

THE IFAF MANUAL
OF
FLAG FOOTBALL
OFFICIATING

(Third edition, 2015)

FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributors to the 3rd Edition Edited by Alexandre Roger.

Thanks to Martin Cockerill, Wolfgang Geyer; Harry Strangl, Jürgen Gatterbauer, Erwin Aigner, Magnus Lauesgaard, Andrea Colombo, Riccardo Zampedri, Luca Scignani, Jakob Andreassen for their help.

The 1st edition was based on the BAFRA/EFAP Manual of Football Officiating, 12th edition and on the BAFRA Manual of Flag Football Officiating.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 2: CHANGES TO MECHANICS	6
CHAPTER 3: RULES APPLICATION	7
3-1: Definitions	7
3-2: Fouls that involve contact.....	7
3-3: Fouls that do not involve contact.....	9
3-4: Unsportsmanlike conduct	11
3-5: Fighting.....	11
3-6: Fouls that should always be called	11
3-7: main differences between tackle football and flag football	12
3-8: Other rules applications	12
CHAPTER 4: GAME MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST.....	13
CHAPTER 5: GENERAL PRINCIPLES	14
5-1: Duties and responsibilities.....	14
5-2: Common sense officiating	14
5-3: Hustle.....	15
5-4: Boxing in	15
5-5: Co-operation and communication	16
5-6: Signals	17
5-7: Marking spots and spotting the ball.....	18
5-8: Fumbles	19
5-9: Written records	19
5-10: Timing responsibilities	19
5-11: Counting responsibility	20
5-12: Conduct.....	20
5-13: Dealing with the media.....	21
CHAPTER 6: PRE-GAME CONFERENCE	22
6.1 - Pre-game duties	22
6.2 - Coin toss procedure	22
6.3 - Plays - general	22
6.4 – Running plays	22
6.5 – Passing plays.....	22
6.6 – Try downs	23
6.7 - End of period duties.....	23
6.8 - Timeouts	23
6.9 - Fouls & enforcement	23
6.10 - In case of injury	23
6.11 - Overtime	23
CHAPTER 7: PRE-GAME DUTIES	24
CHAPTER 8: COIN TOSS.....	26
CHAPTER 9: MECHANICS.....	28
9-1: Basic scrimmage down position - Referee	28
9-2: Basic scrimmage down position – Field Judge	28
9-3: Basic scrimmage down position – Linesman	28
9-4: Basic scrimmage down position – Side Judge	29
9-5: Running plays	29
9-6: Passing plays	30

9-7: Declaring dead ball:.....	30
9-8: Short yardage near the midfield line	31
9-9: Short yardage near Team A’s goal line	31
9-10: Short yardage near Team B’s goal line	31
9-11: First down yardage	31
9-12: Interception returns.....	31
9-13: Scoring plays and the try	31
9-14: After each down	32
CHAPTER 10: TIMEOUTS	33
10-1: Charged timeouts.....	33
10-2: Officials’ timeouts	33
CHAPTER 11: CALLING FOULS	35
11-1: Calling official.....	35
11-2: Other officials	36
11-3: Enforcement procedure	36
CHAPTER 12: TIMING AND THE END OF PERIODS	38
12-1: Two-minute warning	38
12-2: End of period	38
12-3: Half-time.....	38
12-4: End of game.....	39
CHAPTER 13: USE OF BEAN BAGS	40
CHAPTER 14: DOWN BOX	41
14-1: Down Box.....	41
CHAPTER 15: AREAS OF COVERAGE	42
16-1: Communication signals	43

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout this document:

The word “flag” refers to the streamer worn on a player’s hip. The phrase “foul marker” refers to the yellow object that officials throw to indicate a foul.

The phrase “flag football” refers to the football variant.

The phrase “tournament management” refers to the organisers of a tournament who may perform some or all of the functions of game management.

CHAPTER 2: CHANGES TO MECHANICS

Main changes:

- All the references to Back Judge have been replaced by Side Judge
- Adding chapter main differences between tacklefootball and flag football
- On-field uniform
- All the drawings are on a separate document

All the changes have been highlighted in yellow:

- 3-5-3
- 3-7
- 5-6-10
- 5-7-6
- 5-8
- 5-10-1 & 5-10-3
- 6-4
- 7-2
- 8-1-b & 8-6 & 8-8
- 9-1-1 & 9-1-3
- 9-2
- 9-3-3
- 9-4-1
- 9-5-1
- 9-6-4
- 9-6-6
- 9-8
- 9-10
- 9-13-2
- 9-14-2
- 11-1-10
- 11-3-4
- 13
- 15

CHAPTER 3: RULES APPLICATION

In order to ensure that all officials consistently interpret rules the same way, the following fouls shall be called as follows:

3-1: Definitions

1). **Point of attack** is defined as follows:

- a. on a running play, it is the area in advance of the runner through which he runs - if he changes direction the point of attack changes;
- b. on a passing play, it is anywhere in the vicinity of the passer or any player attempting to reach the passer;

2). **Obvious:** An action is "obvious" if it would be visibly apparent to a spectator who knew the rules or to an official watching the game on video.

3-2: Fouls that involve contact

1). Flag football is a non-contact sport. However, this does not mean that any contact between opponents during play is automatically illegal. Incidental contact between opponents that does not grant either player an advantage should not be penalised. Any contact that is not incidental should be penalised and, if it does not already qualify as a foul, it is called a 'contact foul'. Players who make serious contact with an opponent, either as an act of aggression or to halt the advancement of the ball, should be disqualified.

2). **Holding:** Flag players are not allowed to make contact with their opponents, and this is a principle that should be vigorously enforced to prevent player confrontations. A foul marker for holding should only be thrown **if** the hold both impedes the opponent **and** occurs at the point of attack. If the contact is otherwise excessive, call a contact foul. Be vigilant concerning what a player does with his hands when he makes a grab for the runner's flag: if he briefly grabs the opponent's clothing and then immediately releases it, there is no foul, but if he prevents the runner from advancing or uses his grip for leverage to get to the flag, call it.

3). **Roughing the passer:** Defenders must not be allowed to contact the passer. If the contact is serious, the defender must be disqualified. Defenders must not attempt to bat the ball from the passer's hands.

4). **Pass interference:**

Actions that constitute pass interference include:

- i. **Not playing the ball --** Contact by a defender (who is not playing the ball) that impedes or restricts the receiver's opportunity to make the catch. If it does not impede or restrict the receiver, or if the pass is uncatchable, it is not pass interference, but it may be a contact foul.

- ii. **Playing through an opponent** -- Playing through an opponent (i.e. contacting him in the back or on the side of him furthest from the ball), even if attempting to play the ball. If the contact is deliberate, call either pass interference or a contact foul, depending on whichever would be more advantageous to the offense, unless the contact is so serious that it requires disqualification, in which case a contact foul must be called.
 - iii. **Grabbing an arm** -- Grabbing the receiver's arm in any manner.
 - iv. **Arm bar** -- Extending an arm across the receiver's body to impede his ability to catch a pass, whether or not the defender is playing the ball. If the contact is deliberate, see the guidance above.
 - v. **Cut off** -- Cutting off the path of a receiver. It does not matter if contact is actually made, or if the receiver is (shadow) blocked: it is still a foul.
 - vi. **Hook and turn** -- Hooking the receiver around the waist that causes his body to turn prior to the ball arriving (even if the defender is trying to get to the ball). If the contact is deliberate, see the guidance above.
 - vii. **Pushing off** -- Initiating contact with an opponent by shoving or pushing off, thus creating a separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
 - viii. **Driving through** -- Driving through an opponent who has established a position on the field. If the contact is deliberate, see the guidance above.
 - ix. **Pick play** -- A pick play occurs when a receiver runs a pass pattern in such a way that he impedes the movement of a defender. If the pick play is run so that the receiver either contacts or (shadow) blocks the defender, it is illegal. However, if it is run so that two defenders collide with each other and the receivers did not cause the collision by way of a (shadow) block or making contact, it is legal.
- b. Actions that do **not** constitute pass interference include:
- i. Incidental contact in the act of moving to the ball that does not affect the route of the receiver in any way. If in doubt as to whether the route was affected, there is no interference.
 - ii. Inadvertent tangling of feet when both (or neither) players are playing the ball.
 - iii. Contact occurs during a pass that is clearly uncatchable by the involved players. However, there may be a contact foul, even if the pass is uncatchable.
 - iv. Hooking the receiver around the waist that does not turn or impede him until after the ball has arrived. This is a contact foul, not pass interference.
- c. Further notes:
- i. A stationary player (in position to catch the ball) who is displaced from his position has been fouled.

