

**THE
REDDING
STUDY GUIDE**

to

NFHS FOOTBALL RULES

by

George Demetriou

2020 EDITION

ABOUT THE PEOPLE BEHIND THIS BOOK

The book is authored by George Demetriou who first officiated football in 1968. George is currently serving as a crew chief in the Colorado Springs High School Football Officials Association and is Past President of the Colorado Football Officials Association. He is currently the Rules Interpreter for the State of Colorado and has conducted clinics in several states including Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Montana and Utah. George has been an Editorial Contributor to Referee Magazine since 1991 and has written numerous articles and books on baseball and basketball as well as football rules. His most notable football book is "Judgment Calls." George was inducted in the National Federation of High School Associations Hall of Fame in 2014, the Colorado High School Activities Association Hall of Fame in 2011 and in the Minor League Football Hall of Fame in 2009. Demetriou is a 1969 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and a retired Army officer who lives with his wife Joan in Colorado Springs.

This book is an adaptation of an identical book for NCAA rules first published in 1991 by Rogers Redding. Rogers recently retired as the National Coordinator for College Football Officiating, LLC. He served as the Secretary-Editor of the NCAA Football Rules Committee, the Supervisor of Officials for the Southeastern Conference, and is a veteran of more than 30 years of football officiating. He started officiating in the Dallas area and was on the officiating staff of both the Southwest Conference and the Southeastern Conference. Among his post season assignments were three national championship games: the 1991 Orange Bowl (Colorado-Notre Dame), the 1993 Sugar Bowl (Alabama-Miami), and the 1998 Rose Bowl (Michigan-Washington State). Redding retired as Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. He and his wife Shirley live in Birmingham, AL.

"When you're through learning, you're through."

Publisher: George Demetriou
4925 Farthing Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80906-5956
george.demetriou.cos@gmail.com

To order, contact Double S Distributors
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steve@doublesdistributors.com

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PREFACE

ON STUDYING THE RULES

Quite often officials will ask me for advice on studying the rules. Many times I hear officials say, "I study that rule a lot, but I still have a very hard time with it." When someone tells me that they "study" the rules, often what they really mean is they "read" the rules. "Reading" is an important part of "studying," of course, but it is not the only thing. Reading and studying are different. They are related, to be sure, but they are definitely not identical.

What's missing from this picture is *writing*. In my opinion, writing is an extremely important part of studying that most folks overlook, partly because they find writing to be hard work. And it is. But the payoff is powerful. A very smart friend of mine frames it this way, "If you *read* an idea, you rent it. But if you *write* the idea you own it." This principle can be applied to studying the rules.

Here are some steps that I encourage you to try. When you have settled on a particular rule or portion of the rule book to study, do these:

1. Read the rule.
2. Write it out in your own words. Don't use "rule-speak," the jargon of the rule book. Instead, write out the rule by using words with which you are comfortable.
3. Explain or describe the rule (without looking at the book!) to someone else—a fellow official, your wife, a coach, and especially to someone who would not be expected to know it. If you can't explain a rule to someone else, then you don't really understand it yourself.
4. Make up two or three play situations that illustrate the rule. Try to use plays that you have personally seen, ones that have some chance of actually happening, rather than off-the-wall stuff that you are extremely unlikely of ever seeing. Lots of folks love to play "rule book trivia" by concocting outlandish plays, but I don't find this especially helpful.

Scotty Reston, a former editor of the *New York Times*, once was asked what he thought about a certain issue in foreign policy. And his answer was, "How can I know what I think about it until I read what I have written about it?" This applies very well to understanding the rules of football: until you read what you have written about a rule, you are very unlikely to have a clear understanding of it.

Rogers Redding

July, 2011

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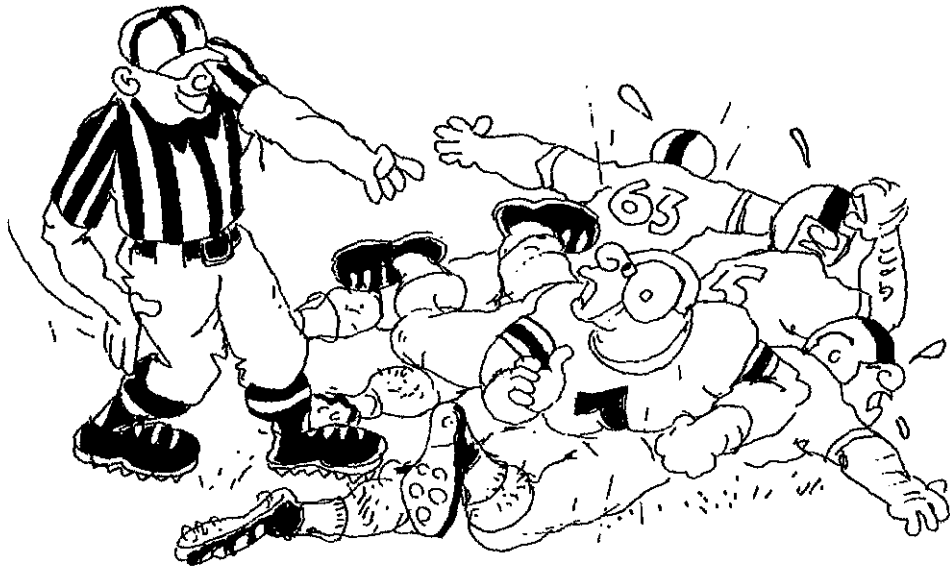
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This *Redding Study Guide* is intended to accompany the *NFHS Football Rules and Case Books* for 2020 published by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). It is certainly not meant to replace the Rules Book, and indeed does not cover everything therein.

However, the Rules Book is not a teaching manual, nor is it intended to be. The purpose in writing this study guide is to provide a clearly written reference work organized around phases of the game and overall topics of importance that can be used to learn the rules and to refresh veteran officials each season.

The book is updated each year to reflect rule revisions.

How To Use This Book

Chapter 2 deals with the most important changes in NFHS rules for the present year plus a revisit of last year's rules changes.

Chapters 3 through 12 are organized in identical fashion. New or changed material is shaded in gray.

Section I, "The Rules in Depth," is a more detailed study of the rules only touched on in the first section, reinforced by examples throughout. References to appropriate sections of the NFHS rules are given. Rule changes for the current year are highlighted and emphasized.

Section II, "Additional Examples," gives play situations that further illustrate the rules for the chapter and supplement the examples in Section I. These examples are not included in the main text because they are not essential to the explanation of the rule. They also give the reader the option to test his comprehension after finishing the chapter. There are specific cross references in Section II which indicate which additional example relates to a certain section.

Section III, "Review Test," contains true-false questions with answers and references to facilitate a review of the material covered in the chapter.

Appendix A is a 62 question multiple-choice quiz designed to test your overall knowledge. Answers with a discussion and references are provided.

Appendix B contains a summary of penalty enforcement, with greater detail than the Rules Book provides.

Appendix C contains "When in Doubt" guidelines.

Appendix D contains a preseason rules guide which is designed to help a crew prepare for the upcoming season.

Appendix E contains scenarios for the 40/25-second play clock.

There is also a rule citation index to ease your search through this book

In an effort to be illustrative, the precise rulebook language is not used in all cases. If there is any question as to the exact meaning of a specific phrase, please check the *NFHS Football Rules Book*.

Rules

Technically, a rule is one of the groups of regulations which govern the game (2-37). Practically, a rule is any statement about what a player may or may not do. The important thing to remember is that if there is no statement for a given act, it is assumed to be legal.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed greatly over the years to my understanding of the rules, and hence to the writing of this book which could not have been written without the foresight and creativity of Rogers Redding.

Portions of this book have previously appeared and may continue to appear in *Referee Magazine*. Selected passages are used with their permission.

Very special thanks go to Jay Cornils of Fort Worth, Texas and James and Mark Bradley of Colorado Springs who developed most of the diagrams. Rick Boedy of Georgia, Larry

Chapter 1: Introduction

Clemmons of Ohio, Clark Sanders and Kevin Hatfield of Oregon, Hal Bidlack, Jack Knapp, and the late Ray Lutz, and Scott Taylor of Colorado Springs, all provided invaluable assistance throughout the years by reviewing the original manuscript, or offering helpful comments. The interest and assistance of all these folks is appreciated. Also, I thank Steve Selby of Double S Distributors. Steve has been instrumental in printing, marketing and distributing this Guide since its inception.

I would be remiss if I did not note the NFHS is the sole and exclusive source of model interpretations of NFHS rules. There is no intent of usurping either the NFHS or the state rules interpreters. Official interpretations should be requested through the appropriate state interpreter. The NFHS is in Indianapolis, Indiana.

References

All references are given in the standard format for the **NFHS Rules** e.g., 7-1-3a refers to Rule 7, Section 1, Article 3, Paragraph a and the **NFHS Case Book** e.g., 3.6.2A refers to Rule 3, Section 6, Article 2. References have been updated for the 2020 Rules Book; however, the 2020 Case Book was not available at press time for this Study Guide. If a referenced case play does not appear in the 2020 edition, please check the 2019 edition.

References and quotes are used by permission of the NFHS.

No Rules Provision

In some cases, the situation described has no direct rules coverage. In those few situations, the author's recommendation is clearly indicated.

Definitions

Defined terms are in **bold** the first time they are used. For a complete set of definitions please check the *NFHS Football Rules Book*.

Team Designations

The offense is the team in possession of the ball. Their opponent, the team not in possession of the ball, is the defense (2-43-1). Team A is the team which puts the ball in play; that is usually, but not necessarily the offense. Team B is the opponent of the team which puts the ball in play;

that is usually, but not necessarily the defense (2-43-2). In kicking situations, Team K is the kicking team, and Team R is the receiving team (2-43-3).

The designations of A, B, K and R, are retained until the ball is next put into play (2-43-4).

Format

All examples and additional examples use the team designations described above with the player's uniform number. These numbers are in accordance with a slight modification of the traditional numbering system (Fig 1-4-2).

Also, in the examples, the reference to a yard line is abbreviated so that "the B-25" means Team B's 25 yard line.

Assumptions

Unless otherwise indicated, it is assumed the rules included apply during regulation play (not overtime) and not during a try. Situations related to overtime or to a try are clearly indicated. Also, a player with an eligible number is an eligible receiver unless otherwise stated.

State Association Adoptions

NFHS rules are written for varsity level competition. State associations have the authority to make decisions and provide coverage relative to a number of specific rules, including modifying rules to make them more restrictive than the NFHS rule. They may also individually adopt specific coverage relative to 16 provisions in the Rules Book (1-7). Please check with your state association for information regarding such adaptations.

A Note about NCAA Rules

A version of this book is available for study of NCAA Rules. Please see the ordering information at the rear of this book.

Comments

If you have a comment, question or spot an error, please contact the author by e-mail at george.demetriou.cos@gmail.com.

Correspondence is welcome and encouraged. Please identify to which rules (NFHS or NCAA) you are referring. You may also request electronically any errata sheets or supplements which may be available.

CHAPTER 2 RECENT RULES CHANGES

I. Rules Changes for 2020

Conserving Time

Team A may now spike the ball from a shotgun formation in order to conserve time as long as the snap is not muffed nor touches the ground (7-5-2 Exc 2). The spike still must be immediate, but no longer has to be a direct hand-to-hand snap. See Chapter 5 for additional information.

Disconcerting Acts

The penalty for disconcerting acts, words or actions in an attempt to disrupt team A's signals, by the defense has been reduced from 15 yards to five yards and is no longer an unsportsmanlike conduct foul (7-1-9). See Chapter 3 for additional information.

Penalty Decisions

In response to the increasing complexity of penalty enforcement and in recognition of the common practice for officials to obtain penalty decisions from the head coach, the team captain is no longer the automatic decision maker on penalty acceptance or declination by rule. Each head coach shall designate a representative to make such decisions. The designee can be the head coach, an assistant coach or a player (1-4-2). See Chapter 11 for additional information.

40/25-second Play Clock

To prevent a potential timing advantage, several play clock changes were made. For defensive timeouts for injury, equipment repair or a helmet coming off, the play clock will be set to 40 seconds.

A clarification was made that when a new series is awarded to either team after a legal kick, the play clock will be 25 seconds (3-6-1a). See Chapter 7 for additional information.

Weather Delays

If the game is interrupted due to weather during the last three minutes of the second period, and the delay is at least 30 minutes, the coaches and referee can mutually agree to shorten the halftime intermission, provided there is at least a one-minute intermission. The three-minute warmup is still required, so there must be at least a four-minute break (3-1-6d). See Chapter 7 for additional information.

Ineligible Receivers Downfield (Editorial)

The last sentence of 7-5-12 has been deleted to clarify ineligible receivers do not have to be in contact with an opponents to enter the expanded neutral zone. See Chapter 5 for additional information.

II. 2019 Rules Changes Revisited

40/25-second Play Clock

To have a more consistent time period between downs, a 40/25-second clock was implemented. Unless the game is stopped for administrative reasons (e.g., change of possession, injury, etc.), the offensive team has 40 seconds to snap the ball after it is declared dead (3-6-1). See Chapter 7 for additional information.

Horse Collar Tackle

The grip area for a horse collar tackle was expanded to include the name plate area which is the area directly below the back collar (9-4-3k). See Chapter 8 for additional information.

Scrimmage Formation

At the snap for a scrimmage formation, a minimum of five Team A players must be on the line and no more than four players may be backs (7-2-5a). The change made it easier to identify legal and illegal offensive formations. See Chapter 3 for additional information.

Tripping

Tripping the runner is illegal (9-4-3o). It is a foul to intentionally use the lower leg or foot to obstruct a runner below the knees. Previously, a runner was not included in the definition of tripping. See Chapter 8 for additional information.

Illegal Kicking and Batting

The penalties for illegal batting and illegally kicking the ball were reduced from 15 yards to 10 yards. Those fouls are neither safety-related nor unsportsmanlike (9-7 Pen). See Chapter 8 for additional information.

Illegal Kicks

The penalty for an illegal kick was reduced from 15 yards to 10 yards. The foul is neither safety-related nor unsportsmanlike (6-2-1 Pen). See Chapter 6 for additional information.

Jersey Numerals

Effective 2024, the entire body of the number shall be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the body color of the jersey (1-5-1c5). See Chapter 12 for additional information.

Instant Replay

A state association is allowed to create an instant replay protocol that permits game or replay officials to use a replay monitor during postseason play to determine if a call/decision by the on-field game officials is incorrect. The procedures and the scope of the replay protocol may be developed by each state association (1-3-7 Nt).

Momentum Exception (Editorial)

It was clarified that for the momentum exception to apply, the ball must remain in the end zone after the player's momentum causes it to enter the end zone (8-5-2a Exc). See Chapter 9 for additional information.

III. 2018 Rules Changes Revisited

Team K Fouls on Kick Plays

Penalties for fouls by Team K during a free kick or a scrimmage kick (other than kick catch interference) may be enforced at the previous spot with the down repeated, or; at the spot where Team K will not be next to put the ball in play (6-1-9, 10-4-2 Exc). See Chapters 6 and 11 for additional information.

Coaches Equipment Certification

Instead of certifying before the game that all players are legally equipped, the head coach must certify his players have all required equipment and will not use any illegal equipment (1-5-4). See Chapter 12 for additional information.

Equipment Violations

Players with improperly worn or missing equipment will be required to be replaced for at least one down, similar to a player whose helmet comes off. If the missing or improperly worn equipment is detected during the down or during subsequent dead ball action related to the down

without being directly attributable to a foul by an opponent or if a player is wearing otherwise legal equipment in an illegal manner, the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless halftime or an overtime intermission occurs. If proper and legal equipment has become improperly worn through use, but prompt repair is possible within 25 seconds, such repair may be made without penalty (1-5-5). A charged timeout by either team cannot be used to allow such a player to remain in the game. See Chapter 12 for additional information.

Signal For Free Kick Infractions

The signals for a violation of 6-1-3b, no Team K players more than five yards behind their free kick line, and 6-1-4, at least four Team K players on each side of the kicker, have been changed to a free kick infraction (S19, rolling fists) from encroachment (S18, hands on hips). Both continue as dead-ball fouls and the signal is preceded by the dead-ball signal (S7).

CHAPTER 3 SCRIMMAGE REQUIREMENTS AND LIVE/DEAD BALL

I. The Rules in Depth

We'll begin our in-depth discussion of the rules of football with some basics and with a few fundamentals. The chapter continues with scrimmage requirements and a summary of the events that cause the ball to become dead.

A **live ball** is a ball in play (2-1-2). To start each half, the ball is put in play by a free kick (kickoff). A free kick is also used to resume play after a safety, successful field goal or try or elected after a fair catch or awarded fair catch (or the replay of a down following a fair catch or awarded fair catch). A snap puts the ball in play when a free kick is not specified.

A **down** is action which starts when the ball is free kicked - a free kick down, or with a legal snap - a scrimmage down. After being put in play, the ball remains live until the ball next becomes dead - the down ends (2-7-1).

Possession

The first fundamental that is essential to grasp is **possession**. Possession connotes a live ball that is held and controlled by a player (2-34-1). A live ball is always in possession of a team and must be either in player possession or loose. In the basketball world, possession is very simple. The ball always belongs to the opponents of the team which caused the ball to go out of bounds. In football, there is no such blanket declaration. In fact, in most cases the opposite is true - the ball belongs to the team which had team possession when the ball went out of bounds. Here are the highlights of the rules regarding possession.

- A ball which is fumbled out of bounds between the goal lines belongs to the fumbling team at the out-of-bounds spot (7-4-3a).
 - A backward pass which goes out of bounds between the goal lines belongs to the passing team at the out-of-bounds spot (7-4-3a).
 - A fumble or pass which is jointly possessed by opponents belongs to the team last in possession (7-4-3c, 7-5-4).
 - An incomplete legal forward pass is returned to the passing team at the previous spot (4-3-4, 4-3-5a).
- Note: If any of the preceding occur to Team A on fourth down, the ball would then be awarded to Team B if it is short of the line-to-gain.
- A fumble or backward pass which is declared dead in the opponent's end zone with no player in possession is a touchdown for the team last in possession (8-2-1c).
 - A legal kick which is jointly possessed by opponents belongs to the receiving team (5-1-3e, 5-1-5d).
 - A legal kick which is declared dead in the field of play with no player in possession belongs to the receiving team (5-1-3e).
 - A free kick which goes out of bounds between the goal lines untouched by Team R is a foul (6-1-9).
 - A free kick which goes out of bounds between the goal lines touched by Team R belongs to Team R at the out-of-bounds spot (5-1-5a).
 - A scrimmage kick which goes out of bounds between the goal lines belongs to Team R (5-1-3e).
 - A scrimmage kick which is declared dead in the kicking team's end zone with no player in possession is a safety if forced by Team K and a touchback if forced by Team R (6-3-2, 8-5-2b, 8-5-3b).
 - The rules above do not apply when the ball is declared dead with no one in possession because of an inadvertent whistle (4-2-3a, b).
 - A change of possession occurs when a Team B or R player gains possession during the down (2-34-3).
 - Possession cannot be gained if touching the ball causes it to become dead.

Chapter 3: Scrimmage Requirements and Live/Dead Ball

SCRIMMAGE REQUIREMENTS

Scrimmage requirements are a good place to begin our study of the rules since most football plays are from scrimmage or said another way, from scrimmage downs- a down that begins with a snap (2-38). Rule Seven is the primary source for the rules about scrimmage requirements for both teams. Except when the ball is free kicked, it must be put into play with a legal snap (2-40-1, 4-1-3) between the hash marks (4-1-4), and it may not be snapped until it is ready for play (2-35, 4-1-6).

When the 40-second play clock is running, the ball is ready for play when it is spotted and the official has stepped away to his position. When the play clock is set to 25 seconds, the referee will blow his whistle to signify the ball is ready for play.

As we see in 4-1-6 and 7-1-4, an illegal snap does *not* make the ball live. The definition (2-40-2) makes it clear to **snap** the ball means to hand or pass it backward from the ground with a quick, continuous motion. (Purists will note the snap is not "handed" because handing is defined as a transfer of possession and there is no possession on a snap until the ball has been released by the snapper.)

The snap begins when the snapper first moves the ball legally, other than in adjustment. The snap ends when the ball touches the ground or any player (2-40-3). If it first touches a lineman, the ball remains dead since the snap is illegal (2-40-2, 7-2-4).

Notice the snap need not be between the snapper's legs, as is sometimes done, for example, in the "swinging gate" formation. The snap is legal when the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches a back or the ground before touching a Team A lineman (2-40-2).

In what follows, the **neutral zone** is all-important, so we should clearly understand its definition (2-28-1). The neutral zone is established when the ball is ready for play. It is the strip of territory, sideline to sideline, whose width is the length of the ball as it sits on the ground with its long axis perpendicular to the goal lines. The two lines that mark the boundaries of the neutral zone serve as the **scrimmage lines** for each team (2-25-1). If any player has any part of his body beyond his scrimmage line, he is in the neutral zone. **Encroachment** is when a player is illegally in the neutral zone (2-8).

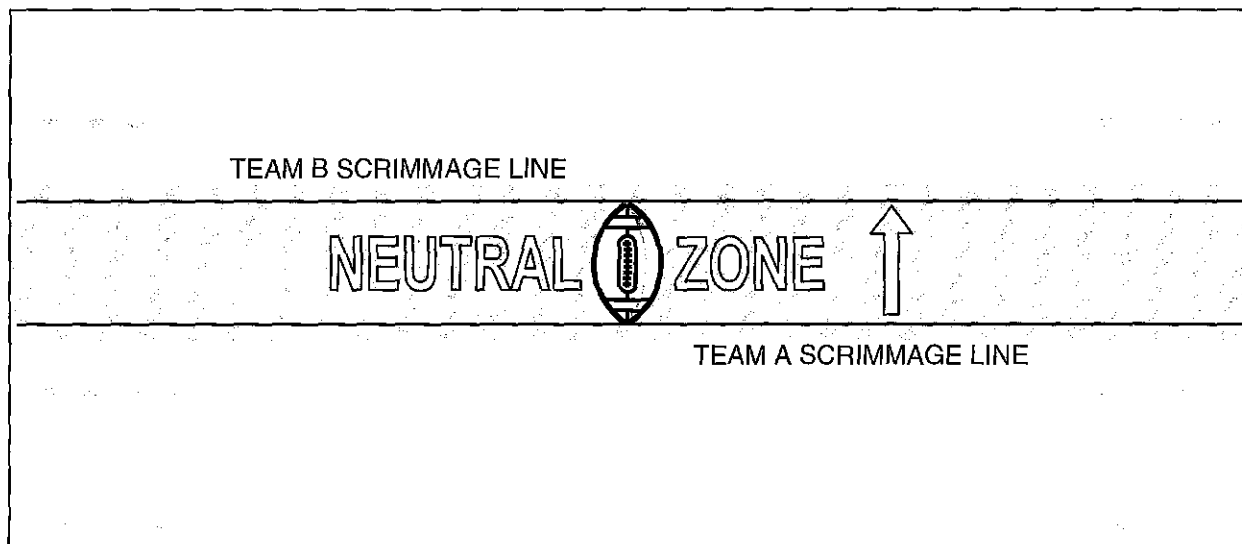


Figure 3-1

For practical purposes, the neutral zone ceases to exist after a change of possession, including when Team R gains possession of a kick. Please see Chapter 6 for the neutral zone on free kick downs.

In order to allow normal line play, the neutral zone may be expanded, following the snap, to a

maximum of two yards beyond the defensive line of scrimmage in the **field of play** – the area within the boundary lines other than the end zones (2-10-2). This is called the **expanded neutral zone** (2-28-2). This applies on scrimmage kicks and forward passes, but has no relevance on running plays.

Chapter 3: Scrimmage Requirements and Live/Dead Ball

Offensive (Team A) Requirements

Prior to the Snap

Team A is restricted in a variety of ways. Before the ball is snapped, these restrictions regulate action by the snapper, encroachment by any offensive player, motion by offensive linemen, simulation of the start of play, and the location of players and substitutes with respect to the ball.

The Snapper

The snapper (2-32-14) is allowed to make certain preliminary adjustments without moving the location of the ball. After the ready-for-play and after the snapper touches the ball, he may not do anything that makes it look as if the play is about to begin before he actually snaps the ball. He is not allowed to move the ball forward, roll it, rotate it end-for-end, fail to keep the long axis of the ball perpendicular to the line of scrimmage or take both his hands off it. He may lift the ball only for lateral rotation, tilt to a 90 degree angle, or remove one hand (if he has placed both hands on it) as long as he does so smoothly and slowly. And after all of this, he must clearly pause before the snap (7-1-2 and 7-1-3c).

If the snapper violates any of these provisions, it is a dead-ball foul. All are either a snap infraction or illegal snap. The ball does not become alive even though it may appear the ball was snapped.

EXAMPLE 3-1: After the ball is ready for play, snapper A58 puts (a) both hands, or (b) only one hand on the ball. A58 then slowly and without simulating action at the snap, removes one hand from the ball. **RULING:** In (a), no foul as long as A58 keeps the other hand on the ball. In (b), a dead-ball foul, snap infraction, five yards.

If the snapper simulates touching the ball, most likely in a "swinging gate" formation, it is *not* treated as touching the ball. See Additional Example 2.

Additional Examples: 1-3.

Encroachment

There are two "phases" of encroachment restrictions. The first begins when the ball is ready for play and the second when the snapper touches the ball. The first phase primarily restricts the defense and is discussed later in this chapter.

Most often, the ready will precede the snapper touching the ball. If however, the snapper touches the ball before the ready, encroachment restrictions are not in effect (7.1.6C).

After the ball is ready for play, once the snapper has touched the ball, the offensive team is not allowed to be in the neutral zone (7-1-6). The exceptions are replaced players who cross the neutral zone as they head to the sideline and incoming substitutes who pass through the neutral zone on their way from the team area. Also, the snapper may be in the neutral zone (usually with his head), but not beyond it, except for his hand(s) which may be on the foremost point of the ball (7-1-1). Encroachment is a dead-ball foul that carries a five-yard penalty.

In a scrimmage kick formation, linemen sometimes break their scrimmage plane by pointing at the opponents to confirm blocking assignments. The rulebook is silent on this point, and it is thus technically a foul. However, veteran officials will not flag this inadvertent and inconsequential act.

EXAMPLE 3-2: Following a change of possession, A54 puts his hands on the ball before the ready-for-play. As A80 comes to the line, he enters the neutral zone. **RULING:** No foul. Encroachment restrictions are not in effect before the ready.

Additional Example: 4.

False Starts

No player of the offensive team may make a **false start** (7-1-7). What does this mean? For the interior offensive linemen, it is clearly spelled out: any lineman between the snapper and the end lineman who has placed his hand or hands on or near the ground may not move his hand or make any quick movement. Please note this means the snapper is not restricted. In particular, linemen once set as described above may not shift, go in motion or be called off the line to re-huddle.

Notice the restriction applies only to *interior linemen* (not the ends) and not necessarily to players wearing numbers 50-79. Thus, if number 73 lines up in the backfield, he is not restricted in the same way as an interior lineman (7-1-7c).

Between the ready and the snap, if a Team A lineman reacts to an opponent who enters the neutral zone, it is a foul by the defense the instant the defensive player breaks the plane of the neutral zone (7-1-6). Note that whether or not the offensive man moves into the neutral zone is irrelevant. In either case, it is a Team B dead-ball foul.

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The same applies if the defense "induces" a false start with disconcerting acts or words (7-1-9) - it is a Team B dead-ball foul. This is discussed in greater detail under "Defensive Requirements."

In the unusual case where an offensive lineman false starts and a defensive player encroaches at the same instant and the officials are unable to determine which player fouled first, the fouls offset and no yardage penalty is enforced (2001 interp, Sit 16).

EXAMPLE 3-3: Guard A62, directly across from B75, jumps and enters the neutral zone (a) after, or (b) at the same instant, B75 feints a charge and enters the neutral zone. There is no contact. **RULING:** In (a), encroachment by Team B. In (b), the fouls offset and no yardage penalty is enforced.

For the rest of the offensive team, what constitutes a false start is a bit murkier. Rule 7-1-7a says offensive players may not make any movement that simulates the beginning of a play. If the quarterback abruptly "chucks" his hands under the snapper, it simulates snap action and is a false start.

After the ball is ready for play and all players are in scrimmage formation, no offensive player shall make a quick, jerky movement before the snap or make any movement whatsoever which is clearly intended to cause Team B to encroach (7-1-7b). Any such motion is an infraction of the rule.

Consequently, a shift in which the offensive line or the entire team lifts up abruptly, even though the linemen have not put their hand(s) near the ground, is most likely a false start. Such shifts are almost always designed to cause the defense to encroach.

As we shall discuss, the rules elsewhere (7-2-7) allow for one player to be in motion at the snap. So, the covering official has the responsibility of making a judgment about *how* the man goes in motion. It is the responsibility of an offensive player who moves before the snap to do so in a manner that in no way simulates the beginning of a play.

The rule allowing a man to go in motion is certainly open to interpretation. A back who jumps the snap count and lifts up from his position has most likely committed a false start. However, there is no general agreement among officials about what constitutes a false start by a back or split end.

Additional Examples: 5-8, 18, 19.

Shifts

If a player on the offensive team moves to a new position after the ready and before the snap, it is a **shift** (2-39). There might be several shifts between the ready and the snap (breaking the huddle (2-21) is a shift), but no matter how many there are, after the last shift all members of the offensive team must stop and remain still for at least one second (7-2-6). After this one-second pause, the ball may be snapped, or one player may go legally in motion and still be moving away from or parallel to his scrimmage line when the ball is snapped. The point is the shift must be separated from the rest of the action by the one-second pause. Otherwise it is an illegal shift (live-ball foul) simultaneous with the snap. The penalty is five yards from the previous spot.

EXAMPLE 3-4: After the ball is ready for play, Team A lines up in an "I" formation. While their teammates remain motionless, the three deep backs shift into a standard "T" formation, and then stop for one second. The ball is then snapped. **RULING:** Legal. Team A has satisfied the "one second" requirement following a shift.

EXAMPLE 3-5: After the ball is ready for play, backs A25 and A34 simultaneously go in motion and stop. Before one second elapses, back A46 goes in motion parallel to his end line. The ball is snapped while A46 continues in motion. **RULING:** Illegal shift. The one-second requirement has not been satisfied.

EXAMPLE 3-6: After Team A has paused for one second, backs A25 and A17 go in motion. A25 then stops, but A17 is still moving parallel to his end line when the ball is snapped. **RULING:** Illegal shift. Even though only one man was moving at the snap, the simultaneous motion of A25 and A17 constituted a shift, and the one-second requirement was not satisfied.

Notice the one-second restriction also applies to a shift by only one player as the following examples illustrate.

EXAMPLE 3-7: Team A has been set for one second when back A34 without committing a false start (a) goes in legal motion, or (b) steps forward to a new position on the line and takes a three-point stance. In either case, he stops, but before one second elapses, the ball is snapped. **RULING:** In (a), the snap is considered to have taken place while A34 is in legal motion. In (b), it is an illegal shift; A34 had to be stationary for a full second before the snap because his motion was forward.

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In the preceding example, when the motion is legal as in (a), the player is considered to be in motion at the snap (2002 interp., Sit 8). If the player moves forward to a new position, the one-second requirement must be met.

EXAMPLE 3-8: With all his teammates motionless, back A25 goes in motion parallel to his line. He stops, and before one second elapses, back A42 goes in motion and is moving parallel to his line at the snap. **RULING:** Illegal shift. Although there was only one player moving at any one time, the one-second rule applies to a shift by a lone player.

There is one situation where shift restrictions do not apply to foot movement. The quarterback may move one foot up or down while otherwise stationary to signal a player to start in motion.

However, if he lowers his body into position to receive a snap, moves his hands under center, moves either foot forward, or makes any other similar forward movement after he comes to the line and all players are set, he has shifted and must pause for a second with all other players stationary for the play to be legal (7.2.6A). A backward foot movement would be legal motion provided no other player is in motion.

EXAMPLE 3-9: A7 stands upright behind the snapper with his hands at his side. All Team A players are set for at least one second when A7 moves his hands under center (a) at the same time back A24 goes in motion, or (b) after back A24 goes in motion. In both cases, A24 continues his motion to the snap. **RULING:** Both (a) and (b) are illegal shifts.

Interior linemen usually shift in place. A tackle or a covered tight end may legally shift and change position as long as the movement is not abrupt and the player has not placed a hand on or near the ground. The practical application of "near the ground" is below the knees.

Additional Examples: 9-12.

Motion

In 7-2-7, the rules allow for the offense to have one man in motion at the time the ball is snapped. This player must be moving parallel to or towards his own goal line (away from the line of scrimmage) at the moment the ball is snapped.

Because both shifts and motion involve movement, officials sometimes confuse the two. If two players are in motion when the ball is

snapped, it is a foul for illegal motion. If two players go in motion and one stops before the snap, it is a foul for an illegal shift. If two players go in motion and both stop before the snap and remain set for at least a second, it is legal.

There is also a fine line between false starts and illegal motion. As stated earlier, the manner in which this player begins his motion is important. It is the responsibility of an offensive player who moves before the snap to do so in a manner that in no way simulates the beginning of a play. In other words, a player who is permitted to move under 7-2-7 still may not commit a false start.

If the man in motion starts from a position not clearly behind the line (either on the line or in no-man's land), he must either establish himself as a back by stopping for at least one full second while he is legally in the backfield or he must be at least five yards behind his line of scrimmage at the snap (7-2-7). The man in motion must be in the backfield at the snap (2001 interp., Sit 17).

Illegal motion is a live-ball foul that carries a five-yard penalty from the previous spot.

EXAMPLE 3-10: Team A lines up with eight men on the line of scrimmage. End A89, leaves his position on the line (no false start) and (a) is in motion three yards behind the neutral zone, (b) moves clearly into the backfield, and stops for one second. He then goes in motion. In either case, A89 is moving parallel to his own goal line when the ball is snapped. **RULING:** In (a), it is a foul for illegal motion. The motion man must be five yards behind the line at the snap unless he clearly established himself as a back by stopping in the backfield for at least one second. In (b), it is a legal play. A89 established himself as a back, so he is allowed to be in motion at any distance behind the line. Team A still has no more than four players in the backfield at the snap.

EXAMPLE 3-11: As Team A lines up for a scrimmage play, A45 is in a three-point stance in the slot (between the tackle and the split end) and is positioned so that he is neither on the line nor in the backfield. Before the snap, he slowly goes in motion and is at least five yards behind his line and moving toward his own goal line when the ball is snapped. **RULING:** Legal play. Since A45 was not a lineman, he is not restricted and can change position after placing his hand on or near the ground.

Additional Example: 13

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Formations and Numbering

There are three types of allowable formations: scrimmage, scrimmage kick and free kick (2-14). The latter is discussed in Chapter 6.

For a **scrimmage formation** (2-14-1), restrictions on Team A at the time the ball is snapped govern location of players, formations, and motion.

To prevent hide-out plays, the rules (7-2-1) require all Team A players be between the nine-yard marks sometime after the ball is ready for play and before the snap.

This rule is intended to prevent a Team A player from remaining near the sideline outside the nine-yard mark following a play or a Team A substitute from slipping onto the field and setting up near his sideline just before the snap. The foul is for an illegal formation, a five-yard penalty from the previous spot (7.2.1A). This rule does not apply to Team K players prior to a free kick.

EXAMPLE 3-12: With less than two minutes remaining in the first half, Team A is in a hurry-up offense. End A89, runs a long pass pattern and does not return to his team's huddle. He remains outside the nine-yard marks and goes to a position near the sideline after the ready. **RULING:** Foul on A89 for an illegal formation; a five-yard penalty from the previous spot.

Formations and location of players also refer to their position "on the line" or "in the backfield." In defining these terms we make use of two imaginary planes, both perpendicular to the ground and parallel to the line. One runs through the waist of the snapper and the other runs through the waist of a lineman.

REMEMBER FROM 2019: A scrimmage formation for Team A must have a minimum of five players on the line of scrimmage and no more than four players may be backs (2-14-1, 7-2-5).

They may have more, of course, but without a minimum of five linemen Team A is guilty of an illegal formation. To be on the line of scrimmage (2-25-2) means a player is facing his opponent's goal line with his shoulders parallel to the goal line and with his head or foot breaking the imaginary plane that passes through the waist of the snapper (2-32-9). The generally accepted rule of thumb is a player's shoulders must be within 30 degrees of the line to be considered parallel.

Of the linemen, at least five must be numbered 50-79 unless Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation.

EXAMPLE 3-13: Team A lines up with their normal offensive team, but with only 10 players. The formation includes the regular four backs. The missing player is (a) tight end A88, or (b) tackle A76. **RULING:** In (a) the formation is legal because there are no more than four players in the backfield and at least five players wearing jerseys numbered 50-79 on the scrimmage line. In (b), it is a live-ball foul for an illegal formation because there are only four players wearing jerseys numbered 50-79 on the scrimmage line.

A **scrimmage kick formation** is one where no Team A player is in a position to receive a hand-to-hand snap and there is either a player in position with a knee on the ground at least seven yards behind the line in position to be the holder with another player three yards or less further back in position to attempt a place kick (2-14-2a) or a player at least 10 yards behind the line (2-14-2b). In either case a player must be in position to receive a long snap.

In a scrimmage kick formation on fourth down or a try, Team A is allowed to have any number of linemen whose uniform numbers lie outside the 50-79 range (7-2-5b Exc 2). On any other down, only the snapper may have a uniform number outside the 50-79 range if his team is using the 2-14-2a type of scrimmage-kick formation and there must be four players numbered 50-79 on the line. The snapper under this exception must be between the ends and is an ineligible forward-pass receiver at the snap (7-2-5b Exc 1).

EXAMPLE 3-14: With four seconds remaining in the first half, Team A decides to attempt a field goal on second down. The regular offensive line, (all players numbered 50-79), is in the formation except for (a) snapper A49, or (b) right tackle A99. **RULING:** Legal in (a), but a foul for an illegal numbering in (b).

For the fourth down/try exemption, a player must assume an initial position on his line between the ends. Once such a player assumes that initial position as an interior lineman, he is an ineligible receiver. If a subsequent shift leaves the exempted player in the position of an eligible receiver, he remains ineligible. The exempted players are determined when the snapper touches the ball (7-2-5b Exc 2 and 7.2.5E & F).

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EXAMPLE 3-15: Fourth and five on the B-30. Team A comes to the line and assumes an initial set in a scrimmage kick formation. When the snapper touches the ball, Team A has only four players numbered 50 through 79. A82 assumes an initial position as a tackle, in effect becoming the fifth lineman. Team A then shifts, uncovering A82, who is now lined up as an end. The ball is then snapped to A7, standing back on the B-40. Immediately after the snap, A82 goes downfield. A7 fakes a punt and (a) throws a forward pass into Team B's end zone, or (b) runs to the B-22. **RULING:** In (a), A82 is an ineligible receiver illegally downfield (five yards, previous spot, repeat the down). In (b), no foul; legal play.

Everyone not on the line must be in the backfield. There is more to this than simply not

being on the line. To be in the backfield (2-32-3) a player must be positioned so that no part of his body penetrates the plane that passes through the waist of the nearest lineman other than the snapper.

This means there is a sort of "no-man's land" (Figure 3-2), - a region between these two vertical planes making it possible (though illegal) for a player to be neither on the line nor in the backfield. It is legal (7-2-3) for one player to be in this forbidden zone - the quarterback. The rule book refers to this as a player with "... his hands in position to receive the ball if it is snapped between the snapper's legs." However, that player does not have to receive the snap. Anyone else in this in-between region when the ball is snapped is neither a back nor a lineman.

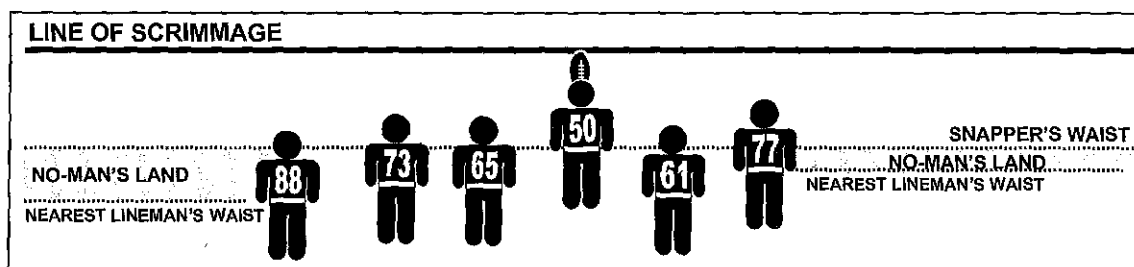


Figure 3-2

The two linemen on either side of the snapper (the "guards") may interlock legs with him (7-2-2). Other linemen must have each foot outside the foot of the player next to him.

In summary, then, the illegal formations are:

- Fewer than five players on the line.
- More than four players in the backfield.
- More than one player in "no-man's land."
- Fewer than five players on the line numbered 50-79, except when in a scrimmage kick formation on fourth down or a try.
- On first, second, or third down in the field goal type of scrimmage kick formation, fewer than four players on the line numbered 50-79.
- Linemen other than the guards and snapper interlocking legs.
- A player is not between the nine-yard marks after ball is ready and before the snap.

These are not fouls until the ball is snapped, which means Team A may legally shift to correct the situation and make the formation legal prior to the snap. Illegal formation fouls carry a five-yard penalty from the previous spot.

Each player must be numbered 1-99 which means both 0 and 00 are not permitted (1-4-3). Players of the same team cannot participate during the same down with identical numbers (7-2-5c). If they notice it, officials should prevent a substitute with an identical number from entering the game.

Additional Examples: 10, 11, 14, 15.

Defensive (Team B) Requirements

Prior to the Snap

There aren't many restrictions on Team B before the snap. Earlier in the discussion of Team A restrictions, we mentioned two "phases" of encroachment restrictions. The first begins when the ball is ready for play - no defensive player may touch the ball, an opponent, or enter the neutral zone to give defensive signals (7-1-5).

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Team B is allowed to otherwise be in or beyond the neutral zone (probably inadvertently) until the second phase begins - when the snapper touches the ball. After that, no player may encroach. Replaced players and incoming substitutes are exempt from this restriction. Replaced players may cross the neutral zone as they head to the sideline and incoming substitutes

may pass through the neutral zone on their way from the team area.

Like offensive encroachment, defensive encroachment is a dead-ball foul with a five-yard penalty.

Here is a summary of the phases of encroachment restrictions for both teams.

Encroachment Restrictions (Players other than the Snapper)

After the Ready	Defensive players may not enter the neutral zone to give signals. Defensive players may not touch the ball or an opponent until the snap ends.
After Snapper Touches Ball	No player may be in the neutral zone for any reason.

Table 3-1

If a personal foul is committed as a player encroaches, both fouls are enforced.

EXAMPLE 3-16: Team A is at the line when B73 jumps into the neutral zone and (a) delivers a blow, on stationary A66, or (b), contacts A66 and then steps back and knocks A66 to the ground. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the ball remains dead when B73 breaks the plane of the neutral zone. B73 has committed two fouls: encroachment and the subsequent personal foul. Both fouls are enforced in the order of occurrence and B73 is disqualified.

The only other restriction on Team B involves "disconcerting acts or words" (7-1-9). Team B is not permitted to call defensive signals that simulate the sound or cadence of, or otherwise interfere with, Team A's snap count. If the quarterback changes the play with an audible, the defense is not permitted to interfere with that either. The defense may use verbal signals, but they must be different than those used by the offense. Team A gets first choice; defenses who use "Hut", "Hike", or "Go" must change signals.

NEW IN 2020: This dead-ball foul carries a five-yard penalty.

EXAMPLE 3-17: As Team A players are taking their positions on the line, B57 imitates the quarterback's cadence as used on previous plays. **RULING:** Not a foul at that time. Once Team A players are set and the quarterback is trying to call the signals, it would be a dead-ball foul if B57 continues the imitated cadence.

EXAMPLE 3-18: B52 yells "hut-hut" as A7 is calling signals. **RULING:** A dead-ball foul for disconcerting acts; a five-yard penalty.

Similarly, Team B cannot commit any act intended to cause a false start by Team A. The defense is allowed to shift to either side or from lineman to linebacker or vice versa. Also, linebackers and defensive backs who run toward the neutral zone attempting to time their blitz with the snap are not in violation.

However, defensive players are not permitted to deliberately feint a charge to provoke Team A linemen into moving. Team B players are prohibited from making quick non-football related movements in an obvious attempt to draw an offensive player into committing a foul.

Examples of violations include: stomping a foot, clapping hands, quickly standing up or moving to a three- or four-point stance or vice versa, quickly bobbing their head or repeatedly and/or abruptly flexing legs or arms.

Consequently, any movement by a Team A player is ignored. Movement by a Team A player is not required for a defensive foul to occur.

EXAMPLE 3-19: On fourth and one from the B-15, all Team A players are set, B61 is in a two-point stance across from A75. While the quarterback is calling signals, B61 (a) claps his hands, (b) stomps his foot, or (c) shifts to a wider position on the line and immediately returns to his original position. **RULING:** A foul in (a) and (b). In (c), legal movement.

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These simple restrictions give Team B wide latitude as to what it may do before the snap. In particular, Team B players may be moving as long as they are behind their side of the neutral zone.

At the Snap

A defensive player is on his line of scrimmage when he is within one yard of his scrimmage line at the snap (2-25-3). This definition is used to determine which players offensive linemen can block in the expanded neutral zone during pass plays (see Chapter 5) and those which can be blocked in the back or below the waist in the free-blocking zone (see Chapter 8).

The rules for Team B are even simpler when the ball is snapped. In addition to all their players being behind the neutral zone, they also must be inbounds.

It is encroachment if the defense touches the ball or the snapper's hands or arms before the snap has ended (7-1-6). The dilemma of whether it is physically possible for a defensive player to touch the snap without encroaching is not an issue. It is clear that act is foul regardless of whether the defensive player's hand broke the plane of the neutral zone before or after the snap began.

EXAMPLE 3-20: As A53 snaps the ball, B72 reaches in and knocks the ball away either by slapping the ball directly or by slapping the snapper's hand or arm. **RULING:** A dead-ball foul for encroachment; five-yard penalty

Additional Examples: 16-19.

LIVE/DEAD BALL

As we mentioned, a ball becomes live when the ball is legally snapped or free kicked and a down is in progress (2-1-2). A **dead ball** is a ball not in play (2-1-1). The ball almost always is dead by rule before an official blows his whistle. The sole exception is an inadvertent whistle which is covered in Chapter 12.

The official blows his whistle to signal that the ball is already dead by rule. Many coaches will instruct their players to "play until the whistle blows," but that is incorrect.

The events which cause a live ball to become dead are found in 4-2-2. It's important to note that no foul causes a live ball to become dead (2-16-4). An official should declare the ball dead when:

- The ball or the ball carrier goes out of bounds;

- The ball carrier's forward progress is stopped;
- Any part of the ball carrier's body other than his hand or foot touches the ground (there is an exception for the holder of a place kick; see the following section);
- The ball carrier's helmet comes completely off;
- A prosthetic limb comes completely off a player who is in possession of the ball;
- A forward pass, legal or illegal, strikes the ground;
- There is a score or touchback;
- A loose ball comes to rest and no one attempts to secure it;
- A loose ball touches or is touched by anything inbounds other than a player, substitute, replaced player, an official, authorized equipment, or the ground;
- A non-scoring kick or a grounded scoring kick breaks the plane of Team R's goal line;
- A scoring kick touches a Team K player in the end zone or has apparently failed after breaking the plane of Team R's goal line;
- A kicking team player catches or recovers any free kick, or a scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone;
- A kicking team player touches a scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone at rest and untouched by Team R;
- A receiving team player catches or recovers a kick after he or a teammate makes a valid or invalid fair catch signal;
- During a try, Team B gains possession or it is otherwise apparent a kick will fail;
- A simultaneous catch or recovery occurs;

Although the rules do not address the situation where an official is in possession of the ball, it is recommended such a ball be declared dead. It should also be noted if a player simulates or fakes putting his knee to the ground, the ball is *not* dead.

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The following example demonstrates.

EXAMPLE 3-21: Team A is in "victory" formation with less than a minute to play. A8 takes the snap and fakes placing his knee on the ground. He then runs for a score. **RULING:** Legal by rule; however, it is recommended the ball be whistled dead as the simulation ends.

Additional Example: 20.

There are several situations where officials may get confused and think the ball is dead. When one of the following scenarios occurs, if a whistle is blown, it would be an inadvertent whistle. Inadvertent whistles are discussed in detail in Chapter 12.

- An interception in the end zone;
- A field goal attempt is blocked;
- A rolling kick is touched by a Team K player, or any other form of first touching;
- A runner breaks his fall by putting his hand on the ground or his knee lands on another player.

Holder Restrictions

A place kick holder, who at the snap has his knee(s) on the ground while there is a teammate in kicking position, must rise before he may advance, hand the ball to another player, kick, or pass (forward or backward). If the holder does any of these things while his knee(s) is on the ground, the ball is immediately dead.

EXAMPLE 3-22: With K11 in kicking position for a field goal, the ball is snapped to holder K22 who has one knee on the ground. Without lifting that knee, K22 (a) hands the ball to K11, or (b) throws a forward pass to eligible K83. **RULING:** The ball is dead as soon as K22 hands or passes the ball.

If the holder rises to catch or recover an errant snap, and immediately returns his knee(s) to the ground and places the ball for a kick or again rises to advance, hand, kick or pass, the ball remains live.

If the holder muffs the snap and rises to secure the ball, the ball is dead if he returns his knee to the ground while holding the ball (4-2-2a Exc Nt; 4.2.2A-C)

EXAMPLE 3-23: At the snap, K12 is in a position to hold for a place kick with one knee on the ground and a teammate in kicking position. The snap is low and bounces along the ground. K12 rises to recover the snap, and immediately returns his knee to the ground and places the ball for the kick. **RULING:** Legal, a holder may now rise to recover an errant snap.

EXAMPLE 3-24: On a field goal attempt with K12 in kicking position, the ball is snapped high to holder K32 who has one knee on the ground. K32 then rises, and (a) immediately returns his knee to the ground, or (b) takes a few steps before returning his knee to the ground. **RULING:** In (a), legal. In (b), the ball is dead when K32 places his knee on the ground.

Additional Examples: 21, 22.

II. Additional Examples

1. Following a penalty and before the ready-for-play, snapper A50 puts his hand on the ball. He then rises and removes his hand from the ball, to speak to the quarterback. **RULING:** No foul, since the snapper is not restricted until the ready.

2. On a try, Team A lines up in a "swinging gate" formation with A87 over the ball. A87 (a) touches the ball, or (b) places his hand six inches above the ball. Team A then shifts and A87 moves 10 yards to his right. **RULING:** A snap infraction in (a), but legal in (b).

3. Team A comes to the line and after the snapper touches the ball, all 11 players clearly pause for at least one second. In making his final adjustment, the snapper looks back between his legs at the quarterback in a shotgun formation, then brings his head forward and without pausing snaps the ball. **RULING:** Legal; as long as the team has set for a second, there is no requirement for the snapper to pause "immediately" before the snap.

4. After the ready is blown following a penalty and after snapper A52 touches the ball, A63 lines up with his head in the neutral zone. **RULING:** A dead-ball foul for encroachment.

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5. After Team A is set, back A24 misses the snap count and prematurely lifts up from his three-point stance. He quickly recognizes his error and resets. **RULING:** A judgment call as to whether or not A24 simulated the start of the play (false start).

6. Snapper A54 comes to the line and places a hand on the ground. Before touching the ball, he rises to tell the tight end to switch to the other side of the formation. **RULING:** Legal, the snapper is not restricted as are the other interior linemen with regard to placing a hand on or near the ground.

7. Team A comes to the line with eight players. End A81 shifts to the backfield leaving (a) A80, or (b) A77, on that end of the line. The new end rises from a three-point stance and shifts to a wider position. **RULING:** A legal shift for either player. Players on the end of the line may shift, regardless of number, as long as they do not simulate action at the snap.

8. Team A comes to the line with (a) split end A89, or (b) tackle A77, on the line and flanker A46 split out wider on the line covering-up either player. All team members go down in a three-point stance except A89 or A77 and A46. After all players are set for one second, A89 or A77, although still covered, slowly moves off the line and into the backfield and are set for one second before the snap. **RULING:** In either case it is a legal shift. An interior lineman may shift as long as the movement is not abrupt and the lineman has not put a hand on or near the ground.

9. After the ball is ready for play, Team A breaks its huddle and 10 players stop in their positions to await the snap. A25 never stops, but is moving parallel to his goal line when the ball is snapped. **RULING:** Illegal shift. Breaking the huddle is a shift, and all 11 players must come to a complete stop for a full second before the snap or before any player goes in motion. This is a five-yard penalty from the previous spot.

10. A37 is lined up as a slot in the gap between the right tackle and A89, the widest man on the line of scrimmage. While in a three-point stance, A37 notices he is in "no-man's-land," neither on the line nor in the backfield. He moves back to get into the backfield and re-sets. **RULING:** Legal play. A37 is not an interior lineman and is thus not restricted.

11. Same alignment as in Example 10. Before the snap, A89 moves into the backfield, and then A37

slowly moves forward and sets up on the line of scrimmage. All 11 players are motionless for one second preceding the snap. **RULING:** This is a legal shift which leaves Team A in a legal formation at the snap.

12. Fourth and four on the K-35. K comes to the line in a scrimmage formation. After calling a few signals, A7 says "shift." All eleven players then make a movement. Some players move to a new position for a scrimmage kick formation, while four interior linemen remain in place and move from a hands-on-thighs position to an upright position and finally to a three-point stance. **RULING:** This is a false start if it is judged to be designed to cause Team B to encroach. There likely was no other purpose in the movement of the interior linemen. In judging the offensive team's intent, the officials should consider whether players move to a new position, the speed and abruptness of movement, down and distance and if any player pretends to have the ball or otherwise simulates an act associated with the start of a play.

13. Quarterback A7 takes a slow step backward as he takes the snap. **RULING:** Legal unless a teammate is in motion at the snap.

14. At the snap, Team A's formation is legal except A25, lined up outside the tight end, is not on the line, but his head breaks the vertical plane through the waist of the tight end. **RULING:** Illegal formation; a five-yard penalty from the previous spot.

15. First and 10 on the A-26. Team A is in a formation with A21 and A33 side-by-side, 10 yards behind the line. Neither is directly behind the snapper. At the snap, B53 charges the snapper directly and pushes him backward. A21 throws an incomplete pass. **RULING:** Foul on B53 for roughing the snapper. Team A's formation was a scrimmage kick formation because a player 10 yards behind the line was in position to receive a long snap. If accepted, the 15-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot and includes an automatic first down. It will be Team A's ball, first and 10 at the A-41.

16. First and 10 on the B-10. After the ready, Team B's captain yells for an 11th player and B22 enters the field. B22 runs through Team A's formation and crosses the neutral zone to get to his position before the ball is snapped. **RULING:** Legal, it is not encroachment for a substitute to cross through the neutral zone.

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17. Snapper A58 places both hands on the ball before the ball is ready for play. B96 then steps into the neutral zone, but does not contact the ball or an opponent. **RULING:** Legal, encroachment restrictions are not in effect before the ready.

18. After the ready-for-play and after the snapper has touched the ball, B79, directly opposite A65, jumps into the neutral zone and gets back without making contact. A65 either (a) immediately reacts, or (b) does not react. **RULING:** In both cases, a dead-ball foul on B79 for encroachment. In (a), the "false start" occurred after the ball was dead.

19. On third and 10 from the A-40, all Team A players are set. While quarterback A11 is calling signals, defensive back B32, starting from a position eight yards behind his line of scrimmage, runs toward the neutral zone. B32 stops directly in front of tackle A74 but does not enter the neutral zone. In response to B32's charge, A74 (a) does not move, or (b) flinches. **RULING:** No foul in (a). In (b), A74 is guilty of a dead-ball foul for false start.

COMMENT: If B32 repeatedly fakes a charge, or if he stops at the line and feints a charge from a

stationary position, he is charged with a disconcerting act and A74 is not guilty of a false start.

20. A7 throws a forward pass which strikes an official standing inbounds. The ball rebounds into the air and is caught by (a) A88, or (b) B26. **RULING:** The ball remains live; nothing has occurred to cause the ball to become dead.

21. With K13 in position to kick, holder K24 (a) fumbles the ball as he places it and he recovers with his knee still on the ground and then rises and runs, or (b) muffs the snap; the ball rolls away and K24 rises to recover and then returns to his knees to place the ball. **RULING:** In (a), legal play. In (b), the ball becomes dead when K24 touches his knee to the ground after rising.

22. While A8 is holding the ball for a place kick (a) B56 tackles him, (b) B72 grabs the ball from A8's hands, or (c) B81 bats the ball. **RULING:** In (a), the ball is dead if A8 maintains possession. Otherwise, the ball is loose and may be recovered by either team. In (b) and (c), it is a fumble and the ball remains live.

III. Review Test (True or False)

1. A ball is live only during a down.
2. A dead ball can only become live by legal snap or free kick.
3. A loose ball is not in possession of either team.
4. If touching the ball causes it to become dead, securing possession of the ball has no significance.
5. A player loses possession by either a fumble or a muff.
6. The lines of scrimmage and the neutral zone are established when the ball is ready for play.
7. The neutral zone is established after the snapper has made final adjustment of the ball.
8. The expanded neutral zone may extend partially into the end zone.
9. After a snap, the ball remains live until the down ends.
10. A legal snap must be a quick and continuous backward motion and must be made between the snapper's legs.
11. The snapper may not have his free hand on the ground in advance of the ball.
12. The snapper may lift the ball for lateral rotation, but may not rotate the ball end for end or change the location of the ball.
13. It is legal for the snapper to adjust the ball so the long axis is parallel to the scrimmage line.
14. Following adjustment, the snapper may not lift or move the ball other than in a legal snap.
15. After the ready, once the snapper touches the ball, he may remove both hands from the ball.
16. If the snapper makes an illegal snap and B66 recovers, the ball belongs to Team B.
17. In a snap, the ball must leave the hand(s) of the snapper and touch a backfield player or the ground before it touches a Team A lineman.
18. It is encroachment if the snapper assumes his position over the ball with his head in the neutral zone.
19. Encroachment may be a live-ball foul.
20. It is encroachment when B81 breaks the plane of the neutral zone after the ready and just after the snapper has touched the ball.

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21. It is encroachment when after the ball is ready for play, A76 assumes a three-point stance with his head in the neutral zone and the snapper has his hands on the ball.
22. Encroachment cannot occur after the ready-for-play if Team A linemen are still in the huddle even though the snapper has his hands on the ball.
23. Defensive players are restricted from contacting the ball or the snapper's hand(s) or arm(s) until the snapper has released the ball.
24. After the ball is ready-for-play, each offensive player must momentarily be within 15 yards of the ball before the snap.
25. After the ball is ready for play, each player of Team A who participated in the previous down and each substitute for Team A must have been, momentarily, between the nine-yard marks before the snap.
26. A false start is always a dead-ball foul.
27. When a false start occurs just prior to the snap, the official shall sound his whistle immediately.
28. Any movement by A7 that simulates action at the snap is a false start.
29. A shift designed to cause the defense to encroach is a false start.
30. An interior lineman in a four-point stance may lift one hand as long as he is set for one second prior to the snap.
31. After Team A's five interior linemen have assumed a position on their line with their hand(s) on or near the ground, they may not lift or move their hand(s) unless called off the line to receive new signals.
32. If B64's movement on his line causes offensive linemen to move, it is a false start on B64.
33. Shifting to punt formation is always illegal if Team B encroaches.
34. After leaving the huddle, all members of Team A must stop and be motionless as a unit for at least one second prior to the snap.
35. There cannot be an illegal shift unless the ball is snapped.
36. If after Team A is set for one second, A26 goes in motion and during this motion end A82 drops from hands on knees to a three-point stance, only A82 has to set for one second prior to the snap.
37. A quarterback who has placed his hands under the snapper may not shift.
38. One of the requirements for an offensive player being on his line of scrimmage is that he must face Team B's goal line.
39. One of the requirements for being on the offensive line is that the lineman's head or foot must break an imaginary plane drawn parallel to the line of scrimmage through the waist of the snapper when the ball is snapped.
40. The offensive linemen on each side of the snapper may lock legs with the snapper.
41. The full exception to the numbering requirement is permitted on any down if either type of scrimmage-kick formation is used.
42. Unless they are in a scrimmage-kick formation, the failure of Team A to have at least five players on the line numbered 50 to 79 is a foul at the snap.
43. When the numbering exception is in effect and a pass is thrown from a scrimmage kick formation, it is an illegal forward pass.
44. Team B players may be anywhere on or behind their line of scrimmage.
45. A back may wear a jersey numbered 50 through 79.
46. If observed, an entering substitute with a number identical to a teammate who is on the field should not be permitted to enter the game.
47. If a back penetrates the vertical plane through the waistline of his nearest teammate who is on the line, he must be in position to receive the ball if it is snapped between the snapper's legs and he must receive the snap.
48. The player in motion at the snap is allowed to be moving parallel to the line of scrimmage.
49. Illegal motion is a foul at the snap.
50. An attempt by B to interfere with A's signals prior to the snap is a live-ball foul.
51. The down is ended when the runner allows any part of his person, other than hand or foot, to touch the ground.
52. A loose ball is out of bounds if it touches anything, including a player who is out of bounds.
53. A foul automatically causes the ball to become dead.
54. When a backward pass strikes the ground, the ball becomes dead.
55. If at the snap a teammate is not in position to kick, the ball becomes dead if the holder catches the snap while he has a knee(s) on the ground.

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56. A place kick holder must rise and lift his knee off the ground in order to throw a backward pass.
57. The ball becomes dead if place kick holder K21 muffs the snap and he recovers with his knees off the ground and he then touches his knee(s) to the ground while in possession of the ball.
58. When an illegal forward pass strikes the ground it becomes dead.
59. When any kick which cannot score breaks Team R's goal line plane, the ball becomes dead and it is a touchback.
60. The ball becomes dead when any loose ball is simultaneously caught or recovered by opponents.
61. A loose ball becomes dead when it touches anything inbounds other than a player, a substitute, a replaced player, an official, authorized equipment or the ground.
62. When Team R muffs a scrimmage kick beyond the line and Team K recovers there, the ball remains live and Team K may advance.
63. If any Team K player recovers or catches a free kick, the ball becomes dead.
64. If a kick try is blocked and the ball is recovered behind the neutral zone, the ball may be advanced by K for a score.
65. The ball becomes dead and the down is ended when a prosthetic limb comes completely off the runner.

Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------------------------|-----|---|-------------------|
| 1. | T | 2-1-2 | 34. | T | 7-2-6 |
| 2. | T | 2-1-2 | 35. | T | 7-2-6 |
| 3. | F | 2-34-2 | 36. | F | 7-2-6 |
| 4. | T | Fund III-4 | 37. | F | 7-2-6 |
| 5. | F | 2-18, 2-27 | 38. | T | 2-25-2, 2-32-9 |
| 6. | T | 2-25-1 | 39. | T | 2-32-9 |
| 7. | F | 2-28-1 | 40. | T | 7-2-2 |
| 8. | F | 2-28-2 | 41. | F | 7-2-5b Exc 1 |
| 9. | T | 4-1-5 | 42. | T | 7-2-5b Pen |
| 10. | F | 2-40-2 | 43. | F | 7-2-5b Exc, 7-5-2 |
| 11. | T | 7-1-1 | 44. | T | 7-2-5d |
| 12. | T | 7-1-2 | 45. | T | 7-2-5c |
| 13. | F | 7-1-2 | 46. | T | 1-4-3, 7-2-5c |
| 14. | T | 7-1-2 | 47. | F | 7-2-3 |
| 15. | F | 7-1-3a | 48. | T | 7-2-7 |
| 16. | F | 7-1-4 | 49. | T | 7-2-7 Pen |
| 17. | T | 7-2-4 | 50. | F | 7-1-9 |
| 18. | F | 7-1-1 | 51. | T | 4-2-2a |
| 19. | F | 2-8, 6-1-3 Pen, 7-1-1, 7-1-5, 7-1-6 | 52. | T | 2-29-3 |
| 20. | T | 7-1-6 | 53. | F | 2-16-4, 4-2-2 |
| 21. | T | 7-1-6a | 54. | F | 2-31-6, 7-4-3 |
| 22. | F | 7-1-6 | 55. | T | 4-2-2a Exc |
| 23. | T | 7-1-6c | 56. | T | 4-2-2a Exc 1 |
| 24. | F | 7-2-1 | 57. | T | 4-2-2a Note |
| 25. | T | 7-2-1 | 58. | T | 4-2-2c |
| 26. | T | 7-1-7 Pen | 59. | T | 4-2-2d, 8-5-3a1 |
| 27. | T | 4-2-1, 7-1-7 Pen | 60. | T | 4-2-2e1 |
| 28. | T | 7-1-7a | 61. | T | 4-2-2e3 |
| 29. | T | 7-1-7b | 62. | F | 4-2-2f |
| 30. | F | 7-1-7c | 63. | T | 4-2-2f |
| 31. | F | 7-1-7c | 64. | F | 4-2-2i |
| 32. | F | 7-1-7c | 65. | T | 4-2-2L |
| 33. | F | 7-1-7 | | | |

CHAPTER 4

THE RUNNING GAME AND FORWARD PROGRESS

I. The Rules in Depth

THE RUNNING GAME

The running game consumes a significant portion of any football game. It includes the usual runs from scrimmage as well as kick and interception returns and runs following a completed pass. Handoffs and fumbles are also part of the running game.

The Runner

The runner is a special player. Some rules apply only to the runner. A **runner** is a player who is in possession, or is simulating possession of, a live ball (2-32-13). A quarterback, standing in the pocket with the ball, is a runner. Also, a running back who pretends to receive a handoff, may be contacted as if he had the ball. Consequently, the quarterback who hands the ball to a teammate can be contacted as if he still had the ball, provided there is a question as to whether or not he still has the ball. The better the deception, the greater benefit of doubt the officials will grant the defense. Additionally, a pass receiver who touches the ball may be contacted as if he had obtained possession. There are times when the defense cannot ascertain actual control before initiating contact.

Tackling is the primary method the defense uses to stop the runner. A defensive player may use his hands, arms, legs or body to bring a runner to the ground or hold him in order to stop his forward progress (2-42). Specifically, the defense may without restriction block the runner below the waist or from the rear.

REMEMBER FROM 2019: It is illegal to trip the runner (9-4-3o).

EXAMPLE 4-1: B25 tackles runner A31 by (a) wrapping his arms around A31's waist, (b) blocking him in front and below the waist, (c) tripping him, or (d) falling across the back of A31's legs. **RULING:** All are legal tackles except (c) (2.42.1).

Tackling is not, however, a license for the defense to do whatever they want to the runner. There are specific rules designed to protect the runner.

It is a foul for a player to grab a runner by the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and pull him down.

REMEMBER FROM 2019: It is also a foul if the grip is on the nameplate area directly below the back collar (9-4-3k).

A runner who is horse-collared need not have the status of a runner when he is pulled down for the foul to be called (9-4-3k). For example, if a runner steps out of bounds or if the ball breaks the goal line, resulting in a dead ball, the defense can still be guilty of a horse collar tackle. A horse collar tackle that begins while the ball is live is always enforced as a live-ball foul.

In addition to the horse collar tackle and tripping, face tackling, spearing, twisting or pulling the face mask, delivering a blow and unnecessary roughness are all prohibited acts and are penalized as live-ball personal fouls with 15-yard penalties.

Also, no player can pile on, fall on or throw his body on the runner or another opponent after the ball becomes dead, and no opponent can block or tackle the runner when he is clearly out of bounds.

Using excessive force to bring down the runner is also prohibited (9-4-3g). Examples include body slams and neck-wrenching tackles.

Personal fouls are discussed further in Chapter 8.

EXAMPLE 4-2: A34 runs around the right end for a five-yard gain. B45 grabs A34 by the back collar of the shoulder pads. B45 then pulls A34 to the ground (a) before A34 can take any additional steps, or (b) after A34 takes two steps. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the horse collar tackle is a personal foul because A34 was pulled to the ground after his collar was grabbed. The pull down does not have to be immediate.

The runner may lower his head when contacted to gain yardage, but he cannot use his head to butt, ram or punish an opponent. The illegal helmet

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contact rules apply equally to all players (2-20-1, 9.4.3D).

The runner may also ward off would-be tacklers, but he cannot kick them or otherwise deliver a blow. The runner (and the runner only) may stiff arm and use a hand on an opponent's helmet or face mask (2-3-4a, 9-2-1), but just like any other player, he cannot grasp or pull the tackler's face mask (9-4-3h). The hand must be open and in advance of the elbow. Also, the runner cannot butt or ram opponents using his helmet as a weapon (9-4-3i).

If the *ball carrier's* helmet or a prosthetic limb comes completely off, the ball is immediately dead (4-2-2k&L). Please note the word "ball carrier" meaning a player in possession of the ball as distinguished from a "runner" which also includes a player simulating possession of the ball. This rule applies only to a player who actually has the ball.

EXAMPLE 4-3: A24 runs to the B-45 where B52 in attempting to make the tackle (a) unsnaps A24's chin strap, or (b) grasps A24's face mask and pulls his helmet off. **RULING:** In (a), play continues; however, B52 is penalized for grabbing A24's chin strap (15-yard face mask penalty). In (b), the ball becomes dead at the spot A24's helmet came completely off. B52's face mask foul carries a 15-yard penalty.

A runner is out of bounds when any part of his person or the ball in his possession touches anything, other than another player or official, who is on or outside a sideline or end line (2-29-1, 2-29-2).

Additional Examples: 1-4.

Helping the Runner

Now, let's look at the runner from the offense's perspective. The runner cannot be assisted by a teammate. A teammate may not push, pull or lift the runner to assist his forward progress (9-1). Helping the runner carries a five-yard penalty. Also, a runner may not grasp a teammate (9-2-2). That is considered illegal use of hands which carries a 10-yard penalty.

EXAMPLE 4-4: First and 10 on the A-20. A7 uses his left hand to hand the ball to A22 and then uses his right hand on A22's back to shove him forward. **RULING:** A foul for helping the runner; a five-yard penalty.

The rule requires that the assistance be responsible for the runner's forward progress; that means there has to be an advantage that results from the act in question. Merely contacting the

runner's back or bumping him while not adding to his momentum is not a foul. Also, shoving a runner who did not need assistance is not a foul – forward progress is not aided in those cases. These are opportunities for preventive officiating.

It is not a foul if a player rams the back of a cluster of players without directly contacting the runner. The contact must be made directly with the runner. "Ramming the pile" is not a foul and is unlikely to impact the play.

Also, be aware that if an offensive player thinks the runner needs assistance, there is a good probability the runner's forward progress has been stopped and the play ended before the "assistance." This would be especially true in cases where the runner is lifted from a non-standing position. A forward progress stop should be the first choice if it is supported by the facts.

Look for situations where there is prolonged contact between a runner and his teammate. Grasping, pulling and lifting a live runner is likely to result in a foul. Pushing or charging into a runner is not likely to have a material effect.

Penalty Enforcement

Primarily for purposes of penalty enforcement, the running game may include the action while the ball is loose from a fumble, backward pass, or illegal forward pass. By definition (2-33-2), a **running play** comprises all live-ball action that is not part of a loose-ball play. Put another way, if the ball is in player possession and it is not followed by a loose-ball play, or if it is loose beyond the line during a fumble, a backward pass, or an illegal forward pass, then we have a running play.

The **run** is the part of the running play when a player has possession of the ball. This term is not specifically defined, but we can derive its definition from what follows. The **spot where the run ends** (2-41-9), or simply "the end of the run," is the yard line where the ball becomes dead, or where a player loses possession on a fumble, backward pass or illegal forward pass, or where he makes an illegal scrimmage kick while beyond the neutral zone. Enforcement of penalties for fouls that occur during running plays is discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

Batting

A ball in player possession may be batted in any direction by either team, except a teammate of the runner may not bat it forward (9-7-4).

A fumble in flight can be batted in any direction by any player (9-7-2).

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Handoffs

7-3-1 allows for a player to hand the ball backward at any time. Note **handing** the ball (2-19-1) involves two teammates who simultaneously touch the ball. In other words, it is never in-flight "between" the two players. If so, it would be a pass. Also, there is no handing of the ball if the transfer from one player to another is not successful – that is a fumble.

Please note that a snap involves "handing" the ball backward. However, if the snap is mishandled by the quarterback, it is not a fumble because no player has possession of a live ball – the ball does not become live until it leaves the snapper's hands. Thus, the ball is muffed by the quarterback and is treated as a backward pass.

By 7-3-2, a player may hand the ball forward only if he and his teammate are *both* in or behind the neutral zone. If either player is beyond the neutral zone, or if a forward handoff is made after a change of possession, it is a foul (7-3-3). The penalty is five yards enforced under the all-but-one principle. It also carries a loss of down if Team A commits the foul during a scrimmage down before team possession changes.

EXAMPLE 4-5: B45 is returning a punt. As he is about to be tackled, B45 attempts to hand the ball to B23 who is in front of him, but B23 muffs the ball which falls to the ground and rolls forward and out of bounds. **RULING:** No foul, because the attempted forward handoff failed. This is a fumble by B45; the ball belongs to Team B at the out-of-bounds spot.

