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AFI Tackle  
Game Rules

2022

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# Major Rule Changes for 2022

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The numbers and letters in the left column refer to rule, section and article, respectively.

## MAJOR RULES AND EDITORIAL CHANGES for 2020-2021

- 1-2-4-a Extend team area and coaching box to 10-yard lines
- 1-4-2-a Player numbering includes 0
- 1-4-5-a-1 Jersey restrictions: additional requirements
- 1-4-5 Penalty Jersey restrictions: additional penalties
- 1-4-5-c-1 Numerals on jersey must be centred and distinct
- 3-1-1 Pregame warmup procedures specified
- 3-1-3-e Extra period becomes a try down beginning with the third
- 3-1-3-f 2-point try required from second extra period
- 3-2-3-a-1 Extend period for foul on field goal
- 3-2-3-a-2 Extend period for illegal touching violation
- 3-3-5-b Feigning injuries: report suspicions to relevant authority
- 3-5-3-b Team B substitution altered to live-ball foul
- 6-3-14 Defensive restrictions on scrimmage kicks
- 9-1-3 Remove when in question on targeting (forcible contact)
- 9-1-4 Remove when in question on targeting (defenseless player)
- 9-2-1-a-1-1 Feigning injuries is unsportsmanlike conduct
- 9-2-2-f No more than one player allowed to be assigned same number
- 10-2-5-a-1 Certain fouls can carry over to extra periods
- 10-2-7-a Penalties for all personal fouls carry over (special enforcement)
- 12-3-4-c-4 Minimum 3 seconds in period after review

## Summary of differences between IFAF and AFI rules

<b>IFAF Rule</b>	<b>AFI difference</b>
1-1-7	Teams subject to the rules.
1-2-1	Field dimensions and markings.
1-2-3	Limit lines markings.
1-2-4	Team area and coaching box markings.
1-2-5-f	Procedure for missing field goals.
1-3-2-f	Obtaining balls from ball person.
2-12-2	The two goal lines are 80 yards apart.
3-2-1	Length of Periods and Intermissions (No 1-minute intermission between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> , and 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> periods, 10 minute halftime, no darkness related rules).
3-3-2-d-4/ 3-3-2-e-18	Clock starts on the ready after incomplete pass outside 2 minutes of each half.
6-2-1	Free kick Out of bounds – receiving team may put the ball in play 25 yards beyond Team A’s restraining line.
7-3-8	Penalty for pass interference is 10 yards instead of 15.
9-1-1/9-6	Flagrant fouls mandating video review by authority after the game.
9-1-3/9-1-4	No video review on targeting foul.
9-2-1-b-6	Further restrictions on chain and down marker personnel.
9-2-5-a	Restriction on Team members in the team area (team area vs coaching line).
Rule 12	Video Judge.
Appendix E	Officials jurisdiction on equipment.

# Points of Emphasis

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For 2020, the Rules Committee wishes coaches, players and officials to take particular note of the following points.

## Officiating mechanics

IFAF has adopted, on the recommendation of the Rules Committee, a change to Rule 11-2-2 regarding officiating mechanics. Officiating responsibilities and mechanics are specified in the current edition of the *Manual of Football Officiating*, published by IAFOA. Officials are responsible for knowing and applying the material in the Manual.

The purpose of the rule change is to standardize officiating mechanics, especially across different size crews. The IAFOA manual is the only one that covers crew sizes from 3 to 8.

The Rules Committee felt that it was best for officials working international games to do the same things that they do regularly in their domestic games (as far as possible). Since domestic games are frequently officiated by 4 or 5-man crews, or in some countries using larger crews is limited to special occasions, it is important that the responsibilities and tasks associated with the officiating positions change as little as possible. The one exception to this principle is obviously that on larger crews, the responsibilities of the crew can be spread out over more people and each individual official can therefore have less to do.

It is a recipe for disaster for officials who are working in their national competitions for most weeks of the year to have to switch to a somewhat arbitrarily different set of mechanics for the one or two weeks of the year when they work international competition.

We hope that in due course all national federations and/or officiating organizations will choose to standardize their mechanics and so facilitate the effectiveness of their officials in international competitions. We recognize that this will be difficult for organizations in USA, Canada and Japan to adopt.

The IAFOA manual is the one previously known as the "BAFRA" manual. An IAFOA Mechanics Committee has been established, based on the existing international advisory committee that has determined recent versions.

What IFAF is doing here is simply standardizing the way that games are officiated. No other major international sport has different positioning requirements for its officials. American football outside the USA (and Canada and Japan for historic reasons) should be no different.

## **Sideline control**

The Rules Committee requires competitions and teams to enforce strictly the rules regarding the team area and coaching box (Rule 1-2-4-a, back of the limit lines between the 25-yard lines), and the space between the limit lines (Rules 1-2-3-a and 1-2-3-c, up to 18 feet outside the sidelines and the end line) and the sidelines. These field-level locations must be kept clear of persons who have no game responsibilities.

The field level is not for spectators. It must be reserved for those who are performing a service associated with action on the field of play and for administration of the game. Simply put, no job means no sideline pass.

Each team is limited to 25 persons in its team area, not including squad members in full uniform, who shall be wearing a team credential. (Full uniform is defined as equipped in accord with IFAF rules and ready to play.)

Persons who are directly involved in the game include (Rules 1-1-6 and 1-2-4-b): coaches, team managers, medical and athletic training staff members, athletics communications staff members, and game operations staff members (e.g. chain crew, ball persons, official media liaisons, technicians responsible for coach-to-press box communications).

Editorial changes to Rules 9-2-1 and 9-2-5 make it clear that coaches and other team personnel may not come on to the field to protest officiating decisions or to communicate with players or officials without permission of the referee. Coaches and other personnel must be behind the coaching line while the ball is alive and during the immediate action after the ball becomes dead.

While the game is in progress, the area from the limit lines outward to the stadium seating, outside the team area, should be restricted to credentialed media camera operators and on-air personnel, cheer team members in uniform, and stadium security personnel in uniform. Game management personnel and stadium security personnel are responsible for enforcing these restrictions.

## **Protection of defenseless players**

In 2009, we introduced a separate rule prohibiting forcible contact with the helmet and targeting a defenseless opponent. These actions are now in two rules: Targeting and Making Forcible Contact With the Crown of the Helmet (Rule 9-1-3) and Targeting and Making Forcible Contact to Head or Neck Area of a Defenseless Player (Rule 9-1-4). Use of the helmet as a weapon and intentional (targeted) contact to the head or neck area are serious safety concerns. The penalties for fouls under both 9-1-3 and 9-1-4 include automatic disqualification. We continue to emphasize that coaches and officials must be diligent to ensure that players understand and abide by these rules.

Rule 2-27-14 defines and lists characteristics of a defenseless player.

## **Helmets**

The helmet is intended to protect the player from head injuries. It must therefore be fitted properly so that it does not come off through play. Coaches, equipment managers and trainers must be diligent in seeing that players wear the helmets properly, and officials must firmly enforce the rules requiring chin straps to be tightly secured. The rules (Rule 3-3-9) now call for the player whose helmet comes off to leave the game for one down, unless this is the direct result of a foul. The player may remain in the game if his team is granted a charged timeout.

## **Uniform and equipment compliance**

There is a growing trend in the game with players choosing not to wear their uniform and/or required equipment properly. It is the responsibility of the team to ensure that the equipment uniform rules are understood and followed by players. The responsibility of officials is to enforce the rule when any player is clearly non-compliant.

For 2022, all officials will be alert to players that wear their pants and knee pads significantly above the knee and be prepared to take action. In addition, compliance to the jersey rule is important and officials noticing players out of scope with the rule should get this corrected or send the player out of the game. This also includes a tee shirt that is untucked and hanging down below the top of the pants.

The intent with this point of emphasis is not to distract officials or make them overly involved in equipment monitoring, but to encourage officials to act when

players are blatantly disregarding the rules involving the uniform. Pregame warmups and dead-ball periods are a good time to be proactive with players concerning the uniforms and equipment.

## **Safety and medical considerations**

IFAF strongly encourages coaches and officials to be diligent in ensuring that players wear mandatory equipment. It is especially important that equipment and pads cover body parts for which they were designed. Particular attention is drawn to wearing uniform pants that cover the knees, which are easily abraded when exposed. With the change made in 2018, players, coaches and athletic equipment managers should ensure that the player's pants are fitted properly. Since 2018, pants and knee pad must cover the knee to be legal. If an official discovers illegal equipment, or a player failing to wear mandatory equipment properly, that official should inform the player that he must leave the game for at least one down and is not allowed to return until the equipment is made legal. The player may be allowed to return without missing a down if his team takes a charged team timeout, but only if he corrects the equipment issue as well.

Football players are especially susceptible to methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), which is resistant to commonly used antibiotics. MRSA results in lost playing time. More seriously, it has caused the deaths of several football players in recent years. MRSA is typically transmitted through body-to-body contact from an infected wound or via an object (e.g. towel) that has come in contact with the infected area. It is not transmitted through the air, is not found on mud or grass, and cannot live on artificial turf.

IFAF recommends observing common medical precautions to reduce the incidence of MRSA infections, including:

- Proper wearing of all required padding and uniform equipment.
- Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water, or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer routinely.
- Immediate showering after all physical activity.
- Avoid whirlpools or common tubs when having an open wound.
- Proper washing of athletic gear and towels after each use.
- Referring all active skin lesions to the athletic trainer.
- Covering all skin lesions appropriately before participation.

## **Illegal contact against a quarterback/passer**

Because of the position he/she plays, the passer is often in a vulnerable position, with little or no opportunity to protect himself/herself from, or to prepare for, forcible contact. In recognition of this, there is an explicit rule (Rule 9-1-9) which addresses this unique situation: "No defensive player shall unnecessarily rough a passer when it is obvious the ball has been thrown."

The rule then lists several specific acts which are illegal when they occur against a passer or potential passer. The Rules Committee over time has given options for the quarterback to protect himself, such as sliding feet first and to legally throw the ball away outside the tackle box. Because of the extremely vulnerable situation the quarterback position presents, it is important for all officials, and the Referee and the Centre Judge in particular, to be a presence and recognise when a passer is threatened or is in a defenseless position. The crew must make it a priority to afford the quarterback all the protection the rules provide.

## **Feigning an injury**

With the advent of the up-tempo offences, there is a growing trend of defensive players feigning an injury in an attempt to slow down or break the rhythm of the offense and try to gain an unwarranted time out. Full protection under the rules should go to a player that indeed suffers an injury; however, on occasion some potential injuries are suspect, happen in unusual windows between plays and appear to be staged. The Rules Committee had serious discussions on potential options on how to best take away incentive for players to feign an injury including adding additional time before a player could return from injury.

Head Coaches are expected to set a culture within their team to ensure that this type dishonest action will not be tolerated. Feigning an injury is not ethical and is completely against the spirit of fair competition. It is a bad look for our great game.

## **Concussions**

Coaches and medical personnel should exercise caution in the treatment of a participant who exhibits signs of a concussion. See Appendix C for detailed information.

## **Sportsmanship**

After reviewing a number of plays involving unsportsmanlike conduct, we are firm in our support of the unsportsmanlike conduct rules as they are currently written and officiated.

Many of these fouls deal with players who inappropriately draw attention to themselves in a premeditated, excessive or prolonged manner. Players should be taught the discipline that reinforces football as a team game.

IFAF reminds head coaches of their responsibility for the behavior of their players before and after, as well as during, the game. Players must be cautioned against pre-game unsportsmanlike conduct on the field that can lead to confrontation between the teams. Such action can lead to penalties enforced on the opening kickoff, possibly including disqualification of players. Repeated occurrence of such unsportsmanlike behavior by a team may result in punitive action by IFAF against the head coach and his team.

## **Unsportsmanlike conduct / taunting**

Currently the Rules Committee is satisfied with the solid judgement that officials are demonstrating evaluating celebration issues and this focus will continue. For the 2022 season, it will be a point of emphasis for officials to penalise any taunting action that is directed at an opponent. These actions are a bad look for the game and can lead to unnecessary confrontations between the teams and must be eliminated. The pregame warmup rules have been modified recently to ensure proper sportsmanship before our contests.

Officials should be vigilant during the pregame whenever players are on the field. Unsportsmanlike acts before the game are detrimental to the sport and must be cleaned up.

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# The Football Code

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## Introduction

Football is an aggressive, rugged contact sport. Only the highest standards of sportsmanship and conduct are expected of players, coaches and others associated with the game. There is no place for unfair tactics, unsportsmanlike conduct or maneuvers deliberately designed to inflict injury.

IFAF believes:

- a. The Football Code shall be an integral part of this code of ethics and should be carefully read and observed.
- b. To gain an advantage by circumvention or disregard for the rules brands a coach or player as unfit to be associated with football.

Through the years, the rules committee has endeavored by rule and appropriate penalty to prohibit all forms of unnecessary roughness, unfair tactics and unsportsmanlike conduct. But rules alone cannot accomplish this end. Only the continued best efforts of coaches, players, officials and all friends of the game can preserve the high ethical standards that the public has a right to expect in the sport. Therefore, as a guide to players, coaches, officials and others responsible for the welfare of the game, the committee publishes the following code:

## Coaching ethics

Deliberately teaching players to violate the rules is indefensible. The coaching of intentional holding, beating the ball, illegal shifting, feigning injury, interference, illegal forward passing or intentional roughing will break down rather than aid in the building of the character of players. Such instruction is not only unfair to one's opponents but is demoralizing to the players entrusted to a coach's care and has no place in the game.

The following are unethical practices:

- a. Changing numbers during the game to deceive the opponent.
- b. Using the football helmet as a weapon. The helmet is for the protection of the player.

- c. Targeting and making forcible contact. Players, coaches and officials should emphasize the elimination of targeting and making forcible contact against a defenseless opponent and/or with the crown of the helmet.
- d. Using nontherapeutic drugs in the game of football. This is not in keeping with the aims and purposes of amateur athletics and is prohibited.
- e. "Beating the ball" by an unfair use of a starting signal. This is nothing less than deliberately stealing an advantage from the opponent. An honest starting signal is needed, but a signal that has for its purpose starting the team a fraction of a second before the ball is put in play, in the hope that it will not be detected by the officials, is illegal. It is the same as if a sprinter in a 100-metre dash had a secret arrangement with the starter to give him a tenth-of-a-second warning before firing the pistol.
- f. Shifting in a way that simulates the start of a play or employing any other unfair tactic for the purpose of drawing one's opponent offside. This can be construed only as a deliberate attempt to gain an unmerited advantage.
- g. Feigning an injury for any reason is unethical. An injured player must be given full protection under the rules, but feigning injury is dishonest, unsportsmanlike and contrary to the spirit of the rules. Such tactics cannot be tolerated among sportsmen of integrity.

IFAF also believes:

1. In his relationship with players under his care, the coach should always be aware of the tremendous influence he wields, for good or bad. The coach should never place the value of a win above that of instilling the highest desirable ideals and character traits in his players. The safety and welfare of his players should always be uppermost in his mind, and they must never be sacrificed for any personal prestige or selfish glory.
2. In teaching the game of football, the coach must realize that certain rules exist that are designed to protect the player and provide common standards for determining a winner and a loser. Any attempt to beat these rules, to take unfair advantage of an opponent, or to teach deliberate unsportsmanlike conduct, have no place in the game of football, nor has any coach guilty of such teaching any right to call himself a coach. The coach should set the example for winning without boasting and losing without bitterness. A coach who conducts himself according to these principles need have no fear of failure, for in the final analysis, the success of a coach can be

measured in terms of the respect he has earned from his players and from his opponents.

3. The diagnosis and treatment of injuries is a medical problem and should under no circumstances be considered a province of the coach.
4. Under no circumstances should a coach authorize the use of drugs. Medicines, stimulants, or drugs should be used only when authorized and supervised by a physician. Coaches should be aware that the willful oversight of drug abuse by players under their care may be construed as condoning such action. Coaches should be acquainted with, and remain aware of the current IFAF policy on drugs.

### **Talking to an opponent**

Talking to an opponent in any manner that is demeaning, vulgar, abusive or "trashy" or intended to incite a physical response or verbally put an opponent down is illegal. Coaches are urged to discuss this conduct frequently and support all officials' actions to control it.

### **Talking to officials**

When an official imposes a penalty or makes a decision, he is simply doing his duty as he sees fit. He is on the field to uphold the integrity of the game of football, and his decisions are final and conclusive and should be accepted by players and coaches. Our Code of Ethics states:

- a. On- and off-the-record criticism of officials to players or to the public shall be considered unethical.
- b. For a coach to address, or permit anyone on his bench to address, uncomplimentary remarks to any official during the progress of a game, or to indulge in conduct that might incite players or spectators against the officials, is a violation of the rules of the game and must likewise be considered conduct unworthy of a member of the coaching profession.

### **Holding**

Illegal use of the hand or arm is unfair play, eliminates skill and does not belong in the game.

The object of the game is to advance the ball by strategy, skill and speed without illegally holding your opponent. All coaches and players should thoroughly understand the rules for proper offensive and defensive use of the hands.

Holding is a frequently called penalty; it is important to emphasize the severity of the penalty.

## **Sportsmanship**

The football player or coach who intentionally violates a rule is guilty of unfair play and unsportsmanlike conduct; and whether or not he escapes being penalized he brings discredit to the good name of the game, which is his duty as a player or coach to uphold.

IFAF Rules Committee

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# RULE 1

## The Game, Field, Players and Equipment

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### SECTION 1. General Provisions

#### The Game

ARTICLE 1. a. The game shall be played between two teams of not more than 11 players each, on a rectangular field and with an inflated ball having the shape of a prolate spheroid.

- b. A team legally may play with fewer than 11 players, but a foul for an illegal formation occurs if the following requirements are not met:
1. When the ball is free-kicked, at least four Team A players are on each side of the kicker (Rule 6-1-2-c-3).
  2. At the snap, at least five players wearing jerseys numbered 50 through 79 are on the offensive scrimmage line and no more than four players are in the backfield (Rules 2-21-2, 2-27-4 and 7-1-4-a) (*Exception:* Rule 7-1-4-a-5). (**A.R. 7-1-4:IV-VI**)

#### Goal Lines

ARTICLE 2. Goal lines, one for each team, shall be established at opposite ends of the field of play, and each team shall be allowed opportunities to advance the ball across the other team's goal line by running, passing or kicking it.

#### Winning Team and Final Score

ARTICLE 3. a. The teams shall be awarded points for scoring according to rule and, unless the game is forfeited, the team having the larger score at the end of the game shall be the winning team.

- b. When the referee declares that the game is ended, the score is final.

## **Game Officials**

ARTICLE 4. The game shall be played under the supervision of the game officials.

## **Team Captains**

ARTICLE 5. Each team shall designate to the referee not more than four players as its field captain(s). One player at a time shall speak for his team in all dealings with the officials.

## **Persons Subject to the Rules**

ARTICLE 6. a. All persons subject to the rules are governed by the decisions of the officials.

- b. Those persons subject to the rules are: Everyone in the team area, players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, athletics trainers, cheerleaders, band members, mascots, public-address announcers, audio/video/lighting system operators, and other persons affiliated with the teams.

## **SECTION 2. The Field**

### **Dimensions and Markings**

ARTICLE 1. The field shall be a rectangular area, length - 80 yards, width - 53.3 yards, end zone length - 10 yards each.

### **Marking Boundary Areas**

ARTICLE 2. Measurements shall be from the inside edges of the boundary markings. The entire width of each goal line shall be in the end zone.

### **Team Area**

ARTICLE 4. a. On each side of the field, a team area between the 10-yard lines shall be marked for the exclusive use of substitutes, athletics trainers and other persons affiliated with the team. The front of the coaching box shall be marked up to six feet outside the sideline between the 10-yard lines.

### **Goals**

ARTICLE 5. a. Each goal shall consist of two white or yellow uprights extending at least 30 feet above the ground with a connecting white or yellow horizontal crossbar, the top of which is 10 feet above the ground. The inside of the uprights and crossbar shall be in the same vertical plane as the inside edge of the end line. Each goal is out of bounds (see Appendix D).

- b. Above the crossbar, the uprights shall be white or yellow and 18 feet, six inches apart inside to inside.
- c. The designated uprights and crossbar shall be free of decorative material (*Exception*: 4-inch-by-42-inch orange or red wind directional streamers at the top of the uprights are permitted./
- d. The height of the crossbar shall be measured from the top of each end of the crossbar to the ground directly below.
- e. Goal posts shall be padded with resilient material from the ground to a height of at least six feet. . Advertising is prohibited on the goals. One manufacturer's logo or trademark or an advertisement is permitted on each goal post pad. Team/national and competition logos are allowed. All padding is out of bounds.

## **Pylons**

ARTICLE 6. Soft, flexible four-sided pylons 4 inches by 4 inches with an overall height of 18 inches, which may include a two-inch space between the bottom of the pylon and the ground, are required. They shall be red or orange in color. One manufacturer's logo or trademark is permitted on each pylon. Team/national logos, competition logos and the name/commercial logo of the title sponsor of the game are also allowed. Any such marking may not extend more than 3 inches on any side. They are placed at the inside corners of the eight intersections of the sidelines with the goal lines and end lines. The pylons marking the intersections of the end lines and hash marks extended shall be placed three feet off the end lines.

- a. A displaced pylon is one that is no longer in its proper position. Unless it is obvious that at least some part of the pylon is touching the ground in the 4-inch by 4-inch square that is its proper position, the pylon is no longer a pylon for the purposes of the rules (e.g. Rule 8-2-1-a). A displaced pylon may be restored to its proper position at any time.
- b. Touching a displaced pylon that is partially or completely out of bounds makes the ball or player out of bounds (Rule 4-2).
- c. A displaced pylon that is completely inbounds is no longer a pylon and is to be considered as part of the playing surface.
- d. A displaced goal line pylon that is partially in its proper position is still to be regarded as a goal line pylon for the purposes of the rules. Only parts of a displaced pylon that are behind the vertical plane of the goal line are behind the goal line.

- e. If a goal line pylon cannot be stood upright, it should be positioned so that it lies on the goal line extended out of bounds with its base covering the sideline.
- f. If an end line pylon cannot be stood upright, it should be positioned so that it lies on the sideline extended out of bounds with its base covering the end line

### **Line-to-Gain and Down Indicators**

ARTICLE 7. The official line-to-gain (yardage chain) and down indicators shall be operated approximately six feet outside the sideline except in stadiums where the total playing enclosure does not permit. These must be operated on the side of the field opposite the press box.

- a. The yardage chain shall join two rods not fewer than 5 feet high, the rods' inside edges being exactly 10 yards apart when the chain is fully extended.
- b. The down indicator shall be mounted on a rod not fewer than 5 feet high operating approximately six feet .
- c. An unofficial auxiliary line-to-gain indicator and an unofficial down indicator six feet outside the other sideline are recommended.
- d. Unofficial red or orange non-slip line-to-gain ground markers positioned off the sidelines on both sides of the field are recommended. Markers are rectangular, weighted material 10 inches by 32 inches. A triangle with an altitude of five inches is attached to the rectangle at the end toward the sideline.
- e. All line-to-gain and down-indicator rods shall have flat ends.
- f. Advertising is permitted on the down and line-to-gain indicators. One manufacturer's logo or trademark is permitted on each indicator. Team/national and competition logos are allowed.

### **Markers or Obstructions**

ARTICLE 8. a. All markers and obstructions within the playing enclosure shall be placed or constructed in such a manner as to avoid any possible hazard to players. This includes anything dangerous to anyone at the limit lines.

- b. After the officials' pregame inspection of the playing enclosure, the referee shall order removed any hazardous obstructions or markers located inside the limit lines.
- c. The referee shall report to game management personnel any markers or obstructions constituting a hazard within the playing enclosure but outside

the limit lines. Final determination of corrective action shall be the responsibility of game management personnel.

- d. After the officials have completed their pregame inspection of the playing enclosure, it is the responsibility of game management personnel to ensure that the playing enclosure remains safe throughout the game.
- e. Yardage line markers must be placed at least 12 feet outside the sidelines and should be collapsible and constructed in such a manner as to avoid any possible hazard to players. Markers which do not conform to this standard shall be removed. Advertising on yardage line markers is permitted.

## Field Surface

ARTICLE 9. a. No material or device shall be used to improve or degrade the playing surface or other conditions and give one player or team an advantage (*Exceptions*: Rules [2-16-4-b](#) and c).

**PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot [S19: APS].**

- f. The referee may require any improvement in the field necessary for proper and safe game administration.

## SECTION 3. The Ball

### Specifications

ARTICLE 1. The ball shall meet the following specifications:

- a. New or nearly new. (A nearly new ball is a ball that has not been altered and retains the properties and qualities of a new ball.)
- b. Cover consisting of four panels of pebble-grained leather without corrugations other than seams.
- c. One set of eight equally spaced lacings.
- d. Natural tan color.
- e. Two 1-inch white stripes that are 3 to 3¼ inches from the end of the ball and located only on the two panels adjacent to the laces.
- f. Conforms to maximum and minimum dimensions and shape indicated in the accompanying diagram. (*Exception*: The competition authority may authorize the use of a smaller ball for competitions involving female or junior players.)

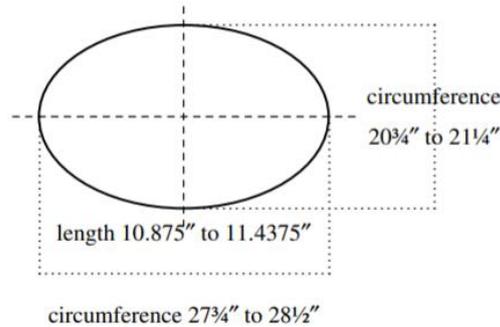


Diagram showing the longitudinal cross section of the standard ball. Maximum and minimum dimensions are used. This diagram is printed in order to secure uniformity in manufacture.

- g. Inflated to the pressure of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  to  $13\frac{1}{2}$  pounds per square inch (psi).
- h. Weight of 14 to 15 ounces.
- i. The ball may not be altered. This includes the use of any ball-drying or ball-warming substance. Mechanical ball-drying and ball-warming devices are not permitted near the sidelines or in the team area.

## Administration and Enforcement

ARTICLE 2. a. The game officials shall test and be sole judge of not fewer than three and not more than six balls offered for play before and during the game. The game officials may approve additional balls if warranted by conditions.

- b. Game management shall provide a pressure pump and measuring device.
- c. Unless provided by the competition authority, the home team shall provide a minimum of three legal balls and should notify the opponent of the ball to be used. The opponent may provide one or more legal balls in addition to those supplied by the home team if they wish to do so.
- d. During the entire game, both teams shall use only balls that meet the required specifications and have been measured and tested according to rule.
- e. All balls to be used must be presented to the referee for testing at least 30 minutes before the start of the game. Once the teams have presented the game balls to the referee, they remain under the general supervision of the officials throughout the game.
  - 1. The referee's first priority is to have three legal balls. If the competition authority or the home team does not provide at least three legal balls, the referee shall inform the away team and offer them the opportunity to provide legal balls. If fewer than three legal balls are provided, the game will proceed with only the legal ball(s) being used.

If no legal balls are provided, the referee shall select up to three balls which in his judgment are the best available.

2. When more than three legal balls are presented, the referee shall select the balls in best condition from those presented by both teams.
- g. The referee or umpire shall determine the legality of each ball before it is put in play.
- h. The following procedures shall be used when measuring a ball:
  1. All measurements shall be made after the ball is legally inflated.
  2. The long circumference shall be measured around the ends of the ball but not over the laces.
  3. The long diameter shall be measured with calipers from end to end but not in the nose indentation.
  4. The short circumference shall be measured around the ball, over the valve, over the lace, but not over the cross lace.

## **Marking Balls**

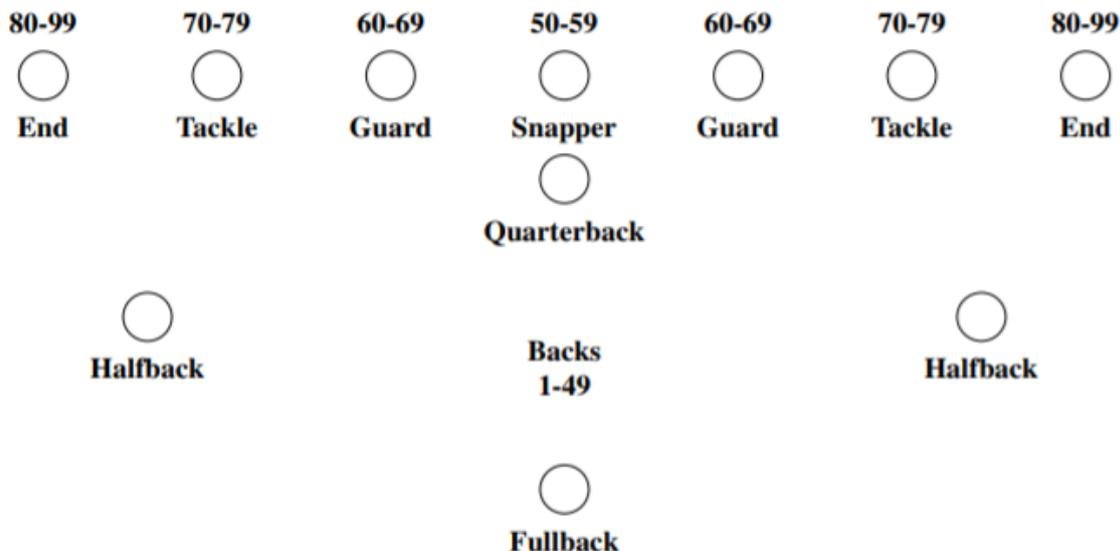
ARTICLE 3. Marking a ball indicating a preference for any player or any situation is prohibited.

**PENALTY – Live-ball foul. Fifteen yards from the previous spot [S27: UC-UNS].**

## **SECTION 4. Players and Playing Equipment**

### **Recommended Numbering**

ARTICLE 1. It is strongly recommended that offensive players be numbered according to the following diagram that shows one of many offensive formations:



### Players' Numbering

ARTICLE 2. a. All players shall be numbered 0 through 99. Any number preceded by the digit zero such as "099", "07" or "00" is illegal.

b. No more than one squad member may be assigned or wear the same jersey number (Rule 9-2-2-f) Markings in the vicinity of the numbers are not permitted.

**PENALTY [a&c]—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot [S23].**

c. When a player enters the game after changing his jersey number, the player must report to the referee. The officiating crew informs the opposing head coach and the referee announces the change. A player who enters the game after changing his number and does not report commits a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct .[S27]. (A.R. 1-4-2-I)

d. Two players playing the same position may not wear the same number during the game.

**PENALTY [d-e]—Live-ball foul. 15 yards from the previous spot [S27].  
Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47].**

### Mandatory Equipment

ARTICLE 3. All players must wear the following mandatory equipment:

- a. Helmet.
- b. Hip pads.
- c. Jersey.

- d. Knee pads.
- e. Mouthpiece.
- f. Pants.
- g. Shoulder pads.
- h. Socks.
- i. Thigh guards.

