

**WACO FOOTBALL CHAPTER**

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Dear Coach:

RE: Sideline Interference

During the recent state meeting of the Texas Association of Sports Officials, there was much discussion about sideline control and the officials' responsibility. This meeting was preceded by a meeting in April where the topic of sideline control was emphasized. The reason for this emphasis on sideline control dates back two seasons to a game in San Antonio in which an official collided with a coach in the six foot restricted area (known as the "white"). This play happened on an interception and the Line Judge had to reverse his field to cover the play. The coach is now a quadriplegic and a multi-million dollar law suit has been filed against TASO and the five officials.

TASO and the UIL have made it very clear that the officials must gain control of the sidelines. I want to make it very clear that sideline control is without exception a safety issue for the officials – as well as safety for the coaches and players. We are not trying to be confrontational.

TASO/UIL has made it clear that they will not entertain the standard excuses by officials that space is limited, thus to get everybody back coaches and players would be on the track or if we enforce the sideline interference rule we will get scratched. My favorite comment from coaches on the sideline when an official is trying to do his job is, "You are more concerned with us on the sideline than officiating the game." Let me answer this comment by saying that an official cannot devote total concentration to a play coming to his sideline when his peripheral vision indicates a coach or coaches are in the "white" and there is a chance of a collision. You have destroyed his concentration.

Let's talk about the 6' area known as the "white". Coaches erroneously think that this is their area. You are allowed in this area (not on the field and not beyond the 25 yard lines) when the ball is dead to give your offensive or defensive signals and then you must vacate this area for the subsequent snap of the ball. You cannot be in this area according to rule when the ball is live. The restricted "white" is 6' deep from the sideline and goes from 25 to 25 yard lines. If you will note on the enclosed diagram of the field, the first 6' is restricted for officials when the ball is in play. The next 6' is the coaching box and the coaches by rule are required to be in this area when the ball is live. Behind the coaches box is the team area.

All chapters in the state have been advised that if there is a UIL or TASO person present at a game and the sideline is out of control, that chapter will be put on probation and not considered for any 2007 playoff games. The UIL has made it very clear that the mandate "to take back the sideline"

will be strictly enforced at all levels (7<sup>th</sup> through Varsity). Their belief is that if we educate the coaches and players at the lowest level, then when they move up problems will be very few.

We are also mandated to make an "incident report" to the UIL on any situations, at all levels, where an official has contacted a coach in the "white", or the crew has been told that they will be scratched because of enforcement of the sideline interference rule. Many years ago when you coaches lined up in a straight T backfield with two tight ends, our wing officials (Linesman and Line Judge) lined up in the field of play. So the restricted 6' area ("white") was not as much an issue. In today's game, you are spreading us all over the field from goal line to goal line and as a result the mechanics for our wing guys have changed over the years and they now work off the field of play. So now, the 6' area ("white") is very much an issue as we are giving the field to the players.

The penalty structure for coaches being in the "white" is warning, warning, 5 yard penalty, 15 yard penalty. If we have no contact in the "white", it will be penalized in the progression above. If an official collides with a coach in the "white", it is a 15 yard penalty plus a warning if we have not used the "warnings". If the warnings have been administered then it will be only a 15 yard penalty.

I know that the season is fast approaching and time is critical for you. Ideally, members of our chapter could have visited with you and your staff at the start of fall practice. Still, if you desire for some of our members to visit your staff, please advise. Obviously, it would be very difficult to visit all the schools that we service at this late date.

Best of luck for the 2007 season and if you have any questions please advise. We meet every Monday night at the north end zone complex at Floyd Casey Stadium (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor) at 6:30 PM. You and your staff are always welcome and if you have any questions about the sideline we could go to the field and address your concerns.

Regards,



Larry Weeks, President

### DIAGRAM OF FIELD

