

2020 NFHS Preseason Bulletin

Welcome to the 2020 Football Season

Greetings!! It is just around the corner – one of the best times of the entire year – the start of the OHSAA Football Season!! As I drive around the state and visit with crews, it is a similar message – “I wish the Football Season was starting tomorrow – I can’t wait!!” It never ceases to amaze me the level of dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work that our nearly 3,203 Ohio HS Football Officials do yearly. On behalf of the 75,000 Student Athletes who play Interscholastic Football in Ohio, THANK YOU!!

Ohio Officials are Contenders Because They Want to Get Better. With great support by Local Associations OHSAA hosted eight FB Clinics last year. Over 1,140 officials attended. Congrats!!

Our new format for OHSAA State Rules Interpretation (SRI) Meetings began a few years ago and was a rousing success again last year. Officials had the opportunity to attend face-to-face meetings and receive credit for two meetings. Approximately half the meetings were devoted to NFHS New Rules/OHSAA Gold Book Mechanics and the other half of the meeting were game video clips with OHSAA Points of Emphasis placed on player safety, mechanics, and rulings. Over 1,000 officials took advantage of these highly informative “mini clinics” in Athens, Cleveland, Columbus, Findlay, Hamilton, New Philadelphia, Orrville, Toledo, & Wapakoneta. We would like to give a BIG thank you to those Local Associations who “stepped up to the plate” and helped us with the SRI Meetings last year. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus there will be no State Clinic, Observers Clinic or Face-to-Face SRI Clinics/Meetings this year. The Local Mechanics & Rules Interpreter Meeting will be online this year.

One of our “key” statements again this year will be **EVERYONE OWNS THE RULES**. When a **Crew** steps onto the field all officials must have the mindset that we will “step up to the plate” and help our fellow **Crew** members with our knowledge and application of the NFHS FB Playing Rules & the OHSAA Regulations. Remember, we have no excuse for not knowing either a Rule or a Regulation. If you have any doubt about one of these, jog in, stop the GC, discuss it with your fellow **Crew** members in an open and honest manner to “get it right.” The players & coaches will appreciate the extra time you take to discuss it.

This Guide is part of our continuing effort to standardize our mechanics throughout the State of Ohio. We are asking and expecting all officials to support our efforts to see that the Gold Book Mechanics are followed by every **Crew**. We have made great strides over the past few years to standardize them.

Your wonderful ideas and suggestions for future improvements will be incorporated as we move forward as a TEAM to improve officiating in Ohio with one goal: Ohio High School Football Officiating will be the BEST in the nation.

Congratulations to Larry Bartlett, Middletown, who was selected as the 2020 NFHS Ohio Active Football Official of the Year. He has officiated FB for 47 years & BSKB/BB/SB for eight years. He has served as the Butler County FB Officials Association Rules Secretary for 35 years and the Class Instructor for 21 years. Larry has served as a State Certified Observer for the past 10 years. He has been an OHSAA State FB Playoff Official for many years, including officiating the OHSAA State FB Championship Game in 2004 as well as three State FB Semifinal Games. Larry has served as a mentor to hundreds of officials. Upon his return to active officiating after watching his son play, he took four second year officials from his class to

form his new **Crew** – all four would later officiate an OHSAA State FB Championship Game. This award is presented to Larry for his outstanding Service to football officials throughout the state of Ohio.

Hope you have a Great and Very Safe FB Season this year!! Bruce Maurer, DOD

PS: ONE VERY SPECIAL NOTE: For some reason when the Gold Book was “copied” this year the shaded areas for the new Mechanics did not copy. You can access <https://www.ohsaa.org/sports/football>. This is an electronic copy that shows the shaded areas.

A Letter from the Senior Director of Officiating & Sport Management

This has certainly been a difficult first half of 2020. I have been working with our coaches’ association (OHSFCA) and our Director of Officiating Development (DOD), Dr. Bruce Maurer, and my staff on issues that will enable the 2020 high school football season to proceed safely. We will follow direction from the Governor of Ohio’s office to make sure our players, officials, coaches and fans are safe. We had a great 2019 season, including seven great football finals at the Tom Benson Stadium in Canton. I would like to thank all of you for your commitment to make high school football in Ohio great for our players, coaches, and fans. **I am hopeful that the finals this year in Canton at the Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium will take place as scheduled.**

The biggest area of emphasis in 2020 will be Rules Knowledge! I want to challenge each and every one of you to dedicate yourselves to improving your knowledge of the NFHS FB Rules. Take your Crew’s and your roles seriously as to what Rules you are designated as the “expert” in the Gold Book and expand your knowledge to all the Rules. You may have an added challenge to learn and know additional procedures due to the pandemic we have experienced.

