

Umpire Topics:

1. Getting in:

- a. Physical Appearance. Get in shape and stay in shape. Preferably before you apply. You only get one chance to make a first impression.
- b. Rules meetings: Find out who in your HS association works college ball and see if you can accompany them to their college rules meetings. You will meet other guys working college ball, begin to learn college rules, and learn more about how they manage games and their various philosophies. This will help you make some connections, make you a better college candidate overall and help you in your HS games as well.
- c. Friends/Mentors: You will not simply apply and get hired in most situations. Typically, it's an official(s) already there, who knows and likes you, that basically sucks you into that level. Be nice to people, you never know who they know. Ask to attend and then regularly attend college rules meetings and get to know guys already ahead of you. Let them get to know you personally. Don't be "THAT GUY". Be humble, coachable and not argumentative. You rarely get in trouble for not talking and usually it's how you say something more than what you say.
- d. Sacrifice: Small college football Be prepared to spend a lot of time away from home for very little money. You will not make a profit in this unless you make it to a high level. Understand this. More importantly, make sure your wife and children understand. If everyone is on the same page it's okay. I suggest that when you are not at your real job, or officiating, be with your family, not golfing, etc...

2. Game Preparation

a. During the week

- i. Workout regularly throughout the season. You will be a better official if you stay in shape. AND: You never know who is watching or when they are watching.
- ii. Eat well and hydrate all week, not just the night before.
- iii. Study the teams for your game.
 1. with all the free online/conference call meeting capabilities available, it works really well to get together Wednesday or Thursday night with the crew, after kids are in bed and go through logistics, situations from previous game, rules questions, etc. This is particularly helpful/efficient when there is no overnight stay.
 2. Know the names of the players you are responsible for and maybe their coaches' names. Until you get to a higher level, film may not be available, but you can look up a lot of information from the teams' websites.
- iv. Be smart about working the Friday night before. If you have to drive more than three hours, I recommend not working the night before. It is a rare official who can 1) give the right kind of hustle on Friday night, 2) get up at 5am and drive 3+hours to the game site in order to arrive 3.5 hours prior to kick-off, 3) participate in the pregame, then 4)work a 3 hour ballgame with the right kind of effort and attention. Then you have to leave and drive home after the game. It can be dangerous, but it can make you look bad on the field. You never know who is watching, but you can rest assured the coaches, players, fans and your fellow officials are watching.
- v. SAC requirements are to be at pregame 3.5 hours minimum, 4 hours is recommended. Leave early enough to change a flat. Pack your gear the night before so you aren't stumbling around in the early am. That's a great way to forget something. (I pack two of everything, few people have something that will fit me, but most guys can where my stuff)

b. Game Day

i. Pregame activities will be determined by the R.

1. Whatever the pregame includes, participate actively; it gets you in the right frame of mind for working the game. It also enhances your standing to your fellow officials and any observer who may be there grading the crew.

2. Duties:

a. Go with the R to meet each head coach.

- i. Make sure you know what all your R likes to cover in this meeting. Sometimes they forget things and you can bring it up when the conversation trails off between the R and the coach. For the most part you are a silent participant, really more of a witness to protect the R. NEVER leave the R alone with the head coach, even if the head coach asks to meet with the R alone!! Make sure you and the R are on the same page here so it doesn't catch anyone off guard. It happened to me one time.
- ii. Ask the head coach if he will sign the equipment card at that time, or if you need to get the trainer to sign it. Even if the HC signs it, go talk to the trainer afterwards to make sure there are no casts to inspect, etc. The HC has a lot on his mind and may forget details like that. Remember equipment rules are all on you. Make sure you know them and can answer any questions. (when you are inspecting a cast, tell the player (with a straight face) that if he doesn't stop this he will go blind. It gets a good laugh and they see you're someone they can relate too.)

b. On the field: Move with a purpose. The observer is watching! As are coaches, players and fans. Jog from area to area performing your routine. Don't walk!

