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JOHN McDAID: Fairly straightforward presentation this year. I'm bringing more video. In fact I'm bringing solely video to you this year and I don't have a lot of slides with statistics on it, and if you're anything like my officials that's going to make you happy.

We'll get into it here with the topics I'll be talking about. The recap from the last year, the 2022 season, talk about new playing rules. We'll talk a little bit about how I evaluate our officiating program from year to year, and this is where I'll use some of the video and then we'll have a wrap-up.

The statistics really haven't changed a lot when I look at it in a five-year window. That's why I'm not really bringing you a lot of graphs this year. I'll talk about the five or six statistics we talk about every year that we use to assess where we are in the state of the game.

Scoring at FBS level for the '22 season, 54.7 points per game. The SEC was slightly higher than that at 56.2 points per game.

We're off about five percent at the national level. We're off about five percent from last year, but it's been relatively flat for the three years prior to that.

Plays per game. 178 plays per game nationally; 177 in the SEC. This is the lowest in the last five years, but the high and low for the last five years has only been a difference of about four plays per game.

Average game time at 3:21 and the SEC was 3:25. This has been oscillating for a 10-year period with a high of about 3:24 and a low of about 3:16. That tells me we're kind of in a steady sea.

Year over year six minutes difference might be a lot, but we virtually haven't changed inside this band of between 3:24 and 3:16 for 10 years.

Fouls per game. 4.1 across FBS last year; we had 4.7 in



the SEC.

The high and low here over the five-year period has been 14.5 down to 14.1.

Replay stops per game. It has been at 2.2 for five of the last seven years. This tells me it's rather flat, as well. We're at 2.4 stops per game in the SEC for the '22 season.

Lastly, targeting per game. This has come down significantly. At the FBS level we've had consecutive year over year reductions of 35 percent and 25 percent, for a total of a 68 percent decrease in targetings per game across the FBS level.

It was at 0.16 per game at the FBS level last year. That's a little bit over-- one per just more than -- every six games. We were at .11 in the SEC; it's one every nine games.

So not a lot of change statistically in the game. As you would imagine, we haven't really had a lot of rule change year over year.

This is an off year, which means that we're only going to address safety issues. We have the ability to address image of the game issues and we have the ability to address recent rule changes that didn't quite work out like we wanted.

As an example, last year we had a fairly significant change in blocking below the waist rules. They went and evaluated the effectiveness of that rule change from the '22 season. The rules committee liked where it is. They haven't done anything with it.

There was something that happened this off-season that is fairly -- I don't want to say unusual, but doesn't happen necessarily each and every year. There was a committee that was stood up by the board of managers and CFO to study the timing of the game.

For purposes of looking at game duration -- game time, but more importantly game duration and the number of plays. This committee was made up of athletic administrators. There was some commissioners, athletic directors, other



athletic administration types on the panel.

Representation from the coaches from AFCA, Mr. Todd Berry, and there was some individuals related to FBS officiating that were on this committee.

The study they did is informed the playing rules committee, and what they eventually came up with were timing rule differences.

I do want to underscore this. There is not concern about game times averaging 3:21. There is concern for game times that are 3:45 and greater.

Similarly, there's not necessarily concern for games that average 180 plays a game. There is concern for games that have 200 plus plays per game. There are a number of them each and every year in each and every conference.

The first rule change has to do with -- we used to have rules that said if we had a foul that occurred during a play where time expired at the end of a quarter and the penalty for that foul was accepted, we would extend that quarter for an untimed down before we'd change to go to the next quarter.

We're no longer going to do that for the first and third quarters. We're just going to -- we accept the penalty, we are going to flip the field, enforce it, and then go from there.

The second rule change that is of the same ilk is that we're no longer going to allow teams to request multiple charged time-outs during the same dead ball period.

This most prevalently played out when a team is so-called trying to freeze a kicker for a field goal attempt. If a team calls a charged time, they need to wait for the ball to be snapped again before they can request another time, should they have any left.

These two rule changes address overall game time. They do not address -- they will not impact the number of plays in a game.

Conversely, the third rule change is the one that everyone is talking about, and that is that we will no longer stop a clock except for under two minutes in each half when we have a first down inbounds.

We do have first downs out of bounds. We will still will stop the clock there because the play ended out of bounds and we'll start when the ball is ready for play back out at the succeeding spot. We don't do that obviously under two minutes.

This basically duplicates the rule that we see in the National Football League. The committee discussed other changes to the timing rules for the purposes of driving down the number of plays per game. This is the only one that they have adopted.

