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An Interview With:

**WALT ANDERSON
BIG 12
COORDINATOR OF OFFICIALS**

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined on the podium by Walt Anderson, coordinator of officials for the Big 12. We'd like to welcome Walt. Walt is going to visit with you a little bit, and then we'll take some questions.

WALT ANDERSON: Good afternoon. I'd like to first just go over -- we don't have too many rule changes. As many of you know, the NCAA went to a two-year cycle on its significant rules changes. However, there are some that come up each year, this kind of being an off year from the two-year cycle.

There are a couple of I just want to make you aware of. A few of them are probably novelty changes, but they provide you with at least some interest.

On equipment, the NCAA has done away with the ruling on where the pants have to be worn relative to the knees. Some of you may know that's been an ongoing uniform police battle that both the officials and coaches have struggled with for years. They've given up the fight. So now that although they're required to have knee pads in their pants, the pants actually do not have to cover the knees. It will be interesting to see what kind of uniforms we come up with this year.

The other issue that did catch a little bit of media notoriety from some incidents last year was the eye shade and how some players were using that to make statements about various topics. This year, if they're going to wear the eye black, it's just going to be plain eye black, cannot have any kind of scripture, message, logo, number. It can only be just the eye shade black.

A significant change was paid in the injured player rule, mostly because of the

emphasis and the interest in concussions. Although the rule change actually extends to any type of injury, any time the game is stopped and a player is removed from the field, there is a requirement that somebody from the team, whether it's a physician, trainer, somebody designated to make a ruling, has to certify that the player -- it is safe for him to come back in.

The other change is that the player has to stay out for one play. And unlike in years past where a team could use a time-out basically to buy that player back into the game, they cannot do that. The player has to stay out for one play. The only exception to that is if a player is injured on the very last play of the first half, then because of the minimum of 20 minutes that has to occur before the second half begins, he can participate in the first play of the second half. But that's the only exception.

It's not really a rule change in terms of emphasis, but you may recall last year there were some rule changes involving targeting of defenseless players, particularly the high contacts to the head as well as an emphasis on unsportsmanlike conduct. Those two rules haven't changed, although the Rules Committee did add in the language on the targeting foul that, when questioned, it is a foul.

And the reason for that is they want the officials to err on the side of -- when in question, they want it to be a foul. They want to call those penalties because they want to stress the importance of trying to get players to lower their target zone and to avoid these hits, very often intentional, to the head area because of the prevalence of head injuries.

And then the second, which is a continued emphasis on sportsmanship, will not carry a rule change this year, but you can all anticipate probably much discussion next year, because in 2011 the unsportsmanlike rule, which now carries a penalty but it's after the play is over so it would not negate a touchdown, in 2011, that will change, and all unsportsmanlike acts will be live ball fouls.

So if you have a situation where a runner



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is running into the end zone and he sticks the ball back at his opponent, this year that touchdown will count. In 2011 it will not count. And the 15-yard penalty will be enforced from the spot where the unsportsmanlike act occurs.

And then the real significant change this year, which was originally intended to go into place in 2011, but, again, because of the safety issue, is the illegal wedge rule, which will cause all of our teams in the Big 12, as well as most of the country, to have to change the manner in which they set up for kick returns.

And the wedge rule states that three or more players form an illegal wedge. So while the ball is in the air or any time during a kick, you cannot have three or more players get together shoulder to shoulder and then move forward with the intent to block.

The rationale behind that rule change this year was because of the concern for the safety of the players. The wedge on kickoffs has evolved. It hasn't been too many years ago when everybody back there near the goal line were all small backs or receivers. It's evolved into the wedge being basically 300-plus players, so you got basically a 900-pound mass of players coming up field meeting players who have probably run anywhere from 50 to 55 yards at full speed, and those collisions were providing some serious injuries. That's why that rule was addressed by the NCAA this year. They basically adopted the NFL which changed that rule at their level last year.

So those are the major rule changes for this year. Like I said, there's not too many of those. You know, I'd be glad to entertain any questions if anybody has any about the new rules changes before we go on to talking about the test that we gave you all.

PETER IRWIN: Okay. We'll go ahead with the test.

WALT ANDERSON: We thought it would be just an area of interest to let you guys and ladies take a rules test and see how well you do on the football rules. Bob passed those out. There are more copies here. If you don't have one and you'd like one, just raise your hand, and we'll pass them around to you. We're going to pass out the answer sheet to you. We're not going to take them up or grade them. There are some things we'd like to talk to you about.

