

San Diego County Football Officials Association Memo

To: Crew Chiefs, Head Coaches, and Athletic Directors

CC: SDCFOA Instructors & Staff

From: Steve Coover, Instructional Chair SDCFOA

Date: 11/2/2009

Re: Weekly Bulletin #7

Overtime Procedures

As you know, we use the college 25-yardline overtime procedure throughout the San Diego Section. We use it as needed during regular conference play; and throughout the playoffs (including the CIF Finals). During the regular season, coaches will decide (if the conference does not have a rule) when to play an overtime. The results of the overtime can be important when determining league champs or for seeding if the teams are in the same division.

Most of you are familiar with the procedure from NCAA games but you can find your own copy of it at www.ncaa.org and click on MEDIA and EVENTS and select PUBLICATIONS. Next click on PLAYING RULES and click on FOOTBALL. From there you select the orange tab that says "download PDF. Scroll down to page FR64 and look for EXTRA PERIODS. Please ignore any reference to running a PAT back for 2 points as that does not apply in high school. If we reach an overtime period, the first thing the officials will do is bring both coaches to the middle of the field and go over the procedure and answer any questions from the coaches.

Video Study in our Instructional Program

As we continue to use game film as an instructional tool in our crew chief meetings and our break out sessions, Andy Castagnola from the WAC Conference emailed his enthusiasm for the quality of the film that we are showing! However, Andy cautions us that this new level of observation brings with it a new level of scrutiny and accountability. Any officials who are out of shape, out of position, not hustling, lack rule knowledge or make judgment errors will be exposed. Conversely, all officials who are in shape, in position, hustling, demonstrating good rules knowledge and judgment will be featured and celebrated! All this comes with new technology. We must both celebrate our successes AND work to get better!

When is a line actually a plane?

When it's the goal line! To score a touchdown, the ball must break the plane of the goal line. Recently an experienced official awarded a touchdown to a player who caught a pass with both feet in the end zone but who then fell forward into the field of play. The ball never crossed the goal line, thus no touchdown. Other planes on the field: the line to gain and both sides of the neutral zone on scrimmage plays and free kicks.

Illegal Block by the Defense

Defensive players can block below the waist under certain circumstances, specifically: the blocker and the player blocked must be on the line and in the free blocking zone at the snap. The contact must be in the zone, and the ball must still be in the zone. An outside linebacker cutting a pulling guard is most likely a foul and must be called in the interest of player safety. For it to be a foul, the contact must clearly be BELOW the waist.....not at the waist which is legal.

Mechanics

Officials who signal touchdown must turn and observe action on and by the scoring player after he crosses the goal line. Recently, an official signaled while facing the center of the field. Behind him and out of view, the runner was "lit up" by a frustrated defensive player. Fortunately another official did see the action and flagged it.

Punctuality

There continue to be reports of officials showing up for games just prior to or after the scheduled kickoff time. Officials need to account for reasonable eventualities, including traffic. Depending on the level of the game, officials should be at the game site at least 30 minutes prior to kickoff.

Victory Offense

When a team reports that they are "taking a knee", the officials should make sure that the defense understands that the ball will become dead almost the instant it is live. The referee should remind the quarterback to go right to his knee. Officials should be close enough to separate players after the ball is dead, but not so close that they are in either team's formation. Recently, a quarterback announced he was taking a knee but then took the snap and stood up for several seconds before going to a knee. This caused confusion on both teams and could have resulted in injuries if either team decided to "go live." So far, coaches and players are respecting this formality and showing good sportsmanship at one of the most difficult times of the game...the last seconds!

Unnecessary Roughness

We have reports of some devastating hits on players who are well out of the play, e.g., trailing a long run or pass, or jogging downfield well behind a rolling punt. These hits are intended to intimidate and punish, and must be observed by officials who have the wide view on these plays. Sometimes these hits are defended by coaches who say that the whistle hadn't blown. This is a judgment call and the official must error on the side of safety. One great officiating tool is our voice. Use it in these circumstances to let the player know not to hit the opponent. In many cases you can see it coming and can prevent it by yelling a warning.

Free Blocking Zone - Nothing has changed!

"The free blocking zone is a rectangular area extending laterally 4 yards either side of the spot of the snap and 3 yards behind each line of scrimmage. A player is in the free blocking zone when any part of his body is in the zone at the snap." Working with the coach's advisory committee we've operationally defined the above to be "tackle to tackle" including defensive linemen lined up on the outside shoulder of the offensive tackles. This "tackle to tackle" philosophy is for all formations except for formations at the goal line or in short yardage where all linemen's splits are down to nothing and then the TE would be in the zone. I hope this is nothing new! As for unbalanced lines, the tackle "over" would be out of the free blocking zone (in the same spot as the TE would have been) and can't cut.

Intentional Grounding

The referee is responsible for the QB and must stay with the QB as he throws, sometimes at the last second and under intense pressure. While the referee is ruling on roughing the QB or not roughing the QB, he cannot always determine where the ball is thrown or if there is an eligible player in the area. In this case, the flank officials must help the referee and report to the referee at the end of the play if the pass was thrown into an empty area and their may be intentional grounding. **Flanks should never throw their flags when this occurs** as the flanks are not responsible for this call and may have no idea whether the QB's arm was hit, the receiver ran the wrong route, or the QB was being hit as he threw. Report the information to the referee and let the referee make the call and possibly throw a late flag. That is our proper mechanic.

Offensive Picks

Please be alert for situations near the goal line or short yardage where an offensive receiver may "pick" a defensive back or linebacker. In most cases there is some sort of "scissors" action in which two receivers cross. Look for one of the receivers to block or run into the defensive back that is covering the other receiver, or has a chance of covering the other receiver. It's not a pick when a receiver runs a short pattern and is stationary and then a defensive back runs into him. The receiver has the right to his established spot prior to the contact. There are a lot of variations on this play so get familiar with them, look for them in your games and on your DVDs.

Signals by Punt Returners

At times our high school punt returners cross their arms across their chests like an incomplete pass signal indicating to their teammates to get away from the bouncing football. In college this is considered an invalid fair-catch signal. But in high school we do not use that strict interpretation of the rule book **unless** it somehow confuses the defense and the receiver then picks up the ball and advances it after the defense has stopped because of the signal. In almost every instance I've seen, the receiver signals with the crossing motion, the receiving team all scrambles away from the ball while the kicking team follows the ball until it stops rolling and downs it. Let's not get technical and create a problem where one didn't exist. Do not penalize this signal by a receiver in high school.

1st and 2nd Year Officials at Games

Crews are responsible for any 1st or 2nd year officials who are observing their games. As much as we want our newer officials to see "how it's done", we are all there representing the San Diego County Football Officials Association and need to make a positive impression with all school staff members. Please model for our younger officials what it is to present ourselves as professionals while we are guests on the school campuses. Please treat all school personnel with respect and courtesy. Remember, without staff opening gates and doors, showing us around the facility, or offering us some water at halftime, our work would be extremely difficult. Be friendly and thankful.