

Football Officials' Pregame Conference Guide

This Guide is based upon the **WOA Mechanics Illustrated (MI)**, Chapter 27, "Pregame Conference," as found on pages 209 – 212 of the manual, as well as other related chapters. This Guide deals primarily with a Crew of 5; adjustments may be needed for Crews of other sizes.

The **Pregame Conference** is mandatory for all Varsity games and should begin at least 90 minutes before scheduled kickoff. Officials should not be dressing or otherwise engaged in other activities; all officials should give full attention to the Pregame Conference.

Section 1 | Administrative

Crew Health & Readiness

- Ensure that all Crew members are healthy and ready to work
 - ✓ Discussed adjustments should a Crew member have an acceptable limitation
 - ✓ Review how Crew will adjust to illness / injury during the game
- Uniform; (**MI: pp. 20-21**)

Timing

- Synchronize watches to correct time; verify kickoff time and length of half-time
 - ✓ Half-time; Crew to meet at a designated place on the field
 - ✓ Wait for teams to leave the field; **R** starts the halftime clock
- Review procedures for loss of scoreboard clock and/or game score
- Starting/stopping clock; any official may stop the clock; only **R** can start the clock
- 25 second count; **BJ** in five-man; **R** otherwise

Timeouts (**MI; Chapter 5; pp. 74-76**)

- Team Timeout (**TO**); regulation and overtime
- Injury / Heat / Weather
- Officials' **TO**
- Coach / Referee Conference procedures; Wing Official to monitor
 - ✓ Coach / Referee Conference will cost a Team timeout
- Who times **TO**? **BJ** in five-man; **R** otherwise
- All officials maintain a record of timeouts; verify **TO** remaining after each time out; Wing Officials advise Coaches of **TO** remaining

Changes/Bulletins

- Review Rules and/or Mechanics changes for the current season
 - ✓ Review WOA RTO Bulletins (*obtained at WOA website*)
- Review weather bulletins as appropriate

Bench Management

- Review expectations and bench management process
 - ✓ Consistent on both sidelines; Coaches on / off the field
 - ✓ Review differences between “Sideline Interference” and “Unsportsmanlike Conduct”
 - ✓ Wing Official to identify and use a “Get-Back Coach”
- Potential penalty enforcements
- Game expectations
 - ✓ Review any pertinent history relevant to players’ and/or coaches’ attitudes and behaviors

Special Coverage

- “Hurry-up Offense” / “No Huddle Offense”
- On-Side Kicks
- “Use of the Bean Bag;” (*MI; pp. 22-23*)
- Mercy Rule (*MI; p. 8*)
- Skirmishes, fights, etc.
- Weather threats or interruptions; e.g., lightning

Making the Call

- *The Halo Principle; (MI; pp. 44-45)*
- Review “dead-ball officiating” practices; (*MI; p. 14-15*)
- Review pre-snap signals; e.g., on/off the line, double stakes, etc.
- Counting players; Offense? Defense? Signals?
- Remember good eye-contact

Calling / Reporting / Recording Fouls (*MI; pp. 24-37*)

- See *Philosophies & Guidelines; (MI; pp. 10-14)*
- Player safety is primary
- Fair play; did the player’s action(s) impact the play?
- If you have cautioned a player, let his Coach know
- Proper penalty report:
 - ✓ Status of the ball; e.g., live/dead, loose/during the run, etc.
 - ✓ Offending player; e.g., “Number 67”
 - ✓ Offending team; e.g., offense/defense or color?
 - ✓ Foul & result of the play
- Wing Officials reminded to notify their Coach regarding nature of the infraction, number of the penalized player, and any special enforcement; e.g., loss of down, untimed down, etc.
- Calling Official records all major fouls (*10+ yards*) he/she calls

