**2024 CFOA Football Bulletin II**

**September 6, 2024**

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

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

Re: Various issues, comments

1. **Scrimmage kick formations, numbering exceptions**
2. **Scrimmage Kick Formation –** Simply put, to be in a scrimmage kick formation, a team may not have a player in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap, have either a player seven yards in position to be a place kick holder, with a kicker in position behind, or have a player 10 yards or more to act as a potential kicker. The rule was modified and expanded when the now-illegal A11 Offense came into being and the numbering exception rule was expanded. So, knowing what the formation is, we turn to numbering exceptions.
3. During first, second, or third down, only the snapper may be an exception to the numbering rule and must be situated between the ends to be legal.
4. On fourth down any number of exceptions may come in, and after the snapper touches the ball must settle or shift between the ends.
5. To remain legal, the team may not shift out of the scrimmage kick formation into another regular formation. If that happens the team violates the exception rule. This is sometimes missed by crews.
6. Wing officials must know their eligible receivers on their side when the formation develops.
7. The Umpire is responsible for interior linemen that are numbering exceptions. The Referee might be able to help, but primary responsibility is with the Umpire.
8. With numbering exceptions, it is possible to have a snapper with an eligible number on the end of the line. Numbering exceptions are established when the team sets or shifts into the scrimmage kick formation once the snapper has touched the ball. A snapper on the end of the line is eligible by number and position, and not an exception to the rule.
9. Violations of the numbering rule are fouls at the snap.
10. **Kick-off reminders**
11. **Inside the 35 –** Back Judges must make sure on kickoff and free kicks that the kicking team’s players must be within five yards of the free kick line (usually the 40) to be legal. The exception, of course, is the player who kicks the ball. Only he may be more than five yards back. The Referee has this responsibility if another player kicks the ball. The player who positioned as a kicker is then in illegal formation. Dead ball foul, five yards.

Unlike the NCAA rule, they may not straddle or be on the 35, but must be within it. Before a Back Judge raises his hand, he should check the legality. If a player loops behind the 35 before the ball is kicked that is a dead-ball foul or illegal formation.

1. **Four on either side –** On free kicks and kickoffs the kicking team must have no less than four players on either side of the kicker. The Referee is the primary official on this rule. Watch for players going behind the kicker. This, also, is a dead-ball foul, five yards.
2. **On-side kick restrictions –** The kicking team may not block before it is eligible to touch the ball. In the NFHS rule, it is a 10-yard penalty for an illegal block, (signal 43) the NCAA rule is a five-yard penalty (signal 19). If the block is below the waist or some other 15-yard foul, the 15-yarder takes precedence.

If the receiving team blocks inside the ten-yard area between the kicking and receiving team restraining lines, all bets are off, and blocks are legalized.

**Note:** Fouls during kicks may be enforced from the previous spot, as it was during the loose-ball interval, ***but there is an exception.*** Fouls by the kicking team from the time the ball is kicked until it ends, may be enforced from the dead-ball (succeeding) spot. This is true on scrimmage kicks as well.

**Play:** During an onside kick attempt from K's 40-yard line, K32 blocks R7 at K's 49-yard line. The kick is rolling at K's 48-yard line and has not been touched at the time the block occurred. The onside kick is recovered by K at R's 46-yard line.

**Ruling:** The recovery by K gives the ball to R as that spot. The illegal block is then enforced from that spot as R will be the next team to put the ball into play. (10-4-2c Exception, 10-5-1j). R 1/10 at the K-36.

With this rule, the offended team has two options: re-kick after enforcement from the previous spot, or the 10-4-2c exception. In the above case, there is only one logical option.

**Aside:** The Referee should make it simple to the offended sideline: “You want the ball, right coach?” And then proceed with the enforcement.

Hat tip to Tom Azevedo, MIAA State Interpreter for this play.

1. **Bicycle Pants revisited**
2. **Second Offense, same player –** In the last bulletin, we noted a player with his pants rolled up at his knees, making his pants “bicycle shorts,” is to be sent off as if for an injury and must sit out a play.

In doing the cut-and-paste from the Interpreters’ Meeting notes, the second part was left off.

Once a player is sent off, his number should be recorded. If he comes back later with the pants rolled up again, he will be assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. We hope it does not come to this.

**Note: Preventative Officiating –** In the pre-game walk, and during the halftime warm-up period, officials should talk to coaches and players if the players have their pants worn improperly.

**Note 2:** Players are now wearing compression-style pants with the pads sewn in. The pants must still be down to knee length.

1. **Varia**
2. **Guardian Caps –** A question has come up regarding the use of Guardian Caps and a player losing them during play. The cap is not the helmet. If it comes off, the player does not have to sit out a play.
3. **Passing Posture –** While it is not in the rulebook, the NFHS has adopted the “passing posture” mindset to protect the quarterback once he has released a pass. A player attempting a tackle at the knees or below should be coming in with the hands to grasp or encircle the passer. Any hits that include the helmet, shoulders, or some other body block at or below the knees are fouls. Also, passers are defenseless players once they release the ball, and should be protected until they move to participate in the play. Referees must be careful not to let their eyes wonder after the pass is thrown.

**Note: Any foul on the passer while he is defined as the passer is “Roughing the Passer,” and should be penalized accordingly.**

1. **Rugby-style punters –** Teams that use rugby-style punters complain their kickers are not being protected. A rugby-style kicker is a runner until he has kicked the ball, but his kicking “routine” is not the same as that of a traditional one- or two-step kicker. “Routine” helps protect the kicker. If the defender is not sure what the potential kicker is doing, he cannot be responsible for a foul against the “kicker.” If, however, the defender tries to get a free shot in after the kick is completed, it could be a personal foul rather than roughing.

**Referees: If you are not sure the player is going to kick, neither does the opponent. Further note, a kicker, rugby or traditional, is a runner until the ball leaves his toe.**

1. **Dead-ball Officiating –** Have your head on a swivel and make sure after a play is over that the “colors have cleared.” That is a fancy way of saying the teams have separated. Step between players, if necessary, otherwise use your voice and establish your presence. Getting the ball for the next play is secondary to making sure there are no dead-ball fouls.
2. **Sideline Control –** Wings must establish their control of the sideline.
3. Work off the field. If in the team area, work two yards off the sideline and not on the field as you should in any part of the field.
4. Know who the “get back coach” is and establish a rapport with him.
5. Use the “sideline warning” if necessary. It works wonders and throw the yellow flag when calling it. It strikes fear in the hardest of hearts.

Have a great opening night!

BR