



# Videoing games: guidance for teams and media organisations

BAFA Rules Committee

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## 1 Introduction

Increasingly, British American football games are being given video coverage, usually via a streaming service. This document is intended to provide guidance to teams and media organisations (both professional and amateur) so that the coverage is the best that it can be, even when the technical facilities are less than Super Bowl quality.

Where relevant, we attempt to distinguish between advice for when videoing games for coaching purposes and when doing so for media.

References are given where relevant to playing rules and BAFA regulations. The current rules and regulations can always be found on the BAFA Rules Website at <https://rules.bafra.info/>.

If you plan to stream a game, this guide needs to be read in conjunction with the [National Leagues Streaming Code of Conduct](#).

### 1.1 Terminology

In this document, we use the term "media" to represent all persons individually and collectively who are at a game to report on it. This includes written and spoken word, still and moving pictures, with or without associated sound.

To "broadcast" a game is to make images or sound of it available to an audience beyond the members of the home and away clubs and BAFRA. This could be live, on a delay, or a recording that is made available after the game has finished. This is irrespective of whether the audience members pay or not.

A camera is any device that can record and/or transmit images (still or moving). A microphone is any device that can record and/or transmit sound.

Game management is normally the home team.

## 1.2 Purposes of video

We can identify at least four potential purposes for videoing a game:

1. a team videos their own games for subsequent coaching and training uses; or
2. a team videos the game of a future opponent for scouting reasons; or
3. BAFRA videos the game for its training and evaluation needs; or
4. a club wants to broadcast their game to a wider audience.

Much of our guidance applies to each of these equally, but where that isn't the case, we point it out below.

## 2 Consent to videoing games

Normally, for a game to be videoed, consent needs to be obtained from all those who might appear in the video. This consent will normally be implicit, but there should be opportunity for consent to be refused in certain circumstances:

1. To broadcast a game (Purpose 4), consent is needed from the competition authority and there needs to be no objection from the away team. Consent is not needed for solely training or scouting purposes (Purposes 1-3). When filming a game for scouting/BAFRA purposes, it is courteous to inform the Head Coach of each of the teams involved before the game.
2. For all purposes, if a game involves a child or vulnerable adult, explicit consent must be given by their parent or guardian. Such consent would normally be obtained by a club from its members well before their first game. Provided it is unanimous, the club can pass this fact on to its opponents in the event that they wish to broadcast the game (Purpose 4).
3. Spectators implicitly give consent by attending the game. Good practice for game management might be to set aside a specific area where spectators will not be videoed.
4. Players, coaches, other team personnel and officials implicitly give consent by participating in the game.
5. Game management may refuse admission to the venue to persons who they believe will video the game but not in the game's best interests. Where the venue is a public area and access cannot legally or practicably be withheld, and the person(s) continues when asked to stop, this should be notified to BAFA Competition Management.

However, consent cannot be withheld for games designated by BAFA as showcase events (e.g. finals). Where there are safeguarding or other concerns, BAFA will work with affected people to reduce their risks and concerns within the parameters of the event.

### 2.1 Restrictions on what can be videoed

Rule 1-4-11-g states: "Any attempt to record, either through audio or video means, any signals given by an opposing player, coach or other team personnel is prohibited."

The BAFA Code of Practice (<https://www.bafca.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/BAFCA-Code-of-Practice-2024-Final.pdf>) says with respect to scouting:

- It is unethical under any circumstances to scout any team, by any means whatsoever except in officially scheduled games.
- BAFA guidelines state that when filming a game for scouting purposes the common courtesy of informing the Head Coach of the teams involved should be applied.
- The Head Coach shall be held responsible for all scouting carried out on behalf of their team.
- The agreed exchange of film in the interest of good working practice in game preparation is encouraged by BAFA.

### 3 Location of cameras and operators

The location of any cameras and communications equipment must be agreed with game management, who have the final say (Rule 1-4-11). This is true for all Purposes.

#### 3.1 At field level

The rules define a "safety zone" that surrounds the field of play and end zones. This normally extends 18 feet (approximately 6 metres) from both the sidelines and the end lines, which is where the limit lines are (or should be). No spectator, photographer, videographer or other media person may be located within the safety zone at any time during the game except the period between halves and during the coin toss ceremony.

There are a few exceptions to this.

