

Topeka Officials Association

Football Newsletter

Week Six

Hard To Believe – This Week Marks the Season Being 2/3 Over: It is still not too late to hit the books – the Rules Book – the Mechanics Book – Rules By Topic Book. Try to learn something new from these books every week. Then, share it with your crew during your pre-game conference. That would amount to five good ideas discussed each week – at a minimum. Pre-Game conferences do not need to be dull and boring. And, a play from your last game usually can provide lively conversation. If your situation involves a rule, identify the rule, read it, and tell how it applies to the situation at hand. If a mechanics issue would have helped get the call right, turn to that book and see if a solution is offered. If not, ask an official you respect what he would have done. Communicate – communicate – communicate!!

We Didn't Communicate Very Well: In our game last week, a seemingly simple situation put the crew in jeopardy. Team A had scored a touchdown and were lined up for the extra point attempt. Before the ball was snapped (the team, was lined up in kick formation), Team A interior lineman A76 committed a false start. Usually (sometimes – once in a while), our new R relays to me the penalty and the options he is going to give the offended team. Since he was back in kick formation, he just turned to the stands, gave the signals and away we went. Except for one thing: He ended his presentation by pointing to the other end of the field. What was that I wondered?

It turns out that he had given as an option the opportunity for the scoring team to take the penalty on the ensuing kick off – WRONG!! That is an option only on a scoring play! Our B caught up with him to let him know of his error – from the look on R's face, I am not sure he was convinced. R did go to A's coach to explain the situation while B went to B's coach. All of this consternation because we did not communicate well!! It is always better to get a call or enforcement right than to let it go and have to explain ourselves later. Lesson for Today: Do the Right Thing Right!!

Mechanics – the Kick Off: As an Umpire, I like being placed at the 20 yard line because that position puts us close to where the initial blocking formation takes place. One problem: Last Friday i got to looking at a suspicious block and before I knew what had happened, the ball carrier burst through the initial line of blockers and he was on his way. Of course as some of you may have suspected, I have not gotten faster as I have approached 60 years of age.

Our L, as I looked up the field, looked as though he was fully aware of the situation (and my situation). He continued to move towards the goal line but kept his attention on the play – i caught his eye and he knew that I was going to cover the spot (about the 32 on the other side of midfield). He also knew that it was going to take me a little time to get there and he was sporting a huge grin as he watched me trundle down the field – but, we got the spot right and if the runner had broken away, he would have been on the goal line waiting for him!

We Are a Team: The above paragraphs point out how important it is to get plays right – they point out how many times we have to depend on others to help us – how many times we have to help others. Officiating is not an avocation for the glory of the individual – it is something we do to help kids – it is something we do because we enjoy the game and the people with whom we officiate. It is very easy to pout and take plays off when someone else corrects us – wrong attitude. We should rejoice that someone thought enough of us and the game and helped us get it right!! **Trust Each Other!!**

Taking a Look at the Calls You Have Made: I have been keeping a diary of the “major” call that I have made so far this season. It is helping to have a handle on what I am looking at and what I am looking for. In the first five weeks of the season I have had six “major” calls – five holds and a clip.

The five holds were split between offensive linemen who started out the play with their hands outside the frame of the defender and then twisted the defender to the ground. Although the KSHSAA won't necessarily like to hear this, all five plays were at the point-of-attack. Three plays had the offensive players with their hands in positions where I could not get a good look at them and which, actually, looked to be “good” blocks. Until, that is, the defenders tried to get away and the offensive players reached out and basically pulled them to the ground. The description of these blocks points to the fact that you must see the entire play before a holding call is made.

Know your keys for running plays – we spend a lot of time talking about keys in passing situations - which officials are looking where on running plays?

Try keeping a “diary” of your “major” calls. Are you seeing all of the play? Does your call live up to the standards of a “good” or “excellent” call? Can you explain to a coach the details of the foul you called?

The Effects of Calls Not Made: During a sub-varsity game this season, as I was covering the goal line, a touchdown was scored and two teammates started to run towards each other in the end zone. One caught a glimpse of me just as he was going to jump into his teammate and bump chests. The reluctance of the one player to go all out kind of resulted in a “dud” of a show. We reprimanded the two kids and I told the coach that such action was Unsportsmanlike and would result in a 15-yard penalty if done again. The coach thanked me and talked to the offending players.

Then, just this week, the same coach e-mailed me with the following play: A back for his team broke away from the defense and was headed for a touchdown. While still in the field of play, the runner raised his hand in the air (just for a second or so, according to the coach) and was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct. Was this the correct call, he asked?

I got to thinking about the call I did **not** make the week before – did my not making a call influence the coach into thinking a call should not have been made on the TD run? Did I put the crew on the game this week in a bad spot because of what I did last week?

This is what makes officiating so interesting – difficult – challenging. We strive for consistency in our own calls – our crew calls – calls made throughout the league, etc. However, the old adage is probably true: you have to see the play before you can determine the appropriate call. By the way, the penalty for the foul mentioned above is: Count the TD – this is a live ball foul penalized as a dead ball foul and the 15 yard penalty is administered on the try. Below is a list of actions that demand that a foul be called:

Reminder from 2004: *I was the Media Official at Kansas State on Saturday and it was interesting that our referee had on his agenda the following: A “List of Unsportsmanlike Acts That **WILL** result in a Penalty from Game Officials”: 1) After tackle, runner “spins” the ball; 2) Salute to the crowd; 3) Bow to the crowd; 4) Unopposed dive into the end zone; 5) Crossed Arms on Chest; 6) First Down Signal; 7) Spike; 8) Throat Slash; 9) Six Shooter or Machine Gun actions; 10) Verbal Taunting; 11) Hand to Ears – “I can't hear you”; 12) Choreographed dance; 13) High Step into end zone; 14) Act as though taking a picture or making a phone call; 15) Simulate the Heisman pose; 16) Any act intended to draw attention to the individual; 17) Slam Dunk over the cross bar; 18) Coaches on the field or out of the box without permission.*