



Pre-Game Conference:

Be Prepared, Ask Questions, Have a Conversation

When working games as part of a referee team, it is important that each official be consistent when applying the laws of the game and managing the behavior of players and coaches. The referee team must also be fully aware of the need to communicate with one another quickly, clearly and accurately. In order to support these objectives, the referee crew is expected to conduct a pre-game conference before every game, regardless of the level of competition or the experience of the officials involved.

In general, there are 4 key characteristics of a pre-game conference:

1. Every pre-game conference takes time, and officials must plan to make time for it. Be early to games so that an effective conference can take place.
2. Just because officials have worked together in the past does not mean the pre-game conference can be abbreviated or ignored. The pre-game conference is critical for those not having worked together before, but are just as important for officials that have previously been assigned together.
3. The pre-game conference is meant to be a conversation, not a lecture by the head official. Although the assigned referee has the ultimate responsibility to lead the conference, all crew members should participate and be prepared to ask questions and seek clarification for anything unclear, as well as to understand roles and responsibilities during the match.
4. Failure to have any pre-game conference, or having one that is

significantly shortened due to interference, poor planning or faulty communication could very well lead to avoidable problems or challenges for the referee team.

At a minimum, it is recommended that referees should cover during the pre-game conference:

1. Any local rules of competition and any recent changes to the rules.
2. Any specific delegation of responsibilities by the referee to the assistant referees and any nonstandard signals or mechanics wants used.
3. Information about the teams, players, coaches and spectators specific to the match at hand, and any other factors that may eventually affect the game, such as weather conditions, field issues or time constraints.

The referee assigned should have the pre-game conference thought out and planned in advance to allow for better execution and to ensure that important issues specific to the game and crew are not overlooked.

Rules Review: A player, who is part of a wall on a free kick, moves his/her hands to protect their face after the ball is kicked and the ball strikes his/her hands. The correct ruling is a) award a direct free kick to the opponent at the spot of the foul, b) allow play to continue as this was a reflex and not considered a deliberate act, c) award an indirect free kick to the opponent at the spot of the foul, or d) none of the above?

Ruling: Allow play to continue as the hand movement is deemed to be a reflex action and is not considered to be deliberate handling (NFHS 12.2 Situation A). Protecting the head, face, groin or chest from a hard shot or pass using the hands or arms as a reflex is not considered deliberate and therefore not handling.