Under the leadership of our Director of Development, Dr. Bruce Maurer, we have refined our football mechanics manual, The Gold Book. The GB helps us to become mechanically consistent across the state. We have refined these mechanics with your input and experience for this year. I appreciate the effort of all our football officials to continually improve in this area.

We can’t make great calls unless we are looking in the right places. Challenge your Crew members and yourself to see the critical parts of each play. Ask each other, “Where are the important blocks on this play? Did we see them?” Talk in your pregame conferences and post-game conferences about plays, where you were looking, what you saw, and where you should be looking. I say this all the time, the more you understand the game, the better official you will become. We will be putting plays into video presentations that show the types of plays and fouls we are emphasizing. **We must do a better job of seeing illegal low blocks by both the DEFENSE and the OFFENSE!**

I very much enjoy travelling around this great state and watching high school football. I saw over 200 different officials last season. I continue to be grateful that you listen and want to continually improve. I look forward to seeing many of you at your games this season. Enjoy your season and please let me know how I can help you improve.

Beau Rugg, Senior Director of Officiating and Sport Management

2020 OHSAA Points of Emphasis

1. Player Conduct
2. Legality of Low Blocks by the defense and offense
3. Illegible receivers downfield on run-pass option plays

2020 New OHSAA GB FB Regulations

Officials Required SRI Meetings: 2020 only – There will be NO face-to-face State Rules Interpretation (SRI) meetings this year only. All FB officials will need to meet this requirement online this year.

Officials Required SRI Online Meeting: Online dates are July 22 (9AM) thru August 26 (must be finished by 11:59AM). From August 27 thru September 29 call OHSAA, pay \$50, and secure access to the SRI Site. Beginning September 30 special permission must be requested to gain access to the SRI site. NOTE: The September 30 date is a correction to the Gold Book (P. 36; # 14B).

Play Clock (PC): For Regional Finals & State SF's all sites must have visible PCs. The PCO is required to meet with the **Crew** before the game.

2020 New OHSAA GB Safety Policies

Game is delayed: Anytime a game is delayed for more than 10 minutes (injury, HC/R Conference, a facility situation, or some other issue) the **LJ** is responsible for timing all of these Delays.

2020 New OHSAA GB State FB Requirements

Officials Uniform: Hats with the OHSAA Logo are mandatory for all Varsity Games only beginning this year.

Officials Uniform: Face Coverings are allowed and may be required if dictated by the Ohio Department of Health. Black is preferred.

2020 New OHSAA GB Mechanics & Clarifications

Ball Handling: If the FB is near the SL, the **U** will still move into the SZ & secure the FB, hustle to the hash mark, and spot the ball off the Back Side **Wing**. Note: This is especially important with using the 40/25 second PC and the more up tempo style of play now.

Ball Handling: The **R** will help relay the FB on plays that lose 15 YDS or more.

Ball Handling: The **BJ** will help relay the FB on plays that gain 20 YDS or more.

Bean Bag: The **HL** will drop his BB on 1st down if the Down Box Person is late and A is ready to snap the FB.

Flag: When one official calls Pass Interference and one nearby does not call Pass Interference, the officials need to come together and discuss what they saw.

Free Kick after Fair Catch or Awarded FC: The **HL's** IP is on the KT Line & the **LJ** IP is on the RT Line.
Note: This new mechanic was needed after moving the **HL** to the KT Line last year for KO's

Goal Line: The **U's** IP will never be positioned on the GL. Note: By staying off the GL this gives both **Wings** a much better view to rule on these challenging plays.

Pass: The **HL/LJ** need to be more patient before sounding their whistle(s) for an incomplete pass vs. a backward pass. Note: We are still having too many inadvertent whistles when officials are ruling incomplete pass on a backward pass. Remember with FB Officiating – we can be late and still be right!