If the player who receives a forward handoff is an interior lineman, then he must satisfy some very specific restrictions (7-3-2a). He must leave the line in such a way that he pivots 180 degrees, moves both feet so that he faces his own end line, and is at least one yard behind his scrimmage line when he receives the ball. If any of these conditions are not met, the foul is for illegal handing. This also applies to an end who is the snapper or adjacent to the snapper (7-3-2b).

Teams with a "guard around" play in their repertoire were able to circumvent these restrictions by having the quarterback deliberately place the ball on the ground at the lineman's feet. This act is termed a "planned loose ball." Since the ball was not handed to him, the lineman did not need to turn, face his own goal line, etc. This play is sometimes referred to as the "fumblerooski."

The "fumblerooski" is an illegal play if the ball is picked up by a lineman. Team A linemen may not advance a planned loose ball in the vicinity of the snapper. It is a live-ball foul and the penalty is five yards enforced under the all-but-one principle (7-2-8).

EXAMPLE 4-6: Second and five on the A-35. A8 takes the snap and places the ball on the ground behind the line. Subsequently, (a) left tackle A73, or (b) back A42, scoops up the ball and gains 20 yards. **RULING:** In (a), a foul for advancing a planned loose ball. It is legal in (b); a non-lineman may advance a planned loose ball.

Additional Examples: 5-7.

Fumbles

When a ball is fumbled, it becomes a loose ball and remains as such until a player secures possession or it becomes dead by rule (2-1-3). It can be advanced by any player of either team.

EXAMPLE 4-7: Fourth down and five at the B-20. After taking a handoff, A43 gains two yards, fumbles, and A76 recovers the ball at the B-14 and advances it to the B-12. **RULING:** Legal play, First and 10 for Team A at the B-12.

A fumble results in the loss of player possession (2-18, 2-34-1), but it remains in possession of the team whose player fumbled it. A live ball is always in possession of a team (2-34-2).

The word "fumble" as used in football has a very specific meaning, more restricted than when it is used by writers and sportscasters describing the action. In particular, it is important to distinguish a fumble from a backward pass (see Chapter 5) and from a muff. The definition given in 2-18 makes it clear a player must first have possession of the ball before he can **fumble**.

A fumble may occur during an unsuccessful handoff, when a runner is jarred by a tackle, or if an opponent bats the ball out of a runner's grasp. However, if a receiver mishandles a kick, never gaining possession of it, then he has muffed the ball and its status is still a kick.

Except in very rare circumstances, the ground cannot cause a fumble. Almost always, when a ball in possession of a runner contacts the ground, the runner is already down by rule (see *Forward Progress* section). If a runner purposefully "loses" the ball before being downed, it is not a fumble but

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instead is a forward or backward pass (depending on the initial direction of the pass).

A **muff** (2-27) is the touching of a loose ball by a player in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession. The play-by-play announcer will tell us "he fumbled the kick." Not so. In fact, it is impossible to fumble a kick; for if the player fumbles the ball, he does so only after gaining possession, in which case the kick has ended.

All this would not matter much except the rules are quite different for fumbles and kicks. It is critical to keep this distinction in mind.

The rules are also quite specific about what can happen to the ball once a player has fumbled. If another player gets the ball, he either catches or recovers it. To catch or recover a fumble (2-4-1 and 2-36-1), a player must secure possession of the ball and first return to the ground inbounds. If he does this before the ball strikes the ground, he has *caught* the fumble. If he does this after the ball has hit the ground, he has *recovered* the fumble. When a player catches an opponent's fumble, he has *intercepted* it.

Note recovering the ball does not necessarily mean falling on it. If a fumble bounces off the ground and into the hands of an inbounds player, he has recovered the fumble. This is the case whether the fumble was his, a teammate's, or an opponent's.

The rules regarding the recovery of a fumble by an airborne player who is contacted by an opponent are the same as those governing a catch as discussed in Chapter 5.

Whenever either team catches, intercepts or recovers a fumble, the ball remains live and may be advanced (7-4-2).

If Team A fumbles before a change of team possession on fourth down or on a try, it is the same as a fumble on any other play, except the ball is dead if Team B recovers during a try (or in overtime).

Additional Examples: 8, 9.

Fumble Out of Bounds

A fumble is out of bounds (2-29-3) when it touches the sideline or the ground outside the sideline, or if it touches anything that is out of bounds, including a player or an official. In turn, a player is out of bounds if he is touching the sideline or anything other than another player or an official on or outside the sideline. The pylon at the intersection of the goal line and the sideline is out of bounds in the end zone, so a fumble that touches a pylon is deemed to have gone into the end zone and then out of bounds. (Purists will note

the ball can touch the pylon without ever having gone in the end zone.)

When a fumble goes out of bounds between the goal lines, it belongs to the fumbling team. The remaining question is - where is the ball next put into play? Even though the fumbling team may gain an advantage if it fumbles the ball out of bounds in some situations, the governing philosophy is simplicity of the rules. With this in mind: If the ball goes out of bounds, it belongs to the fumbling team at the out-of-bounds spot and is put in play at the inbounds spot (4-3-1). A fumble is no different from a backward pass in this regard as we shall see in the next chapter. Example 4-8 illustrates a critical situation.

EXAMPLE 4-8: Fourth and five at the B-22. The ball carrier sweeps to his left, gains three yards to the B-19, and fumbles as he is tackled. The ball rolls out of bounds at the B-16. **RULING:** First and 10 for Team A at the B-16. Had there not been a fumble, the play would have ended short of the line-to-gain.

When the ball is fumbled and goes out of bounds, the clock will start on the snap (3-4-3a). The clock is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

EXAMPLE 4-9: Near the sideline the ball carrier is hit and fumbles. The ball goes forward and out of bounds. The ball carrier is (a) A23 who gained two yards before fumbling on a third-and-seven play, (b) R37 who is returning a kickoff, (c) A45 who was stopped short of the line-to-gain on fourth and three, (d) A89 who is returning a ball fumbled by B29 on the return of a pass interception, or (e) K47 who recovered a fumble by R21 on his return of a scrimmage kick. **RULING:** In all cases, the clock starts on the snap.

Fumbles in the end zone which go out of bounds merit particular attention. Suppose Team A is backed up against its own goal line. A runner carries the ball into his end zone and he fumbles the ball which rolls into the field of play and then out of bounds. This is not a *safety*. This play is treated the same as any other fumble out of bounds between the goal lines; the ball belongs to Team A at the out-of-bounds spot.

When the offensive team fumbles and the ball goes out of bounds from an end zone, the ball belongs to the team defending that goal and it is a touchback or safety depending on which team provided the force (7-4-4).

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When the offensive team fumbles in the field of play and forces the ball into and out of bounds from the opponent's end zone, it is a touchback (8-5-3c). The ball belongs to the defensive team at their 20 yard line.

When the offensive team fumbles in the field of play and forces the ball into and out of bounds from their own end zone, it is a safety. Safeties and touchbacks are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

EXAMPLE 4-10: R45 is returning a kickoff. He is hit from behind at the K-5 and fumbles the ball into Team K's end zone. The ball (a) is recovered in the end zone by R21, (b) is recovered in the end zone and downed there by K63, (c) strikes the ground beyond the end line. **RULING:** In (a), a touchdown. In (b) and (c), a touchback, it will be first and 10 for Team K at the K-20.

Additional Examples: 10, 11.

Momentum Exception

This rule (8-5-2a Exc) allows for the possibility a defender might intercept or recover a fumble inside his five yard line and his momentum carries him into his own end zone. Without this special rule, such a play would result in a safety, since the player is responsible for carrying the ball into his own end zone.

EXAMPLE 4-11: Third and goal at the B-6. A22 is hit and fumbles at the B-5. The ball is (a) caught, or (b) recovered by B16 at the B-3, and his momentum carries him into the end zone where he is downed. **RULING:** In both cases, Team B's ball first and 10 at the B-3. The momentum exception applies.

Note the rule stipulates the ball either becomes dead in the defensive team's possession in the end zone, or is fumbled out of bounds from the end zone (without going back into the field of play). In each of these cases, the defensive team will next put the ball in play at the spot where possession was obtained. The momentum exception is discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

EXAMPLE 4-12: Second and eight at the A-4. A21 takes a handoff and is at his the A-3 when he is hit and fumbles. The ball (a) hits the ground and bounces up, or (b) pops up into the air. It is caught or recovered by A42 at the A-2. A42's momentum takes him into the end zone, where he is tackled. **RULING:** Since Team A is still the offensive team, the momentum exception does not apply. Team B scores a safety.

FORWARD PROGRESS

Forward progress is a definition that must be applied on virtually every play. Rule 2-15-1 says it is the end of advancement of the ball towards the opponent's goal. Barring an inadvertent whistle or the runner's helmet or prosthetic limb coming off, the runner's advancement can end four ways:

- He is down by rule;
- His forward progress is stopped;
- He steps out of bounds; or
- He loses possession either by handing, passing, or kicking the ball (voluntary), or by fumbling (involuntary).

A runner is down by rule when any part of his body other than a hand or foot touches the ground and his forward progress is marked at the ball's foremost point when that occurs. The ankle or wrist are considered part of the foot or hand, respectively and do not make a runner down.

A runner is not down if any part of his body touches another player (teammate or opponent) who is lying on the ground.

Forward progress determines the dead-ball spot. The exact spot is the foremost point of the ball when it becomes dead by rule (2-41-3). This doesn't apply if part of the ball is in Team A's end zone and in Team A's possession, then it's a safety (see Chapter 9).

Additional Examples: 12-15.

Inbounds Plays

Although running plays are easier to deal with than passing plays, difficulties arise if you don't have a consistent methodology for determining the forward progress spot.

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EXAMPLE 4-13: First and 10 on the A-20. A31 takes a handoff and (a) is sent flying by a shoestring tackle; he dives forward and his right shoulder is first to touch the ground at the A-27; (b) is grabbed by the knees which touch the ground at the A-25 while the rest of his body is nearly upright, he then thrusts the ball forward and it contacts the ground at the A-26; or (c) is stopped upright at the A-23 by B27 and B31. **RULING:** In (a), the ball is spotted where it was (slightly behind the A-27, when A31's shoulder touched the ground. In (b), the dead-ball spot is the A-25 which is where the ball was located when A31's knees touched the ground. The thrust to the A-26 was with a dead ball. In (c), although A31 was never "downed," his forward progress was stopped at the A-23.

When the runner gets "lost" in a cluster of linemen in the middle of the field, it can be difficult to determine the exact forward progress spot. When the runner's voluntary movement is stopped, the whistle should be blown. Remember on some occasions, defenders will relax when they hear the whistle while the runner fights on, giving the appearance of a premature whistle.

EXAMPLE 4-14: A42 plunges into the pack at the A-35 and is contacted by several Team B players. A42 is (a) carried back and dumped at the A-31, or (b) pushed back to the A-32 where he breaks free and continues to run, finally tackled to the ground at the A-33. **RULING:** In (a), A42's voluntary movement was stopped at the A-35 which is the dead-ball spot. In (b), since A42 broke free and continued voluntary movement, his forward progress is where the ball was located when he contacted the ground - the A-33.

Voluntary movement is a key concept here. If a runner is contacted and loses ground, his forward progress is where the contact was initiated. The runner should not be penalized for losing ground, even if there is separation between the runner and defender, unless the runner voluntarily retreats from the defender.

EXAMPLE 4-15: A33 is forcibly contacted by B51 at the A-40 and loses ground to the A-37. He attempts to move forward and is again hit by B51 at the A-37, where he staggers back and falls at the A-35. During the play, B51 lost contact with A33 after each hit. **RULING:** The forward progress spot is the A-40. A33 did not voluntarily retreat, and his voluntary movement was stopped at the A-40.

When the quarterback is sacked, there is often a substantial difference between the spot where the quarterback is contacted and where he goes to the ground.

EXAMPLE 4-16: Third and 15 on the A-35. A7 drops back to pass to the A-28; he (a) decides to run and just as he takes a step forward to the A-29, or (b) while he is stationary, is contacted by B66 who firmly grasps him and without being unnecessarily rough, swings him around. A7 comes to the ground at the A-23. **RULING:** In either case, A7 is given forward progress at the spot he was contacted by B66. In (a), the dead-ball spot is the A-29 and in (b) the A-28.

Sideline Plays

If the runner steps out of bounds, the forward progress spot is the foremost point of the ball when the runner touches the ground out of bounds. However, if the ball carrier's outside foot is just inside the sideline and his running stride next places his inside foot out-of-bounds, the forward progress spot is where the ball crosses the sideline.

For tackles near the sideline, determining the forward progress spot can be challenging. If the runner's forward progress is stopped in the field of play, even if he is subsequently thrown out of bounds, the clock is *not stopped*, but if he went out of bounds before his forward progress was stopped, the clock is *stopped*.

EXAMPLE 4-17: Third and six on the A-30. Runner A38 sweeps around left end to the sideline. B43 attempts the tackle and he (a) shoves A38 from behind so A38 steps out of bounds at the A-46 while moving forward, (b) blocks A38's path and contacts him at the A-45 knocking him laterally out of bounds at the A-45, or (c) blocks A38's path and contacts him at the A-42, knocking him backward and out of bounds at the A-41. **RULING:** In (a), A38's forward progress was not stopped in the field of play and the dead-ball spot is where the ball was located when A38 stepped out of bounds - the A-46; the clock is stopped. In (b) and (c), A38's forward progress was stopped in the field of play. In (b) the ball is spotted at the A-45; or in (c) at the A-42. The clock continues to run unless there is another reason which would cause the clock to stop.

Another difficult spot to determine is when the runner is airborne as he crosses the sideline. Forward progress is where the forward most part

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of the ball crosses the plane of the sideline, not where the ball is when the runner first touches out of bounds.

EXAMPLE 4-18: Third and three on the A-39. A36 sprints around the right end and dives for a first down near the sideline. A36's last step inbounds is at the A-40 and while airborne, he stretches the ball and lands prone out of bounds. When the side of his body contacts the ground, the ball is at the A-44. **RULING:** The covering official must decide where the ball was when it crossed the plane of the sideline. If it crossed beyond the A-42, Team A will be awarded a new series. In making this judgment, the official should note whether the runner was carrying the ball in his outside or inside arm and how close to the sideline the dive began.

Goal Line Plays

The spot becomes extremely critical when a touchdown is at stake.

EXAMPLE 4-19: Fourth and goal on the B-6. A39 tries the left side and (a) with his feet still inbounds, extends the ball over the sideline and breaks the plane of the goal line extended. He is then knocked out of bounds by B75 before any part of his body crosses the goal line, or (b) he dives and while airborne, the ball breaks the plane of the sideline and then the goal line extended (but not the goal line). No part of A39's body touches inbounds after the dive. **RULING:** In (a), touchdown. In (b), it is not a touchdown; A39 is given forward progress where the official judges the ball crossed the plane of the sideline.

Additional Examples: 16, 17.

Let's summarize how the forward progress spot is determined:

- When the contact pushes the runner forward, the spot is the forward most point of the ball.
- When the contact pushes the runner backward when he was running forward, the spot is the forward most point of the ball when the opponent makes contact with the runner.
- When the contact pushes the runner backward when he was running backward, the spot is the forward most point of the ball where the official judges the runner's voluntary movement was stopped by the opponent. The runner is not necessarily entitled to his forward most spot.
- When the runner is airborne (with or without contact) as he crosses the sideline, the spot is the forward most point of the ball where the official judges the ball crossed the sideline, not where the ball is when the runner first touches out of bounds.

Forward progress for an airborne receiver is discussed in Chapter 5. The following table may help you visualize forward progress for a runner.

Runner's Forward Progress

Runner's Direction	Direction Contact Pushes Runner	Forward Progress
Forward	Forward	Forward most spot
	Backward/Laterally	Point of contact
Backward	Forward	Forward most spot
	Backward/Laterally	Where voluntary movement is stopped
Forward, Airborne & Out of Bounds	Forward	Where the ball crosses the plane of the sideline
	Backward/Laterally	Point of contact

Table 4-1

Snap Location

Once the forward progress spot is determined, the ball must be properly placed at that spot for the next play. If there are no fouls and ball becomes dead between the hash marks, the dead-ball spot becomes the succeeding spot.

If the ball becomes dead in a side zone, the ball is placed at the nearest hash mark, except following an inadvertent whistle when the down will be replayed or following an incomplete legal forward pass.

In both those cases, the ball is returned to the previous spot (4-3-4, 4-3-5a, 4-3-5b).

Also, if a kick goes out of bounds and the down is not replayed, the ball is placed at the hash mark nearest the sideline where it went out of bounds.

If penalties are enforced, the succeeding spot will most likely not be the dead-ball spot. Correct spotting of the ball in those situations is not widely understood. Consider the following.

EXAMPLE 4-20: The ball is snapped from the right hash mark and the run ends in the left side zone beyond the neutral zone. The foul is (a) illegal motion on A22, (b) holding by A77 behind the neutral zone in the middle of the field, or (c) grasping the face mask by B34. **RULING:** In (a), the ball is spotted on the right hash mark; the penalty is enforced from the previous spot which was at the right hash mark. In (b), the ball is spotted in the middle of the field; the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul. In (c), it is spotted on the left hash mark, since the penalty is enforced from the end of the run.

Remember, a spot foul means exactly that – a spot on the field which consists not only of a yard line, but the lateral placement as well. Fouls by the offense behind the basic spot are enforced from the spot of the foul (10.1.1A). Here's another example.

EXAMPLE 4-21: The ball is snapped from the center of the field and A67 behind the line holds near the right hash mark. The play is an incomplete pass and the penalty is accepted. **RULING:** The penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul near the right hash mark.

Figures 4-1 and 4-2 depict a difference in the placement of the ball following enforcement of a holding penalty on separate running plays.

After a fourth down play when a new series will be awarded to Team B, the ball is placed as it would be after any other play. The rearmost point of the ball then becomes the foremost point when the direction of the offense changes (5-3-3a). If the fourth down play is an incomplete pass, the ball is returned to the previous spot and the stakes must be moved from the old foremost point to the new foremost point (5-3-3b).

Before the ready-for-play signal, Team A or K may designate the spot from which the ball is put in play anywhere between the hash marks: for a try or kickoff, following a safety or touchback, following a fair catch or awarded fair catch, or to begin any overtime series (4-3-6, 4-3-7). This privilege remains if the down is replayed or a dead-ball foul occurs. A team cannot have the ball re-spotted merely by taking a timeout.

EXAMPLE 4-22: After a fair catch outside the numbers, Team A asks to have the ball placed in the center of the field. **RULING:** Legal.

EXAMPLE 4-23: For a try, Team K does not make a request for spotting of the ball and the umpire places it in the center of the field. The kick is successful, but both teams foul. For the replay, Team K asks to spot the ball at the right hash mark. **RULING:** Legal.

EXAMPLE 4-24: After a punt rolls into the end zone for a touchback, Team A requests the ball placed at the right hash mark. Either (a) Team A false starts, or (b) Team B encroaches. Team A then asks for the ball to be placed in the center of the field. **RULING:** Legal.

EXAMPLE 4-25: To start overtime, the umpire places the ball in the center of the field. After the ready, Team A takes a charged timeout and asks to spot the ball at the left hash mark. **RULING:** Team A's request is denied.

Additional Examples: 18-20.

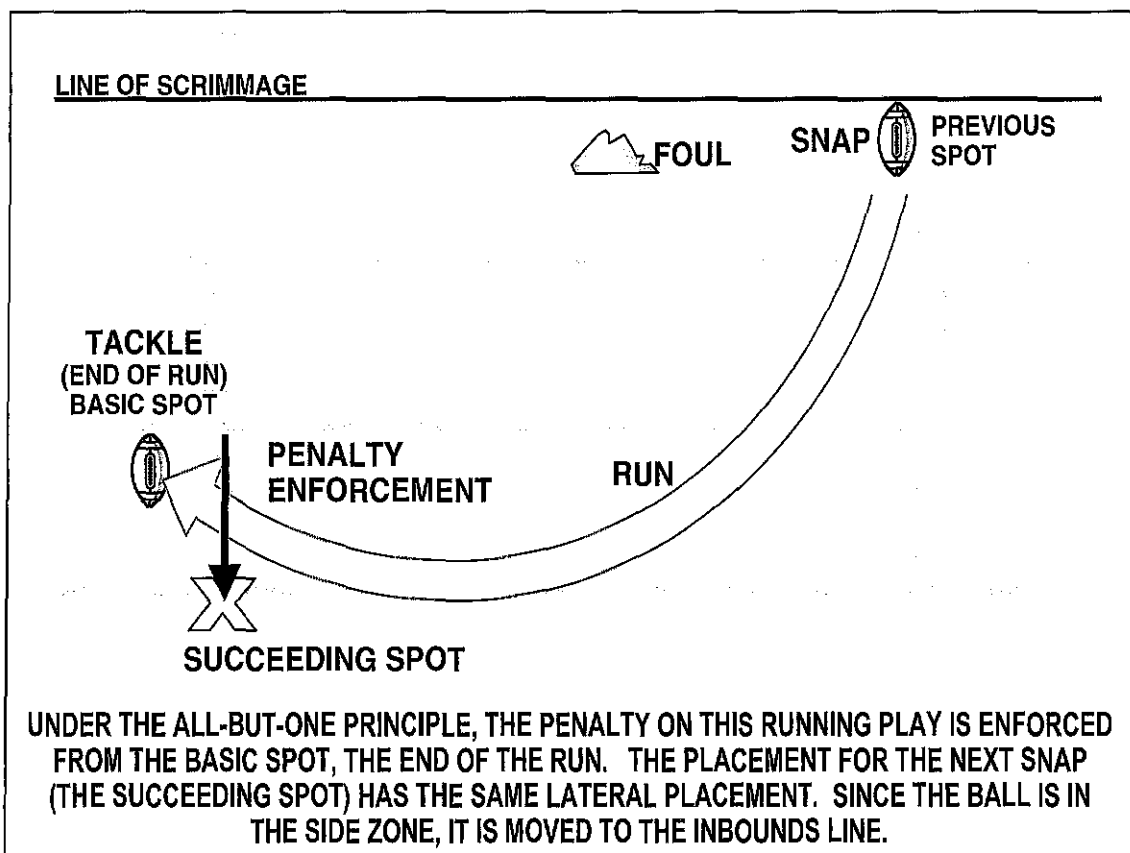


Figure 4-1

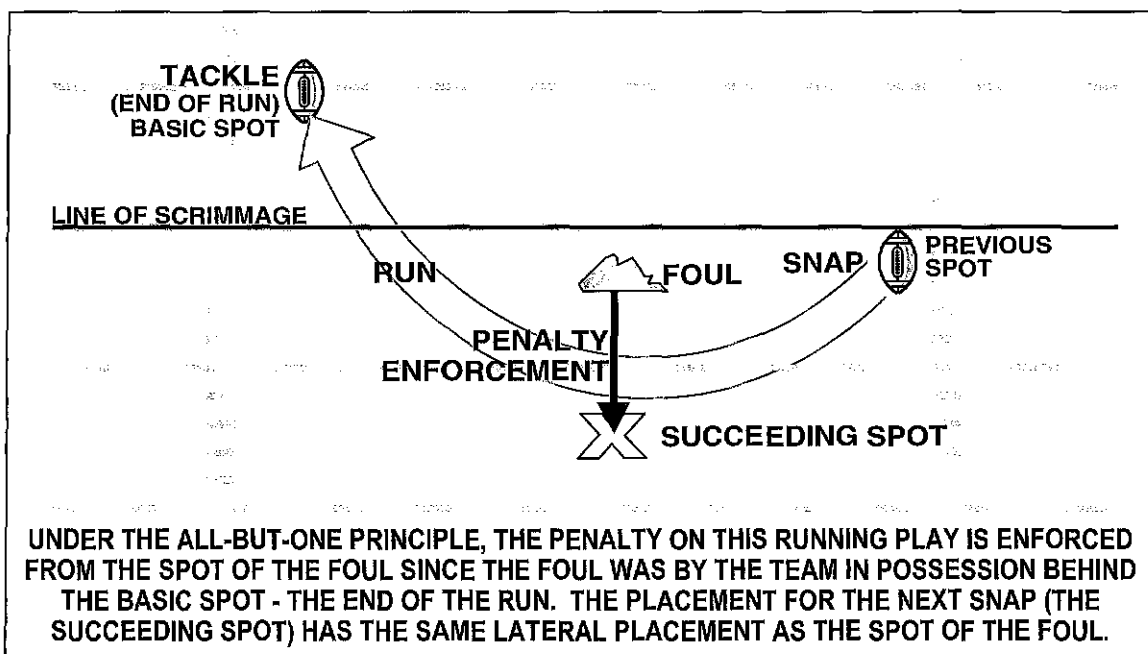


Figure 4-2

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The following table summarizes the six situations where the designated representative may choose where to spot the ball. If the

designated representative does not make a request, the ball should be spotted in the middle of the field.

Designating the Spot

What	Where	How
For a Kickoff	Team K's 40 Yard Line	Free Kick
After a Safety	Nearest 20 Yard Line	Free Kick
After a Fair Catch or Awarded Fair Catch	Yard Line Through Spot of Catch	Snap or Free Kick
After a Touchback	Nearest 20 Yard Line	Snap
For a Try	Team B's 3 Yard Line	Snap
To Start an Overtime Series	Team B's 10 Yard Line	Snap

Table 4-2

II. Additional Examples

1. Runner A28 breaks free beyond the neutral zone. (a) As B53 and B44 are closing in to tackle him, A28 veers into B53 and deliberately drives his helmet into B53's chest; or (b) as B53 and B44 attempt to bring him down, A28 lowers his head and drives forward for yardage as his helmet contacts either or both defender(s). **RULING:** In (a), it is spearing by A28 as he intentionally used his helmet to punish B53. In (b), a legal play. The lowering of the head and the subsequent contact is not illegal unless it was an attempt to butt or ram an opponent or to punish him.

2. After the whistle is blown to signify A32's forward progress has been stopped, B56 forces A32 backwards several yards and grounds him roughly. **RULING:** Personal foul; a 15-yard penalty from the succeeding spot.

3. B52's helmet comes completely off as he attempts to tackle A16 who does not go down and runs for a touchdown. **RULING:** The score stands. The ball does not become dead if the helmet comes off any player other than the ball carrier. B52 must leave the game for one play.

4. A26 receives a handoff from A8. Just as A26 hits the hole between center and guard, B55 grabs him by the side collar of the shoulder pads and pulls him down. **RULING:** A foul for a horse collar tackle. There is no exception for the free-blocking zone.

5. Split end A80 is lined up in a normal position. At the snap, he turns slightly and sprints into the backfield where he passes in front of quarterback A7 and receives a forward handoff. **RULING:** Legal.

6. Team A lines up in an unbalanced formation, with tight end A84 immediately to the left of the snapper. A84 turns slightly and sprints into the backfield where he passes in front of quarterback A12 and receives a forward handoff. **RULING:** Illegal forward handoff. Since A84 was adjacent to the snapper, he must leave the line in such a way that he pivots 180 degrees, be at least one yard behind the line and moves both feet so that he faces his own goal line before receiving a forward handoff.

7. Second and 10 on the A-20. A35 takes a handoff and runs to the A-30. As he is being tackled, he hands the ball to A22 who is running parallel with him. A22 initially touches the ball at the A-30, but doesn't control it until he gets to the A-32 ahead of A35. A22 then scores. **RULING:** The touchdown stands. In order for an illegal forward handoff to occur, the player receiving the handoff must be clearly in advance of the player making the handoff when he touches the ball.

8. A23 opens a long run. B44 approaches from behind and punches the ball from A23. **RULING:** Fumble.

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9. A21 runs to the A-25, where B53 attempts to tackle him and hits his arm. The ball pops into the air and A21 juggles the ball in an effort to regain control. The ball hits the ground when A21 reaches the 28 yard line. At what point did A21 fumble? **RULING:** The fumble occurred at the instant A21 no longer had complete control and began juggling the ball - the A-25.

10. Third and goal at the B-2. A26 is hit and fumbles at the B-1 and the ball bounces toward the pylon. A45 dives and grabs the ball while he is airborne. While he is still airborne and clearly holding the ball over the goal line, A45's knee touches the pylon. **RULING:** Because A45 touched the pylon while holding the ball, he did not complete the recovery and the ball is declared out of bounds at its most forward point which is in the end zone. Touchback: first and 10 for Team B at the B-20.

11. B31 intercepts a forward pass in his end zone. While still in his end zone, B31 fumbles. The ball rolls forward and goes out of bounds at the B-2. **RULING:** It is Team B's ball at the B-2 where the ball went out of bounds.

12. A33 is tackled at the A-40 and rolls forward. His shoulder contacts the back of A66 or B56 who is lying on the ground. A33 is able to roll off that player and regain his balance by touching the ground with his hand. He is then able to rise and continue running without any part of his body other than a hand or foot touching the ground. **RULING:** Legal, A33 is not down.

13. Third and five at the B-26. Airborne B35 controls a legal forward pass in his end zone and is then driven forward by A87's tackle to the B-2 where he first comes to the ground and is downed. **RULING:** B35 is "entitled" to the forward progress spot at the B-2. This is a rare situation where forward progress works to the disadvantage of the team in possession.

14. First and 10 at the A-4. A22 is tackled and the ball is lying with the foremost point of the ball on the eight-inch line, but part of the ball is on the goal line. **RULING:** Safety. Although the forward progress spot would normally be at the foremost point of the ball, the ball must be advanced completely out of the end zone to avoid a safety. The goal line is in the end zone and the ball is considered to have become dead in the end zone.

15. Second and 15 at the A-2. A22 receives a handoff and is tackled just beyond the goal line with the long axis of the ball parallel to the goal line. **RULING:** Since placing the ball at its foremost point with the long axis perpendicular to the goal line would result in part of the ball in the end zone, the ball is advanced a few inches so that it is entirely in the field of play.

16. A24 is advancing towards Team B's goal line and is very near the right sideline. A24 thrusts the ball in his left hand to reach the goal line inside the pylon. A24 is hit by B53 and knocked out of bounds and passes through the goal line extended. **RULING:** The covering official must judge whether A24 was inbounds when the ball broke the plane of the goal line. A24 is out of bounds when a foot first touches the sideline or the area outside the sideline.

17. A26 is advancing towards Team B's goal line and is very near the right sideline. A26 is pursued by B53 and dives for the pylon. The ball glances off the right side of the pylon, while still in his possession. **RULING:** The covering official must judge whether A26 was inbounds when the ball touched the pylon. Unless A26 touched out of bounds before the ball touched the pylon, it is a touchdown.

18. The referee blows the ready-for-play for a kickoff. As K22 prepares to kick from the middle of the field, a gust of wind blows the ball off the tee. K22 picks up the ball and moves it to the right hash mark. **RULING:** Legal. Since there will be a new ready signal, Team K may designate the placement of the ball.

19. On a kickoff, K27 kicks the ball near the sideline and it rolls out of bounds at the R-20. Team R's coach elects to take the ball at the R-35 and asks for it to be placed in the middle of the field. **RULING:** Team R's request is denied. If the selected option is to take the ball 25 yards beyond where it was kicked, it must be spotted at the hash mark nearest the sideline where it went out of bounds.

20. After a touchback, Team A throws four consecutive incomplete forward passes. **RULING:** A new series is awarded to Team B at the A-19½. The ball is spotted as it was for the fourth down play, with what is now the rear point touching the A-20. The first down stakes must be adjusted to the new forward point of the ball.

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III. Review Test

(True or False)

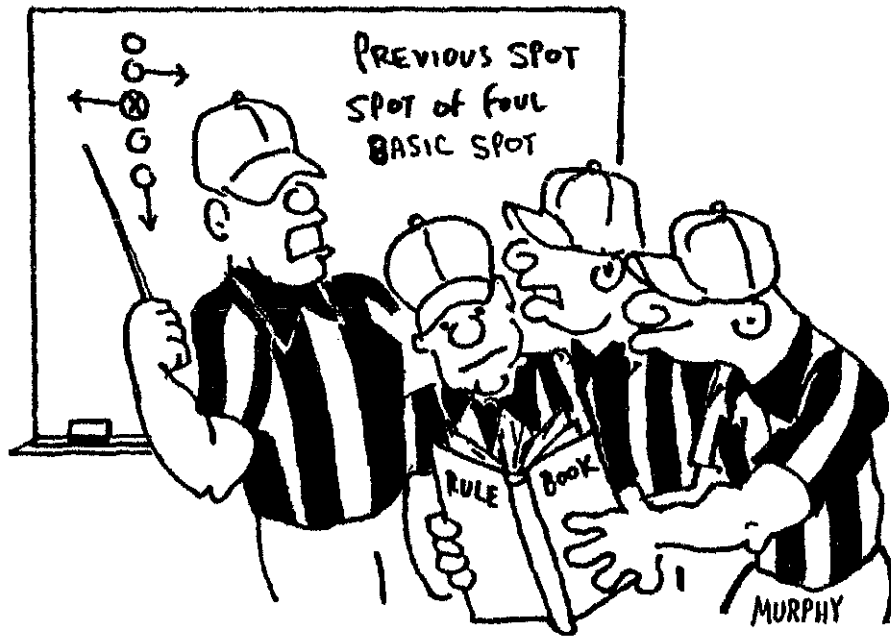
1. If a Team B player tackles an opponent who is not a runner, officials will make allowance if such player was pretending to be a runner.
2. If the helmet of the tackler comes off in making contact with the runner, the ball becomes dead immediately.
3. If receiver A82 has his helmet ripped off at the line, the ball becomes dead if A82 touches or catches a forward pass.
4. The runner may use his hands or arms to ward off or push an opponent.
5. If a runner uses an open hand on an opponent's face mask to ward off a tackle, it is a foul.
6. When B72 throws his body across the back of the legs of the runner, it is a foul for clipping.
7. It is legal for B98 to trip runner A41.
8. The runner may be clipped or blocked below the waist at any time while the ball is live.
9. The runner cannot commit a spearing foul.
10. Tackling a runner by driving the face mask, frontal area or top of the helmet directly into him is a foul.
11. The runner may be tackled by grabbing the inside front collar of the shoulder pads or jersey.
12. It is not a horse collar tackle if a player standing in the pocket is pulled down by the back collar of his jersey as he releases a forward pass because he was no longer a runner when he came to the ground.
13. Spearing must involve an attempt to punish an opponent by intentionally contacting him with the helmet.
14. If a teammate lifts or pushes the runner, it is a foul which carries a 10-yard penalty.
15. It is a foul for illegal use of hands if the runner grasps a teammate.
16. If the quarterback contacts the runner's back without adding to his momentum, it is a foul.
17. A fumble is the touching of a loose ball by a player in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession.
18. The ground cannot cause a fumble.
19. A runner beyond the line who intentionally fumbles the ball forward has thrown an illegal forward pass.
20. Beyond the line, a handed ball is considered to be a pass.
21. During a free kick down, the ball may be handed forward to a teammate.
22. The ball may be handed either forward or backward to a teammate at any time.
23. Interior linemen can receive a handoff behind the line without restriction.
24. A planned loose ball play involving a lineman is legal if the referee is notified in advance.
25. A catch of an opponent's fumble or pass is called a recovery.
26. If A32 hands the ball forward to A88 beyond the line of scrimmage and A88 allows the ball to fall to the ground, it is a foul for illegal forward handing regardless of who recovers the ball.
27. If a third down fumble by A32 is recovered simultaneously by A36 and B55, the ball belongs to Team B.
28. A fumble by A34 recovered by B52, who is in contact with the sideline, becomes dead when touched and belongs to Team A.
29. A player cannot fumble before gaining possession.
30. A muff and a fumble are considered one and the same by definition.
31. There are special rules for fumbles on fourth down plays.
32. If the ball is fumbled forward and out of bounds, it is returned to the spot of the fumble.
33. The momentum exception may apply to fumbles recovered inside Team B's five yard line.
34. If airborne A86 possesses the ball in Team B's end zone, but prior to touching the ground inbounds he brushes the upright, it is a touchdown.
35. If runner A11 touches B44 while B44 is out-of-bounds, A11 is also out-of-bounds.
36. If a loose ball touches a game official who is straddling the sideline, the ball is not out-of-bounds.
37. The dead ball spot is always the spot under the foremost point of the ball when it becomes dead by rule.
38. When an airborne player makes a catch, forward progress is the furthest point of advancement after he possesses the ball if contacted by a defender.
39. When a runner is airborne as he crosses the sideline, the forward progress spot is where the foremost point of the ball crosses the plane of the sideline.

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40. When a quarterback is sacked and thrown backward, the forward progress spot is where the ball is located when the quarterback is down by rule.
41. When the ball becomes dead in a side zone, the ball is always placed at the nearest hash mark.
42. If requested after a safety or touchback, the ball may be put in play anywhere on the 20 yard line between the hash marks.
43. After a fair catch or kick catching interference resulting in an awarded fair catch, Team R may choose to have the ball placed on the proper yard line anywhere between the hash marks.
44. On a try, the ball is snapped from a spot designated by Team A anywhere between the hash marks on Team B's three yard line.

Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------|-----|---|-----------------------|
| 1. | T | 2-3-5 Note | 23. | F | 7-3-2a |
| 2. | F | 4-2-2k | 24. | F | 7-2-8 |
| 3. | F | 4-2-2k | 25. | F | 2-23, 2-36-1 |
| 4. | T | 2-3-4a | 26. | F | 2-18, 2-19-1 |
| 5. | F | 2-3-4a | 27. | F | 7-4-3c |
| 6. | F | 9-3-5c | 28. | T | 2-29-3, 7-4-3a |
| 7. | F | 9-4-3o | 29. | T | 2-18 |
| 8. | T | 9-3-2b, 9-3-5c | 30. | F | 2-18, 2-27 |
| 9. | F | 2-20-1c, 9-4-3i | 31. | F | 7-4 |
| 10. | T | 2-20-1b, 9-4-3i | 32. | F | 4-3-1, 7-4 |
| 11. | T | 9-4-3k | 33. | T | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 12. | F | 9-4-3k | 34. | F | 2-29-1 |
| 13. | F | 2-20-1c | 35. | F | 2-29-2 |
| 14. | F | 9-1 | 36. | F | 2-29-3 |
| 15. | T | 9-2-2 | 37. | F | 2-41-3, 5-3-4 |
| 16. | F | 9-1 | 38. | T | 2-15-2 |
| 17. | F | 2-18, 2-27 | 39. | T | 4-3-3 |
| 18. | F | 2-18, 4-2-2a | 40. | F | 2-15-1 |
| 19. | T | 2-18, 2-31-1, 7-5-2b | 41. | F | 4-3-5 |
| 20. | F | 2-19-1, 2-31-1 | 42. | T | 4-3-6c, f |
| 21. | F | 7-3-2 | 43. | T | 4-3-6d, 4-3-6e, 6-5-4 |
| 22. | F | 7-3-2, 7-3-3 | 44. | T | 4-3-6a, 8-3-1 |



CHAPTER 5 THE PASSING GAME

I. The Rules in Depth

As defined in Rule 2-31-1, a pass is a ball that has been thrown, either forward or backward. It remains a pass until it is possessed by a player, or becomes dead by rule (2-31-4). Thus, a forward pass that has been tipped or muffed is still a pass until someone catches it or it becomes incomplete, and a backward pass that has been tipped or muffed is still a pass until someone catches it, recovers it, or it touches something out of bounds.

The word "**catch**" as used in football has a very specific meaning, more restrictive than in everyday use. As 2-4-1 says, catching a ball involves more than simply gaining possession of it. It means gaining possession of the ball in-flight *and* first coming to the ground inbounds. If an airborne player receives the ball and lands so his first contact is inbounds, then he has caught the ball. If the first contact is out of bounds, then there is no catch and the pass is incomplete.

In the vast majority of plays, the first contact with the ground will be a foot. If both feet come down together, both must be inbounds or it is not a catch.

If a prone player is contacting the ground inbounds when he obtains possession of the ball, it is a catch even if he reaches over a sideline or end line.

If a player is airborne when he receives the ball, is hit by an opponent, and lands out of bounds, he has not made a catch unless he is caught and carried out of bounds backward or sideways, thus stopping his forward progress.

Also, if the player controls the ball while airborne, but loses possession when he lands, there is no catch. Put another way: *the ground can cause an incomplete pass.*

These conditions also apply to **intercepting** a pass, which simply means catching a pass thrown by an opponent (2-23).

Catching the ball is always preceded by touching (2-44); thus, if touching causes the ball to become dead, securing possession of it is meaningless (2-4-2).

EXAMPLE 5-1: A87 attempts to catch a pass with his foot on the sideline and deflects the ball to B22. **RULING:** The ball is dead when A87 touches it. No player can catch the ball.

When opposing airborne players gain joint possession, it is a "**simultaneous catch**" if both return to the ground inbounds. The players' contact with the ground does not have to be simultaneous (2-4-3). A simultaneous catch causes the ball to become dead (4-2-2e1) and it belongs to the offensive team.

FORWARD PASSES

Whether a pass is forward (2-31-2) or backward (2-31-5) usually depends on the initial direction which it is thrown. If the pass is toward the opponent's end line, then it is forward.

It is also a forward pass if a defensive player contacts the ball or the passer after forward movement of the passer's arm has begun, regardless of the direction the ball actually goes (2-31-2 Nt). Once the passer starts his arm forward, it is a forward pass, regardless of which direction the ball leaves his hand or where the ball lands. The passer receives the benefit of the doubt as to whether the ball is thrown or fumbled. When in question, it is a forward pass, and not a fumble.

EXAMPLE 5-2: A7 drops back to the A-25. As A7's arm starts forward (a) he is grabbed by B66 who twists A7's body, or (b) B66 strikes A7's arm. In both cases, the ball lands near A82 at the A-23. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), an incomplete forward pass. Although the ball landed behind the spot from where it was thrown, it is a forward pass because the contact altered the flight of the ball.

Notice it also makes no difference *how* a pass is thrown—it can be overhand, underhand, between the legs, with two hands, whatever. As long as the player starts his arm forward and the ball leaves his hand, it is a forward pass.

EXAMPLE 5-3: A13 is under a strong rush when he flips the ball forward with two hands to eligible A43, who catches the ball behind the neutral zone and carries for a big gain. **RULING:** Legal play – a complete forward pass.

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A forward pass, whether legal or illegal, is complete (7-5-4) when an inbounds player catches the ball. Play continues except in two cases. A catch by a kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion, but the ball is immediately dead. If the ball is simultaneously caught by opposing players, the ball is dead and belongs to the passing team.

It is incomplete (7-5-5) when it hits the ground, goes out of bounds, or a player controls the ball in the air and first touches the ground out of bounds. The clock always stops after an incomplete pass. Notice the definition of a ball in player possession out of bounds (2-29-2) means if a player is in contact with the sideline or standing out of bounds when he receives the pass, the pass is out of bounds and thus incomplete.

There are many circumstances when batting a ball forward is a foul. **Batting** is defined as intentionally striking the ball or intentionally using hand or arm (2-2). However, by 9-7-3, it is legal for an eligible player of either team to bat a forward pass in any direction. Thus, for example, it is legal for a Team A pass receiver to tip the ball to a teammate either forward or backward. Also, since the pass does not end until the ball is caught or becomes dead, it is perfectly legal for an airborne eligible player to receive the ball and shovel or deflect it to his teammate. This is all one pass.

Here is an example.

EXAMPLE 5-4: A25 is airborne when he receives a legal forward pass. While still in the air he taps the ball forward to eligible A48 who (a) muffs the ball which hits the ground, or (b) catches the ball. **RULING:** In (a), an incomplete forward pass. This is not a fumble since A25 did not complete the catch. In (b), a completed pass to A48. Note A25's action satisfies the definition of batting the ball.

Legal and Illegal Forward Passes

A forward pass may only be thrown by the team that snaps the ball from scrimmage. As 7-5-1 says, a legal forward pass is a ball thrown by a player of Team A during a scrimmage down before team possession has changed with both feet in or behind the neutral zone when the ball is released. Anything else is illegal.

Here are the conditions under which a forward pass is illegal (7-5-2):

- It is thrown when the passer is beyond the neutral zone;
- It is thrown by either team after a change of team possession during the down;

- It is the second forward pass by Team A during the down;
- It is thrown (under duress) into an area where there is no eligible Team A receiver;
- It is intentionally grounded to save yardage or to stop the clock;
- The passer, spiking the ball in an effort to stop the clock, does not release it immediately after controlling a hand-to-hand snap, or does so after a muffed snap has touched the ground.

EXAMPLE 5-5: A5 drops straight back to pass under a heavy rush and is unable to quickly find a receiver. He subsequently throws the ball (a) to the ground, (b) into the legs of the onrushing linemen, (c) downfield well behind the nearest receiver, or (d) 10 feet over the head of a receiver near the sideline. **RULING:** An illegal forward pass in (a) and (b), but a judgment call in (c) and (d).

In the latter two cases of the preceding example, the referee will have to judge whether the pass was intentionally thrown incomplete or whether A5 simply made a bad throw. The ability and skill of the passer and the amount of duress he is under are factors to consider. In other situations, the referee must take into account the time remaining, the score, field position, down and proximity of an eligible receiver in making the call. Please remember if such an illegal pass is touched by an ineligible receiver or a defensive player, it is still a foul. The penalty, though, would almost certainly be declined following an interception.

We can summarize this by saying Team A is allowed to throw only one forward pass during a down; it must be thrown from in or behind the neutral zone before team possession has changed; and the passer may not avoid a sack by deliberately throwing the ball into an area where there are no eligible teammates or otherwise intentionally throw the pass incomplete to conserve time.

It is okay to "spike" the ball to stop the clock (7-5-2e Exc).

NEW IN 2020: The spike is legal if it is by a player positioned directly behind the snapper, has neither been muffed nor touched the ground and is thrown forward immediately.

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EXAMPLE 5-6: Late in the game on first down, A6 takes the snap and immediately throws the ball directly forward and to the ground to stop the clock. A6 received the snap (a) directly on a hand-to-hand transfer, (b) directly on a snap in a shotgun formation, or (c) after muffing the snap with the ball striking the ground. **RULING:** Legal play in (a) and (b), but an illegal pass in (c).

Notice a forward pass is legal if it is thrown from in or behind the neutral zone, so it does not matter if a runner advances the ball beyond the zone and then returns. Also, if a runner crosses the neutral zone and then flips the ball back to a teammate behind the zone who throws a forward pass, that pass is also legal.

The penalty for an illegal forward pass is five yards and loss of down. If the penalty for an illegal forward pass is accepted, measurement is from the spot of the pass. If the penalty is declined, the offended team may have the down count at the spot of the pass or if the ball was caught or intercepted, have the ball put in play as determined by the action which followed the catch (7-5-3).

EXAMPLE 5-7: On third down at the A-35, A12 drops back to pass. Under a heavy rush, he is unable to find a receiver. From the A-28, he throws the ball into an area where there are no eligible Team A receivers. **RULING:** An illegal forward pass for intentional grounding which is a five-yard penalty from the spot of the pass plus loss of down. It will be fourth down for Team A at the A-23.

It is illegal to throw a forward pass from beyond the neutral zone. A passer is beyond the neutral zone when either foot is beyond the neutral zone when the forward pass is released (7-5-1, 7-5-2b, and 7.5.1). The zone is a plane.

EXAMPLE 5-8: Second and 10 on the A-20 with 6:33 to go in the second period. A14 releases a forward pass when his passing hand is beyond the neutral zone, but his feet are behind the line. **RULING:** Legal.

If the passer is beyond the neutral zone when he grounds the ball to stop the clock, he keeps the yardage he has gained less the five-yard penalty. However, if Team A was seeking a time advantage, it will not be allowed: the clock will start on the ready (3-4-6), rather than on the snap as following an incomplete legal forward pass (3.4.6 Cmt).

EXAMPLE 5-9: On first down and 15 yards to go with time running out in the half, A23 gains three yards to the B-42. About to be tackled before he gets out of bounds, A23 deliberately "fumbles" the ball by throwing it forward. **RULING:** Illegal forward pass. The five-yard penalty is enforced from the spot of the pass, the B-42. Because of the loss of down, it will be second down from the B-47 and the clock starts on the ready unless Team B opts to have it started on the snap.

Additional Examples: 1-9, 23.

Incomplete Passes

Rule 7-5-5 deals with incomplete legal and illegal forward passes. A pass is incomplete and the ball becomes dead when the pass touches the ground or goes out of bounds. A pass (loose ball) is out of bounds when it touches anything, including a player or game official, who is out of bounds (2-29-3). It is also incomplete when an airborne player possesses the ball and lands so that his first contact with the ground or anything other than a player or game official who is on or outside a boundary (such as a pylon).

A player is out of bounds when any part of his person is touching anything, other than a player or game official, who is on or outside a sideline or end line (2-29-1). Consider the following example.

EXAMPLE 5-10: Wide receiver A83 accidentally steps on the sideline and after taking two steps out of bounds, jumps. While in the air, he (a) controls the ball and lands inbounds, or (b) bats the ball to A87 who catches the ball, and then A83 lands out of bounds. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), the ball remains live and the catch is legal. In (a), A83 is guilty of illegal participation.

In the preceding example, the receiver was not out of bounds when he touched the ball since he was airborne, and not touching out of bounds when he contacted the ball. He is, however in (a), guilty of illegal participation when he returns inbounds. Please see Chapter 10 for further discussion including players who intentionally go out of bounds.

The succeeding spot after an incomplete *legal* forward pass is the previous spot (4-3-4). Following an incomplete *illegal* forward pass, the ball belongs to the passing team at the spot of the pass. Since this is also the spot of the foul, any accepted penalty for an illegal forward pass is enforced from where the pass is thrown.

If Team A throws an illegal incomplete forward pass from their own end zone, the result of both the play and the penalty is a safety. The

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result of the play is a safety because for the next play the ball would belong to Team A in its own end zone, at the spot of the pass. And since the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul, this also results in a safety. Team B thus does not have an option. Safeties by penalty are discussed further in Chapter 9.

Here is an example that illustrates the point.

EXAMPLE 5-11: Late in the game Team A, leading by five points, has third down and 10 at the A-2. As the play develops, A21 is standing in his end zone and he intentionally grounds the ball to avoid a sack. **RULING:** Team B must accept a safety. They cannot have the ball next put in play at the previous spot, fourth down for Team A, even though Team B might prefer this.

Additional Examples: 10, 26.

Eligibility

Eligibility rules (7-5-6) apply only to legal forward passes. The question of eligibility simply does not arise in the case of an illegal forward pass. So, for example, if an ineligible player is downfield when an illegal pass is thrown, there is only one foul - for the pass, and not a second foul for the ineligible receiver being downfield.

All Team B players are eligible. No more than six Team A players can be eligible at the snap, but all Team A players become eligible when a Team B player touches a forward pass (7-5-6b).

EXAMPLE 5-12: 12. A10's forward pass is deflected by B76 at the line and caught by A62 behind the line. **RULING:** Legal catch. All ineligible players become eligible when Team B touches a pass.

Rules governing Team A players eligible at the snap refer to *position and uniform number*, both of which must be satisfied. To be eligible by number, a player must have a uniform number outside the range 50-79. A player wearing a number in the range 50-79, regardless of his position at the snap, is never eligible. To be eligible by position, he must either be on the end of his scrimmage line (2-25-2, 2-32-9, 7-5-6a) or legally in the backfield (2-32-3). An interior lineman is never eligible, regardless of his uniform number. There is no provision in the rules for a player with an ineligible number to report to the referee and become eligible.

With one exception, no player in "no-man's-land" is eligible. The exception is the quarterback, i.e., the player in a position to receive a direct hand-to-hand snap.

In Chapter 3, it was mentioned that at least five of the seven linemen must be numbered 50-79 unless Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation on fourth down, in a field goal situation or a try and the types of scrimmage kick formations are described there.

Under those conditions, Team A is allowed to have any number of players whose uniform numbers are outside the 50-79 range, but those players *remain* ineligible by position (7-2-5b Exc).

To gain such an exemption, a player must assume an initial position on his line between the ends. Once such a player assumes that initial position as an interior lineman, he is an ineligible receiver. If a subsequent shift leaves the excepted player in the position of an eligible receiver, he *remains* ineligible (7-2-5b Exc and 7.2.5D).

The same applies to the snapper when Team A is in the field goal type of scrimmage-kick formation on first, second or third down.

EXAMPLE 5-13: Fourth and four on the B-35. Team A comes to the line and assumes an initial set in a scrimmage-kick formation. At that time, Team A has only four players numbered 50 through 79. A88 assumes an initial position as a tackle, becoming the fifth legal lineman. Team A then shifts, uncovering A88, who is now lined up as an end. The ball is snapped to A7, standing back on the B-45. A7 fakes a punt and (a) throws a forward pass into Team B's end zone; or (b) runs to the B-25. Immediately after the snap, A88 went downfield. **RULING:** In (a), A88 is an ineligible receiver illegally downfield. In (b), it is legal.

Eligible Team A pass receivers must stay inbounds. If an eligible receiver steps out of bounds whether inadvertently or deliberately before a change of possession, he may not return to the field of play (9-6-1). If he does so before a change of possession; e.g., an interception by Team B, it is a 15-yard foul for illegal participation. Illegal participation is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10.

A receiver's status is not affected if his opponent blocks him out of bounds; in this case it's as if he never went out at all. The only caveat is he must return inbounds *at the first opportunity*. He is not allowed to take advantage of being blocked out of bounds by "hiding" and then returning inbounds later to catch the pass.

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EXAMPLE 5-14: Defensive lineman B76 rushes the passer and tips the legal forward pass, which continues in flight. After B76 tipped the ball, eligible A35 steps out of bounds, then returns inbounds to catch the pass. **RULING:** Illegal participation where A35 returned inbounds. B76's touching was not a change of possession and thus the restriction on Team A players going out of bounds still applies.

Additional Examples: 22.

Here is a summary of eligibility requirements:

- To be eligible, a Team A player must be legally in the backfield or on the end of the line.
- Eligible Team A players must be numbered 1 through 49 or 80 through 99.
- All Team A players who were eligible receivers at the snap remain eligible throughout the down; however, once an eligible Team A receiver intentionally goes out of bounds, he may not return (Penalty: illegal participation).
- Team A players wearing numbers 50-79 are ineligible regardless of their position at the snap.
- All Team A players who were ineligible at the snap remain ineligible until a Team B player touches the pass.
- All Team B players are eligible at all times.

Illegal Touching

With regard to an ineligible receiver touching a pass, the rules distinguish between intentional and accidental touching of the ball. If an ineligible player bats, muffs, or catches a legal forward pass (intentional act), it is a foul for illegal touching (7-5-13). This carries a penalty of five yards with loss of down enforced under the all-but-one principle.

Illegal touching applies equally behind and beyond the neutral zone (7-5-13). It is not offensive pass interference if an ineligible touches the ball beyond the neutral zone.

If the Team A ineligible does not attempt to touch the forward pass, but is instead inadvertently struck by it, the touching is ignored and there is no foul. Such touching, does not however, excuse intentional grounding.

If the Team A ineligible is beyond the neutral zone when is inadvertently struck by the ball, he is only guilty of being an ineligible receiver downfield.

EXAMPLE 5-15: Second and 10 on the A-30. Ineligible A76 tries to catch A10's forward pass at the (a) A-28, or (b) A-35, and touches the ball. **RULING:** In either case it is illegal touching, a five yard penalty with loss of down. In (a), it will be third and 17 from the A-23 (the penalty is enforced from the spot where A76 touched the pass). In (b), it will be third and 15 from the A-25 (the penalty is enforced from the previous spot).

EXAMPLE 5-16: Same as the previous example except the pass hits A76's back and he made no attempt to touch it. **RULING:** No foul in (a), but an ineligible downfield in (b). If accepted, the five-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot resulting in second and 15 from the A-25.

Additional Examples: 11, 12.

Ineligibles Downfield

During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses the neutral zone, interior offensive linemen and other ineligible Team A players are not allowed to roam very far down the field before the pass is thrown (7-5-12).

A forward pass has crossed the neutral zone when the entire ball is beyond the neutral zone. Where the pass is first touched does not determine if the pass crosses the line (2-31-3).

NEW IN 2020 (Editorial): Specifically, until the pass is thrown, these players may not venture beyond the expanded neutral zone (two yards).

The ineligible player may enter the expanded neutral zone to seek an opponent to block or he may initiate contact with an opponent in that zone. The player, whether in contact with an opponent or not, may not continue beyond the expanded neutral zone. If such a Team A player reaches the limit of the zone, he must freeze or retreat until the pass is thrown.

EXAMPLE 5-17: Third down on the A-35. A13's forward pass travels to the A-45. A68 moves forward to the (a) A-37, or (b) A-38 looking for a player to block. **RULING:** In (a), there is no foul. In (b), A68 is flagged for being an ineligible receiver illegally downfield.

The key to this foul is not so much where the ineligible player is when the pass is thrown as *where he has been* anytime between the snap and the pass. That is, if he advances *too far* downfield and returns behind the neutral zone before the pass is thrown, it is still a foul.

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If a pass is caught by an ineligible receiver, the ball remains live and may be advanced. However, the penalty will be accepted, and the play negated, unless a subsequent fumble gives Team B possession of the ball.

There is no foul if the pass does not cross the neutral zone. Thus, on a typical screen pass completed behind the line, it is perfectly legal for ineligible receivers to go downfield any time after the snap. Such receivers may also immediately block downfield legally.

If the pass is deflected by a Team B player in or behind the neutral zone and it goes beyond the zone, there is also no foul (7-5-12). This exception protects the offense from an act they could not anticipate.

EXAMPLE 5-18: Third down on the A-30. A16's forward pass is tipped by (a) eligible A23, or (b) B52, at the A-24. The pass travels to the A-35, where it is caught by eligible A82 and advanced to the A-45. Before A16's pass is released, ineligible A76 wandered downfield to the A-35. **RULING:** In (a), A76 is flagged for being an ineligible receiver illegally downfield. If he blocks before A23 touches the ball, he is also guilty of offensive pass interference. In (b), there is no foul for being illegal downfield because the ball was deflected by a Team B player behind the line.

In addition, there is no foul for ineligibles downfield if the pass is illegal. Eligibility rules apply *only* to legal forward passes.

The penalty for ineligibles downfield is five yards from the previous spot. It *does not include* loss of down. Thus, the penalties for ineligible receivers downfield and illegal touching by an ineligible are different: the latter has loss of down and the former doesn't.

The following table summarizes downfield activity.

Legal Forward Pass	Pass Behind NZ	Pass Beyond Neutral Zone
Can ineligible bat, muff, or catch pass?	NO – Illegal touching, Five yards & LOD. (7-5-13)	
Can ineligible be touched by pass?	YES	NO - Ineligible downfield, Five yards. (7-5-12)
Can ineligible go downfield?	YES	NO - Ineligible downfield, Five yards. (7-5-12)

Table 5-1

Here is a summary of the possibilities for a completed pass. The first column indicates the player who initially contacts the pass and the second column indicates the player who then catches the ball. It is assumed that all Team A players wearing eligible numbers were properly lined up as eligible receivers and the initial touching was intentional.

Additional Examples: 11, 13.

Initially Touched by	Caught by	Result
Eligible A	Eligible A	Legal Catch
	Ineligible A	Illegal Touching
	B	Interception
Ineligible A	Eligible A	Illegal Touching
	Ineligible A	Illegal Touching
	B	Illegal Touching*, Interception
B	Eligible A	Legal Catch
	Ineligible A	Legal Catch
	B	Interception

* Team A's foul would most likely be declined if the down ended with the ball in Team B's possession.

Table 5-2

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Downfield Contact

When an eligible receiver goes downfield on a play where a forward pass crosses the neutral zone, he may not block until the pass has been touched. We'll have more to say about that under offensive pass interference.

The defender may, however, treat the receiver as a potential blocker and use unlocked arms to ward him off before a pass is thrown. If the receiver is not attempting to block, by going past or moving away from the defender, the defender may not make contact (9-2-3d). A guideline is to allow contact until the receiver occupies the same yard line as the defender or until the opponent cannot possibly block him. Continuous contact is illegal.

EXAMPLE 5-19: First and 10 on the A-20. Wideout A85 runs his pass route towards B39 who is standing on Team A's 30 yard line. Before a pass is thrown, A85 approaches B39 and (a) B39 pushes A85 with both hands and knocks him down, or (b) A85 cuts a ninety degree angle immediately in front of B39. B39 then shoves A85 from the side as A85 is moving away. A forward pass is then thrown across the line, which falls incomplete. **RULING:** Legal in (a), but illegal use of hands in (b). The penalty is 10 yards, enforced from the previous spot.

Pass Interference

Pass interference (7-5-10 and 7-5-11) is among the toughest and most controversial calls that an official has to make. There are three helpful keys to this rule: (1) all eligible receivers on both teams have equal rights to the ball, (2) there is pass interference only if the action interferes with an opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch or bat the pass, and (3) physical contact is necessary to establish interference. Face guarding is not a foul (7.5.10C).

Contact by a defender obviously away from the direction of the pass is not pass interference (7-5-11c). If contact occurs with a receiver who is not the intended receiver away from the direction of the pass, it is possible for another foul such as holding, unnecessary roughness or a face mask infraction to be called.

It's important to understand both receiver and defender have territorial rights - a right to the ball, and "incidental contact" (no foul), may be the proper call if both players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach the ball. An example is when two opponents are running side-by-side before and/or after the pass is released. If the

players fall when their feet become entangled (without intentional tripping), there is no foul.

Pass interference fouls apply only under the following conditions:

- The pass is a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B in or behind the neutral zone (7-5-7);
- The interference occurs beyond the neutral zone (7-5-10);
- The interference is with an eligible opponent (7-5-10);
- The interference occurs before restrictions have ended (7-5-9).
- "Catchability" of a pass is not a factor for pass interference.
- If pass interference by either team is intentional, an additional 15 yards are added to the original 15-yard penalty (7-5-10 Pen).

Additional Examples: 14-20.

Offensive Interference

The offensive team is restricted *from the snap* until the pass is touched or incomplete (7-5-8a). Except as noted below, the offense is not allowed to initiate any contact with the defense beyond the neutral zone. This does not depend on whether the pass is catchable, nor if it has even been released yet. It is the responsibility of the offensive player to avoid the defenders.

The rules allow for offensive players to make contact with defensive players and drive them no more than two yards beyond the line (7-5-11b). This is considered legitimate action at the snap and not pass interference. It is also not a violation of the rule prohibiting ineligible Team A players from being downfield.

If the defensive player is driven more than two yards downfield, it is offensive pass interference.

EXAMPLE 5-20: Third and eight on the A-45. A12 throws a pass to the B-45. A78 initiates a block against B94 at the line and drives him downfield to the (a) A-47, or (b) A-49. **RULING:** In (a), there is no foul, but in (b), it is offensive pass interference (7.5.12B).

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Since both receiver and defender have equal rights, either player is entitled to whatever spot on the field they can get to first without contact. Consequently, crossing patterns and stationary picks are smart maneuvering.

Offensive pass interference carries a penalty of 15 yards from the previous spot and the down is repeated (7-5-10 Pen). There is no loss of down.

EXAMPLE 5-21: Tight end A82 goes five yards downfield and blocks the cornerback in the left flat. After A82's block, quarterback A12 completes a deep pass down the right sideline to eligible A24. **RULING:** Offensive pass interference by A82; a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot and the down is replayed.

Once a forward pass is touched by an eligible Team A player, ineligible Team A players may use their hands and arms in a legal block to ward off an opponent. As mentioned, though, ineligible players still may not legally touch the ball.

EXAMPLE 5-22: A87 muffs a forward pass high into the air beyond the neutral zone. While the ball is in the air, A55 blocks B22 away from the ball. **RULING:** Legal.

Additional Examples: 16, 18, 20.

Defensive Interference

The rules are a bit more lenient for the defensive team in as much they are restricted *from the time the pass is thrown* (7-5-8b). Action that would otherwise be pass interference is not a foul until the pass is in flight.

Pass interference rules apply only to eligible receivers. So, if receiver A34 lines up in no-man's land, goes downfield for a pass and is contacted by a defensive player, there cannot be pass interference on Team B. A34 is not an eligible receiver because he was neither an end on the line nor legally in the backfield at the snap. He also is an ineligible receiver downfield and Team A's formation is illegal.

The penalty for defensive pass interference is 15 yards from the previous spot, and the down is repeated (7-5-10 Pen). There is no automatic first down.

If defensive pass interference occurs on a Team A touchdown, the penalty carries over to the try or to the next kickoff (8-2-2). In some cases, half-the-distance may apply.

EXAMPLE 5-23: Third and 10 for Team A at Team B's 16 yard line. A15's pass is incomplete, but defensive pass interference occurs at (a) the four yard line, (b) at the one yard line, (c) in the end zone. **RULING:** In all cases, third and two for Team A at the eight yard line.

A more detailed discussion of penalty enforcement is in Chapter 11. Here is a summary of eligibility and pass interference restrictions.

- If the pass is touched by Team B:
 - All players are eligible and all pass interference restrictions end.
- If the pass is touched by an eligible Team A player:
 - Pass interference restrictions end for Team B and eligible Team A players.
 - Ineligible Team A players may not touch the ball, but can use hands and arms in a legal block to ward off opponents.
- If the pass is caught, batted, or muffed by an ineligible Team A player:
 - That player is guilty of illegal touching.
 - Other ineligible Team A players may not touch the ball, but can use hands and arms in a legal block to ward off opponents.
- If the pass inadvertently touches an ineligible Team A player:
 - Behind the expanded neutral zone, the touching is ignored.
 - Beyond the expanded neutral zone, that player is guilty of being an ineligible downfield.

Additional Examples: 17, 19, 21-24.

Airborne Receiver

An airborne receiver who obtains a firm grasp of the ball while in the air, must maintain possession when he contacts the ground. Please remember it is not a catch until the receiver touches the ground inbounds with possession of the ball. The fact he may have a firm grasp of the ball while airborne is *not* a factor in determining whether the pass is complete.

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This brings us to the situation where a player receives the ball in the air, but loses control of it when he hits the ground. The rules are clear that there is no catch (2-4-1). The key phrase is "returning to the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball. Put another way: the ground can cause an incompletion.

Here are some guidelines:

- An airborne receiver must maintain control if going to the ground in the process of completing a catch.
- Maintaining control is necessary regardless of whether a receiver goes to the ground on his own or is contacted by a defender.
- The down does not end until it's clear the grounded player has secure possession of the ball, he is out of bounds or the ball touches the ground.
- A player who returns to the ground inbounds without firm control must remain inbounds until he obtains secure possession of the ball.

EXAMPLE 5-24: A89 possesses the ball while airborne and (a) is driven to the ground by B22, or (b) comes to the ground because he had to dive for the ball. In both cases, when A89 lands, the ball becomes loose and touches the ground. **RULING:** In either case, the pass is incomplete.

EXAMPLE 5-25: A88 possesses the ball while airborne and comes to the ground inbounds near the sideline with a foot. He then hits the ground with his back and juggles the ball. When A88 regains secure possession of the ball, his body is (a) completely inbounds, or (b) partially out of bounds. **RULING:** A catch in (a), but not in (b).

Officials do not have to judge whether the player would have returned to the ground inbounds without the opponent's contact. It is not a catch if the receiver is prevented from landing inbounds because of contact by an opponent unless he is caught and carried out of bounds, thus stopping his forward progress (2-4-1).

EXAMPLE 5-26: First and 10 on the A-20. A16 throws forward to A82 who jumps straight up at the A-40 when he's shoved out-of-bounds by B29. A82 lands outside the (a) A-37, (b) A-40, or (c) A-43. **RULING:** In all cases, it is an incomplete pass (3.4.3C).

EXAMPLE 5-27: Same as the previous example, except A82 jumps straight up when he's grabbed and carried out-of-bounds at the (a) A-37, (b) A-40, or (c) A-43. **RULING:** In all cases, it is a catch. In (a) and (b), forward progress is at the A-40 and the clock does not stop. In (c), progress is at the A-43 and the clock stops because A82's progress was not stopped inbounds (4.3.3B).

Forward progress for an airborne receiver is the same as for a runner and is discussed in Chapter 4.

If the catch is completed by the receiver landing inbounds and maintaining possession, the forward progress spot is the furthest point of advancement where the player is contacted and driven backwards. The clock continues to run if the player subsequently ends up out of bounds unless it is stopped for another reason such as a first down (2-15-2).

If the player is pushed forward and the pass is completed, the forward progress spot is where the receiver is down by rule.

EXAMPLE 5-28: Second and 10 on the A-30. A7 passes forward to A84 who jumps straight up into the air at the A-45 and is contacted by B44. A84 lands inbounds and is downed at the (a) A-43, (b) A-45, or (c) A-47. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the forward progress spot is where he was contacted, the A-45. In (c), A84 gets the benefit of his forward progress on the push to the A-47.

EXAMPLE 5-29: Same as the previous example, except A84 dives backwards grabbing the ball at the A-45. B23 makes contact at the A-44 and A84 lands at the A-43. **RULING:** The ball is spotted where A84 was contacted, the A-44.

The principles for airborne receivers near the goal line are the same.

EXAMPLE 5-30: Fourth and goal on the B-10. A11 passes forward to A83 who jumps and grabs the ball about one yard deep into the end zone. A83 is airborne with the ball (a) with a straight-up jump, or (b) is moving backward toward the field of play. In both cases, A83 is shoved by B37, lands and is downed with the ball at the B-1. **RULING:** In (a), touchdown, A83 was clearly contacted in the end zone and that is the forward progress spot. In (b), it is a judgment call as to whether A83 was contacted in the end zone or the field of play. Regardless of where he would have landed, it is a touchdown if he is contacted while the ball is in the end zone (2.15.2).

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In the preceding example, please remember it is not a catch until the receiver touches the ground inbounds with possession of the ball. The fact he may have a firm grasp of the ball while airborne over the end zone is *not* a factor in determining whether the pass is complete. If there is no catch, the point where the receiver is contacted is of no significance.

EXAMPLE 5-31: Same as the previous example, except A84 jumps straight up and when shoved by B37, he lands on his feet at the B-1. After he regains his balance, he runs and is downed at the B-5. **RULING:** Touchdown, A84's forward progress was in the end zone and the ball is dead when he completes the catch by touching the ground.

Additional Examples: 25, 26.

Roughing the Passer

Roughing the passer is a major foul the rules treat very seriously. It is the intent of this rule (9-4-4) to protect the passer from avoidable contact by the defense after he has thrown the ball. The onus for avoiding contact rests with the defense.

By definition (2-32-11), the **passer** is the player who throws a *legal* forward pass. He is the passer from the time the ball is released until the pass ends, or until he moves to participate in the play.

The key phrase in the rule is "after it is clear that the ball has been thrown." The rule does not specify any time or distance requirement, which makes the determination a judgment call. Such judgment should be based on whether the defender knew (or should have known) that the ball had been released when the rusher arrived at a point at which he could not avoid contact. A player who is blocked into the passer is not exempted from a foul.

Illegal personal contact fouls against the passer (helmet contact, pulling the face mask, etc.) committed before it is clear that the ball has been thrown, are roughing fouls (9.4.4D), except incidental face mask fouls.

EXAMPLE 5-32: As A12 releases a forward pass, he is struck in the chest by B52 who had lowered his head and led with his helmet. **RULING:** Although the contact was before it was clear that the ball had been thrown, the foul is for roughing the passer.

The rule protects not just the quarterback, but any player who attempts a forward pass, including a halfback on an option pass.

A passer is only protected from being roughed if he has thrown from in or behind the neutral zone. Put another way, there cannot be roughing on a pass from beyond the neutral zone. Nor can there be roughing on any backward pass. Also, roughing cannot be called on an illegal pass from behind the line, such as intentional grounding.

EXAMPLE 5-33: Third down on the A-35. A10 throws a forward pass from the A-30. B52 then charges into A10 (a) as he is standing still watching the pass, which is in flight; or (b) as he is running downfield and is about to block B49. **RULING:** In (a), roughing the passer; in (b), no foul because A10 had moved to participate in the play.

The enforcement spot for the penalty, which is 15 yards and an automatic first down, varies depending on the result of the play. If the pass is incomplete, if possession changes during the down, or if the last run ends behind the neutral zone, the penalty is enforced from the previous spot (9-4-4 Pen).

EXAMPLE 5-34: Team A's passer is roughed after throwing a forward pass which is (a) incomplete, or (b) complete beyond the neutral zone to A82 who fumbles. The ball is recovered by B62. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), Team A has a first down, after enforcement of the 15-yard penalty from the previous spot.

The enforcement spot for plays where the run ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of possession during the down is the dead-ball spot (10-5-5).

EXAMPLE 5-35: On third down from the A-39, A12 is roughed after throwing a complete pass to A28, who runs for three yards to the A-42 and fumbles. The ball (a) is recovered by prone A63 at the A-45, or (b) rolls out of bounds at the A-40. **RULING:** In (a), the penalty is enforced from the A-45 making it first and 10 at the B-40. In (b), the penalty is enforced from the A-40 making it first and 10 at the B-45.

Notice in this example the dead-ball spot in (b) is where the ball went out of bounds, Team A's 40 yard line, not where A28 fumbled it, Team A's 42 yard line. It does not matter whether the ball goes

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out of bounds beyond or behind the spot of the fumble (9.4.4C).

It is worth discussing enforcement of the roughing-the-passer penalty when the change of team possession comes at the end of the down rather than during the live-ball action. The rule makes it clear that the penalty is enforced from the dead-ball spot "when Team A has possession of the ball at the end of the down and there has been no change of team possession." That has been interpreted to mean *only* if possession changes during the down, such as through an interception or a Team B recovery of a fumble in their end zone.