There were several reasons for that, but one of the more compelling reasons is I'll use the analogy of a doctor prescribing medication. The doctor doesn't want to prescribe too much medication right out of the gate because if there's a change in the pace, you don't know which medication is attributed to what.

We have this rule change for this year. We're going to see what effect it has on our game from an overall number of plays.

Obviously if you decrease the number of plays, you're probably also going to drive down the game time. But the impetus for this rule change was to address the number of plays in our game.

There's editorial changes every year in the rule book, and primarily they're there to clarify. Maybe there's some language that has to do with a rule and we're trying to interpret it from an officiating standpoint. It's not necessarily clear what rules makers had as intent, so there's an editorial change to come in and clarify.

Sometimes we have an editorial rule change that effectively is a rule change, and we do have one this year that falls under that category, and we have at least one play from the SEC last year that was an impetus for making this editorial change.

For running and roughing into the kicker, the standard of when those rules are in effect is when it's obvious a scrimmage kick is going to be made and before the kicker carries or possesses the ball outside of the tackle box.

Let me go back to the first standard, the standard of it's obvious a kick will be made. It's not the most specific of standards. You put 10 officials in a room, show them a play and say, is it obvious that a kick is going to be made here when a kicker is under duress and you're probably going to get a 40/60 or even a 50/50 split.

The second, no longer in effect when the ball is carried outside the tackle box. That was put in place approximately 10 years ago to address rugby style kickers, that if they are carried the ball outside of the box before kicking it they no longer get running and roughing protection.

The change this year is they're going to add a third

standard, and that is not only are the running and roughing rules not into effect if the ball is carries outside the tackle box, which is five yards laterally.

If the kicker possesses or carries the ball more than five yards behind his original position at the snap, they are no longer -- those protections of running and roughing are no longer in effect.

Let me show you a play from last year that illustrates why this editorial change was made.

You can see we have a snap well over the kicker's head, and if we play it back from the beginning and you watch the ball, it follows those inbound lines at the top of the screen, which tells you that ball is still in the tackle box.

The definition of the tackle box is five yards laterally from the position where the ball is snapped all the way back to the end line behind the offense.

So in this particular play last year the ball was in the tackle box, and it came down to the standard, is it obvious a kick is going to be made. Our official had a flag down for roughing the kicker, and I asked him after the game why did you believe running and roughing are in play, and he said, I never had the kicker possessing the ball and showing any intent to run, and I had the defender coming in not making any effort to block the kick but just to contact the kicker.

That's fairly reasonable to me. If that's the two judgments he brought to bear to try to determine is it obvious a kick is going to be made, I supported him on that.

But in looking at this play this past off-season, the care takers of the game said, maybe this doesn't meet the spirit of the rules to give him protection in this particular instance.

So the editorial change comes into play here. Obviously the kicker possesses the ball more than five yards behind his original position. He will no longer be afforded the protection for running and roughing.

He could be fouled with an unnecessary roughness foul, but on this particular play I don't think we have that here.

With this editorial change, this play from last year would be no foul. The correct call would be no foul.

Can we toggle back to our slides?

I said I'd talk a little bit about how I evaluate our officiating program, how I evaluate a season once we get into the

winter.

We have metrics that we use. We grade every game. Every flag that's thrown, we grade whether it's correct or incorrect. If we don't have a flag thrown we evaluate whether or not we missed a foul that should have had a flag down.

We have two main ratios we use from those statistics. What's your ratio of your correct calls to incorrect calls and what's your ratio of correct calls to your missed calls.

In the replay booth we look a things like what's your percentage of correct outcomes, what's the number of missed stops we had where there's compelling video evidence that we should have stopped the game but we failed to do so.

What's the number of reviews that we have that are longer than two minutes, and what's our overturn percentage.

The reason we measure overturns is replay is predicated on the idea of correcting obvious errors. It's also predicated on the notion that we're looking to stop the game only when there's compelling evidence to do so.

If you're stopping the game and let's say 80 percent of the time you're either confirming or you're going with stands, we're stopping the game too much. We're interjecting ourselves into the game, impacting the flow of the game, and not coming out with any different ruling than what was ruled on the field.

Nominally we're looking for an overturn percentage that's at least in the 40 percentile to be considered a successful year in the replay booth.

So I do all this, and I have one-on-ones with all our officials and they get feedback from the season and they get these statistics back, depending on whether they're on-field official or a replay official.

But there's another way I evaluate the season. That's what I want to talk to you about today. That is what were our rough spots during the season, and what created those rough spots.

