

ATTENTION ATHLETIC DIRECTORS', COACHES & OFFICIALS!!

****Athletic Directors, please make copies of this letter and distribute to ALL levels of your football staff****

Iowa High School Football Officials

The IHSAA is providing you the opportunity to join in the fight against Cancer by partnering with the “**Calling for a Cure**” campaign the week of October 13-18, 2008. All officials that wish to participate should go to www.foundationresourcegroup.com and order a Pink Fox 40 whistle for \$5.00, your whistle will then be shipped directly to you. The IHSAA will provide the media information pertaining to this week and we ask all officials wishing to participate use their Pink whistle in all games you work (all levels) during that week. You will be invited to make a voluntary contribution of up to 25% of one of your game fees even if you work more than one game that week to “Calling for a Cure.” All funds raised will be donated to the American Cancer Society in the name of IHSAA Sports Officials. I would encourage individual or crews who wish to take part in this “**Calling for the Cure**”, get on line ASAP and place their orders to be sure to receive your whistle(s) in a timely manner.

HOT TOPICS

These are some of the latest situations that have happened since the football season has been underway in “IOWA.”

EJECTIONS: To date, 13 players and 0 coaches; all coaches receive an accolade for staying on the sidelines where they can help their team. We still need to spend time with players at least once a week reminding them of the importance of **GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP**, and the consequences that occur if a player is ejected.

FACE MASK PENALTIES: In high school football we still have a 5 yard incidental face mask penalty and a 15 yard penalty for pulling, turning and or twisting of the face mask.

BALL BOYS: Athletic directors/coaches, please make every effort to use Jr. High school students or above to be ball boys. We are seeing some young ball boys on the sidelines and I would not want to see one of these boys injured. I'm afraid their concentration level in most cases is not as high as older boys might be.

PASSER OUTSIDE THE TACKLE: Coaches and officials, we do **NOT** have a rule that allows a passer outside the tackle to intentionally ground the ball. Please do not confuse this rule with the college or pro rule.

FAIR CATCH INTERFERENCE: Whenever we have a free kick (example a free kick is used to start the game) a **kicking team member can NOT catch this free kick** even if there is no R player is in position to catch this kick. If this occurs, we have fair catch interference. Remember, when we have fair catch interference, the receiving team has three options, choose an awarded fair catch at the spot of the foul with no distance penalty, take the result of the play, or take the 15 yard penalty from the previous spot and replay the down.

INADVERTENT WHISTLE: Let's have some fun!!

Play: A-1 goes back to pass and is throwing a forward pass to A-2 10 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. B3 deflects the pass up in the air and B5 intercepts the pass and is headed for the goal-line. When the ball breaks the plane of the goal-line the covering official blows his whistle. One major problem, player just crossed his own goal line. What's the call?? Please continue reading, the answer is included in this letter.

ENCROACHMENT RESTRICTIONS: Defensive (Team B) Requirements, prior to the snap. The first requirement begins at the ready for play-no defensive player may touch the ball, an opponent or enter the neutral zone to give defensive signals (7-1-5). Team B is allowed to otherwise be in the neutral zone (probably inadvertently) until the second phase begins-when the snapper touches the ball. After that, no player may encroach. Replaced players and incoming substitutes may pass through the neutral zone on their way from the team area. Like offensive encroachment, defensive encroachment is a dead ball foul with a five yard penalty. Understanding, following the ready for play and after the snapper has placed his hand(s) on the ball, encroachment occurs if any other player breaks the plane of the neutral zone.

AT THE SNAP: The scrimmage down starts with a legal snap, and the ball remains dead if the snap is illegal.

All players must be inbounds.

Each team A player (substitutes and players who participated in the previous down) must have been between the 9 yard marks 11 player & 7 yard marks 8 player, some time after the ready and before the snap.

