**SAN DIEGO COUNTY FOOTBALL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION**
**THE WEEKLY BULL – October 4, 2023**

**No Meeting This Week** – Our next meeting will be next Wednesday October 11th.  Meanwhile read and discuss the Bull with your fellow officials and watch this week’s Instructional Video.

**Nathan Thernes, Dave Melton and Frank Mannen Inducted Into the Hall of Fame** – Thank you to all who supported our three newest members in the San Diego Sports Officials Hall of Fame.  Congratulations to these outstanding officials who have added so much to the SDCFOA and it legacy!

**Helping the Runner Rule** - Changes have been made at higher levels of football allowing offensive teams to pile in behind and directly push the runner. Because of these changes, we are now seeing similar plays at the high school level. As guardians of the game, it is imperative that all stakeholders work together to remove “helping the runner” from our high school game.

The NFHS Football Rules Committee’s main focus is risk minimization, followed closely by assurance of a balance between offensive and defensive rules. Because the players on defense must guard against the pass, they are not able to counter the advantages created by “helping the runner” formations. Allowing teams to help the runner by illegal techniques swings the balance heavily in favor of the offense. Football game officials need to change their view of “helping the runner” to a risk issue (clipping, chop block) and remove it from the “pioneer call” category and refocus on ending plays when forward progress is stopped. **Pushing the pile is legal; direct contact and pushing, pulling, lifting of the runner is not.**

Removing “helping the runner” from high school football will at times be met with resistance. School administrative support of football game officials, re-focus of coaches and education of players will lead to a smooth transition. All those directly involved in our great game must stay committed to trying to minimize risk to all players and maintaining the balance between offensive and defensive play.

**Kick Catch Interference** – Do we know the proper penalty enforcement options?  Don’t forget the option to take the result of the play!!  Or an awarded fair catch plus 15-yards from the spot of the foul.  Or a 15-yard enforcement from the previous spot and replay the down.

**Losing a Down** – I’m aware of two instances where a crew has lost track of the down and shorted the offense their 3rd down play by declaring it is 4th down.  Here’s how they happened.  Box man in 1st game flips from 2nd to 3rd down as the play ends.  Dead ball foul is administered, and the box is informed that the down counts so he is asked to flip again making it 4th down.  Box person admitted it later in the game.  In the second game, no foul is involved.  The box man quickly flips the down as the play ends.  Then the crew looks to the box and goes to the next down…4th down.  These are crew errors that must not happen.  If you need to, you can go to the team statistician, or you can even use an IPad with sideline feed to go back and determine the correct down.  You cannot use an IPad for any other purpose as it is not permissible by rule.

**Expanded Neutral Zone** – Can it be expanded up to 2 yards into the end zone?  Answer: NO, the neutral zone may be expanded up to a maximum of 2 yards behind the defensive line of scrimmage, in the field of play.  The expanded neutral zone is for linemen only (ineligible A players).  No ineligibles running around in the endzone please - LOL

**Anniversary Awards –**If you are celebrating an anniversary of service to SDCFOA, we want to recognize you at the banquet this year.  If your first year of service is 2004, 1994, or 1984, we want to present you with a “Years of Service” award this year.  Please contact Rick Christensen at  [Contact SDCFOA | San Diego County Football Officials Association](https://www.sdcfoa.org/contact-sdcfoa) with your information no later than October 20th.

**Nominations for CA State Playoffs** – Congratulations to the following officials who have been nominated to work at State Championship Game.
**Referee:**Ted Schiess, Jacob Wittler; **Umpire:**Andre Coleman, Andy Wilson; **Flanks**: Glen Inigo, Terry Bernard, Greg Covington, David Collins **Deep Flanks:**Eric Stoffer, Brian Mills, Ben Boccoli, Levi Sumner **BJ:**Rob Schaerer, Cory Butts

**Crew Chiefs, the Weekly Bulletin, and Video** - Crew Chiefs are working extra hard this year to communicate with their crew prior to the next game.  Topics include the Weekly Bulletin, the Weekly Instructional Video, and cut ups from their previous game.  This is a huge time commitment so I hope the crew is pitching in and participating.  We must get better each week!

**Inside 5 minutes** – I observed several games where the final 3-5 minutes of either half became “pressure cooker.”  Let’s prepare to match this intensity with our own internal communication, or maybe a code word or just a reminder on the radios.  Our focus must be clear and our minds sharp.  Obviously we officiate every play in the game like it’s the last “game winning” play, but sometimes we need a re-set as we prepare for action at this critical time in the game!  Remember to pause and be deliberate when the game clock is stopped.  We hustle when it’s running but we have a chance to help the players, coaches and the game by informing everyone that the clock is stopped.

**The Use of the Whistle** – It is our local, state and national mechanic to not blow our whistles unless we see the ball in possession, and progress stopped or the player down by rule.  We do not want inadvertent whistles, but when the player is down and you see the ball in his possession, please blow your whistles – loud – and not staccato!

**Accurate Progress Spots** – This is becoming a point of emphasis at every level of the game.  I’m sure you’ve noticed the scrutiny that the NFL is now giving to spots and the line to gain or goal line.  We too can get more accurate spots by focusing on the ball, and where exactly it is, when the runner’s progress was stopped, he went out of bounds, or down by rule.  Remember to use your **DOWNFIELD FOOT** to mark the exact progress spot.

**Communication with Players and Coaches** – Be a Mike Weseloh when it comes to communication!!!  Please respond to players with facts, or the rule, or “I saw the block and it was close but legal.”  “I was focused on other action on that play, I’ll watch for that foul.” Explain to coaches that “Coach we just saw the play differently.”  “I hear you, I understand.” “What did you see?”  Remember, positive and proper communication starts as we arrive at the school.  Be professional from the time you park your car.

**Communication Within the Crew** – Feedback from the observers has been very complimentary in this area.  Not only are we communicating consistently and accurately with our supplemental hand signals, we have been very loud and vocal in our communication.  Each individual on the crew can do enormous good for the crew as a whole by participating vocally on every play…down, distance, my goal line, your goal line, the status of the ball relative to the 5-yard mark on the chains, double stakes, wind, no wind, the clock is hot, when to hack relative to the final 25 seconds of the half or game, …the list goes on and on.  Keep yourself and the crew alert on each and every play by communicating loudly and consistently.