

(610) 828-7047 Fax
(610) 389-0351 Cell

James D. Maconaghy
Supervisor of Football Officials
Hillcrest Plaza - SuiteC
102 West Germantown Pike
East Norriton, Pa. 19401
jimmaconaghy@comcast.net

(610) 832-0623

WEEKLY FLASH

8/23/04

To: All Coaches and Officials:

Substitutions

Rule 3 Section 5 Article 2-e

e. While in the process of substitution or simulated substitution, Team A is prohibited from rushing to the line of scrimmage with the obvious attempt of creating a defensive disadvantage. If the ball has been declared ready for play, the game officials will not permit the ball to be snapped until Team B has placed substitutes in position and replaced players have left the field of play. Team B must react promptly with its substitutes.

Presently, the Umpire remains over the ball after the ball has been made "ready for play" and while the twenty-five second clock is running as follows:

- 1.) Change of possessions
- 2.) Kicking formation plays
- 3.) "hurry up" offense

This Umpire mechanic has been used to delay snapping the ball in order to allow the officiating crew to assume their proper position in a timely manner. Now the Umpire will also need to be aware of possible "**substitution and rush**" tactics being used to put Team B at a disadvantage.

During other game situations (first thru third down) the Umpire places the ball on the ground and returns to his normal officiating position about 8 yards behind the defensive linemen. The recommended mechanic to assist in enforcing the new rule will be to add the following situations to items 1, 2 & 3 above.

4.) **Only** when Team A "**substitutes and rushes**" to the line of scrimmage (this can occur when Team A rushes from a huddle, a formation or from the team area) the Umpire will now be viewing the Team A sideline and along with the Referee also be viewing the huddle/formation activities. When a "**substitute and rush**" situation develops the Umpire will begin to walk toward the position of the ball in preparation to delay or prevent the snap. Both the Umpire and the Referee are already maintaining "eye contact" during this period since both will be counting the offensive players. The Umpires

movement toward the ball will indicate to the Referee that a **“substitute and rush”** situation may be developing. The Referee may “wave off” the Umpire at any time he feels the defense has made “prompt adjustments and replaced players have left the field” or he may allow the Umpire to continue come to the ball to delay the snap temporarily or to allow the twenty-five second clock to expire creating a “substitution/delay of the game” foul. If the Umpire is “waved off” by the Referee and the Umpire feels he would be in jeopardy because there is not enough time on the twenty-five for him to return to his normal officiating position safely he may also allow the twenty-five second clock to expire creating the substitution/delay of the game foul. In some situations the Umpire may not be aware that a substitution is taking place and must receive assistance from the Referee and the other officials.

The Referee and the Umpire will coordinate when the Umpire will move "off the ball" usually with a “wave, pointing signal or nod from the Referee. The Umpire will then simultaneously point at and give a verbal indication to the snapper that he is free to snap the ball. If the snapper “quick snaps” the ball before the Umpire has given him a verbal indication Team A will be charged with a delay of game penalty.

If Team B does not react promptly to A's substitution(s), then a delay of game penalty will be assessed against Team B, provided the 25 second play clock expires. If Team B completes its substitution(s) promptly and the 25 second play clock expires, the foul is on Team A for delay of game. However, if Team B purposely delays its substitution(s) and the 25 second clock expires, **the Referee also has the authority to invoke Rule 3-4-3**, in which case the clock will not start until the snap each time B delays its substitution process.

It is important to remember that once the Referee recognizes a **“substitute and rush”** situation is developing he should allow Team B appropriate time to also recognize the **“substitute and rush”** is taking place. If Team B does not attempt to react to the situation promptly then the play should continue uninterrupted and officiated normally. However, if Team B reacts at an appropriate pace then Team B must be given an opportunity to complete the defensive substitution.

