

## Football Officiating M to O

# MOTION

When a team A player goes in motion, every official on the field should take notice. Before the snap, the official away from whom the player is moving has to make sure the man in motion doesn't cut upfield before the snap. The referee has to make sure team A doesn't have two men in motion. The back judge has to know if the motion has change the strength of the formation because that will change his key (see "Keys"). Officials should also notice how team B responds to the motion. Perhaps defensive backs that had been close to the line of scrimmage and ready to blitz will drop off.

Once the ball is snapped, the player in motion still bears attention. Motion men are often used as lead blockers on sweeps. Make sure someone watches that block to make sure it's legal. See the entire block so you don't penalize team A for contact that starts above the waist and ends below the waist or starts in the front and ends in the back only because the team B player turned.

# NOTES

“Cheat sheets” were discouraged during your school days, but they come in handy on the football field. Most officials pull out their information card before the game, jot down the captains’ numbers, record which team won the toss and put the card back into their pocket. They don’t look at it again until the second half unless a team takes a timeout before halftime. That’s an incredible waste of a potentially valuable resource.

Record the captains’ names (first and last) and numbers. Players will be more responsive when called by their name rather than number. If you need a captain’s help in dealing with an exuberant teammate, the captain will be more receptive if called by his name. If the coach doesn’t offer the captains’ names in the pregame meeting, ask for them.

Jot down the results of the coin toss. You might also consider recording which captain served as his team’s spokesman. If the coach wanted his captain to defer the choice but the player chose to receive, the coach will want to speak to the captain who disobeyed his orders. Write down both team’s choices. If you’re confused about which compass direction the teams are facing, use S for

scoreboard end and N for non-scoreboard end, if applicable.

Log the number of the player who asked for a timeout and the time on the clock when the timeout was granted.

Record the name or number of any ejected player or coach or anyone flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Every official should note the down, distance and position of the ball (i.e. left hash, slightly right of center) at the end of the first and third quarters. That information will help you reset the ball properly to start the next quarter.

The card also provides a means of jotting down reminders for discussion at halftime or after the game. If you are unsure you properly applied a rule, when time allows make a note to yourself to check on it. If you think of a way your crew can better cover a certain type of play, you can write it down.

Umpires may wish to record the uniform numbers of players they inspected before the game. It will help an umpire remember which players had equipment that was judged illegal should the player participate wearing the illegal gear.

If you find all of this information won't fit on a standard information card, create your own or use a blank index card. Another tip: When working a game in rain or snow,

take along a plastic bag with a reusable seal such as a sandwich bag. Keeping the card in the sealed bag will limit the amount of time it is exposed to the elements.

## **OUT OF BOUNDS**

One of the toughest things to teach newer officials is the need to turn away from the field of play when a play ends out of bounds. Some less-experienced officials seem to think that no one will see them give the stop-the-clock signal unless they are facing the field. Others worry about what's going on behind them, not realizing that other officials are (or should be) observing players still on the field.

You may see 99 plays ending out of bounds with no problems. But that 100th play could be the one in which someone delivers a blow after the whistle. If you don't see it and the act goes unpenalized, you may soon find yourself breaking up a brawl.

At no time while players are out of bounds should officials turn their backs on the play. Players who have crossed the sideline return to the field must be accompanied by an official. Holding the spot with your foot, blowing your whistle, signaling the clock to stop and

watching the players may seem like a lot do at one time, but it comes naturally with practice.

Wing officials should start each play no closer than toes on the back edge of the sideline. They should not hesitate to move beyond the sideline when necessary, such as when a sweep or sideline pass brings several players toward the sideline. That's why it's important for wing officials to keep a "clean sideline," one in which players and coaches stand only where allowed by rule.

Linesmen and line judges can improve their chances of clean sidelines by having each head coach designate a "get-back coach." The get-back coach is usually an assistant coach who urges substitutes, trainers and other sideline personnel to stay in the team boxes.

The wing official should introduce himself to the get-back coach shortly before the game begins. If, in the excitement of the game, the get-back coach forgets his duties, a gentle reminder from the wing official usually does the trick. Players will usually respond to a coach's order to get back.

Don't hesitate to issue a sideline warning if warranted. The first warning has no yardage walkoff, and is often all that's needed to get compliance.

**REFEREE.COM**  
YOUR SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING OFFICIATING

**VISIT DAILY FOR UPDATED CONTENT**