

**Pre-Season, Pre-Game, Pre-Snap
Preparing to Work the Referee Position
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SCCFOA Referee Symposium
July 21st, 2007**

Preseason Preparation:

1. PREPARATION – JANUARY TO JUNE

- Work on aerobic and strength conditioning to be in the best possible shape
- As the season approaches, work in some sprint and back pedaling workouts
- Study the NCAA Football Rule Book. Make notes on rules/interpretations that you don't know cold. These written reminders are good study materials as you prepare for the Clinic test in August and good for review during the season.
- Set 3 or 4 realistic goals for yourself for the upcoming season. Stress areas that are new to you or those that you have had difficulties with in the past.
- Set up some crew goals that you can give the crew over the summer or before the first game

2. WHEN YOU ARE ASSIGNED YOUR CREW

- Call and welcome the guys on your crew as soon as you can when crews are announced. Make the guys feel that being on your crew will be a positive experience. Make sure they understand they can talk with you anytime. Make sure they have proper phone numbers and email address to be able to reach you.
- Set up an "SCCFOA Crew" group email address so that you can quickly get information to your crew throughout the year
- Decide on who should be the fill in Referee if you go down in a game.
- In case you have to work a game with 6 officials, decide who will work where depending on which official goes down.
- Who are you going to rely on for help during the game when there is a question on a rule, enforcement, or replay situation? When you know who the best person will be, have him always pay attention to what you are doing. He should not hesitate to question you if he has doubts about what you are doing.
- Begin to evaluate your crew and how you are going to bring them together to work effectively during the season.
- If you have a new official on your crew, spend some time on the phone, or in person, with him and let him know your expectations and find out the type of person he is.

3. PRESEASON TESTS (CCA and SCCFOA Exams)

- Set the standard for your crew by getting started early and encourage them to do the same.
- Put your answers on a Word or Excel document so that they can easily be emailed to others on your crew.
- Encourage your crew members to share their answers with you so that you can judge their rules knowledge. This will enable you to see areas where the guys need help and also let you know who you can count on for help during the season on the field
- Help out any crew member that is having some difficulty with the tests. Spend some time with him on the phone or in person, if possible, to clarify answers.
- Attend, at a minimum, the SCCFOA Summer Study meetings in your area to go over questions and answers. Schedule additional meetings if possible with your crew. Group discussions are a great way of learning and understanding the rules. As a Referee you will be expected to take a lead role in the discussion of the rules during the season.

- Be sure that your crew is made aware of any answer changes/clarifications that come out of the NCAA and SCCFOA.
- Make sure you are “test ready” for the clinic. Knowing the rules for a game and being able to take a test can be two entirely different things.

4. UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

- Assure that your uniform and equipment is in top shape.
- Replace any equipment that looks old or worn and can detract from a professional appearance.
- Tailor your shirt for the best possible fit
- Make sure that the crew brings both long and short sleeve shirts if there is ANY possibility of wearing either one. Crew must also know whether to bring mesh or solid short sleeve shirt to every game.

5. POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR A PRESEASON CREW MEETING

- Prior to the August clinic schedule a time to meet with your crew. You need to cover what you feel is important in those meetings. Below you will find some suggestions as to potential topics to discuss.
 - ◆ Have each man introduce himself, talk about his family, job, officiating history
 - ◆ Stress the fact that a lot of support is needed from each official. Also that everyone needs to help each other during the season
 - ◆ Ask each official to have 3 goals for themselves/crew for the coming season that you will discuss before your first preseason game
 - ◆ Identify the referee and umpire replacements. Discuss 6 man mechanics
 - ◆ Spend some time on any rules questions in preparation for the SCCFOA Clinic test
 - ◆ Talk about uniforms. Short sleeve / Long sleeve shirts, etc.
 - ◆ Go over how a general Saturday pre game will go (Generally when you want to start, topics to be covered, your pre game meeting outline)
 - ◆ How you want fouls reported to you and the crew mechanics for marking off enforcement’s
 - ◆ Discuss hurry up offense, measurements, game and play clock problems, onside kicks and goal line mechanics.

Pregame Preparation:

1. CORRESPONDENCE WITH CREW DURING THE WEEK

- Talk or email everyone on the crew with how you saw things by Tuesday, and get their feedback on how they thought the game went. Discuss what went well, what did not; and, what are changes / goals for the next game. Perhaps assign a special topic for the upcoming week's pregame.
- Make sure everyone on the crew for the up-coming week is aware of when and where you plan to meet and conduct your Pre-Game Conference.
- Email the crew w/ a brief letter covering the when and where you plan to meet and conduct your Pre-Game Conference. Attached your Pre-Game Outline if necessary. Here is a sample:

From: Jack Wood
Sent: Monday, September 04, 2006 12:22 PM
To: 'mikeumpire3@yahoo.com'; 'kelvinbudd@yahoo.com'; 'danny.short@ge.com'; 'theappraisalfirm@yahoo.com'; 'acastagnola@mesadistributing.com'; 'sd_ref_clay@yahoo.com'
Cc: 'sciacfootball@earthlink.net'
Subject: September 9th, 2006 - 6:00pm - Dixie State College @ University of San Diego
Importance: High

Gentlemen:

I am looking forward to seeing and working with all you in San Diego, CA on Saturday September 9th.