“Substitute and rush” situations in a normal “no huddle offense” should indicate an obvious “offensive change of its normal game pace or tempo”. The officials should be able to ascertain an obvious change in pace or tempo on Team A substitutions that would indicate a potential foul. The crew needs to determine whether the Team A substitutes are running onto the field more quickly (rushing) than normal to gain an advantage on Team B, coming more quickly onto the field late in the twenty-five second

clock count down to gain an advantage on team B or merely maintaining normal offensive tempo in which case no foul has occurred. The rule change is not meant to alter or penalize the normal substitution process that the “no huddle offense” has been using for many years. In the past, Team B has usually been able to adjust appropriately unless Team A starts to “hurry” substitutes or begins the substitution process late.

All officials are responsible for knowing when substitutions take place and all three deep officials are responsible for counting the defensive team. The Back Judge should confirm to the Referee that Team B has 11 players in position on the field and has completed its substitution process by holding out his arm.

If a penalty flag is thrown indicative of this foul the Referee and Umpire must confer prior to enforcement with assistance from the Linesman or Line Judge (on the Team A sideline) and the Back Judge regarding the Team A substitution (H or L) and the “prompt” reaction of the defense (BJ).

A good “rule of thumb” would be to “become acutely aware of substitute and rush” situations when the twenty-five second clock is nearing the halfway point.

Game Clock and 25 Second Clock

The Collegiate Commissioners Association (CCA) has determined that the **Side Judge will be responsible for the game clock and the Back Judge will be responsible for the 25 second clock.** Although this mechanic is a departure from previous years, we are obliged to adhere to the procedures set forth by the CCA. Each official will receive updated guidelines to replace the existing guidelines in the Big East/ Atlantic 10 policy manual.

The comments submitted by Side Judges and Back Judges were carefully considered and appreciated. In the final analysis, all conferences should follow the same officiating guidelines as directed by the CCA. If a conference finds the new timing mechanics unworkable, it may recommend a change to the CCA. I am confident that all Side Judges and Back Judges will make a smooth transition to the new timing mechanics.

Simulated Punt/Pass on Scrimmage Kick Formation

Referees are primarily responsible for determining whether a pass from a scrimmage kick formation simulates a scrimmage kick. If a crew conference is necessary after a penalty marker has been thrown on the play related to pass interference a discussion with involved officials should take place with the

Referee. The officials should officiate the play normally and the penalty marker may be “picked-up” if the Referee determines that the pass was a simulated kick.

Scrimmage Kick Formation

The Umpire and Side Judge are responsible for players' numbers and their eligibility to receive a pass on field goals and PATs. Both the Umpire and Side Judge should communicate prior to the snap regarding eligible and ineligible numbers and exceptions pursuant to Rule 1-4-2-b.

Fair Catch Interference

Rule 6 Section 5 Article 1.a.

When a Team B player makes a fair catch, the ball becomes dead where caught and belongs to Team B at that spot (**Exception: When a valid fair catch signal is made, the unimpeded opportunity to catch a free kick or scrimmage kick is extended to a player who muffs the kick and still has an opportunity to complete the catch. This protection terminates when the kick touches the ground. If the player subsequently catches the kick the ball is placed where it was first touched.**

Guidelines (when a Team B player is positioning himself to catch a kick - with or without a “fair catch” signal)

1. A kicking team player (“*gunner*”) may not:
 - stop near the *receiver* as he positions himself normally to catch the ball
 - be in the *receivers* path as he moves to position himself to catch the ball
 - run near or sprint passing by (“*buzz*”) the receiver
 - shout at the *receiver*
 - wave his hands/ arms at the *receiver*

Keep in mind that all of the above acts are designed to **“break down the concentration of the receiver who is very vulnerable as he gets ready to catch the ball”**. All would be considered fouls without contact.

2. The proximity of the *gunner* to the *receiver* in these situations is the primary factor in determining when a foul has occurred. We need to allow the *receiver* an opportunity to “reach out or up” to catch the ball. This reaching distance by a *receiver* may vary but under most circumstances should be the distance from the players shoulder to the fingertips. This distance is a good method to apply when making your judgment. Keep in mind that this foul may occur as the *gunner* stops in front of the *receiver*

or as the *gunner* passes by the *receiver*. If the *gunner* passes by the *receiver* during the time the *receiver* is turning to make the catch a foul would have occurred since this would have limited the receiver's adjustment. However if the *gunner* had already passed by the *receiver* prior to any adjustment this may not be a foul. The covering official needs to see the play complete itself before determining whether or not a foul occurred.