One of which is to make you aware some people think, it should go without saying, that rules knowledge would be something you would expect out of officials because we expect a similar degree

of professional knowledge out of other professions. But rules tests in the NCAA, they're certainly encouraged, but they're not necessarily required.

We felt like this was something several years ago that we felt was so important and so paramount to moving our program of officiating to the highest level we could that we implemented a policy that if the officials don't pass the rules test they just simply cannot work.

You know, there are other conferences that they certainly give tests, and they encourage their officials to take those, but there's not really any real consequence to that, and we feel like that's probably not the degree of accountability we're trying to create in our entire program. So we implemented that.

So what we've passed out to you is the actual test that the officials took this year. I'm not going to go through all of them, but I appreciate several of you have already come up to me and asked some questions about some of these, and I would like to go over a couple of them because they may end up generating some discussion on your part.

The first one is Question No. 2. The thing I will tell you about this rules test is that every situation you see on here, right down to the yard lines, the player numbers, the time of the game, all came from plays in the Big 12 Conference last year. You can't sit there -- like sometimes the officials say, Why would you ask that question? That would never happen. All of these happened, and they all happened last year.

Number 2 involves the play where we've got the pass, and there's a defensive holding that occurs. The real key to that is the defensive holding -- the ball's down on the B5-yard line, which means it's third and goal from the 5-yard line. The hold happens at the 6-yard line, which is behind the line of scrimmage.

In most cases, most every defensive holding foul is going to end up resulting in a first down, but this is one of those rare exceptions -- and to their credit, the crew on the field -- that was actually the Missouri at Colorado game when that happened up in Boulder. To their credit, they got that play right because it's not an automatic first down. You are going to enforce the penalty for the defensive hold, but it -- make the play third and goal from now B2-1/2. Most of you put first and ten on that. So that's one that's a little bit unusual.

The next one is a play that happened in

the Outback Bowl. In fact, there were probably ten very unusual plays that happened in the Outback Bowl. But that's Question No. 13. On Question No. 13, there was a screen pass, and this actually happened during overtime of that game. There was a screen pass out to the left, and the receiver catches the ball, and then he's hit, and then the ball comes loose. While it's loose, it just rolls on the ground and actually comes to rest.

And a defensive player, I believe it was Auburn in that particular game -- we were officiating, but it was Auburn and Northwestern playing. The defensive player -- and in an effort he couldn't quite get to the ball, but he bats the ball forward, which is a foul.

And the question becomes where are you going to enforce that penalty? And by rule in that situation we would normally enforce it from the spot where the ball was actually fumbled, not from the spot where he bats it and not from the spot where it becomes dead.

The interesting thing that happened -- so the answer would normally be first and goal at the B8-1/2 because you're going to go from the 17-yard line. The interesting thing that happened in that game is we actually had a replay review because we reviewed whether or not the player was actually down before he fumbled the ball, which after the review it was determined that his knee was actually down. So we actually brought the ball back to the 17-yard line.

And the interesting thing for you to remember is that any foul that happens after the ball is declared dead, whether it's on the field or in replay, unless it's a personal foul, it just goes away. So in that situation, we would not enforce that illegal bat because it's not a personal foul-type thing.

The next question that I thought was of some interest because it happens quite often is Question No. 17. And you don't have a lot of these, but we had one last year, and it was in that same game, Missouri-Colorado, where it was a safety kick. We actually had offside on the kickoff, and the ball went out of bounds at the 39-yard line.

The thing that you have to remember on kickoffs is any foul -- as a matter of fact, any kick, the receiving team always has the option of enforcing any offensive foul from the spot where the ball ends up being declared dead.

In this case, the ball went out of bounds at the 39-yard line. So the receiving team could take that five-yard penalty for the kickoff and add it to that and then take the ball at the 44. They also

have the option of going back and penalizing five yards, and you would make the team rekick from the 15-yard line if that were their choice.

Oftentimes, as is the case with the rules, there's not always one obvious choice. Very often those of you in the media may wonder what's going on out there on the field. Why are the officials huddled together? Why are they taking time to go over to the coach? It's to try to get to explain to the coach what his options are and determine his choice.

We actually instruct our referees to go ahead and make choices for the teams when it's obvious what the best choice would be, but in situations like this where it's not so obvious, we're going to take the time and explain that to the coach.

You're one up on the coaches, by the way. We did not give them a rules test this year.

