

The TOA “Football Newsletter”

Getting Ready for Week 1 - 2006

Preparations: By now, I hope it has been decided who on your crew is going to be the designated communicator. By at least Tuesday of each week, your crew should communicate with the AD of the school where you are working on Friday the 1) names of everyone on your crew; 2) the phone numbers of everyone on your crew; 3) the Social Security Numbers of everyone on your crew. For Sub-Varsity games, the same information needs to be communicated to school personnel. When calling the school, also ask for a cell phone number to use in the case of an emergency or in case you are going to arrive after the time you gave them. Common Courtesy is Not Common, but it goes a long way towards building good will.

What are the benefits of taking care of business in a timely manner? It is the “right” thing to do – you display your professionalism, and, you have a far better chance of actually being paid on a timely basis.

Arriving at the Game Site: Make sure, except for an emergency, to arrive at the game site no later than 1½ hours before game time. Arrive with a professional demeanor – greet old friends as though someone from the opposing team is watching – listen to your escort as they describe the events of the evening.

If the escort is NOT the AD or Principal, ask that they come by to visit with the crew prior to ½ before the game. **The Plan:** Always determine the Plan the school has devised in case Dangerous Weather or Other Acts that would cause the delay or cancellation of the game. Know who the Administrator on the field will be and introduce yourself to that person and ask **weather** questions, ask **sportsmanship** questions, and ask **security** questions. If “A” happens, who is going to do what – how will we know when the situation has been resolved? Be Prepared!!

Pre-Game Conferences with the Coaches: At the TOA Clinic last week, it seemed that the consensus was that this meeting is probably best held upon the arrival of the officials – 1 ½ hours prior to kick off. No matter when it is held, it is important that the Safety questions be asked and on our crew it is the umpire who writes on his game card the responses of the coaches. Hopefully that information will never be part of testimony in a court following a catastrophic injury – error on the side of good judgment.

Another Piece of Information for Your Game Card: It always used to bother me, as an umpire, when players numbered other than 50 – 79 lined up on the interior of the line on kick plays – the umpire is responsible keeping track of those folks and it seems more often than not that the “Interior Five” can have two or three players on kicks without numbers 50 – 79. I ask the coaches before the game for the numbers of those players on the scrimmage kick teams and I write those on my game card – all I have to do is quickly check against the players on the field – if there is a deviation, all I have to do is remember that number for one play. It really doesn’t matter how you keep track of those players – as long as you do it!

Speaking of Game Cards: Make sure that your game card is completely and accurately filled out. It is very important that your game card be accurately and completely filled out – especially for time-outs. Is it important to keep a record of fouls? I think so! If you get in the habit of getting the player’s number and are able to describe the infraction along with other details, you probably saw all of the play (very important), got the right number, and will be able to help in the assessment of the penalty, if necessary.

“Line to Gain Equipment” to be 2 yards Off the Field: While many expect this change will not require much of a change, I suggest that it might. If the “chains” are within the team box area, it will be very different to have coaches standing in front of chain crew members – just moving the down box may be exciting since the chain crew is used to having an unobstructed view. I fear there just may be frustration for both the crew and the coaches. Should the game crews ask coaches to not be in front of them? I really don't think that is too much to ask as long as it is done in a professional manner – Be ready to step in immediately if necessary

Next Time: Mechanics Review

Remember: We're all in this together – Work together as a team to “Get the Play Right!”