Section 2 | Pregame Duties

☐ Coaches' Meeting

- Crew takes the field together 20 – 30 minutes prior to kickoff
- Meet with Home Team Coach first
- Crew Introductions
 - ✓ Provide Coaches with a printed list of Officials
- Questions for the Coaches
 1. “Do you have any questions regarding the Rules changes for this season?”
 2. “Do you have a Healthcare Professional on site?”
 3. “Are all your players properly equipped?”
 4. “Do any of your players have a cast or splint?” (*For inspection by U*)
 5. “Do you have any planned trick plays or unusual formations?”
 6. “Do you understand the restrictions we will enforce on bench/sideline behavior?”
 7. “Do you have any special concerns about this game?”
 8. “What are the numbers/names of your Captains?”
 9. “Are your QB’s and/or Kickers right/left handed/ footed?”
 10. “Who will call timeouts from your sideline?”
 11. “Who are your ball persons?”
- Review the timing and process for the coin toss and kickoff
- Confirm the length of half-time
- Review requirements for having the Team on the field
 - ✓ At least 3 minutes prior to kickoff
 - ✓ For the full 3-minute warm-up period following half-time

☐ Crew Duties

- **R:** Inspect the field (*inside the sidelines*), pylons, goalposts and goalpost padding; approve the game balls
- **U:** Spot-check players for uniform violations and proper equipment
- **HL:** Inspect the down box and chains; ensure proper length and tape at midway point; meet with and instruct the Chain Crew
- **LJ:** Inspect the field (*outside the sidelines*), pylons, goalposts and goalpost padding; meet with the ball persons (*Crew of 4*)
- **BJ:** Meet with the ball persons (*Crew of 5*); ensure coverage behind the goalposts following a field goal attempt or an extra point try
- After completion of these inspections and meetings, Crew should casually observe both teams, note wind and weather conditions, kickers’ abilities, etc.; then exchange any pertinent information with other members of the crew.

Session 3 | Coin Toss (*MI; Chapter 4; pp. 71-73*)

Logistics

- Occurs 3 minutes prior to kickoff; (**Note: MI; p.9**) | (*Start process at 5 minutes prior*)
- **U & BJ** (*with Visitors' game ball, if used*) go to sideline with line-to-gain equipment; and
- **R & LJ** (*with Home game ball, if used*) go to other sideline; meet Captains and escort to center of the field; speaking Captains positioned closest to **R**
- **R & U** face each other; **LJ & BJ** stop and remain at the hash marks; **HL** remains on sideline
- All other players and coaches remain off the field of play

Coin Toss Mechanics

- **R** displays both sides of the coin to all Captains
- Visitors' spokesman chooses "Heads" or "Tails" before coin is flipped; **U** repeats the Captain's choice for all to hear
- **R** explains whether coin will be caught or allowed to hit the ground; coin is then flipped
- **R** declares the winner and offers that team the choice of:
 - ✓ Defer
 - ✓ Receive
 - ✓ Defend a goal
 - ✓ Kick
- Loser of the coin toss is offered their choice of the remaining options
- Position Captains with their backs to the goal they will defend; give appropriate signals
- Kicking ball given to **BJ**; other ball returned to its sideline
- As Captains leave the field, all Officials gather to record the results of coin toss; and then moved to their respective kickoff positions

Second Half Kickoff Options

- It is no longer necessary to meet with the Captains at midfield to determine second-half options; choices may be determined with a sideline conversation with the coaches
- A midfield meeting with the Captains may be held, if needed

Overtime

- The same logistics and mechanics are used for the Overtime Coin Toss except, the options are limited to:
 - ✓ Offense
 - ✓ Defense
 - ✓ Defend a goal
- Follow WOA procedures; (**MI; p.8**)

Section 4 | Kick Off / Free Kicks

Logistics

- All officials assume designated positions for a Free-Kick and count players
 - ✓ **BJ** hands ball to the Kicker; instructs Kicker to signal when ready and wait for R's whistle
- Positions adjusted if an "on-side kick" is expected
- Officials raise hand in the air to signal "ready"
- When Kicker is ready, **R** sounds whistle to mark the ball ready for the kick

