Update To Football and Allowable Covid Rule Change

Players will be allowed to wear cloth face masks/coverings as they see fit during contests. This includes items that may potentially conceal a mouth guard or chinstrap.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of coaches to ensure players are still properly equipped during contests. If players are found to be in obvious violation of mouth guard or chinstrap equipment rules, they should be removed from the contest until the issue is remedied.

This allowance would include simple cloth face masks, medical-style masks, or “gaiters” to be worn by football athletes while in the game. Gaiters may be worn either under the facemask or overlapping the face mask.

As far as enforcement goes -- assume the players to be legal unless glaringly obvious that a chin strap or mouth guard are not being worn or are being worn improperly. Reminder that the penalty now is simply the removal of a player from the contest until they 'fix' the issue, which is a minimum of one down.

Ineligibles Downfield—Rule 7.5.12

The ineligible player may enter the expanded neutral zone to seek an opponent to block or he may initiate contact with an opponent in that zone on a legal forward pass play before a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone is in flight.

The player, whether in contact with an opponent or not, may not continue beyond the expanded neutral zone. If such a Team A player reaches the limit of the zone, he must freeze or retreat until the pass is thrown.

The old rule indicated a Team A ineligible was required to contact a Team B lineman at the snap in order to enter the expanded neutral zone. Additionally, some alternative language has stated that if an ineligible advances too far downfield, a foul could be called.

RULING: The sole determinant on whether an ineligible is downfield is the position of the player at the moment of the legal pass crossing the expanded neutral zone!

Players can travel multiple yards in a quick period of time. These players can be legally within the expanded neutral zone when the pass is thrown but beyond as the pass moves downfield.

In nine-man football, be sure that your umpire identifies the three ineligible players on each snap, as the eligible “end” may change from play to play due to the lack of a numbering restriction.

If Team B touches the pass in or behind the neutral zone, restrictions against ineligible downfield are terminated. The pass is considered not to have crossed the line.
Video Review

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=IZAfYa3wAVM

Horse Collar Tackle—Rule 9-4-3k

The area directly below the back collar of the jersey, know as the name plate, has been added to the horse-collar rule.

No player shall grab the inside back or side collar or the name plate of either the shoulder pads or the jersey of the runner and subsequently pull (backward or sideward) that opponent to the ground. It is a foul if possession is lost, but it is *not* a foul if the runner does not subsequently go down because of the horse-collar foul action. The penalty is 15 yards and is enforced as a live-ball foul.

The change makes it easier for officials who won’t have to decide if the collar or the area just below it was grabbed.

35-Point Rule/50-Point Rule

In ALL Classes, when a team secures a 35 point lead during the third or fourth quarter, the clock will continue to run except for timeouts (team or official) or after a score. If a team secures a 35 point lead in the second half and the score subsequently falls below the 35 point mark, the clock will continue to run as outlined.

In any contest featuring a team from 11A, 11B or Nine-Man football: If a team secures a 50 point or greater lead at the end of the first half, or if they secure such a lead during the second half, the game is ended immediately. Regulation timing is followed in the first half regardless of the score. These regulations shall be followed for all regular-season contests, as well as all first-round, quarterfinal and semifinal playoff contests when a team from 11A, 11B, or 9-Man classifications is playing, regardless of host site.

Additionally, coaches and officials should be aware of Rule 3-1-3: A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time or the game terminated.

Wing Officials--Running Play Away

The wing official on the side opposite of where the ball is going does not have relevant point-of-attack responsibilities. But your eyes may still be drawn to the ball because you dismiss the players behind the runner as immaterial.

While the ball is live, the opposite wing must adopt a officiating mindset by scanning the players behind the point of attack for activity viewed as excessive or unnecessary.
You as the opposite wing become the most important official on the field. The referee, umpire and back judge TRUST that you will clean up the activity behind the ball. You need to come-on-to field to the numbers to observe the action behind the play. Use your voice to let the trailing players know you are watching.

**Calling Pass Interference**

**Don’t Focus On The Ball**
A. Train yourself not to look at the ball in flight
B. Watch downfield action of the players in the area where the action will occur
C. By shifting your eyes from the ball to players you will be able to rule on any interference that occurs while the ball is in the air

**The Basics**
A. Once the offense throws the ball, all eligible players on both teams have equal territorial rights to move toward, catch or deflect the pass.
B. It is not interference if unavoidable contact occurs when two or more eligible’s are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
C. Physical contact may or may not be involved. Face guarding (waving the hands near the face of an opposing receiver) is NO longer considered an act of forward pass interference.
D. Catchability in never a factor in high school interference calls

**Crack-back Block**

Crack back block is a term that is misunderstood because it is not defined in the rulebook. A crack back block is not necessarily an illegal block, but is simply a block by a player who blocks back toward the spot of the snap.

Most crack backs aimed below the opponent’s waist are illegal because they occur outside the free-blocking zone. But a crack back above the waist from the front is always legal; the free-blocking zone is not an issue.

A wide out’s position in the formation is outside the free-blocking zone, meaning he cannot legally block below the waist. When the sweep comes toward the wide out but the wide out peels back toward the original position of the snap, it should serve as a “red flag” to the covering official.