There's basically two categories that usually when I look at those rough spots, they fall into one.

Our mission every game, we want to be perfect. It's not reasonable to expect we're going to be perfect. It's not even reasonable to expect -- we had I believe 105 games that an SEC crew officiated last year. It's not even reasonable to expect that one of those games was going to

be perfect, right.

What we're trying to do is make sure that any incorrect or missed calls that we have don't create a critical pivot point in the game that directly contributes to the outcome of the game.

What does that mean? If we're going to miss a call, it's much better to do so in the first quarter than it is late in the fourth quarter in a one-score game.

I'm going to show you a bunch of video here now and we'll go over it. Let's just stop it right here. Let me talk a little bit about this.

The first category of what challenges us is where is the game evolving the quickest, and whatever parts of the game are evolving the quickest, that's what's creating a challenge for us because we're trying to have officiating stay ahead of that.

We're trying to be consistent with our officiating. And if the game evolved so quickly that we're starting to see things we've never seen before, it's hard to get 100 plus officials all on the same page if it's changing week in and week out.

The first scenario is the tactics that the defense is using pre-snap. In this video here we're going to watch several things, and Ryan is going to play it back and forth. We're going to watch this backer first right here. You can see he's giving some kind of cue to his teammates to what we call stem, change their lateral position.

We're going to watch these three plus this end here. They're all going to change their lateral position, right?

And then we're going to watch the offense to see how they react.

The standards that come into play here, there's only three. The offense has one. They cannot make any movement that simulates the start of the snap before the start of the snap.

On defense they have two standards. They can't do anything that's an unnatural part of the game that's done to get their opponent to false start; nor can they use any kind of signal that emulates the signal the offense is using to start their play.

So this particular offense is using a clap cadence. So if this backer is using a verbal cue, it stands to reason he's not using a signal that is trying to emulate his opponent.

The stemming here, I don't see anything that resembles

doing something -- this is a part of the game, right? I don't see any extra hand motions, stomping of a foot.

This end that collapses down, he's not doing any -- he's going down in a three-point stance. We need to evaluate all of this when this happens each and every time, and we need to do it consistently such that what we create -- the foul here would be delay of game defense if we were to have a foul.

Every time we call delay of game defense or don't call delay of game defense it's consistent game in and game out. We got to give fair protection to the offense here.

Go to the next play, Ryan.

Watch what's going on here and to our left on the line. This doesn't resemble football. This is movement that is done for the purposes of trying to get your opponent to false start.

Go to the next one, Ryan.

We're going to watch this backer right here, No. 32, just inside the line to gain, and right there he starts clapping. That's crept into our game. This particular play when I look at it, I don't think it's intentional by this backer. I think he's legitimately trying to get his teammates' attention.

But again, the standards don't necessarily speak to what's fair here, and we need to come up with an interpretation that says, if this backer claps like this, it's clear the ball is snapped because of this clapping. What is the equitable thing to do?

Next play.

It's even crept in -- we're going to watch this coach up here on the sideline. Might be tough for you to see. Right there he starts clapping, and watch the snap. It's his clapping that causes the ball to be snapped.

One of the challenges we have in this part of the game is that our mechanics for decades didn't account for having eyes on all 11 defensive players prior to the snap. We have examples now where safeties -- players off the line of scrimmage, and in this particular instance a coach on the sideline clapping which emulates their opponents' offensive cadence and causing the ball to be snapped early.

This part of the game is evolving -- actually there's one more play I'm going to show you.

Defense in the neutral zone, and we'll see the snapper here just reach out. What's he trying to do? He's trying to

create a dead ball off-side defense contact in the neutral zone.

The defensive offside rules are such that if you go in the neutral zone causing your opponent directly above you or if you're head up on someone, each opponent on either side, they're protected from false starting. If they false start because you come into the neutral zone, it's offside, it's not a false start.

This snapper, this center, is trying to get an offside call by virtue of reaching out and touching this defender.

But is that reaching out and touching that defender, is that a false start or is it just an action to basically buy himself an offside?

All of these things are changing rapidly in our game. A lot of these things I just showed you in the last five plays we didn't see five years ago. We didn't necessarily see four years ago.

We work hard to create consistency when the game changes this quickly, but it creates rough spots for us.

Let's go to the next play.

Next thing we're going to talk about is defensive holding. Before we watch the video, it wasn't too long ago that contact downfield, legal contact downfield between defender and receiver, was up around the shoulders.