I will be driving to San Diego Saturday afternoon arriving at 3:30pm.

Kickoff is scheduled for 6:00pm.

Let's plan on meeting at the stadium by at 3:30pm to begin our Pre-Game Conference.

I have attached a brief Pre-game Conference Outline.

Please feel free to call me at either home (949) 470-0170 or work (949) 389-6153.
While on the road I can be reached on my cell phone at (949) 291-4222.

Sincerely,

Jack

Jack

<< File: 2006 SCCFOA Pregame Conf. Outline.doc >>

2. 'BRIEFCASE' CONTENTS FOR EVERY GAME

Obviously, what you carry is a personal choice. Some of the following are necessary and some are suggestions that may assist you in your duties. Once you establish what you need, do not try to lighten up the briefcase by eliminating a folder or two, for as soon as you do, you will find you need that information.

- Create a folder for every game. Include a game card, NCAA Game Report form, and an Officials Game Report and your Pre-Game Conference Outline.
- Have an additional folder with extra forms for you and your crew.
- Rule book, SCCFOA Seven-Man Mechanics Book.
- Any personal referee study guides you use prior to games

3. DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CONDUCTING A SATURDAY PREGAME

You are the leader and it is your choice on how you conduct your pre games. You may do a pre game differently if you have a veteran crew or one with a new or relatively inexperienced crew. Remember to be flexible. Lead the discussion do not dominate it. Get everyone to participate. Have the guys arrive early enough (at least two hours before scheduled kick-off) so that you can conduct a complete pre game. Following is a suggested Pregame Conference Outline.

SCCFOA Pregame Conference Outline

- 1) Discuss free kicks reviewing positions and responsibilities.
- 2) Review coverage during scrimmage plays:
 - a) Running plays, position and coverage.
 - b) Forward passes, eligibility of receivers and interference.
 - c) Illegal forward passes.
- 3) Review positions and coverage during scrimmage kicks:
 - a) First touching by K.
 - b) Fair catch situations.
 - c) Kicks out-of-bounds.
 - d) Kick catching interference.
 - e) Numbering requirements.
- 4) Discuss goal line play and try coverage.
- 5) Review the following:
 - a) Substitution rule.
 - b) Starting and stopping clock.
 - c) Procedures during measurement.
 - d) Duties during time-outs and intermission between periods.
 - e) Penalizing personal and unsportsmanlike fouls.
 - f) Penalty administration.
 - g) Overtime procedure.
- 6) Crew Coordination topics
 - a) Referee-Umpire.
 - i) Counting the offense and communicating the count.
 - ii) Spotting the ball
 - (1) When can the Umpire release?
 - (2) How will release be communicated when the offense is on the ball, ready to snap?
 - (3) Procedures after an incomplete pass different than after a running play?
 - (4) What if anything, will be done differently in the hurry-up offense?
 - iii) Penalty administration
 - (1) How will the referee explain how the umpire should enforce the penalty?
 - iv) How will the numbering exception in a scrimmage-kick formation be handled?
 - v) Who is responsible for checking the numbering of the interior linemen?
 - b) Referee-Linesman/Line Judge.
 - i) How a short count (10 or less) of the offense will be communicated.
 - ii) Communicating whether the ball became dead in or out of bounds is also important.
 - iii) How will the linesman let the referee know when a five-yard penalty on the defense will result in a first down? (The chain should be taped at the mid-point to assist with that determination.)
 - iv) What cues the flip of the down marker and the release of the chain crew after punts and long plays?
 - v) Procedure at the end of the first and third quarters?
 - c) Umpire-Linesman/Line Judge.
 - i) Forward progress spot.
 - (1) Will the umpire ever take it on his own?
 - (2) When can wing who has the spot release.
 - (3) Communication of progress at the goal line.

- d) Linesman-Line Judge.
 - i) Signaling widest player(s) on or off the line of scrimmage.
 - ii) Signal(s) to be used for off-the-line?
 - iii) On quick passes to the flank, who will determine forward or backward?
 - iv) Will a signal be used?
- e) Linesman/Line Judge – Field Judge/Side Judge.
 - i) What's the goal post/goal line procedure on kick tries and field goals?
 - ii) Communication on double flags.
 - iii) Complete/incomplete on sideline passes.
 - iv) Affirmation that pass was catchable.
- f) Field Judge/Side Judge/Back Judge
 - i) Communication on whether a pass was catchable.
 - ii) Counting the defense and signaling the count.
 - iii) Which official is responsible for the play clock and which has the game clock.