- ii. It is never pass interference if the defensive player touches the ball before contacting the opponent. However, there may be a contact foul.
- iii. Interference must be obvious to be called.
- iv. Remember that the defense has as much right to the ball as the offense.
- v. It is crucial to identify which players are playing the ball and which are not.
- vi. When judging whether a pass is catchable, imagine how far the receiver could have run, and how high or wide he could have jumped, if he had not been impeded.
- vii. Before the pass is thrown, all interference must be called except where contact is incidental. However, contact that may be considered incidental in terms of calling pass interference may be a contact foul.
- viii. While the pass is in flight, only fouls in the vicinity of the end of the pass or those committed against Team B players in a position to pull off the flags of the catcher of the pass should be called as pass interference.
- ix. Contact away from the play should be called (if necessary) as a contact foul, not pass interference.

3-3: Fouls that do not involve contact

1). Delay of game:

- a. If Team A is still in the huddle with 10 seconds to go, warn them verbally that they must hurry (with a shout of "Time" or similar). Always throw the foul marker on the 25th second unless the snap is very imminent (i.e. the quarterback is calling out "huts"). The secret of reducing the number of delay of game penalties is to not hurry the ready for play. In other words: don't give the teams the benefit at the end of the 25-second period, give them the benefit at the **start** of it.
- b. After a score, it is a delay of game if either team is not on the field within one minute regardless of whether the ready for play has been given or not, or if they are on the field but they have failed to bring their football with them. For a first offence, throw a foul marker and charge the team with a timeout if they have timeouts remaining.
- c. If no players from Team B are ready to play when Team A is set to snap the ball following a timeout, penalise Team B for delay of game. Do **not** give Team A a free shot play.

2). **Illegal substitution:** If a replaced player is still technically on the field of play at the snap, but he is one or two steps from the sideline and no opponent is reacting to his movement off the field, then don't call it. Similarly, if substitutes enter the field momentarily before the ball is dead but don't interfere with play, then don't call it. If Team A breaks its huddle with 6 or more players, this confuses the opposition and should always be penalised.

3). Offside and encroachment:

- a. When a defensive player, before the snap, obviously moves beyond (not simply into) the neutral zone, blow the whistle and call it as a dead-ball offside foul.
- b. Don't rule a defensive player offside if he is stationary and only intruding on the neutral zone by a trivial amount.
- c. Don't be picky about offside or encroachment. On most plays, players have no yard lines to guide them. Officials should be proactive in helping players line up on the correct side of the ball, especially with younger players.
- d. Encroachment on the neutral zone by the offense is a dead-ball foul. Attempt to get the player to move onto the correct side of the ball, but if the snap is imminent then blow the whistle.

4). **Illegal motion:** A player is in illegal motion only if he is obviously moving towards the line of scrimmage.

5). **7-second limit:** This is a live-ball foul that makes the ball dead. Call it on the 7th second, as for delay of game. Remember that the rule only applies to the player who originally receives the snap during his initial possession of the football: if he hands it off or throws a backward pass, the limit no longer applies even if he later regains possession of the ball.

6). **Illegal running:** This only applies to the player who receives the snap, and only if he has not already given up possession of the ball. It does not make the ball dead. If in doubt, he has not advanced past the neutral zone.

7). **Illegal backward pass or handoff:** If in doubt, the backward pass or handoff was completed behind the neutral zone.

8). **Blocking (or shadow blocking):** A block has occurred when a player, without making contact, impedes the progress of an opponent. If an offensive player (shadow) blocks for the runner, call it only at the point of attack. Players who have obviously indicated their intent not to participate in the play should not be called for shadow blocking.

If a defensive player (shadow) blocks an opponent who is running a pass pattern, he has committed a foul which should always be called. If the receiver is forced out of bounds by the (shadow) block and returns immediately, he is still eligible to touch a forward pass.

But if the defender does not move, the receiver must avoid him.

9). **Illegal touching by an originally-ineligible player:** At the start of a down, all players are eligible. The passer may not be the first player to touch his own forward pass (exception: the pass has been deflected).

10). **Failure to wear mandatory equipment:** Generally, only call a violation for missing or improperly positioned equipment if the snap is imminent. If it is not, allow the player to retrieve or reposition their equipment, but do not interrupt the 25-second count.

11). **Illegal equipment:** Anything that might be a risk to participant safety must be dealt with before the start of the game. The officials should conduct a safety check prior to the game. .

Flags should be tested to ensure that they detach in a prompt and safe manner from players' hips. Each player must produce a legal mouthpiece that is not clear.

Players may not wear anything that may prevent an opponent from clearly reaching their flag; this includes long shirts that are not tucked in and/or large pants that may obstruct access to the flags. Extra-wide pants are forbidden.

3-4: Unsportsmanlike conduct

1). Acts of celebration that take place within the field of play are illegal, but use common sense and be tolerant of reasonable celebrations that are not excessive, that do not waste time, and that do not taunt opponents.

2). If a player or coach shows dissent with a call or taunts an opponent, throw a foul marker immediately. There is no place in flag football for such acts. If the language or gestures used are offensive, insulting or abusive, disqualify the player or coach.

3). Do not penalise the conduct of anyone other than a player or coach. If someone else is giving you a problem, ask the team, game or tournament management to deal with it.

4). Do not penalise a player or team twice for the same act.

5). Be vigilant during the period when a runner approaches a defensive player to retrieve his flag. Do not allow the players to use it as a chance to confront each other. The defender should either hand the flag to the runner. For the first (non-serious) infraction, warn the player. For the second, the foul is delay of game. Any subsequent infractions, or any serious infractions, are unsportsmanlike conduct.

3-5: Fighting

1). It is a fight if players square up to each other and begin pushing, or if any punches, kicks or other blows are thrown, regardless of whether they make contact. If a player responds to a unsportsmanlike act by an opponent by fighting, then both players should be penalised and disqualified for fighting.

2). During a fight, be aware of who is actually fighting and who is merely trying to separate those involved in a fight. Players who only attempted to separate the fighting players should not be disqualified if they were on the field when the fight began.

3). Substitutes and coaches who leave the team area during a fight should only be disqualified if they fail to respond to an order to leave the field. However if they touch an opponent or attempt to pull a team-mate away from one then they have participated in the fight and must be disqualified. **The purpose of this is to avoid getting lots of people on the field.**

4). Only disqualify a player if you are certain of his identity. If two players are involved in a fight, don't disqualify one unless you know the identity of the other.

3-6: Fouls that should always be called

The following fouls should always be called:

1). **Team A player out of bounds:** Whenever any eligible receiver touches the ball after voluntarily going out of bounds during a pass play, it is always a foul. He gains an advantage by avoiding the attention of defenders. He is also violating the spirit of the rules: flag football has a defined playing area, and the players should play the game inside it. Remember that a player is out of bounds even if only one foot touches the sideline or end line - this must be called. However, if contact or a (shadow) block by Team B forces him out of bounds, it is a foul against Team B and the player remains eligible if he returns inbounds immediately.

3-7: main differences between tackle football and flag football

The following fouls do not exist in flag football, should never be called, and if a foul marker is thrown for any of them, it should be waved off.

1). **Illegal formation:** There is no such thing as an illegal formation. Any player may line up on the line of scrimmage, as a back, or in a position where it is not obvious if he is a lineman or a back. There are no numbering restrictions or exceptions.

2). **Illegal forward handoff:** A forward handoff is only illegal if it takes place beyond the line of scrimmage, where any handoff is illegal. Behind the line of scrimmage, any player may hand the ball forwards to any other player. A direct handoff from the QB to the snapper is illegal.

