

New Haven Football Officials Operating Code

As a member of the New Haven Football Officials Association there is professionalism necessary on and off the field. This operating code outlines those guidelines necessary to be a true professional on and off the field.

The N.H.F.O.A. operating code outlines how an official should dress. The proper way to talk to coaches, players and people associated with the games you work. The operating code also looks at mechanics that make the flow of the game smoother as well as make the crew look more professional. The operating code also reviews some very important policies of the board that every official must know.

1. UNIFORM and APPEARANCE -The first impression is the most important and the first thing a coach, player, game official or fan sees is the way you dress and look. The following guidelines should be followed by all officials concerning the proper uniform and appearance, as outlined in NFHS association manual.
 - a. Shirt and Pants- Your shirt and pants must fit correctly and they must be clean and free of any wrinkles. Shirts and pants over time will fade and look yellow. It is a good idea to invest in new pants and shirts every couple of seasons.
 - b. Hat- Whether you wear a black hat or a white hat everyone is required to wear a sized hat. Expandable hats are unacceptable. Hats also look dingy after a season or two and they should be replaced after no more than two seasons.
 - c. Shoes- Shoes must be black and they must be cleaned and polished for every game that you work. No white logo or markings are allowed.
 - d. Gloves- Gloves are allowed during cold weather, but the gloves should be 100% black.
 - e. Jacket- If you wear a jacket on a cold night the jacket must either be 100% black or a jacket with official's stripes. The jacket should not have a marking on it, except for the football associations logo.
 - f. Jewelry- Every official must wear a digital watch. The watch must have a black band. The only other piece of jewelry that should be exposed is a wedding band; any other jewelry must be completely hid from sight or not worn during a game.
 - g. Flags- Every official must carry two flags. The flags must be yellow in color and they must be clean. The N.H.F.O.A. mechanic for carrying flags is to tuck the flag into your pants so that only the small ball sack is exposed; the ball sack should be covered in white tape so that no yellow is showing. You don't want to show up at a game with yellow flags hanging out all over the place. It makes you look like someone who is ready to throw some flags.
 - h. Bean bags- the only authorized bean bag is a white one. Every official must carry at least one beanbag.
 - i. Game card- The game card is not an optional item. Every official must carry a game card.
 - j. Personal Appearance- Your personnel appearance is also a very important part of your first impression. Your hair should be kept at a reasonable length. When you

work a game you should be clean-shaven, if you have a beard or mustache it must be kept neatly trimmed.

- k. Conditioning- To be a good official in takes a person who is in good mental and physical conditioning. The mental aspect comes with a good understanding of the rules along with the proper mechanics for your position. The physical aspect is just as important as understanding the rules. An official who is out of shape could be out of position to make the right call. Officiating football requires you to be able to run with a 17 or 18-year-old young man who is in the peak physical condition of his life. As an official you should prepare yourself for the season by working out a minimum of 3 times per week for a minimum of 30 to 45 minutes. These workouts will make you a better official, but more importantly you will feel better.
2. **PROPER ETIQUETTE at GAMES** –There are certain unwritten rules that every official should know.
- a. Tobacco Use- The use of any type of tobacco is strictly forbidden as soon as you enter the premises of the game site. That means from the time you come to the field for your pre-game until the time you enter your car at the end of the game.
 - b. Eating- Eating food at a Varsity game, JV game or Freshman game is strictly prohibited. It is understood that it is necessary to eat something during a long day of Pop Warner football, but when you eat it should be done in or near the concession stand or in a separate room.
 - c. Handling Fans- We are not robots! Being polite to fans with a hello is not a problem. Getting into a long conversation with a fan or someone you know before or after the game should not happen; you are there to work a football game and to be impartial to both teams. It doesn't look good if you are seen talking to someone for any extended period of time. Fans that become unruly or start to taunt you or the crew should be ignored and you should never respond to an unruly fan – just walk away and/or notify game management.
 - d. Warming up or stretching- Everyone should stretch out before the game, but this should be done inside during or just after your pre-game. Do not stand on the sideline and stretch out and warm up. A light jog up and down the sideline before the game is acceptable.
 - e. Parade Rest- There is a proper way to stand before the game on the sideline or at anytime during the game when there is a break in the action. The way that every official should stand at these breaks is at parade rest with your arms crossed behind your back. You should never stand around with your hands in your pockets; it shows a lack of interest in what you are doing.
 - f. Handling coaches and players- The way an official conducts himself with coaches is very important. The wing officials are the two people who have the most contact with coaches. The wing officials should introduce themselves to the head coach so the coach knows your name. At this time you should ask him which coach is responsible for keeping the team back behind the six-foot line and within the team box. Introduce yourself to the “*get back coach*” and tell him what you expect from him. Coaches expect the wing officials to communicate fouls or unusual situations on the field. Keeping the head coach informed will keep him from getting frustrated with you and the crew. There are situation during the game when you are unable to respond to the coach as quickly as he expects. Just tell him you will answer his question as soon as possible. Don't let the coach take you

out of the game. Coaches work hard preparing their team for the game and a disrespectful official or an official who is unwilling to communicate will make the coach mad and it could disrupt the flow of the game. It is important to note that if a coach is out of control on the sideline the wing official should not let the coach disrupt the game. Calmly tell the coach to calm down or he risks getting a foul. If the wing official can't get the coach to calm down then he should call a sideline warning on the coach. This should be done before things get out of control. Remember all the coaching staff is looking for is communication from the wing official.

