Expectations for Football Officials – Key Points for Observers

Movement of officials: as a play ends the officials should be moving -- "pinch" in on the play, being careful not to be guarding "air," but moving in under control, while observing all action. "Guard pressure."

Only **BLOW THE WHISTLE ONCE.** Do not be a in a hurry to whistle. Once the play starts the whistle can come out of the mouth – there is time to put the whistle in and then blow it. Better off being slow on the whistle rather than too fast.

Rarely should there be more than two flags on any play. Officiate your own area -- work as a team of 5. If there are too many flags on the same play, too many eyes are watching the same action.

Only carry one flag, either in the belt or in the back pocket. In either case little of the flag should be exposed – only enough to grab. Use a cap for second flag on the same play.

Strive for perfection on every play for every game.   No one is perfect, but that goal will lead to improvement and will make the game better. Play-off game assignments will take care of themselves.

Appearance is important. General athletic and professional appearance is important. Specifically stripes must not show through the knickers (wear compression shorts). All caps should be fitted. No Jackets – even when very cold (use quality under garments and you will stay even warmer than with jackets). Gloves are OK.

Signal professionally – incomplete or "no good" sign should be given at chest level, while standing erect.

When pointing in a direction, only point with one hand; the umpire never signals touchdown; keep head up when coming in to mark forward progress and only use one foot (downfield foot) to mark the spot; use extended arm with fist to indicate that a wide out is off of the line of scrimmage. No signal if on or ahead of the LOS.

New in '04: On Free Kicks: the BJ handles the ball, gives it to the kicker and stands just outside the sideline on K's free kick line, on the same side as the chain gang. The Linesman is on the same sideline at R's 30. LJ is on the 50 opposite of theBJ; Umpire on R's 20 opposite side as the BJ; Referee on the goal line 5 yards inside of the hash on same side as BJ.

On FG/Try – the BJ and Umpire should be on the goal posts, unless the kick is from outside of the 15 yd line – then it's the BJ only.

On scrimmage play: Referee 12 yards back behind the tight end, or where a tight end would line up, on the throwing arm side of the QB. Umpire 5 yards back and Back Judge 17-18 yards deep. Both Wings on the sideline.

On punts the Umpire lines up in the offensive backfield.

Referee should "freeze their feet" (especially on running plays) and watch. Referee is " married to the Quarterback" and needs to move and stay close to the QB on any broken plays.

General rule for officials is to stay back and slow down. You can usually see more from a distance.

Wings should spot the ball 90% of the time. Wing should run in to sell the spot when necessary – always use the "forward foot" (towards the goal line) to mark the spot.

On an inside dive, with definite knowledge of where the ball was when the knee went down the umpire can mark, but needs to sell the call. The Umpire NEVER signals TD. Umpire stand over the ball – "ready for play."

Referee should be 10 yards back before giving the ready for play signal, and then takes 2 more steps back, which will put him at his 12 yard depth when the play begins.

Stop the clock first on out of bounds, then get to the spot and turn & officiate out of bounds as necessary.

Throw the ball in as opposed to running it in – use a short triangle to bring in the ball from the sidelines.

The official who makes the call reports to the Referee, and one of the other officials needs to "cover" the flag, making sure that no one moves it or picks it up.

Bean bag: always throw bean bag on a fumble or change of possession to mark the spot. Back Judge should have bean bag in hand on all scrimmage kicks and needs to always mark the "end of the kick." Never bean bag forward progress.