

Empire 8 - Liberty League Informational Meeting

Sunday April 3, 2016 at St. John Fisher College

Meeting begins promptly at 3:00 PM.

John Swartz begins with a brief introduction of what transpired to change the landscape of DIII Football in New York State. ECAC is out of the Empire Chapter footprint with the exception of Alfred State and Hamilton College. Swartz also speaks of the viability of the Empire Chapter going forward.

Swartz speaks of the new organization and that Bill Schuster is requiring all Active Officials must be a member in good standing with the EAIFO, including Supplemental Officials and Clock Operators.

Swartz also mentions that nothing else has changed within the structure of the Empire Chapter. He mentions that Bill will address his policies soon but think of this as a positive; a win/win for everyone and the leagues, granting more opportunities to improve.

Swartz opens the floor to questions covering the Empire Chapter and its role. With no questions brought forth, Swartz then introduces Schuster, mentioning to all that Bill finished his last round of Chemo on Friday, 4/1/16.

Schuster thanks everyone for attending, stating that it is important to step forward. He runs through the timeframe of the change.

- Approached 1 ½ years ago by an AD about the possibility of being the Supervisor of Officials.
- In Mid-January, he received a Request for Proposal from the Empire 8 / Liberty Leagues.
- Met with the members of the Empire Chapter Executive Committee to form his proposed off-field staff and discuss his proposal.

Schuster states that he was interviewed by the two Commissioners, two coaches and two Athletic Directors. Amongst the concerns posed were the following:

- Several Officials worked games that involved Alma Mater.
- Unbalanced crews; coaches concerned that their games weren't "important enough" to have the **A** crew work.

- Lackadaisical Officials; they appeared to be going through the motions, where it was an honor to work DIII in the past it now was more of a chore. How do you restore the pride?
- Test scores; coaches became aware that many members working their games were not well versed in the rules, noting that at least one Official missed 18 out of 25 questions on the Closed Book exam and still worked on the field.
- Accountability; errors made on the field and nothing was done to correct or solve the issue. Policy for corrective actions not set, but termination will occur if you work a game at Alma Mater.
- Due to staffing issues, some games involved Officials that had not been trained; High School Officials used out of necessity.

Schuster was asked how to remedy the state of officiating that they had witnessed. He discusses first, his background. He has spent the past 16 years as an on-field NFL Official and the last 9 years working with the MAC as a grader for Bill Carollo; he has experience working with college Officials. The Big 10 influence will help with technology and serve as a vehicle for the training and film study needed to improve the staff. Secondly, his off-field staff will include four Observers and four Division I graders. The observers will be Jim Sheehan, Don Cerra, Stan Evans, and Dick Kingdon. The graders are Jim Eckl, John Swartz, Mark Kluczynski, and Bob Bittner (Schuster will also grade). There will be film of JV games available. He will be training the camera people as to angles, etc. to enhance the quality of the game tapes.

While the proposed budget will not allow for all games weekly to be observed, the hope is for each school to be served at least twice, with some flexibility should the need arise for more.

Schuster has the 1st year Officials stand and introduce themselves to the body.

Schuster breaks-down the staffing needs for the 2016 season, stating that some weeks there is a need for 9 crews (63 Officials) but most weeks there are 6 games. He is still awaiting the finalized schedules from some schools, and thus may need two crews of Officials from the Western New England Chapter as well as help from the Supplemental Officials during open dates.

Game Fees; used national pay structure by contacting Mark Baltz. Unfortunately the budgets were set for 2016 therefore he does not believe there will be an increase this season, but expect the fees to increase to \$225 per game in 2017.

Payments will be rendered as they were by each school in 2015; no changes. If you do not receive payment DO NOT contact schools; contact the supervisor through your Referee.

Several members arrive late; Schuster talks accountability and integrity to include being on time for everything; meetings, pre-games and again stresses not to work schools you attended.

Upon request, Swartz addresses Friday night lightweight games, stating that he will reach out to Jim King / Jim Maconaghy regarding the Empire Chapter working these games and that he will assign them. Schuster now discusses working with the High School Boards and not to turn back games late; work your schedule unless ill, injured, etc.

Schuster details his application process and the importance of having the proper cell phone number, email address, and desired position. The Northeast Football Officials Consortium (NFOC) will be a required membership for all Clock Operators also and everyone must be a member in good standing of the EAIFO. Officials (especially new) may be asked to work clock assignments.

Schuster outlines his Code of Conduct; expectations of all members. They are as follows:

- Gambling; stay off social media.
- Physical Conditioning; clinic weigh-in but no fitness workout.
- Commitment to Knowledge; tests will be sent out and returned to the Supervisor soon, don't be late submitting the answers.
- Integrity; do not contact coaches or administrators. The supervisor is the conduit, not Officials.

Schuster next discusses the technology to be used as a tool to increase feedback from coaches and graders. These will aid in promoting Officials knowledge and awareness of mechanics through film review.

1. QWIKREF – Discusses the what/why/how of fouls and exceptional conditions that occur during games. Holds Officials accountable for fouls and can be accessed by coaches, graders, and observers.
2. HUDL – Allows all to watch film of games. Officials have access to their assigned games only. Graders, Observers, and the Supervisor have access to all games.
3. ZEBRAWEB – Webinars, meeting attendance, more administrative details.

Jeff Heidman asks about Arbiter and Schuster replies it will not be used. The leagues have offered to pay for QWIKREF and ZEBRAWEB.

