

2014 Football Bulletin VII

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

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

I. Sideline control

A. Need for consistency -- It's amazing how these things work out. I was recently involved in a discussion on my own board about sideline control, and consistency. In watching games on TV, and talking with other officials in the state, the problem is not just local. Some crews are enforcing the six-foot area rules, and some are not. Needless to say, we're getting crews hearing the age-old complaint, "The guys last week weren't this strict, why are you?" Whether the previous crew was or wasn't strict, across-the-board consistency would help the problem.

B. Review of rule:

1. Three coaches are allowed in the "restricted area" in order to relay plays or instructions. They are to vacate when the play becomes imminent. "Imminent" means the team breaks the huddle and the QB moves to call signals; or, in a spread, no-huddle offense, the signals have been given from the sideline and the QB begins his signal call.
2. Coaches, players and anyone else on the sideline cannot be in the restricted area. If they violate, we go through the three-step process
 - a. First offense—sideline warning.
 1. We recommend covering official throws the flag in order to call the sideline warning. It's amazing how people pay attention when the yellow starts to fly.
 - b. Second offense – five-yard penalty
 - c. Third and subsequent offenses – 15-yard penalty.
3. If there is physical contact with a coach, player or other person in the restricted area during a play, this is separate from the three-step process (you can have this penalty on one play and later have a

sideline warning, for example), and is a 15-yard penalty from the succeeding spot (9-4-8 penalty). A second offense is disqualification of the head coach.

Comment: If we call the sideline warning, which costs us and the teams nothing, we've set the tone, and we've pretty much solved the problem. Seldom does a coaching staff want to push the envelope after they've been warned. Unintentional contact in the restricted zone happens occasionally and must be called as it could injure a coach or official. The point is we have to take control of the sidelines from the time we hit the field.

4. Suggested mechanic:
 1. Sideline official should introduce himself to the head coach prior to the game, say he's working his sideline, and inquire about "get-back" coaches.
 2. We talked a couple of weeks ago about working off the sideline at least with the toes touching the sideline or working the back of the six-foot area with one's heels on the back line. This latter mechanic is the best, particularly on kickoffs. We encourage all wing officials to work at the back of the six-foot area whenever possible. We understand some formations and/or some teams might mean adjustments, but as a general rule, work the six-foot area. This establishes our territory.
 3. Be verbal when necessary to encourage teams to stay back. Too many officials are not using their voices and communicating with the coaching staff. It saves a lot of problems.

We encourage curriculum chairmen to go over these things in regular meetings. We have to be consistent throughout the state, or these problems will keep cropping up.

II. Pinching in on close plays

- A. Don't be anchored to the sideline – It may seem as if we're picking on wing officials. On close plays that could mean a first down (especially on

third and fourth down), giving a spot from the sideline looks lazy and does not sell the call.

1. Wing officials should hustle into the field on close plays until they get resistance – that means until they reach a player in their way. Don't jump over players or go around players. Get as close as you can.
2. If you need to mark the ball at your foot, do it, and then allow the Referee to see if it's a first down. Either measure from there or make the first-down call, then re-spot the ball at its original location for the play.
3. The same goes for goal line plays, pinch in when it's close. Part of the job is *selling the call* and it looks better when an official is hustling into the play to make the call than making it from the sideline.

That's it for now. Have a good weekend,

Bill R.