Jams were up in the shoulders, on the side of the shoulder, into the arms. What we're seeing is more action down around the waist, clutching at the pants, clutching at the beltline, clutching at the jersey that's like in the small of the back for the purposes of upsetting the route that the receiver is running.

Let's watch these plays. We're going to watch the No. 2 receiver in the slot at the bottom.

Clearly grabbed around the waist. We play it a couple times, watch the quarterback. He has eyes on him. That's where he wants to go with the ball. We put a flag down for defensive holding here and it was a correct call. Let's look at the next play.

We're going to watch this receiver in motion. We're going to have a replay here on TV. We called defensive hold here. It's a clutch of a jersey. It's not big.

Some of you are probably thinking, this resembles a play that was a pretty critical play in last year's Super Bowl late in the game. It's almost identical to that play. A defensive

hold was called that basically allowed the team to retain possession and win the game.

Go to the next play.

We're going to watch this halfback that's at the bottom of the screen release. Defender goes and reaches around his waist, but unlike the first play I showed you, do we really have a restriction here? Is there a point in time that we can say the defender takes a step away from the receiver by that clutching around his waist that he takes him off his route? We have a flag on this one; I did not support this flag.

Even though the defender did put his arm around the beltline, he doesn't really have any material effect on what happened with the receiver. This action by defenders, the clutching of the jersey of the beltline, at the pants, we're seeing more and more of. It's challenging us, and we need to create frameworks and judgments to create consistency.

Go to the next play.

We're going to talk about defensive technique here for a second. Let's go back, and we're going to watch the No. 1 receiver at the top of the screen.

This defender, I'll call this the bail technique. More than a generation ago this is how we played defensive secondary football. We kept the receiver in front of us at all times.

This is a man-on-man, one-on-one assignment at the top of the screen. He's bailing to keep deeper than the receiver in front of him, and he plays the ball and is able to get in front of him on an underthrown ball and intercept it.

Go to the next play.

We're going to watch the defender over the No. 2 receiver at the bottom of the slot. He's going to use what we call a catch technique, and his technique here is to wait for the top of the route or the break in the route from the receiver.

If he's going to cut out or in, that would be the top of the route, and wants to get it jammed in there to upset his pattern. If he's going to go on a post or corner route, he wants to get a jam at the break to upset his route, and then he's going to play him one-on-one.

And you'll notice his technique that once he catches him, he gets on his hip and runs stride for stride downfield.

Go to the next play.

Watch at the top of the screen. This is what a catch route

looks like where the defender gets fooled.

Go back.

He's trying to get a jam at the break at the top for the post route. Gets his hips swiveled the wrong direction. He's clearly beat. Unlike the previous play where the defender gets the jam in at the break and is on his hip and running stride for stride, this defender gets beat, and you can see he's trying to play catch-up now.

Go to the next play.

This is what we're seeing more and more of. One-on-one coverage at the bottom of the screen with a jam technique. He wants to jam him, get underneath him, and stay on his hip from an underneath position.

One of the ways the game is evolving from the way it's officiated is three or four years ago if I showed this play to officials they would say this defender is beat.

Well, this defender is doing exactly what his coach is teaching him, the technique the coach wants him to use. Get on that hip from an underneath position and run with him stride for stride down the field.

So when this pass is underthrown and the receiver is trying to slow up to come back and get the pass, who's creating contact against whom? The defender is not beat. He's not playing the ball, I'll grant you that, but he's not beat.

Is it fair to create a defensive pass interference call here or is it fair to say this is nothing? The defender has his position on the field fairly. He's running stride for stride on the hip of that receiver.

It's the underthrown ball that creates this contact, and it's no harm, no foul either way.

Go to the next play.

This defender at the bottom of the screen also wants to jam and run, but he gets fooled. He doesn't know who to jam and he is beat. He's not on his hip. He's trying to make up that distance. The ball is underthrown, the receiver slows down, and now he creates contact.

I don't believe this play is a foul because of the timing. The timing is just not there. But the defender in that position isn't the same as the defender in the previous position.

These are the things that coaches come to about making sure we understand the technique, the strategy they're trying to use, and make sure our officiating is matching.

Next play.

This is the last play I have for you. We're seeing a lot of this. There is nothing in the college game that prevents you from having a formation where there's an ineligible player uncovered. So think about a tackle where there's no receiver on the line of scrimmage outside of him.

If you do this, you have to have an eligible number covered up somewhere, or you're going to have five players in the offensive backfield, which is an illegal formation.

But there's nothing to prevent you from doing this. Offenses are getting really creative and trying to create situations to deceive the defense.

