

Onfield Coaching

Remember no good deed goes unpunished!

If you try to coach, you are opening yourself up for a game situation.

As the age and level of play go up, your “coaching” should go down.

A sensible place to draw the line at all levels is play-off games. Offering advice of any kind in a game where the losers’ season ends is a bad idea and makes the well-intentioned official an easy target for post game blame.

Another place to draw the line is when the “coaching” becomes more strategic than practical. Never advise a team on how to play better or stop the opponent. Stick to the rules of fair play. Stick to comments that help prevent problems such as “back up a half step” or “on or off the line”.

Best advise: Coaches should coach, Players should play, and Officials should officiate.

There are four areas in which it is almost universally acceptable for officials to coach players.

Player Errors that Don’t Affect the Play.

Probably the best example is the classic holding away from the point of attack.

In such a situation, you may express to the player that what he did would have been penalized quickly had the play developed differently. You may also indicate that you will be watching him.

Often such a warning is all that a player needs to clean up his or her level of play.

Contact Suspected of Being “Late”.

Officials and even most fans know that the first ‘hit’ is often not seen.

It’s the response to what has happened that draws the attention of official and spectator alike.

If you see something that doesn’t look quite right, get over to the action and talk to the players firmly about what you saw and let them know it stops there and that they now have your full attention.

Sometimes it is so close, you see it and just grimace.

You might just go over and say, “You know what? A couple of times you’re close to late on that. You better be careful or that’s a 15-yarder”.

Issues Dealing with Sportsmanship.

Officials can and should talk to players about sportsmanship problems at every level of competition.

However, there should be a near zero tolerance for poor sportsmanship at the lower levels.

Younger or lower levels of play are in the learning stage and they need to learn the right things.

Sloppy or Unsafe Play.

Sometimes things that players do aren’t actually illegal or even borderline. They are just not pretty.

It’s fine to speak to a player about snaps that are so slow that bad things happen or lackadaisical play that can only lead to trouble.

Then there is the unsafe play.

If players are perhaps tackling in an unsafe manner or performing in a cavalier manner, an official can step up and say “Hey 25, you’re gonna get hurt!” They usually appreciate that.