

2016 NCAA Rules Clarification Memo from Tom Abbott

This applies to games played under NCAA rules, but the procedure is the same for NFHS

Welcome to the 2016 season:

As usual, the majority of emails and calls I've received thus far have been about the face-off.

This Memo has been sent to all coaches & officials and is intended to be a refresher course in clearing up a couple of issues regarding the face-off.

- 1.) The length of time it takes to conduct the face-off, and
- 2.) What constitutes 1 step.

To start with, I think we would all agree, last year's changes in the rules regarding face-offs has made a dramatic improvement in the way the ball has come out of the face-off area. Generally speaking, once the whistle blows to start play, the ball is out and away much quicker than in previous seasons.

The officiating mechanics implemented in 2015, especially having 2 officials conducting the face off, has greatly improved the quality and fairness of the face off.

While the ball has come out of the area quicker, after the sounding of the whistle, the competing players are in the "down" position for a considerable length of time before the "set" command.

It is always important to get the players into a proper and legal position, but it is just as important to not have them be in the "down" position for an inordinate amount of time. Officials have also been instructed to "vary" the whistle after the "set" command and are doing so with more regularity.

The end result is the overall process has often taken longer than necessary.

The purpose of this portion of the Memo is to inform officials to conduct this process in a more timely fashion and to ask coaches to instruct their players to be in a legal position as quickly as possible.

As the season moves along, I expect this whole process to become easier for everyone.

Secondly, there have been a few questions regarding "when" does the one step rule start. To be very clear, Rule 4-3b #10, on Page 28 in the NCAA Rulebook, states "It is still legal to clamp the ball with the back of the stick, but it must be moved, raked, or directed immediately. Immediately is defined as within one step."

#11 further states "A player may not lie on the ball or trap it with his crosse longer than is necessary for him to control the ball and pick it up with one continuous motion, or withhold the ball from play in any other manner."

If a player gains control and does not move the ball immediately, a violation will be called. Dragging it on the ground and shuffling of the feet, after gaining control, is considered to be a violation.

The 2016 NCAA Rules Video covered this exact play.

Officials are instructed to call this as a violation and coaches are reminded to instruct their players to move the ball immediately upon gaining control.

Thank you for your attention to these 2 important aspects of the face-off.
Good luck to all during the 2016 season.

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