



## **2012–2013 GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

### **SPORTSMANSHIP – END OF GAME MANAGEMENT**

The NFHS Game Officials Manual Committee has once again made Sportsmanship a point of emphasis for the 2012-2013 football seasons and wants to extend the focus to include end-of-game protocol/preventive officiating. NFHS football rules allow state associations to prescribe a point differential that allows the game to be terminated or a running clock to be used. The NFHS Football Rules Committee shares the concern about potential injuries and the issues surrounding sportsmanship in those situations when the point differential is implemented. A basic requirement for all athletes is to be able to control their emotions when things occur that could trigger unsportsmanlike behavior. It is of the utmost importance that participants, coaches and game officials carefully and diligently enforce all playing rules, but particularly those regarding safety and risk minimization. Unwarranted and unnecessary “punishing” of an opponent has become a style of play that is specifically condemned when a game has been decided. Players must be made aware of potentially unsafe techniques and refrain from their use. For game officials, dead-ball officiating is critical in these types of games. Players must be monitored carefully as they may resort to cheap shots. Game officials must be ever vigilant to make calls involving player safety and potential risk. There are several areas of officiating that should never be compromised. Taunting and fouls that endanger player safety must never be ignored. Obvious and blatant acts cannot be ignored. Players also have responsibilities to their teams and their opponents to play within the rules for the whole game. All game officials have an opportunity to exercise preventive officiating but must call those fouls related to player safety. Game officials will at times need to be more vocal on the field and empower the captains to help game officials keep their teammates in line. Coaches and game officials must act decisively to eliminate - to the greatest extent possible - threats to the welfare of football players.

### **ENFORCING THAT LEGAL EQUIPMENT IS WORN PROPERLY**

Head Coaches and game officials should always keep in mind that risk minimization comes first. Required equipment is mandated for the well-being of the players. Coaches and game officials must remember that high school players are apt to mimic what they see collegiate or professional players do on television. Note that what is allowed at those levels by either rule or application of rules can be totally different than what is legal or should be allowed in high school. Permitting players to wear knee pads that do not cover the knee is one such area of concern. Requiring the play card to be worn on the wrist as intended by the manufacturer is another. Enforcing the NFHS football equipment rules is just as important as enforcing a clip or chop block as both of these rules deal directly with player safety. Ideally, the head coach should shoulder a great deal of this responsibility because the coach is required to verify that all of the team’s players are legally equipped. Game officials have the responsibility to penalize the head coach when players are not legally equipped and to prohibit the players from participating until they become legally equipped. It is suggested that game officials address these equipment concerns during the pre-game activities through a diligent review of all players. Coaches and game officials must work together to require compliance with NFHS football equipment rules.

## **LINESMAN AND LINE JUDGE POSITIONING**

It is important that the Linesman and Line Judge begin each play positioned on the sideline, outside the field of play. The Linesman and Line Judge should start each play aligned opposite each other straddling the neutral zone, working just out of bounds but inside the restraining line that aligns with their respective sideline. This will help the wing officials with several field management duties:

Player and non-player safety as well as sideline control with the prospect for clear communication between the game officials and coaches is very important. Positioning along the sideline allows the action to be in front of them. Working wide will give the Linesman and Line Judge a broader view of the play with complete outside-in coverage while keeping the play boxed in. Working outside the field of play will also prevent game officials from having players lining up or positioned behind them. It is essential to begin each play wide. This gives the game official a better perspective with a wider peripheral view for better officiating opportunities.

## **KICKOFF MECHANICS AND COVERAGE**

Significant changes were implemented by the NFHS Game Officials Manual Committee regarding kickoff mechanics and coverage. As a result of the addition of the new NFHS football rule 9-3-8, the committee is emphasizing the new mechanics and coverage on the kickoff.

The rationale for the changes has to do with the addition of NFHS football rule 9-3-8 and the number of deep kicks that are occurring throughout the country. The Umpire and Line Judge have reversed their positions. This will allow for the Line Judge to be on the line during runbacks and allow him/her to make the calls on the line he/she would typically make during the other plays of the game. In addition, the positioning of the Line Judge has been moved back to the 10-yard line to help with kicks in the deep corner. The Referee has been positioned closer to the sideline to take care of deep kicks to his/her deep corner. The Linesman has been moved up to the receiver's free-kick line to have a better look at the legality of blocks if an on-sides kick occurs. As in other situations, the crew should consider other factors such as wind conditions, skill of the kicker, etc., in adjusting their positions on the kickoff.