3). **Intentional grounding:** For safety reasons, the passer is always allowed to throw the ball away to avoid being sacked, regardless of where it lands and regardless of the position of other players.

3-8: Other rules applications

1). A catch should not be regarded as completed if the player never demonstrates complete control over the further disposal of the ball.

CHAPTER 4: GAME MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

At the earliest possible opportunity after arriving at the ground, the officials should check all **appropriate** items from the following list:

With game or tournament management...

- adequacy of ground and field markings, removal of hazards, etc.
- the time the teams will enter the field, or the time the first game shall start
- team announcements and the time they will begin and end
- any VIP's or special arrangements for coin toss ceremony
- National Anthems
- if appropriate, half-time activities, length of the half-time interval and intervals between games, etc.
- payment of game fee
- down box operator
- the balls to be used and whether each team will supply its own football(s)
- towels
- medical facilities and personnel
- changing room security
- if the officials can have a copy of any video
- whether overtime will be played

With the management or coach of each team...

- player equipment
- roster form
- coach's report card
- names and numbers of captains
- unusual plays or situations
- rule queries
- sideline control

With medical personnel...

- location of medical personnel
- signals to be used to summon medical help to the field

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

5-1: Duties and responsibilities

1). An official must have good rules knowledge, and be able to interpret the rules correctly and fairly. Judgement in all decisions must be correct and must be announced without undue delay. Officials should not go looking for fouls. They will occur on their own. Always be sure of a foul, never guess. Do not penalise a team if you are not sure. If you only think it's a foul, then it is not. If you realise that you have made a mistake, then inform the rest of the crew (if present) and ensure that the penalty is not enforced.

2). Each official must:

- a. know and announce the down, be aware of whether the line to gain is the midfield line or the goal line;
- b. be ready to assist another official who is temporarily out of position;
- c. observe erroneous procedures or rulings of other officials and attempt prevention and correction whenever possible;
- d. know the prescribed signals and when and how they should be used;
- e. secure a new ball, if appropriate, after all action has ceased, and be able to handle and pass the ball properly underarm 10 yards with a flat trajectory and nose first;
- f. be alert to happenings away from the ball when play has left their immediate area - don't ball watch;
- g. call time out for any player who is obviously injured;
- h. be prepared, if necessary, to call any foul or rule infraction that they observe, regardless of specific assignment;
- i. communicate with colleagues, players, coaches, announcers or spectators as appropriate whenever anything unusual or out of the ordinary happens.

5-2: Common sense officiating

1). It is important that you call every foul that you see which affects the result of the play, the safety of the players, or the discipline of the game. However, please remember that neither spectators nor players come to see officials marching up and down the field. Use your discretion, and above all your common sense. Delay throwing the foul marker for a second or two to give yourself time to review the play mentally.

2). Preventive officiating enables a game to flow in a disciplined manner. Whenever necessary, talk to coaches or players with regard to their conduct. Never **ignore** a foul: you must do something about **every** foul, even if you decide not to throw your foul marker.

- 3). Always acknowledge complaints from players. We cannot see everything on every play. If a player makes a complaint against an opponent, be prepared to observe the next encounter between them more closely. Request the assistance of other officials when necessary.
- 4). When speaking to players, coaches or spectators always be polite. Your position as an official does not give you the right to be abusive or derogatory. Using soothing language to defuse hostility.
- 5). When you have made a decision based on your observation, your experience and your knowledge, do not back down. Pressure from coaches, players, or the crowd should not be allowed to influence your judgment. When you are wrong, admit it, but don't allow it to affect your performance.
- 6). Praise players for good sportsmanship, but make sure you do it to both teams.

5-3: Hustle

- 1). Always try to keep the game flowing smoothly, but do not rush. Move quickly when required, but do not allow your desire for rapid action to interfere with your duties nor with correct determinations.
- 2). Never hurry the treatment of an injured player. The recognition of injured players is the concern of all game officials. If in doubt, stop the clock and call the attention of the medical personnel present. The clock can be started again straight away if the timeout is not necessary.
- 3). Hustle is even more important than normal if the game is being played with a running clock. However, if something unusual happens (for example, if an incomplete pass causes the ball to bounce thirty yards away from everybody), do not rush to deal with it. Stop the clock while the problem is resolved and ensure it is started on the Referee's ready-for-play signal.

5-4: Boxing in

- 1). When shifting position during the game always try to surround the play when working with other officials. A position of "outside looking in" is essential for sideline and end line coverage. Keeping the play "boxed in" should ensure that each play is observed from more than one viewpoint.
- 2). While the ball is live, don't get too close to the play.
- 3). Generally, there is no need for any official to watch:
 - a. The ball while it is in the air (other than a glance to ascertain its direction if it may be coming towards you).
 - b. The ball after a pass is incomplete. The dead ball spot once it is marked (see section 5.7)
 - c. The spot of a foul after a foul marker has been thrown to it (or level with it).
 - d. The goal line after a touchdown (or safety) has been scored.
 - e. The sideline or end line after a player has been ruled out of bounds.
 - f. A player who is out of the play and has no opponent near him.
 - g. In each case, there is a need for you to concentrate on something else more important.

5-5: Co-operation and communication

- 1). It is essential that the officials work together as a team and that they communicate efficiently with each other for the purposes of effective game administration. Such communication will normally be verbal but where verbal communication is impossible or inappropriate, approved visual signals should be used.
- 2). The officials must also communicate where appropriate with players, coaches, spectators and announcers. If a ruling is puzzling or controversial, it is better to take a moment to explain it than for everyone to continue in ignorance. Your aim is to give information before someone needs to ask for it.
- 3). On the sidelines, if there is more than one coach present, appoint someone as the "Get-back coach", responsible for keeping his colleagues and players in the coaching box and team area. He can devote more time than you can to keeping people out of your way.
- 4). All officials must verbally and visually signal the down number before each down. When officials disagree on the down, the officials should declare and charge themselves with a timeout to establish it. They may ask the opinions or advice of any person connected with the game that they see fit. When a decision has been reached, both Head Coaches should be informed and it should be explained to them how the error came about. If the officials agree on the down but a Head Coach does not, the Referee should charge himself with a timeout and conduct a head coach's conference, unless the Head Coach can immediately and indisputably demonstrate that he is correct. The opposing Head Coach should be kept aware of what is going on.
- 5). At the end of a down, if you are the covering official and you are sure the ball is dead, blow your whistle. It should be blown with authority, not just a peep. Other officials should echo the whistle **only** if it is necessary to end continuing action in their area of coverage. Don't toot your whistle unless you have thrown a penalty flag or otherwise need to attract attention.
- 6). If you blow an inadvertent whistle, don't think no one will notice. Continue to blow and make sure the play is killed. Admit your mistake and follow the procedure laid down by rule.
- 7). Your body language says more than you think - be aware of it. An official moving hesitantly (e.g. towards the spot where a catch was attempted) is a sign that they are not sure of the call and need help. Be aware of such body language signals by colleagues and be prepared to assist them where you can. Never point at players or coaches in a disapproving or threatening manner.
- 8). Don't shout at people - it indicates your loss of control. Never swear at a player, coach or colleague.
- 9). The following points illustrate good and bad practice when officials disagree on a call. If necessary the Referee must be the final arbiter of the decision. The game clock should always be stopped while discussion takes place.
 - a. Officials who disagree on a call must be called together to discuss the matter with each other. The best place for this conference is at the dead-ball spot or the spot where the contentious matter took place. The conference should be conducted calmly, without

raised voices or overt gestures. Officials not involved in the conference should keep players away, while maintaining coverage of the dead-ball spot and any other relevant spots.