1. Hand-held cameras under the supervision of the media partners may briefly be between the limit lines and the sideline after the ball is dead and the game clock has been stopped (Rule 1-2-3-b). This exception does not allow cameras to be on the field of play or in the end zone at any time during the game.
2. Fixed cameras can be attached to a goal, provided they are *behind* the uprights and crossbar (Rule 1-4-11-c Exception 1). Cameras can also be embedded in any pylon (Rule 1-4-11-c Exception 2), though a goal line pylon would be obvious first choice for this.
3. A camera (with no audio component) can be attached to the uniform or equipment of an official, provided the official agrees (Rule 1-4-11-c Exception 3).
4. A team videographer may be in the team area, but their video cannot be used in any live broadcast during the game (see section 3.4 below).

#### 3.2 Above field level

Outside the safety zone, cameras can be located anywhere that is convenient. Obviously, the best vantage points are those with height, giving a clear view above the heads of participants and spectators. The best locations within a stadium may be easily determined - other broadcasters may have used them before.

Any platform or similar used as a camera position must be located completely outside the safety zone. In addition, the Work at Height Regulations 2005 need to be applied (by game management or the media partner, as appropriate) if a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury.

If there is only one camera, there is an obvious preference to locate it on or near the midfield line - that will give coverage of both ends of the field equally, but not good coverage of scoring plays since they usually start near one of the goal lines. If there are two cameras, placing them on or near the 30-yard lines maintains equal coverage of both ends. At four or five cameras, it might be worth placing two on or near the goal lines.

The following is a suggestion for how to locate cameras to minimise the distance between a camera and the play.

Number of fixed cameras	Location to maximise coverage at both ends	Maximum length of field covered by each camera (assuming 100yds + 10yd end zones)
1	midfield line	120yds
2	30-yard line, 30-yard line	60yds
3	10-yard line, midfield, 10-yard line	40yds
4	5-yard line, 35-yard line, 35-yard line, 5-yard line	30yds
5	goal line, 25-yard line, midfield, 25-yard line, goal line	25yds

We refer to the "midfield line" because not all fields are 100 yards, so the midfield line might be the 45 rather than the 50.

An alternative viewpoint is behind an end zone, but experience shows that this isn't very useful (except possibly to coaches) and if there is a camera behind only one end zone, some action may be at least 120 yards away.

From a game coverage point of view, it is useful if not all cameras are located on the same side of the field, or behind the same end zone.

### **3.3 Aerial cameras**

You cannot use an aerial camera unless it is on cables over the field (Rule 1-4-11-c Exception 4). We are not aware of any American football facility in Great Britain that provides that.

All drones are prohibited over or near the field (Rule 1-4-11-d). If a drone is spotted intruding into the playing enclosure (the stadium perimeter if there is one, 150 metres otherwise) the referee will stop the game until it has departed.

### **3.4 Cameras in the team area**

The only cameras allowed in either team area are those belonging to the teams themselves (Rule 1-4-11-c Exception 5). This video cannot be used during any live broadcast of the game. This is to prevent the opposition from gaining an advantage from what the camera might see.

It is permitted for game management to provide monitors near the team area so that coaches and players can see what is broadcast during the game. If this facility is available for one team, identical functionality must be available for the other team as well. Either both teams have it or neither does (Rule 1-4-11-a). If one breaks, the other must be switched off until the first is fixed. A team may also provide its own mobile device(s) to access a broadcast near the team area – in this case, identical capability only applies to connectivity to the broadcast, not to the device(s) used.

## **4 Sound issues**

Relevant to Purpose 4, the rules specifically prohibit microphones for media purposes on anyone on the field or team areas, except the referee for their announcements (see section 7.5 below). Rule 1-4-10 prohibits this for players and Rule 1-4-11-e prohibits it for coaches.

Microphones set up to capture general game and spectator noise are allowed, but bear in mind that not everything that is said on the field, in the team areas or in the crowd is broadcastable.

## **5 Sharing coverage**

### **5.1 Coaching**

Whether produced by a team itself or by a media partner (Purposes 1 and 4), it is usual for the teams to share video with their opponents as soon as possible after the game (usually within 24 hours).

There are currently no sanctions for teams not doing so, but please do everything possible to facilitate this.

### **5.2 Officiating**

Officials learn a lot from being able to see themselves and their calls on video.

Unlike coaching use (Purposes 1 and 2), which tends to focus only on live-ball action, officials are equally interested in dead-ball coverage, so please do not switch a camera off at the end of a play - keep it running and pointed at the action until all action is completed.

Please share Purpose 1, 2 and 4 coverage with BAFRA (email [video@bafra.info](mailto:video@bafra.info) or share through services such as Veo, QwikCut or Hudl) as soon as possible after the game (usually within 24 hours).

There are currently no sanctions for teams not doing so, but please do everything possible to facilitate this.

