

The Football Code

Introduction

The highest standards of sportsmanship and conduct are expected of players, coaches and others associated with the game.

The National Football Coaches Association (NFCA) Code of Ethics states:

- a. The football code shall be an integral part of this code of ethics and should be carefully read and observed.
- b. To gain an advantage by circumvention or disregard for the rules brands a coach or player as unfit to be associated with football.

Football is and should be an aggressive, rugged, contact sport. However, there is no place in the game for unfair tactics, unsportsmanlike conduct or manoeuvres deliberately designed to inflict injury.

Throughout the years, the rules committee has endeavoured by rule and appropriate penalty to prohibit all forms of unnecessary roughness, unfair tactics and unsportsmanlike conduct. But rules alone cannot accomplish this end. Only the continued best efforts of coaches, players, officials and all friends of the game can preserve the high ethical standards that the public has a right to expect in the sport. Therefore, as a guide to players, coaches, officials and others responsible for the welfare of the game, the committee publishes the following code:

Coaching ethics

Deliberately teaching players to violate the rules is indefensible. The coaching of intentional holding, beating the ball, illegal shifting, feigning injury, interference or illegal forward passing, such as the “forward fumble”, will break down rather than aid in the building of the character of players. Coaching or condoning intentional “roughing”, including the blind-side blocking of an opponent below the waist anywhere on the field, is indefensible. Such instruction is not only unfair to one’s opponents but is demoralising to the players entrusted to a coach’s care. It has no place in the game. Changing numbers during a game to deceive opponents is an unethical act.

The football helmet is for the protection of the player and is not to be used as a weapon.

The National Football Coaches Association has stated:

- a. The helmet shall not be used as the brunt of the contact in the teaching of blocking and tackling.
- b. Self-propelled mechanical apparatus shall not be used in the teaching of blocking and tackling.
- c. Greater emphasis by players, coaches and officials should be placed on eliminating spearing.

The use of non-therapeutic drugs in the game of football is not in keeping with the aims and purposes of amateur athletics and is prohibited.

Illegal use of hand or arm

Indiscriminate use of the hand or arm is unfair play, eliminates skill and does not belong in the game. The object of the game is to advance the ball by strategy, skill and speed without using illegal tactics.

Perhaps a good game could be invented, the object of which would be to advance the ball as far as possible with the assistance of holding, but it would not be football. It would probably become a team wrestling match of some kind.

“Beating the Ball”

“Beating the ball” by an unfair use of a starting signal is nothing less than deliberately stealing an advantage from the opponents. An honest starting signal is good football; but a signal that has for its purpose starting the team a fraction of a second before the ball is put in play, in the hope that it will not be detected by the officials, is nothing short of crookedness. It is the same as if a sprinter in a 100-metre dash had a secret arrangement with the starter to give him a tenth of a second warning before he fired the pistol.

Illegal Shifting

An honest shift is good football; but shaving the one-second pause, shifting in such manner as to simulate the start of a play or employing any other unfair tactic for the purpose of drawing one’s opponent offside can be construed only as a deliberate attempt to gain an unmerited advantage. Such tactics cannot be tolerated in football.

Feigning Injuries

An injured player must be given full protection under the rules. However, the feigning of an injury by an uninjured player for the purpose of gaining additional, underserved time for his team is dishonest, unsportsmanlike and contrary to the spirit of the rules. Such tactics cannot be tolerated among sportsmen of integrity.

Talking to Your Opponents

Talking to opponents, if it falls short of being abusive or insulting, is not prohibited by the rules, but no good sportsman is ever guilty of cheap talk to his opponents.

Talking to Officials

When an official imposes a penalty or makes a decision, he is simply doing his duty as he sees it. He is on the field to uphold the integrity of the game of football, and his decisions are final and conclusive and should be accepted by players and coaches.

The NFCA Code of Ethics states:

- a. On- and off-the-record criticism of officials to players or to the public shall be considered unethical.
- b. For a coach to address, or permit anyone on his bench to address, uncomplimentary remarks to any official during the progress of a game, or to indulge in conduct that might incite players or spectators against the officials, is a violation of the rules of the game and must likewise be considered conduct unworthy of a member of the coaching profession.

Sportsmanship

The football player who intentionally violates a rule is guilty of unfair play and unsportsmanlike conduct; and whether or not he escapes being penalised he brings discredit to the good name of the game, which it is his duty as a player to uphold.

BAFA Rules Committee &
National Football Coaches Association