

# General Principles

## Duties and responsibilities

1. An official must have a thorough knowledge of the duties of his own position and in addition must be cognizant of the duties of each of the other officials. Anyone should be prepared and able to assume any one of the other positions whenever circumstances, such as an injury or delayed arrival, require rearrangement of assignments. This should be discussed in the pre-game conference.
2. Each official must
  - a. know the down and yardage prior to each snap
  - b. be ready to assist any official who is temporarily out of position
  - c. observe erroneous procedures of rulings of other officials and attempt prevention and correction whenever possible.
  - d. know the prescribed signals and when and how they should be used
  - e. secure the ball, if appropriate, after all action has ceased, and be able to handle and pass the ball properly and accurately underhand 10 yards with a flat trajectory and nose first
  - f. be alert to happenings away from the ball when play has left his immediate area - don't watch the ball
  - g. call time out for any player who is obviously injured
  - h. be prepared if necessary to call any foul or rule infraction that he observes, regardless of specific assignment
  - i. communicate with colleagues, players, coaches, announcers, or spectators as appropriate whenever anything unusual or out of ordinary happens

## Common sense officiating

1. It is important that you call every foul that you see which affects the result of the play, the safety of the players, or the discipline of the game. However, please remember that neither spectators nor players come to see officials. Use your discretion, and above all your common sense. Delay throwing the flag for a second or two to give yourself time to review the play mentally.
2. Preventative officiating enables a game to flow in a disciplined manner. Whenever necessary, talk to coaches or players with regard to their conduct. Never ignore a foul: you must do something about every foul, even if you decide not to throw a flag.
3. At appropriate times, such as when the players are lining up for a kickoff or leaving the huddle to go to the line of scrimmage, remind players to check their mouthpiece and chinstraps, and also of the clipping and illegal block provisions. Try not to do this obtrusively.
4. Always acknowledge complaints from players. We cannot see everything on every play. If a player makes a complaint against an opponent, be prepared to observe the next encounter between them more closely. Request the assistance of other officials if necessary.

5. When speaking to players, coaches, or spectators, always be polite. Your position as an official does not give you the right to be abusive or derogatory. Use soothing language to defuse hostility.
6. When you have to make a decision based on your observation, your experience and your knowledge, do not back down. Pressure from coaches, players, or the crowd should not be allowed to influence your judgment. When you are wrong, admit it, but don't allow it to affect your performance. If you do make a mistake, forget it and move on.
7. If by putting yourself between two players you can prevent a fight, then do so, but never at risk to your own safety (your number one concern). Never grasp a player's facemask to prevent or break up a fight.

### **Hustle**

1. Always try to keep the game flowing smoothly, but do not rush. Move quickly when required, but do not allow your desire for rapid action to interfere with your duties nor with correct determinations.
2. Never hurry the treatment of an injured player. The recognition of injured players is the concern of all game officials. If in doubt, stop the clock and call the injury to the attention of the medical personnel present. The clock can be restarted again on the ready if the timeout is not necessary. (The player must leave for 1 play).

### **Position**

1. Through experience you will gain knowledge on how to get yourself in the best position to observe action in and around your zone of responsibility.
2. When shifting position during the game, always try to surround the play together with the other officials. A position of "outside looking in" is essential for sideline and end line coverage. Keeping the play "boxed in" should ensure that each play is observed from more than one viewpoint.

### **Co-operation and communication**

1. It is essential that the officials work together as a team and that they communicate efficiently between each other for the purpose of effective game administration. Such communication will normally be verbal but where verbal communication is impossible or inappropriate, approved visual signals should be used.
2. The officials must also communicate when appropriate with players, coaches, spectators, and announcers. If a ruling is puzzling or controversial, it is better to take a moment to explain it than for everyone to continue in ignorance. Your aim is to give information before someone needs to ask for it (If the Referee takes the time to explain something to one head coach, he should also immediately explain it to the other).
3. On the sidelines, make sure someone is appointed as the "Get Back Coach", responsible for keeping his colleagues and players in the coaching box and team area. He can devote more time than the officials can to keep people out of the way.
4. All officials should signal the down number before each down.