### **5.3 Disciplinary purposes**

For all Purposes, if an incident occurs on the field, get as good coverage of it as possible since the coverage may also be used by BAFA as disciplinary evidence.

Note also that any coverage of a game may be used as evidence to either: (i) uphold an appeal or otherwise cancel a disqualification that was imposed during the game (Regulation 3.3.11); or (ii) generate a disciplinary case where the coverage shows evidence of foul play that should have resulted in a disqualification (Regulation 5.2.3 and Rule 9-6-2).

There is a statutory duty on any BAFA organisation videoing a BAFA event to take all reasonable steps to record any breach of the BAFA Regulations that may occur. This includes the aftermath of any serious foul on the field or misconduct off it (Regulation 4.7.9).

We are aware that video operators may not always be aware that a disciplinary incident is taking place, so if in doubt keep the camera rolling, though not necessarily broadcast the scene.

## **6 Linking to instant replay**

### **6.1 Process for agreeing to use instant replay**

We encourage the use of video to provide an instant replay facility wherever possible. Officials accept that they won't always see everything and so video provides a useful backup to their on-field decision making. If a game is being broadcast by a professional production company (a subset of Purpose 4), we would expect this facility to be available. We do not expect replay to be based on video coverage produced for coaching purposes (i.e. Purposes 1 and 2) or BAFRA training (Purpose 3).

Rule 12 covers all aspects of video review including defining which plays are reviewable and which are not. Note that most reviews will come from the officials - each team loses the ability to request review after it has had an unsuccessful challenge or has run out of timeouts. There is no limit on the number of officiating reviews, and no time limit for a review, but the officials are encouraged to have regard for the duration of the game and not instigate reviews that would have little impact on the game.

We allow three formats for instant replay:

1. The most common one is where there is a Video Judge viewing play and replays on a monitor and able to communicate with the on-field officials (Rule 12-2-1-a).
2. An option is for the on-field officials to be able review plays on a big stadium screen. This is not permitted though when one team has control of which plays to show on the screen - there either must be a neutral screen operator or a video judge who can do that (Rule 12-2-1-b and c). (This is why Purpose 1 video could not be used, for example.)
3. The third option is for there to be a monitor near the field of play (outside the safety zone) and well away from spectators and sideline personnel. This needs to be a large monitor, not simply a tablet computer, to ensure that the referee gets a satisfactory quality view. Any team proposing to do this must get an OK from the BAFA Rules Committee about the quality of their setup (Rule 12-2-1-d).

To the best of our knowledge, options 2 and 3 have not yet been used in any BAFA competition.

If there is a technical or other problem that means that replays cannot be provided, the review function is suspended, at least until the problem can be rectified. In the worst-case scenario, the game will be officiated as normal.

What we definitely do NOT allow is for a team to request use of replay when not allowed by rule. For instance, a coach says to an official, "let me show you the last play on my tablet/phone". That is explicitly deemed to be unsportsmanlike conduct (Rule 9-2-1-a-1-m).

### **6.2 Managing expectations of replay**

When we know that a game will have replay, we have in the past provided some advice for coaches about how camera locations and angles are key to what can be reviewed effectively. Notes include:

- a camera on the half-way line is more likely to be useful for plays near midfield than ones in or near the end zones
- plays where the camera is moving may have motion blur because the camera is panning
- even the best-sited camera doesn't have x-ray vision to see through players, especially in close line play

In practice, that means that the proportion of plays where video gets a good enough view of the action to be decisive will be well short of what people expect from NFL or NCAA TV coverage.

## **7 Editorial fairness**

There are no "rules" covering media broadcasters, though stadium announcers ARE "persons subject to the rules". However, that does not mean that anything goes. The media is responsible for its own editorial decisions, but we expect that they will be fair to everyone. We do not want anyone to "bring the game into disrepute".

Therefore, the following principles should be taken into consideration when videoing a game for Purpose 4.

### **7.1 Fairness to teams**

In order to ensure fairness to both teams, announcers must not describe the play to the advantage or disadvantage of either team, especially when the ball is live (Rule 13-6-2-b). By common sense, this should also apply to video commentators whose words can be heard by anyone subject to the rules (including players, coaches and other team personnel) either directly or through accessing a livestream.

## **7.2 Fairness to officials**

Officials do a tough job and deserve respect for that. They don't see everything, and replay exists as a facility to improve what they can see.

They also make mistakes occasionally, but experience shows that where a player or coach (or commentator!) has a different interpretation of a rule from an official, it is usually the official who is right. All BAFRA officials undertake a tough annual written exam and periodic assessments of their on-field performance.