Team A must have at least seven players on the line. "On the scrimmage line" means the player faces his opponent's goal line with his shoulders parallel to that line and his head breaking the vertical plane through the waist of the snapper.

No fewer than five linemen must be numbered **50-79**, except in a scrimmage kick formation. **Coaches**, with this in mind if you run a swinging gate formation on the PAT all players on the line of scrimmage must have their shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage. **The center**, who is usually on the end of the line in the swinging gate formation, may snap the ball off to the side to a back, but must be facing his opponent's goal line at the snap.

Team A players not on the line (with one exception) must be legally in the backfield. "In the backfield" means no part of the player's body breaks the plane through the waist of the nearest teammate who is on the line.

One back may be in "**no-man's-land**" between the backfield and the line: a player in position to receive a hand to hand snap from between the snapper's legs (normally, of course, this is the quarterback). That player is not required to receive the snap.

Guards may interlock legs with the snapper, but the other linemen must have each foot outside the foot of the player nearest to him.

RIGHT TO ADVANCE A SCRIMMAGE KICK: Barring a fair catch signal, any scrimmage kick can be caught or recovered by the receiving team and advanced (6-2-2). There are several restrictions on the kicking team.

Perhaps the key question for an official is to ask one's self on any scrimmage kick is: **IS THE BALL BEYOND THE NEUTRAL ZONE WHEN IT IS TOUCHED?** If the scrimmage kick is beyond the neutral zone, team K is bound by the first touching rules and cannot advance the ball.

If the ball remains behind the neutral zone or returns there, either team may advance it (6-2-2 and 6-2-3).

In fact, team K may run, pass or even kick again since team possession has not changed.

If the ball is beyond the neutral zone and team K recovers it, then it is simply first touching. However, if team R has touched it beyond the neutral zone and team K recovers, then team K retains possession and is awarded a new series-but the ball is dead where caught or recovered.

It is absolutely crucial to know whether or not team R has touched the scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone.

If team K recovers a scrimmage kick in or behind the neutral zone and the ball was not touched first by team R beyond the zone, the ball remains live and belongs to team K with the down counting (5-1-4). Thus, if a fourth down punt is blocked and then recovered and downed by team K behind the neutral zone, the ball belongs to R, because team R simply takes possession on downs because team K has failed to advance the ball beyond the line to gain.

END OF GAME SITUATIONS: Officials, end of game procedures and communication are important. Make sure that any unusual game ending situations communication is solid. Hold up the ball indicating the game has ended just as you do at the end of each quarter.

It is important officials' know the time on the clock and are alert to checking the clock when the clock should be stopped, via a first down, incomplete pass or time out is charged. Rules are written so there is a balance between offense and defense with the understanding that the referee has the authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game (1-1 Art. 6).

EYE BLACK: Coaches let's work together and make sure our players are wearing eye black for the right reasons. Directly under each eye, with no additions.

OFFICIALS-CHAIN CREWS

Officials, if you have an outstanding chain crew, please contact our office. We select chain crews for our championship games from the officials recommendations around the state.

Our observers have said that thus far, the chain gangs they have seen are doing a good job of setting the chains, getting the clip on the chain and moving two yards back off the field. One item linesmen need to bring to the chain crew's attention, get the back stake of the chain as close to the forward point of the ball and stretch the chain completely out. If we don't stretch it out all the way and the player is using the end of the chain for a guideline pertaining to a first down, we are putting their team to a disadvantage if the chain is not stretched out all the way.

COACHES & OFFICIALS

Helmet Contact. Through rule changes, points of emphasis and educational materials the NFHS in the last five years has put forth its unequivocal belief that illegal helmet contact must be purged from the game. Coaches have been instructed to teach their players how to block and tackle without using any part of the head.

