

August 25, 2026

Football Officials,

Welcome to Zero Week! Here's to another great season of Friday Nights under the lights (and Thursdays and Saturdays, too). Hopefully you've done a gear check and wash. With any luck, you've stepped onto the field for a scrimmage to "bust the rust off" as well. As we get into the season, please reach out if there's anything that comes up during the week or after your games.

Week Zero Training Email

1. Rules Knowledge -- Own Your Learning!
 - a. Week One Rules Quiz: <https://forms.gle/TsxYLQpfJypBdtGj9>
 - b. I invite your feedback on these quizzes. Please enjoy as you hit the road this week!
2. Field Mechanics:
 - a. Offensive Holding
 - i. It's always good to level-set on our philosophy as it relates to Offensive Holding at the beginning of each year.
 1. We should all strive for our Offensive Holding (OH) fouls to be **BIG**.
 2. Set the Tone: Whomever on your crew throws that first OH foul sets the tone for the whole crew for the whole game.
 3. Did You Know: Studies show that if an OH is thrown on a series, there's something like a 75% chance that drive will result in a punt.
 - a. That means our OH fouls have the distinct ability to be drive killers.
 4. Now, I'm not telling you to stop throwing OH. This is simply a reminder for all of us to make sure our fouls rise to that high level, worthy of a flag.
 - ii. Revisit the Offensive Holding buckets
 1. Grab & Restrict: The blocker controls the defender with two hands outside the defender's frame usually at the shoulders. The blocker controls the defender's movement preventing him from reaching for the runner to make a tackle or rushing the passer. The key to recognizing this as a foul will be the defender's unsuccessful attempts to tackle the runner or rush the quarterback.
 2. Hook & Restrict/Turn: The blocker hooks the defender above the waist with one hand and controls or redirects defender's movement. This usually occurs when the blocker's feet are beat, and the defender is even with him or past him.
 3. Take Down: The blocker grabs the defender with two hands or hooks him with one hand above the waste and takes him to the ground. *These should almost always be thrown, regardless of location on the field.*
 4. Tackle: This usually occurs when the blocker loses contact with the defender; or the defender beats the blocker's feet and is even with him or beyond him, or the defender is running away from the blocker. The blocker grabs or hooks the defender around the waist or below or dives and hooks the defender with one or both arms or hands at the lower legs or ankles causing the defender to go to the ground.
 5. Reverse Take Down: The blocker, who appears to be getting overpowered or run over, grabs the defender inside the frame of his body and pulls the defender down on top of him as he is falling backward.
 - b. Block in the Back
 - i. This is another foul category that we need to level-set on. This penalty and rule are among the most mis-interpreted in our code. To put it plainly, *we throw this too much!*
 - ii. Make sure you're seeing the whole block. It's challenging when to see a player on the ground and don't know how he got there... but that doesn't mean we have a foul.

- iii. Rule 2-5-2 says, “Blocking in the back is a block against an opponent when the initial contact is in the opponent’s back, inside the shoulders and below the helmet and above the waist, and not against a player who is a runner or pretending to be a runner.
 - 1. I prefer the term, “**inside the shoulder blades**,” over the above. It’s a far narrower definition than we think!
- iv. A few POE’s for BIB fouls:
 - 1. If one hand is on the number and the other hand is on the side – **this is generally not a foul**. This only becomes a foul if there is forcible contact is on the number side... then, it is a block in the back;
 - 2. The force of the block could be slight and still a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner or prevents the player from making the play;
 - 3. Blocks that start at the side and subsequently end up in the back are **not fouls** as long as contact is maintained throughout the block
 - 4. Blocks in the back that occur at or about the same time a runner is being tackled should **not** be called, unless they are a personal foul or there is forceable contact that involves player safety.
- v. In the end, make sure there is actual, physical displacement and that the contact occurred where you believe it did. If you “*think*” it was a Block-in-the-Back foul, it’s **not**!

3. Officiating Philosophy:

- a. Get out to the field early!
- b. Why? Here are just a few of the things we as a crew can accomplish when we arrive early, dress efficiently, and get onto the playing surface in a timely matter:
 - i. Meaningful walk of field – instead of a glance, or assuming things are fine.
 - ii. Meaningful meeting with chain crew – they’re part of our team and we need them!
 - iii. Meaningful meeting with clock operator(s) – they can be a huge benefit when properly briefed and empowered.
- iv. **See snaps from both teams** (it sets our minds and eyes onto football!)
 - 1. Know who our studs/team leaders are; and who the knuckleheads might be!
 - 2. QB is a righty or lefty
 - 3. K is a righty or lefty; and how good of a leg does he have
 - 4. Names of both QBs (for the R), names of both Centers (for the U)
- v. Fix player equipment issues before the game even starts!
- vi. Meet with the coaches, cover all the bases, and see what we need to see before the teams go into the locker room!
- c. This is worth our time and goes with the old saying... “an ounce of prevention.”

4. Football Teaching Tape:

- a. Here’s this week’s Teaching Tape – more on the new Free Kick mechanics
 - i. Apologies that it’s a little lengthier than others.
 - ii. Link: <https://youtu.be/TZcBZ7tLtUU>

Have a great week, hydrate, stretch well, and remember to...

Set the Tone!

Tyler Spear
 State Coordinator of Football Officials, WHSAA
 970-554-1600 (cell)
tyler.s.spear@gmail.com