Line of Scrimmage Officiating Presentation

By Scott Reilly

Getting Spots

- Spots Bread & Butter. Good officials always get good spots all game long. – Cruise control as a LOS official. Repetitive action/motion equals instinct. Take pride in spots. This is the fun part.
- The runner is down when any part, except the hand or foot, touches the ground; when he is tackled or otherwise falls, or he loses possession of the ball as they contact the ground with any part of their body, except the hand or foot.
- Forward progress is a term indicating the end of advancement by the ball carrier or airborne pass receiver of either team as it applies to the position of the ball when it becomes dead by rule.

Getting Spots

- Be no worse than a ball length on every play when spotting the ball –
 Challenge yourself. Be patient on forward progress. Let it play out.
 Guy got his legs back, can make a football move, then forward progress goes away.
- Guy going OB be aware of which arm he has the ball. Could be a yard difference. Retrace the runner's steps going out of bounds.
- Need to be able to recognize double action you'll see a bounce, needs to be second nature. This seems to happen a lot at the goal line so be ready to rule, pinch in and sell the spot short

Getting Spots

- End of Play in field of play Square Up Progress Slide with shoulders squared up Mirror your fellow LOS across from you. This is an art that requires constant communication.
- When you notice you are a yard apart, you either have positive knowledge you nailed it because you saw an elbow down or knee down that your partner couldn't see, so get their attention and communicate verbally or keep pinching in or sometimes point to the body part you saw down on yourself. They better defer to you.
- Get in the habit on every play looking across the field at your fellow official so you are always in alignment with each other. You are a team that must be on the same page regarding spots. Know when it is best to defer.

Crossfield Mechanics

- Understand how important a crossfield spot can be. Build trust with your fellow official across from you. They are expecting you to be there for them.
- I personally get progress on every play, even on the other side of the field on an out of bounds play. You never know what distractions your partner may have.
- The typical mechanic is when help is needed for the official who knows the receiver will be pushed back into where they are positioned on the sideline, they will wind indicating progress is stopped while the receiver is driven backwards towards them so all they need to worry about is protecting that receiver and watching the immediate action because there isn't a concern about progress because the cross-field official will have your back and get the spot. You still need to have an opinion on where that spot is because you never know if your buddy will be there.

Crossfield Mechanics

- The official that wound, after all action is cleared, will then just walk up field, looking across the field, and take the spot from the crossfield official (assuming you like the spot). Again, this is all about trust and mechanics.
- The opposite official should keep coming across the field if have a good cross field spot even if your fellow official puts the ball down short. You are the one with the "best" forward progress spot. Tweet whistle and hustle in if necessary. You may need to go across the field to have a discussion.
- The official asking for "help with the spot" may give a bobble signal to the crossfield guy if he or she doesn't want the spot because the receiver may have been juggling the ball while being hit and secures it later during the process of being driven back.

Mechanics

 Mechanics – Optimum spot to see fouls. Usually make the right call when in position. When you have mechanical breakdowns this can create problems. Mechanics are designed so you do what you need to do when you get there. Instinct – Automatically happens for you. Have to stress mechanics – what can I do to improve

LOS Training

- No crew will be successful without an outstanding pair of LOS officials
- Be 100% on LOS fouls Must be excellent. Take your chances on other fouls. Who had the best year on the LOS. Very tight, decimals between officials. Have to be focused all the time. Mechanics, judgment, getting into position. Own your position, know your responsibilities (HL & LJ are different). Can't be afraid, make a call.
- Training & Thinking you are good enough to make the call. Make the call that is necessary to be made. If you are going to be good, you have to be prepared. What are your goals (#1 guy or just want to get asked back)? You have to be disciplined. Open up your vision, don't get tunnel vision. Separate yourself from the pack. Evaluate every single play not just fouls you called.