Jeff Kyles asks about CFO; will this be mandated to join? Answer is highly recommended but not required. He needs to ask Baltz if this is required to work NCAA playoff assignments.

Schuster discusses membership fees; NFOC dues are \$125 to include administrative and clinic costs. Tom Dowd asks if this is the same fee for clock operators; no, CO's are \$50.

Schuster announces the clinic date as Saturday, 7/23 at a site TBD. Bob Waggoner will attend along with others including Empire Chapter DI Officials. There also will be a Saturday in August that will be a voluntary on-field mechanics review prior to the start of the season.

Sean McKinnie asks if it is required for Supplemental Officials that are attending another clinic; answer is no.

Dave Scott asks if Big Ten film will be available to Officials; answer is yes.

Vince Joy asks if Physicals will be required; answer is yes. Schuster then brings up independent contractor forms; undecided if required. Suggests that everyone join NASO for insurance coverage.

Schuster discusses the name NFOC; the commissioners decided on the name due to possible changes within the structure in the East in future years; more to follow on that upcoming. Design still in progress for letterhead and apparel, which will be available to all at a later date.

Schuster mentions he has contacted and will have a working relationship with the ECAC, CIP, ACC, and Big Ten to supply Officials. He stresses he will not bring onto the field High School Officials and retired Officials as was the practice of the previous administration.

He plans having Bi-weekly staff memos in season.

Game day dress code will be sport jacket and golf shirt, mock turtle, dress shirt; no ties.

Dave Scott asks if QWIKREF replaces NCAA game reports; answer is yes.

Some other game day administrative issues; Pre-game 3 hours prior to KO, post-game tailgating; no alcohol on campus. Kevin Gentz asks about JV assignments for pre-game; answer is two hours.

Schuster mentions QWIKREF reports must be completed on Sunday after a Saturday game. Grades will be completed by Tuesday. He is looking into free conference call numbers as well.

Swartz discusses the COC question of the day (Charlie Leatherhead) and will request the Empire Chapter email addresses be included.

Vince Joy asks if there is a timeline for graduating from a school; answer is no. You cannot ever work that school.

Swartz asks if the NFOC will use CCA mechanics'; answer is yes, to the letter.

Schuster introduces Kluczynski as his 'rules man'; any questions will be directed to Mark. He then gives everyone his cell # (Bill Schuster: 585-362-3920).

Rules must be studied; this point is stressed.

Chuck Winterberger asks for a copy of the Code of Conduct and Expectations. This will be distributed.

Date for release of schedules and crews not set; expected around June 1st. He is attending the Empire 8 coaches meeting May 10. (The Liberty League does not participate).

New rules PowerPoint presentation from Bill Carollo will be distributed once released very shortly.

Attendance at clinic is mandatory; no exceptions, including Clock Operators.

Swartz asks about the possible exclusion of WPI, Merchant Marine, and Springfield. It has been discussed to have those three schools to leave the Liberty League one year early; no decision has been made.

Tony Costanza asks about regionalization of JV assignments on Sundays. Schuster states that he is going to attempt to keep those as local as possible. He will use those games to work in the newer Officials as well as Officials that may be preparing for a future position change.

Scott inquires about contacting coaches during the week of a scheduled game (Referees only); answer is yes.

Scott follows that question with one about facilities; should this be discussed. The answer is yes, and he wants to be notified of poor locker room facilities, etc. via email immediately following the game.

Schuster discusses the landscape in 2017; 17 schools in 2016 down to 14 in 2017. It is possible something may be worked out with Hamilton and Alfred State. It is also possible the Hartwick may change Leagues from the Empire 8 to the Liberty League. This move would give both leagues an auto bid to the NCAA playoffs (7 schools apiece).

NFOC has a working relationship outside of Empire Chapter with Ohio and Pennsylvania organizations. Don't expect a suspension won't happen; it will if warranted. The other groups would supply your replacement.

NCAA playoffs; expects two crews to be assigned by the NFOC. This will be confirmed at a later date.

ECAC Bowls are a thing of the past, but there are discussions between the leagues and schools currently on having a similar week of games played; no decision to date.

Swartz asks how if fouls will be graded or if there will be just comments; answer is yes, there will be grades assigned. This is part of the accountability the leagues are stressing.

Kluczynski has some remarks for the group. He discusses comments from the coaches regarding Officials not excited to work the games. Why? He doesn't understand how men can work these games and not realize it is an honor and a privilege. He talks about taking advantage of the technology that will be provided to make you a better Official; work at it through rules and film review. He offers to help at any time.

Schuster asks for guys to share rules questions and interpretations with the entire group; we all can learn from discussions.

Swartz says that we all want the group to improve; don't be afraid to call or email anyone on the staff.

Meeting notices will be sent out soon; tests coming very shortly. Go to local study group sessions, as many as possible.

Brian Finn inquires about 2016-2017 Rule Books; will they be supplied by the EAIFO? This practice appeared to have stopped the past two years. Swartz answers that the EAIFO has decided not to order rule books as they are cost-prohibitive. Schuster agrees, stating that the thought process is while it is not mandated for DIII Officials to join the CFO; the NCAA wants participation in the CFO and is making it too costly to order separately. CFO members receive a hard copy along with the Mechanics Manual.

At this point, Schuster asks if there are any further questions; no one responds and the meeting is adjourned. The 1st year Officials area asked to stay and receive their positions for the upcoming season.

