

2017 CFOA Football Bulletin II
August 1, 2017

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

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

Re: Report on Interpreters Meeting/Things to Remember

I. Interpreters Meeting.

A. Rules Changes

1. Regarding advertisements on the ball. If the case comes up, we'll let the proper authorities know, but play the game.
2. On blindside blocks we will continue to emphasize the danger using the same interpretations with the current additions. Remember: blindside blocks with a hand-extended point of contact is a legal block under the current rule. The CFOA interpretation will be published below.
3. Pop-up Kicks were discussed. Two criteria will be used: 1) the kick has to be topped and bounce in or about the first yard and 2) it must rise to a level above the heads of the players. Camel-back kicks, Kangaroo kicks or dribble kicks remain legal. These will be further explained in the state clinic and at local chapter meetings.
4. With regard to sliding players. We will follow the recommended concept that if a ball carrier decides to make a feet-first slide in order to avoid hard contact, we will spot the ball at the beginning of the slide. He is giving himself up at that point, and should not be given any extra yardage by attempting to determine where his knee touches.
5. Starting and stopping the clock. A ruling came from NFHS on a question that was posed to me by Hartford's Tony Capon. In the Casebook there is an error.

Eliminate final statement in 3.4.2 SITUATION B: K1's kickoff is caught by R1 and returned to R's 30. While the kick is in flight, R2 blocks K2 below the waist on R's 40. **RULING:** If the penalty is declined, R will have the ball first and 10 on R's 30. Since the clock is stopped for a new series following a legal kick,

the clock will start with the snap. If the penalty is accepted, K will rekick from R's 45. The clock will start when the kick is touched other than first touching by K. When a free kick down is replayed, the clock will start the same as it does on the original free kick. ~~unless the offended team chooses to start the clock on the snap inside the last two minutes of either half.~~ (3-4-1, 3-4-3).

II. Two reminders

A. **Defenseless Players/Blindside Blocks.** The following is the statement made by the CFOA two years ago and remains in force with the current rules change:

Rule 9-4-3g has been given additional language to eliminate what are considered excessive blocks on what are considered defenseless players.

Defenseless players are covered under 2-33-16 a-h in the Definitions:

“A defenseless player is a player who, because of his physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury.” The rule has been rewritten to be more specific in 2017, but it does not change the overall philosophy.

9-4-3g: “Make any other contact with an opponent, including a defenseless player, which is deemed unnecessary or *excessive* and which incites roughness.”

The meat of what the rules-makers were trying to legislate comes under the Points of Emphasis on pages 92-93 of the rulebook. A key sentence of which is:

“Considering the potential for serious injury, it is critical that those situations involving unnecessary or excessive contact on players are eliminated whether or not that contact is otherwise deemed legal.”

We have to be conscious of these characteristics:

1. The player making the block on the defenseless player is in a “hunter” mode, looking to line-up a player;
2. The block is a peel-back block where a blocker is heading back toward his own end line;
3. A head-down shoulder thrust, dip and thrust, drive, or launch is used to deliver a blow.

These can happen on sweeps to the wide side, especially, plays along the sideline and on return plays, whether they are kick returns or interception returns.

THESE ARE FOULS

Players are encouraged to use an open-hand-style technique in these types of situations, where you “get the player out of the play, but not out of the game.”

When talking about receivers in a vulnerable position, the shoulder-first, head-down blow by a defensive player when timed with the pass, or used after the pass is obviously overthrown or underthrown is a foul.

Coaches have to be reminded that the “play until the whistle” philosophy is to be discouraged. The play is over when it is over by rule, not when the whistle blows. A late hit or unnecessary hit can be called.

Blind-side blocks

The guideline for determining a blind-side block corresponds with the definition of a defenseless player: his “*physical position and focus of concentration*” prohibit his seeing the approaching contact.

The official is asked to answer three questions when determining the legality of a blind-side block:

Does the player have a legitimate chance to make a play?

Does the player receive a blind-side block?

Was the contact unnecessary?

Four variations are given:

If the answer is yes to all three, it is a foul.

If the answer is yes to the first two but not the third, the play is legal.