Criticism of specific officials is obviously demotivating to those involved, but it also has a negative effect on the public's general perception of officials, leading to a shortage of people willing to undertake the role. That is bad for any sport.

## **7.3 Presenting the sport in a good light**

American football is a sport that we all enjoy - else we would not be involved in it. However, it comes with its risks and challenges and what happens on the field needs to be considered in those contexts. We all hope that the sport will continue to develop and grow, and a positive light is the one most likely to encourage that.

## **7.4 Sensitive events**

Sometimes sensitive events happen during a game, for example an injury to one of the participants. Media partners should abide by good practice and not focus on the injured person while they are being treated. The more serious the injury, the more respect should be paid to the individual involved.

Additional care needs also to be taken when the game involves participants who are children or vulnerable adults. Some children in care should not be videoed so videoing should only be done with explicit permission from both participating clubs.

## **7.5 Media access to officials during the game**

We encourage media to provide a microphone for the referee's announcements. Ideally these are also audible to the in-stadium spectators so that they can hear the announcements at the same time as the online audience. The referee's microphone must be under their control and cannot be open (even to the media) at other times (Rule 1-4-13-a).

The referee's microphone is normally either a lapel clip one (preferred) or a headset mounted one. Either way it needs to be hands-free so that the referee can give their signals while making their announcement.

A referee can choose whether or not to use a media organisation's equipment. Note also that a referee may choose not to use multiple microphones for stadium and media purposes - it is best if they share the same feed and, if not, the stadium should take priority (since the media should be able to pick up announcements using other microphones).

## **7.6 Media access to officials after the game**

The media can have access to the referee after a game if there are any contentious calls that need explanation. This would be off-camera and not for broadcast or recording. It would not be on or near the field - rather it should be in or immediately outside the officials' changing room. Please give the referee an opportunity to (a) have a brief respite after the game; and (b) consult with colleagues about the details.

This is an opportunity to be given the facts of the call as seen by the officials. It is not an opportunity to question the judgement of the officials.

# **8 Intellectual property**

Section 8 of the BAFA Contact Competition Rules and Regulations – 2026

(<https://www.britishamericanfootball.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2026-Contact-Competition-Rules-and-Regulations-1-November-2025-final.pdf>) sets out BAFA's position on this. These are reproduced below.

At present, we are deliberately non-prescriptive about the status of the intellectual property created by the coverage of games. This is a matter for agreement between the parties involved, normally the game management and their media partner(s).

We suggest that an agreement be in writing and cover the issues raised in this guidance, including:

- the location of cameras microphones and personnel during the game, and that this will always be in accordance with the rules and all health and safety guidance
- the media coverage be shared with the two teams and the officials as soon as possible after the game

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- whether the media coverage can be used for instant replay
- the media partner will respect the need to be fair to all participants in the sport

The general legal position is that, unless agreement is made to the contrary, copyright in any photograph or video taken at a BAFA game is retained by the photographer.

## **9 Appendix - extract from BAFA Contact Competition Rules and Regulations – 2026**

### **8. Competition Properties**

8.1 All rights and properties associated with the National Leagues are owned, controlled and managed by BAFA.

8.2 Permission must be sought from competition management should any team seek to have their League fixtures broadcast (either via visual or audio means) by an external party. All broadcasters will be required to comply with terms and conditions as set by BAFA.

8.3 The Governing Body may elect to broadcast any regular season, play off or National Finals game. They will organise broadcast of any particular league game by notifying the host team at least 10 days prior to the scheduled date for any such game during the regular season, and 5 days prior to the scheduled date for any such game during the post-season.

8.4 If your organisation plans to live stream any game played under the auspices of BAFA (such as National Leagues, friendly or exhibition matches), or you permit this to be done by a third party, you must notify your opponent of your intention to do at least 48 hours in advance of streaming and seek their consent. If sufficient notice and / or permission is not given, the game should not be streamed. Where Mixed U19 or Mixed U16 games are to be live streamed, you must work with the opposing team(s) to ensure that consent is in place from the parents / guardians of all participants under 18. Where notice and / or consent has not been given and a stream takes place, teams should consider this to be 'playing under protest' and should notify their opposition that this is the case and then notify Competition Management within 48 hours of the game taking place.

8.5 Teams may not attach monikers to official competition names without the approval of competition management. This encompasses sponsor names and any other title.

8.6 In maintaining copies of fixtures, results and tables on team websites, social media or any other form of publication, teams must use the full titles and correct signage (if used) of the competition (incorporating sponsor names where appropriate).

8.7 Teams failing to comply with the above may face a fine of up to £500.