



Chucking the Phone

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This will serve as a warning to anyone stepping onto the field during the upcoming summer tournaments with a cellphone in their pocket. Don't do it! Here's why.

I worked a tournament in North Georgia several years ago that used eleven fields at two separate locations. Being my tech-savvy self I thought, "why not download the schedule onto my phone and keep it in my pocket? That way I'll be able to quickly check where I need to be after every game and can send a quick text to my partner if I might be late running to a distant field." That was the thought, and it worked great up until my third game of the day.

Keep in mind that it was close to 100 degrees in the shade and we were running two-person crews in the high school division. I was hot, sweaty, and solely focused on officiating and drinking as much water as possible between games. I was jogging up as the Trail official and crossed the midfield line just as the shooter took a shot after a quick clear. I kept my eyes on the shooter and this is the sequence that followed:

- Blue shooter is slashed by the White defender.
- White defender runs into the Blue shooter after the slash and they fall over.
- Blue shooter winds up on top of the White defender after they hit the ground.
- Blue shooter stands up and swings his crosse down into the facemask of the White defender in retaliation.
- White defender takes exception to this, gets to his feet, and executes a rather clean double-leg takedown of the Blue shooter.
- Punches start flying between the two players while on the ground.

That's what I saw. Here is the sequence that I went through:

- Flag down for a slash and I kept my eyes on the two players.
- Flag down for the retaliatory slash and I ran in to try to break up what I know is coming.
- Hat stays on (I really try to avoid throwing my hat. Sure it looks cool, but I don't want to be looking around for my hat after a ton of craziness).
- As the punches started flying I was out of flags, but my body didn't realize that fact and it wanted to keep throwing stuff. Next thing I knew I reached into my front right pocket, grabbed something, and chucked it into the air.



Turns out I chucked my new phone forty yards up. Now I had a dilemma. Do I keep my eyes on the players trying out for The Ultimate Fighter or do I try to catch my rapidly falling phone?

I stayed with the players. Phones can be replaced and I didn't want anyone recording this game seeing me desperately try to catch a phone instead of breaking up a fight.

Final tally with all of the penalties went:

- White defender - 1 minute releasable slash, 3 minutes non-releasable unsportsmanlike conduct, ejected
- Blue shooter - 1 minute releasable slash, 3 minutes non-releasable unsportsmanlike conduct, ejected

After this incident I made a rule for summer and fall tournament games that I would only keep my phone in my back pocket on vibrate or silent. Then I modified that rule to only keep my phone in my game bag that is by the table because I don't want the cell phone on me and it only takes a few extra seconds to grab it out of the bag and confirm my next assignment.

We might live in a more connected world than ever before with all of our devices, but we don't need to bring them onto the field with us when our attention should be focused on the players. That being said, there are some great ways to use smartphones in pre- and post-game discussions:

1. Download the [US Lacrosse pre-game checklist](#), or make your own so you always have a backup.
2. [Stream video](#) in your pre-game to discuss common penalties from the Central Hub Men's Officials Video Library.
3. Download the tournament/league rules to your phone for one less thing to print out.
4. [Purchase the NFHS rulebook on Amazon](#), for a fully searchable digital document to more easily find the rule you are looking for.
5. Save the phone numbers of your partners for the weekend to your contacts list so you spend less time looking them up if you need to reach them.

If you absolutely must bring the phone onto the field with you make sure it is set to vibrate or silent and make sure to keep it in your back pocket. That way you won't end up chucking the phone into the air and picking up the pieces like I did.