



COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

CFO GUIDELINES ON UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT FOULS

Player behavior in committing unsportsmanlike conduct fouls continues to be a major point of emphasis for the NCAA football rules committee and the CFO Board of Managers. Recognizing these fouls and enforcing the penalties place our officials in a difficult situation. It is the nature of the business to be criticized, and it seems especially true when we try to apply the relevant rules (Rule 9-2-1). These are judgment calls, as are all the decisions officials make during the action of the game.

As officials apply their judgment, perhaps these guidelines will be helpful:

- Remember that the game is one of high emotion, played by gifted teenagers who are affirmed by playing a game at which they are exceptionally talented.
- Do not be overly technical in applying this rule.
- Do allow celebratory actions that are brief, spontaneous, emotional reactions at the end of a play.
- Beyond the brief, spontaneous bursts of energy, officials should flag those acts that are either taunting in nature or clearly prolonged, self-congratulatory, and that make a mockery of the game.

A list of specifically prohibited acts is in Rule 9-2-1-(a) thru (j); this list is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive. We can all agree that when these acts are clearly intended to taunt or demean, they should not be allowed—not only because they are written in the book, but because they offend our sense of how the game should be played.

We now have enough experience with this rule to know what “feels” right and wrong. Note that most if not all of these actions fall outside the category of brief, spontaneous outbursts. Rather, they present themselves as taunting, self-glorification, demeaning to opponents, or showing disrespect to the opponents and the game.

When such a situation arises, officials should wait a count, take a deep breath, and assess what they feel about what they have seen.

If it feels OK, let it go.

If it feels wrong, flag it.

There are a number of actions that officials should automatically flag:

- Throat Slash
- Demonstrations of violence (E.g., “six guns”)
- Removal of helmet to celebrate or protest
- Heisman pose
- Gestures with sexual connotation
- Dancing
- Somersault or flip
- High step
- Dunking the ball over the cross bar
- Spinning the ball

It will never be possible to be totally specific in writing what should and should not be allowed. But we trust our officials to be men of good judgment who know in their hearts what should and should not be allowed in the heat of an emotional game.

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