

OFFICIATING PHILOSOPHIES

Line of Scrimmage

- Officials will work to keep interior linemen legal and will only put a player in the backfield when it is obvious or when repeated warnings are ignored. Do not wait until the fourth quarter to enforce the rule.
- If an interior offensive player is lined-up with his head clearly behind the rear-end of the snapper or clearly beyond the neutral zone, a foul should be called without a warning.
- Do not be overly technical on an offensive player who is a wide receiver or slot back in determining if he is off the line of scrimmage. When in question, it is not a foul but a warning may be warranted.
- Wide receivers or slot backs lined-up outside a tight end will be ruled on the line of scrimmage and covering the tight end if there is no stagger between their alignments.
- If there is a question, a player with an eligible number is not covered-up, but a warning may be warranted.
- Formations during the execution of a trick or unusual play have the highest degree of scrutiny and must be completely legal.

Defensive Pass Interference

- Early contact is required.
- Early contact by a defender who is not playing the ball is defensive pass interference if he demonstrates an obvious intent to impede the offensive player's ability to complete the catch. The categories of defensive pass interference are the following:
 - Playing through the back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
 - Grabbing and restricting a receiver's arm(s) or body in a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
 - Extending an arm across the body (arm bar) of a receiver thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of the fact of whether or not the defender is looking for the ball.
 - Cutting-off or riding the receiver out of the path to the ball by making contact with him without playing the ball.
 - Hooking and restricting a receiver in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that causes the receiver's body to turn prior to the ball arriving.
- The defensive player has an equal right to the ball, so he must demonstrate the obvious intent to impede the offensive player.

Offensive Pass Interference

- Actions that constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to the following categories:
 - Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing-off to create separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
 - Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.
- Offensive pass interference will not be called on a screen pass when the ball is overthrown behind the line of scrimmage but subsequently lands beyond the expanded neutral zone (up to two yards) and linemen are blocking downfield, unless such blocking prevents a defensive player from catching the ball.
- It is not offensive pass interference on a pick play if the defensive player is blocking the offensive player when the pick occurs and the offensive player does not make a separate action.

Passing Situations

- When in question on action against the passer, it is roughing the passer if the defender's intent is to punish.
- If an interception is near the goal line (inside the one yard line) and there is a question as to whether possession is gained in the field of play or end zone, make the play a touchback.
- When in question on quarterback pass/fumble, rule pass.
- When in question whether the pass was complete or incomplete, rule incomplete.
- When in question whether a pass was forward or backward, rule forward if it was thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.

Blocking

- If there is a potential offensive holding but the action occurs clearly away from the point of attack and has no effect on the play, offensive holding should not be called (a warning may be warranted), except that a takedown should always be called anywhere on the field.
- If there is a potential for defensive holding but the action occurs clearly away from the point of attack and has no effect on the play, defensive holding should not be called (a warning may be warranted). Example: A defensive back on the opposite side of the field holding a wide receiver on a designed run play to the other side.
- Holding can be called even if the quarterback is subsequently sacked as it may be the other half of an offset foul.

- A slight jersey pull does not necessarily mean that offensive holding should be called—a material restriction against an opponent is necessary for a foul.
- Rarely should you have a hold on a double team block unless there is a takedown or the defender breaks the double team and is pulled back.
- For blocks in the back, indicators of the force of the contact include whether the blocking player was in a “chase mode” and how the blocked player falls—if he falls forward (rather than on his side), the contact was to the back. The force of the block could be slight and still a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner or prevents him from making the play. If the force is clearly on the side, it is not a foul.
- An illegal block in the back can still be called on fair catches, but should not be called if the illegal block occurs away from the play as the fair catch is being made or a touchback occurs and the contact is slight, except blocks in the back which are personal foul in nature should be called regardless of their timing relative to a fair catch or the tackling of a runner.
- When in question if an illegal block occurs in the end zone or field of play, it occurs in the field of play.

Kicking

- The kicker's restraining line on onside and short pouch kickoffs should be officiated as a plane and any player (other than the kicker or holder) breaking the plane before the ball is kicked should be called offside. For deep kickoffs, also officiate the restraining line as a plane but do not be overly technical.
- When in question if a kick was touched, rule it was not touched.

Runner Down

- When in question, the runner was down and there was not a fumble.
- It is not a foul if legal contact occurs before the runner has a foot down out of bounds unless the runner has eased-up as he is stepping out-of-bounds.
- When in question, the runner did not step out of bounds.

Personal Fouls & Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Unsportsmanlike conduct is a *non-contact* foul under NFHS rules.
- If action is deemed to be "fighting," then the player must be disqualified. Preventive officiating often can help de-escalate the situation.
- For late hits away from the ball near the end of the play, when in question lean toward a dead-ball foul rather than a live-ball foul.
- Spitting on an opponent requires disqualification.