

Football Officiating S to U

SIGNALS

Clear, sharp signals not only help public address announcers, teams and spectators understand what call has been made, they enhance the impression an official makes in the eyes of others.

The hand signals used by football referees to signify penalties can be traced to the late 1920s. In a game between Syracuse and Cornell, radio announcer Ted Husing asked referee Ellwood Geiges if Geiges could do something to keep the press booth informed of the action. Some of the signals Geiges created on the spot (such as offside and holding) are still used in their original form. Albie Booth, a well-known official of that era, is also credited with originating many of the signals.

Ideally, you want to appear poised and relaxed when giving signals. You do not want to create the impression you are lethargic or lazy. The other extreme, appearing overly excited, should also be avoided. Avoid nervous mannerisms such as tugging on your lanyard, repeatedly snapping your down indicator, etc. Have the same body language late in the game as you had at the beginning

and, above all, avoid getting caught up in the emotion of the game.

Neither your signals nor your facial expression should indicate emotion. If you've just flagged a coach for unsportsmanlike conduct or ejected a player, over-enthusiastic thrusts of the arms can enflame an already contentious situation.

Add some emphasis to your signals when you're trying to sell a close call. But save that emphasis for occasions when it is needed. In all other instances, maintain a slow, even tempo.

Some associations allow supplemental signals. Check with your association before using such non-authorized signals.

Your signals must be firm, but not flashy. Don't give signals that infer a "gotcha" attitude to the offending player.

TIMERS

Few things make an official's life more miserable than a bad clock operator. If the clock stops or starts incorrectly despite the officials' best efforts and signals, the officials will bear the brunt of coaches' wrath, not the timer.

In extreme cases, officials can take over the timing of a game. But that should be an absolute last resort, one undertaken only if the timer is clearly trying to influence the outcome of the game (which is difficult if not impossible to prove).

Before going to the pressbox to meet the timer in the pregame, the appropriate official must confirm with the game manager the starting time of the game and the length of halftime. That information should also be confirmed with the timer.

On free kicks, remind the timer to wait for the proper signal. From scrimmage, the clock will start either with the referee's ready or on the snap.

Remind the timer that five signals should cause him to stop the clock: stop the clock, incomplete pass, touchdown, touchback and safety.

The timer must observe the covering official on plays that end at the sideline. Remind the timer to look for the stop-the-clock signal when the ball goes near a sideline, there is a change of possession or there is a first down, and that tries are always untimed.

Instruct the timer to wait for the referee's signal before starting the countdown for halftime. That signal is

contingent upon both teams clearing the field. For NFHS games, there is an additional three-minute warmup that immediately follows the intermission. That time should also start on the referee's signal so he can ensure both teams are on the field ready to loosen up.

Another item for prep games: If the regulation game ends in a tie and overtime is played, the timer will need to put three minutes on the clock (NFHS rules mandate a three-minute break between the end of regulation play and the first overtime period) and again wait for the referee's signal. After that, the clock is not needed unless there is a second overtime (a two-minute break occurs in that case).

The timer should be asked how the referee will be able to communicate with the timer if the clock needs to be corrected. In some cases, assistant coaches in the pressbox communicate through headphones to coaches on the sideline. Using the coaches is one method of relaying information. Another is to have the referee signal the correct time with his fingers, like a basketball official reporting a foul to the scorer. The official meeting with the timer should find out if the clock is programmable (can be set to a specific time) or if it has to run through a one-minute cycle in order to be reset.

The timer should also be asked if the clock is in working order to the best of his knowledge. If there were mechanical malfunctions in previous weeks, were the problems solved? Either way, Referee recommends having an official on the field (usually the back judge in a crew of five or the line judge in a crew of four) time the game as a backup. If the clock malfunctions during the game, the timer should be instructed to wait for a timeout or other break in the action before resetting the clock. The timer should communicate with the referee to obtain the correct time, then reset the clock.

In areas using a game-shortening procedure (such as a 35-point rule), it's a good idea to provide the timer with a list of exceptions to clock rules.

UNIFORM

The editors at Referee have harped on wearing the correct uniform and using the proper accessories for so long, it seems redundant to bring it up again here. Yet year after year there are reports of officials wearing dirty, ill-fitting, old or improper uniforms, unpolished shoes, adjustable caps and committing other fashion faux pas. One crew showed up for a state playoff football game

wearing V-neck basketball shirts. Another group featured four members in long-sleeved shirts and one wearing short sleeves.

Apparently the message has not gotten through to everybody, so here goes again.

The standard black and white shirt with a Byron collar and one-inch vertical stripes are worn. Leave the wide-stripe shirts for the guys who've made it to the next levels. Officials should own shirts with short and long sleeves. All crew members should wear the same length sleeves. Do not wear a long-sleeved garment underneath a short-sleeved shirt. T-shirts and turtlenecks (for cold weather) should be black. The undershirt should not have any letters or pictures that could be seen through your striped shirt. Shirts should always be tucked in. Association patches are allowed if it's accepted in the area.

In most places, black pants have replaced the iconic white knickers. A black belt 1-1/4 to 2 inches wide with a plain buckle is required. Shirts should remain tucked in at all times.

Entirely black shoes are most acceptable; however, some state associations and college conferences allow black with minimal white markings (like shoe logos). Black laces are always worn.

A black cap with white piping should be worn by all but the referee. The referee's white hat must be clean. All caps should be fitted and made of either wool or nylon. Adjustable caps and those made of mesh appear unprofessional.

The CCA does not allow jackets to be worn during games. When high school associations allow jackets to be worn during the game, the jacket should be black and white striped. Jackets may be worn before the game during warmups. All officials should either wear jackets or go without. Referee strongly recommends that jackets not be worn during games. There are plenty of undergarments on the market that will keep you warm. An official wearing a jacket just doesn't look as professional as one not wearing one.

Do not go to the game dressed in any part of your uniform. It just looks unprofessional. Make a good first impression on game management by wearing clean, pressed clothes to and from the game. Jeans, shorts, T-shirts, baseball caps, sneakers, sandals, sweatsuits and jogging attire are inappropriate. Wedding rings may be worn on the field, but other rings, necklaces, bracelets and earrings may not. As a backup in case a watch malfunctions during the game, at least one official

who doesn't have timing responsibilities should wear a watch.

Carry your uniform in a garment bag or gym bag. The bag should be neat (no frayed edges, etc.) and entirely black. Some associations have their group's logo or the official's name embroidered on the bag. That's acceptable if that's what officials in the area are doing. If no one else in the area is doing it, don't do it just to stand out.

Many officials at the high school and college levels use all black, wheeled, airline-type luggage. They keep your clothes clean and pressed and, because of the wheels, are easy to transport.

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