If the pass is complete but the receiver fails to make the line-to-gain on fourth down, the ball belongs to Team B at the end of the down, but Team A is still in possession. See Additional Example 29.

Here is an example where possession changes after the down, but there is no dead-ball spot.

EXAMPLE 5-36: On third and goal at the B-12, A13 is roughed as he completes a pass to eligible A83. At the B-4, A83 fumbles. The ball rolls into Team B's end zone and over the end line. **RULING:** The roughing penalty will be enforced from the previous spot, half-the-distance to the goal. The automatic first down gives Team A first and goal at the B-6 (9.4.4C (f)).

The above example is worth some further commentary. Even though the result of the play would give Team B the ball due to the touchback, this change of possession would take place after the down is over, not during the down. However, because there is no practical dead-ball spot, by interpretation, the penalty is enforced from the previous spot.

Additional Examples: 7, 27-29.

BACKWARD PASSES

The definition of a **backward pass** is simply a pass which is not forward (2-31-5). Usually a backward pass is a pitchout that is either parallel to the goal line or clearly angled backward. We sometimes hear the term "lateral" (which means "sideways") to describe this, but in fact there is no such thing as a "lateral" in football. The word never appears in the rule book. It is simply a backward pass. A good way to remember this is if the pass is not forward, it is a backward pass.

There are no eligibility restrictions on a backward pass. All players are eligible to catch or touch it at any time (7-4-2). If a backward pass is caught, intercepted, or recovered, it remains live and in play, and the ball may be advanced (7-4-2).

EXAMPLE 5-37: A18 muffs the snap. As the ball rolls along the ground, B83 recovers it and runs for an apparent touchdown. **RULING:** Touchdown for Team B. B83 is allowed to advance the recovered backward pass (muffed snap).

If a backward pass touches the ground, it falls under the "other loose balls" category in 9-7-2. In that respect, backward passes and fumbles are treated the same.

EXAMPLE 5-38: A12 passes the ball backward to tailback A29 who (a) never gets possession of the ball, or (b) catches the backward pass then fumbles it. Defensive lineman B78 recovers the ball. **RULING:** The ball is treated the same in either case. B78 may advance the ball unless he was down when he recovered it.

It is also legal for any player on either team to throw a backward pass any time anywhere on the field (7-4-1). If a player deliberately throws a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time, it is legal and the clock will start on the snap.

EXAMPLE 5-39: Third and seven on the A-45 with 25 seconds remaining in the game and Team A trailing. A23 sweeps left and gains four yards. As he is about to be tackled, he throws the ball backwards in an obvious attempt to stop the clock and it goes out of bounds at the A-48. **RULING:** Legal play. Fourth and four for Team A at the A-48 and the clock starts on the snap.

Although a forward pass may be batted in any direction by a player eligible to touch it, the passing team is not allowed to bat a backward pass in flight forward (9-7-3). The penalty is 10 yards under the all-but-one principle.

EXAMPLE 5-40: A12 throws a backward pass in the direction of A25. Seeing that he will be tackled immediately, A25 does not catch the ball, but instead bats it forward to A79 who carries it for several yards beyond the neutral zone before being tackled. **RULING:** A foul for batting a backward pass forward. It is a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul, and the down is replayed. Note that A79 is eligible to receive the ball since it is still a backward pass.

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Because a backward pass which touches the ground, is a loose ball (9-7-2), it may not be batted in any direction by any player.

EXAMPLE 5-41: Third and two at the B-25. On an option play, quarterback A17 sweeps to his right and passes the ball backward in the direction of A30 who muffs the pass. As the ball rolls along the ground at the B-32, A30 bats it forward to prevent B82 from recovering. The ball rolls out of bounds at the B-26. **RULING:** A30 is guilty of illegal batting; a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul. It will be third and 19 at the B-42. The clock starts on the snap.

If a backward pass is out of bounds behind a goal line, the ball belongs to the team defending that goal and the result is either a touchback or a safety depending on which team provided the force (7-4-4). This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

Please remember the initial direction the ball is thrown (2-31-2) determines whether the pass is

forward or backward. This could be a factor in high winds.

Additional Example: 30.

Momentum Exception

This rule (8-5-2a Exception) allows for the possibility a defender might intercept either a forward or backward pass inside his five-yard line with his momentum carrying him into his own end zone. Without this special rule, such a play would result in a safety, since the player would be responsible for carrying the ball into his own end zone.

Note the rule stipulates the ball either becomes dead in the defensive team's possession in the end zone, or is fumbled out of bounds from the end zone (without going back into the field of play). In each of these cases, the defensive team will next put the ball in play at the spot of the catch.

The momentum exception is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

Additional Example: 25, 31.

II. Additional Examples

1. A7 rolls out, but does not decide to release the pass until he is near the neutral zone. When he releases the ball, his lead foot is (a) in the air and is breaking the plane of Team B's side of the neutral zone, or (b) touching the ground in the neutral zone. **RULING:** In (a), it is an illegal forward pass. In (b), a legal pass.

2. During a kickoff return, R34 is tackled at the R-40. As he is going down, R34 simulates a fumble by throwing the ball forward to R21 who recovers it at midfield. **RULING:** The whistle should be blown when the ball hits the ground. The illegal forward pass is penalized from where the ball was thrown. It will be Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-35.

3. A7 takes the snap, drops back two steps and throws the ball to wingback A32 in the flat. A32 then throws a forward pass to A89. **RULING:** Legal if the pass from A7 to A32 was backward. If it was forward, then A32 is guilty of an illegal forward pass.

4. With Team A in a shotgun formation, the ball is snapped over the head of quarterback A6. A6 recovers the ball and immediately throws it forward to the ground. **RULING:** An illegal forward pass because the ball touched the ground and the

pass was not immediate. Team A is penalized five yards from the spot of the foul plus loss of down.

5. With Team K in scrimmage kick formation, holder K4 muffs the snap and K4 or potential kicker K22 picks up the ball and immediately throws it forward to the ground. **RULING:** An illegal forward pass because the ball touched the ground. Team K is penalized five yards from the spot of the foul plus loss of down.

6. Ball carrier A46 advances across the neutral zone and then passes the ball backward to A14 who is behind the neutral zone. A14, still behind his scrimmage line, then throws a forward pass to eligible A89 who is standing in Team B's end zone for a touchdown. **RULING:** Legal. Team A may throw the ball forward from behind the neutral zone before team possession has changed.

7. Third and eight on the A-30. A7 drops back to pass, and is unable to find an open receiver. A7 grounds the ball at the A-22 and before the ball hits the ground, he is tackled by B77 who could have avoided the contact. **RULING:** Intentional grounding and the personal foul for unnecessary roughness result in a double foul and the down is replayed. Roughing the passer cannot be called

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on an illegal forward pass. A passer is a player who throws a legal forward pass.

8. On second and three with 10 seconds remaining in the game, quarterback A27 runs beyond the line of scrimmage and, before being tackled, throws the ball forward and incomplete to stop the clock. Before throwing the ball, he had gained (a) nine yards, (b) four yards. **RULING:** An illegal forward pass; five yard penalty from the spot of the pass plus loss of down, if applicable. In (a) the penalty leaves the ball beyond the line-to-gain, so Team A will be awarded a first down. The loss of down provision does not apply. In (b), the penalty leaves the ball short of the line-to-gain, so it will be third down and four for Team A. The clock will start on the ready in both cases because there has been an abuse of the timing rule unless Team B opts to have it started on the snap.

9. Fourth and 10 on the K-45. K17 punts the ball beyond the neutral zone. R41 muffs the ball back behind the neutral zone where K21 recovers and throws a forward pass to K83 which is (a) complete at the 50 yard line, or (b) incomplete. **RULING:** Since R1 touched the kick beyond the neutral zone, it will be first down for the team in possession at the end of the down. The pass is legal as there had been no change of team possession. In (a), it will be K's ball, first and 10 at the 50 yard line. In (b), it will be K's ball, first and 10 at the K-45.

10. A86 and B24 jump and simultaneously catch a forward pass near the sideline. A86 returns to the ground inbounds while B24 lands with a foot on the sideline. A86 and B24 land (a) at the same time, (b) with A86 returning to the ground first, or (c) with B24 returning to the ground first **RULING:** In all cases, an incomplete pass. Both players must return to the ground inbounds for the pass to be complete.

11. At the snap A35 is neither legally on the line nor in the backfield. He runs 10 yards downfield and catches a forward pass. **RULING:** A35 has committed three fouls: illegal formation, ineligible receiver downfield, and illegal touching. Team B will accept the penalty for the illegal touching foul because it includes a loss of down.

12. A6 drops back and throws the ball forward. The pass is deflected by B56 behind the neutral zone and is touched by A75 beyond the neutral zone before it falls incomplete. **RULING:** It is not

illegal touching because all restrictions ended when the pass was touched by a Team B player.

13. At the snap, A76 moves about five yards downfield and finding no one to block, retreats behind the neutral zone. A7 subsequently throws a forward pass which crosses the neutral zone. **RULING:** A76 is an ineligible receiver downfield. Restrictions for Team A begin at the snap. The fact A76 was not downfield when the pass was thrown is not a factor.

14. A88 is running a pass route downfield. B22, who is covering A88, has his back to the ball and waves his arms to block the vision of A88. **RULING:** Legal.

15. Before the ball is thrown, A83 and B26 are running side-by-side. A83 breaks to the inside to get the ball and collides with B26, who did not move. **RULING:** No foul.

16. A85 runs a short pass route directly at B36, avoiding contact by stopping or changing direction. Due to A85's location, B36 can't get to the forward pass, which is caught by A84. The covering official's opinion is A85's sole intent was to hinder B36 and not to run a pass route. **RULING:** No foul. Intent is not a factor and A85 is entitled to be downfield. Forcing an opponent to stop or change course by taking a position in his path without initiating contact is not a foul.

17. A7 throws a legal forward pass to A82, who is running down the sideline. While the pass is in flight, B44 interferes with A84. The contact occurs (a) on the opposite sideline, or (b) in the center of the field. **RULING:** No foul because the contact occurred away from the direction of the pass.

18. B33 gets in the path of a receiver, A82, without making contact. B33's presence results in either (a) A82 slowing down to avoid contact or, (b) A82 initiating contact by displacing B33 in an effort to reach the ball. **RULING:** No foul in (a), but in (b) a foul by A82 for offensive pass interference. Any player is entitled to any spot he can legitimately obtain first.

19. A41 and B25 are running stride-for-stride near the sideline. Their feet inadvertently become tangled and both players lose their balance. When their feet became tangled (a) both players were looking for the ball, (b) neither player was looking for the ball, or (c) A41 was looking for the ball, but B25 was not. **RULING:** No foul in (a) and (b); both

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players have equal rights to the ball. In (c) it is a foul on B25.

20. Second and 10 on the A-30. As A7 drops back to pass, A82 blocks B43 in the middle of the field at the A-45, allowing A84 to break into the open. However, A7 throws to A85 near the sideline. **RULING:** A82 is guilty of pass interference. The rule regarding contact away from the pass applies only to Team B. The penalty is 15 yards. If accepted, it will be second and 25 at the A-15.

21. First and 10 on the A-30. Team A lines up with three receivers on one side of their formation. A forward pass is thrown to the rearmost receiver, A81, at the A-28. B22 evades the blocking of the other receivers and blocks A81 in the front, above the waist, before the ball arrives. **RULING:** Legal. There cannot be pass interference behind the line.

22. Eligible A41 runs 10 yards downfield, accidentally steps on the sideline, and then turns to receive a forward pass. Just before the ball arrives, defender B42 jumps into A41's back and deflects the pass away before A41 touches it. **RULING:** Double foul; the penalties offset. A41 is guilty of illegal participation for voluntarily going out of bounds and returning before a change of possession. B42 is guilty of pass interference. A41 remains an eligible receiver even though he stepped out of bounds and returned to the field of play.

23. Second and six on the A-35. A12's short forward pass is caught by A82 on the A-36. A82 then flips the ball back to A12 who, from the A-32 throws a forward pass toward eligible A83 at the 50 yard line. A83 cannot catch the pass because while it was in flight he was bumped in front and above the waist by B27. **RULING:** The second forward pass is illegal and that is the only foul. Team B's pass interference restrictions ended as soon as A82 touched the first forward pass (whether it was touched behind or beyond the neutral zone). Thus, B27 is not guilty of pass interference.

24. A84 runs a pass route directly at B28, then buttonhooks between B28 and the oncoming pass. B28, in an honest effort to get to the ball, goes through A84 to intercept. **RULING:** Pass interference on B28. Lack of intent to interfere does not excuse the illegal contact. A84 is entitled to his position in this situation.

25. B44 leaps in the air over his two yard line and has A7's pass in his grasp. He returns to the ground in his end zone inbounds. **RULING:** B44's interception was not completed until he returned to the ground inbounds. He now possesses a live ball in his end zone and may attempt to run it out or down it for a touchback. The momentum exception does not apply because the ball was not caught in the field of play.

26. A86 is in the end zone near the end line. He possesses a pass while airborne, and his first contact is with B28 who is lying on the ground. No part of A86 touches the ground in the end zone. His first contact with the ground as he rolls or steps off the player on the ground is beyond the end line. **RULING:** Incomplete pass. A86 did not return to the ground inbounds.

27. A15 is roughed on a play in which he completes a pass to teammate A45, who is then tackled six yards behind the neutral zone. **RULING:** A 15-yard penalty from the previous spot and an automatic first down for Team A.

28. Third and one on the A-40. A11 rolls out and throws a pass. He is hit hard by B2 who could have avoided the contact, but renewed his charge after the pass was released. When A11 threw the ball he was at the (a) A-38, or (b) A-42. **RULING:** It is roughing the passer in (a), but not in (b). In (b), A11 lost his protection from roughing when he threw from beyond the neutral zone. B2 could be guilty of unnecessary roughness and if so, the fouls would offset.

29. Fourth and 20 on the B-30. A10 is roughed as he completes a pass to A89 at the B-16 where he is tackled. **RULING:** Although the play ends short of the line-to-gain, the roughing foul is a live-ball foul and the penalty is enforced half-the-distance from the dead ball spot, the B-16. It will be first and goal for Team A at the B-8.

30. During a punt return, R30 is about to be tackled when he passes the ball back to R42 who muffs the pass. The ball is loose on the ground when K28 picks it up and runs for an apparent touchdown. **RULING:** Touchdown for Team K.

31. B21 intercepts a pass at the B-4 and his momentum carries him into his end zone. He then circles deep into the end zone to avoid A82 and is tackled in the end zone by A40. **RULING:** The momentum exception applies. It will be Team B's ball, first and 10 at the B-4.

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III. Review Test

(True or False)

1. To make a catch a player must possess a live ball in flight and return both feet to the ground inbounds.
2. A pass thrown from Team A's 20 yard line toward the 22 yard line, but is blown backward by the wind and hits the ground at the 19 yard line is a backward pass.
3. A backward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the runner's end line.
4. A passer continues to be a passer until the pass ends or until he moves to participate in the play.
5. A pass thrown backward out of bounds to stop the clock is an illegal pass.
6. A third down backward pass, which is simultaneously possessed by opponents, belongs to the defensive team.
7. A forward pass is legal if it is the first pass thrown by Team A during a scrimmage down with both feet of the passer in or behind the neutral zone, before a change of team possession.
8. Team A is limited to one legal forward pass per down.
9. If the ball is beyond the neutral zone when it leaves the passer's hand on a forward pass, it is an illegal pass.
10. A forward pass has gone beyond the neutral zone if at any time during the pass, some part of the ball is beyond the neutral zone.
11. A forward pass caught behind the neutral zone by A76, is an illegal forward pass, but the ball remains alive when caught.
12. A pass thrown forward after a change of possession is an illegal forward pass.
13. If runner A32 who is beyond the neutral zone intentionally tosses the ball forward, he has thrown an illegal forward pass.
14. When an illegal forward pass touches the ground, the ball becomes dead.
15. When the numbering exception is in effect and a pass is thrown from a scrimmage-kick formation, it is an illegal forward pass.
16. The absence of eligible offensive receiver(s) in the immediate area of an incomplete forward pass is one guideline in determining intentional grounding.
17. Any forward pass purposely thrown incomplete is an illegal pass.
18. It is legal to spike the ball to conserve time if Team A is in a shotgun formation at the snap.
19. If a forward pass touches an official who is in the field of play, the pass is ruled incomplete if it is subsequently caught by any player.
20. An underhand pitch forward behind the neutral zone from A7 to A32 is an incomplete pass if not caught.
21. During an illegal forward pass, no pass eligibility restrictions apply.
22. Touching of a forward pass by A81 causes all Team A players to become eligible.
23. Pass eligibility rules apply equally to legal and illegal forward passes as well as backward passes.
24. An eligible Team A pass receiver must be either on an end or legally behind his scrimmage line and must be numbered 1-49 or 80-99 at the snap.
25. Any back or end numbered 50-59 is an ineligible pass receiver at the snap.
26. The snapper can be an eligible receiver.
27. Touching of a forward pass by Team B causes all Team A players to become eligible.
28. A player who is an eligible receiver at the snap becomes ineligible if he goes out of bounds intentionally and returns.
29. A player who is an eligible receiver at the snap may become ineligible during the down.
30. If B1 tackles eligible A1 behind the line while the pass is in flight, it is pass interference.
31. There can be no pass interference or ineligibles downfield if the pass does not cross the neutral zone.
32. A forward-pass interference foul can occur only beyond the neutral zone.
33. Offensive pass interference is still possible if a legal forward pass is touched by B41 behind the neutral zone.
34. It is possible for B42 to commit pass interference after the pass has been touched by A81.
35. Hindering an opponent's vision without making an attempt to catch the ball is pass interference even if there is no contact.
36. Contact by a defender that occurs clearly away from where the pass is thrown is not pass interference, but could be another foul.

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37. Ineligibles are restricted from going downfield until a forward pass which goes beyond the neutral zone is thrown.
38. Ineligible receivers may not legally go beyond the neutral zone until the pass has gone beyond the neutral zone.
39. On a play where a forward pass crosses the neutral zone, A76 is guilty of being an ineligible receiver downfield if he runs two yards beyond the line and does not block anyone.
40. If A11's forward pass is deflected by A82 to A63 behind the neutral zone and A63 catches it, there is no foul.
41. If a forward pass hits A61 in the back while he is pass blocking behind the neutral zone, such a pass is illegal.
42. If A7's forward pass is muffed by A72 behind the neutral zone, the spot of the foul is the spot from which the pass was thrown.
43. If a player possesses the ball while airborne and is driven out-of-bounds by a defensive player prior to touching grounds inbounds, it may be ruled a catch.
44. If airborne B1 intercepts a pass on B's two yard line and he first lands in his own end zone, it is a touchback if he is downed there.
45. After the ball is thrown, as long as the passer is standing still or fading back, no defensive player shall charge into him unless contact is unavoidable.

Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---------------|-----|---|------------------------|
| 1. | F | 2-4-1 | 24. | T | 7-5-6a |
| 2. | F | 2-31-2 | 25. | T | 7-5-6a |
| 3. | T | 2-31-5 | 26. | T | 7-5-6a |
| 4. | T | 2-32-11 | 27. | T | 7-5-6b |
| 5. | F | 7-4, 7-5-2 | 28. | F | 7-5-6d |
| 6. | F | 7-4-3c | 29. | F | 7-5-6d |
| 7. | T | 7-5-1 | 30. | F | 7-5-7 |
| 8. | T | 7-5-1 | 31. | T | 7-5-7, 7-5-12 |
| 9. | F | 7-5-1, 7-5-2b | 32. | T | 7-5-7 |
| 10. | F | 2-31-3 | 33. | F | 7-5-6b, 7-5-9a, 7-5-9b |
| 11. | F | 7-5-2, 7-5-13 | 34. | F | 7-5-9c |
| 12. | T | 7-5-2a | 35. | F | 7-5-10 |
| 13. | T | 7-5-2b | 36. | T | 7-5-11c |
| 14. | T | 4-2-2c | 37. | T | 7-5-12 |
| 15. | F | 7-5-2 | 38. | F | 7-5-12 |
| 16. | T | 7-5-2d | 39. | F | 7-5-12 |
| 17. | F | 7-5-2e Exc | 40. | F | 7-5-13 |
| 18. | T | 7-5-2e Exc | 41. | F | 7-5-13 |
| 19. | F | 2-44 | 42. | F | 7-5-13 Pen |
| 20. | T | 7-5-5 | 43. | F | 2-4-1 |
| 21. | T | 7-5-6 | 44. | T | 8-5-3d |
| 22. | F | 7-5-6b | 45. | T | 9-4-4 |
| 23. | F | 7-5-6 | | | |

CHAPTER 6 THE KICKING GAME

I. The Rules in Depth

The kicking game can give officials more problems than almost any other phase of football. For the most part, rules covering kicking situations are quite different than those for the rest of the game, so there are more special cases to remember. Also, kicks don't occur as often as passes and running plays. Punts, for example, occur at most once every four downs, and sometimes even less frequently. Kickoffs only start halves and follow tries and field goals. So one might contend the comparative paucity of kicking plays doesn't provide enough repetition to fix the kick rules firmly in the mind. Many experienced officials feel the rules of the kicking game require more study and review than all the rest combined.

Let's get a couple of definitions out of the way early--what it means to kick the ball and what a kick is. The definition in 2-24-1 says **kicking** the ball is intentionally striking it with the knee, lower leg, or foot. The key word is *intentionally*. If the ball is rolling along the ground and a player happens to hit it with his foot while trying to recover it, he has not kicked the ball according to the definition.

Technically, there is no such thing as an "accidental kick." Kicking is a deliberate act. The word "kick" used as a noun refers to the status of the ball. Once the ball is legally kicked, it remains a kick until the ball becomes dead or is caught or recovered (2-24-2). This leads us to the definitions of **catch** and **recover**, found in 2-4-1 and 2-36-1 respectively. To "catch" the ball a player must satisfy two conditions: (1) he must gain possession of the ball before it strikes the ground and (2) he must return to the ground inbounds with the ball in his possession (the exception to the latter is discussed in Chapter 5). To "recover" the ball means the same thing for a ball that has touched the ground. (There is more about **catch** and **recover** in the discussion of the passing game in Chapter 5.) Notice recovering the ball does not necessarily mean falling on it.

If a kick is muffed, the status of the ball is unchanged and it remains a kick (See Chapter 12). The kick ends only when a player catches or recovers the ball (obtains possession), or the ball becomes dead by rule, such as, going out of bounds.

The kicking method can be either a punt, a place kick or a drop kick. A legal punt is accomplished by dropping the ball and kicking it before it touches the ground (2-24-8). A place kick must be made with the ball in a fixed position. A teammate of the kicker may be used to control the ball on the ground with or without a kicking tee (2-24-7). Use of an illegal kicking tee is an unfair act (see Chapter 8).

There are two kinds of kicks: free kicks and scrimmage kicks. Free kicks are those that begin a half, or follow a score or fair catch. A scrimmage kick is one made during a scrimmage down following a snap.

Free Kicks

During a free kick (2-24-3), both teams are restricted by free kick lines. Rule 6-1-1 locates the two teams' free kick lines 10 yards apart.

The 40 yard line is the kicking team's free kick line on a kickoff. A kickoff, which is the free kick that begins a half or follows a try or field goal, must be from some point *on*, not behind, this free kick line. A kickoff must be either a place kick or a drop kick. If a place kick is used (as it almost always is), a teammate of the kicker may be used to control the ball on the ground with or without a kicking tee (2-24-7).

It is a dead-ball foul if a free kick is immediately driven to the ground, strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee (pop-up kick) (2-24-10, 6-1-11).

This ensures the receiving team of fair catch protection for kicks that go high into the air. Kicking the ball along the ground as is frequently done for onside kicks is legal as long as the ball does not rise an appreciable height above the ground and can be mistaken for a kick in flight.

EXAMPLE 6-1: On an onside kick attempt, K15 kicks the ball directly into the ground. The ball bounces about 20 feet into the air and is coming down about 10 yards from where it was kicked. **RULING:** The ball is immediately dead when the kick is made. Team K is penalized five yards and will re-kick.

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The kicking team's free kick line for the free kick which follows a safety (which is not a kickoff, by definition) is the 20 yard line. If Team K uses a punt or a drop kick, it must be made from within one step behind their free kick line (6-1-2). Note the 20 yard line remains the free kick line even when Team K punts or drop-kicks the ball from behind it.

These free kick lines can be moved by a penalty. In this event, the free kick lines are still 10 yards apart. The space between them is the **neutral zone** (2-28-1).

The kicking team must have all their players behind their line, except the holder and the kicker who may be beyond the ball. A violation of that provision is encroachment (6-1-3a).

When the ball is kicked, the kicking team must have at least four players on each side of the kicker (6-1-4).

EXAMPLE 6-2: When the ready is blown for a kickoff, Team K has (a) six players to the left of the kicker, K3 and four players to his right, or (b) seven players to his left and three players to his right. **RULING:** Legal in both cases. In (b), if a player to the left of K3 does not move to his right before the ball is kicked, a foul will occur. In that case, the whistle should be blown immediately for a dead-ball foul.

After the ball has been made ready for play and until the ball is kicked, all players on the kicking team except the kicker must be no more than five yards behind their free kick line (6-1-3b). A player satisfies this rule when no foot is on or beyond the line five yards behind K's free kick 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 a free kick infraction (Signal 19).

EXAMPLE 6-3: On the kickoff to start the game when the ready is whistled, (a) all Team K players are (a) between the A-40 and A-35 except for kicker K2, who is standing at the A-33, or (b) huddled between the A-35 and A-30. **RULING:** Legal in (a), but a dead-ball foul in (b).

There are no other restrictions on Team K's formation (2-14-3). There is no requirement, as with scrimmage downs, for players to be within the nine-yard marks after the ready-for-play (7-2-1).

Once a spot is designated, the kick must be made from that spot (6-1-2). Adjusting the ball on the tee or moving it from the ground to an adjacent tee is not considered changing the designated spot (2001 interp., Sit 15). Faking a kick is legal.

If a kicking team player goes out of bounds before a change of possession, he cannot return inbounds for the remainder of the down (9-6-1), unless he was blocked out. Please note Team R players may inadvertently go out of bounds, and there is no foul if they return inbounds since they cannot gain an advantage by doing so.

Team R may not have anyone beyond their free kick line before the ball is kicked. There is no rear restraining line. Team R's 11 players may be anywhere behind their free kick line.

The clock starts when the ball is touched other than first touching by Team K (3-4-1a, 3-4-3).

Additional Examples: 1-5.

Possession and Advance

The kicking team is allowed to touch a free kick after it touches (6-1-6):

- A Team R player; or
- The ground and is or has been beyond Team R's free kick line;

Those two events may occur in either order, but once either one occurs, then not only is Team K allowed to touch the ball, they retain possession if they catch or recover it.

Although the following example would be rare, it illustrates the rule.

EXAMPLE 6-4: K19's kickoff is airborne over the R-48, but a gust of wind blows it back to the K-47 where it touches the ground and the first player to touch it, K90, makes the recovery. **RULING:** Team K's ball; the kick broke the plane of Team R's free kick line (traveled 10 yards) and touched the ground.

As 6-1-6 points out, Team K is not allowed to advance the kick. The ball is dead by rule if the kicking team catches or recovers the kick--that is, before Team R gains possession.

Touching by the receiving team does not give Team K the right to advance it, because it is still a kick until a player gains possession. However, if Team R catches or recovers the ball, it remains live and the kick has ended. Team R may advance the ball unless any Team R member has given a valid or invalid fair catch signal (6-1-5). This is now a running play and kick rules no longer apply. If a Team K player intercepts or recovers a subsequent fumble, for example, he is allowed to advance the ball as with any other fumble.

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Again, once the ball travels 10 yards and touches the ground, both teams are entitled to possession, but Team K cannot advance the ball.

EXAMPLE 6-5: K12's kickoff is short and lands at the R-48 where it is scooped on the bounce by K49 who takes it to the R-30 before being tackled. **RULING:** Team K is entitled to retain the ball, but cannot advance it. The ball is dead when K49 recovers and it belongs to Team K at the R-48.

Here we have an opportunity to demolish one of the cherished myths of football--"A muff may not be advanced." Well, sure it may. If a pass receiver muffs a forward pass and it is then intercepted, we'd all agree the defensive player may return it. The muff has nothing to do with it. What the kicking team may not do is advance a *kick*, and a muffed kick remains a kick.

The muff does not change the status of the ball--it is still a forward pass, or it is still a kick, or it is still a fumble - whatever it was before it was muffed. (See Chapter 12.)

First Touching

If Team K touches the ball in the field of play before Team R does, and before it has gone the requisite 10 yards, then Team K has committed a violation for "**first touching**" (2-12-1).

That isn't a foul, so no flag is thrown. There is no yardage penalty, no foul by the opponent is offset, nor is the ball dead if Team K merely touches it without gaining possession. The whistle certainly should not be blown and play continues, but the clock does not start (3-4-3).

The term is somewhat of a misnomer as there can be more than one spot of first touching. Perhaps "violation touching" is more descriptive.

As long as Team R does not touch the ball and subsequently foul, or there is not an accepted penalty for a player foul, or offsetting fouls, Team R may elect to take the ball at any spot of first touching (6-1-7). Team K may not keep possession, even if it recovers a muff or a fumble, as this is the price for having touched the ball too soon.

EXAMPLE 6-6: On a kickoff, K88 touches the ball at the K-48. As the play continues, R20 gains possession, carries the ball for a few yards and fumbles. K29 recovers the ball and is tackled. **RULING:** The first touching by Team K gives Team R the option of taking the ball at the K-48, so the fumble recovery by Team K is for naught.

In situations such as Example 6-7, Team R is entitled to the ball at the spot of first touching (or spots, if more than one) or to the result of the play.

EXAMPLE 6-7: K30 touches the kick at the K-47 which touches K42 at the K-49. R44 recovers the ball and advances to the K-45. **RULING:** The K-47 and K-49 are both first touching spots, but Team R will accept the result of the play; first and 10 on the K-45.

The next example further demonstrates the impact of first touching.

EXAMPLE 6-8: K12's kick glances the leg of K50 at the K-46, is touched by R64 at the K-48 and is recovered by K72 at the R-49. **RULING:** Although Team K was entitled to possession at the R-49, first touching occurred at the K-46. The ball belongs to Team R at the spot of first touching.

If Team R is the first to touch the ball, first touching by Team K no longer applies, even if the ball has not gone 10 yards.

EXAMPLE 6-9: R45 touches the kick at the K-46, K76 then touches it at the K-49 and the ball is recovered at the R-47 by: (a) R55, or (b) K27. **RULING:** First touching does not apply since Team R was the first to touch the kick. K76's touching is legal and the result of the play stands.

Some interesting situations can arise. In Example 6-6, suppose Team K fouls. Certainly Team R will refuse the penalty to gain possession of the ball at the spot of first touching. But, if Team R fouls, it is critical *when* the foul occurs, because the timing will govern the result. On the one hand, if Team R fouls any time before R20 touches the ball, then the penalty, if accepted, will be enforced from the previous spot and Team K will re-kick. On the other hand, if Team R fouls after they touch the ball, Team K will decline the penalty and keep the ball.

In the heat of battle, this can be quite confusing. The short answer is this: If no penalty is involved and if the kicking team commits first touching, it will not get the football. If there is a foul, be careful and think it through.

It is not first touching if a Team R player pushes or blocks a Team K player into contact with the ball (6-1-7), but it is likely a foul (more on that later). Also, Team R's touching is ignored if Team K pushes Team R into the ball or a Team K player muffs the ball into a Team R player in the

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neutral zone (the 10-yard area between the teams' free kick lines). The exemption applies only within the free kick neutral zone; it is meaningless beyond the neutral zone, since Team K may legally recover and retain possession beyond Team R's free kick line (6-1-6).

EXAMPLE 6-10: Team K tries an onside kick from the K-40. Before the untouched kick has traveled 10 yards, R62 blocks K50 into the ball at the K-45. K57 recovers the ball and is downed at the K-47. **RULING:** Because K50 was blocked into the ball, his touching is disregarded. However, K57 is guilty of first touching. Team R will most likely accept the first touching privilege and put the ball in play at that spot, the K-47.

Additional Examples: 6, 7.

Free Kick Becomes Dead

A free kick becomes live when the ball is legally kicked (2-1-2). Here are the ways a free kick becomes dead:

- It goes out of bounds.
- It breaks the plane of Team R's goal line. It doesn't matter if it has been touched by either team. It is a touchback and the ball belongs to Team R;
- A Team K player catches the kick. This is most likely a foul as discussed later;
- A Team K player recovers the kick;
 - The ball belongs to Team K if it is recovered after having been beyond Team R's free kick line, unless there was first touching (5-1-5b);
 - The ball belongs to Team K if it is recovered anywhere after Team R was the first to touch it (6-1-6);
 - The ball belongs to Team R if Team R has not touched the ball and the ball has not traveled the 10 yards to Team R's free kick line (5-1-5c);
- Team R makes a fair catch;
- Team R gains possession after a valid or invalid fair catch signal;

- It comes to rest and no one attempts to secure possession. The ball belongs to Team R;
- It is in joint possession of opponents. The ball belongs to Team R.

Free Kick Out of Bounds

If a free kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines after Team R touches it, it is put in play at the inbounds spot by Team R (6-1-10).

However, if a free kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines before Team R touches it, it is a foul by Team K (6-1-9). Team R has four options in this case:

- Have Team K kick again following a five-yard penalty; or
- Put the ball in play at the inbounds spot on the side of the field where the kick went out of bounds 25 yards beyond Team K's free kick line (normally their own 35 yard line);
- Put the ball in play following a five-yard penalty enforced from the succeeding spot; or
- Decline the penalty and take the ball at the inbounds spot.

The option to have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot negates declining the penalty (taking the ball at the out-of-bounds spot) as a viable option.

EXAMPLE 6-11: Following Team K's kickoff from the K-40, K21 is the first to touch the ball at the K-46, causing it to roll out of bounds untouched by Team R at the K-49. **RULING:** Team K is guilty of first touching and a foul for a free kick out of bounds. Team R has the following options: (1) decline the penalty and take the ball at the K-46 which is the spot of the first touching; (2) accept the five-yard penalty and have it enforced from the succeeding spot (the K-49) which would put the ball at the K-44; (3) accept a five-yard penalty from the previous spot and have Team K re-kick; (4) put the ball in play at the near inbounds spot 25 yards beyond the previous spot (the R-35); or (5) take the result of the play and get the ball at the K-49. The best choice is succeeding spot enforcement.

When an inbounds player of the receiving team touches a kick that subsequently goes out of bounds untouched by another player, then the

receiving team has caused the kick to go out of bounds.

When a receiving team player who is out of bounds is the first to touch a kick, the kicking team has caused the ball to go out of bounds. It does not matter if the ball is inside the plane of the sideline when it is touched.

EXAMPLE 6-12: R24 is standing with one foot out of bounds when he receives Team K's free kick before or after it touches the ground inbounds. When R24 touches the ball it is (a) beyond the sideline plane, or (b) over the field of play. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), it is a foul by Team K for a free kick out of bounds. The ball is out of bounds because it touches a player who is out of bounds (6.1.9C). It is not a foul for a Team R player to unintentionally go out of bounds.

If because of penalties the ball is kicked from a point such that placing the ball 25 yards beyond the previous spot would put the ball in Team R's end zone, that option cannot be offered (6-1-9 Pen, 6.1.9H).

Additional Examples: 7-9.

Fouls during Free Kicks

Penalties for fouls by Team K (other than kick catch interference) on any free kick may be enforced at the previous spot with the down repeated, or; at the succeeding spot when Team K will not be next to put the ball in play (10-4-2a).

EXAMPLE 6-13: While the ball is loose following a free kick, K12 blocks R50 below the waist at midfield. R30 catches the kick at the R-30 and is downed at the R-43. **RULING:** K12's penalty will be enforced from the succeeding spot, which is the R-43. Team R will snap the ball from the K-42.

In addition to a free kick out of bounds which was previously discussed, the next more likely fouls by Team K during a free kick (encroachment or a free kick infraction) are dead-ball fouls. Illegal blocking is discussed in a later section.

For kick catching interference, if Team R accepts the penalty, they may have the 15-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot with a replay of the down, or an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul (6-5-6 Pen).

The option to have the penalty enforced at the subsequent dead-ball spot still applies if there is a change of team possession. The only requirement

is that the ball will not be next be put in play by Team K.

A penalty for a foul by Team K can also be enforced from a spot of first touching if that spot is the dead-ball spot. Succeeding spot enforcement is discussed further in Chapter 11.

Once Team R possesses the ball, the kick has ended. The penalty for any subsequent foul is enforced as on any other running play using the all-but-one principle.

Additional Examples: 5, 10-11.

Opportunity to Catch a Free Kick

During any free kick, members of the receiving team must have an unhindered opportunity to catch the ball (6-5-6). Kicking team players must not obstruct the receiver's path to the ball if, in the judgment of the covering official, he has a reasonable opportunity to catch the ball and is in a position to do so. There is no specific distance requirement (no "halo" rule). In non-contact situations, it is strictly a judgment call as to whether the receiver has been obstructed. Kicking team players may be guilty of obstructing the receiver's path to the ball even if they are stationary.

Whether or not the receiver has signaled for a fair catch has nothing to do with this rule; kicking team players must stay out of his way in either case.

If a player of the kicking team touches the ball, obstructs the receiver, or contacts him while the kick is in-flight, then it is a foul for interference. Team R may decline the penalty and accept the result of the play, accept a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot and replay the down, or an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul (6-5-6 Pen).

EXAMPLE 6-14: K21's untouched free kick is caught by K54 and there are no Team R players anywhere near the spot of the catch, which is made at the (a) K-47, or (b) R-46. **RULING:** Kick-catching interference in (a) and (b). In (a), it is also first touching by K54.

It is highly unlikely for this foul to occur in the end zone, since the ball is dead when it breaks the plane of Team R's goal line.

Notice this protects Team R's opportunity to catch the kick. In other words, if the ball has touched the ground, the receiver no longer has protection since, by definition, he no longer can catch the ball. Also, once the ball touches a teammate of the receiver, there is no protection.

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Restrictions end when a Team R player touches the ball, so the receiver may be contacted immediately if he muffs the ball (2003 interp., Sit 7).

Being blocked by an opponent into the receiver or his path is not a foul.

Blocking

The kicker or place kick holder may not be blocked before they have advanced five yards beyond their free-kick line or the kick has touched the ground or touched another player. This is a 15-yard penalty for an illegal block (9-3-4, 9.3.4).

During a free kick, Team K is prohibited from blocking an opponent until they are eligible to recover the ball, the ball has gone 10 yards or the receiving team initiates a block within the neutral zone. The penalty is 10 yards for an illegal block (9-3-7).

EXAMPLE 6-15: While K2's kickoff is rolling free and untouched, K45 blocks R23 in the front and above his waist. At the time of K45's block the kicked ball was (a) six yards, or (b) 11 yards, beyond Team K's free-kick line. **RULING:** In (a), an illegal block, a 10-yard penalty from either the previous spot and re-kick or from the succeeding spot. In (b), a legal block.

Additional Examples: 11-13.

Scrimmage Kicks

Punts and field goal attempts, including those on a try, constitute the other class of kicks: scrimmage kicks. A field goal attempt may be either a place kick or the nearly obsolete drop kick. If a place kick is used, the ball must be controlled on the ground or a tee by a teammate (2-24-4).

A scrimmage kick is a legal kick made in or behind the neutral zone during a scrimmage down before a change of team possession. That is, the ball must be kicked legally, in a manner allowed by the rules. A scrimmage kick is legal if the foot that contacts the ball is not beyond the neutral zone when the kick is made (S&I 2-24-4). Illegal kicks are discussed later in this chapter.

Scrimmage kicks are usually made from a scrimmage-kick formation (see Chapter 3), but may also be attempted from a scrimmage formation. There are no restrictions on Team K players going downfield before the kick.

Although rare, a second scrimmage kick or a scrimmage kick after a completed pass, would be legal as long the ball is kicked in a legal manner in or behind the neutral zone before a change of team possession.

Right to Advance

Barring a fair catch signal, which we'll discuss later, any scrimmage kick (other than a try) can be caught or recovered by the receiving team and advanced (6-2-2). For the kicking team, there are several restrictions.

Perhaps the key question for an official to ask on any scrimmage kick is:

IS THE BALL BEYOND THE NEUTRAL ZONE WHEN IT IS TOUCHED?

Before we answer that question, let's make sure the related definitions are understood.

The **neutral zone** (2-28-1) is the rectangular area between the teams' scrimmage lines; its width is the length of the football. The expanded neutral zone extends two yards beyond the defensive line of scrimmage in the field of play (2-28-2).

A scrimmage kick has crossed the neutral zone when it touches the ground, a player, an official or anything that is beyond the neutral zone.

The blocking of a scrimmage kick (therefore, the touching) by an opponent of the kicking team who is in or behind the expanded neutral zone is ignored (6-2-6).

Back to the question "is the ball beyond the neutral zone when it is touched?"

If the answer is YES:

- There is no longer a line-to-gain (the continuity of downs is broken);
- If Team R is the first to touch the kick, then Team K may catch or recover it and retain possession (see Example 6-15);
- Team K may not advance the kick. The ball is dead as soon as Team K gets possession (4-2-2f) (see Example 6-15);
- Team K may not be the first to touch the ball. If this happens, it is a violation - first touching (see Example 6-22 and the following section).

If the answer is NO:

- Either team may catch or recover the ball and advance it. If a Team K player gets it, he may run, pass, or even kick the ball again (6-2-2 and 6-2-3) (see Examples 6-17 and 6-20).
- The continuity of downs is not broken, even if Team R had touched the ball behind the neutral zone. That means the down counts

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and Team K must make it to the line-to-gain in order to retain the ball (see Example 6-18).

Here are plays where the answer to the above question is **YES**.

EXAMPLE 6-16: K27's field goal attempt is partially blocked behind the neutral zone and is muffed by R95 beyond the expanded neutral zone. The muffed ball is recovered (a) behind, or (b) beyond the neutral zone by K33. **RULING:** In both cases, it is a first down for Team K. In (a), K33 could have advanced after recovering the ball.

EXAMPLE 6-17: K11's untouched punt is rolling downfield at the R-40 when K89 scoops it up and takes a few steps with the ball. **RULING:** The ball should be whistled dead when K89 gains possession. Team K cannot advance the ball. It's Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-40.

It is essential to know where Team R touches the ball in relation to the expanded neutral zone. If Team R has not touched the ball beyond the expanded neutral zone and Team K recovers it there, then the ball is dead and it is simply first touching. However, if Team R has touched it beyond the expanded neutral zone and Team K recovers, then Team K retains possession and is awarded a new series. Remember, the ball is dead if Team K catches or recovers a kick beyond the expanded neutral zone; Team K may not advance the ball regardless of touching by Team R.

And plays where the answer to the above question is **NO**.

EXAMPLE 6-18: Fourth and 10 on the K-40. K18's punt hits the ground at the (a) K-45 or (b) K-38. In either case, it bounces back untouched to the K-35. K25 grabs the ball and advances to the R-20. **RULING:** In both cases, K25's recovery and advance are legal; first and 10 for Team K on the R-20. In (a), although the ball crossed the neutral zone, Team K did not touch it there. It does not matter if the ball remains behind the neutral zone or crosses the neutral zone and returns there; either team may advance it (6-2-2 and 6-2-3).

EXAMPLE 6-19: Fourth and six on the K-30. K2's short punt strikes the ground at the K-35 and caroms untouched back to the K-25. There, R43 muffs the ball while trying to grab it and K28 falls on the ball at the K-23. **RULING:** Since R43's touching did not occur beyond the neutral zone, the touching is ignored. Since the ball is recovered short of the line-to-gain, Team R takes over first and 10 on the K-23.

If the ball is behind the neutral zone when Team K gains possession, Team K may run, pass, or even kick again since team possession has not changed.

If the ball was not touched first by Team R beyond the zone, the ball remains live and belongs to Team K with the down counting (5-1-4). Thus, if a fourth down punt is blocked and then recovered and downed by Team K behind the neutral zone, a new series is awarded to Team R (5-1-3c). It does not matter if Team R touches the ball behind the neutral zone. This has nothing to do with the kick rules, as Team R simply takes possession on downs because Team K has failed to advance the ball beyond the line-to-gain. Had the same situation occurred on, third down, Team K would keep the ball and snap on fourth down.

EXAMPLE 6-20: R78 blocks a punt and the ball does not cross the neutral zone. K24 recovers and advances beyond the neutral zone where he is tackled short of the line-to-gain. This happens on (a) third down, or (b) fourth down. **RULING:** In (a), Team K will have fourth down at the yard line where K24 is tackled. The clock continues to run. In (b), the ball goes over on downs to Team R, first and 10 at the yard line where K24 was tackled. The clock stops when the ball is dead and starts on the snap since a new series was awarded after a legal kick.

If the ball was touched first by Team R beyond the expanded neutral zone, the ball also remains live and will belong to whichever team is in possession at the end of the down (5-1-3f). If Team K recovers a ball touched first by Team R beyond the zone and then throws an incomplete forward pass, the ball will belong to Team K at the previous spot (5.1.3C).

EXAMPLE 6-21: Fourth and 10 on the K-45. K22 punts the ball beyond the neutral zone. R55 muffs the ball back behind the neutral zone where K8 recovers the ball at the K-40 and throws an incomplete forward pass. **RULING:** Since R55 touched the kick beyond the expanded neutral zone, it will be a new series for the team in possession. Thus, it is a first down for Team K at the K-45. The pass is legal as there had been no change of team possession.

A critical play arises when there is simultaneous recovery of a kick. Simultaneous recovery of a *fumble* awards the ball to the team last in possession (7-4-3c). But in the case of the kick, 5-1-3e and 5-1-5d make it clear joint possession is awarded to the receiving team.

EXAMPLE 6-22: Team K's punt is blocked, never crosses the neutral zone, and winds up back in Team K's end zone where opposing players simultaneously recover it. **RULING:** By 5-1-3e, it is a touchdown for Team R.

Be prepared for this one, because Team K's coach is sure to go ballistic. This is an excellent example of where the kick rules are very different from the rest of the game.

Additional Example: 14, 15.

First Touching

First touching of a scrimmage kick is a violation which benefits the receiving team by giving them the option to take the ball at the spot of the first touching (6-2-5). First touching applies only when Team K touches the ball when they are not entitled to possession (2-12-2). Thus, on a scrimmage kick, first touching can occur only beyond the expanded neutral zone. First touching does not apply if the ball is at rest.

EXAMPLE 6-23: K5's punt is rolling downfield when K82 touches it at the R-20. The ball (a) comes to rest at the R-10 and is blown dead there, (b) is picked up by R26 at the R-10 and advanced to the R-30, or (c) is picked up by R33 at the R-10 who retreats and is downed at the R-5. **RULING:** In (a) and (c), Team R will choose the spot of first touching, the R-20. In (b), Team R will take the result of the play, first and 10 on the R-30.

As with free kicks, this option is canceled if Team R touches the ball and thereafter during the down commits a foul, or if any penalty is accepted

for a player foul (including offsetting fouls) by either team. It is important to note first touching *does not kill the ball*. If the ball is at rest, it becomes dead when Team K touches it, but by definition (2-12-2), it is not first touching.

EXAMPLE 6-24: Team K's punt is beyond the neutral zone and is first touched by K68. Receiver R27 picks up the ball, returns it for 10 yards, and fumbles. The ball is then recovered and downed by K19. R62 clipped during R27's return. **RULING:** Team K may keep the football by declining R62's penalty. Since Team R fouled after they touched the kick, their option to take the ball at the spot of first touching is canceled.

Forced touching by either team is disregarded. Touching of a free kick or scrimmage kick is ignored if it is caused by a player batting or muffing the ball into contact with an opponent or caused by a player pushing or blocking an opponent into contact with the ball (6-2-4, 6-2-5).

Additional Examples: 16-21, 23.

Scrimmage Kick Out of Bounds

If a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines, it belongs to the receiving team at the inbounds spot (6-2-7). Team R gets the ball regardless of the down, whether the ball crossed the line, whether it went out of bounds beyond or behind the line, or which team touched it last. Also, it does not matter if it is a punt or field goal attempt.

Additional Example: 14.

Scrimmage Kick Becomes Dead

Here are the ways a scrimmage kick becomes dead:

- It goes out of bounds;
- A non-scoring kick breaks the plane of Team R's goal line;
- A Team K player catches or recovers the ball while it is beyond the neutral zone (4-2-2f);
- Team R makes a fair catch or gains possession after any valid or invalid fair catch signal;
- It comes to rest in the field of play and is touched by Team K or no player attempts to secure it. The ball belongs to the receiving team;

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- It comes to rest in Team K's end zone and no player attempts to secure it. It is a safety or touchback (6-3-2);

EXAMPLE 6-25: K13's punt comes to a rest at the 50 yard line and K32 immediately places his hand on the ball and quickly removes it. R43 grabs the ball and races into the end zone. **RULING:** The ball became dead when K32 touched it while it was at rest. There is no touchdown.

- It is in joint possession of opponents. The ball belongs to the receiving team.

Additional Examples: 17, 23-25.

Opportunity to Catch a Scrimmage Kick

The rules regarding the opportunity of the receiving team to catch a scrimmage kick are the same as for a free kick with one difference. The kicking team may not obstruct the path of the receiver, or contact him before he touches the ball, unless blocked into the ball or the receiver, or to ward off a blocker, but they may touch or catch the ball if no receiver is in position to catch it.

EXAMPLE 6-26: K25's untouched punt is caught by K32 and there (a) are no Team R players near the spot of the catch, or (b) is a Team R player in position to catch the ball. **RULING:** No foul in (a), but kick-catching interference in (b).

EXAMPLE 6-27: K14 punts and the kick goes well downfield. As R27 is about to catch the kick, K36 waves his hands near R27's face (face guarding), but makes no contact. **RULING:** Since K36 hindered R27, it is a foul for kick catching interference. Team R's choices are: a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot with the down replayed, an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul, or decline the penalty and take the result of the play.

EXAMPLE 6-28: Fourth down on the K-40. K15 punts. Deep receiver R29, realizing the kick is short, is running forward trying to reach the kick, but has to go around K58, who came within an eyelash of contact. **RULING:** R29 has the right of way. If the covering official judges K58 hindered R29, it's kick catching interference.

EXAMPLE 6-29: Same as the previous example, except R85 blocks K57, who then runs into R29. **RULING:** K57 is excused from his contact because he was blocked into the receiver.

The opportunity to catch a kick ends if the ball is muffed (2003 interp, Sit 7).

EXAMPLE 6-30: While K1's punt is in flight beyond the neutral zone, R20 does not give a fair catch signal. The ball strikes R20 on the shoulder and bounces high into the air. While the loose ball is still airborne, K45 pushes R20 in the chest and K45 catches the ball at that spot. **RULING:** There is no foul for kick-catching interference since R20's protection ended when the kick was muffed. The ball is dead when K45 catches it; Team K's ball, first and 10 at the spot of K45's catch.

If a player of the kicking team obstructs the receiver, or contacts him while the kick is in-flight, then it is a foul for interference. Team R may accept a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot and replay the down, choose an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul, or accept the result of the play (6-5-6).

Additional Examples: 22, 23.

Field Goals

The rules which govern punts and unsuccessful field goal attempts are identical except as to when the ball becomes dead. Scoring kicks remain live after breaking the plane of Team R's goal line in-flight until ruled successful or unsuccessful unless the ball touches a Team K player.

EXAMPLE 6-31: On fourth down at the R-30, Team K attempts a field goal. The kick is short and (a) Team R touches the ball at the R-10 and it then rolls into and out of the end zone, (b) Team R touches the ball at the R-10 and it rolls out of bounds at the R-5, (c) The ball is untouched beyond the neutral zone and comes to rest at the R-7, or (d) The ball lands at the R-25, rebounds untouched behind the neutral zone, and rolls out of bounds at the R-34. **RULING:** In (a), touchback. Team R's ball, first down and 10 at the R-20; in (b) Team R's ball, first down and 10 at the R-5; in (c) Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-7; in (d) Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-34.

Be careful about first touching of an unsuccessful field goal attempt. The rules regarding first touching by Team K are the same as for any other scrimmage kick. Team R can advance an unsuccessful field goal attempt as long as the ball does not break the plane of the goal.

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EXAMPLE 6-32: Team K's unsuccessful field goal attempt is rolling along the ground at the R-10 where K35 touches it and: (a) R26 tries to pick up the ball, but muffs it out of bounds at the R-5, or (b) the ball rolls dead at the R-12. **RULING:** In (a), Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-10, the spot of first touching. In (b), Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-12; the spot of first touching will be refused.

Additional Examples: 23-25.

The Try

It is well to remember a kick on a try is also a scrimmage kick. However, the try is a unique part of the game and has special rules. The kick try is like a field goal attempt, but there is a significant exception. Unlike a field goal attempt, the kick try ends whenever Team R gains possession or it is otherwise apparent the kick will not score (8-3-2a, b). It does not matter whether or not the ball crosses the neutral zone or breaks the plane of Team R's goal line.

The try will be covered further in detail when we discuss scoring in Chapter 9. Penalty enforcement for fouls during and after a try are discussed in Chapter 11.

EXAMPLE 6-33: Team K's kick try is blocked at the line of scrimmage. The ball rolls: (a) behind, or (b) beyond the neutral zone where it is recovered by K34 who carries the ball over the goal line. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the ball is dead when it is apparent the kick will not score.

Fouls during Scrimmage Kicks

Penalties for fouls on scrimmage kicks are treated differently depending on which team fouls. Team R fouls which do not qualify for post-scrimmage kick enforcement, are enforced under the all-but-one principle with the previous spot as the basic spot.

Penalties for fouls by Team K (other than kick catch interference) on any scrimmage kick may be enforced at the previous spot with the down repeated, or; at the succeeding spot when Team K will not be next to put the ball in play (10-4-2a).

EXAMPLE 6-34: Fourth and seven at the K-35. Team K has five players in the backfield at the snap. R39 catches the punt at the R-30 and is tackled at the R-35. **RULING:** If Team R accepts the penalty for the illegal formation foul they may elect to have fourth down replayed at the K-30 or they may put the ball in play at the R-40. The clock starts on the ready if the down is replayed or on the snap if Team R is to next snap the ball.

EXAMPLE 6-35: Fourth and 10 on the K-40. (a) Before the kick, K64 holds at the K-38, or (b) while the ball is rolling downfield, K79 clips at the R-30. The punt rolls out of bounds at the R-37. **RULING:** The foul can be enforced under the all-but-one principle and the basic spot is the previous spot. In (a), the foul is by the team in possession behind the basic spot, so the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul, the K-38. In (b), the foul is by the team in possession beyond the basic spot, so the penalty is enforced from the basic spot, the K-40. In either case, the penalty can also be enforced from the succeeding spot, the R-37. After enforcement, it will be Team R's ball first and 10.

EXAMPLE 6-36: Fourth and six at the K-35. Team K has five players in the backfield at the snap. R39 catches the punt at the R-30 and is tackled at the R-35. Team R then commits a dead-ball foul. **RULING:** The penalties will be enforced in the order of the occurrence of the fouls starting with the live-ball foul. The referee should explain to Team R's coach that to keep the ball, Team R must have the penalty for Team K's live-ball foul enforced from the succeeding spot. This will be followed by enforcement of the penalty for Team R's dead-ball foul, so that Team R will have the ball at the R-25. The clock starts on the snap.

Note in the above example that if Team R elects to have the illegal-formation penalty enforced from the previous spot, Team K will retain possession of the ball, with a first down due to enforcement of the penalty for Team R's dead-ball foul. The referee should ensure this mistake is not made.

EXAMPLE 6-37: Fourth and seven at the K-35. Team K has five players in the backfield at the snap. R39 catches the punt at the R-30 and is tackled at the R-35. Team K then commits a dead-ball foul. **RULING:** In this case, Team R has a viable option to have the illegal-formation penalty enforced from the previous spot because of field position. The penalty for the dead-ball foul would then be enforced from the spot where the five-yard penalty leaves the ball, resulting in a replay of fourth down at the K-15. The clock would start on the ready.

Again, the referee should explain the options carefully to the Team R coach.

Penalties for Team R fouls during scrimmage kicks are enforced from the previous spot unless the foul is governed by post-scrimmage kick

enforcement rules. Post-scrimmage kick enforcement allows the receiving team to retain possession of the ball after they have forced the opponents to punt, even though the receiving team commits certain fouls before possession actually changes. There are also special enforcement rules which apply when Team R fouls during a try. Both of these types of fouls are discussed in Chapter 11.

Additional Example: 16.

Contacting the Kicker

Arguably the most vulnerable player on the football field is a kicker with his leg in the air on a follow-through. Consequently, the rules provide kickers and holders special protection from contact by the defense. A player becomes a **kicker** when a knee, lower leg or foot makes (deliberate) contact with the ball (2-32-8).

A **holder** is a player who controls the ball on the ground or on a kicking tee (2-32-7). The kicker and place kick holder are protected from contact by the defense (9-4-5).

While incidental contact is not a foul, a foul should be ruled if the contact is sufficient and could have been avoided regardless of whether it was apparent a kick would be made.

EXAMPLE 6-38: K10 in punt formation moves two or three steps to recover an errant snap or recovers a snap over his head. K10 then punts and is contacted by R72. **RULING:** A judgment call; the key is whether the contact was avoidable. A bad snap is not an excuse in and of itself for the defense to contact the kicker.

There are two penalties for illegal contact with a scrimmage kicker or holder (9-4-5). Whether the foul is **roughing** or **running into** is obviously a judgment call. Roughing the kicker is a personal foul and includes any act that endangers the safety of the kicker or holder. The penalty for roughing is 15 yards from the previous spot and an automatic first down. Running into the kicker or holder is a foul that occurs when the kicker or holder is displaced from his kicking or holding position but is not roughed. The penalty is five yards from the previous spot with the down repeated.

EXAMPLE 6-39: Fourth and 10 on the K-20. After K5's punt is in flight and untouched by any Team R player, R55 (a) tries to avoid K5, but brushes K5's shoulder, causing K5 to stagger to maintain his balance; (b) tries to avoid K5, but

bumps his shoulder, causing K5 to lose his balance and fall; or (c) charges into K5's chest, knocking him to the ground. The penalty is accepted in each case. **RULING:** In (a), no foul; that is incidental contact. In (b), R55 is guilty of a five-yard penalty for running into the kicker. If accepted, the five-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot. The result is fourth and five from the K-25. In (c), R55 is guilty of a 15-yard personal foul for roughing the kicker. Team K will likely accept the penalty, which includes an automatic first down. The penalty yields first and 10 for Team K at the K-35.

As previously mentioned, incidental contact is not a foul. If contact is slight and partially caused by the unexpected or unnecessary movement of the kicker, no foul should be called. There are three specific instances in which contact may not be avoidable. The first happens when it is not reasonably certain a kick will be made. Examples include an unexpected punt on the run (rugby-style kick) or a kicker who chases an errant snap and abruptly kicks the ball.

Second, if the kicker or holder is contacted by a defensive player who touches the kick and the contact was unavoidable, there is no foul. The ball must be touched near the spot of the kick and the defender may not stop and renew his charge into the kicker, nor may he change direction. Touching the kick, in itself, is not a license to contact the kicker. If the player who contacts the kicker is not the player who touched the kick, the contact *may* be excused. However, it is a foul if one player blocks the kick, but another roughs or runs into the kicker when the contact is avoidable (9.4.5A).

EXAMPLE 6-40: Fourth and 10 on the K-30. On the K-22, K9's punt is partially blocked by R29, but the kick carries well downfield. Within a second or so of touching the kick, R29 and R35, who was right next to R29, contact K9, knocking him to the ground. In the referee's judgment, neither R29 nor R35 could avoid the contact with K9. **RULING:** Legal.

Finally, being blocked into the kicker by a member of Team K is exempted. This means, for example, if a Team R player attempts to block the kick and contacts the kicker because of being blocked by a Team K player, then there is no foul.

In summary, there are three situations in which contact may not be avoidable.

- It is not reasonably certain a kick will be made;

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- When the kick is touched; and
- A defender is blocked into the kicker or holder by a member of the kicking team.

A potential punter and a holder are runners by rule when they receive the snap. Consequently these players may be contacted or tackled while they are in possession of the ball. If so, the play is legal and any fumble resulting from the tackle is allowed.

On occasion, the potential punter may be contacted or tackled after he releases the ball, but before the ball is kicked. If the contact causes the ball to fall to the ground without a kick, there is no question as to the legality of the play – a fumble has occurred. However, if the ball is kicked, normally or abnormally, the referee has a very difficult judgment to make.

It should be noted that a player who has released the ball for a punt and is beginning to raise his foot to kick the ball is just as vulnerable as a player who has kicked the ball; however by rule, he is not provided protection until he kicks the ball (9.4.5G).

Additional Examples: 26, 27.

Rules Common to Both Free and Scrimmage Kicks

Batting

For the most part it is illegal to bat a kick. The exceptions are listed in the next section. Batting is further discussed in Chapter 8. Batting a field goal attempt is discussed in Chapter 9.

Touching

Here is a summary of the rules regarding the touching of a kick:

- The receiving team may always catch or recover a kick, free or scrimmage, anywhere in the field of play, and advance;
- If Team K touches any kick before they may legally retain possession, it is first touching. Such touching is not a foul, but a violation. The touching is ignored if it is caused by a Team R player pushing or blocking a Team K player into contact with ball (6-1-7, 6-2-5);
- If Team R is first to touch a free kick, Team K may catch or recover the ball and retain possession;
- Team K may retain possession of a free kick after it goes 10 yards and touches the ground;

- The ball is always dead when Team K gains possession of a free kick;
- On free kicks, it is kick catching interference if Team K touches the ball in flight;
- If Team R is first to touch a scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone, Team K may catch or recover the ball and retain possession;
- If a scrimmage kick is behind the neutral zone, Team K may catch or recover the ball and advance;
- If a scrimmage kick is beyond the neutral zone when Team K gains possession, the ball is dead;
- On scrimmage kicks, it is kick catching interference if Team K touches the ball in flight or obstructs Team R when a Team R player is in position to make a catch;
- The touching of a low scrimmage kick by any player is ignored if the touching is in or behind the expanded neutral zone (6-2-6);
- The touching of a scrimmage kick or a free kick within the neutral zone is ignored if it is caused by a Team K player pushing or blocking a Team R player into contact with ball (6-1-6, 6-2-4);
- A Team K player may bat a grounded scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone toward his own goal line;
- A Team K player may catch or bat a scrimmage kick in flight beyond the neutral zone toward his own goal line if no Team R player is in position to catch the ball;
- If any kick strikes an official who is inbounds, the status of the ball is unchanged. It is not the same as the ball touching the ground where the official is standing. If the ball is in flight when it strikes the official, it continues to be in flight until the ball physically touches the ground.

Opportunity to Catch a Kick

The opportunity to catch a kick applies whether or not a fair catch signal is given. As previously discussed (see the sections on "Opportunity to Catch a Free Kick" and "Opportunity to Catch a Scrimmage Kick"), the opportunity of the receiving team to catch a kick

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applies to both free and scrimmage kicks. Again, these rules are the same except for one difference. On a scrimmage kick, the kicking team may touch or catch the ball if no receiver is in position to catch it. On a free kick, it is a foul if the kicking team is the first to touch the ball while it is in-flight.

If there is a foul for interference, Team R may:

- Decline the penalty and take the result of the play;
- Accept a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot and replay the down; or
- An awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul (6-5-6).

EXAMPLE 6-41: Fourth and 20 on the K-30. K10 kicks a high, but short punt. R36 is moving forward to catch the ball, but is obstructed by several Team K players who lost track of the ball. The in-flight ball strikes K22 in the back at the R-45. The ball is recovered by R44 at the (a) R-40, or (b) K-35. **RULING:** A foul for kick catching interference. In both (a) and (b), Team R may accept the penalty and have fourth down replayed from the K-15. In (a), the best choice is to accept an awarded fair catch at the K-40 – 15 yards from the spot of the foul. In (b), the best choice is to decline the penalty and accept the result of the play: first and 10 at the K-35 which is better field position than the awarded fair catch.

Additional Example: 28.

Fair Catch

In addition to a receiver's normal opportunity to catch a kick, the restrictions on both teams increase when a fair catch signal is given.

A fair catch is a unique part of the game. On a kick, it allows the receiving team to make an exchange or trade-off, so to speak. A receiver who signals receives the opportunity to catch the ball while protected from contact by the kicking team in return for a commitment on behalf of his team to not advance the ball.

The rules related to a fair catch can be examined in terms of the signal itself and the restrictions on both teams, both on making contact with an opponent and advancing the ball.

Any receiver may signal for a fair catch while any legal kick is in flight (6-5-1). In 2-9-1, a **fair catch** is a catch of a free kick in or beyond the neutral zone to the receiver's goal line or a catch beyond the neutral zone of a scrimmage kick, by a

Team R player who has made a valid signal. Carefully consider what all this means.

First, it is perfectly legal to fair catch a free kick. Sometimes, fair catches are mistakenly identified only with punts.

Second, on scrimmage kicks, the ball *must be beyond the neutral zone* if a fair catch is to be made. It is insufficient for it to *have been* beyond the zone, such as having crossed and been blown back. It must *be* beyond the zone when the catch is made (6-5-2). If the ball crosses the neutral zone and it is blown back, there cannot be a fair catch, but the ball is dead when it is caught or recovered by the receiving team if a signal has been given. In most cases, this is insignificant, but it does negate the option for Team R to free kick following the fair catch.

Also, a fair catch cannot be made in Team R's end zone because the ball is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line.

Signaling

Fair catch signals are classified as either **valid**, **invalid** or **illegal**. The receiver must make a valid signal. Let's see what that means. Valid and invalid refer both to the *KIND* of signal, and to *WHEN* the signal is made.

2-9-3 says a player makes a valid signal by fully extending only one arm above his head and waving it from side to side. The idea is this: if he wants the protection afforded by the fair catch rule, he'd better let everybody in the stadium know it, especially the opponents bearing down on him. An invalid signal is any signal that is not a valid one, such as a chest-high flick of the hand or the quick wave-off motion like that of an outfielder calling for a fly ball.

Other examples of invalid signals include: a limp wave, partially extending and waving one hand in front of the face or chest, or fully extending and laterally waving both hands above the head (6.5.7B). When a receiver shades his eyes during a kick, he must do so with a bent arm and without waving so it cannot be mistaken as a signal. Note a player commits a foul by giving an invalid signal, and the penalty is five yards (6-5-7).

EXAMPLE 6-42: Fourth and three on the 50 yard line. At the R-20, R41 gives an invalid fair catch signal while the punt is in flight well downfield. R41 then catches the kick at the R-15. **RULING:** The ball is dead when possessed by any player. The five-yard penalty is assessed under post-scrimmage kick enforcement rules. Team R's ball, first and 10 on the R-10.

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As mentioned, the validity of a signal also refers to *WHEN* the signal is made. An invalid fair catch signal is not only a signal which does not meet the requirements of a valid signal as described in 2-9-3, but also one which is made after the kick has touched a receiver or the ground. When a valid or invalid signal is given, the ball is dead when caught or recovered anywhere by Team R.

EXAMPLE 6-43: Fourth and 10 on the K-20. K15 punts and the ball touches the ground at the 50 yard line. After the ball has bounced high into the air, R18 makes a proper fair catch signal at the R-45 and gains possession of the ball at the R-48. **RULING:** Foul for an invalid fair catch signal. The ball is dead as soon as R18 gains possession. The penalty is enforced using post-scrimmage kick rules. Team R's ball, first and 10 on the R-40.

EXAMPLE 6-44: R20 is standing on the R-30 and is struck on the shoulder by a punt that is beyond the neutral zone. After the ball has hit R20, R28 signals for a fair catch while standing at the R-25. The ball then rolls out of bounds at R-18. **RULING:** A foul for an invalid fair catch signal. The five-yard penalty is enforced under post-scrimmage kick enforcement rules. Team R's ball, first and 10 on the R-13.

As was mentioned, any member of the receiving team can signal for a fair catch while any kick is in flight. There are three instances when a player gives a valid signal, but it is not a fair catch when the ball is caught. They are when:

- A scrimmage kick is caught behind the line;
- The ball is caught by a player who did not signal (6-5-3); and
- A free kick is caught behind the neutral zone.

An illegal signal, by contrast, can only be given by a runner – a player in possession of the ball (2-9-5). The penalty is also five yards and is enforced under the all-but-one principle (6-5-8 Pen). If any other player gives a fair catch signal after the ball is in possession of a receiver, the signal is ignored (6.5.8B)

Protection

A receiver who signals is protected from contact by the kicking team in return for a commitment on behalf of his team to not advance the ball (6-5-5). This protection applies to a player

after he touches the ball and is not related to the opportunity to catch the ball which was discussed earlier. Contacting a player who has given a valid signal is a foul that carries a 15-yard penalty.

The ball becomes dead as soon as any Team R player gains possession. (It is also dead if a Team K player gains possession, but for a different reason.) Put another way, if a Team R player makes any waving signal, then it is illegal for him or any of his teammates to advance the ball. The foul is for delay of game.

This can be troublesome for the downfield officials. The signal might be given by a deep receiver, but the ball caught by an upback who, unaware his teammate has signaled, begins to run. Such advance is a foul if it delays the game. There are no prescribed guidelines for the number of steps a receiver may take; however, we recommend officials be tolerant of a receiver who could not have seen his teammate's signal and takes a few extra steps through no real fault of his own.

It is critical to whistle this play dead as soon as it is certain the receiver has control of the ball. If Team R does advance, the foul is for delay of game (6-5-5 Pen). It is a dead-ball foul between series, so it will be first down and 10 yards to go.

Only the receiver who gives a valid signal is afforded protection, but he loses his protection if he muffs the ball. It does not matter if he still has a chance to complete the catch after the muff; he may be immediately contacted legally.

If, after a receiver signals, a catch is made by a teammate, it is not a fair catch, but the ball becomes dead (6-5-3). This also applies if the signal is invalid. Contacting the teammate of a player who has signaled, a receiver who has given an invalid signal, or a receiver who has signaled but is contacted where he cannot make a fair catch, is not a foul unless the contact is judged to be unnecessary roughness or some other type of personal foul (6.5.3).

EXAMPLE 6-45: Fourth and 12 on the K-30. After K13's punt lands on the R-35 and bounces high into the air, R28 gives a fair catch signal at the R-30 where he grabs the ball and is immediately tackled by K76. **RULING:** No fair catch, but the ball is dead at the R-30 where R28 recovered it. The tackle by K76 is not a foul because no protection is afforded a receiver who gives an invalid signal. R28 is guilty of an invalid signal, which is enforced under post-scrimmage kick enforcement rules. Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-25.

EXAMPLE 6-46: K3 punts and R35 signals for a fair catch. R26 catches the ball and is immediately tackled cleanly by K25. R26 fumbles when hit and the ball is recovered by K44. **RULING:** The ball became dead when caught by R26, and regardless of when the whistle was blown, R26 fumbled a dead ball. There can be no recovery by K44. The contact by K25 is not a foul because R26 did not signal for a fair catch.

6.5.3 Comment states a kicking team player who could have seen a fair catch signal made by a teammate of the player who catches the ball, does not have license to contact the receiver. However, 6.5.3 makes it clear such contact is not a foul unless it is a personal foul. It does not matter whether the kicking team player did or did not have a chance to see the signal, since a receiver who fails to signal is not afforded protection.

Protection ends when the kick is touched by a Team R player beyond the line or it strikes the ground (6-5-6).

EXAMPLE 6-47: R21 signals for a fair catch while the kick is in-flight and the ball (a) strikes R21's chest and ricochets into the air directly above him; or (b) lands five yards in front of him and he moves to recover the ball. In both cases, K55 then blocks R21 out of the way before anyone touches the ball. **RULING:** Legal in both cases. In (a), once R21 muffs the kick, he may be contacted. In (b), R21's protection ended when the kick struck the ground (6.5.6E).

Blocking

There are restrictions on blocking by receivers who signal for a fair catch. Any receiver who has given a valid or invalid signal may not block until the *kick has ended* (6-5-1, 9-3-3). Any such block carries a 15-yard penalty even if it is a block in the back.

This prohibits the receiver from signaling for a fair catch near his goal line, purposely making no attempt to catch the kick, and then blocking an opponent to prevent the ball from being downed before it goes into the end zone for a touchback.

The wording "kick has ended," has the same meaning as "until the down ends"; except in the rare case when the ball returns behind the neutral zone after having crossed it, and is subsequently advanced.

Next Play

When a fair catch is made, the ball is next snapped by the receiving team at the spot of the catch unless it is caught in a side zone in which case the ball is moved to the nearest hash mark.

Summary

Here's a summary of the rules regarding a fair catch:

- For a fair catch to be made Team R must give a valid signal;
- It is permissible for a receiver to give a fair catch signal regardless of where he is standing.
- Only the receiver(s) who gives a valid signal can make a fair catch and is thus afforded protection;
- The protection ends after a free kick is touched by a receiver in or beyond the neutral zone to the receiver's goal line or after a scrimmage kick is touched by a receiver beyond the neutral zone;
- After the signal, the ball must be caught for a fair catch. A ball which touches the ground and is recovered is not a fair catch;
- Anytime a valid or invalid fair catch signal is given, the ball becomes dead when possession is obtained by either team beyond the neutral zone;
- A scrimmage kick recovered by the kicking team in or behind the neutral zone remains live even though Team R signals;
- A fair catch cannot be made in the end zone - the ball is dead when it breaks the plane of Team R's goal line;
- A fair catch cannot be made behind the line on a scrimmage kick, or behind Team K's line on a free kick, but the ball becomes dead when caught or recovered by the receivers if a signal was given;
- When in doubt, the fair catch signal is valid.

