

South Dakota High School Activities Association

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Crunch Time

October/November is crunch time for football. The teams are fighting for conference championships and high seeds for the state play-offs. Teams want to be at their best and so should we as officials. Our concentration and game calling skills should be at optimum. We must give 100% each and every game we officiate.

There is no excuse for making errors on rules enforcement and not using proper positioning and proper mechanics. We have to get in the best position possible to clearly see the play which minimizes our chances significantly to getting it wrong. We must use our proper NFHS mechanics to communicate with the timer, our crew members, coaches, and fans. We cannot allow laziness or lack of respect to deter us from performing to our maximum.

We are not suggesting that you are not going to miss one now and then, but it should not be from lack of effort. The miss should involve judgment, not improper enforcement or poor positioning.

If you prepare yourself, know the game, know how to apply the rules, use proper positioning, and mechanics and give 100% every game, you and your crew members can feel proud of your achievements. Remember, we only cheat ourselves when we do not give our very best.

Finish The Season Strong

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 (mechanics and rules review):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPWIFhgH2IY&feature=youtu.be>

Quarterback Clapping Hands

Quarterback clapping his hands before the snap for the cadence or silent count: This motion is OK as long as it doesn't, in the judgment of the officials, simulate action at the snap. If done rhythmically and smoothly and it is for the purpose of calling the cadence, it will be allowed.

If the official feels it is done quickly, moves the body, bobs the head, moves the feet, etc. and that causes Team B to encroach, then it should be flagged as a false start. Give the quarterback the benefit that it is legal, unless they really exaggerate the movements.

If a Team A player is in motion and the quarterback claps his hands, this is not an illegal shift, not 2 players moving at the same time. If the quarterback is moving forward then the movement should be flagged.

Eligibility Rules—Backward Passes

Eligibility rules apply only to legal forward passes. The question of eligibility does not arise in the case of an illegal forward pass. For example, if an eligible player is downfield when an illegal pass is thrown, there is only one foul—for the pass and not a second foul for the ineligible receiver being downfield.

There are no eligibility restrictions on a backward pass. All players are eligible to catch or touch it at any time. If a backward pass is caught, intercepted or recovered, it remains live and in play, and the ball may be advanced.

It is legal for any player on either team to throw a backward pass any time anywhere on the field. If a player deliberately throws a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time, it is legal and the clock will start on the snap.

The initial direction the ball is thrown determines whether the pass is forward or backward. This could be a factor in high winds.

Option Involving The Game Clock

When a penalty is accepted with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team will have the option to start the game clock on the snap. That prevents the offending team from benefitting from a foul that would normally cause the clock to start on the ready-for-play signal and consume more time.

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.

Ineligibles Downfield

Until the pass is thrown, interior offensive linemen and other ineligible Team A players are not allowed down the field before the pass is thrown. A forward pass has crossed the neutral zone when the entire ball is beyond the neutral zone.

On forward pass plays, ineligible Team A players may continue into the expanded neutral zone if contact is made immediately on Team B linemen and sustained the block as long as the contact does not continue beyond the two-yard expanded neutral zone. If such a Team A player loses contact with the opponent he must stop or retreat until the pass is thrown.

If ineligible Team A players advance too far downfield and returns behind the neutral zone before the pass is thrown, it is still a ineligible downfield foul.

There is no foul if the pass does not cross the neutral zone. On a screen pass completed behind the line, it is legal for ineligible receivers to go downfield anytime after the snap. Such receivers may also immediately block downfield legally.

Defenseless Player and Blindside Blocks

ILLEGAL CONTACT

SDHSAA football officials need to continue to officiate the illegal contact fouls and blindside hits, calling the foul where necessary and not calling a foul on legal hits. Officials need to keep up the good work and remember to educate players and coaches when possible. Remember there is no place for these illegal hits in the high school game. Officials need to be especially observant to ensure blocks are being done legally.

A blindside block is a block outside of the free-blocking zone against an opponent other than the runner who does not have a reasonable opportunity to see the blocker approaching.

A defenseless player is a player who, because of his physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury. A player who initiates contact against a defenseless player is responsible for making legal contact. When in question, a player is defenseless.

Was the block initiated with the open hands? Any forceful blindside block outside the free-blocking zone must be initiated with open hands. Blocks initiated with the shoulder or body is dangerous because of the amount of force they generate. Blocks initiated with open hands are significantly less dangerous because they do not typically generate that same amount of force.