- b. Ask the officials to describe what they saw, not just what they are ruling. One official may accept that another had a better view of the play. Make sure that all relevant facts (e.g. whether the ball was live or dead, whether the incident occurred before or after the change of possession) are mentioned.
- c. Distinguish between issues of fact (e.g. what happened?), issues of judgement (e.g. did it happen intentionally?) and issues of rule (e.g. what does the rulebook say we do in the given situation?).
- d. Cut short the conference once all the officials concerned have given their view and opinion. There is no time for repeated remarks (unless clarification is necessary) and encourage everyone to stick to the point.
- e. Ideally, the officials concerned will come to their own resolution and notify the Referee.
- f. If the officials cannot agree on the call, it is normally best to go with the call made by the official with primary responsibility for making it. Going with the call made by an "experienced" official over that made by an "inexperienced" official may cause problems in the long-term.
- g. Remember the "when in doubt" principles.
- h. Once a final decision has been made, the Referee should signal and/or announce the outcome decisively. The need for the decision to be clearly notified to everyone becomes greater the longer the conference takes. It also helps to sell the call if all of the officials nod their heads in agreement during or at the end of a discussion.
- i. If an official does not agree with the final decision, he must not make any statement or gesture that would give that impression.

5-6: Signals

Note: Where a sentence is marked with an asterisk*, it indicates that the sentence or section does not apply after the last two minutes of a half.

- 1). Officials' signals should be clear, distinct and deliberate at all times.
- 2). Covering officials should signal a timeout when the rules provide for stopping the clock or when a timeout is charged to a team or to the Referee. Other officials should repeat timeout signals.
- 3). The usual timeout signal is S3. However in the following circumstances the specified signal should be used instead of the timeout signal:
 - a. *when a touchdown or try is scored - S5;
 - b. when a safety is scored - S6;
 - c. *when a forward pass is incomplete, or when there is no score on a try - S10.

These signals are sufficient to instruct the time keeper or clock operator to stop the clock, and S3 should **not** be given in addition unless a foul marker has been thrown, or a charged or injury timeout awarded.

- 4). The on-field time keeper should stop the clock before giving or repeating any timeout signal.
- 5). Signals such as 'timeout' or 'incomplete pass' should be repeated two or three times to ensure that everyone sees them. However, more repetitions are excessive. Do not bend at the waist when giving incomplete pass signals.
- 6). There is no need for the timekeeper to echo the wind the clock signal (S2). If visual confirmation is required, the timekeeper may use signal Sup12.
- 7). When giving signals at the end of a play, continue to face the players in your area of responsibility until all threat of further action has passed. If you signal clearly enough, your fellow crew members, the occupants of the press box and the spectators will all see the signal whatever direction it is given in. It is only the Referee's signals on penalties and unusual incidents that need to be given in the direction of the press box.
- 8). Unless you are absolutely certain that the Referee knows that the line to gain has been reached, that the play ended out of bounds, that there was a change of possession, or that there was a score, repeat the signal(s) you have given once you have established eye contact with the Referee.
- 9). Don't get excited when giving signals (especially S5). Be tranquil and poised. Don't become emotional. Maintain your equanimity.
- 10). You can use the dead ball signal (S7) to indicate the end of a play, except another signal has been made (incomplete pass, score, etc.).

5-7: Marking spots and spotting the ball

- 1). Remember that in flag football, the dead-ball spot is the point where the ball is when the runner was deflagged. A touchdown has not been scored unless the ball has broken the plane of the end zone.
- 2). At all times, inbounds spots should be marked by squaring off as follows:
 - a). If you are on or near a sideline, move quickly down it until you are level with the spot, then come infield off the sideline if appropriate.
 - b). If you are in the middle of the field, head in a straight line at a right angle towards the appropriate goal line until you are level with the spot, and then move parallel to the goal line towards the player with the flag if appropriate.
- 3). If it is necessary for you to mark the spot and then spot the ball, hold the spot until a player, official, or other person brings you the ball, then take it to the centre of the field to spot it. Try to get it as close to the centre as possible but don't waste time looking for the exact spot. Cones or pylons behind the end zones may help.
- 4). Remember that the ball has crossed the midfield line and the goal line becomes the line to gain when the slightest part of it is touching the line.

5). At the start of a new possession, position the ball with its nose on the 5-yard line. On a try, position the ball with its nose on the 5-yard or 12-yard line as appropriate.

6). When spotting the ball, first line up with the sideline and look for the cones behind the end-zones to align the ball in the middle of the field.

7). Instruct players that when they stop someone by removing their flag, they should raise the flag high in the air and actively seek out the runner to return the flag.

5-8: Fumbles

1). If the ball is fumbled, or a backward pass is incomplete, the ball is dead and the down is over. If it was fumbled backwards or forwards, it is spotted where the player lost the ball. In doubt it is rather a pass than a fumble behind the line of scrimmage. In doubt it is rather a fumble than a pass beyond the line of scrimmage.

2). Do not allow players to attempt recovery of any loose ball. Blow the whistle as soon as it hits the ground.

5-9: Written records

1. All officials should record, in writing:
 - result of the toss
 - scores
 - charged team timeouts
 - all disqualified players
 - all players penalised for unsportsmanlike conduct

Officials may also be requested to nominate a candidate for a 'Man of the Match' or similar award.

5-10: Timing responsibilities

1). On a 2-man crew, the Referee shall be responsible for the 25-second clock and the 7-second limit for the QB. The Field Judge is running the game clock.

2). On a 3-man crew, the Referee shall be responsible for the 25-second clock and the 7-second limit for the QB. The Field Judge is running the game clock.

3). On a 4-man crew, the Referee shall be responsible the 7-second limit for the QB. The Field Judge is running the game clock and the Side Judge get the 25-second clock. As soon as there is 10 seconds left, the Side Judge will raise his arm and the Referee have to warn the QB. At 0, he will kill the play and tell to the Referee the call is Delay of game.

4). The duration of a game is defined as the time from the first snap to the Referee giving the end-of-game signal (S14), including the half-time interval and time for any stoppages or suspensions.

5-11: Counting responsibility

- 1). On a 2-man crew, the Referee shall count Team A and be responsible for Team A's huddle, and the Field Judge shall count Team B and be responsible for Team B's huddle. Each official shall be responsible for the legality of substitutions along his sideline.
- 2). On a 3-man crew, the Referee shall count Team A, with the Linesman, and be responsible for Team A's huddle. The Field Judge shall count Team B and be responsible for Team B's huddle.
- 3). On a 4-man crew, the Referee shall count Team A, with the Linesman, and be responsible for Team A's huddle. The Side Judge shall count Team B, with the Field Judge, and be responsible for Team B's huddle.
- 4). Having more than 5 men on the field and not noticing it is one of the worst errors a crew can make.

5-12: Conduct

- 1). Remember that your conduct before, during, and after each game is subject to public scrutiny. Always conduct yourself in a manner befitting an official.
- 2). Officials bear a great responsibility for engendering public and participant confidence. They are judged by everything they do, on the field and off it, before, during and after the game. Greet and treat the personnel from each team equally. Don't banter with spectators. Don't fraternize with anyone.
- 3). Perform warm-up exercises before the game in the privacy of the changing room or well out of sight of players and spectators. Do not test your whistle on or within hearing of the field of play. Do not toss footballs around or indulge in any other recreational activity in sight or sound of spectators, players or other personnel.
- 4). No official is permitted to consume any prohibited drug or alcoholic beverage, or be under the influence of one, either before or during any game or tournament, or to smoke near the field.
- 5). Do not provide any team, coach or player with any information pertaining to any other team, coach or player. Do not carry gossip from one team to another, nor make statements about another crew or another official.
- 6). Do not engage in arguments with anyone after the game regarding any decisions made. If they wish to make a complaint, refer them to your supervisor. Questions of judgment on the part of any official are not open to argument either on the field or after the game.
- 7). Be loyal to your fellow officials, to your officiating organization and to football.
- 8). Report immediately to your supervisor any approach by anyone regarding the possibility of an attempted bribe or any other unethical act.

5-13: Dealing with the media

- 1). Always be courteous when dealing with the news media, but remember that your job is officiating and that you are not a spokesman for any team, league or officiating organization.

