

FWFO Coaches' and Officials' Pre-Season Bulletin

Points of Emphasis and Associated Editorial Changes

PRE-SNAP ACTIONS FOR OFFENSE & DEFENSE / DISCONCERTING SIGNALS / OFFENSIVE ALIGNMENT

The intent of pre-snap rules is to define and govern what is allowed by the offense and defense. The offense, by design, has an advantage of knowing the starting signal, cadence, or sound, and the defense has an advantage as they are not limited in terms of overall player movements before the snap. To discourage tactics at the line of scrimmage designed to cause an opponent to foul or to give either team an unmerited advantage, officials must be on high alert for any type of illegal pre-snap actions by either team. Additionally, coaches should not teach illegal pre-snap actions designed to make their opponent foul.

New language in Rule 7 makes it clear for Team A, that any movement that simulates action at the snap is a foul. This includes abruptly shifting a player or players that simulates the start of a play. 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. Additionally, the defense cannot use words or signals that simulate the sound or cadence of, or otherwise interfere with the offensive starting signals. This includes using a clap on the defensive side of the ball that may disconcert the offense. Also, for 2024, special focus on the offensive alignment is a point of emphasis. Guidelines have been introduced to ensure we are consistent nationally in dealing with restricted linemen that are not on their line of scrimmage. Also, we will ensure that Team A is in proper alignment at the snap, especially when there is a player with an eligible number covered up. These type formations will be evaluated just as we do for “gadget plays” and the offense must be precise in their alignment or should be penalized.

Below is a great pre-season video by Steve Shaw (Secretary-Rules Editor, NCAA Football Rules Committee) and we highly encourage you to view this.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gm_phTR4Sv0

- Offensive requirements prior to the snap – 7-1-2-b-1 FR 79.
 - False start - Any movement by one or more players that simulates the action at the snap. **This includes abruptly shifting a player or players that simulates the start of a play.**
- Defensive requirements prior to the snap – 7-1-5-a-4 FR 82 (stemming)
 - Any player within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage (stationary or not) may not make quick, abrupt or exaggerated actions that are not part of normal defensive player movement.
 - Foul is a dead ball delay of game on the defense. Penalty is 5 yards and **an offensive reaction is NOT required for a foul to be called.**

2024 Rule and Editorial Changes

- Jersey numbers changed during the game (1-4-2-d & UIL Exception 14)
 - Number changes are required to report to the referee and the crew will let the opposing coach know and use the mic to announce if available
- Illegal jersey color that are not agreed upon by the coaches (1-4-5-b & UIL Exception 17)
 - Penalty is 15 yards from the succeeding spot after the kick off of each half and are charged a time out at the start of every quarter the illegal jerseys are worn. If timeouts are exhausted, a 5 yard delay of game penalty is then enforced.
- In game technology (Rule 1-4-11 and UIL Exception 22)
 - Teams are allowed to use technology during the game and during the half time intermission. The use of this technology is limited to coaching booths and the locker room.
 - Officials are not responsible for the enforcement of restricted sideline use, but the officials are expected to report any known or suspected violation via an incident report.
 - **TAPPS does not have the same UIL restrictions**
 - Any team member, coach or staff approaching an official with any video technology to review video will result in an automatic unsportsmanlike conduct foul.
- No in helmet communication for UIL or private school games despite the NCAA rule change.
- This NCAA rule change adding a two minute time out and the associated timing rules that go with it, does not apply to UIL or private school games

- Illegal scrimmage kick language (2-16-7-c) now includes not just “the kicker's entire body” has been across the neutral zone, it also includes "and the ball is or has been" beyond the neutral zone.
- Horse Collar Tackles – 9-1-15 FR 101
 - Rule now applies to a ball carrier in the tackle box including the potential passer.
- Hideouts are illegal regardless if there is a substitution or not. UNS is applied to the team not to the player. (9-2-2-b FR 104)
- Field goals and try -UIL exception 58 (please make sure to read this).
 - In short, it is illegal for a defender who is not in a 3 or 4 point stance and within one yd. of the line of scrimmage at the snap to enter neutral zone and initiate forcible contact with an opponent in or behind the neutral zone. There is no foul AFTER it is obvious a place kick will not be made. Incidental or slight contact shall be ignored. **The penalty for this foul is a personal foul, not unsportsmanlike conduct.**

Equipment

- Drones – Drones are not allowed within the playing enclosure when it is anything but an intersquad practice/scrimmage.
- Guardian caps – Not allowed in UIL contests.
 - Are allowed in TAPPS with written sign off by Bryan Bunselmeyer (Executive Director). This must be presented to the Referee prior to the game.
- Knee pads – This is something that has been a hot topic in recent years. Again, the emphasis by FWFO officials will be to not allow egregious violations of this rule to be tolerated. An example of this is shown below and can also be referenced in the rule book as it also shows multiple examples of proper and legal equipment.
 - Players are required to wear knee pads – we have observed many instances of players not wearing any at all in recent years.
 - The knee pads need to get down to the top of knees. Players will frequently have adequate length in their pants to make this happen with ease, but they will often roll the pants up significantly and thus create an issue that the officials have to deal with.



- Face shields/Visors – Must be clear and colorless. Anything that has color is considered to have tint and is not allowed by rule. This includes the rose colored or pink shields that are popular. Also, it includes the reflective shields that appear clear at close range, but from a distance, have a mirroring effect. An example of this is shown below. **Officials shall not allow anything but completely clear and transparent to be worn during the game.**



Officials are always better equipped to deal with these issues when the coaches are working in tandem to resolve it prior to kick off.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding the content of this bulletin, please reach out to the FWFO Varsity Assignment Committee by email at vac@fwfo.org or contact the Varsity Assignment Secretary, Durwood Manley by phone at 972-658-1208. We wish all of the coaches, officials, players and staff the best of luck during the 2024 football season and we are all very excited to get started this week. Stay cool, hydrated and healthy!

Regards,

Ryan Vance

FWFO Immediate Past President