

2015 Regular Season Bulletin 7

Helping the Runner

Play: Back A2 carrying the ball is met by a wall of B players. As runner A2's forward progress slowly continues, lineman A56 joins the pile of players by pushing the B players toward the B goal line but A56 does not contact runner A2 and A56 does not block any B players in the back. Has A56 committed any foul?

Ruling: Rule 9-1 specifically requires an offensive teammate to push, pull or lift the runner in order to be guilty of aiding/assisting the runner. This action is different from blocking or pushing other players in the pile in an effort to create space for the runner to advance by himself. In your play, since A56 does not contact A2 or commit any foul against a B player, A56 has not fouled,

Measurements

Referees, after the chains have been brought onto the field and the Umpire has the front stake and is stretching it out and all eyes are on you, you should be looking down and seeing if it is first down from the side of the chain opposite the press box. That way everyone sees the front of you when you are looking down, rather than your backside. You then don't have to pivot and signal to the press box, you just have to step to the side and signal.

False Start vs. Illegal Motion

There is a fine line between false starts and illegal motion. Bottom line, it's the responsibility of the offensive player who moves before the snap to do so in a manner that DOES NOT simulate the start of a play. A player who is permitted to move under Rule 7-2-7 still may not commit a false start. When a player in motion turns up field before the snap, he may do so legally without necessarily simulating action at the snap.

Correctable Error – Charged Team Timeout

A crew walked off a penalty incorrectly and the offended coach asked for a timeout and pointed out the error. He asked that the timeout not be charged and his request was denied. He then became irate and was flagged. The coach was upset because this occurred at a critical time in the game and the Referee thought the coach needed the timeout to align his defense.

When the crew errs, the coach is entitled to have the error corrected without being charged a timeout. Not charging the timeout is totally defensible. That doesn't mean the coach gets a free timeout. The way to handle this situation is to go to the coach after the correction is made and tell him up to that point it is an official's timeout and play is to resume immediately. If he then wants a charged timeout, he can then have one at that point. If he gets a few extra seconds in the process to talk to his team, it's not a big deal. The other team got the benefit of a timeout while all the discussion was taking place and is not likely to object.

Difficult Plays

After observing games and reading game reports, here are 3 areas worthy of comment.

Incomplete Pass v. Catch-Fumble. This goes beyond “when in doubt it is an incomplete pass.” There is an unspecified time element associated with making a catch simply because it takes time for the human eye-brain combination to discern the receiver has established possession which includes control (Rule 2-34-1). Furthermore, control requires being able to maintain possession of the ball. In other words, if there is any question as to whether the ball was caught/possessed or control maintained, the play should be ruled an incomplete pass. To my knowledge, no high school coach has ever complained that a pass was erroneously ruled incomplete and that it was actually a catch and a fumble. Also, please review Rule 2-4.

Forward Progress. Do not rule a fumble when the ball becomes loose after a runner is stopped upright. If the ball does not become loose on the initial contact, the ruling should be the play had ended. In those cases, a quick whistle can be supported and any error would be in the interest of player safety.

Pass Interference. Both teams have equal rights to the ball. If the defender goes directly for the ball (not through the receiver) and makes contact with the receiver, it is not a foul. Do not penalize a defender who is more aggressive than the receiver in trying to catch the ball.

Snap Infraction

The snapper is allowed to tilt the ball up to a 90 degree angle. It doesn't matter which end of the ball is on the ground. Rule 7-1-3. Case Book play 7.1.3

Training Videos

As a result of technical glitches, the link to this week's training video will be sent to all football officials on Tuesday. Sorry for any inconvenience, but I wanted the rest of the Bulletin to go out today.