

2015 Football Bulletin II

September 9, 2015

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

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

Re: Opening week

I. General

A. Guardian caps – We changed the ruling on Guardian caps this week. The change occurred because of a letter and confirmation NFHS has no policy on the caps, nor are they against the rules. If coaches want to utilize the caps, they may. There has been some talk over the years about the caps nullifying the NOCSAE standard. That is outside our responsibility. The schools can make the decision.

B. Excessive hits – Two clips came my way this week from scrimmages. In one case a missile-style, head-down, shoulder thrust was used to cut down a receiver in the act of catching a pass. Back Judges and wings have to be aware of the airborne receivers and how they are contacted. Re-read the state guideline sent out four weeks ago, and pp. 92-93 of the rule book under Points of Emphasis.

In the second clip a peel-back block was made on a defenseless defender while a runner was going out of bounds. The defender held up because of the action and was blind-sided by the peel-back block.

In both cases the heads-up, hands-first tackle we're looking for was not present. Interpreters must review these plays at every local meeting if possible.

Mechanically, the R and B can help on sideline plays along with the U who is looking through the play to the sideline.

If you see a player in "chase mode" or at a dead run, that should be an indicator there may be trouble.

C. Kicker's balls – Since the NFL came out with its ruling on kicker's balls a couple of years ago, we've seen an uptick in teams trying to designate older, more worn balls as "kicker's balls." There is no such thing.

Only the balls approved by the Referee prior to the game are to be used, and kickers cannot bring in the ball of their choice.

This brings up changing balls during a series. Officials can bring a different ball in during a series for any number of reasons, including weather conditions or attempts to speed up the game. Teams can request a new ball if they get wet or otherwise are compromised. But the teams may not change the balls on their own, especially in PAT and FG plays.

- D. Oregon-style offenses** – More and more schools are trying to go up-tempo, putting the ball in play quickly. Coaches are asking that the Ready for Play be quicker. **The ultimate guideline in blowing the ball Ready is whether the crew is ready to officiate the next play.** Referees should check off the members of the crew in up-tempo and two-minute situations before giving the RFP signal. The worst thing that could happen is a quick ready for play while officials are trying to hustle to their positions.
- E. Keys and Zones** – Sometimes we have officials that become “ball watchers” rather than “zone watchers.” Keys and zones should be reviewed and officials have to concentrate on “fishing in their own ponds.” If we look at our keys and zones we’ll see what we are supposed to see and officiate accordingly. Five officials watching the ball means there’s a lot of stuff we’re missing.
- F. Inadvertent Whistles** – If an official says he’s never had an inadvertent whistle, he will. Own up to the inadvertent whistle if it happens. Give the offended team the options as listed in the rule book, and move on. I don’t want to dwell on the topic, but remember, if a penalty is committed prior to the IAW, it is enforced as if the whistle never happened.
- G. Charting plays** – This was discussed during the state clinic. Officiating crews should check if teams have statisticians should there be a discrepancy on down and distance. If you can get the Clip man to chart plays, all the better. Many times reporters from local papers will be charting plays and help out. You may not need it all year, but it’s good to have a back-up plan.
- H. Working off the field** – This is from one of last year’s bulletins, but it bears repeating:
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.

- I. **Motion and shifts** -- 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.

"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.

This is what we don't want called:

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).

J. 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.

That’s it for now. Have a great opening week.

Bill R.