

Next Level Football Officiating

OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE

1. Actions that constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to the following four categories:

- Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing off thus creating separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
- Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.
- Blocking downfield during a pass that legally crosses the line of scrimmage.
- Picking off a defender who is attempting to cover a receiver.

2. Offensive pass interference for blocking downfield should not be called if the pass is nowhere near the contact.

If the pass is thrown to one side of the field and a block is thrown on the far opposite side, it is unrealistic to think that defender was prevented from making a play on the ball. It is good preventive officiating to counsel the blocker that the same block may be illegal if it occurs in the vicinity of where a pass is directed.

3. Offensive pass interference should not be called on a screen pass when the ball is overthrown behind the line of scrimmage but subsequently lands beyond the expanded line of scrimmage (up to three yards) and linemen are blocking downfield, unless such blocking prevents a defensive player from catching the ball.

Officials realize not everything is black and white; some situations involve shades of gray. Good referees understand that potential interference on a screen pass is one of those gray areas. The art of officiating should be applied to not prolong the series unnecessarily. No advantage is gained by a man downfield on that play.

4. A flag for interference should not be thrown at the instant an offensive player initiates contact downfield.

Remember that the play must ultimately involve a pass that flies beyond the neutral zone. If the offense runs the ball or tosses a pass behind the line, the early contact is not illegal. So, when an end hustles out to throw a block on a defensive back or linebacker, you must store that action (and the jersey number of the blocker) in your memory to let the play unfold. Delay the flag until that preliminary block qualifies for a pass interference call.

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