

The TOA “Football Newsletter”

A New Season

A New Season: One of the best parts of officiating is the promise of the start of a new season. All of us have areas of our officiating performances that we wish we could “do over.” The start of a new season allows us to evaluate what we have done in the past and to prepare for improvement this season. All of us, no matter what level we are officiating, have room for improvement - satisfaction in life (and officiating) comes from accomplishing and improving. And, we get the added bonus of working within the parameters of a “team.” While we have to perform individually, we also have to perform as a team.

The truth of the matter is that all members of the crew must be “leaders.” We all have to take ownership in our positions - we all must know the rules - we all have to be team players - and, we all have to be excellent at our positions - at what we do - and in how we treat players, coaches, and each other. We must project the attitude that our crew is just another “team” on the field.

New Rules - and “Old” New Rules: 1994: Emphasis on stopping Baiting and Taunting; 1995: Grounding a pass is legal as long as it is thrown immediately from a hand-to-hand snap (Note: Under NCAA rules, grounding a pass from a Shot Gun formation is legal - not so under Federation rules); 1996: Protection is afforded the snapper in scrimmage kick situation; 1997: As pertains to the 1996 new rule re. Protection for the center, 1997 added an automatic first down in addition to the 15 yard penalty for roughing the center - also in 1997 - Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement prior to the ready for play shall be administered before establishing the line to gain for the new series; 1998: Eye shields must be clear and the coach’s box shall extend from the 25 yard line to the other 25 yard line; 1999: Jurisdiction for the officials begins 30 minutes prior to game time; 2000: Two face mask penalties - 5 yards for incidental grasping and 15 yards for grasping and pulling or twisting; 2001: Running into the kicker (5 yards) as well as roughing the kicker (15 yards); 2002: “Block in the back - above the waist” rule - 10 yards; 2003: Post Scrimmage Kick Penalty Enforcement - Fouls against the opponents of the scoring team carry a new option of having the foul administered from the succeeding spot; 2004: Head Coach may call TO & clarification of the PSK rule; 2005: The new 9 yard rule; and the momentum rule now covers fumbled balls as well. 2006: 7-5-13: The act of illegally touching the ball by an ineligible receiver carries the same penalty whether behind or in front of the LOS - a legal forward pass (past the line of scrimmage - touched by an ineligible downfield is no longer a 15-yard penalty for offensive pass interference. No “fumblerooskie” plays are legal. The line-to-gain equipment is to be run 6 feet (2 yards) off the sideline (no exceptions - make that happen! 2008: The Head Coach can now designate another coach for the purpose of requesting time-outs; TO’s may no longer be carried over into OT’s; Point of Emphasis: Sideline Management.

Sideline Management: Is the Federation serious about this issue? Is the KSHSAA serious about this issue? Uh, ... Once again, it is up to us as officials to deal with this subject.

A few years ago, our crew worked a “rivalry game” between two schools that are situated about five miles apart. The coaching staff and players on one sideline wore us out - 3 - 4 yards on the field seemed to be the norm and we had to constantly remind them to be where they belonged (where we thought they belonged and where they thought they belonged were two different issues). Our reward for trying to work with them instead of flagging them? We were written up to the KSHSAA for being “intimidating.”

Try your best to keep players and coaches where they belong. If a player were to get hurt by being hit while he was outside the team box we would probably be sued for every penny we had. It seems like the officials have all the responsibility in this area and some coaches take none. We need to work together on this issue. If there is no cooperation from the coaches and kids, take care of it.

Weather: Weather this time of year always presents some extremes with which we must deal.

Lightning: The lightning associated with thunder storms can be among the most deadly of nature's phenomena. Make Sure School Administrator's (and, your crew) have a plan. Most (all) schools will have a lightning meter at their disposal - know what their plan is and work with the administration to implement that plan. Who makes what decisions? The Rules Book states that until the time of kickoff, the decision to start a contest is in the hands of the administration - but, it should be made in concert with the Referee. Once a game has started, the Referee is technically in charge - however, if an administrator lets it be known that lightning has been observed and he would like the game suspended, which is what should happen. The re-starting of a game should also be a joint decision.

Heat and Humidity: Again, the effects of heat and humidity can be a deadly issue. Most of us have the experience to know when a Heat and Humidity TO should be called by the Referee. Try to make it at a time when a team's momentum would not be disrupted. Use good common sense. Let the coaches know in your pre-game meeting that you are aware that heat and humidity could be a problem and let them know how you are going to handle it.

You are always welcome to contact me if you have any questions - comments - ideas for future Newsletters. For the first week of play: "How to get off to a good start - every game."