

New Official “Wing Tips”

Note: Officiating is both an “art” and a “science.” The “science” is rule and mechanics knowledge; you must know the rule book “cold.” When you step onto the field, coaches, players, admin and spectators trust that you have prepared yourself properly to officiate the game. They don’t know if this is your very first game or your 300th game – they put time and effort to prepare for the game and so should you. As a wing, you are standing on the sideline and will need to communicate properly with coaches, players and chain crew. Do not rely on your crew partners to be your “safety net” for rule knowledge. The “art” of officiating is being able to administer the game properly within the context of the rule book. Your crew chief (in general) and your white hat (R) for each game will be the final arbiter on your role as a wing and on how the crew will function.

Overall

- Be “teachable!” You’re a new official and will learn a lot of new information each time you officiate. Don’t be offended when you’re corrected before/during/after a game.
- We’re a team, not individual officials. Be a good teammate. Don’t throw your fellow officials under the bus. Never “bad-mouth” another official to anyone.
- Don’t dwell on mistakes, no official has had a “perfect” game, learn from your mistakes and keep focused on each play.
- Read the Football Game Officials Manual to learn responsibilities and positioning for 4-man and 5-man; 3-man mechanics can be modified by the R.

Pre-game

- Have your bag packed and ready to go well before game time. (If you are transitioning from work to a game, you don’t want to rush preparing your bag...you’ll undoubtedly miss something.)
- Always have short sleeves and long sleeves in your bag...the weather can/will change quickly.
- Keep a copy of the rule book in your bag, but don’t bring it to the field.
- Recommend you use a plastic container for flags, game cards, whistles, down markers, etc. It’s much easier to keep track of everything.
- Always wear a proper uniform on the field. Don’t dress on/near the field (i.e., don’t wear running shoes to the field and then change to your black shoes). The uniform is your first “first impression.” Keep your shoes clean/shined!
- Recommend you carry a backup whistle...one finger and one lanyard is a possible combination
- Arrive at the field when the R desires (in plenty of time to pregame with the entire crew)
 - Ensure you understand your responsibility for KO’s, counting, scrimmage plays, punts, FGA/trys, goal line, penalties. Communicate with the other wing to agree on hand signals
 - Who has backward pass and motion responsibilities? (Going away or coming towards?)
- You’ll step on the field 30 minutes before game time for varsity games, sub-varsity try to be on the field at least 15 minutes prior to KO.
- When the R speaks with the head coaches, you’ll participate when he is speaking to your sideline’s coach.
- Locate your ball boy/girl and record his/her name.
- (HL) locate your chain crew and record names.

Chains (what to tell the chain crew)

- Note: try to get adults for the chain crew; don’t be afraid to replace members of the chain crew if you don’t feel they are appropriate. It’s the home team’s responsibility to provide adequate/capable members.

- No cell phone/walkman/i-Pod usage!
- You're an integral part of the crew...our job is to administer the game in a consistent rhythm. You can help us by hustling and paying attention.
- Have the crew ensure the accuracy (10 yards – set up from the 10 to the 20) and safety of the chains.
- Make sure there's a tape at the 5 yard mark of the chains.
- First priority is safety...drop the chains if the play is coming toward us.
- Always run through a few quick scenarios with the crew.
- Set up well off the field (approximately two yards). This gives me plenty of room to work out-of-bounds.
- Clip will be placed on the first available five yard line from the back stick...place the clip on the back edge/middle of the stripe.
- Don't move until I wave you! (This is extremely important to emphasize.)
- When we mark off a penalty, box person do not move until I point at you (this reinforces the penalty enforcement spot and the penalty distance).
- After each play, box person can state the down (number) on the box and the line to gain (i.e., "I have three on the box, line to gain is the 42").
- If we have to measure, box person repositions to the front stick, keep the same down, then the stick people run onto the field as directed by the HL. Important that the down is not changed until after the measurement and the chains are re-set. HL needs to hold the clip and chain as you run onto the field to measure – if the clip falls off, you'll not get a very accurate measurement. If the clip is not on the five yard stripe nearest the rear stake, reposition it before coming onto the field for the measurement.
- Between first/second and third/fourth periods, HL will record, down, clip, line to gain. We will wait for the R to indicate we can move. We will then switch stick positions (the line to gain person should be the same after the switch), then hustle down to the other end of the field
- Do not snake your way thru the team box, or the members of the team and coaching staff near the sideline. Instead, move into the field, and around the team.
- Use the chain crew and ball person's names as much as possible...make them feel important as an integral member of the crew.