COACH, make sure you take every precaution and teach proper technique so this doesn't happen to one of your players. Officials have been advised to call related fouls without hesitation. (Rule Book sections 2-20, and 9-4-3i.) Note, would be great review for all involved. Even though the penalties for these acts remain unchanged, their definitions have been slightly altered. Butt blocking is a technique involving a blow initiated with the front of the helmet against a player who is not a ball carrier. Face tackling is a blow initiated with the front of the helmet against a player who is the ball carrier. Spearing is a blow initiated with the top of the helmet against an opponent. The penalty for each foul is 15 yards.

Remember that as of last year, the official no longer has to determine that a player who speared an opponent did so intentionally. Spearing is spearing.

Fumble vs. Muff. A fumble is the loss of player possessions and is characterized by an act other than passing, kicking or successful handing of the ball. In order to fumble, a player must first have possession of the ball. Covering official(s) should drop a beanbag on the yard line where the fumble takes place and continue to officiate. Don't throw the beanbag into a pile (1) you may injure someone; (2) you will not get an accurate spot. A muff is an unsuccessful attempt to get possession (catch or recover) of the ball and is always preceded by a touch. Muffs are **not** bagged.

When a fumble occurs, any player of either team can recover or catch the ball and advance it regardless of whether the fumble occurs beyond or behind the line. However, the ball is dead if B recovers a fumble on a try or during any overtime.

When the ball is fumbled in the field of play and goes out-of-bounds, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the out-of-bounds spot. Exception-if the fumble occurs on fourth down and the offensive team fails to reach the line to gain. If A 1's fumble (going into score) is recovered by Team B in B's own end zone or goes out-of-bounds in Team B's end zone, it is a touchback.

A muff may occur after a fumble as several players vie for the ball. Muffs most frequently occur during kicks and present a challenge to officials. Muffed scrimmage kicks may be recovered but not advanced by the kicking team beyond the neutral zone, not because the ball was muffed, but because the status of the ball remains a kick. Muffed free kicks by R may be recovered by the kicking team but cannot be advanced by any K player. Any K player may recover a free kick if it has both touched the ground and goes beyond the plane of R's free kick line. The two requirements may occur in any order.

COACHES, every Thursday take at least 5 minutes out of your practice time to talk to your players about Good Sportsmanship and Playing Within the Rules. Talk about playing Heads-up Football and the Proper Use of the Helmet. Remind them about being a Good Citizen. All of these things go hand-in-hand in the being a well respected student athlete. The time and effort you put in building good character of young people is more likely to help them overcome difficulties in life, and be responsible citizens. Talk about the importance of sportsmanship and what the expectations are for your players and staff. Here are several practical suggestions for you to use to help promote good sportsmanship.

- Use “teachable moments”. Naturally occurring situations can enhance the athlete’s Reasoning about sport-related events.
- Take time to discuss and resolve conflicts through team discussion. You can serve a powerful role to help shape future reactions to conflict.
- Establish a Code of Ethics. Your code should include behaviors that are acceptable as well as unacceptable and should be arrived at by both your coaching staff and athletes.
- Set up a system of positive reinforcement. Rewarding positive behavior and Penalizing inappropriate behavior reinforces the idea that performance goals Apply to more than sport skills.
- Model appropriate behavior. You need to lead by example, consciously modeling the team’s code of ethics in all competitions and practices.

*******OFFICIALS*******

*******SPORTSMANSHIP RATINGS ONLINE*******

If you have officiated any varsity level contest, you must login to your “INDIVIDUAL OFFICIALS INFORMATION” page with your new password and rate each school. Once logged in, click on “Enter Your Sportsmanship”. If you have any changes to your ratings, you can log back in, see what you have completed, and make any necessary changes yourself.