## **Specifications: Mandatory Equipment**

### ARTICLE 4. a. *Helmets.*

1. The helmet must be fitted with a facemask and a secured four- or six-point chin strap, all points of which must be secured whenever the ball is in play.
  2. Helmets for all players of a team must be of the same color and design.
  3. Helmets must carry a warning label regarding the risk of injury and a manufacturer's or reconditioner's certification indicating satisfaction of National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) test standards. Reconditioned helmets shall show recertification to indicate satisfaction with the NOCSAE test standard.
- b. *Hip pads.* Hip pads must include a tailbone protector.
- c. *Jersey.* See Rule 1-4-5.
- d. *Knee pads.* Knee pads must be covered by pants. Furthermore, the pants and knee pads must cover the knees. No pads or protective equipment may be worn outside the pants. (See Appendix E.)
- e. *Mouthpiece.* The mouthpiece must be an intra-oral device of any readily visible color. It must not be white or transparent. It must be made with FDA-approved base materials (FDCA) and cover all upper teeth. It is recommended that the mouthpiece be properly fitted.
- f. *Pants.* Players of a team must wear pants of the same color and design.
- g. *Shoulder pads.* There are no specifications for shoulder pads. (See Appendix E.)

- h. *Socks*. Players of a team must wear socks or leg coverings that are identical in color and design. (Exception: Unaltered knee braces, tape or a bandage to protect or prevent an injury, and barefoot kickers)
- i. *Thigh guards*. There are no specifications for thigh guards. (See Appendix E.)

## Jersey Design, Color and Numerals

### ARTICLE 5. a. Design

1. The jersey must have sleeves that completely cover the shoulder pads. It must not be altered or designed to tear. The jersey must be full-length and tucked into the pants or made even with the waistline. No other undergarment (e.g., T-shirt) shall extend below the waistline at the torso. It must cover all pads worn at or above the waist. A second jersey meeting all requirements of Rule 1-4-5 worn concurrently is allowed. Vests and/or altered jerseys with zippers, Velcro, clasps or other fasteners are not allowed.
2. Other than the player's numbers, the jersey may only contain:
  - Player's name;
  - Team name;
  - Mascot name;
  - Sleeve stripes;
  - Logo for team, competition mascot, game memorial, or the military;
  - Authorized advertising material;
  - The letter "C" to identify a team captain; or
  - The team's national flag.
3. Any item in paragraph 2 must not exceed 16 square inches in area (i.e., rectangle, square, parallelogram), including any additional material (e.g. patch).
4. A border around the collar and cuffs not more than 1 inch wide is permissible, as is a maximum 4-inch stripe along the side seam (insert from the underarm to pants top).
5. Jerseys may not be taped or tied in any manner.

- b. Color.

1. Players of opposing teams shall wear jerseys of contrasting colors. Players on the same team shall wear jerseys of the same color and design.
2. The visiting team shall wear white jerseys; however, the home team may wear white jerseys if the teams have agreed in writing before the start of the competition.
3. If the home team wears colored jerseys, the visiting team may also wear colored jerseys, if and only if the following conditions have been satisfied:
  - (a) The home team has agreed in writing prior to the game; and
  - (b) The competition authority certifies that the jersey of the visiting team is of a contrasting color.
4. If on the kickoff at the start of each half the visiting team wears a colored jersey in violation of the conditions specified in Rule 1-4-5-b-3 (above), it is a team foul for unsportsmanlike conduct.

**PENALTY: Administer as a dead-ball foul. 15 yards at the succeeding spot following the kickoff. If the kickoff is returned for a touchdown, the penalty is assessed either on the try or on the succeeding kickoff, at the option of the home team. [S27] In addition, officials shall charge a team timeout at the start of each quarter the illegal jerseys are worn, or a foul for delay of the game if all timeouts have been used. ×**

5. If a colored jersey contains white, it may appear only as any of the items listed in paragraph a-2 above.

c. Numerals

1. The jersey must have clearly visible, permanent Arabic numerals measuring at least 8 and 10 inches in height front and back, respectively. The number must be of a color that itself is clearly in distinct contrast with the color of the jersey, irrespective of any border around the number. The number must be centred. No logo may appear within 1 inch of the numerals.
2. Teams wearing jerseys/numerals that do not conform to this rule will be asked to change into legal jerseys before the game and before the start of the second half. On the kickoff at the start of each half, if a team wears a jersey in violation of the conditions specified in paragraph 1, it is a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct.

**PENALTY – Administer as a dead-ball foul. 15 yards at the succeeding spot following the kickoff. If the kickoff is returned for a touchdown, the penalty is assessed either on the try or on the succeeding kickoff, at the option of the offended team. [S27: UC-UNS] In addition, officials shall charge a team timeout (or a delay penalty if all timeouts have been used) at the start of each quarter the illegal jerseys are worn. (A.R. 1-4-5:I)**

3. All players of a team shall have the same color and style numbers front and back. The individual bars must be approximately 1½ inches wide. Numbers on any part of the uniform shall correspond with the mandatory front and back jersey numbers.

### **Optional Equipment**

ARTICLE 6. The following items are legal :

a. *Towels and Hand Warmers.*

1. Solid color towels no smaller than 4 inches by 12 inches and no larger than 6 inches by 12 inches with no words, symbols, letters, or numbers. Towels may bear the team logo. They may also contain a single manufacturer's or distributor's normal label or trademark not to exceed 2-¼ square inches in area. Towels that are not a solid color are not permitted.
2. Hand warmers worn during inclement weather.

b. *Gloves.*

1. A glove is a fitted covering for a hand having separate sections for each finger and thumb, without any additional material that connects any of the fingers and/or thumb, and that completely covers each finger and thumb. There is no restriction on the color of gloves.
2. Gloves should have a securely attached label or stamp ("NF/NCAA Specifications") indicating voluntary compliance with appropriate test specifications on file with either the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) or the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE), unless made of unaltered plain cloth.

- c. *Eye shields.* Eye shields must be clear, not tinted, and made from molded or rigid material. Eyeglasses and goggles also must be clear and not tinted. No medical exceptions are allowed.

- d. *Insignia*.
  - 1. Persons or events may be memorialized by an insignia with an area not greater than 2.25 square inches on the uniform or helmet.
  - 2. Team/national decals and advertising are allowed on helmets.
- e. *Eye Shade*. Any shading under a player's eyes must be solid black with no words, numbers, logos or other symbols.
- f. *Game information*. Any player may have written game information on the wrist, arm or belt.

## Illegal Equipment

ARTICLE 7. Illegal equipment includes the following (See Appendix E for additional details):

- a. Equipment worn by a player that could endanger other players .
- b. Tape or any bandage other than that used to protect an injury, subject to the approval of the umpire.
- c. Hard, abrasive or unyielding equipment that is not completely covered and padded, subject to the approval of the umpire.
- d. Cleats that extend more than ½ inch from the base of the shoe (See Appendix E for full specifications).
- e. Any equipment that could confuse or deceive an opponent.
- f. Any equipment that could provide an unfair advantage to any player.
- g. Adhesive material, paint, grease or any other slippery substance applied to equipment or a player's person, clothing or attachment [*Exception*: Eye shade. (Rule 1-4-6-e)].
- h. Uniform attachments other than towels (Rule 1-4-6-a).
- i. Rib pads, shoulder pad attachments and back protectors that are not totally covered.
- j. Visible bandannas worn on the field outside the team area. (A.R. 1-4-7:I)
- k. Jerseys that do not conform with Rule 1-4-5.
- l. Non-standard overbuilt facemask.(A.R.1-4-7-IV)
- m. Equipment that has been modified in a way that reduces the protection of the player wearing it or any other participant.

## Mandatory and Illegal Equipment Enforcement

ARTICLE 8. a. No player wearing illegal equipment or failing to wear mandatory equipment shall be permitted to play ,(Exception: Rule 1-4-5-c)

- b. If an official discovers illegal equipment, or if a player is not wearing mandatory equipment, the player must leave the game for at least one down and is not allowed to return until the equipment is made legal. The player may be allowed to return without missing a down if the team takes a charged team timeout, but in any event the player may not play with illegal equipment or without mandatory equipment.
- c. If equipment becomes illegal through play, the player is not required to leave the game for one down, but the player may not participate until the equipment is made legal. (A.R. 1-4-7-II)

## Coaches' Certification

ARTICLE 9. The head coach or his designated representative shall certify in writing to the umpire before the game that all players:

- a. Have been informed what equipment is mandatory by rule and what constitutes illegal equipment.
- b. Have been provided the equipment mandated by rule .
- c. Have been instructed to wear and how to wear mandatory equipment during the game.
- d. Have been instructed to notify the coaching staff when equipment becomes illegal through play during the game.

## Prohibited Signal Devices

ARTICLE 10. Players may not be equipped with any electronic, mechanical or other signal devices for the purpose of communicating with any source or recording sound (*Exceptions*: 1.A medically prescribed hearing aid of the sound-amplifier type for hearing-impaired players. 2. A device for transmission or reception of data specifically and only for purposes of health and safety).

**PENALTY—Administer as a dead-ball foul. 15 yards at the succeeding spot .  
Player is disqualified [S7, S27 and S47]**

## Prohibited Field Equipment

ARTICLE 11. Jurisdiction regarding the presence and location of communication equipment (cameras, sound devices, etc.) within the playing enclosure resides with game management personnel.

- a. Motion pictures, any type of film, facsimile machines, videotapes, photographs, writing-transmission machines and computers may be used within the playing enclosure by coaches or for coaching purposes any time during the game or between periods.
  1. Game management is responsible for assuring identical television capability and identical video and Internet connectivity in the team area and in the coaches' booths of both teams.
  2. Teams are responsible for their own computers or other coaching equipment.
  3. A monitor is permitted on the sideline only to assist team or game management medical personnel in the diagnosis and treatment of participants.
- b. Only voice or text communication between the press box and team area is permitted. Where press-box space is not adequate, only voice or text communication may originate from any area in the stands between the 10-yard lines extended to the top of the stadium. No other communication for coaching purposes is permitted anywhere else, including the use of any communication equipment (e.g. mobile phones or radios) for voice, text, image or any other type of message from inside or outside the playing enclosure by or to any person subject to the rules.
- c. Media communication or recording equipment, including cameras, sound devices, computers and microphones, is prohibited on or above the field, or in or above the team area ([Rule 2-31-1](#)).

***Exceptions:***

1. Camera equipment attached to a goal support behind the uprights and crossbar.
2. Camera(s) embedded in any pylon.
3. A camera, with no audio component, may be attached to the cap of any official with prior approval of the official and the participating teams.

**NOTE:** Cameras worn by officials solely for the purposes of officiating development may be worn by any official without requiring the permission of the participating teams.

4. A camera, with no audio component, may be attached to cables that extend over the team area and field of play, including the end zones.
  5. A team videographer may be in the team area as one of that team's 25 credentialed individuals. This video may not be used during any live broadcast or digital stream of the game.
- d. Microphones attached to coaches during the game for media transmission or recording are prohibited.
  - e. No one in the team area or coaching box may use any artificial sound amplification to communicate with players on the field.
  - f. Any attempt to record, either through audio or video means, any signals given by an opposing player, coach or other team personnel is prohibited.
  - g. No drones (unmanned aerial vehicle) may be used inside the playing enclosure. If a drone violates this space, the referee shall order the game stopped until such time as the drone is removed from the space.

### **Coaches' Phones**

ARTICLE 12. Coaches' phones and headsets are not subject to the rules before or during the game.

- a. A competition may develop a policy to provide guidance in handling situations dealing with failure of coaches' headsets

### **Referee communication**

ARTICLE 13. a. A microphone is strongly recommended for the referee to be used for all game announcements. It is strongly recommended that it be a lapel-type microphone. The microphone must be controlled by the referee. It may not be open at other times.

- b. A wireless communication system open only to the officiating crew, video judge and the officiating observer is permitted.
- c. No person subject to the rules is permitted to eavesdrop wireless communication between officials before, during or after the game..)

**PENALTY – For fouls before or during the game, administer as a dead-ball foul, 15 yards at the succeeding spot. Person is disqualified. Fouls after the game shall be reported as misconduct**

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# RULE 2

## Definitions

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### SECTION 1. Approved Rulings and Official's Signals

ARTICLE 1. a. An approved ruling (A.R.) is an official decision on a given statement of facts. It serves to illustrate the spirit and application of the rules.

b. An official's signal [S] refers to the Official Football Signals 1 through 47.

### SECTION 2. The Ball: Live, Dead, Loose, Ready For Play

#### Live Ball

ARTICLE 1. A live ball is a ball in play. A pass, kick or fumble that has not yet touched the ground is a live ball in flight.

#### Dead Ball

ARTICLE 2. A dead ball is a ball not in play.

#### Loose Ball

ARTICLE 3. a. A loose ball is a live ball not in player possession during:

1. A running play.
  2. A scrimmage or free kick before possession is gained or regained or the ball is dead by rule.
  3. The interval after a legal forward pass is touched and before it becomes complete, incomplete or intercepted. This interval is during a forward pass play, and any player eligible to touch the ball may bat it in any direction .
- b. All players are eligible to touch, catch or recover a fumble (*Exceptions*: Rules [7-2-2-a-Exc.2](#) and [8-3-2-d-5](#)) or a backward pass.
- c. Eligibility to touch a kick is governed by kick rules (Rule [6](#)).
- d. Eligibility to touch a forward pass is governed by pass rules (Rule [7](#)).

## When Ball Is Ready for Play

ARTICLE 4. A dead ball is ready for play when:

- a. With the 40-second play clock running, an official places the ball at a hash mark or between the inbounds marks and steps away to his position.
- b. With the play clock set at 25 seconds, or at 40 seconds after an injury to or loss of helmet by a defensive team player, the referee sounds his whistle and either signals to start the game clock [S2] or signals that the ball is ready for play [S1]. (A.R. 4-1-4-I and II)

## SECTION 3. Blocking

### Blocking

ARTICLE 1. a. Blocking is obstructing an opponent by intentionally contacting the opponent with any part of the blocker's body.

- b. Pushing is blocking an opponent with open hands.
- c. Continuous contact is a block where contact with an opponent is maintained for more than one second.

### Below Waist

ARTICLE 2. a. A block below the waist is a block in which the force of the initial contact is below the waist of an opponent who has one or both feet on the ground. When in question, the contact is below the waist (Rule [9-1-6](#)).

- b. A blocker who makes contact above the waist and then slides below the waist has not blocked below the waist. If the blocker first contacts the opposing player's hands at the waist or above, it is a legal "above the waist" block (Rule [9-1-6](#)).

### Chop Block

ARTICLE 3. A chop block is a high-low or low-high combination block by any two players against an opponent (not the ball carrier) anywhere on the field, with or without a delay between blocks; the "low" component is at the opponent's thigh or below. (A.R. 9-1-10-I-IV). It is not a foul if the blockers' opponent initiates the contact. (A.R. 9-1-10-V)

## Block in the Back

ARTICLE 4. a. A block in the back is contact against an opponent occurring when the force of the initial contact is from behind and above the waist. When in question, the contact is at or below the waist (see Clipping, Rule [2-5](#)) (Rule [9-3-6](#)) (A.R. 9-3-3-I-VII and A.R. 10-2-2-XII).

- b. The position of the blocker's head or feet does not necessarily indicate the point of initial contact.

## Frame of the nody

ARTICLE 5. The frame of a player's body is at the shoulders or below other than the back [Rule [9-3-3-a-1-b](#) Exception].

## Free-Blocking Zone

ARTICLE 6. a. The free-blocking zone is a rectangle centered on the middle lineman of the offensive formation and extending five yards laterally and three yards longitudinally in each direction. (See Appendix D).

- b. The blocking zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone.

## Blind-side block

ARTICLE 7. A blind-side block is an open field block against an opponent that is initiated from outside the opponent's field of vision, or otherwise in such a manner that the opponent cannot reasonably defend himself against the block.

# SECTION 4. Catch, Recovery, Possession

## Possession

ARTICLE 1. Possession refers to custody of (a) a live ball as described later in this article and (b) a dead ball to be snapped or free-kicked. It may refer either to player possession or team possession.

- a. *Player Possession*

The ball is in player possession when a player has the ball firmly in his grasp by holding or controlling it with hand(s) or arm(s) while contacting the ground inbounds.

- b. *Team Possession*

The ball is in team possession:

1. When one of its players has player possession, including when he is attempting a punt, drop kick or place kick; or
  2. While a forward pass thrown by a player of that team is in flight; or
  3. During a loose ball if a player of that team last had player possession; or
  4. When the team is next to snap or free kick the ball.
- c. A team is in legal possession if it has team possession when its players are eligible to catch or recover the ball.

## **Belongs To**

ARTICLE 2. “Belongs to,” as contrasted with “in possession,” denotes custody of a dead ball. Such custody may be temporary, because the ball must next be put in play in accordance with rules governing the existing situation.

## **Catch, Interception, Recovery**

ARTICLE 3. a. To catch a ball means that a player:

1. Secures firm control with the hand(s) or arm(s) of a live ball in flight before the ball touches the ground, and
  2. Touches the ground in bounds with any part of his body, and then
  3. Maintains control of the ball long enough to enable him to perform an act common to the game, i.e., long enough to pitch or hand the ball, advance it, avoid or ward off an opponent, etc., and
  4. Satisfies paragraphs b, c, and d below.
- b. If a player goes to the ground in the act of catching a pass (with or without contact by an opponent) he must maintain complete and continuous control of the ball throughout the process of contacting the ground, whether in the field of play or in the end zone. This is also required for a player attempting to make a catch at the sideline and going to the ground out of bounds. If he loses control of the ball which then touches the ground before he regains control, it is not a catch. If he regains control inbounds prior to the ball touching the ground it is a catch.
- c. If the player loses control of the ball while simultaneously touching the ground with any part of his body, or if there is doubt that the acts were simultaneous, it is not a catch. If a player has control of the ball, a slight movement of the ball, even if it touches the ground, will not be considered loss of possession; he must lose control of the ball in order for there to be a loss of possession.

- d. If the ball touches the ground after the player secures control and continues to maintain control, and the elements above are satisfied, it is a catch.
- e. An interception is a catch of an opponent's pass or fumble.
- f. A catch by any kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion or interception (Rules [7-3-6](#) and [7-3-7](#)).
- g. A player recovers a ball if he fulfills the criteria in paragraphs a, b, c, and d for catching a ball that is still alive after hitting the ground .
- h. When in question, the catch, recovery or interception is not completed.

### **Simultaneous Catch or Recovery**

ARTICLE 4. A simultaneous catch or recovery is a catch or recovery in which there is joint possession of a live ball by opposing players inbounds (A.R. 7-3-6-I-II).

## **SECTION 5. Clipping**

ARTICLE 1. a. Clipping is a block against an opponent in which the force of the initial contact is from behind and at or below the waist (Rule [9-1-5](#)).

- b. The position of the blocker's head or feet does not necessarily indicate the point of initial contact.

## **SECTION 6. Deliberate Dead-Ball Advance**

Deliberately advancing a dead ball is an attempt by a player to advance the ball after any part of their body, other than a hand or foot, has touched the ground or after the ball has been declared dead by rule (*Exception*: Rule [4-1-3-b](#) Exception).

## **SECTION 7. Down, Between Downs and Loss of Down**

### **Down**

ARTICLE 1. A down is a unit of the game that starts after the ball is ready for play with a legal snap (scrimmage down) or legal free kick (free kick down) and ends when the ball becomes dead [*Exception*: The try is a scrimmage down that begins when the referee declares the ball ready for play (Rule [8-3-2-b](#))].

### **Between Downs**

ARTICLE 2. Between downs is the interval during which the ball is dead.

## Loss of Down

ARTICLE 3. “Loss of down” is an abbreviation meaning “loss of the right to repeat a down.”

## SECTION 8. Fair Catch

### Fair Catch

ARTICLE 1. a. A fair catch of a scrimmage kick is a catch beyond the neutral zone by a Team B player who has made a valid signal during a scrimmage kick that is untouched beyond the neutral zone.

- b. A fair catch of a free kick is a catch by a player of Team B who has made a valid signal during an untouched free kick .
- c. A valid or invalid fair catch signal deprives the receiving team of the opportunity to advance the ball. The ball is declared dead at the spot of the catch or recovery. If the catch or recovery precedes the signal, the ball is dead when the signal is first given.
- d. If the receiver shades his eyes from the sun without waving his hand(s), the ball is live and may be advanced.

### Valid Signal

ARTICLE 2. A valid signal is a signal given by a player of Team B who has obviously signaled his intention by extending one hand only clearly above his head and waving that hand from side to side of his body more than once.

### Invalid Signal

ARTICLE 3. An invalid signal is any waving signal by a player of Team B:

- a. That does not meet the requirements of Rule 2-8-2 (above); or
- b. That is given after a scrimmage kick is caught beyond the neutral zone , strikes the ground or touches another player beyond the neutral zone (A.R . -6-5-3 III-V); or
- c. That is given after a free kick is caught, strikes the ground or touches another player. [*Exception*: Rule [6-4-1-f](#)]

## SECTION 9. Forward, Beyond and Forward Progress

## **Forward, Beyond**

ARTICLE 1. Forward, beyond or in advance of, as related to either team ,denotes direction toward the opponent's end line. Converse terms are backward or behind.

## **Forward Progress**

ARTICLE 2. Forward progress is a term indicating the end of advancement by the ball carrier or airborne pass receiver of either team and applies to the position of the ball when it became dead by rule (Rules [4-1-3-a](#), b and p; Rules [4-2-1](#) and 4; and Rule [5-1-3-a](#) Exception) (A.R. 5-1-3-I-VI and A.R. 8-2-1-I-IX) (*Exception*: Rule [8-5-1-a](#), A.R. 8-5-1-I).

# **SECTION 10. Foul and Violation**

## **Foul**

ARTICLE 1. A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed.

## **Personal Foul**

ARTICLE 2. A personal foul is a foul involving illegal physical contact that endangers the safety of another player.

## **Flagrant Personal Foul**

ARTICLE 3. A flagrant personal foul is illegal physical contact so extreme or deliberate that it places an opponent in danger of catastrophic injury.

## **Violation**

ARTICLE 4. A violation is a rule infraction for which no penalty is prescribed. Since it is not a foul, it does not offset a foul.

# **SECTION 11. Fumble, Muff; Batting and Touching the Ball; Blocking a Kick**

## **Fumble**

ARTICLE 1. To fumble the ball is to lose player possession by any act other than passing, kicking or successful handing. (A.R. 2-19-2-I and A.R. 4-1-3-I) .The status of the ball is a fumble.

**Muff**

ARTICLE 2. To muff the ball is to touch the ball in an unsuccessful attempt to catch or recover it. Muffing the ball does not change its status.

**Batting**

ARTICLE 3. Batting the ball is intentionally striking it or intentionally changing its direction with the head, hand(s) or arm(s). When in question, the ball is accidentally touched rather than batted. Batting the ball does not change its status.

**Touching**

ARTICLE 4. a. Touching a ball not in player possession denotes any contact with the ball. It may be intentional or unintentional, and it always precedes possession and control .

- b. Intentional touching is deliberate or intended touching .
- c. Forced touching results when a player's contact with the ball is due to (i) an opponent blocking that player into it, or (ii) the ball being batted or illegally kicked into that player by an opponent. If the touching is forced the player in question has not touched the ball by rule. (Rules [6-1-4](#) and [6-3-4](#))
- d. When in question, a ball has not been touched on a kick or forward pass.

**Blocking a Scrimmage Kick**

ARTICLE 5. Blocking a scrimmage kick is touching the kicked ball by an opponent of the kicking team in an attempt to prevent the ball from crossing the neutral zone (Rule [6-3-1-b](#)).

**SECTION 12. Lines****Sidelines**

ARTICLE 1. A sideline runs from end line to end line on each side of the field and separates the field of play from the area that is out of bounds. The entire sideline is out of bounds.

**Goal Lines and Pylons**

ARTICLE 2. The goal line at each end of the field of play runs between the sidelines and is part of the vertical plane that separates the end zone from the field of play. The two goal lines are 80 yards apart. The plane of the goal line extends

between and includes the pylons, which are out of bounds. The entire goal line is in the end zone. A team's goal line is that which it is defending.

### **End Lines**

ARTICLE 3. An end line runs between the sidelines 10 yards behind each goal line and separates the end zone from the area that is out of bounds. The entire end line is out of bounds.

### **Boundary Lines**

ARTICLE 4. The boundary lines are the sidelines and the end lines. The area enclosed by the boundary lines is "in bounds," and the area surrounding and including the boundary lines is "out of bounds".

### **Restraining Lines**

ARTICLE 5. A restraining line is part of a vertical plane that limits a team's alignment for free kicks. The plane extends beyond the sidelines (A.R. 2-12-5-I).

### **Yard Lines**

ARTICLE 6. A yard line is any line in the field of play parallel to the end lines . A team's own yard lines, marked or unmarked, are numbered consecutively from its own goal line to the midfield line.

### **Hash Marks**

ARTICLE 7. The two hash marks are 60 feet from the sidelines. Hash marks and short yard-line extensions shall measure 24 inches in length.

### **Nine-Yard Marks**

ARTICLE 8. Nine-yard marks 12 inches in length, every 10 yards, shall be located nine yards from the sidelines. They are not required if the field is numbered according to Rule 1-2-1-j.

## **SECTION 13. Handing the Ball**

ARTICLE 1. a. Handing the ball is transferring player possession from one teammate to another without throwing, fumbling or kicking it.

- b. Except when permitted by rule, handing the ball forward to a teammate is illegal.

- c. Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble by the last player in possession [*Exception*: The snap (Rule [2-23-1-c](#))].
- d. A backward handoff occurs when the ball carrier releases the ball before it is beyond the yard line where the ball carrier is positioned.

## **SECTION 14. Huddle**

A huddle is two or more players grouped together after the ball is ready for play and before a snap or a free kick.

## **SECTION 15. Hurdling**

ARTICLE 1. a. Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent while that opponent is still on their feet (Rule [9-1-13](#)).

- b. “On their feet” means that no part of the opponent’s body other than one or both feet is in contact with the ground .

## **SECTION 16. Kicks; Kicking the Ball**

### **Kicking the Ball; Legal and Illegal Kicks**

ARTICLE 1. a. Kicking the ball is intentionally striking the ball with the knee , lower leg or foot.

- b. A legal kick is a punt, drop kick or place kick made according to the rules by a player of Team A before a change of team possession. Kicking the ball in any other manner is illegal (A.R. 6-1-2-I).
- c. Any free kick or scrimmage kick continues to be a kick until it is caught or recovered by a player or becomes dead.
- d. When in question, a ball is accidentally touched rather than kicked.

### **Punt**

ARTICLE 2. A punt is a kick by a player who drops the ball and kicks it before it strikes the ground.

### **Drop Kick**

ARTICLE 3. A drop kick is a kick by a player who drops the ball and kicks it as it touches the ground.

## Place Kick

ARTICLE 4. a. A field goal place kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession while the ball is controlled on the ground by a teammate (Rule [2-16-9](#)).

- b. A tee is a device that elevates the ball for kicking purposes. It may not elevate the ball's lowest point more than one inch above the ground (A.R. -2-16-4I). If utilised, a tee must be in contact with the ball for the kick to be legal.
- c. A free kick place kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession while the ball is positioned on a tee or the ground. It may be controlled by a teammate. The ball may be positioned on the ground and contacting the tee.
- d. No device or material may be used to mark the spot of a scrimmage place kick or to elevate the ball. This is a live-ball foul at the snap. (Rule [6-3-10-d](#))

## Free Kick

ARTICLE 5. a. A free kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession made under restrictions specified in Rules [4-1-4](#), [6-1-1](#) and [6-1-2](#).

- b. A free kick after a safety may be a punt, drop kick or place kick.

## Kickoff

ARTICLE 6. A kickoff is a free kick that starts each half and follows each try or successful field goal attempt (**Exception:** In extra periods). It must be a place kick or a drop kick.

## Scrimmage Kick

ARTICLE 7. a. A scrimmage kick is a punt, drop kick, or field goal place kick. It is a legal kick if it is made by Team A in or behind the neutral zone during a scrimmage down before team possession changes.

- b. A scrimmage kick has crossed the neutral zone when it touches the ground, a player, an official or anything beyond the neutral zone (**Exception:** Rule [-6-3-1-b](#)) (A.R. 6-3-1-I-IV).
- c. A scrimmage kick made when the kicker's entire body is beyond the neutral zone is an illegal kick and a live-ball foul that causes the ball to become dead (Rule [6-3-10-c](#)).

## Return Kick

ARTICLE 8. A return kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession after change of team possession during a down. It is an illegal kick and a live-ball foul that causes the ball to become dead (Rule [6-3-10-b](#)).

## Field Goal Attempt

ARTICLE 9. A field goal attempt is a scrimmage kick. It may be a place kick or drop kick.

## Scrimmage Kick Formation

ARTICLE 10. a. A scrimmage kick formation is a formation with no player in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap from between the snapper's legs, and with either (1) at least one player seven or more yards behind the neutral zone; or (2) a potential holder and potential kicker five or more yards behind the neutral zone in position for a place kick. For either (1) or (2) to qualify as a scrimmage kick formation, it must be obvious that a kick will be attempted (A.R. 9-1-14-I-III).

- b. If Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation at the snap, any action by Team A during the down is deemed to be from a scrimmage kick formation.

## SECTION 17. The Neutral Zone

ARTICLE 1. a. The neutral zone is the space between the two scrimmage lines extended to the sidelines. Its width is equal to the length of the ball.

b. The neutral zone is established when the ball is ready for play and is resting on the ground with its long axis at right angles to the scrimmage line and parallel to the sidelines.

- c. The neutral zone exists until there is a change of team possession, until a scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone or until the ball is declared dead.

## SECTION 18. Encroachment and Offside

### Encroachment

ARTICLE 1. After the ball is ready for play, encroachment occurs when an offensive player is in or beyond the neutral zone after the snapper touches or simulates (hand[s] at or below his knees) touching the ball before the snap (*Exception*: When the ball is put in play, the snapper is not encroaching when he is in the neutral zone).

### Offside on a scrimmage play

ARTICLE 2. After the ball is ready for play, offside occurs (Rule [7-1-5](#)) when a defensive player:

- a. Is in or beyond the neutral zone when the ball is legally snapped; or
- b. Contacts an opponent beyond the neutral zone before the ball is snapped; or
- c. Contacts the ball before it is snapped; or
- d. Threatens an offensive lineman, causing an immediate reaction, before the ball is snapped (Rule [7-1-2-b-3-Exception](#), A.R. 7-1-3-V Note); or
- e. Crosses the neutral zone and charges toward a Team A back (A.R. 7-1-5-III)

### Offside on a free kick play

ARTICLE 3. Offside occurs (Rule 6-1-2) when:

- a. A defensive player is not behind their restraining line when the ball is legally free-kicked.
- b. One or more players of the kicking team are not behind their restraining line when the ball is legally free-kicked (*Exception*: The kicker and holder are not offside when they are beyond their restraining line) (Rule 6-1-2).

## SECTION 19. Passes

### Passing

ARTICLE 1. Passing the ball is throwing it. A pass continues to be a pass until it is caught or intercepted by a player or the ball becomes dead.

### Forward and Backward Pass

ARTICLE 2. a. A pass is forward if the ball first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything else beyond the spot where the ball is released. All other passes are backward passes. When in question a pass thrown in or behind the neutral zone is forward rather than a backward pass.

- b. When a Team A player is holding the ball to pass it forward toward the neutral zone, any intentional forward movement of his hand or arm with the ball firmly in his control starts the forward pass unless the player clearly starts to bring the ball back with firm control to his/her body. If a Team B

player contacts the passer or ball after forward movement begins and the ball leaves the passer's hand, a forward pass is ruled regardless of where the ball strikes the ground or a player (A.R. 2-19-2-I)

- c. When in question, the ball is passed and not fumbled during an attempted forward pass. (*Exception*: Games using Video Judge).
- d. A snap becomes a backward pass when the snapper releases the ball other than via a hand-to-hand exchange (A.R-2-23-1 .I.)