- i. When you come out, do any warm ups/stretching towards the back of the endzone or on the sideline. I got dinged for stretching on the field one time.
- ii. Look for the trainer if you haven't checked with him already.
- iii. Inspect any players on the field already that the trainer has given you.
- iv. Find and talk to the Special Teams coaches. I carry a card with a basic formation of: O O X O O. I then get his numbering exceptions for PAT/FG/Punts. That way, if something crazy happens during one of those plays I can refer back to it. (It may be wrong if a player has been substituted for, but it's better than nothing.) Be ready to explain the numbering exception to them. You will be disappointed to see how many coaches do not really understand that rule.
- v. Typically the snappers will be out with early groups because they handle the ball. After talking with the ST coaches, go introduce yourself and confirm their first names, sometimes you have to ask a coach who they are. (It looks a lot better to have looked the teams up online and have their names before hand, even if that is no longer the case, say he was injured or something, it still looks really good to the coaches when you

already know the kids' names and you ask to confirm if they are still the snapper/long snapper for that day's game.)

1. To each Center: I tell him that I will typically talk to him if his guys are close to fouling and let him handle it.
 2. I review the hurry up routine and substitution issues with him. I will typically be a yard off the ball with my hand out and I tell him this will be my location most instances.. I let him know he can snap it as soon as I drop my arm. I am clear of the DL and can get out of the way better than if I was right up on the snapper.
 3. I tell them they can ask me any questions during the game and I will try and get him and answer.
 4. I remind him that chop blocks are safety issues and when in doubt the flag will be thrown.(that's just me, I don't know what others do. But I'm all for anything I can do to prevent a foul)
 5. Both regular and long snapper. I watch them snap several times to get a feel for their rhythm. Then I discuss with them about how they better not do anything different in short yardage situations, like flinching their hands, knees, etc. If they do anything different and B jumps I tell them I'm putting it on them. (So, 4th and inches just became 4th and 5+.)It has worked well for me, though I've had to flag three guys for it who decided to test it.
- vi. While waiting on all the teams to come out, walk with purpose in and amongst the players who out there to check their uniforms and equipment visually, and write anything down. Then jog over to the next group and do the same. Address issues then and ask them to correct it when they go in. Later, let the others officials know what you addressed and they can help check it when the teams come back on the field.
- vii. As the teams come out during the warm-up period, if possible, be at their entry point. This is the most efficient time look at their equipment and uniforms.
- viii. Go meet the defensive signal callers for each team(usually the middle LB. Again it looks good to have looked it up ahead of time) and go through the same stuff you did with the snappers. When you ask a coach if #55 (first name) is still the guy you need to talk to, it makes a great impression and pays dividends later. Usually they are in their stretching at this time and you can walk the lines looking for uniform/equipment issues.
- ix. Once finished, I assume my guard duty at midfield to stay between the teams. Stand at a kind of ready or parade rest position. Don't have your hands on your hips or in your pockets. It looks bad. It's okay to talk with another official, but three guys together looks like you're grab-assing, unless you are writing something on your card. Don't congregate. Observers

will notice it and write about these things. Subconsciously, coaches, players and fans notice it. Perception is everything. If you look and act the part, you get the benefit of the doubt. If you guys can look calm and smooth to others, you get the benefit of the doubt, even if inside you don't have a clue what's going on. As long as you look in control, you can sell about anything.

- x. Once the teams break up into their position warm-ups, go and watch the O-linemen. You can see who has good technique, bad feet, etc. Try to split time equally between both teams. It's more jogging and movement, but up until last season my crew picked on me for all the movement. This preseason the boss sent an email out saying he wanted all officials to be watching their key groups during warmups as opposed to standing around doing nothing. Like I said, people notice what you do, for good or for bad.
 - xi. Coin toss: go on the field with the R. When the Capts come out, he will let them shake hands. Then he will introduce you to them. Then step in and be facing the R, to hear the call and repeat it if needed. This sounds absurd, but they at times will forget what the Capt called. You have to be able to point to the team, discreetly, that won the toss, so don't go to sleep (It has happened in a game.) Or you have to be able to correct the R if he gets it wrong, before he gets on the microphone (This has happened also)
- c. Game Time: Remember prevention is better than a flag, especially in the SAC. So, use your feet and your voice to stop things from escalating.
- i. Fouls: Know YOUR supervisor's philosophies!! But I suggest you make fouls BIG so that everyone can see them. These will show up on the film and help you if you are questioned. Know where the game cameras are.
 - 1. Administration Fouls: You have to get these every time for yours and the crew's credibility.
 - 2. Deadball Interval: In getting these fouls, you can save the crew and look really good here. Don't go to sleep.
 - 3. Holding: Know what your supervisor wants. (Material Restriction?, Causes a disadvantage?, Impacts the play?)
 - a. Is it a take down? Yes-call it most anywhere. Easy for you and the supervisor to defend if you throw, hard if you don't throw.
 - b. Which Zone did the restriction occur? Zone 1=strict, 2=less strict, 3=mostly just takedowns.
 - 4. You have to call safety fouls, but with those you will usually get the benefit unless the film 100% doesn't support it.
 - a. Chops: If one of the A linemen is obviously trying to get to the next level, then pass on it. But he better be obvious about it. The onus is on them.
 - b. Ineligibles downfield: Make them way down. Don't put yourself in the crosshairs.
 - 5. Get the number, both numbers if it's a chop block, but then keep officiating the rest of the play, including the dead ball interval.

