

19. CALLING FOULS

19.1 – Calling official

19.1.a – Priorities

When observing a foul:

1. Dropping or throwing a penalty marker (flag) at the proper spot, i.e. where the foul occurs.
 - (a) Making sure that the flag falls on the correct side of the goal line on spot fouls near either end zone.
 - (b) Throwing the flag high in the air when there is no importance to marking the spot of the foul (e.g. line of scrimmage infractions, dead-ball fouls).
2. Noting the yard line where the foul occurred.
3. Noting the status of the ball, i.e. which team had possession of the ball at the moment the foul occurred, whether it was in player possession or loose, and whether the ball was live or dead.

At the end of the play:

4. When the ball becomes dead, ensuring that all colleagues know that you have thrown a penalty flag.
5. Staying at the dead-ball spot (if you are the Coverer) until another official relieves you of the responsibility.
6. Consulting with colleagues who also had a flag on the play, or who may have had a better view of the play than you. This is particularly important for targeting fouls.
7. Ensuring that the Referee and the Umpire are aware of what the foul is.
8. Verifying that the Referee and Umpire enforce the foul correctly. Staying in the vicinity of the Referee to make sure he has all the necessary information or in case he needs a reminder of the player's number. Checking the enforcement spot, the distance, and the direction. If you think anything is wrong, informing the Referee immediately.
9. Recording for each foul you call:
 - (a) the foul (using the codes listed in section 28);
 - (b) the number of the fouling player;
 - (c) whether the penalty was accepted, declined, offset or cancelled by rule.

19.1.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If the ball is live when the foul occurred, do *not* blow the whistle until the ball becomes dead (unless the foul causes the ball to become dead).
2. When the ball becomes dead, continue to toot your whistle in short blasts until all other officials know that you have seen a foul. Give the timeout signal (S3) prominently.
3. If the foul is a spot foul, ask an available colleague to cover your flag.
4. If you are the Coverer, do not leave the dead-ball spot until another official takes over responsibility for the spot from you. If you are not relieved, make the Referee come to you. If you have a foul for defensive pass interference, stay by your flag and make the Referee come to you. If you are not the Coverer, once all action has ceased in your area, move quickly towards the Referee.
5. [REFEREE] Report the foul to the Umpire. [UMPIRE] Report the foul to the Referee. [OTHERWISE] Report the foul to the Referee, ensuring that the Umpire knows too.
6. Give the following information:
 - the nature of the foul;
 - the offending team, by colour and/or by offense/defense;

- the offending player, by number or position;
 - the spot of the foul and the likely enforcement spot;
 - 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 or while loose from a pass, kick or fumble.
7. If more than one official throws his flag for a foul (e.g. scrimmage line infractions, interference), all calling officials should consult with each other before reporting the foul.
 - (a) 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?"
 - (b) Don't assume that everyone saw the same as you.
 - (c) If you have to throw a flag for a foul clearly in someone else's area, it is courteous to discuss it with them.
 8. If your flag is for targeting, you must have direct, verbal communication with at least one other official prior to reporting the foul to the Referee. Rarely does targeting occur where there are not multiple views of the action. Because the penalty involves mandatory disqualification, we require this communication to reduce the risk of an incorrect call.
 9. When a defensive player, before the snap, moves and an offensive player reacts, a conference between the Umpire and the wing officials is mandatory. This is to determine if the defensive player was in the neutral zone and if the offensive player was threatened.
 10. 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.
 11. In the event of a disqualifying foul:
 - (a) Accompany the Referee to notify the Head Coach of the number of the player disqualified and the nature of the foul.
 - (b) When notifying the Head Coach, the recommended wording is "X just disqualified himself because ..." or "X is disqualified because ...", rather than "I am disqualifying X because ...".
 - (c) [REFEREE] If you called the foul, the wing official should accompany you.
 - (d) Another official (normally the opposite wing official) should inform the opposing Head Coach of the disqualification.

19.1.c – Advanced techniques

1. If your flag falls on the wrong spot, move it to the correct spot. Move the flag with authority – don't try to nudge it with your foot in the hope that no one will notice!

19.2 – Other officials

19.2.a – Priorities

1. If the flag was thrown in your normal area of responsibility, or you believe the penalty may be against a player for whom you were responsible during the down (e.g. your key player at the snap, or a receiver who passed through your area of responsibility):
 - (a) making sure that you know what the penalty is;
 - (b) reporting any information relevant to it;
 - (c) not allowing the penalty to be incorrectly administered because someone else did not know what you knew or saw.