The open-hands requirement is intended to reduce the force associated with blindside blocks.

As a result, game officials should consider two things in determining whether a blocker has complied with the open-hand requirement. First, the blocker's initial contact with his opponent must be with open hands if the block is forceful. Second, the force of the block should come from the blocker's hands and arms rather than from his shoulder or body.

Game officials must use proper mechanics on these plays and be in position to observe players throwing blindside blocks. Game officials should take the entire block into consideration.

By teaching these techniques and consistently penalizing infractions, coaches and game officials will have continued taking positive steps toward reinforcing player safety, minimizing injury, and removing unnecessary and excessive contact from the game.

Crew Mechanics

- Communicate, communicate, and communicate. Be approachable
- Make sure that you have a way to communicate that there are 10 (or 9) players or less on offense as the LOS officials need to know.
- Know the line-to-gain prior the snap (pre-snap routine) so you don't have to turn around to look at the chains.
- Officiate your key responsibilities and zones to the best of your ability. It is too hard to officiate in another official's area while trying to officiate in our own. Trust your crew!
- Field Goals and Extra Points: Back Judge will take the whistle on these plays, except when an extra point is clearly blocked at the line, in which case the referee will get involved.

- To avoid inadvertent whistles (and missing teeth), keep the whistle out of your mouth until you need it. We see umpires and back judges with whistles in their mouth the entire play. Hold the whistle in your hand until the play requires a whistle.
- Know how many timeouts are remaining and communicate that with the coach before it becomes an issue.

Blocking Below The Waist

Coaches and observers have several concerns related to blocking, including low blocks by the defense on lead blockers.

Rules and restrictions concerning blocking below the waist are clear and do not specify that the prohibitions are solely on the offense. These safety-driven rules mandate consistent enforcement by officials. Properly positioned officials, watching the play from a wider perspective than simply following the football, and properly instructed players taught the right techniques by their respective coaches, will ensure that knee and other injuries are minimized, and that the balance between offense and defense is maintained.

Blocking below the waist is now restricted to players who are on the line of scrimmage and in the free-blocking zone at the snap. It is no longer legal for a back to block below the waist. Blocking below the waist is making initial contact below the waist from the front or side against an opponent other than a runner. Blocking below the waist applies only when the opponent has one or both feet on the ground.

If a Team A blocker's initial contact is with an opponent's hand(s), that are at or above the waist, and the blocker follows through and blocks that opponent below the waist, the block is considered above the waist.

If the blocker first contacts the opposing player's hand(s) below the waist and the blocker follows through with a block below the waist the initial intent of the block in this case was to block below the waist and will be considered an illegal block. Officials make sure you see the entire block, in order to rule if it is a legal or illegal block.

The blocker is allowed to contact the back of the opponent if the opponent turns during the block or after the blocker is committed to his charge. An example, A1 drops back to pass and B4 rushes. Fullback A3 makes contact on B4's chest using extended arms with open hands. B4 spins in an effort to evade A3. A3 effectively maintains contact while shifting his hands to B4's upper arm and then directly on his back as B4 turns. A3 continues the contact and finishes the block by pushing B4 past A1. That is a legal block.

Officials need to see the beginning, middle and end of the block before ruling if the block is legal or an illegal block.

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.

- 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.

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

Officials Quiz 2019

Question 1: Fourth and 5 from K's 40 yard line. K47's punt is caught by R15 at R's 10 yard line. During the return, R57 approaches K35 from his blind side as he is pursuing the ball carrier. At the R's 25 yard line, R57 (a) executes a block with open hands, knocking K35 backwards to the ground, (b) with his arms raised, brushes K35's body with his chest with minimal contact, knocking K35 off balance, (c) leaves his feet, launches, and forcibly strikes K35 in the head or neck area. R15 then runs out-of-bounds at the R's 35 yard line. Do you have a blind side block in all three situations?

Question 2: Fourth and 10 for Team K at its own 25 yard line. K1 is lined up directly behind snapper K2 but his hands are not under the snapper. K3 is positioned eight yards behind the line and is directly behind K1 and K2. If K3 receives the snap, is K2 afforded snapper protection? Does it matter if K1's hands are under the snapper?

Question 3: Immediately after A5 snaps from a scrimmage-kick formation and before A5 has a chance to look up to defend himself, B2 tries to shoot the gap between A5 and guard A6. In the process, B2 places a hand and pushes down on A5's right shoulder, causing him to fall. Is this a roughing the snapper foul?

