



## Guide to self officiating

### 1 Actions for clubs

1. As soon as it is known that BAFRA are unable to cover a game, the home team should make every effort to secure neutral officials from a neighbouring team. The minimum crew is 3 level 1 (or above) licensed (i.e. qualified and registered) coaches, but at least 4 would be normal.
2. If no neutral stand-in officials can be found, then the home team must supply a minimum of 2 licensed coaches (one to be Referee, the other to act as Line Judge on the home sideline) and the away team must supply a minimum of 1 licensed coach (to act as Head Linesman on the away sideline). If a fourth licensed coach is available (from either team), they will act as Umpire.
3. No game may ever take place with fewer than 3 officials.
4. The Head Coaches from both teams should brief their players that the stand-in officials are to be treated with respect and that their decisions must be accepted as final.
5. Determine who on the crew is going to run the game clock (usually the Line Judge) and who is going to run the play clock (usually the Referee).
6. Normal minimum game standards regarding the field and medical cover must be met, a crew of 5 people (3 for chains and 2 ball persons) must be provided - **unless all of these conditions are met the game must not proceed.**

### 2 Responsibilities of the stand-in officials

1. The primary responsibility for the stand in officials must at all times be the safety of the players. As qualified coaches, they will have been trained in proper tackling techniques and the need to avoid contact with the neck and head area. This should be the primary focus during play and any breaches must be penalised.
2. Flagrant personal fouls are to be punished with the disqualification of the player concerned - there are no second chances.
3. The Referee will focus on the offensive backfield and is responsible for protecting the QB from late, low or high hits. He and the Umpire should also penalise any clear holding offences, false starts or personal fouls.
4. The Head Linesman and Line Judge will focus on the line of scrimmage before the snap looking for false starts or offside. At the snap they should follow the play downfield making judgements on foul play and ensuring that the spot gained is marked correctly. The Linesman on the away sideline will manage the Chain Crew. Instruct them before the game only to move on your instructions.
5. Prior to the snap, the Referee and Umpire must check that the offense has 11 players on the field. The Head Linesman and Line Judge must similarly check the defense.
6. Inexperienced officials will not spot every infraction - the important thing is that they consistently spot and act upon any action that illegally endangers player safety.
7. The Referee will be responsible for starting the play by whistling the ball ready. Any official can whistle the play dead when a tackle is made or progress is stopped.
8. All officials are responsible for keeping the score - the officials as a team should ensure the players are aware of the down.

9. If any official considers that a player may have suffered a concussion, the player must be removed from the field and must not return without clearance from the medical staff present.
10. The crew collectively are responsible for correct penalty enforcement.

### **3 Common fouls to look out for**

1. False starts (always blow your whistle because play cannot continue)
2. Offside and illegal motion; delay of game, illegal substitutions
3. Holding and blocks in the back (but remember that blocks in the side are legal)
4. Illegal blocks below the waist, clipping, chop blocks, targeting, face masking and other personal fouls; offensive and defensive pass interference
5. Roughing the passer, roughing the kicker (or holder) or roughing the snapper
6. Intentional grounding, ineligible players downfield, illegal forward passes
7. Kick catch interference, advancing the ball after making a fair catch

### **4 Commonly misunderstood rules**

1. There is no 5-yard bump and run zone on receivers like the NFL has.
2. There are no restrictions on players being downfield on a punt.
3. A completed catch requires only one foot inbounds, but the receiver must keep control of the ball if he goes to the ground.
4. No player numbered 50-79 can ever report "eligible".
5. If a kick goes into the opposition's end zone, the result of the play is almost certainly a touchback, not a safety.

### **5 Head Referee responsibility before, during and after the game**

1. Conduct a safety check to ensure that the field surface is fit (no holes, obstructions, etc.).
2. Ensure the BAFA minimum field markings are in place (including all 5-yard lines).
3. Ensure goal posts are padded and not within the playing area.
4. Ensure supporters are kept a safe distance from the field (by barriers if necessary).
5. Ensure both teams have completed the mandatory registration check.
6. Ensure 3 balls fit for play are provided.
7. Ensure the required medical cover is present and remains present during play.
8. Be in possession of roster forms from both teams, so that disqualified players can be identified.
9. Brief the other officials and both Head Coaches on the requirements of this guide.

**The game can't start until all these are done.** Suspend the game if anything becomes unsafe and abandon the game if it can't be fixed.

Any incidents before, during or after the game, including all disqualifications, must be reported to BAFA Operations (email [steve.rains@britishamericanfootball.org](mailto:steve.rains@britishamericanfootball.org)) and the BAFA Disciplinary Officer (email [discipline@britishamericanfootball.org](mailto:discipline@britishamericanfootball.org)). Provide details of who (team, player name and number), what (what they did), when (which quarter of the game) and why (who made the decision to disqualify them).

### **6 Keep everyone safe**

While everyone appreciates that stand-in officials do not know the rules as well as qualified officials, there are no excuses for negligent conduct or favouritism. Disciplinary action (which may involve suspensions or loss of coaching qualifications) may be taken where necessary to maintain standards.

If you don't know the rule, look it up!