



They Write 'Em, We Enforce 'Em

Author: Charlie Obermayer

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New rules proposed by the NCAA men's lacrosse committee in August and approved by an oversight panel in September have emboldened coaches, fans, former and current players with opinions from every angle. I have never seen anything like it. It was really great to see people talking about the rules and how they will impact the game going forward in 2013.

Well actually, I have seen something like it before. Every other year, the NCAA publishes a new rulebook. And every other year, 900 or so collegiate officials have the same heated discussions. We remain pretty quiet most years. "They write 'em, and we enforce 'em," we say. But it seems this year the committee has put more of the game into our hands than ever before.

As a group we must figure out how we keep the game in the hands of the players, where it belongs. There are still a lot of questions regarding the new rules. Officials want to know what they are – in print – so we can learn them inside and out. Unfortunately, because of the timing, we still may be sorting out some things come spring. With each game worked, there will be new questions and opinions on the rules.

Before fall ball, I worked an intra-squad scrimmage for an NCAA Division I program using the new rules. The coaches wanted to see how they would impact the game. We really didn't know either. It gave us a great opportunity to play with some of the changes and see how players reacted.

We worked for about 50 minutes and came away with about two pages of notes. Here are some quick thoughts on the rules changes from one official's perspective:

- The 30-second "shot clock" after a stall warning is a completely new and dynamic aspect to the game. It puts a lot of onus on the officials to call a stall. This has been a point of contention. What one crew views as stalling another may not.
- Once a stall is on, the officials are then responsible for counting the 30 seconds. We will be using the timer on our belt for the first 20 and then use a hand count for the remaining 10. This should be interesting. We are humans. We are not programmed digitally. One official's 10 seconds is bound to be slower or faster than that of another official. (Don't believe me? Set your watch and time yourself counting to 10 seconds.)
- Quick restarts. Both players (especially goalies) and officials must get used to them. How will offensive players use this to their advantage? How will it be coached?
- Faceoffs have gotten cleaner the last couple of years, but no matter what rules are put in place – the committee ultimately reversed course on changes pertaining to the motorcycle grip, but kept the man-up for multiple violations – faceoff guys will test us to see what they can get away with.



- With more rigorous stick checks, will we see more penalties, especially the ball being withheld in the back of the stick or not rolling freely over the shooting strings?
- Subbing only on the fly (no horns) will definitely speed up the game. We may still see players subbing through midfield and teams on offense swapping out defensive middies, but not the slow-moving heaps as the ball sits on the sideline.
- The larger substitution box will further separate opposing coaches, but how will they use it to their advantage when subbing?

Once officials have written rules in hand, many of these questions will be answered. We won't catch everything, and we will have to make some adjustments on the fly. But we will maintain consistency, fairness and safety of the player.

That why we do what we do.