- 2). You may at any time, except in the emotion-charged atmosphere of a game or its immediate after match, explain and discuss a rule. Do not, however, discuss a particular play, ruling or interpretation except after the game to answer specific questions from reporters attending the game. The best place to do this is in or immediately outside the officials' dressing room. Be sure the crew discusses the play in private, and makes sure all the facts are clear, before the Referee talks to the reporters.

CHAPTER 6: PRE-GAME CONFERENCE

A pre-game conference is an opportunity for officials to get into the right frame of mind to officiate a flag football game: for this reason a pre-game conference should always be held. Before a tournament, it may be appropriate for all the officials present to hold a joint conference. All aspects of the game must be covered during the pre-game conference, this includes both rules and mechanics. Discuss rare and unusual game situations and decide how you would cover them. Describe experiences of previous games and how you handle them.

The following checklist is provided as a guide.

6.1 - Pre-game duties

- Coaches certification
- Conduct a check of players' equipment
- Check balls (no need to mark)
- Identify medical facilities
- Instruction of down box operator and alternates, if present
- Location of tournament management
- Inspection of field

6.2 - Coin toss procedure

- Mechanics and options

6.3 - Plays - general

- Positions
- Count players
- Man in motion
- Legality of snap
- Blitz line patrol
- No run zone enforcement

6.4 – Running plays

- Coverage of runner - in backfield, up the middle, sweeps, pitchout, option plays
- Action in front of runner
- Cleanup coverage
- Forward progress - out of bounds
- Goal line/short yardage situations
- Fumble

6.5 – Passing plays

- Coverage of passer – 7-second limit, roughing, forward pass vs. fumble
- Passer/pass behind/beyond line of scrimmage: clarify jurisdiction

- Forward/backward pass/fumble: clarify jurisdiction
- Coverage of receivers
- Complete/incomplete
- Pass interference - offensive, defensive
- Touching of a pass in flight
- Coverage on interception - momentum into end zone, reverse mechanics

6.6 – Try downs

- Positions
- 1 pt vs 2 pts
- Coverage when defense gains possession

6.7 - End of period duties

- Half-time
- End of game

6.8 - Timeouts

- Records
- Positions

6.9 - Fouls & enforcement

- Reporting - who, what, where, when
- Recording fouls
- Options
- Signals
- Enforcement

6.10 - In case of injury

- If one official is hurt
- If two officials are hurt

6.11 - Overtime

- Review rules for overtime

CHAPTER 7: PRE-GAME DUTIES

Officials are expected to be neat and tidy at all times. They are on view from the moment they arrive at the venue until the time they leave. Dress standards must be high at all times.

Arriving and departing from the venue, all officials shall wear:

1. EITHER a smart shirt or blouse, OR a plain polo shirt with no more than one small logo on the breast.
2. Trousers, but not denim jeans. Smart shorts (not denim) are acceptable in hot weather.
3. Shoes, but not trainers.
4. Anything bearing the logo of any national team is prohibited. This includes caps.

1). Arrive at the stadium at least 1 hour before the start of the game or tournament. As early as possible after arriving at the stadium, inspect the facilities and the playing surface, particularly for hazards and obstructions. Seek the cooperation of game or tournament management to rectify any faults.

2). On-field uniform

The uniform to be worn by IFAF flag officials for all games or tournaments shall be as follows:

1. Standard black and white 2" vertical striped shirt with black collar and cuffs; numbers on the shirt are prohibited; mesh shirts are permitted if worn by all members of the crew.
2. Standard blackpants; Standard black shorts are permitted if worn by all members of the crew.
3. Black socks.
4. A black belt, approximately 1½" wide, with a plain buckle.
5. Black (or predominantly black) shoes with a suitable stud or tread pattern and black laces.
6. A peaked cap, white for the Referee, black with white piping for the other officials; solid, sized hats are preferable to meshed, adjustable ones; rain hats are permitted.
7. Only this badge expressly approved; if worn, the IFAF badge should be placed on the breast pocket; another approved badge may be worn in the corresponding place on the right sleeve; badges may either be sewn on or attached by Velcro or similar.
8. Any part of the clothing worn under the uniform shirt that shows shall be black in colour.
9. Rain jackets, if worn, shall be un-numbered and must have a 2" stripe pattern.
10. Gloves, if worn, shall be predominantly black.

3). On-field equipment

Officials shall carry the following equipment:

1. One foul marker, light gold in colour, approximately 15" square and weighted, worn inconspicuously.
2. At least one bean bag of suitable design carried where easily accessible.
3. A whistle (and a spare), either finger whistles or those on neck and wrist lanyards are recommended.
4. The time keeper and the play clock operator shall carry suitable stop watches that have been checked for accuracy before the game, spare watches should also be carried, either by the time keepers or by other members of the crew.
5. Game data card, pencil (and spare).
6. Down counter (and spare).
7. Coin for the toss (Referee and Field Judge only).

- 2). All officials should participate in a thorough conference to prepare mentally and to review the flag football rules and mechanics. The conference should be based on a guide such as the one in chapter 6. If there is more than one crew present, hold a joint conference if possible.
- 3). Prior to the game or tournament, identify and introduce yourselves to game or tournament management. Discuss with them any and all pertinent issues (for example, when you are to be paid, which clock rules are to be used, whether overtime will be played and what form it will take, which field(s) you will be working on, whether any card checks will be conducted and what form they will take, whether you will be required to take and keep roster forms, etc.)
- 4). Check your watches for accuracy against a reliable source. Each official should carry at least one countdown stopwatch, which should be checked for reliability and accuracy.
- 5). If possible, examine the game balls. If they are acceptable, return them to the teams.
- 6). Leave in enough time to arrive at the field approximately 15 minutes before the start of the game. Be aware of potential long journeys to the field and the time they will require. If neutral balls are to be used, carry them with you.
- 7). Note the location of team areas and medical facilities. Check that game management has made any necessary changes to rectify faults in the facilities or playing area. Check that representatives of both teams are present.
- 8). Conduct a check of players' equipment to ensure that it is safe and legal.
- 9). Confirm with both Head Coaches that their teams are fully present and ready to begin.
- 10). Take up position and conduct the coin toss procedure detailed in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8: COIN TOSS

1). After completion of pregame duties:

a). On a 2-man crew, the Referee and **Field Judge** should position themselves on opposite sidelines at the midfield line. They should then escort the captains to the centre of the field.

b). On a 3-man, the Referee should take up position in the centre of the field on the midfield line. The **Linesman** and the **Field Judge** should gather the captains, escort them to the Referee, and then **stay as witnesses**.

c). On a 4-men crew, the Referee and the **Linesman** should take up position in the centre of the field on the midfield line. The **Side Judge** and the **Field Judge** should gather the captains, escort them to the Referee, and then return to the sidelines.

2). When the captains (no more than two from each team) have arrived at the centre of the field, they should be positioned opposite each other with their backs to their own sidelines. The visiting team should then be invited to move round and shake hands with the home team. If another official will present, he should take up a position where he can witness the toss and observe both sidelines.

3). The Referee shall introduce himself and, if present, other officials to the captains.

4). During the toss ceremony, only those participating in the ceremony should be on the field of play. All other players, coaches, etc. should be in the team area.

5). The Referee shall:

a. ask the visiting captain to call the toss;

b. toss and catch the coin (unless a VIP will perform it);

c. indicate the winning captain by placing a hand on his shoulder. Placing the hand near the captain's shoulder is adequate providing the signal is clear.

d. explain the result of the toss.

6). The winning captain has the option **to put the ball in play first half or in the second half**. The losing team will then choose which end of the field to defend. The teams will change ends at half-time automatically.

7). The captains shall then be instructed to move around so that they are facing each other with their backs to the end zone which they will be defending in the first half.

8). **The Referee shall go near the captains of the team that will have first possession and signal first down (S8).**

9). As the captains return to their team areas, the officials will record the result of the toss. Handshakes or other crew activities at this juncture should be unobtrusive. If teams are not supplying their own footballs, the Referee shall obtain a ball to begin the game with.

10). At the request of game or tournament management, the toss of the coin may be performed by an individual or attended by a small group of persons.

CHAPTER 9: MECHANICS

On a 2-men crew, the officials are the Referee and the Field Judge.

