**The Regular Season is Half Over** – The season is flying by as we head into the main portion of league play. Now the teams square off in their quest of the league championship. Schools and teams are more familiar with one another as the enthusiasm and school spirit rises. As officials, we must now keep our enthusiasm and energy in check and keep ourselves focused and calm. It is always helpful to know the teams, coaches, rivalries, tendencies, and traditions as we approach a league game, but, it is not cause to get “hyped up” or overly excited. Let’s prepare for these games as we always do. Stay with our regular mid-week and pre-game routine. Get prepared to do your usual best work! Good luck during this important part of the season.

**More on Preparing for a Big Game** – Sometimes it is helpful to prepare for an important game by making sure you start off well. Conducting a good pre-game builds confidence and having a professional, comfortable, and confident coaches meeting before the game is also a great help in setting the tone for a great game. Keep on time but don’t hurry the teams, captains, or coaches. You are setting the tempo for the game right from the start by helping the teams kick off right on time. Next up is a good first series for both teams. Whether they score or not, make sure you set a good game tempo that promotes good play for both teams. Remember, our goal is a perfect game …. No mistakes by either team, no fouls, and a lot of great plays. If you’re successful in the first half, then starting the second half on time is equally important as is working those first two series. Get off to a great start in both halves! Getting off to a great start will pay off for the officials and the teams!

**Make it Big!** – I’ve watch a lot of video this year, and I need to watch even more to keep improving our work! One common theme that is emerging is that some of our calls don’t show up very big on video. Now I’m the first one to say that some holds at the point of attack don’t have to be very big to give the runner a huge advantage. That being said, the fouls I’m referring to are just not big enough. If you see what appears to be a foul, you have a second to think about it before deciding to call the foul. Is it big enough? Just take that one second to replay the action in your brain and ask if it’s really big enough. Even after you’ve thrown, you still have a chance to pick it up and wave it off if you don’t like it. Remember, some of our best decisions all night are our decision NOT to throw a flag.

**Somersaults** – I usually don’t get to see the PPR but I hear that some highlights are featuring delayed, prolonged, or excessive celebrations…like a somersault!!! I assume we’re flagging this unsportsmanlike act. The PPR cuts off before the viewer can determine if a proper flag was thrown. I hope so!

**Leaving the field** – I received a report of an official who stayed on the field and went nose-to-nose with a coach. No one wins in this situation. Crew chiefs, make sure you all leave together.

**Spots (progress stopped and runner down)** – Some of our best calls are when we are accurate with our spots. The key to good, accurate spots is concentration. Anticipate the runner’s progress, see the knee down, be strong when declaring progress has been stopped! Get these important rulings right.

**Talking to Coaches after the Game** – Is this allowed? Well, if the coach is asking to speak in a controlled and respectful manner, then sure. If the coach begins yelling, complaining, or berating the crew then it’s a waste of time and needs to be ended in a professional manner.

**Defense Calling Adjustment Signals** – If the signals don’t cause any confusion for the offense, then all is good. In one case, the adjustment signal was a school color “Gold” which is quite close to “Go!” In this case any false start by the offense can be assumed to be caused by the defense if the official believes the defensive signal calling is contributing to the confusion. It is on the defense to avoid this type of conflict. Penalty is 1 5 yards unsportsmanlike conduct.

**Chop Blocks** – The best way to determine if the block is a chop block according to the rule book is to describe the block in terms of the level of the block. If the blocks by the two offensive players are at the same level (high-high, or low-low) then the block is legal. If the block is high-low or low-high (different levels) then the block is illegal. High and low is defined by the knee, not the waist! And it is legal or illegal with or without delay (that’s no longer an issue.)