5. At the end of a down, the covering official should blow his whistle. It should be blown with authority, not just a peep. One or two loud blasts should be appropriate. Avoid blowing repeated short bursts, (it makes you appear nervous) unless you have thrown a penalty flag or otherwise need to attract the Referee's attention. Other officials should echo the whistle only if it is necessary to end continuing action in their area of coverage. Never be the first official to blow a whistle if the ball is not in your zone of responsibility.
6. If you blow an inadvertent whistle, don't think no one will notice. Continue to blow and make sure the play is killed. Admit your mistake and follow the procedure laid down by rule.
7. Your body language says more than you think - be aware of this. An official moving hesitantly (e.g. toward the spot where a catch was attempted) is a sign that they are not sure of the call and need help. Be aware of such body language signals by colleagues and be prepared to assist them when you can.
8. Don't shout at people - it indicates your loss of control. Never swear at a player, coach, or colleague.

### **Signals**

1. Officials' signals should be clear, distinct, and deliberate at all times.
2. Covering official should signal a timeout when the rules provide for stopping the clock or when a timeout is charged to a team or to the Referee. Other officials should repeat timeout signals (S3). The on-field time keeper should stop the clock before giving or repeating the signal.
3. In the following circumstances the specified signal should be used instead of the timeout signal
  - a. when a touchdown, field goal or try is scored (S5) – touchdown
  - b. when a safety is scored (S6) – safety
  - c. when a touchback is awarded (S7) – touchback
  - d. when a forward pass is incomplete, or a field goal attempt is wide or short of the goal, or when there is no score on a try (S10) – incomplete
  - e. These signals are sufficient to instruct the on-field time keeper or clock operator to stop the clock, and (S3) should not be given in addition unless a penalty flag has been thrown or a charged or injury timeout awarded.
4. Signals such as timeout or incomplete pass should be repeated two or three times to ensure that everyone sees them. However, more repetitions are excessive. Do not bend at the waist when giving incomplete pass signals.
5. Except on free kicks, the wind clock signal (S2) should be used by an official only when the ball becomes dead inbounds within 10 feet of the sideline. The covering official shall make the winding signal two or three times and no more. If the play ends beyond the line to gain, the clock shall then be stopped.
6. There is no need for the on-field time keeper to echo the wind clock signal (S2).
7. Don't get excited when signaling (especially touchdowns). Be tranquil and poised. Don't become emotional. Maintain your equanimity. (Act like you've done it before).

## **Marking spots**

1. There are only three ways to mark a dead-ball spot. These are (in order of desirability).
  - a. with the ball (placed so its axis is parallel to the sideline);
  - b. with your downfield foot;
  - c. with a bean bag.
2. Place a ball at the spot whenever possible, or mark the front time of the ball with your downfield foot. The covering official must never move away from the spot except in the most exceptional of circumstances. Use a bean bag as a last resort.
3. When marking forward progress with your foot, do it inconspicuously. The best way is to stand with your feet level, with the instep of your downfield (towards the defense) and upfield (towards the offense) feet marking the front and back ends of the ball respectively. If you want to extend your downfield foot slightly this is permissible, but don't draw undue attention to the position; there is nothing worse than two officials obviously indicating different spots. Discuss in the pre-game conference how the crew is going to resolve any conflict.

## **Out of bounds coverage**

1. When handling out-of-bounds plays, it is important that each official assumes a separate responsibility in order that duplication does not result in extra-curricular activity going unobserved.
2. The first man (the covering official) should signal time out (S3) and/ for his own safety, move to the out-of-bounds spot one once players have run through that area. (You should signal timeout as soon as the ball becomes dead - don't wait until you reach the dead-ball spot. You may give the timeout signal while on the move). He should stay on the sideline at the out-of-bounds spot to watch continuing action in or near the team area. If absolutely necessary he can drop a bean bag and go further out to prevent/stop any continuing action. Once there is no further risk of fouls occurring, he should obtain a ball from either the runner or an official and use it to either mark the spot or relay it to the inbounds spot.
3. The second man (the next official to reach the area: on a 5-man crew this would be the Back Judge or Referee; in a 3-man crew this would be the Referee) should go out of bounds with the runner (going out as far as the runner does) to specifically watch for and prevent fouls on him. He should obtain the ball from the runner and either convey it to the first man (to mark the spot) or else to the third official or Umpire for relay to the inbounds spot. If necessary the second man should loop around the first man (going further out of bounds in the process) in order to cover a runner who carries on running beyond the first man.
4. The third man (Referee or Back Judge on a 5-man crew) should cover the action in the field of play behind the first two officials and either get a ball to the first man (to mark the spot) or else assist in relaying it to the Umpire.

