

**2017 CFOA Football Bulletin IV**  
**September 21, 2017**

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

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

Re: Various issues

**I. Sideline Control**

- A. **Success so far** – Most coaches have been more than compliant in working with us regarding the “Restricted Area.” There are some who still don’t get it, and, a very few have been penalized for contacting an official in the area while the ball is in play.
- B. **Sideline warnings** – The use of the sideline warning – and the use of the flag to signal that warning – have worked in keeping coaches and players off the field. Wing officials should work with coaches, particularly in stadiums that are tight to the field. The goal is the sideline warning nothing more if possible. Some coaches still try to make an issue out of it. Just keep the safety factor in mind when explaining it to them: theirs and yours, as well as the players’ safety.
- C. **Contact in the “Restricted Area”** – There have been instances of coaches flagged for contacting officials while the ball is in play. They have been penalized and – usually – apologetic.
  - 1. In those cases the signal has been very problematic. It calls for a “personal foul signal,” followed by the “sideline interference” signal (38-29). This may have to be addressed for clarity’s sake.

**II. Pre-game conduct**

- A. Three years ago, we had questions about the use of hammers and flags by teams, home and away. We came up with a policy based on information provided by the boards. Here is that policy as published in 2014:  
Pre-game conduct: After getting a concerned call regarding some pre-game actions by visiting teams, and getting feedback from commissioners,

at least one league's ADs and league commissioner, and several interpreters, the following should take place at all games officiated by the state's six boards.

1. Visiting teams with flags, hammers, spears or any other type of instrument should not enter the field and show disrespect to the home team, or its logo (by stomping on it). Such acts are considered unsportsmanlike and will be penalized by the crew on the opening kickoff.
2. Visiting teams, if they have these flags or instruments, can run onto the field with them and plant them at their team bench. *We're not trying to stop tradition, just avoid conflict.*
3. Home teams can do as they've always done. They are not showing disrespect to their guests. **However, if the action includes any show of ill will toward the opponent, it should be penalized.**
4. Officials should alert coaches of the policy as the penalty will be against the head coach (second ULC can mean disqualification). A little preventative officiating can go a long way.
  - a. Mechanics
    1. Officials should get in the practice (if they don't already) of getting the team captains and/or teams for the opening toss and second half. The L will get the home team, the B the visitor.

### III. Bands

A. This past week, I was asked to repeat the guidelines for bands playing during the game. 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.

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.

#### IV. **Conferences during injury timeouts/between plays**

- A. Conferring outside the nine-yard marks – Officials are reminded that players *can* go to the sideline to confer with coaches during an injury timeout. There has been some confusion on this. Players can stay between the sidelines and the numbers or nine-yard marks while a player is attended.
- B. Between plays – Conferring with the sidelines between plays is fine as well. The restriction against it was stricken from the book 20 years ago. As long as the offense is ready to snap the ball within the 25-second count, we’re fine.

#### V. **Excessive hits**

- A. **Overall consistency** – We’ve had good consistency with excessive hits and blindside blocks based on conversations I’ve had with the interpreters and officials from all over the state. There is still some discussion as to how best interpret hits in the heat of the game. We know the guidelines, but remember the four key components:
  - 1. The opponent is in a prone or defenseless position;
  - 2. The hit is forceful;
  - 3. It is with the shoulder and there was an upward thrust;
  - 4. It is unnecessary.

## VI. SHOK

A. Any football official who has five minutes of experience has heard the anagram SHOK (S... happens on kicks). It's about 18 percent of the game and most of the headaches. Here's a play:

1. K 4/7 from its own 30. K3 takes the ball and goes around the right side, kicking the ball six yards beyond the neutral zone. Ruling: If the penalty is accepted it is enforced from the spot of the kick, 15 yards, and replay the down.

The kick is treated as a fumble and the play is allowed to continue under NFHS rules. If you have the NFHS Study Guide, these situations are covered exhaustively.

Note: For those working Prep School games using NCAA rules. This would be killed at the time of the kick, with the penalty enforced at the previous spot, 5-yards and loss of down.

2. Team K punts from its own 40. The ball never crosses the neutral zone and is touched by R behind the line of scrimmage, and K falls on the ball, ending the down. Ruling: 1/10 for R at the dead-ball spot.

*The touch is not a factor in the play. All rules having to do with scrimmage kicks and touching by either team are specific when the touching is "beyond" the neutral zone. But we even have to add a principle to this. It must go beyond and STAY beyond the neutral zone. As we know if the ball bounces back behind the neutral zone either team can pick it up and advance it.*

*So, let's extrapolate: if the ball goes beyond the zone and kicks back behind and the same thing happens (R touches the ball behind the zone) the touching is ignored as if the ball never crossed. This is because under Federation rules the ball in relation to the neutral zone is the determining factor, not whether the ball crossed or not.*

*Now, if the ball was touched BEYOND the neutral zone by R and recovered by K, they get a new series of downs regardless of whether they reach the line to gain or not. Please review the casebook plays on this. CASEBOOK 6.2.3 Situation A*  
COMMENT

3. Kick Mechanics – Even if pregame conferences are getting stale, keep reviewing mechanics on punt plays – particularly who is secondary on

fair catches and plays in front of the receivers. Line Judges are drifting downfield and have to watch the gunners and the action in front of the receivers. Line Judges and Head Linesmen have to be alert for quick fair catch signals.

Wings shouldn't rush downfield, but drift so that the play is boxed in. Getting down there in a rush could mean you've hustled yourself right out of position.

Suggestion: This is being used in seven-man games and could work in five-man games. On snaps over the punters head (or the QB's head in pistol or shotgun) the wing that is facing the Referee should come back, while the opposite wing stays at home. It keeps the play boxed in, and doesn't displace too many officials. We really don't need three officials deep behind the LOS.

4. There still is confusion on starting and stopping the clock when a kick (punt or place kick) is involved. Here are some examples:

**Play 1:** K 4/4 from the K-40. K3's punt is blocked and stays behind the neutral zone. The loose ball is picked up by K67 who runs to the K-35. Ruling: K 1/10 at the K-35. Start the clock on the snap (legal kick play).

**Play 2:** K 4/4 from the K-40. K3's punt is partially blocked and goes beyond the neutral zone and rebounds back behind untouched by R. K67 picks up the loose ball and runs to the K-35. Ruling: K 1/10 at the K-35. Start the clock on the snap (legal kick play).

**Play 3:** K 4/4 from the K-40. K3's punt goes beyond the neutral zone and is touched by R44 and rebounds behind the line, where K67 picks up the loose ball. Ruling: Regardless of where the play ends up, it is a new series of downs for K with the clock starting on the snap (legal kick play).

You can add to the above examples, but the principle is the same: As long as the kick is legal, the clock starts on the snap.

That's it for now,

Bill R.