### **Crosses Neutral Zone**

ARTICLE 3. a. A legal forward pass has crossed the neutral zone when it first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything beyond the neutral zone inbounds. It has not crossed the neutral zone when it first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything in or behind the neutral zone inbounds.

- b. A player has crossed the neutral zone if his entire body has been beyond the neutral zone .
- c. A legal forward pass is beyond or behind the neutral zone where it crosses the sideline.

### **Catchable Forward Pass**

ARTICLE 4. A catchable forward pass is an untouched legal forward pass beyond the neutral zone to an eligible player who has a reasonable opportunity to catch the ball. When in question, a legal forward pass is catchable.

## **SECTION 20. Penalty**

A penalty is a result imposed by rule against a team that has committed a foul and may include one or more of the following: loss of yardage, loss of down , automatic first down, disqualification, subtraction from the game clock (Rule [10-1-1-b](#)) .

## **SECTION 21. Scrimmage**

### **Scrimmage Down**

ARTICLE 1. A scrimmage down is the action between the two teams during a down that begins with a legal snap. *Note*: A try down is a scrimmage down that begins when the referee declares the ball ready for play (Rule [8-3-2-b](#))

## Scrimmage Line

ARTICLE 2. The scrimmage line for each team is established when the ball is ready for play. It is the yard line that defines the vertical plane passing through the point of the ball nearest a team's own goal line.

## SECTION 22. Shift

ARTICLE 1. a. A shift is a simultaneous change of position or stance by two or more offensive players after the ball is ready for play before the snap for a scrimmage down (A.R. 7-1-3-I-II and A.R. 7-1-2-I-IV).

- b. The shift ends when all players have been motionless for one full second.
- c. The shift continues if one or more players are in motion before the end of the one second interval.

## SECTION 23. Snapping the Ball

ARTICLE 1. a. Legally snapping the ball (a snap) is handing or passing it backward from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hand or hands, the ball actually leaving the hand or hands in this motion (Rule [4-1-4](#)).

- b. The snap starts when the ball is moved legally and ends when the ball leaves the snapper's hands; the ball then becomes alive (Rule [4-1-1](#), A.R. 7-1-5-I-II).
- c. If, during any backward motion of a legal snap, the ball slips from the snapper's hand, it becomes a backward pass and is in play (Rule [4-1-1](#)).
- d. While resting on the ground and before the snap, the long axis of the ball must be at right angles to the scrimmage line (Rule [7-1-3](#)).
- e. Unless moved in a backward direction, the movement of the ball does not start a legal snap. It is not a legal snap if the ball is first moved forward or lifted.
- f. If the ball is touched by Team B during a legal snap, the ball remains dead and Team B is penalized. If the ball is touched by Team B during an illegal snap, the ball remains dead and Team A is penalized (A.R. 7-1-5-I-II).

- g. The snap need not be between the snapper's legs; but to be legal, it must be a quick and continuous backward motion.
- h. The ball must be snapped on or between the hash marks.

## **SECTION 24. Series and Possession Series**

### **Series**

ARTICLE 1. A series comprises up to four consecutive downs that each begins with a snap (Rule [5-1-1](#)).

### **Possession Series**

ARTICLE 2. A possession series is a team's continuous possession of the ball in an extra period (Rule [3-1-3](#)). It may consist of one or more series .

## **SECTION 25. Spots**

### **Enforcement Spot**

ARTICLE 1. An enforcement spot is the point at which the penalty for a foul or the result of a violation is enforced.

### **Previous Spot**

ARTICLE 2. The previous spot is the point at which the ball was last put in play.

### **Succeeding Spot**

ARTICLE 3. The succeeding spot is the point at which the ball is next to be put in play.

### **Dead-Ball Spot**

ARTICLE 4. The dead-ball spot is the point at which the ball became dead .

### **Spot of the Foul**

ARTICLE 5. The spot of the foul is the point at which that foul occurs. If out of bounds between the goal lines, it shall be the intersection of the nearer hash mark and the yard line extended through the spot of the foul. If out of bounds between the goal line and the end line or behind the end line, the foul is in the end zone.

### **Out-of-Bounds Spot**

ARTICLE 6. The out-of-bounds spot is the point at which, according to the rule, the ball becomes dead by rule because of going or being declared out of bounds.

## Inbounds Spot

ARTICLE 7. The inbounds spot is the intersection of the nearer hash mark line and the yard line passing through either the dead-ball spot or the spot where a penalty leaves the ball in a side zone.

## Spot Where Run Ends

ARTICLE 8. The spot where the run ends is the point:

- a. Where the ball is declared dead in player possession.
- b. Where player possession is lost on a fumble.
- c. Where handing of the ball occurs.
- d. Where an illegal forward pass is thrown.
- e. Where a backward pass is thrown.
- f. Where an illegal scrimmage kick is made beyond the line of scrimmage.
- g. Where a return kick occurs.
- h. Where player possession is gained under provisions of the “momentum rule” (Rule [8-5-1-a](#) Exceptions).

## Spot Where Kick Ends

ARTICLE 9. A scrimmage kick that crosses the neutral zone ends at the spot where it is caught or recovered or where the ball is declared dead by rule (Rule [2-16-1-c](#)).

*(Exception:* If inadvertent whistle provisions apply, the end of a kick is where the ball next touches a player, official, the ground or crosses a boundary line after the whistle has blown.)

## Basic Spot

ARTICLE 10. The basic spot is a benchmark for locating the enforcement spot for penalties governed by the Three-and-One Principle (Rule [2-33](#)). Basic spots for the various categories of plays are given in Rule [10-2-2-d](#).

## Postscrimmage Kick Spot

ARTICLE 11. The postscrimmage kick spot serves as the basic spot when postscrimmage kick enforcement applies (Rule [10-2-3](#)).

- a. When the kick ends in the field of play, other than in the special cases given below, the postscrimmage kick spot is the spot where the kick ends.
- b. When the kick ends in Team B's end zone, the postscrimmage kick spot is Team B's 20-yard line.

**Special cases:**

1. On an unsuccessful field goal attempt, if the ball is untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone and is declared dead beyond the neutral zone, the postscrimmage kick spot is:
  - (c) The previous spot, if the previous spot is on or outside Team B's 20-yard line; (A.R. 10-2-3-V)
  - (d) Team B's 20-yard line, if the previous spot is between Team B's 20-yard line and its goal line.
2. When Rule [6-3-11](#) is in effect, the postscrimmage kick spot is Team B's 20-yard line.
3. When Rule [6-5-1-b](#) is in effect, the postscrimmage kick spot is the spot where the receiver first touched the kick.

## **SECTION 26. Tackling**

Tackling is grasping or encircling an opponent with a hand(s) or arm(s).

## **SECTION 27. Team and Player Designations**

### **Teams A and B**

ARTICLE 1. Team A is the team that is designated to put the ball in play, and Team B is the opponent. The teams retain these designations until the ball is next ready for play .

### **Offensive and Defensive Teams**

ARTICLE 2. The offensive team is the team in possession or the team to which the ball belongs; the defensive team is the opposing team.

## Kicker and Holder

ARTICLE 3. a. The kicker is any player who punts, drop kicks or place kicks according to rule. He remains the kicker until he has had a reasonable time to regain his balance.

- b. A holder is a player who controls the ball on the ground or on a kicking tee . During a scrimmage-kick play, he remains the holder until no player is in position to make the kick or, if the ball is kicked, until the kicker has had a reasonable time to regain his balance .

## Lineman and Back

ARTICLE 4. a. *Lineman*.

1. A lineman is any Team A player legally on his scrimmage line (Rule [2-21-2](#)).
  2. A Team A player is on the scrimmage line when facing their opponent's goal line with the line of his shoulders approximately parallel thereto and either (a) he is the snapper (Rule [2-27-8](#)) or (b) his head breaks the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper.
- b. *Interior Lineman*. An interior lineman is a lineman who not on the end of his scrimmage line.
- c. *Restricted Lineman*. A restricted lineman is any interior lineman, or any lineman wearing a number 50-79, whose hand(s) are below the knees.
- d. *Back*.
1. A back is any Team A player who is not a lineman and whose head or shoulder does not break the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the nearest Team A lineman .
  2. A back is also the player in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap.
  3. A lineman becomes a back before the snap when he moves to a position as a back and stops .

## Forward Passer

ARTICLE 5. The forward passer is the player who throws a forward pass. That player is a forward passer from the time the ball is released until the pass is complete, incomplete or intercepted or until he moves to participate in the play.

## Player

ARTICLE 6. a. A player is any one of the participants in the game who is not a substitute or a replaced player and is subject to the rules when inbounds or out of bounds.

- b. An airborne player is a player not in contact with the ground because he /she has leapt, jumped, dived, launched, or been contacted by an opponent or teammate, etc. in other than normal running action.
- c. A departing player is a player leaving the field, having been replaced by a substitute.
- d. A teammate is a player of the same team

## Runner and Ball Carrier

ARTICLE 7. a. The runner is a player in possession of a live ball or simulating possession of a live ball.

- b. A ball carrier is a runner in possession of a live ball.

## Snapper

ARTICLE 8. The snapper is the player who snaps the ball. That player is established as the snapper when he takes a position behind the ball and touches or simulates (hand[s] at or below his knees) touching the ball (Rule [7-1-3](#)).

## Substitute

ARTICLE 9. a. A legal substitute is a replacement for a player or a player vacancy during the interval between downs.

- b. A legal incoming substitute becomes a player when he enters the field of play or end zones and communicates with a teammate or an official, enters the huddle, is positioned in an offensive or a defensive formation, or participates in a play.

## Replaced Player

ARTICLE 10. A replaced player is one who participated during the previous down, has been replaced by a substitute and has left the field of play and the end zones.

## Player Vacancy

ARTICLE 11. A player vacancy occurs when a team has fewer than 11 players in the game.

### **Disqualified Player**

ARTICLE 12. a. A disqualified player is one who is declared ineligible for further participation in the game.

- b. A disqualified player must leave the playing enclosure under the escort of team personnel before the next play after his disqualification. He must remain under team supervision for the duration of the game.

### **Squad Member**

ARTICLE 13. A squad member is part of a group of potential players, in uniform, organized for participation in the ensuing football game or football plays.

### **Defenseless Player**

ARTICLE 14. A defenseless player is one who because his physical position and focus of concentration is especially vulnerable to injury. When in question, a player is defenseless. Examples of defenseless players include but are not limited to:

- a. A player in the act of or just after throwing a pass.
- b. A receiver attempting to catch a forward pass or in position to receive a backward pass, or one who has completed a catch and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a ball carrier.
- c. A kicker in the act of or just after kicking a ball, or during the kick or the return.
- d. A kick returner attempting to catch or recover a kick, or one who has completed a catch or recovery and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a ball carrier.
- e. A player on the ground.
- f. A player obviously out of the play.
- g. A player who receives a blind-side block.
- h. A ball carrier already in the grasp of an opponent and whose forward progress has been stopped.
- i. A quarterback any time after a change of possession.

- j. A ball carrier who has obviously given himself up and is sliding feet-first.

## **Player In Bounds and Out Of Bounds**

### ARTICLE 15. a. *Out of Bounds*

1. A player is out of bounds when any part of his body touches anything other than another player or a game official on or outside a boundary line.
2. An out-of-bounds player who becomes airborne remains out of bounds until he touches the ground in bounds without simultaneously being out of bounds.

### b. *In Bounds*

1. An inbounds player is a player who is not out of bounds.
2. An inbounds player who becomes airborne remains in bounds until he is out of bounds.

## **Definition of coach**

ARTICLE 16. a. A coach is a person subject to the rules who, while in the team area, coaching box, press box (or another authorised place within the playing enclosure), observes the game and/or gives instructions to players and substitutes.

- b. A player/coach is regarded as being a coach when in the team area or coaching box and as a player or substitute otherwise.
- c. Each team shall designate a coach as its head coach, and identify him on the roster form and to the referee. A head coach disqualified from the game may designate a new head coach (Rule 9-2-6-d).

## **SECTION 28. Tripping**

Tripping is intentionally using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knees (Rule [9-1-2-c](#)).

## **SECTION 29. Timing Devices**

### **Game Clock**

ARTICLE 1. The game clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the duration of the game.

### **Play Clock**

ARTICLE 2. a. Each stadium should have a visual play clock at each end of the playing enclosure. The play clock (if provided) must be capable of counting down from both 40 seconds and 25 seconds. It should automatically default to 40 seconds and start immediately upon being reset by the play-clock operator when any official signals that the ball is dead after a play.

- b. Otherwise, the play clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the 40/25 seconds between end of the previous play or the ready for play signal and the ball being put in play.

## **SECTION 30. Play Classification**

### **Forward Pass Play**

ARTICLE 1. A legal forward pass play is the interval between the snap and when a legal forward pass is complete, incomplete or intercepted.

### **Free Kick Play**

ARTICLE 2. A free kick play is the action during the interval from the time the ball is legally kicked until it comes into player possession or is declared dead by rule.

### **Scrimmage Kick Play**

ARTICLE 3. A scrimmage kick play is the action during the interval between the snap and when a scrimmage kick comes into player possession or the ball is declared dead by rule.

### **Running Play and Run**

ARTICLE 4. a. A running play is any live-ball action other than that during a free kick play, a scrimmage kick play or a legal forward pass play.

- b. A run is that segment of a running play during which a ball carrier has possession.

- c. If a ball carrier loses possession by a fumble, backward pass or illegal forward pass, the spot where the run ends (Rule [2-25-8](#)) is the yard line where the ball carrier loses possession. The running play includes the run and the loose-ball action before a player gains or regains possession or the ball is declared dead (A.R. 2-30-4-I and II).
- d. A new running play begins when a player gains or regains possession .

## Result of the Play

ARTICLE 5. The result of the play is the game situation when the ball becomes dead and before the enforcement of penalties for any fouls or violations occurring during the play.

## SECTION 31. Field Areas

### The Field

ARTICLE 1. The field is the area within the limit lines and includes the limit lines and team areas, and the space above it (*Exception:* Enclosures over the field).

### Field of Play

ARTICLE 2. The field of play is the area enclosed by the sidelines and the goal lines.

### End Zone

ARTICLE 3. a. The end zone at each end of the field is the rectangle defined by the goal line, sidelines and end line.

- b. The goal line and goal line pylons are in the end zone.
- c. A team's end zone is the one it is defending (A.R. 8-5-1-VII and A.R. 8-6-1-I.)

### Playing Surface

ARTICLE 4. The playing surface is the material or substance within the field of play, including the end zones.

### Playing Enclosure

ARTICLE 5. The playing enclosure is that area bounded by the stadium, dome, stands, fences or other structures. (*Exception:* Scoreboards are not considered within the playing enclosure.) Where there is no stadium, dome or stands, the

playing enclosure is any area within sight and/or sound of the field. (Rules [9-2-6-b](#) and [9-2-7](#))

## **Side Zone**

ARTICLE 6. The side zone is the area between the hash marks and the near sideline.

## **SECTION 32. Fighting**

ARTICLE 1. Fighting is any attempt by a player, coach or squad member in uniform to strike an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to:

- a. An attempt to strike an opponent with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s) or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact.
- b. An unsportsmanlike act toward an opponent that causes any opponent to retaliate by fighting (Rules [9-2-1](#) and [9-5-1-a-c](#)).

## **SECTION 33. Three-and-One Principle**

The Three-and-One Principle of penalty enforcement applies when the penalty statement for a foul does not specify the enforcement spot. Application of this principle is described in Rule [10-2-2-c](#).

## **SECTION 34. Tackle Box**

ARTICLE 1. a. The tackle box is the rectangular area enclosed by the neutral zone, the two lines parallel to the sidelines five yards from the middle lineman, and Team A's end line. (See Appendix D).

- c. The tackle box disintegrates when the ball leaves it.

## **SECTION 35. Targeting**

ARTICLE 1. "Targeting" means that a player takes aim at an opponent for purposes of attacking with forcible contact that goes beyond making a legal tackle or a legal block or playing the ball. Some indicators of targeting include but are not limited to:

- a. Launch —a player leaving his feet to attack an opponent by an upward and forward thrust of the body to make forcible contact in the head or neck area.

- 
- b. A crouch followed by an upward and forward thrust to attack with forcible contact at the head or neck area, even though one or both feet are still on the ground.
  - c. Leading with helmet, shoulder, forearm, fist, hand or elbow to attack with forcible contact at the head or neck area.
  - d. Lowering the head before attacking by initiating forcible contact with the crown of the helmet.

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# RULE 3

## Periods, Time Factors and Substitutions

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### SECTION 1. Start of Each Period

#### Pregame, First and Third Periods

ARTICLE 1. a. Prior to the game, during warm-ups, teams must remain in an agreed separate half of the field, normally the half up to the line 5 yards from midfield to their left, looking from their team area towards the field.

- b. When any squad member enters the playing enclosure prior to the officials escorting the captains out for the coin toss, the head coach or an assistant coach from that team must be present on the field.
- c. When squad members are present within the playing enclosure subsequent to the officials' jurisdiction, they must be wearing their jerseys or have their numerals readily visible. Any player without their numeral readily visible must leave the playing enclosure.
- d. Each half shall start with a kickoff.
- e. Five minutes before the scheduled starting time, the referee shall toss a coin at midfield in the presence of not more than four field captains from each team and another game officials, first designating the field captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss. Before the second half, the referee will obtain the teams' second half options.
- f. During the coin toss, each team shall remain in the team area. The coin toss begins when the field captains leave the sidelines and ends when the captains return to the sidelines.

**PENALTY—[f] Five yards from the succeeding spot [S19].**

- g. The winner of the toss shall choose one of the following options:
  - 1. To designate which team shall kick off.
  - 2. To designate which goal line his team shall defend.

3. To defer his selection to the second half.
- h. The opponent shall then choose option 1 or 2 above, as available .
- g. If the winner of the toss chooses option 3 above, then after the opponent's choice the winner selects the available option (1 or 2 above).
- h. For the second half, the loser of the toss, or the winner who chooses option 3 above, shall choose option 1 or 2 above. The opponent then chooses the remaining available option.

## Second and Fourth Periods

ARTICLE 2. Between the first and second periods and also between the third and fourth periods, the teams shall defend opposite goal lines.

- a. The ball shall be relocated at a spot corresponding exactly, in relation to goal lines and sidelines, to its location at the end of the preceding period.
- b. Possession of the ball, the number of the down and the distance to be gained shall remain unchanged.

## Extra Periods

ARTICLE 3. The tiebreaker system will be used when a game is tied after four periods. (*Exception:* Competitions may adopt regulations to forgo the tiebreaker system if the scores are tied at the end of a regular season game. In that event, the game shall be terminated and the result shall stand as a tie.) IFAF football-playing rules apply, with the following exceptions:

- a. Immediately after the conclusion of the fourth quarter, officials will instruct both teams to retire to their respective team areas. The officials will assemble at the midfield line and review the tiebreaker procedures .
- b. The officials will escort the captains (Rule [3-1-1](#)) to the center of the field for the coin toss. The referee shall toss a coin at midfield in the presence of not more than four field captains from each team and another game official , first designating the field captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss . The winner of the toss may not defer the choice and must choose one of the following options :
  1. Offense or defense, with the offense at the opponent's 25-yard line to start the first possession series.
  2. Which end of the field shall be used for both possession series of that overtime period.

- c. The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option for the first extra period and shall have the first choice of the two options for subsequent even-numbered extra periods.
- d. Definition. An extra period shall consist of two possession series with each team putting the ball in play by a snap on or between the hash marks on the designated 25-yard line (unless relocated by penalty), which becomes the opponent's 25-yard line. The snap shall be from midway between the hash marks, unless the offensive team selects a different position on or between the hash marks before the ready-for-play signal. After the ready-for-play signal, the ball may be relocated only after a charged team timeout, unless preceded by a Team A foul or offsetting fouls.
- e. Possession series: Each team retains the ball during a possession series until it scores or fails to make a first down. The ball remains alive after a change of team possession until it is declared dead. However, Team A may not have a first down if it regains possession after a change of team possession (A.R. 3-1-3-I-IX). Beginning with the third extra period, a team's possession series will be one play for a two-point try from the three-yard line, unless relocated by penalty.

Team A and B designations are the same as defined in Rule [2-27-1](#).

- f. Scoring: The team scoring the greater number of points during the regulation and extra periods shall be declared the winner. There shall be an equal number of possession series, as described in I above, in each extra period, unless Team B scores other than on the try. Beginning with the second extra period, teams scoring a touchdown must attempt a two-point try. Although not illegal, a one-point try attempt by Team A will not result in a score (A.R-3-1-3 .X).
- g. Fouls after a change of team possession are treated specially (Rule [10-2-7](#)). (A.R. 3-1-3-XI-XIV):
- h. Timeouts: Each team shall be allowed one timeout for each extra period. (Rule [3-3-7](#)) Timeouts not used during the regulation periods may not be carried over into the extra period(s). Unused extra-period timeouts may not be carried over to other extra periods. Timeouts between periods shall be charged to the succeeding period.

Radio and television timeouts are permitted only between extra periods (first and second, second and third, etc.). Charged team timeouts may not be

extended for radio and television purposes. The extra period(s) begins when the ball is first snapped.

- i. In the absence of a media timeout, after the second and fourth extra periods, there will be a two-minute mandatory break period.

## **SECTION 2. Playing Time and Intermissions**

### **Length of Periods and Intermissions**

ARTICLE 1. The normal total playing time in a game shall be 48 minutes, divided into four periods of 12 minutes each.

Competitions or national federations may adopt regulations to set the maximum playing time in a game to 60, 48, 40 or 32 minutes, provided the four periods are of equal length.

- a. No period shall end until the ball is dead and the referee declares the period ended [S14].
- b. The intermission between halves of a regular season game shall be 10 minutes, unless shortened before the game by mutual agreement of the administrations of both teams. Immediately after the second period ends, the referee should begin the intermission by signaling to start the game clock [S2].

### **Timing Adjustments**

ARTICLE 2. Before the game starts, playing time and the intermission between halves may be shortened by the referee if he is of the opinion that darkness or other conditions may interfere with the game. The four periods must be of equal length if the game is shortened before its start.

- a. Any time during the game, the playing time of any remaining period or periods and the intermission between halves may be shortened by mutual agreement of the opposing head coaches and the referee. (A. R. 3-2-2-I)
- b. Timing errors on the game clock may be corrected but only in the period in which they occur.
- c. If the referee has positive knowledge of the elapsed time, he will reset and appropriately start the game clock.
- d. Timing errors on a play clock may be corrected by the referee. The play clock shall start again (Rule [2-29-2](#)).

- e. When the play-clock count is interrupted by circumstances beyond the control of either team (without positive knowledge of game clock elapsed time), a new count shall be started and the game clock shall start per Rule [3-2-4-b](#).
- f. The 40/25-second clock is not started when the game clock is running with fewer than 40 or 25 seconds, respectively, in a period. The play clock shall be set appropriately and continuously display this time (40 or 25 seconds) and hold.
- g. The game clock should not be stopped if the play clock is started in conflict with paragraph f above .
- h. Timing adjustments for games using video review are governed by Rule 12-2-2-a-10.

### Extension of Periods

ARTICLE 3. a. A period shall be extended for an untimed down if one or more of the following occurs during a down in which time expires (A.R-3-2-3 .I-VIII):

1. A penalty is accepted for a live-ball foul(s) (**Exception:** Rule [10-2-5-a](#) and [10-2-5-d](#)). At the option of the offended team, the period is not extended if the foul is by the team in possession and the statement of the penalty includes loss of down (A.R. 3-2-3-VIII).
2. At the option of the offended team, an illegal touching violation is accepted.
3. There are offsetting fouls.
4. An official sounds his whistle inadvertently or otherwise incorrectly signals the ball dead.

b. Additional untimed downs will be played until a down is free of the circumstances in statements 1, 2 and 3 of Rule [3-2-3-a](#) (above).

c. If a touchdown is scored during a down in which time expires, the period is extended for the try (**Exception:** Rule [8-3-2-a](#)).

### Timing Devices

ARTICLE 4. a. *Game Clock*. Playing time shall be kept with a game clock that may be either a stop watch operated by the line judge, back judge, field judge or side judge, or a game clock operated by an assistant under the direction of the appropriate judge. The type of game clock shall be determined by the game

management. The game clock shall not display tenths of seconds.

b. *40-Second Clock.*

1. When an official signals that the ball is dead, the play clock shall begin a 40-second count.
2. If the 40-second clock does not start or the count is interrupted for reasons beyond the control of the officials or the play-clock operator (e.g., clock malfunction), the referee shall stop the game clock and signal (one open palm in an over-the-head pumping motion) that the play clock should be reset at 40 seconds and started immediately.
3. In the event that the 40-second clock is running and reads 20 before the ball is ready to be snapped, the referee shall signal that the play clock be set at 25 seconds. If there is a delay in doing this, the referee shall declare a timeout and signal that the play clock be set at 25 seconds. When play is to be resumed, the referee will give the ready-for-play signal [S1] and the play clock shall begin the 25-second count. The game clock will start on the snap unless it had been running when the referee declared a timeout; in that case, it will start on the referee's signal (Rule [3-3-2-f](#)). (A.R. 3-2-4:I and II)

c. *25-Second Clock.* If the officials signal the game clock to be stopped for any of the following reasons, the referee shall signal (one open palm in an over-the-head pumping motion) that the clock should be set at 25 seconds:

1. Penalty administration.
2. Charged team timeout.
3. Media timeout.
4. Injury timeout for a player of the offensive team only. The play clock is set to 40 seconds for an injury to a player of the defensive team .
5. Measurement .
6. Team B is awarded a first down.
7. After a kick down other than a free kick where Team B will next snap the ball.
8. Scores other than a touchdown (not the try).
9. Start of each period.
10. Start of a team's possession series in an extra period.
11. Video review.
12. Other administrative stoppage.

13. An offensive team player's helmet comes completely off through play. The play clock is set to 40 seconds if the helmet comes completely off a player of the defensive team.

When play is to be resumed, the referee will give the ready-for-play signal [S1] and the play clock will begin its count

- d. Device malfunction. If a visual 40/25-second timing device becomes inoperative, both coaches shall be notified by the referee immediately and both clocks shall be turned off.

### **SECTION 3. Timeouts: Starting and Stopping the Clock**

#### **Timeout**

ARTICLE 1. a. An official shall signal timeout when the rules provide for stopping the clock or when a timeout is charged to a team or to the referee. Other officials should repeat timeout signals. The referee may declare and charge himself with a discretionary timeout for any contingency not elsewhere covered by the rules (A.R. 3-3-1-IV).

- b. When a team's charged timeouts are exhausted and it requests a timeout, the officials shall not acknowledge the request. (Rule [3-3-4](#)).
- c. Once the game begins, players shall not practice with a ball on the field of play or the end zones except during the half-time intermission.

#### **Starting and Stopping the Clock**

ARTICLE 2. If the margin in the score becomes more than 34 points, a running clock session will start. During a running clock session, the game will stop only for reasons marked \* below. For other events listed here, the clock will keep running. Competitions may adopt regulations to:

- 1. Forgo the running clock rule completely;
  - 2. Forgo the rule only in the first half of a game ;
  - 3. Limit the running clock rule to use after an elapsed time no later than 2 hours 15 minutes after kickoff, but only in games that are broadcast live;
  - 4. Reduce the score margin below 34 points.
- a. *Free Kick*. After the ball is free-kicked, the game clock shall be started on an official's signal when the ball is legally touched in the field of play, or when it crosses the goal line after being touched legally by Team B in its

end zone. It is subsequently stopped on an official's signal when the ball is dead by rule. (A. R. 3-3-2-VII)

- b. *Scrimmage Down*. When a period begins with a scrimmage down, the game clock shall be started when the ball is legally snapped. On all other scrimmage downs, the game clock shall be started when the ball is legally snapped (Rule [3-3-2-d](#)) or on a prior signal by the referee (Rule [3-3-2-e](#)). The game clock shall not run during a try, during an extension of a period or during an extra period (A.R. 3-3-2-I-IV).
- c. *After a Score*. The game clock shall stop on an official's signal after a touchdown, field goal or safety. It shall be started again as in (a) above unless an accepted penalty erases the score, in which case it shall be started when the ball is legally snapped.
- d. *Starts on the Snap*. For each of the following, the game clock is stopped on an official's signal. If the next play begins with a snap, the game clock will start on the snap:
  1. Touchback (provided Team B will next snap the ball).
  2. With fewer than two minutes remaining in a half a Team A ball carrier, fumble or backward pass is ruled out of bounds. (**Exception:** After a Team A forward fumble, the clock starts on the referee's signal.)
  3. Team B is awarded a first down and will next snap the ball (A.R. 3-3-2V).
  4. A forward pass is ruled incomplete inside last two minutes of each half.
  5. A team is granted a charged timeout. \*
  6. The ball becomes illegal. \*
  7. A period ends
  8. A legal kick down ends. (A.R.3-3-2-VI)
  9. A return kick is made.
  10. A scrimmage kick is made beyond the neutral zone.
  11. Team A commits a delay-of-game foul while in a scrimmage-kick formation.
- e. *Starts on the Referee's Signal*. For each of the following reasons, the game clock is stopped on an official's signal. If the next play begins with a snap, the game clock will start on the referee's signal:
  1. Team A is awarded a first down, either through play or by penalty.
  2. A Team A forward fumble goes out of bounds.

3. Other than with fewer than two minutes remaining in a half, a Team A ball carrier, fumble or backward pass is ruled out of bounds.
  4. To complete a penalty (**Exception:** Rule [3-4-4-c](#)). \*
  5. An injury timeout is allowed for one or more players or an official (A.R. 3-3-5-I-V). \*
  6. An inadvertent whistle is sounded.
  7. A possible first-down measurement. \*
  8. Both teams cause a delay in making the ball ready for play (A.R. . 3-3-1-III).
  9. A live ball comes into possession of an official.
  10. A head coach requests a conference or video review. \*
  11. The referee grants a media timeout. \*
  12. The referee declares a discretionary timeout. \*
  13. The referee declares a timeout for unfair noise (Rule [9-2-1-b-5](#)).
  14. An illegal pass is thrown to conserve time (A.R. 7-3-2-II-VII) (**Exception:** Rule [3-4-4-c](#)).
  15. The referee interrupts the 40/25-second count.
  16. A player's helmet comes completely off through play.
  17. When either team commits a dead-ball foul. \*
  18. Other than with fewer than two minutes remaining in a half, a forward pass is ruled incomplete.
- f. *Snap Supersedes Referee's Signal.* Whenever one or more incidents that cause the game clock to be started on the referee's signal (Rule [3-3-2-e](#)) occur in conjunction with any that cause it to be started on the snap (Rules [3-3-2-c](#) and [3-3-2-d](#)), it shall be started on the snap. [**Exception:** Rule [3-4-4](#) (10-second runoff) supersedes this rule, other than when a team is granted a charged timeout . (A.R. 3-3-2-VIII and -IX)]
- g. *Running clock.*
1. During a running clock session, the clock will always be started on the ready for play rather than the snap. (A.R. 3-3-2:X-XI)
  2. If during a running clock session, the margin in the score continues to be more than 34 points, the running clock session will continue. If the margin drops to 34 or fewer points, the running clock session will end immediately on the relevant score and normal clock rules will apply unless and until the margin becomes more than 34 points again. (**Exception:** If a competition reduces the score margin to start a

running clock session below 34 points, the margin to end it will be similarly lower.)

## Suspending the Game

ARTICLE 3. a. The referee may suspend the game temporarily when conditions warrant such action .