Reverse: When the FB is snapped between the – 10 YL & - 5 YL (R & R 2) both **Wings** will take one step back toward the GL at the snap. Note: Too often we see **Wings** staying on the LOS when the GL is threatened by either the QB or Running Back. Remember – the most Important Line on the FB Field is the GL.

Signaling: The **R** will raise his arm at a 45 degree angle when signaling 11 players to the **U**. Note: This mechanic worked well last year for the **U** as it was easier to see the signal so we added it for the **R**.

Signaling: Crew members will signal to the **R** by winding their index finger (2X) at shoulder level or higher to wind the GC. Note: This new mechanic adds “or higher” so the wind signal is easier to see.

Signaling: The **BJ** raises both arms overhead and pushes upward (2X) to reset the PC to 40 seconds for a defensive injury.

Try-Kick: The **HL & LJ** IP is the bottom of the Field Numbers. Note: This new mechanic is more specific as to where the **Wings** stand. By having the **Wings** stand at the bottom of the numbers, if the KT fakes the Try or there is an errant snap, it gives them more time to react & get to the GL.

Try-Kick: The **U** will stay on the End Line during a scrimmage play from a Muddle Huddle formation.

Your Rule Book & Case Book Are Your Friends – Please Use Them: Now with our excellent Rules Index in the Gold Book it is much easier to find a Rule. While discussing a video clip recently two very good and experienced officials cited the ruling. The **R** questioned their ruling. They were adamant of their ruling. Did they look it up after the game to be sure – No they did not. Upon arriving home the **R** checked both books. He was correct. Rather than being over confident, take a few minutes and review the books. It can be a “game changer” down the road in a tough and challenging game.

During a live ball all players, coaches, and non-players must be out of the restricted area (6' off the sideline). It is imperative that all officials enforce this Rule. When meeting with each Head Coach 35 minutes prior to the game secure the name of the "Get Back Coach." Request the Coach's cooperation with keeping the team personnel out of the restricted area. Issue/assess sideline warnings early in the game when it is necessary. We have learned from experience that early warnings usually prevent having to issue warnings or yardage penalties later in the game. Be mindful of this Quote: "Be Respected rather Than Liked by Coaches."

Keep Up the Speed When You Walk

A brisk walk is good for your health, especially as you grow older. A Study reported on the Live Science website found that older adults who maintain a speed of three miles per hour when they walk have a 50% lower risk of heart disease than people with a pace of two miles per hour or slower.

And folks who walk an average of 7 blocks a day have a 47% lower chance of developing heart disease than those whose walks add up to just 5 blocks a day or less. So put your shoes on and get walking!

Manning the Umpire (U) Position – What to look for and how you can help Your Crew

While successful officiating of a high-school football game takes a full **Crew**, the **U** sets the tone for the entire game. The **U's** hustle allows teams to dictate the pace of play; their communication keeps players informed, and promotes safe play while their presence defuses potential problems long before they start.

The **U** is in position to hear much of what is said on the field. Talking to players at the first sign of trouble often eliminates any potential problems. A good **U** must step into a situation as soon as it starts to prevent it from escalating. Too many times, games that have behavior problems in the fourth quarter stem from instances that could have been prevented with a warning or a word in the first quarter.

Being in the middle of the field also gives the **U** the ability to make 'Crew saves'. The **U**, due to his position and his proximity to most plays, can help in situations where a **Crew** member needs help. What follows are some things to a **U** can do to help in those situations.

Run plays

Once you have seen the snap and the action on the snapper, a **U** must determine where the play is headed. The key to success in this is the ability to shift your eyes quickly to determine which linemen are at the point of attack (POA) – in other words who are the most important players to watch.

Avoid the temptation to look into the backfield. By the time the backfield takes you to the POA, most of the blocking fouls at the POA will have taken place. A low block on a LB or a high-low block can take place before your vision goes from the backfield to the linemen at the POA.

On sweeps, the **U** must move with the action into the side zones. This is key not only for pace of play, but the **U** in the side zone can help with action in the sideline area, late hits, and even a face mask toward the field of play that the **Wing** might be screened from.