NOTE: Enter your sportsmanship after each contest while it is fresh in your mind; do not wait until the last minute. Make sure you are keeping up with your sportsmanship ratings so you will be tournament eligible next year. **FINAL SPORTSMANSHIP ENTRIES ARE DUE November 24th, 2008 BY 5:00 PM !!**

COACHES & OFFICIALS

Lightning. Whenever we have lightning, we ask that all schools involved to please use your lighting detectors to help officials in monitoring the lighting. If you don’t have a lighting detector; please get on a computer and us the radar and any available

radio or TV personnel in the area. Administrators, please assist officials when dealing with this life threatening issue. Officials always rule on the side of safety. Get the coaches and administrators together from both schools and make solid choices, even if it means coming back the next day or the following Monday. Any schools desiring to purchase lightning detectors may do so by contacting Elisa Kahler in the IHSAA office at (515) 432-2011 or email at: ekahler@iahsaa.org

Wristbands. If worn, they must be worn no more than 3' below the base of the thumb toward the elbow. Coach, play wristbands are legal when worn on the wrist or forearm. We have had a few calls pertaining to forearm sleeves (mainly receivers or ball carriers). These are considered to be adornments and should not be allowed. Regular forearm pads, rubber sleeves and elbow covering to protect elbows, tape, bandage or support wrap on the hand or forearm to protect and existing injury are legal. Rubberized elbow sleeves or pads to protect elbows on turf fields are legal-WHEN PLAYING ON ARTIFICIAL TURF. Tape shall not exceed three thicknesses.

Substitution Rule. During the period between downs, any number of substitutions from either team may enter and replace players, provided the substitution is completed by having the replaced player(s) leave the field IMMEDIATELY applies to offense or defense. No substitute may enter during a down. During the same dead ball interval, no substitute may become a player and then withdraw and no player may withdraw and then re-enter as a substitute unless during the interval, a penalty is accepted, a dead ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out or the period ends. Replaced players and substitutes are required to leave the field on the same side of the field on which their team box is located.

Blood Rule. In between downs if a player is discovered to have blood on his uniform or person, we are to stop the game and have that player removed until such time they can stop the bleeding and bandage the player up (at least one play). Remember, we must give the affected team time to get a replacement on the field and situated. If an umpire notices the blood on the defensive player just as the offense comes to the line of scrimmage, blow the whistle, and give the replacement player time to get the defensive call and get to his position. You are probably better off to send the offensive team back to huddle up if they want, but don't short change the replacement player or defensive team.

Rule 3-10 a & c: A time out occurs when: An apparent injured or bleeding player is discovered by the official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped. **The player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless the halftime or an overtime intermission occurs.** This time-out, if not charged, is an official's time-out.

Late Hits. Football is a contact sport, but officials and coaches must ensure that the contact is legal. Not only do late hits and other illegal contact lead to injuries, but they often contribute to a loss of game control. Football Fundamental 111-1 states that an official's whistle seldom kills the ball; it is already dead. Officials, the solution to this problem is to blow the whistle in a timely manner. Once forward progress is **stopped**, blow the whistle immediately. Players relax when forward progress is stopped and additional contact at that time can cause unnecessary injury.

Late hits also occur near the sideline. **It is the responsibility of the player initiating the contact** to know if the opponent is in-bounds or out-of-bounds. Again, once players are out of bounds, they relax. Players are very susceptible to injury at that time. Officials must be diligent in their responsibilities to penalize such illegal acts. Being in the proper position will help the officials make the correct call. If late hits are not called, they will only increase as the game progresses.

Free Blocking Zone When QB is in Shotgun Formation. One must understand that when the QB is in shotgun formation, the ball is going to leave the zone in most situations in a very short period of time. With that in mind, coaches need to inform their players that if they are going to block below the waist in the free blocking zone, it must be done immediately. **This means immediately following the initial snap!** If the linemen rise up and then go back down and block below the waist, clip or block in the back, it would be considered an illegal block, because the ball has already left the zone. Officials, you need to pay particular attention to this so we aren't allowing illegal blocks in the free blocking zone. Please review this rule in your Local Officials Association meetings and crew meetings. This will make for some good pre-game discussion. (2-17(1-5)), page 33 of the Rule Book.

