

September 30, 2026

Football Officials,

We've officially made it to the mid-point of the season. Teams are starting to carve out their place in the standings. We, as officials, should strive to differentiate ourselves as excellent crews in much the same way. Your rules knowledge, mastery of mechanics, and grasp of higher-level officiating philosophy will be what differentiates you as an official. Please send me any plays or situations you might have from this week! You'll find them used on the film review, quiz, and beyond.

Week Five Training Email

1. Rules Knowledge – Own Your Learning!

- a. Week Three Rules Quiz: <https://forms.gle/Q6TKvUPt5GhFkWLY6>
- b. Only 22 takers this week. C'mon folks, let's do better. Enjoy this quiz as you hit the road...

2. Mechanics, Philosophy, Stuff and Things

a. Helmet off a player

- i. You might be able to buy a vowel in a gameshow, but teams are not allowed to “buy players back in” by utilizing a timeout. Period.
- ii. Players whose helmet comes off due to foul are allowed to stay in the game.
- iii. If a player whose helmet has come off continues to participate in the play, it is a foul for Illegal Participation. This applies to both sides of the ball.
 1. It's also a Personal Foul to contact a player whose helmet has come off.
- iv. If the helmet comes off the runner, we are shutting the play down *immediately*.
 1. Regardless of whether there's a foul.
- v. We must be 100% on these items!

b. Hurdling and Leverage

- i. Sorry to beat this one to death, but I am seeing this every week! Defensive players, particularly on scrimmage kicks (including FG's and Try's), are using techniques that constitute Hurdling or Leveraging.
- ii. Now... you won't find the vernacular, “Leverage or Leveraging” in your rulebook. That phrase is only found at the college and professional level. However, we still have rules that assist us in what is and is not allowable.
- iii. Hurdling
 1. Rule Book: 2-22; 9-4-3d
 2. This one is pretty simple – no player of either team can hurdle an opponent unless they have a body part other than their feet on the ground. It is a foul regardless of whether they “clear” the opponent or not. They also don't have to go over the middle of the opponent, any hurdle attempt over any part of the opponent is a foul.
 3. **This is a Safety Foul and must be thrown!**
 4. Umpires and Wing Officials – be looking for this on the line during scrimmage kicks. All officials can see this when it's the runner – and since it's becoming “fashionable” at the higher levels, we need to nip it in the bud at our level. Remember, a hurdle is knees or feet first...

iv. Illegal Personal Contact

1. Rule Book: 9-4-3e
2. Case Book: 9.4.3 Situation E (Advantage Gained Illegally)

3. Now... I'm not going to make friends with this one. **It is Illegal** for defensive players to, "position himself on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage."
4. We are seeing defensive players try to "shoot the gap" between the Center and Guard in an attempt to block a kick.
 - a. If that defensive player puts his hands on an opponent in order to accomplish this -- whether to raise their body higher up off the ground, or to make their way through the A-gap (or any gap) easier -- **it is a foul.**

v. Officials:

1. If you see this in the pre-game, talk to the players about it.
2. During the game, Umpires, you can remind the defense that they can't hurdle or leverage off of the offensive line. While that word isn't in the book, it's an easy term to use here. As it states in the Case Book, it's an Advantage Gained Illegally.

c. Ants and Elephants

- i. "Don't flag ants, always flag elephants, and never make ants into elephants."
 1. Ray Lutz, a legend and someone many of us looked to as a mentor, preached this concept to officials new and seasoned.
- ii. A few key tenets to this philosophy:
 1. Ants, of course, are insignificant, technical infractions. They're also ones that create no advantage and put no one at a disadvantage.
 2. Elephants are big. They make a difference. They involve safety issues. Elephants most often occur at the point of attack. They give a team an advantage or put the opponent at a disadvantage. Elephants affect the game.
 3. Never throw on Ants. Always throw on Elephants. Never pass on an Elephant to throw an Ant... People will notice.

3. Nine-man Minute

- a. Rule 7 (p. 92)
- b. 7a... "may have any legal jersey number."
- c. 7c... "Each A player (regardless of jersey number) who at the snap was on the end of the line of scrimmage line (a total of two) and each A player who, at the snap, was legally behind the line of scrimmage is eligible. There are no numbering requirements."
- d. Pretty self-explanatory, but there is NO numbering exception in nine-man football. The Center can be #4 and QB1 could be wearing #77 --- it's all fine. Be sure to make note of this unique difference in rule sets.

4. Film Room

- a. Link: https://youtu.be/R9R_iJea0Vo
- b. Many thanks to the crews featured in this week's film!

This week... Let's all communicate well!

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