4. PREGAME DUTIES AT THE STADIUM (REFEREE/CREW MEMBERS)

There are many duties that you and the crew need to do consistently at the stadium prior to the game. Every crew will do things a little differently. The following are some of what should be done before each game.

- Plan to arrive at the stadium two hours prior to game time.
- At one hour and 15 minutes prior to KO; you and the U will leave to meet w/ coaches, HL, LJ, FJ, SJ, and BJ will be on the field to observe teams as they warm up.
- Game balls should be there or delivered at 1 hour prior to KO. The BJ will check for the proper inflation and marking of the balls.
- Observe Quarterbacks and Kickers during their warm-ups and note hand/foot used to throw/kick ball.
- Spot check equipment and report any irregularities to Umpire who will work with trainer(s) to correct.

5. PREGAME MEETING WITH COACHES

- You and the Umpire meet w/ the coaches 1 hour and 15 minutes before the scheduled kickoff.
- Go to the home coach first (he may have some late information on game start time or other change that you would then share with visiting coach).
- Generally best to greet him: “Hello **Coach _____**, Bob Smith, good to see you. Or some other greeting you are comfortable with. Then introduce the Umpire.
- Give him a card w/ the names (and positions) of the other officials on your crew. **Highlight** the official who will be the ‘primary communicator’ on his sideline. There is an on-line version of an SCCFOA Game Card available at: <http://www.sccfoa.org/docs/sccfoagamecard.xls>
- Get the numbers and names of his Captains.
- Ask him if he has any special plays or formations planned for the game.
- Review (for Community College games) the California Community College Decorum Policy with him and be sure he understands the policy and our responsibility to see that it is enforced.
- Solicit his assistance in assuring the policy will be adhered to. Also, get the name of the ‘Get-Back Coach’ who will assist in keeping the sideline clear.
- Confirm current time of day, the scheduled KO time, and when we will be coming for his Captains and Team.

Presnap Preparation:

1. POSITIONING FOR VARIOUS PLAYS

There are accepted normal starting positions that you should attempt to follow realizing that they may need to be modified depending on the formation.

- **Kickoffs** – Start on the goal line when you blow the whistle and signal the ready for play. (*Note: This will be done when Umpire gives ball to kicker beginning this year.*) If there are two receivers near the goal line get in between them. If there is only one returner, then start as much in the middle of the field as you can but never directly behind him. When kicked, remain on the goal line until *kick is legally touched or leaves the end zone after being touched in the end zone and then wind* and move up field. If the kick goes deep in the end zone, then you must retreat with the return man and either protect him if he downs the ball, or move with him and wind when he crosses the goal line into the field of play.
- **Regular Scrimmage Down** – As quickly as possible after giving the ready for play get into position to be able to see the offensive team while they are in the huddle. Turn toward the huddle and count the players. Be alert to the substitution process and signal with your arm straight out as they break the huddle. Don't hold your arm up too long, however make sure your wings and umpire are seeing your signal. Start 10-12 yards deep and wider than the TE on the throwing arm side of the QB. You can start with your hands on your knees or stand straight up. If it is a running play stay still and watch the POA if the QB back pedals to pass then you should retreat at a 45 degree angle and keep your cushion. Stay deep and wide. If the QB starts running then you must go with him immediately
- **Punt Play** – Start on kicking leg side of punter. Generally 2 to 3 yards deeper than the punter and at least 6-8 yards wide. Watch the players behind the line of scrimmage for potential fouls and when the ball is punted move to the spot of the punter in case the punt goes OB. Don't move down field too quickly as you should be able to be on the goal line if the punt is returned for a touchdown. Don't lose track of punter.
- **Field Goals and Trys** – Start at least 10 yards wide and in-between the kicker and holder. If you happen to line up on the wrong side of the kicker DO NOT try to run to the correct side as you might distract the kicker. Observer snap back to holder. Stay still when ball is kicked, and after cleaning up around the kicker, look to the BJ/FJ and give the signal to the press box.

2. CONCENTRATION ROUTINES FOR ALL TYPES OF PLAYS

Having a set concentration routine that you go over in your mind prior to, during, and after every play in the game is very important. These routines will prepare you for whatever play is about to take place and help cut down on surprises and errors. An added benefit is that if something goes wrong, refocusing even more on your concentration routine will help prevent you from making another mistake. Each referee will be different in what things they feel they need to go over on every down, but the more consistent you can be the better you will do on the field. The following routines should be modified any way that works for you.