Additional Examples: 29-34.

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Option to Snap or Free Kick

After a made or awarded fair catch, Team R has the option to put the ball in play by snap or free kick. That choice remains if:

- A dead-ball foul occurs;
- A foul or inadvertent whistle occurs during the down following the fair catch and the down is replayed.

When a fair catch is made or awarded, and either of the above apply, the offensive team may choose to free kick for a field goal or snap anywhere between the hash marks (6-5-4).

If Team K chooses to free kick for a field goal, the formations for both teams are the same as for any free kick with a 10 yard neutral zone between each team's free kick line.

EXAMPLE 6-48: After a fair catch following a punt, Team A snaps the ball from the B-45. A24 gains 10 yards on a running play and during the down B26 grasped and pulled A24's face mask. The penalty moves the ball to the B-20. Team A now wishes to try a free kick for a field goal. **RULING:** A free kick is permitted since the down is replayed.

EXAMPLE 6-49: With eight seconds remaining in the game, Team A is behind, a fair catch is made at the B-35. Team A puts the ball in play by snap. In (a) A7 is barking signals when B25 encroaches and Team A accepts the penalty, moving the ball to the B-30; or (b) Team A snaps and the umpire blows an inadvertent whistle when A7's forward pass is in flight. In each case, what options does Team A have? **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the options available to Team A are the same as they had been after the fair catch. In (a), from the B-30 or in (b), from the B-35, Team A may put the ball in play by snap or free kick (field-goal attempt).

Additional Example: 34.

Momentum Exception

This rule (8-5-2a Exception) allows for the possibility a receiver might catch or recover a kick inside his five yard line and his momentum carries him into his own end zone. Without this special rule, such a play would result in a safety, since the player is responsible for carrying the ball into his own end zone.

The momentum rule applies regardless of whether the kick is caught or recovered. Thus, if the punt hits the ground at the six, bounces high into the air, and the receiver grabs it at the three with his momentum carrying him into the end zone, the momentum rule applies.

Note the rule stipulates the ball either becomes dead in the receiving (defensive) team's possession in the end zone, or is fumbled out of bounds from the end zone without returning to the field of play. In both of these cases, the receiving team will next put the ball in play at the spot of the catch or recovery. The momentum exception is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

Additional Example: 35.

Player Out of Bounds

A Team K player who goes out of bounds during the down before any change of possession (unless he is blocked out of bounds and returns at the first opportunity) must remain out of bounds until the ball becomes dead. The foul is for illegal participation.

There is no such restriction on Team R players; however, no player may intentionally go out of bounds during the down and return to the field, intentionally touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate (9-6-2). See Chapter 10 for further discussion and examples.

Illegal Kicks

There is a distinction between an illegal kick and illegally kicking the ball. They are separate acts. Illegally kicking the ball means kicking it in a manner not allowed by the rules--how the ball is kicked (2-24-1, 9-7-1). An illegal kick is a kick made in a perfectly legal manner, but is not allowed because of when or where it is made (2-24-9).

REMEMBER FROM 2019: The penalty for illegally kicking the ball is 10 yards (9-7-1 Pen).

REMEMBER FROM 2019: The penalty for an illegal kick is 10 yards (6-2-1 Pen).

The requirements for a legal free kick and a legal scrimmage kick were previously discussed. The best example of a kick made in a perfectly legal manner, but is not allowed because of *where* it is made is a punter who runs beyond the neutral zone before he kicks the ball. This is a foul for an illegal kick (6-2-1). The penalty is enforced from the end of the run (spot of the kick). The loose ball is considered a fumble, and the receiving team

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may decline the penalty in order to keep possession should they recover the ball with or without an advance.

It is worthwhile to note that when this type of illegal kick occurs, the players and the downfield officials will not know that an illegal kick has occurred and that the ball should be treated as a fumble. Consequently, the ball will be played and officiated as a legal kick. The correct options can be addressed after the play ends.

EXAMPLE 6-50: From a fourth down punt formation, K49 receives the snap and, under a heavy rush, eludes tacklers, runs beyond the neutral zone, and punts the ball. **RULING:** K49 is guilty of an illegal kick, but this is not illegally kicking the ball. The ball remains in play and is treated as a fumble. The 10-yard penalty can only be enforced from the spot of the foul/end of the run. Succeeding spot enforcement is not available because the action did not occur during a legal scrimmage kick; it happened during a running play.

Another example (highly unlikely) of a kick made in a perfectly legal manner, but is not allowed because of *when* it is made is a return kick. This kick is not defined in the rulebook, but is a kick made after a change of team possession (6-2-1). Again, the loose ball is considered a fumble. That is a 10-yard penalty from the end of the run (spot of the kick).

As for a kick made in a manner not allowed by the rules (how the ball is kicked), let's consider a ball rolling along the ground that is intentionally kicked by a player. This is illegal (9-7-1). If the punter muffs the snap and kicks the ball while it is on the ground, we simply have a backward pass and a foul for illegally kicking the ball. If the ball is inadvertently kicked in an attempt to obtain possession, it is a muff and not a foul (2-27).

EXAMPLE 6-51: Fourth and seven. K38, in position to punt while standing at the K-7, muffs the snap from center. To prevent Team R from recovering the ball, K38 kicks it backward and out of the end zone. **RULING:** The result of the play is a safety. It is illegal to kick a loose ball. Team R may accept the penalty, which would be enforced half-the-distance to the goal from the spot of the foul with fourth down replayed.

EXAMPLE 6-52: Quarterback A18 drops back into his end zone to pass. He fumbles the ball and kicks it out of the back of the end zone. **RULING:** A foul for illegal kicking. The result of the play and the penalty are the same - a safety.

When the ball is illegally kicked, the status of the ball is not changed (2-24-9); however, most of the time, treating an illegally kicked ball as a fumble will still be the case. If the ball has the status of a kick, it remains a kick.

EXAMPLE 6-53: R28 muffs a kickoff at the R-5. In order to prevent the ball from being recovered by the opponents, R40 kicks the loose ball out of the back of the end zone. **RULING:** The result of the play is a touchback. The ball retained its status as a kick and force is not a factor on kicks going into Team R's end zone, so the result of the play is not a safety. If the penalty for illegal kicking the ball is accepted, it is enforced from the previous spot and the down will be replayed from the 50 yard line.

EXAMPLE 6-54: On fourth down, K18's punt is partially blocked, and crosses the neutral zone. K67 kicks the loose ball out of bounds, (a) beyond the neutral zone, or (b) after the ball is muffed back behind the neutral zone. **RULING:** A foul for illegally kicking the ball; however it occurred during a legal kick. Consequently, Team R will choose to have the 10-yard penalty enforced from the succeeding spot. In (a), the illegal kick is also first touching but accepting the penalty with succeeding spot enforcement is likely to be the better choice.

The use of an illegal kicking tee is an unfair act and is discussed in Chapter 8.

Additional Examples: 36-38.

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II. Additional Examples

1. K22 places the tee for a kickoff on the K-39. **RULING:** This is not legal. The covering official should tell K22 to place the tee on the K-40. A kick that is made from other than the free kick line is a free kick infraction which is a dead-ball foul with a five yard penalty. A free kick cannot be made from behind the free kick line.
2. As K15 approaches the ball to kick off, K81 (not a holder) goes beyond his free-kick line. K15 then kicks the ball (a) after K81 returns behind the free kick line, or (b) while K81 remains beyond the line. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), encroachment on K81, a dead-ball foul.
3. When the ready signal is given, kicker K21 is standing at the K-30 and K82 is (a) standing with both feet (a) at the K-36, or (b) at the K-34, (c) straddling the K-35, or (d) with a foot on the K-36 and the other foot touching the K-35. **RULING:** Legal in (a), but an illegal formation in (b), (c) and (d).
4. After the ready signal, K10 starts forward as if to kick the ball. K27 suddenly crosses in front of K10 and kicks the ball. When the ball is kicked, there are three players on the same side of the formation as K27. **RULING:** A foul by Team K for a free kick infraction. The dead-ball foul occurs when the ball is kicked. The five-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot.
5. Team K kicks off from the K-40. Only three Team R players are between the R-45 and midfield. During the kick K65 clips at the R-45. R23 (a) returns the kick to the R-30, or (b) returns the kick for a touchdown. **RULING:** There is no foul by Team R since there is no rear restraining line. In (a), Team R will likely have Team K's clipping foul enforced at the succeeding spot for a first down at the R-45. Their other option is to have Team K re-kick following a 15-yard penalty. In (b), the touchdown stands and the penalty will be enforced on the try. It cannot be carried over to the succeeding kickoff because it occurred before the change of possession.
6. K22's onside kick is rolling in the neutral zone when K81 muffs the ball into R43's leg and is recovered by K52 at the R-45. **RULING:** The touching by R43 is ignored as it was caused by K81. Team R will accept the ball at the spot of first touching.
7. K2's onside kick is rolling in the neutral zone when K78 muffs the ball. The ball strikes R22's leg and goes out of bounds at the K-49. **RULING:** The touching by R2 is ignored as it was caused by K78. Team K has fouled by kicking the ball out of bounds. Team K is also guilty of first touching. The same options as in Example 6-11 will apply.
8. The opening kickoff rolls out of bounds at the R-5. Team R elects to take the ball at the R-35 and asks for the ball to be placed at the middle of the field. **RULING:** The ball must be placed at the hash mark nearest the sideline where the ball went out of bounds.
9. R42 steps on the sideline and goes airborne when he receives Team K's free kick. R42 lands inbounds and then steps out of bounds. **RULING:** Team R has caused the ball to go out of bounds. The kick ended when R42 landed inbounds and he carried the ball out of bounds. The step on the sideline is ignored because it was not intentional (6.1.9A).
10. With 10 seconds remaining in the first half, K13's kickoff is a low line drive down the middle of the field to prevent a long runback. While the ball is rolling, R27 holds at the R-35. **RULING:** The foul occurred during the kick, and if the penalty is accepted, it is enforced from the previous spot. Team K will kick off again from the 50 yard line.
11. Team K tries an onside kick from the K-40. Before the untouched kick has traveled 10 yards, K62 blocks R50 into the ball at the K-45. The block is above the waist from the front. K57 muffs the ball at the K-44 and recovers it while downed at the K-48. **RULING:** By blocking before being eligible to touch the ball, K62 fouled. Also, since R50 was blocked into the ball, he is deemed not to have touched it. Thus K57 is guilty of first touching. Team R has two options: (a) accept the 10-yard penalty for the blocking foul from the previous spot and have Team K re-kick; or (b) decline the penalty, accept the first touching privilege and put the ball in play at the spot of the illegal touching, the K-44. The clock starts on the snap. The K-44 is not a spot where the ball belongs to Team R. The succeeding spot option does not apply because Team K would be next to snap the ball.

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12. After K17's kickoff and while the untouched kick is in flight downfield, R24 blocks at Team K's free kick line. The block is against (a) K17, or (b) holder K22. **RULING:** Illegal blocks in both cases. If the penalty is accepted, the 15-yards are marked off from the previous spot with the free kick repeated.

13. K19 attempts an onside kick by kicking the ball along the ground. R62 blocks K19 at the K-44. **RULING:** Legal block; the kick has touched the ground.

14. Team K punts on third down. The ball goes high into the air, travels a few yards beyond the neutral zone, is blown back, and touches the ground behind the neutral zone. In an attempt to recover the ball, K23 muffs it and it rolls out of bounds. **RULING:** A scrimmage kick out of bounds belongs to the receiving team. K23 has not committed first touching since the ball was touched behind the neutral zone. Team R's ball, first and 10 at the inbounds spot.

15. Fourth and 20 on the K-40. K27's punt is caught by R33 who takes one step and the ball pops out when he's hit. The ball (a) hits the ground and is recovered by K68 at the R-15, or (b) caught (in-flight) by K68 at the R-15. K68 then advances into the end zone. **RULING:** The kick ended when R33 gained possession and the subsequent fumble can be advanced. In both cases, score the touchdown.

16. Team K punts from a scrimmage-kick formation. The ball crosses the neutral zone and Team K commits first touching. While the ball is still a kick, K65 blocks below the waist. **RULING:** Team R may either (a) decline the penalty and take the ball at the spot of the first touching, (b) accept the 15-yard penalty at the succeeding spot or (c) accept the 15-yard penalty at the previous spot and have Team K replay the down.

17. K85 first touches a punt at the R-11. The ball rolls into the end zone where R32 muffs it. K29 then recovers the ball in the end zone. **RULING:** The ball remains live after K85's first touching, but became dead when it broke the plane of the goal line. The result of the play is a touchback. Team R's ball, first down and 10 at the R-20. The first touching will be declined since the touchback is more advantageous.

18. On a punt, the untouched ball is rolling at the R-25 (a) K72 blocks R40 into the ball, or (b) R22 blocks K60 into the ball. In either case, K75 recovers the ball at the R-20 and is downed there. **RULING:** In both cases the forced touching is disregarded. It will be Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-20. In (a), Team K is not entitled to retain possession. K75 has first touched the ball at the R-20. In (b), K60 did not first touch the ball, so Team R cannot take possession at the R-25.

19. On a punt, the untouched ball is bouncing at the R-15 when K44 muffs the ball into R22. K75 recovers the ball at the R-20 and is downed there. **RULING:** The forced touching is disregarded. It will be Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-20. Team K is not entitled to retain possession. The spot of K75's first touching at the R-20 is more advantageous for Team R than K44's first touching at the R-15.

20. Fourth and four on the R-40. K14 punts and the kick is bounding near Team R's goal line. K22, in an attempt to keep it from penetrating the plane of the goal line, bats the ball at the R-2 back toward his own goal line. It is recovered (a) by R46 who advances to the R-30, or (b) by R53 who attempts to advance, but retreats and is downed in his own end zone. **RULING:** The bat by K22 is legal because it occurred beyond the neutral zone. In (a), Team R will accept the result of the play and have a first down at the R-30. In (b), since the result of the play is a safety, Team R would take the ball at the R-2 which is the spot of first touching.

21. On a punt, the untouched ball is bouncing at the R-5 when K26 legally bats the ball backwards into R32. While the ball is rolling loose, R65 clips at the R-10. The ball is recovered by prone K10 at the R-2. **RULING:** The forced touching is disregarded, thus Team R would next put the ball in play. Consequently, R65's foul has PSK enforcement. The penalty is enforced from the end of kick, the R-2, half-the-distance to the R-1. Team R loses the right to take the ball at the spot of first touching because the penalty is accepted. If Team K declines the penalty, Team R will choose the spot of first touching (the R-5) because R65's foul occurred before Team R (legally) touched the ball.

22. Fourth and 10 at the R-40. K14 punts and R28 is standing in his end zone awaiting the ball. As R28 moves forward to get under the ball, K40 impedes R28 by bumping him (a) in the end zone, or (b) at the R-2. The ball, which never breaks the

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plane of Team R's goal line, is muffed by R28 at the R-5 and rolls out of bounds there. **RULING:** A foul for kick catching interference. If Team R accepts the penalty, they may have fourth down replayed from the K-45 or they may choose an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul. In (a), the enforcement spot is the goal line.

23. Fourth and 10 on the R-40. K11's field goal attempt is way short, hits the ground at the R-25 and bounces back into K41 at the R-30. The ball comes to rest at the R-27 and the covering official whistles it dead when no player attempts to secure possession. **RULING:** K41's touching is first touching. Team R will take the ball at the first touching spot (the R-30) since that is more advantageous than the result of the play (the R-27).

24. Fourth and 10 on the R-20. K12's field goal attempt is partially blocked behind the neutral zone. The kick is then recovered by (a) K22 at the R-25, (b) K30 at the R-15, (c) R44 at the R-25, or (d) R52 at the R-15. **RULING:** In (a) and (c), the ball may be legally advanced by either team. In (b), K30's touching is first touching and the ball is dead when recovered. In (d), R52 may advance the kick.

25. Same as example 24, except the kick is rolling free on the R-25 as players from both teams attempt to recover it. The ball is first muffed by K33, then by R52 at the R-26. The ball rolls to the R-15 where it is recovered by: (a) K46, or (b) R63. **RULING:** When the ball was muffed, it was still a kick and the touching is irrelevant since it was behind the neutral zone. Once beyond the neutral zone, it is treated just like any other kick. In (a), K46's touching is first touching and his possession causes the ball to become dead immediately. In (b), R63 legally recovered and may advance.

26. K15 punts, K67 blocks R25 causing him to (a) run into K15, who loses his balance and falls to the ground, or (b) charge into K15, knocking him down. **RULING:** In (a), no foul. In (b), no foul if the contact was solely a result of the block; if R25's actions caused the contact to be more severe than it should have been, roughing should be called.

27. Team K is in scrimmage kick formation. R77 charges as K2 is preparing to punt. R77 contacts K2 as he begins his kicking motion, but before his foot touches the ball. K2 then is able to kick the ball. **RULING:** Legal, K2 is not a kicker until he actually kicks the ball and he may be contacted.

28. K27's punt is partially blocked by R51 in or behind the neutral zone and then travels beyond the neutral zone. R42 is in position to catch the ball, but it first touches K82's shoulder before hitting the ground where it is recovered by R42. **RULING:** Since R51's touching is ignored, it is kick catching interference by K82, because R42 was in position to catch the ball.

29. On Team K's punt beyond the neutral zone, R23 catches the ball at the R-28 and then gives a valid fair catch signal. **RULING:** Illegal fair catch signal. The ball remains live. Team R is penalized five yards under the all-but-one principle, most likely the spot of the foul, giving Team R first and 10 at the R-23.

30. On Team K's punt beyond the neutral zone, R33 and R45 both signal for a fair catch. R33 muffs the ball and R45 is about to catch it when he is tackled by K15. **RULING:** This is not kick catching interference because Team R had an opportunity to catch the ball. K15 is guilty of holding.

31. R21 gives a fair catch signal just as R44 begins to advance after catching a punt. **RULING:** Legal. Only a runner can give an illegal fair catch signal. Opponents are expected to continue play and not be deceived by a player waving an arm after a kick has ended.

32. On a free kick, five Team R players immediately signal for a fair catch. Some of these players have the potential to catch the free kick, while others do not. **RULING:** Only the players who are in position to make a fair catch are protected.

33. Fourth and 10 on the K-30. After giving a valid fair catch signal at the R-45, R42 muffs the ball. The ball hits the ground and is loose when R42 blocks K82 in the back above the waist at the R-45. R23 recovers the loose ball at midfield. **RULING:** Illegal block, as R42 is prohibited from blocking an opponent because he gave a fair catch signal and the kick had not yet ended. The 15-yard penalty is enforced from the R-45.

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34. With five seconds remaining in the game and Team K behind by two points, K17 is flagged for kick catching interference at the K-40. Team R's coach asks for a timeout prior to deciding whether to (a) accept the awarded fair catch, or (b) snap or free kick after having accepted the awarded fair catch. **RULING:** Not allowed in (a), but permissible in (b). Deciding whether to accept an awarded fair catch is a penalty decision.

35. Team K's long kickoff is (a) caught, or (b) recovered by R32 at the R-3 and his momentum carries him into the end zone. He tries to get out of the end zone, but is tackled there or fumbles the ball out of bounds over the end line. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), the momentum exception to the safety rule applies. Team R will put the ball in play at the R-3.

36. On a fourth down field goal attempt, holder K22 muffs the snap. K1 kicks the loose ball between the uprights. **RULING:** The kick does not score and it is a foul for illegally kicking the ball. The result of the play is a touchback. If the penalty is accepted, it will be enforced 10 yards from the spot of the foul, and fourth down will be replayed.

37. Fourth and 10 on the K-25. K19 fakes a kick, runs beyond the neutral zone and kicks the ball at the K-30. The ball is (a) caught by K88 at the K-45, (b) goes out of bounds at midfield, or (c) comes to rest at the R-40 where it is blown dead after no player attempts to touch it. **RULING:** The illegal kick is treated as fumble. Normal kicking rules and restrictions are not in effect. In all cases, if the penalty for the illegal kick is declined, it will be Team K's ball, first and 10 at the dead-ball spot. If the penalty is accepted, it is enforced 10 yards from the end of the run (where the ball was kicked) and it will be fourth and 20 at the K-15.

38. Fourth and 10 on the K-45. K17 punts the ball and it goes beyond the neutral zone. R41 muffs the ball back behind the neutral zone where K21 recovers and punts the ball. R31 fair catches the ball at the R-30. **RULING:** Since R41 touched the kick beyond the neutral zone, it will be first down for the team in possession at the end of the down. The second punt is legal as there had been no change of team possession. The ball belongs to Team R first and 10 on the R-30.

III. Review Test (True or False)

1. A free kick ends as soon as the ball is touched beyond the neutral zone.
2. For a kickoff, the ball may be held in position on a kicking tee by a place kick holder.
3. On a free kick, the ball remains dead until it crosses Team R's free kick line.
4. A kick ends when a new force is applied after it has touched the ground.
5. For any free kick, a free-kick line corresponding to a scrimmage line, is established for each team.
6. When a punt is used following a safety, the kick must be made from within two steps beyond Team K's free kick line.
7. It is a free-kick infraction if five Team R players are not within five yards of Team R's free-kick line after the ready-for-play signal and until the kick.
8. On a kickoff, it is encroachment when, after the ball has been declared ready-for-play, a player other than the kicker or holder is beyond his free kick line.
9. If the holder is to the right of the kicker and there are only three other players to the right of the kicker, the formation is legal.
10. It is illegal if all Team K players are not within five yards of Team K's free-kick line after the ready-for-play signal and until the kick.
11. If K61 blocks R43 into the ball in the neutral zone during a free kick and K52 recovers, the ball belongs to Team K.
12. Any kicker may recover a free kick if it has touched the ground and has also gone beyond the plane of Team R's free kick line.
13. The kickers may not advance a recovered free kick.
14. The down is ended when the kickers catch or recover a free kick anywhere.
15. The first touching of a grounded free kick by K11 is ignored if it occurs within the neutral zone.

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16. On a kickoff, it is a new series for Team R at the spot of first touching if that spot is chosen by Team R.
17. If K20's kickoff from his 40 yard line goes out of bounds untouched at Team R's five yard line, Team R may choose to take the ball on Team R's 40 yard line.
18. It is a foul if a free kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines last touched by Team K following touching by Team R.
19. If R2 muffs a kickoff at his five yard line and it is caught in flight by K32 in the end zone, it is a touchdown for Team K.
20. A legal, free or scrimmage kick that is not a scoring attempt does not become dead until the ball touches something after it is behind R's goal-line plane.
21. If a free kick goes out bounds untouched at Team R's 25 yard line and Team R declines the penalty option of putting the ball in play at the inbounds spot, 25 yards beyond the previous spot, the ball must be placed at the inbounds spot on Team R's 25 yard line.
22. A free kick which goes out of bounds belongs to the kicking team.
23. A pop-up kick is a free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately into the ground, the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee.
24. The kicker or place kick holder may be blocked as soon as a free kick touches the ground or any other player.
25. A legal scrimmage kick can only be made from behind the neutral zone before team possession has changed.
26. It is not necessary to be in a scrimmage kick formation to execute a legal scrimmage kick.
27. A new series is always awarded to Team R if K41 recovers a blocked punt behind the line and is downed there.
28. During a field goal attempt, the ball becomes dead when the kick is blocked behind the neutral zone.
29. Team R may recover a punt anywhere between the goal lines and advance.
30. A punt recovered behind the line may be advanced by either team.
31. If on third down, K72 recovers a blocked kick behind the neutral zone, it is fourth down for Team K at the spot of recovery.
32. If R40 signals for a fair catch beyond the neutral zone, but he muffs the scrimmage kick, K15 may recover beyond the neutral zone and advance.
33. If R45 is blocked into a grounded scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone by K21 and K32 recovers after this touching by R45, the ball belongs to Team K.
34. During a scrimmage kick, touching by Team R is ignored if the ball is muffed into R33 by K55, but it will be first touching.
35. If there is first touching of a scrimmage kick, Team R will always have the opportunity of taking the results of the play or the ball at the spot of first touching regardless of whether Team R fouls during the down or not.
36. Touching of a low scrimmage kick is ignored if it occurs in the expanded neutral zone or behind Team K's line.
37. If on third down, K20's blocked scrimmage kick goes out of bounds behind the line, it is fourth down for Team K at the inbounds spot.
38. If a scrimmage kick becomes dead inbounds with no player in possession, it belongs to Team R.
39. It is a safety if R44, in an effort to block K10's field goal attempt, leaps high in the end zone and tips the ball between the uprights above the crossbar.
40. Only one receiver may give a fair catch signal during a down.
41. A receiver who has given a fair catch signal shall not block until the kick has ended.
42. If R34 makes a fair catch and is then tackled by K25, it is a dead-ball foul.
43. A fair catch can be made anywhere between the goal lines.
44. A fair catch of a free kick cannot be made in the neutral zone.
45. Only the receiver who gives a valid signal is entitled to protection.
46. It is a fair catch when R46 gives a valid signal and R36 catches the scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone.
47. When R28 signals for a fair catch, and the kick is caught by R22, the ball remains alive as it is not a fair catch.
48. K41 can commit kick catching interference without making physical contact with the ball or R22.

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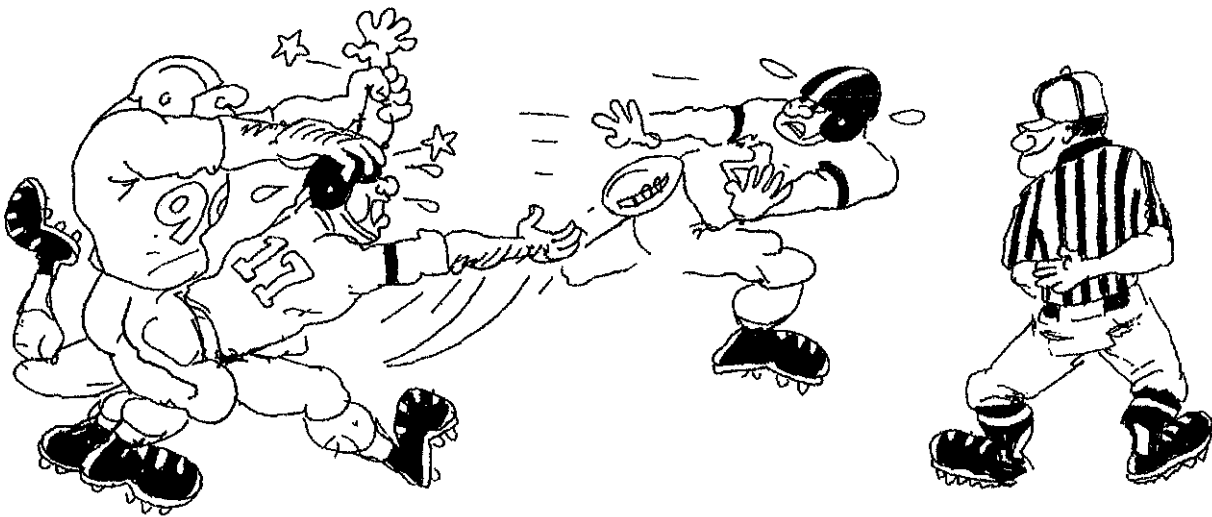
49. During a scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone, a player of Team R who gives a valid fair catch signal before the ball hits the ground must be given an unimpeded opportunity to catch the kick even after the receiver muffs the kick.
50. If K81 is first to touch a free kick in flight, it is kick-catching interference whether the touching is in or beyond the neutral zone.
51. If R45 is blocked into a grounded scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone by K21 and K32 recovers after this touching by R45, the ball belongs to Team K.
52. During a scrimmage kick, if a kicking team member contacts the receiver as a result of being legally blocked by a Team R player into the receiver, there is no foul for interference.
53. Team K may bat a scrimmage kick in flight beyond the neutral zone if no player of Team R is in position to catch the ball.
54. If K88 interferes with a kick catch, Team R may choose an awarded fair catch plus penalize Team K 15 yards from the spot of the foul.
55. No player of Team R may advance the ball after a valid, invalid, or illegal fair catch signal.
56. It is a touchback if a punt lands at Team R's 10 yard line and bounces to the three yard line where R42 recovers it and his momentum takes him into the end zone where he is tackled.
57. If the runner is hit and fumbles and the loose ball is illegally kicked, the ball is treated as a kick.
58. When the ball is loose following an illegal kick, it does not retain the same status as prior to the illegal kick.



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Answer Key

1. F 2-24-2
2. T 2-24-7
3. F 2-1-2
4. F 2-24-2
5. T 6-1-1
6. F 6-1-2
7. F 2-14-3a, 6-1
8. T 6-1-3a
9. T 6-1-4
10. F 6-1-3b
11. F 6-1-6
12. T 6-1-6
13. T 6-1-6
14. T 4-2-2f
15. F 6-1-7
16. T 5-1-5e, 6-1-7
17. F 6-1-9
18. F 6-1-9
19. F 4-2-2d1
20. F 4-2-2d1
21. F 6-1-9
22. F 6-1-9, 6-1-10
23. T 2-24-10, 6-1-11
24. T 9-3-4b
25. F 2-24-4, 6-2-1
26. T 6-2-1
27. F 5-1-4
28. F 6-2-2, 6-2-3, 8-4-1a
29. T 6-2-2
30. T 6-2-2, 6-2-3
31. T 5-1-4, 6-2-3
32. F 4-2-2f, 6-2-4
33. F 6-2-4
34. T 6-2-5
35. F 6-2-5
36. T 6-2-6
37. F 5-1-3e, 6-2-7
38. T 6-2-7
39. F 6-3-1
40. F 6-5-1
41. T 6-5-1
42. T 4-2-2g, 6-5-2
43. F 6-5-2
44. F 6-5-2
45. T 6-5-3
46. F 6-5-3
47. F 6-5-2, 6-5-3
48. T 6-5-6
49. F 6-5-6
50. T 6-5-6
51. F 6-2-4
52. T 6-5-6a
53. T 6-5-6 Exc
54. T 6-5-6 Pen
55. F 6-5-5, 6-5-8
56. F 8-5-2a Exc
57. F 2-24-9
58. F 2-24-9



CHAPTER 7 THE CLOCK AND OVERTIME

I. The Rules in Depth

Game Length

The game consists of four periods or quarters, each 12 minutes long (Figure 7-1). The teams change goals at the end of the first and third periods during a one minute intermission (3-2-4).

The halftime intermission is 15 minutes followed by a three minute warm-up time. The intermission may be extended up to 20 minutes by state association adoption or if the opponents are notified at least five minutes prior to the start of the

game. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches, the intermission may be reduced to 10 minutes (Table 3-1). The officials are responsible for ensuring the three-minute warm-up time is posted on the clock and is started immediately after the halftime intermission expires. The warm-up time cannot be waived even if both coaches agree nor can it be extended if one team is late.

Additional Examples: 1-4.

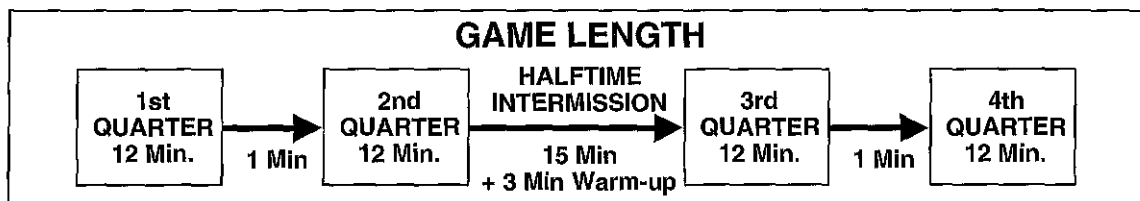


Figure 7-1

Coin Toss

Before the game, the referee, in the presence of the captains, tosses a coin to be called by the visiting team (3-2-1). The captain must choose "heads" or "tails" before the coin is tossed. The winner of the toss has first choice of the options for the first half. He may

- Defer his choice to the second half;
- Choose whether his team will receive or kick;
- Choose the goal his team will defend.

The captain who does not have first choice will then exercise the remaining option, and back to the deferring captain, if appropriate (3-2-3).

No more than four captains per team may take part in the coin toss. Each state association may establish the time at which the coin toss is held, or simulated on the field. In the absence of state association policy, the coin toss is to be held, or simulated on the field, three minutes before game time.

During the coin toss, no more than four captains from each team can be on the field of play. All other players must be off the field (3-2-2). The penalty is unsportsmanlike conduct (9-8-1g1).

Starting and Stopping the Clock

Starting the Clock

On all free kick downs, the clock starts when the ball is touched other than first touching by Team K (3-4-5). It does not ever start on the ready-for-play signal prior to a free kick down, even if the free kick down is replayed.

On a scrimmage down, the clock starts on either a ready-for-play signal with a referee's whistle, a wind-the-clock signal (S2) from the referee without a whistle ("silent wind") or on the snap. In most cases, the reason for stopping the clock determines when it starts. On occasion, an event which occurs after the clock is stopped may dictate when it is started.

It is important to remember on any given play, there may be more than one reason for the clock to stop, such as awarding a first down to Team A and the ball carrier going out of bounds. Whenever there is more than one reason for stopping the clock, and one of those reasons requires it start on the snap, then starting it on the snap prevails (3-4-2b3). To say it another way, the reasons for starting the clock on the snap "outrank" those for starting it on the ready. Thus, we can classify reasons to stop the clock as "major" and "minor" clock stoppers.

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When a major clock stopping event occurs, the clock is next started on the snap. A minor event starts it on the ready-for-play signal or the referee's silent wind. As previously mentioned, if more than one event occurs on a given play, a major event takes precedence.

The **major** clock stoppers (3-4-3) are:

- A period ends;
- A charged or media timeout;
- A fair catch is made;
- The ball goes out of bounds;
- A forward pass (legal or illegal) is incomplete;
- Team B or R is awarded a new series;
- Either team is awarded new series after a legal kick;
- A score or touchback occurs;
- An attempt to *consume* time illegally;
- A delay-of-game penalty is accepted.

The **minor** clock stoppers are:

- An award of or measurement for a first down;
- An injured player;
- To dry or change the game ball;
- A heat/humidity timeout;
- A coach/referee conference;
- Any unusual delay;
- An attempt to *conserve* time illegally;
- A sideline warning;
- Any other official's timeout;
- A dead ball following any penalty except an accepted penalty for a delay of game foul;
- Equipment worn improperly, including the helmet coming off or repair (within 25 seconds);
- The four-minute warning when there is no visible game clock (3-3-1).

Once these major and minor events are understood, the exceptions presented in the rule book are of no concern. Memorizing the major events will serve you well. Here are some examples.

EXAMPLE 7-1: Team A gains first down yardage on a play which ends on (a) a run out of bounds, or (b) an inbounds run. **RULING:** In (a), the clock will start on the snap. A run out of bounds is a major clock stopper and takes precedence over the official's timeout to award a first down, which is a minor stopper. In (b), the clock will start on the referee's signal. The only reason the clock was stopped was to award a first down.

EXAMPLE 7-2: With the clock running, Team A is flagged for holding on a down which ends on (a) an incomplete pass, or (b) an inbounds run. **RULING:** In (a), the clock will start on the snap. An incomplete pass is a major clock stopper and takes precedence over the penalty enforcement which is a minor stopper. In (b), the clock will start on the ready-for-play signal. The only reason the clock was stopped was for a minor clock stopper - the penalty enforcement.

EXAMPLE 7-3: On fourth down, Team K punts and is flagged for holding as the kick is made. The ball is caught by R2 who is tackled inbounds. **RULING:** If the penalty is accepted and enforced from the previous spot, the clock will start on the ready-for-play signal since it was stopped for the penalty and there is no major stopper. If the penalty is enforced from the succeeding spot, the clock will start on the snap, since a new series is awarded to Team R.

An inadvertent whistle is a special case (3-4-2c). Whenever the clock is stopped for an errant toot and the down is replayed, it will start on the ready unless Team B or Team R is in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle and chooses to accept the result of the play (3-4-2c). Inadvertent whistles are discussed in Chapter 12.

EXAMPLE 7-4: An inadvertent whistle is blown while a Team A pass is in the air. **RULING:** The clock will start on the ready since nothing has occurred to cause it to start on the snap.

Among the reasons for stopping the clock is either team being awarded a first down (3-5-7b), which means either Team A has earned one or Team B has legal possession of the ball when the

Chapter 7: The Clock and Overtime

down ends. A new series for Team B will always start the clock on the snap. When Team A is awarded a first down and a kick is involved, or the ball went out of bounds, the clock will also start on the snap. However, if the play ends inbounds and no other major clock stopper has occurred, the clock will start with the silent wind (3-4-2a).

Two points to remember: (1) a change of possession does not dictate when the clock starts (it's which team is awarded a new series after the change of possession that matters) and (2) Teams A and B retain their designation throughout the down (2-43-4). Here is the classic example.

EXAMPLE 7-5: B20 intercepts A7's forward pass and fumbles on the return. Team A recovers and downs the ball. **RULING:** Even though Team A is awarded a first down on the break in the continuity of downs, the clock starts on the referee's signal. The fact possession changed has no effect.

However, the clock starts on the snap when either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick down (3-4-3c).

EXAMPLE 7-6: Team K's punt is blocked. K23 recovers the ball behind the neutral zone and carries it beyond the line-to-gain for a first down. **RULING:** First down for Team K. The clock starts on the snap.

EXAMPLE 7-7: R27 muffs Team K's punt beyond the neutral zone. K23 recovers the ball. **RULING:** Team K's ball, first and 10. The clock starts on the snap because a new series is awarded to Team K after a legal kick.

Here's a situation where the ball is legally kicked, but the clock will start on the ready.

EXAMPLE 7-8: Fourth and 10 at the K-20. K27 punts as his team is flagged for an illegal formation. The ball is dead inbounds. Team R elects to have the penalty enforced from the previous spot. **RULING:** Team K's ball, fourth and 15 at the K-15. The clock starts on the ready. Although there was a legal kick, neither team was awarded a new series.

When administration of a penalty is one of the reasons for stopping the clock, the decision to start the clock is almost always made on the following principle: the clock should start just as it would if the foul had not occurred.

EXAMPLE 7-9: After making the line-to-gain, A20 is tackled inbounds by B67 who grasps and twists his face mask. **RULING:** There are two reasons for stopping the clock: Team A made a first down, and there is a penalty to administer. After the penalty is enforced from the end of the run, the clock will start on the ready, since neither of these requires starting the clock on the snap.

EXAMPLE 7-10: A23 carries the ball across the goal line for an apparent touchdown, but Team A is flagged for having a man illegally in motion at the snap. **RULING:** Since a score is a major clock stopper, the clock starts on the snap after the penalty for the illegal motion foul is enforced.

However, there are instances where the *acceptance* of a penalty influences the clock. "Acceptance" is emphasized because if the penalty is declined, the clock will start as otherwise stated in the rules.

One exception is an accepted penalty for delay of game, after which the clock always starts on the snap. As an example, this exception may prevent loss of game time for Team R's return of a punt. The delay foul is sometimes taken deliberately so Team K can reduce the chance of the punt going into the end zone for a touchback.

The other exception only applies when there are less than two minutes remaining in either half, but also see the following section entitled "Referee's Discretion."

When a penalty is accepted with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team has the option to start the game clock on the snap. Please note the converse is not true – a team never has the option to start the clock on the ready when it is to start on the snap by rule.

EXAMPLE 7-11: With about a minute remaining in the first half, Team A is deep in their own territory facing third and long. With the clock running, A66 commits a false start. **RULING:** The clock normally starts on the ready since the foul was the only reason for stopping it. Team B may choose to have the clock started on the snap.

EXAMPLE 7-12: With less than a minute remaining in the game, Team B trails 21-20. B1 commits a holding foul during the down. Following the play, A2 commits an unsportsmanlike conduct foul. **RULING:** The fouls are administered separately and in order of occurrence. In addition, Team A is given the choice of starting the clock on the snap. If Team A declines to start the clock on

the snap, Team B is then given the option of starting the clock on the snap. With Team B trailing, Team B will likely choose to start the clock on the snap (3.4.7C).

As mentioned, the game clock starts on the snap whenever Team B is awarded a new series; however, a new series is not awarded to Team B until all acts which occurred during the down, including penalties for other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike fouls, are considered (5-1-2b). This is another exception to the principle that the clock should start just as it would if the foul had not occurred.

EXAMPLE 7-13: On fourth and two, ball carrier A12 is stopped inbounds short of the line-to-gain and replaced player B76, didn't make it off the field before the snap (substitution infraction). **RULING:** Team A will accept the penalty which results in a first down. Even though without the foul the clock would have stopped to award Team B a first down, the clock will start on the ready because Team A was awarded a first down.

Here is the opposite scenario.

EXAMPLE 7-14: Ahead by six points in the fourth quarter, Team A has the ball, fourth and one at the B-30. A12 is at the B-28 when he illegally hands the ball forward to A35 who is tackled at the B-25 with one second showing on the game clock. Team B accepts the penalty of five yards and loss of down. **RULING:** Team B will have the ball, first and 10 at the B-33. The fact Team A would have made a first down is inconsequential. The clock was stopped to administer a penalty. Team B will be awarded a new series after the penalty enforcement, and the clock will start on the snap.

After a kickoff, the clock will start when and if the ball is legally touched and will stop when the ball becomes dead. For the following play, the clock will always start on the snap (unless the free kick is replayed) since a new series will be awarded. It does not matter whether the play ends inbounds or out of bounds.

EXAMPLE 7-15: Team K kicks off following a score. The free kick is returned by R23 who is (a) tackled inbounds, or (b) forced out-of-bounds. **RULING:** The clock starts when R23 touches the ball and stops when the ball is dead. In both cases, the clock will start on the snap.

Additional Examples: 5-12, 27.

Stopping the Clock

The reasons for stopping the game clock (3-4-4) have been mentioned and we need not repeat them here. However, there are some situations which merit discussion.

The clock *always* stops after a fourth down play. The reason for stopping it will vary and depending on that reason, it may start on the snap or on the ready, but in all cases the clock will be stopped.

EXAMPLE 7-16: Fourth and five at the A-30. A37 runs and is tackled inbounds at the (a) A-32, (b) A-35, or (c) A-38. **RULING:** In all cases, the clock is stopped. In (a), the ball is clearly short of the line-to-gain. Team B will be awarded a new series and the clock will start on the snap. In (c), the ball is clearly beyond the line-to-gain. Team A will be awarded a new series and the clock will start on the referee's signal. In (b), there will be an official's timeout to measure which is an administrative stoppage. If Team A is awarded a new series, the clock will start with a ready-for-play signal and a 25-second play clock.

The clock *almost* always stops after a legal kick down and starts on the snap (3-4-3c). The following examples illustrate the exceptions.

EXAMPLE 7-17: Third and 10 at the A-20. A7 is in shotgun formation to pass, but decides to quick kick when he is blitzed. The kick is blocked at the line and recovered by A64 on the A-18. A64 (a) is downed at the A-18, or (b) advances to the A-33. **RULING:** In (a), the clock does not stop. It is Team A's ball, fourth and 12 on A-18. In (b), the clock is stopped to award Team A a new series and it starts on the snap since a new series was awarded following a legal kick.

Stopping the clock on passes to airborne receivers near the sideline is discussed in Chapter 5, see Example 5-25.

If the clock is stopped in error, such as an official mistaking the rear stake for the line-to-gain, it should be restarted immediately without impacting the play clock (4.3.3B). However, if the delay is significant, such as stopping the clock while sorting out a fumble scrum, an administrative stoppage should be declared with a 25-second play clock. This is particularly important near the end of a half when time management is critical.

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EXAMPLE 7-18: Third and three at the A-37. A21 gains about three yards, but fumbles. The clock is stopped because the officials cannot determine who has recovered the fumble. A21 is in possession of the ball and he is (a) short of, or (b) beyond the line-to-gain. **RULING:** In (a), the clock is started immediately. In (b), it starts on the ready since Team A is awarded a new series.

Additional Examples: 7, 9-12.

Play Clock

In addition to the game clock which is used to time the game, a play clock is used to ensure time is not unduly wasted.

A 40/25-second play clock is used. Unless the game is stopped for administrative reasons (e.g., change of possession, penalty, an injury, equipment or charged timeout, etc.), the offensive team has 40 seconds to snap the ball after it is

declared dead (3-6-1a2). With a 40-second play clock, the ball is ready for play when an official spots the ball and steps away to his position (3-6-1b2). The 40-second play clock has significantly standardized the time the offense has to put the ball into play.

NEW IN 2020: For defensive timeouts for injury, equipment repair or a helmet coming off, the play clock will be set to 40 seconds. Also, a clarification was made that when a new series is awarded to either team after a legal kick, the play clock will be 25 seconds (3-6-1a).

Here are some examples beginning with a common scenario. Additional scenarios are in **Appendix E. Table 7-1** shows all scenarios.

Event *	Play Clock Starts at	Game Clock Starts on	Covering Official's Signal #	Referee's Signal
Dead ball inbounds	40	Running	S7	None
Dead ball out of bounds	40	Snap	S3	None
Incomplete pass	40	Snap	S10	None
Team A awarded 1st down	40	Signal	S3	Wind
Penalty administration	25	Ready	S3	Wind
Charged team timeout	25	Snap	S3	Chop
Injury/Helmet off/Equipment Issue – Team A	25	Ready	S3	Wind
Injury/Helmet off/Equipment Issue – Team B	40	Ready	S3	Wind
Measurement	25	Ready	S3	Wind
Double Change of possession- Team A snaps	40	Ready	S7	Wind
Change of possession- Team B snaps	25	Snap	S3	Chop
Touchdown	25	N/A	S5	Chop
Try, FG, Safety	25	Varies**	Varies**	Chop
Start of each period	25	Snap	N/A	Chop
Legal kick when new series is awarded	25	Snap	S3	Chop
Start of an overtime period	25	N/A	N/A	Chop
Other administrative stoppage ***	25	Ready	S3	Wind

- * If event does not occur in conjunction with any other event that stops the clock.
- ** The game clock will start by rule on the free kick.
- *** Includes inadvertent whistle and period extension.
- # S3 is stop the clock, S7 is "dead ball - start play clock," S10 is incomplete pass.

Table 7-1

EXAMPLE 7-19: A32 runs for a yard and is tackled inbounds (a) short of, or (b) beyond the line-to-gain. **RULING:** In either case, a 40-second play clock is started immediately when the ball is declared dead. In (a), the game clock continues to run. The referee does not give a ready signal or any other clock signal. In (b), the game clock stops. The referee signals "first down," the ball is spotted and the chains are set. The referee then signals to start the game clock.

The previous ruling applies to that scenario on any down other than fourth down when the ball becomes dead short of the line-to-gain and at any time during the game, except there is no game clock in an extra period.

On such a fourth-down play, the clock would be stopped to award Team B a first down and since they will next snap the ball, the game clock will stop, and the referee will blow his whistle and signal ready-for-play for a 25-second play clock.

EXAMPLE 7-20: In the first quarter, (a) A11 throws an incomplete pass, or A24 runs out of bounds (b) short of, or (c) beyond the line-to-gain. **RULING:** In all cases, a 40-second play clock is started immediately when the ball is declared dead and the game clock stops. In (a) and (b), the game clock starts on the snap and there is no overt referee signal. In (c), the referee signals a first down and the game clock starts on the snap.

In addition to a change of possession, the referee whistles the ball ready-for-play with a 25-second play clock, after any administrative stoppage. As illustrated in the preceding two examples, if a play ends beyond the line-to-gain without a foul, a 40-second play clock is used. The game clock is still stopped for the chains to move, but that is not considered an administrative stoppage.

The following is a prime example of an administrative stoppage.

EXAMPLE 7-21: A11 throws an incomplete pass. A79 is flagged for holding. **RULING:** The clock stops for the incomplete pass. After the penalty is administered, the ready-for-play is blown and a 25-second play clock is started. The game clock starts on the snap.

Administrative issues are situations such as the chains getting tangled up, wet ball not relayed in time, etc. This stoppage is not intended to allow for additional time needed to break up scraps

between players. Statements like "Play clock is running" can be used as an aide to assist in getting players back to huddle.

When the helmet coming off or any other equipment issue necessitates a player be removed from the game for a down, or an injury is the only reason for stopping the clock, the game clock will be started on the referee's signal if it was running. The play clock will be set at 25 seconds if a Team A player was involved and 40 seconds for a Team B player. The following acronym may be helpful: HEID 40: After an official's timeout, the following result in a ready-for-play with a 40-second play clock.

H Helmet off
E Equipment repair
I Injury
D by the Defense

If the 40-second clock is running and the ball is not properly positioned to be snapped after approximately 15 seconds into the count, the referee should stop the game clock and signal for the play clock to be set at 25 seconds (3-6-1a1g).

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

If the play clock 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 that the play clock should be reset at 25 seconds and started immediately.

Additional Examples: 12-15.

Timeouts

Timeouts can be classified as official's timeouts or charged timeouts. The official's timeouts are listed in 3-5-7 and most have already been mentioned as events which stop the clock.

Charged Timeouts

Each team is allowed three team timeouts during a half (3-5-1); they do not carry over from the first half to the second half. Any remaining second half timeouts do not carry over to overtime.

Similarly, in an overtime period, each team is allowed one timeout, and if unused it does not carry over to any subsequent overtime period. Timeouts may be requested at any time while the ball is dead.

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When a decision on a penalty is pending, a timeout cannot be granted either team until the penalty choice is made (3-5-2a). A team may be granted consecutive timeouts during the same dead-ball interval (3-5-4, 3.5.4). A charged timeout cannot be used to allow an injured player or a player observed with an equipment infraction, including the helmet coming completely off, to remain in the game.

The head coach may request a charged timeout from the sideline. He may also designate a coach to request timeouts (3-5-2a). There can be a maximum of two coaches on the sideline at a given time who can request timeouts. The designated assistant coach must remain in place for the entire game except in case of an emergency (3.5.2B).

It is the responsibility of the coach to get an official's attention when he wants to request a timeout. Officials should not "stop officiating" to anticipate a coach's request.

Also, any player may request a timeout. An incoming substitute becomes a player when he communicates with an official, so he may request a timeout as soon as he steps onto the field (2-32-15).

The length of a team timeout is one minute (3-5-3). The referee should take about five seconds to notify both teams after one minute, and then whistle the ball ready for play.

Neither team "owns" the timeout. If the team that called timeout is ready to play early, the referee must be sure the other team is also ready before he declares the ball ready for play (3-5-3). Once the ready-for-play is whistled, the 25-second count applies as for any other play.

EXAMPLE 7-22: Team A is granted a timeout, but fails to snap the ball within 25 seconds after the referee declares the ball ready for play. **RULING:** A delay of game foul against Team A. It is a dead-ball foul with a five-yard penalty enforced from the succeeding spot.

There is no foul if a team requests an excess timeout (3-5-5). Officials should simply deny the request. If such a request is erroneously granted, play should be resumed as soon as the error is identified.

In addition to requested timeouts, there are several circumstances where a team is charged one of its three timeouts:

- If following a coach-referee conference (2-6-1) the referee does not reverse a ruling (3-5-11). Although it is not specifically addressed in the rules, it is recommended that a coach be allowed to talk to his players if he is to be charged with such a timeout. If a team does not have any timeouts remaining, they are penalized five yards for delay of game (3-6-2c).
- If the clock is stopped for the repair of player equipment and requires the assistance of a team attendant or delays the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds (3-5-2b).

Note: When the latter occurs, many officials will allow the coach a choice between removing the player for one down or taking a timeout and allowing the player to remain in the game. If the team has used all its timeouts, there is no option and the player must leave the game for one down. A delay-of-game penalty is not assessed (3-5-6).

Helmet off Timeout

If a player's helmet comes completely off during the down or during subsequent dead ball action and is not directly attributable to a foul by an opponent, the player must be replaced for at least one down, unless the halftime or an overtime intermission occurs (3-5-10d). A charged timeout cannot be used to allow the player to remain in the game. The purpose of the rule is to encourage players to wear their helmets properly.

EXAMPLE 7-23: As B51 tackles A22 in the third quarter, B51's helmet comes (a) partially, or (b) completely off. **RULING:** In (a), the clock continues to run and play proceeds. In (b), the clock is stopped and B51 must remain out of the game for one play.

EXAMPLE 7-24: During the first quarter, B51 tackles A34 and A34's helmet comes completely off when he contacts the ground (a) in the end zone, or (b) out of bounds. **RULING:** The ball became dead and the down ended when A34 (a) crossed the goal line, or (b) stepped out of bounds. However in either case, A34 must remain out of the game for one play.

"Directly attributable to a foul" means the helmet must come off as a direct result of a foul. Thus, unless it is any type of illegal helmet contact, including the facemask, it is unlikely the foul was the cause of the helmet coming off.

EXAMPLE 7-25: After an incomplete pass, agitated A61 (a) knocks B42 to the ground, or (b) yanks B42's face mask. In each case, B42's helmet comes off. **RULING:** A61 is flagged for a dead-ball foul, which carries a 15-yard penalty from the succeeding spot. In (a), because the foul was not specifically related to the helmet, B42 must leave the game for the next down. In (b), B42's helmet came off as a direct result of A61's foul, so B42 need not leave the game for one play.

Other Equipment Timeouts

In addition to the helmet coming completely off as described above, if an official notices a player with missing equipment or improperly worn equipment the clock is to be stopped and an official's timeout taken (1-5-5). A charged timeout cannot be used to allow the player to remain in the game.

If the missing or improperly worn equipment is detected during the down or during subsequent dead ball action related to the down without being directly attributable to a foul by an opponent or if a player is wearing otherwise legal equipment in an illegal manner, the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless halftime or an overtime intermission occurs.

If proper and legal equipment has become improperly worn through use, but prompt repair is possible and does not delay the ready-for-play signal for more than 25 seconds, such repair may be made without penalty. An example is inserting a dangling mouthpiece.

Injury Timeouts

In the event of an injured or apparently injured player, an official's timeout is taken. There are three categories of injuries:

- General injury (3-5-10a);
- Possible concussion (3-5-10b); and
- Bleeding (3-5-10c).

Regardless of the type of injury, the player must be removed from the game and may not return until the situation is corrected.

As a minimum, he must remain out of the game until or for at least one down unless the halftime or an overtime intermission occurs. The player may *not* remain in the game or reenter the game if his team takes a charged timeout. If such a player participates, he is charged with a live-ball foul for illegal participation, 15 yards, previous spot (3-5-10a, 9-6-4b).

During an injury timeout an authorized conference can be held only in front of the team box within nine yards of the sideline (3-5-8c).

EXAMPLE 7-26: With six minutes to go in the second period, the game clock is stopped when an official sees A23 is limping. Within 20 seconds, A23 says he feels fine and wants to remain in the game. **RULING:** A23 must leave the game for one down. He cannot "buy" his way back into the game with a timeout.

EXAMPLE 7-27: During an injury stoppage to tend to A25, the other 10 players of Team A go over to within about five yards of the sideline by their team's bench and chat with several coaches. **RULING:** Legal.

The rule regarding concussions applies to any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behavior consistent with a concussion. Examples are loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems (3.5.10D). Concussion guidelines are in Appendix B of the Rules Book.

The official's responsibility is to ensure that such a player is removed from the game and the coach is apprised of the symptoms. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure the player is cleared by an appropriate health care professional before he returns. No written documentation is required even if the player was unconscious.

EXAMPLE 7-28: During the first quarter an officials' timeout is taken for injured A38. The officials believe A38 may have a concussion and (a) became unconscious at some point, or (b) remained conscious. **RULING:** Whether or not A38 was unconscious is not a factor. A38 must be removed from the game and cannot return unless cleared by an appropriate health care provider.

The rule regarding bleeding players includes any player who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on his/her uniform, or has blood on his/her person. The player may not return until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to competition.

"Excessive" blood on the uniform is defined as an amount of blood sufficient to saturate the uniform, or is likely to be easily transferred to another player. Furthermore, officials should follow the same precautions if a blood related situation

involves a member of the officiating crew (3-5-10c).

EXAMPLE 7-29: The game clock is stopped because A44 is bleeding. Team A then requests a charged timeout during which A44 receives medical treatment, his bleeding stops and the wound is covered. **RULING:** A44 must be replaced for at least one down. He cannot re-enter even though his team used a timeout.

EXAMPLE 7-30: With 7:21 left in the period, the ball is snapped and the umpire then notices guard A66's (a) left arm is bleeding, (b) jersey has blood on it, but he is not bleeding; or (c) right arm has a scratch on it, but he is not bleeding. When the down ends, what should the officials do? **RULING:** In (a), an injury timeout is declared and A66 must leave the game for at least one down. He may not return until the bleeding is stopped and the open wound covered. In (b), nothing is done regarding the blood on his jersey unless it is an excessive amount, in which case an injury timeout is declared and A66 must depart for at least one down and may not return until the jersey is replaced or cleaned. In (c), nothing is done because A66 is not bleeding.

EXAMPLE 7-31: A30 leaves the game because he is bleeding. He stays on the sideline and later enters the field as a substitute. When A30 re-enters, is it necessary for the officials to inspect him? **RULING:** No, a formal inspection is unnecessary. When A30 re-enters, the officials will assume the problem has been rectified unless it's obvious the bleeding still exists.

EXAMPLE 7-32: In the previous example, what should the officials do if they observe A30's bleeding has not been stopped? **RULING:** Without stopping the game clock or the play clock, the officials should tell A30 he may not re-enter the game. If A30 refuses, the official will blow his whistle to keep the ball dead. A30 is penalized 15 yards (unsportsmanlike conduct) and he must then leave the field to have the bleeding stopped.

Conferences

During a charged timeout and selected official's timeouts, there are two types of authorized conferences (2-6-2) permitted:

- One coach may enter the field and join his team's huddle to confer with 11 players; or

- Near the sideline in front of the team box between the sideline and the nine-yard marks. There is no limit on the number of coaches, players or substitutes who can participate.

Players, as well as nonplayers, may use electronic equipment during sideline conferences (1-6-2). There is no limit on the number of players who may go to the sideline during the timeout, provided a coach is not between the hash marks for a conference, as only one type conference can be used during a given timeout (3-5-8b 9.8.1C). Holding an unauthorized conference is unsportsmanlike conduct (9-8-1f) but preventive officiating should be used to avoid the foul (see Chapter 8).

EXAMPLE 7-33: During a charged timeout, the head coach of Team A goes to the team huddle on the field for 30 seconds and then comes out and an assistant coach takes his place for the rest of the timeout. **RULING:** Unauthorized conference; a 15-yard penalty is charged to the assistant coach for unsportsmanlike conduct.

EXAMPLE 7-34: During a charged timeout (a) A7 goes to the sideline to talk to his head coach. Thereafter three other Team A players go to the sideline, but other team members remain between the hash marks; or (b) while A7 is near the sideline talking to one coach, another Team A coach goes out to the huddle on the field. **RULING:** Legal in (a), but an unauthorized conference in (b).

Except when the coach is on the field for an authorized conference, it is legal for players to go near their sidelines to communicate with coaches as long as coaching-box restrictions are observed, the players remain on the field, and the game is not delayed (9-8-1f Note, 9.8.1B).

EXAMPLE 7-35: During the course of the game, quarterback A7 runs to the vicinity of his team box area to get the play from his coach. No timeout is requested, there is no delay in declaring the ball ready for play, encroachment does not occur and the coach does not leave the coaches area. **RULING:** Legal.

In addition, an authorized conference can be held without a charged timeout during a TV/radio timeout; an officials' timeout due to unusual heat and/or humidity; between periods; or following a safety, field goal or try (not allowed after a touchdown and before the try) and before the

following kickoff (3-5-8b2). In each of these cases, up to three attendants, none of whom is a coach, may also enter the field to attend to their team (9-8-2). With permission of the referee, as many coaches and attendants as needed, may enter the field to attend to an injured player.

EXAMPLE 7-36: After Team K's try and before the following kickoff, all 11 players of Team K wish to confer with their head coach (a) on the field within a huddle, or (b) within about five yards of the sideline near their team's bench. **RULING:** Legal conferences in (a) and (b), but only one type of conference may be held during a dead-ball interval.

Additional Example: 12.

Delaying and Suspending the Game

The officials have the authority to delay or suspend a game if weather conditions are construed to be hazardous to the safety of the participants (3-1-5). Lightning, tornado alerts, hail and excessive wind chill, as examples, are considered to be life threatening. Lightning guidelines are in Appendix E of the Rules Book.

A wet or muddy field that affects only playing conditions should not be construed as hazardous to life or limb. It is sound policy for the officials to discuss the situation with both coaches and game management personnel before suspending a game (3.1.5A).

Any period may be shortened in an emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By the same mutual agreement, any remaining period may be shortened at any time, or the game ended (3-1-3).

NEW IN 2020: If the game is interrupted due to weather during the last three minutes of the second period, and the delay is at least 30 minutes, the coaches and referee can mutually agree to shorten the halftime intermission, provided there is at least a one-minute intermission (3-1-6d).

Games interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible administrative authority shall be continued from the point of interruption unless the teams agree to end the game with the existing score, or there are state association rules which apply (3-1-4).

Timing Adjustments

Timing errors on the game clock may be corrected if discovered prior to the second live ball following the error, unless the period has ended (3-3-5b 3-4-8, 3.4.8).

EXAMPLE 7-37: After a punt return, the game clock shows 1:42 to play, but the referee knows the game clock showed 2:39 to play when the ball was snapped for the punt. He (a) notices it immediately, or (b) doesn't notice the discrepancy until after two plays have been run and the clock shows 1:07. **RULING:** In (a), the referee should order the game clock reset to correct the timing error by estimating the amount of time the play took. In (b), it is too late to make a correction because discovery was not made before the second live ball after the error.

EXAMPLE 7-38: With 33 seconds left in the fourth period, the timer gets word to the referee that a timing mistake resulted in an extra minute being put on the game clock (a) during the third period, or (b) at about the 8-minute mark of the fourth period. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), no correction can be made. Play resumes with 33 seconds left in the period.

By state association adoption, a point differential may be established whereby if one team has gained such a lead, or if it secures such a lead, at any time in the game, the game is ended or a "running clock" rule may take effect (3-1-2).

Extending the Period

In deciding whether to extend the period (3-3-3), keep in mind this thought: If the situation calls for replaying the down, then the period is extended. However as we will see, there are some scenarios in which the down is not replayed, but which may also result in an untimed down.

With this principle in place, we can see accepted penalties for live-ball fouls, double (offsetting) fouls, and inadvertent whistles (see Additional Example 4 in Chapter 12) all cause the period to be extended.

Time must expire *during* the down; these events must occur during a down in which time expires.

EXAMPLE 7-39: Team A is out of timeouts with first and goal at the B-8. A87 catches a pass and is tackled inbounds on the B-1. During the down, A68 was flagged for being downfield illegally. The penalty is accepted and marked off to the B-13. The referee properly starts the game clock on the ready and time for the period expires before the ball can be snapped. **RULING:** The period is not extended for an untimed down because the foul did not occur during a down in which time expired.

It does not matter which team fouls. It is the replay of the down which mandates the extension of the period.

EXAMPLE 7-40: Time expires in the first or third quarter during a play in which A25 gains 10 yards on a run, but A79 clipped. **RULING:** Team B will accept the penalty, so the quarter is extended for one down.

EXAMPLE 7-41: At the snap on a play in which time expires, B79 is guilty of a substitution infraction and A23 is illegally in motion. **RULING:** A double foul; the penalties offset. Extend the period.

In addition, the period is normally extended after a touchdown for the try (3-3-3d). If the touchdown is scored as time expires in the fourth quarter, the try must be attempted unless the game has been decided and the points will not be used as a tiebreaker for playoff qualification (8-3-1 Exc). This depends on league or conference policy and may be specified by the state association. If necessary, this should be discussed in the pre-game meetings with the coaches.

Accepted penalties for dead-ball fouls, or for nonplayer or unsportsmanlike fouls (live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls), do not extend the period.

EXAMPLE 7-42: Third and goal at the B-2 with five seconds left in the fourth period and Team A trailing by five points. A10 runs to Team B's one-foot line and is tackled there. After A10 is down, B20 piles on. Time for the period expired during the down. **RULING:** The game is over and Team B wins. The penalty for B20's foul cannot extend the period because it was a dead-ball foul.

Fouls for which the penalty is a safety do not extend the period (3-3-4b5, 3.3.3A).

If a foul occurs that specifies a loss of down penalty, any score is canceled and the period also is not extended (3-3-4b Nt, 3.3.4A, B).

EXAMPLE 7-43: First and 10 at the B-14. A88 catches a pass thrown from the B-11 and is immediately tackled inbounds. The penalty is accepted and marked off to the B-16. Time for the period expires during the down. **RULING:** The period is not extended because the foul includes loss of down.

Also, the period is not extended when the defense fouls during a successful try or field goal and the offended team accepts the results of the play with enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding spot (3-3-4a). However, the penalty will carry over to the first play of the next period or overtime.

Likewise if there is an accepted penalty for a foul by the non-scoring team during a play that ends in a touchdown as time expires in the quarter, the period is *not* extended for the kickoff. The penalty either carries over to the try, for which the period is extended, or to the kickoff in the next quarter, if there is one, but there would be no extension of the period for a kickoff (see Chapter 11).

If a foul occurs before or during an untimed down, it is treated the same as if it occurred during the last timed down of the period. Consequently, there could be multiple untimed downs.

Additional Examples: 16-25, 30.

Crowd Noise

There is no rule governing crowd noise. Crowd noise is a normal part of the playing conditions to which teams must simply adjust.

The rule prohibiting persons not subject to the rule, including bands, from hindering play can be applied if excessive noise disrupts signal calling (9-9-1).

Delay of Game

The ball must be snapped before the expiration of the play clock (3-6-2a). Failure to do so, results in a delay-of-game foul which carries a five-yard penalty. Here is the classic example.

EXAMPLE 7-44: Team A is ahead in the score with about two minutes in the game with the game clock running. The players remain in the huddle and allow the play clock to expire. **RULING:** After the penalty is administered, the clock starts on the snap.

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The following are also delay-of-game fouls:

- Unnecessarily carrying a dead ball (3-6-2b).
- Unnecessary delay in unpiling after a down (3-6-2f).
- Snapping or free kicking the ball before it is marked ready for play (3-6-2d).
- Any other conduct which unduly prolongs the game (3-6-2e).

If a team fails to play within two minutes of being ordered to do so by the referee, the game is forfeited (3-6-3).

Additional Examples: 26, 27.

Delay at the Beginning of a Half

If a team is not ready to play at the beginning of a half, the delay foul carries a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. If both teams refuse to enter the field, the home team must enter first (9-8-1g2, 1.1.6). This rule is an attempt to prevent the "mind games" in which some teams try to engage.

If the field is not cleared by the home team management so that a half may start, it is a delay foul that carries a five-yard penalty (3-6-4).

EXAMPLE 7-45: When the halftime break ends, (a) the home team's band is still on the field and refuses to leave, or (b) both teams refuse to enter the field first even though the field is clear. **RULING:** Assuming there are no extenuating circumstances, the second half starts in (a) with the home team being penalized five yards (delay). In (b), the referee should request the home team enter first (1.1.6). If they refuse, it is a 15-yard penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct.

It is a foul if a team fails to be on the field for the mandatory three-minute warm-up period. The 15-yard penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct is charged to the head coach (9-8-1g3).

Additional Example: 28.

Referee's Discretion

The referee has wide latitude in controlling the clock if he feels a team is attempting to illegally conserve or consume time. Rule 3-4-6 is an "elastic clause" that supersedes any other clock rule. Thus, the referee may start the clock on the snap when it would ordinarily start on the ready, and vice versa, in the spirit of fairness.

As previously discussed (see the Section entitled "Starting the Clock"), when a penalty is accepted with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team has the option to start the game clock on the snap (3-4-7).

The interval between the last five minutes of the game and the last two minutes is not covered by 3-4-7, but is a possible time for a team to attempt to manipulate the clock.

If Example 7-11 were to occur, for instance with 3:30 remaining in the game and Team A would gain a time advantage, the Referee should consider holding the clock until the snap, especially on a second false start.

3-4-6 also calls for the referee to start the clock *on the ready* when Team A throws an illegal pass to stop the clock (conserve time).

EXAMPLE 7-46: On second down late in the fourth quarter, A11, whose team is trailing, scrambles from the pocket and runs beyond the neutral zone. Not able to get out of bounds, he intentionally throws the ball forward to the ground. **RULING:** Illegal forward pass. The penalty is five yards from where the ball was thrown and loss of down. The clock starts on the ready.

As previously mentioned, if a team unnecessarily delays in unpiling at the end of a down it is a five-yard penalty. If the referee is uncertain about a team's intent, he may pass on the penalty and delay starting the clock.

EXAMPLE 7-47: Near the end of the game, players from both teams are tangled and slow in allowing a downed runner to get up. The referee is uncertain as to whether the team leading deliberately delayed or the players were inadvertently tangled. **RULING:** The clock should be stopped, and started on the ready.

If, for whatever reason, the ball becomes illegal (e.g. becomes deflated or otherwise damaged) while it is in play, there is no rules coverage and the referee must handle the situation at his discretion. It is recommended the inadvertent whistle procedure be applied (See Chapter 12).

EXAMPLE 7-48: K1 punts, and while the kick is airborne beyond the line the ball suddenly deflates. **RULING:** The down be replayed from the previous spot.

Additional Examples: 29-31.

OVERTIME

When a game is tied after four periods, the optional tiebreaker system found in the back of the Rules Book is used to determine a winner in most states. *State Associations may opt for a different procedure or they may modify the standard procedure.*

The basic idea is to give each team an equal opportunity to score – a “series,” like extra innings in baseball. An overtime period consists of two series - one for each team. The line-to-gain is always the goal line and cannot be altered by any penalty, so chains are not used in overtime.

The winner is the team with the most points after each team has had an equal number of possessions (3-1-1 Note).

The game clock does not run during overtime; the play clock is run as normal.

Intermissions

A three minute intermission is taken after the fourth quarter ends, during which teams may confer with coaches. If there are subsequent overtime periods, there is a two-minute intermission between each period. See Figure 7-2.

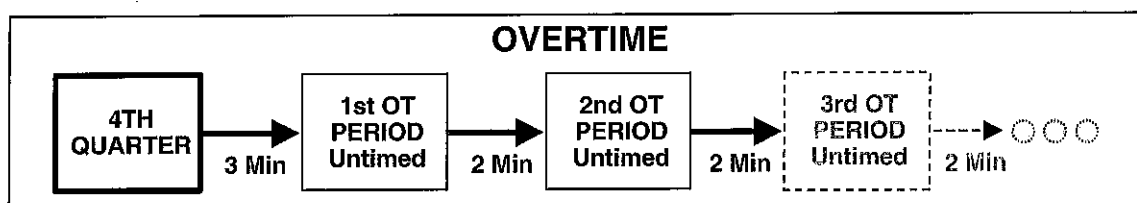


Figure 7-2

Coin Toss

After the three minute intermission, a coin toss is conducted, but the options are somewhat different. There is only one coin toss no matter how many overtime periods are played.

The winner may choose to initially play offense or defense, or select (designate) the end of the field to be used. That end will be the same for both series. The loser of the toss selects from the remaining option. The coin toss winner cannot defer making a choice.

The spot from which the ball is first snapped - the 10 yard line, is a succeeding spot from regulation play. Thus the penalty for a dead-ball foul, after the end of the fourth period (10-4-5b) or during a successful try or field goal at the end of the fourth period (8-3-5b), may carry over. That is significant because it will affect the choice of the team that wins the toss and can have a significant impact on game strategy. The referee must clearly explain the options at the coin toss.

EXAMPLE 7-49: Team A wins the toss and opts to start on defense. **RULING:** Team B must start on offense, thus their remaining option is to select the end of the field which that overtime period will be played.

EXAMPLE 7-50: At the end of the fourth quarter, the game is tied. As the last play ends, a visiting team player is flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct. The penalty is enforced at the succeeding spot to begin the overtime period. The visiting team wins the coin toss. **RULING:** If the visiting team elects to go on defense first, the overtime will begin with the home team having first and goal at the visiting team’s five yard line. If the visiting team elects to go on offense first, the overtime will begin with the visiting team having first and goal at the home team’s 25 yard line.

If there are additional overtime periods, the teams alternate the first choice. The winner of the toss will have the option for the odd-numbered periods and the loser for the even-numbered periods.

Additional Example: 32.

Additional Example: 33.

Start of Series – Succeeding Spot

Unless moved by penalty, Team A puts the ball in play from Team B’s 10 yard line at the end of the field determined at the coin toss, and has four downs to score. Team A may designate the spot from which the ball is put in play anywhere between the hash marks.

End of Series

The ball is dead if Team B gains possession. Once Team A scores or loses possession, their series is over. Team B then gets its chance (following the try if Team A scores a touchdown).

EXAMPLE 7-51: First and goal at the B-10 on the first possession of an overtime period. A34 advances the ball (a) to the B-2 where he is tackled, or (b) into the end zone. **RULING:** In (a), the series continues, second and goal for Team A. In (b), Team A's series is over. Following the try, Team B will put the ball in play to begin its series at the same 10 yard line.

EXAMPLE 7-52: On the first series of an overtime period, A34 fumbles the ball. B63 recovers and advances. **RULING:** The ball is dead when B63 gains possession and Team A's series is ended. First and goal for Team B from the 10 yard line at the same end of the field.