On a 3-man crew, the officials are the Referee, the Linesman, and the Field Judge.

On a 4-man crew, the officials are the Referee, the Linesman, the Field Judge and the Side Judge.

The Referee shall wear a white hat and the other officials shall wear a black hat with white piping.

9-1: Basic scrimmage down position - Referee

1). On 2-men crew, your basic scrimmage down position is on the LOS of the visiting team side with the down marker. On 3 or 4-men crew, **if there is no line to cover**, your basic scrimmage down position is in the offensive backfield on the opposite side of the Linesman, at least 5 yards deeper than the deepest back and no closer than 10 yards to the line of scrimmage (except near A goal line). You should be able to see all the players from this position.

2). Count Team A and signal your count to the Linesman. Watch for his counting signal. If you are giving signal Sup4, wait for him to check your count. On 2-men crew, Count Team A twice (because you do it alone).

3). Identify the legal blitzers with the help of the Field Judge **and check if there is no contact during the blitz**. Know who has established an unimpeded path to the QB.
REMEMBER: to have a clear path to the QB, the blitzer(s) must raise one hand and be sure that the Center or the QB have seen him/them.

4). Watch for the snap of the ball. Be aware of potential illegal motion, shifts, encroachment, or false starts by Team A, and potential offside by Team B. Ensure the snap is legal, but do not be overly picky with very young players.

9-2: Basic scrimmage down position – Field Judge

1). On 2-men crew, your basic scrimmage down position should be on the sideline opposite the Referee, 7 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, marking Team B's blitz line. On 3 or 4-men crew, your basic scrimmage down position should be on the sideline opposite the Linesman, 7 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, marking Team B's blitz line

2). On 2-men crew, Count Team B twice (because you do it alone). On 3-men crew, count Team B **alone**, on 4-men crew, to the **Side Judge**.

3). Watch Team B. Their movement will tell you when the play has begun. Be aware of players moving back and forth over the blitz line. Know who is eligible to blitz and communicate this to the Referee before the snap.

9-3: Basic scrimmage down position – Linesman

1). Your basic scrimmage down position is on the LOS of the side of the visiting team with the down marker.

2). Count Team A and signal your count to the Referee. Watch for his counting signal. If the ball has been snapped, do not blow it dead: penalise it as a live-ball illegal participation foul.

3). Watch Team A. Watch for false start and correct line-up.

9-4: Basic scrimmage down position – Side Judge

1). Your basic scrimmage down position should be on the LM side in front of the FJ. You could be directly on lines to cover (midfield or GL) helping you to cover deep passes.

2). Count Team B and signal your count to the Field Judge. If you count 6 or more, wait for him to check your count.

3). Watch Team A. Their movement will tell you when the play has begun.

9-5: Running plays

1). The Referee should trail the runner. The Linesman may begin moving to cover the play as soon as the runner crosses the LoS, but should be aware of a reverse or other sudden change of direction or play.

2). On a running play up the middle, the Referee trails the runner, keeping as many players in front of him as possible. He has responsibility for the runner and action behind him. The Linesman and the Field Judge cover the play from the sideline and have responsibility for action ahead of the runner. The Side Judge is looking for (shadow) blocking.

3). On a running play that develops to the Linesman's sideline, the Linesman remains on the sideline. He has responsibility for it and for the runner. The Referee trails the play, remaining close to the centre of the field, and has responsibility for action ahead of and behind the runner. Both officials remain aware of the possibility of a reverse or other sudden change of direction or play.

4). On a running play that develops to the Field Judge's sideline, the Field Judge shall remain closer to the sideline than the runner. He has responsibility for the sideline and the runner, and must be in position to rule if the runner is out of bounds. The Side Judge stay inside to obtain a better view and is responsible for action ahead of and behind the runner. All officials remain aware of the possibility of a reverse or other sudden change of direction or play.

5). If a long run develops, the Field Judge has responsibility for the line to gain, Team B's goal line (4-men crew : SJ), the runner, and his sideline if it is threatened. The Field Judge has responsibility for action ahead of or behind the runner, and his sideline if it is threatened.

6). Remember the following: the player who takes the snap may not run with the ball past the line of scrimmage unless he has lost and then regained possession, and no handoff or backward pass may be made beyond the line of scrimmage.

7). Be alert for potential reverses, flea-flickers, or other trick plays, especially a run/pass option.

8). All Team B players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage once a handoff or backward pass has been made or faked. The Referee is responsible for ruling on the legality of Team B players who cross the line of scrimmage.

9-6: Passing plays

1). The Referee is responsible for the 7-second restriction. If the player who receives the snap hands off, no player has the 7-second restriction, even if the player who receives the snap comes into possession of the ball again. Blow the whistle and throw a foul marker as soon as your count reaches 7. You should give a hand signal while you are counting and verbalise the final three seconds of the count.

2). The Referee shall drop back to stay clear of the potential passer. Watch for fouls against him and penalise any Team B player who crosses the line of scrimmage if he is not entitled to do so.

3). After the pass has been thrown, the Referee should ensure there will be no continuing action concerning the passer, and then watch the end of the pass, moving if necessary to obtain a better position. The Linesman should move towards the spot where players are congregating to receive the ball. If it is near his sideline, he should remain on it: otherwise, he may come infield to obtain a better view of the action.

4). The other officials shall remain on their sidelines and move towards Team B's goal line, covering the receivers on their side of the field until the pass is thrown (LM : stay on the LoS and leave it as soon as the pass crosses the LoS). Once the pass is thrown, they may come into the field if necessary to obtain a better view of the end of the pass, unless it is obviously towards their sideline, in which case they must remain there to rule on action involving it.

5). All officials may be responsible for ruling on control of the ball, depending on who has the better position to see it. When an airborne player attempts to catch a pass near the sideline or end line, watch his feet first to see whether he comes down in bounds. If he does, then look to his hands to see whether he has control of the ball. If you look at his hands first, you may miss the instant when his foot touches the ground.

6). If the pass is complete, officiate the rest of the play as you would a running play.

9-7: Declaring dead ball:

1). When you are sure that the ball is dead by rule, blow a clear, confident blast on your whistle. Remember that it is the actions of the players that cause the play to end and that your whistle is just confirming it.

2). If the clock should stop, allofficials should signal timeout (S3) unless another signal supersedes it, and the timekeeper should stop the clock.

9-8: Short yardage near the midfield line

Be aware of the position of the ball. The closest official has primary responsibility for the midfield line. But be aware of the score and the time to play in the half, then anticipate a long pass if the defense is leading.

9-9: Short yardage near Team A's goal line

Be aware of the position of the ball. The Referee has responsibility for Team A's goal line.

9-10: Short yardage near Team B's goal line

1). Be aware of the position of the ball. If the ball is outside the no-run zone, the Field judge has primary responsibility for the goal line and sole responsibility for the end line on 2 or 3-men crew, this responsibility is for the Side Judge on 4-men crew. The Referee may attempt to assist at the goal line if appropriate.

2). On 3-men crew if the ball is inside the no-run zone, or maybe even on 4th down and 7 as well, the Referee should have the line of scrimmage, the Linesman has the goalline and the Field Judge is responsible for the endline.

On 4-men crew: If the ball is spotted more than 2 yards from the goal line the Field Judge has the goalline – working with Linesman – and the Side Judge has the endline.

If the ball is closer than two yards from the goalline the Linesman has the responsibility of the goalline, the Field Judge and the Side Judge have responsibility of the endline.

9-11: First down yardage

1). After every play, check to see whether Team A has achieved the line to gain.

2). If it has, stop the clock (if appropriate). The Referee should give signal (S8).

3). The first down signal (S8) should also be given by the Referee when there is any change of possession.

9-12: Interception returns

1). When there is an interception, the officials should reverse their normal mechanics and then officiate the play as a long run, with the Referee responsible for Team A's goal line.

2). Remember that the ball is not returned to the 5-yard line for the start of the next series. Play continues from either the end of the run, the spot where the ball is relocated by penalty, or with a try down.

