

The TOA “Football Newsletter” Weeks 6 & 7 – 2006

Sorry About Last Week: Funny how time and events often catch up with us. On Monday, knowing that Rod McMaster’s funeral would draw a large crowd, I got on the turnpike at the Perry-Lecompton exchange at 9:00 a.m. – even at that, I thought I might have left a little too late. Of course, as soon as I got on the toll road, traffic slowed to a virtual snail’s pace – road work had narrowed the usual three lanes down to one. I arrived at the church at 9:55, manufactured a parking space, got inside the church and was seated in the last row of the third room they used for the overflow crowd. One more row and I would have proverbially been on the “outside, looking in.” I certainly hope that June, Tyler and the rest of the family firmly believe in “it’s the thought that counts.”

Proper preparation will help us to be able to get a vast majority of our calls correct – be in the right place, at the right time, with the correct mechanics, a thorough knowledge of the rules, and a sincere desire get the call correct, AND, some kids runs right in front of you at exactly the wrong time. We must remember that officiating is a human endeavor and we are not – we cannot be perfect. Any official that tries to BS their way through a bad call needs to find another avocation. The last play is done and before we know it the next play will take place. Don’t dwell on the last play – work as hard as you can to get the next one correct. Proper preparation will keep you from being “on the outside, looking in!

This Week – The Start of District Play: Game during weeks 7 – 8 and 9 have special significance in that a team’s record during those three weeks can lead them to post-season play. There is nothing logical about which team is in which district: The only criterion is the location of a school. There are four teams (usually) in each district and they play a round-robin tournament in the last three weeks of the regular season. Each game is of significant importance - and the system provides a tie-breaking system that is determined by the margin of victory – up to 13 points.

If a team scores on the last play of regulation, and that score puts them by 11 points, they will need to run an “extra point” play as the system recognizes victories by as much as 13 points. If a team scores on the last play of a game and is now behind by 15 points, there is no need to run the extra point since, even if it is successful, the margin will be 13 points. Remember, the most points a team can gain is +13 and the most they can lose is -13. If the game ends in a tie and goes to OT, the most points that can be gained by the winning team is +1 – for the losing team, -1.

Thoroughly discuss these special rules before each of your remaining varsity games!

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Some Pre-Game Advice: I am sure almost all of you know about my affiliations with the Big 12 Conference - in football, one of the best things I get to do is listen in on pre-game conference. Following are just some of the tidbits I have picked up in the last four or five weeks:

One thing that I have noticed is that many R's bring to the table the "tough" calls we face each and every game. Here a just a few from Drew George, R for the KU – A&M game on Saturday:

How does every game begin? With the kick-off. So many screwy things can happen on KO's and we must be prepared from the very start. Some of Drew's comments: Be ready to officiate the game from the opening kick off (a great way for a team to gain early momentum is a successful short free kick); Know whether the ball went 10 yards – know who touched it and where; watch all blockers; watch the results of a broken play – muffs – fumbles – hand-offs – laterals – backward passes, etc. So many odd things can happen on a free kick over a space as close as ten yards or as many as 60 yards in high school play. Always know the status of the ball!! We are so used to the "typical" kick off that a short free kick can catch us off guard!

Want to Get Better? Ten Ways to Get Better: 1) Do your homework and study the Rules Book, the Case Book, and the mechanics Manual; 2) Talk Football on the way to the game and on the way home; 3) Count the players for whom you are responsible on EVERY play; 4) Have a RITUAL and use it on every play; 5) Between plays, keep the ball off the ground (nothing looks worse than having a ball on the ground on throws between officials); 6) Make sure that every player who goes out of bounds within the confines of a team box is escorted out of the box and onto the field by an official – don't be lazy; 7) Be honest and truthful with coaches; 8) As for dealing with coaches, "Don't go often and don't stay long; 9) Get every "easy" call correct; 10) Error on the side of safety!

One more word for Rod McMaster: John Laurie, former Big 8 and Big 12 referee, penned this comment about Rod: "Rod was as good an official as any Big 8 official from Kansas. It was simply timing and fate, not talent that kept Rod from becoming a major college official."

I never knew Rod to bemoan his officiating position in life – I just knew him to do his best at whatever level he was working. That is the real challenge for us, as well. FS