

Taking a Knee

There are two different scenarios to think about when A is taking a knee:

1. Does A have a lead of 8 points or less, or
2. Does A have a lead of 9 or more points?

If A's lead is 9 or more points, it is at least a two possession game.

It is important to remember that the offense doesn't get to unilaterally determine when competition stops in a game — especially when the difference in score is fairly small. If the QB (or coach) says he's taking a knee, tell him: "Go to your knee immediately after the snap." There's no rule that makes him do it, but there's also no rule that prevents the defense from cleaning his clock if he's just standing there.

Communicate to both teams, "**IF** he takes a knee, the play ends when his knee touches the ground. **IF** he takes a knee, let's not have any late hits. Be smart. Play the whistle. Protect yourself and your QB. The game is not over." Don't ever tell the defense to let up. That's not your right. What if you tell them to ease up and the QB muffs the snap? You will have taken away an opportunity for them. Don't do it.

Specifically communicate with the offensive line, tell them "Continue to play football. Protect yourself and protect your QB." They need to know more than anyone that the game IS NOT over. Problems arise in these situations arise when the offense just stands up figuring the whole world is resigned to them winning and their QB kneeling down. Then the defensive end comes through untouched and nails the QB (legally) just as he gets the snap and as he begins to kneel. An official should never be resigned that the game is over until the clock strike 0:00 and the Referee sounds the whistle while holding the ball over his head.

Game situations makes a big difference, so how you handle things when there's a 6 point spread is a lot different than when the spread is 15 points or higher. In a 2 or more possession game, move in closer and communicate the same as above. Also communicate to the B team bench – the B coach may give his team instructions to stand down. Relying on the judgment of teenage boys, half of which are about to lose a game and/or may have just been beaten like a rented mule for 47 minutes, is unwise. Don't think for a second that some kid isn't viewing this as his time to finally get his "shot" in.

When a game is ending with a team taking a knee, the crew needs to be on high alert – its DEFCOM 5.

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3. Specifically communicate with the offensive line, tell them "Continue to play football and protect your QB."