The other one that happened that was somewhat unusual was Play No. 20. This happened at Oklahoma, and there was a play that involved a screen pass, and during the screen pass while the ball is being thrown out to the side, there's an offensive player, and he's blocking downfield. After the receiver catches the ball while he's running, one of his teammates holds on the play.

One of the things that you always have to keep in mind is that pass interference, whether it's offense or defense, does not apply regardless of where it occurs, if the ball is touched at or behind the line of scrimmage, which is what happens here.

This is a common situation where, in this case, we actually have a flag on the play for the block downfield, which we then end up, through conference, trying to determine hopefully, rightfully so, that the ball was touched behind the line of scrimmage. So he would pick up the foul for offensive pass interference. So the only thing we left on this play is offensive holding.

So the correct answer would be, again, a choice. It's either going to be, A, first and 15 at the 49-yard line, or second and five at the B39.

So that's just a couple of questions that I picked out from the test. Again, we wanted to give this to you for your benefit. You know, if you take the time to take it, you can grade it yourself, see how you do. You'll know whether you're real good with the rules or whether you're real bad with the rules.

If you need a little help with the rules, just

ask us. We'll be glad to help. I know you're always ready, willing, and able to offer advice. So we want to reciprocate that and return the favor.

Q. On the targeting foul, are you also saying that that's not a reviewable play as well, when you talk about erring on the side of caution?

WALT ANDERSON: Yes, it's not a reviewable play as far as instant replay is concerned. That is correct.

Q. And on the eye black, is that no school logo, anything like that either?

WALT ANDERSON: Nothing. It's either just black -- some of them are either, I guess, like a chalk that they actually paint on, and there are a lot of just stick-ons. But it can only be black. If there is anything on the eye black, then the officials will remove the player from the game until either the black is removed or the sticky -- it's removed.

And that was the result of that -- I don't think the rule change was made so much because of logos, but the question came up is what do you allow if you're going to allow anything. I think there was some concern that there was messaging being -- beginning to appear on some players that the Rules Committee felt like at what point do you stop. So they stopped at nothing.

Q. You mentioned that taunting would be 15 yards -- in 2011 would be 15 yards from the spot that it actually occurred. Would this also apply to unsportsmanlike after the touchdown? For example, is the touchdown then called back 15 yards from the goal?

WALT ANDERSON: Good question. If the act does not occur -- and, again, we're talking about 2011. What we're trying to do is prepare the players and get them used to not committing those acts. But for 2011, if the player scores a touchdown and then spikes the ball, the touchdown will still count.

In 2011, if he's running in -- and I know we had a play. The one I can remember was Missouri and Kansas. We had one that would apply in next year's rule, where the player is running in for a touchdown, reaches back with one hand and points to the opponent. That was a foul. It was called this past year, but the penalty would be enforced on the kickoff, or the extra point.

In 2011 it will just simply be enforced from wherever he turns to point. If he points at the 10-yard line, we're going next year back to the 25,

and it will be whatever down and distance it would be after enforcing that penalty.

The intent there -- and the Rules Committee has actually looked at this for several years. It's been a point of emphasis for a couple of years. They had hoped, I believe, by making it a point of emphasis, they could end up curtailing it to the degree that they wished. They had determined that they have not been successful in doing that.

Therefore, beginning next year, it will be a live ball foul, and I'm sure we will then assess whether or not the incidences of those acts will be reduced or increased.

Q. Walt, it's an unsportsmanlike call, not a taunting call, correct? Does that mean, you know, you get called for anything -- if you dove into the end zone from the 1, is that going to be called? I'm curious what's the standard here.

WALT ANDERSON: Within the category of unsportsmanlike fouls, there's a litany of acts of which taunting is one. There are various types of non-contact fouls. The example you gave of a player doing a somersault into the end zone, it is an unsportsmanlike act.

Again, we'll have to wait in 2011 and see what the Rules Committee comes about in terms of interpretation because this year it's not going to apply for us. It's still going to be a foul. If a kid does a somersault into the end zone, it's a foul, and it's either going to go on the extra point or the kickoff this year.

For next year, what will have to be determined is how close to the goal line is he? Does the leaping act start after he's broken the plane or not. More than likely, because it's not a contact-type foul, if you're in doubt, we'll probably count the score and put it on the kickoff. But the kid who points at the 5-yard line next year, that should be much easier to determine.

But it can involve any act. You know, sometimes you get a kid -- we had one that was fouled this year where he's high stepping. He starts the high step-type act about the 10-yard line and then just high steps into the end zone. Next year, once that high-stepping act begins, that's where the foul occurs. So that's the point at which we would end up marking the penalty from.

