**“Common Sense Officiating”**

James Kearney, college and high school official, spoke before a packed house of ANEFO Officials on Monday, August 29, 2016. He stressed how important it is to have common sense on the football field. No surprise when he stated, “We all make mistakes. But, what is important is that we learn from those mistakes and try not to make them again.” He stressed studying and continuously learning the rules of football in order to be a fair to all the players on the field. Never stop learning the rules he told the audience. He argued convincingly, “No one pays to see the officials!”

Jim had several suggestions for both new and experienced officials. Some of those suggestions include the following: Study the rules. Understand and interpret proper application of the rules. Never stop learning. Arrive at the stadium early and enter the site unnoticed. Be properly attired, appearance matters, and be relaxed. Be confident, know the rules, and know what to expect of yourself. Hustle to get the ball, but don’t over hustle. Be aware of the action around you. Communicate clearly with the crew, especially when reporting penalty calls. Speak up if you think the crew is in error; don’t wait until you get to the locker room if you can fix something on the field. Communicate professionally with the players and the coaches. Don’t dodge their questions. Don’t make something up. Don’t give misinformation. Say, “I am sorry coach that is not how I saw it.” Read the play – pause and think – then react appropriately. Don’t anticipate a foul, pause and be sure it is a foul before you throw your flag. If you did not see the beginning of the play or what might look like an infraction, pass on throwing the flag. Pass on fouls that have no bearing on the outcome of the play. However, call all personal fouls and fouls that involve player safety. Don’t let the crowd or the coaches influence your calls. Don’t disqualify a player unless the action was detrimental to a team, a player, or an official. Practice preventative officiating. Be consistent throughout the entire game; don’t call something in the fourth quarter that you passed on in the first half. Keep officiating after you throw you flag. When reporting fouls, know the number of the player who committed the foul and interval during which the foul occurred. Don’t lose your cool, don’t be afraid to pick-up your flag if you made an error. If you see a ‘take-down’, call that type of a holding foul. And finally, always try to be in position to make the call.

All of which are inspiring suggestions. Jim closed with reminding the members of the ANEFO that we all represent the game of football. He stated, “We must officiate with confidence and the highest integrity!” His remarks were spot-on. One could not help to notice how diligent and passionate James Kearney is about the game of football! Thank you Jim.