5. The fourth man (Umpire on a 5-man crew) should observe continuing action between his position and the sideline and also move towards the sideline to assist the officials who are trying to relay a new ball to him. (Don't let the inbounds line act as a barrier, come as far towards the sideline as necessary; the back-side wing official should be covering the field behind you).

### **Fumbles**

1. Unless there has obviously been no change in team possession, the official who covers a fumble recovery that is not advanced shall point in the proper direction to show which team has recovered the ball. Remember to signal timeout (S3) first.
  - a. if it is a first down for Team A
  - b. if it is a first down for Team B.
2. If it is necessary to "dig it out", the nearest official should dig for the ball. The next official should signal timeout (S3) to stop the clock, and this should be echoed by the rest of the crew. When the digging official determines possession he should verbally relay that information (the jersey color of the player in possession) to the nearest official, who will then signal the proper direction. Only the Referee, if he is not the signaling official, should echo the direction signal.

### **Written records**

1. All officials should record in writing:
  - a. the result of the coin toss
  - b. scores
  - c. charged team timeouts
  - d. sideline warnings
  - e. any unsportsmanlike fouls that they call (include the players number).
2. One official (usually the Referee) should be appointed to record any necessary injury information.
3. In addition, at the end of the first and third periods, the Referee, Umpire, and Linesman should record the position of the ball and chain and the Linesman should record the position of the chain clip.

### **Timing responsibilities**

1. The following officials are responsible for timings:
 

	<u>5-Man</u>	<u>3-Man</u>
a) Game clock:	Back Judge	Referee
b) 25-second clock:	Back Judge	Referee
c) Duration of charged timeouts:	Umpire	Umpire
d) Duration of interval between quarters:	Back Judge	Referee
e) Duration of interval after a score:	Back Judge	Referee
f) Duration of interval between halves:	Back Judge	Referee

## Counting responsibilities

1. The following officials are responsible for counting players:

	5-Man		3-Man
	Primary	Secondary	
a) Team A on scrimmage downs:	Referee	Umpire	Referee
b) Team B on scrimmage downs:	Back Judge	Line Judge	Umpire
c) Team A on free kicks	Linesman	Back Judge	Linesman
d) Team B on free kicks	Line Judge	R&U	Umpire
e) 7 on the offensive line	Linesman	Line Judge	Linesman

2. It is especially important to count players on field goals, punts, and tries.
3. Having more than 11 men on the field and not noticing it is one of the worst errors a crew can make.

## Conduct

1. Remember that your conduct before, during, and after each game is subject to public scrutiny. Always conduct yourself in a manner befitting an official.
2. Officials bear a great responsibility for engendering public and participant confidence. They are judged by everything they do, on the field and off it, before, during and after the game. Greet and treat the personnel from each team equally. Don't banter with spectators. Don't fraternize with anyone.
3. Perform warm-up exercises before the game in the privacy of the changing room or well out of the sight of players or spectators. Do not test your whistle on or within hearing of the field of play. Do not toss footballs around or indulge in any other recreational activity in sight or sound of spectators, players, or other personnel.
4. No official is permitted to consume any prohibited drug, tobacco product or alcoholic beverage, or be under the influence of one, either before or during the game.
5. Do not provide any team, coach or player with any information pertaining to any other team, coach or player. Do not carry gossip from one team to another, nor make statements about another crew or another official.
6. Do not engage in arguments with anyone after the game regarding the decisions made. Questions of judgment on the part of any official are not open to argument either on the field or after the game.
7. Be loyal to your fellow officials, to your officiating organization and to football.
8. Report immediately to your executive committee any approach by anyone regarding the possibility of an attempted bribe or any other unethical act.