If the score remains tied after each team has had their series, play continues with an additional overtime period after a two-minute intermission. If the team on defense scores on a change of possession, the game is over --there is no try and no need to proceed further. However, the likelihood of this is extremely remote, as the ball is dead as soon as the defense gains possession (Examples: a series of penalties or other yardage losses followed by a Team A ball carrier tackled in his own end zone for a safety, or Team B recovering a fumble in Team A's end zone).

Additional Examples: 34-36.

New Series

A team may be awarded a new series (also a remote possibility) if the opponents commit a foul for which the penalty includes an automatic first down or if the offensive team recovers a field goal attempt between the goal lines after it has been touched first by the opponents beyond the neutral zone. The following examples demonstrate those two possibilities.

EXAMPLE 7-53: Team A has second and goal at the B-8. Team B is flagged for roughing the passer and the pass is incomplete. **RULING:** The penalty is enforced from the previous spot. It will be first and goal for Team A at the B-4.

EXAMPLE 7-54: Fourth and goal at the R-10. Team K's unsuccessful field goal attempt is first touched by Team R beyond the expanded neutral zone. K26 recovers the ball at the R-7. **RULING:** The ball is dead when K26 gains possession. Team K is awarded a new series. It will be Team K's ball, first and goal at the R-7.

Additional Examples: 36, 37.

Penalty Enforcement

Post-scrimmage enforcement does not apply in overtime. If a foul occurs that otherwise would be treated under post-scrimmage kick rules, the accepted penalty is enforced from the previous spot.

EXAMPLE 7-55: Team K's field goal attempt is unsuccessful. As the ball rolls beyond the neutral zone, a Team R player commits a personal foul five yards downfield. **RULING:** Post-scrimmage kick rules do not apply. Team K will accept the penalty which will be enforced from the previous spot and the down replayed.

Try

If the try is not necessary to determine the winner, it is not attempted.

EXAMPLE 7-56: On its first series, Team K kicks a field goal. Team R then scores a touchdown. **RULING:** Team R has won the game and the try is not attempted.

Timeouts

Each team is allowed one timeout in each overtime period. Unused timeouts do not carry over to any subsequent overtime period. Any remaining second half timeouts do not carry over to overtime.

EXAMPLE 7-57: At the end of regulation play with the score tied, Team A has used all three of its second-half timeouts, while Team B has used only one. **RULING:** Each team has one timeout for the overtime period. It does not matter how many second-half timeouts were not used.

EXAMPLE 7-58: Regulation play ends with Team A having no timeouts remaining. Team A requests a charged timeout (a) just before the overtime is to start, or (b) during the overtime. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the request is granted and Team A has used their timeout for that overtime period.

Additional Example: 38.

II. Additional Examples

1. After the 15 minute halftime intermission, the officials properly put three minutes on the clock and start it for the required warm-up period. Instead of having his players warm up, Team B's coach gathers his players for a lecture. **RULING:** Legal. No guidance for the warm-up period is specified. The officials are only required to provide an opportunity for warm-up activities (3.1.1C).
2. After the 15 minute halftime intermission, one of the teams has not returned to the field and is not visibly returning. **RULING:** The referee should ascertain that there has not been a mix-up. If so, he shall rectify the mix-up by allowing the team to immediately return. If there has not been a mix-up, he shall start the three-minute warm-up period and charge the team with a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct charged to the head coach.
3. With four minutes remaining in the halftime intermission, both teams are on the field and are warming up. The coaches agree to start the second half without a formal warm-up period. **RULING:** The three minute warm-up period must be held. With mutual consent of the coaches, the referee may shorten the halftime intermission, but a separate three minute warm-up period must be put on the clock and run (3.1.1B).
4. With two minutes of the mandatory warm-up time remaining, both teams start lining up for the second half kickoff. **RULING:** The teams should be allowed to line up; however, the half cannot begin until the three minutes have expired and the clock is reset to 12 minutes. The mandatory three-minute warm-up period cannot be shortened.
5. Fourth and three for Team A at the B-20. Tackle B79 doesn't get off the field before the snap (substitution infraction) on a running play in which A23 gains (a) two yards to the B-18, or (b) four yards to the B-16. Both plays end inbounds. **RULING:** In each case the clock will start according to what would have happened had the foul not occurred. In (a), although the ball is short of the line-to-gain and there would have been a change of possession after the play, a new series is not awarded to Team B because of their foul. By accepting the penalty Team A is awarded a first down and the clock starts on the ready. In (b), since A23 made the line-to-gain, Team A is awarded a first down. They get an additional yard by accepting the penalty. The clock starts on the ready.
6. R34 catches a punt and fumbles on the return. Prone K49 recovers the fumble. **RULING:** The clock starts on the snap. Team K is awarded a first down, and the clock starts on the snap when either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
7. Fourth and 10 at the K-30. K24 is flagged for illegal motion as K15 punts. The ball (a) rolls out of bounds, (b) is caught by R34 who is tackled inbounds, or (c) is fair caught by R28. The penalty is accepted. **RULING:** In (a), the clock starts on the snap as it was stopped because the ball went out of bounds. In (b), if the penalty is accepted and is enforced from the previous spot, the clock is started on the ready. The clock was stopped for both the foul and for the change of possession (an official's timeout). The clock only starts on the snap following a legal kick if a new series is awarded to either team as would be the case if the penalty was enforced from the succeeding spot. In (c), the game clock starts on the snap as the clock was stopped for the fair catch.
8. Third and four at the A-45. B26 intercepts A8's forward pass and is tackled inbounds on the B-42. While the pass was in flight, B32 committed pass interference and the penalty is accepted. **RULING:** The game clock starts on the ready. Team B was not awarded a new series because of the penalty.
9. Third and 10 at the K-20. K7 tries a quick kick, which is blocked by R62 and recovered on the K-12 by prone (a) R55, or (b) K77. **RULING:** In (a), the clock starts on the snap; in (b), the clock should not have been stopped at any point during or after the down, but if it is stopped, it should be started as soon as the error is recognized. While K7's kick was legal, a new series was not awarded to either team at the end of the down.
10. Fourth and five for Team K at the K-25. While K21's punt is in the air beyond the expanded neutral zone, R2 holds at midfield. An official then blows an inadvertent whistle while the ball is loose. **RULING:** K will accept the penalty which is enforced 10 yards from the previous spot yielding first and 10 for Team K at the K-35. The clock will start on the snap because a new series was awarded after a legal kick (4.2.3E).

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11. Second and 14 at the A-25. A33 gains six yards and is tackled inbounds. The line judge mistakes the back stake for the front stake and erroneously stops the clock. **RULING:** The clock is started as soon as the error is detected.

12. Second down and seven. A43 gains five yards and is tackled in a side zone. The clock is stopped because of an injury to (a) A66, or (b) B79. A radio timeout is taken. **RULING:** A66 or B79 must leave the game for at least one play. The clock starts on the ready with a (a) 25-second or (b) 40-second play clock.

13. With 33 seconds remaining in the game, Team A leads 17-13. Team B has no timeouts remaining. After a third down play that ends inbounds, B43 sprains his ankle and must be assisted off the field. **RULING:** The game clock is started on the referee's signal and the play clock is turned off because there is less time on the game clock than would be on the play clock (40 seconds). Team A does not have to snap the ball.

14. When the ball is dead after a running play that ends out of bounds, the 40-second play clock is started. The umpire receives the ball from the line judge, and as he is placing it on the ground, he sees that it is one of Team B's balls. He tosses the ball to the line judge who attempts to get a Team A ball from the ball boy. **RULING:** If the play clock reads 25 or less before the correct ball is in from the sideline and ready for play, the referee declares a timeout and signals to reset the play clock to 25 seconds. When the correct ball is ready for play he signals to start the play clock and the game clock.

15. When the ball is dead after a running play that ends in the side zone, the officials have difficulty getting the ball in to the hash mark. As the play clock nears 25, the Umpire places the ball on the ground, and by the time the officials are ready, the play clock is somewhat below 25 when the Umpire steps away. **RULING:** Without stopping the game clock, the referee gives the "pump" signal to indicate that the play clock is to be reset to 25. If the play clock is quickly reset to 25, the game clock does not stop. Only if the play clock operator does not quickly respond to the Referee's "pump" signal will the referee declare a timeout, signal for the play clock to be set at 25, and then signal to start both the play and game clocks.

16. As time expires during the last play of the second quarter, A19 loses five yards. B63 commits a personal foul (a) during the play, or (b) after the ball is dead. **RULING:** In (a), if Team A accepts the penalty the period is extended for one untimed down. In (b), the half ended before the foul. The penalty will be enforced on the second-half kickoff.

17. As time expires during the last play of the second quarter, A16 is flagged for holding in his end zone. The penalty is accepted. **RULING:** The period is not extended for Team A's free kick after the safety.

18. Punt receiver R30 is hit by K38 as he is about to catch the punt. Time in the first quarter expires during the kick. **RULING:** The period is extended if Team R accepts the penalty. Their choices: a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot (Team K retains the ball), an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul with the option to free kick or the result of the play.

19. The period is extended for an untimed down and after the ready-for-play, Team A false starts. **RULING:** The penalty for the dead-ball foul is enforced and Team A is still entitled to the untimed down.

20. As time expires during the last play of the third period, A64 is called for holding on a running play. The penalty is accepted and the period is extended for an untimed down. On the replayed down, A47 is flagged for a block below the waist and the penalty is accepted. **RULING:** The period is extended for a second untimed down.

21. A36 scores a touchdown as time in the first period expires. The period is extended for the try in the same direction the touchdown was scored. Team B fouls during the successful kick try. **RULING:** The period is not extended for the kickoff. Team A may accept the penalty and replay the try or have the penalty enforced on the kickoff to start the second period. The teams will switch goals for the kickoff.

22. Team A scores a touchdown as the first period ends. The period is extended for the try. Team A attempts a two-point try and B76 is flagged for roughing the passer as A6 completes a pass in the end zone. **RULING:** The period is not further extended. Team A will accept the penalty since it will be enforced from the succeeding spot. The kickoff will be the first play of the second period.

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23. Team A scores a touchdown as the third period expires. Team A's two-point try is (a) unsuccessful, or (b) successful. A8 is flagged for throwing a pass beyond the neutral zone. **RULING:** In (a), the penalty will be declined and the period has ended. In (b), the penalty will be accepted to negate the score, but since it includes loss of down, the try will not be repeated. The period is not extended for the kickoff.

24. Second and goal at the B-6. With time running out in the fourth period, Team A trails by three points. A7, finding no open receiver, decides to run. He advances to the B-4 and as he is being tackled, he throws a forward pass which is caught by A86 in the end zone as time expires. **RULING:** A7 is guilty of throwing an illegal forward pass from beyond the neutral zone. The penalty will be accepted to negate the touchdown. Since the penalty includes loss of down, the period is not extended for an untimed down. The game is over.

25. Near the end of the first half, A7 throws a "Hail Mary" pass which is intercepted by B22 in his end zone. B22 returns the ball to the A-20 where B22 attempts to throw a backward pass to B44; however, the pass goes forward. B44 catches the ball and scores. Time expires during the down. **RULING:** The penalty must be accepted to negate the touchdown. Although the loss of down aspect of the penalty does not apply after a change of possession, because the penalty for the foul specifies loss of down, the period is not extended for an untimed down.

26. With the game clock running in the third quarter, Team A (a) in a scrimmage kick formation, or (b) regular formation, allows the play clock to run down. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), Team B may accept or decline a five-yard penalty for delay of game. The clock starts on the snap if the penalty is accepted. Depending on field position, this is one of the rare situations, in which Team B may want to decline the yardage portion of the penalty in order to maintain a better opportunity for a touchback, while accepting the penalty to have the clock start on the snap.

27. With under a minute to play in the fourth quarter, Team B leads by one point. With the clock running, A21 is tackled at the B-10 well short of a first down. Team B players are slow in unpling and do not heed the umpire's request to get off the runner. **RULING:** A five-yard delay penalty from the succeeding spot and the clock will start on the snap.

28. When the halftime intermission expires the home team is still in their locker room. They enter the field just as the three-minute warm-up period ends and are not ready for the second-half kickoff. **RULING:** The foul for unsportsmanlike conduct is charged to the head coach when the halftime intermission expires. A second foul is not charged for failing to be ready for the kickoff.

29. Team A is behind in the score with 0:35 left in the fourth quarter. A12 gains five yards, runs toward the sideline and, unable to get out of bounds, throws an incomplete forward pass. **RULING:** An illegal forward pass; a five yard penalty from the spot of the pass, plus loss of down unless the penalty leaves the ball beyond the line-to-gain. The clock starts on the ready because Team A attempted to conserve time with the illegal forward pass.

30. Team A comes to the line with 12 seconds remaining in the first half. After counting, the Back Judge flags the defense for 12 men in the formation. There are two seconds on the clock with this occurs. **RULING:** By rule, the clock starts on the ready. Because this is a dead-ball foul, the period cannot be extended for Team A if they are unable to snap the ball. Thus, Team A will choose to start the clock on the snap.

31. Team A has a 20-16 lead and the ball on the A-20. There is 1:23 left in the fourth quarter and Team B is out of timeouts. After the referee blows the ready, he notices A67 has lost his shoe. After about 20 seconds have elapsed, A67 realizes he will be unable to get the shoe on in time and asks referee for help. The referee then calls an official's timeout. **RULING:** The clock should be started on the snap to ensure no additional time elapses.

32. To begin the second overtime series, a captain chooses to play at the opposite end of the field from where the first overtime series was played. **RULING:** Legal.

33. During the last down of the fourth period, A22 scores a touchdown to get within one point of the opponents, 21-20. On the successful kick try, B78 roughs the kicker. **RULING:** Team A may accept the point to tie the game and have the penalty enforced to start overtime. The penalty may also be accepted to replay the try from the B-1½.

34. During Team A's first overtime series, B10 intercepts a forward pass on the B-5. He circles back into his own end zone where he (a) is tackled, (b) fumbles as he is tackled and A84

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recovers the ball. **RULING:** In both cases, Team A's series is over. Team B will put the ball in play at the 10 yard line on the same end of the field. There is no score as the ball is dead when B10 gains possession.

35. Fourth and goal on the R-4 in overtime. K20's field goal attempt is blocked and is recovered at the R-1 by R90. **RULING:** Team K's series is over.

36. During the first series in overtime, K2 kicks a successful field goal as R79 roughs K2. **RULING:** Team K may take the three points off the board and accept the penalty with an automatic first down, or keep the three points and have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot. If the

latter, Team R will snap from the designated 25 yard line, first and goal start its series.

37. Fourth and goal on the R-6 in overtime. K12's field goal attempt is blocked and rolls out of bounds after R62 roughs the snapper. **RULING:** Team K is awarded a new series at the R-3 since the penalty for roughing the snapper carries an automatic first down.

38. Following the second play of an overtime period, Team A requests a timeout. They then attempt to call a second timeout. **RULING:** They have used their one timeout for the overtime period. The officials simply deny the request for a second timeout.

III. Review Test

(True or False)

1. A period may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing captains and the referee.
2. On first and 10, the ball is run up the middle for a five-yard gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead.
3. An incomplete pass is thrown. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The game clock stops and starts on the snap.
4. On third and five, the ball is run for a 10-yard gain and the tackle is inbounds. When the referee winds the clock, he will blow his whistle.
5. After a penalty is administered, the referee will blow the ready with a 25-second play clock.
6. After a helmet comes off a Team B player, the referee will blow the ready with a 25-second play clock.
7. On second down, Team A recovers a fumble. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock.
8. The ball is punted and a fair catch is made. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock. The game clock starts on the snap.
9. When the period ends during a free kick down and the penalty for a foul by Team K is accepted, the period is not over.
10. The period must be extended if during a down in which time expires, the penalty for any live-ball foul enforced as a live-ball foul is accepted.
11. The period must be extended if, during a down in which time expires, Team B commits an unsportsmanlike foul and the penalty is accepted.
12. If during a down in which time expires, A71 holds and A22 scores a touchdown, the period is automatically ended and the score is canceled.
13. If during a down in which time expires, A81 commits pass interference, the period is not extended whether the penalty is accepted or declined.
14. If the penalty is accepted for pass interference by A83 on a fourth down play which is also a down in which time expires, it will be Team B's ball for an untimed down.
15. If during a down in which time expires, K23 commits kick-catching interference and Team R accepts an awarded fair catch the period shall be extended.
16. If the penalty is enforced for a foul which occurred during the last timed down of a period, but time expires before the next down, Team A is entitled to an untimed down.
17. If a double foul occurs during a down in which time expires, the period is ended.
18. The clock always runs while the ball is live.
19. The clock is running between downs when A61 false starts. After the penalty is enforced, the clock is started, but the period ends before the snap. The period must be extended.

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20. If A1 intentionally grounds a forward pass on the last play of the first quarter and time expires during the down, the period is extended.
21. The period shall be extended if, during a down in which time expires, B1 commits an unsportsmanlike foul and the penalty is accepted.
22. A period shall not be extended by an untimed down if, during a down in which time expires, a foul occurs for which enforcement, by rule, results in a safety.
23. If any foul by either team occurs after the last timed down of either half, it is penalized from the succeeding spot on the kickoff or overtime.
24. A clock stopped during a period for an official's timeout will start with the ready-for-play signal unless a free kick follows.
25. The clock does not start during a free kick at the time of first touching by Team K.
26. If a free kick is repeated, the clock starts on the ready-for-play signal if it had been started on the original kick.
27. When A7's forward pass is complete and B44 commits pass interference, the clock starts with the snap after the enforcement.
28. If stopped, the clock will start with the ready-for-play signal for other than a free kick when the action which caused the down to end did not also cause the clock to be stopped.
29. After the ball has been out of bounds, the clock always starts with the ready-for-play.
30. The game clock will start on the ready after a running play out of bounds for a new first down during the last two minutes of either half.
31. If K89 commits kick-catching interference and Team R chooses an awarded fair catch, the clock will be started with the snap or when the free kick is touched, other than first touching by Team K.
32. The clock will start on the snap for a scrimmage down following a fair catch.
33. If A6 intentionally grounds a forward pass in an effort to save loss of yardage, after enforcement, the referee shall start the clock with the ready-for-play signal.
34. The clock will always start with the ready-for-play following a television timeout.
35. The clock starts on the snap following the enforcement of a delay-of-game penalty.
36. If B22 intercepts a pass, then fumbles during the return and A77 recovers the ball inbounds, the clock will start on the snap.
37. If A8 intentionally grounds a pass in an effort to conserve time, the official shall after penalty enforcement, start the clock with the ready-for-play signal.
38. The referee may correct an obvious timing error after a period has ended, if discovery is prior to the second live ball following the error.
39. Unused first half time outs may be used in the second half.
40. Unused second half time outs may be used in overtime.
41. The head coach or any player may request a timeout.
42. The head coach may come onto the field and request the nearest official to grant a time-out.
43. No more than 11 players and one coach may participate in any one conference.
44. During a timeout, headsets may only be used by players if the conference is at the sideline.
45. There is no limit on the number of coaches who may take part in a conference between the hash marks.
46. During a coach-referee conference, a regular player-coach conference may be held by both teams since the time out at that point is charged to the team requesting the conference.
47. Charged team timeouts shall be reduced in length if both teams are ready to play before the ready-for-play signal.
48. Successive timeouts may not be granted to either team during the same dead-ball period.
49. The referee may call an official's timeout to allow K13 time to put on his kicking shoe or put on a different numbered jersey.
50. As a result of a coach-referee conference that follows a running play that ends inbounds, if the referee is in error, the clock will start with the ready-for-play signal.
51. Regular authorized conference privileges are allowed during the one minute intermission following a field goal, safety or try and prior to the succeeding kickoff.
52. An authorized conference is permitted during the intermission between periods.
53. When the ball becomes dead following a fourth down play, the clock must always be stopped.
54. After the ball becomes dead and it appears that the ball has reached the line-to-gain, the covering official shall stop the clock.

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55. Unless the clock is already stopped, an official's timeout shall be taken as soon as the ball becomes dead following a change of possession.
56. If an official calls a timeout for an apparently injured player and after examination it is determined the player is not injured, the player need not leave the game.
57. If an official stops the clock for a bleeding player and his team thereafter requests a timeout, the player may remain in the game.
58. During an official's time-out for injury, players of either team may not go near the sideline to communicate with their coaches.
59. A player who is briefly knocked unconscious must have a note from an appropriate health care provider to return to the game.
60. If a player's helmet comes off without a foul occurring on the last play of the first period, that player may participate in the first play of the second period.
61. The coach-referee conference will be held at the sideline in the field of play in front of the coaches' team box.
62. A coach-referee conference may result in a penalty for a delay-of-game foul.
63. Failure to properly wear required equipment when the snap is imminent is a delay of game foul.
64. There is no foul for which the penalty includes loss of a timeout.

Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------|-----|---|-------------------------|
| 1. | F | 3-1-3 | 33. | F | 3-4-3e, 7-5-2e |
| 2. | T | 3-6-1a2 | 34. | F | 3-4-3f |
| 3. | T | 3-6-1a2 | 35. | T | 3-4-3i |
| 4. | F | 3-6-1b2 | 36. | F | 3-4-3, 3-4-2b3 |
| 5. | T | 3-6-a1e | 37. | T | 3-4-8 |
| 6. | F | 3-6-1a1f | 38. | F | 3-4-7 |
| 7. | T | 3-6-1a1g | 39. | F | 3-5-1 |
| 8. | T | 3-6-1a1e | 40. | F | 3-5-1 |
| 9. | T | 3-3-3a | 41. | T | 3-5-2a |
| 10. | F | 3-3-3a | 42. | F | 1-2-3g, 9-8-1i |
| 11. | F | 3-3-3a | 43. | F | 2-6-2 |
| 12. | F | 3-3-3a | 44. | T | 1-6-1 |
| 13. | F | 3-3-3a | 45. | F | 2-6-2b |
| 14. | F | 3-3-3a, 7-5-10 Pen | 46. | T | 3-5-2c |
| 15. | T | 3-3-3a, 6-5-6 Pen | 47. | T | 3-5-3 |
| 16. | F | 3-3-3a | 48. | F | 3-5-4 |
| 17. | F | 3-3-3b | 49. | F | 3-5-7 |
| 18. | F | 3-3-3, 3-4-1a, 8-3-1 | 50. | T | 3-4-2a, 3-5-7h |
| 19. | F | 3-3-3 | 51. | T | 3-5-7L, 3-5-8 |
| 20. | F | 3-3-4b3 | 52. | T | 3-5-7L, 3-5-8 |
| 21. | F | 3-3-4b1 | 53. | T | 3-5-9 |
| 22. | T | 3-3-4b5 | 54. | T | 3-5-9 |
| 23. | T | 3-3-6 | 55. | T | 3-5-9 |
| 24. | F | 3-4-2a | 56. | F | 3-5-10a |
| 25. | T | 3-4-1a, 3-4-3 | 57. | F | 3-5-10c |
| 26. | F | 3-4-1a | 58. | F | 3-5-8a3, 3-5-8c, 3.5.8B |
| 27. | F | 3-4-2b3 | 59. | F | 3-5-10b |
| 28. | T | 3-4-2b3 | 60. | F | 3-5-10d |
| 29. | F | 3-4-3a | 61. | T | 3-5-11 |
| 30. | F | 3-4-3a | 62. | T | 3-6-2c |
| 31. | T | 3-4-3b | 63. | F | 1-5-5 |
| 32. | T | 3-4-3b, 3-4-3j | 64. | T | 3-5 |

CHAPTER 8 MAJOR FOULS

I. The Rules in Depth

Rule 9 describes most of the major fouls. We'll discuss most of them here except some which are specifically tied to kicking or passing. Also, illegal participation is discussed in Chapter 10. 9-4-3 lists many of these: targeting, the striking fouls; helmet fouls i. e., spearing, face tackling, butt blocking, tripping, chop blocking, clipping, blocking in the back, and blocking below the waist.

Many of the major fouls involve blocking infractions. Blocking is an extremely important part of the game because no runner, kicker or passer could perform effectively without his teammates blocking would-be tacklers.

Blocking is obstructing an opponent by contacting him with any part of the body (2-3-1) and is a foul if an illegal technique is used. The legal blocking techniques are described in 2-3-2.

Use of a legal technique can also be a foul if the block occurs when blocking is prohibited e.g., contacting the snapper in a scrimmage-kick formation, blocking by or on eligible receivers downfield, blocking by receivers who signal for a fair catch, kick catching interference, or blocking the kicker or holder of a kick.

Free-Blocking Zone

The **free-blocking zone** (2-17-1), also referred to as the "zone," is designed to allow utilization of all aspects of football with minimal compromise of safety. It is defined as a rectangle centered on the spot of the snap. It measures eight yards laterally and six yards lengthwise (Figure 8-1).

Blocks below the waist from the front or side and blocks in the back are permitted within the zone provided certain conditions are met. These conditions always include that the contact takes place in the zone and before the ball leaves the zone (2-17-4). Low blocks may only be made against opponents who are in the zone and on their line of scrimmage at the snap.

A player is in the zone when any part of his body is in the zone at the snap. The criteria for offensive players to be on the line of scrimmage are explained in Chapter 3. A defensive player is on his line of scrimmage when he is within one yard of the neutral zone at the snap (2-25-3). That means linebackers can be on the line if they step up to the neutral zone before the snap.

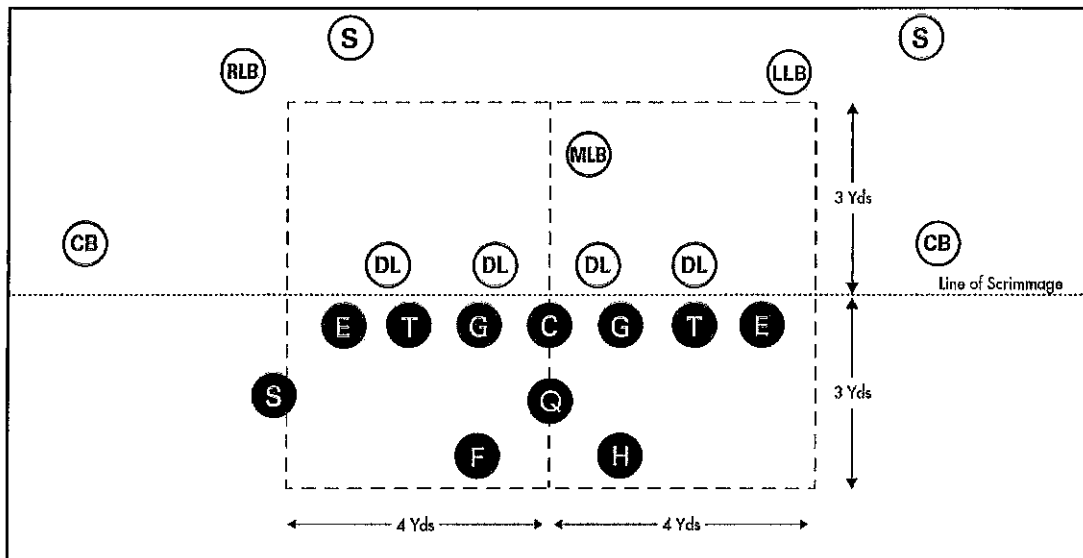


Figure 8-1

Clipping

This rule was written so a player should not be contacted from behind by an opponent he cannot see approaching. The legality of the block and whether it constitutes a foul is usually dependent upon the initial contact (2-5-1). Protection is not provided a player who turns his back to an oncoming blocker when the blocker has committed in intent and direction of movement. Because of the injury risk, clipping is considered one of the most dangerous fouls. 2-5-1 gives a definition of **clipping** – contacting an opponent from the rear at or below the waist. Clipping is a 15-yard penalty. All clipping is illegal.

EXAMPLE 8-1: On a trap play, offensive guard A56 blocks defensive lineman B75 from behind at the ankles at the line of scrimmage just as the quarterback hands off to the fullback two yards behind the line. **RULING:** A foul for clipping.

EXAMPLE 8-2: Quarterback A12 drops back seven yards and completes a pass to a wide receiver. Guard A68, beaten on the play by B79 who avoided the block, falls on the back of B79's legs. **RULING:** A foul on A68 for clipping; a 15-yard penalty under the all-but-one principle.

There is no exemption for clipping when players are chasing a loose ball. Defensive players also are *never* allowed to legally clip. Many coaches, officials, and fans believe the prohibition on clipping only applies to offensive players. But in fact the definition of clipping and the discussion in Rule 9 make no distinction between offense and defense.

Additional Examples: 1-5.

Blocking in the Back

A **block in the back** (2-5-2) is a similar infraction to clipping except it is contact in the back (above the waist), inside the shoulders and below the helmet. Contact on the back of the arm or shoulder is not a foul. The penalty is 10 yards.

Unlike clipping, blocking in the back is allowed for offensive linemen in the free-blocking zone. Offensive linemen may legally block in the back inside the zone if the opponent was in the zone at the snap and the block is in the zone (2-17-3).

In summary, there are four requirements for a legal block in the back. The block must be:

- By an offensive lineman who is in the zone at the snap;

- In the zone;
- Against an opponent who is in the zone at the snap;
- Before the ball leaves the zone.

EXAMPLE 8-3: Quarterback A12 drops back seven yards and completes a pass to a wide receiver. Tackle A72, beaten on the play by B81 who avoided the block pushes B81 in the back above the waist. **RULING:** A foul on A72 for blocking in the back; a 10-yard penalty under the all-but-one principle.

If the defender spins on a blocker who is otherwise attempting a legal block, the block is legal. Sometimes the result of the spin is that contact by a blocker shifts to a point on the opponent's back. The spin may be deliberate or it may result from impetus of the initial collision. If contact was first in front or on the side, the block is legal. It is imperative the official observe such a block in its entirety – initial contact and follow-through. Continuous contact moving from in front of an opponent to behind is also legal.

Defensive players are allowed to push an opponent in the back *above the waist* if they are trying to get to the runner. Also, players of either team may push or pull in the back when trying to reach a loose ball, such as a fumble, a backward pass, a kick they are eligible to touch, or a tipped forward pass unless they have signaled for a fair catch (6-5-1). They also are allowed to push in the back if they are warding off a blocker (9-3-5b).

EXAMPLE 8-4: Quarterback A15 fumbles behind the neutral zone. In trying to get A27 out of his way and recover the fumble, B82 pushes A27 in the back. **RULING:** Legal play.

In summary, there are three differences between clipping and blocking in the back.

- Clipping is a 15-yard penalty, while a block in the back is a 10-yard penalty;
- A defensive player can be legally blocked in the back if he is in the zone at the snap, but all clipping is illegal.
- A block in the back is legal anywhere on the field to get at the runner, a loose ball that the blocker may legally touch or possess or to ward off a blocker.

Additional Examples: 2-6.

Blocking Below the Waist

Blocking below the waist is initial contact below the waist from the front or side against an opponent other than a runner (2-3-7). It is a block that is only allowed under specific conditions (9-3-2). These are outlined in 2-17-2. The NFHS philosophy is an above the waist block in the open field usually accomplishes the same purpose as a block below the waist, but reduces the possibility of injury to the opponent's legs. Please remember blocking below the waist refers to blocks from the front or side. If the block is from the rear, it falls under the clipping rule.

The first point of contact is very important, because if the block has been initiated *above the waist* and the blocker then slides down while retaining contact, it is a legal block.

If a blocker's initial contact is with an opponent's hand and the blocker follows through and blocks that opponent below the waist, the block is above the waist if the blocker first contacts the opposing player's hands at or above waist level; the block is below the waist if the contact with the opponent's hand is below the waist (2-3-7).

The player being blocked can protect himself against significant lower leg contact if he gets his hands on the blocker before his torso is contacted. Contacting only the opponent's hands is not a foul.

EXAMPLE 8-5: On a kick return, R66 leads interference. He blocks K34 and the initial contact is (a) below K34's waist, (b) at waist level, but as he continues, he contacts K34's legs; (c) with K34's hands which are above his waist; or (d) with K34's hands which are below his waist. In (c) and (d), subsequent contact is at K34's knees. **RULING:** In (a) and (d), illegal blocks. In (b) and (c), the blocks are legal because the initial contact was not below the waist (9.3.2D).

Blocking below the waist applies only when the opponent has one or both feet on the ground.

EXAMPLE 8-6: Fourth and 10 at the K-40. With Team K in a scrimmage kick formation, R56 rushes in to block K12's punt, and K74 attempts to block R56. R56 leaps to block the kick and K74's contact is below R56's waist. **RULING:** Legal block; when R56 jumped into the air, it absolved K74's responsibility for the low block (9.3.2E).

Blocking below the waist is allowed for certain players in the free-blocking zone. In addition to being in the free-blocking zone at the snap, both players must have been on their line of scrimmage

at the snap (2-17-2). Also, the contact must take place in the zone.

When Team A is in a shotgun or scrimmage kick formation, blocking below the waist is legal if the block is initiated immediately at the snap while the ball is passing through the zone. If there is any delay, it is an illegal block (2.17.2E).

A "**crackback block**" may be either a legal or illegal block. Although there is no formal definition, this term is used to describe a block by a wide receiver that blocks back toward the spot of the snap. If the crackback is in front or side and above the waist, it is a legal block unless it is a blindside block.

Crackback blocks are usually initiated by players who are outside the zone. Accordingly, a crackback block below the waist is an illegal block. Likewise, any crackback from behind is also illegal.

In summary, there are four requirements for a legal block below the waist. The block must be:

- By a blocker (offense or defense) who is in the zone and on his line of scrimmage at the snap;
- In the zone;
- Against an opponent in the zone and on his line of scrimmage at the snap;
- Before the ball leaves the zone.

EXAMPLE 8-7: A23 is lined up as a split end 10 yards from the ball. As the quarterback sweeps wide to his side, A23 blocks B52 from the front and toward the snap. **RULING:** If the block is below the waist, it is a foul for an illegal block and a 15-yard penalty with "all-but-one" enforcement. If the block is above the waist, it is legal.

EXAMPLE 8-8: Same as the preceding example, except A23 is lined up in the backfield and just outside the tight end who is positioned five yards from the ball. **RULING:** Again the high block is legal, and the low block is illegal.

In the kicking game, blocking below the waist has been virtually eliminated. If there is a free kick, then blocking below the waist is not permitted by either team anywhere on the field at any time during the down. It is important to note the block below the waist is prohibited during the *entire down*, not just during the kick. Thus, if a member of the receiving team blocks below the waist during the return, it is a foul—even though the kick has ended.

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If there is a scrimmage kick, any blocking below the waist must be initiated immediately after the snap, since the ball will leave the zone on the snap. Like the free kick, blocking below the waist is forbidden during the return of a scrimmage kick.

Blocking below the waist is also prohibited anywhere on the field after a change of possession. Thus, when the defense recovers or

intercepts a fumble or backward pass, or intercepts a forward pass, no one is allowed to block below the waist.

Additional Examples: 4-9.

The following table summarizes activity in the free-blocking zone.

Players who may block low in the zone.	Players who may be blocked low in the zone.
Offensive players in the zone and on the line at the snap.	Defensive players in the zone and on the line at the snap.
Defensive players in the zone and on the line at the snap.	Offensive players in the zone and on the line at the snap.
Players who may block in the back in the zone.	Players who may be blocked in the back in the zone.
Offensive players in the zone and on the line at the snap.	Defensive players in the zone at the snap.

Table 8-1

Chop Block

A **chop block** is a combination block by two or more teammates against an opponent other than the runner, with or without delay, where one of the blocks is at the knee or below and the other block is above the knee (2-3-8). For this discussion, a "low" block is a block at or below the knee.

The penalty for a chop block is 15 yards and is enforced under the "all-but-one" principle (9-3-6).

Such contact outside the zone is an illegal block below the waist. If the opponent has disengaged from the first block when the second block occurs, there cannot be a chop block.

EXAMPLE 8-9: Second and 10 at the A-33. While right guard A68 is blocking defensive tackle B76 above the waist at the A-35, left guard A60 pulls and joins A68 in a double-team. A60 blocks B76 at the knees. **RULING:** Chop block (high-low). If accepted Team A will be penalized 15 yards.

EXAMPLE 8-10: First and 10 at the A-20. A66 blocks defensive tackle B78. The impact knocks B78 backwards. A66 then turns to his left and blocks B70. While B78 is no longer contacting A66, he is blocked below the knees by A64. A64's block takes place after the ball has left the free-blocking zone. **RULING:** This is not a chop block; however, A64 is guilty of blocking below the waist. If accepted Team A will be penalized 15 yards.

Here are some key points regarding chop blocks.

- Both offensive and defensive players can be guilty of a chop block
- Two high blocks are legal in situations where blocking is allowed.
- Two low blocks are legal in situations where low blocks are legal.
- High-low or low-high blocks are chop blocks.
- When in doubt, the contact is at the knee or below.

Additional Examples: 10-12.

Blindside Block

Action which includes identifying and taking aim on an opponent who is not aware of any pending contact increases the potential for serious injury to one or both of the players and must be minimized. Officials need to be aware of situations that are likely to produce unnecessary or excessive contact. Blindside blocks often provide windows of opportunity for these potentially dangerous contact situations to occur. A **blindside block** is a block outside of the free-blocking zone against an opponent other than the runner who does not see the block coming (2-3-10).

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Blindside blocks include, but are not limited to:

- Blocks by a player on offense who initiates a “peel back” block toward his own end line or a “crack back” block toward the spot of the snap;
- Blocks by a Team R player during a free kick or scrimmage kick play where the Team R player is running toward his end line and blocks an opponent who has either just turned to pursue the runner or is running roughly parallel to the end line in pursuit of the runner;
- Blocks by a player on offense after the runner abruptly changes direction regardless of the designed play;
- Any open field block against an opponent whose primary focus is on the runner or the ball and who does not see the block coming.

When a player does not know he is being contacted, the risk of injury increases significantly. If a player can see the block coming, he can prepare for the contact. A blindside block is particularly dangerous because the blocker is often running at full speed while the opponent may be in the process of turning to pursue the runner.

A forceful block with the shoulder at the level of the opponent's chest is more than what is necessary to achieve the football purpose of eliminating or delaying a tackle. Blocks initiated with open hands are significantly less dangerous because the blocker typically cannot generate the same amount of force on the opponent's body as he can with his shoulder. It is illegal to initiate a blindside block with forcible contact unless made with open hands (9-4-3n).

EXAMPLE 8-11: B30 is pursuing runner A22 at the B-40. A80 runs roughly parallel to the B-40 and blocks B30 with his shoulder. At the time of the block, B30 (a) was focused on A22 and did not turn toward A80 or visibly prepare for contact, or (b) tried to ward off A80's block. **RULING:** A foul in (a) because B30 did not see A80 approach. A legal block in (b) because B30 saw A80 before the block was initiated.

Most blindside blocks are made in situations where a block is necessary to promote the movement of the runner, thus this rule is designed to eliminate excessive contact. Contact away from

the play may still be judged as unnecessary or excessive if the action is not near the point of attack and the player blocked had no chance of influencing the play. For action in the free-blocking zone such as trap blocks, even though the defensive player may not see the block coming, it is not a foul.

Once a player is blocked, contact with the ground is inevitable. It is critical that officials observe the entire blocking action.

EXAMPLE 8-12: A7 throws a screen pass to A22 at the A-38. A22 is at the A-42 and linebacker B55 is pursuing him across the field. A80 has gone five yards downfield, reverses direction, approaches B55 and blocks him at the A-43 with (a) his shoulder, or (b) open hands, knocking B55 to the ground. **RULING:** A foul for an illegal blindside block in (a) and a legal block in (b). In (b), the fact that a player was knocked to the ground does not necessarily make the contact an illegal block; the technique was legal.

If the initial contact is with open hands followed by contact with the torso, it is a legal block. When in doubt, it is a foul for an illegal block.

EXAMPLE 8-13: A12 throws a screen pass to A22 at the A-38. A22 advances to the A-42 and linebacker B55 is pursuing him across the field. A80 has gone five yards downfield, comes back and blocks B55 at the A-43 with open hands, then compresses into a shoulder block, which slides down below the waist while contact is maintained. **RULING:** The block is legal; the block was initiated with open hands.

Additionally, for a blindside block to be a foul, the contact must be forcible. That can be generally interpreted to mean that if the opponent is not knocked to the ground, the contact is not forcible.

EXAMPLE 8-14: On a punt return, R26 blocks K42 from the side just as K42 is turning to pursue the runner. R26's block is with his shoulder and breaks K42's stride but does not knock him down. **RULING:** The blindside block is not a foul because the shoulder contact was not forcible contact.

There is no exception if the player who is blocked is in the process of making a tackle.

EXAMPLE 8-15: During a run by A35, B22 is one step behind and has one hand on A35's shoulder pad attempting to make the tackle when he is blindsided from the side by A60. The contact was: (a) a shoulder-leading block; or (b) an open hand block. **RULING:** In (a), an illegal blindside block; in (b) a legal block.

Players whose actions are so severe and abusive and are meant to intentionally (flagrantly) punish an opponent should result in disqualification.

Holding and Illegal Use of Hands

General

Hands to the head or neck area constitute an illegal blocking technique (2-3-3). The runner is exempted from this prohibition (9-2-1a). If a player's hands initially go to the chest or shoulder area, and then slide or deflect to the head, it can be penalized as illegal use of hands. If a blow is delivered directly to the head area, it should be treated as a personal foul.

Offense

The descriptions in 2-3-2 allow members of the offense to use their hands in a typical "pass blocking" position.

There are two basic legal positions - either with closed or cupped hands and the forearms within 45 degrees of the body, or open hands with palms facing the opponent and arms extended from the body as far as the blocker wishes. The cupped hand technique requires that the palms not face the opponent and the elbows or forearms may not be thrown into the opponent faster than the blocker's shoulders at contact. The open hand block requires the blocker's hands be inside his own frame and also within the opponent's frame on contact. Any blatant deviation of this e.g., hands at the opponent's side or too high, is a foul for illegal use of hands (9-2-1a). The penalty is 10 yards administered under the all-but-one principle. Holding, which also carries a 10-yard penalty, is now understood to mean grasping, encircling, hooking, pulling, etc., that illegally obstructs an opponent (9-2-1c).

The blocker is allowed to contact the back of the opponent if the opponent spins during the block or after the blocker is committed to his charge.

EXAMPLE 8-16: First and 10 at the A-20. A5 drops back to pass and B74 rushes. Fullback A32 makes contact on B74's chest using extended arms with open hands. B74 spins in an effort to

evade A32. A32 effectively maintains contact while shifting his hands to B74's upper arm and then directly on his back as B74 turns. A32 continues the contact and finishes the block by pushing B74 past A5. **RULING:** Legal block.

A player may not grasp or connect with a teammate in any way just prior to or while blocking an opponent (9-2-1b). This is called **interlocked blocking** (2-3-9).

Additional Example: 13.

Defense

The rules for defensive use of hands (2-3-5) are more liberal than those for the offense. However, the defense is not allowed to hold an opponent other than the runner, unless trying to ward off a blocker or throw an opponent out of the way in an effort to reach the ball or the ball carrier.

In most cases there is no advantage to holding an offensive player, so it is not frequently seen. The exceptions include a receiver, such as tight end, who may be held to disrupt the timing on a possible pass route, and the guards, who may be held to prevent them from pulling so that they may block at the point of attack.

Also, a defensive player cannot use his hands to add momentum to the charge of a teammate who is on the line of scrimmage (9-2-3b). Examples include using a teammate as a battering ram or launching him in an attempt to block a kick or pass. The penalty for illegal use of hands is 10 yards.

Officials are sometimes confused by "hands to the face." While that phrase is not used in the Rules Book, there is delineation between what constitutes a 15-yard penalty and a 10-yarder. It is mostly a judgment call, but the following explanation should assist.

It is illegal and a personal foul for a defensive player to use his hand(s) to slap the blocker's head (9-4-7). This technique is most often used when defensive linemen are pass rushing. The intent is to get the opponent off balance and allow the pass rusher to slip past the blocker. The head slap can be an open hand to the helmet or a punch (which is not fighting).

There will be times when linemen through the course of normal close line play force hands up to the face or neck, or the hands move to the face or neck and then quickly off. While delivering a blow is a foul, quick movement to the face or neck and immediately off is not. However, if there is a prolonged pushing or forcing of the head back, either by contact to the facemask or contact under the chin, it is a 10-yard penalty for illegal use of

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hands (9-2-1a, 9-2-3a). Grabbing and controlling of the face mask is of course a personal foul (9-4-3h). These can occur with both offensive and defensive linemen. The umpire has the best chance of seeing these acts.

EXAMPLE 8-17: Offensive tackle A73 charges out of his three-point stance and blocks defensive end B86 in the midsection. B86 attempts to fight off the block by placing one hand on A73's shoulder and the other on the side of A73's head, then pushing the blocker aside. **RULING:** The action by B86 is legal. The open hand to the side of the head is not a striking blow.

Contact by the defense with eligible pass receivers is restricted. The "potential blocker" rule (9-2-3d) allows the defensive man to ward off or block an eligible pass receiver until he and the defensive man are at the same yard line or the receiver cuts away from the defender. The idea is once the offensive receiver gets even with or cuts away from the defensive back, he is no longer a potential blocker and is not a threat to the defensive man. The blocking technique must be legal. Consider the following.

EXAMPLE 8-18: Before quarterback A10 throws an incomplete forward pass across the neutral zone in the direction of A89 in the right flat, defensive back B30 fouls receiver A23, who runs a pattern to his left, by (a) holding, or (b) blocking him in the back. **RULING:** The penalty will be enforced 10 yards from the previous spot. The down will be replayed.

Downfield blocking is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Additional Example: 14.

Kicking Team

Members of the kicking team are allowed to use their hands and arms to ward off blockers.

During a free kick, Team K is now prohibited from blocking an opponent until they are eligible to recover the ball, the ball has gone 10 yards, or if the receiving team initiates a block within the neutral zone (9-3-7).

EXAMPLE 8-19: While K2's kickoff is rolling free and untouched, K45 blocks R23 in the front and above his waist. At the time of K45's block the kicked ball was (a) seven yards beyond Team K's free-kick line, or (b) 12 yards beyond Team K's

free-kick line. **RULING:** In (a), an illegal block, a 10-yard penalty from either the previous spot and re-kick or from the succeeding spot. In (b), a legal block.

Also, if they are eligible to touch the ball, kicking team members are allowed to push or pull an opponent in the back in an attempt to get to the ball. Thus if a kickoff has gone 10 yards or has been touched by the receiving team, all Team K players are eligible to touch the ball and may push or pull their opponents out of the way. However, if the ball has not gone 10 yards or has not been touched by the receiving team, a block in the back is illegal.

The same is true for Team K players on a scrimmage kick that has not crossed the neutral zone, or that has been touched by Team R after having crossed the neutral zone.

Additional Example: 15.

Head Contact

It is a foul for a player to either initiate contact using his head or to initiate contact above the shoulders. The rules address both the method of delivery of the contact – the head, and the receiving area of the contact – above the shoulders. In either case, it is a foul.

The rules prohibiting the use of the helmet as a weapon have existed for many years. **Illegal helmet contact** includes butt blocking, face tackling and spearing and is a continuing point of emphasis due to risk-minimization concerns (2-20).

Face tackling is driving the face mask, frontal area or top of the helmet directly into the runner (2-20-1b). Butt blocking is the same technique used to block (2-20-1a). These are prohibited along with spearing. Spearing does *not* have to be an intentional act. Any driving of the helmet into a player in an attempt to punish him is a foul (9-4-3i).

Spearing is defined as "an act by an offensive or defensive player who initiates contact against any opponent with the top of his helmet" (2-20-1c).

It is also illegal for a player to intentionally use his helmet, including the face mask, to butt or ram an opponent (9-4-3j) or to target an opponent by taking aim and initiating contact above the shoulders (9-4-3m).

The blow can be delivered with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow, or shoulder. **Targeting** means that a player takes aim at an opponent for purposes of attacking with an apparent intent that goes beyond making a legal tackle or a legal block or playing the ball (2-20-2). Some indicators of targeting include but are not limited to:

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- Leading with helmet, forearm, fist, hand or elbow to attack with contact at the head or neck area.
- Lowering the head before attacking by initiating contact with the crown of the helmet.
- Launch—a player leaving his feet to attack an opponent by an upward and forward thrust of the body to make contact in the head or neck area.
- A crouch followed by an upward and forward thrust to attack with contact at the head or neck area—even though one or both feet are still on the ground.
- A player obviously out of the play or not in the immediate vicinity of the runner; and
- A player who receives a “blindside” block with forcible contact not initiated with open hands.

EXAMPLE 8-20: A83 leaps to receive a forward pass. As he is about to regain his balance, B45 launches and drives into him above the shoulder area with his helmet or shoulder. **RULING:** A personal foul by B45 for targeting and initiating contact with a defenseless opponent above the shoulders. B45 is disqualified.

EXAMPLE 8-21: A20 sweeps around the end and heads upfield. As B89 approaches to make the tackle, A20 lowers his head and contacts B89. The players meet helmet to helmet. **RULING:** If neither player led with his head, there no foul. Accidental helmet contact can result when neither player can anticipate where the opponent's head will be.

Additional Examples: 16, 17.

All players are protected from being targeted. Targeting may be considered a flagrant foul if it is against a defenseless player. A **defenseless player** is a player who, because of his physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury (2-32-16). When in question, a player is defenseless. A defenseless player is not entitled to any protection which is not afforded to any other player and a player who initiates contact against a defenseless player is responsible for making legal contact. Legal contact against a defenseless player is outlined in 2.32.16 Cmt provided it is not judged to be excessive.

Examples of defenseless players include but are not limited to:

- A passer;
- A receiver attempting to catch a pass who has not had time to clearly become a runner;
- The intended receiver of a pass in the action during and immediately following an interception or potential interception;
- A runner already in the grasp of a tackler and whose forward progress has been stopped;
- A kickoff or punt 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;
- A player on the ground including a ball carrier who has obviously given himself up and is sliding feet first;

Horse Collar Tackle

It is a foul for a player to grab an opponent by the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and pull him down (9-4-3k). A horse collar tackle foul includes pulling the runner down either to the side or rear.

REMEMBER FROM 2019: It is also a foul if the grip is on the nameplate area directly below the back collar (9-4-3k).

EXAMPLE 8-22: A28 runs around the left end for a six-yard gain. B54 then grabs A28 by the (a) back collar of his jersey, or (b) front collar of his jersey. B54 then pulls A28 to the ground. **RULING:** In (a), the horse collar tackle is a foul because A28 was pulled to the ground after his rear collar was grabbed. In (b), the tackle is legal as the front collar was grabbed.

The rule does not require the tackle to be immediate, so if the back or side of the collar is grabbed and the runner takes several steps before he is pulled down, it is a foul. The foul does however, require the runner to be pulled down by the grip on the top of the jersey, so if a defender grabs the collar and releases or tackles him around the waist after using a grip on the collar to slow him down, it is not a foul. Also if a second defender assists in the tackle, it is not a foul. The high grip

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alone must be used to pull down the runner for a foul to occur.

Also, please note there are no exceptions for specific players or specific locations, such as a quarterback in the pocket or a runner between the tackles. A runner who is horse collared need not have the status of a runner when he is pulled down for the foul to be called (9-4-3k).

A horse collar tackle that begins while the ball is live is always enforced as a live-ball foul.

EXAMPLE 8-23: A33 runs near the sideline. B56 then grabs A33 by the back collar of his jersey while A33 is inbounds and then pulls A33 to the ground after A33 crosses the (a) sideline or (b) goal line. **RULING:** It does not matter that A33 was no longer a runner when he was pulled to the ground. The horse collar tackle is a live-ball foul because A33 was grabbed while the ball was live.

Additional Examples: 18-21

Face Mask Fouls

It is a foul for any player to grasp an opponent's face mask, the chin strap or any edge of a helmet opening (9-4-3h). The mouthpiece and attaching strap are considered part of the face mask.

The edge most likely to be grasped is the back of the helmet. Distinction is made between "incidental grasping," and "twisting, turning, or pulling.

Simply touching the face mask is not a foul. However, incidental grasping of the face mask is a five-yard penalty. Twisting, turning or pulling the face mask is a 15-yard penalty. Neither penalty has provisions for awarding an automatic first down. The five- or 15-yard option applies whether the offending player is on Team A or Team B. Although not part of the rule, it is recommended when the official is in doubt, it is a 15-yard penalty.

EXAMPLE 8-24: During A32's 20 yard run, B40 is flagged for a face mask foul for (a) just briefly grabbing A32's mask, or (b) grabbing A32's mask and twisting it. **RULING:** In (a), add five yards to the end of A32's run; in (b), add 15 yards to the end of A32's run (no automatic first down).

EXAMPLE 8-25: Same as the previous example, except during A32's run, A66 grabs B42's face mask as in (a) and (b). **RULING:** The penalty is enforced in accordance with the all-but-one principle: five yards in (a) and 15 yards in (b). There is no distinction between offensive and defensive fouls.

Contacting the Snapper

When the offensive team is in a scrimmage kick formation, no defensive player may charge directly into the snapper. There are two types of scrimmage kick formations (2-14-2) and they are discussed in Chapter 3.

The protection exists until the snapper is able to protect himself, moves to block or otherwise participate in the play. "Protect himself" means the snapper has time to look up and regain his balance. If contacted directly while his head is still down and before he has been given a chance to look up, the contact is a foul. If the contact is slight and indirect, it is not a foul. The protection exists whether or not there is a kick. The penalty is a personal foul (roughing the snapper), 15 yards, automatic first down (2-32-14, 9-4-6, 9.4.6A).

Please note shotgun formations are highly unlikely to be scrimmage kick formations. The snapper is not protected in those situations.

EXAMPLE 8-26: Fourth and 10 at the B-35. At the snap, Team A is lined up in a (a) standard, non-scrimmage-kick formation, or (b) scrimmage-kick formation. Immediately after the snap, lineman B72 runs through snapper A55 in an effort to reach runner A21. At the time of contact, A55 had not been given sufficient time to look up to protect himself. **RULING:** In (a), no foul on B72 because snapper protection applies only if the ball is snapped from a scrimmage-kick formation. In (b), it is a personal foul for roughing the snapper on B72.

EXAMPLE 8-27: Immediately after A54 snaps from a scrimmage-kick formation and (a) before he has a chance to look up, he is contacted directly by B82; or (b) after he has looked up and has a chance to defend himself, he is contacted directly by B82. **RULING:** In (a), a personal foul, roughing the snapper, on B82 because he directly contacted A54 before he had a chance to look up and defend himself. In (b), no foul on B82 because A54 was in a position to defend himself.

EXAMPLE 8-28: Immediately after A53 snaps from a scrimmage-kick formation and before A53 has a chance to look up to defend himself, B72 tries to shoot the gap between A53 and guard A66. In the process, B72 places a hand on and pushes down on A53's right shoulder, causing him to fall. **RULING:** Legal play by B72 because he did not play directly through A53.

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EXAMPLE 8-29: Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation. Immediately after A55 snaps the ball, he is directly blocked by B73. The deep punter muffs the ball and never gets the punt away. **RULING:** Foul by B55; 15-yard penalty from the previous spot and an automatic first down.

Example 8-28 illustrates the point that whether or not the ball is kicked is irrelevant. The fact Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation is what counts, not whether the kick is actually made. Also, please note the foul occurs during a loose-ball play – the snap. Thus enforcement will always be from the previous spot. To make that clear, the penalty specifies previous spot enforcement.

Additional Example: 22.

Contacting the Kicker

Roughing the kicker is discussed in great detail in Chapter 6.

Contacting the Passer

Roughing the passer is discussed in great detail in Chapter 5. It is important to note that all illegal personal contact fouls in 9-4-3 against the passer are roughing fouls (9-4-4), except incidental face mask fouls.

EXAMPLE 8-30: A12 completes a pass and, as he releases the ball, he is tackled by B52, who makes helmet-to-helmet contact. It was not obvious the ball was thrown when B52 made contact. **RULING:** Roughing the passer.

Fighting

“**Fighting**” is defined as “any attempt by a player or nonplayer to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include but are not limited to attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s) or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact. Any player or nonplayer guilty of fighting is penalized 15 yards and is disqualified.

Fouls which occur during the course of a typical game and are related to football (such as late hits, unnecessary roughness and various other personal fouls) are not considered fighting. Also, verbal or physically demonstrative taunting is not considered fighting (2-11; 9-4-1; 9.4.1B, C).

Except for coaches, anyone disqualified for fighting may remain within his team area. Coaches

who are disqualified must leave the stadium area and may not have further contact with their teams for the remainder of the game. Of course, if there are aggravating circumstances, any offender could be ejected from the stadium area.

Some state associations impose additional suspensions on those ejected for fighting. Such suspensions, however, are not part of the rule (9-8-1L Pen, 9.8.1E).

EXAMPLE 8-31: A17 is tackled inbounds at the A-30 and (a) B20 piles on, or (b) after A17 rises and is walking toward his team’s huddle, B40 punches A17 or tries to punch him but misses. **RULING:** In (a), the foul is related to football; it is not considered fighting. B20’s foul does not include disqualification. In (b), punching or trying to punch, is unrelated to football: B40 is charged with fighting, is penalized 15 yards, and disqualified.

EXAMPLE 8-32: Right after a play ends, A15 verbally taunts B28. In response, B28 (a) ignores A15, (b) makes remarks regarding A15’s heritage, (c) challenges A15 to a fight which prompts A66 to strike B28 and starts a melee, or (d) punches A15 and the players are immediately separated by teammates. **RULING:** In (a), A15 is flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct and in (b), both players are flagged. In (c), all the players who fought are charged with fighting. A15 and B28 are flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct, unless they subsequently deliver blows. In (d), B28 is charged with fighting; A15 is not charged with fighting but is flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct.

A substitute may not leave his team box when a fight occurs. That is a dead-ball foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. The penalty is 15 yards from the succeeding spot and disqualification. One exception to the rule: If the fight is within his team box, the substitute may leave the box only if he is trying to avoid becoming part of the fight (9-8-1L).

EXAMPLE 8-33: A22 is tackled inbounds at the 50 yard line. A second or two later, A33 and B27 begin punching each other. During the fight, subs A13 and B15 leave their team boxes and enter the field, but neither fights. **RULING:** A33 and B27 are flagged (personal foul) for fighting, A13 and B15 are flagged (unsportsmanlike conduct) for leaving their team areas. All four players are disqualified.

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EXAMPLE 8-34: Runner A35 is tackled out of bounds on the B-10. A second or two later, A13 and B26 begin punching each other out of bounds. During the fight, sub B15 stays entirely out of bounds as he leaves his team box and walks down to the area of the scuffle, but does not participate in the fight. **RULING:** A13 and B26 are flagged (personal foul) for fighting, B15 is flagged (unsportsmanlike conduct) for leaving his team area even though he remained out of bounds and did not participate in the fight. All three players are disqualified.

EXAMPLE 8-35: A30 runs to the 50 yard line, goes out of bounds there and his momentum carries him into Team B's team area, where a fight erupts. To avoid becoming part of the scuffle, sub B15 leaves his team box to find a safe haven. **RULING:** No foul on B15.

EXAMPLE 8-36: A fight erupts and the field is flooded with personnel from both teams. The officials are unable to determine which personnel are players and which are subs who entered the field from their team boxes. **RULING:** Everyone who is cited for fighting is ejected and each is penalized 15 yards. Since the officials cannot distinguish the players who were already on the field from the squad members who violated the rule by entering the field, those who did not participate in the fight are not penalized.

Other Personal Fouls

The "other personal fouls" can be found in 9-4-3. The penalty for each of these is 15 yards *without* an automatic first down. As previously noted, the one exception - grasping the face mask (9-4-3h), has a five-yard penalty.

An opponent cannot be charged into or thrown to the ground after he is obviously out of the play, or after the ball is clearly dead either in or out of bounds (9-4-3b).

A player whose helmet comes completely off is a player who is obviously out of the play and cannot be contacted (9-4-3L).

Any runner approaching the sidelines can be contacted legally inbounds as long as the contact is made in a manner prescribed by rule. An opponent is not expected to avoid contacting a runner inbounds even though the runner may indicate he is headed towards the sideline.

However, once he has crossed the sideline, any avoidable contact on the runner is illegal. The tackler's teammates may not join in with additional contact once the runner has broken the plane of

the sideline. Moreover, even if contact is initiated in the field of play, a tackler may not add additional thrust, renew a charge, or slam the runner to the ground after crossing the sideline. Once out of bounds, the runner cannot be taken to the ground unless it is the unavoidable result of an effort which began inbounds. This is referred to as "renewed effort."

A player may not swing his foot, shin or knee into an opponent nor extend his knee to meet a blocker (9-4-3a). He may not strike an opponent with his fist, locked hands, forearm or elbow, nor may he kick or knee him (9-4-3j). In other words, he cannot in any way deliver a blow; this includes head slaps (9-4-7) or "bell ringers," and "clotheslining." Also please note these are football fouls and are not considered fighting.

Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is still on his feet (or foot) and is a foul (2-22, 9-4-3d).

REMEMBER FROM 2019: It is illegal to trip the runner (9-4-3o).

All tripping including throwing a helmet to trip an opponent (2-45, 9-4-3f), is illegal and is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Unnecessary roughness includes, any contact with an opponent including a defenseless player which is deemed unnecessary (or excessive) and which incites roughness (9-4-3g).

No player may position himself on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage (9-4-3e, 9-4-3E). The remaining prohibitions are: piling on (9-4-3c), and intentionally contacting an official (9-4-2).

Personal fouls apply to nonplayers as well as to players (9-4-3, 9.4.1D).

Penalty Enforcement

Penalties for all 9-4-3 fouls are enforced under the "all-but-one" principle and, except for the five-yard face mask foul, all are 15 yards. If any foul is flagrant, the player may be immediately disqualified.

A flagrant foul is defined as a foul that may or may not involve physical contact, but involves such acts as fighting, contacting a game official, fouls so severe as to place an opponent at risk, persistent or extreme abusive conduct and the use of vulgar language or gestures (2-16-2c).

One example of a flagrant foul is spitting on an opponent.

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Furthermore, penalties for 9-4-3 fouls by Team B do *not* include an automatic first down.

EXAMPLE 8-37: Second and 15 at the B-18. A34 gains four yards and goes out of bounds at the B-14 where he is hit by B70 after the ball is dead. **RULING:** Half-the-distance enforcement to the B-7; no automatic first down - third and four.

Additional Examples: 23-28.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Rule 9 has two sections dealing with **unsportsmanlike conduct**: 9-5 is for players and 9-8 for nonplayers. Unsportsmanlike conduct fouls include such "ill will" acts as taunting, abusive or insulting language such as racial slurs or innuendo, name-calling, slang references to sexual organs, sexual practices, or body elimination; inciting the crowd; verbal baiting; intimidation tactics; spiking, kicking, or throwing a dead ball; etc. Overtly applauding an official's decision can be just as unsportsmanlike as demonstrative disagreement.

Other illegal acts include: flaunting the ball in an opponent's face or offering it to him, shooting imaginary pistols, slashing the throat, an exaggerated first down signal, or indulging in other saluting or excessive self-congratulating gestures.

Visual taunting is not restricted to the interval after the play. There are multiple ways a runner can either make fun of an opponent or draw undue attention to himself while the ball is live. Unacceptable acts include: running backward with the ball in the open field, high-stepping, strutting, or any other obvious alteration of the stride; finger-pointing, or diving into the end zone when there is no opponent in the vicinity. Acts which occur spontaneously and are a result of sincere jubilation are not fouls. Also, merely removing the helmet before reaching the team box, is not a foul.

Any delayed, excessive, or prolonged act by which a player attempts to focus attention upon himself, such as pounding one's own chest, crossing one's arms in front of the chest while standing over a prone player, bowing at the waist, going into the stands to interact with spectators, dancing after a sack or engaging in other choreographed routines after tackles or after scores, is a foul (9-5-1c). This means a player might be guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct even though he is not directing his gestures or comments at an opponent.

When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he is not allowed to intentionally kick or spike the ball, throw it high into the air or from the

field of play or end zone or intentionally fail to place the ball on the ground or immediately return it to a nearby game official (9-5-2).

Equipment violations can also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul. Prior to a game, the head coach must verify to the umpire and referee that his players have all required equipment and will not use any illegal equipment. Violation of this rule can result in a 15-yard unsportsmanlike foul charged to the head coach (1-5-4, 9-8-1h). Equipment requirements are further discussed in Chapter 12.

Finally, it is a foul if anyone subject to the rules uses tobacco or smokeless tobacco (9-5-1g, 9-8-1i).

Officials sometimes have difficulty distinguishing between personal and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls. Personal fouls involve contact using the body while unsportsmanlike conduct fouls are non-contact. If there is a question as to which type of foul occurred, it should be called unsportsmanlike.

Penalty Enforcement

If any of these fouls are committed while the ball is live, they are enforced as dead-ball fouls. A common example is a break-away runner turning and taunting his pursuers on his way into the end zone. The penalty need not be declined. It may be enforced either on the try or the succeeding kickoff, just as if it had occurred after the ball was dead. A similar penalty for an unsportsmanlike foul during a successful field goal or try could be enforced on a succeeding kickoff or to begin an overtime period.

Additional Examples: 29, 30.

Disqualification

Any player or nonplayer (see below for coaches) who is charged twice with 15-yard penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct is disqualified and is barred from further participation in the game (2-32-6), but may remain within his team area (9-5 Pen). If any foul is flagrant, the player may be immediately disqualified. Any further penalties or sanctions related to the disqualification are governed by state association policy.

EXAMPLE 8-38: A88 is twice flagged for unsportsmanlike acts, once when he was playing end and then again when he was standing in his team area. **RULING:** A88 is disqualified for two unsportsmanlike fouls, but he may remain in the team area.

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EXAMPLE 8-39: Same as the previous example except when the second flag is thrown, A88 cannot be identified as the offender. **RULING:** The foul is charged to the team and A88 still has only one unsportsmanlike foul for purposes of disqualification. Accordingly, he is not disqualified.

Any coach who is flagged twice for unsportsmanlike conduct is disqualified and must leave the stadium area for the remainder of the game. He may have no direct or indirect contact with his team. Although the rule book does not specify so, we recommend all adult support personnel be treated as members of the coaching staff and be removed from the team area. For failure to comply, the referee may forfeit the game (9-8 Pens; 9.8.1E, F).

The following fouls are also charged to the head coach and count toward disqualification:

- A player is using illegal equipment (1-5-4, 9-8-1h);
- A team is not ready to begin either half (9-8-1g);
- A team fails to be on the field for the mandatory three-minute warm-up period (9-8-1g).
- There is a third non-contact violation of the restricted area or for individuals being outside the team area (1-2-3g, 9-8-1k, 9-8-3 Pen, 9.8.3A);

EXAMPLE 8-40: In the first half and again in the second half (a) B45, (b) the team statistician (adult), or (c) an assistant coach is flagged for unsporting remarks. **RULING:** A second unsportsmanlike conduct foul requires disqualification and each is penalized 15 yards. In (a), B45 may remain within the team area. In (b) or (c), the team statistician and coach must leave the stadium area and have no further contact with their team.

EXAMPLE 8-41: Early in the game, Team A's coach is flagged for protesting a call. In the second half (a) Team A is several minutes late returning to the field, or (b) A10 is flagged for a missing tailbone protector. **RULING:** In each case the 15-yard unsportsmanlike foul is charged to the head coach resulting in his disqualification.

Batting and Kicking the Ball

For the most part it is illegal to kick or bat a loose ball. Batting kicks and illegal kicks are

discussed in Chapter 6. Batting a field goal attempt is discussed in Chapter 9.

Batting is intentionally slapping or striking the ball with the hand or arm (2-2). A ball may be slapped or struck in an attempt to secure possession. Although that act can be construed as intentional, it is not batting, but a muff. Thus, we can distinguish between batting and a muff. For it to be batting, there cannot be an attempt to secure possession. There are six situations where batting a loose ball is legal:

- Any player may bat a fumble in flight (9-7-2);
- Any player eligible to touch a forward pass may bat it in any direction (9-7-3);
- A backward pass in flight may be batted in any direction by the defensive team, but the passing team may not bat it forward (9-7-3);
- A player may block a low scrimmage kick in the field of play or in the end zone if he is attempting to block it in or behind the expanded neutral zone (9-7-2);
- A Team K player may bat a grounded scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone toward his own goal line (9-7-2 Exc);
- A Team K player may bat a scrimmage kick in flight beyond the neutral zone if no Team R player is in position to catch the ball (9-7-2 Exc).
- A ball in player possession may be batted in any direction unless it is batted forward by a teammate of the runner (9-7-4).

REMEMBER FROM 2019: The penalty for illegal batting is 10 yards (9-7 Pen).

EXAMPLE 8-42: K10's punt from the 50 yard line hits the ground at the R-5 and at the R-2, K53 bats the ball backward. The ball rolls to a stop on the R-4 and is properly blown dead there. **RULING:** Legal batting by K53. Team R will snap at the R-4, first and 10. K53's touching on the R-2 is also first touching.

EXAMPLE 8-43: K17's short punt from scrimmage lands untouched five yards beyond the line then caroms behind the neutral zone, where the kick is batted toward Team K's goal line by (a) K55, or (b) R82. **RULING:** Illegal bat in (a) and (b). Had the kick been beyond the neutral zone when batted in (a), it would have been legal.

EXAMPLE 8-44: Fourth and seven at the K-10. K38, in position to punt, muffs the snap from center. To prevent Team R from recovering the ball, K38 bats it backward and out of the end zone (a) at the K-2, or (b) from within the end zone. **RULING:** The result of the play is a safety. It is illegal to bat the loose ball in this situation. In (a), Team R may take the penalty, which would be half-the-distance to the goal from the spot of the foul with fourth down replayed. In (b), the result of the play and the penalty are the same - a safety.

Additional Examples: 31-33.

Sideline Interference

All team members must remain within the team box during the game unless legally entering or leaving the field. If a nonplayer who is not an entering substitute is on the field, it results in a 15-yard unsportsmanlike foul. Up to three coaches are allowed in the two-yard restricted area between the sideline and the front of the team box while the ball is dead (9-8-3). All coaches must vacate the restricted area and be inside the team box while the ball is live.

Teams whose players and coaches wander outside their designated areas are penalized as follows:

- An official sideline warning;
- A five-yard penalty for the next infraction;
- A 15-yard penalty for each additional infraction; The first two infractions are nonplayer fouls (9-8-1i). The latter infraction is an unsportsmanlike foul and is charged to the head coach regardless of whether or not he was one of the persons in the restricted area. See the disqualification portion of the unsportsmanlike conduct section earlier in this chapter.

EXAMPLE 8-45: Team A's assistant coach is outside his team area and is (a) just standing there, or (b) vociferously criticizing an official. **RULING:** In (a), if no previous warnings have been given Team A, the coach will receive a formal warning. In (b), it is a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct charged to the assistant coach.

Unintentional contact in the restricted area while the ball is live results in a 15-yard penalty for the first offense. If there is a second offense, the head coach is disqualified in addition to the 15-yard penalty. Also, any flagrant foul requires disqualification (9-4-8).

EXAMPLE 8-46: As the line judge moves down the field to cover a pass play, he collides with an assistant coach. **RULING:** A foul with a 15-yard penalty.

Rules 9-8-3 and 9-4-8 are separate rules. A foul under one rule does not affect the penalty for the other rule (9.8.1D). Thus, in the preceding example if in a subsequent incident, a team member was observed in the restricted area while the ball is live and it was the first non-contact violation, the penalty is still a warning. The fact a 15-yard penalty was enforced for the contact foul does not affect the penalty sequence for non-contact violations of the restricted area or the team box.

Additional Example: 34.

Illegal Participation

There are 12 different acts which comprise illegal participation. All carry a 15-yard penalty without an automatic first down. Illegal participation is discussed in detail in Chapter 10.

Unfair Acts

An unfair act is the hindering of play by anyone which does not have specific rules coverage (9-9-1). Included are sideline personnel or others not subject to the rules interfering with the ball or a player during play, use of an illegal kicking tee (9-9-4), acts which make a travesty of the game (9-9-5), hiding the ball under a jersey (9-9-3), repeated half-the-distance fouls (9-9-2) to prevent a score or other deliberate delays, or any other such act not specifically covered by the rules.

EXAMPLE 8-47: K2 scores (a) on a try where the line of scrimmage was the R-3 and the tee was placed at the R-10, or (b) on a field goal where the line of scrimmage was the R-20 and the tee was placed at the R-27. In both cases, the kicker was using an illegal tee. **RULING:** In both cases, the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul. The down will be replayed from the R-25 in (a) and from the R-42 in (b) (9.9.4).

The referee has broad authority to enforce any equitable penalty, including awarding a score, for unfair acts. He may also declare a forfeit for repeated delays (9-9 Pen).

If a game is forfeited and the offended team is ahead, the score stands. If not, the score is 1-0 (8-1).

The rules give the referee wide discretion in dealing with coaches, substitutes, other sideline

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personnel, and anyone else coming onto the field and interfering with the players or officials. Here is the classic example.

EXAMPLE 8-48: On a punt return B39 is streaking down Team A's sideline and is in the clear when a member of the kicking team leaves the bench and tackles him. **RULING:** The referee may enforce any penalty, and in this case awarding a touchdown would be appropriate.

