

2015 Pre-Season Bulletin 2

Correcting Down Box Errors – Mechanics

I have been asked to provide a consistent and workable mechanic when officials, **prior to the snap**, need to correct the down box when the officials have the correct down but the down box is incorrect. The following “administrative” process will be used by officials when necessary.

If the down box cannot be corrected prior to the ready-for-play, **and the game clock is running**, we will let the clock run, hold the Umpire over the ball, wait until the down box is correct, and then make the ball ready-for-play, **if that can be accomplished with any undue delay to the game**. If the game clock is not running, the same process can be used without concern for any undue delay to the game. Remember, the 25-second play clock does not start until the ball is made ready-for-play, even if the ready-for-play is delayed due to an incorrect down box. You could have a second ready-for-play if a down box error is noticed after the initial ready-for-play, but before the ball is snapped.

If correcting the down box will cause an undue delay, officials will stop the game clock to correct the down box. I am well aware that this will interrupt the tempo, pace and flow of the game, may create an advantage/disadvantage situation for one or both teams, and will cause a new 25-second play clock, **but, BOTTOM LINE, A DOWN SHOULD NOT BE PLAYED WITH AN INCORRECT DOWN SHOWING ON THE DOWN BOX.**

Comment: Three additional thoughts.....

Linesmen....the current interpretation of 5-1-1b gives you extra responsibility to make sure the down box is correct before the start of every play. I don't want you turning your body to check the box before every snap, because you'll miss some action on the field, but a quick glance over your shoulder will accomplish the same check.

Line Judges....you have the best view of the down box. If it shows an incorrect down, get your hand in the air with the correct down; hopefully, the Linesman will see your signal and instruct the down box operator to make the change.

Referees....many of us, including myself, like to establish a brisk game tempo. With the added emphasis on making sure every play is run with a correct down showing on the down box, I would just suggest that Referees slow down our ready-for-play a beat or two to make sure the correct down is showing on the box. Do not get caught up in a no-huddle or hurry-up offense.....remember the old saying, “haste makes waste.” Being more deliberate with your ready-for-play can save a lot of potential grief.