

Topeka Officials Association

Football Newsletter – Week One

Starting the Season: It is hard to believe that the football season begins this week – sub-varsity play followed by Friday varsity play. It seems to get earlier and earlier every season but collegiate play started on Thursday and Washburn University begins today (this is being written on Saturday morning). Much of this epistle will be a repeat of what you read last season – and the season before that, and the season before that, and the...

Obviously, many have been through this before. But, it is the responsibility of the veterans to make sure that our younger officials know what is expected of them and to set the example for what needs to be done and how to get things done correctly.

With this in mind, I thought the TOA got off to an excellent start with the clinic at Perry-Lecompton High School on Thursday. A lot of officials attended and I heard a lot of good advice. The trick is to take all the advice you heard and figure out how to best apply it to the position you work and use it consistently. I have often heard how important it is to be consistent as an official – the real issue is how to be consistently excellent. On any given play you will change your mechanics, view the rule, and change your position several times during your career. Be prepared to keep on learning – in officiating, it is rare that we can trust the old saying: "But, that's the way I've always done it!"

How Others Do Things: I recently read a piece from the Michigan HSAA regarding "What it Takes to be an Official." Following are some excerpts from that document:

"There is No Substitute for Study:" The KSHSAA supplies us with Rules Books, Mechanics Books, Case Study Books, etc. However, it is up to us to dig into the content of these manuals and discuss plays. Our crew is blessed with a rules "guru." It is easy to depend on him – but that does not relieve the rest of us from knowing the rules and how to apply them. And it is our responsibility to know the mechanics that will allow us the best opportunity to get a good look at what we are supposed to see.

"Join a Local Officials Group:" This is very important. Probably the best officials meeting I have attended in many years was a make-up TOA basketball meeting last winter - there were six of us there but the discussion was excellent. The "big" TOA meetings are fun – it's great to see a lot of old friends and make new ones. But, try forming a small group that meets on a regular basis – you may be surprised how much you will learn.

"See All the Games You Can:" Not all of us have full varsity schedules – or full sub-varsity schedules. If you are not working, find a game to go watch. Watch how a crew handles certain situations – watch the official who works the position you work and determine what works best.

"Always Strive to Improve:" This is self-explanatory!!

Game Week: What you and your crew do during the week will have a direct influence on how things go on Friday night:

Make sure that R (or someone he has designated) contacts the school where you will be working. To me, that means actually speaking to the Athletic Director. Let them know the date you believe the game will be played (that Friday night game may have been switched to Thursday or Saturday); let them know who the officials will be – along with their SSN's – phone numbers, etc.; let them know what time you will be arriving and ask who your escort will be. Also, ask for the cell phone number of the AD – if there are circumstances that will cause you to be late in arriving, you can contact the AD!

Game Day: Make a list of everything that should be packed in your bag – then pack it. Do NOT just pick up your bag from the end of last year and assume that you thought was in your bag is actually there. Those of you who know me, know that my bag is just about as tall as I am and, unfortunately, almost as wide. But I still check the contents every time I officiate.

Traveling: I know you are tired of hearing me say this – BUT - “You cannot Be on Time Unless you are Early!” Be where you are supposed to be WHEN you are supposed to be there! Remember to get the cell phone number of the AD!!

Arrival: Try to find your contact immediately upon your arrival. While some crews like to find the head coach before going to the field, my experience has been that tracking down coaches in this time period can be frustrating at best. On one occasion my R and I were looking all over the place for the head coach – no one had seen him. Finally, a manager suggested looking on the team bus – where we found him asleep. R and I had a quick discussion as to which one of us would awaken him – I lost!!

I have found that it works best for at least R and U to be on the field about 40 minutes before game time to see the coaches for their pre-game meetings. I know – I know – i can hear it now: “But, we have always done it our way...” Try it – you'll like it!!

Prepare Game Cards with the names of the officials – their home towns and the positions they work.

Pre-Game Conference with the Principal and/or the AD: It is critical that this meeting take place – suggest a good time for them to come to the locker room prior to the game to discuss: Weather and other emergencies. Remember, until the game time, the start of the game is in the hands of the school administration - once the game begins, it is in the hands of the Referee **with the advice of the administrator** (if the administrator yells the crew that their school policy is to suspend the game if there are indications of lightening within 10 miles, that's what we are going to do!). **Error on the Side of Safety!!**

Get Your Season Off to a Good Start!!