



2017 NFHS FOOTBALL GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

TARGETING

The NFHS Football Rules Committee continues to focus on player safety and risk minimization.

It is the responsibility of coaches, game officials and players to know and understand not only the rule concerning targeting, but the risk involved when players engage in targeting. In most cases, this contact poses a risk to both players. It is especially risky when the offending player uses the crown of his helmet to contact an opponent.

Targeting is defined in Rule 2-20-2 as: "Targeting is an act by any player who takes aim and initiates contact against an opponent above the shoulders with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulders." The key words in the definition are "who takes aim." This phrase clearly indicates that targeting is an intentional act. Targeting usually takes place in the open field against a player who is defenseless. Examples would include but not be limited to: A receiver who has no opportunity to complete a catch, a player who is making no effort to participate in the play, an R player attempting to catch a kick, a passer or a kicker. It is important for game officials to know that targeting can take place anywhere on the field and is not limited to players who are directly involved in the play. The penalty for targeting is 15 yards, and if deemed flagrant, carries disqualification.

RESTRICTED AREA

Application of rules for the restricted area has improved over the past few years; the following points of clarification are intended to resolve remaining misconceptions and aid in the consistent and correct application for sideline management.

The restricted area is the 2-yard belt that runs from the 25-yard line to the 25-yard line. It is an extension of the restraining line (Rule 1-2-3d) that is marked around the playing field. Misconceptions exist about the restricted area from both game officials and coaches. Game officials consider the restricted area their area; coaches will consider the restricted area as their area. And, depending on the status of the ball, both are correct. In reality, the restricted area belongs to both the game officials and the coaches and with the correct application of rules, allows both to do their jobs effectively and safely.

Rule 1-2-3g states: “Team boxes shall be marked on each side of the field outside the coaches’ area between the 25-yard lines for use of coaches, substitutes, athletic trainers etc., affiliated with the team. The coaches’ area is a minimum of a 2-yard belt between the front of the team box and the sideline, and becomes a restricted area when the ball is live.”

The restricted area is provided for the safety of players, nonplayers, coaches and game officials. The application of the restricted-area rules should be understood by both coaches and game officials and should be applied in all aspects of the game. While the ball is dead, the restricted area is the coaches’ box, where a maximum of three coaches and substitutions are allowed. Although there is no specific statement as to when the restricted area should be cleared, a good point of reference is when the snap is imminent. While the ball is live, this is the restricted area and should be clear between the 25-yard lines.

Rule 9-8-3 states: “A nonplayer shall not be outside his team box unless to become a player or to return as a replaced player. A maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area. No player, nonplayer or coach shall be in the restricted area when the ball is live.”

Substituting, coaching and officiating in the restricted area are not to be ignored at any time during the game. Game officials need to focus on two areas: 1. Red zone application. When the line of scrimmage is in the red zone, and the wing official is downfield beyond the end of the team box, the restricted area can become occupied with nonplayers and coaches. 2. “Up-field” situations. When the line of scrimmage is within the restricted area, nonplayers and coaches stand in the restricted area up-field, behind the line of scrimmage. Game situations can change quickly and may create a safety situation. During live-ball action, no coach, substitute, athletic trainer, anyone affiliated with the team or any other person is allowed in the restricted area regardless of where the line of scrimmage is on the field of play.

Pregame is an opportunity for the wing official to communicate with the head coach and identify who can assist him/her if he/she needs help with the restricted area. Communication between game officials and coaches that brings a possible resolution and support to defuse a potential issue before it occurs benefits both parties. Remember that a game official has a process supported by rule in dealing with the restricted area. Game officials can prevent a negative situation with proactive, positive communication and by applying the restricted- area rules early in the game.

DOWN-MARKER INDICATOR MECHANICS

The NFHS Football Case Book notes situations with the proper procedures to be used when a play is run with the incorrect down on the down-marker indicator. These situations and procedures should be reviewed and should give game officials a heightened awareness of the importance of making sure the down on the down- marker indicator is correct prior to the ball being marked ready for play. It is important to note that when an error is discovered, in other than a fifth-down situation, the procedure calls for the replay of that down. There is no option

to continue play with the results of the play that was run with the incorrect down on the down-marker indicator. Mechanics currently exist to prevent this type of error from occurring.

An increased awareness, including pregame discussion and crew coordination of pre-snap mechanics, will help keep errors to a minimum. If a game official thinks the down-marker indicator is incorrect, blowing the whistle and making sure it is correct is preferable to letting the play go and having to replay the down because the down-marker indicator was incorrect. While the Referee and the Head Linesman may have primary responsibility, it is imperative that the entire crew know the down is correct when the ball is marked ready for play.

*****As of June 15, 2017***