Ball person

- The ball person will normally be younger than the chain crew. Sometimes (sub-varsity), the ball person will be a player.
- As with the chain crew, the ball person helps to administer the game in a consistent rhythm.
- If possible, the ball person should have two game balls.
- Use the ball person's name often; make him/her feel important.
- At all times (even when your sideline is on defense), the ball person should be right behind you (i.e., you are on the 15 yard line, the ball person should be right with you).
- If a pass is incomplete and away from another official, get a new ball and put that ball in play. Have the ball person chase the other ball.
- Note: If you are on a crew of 3 or 4 and the ball goes out of bounds or far away from you, officiate first, then get the ball...pause, clean up after the play, then get the ball (if at all possible have a player retrieve the ball).

A "typical" play

- It will take time for you to become accustomed to the pre- and post-snap routines
- As a wing, you will count defense and confirm with your fellow wing official.

- Check for 7 on the line of scrimmage (LOS), do this by counting the offensive players in the backfield...the R will indicate if the offense has the correct number of players on the field.
- Indicate outside receivers are OFF the LOS by “punching back”. Keep this posture until the other wing acknowledges your signal. If the player then moves onto the LOS, indicate the change in position to the other wing.
- If you have 5 in the backfield, you only have 6 on the LOS (or you might have 12 players on the field)...indicate this to the other wing by tapping your flag, you'd like to have two flags with illegal formations.
- Your keys: Snap, tackle, back
 - Look for snap infractions and false starts
 - At the snap, linemen will help you with the play...are they pass-blocking or run-blocking? What are the guards doing?
- Don't focus on the backfield...the referee has the backs at the start of the play. Look for linemen holding (on pass plays it's difficult to look for linemen holding while keying on the DBs and receivers - in this case, you will assist if possible on the tackle holding). When you move downfield on a passing play, your “internal clock” (about 3-4 seconds) will cause you to peek in the backfield to see what is going on with the play...but just a peek.
 - The referee will “hand off” the runner to you when the runner crosses the LOS. Allow the runner to go by you; on sweeps to your sideline, move towards the offensive backfield. This will prevent you from officiating from a “get out a way “position. Still look for lead blocking problems (receivers on illegal crack-back blocks, pulling guards and lead blocking backs). Common fouls are Blocks Below the Waist – both offense and defense – and holding at the point of attack. Remember, if a player is gaining an advantage it may warrant a flag. Look for issues at the tackle (fumble, facemask, illegal helmet contact, sideline, horse collar, and other dead ball infractions).
- When the play is dead by rule, you still have important responsibilities:
 - If you are the covering official, sound your whistle, square off and indicate the ball's position with your “downfield” foot. Do not move until the ball is properly spotted. Unless the U or opposite wing has your spot, do not move to chase the ball...someone else can get it for you.
 - Get off the sideline, move onto the field. Move to the numbers as you dead-ball officiate (watch players as they unpile and watch players away from the ball). This is known as “umbrella” – you'll do this on all most every play, try to keep all 22 players in front of you.
 - Indicate the proper down with your hand and your voice (fist for fourth down)
 - If the ball is dead and close to the goal line or line-to-gain, hustle in (sense of urgency) and get a forward progress spot. “Sell” the ball's position if needed. Review goal-line mechanics with your crew.
 - If the play is going away from you, look for problems behind the play... clean up and be a good “dead ball” official.
 - If the play ends out-of-bounds (OOB), whistle, signal TO, hold OOB spot with foot, keep your head up and continue to dead-ball officiate. Pivot your entire body to keep a good eye on players in the area (even substitutes).
 - If the play ends up in the end zone, do the same thing...pivot your body and watch the runner/defenders as you give the “touchdown” signal.
- After a kick try, hustle to the middle of the field to clean up any shoving/taunting/etc. Use your voice to let the players know the play is over. Same on FGA, but remember the ball may be still “live”.
- “Sell” your calls if required (OOB on a catch, incomplete catch, player down before a fumble), but don't grandstand

Bean Bag

- Bean bags are used to assist officials to mark a spot on the field (i.e. fumbles beyond the LOS, PSK enforcement spot, can be used to mark where a runner goes OOB, previous spots if box is not available)
- Carry two bean bags (in case you use one and the play moves well downfield)
- You don't need to throw the bean bag to the pile on a fumble or Post Scrimmage Kick (PSK) position. Drop it near your feet on the proper yard line