- b. When the game is stopped by actions of a person(s) not subject to the rules or for any other reasons not in the rules and cannot continue, the referee shall:
  1. Suspend play and direct the players to their team areas.
  2. Refer the problem to those responsible for the game's management .
  3. Resume the game when he determines conditions are satisfactory.
- c. If a game is suspended under Rules [3-3-3-a](#) and b before the end of the fourth period and cannot be resumed, there are four possible options :
  1. Resume the game at a later date ;
  2. Terminate the game with a determined final score;
  3. Forfeit of the game; or
  4. Declare a no contest .

The option that takes effect shall be determined by competition regulations.

- d. If a game is suspended under Rules [3-3-3-a](#) and b after four periods of play and cannot be resumed, the game shall be ruled a tie. The final score shall be the score at the end of the last completed period. (Note: If a winner must be determined in a playoff game, league policy shall determine when and where the game will be resumed).
- e. A suspended game, if resumed, will begin with the same time remaining and under the identical conditions of down, distance, field position and player eligibility .

## Charged Team Timeouts

ARTICLE 4. When timeouts are not exhausted, an official shall allow a charged team timeout when requested by any player or head coach when the ball is dead.

- a. Each team is entitled to three charged team timeouts during each half.
- b. After the ball is declared dead and before the snap, a legal substitute may request a timeout if he is between the nine-yard marks (A.R. 3-3-4-I).

- c. A player who participated during the previous down may request a timeout between the time the ball is declared dead and the snap without being between the nine-yard marks (A.R. 3-3-4-I)
- d. A head coach who is in, or in the vicinity of, his team area or coaching box may request a timeout between the time the ball is declared dead and the next snap.
- e. A player, incoming substitute or head coach may request a head coach's conference with the referee, if the coach believes a rule has been enforced improperly. If the rule enforcement is not changed, the coach's team will be charged a timeout, or a delay penalty if all timeouts have been used.
  5. Only the referee may stop the clock for a head coach's conference.
  6. A request for a head coach's conference must be made before the ball is snapped or free-kicked for the next play and before the end of the second or fourth period (Rule [5-2-9](#)).
  7. After a head coach's conference or challenge, the full team timeout is granted if charged by the referee.

## **Injury Timeout**

ARTICLE 5. a. In the event of an injured player(s):

1. An official will declare a timeout and the player(s) must leave the game. He must remain out of the game for at least one down. When in question, officials will take a timeout for an injured player.
  2. The player(s) may not return to the game until he receives approval of medical personnel.
  3. Officials, coaches and trainers shall give special attention to players who exhibit signs of a concussion. (See Appendix C).
  4. Whenever a participant (player or game official) is bleeding, has blood saturated on the uniform, or has blood on exposed skin, the player or game official shall go to the team area and be given appropriate medical treatment. He may not return to the game without approval of medical personnel (A.R. 3-3-5-I-VII).
- b. Feigning an injury for any reason is unethical. An injured player must be given full protection under the rules, but feigning an injury is dishonest, unsportsmanlike and contrary to the spirit of the rules. For questionable game action, a team or an official has the option to report the matter to the relevant disciplinary authority, who may choose to take action against the

player(s) and coach(es) involved. Attention is directed to the statement in "The Football Code" (Coaching Ethics)

- c. An injury timeout may follow a charged team timeout.
- d. The referee will declare a timeout for an injured official.
- e. Following a timeout for an injured player of the defensive team, the play clock shall be set at 40 seconds .
- f. *Ten-Second Runoff*. If the player injury is the only reason for stopping the clock (other than his or a teammate's helmet coming off, Rule [3-3-9](#)) with less than one minute in the half, the opponent has the option of a 10-second runoff.
  1. The play clock will be set at 40 seconds for an injury to a player of the defensive team and at 25 seconds for an injury to a player of the offensive team (Rule [3-2-4-c-4](#)).
  2. Rule [3-4-5](#) applies. (A.R. 3-3-5:VIII and IX)

## Violation Timeouts

ARTICLE 6. For noncompliance with Rule [1-4-5-c-2](#), the team will be charged a timeout (Rule 3-4-2-b-2).

## Length of Timeouts

ARTICLE 7. a. A charged full team timeout requested by any player or head coach shall be one minute plus the five-second referee notification and the 25-second play clock interval. (*Exception*: Rule [3-3-4-e-3](#)).

- b. Other timeouts shall be not longer than the referee deems necessary to fulfill the purpose for which they are declared, including a radio or TV timeout, but any timeout may be extended by the referee for the benefit of an injured player (Refer to Appendix A for the guidelines for game officials to use during a serious on-field player injury).
- c. If the team charged with a full timeout wishes to resume play before the expiration of one minute and its opponent indicates readiness, the referee will declare the ball ready for play.
- d. The length of a referee's timeout depends on the circumstances of each timeout.
- e. Penalty options must be exercised before a team timeout.

- f. The intermission after a safety, try or successful field goal shall be not more than one minute. It may be extended for radio or television.

## Referee's Notification

ARTICLE 8. During a full team timeout (Rule [3-3-7-a](#)) the referee shall notify both teams after one minute. Five seconds later the referee shall declare the ball ready for play.

- a. When a third timeout is charged to a team in either half, the referee shall notify the field captain and head coach of that team .
- b. Unless a visual game clock is the official timepiece, the referee also shall inform each field captain and head coach when two minutes of playing time remain in each half. He may order the clock stopped for that purpose. If the game clock is running at 2:00 and the ball is dead, the clock shall be stopped and the two-minute warning given then. If the ball is live at 2:00, the two-minute warning shall be given after the ball becomes dead,
  1. The play clock may be interrupted for this purpose and shall then be reset to 25 seconds.
  2. The clock starts on the snap after the two-minute notification.
  3. Competitions may adopt regulations that even if a visual game clock is the official timepiece, a two-minute warning shall still be given.
- c. If a visual game clock is not the official timing device during the last two minutes of each half, the referee or his representative shall notify each captain and head coach of the time remaining each time the clock is stopped by rule. Also, a representative may leave the team area along the limit line to relay timing information under these conditions.

## Helmet Comes Off--Timeout

ARTICLE 9. a. If a player's helmet comes completely off through play, other than as the direct result of a foul by an opponent, the player must leave the game for the next down. The game clock will stop at the end of the down. The player may remain in the game if his team is granted a charged timeout.

- b. When the helmet coming off is the only reason for stopping the clock, other than due to an injury to the player or his teammate (Rule [3-3-5](#)), the following conditions apply (A.R. 3-3-9-I-III):

1. The play clock will be set at 25 seconds if the player is on offense and at 40 seconds if the player is on defense. With one minute or more remaining in either half, the game clock will start on the referee's signal.
  2. *Ten-Second Runoff*. If there is less than one minute in the half the opponent has the option of a 10-second runoff, unless the helmet comes off as the direct result of a foul by the opponent. Rule 3-4-5 applies.
- c. If the ball carrier's helmet comes off as in paragraph a (above) the ball is dead (Rule [4-1-3-q](#)). If the player is not the ball carrier the ball remains alive, but he must not continue to participate in the play beyond the immediate action in which he is engaged. Prolonged participation is a personal foul (Rule [9-1-17](#)). By definition such a player is obviously out of the play (Rule [9-1-12-b](#)).
- d. A player who intentionally removes his helmet during the down commits a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct (Rule [9-2-1-a-1-i](#)).

## SECTION 4. Delays/Clock Tactics

### Delaying the Start of a Half

ARTICLE 1. a. Each team shall have its players on the field for the opening play at the scheduled time for the beginning of each half. When both teams refuse to enter the field first for the start of either half, the home team must be the first to enter.

**PENALTY—15 yards from the succeeding spot [S21:DSH].**

- b. Game management is responsible for clearing the field of play and end zones at the beginning of each half so the periods may start at the scheduled time. Bands, speeches, presentations, homecoming and similar activities are under the jurisdiction of game management, and a prompt start of each half is mandatory.

**PENALTY—10 yards from the succeeding spot [S21: DSH].**

*(Exception: The referee may waive the penalty for circumstances beyond the control of the game management).*

## Illegal Delay of the Game

ARTICLE 2. a. The officials shall make the ball ready for play consistently throughout the game. The play clock will start its count-down from either 40 seconds or 25 seconds, by rule depending on circumstances. A foul for illegal delay occurs if the play clock is at :00 before the ball is put in play (Rule [3-2-4](#)).

b. Illegal delay also includes:

1. Deliberately advancing the ball after it is dead.
2. When a team has expended its three timeouts and commits a Rule [1-4-5-c-2](#) or [3-3-4-e](#) infraction.
3. When a team is not ready to play after an intermission between periods, after a score, after a radio/television/team timeout, or any time the referee orders the ball put in play (A.R. 3-4-2-I).
4. Defensive verbal tactics that disconcert offensive signals (Rule [7-1-5-a-5](#)).
5. Defensive actions designed to cause a false start (Rule [7-1-5-a-4](#)).
6. Putting the ball in play before it is ready for play (Rule [4-1-4](#)).
7. Sideline interference (Rule [9-2-5](#)).
8. Action clearly designed to delay the officials from making the ball ready for play (A.R. 3-4-2-II).

**PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S21: DOG/DOD].**

## Unfair Clock Tactics

ARTICLE 3. The referee has broad authority in the timing of the game. He shall order the game clock or play clock started or stopped whenever either team conserves or consumes playing time by tactics obviously unfair. This includes starting the game clock on the snap if the foul is by the team ahead in the score. As a guideline, referees should consider invoking this rule when the game clock is under five minutes of each half. If the game clock is stopped only to complete a penalty for a foul by the team ahead in the score (or either team if the score is tied) inside the last two minutes of a half, it will start on the snap, at the option of the offended team. The game clock will start on the ready-for-play signal after Team A throws an illegal forward or backward pass to conserve time (Rule [3-3-2-e-14](#)) (A.R. 3-4-3-I-V).

## 10 Second Runoff from Game Clock--Foul

ARTICLE 4. a. With the game clock running and less than one minute remaining in either half, before a change of team possession if either team commits a foul that causes the clock to stop immediately, the officials may subtract 10 seconds from the game clock at the option of the offended team. The fouls that fall in this category include but are not limited to:

1. Any foul that prevents the snap (e.g., false start, encroachment, defensive offside by contact in the neutral zone, etc.) (A.R. 3-4-4-III);
2. Intentional grounding to stop the clock;
3. Incomplete illegal forward pass;
4. Backward pass thrown out of bounds to stop the clock;
5. Any other foul committed with the intent of stopping the clock.

The offended team may accept the yardage penalty and decline the 10-second runoff. If the yardage penalty is declined the 10-second runoff is declined by rule.

- b. 10-second runoff procedures are specified in Rule [3-4-5](#).

## 10-second Runoff Summary

ARTICLE 5. The following is a summary of when the 10-second runoff process is in effect:

- a. Injury timeout (Rule 3-3-5-f).
- b. Helmet comes off timeout (Rule 3-3-9-b).
- c. Foul (Rule 3-4-4).
- d. Video review (Rule 12)

## 10-second Subtraction from Game Clock—Common Procedures

ARTICLE 6. a. The 10-second rule only applies if the game clock is running when the event occurs and the event causes the game clock to stop.

- b. If there is a 10-second subtraction, the game clock will start on the referee's signal. If there is no 10-second subtraction, the game clock will start on the snap. *NOTE:* This rule supersedes Rule 3-3-2-f (snap supersedes referee's signal) but does not supersede Rule 3-3-2-g (running clock). (A.R. 3-3-2:VIII and IX)

- c. If the team that caused the event has a team timeout remaining they may avoid the 10-second subtraction by using a team timeout. In this case the game clock will start on the snap after the timeout.
- d. The 10-second subtraction does not apply when both teams are equally responsible for stopping the clock (e.g. offsetting fouls, or injured or helmet-off players from both teams). (A.R. 3-4-4:IV)

## **SECTION 5. Substitutions**

### **Substitution Procedures**

ARTICLE 1. Any number of legal substitutes for either team may enter the game between periods, after a score or try, or during the interval between downs only for the purpose of replacing a player(s) or filling a player vacancy(ies).

### **Legal Substitutions**

ARTICLE 2. A legal substitute may replace a player or fill a player vacancy provided none of the following restrictions is violated:

- a. No incoming substitute shall enter the field of play or an end zone while the ball is in play.
- b. No player, in excess of 11, shall leave the field of play or an end zone while the ball is in play (A.R. 3-5-2-I).

**PENALTY [a-b] Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot [S22: SUB].**

- c. 1. An incoming legal substitute must enter the field of play directly from his team area and a substitute, player or departing player must depart at the sideline nearest his team area and proceed to his team area .  
2. A departing player must immediately leave the field of play, including the end zones. A departing player who leaves the huddle or his position within three seconds, after a substitute becomes a player, is considered to have left immediately .
- d. Substitutes who become players must remain in the game for one play and replaced players must remain out of the game for one play, except during the interval between periods, after a score, or when a timeout is charged to a team or to the referee with the exception of a live-ball out of bounds or an incomplete forward pass (A.R. 3-5-2-III and VII).

**PENALTY [c-d]—Dead-ball foul: Five yards from the succeeding spot [S22:SUB]**

e. When Team A sends in its substitutes, the officials will not allow the ball to be snapped until Team B has been given an opportunity to substitute. While in the process of substitution or simulated substitution, Team A is prohibited from rushing quickly to the line of scrimmage with the obvious attempt of creating a defensive disadvantage. If the ball is ready for play, the game officials will not permit the ball to be snapped until Team B has placed substitutes in position and replaced players have left the field of play. Team B must react promptly with its substitutes.

**PENALTY—(First Offense)—Dead-ball foul. Delay of game on Team B for not completing its substitutions promptly, or delay of game on Team A for causing the play clock to expire. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S21: SUB]. The referee will then notify the head coach that any further use of this tactic will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul .**

**PENALTY—(Second or more offense)—Dead-ball foul, team unsportsmanlike conduct. An official will sound his whistle immediately. 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S27: UC-UNS].**

**More Than Eleven Players on the Field**

ARTICLE 3. a. Team A may not break the huddle with more than 11 players nor keep more than 11 players in the huddle or in a formation for more than three seconds. Officials shall stop the action whether or not the ball has been snapped.

**PENALTY – Dead-ball foul. Five yards at the succeeding spot. [S22: SUB]**

b. Team B is allowed to briefly retain more than 11 players on the field to anticipate the offensive formation, but it may not have more than 11 players on the field when the ball is snapped. The infraction is treated as a live-ball foul.

**PENALTY – Live-ball foul. Five yards at the previous spot. [S22: SUB]**

c. When Team A is in formation, Team B must not have more than 11 players in its formation. If the play clock is at :00 and Team B has more than 11 players on the field, it is a foul against Team B.

**PENALTY – Dead-ball foul. Five yards at the succeeding spot. [S22: SUB]**

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# RULE 4

## Ball in Play, Dead Ball , Out of Bounds

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### SECTION 1. Ball in Play—Dead Ball

#### Dead Ball Becomes Alive

ARTICLE 1. After a dead ball is ready for play, it becomes a live ball when it is legally snapped or legally free-kicked. A ball snapped or free-kicked before it is ready for play remains dead (A.R. 2-16-4-I, A.R. 4-1-4-I and II, A.R. 7-1-3-IV , and A.R. 7-1-5-I and II).

#### Live Ball Becomes Dead

ARTICLE 2. a. A live ball becomes a dead ball as provided in the rules or when an official sounds his whistle (even though inadvertently) or otherwise signals the ball dead (A.R. 4-2-1-II and A.R. 4-2-4-I) .

- b. If an official sounds his whistle inadvertently or otherwise signals the ball dead during a down (Rules [4-1-3-k](#), m and n) (A. R. 4-1-2-I-V):
1. When the ball is in player possession, then the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where declared dead or repeat the down.
  2. When the ball is loose from a fumble, backward pass or illegal pass, then the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where possession was lost or repeat the down.

#### *Exceptions:*

- (1) Rule 12
- (2) If the ball goes out of bounds in the immediate continuing action after the inadvertent whistle, then the ball belongs to the fumbling/passing team according to Rule 7-2-4.
- (3) If there is a clear catch, recovery or interception of a loose ball in the immediate continuing action after the inadvertent whistle, then the ball belongs to the recovering team at the spot of the recovery and any advance is nullified.

3. During a legal forward pass or a free or scrimmage kick, then the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down repeated.

***Exceptions:***

- (1) Rule 12
  - (2) If, in the immediate continuing action after the inadvertent whistle, a legal forward pass is incomplete (Rule [7-3-7](#)), a free kick goes out of bounds (Rule [6-2](#)) or touches the ground on or behind Team B's goal line (Rule [6-1-7](#)), a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds (Rule [6-3-7](#) or [6-3-8](#)) or touches the ground on or behind Team B's goal line (Rule [6-3-9](#)), then those rules apply as if the inadvertent whistle had not happened.
  - (3) If there is a clear catch, recovery or interception of a loose ball in the immediate continuing action after the inadvertent whistle, then the ball belongs to the recovering team at the spot of the recovery and any advance is nullified.
  - (4) If a scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B beyond the neutral zone, and if the other exceptions here do not apply, the ball is dead and belongs to Team B at the spot where the kick ends (Rule 2-25-9). If this spot is beyond the neutral zone, the kick has crossed the neutral zone, and postscrimmage kick enforcement will apply if the provisions of Rule 10-2-3 hold. On a field goal attempt, a field goal will be scored if the requirements of Rule 8-4-1 are met.
4. After Team B gains possession on the try or during an extra period, then the try is over or the extra-period possession series is ended.
    - c. If a foul or violation occurs during any of the above downs, the penalty or violation privilege shall be administered as in any other play situation if not in conflict with other rules (A.R. 4-1-2-I and II).

## **Ball Declared Dead**

ARTICLE 3. A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound his whistle or declare it dead:

- a. When it goes out of bounds other than a kick that scores a field goal after touching the uprights or crossbar; when a ball carrier is out of bounds, or when a ball carrier is so held that his forward progress is stopped. When in question, the ball is dead (A.R. 4-2-1-II).

- b. When any part of the ball carrier's body, except his hand or foot, touches the ground or when the ball carrier is tackled or otherwise falls and loses possession of the ball as he contacts the ground with any part of his body, except his hand or foot [**Exception:** The ball remains alive when an offensive player has simulated a kick or at the snap is in position to kick the ball held for a place kick by a teammate. The ball may be kicked, passed or advanced by rule] (A.R. 4-1-3-I).
- c. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, field goal or successful try occurs; or when a free kick or a scrimmage kick that is untouched by Team B beyond the neutral zone touches the ground in Team B's end zone (Rules [6-1-7-a](#), [6-3-9](#) and A.R. 6-3-9-I).
- d. When, during a try, a dead-ball rule applies (Rule [8-3-2-d-5](#)).
- e. When a player of the kicking team catches or recovers any free kick or a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone.
- f. When a free kick, scrimmage kick or any other loose ball comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it.
- g. When a scrimmage kick or a free kick is caught or recovered by any player after a valid or invalid fair-catch signal; or when an invalid fair-catch signal is made after a catch or recovery by Team B (Rules [2-8-1](#) through 3).
- h. When a return kick or scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone is made .
- i. When a forward pass is ruled incomplete.
- j. When, before a change of team possession on fourth down or a try, a Team A fumble is caught or recovered by a Team A player other than the fumbler (Rules [7-2-2-a](#) and -b and [8-3-2-d-5](#)).
- k. When a live ball not in player possession touches anything inbounds other than a player, a player's equipment, an official, an official's equipment or the ground (inadvertent-whistle provisions apply).
- l. When there is a simultaneous catch or recovery of a live ball.
- m. When the ball becomes illegal while in play (inadvertent-whistle provisions apply).
- n. When a live ball comes into possession of an official (inadvertent-whistle provisions apply).
- o. When a ball carrier simulates placing his knee on the ground.

- p. When an airborne pass receiver from either team is held so that he is prevented from immediately returning to the ground. (A.R. 7-3-6:III)
- q. When a ball carrier's helmet comes completely off .
- r. When a ball carrier obviously begins a feet-first slide. (A.R. 4-1-3-III)
- s. When all players in the vicinity of the ball stop playing and/or believe it to be dead.

### **Ball Ready for Play**

ARTICLE 4. No player shall put the ball in play before it is ready for play (A.R. -4-1-4I and II).

**PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S21].**

### **Play-Clock Count**

ARTICLE 5. The ball shall be put in play within 40 or 25 seconds after it is made ready for play (Rule [3-2-4](#)), unless, during that interval, play is suspended .If play is suspended, the play-clock count will start again .

**PENALTY—Dead-ball foul for delay of game. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S21].**

## **SECTION 2. Out of Bounds**

### **Player Out of Bounds**

ARTICLE 1. a. A player is out of bounds when any part of his person touches anything, other than another player or game official, on or outside a boundary line (Rule [2-27-15](#)) (A.R. 4-2-1-I and II).

- b. An out-of-bounds player who becomes airborne remains out of bounds until he touches the ground in bounds without simultaneously being out of bounds.

- c. A player who touches a pylon is out of bounds.

### **Held Ball Out of Bounds**

ARTICLE 2. A ball in player possession is out of bounds when either the ball or any part of the ball carrier touches the ground or anything else that is out of bounds, or that is on or outside a boundary line except another player or game official.

## Loose Ball Out of Bounds

ARTICLE 3. a. A ball not in player control, other than a kick that scores a field goal, is out of bounds when it touches the ground, a player, a game official or anything else that is out of bounds, or that is on or outside a boundary line.

- b. A ball that touches a pylon is out of bounds behind the goal line.
- c. If a live ball not in player possession crosses a boundary line and then is declared out of bounds, it is out of bounds at the crossing point.

## Out of Bounds at Forward Point

ARTICLE 4. a. If a live ball is declared out of bounds and the ball does not cross a boundary line, it is out of bounds at the ball's most forward point when it was declared dead (A.R. 4-2-4-I) (*Exception*: Rule [8-5-1-a](#), A.R. 8-5-1-I).

- b. A touchdown is scored if the ball is inbounds and has broken the plane of the goal line (Rule [2-12-2](#)) before or simultaneous to the ball carrier going out of bounds.
- c. A receiver who is in the opponent's end zone and contacting the ground is credited with a completion if he reaches over the sideline or end line and catches a legal pass.
- d. The most forward point of the ball when declared out of bounds between the goal lines is the point of forward progress (A.R. 8-2-1-I and A.R. 8-5-1-VII) (*Exception*: When a ball carrier is airborne as he crosses the sideline (including a striding runner) forward progress is determined by the position of the ball as it crosses the sideline (A.R. 8-2-1-II-III and V-IX) .

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# RULE 5

## Series of Downs, Line to Gain

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### SECTION 1. A Series: Started, Broken, Renewed

#### When To Award Series

ARTICLE 1. a. A series (Rule [2-24-1](#)) of up to four consecutive scrimmage downs shall be awarded to the team that is next to put the ball in play by a snap after a free kick, touchback, fair catch, or change in team possession, or to the offensive team in overtime.

- b. A new series shall be awarded to Team A if it is in legal possession of the ball on or beyond its line to gain when the ball is declared dead.
- c. A new series shall be awarded to Team B if, after fourth down, Team A has failed to earn a first down (A.R. 10-1-5-I).
- d. A new series shall be awarded to Team B if Team A's scrimmage kick goes out of bounds or comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it (*Exception*: Rule [8-5-1-a](#)).
- e. A new series shall be awarded to the team in legal possession when the ball is declared dead:
  1. If a change of team possession occurs during the down.
  2. If a scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone (*Exceptions*: (1) When the down is repeated; (2) Rule [6-3-7](#)).
  3. If an accepted penalty awards the ball to the offended team.
  4. If an accepted penalty mandates a first down.
- f. A new series shall be awarded to Team B whenever Team B, after a scrimmage kick, elects to take the ball at a spot of illegal touching (*Exception*: When the down is repeated) (Rules [6-3-2-a](#) and b).

## Line to Gain

ARTICLE 2. a. The line to gain for a series shall be established 10 yards in advance of the most forward point of the ball; but if this line is in the opponent's end zone, the goal line becomes the line to gain.

- b. The line to gain is established when the ball is made ready for play before the first down of the new series.

## Forward Progress

ARTICLE 3. a. The most forward point of the ball when declared dead between the end lines shall be the determining point in measuring distance gained or lost by either team during any down (*Exceptions:*

1. Rule [8-5-1](#), A.R. 8-5-1-I.
2. When an airborne pass receiver of either team completes a catch inbounds after an opponent has driven the receiver backward and the ball is declared dead at the spot of the catch, the forward progress is where the player gained and maintained firm control of the ball)

The ball always shall be placed with its length axis parallel to the sideline before measuring. (Rule 4-1-3-p) (A.R. 5-1-3-I, III, IV and VI, and A.R 7-3-6-V).

- b. Questionable distance for a first down should be measured without request . Unnecessary measurements to determine first downs shall not be granted.
- c. No request for a measurement shall be granted after the ball is ready for play.

## Continuity of Downs Broken

ARTICLE 4. The continuity of a series of scrimmage downs is broken when:

- a. Team possession of the ball changes during a down.
- b. A scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone.
- c. A kick goes out of bounds.
- d. A kick comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it.
- e. At the end of a down, Team A has earned a first down.
- f. After fourth down, Team A has failed to earn a first down.
- g. An accepted penalty mandates a first down.
- h. There is a score.

- i. A touchback is awarded to either team.
- j. The second period ends.
- k. The fourth period ends .

## **SECTION 2. Down and Possession After a Penalty**

### **Foul During Free Kick Down**

ARTICLE 1. When a scrimmage down follows the penalty for a foul committed during a free kick down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with a new line to gain.

### **Penalty Resulting in New Series**

ARTICLE 2. It is a new series with a new line to gain:

- a. After a penalty that leaves the ball in possession of Team A beyond its line to gain.
- b. When a penalty mandates a first down.

### **Foul Before Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 3. a. If a penalty is accepted for a foul that occurs between the goal lines before a change of team possession during a down, the ball belongs to Team A. The down shall be repeated unless the penalty also involves loss of a down, mandates a first down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the line to gain (*Exceptions*: Rules [8-3-3-b-1](#), [10-2-3](#), [10-2-4](#), and [10-2-5](#)). (A.R. 10-2-3-I)

- b. If the penalty involves loss of a down, the down shall count as one of the four in that series .

### **Foul After Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 4. If a penalty is accepted for a foul that occurs during a down after a change of team possession, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred. The down and distance established by any such penalty shall be first down with a new line to gain (*Exception*: Rule [10-2-5-a](#)).

### **Penalty Declined**

ARTICLE 5. If a penalty is declined, the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

## Foul Between Downs

ARTICLE 6. After a distance penalty incurred between downs, the number of the next down shall be the same as that established before the foul occurred ,unless enforcement for a foul by Team B leaves the ball on or beyond the line to gain or a penalty mandates a first down (Rule [9-1](#)) (A.R. 5-2-6-I and A.R-10-1-5 .I-III).

## Foul Between Series

ARTICLE 7. a. The penalty for any dead-ball foul (including live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls) that occurs after a series ends and before the ball is ready for play shall be completed before the line to gain is established .

- b. The penalty for any dead-ball foul that occurs after the ball is ready for play shall be completed after the line to gain is established (A.R. 5-2-7-I-V).

## Fouls by Both Teams

ARTICLE 8. If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down shall be repeated (Rule [10-1-4](#) Exceptions) (A.R. 10-1-4-III-VI, VII).

## Rule Decisions Final

ARTICLE 9. No rule decision may be changed after the ball is next legally snapped, legally free-kicked or the second or fourth periods have ended (Rules [3-2-1-a](#), [3-3-4-e-2](#) and [11-1](#)) . (*Exception*: The number of a down may be corrected any time within that series of downs or before the ball is legally next put in play after that series.)

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# RULE 6

## Kicks

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### SECTION 1. Free Kicks

#### Restraining Lines

ARTICLE 1. For any free kick formation, the kicking team's restraining line shall be the yard line through the most forward point from which the ball shall be kicked, and the receiving team's restraining line shall be the yard line 10 yards beyond that point. Unless relocated by a penalty, the kicking team's restraining line on a kickoff shall be its line 15 yards from the midfield line, and for a free kick after a safety, its 20-yard line.

#### Free Kick Formation

ARTICLE 2. a. A ball from a free kick formation must be kicked legally and from some point on Team A's restraining line (*Exception*: Rule [6-1-2-c-4](#)) and on or between the hash marks. The referee will declare the ball ready for play when the officials are in position after the kicker has received the ball.

After the ready-for-play signal:

1. the ball may only be relocated after a charged team timeout and before a subsequent kick.
2. All players on the kicking team, except the kicker in his/her kicking motion and the holder for the purposes of holding the ball, must remain behind their restraining line [S18: OFK].
3. If a Team A player attempts to kick the ball but misses it (intentionally or accidentally), it is a dead-ball foul for illegal procedure [S19: IFK].

**PENALTY – Dead-ball foul. Illegal kick. Five yards from the succeeding spot. [S18/S19: OFK/IFK]. (A.R. 6-1-2:I)**

- b. After the ball has been made ready for play, All players on the kicking team except the kicker must be no more than five yards behind their restraining line. A player satisfies this rule when one foot is on or beyond the line five yards behind the restraining line. If one player is more than five yards behind

the restraining line and any other player kicks the ball, it is a foul for an illegal formation. (A.R. 6-1-2-VII)

1. All players on the kicking team, except the kicker in his kicking motion and the holder for the purposes of holding the ball, must remain behind their restraining line
  2. If a Team A player attempts to kick the ball but misses it (intentionally or accidentally), it is a dead-ball foul for illegal procedure [S19: IFK].
- c. When the ball is kicked (A.R. 6-1-2-I-IV):
1. Each Team A player, except the holder and kicker of a place kick, must be behind the ball (A.R. 6-1-2-V) [S18].
  2. All Team A players must be inbounds [S19].
  3. At least four Team A players must be on each side of the kicker [S19]. (AR 6-1-2-II-IV)
  4. After a safety, when a punt or drop kick is used, the ball may be kicked from behind the kicking team's restraining line. If a yardage penalty for a live-ball foul is enforced from the previous spot, administration is from the 20-yard line, unless the kicking team's restraining line has been relocated by a previous penalty [S18 or appropriate signal]
  5. All players of Team A must have been between the nine-yard marks after the ready-for-play signal [S19].

**PENALTY [b-c5]—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot, or five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B, or from the spot where the ball is placed after a touchback [S18 or S19] (A.R. 6-1-2-VI).**

6. All Team B players must be inbounds [S19]
7. All Team B players must be behind their restraining line [S18]

**PENALTY [c6-c7]—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot [S18 or S19].**

- d. After the ball is ready for play and for any reason falls from the tee, Team A shall not kick the ball and an official shall sound his/her whistle immediately.

### **Touching and Recovery of a Free Kick; Illegal Touching**

ARTICLE 3. a. No Team A player may touch a free-kicked ball until after:

1. It touches a Team B player (*Exception*: Rules [6-1-4](#) and [6-5-1-b](#));
2. It breaks the plane of and remains beyond Team B's restraining line (*Exception*: Rule [6-4-1](#)) (A.R. 2-12-5-I); or
3. It touches any player, the ground, an official or anything else beyond Team B's restraining line.

Thereafter, all players of Team A become eligible to touch, recover or catch the kick .

- b. Any other touching by Team A is illegal touching, a violation that, when the ball becomes dead, gives the receiving team the privilege of taking the ball at the spot of the violation .
- c. If there is an accepted penalty for a live-ball foul by either team, or if there are offsetting fouls, the illegal touching privilege is canceled (A.R. 6-1-3-I).
- d. Illegal touching in Team A's end zone is ignored.