On a long run, the **U** should also go downfield at a moderate pace and clean up everything in the middle of the field. Long plays and reversal of field carry the most potential for blindside blocks (BSB), so the **U** – since they have no ball responsibility – should be looking for this.

Pass plays

On passing plays, the **U** first and foremost must stay with the linemen. On a straight drop back, the **U** shouldn't have to move, giving the best look at line action. Plus if you are stationary, you can use your peripheral vision to see any crossing receivers coming at you.

If the play breaks down, move laterally with the linemen. Resist watching the scrambling QB. Your emphasis is still line play, and the longer a pass play takes, the higher the chance of ineligibles are moving downfield. This is a point of emphasis and you have primary responsibility along with the **Wings**.

Once the pass is thrown, pivot and pick up the ball. A fast pivot allows you to rule on passes thrown close to the ground and your inside-out look gives a view that the **Wings** may not have. Turning to the ball quickly on a swing or flat pass allows you to pick up the action around the ball carrier. You can also help with a BSB since a flat pass carries with it the danger of receivers that had been downfield, now coming back to the play with the 'brick in their hand' for a potential BSB. They become "suspect." The **U's** look on this play can save a **Crew**.

Kicking plays

On free and scrimmage kicks, the **U's** inside-out look is especially important on BSB's. On free kicks you will run to your hash mark and stop, looking at all the action ahead of the play. There is no need to move downfield until the play ends, so stay stationary and watch the blocks. Be prepared to turn toward the GL on a long return, but you will maintain the inside-out look as the **Wing** has sideline and the **BJ** has the goal line.

Scrimmage kicks require a different focus. You have initial responsibility for action on the center and once that is cleared, you stay planted until the linemen go past. Then turn and slowly move downfield. Here is where you can make a big difference with a BSB. You do not have ball responsibility, so pick up action around the returner.

Returns of scrimmage kicks have the highest chance of the ball carrier moving east/west instead of north/south. Any east/west movement carries a higher chance of a BSB. By moving downfield slowly and watching, you maintain a wider field of vision, allowing you to see the players 'carrying the brick' who become suspect that can potentially execute a BSB or block in the back.

Summary

Remember, the field is 120 yards long and 53-1/3 yards wide, and a lot happens in that space on a Friday night in Ohio. Know your keys, know your reads, take care of your responsibilities, but remember that the officials work best when they work together. Anything you can do to help the **Crew**, helps everybody have a better game. Have fun!

Written & Submitted by Eric Mauk

Two Things at a Time

When **Wing** officials find themselves in Goal Line (GLM) or Reverse Mechanics (RM) situations, when getting to the GL immediately is not the primary movement, they often get stuck on the “read” portion of the mechanic. The word “read” leads one to believe you must stop, study, and then react to the situation. Granted there are times when being stopped is a critical element of our process, but when players are close to the GL the time spent pausing can be the difference between being at this most important line on time or well behind. So, to clarify, in these situations you must do two things at a time: move towards the GL quickly and read on the move.

Should you stop short of the GL? Perhaps, if the specifics of the play dictate you move back to the forward progress spot before you get to the GL. However, anticipating the tackle short of the GL can and often does put you in a situation where you are moving in the wrong direction. Move toward the GL under control (steady, head up, shuffle/slide); stop at the GL if you get there before progress is stopped.

If progress is stopped short of the GL, move back to the spot after the whistle. If the runner bounces off a potential tackle and makes it to the GL you will be there, or at least you will be ahead of him. That is the KEY; we are getting to this important line BEFORE the ball.

Last, and not least, shuffling/sliding is the act of keeping your shoulders parallel with the sideline. This is imperative. Turning to move only reduces what you see on the field. With everything to watch we cannot reduce our vision.

Ask yourself after each game, “Did I beat the runner to the GL when we were in GLM every time”?

Written & Submitted by Terry Williams

The Importance of a Great Pre-Game

Planning & preparation are such a big part of our lives. We prepare & plan every day.

If we can carry this philosophy to improving our officiating skills for ourselves and our Crew, proper planning and preparation for the season can be key factors for improvement

Does your Crew conduct pre-games weekly? Do you have discussions concerning the Gold Book, Rules, Case Books plays & previous game situations? Do you have access to your game films to review mechanics & penalty enforcement accuracy?