LOS Training

- Trust your instincts live with it, you'll be 99% right don't over think. Don't let things drive you crazy. Be consistent. If things bother you then take care of it. Be ready to pull the trigger, natural reaction. Officiating is about instincts. We have a problem when we don't trust our instincts. When you react 99% of the time you are going to be right.
- Shock factor throws you off as an official. Unusual situations can catch
 you off guard. Brain freeze take your time and work your way through it.
 "I don't know what happened, but it just doesn't look right.
- Read and make adjustments, play the percentages, know the biggest threat, biggest potential for foul.
- Minor fouls become major fouls when you miss them

Presnap Routine

- Need a great presnap routine or you're not going to make it. Same thing over and over every play 150 to 200 plays (exhausting). Puzzle to put together on LOS every single play. Is the formation legal, find your key. Calling numbers out in your head, get to this level. Is everyone set? Check this off your list. Is D lined up tight. Down & Distance is a critical presnap routine.
- You officiate from the end of the last play. Presnap, subs, counting get ahead of the game. So many distractions, snap back if lose focus. Always have to be focused. Guys at the top do not have breakdowns on simple basic fouls – Presnap way before team breaks the huddle. Relaxed zone, things run in the background, check yourself, make this be automatic. Can't write a mechanics manual for everything, read the play.

Chains

- Go over your routine with the chain crew every game. Get the first name of the box guy.
- Never take for granted the chains are right Measure in pregame.
- Have the box guy echo the down to you when you give it. Chain guys need to do things your way. In College, we have them write down the down, distance and yard line on every play. Sometimes chains don't flip down on an OB spot – Be careful.
- Make sure you move the chains on first down. Give him the heel of your foot. No need to turn to give him the down. Have tape at the halfway point of the chain. Give signals of a short or long five to referee. Can be subtle. Be friendly but firm with your chain crew. It's your neck on the line. Pay attention in the beginning to where your box guy is setting.

Down Indicator

- Indefensible to miss a down, sometimes replay is wrong, your down indicator is important.
- The down indicator is the very last thing I change, after the CJ or U spots the ball and I'm backing up to sideline (all is clear)
- Be very careful on fouls and the down after enforcement (and replays)
- Be careful writing on your game card, leave down indicator in place
- Have the box person turn the down when he/she gets to the new spot
- Have the box person echo the down to you when you give it. Sometimes chains don't flip down on OB spots

- Always Know Primary Line to Gain Stop Clock on First Down Sharp Signals (T.O., Wind @ SL)
- Back out to the Sideline keeping your head looking inward Communicate down, distance, your G/L, my G/L (in 7 man mechanics).
- Double stakes to opposite official if appropriate. Verify Down Box Correct Down

- Move a half step so you can see your side of the ball. You have to see what you have to see. Go back to LOS after your adjustment. Not acceptable to not see a false start. If wideout in way, lean or step out so you can see.
- If snap is imminent, can't be distracted. Coaches can be good at distracting you.
- Be positioned and focused to see your guys on your side of the ball.
 Get the layups.
- Get keys in a second. Need to get formations quickly as part of your presnap routine.

- Needs to be obvious if all 11 not set
- Interior lineman goes down into stance at snap this is a false start
- When guys disappears inside need to stay with him brick in hand
- Can't prevent injuries but we can have a flag down on safety related type of fouls.
- If guy is fighting to get OB (just a little off parallel trying to get OB), then give him benefit of the doubt when time is important. If 1st down then fights to get OB but loses a little yardage so not 1st down you have a decision to make. Don't penalize the D if they are making a good play stopping forward progress inbounds.
- Give them within 1 yard for being off the line. If close to that 1 yard talk to him after the play. Don't take a winning TD away – must be clearly in backfield.

- Tackles line up purposely off the line because they have bad footwork. If he doesn't have to move his feet to block the DE, then too far back. Look at distance from DE to tackle, you'll see the separation.
- For OH you need to put foul in one of the categories. Officiate the defenders. They will tell you by body movement if they are held. Be really certain on edge blocks – No reason to guess. Placement of hands, grab at top of shoulder pads, raises your antenna.
- If during substitution defense comes on late on offense side then dead ball foul if ball is snapped because could be unabated to QB or WR.
- Preference when ball coming your way, bailing out is typically straight back but it's OK to take a step or two into backfield rather than going back holding the line

- Stretch plays, swing plays get the angle to see the big picture and where all the bodies are – Feel for the game. Head on a swivel looking for other things – Both H & L.
- Tackle to tackle 2 point to 3 point right before snap this is a false start. If TE going down at the snap then not a false start.
- When backs or WR's get past the center they become the other wings responsibility.
- Definition of "set", you get some sort of pause.