### **Forced Touching Disregarded**

ARTICLE 4. a. A player blocked by an opponent into a free kick is not, while inbounds, deemed to have touched the kick. (A. R. 2-11-4-I)

b. An inbounds player touched by a ball either batted or illegally kicked by an opponent is not deemed to have touched the ball (Rule [2-11-4-c](#)).

### **Free Kick at Rest**

ARTICLE 5. If a free kick comes to rest inbounds and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at the dead-ball spot.

### **Free Kick Caught or Recovered**

ARTICLE 6. a. If a free kick is caught or recovered by a player of the receiving team, the ball continues in play (*Exceptions*: Rules [4-1-3-g](#), [6-1-7](#), and [6-5-1](#) and 2). If caught or recovered by a player of the kicking team, the ball becomes dead. The ball belongs to the receiving team at the dead-ball spot, unless the kicking team is in legal possession when the ball is declared dead. In the latter case, the ball belongs to the kicking team.

- b. When opposing players, each eligible to touch the ball, simultaneously recover a rolling kick or catch a free kick, the simultaneous possession makes the ball dead.
- c. A kick declared dead in joint possession is awarded to the receiving team .

## Ball Dead in End Zone

ARTICLE 7. a. When a free kick untouched by Team B touches the ground on or behind Team B's goal line, the ball becomes dead and belongs to Team B.

- b. If the result of the free kick is a touchback (Rule [8-6](#)) for Team B, they will put the ball in play at their 20-yard line.

## Fouls by Kicking Team

ARTICLE 8. Penalties for all fouls by the kicking team during a free kick play other than kick-catch interference (Rule [6-4](#)) may be enforced at the previous spot with the down repeated or at the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B, at the option of Team B.

## Foul Against Kicker

ARTICLE 9. The kicker of a free kick may not be blocked until he has advanced five yards beyond his restraining line or the kick has touched a player, an official or the ground. (Rule [9-1-16-c](#))

**PENALTY—15 yards from the previous spot [S40: PF-RFK].**

## Illegal Wedge Formation

ARTICLE 10. a. A wedge is defined as two or more players aligned shoulder to shoulder within two yards of each other.

- b. Free-kick down only: After the ball has been kicked, it is illegal for two or more members of the receiving team intentionally to form a wedge for the purpose of blocking for the ball carrier. This is a live-ball foul, whether or not there is contact between opponents.

**PENALTY – Noncontact foul. 15 yards from the spot of the foul, or 15 yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B if this is behind the spot of the foul. 15 yards, previous spot with the down repeated if the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team A [S27: IWK].**

- c. Formation of the wedge is not illegal when the kick is from an obvious onside kick formation.
- d. There is no foul if the play results in a touchback, a foul for free kick out of bounds or a fair catch.

## Player Out Of Bounds

ARTICLE 11. A Team A player who goes out of bounds during a free kick play may not return inbounds during the down (*Exception*: This does not apply to a Team A player who is blocked out of bounds and returns in-bounds immediately)

**PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot, or five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B, or from the spot where the ball is placed after a touchback [S19].**

## Eligibility to Block

ARTICLE 12. No Team A player may block an opponent until Team A is eligible to touch a free-kicked ball. (A.R. 6-1-3-II).

**PENALTY —Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot, or five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B ,or from the spot where the ball is placed after a touchback [S19].**

## SECTION 2. Free Kick Out of Bounds

### Kicking Team

ARTICLE 1. A free kick out of bounds between the goal lines untouched by an inbounds player of Team B is a foul (A.R. 6-2-1-I-II and 4-2-1-III)

**PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot; or five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B; or the receiving team may put the ball in play 25 yards beyond Team A's restraining line at the hash mark [S19].**

### Receiving Team

ARTICLE 2. When a free kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball belongs to the receiving team at the hash mark. When a free kick goes out of bounds behind the goal line, the ball belongs to the team defending that goal line (A.R. 6-2-2-I-IV).

## SECTION 3. Scrimmage Kicks

### Behind the Neutral Zone

ARTICLE 1. a. A scrimmage kick that fails to cross the neutral zone continues in play. All players may catch or recover the ball behind the neutral zone and advance it (A.R. 6-3-1-I-III).

- b. The blocking of a scrimmage kick by an opponent of the kicking team who is not more than three yards beyond the neutral zone is considered to have occurred within or behind that zone (Rule [2-11-5](#)).

### Beyond the Neutral Zone

ARTICLE 2. a. No inbounds player of the kicking team shall touch a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone before it touches an opponent. Such illegal touching is a violation that, when the ball becomes dead, gives the receiving team the privilege of taking the ball at the spot of the violation (*Exception*: Rule [6-3-4](#)) (A.R. 2-12-2-I and A.R. 6-3-2-I).

- b. This privilege is canceled if there is an accepted penalty for a live-ball foul by either team (A.R. 6-3-2-I-IV, A.R. 6-3-11-I-III and A.R. 10-1-4-VII) .
- c. The privilege is canceled if there are offsetting fouls.
- d. Illegal touching in Team A's end zone is ignored. Illegal touching on a try results in no score. Illegal touching in an extra period results in team possession ending.

### All Become Eligible

ARTICLE 3. When a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone touches a player of the receiving team who is inbounds, any player may catch or recover the ball (Rule [6-3-1-b](#)) (*Exceptions*: Rules [6-3-4](#) and [6-5-1-b](#)).

### Forced Touching Disregarded

ARTICLE 4. a. A player blocked by an opponent into a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone shall not, while inbounds, be deemed to have touched the kick (A.R. 6-3-4-I-V and 2-11-4-I).

- e. An inbounds player touched by a ball either batted or illegally kicked by an opponent is not deemed to have touched the ball (A.R. 6-3-4-II). (Rule [2-11-4-c](#))

## Catch or Recovery by Receiving Team

ARTICLE 5. If a scrimmage kick is caught or recovered by a player of the receiving team, the ball continues in play (*Exceptions*: Rules [4-1-3-g](#), [6-3-9](#), [6-5-1](#) and 2) (A.R. 8-4-2-V).

## Catch or Recovery by Kicking Team

ARTICLE 6. a. If a player of the kicking team catches or recovers a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone, the ball becomes dead (A.R. 6-3-1-IV). The ball belongs to the receiving team at the dead-ball spot, unless the kicking team is in legal possession when the ball is declared dead. In the latter case, the ball belongs to the kicking team (*Exception*: Rule [8-4-2-b](#)).

b. If opposing players who are each eligible to touch the ball simultaneously catch or recover a scrimmage kick, the simultaneous possession makes the ball dead. A kick declared dead in joint possession of opposing players is awarded to the receiving team (Rules [2-4-4](#) and [4-1-3-1](#)).

## Out of Bounds Between Goal Lines or at Rest Inbounds

ARTICLE 7. If a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines or if it comes to rest inbounds and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at the dead-ball spot (*Exception*: Rule [8-4-2-b](#)).

## Out of Bounds Behind Goal Line

ARTICLE 8. If a scrimmage kick (other than one that scores a field goal) goes out of bounds behind a goal line, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the team defending that goal line (Rule [8-4-2-b](#)).

## Touching Ground On or Behind Goal Line

ARTICLE 9. When a scrimmage kick untouched by Team B beyond the neutral zone touches the ground on or behind Team B's goal line, the ball becomes dead and belongs to Team B. (Rule [8-4-2-b](#)) (A.R. 6-3-9-I-II).

## Legal and Illegal Kicks

ARTICLE 10. a. A legal scrimmage kick is a punt, drop kick or place kick made according to rule.

b. A return kick is an illegal kick and a live-ball foul that causes the ball to become dead (Rule [2-16-8](#)).

**PENALTY—For a return kick (live-ball foul): Five yards from the spot of the foul [S31].**

c. A scrimmage kick made when the kicker's entire body is beyond the neutral zone is an illegal kick and a live-ball foul that causes the ball to become dead.

**PENALTY—For an illegal kick beyond the neutral zone (live-ball foul): Five yards from the previous spot and loss of down [S31 and S9].**

d. No device or material may be used to mark the spot of a scrimmage place kick or elevate the ball. This is a live-ball foul at the snap.

**PENALTY—Five yards from the previous spot [S19].**

## Loose Behind the Goal Line

ARTICLE 11. If a scrimmage kick untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone is batted in Team B's end zone by a player of Team A, it is a violation for illegal touching (Rule [6-3-2](#)). The spot of the violation is Team B's 20-yard line. This is a special case of batting in the end zone and is not a foul. (A.R. 6-3-11-I-V and A.R. 2-12-2-I).

## Out-of-Bounds Player

ARTICLE 12. No Team A player who goes out of bounds during a scrimmage kick play may return inbounds during the down (*Exception*: This does not apply to a Team A player who is blocked out of bounds and attempts to return inbounds immediately).

**PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot or if the scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone, five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B [S19].**

## Fouls by Kicking Team

ARTICLE 13. Penalties for all fouls by the kicking team other than kick-catch interference (Rule [6-4](#)) during a scrimmage kick play (except field-goal attempts) in which the ball crosses the neutral zone may be enforced either at the previous spot with the down repeated (*Exception*: Penalty option is a safety for fouls in Team A's end zone.) or at the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B, at the option of Team B. (A.R. 6-3-13-I-III)

## Defensive Linemen on Scrimmage Kick Plays

ARTICLE 14. a. If Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation at the snap, any Team B player within one yard of the line of scrimmage must be aligned completely outside the frame of the body of the snapper at the snap (A.R. 6-3-14:I-II).

- b. If Team A is in a formation to attempt a place kick (field goal or try) it is illegal for three Team B players on their line of scrimmage inside the blocking zone to align shoulder-to-shoulder and move forward together after the snap with primary contact against a single Team A player (A.R. 6-3-14-I and II).

**PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards, previous spot. [S19].**

## SECTION 4. Opportunity To Catch a Kick

### Interference With Opportunity

ARTICLE 1. a.

If an inbounds player of the receiving team is located where he could catch a free kick or a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone, and if he is attempting to do so, he must be given an unimpeded opportunity to catch the kick (A.R. 6-3-1-III, A.R. 6-4-1-V, VI and IX).

- b. It is an interference foul if, before the receiver touches the ball, a Team A player enters the area defined by the width of the receiver's shoulders and extending one yard in front of him. When in question it is a foul. (A.R. 6-4-1-X-XIII).
- c. This protection ends when the kick touches the ground (*Exception*: Free kick, par. f below), when any player of Team B muffs or touches a scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone, or when any player of Team B muffs or touches a free kick in the field of play or in the end zone (*Exception*: Rule [6-5-1-b](#)) (A.R. 6-4-1-IV).
- d. If interference with a potential receiver is the result of a player being blocked by an opponent, it is not a foul.
- e. It is an interference foul if the kicking team contacts the potential receiver before, or simultaneous to, his first touching the ball (A.R. 6-4-1-II, III, and VIII). When in question, it is an interference foul.

- f. During a free kick a player of the receiving team in position to receive the ball has the same kick-catch and fair-catch protection whether the ball is kicked directly off the tee or is immediately driven to the ground, strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of the ball kicked directly off the tee.
- g. Contact by Team A involving a targeting foul (Rules [9-1-3](#) and [9-1-4](#)) or other personal foul that interferes with the receiver's opportunity to catch a kick may be ruled either as interference or as a targeting or personal foul. The 15-yard penalty is enforced at the spot where the dead ball belongs to Team B or at the spot of the foul, at the option of Team B .

**PENALTY [a-g]—For foul between the goal lines: Receiving team's ball, first down, 15 yards beyond the spot of the foul for an interference foul [S33]. For foul behind the goal line: Award a touchback and penalize from the succeeding spot. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47].**

## **SECTION 5. Fair Catch**

### **Dead Where Caught**

#### ARTICLE 1.

- a. When a Team B player makes a fair catch, the ball becomes dead where caught and belongs to Team B at that spot. [*Exception*: If a Team B player makes a fair catch of a free kick behind Team B's 20-yard line, the ball belongs to Team B at its own 20-yard line. The next snap shall be from midway between the hashmarks, unless a different position on or between the hashmarks is selected by the team designated to put the ball in play before the play clock is at 25 seconds or before any subsequent ready-for-play signal. After the play clock is at 25 seconds or any subsequent ready-for-play signal, the ball may be relocated only after a charged team timeout unless preceded by a Team A foul or offsetting fouls.]
- b. If a Team B player makes a valid fair catch signal, the unimpeded opportunity to catch a free or scrimmage kick continues if this player muffs the kick and still has an opportunity to complete the catch. If the (or another Team B player) subsequently catches the kick, the ball is placed where the player making the signal first touched it. This protection terminates when the kick touches the ground. (A.R. 6-5-1-I-II).

- c. Rules pertaining to a fair catch apply only when a scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone or during free kicks.
- d. The purpose of the fair catch provision is to protect the receiver who, by using the fair catch signal, agrees he or a teammate will not advance after the catch (A.R. 6-5-5-III).
- e. The ball shall be put in play by a snap by the receiving team at the spot of the catch if the ball is caught (*Exceptions*: Rules [6-5-1-b](#), [7-1-3](#) and [8-6-1-b](#)).

### **No Advance**

ARTICLE 2. No Team B player shall carry a caught or recovered ball more than two steps in any direction after any Team B player gives a valid or invalid fair catch signal (A.R. 6-5-2-I-III).

**PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S21].**

### **Invalid Signals: Catch or Recovery**

ARTICLE 3. a. A catch after an invalid signal is not a fair catch, and the ball is dead where caught or recovered (*Exception*: During a free kick, if a Team B receiver gives any waving signal that does not meet all of the requirements of a valid fair catch signal, and subsequently catches the ball behind the B-20 yard line, the ball belongs to Team B at its own 20-yard line). If the signal follows a catch or recovery, the ball is dead when the signal is first given (A.R. 6-5-1-I).

b. Invalid signals beyond the neutral zone apply only to Team B.

c. An invalid signal beyond the neutral zone is possible only when the ball has crossed the neutral zone (Rule [2-16-7](#)) (A.R. 6-5-3-I).

### **Illegal Block or Contact**

ARTICLE 4. A player of Team B who has made a valid or invalid signal for a fair catch and does not touch the ball shall not block or foul an opponent during that down (A.R. 6-5-4-I and II).

**PENALTY—Free kick: Receiving team's ball 15 yards from the spot of the foul [S40]. Scrimmage kick: 15 yards, postscrimmage kick enforcement [S40]**

**No Tackling**

ARTICLE 5. No player of the kicking team shall tackle or block an opponent who has completed a fair catch. Only the player making a fair catch signal has this protection (A.R. 6-5-5-I and III).

**PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Receiving team's ball 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S38].**

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# RULE 7

## Snapping and Passing the Ball

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### SECTION 1. The Scrimmage

#### Starting With a Snap

ARTICLE 1. a. The ball shall be put in play by a legal snap unless the rules provide for a legal free kick [S7 and S19: ISP]

- b. No player shall put the ball in play before it is ready for play [S7 and S19: IPR]

**PENALTY [a-b]—Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S19:ISP/IPR].**

- c. The ball may not be snapped in a side zone (Rule [2-31-6](#)). If the starting point for any scrimmage down is in a side zone, the ball shall be transferred to the nearest hash mark.

#### Shift and False Start

ARTICLE 2. a. Shift. After a huddle (Rule [2-14](#)) or shift (Rule [2-22-1](#)) and before the snap, all Team A players must come to an absolute stop and remain stationary in their positions for at least one full second before the ball is snapped, without movement of the feet, body, head or arms (A.R. 7-1-2-I).

b. False Start. Each of the following is a false start by Team A if it occurs prior to the snap after the ball is ready for play and all players are in scrimmage formation :

1. Any movement by one or more players that simulates the start of a play.
2. The snapper moving to another position.
3. A restricted lineman (Rule [2-27-4](#)) moving his hand(s) or making any quick movement.

***Exceptions:***

- (a) It is not a false start if a Team A lineman immediately reacts when threatened by a Team B player in the neutral zone (Rule [7-1-5-a-2](#)) (A.R. 7-1-3-V) 2. Rule [7-1-3-a-3](#)].
  - (b) It is not a false start if the snapper takes his hand(s) off the ball, provided this does not simulate the start of a play
4. An offensive player making any quick, jerky movement before the snap ,including but not limited to:
  - (a) A lineman moving his foot, shoulder, arm, body or head in a quick ,jerky motion in any direction.
  - (b) The snapper shifting or moving the ball, moving his thumb or fingers, flexing his elbows, jerking his head, or dipping his shoulders or buttocks.
  - (c) The quarterback making any quick, jerky movement that simulates the beginning of a play .
  - (d) A back simulating receiving the ball by making any quick, jerky movement that simulates the beginning of a play .
5. The offensive team never coming to a one-second stop prior to the snap after the ball is ready for play (A.R. 7-1-2-IV). This is an illegal shift that converts to a false start.

### **Offensive Team Requirements—Prior to the Snap**

ARTICLE 3. Each of the following (a-d) is a dead-ball foul. Officials should blow the whistle and not allow the play to continue. After the ball is ready for play and before it is snapped:

- a. *Snapper*. The snapper (Rule [2-27-8](#)) :
  1. May not move to a different position nor have any part of his body beyond the neutral zone;
  2. May not lift the ball, move it beyond the neutral zone or simulate the start of a play;
  3. May take his hand(s) off the ball, but only if this does not simulate the start of a play.
- b. *Nine-Yard Marks*.
  1. Each Team A substitute must have been between the nine-yard marks . Team A players who participated in the previous down must have been between the nine-yard marks after the previous down and before the next snap (A.R. 3-3-4-I).

2. All Team A players must have been between the nine-yard marks after a charged team timeout, an injury timeout, a media timeout or the end of a period.
- c. Encroachment. Once the snapper is established no other Team A player may be in or beyond the neutral zone [*Exceptions*: (1) Substitutes and departing players; and (2) offensive players in a scrimmage kick formation who break the neutral zone with their hand(s) to point at opponents].
- d. False Start. No Team A player may commit a false start (Rule [7-1-2-b](#)) or contact an opponent (A.R. 7-1-3-III).

**PENALTY—[a-d] Dead-ball foul: Five yards from the succeeding spot. [S7 and S19 or S20].**

### **Offensive Team Requirements—At the Snap**

ARTICLE 4. Violation of each of the following (a-c) is a live-ball foul; the play is allowed to continue.

- a. Formation. At the snap Team A must be in a formation that meets these requirements:
  1. All players must be inbounds.
  2. All players must be either linemen or backs (Rule [2-27-4](#), A.R. 7-1-4-VIII).
  3. At least five linemen must wear jerseys numbered 50 through 79 (*Exception*: When the snap is from a scrimmage kick formation, par. 5 below).
  4. No more than four players may be backs.
  5. In a scrimmage kick formation at the snap (Rule [2-16-10](#)) Team A may have fewer than five linemen numbered 50-79, subject to the following conditions :
    - (a) Any and all linemen not numbered 50-79 who are ineligible receiver(s) by position become exceptions to the numbering rule when the snapper is established .
    - (b) Any and all such numbering-exception players must be on the line and may not be on the end of the line. Otherwise, Team A commits a foul for an illegal formation .
    - (c) Any and all such players are exceptions to the numbering rule throughout the down and remain ineligible receivers unless they

become eligible under Rule [7-3-5](#) (forward pass touched by an official or a Team B player).

The conditions in 5(a) – 5(c) are no longer in effect if prior to the snap a period ends or there is a timeout charged to the referee or one of the teams.

b. Man in Motion.

1. One back may be in motion, but he may not be moving toward his opponent's goal line .
2. The player who goes in motion may not start from the line of scrimmage unless he first becomes a back and comes to a complete stop.
3. A player in motion at the snap must have satisfied the one-second rule—i.e., he may not start his motion before any shift has ended (Rule [2-22-1-c](#)).

c. Illegal Shift. At the snap, Team A may not execute an illegal shift (Rule [7-12--a](#)). (A.R. 7-1-3-I-III).

**PENALTY [a-c]—Live-ball foul: Five yards from the previous spot [S19 or S20]. For live-ball fouls occurring when or after the snap starts during scrimmage kick plays other than field goal plays: Five yards from the previous spot or if the kick crosses the neutral zone, five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (S18, S19, or S20).**

## Defensive Team Requirements

ARTICLE 5. The defensive team requirements are as follows:

- a. Each of the following (1-5) is a dead ball foul. Officials should blow the whistle and not allow the play to continue. After the ball is ready for play and before the ball is snapped:
  1. No player may touch the ball except when moved illegally as in Rule [7-1-3-a-1](#), nor may any player contact an opponent or in any other way interfere with him.(A.R. 7-1-5-I-II).
  2. No player may enter the neutral zone causing an offensive lineman to react immediately or commit any other dead-ball offside foul (Rules [2-18-2](#) and [7-1-2-b-3-Exception](#)) (A.R. 7-1-3-V and A.R. 7-1-5-III).
  3. No player may cross the neutral zone and without making contact continue his charge toward any back.

**PENALTY [1-3]—Dead-ball foul, offside. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S21]**

4. Player(s) aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage may not make quick, abrupt or exaggerated actions that are not part of normal defensive player movement (A.R. 7-1-5-IV).
5. No player shall use words or signals that disconcert opponents when they are preparing to put the ball in play. No player may call defensive signals that simulate the sound or cadence of (or otherwise interfere with) offensive starting signals.

**PENALTY [4-5]—Dead-ball foul, delay of game. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S21].**

b. When the snap starts:

1. No player may be in or beyond the neutral zone at the snap.
2. All players must be inbounds.

**PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot [S18].****Handing the Ball Forward**

ARTICLE 6. No player may hand the ball forward except during a scrimmage down as follows:

- a. A Team A back may hand the ball forward to another back only if both are behind their scrimmage line and the player handing the ball forward has not had their entire body beyond the neutral zone while in possession of the ball.
- b. A Team A back behind his scrimmage line may hand the ball forward to a teammate who is on his scrimmage line at the snap, provided that teammate leaves his line position by a movement of both feet that faces him toward his own end line and is at least two yards behind his scrimmage line when he receives the ball (A.R. 7-1-6-I).

**PENALTY—Five yards from the spot of the foul; also loss of a down if by Team A before team possession changes during a scrimmage down [S35 and S9].****Planned Loose Ball**

ARTICLE 7. A Team A player may not advance a planned loose ball in the vicinity of the snapper.

**PENALTY**—Five yards from the previous spot and loss of down [S19 and S9].

## SECTION 2. Backward Pass and Fumble

### During Live Ball

ARTICLE 1. A ball carrier may hand or pass the ball backward at any time ,except to throw the ball intentionally out of bounds to conserve time.

**PENALTY**—Five yards from the spot of the foul; also loss of down if by Team A before team possession changes during a scrimmage down (A.R. 3-4-3-III) [S35 and S9].

### Caught or Recovered

ARTICLE 2. a. When a backward pass or fumble is caught or recovered by any inbounds player, the ball continues in play (A.R. 2-23-1-I).

#### *Exceptions:*

1. Rule [8-3-2-d-5](#) (Team A fumble on the try).
  2. On fourth down before a change of team possession, when a Team A fumble is caught or recovered by a Team A player other than the fumbler, the ball is dead. If the catch or recovery is beyond the spot of the fumble, the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble. If the catch or recovery is behind the spot of the fumble, the ball remains at the spot of the catch or recovery.
- b. When a backward pass or fumble is caught or recovered simultaneously by opposing players, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the team last in possession (*Exception:* Rule [7-2-2-a](#) Exceptions)

### After the Ball Is Snapped

ARTICLE 3. No offensive lineman may receive a hand-to-hand snap.

**PENALTY**—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot [S19].

### Out of Bounds

ARTICLE 4. a. Backward Pass. When a backward pass goes out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball belongs to the passing team at the out-of-bounds spot.

- b. Fumble. When a fumble goes out of bounds between the goal lines:

1. In advance of the spot of the fumble, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the spot of the fumble (Rule [3-3-2-e-2](#)).
  2. Behind the spot of the fumble, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the out-of-bounds spot.
- c. Behind or Beyond Goal Line. When a fumble or backward pass goes out of bounds behind or beyond a goal line, it is a safety or touchback depending on impetus and responsibility (Rules [8-5-1](#), [8-6-1](#) and [8-7](#)) (A.R. 7-2-4-I, A.R. 8-6-1-I and A.R. 8-7-2-I).

## At Rest

ARTICLE 5. When a backward pass or fumble comes to rest inbounds and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and:

- a. If in advance of the spot of the pass/fumble, the ball belongs to the passing/fumbling team at the spot of the pass/fumble.
- b. If behind the spot of the pass/fumble, the ball belongs to the passing/fumbling team at the dead ball spot.

## SECTION 3. Forward Pass

### Legal Forward Pass

ARTICLE 1. Team A may make one forward pass during each scrimmage down before team possession changes, provided the pass is thrown from a point in or behind the neutral zone.

### Illegal Forward Pass

ARTICLE 2. A forward pass is illegal if:

- a. It is thrown by a Team A player whose entire body is beyond the neutral zone when the ball is released.
- b. It is thrown by a Team B player.
- c. It is thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
- d. It is the second forward pass during the same down.
- e. It is thrown from in or behind the neutral zone after a ball carrier's entire body and the ball have been beyond the neutral zone .

**PENALTY [a-e]—Five yards from the spot of the foul; also loss of down if by Team A before team possession changes during a**

**scrimmage down (A.R. 3-4-3-IV and A.R. 7-3-2-II) [S35 and S9].**

- f. The forward passer to conserve time throws the ball directly to the ground (1) after the ball has already touched the ground; or (2) not immediately after controlling the ball .
- g. The passer to conserve time throws the ball forward into an area where there is no eligible Team A receiver (A.R. 7-3-2-II-VII).
- h. The passer to conserve yardage throws the ball forward into an area where there is no eligible Team A receiver (A.R. 7-3-2-I).

**[Exception:** It is not a foul if the passer is or has been outside the tackle box and throws the ball so that it crosses or lands beyond the neutral zone or neutral zone extended (Rule [2-19-3](#)) (A.R. 7-3-2-VIII-X) or would have crossed the neutral zone if not touched by Team B. This applies only to the player who controls the snap or the resulting backward pass and does not relinquish possession to another player before throwing the forward pass].

**PENALTY [f-h]—Loss of down at the spot of the foul [S36 and S9].**

### **Eligibility To Touch Legal Forward Pass**

ARTICLE 3. a. Eligibility rules apply during a down when a legal forward pass is thrown .

- b. All Team B players are eligible to touch or catch a pass.
- c. When the ball is snapped, the following Team A players are eligible:
  - 1. Each lineman who is on the end of his scrimmage line and who is wearing a number other than 50 through 79.
  - 2. Each back wearing a number other than 50 through 79.
- d. An eligible player loses his eligibility when he goes out of bounds. (Rule [7-3-4](#)) (A. R. 7-3-9-III).

### **Eligibility Lost by Going Out of Bounds**

ARTICLE 4. No eligible offensive receiver who goes out of bounds and returns in bounds during a down shall touch a legal forward pass while in the field of play or end zones or while airborne until it has been touched by an opponent or official (A.R. 7-3-4-I, II and IV). **[Exception:** This does not apply to an originally eligible offensive player who immediately returns inbounds after going out of bounds due to contact by an opponent (A.R. 7-3-4-III)]. If he touches the pass

before returning in bounds, it is an incomplete pass (Rule [7-37-](#)) and not a foul for illegal touching .

**PENALTY—Loss of down at the previous spot [S16 and S9].**

### **Eligibility Gained or Regained**

ARTICLE 5. When a Team B player or an official touches a legal forward pass , all players become eligible (A.R. 7-3-5-I).

### **Complete Pass**

ARTICLE 6. Any forward pass is complete when caught by a player of the passing team who is inbounds, and the ball continues in play unless completed in the opponent's end zone or the pass has been caught simultaneously by opposing players. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by opposing players inbounds, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing team (Rules [2-4-3](#) and [2-4-4](#)) (A.R. 2-4-3-III and A.R. 7-3-6-I-VIII).

### **Incomplete Pass**

ARTICLE 7. a. Any forward pass is incomplete if the ball is out of bounds by rule (Rule [4-2-3](#)) or if it touches the ground when not firmly controlled by a player. It also is incomplete when a player leaves his feet and receives the pass but first lands on or outside a boundary line, unless his progress has been stopped in the field of play or end zone (Rule 4-1-3-p) (A.R. 2-4-3-III and A.R.7-3-7 .I).

- b. When a legal forward pass is incomplete, the ball belongs to the passing team at the previous spot.
- c. When an illegal forward pass is incomplete, the ball belongs to the passing team at the spot of the pass (*Exception*: If Team B declines the penalty for an illegal pass thrown from the end zone, the ball shall next be put in play at the previous spot) (A.R. 7-3-7-II-III).

### **Illegal Contact and Pass Interference**

ARTICLE 8. a. During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses the neutral zone, illegal contact by Team A and Team B players is prohibited from the time the ball is snapped until it is touched by any player or an official (A.R. 7-3-8-II).

- b. Offensive pass interference by a Team A player beyond the neutral zone during a legal forward pass play in which a forward pass crosses the neutral zone is contact that interferes with a Team B eligible player. It is the

responsibility of the offensive player to avoid the opponents. It is not offensive pass interference (A.R. 7-3-8-IV, V, X, XV and XVI):

1. When, after the snap, a Team A ineligible player immediately charges and contacts an opponent at a point not more than one yard beyond the neutral zone and maintains the contact for no more than three yards beyond the neutral zone.
2. When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch or bat the pass. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball (A.R. 7-3-8-IX).
3. When the pass is in flight and two or more eligible players are in the area where they might receive or intercept the pass and an offensive player in that area impedes an opponent, and the pass is not catchable.

**PENALTY—10 yards from the previous spot [S33].**

- c. Defensive pass interference is contact beyond the neutral zone by a Team B player whose intent to impede an eligible opponent is obvious and it could prevent the opponent the opportunity of receiving a catchable forward pass. When in question, a legal forward pass is catchable. Defensive pass interference occurs only after a legal forward pass is thrown (A. R. 7-3-8-VII, VIII, XI AND XII). It is not defensive pass interference (A.R. 7-3-8-III and 7-3-9-III):

1. When, after the snap, opposing players immediately charge and establish contact with opponents at a point that is within one yard beyond the neutral zone .
2. When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch or bat the pass. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball (A.R. 7-3-8-IX).
3. When a Team B player legally contacts an opponent before the pass is thrown (A.R. 7-3-8-III and X).
4. When there is contact by a Team B player that otherwise would be pass interference during a down in which a Team A potential kicker, from scrimmage kick formation ,simulates a scrimmage kick by throwing the ball high and deep.

**PENALTY—Team A’s ball at the spot of the foul, first down, if the foul occurs fewer than 10 yards beyond the previous spot. If the foul occurs 10 or more yards beyond the previous spot, Team A’s ball, first down, 10 yards from the previous spot [S33].**

**When the ball is snapped on or inside the Team B 12-yard line and outside the Team B two-yard line, and the spot of the foul is on or inside the two-yard line, the penalty from the previous spot shall place the ball at the two-yard line, first down (A.R. -7-3-8XIV).**

**No penalty enforced from outside the two-yard line may place the ball inside the two-yard line (*Exception: On the Try when the snap is on or inside the 3-yard line, Rule [10-2-5-b](#)*).**

**If the previous spot was on or inside the two-yard line, first down halfway between the previous spot and the goal line (Rule [10-2-6](#) Exception).**

### **Pass Interference: Summary**

ARTICLE 9. a. Either Team A or Team B legally may interfere with opponents behind the neutral zone.