If the answer is Yes to the first, and No to the remaining two it is legal.

If the answer is No to the first, but **yes or no** on the remaining two, it is a foul for unnecessary roughness.

Remember: Legal blocks can be determined as fouls if the contact is excessive or unnecessary.

Summary Guidelines:

A block/contact is considered a foul and includes (but is not limited to):

1. Head-down, shoulder-first blind-side blocks to punish (light him up) a player rather than move that player out of the play;
2. Head-down, shoulder-first peel-back blocks using this type of technique may be prone to foul, especially on blind-side blocks;
3. Head-down shoulder-first blocks given near the sideline as a runner moves toward that sideline and are made to punish (light him up) rather than move a player;
4. Blocks made by offensive or defensive players after a play is legally over, whether or not the whistle has sounded;
5. Defensive players hitting defenseless receivers with a head-down, shoulder-first hit when a hands-first, tackling-style would be effective.

*A defenseless receiver that is airborne receiver or one who has not established himself as a runner by making a football move (alighting to the ground and making a football move).

THESE ARE FOULS

6. Officials should err on the side of safety when making these determinations. When in doubt, it's a blindside block and a foul.

- B. **Protecting the Passer** – Last year, we had a situation where a player was hurt, who was a potential passer. While the rulebook does not have a “player in a passing posture rule” like the NCAA and the NFL we came up with a guideline. In the intervening year we’ve found out our guideline is the one being followed throughout most of the country. Referees, especially, have to be aware of the action on the QB or potential passer. Here is the guideline for your early-season perusal and study.
1. The NFHS code considers the player who passes a defenseless player because of the focus of his action and attention.
 2. Referees, particularly, have to be attentive to protecting the passer or potential passer while he’s in the passing posture. This includes before, during and after the pass is thrown. “Passing posture” for our purposes will mean the player’s set-up and position in order to throw the pass.
 3. Other codes have rules for this; the NFHS has yet to add rule support – other than defenseless player and unnecessary roughness.

4. If a passer is in posture to throw, even though he is technically the ball carrier, referees have to watch the manner and type of hit.
 - a. A defender who attempts to get to the passer while he's in the pocket and goes at or below the knees with the helmet or shoulder is committing a foul. This is not a *bone fide* effort to stop a runner so much as to inflict injury. This is true whether the pass is thrown or not.
 - b. On a roll-out the same is true. If the passer sets up, he is in the passing posture. If the defender attempts to contact with only the helmet or shoulder at the knees or below, there is a foul.
 1. In both cases if the ball is not thrown, it's unnecessary roughness.
 2. If the ball is thrown, it's roughing the passer.
 3. If the hit is flagrant, the player is subject to ejection.
 4. If the defender in both above cases leads with his hands to make a wrap or grab at or below the knees, it is legal.
5. A potential passer who becomes a runner is subject to the same hits as any other runner.

III. Points of Emphasis Discussion

- A. **Sideline Control** – Referees will discuss the sideline and what is expected from coaches and players during the course of the game. This is going to be emphasized during the various league meetings with officials' groups. We have to be consistent on this, and use the rules the Federation has developed to protect us, the players and the coaches. These rules are the result of coaches and officials getting hurt. Referees must have wing officials enforce both sidelines consistently and fairly.
- B. **Uniforms** – We are to continue the guideline we used last year: The cut of sleeves has made covering the pads difficult. We will continue to have players pull down sleeves.

We will be less tolerant of untucked jerseys, exposed back pads or knees not covered by pants. We will monitor the jersey situation and get the players to tuck their jerseys.

As far as the knees being covered by the pants, we will not allow substitutes into the game with this problem. Getting them off the field might get the point across. Players seen having hiked-up pants will be told to cover their knees or risk getting sent to the sidelines.

We don't want to get into a "delay of game" mode. Let's see if we can monitor this without extra penalties.

IV. State Clinic

- A. Things are getting ready for the state clinic. Directions were sent out in the last bulletin and officials can go on the Notre Dame-West Haven website to get the directions: notredamehs.com.

These should start getting shorter now. There's been a lot to cover.

Bill R.