- Focus at Snap Leading edge of G, T, TE helmuts See Ball F/S, O/S, Contact O/S,
- Read Running Play Point of Attack, Lead Blocks, Corner Block, Progress
- Read Pass Play Key Receiver off LOS, Get look at near tackle
- BACKWARD PASS RESPONSIBILITY, ensure you point backwards

- Shotgun QB. Takes step up and man in motion let this go. If leave the center & man in motion than illegal shift.
- If TE covered and has hand on the ground and shifts then FST. If 2 point stance, then move to backfield, pauses, moves to other side, OK.
- Hold we have grabs on every play but you need a restriction. Do you think a guys going to do a 360 to tackle the guy. Material effect or impact on the play. You'll see a jerk or shoulder dip.
- At times there will be incidental contact to the head not a foul
- If your primary key is not threatened you can assist in another area, like the belt. LB will give a cheap shot with receivers coming across in belt.
- When you see your lineman go down to the ground you need to look for trips.
- OH Players that hold typically have pour footwork. Watch the defenders, he'll tell you if he's being held. If defender get past a blocker, reach out, grab, trip with arm offense needs to do an illegal act to stop them. Grab alone is not enough. Make the guy show you something.

- OK if a guy is just swaying around then guy goes in motion. Stay away from illegal shift. Motion can stop for a pause, shift (2 men) everyone to stop for 1 second.
- Marking penalty with Ump. Make sure you start from the same line.
- Game Cards TO's need to know. Keep yourself out of situations.
- DOD (one yard of line) unnatural movements by D with or without a snap. LB off the line can make unnatural movement no foul. If stemming when tight to line causing FST Go with DOF if there is any forward movement. Sometimes there is disconcerting signals when stem then disconcerting signals.
- IDP Have the guy 3 yards beyond, then see the release, not other way around. Can get fooled. Snap tackle back can see your tackle fire off. Loophole in rule. TE is covered up and does a 2 ½ yard out & DB will cover him. Hard to get. Backside long developing plays lineman drifts need to see this.

- Consistency will reward your career.
- Things can happen if you lose focus & concentration
- Football is common sense Know guidelines
- Take philosophies given to us, don't think, just react.
- Avoid basic LOS fouls trust your instincts. Be very proficient on LOS fouls you will have a successful season.
- Two words FOCUS and CONCENTRATION.
- Address a problem head on, don't lose coaches confidence

False Start

- Movement by the offense doesn't necessarily mean it's a FST.
 Sometimes that movement just is not enough.
- Slight movements prior to the snap by wideouts can be ignored.
 Knee buckles are false starts.
- Anytime a receiver or player falls out of their stance, it is a FST.
- WR moving forward or backward (an attempt to reset) at the snap is FST.
- Be aware of QB head bobs both shotgun and under center.

False Start

- Offense has the advantage of knowing the snap count
- Any movement by one or more players that simulates action at the snap is a FST. This includes:
 - QB making quick jerky movements that simulates the start of a play
 - The snapper flexing, jerking their head or dipping their shoulders or simulating a snap
 - Abrupt coordinated shifts or player movement
 - Clap or signal to start a play with abrupt or coordinated movements
 - Any Team A movements that simulates action at the snap is a foul.
 - Can always cover yourself by simulating the start of a play.

Formations

- An ineligible lineman between the belt line and rear end of the center is in the "warn zone." The offense should be warned early and then flagged for subsequent violations. Do not nit pick – make it jump out.
- Any receiver that lines up within 1 yard of the LOS is on the line unless there is any stagger that would cause us to put him in the backfield to make the formation legal. 2 WR's – Any stagger is enough to make them legal. Use "blade of grass" philosophy.
- A wideout more than 1 yard off the LOS is considered to be in the backfield, but again don't be too technical
- If there are 5 players in the backfield it is a foul. We can't use any philosophy to make this legal.
- Any type of "trick" or "gimmick" formation must be strictly legal, especially when an eligible numbered player is covered up.

