



THE CLEVELAND FOOTBALL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

# THE GOALPOST

## THE OFFICIAL'S NEWSLETTER

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JIM LANESE, EDITOR

### 2014: A lot left!

With about three weeks left in the regular season schedule, plenty of football action remains. Add the excitement of five more weeks of tournament football and we land right in the holiday season. Here are a few dates to jot down. The Cleveland Football Officials Association annual banquet and business meeting is slated for Thursday November 6 at Tizzano's Party Center in Euclid. Plan to attend and enjoy the recognitions and Hall of Fame inductions for 2014. The OHSAA football tournament begins the weekend of November 7 - 8 and proceeds to the state final games on December 6 - 7 - 8 in Columbus. This is the return of games to Ohio Stadium following a long run in Canton/Massillon. Plan to take in tournament games along the way to see why Ohio football ranks best in the land.

### 2015: Not too early to think ahead!

Would you like to speak at a meeting about a certain topic next year, or do you have a specific topic you would like brought up at a meeting next year?

Please get in touch with Mike Dame in the near future as the planning process for next season will begin soon!

Email to: [dameit@roadrunner.com](mailto:dameit@roadrunner.com) or call or text to 216-650-7704

### Why the game is what it is.... It goes WAY BEYOND football...

By Mike Dame

On September 24 I worked a 7<sup>th</sup> grade football game between Brunswick Willets and Green briar middle schools. I had worked for Greenbriar a few weeks prior, and I knew ahead of time they had a special needs player on their team--#38. He wears leg braces and is mentally disabled as well. His twin brother who has no disabilities also plays on the team, which is why it is very special for #38 to be on the team.

The last time I had them, he did not get a chance to get into the game. Today would be a different story. Late in the game, Willetts was losing, and it seemed as if Greenbriar had the game in hand, so they put #38 into the game as a wide out. The coaches knew ahead of time that if he got in the game, they would not use him to gain an advantage of any kind; they would just run the ball the other way. When #38 came to the line, he was covered by #80 from Willetts. I had a moment to talk to #80 before #38 got to the line, I told him not to charge at 38, it is ok to engage him, but do not take advantage of the situation. #80 understood, and nodded to me and said he understood.

At the snap, #38 went out to "block" #80, well away from the play as planned, but #80 allowed himself to be "blocked" (or so it seemed) without being obvious about it... That would have been enough to make #38's day, but after the play was over, #80 tapped #38's helmet and said "good block"... PRICELESS

#38 played I think 4 plays before he was taken out of the game, and as he made his way off the field, all 11 Willetts kids on the field were the first to clap for him, which started everyone in attendance to clap for him.

As much as #38 is an inspiration for being there, the Willetts kids and especially #80 reminds me of why I am proud to be a sports official. What I saw that day makes me a better person, and there are bigger things out there than winning the game.



Possession, that way!

## Rules to Ponder and Discuss!

First of all, thanks for your responses to a call for “disliked rules”. Jerry S, Ted G, Robert P, Tim D, Ralph M, Mel L, and John VB shared their thoughts and ideas about several aspects of the NFHS rulebook. Let’s consider the issues:

**Timing.** By far this is one of the largest impacts upon our game in the past couple decades. Effective in 2014, OHSAA instituted the Point Differential Timing Procedure. The running clock rule has drawn praise and ire from coaches, officials, and players. Coaches interviewed on the radio have praised the rule for its intent to promote safety and sportsmanship for players and opposing teams when the game becomes overly one-sided. Conversely, others argue that the shortened playing time limits the opportunity for second string players to participate in game conditions, though one coach argued that substituting players with a 21 point differential will likely avoid the running clock and afford the extra players and starters alike more playing time.

