

INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN FOOTBALL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

MANUAL OF FOOTBALL OFFICIATING

Jim Briggs

18th edition

December 2019

An IAFOA publication

Copyright © IAFOA and J S Briggs 2019

The right of Jim Briggs to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

ISBN 978-0-244-54451-5 (print version)

ISBN 978-0-244-84451-6 (Ebook version)

Based on the BAFRA Manual of Football Officiating

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Front cover photograph by Mikkel Bo Rasmussen, 1st Down Photo

Foreword

It's been nearly twelve years since I was introduced to the "international" game of American football, but it seems like yesterday when I accepted the invitation to officiate the IFAF World Championship in Japan. It was an opportunity to get a jump on the upcoming fall NCAA season. Not knowing what to expect, I assumed the competition and the officiating would be equal to NCAA Division II or III. What a pleasant surprise I and the other American officials were in for. The caliber of football was well beyond what we expected and the best part was what we came away with in our relationships with the fifteen other international officials.

"Our game" was now their game. We can become pretty complacent thinking that the Americans were the only ones who knew anything about football. I remember one of our outstanding mentors, Jim Keogh, telling us that we're like a piece of fruit. "When we're green we grow and when we're ripe we rot." That was Jim's message and emphasis to every official he ever came in contact with. The two weeks together with the international officials was the opportunity of a lifetime to realize we all had room to "blossom and grow".

Through that first international experience I quickly realized that as good as we think we know the rules of the game, the Japanese officials to a man knew the rulebook better than most of us. As a whole they were like former Big Ten referee Tom Quinn who could quote you chapter and verse of every rule and "AR" in the book. The Japanese officials are truly students of the game. That motivated me to spend even more time in rules study. I needed to be better than I thought I was.

Over the next few years I had the opportunity to work games and do clinics around the world. That's where my next motivation came and it involved our officiating mechanics. Again, thinking like we do, I thought I/we had a pretty good handle on mechanics and the rationale for why we do certain things on the field. Let me tell you, just like the wakeup call on rules with the Japanese officials, I got another dose of "you're not as smart as you thought you were" from British and other European IFAF officials. No one has put together a more comprehensive, black and white mechanics manual than the IAFOA manual. The Manual of Football Officiating covers everything from three to eight person crews in an in-depth manner that is more comprehensive than any NFHS or NCAA manual. This manual is an encyclopedia of the "best practices" of football officiating. The pages are devoted to individual positions, a pre-game, general principles and axioms, measurements, working with your chain crew, etc. It's as comprehensive an officiating resource as any you will read. Combine this manual with your NFHS and NCAA/CFO manuals and you and your crew will be on the road to raising your game.

Kudos to Professor Jim Briggs, the main author and chair of the IAFOA Mechanics Committee, for his leadership and work on this officiating mechanics manual. Jim exemplifies the body of officials who officiate internationally. He and his committee members have spent countless hours discussing, debating and editing the mechanics. So the next time you think of American Football as "our game", remember "our" now means the world. The international players and coaches are pretty darn good and the officiating is even better.

So whether you're a BAFRA official, an IFAF official, or an official in the United States, Japan or Brazil, the "Manual of Football Officiating" is a must read book for you. The decision is yours... "If you're green you grow. If you're ripe you rot". Which official are you? If you know everything about the game then this manual's not for you. But remember, knowledge is power and this manual will give you power through its insights and strategies for improving your individual and crew performance. The officials in Japan made me a better rules official. BAFRA and IFAF continue to motivate me to better know and understand the mechanics of officiating football.

Bill LeMonnier, Big-10 (retired), IFAF Coordinator of Officials, ESPN Rules Analyst

Editor's foreword

The Manual of Football Officiating (MOFO) embodies the best practice of football officiating as exemplified by top officials in the USA. The members of the International Advisory Group continue to monitor good practice in the National Football League, major college conferences and high school football, and adapt it to the particular needs of our football.