So I think, when in doubt, was it a touchdown already before the act occurred, like we do with so many things, I would expect the

touchdown would count.

But the smart thing to do, which is what both the coaches and the officials are trying to get the players to do, is don't take that chance. Don't run that risk.

Q. Can you clarify -- I know in the NFL, I know, you can't do a celebration with a teammate that's orchestrated the stage, you can't use props and all that sort of thing. Are those things eliminated from college football as well? What can and can they not do in terms of any kind of celebration? Zero?

WALT ANDERSON: The way the rule is written for the college game as opposed to the NFL game -- and it often is problematic for us because, obviously, you know, kids and players, they have a tendency to emulate what they see often in other venues. High school players will emulate the college athletes, and the college players have a tendency to emulate some of the things they may see on Sunday.

It's problematic for us because the NCAA rule is far more restrictive in what can be allowed appropriately about college players than what the NFL allows. But the acts that you mentioned are also fouls in the NCAA, where you have these choreographed dances and so forth.

We have acts like spiking the ball or intentionally throwing the ball up in the air where they're not fouls in the NFL, but they are certainly fouls at the college level.

Again, the intent of the Rules Committee is to try to foster sportsmanship and always keep in mind that football is a team sport. And when any player scores a touchdown, he hasn't scored that touchdown really by himself; that there are ten other players on the field that have contributed to that.

So what we do not want to do, which we often somewhat take exception to -- because the penalty is not excessive celebration. That is not the foul. There is actually no penalty for excessive celebration because, I mean, it's too hard to define that. We actually want to encourage players to celebrate, and at times to do so excessively, just not inappropriately. Sometimes it might be semantics, but what they're really trying to avoid in the rule are individual players just bringing attention to themselves as if they were the only person on the field who contributed to that act, which is, in and of itself, worthy of celebration.

So we want the kids to be able to appropriately celebrate but not at the expense of

either their opponents, any act directed toward them in a ridiculing manner, or by neglecting their own teammates.

Q. Follow up to that celebration. In Washington the quarterback scores, toss the ball airborne, there's a penalty. A celebration of that that's raw emotion, is there any suggestion to that being a delay of game rather than a personal foul?

WALT ANDERSON: I wasn't at the Rules Committee meeting this year, although I do understand that they certainly consider whether they would want to reclassify those acts. The final decision was, relative to that specific act that they're talking about, when the intent is to throw the ball in the air, it's a foul just like if the intent is to spike the ball to the ground it's a foul.

What we're not going to get involved with in officiating is that doesn't mean that if a player just tosses the ball over his shoulder or his head, no different than if he just releases the ball and gravity takes it to the ground. Just because the ball goes up, it's not necessarily a foul, just like when he releases the ball and it goes to the ground, it's not necessarily a spike.

We've got a lot of video that we've looked at and shared with the officials. For those of you in the media who have come to our clinics have also seen where we've been able to show examples of acts, like the Washington play, which the Rules Committee does want to be a foul, and also other acts where the balls are released either up or down that we would not want to be a foul.

PETER IRWIN: Walt, thank you very much.

WALT ANDERSON: Just following up, I know a number of you have come to a number of our clinics. One of the things we've tried to do in the Big 12 Conference -- and Bob Burda has been very active with this with members of the media -- is to open up the means by which we train our officials to you members of the media.

And I know many of you have taken advantage of that. We have quite a few clinics that we conduct in the spring that are smaller in venue, but our large clinic, which is in the summer, will encompass all of our officiating conferences which are in our CFO west region, which involves the Mountain West Conference and the Southland and several Division II conferences. We bring all those officials together for a three-day event, and that is

open to the media.

The dates for that next year, if you just want to know what those are, is July the 7th through the 9th. It will be in Kansas City this next year at the Airport Hilton. So we would issue an invitation to any of you that want to come and sit in on those sessions. You'll sit right through it. I know many of you that are here today were at our clinic, which was here in Dallas three weeks ago.

You know, you're welcome to come. You'll see us -- we cull over video. We don't pull any punches with the officials. We talk about why calls were right, why calls were wrong, if we missed calls or failed to make calls. We're trying to teach them how not to make those same mistakes again. I feel like it's an opportunity for those of you that have not been through that, to see the effort that the officials are making to try to get things right. But being human as we are, we will make mistakes.

Our charge in the conference office is to develop the resources and the training to where we try to minimize to the humanly extent possible the amount of mistakes that are made.

So feel free to jot those dates down and contact Bob Burda if you want to come. You're more than welcome.

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