Before we even start this play, this appears to be what? This appears to be three receivers outside the tackle at the bottom of the screen with an end at the bottom of the screen, a slot just inside of him, and then a wingback off that tackle up there.

We have two players obviously in the backfield, and then we have a receiver that we're going to assume is on the line of scrimmage at the top of the screen.

That would create illegal formation with a slot at the bottom, the wingspan, the running back and the quarterback as the four players in the offense in the backfield.

Let's go ahead and put the shift on.

Now we have a shift here down at the bottom of the screen. What we would do as officials, is there doesn't appear to be any intent to deceive. Receiver at the top is on the line of scrimmage. What was the slot at the bottom now has moved on to the line, and so we're going to put the receiver at the bottom of the screen off the line.

We still have four players in the offensive backfield, and everyone is good.

Now let's go ahead and put this player in motion. Stop.

By rule, you can only go in motion if you're a back. Prior to me putting him in motion we said we're going to put him in the line of scrimmage to create a legal formation.

Down at the bottom of the screen I said we were going to put the No. 2 receiver on the line, the No. 1 receiver off the line. Well, if that's the case, we have five players in the offensive backfield when the ball is snapped here.

What is the offense trying to do? The offense is trying to give an initial look that says that that receiver at the top of the screen is on the line of scrimmage, and when they read that, the defense is going to say that receiver is anchored.

They're going to come up with some kind of defensive formation to account for that anchored receiver, but now when they send him in motion like this, you're trying to overflow the bottom of the screen with more offensive players than defensive players. That's what they're trying to do.

This is putting a lot of pressure on us officials because on a regular formation we don't get technical with what's a back and what's a lineman. We use the expression with receivers that are split out wide a blade of grass. I can cut a blade of grass between two receivers, one is off the line, one is on the line.

Well, we can't do that in these kinds of situations because there's the intent to deceive here. Let's make sure we're on the same page. There are legal ways to deceive. Not all deception in football is illegal, right?

But this deception crosses the line into something that's illegal, and it's putting a lot of pressure on our officials.

Can we go back to the slides?

The second area -- I told you when I looked at the rough spots there's two categories. The second category are simply we had an incorrect call or we had a missed call at a really key part of the game.

I don't have any video on this, so for those of you that enjoy looking at train wrecks and plane crashes on YouTube, you're going to be disappointed.

It's just plain the timing of the incorrect call or the missed call was very unfortunate from the standpoint of the competitiveness of the game and the moment in the game that it happens.

Our officials get an 11-game schedule each year. If you take the 180 average plays in a game, that's about 2,000 plays an official is going to work for me each and every season.

If an official has been with me for about five years and -- I'd say the average years of service for our staff is probably north of five years -- that's 10,000 plays that official has worked in the SEC over that five years.

When an official has an incorrect call or a missed call at a key moment in the game, I judge that official in the context

of those 10,000 plays. I say this for this reason: When an incorrect call or missed call occurs and our television partner shows the play using two, three, five different camera angles, slow motion, multiple times, and the fan can discern that that was probably incorrect or that was probably a missed call, the court of public opinion judges that official using a sample size of one.

It's likely that if a quarterback goes out in game 7 of a season and throws a couple of interceptions, that quarterback is not going to be evaluated by his coaching staff based on those two pass attempts. He's going to be evaluated what did he do in the previous six games? What did he do for all the practices leading up those seven games? What did he do for the month of August in their camp?

Similarly that's how I judge our officials. They're rarely being judged in a sample size of one when they have an incorrect call or a missed call. They're being judged inside the thousands of plays they have on video that I've seen them while they've been with us on our staff.

So as a wrap-up, we have nine crews in the SEC on field and replay. It's approximately 100 officials. We had five of our officials, four on field and one replay be asked to join the National Football League this past off-season, so we have new officials in their place.

We also had two officials -- I'm sorry, we had five officials that retired, three on the field and two in the replay booth. So there's a number of new faces that we have on the field.

No real major recalculations in our judgments year over year. No major rule changes -- the one rule change with the timing doesn't really affect how we officiate the game.

We just need to remember to not stop the clock if it's first down in bounds outside of two minutes in each half.

Our clinic is next week in Birmingham. We'll hammer the fundamentals. We'll talk about these evolving parts of the game that I showed you here with the expectation of trying to get everyone on the same page, that their frameworks of judgment, their mechanics, their standards are all similar so that we can create the consistency that the coaches are looking for.

It's great to see everyone here today, and I wish you a very rewarding 2023 football season.

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