

San Diego County Football Officials Association

Common Sense and Good Judgment Approach to Officiating

Adapted from CALIFORNIA FOOTBALL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

AS A FOOTBALL OFFICIAL, YOU SHOULD REMEMBER THIS:

1. If you are in doubt, don't throw the flag or blow the whistle.
2. If you think it was a foul, it was not.
3. When in doubt, the pass is incomplete.
4. When in doubt, it is a fumble.
5. When in doubt, progress was stopped rather than a strip.
6. When in doubt, it is a touchback.
7. When in doubt, the pass is forward rather than backward behind the neutral zone.
8. When in doubt, the pass is backward rather than forward beyond the neutral zone or when there is no neutral zone.
9. If in doubt, the block is legal rather than below the waist.
10. When in doubt, the block is from the side.
11. When in doubt, the ball is accidentally kicked.
12. When in doubt, the ball is not touched on kick or forward pass.
13. When in doubt, it is not a face mask foul.
14. When in doubt, the ineligible was not downfield.
15. When in doubt, it was a "football act" and not an ejection.
16. When in doubt, the celebration was not prolonged or choreographed.
17. If you're in doubt, the passer's arm was going forward and it is an incomplete pass rather than a fumble.
18. See the ball break the plane of the goal in player possession.
19. If you did not see the approach, it is never a clip.
20. Always be sure of a foul and never guess, as there are not phantom fouls
21. Pick up your flag if you realize the foul wasn't there.
22. Let the foul screech before calling it.
23. Never seek fouls or hunt trouble.
24. Keep officiating after you call a foul.
25. Judgment in the final analysis is the application of common sense, and common sense tells us that extremes are as undesirable in officiating as in anything else.
26. If it didn't affect the play or take an advantage of an opponent, it is not a foul.
27. Never guess what may have happened.
28. Concentrate on each play -- just one at a time. Down, distance, clock and team. The whole game will take care of itself.
29. Talking will get you in trouble.
30. When you see pass interference, don't let crowd noise help you call it.
31. Be consistent in declaring the ball dead.
32. Concentrate your efforts on the point of attack, not away from the ball.
33. If it involves the safety of a player, call it.
34. Get involved, either physically or mentally, in every play.
35. Be slow and positive in declaring possession on fumbles.
36. Overriding principle: It is the purpose of the rules to penalize a player who by reason of an illegal act has placed his opponent at a disadvantage.
37. Help players, especially on muddy unmarked fields, who are possibly lining up in the neutral zone as split ends rather than having a penalty contest with the other flank official.
38. Don't blow your whistle unless you see the ball. Forward progress and timing are the two most important aspects of the game.
39. Let the players settle the game: Avoid technicalities that don't affect the game.
40. Don't see how fast you can count to 25 seconds, especially on the first play of the game.
41. Never anticipate fouls -- "let it happen"

42. Officiate in a manner that no one will ask who the officials were.
43. Call fouls and continue to officiate.
44. Fouls inside the five yard line should be called like fouls on the fifty.
45. On emotional plays where a team attempts to make a first down, bring out the chains and let them decide it.
46. The only part of officiating to emphasize is your signaling.
47. That substitute that is running to get off the field doesn't have to be watched until he is completely off. He has done that when he passes the flank official. If could be you missed the play while you had your back turned.
48. Never show arrogance, irritation or anger when enforcing a penalty.
49. Never "react" emotionally.
50. No "mystery" flags. Get it in the air where everyone can see it.
51. Avoid coaches before and after the game.
52. Putting the hand on the face mask is not a foul. It must be grasped.
53. If a man is in motion and the quarterback is stepping back at the snap, this puts no one to a disadvantage.
54. Don't be picky or over-technical.
55. No fan ever paid to see an official officiate.
56. Know the rulebook so you know the game -- not so you can be over technical.
57. Let the play kill itself.
58. Concentration is knowing your responsibilities and mentally reviewing them before each down.
59. Don't call it unless you can hang your hat on it.
60. You call fouls to make a game fair and safe, don't just call fouls.
61. It can be understandable when an official doesn't see something -- it is never understandable when an official calls a foul that wasn't there.
62. Your job is officiating -- not coaching.
63. When you report a foul to the referee, you should also know the proper enforcement of that penalty. Check to see if it is done correctly.
64. Avoid an air of belligerence.
65. It's an accepted fact that great coaches "out-prepare" the competition, so do great officials.
66. How can you react correctly, if you're not prepared?
67. The best officials always seem to be in the best position to see things.
68. When you watch great officials, you'll always see great mechanics.
69. Kicking plays usually decide the close games. Maybe these are the plays to "bear down" even harder?
70. Don't miss personal fouls, unsportsmanlike and fouls dead ball fouls.
71. "Holding" should either gain an advantage, or somehow place an opponent at a disadvantage or restrict him.
72. Be felt, not heard, as much as possible.
73. In calling a foul, you must know was the ball loose or in possession? Was it a live or dead ball? Where was the ball when the foul was committed?
74. Never sacrifice accuracy for speed in making officiating decisions.
75. Knowing what to look for and where to look is a requirement of every official on every play. Some do -- some don't. The great ones always know.
76. If an official questions your call, don't fence yourself in. Reverse the question -- ask him what he thinks.
77. An officiating sin -- to move the chains without orders.
78. Preventative officiating is your best weapon towards maintaining game control.
79. A word of warning at the right time goes a long way.
80. If a player is baiting or having words with an opponent, warn the player through his captain. Warn -- don't threaten!
81. Be great dead ball officials.
82. Officiating is a team game -- you're all members of the same crew. The game is either well officiated or poorly officiated.