Question 4: A1 is headed for the end zone to score a would be touchdown (a) on the five yard line (b) has broken the plane of the goal line with the ball; when teammate A2 throws a blind-sided block on an opponent completely out-of-the-play at the 50 yard line. Where is the blind side block foul enforced?

Question 5: Late in the game, Team A, is leading by five points, have third down and 10 at Team A's 2 yard line. As the play develops, A17 is standing in the end zone and he intentionally grounds the ball. What is the ruling?

Question 6: Second and 10 on the Team A's 30 yard line. Ineligible A76 tries to catch A10's forward pass at (a) Team A's 28 yard line, or (b) at Team A's 35 yard line, and touches the ball. Do you have an illegal touching foul?

Question 7: Same as Question 6 except the pass hits A76's back and he made no attempt to touch the pass. What is the ruling?

Question 8: Second and 15 at Team A's 20 yardline. A1's pass to the right side intended for eligible A2 is incomplete. Before the pass, B3 holds eligible A4 in the left flat at Team A's 33 yardline. Do you have a pass interference penalty?

Question 9: On a fourth-down play or try, the ball falls to the ground during (a) the exchange between quarterback A1 and snapper A2, or (b) a handoff from quarterback A1 to back A4. In each case, A2 recovers and scores. Do you score the touchdown?

Question 10: Fourth and five from Team A's 30 yardline. An official blows an inadvertent whistle when (a) A1's forward pass is in flight, or (b) A1's punt is in flight. How is the situation handled and when does the clock start?

Football Officials Or Coaches Concerns

- If you have any play situations during your games that officials statewide should know about to help them become better officials, please send plays to be included in weekly bulletins.
- If you have questions about rule interpretation, please forward your concerns to buck.timmins@k12.sd.us or call me at 605-996-1483 (home) or 605-933-1493 (cell).

- If you have any questions or comments about any information you will receive this football season--please forward your concern to me.

Quiz Answers

Ruling 1: Legal play in (a) and (b). In (a) because R57 is using open hands and in (b) because the contact is not forcible. In (c), R57 is guilty of a Personal Foul, Blindside Block with Targeting. The 15 yard penalty will be enforced half the distance from the spot of the foul (all but one). Team R's ball 1st & 10 at R's 12 and half yard line. The nature of R57's act should also be considered flagrant, resulting in a disqualification.

Ruling 2: If K1 is in position to receive a direct hand-to-hand snap, it is not a scrimmage kick formation and snapper K2 is not afforded protection. The location of K1's hands and the fact that deep back K3 received the snap are both immaterial to the ruling. Consequently, the snapper is not afforded extra protection.

Ruling 3: Legal play by B2 because he did not play directly through A5.

Ruling 4: Personal foul, 15 yard penalty from the spot of the foul on Team A player in situation (a); in situation (b), count the score and the defensive team has their choice of penalizing Team A on the PAT or succeeding kick-off (exception, if this occurred on the last play of the game, penalty can only be enforced on the PAT).

Ruling 5: If Team A throws an illegal incomplete forward pass from their own end zone, the result of both the play and the penalty is a safety. Following an incomplete *illegal* forward pass, the ball belongs to the passing team at the spot of the pass. The penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul. Team B cannot have the ball next put in play at the previous spot fourth down for Team A.

Ruling 6: In either case it is illegal touching, a five yard penalty with loss of down. In (a), it will be third and 17 from Team A's 23 yard line (the penalty is enforced from the spot where A76 touched the pass). In (b), it will be third and 15 from the Team A's 25 yard line (the penalty is enforced from the previous spot).

Ruling 7: No foul is (a), but an ineligible downfield in (b). If accepted, the five yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot resulting in second and 15 from Team A's 25 yard line.

Ruling 8: Because the foul is away from the ball, it is considered defensive holding, not defensive pass interference. The penalty is 10 yards from the previous spot. It will be second and five for Team A from its 30 yardline.

Ruling 9: NFHS rules do not include the fourth down fumble rule. Any player is eligible to recover and advance a fumble. The score counts in each case.

Ruling 10: In each case, the down is replayed from Team A's 30 yardline. In both cases, the game clock next starts on the ready.

STATEMENT FROM REFEREE MAGAZINE

Good ball handling and relays to your partners make your crew look sharp and keeps the pace of the game flowing smoothly and on time