3. Legal and illegal contact with the *receiver*:

During a play in which a "valid fair catch signal" has been given by the *receiver* he may not be hit. He must also be permitted to complete the catch after a muff, bobbling the ball or mishandling the ball (providing the ball does not hit the ground). He may not in any way be impeded from moving to catch the ball or to establish possession after first touching the kick in the air. The *gunner* may not be in the *receivers* path as he approaches the ball or after a muff/bobble as the receiver takes a new or continued path to establish possession.

During a play in which no "fair catch signal" has been given by the *receiver* he should be given a reasonable opportunity to complete the catch after touching the ball. If the *receiver* completes the catch cleanly (no muff/bobble) he may be contacted after the catch is completed. If after touching the ball but prior to completing the catch he muffs/bobbles the ball thereby not cleanly handling the catch he may be contacted immediately. He may also be contacted by the *gunner* as he attempts to regain the ball since both players now may pursue the ball to catch or recover it. *Example # 1* - The ball first strikes the *receiver* on the fore arms, upper arms or shoulder causing him to muff/bobble the ball thus being unable to complete a catch cleanly, the *gunner* may contact him. *Example # 2* - The ball strikes the *receiver* as above and deflects away from the *receiver* causing him to move away from his original position to chase the ball and catch it. The *gunner* may contact him and is not responsible to allow the *receiver* an unimpeded path to regain the ball.

When a receiver who has touched the kick and clearly completed the catch cleanly, he may then be contacted. The receiver who has touched the kick and muffs/bobbles the ball before completing the catch has not completed the catch cleanly he may be contacted during this very short period of time.

This is a "very fine line" which happens very, very quickly. The officials need to concentrate and focus on the play. The coaches need to be sure

their "gunners" understand the differences. In most cases an "immediate catch then hit" by the "gunner" on the "receiver"

Roughing the Passer

- **Pass Leaving Passer's Hand: 1-Step Rule**

Roughing will be called if, in the Referee's judgment, a pass rusher clearly should have known that the ball had already left the passer's hand before contact was made. Pass rushers are responsible for being aware of the position of the ball in passing situations. The Referee will use the release of the ball from the passer's hand as his guidelines that the passer is now fully protected. Once a pass has been released by a passer, a rushing defender may make direct contact with the passer only up through the rusher's first step after such release (**prior to second step hitting the ground**); thereafter the rusher must be making an attempt to avoid contact and must not continue to "dive through" or otherwise forcibly contact the passer. Incidental or inadvertent contact by a player who is easing up or being blocked into the passer will not be considered significant.

- **Unnecessary Acts Against the Passer**

A rushing defender is prohibited from committing such intimidating and punishing acts such as "stuffing" a passer into the ground or unnecessarily wrestling or driving him down after the passer has thrown the ball, even if the rusher makes his initial contact with the passer within the one-step limitation provided for above. When tackling a passer who is in a virtually defenseless posture (e.g., during or just after throwing a pass), a defensive player must not unnecessarily or violently throw him down and land on top of him with all or most of the defender's weight. Instead, the defensive player must strive to wrap up or cradle the passer with the defensive player's arms.

Any unnecessary action against the Passer after he release the ball, even if it is just a push, may draw a penalty depending upon the effect it has on the Passer. In addition, unnecessary action on the Quarterback when he is running an option offense and has pitched the ball to the trailing back should not be tolerated.

Rule 1-4-2-b. Exceptions to the Mandatory Numbering Rule on Scrimmage Kick Formations

It is important to note that teams who line up in a scrimmage kick formation are exempted from the rule which requires at least five offensive players on the line of scrimmage numbered 50-79. However, such an exemption may limit a team's flexibility when it shifts from the muddle-huddle or swinging gate back to the area where the center, kicker, and holder are positioned.

