These manual supplements the NFHS Rule Book and reflects PSI South’s philosophy in relation to the situations encountered before, during and after football games.

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## Officials Conduct

1. You only have one chance to make a first impression.
2. Your integrity is your most valuable asset, without it, you can’t officiate.
3. If you can’t plan to be on-site at least 30 minutes prior to kick-off you should not accept any game.

### Proper Uniform

* Clean shaved that day (males) facial hair neat and trim, hair combed (long hair pulled back and tied)
* Tobacco of any kind while on school grounds or in the presence of players, coaches, administration or fans is strictly prohibited. (Never in uniform in public)
* Avoid use of profanity at any time at game site.
* Never get into debates or arguments with coach or fans prior to, during or after games.
* Do not talk negatively about fellow officials or those related with officiating.
* Always be polite when talking with anyone while in uniform. Look the part act the part and be a positive role model for officials and players.
* Keep a Game Card that will allow you to record; COIN TOSS INFO, ALL TIME OUTS, ANY UNSPORTMANLIKE FOULS with TIMES and NUMBERS and SIDELINE WARNINGS and any extra info that you feel may help you be a better official; coach’s names, team names, captains, get back coach, kickers #’s (right or left footed) quarter back # (left or right handed), kick receivers #’s, penalty info, questions about game.

### Preventative Officiating

* Make **preventative** officiating a priority. Aim to prevent the player or coach from earning the flag.

## Officiating Axioms

You won’t find these axioms in the books, but learning and applying them will make you games go smoother and the officiating experience for enjoyable.

* See everything you call, but don’t call everything you see.
* Hustle, but don’t rush.
* Let’em play. Call the BIG fouls.
* Always see the ball before you blow your whistle.
* You earn your money during dead ball periods. Prevent, prevent, prevent.
* Be deliberate.
* Crisp ball movement, no committee meetings, no walking on the field.
* Count players every down-Don’t punch unless you’ve counted.
* Please and Thank You goes a long way. If you miss one don’t look back, we must always be ready to officiate the next play.

## When in Question

When a play is too close to call and you are unsure, use these rules of thumbs.

### General Game Situations:

* Defenseless or not-------------------------------------------------Defenseless
* Excessive/Unnecessary or Not------------------Excessive/Unnecessary
* Runner in-bounds or out-of-bound------------------------------inbounds
* Incomplete Pass or Fumble-------------------------------incomplete pass
* Forward or backward pass-------------------------------------------forward
* Kick or pass touched or not------------------------------------------------not
* Catch or not-------------------------------------------------------------no catch
* Passer has thrown or fumbled----------------------------------has thrown
* Touchback or safety-------------------------------------------------touchback
* Fumble or dead ball---------------------------------------------------dead ball
* Helmet on or off----------------------------------------------------------------off
* Accidental or intentional/contact, touching or kicking------accidental
* Legal block or clip-------------------------------------------------------------legal
* Block above or below the waist------------------------------------------above
* 5 or 15 face mask----------------------------------------------------------------15
* 5 or 15 kicker/holder------------------------------------------------------------15

### Scoring Plays

* When in question, it is NOT a touchdown.
* When in question, it is NOT a safety.
* A non-airborne runner crossing the goal inside the pylon with the ball crossing the goal line extended is a touchdown

## Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Listed here are “obvious” acts that must be addressed every time they are seen. Timing often dictates if a flag is warranted. Again, the officials who are quick and in position can often prevent the obvious act merely by his/her presence.

### Players Celebration:

Allow for brief, spontaneous, emotional reactions at the end of the play.

* Beyond brief, spontaneous bursts of energy, officials should flag those acts that are clearly prolonged, self-congratulatory, and that make a mockery of the game.
* Strutting or changing strides when breaking away on a score
* Diving into the end zone with no obvious pursuit by defenders Posing or dancing after a score
* Spiking or throwing the ball

Anything seen as a planned celebration **IS A FOUL** and should be flagged

#### Taunting (Visual Act):

* Pointing a finger
* Six guns
* Throat slash
* Standing over an opponent \*\*
* Gesturing towards the opponent’s sideline

#### Taunting (Verbal Act):

* Any taunting said so loud it is heard be an opponent and a referee.
* Coaches/players using profanity

## Coaches Conduct

### Coaches Questioning Officials:

* Coaches may not like your call or your ruling on a play. They may even say ‘that was a terrible call’. This is ok. They cannot like the call, but they cannot say ‘you made a terrible call’.
* Throwing of hat, clipboard, program or anything else while standing on the field
* Indulging in conduct which would incite players or spectators against officials
* Anything negative said towards the opponent or Game Official
* All the above actions would be an Unsportsmanlike flag against the coach

## Communication

### With Head Coaches

* If the HEAD coach requests a Coach/Referee Conference, he may do so ONLY for reviewing a decision which may have resulted from a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule.
  + If the Referee alters his ruling, the opponent will be notified, the revision made, and the time-out shall be an official’s time-out.
  + If the Referee’s rulings prevail, the time-out remains charged to the team requesting time-out for the conference.
* Head Coaches may not request a referee-coaches conference to discuss an official’s judgement.