There are several reasons a Crew can use to justify why a pregame is not necessary. However, Pre-games properly planned build confidence, expand rule/mechanic knowledge, and trust. This is the foundation for improvement for being an excellent official and an excellent Crew.

Are you identifying areas for improvement for yourself and your Crew? Have you discussed improvement goals as a Crew or do you try to fix things yourself? Are you open to constructive comments? When we hold the Crew and ourselves accountable, improvement is the result and very satisfying.

Here are six steps for better preparation to achieve improved and informative pre-games:

1. Determine your topics for the pregame – limit to two or three
2. Each week a different member of the Crew develops and leads the discussion
3. Establish an agenda for discussing those topics
4. Encourage discussion and participation from the entire Crew
5. Listen intently to what others are saying
6. Manage conflict through our reference material – what do the books say

A great pregame is the prelude to a great game, which leads to a great season. It is amazing the confidence and trust a Crew can develop over the course of the season with great pre-games. This will carry over to many years of continuous improvement.

The Importance of Being a Great Communicator

Great pre-games enhance Crew communication. So, what does good communication look like? First, let's define communication: "The process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. It is a process of transmitting and exchanging ideas, opinions, facts, values, etc., from one person to another."

In 2019, we worked a State Semi-Final Playoff Game. In the 3Q during a long pass play for a TD, both the **U** & **BJ** threw flags for a PF facemask penalty. When the calling officials got together to discuss, both agreed it was a PF face mask penalty on #13. However, the **BJ** had #13 on A & the **U** had #13 on B. WOW!!

Because of great communication, each official confirmed what was called and who the offending players were. However, what if they both just agreed it was a PF facemask on #13, without saying A or B? It could have led to incorrect penalty enforcement and then having to stop play and discuss it further. The Result would be the appearance of instability and miscommunication among the Crew.

Here are five suggested steps for better Crew communication:

1. GO SLOW – there is no need to hurry, especially after a flag has been thrown
2. Proper preliminary signals for penalty enforcement
3. Consistent between snap signals – down, double stakes, clock status
4. Accurate pre snap signals – balanced vs. unbalanced line, off LOS, tap the wrist if inside two minutes for every quarter, and 11 players on the field for each team

5. Group discussion when necessary and with the officials who have something to add to the discussion – the locker room is not the place for needed information

For the 2020 FB Season it is everyone's job to make the pre-game an important part of your season. The Crew will have better communication & the confidence to initiate that communication, especially during those challenging plays. You will enjoy the benefits of improving your officiating & the Crew's skill.

Have a great season!

Written & submitted by: Greg Bartemes and Brad Huntley

What a Difference a Year Makes

I hope everyone is doing well during these difficult times. I know we are all concerned about this coming football season, but my topic is about last year. You see, after 49 years working on the field, I spent last year observing officials from press boxes and stands. It was an emotional change, but it provided me an opportunity to see and meet many wonderful officials in SW Ohio.

The officiating in Ohio has greatly improved due to the standardized mechanics that OHSAA has implemented in the Gold Book. I would like to share with you some areas of concern that I witnessed last year.

To begin with, when I observed during the season, I didn't let the **Crew** know I was going to be at their game. During playoffs I did notify the **R** I was going to be there and if I could attend their pregame.

I always like to see officials work without the pressure of them knowing someone is watching them. This gives me an idea of how they approach each game. To me, whether you are working a D-VII game or a D-I game, you should approach each game with the same level of intensity and professionalism. The same holds true for sub varsity games. The young people who play the game and their coaches deserve the very best effort you can give them.

Below is a list of items I would like to share with you.

1. Pre-game duties.

If game balls aren't presented to you in the locker room for you to check, take your gauge and pump with you and check the balls on the field. Don't forget to mark them so you know which ones are game balls. Too many times I saw officials just "finger check" game balls.

I always liked to see two officials talk with the chain crew and ball personnel. This will eliminate any question regarding how the chains are to be operated and where the ball personnel are to be located.

Even though most games are on artificial surface, I still like to see officials walk the field and check things out. Standing in one spot doesn't accomplish much.

