

Game Bag Tips

Sometimes I'm still surprised at what I find in my game bag, but whatever is in there is there because I once really needed it. There was a time in my earlier officiating career when I wished someone told me what to bring along. For the most part, however, experience has been the best teacher. I have gone through a variety of bags - some smaller, some larger, some purchased and some given. Of all those bags, I like the one I have now the best. It has wheels and you learn to conserve energy. My association was nice enough to have my name embroidered on the outside. It is deep with lots of pockets and can fit into an overhead airline bin.

Inside this bag, I have another bag – well, more of a small, roll-up case actually. This case contains all the small stuff that would otherwise get lost or broken, or possibly damage my uniform or even me if I reached into the bag in too much of a hurry.

I have to assume you will know to bring your uniform. In District 8, the crew always calls the ref to find out which uniform to bring/wear. It's no fun to show up wearing short sleeves when it's cold enough for long sleeves. Two crew members are not going to be happy.

Let's talk about some things you otherwise might not have thought to include in your bag:

Sewing kit:

You can make your own or buy a travel version. Make sure it has black and white thread, extra needles, straight pins, extra white buttons, black/white adhesive mending tape and safety pins. I've needed every one of those items over the years.

Rubber bands:

They can be worn to quickly remind you of alternate possession without having to pull out your scorecard. They can hold together a beeper that gets smashed by an errant shot. They can also hold up those older, stretched out socks you use when it's muddy or hold your pencil and scorecard together.

Small fingernail brush:

When your hat starts to show sweat lines, this is a great way to clean it.

Large rubber eraser:

It's easier than using the small end of a pencil to clean scorecards.

Pencils:

I use the small ones found in the back of church pews (I'm not advocating you steal them!) and at Putt-Putt Golf. I use a small metal clip to keep it in the pocket. I have extra pencils and clips. Don't forget a small, plastic pencil sharpener.

Shoelaces:

Better to have an extra set than to wish for an extra set.

Ziploc bags:

They keep your NCAA cards, vouchers and paychecks dry.

Large plastic bags:

Use it for storing your uniform when it is sweaty and for muddy shoes on the way home. A dry shirt makes the ride home more comfortable as well.

First Aid Kit:

It doesn't need to include anything big, just a few band aids and antibiotics packets, sunscreen and hand lotion.

Towel:

I live in Texas where sometimes it is 100 degrees at faceoff, so consider a towel as "optional."

Small (plastic) wire ties:

Lots of uses from fixing holes in a goal, to a quick fix for a broken timer belt clip.

Duplicate stuff:

- Scorecards
- Whistle
- Beepers/timers
- Coins
- Flags (as well as mudder flags)
- Tape measures

Now, all of this may sound like it would take up lots of space in your bag, but surprisingly, it doesn't. The best news is that when you need one of these items - and you will eventually - you'll be glad you have it.

Now, what's in your bag? Have a great game!

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