- b. Players of either team legally may interfere beyond the neutral zone after the pass has been touched (A.R. 7-3-9-I).
- c. Defensive players legally may contact opponents who have crossed the neutral zone if the opponents are not in a position to receive a catchable forward pass.
  1. Those infractions that occur during a down in which a forward pass crosses the neutral zone are pass interference infractions only if the receiver had the opportunity to receive a catchable forward pass.
  2. Those infractions that occur during a down in which a forward pass does not cross the neutral zone are Rule [9-3-4](#) infractions and the penalty is enforced from the previous spot.
- d. Pass interference rules apply only during a down in which a legal forward pass crosses the neutral zone (Rules [2-19-3](#) and [7-3-8-a](#), b and c).
- e. Contact by Team B with an eligible receiver involving a personal foul that interferes with the reception of a catchable pass may be ruled either as pass interference or as a personal foul with the 15-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot. Rule [7-3-8](#) is specific about contact during a pass . However, if the interference involves an act that ordinarily would result in disqualification, the fouling player is disqualified from the game .
- f. Physical contact is required to establish interference.

- g. Each player has territorial rights, and incidental contact is ruled under “attempt to reach...the pass” in Rule [7-3-8](#). If opponents who are beyond the line collide while moving toward the pass, a foul by one or both players is indicated only if intent to impede the opponent is obvious. It is pass interference only if a catchable forward pass is involved.
- h. Pass interference rules do not apply after the pass has been touched anywhere inbounds by an inbounds player or has touched an official. If an opponent is fouled, the penalty is for the foul and not pass interference (A.R-7-3-9 .I).
- i. After the pass has been touched, any player may execute a legal block during the remaining flight of the pass.
- j. Tackling or grasping a receiver or any other intentional contact before the receiver touches the pass is evidence that the tackler is disregarding the ball and is therefore illegal.
- k. Tackling or running into a receiver when a forward pass obviously is underthrown or overthrown is disregarding the ball and is illegal. This is not pass interference but a violation of Rule [9-1-12-a](#), which carries a penalty of 15 yards from the previous spot plus a first down. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified.

### **Ineligible Receiver Downfield**

ARTICLE 10. No originally ineligible receiver shall be or have been more than three yards beyond the neutral zone until a passer throws a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone. A player is in violation of this rule if any part of his body is beyond the three-yard limit (*Exception*: If the passer is legally throwing the ball away and the ball lands near or beyond the sideline.) (A.R. 7-3-10-I and -III).

**PENALTY—Five yards from the previous spot [S37].**

### **Illegal Touching**

ARTICLE 11. No originally ineligible player while inbounds shall intentionally touch a legal forward pass until it has touched an opponent or an official (A.R5- . -2-3I and A.R. 7-3-11-I-II).

**PENALTY—Five yards from the previous spot [S16].**

### **Team B Personal Foul During Legal Forward Pass Play**

ARTICLE 12. Penalties for personal fouls by Team B during a completed legal forward pass play are enforced at the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone. If the pass is incomplete or intercepted, or if there is a change of team possession during the down, the penalty is enforced at the previous spot. (Rule [9-1](#) Penalty) (A. R. 7-3-12-I and 9-1-2-III)

# RULE 8

## Scoring

### SECTION 1. Value of Scores

#### Scoring Plays

ARTICLE 1. The point value of scoring plays shall be:

Touchdown	6 Points
Field Goal	3 Points
Safety (points awarded to opponent)	2 Points
Touchdown during try	2 Points
Field Goal during try	1 Point
Safety during try (points awarded to opponent)	1 Point

#### Forfeited Games

ARTICLE 2. The score of a forfeited game, or a suspended game that later results in a forfeiture, shall be: Offended Team—1, Opponent—0. However, if the offended team is ahead at the time of forfeit, the score stands (Rules [3-3-3-a](#) and [b](#), and Rules [9-2-3](#)).

### SECTION 2. Touchdown

#### How Scored

ARTICLE 1. A touchdown shall be scored when:

- a. A ball carrier advancing from the field of play has possession of a live ball when it penetrates the plane of the opponent's goal line. This plane extends beyond the pylons only for a player who touches the ground in the end zone or a pylon. (A.R. 2-23-1-I and A.R. 8-2-1-I-IX).
- b. A player catches a forward pass in the opponent's end zone (A.R. 5-1-3-I and II).

- c. A fumble or backward pass is recovered, caught, intercepted or awarded in the opponent's end zone (*Exceptions*: Rules [7-2-2-a](#) Exception 2 and 8-3-2-d-5). (A.R. 8-2-1-X)
- d. A free kick or scrimmage kick is legally caught or recovered in the opponent's end zone. (A.R. 6-3-9-III).
- e. The referee awards a touchdown under the provisions of Rule [9-2-3](#) Penalty.

## SECTION 3. Try Down

### How Scored

ARTICLE 1. If the try results in what would be a touchdown, safety or field goal under rules governing play at other times, the point or points shall be scored according to the point values in Rule [8-1-1](#) (A.R. 8-3-1-I-II; A.R. 8-3-2-I-III and VI; and A.R. 10-2-5-X-XV).

### Opportunity to Score

ARTICLE 2. A try is an opportunity for either team to score one or two points while the game clock is stopped after a touchdown. It is a special interval in the game which, for purposes of penalty enforcement only, includes both a down and the "ready" period that precedes it.

- a. The ball shall be put in play by the team that scored a six-point touchdown . If a touchdown is scored during a down in which time in the fourth period expires, the try shall not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game.

#### *Exceptions:*

1. If the scoring team is ahead by one or two points, they have the option to forego the try.
  2. The try shall not be attempted if the fourth period ends due to a running clock before the ball is snapped.
- b. The try, which is a scrimmage down, begins when the ball is declared ready for play.
  - c. The snap will be midway between the hash marks on the opponent's 3-yard line or from any other point on or between the hash marks on or behind the opponent's 3-yard line if the position of the ball is selected by the team designated to put the ball in play before the play clock is at 25 seconds or before any subsequent ready-for-play signal. The ball may be relocated after

a Team B foul or a charged timeout to either team, unless the timeout is preceded by a Team A foul or offsetting fouls) Rules [8-3-3-a](#) and [8-3-3-c-1](#)).

d. The try ends when:

1. Either team scores.
2. The ball is dead by rule (A.R. 8-3-2-IV and VI).
3. An accepted penalty results in a score.
4. A Team A loss-of-down penalty is accepted (Rule [8-3-3-c-2](#)).
5. Before a change of team possession, a Team A player fumbles and the ball is caught or recovered by any Team A player other than the fumbler. There is no Team A score (A.R. 8-3-2-VIII).

### **Fouls During a Try Before a Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 3. a. Offsetting fouls: If both teams foul during the down and Team B fouls before the change of possession, the fouls offset and the down is repeated, even if additional fouls occur after the change of possession. Any repeat of the down after offsetting fouls must be from the previous spot (A.R. 8-3-3-II).

b. *Fouls by Team B on a try:*

1. When the try is successful Team A shall have the option of declining the score and repeating the try after enforcement, or declining the penalty(ies) and accepting the score. Team A may accept the score with penalties for personal fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls enforced on the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods (A.R. 3-2-3-VI; A.R. 8-3-2-II; A.R. 8-3-3-I; and A.R. 10-2-5-IX-XI).
2. A repeat of the down after a penalty against Team B may be from any point on or between the hash marks on or behind the yard line where the penalty leaves the ball. (A.R. 8-3-3-III)

c. *Fouls by Team A on a try:*

1. After a foul by Team A on a successful try, the ball shall be put in play at the spot where the penalty leaves it (A.R. 8-3-3-I).
2. If Team A commits a foul for which the penalty includes loss of down, the try is over, and the score is canceled, and no yardage penalty is assessed on the succeeding kickoff.

3. If before a change of team possession Team A commits a foul that is not offset, and during the down there is neither another change of team possession nor a score, the penalty is declined by rule.
- d. *Dead-ball enforcement:*
1. Penalties for fouls occurring after the ball is ready for play and before the snap are enforced before the next snap.
  2. Penalties for live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls occurring during the try down are enforced on the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods. If the try is replayed, these penalties are enforced on the repeat (Rule [10-1-6](#)) (A.R. 3-2-3-VII).
- e. *Roughing or running into kicker or holder:* Roughing or running into the kicker or holder is a live-ball foul.
- f. *Kick-catch interference:* The penalty for interference with a kick catch is declined by rule. Any score by Team A is canceled.

### **Fouls During a Try After a Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 4. Fouls after a change of team possession are treated specially (Rule [10-2-7](#)). (A.R. 8-3-4-I and II).

### **Fouls After a Try**

ARTICLE 5. Penalties for fouls occurring after a try are enforced on the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods. However, if the try is repeated, these penalties are enforced before the repeat (Rule [10-1-6](#)) (A.R. 10-2-5-XIII-XV and A.R. 3-2-3-VII).

### **Next Play**

ARTICLE 6. After a try, the ball shall be put in play by a kickoff or at the succeeding spot in extra periods. The team scoring the six-point touchdown shall kick off.

## **SECTION 4. Field Goal**

### **How Scored**

ARTICLE 1. a. A field goal shall be scored for the kicking team if a drop kick or place kick, passes over the crossbar between the uprights of the receiving team's goal before it touches a player of the kicking team or the ground.

- b. If a legal field goal attempt passes over the crossbar between the uprights and is dead beyond the end line or is blown back but does not return over the crossbar and is dead anywhere, it shall score a field goal. The crossbar and uprights are treated as a line, not a plane, in determining forward progress of the ball.

### **Next Play**

ARTICLE 2. a. Successful field goal. After a field goal is scored, the ball shall be put in play by a kickoff or at the succeeding spot in extra periods. The team scoring the field goal shall kick off.

- b. Unsuccessful field-goal attempt.
  1. When the ball is declared dead and is untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone, it belongs to Team B. Except in an extra period, Team B will snap the ball at either the previous spot, the 20-yard line or the dead ball spot (whichever is most advantageous to Team B).
    - (a) The 20-yard-line snap shall be from midway between the hash marks unless Team B selects a different location on or between the hash marks before the ready-for-play signal.
    - (b) After the ready-for-play signal, the ball may be relocated after a charged team timeout, unless preceded by a Team A foul or offsetting fouls .
  2. If the ball does not cross the neutral zone, or if Team B touches the ball after it crosses the neutral zone, all rules pertaining to scrimmage kicks apply (A.R. 6-3-4-II, A.R. 8-4-2-I-VI and A.R. 10-2-3-V).

## **SECTION 5. Safety**

### **How Scored**

ARTICLE 1. It is a safety when:

- a. The ball becomes dead out of bounds behind a goal line, except from an incomplete forward pass, or becomes dead in the possession of a player on , above or behind his own goal line, or becomes dead by rule, and the defending team is responsible for the ball being there (A.R. 6-3-1-IV; A.R. 7-2-4-I; A.R. -8-5-1I-II, IV and VI-X; A.R. 8-7-2-II; and A.R. 9-4-1-VIII).

When in question, it is a touchback, not a safety.

**Exception:** It is not a safety if a player between his/her five-yard line and goal line:

- (a) intercepts a pass or fumble; or recovers an opponent's fumble or backward pass; or catches or recovers a kick; and
- (b) his original momentum carries him into his own end zone; and
- (c) the ball remains behind that team's goal line and is declared dead in that team's possession there. This includes a fumble that goes from the end zone into the field of play and out of bounds (Rule [7-2-4-b-1](#))

If conditions (a)-(c) are satisfied above, the ball belongs to this player's team at the spot where he gained possession.

- b. An accepted penalty for a foul leaves the ball on or behind the offending team's goal line (**Exception:** Rules [3-1-3-g-3](#) and [8-3-4-a](#)) (A.R. 8-5-1-III and A.R. 10-2-2-VI).

## Kick After Safety

ARTICLE 2. After a safety is scored, the ball belongs to the defending team -at its own 20-yard line, and that team shall put the ball in play on or between the hash marks by a free kick that may be a punt, drop kick or place kick (**Exception:** Extra-period and try rules).

## SECTION 6. Touchback

### When Declared

ARTICLE 1. It is a touchback when:

- a. The ball becomes dead out of bounds behind a goal line, except from an incomplete forward pass, or becomes dead in the possession of a player on , above or behind his own goal line and the attacking team is responsible for the ball being there (Rule [7-2-4-c](#)) (A.R. 7-2-4-I, A.R. 8-6-1-I-III).
- b. A kick becomes dead by rule behind the defending team's goal line and the attacking team is responsible for the ball being there (**Exception:** Rule [8-4-2b](#)) (A.R. 6-3-4-III).

### Snap After a Touchback

ARTICLE 2. After a touchback is declared, the ball belongs to the defending team at its own 20-yard line. The ball shall be put in play on or between the hash marks by a snap (**Exception:** Extra-period rules). The snap shall be from midway

between the hash marks, unless a different position on or between the hash marks is selected by the team designated to put the ball in play before the play clock is at 25 seconds or before any subsequent ready-for-play signal. After the ready-for-play signal, the ball may be relocated after a charged team timeout, unless preceded by a Team A foul or offsetting fouls.

## **SECTION 7. Responsibility and Impetus**

### **Responsibility**

ARTICLE 1. The team responsible for the ball being out of bounds behind a goal line or being dead in the possession of a player on, above or behind a goal line is the team whose player carries the ball or imparts an impetus to it that forces it on, above or across the goal line, or is responsible for a loose ball being on, above or behind the goal line.

### **Initial Impetus**

ARTICLE 2. a. The impetus imparted by a player who kicks, passes, snaps or fumbles the ball shall be considered responsible for the ball's progress in any direction even though its course is deflected or reversed after striking the ground or after touching an official or a player of either team (A.R. 6-3-4-III ;A.R. 8-5-1-II, VI and VIII; and A.R. 8-7-2-I-IV).

- b. Initial impetus is considered expended and the responsibility for the ball's progress is charged to a player:
  1. If he kicks a ball not in player possession or bats a loose ball after it strikes the ground
  2. If the ball comes to rest and he gives it new impetus by any contact with it, other than through forced touching (Rule [2-11-4-c](#)).
- c. A loose ball retains its original status when there is new impetus .

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# RULE 9

## Conduct of Players and Others Subject to the Rules

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### SECTION 1. Personal Fouls

All fouls in this section (unless noted) and any other acts of unnecessary roughness are personal fouls. For flagrant personal fouls mandating disciplinary authority review, see Rule 9-6. Except as otherwise noted, the penalties for all personal fouls are as follows:

**PENALTY—Personal foul. 15 yards. For dead-ball fouls, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Penalties for Team A live-ball personal fouls behind the neutral zone are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the live-ball foul occurs behind Team A's goal line [S7, S24, S25, S34, S38, S39, S40, S41, S45 or S46 .] Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47].**

**For Team A fouls during free or scrimmage kick plays : Enforcement may be either at the previous spot or, if the scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone, the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (field-goal plays exempted) (Rules [6-1-8](#) and [6-3-13](#)).**

**For Team B personal fouls during a legal forward pass play (Rules [7-3-12](#) and [10-2-2-e](#)): Enforcement is at the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of team possession during the down. If the pass is incomplete or intercepted, or if there is a change of team possession during the down, the penalty is enforced at the previous spot.**

## Flagrant Fouls

ARTICLE 1. Before the game, during the game and between periods, all flagrant fouls (Rule [2-10-1](#)) require disqualification. Team B flagrant personal fouls require first downs if not in conflict with other rules.

## Striking Fouls and Tripping

ARTICLE 2. a. No person subject to the rules shall strike an opponent with the knee; strike an opponent's helmet (including the face mask), neck, face or any other part of the body with an extended forearm, elbow, locked hands, palm, fist, or the heel, back or side of the open hand; or gouge an opponent (A.R-9-1-2 .I).

- b. No person subject to the rules shall strike an opponent with his foot or any part of his leg that is below the knee.
- c. There shall be no tripping. Tripping is intentionally using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knee. (Rule [2-28](#))

## Targeting and Making Forcible Contact With the Crown of the Helmet

ARTICLE 3. No player shall target and make forcible contact against an opponent with the crown of his helmet. The crown of the helmet is the portion of the helmet above the level of the top of the facemask. This foul requires that there be at least one indicator of targeting (See Rule [2-35](#)). (A.R. 9-1-3-I)

**PENALTY – In addition to the 15-yard penalty, automatic disqualification.  
[S38, S24 and S47: PF-TGT/DSQ]**

## Targeting and Making Forcible Contact to Head or Neck Area of a Defenseless Player

ARTICLE 4. No player shall target and make forcible contact to the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulder. This foul requires that there be at least one indicator of targeting (See Rule [2-35](#)). (A.R. 9-1-4-I-VI)

**PENALTY – In addition to the 15-yard penalty, automatic disqualification.  
[S38, S24 and S47: PF-TGT/DSQ]**

## Clipping

ARTICLE 5. There shall be no clipping (Rule [2-5](#)).

***Exceptions:***

1. Offensive players who are on the line of scrimmage at the snap within the free-blocking zone (Rule [2-3-6](#)) legally may clip in the free-blocking zone, subject to the following restrictions.
  - (a) A player in the free-blocking zone may not block an opponent with the force of the initial contact from behind and at or below the knee.
  - (b) A player on the line of scrimmage within the free-blocking zone may not leave the zone and return and legally clip.
  - (c) No player may violate Rule [9-1-6](#) (Blocking Below the Waist)  
*NOTE:* The blocking zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone (Rule [2-3-6](#)).
2. When a player turns his back to a potential blocker who has committed himself in intent and direction or movement.
3. When a player attempts to reach a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier or legally attempts to recover or catch a fumble, a backward pass, a kick or a touched forward pass, he may push an opponent below the waist at or to the buttocks (Rule [9-3-6](#), Exception 3).
4. When an eligible player behind the neutral zone pushes an opponent below the waist at or to the buttocks to get to a forward pass (Rule [9-3-6](#), Exception 5).
5. Clipping is allowed against the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.

## **Blocking Below the Waist**

ARTICLE 6. a. *Team A prior to a change of team possession:*

Linemen with initial position completely inside the tackle box may legally block below the waist inside the tackle box or the free-blocking zone until the ball leaves the tackle box. All other Team A players are allowed to block below the waist only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front. "Directed from the front" is defined as within the clock face region between "10 o'clock and 2 o'clock" forward of the area of concentration of the player being blocked.

***Exceptions:***

1. Team A players may not block below the waist when the block occurs five yards or more beyond the neutral zone.

2. Players outside the tackle box at the snap or anytime after the snap, or who are in motion at the snap may not block below the waist toward the original position of the ball at the snap.
  3. Once the ball has left the tackle box a player may not block below the waist toward his own end line. (A.R. 9-1-6-III)
- b. *Team B prior to a change of team possession:*
1. Other than in paragraphs 2 and 3 (below), players of Team B may block below the waist only within the area defined by lines parallel to the goal line five yards beyond and behind the neutral zone extended to the sidelines. To be legal, this block must be directed from the front. Blocking below the waist by players of Team B outside this zone is illegal except against the ball carrier. (A.R. 9-1-6-VI, IX)
  2. Players of Team B may not block below the waist against an opponent who is in position to receive a backward pass.
  3. Players of Team B may not block below the waist against an eligible Team A pass receiver beyond the neutral zone unless attempting to get to the ball or ball carrier. This prohibition ends when a legal forward pass is no longer possible by rule.
- c. *Kicks.* During a down in which there is a free kick or scrimmage kick, blocking below the waist by any player is illegal except against a ball carrier.
- d. *After change of team possession.* After any change of team possession, blocking below the waist by any player is illegal except against a ball carrier.
- e. *Clipping.* No player may violate Rule 9-1-5 (Clipping).

### **Late Hit, Action Out of Bounds**

- ARTICLE 7. a. There shall be no piling on, falling on or throwing the body on an opponent after the ball becomes dead (A.R. 9-1-7-I).
- b. No opponent shall tackle or block the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier when he is clearly out of bounds or throw him to the ground after the ball becomes dead.
  - c. It is illegal for any player to be clearly out of bounds when he initiates a block against an opponent who is out of bounds. The spot of the foul is the point on the sideline nearest to where the contact occurs.

## Helmet and Face Mask Fouls

ARTICLE 8. a. No player shall continuously contact an opponent's face, helmet (including the face mask) or neck with hand(s) or arm(s) (*Exception*: By or against the runner). [S26]

- b. No player shall grasp and then twist, turn or pull the face mask, chin strap or any helmet opening of an opponent. It is not a foul if the face mask, chin strap or helmet opening is not grasped and then twisted, turned or pulled . When in question, it is a foul.

## Roughing the Passer

ARTICLE 9. a. No defensive player shall unnecessarily rough a forward passer when it is obvious the ball has been thrown. Illegal actions include but are not limited to:

1. Targeting fouls as noted in Rules [9-1-3](#) and [9-1-4](#).
  2. Forcible contact to the head or neck area that does not meet the requirements of Rule [9-1-4](#) (also reference Rule [9-1-2](#)).
  3. Forcible contact that is avoidable after it is obvious the ball has left the forward passer's hand. (*Exception*: A defensive player who is blocked by a Team A player(s) with a force so that he has no opportunity to avoid contact with the forward passer. However, this does not relieve the defensive player of responsibility for personal fouls as described elsewhere in this section.)
  4. Forcibly driving the forward passer to the ground and landing on him with action that punishes the player.
  5. Any action that is a personal foul as described elsewhere in this section.
- b. When an offensive player is in a passing posture with one or both feet on the ground, no defensive player rushing unabated shall hit him forcibly at the knee area or below. The defensive player also may not initiate a roll or lunge and forcibly hit this opponent in the knee area or below.

### *Exceptions:*

1. It is not a foul if the offensive player is a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier not in a passing posture, either inside or outside the tackle box.
2. It is not a foul if the defender grabs or wraps this opponent in an attempt to make a conventional tackle without making forcible contact with the head or shoulder.

3. It is not a foul if the defender is not rushing unabated or is blocked or fouled into this opponent.

**PENALTY – the penalty is added to the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of team possession during the down. (A. R. 9-1-9-II-III)**

### **Chop Blocking**

ARTICLE 10. There shall be no chop blocking (Rule [2-3-3](#)) (A.R. 9-1-10-I-V).

### **Leverage, Leaping and Landing**

ARTICLE 11. a. No defensive player, in an attempt to gain an advantage, may step, jump or stand on an opponent.

- b. It is a foul if a defensive player moves forward and tries to block a kick or apparent kick on a field goal or try by leaving his feet and leaping into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent. It is not a foul if the player was aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped.
- c. It is a foul if a defensive player who is inside the tackle box tries to block a punt or an apparent punt by leaving his feet and leaping into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent.
  1. It is not a foul if the player tries to block the punt by jumping straight up without attempting to leap over the opponent.
  2. It is not a foul if a player leaps through or over the gap between players.
- d. No defensive player, in an attempt to block, bat or catch a kick or apparent kick, may:
  1. Step, jump or stand on a teammate.
  2. Place a hand(s) on a teammate to get leverage for additional height.
  3. Be picked up by a teammate, or be elevated, propelled or pushed.

**PENALTY [a-d]—15 yards, previous spot and automatic first down[S38].**

- e. No player may position himself with his feet on the back or shoulders of a teammate before the snap.

**PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules [S27].**

## Contact Against an Opponent Out of the Play

ARTICLE 12. a. No player shall tackle or run into a receiver when a forward pass to that receiver is obviously not catchable. This is a personal foul and not pass interference.

- b. No player shall run into or throw himself against an opponent obviously out of the play either before or after the ball is dead.

## Hurdling

ARTICLE 13. There shall be no hurdling (*Exception*: The ball carrier may hurdle an opponent).

## Contact Against the Snapper

ARTICLE 14. When a team is in scrimmage kick formation, a defensive player may not initiate contact with the snapper until one second has elapsed after the snap (A.R. 9-1-14-I-III).

## Horse Collar Tackle

ARTICLE 15. All players are prohibited from grabbing the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, the area, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and immediately pulling the ball carrier down. This does not apply to a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier, including a potential passer, who is inside the tackle box (Rule [2-34](#)). Note that the tackle box disintegrates when the ball leaves it.

*NOTE*: It is not necessary for a player to pull the opponent completely to the ground in order for the act to be illegal. If the opponent's knees are buckled by the action, it is a foul even if he is not pulled completely to the ground.

## Roughing or Running Into Kicker or Holder

ARTICLE 16. a. When it is obvious that a scrimmage kick will be made, no opponent shall run into or rough the kicker or the holder of a place kick (A.R. 9-1-16-I, III and VI).

1. Roughing is a live-ball personal foul that endangers the kicker or holder.
2. Running into the kicker or holder is a live-ball foul that occurs when the kicker or holder is displaced from his kicking or holding position but is not roughed (A.R. 9-1-16-II).
3. Incidental contact with a kicker or holder is not a foul.

4. The kicker's protection under this rule ends:
  - (a) When he has had a reasonable time to regain his balance (A.R. 9-1-16-IV); or
  - (b) When he carries the ball outside the tackle box (Rule [2-34](#)) before kicking.
5. When a defensive player's contact against the kicker or holder is caused by an opponent's block (legal or illegal), there is no foul for running into or roughing .
6. A player who makes contact with the kicker or holder after touching the kick is not charged with running into or roughing the kicker.
7. When a player other than one who blocks a scrimmage kick runs into or roughs the kicker or holder, it is a foul.
8. When in question whether the foul is running into or roughing, the foul is roughing.

**PENALTY – Roughing or any other personal foul against the kicker who is in the act of or just after kicking the ball: 15 yards from the previous spot, plus automatic first down if not in conflict with other rules [S38 and S30: PF-RTK/PF-RTH]. Running into the kicker: five yards from the previous spot [S30: RNK/RNH].**

- b. A kicker or holder simulating being roughed or run into by a defensive player commits an unsportsmanlike act (A.R. 9-1-16-V).

**PENALTY —15 yards from the previous spot or, if the scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone, can be enforced where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B [S27].**

- c. The kicker of a free kick may not be blocked until he has advanced five yards beyond his restraining line or the kick has touched a player, an official or the ground.

**PENALTY—15 yards from the previous spot [S40].**

### **Continued Participation Without Helmet**

ARTICLE 17. A player whose helmet comes completely off during a down may not continue to participate beyond the immediate action in which he is engaged, whether or not he puts the helmet back on during the down. (A.R. 9-1-17-I)

## Blind-side block

ARTICLE 18. No player shall deliver a blind-side block by attacking an opponent with forcible contact. (*Exceptions:*

1. the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.
2. a receiver in the act of attempting to make a catch.)

*NOTE:* In addition, if this action meets all the elements of targeting, it is a blind side block with targeting (Rules 9-1-3 and 9-1-4).

### Approved Ruling 9-1-18

- I. B44 intercepts the pass of A12 at the B-20 and turns back up-field on the return. During the return, B21 approaches A88 at midfield from the blind side and blocks A88 (a) with extended hands; (b) with a screen type block; (c) by attacking with forcible contact with his shoulder into the chest of A88; (d) by attacking with forcible contact with the shoulder into the head of A88. B44 returns the pass to the A-20. RULING: (a) No foul. (b) No foul. (c) Personal Foul, blind-side block, 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul. (d) Personal Foul, blind-side block with targeting, 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and B21 is disqualified.

## SECTION 2. Unsportsmanlike Conduct Fouls

### Unsportsmanlike Acts

ARTICLE 1. There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct or any act that interferes with orderly game administration on the part of players, substitutes, coaches, authorized attendants or any other persons subject to the rules, before the game, during the game or between periods. Infractions for these acts by players are administered as either live-ball or dead-ball fouls depending on when they occur. (A.R. 9-2-1-I-X)

a. Specifically prohibited acts and conduct include:

1. No player, substitute, coach or other person subject to the rules shall use abusive, threatening or obscene language or gestures, or engage in such acts that provoke ill will or are demeaning to an opponent, to game officials or to the image of the game, including but not limited to:
  - (a) Pointing the finger(s), hand(s), arm(s) or ball at an opponent, or imitating the slashing of the throat.
  - (b) Taunting, baiting or ridiculing an opponent verbally.

- (c) Inciting an opponent or spectators in any other way, such as simulating the firing of a weapon or placing a hand by the ear to request recognition
- (d) Any delayed, excessive, prolonged or choreographed act by which a player (or players) attempts to focus attention upon himself (or themselves).
- (e) An unopposed ball carrier obviously altering stride when approaching the opponent's goal line or diving into the end zone .
- (f) A player removing his helmet after the ball is dead and before he is in the team area (*Exceptions*: Team, media or injury timeouts; equipment adjustment; through play; between periods; and during a measurement for a first down).
- (g) Punching one's own chest or crossing one's arms in front of the chest while standing over a prone player.
- (h) Going into the stands to interact with spectators, or bowing at the waist after a good play.
- (i) Intentionally removing the helmet while the ball is alive.
- (j) Dead-ball contact fouls such as pushing, shoving, striking, etc. that occur clearly after the ball is dead and that are not part of the game action. (A.R. 9-2-1-X)
- (k) After the ball is dead, using forcible contact to push or pull an opponent off the pile. (A.R. 9-2-1-XI)
- (l) Feigning an injury.

**PENALTY—Live-ball fouls by players: 15 yards [S27]. Live-ball fouls by non-players and all dead-ball fouls: 15 yards from succeeding spot [S7 and S27]. Automatic first down for live-ball and dead-ball fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47].**

2. After a score or any other play, the player in possession immediately must return the ball to an official or leave it near the dead-ball spot. This prohibits:
  - (a) Kicking, throwing, spinning or carrying (including off of the field) the ball any distance that requires an official to retrieve it.
  - (b) Spiking the ball to the ground [*Exception*: A forward pass to conserve time (Rule 7-3-2-f )].
  - (c) Throwing the ball high into the air.

(d) Any other unsportsmanlike act or actions that delay the game.

**PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S27]. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47].**

b. Other prohibited acts include:

1. During the game, coaches, substitutes and authorized attendants in the team area shall not be on the field of play or outside the 15-yard lines to protest an officiating decision or to communicate with players or officials without
2. No disqualified person shall be in view of the field of play (Rule 9-2-6).
3. No person or mascot subject to the rules, except players, officials and eligible substitutes, shall be on the field of play or end zones during any period without permission from the referee. If a player is injured, attendants may come inbounds to attend him, but they must obtain recognition from an official.
4. No substitute(s) may enter the field of play or end zones for purposes other than replacing a player(s) or to fill a player vacancy(ies). This includes demonstrations after any play (A.R. 9-2-1-I).
5. Persons subject to the rules, including bands and audio/video/lighting systems operators, shall not create any noise or distraction that prohibits a team from hearing its signals or obstructs play (Rule [1-1-6](#)).
6. The yardage chain and down marker crew shall be under the responsibility of the home team. The following acts by any member of the crew are prohibited:
  - (a) Wear jerseys similar to either team.
  - (b) Cheer, whistle or create any noise that simulates a snap count.
  - (c) Interfere in any way to the action in the field of play.

**PENALTY—[1-4] Dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S27]. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders, if players or substitutes, shall be disqualified [S47].**

**[5] Unsportsmanlike conduct. The referee may take any action they consider equitable, which includes directing that the down**

**be repeated, assessing a 15-yard penalty, awarding a score, or suspending or forfeiting the game [S27: UFA].**

## Unfair Tactics

ARTICLE 2. a. No player shall conceal the ball in or beneath his clothing or equipment or substitute any other article for the ball.

