**2024 CFOA Football Bulletin III**

**October 17, 2024**

To: Commissioners, Board Interpreters, Curriculum reps, CIAC and league reps, media.

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

Re: Various issues, comments

1. Issues from last Bulletin

**A – Roughing the Passer --** Usually we know what roughing the passer is and we are quick to make the call. A few things to remember:

1. Fouls on the passer while he is defined as the passer under Rule 2-32-11 means that foul is roughing the passer. He is passer from the time he releases the ball until the pass is ended (complete, incomplete, or intercepted), or he moves to participate in the play.

The passer is in a prone position and is, under the defenseless player rule, to be protected. While he is defenseless, we have roughing the passer, or, if the pass ended, we have defenseless player.

This is where the “passing posture” interpretation comes into play. We do not have the same specific rule as higher levels, but the Federation has interpreted the passing posture and called it defenseless. The Referee must be aware that hits at the knee or below are particularly dangerous. Any hit with the body, shoulder, helmet is a foul and can be roughing the passer OR a defenseless player call. It may be, also, an ejection if the hit is deemed excessive.

When in doubt, go with protecting the passer, even if you are not sure he is still the passer.

**B – Intentional Grounding –** Specifically in this case, we want to talk about the passer who can legally throw the ball out of bounds or away. Under the rule the play is legal if the pass “reaches the neutral zone, including the extension of the sideline.” That means it can reach or cross the sideline to infinity once out of bounds. If the pass crosses or reaches the neutral zone, the play is legal. (7-5-2 exc. 2b)

In other cases, if an eligible receiver is in the area and the ball is passed in that direction, the wing official can help the Referee by pointing to the player. If there is no one there, the wing should communicate by word and/or signal. Crews should develop a signal or procedure during the pregame conference.

**C. Rugby-Style Kickers –** We do not see many of these types of kickers, but when we do, the question arises as to protection. We do not have the same rule as the NCAA in this regard. We must protect the kicker if he is “clearly” the kicker. We have always used the idea that a “kicking routine” is needed to enforce the rule properly.

That routine should include the kicker squaring up somehow or in the case of rugby-style kicker, giving an indication that he is clearly kicking the ball.

The problem with this style of kicking is the player is a runner until he kicks the ball, and that means the ball leaves his toe. If he is hit in the process of making the kick, he is a runner. In this regard, the same is true for a traditional-style punter. He is a runner until the ball leaves his toe.

Rule of thumb for Referees: if you are not sure the player is going to kick the ball, neither is the covering player, and roughing or running into the kicker cannot happen.

**D. Swing and a Miss – SHOK.** We had a situation where a kicker flat-out missed a placekick. The question arose when does the play end? If the holder is kneeling on the ground, and the kicker whiffs, the play should be called dead immediately. The potential kick is no longer possible, and the kicker is not in position to make the kick.

The play was called correctly, but it is another thing to check off during your pre-snap review.

**E. Illegal Shifts –** Many times illegal shifts are caused by QBs who are going too fast with their cadences. While the rulebook says all 11 players must be set for a second, we have always used a “count” or the better part of a second. If the shift is clean, and not abrupt – and for the better part of a second – let it go. What we do not want are players settling into their stances and the ball snapped. Note: We do not have the same rule as the NCAA in this regard. If players are still moving to their initial positions, and the ball is snapped, that is a live-ball foul. The NCAA shuts it down and calls it a false start.

**F. Holding –** Holding should affect the play. Four questions should be asked before making the call: “Is it a hold? Is it a hold? Is it a hold? Does it affect the play?

The final question is the most important. Holding of some type occurs on almost every play. The key is finding the one that springs a runner. If the hold is used to create a space for the runner to advance, we should call a foul.

What we do not want is a holding penalty called ahead of the play, and the runner never gets there.

Coaches are going to yell holding, and we must understand they are looking for a call. We must make sure any holding call is “Cadillac” as far as it affects the play. Holding calls that are made ahead of the runner, and the runner never advances to or beyond that spot are useless flags, and unnecessary. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A LATE FLAG FOR HOLDING.**

**Sideline Control –** We must be more consistent with this. Some crews are excellent in keeping the teams out of the Restricted Area. Some crews not so much. If the Referee calls a sideline warning for a wing, that wing is not doing his job. Mechanically, when we have a sideline warning, we are throwing the flag.

That’s it for now. Have a great weekend. We are half-way through the year.

BR