### With Players

* Make the effort to give positive feedback whenever possible. “Nice job staying out of that pile 74”. And when you need to talk to them, try to be positive, “54, I need your help here, stay focused on football, don’t talk to that guy” or, “Come on 99, I know you are better than that, don’t do something that will embarrass your team”.
* Avoid yelling except to get their attention.
* Avoid touching players except with a gentle pat on the shoulders, stay away from helmets or below the waist.
* DON’T use profanity; you can’t expect them to be good if you are not.
* DON’T threaten with a flag directly, be subtle, “67 you need to watch your hands”.
* And never send a player off for a play to cool off, **report problems to coaches** **and let them decide** to pull a player.

Pre-game Responsibilities:

* A pre-game meeting is one of the most valuable tools for a crew to prepare for officiating a high school football game, from a freshman game to a CCS Championship, each game requires the officials to be prepared and ready to work.

### Advantage/Disadvantage

* The key factor in deciding to throw a flag is “Advantage gained”. If a player or team is gaining an advantage though a rule violation a flag must be thrown.
* IF there is no advantage gained, **perhaps a warning and comment to a coach is the better course of action.**
* Defining advantage gained is difficult and requires a very good understanding of the game.

Line play/Alignment (encroachment/false start etc.)

1. Officials will work to keep the offensive and defensive linemen legal and will call only the obvious. Lineman’s head or hand in the neutral zone – warning 1 or 2 times (advise player) (advise coach) than flag.
2. If the offensive player is lined up with his head clearly behind the rear end of the snapper, a foul will be called. Back or flanker not quite on line or in backfield – same warnings (advise coach)
3. Don’t be technical on an offensive player who is a wide receiver or slot back in determining if he is off the line of scrimmage. When in question, it is not a foul if there is a stagger between alignments. (advise player and coach)
4. Foul if NO stagger between their alignments.
5. Wide out (receiver) foot in zone – same warnings (advise coach)
6. Formations during the execution of a trick or unusual play have the highest degree of scrutiny and should be completely legal.
7. Offensive Tackle off the line – running play, warn, passing play FLAG. An offensive lineman can gain an advantage by being off the line and able to block an outside rushing defender.
8. When in question, a quick or abrupt movement by a center or quarterback is a false start.

**Don’t wait until the fourth quarter to enforce the rule.**

#### Motion/Movement violations:

1. Back in motions leans or runs slightly toward line of scrimmage – warn
2. Motion man takes a jab step forward prior to snap – FLAG
3. Offensive down lineman adjusts his feet or rear end – ignore, Advise coach
4. lineman moves his hand slowly or adjusts his shoulders – warn if no reaction from defense. (Flag if draws defense)
5. lineman makes any jerky move – FLAG
6. Offensive back makes a quick forward step then goes in motion – FLAG
7. Offensive back begins leaning forward prior to snap – If Obvious FLAG, if not, warn.
8. Wide receiver leans prior to snap – If Obvious FLAG, if not, warn.

##### Offensive Pass Interference

Actions that constitute OPI include but are not limited to the following three areas:

1. Initiating contact with the defender by shoving or pushing off thus Creating Separation in an attempt to catch a pass beyond the Expanded Neutral Zone.(beyond 3 yards downfield)
2. Driving Thru a defender who has established a position on the field.
3. PICK PLAY; OPI for Blocking Downfield while another receiver cuts behind that block and receives a pass. (Pick play; happens more often than not while in goal line)

#### Not Forward Pass Interference

1. If unavoidable contact occurs when two or more eligible are making a bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
2. When on a screen pass when the ball is overthrown behind the Neutral zone, but subsequently lands beyond the expanded Neutral Zone (up to two yards) and linemen are blocking downfield, unless such blocking prevents a defensive player from catching the ball.
3. On a pick play if the **defensive player** is blocking the offensive player when the contact occurs and doesn’t make a separate action, or if the contact occurs within the expanded Neutral Zone
4. If contact by B is obviously away from the direction of the pass.

