

September 23, 2026

Football Officials,

Here we are at the midway point of the football season! I must say that it's easy to miss the forest for the trees during our season. We're so buried with games almost every day, but we also need to look up and enjoy the great football we get to be part of on a weekly basis. Hang in there; but appreciate it too! As always, send me any film review, play situations, or other questions or concerns. Travel safely this week!

Week Four Training Email

1. Rules Knowledge – Own Your Learning!

- a. Week Three Rules Quiz: <https://forms.gle/DwKWZGyPArfmXn8UA>
- b. I invite your feedback on these quizzes. Please enjoy as you hit the road this week!

2. Mechanics, Philosophy, and Da Rules

a. Ineligible Downfield Player (IDP)

- i. We gotta be consistent on this foul! It's easy to throw erroneously – and it's also easy to miss this one. With the RPO becoming more prevalent, it puts a challenge on officiating IDP because we have to know where ineligible receivers are at the moment the ball is released – on a play where our initial key is “run play.”
- ii. Here's the rule: 7-5-12 (p. 68) – Ineligible A players may not advance beyond the expanded neutral zone on a legal forward pass before a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone is in flight. If B touches the pass in or behind the neutral zone, this restriction is terminated.
- iii. Who can see this?
 1. This foul is best seen by wing officials that work where they're supposed to be working (i.e. they stay home and work on the line of scrimmage).
 - a. We can see our initial key move downfield.
 2. The umpire is secondary on this foul. Obviously, the U can throw this if a lineman is in their kitchen. However, if the U is working where they're supposed to (7-10 off the LOS and *not* running towards the line at the snap), it's more difficult for them to see this foul. The U can also be the crew saver if the wings have deep routes to cover.
- iv. Likely times for IDP to occur:
 1. Always be aware for IDP then the offense uses the Run-Pass Option.
 2. Broken plays, or plays that take longer to develop.
 3. Trick plays with lots of backfield action.
- v. How far?
 1. The Federation code is different than the NCAA/NFL.
 2. We're **NOT** throwing this for a one-yard space!!!
 3. The action rises to IDP only if an ineligible player has gone fully beyond the expanded neutral zone. Operationally, we're talking like 3 yards. Two yards for the expanded NZ, plus the length of the football... so just go with 3 yards.
 - a. When in doubt, we do not have IDP.

b. Blocking Below the Waist (BBW)

- i. This seems to be the year that the cut block has had a renaissance. Personally, I've seen it in 3 of 4 weeks. There're lots of questions about what makes the block legal or illegal. Let's discuss!

- ii. Here are da rules:
 - 1. 2-3-7 defines Blocking Below the Waist generally (p. 30)
 - 2. 2-17 discusses the Free Blocking Zone and blocking within the Zone. 2-17-2 is specific to BBW. (p. 35)
 - 3. 9-3-2a highlights the allowable/unallowable contact and the exception that makes those blocks not a foul. (p. 74)
- iii. Who can see this?
 - 1. When we're talking about the blocking on the line and/or in the free-blocking zone, this can be seen by the R, U, or the Wings. Once the play develops, any official can see this foul.
 - a. Obviously, outside the FBZ exception, a Block Below the Waist is illegal.
 - 2. Stick with your keys when ruling on this action within the free-blocking zone.
- iv. Remember – this foul can occur by either the Offensive or Defensive player.
- v. When do we throw?
 - 1. Lean on the rules. If it's not on the initial charge, not within the Zone, and not on the line, then it's a foul. If all three criteria of 2-17-2 are met, we are legal!
- vi. Watch for secondary action!
 - 1. Whether it's the offense or the defense that cuts, we also need to be aware of secondary action that could cause a legal cut block to become a foul. Including:
 - a. Chop blocks
 - i. It's fine to cut, but if another player then engages the same opponent with a high block... we have a foul.
 - b. Tripping
 - i. Again, it's fine to cut. But after that action, the cutting player needs to remain in a legal blocking position. Sticking out a leg in an effort to obstruct the opponent is illegal.
 - c. Holding
 - i. This isn't wrestling. Yes again, it's perfectly fine to cut block within the bounds of the rules; as long as the player doing the cutting remains legal. If they subsequently grab and hold the opponent, we have a foul.

New to these weekly emails, we will be adding a special note for either six- or nine-man football.

3. Six-Man moment

- a. If there is a muffed/bobbled snap, the offensive player that ultimately ends up with the ball is still held to the player exception against advancing the ball. That is... after the muff is recovered, there still needs to be a change of possession from that player to another before the ball can be advanced via run across the line of scrimmage.
 - i. If the foul occurs, the ball remains live and the penalty is a loss of down at the previous spot. See "Rule 2 and 7" of the six-player rules differences on p. 93 of the rule book.

4. Film Room

- a. Link: <https://youtu.be/P2XAMZbJHjM>
- b. Many thanks to the crews featured in this week's film!

Enjoy this week! Thank your loved ones for allowing you to enjoy another Friday night under the lights!

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