**Touchback or Safety** – When a pass is intercepted or a punt is caught near the defense’s own goal line, and the player is ultimately tackled in the end zone, is it a safety or a touchback? It depends how the ball got into the end zone in the first place. If the interception or catch of the punt takes the momentum of the player into the end zone, then the ruling is that the ball got into the end zone as a result of the play (pass or punt) and if tackled in the end zone it is a touchback. If the player intercepted or caught the punt well in the field of play and LATER ran into his own end zone and is tackled there, then we have a safety. The reason for the ball being in the end zone in this case is that the player carried it in – Safety. When in doubt, we will rule touchback!

**Chop Block and Block Below the Waist** – Both block are illegal and I’ve heard coaches confuse the definitions of them. A block below the waist is just that, one-on-one block that starts below the waist…not at the waist, below the waist. A Chop Block is a 2-on-1 block…”a combination block by two or more teammates against an opponent other than the runner, with or without delay, where one of the blocks is low (at the knee or below) and one of the blocks is high(above the knee).”

**Holding** – NFHS Rule “An offensive player (except the runner) shall not use his hands, arms or legs to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent.” So what common sense logic should we be using to distinguish between holding and not holding because this type of action can be seen on almost every play? Here are some of our philosophies:

1. Was the defender controlled by this action?
2. Was it prolonged, or was it a quick grab and release?
3. Did it put the defender at a disadvantage?
4. Were they “dancing,” or was the defender trying to get away?
5. Did the action restrict the defender’s penetration up field?
6. Was the defender part of the tackle of the runner “just before” or “just as” he was being held?
7. Was the runner already past the point where the holding action took place?
8. What effect does the “holding action” have on the play?
9. You must watch the Engagement and the Disengagement. SEE THE ENTIRE ACTION!
10. Holding action on the perimeter is not as forgiven as it might be in the interior line.
11. Officials must stay with their keys and make sure they see the action from start to finish.
12. Take downs are not passed over.

When these philosophies are properly applied, the big ones will jump out at you. Everyone will see it.

**Coaches and Holding** – I’ve witnessed many a game where coaches start yelling for holding from the first to the last play of the game. My experience has proven that this does no one any good. What does seem to help the game is specific information regarding the number of players being held or doing the holding. When coaches get that information relayed through their flank official to the rest of the crew, then the referee and umpire can go to work and start communicating with the players involved, watching specific players more closely, and flagging the penalty if it happens again. But just screaming “holding” on plays does absolutely nothing. Consider a different approach, communicate!!!! And this goes for officials and coaches ☺