FOOTBALL INTERPRETATIONS

- Case book 9.7.1 Situation B & C - States that the enforcement spot for an illegal kick can be the succeeding spot. I do not believe that the succeeding spot is an option on those two particular plays. I think only a “legal” kick can be the succeeding spot on a foul by K.

  **RULING:** The casebook is correct. The option to take the penalty from the succeeding spot is during a scrimmage kick down, the rule does not state there must be a legal kick. Remember the intent of this rule is to reduce re-kicks so give the coach the option from the succeeding spot.

- There are a few casebook plays relating to when to reset the 25 second play clock: there are different casebook plays and procedures because the situation will dictate what to do. Every situation is not going to be handled the same way.
  - Here are a few examples,
    - If there is a delay in getting the ball set, which should happen very rarely, and Team A is coming to the LOS, don't reset because team A is not in jeopardy of getting a DOG foul. If time is not important (i.e. 8:30 in the first period), just pump the 25, if time is important (i.e. coming down to the end of the 2nd or 4th periods) or there is a long delay for some reason, then the R might consider stopping the game clock and resetting both. I am in favor of not stopping the game clock whenever possible.
    - Question on QB clapping his hands before the snap for the cadence or silent count: This motion is OK as long as it doesn't, in the judgement of the officials, simulate action at the snap. If done rhythmically and smoothly and it is for the purpose of calling the cadence, then allow it. If the official feels it is done quickly, moves the body, bobs the head, moves the feet, etc. and that draws Team B, then flag it. Give them the benefit that it is legal, unless the QB really exaggerates the movements. If a Team A player is in motion and the QB claps his hands, this is not an illegal shift, not 2 players moving at the same time. Don't be over technical on this. Again, if the QB moves forward then flag it.
    - If, due to a delay in placing the ball for ready for play, we reset the play clock to 25 seconds, and the game clock was running at the time, do we reset the game clock to where it would have been when 25 seconds were left on the play clock?
      **RULING:** If its just a few seconds and at a stage in the game when time is not important, then no, just pump the 25 and let it keep running. If time is important, then I would reset both. It is up to the Referees discretion.

- **NFHS Rules Interpretations**—please click this link for the NFHS interpretations.
• Thoughts on officials using supplemental signals to “sell” a call? Examples that came up were an official repeatedly tapping his hand on the turf to indicate a pass “skipped” on the turf as opposed to a catch; an official swiping his arms toward the sideline after giving an incomplete pass signal to indicate the receiver was out of bounds when he caught the ball (also the “juggling” signal to indicate the receiver did not have control).

  **RULING:** If it helps sell the call, they can be used.

• If after a long play downfield, Team A hustles up to the ball to snap it quickly, Umpires should be aware that all crew mates are in position and ready to officiate, but also should be aware that players are on their side of the neutral zone before releasing the ball. For example, if you see a Team B linemen coming downfield to his position, wait until he gets there. This will eliminate a lot of problems if the ball is snapped early. If the ball does get snapped while a B player is on A's side of the ball, we have to shut that down as a dead ball foul, the foul would actually be an illegal numbering foul, per NFHS rule 7-2-5-d which is a 5 yard penalty and signal 19.

• If a Team/Coach presents an authorization letter from the PIAA that is an exception to a rule (i.e. a player allowed to wear tinted visor, hearing aids beneath the helmet, artificial limb, etc.) the player is allowed to participate while wearing this approved equipment. The Referee, in these rare cases, should already be alerted by their District Interpreter prior to these games where there is an authorization letter, but if not, the Referee/Umpire should allow the player to participate. There should be no other exceptions made to equipment rules unless there is a authorization letter from the PIAA office.

• The officials crew is not going to be responsible for any Band playing issues during the game. If a member of a team complains about bands playing during the game, tell them we are not responsible and to seek out game management for assistance.

• Review Guidelines On Handling Contests During Lightning or Thunder Disturbance. 2019 NFHS rule book Appendix E, Page 102 and the Points of Emphasis. Be prepared and know what to do if a game is halted due to lightening.

• Per NFHS rule 1-1-7 officials jurisdiction starts 30 minutes prior to scheduled game time, PIAA does not have an adoption contrary to this. So our jurisdiction starts 30 minutes prior to scheduled game time. Unsportsmanlike acts prior to the 30 minute mark cannot be penalized, however this should be reported to PIAA and the assignor.

• The new formation rule requires 5 Team A linemen numbered 50-79 and no more than 4 backs. If Team A has 10 players or less in the game and have 4 backs and at least 5 linemen, the formation is legal.

• For horse collar, the jersey on top of the shoulder pads. If that material is used to pull the runner down immediately backwards or sideways is that part of the horse collar criteria?

  **RULING:** By rule it is not, however when in doubt and it is a safety concern, throw the flag.

• If an A player doesn’t stop momentarily between the numbers prior to snap, I believe we as officials could penalize either 5 or 15 yards?

  **RULING:** Illegal formation, live ball 5 yard penalty. If the player is seen and played by the defense, there should be no foul, just a talk-to.
Numbering Exception: Per NFHS interpretation regarding the new formation rule, 4th down when Team K is in scrimmage kick formation, under the numbering exception, the ends and backs are eligible if they have an eligible number, the linemen inside the ends are not eligible. So under this formation: even though Team K only has 10 players in the game, the formation is legal, because they have 5 linemen and not more than 4 backs, and A21, A1, A10, A35, A5 and K3 would all be eligible by number, and there are only 4 players not eligible, A30, A25, A15, A18. Per rule, once the snapper places his hand on the ball, Team K cannot shift to change the eligible players.

