arm when signaling; it is a sign you are angry or feel a sense of “gotcha” toward the offending team. Don’t walk through the end of your signals either. Come to a complete stop after signaling and hustle to your next task.

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### UMPIRE

- Stands close to the ball until Referee gives the ready. Back out of your position.
- The umpire shall be 4-7 yards back on a scrimmage play. Be in position to see the snap. What is best for you?
- Do not chase ball when play ends between sideline and hash.
- Confirm with the wing officials that the ball is spotted properly.
- Mirror positioning with the Referee on punts.
- On an inside dive at or near the goal line, the Umpire NEVER signals TD. The HL or LJ will rule on TD or short.
- On passes, move up on the line of scrimmage to make sure the passer does not go over the line of scrimmage when passing.

- Umpires often have the best look on catches and traps, particularly those in the middle of the field—need to pivot after ball crosses your head when a pass with low trajectory is thrown to rule on “catch/no catch”
- Umpire must not watch the runner; watch action **AROUND** the runner!
- Anyone can run and hide—at snap **DO NOT** retreat
- Need to see snappers arm—hand—ball at snap
- After the snap—spit whistle
- When play is wide—pivot and **DO NOT** chase play with “Happy Feet”
- Move downfield parallel—avoid angling towards ball
- Scrimmage kicks-- Position yourself so that you can see the center and action by and upon him
- On scrimmage kicks the umpire will be positioned in the backfield of Team A, opposite the Referee. Prior to moving to the new position the umpire will remind the defense to stay off of the snapper. If Team A is not going to punt in a fourth down situation, umpires do not move to backfield. If any doubt about punt or not, umpire stay in normal position.

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## **HEAD LINESMAN AND LINE JUDGE**

- Initial position at the snap shall be off the sideline.
- Insists on the 2-yard belt being clear of coaches and players prior to the snap.
- Use extended arm with fist to indicate that a wide out is off the line of scrimmage. If the receiver asks, tell them what they are (on or off). Don’t tell them where you think they should be.
- When the ball is snapped between the ten and five going in, float to the five and proceed to the goal line, as necessary. When the ball is snapped between the five and the goal line, move to the goal line immediately at the snap, and adjust accordingly. Communicate with all crew members about who is covering the goal line and end line.
- When the ball is snapped between the Goal Line and the five-yard line going out, move to the Goal Line immediately and adjust accordingly.
- Moves parallel to sideline then squares off.
- Officials should wind the clock on plays that end near the sideline to avoid confusion as to whether or not the play ended in bounds or out of bounds, when short of the line to gain.
- When a play makes the line-to-gain, the covering official should use the stop the clock signal.
- Keep head up when coming in to mark forward progress and only use one foot (downfield foot) to mark the spot.
- During the play, float downfield in the white. Come on to the field at the conclusion of the play to officiate. Have a presence.
- Wing closest to the ball spots the ball. Use cross field mechanics when necessary.
- Stop the clock first on out of bounds, then get to the spot and turn & officiate out of bounds as necessary.
- Help with the spot on tackles for loss, including sacks. Referees need to officiate players.

- Confirm with the umpire that the ball is spotted properly before returning to your position.
- Line Judge releases on snap on scrimmage kicks to watch blocks and Linesman releases when the kick crosses line of scrimmage
- Before the game, introduce yourself to the HEAD COACH. Let him know you will communicate with him throughout the game. Develop a GOOD rapport. Use TACT when communicating with sideline.
- During time-outs, wing officials are responsible for monitoring conferences near your sideline. Help get players promptly back onto the field.
- When the ball breaks the goal line plane in player possession, make eye contact with the opposite wing official before signaling the touchdown. There is no reason to rush the touchdown signal.
- On close goal line plays in the middle of the field, move in slowly in the field of play. If you come in on the goal line or in the end zone, everyone will think the ball has crossed the goal line.
- If you read run toward your direction—take four or five steps into the backfield-- Let ball carrier pass you—officiate behind play
- If you read run away from you-- Clean up action behind the umpire and referee-- This is area where cheap shot take place—has to be officiated well
- Read run between hash marks-- Stay on line of scrimmage-- Let ball carrier take you up field—be patience.
- 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 up goal line if there is the possibility of it coming into play
- Linesman—DO NOT turn your head from field to check on first down—do not take eyes off players—gives the perception your look may change spot

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## **BACK JUDGE:**

- On Free Kicks: the Back Judge handles the ball, gives it to the kicker and moves to a position outside the sideline on K's free kick line, on the same side as the chain gang.
- On free kicks moves onto field between 9-yard mark (numbers) and hash after ball is kicked.
- Shall count all Team B players on every down. Use a straight arm and fist to indicate 11 (9) players. Don't need to coordinate with Referee/Umpire.
- The back judge should be approximately 20 yards deep on scrimmage plays. If the ball is snapped on the 15-yard line and in, position yourself on the end line.
- Gives visible count the last 5 seconds of the 25-second count.
- Does not allow a potential pass receiver to get behind.
- Moves into side zone when ball becomes dead between hash and sideline.
- Back Judge should have bean bag in hand on all scrimmage kicks and needs to always mark the "end of the kick." Never bean bag forward progress.
- Start on the goal line for scrimmage kicks snapped from the 40 yard line in. Do not move off the goal line unless you're positive it will not be threatened.
- Get to the goal line or end line on plays involving the front or back of the end zones