**Jerry** notes a perceived differential impact upon public and private football programs. “independent schools definitely have a decided advantage as opposed to teams in conferences who, by definition, play 4 winners and 4 losers” and are less likely to meet the running clock in closer matched contest schedules. “The other consideration is that society as a whole is ‘sissifying’ all levels of competition with rules in all sports attempting to level the playing field. Nobody can get cut anymore, nor be demoted or have their feelings hurt without making someone uncomfortable”. **I applaud the OHSAA's attempt to level the playing field, but the 30 point differential is not the answer for all schools.**

**Rob** likes the rule when games are out of hand, but thinks 30 points is too much of a differential. “When you sit back and think about it that is more than a 4 touchdown lead. I think they could make the rule better by making it 21-24 points. Basically that is 3 or more TD’s and the game is pretty much out of reach at that point in most cases.”

**Mel** liked the running clock this year. “That was one of the better ones. It takes the pressure off of the coach to say he's surrendering”. Also, during regular timing the clock should stop on incomplete passes, and when a runner goes out of bounds. However, it should be restarted when the ball is spotted and the ready for play whistle is blown. I do believe that within the last four (4) minutes of a half it can and should start on the snap. Ralph agrees, “Games are getting too long with all the passing and incompletions. On all situations where the clock would be started at the snap, change that to the "Ready for Play" whistle.”

**Starting the game.** The coin toss is a traditional ceremony. Is it needed? **Ralph** suggests “forget the coin toss. Make a rule that either the home visiting team starts with the ball, and the other team gets it at half time. The team that does not get the ball at each half can still select a goal to defend.” He would also end all kickoffs. “Just pick a yard line from which the ball will be snapped...too many injuries.”

**Ineligible receiver confusion.** **John** writes: My most disliked rule is that which states an ineligible receiver becomes eligible when the defense touches a pass behind the LOS. In this scenario the offense can have an illegal man downfield but, because of a good play by the defense, get bailed out of a foul. This does not make any sense to me.

The reasoning behind the rule is that a defender could deflect a pass that was supposed to remain behind the LOS, past the LOS and, thus, a lineman could have gone downfield, which would have been legal except for the deflection. Though a rare circumstance, “my solution would be to have a rule stating if, in the opinion of the official, a

pass intended to remain behind the LOS was deflected by the defense past the LOS, an ineligible receiver downfield would not be penalized as long as he did not catch the pass.”

**Calling time out:** One of my dislikes was the change several seasons ago which enabled the head coach to call time out. Prior to that change, only captains or designated players could call time out on the field (not from the bench). As a wing official I find this very distracting and many times impossible to hear or enforce prior to a snap—and the coach gets angry or demands 10 seconds back on the clock because he didn’t see the clock stop when he first uttered the words. This rule also removed more responsibility from players analogous to obtaining coin flip choices and penalty acceptance from coach instead of the field captain.

**Tim** would prefer that any adult on the sideline be able to call time out since they are likely acting with the head coaches wishes. All too often wing officials have to seek out the HC in order to verify the request, losing time, and attention to the players and field events near the snap.

**Personal foul enforcement:** **Tim** also suggests that any personal foul by the defense that occurs before the ready for play is considered part of the previous down. Under normal playing conditions if the defense fouls the offense gets the benefit of the play plus the opportunity to replay the down. With a personal foul after the whistle the offense gets the penalty distance, but the down counts. When this happens on fourth down the team that has fouled now has the ball with a first and ten after the enforcement. Since most such fouls occur as a continuation of the play there would be little chance of a personal foul occurring after a long time lapse from the previous play.

Further, he adds “Any personal foul that halves the distance to the goal line results in an automatic first down for A. In the above scenario most defensive personal fouls would result in a first down. If A were more than 15 yards from the first down it would remain the current down, but closer to the line to gain. With a goal line situation the defense could commit a foul (live or dead ball), get a very short yardage penalty and in some instances gain an advantage by the act.”

**Game ball:** I had the opportunity to work two games recently where visiting teams arrived without footballs and utilized the available home team game balls. The game proceeded very smoothly without the need to change balls with every possession change or other request. A rule to utilize home team game balls (or other designated ‘universal’ or league balls would enhance the game efficiency!

Let’s continue the discussion. Send your reactions or more suggestions to [jlinese@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jlinese@sbcglobal.net)



Down number two!