Defense Requirements

- Any player within 1 yard (stationary or not) may not make quick, abrupt, or exaggerated actions that are not part of normal defensive player movement. You are judging a non-football act versus a normal stem.
- The defense will be held to the same standard as the offense simulating action at the snap
- Coordinated defensive movement, including lateral and backward movement that includes amplified or unnecessary arm movement is a foul. Looking for exaggerated movement prior to the stem.
- No defender shall use words or signals that disconcert opponents when they are preparing to put the ball in play
- No player may call defensive signals that simulate the sound or cadence or otherwise interfere with offensive starting signals. This includes clapping or actions that create a clapping sound if the offense is using the clap as a part of their starting signal. Clapping from the SL is also illegal.

Defense Requirements

- A defensive lineman barely in the Neutral Zone is in the "warn zone."
 The closer to the ball less leeway. Farther away from the ball more leeway.
- Illegal stemming on any down Team B will be held to the same standard of not simulating action at the snap as Team A. Coordinated Team B movement, including lateral and backward movement that simulates action at the snap is a foul and should be shut down for DOD.

Scrimmage Kicks

- Pick up R 11 signal Need a Legal Formation. If it is going to be a trick play then alignments must be perfect
- At snap Blocks on wing End of line (FG, Try) Action on Flyer at LOS (Punts)
- Help R with illegally blocked into the kicker or holder
- Slide downfield on punts AFTER kick clears LOS (Punts) Blocks 2nd Wave
- Goal line responsibility on long returns

Goal Line

- Process all information at the SL then rule strong
- At GL, use all your senses to see all action, then make decision. If you are in position on the goal line then 99% of the time you'll make the right call.
- If it feels like a TD, then TD, if you see double action, elbow down, then surge then short.
- May have to just find ball if you are looking through players
- Don't want to be moving at the moment of truth. If at G/L off the pylon just stay there on a sideline catch in EZ. We make the right calls when we are in the right position.
- Goal Line inside 5-yd line go to G/L at snap, also 5-yd line coming out
- Goal Line mechanics officiate while you go the goal line.

Penalty Enforcement

- Fouls Check Clock Enforcement Spot Hold until U Spots Ball
- LJ Foul Kill Clock Relocate Flag (Spot Foul)
- 2 of more flags, officials must concur
- Report Status, #, foul to R, know penalty options and enforcements
- Listen to Referee repeat foul information
- Record fouls
- Communication to Head Coach, Professional

Penalty Enforcement

- Judgement is the ability to determine whether or not an apparent infraction of the rules has had a material effect on the play.
- Point of attack
- Safety of Players
- Control of the game
- Action that leads up to foul, the action itself, the action that occurs after
- When their beat, they cheat.
- Get the Alligators, let the lizards run free

Penalty Enforcement

- Continue to officiate after throwing the flag
- Status of the play determine basic spot
- Know measurements and how to do them, 5 yard tape
- Slow down
- Get ball down, tweet tweet, ensure ball is covered by someone
- Hold chains
- Flag covered
- Reporting spokesman stays with Referee. He may need help with numbers
- Umpire get ball, walk off with HL. LJ stays at enforcement spot, U verifies with him.

- Honest and Direct with Coaches. Develop your own style but be professional. Coaches know what your tolerance level is. Each official is different. Coach that's enough. Coach do you have a question for me? Emotions run high. Give him a chance to get out of the situation. Get away from him if need to. You may need to flag the coach.
- Sideline Control (I use same technique heads up coach, coming way way. Heads up, Back up please, Find get back coach

- Keep communication simple, don't use DPI, KCI, etc.
- Always Coach or Coach Smith
- Be approachable
- Are you listening to understand, look of concern
- Eye Contact
- Coach wants to trust you.
- Let coach have the last word
- I hear you coach, I understand. OK, coach. Coach I have heard enough.

