

2014 Football Bulletin VI
September 25, 2014

To: Commissioners, Board Interpreters, Curriculum reps, CIAC and league reps, media.

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

I. Blocking below the waist

A. Shotgun and Pistol Formations -- One of the blocks that is of constant concern is blocking below the waist. With the advent of shotgun and pistol formations, that concern is heightened, not lessened.

Officials have to remember when teams line up in a shotgun or pistol, the probability of anything other than a block below the waist initiated at the snap is going to be a foul. Why? Because the Free-Blocking Zone disintegrates once the ball physically leaves the zone. If a QB is 5 to 7 yards back, the zone is going to disintegrate quickly. To be legal in a shotgun or pistol:

1. A block has to begin simultaneously with the snap;
2. There cannot be a delay, stutter step, or motion that makes the block a "second (or third) move."
3. The block has to be on a player who was on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage (down lineman or backer that steps up to fill a gap and is within one yard of the LOS).

B. Under center – A QB who takes a ball under center and executes a play inside the Free-Blocking Zone (handoff, etc.) means the ball is inside the zone longer, and there may be second blocks below the waist inside the zone that are legal. The old term "initial charge" was taken out of the rule about a decade ago.

The Point of Emphasis from 2013 is attached to the email that delivered this bulletin.

II. Substitutions

A. Feigning substitutions – In the last week I've had three questions concerning teams using trick plays, two involving substitutions. I would

recommend officials to read the casebook plays regarding using substitutions to deceive opponents. Put simply, teams cannot use the substitution process to hide players. It is at least an illegal formation and at most illegal participation. Time and space do not allow going into all the ins and outs of the rule. I will leave that to your own individual curriculum committees.

- B. Nine-yard marks – Players are to be within the nine-yard marks (usually the top of the numbers) sometime between the Ready-for-Play and the snap if they were in the previous play, or “touch up” if they are a substitute.

As a practical matter, this may not happen on every play. We all agree that if the defense is covering a player, we don’t get too technical on the touch up, especially in two-minute drills: no harm, no foul.

- C. Crews should review substitution rules during the pre-game conference, especially late substitutions and ways of avoiding problems. The no-huddle, no-hurry offenses that most teams use, don’t present too many problems, it is when things get rushed or they try to go up-tempo that substitutions might become a problem.

- D. Counting and penalties –

1. The R and U count offense as we know, and should show they have 11 by use of the extended fist; conversely, the L and B count defense and signal the same way.
2. What we want (if we have anything) is penalizing the 5-yard “substitution infraction” rather than a 15-yard illegal participation foul.
3. It is recommended that if an official suspects there might be too many on the field, the flag be thrown and the play shut down. If you’re wrong, no harm done; however, if you’re right, you’ve saved the crew a headache.

III. New Kick Rules

- A. As expected there were a couple of hiccups with the new kick rules, but they've worked themselves out. Just remember, they are both "blow and throw" violations. The Federation has made it clear these violations were set up to prevent re-kicks.

IV. Motion and the QB

- A. We talked about this at the state clinic. In a spread offense we are giving the QB some latitude as far as his movement while a man is in motion. As long as he does not "substantially" change his position while a man is in motion, we are doing nothing.
- B. "Substantially" is defined as his stepping forward, moving laterally with both feet, etc. Think of him as a basketball player, who's using a pivot foot. As long as the pivot foot is planted, let it go.
The rulebook is five years behind the way the game is played, and we have to use common sense.
Example: A play in the case book would have us call illegal motion if a QB who is stationary goes into a squat to put his hands under center while a man is in motion. None of us call that (if we want to work the next week).

V. Bands

- A. This past week, I was asked to give guidelines for bands playing during the game. In the last week I have been asked by Joe Tonelli for those guidelines, and contacted by boards concerning bands. There is a new fad that bands will play while the opponent has the ball. This can create – and has created – problems over the last year or so. Most leagues have rules concerning bands, and the six boards should find out what those rules are. They can supersede what I sent to the CIAC.
For your discussion, here is what I sent to Joe Tonelli:

The general practice is:

The band will not play when the opponent has the ball; or can play up to the time the team goes to the line of scrimmage.

It CAN play while its own team has the ball, provided there is no objection by the coaching staff.

If the band is requested not to play (for example, if they play while the opponent has the ball), the request is made by the Referee. If the band continues and it affects play, there can be an Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty assessed against the team whose band it is under the "Unfair Acts" rule.

The band can play during intermissions at quarters, during time outs, etc.

In case a band is asked not to play, keep the coach affected in the loop by telling him a request has been made to have his school's band stop playing.

That's it for now, have a great weekend,

Bill R.