If a player is identified by his initial position as an exception to the rule, that player remains an ineligible receiver until the down is over, a timeout is charged by the referee, or a period ends. Consequently, if a team shifts the "ineligible" player to an eligible position, a foul for illegal formation occurs at the snap.

Some important points to remember about the rule:

1. If a team has five players on the Line of Scrimmage (LOS) numbered 50-79, it need not concern itself with exceptions to the numbering rule. It needs only to concern itself with normal shift requirements.
2. If a team has less than five players on the LOS numbered 50-79, simply lining up for the PAT and kicking the ball, without shifting from the muddle-huddle, is legal. The team may also run or pass the ball as long as the receivers are in eligible positions with eligible numbers.

Further clarification charts are enclosed.

The Umpire and the Side Judge (SJ) have specific responsibilities on these play situations but the following will apply:

1. The Umpire will go with the "muddle huddle" to note numbering exceptions to Rule 1-4-2-b.
2. The Side Judge will stay with the snapper.
3. The Side Judge will focus on the defensive overload (pull and shoot) and may have to go behind the Umpire more than once on muddle huddle situations.

Let us not concern ourselves with form over substance; let's cover the play the same way every time. If a team is committing an infraction when it shifts from the muddle huddle to a scrimmage kick formation, then take the time to explain as best you can what must be done to correct the situation. Preventative officiating can save teams and officials unnecessary fouls.

Receiver Going Out of Bounds

Officials will throw their hat when a receiver or a kicking team player goes out of bounds during the down. This change will alert other officials that something unusual has occurred and conveys information to the media and to spectators

On-side Kickoff

The A10 staff will cover the **obvious** on-side kick situation by positioning six officials at five yard intervals starting at the 35 yard line and ending at the 45 yard line. This mechanic will provide better coverage in critical situations during the game. Please refer to the **Priority Check List** and the **Initial Positions** diagrams that were distributed in March 2003 for Short Free Kicks for your duties and responsibilities. **The kicker's restraining line is treated as a "plane" not to be broken by the kicking team prior to the kick.**

Fair Catch Interference - Head Linesman

When a scrimmage kick is to the Field Judge's side of the field, the Head Linesman needs assistance from Back Judge (BJ), Field Judge (FJ), and Side Judge as to whether or not a valid or invalid signal has been given in the event the receiver blocks after giving the signal. This information is vital to the HL and determines if a penalty has been committed.

On the same subject, we as a staff did not do a credible job when the kick receiver had to move toward the line of scrimmage to catch the kick. Too frequently, the BJ did not move up with the receiver nor did the SJ and FJ move up on a timely basis when it was clear that the kick was going to be short. Officiate the play - positioning at the start of the play is simply the recommended position before the play evolves. Good officials are alert and react accordingly as they gain information once the ball is kicked. We do not need officials at the goal line once it is apparent the ball will come down on the 25-30 yard line. Again, officiate the play as it develops and adjust accordingly.

"Buzzing" the receiver is a flag only when the receiver is positioned to catch the kick. However, forcing the receiver to go around a kicking team player to get into position is a 15 yard penalty. It is the responsibility of the kicking team player to know where the ball is.

Please remember that interference with the opportunity to catch a kick is a 15 yard penalty from the spot of the foul.

Use of Bean Bags
WHITE IN COLOR

Fair Catch Signaler First Touching

When a Team B player makes a fair catch and muffs the kick, the downfield officials must drop a bean bag at the spot of first touching. If the signaling player subsequently catches the kick, the ball is placed where it is first touched.

Muffed Backward Passes and Snaps

It was agreed at the 2002 clinic that staff would not bean bag muffed backward passes and snaps behind the neutral zone.

Backward Passes Behind the Neutral Zone

Line Judges will share responsibility for ruling passes forward or backward behind the neutral zone on drop back passes of 3 or more steps. The Referee and Head Linesman also have this responsibility. It is easier to determine whether a pass is forward or backward if it is thrown "away" from the official (i.e. to the other side of the field) than at him.

