

**The TOA “Football Newsletter”  
Week 4 – 2006**

**In the News...**Any fan of football that doesn't have an opinion on the officiating of a late on-sides kick in the Oklahoma – Oregon game needs to have his ticker checked. Any of you who would have acted they way the president of OU did needs to have some other body part checked.

Let's get our facts straight: Every indication from replays of the on-sides kick indicates that 1) an Oregon player touched the ball before it went 10 yards and that 2) an Oklahoma player recovered the ball in any case. Let's get one thing straight: any official who has officiated a kick like that in a situation similar to that one knows how difficult it is to officiate that play. You have two teams running full speed at each other from ten yards and you have to make a decision on a ball that rarely bounces the way you think it will and just as you are ready to rule on the play, four players run in front of you. And, to add spice to the fun, kids don't seem to be able to handle the ball very well. As for replay officials, exactly what angle was that camera at? The very camera angle you are depending on to make your decision. Did I mention 22 players thundering at each other as fast as they can?

What mechanics do you and your crew use? I think it is best to leave H and L where they are on any other free kick. This would move U to Ski's 40 and leave L on the 50; on the other side, H would stay at the 40 and B would move to the 50. This setup would mean that at least half of those covering the kick would be where they would normally be on a kickoff – otherwise more officials are out of the “normal” position. It should be pointed out that many crews prefer just to “bump” the other officials on their sideline so that the placement of the officials remains the same – that is to say that, for instance, U is always to the right hand of L. Either mechanic works as long as everybody knows their assignment. Secondly, keep your rules straight: In Federation ball, blocks can be made by either team whether the ball has traveled ten yards or not – in college ball, the ball must go 10 yards before any blocking may take place. This play should be a part of every pre-game conference.

Is it surprising that an officiating crew could get a play as close as the one at Oregon wrong? We'd like to think that we can get all plays like that correct, but that just isn't the case. For example, in a game last season, I was extremely concerned about the volatility building between the two teams – the game came down to the home team having to recover an onsides kick to have any chance at all of winning the game. I watched a home team player recover the ball – tuck it away in his arm away from me – and head for the ground. I blew the ball dead and signaled vigorously that the home team had recovered. As I was on the home team sidelined, they naturally celebrated...until one of my partners told me that in tucking the ball away, it slipped from his grasp and bounced directly to a member of the opposing team. It was the second

inadvertent whistle of my 30+ year career. Oh how easy it is to NOT see the entire play. Oh, how easy it is to make the big signal at a dramatic point in the game. Oh, what a good way to get the entire crew in trouble!! As a good way to learn, develop a pre-snap ritual for onside kicks!! It will save you a large dose of embarrassment sometime in your career!

**It Has Been an Interesting week:** It has to be an interesting time when Bobby Knight has comments to make about football games – ‘the duck was swimming in a different pond.’ Pretty funny, but was it necessary? This morning’s paper has an article in it calling for the abolishment of the college system in favor of the NFL system where on-field officials make the ruling (having on-field officials a part of the discussion with a monitor on the field was part of the original NCAA proposal – it was nixed due to the fact that many stadiums were not able to support all the electronic gear required and the prohibitive cost of implementing it). Many imply that “old” league officials should not be the replay officials – one radio show in the KC area (810) proposed that 19-year old video game addicts would do a better job.

Sports are a human endeavor – humans, even with the aid of electronic devices, make mistakes. Most of the mistakes officials make are not of the consequence of the one made at the Oklahoma – Oregon game. If you’re going to visit with friends about this issue, emphasize that it is a human endeavor and then ask them if they won’t join you on the field or court next season!

**Inclement weather:** At our game last night at BVNW, we made it through most of the second period before heavy rains and sharp lightning hit the area. Always, always, error on the side of safety. The administration called everyone off the field and fans out of the stadium midway through the second quarter and play never resumed last night. The situation was handled very professionally by the school administration and the crew. Be aware of the environment – whether it is lightning, heat, humidity, be prepared to do what is best for the kids.

**Next Week: More On Mechanics vs. Moron Mechanics!**