ii. Tips:

1. Hustle, but don't hurry. But some guys don't know the difference. You should have a feel for the situations when trouble may brew. Get in there. Your presence will defuse a lot of issues. Otherwise, try circling around the pile as you go towards them (kind of like a boxing ref) so that you are facing the wing who has the spot. It's efficient movement.
2. You don't need a whistle very often. Let the other officials do that. They have space and distance whereas you are in the mix. Use your voice and your presence to let these guys know you are there. Talk loudly and respectfully, but let them know you are there.
3. Help guys up. Tell a guy a 'nice play' when appropriate, or if they show good sportsmanship.
4. Your presence is the number one way to keep the big guys calm. If they know you are there, they will back down on stuff. They don't want to fight, but they don't want to look weak either. For the most part they are waiting on you to intervene, so don't be goofing off in the dead ball interval.
5. Move outside the hashes to get the ball. At lower levels the ball boys are often suspect, if even present, and it can be quicker to get the ball from the wing. If opposing players are out of bounds in the sidelines, be quick to go help get players out. Nothing says it should just be the wings. Be involved and help out the officials. Your presence helps maintain control.
6. When going outside the hash to get the ball, make your off wing get a soft spot/mirror the wing so you can spot the ball off him as opposed to turning back around once you get to the hash. Review this in pregame.
7. When spotting the ball, put your up-field foot on the wing's spot, then put the tip of the ball at your foot. It shows everyone you are taking the time to be accurate when spotting the ball as opposed to putting it between your spread legs and looking up a couple of times to see the wing. It looks a lot better and is more accurate. It subconsciously builds/reinforces your credibility. It will pay off at sometime.
8. When the spot is close to the LTG/GL, make the wing who has the spot come in and you give him the ball to spot, especially on 4th down plays. It keeps anyone from complaining/accusing you of placing it incorrectly.
9. Always start a series with the tip of the ball on the back of a yard line. That way if the spot is touching the LTG everyone knows it's first down and the crew can keep rolling. Unless it is close to the LTG or inside the 20 I will typically put the ball on a yardline. It makes penalty enforcement simpler, the game flows smoother and it doesn't matter to the game. That is something you need to decide about, but I've never been questioned about it. But my wings know what I'm going to do, and so it really goes unnoticed. It really helps this to go unnoticed if they come into the field off the sidelines away from the tick marks. Again something to cover in pre-game.

iii. Penalty enforcement: (Starts in your pregame, communicate with the crew about what you guys will be doing)-

1. Dead Ball officiate first. Finish the play.
2. Then, make sure there is a ball on the ground at the spot at the end of the play unless it is an incomplete pass.
3. Take a quick peek to make sure the clock is stopped.

4. If possible, let the R know there is a flag on the ground.
5. Hang close to see what the foul is and confirm the enforcement spot and yardage, you really should know this, but confirm with the R.
6. If you are in the side zones, enforce from the spot and then come into the hash and spot the ball. It looks more accurate, and there's less chance you leave from the wrong spot. It's also more time efficient.
 - a. Everyone has their own method, but I signal 1/2/3/half to each wing then go.
 - b. When I get to the spot I confirm with my H and but I do not place the ball.
 - c. I stand there until the L gets there and confirms with a quick thumbs up. It's a final safety check. I've only had to move it once, but it's better to move it than to have marked off the wrong yardage. It also looks better than having to bend back down and move it. Sometimes it happens, but it's better to try and not have it happen.
 - d. Then the L confirms with the R. Bottom line is to get it right.
7. Know the status of the ball-Snap/Ready. (That should be every play, but it always helps. You are the closest to the R. Help him out.

