

2026 NCAA Pre-game Talking Points

30 Minutes Prior to Game (15 Minutes for high school):

- Coaches meeting - 30 minutes prior - walk out on the 50 yd line – keep teams 5-yard buffer from midline (if no timing sheet, go to home team coach first for certification, captains, in-home, questions/comments – anthem? line-ups? going in?)
- Coin toss – make sure captains are not leading stretches – get them after stretches.
- Faceoff meeting – check for tape, explain procedure, questions?
- Scan teams for equipment issues and field conditions during pregame. (i.e. midline paint, goal mouth, check nets as early as possible and again after warmups, shot clocks, horns, behind boxes clear, etc.)
- Shot clock operator meeting (if necessary) (recall?, auto-blank?, horn?)

Helmet Rule (“Off” means “Off”):

- Anytime a player loses helmet during live ball in scrimmage area – immediate whistle (even with scoring opportunity)
- That player must leave the field - can't return until after next dead ball.
- Ball always goes to other team unless illegal contact
- Defensive player loses helmet while playing ball – whistle, flag, 30-second technical.

Faceoffs:

- Single side will place the ball on the ground (**ensure players are standing – stick at/above knees**), command both players **“DOWN”** (SNG, hands wrapped and, on the ground, off the plastic, ball centered, top to stop, stick heads vertical, off the line, no neutral zone), **adjust verbally/physically**, **“SET”**, **pause/backout (can be moving OR stationary)**, whistle. Helper watches man facing you and wing official watches big picture.
- All restarts will be done by single side – trail/lead freeze box then reiterate number of violator to teams, table, partners.
- Upon possession, “play”, arm wind and reset 80 signal (if ball crosses restraining line, arm wind and “release”

Overall principles: control the faceoffs = control the game, be quick, efficient, and consistent, communicate with each other, players, coaches, play the ball – get wings involved, learn tendencies throughout the game and communicate with each other

Restarts:

- Check clocks
- Correct spot (no sprinting restart, five-yard separation from offensive players, five yards from box area – slow it down here,
- Communicate – have visual with partners.
- Controlled “be quick but don’t hurry” – back them up if necessary.
- Check clocks again

Timeouts and End of Quarters (stick checks – 50 yard line, R face away, U and FJ face benches):

- TO’s – be aware of situations and scenarios when head coach (or player on the field) may call a timeout and get into position quickly – give coach benefit of the doubt with time-outs.
- Keep eyes up and cards in pockets until both teams are huddled – move to middle of field for brief meeting (good time to remind each other of timeouts remaining and violations – discuss passes, calls, tendencies, player concerns, etc.
- Check clocks – note game time and shot clock time on scorecard.
- If it seems like an odd timeout situation, blow whistle and quickly count before granting TO (could be trying to avoid an offside penalty)

High Hits:

- Starts low, ends high - adjudicate as **“contact to the head”**, 1-minute, full time.
- Starts high, ends high – adjudicate as **“direct contact to the head”**, 2-minutes, full time.
- Starts high, ends high and excessive or flagrant – adjudicate as **“excessive direct contact to the head”**, 3-minutes, full time. (consider for expulsion)

Overall principles: Can’t miss high hits to the head and neck area (four eyes on the shooter), if multiple flags – come together, discuss quickly, relay penalty to table area, if one flag but considering 2 minutes – discuss with a partner

Shot Clock:

- Reset vs. No Reset
 - Possession gained **or** change of possession = 80 seconds
 - “Valid Shot” (shot taken above GLE that hits either the goalie [does not have to be in the crease] or the goal pipes) retained in the offensive half of the field = 60 seconds
 - “Valid Shot” that returns to the defensive half and is retrieved by the offense = 80 seconds
 - Loose ball technical foul (including play-ons) retained by offense in the offensive half at or below 60 = 60, above 60= 80
 - Defensive injury at or below 60 = 60, above 60= 80
 - Timeout by either team **or** inadvertent flag/whistle = clock stays where it was when stopped
- Loud, verbal “Under” at 60 – be sure trail especially signals
- Where is the ball at 60? Everyone help if ball is in scrum near midline close to 60
- Look after every shot to be sure clock was not inadvertently reset (shut play down if it needs to be fixed, especially if low in the shot clock). If clock not properly reset after 5 seconds – kill it if scoring play is not imminent.

Overall principles: All 3 officials need to be clock watchers. Verbal and visual resets – all echo (stay focused on this from the first possession of the game)

Crease/Goal Mouth:

- Shooter that lands or runs in the goal mouth after the ball enters the goal = No goal
- Illegal contact that puts offensive player into goalmouth = good goal if ball is in the goal before contact with crease/mouth.

Overall principles: FEET, CONTACT - lead and single anticipate, be in tight, look at feet, watch for contact (legal or illegal), where's the ball? where does he land? Contact with goalie? Communicate before throwing up the goal signal. If need to discuss, go away from players. Trail monitors players during discussion and joins only if adding value.

10 Man Ride:

- **Trail to Lead transition:** get to GLE as quickly (is goalie leaving his crease?), you have primary responsibility for shots that will come from anywhere, determine if it's a shot or pass, help your partners count players and offsides. Often has a good view of catching the 7th player in the riding end of the field
- **Lead to Trail transition:** stay 10 yards behind the ball coming up from the field, you're by yourself on GLE if there's a turnover. Monitor box for uneven substitution numbers entering the field. Secondary 20 second clearing clock.
- **Single:** get to the cone and wait for the ball to cross on slow transitions look for seven offensive players in the offensive half get to GLE as quickly as you can on fast transitions. Primary 20 second clearing count

Offensive Screening:

- A legally set (stationary, stick within frame) screener is entitled to their position and cannot be displaced illegally.
- Officiate the contact? Did the **offensive player initiate contact** with defender → **illegal screen**
- Did defender (not playing ball) recognize the screener and **intentionally displace** → **interference**
- Was the contact by the **defender excessive or deliberate** → **unnecessary roughness**

Miscellaneous:

- Broken crosse in crease area → use discretion, safety, stop play to retrieve when appropriate
- **Bench celebrations:** respectful within confines of bench area. **Taunting/baiting, simulated violence** → **1minUC**
- **Taunting/Baiting – player to player** → **1minUC**, **player talking to official** can be 30 sec conduct
- Personal fouls – safety stuff → call it (Don't leave partner out to dry)
- Technical fouls – use for game management, catalogue fouls (don't call technical fouls in your partner's zone) but be sure to call big personals. “We're hunting whales, not fishing for minnows.”