Interceptions of Passes in the End Zone. We have had several calls pertaining to interceptions of passes in the end zone and the right to run the ball back out of the end zone. Page 63 in the Rule Book relates to this (any intercepted pass remains live) regardless if in the end zone or field of play. So if the defensive team intercepts the ball in the end zone, they have the right to run it out or down it. If the defensive player would be tackled in the end zone while trying to run it out of the end zone, it would still be a touchback. What's the call? Answer, Replay the down, or take the safety 4-2 Art. 3.

CLARIFICATION OF FOOTBALL CASTING/SPLINT RULE

Due to some changes in the privacy protection law regarding cast/splints, the following items only need to appear on the written prescription from a licensed professional:

1. First and last name of the athlete for whom the cast has been prescribed.
2. The location of the cast.
3. The date the cast was prescribed.
4. The licensed professional's signature.

ON-FIELD MECHANICS REVIEW

1. **The game ending procedure when time runs out during the down or on a fourth down play in overtime when a team fails to score:** The covering officials shall give the timeout mechanic and spot the ball. The referee shall check for any penalties, make sure no timing errors have occurred, no request for a coach referee conference and no other irregularity has occurred. The referee will then hold the ball up with one hand above his/her head indicating the game is over.
2. Wings use your foot (back side of ball) to help wide-outs, but don't tell them they need to move up or back, because, if the ball is snapped while they are moving, a coach wants to know why you were talking to them. Also, square up your feet before you snap.
3. When forward progress is **over**, there should be a whistle immediately. Nothing good will happen after this, defense will try to steal the ball, and extra curricular activities will take place as well as a frustrated runner.
4. Extra Point Situations: when a team comes out in the swinging gate formation, the officials on the same side as the Referee needs to hold his position until the team shifts back to the ball, then release to the goal post with the Back Judge.
5. Officials need to continue to work on observing action after the play is over, especially on scrimmage kicks and free kicks. Everyone is in a big hurry to go to their positions for the next play and there are times when two or three players could be left by themselves and an extra curricular activity could take place. That gets coaches and fans excited.
6. Measurements- The ball needs to be spotted whenever it is close and the Linesman should not look over their shoulder to look at the stakes to see it is close. Know the down and distance and let the Line Judge stop the clock if it is close. Key, always spot the ball in or outside the boundary lines, but **never** spot the ball until after the measurement or your positive if it is short, or it is a first down. Always measure if it is close. Do not leave anyone in the stadium in doubt. BJ, if the ball is outside the inbounds lines, retrieve another ball for the referee to spot between the inbound line. Once the ball is spotted, pick up the original ball and toss it to a ball boy or girl.

OFFICIALS MECHANICS—35-POINT RULE

Make sure the Clock Operator understands your crew will do their normal mechanics anytime the 35-point rule is in effect. However, they are to only stop the clock under the prescribed times we have indicated. Clock Operators have all been sent instructions pertaining to when the clock should be stopped when the 35-point rule is in effect.

REFEREE: The signal as to when the 35-point rule is in effect (when and if it ever reaches this point) is a closed hand with the index finger pointed up above the head (same as untimed down signal) and making a circular motion. This will help remind the Clock Operator the 35-point rule is now in effect. I would recommend that when it goes back under 35 points and normal clock operations are back in effect is to have your Back Judge or Linesman notify the home team sidelines to notify the Clock Operator that the normal clock operations are back in place.

CLOSING

Coaches and Officials, remember it is important to focus your energy into the game and not the negative comments or trying desperately to prove anything to anyone. Weather it is personal attack, unfair criticism or just harassment, the key to keeping cool and performing well is to maintain your focus where it should be- on the game.

The final football letter of the season will be posted on the IHSAA web site by Thursday October 16. I hope you are having an enjoyable football season. Please check our web site for updated information.

Sincerely,

Roger Barr
Director of Officials

RB:am