Steve’s Weekly Bull – Week 3

**Reminder to Officials:**  If you cannot work a game for any reason, please block that day in Arbiter. If there is a light blue box (pending game) on your calendar, you cannot block that day.  You must be removed from the game first.

**Chain Crews and Timers** – We really need them available for instructions 30 minutes before kickoff. A little late is acceptable, but just before kickoff is not. Thank you.

**Varsity Head Coaches** – Please restrain yourselves during the JV game. We had a varsity head coach trying to call time out for the JV when it was obvious he wasn’t a member of the JV staff.

**Locker Room** – It is a serious safety concern for officials to be left out of the locker room after a game. Crowds of people may be passing nearby and unsportsmanlike comments can be lobbed in the direction of the officials….or worse! Please have someone assigned to this task. Thank you.

**The Goal Line** - The Goal Line is totally what the game of football is about! It is the most important line in the game. Any time the offense has the ball on or inside the opponent’s 15 yard line, we must anticipate the play ending right at the goal line or pylon. In this situation we must move much more quickly to the goal line than if we were outside the 15 yard line. I’m not saying we all use goal line mechanics from anywhere inside the 15 BUT I will not criticize an official who goes down field anticipating that the ball may reach the goal line/pylon. With a five-man crew, this is a definite, serious “hole” in our coverage.

**Long Field Goal Attempt** – Referees should wait until the two officials are set under the goal posts before giving the ready.  We’re really not "ready" until both under officials are set.

**Chula Vista Field** - The beautiful new field does not have any 9 yard marks on it so see if you can use the numbers as a reference point.

**Watching Receivers During Their Routs** – Flank officials, along with the back judge, must watch their keys during their routes. Many times there are four and even five receivers and only three of us but we must give it our best effort on every play. Once we read pass we should move our eyes to our key then to others who are in their patterns. If your key is not threatened, then move on to another receiver who is threatened.

**Press Coverage** – A defender who is in press coverage presents two unique challenges. First, they may be blocking the defender so the two of them instantly lock up. We do not favor one player over the other if they are both using their hands to block/ward off the block. Most times they are just fighting to maintain position….no foul. Only when the runner approaches the block do we fully evaluate holding. The other problem associated with press coverage is the release of the receiver as he tries to get past the defender and the defender legally uses his hands to restrict the receiver (not holding). Again, in this case we have no foul as both are attempting to gain a legal advantage. Most of the times the result of this struggle between the two is a receiver who has moved past the defender and is now slightly in front of the defender as they move down field. Now the defender has little opportunity to legally use his hands and is in chase mode. This positioning should alert the flank official of the possibility of interference….not that there will be interference; it’s just that the receiver now has the advantage in positioning. As I said, we just need to be alert.

**Helmet Off or Player with Blood Must Leave for One Play** – Players whose helmet comes off (not as a result of facemask penalty) must stay out for one play (unless it happens on the last play of the half or the last play of the game and an overtime is going to occur). Coaches cannot use a timeout to “buy him back into the game.” One play means one play and a PAT counts as a play. Same thing for a player who is bleeding, has on open wound, or has any amount of blood on his uniform. The rule further indicates that the player must leave until “the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned and/or the uniform is changed before returning to competition.”

**The following are some reminders from the Association Observers …for the good of the Association:**

1. Crews need to be pro-active in getting the teams on the field as quickly as possible for kickoffs. We are responsible for the tempo of the game and keeping the game moving along.
2. All officials on our crews must be consistent in mirroring the timeout signal of the covering official. Again, the clock and timing of the game is every official’s responsibility.
3. Crews must be consistent in giving the double stake signal when the line to gain is more than 10 yards.
4. During a running play, the covering official should not blow his/her whistle and/or give forward progress if he/she cannot see the ball at the end of the run. This is a great time to use your voice to stop the action…not your whistle.
5. Observations show that covering official(s) can be more deliberate in blowing the whistle, giving signals and marking forward progress (unless they don’t see the ball in possession as stated in #4 above.).
6. On dead ball fouls prior to the snap, the calling official(s) needs to immediately hustle to stop play (blow whistle hard and be emphatic with signal(s) and flag ) and quickly report the foul(s) to the referee. This should be done on a consistent basis throughout the game.
7. Flank officials should have the option of working outside the sideline.  This keeps you from being trapped between the coaches/players and the action coming your way! If you establish a clear restricted area, you won't have as many issues with the team and coaches; and coaches must be the only non-players we’re talking about. Players should be completely clear of this area.
8. Referee - when giving foul signal, SLOW DOWN.  Give clear, slow signal.
9. On time outs, officials should not gather together at the ball.  We all have responsibilities that don't involve being in the same spot.
10. When a foul is called on a running play, leave the ball on the ground at the dead ball spot until an option is chosen by the offended team.  Umpire should not be holding the ball while standing next to the R.
11. When both teams enter and leave the field through the same gate, let coaches know before each half who will go first, then be in position to hold the second team until the gate is clear.  This will avoid a lot of potential problems and not make the crew look like they are practicing a fire drill at the end of each half.

As you can tell, the Observer Program has already paid off! This feedback should be a part of every crew’s pregame or mid-week conference call as they prepare for this week’s games.