2. Covering the dead-ball spot if nobody else is doing it. If a ball is not at the dead-ball spot, assisting in getting one there. Leaving the ball on the ground at the dead-ball spot until it is called for.
3. [REFEREE] Identifying the official(s) who has/have thrown a flag, going towards them, and finding out the details of the foul they observed.
4. [UMPIRE] Identifying the official(s) who has/have thrown a flag, hearing what they tell the Referee and ensuring that the Referee has understood what they said.
5. Noting the yard line where the ball is dead.
6. If the foul is a spot foul, covering and holding the spot of the foul. If the foul has post-scrimmage kick enforcement, covering and holding the spot where the kick ends.
7. If other officials are huddling to discuss a situation, keeping players away from them.
8. If all spots are covered, observing the players and assisting where needed.
9. Getting a new ball to the Umpire.
10. If you are the nearest official to the Head Coach (and you have nothing else to do), standing near him and assisting in communicating to him what the penalty is and what his options are, and relaying his decision to the Referee. This is particularly important when there is:
 - (a) a complex penalty situation;
 - (b) a 10-second subtraction option (or a timeout to avoid it)
11. Sharing an equal responsibility for rule interpretation. If you believe a foul has been called or administered incorrectly it is your responsibility to draw this to the Referee's attention without fuss, indiscretion or delay. If you have information to contribute, make sure that your colleagues, especially the Referee know about it. If an official blows a rule interpretation, the whole crew has blown it.
12. [ON A 4-MAN CREW] [LINE JUDGE]
[ON A 5-MAN CREW] [BACK JUDGE]
[ON A 6/7-MAN CREW] [FIELD JUDGE] Recording each foul called by each official and whether the penalty is accepted, declined, offset or cancelled by rule.

19.2.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. At the end of the play, repeat the timeout signal (S3) given by an official who has thrown a flag.
2. When the Umpire starts to enforce the penalty, pick up the flag (or bean bag) you are covering and return it to the official who called the foul.

19.3 – Enforcement procedure

1. [REFEREE] After receiving the report of the foul:
 - (a) Unless the the enforcement is obvious, give the preliminary signals in a crisp clear manner to the press box side. (Preliminary signals consist of (i) the signal for the foul; and (ii) point to the offending team's end line.) Give the dead-ball signal (S7) before giving the foul signal for a dead-ball foul. Do *not* announce the foul over the radio microphone at this stage.
 - (b) If the enforcement is "obvious", inform the on-field captain of the offended team of the foul and where the ball will be placed. You may forgo this if you believe he is already aware of the nature of the foul. If the captain objects, follow the procedure below for "non-obvious" enforcement. If the captain makes an obviously inappropriate choice, confirm that he fully understands the ramifications of it.
 - (c) If not obvious, explain to him the foul(s) and his options. If he has a genuine decision to make, make sure he is facing his team area so that he can see signals from his Head Coach.
 - (d) Notify the on-field captain of the offending team of the foul called and, if possible, the number or position of the offending player.

- (e) Notify the on-field captain and Head Coach of each team if the penalty involves the loss of a down.
 - (f) If he does not already know, instruct the Umpire as to the spot of enforcement and the yardage to be marked off.
2. [UMPIRE]
 - (a) Ensure that you know what the foul is that has been reported to the Referee.
 - (b) If the acceptance/declination of the penalty is not obvious, call a captain of the offended team while the Referee gives the preliminary signals, so that he may be notified of the foul and the options. If the penalty is complex or may involve options for both teams, call both captains.
 - (c) Obtain a new ball. Other officials may assist in relaying one to you. Hold it in your hand rather than place it on the ground.
 - (d) Be present if the options are given, and check that they are given correctly.
 - (e) While carrying a ball, determine the spot to which the ball should be taken and move directly to it, without stepping off each yard of the penalty. It should only be necessary to step off the penalty on badly marked fields.
 3. [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER] If there is less than one minute remaining in the half, ensure that the rest of the crew know that a 10-second subtraction may apply.
 4. [LINE JUDGE] Excepting penalties enforced on a free kick, monitor the enforcement spot (e.g. the spot of the foul or the end of the run) until the penalty administration[§] is completed.
 5. [ON A 4/5-MAN CREW] [LINESMAN]
[ON A 6/7-MAN CREW] [SIDE JUDGE][†] For penalties enforced on a free kick, monitor the enforcement spot (e.g. the spot of the foul or the end of the run) until the penalty is completed.
 6. [LINESMAN] Excepting penalties enforced on a free kick, move the same distance and direction as the Umpire, visually checking that the distance moved is correct.
 7. [ON A 4-MAN CREW] [LINESMAN]
[ON A 5-MAN CREW] [LINE JUDGE]
[ON A 6/7-MAN CREW] [FIELD JUDGE][†] For penalties enforced on a free kick, move the same distance and direction as the Umpire, visually checking that the distance moved is correct.
 8. [REFEREE]
 - (a) While the Umpire is enforcing the penalty, move to a position in clear view and give the final signals to the press box side of the field only. (The Head Coach on the opposite side will be notified by the Linesman or Side Judge). Don't take too long to get into position, though occasionally taking an extra second can help you compose yourself and think about what you are going to say. Come to a complete stop before starting the announcement.
 - (b) For each foul, give the appropriate signal and then point towards the offending team's goal line.
 - (c) In the case of the following penalties, precede the appropriate signal by the personal foul signal (S38):
 - (i) facemask (S45)
 - (ii) roughing the passer (S34)
 - (iii) horse collar tackle (S25)
 - (iv) roughing the kicker/snapper/holder (S30)
 - (v) chop block (S41)
 - (d) If the penalty is declined, also give the penalty declined signal (S10).
 - (e) If there are offsetting penalties, 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).

