



COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

SIDELINE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES: **OFFICIATING PROTOCOLS AND MECHANICS**

INTRODUCTION

The rules for sideline management have been in place for many years. However, over time many officials have become lax in their enforcement, both as to the spirit and the letter of these rules. This lack of consistency in sideline management has resulted in actions by coaches and players that go well beyond the rules' intent. As a result, the image of the game is being tarnished by unsportsmanlike acts that have become much too prevalent.

This document establishes the guidelines and expectations for game officials so that they may better manage the sidelines with regard to practices of both players and coaches. Educating and instructing all parties with a thorough knowledge of the rules and their practical application should lead to a better shared understanding of how the sidelines should be managed. The consistent application of these guidelines by coordinators and game officials should quickly move players and coaches toward eliminating negative behavior. With this standardized set of guidelines and protocols, players and coaches will understand that they can continue to perform their normal and customary duties without concern that game officials will become overzealous in applying these procedures.

OFFICIATING PROCEDURES

Before the game, all sideline officials should greet the head coach of each team and establish a positive working relationship.

- Ask the head coach for the name of his “get-back” coach who will support your efforts in the positive management of the sidelines.
- Provide direction to the “get-back” coach as to what the game officials understand his duties and responsibilities are with regard to sideline management.

During the game, game officials are to use these protocols for actions of players and coaches “within the white”:

- Work with the “get-back” coach when the need arises.
- In the absence of cooperation from the “get-back” coach, or if the game officials are unable to control the sideline, they should go directly to the head coach and explain that his assistance is required in rectifying the situation.

If speaking with the head coach does not resolve the issues, during the next dead-ball period the sideline official should implement the following procedures.

Except for the allowances given later, players and/or coaches may not “crowd into the white” (stepping between the coaching line and the sideline) while the ball is in play (alive or dead), nor may they obstruct the sightlines or work of the officials, nor may they force an official to run around team members in order to officiate the game. Game officials are to employ the following set of protocols:

- 1st occurrence – During the subsequent dead ball period the sideline official will report the situation to the Referee, who will then give the offending sideline an “official” warning. No flag should be thrown.
 - The Referee will go to the head coach and explain the situation, step away, signal the team back and give the following announcement:
“(Team) has been given its 1st warning for Sideline Interference.”
- 2nd and 3rd occurrences
 - The sideline official will throw his flag and the team will be assessed a 5-yard penalty. The Referee will follow with the appropriate announcement for Sideline Interference.
- 4th and all Subsequent occurrences
 - The sideline official will throw his flag and the team will be assessed a 15-yard penalty for an Unfair Act. The Referee will follow with the appropriate announcement for an Unfair Act associated with sideline interference.

Allowances

- Whether a coach is “in the white” or near the sideline, game officials are to understand the *spirit* of his actions and respond appropriately.
 - Do his actions exhibit poor sportsmanship, or is he coaching?
 - ✓ If he is coaching and goes too far onto the field, the sideline warning protocol would be implemented.
 - ✓ If he exhibits poor sportsmanship, there will be an automatic 15-yard penalty.
 - Do his actions interfere with officiating duties?
 - ✓ A 5- or 15-yard penalty is appropriate per the given examples.
- When all action has ceased after a play, coaches may step to or slightly beyond the sideline, or at a reasonable distance slightly outside the team

area out of bounds, to coach their players by calling plays or to send substitutes on and off the field. Coaches and players must be back in the coaching box and team area, respectively, when the ball is next snapped.

- When all action has ceased after a play, coaches may come slightly onto the field to congratulate players in a “spontaneous celebration of success,” but they must always be aware of potential taunting actions.
- A head coach may leave his team area and run down the sideline *only to immediately* request a time-out or for a replay challenge. (Rule 3-3-4-d)
- During Team or Administrative Time-Outs – All coaches and their teams must stay at or near the sideline adjacent to the team area and must never progress as far as the numbers.
 - If teams huddle an excessive distance from the team area, implement the “official warning” procedures.

Note: For all allowances, game officials should use the “warning system” when coaches are an excessive distance from the sideline.

Game Administration Issues

- If just prior to the snap if a coach or player walks in front of or crosses the sightlines of an official:
 - Use the “official warning” procedure if there is no direct interference with officiating duties.
 - Penalize appropriately if there is interference with officiating duties.
- Coach standing well outside the team area:
 - if not interfering
 - ✓ Use the “official warning” protocol after the play.
 - If interfering or exhibiting unsportsmanlike behavior
 - ✓ Penalize appropriately: 5- or 15-yard penalty as warranted.
- Coach either standing in the “white” or coming onto the field in protest:
 - For exaggerated, excessive or prolonged demonstrations that threaten, or are obscene or abusive.
 - ✓ Automatic 15-yard penalty
- Spontaneous celebration of success and/or congratulating players:
 - Coaches will be allowed to come slightly onto the field to congratulate their players after all action has ceased.
 - Officials are to understand the “spirit” of a coach’s actions and respond to his actions appropriately. Talk him back to the sideline.
 - ✓ If an excessive distance from the sideline:
 - Implement the “official warning” protocols
 - ✓ Coaches and officials should understand possible taunting actions
 - Taunting: automatic 15-yard penalty

- Specific actions that prevent officials from performing their duties:
 - Collisions in the white or on the field with a member of a team:
 - ✓ Automatic 15-yard penalty or equitable action including awarding a score. (Rule 9-2-3-a)
 - Being in the white and obstructing the sightlines or work of active officiating:
 - ✓ If it has an impact on officiating duties. (Rule 9-2-5)
 - 1st and 2nd infractions: automatic 5-yard penalty
 - 3rd and all subsequent infractions: automatic 15-yard penalty
 - ✓ If the action of players or coaches in the white or on the field requires an official to run around players.
 - Automatic 5-yard penalty at the succeeding spot.

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