



## Rules and Mechanics

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January 27, 2015*

I thought for a long while about what my first article on the Central Hub should be about. This area would be the place for boy's lacrosse officials to go for relevant posts, training videos, and rule tests that any US Lacrosse official member could access. For that reason I wanted my first article to start off with a bang. Maybe something on handling a particularly difficult situation. Or perhaps digging into a convoluted rule that still gives me trouble no matter how often I read it. Even better would be a detailed explanation of how to work with a new official or handling your very first game as a college official.

Then I took a step back and thought about what Rich Tamberino told me at the 2010 US Lacrosse National Convention.

I was drowning in a sea of officiating knowledge and had written about six pages of notes, front-and-back, about the ABCs of Officiating. I was trying to absorb all of Tamberino's knowledge in one sitting and failing miserably at it so I asked him for a lifeline.

**Me:** "If you boiled everything you talked about down to the level of a second year official, what is the most important thing I should focus on?"

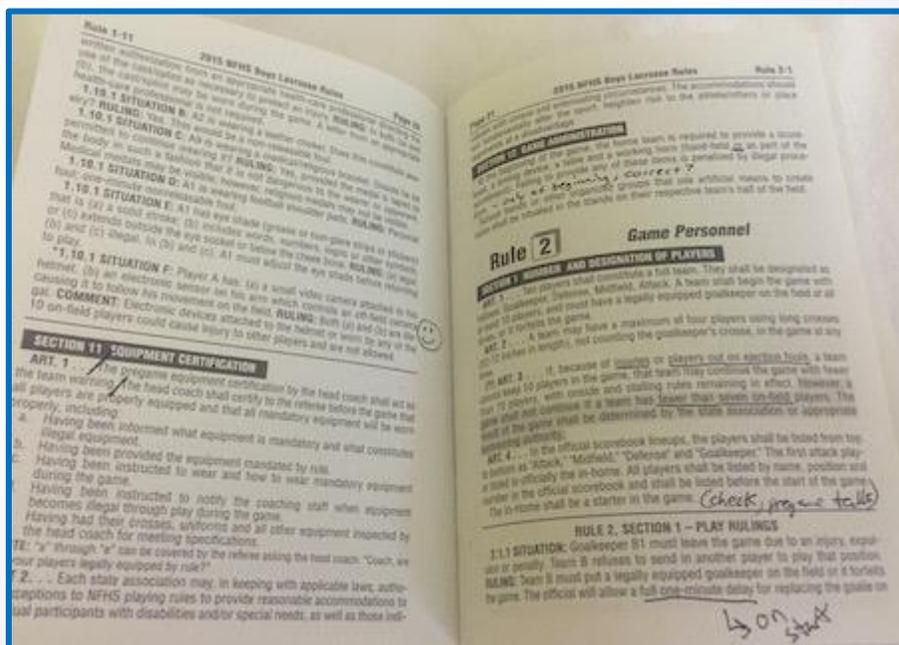
**Tamberino:** "Rules and Mechanics."

Rules and mechanics. That is what I need to start with because that is what I always come back to as a lacrosse official. We can discuss and examine game management techniques or the proper application of a play-on across various levels of play, but we always come back to rules and mechanics. They are not terribly exciting topics, and they aren't the most fun to discuss either but focusing on those two concepts always puts me in a position to officiate well.

How do you make the rulebook fun? It's written in faux-legalese and there isn't an edition that's been printed that doesn't have contradicting rules. Plus, it is incredibly dry reading so I try to liven it up.

I never highlight my rulebook. It's a personal preference, but I prefer to write notes and symbols in the margins. An exclamation point means something that is new to me, not necessarily new to a particular year. A question mark is an area I need to review. A star is a major area that I must know (think when to wipe off a goal). A smiley face is something I find funny. Other times I write the name of the official who applied the rule the first time I saw it happen on the field. That way instead of thinking "Rule 2.6.2" I think "The Mike Collver Rule," and not only do I remember the rule I remember the key situation that it was applied in.

The rulebook is also set up to test yourself as you read it. Case plays are best read with a 3x5 card covering up the unread part of the page. Read the situation and while keeping the rest of it covered try to see if you got the answer right. If you did put a checkmark in the margin. If you got it wrong put an "X" down. As you reread the book you can spend more time on the situations you got wrong and a quick review on the situations you got right.



The rules are the rules. Read the rulebook often and they'll eventually get burned into your brain, but mechanics are different and much harder to master. When I got serious about improving I moved from not particularly caring about mechanics to standing in the absolutely correct spot and pointing rigidly with my arm perpendicular to the ground on every directional signal. I spent the last few years unlearning my overly robotic movements and signals in a manner that is much more relaxed yet visibly strong. A few changes to where I put my equipment helped me do this.

I moved my timer to my left hip so I could signal with my dominant right-hand while using my non-dominant left-hand to flip the timer. I also put my whistle in my left hand for the same reason. My primary flag went into my waistband right above my right hip, and my second flag went into my right front pocket. That keeps me from looking like a gunslinger to coaches and players, and it also means I do not have to reach awkwardly across my body for my second flag. The tape measure goes into my back right pocket so it's easily accessible with my dominant hand, and my back-up finger whistle goes into my back left pocket so it's available if I need it.



Everything has its proper place so I don't have to think about where something is, I know where my equipment is and that means I can put more of my attention on the play.

You need to know when to sprint and when to jog, when to back pedal and when to side step. You need to keep the play in front of you and if that means you are slightly off Goal Line Extended as the Lead official so be it. At least you are officiating the play with the best view. Some officials are pretty cavalier about hustling into position. Don't be that official. Be the one that jogs quickly into position as the Trail official to show your partner that you aren't slacking, and definitely be the one that sprints towards the goal or the end line as the Lead official when the situation calls for it. I've been critiqued on a lot of my mechanics, but one area I never get dinged on is my hustle. Put in the effort to be in the best position possible while on the field and you'll find yourself making the right call because you worked to be in the right place.

That is a good stopping point for this first article on the Central Hub. It's nothing flashy, but officials don't get to be flashy. Our aspiration is to be forgotten as soon as the game ends so a focus on rules and mechanics is true to what officiating is all about. Getting the call right by knowing the rules and doing everything in our power to be in the right spot to make the call.

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*If you have a passion for officiating and want to share your knowledge with officials from across the nation please send a Word document with no more than 1,000 words to Gordon Corsetti, Manager of the Men's Officials Education Program at US Lacrosse, at [gcorsetti@uslacrosse.org](mailto:gcorsetti@uslacrosse.org). Your submission will be reviewed and you will be notified if it is selected for publication. If it is you will be credited along with the LOA you officiate in*