- (f) While facing the press box, indicate the number of the next down.
 - (g) Announce the penalty, including the identity of the offending player by number (or position if the number is not known). For brevity, the numbers of the players may be omitted if there are more than two fouls. Use a radio microphone if provided. Under no circumstances use a microphone for which you do not have a control switch.
9. If there are multiple dead-ball fouls which do not cancel by rule, each penalty distance must be traversed and (except for fouls between series) the position of the chain reconsidered after each. Half distance enforcement should also be checked before each penalty administration. The chain clip, however, need only be set after the last penalty has been enforced.
 10. The wing official (or deep official) on the appropriate side of the field *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 (Rules 9-2-2 and 9-2-3).
 11. [REFEREE] If the penalty for a foul is to be enforced at the next free kick, give the final signals (and announce the penalty) and point to the spot of the kick. [UMPIRE] Repeat the final signals before enforcing the penalty from the kickoff spot.
 12. [REFEREE] If a penalty flag is to be disregarded, give the disregard flag signal (S13) to the press box. This signal is not given by the official who threw the flag (unless it was the Referee).

19.4 – Obvious and non-obvious enforcement

1. Officials may normally regard enforcement of the following penalties as "obviously" accepted:
 - (a) dead-ball penalties (except possibly those committed by teams about to punt) will be accepted;
 - (b) post-scrimmage kick penalties will be accepted;
 - (c) defensive penalties where the yardage is added to the end of the play will be accepted;
 - (d) Team A penalties that include loss of down will be accepted;
 - (e) Team B penalties that include an automatic first down will be accepted (unless declining gives better field position);
 - (f) Team A penalties that result in a safety will be accepted (unless declining gives Team B the ball in good field position);
 - (g) Team A penalties on plays where they gained a first down will be accepted.
2. Officials may normally regard enforcement of the following penalties as "obviously" declined:
 - (a) penalties where the result of the play is the same as the penalty (e.g. defensive pass interference at the spot of the catch beyond the line to gain, or a safety) will be declined;
 - (b) penalties against the opponents of the team that scores a touchdown (or 2-point try) will be declined unless they carry over to the next free kick;
 - (c) opponent's penalties prior to the offended team gaining possession will be declined;
 - (d) defensive penalties that leave the offense in a less favourable position and less favourable down number will be declined;
 - (e) Team A penalties on plays where they lost significant yardage will be declined.

3. In the following cases, acceptance/declination will be obvious based on the state of the game:
 - (a) where there are multiple penalties, the one that puts the offending team in the worst position will be accepted;
 - (b) where a penalty will extend/terminate the game, it will be accepted/declined according to which team is leading;
 - (c) where a penalty will extend/terminate the first half, it will be accepted/declined according to whether either team is in position to score.
4. Note, however, that a team captain may at any time up to the ready for play overrule the officials' choice of option in the cases above.
5. Officials should normally regard enforcement of the following penalties as not "obvious":
 - (a) where the penalty removes/awards points for a field goal, safety or 1-point try;
 - (b) where better/worse field position has to be traded against more/less favourable down number;
 - (c) where Team B can choose enforcement at the previous spot or the dead-ball spot after a kick (including when an untouched free kick has gone out of bounds) and the length of the kick and/or return does not "obviously" indicate the preferable outcome (generally, a long kick and a short return will suggest previous spot enforcement; a short kick or long return will suggest dead-ball spot enforcement);
 - (d) where (at or near the end of a quarter) a strong wind or other factors may affect which way a team wants to play the next down.