- b. No simulated replacements or substitutions may be used to confuse opponents. No tactic associated with substitutes or the substitution process may be used to confuse opponents (Rule [3-5-2-e](#)) (A.R. 9-2-2-I-V).
- c. No equipment may be used to confuse opponents (Rule [1-4-2-d](#)).
- d. No unusual action or verbiage may be used by Team A to confuse an opponent into believing the snap or free kick is not imminent.
- e. No action that simulates an injury may be used to confuse opponents or officials

**PENALTY [a-e]—Live-ball foul. 15 yards from the previous spot [S27]. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47].**

- f. No more than one squad member may be assigned or wear the same jersey number (Exception: Non-competitive games).

**PENALTY – Unsportsmanlike conduct charged against the Head Coach and the players must immediately correct the numbering and report the change. Administer as a dead ball foul - 15 yards [S27: UC-2PN].**

## Unfair Acts

ARTICLE 3. The following are unfair acts:

- a. A team refuses to play within two minutes after ordered to do so by the referee.
- b. A team repeatedly commits fouls for which penalties can be enforced only by halving the distance to its goal line .
- c. An obviously unfair act not specifically covered by the rules occurs during the game This includes substitutes, coaches or any other persons subject to

the rules, other than a player or official, interfering in any way with the ball or a player while the ball is in play (A.R. 4-2-1-II and 9-2-3-I).

**PENALTY—The referee may take any action he considers equitable ,which includes directing that the down be repeated, including assessing a 15-yard penalty, awarding a score, or suspending or forfeiting the game [S27].**

### **Contacting an Official**

ARTICLE 4. Persons subject to the rules (Rule 1-1-6) shall not intentionally contact a game official forcibly during the game.

**PENALTY—Administer as a dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Automatic disqualification [S7, S27 and S47].**

### **Game Administration and Sideline Interference**

ARTICLE 5. While the ball is alive and during the continuing action after the ball has been declared dead:

- a. Coaches, substitutes and authorized attendants in the team area may not be between the sideline and team area or on the field of play.

**PENALTY—Administer as a dead-ball foul. First infraction: Warning for sideline interference. No yardage penalty. [S15]**

**Second and third infractions: Delay of game for sideline interference, five yards from the succeeding spot. [S21 and S29]**

**Fourth and subsequent infractions: Team Unsportsmanlike conduct for sideline interference, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. [S27 and S29]**

- b. Physical interference with an official is a foul charged to the team for unsportsmanlike conduct. (A.R. 9-2-5-I)

**PENALTY—Administer as a dead-ball foul. Team unsportsmanlike conduct. 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules.**

## Disqualified Players and Coaches

ARTICLE 6. a. Any coach, player or identified squad member in uniform who commits two unsportsmanlike conduct fouls in the same game shall be disqualified.

- b. A player disqualified from the game (Rule 2-17-12) must leave the playing enclosure under team supervision within a reasonable amount of time after his disqualification .
- c. A coach disqualified from the game must leave the playing enclosure within a reasonable amount of time after the disqualification and must remain out of view of the field of play for the remainder of the game.
- d. A head coach disqualified from the game may designate a new head coach.

## Removing persons from the playing enclosure

ARTICLE 7. The referee may require game management to remove any person from the playing enclosure (Rule [2-31-5](#)) who he believes poses a threat to the safety of persons subject to the rules or the officials, or whose behavior is prejudicial to the orderly conduct of the game. The referee may suspend the game (Rule [3-3-3-a](#)) while this takes place.

## SECTION 3. Blocking, Use of Hands or Arms

### Who May Block

ARTICLE 1. Players of either team may block opponents, provided it is not pass interference, interference with the opportunity to catch a kick or a personal foul (*Exception*: Rules [6-1-12](#) and [6-5-4](#)).

### Interfering for or Helping the Ball Carrier or Passer

ARTICLE 2. a. The ball carrier or passer may use his hand or arm to ward off or push opponents.

b. The ball carrier shall not grasp a teammate; and no other teammate shall grasp, pull, or lift the ball carrier to assist him in forward progress. (A.R. 9-3-2-I )

c. Teammates of the ball carrier or passer may interfere with opponents by blocking but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner while contacting an opponent.

**PENALTY—Five yards [S44].**

## Holding and Use of Hands or Arms: Offense

ARTICLE 3. a. *Use of Hands.* A teammate of a ball carrier or a passer legally may block with his shoulders, his hands, the outer surface of his arms or any other part of his body under the following provisions.

1. The hand(s) shall be:
  - (a) In advance of the elbow.
  - (b) Inside the frame of the opponent's body (**Exception:** When the opponent turns his back to the blocker) (A.R. 9-3-3-VI and VII).
  - (c) At or below the shoulder(s) of the blocker and the opponent (**Exception:** When the opponent squats, ducks or submarines).
  - (d) Apart and never in a locked position.
2. The hand(s) shall be open with the palm(s) facing the frame of the opponent or closed or cupped with the palms not facing the opponent (A.R. 9-3-3-I-IV and VI-VIII).

b. *Holding.* The hand(s) and arm(s) shall not be used to grasp, pull, hook, clamp or encircle in any way that illegally impedes or illegally obstructs an opponent

**PENALTY—10 yards Penalties for Team A fouls behind the neutral zone are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line [S42].**

c. *Kicking Team.* A player on the kicking team may:

1. During a scrimmage kick play, use his hand(s) and/or arm(s) to ward off an opponent attempting to block him when he is beyond the neutral zone.
2. During a free kick play, use his hand(s) and/or arm(s) to ward off an opponent who is attempting to block him.
3. During a scrimmage kick play or a free kick play, when he is eligible to touch the ball, legally use his hand(s) and/or arm(s) to push an opponent in an attempt to reach a loose ball.

d. *Passing Team.* An eligible player of the passing team legally may use his hand(s) and/or arm(s) to ward off or push an opponent in an attempt to reach a loose ball after a legal forward pass has been touched by any player or official (Rules [7-3-5](#), [7-3-8](#), [7-3-9](#) and [7-3-11](#)).

## **Holding And Use of Hands or Arms: Defense**

ARTICLE 4. a. Defensive players may use hands and arms to push, pull, ward off or lift offensive players:

1. When attempting to reach the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.
  2. Who are obviously attempting to block them.
- b. A defensive player legally may use his hands or arms to ward off or block an opponent in an attempt to reach a loose ball (Rule 9-1-5, Exceptions 3 and 4 and Rule 9-3-3-c, Exceptions 3 and 5):
1. During a backward pass, fumble or kick that he is eligible to touch.
  2. During any forward pass that crossed the neutral zone and has been touched by any player or official
- c. When making no attempt to get at the ball or the runner, defensive players must comply with Article 3, paragraphs *a* and *b* above
- d. Defensive players may not use hands and arms to tackle, hold or otherwise illegally obstruct an opponent other than a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.
- e. Defensive players may ward off or legally block an eligible pass receiver until that player occupies the same yard line as the defender or until the opponent could not possibly block him. Continuous contact is illegal (A.R. 9-3-4-I and II).

**PENALTY—10 yards [S38, S42, S43 or S45].**

## **Use of Hands or Arms by Defense: Passing Downs**

ARTICLE 5. During a legal forward pass play in which the pass crosses the neutral zone, if before the pass is touched there is a contact foul by Team B beyond the neutral zone against an eligible receiver (other than pass interference), the penalty includes an automatic first down.

**PENALTY—10 yards and automatic first down for fouls by Team B if the first down is not in conflict with other rules [S38].**

## **Blocking in the Back**

ARTICLE 6. A block in the back (other than against the ball carrier) is illegal (A.R. 9-3-3-I, VII and -IX; and A.R. 10-2-2-XII.)

***Exceptions:***

1. Offensive players who are on the line of scrimmage at the snap within the free-blocking zone (Rule [2-3-6](#)) may legally block in the back in the free-blocking zone, subject to the following restrictions:
  - (a) A player on the line of scrimmage within this free-blocking zone may not leave the zone, return and block in the back.
  - (b) The free-blocking zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone (Rule [2-3-6](#)).
2. When a player turns his back to a potential blocker who has committed himself in intent and direction or movement.
3. When a player attempts to reach a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier or legally attempts to recover or catch a fumble, a backward pass, a kick or a touched forward pass, he may push an opponent in the back above the waist (Rule [9-1-5](#) Exception 3).
4. When the opponent turns his back to the blocker under Rule [9-3-3-a-1-\(b\)](#).
5. When an eligible player behind the neutral zone pushes an opponent in the back above the waist to get to a forward pass (Rule [9-1-5](#) Exception 4).

**PENALTY—10 yards. Penalties for Team A fouls behind the neutral zone are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line. [S43].**

## **SECTION 4. Batting and Kicking**

### **Batting a Loose Ball**

ARTICLE 1. a. While a pass is in flight, only a player who is eligible to touch the ball may bat it in any direction (*Exception*: Rule [9-4-2](#)).

- b. Any player may block a scrimmage kick in the field of play or the end zone.
- c. No player shall bat other loose balls forward in the field of play or in any direction if the ball is in the end zone (Rule [2-2-3-a](#)) (*Exception*: Rule [6-3-11](#))( A.R. 6-3-11-I, A.R. 9-4-1-I-X and A.R. 10-2-2-II).

**PENALTY—10 yards and loss of down for fouls by Team A if the loss of down is not in conflict with other rules [S31 and S9] [*Exception*: No loss of down if the foul occurs when a legal scrimmage kick has crossed the neutral zone].**

### **Batting a Backward Pass in Flight**

ARTICLE 2. A backward pass in flight shall not be batted forward by the passing team.

**PENALTY—10 yards [S31].**

### **Batting Ball in Possession**

ARTICLE 3. A ball in player possession may not be batted forward by a player of that team.

**PENALTY—10 yards [S31].**

### **Illegally Kicking Ball**

ARTICLE 4. A player shall not kick a loose ball, a forward pass or a ball being held for a place kick by an opponent. These illegal acts do not change the status of the loose ball or forward pass; but if the player holding the ball for a place kick loses possession during a scrimmage down, it is a fumble and a loose ball ;if during a free kick, the ball remains dead (A.R. 8-7-2-IV and A. R. 9-4-1-XI).

**PENALTY—10 yards, plus loss of down for fouls by Team A if the loss of down is not in conflict with other rules [S31 and S9] (*Exception:*No loss of down if the foul occurs when a legal scrimmage kick has crossed the neutral zone).**

## **SECTION 5. Fighting**

ARTICLE 1. a. Before, during and after the game, including the half-time intermission, squad members in uniform or coaches shall not participate in a fight (Rule [2-32-1](#)).

**PENALTY – 15 yards. For dead-ball fouls, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for Team B fouls if not in conflict with other rules. Disqualification for the remainder of the game [S7, S27 or S38, and S47: FGT/DSQ].**

b. During either half, coaches and substitutes shall not leave their team area to participate in a fight, nor shall they participate in a fight in their team area.

**PENALTY – 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for Team B fouls if not in conflict with other rules. Disqualification for the remainder of the game and the next game [S7, S27 or S38, and S47: FGT/DSQ].**

ARTICLE 2. The referee will notify (in writing) his assigning agency of all disqualifications for fighting. The assigning agency becomes responsible for implementation of the penalty.

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# RULE 10

## Penalty Enforcement

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### SECTION 1. Penalties Completed

#### How and When Completed

ARTICLE 1. a. A penalty is completed when it is accepted, declined or canceled according to rule, or when the choice is obvious to the referee.

- b. Any penalty may be declined, but a disqualified player must leave the game whether the penalty is accepted or declined (Rule [2-27-12](#)).
- c. When a foul is committed, the penalty shall be completed before the ball is declared ready for play for any ensuing down.
- d. Penalties as stated are not enforced if in conflict with other rules.

#### Simultaneous With Snap

ARTICLE 2. A foul that occurs simultaneously with a snap or free kick is considered as occurring during that down (*Exception*: Rule [3-5-2-e](#)).

#### Live-Ball Fouls by the Same Team

ARTICLE 3. When two or more live-ball fouls by the same team are reported to the referee, the offended team may elect only one of these penalties. Any player who commits a foul that mandates disqualification must leave the game.

#### Offsetting Fouls

ARTICLE 4. If live-ball fouls by both teams are reported to the referee, the fouls offset and the down is repeated (A.R. 10-1-4-I and VII). Any player who commits a foul that mandates disqualification must leave the game.

#### *Exceptions:*

1. When there is a change of team possession during a down, and the team last gaining possession had not fouled before last gaining possession, it may refuse offsetting fouls and thereby retain possession after completion of the penalty for its foul (A.R. 10-1-4-II-VII).

2. When all Team B fouls are governed by postscrimmage kick rules, Team B may refuse offsetting fouls and accept postscrimmage kick enforcement.
3. Rules [10-2-7-c](#) (during a try or extra period after Team B possession).

## Dead-Ball Fouls

ARTICLE 5. Penalties for dead-ball fouls are administered separately and in order of occurrence (A.R. 10-1-5-I-III) [*Exception*: When dead-ball unsportsmanlike or dead-ball personal fouls by both teams are reported to the referee and none of the penalties have been completed, the yardage penalties cancel and the number or type of down established before the fouls occurred is unaffected. Any disqualified player must leave the game (Rules [5-2-6](#) and [10-2-2-a](#))]

## Live-Ball—Dead-Ball Fouls

ARTICLE 6. a. Live-ball fouls do not offset dead-ball fouls .

- b. When a live-ball foul by one team is followed by one or more dead-ball fouls (including live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls) by an opponent or by the same team, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence (A.R. 10-1-6-I-VI).

## Interval Fouls

ARTICLE 7. Penalties for fouls that occur between the end of the fourth period and the start of the extra period for overtime, between possession series during an extra period, and between extra periods are enforced from the 25-yard line, the spot of the next possession series (*Exception*: Rule [10-2-5](#), A.R. 10-2-5-I-XII).

# SECTION 2. Enforcement Procedures

## Enforcement Spots

ARTICLE 1. a. For many fouls, the enforcement spot is specified in the statement of the penalty. When the enforcement spot is not specified in the statement of the penalty, the enforcement spot is determined by the Three-and-One Principle (Rules [2-33](#) and [10-2-2-c](#))

- b. Possible enforcement spots are: the previous spot, the spot of the foul, the succeeding spot, the spot where the run ends, and—for scrimmage kicks only—the postscrimmage kick spot.

## Determining the Enforcement Spot and the Basic Spot

ARTICLE 2. a. Dead-ball fouls. The enforcement spot for a foul committed when the ball is dead is the succeeding spot .

- b. Fouls by the offensive team behind the neutral zone. For the following fouls committed by the offensive team behind the neutral zone, the penalty is enforced at the previous spot: illegal use of hands, holding, illegal block and personal fouls (**Exception:** If the foul occurs in Team A's end zone the penalty is a safety.). However, see Rule [6-3-13](#) for offensive team fouls during scrimmage kick plays.
- c. The Three-and-One Principle (Rule [2-33](#)) is as follows :
  1. When the team in possession commits a foul behind the basic spot, the penalty is enforced at the spot of the foul.
  2. When the team in possession commits a foul beyond the basic spot, the penalty is enforced at the basic spot.
  3. When the team not in possession commits a foul either behind or beyond the basic spot, the penalty is enforced at the basic spot.
- d. The following are basic spots for the various categories of plays:
  1. *Running plays.*
    - (a) *Previous spot*, when the related run ends behind the neutral zone.
    - (b) *End of the related run*, when the related run ends beyond the neutral zone.
    - (c) *End of the related run*, on running plays that have no neutral zone .
  2. *Running plays when the run ends in the end zone after change of team possession (not on a try).*
    - (a) *Succeeding spot*, when a foul occurs after a change of team possession in the end zone and the result of the play is a touchback .
    - (b) *Goal line*, when a foul occurs after a change of team possession in the field of play and the related run ends in the end zone. (**Exception:** Rule [8-5-1](#)-Exceptions).
    - (c) *Goal line*, when a foul occurs after a change of team possession in the end zone, the related run ends in the end zone, and the result of the play is not a touchback.
  3. *Pass plays.*

*Previous spot*, on legal forward pass plays.

4. *Kick plays* .

(a) *Previous spot*, on legal kick plays unless the foul is governed by postscrimmage kick rules.

(b) *Postscrimmage kick spot*, if the foul is governed by postscrimmage kick rules.

e. For Team B fouls during a legal forward pass play:

1. Penalty enforcement for Team B for personal fouls is at the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of team possession during the down. (Rule [7-3-12](#)) (A. R. 7-3-12-I and 9-1-2-III)
2. If the pass crosses the neutral zone and Team B commits a contact foul against an eligible receiver beyond the neutral zone before the ball is touched, the penalty includes an automatic first down. (Rule [9-3-4-e](#))

## Postscrimmage Kick Enforcement

ARTICLE 3. a. Under postscrimmage kick enforcement rules, fouls by Team B that satisfy the conditions in paragraph b (below) are treated as if Team B had been in possession at the time the foul was committed, even though by Rule [2-4-1-b-3](#) team possession had not changed.

b. Postscrimmage kick enforcement applies only to fouls by Team B during a scrimmage kick and only under the following conditions:

1. The kick is not during a try, a successful field goal, or in an extra period. (A.R. 10-2-3-IV)
2. The ball crosses the neutral zone.
3. The foul occurs before the end of the kick (A.R. 10-2-3-I, II, and V)
4. Team B will next put the ball in play .

If these conditions are all met, the penalty is enforced according to the Three-And-One Principle. Team B is taken as the team in possession with the postscrimmage kick spot as the basic spot (Rule [10-2-2-c](#)). See Rule 2-25-11 for the postscrimmage kick spot. (A.R. 10-2-3-I-VII)

## Fouls by Team A During Kicks

ARTICLE 4. Penalties for all fouls by the kicking team other than kick-catch interference (Rule [6-4](#)) during a free kick play or a scrimmage kick play in which

the ball crosses the neutral zone (except field goal attempts) are enforced either at the previous spot (*Exception*: Penalty option is a safety for fouls in Team A's end zone.) or at the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B, at the option of Team B. (Rules [6-1-8](#) and [6-3-13](#))

### **Fouls During Or After A Touchdown, Field Goal or Try:**

ARTICLE 5. a. Fouls by the non-scoring team during a down that ends in a touchdown (not on the try).

1. Fifteen-yard penalties for personal fouls and for unsportsmanlike conduct fouls are enforced on the try, the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods, at the option of the scoring team. If there is no kickoff the accepted penalty is enforced on the try.
  2. Five- and 10-yard penalties are not enforced on the try or the succeeding kickoff. Such penalties are declined by rule unless enforcement is made possible by illegal touching of a kick during the down (A.R. 6-3-2-III-IV).
- b. Penalties for defensive pass interference fouls on a try from or inside the 3-yard line are enforced one-half the distance to the goal line. If the try is successful, the penalty is declined by rule.
- c. When a foul(s) occurs after a touchdown and before the ball is ready for play on the try or there was a live-ball foul treated as a dead-ball foul on the touchdown play, enforcement is on the try, the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods, at the option of the offended team. If there is no kickoff, the accepted penalty is enforced on the try (A.R. 3-2-3-V).
- d. Penalties for live-ball fouls during field goal plays are administered by rule. When the field goal is successful, Team A shall have the option of cancelling the score and have the penalty enforced from the previous spot or declining the penalty(ies) and accepting the score. Team A may accept the score with penalties for personal fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls enforced on the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods. Penalties for live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls and those for dead-ball fouls after a field goal down are enforced at the succeeding spot
- e. Penalties for fouls during and after a try down are administered under Rules [8-3-3](#), [8-3-4](#), [8-3-5](#) and [10-2-5-b](#) (A.R. 3-2-3-VI-VII).

- f. Distance penalties for fouls by either team may not extend a team's free kick restraining line behind its five-yard line. Penalties that would otherwise place the free kick restraining line behind a team's five-yard line are enforced from the next succeeding spot.

### **Half-Distance Enforcement Procedures**

ARTICLE 6. No distance penalty, including tries from on or inside the 3-yard line, shall exceed half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line [*Exceptions*: (1) Defensive pass interference on scrimmage downs, other than the try (Rules [7-3-8](#) and [10-2-5-b](#)); and (2) On the try, defensive pass interference when the ball is snapped from outside the 3-yard line].

### **Special Enforcement of Post-Possession Fouls**

ARTICLE 7. In extra periods or during a try, fouls after a change of team possession have special enforcement.

- a. Penalties against either team are declined by rule. (*Exception*: Penalties for flagrant personal fouls, unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, dead-ball personal fouls and live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls are enforced on the succeeding play.)
- b. A score by a team committing a foul during the down is cancelled. (*Exception*: Live-ball foul treated as a dead-ball foul.) (A.R. 8-3-2:VII)
- c. If both teams foul during the down and Team B had not fouled before the change of possession, the fouls 3 and the down is not repeated. On a try, the try is over. (**Exceptions**: Penalties for personal fouls, unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, dead-ball personal fouls and live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls are enforced on the succeeding kickoff or succeeding spot in extra periods. See Rule 8-3-5.)

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# **RULE 11**

## **The Officials: Jurisdiction and Duties**

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### **SECTION 1. Jurisdiction**

The officials' jurisdiction begins 60 minutes before the scheduled kickoff and ends when the referee declares the score final [S14].

### **SECTION 2. Responsibilities**

ARTICLE 1. The game shall be played under the supervision of four, five, six , seven or eight officials. The game may be played under the supervision of three officials under exceptional circumstances such as injury or delay in travel.

ARTICLE 2. Officiating responsibilities and mechanics are specified in the current edition of the Manual Of Football Officiating, published annually under the jurisdiction of the International American Football Officials Association. Officials are responsible for knowing and applying the material in the Manual.

# Summary of Penalties

LEGEND: “O” refers to official’s signal number (see Code of Official’s Signals); “R” is the rule number; “S” is the section number; “A” is the article number.

## LOSS OF A DOWN

	O	R	S	A
Illegal scrimmage kick [also loss of five yards].....	31*	6	3	10
Illegally handing ball forward [also loss of five yards] .....	35*	7	1	6
Planned loose ball play [also loss of five yards].....	19*	7	1	7
Intentionally throwing backward pass out of bounds [also loss of five yards] .....	35*	7	2	1
Illegal forward pass by Team A [also loss of five yards] .....	35*	7	3	2
Intentionally grounding forward pass.....	36*	7	3	2
Forward pass illegally touched by player out of bounds.....	16*	7	3	4
Illegally batting ball [also loss of 10 yards] (see exceptions) .....	31*	9	4	1
Illegally kicking ball [also loss of 10 yards] (see exceptions) .....	31*	9	4	4

## LOSS OF FIVE YARDS

Alteration of playing surface for an advantage.....	27	1	2	9
Improper numbering.....	23	1	4	2
Coin-toss infractions.....	19	3	1	1
Delay after three timeouts expended.....	21	3	4	2
Illegal delay of the game.....	21	3	4	2
Advancing a dead ball.....	21	3	4	2
Disconcerting offensive signals.....	21	3	4	2
Substitution rules infractions.....	22	3	5	2
Delay of game (substitutions).....	21	3	5	2
More Than Eleven Players in the formation or during the play.....	22	3	5	3
Putting ball in play before it is ready .....	21	4	1	4
Exceeding 40/25-second count.....	21	4	1	5
Infraction of free kick formation.....	18,19	6	1	2
Team A blocking during a free kick.....	9	6	1	2
Player out of bounds when ball free-kicked.....	19	6	1	2
Team A player illegally goes out of bounds (free kick).....	19	6	1	2
Free kick out of bounds .....	19	6	2	1
Illegal kick [also loss of down if by Team A] .....	31*	6	3	10
Team A player illegally goes out of bounds (scrimmage kick).....	19	6	3	12
Defensive Linemen—3-on-1 on field goal formation).....	19	6	3	14
Taking more than two steps after fair catch.....	21	6	5	2
Illegal snap.....	19	7	1	1
Snapper’s position and ball adjustment.....	19	7	1	3
Team A not within nine-yard marks after ready.....	19	7	1	3
False start or simulating start of a play.....	19	7	1	3
Encroachment (offense) at snap.....	19	7	1	3

Player out of bounds when ball is snapped.....	19	7	1	4
Offensive player illegally in motion at the snap.....	20	7	1	4
Illegal Formation.....	19	7	1	4
Illegal formation due to numbering exception.....	19	7	1	4
Illegal shift.....	20	7	1	4
Offside (defense) .....	18	7	1	5
Abrupt defensive actions.....	21	7	1	5
Interference with opponent or ball.....	18	7	1	5
Defensive player charging unabated toward a back.....	19	7	1	5
Defensive player out of bounds at the snap.....	19	7	1	5
Illegally handing ball forward [also loss of down if by Team A].....	35*	7	1	6
Planned loose ball play [also loss of down] .....	19*	7	1	7
Intentionally throwing backward pass out of bounds [also loss of down if by Team A] .....	35*	7	2	1
Player on scrimmage line receiving snap.....	19	7	2	3
Illegal forward pass [also loss of down if by Team A] .....	35*	7	3	2
Ineligible receiver downfield.....	37	7	3	10
Forward pass illegally touched .....	16	7	3	11
Running into kicker or holder.....	30	9	1	16
Game Administration Interference [also 15 yards] .....	29	9	2	5
Interlocked interference or helping ball carrier .....	44	9	3	2

## LOSS OF 10 YARDS

Home team delay.....	21	3	4	1
Illegal use of hands or arms (offense) .....	42	9	3	3
Holding or obstruction (offense) .....	42	9	3	3
Illegal block in the back (offense) .....	43	9	3	3
Locked hands.....	42	9	3	3
Illegal use of hands (defense) .....	42	9	3	4
Holding or obstruction (defense) .....	42	9	3	4
Illegal block in the back (defense) .....	43	9	3	4
Holding or obstruction (loose ball) .....	42	9	3	6
Illegally batting loose ball [also loss of down] .....	31*	9	4	1
Illegally batting a backward pass.....	31	9	4	1,2
Batting ball in possession by player in possession.....	31	9	4	3
Illegally kicking ball [also loss of down] .....	31*	9	4	4
Offensive pass interference.....	33	7	3	8
Defensive pass interference [first down] .....	33	7	3	8

## LOSS OF 15 YARDS

Marking ball.....	27	1	3	3
Numbers changed to deceive the opponent.....	27	1	4	2
Home Jersey Worn Without Permission.....	27	1	4	5
Illegal signal devices [also disqualification] .....	27	1	4	10
Team not ready to play at start of either half.....	21	3	4	1
Rapid substitutions to opponents' disadvantage.....	22,27	3	5	2

Illegal Wedge Formation .....	27	6	1	10
Interference with opportunity to catch a kick.....	33	6	4	1
Illegal block by fair-catch signaler.....	40	6	5	4
Tackling or blocking fair-catcher.....	38	6	5	5
Striking; tripping [first down] .....	46,38	9	1	2
Targeting/Initiating Contact w/Crown of Helmet [first down][Also Disqualification].....	38,47	9	1	3
Targeting/Initiating Contact to head/neck area of a defenseless player[first down] [Also Disqualification] .....	38,47	9	1	4
Clipping [first down] .....	39	9	1	5
Blocking below the waist [first down] .....	40	9	1	6
Late Hit/action out of bounds [first down] .....	38	9	1	7
Helmet / Face Mask Fouls [first down] .....	38,45	9	1	8
Roughing the passer [first down] .....	34	9	1	9
Chop Blocking [first down] .....	41	9	1	10
Leverage/Leaping [first down] .....	38	9	1	11
Fouling an opponent obviously out of the play [first down] .....	38	9	1	12
Hurdling [first down] .....	38	9	1	13
Illegal contact against the snapper [first down] .....	38	9	1	14
Horse Collar Tackle [first down] .....	25,38	9	1	15
Roughing the kicker [first down] .....	30,38	9	1	16
Kicker simulating being roughed.....	27	9	1	16
Obscene or vulgar language.....	27	9	2	1
Persons illegally on the field.....	27	9	2	1
Player not returning ball to official.....	27	9	2	1
Engendering ill will.....	27	9	2	1
Unsportsmanlike conduct.....	27	9	2	1
Persons leaving team area.....	27	9	2	1
Illegal return of disqualified player.....	27	9	2	1
Noise by persons subject to rules.....	27	9	2	1
Concealing the ball.....	27	9	2	2
Simulated replacements or substitutions.....	27	9	2	2
Equipment to confuse opponents.....	27	9	2	2
Intentionally contacting an official [also disqualification] .....	27	9	2	4
Continuous contact to the helmet [first down] .....	38	9	3	4
Defensive restrictions.....	27	9	3	5
Fighting [also disqualification] .....	27, 38,47	9	5	1

## LOSS OF HALF DISTANCE TO GOAL LINE

If distance penalty exceeds half the distance (except on defensive pass interference) .....	-	10	2	6
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## OFFENDED TEAM'S BALL AT SPOT OF FOUL

Defensive pass interference (if less than a 10-yard penalty) [first down] .....	33	7	3	8
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## CHARGED TIMEOUT FOR A VIOLATION

Not wearing mandatory equipment.....	23	1	4	8
Wearing illegal equipment.....	23	1	4	8
Head coach's conference.....	21	3	3	4
Head coach's challenge.....	21	12	5	1
Illegal cleats [Also disqualification] .....	23	9	2	2

## VIOLATION

Illegal touching of free kick by kicking team.....	16	6	1	3
Illegal touching of scrimmage kick.....	16	6	3	2
Scrimmage-kick-batting exception.....	16	6	3	11

## DISQUALIFICATION

Prohibited signal devices.....	47	1	4	10
Flagrant fouls.....	47	9	1	1
Targeting/Initiating Contact w/Crown of Helmet .....	38	9	1	3
Targeting/Initiating Contact to head/neck area of a defenseless player..	38	9	1	4
Two unsportsmanlike fouls.....	47	9	2	6
Illegal cleats.....	47	9	2	2
Contacting an official.....	47	9	2	4
Fighting .....	47	9	5	1

## AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWNS (DEFENSIVE FOULS)

Pass interference.....	33	7	3	8
Striking; tripping.....	38,46	9	1	2
Targeting/Initiating Contact w/Crown of Helmet.....	38	9	1	3
Contact to head/neck area of a defenseless player .....	38	9	1	4
Clipping .....	39	9	1	5
Blocking below the waist.....	40	9	1	6
Late Hit/action out of bounds.....	38	9	1	7
Helmet / Face Mask Fouls.....	38,45	9	1	8
Roughing the passer.....	34	9	1	9
Chop Blocking.....	41	9	1	10
Leverage/Leaping.....	38	9	1	11
Fouling an opponent obviously out of the play.....	38	9	1	12
Hurdling .....	38	9	1	13
Illegal contact against the snapper.....	38	9	1	14
Horse Collar Tackle.....	31,38	9	1	15
Roughing the kicker.....	30,38	9	1	16
Unsportsmanlike Conduct.....	27	9	2	1
Illegal contact with eligible receiver.....	38	9	3	4
Fighting [also disqualification] .....	27, 38,47	9	5	1

## WHEN-IN-QUESTION RULES

Catch or recovery not completed	-	2	4	3
Block below waist.....	-	2	3	2
Chop block.....	-	2	3	3
Block in the back.....	-	2	3	4
Ball not touched on kick or forward pass.....	-	2	11	4
Ball is accidentally kicked (touched) .....	-	2	16	1
Forward pass rather than backward pass.....	-	2	19	2
Forward pass and not fumble.....	-	2	19	2
It is a catchable forward pass.....	-	2	19	4
Stop clock for injured player.....	-	3	3	5
Forward progress stopped.....	-	4	1	3
Kick-catch interference.....	-	6	4	1
It is a catchable forward pass.....	-	7	3	8
Touchback rather than safety.....	-	8	5	1
Twisting, turning or pulling face mask (helmet opening) .....	-	9	1	8
Roughing kicker rather than running into.....	-	9	1	16

