

# Meeting the Coaches: It's More Than 'Shake and Howdy'

A great way to start a game and set a positive tone is to have a good pregame meeting with each head coach. That required meeting is a time to discern important information. The meeting can also be used to build rapport with each head coach. Take the duty seriously and perform it professionally. Be to the point; yet cover everything you need to talk about. Here is a suggested "checklist" to help referees conduct a thorough pregame meeting.

**Introduce yourself and the umpire to head coach.** Shake hands and give them your full names. Even if you know the coach well, refer to him as "Coach". It is a business meeting as opposed to a social event.

**Ask if players are properly equipped.** The umpire asks the question with the referee as a witness. The umpire should also ask if any player's equipment, bandages or casts need inspection.

**Provide a list of officials.** Have a prepared list of officials working the game by position. Note who is working each sideline and indicate which official will report foul information. Use a small card with that information to give to both head coaches.

**Get the names and numbers of the captains.** Write down the information on your game card so you can give the data to the other officials. Ask the coach if he has a preference as to which captain will do the talking for his team at the coin toss or when a penalty option needs to be discussed.

**Ask about anything uncommon.** Suggested wording: "Coach, do you have any unusual plays or formations we should know about in order to better work your game?"

If the coach describes a play that involves something illegal, point out the problem. If the coach tries to argue the legality of the play or insists that he'll run it in spite of your warning, end the conversation with a statement like, "That's your choice, Coach, but I want you to know that if you run it as you describe, we'll have to flag it." Communicate any information to the rest of the crew.

**Ask for the name of the "get back" coach.** Find out the names of the coaches designated to keep players in the team area. Write down the names to tell the sideline officials whom they can work with to help with sideline control.

**Ask about the availability of emergency help.** If a game requires medical personnel to be present before a game can start, ask the coach or game administrator to identify them for you and find out where they will be stationed during the game.

**Cover special activities or field conditions.** Make sure the coaches know of any special pregame or halftime activities (e.g. homecoming, parents' night) or anything unusual about the field. Any half-time activities that last more than 28 minutes will be reported to the UIL in an Incident Report.

**Confirm the start time.** Make sure both head coaches know when the game will start, when you want captains for the coin toss and when teams are to come onto the field.

**Review 30-second timeouts.** It's helpful to remind the head coaches that if they want a 30-second timeout instead of a normal timeout, they need to communicate that to a wing official.

**Ask if they have any concerns or questions.** Give the coach the opportunity to ask a question or bring an issue not covered.

**Be professional but be brief. Get the game off to a good start.**