Handling players on the field is also a very important factor for officials. High school football players are young men who should act like men and they should be treated as men. Football is a physical sport and during a game players lose their temper as an official it is our job to keep them under control. Try to get players who are somewhat out of control back into the game. Don't talk down to players. Don't yell at players unless the situation warrants you to raise your voice. Remember you have the yellow flags that let players know that they have crossed the line. Don't be above the game the best official is a communicator not a dictator.

3. **OFF SEASON PREPARATION-** The football season doesn't end with the last game to be a good official you need to prepare yourself for the upcoming season.
 - a. Physical conditioning- Stay in shape! Work out at least three times a week to keep your cardiovascular conditioning, when the season gets close you may want to extend your workouts to be ready for the season. Every on field official will be required to complete a half mile run at one of the summer clinics.
 - b. Medical physical requirement- every on field official is required to have a physical performed by a doctor before you are allowed to step onto the field. The physical is due by August 1st.
 - c. Mental preparation- the NHFOA meets in May or June to hand out the new books and the annual test. This signals the start of the season and you should be reading the books a minimum of 2 hours per week. This study time will get you back in focus with the rules and mechanics. As far as the test is concerned there are usually several study groups that you should find the time to attend. If you do not know where or who is conducting these study groups call the director from your district.
 - d. Annual Exam- Every on field official is required to complete an open book exam. The exam will be handed out at the annual spring meeting. The exam is due the first scheduled meeting of September. Failure to hand in your exam will result in lost game assignments. Any official who fails the exam will be required to take a make up exam; failure to pass the make up exam will result in no schedule from the commissioner.

4. **PRE –GAME RESPONSIBILITIES-** The following section covers what each official should know concerning pre-game responsibilities.
 - a. Time of Pre-Game- The pre-game for a varsity game starts 1:15 minutes before the scheduled start of the game. For all other games unless otherwise stated by

your referee you should arrive at a game 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the game. The referee is required to contact his crew a minimum of three days before the day of the game, if an official has not heard from his referee he should contact the referee to find out the particulars on the game.

- b. Pre-Game preparation- Every official should be prepared to cover all aspects of the pre-game. Knowing the entire pre-game only makes you a better official.
- c. Pre-Game field inspection- The following pre-game field inspection mechanics should be followed by every crew working a varsity game.
 - i. The referee and umpire meet the coaches approximately 50 minutes before the kickoff. This should be done as soon as you see both teams on the field at the same time.
 - ii. The referee should ask the following questions when he and the umpire meet the coaches.
 1. Verify the street time
 2. Get captains last names and numbers.
 3. Tell the coach what time he is expected to be on the field for the coin toss. Let him know that an official will come and get his team so that they will be on time.
 4. Ask the home coach how long the half time will be (15 or 20 minutes)
 5. Verify with the coach that all players are legally equipped. Ask if there are any casts or braces that should be looked at.
 6. Check the game balls and mark
 7. Ask about any unusual plays that his team may run.
 8. Ask the home coach if a chain crew is available
 9. Ask the home coach if an ambulance is expected to arrive before the scheduled kickoff.
 - iii. At approximately 20 minutes before the kickoff the entire crew should go to the field to inspect the field.
 - iv. The crew should jog as a unit to the home side 50-yard line.
 - v. The referee and back judge should jog the perimeter of the field to inspect the yard line markers, pylons, goalposts, try for point line and field conditions.
 - vi. The line judge jogs in the opposite direction of the referee and back judge and he mirrors the referee and back judge.
 - vii. Prior to the start of the game, the referee or crew chief, with a witness present, must inquire of home management: "Are you in compliance with any rules, regulations or policies regarding the presence of medical personnel?" Do not start the game until home management can answer affirmatively.
 - viii. The linesman meets with the chain crew to review their responsibilities. The athletic director or game management is solely responsible for providing a chain crew. (See instructions for chain crew)
 - ix. The umpire assists the linesman with checking the chains.
 - x. The referee, back judge and line judge are on the home side of the field at parade rest. While the linesman and the umpire are on the visitors side at parade rest.

- xi. Three minutes before the scheduled coin toss the back judge and lineman get their respective teams out for the coin toss.

5. GENERAL INFORMATION- The following information is general rules and regulations that every member of the board should be aware of:

- a. The Commissioner will require every official including clock operators to fill out an availability sheet. The Commissioner will rely on this availability sheet when he assigns you games so please make sure it is filled out accurately.
- b. Annual dues are due by April 1st dues paid after April 1st will be doubled.
- c. All officials will be required to accumulate a minimum of 12 meeting attendance points. The clinics that are scheduled in the month of August and the weekly meeting are very important and every attempt to attend these meetings should be made by every official. A failure to accumulate the necessary points could affect your status for being assigned a playoff game at the end of the season.
- d. All requests for comments concerning game situations from media, coaches or fans should be referred to the commissioner.
- e. Officials take control of a game thirty minutes prior to the start of the game. From that point if there is a weather condition that is dangerous to the players, officials or people attending the game the referee should stop the game until the conditions improve. Anytime there is lightning in the area the game should be stopped immediately.
- f. During a game early in the season when the weather is warm every attempt to keep the players hydrated should be made. Water should be allowed on the field at every break in the action.
- g. List of don'ts:
 - i. Working with the whistle in your mouth immediately prior to and at the snap.
 - ii. Using the NFL dead ball signal at the end of the down
 - iii. Signaling first down on their own (non-referees)
 - iv. Indicating the penalty they have called with signals vs. verbally
 - v. Spotting the ball at a different hash mark or different part of the field after an incomplete pass or penalty.
 - vi. Out of position at the end of the first and third periods and also at the half.
 - vii. Not securing the captains at the appropriate time for instructions at the beginning of the game and at the half
 - viii. Not throwing flags at the spot of the foul so that the administration of the penalty is from the right spot.