Next Level Football Officiating

BLOCKING

1. When considering blocking below the waist, observe the initial movement by offensive linemen.

In most cases, the initial move will be the limiting factor. The block must be lineman on lineman, in the free blocking zone and executed before the ball leaves the free-blocking zone. If the block is not initiated immediately after the snap, it is likely the ball has left the free-blocking zone. That is especially true when the quarterback is not under center or the offense is in scrimmage kick formation.

2. For blocks in the back, if one hand is on the number and the other hand is on the side and the initial force is on the number, it is a block in the back.

The force of the block could be slight and still a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner or prevents him from making the play. If the force is clearly on the side, it is not a foul. If the blocker is in a "chase mode," all the action must be on the side.

If an official can see both jersey numbers, unobstructed, on the back of the player being blocked when the initial contact occurs, it's difficult to rule such contact a foul.

Mere contact with the opponent's back, such as a slight brush that does not change the contacted player's stride, is not a foul. However, if the defender stumbles and misses an opportunity to make a tackle, it is a foul within the intent of the rule.

3. Blocks that start on the side and subsequently end up in the back are not fouls as long as contact is maintained throughout the block.

It's important to distinguish between contact from the side, which is legal, and illegal blocks in the back, which carry a penalty. One criterion is whether the person being blocked had an opportunity to see the blocker before being hit. A block from the side, even though it results in a player being put on the ground, is not a foul unless for some other reason it is also a personal foul.

4. Allow legal contact until the receiver occupies the same yardline as the defender. Continuous contact is illegal.

There is no "chuck zone" in amateur football. Contact between receiver and defender is allowed to a point. Until a pass is thrown, a team A player who moves downfield and contacts an opponent is not a receiver; he's a blocker. And a defender is allowed to fight off the block. But once that team A player has reached the same yard line or has gone beyond that defender, he

has demonstrated he's either going out for a pass or is looking for a different opponent to block. He should be able to perform that duty unfettered.

5. Blocks in the back and personal fouls should be called regardless of their timing relative to the runner being tackled.

A common but not universal philosophy is that if a player is fouled but is still able to make the tackle, there is no foul. Additionally, some believe that a foul that occurs nowhere near the runner can be passed on if the defense drops the runner for a loss or a short gain. That is not the case when "safety fouls" are involved. If a team A player clips, blocks an opponent in the back or blocks below the waist, the foul should be called regardless of when or where the tackle is made.

6. Rarely should you have a hold on a double-team block unless there is a takedown or the defender breaks the double team and is pulled back.

The theory is that if the offense is willing to commit two blockers to one defender, a defender who could have been blocked by one of those blockers is now unblocked. Thus, the defense enjoys an advantage rather than being placed at a disadvantage. As a result, a holding penalty would be "piling on."

7. When in question if an illegal block occurs in the end zone or field of play, it occurs in the field of play.

When a team A foul occurs in its own end zone and the penalty is accepted, it is a safety. A safety is a momentum-changing play. If a foul occurs so close to the end zone that it could reasonably be judged to be in the field of play, go with that option. For example, a blocker engages the opponent a yard or so deep in his own end zone and the contact morphs into a hold. If the contact continues into the field of play, use that as the spot of the foul rather than the end zone.