- **You DO NOT need to be near the ball when every play ends—the advantage of this is your set of eyes will be able to observe player action after the ball is dead**
- **Look at clock when possible during dead-ball situations—is it running when it should be stopped or is it stopped when it should be running**
- **Punts-- Remind yourself what to look for—a fair catch signal, first touching, kick catch interference, legal or illegal batting, when to drop a bean bag, touchback**
- **Back Judge Needs To Be Involved In The Game—as you are the hardest working official on field—ball control sideline to sideline**

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## **ALL OFFICIALS:**

- **General athletic and professional appearance is important. All caps should be fitted. No Jackets – even when very cold (use quality under garments and you will stay even warmer than with jackets). Gloves are OK.**
- **Strive for perfection on every play for every game. No one is perfect, but that goal will lead to improvement and will make the game better.**
- **On Free Kicks: All officials, with exception of the referee, should be outside of the sideline.**
- **All officials shall raise their hand with the next down and drop when the referee blows the ready for play whistle. The Head Linesman – verify with the down box before raising your hand.**
- **Officiate your keys at the snap then move to zone coverage.**
- **General rule for officials is to stay back and slow down. You can usually see more from a distance.**
- **Signal professionally – incomplete or “no good” sign should be given at chest level.**
- **Only BLOW THE WHISTLE ONCE. Do not be in a hurry to whistle. When the play starts, the whistle should not be in the mouth – there is time to put the whistle in and then blow it. Better off being slow on the whistle rather than too fast.**
- **No mirroring of signals or whistles. Only the covering officials shall have a stop the clock signal or whistle. You should only have a whistle if you see the football.**
- **Movement of officials: as a play ends the officials should be moving -- “pinch or accordion” in on the play, being careful not to be guarding “air,” but moving in under control, while observing all action.**
- **Rarely should there be more than two flags on any play. Officiate your own area -- work as a team of 5. If there are too many flags on the same play, too many eyes are watching the same action.**
- **The official who makes the call reports to the Referee, and one of the other officials needs to “cover” the flag, making sure that no one moves it or picks it up. Cover the dead ball spot as well.**
- **Bean bag: always use a bean bag on a fumble to mark the spot.**
- **Never turn your back to the field of play during dead ball interval when play ended inbounds.**
- **See the ball before blowing whistle!**
- **Every official has responsibilities on every play.**
- **Talk with the players. Use preventative officiating.**

- Communicate down and distance every play.
- Alert official(s) of “who has responsibility for the goal line.”
- Repeated whistle blasts to alert crew of penalty marker.
- Talk to players as they un-pile.
- Compliment players... “good tackle”, “good run”, “good sportsmanship”.
- If the ball has become dead close to the line to gain, the covering official should not throw the ball to the wing official or place the ball at the wing official’s foot. The ball should be handed to the wing official who will place the ball at the dead ball spot.
- If the clock is stopped because the ball is close to the line-to-gain, the crew must either measure or award a first down.

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## **DEAD BALL OFFICIALS**

1. **TAKE CHARGE – OFFICIALS RUN THE GAME.** Officials know three things ruin a football game: 1) Fights; 2) Excessive penalties; and 3) Injuries.
  2. **Do whatever it takes to prevent problems from occurring. GAME CONTROL + PREVENTIVE OFFICIATING** are the key to being a **GREAT DEAD BALL OFFICIAL** (hustle, presence, voice, whistle).
  3. **Primary responsibility is player safety (and their own). Personal fouls cause injuries and provoke other problems. All personal (player safety) fouls must be enforced (zero tolerance).**
  4. **Do not tolerate taunting, baiting and unsportsmanlike acts. Unsportsmanlike acts lead to more problems during the game . . . personal fouls and fights (zero tolerance).**
  5. **Set standards early and be consistent. Active prevention starts the first play of the game.**
  6. **Continue to officiate after you have thrown a flag.**
  7. **Keep your eyes on the players. Do not look down at their progress spot (feet). Keep your head up -- continuing to observe the action around the ball carrier.**
  8. **Work as a unit. Dead ball officiating is a team effort. Box-in players. Don't let players get behind you (accordion effect). Communicate with each other.**
  9. **Clean up out-of-bounds. Get there quickly (usually straight down the sideline and then out of bounds). Avoid getting obstructed by players in the bench area. Bring opponents out of the team area (visually, if not physically). The official taking progress should also be looking out of bounds, following the action.**
  10. **Continue to officiate until players separate and the potential for problems no longer exists.**
  11. **Sense trouble and take the necessary steps to prevent it. Expect the unexpected, anticipating problems before they happen. Then have the courage to step up when necessary.**
  12. **Maintain concentration the entire game (never letting up). Be totally focused on your tasks and the game.**
  13. **Are never in a hurry to get to the ball. Ball mechanics are a secondary responsibility.**
  14. **Take pride in being GREAT DEAD BALL OFFICIALS**
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