Football has traditionally been a game of deception and trickery. There is both legal deception, e.g., faking a kick, and illegal deception e.g., hiding a ball under a jersey. Also, multiple shifts, unusual formations and creative plays are accepted practices. Hiding the ball under a jersey has specific coverage as an unfair act and carries a 15-yard penalty from the basic spot (9-9-3).

However, actions or verbiage designed to confuse the defense into believing there is a problem and a snap is not imminent, are not legal. This includes pretending to have a problem with the play that has been called, an equipment problem with a shoe, the ball or kicking tee, etc. and feigning an injury. A good rule of thumb to follow is that if an act appears to be unfair, it probably is contrary to the rules.

EXAMPLE 8-49: With Team A in field goal formation, kicker A18 yells "I need the tee" and trots toward the sideline, taking care to be in legal motion. The ball is then snapped to A7 who completes a pass. **RULING:** This is a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct, but has a unique enforcement. The unfair act provision should be utilized to call a dead-ball foul prior to the snap.

Additional Example: 35.

II. Additional Examples

1. A29 is lined up as a back within the free-blocking zone when the ball is snapped. Lineman B62 "shoots the gap" and is clipped by A29 within the zone before the ball leaves the zone. A7 then throws an incomplete pass. **RULING:** A foul by A29. Penalize Team A 15 yards from the spot of the foul. Clipping is illegal anywhere on the field.

2. Team K's fourth-down punt is beyond the neutral zone and rolling free after being touched by R46. In an attempt to recover the loose ball, K82 (a) pushes R62 in the back above the waist, (b) clips R62. The ball is recovered and downed by either team. **RULING:** In (a), legal play. R46's touching makes K82 eligible to touch the kick, so he is allowed to push his opponent in the back to reach the ball. But if Team R had not touched the ball, A82's action would have been a foul, since he would not have been able to legally touch the ball. In (b), it is a foul by K82 for clipping. If the penalty is accepted, it will be enforced from either the previous spot with the down replayed, or from the succeeding spot.

3. In the free-blocking zone before the ball leaves the zone, guard A61 blocks blitzing linebacker B52 (a) below the waist and from behind, (b) below the waist and from in front, or (c) in the back above the waist. B52 was in the zone and within one yard of the line of scrimmage at the snap. **RULING:** In (a), it is an illegal clipping foul. The blocks in (b) and (c) are legal. Even though B52 was moving, he

was in the free-blocking zone and on his line of scrimmage at the snap. A61 was in the zone and on the line at the snap.

4. In the free-blocking zone before the ball leaves the zone, tackle A75 blocks linebacker B56 (a) below the waist and from behind, (b) below the waist and from in front or (c) in the back above the waist. B56 was in his regular position at the snap in the free-blocking zone and was not on his line of scrimmage. **RULING:** Illegal blocks in (a), and (b), but legal in (c). Even though B56 was in the free-blocking zone at the snap, the blocks in (a) and (b), may only be made against opponents who were in the zone and on the line at the snap. In (c), the opponent only need be in the zone at the snap.

5. While Team K's punt is in the air, R78 blocks K47 from behind above the waist 12 yards downfield, at the R-45. R46 catches the kick at the R-32 and returns it for an apparent touchdown. **RULING:** Foul by R78 for a block in the back – PSK enforcement.

6. In the free-blocking zone before the ball leaves the zone, defensive end B81 was on the line and in the zone at the snap blocks A52 (a) below the waist and from behind, (b) below the waist and from in front, or (c) in the back above the waist. **RULING:** An illegal block in (a) and (c), but a legal block in (b). In (c), only offensive linemen may legally block from behind in the zone. In (b),

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defensive linemen may legally block opponents low if the opponent was in the zone and on the line at the snap.

7. A23 lines up 11 yards from the middle of the offensive formation and outside cornerback B56. A23 blocks B56 below the waist six yards beyond the neutral zone and toward the far sideline. **RULING:** Illegal block. The block is outside the free-blocking zone and by a player who was not in the zone at the snap.

8. Linebacker B55 is positioned four yards off the line at the snap. A20 takes a handoff for a run up the middle and B55 blocks the lead blocker A26 below the waist in the free blocking zone. **RULING:** An illegal block below the waist. B55 was not in the free blocking zone at the snap.

9. Team A is in a spread formation. A13 takes the snap and begins a sweep play to the right. B84, who was on the line and in the free blocking zone at the snap, blocks the lead blocker A64 below the waist. **RULING:** An illegal block below the waist. Although B84 was on the line and in the free blocking zone at the snap, the ball had left the zone.

10. During a down in which Team A throws a forward pass, A65 blocks B71 using an open-hands technique. While A65 and B71 are still engaged, A70 hits B71 at the knee. **RULING:** Foul by A70, chop block (high-low), 15-yard penalty, "all-but-one" enforcement.

11. First and 10 at the A-30. At the snap, center A50 and right guard A66 block nose guard B76 low. **RULING:** Legal, the blocks were a low-low combination.

12. Third and 10 at the A-40. At the snap, right guard A62 blocks defensive tackle B70 low. A75 joins A62 in a double team by blocking B70 above the waist. **RULING:** Foul by A75, chop block (low-high), 15-yard penalty, "all-but-one" enforcement.

13. During a running play, A82 blocks B21 and forces him out of bounds. After B21 is out of bounds, A82 (a) blocks B21 one more time, or (b) continues to block B21 to keep him from returning inbounds. **RULING:** Legal in (a) and also in (b) unless the official judges the blocks are unnecessarily rough.

14. On a field goal attempt, R60 and R69 grab R21 and throw him high into the air in an attempt to block the kick. **RULING:** Illegal use of hands.

15. K17's inside kick is rolling free and untouched, K65 blocks R23 in the front and above his waist. At the time of K65's block the kicked ball was on the (a) K-47, or (b) R-48. **RULING:** An illegal block in (a), but legal in (b).

16. A28 takes a pitchout from A7 and breaks into the secondary. Safety B35 comes up quickly and drives his face mask or helmet directly into A28's chest. B35 simultaneously wraps his arms around A28 bringing him to the ground. **RULING:** A face tackling foul. 15 yards will be added to the end of the run.

17. Same as Example 16, except when B35 comes up to make the tackle, he keeps his head in an upright position with his eyes on A28's numbers and (a) moves his head at the last moment so he contacts A28 with his shoulder, or (b) moves his head to attempt a shoulder tackle, but because of a sharp cut by A28, there is contact with the side of the helmet of B35. **RULING:** Legal tackles.

18. A26 receives a handoff from A8. Just as A26 hits the hole between center and guard, B55 grabs him by the side collar of the shoulder pads and immediately pulls him down. **RULING:** The tackle is an illegal horse collar tackle. There is no exception for a runner in the tackle box.

19. B51 attempts to tackle A42 by grabbing the inside back collar of his shoulder pads or jersey and (a) pushing him, or (b) swinging him around and throwing him to the ground. **RULING:** There is no foul in (a) or (b). A42 was not tackled by being pulled down.

20. B46 attempts to tackle A32 by grabbing the inside back collar of A32's shoulder pads. A32 continues to run as B46 hangs on to his collar. A32 is finally taken to the ground by B53 who grabs A32 at the waist. **RULING:** There is no foul. A43 was not tackled by being pulled down by his collar.

21. A21 runs up the middle. B74 then grabs A21 by the back collar of his jersey and A21 fumbles the ball. B74 then pulls A21 to the ground. **RULING:** The horse collar tackle is a foul because A21 was pulled to the ground after his rear collar was grabbed. It does not matter that A21 was no longer a runner when he was pulled to the ground.

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22. Fourth and 16 at the R-30. With holder K11 and kicker K2, Team K is in a legal scrimmage kick formation. K11 takes the snap and runs to the R20. R66 is flagged for directly running into the snapper. **RULING:** Although the down ended with a running play, the foul occurred during a loose-ball play – the snap. Enforcement is from the previous spot. It will be Team K's ball first and 10 at the R-15.
23. Third and 20 at the A-30. A24 is tackled by B71 for no gain, and after the whistle B52 hits prone A24. **RULING:** Dead-ball foul; fourth and five on the A-45; no automatic first down.
24. After the ball is dead, a player pushes an obviously stopped runner backwards several yards and grounds him roughly. **RULING:** Personal foul; a 15-yard penalty from the succeeding spot.
25. During a field goal attempt, B53 steps on the back of (a) snapper A50, or (b) linemen B98 and propels himself into the air to block the kick. **RULING:** In either case, a personal foul.
26. B27 tackles A24 at the sideline in front of Team A's team box. A55 who did not participate in the previous play does not like the way B27 uses A24 for leverage as he gets up. A55 steps up to the sideline and shoves B27 knocking him to the ground. **RULING:** Although A55 was a nonplayer, he is charged with a personal foul for his unnecessary contact.
27. B54's helmet comes completely off while trying to tackle A32, who continues running after breaking free from B54's grasp. After disengaging, B54 puts his helmet back on, then resumes his pursuit of A32. B54 is then contacted (blocked) by A76. **RULING:** B54 should be flagged for an illegal participation foul as soon as he resumes his pursuit of the runner, or otherwise participates in the play. B54 must leave the field for at least one play. No foul should be called on A76; the official should assume that A76 is not aware that B54's helmet had come completely off earlier during the play.
28. Team K is in punt formation at the K-25. K34, K45, and K15 form a shield a few yards in front of the punter. R47 rushes forward and in an attempt to block the kick he leaves his feet. His action takes him straight into the air but he does not attempt to leap over any member of the shield. K45 moves to block R47 and contacts him in the shins causing R47 to tumble head first into the kicker's leg. **RULING:** No foul. It is not a foul for hurdling because R47 did not attempt to jump with his feet or knees foremost over an opponent (2-22). It is not a foul for blocking below the waist because R47 did not have one or both feet on the ground (2-3-7). It is not a foul for contacting the kicker because the contact was caused by K45's block (9-4-5d).
29. Team A's coach comes onto the field during Team B's long punt return that ends at the A-28. **RULING:** Unsportsmanlike conduct foul against Team A's coach. Penalize as a dead-ball foul, half-the-distance to the goal from the succeeding spot: First and 10 for Team B at the A-14.
30. A28 scores the potentially game winning touchdown and (a) does a bump and grind dance in the end zone, (b) pretends to have a gun and shoots it at the crowd, (c) holds the ball on the ground and spins it like a top, (d) jumps up and down a few times in jubilation, or (e) chest bumps a teammate. **RULING:** In (a), (b), and (c), the acts are clearly designed to focus attention on A28 and are penalized as unsportsmanlike conduct. In (d) and (e), A28 is allowed to exhibit a reasonable amount of excitement. As long as his action is spontaneous, brief, does not focus undue attention on himself and does not attempt to provoke an opponent, there should be no foul.
31. In a shotgun formation, A7 takes the snap and throws a backward pass. A33 steps forward and bats the ball 20 yards downfield. In (a), the ball is caught or recovered by A83 who advances another 10 yards, (b) it rolls out of bounds, or (c) is intercepted by B20 and returned for a touchdown. **RULING:** The bat by A33 is illegal. The penalty will be accepted in (a) and (b) and will be enforced 10 yards from the spot of the foul. In (c), the penalty will be declined and the touchdown stands.
32. Fourth and five at the B-10. A22 is about to be tackled on the B-7. With A22 in possession (a) A7, or (b) B76, bats the ball from A22 and it goes into the end zone where A80 recovers. **RULING:** In (a), it is an illegal bat which is enforced from the spot of the foul. In (b), the bat is legal and results in a touchdown for Team A.
33. A18 drops back into his end zone to pass. He fumbles and bats the ball out of the back of the end zone. **RULING:** A foul for illegal batting. The result of the play and the penalty are the same - a safety.

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34. In the first quarter during a live ball an official contacts the defensive coordinator in the restricted area. The 15-yard penalty is assessed. Later in the second quarter, the same team violates the restricted area and is assessed a warning, three plays later another violation is flagged and a five-yard penalty is assessed. On the last play of the second quarter, the restricted area is violated again by the same team and flagged. **RULING:** A 15-yard penalty is assessed. If there are any subsequent sideline violations, the Head Coach is disqualified from the game. If it is a

contact violation, he is disqualified for a second contact violation. If it is a non-contact violation, he is disqualified for a second unsportsmanlike foul.

35. A22 pretends that he has injured an ankle, but refuses assistance when asked by the officials. During the following play he limps and doesn't directly participate. On the next play, A22 goes in motion with a very severe limp. At the snap, A22 runs without problems and catches a pass. **RULING:** The unfair act provision should be utilized to enforce a minimum of a 15-yard penalty.

III. Review Test (True or False)

1. In a double tight end formation, both tight ends are in the blocking zone if at least one foot is no more than four yards from the snapper.
2. It is an illegal use of hands foul if the runner grasps a teammate.
3. The use of the hands by a defensive player to strike a blocker's head is illegal.
4. A defensive player shall not contact an eligible receiver who is no longer a potential blocker.
5. A player of Team B may grasp or hold an opponent in an effort to clear a path for a teammate to get to the runner.
6. If B71 tackles A21, who is obviously not the runner, it is defensive holding.
7. It is legal for flanker A46 to block back toward the snap provided his initial contact is above the waist and is not from the rear.
8. When R26 gains possession of a free kick, blocking below the waist by teammates is legal.
9. Any player in the free blocking zone, at the time of the snap, may block below the waist.
10. If Team A is in a shotgun formation, no player may block below the waist during the down.
11. Any block on a non-runner below the waist outside the 6 x 8 yard free-blocking zone is illegal.
12. Following an interception, it is legal for the intercepting team to block below the waist.
13. The restriction on prohibiting blocking below the waist is in effect even though the opponent has both feet off the ground when contacted by the blocker.
14. The kicker or holder of a free kick may not be blocked before he has advanced 10 yards beyond his free kick line.
15. No member of the kicking team shall initiate contact (block) with an opponent until the legal kick has traveled 10 yards; the kicking team is eligible to recover a free kicked ball; or the receiving team initiates a block within the neutral zone.
16. It is possible for a Team B player to foul by clipping.
17. It is legal for an opponent to throw himself against the back of a runner's legs.
18. The penalty for illegal contact from behind is determined by whether the contact is above or below the waist.
19. An offensive player may legally clip an opponent to get to a loose ball that he can legally touch.
20. A chop block is an illegal block anywhere on the field.
21. Tripping an opponent who is the runner is legal.
22. A simultaneous low-low block by two non-adjacent linemen is an illegal chop block.
23. The blocker is allowed to lock his hands in certain situations.
24. It is legal for linebacker B51 to position himself on the shoulders of lineman B82 in an effort to block a field goal attempt.
25. Contacting the face mask with the hand is not a foul unless the mask is grasped.
26. The penalty for grabbing and releasing an opponent's face mask is a 15 yards.
27. A face mask foul may be a five- or 15-yard penalty, but will never be an automatic first down.
28. If a player accidentally drives his helmet into an opponent, it is a foul.

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29. Spearing is an act by a defensive player who initiates contact with a ball carrier with the front of his helmet.
30. An offensive player cannot commit a spearing foul.
31. Initiating contact with an opposing player whose helmet has come completely off is an illegal personal contact foul.
32. It is not a horse collar tackle if a player standing in the pocket is pulled down by the back collar of his jersey as he releases a forward pass because he was no longer a runner when he came to the ground.
33. It is a foul for a horse collar tackle if a ball carrier is immediately pulled down by the back of his collar by a middle linebacker who was standing two yards immediately in front of the snapper.
34. It is not possible to have targeting unless the player contacted is defenseless.
35. After the ball is thrown, Team B players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer.
36. It is roughing to charge into a potential kicker when he is running with the ball.
37. The holder on a scrimmage place kick has the same special protection as the kicker.
38. It is not roughing the kicker when there is doubt that a kick will be made and contact is unavoidable.
39. If R20 is blocked into the kicker by K66, it is not roughing the kicker.
40. When his team is in scrimmage-kick formation, the snapper is given special protection from a direct charge by an opponent until the snapper blocks or further participates in the play.
41. An assistant coach is flagged for bumping into an official in the restricted area while the ball is live. Subsequently a different coach is observed in the restricted area while the ball is live. The penalty for both fouls is 15 yards.
42. If a player is charged with an unsportsmanlike foul because of a prolonged or excessive act, he must also be disqualified.
43. It is unsportsmanlike if A31 attempts to focus attention upon himself with any delayed, excessive or prolonged act.
44. Team B's attempt to interfere with Team A's offensive signals is a foul at the snap.
45. If a player refuses to comply with a game official's directive, the player will be disqualified.
46. It is an unsportsmanlike foul if a disqualified player re-enters to participate.
47. It is a foul if a player contacts a loose ball with his hand.
48. It is illegal for any player to accidentally slap a loose ball with the arm or hand.
49. Batting a scrimmage kick in or behind the neutral zone by Team R, in an effort to block the kick is legal.
50. Batting a fumble in flight is illegal.
51. It is not a foul if a player accidentally contacts a loose ball with his hand.
52. After an onside kick has traveled 10 yards and touched the ground, it is legal for K52 to bat the ball to prevent it from going out of bounds.
53. A forward pass may be batted in either direction by eligible receivers of either team.
54. It is legal for anyone to bat a backward pass in flight except for an offensive player to bat such a pass forward.
55. B64 may not bat a ball which is in possession of A24.
56. A player of the team in possession may not bat a ball in player possession forward.
57. If the head coach is ejected, the game must be forfeited immediately.
58. A second 15-yard unsportsmanlike foul by the same member of the coaching staff is considered flagrant and results in ejection.
59. A coach who has been ejected may not have further direct or indirect contact with his team during the remainder of the game.
60. All 11 players may come near the sideline between downs to communicate with the coaches.
61. Holding an unauthorized conference is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and carries a 15-yard penalty.
62. If a substitute leaves the team box and enters the playing area during a fight, the unsportsmanlike foul carries a 15-yard penalty plus he shall be disqualified.
63. Three attendants may enter the field during an official's time-out for a measurement.
64. Three coaches are allowed to be in the two-yard area between the front of the team box and the sideline at any time.
65. A sideline warning may be given if there is no interference with a sideline official.
66. A third sideline interference penalty against the same team will result in a 15-yard penalty.

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67. If a player commits an obviously unfair act which has no specific rules coverage, the referee may enforce any penalty he considers equitable.
68. If a team repeatedly commits fouls which halve the distance to the goal, the referee may forfeit the game.

Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------|-----|---|------------------|
| 1. | T | 2-17-1 | 35. | T | 9-4-4 |
| 2. | T | 9-2-2 | 36. | F | 9-4-5a |
| 3. | T | 9-4-7 | 37. | T | 9-4-5 |
| 4. | T | 9-2-3d | 38. | T | 9-4-5a |
| 5. | F | 9-2-3c | 39. | T | 9-4-5d |
| 6. | T | 9-2-3c | 40. | F | 9-4-6, 2-32-14 |
| 7. | T | 9-3-1 | 41. | F | 9-4-8, 9-8-3 Pen |
| 8. | F | 9-3-2 | 42. | F | 9-5 Pen |
| 9. | F | 2-17-2 | 43. | T | 9-5-1c |
| 10. | F | 9-3-2a | 44. | F | 7-1-6d |
| 11. | T | 9-3-2 | 45. | F | 9-5-1f |
| 12. | F | 9-3-2 | 46. | F | 9-6-4f |
| 13. | F | 2-3-7 | 47. | F | 2-2, 2-27 |
| 14. | F | 9-3-4 | 48. | F | 2-2; 9-7-2 |
| 15. | T | 9-3-7 | 49. | T | 9-7-2 |
| 16. | T | 9-3-5 | 50. | F | 9-7-2 |
| 17. | T | 2-5-1 | 51. | T | 9-7-2 |
| 18. | T | 9-3-5 Pen | 52. | F | 9-7-2 |
| 19. | F | 9-3-5b | 53. | T | 9-7-3 |
| 20. | T | 9-3-6 | 54. | T | 9-7-3 |
| 21. | F | 9-4-3o | 55. | F | 2-2, 9-7-4 |
| 22. | F | 2-3-8 | 56. | T | 9-7-4 |
| 23. | F | 2-3-3 | 57. | F | 9-8 Pen |
| 24. | F | 9-4-3e | 58. | T | 9-8 Pen |
| 25. | T | 9-4-3h, 9.4.3G | 59. | T | 9-8 Pen |
| 26. | F | 9-4-3h | 60. | T | 9-8-1f Note |
| 27. | T | 9-4-3h Pen | 61. | T | 9-8-1f Pen |
| 28. | T | 2-20, 9-4-3i | 62. | T | 9-8-1L Pen |
| 29. | F | 2-20-1c, 9-4-3i | 63. | F | 9-8-2 |
| 30. | F | 2-20-1c, 9-4-3i | 64. | F | 9-8-3 |
| 31. | T | 9-4-3L | 65. | T | 9-8-3 Pen |
| 32. | F | 9-4-3k | 66. | T | 9-8-3 Pen |
| 33. | T | 9-4-3k | 67. | T | 9-9-1 Pen |
| 34. | F | 9-4-3m | 68. | T | 9-9-2 Pen |

CHAPTER 9 SCORING

I. The Rules in Depth

It is the object of the game for one team to carry or pass the ball across the opponent's goal line or to kick the ball through the opponent's goal. The game is won by the team which accumulates the most points.

Touchdown

Scoring a touchdown is having possession of the ball and advancing it into the opponent's end zone. Thus, a touchdown is scored when the ball in possession of a player penetrates the plane of the opponent's goal line before or simultaneous to the runner going out of bounds, when a receiver catches a forward pass in the opponent's end zone, or when a team is otherwise legally in possession of the ball in the opponent's end zone (8-2-1).

The latter includes when a backward pass or fumble is declared dead in the end zone of the opponent of the player who threw the backward pass or fumbled while no player is in possession (other than because of an inadvertent whistle) (8-2-1c). Example 9-1 is one that is sure to be viewed very differently by the two teams!

EXAMPLE 9-1: A30 is at the B-2 when he is hit hard by B49 and fumbles. The ball bounces into the end zone where it comes to rest and no one attempts to recover it. **RULING:** Touchdown. The ball belongs to the fumbling team, Team A in this play.

Perhaps a more likely scenario to the preceding is when a player drops the ball before he crosses the goal line, thinking he has scored and the ball rolls into the end zone.

Plays where the ball is declared dead with no one in possession are very rare. The key to declaring a touchdown is ensuring the ball is declared dead in team possession of the last team to have player possession and that it occurs in the end zone of the opponent's (8.5.1A).

The ball becomes dead as soon as a touchdown is scored (4-2-2h). The position of the runner's body is of no consequence. The ball needs only to break the vertical plane of the goal line or the goal line extended while it is in possession of an inbounds runner. It is not necessary for the player to be in the end zone,

only for the ball. Also, note the entire goal line is in the end zone (1-2-3j).

The goal line pylons placed at the intersection of the goal lines extended and the sideline, not only assist in making out of bounds calls, but also help an official in determining whether a touchback has occurred, and most importantly, whether a touchdown has been scored.

The goal line pylons sit on the sideline, and as such they are entirely out of bounds. The end zone is entirely inbounds. These pylons are out of bounds behind the goal line (4-3-2).

For runners who approach a goal line pylon, the goal line plane is extended out of bounds for a runner who is still touching the ground inbounds (2-26-3). If the ball is held outside the sideline plane and breaks the goal line plane extended, it is a touchdown.

However, as we discussed in our study of forward progress in Chapter 4, if a runner dives or jumps and the ball breaks the plane of the goal line extended while he is airborne and he lands out of bounds, the runner's forward progress is marked where the ball crossed the plane of the sideline (4-3-3). The ball is not spotted at its position when the runner first touches out of bounds. Consequently, there is no score unless the ball was inside or over the pylon when it broke the plane of the sideline.

EXAMPLE 9-2: A23 takes a handoff. He leaps at the B-2 near the right sideline and his first contact with the ground is out of bounds three yards beyond the goal line. **RULING:** The covering official must judge whether the ball broke the plane of the goal line before it broke the plane of the sideline. If so, it is a touchdown. Since the pylon is at the intersection of the goal line and sideline, if any part of the ball passed over the pylon, it is a touchdown. If not the ball is spotted where it went out of bounds (crossed the sideline).

EXAMPLE 9-3: A42 is advancing towards Team B's goal line and is very near the right sideline. A42 thrusts the ball in his left hand to reach the goal line inside the pylon. A42 is hit by B53 and knocked out of bounds and passes through the goal line extended. **RULING:** The covering official must judge whether A42 was

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inbounds when the ball broke the plane of the goal line. A42 is out of bounds when a foot first touches the sideline or the area outside the sideline.

EXAMPLE 9-4: A34 is advancing towards Team B's goal line and is very near the right sideline. A34 is pursued by B25 and dives for the pylon. The ball glances off the right side of the pylon. **RULING:** The covering official must judge whether A34 was inbounds when the ball touched the pylon. Unless A34 touched out of bounds before the ball touched the pylon, it is a touchdown.

A pass receiver who is airborne when he possesses the ball must complete the catch to score a touchdown. That also applies if he is airborne over the end zone and he first touches the ground in the field of play. The following example illustrates the point.

EXAMPLE 9-5: Eligible receiver A23 is in his opponent's end zone and running toward the field of play. While still in the end zone he leaps to receive a forward pass and first lands (a) at the B-1 where he is downed, or (b) out of bounds. **RULING:** In (a), Team A's ball at the B-1. In (b), an incomplete pass.

Please see Chapter 5 for a complete discussion of airborne receivers when there is contact by a defender.

The fumble rules become critically important in other situations close to the goal line, as the following examples illustrate (8-2-1b).

EXAMPLE 9-6: Team A snaps the ball with goal to go at the B-6. A12 hands off to back A49 who fumbles at the B-4. The ball rolls into the end zone and recovered by A81. This happens on (a) third down; or (b) fourth down. **RULING:** In both cases it is a touchdown for Team A.

EXAMPLE 9-7: Second and goal at the B-7. At the B-3, A24 fumbles; the ball rolls into the end zone where it (a) goes out of bounds behind the end line, (or b) is recovered and downed by B59. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), a touchback. It will be first and 10 for Team B at the B-20.

In practicality, the team that scores the touchdown is the team that kicks off following the try, except of course in overtime.

Additional Examples: 1-3.

Field Goal

A field goal attempt is a scrimmage kick, and the rules are basically the same as for a punt. A field goal scores three points for the kicking team and can be either a placekick or drop kick from scrimmage, or a free kick following a fair catch or awarded fair catch. For a placekick, the ball must be controlled on the ground or a tee by a teammate (2-24-7). For a successful kick, the entire ball must pass between the vertical uprights, or the inside edges of the uprights extended, and above the crossbar of the opponent's goal (8-4-1c).

EXAMPLE 9-8: K10's placekick (a) sails between the uprights and clears the crossbar by a foot, (b) hits the left upright and goes through the uprights over the crossbar; or (c) goes directly over an upright. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), it is a field goal. In (c), the attempt is unsuccessful because the entire ball did not penetrate the plane of the goal between the inside edges of the uprights extended.

A kick cannot be "reversed" after an apparent score (8.4.1A).

EXAMPLE 9-9: K11 attempts a field goal into a stiff wind and the ball passes between the uprights and above the crossbar. A gust then blows the ball back and on its way back, the ball (a) passes above the crossbar, or (b) passes below the cross bar. **RULING:** The kick is good in both cases. Once the plane of the goal post is broken, the score cannot be reversed.

An unsuccessful field goal attempt that is untouched by Team R beyond the neutral zone and is declared dead in the field of play belongs to Team R at the dead-ball spot (5-1-3e).

EXAMPLE 9-10: Team K attempts a field goal with the ball snapped at the R-37. The kick is short, is touched by K79 at the R-13, and rolls dead (a) at the R-2, or (b) in the end zone. **RULING:** In (a), Team R will take the ball at the R-13, the spot of first touching. In (b), Team R will decline the first touching and accept the touchback.

A kick which rolls into Team R's end zone, whether touched or untouched is a touchback (8-5-3a2). If it goes into the end zone in flight, it becomes dead as soon as it is unsuccessful after breaking the plane of the goal line.

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EXAMPLE 9-11: K2's field goal attempt is short and (a) bounces past R32, or (b) caroms off R32's chest at the R-2, and rolls into the end zone. **RULING:** Touchback. Since the ball was loose, it remained a kick and became dead when it broke the plane of the goal line.

On the other hand, if the ball fails to cross the neutral zone, or if Team R touches it beyond the neutral zone, then it remains live. Either team may advance the ball if it is recovered behind the neutral zone, but becomes dead if Team K recovers it beyond the zone. If Team K touches the ball beyond the neutral zone before it is touched by Team R, it is first touching (see Chapter 6). Team R may return the kick regardless of where they recover or catch it except from their own end zone.

EXAMPLE 9-12: Team K's field goal attempt is blocked and does not cross the neutral zone. R71 recovers the kick while downed. **RULING:** Team R's ball, first and 10 where R71 recovered it.

EXAMPLE 9-13: Third and seven at the R-36. Team K's field goal attempt fails to cross the neutral zone and is recovered by K27 who advances the ball (a) to the R-32, (b) to the R-25, or (c) across Team R's goal line. **RULING:** In (a), it's fourth and three at the R-32. In (b), it's first and 10 for Team K at the R-25. The clock starts on the snap (a new series is awarded following a legal kick down). In (c), touchdown.

EXAMPLE 9-14: On fourth down at the R-30, Team K attempts a field goal. The kick is short and lands at the R-25. It rebounds untouched behind the neutral zone and rolls out of bounds at the R-34. **RULING:** Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-34. Note the relationship of the out-of-bounds spot to the neutral zone is irrelevant--the ball still belongs to the receiving team.

The receiving team may catch a field goal attempt just as they are entitled to catch any punt. However as previously stated, once it is apparent the kick will not score and the ball has broken the plane of the goal line, the ball is dead. It is a touchback and anything which takes place afterwards is usually of no consequence.

In some situations, it is important to distinguish between a bona fide attempt to catch the ball, a muff - which is legal, and batting - which is illegal. However, Team R cannot foul in the end zone by

batting or touching the ball; if the ball does not score after being touched, it is dead. If such a ball caroms through the goal, the score counts (4-2-2d2 Exc, 6.3.1B).

EXAMPLE 9-15: Team K's field goal attempt is about to clear the crossbar when R62 jumps and bats the ball to the ground in the end zone where it is recovered and downed by R81. **RULING:** The result of the play is a touchback. R62's batting the ball in the end zone is not a foul; the ball was dead when touched.

If an attempted field goal touches a Team K player beyond the neutral zone it cannot score.

EXAMPLE 9-16: Team K's field goal attempt strikes K20 in the end zone and (a) then clears the crossbar between the uprights, or (b) is caught by R43 who runs to the R-4, fumbles, and the ball is recovered by K14 who returns the ball for an apparent touchdown. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), K20's touching of the ball makes the attempt unsuccessful and the ball is dead. It is Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-20.

If the ball touches an official, the touching is ignored if the official is inbounds. When a live ball (pass, fumble, muff, kick, etc.) strikes an official who is inbounds, the status of the ball is unchanged: It remains a pass, fumble, muff, kick, etc. Also, in those same cases, when the ball touches the official it is *not* the same as the ball touching the ground where the official is standing. If the ball is in flight when it strikes the official, it continues to be in flight until the ball physically touches the ground, is caught by any player or the ball becomes dead by rule (4-2-2d2 Exc).

EXAMPLE 9-17: The ball is snapped from the R-3. K6's field goal attempt from the R-10 is a low line drive that goes through Team R's line without touching any player. The kick, still in flight, strikes the umpire, who is standing about two yards deep in Team R's end zone. The kick then caroms in flight (a) between the uprights, above the crossbar and lands beyond the end line; or (b) back to K27, who catches or recovers the kick behind his line. **RULING:** When the ball strikes the umpire in (a), it remains live and in play because it has not struck the ground in Team R's end zone. The kick is good. In (b), the ball becomes dead by rule when it is apparent it will not score after having broken the plane of Team R's goal line.

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Following a successful field goal, the ball is put in play with a kickoff, except of course in overtime (4-1-1, 8-4-2).

Additional Examples: 4-7.

Safety

A safety scores two points for the defense and the opponents must then put the ball in play on their 20 yard line by a free kick. A safety can be scored in two ways:

- As the result of a play (8-5-2a, 8-5-2b) when the offensive team is responsible for the ball being in its own end zone (except when the momentum rule applies); or
- When an accepted penalty would be enforced from the fouling team's end zone (8-5-2c).

In the first case above, it is a safety when the ball either is dead in the end zone in possession of one of the offensive team's players or goes out of bounds in the end zone.

A safety also results if an accepted penalty would locate the succeeding spot for the fouling team behind its own goal line or if the penalty requires a safety.

Here is a typical example of a play resulting in a safety.

EXAMPLE 9-18: Quarterback A17 receives the snap at the A-2 and drops back into the end zone where he is tackled. **RULING:** Safety.

For a safety to be the result of the play, a runner must either carry the ball back across his goal line or the ball must be fumbled, passed, muffed or otherwise forced into the end zone. We will save the second topic for later in the chapter. When the ball is carried into the end zone by a runner, it must become dead there while still in his team's possession. The dead-ball spot is normally "under the foremost point of the ball," but not when Team A's goal line is involved (5-3-4).

EXAMPLE 9-19: Second and 15 on the A-2. A24 receives a handoff in his end zone and is tackled with the foremost point of the ball six inches beyond his goal line and the rear portion of the ball on the goal line. **RULING:** Score a safety for Team B. If any part of the ball is touching the goal line (plane) when it becomes dead, the ball is in the end zone even though its foremost point is in the field of play.

Additional Examples: 8, 9.

Momentum Exception

The momentum rule (8-5-2a Exc) states it is neither a safety nor a touchback if a defensive team player is inside his five yard line when he intercepts a forward pass, or catches or recovers a kick, backward pass or fumble and his momentum carries him into the end zone where he is downed or loses possession of the ball which then goes out of bounds in the end zone. The rule requires the ball to be declared in possession of the team of the player whose momentum carried him into the end zone. The ball belongs to the defensive team at the spot where possession is obtained.

EXAMPLE 9-20: Team K's long punt is caught by R29 at the R-3. His momentum carries him into his end zone where (a) he is tackled, or (b) he fumbles the ball and it goes out of bounds over the end line. **RULING:** In both cases it is Team R's ball at the R-3 where R29 caught it.

EXAMPLE 9-21: Team K's kickoff lands at the R-6 and bounces high into the air. R81 possesses the ball at the R-3 and his momentum carries him into the end zone where he is tackled. **RULING:** The momentum rule applies. It is Team R's ball at the R-3 where R81 recovered the ball.

It is important to note the result of the play is a safety if the defensive team player obtains possession of the ball outside the five yard line and his "momentum" carries him into the end zone and the ball becomes dead there.

EXAMPLE 9-22: A11's long pass is intercepted by B34 at the R-6, and his original momentum carries him into his end zone where he falls. **RULING:** Safety; the momentum exception does not apply when the ball is caught outside of the B-5.

Remember, for the exception to apply, original momentum *must* be the cause of the ball entering the end zone.

EXAMPLE 9-23: R21 catches K7's kickoff on the R-1, takes a step forward and circles back into his end zone where he is tackled. **RULING:** Safety; the step forward eliminated any possibility of momentum being judged as the reason for the ball being carried into the end zone.

What happens after the ball enters the end zone is inconsequential providing the ball never

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returns to the field of play and the defensive team has possession at the end of the down. Also, please remember the key to "leaving the end zone" is the location of the ball. If a player intercepts a pass on his one yard line, is carried into the end zone by his original momentum and then after running around, breaks the plane of the goal line with part of his body, but not the ball – the exception still applies.

EXAMPLE 9-24: K3's kick is caught by R12 on the R-2. His original momentum carries him into his end zone and he is able to stop about three yards deep. R12 steps laterally and retreats almost to the end line, he runs parallel to the goal line and makes an attempt to bring the ball out of the end zone, but is tackled before leaving the end zone. **RULING:** Although R12 maneuvered in the end zone, the exception applies because original momentum took the ball into the end zone and it remained there. It is Team R's ball first and 10 on the R-2.

EXAMPLE 9-25: R33 catches K7's kick on the R-3. Original momentum carries him into the end zone. He recovers and runs out to the R-1, then circles back into the end zone and (a) is tackled there, or (b) comes out again and is tackled on the R-1. **RULING:** The exception applied until R33 brought the ball out of the end zone. In (a), it's a safety, and in (b) Team R's ball on the R-1.

EXAMPLE 9-26: B44 intercepts a pass on the R-2 and pitches the ball back to B25 in the end zone (a) after; or (b) before his momentum carries him into the end zone. B25 is tackled in the end zone. **RULING:** In (a), the exception applies since B44's momentum took the ball into the end zone. In (b), it's a safety; the backward pass was the force which put the ball in the end zone. The momentum exception cannot apply.

What happens in the end zone doesn't matter - as long as the defensive team retains the ball.

EXAMPLE 9-27: K13's kick is caught by R12 on the R-4. His original momentum carries him into his end zone and he is able to stop about three yards deep. R12 steps laterally and retreats almost to the end line, he runs parallel to the goal line and makes an attempt to bring the ball out of the end zone, but fumbles while in the end zone and the ball is recovered by (a) R12, (b) R33, or (c) K54. **RULING:** In (a) and (b) the outcome is the same regardless of which Team R player has the

ball. The ball may be advanced, and if either player is downed in the end zone without leaving it, the exception will apply. It will be Team R's ball on the R-4. In (c), the exception is irrelevant because Team K has scored a touchdown.

Here is a play where the defensive team is not Team B.

EXAMPLE 9-28: B12 intercepts A16's forward pass at midfield. At the A-10, he is hit and the ball pops into the air. The ball is caught by A86 at the A-4 and his momentum carries him into the end zone where he is downed. **RULING:** Team A's ball first and 10 at the A-4. Team A became the defensive team after the interception and the momentum exception applies.

Enforcement of penalties on plays where the momentum exception applies is discussed in Chapter 11.

Additional Examples: 10-13.

Safety by Penalty

A safety by penalty is scored when an accepted penalty is enforced from the offending team's end zone. Consider the following example.

EXAMPLE 9-29: Second and nine at the A-3. A17 completes a legal forward pass for a 12 yard gain, but A70 is flagged for clipping in his own end zone. **RULING:** Safety by penalty. The penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul under the all-but-one principle. Since this spot is in Team A's end zone, it is a safety.

It is important to remember the location of the foul is not what matters, but where the penalty by the offense is enforced, as Example 9-30 illustrates.

EXAMPLE 9-30: A25 fumbles at the B-4 and the ball rolls into the end zone. B66 bats the ball over the end line to prevent an opponent from recovering it. **RULING:** A foul against Team B for illegal batting. If the penalty is accepted, Team B will be penalized half-the-distance from the B-4. This is not a safety because the penalty is not enforced from a spot in the end zone. The penalty for a foul by the team not in possession on a running play is enforced from the end of the run.

The rule on illegal forward passes (7-5-2) allows for some interesting situations. Here are examples where Team B does not have an option; a safety is the only outcome.

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EXAMPLE 9-31: Team A's quarterback is sacked in his end zone. A24, in the end zone for pass-protection blocking, holds. **RULING:** Both the result of the play and the penalty for the foul leave the ball in Team A's end zone; safety.

EXAMPLE 9-32: Fourth and 19 on the A-5. A7 is in punt formation. Under a heavy rush, he heaves the ball forward from the end zone to the ground in an area where there are no eligible receivers. **RULING:** The result is a safety regardless of whether the play or penalty is chosen. Acceptance of the penalty results in a safety as the enforcement spot is in Team A's end zone. If Team B wants to decline the penalty and take the result of the play, the result is identical - safety, A7's run ended in his end zone.

Here's one situation where there is a choice.

EXAMPLE 9-33: Third and 10 on the A-6. A11 drops back to pass and from his end zone, he attempts to ground the ball, but it hits ineligible A77 (behind the line) in the shoulder and ricochets into the hands of B89, who catches it and is downed on the A-2. **RULING:** The choice is intriguing. The result of the play is Team B's ball on the A-2, but accepting the penalty for intentional grounding yields a safety. Depending on the score and the time remaining, Team B must decide whether to take the sure two points or to go for the touchdown from the A-2.

Additional Examples: 14, 15.

Touchback

A touchback does not involve a score, but it is closely related to scoring plays because it involves the end zone.

In contrast with a safety, a touchback occurs when a team is responsible for the ball being in the opponent's end zone and it becomes dead in the opponent's possession, or when it goes out of bounds in the end zone (6-3-1, 8-5-3). A touchback requires the team defending that goal to put the ball in play with a snap from their 20 yard line (8-5-4).

Touchbacks occur most often on kicks. The ball is dead and it is a touchback when a non-scoring kick breaks Team R's goal line plane. It does not matter if the ball was touched or which team touched it. Here is a basic example,

EXAMPLE 9-34: Team K's punt or kickoff is untouched by Team R beyond the neutral zone and strikes the ground in Team R's end zone. **RULING:** The ball is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line - touchback.

EXAMPLE 9-35: R24 muffs Team K's punt and it rolls back into Team R's end zone. R27 recovers the ball (a) while grounded in the end zone, (b) and carries it out across the end line, or (c) and is tackled in the end zone. **RULING:** Touchback in all three cases. The kick is dead the instant it breaks the plane of the goal line.

EXAMPLE 9-36: R42 is standing in his end zone when he (a) catches a kickoff, or (b) recovers a kickoff which bounces at the R-2. R42 then takes off down the sideline for a touchdown. **RULING:** In both cases, the ball is dead as soon as the ball breaks the plane of the goal line and it is a touchback.

EXAMPLE 9-37: R31 on the R-5 muffs a kickoff as it bounds past him. The ball bounces into Team R's end zone where (a) K24 recovers after the ball hits the ground in the end zone, (b) K24 recovers before the ball can hit the ground in Team R's end zone, or (c) prone R27 recovers after the ball hits the ground in the end zone or while it is in flight. **RULING:** A touchback in each case. The ball is dead as soon as the ball breaks the plane of the goal line.

It is also a touchback when a grounded scoring kick or an in-flight scoring kick touches a Team K player in the end zone or has apparently failed after breaking the plane of Team R's goal line (6-3-1).

A touchback may also result from an interception or a fumble during a scrimmage down. If Team B intercepts a pass in their end zone, the force which put the ball in the end zone is Team A's pass. If the ball becomes dead behind the goal line without leaving the end zone, it is a touchback.

A common misconception is such a play results in a safety if a Team B player attempts to advance the ball out of the end zone, but is tackled behind the goal line. Don't ever let a coach talk you into that one.

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EXAMPLE 9-38: A7's long pass is intercepted by B12 in his end zone. B12 (a) immediately falls down, (b) runs over the end line, or (c), is tackled in the end zone while attempting to return the ball. **RULING:** A touchback in all cases.

If a fumble is recovered by the opponents in their end zone and they are downed there, or if a fumble goes out of bounds in the opponent's end zone, it is a touchback.

EXAMPLE 9-39: First and goal on the B-5. A27 takes a hand off and dives over the line. He fumbles at the B-2 and the ball (a) goes out of bounds from the end zone, (b) is recovered by prone B28 in the end zone, or (c) is recovered by A38 in the end zone. **RULING:** A touchback in (a) and (b); touchdown in (c).

Remember, the goal line pylons are out of bounds behind the goal line (4-3-2). Consequently, a loose ball that strikes the pylon is either a touchback or safety.

EXAMPLE 9-40: R41 is returning a punt. At the K-5 he fumbles. The ball (a) is recovered by K28 in the end zone, or (b) strikes the pylon at the intersection of the goal line and the sideline. **RULING:** Touchback in both cases.

Additional Examples: 16-21.

Safety vs. Touchback: Force

The decision of whether to rule a safety or touchback revolves around this question: How did the ball get into the end zone? Figure 9-1 is a schematic representation of the possibilities. It doesn't make any difference what happens to the ball after it is in the end zone. As far as the safety vs. touchback issue is concerned, who put it there is all that counts, provided the ball becomes dead in the end zone.

The central idea is **force** (2-13-1): which team gave the ball the force to put it into the end zone? Before we discuss force, it's important to note the situations where force is not a factor. The first exception is when Team K's non-scoring legal kick goes into Team R's end zone; that is always a touchback regardless who supplied the force (2-13-4, 8-5-3a, 6.3.1A, 8.5.3B).

EXAMPLE 9-41: K17's kickoff caroms off R30's chest at the R-2. The ball is nearly at rest on the R-3 when R22 hastily tries to grab it. Instead he muffs the ball which goes into and out of Team R's end zone. **RULING:** Touchback; force is never a factor on a kick going into Team R's end zone.

In the preceding example, the ball remained a kick while it was loose since a kick does not end until a player has possession or the ball is dead by rule. Force is never a factor on a kick going into Team R's end zone (2-13-4a).

Also, force is not a factor when a backward pass or fumble is declared dead in the opponent's end zone with no player in possession (2-13-4b, 8.5.1A). If no player of either team is in possession when a backward pass or fumble is correctly (without an inadvertent whistle) declared dead in the end zone of the opponent of the player who fumbled or threw the backward pass, a touchdown is awarded (8-2-1c).

EXAMPLE 9-42: A21 runs to the B-2, where he fumbles. The ball rolls into Team B's end zone and several players pile on the ball. After the players are unpled, no one is in possession of the ball. The ball was snapped from the B-3 (a) second and goal, (b) fourth and goal, or (c) on a try. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), a touchdown for Team A. In (c), the try is successful.

Force is the result of energy exerted by a player which provides movement of the ball. Force is used only in connection with the goal line and in only one direction: From the field of play into the end zone (2-13-1). If the ball is *carried* into the end zone, there is no question about responsibility: it rests with the ball carrier. For a loose ball, there are four acts that can provide initial force:

- kick,
- pass,
- fumble, or
- snap (8-5-1).

If the ball is put into the end zone by one of these four actions, even though its direction may have changed because of other touching, it is an initial force. Example 9-38 is a play where the force is a pass. In Example 9-39, the force which put the ball in the end zone is A27's fumble. Here are some additional examples including one where the force is a snap.

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EXAMPLE 9-43: On a kickoff return, R25 receives the ball at the R-10 and hands off backward to R15 on a reverse play. As R15 is running toward his goal line, he is hit and fumbles at the R-5. The ball goes out of bounds over the end line. **RULING:** Safety. The force is the fumble.

EXAMPLE 9-44: K30 is standing at the K-5 to punt. The ball is snapped over his head and rolls over the end line. **RULING:** Safety. The force is the snap.

How can the force change? After a fumble, kick or backward pass has been grounded, a new force comes in three ways (2-13-1), if a player:

- Kicks,
- Bats, or
- Muffs the ball.

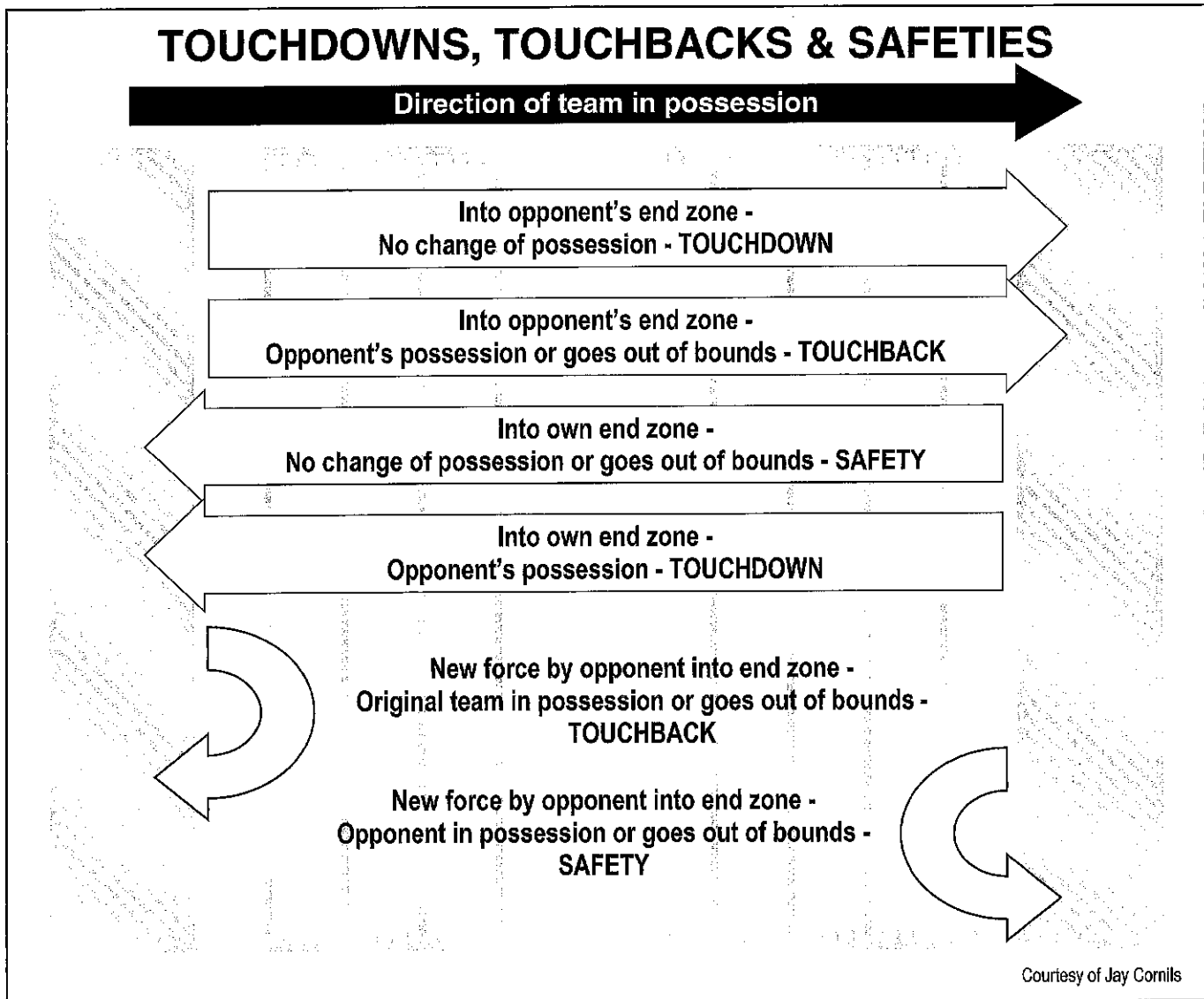


Figure 9-1

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A new force cannot be applied to a ball in flight (2-13-3). It is important to recall kicking and batting are deliberate acts, not simply incidental or accidental contact with the feet/legs or hands/arms, respectively. A **muff** is the touching of a loose ball by any part of the body including the hands or feet in an unsuccessful attempt to gain possession (2-27). A player who is unwittingly struck by the ball has not muffed it, even though the ball's direction may change.

EXAMPLE 9-45: Punter K10 is standing in his end zone when he kicks the ball. It crosses the neutral zone, strikes either R45 or K63 in flight in the helmet, and rebounds into the end zone. K10 recovers the ball and is downed in the end zone. **RULING:** Safety in either case. It doesn't matter which player touched the ball. The initial force is from the punt, and a new force cannot be applied while the ball is in flight.

EXAMPLE 9-46: Second and nine on the A-5. Runner A33 fumbles on the A-2 and B42 intentionally kicks the grounded loose ball so that it goes over the end line. B42 kicked the ball (a) on the A-2, or (b) in Team A's end zone. **RULING:** In (a), the illegal kick is a new force. The result of the play is a touchback, so the 10-yard penalty will be declined. In (b), the force which put the ball in the end zone is A33's fumble, thus the result of the play is a safety. Team A will accept the 10-yard penalty which is enforced from the A-5, the previous spot.

EXAMPLE 9-47: Fourth and 10 on the K-20. K29 muffs the hand-to-hand snap which falls to the ground. R38 dives for the ball at the K-7 and bats it into and out of the end zone. **RULING:** The result of the play is a touchback. The initial force of the snap ends when R38 bats the grounded loose ball and it is this new force that caused the ball to go into the end zone. R38's batting is a foul—he batted a loose ball. If the penalty is accepted, it will be enforced 15 yards from the previous spot, the K-20, and would give Team A a new series at the K-35.

EXAMPLE 9-48: Team K's punt is blocked in the neutral zone and is muffed by several players. In the scramble, the ball is forced backward into Team K's end zone by (a) R55, or (b) K37, and goes out of bounds in the end zone. **RULING:** The initial force ends when a new force is applied and a muff is a new force. In (a), it is a touchback and in (b), a safety.

When a grounded loose ball is muffed and subsequently goes into an end zone, the covering official must decide whether the original force was such the ball could have gone into the end zone regardless of the muff. If the official is in doubt, the original force is not spent. No distinction is made between a ball at rest and a ball not at rest, except if the ball is at rest the covering official has no judgment to make as to whether the ball would have gone into the end zone as a result of the original force (8.5.2C).

EXAMPLE 9-49: A24 fumbles on the B-3. The ball is (a) at rest, or (b) rolling toward the sideline at the B-2, when in either case B54 attempts to recover the ball, but instead muffs it into the end zone, where it is recovered by prone B86. **RULING:** Safety in (a) or (b). A new force is attributed to B54's muff.

EXAMPLE 9-50: First and goal on the B-3. A28 fumbles behind the line and the ball is rolling toward the sideline at the B-2 when B54 bats it backward into the end zone, where it is recovered by prone B86. **RULING:** The result of the play is a safety. A new force is attributed to B54 since the ball would not have gone into the end zone without the bat. B54's bat is a foul. If the penalty is accepted, it is enforced half-the-distance from the previous spot to the B-1-1/2; Team A's ball with the down replayed.

EXAMPLE 9-51: First and goal at the B-4. A32 fumbles at the B-3 and the ball is rolling toward the end zone at the B-2 when B90 bats the ball backward into the end zone, where it is recovered by prone B82. The covering official rules the ball would have gone into the end zone as a result of A32's fumble. **RULING:** The result of the play is a touchback. A new force is not attributed to B90 since the ball would have gone into the end zone without the bat. B90's bat is a foul. If the penalty is accepted, it is enforced half-the-distance from the end of the run to the B-1-1/2; Team A's ball with the down replayed.

The accidental touching of a loose ball by a player who is blocked into the ball is ignored and cannot be a new force (8-5-1b).

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EXAMPLE 9-52: First and 10 on the A-6. A fumble on the handoff is rolling slowly on the A-4 towards the A-5. During an attempt to recover the ball (a) A21 pushes B42 into the ball, or (b) B31 pushes A67 into the ball. In each case, the ball rolls across the goal line where it is recovered by a prone A50. **RULING:** The original force is a result of the fumble. In both (a) and, the push is not a new force. The result is a safety.

Here's is a summary of the key rules which determine whether a safety or touchback has occurred:

- Original force can result from a carry, kick, pass, fumble, or snap (2-13-1);
- Force is not a factor when Team K's non-scoring legal kick goes into Team R's end zone; it is always a touchback (2-13-4a);
- Force is not a factor when a fumble or backward pass is declared dead in the opponent's end zone with no player in possession (2-13-4b, 8.5.1A);
- A new force can result from batting a grounded ball, an illegal kick, or muff (2-13-1);
- The muffing or batting of a pass, kick or fumble in flight is not considered a new force since the original force has not been spent (2-13-3, 8.5.1C);
- A new force is not attributed to a player who is struck by a loose ball even though the ball, which would not have gone into the end zone, goes into the end zone as a result of the deflection (Schindler interp.);
- The original force is not changed when a loose ball already in the end zone (at rest or not at rest) is batted or kicked (2-13-1);
- The momentum rule is an exception to force (8-5-2a Exc);
- If the ball is struck by a player's hand or arm in a bona fide effort to recover the ball, the contact is a muff and not batting (2-2);
- Intentionally kicking a loose ball is a foul, and batting might be a foul (9-7-1, 9-7-2).

Additional Examples: 21-24.

The Try

After a touchdown the scoring team may put the ball in play on an untimed scrimmage down - the "try." This is attempted from the three yard line (unless the location is changed by a penalty) (8-3-1) and gives them an opportunity to score an additional one or two points (8-3-3). Team B cannot score on a try.

The try is always part of the period in which the touchdown is scored. It is not attempted when a touchdown is scored during the last down of the game and the point(s) would not affect the outcome or qualification for playoffs (8-3-1 Exc). Here is an example.

EXAMPLE 9-53: Team A scores a touchdown as the clock expires in the fourth period, and leads 13-12. **RULING:** The game is over unless there is a state association, league or conference policy which uses points as a tie-breaker for playoffs.

The try begins when the ball is marked ready for play. The snap is from Team B's three yard line unless moved by penalty. The ball is placed in the center of the field unless the offense requests it to be placed elsewhere between the hash marks before the ball is marked ready for play. Provided there are no fouls, the try ends when it is successful, Team B gains possession, it's obvious a kick try will not score, or the ball otherwise becomes dead by rule.

EXAMPLE 9-54: On a try, Team K's kick is blocked and (a) K22 recovers the ball beyond the neutral zone, (b) the ball hits the ground in Team R's end zone without having been touched beyond the neutral zone, (c) R10, the first player to touch the ball beyond the neutral zone, muffs it into the end zone and K24 recovers it there, or (d) K33 recovers the ball behind the neutral zone and advances. **RULING:** In all four cases, the try is over and the ball is dead when it is apparent the placekick will not score.

The point values for scores on the try are different than in the game itself (8-1).

- Touchdown = 2 points
- Field Goal = 1 point
- Safety = 1 point

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We are quite accustomed to a touchdown and a field goal on the try, even though it is not common to use these terms. We say the team "kicked the extra point," or they "went for two and made it," without really thinking that these are, respectively, a field goal and a touchdown. The safety is a different matter, since it is so rare.

The following examples demonstrate some other possibilities during the try.

EXAMPLE 9-55: On a try, quarterback A8 running an option play (a) is hit by B35 and fumbles with the ball recovered by A42 who scores, or (b) throws a backward pass which is muffed by A23 and recovered by A32 who scores. **RULING:** Two points are scored for Team A.

EXAMPLE 9-56: On a try, the ball is snapped over the holder's head and is recovered by A25 who advances and scores. **RULING:** Two points for Team A.

EXAMPLE 9-57: On a try, the ball falls to the ground (a) during the exchange between snapper A55 and quarterback A7, or (b) during a hand off between A7 and back A22. In both cases the ball is recovered by A32 who scores. **RULING:** Score two points for Team A.

EXAMPLE 9-58: A21 fumbles the handoff from A7 on a try and the ball is nearly at rest on the B-2 when a muff by B53 (a) forces the ball into Team B's end zone where B23 recovers and is

immediately downed, (b) forces the ball into Team B's end zone where B31 recovers and advances the ball to the B-10, or (c) moves the ball to the B-5 where B45 recovers and advances the ball to Team A's end zone. **RULING:** The ball is dead as soon as Team B gains possession. In (a) and (b), score one point for Team A as the result is a safety; Team B's force put the ball in the end zone. In (c), there is no score.

Each team may use any referee-approved ball of its choice to free kick or to start a new series of downs. A try is part of a previous series. However, following a change-of-possession touchdown, the scoring team may use any referee-approved ball of its choice for the try (1-3-2, 1.3.2 A-B).

EXAMPLE 9-59: Second and 10 on the B-20. A touchdown is scored by (a) A24 on a run, or (b) B36 on an interception return. Before the referee's ready for the try, the offense tells the referee they want to use a different ball for the try than was used to score the touchdown. **RULING:** In (a), the request is denied, but in (b), the request is honored.

The try has a set of rules all its own with regard to penalty enforcement. Please see Chapter 11 for an extensive discussion.

After the try is over, the opponents of the team which scored designates which team shall kickoff, except of course in overtime (8-3-9).

Additional Examples: 25, 26.

II. Additional Examples

1. Ball carrier A45 dives for a touchdown, the ball just penetrating the plane of the goal line, and he is thrown back to the B-1. **RULING:** Touchdown. The ball is dead as soon as it penetrates the plane of the opponent's goal line while in the runner's possession.

2. A85 runs a fly pattern towards the goal line pylon. He jumps at the B-1, secures the forward pass in mid-air, crosses the goal line while still airborne, but first comes in contact with the ground outside the sideline in the end zone. **RULING:** Incomplete pass. A85 landed out of bounds.

3. A86 is running along the sideline and approaches the goal. He leaps to catch a pass. As he returns to the ground, his foot glances the goal line pylon, but the first foot to touch the ground does so inbounds. **RULING:** Incomplete pass. A86 was out of bounds when he touched the pylon.

4. Team K's field goal attempt lands at the R-5, accidentally strikes R19 in the foot, and rolls out of bounds at the R-2. **RULING:** First and 10 for Team R at the R-2.

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5. Fourth and five at the R-20. During Team K's successful field goal attempt, R63 commits a personal foul 10 yards beyond the neutral zone. **RULING:** Team A can either cancel the score and have a first down half-the distance at the R-10 or accept the three points and have the 15-yard penalty enforced at the succeeding spot.

6. K11's field goal attempt strikes the ground beyond the neutral zone and is (a) touched, or (b) not touched by a Team R player. The ball bounces back behind the neutral zone where it is recovered by K29 who advances it into the end zone. **RULING:** Touchdown.

7. After a safety, two unsportsmanlike fouls are charged to the same team. Team K chooses to placekick from the 50 yard line and the kick goes between the uprights and above the crossbar. **RULING:** A touchback and no score. A free kick after a safety cannot score.

8. A32 fumbles on the B-5. The ball is at rest on the B-2 when B44 blocks A77 into the ball, forcing it into the end zone, where the ball is recovered by prone B88. **RULING:** Touchback. This play is a football paradox. Logic says the original force has been expended when a ball comes to rest in the field of play albeit there is no rule that says that. The true cause of the ball entering the end zone is B44's block; however, a new force can only result from a bat, illegal kick or muff (2-13-1). A77's contact is not a muff because he didn't touch it in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession (2-27). Furthermore, A77's contact is excused because he was blocked into the ball (8-5-1b). Consequently, the only determination not contradicted by rule, is the original force, A32's fumble, applies resulting in a touchback.

9. A34 fumbles on the B-3. The ball is at rest on the B-2 when B98, in an attempt to recover the ball, muffs it toward the left sideline. The ball deflects off the back of A64's leg and goes into the end zone, where the ball is recovered by prone B82. **RULING:** Safety. A new force is attributed to B98's muff since the ball would not have gone into the end zone without that contact. A64's touching is immaterial even though it changed the direction of the ball.

10. B22 is at the B-2 and his momentum carries him into his end zone where he is downed after he (a) catches a punt, (b) recovers a punt, (c) intercepts A8's forward pass, (d) intercepts A8's backward pass, (e) recovers A11's backward pass, (f) intercepts A26's fumble, or (g) recovers A32's fumble. **RULING:** The momentum exception applies in each case. It will be Team B's ball on the B-2.

11. B21 intercepts a pass at the B-4. As his momentum is carrying him into his end zone, he fumbles at the B-1 and (a) he, or (b) B45 recovers the ball. The ball is then downed in the end zone. **RULING:** A safety in both (a) and (b). The momentum exception does not apply when Team B fumbles in the field of play.

12. First and 10 at the A-6. A21 muffs a backward pass at the A-2. The ball pops up into the air and is caught by A89, who lunges for the ball from the vicinity of the A-2. A89's momentum carries him into the end zone, where he falls to the ground. **RULING:** Team A remains the offensive team throughout the down. Consequently the momentum exception does not apply. The play results in a safety.

13. B25 leaps in the air over the B-2 and has A6's pass in his grasp. He returns to the ground in his end zone inbounds. **RULING:** B25 possesses a live ball in his own end zone and may attempt to run it out or down it in the end zone for a touchback. Momentum is not involved.

14. Third and 10 at the A-6. From his end zone, A8 throws the ball forward to A67, who muffs the ball just behind the goal line; the pass is incomplete. **RULING:** Illegal touching. The penalty, if accepted, is enforced from the spot of the foul (all-but-one principle) which is in the end zone, thus the result is a safety.

15. Fourth and 10 at the A-5. A8 drops back into his end zone and throws a legal forward pass. Blitzing linebacker B52 deflects the pass, which is caught by A81. Still in his own end zone, A81 throws a second forward pass to eligible A43 that is incomplete. **RULING:** Regardless of whether the penalty is declined or accepted, it is a safety. An illegal forward pass is a running play and the ball belongs to Team A at the end of the run.

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16. Third and nine at the A-3. A17 is in his end zone and throws a backward pass, but A39 muffs it and the ball rolls into the field of play. B75, hoping to score a touchdown, bats the ball into Team A's end zone where it is recovered by A29. He is tackled as he tries unsuccessfully to advance out of the end zone. **RULING:** B75's batting is a foul. It also imparts a new force making Team B responsible for the ball being in the end zone, thus the result of the play is a touchback. The penalty is enforced under the all-but-one principle from the previous spot. It is to Team A's advantage to take the touchback (first and 10 on the B-20) rather than the penalty (first and 10 on the B-18).

17. B46 is standing with his feet on his goal line to receive a punt. He catches the ball and touches his knee down in the end zone, but the football never breaks the plane of the goal line. **RULING:** Team B's ball at the spot of its most forward point. It is not a touchback if the ball does not enter the end zone. The position of B46's body is irrelevant.

18. Team K's free kick from the K-40 rolls along the ground near Team R's end zone. To keep Team K from recovering it, R34 kicks the ball back into the end zone and it goes out of bounds over the end line. **RULING:** The result of the play is a touchback. If accepted, the penalty for illegally kicking the ball would place the ball at the R-45 and Team A would replay the free kick down.

19. K18's kickoff rolls untouched toward a goal line pylon on the left side of the field. The ball strikes the pylon on its (a) left side and rolls further out of bounds, or (b) right side and rolls into the end zone. **RULING:** Touchback. In either case, the ball is considered to have entered the end zone.

20. First and goal at the B-9. A22 takes a handoff and is hit at the B-5. The loose ball bounces toward a pylon and (a) strikes it, or (b) does not strike it. The ball then goes out of bounds. **RULING:** In (a), the covering official has prima facie evidence that a touchback occurred. It will be Team B's ball, first and 10 at the B-20. In (b), if the ball entered the end zone, it is also a touchback.

However, if the ball went out of bounds in the field of play, Team A will retain the ball for second down at the out-of-bounds spot.

21. B41 intercepts A8's pass in his end zone. A89 then snatches the ball from B41's grasp while they are still in the end zone. **RULING:** Touchdown. The ball is not immediately dead when intercepted in the end zone. However, after a perceptible time if B41 makes no effort to advance, a touchback should be declared.

22. B21 intercepts A8's forward pass in his end zone and then passes backward to B42 who (a) muffs the ball so that it goes out of bounds across the sideline behind the goal line; or (b) bats the ball in-flight over the end line. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), the force which put the ball into the end zone was the pass by A8. When B42 muffed the backward pass out of bounds in the end zone or legally batted the backward pass in flight so that it went over the end line, the result is a touchback.

23. Team A's fumble in flight is batted forward by B91, and the ball goes out of bounds behind Team A's goal line. **RULING:** Safety. Batting a fumble in flight does not add a new force (2-13-1) nor is it a foul (9-7-2).

24. Team A's backward pass in flight is batted by B77, and the ball goes out of bounds behind Team A's goal line. **RULING:** Safety. A pass may be batted in any direction and the force is charged to Team A's pass (9-7-3).

25. On a two-point try, B23 intercepts A14's pass in the end zone. **RULING:** The ball is dead and the try is unsuccessful when Team B gains possession.

26. On a try, A21 takes a handoff and fumbles at the B-2. The ball rolls into the end zone where B55 bats the ball over the end line to prevent a recovery by A48. **RULING:** The penalty is enforced half-the-distance from the end of A21's run. The try will be replayed from the B-1.

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III. Review Test

(True or False)

1. The goal line pylons when properly placed are out of bounds at the intersection of the sideline and the goal line extended.
2. It is a touchdown for Team A when a live ball in runner A31's possession breaks the vertical plane of Team B's goal line.
3. Team A scores a touchdown any time it possesses a live ball in the opponent's end zone.
4. It is a safety if A22's fumble is declared dead in Team B's end zone and no player of either team is in possession.
5. If A33 fumbles the ball into Team B's end zone, and while the ball is loose there an official blows an inadvertent whistle, it is a touchdown for Team A.
6. It is a safety if B56 forces A28's fumble into Team B's end zone and A12 recovers there.
7. It is a safety if A1's fumble on his 5-yard line is recovered by B1 in A's end zone.
8. If a try by placekick does not break the plane of R's goal line, R1 may recover and advance.
9. If a kick try is blocked and K42 recovers behind the line and runs into the end zone, Team K is awarded two points.
10. Team B can score on a try.
11. If a loss of down foul by Team A occurs during a successful try, there is no score and the down is replayed.
12. A field goal may be scored by a dropkick or placekick, either from scrimmage or during a free kick following a fair catch or awarded fair catch or safety.
13. If K1's field-goal attempt deflects off K2's shoulder while he is in the expanded neutral zone, no goal is scored even if the ball passes between the uprights and above the crossbar.
14. During a field goal attempt, the ball becomes dead if the kick is blocked behind the neutral zone.
15. If the holder muffs the snap on a field goal attempt and K21 kicks the ball as the holder is attempting to gain possession, it is a field goal if the ball goes through the uprights above the crossbar.
16. Force is a concern only with ball movement either toward or away from the goal line.
17. A new force can be given to a fumble after it has touched the ground.
18. A new force can be added to a kick in flight.
19. The batting of a forward pass is not considered a new force for judging whether a touchback or safety results.
20. If R64 blocks K10's kick on Team K's eight yard line and the ball rebounds into Team K's end zone, the change of direction is a new force and when K28 recovers it there, it is a touchback.
21. A backward pass on Team A's 20 which is batted in flight by B31 and recovered by A8 in Team A's end zone is not a safety because of the new force.
22. The muffing or batting of a pass, kick or fumble in flight is not considered a new force since the original force has not been spent.
23. When a live ball becomes dead in player possession in that player's end zone, it is always a safety.
24. It is a safety if A7 retreats into his end zone and fumbles the ball out of bounds over the end line.
25. If B25 recovers a scrimmage kick on Team B's two yard line and his momentum carries him into the end zone and he is downed there, it is Team B's ball at the two yard line.
26. If B39 catches a scrimmage kick on his six yard line and his momentum carries him into his end zone and he is tackled there, it is a touchback.
27. If B24 intercepts a pass on his own three yard line and his momentum carries him into his end zone, it is a touchback if he fumbles the ball across the end line.
28. If B35 catches a punt on his three yard line and voluntarily carries the ball into his own end zone, the momentum exception does not apply.
29. It is a touchback if B25 falls down in the end zone after his interception of a pass on his three yard line and his momentum has carried him into the end zone.
30. The exception on momentum does not apply to a free kick.
31. It is a safety if A7's backward pass enters the end zone and touches the ground out of bounds behind Team A's goal line.

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32. It is a touchback if A28 fumbles on Team B's five yard line and B11's muff forces the loose ball into Team B's end zone and out of bounds beyond the end line.
33. On fourth down, if A8 is in his own end zone when he intentionally grounds a forward pass, Team B does not have an option as it must be a safety.
34. If K1 holds R1 in K's end zone to prevent R1 from recovering a blocked punt, it will be a safety if R accepts the penalty.
35. A safety is scored when an offensive player commits any foul for which the penalty is accepted and enforcement is from a spot in his end zone.
36. On kicks entering Team R's end zone and becoming dead there, the determination of force dictates whether it is a touchback or a safety.
37. If K17's punt is blocked by R71 and strikes the ground and is then forced into Team K's end zone by R27, it is a touchback if K21 recovers and is downed there.
38. If A31 fumbles on Team B's two yard line and the ball rolls through the end zone and over the end line, it is a touchdown for Team A.
39. It is a touchdown for Team A when A41 fumbles on Team B's two yard line and B51 touches the ball before it rolls out of bounds beyond the end line.
40. It is a touchback if A7's fumble on Team B's five yard line is recovered by B66 in the end zone.
41. It is a touchback when A1 fumbles on B's 2-yard line and the ball goes into B's end zone and out-of-bounds there.
42. If B31 intercepts a pass in Team B's end zone and begins a return but is tackled in the end zone, it is a safety.
43. The team whose goal line is involved shall put the ball in play anywhere between the hash marks on its 20 yard line by a snap after a touchback and by a free kick after a safety.

Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----------------|-----|---|-----------------|
| 1. | T | 1-2-4 | 23. | F | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 2. | T | 8-2-1a | 24. | T | 8-5-2a |
| 3. | T | 8-2-1 | 25. | T | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 4. | F | 8-2-1c | 26. | F | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 5. | F | 4-2-3, 8-2-1c | 27. | F | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 6. | F | 8-2-1b, 8-5-1 | 28. | T | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 7. | F | 8-2-1b | 29. | F | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 8. | F | 8-3-2b | 30. | F | 8-5-2a Exc |
| 9. | F | 4-2-2i, 8-3-2b | 31. | T | 8-5-2b |
| 10. | F | 8-3-3, 8.3.3B | 32. | F | 8-5-2b |
| 11. | F | 8-3-4 | 33. | T | 8-5-2c |
| 12. | F | 8-4-1a | 34. | T | 8-5-2c |
| 13. | F | 8-4-1b | 35. | T | 8-5-2c |
| 14. | F | 6-2-2, 6-2-3 | 36. | F | 2-13-4a, 8-5-3a |
| 15. | F | 8-4-1a, 9-7-1 | 37. | T | 2-13-2, 8-5-3b |
| 16. | F | 2-13-1 | 38. | F | 8-5-3c |
| 17. | T | 2-13-1, 8-5-1 | 39. | F | 8-5-3c |
| 18. | F | 2-13-1, 8-5-1a | 40. | T | 8-5-3c |
| 19. | T | 8-5-1 | 41. | T | 8-5-3c |
| 20. | F | 8-5-1 | 42. | F | 8-5-3d |
| 21. | F | 8-5-1a | 43. | T | 8-5-4 |
| 22. | T | 2-13-1, 8-5-1 | | | |



CHAPTER 10 SUBSTITUTION AND PARTICIPATION

I. The Rules in Depth

Teams must start a game with 11 players, but later may play with fewer than 11 if no substitutes are available to replace injured or disqualified players (1-1-3, 1.1.3). However, when on offense, a team must have at least five players on the line (see Chapter 3).