- Body posture Field presence
- Never blow a coach off we are facilitating a game
- Address a problem head on, don't lose coaches confidence
- Learn to Control your anger or recognizing your own anger "triggers"
- Don't interrupt
- Thick skin, don't be too cute. Don't be a jerk
- Help coaches visualize what their options are (down and distance options)

- Be honest and direct with Coaches
- There is a difference between complaining and being abusive (you may need to flag a coach)
- Silence can't be misquoted
- If I'm wrong coach, I apologize (Disarms coaches)
- Coach, if it was, as you are describing it, then I missed it

Being Part of a Crew

- Chemistry (Crew Credibility Keep it)
- Can't be late
- Approach try not to offend, work harder to not be offended. Don't argue, chose words carefully
- Pick members up
- Check ego at the door
- Know your position
- First Impressions don't get typecast

Crew Self Assessment Objectives

- 1. Did we effectively and fairly manage the game?
- 2. Did we consistently apply the rules and philosophies to each play?
- 3. Did we demonstrate sound and fundamental mechanics?
- 4. Did we work together as a team?
- 5. Was our individual performance up to the standard that is expected?

Self Awareness

- Mental toughness motivated, prepared, focused, stable, accountable.
- Law of the Chain only as strong as our weakest link. If people feel accepted, allows us to work & challenge each other. Feel safe it's OK to make mistakes.
- Self-actualization be all you can be, be motivated from the inside, not through fear
- Time Orientation Right here, right now, in the moment, in the zin zone, the flow. No negative thoughts, body language follows your conscience thoughts. You are responsible for your own thoughts. Choose to be confident, choose to be competent, know what you are doing, work hard at emotional stability.
- Awareness of what everybody else is doing. Don't be clueless.
- Be honest with yourself Be the best self-evaluator
- You are going to make mistakes, its how you recover that is important.
- Don't make anything you do, fatal. Live to see another day.

Words from my boss in the Big XII

- Why are we here? Consistency
- Mechanics Optimum spot to see fouls. Usually make the right call when in position. When you have mechanical breakdowns this can create problems. Mechanics are designed so you do what you need to do when you get there. Instinct – Automatically happens for you. Have to stress mechanics – what can I do to improve
- Veteran Guy Slows the game down, relaxed
- Hold Categorize brings consistency. OH categories Reverse Takedown, grab & restrict, hook & restrict, jerk & restrict, tackle – grabs and let's go – nothing. Need effect on play.

Words from my boss in the Big XII

- Approach Try not to offend, work harder to not be offended. Can't write anything of value unless you offend someone
- Tell the truth about the play. Proficient in every phase of the game –
 not fair to protect crewmate if you know a foul should or should not
 have been called.
- Talk about 50/50 plays to get on the same page
- Be honest with yourself Be the best self-evaluator
- If you want to go far, you have to go together.

- We are all just football officials. We are in this together. We need to learn from others
- Be patient and stay positive. Natural progression up the ladder is best
- Manage your own emotions. You are going to make mistakes, it is how you recover that's important.
- Presnap routine for every play
- Attitude -No ego, be humble. Learn from the game
- Know your position. This guy knows what he is doing. You can be trusted.
- On the field, basic instincts, put into action.

- The best officials always seem to be in the best position to see things. When you watch a great official, you'll always see great mechanics.
- Preventative officiating is your best weapon towards maintaining game control
- A word of warning at the right time goes a long way
- Know what to look for and where to look is a requirement of every official on every play. The great ones always know.
- Interpersonal skills look coaches in the eye.
- Know your "initial responsibility". Follow your key until free of foul.
- Lessons Learned are experiences distilled from past activities that should be actively taken into account in future actions and behaviors.

- If you think it's a foul It's Not
- If you know it's a foul It Is
- Interception on other side, officiate behind. Officiate people
- Focused Mentally alert/must concentrate one play at a time for the full game. Get involved, either physically or mentally, in every play.
- Be prepared for each game: mentally, physically and emotionally. All games are important. Work every game with the same intensity.
- Be professional at all times. If you want to be treated like a professional, you must act & look like a professional, both on and off the field.
- Strong Communicator Be Approachable. Good Listener. You think before you speak. Fair, but firm. Talking too much can get you into trouble
- Team Player Tries to make each member of the crew better. Willing to sacrifice for the good of the crew.