Free-Kick Out Of Bounds (*untouched by R*)

- Covering Official marks spot with penalty flag
- Nearest Official to R's Coach gets choice of options for penalty enforcement
 - ✓ NOTE: If R elects to keep the ball, it must be spotted at the inbounds hash mark

Fair Catch / First Touching

- Review pertinent rules and mechanics

Section 5 | Dead Ball Intervals

Strong Dead Ball Officiating

- Player(s) action after the down ends?
- Crisp ball handling; short, underhand passes; triangle when appropriate
- Clock status and correct "Next Down?"
- Note substitutions; count players
 - ✓ Offense: **R & U**
 - ✓ Defense: **BJ + HL / LJ**

First Downs

- Line-to-gain reached? Close? When in doubt, "Take a look!"
- **LJ** primary to stop clock

Measurements (*MI; Chapter 6; pp. 77-82*)

- **BJ / LJ** gets new ball from Offense sideline; transfers to **LJ** prior to measurement
- **BJ** secure ball at dead-ball spot; measure before moving ball
- **HL** (*holding 5-yard intersection clip*) brings chains to measure at **LJ's** 5-yard intersection spot; **BJ** holds ball
- **U** stretches chain for measurement; **R** decides
- **HL** resets chains

Between Periods / Halftime

- Between Periods; (**MI**; pp. 39-40)
 - ✓ If there is no penalty or request for a Coach/Referee Conference, **R** will signal the end of the period
 - ✓ All Officials come together and record team possession, line of scrimmage, down, line-to-gain (*distance*), clip location and ball location relative to hash marks
 - ✓ **U** (*with ball*) and **R** will move to new spot and hold ball until chains are set
 - ✓ **HL** coordinates movement of chains; after chains are set and **HL** & **U** confirm new spot, ball is spotted
 - ✓ **LJ** & **BJ** monitor team huddles; at 45 seconds, Teams are notified to return to the field
- Halftime
 - ✓ If there is no penalty or request for a Coach/Referee Conference, **R** will signal the end of the half
 - ✓ All Officials come together and wait for Teams to leave the field; when clear, **R** will start the halftime clock

Section 6 | Scrimmage Plays

General

- Pre & Post Snap; (**MI**; Chapter 3; pp. 69-70)
- Positioning; (**MI**; Chapter 7; pp. 83-89)
- Keys; (**MI**; Chapter 2; pp. 51-68)
- Motion
- Coverage; (**MI**; Chapter 8; pp. 90-129)

Running Plays

- Coverage
- Out-of-Bounds
- Blocks

Passing Plays

- Coverage
- Pass Eligibility
- Backward Passes
- Illegal Passes
- Passes – Inside & Underneath
- Pass Interference

Goal Line / End Line Plays

- **MI**; pp.116-121

Fumbles

- *MI; pp. 46-47*
- See the Ball!!

Force / Momentum

Section 7 | Scrimmage Kicks

Punts

- Coverage
- Out-of-Bounds
- First Touching
- Fair Catch
- End Zone
- PSK Fouls

Scoring Kicks

- Coverage
- Goal Line
- End Line
- Live Ball / Dead Ball

Section 8 | Disqualification Mechanics (*Ejection*)

Crew Conference

- Ensure you have all the facts, perspectives and correct player(s)

Coach Conference

- **R** and Ejecting Official (or **R** and Wing Official, if **R** ejects) escort player(s) to sideline

Section 9 | Final Thoughts

Work / Communicate as a Team

- Report only what you know / saw
- If you cannot contribute to the Crew discussion, step away and keep players away from the conference

Section 10 | Equipment Check

All Officials

- Whistles; (***Whistle Mechanics; MI; p. 38***)
- Penalty flags
- Beanbags
- Down indicators; (**HL**) chain clip
- Game cards & pencils
- Watches

Referee

- List of Officials
- Coin