

2017 CFOA Football Bulletin III
August 24, 2017

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

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

Re: Report on Clinic, Issues, Pre-Season reminders

I. State Clinic

A. Review – The 23rd annual CFOA State Clinic was successful at Notre Dame High School on Aug. 12. More than 200 officials were in attendance as well as the coach from Warren Harding in Bridgeport and Joe Tonelli from the CIAC Officials Association.

1. Thanks to all the presenters for their hard work. A lot was accomplished in the 3-hour agenda.
2. Many new candidates from the six boards showed up, and they got a good taste of the commitment needed to be a successful official.
3. The film by Matt Sumstine on the new rules has become the gold standard for the boards and coaches. It has explained in clear detail what we are calling regarding the new rules.

II. Issues

A. Drop kick – A question came to me this week concerning use of a drop kick for kickoff or free kick. A coach asked the question. The concern was that the new “pop-up kick” rule might be employed in this regard. The drop kick – a kick not seen much in the last 80 years – is still legal for kickoffs and free kicks. If it is used:

1. It must be within a yard of the free kick line, similar to a punt for free kick following safety.
2. All other rules apply (4 players on either side, no one other than kicker more than 5 yards behind free-kick line).
3. **It is NOT a pop-up kick.**

4. If a coach has a drop-kick specialist, he should alert the crew.
- B. Catch/No Catch – This is the second year we are under the interpretation for the “catch process” reception. Here is a review of what constitutes a catch v. incomplete.

The state will use the “complete the process” interpretation, similar to that used in many states. The NFHS has sought to change its catch rule to conform with the other codes, but editorial and case book plays will take many man-hours of work. This interpretation is consistent with that desire, and still within the current definitions in the rulebook.

A receiver must have control, land with one foot and maintain control when contacting the ground throughout the process of the catch. This is true in the end zone, and along the sideline.

When the ground is not involved, a receiver must alight to the ground if airborne, get his balance and “make a football move (step or steps) with control. A hit that comes at the time of the foot alighting to the ground with loss of possession is an incomplete pass. Interpreters will go over this during the pre-season and during the season proper. We have to be consistent on this one. The Arizona tape shown at the clinic should be shown by each board during regular chapter meetings.

Here are a few examples:

Play 1: Receiver A1 is running a crossing pattern and has a legal forward pass grasped in his outstretched hands and attempts to pull it into his body. He’s hit and loses possession of the ball. Ruling: Incomplete.

Play 2: Receiver A1 is running a crossing pattern and has a legal forward pass grasped in his outstretched hands and pulls the ball into his body. He is hit just as he brings the ball into his body. He loses possession of the ball. Ruling: Incomplete.

Play 3: Receiver A1 is running a crossing pattern and has a legal forward pass grasped in his outstretched hands and pulls it into his body. He turns and (a) takes a step, or (b) continues on his run. He is hit and loses possession of the ball. Ruling: Completion and fumble.

Note: Once a “football move” is made with possession, taking one, two or three steps and losing the ball denotes player possession. Any subsequent loss of the ball is a fumble by definition.

Play 4: Airborne receiver A1 has a legal pass grasped is hit and makes contact with the ground, where he loses possession on contact. Ruling: Incomplete pass.

Play 5: Airborne receiver A1 has a legal pass grasped is hit and falls to the ground. Once in contact with the ground, he rolls and loses possession. Ruling: Incomplete pass. The receiver must retain possession throughout the “process of the catch.”

Note: Once he makes contact with the ground, if he loses possession while continuing the action of the catch, he must retain possession throughout.

Play 6: Airborne receiver A1 has a legal pass grasped is hit, but retains his feet. Once on the ground he turns or begins a run, taking one or several steps, while the ball is in his possession. He is hit again and loses the ball. Ruling: Fumble.

Note: Once possession is established by “making a football move,” loss of player possession results in a fumble by definition.

Play 7: Airborne receiver near the sideline has a legal forward pass grasped, is hit and goes to the ground, where he rolls out of bounds. During the roll, he loses possession. Ruling: Incomplete pass. He must retain possession throughout the process of making the catch.

Note: The same is true if this play took place in the end zone. Loss of possession results in an incomplete pass.

These are just a few of the situations that can happen and are not intended to be a complete overview. This should give officials the flavor of what we are trying to accomplish. It should make catch/no catch an easier call.

NOTE 1: Officials have to take everything slower and watch the catch process before making a ruling. Once the determination is made, the official will give the proper signal (we do not use a “catch” signal) for the incompleteness, TD, first down, or otherwise.

NOTE 2: When in question, the ball is incomplete. This does not preclude a discussion among the covering officials, and a ruling of complete. However, if officials are unsure, the play is incomplete.

- C. Swinging gate play – There’s been a bit of confusion as to whether a snapper on the end of the line is eligible to receive a pass if he has a number 1-49 or 80-99, and there are other exceptions to the 50-79 rule. The answer is yes. A player who takes his initial position on the end of the line is not an exception to the 50-79 rule on kick plays and PATs. *Only those players taking initial positions between the ends are exceptions.* In this one instance the snapper and the man on the end of the line are the same. Hope that clears things up. Read the rules regarding the numbering exceptions in the rulebook and casebook for examples.

III. Reminders

- A. Sideline control – The emphasis this year is on clearing the “Restricted Area.” Referees should discuss this with coaches prior to the contest, including scrimmages and game-scrimmages the week before the season.

- B. Water/Heat Breaks – Referees should be aware of temperature and humidity and allow for water breaks. Breaks should be allowed if teams have several two-way players or if it is oppressively hot, regardless of how many two-way players there are. Normal changes of possession can be used as well as other time-outs. Don't give breaks after a big play, like an interception that could affect momentum.
- C. Pants have to cover knees – Let's be consistent on this. Players seen with pants rolled up above the knee should not be allowed in the game. Let the coaches deal with whether they get the play off within 25 seconds after a player comes onto the field with rolled-up pants.
- D. Sleeves/Back Pads – Just a reminder we are lenient on the sleeves rolling up on the shoulder pads. Keep reminding the kids. The newer uniforms won't have the problems the older ones have since manufacturers have redesigned them. Back pads, however, are a different story. They must be covered by the jersey.
- E. Tucking in pants – If the jerseys are at belt line or below they should be tucked into the pants. It's tough during the early season with heat and sweat, but we have to be consistent.
- F. Coach calling timeout – We are allowing coaches to leave the coaches' box and get our attention in order to call timeout. If he runs down to the 5 to get into the LJ's face in order to call it, all the better. If you hear timeout from the coaching area and can't determine if it is the head coach, call the timeout. When the clock is running, it's not time to split hairs.

That's it for now, have a great pre-season and season opener.

Bill Riccio