9-13: Scoring plays and the try

1). When you are sure that there is a score, blow your whistle and give the appropriate signal (S5 for a touchdown, S6 for a safety). If you are not the Referee, hold it until you are sure the

Referee has seen you. If you are the Referee, drop it after a second while performing clean-up duties. Then give a final, confirming signal. Hold it for 5 seconds.

2). If a touchdown has been scored, **the nearest official (Referee or Linesman)** shall obtain a ball and move towards Team B's 5-yard line. Spot the ball there unless Team A clearly indicates its desire to attempt a 2-point conversion, in which case the ball should be spotted 12 yards from the goal line.

3). Remember that you must accept the first choice made by the scoring team and they may not change their minds after the ready-for-play has been given.

4). If the try is good, the Referee shall signal (if necessary) and confirm it as he would a touchdown, and also confirm whether it is for 1 or 2 points. If it is no good, give signal (S10).

5). After a safety, the scoring team takes possession at its 5-yard line.

9-14: After each down

1). The appropriate official shall mark the spot.

2). Either official may retrieve and/or spot the ball. **All officials** have primary responsibility for doing so.

3). Change your down indicator to reflect the new down. Announce it verbally and visually. On 4th down, you must be sure that both Head Coaches are aware that it is 4th down.

4). The Referee shall check the status of the game clock with the appropriate official, and declare the ball ready for play by blowing his whistle and giving signal (S2) when the officials are in their final position. If the clock should start on the ready-for-play, he should give signal (S3).

5). The 25-second count starts when the Referee declares the ball ready for play. If Team A are not in position to snap the ball, warn them with a call of "Time" when there are approximately 10 seconds left.

CHAPTER 10: TIMEOUTS

10-1: Charged timeouts

- 1). The Referee shall signal a charged timeout by facing the requesting team's goal line and giving the timeout signal (S3) followed by a "chucking signal" with the arms shoulder high. There is no need for the Referee to sound his whistle.
- 2). If the timeout is the second and final one charged to that team, the Referee shall in addition give two pulls on an imaginary steam whistle (without blowing his whistle). **The Referee will personally ensure that the Head Coach and captain of the team are aware that all their timeouts have been used.**
- 3). The official recognising the timeout shall notify the Referee of the identity of the requesting person.
- 4). All officials must record all timeouts, including the period and time remaining on the clock.
- 5). The officials shall inform both Head Coaches of the number of timeouts remaining for each team, and the time remaining in the period.
- 6). The timeout interval will be timed by an appropriate official.
- 7). During the timeout, and while the officials are not performing other duties:
 - a. the Referee remains with the ball at the succeeding spot;
 - b. other officials (if present) observe the teams from their sidelines

10-2: Officials' timeouts

- 1). If a timeout is not to be charged to either team, the Referee shall signal timeout (S3) and then tap his chest.
- 2). The Referee shall declare the ball ready for play as soon as the reason for the timeout has been met (e.g. an injured player has left the field and is not in any danger).
- 3). If an injury timeout is prolonged, or the game is suspended for some other reason, send the players to their team areas.
- 4). Only the Referee can stop the clock for a Head Coach's conference. The conference will take place on the sideline. The Head Coach who requested the conference is the only coach who may attend it. If present, another official must go with the Referee to witness the conference. If after the conference the ruling is not altered, his team will be charged with a timeout, in which case the procedure for a charged timeout (including giving the team their full entitlement of time) will be carried out. If a team asks for a timeout which is in fact intended to be a request for a coach's conference and the ruling is then altered, they should only be charged with a timeout if they subsequently request a further timeout.

5). If the game is disrupted for any reason, all officials should record the down, the team in possession, the position of the ball, and the time remaining.

CHAPTER 11: CALLING FOULS

11-1: Calling official

1). Any official observing a foul shall drop or throw a foul marker at the proper spot, making a mental note of its position. If the foul marker falls on the wrong spot, move it to the correct spot. Move the foul marker with authority. Don't try to nudge it with your foot in the hope that no one will notice. Note which team had possession of the ball at the moment the foul occurred, and whether the ball was live or dead. On spot fouls near the goal line it is particularly important that the foul marker falls on the correct side of the line.

2). If the ball is live, do **not** blow the whistle until the ball becomes dead (unless the foul causes the ball to become or remain dead).

3). When the ball becomes dead, continue to blow your whistle in short blasts until any other officials know that you have seen a foul. Give the timeout signal (S3) if the clock needs to be stopped. If the foul is a spot foul, cover the foul marker and, if necessary, ensure that the Referee comes to you.

4). Unless you are holding a spot, go quickly to the Referee and verbally report the foul. If you are the Referee, report the foul to another official. Give the following information:

- a. the nature of the foul;
- b. the offending team, by colour and/or by offense/defense;
- c. the offending player, by number or position;
- d. the enforcement spot
- e. whether the ball was live or dead at the time of the foul and, if appropriate, whether it occurred before or after a change of team possession.

5). If more than one official throws his foul marker (e.g. scrimmage line infractions, interference), all calling officials shall consult with each other before reporting the foul. If you observe an official throw a flag which may be for pass interference and you believe the pass was uncatchable, the recommended thing to say to the official is, "Was that pass catchable?" If sure it was he should reply, "Yes, it was." If not sure that it was, he should reply, "What did you see?" Don't assume that everyone saw the same as you. If you have to throw a flag for a foul clearly in someone else's area, it is courteous to discuss it with them.

6). When reporting fouls to the Referee, do not point to teams or players. After reporting, stay near the Referee in case he needs to ask you for further details. Avoid conferences except when absolutely necessary to obtain information from more than one official. Only those involved should be included.

8). In the event of a disqualifying foul, the official calling the foul, accompanied by another official (if present) as witness, shall notify the Head Coach of the number of the player who has been disqualified and the nature of the foul. When reporting to the coach, the

recommended wording is "X just disqualified himself because ..." or "X is disqualified because ...", rather than "I am disqualifying X because ..." The opposing Head Coach should also be notified of the disqualification.

9). Verify that the penalty is enforced correctly. Check the enforcement spot, the distance, and the direction. If you think it is wrong, inform the Referee immediately. If a player has been disqualified, ensure that he has left the team area.

10). Officials should record the **main fouls: unsportsmanlike conduct, ejection, etc.**

11-2: Other officials

Other officials, if present, should assist by covering relevant spots and keeping players clear of conversations between officials.

11-3: Enforcement procedure

1). After receiving the report of the foul, the Referee shall, in a crisp and clear manner:

- a. Give the preliminary signal(s) to the appropriate side except if the choice is obvious. [Note: A preliminary signal consists of (i) the signal for the foul; and (ii) point to the offending team.] Give the dead-ball signal (S7) before giving the foul signal for a dead-ball foul. Do **not** announce the foul verbally at this stage.
- b. Explain the foul(s) and option(s) to the offended team. Notify the captain of the offending team of the foul called and, if possible, the number or position of the offending player.
- c. Notify both captains and Head Coaches if the penalty involves the loss of a down.

2). While the Referee gives the preliminary signal, another official shall call the captains together, so that they may be notified of the foul and the options. Another official shall be present when the options are given, and should check that they are given correctly.

3). If the offended captain's choice of option is obvious, or if the penalty must be accepted or declined by rule, the Referee shall announce it and proceed with enforcement or declination. If the captain objects or the choice is not obvious, the Referee shall fully explain the options to him and conform to his choice. If the captain has a genuine decision to make, make sure he is facing his team area so that he can see signals from his Coach.

4). The Referee shall instruct the Field Judge **on 2-men crew, Linesman on 3-men or 4-men crew** as to the spot of enforcement and the yardage to be marked off. The official, while carrying the ball, shall determine the spot to which the ball should be taken and move to it, stepping off each yard of the penalty. It is important that officials take care to enforce the correct yardage, and that they can reasonably estimate how far one yard is without the aid of marked lines.

5). While the official is marching off the penalty, the Referee shall take a position in clear view and give the final signals to the press box side of the field only.

