



IOWA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Football Memo #7

September 28, 2023

Good afternoon football coaches and athletic directors. As we head into Week 6, I have just a few items for everyone to keep in mind.

1. Defenseless Player

I've had a few questions regarding defenseless players over the last couple of weeks. Again, there was a rule change this season to help define who is defenseless. While there are nine examples of defenseless players under rule 2-16, I want to focus on the specific rule change. A receiver attempting to catch a pass who has not had time to clearly become a runner, the intended receiver of a pass in the action during and immediately following an interception or potential interception, or the person intercepting the pass who is forcefully contacted by an opponent and that contact does not meet one of the following criteria is considered defenseless: 1) incidental contact as a result of making a play on the ball, 2) contact initiated with open hands, or 3) an attempt to tackle by wrapping arm(s) around the receiver. The addition of this criteria was meant to aid coaches and officials in clarifying what is and isn't a foul on one of the individuals listed above as there still can be legal, physical contact on these individuals if one of the three conditions are met.

2. Communication Between Coaches and Officials

I would like to circle back on one of the points of emphasis that we covered at the start of the season: communication between coaches and officials. As we covered in the rules meeting, coaches and game officials must demonstrate respect for one another. Both must work together and strive to manage verbal and nonverbal exchanges in ways that avoid escalating conflict.

Game officials must avoid the urge to argue with coaches who disagree with their decisions. Coaches may ask questions, and game officials should make every effort to be approachable, actively listen, and provide correct and complete answers as soon as possible. Game officials should aim to be direct and concise in their communication of essential information. Game officials must anticipate circumstances where coaches may become upset and pre-emptively diffuse the situation. Coaches model acceptable and unacceptable behavior for their student-athletes. If coaches disrespect game officials and make derogatory comments, players will behave in the same way. If a coach exhibits inappropriate behavior and "crosses a line," the game official may choose to penalize the coach for unsportsmanlike conduct.

3. Ejections

Somewhat related to the topic above, but not entirely. Through four weeks of the season, we had 17 ejections at all levels, which is an average of four ejections per week. Looking back at the last seven days, we have had 14 ejections with six alone coming at the junior high level. Nearly all the fouls leading to the ejection occurred after the play had ended. We are scratching our heads at what changed over the last week, particularly at the junior high level, to have this sudden spike in number.

4. Postseason Manual

The 2023 postseason manual is now posted and can be found here: <https://www.iahsaa.org/manuals/football-postseason/>. Do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions as we continue toward the playoffs.

One last head's up. We will post the initial RPI rankings on Monday along with the second set of IHSAA rankings.

Have a great Week 6. Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Jared