Communicating with other officials

- Kickoff: Raise your arm when you are ready for the kick. If another official is "up field" from you, wait until his arm is raised before you raise your own.
- Use the U to communicate with players, for example "#76 defense, is close to encroachment", don't say "#76 defense is encroaching" – coaches and players will wonder what other breaks are you giving their opponent. It's OK to communicate between plays, but make it quick and meaningful communication.
- Learn the proper football jargon and signals. When you throw a flag, continue to officiate until the ball is dead by rule. Then give a strong "tweet, tweet, tweet" to let the crew know you have a foul. Ensure you properly spot the ball and "clean up" before you report the foul to the R.
- When reporting fouls, ensure the proper forward progress spot is maintained.
- Report the foul slowly, and ensure your report has all the information that the R needs - for example: "live ball foul, holding offense #65, 10 yards from the spot of the foul, flag is in the correct spot". When marking forward progress, normally the wing closes to the dead ball will have the forward progress spot. Both wing officials should agree on the forward progress spot.

➤ Communicating with coaches

- Is the coach asking a question or making a statement? You don't need to answer if the coach is simply making a statement.
- Be "thick skinned"...do not be anxious to flag a coach...practice good conflict resolution.
- Be attentive to the coach's concerns, but maintain your focus on the game...do not delay the game to get clarification from another official.
- It's not about "us" as officials...understand and respect their time commitment and passion.
- Try not to run into coaches on sideline, communicate very clearly about your need for the first 2 yards on the sideline when the ball is live.
- Possible statements for coaches:
 - "Coach, what did you see?" (Ask the coach to clearly describe the foul.)
 - "Coach, do you have a number?"
 - "Thanks coach, I'll keep an eye on that"
 - "My partner was right there and had a good look at the play"
 - "If that's what happened, I missed it" (Just don't say that too many times)
 - "Coach, I'm coming your way" (if he is in the restricted zone prior to the snap and you want to move him back)
 - "Coach, I need you back please"

Communicating with players

- When receivers come to the line, they will look to you to ensure they are properly lined up. Step onto the field if required to clearly communicate ("You're on the line" or "You're in the backfield"). Note: "You're on the line" and "You're off the line" sound too similar.

- At the sub-varsity level, you will encounter various levels of skill and knowledge so check with your R to determine how to approach the game; however, don't let "teaching" distract you from administering the game. At the sub-varsity level, you will see a lot of formation problems, false starts, etc. Communicate with your R if you have questions.
- Use your voice...("play's over!" if kids are jostling after the whistle).

Flags

- "Sky" the flag for dead ball fouls or fouls that will be enforced from previous or succeeding spot
- Toss the flag for a spot foul.
- If you throw the flag for a spot foul and don't like where it landed, move the flag (after you complete all other responsibilities) before you report the foul to the R.
- If you and the opposite wing throw flags, quickly communicate to ensure you have the same foul...don't assume.
- If you throw the sole flag for a dead ball foul (i.e., false start), you can indicate the foul by quickly giving the proper signal...you don't have to run all the way to the R to report the foul.

Penalty Enforcement

- When you administer a penalty, each official has a role...typically:
 - The LJ will "hold the spot" to indicate where penalty enforcement begins
 - The HL after communication with the U will move to the spot where the ball will be marked ready for play (succeeding spot)
 - Ensure you make eye/voice contact with the U to ensure proper administration

Time Outs (TO)

- When a coach or player requests a time out, loudly blow the whistle (tweet, tweet, tweet).
- First "look" should be to the clock to note the time.
- Then indicate the time out to the R.
- Officials usually indicate timeouts remaining by stating the number of the team that asked for the timeout first (i.e., "I have 23"...this means the team that just requested the time out has only two remaining and the other team has all three)
- After each TO, tell your coach how many TO's each team has left

Avoiding an inadvertent whistle (IW)

- Do not blow your whistle unless you can see the ball!!! (We don't need a whistle on every play.)
- Are you the covering official? Typically, if the ball does not become dead in your side zone, you won't blow the whistle! There are some exceptions to this.
- Field goal attempt? Fair catch signal on a punt? Pile of players on a fumble? (Be careful here, don't create an IW)
- Finger whistle wins out over a lanyard. A finger whistle gives you an extra fraction of a second to process what you see, and will often help you avoid an IW.
- Take your time, don't be in a hurry...(i.e., let a pass bounce twice)

Miscellaneous

- Always try to put the nose of the ball on a yard line to start an initial series for a team, (especially following a kick, fumble recovery by the defense, and interception)
- Before every snap, know exactly the location of the line to gain. LJ should be very vocal if the ball is downed close to the line to gain. HL, don't turn your head to look at the chains when the ball is downed. If you are unsure, look at the LJ for help.

- Be confident! If you are unsure about something (i.e., you think the crew has the wrong down or if you think a penalty is being incorrectly enforced), blow your whistle and speak with the R.