If there is no whistle from the LJ or HL when a pass strikes the ground behind the neutral zone, and the Referee is uncertain, then the absence of a whistle is an indicator that the pass was thrown backwards and is still a live ball. On QB scrambles deep in the backfield, the Referee may have to make this call since the LJ is holding the LOS and the HL is five yards downfield.

Remember: "When in question, it is a forward pass rather than a backward pass when thrown in or behind the neutral zone." Rule 2-19-2-a

Pass Coverage Mechanics

Officials should always be downfield looking back upfield at receivers coming at them. Proper spacing will allow the official to slow down or stop and make the call. There are times when officials will "get beat" to the goal line. Your job is to minimize those occurrences.

On pass plays at the sideline in the end zone, it is perfectly sound for the SJ and FJ to straddle the sideline and move into the end zone if the pass is

thrown to your corner (end line and sideline) as long as you communicate visually with the Back Judge.

Broken Play on FGs and PATs

The Field Judge will move quickly to the goal line (from under the upright). The Line Judge will rule on the runner or receiver being out of bounds on his side of the field.

The Side Judge should not try to get to the sideline but will hold his position and watch for illegal blocks and trapped passes. The BJ is responsible for the end line and the HL and LJ have their normal duties with one major difference. Each has his sideline all the way to the end line because of the repositioning of the SJ and FJ during FGs and PATs.

Guidelines for Helmet to Helmet Contact - Defenseless Players

The emphasis on helmet contact has not changed. The key is to determine if the tackler “dips” his head and then makes initial contact with it. If a player is to be disqualified, communicate with those officials who may have had the opportunity to view the contact.

In regard to fair catch interference, there is no change as to whether a disqualification is in order. The key factor is to determine if the Team A player “broke down” prior to hitting the receiver. If so, it is a 15 yard penalty. If flagrant and/or if the helmet is used, a disqualification is in order.

Player Disqualification's

Referees shall notify Head Coaches when a player is disqualified. If the calling official is other than the Referee, then the official who ejected the player should accompany the Referee to the sideline to advise the Head Coach why the player was ejected. Two officials should be present when such information is given to the Coach. There should be no misunderstanding in this situation.

Training Room Visit

When the Umpire goes to the training room he should be accompanied by the Referee. Both officials should hear what the Trainer needs to tell them to prevent any misunderstanding when information is conveyed to the rest of the crew. **Additionally, the Umpire will deliver the “Emergency Medical Envelopes” to the Trainer at this time.**

Equipment Policy Procedures

The equipment policy was previously distributed to all officials by e-mail. It was discussed and modified at the clinic by designating the **Back Judge** and **Line Judge** as the two officials responsible for meeting with **Team Designees** 30 minutes prior to game time and, then again, 5 minutes before the game when the BJ and LJ go to the team's locker room.

Procedurally, the following should occur:

1. One hour prior to the game, the Side Judge and Field Judge will go out to the field to observe the teams in the pre-game warm ups. Each official will have an Equipment Card on which he will record equipment violations. Violations may include "sock length, knee pads, shirt out, no tail bone protector, etc." and should be entered on the "Equipment Violation" line with the player's jersey number.
2. The Head Linesman and Line Judge will enter the field 40 minutes prior to game time at which time the Side Judge will give his card to the HL and the Field Judge will give his card to the LJ. The HL and the LJ will confirm the equipment violations and may add or delete violations as noted or corrected.
3. Thirty minutes prior to the game the BJ will enter the field and will receive the equipment card from the HL. The BJ will meet with the visiting team's designee and the LJ will meet with the home team's designee at the 50 yard line. Each team designee will be given a copy of the equipment card with the violations noted.
4. At least 5 minutes prior to game time, before the teams leave the locker rooms, the BJ and LJ will again meet with the team designee. As the team exits to take the field, the designated game official (BJ or LJ) will once again inform the team designee of any equipment violations. Each official will note on his equipment card those violations which have been corrected. The officials will give the card to the Technical Advisor after the game so it can be faxed to the Supervisor of Officials only if violations remain unattended or continue during the game.

BE THE BEST THIS SEASON!!!!