Substitution (Rule 3) and participation (Rule 9) are far apart in the rulebook, but are closely related topics. The distinction between illegal participation and illegal substitution is an important one - a major penalty (15 yards) versus a minor (five yards).

Substitution

A player is one of the 22 team members who is on the field. A player continues to be a player until a substitute enters the field and indicates to the player that he is replaced or when the substitute otherwise becomes a player (2-32-1). Any number of players may be replaced any time the ball is dead. There are no limits on the number of substitutions in a game. A **substitute** is a team member who replaces a player already in the game. A substitute becomes a player when he enters the field and communicates with a teammate or official, enters the huddle, is positioned in a formation or participates in a play (2-32-15). A **replaced player** is one that has been notified by a substitute that he is to leave the field (2-32-12).

There are six acts which comprise illegal substitution and they can be penalized as either a dead or live-ball foul. The most frequent infractions are when a replaced player does not depart immediately, or fails to leave the field before the snap.

Delayed Departure

If either team has more than 11 players on the field, there are times when the infraction is a dead-ball foul (illegal substitution, five yards) and others when it is a live-ball foul (illegal participation, 15 yards). We've mentioned the fine line between illegal substitution and illegal participation. The difference is a matter of recognition by the officials.

A replaced player must leave the field within three seconds of when his substitute enters the

huddle (3-7-1). If the official's count reveals more than 11 players prior to the snap, it is a dead-ball foul since it is obvious a replaced player(s) did not leave immediately. Therefore, if the official counts 12 or more on the field:

- Before the snap, it is a dead-ball, illegal substitution foul (3-7-1);
- After the snap, play should be continued. This is a live-ball, illegal-participation foul (9-6-4c), unless the 12th player was attempting to leave the field before the snap. In this case it is a live-ball foul simultaneous with the snap for illegal substitution (3-7-4, 3.7.1B). However, if the player attempting to leave participates, it is illegal participation (9-6-3).

EXAMPLE 10-1: Team A breaks their huddle and moves to the line. As the quarterback is barking signals, the referee realizes with certainty that Team A has 12 players on the field. No Team A player is attempting to leave the field. **RULING:** Dead-ball foul (illegal substitution, five yards).

EXAMPLE 10-2: First and goal at the B-9. B42 comes onto the field to replace B10 at the last moment as part of a goal line defense. When B42 comes onto the field, B10 realizes there isn't enough time for him to get off, so he stays on the field. **RULING:** The official must wait three seconds to see if a Team B player will depart. If, after this time, no Team B player tries to depart, a dead-ball foul for illegal substitution (five yards) should be called. If the snap occurs before the official reaches the three second limit, the whistle should be blown to prevent the play and avoid a foul for illegal participation (15 yards).

Additional Examples: 1, 2.

Unsuccessful Departure

As mentioned, if a replaced player tries to leave the field before the snap, but fails to do so, it is a live-ball foul for illegal substitution (3-7-4, 3.7.1B). If this player draws coverage or otherwise participates, it is illegal participation.

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EXAMPLE 10-3: Fourth and 10 on the K-30. K42 thinks he is part of the punt team, but belatedly realizes his error. When the ball is snapped, K42 is halfway between the hash marks and his sideline. **RULING:** A live-ball illegal substitution foul. Team R will have the choice of the result of the play or a five-yard penalty against Team K from the previous spot making it fourth and 15 from the K-25. If the ball is kicked, the penalty can also be enforced from the succeeding spot.

Leaving on Wrong Sideline or End Line

Another requirement is the departing player must leave the field on his own sideline and go directly to his team box. Leaving on the opponent's sideline or the end line is a dead-ball foul (3-7-2).

EXAMPLE 10-4: First and 10 on the B-15. Substitute B71 comes onto the field to replace B70. Prior to the snap (a) B70 leaves the field through the sideline in his end zone; (b) B71, seeing he will be unable to complete the substitution, returns to his team box; or (c) B70 leaves the field through the end line and goes immediately to his team box. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), legal. In (c), B71 did not enter the huddle or communicate with anyone. In (c), it is a five yard dead-ball foul which will give Team A first and five on the B-10.

In addition to replaced players, this restriction applies to players and to substitutes who are unable to complete the substitution (3-7-2).

EXAMPLE 10-5: Fourth and goal at the R-9. Team K sets up for a field goal attempt and Team R responds with a massive substitution. R41 incorrectly counts his team and, thinking he is the 12th man, leaves the field just before the snap over the end line and immediately returns to his bench. **RULING:** A foul for a substitution infraction; R41 was a player.

Please note if a replaced player or substitute exits on the wrong side of the field during the down, it doesn't really matter where he leaves the field. He has already fouled by not being off the field before the snap (3-7-4).

Entering and Withdrawing

When a substitute enters, becomes a player and then withdraws, or a player or replaced player

withdraws and re-enters during the same dead-ball interval, it is a foul. Either act is legal (3-7-3) if:

- a penalty is accepted,
- a dead-ball foul occurs,
- there is a charged timeout, or
- the period ends.

This rule was adopted to require a "messenger" who brings a play to the huddle to play at least one down.

EXAMPLE 10-6: Third and five at the A-40. Team A's coach thinks it is fourth down and sends punter A5 onto the field. When A5 arrives in the huddle, A7 checks the down with the referee. A5 then leaves the field. **RULING:** A dead-ball illegal substitution foul. If the penalty is accepted, it will be Team A's ball, third and 10 on the A-35.

A player who returns to his team box, realizes he was supposed to stay in the game, and then returns to the field does not commit a foul because he does not lose his status as a player when he enters the team area while the ball is dead. He is not a replaced player (2-32-12) because he was not notified by a substitute that he was to leave the field and he is not a substitute (2-32-15) because there was not a player vacancy for him to fill. However, if it is done intentionally to gain an advantage, it is an illegal participation foul per 9-6-4d (3.7.3A).

EXAMPLE 10-7: First and 10 on the A-12. Wide receiver A87 thinks the "goal line offense" is going to enter the game and goes to his team box. He then realizes he is supposed to remain in the game and goes back to the huddle. When A87 left the field, tight end A80 (a) entered, or (b) did not enter the field. **RULING:** In (a), it is a dead-ball illegal substitution foul. In (b), no foul. If A87 left the field intentionally to gain an advantage, it would be illegal participation.

Entering During a Down – No Participation

When a substitute enters the field during the down, and does not participate, it is a foul for illegal substitution (3-7-6). It does not matter whether the entering substitute is filling a player vacancy or is the 12th player. Also, it does not matter which side of the neutral zone he enters on. This is a nonplayer foul and is enforced from the

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succeeding spot which is apt to cause confusion as the following play illustrates.

EXAMPLE 10-8: Fourth and 10 on the A-34. B21 thinks his team only has 10 players on the field. He comes onto the field as the 12th player at the B-36 just after the ball is snapped. The play goes to the other side of the field and he does not participate while the runner is downed at the A-41. **RULING:** A nonplayer foul for an illegal substitution. The ball belongs to Team B because the play ended short of the line-to-gain (5-1-2b). The five-yard penalty is enforced from the succeeding spot, resulting in a first down for Team B at the A-46.

simultaneous with the snap (previous spot enforcement) , a five-yard penalty (3-7-5); or (2) if he participates in any way by hindering an opponent, drawing coverage or touching the ball, it is a live-ball foul for illegal participation (9-6-3).

EXAMPLE 10-9: Prior to the snap B41 recognizes he is to be in the game and belatedly enters on Team A's side of the neutral zone. The ball is snapped after B41 enters the field of play, but before he crosses the line. B41 then stands near the sideline and watches the play. **RULING:** A live-ball foul for illegal substitution because B41 was on the wrong side of the neutral zone at the snap and didn't participate in the play.

Wrong Side of Neutral Zone –No Participation

Encroachment restrictions apply only to players and not to substitutes or replaced players. A team member who is entering the field to fill a player vacancy (when the team has less than 11 players on the field) must be on his team's side of the neutral zone prior to the snap or free kick. If the snap or free kick occurs while such a team member is on his opponent's side of the neutral zone he is considered to be a substitute, not a player. As a result: (1) If he does not participate, it is a live-ball foul for illegal substitution

While an entering substitute becomes a player when he communicates with a teammate, he is not considered a player for encroachment restrictions until he crosses to his team's side of the neutral zone.

If the entering Team A substitute gets to his team's side of the neutral zone before the snap he must be between the nine-yard marks (7-2-1) and not violate the shift or motion rules.

The following table summarizes penalty enforcement for illegal substitution fouls.

Illegal Substitution	
Live-Ball Fouls from the Previous Spot	Replaced player or substitute unsuccessfully attempts to withdraw. (3-7-4, 3.7.Cmt 1)
	Entering substitute not on his team's side of the neutral zone at the snap and does not participate. (3-7-5, 3.7 Cmt 4)
All-but-One Fouls	None.
Dead-Ball Fouls from the Succeeding Spot	Replaced player does not leave field within three seconds. (3-7-1, 3.7 Cmt 2)
	Replaced player, substitute, or player leaves field before the snap other than on his team's sideline. (3-7-2, 3.7 Cmts 3 & 5)
	Substitute becomes a player and withdraws or replaced player withdraws and re-enters during the same dead-ball interval. (3-7-3)
Live-Ball Foul from the Succeeding Spot	Substitute enters the field during down, but does not participate. Nonplayer foul. (3-7-6, 3.7 Cmt 6)

Table 10-1

Participation

There are 12 acts which comprise illegal participation and with one exception they are all live-ball fouls. Some are fouls at the snap and penalized from the previous spot. Others are

enforced under the all-but-one principle. **Participation** is any act or action by a player or nonplayer that has an influence on play (2-30).

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12 Players on the Field

As previously mentioned, if the official's count is not completed before the snap, or the substitution is not monitored, it becomes illegal participation at the snap if there are more than 11 players in the formation. Each team is responsible for substituting legally and having replaced players leave immediately (9-6-4c).

Additional Example: 3.

Player Out of Bounds

A player may not intentionally go out of bounds and intentionally touch the ball, subsequently return to the field, influence the play, or otherwise participate (9-6-2).

EXAMPLE 10-10: A81 intentionally runs to a position one yard beyond the end line and stops. A7 throws a forward pass intended for A81. As the ball nears the end line, A81 leaps into the air, bats the ball to A22 and lands out of bounds. A22 catches the ball in the end zone. **RULING:** A81 is guilty of illegal participation. A81 touched the ball after intentionally going out of bounds.

EXAMPLE 10-11: B55 intentionally runs out of bounds while the ball is live and (a) leaps and knocks down a pass intended for A82, who is near the sideline, or (b) tackles runner A24, who is running down the sideline. **RULING:** In either case, B55 is guilty of illegal participation. In (a), B55 touched the ball after intentionally going out of bounds. In (b), B55 returned to the field.

EXAMPLE 10-12: During R15's kickoff return, (a) R22, or (b) K75 intentionally goes out of bounds, runs several yards while out of bounds, then re-enters the field and blocks. **RULING:** Illegal participation in (a) and (b) because the player went out of bounds *intentionally*. The spot of the foul is where the player returned to the field and is enforced under the all-but-one principle. In (b), the penalty can also be enforced from the succeeding spot.

If a player is blocked or pushed out of bounds, he may continue to participate provided he returns to the field at the first opportunity.

EXAMPLE 10-13: Eligible A82 runs downfield, and before a pass is thrown, he is blocked by B40 and pushed out of bounds. A82 runs behind some players in the team box to avoid B40 and returns to the field 10 yards beyond the spot where he left. He then catches a forward pass. **RULING:** A82 is guilty of illegal participation for not returning immediately after being blocked out of bounds.

Other than the above exemption, no player of Team A or Team K may go out of bounds during the down before a change of possession and return (9-6-1). There is no foul unless such a player returns inbounds during the down. The foul occurs when the offending player *returns* inbounds, not when he steps out of bounds (9.6.1A Cmt).

EXAMPLE 10-14: Fourth and 10 on the K-5. The snap is high and punter K15 takes a step backward onto the end line, jumps to catch the ball, and then lands with both feet inbounds. R25 returns the punt to the K-10. **RULING:** Illegal participation by K15. The foul occurred where K15 returned inbounds, and if accepted, results in a safety.

EXAMPLE 10-15: K16 kicks off from the K-40. While the kick is in-flight and untouched, K72 accidentally steps on the sideline, but returns inbounds (a) before, or (b) after the kick is caught and is blocked by R42. **RULING:** In either case, illegal participation on K72. In (a), enforcement is either from the previous spot or from the succeeding spot. In (b), enforcement is from the end of the run because the foul occurred during the following running play.

EXAMPLE 10-16: While A10's forward pass is in-flight and untouched, eligible A83 and B28 both accidentally step on the sideline, but return to the field. B28 touches the pass, which falls incomplete. **RULING:** Illegal participation by A83, but B28's play is legal.

In the preceding example, while A83 is guilty of illegal participation (enforced from the previous spot because it occurred during a loose-ball play), he is not an ineligible receiver illegally downfield.

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A player who is an eligible receiver at the snap remains eligible throughout the down. Stepping on the sideline never makes an eligible receiver ineligible (see Chapter 5).

The restriction *does not* apply to players of Team B or Team R who inadvertently step out of bounds.

EXAMPLE 10-17: During A41's run, B26 inadvertently steps on the sideline, returns inbounds, and makes the tackle. **RULING:** Legal.

EXAMPLE 10-18: A12's pass is intercepted by B20, who inadvertently stepped on the sideline before the interception, but was inbounds when he caught the pass. **RULING:** Legal.

Furthermore, once there has been a *change of possession*, the restrictions on unintentionally going out of bounds are removed for Team A and Team K players.

EXAMPLE 10-19: A7's pass is intercepted by B29. During B29's runback (a) B82 steps on the sideline and then blocks A57, or (b) A52 steps on the sideline, returns inbounds and tackles B29. **RULING:** Legal in both (a) or (b). In (b), Team A restrictions ended when B29 intercepted the pass.

EXAMPLE 10-20: R23 catches K2's punt. During R23's advance (a) R76 inadvertently steps on the sideline, returns inbounds and blocks K51; or (b) K60 inadvertently steps on the sideline, returns inbounds and is blocked by R44. **RULING:** No foul in either (a) or (b).

EXAMPLE 10-21: R24 muffs K1's punt. While the ball is rolling loose on the field (a) R77 inadvertently steps on the sideline, returns inbounds and blocks K50; or (b) K62 inadvertently steps on the sideline, returns inbounds and is blocked by R47. **RULING:** By rule, a change of possession has not occurred because Team R has not possessed the ball. In (a), R77's play is legal; in (b), illegal participation on K62 (enforced from either the previous spot or from the succeeding spot. Had R24 caught the kick and fumbled before K62 stepped out of bounds, there would have been no foul.

Although a foul does not occur unless an offending player returns inbounds during the down, when the player steps out is significant.

EXAMPLE 10-22: K33 accidentally steps out of bounds while K11's punt is in the air. K33 returns inbounds (a) before, or (b) after R27 catches the ball. **RULING:** Since K33 stepped out of bounds while his team was restricted (before the change of possession), it is illegal participation in both cases (9.6.1C).

In the preceding example, since the foul did not occur until the player returned inbounds, the foul in (a) occurred during a loose-ball play and in (b), during a running play. Types of plays and penalty enforcement are discussed in Chapter 11.

Here is a summary of the rules governing players who go out of bounds.

- Any player can go out of bounds and return if he is blocked out.
- All players are prohibited from intentionally going out of bounds and returning.
- Team A and K players cannot inadvertently go out of bounds *before* there is a change of possession. It is a foul if they return either before or after the change of possession.
- Team B and R players are not restricted from inadvertently going out of bounds.

Additional Examples: 4-9.

Wrong Side of Neutral Zone – Participation

We know a team member who enters the field to fill a player vacancy must be on his team's side of the neutral zone prior to the snap or free kick. If he's on the opponent's side of the zone, he is considered to be a substitute, not a player. Thus, if he enters *before* the snap and does not participate, it is illegal substitution (3-7-5). But if he participates in any way by hindering an opponent, drawing coverage or touching the ball, the penalty is more severe: 15 yards for illegal participation. The spot of the foul is where he began to participate (9-6-4a).

EXAMPLE 10-23: Second and 10 at the B-20. As Team A leaves their huddle and comes to the line, Team B realizes they have only 10 players on the field. B31 then enters the field and is on the B-25 when the ball is snapped. During the play B31 (a) begins to participate while on Team A's side of the neutral zone, (b) doesn't begin to participate until he is on his side of the neutral zone, or (c) simply continues to run toward his side of the

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neutral zone, but doesn't participate at all in the play. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), because B31 participated, he is guilty of illegal participation, a 15-yard, live-ball foul. In (c), B31 is flagged for a live-ball, five-yard foul for illegal substitution because he was on the wrong side of the neutral zone at the snap and didn't participate in the play.

In the preceding example, the result would be the same if Team A were shorthanded and the offender was a Team A player, who was on Team B's side of the neutral zone when the ball was snapped.

Entering During a Down - Participation

When a substitute enters the field during the down, the foul is illegal participation if the entering substitute participates (9-6-4a). It does not matter whether the entering substitute is filling a player vacancy or is the 12th man. Also it does not matter which side of the neutral zone he enters on.

EXAMPLE 10-24: Second and 10 at the B-20. As Team A leaves the huddle and comes to the line, B41 enters the field after the ball is snapped. B41 enters as the (a) 11th player, or (b) 12th player. In either case, B41 participates in the play. **RULING:** In both cases B41 is guilty of illegal participation, a 15-yard, live-ball foul.

Injured Player

When a player is injured or apparently injured, including one who exhibits signs of a concussion or is bleeding, the referee should charge himself with a timeout so medical personnel may attend to the player (3-5-10).

Once this timeout is taken, the player must be replaced for at least one down. The player does not have to be replaced if the halftime or overtime intermission occurs, but may *not* remain in the game should his team subsequently request a timeout – no “buy back.” See Chapter 7 for more detail.

If such a player participates, he is charged with a live-ball foul for illegal participation (3-5-10a, 9-6-4b, 9.6.4D). Preventive officiating should be used to avoid this foul.

EXAMPLE 10-25: In the first period, the umpire stops the clock when he sees A25 hobbling. Within 20 seconds, A25 says he feels fine and wants to remain in the game. **RULING:** A25 *must be* replaced since the clock was stopped for him. Play should not be resumed until A25 leaves the field, but if he remains in the game and the officials don't recognize it until after the play, it would be illegal participation.

Additional Example: 10.

Deception

Using a player, replaced player or substitute in a substitution or pretended substitution to deceive opponents before the snap or free kick is illegal participation. It is not a foul to have 12 players in the huddle; however, when that occurs it is likely the replaced player did not depart immediately and thus a substitution infraction.

There are no restrictions regarding when a substitute may enter while the ball is dead as long as a Team A player is within the nine-yard marks before the snap and he does not violate any other rule provisions (9-6-4d and 9.6.4A-B).

EXAMPLE 10-26: Third and 10 at the B-15. The ball is on the right hash mark and Team A's formation has only 10 players and is spread to the left side. Just before the snap, A81 enters the field from the right sideline and takes a position between the nine-yard marks as right end. A81 goes downfield and catches a touchdown pass. **RULING:** Legal, provided he was set for a full second before the snap.

The rule is not intended to penalize a team unless there is intent to deceive. The official must judge whether deception was intended. The following example illustrates the “lonely end,” “hide-out,” or “sleeper” play this rule is designed to prohibit.

EXAMPLE 10-27: Second and 10 at the A-40. Two subs enter the game and three leave the huddle, one of the departing players stays on the field in front of his team bench and goes downfield to catch a touchdown pass. **RULING:** The 15-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot leaving Team A with second and 25 on the A-25.

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It is also a foul if a player lies on the ground to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap or free kick (9-6-4e).

Additional Examples: 1, 11, 12.

Disqualified Player

A disqualified player is a team member who is barred from further participation in a game (2-32-6). If a disqualified player re-enters, it is illegal participation (9-6-4f).

EXAMPLE 10-28: Early in the game A9 is ejected for fighting. He changes jerseys at halftime and participates in the first series of the third quarter. As he throws a touchdown pass, the referee recognizes him and throws a flag. **RULING:** The foul is illegal participation resulting in a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot. A9 is once again ejected.

In the preceding example, if the referee were to recognize the disqualified player before the snap, the foul should be called immediately and the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot.

Helmetless Player

A player whose helmet comes completely off is prohibited from continuing to participate beyond the immediate action in which he is engaged (9-6-4g).

If a player's helmet comes off and he quickly puts it back on he may not continue to participate in the play.

EXAMPLE 10-29: During a down B55's helmet comes off without a foul by Team A. He continues to chase the ball carrier and attempts to make the tackle. **RULING:** The ball remains live and the clock is stopped after the down ends. B55 fouled by continuing to play without a helmet and must leave the game for the next down.

See Chapter 7 for the associated timeout and Chapter 8 for fouls against a helmetless player.

Equipment Infractions

Players with improperly worn or missing equipment are required to be replaced for at least one down and cannot participate until they are legally equipped. See Chapter 7 for the associated timeout.

Table 10-2 summarizes the penalty enforcement for the various types of illegal participation fouls.

Enforcement	Illegal Participation
Previous Spot Fouls	12 players in formation at the snap (9-6-4c, 9.6 Cmt 1).
	Injured player not replaced for one down (9-6-4b).
	Simulating replacements to deceive (9-6-4d; 9.6.4A, B).
	Player lies on the ground (9-6-4e).
	Disqualified player participates (9-6-4f).
All-but-One Fouls	Entering substitute not on his team's side of the neutral zone at the snap participates (3-7-5, 9-6-4a, 3.7 Cmt 4).
	Team A or K player inadvertently goes out of bounds and returns (9-6-1, 9.6 Cmt 4).
	Player intentionally goes out of bounds and returns or touches the ball (9-6-2).
	Substitute enters the field during the down and participates (9-6-4a, 9.6 Cmt 2).
	Nonplayer hinders an opponent outside the field of play (9-6-3, 9.6 Cmt 3).
Succeeding Spot Fouls	Player whose helmet comes completely off continues to participate beyond the immediate action in which he is engaged (9-6-4g).
	Disqualified player re-enters and is noted before the snap (9-6-4f).

Table 10-2

II. Additional Examples

1. Team A huddles with nine players. Three substitutes enter the huddle which almost immediately breaks with 12 players. A45 runs to his sideline and leaves the field just before the snap. **RULING:** Legal. It is not a foul to break a huddle with 12 players unless deception is involved or a replaced player fails to leave within three seconds.
2. Team A has 11 players in the huddle when A32 enters the game. After about two seconds have elapsed, (a) the huddle breaks, or (b) A32 leaves the huddle and Team A breaks the huddle about a second later. **RULING:** In both cases, legal.
3. Fourth and 17 at the K-33. Team R has 12 men on the field during the punt which R30 catches at the R-34 and returns to midfield. **RULING:** Illegal participation by Team R, resulting in a 15-yard penalty from the previous spot (PSK does not apply because the foul occurred at the snap), but not an automatic first down. If the penalty is accepted, Team K will have the ball, fourth and two from the K-48.
4. Eligible A41 runs 10 yards downfield, accidentally steps on the sideline, and then turns to receive a forward pass. Just before the ball gets to A41, defender B42 jumps into him from behind and deflects the pass away before A41 touches it. **RULING:** Double foul; the penalties offset. A41 is guilty of illegal participation for going out of bounds and returning before a change of possession. B42 is guilty of pass interference.
5. Runner A21 fumbles near the sideline after advancing three yards. Before recovering the ball inbounds (a) A21, or (b) B53 accidentally stepped on the sideline. **RULING:** In (a), illegal participation on A21 (the spot of the foul is where he returned inbounds); in (b), B53's play is legal.
6. Tight end A92 runs a wide pattern and steps out of bounds but does not return inbounds. The pass is thrown to eligible A49. **RULING:** Legal play. A92 has not fouled since he did not return to the field of play.
7. A86 accidentally steps out of bounds while running a sideline pattern. He returns inbounds and A7 throws a pass well over A86's head. **RULING:** Illegal participation by A86.
8. Third and 10 at the B-40. A8's forward pass is intercepted by B32 on the B-20 and returned to midfield. A82 accidentally steps on the sideline at the B-30: (a) before, or (b) after the interception. **RULING:** Illegal participation in (a) as A82 went out of bounds while his team was restricted. Legal in (b), as there was a change of possession before A82 stepped on the sideline.
9. During A35's run, A75 throws a block immediately after accidentally stepping on the sideline. **RULING:** Illegal participation by A75. The foul occurred where A75 returned inbounds. If A75 is blocked out of bounds and returns to the field immediately, his play is legal.
10. Near the end of the third period, the line judge stops the clock when he sees A65 motionless on the ground. A65 merely had his wind knocked out and is escorted from the field. The clock is started on the ready and time for the period expires before the next snap. When the fourth period begins, the referee notices A65 in the huddle. **RULING:** A65 *must be* replaced for one down since the clock was stopped for him. The referee should remind Team A's coach of the rule. If A65 remains in the game, it is illegal participation.
11. During a down, A34 leaves the field and goes to his team area. Team A huddles before the next play with only 10 players. Substitute A35 enters the huddle, and A41 leaves the huddle as if leaving the game, but then sets up near his sideline for a hide-out pass. All 11 players were between the nine-yard marks after the ready-for-play and before the snap. **RULING:** Foul against Team A for simulating a replacement with the intent to deceive. The illegal participation penalty is 15 yards from the previous spot as the foul occurred with the snap.
12. Fourth and 10 at the R-15. Field goal kicker K12 enters the field as the twelfth player. K12 paces off the distance for the kicking spot, joins the huddle and then leaves the field when the huddle breaks. Team K runs a play from scrimmage and runs for a touchdown. **RULING:** Foul for using a simulated replacement to confuse opponents. The penalty is enforced from the previous spot; Team K's ball, fourth and 25 on the R-30.

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III. Review Test

(True or False)

1. If a player is injured and his team has fewer than 11 players, the game is immediately forfeited.
2. If a team on offense only has 10 players on the field, they need not have seven players on the line.
3. An entering substitute does not become a player for encroachment restrictions until he reaches his team's side of the neutral zone.
4. A team member entering the field to fill a player vacancy remains a substitute until he is on his team's side of the neutral zone.
5. A substitute becomes a player when he enters the huddle or is positioned in a formation.
6. Illegal substitution on a running play, which occurs simultaneously with the snap, is enforced from the previous spot.
7. If a replaced Team B player is attempting to leave the field at the snap and A scores a touchdown, the penalty may be enforced on the kickoff.
8. If substitute B42 enters the field as the 12th player during a down but does not participate or influence the play, it is a nonplayer foul.
9. It is a foul if A12 replaces A11 and A11 does not begin to leave the field until five seconds after A12 arrives in the huddle.
10. If a substitute enters the huddle, but the replaced player does not leave within three seconds, it is a dead-ball illegal participation foul.
11. It is a foul if the huddle breaks two seconds after A12 enters the huddle and before any player begins to leave the field.
12. During a dead ball, no more than two players from either team may enter the game unless there was a change of possession or a charged timeout.
13. A substitute who goes on the field, but is unable to complete the substitution prior to the ball becoming live, may return to his team box legally, provided he leaves the field on his team box side and is off the field when the ball is snapped.
14. A player may be withdrawn and reenter during the same dead ball interval if the opponents take a charged timeout.
15. If A81 is replaced by A82 following a down, he may not return during the same dead-ball interval, even if the period ends prior to the next down, or the penalty is accepted for a foul which occurred during the down.
16. It is illegal participation for a replaced player to leave the field during a down.
17. It is illegal substitution if a replaced player unsuccessfully attempts to leave the field prior to the snap, whether or not he affects the play.
18. If substitute B32 enters the field during a down, but does not influence the play, it is a nonplayer foul.
19. Illegal participation is enforced as a live-ball foul.
20. If a player is blocked out-of-bounds, he may come back inbounds and legally participate.
21. It is not a foul if potential punter K27 accidentally steps on the end line following the snap but is inbounds when he catches the high snap and then punts the ball.
22. If end A1 voluntarily goes out of bounds and immediately returns during the down, it is illegal participation.
23. If B44 steps on the sideline while covering receiver A86, it is a foul if B44 returns and intercepts the forward pass.
24. It is a foul if A84 accidentally steps out of bounds after B21 intercepts and A84 then returns to make the tackle.
25. If a player is blocked out of bounds by an opponent and returns inbounds at the first opportunity, he may legally participate.
26. If R28 accidentally goes out of bounds during a scrimmage kick and then returns and catches the punt, it is a foul for illegal participation.
27. During the down, it is illegal participation if any player intentionally goes out of bounds and does not return inbounds.

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28. If A88 voluntarily goes out-of-bounds and returns to block B41, it is illegal participation, a foul during the down and the "all-but-one" enforcement principle is used.
29. No player shall intentionally go out of bounds during a down and intentionally touch the ball.
30. If a substitute or replaced player influences the play, it is illegal participation.
31. If a team member who is entering to fill a player vacancy is on the opponent's side of the neutral zone at the snap, it is illegal participation if he touches the ball.
32. Illegal participation may be enforced as a nonplayer foul.
33. If a 12th player is in the defensive formation at the snap, the foul is illegal participation and is enforced from the succeeding spot.
34. It is illegal participation if a player is lying on the ground to deceive the opponents at or immediately before the snap or free kick.
35. The re-entry of a disqualified player is illegal participation.

Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|------------------|-----|---|----------------|
| 1. | F | 1-1-3 | 19. | T | 9-6 Pen |
| 2. | T | 1-1-3, 7-2-5a | 20. | T | 9-6-1 |
| 3. | T | 2-8, 2-32-15 | 21. | F | 9-6-1 |
| 4. | T | 2-32-15 | 22. | T | 9-6-1 |
| 5. | T | 2-32-15 | 23. | F | 9-6-1 |
| 6. | T | 10-4-2a | 24. | F | 9-6-1 |
| 7. | T | 8-2-2, 10-5-1f | 25. | T | 9-6-1 |
| 8. | T | 2-16-2f, 3-7-1 | 26. | F | 9-6-1 |
| 9. | T | 3-7-1 | 27. | F | 9-6-2 |
| 10. | F | 3-7-1 | 28. | T | 9-6-2, 9.6.1A |
| 11. | F | 3-7-1 | 29. | T | 9-6-2b |
| 12. | F | 3-7-1 | 30. | T | 9-6-3 |
| 13. | T | 3-7-2 | 31. | T | 2-32-15, 9-6-3 |
| 14. | T | 3-7-3 | 32. | F | 2-16-2f, 9-6-4 |
| 15. | F | 3-7-3 | 33. | F | 9-6-4c, 10-4-2 |
| 16. | F | 3-7-4, 9-6-4 | 34. | T | 9-6-4e |
| 17. | F | 3-7-4 Nt, 9-6-4a | 35. | T | 9-6-4f |
| 18. | T | 2-16-2f, 3-7-6 | | | |

CHAPTER 11 PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

I. Rules in Depth

Often you will hear the terms "foul" and "penalty" used interchangeably, but in fact they have quite different meanings. It is appropriate at the beginning of our discussion to distinguish between a **foul** and a **penalty**. A *foul* (2-16-1) is an action that is an infraction of the rules, while a *penalty* is the consequence of that action (2-16-5), involving either a yardage loss, a loss of a down/automatic first down, disqualification or perhaps a combination of the preceding.

So for instance, an official throws his flag when there is a foul. There may or may not be a penalty enforced, at the option of the offended team. Remember, fouls are penalized and penalties are enforced or administered.

Any penalty may be declined. This is a very important point, for the offended team is never required to accept the penalty for its opponent's foul. Without exception, the offended team *always* has the option to accept the result of the play - that is, the outcome if the foul had not occurred. Once the penalty choice is made, it cannot be revoked (10-1-1). See Additional Example 42.

The tradition has been the team captain gets to decide whether a penalty will be accepted or decline. Over the years, the role of captains has

been reduced and officials have consulted the head coach for that decision.

NEW IN 2020: Before the game, each head coach shall designate a representative to make such decisions (1-4-2).

Furthermore, we shall see some fouls may offset. It's also important to note that no foul causes loss of the ball (2-16-3).

Loss of down is the loss of the right to replay a down (2-7-2). Fouls that include a loss of down are discussed in a later section.

An **automatic first down** is the award of a new series. On scoring plays and tries the inclusion of an automatic first down in a penalty is of no consequence.

When a player commits a foul that results in disqualification, such as fighting, he must leave the game, even if the offended team declines the penalty or the fouls offset.

Classification of Fouls

The game is a series of dead-ball and live-ball intervals as depicted after an administrative stoppage in Figure 11-1.

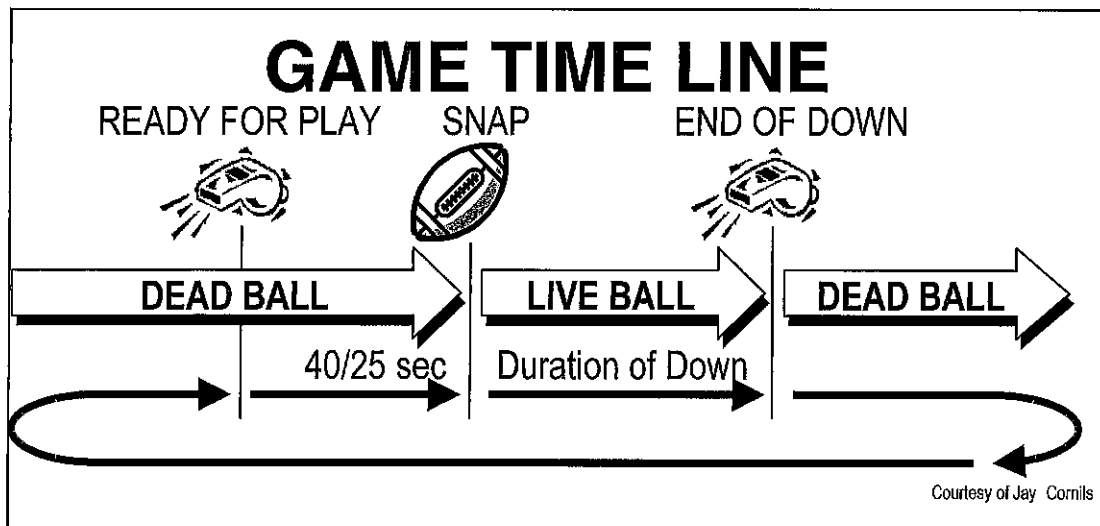


Figure 11-1

All fouls are either dead-ball fouls or live-ball fouls – depending obviously on the status of the ball when the foul occurs. Most live-ball fouls are

enforced under the all-but-one principle, but some are simultaneous with the snap, and others are treated as dead-ball fouls or have special

enforcement rules. Nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls may occur while the ball is either live or dead, but are treated as dead-ball fouls and the penalty is enforced from the succeeding spot. Personal fouls may also occur as live-ball or dead-ball fouls. The relationship between the types of

fouls and the status of the ball (live or dead) is depicted in Figure 11-2. Recognizing the type of foul and when it occurs is essential to proper enforcement. One must also understand the type of foul to determine whether the fouls offset or are part of a double or multiple foul.

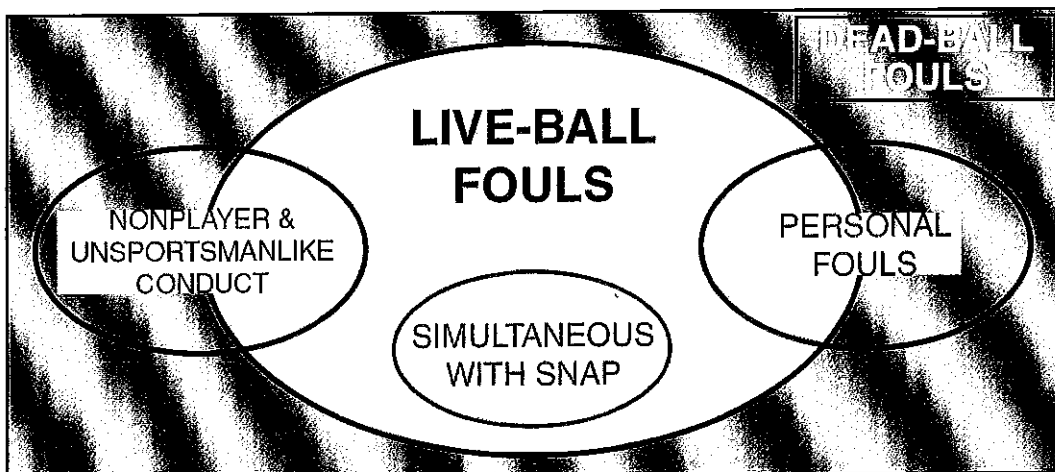


Figure 11-2

ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES

The **enforcement spot** is simply the point from which a penalty is enforced (2-41-2). Every penalty is enforced from one of the following spots: the previous spot, the spot of the foul, the succeeding spot, the spot where the run ends, or the post-scrimmage kick spot. These terms are fairly self-explanatory, but we will expand on them as we continue.

Live-Ball Fouls

A live-ball foul is simply a foul that occurs while the ball is live. As previously mentioned, some live-ball fouls are treated as dead-ball fouls. In the interest of simplicity, the term "live-ball foul" will be used to mean a live-ball foul enforced as a live-ball foul.

It's important to understand the majority of live-ball fouls are enforced using the all-but-one principle. However, some live-ball fouls occur simultaneous with the snap. Fouls simultaneous with the snap are simply acts that take place while the ball is dead, but which do not become a foul until the ball is snapped. The rationale is the act in question can be corrected up until the snap. These fouls are not enforced using the all-but-one principle, but instead are enforced from the previous spot (10-4-2a).

Most of these fouls can only be committed by the offense, but there are a few that the defense can commit. The following acts which, if not corrected, become fouls when the ball is snapped: (1) illegal formation or numbering, (2) illegal motion, and (3) illegal shift. Certain types of substitution infractions (Table 10-1), and illegal participation (Table 10-2) can also occur simultaneous with the snap.

The most frequently encountered foul which is simultaneous with the snap is illegal formation. This includes but is not limited to: Less than five players on the offensive line or more than four players in the backfield, a numbering violation, linemen locking legs other than with the snapper, or a member of Team A not being between the nine-yard marks after the ready-for-play signal and before the snap (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of these). The following examples illustrate.

EXAMPLE 11-1: Fourth and 10 at the B-20. Team A comes to the line with A49 at right tackle. Only four players on the line are numbered 50-79. A7 takes a direct hand-to-hand snap from the center. **RULING:** The numbering infraction is a foul at the snap, enforced from the previous spot.

The reason this is not a foul until the snap is made clear in the next example.

EXAMPLE 11-2: Same as the previous example, except before the snap, A7 shifts by dropping back 10 yards into a shotgun formation. He subsequently takes the long snap and throws a touchdown pass to A88. **RULING:** A legal play. At the snap, Team A was in a scrimmage kick formation and the numbering exception applies, even if there is no kick.

The underlying philosophy is some acts can be corrected before the snap, and are not a foul until the ball is snapped. The principle also applies to both illegal motion and illegal shifts.

Additional Examples: 1-3.

The All-but-One Principle

As previously mentioned, the majority of live-ball fouls are enforced under the all-but-one principle which is explained in Rule 10-6. Fouls which are simultaneous with the snap or free kick (previously discussed), and fouls with special enforcements (to be discussed later) are exceptions.

Why "All-but-One"?

There is often much mystery surrounding the all-but-one principle, but in fact it is really quite simple. The name comes from the following. Every foul can be classified as follows: it is either by the team in possession or by the team not in possession, and it occurs either behind or beyond the basic spot for that play. Two teams and two possible locations equal four categories of fouls.

If the foul is by the team *not in possession*, whether behind or beyond the basic spot or by the team *in possession beyond the basic spot*, the penalty is enforced from the **basic spot**. This is the "all" in the name: three classifications of fouls have their penalties enforced from the basic spot. The fourth is the remaining one--by the team in possession behind the basic spot. This is the "one," and the penalty is enforced from the **spot of the foul**.

That's all there is to it: three penalties enforced from the basic spot, and one from the spot of the foul. The following figure may help visualize the all-but-one principle.

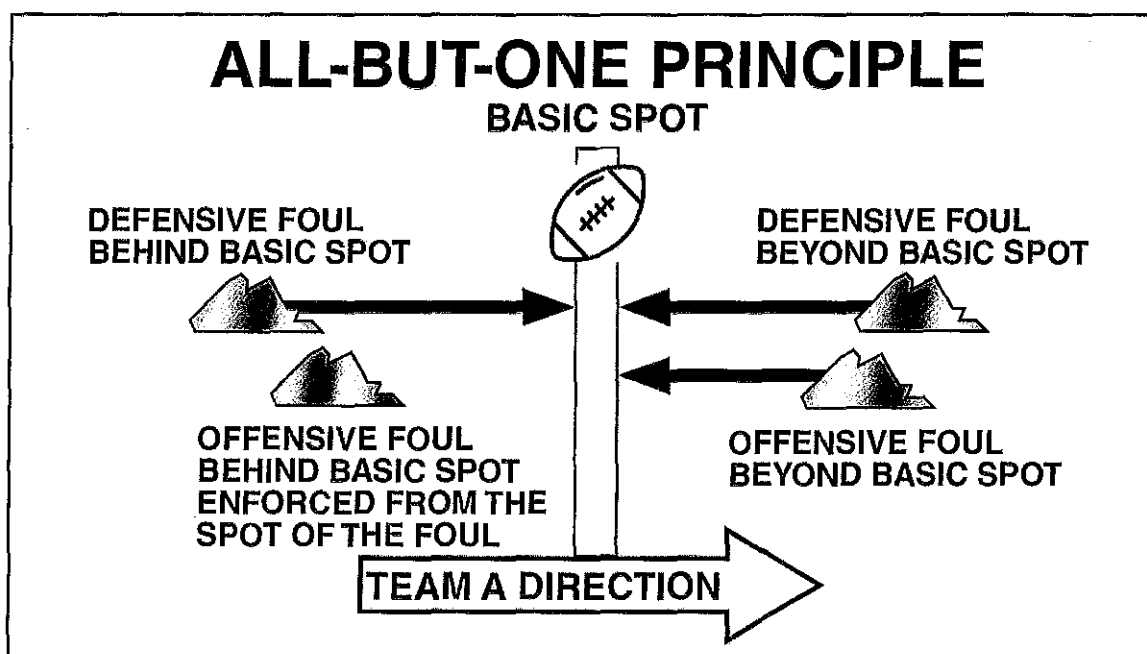


Figure 11-3

Basic Spot

To use the all-but-one principle, the concept of the basic spot must be understood. The basic spot serves as a benchmark reference for all-but-one enforcement and is determined by the type of play that occurs during the down (10-4-1). It is either the *end of the run*, the *previous spot* or the *post-scrimmage kick spot* (2-41-6, 2-41-7, 2-41-9, 10-4).

- The **end of the run** is the basic spot on running plays (2-41-1, 2-41-9, 10-4-4).
- The **previous spot** is the basic spot on loose-ball plays (2-41-1, 2-41-7, 10-4-2b).
- The **post-scrimmage kick spot** is the basic spot on plays which have post-scrimmage kick enforcement (2-41-6, 10-4-3).

The basic spot may, at the option of the offended team, be the succeeding spot for fouls by Team K (other than kick catch interference) on any legal free or scrimmage kick when Team K will not be next to put the ball in play (10-4-2 Exc).

Note the **spot of the foul** (2-41-8) is *never* a basic spot, even though it can be the spot from where the penalty is enforced.

A Run

It is extremely important to understand what a *run* is and to distinguish it from a *running play*. A **run** is when the ball is in player possession and can be all or part of a running play, or part of a loose-ball play.

It is worthwhile to elaborate on the end of the run. Since the run is when a player has possession of the ball, the "**spot where the run ends**" (2-41-9, 10-3-3), or simply "**the end of the run**," is the spot where the ball becomes dead, or where a player loses possession on a fumble or pass while beyond the neutral zone. Note that a handoff is not a spot where the run ends (10.4.4D). Also, the end of the run is the spot where possession is obtained when the momentum exception applies (10-3-3c).

Plays

Every live-ball foul occurs during either a loose-ball play or a running play. A **loose-ball play** (2-33-1, 10-3-1) is action during:

- A backward pass (including the snap), illegal kick or fumble made by Team A in or behind the neutral zone prior to a change of team possession;
- A legal forward pass;
- A free kick or scrimmage kick;
- The run or runs which precede any of the above.

The following three figures depict three different types of loose-ball plays: a forward pass (Figure 11-4), a scrimmage kick (Figure 11-5), and a fumble behind the neutral zone (Figure 11-6).

Please note all activity before the pass, kick, or fumble is part of one loose-ball play.

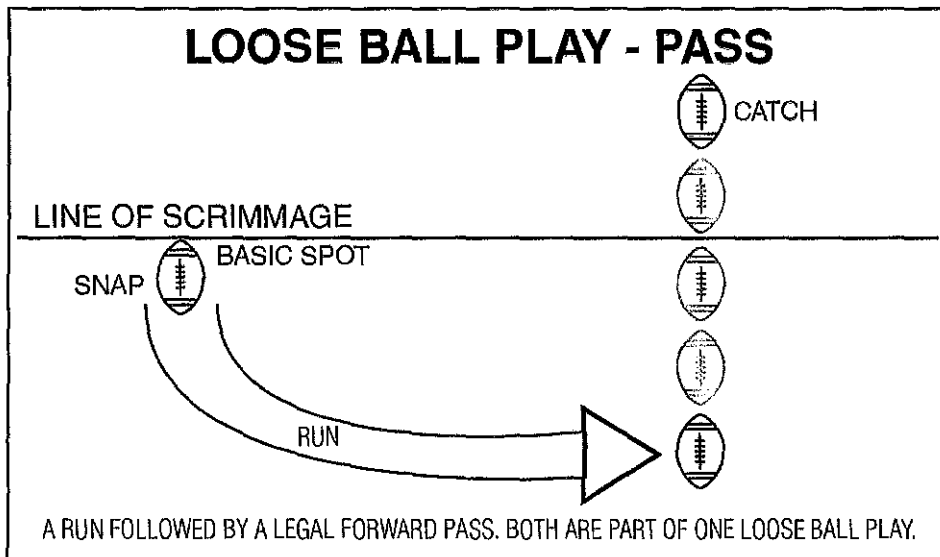


Figure 11-4

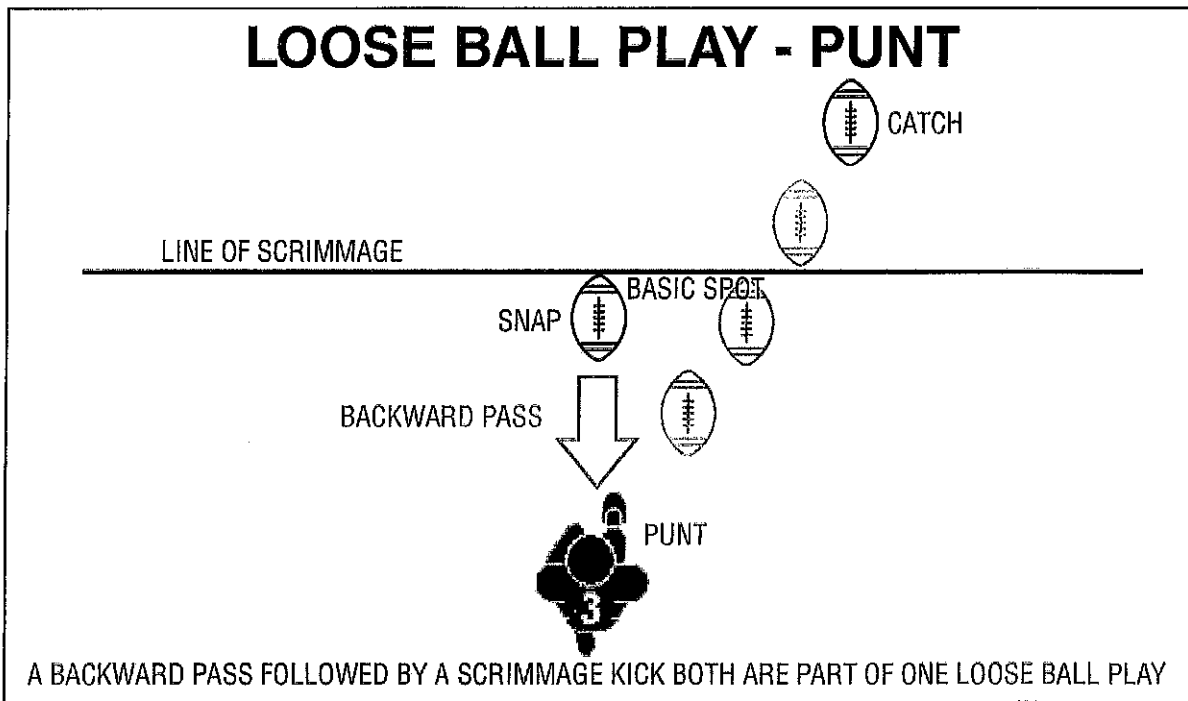


Figure 11-5

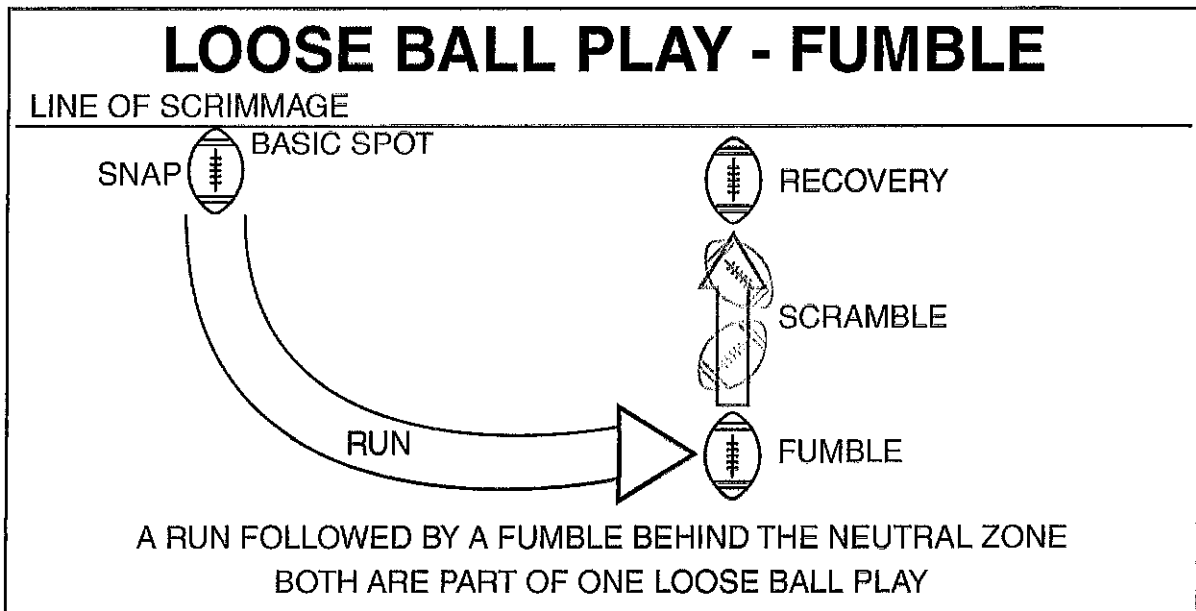


Figure 11-6

A **running play** (2-33-2 and 10-3-2) comprises all live ball action which is not included in a loose-ball play.

The simplest running play consists of one run: a player takes the snap and runs with the ball until he is tackled (Figure 11-7). It does not matter

whether the run ends beyond or behind the neutral zone. The run ends when he is tackled. Again note a handoff does not end a run (10.4.4D).

If a foul occurs during the run, the basic spot is the end of the run, which is the spot where the ball became dead.

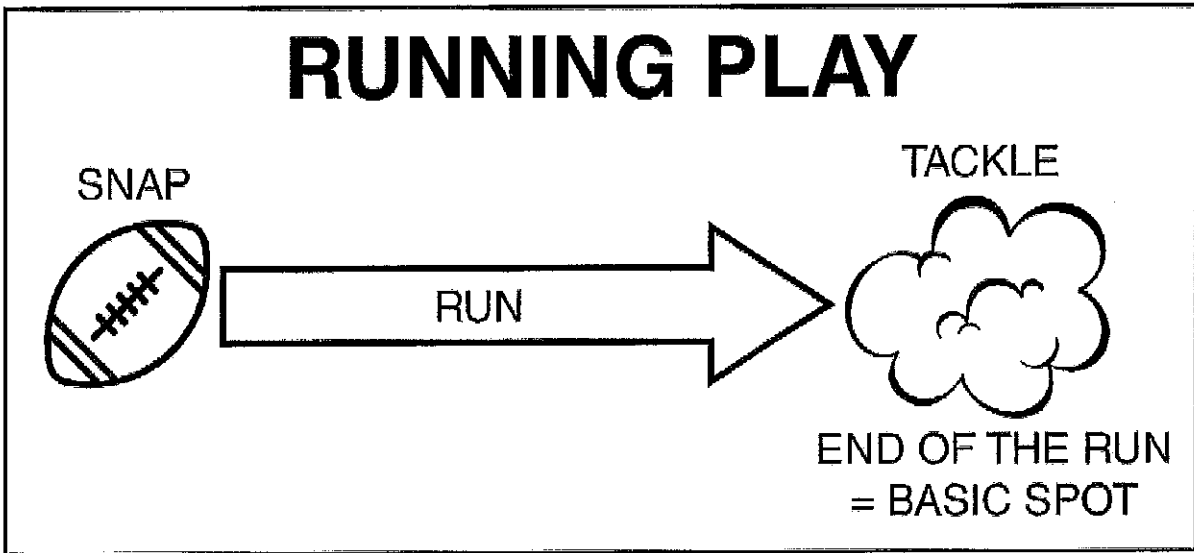


Figure 11-7

Any action that occurs after a run while the ball is loose beyond the neutral zone due to a fumble, a backward pass, an illegal kick or an illegal forward pass is also part of the related running play. The running play ends when player

possession is regained (which begins a new running play) or the ball becomes dead (Figure 11-8). If a foul occurs while the ball is loose, the basic spot is the end of the run, which is the spot where the ball carrier lost possession.

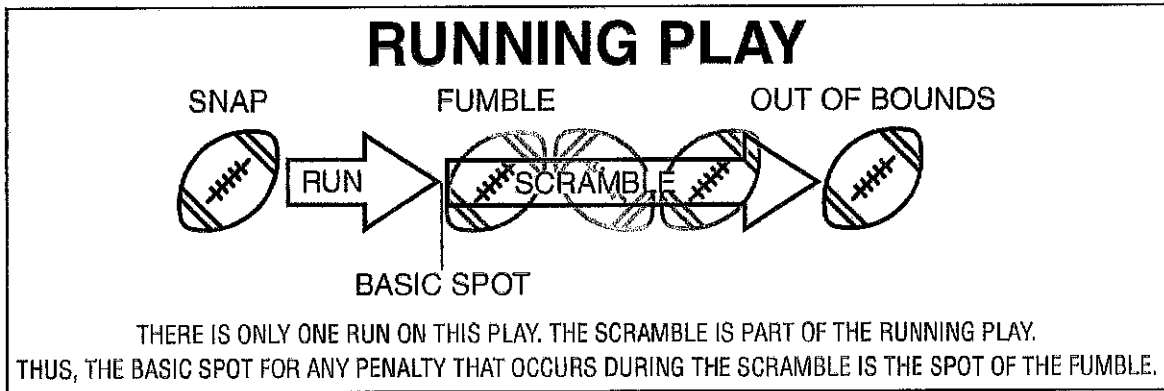


Figure 11-8

In other words, a running play comprises all the live ball action when the ball is in player possession except for the interval preceding a legal kick, a legal forward pass, or a backward pass, illegal kick or fumble made by Team A in or behind the neutral zone prior to a change of team possession. Those are part of a loose-ball play as previously explained.

From this it follows there can be more than one running play during a down. For example, one running play would involve a runner who advances beyond the line and fumbles the ball. This running play continues until the ball is recovered by a teammate who advances it. When the teammate gets possession, the first running play ends and the second begins (Figure 11-9).

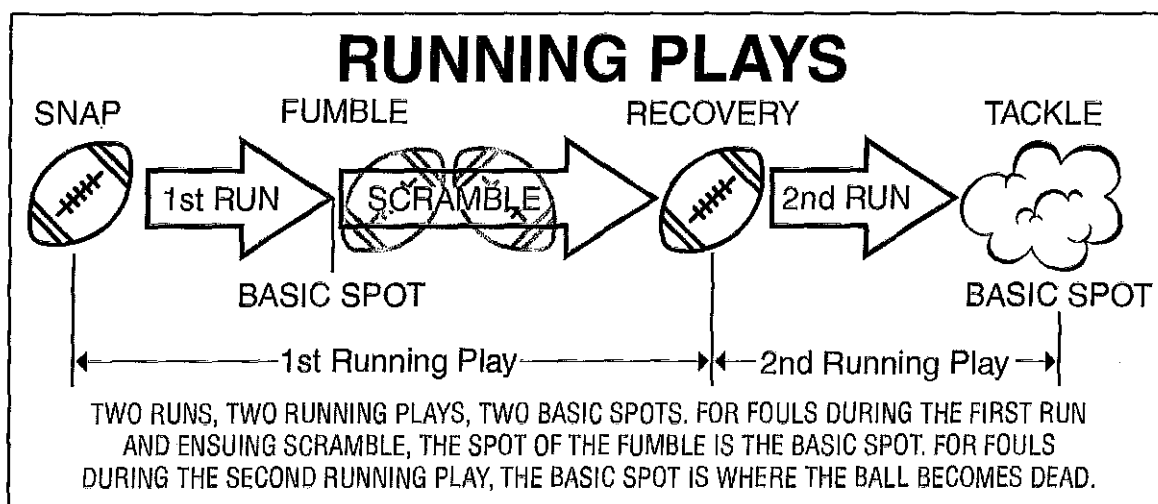


Figure 11-9

If while the ball is loose, a teammate of the fumbler fouls, the basic spot is the end of the first run, which is the spot where the ball carrier lost possession. If the foul occurs after the ball is recovered, the basic spot is the end of the second run, which is the spot where the ball becomes dead.

When a prone player recovers a loose ball, the recovery starts a run that ends immediately, an instantaneous run so to speak. An instantaneous run also occurs when a player catches a pass with a knee on the ground.

It is interesting to note that almost every play will end with a run. The only exceptions are incomplete passes and kicks that become dead out of bounds, in the end zone or because no one was in possession. Thus, a running play follows a change of possession. There is a more detailed discussion in a later section.

While there can only be one loose-ball play during a down, there can be multiple running plays as shown in the preceding diagram. There can also be a loose-ball play followed by one or more running plays during the same down. Please note the running play(s) must follow the loose-ball play. Any player possession *before* a fumble behind the line before team possession has changed, or before a legal pass or kick, is by definition part of the loose-ball play.

If a Team A player fouls before a pass ends, the basic spot is the previous spot. If the foul occurs after the ball is caught, the basic spot is the end of the run, which is the spot where the ball becomes dead. Figure 11-10 on the following page illustrates.

In order to properly apply the all-but-one principle, we must first determine if the foul occurred during a loose-ball play or a running play. Next, we must determine if the foul was by the team in possession behind the basic spot. That's all there is to it: Three enforcements from the basic spot, and one from the spot of the foul. Here are some examples.

EXAMPLE 11-3: Runner A33 is downed one yard beyond the neutral zone on a play during which B49 commits a personal foul (a) 10 yards downfield, or (b) behind the neutral zone. **RULING:** The foul occurs on a running play and the basic spot is the end of the run. In either (a) or (b), Team B is penalized 15 yards from the end of the run.

Please note as illustrated in the preceding example, when the foul is by the team not in possession, it does not matter where the foul occurs. The penalty is enforced from the basic spot.

Also, it does not matter where the run ends – behind or beyond the line. Fouls by the team not in possession are enforced from the end of the run.

EXAMPLE 11-4: Third and 25 at the A-20. A13 drops back to pass and scrambles. He is pulled to the ground by his face mask by B54 at the (a) A-15, or (b) A-25. **RULING:** It is a running play and the 15-yard penalty is enforced from the end of the run. In (a), it will be third and 15 at the A-30. In (b), it will be third and five at the A-40.

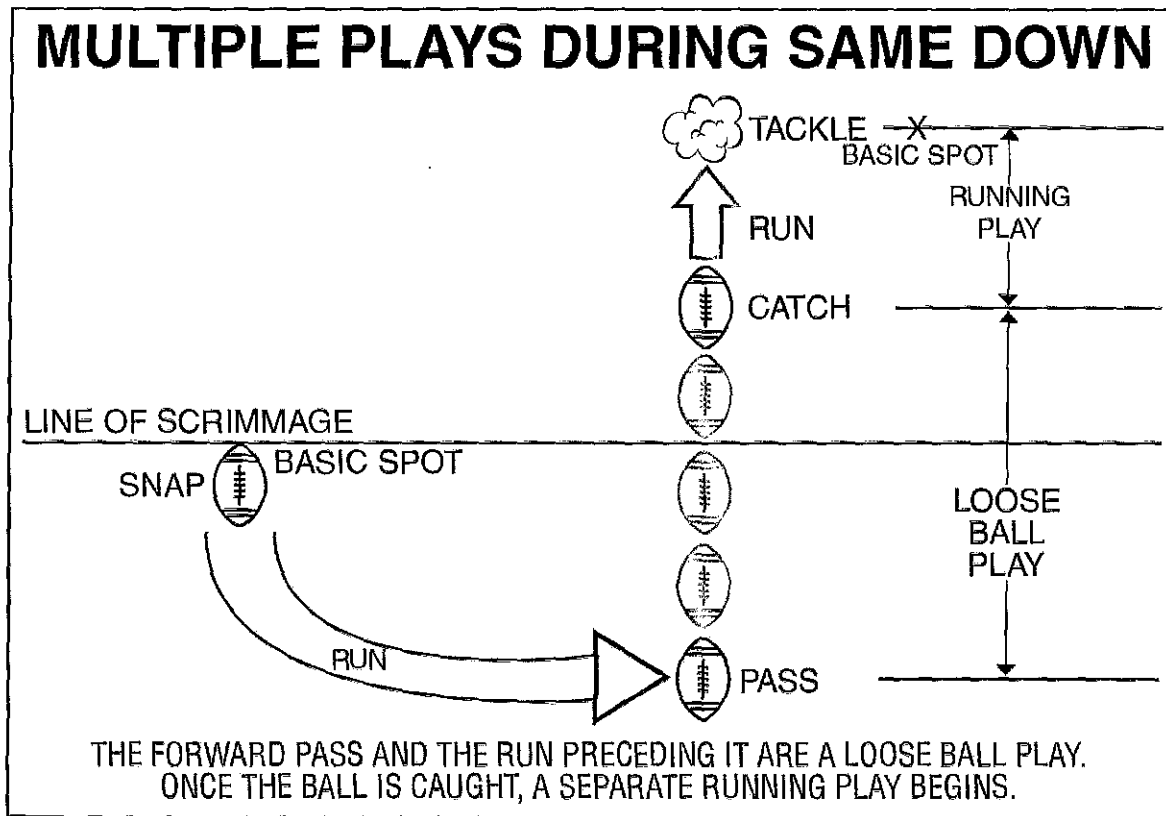


Figure 11-10

In the next two examples, the foul is by the team in possession, so where the foul occurs is of great significance.

EXAMPLE 11-5: A7 throws a legal forward pass that B29 intercepts and returns to the B-45 where he runs out of bounds. During the return, B68 clips at the B-38. **RULING:** The foul occurs on a running play and the basic spot is the end of the run. The foul is by the team in possession behind the basic spot, so the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul. Thus Team B is penalized 15 yards from the B-38 back to the B-23.

EXAMPLE 11-6: From a snap at the B-36, A25 loses yardage and is downed at the B-45. During the play A63 holds behind the line at the B-39. **RULING:** The foul occurs on a running play and the basic spot is the end of the run. The foul is by the team in possession beyond the basic spot, so the penalty is from the basic spot. Thus Team A is penalized 10 yards from the basic spot, which is the B-45.

The following two examples illustrate fouls by the team in possession on a loose-ball play.

EXAMPLE 11-7: On third down on a snap from the A-40, A7 throws a forward pass which is caught at the B-30. While the ball is in the air, A79 clips at the A-45. **RULING:** The foul occurs on a loose-ball play and the basic spot is the previous spot. The foul is by the team in possession beyond the basic spot. The penalty is enforced from the basic spot. If accepted by Team R, the penalty is enforced from the previous spot, back to the A-25.

If a similar scenario occurs on a kick play, the option to enforce the penalty from the succeeding spot applies. There is a further discussion of that option in a later section.

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EXAMPLE 11-8: Team K punts on fourth down with the ball snapped at the K-40. The punt rolls out of bounds at the R-37. While the ball is live, K79 clips at the R-30. **RULING:** The foul occurs on a loose-ball play and the basic spot is the previous spot. The foul is by the team in possession beyond the basic spot. Under all-but-one enforcement, the penalty is marked off from the basic spot which is the previous spot and the down would be replayed from the K-25. However, because Team K would not be next to snap the ball, Team R would likely have the penalty enforced from the dead-ball spot – the R-37. The result would be a first down for Team R at the K-48.

The next example clearly illustrates the difference between the two types of plays.

EXAMPLE 11-9: First and 10 at the A-10. A7 drops back into his end zone to pass and his face mask is pulled by B73. A7 (a) is downed in the end zone, or (b) fumbles and the ball goes out of bounds in the end zone. **RULING:** In (a), it is a running play and the 15-yard penalty is enforced from the goal line. Result: First and five at the A-15. In (b) it is a loose-ball play (see Figure 11-6) and the 15-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot. Result: First and 10 at the A-25.

When the all-but-one principle first became a part of the rules, it was sometimes interpreted the penalty should be enforced from the "place where it hurts them the most." Unfortunately, this mindless notion has persisted for many years. This bromide--powerful in its simplicity--is wrong as often as it is right. Nevertheless, many officials still cling to it as a security blanket. My advice is to forget it. Two examples illustrate why.

Look at Example 11-6. The runner loses yardage from Team B's 36 yard line back to Team B's 45 yard line, and his teammate clips behind the line, at Team B's 39 yard line. The "worst" spot to penalize from would be the end of the run, the 45 yard line; and that is exactly what is done. The penalty is enforced from Team B's 45 yard line, which is where it hurts Team A the most. Sounds like the theorem works, doesn't it?

In contrast, look at Example 11-3, the runner gains yardage and the defense fouls somewhere further beyond the neutral zone. If the penalty were to be enforced from where it hurts Team B the most, it would be stepped off from the spot of the foul. But it isn't--it is enforced from the end of the run, which is the basic spot on this play.

The point is this: it is better to learn the principle than to rely on some over-simplification that is misleading, and often just plain wrong.

Additional Examples: 4-9.

Dead-Ball Fouls

Accepted penalties for dead-ball fouls are always enforced unless the fouls cancel (more on that later). By Rule 10-1-2, the offended team could decline the penalty (any penalty can be declined), but the number of the next down or possession of the ball are not impacted, thus there is usually no reason to decline the distance.

Dead-ball fouls can occur during two distinct intervals: (1) Between the end of a down and the ready-for-play, and (2) Between the ready and the snap (or free kick). In the latter category, there are five fouls which can occur. If any of these fouls are committed, the ball remains dead, even if the snap is made before a whistle can be blown. The exclusively dead-ball fouls, all carry five-yard penalties and are: (1) false start, (2) snap infraction, (3) delay of game, (4) encroachment, and (5) free kick infraction. The false start is the most frequent dead-ball foul and is also the most frequent foul of any type.

Certain types of substitution infractions (see Chapter 10) and equipment infractions (see Chapter 12) are also dead-ball fouls. Personal fouls are another set of infractions which can occur as either a dead or live-ball foul or strictly as a dead-ball foul. Piling on or a late hit out of bounds are always dead-ball fouls. Fighting can be either type (see Chapter 8).

The general principle is that dead-ball fouls are enforced separately in the order of their occurrence. The penalty enforcement is separate from the enforcement for any live-ball fouls (10-1-3, 10-1-4). They are also enforced following offsetting live-ball fouls, but can never be part of a double or multiple foul (10-2-5).

Accepted penalties for dead-ball fouls are always enforced from the succeeding spot (10-4-5b). The succeeding spot is the spot where the ball will next be put into play, either by a snap or a free kick (2-41-10). A down is never replayed as a result of a dead-ball foul.

EXAMPLE 11-10: R23 returns a punt and is tackled at the K-40. After the play is over, R62 slugs K79 at the 50 yard line. **RULING:** The succeeding spot as a result of the punt return is the K-40, which is the enforcement spot. It is Team R's ball, first and 10, at the R-45. R62 is ejected. The clock starts on the snap.

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In many cases, the succeeding spot is simply the dead-ball spot, but can be different if the ball has been relocated by a penalty. Please see the section on "Multiple Fouls."

The succeeding spot enforcement for dead-ball fouls is one of the few rules for which there is no exception. This means it makes no difference where the dead-ball foul takes place--on the field, in the end zone, out of bounds. The penalty will be enforced from the succeeding spot.

As mentioned, it is possible for dead-ball fouls to cancel (as opposed to "offset"). When there are 15-yard penalties for dead-ball fouls or live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls committed by each team and prior to the penalty administration; each 15-yard foul will cancel a 15-yard foul on the other team. The penalty for any remaining 15-yard fouls will be enforced (10-2-5a, 10.2.5A-C, F).

EXAMPLE 11-11: Third and 10 at the B-40. A21 advances to the B-35 where he is downed. After the ball is dead, (a) B52 unnecessarily knocks down A77 and A73 retaliates with a hard shove, or (b) A56 unnecessarily knocks down B50 and B66 retaliates with a hard shove. **RULING:** The order of the fouls is not a factor. Because each foul was committed prior to the penalty administration, the fouls cancel. The next play will be fourth and five at the B-35; the same as if the fouls had not occurred.

The nature of the foul is not a factor; a noncontact foul can cancel a contact foul. The key is both fouls must carry 15-yard penalties. Both fouls must also occur before the penalty administration for the first foul is completed. That occurs when the referee gives his final signal for enforcement of the penalty.

Dead-ball fouls that occur simultaneously or fouls that the officials do not know the order in which the fouls occurred also cancel as long as there are an equal number of fouls by both teams. Whenever that happens, there are no distance penalties and the number of the down is the same as if the fouls had not occurred.

EXAMPLE 11-12: After a third down play, B56 and A22 begin to fight. After B56 disengages from A22, A43 strikes B56. **RULING:** There are two fouls on Team A and one foul on Team B, thus only one foul on Team A will be enforced. The next play will be fourth down. All three players are disqualified.

A five-yard penalty for a dead-ball foul will be enforced separately and in the order of occurrence

and does not cancel a five or 15-yard penalty (10-2-5b).

EXAMPLE 11-13: During a punt, Team K's coach is flagged for colliding with an official in the restricted area. R1 then gives a fair catch signal at the R-2 and advances the ball after the catch. **RULING:** There are two dead-ball fouls, but Team R's foul carries a five-yard penalty, thus the fouls do not cancel. The penalties are enforced in the order that the fouls occurred. Team K's penalty takes the ball out to the R-17 and Team R's penalty brings it back to the R-12.

If the foul takes place between the touchdown and the try (before the ready), the succeeding spot is the try. However, the offended team has the choice of having the penalty enforced either on the try or the succeeding kickoff. The penalty cannot carry over to an overtime period. Please see the section on "Scoring Plays."

EXAMPLE 11-14: After runner A26 crosses the goal line for a touchdown, B73 slugs A18. **RULING:** B73 is disqualified. The penalty may be enforced either on the try or the succeeding kickoff.

Officials must also be cognizant of fouls which can carry over from one period to the next, or to overtime. These situations are rare, but it is absolutely essential the penalties be correctly administered.

Any dead-ball foul that occurs after time for a period expires (and after any untimed down), is carried over to the succeeding spot in the next period, including an overtime period (3-3-6).

EXAMPLE 11-15: With five seconds remaining in the first half, A8 completes a pass to A82. Time expires during the down and B32 piles on after the play. **RULING:** The 15-yard penalty is enforced on the second-half kickoff.

These rules regarding dead-ball fouls also apply to live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls.

Additional Examples: 10-13.