A1  A30  A25  A15  A18  A10  A35  A5  K3

When visible play clocks are NOT used, the play clock official (SJ in 6 man or BJ in 5 and 7 man) at 10 seconds remaining in the count will raise one hand into the air. At 5 seconds that official will count down with a one arm swiping motion (i.e. basketball count). When visible play clocks ARE used, the official will not use this mechanic. This applies when either the 25 or 40 second play clocks are being used. PIAP Document on 25/40 Second Play Clock Mechanics.

The new alternate wider striped shirt may be worn this year. Every official in the crew must wear the same shirt, so it is the decision of the crew which shirt to wear. Shoes do not have to be the same. Either solid black or the approved white accented shoe (Per PIAP guidelines) may be worn on the same crew. The traditional one inch striped shirts will be worn for all PIAA inter-district contests.

Many questions on rules, mechanics, adoptions, etc. are already in documents posted on the football site of the PIAP website. Officials should visit and read those documents and many of their questions will be answered.

Disqualifications: If a player is disqualified from a contest, the proper DQ report must be filed with the PIAP office within 24 hours, the sooner the better. Give as much specific information as possible. Make sure the full name of the ejected player is included in the report. Do not just list a number.

Concussions - if a player is exhibiting concussion like symptoms, the official must send the player out of the game and advise the head coach that the athlete is exhibiting concussion like symptoms. At that point we have done our job. If the athlete returns to the game they shall be monitored like any other player. We do not have to get the name or license number of the doctor who approved that players return to the game, nor do we have to ask if that player was examined by a doctor. If the player continues to show signs of concussion, remove from game. A written note is not required from a doctor.

Dead Ball Foul: If a first down is gained by Team A and then there is a dead ball personal/UNS foul on Team A after the play, the penalty will be marked off 15 yards from the dead ball spot and it will be 1st and 10. The only way it can be 1st and 25 is if the dead ball foul occurred AFTER the ready for play, which is going to rarely happen.
When crucial judgments need to be made, our body language and signals need to project confidence in our decisions. Example - on tight spots move efficiently towards the spot and take command and ask for the ball and get it at your feet.

When deciding on a tight pylon play, stay deep off the sideline, be able to see the ball, the goal line and the sideline. Process and then make a firm signal either OOB or TD. If the sideline official is trailing the play come strong if you have the ball carrier OOB prior to the goal line and give the stop clock signal. Official on the goal line should pause and take a look at your line judge to make sure he does not have the runner stepping OOB before you signal TD.

**Play Clocks** - It is essential that you have a good pregame if the play clock is visible and operated either by an assigned official or school personnel. By the 2nd quarter all kinks should be worked out. By the 3rd week of the season, there should be no kinks. R’s - when making communication to confirm game details, instruct the athletic personnel you need to talk with to have both clock operator (if there are 2) present at some point in the pregame. If it is just the game clock operator, this should occur as well...even if they say he is experienced.

**Uniforms**:
As a reminder, I attached the recent release from PIAA regarding the Uniform Changes, specifically the wearing of approved shoes. White on the outside of the soles is not permitted. Remind your Referees to be a leader of their crew and insist on the proper uniform be worn in the game. Highlights of recent PIAA Officials uniform changes.

**Unintentional contact with a nonplayer**: Unintentional contact between a nonplayer and an official in the restricted area while the ball is live is a 15 yard personal foul penalty charged to the head coach. For the second offense of this foul it is a DQ of the head coach. The penalty is administered from the succeeding spot. If the result of the play is a touchdown, the TD stands and the offended team can choose enforcement on the try or the succeeding kickoff. (9-4-8 and 8-2-4).

**Communicating with coaches**: we need to work on this at all times. At times it is the most difficult thing to do in a game. For a coach it's a sense of not knowing what is going on or what just happened. You may not know either. If you are a sideline official you MUST get to them and keep them calm. If you don't have an answer for them, tell them just that, and find out what IS going on. Get them the information they need as soon as you can. Coaches want honesty. If you make a mistake, own it, tell the coach if he asks, you made a mistake and try to correct the situation. They may not be happy, but will move on. Don't make something up.

**Formations**: Remember when we can make formations legal, do it. Don't get too technical with this foul. If a back or lineman is lined up close, give them the benefit of the doubt and make them legal. If they are lined up to gain an advantage, flag them. If you pass on it, get to the player and tell them to be more precise next play. If we can avoid a cheap foul, let's do so.

**Help your partners out** - Don't leave a flag on the ground that needs to be picked up. Get the play right if you have information that will help.

**Game flow**: Let's get the easy ones right. Calling official give the Referee a preliminary signal, if there is only one flag. Umpire walk off the penalty yardage with the Head Linesman and move to the next play efficiently. We are spending too much time discussing "simple" fouls. If there are multiple fouls or a more complicated situation, then we should take more time.
- **Announcements**: Referees, if using a mic, make clear and concise announcements, know what to say before you open the mic. Do not give player's numbers over the mic.

- **Unsportsmanlike Fouls**: If players are jawing at each other, break it up and stop that early. This will only escalate during the game. Let the players celebrate good plays, within reason. If you are not sure, do not penalize.

- **Play clocks**: If both the visible plays clocks are not working or the ECO is making too many mistakes, take the play clock on the field. Both play clocks should be turned off or left at :00. Tell both head coaches that the play clock is being taken on the field and point out the official who has the play clock.

- **Touchback**: When there is a missed field goal that breaks the plane of R's goal line, the result is a touchback. It will be R's ball at the 20 yard line anywhere between the hashes. Do not go back to the previous spot.