iv. Pat's/FG's:

1. Some of this will be repetitive: In the warm-up period, find the special teams coach. Get the numbering exceptions from him. You must be an expert on this because they will ask you questions.
 - a. Watch the long snapper(s) for several reps. (I do the following with the regular snapper on offense also)
 - b. Introduce yourself to them.
 - c. Let them know you've watched their snap rhythm. Warn them, that if they do anything different, particularly in a short yardage situation, you are going to flag them if someone jumps. Explain that 4th inches just became 4th and 5+. It scares them. It prevents a lot of problems.
2. During the game :Verbally warn them to stay off the snapper (Punts also) that way there is no excuses if they foul the snapper.
3. Look for the pull and shoot. It can catch you by surprise. Be quick to yell the kick is gone and move into the line to keep them calm. Sometimes B will want to take out their frustrations after having given up a score.
4. Make sure you and the side judge are on the same page with leaping and when it is a foul.
5. Don't say #45(snapper) is ineligible. You and he call out numbers to each other, but don't advertise what that means. They may complain that you are helping the defense.

v. Punts:

1. Protect the snapper, then back to the side opposite the R so you and he can help keep them boxed between you.
2. Don't turn to the return until the herd has passed by you so you don't get hit.
3. Look at the area about 5-15 yards in front of where the kick is caught. There are a lot of things missed there, including a gunner getting pulled down. You can make some easy big calls there.

vi. COP's:

1. Look for cheap/UNR type blocks by B. They are looking to get some payback on the A linemen. Know where the ball is when the foul occurred if you have a flag!
2. In 7 man, if it is an interception and there is a return, keep an eye on the quarterback. The R's will have to turn and run for the GL, as will the wings. The QB is usually not being watched in this situation. Protect him. Discuss in the pregame. You can save the crew here. (This is an example why it's important to know the mechanics of the other positions.)
 - a. This is the same on free kicks. One section says to protect the kicker the first 5 yards, but he's also defined as defenseless during the down. Don't let some guy blow him up 20 yards from the play, clean hit or not. If he's moving to participate in the play, that's a different situation.
- vii. Intentional Grounding: You should have the lateral position of the previous snap. Go and stand there so the R can look at you in case he needs help determining if the passer was out of the tackle box (you may be able to help him also). Discuss with your crew that ANYTIME the ball is thrown into an area with no receiver that they should come in and tell the R. That will at least start the process for considering IG. But if no one tells him, he may not start the process.
- viii. End of the game:
 1. Make the fouls murder or mayhem. No one wants the officials impacting the outcome. (However, you have to get the administration fouls everytime, all the time for crew credibility. (false starts, etc.))
 2. When it gets to a hurry up situation, you are going to spot the ball almost every time. Go over this in pregame: when it's under two minutes in the half, other than an incomplete pass, ball OB or TO: you guys should use one ball. Gongetbthe ball. Try an avoid tossing it around. Don't mess around with getting a ball from a ball boy. Tell the R to stay back and you run and spot the ball. Conditioning becomes paramount here.
 3. If A is going to take a knee, step in and start talking. Be around the LOS and keep everyone calm. Prevent the dumb stuff. (How you worked the rest of the ball game will go a long way with the players in this situation.)
- ix. Post Game:
 1. Be quiet and answer the questions asked directly to you by the observer/grader. Wait to discuss the game until the observer finishes and leaves. The shorter the answer the better. You haven't seen the film. That always impacts everything.
 2. When the observer asks questions, Don't throw your crew mate under the bus, but don't lie either. The film will confirm what happened. Only answer if it involved you as well and you have to explain what you did/didn't do. But do it in the best way possible.
 3. Put you Big Boy underwear on and admit if you messed up. The truth is everyone knows if you messed up already. How you handle it is what your reputation will be and is how you will be known. You won't be able to make excuses, put it on someone else, etc. The question is a test is to see how you handle it.
 4. When the boss calls, admit your mistake and move on. You only make it worse by arguing, explaining.

3. Closing: Enjoy the friends you make and the experiences you have. That's what you remember and take from this. Have fun.