FREE KICKS / KICKOFFS

- Stand at the goal line, count receiving team and signal HL/LJ.
- Give Ready for Play when Umpire raises his hand indicating he and the other officials in his area are ready to go *and he has given the ball to the kicker. (New for 2007)*

- Be on the goal line when the ball is kicked.
- Stay 3-5 yards behind deepest receiver and adjust where kick takes you.
- Get in front of returner if he opts for a touchback and then signal touchback
- Be prepared to drop bean bag if there is a momentum situation
- Look at POA during return – Don't rush to follow the runner but move at a trot
- Be a good dead ball official

NORMAL SCRIMMAGE DOWN

- Glance at both game and play clocks. Know their status
- Know down and distance
- Change indicator to reflect proper ball position on field
- Count offense in huddle & again when breaking huddle. Count "3-6-9-11". Signal early with arm straight. Be alert to possible substitution infractions.
- Establish the pocket outside tackles. (Applies to Intentional Grounding)
- Recognize on 2nd and 3rd down and more/less than 5 yards to go. Have HL signal whether or not it will be a 1st down if there is a 5 yard penalty on the defense
- Pick up your tackle.
- QB under center or Shotgun?
- If pass play look at tackle until QB is under pressure. Look for immediate hands to the face by/on tackle.
- RUN - Stay still until runner crosses NZ. – If runner is moving parallel away from you and then you can start in his direction - Focus on POA
- PASS – Retreat at 45 degree angle STAY WITH QB. Rule on intentional grounding; may consult with other officials regards positions of eligible receivers with an opportunity to catch the pass or pass beyond the neutral zone.
- Don't leave QB too early. Move into position while being a good dead ball official
- Get eye contact with your HL and signal next down

PUNT PLAYS

- Count players in huddle if possible – Signal wings you have 11
- Kicking leg side - deeper than punter and about 6-8 yards wide
- Know how ball gets into hands of punter
- Focus on tackle and back on your side. You should know if player is blocked into the kicker by a player on your side of the field. The HL or LJ should help you with a player being blocked into the kicker from his side of the formation
- Look at action around punter.
- After the punt move to spot of punter.
- Don't follow the ball too early but know if there is a shank. Know if kick goes on the fly and raise arm to signal SJ/FJ that you have a spot. Point to SJ/FJ if you don't have the spot
- Normal punt - take the half of the field on the HL side and progress down field slowly
- Be ready to lead the return man and be on the goal line if there is a score
- Observer dead ball action.
- Always communicate with your BJ after the punt. Be sure you understand what happened during the entire down, in case there is a penalty, fair catch, illegal touch etc.

FIELD GOALS AND TRYS

- On a Try wait for everyone to be ready before chop. No need to rush, game clock is not running.
- Count players in huddle and in formation. Signal wings as early as possible
- Line up as wide as you need to be to be able to see the ball through the lineman's feet and in the hand of the center
- If line up for kick and then shift –stay where you are, don't go to QB's arm
- Right-footed kicker be on his left side. Left-footed kicker be on his right side
- Don't move if you lined up on the wrong side of the kicker
- Focus on legality of snap
- Watch snap back to the holder
- Check BOTH wing backs for holding and for a defender being blocked into the kicker/holder
- Focus on area around kicker/holder - Don't follow kick
- Stay still and look for dead ball action - then the signal from BJ/FJ – Don't be in a rush!
- Turn and give signal indicating either field goal/try good or no good. Remember to drop whistle from your mouth.

Postgame 'Preparation':

1. AFTER GAME DUTIES

Since time is usually a factor, you and the rest of the crew need to be very organized in getting all of the proper reports finished.

- If possible, you and the other members of the crew can use half-time to start filling out your individual game reports for 1st half fouls
- Briefly review the game reports being submitted by the rest of the crew, to be sure they are complete and that major fouls have been properly explained.
- Collect all 7 of the Game Cards from the crew and take them with you when you leave the dressing room. Be sure the BJ has recorded the start time, finish time and length of the game.
- The SCCFOA Official's Post Game Report does not have to be completed immediately after the game. With the Game Cards from the rest of the crew you can finish your report Sunday morning at home. There is an on-line version of this form available at: <http://www.sccfoa.org/postgamereport.asp>
- Once the SCCFOA Official's Post Game Report finished, it should be sent to the Conference Supervisor (Jack / Rich / Dean / Bill) **by 6:00pm Sunday after the game.**
- If you have an unusual incident and/or have to eject a player, etc. you should phone the appropriate Supervisor Sunday morning.

2. GAME REVIEW DIARY

As you probably have done since you first began officiating, keeping a diary after every game will prove very helpful. There are so many things to think about as a referee, that recording the good and not so good things you do during each game can really help you when you use this form to review every week. There is no special form you need to use for a diary, but you should keep weekly track of all the fouls you called, the close ones you passed on and why, the no-calls, and the grades you got. It is particularly important to note how you can handle things better the next time. Note should also be made of special circumstances and announcements you made or believe you should have made; or could have made better.