## REFEREE'S DISCRETION

Penalty for unfair acts.....	-	9	2	3
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Summary of foul codes

By code:

APS Altering playing surface

ATR Assisting the runner

BAT Illegal batting

DEH Holding, defense

DOD Delay of game, defense

DOF Offside, defense

DOG Delay of game, offense

DPI Pass interference, defense

DSH Delay of game, start of half

DSQ Disqualification

ENC Encroachment (offense)

EQV Equipment violation

FGT Fighting

FST False start

IBB Illegal block in the back

IBK Illegal block during kick

IBP Illegal backward pass

IDP Ineligible downfield on pass

IFD Illegal formation, defense (3-on-1)

IFH Illegal forward handing

IFK Illegal free kick formation

IFP Illegal forward pass

IKB Illegally kicking ball

ILF Illegal formation

ILM Illegal motion

ILP Illegal participation

ING Intentional grounding

IPR Illegal procedure

ISH Illegal shift

ISP Illegal snap

ITP Illegal touching of a forward pass

IUH Illegal use of hands

IWK Illegal wedge on kickoff

KCI Kick catch interference

KIK Illegal kick

KOB Free kick out of bounds

OBK Out of bounds during kick

OFH Holding, offense

OFK Offside, free kick

OPI Pass interference, offense

PF-BBW Personal foul, blocking below the waist

PF-BOB Personal foul, blocking out of bounds

PF-BTH Personal foul, blow to the head

PF-CHB Personal foul, chop block

PF-CLP Personal foul, clipping

PF-FMM Personal foul, face mask

PF-HCT Personal foul, horse collar tackle

PF-HDR Personal foul, hit on defenseless receiver

PF-HTF Personal foul, hands to the face

PF-HUR Personal foul, hurdling

PF-ICS Personal foul, illegal contact with snapper

PF-LEA Personal foul, leaping

PF-LHP Personal foul, late hit/piling on

PF-LTO Personal foul, late hit out of bounds

PF-OTH Personal foul, other

PF-RFK Personal foul, roughing free kicker

PF-RTH Personal foul, roughing the holder  
PF-RTK Personal foul, roughing the kicker  
PF-RTP Personal foul, roughing the passer  
PF-SKE Personal foul, striking/kneeing/elbowing  
PF-TGT Personal foul, targeting  
PF-TRP Personal foul, tripping  
PF-UNR Personal foul, unnecessary roughness  
RNH Running into the holder  
RNK Running into the kicker  
SLI Sideline interference, 5 yards  
SLM Sideline interference, 15 yards  
SLW Sideline interference, warning  
SUB Illegal substitution  
UC-ABL Unsportsmanlike conduct, abusive language  
UC-BCH Unsportsmanlike conduct, bench  
UC-DEA Unsportsmanlike conduct, delayed/excessive act  
UC-FCO Unsportsmanlike conduct, forcibly contacting an official  
UC-RHT Unsportsmanlike conduct, removal of helmet  
UC-SBR Unsportsmanlike conduct, simulating being roughed  
UC-STB Unsportsmanlike conduct, spiking/throwing ball  
UC-TAU Unsportsmanlike conduct, taunting/baiting  
UC-UNS Unsportsmanlike conduct, other  
UFA Unfair acts  
UFT Unfair tactics

By Foul:

APS Altering playing surface

ATR Assisting the runner

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DOG Delay of game, offense

DSH Delay of game, start of half

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PF-HCT Personal foul, horse collar tackle

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UFT Unfair tactics

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UC-FCO Unsportsmanlike conduct, forcibly contacting an official

UC-UNS Unsportsmanlike conduct, other

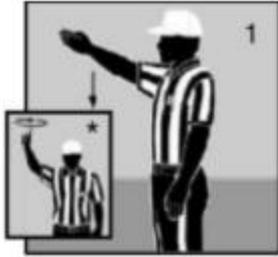
UC-RHT Unsportsmanlike conduct, removal of helmet

UC-SBR Unsportsmanlike conduct, simulating being roughed

UC-STB Unsportsmanlike conduct, spiking/throwing ball

UC-TAU Unsportsmanlike conduct, taunting/baiting

# OFFICIAL SIGNALS



Ready for play  
\*Untimed down



Start the clock



Stop the clock



TV/radio timeout



Touchdown  
Field Goal



Safety



Dead-ball foul/  
touchback  
(move side to side)



First down



Loss of down



Incomplete pass/unsuccesful try or  
field goal/penalty declined/  
coin toss option deferred



Legal touching



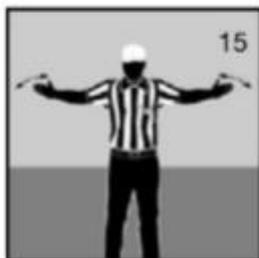
Inadvertent whistle



Disregard flag



End of period



Sideline warning



Illegal touching



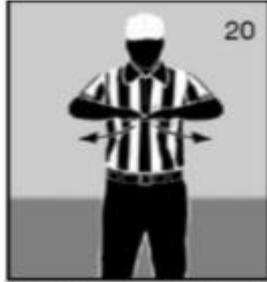
Uncatchable pass



Offside B/Offside A  
or B on kickoff



19  
False start/  
Encroachment A  
Illegal formation



20  
Illegal motion (1 hand)  
Illegal shift (2 hands)



21  
Delay of game



22  
Substitution  
infraction



23  
Equipment violation



24  
Targeting



25  
Horse-collar



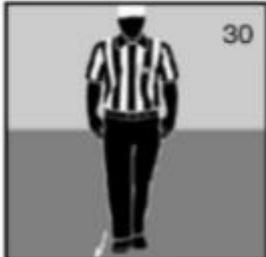
26  
Hands to the face



27  
Unsportsmanlike  
conduct



29  
Sideline interference  
Note: Face press box  
when giving signal.



30  
Running into or  
roughing the kicker  
or holder



31  
Illegal batting/kicking  
(for illegal kicking, follow  
with a point toward foot)



32  
Illegal fair catch



33  
Pass interference  
Kick-catching  
interference



34  
Roughing the passer



35  
Illegal pass  
Illegal forward handing  
Note: Face press box  
when giving signal.



36  
Intentional grounding



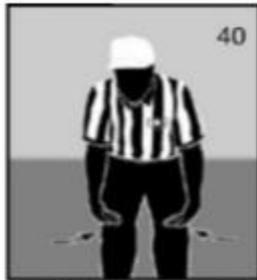
37  
Ineligible downfield  
on pass



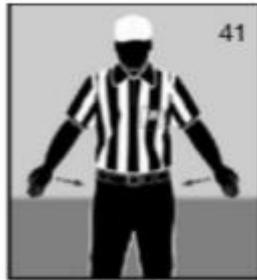
38  
Personal foul



39  
Clipping



Block below the waist  
Illegal block



Chop block



Holding  
Obstructing  
Illegal use of the  
hands or arms



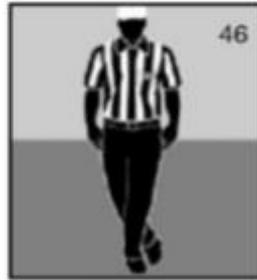
Illegal block  
in the back



Helping the runner  
Interlocked blocking



Grasping of  
face mask or  
helmet opening



Tripping



Disqualification

# Appendix A

## Guidelines for Game Officials to Use During a Serious On-Field Player Injury

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1. Players and coaches must go to and remain in the bench area. Direct players and coaches accordingly. Always ensure adequate lines of vision between the medical staffs and available emergency personnel.
2. Attempt to keep players a significant distance away from the seriously injured player or players.
3. Do not allow a player to roll an injured player over.
4. Do not allow players to assist a teammate who is lying on the field; i.e., removing the helmet or chin strap, or attempting to assist breathing by elevating the waist.
5. Do not allow players to pull an injured teammate or opponent from a pile.
6. Once the medical staff begins to assist an injured player, all members of the officiating crew should control the total playing field environment and team personnel, and allow the medical staff to perform services without interruption or interference.
7. Players and coaches should be appropriately controlled to avoid dictating medical services to the athletics trainers or team physicians, or taking up their time to perform such service.

*Note: Officials should have a reasonable knowledge of the location of emergency personnel equipment at all stadiums.*

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# Appendix B

## Guidelines for Game Officials and Game Management To Use Regarding Lightning

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*The purpose of this appendix is to provide information to those responsible for making decisions about suspending and restarting games based on the presence of lightning.*

Lightning is the most consistent and significant weather hazard that may affect outdoor sport. While the probability of being struck by lightning is low, the odds are significantly greater when a storm is in the area and proper safety precautions are not followed.

Education and prevention are the keys to lightning safety. Authorities should begin prevention long before any athletics event or practice by being proactive and having a lightning safety plan in place. The following steps are recommended to mitigate the lightning hazard:

1. Designate a person to monitor threatening weather and to make the decision to remove a team or individuals from an athletics site or event. A lightning safety plan should include planned instructions for participants and spectators, designation of warning and all-clear signals, proper signs, and designation of safer places for shelter from the lightning.
2. Monitor local weather reports each day before any practice or event. Be diligently aware of potential thunderstorms that may form during scheduled athletics events or practices. Weather information can be found through various means via local television news coverage, the Internet, or national weather services.
3. Be informed of severe weather warnings, and the warning signs of developing thunderstorms in the area, such as high winds or darkening skies.

4. Know where the closest safer structure or location is to the field or playing area, and know how long it takes to get to that location. A safer structure or location is defined as:
  - a. Any building normally occupied or frequently used by people, i.e., a building with plumbing and/or electrical wiring that acts to electrically ground the structure. Avoid using the shower or plumbing facilities and having contact with electrical appliances during a thunderstorm.
  - b. In the absence of a sturdy, frequently inhabited building, any vehicle with a hard metal roof (neither a convertible, nor a golf cart) with the windows shut provides a measure of safety. The hard metal frame and roof, not the rubber tires, are what protects occupants by dissipating lightning current around the vehicle and not through the occupants. It is important not to touch the metal framework of the vehicle. Some athletics events rent school buses as safer shelters to place around open courses or fields.
5. Lightning awareness should be heightened at the first flash of lightning, clap of thunder, and/or other criteria such as increasing winds or darkening skies, no matter how far away. These types of activities should be treated as a warning or wake-up call to event personnel. Lightning safety experts suggest that if you hear thunder, begin preparation for evacuation; if you see lightning, consider suspending activities and heading for your designated safer locations.

The following specific lightning safety guidelines have been developed with the assistance of lightning safety experts. Design your lightning safety plan to consider local safety needs, weather patterns and thunderstorm types.

- a. As a minimum, lightning safety experts strongly recommend that by the time the monitor observes 30 seconds between seeing the lightning flash and hearing its associated thunder, all individuals should have left the athletics site and reached a safer structure or location.
- b. Please note that thunder may be hard to hear if there is an athletics event going on, particularly in stadiums with large crowds. Implement your lightning safety plan accordingly.
- c. The existence of blue sky and the absence of rain are not guarantees that lightning will not strike. At least 10 percent of lightning occurs when there is no rainfall and when blue sky is often visible somewhere in the sky, especially with summer thunderstorms. Lightning can, and does, strike as far as 10 (or more) miles away from the rain shaft.

- d. Avoid using landline telephones, except in emergency situations. People have been killed while using a landline telephone during a thunderstorm. Cellular or cordless phones are safe alternatives to a landline phone, particularly if the person and the antenna are located within a safer structure or location, and if all other precautions are followed.
- e. To resume athletics activities, lightning safety experts recommend waiting 30 minutes after both the last sound of thunder and last flash of lightning. If lightning is seen without hearing thunder, lightning may be out of range and therefore less likely to be a significant threat. At night, be aware that lightning can be visible at a much greater distance than during the day as clouds are being lit from the inside by lightning. This greater distance may mean that the lightning is no longer a significant threat. At night, use both the sound of thunder and seeing the lightning channel itself to decide on resetting the 30-minute return-to-play clock before resuming outdoor athletics activities.
- f. People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge. Therefore, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is safe for the responder. If possible, an injured person should be moved to a safer location before starting CPR. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need prompt emergency help. Prompt, aggressive CPR has been highly effective for the survival of victims of lightning strikes.

Automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) have become a common, safe and effective means of reviving persons in cardiac arrest. Planned access to early defibrillation should be part of your emergency plan. However, CPR should never be delayed while searching for an AED.

*Note: Weather watchers, real-time weather forecasts and commercial weather warning devices are all tools that can be used to aid in decision-making regarding stoppage of play, evacuation and return to play.*

### Dangerous Locations

Outside locations increase the risk of being struck by lightning when thunderstorms are in the area. Small covered shelters are not safe from lightning. Dugouts, rain shelters, golf shelters and picnic shelters, even if they are properly grounded for structural safety, are usually not properly grounded from the effects of lightning and side flashes to people. They are usually very unsafe and may actually increase the risk of lightning injury. Other dangerous locations include areas connected to, or near, light poles, towers and fences that can carry a nearby strike to people. Also dangerous is any location that makes the person the highest point in the area.

*Adapted by IFAF from NCAA guidelines.*

# Appendix C

## Concussions

A concussion is a brain injury that may be caused by a blow to the head, face, neck or elsewhere on the body with an "impulsive" force transmitted to the head. Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness or other obvious signs. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the previous one (hours, days or weeks) can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage and even death.

**Recognize and Refer:** To help recognize a concussion, watch for the following two events among your players during both games and practices:

1. A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head. -AND
2. Any change in the player's behavior, thinking or physical functioning (see signs and symptoms).

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

#### Signs Observed By Coaching Staff

Appears dazed or stunned  
 Is confused about assignment or position  
 Forgets plays  
 Is unsure of game, score or opponent  
 Moves clumsily  
 Answers questions slowly  
 Loses consciousness (even briefly)  
 Shows behavior or personality changes  
 Can't recall events before hit or fall  
 Can't recall events after hit or fall

#### Symptoms Reported By Player

Headache or "pressure" in head.  
 Nausea or vomiting.  
 Balance problems or dizziness.  
 Double or blurry vision.  
 Sensitivity to light.  
 Sensitivity to noise.  
 Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy.  
 Concentration or memory problems.  
 Confusion.  
 Does not "feel right."

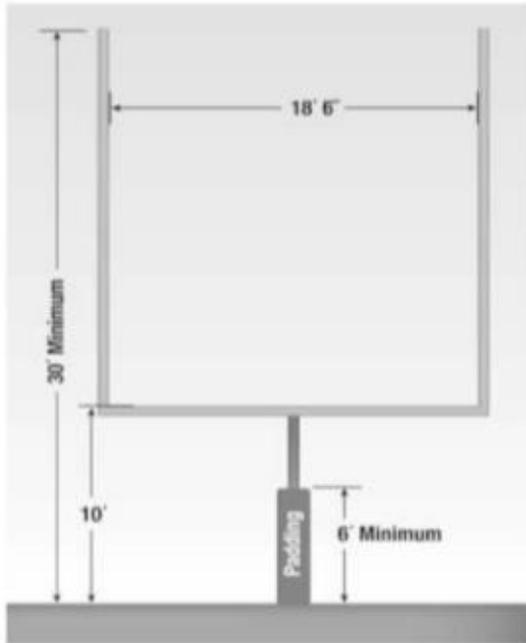
An athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, either at rest or during exertion, should be removed immediately from practice or competition and should not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that players can get checked.

**IF A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED:**

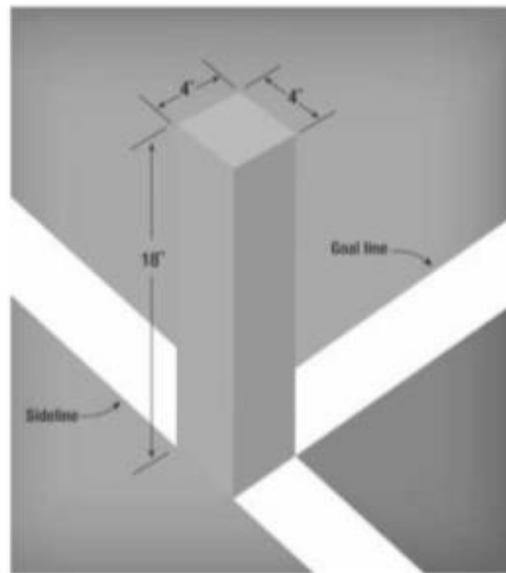
1. Remove the athlete from play. Look for the signs and symptoms of concussion if the athlete has experienced a blow to the head. Do not allow the athlete to just "shake it off". Each individual athlete will respond to concussions differently.
2. Ensure that the athlete is evaluated right away by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Immediately refer the athlete to the appropriate athletics medical staff, such as a certified athletic trainer, team physician or health care professional experienced in concussion evaluation and management.
3. Allow the athlete to return to play only with permission from medical personnel. Allow athletics medical staff to rely on their clinical skills and protocols in evaluating the athlete to establish the appropriate time to return to play. A return-to-play progression should occur in an individualized, step-wise fashion with gradual increments in physical exertion and risk of contact. Follow your institution's physician supervised concussion management protocol.
4. Develop a game plan. Athletes should not return to play until cleared by the appropriate medical personnel. In fact, as concussion management continues to evolve with new science, the care is becoming more conservative and return-to-play time frames are getting longer. Coaches should have a game plan that accounts for athletes to be out for at least the remainder of the day.

# Appendix D

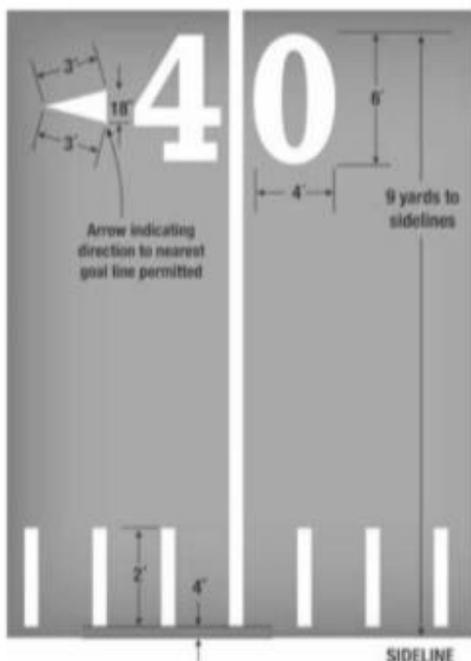
## Field Diagrams



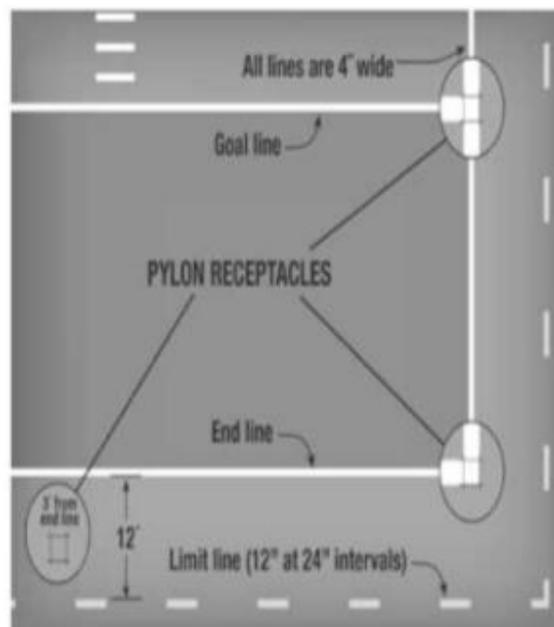
**GOAL POST DETAIL**



**PYLON DETAIL**



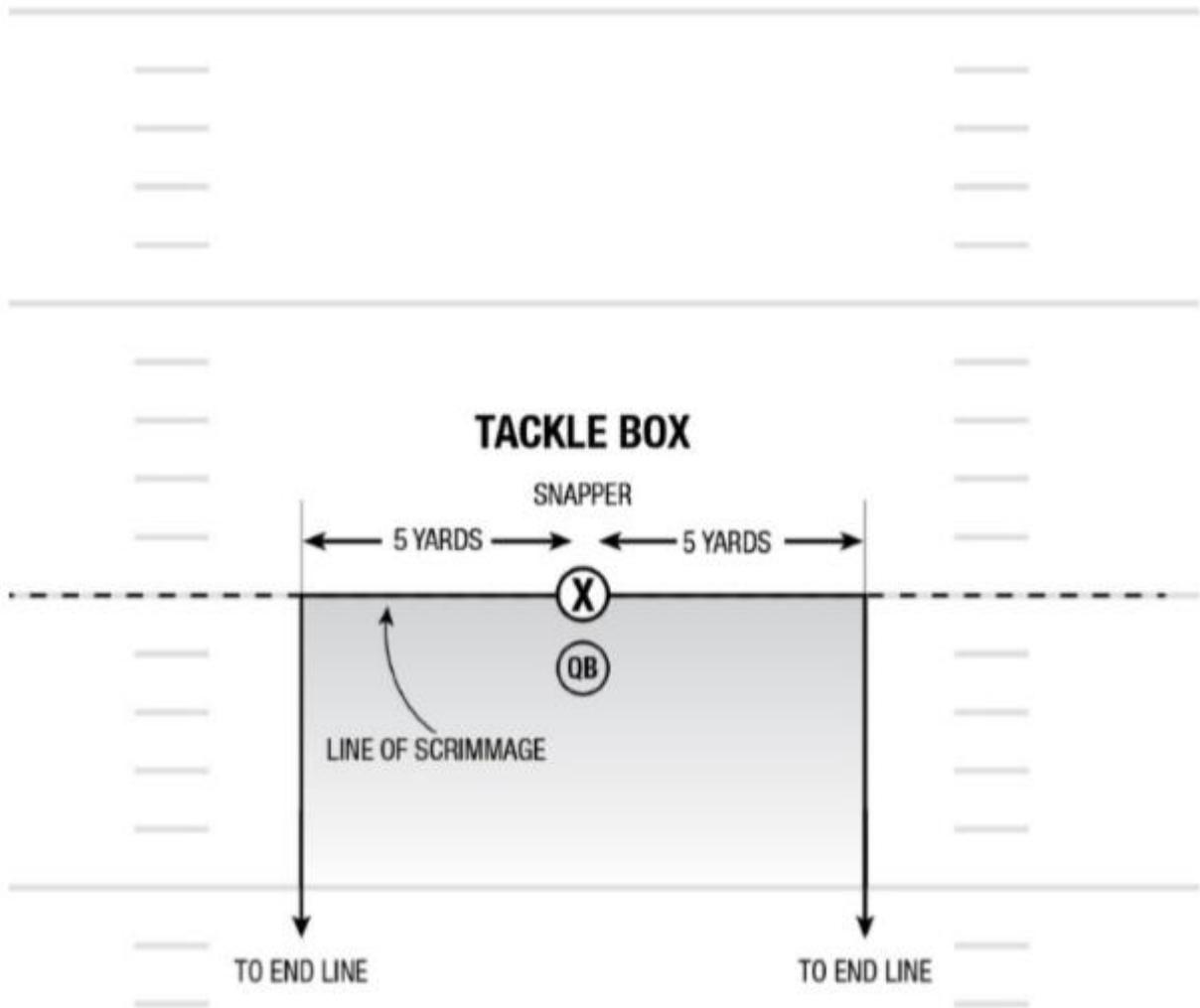
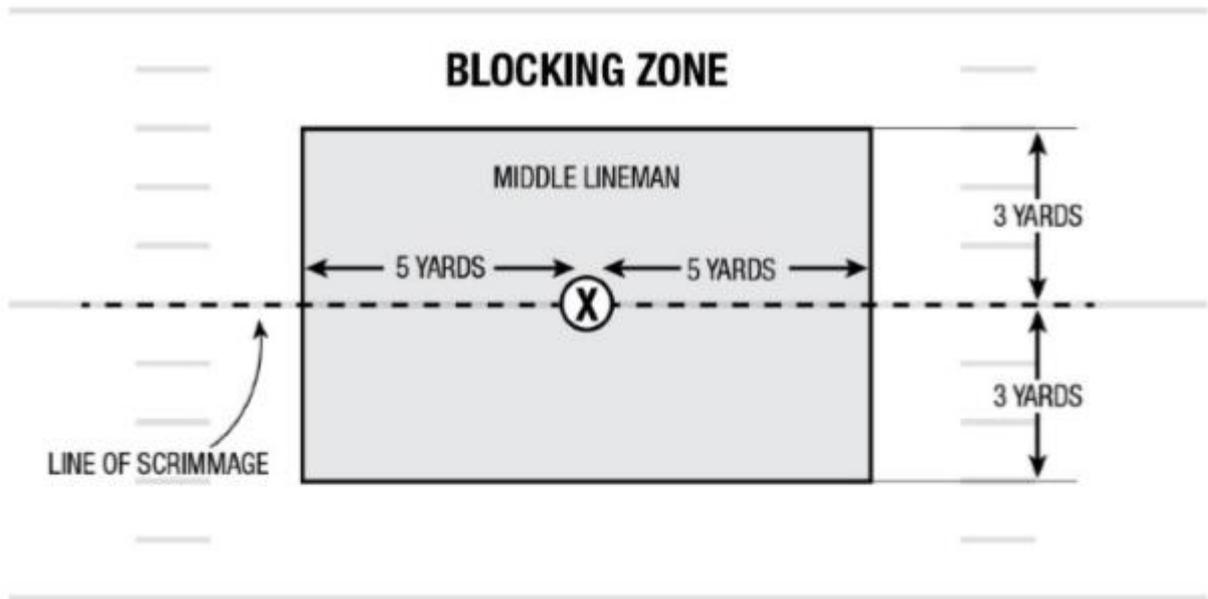
**RECOMMENDED YARD-LINE NUMBERING**

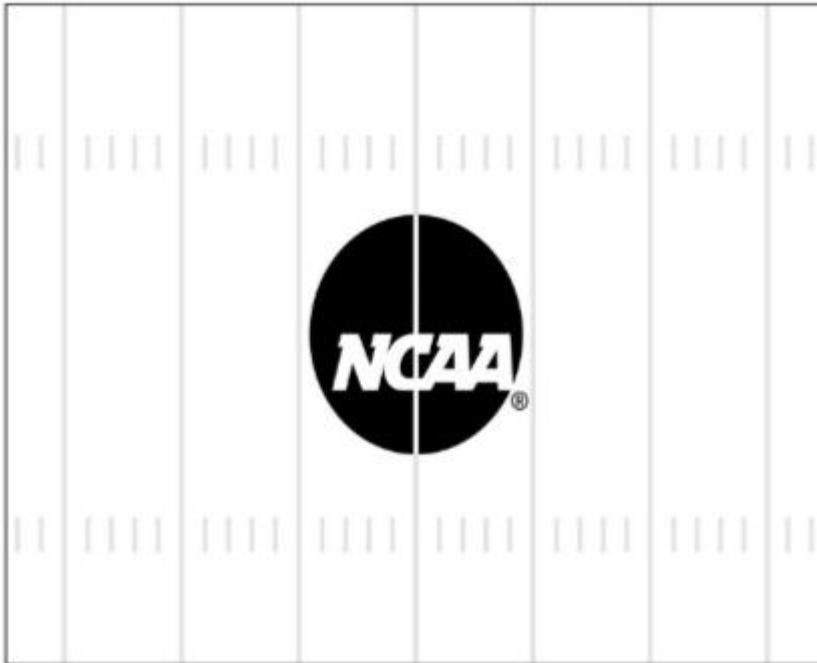


**END ZONE DETAIL**

Important note: Although the diagram above shows the limit lines at 12', IFAF limit lines should normally be 18' from the sidelines/end lines (Rule 1-2-3-a).





**PROPER PLACEMENT OF LOGO**

**Rule 1-2-1-f:** Contrasting decorative markings are permissible within the sidelines and between the goal lines. However, yard lines, goal lines and side lines must not be hidden. The markings also may not touch or enclose the hash marks.

**IMPERMISSIBLE PLACEMENT OF LOGO**

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# Appendix E

## Equipment: Additional Details

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1. The officiating crew is responsible for inspecting and approving players equipment, as part of pre-game procedure.
2. Official will also make sure all players are registered in the team roster
3. Hard or unyielding substances are permitted, if covered, only to protect an injury.
4. Hand and arm protectors (covered casts or splints) are permitted only to protect a fracture or dislocation.
5. Thigh guards may not be made of any hard substances, unless all surfaces are covered with material such as closed-cell vinyl foam that is at least 1/4-inch thick on the outside surface and at least 3/8-inch thick on the inside surface and the overlaps of the edges.
6. Shin guards must be covered on both sides and all edges with closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding at least 1/2-inch thick, or an alternate material of the same minimum thickness having similar physical properties.
7. Therapeutic or preventive knee braces should be worn under the pants and entirely covered from direct external exposure.
8. There may be no projection of metal or other hard substance from a player's person or clothing.
9. Shoe cleats must conform to the following specifications:
  - (a) They may not be more than 1/2-inch in length (measured from tip of cleat to the shoe). (See below for an exception for detachable cleats.)
  - (b) They may not be made of any material that burrs, chips or fractures.
  - (c) They may not have abrasive surfaces or cutting edges.
  - (d) Nondetachable cleats only may not be made of any metallic material.
  - (e) Detachable cleats:
    - (i) Must have an effective locking device.
    - (ii) May not have concave sides.
    - (iii) If conical they may not have flat free ends not parallel to their bases or less than 3/8-inch in diameter or rounded free ends having arcs greater than 7/16-inch.

- (iv) If oblong they may not have free ends not parallel with bases or that measure less than 1/4-inch by 3/4-inch.
- (v) If circular or ring shaped they must have rounded edges and a wall at least 3/16-inch thick.
- (vi) If steel-tipped they must contain low carbon steel of 1006 material, case hardened to .005-.008 depth and drawn to Rockwell hardness of approximately C55.

*NOTE:* The distance in paragraph (a) for detachable cleats may exceed 1/2-inch if the cleat is attached to a 5/32-inch or less raised platform wider than the base of the cleat and extended across the width of the shoe to within 1/4-inch or less of the outer edges of the sole. A single toe cleat does not require a raised platform that extends across the width of the sole. The raised platform of the toe cleat is limited to 5/32-inch or less. The 5/32-inch or less is measured from the lowest point of the platform to the sole of the shoe.

10. The facemask must be constructed of non breakable material with rounded edges covered with resilient material designed to prevent chipping, burrs or an abrasiveness that would endanger players.
11. Shoulder pads may not have the leading edge of the epaulet rounded with a radius more than one-half the thickness of the material used.
12. No equipment that endangers other players may be worn. Artificial limbs are permitted provided:
  - (a) An artificial limb must not give the wearer any advantage in competition.
  - (b) If necessary, the artificial limb should be padded to rebound as a natural limb.
13. Insignia, logos, labels:
  - (a) Uniforms and all other items of apparel (e.g. warm-ups, socks, headbands, T-shirts, wristbands, visors, hats or gloves) may bear only a single manufacturer's or distributor's normal label or trademark (regardless of the visibility of the label or trademark) not to exceed 2¼ square inches in area (i.e. rectangle, square, parallelogram) including any additional material (e.g. patch) surrounding the normal trademark or logo. See also Rule 1-4-6-d.
  - (b) No sizing, garment-care or other non-logo labels shall be on the outside of the uniform.
  - (c) Professional league logos are prohibited.