

## Football Officiating P to R

# POSTGAME

Another longtime Referee emphasis has been the importance of a pregame meeting. Less discussed but equally important is the postgame meeting.

Once the game is over and you've reached the locker room, a crew should honestly assess its performance. If an unusual play occurred, discuss how it was handled and if the reaction was correct. Even if it was a routine game, the crew can discuss what it did well and what it could have done better.

Be technical and be critical. Don't let the conversation deteriorate into a testosterone festival, filled with comments like, "Did you hear what I told that coach? Man, I shut him up in a hurry!" Instead, examine what caused the blowup. "The coach said I missed a clip on that kickoff return for a touchdown. Did any of you see it? I saw the block and thought it was legal. Should I have told the coach I saw it and passed on it?"

One of the more pleasant aspects of officiating is going out for food and beverages after a game. You can discuss elements of the game over dinner, but be careful.

Other restaurant patrons may have attended the

game. You don't want to start a debate with fans or air your dirty laundry in a potentially hostile area. What's said in the locker room should stay there.

## QUIET WORD

Just as a picture says a thousand words, a look or brief comment can work wonders on the football field. The quiet word is part of preventive officiating. If you see an offensive lineman hold an opponent on a play on which the run goes to the other side of the field, let the lineman know you saw it. "Hey, number 76. Understand that if you hold like that at the point of attack, I'll have to throw a flag." If a player is acting up but has not yet earned a flag, talk to him. "Come on now, 55. You're a better player than that. Play football, OK?" Use a conversational tone, not an aggressive tone.

You say that sounds like you're coaching? Au contraire. You're passing along information. Officials are not merely enforcers; part of their job is to improve or at least maintain the flow of the game. The quiet word doesn't have to be punitive. If a runner hands you the ball instead of making you bend for it, say thank you. If a

player helps an opponent to his feet, compliment him for that act of good sportsmanship.

There will be times when you'll need to raise your voice in order to make a point. But that should happen as little as possible. There will also be times when you should not speak at all. Sometimes merely making eye contact with a player or coach is all that is necessary to convey the message you choose to send.

## **RULEBOOK**

Believe it or not, the rulebook is more of a friend than an enemy. The vast majority of the questions you have about situations can be answered simply by checking in the rulebook. The trick is knowing where to look. It comes easily only by reading and re-reading the book.

When you get your new rulebook, speed-read the entire book. Read it as if you're cruising through a novel. You will not remember everything you read, but don't worry about that now. Familiarize yourself with different sections so you don't need to rely on the index.

Categorize the rules. Some rules have more game-to-game impact than others. For example, the "Game, Field Players and Equipment" rules, often near the front of the

book, are not necessarily the ones you should read first. While important, that section is not the most important for someone who is trying to learn the rules. What's more important, a legal blocking technique or the width of the stripes on the ball? Perhaps the most important section of the book is the one dedicated to definitions. Mastering the definitions not only helps you on the field, it helps you study the rest of the book.

Read in short increments of time. After the initial reading of the entire rulebook, study in increments of 15-20 minutes per sitting. Digest the material in bite-sized pieces. Read some part of the rulebook each day, including during the offseason. Make it as much a part of your daily routine as brushing your teeth.

Study just before falling asleep. Studies have shown that memory retention is enhanced by studying right before sleeping. Instead of watching TV as you begin to fall asleep, read the rulebook.

Don't forget to check related casebook plays or approved rulings. Once you've grasped a rule, read related caseplays and manuals before moving to the next rule. Caseplays enhance knowledge by taking rules and placing them into game situations. However, the caseplays cannot replace the rulebook. Also, take quizzes and tests,

which reinforce what you already know or emphasize what you don't know.

Keep your rulebook near your TV. If a foul occurs, ask yourself how the penalty would be enforced at the level you work. Check the rulebook to make sure you're correct.



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