- a. For each foul, the Referee shall give the appropriate signal and then point towards the offending team's goal line.
 - b. In the case of a contact foul, the Referee shall use the contact foul signal (S38).
 - c. If the penalty is declined, the Referee shall also give the penalty declined signal (S10).
 - d. If there are offsetting penalties, the Referee shall signal the home team's foul, point to that team's goal line, then signal the away team's foul, point to that team's goal line, and finally give the offsetting penalty signal (S10).
 - e. While facing the press box, the Referee shall indicate the number of the next down.
 - f. The Referee shall announce the penalty, including the identity of the offending player by number (or position if the number is not known).
- 6). If there are multiple dead-ball fouls which do not cancel by rule, all penalties must be marched off and the position of the ball reconsidered after each. Half-distance enforcement should also be checked before each penalty.
- 7). An official **must** relay to the Head Coach details of the foul if it is by his team, including, where possible, the number or position of the offending player and precisely what the player did that was illegal. If the penalty involves loss of down, the Coach must be notified of that fact. The Coach must also be notified of any unusual enforcements or judgments whether or not they are against his team. Examples might include: flags waved off (disregarded); uncatchable passes; any unfair tactics or unfair acts calls. (See Rules 9-2-2.)
- 8). The Referee may forego giving a preliminary signal if the enforcement is "obvious" (e.g. false start, delay of game, other dead-ball fouls).

If a foul marker is to be disregarded, the Referee shall give the disregard flag signal (S13). This signal is not given by the official who threw the flag, unless it was the Referee.

CHAPTER 12: TIMING AND THE END OF PERIODS

12-1: Two-minute warning

- 1). The on-field timekeeper shall issue the two-minute warning when the ball is dead and approximately two minutes or less remain in the half. If a touchdown has been scored, the two-minute warning will be given after the try.
- 2). The two-minute warning does not need to be given with exactly 2:00 remaining and the 25-second count should not be interrupted to give it.
- 3). The Referee shall announce the two-minute warning and signal it to both sidelines using the timeout signal (S3). The Referee shall ensure that the captain and Head Coach of each team have been informed of **exactly** how much time remains in the half, not merely that it is the two-minute warning.
- 4). After the two-minute warning, the clock shall start on the snap.
- 5). The two-minute warning is not an extended time-out and the Referee should declare the ball ready for play immediately after announcing it, unless there is an injured player or some other appropriate reason (for example, in hot conditions the Referee might agree with both coaches before the game to extend the two-minute warning in order to allow players to take on water). Otherwise, if a team wishes a longer delay at the two-minute warning, they must call and be charged with a timeout.

12-2: End of period

- 1). Near the end of each half, the on-field time keeper should ensure before the start of each play that all officials are kept informed of the time remaining. After the two-minute warning in each half, or on request, he must inform the captain and Head Coach of each team of the exact time remaining each time the clock is stopped.
- 2). The on-field timekeeper is solely responsible for determining when a period has ended and whether or not the ball was snapped before time expired.
- 3). When time expires, the on-field time keeper shall sound his whistle if the ball is dead. Officials should assist in relaying a ball to the Referee, who shall signal the end of the period by giving (S14) and blowing his whistle.

12-3: Half-time

During a tournament, the half-time interval will usually be minimal and last approximately two minutes. The Referee shall allow each team a reasonable amount of time to obtain refreshment before ordering the second half to begin.

12-4: End of game

- 1). By rule, the game is ended, the score is final, and the officials' jurisdiction terminates when the Referee holds the ball up. No decision may be taken, retracted, or changed. All officials should be absolutely certain that the game may be ended before allowing the Referee to terminate it.
- 2). All officials should immediately assemble near the middle of the field and leave the field together at a leisurely and uniform pace. They should neither seek nor avoid coaches and players. If necessary, they should make sure that they have the game balls with them. If hassled by anyone, they should keep walking.
- 3). Any request for discussion regarding the officiating of the game must be directed towards the Referee. The Referee should be prepared to discuss any rules interpretation (not on the field and not immediately after the game), but should politely refuse to discuss judgment calls. A tournament representative may be nominated to handle such matters, in which case the officials shall redirect any request for discussion to him.
- 4). All officials should complete any administrative duties required of them. During a tournament, the Referee must immediately proceed to tournament management and report the particulars of the game.
- 5). If necessary, officials are responsible after the game to ensure that the balls are returned to game or tournament management.

CHAPTER 13: USE OF BEAN BAGS

All officials shall carry at least **one** bean bags to use to mark spots other than spots of fouls.

Never throw a bean bag; run to a position approximately level with the spot and *drop* it. If the bean bag falls on the wrong spot, move it to the correct spot. Move the bean bag with authority - don't try to nudge it with your foot in the hope that no one will notice!

Bean bags shall also be used by the appropriate official to mark:

- the spot where an eligible pass receiver voluntarily goes out of bounds - this is an indication that a foul will occur should he touch a forward pass in bounds before it has touched an opponent;
- the dead-ball spot if the official has to leave the spot to recover the ball or to observe action.

CHAPTER 14: DOWN BOX

14-1: Down Box

- 1). It is the responsibility of the officials to see that the down box operator is adequately briefed before the game starts. Introduce yourself to him before the game. Stress to him the importance of his job.
- 2). Demonstrate to the operator the signals that you will use to indicate (i) the down number; (ii) “Stay!”; (iii) move the box.
- 3). Instruct the box operator never to move the down box, or change the down number, except at the direction of a game official. If they are told to move and they can see that a foul marker has been thrown, they must stay where they are and draw the official's attention to the foul marker. When they do move, they must move quickly and with no fuss to their new position.
- 4). Instruct the down box operator that between downs:
 - a. He must not move until signalled to do so.
 - b. He must position the down box level with the nose of the ball.
 - c. He should change the number on the down box to that indicated by a game official.
 - d. Ideally, he should change the number while moving the box to the new position -- i.e. the box should show the old number at the old position, and the new number at the new position.
 - e. In order to keep the sideline clear for the safety of players, officials and assistants, it is crucial that, where possible the down box is always positioned **six feet out of bounds**. This must be stressed to the down box operator.
 - f. On the try, the down box shall show 1st down.

CHAPTER 15: AREAS OF COVERAGE

Please report to **Flag mechanics: quick start.**

CHAPTER 16: SUPPLEMENTARY SIGNALS

The official football signals (S1 to S52) are described in the rulebook, but in practice officials supplement these with signals of their own or other people's invention in order to aid communication in situations where verbal communication is either impossible or undesirable.

All signals are means of visually communicating a message. The source of the message is the official who gives the signal. The destination of the message may be, in different cases, other officials, players, coaches or spectators. Visual signals may have to be used where either distance, or noise, prevent audible signals from being heard, or where an audible signal is inappropriate.

16-1: Communication signals

Sup3: the team I am responsible for counting has 5 players on the field

Signal: clenched fist at shoulder height (with optional upward pointing thumb); arm outstretched to side (see also Sup24)

Sup4: the team I am responsible for counting has more than 5 players on the field

Signal: one hand on top of head

Sup5: the last pass in the backfield was a backward pass

Signal: punch arm into backfield

Sup6: The line to gain is the goal line

Signal: wagging index fingers discreetly at chest height

[Note: This signal should only be used when the ball is in Team A's half]

Sup8: the clock stops after the next play

Signal: crossed wrists at chest height

Sup11: the game clock starts on the snap

Signal: click fingers

Sup12: the game clock starts on the ready

Signal: circular motion of finger from wrist

Sup13: the catch was complete

Signal: clutch hands to chest in catching motion

Sup14: the pass was caught out of bounds (incomplete)

Signal: throw arms to out of bounds side

Sup24: the team I am responsible for counting has 4 (or fewer) players on the field

Signal: clenched fist with downward pointing thumb; arm outstretched to side (see also Sup3)

Sup25: I believe all the conditions for a touchdown are met

Signal: fists together with thumbs up

Sup26: The receiver touched the ball inbounds but did not have control of it until he was out of bounds

Signal: move hands (palms up) alternately up and down in front of chest

Sup27: The down box is displaying the wrong number

Signal: give signal S17 (uncatchable forward pass) before the snap

END OF DOCUMENT