The covering officials should look for “blindside blocks” when the wide out moves back toward the snap. A blindside block is a block against an opponent other than the runner, who does not see the blocker approaching. No player shall execute a blindside block outside of the free blocking zone with forceful contact unless initiated with open hands and not viewed as excessive or unnecessary in order to be legal. Officials need to have head/eyes on a swivel to view all the action as the crew cannot have four sets of eyes on the ball carrier.

Remember that a block that starts above the waist can be completed below the opponent’s waist. If a blocker’s initial contact is with the opponent’s body, hands or arms, at the waist or above, and in continuation the contact is below the waist, it is a legal block. The official must see the entire block in order to rule on it correctly.

On running plays, wing officials and the back judge must pay strict attention to wide outs that are in motion towards the original position of the snap or following the snap blocks towards the ball on defensive players.
Officials must stay with your keys until the threat of blocking below the waist is over on running players as the blocks must be from the front and above the waist. As an official—you need to see the beginning of the block! For example: A doubtful block in the back where the blocked player turns his back, leaving the blocker with no other choice than blocking from behind does not result in a foul (unless it qualifies as unnecessary roughness or another personal foul).

Every play has a beginning and end—if you throw the flag or blow the whistle somewhere in between—you missed the play.

**Official Quiz**

Question 1: A33 runs near the sideline, B56 then grabs A33 by the back collar of his jersey while A33 is inbounds and then pulls A33 to the ground after A33 crosses the (a) sideline or (b) goal line. Do the officials have a foul for a horse collar tackle?

Question 2: Backs A1 and A2 simultaneously move to new backfield positions prior to the snap. In less than one second after both are stationary: (a) A3 goes in motion and is in motion at the snap; (b) the ball is snapped. What is the ruling?

Question 3: Player A1 runs out of bounds (a) short of, or (b) beyond the line to gain. When does the 40-second play clock start?

Question 4: A11 runs straight up the field and after the ball has left the passer’s hand (a) B9 illegally blocks A11 and throws him off his pattern. The pass is completed to A10 who was clearly on the opposite side of the field. Is this pass interference?

Question 5: As a player attempts to catch the ball, an opponent waves his hand in front of the potential receiver’s face. There is no contact. Is this a foul?

Question 6: Center A54 snaps the ball to quarterback A12. The ball touches A12’s hands, but never leaves A54’s hands. A54 simply holds the ball there as A12 fakes having the ball and halfback A33 cuts in, grabs the ball from A54 and advances. Legal snap?

Question 7: Is it legal for a running back to use a straight-arm technique making initial contact directly on the opponent’s helmet and/or facemask when attempting to ward off a potential tackler?

Question 8: First and ten on Team A’s 30 yard line. Team A lines up with three receivers on one side of their formation. A forward pass is thrown to the rearmost receiver, A81, at Team A’s 28 yard line. Player B22 evades the blocking of the other receivers and blocks A81 in the front, above the waist, before the ball arrives. Has B22 fouled for pass interference?

Question 9: A8 jumps in the middle of the end zone, grabs a pass while in the air and, before alighting, has the ball knocked out of his hands by a defender. While in the air, the receiver has control of the ball. Is that a touchdown or an incomplete pass?

Question 10: A passed or fumbled ball is near a sideline, B1 gets the ball in his hands while his foot is on the sideline. Is this a legal recovery by B1?
**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:** Yes. It does not matter that A33 was no longer a runner when he was pulled to the ground. The horse collar tackle is a live-ball foul because A33 was grabbed while the ball was live.

**Ruling 2:** Illegal shift in both (a) and (b). Following a huddle or shift, all 11 (9) players of Team A must come to a complete stop and must remain stationary simultaneously for at least one second before the snap or before a player goes in motion.

**Ruling 3:** In both cases, a 40-second play clock is started immediately when the ball is declared dead and the game clock stops. The game clock will start on the snap and referee does not give a ready signal. In (b), the referee does signal a first down.

**Ruling 4:** There is no pass interference call on B9, however, a flag should have been dropped for the illegal block.

**Ruling 5:** No foul regardless if the player is attempting to catch a kick or a legal forward pass. Face guarding in and of itself is no longer considered an act of forward pass interference.

**Ruling 6:** This would be a dead ball foul. In a snap, the movement must be a quick and continuous backward motion of the ball during which the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches a back or the ground.

**Ruling 7:** That is a legal technique. The runner may ward off would-be tacklers, but he cannot punch, kick, swing at or otherwise deliver a blow. The runner may use a stiffarm and use a hand on an opponent’s helmet or facemask, but just like any other player, he cannot grasp or pull the tackler’s facemask. The hand must be open and in advance of the elbow.

**Ruling 8:** Legal block by Player B22. There cannot be pass interference behind the line.

**Ruling 9:** That is an incomplete pass. To complete a catch, an airborne player must first touch the ground inbounds. If control of the ball is lost prior to or simultaneous with returning to the ground, it is an incomplete pass.

**Ruling 10:** The ball becomes dead when touched. Since touching precedes player possession, there is no “catch” or “recovery.”

**Be Outstanding Protecting Players**