#### Blocking

1. Take downs will be called HOLDING.
2. If there is a potential offensive holding but the action occurs clearly away from the Point of Attack (POA) and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, offensive holding should not be called.
3. If there is a potential for defensive holding but the action occurs clearly away from the POA and has (or could have no ) effect on the play, defensive holding should not be called. EXAMPLE: A defensive back on the opposite side of the field holds a receiver on a designed run play to the other side.
4. For blocks in the back, if one hand is on the number and the other is on the side and the initial force is on the number, it is a block in the back. (the player blocked will usually fall forward) Again we are looking for this foul at the POA. If the block is clearly on the side. It is NOT a foul and the player being block will usually fall sideways. If the blocker is in (chase mode) all action must be from the side.
5. A grab of a receiver’s jersey that restricts the receiver and takes away his feet should be defensive holding if other criteria are met, it could also be DPI.
6. Holding can be called even if the quarterback is subsequently sacked as it may be the other half of an off-set foul.
7. Illegal block in the back(IBIB) could still be called on fair catches, but not if the IBIB occurs away from the play as the fair catch is being made or a touchback occurs and the contact is slight (personal foul type actions should always be called)
8. Blocks in the back that are personal foul in nature should always be called regardless of their timing relative to a fair catch, touchback or runner being tackled.
9. Rarely should you have a hold on a double team block unless there is a take down or the defender breaks the double team and is pulled back.
10. When in question if an illegal block occurs in the EZ or field of play, it occurs in the field of play.

### Kicking/Kick-Offs

#### On-side Kicks

The kicker’s restraining line on onside and short pooch kick-offs should be officiated as a plane, any player (other than the kicker or holder) breaking the plane before the ball is kicked should be called for offside. For deep kicks don’t be so technical, if a foot is down beyond the plane before the kick, you have off-side.

#### Scrimmage Kicks

* The manual is the guide for most scrimmage kick situations. Some slight variations for **5 –man mechanics only:**
  1. Before the kick the Back Judge should count (and confirm with the Line Judge) that the receiving team has 11 players on the field.
  2. Back Judge should always remind the receivers to signal properly for a fair catch. And not to run with the ball after a catch or recovery, if in fact he/she does signal.
  3. The Umpire should always remind the defensive line and linebackers to stay away from direct contact on the snapper.
  4. PUNT and Field Goal situation, the Referee has complete responsibility for protecting the kicker and should not be overly concerned about the flight of the ball. Once the players have cleared the Referee will then assist the wings on the position of the ball that has crossed the sideline out of bounds.
  5. On grounded kicked balls which cross the sideline the wings should go to and mark the dead ball spot and signal for the clock to stop without assistance from the Referee.

### Ball-Spotting

* The ball can be placed on a yard line to begin the next series after a change of possession.
* For example, if a kick-off return ends between the 19 and the 20, spot the ball on the 20 yard line or if the punt is whistled dead between the 33 and 34 yard line place the ball on the 34 yard line.
* At all other times place the ball where it became dead.

### Plays at the Sideline

* If legal contact occurs before the runner has a foot down out of bounds, consider it a legal hit,
* If the whistle has blown and a runner continuing to advance down the sideline has eased up, contact by the opponent against the runner is a foul.
* When a runner goes OB on your **sideline**, get the spot, turn and follow the play with your eyes OB. If you need to go into the team box area, drop bean bag and go.
* Opposite wing official maintain cross field mechanics by holding OB spot. On pass plays and long runs into the side zone the Back Judge should always close down into the side zone to assist with dead ball officiating.
* Referees on short runs into the side zone should be moving in to help as well.
* If forward progress of the runner has been stopped inbounds and the runner is than pushed out of bounds the side line official should give the start the clock signal while turning to officiate the dead ball action.
* If in the above scenario the play results in a first down the official should first give the start the clock signal, followed by the stop clock signal.
* If the referee looks to the sideline official before marking the ball ready for play the sideline official shall give the referee the “the one finger wind” signal for a running clock or the two hands crossed in front of the belt signal for a stopped clock.

## Fighting

If a fight breaks out on the field

1. the closest official should carefully move in, using his/whistle and voice to try and separate the individuals.
2. The next two closest officials should try to prevent any other players from becoming involved while recording numbers and activities as they might occur.
3. It is imperative during a fight that sideline officials or other officials if the side line officials are involved in braking up the fight get to the 9 yard marks and while facing the bench area informs the bench personnel to remain off of the field to prevent any further incidents if possible.