

## *Next Level Football Officiating*

# **FIRST THINGS FIRST**

### **1. See the ball before you blow your whistle.**

Losing sight of the ball is without a doubt the leading cause of errant play-killing. There is no hurry. There is nothing wrong with having a few plays that end with no one blowing a whistle. If no official can see the ball when the play ends, there should not be a whistle. A couple of good habits to develop are waiting one second after seeing the ball and letting an incomplete pass bounce twice before sounding the whistle.

Although some inadvertent whistles are the product of rushing, that is not the only cause. Concentration and focus are crucial in staying out of the abyss. Whether the game is tied or a blowout, all officials must keep their heads in the game.

### **2. Say the penalty as you throw the flag.**

By saying the penalty out loud when throwing the flag you allow yourself the ability to be able to remember the type of foul and the fouling player. You are better able to remember the play once it has concluded and before you are able to relay your penalty information to the crew and/or the referee.

### **3. Know your pre-snap keys.**

Wing officials should remember the phrase, “Snap. Tackle. Back.” That’s who and what you watch as each play begins. Umpires observe the center and the guards. The referee has the quarterback and the backs. In that way, all 11 offensive players are observed at the start of a play. Once the ball is snapped, read the type of play and focus on players in your area. For instance, if the linemen drop back, it’s likely a pass. If a guard pulls, expect a sweep. If the linemen fire out, it’s a running play between the tackles.

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