Originally developed for BAFRA members in Great Britain, this book has now been adopted as the official mechanics manual for international competitions, and is used for domestic football in many other countries, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kuwait, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Serbia and Sweden (some in translation).

A previous edition of this book published by *Referee* magazine in the USA sold 1000 copies. We are proud of the book's success and would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to it over the years.

In this manual:

- The verb "to observe" is used in relation to a specific foul to mean that the official(s) should watch players who are at risk of committing that foul, and flag it (or take appropriate preventative action) if it happens (or comes close to happening).
- The verb "to record" implies a *written* record while the verb "to note" implies a *mental* note.
- Unless otherwise specified by context, the term "wing official" means either or both the Linesman and Line Judge, the term "deep wing official" means either or both the Field Judge and the Side Judge, and the term "sideline official" means either the Linesman, Line Judge, Field Judge or Side Judge, or another official who is located on the sideline at the time.
- The following abbreviations are used to denote officiating positions:

B	Back Judge
C	Centre Judge
F	Field Judge
H	Head Linesman
L	Line Judge
R	Referee
S	Side Judge
U	Umpire
V	Video Judge
- The section entitled "Returns" in each of the positional chapters refers to fumble, backward pass, interception, punt, field goal and other returns except for kickoff returns, which are covered in their relevant sections.
- Rules references are to the 2020 edition of the *IFAF Football Rules and Interpretations* and national rulebooks derived from it, but are normally applicable to NCAA rules also.
- For brevity, male pronouns are used extensively in this book, but the mechanics are equally applicable to female and male participants.

We always encourage officials or local associations to write to us with comments on this manual and, in particular, suggestions of improvements to the mechanics which could be incorporated in future editions. Please contact me at the following email address.

Professor Jim Briggs
jim.briggs@acm.org

Acknowledgements

The Editor would like to thank all the members of our International Advisory Group who contributed to this edition. These include: Einar Bolstad (Norway), Frank Kristensen (Denmark), Bill LeMonnier (USA), Paul Mercer (Australia), Miles Newman (Australia), David Parsons (GB), Peter Parsons (GB), Shawn Sombati (GB), Paul Sutton (GB). Steve Tonkinson (GB), Mariano Viotto (Argentina).

The Editor is grateful to the following who contributed by helping to proof-read and check this edition (GB where not specified): Michael Bilica (USA), Tom Blakeson, Amir Brooks, Arnold Buijs (Netherlands), Adam Durucz (Hungary), Steve Egan, James Ford-Bannister, Steve Hall, Perttu Hautala (Finland), Thomas Hofbauer (Austria), Chris Jarvis, James Kilbane, Ali May, Richard McEwan, Richard Moger, Russell Newton, Pam Pellizzari (Australia), Leanne Spencer, Marcin Szczepanski (Poland), Gaute Tesli (Norway), Pete Thom, Frank Thomson, Paul Todd, Mark Wilson.

In addition, many officials have contributed to previous editions, including (GB where not specified): David Allan, Ian Barraclough, Chris Bowker, Stephen Bowness (New Zealand), Bill Bowsher, Dan Bridgland, Arnold Buijs (Netherlands), the late Phil Cottier, the late Norman Cox, T Hutchison, Richard Jeffrey-Cook, Hans Lammerhirt (Germany), Tzvi Lindeman, Will Marriage, Russell Newton, Eigil Noren (Norway), David Norton, Mel Pons (Netherlands), Dominic Ray, Henning Rieske (Germany), Bojan Savicevic (Austria), the late David Sinclair (Australia), the late John Slavin, Mike Wylde, Brian Yates.

The invaluable contributions of Jerry Grunski, Dick Honig, Bill LeMonnier, Mike Pereira and many other US officials who have spoken at European clinics should also be acknowledged.

The Editor would also like to thank all the officials and officiating organisations who have contributed mechanics, tips and ideas.