- Targeting See the play. Make the right call. Don't rely on replay.
- OH into the tackle no foul unless time delay.
- IBB into the tackle no foul unless a Personal Foul.
- Start every new series on a yard line unless there is a COP on 4th down. Inside B's 5 Y/L, leave it where it lies.
- Ball coming out of the EZ Entire ball must be in the field of play. (Reviewable)
- Finish every play / Get a ball down at the DBS especially when a flag is on the ground.
- 4 & 2 or less and not a scrimmage kick formation both LOS officials move to the LTG after the snap.

- Never assume anything Don't be surprised. Anticipate the action not the call. Be alert. Expect the unexpected.
- Hustle But don't be in a hurry. Move with a purpose.
- Have fun. It's hard work to become a good official, but that doesn't mean you can't have fun in the process. It shouldn't be difficult to find pleasure in the officiating experience. A fondness of working in certain stadiums. An assignment that takes you to a new area, take in the scenery along the way. The opportunity to renew friendships and share new experiences. The satisfaction that comes doing a good job are all things that make officiating fun.
- Don't be so hard on yourself. Know it is not the end of the world if you make a mistake.

- Referee's are expected to give as much information when announcing fouls
 they are the face of the crew. Do your part in providing foul information.
- Every LJ punches back on any ball at any time that goes backwards, this trains you.
- Don't forget about conversations even though it's late. Get it Right on the field.
- Slow down on catch-no catch. If going to the ground in process of making a catch and ball comes out incomplete. But if catch than ball comes out then possibly can be a catch. If you have clear knowledge then come in and help.
- A lot of fouls happen at start of a quarter Interesting.
- Don't get off the tackle too soon by going to open back.

- Pay attention to timelines
- Keep your attitude positive
- Don't be picky or over-technical
- Never guess what may have happened
- If it involves the safety of a player, call it.
- Never show annoyance, irritation or anger when enforcing a penalty
- It's an accepted fact that great coaches "out-prepare" the competition. (So Do Great Officials). How can you act correctly, if you're not prepared.

- Be a "Great" Dead Ball Official. View all players until they are back with their teammates.
- Always see the ball before you blow your whistle.
- You may miss one, don't look back. We must always be ready to officiate the next play.
- Concentration. Give everything you have on every play for 60 minutes (extra periods if required).
- Display integrity, courage and poise.
 - Integrity: the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness
 - Courage: the ability to do something that frightens one.
 - Poise: graceful and elegant bearing in a person. (balance, control, presence)

- When receivers go inside you really need to be there to see the contact that takes place.
- Officiate the threats. Really no more "keys", now "Initial Responsibility"
- Make sure the referee has every piece of the puzzle so he/she doesn't go down the wrong road.
- Is the defender trying to track the ball? We will allow contact but we don't want to bail him out.
- Need to officiate the belt.
- Don't get so focused on the ball carriers. Need to look at the blocks in front.

- Is a guy running a route when you consider OPI. Receiver attacks main part of the body. This is not accidental. This is practiced. Especially around the GL. At one yard from GL, you need to be as tight as possible as these are pick plays.
- Sometimes you can have a Big Ugly nothing.
- Tackle to tackle a flinch is a flinch
- Catch on sideline. Get feet but follow guy OB to ensure possession, then look to sideline partner.
- Using your voice (It's over, plays over, clock is running, get back to your huddle)

When in Question

- When is Question Rules: know them
- When in question as to whether an action is a false start or illegal motion, it is a false start.
- When in question if a wide receiver is covering up an originally ineligible receiver, they are not covered up.
- When in question, the runner fumbled and was not down.

The C's of Officiating

- Concentration
- Consistency
- Communication
- Common Sense
- Courage
- Comportment (Your demeanor is **your outward behavior**. It includes the way you stand, the way you talk, your facial expressions.
- Confidence

Random Thoughts

- Apply self control
- Humbling Learn from the game
- Be Professional
- Deliver on Promises made
- Share your knowledge Your mind won't be emptied by giving away kernels of wisdom or experience
- Consistency will reward your career-same routine. Gets you through tough times

Final Thoughts

- Live in the Moment (Be a positive person)
- Be Grateful. You are part of a great brotherhood. Opportunity to play in the arena.
- Be patient, have enthusiasm, be passionate
- Keep expectations real. Avoid that feeling of "not being ready".
- Enjoy the Pressure Pressure is a privilege
- Enjoy the stories and experiences