Many times I saw **Crews** on the field before kickoff waiting for the teams to arrive and talking together. During the pregame discuss whether the teams arrive on the field through the same entrance. Also, be ready to "direct" the teams away from the opponent and to their bench as they enter the field.

2. During the game.

R's: On live ball fouls remember to give a preliminary signal. Many times in the press box the announcer and coaches are waiting not knowing what the foul was. By giving the prelim signal we look much more professional and that "we know what we are doing."

Relay the FB: Take a few steps and toss the ball out of bounds in the air to the ball person. Watching the ball bounce around on the ground near the sideline doesn't look good. And please do not kick the ball off the field.

R's: Know your Reverse Mechanics. Too many times I saw Referees anywhere from two to three yards up to eight yards deep in the end zone. Remember the very challenging call on the End Line is your call as no one else can be there to assist you.

Wings: "Open the door" sooner. This will remove you from the potential of getting hit on out-of-bounds plays. Plus it allows you to watch the "important" players – the blocks ahead of the runner. In most cases I saw **Wings** "opening the door" too late rather "open the door" too soon.

While this isn't a complete list of my observations, it highlights those we need to improve upon for this coming season.

Best of luck to everyone this year as we all work together.

Written & Submitted by Larry Clemmons

"Hidden Ball Play"

Most of us have wondered what brought about this rule. Well, it so happens that Carlisle was playing Harvard in 1903 and Carlisle's coach, Pop Warner, had sewed patches resembling footballs on his players' jerseys. The Harvard coach protested and threatened to play with a yellow ball if they didn't take off the patches. Warner agreed to remove the patches but started the second half with his "hidden-ball-under-a-player's-jersey play." The Harvard kickoff was caught at Carlisle's five yard line. All the Carlisle players gathered around the receiver and formed a V wedge. The receiver then placed the ball under the back of another player's jersey, which had an elastic band on the bottom to prevent the ball from falling out. On a signal all the players took off toward the Harvard goal line impersonating a runner by carrying their helmets like a ball under their arms. The player with the ball, with arms swinging freely, took off like a blocker. The kickers seeing him swinging his arms sidestepped him to avoid being blocked. After the score Harvard protested but the score was allowed. The Rule was quickly changed and we still have it as a rule today.

I hope these short stories enrich your enjoyment of officiating this great game of football.

Written and submitted by Larry Clemmons

OHSAA to Expand Football Playoffs in 2021

The 2021 OHSAA FB Playoffs will be expanded from eight schools per region to 12, an expansion to 336 teams.

In the First round, the top four seeds will have a bye. In the second round:

- No. 1 seed will play the winner of the 8 vs. 9 game;
- No. 2 seed will play the winner of the 7 vs. 10 game;
- No. 3 seed will play the winner of the 6 vs. 11 game;
- No. 4 seed will play the winner of the 5 vs. 12 game.

The football finals in 2021 are expected to end during the same weekend as previously scheduled.

The higher seeded teams will have the opportunity to host their playoff games during the 1st & 2nd rounds.

2019 OHSAA State Championship Finals: Game Officials

Congrats to the 42 officials selected to work the seven State Championship Games in Canton. They were:

Roger Smith; Brian Samborsky; Robert Juliano, Jr; Kristopher Estes; Daniel Palmer; Matthew Ferdinand; Matt Orin; Peter Tamborello; Mark Riley; Wayne Horsley; Aaron Wahl; Cory Miller; Derek Krueger; Bruce Bame; Jeff Klaus; Dexter Krueger; Bret Roberson; Derek Diller; John Tulk; Kris Lowdermilk; Anthony Jordan; Bobby Starks; Matthew Kendeigh; Scott Scrivens; Justin Bradford; William Smith; Dalon Myricks; Jason Elder; Paul Maragos; Cary Allion; Rich Fisher; Adrian Johnson; Eric Mauk; Matt Despoth; Marcus Thompson; Scott Bunting; Brad Huntley; Chuck Caskey; Greg Bartemes; Jeffrey Csank; Rick Macer; and Matt Clark

These officials were observed in great detail throughout the earlier round playoff games and challenged to upgrade their OHSAA Mechanics. We were very proud of their outstanding hard work and improvement.