Live-Ball Fouls Treated as Dead-Ball Fouls

The Rules Book does not use the phrase "live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls; however it is an accurate description of how nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls are treated. Even though those fouls may occur while the ball is alive, they are treated as dead-ball fouls. Unless the fouls

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cancel (see Additional Example 15), penalties for these fouls are enforced in the order of their occurrence, regardless of any live-ball fouls by either team, and they do not affect the result of the play during which they occur. Thus, for purposes of penalty enforcement, they are treated as if they had taken place while the ball was dead and are always penalized from the succeeding spot. Of course the offended team could decline the penalty, but only occasionally is there any reason to do so.

EXAMPLE 11-16: During a punt return, the Team R coach runs onto the field to protest an official's call. The ball carrier is tackled at the R-48. **RULING:** The foul by Team R's coach is a live-ball foul that is treated as a dead-ball foul. It will be Team R's ball following the 15-yard penalty, first and 10 at the R-33.

If an unsportsmanlike foul occurs during a scoring play, the score counts. One common example is a runner who has outdistanced the opposition and taunts his pursuers just before he crosses the goal line (9-5-1a). This is a live-ball unsportsmanlike foul, but it is treated as if it happened while the ball was dead: The touchdown counts and the penalty is enforced on the try or the succeeding kickoff (10-5-1f). The penalty cannot carry over to a succeeding overtime period.

Substitution situations are especially tricky. The crew must be careful to ascertain the type of foul since substitution infractions can occur as a dead-ball foul, or a foul simultaneous with the snap. It is also possible for the foul to be illegal participation. These infractions are discussed in Chapter 10.

EXAMPLE 11-17: First and goal at the B-9. B42 who is part of a goal line defense intends to replace B10. B42 comes onto the field at the last moment, and B10, (a) realizing he won't be able to reach his team's sideline before the snap, leaves the field over the end line, or (b) is running towards his sideline at the snap. In (c) B42 enters the field after the ball is snapped and doesn't draw any coverage or attempt to participate in the play. **RULING:** In (a), it is a dead-ball foul; the violation occurred before the snap. In (b), the foul is simultaneous with the snap. Since B10 was trying to get off, there was no infraction until the ball was snapped. In (c), B42 never became a player, thus it is a five-yard nonplayer foul that is enforced from the succeeding spot.

Additional Examples: 14, 15.

Multiple Fouls

A **multiple foul** is when there are two or more live-ball player fouls by the same team during the same down, the offended team must either decline the penalties for all of them, or select only one penalty to be enforced (2-16-2e, 10-2-4). The exceptions to this are nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls which are treated as dead-ball fouls.

If the same team commits both a live-ball foul during the down, and a dead-ball foul after the down, it is not a multiple foul. The penalties are administered separately and in the order the fouls occurred (10-1-3) and all fouls may be penalized (10-1-4) unless the fouls cancel (10-2-5a).

EXAMPLE 11-18: First and 10 at the B-45. A19 is illegally in motion at the snap. After the ball is dead, A56 and A72 both commit personal fouls. **RULING:** All three penalties will be enforced. The penalty for the illegal motion will move the ball to the 50 yard line. The penalty for the first dead-ball foul places the ball back at the A-35. The penalty for the second dead-ball foul then moves the ball back to the A-20, where it will be first down and 45.

The same applies if the fouls are by opposing teams. For instance, suppose a Team B player commits a five-yard face mask foul on a running play that ends at Team A's 40 yard line (the dead-ball spot), and then Team A commits a dead-ball personal foul. The face mask penalty for the live-ball foul moves the ball forward to Team A's 45 yard line which is an "interim" succeeding spot for enforcement of Team A's dead-ball penalty. That penalty then moves the ball back to Team A's 30 yard line, which becomes the next succeeding spot. So this is a case where the dead-ball spot and the succeeding spot are different. See the section entitled "Fouls between Downs and Series," for the impact of an interim succeeding spot on the award of a new series.

Thus, penalties for fouls by the same team are "stacked"; they are "netted" for fouls by opposing teams.

When both teams commit dead-ball fouls, that have five-yard penalties or a mixture of five and 15-yard penalties, enforcement can be confusing. Although the yardage is ordinarily netted, half-the-distance situations require extra attention.

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It is also possible for Team A to receive a first down even if the ball ends up at the spot where the play ended (dead-ball spot). If any interim succeeding spot is beyond the line-to-gain, a new series is awarded (5-2-5b). That is likely to occur when Team B's foul is enforced first.

The preceding scenarios are not common as there are only three dead-ball fouls with five-yard penalties: the second noncontact violation of the restricted area (9-8-1k and 9-8-3), delay of game (3-6-2 and 6-5-5) and a substitute enters the field during down, but does not participate (3-7-6).

Here is an example that illustrates some of the possibilities of live-ball and dead-ball fouls on the same play.

EXAMPLE 11-19: Fourth and 12 at the K-23. R75, the 12th player, does not get off the field before the snap (substitution infraction) and K2 punts. R23 makes a fair catch at the R-30, and then runs for several yards after making the catch, drawing a flag. **RULING:** Team K may accept or decline any combination of penalties for the live-ball foul and dead-ball fouls by Team R. Here are the options: (1) Decline both penalties; (2) Accept the substitution penalty and decline the delay penalty; (3) Accept both penalties: The penalty for the live-ball illegal substitution foul, enforced from the previous spot, would place the ball at the K-28, and then enforcement of the delay penalty places the ball at the K-33, where it will be fourth and two; (4) Decline the substitution penalty and accept the penalty for delay (which would be enforced from the dead-ball spot). This allows Team R to keep the ball first and 10 on the R-25.

Unless Team K wants to punt again or go for the fourth-and-two play from their 33 yard line, the last option is the most reasonable one. Note in options (3) and (4) the penalty for the dead-ball foul is enforced from the succeeding spot, which differs in the two situations.

Additional Examples: 3, 16.

Double Fouls

A **double foul** is when there are one or more live-ball fouls (other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike) committed by each team so that the penalties offset (2-16-2b). Double fouls can be tricky if there is a change of possession. If both teams commit fouls during the down and no possession change occurs, the fouls offset, and the down is simply replayed (10-2-1).

EXAMPLE 11-20: As A8 drops back into the pocket. B42 holds A88 at the line and A66 holds while pass blocking. **RULING:** The fouls offset and the down is replayed.

Note any number of fouls by one team offsets any number of fouls by the other team as long as they are all *live-ball* fouls.

EXAMPLE 11-21: At the snap Team A has five players in the backfield and A34 is illegally in motion, while B79 illegally uses his hands during the play. **RULING:** Although Team A has fouled twice, the fouls offset and the down is replayed.

It does not matter if the penalty distances are different.

EXAMPLE 11-22: At the snap Team A is illegally in motion, while B42 commits pass interference. **RULING:** Although one foul has a five-yard penalty and the other 15 yards, the fouls offset and the down is replayed.

Nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls are exempt from double fouls. Although they may occur while the ball is live, they are identical to dead-ball fouls for purposes of penalty enforcement. Thus, they are not offset by opponent's fouls.

EXAMPLE 11-23: B22 commits pass interference and the Team A coach is flagged for coming on to the field during the play. **RULING:** These fouls do not offset. Team A's foul is treated as a dead-ball foul, so both penalties are enforced. Team B is first penalized 15 yards for the pass interference foul, and then Team A is penalized 15 yards for the unsportsmanlike foul. If Team B's penalty takes the ball beyond the line-to-gain, Team A will start a new series, first and 10.

Change of Possession Fouls

As mentioned earlier, a running play follows a change of possession. Thus after a free kick, a scrimmage kick or the interception of a forward pass (all are loose-ball plays) as well as a fumble (the type of play depends on where the fumble takes place with regard to the neutral zone), a running play follows and penalty enforcement is the same as if the running play had begun with a snap.

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EXAMPLE 11-24: On third down on a snap from the A-40, A7 throws a forward pass which B42 intercepts at the B-30. During B42's runback, his facemask is twisted and turned by A60 at the B-45. B42 escapes the tackle and runs to the A-45 where he is finally brought down. **RULING:** The foul occurs on a running play and the basic spot is the end of the run. The foul is by the team not in possession, so the penalty is enforced from the basic spot – the A-45. The penalty will be accepted for a first down for Team B at the A-30.

Live-ball fouls by opponents do not always combine to make a double foul. A very important exception applies when a double foul occurs on a play where there is a change of possession - the "clean hands" rule (10-2-2). If there is a change of team possession during the down and the team that winds up with the football did not foul before they gained possession (i. e., their "hands were clean"), then they may keep the ball by declining their opponent's foul(s). The team not last in possession then has the opportunity to exercise their penalty option. Here are a couple of examples.

EXAMPLE 11-25: A23 is illegally in motion at the snap, and A12's pass is intercepted. B79 clips on the runback. **RULING:** Team B has the option of keeping the football by declining Team A's foul. Team A then has the option to accept or decline the penalty for the clipping foul.

EXAMPLE 11-26: B34 recovers Team A's fumble and returns the ball for 20 yards before being tackled by A73 who grasps B34's face mask. During B34's run B29 clips. **RULING:** Team B may decline Team A's foul to keep the football, and the penalty for B34's clip will be enforced.

Note in these examples whether or not Team A's foul occurs before or after the change of possession doesn't make any difference. It is the timing of Team B's foul that is critical because they are "the team in final possession." The following example illustrates.

EXAMPLE 11-27: At the snap, Team A is illegally in motion and B79 illegally uses his hands during his initial rush. A12's legal forward pass is intercepted by B23. During the return, B63 blocks below the waist. **RULING:** The fouls offset, and the down is replayed. Team B committed a foul (illegal use of hands) before gaining possession, so the clean hands exception does not apply.

Here is a rare situation where a team gets the ball with clean hands, but will allow the fouls to offset.

EXAMPLE 11-28: First and 10 on the B-30. Team A is in an illegal formation and A7's pass is intercepted in the end zone by B27. As B27 begins to run, B62 clips A89 in the end zone. B27 returns the ball for a touchdown. **RULING:** Team B, as the team last in possession, has the option of accepting or declining Team A's foul. Declining the penalty would result in a safety. Thus, Team B will accept the penalty for Team A's illegal formation and the fouls will offset, resulting in a replay of the down.

Once the team last in possession (usually Team B) declines the penalty on a double foul, the team not last in possession (usually Team A) now may either accept or decline the penalty for their opponent's foul (10-2-2). Please see Additional Example 22 for a situation where Team A is the team in final possession.

Here is an example when both teams will decline the opponent's penalty.

EXAMPLE 11-29: With Team A leading by three points and the clock running with three seconds remaining in the game, A12 muffs the snap. Team A had five players in the backfield at the snap. The ball (backward pass) is recovered by B56 who returns the ball for 10 yards before being tackled. During B56's run, B39 shoved an opponent in the back above the waist as time expired. **RULING:** Team B will decline the penalty for Team A's foul to keep the ball. Team A will then decline the penalty for B39's foul so the period is not extended.

Here's a situation that may appear to be a double foul, but is not.

EXAMPLE 11-30: On fourth down, Team A commits an illegal shift. Ball carrier A23 is stopped short of the line-to-gain and B76 piles on after the ball is dead. **RULING:** If Team B declines the penalty for Team A's illegal shift, they will be awarded a new series and will have first down and 10 following enforcement of the penalty for their dead-ball foul.

In this example, Team B takes over on downs and then fouls. Team B's dead-ball foul and Team A's live-ball foul cannot offset, since only live-ball fouls offset. The obvious choice for Team B is to

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decline the penalty for the illegal shift. If Team B accepted the penalty, Team A would retain possession of the ball as acceptance of the illegal shift-penalty would negate the change of possession on downs and then be awarded a new series when the penalty for Team B's dead-ball foul is enforced. This leads us directly into the topic of fouls after a series ends.

Penalty enforcement on plays where the ball changes hands can be a bit confusing, so the simple thing to keep in mind is this: if the penalty is accepted, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred (5-2-1). Here are some simple examples.

EXAMPLE 11-31: Team B illegally participates by having 12 players in the formation on a play in which Team A's forward pass is intercepted. **RULING:** Team A will want to accept the penalty since this allows them to keep the ball after enforcement of the penalty.

EXAMPLE 11-32: During a run by A46, his teammate blocks an opponent in the back. A46 subsequently fumbles further downfield and the ball is recovered and downed by B76. **RULING:** Team B will decline the penalty for Team A's illegal block and take the result of the play to keep the ball.

Additional Examples: 17-20.

Post-Scrimmage Kick (PSK) Fouls

Post-scrimmage kick enforcement allows the receiving team to retain possession of the ball after they have forced the opponents to punt, even though the receiving team commits certain fouls before possession actually changes (2-16-2h). A scrimmage kick is a loose-ball play, and ordinarily the basic spot for fouls during such a play is the previous spot. Under all-but-one enforcement, any foul that takes place while Team K is still in team possession of the ball, even though none of its players has possession, should be enforced from the previous spot.

Under post-scrimmage kick enforcement (10-4-3), this is not the case. The all-but-one principle is still used, but it is applied as if Team R were the team in possession. The basic spot is the post-scrimmage kick spot (usually the spot where the kick ends) and the spot of the foul must be

compared to that spot as if Team R were returning the ball.

Post-scrimmage kick rules apply *only* if all of the following conditions are met:

- (1) The foul is by Team R.
- (2) The foul (other than illegal substitution or illegal participation fouls that occur at the snap) occurs beyond the expanded neutral zone.
- (3) The foul takes place during the interval between the snap and the end of a scrimmage kick (not a try or successful field goal) that crosses the expanded neutral zone (Figure 11-11); and
- (4) Team R will next put the ball in play.

Here is a basic example.

EXAMPLE 11-33: After Team K snaps from the 50 yard line, R45 fields K2's punt at the R-14 and returns it to the R-35. While the kick is in flight beyond the expanded neutral zone, R62 clips at the R-20. **RULING:** This foul satisfies all the conditions for post-scrimmage kick enforcement. The basic spot is the end of the kick, the R-14. Since R62's foul occurs beyond the basic spot, the penalty is enforced from the basic spot. Team B is penalized half-the-distance to their goal line, from the R-14 to the R-7. Where R45's run ends is of no significance.

If the kick ends in Team R's end zone for a touchback, the 20 yard line is the basic spot (10-4-5d, 10.4.3C).

EXAMPLE 11-34: Team K's punt enters Team R's end zone. During the kick, R66 holds at the (a) R-12, or (b) R-28. **RULING:** Since the kick ends in the end zone, the R-20 is the basic spot for post-scrimmage kick enforcement. In (a), the foul occurs behind the basic spot, so the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul - the R-12 to the R-6. In (b), the foul occurs beyond the basic spot so the penalty is enforced from the basic spot - the R-20 - to the R-10. In either case, Team R begins their new series first and ten.

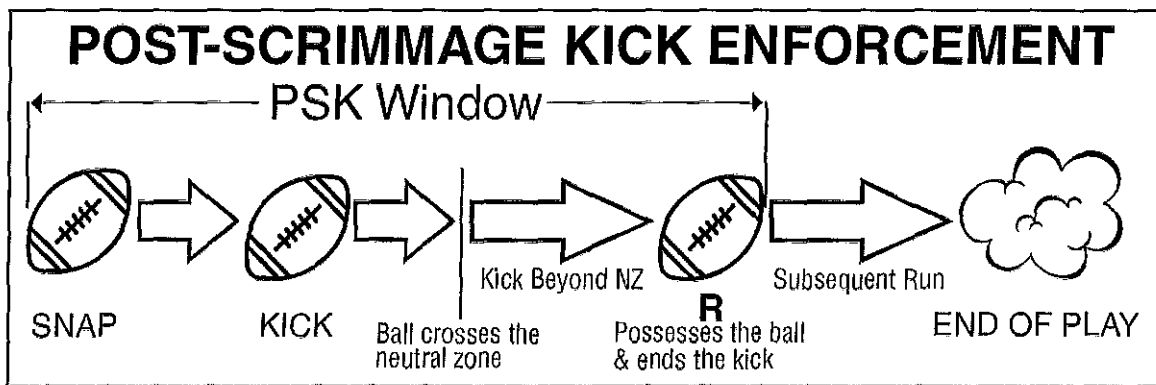


Figure 11-11

Here are examples of situations where post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply.

EXAMPLE 11-35: Team K's punt crosses the expanded neutral zone and is bouncing when R35 attempts to pick up the ball, but muffs it. 10 yards downfield from the previous spot, R24 holds K23. K87 then recovers the loose ball. **RULING:** Since Team K is in possession at the end of the down, post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply. Team K will decline the penalty and take the ball, first and 10, at the spot of K87's recovery, unless having the penalty enforced from the previous spot yields better field position.

EXAMPLE 11-36: R24 holds wide receiver K86 at the line while the punt is in the air. The kick is returned by R20 for a touchdown. **RULING:** Since the foul takes place in the expanded neutral zone, post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply. Team R is penalized 10 yards from the previous spot and the down is replayed.

The occurrence of first touching doesn't necessarily result in Team R being next to snap the ball. If the first touching is followed by a Team R foul, acceptance of the penalty will cancel the first touching privilege. That impacts whether or not post-scrimmage kick enforcement will apply.

EXAMPLE 11-37: Fourth and 10 at the K-30. K2's punt hits the ground and is first touched by K88 at the R-30. The ball continues rolling and is picked up by R42 at the R-25. R42 is subsequently hit and fumbles at the R-28. The loose ball is recovered by prone K84 at the R-26. During the kick, R66 holds at midfield. **RULING:** Team K cannot keep the ball at the R-26 because if they decline Team R's foul, Team R will take the ball at the spot of first touching. Post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply as Team K would be next to put the ball in play as a result of recovering Team R's fumble. Acceptance of the penalty cancels Team R's privilege to take the ball at the spot of first touching. Team R's foul is enforced from the previous spot resulting in a first down for Team K at the K-40 (6.2.5C).

If Team R fouls more than once, all their fouls before possession changes must have post-scrimmage kick enforcement for the exception to apply.

EXAMPLE 11-38: Fourth and 20 on the K-30. Team K's formation is illegal and R44 holds wide receiver K88 at the line while the punt is in the air. K2's shanked punt rolls out of bounds at the K-35. During the kick, R40 blocks K89 in the back at the K-40. **RULING:** The fouls offset because one of Team R's fouls did not have post-scrimmage kick enforcement.

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When both teams commit live-ball fouls on a scrimmage kick play, a double foul can be avoided if Team R's foul qualifies for post-scrimmage kick enforcement. In such a case, Team R may elect to keep the ball provided they decline the penalty for Team K's foul (10-2-3). Accordingly, post-scrimmage kick enforcement is also an exception to the "clean hands" rule. It is as if Team K relinquishes possession and Team R gains possession when the ball is kicked.

EXAMPLE 11-39: After Team K snaps from the 50 yard line using an illegal formation, R45 fields K2's punt at the R-14 and returns it to the R-35. While the kick is in flight beyond the expanded neutral zone, R62 clips at the R-20. **RULING:** Team R may keep the ball by declining the penalty for Team K's foul. The penalty for R62's foul will then be marked off via post-scrimmage kick enforcement. This foul satisfies all the necessary conditions. The basic spot is the end of the kick, the R-14. Since R62's foul occurs beyond the basic spot, the penalty is enforced from the basic spot. Team B is penalized half-the-distance to their goal line, from the R-14 to the R-7. Where R45's run ends is of no significance.

Field Goals

A successful field goal is another situation where post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply. This is because Team R is not in possession at the end of the down. As a reminder, this is specifically stated as an exception in the definition (2-16-2h). Fouls during scoring plays are discussed in a later section.

If the field goal attempt is unsuccessful, then post-scrimmage kick enforcement does apply, just like after any other scrimmage kick that crosses the expanded neutral zone.

EXAMPLE 11-40: Fourth and five at the R-24. While a field goal attempt is in flight, R46 twists K23's face mask at the R-16. The unsuccessful kick goes out of bounds (a) at the R-6, or (b) through Team R's end zone. **RULING:** The down cannot be replayed. If the penalty is accepted, the basic spot for PSK enforcement is the R-6 in (a), and the R-20 in (b). In (a), the penalty is enforced half-the-distance from the end of the kick (the R-6). It will be R's ball, first and 10 from the R-3. In (b) the penalty is enforced half-the-distance from the spot of the foul (the R-16). It will be Team R's ball, first and 10 from the R-8.

Post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply in overtime. See Chapter 7.

Additional Examples: 21-31.

Fouls by Team K on Kick Plays

Penalties for fouls by Team K (other than kick catch interference) on any legal free or scrimmage kick may be enforced at the previous spot with the down repeated, or; at the succeeding spot when Team K will not be next to put the ball in play (10-4-2 Exc).

The following example illustrates.

EXAMPLE 11-41: Receiver R27 catches the punt and returns it to the R-35 where he is tackled. Team K is flagged for (a) an illegal shift, or (b) holding. **RULING:** In either case, Team R may choose to have the down replayed following enforcement of the penalty from the previous spot or to have first down and 10 following enforcement of either penalty from the spot where R27 was tackled. The clock starts on the snap.

Succeeding spot enforcement is also discussed in Chapter 6.

The option for succeeding spot enforcement applies regardless of when the foul by Team K occurs during the kick down. In the preceding play, it does not matter whether the holding foul takes place before the kick or during the kick.

If the foul occurs after the change of possession, it will be during a running play and the all-but-one principle applies (see Example 11-24).

Here is an example where succeeding spot enforcement does not apply because Team K will be next to put the ball in play.

EXAMPLE 11-42: On fourth down from the K-22, punter K43 muffs the snap and, at the K-8, kicks the rolling ball through the end zone. **RULING:** The result of the play is a safety and Team K would next put the ball in play with a free kick from the A-20. If Team R accepts the penalty, Team K will replay fourth down after enforcement from the K-8 to the K-4.

The option also applies on field goal attempts. If the kick is successful, the penalty will be accepted from the previous spot to negate the score.

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EXAMPLE 11-43: Team K's field goal attempt with an illegal formation from the R-24 is unsuccessful and results in a touchback. **RULING:** Team R will choose to have the penalty for the illegal formation foul enforced from the succeeding spot. It will be R's ball, first and 10 at the R-25.

The option applies even if the penalty for the foul would be a safety if enforced from the previous spot; see Additional Example 33. Fouls during kick plays are also discussed in Chapter 6.

Additional Examples: 32-35.

Fouls between Downs and Series

When a foul occurs between downs, the number of the next down is the same as that established before the foul occurred, unless enforcement for a foul by Team B takes the ball on or beyond the line-to-gain (5-2-3).

EXAMPLE 11-44: Third and four at the B-35. Before the snap, B85 enters the neutral zone and contacts A65. **RULING:** The penalty for encroachment is enforced to the B-30 resulting in a new series for Team A.

When more than one dead-ball foul is enforced, a new series is awarded if any interim succeeding spot takes the ball on or beyond the line-to-gain.

EXAMPLE 11-45: Third and four at the B-35. Before the snap, B85 enters the neutral zone and contacts A65. A65, upset at the contact, shoves B85 to the ground. **RULING:** The penalty for encroachment is enforced first to the B-30 resulting in a new series for Team A. The personal foul against Team A is then administered leaving the ball at the B-45 where it is first and 10 for Team A.

Fouls that occur after a series ends can be confusing, especially with regard to which team is entitled to possession of the ball. 5-1-3 explains the specific acts which end a series and result in a new series and 5-2-5 explains when a series ends following a foul.

EXAMPLE 11-46: Fourth and two at the A-35. A11 takes the snap and fumbles the ball at the A-38, with the ball going out of bounds on the (a) A-40 or (b) A-30. Immediately after the ball goes out of bounds, Team A commits a personal foul.

RULING: In (a), it is Team A's ball, first and 10 at the A-25. The ball belongs to Team A at the out-of-bounds spot and that is enough for a first down, so they retain possession after the 15-yard penalty is enforced from the A-40. In (b), it is Team B's ball, first and 10 at the A-15 after the 15-yard penalty is enforced from the A-30. The ball also belongs to Team A at the out-of-bounds spot and Team B gains possession on downs. In either case, the clock starts on the snap.

If a dead-ball foul occurs after a series ends and before the ball is next declared ready for play, the penalty is enforced *before* the line-to-gain is established (5-3-1). Here is a basic example.

EXAMPLE 11-47: Fourth and seven at the B-35. A33 gains five yards and (a) B56 piles on, or (b) A88 commits a personal foul immediately after the ball is dead. **RULING:** In either case, Team B is awarded a new series. As soon as the fourth down play ended behind the line-to-gain without a live-ball foul, the ball belonged to Team B. The penalty is enforced and then the line-to-gain is established. It will be first and 10 for Team B, at the (a) B-15, or (b) B-45.

Also, when a new series is awarded after a foul is committed during a free kick down, or after a free kick down and before the ready, the penalty is enforced *before* the line-to-gain is established.

If the ball has already been declared ready for play and then a dead-ball foul occurs, the penalty will be enforced *after* the line-to-gain has been determined.

The easy way to remember the rule is this: If the ball has not been declared ready, complete all the penalties *then* set the chain.

In the next example, the timing of the foul with respect to the ready-for-play makes a difference.

EXAMPLE 11-48: Team A runs a play that gains a first down out of bounds. After the ball is dead and before the ball is spotted, B79 leaves the field via the wrong sideline or through the end zone. **RULING:** Substitution infraction; five-yard penalty against Team B. Team A's ball, first and 10.

Please note in the preceding example, if the foul occurred after the ready (the spotting of the ball) then it would be first and five.

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Loss of Down Fouls

As previously mentioned, loss of down is the loss of the right to replay a down (2-7-2). The penalty for three offensive fouls includes loss of down are:

- Illegal forward handing,
- Illegal forward pass, and
- Illegal touching of a forward pass.

In almost all situations, the loss of down aspect of a penalty will have no significance if the line-to-gain is reached after enforcement or following a change of possession (5-2-2c). In the latter case, Team B would start with a first down; no series can ever start on a down other than first. Here are examples of each of those situations.

If the illegal forward pass occurs after a change of possession, the loss of down aspect of the penalty would prevent an extension of the period (See Chapter 7).

EXAMPLE 11-49: On third and three, quarterback A17 runs beyond the line of scrimmage and, before being tackled, throws an incomplete forward pass. Before throwing the ball, he had gained nine yards. **RULING:** An illegal forward pass; a five yard penalty from the spot of the pass plus loss of down. Because the penalty leaves the ball beyond the line-to-gain, Team A will be awarded a first down. The loss of down provision does not apply.

EXAMPLE 11-50: A11 throws a pass which is intercepted by B21. B21 advances to the A-8 where he (a) throws an incomplete pass; (b) throws a pass to B2 in the end zone for an apparent touchdown; or (c) hands the ball forward to B2 who runs for apparent touchdown. **RULING:** In (a), (b) and (c), the accepted foul will result in B having the ball, first and 10 as the loss of down aspect of the penalty does not apply.

Additional Examples: 3, 42.

Special Enforcement Fouls

There are fouls that have special enforcement provisions and options for the offended team (10-5). These fouls are:

- Free kick out of bounds (Chapter 6);
- Kick catching interference (Chapter 6);

- Unfair acts (Chapter 8);
- Roughing the passer (Chapter 5);
- Fouls on scoring plays (Chapter 11).
- Fouls by Team K on kick plays (Chapter 11).

The Clock

When a penalty is accepted with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team has the option to start the game clock on the snap (3-4-7). See Chapter 7 for a detailed discussion.

Half-the-Distance Enforcement

No penalty may take the ball closer than half the distance to the offending team's goal line from the enforcement spot (10-1-5).

EXAMPLE 11-51: First and 10 at the A-20. A42 gains four yards to the A-24 and during the run A79 holds at the A-18. **RULING:** The holding foul carries a 10 yard penalty. The all-but-one enforcement is from the A-18, so Team A is penalized half-the-distance, leaving the ball at the A-9.

EXAMPLE 11-52: On a long punt return B29 returns the ball to the A-12 where he is tackled by A28 who grasps and twists the face mask. **RULING:** Team B will have the ball, first and goal at the A-6, following the half-the-distance enforcement from the end of the run.

Additional Examples: 11, 24, 26.

End Zone Enforcement

Under the all-but-one principle, when the run ends in the field of play the basic spot is the end of the run. When the run ends behind the goal line, penalty enforcement is determined by the final result of the play. There are three possible situations. The final result is:

- a safety;
- a touchback;
- neither a safety nor a touchback.

When the result of the play is a safety, the goal line is the enforcement spot for fouls by the opponents of the team defending that goal (10-5-2).

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EXAMPLE 11-53: Punt receiver R19 catches the ball at the R-9, circles back into the end zone, and is tackled there. During R19's run, K64 commits a personal foul, either in the field of play or in the end zone. **RULING:** Since the run ended behind the goal line, Team K is penalized 15 yards from the goal line. Team R will put the ball in play at the R-15, first and 10.

EXAMPLE 11-54: Second and 15 at the A-5. A6 drops back to pass, and is sacked five yards deep in the end zone by B87 who makes the tackle by twisting A6's face mask. **RULING:** The 15-yard penalty is enforced from the goal line. It will be second and five from the A-15.

Keep in mind this applies only to fouls by the *defensive* team. If the team in possession fouls, then the only possible result is a safety since the basic spot is the end of the run, which is in the end zone.

If the final result of the play is a touchback, the basic spot is the succeeding spot, typically the 20 yard line. The all-but-one principle applies, so all fouls, except those committed by the team in possession inside their 20 yard line, are enforced from the 20 yard line. Fouls committed by the team in possession behind the 20 yard line (basic spot) are enforced from the spot of the foul.

The phrase "final result of the play is a touchback" means the ball becomes dead in the end zone, and the foul occurs after Team B intercepts or recovers there, or Team A regains possession in their end zone following a new force by their opponent (10-4-5d; 8.5.1D, E; 10.4.5H, I).

EXAMPLE 11-55: B27 intercepts A7's pass in Team B's end zone. B27 tries to advance, but is tackled in the end zone before leaving it. While B27 was running with the ball, A64 grabbed B27's face mask in the end zone. The penalty is accepted. **RULING:** The penalty is enforced from the B-20 (basic spot), because the final result of the play is a touchback. It will be first and 10 for Team B from the B-35.

EXAMPLE 11-56: B24 intercepts A10's pass in Team B's end zone. B24 tries to advance, but is tackled in the end zone before leaving it. During B24's run, B92 illegally blocked below the waist (a) in Team B's end zone, or (b) on the B-4. **RULING:** The basic spot is the B-20 because the final result of the play is a touchback. All-but-one enforcement applies: All fouls are enforced from the B-20

except fouls committed by the team in possession behind the B-20 which are enforced from the spot of the foul. Result: In (a), a safety because enforcement is from Team B's end zone; in (b), Team B's ball on the B-2, enforced half-the-distance from the B-4.

EXAMPLE 11-57: Third and 10 at the A-4. A21 fumbles on the A-4. The ball is motionless on the A-3 when B26 muffs the ball into Team A's end zone. The ball is recovered there by A89 who begins to run but is tackled in the end zone by the face mask. **RULING:** B26's muff is a new force, which caused the ball to enter Team A's end zone. Therefore, the final result of the play is a touchback, with Team B's face mask foul enforced from the basic spot: First and 10 for Team A on the A-35.

This rule does not apply if the foul occurs before a change of possession or any other act which results in a touchback. Here are two examples.

EXAMPLE 11-58: A9 takes a shotgun snap from the A-12. B90 breaks through the line and knocks the ball out of A9's hand at the A-7. Both players are trying to recover the nearly still ball when B90 bats it from the A-2 into the end zone where A9 falls on it. **RULING:** The foul occurred before the change of possession in the end zone. This rule does not apply. Team A may accept the penalty which is enforced from the previous spot or let the touchback stand.

EXAMPLE 11-59: B24 intercepts A8's pass in Team B's end zone. While the pass was in flight, B33 roughed A8. The penalty is accepted. **RULING:** The foul occurred before the change of possession in the end zone. This rule does not apply. Team A will accept the penalty which is enforced from the previous spot with an automatic first down and will retain the ball.

If the run ends in the end zone without the ball being declared dead there or the ball is fumbled in the end zone and subsequently recovered in the field of play, or goes out of bounds between the goal lines, then the final result of the play is neither a touchback nor a safety.

Without a change of possession, when the run ends in the end zone, penalties are enforced under the all-but-one principle.

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EXAMPLE 11-60: Third and 10 at the A-6. A10 retreats into his end zone to pass. While scrambling, he fumbles there. The fumble is subsequently recovered in the field of play by Team A, or goes out of bounds between the goal lines. During A10's run, or while the ball is loose after the fumble (a) A55 blocks below the waist at the A-10, or (b) B42 commits a personal foul. **RULING:** This is a loose-ball play and the basic spot is the previous spot. There cannot be a safety unless Team A fouls in their end zone. In (a), the foul is enforced from the basic spot, half-the-distance to the A-3 where it will be third and 13. Team B could also decline the penalty to make it fourth down. In (b), the 15-yard penalty is also enforced from the basic spot. It will be first and 10 for Team A at the A-21.

When the run ends in the end zone after a change of possession, the basic spot is determined based on the force that put the ball in end zone.

The basic spot is the 20-yard line for fouls by the opponent of the team in possession at the time of the foul when the opponent is responsible for forcing the ball across the goal line of the team in possession, and the run ends in the end zone and is followed by a loose ball, regardless of where the loose ball becomes dead (10-4-6).

Also, the basic spot is the goal line for fouls during running plays by the opponent of the team in possession at the time of the foul when the team in possession is responsible for forcing the ball across its own goal line, and the related run ends in the end zone (10-4-7).

This is quite a mouthful, but what it really means is that when there is a foul on a running play in which the final result is neither a touchback nor a safety, the penalty is enforced the same as if the play had ended when the run related to the foul ended.

A running play with the ball becoming loose in the end zone can only occur after a change of possession. If there is no change of possession, such a play will be a loose-ball play because the end zone will always be behind the neutral zone. See Example 11-9.

The following play demonstrates a situation where the opponents of the team in possession are responsible for the force. This play would have resulted in a touchback if the play had ended when the related run ended (10.4.6A, B).

EXAMPLE 11-61: B45 intercepts a pass in his end zone and fumbles there while attempting to advance. The fumble is subsequently recovered in the field of play, or goes out of bounds between the goal lines, at the B-4. During B45's run, or while the ball is loose after the fumble (a) A35 commits a personal foul, or (b) B50 blocks below the waist at the B-10. **RULING:** Because the related run ended in Team B's end zone and the opponents of the team in possession were responsible for the force, the basic spot is the B-20. In (a), the 15-yard penalty is enforced from the basic spot – the B-20. It will be a first down for Team B at the B-35. In (b), the spot of the foul is behind the basic spot, thus the penalty would be enforced from the spot of the foul – the B-10. Half-the-distance applies, so it will be first and 10 for Team B on the B-5. Note that if Team A recovers B45's fumble, they will likely decline the penalty for B50's foul in (b) and accept the result of the play instead.

The next play demonstrates a situation where the team in possession is responsible for the force. This play would have resulted in a safety if the play had ended when the related run ended (10.4.7).

EXAMPLE 11-62: B21 intercepts A7's pass at his the B-6. B21 retreats into his own end zone and fumbles there while attempting to advance. The fumble is subsequently recovered in the field of play, or goes out of bounds between the goal lines, at the B-4. During B21's run, or while the ball is loose after the fumble (a) A55 commits a personal foul, or (b) B70 blocks below the waist at the B-10. **RULING:** Because the related run ended in Team B's end zone and the team in possession was responsible for the force, the basic spot is Team B's goal line. In (a), Team B will accept the penalty, which results in first and 10 for Team B from the B-15. In (b), the basic spot (the goal line) is behind the spot of the foul, thus the penalty results in a safety. Note that if Team A recovers B21's fumble, they might decline the penalty for B70's foul in (b) and accept the result of the play instead.

Table 11-1 summarizes enforcement of fouls when the run or related run ends in the end zone.

When the momentum exception applies (see Chapter 9), the end of the run is the spot where the kick ends or the pass was caught (10-3-3c). Penalties are enforced under the all-but-one principle (10.4.4E Cmt).

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	Final Result of the Play is:			
	Safety	Touchback	Neither	
			No Change of Possession	Change of Possession
Basic Spot	Goal Line	20 Yard Line	Previous Spot	Same as if play ended when related run ends.

Table 11-1

EXAMPLE 11-63: B47 intercepts a pass on the B-3 and his momentum carries him into the end zone where he is downed. After the interception, and before the ball becomes dead (a) A56 holds in Team B's end zone, (b) A68 holds at the B-5, or (c) B52 holds in the end zone. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), if the penalty is accepted for Team A's foul, it will be first and 10 for Team B at the B-13 since the penalty will be enforced from where B47 gained possession of the ball. In (c), it is a safety since the foul was by the team in possession in the end zone.

Additional Example: 36.

Scoring Plays

Live-ball fouls by the opponents of the scoring team on plays where a touchdown or field goal is scored may be carried over either to the succeeding spot or the succeeding kickoff (8-2-2, 8-4-3).

EXAMPLE 11-64: On a play where A3 throws a touchdown pass. B22 is flagged for (a) a live-ball substitution infraction, (b) holding, (c) pass interference, or (d) roughing the passer. **RULING:** In all cases, the touchdown is accepted and the penalty may be enforced either on the try or the succeeding kickoff.

It is important to note that once the choice is made, it cannot be revoked, See Additional Example 42.

The option to enforce a penalty on either the try or succeeding kickoff also applies to dead-ball fouls by either team that occur after the touchdown and before the initial ready-for-play signal on the try (8-2-5, 10-5-1f).

EXAMPLE 11-65: After crossing the goal line on a touchdown run, A22 is unnecessarily tackled by B46. **RULING:** The penalty for the dead-ball foul may be enforced either on the try or the succeeding kickoff.

Nonplayer or unsportsmanlike fouls (live-ball fouls enforced as dead-ball fouls) by either team that occur during the play may also be enforced on either the try or the subsequent kickoff (10-5-1f).

EXAMPLE 11-66: A89 catches a pass and runs the last five yards to the goal line backwards while pointing his finger at the defender. **RULING:** Although the foul occurred while the ball was live, it is an unsportsmanlike foul which is penalized as a dead-ball foul. The touchdown counts and the penalty may be enforced either on the try or the succeeding kickoff.

The carry-over spot has been specified as the "succeeding" kickoff. This allows a penalty to be carried over from the end of the first half to the beginning of the second half.

Any foul that occurs before a change of possession on a non-kick play cannot carry over (8-2-3).

EXAMPLE 11-67: Third and 10 at the A-30. A67 holds at the A-25 as A12's pass is intercepted by B23 and returned for a touchdown. **RULING:** Team B will accept the touchdown. The penalty for the hold will be declined; it cannot be enforced as it occurred before the change of possession.

On a kick play that results in a touchdown, Team K fouls (other than kick catch interference) can be enforced at the succeeding spot (the try) when K will not be next to put the ball in play (10-4-2 Exc).

EXAMPLE 11-68: Fourth and six at the K-35. R39 fields K11's punt at the R-30 and returns it for an apparent touchdown. (a) During the kick, or, (b), during the return, K65 clips R62. **RULING:** In (a) the penalty may be enforced only on the try which is the succeeding spot per 10-4-2 Exc – the foul occurred *before* the change of possession. In (b) the penalty may be enforced on either the try or the subsequent kickoff per 8-2-3 – the foul occurred *after* the change of possession.

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Despite the carry-over provision, there are rare situations where it would be advantageous to decline the penalty. Here is one.

EXAMPLE 11-69: Third and 15 at the A-10. Team B trails by nine points late in the fourth quarter. A67 holds in the end zone as A12's pass is intercepted by B23 and returned for a touchdown. **RULING:** Team B may accept the touchdown, but Team B will then have to kick off to Team A, most likely reducing the time available for the second score needed to win. A better choice might be accepting the penalty of a safety. Team B is likely to get the ball when Team A kicks off from the A-20 and only trail by seven points.

If Team R fouls during a successful field goal, Team K may accept the score, and have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot on the next kickoff or overtime period, or choose to take the points off the board and replay the down following enforcement from the previous spot. Post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply because Team K would be next to put the ball in play.

Dead-ball fouls committed by either team after the touchdown and before the ready-for-play on the try are enforced either on the try or the succeeding kickoff. Fouls committed after the ready and before the snap on the try are enforced on the try. They cannot carry over to the succeeding kickoff.

One live-ball foul from a touchdown play and one live-ball foul from the try can be carried over to the succeeding kickoff.

EXAMPLE 11-70: During A21's touchdown run B52 grasps but does twist A21's face mask. Team A opts to have B52's penalty enforced on the succeeding kickoff. During the two-point try attempt, B3 is flagged for roughing the passer. **RULING:** Both penalties for the live-ball fouls can be carried over to the kickoff.

Additional Examples: 14, 37-43.

The Try

The try is a one-down reward for scoring a touchdown. By and large, the rules of play are the same as for any other scrimmage down. However, since the play following the try is a kickoff (or an overtime series) and not a scrimmage down, penalty enforcement is somewhat different than during the rest of the game.

When Team B fouls during a successful kick try (8-3-5, 10-5-1d), Team A has the option of declining the score and replaying the try after the penalty is enforced, or keeping the score with enforcement from the succeeding spot. This rule was adopted in the interest of safety. There were cases of roughing the kicker and/or holder on a try as the defenders made an all-out effort to block the kick. Also, the possibility of a "free shot" on a two point try has been eliminated.

EXAMPLE 11-71: Team K's kick try is successful. Team R (a) commits a substitution infraction, or (b) roughs the kicker. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), Team K could elect to go for two points after Team R is penalized, or it could keep the point and have the penalty enforced on the kickoff or in a succeeding overtime period.

If Team B fouls during a successful two-point try, the option to replay the try obviously will not be selected and the penalty will be carried over to be enforced from the succeeding spot (8-3-5b).

EXAMPLE 11-72: On a two-point try, B73 roughs quarterback A7 as he completes a touchdown pass. **RULING:** The try is successful and Team A will kick off from the opponent's 45 yard line after the 15-yard penalty is enforced.

If Team B fouls during an unsuccessful try, the try will be replayed (8-3-6b).

If Team A fouls during a successful try, undoubtedly Team B will accept the penalty and replay the down. However, if the penalty for Team A's foul includes loss of down (8-3-4), the try is over, any score is nullified, and the down is not replayed. This is true whether the try is successful or unsuccessful. The penalty for such a foul does not carry over.

EXAMPLE 11-73: On a try, quarterback A12 sweeps right, crosses the neutral zone, and hands the ball forward to A41 who carries the ball into the end zone for an apparent score. **RULING:** Team B will accept the penalty, nullifying the score. Since the penalty for handing the ball forward beyond the neutral zone includes loss of down, the try ends and the distance penalty is not enforced.

If both teams foul, the fouls offset and the down is replayed (8-3-7). The offense may choose to snap anywhere between the hash marks (8-3-8).

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EXAMPLE 11-74: On a try B79 illegally uses his hands and A37 is illegally in motion. B38 intercepts A21's forward pass. **RULING:** The fouls offset and the down is replayed.

Table 11-2 summarizes fouls during a try.
Additional Examples: 26, 44, 45.

Foul by	Try is			
	Successful		Unsuccessful	
	Kick (1 pt)	Pass/Run (2 pts)	Kick (1 pt)	Pass/Run (2 pts)
Team A (8-3-6)	Replay unless loss of down foul		Penalty Obviously Declined	
Team B (8-3-5)	Accept score with carry-over penalty or replay for 2-points	Accept score with carry over Penalty	Replay (Distance penalty may be declined)	

Table 11-2

After The Try

Penalties for dead-ball fouls that occur after the try is over are enforced from the succeeding spot on the kickoff or to begin an overtime series.

EXAMPLE 11-75: Quarterback A8 sneaks the ball across Team B's goal line for a successful two-point try and B1 piles on after the ball is dead. **RULING:** The 15-yard penalty is enforced from the succeeding spot and Team A will kick off from the B-45.

However, if there is a live-ball foul that would cause the try to be replayed, penalties for dead-ball fouls committed after the try are enforced on the replay of the try. In the following two examples, enforcement of the penalty for the live-ball foul means that the down is replayed, so the penalty for the dead-ball foul is enforced on the replay.

EXAMPLE 11-76: R73 illegally uses his hands in the neutral zone on the try. R82 blocks the kick attempt, recovers the ball, and carries it across Team K's goal line. After the ball is dead, K45 slugs an opponent. **RULING:** The ball was dead when the kick was blocked. Both penalties will be enforced and the try replayed. Team R is penalized half-the-distance from the previous spot for illegal use of hands, and then Team K is penalized 15 yards for the personal foul. The replay of the try will thus be at the R-16½. K45 is disqualified.

EXAMPLE 11-77: Team A is illegally in motion on the try and ball carrier A34 runs for an apparent score. After the ball is dead (a) A75 grasps and twists B62's face mask, or (b) B42 hits A34 late. **RULING:** Both penalties are enforced. In (a), the try is replayed from the B-23. In (b), replay the try from the B-4.

In the following example, there is no reason to replay the try.

EXAMPLE 11-78: Team K's try kick is unsuccessful. After the ball is dead, either team commits a foul. **RULING:** The penalty for the dead-ball foul is enforced on the kickoff.

Summary: Carry-Over Penalties

The following penalties may carry over **only to the try or the succeeding kickoff**. They cannot carry over from regulation play to overtime, nor can they carry over within an overtime period (since there are no kickoffs in overtime):

- Penalties for fouls, excluding nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls, by the non-scoring team during a play that ends in a touchdown (8-2-2, 8-2-3), unless the foul occurred before a change of possession.
- Penalties for nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls, by either team during a play that ends in a touchdown (8-2-4).

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- Penalties for dead-ball fouls by either team during or after a play that ends in a touchdown and before the initial ready-for-play signal for the try (8-2-5).
- Penalties for live-ball fouls by Team R during a successful field goal (8-4-3b). Team K may choose to accept the penalty and replay the down or they may elect to have the penalty carry over.

The following penalties may carry over to the succeeding kickoff, or to an overtime period, or to the next series within an overtime period:

- Penalties for fouls by Team B during a successful try (8-3-5b). Team A may choose to accept the penalty and replay the try or they may elect to have the penalty carry over.
- Penalties for live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls committed during the try by Team B, or for dead-ball fouls following the try. However, if the try is replayed due to a penalty for a live-ball foul, then the penalty for the dead-ball foul, or for a live-ball foul treated as a dead-ball foul, is also enforced on the replay of the try (10-4-5b).
- Penalties for live-ball fouls by Team R treated as dead-ball fouls during a successful field goal, or for dead-ball fouls following a successful field goal (10-4-5b).
- Penalties for fouls by Team K (other than kick catch interference) on any free or scrimmage kick when Team K will not be next to put the ball in play (10-4-2 Exc).

You may find the following chart helpful.

Carry-Over Penalties

Play	Penalty is for	Can be enforced on/in		
		Try	Succeeding KO	Overtime
Touchdown (8-2-4)	Live-ball Foul % #	Yes	Yes	No
Touchdown (8-2-5)	Dead-ball Foul Before Try	Yes	Yes	No
Try (8-3-5b)	Live-Ball Foul #	Yes	Yes	Yes
Try (10-4-5b)	Dead-ball Foul After Try *	NA	Yes	Yes
Field Goal (8-4-3)	Live-ball Foul Dead-ball Foul After Field Goal #	NA	Yes	Yes

Table 11-3

- % Foul must occur after any change of possession unless nonplayer or unsportsmanlike.
- * Does not apply if try is replayed.
- # Includes nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls (live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls).

II. Additional Examples

1. Team A lines up in a standard "T" formation. Back A38 goes into motion (no false start) toward the line of scrimmage. He recognizes his error before the snap and changes his direction so that he is no longer moving toward the line. **RULING:** There is no foul because A38's motion was legal at the snap.

2. After the ball is declared ready for play, backs A22 and A32 simultaneously go in motion and stop. Before one second elapses, back A44 goes in motion parallel to his end line. The ball is snapped while A44 continues in motion. **RULING:** An illegal shift. The one-second requirement was not satisfied. However, if A44 were to stop for one second before the snap while all his teammates were motionless, the foul would be avoided. Thus, this is a live-ball foul.

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3. At the snap, A45 is lined up in "no-man's-land." As the play develops, he goes 10 yards downfield, catches a legal forward pass, and is tackled for a 14 yard gain. **RULING:** A45 has committed three different live-ball fouls: illegal formation, ineligible receiver downfield, and illegal touching. All carry five-yard penalties, but Team B will accept the penalty for illegal touching since it includes loss of down.

4. A22 gains five yards to the A-27 and during the run B30 is flagged for slugging A35 at the A-33. **RULING:** B30 is ejected. Team B is penalized 15 yards from the A-27, the end of the run, which is the basic spot.

5. Fourth and five on the A-35. A33 gains six yards, but A69 holds at the A-40. **RULING:** Since the play resulted in a first down, the penalty will be accepted. It is enforced from the spot of the foul and results in fourth and 10 on the A-30.

6. Team R's receiver catches the punt at the R-28. On the return he loses yardage to the R-19 where he is tackled. During the return, R72 clips at the R-18. **RULING:** Team R's foul occurred behind the basic spot (the end of the run). The spot where the kick ends is irrelevant because the foul occurred during the subsequent run. It will be first and 10 for Team B from the B-9.

7. During a play where a legal forward pass crosses the neutral zone, snapper A58 holds B74 behind the neutral zone either (a) before, or (b) during the pass. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), penalize Team A 10 yards from the spot of the foul.

8. During a play where a legal forward pass crosses the neutral zone, defensive back B38 holds A84 beyond the neutral zone either (a) during, or (b) after the pass is completed. **RULING:** In (a), the foul occurs during a loose-ball play and, if accepted, the penalty will be enforced from the previous spot. In (b), the foul occurs during the running play which follows the loose-ball play. The penalty will obviously be accepted since it is enforced 10 yards from the end of the run.

9. Team K is in a scrimmage kick formation, fourth and five, at the K-40. K54 snaps the ball to K5. Immediately after releasing the ball, K54 is blocked by nose guard R60. K5 muffs the snap, recovers and advances the ball to midfield. **RULING:** Although the down ended with a running

play, the foul occurred during a loose-ball play - the snap. If the penalty for roughing the snapper is accepted, it will be enforced 15 yards from the previous spot with an automatic first down.

10. Third and 25 on the B-45. A21 runs to the B-40 and is downed there. B28 piles on. **RULING:** The foul occurred when the ball was dead. The down counts and Team A will have fourth and five on the B-25. The penalty does not take the ball beyond the line-to-gain and does not include an automatic first down.

11. Second and goal on the B-10. A32 advances to the B-8. After he is down, B42 piles on. **RULING:** Half-the distance enforcement results in a four-yard penalty, so it will be third and goal on the B-4. The penalty does not include an automatic first down.

12. R35 makes a fair catch of a punt at the R-42 and runs five yards with the ball. R69 then commits a personal foul. **RULING:** Both dead-ball fouls occurred after the series ended and before the ball was declared ready for play. Both penalties are enforced in the order of their occurrence, before the line-to-gain is established. The penalty for R35's delay of game foul places the ball at the R-37 and R69's penalty moves it back to the R-22, where it will be first down and 10.

13. Second and eight at the A-32. A49 gains five yards to the A-37. After the ball is dead, B79 piles on. After the referee gives the final signal for the penalty for B79's late hit, A89 taunts B79 over his foul. **RULING:** Because A89's foul occurred after the penalty for B79's foul was administered, the fouls do not cancel. Both penalties are enforced in the order the fouls occurred. It will be first down and 10 for Team A at the A-37.

14. A87 catches a pass and runs toward the goal line while high-stepping. When he gets to the B-5 he throws the ball to the ground and raises his arms exclaiming "Hallelujah." The ball rolls out of bounds at the B-1. **RULING:** The high-stepping and spiking the ball, in isolation, are separate fouls. However, because A87's action is continuous, they are treated as one unsportsmanlike act. Although the foul occurred while the ball was live, it is a non-contact, unsportsmanlike foul which is penalized as a dead-ball foul. The penalty is enforced from the dead-ball spot.

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15. First and 10 at the A-15. During A28's long run which ends at the B-10, the line judge must run around Team A's coach in the restricted area at the 50 yard line. The coach is flagged for his team's third violation of the restricted area. After the ball is dead, B57 piles on. **RULING:** The fouls cancel. Although one foul did not involve contact and the other did, the fouls cancel because both carry 15-yard penalties and the second foul occurred before the penalty administration for the first foul was completed.

16. First and 10 at the A-20. A24 advances to the A-25 where he fumbles. A32 recovers and advances to the B-40 where he is downed. While the ball was loose following A24's fumble, B55 held A86, and during A32's run, B42 grasped but did not twist A32's face mask. **RULING:** This is a multiple foul and Team A can accept either penalty or decline both. B55's foul would be enforced 10 yards from the end of A24's run. B42's foul would be enforced five yards from the end of A32's run. The latter will be accepted resulting in first and 10 for Team A at the B-35.

17. A12 throws an interception on a play where A23 is illegally in motion at the snap. During the runback, B79 clips A24 at the B-40 and B66 holds A76 at the B-30. **RULING:** Team B has the option of keeping the football by declining Team A's foul. The team not last in possession, Team A, can then choose which of Team B's fouls to accept (or they may decline both). They will choose the 10-yard penalty for holding since that leaves the ball at the B-20, while the 15-yard clipping penalty would leave the ball at the B-25.

18. Second and 10 at the A-20. A8's pass is intercepted by B22 on the A-40 and returned to the A-30. During B22's runback, B56 illegally blocked below the waist at the A-33. While the pass was in flight (a) A72 was flagged for holding, or (b) B81 was flagged for a personal foul. **RULING:** In (a), Team B may retain possession only if they decline the penalty for A72's foul. If Team B does not decline that penalty, the fouls offset and the down is replayed from the A-20. Assuming Team B wants to keep the ball, it would be first and 10 from the A-48. In (b), since B81 fouled before the change of possession, the penalty for his foul will be enforced 15 yards to the A-35, first and 10 for Team A.

19. Second and eight on the B-40. A10's pass is intercepted by B23 at the B-20. After the interception and during the return B55 blocks A88 in the back at the B-30. At the A-45, A78 grabs and twists B23's facemask. Then B23 fumbles the ball. A32 recovers the ball at the A-40. **RULING:** Team A did not regain possession with clean hands so the fouls offset and the down is replayed.

20. Second and 10 on the A-35. A7's pass is intercepted by B33 on the B-40. During the subsequent running play, both teams commit live-ball fouls. B33 fumbles and the ball is recovered by (a) B40, or (b) A70. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the foul by the team last gaining possession is prior to the fumble. Neither team can decline the other team's foul to keep the ball. The down must be replayed.

21. Fourth and 10 at the K-30. While K6's punt is in flight beyond the line, R44 blocks K80 in the back at midfield. R40 catches the kick at the R-32 and is tackled by K53 who grasps his face mask. **RULING:** Since Team R's foul has post-scrimmage kick enforcement, they may keep the ball by declining the penalty for Team K's foul. The penalty for R44's foul will then be marked off from the basic spot which is where the kick ended – the R-32. The foul is enforced 10 yards from that spot, resulting in first and 10 for Team R at the R-22. If Team R chooses to accept the penalty for Team K's face mask foul, the result is a double foul and fourth down is replayed.

22. Fourth and 10 at the K-40. Team K is in an illegal formation at the snap. While K23's punt is in flight beyond the line, R29 holds K88 at midfield. R43 catches the kick at the R-25 and returns it for a touchdown. During the return, R58 blocks K28 in the back at the R-35. **RULING:** Team R may keep the ball by declining the penalty for Team K's foul. Team K will then have a choice of either of Team R's fouls. Even though R58's block in the back at the R-35 is further downfield than R29's hold at midfield, enforcement of the holding penalty will result in the most advantageous field position for Team K. That is because the hold is a post-scrimmage kick foul and the enforcement spot would be where the kick ended – the R-25. That penalty would be enforced 10 yards from that spot, resulting in first and 10 for Team R at the R-15. If Team R chooses to accept the penalty for Team K's illegal formation, the result is a double foul and fourth down is replayed.

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23. Fourth and 20 at the K-40. R19 catches Team K's punt in his end zone. During the kick R63 blocks below the waist at the R-25. **RULING:** The ball is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line. The foul has post-scrimmage kick enforcement and the basic spot is the R-20. After enforcement it will be Team R's ball, first and 10 on the R-10.

24. After Team K snaps from the K-40, R25 fields K16's punt at the R-24 and returns it to the R-35. While the kick is in flight beyond the expanded neutral zone, R72 clips at the R-20. **RULING:** This foul satisfies all the conditions for post-scrimmage kick enforcement. The basic spot is the end of the kick, the R-24. Since R72's foul occurs behind the basic spot, the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul. Team B is penalized half-the-distance to their goal line, from the R-20 to the R-10.

25. A kick try is wide. While the ball is in the air, R22 pulls an opponent's face mask in the end zone. **RULING:** Post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply on a try. The penalty will be accepted and the try will be replayed after the penalty is enforced half-the-distance to the R-1½.

26. During the first series in an overtime period, a field goal attempt by K4 from the R-20 is partially blocked. While the ball is rolling toward the end zone, R52 clips K28 at the R-1 in an effort to get the ball. **RULING:** Post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply in overtime. The penalty is enforced from the previous spot.

27. Fourth and 10 at the K-40. The snap is high and over K2's head. K2 retrieves the ball, maneuvers to evade several tacklers, and punts the ball on the run. The line drive punt goes out of bounds at midfield. While K2 is running around, R34 holds K86 five yards downfield. **RULING:** Although the foul occurred before the kick, post-scrimmage kick enforcement applies. The penalty will be accepted resulting in first and 10 for Team R at the R-40.

28. Fourth and five at the K-25. R31 is in position to catch K15's punt at the R-40, but K42 interferes. After the kick lands on the R-42, R22 muffs the ball at the R-38. R63 then holds K43 at the R-36 to prevent him from recovering the ball. K54 recovers the ball at the R-39 and advances for an apparent TD. **RULING:** The ball is dead when K54 recovers the kick at the R-39. Since Team K is in possession at the end of the down, post-scrimmage kick enforcement does

not apply. Because both teams fouled and there was no change of team possession during the down, it is a double foul and fourth down is replayed.

29. Fourth and 10 at the K-35. At the snap, K23 is illegally in motion. K11 then punts. While the kick is airborne well beyond the line, R55 illegally blocks below the waist at the K-45. The kick is caught by R20 on the R-30 and advanced to the R-40. **RULING:** Team R has the choice of allowing the fouls to offset and the down replayed or keeping the ball by declining Team K's foul and having their foul enforced under post-scrimmage kick enforcement. The basic spot is the end of the kick. Enforcement would result in first and 10 for Team R at the R-15.

30. Same as the preceding example except (a) R20 fumbles and K35 recovers, or (b) R20 fumbles and R71 recovers. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the fouls offset and the down is replayed since both teams fouled prior to the last change of possession. Post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply in (a) because Team R is not in possession at the end of the down. In (b), Team R could elect post-scrimmage kick enforcement, which results in first and 10 for Team R at the R-15.

31. K15 punts from an illegal formation and R68 illegally uses his hands during his initial rush. R21 fair catches the ball. **RULING:** The fouls offset, and the down is replayed. Neither exception applies. Team R committed a foul (illegal use of hands) before gaining possession, and did not get the ball with "clean hands." Additionally, that foul does not have post-scrimmage kick enforcement. The clock will start on the snap.

32. Team K punts on fourth down with the ball snapped at the K-40. The punt rolls out of bounds at the R-37. While the ball is alive, K79 clips at the R-30. **RULING:** Team R may choose (a) to have the down replayed following enforcement of the penalty from the previous spot or (b) to have first down and 10 following enforcement of the penalty from the spot where the ball went out of bounds. In (a), the foul is by the team in possession during a scrimmage kick play, so the previous spot is the basic spot. Since the foul takes place beyond the basic spot, the penalty is from the basic spot. If accepted by Team R, the penalty is enforced from the previous spot, back to the K-25, and Team K will replay fourth down.

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33. At the snap on a punt play, K35 is lined up so that he is neither on the line nor in the backfield. R25 catches the ball in the end zone. **RULING:** The ball is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line and the result of the play is a touchback. A five-yard penalty against Team K. Team R may choose to have the penalty enforced either at the previous spot (and the down replayed) or from the R-20 to the R-25 from where they would have first and 10.

34. Fourth and 15 at the K-5. Punter K88 is in his end zone when he kicks the ball. K77 is flagged for holding in the end zone. R24 returns the ball to the R-45. **RULING:** Team R has the option of having possession after the penalty is enforced at the R-45 or accepting the penalty for a safety.

35. Fourth and 10 at the R-15. K8's field goal attempt is blocked at the line. Team K is flagged for an illegal formation. The ball is recovered by a player of either team at the R-22. **RULING:** The touching at the line is ignored. Team R will elect to have the penalty enforced at the succeeding spot. It will be their ball at the R-27. It does not matter that the ball did not cross the neutral zone.

36. B45 intercepts a pass in his end zone and fumbles there while attempting to advance. The fumble is subsequently recovered at the B-4 by A88 who carries the ball into the end zone. During B45's run, or while the ball is loose after the fumble, A55 blocks below the waist at the B-10. **RULING:** The 15-yard penalty is enforced from the B-20. That is the succeeding spot associated with the run during which the foul occurred. Result: First and 10 for Team B on the B-35.

37. Fourth and eight from the R-28. While a successful field goal attempt is in flight, R46 grasps and twists K23's face mask at the R-16. **RULING:** Team K may accept the three points and have the penalty enforced on the succeeding kickoff, or they may have the penalty enforced from the previous spot which would result in first and ten from the R-14.

38. Same as example 37 and time expires in the (a) first half, or (b) game to tie the score. **RULING:** Team K may have the penalty enforced from the previous spot which would result in first and ten from the R-14. They may also accept the three points and have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot which in (a) would be the start of the second half. In (b) it would be the start of overtime.

39. During A20's touchdown run, B41 holds. Before the ready for play on the try while the ball is dead, A62 commits a personal foul. **RULING:** The score stands. Either foul may carry over to the succeeding kickoff, but not overtime.

40. B42 twists A32's face mask at the B-8, but A32 breaks away to score a touchdown. Time expires in the fourth period during the play and the score becomes B-14, A-13. **RULING:** Since there will not be a kickoff after the try, Team A may only have B42's penalty enforced on the try. It cannot be carried over to the start of overtime.

41. During the last timed down of the second quarter, B51 commits a live-ball foul on a play in which Team A scores a touchdown. **RULING:** The foul can carry over to the second half as that kickoff is the "succeeding" kickoff. The penalty for the foul can also be administered on the try.

42. A7's pass to A82 results in minor contact between A82 and B21. A82 breaks away and scores a touchdown. While the ball is live, Team B's coach runs onto the field and claims A82 committed offensive pass interference. He is flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct. **RULING:** The penalty may be enforced on the try or the succeeding kickoff.

43. First and 10 at the B-35. A44 scores a touchdown and after crossing the goal line, he spikes the ball. Team B elects to have the unsportsmanlike conduct foul enforced on the kickoff. Before the try, Team B encroaches. Team A accepts the penalty and will go for two points from the B-1 1/2. The Team B coach now wants to elect to take the unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on the try rather than on the kickoff. **RULING:** Not allowed. Once a penalty option is chosen, it cannot be revoked.

44. During A11's legal forward pass on a try, A89 interferes with B24 in the end zone and catches the ball. **RULING:** The penalty for offensive pass interference does not include loss of down, so the down is replayed because the try was successful.

45. On a try, B34 intercepts A18's pass and returns the ball over Team A's goal line. During B 34's run, B73 clips. **RULING:** The officials should not allow such a play to continue because the ball is dead and the try ends when Team B gains possession. The clipping penalty is not enforced unless it is flagrant.

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III. Review Test

(True or False)

1. The referee shall grant a request for a timeout prior to accepting or declining a penalty which involves an automatic first down.
2. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined.
3. No foul causes loss of the ball.
4. No series can ever start on a down other than first.
5. Team A may never be awarded a new series if they commit a foul during a down.
6. When a penalty is declined, the number of the down will be the same as if the foul had not occurred.
7. Defensive pass interference is one of the fouls by Team B that awards an automatic first down.
8. If there is no change of team possession, a live-ball foul on each team during a down results in a double foul.
9. If both teams foul during a change of possession down and the team in final possession did not foul prior to gaining possession, it may keep the ball, provided it declines the penalty for the opponent's foul.
10. If R33 gives an invalid fair catch signal and R42 catches the scrimmage kick, Team R may retain possession if the penalty is accepted.
11. The down must be replayed if Team A is illegally in motion and B64 clips during B30's interception return.
12. The down must be replayed if both teams commit holding fouls before an interception.
13. The down must be replayed if both teams commit holding fouls during a play where the ball is punted.
14. A nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul is treated as live-ball foul.
15. If during a down B80 holds and then B14 commits an unsportsmanlike act, only one foul can be penalized.
16. Penalties for dead-ball fouls are usually enforced separately and in the order in which they occurred.
17. If both teams commit a foul during the same dead-ball period, and the second foul is committed prior to the enforcement of the first foul, the fouls always cancel.
18. When the same team commits a live-ball foul followed by one or more dead-ball fouls, all fouls cannot be penalized.
19. All dead-ball fouls are enforced in the order in which they occurred and always from the spot of the foul.
20. When a team commits two or more live-ball fouls, including unsportsmanlike fouls, it is a multiple foul.
21. A multiple foul is one or more live-ball fouls by each team resulting in offsetting penalties.
22. There can be only one loose-ball play during any down.
23. If A7's pass is caught by A82 and there is an unnecessary roughness foul against A7 after the catch, it is a foul during a loose-ball play.
24. All roughing the kicker fouls are penalized from the spot of the foul.
25. All fouls committed before the change of possession on a free kick are fouls during a loose-ball play.
26. When A1 is tackled behind the neutral zone and fumbles, it is a running play.
27. During a scrimmage down, a backward pass from behind the neutral zone is always part of a loose-ball play.
28. All illegal forward passes are loose-ball plays, and the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot.
29. The succeeding spot is the enforcement spot for a foul which occurs simultaneously with the snap or free kick.
30. The basic spot of enforcement for a foul during a loose-ball play is the succeeding spot.
31. A foul that occurs simultaneously with the snap is an exception to the all-but-one principle.
32. Illegal motion, illegal shifts and false starts are all fouls simultaneous with the snap.
33. If K51 commits an unsportsmanlike foul during a successful field goal, the penalty is administered from the succeeding spot.
34. A post-scrimmage kick foul can only occur after the kick is beyond the expanded neutral zone.
35. If R22 fouls beyond the expanded neutral zone during a punt that crosses the expanded neutral zone and is caught by R44 who then fumbles, there cannot be post-scrimmage kick enforcement if the ball is finally recovered by K24.

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36. The basic spot for a post-scrimmage kick foul is the end of the kick or the 20 yard line if the play results in a touchback.
37. Post-scrimmage kick enforcement applies to all kicking situations.
38. Some types of illegal participation fouls by the receiving team occurring during a kick may be enforced under post-scrimmage kick rules.
39. An unsportsmanlike foul by B22 during A34's touchdown run may be enforced from the succeeding spot on the kickoff.
40. A penalty for nonplayer foul is enforced from the same spot as a dead-ball foul.
41. When the final result of a down is a touchback, the basic spot is the goal line.
42. It will be first and 10 for Team B at their 15 yard line if A85 grabs B35's face mask in the end zone after B35 intercepts a pass.
43. B46 intercepts a pass and scores a touchdown. If A66 grabbed B52's face mask prior to the interception, Team B must decline the penalty to keep the touchdown.
44. If B31 tackles A44 by grasping his face mask in Team A's end zone, the penalty will be enforced from the goal line.
45. If a distance penalty for a foul by Team B is measured from behind Team B's goal line toward its end line, the result is a touchback.
46. Whether the next down will be first down is determined at the time the ball becomes dead and after considering any act, except a nonplayer foul or unsportsmanlike foul, which occurred during the down.
47. A disqualified player must be removed from the game even if the penalty for his foul is declined.
48. All live-ball fouls are penalized under the all-but-one principle.
49. Under the "all-but-one" enforcement principle, all defensive fouls are penalized from the basic spot.
50. All fouls by Team A during the down are enforced from the basic spot.
51. Only fouls by Team B are enforced from the spot of the foul.
52. The enforcement spot for any foul by the defense is the goal line when the run ends in the end zone and would result in a safety.
53. If during a touchdown a foul occurs by the opponent of the scoring team, the scoring team must decline the penalty in order to keep the score.
54. If A2 taunts an opponent after scoring a touchdown, the score is negated and the down is relayed after a 15-yard penalty is enforced from the previous spot.
55. If Team R commits a foul during a successful field goal by Team K that would have post-scrimmage enforcement on a punt, the penalty is automatically declined.
56. If the kicker is roughed during a successful field goal, the only way Team K can have the penalty enforced is by repeating the down.
57. If B22 intercepts and is downed, and then A62 and A34 pile on, it is a multiple foul.
58. A foul by Team B during a successful two-point try by Team A is enforced from the succeeding spot.
59. If during a successful two-point try, A88 commits pass interference, the try is repeated after the penalty is enforced.
60. If during an unsuccessful try, A33 fouls, the penalty is obviously declined, the results of the play stand and there is no replay.
61. When the momentum exception is in effect, the end of the run for purposes of penalty enforcement is the spot of the catch or recovery.

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Answer Key

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------|-----|---|-------------------------|
| 1. | F | 1-4-1, 10-1-1 | 32. | F | 7-1-7, 7-2-6, 7-2-7 |
| 2. | T | 10-1-1 | 33. | T | 10-4-5a |
| 3. | T | 2-16-3 | 34. | F | 2-16-2h |
| 4. | T | Fund II-6 | 35. | T | 2-16-2h |
| 5. | F | 5-2-6 | 36. | T | 10-4-3, 10.4.3D |
| 6. | T | 5-2-1 | 37. | F | 2-16-2h |
| 7. | F | 10-1-7 | 38. | T | 2-16-2h |
| 8. | T | 10-2-1a | 39. | T | 8-2-4, 10-4-5a Nt |
| 9. | T | 10-2-2 | 40. | T | 10-4-5b, 10-4-5c |
| 10. | T | 10-2-3 | 41. | F | 10-4-5d |
| 11. | F | 10-2-2 | 42. | F | 10-4-5d |
| 12. | T | 10-2-2 | 43. | T | 8-2-3, 10-2-2 |
| 13. | F | 10-2-2 | 44. | T | 10-5-2 |
| 14. | F | 10-2-4, 10-4-5a, c | 45. | F | 10-4-4 |
| 15. | F | 10-2-4 | 46. | T | 5-1-2a, Fund II-2 |
| 16. | T | 10-2-5a | 47. | T | 10-5-6 |
| 17. | F | 10-2-5a | 48. | F | 10-6 |
| 18. | F | 10-1-4 | 49. | T | 10-6 |
| 19. | F | 10-2-5, 10-4-5b | 50. | F | 10-6 |
| 20. | F | 2-16-2e, 10-2-4 | 51. | F | 10-6 |
| 21. | F | 2-16-2e | 52. | T | 10-5-2 |
| 22. | T | 10-3-1 | 53. | F | 8-2-2 |
| 23. | F | 10-3-1 | 54. | F | 8-2-5, 10-5-1f, 10-4-5a |
| 24. | F | 10-3-1a, 10-4-2b | 55. | F | 8-4-3 |
| 25. | T | 10-3-1a, 10-4-2a | 56. | F | 8-4-3 |
| 26. | F | 10-3-1c, 10-4-2b | 57. | F | 2-16-2e |
| 27. | T | 10-3-1c | 58. | T | 8-3-5b, 10-5-1d |
| 28. | F | 7-5-3, 10-3-2, 10-4-4 | 59. | T | 8-3-4 |
| 29. | F | 10-4-1, 10-4-2a | 60. | T | 8-3-6a |
| 30. | F | 10-4-2b | 61. | T | 8-5-2a Exc, 10-3-3c |
| 31. | T | 10-4-2a | | | |

Chapter 11: Penalty Enforcement



CHAPTER 12 LOOSE ENDS AND OTHER STUFF

I. The Rules in Depth

Inadvertent Whistle

The inadvertent whistle is every football official's nightmare, and we are all guilty of having one at some time or another. It usually isn't "inadvertent" at all, but blown deliberately by an official who sincerely believes the ball is dead. The whistle is intended to note the ball has become dead by rule, and does not cause the ball to become dead unless it was blown inadvertently. One of the keys to avoiding inadvertent whistles is to avoid blowing the whistle unless the ball can be seen. In any event, inadvertent whistles are a fact of life, and there are rules to deal with them.

Often times, there is no way to completely rectify the damage caused by an inadvertent whistle. The method of handling such whistles (4-2-3) depends on the type of play and the status of the ball. We can divide these into three categories: (1) ball in player possession; (2) ball loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass or illegal kick; and (3) during a snap, legal forward pass or legal kick.

Ball in Player Possession

If an official blows his whistle while a player has possession of the ball (4-2-3c), the play is dead immediately. The team in possession has one of two options: to take the ball where it was *blown dead*, or to replay the down at the previous spot. Here are some examples.

EXAMPLE 12-1: Second and eight at the A-25. A20 gains five yards to the A-30 and is still running when the whistle blows. **RULING:** Team A may put the ball in play, third and three at the A-30, or replay the down, second and eight from the A-25.

EXAMPLE 12-2: Team A's punt is caught by B37 who runs several yards before an official mistakenly blows his whistle. **RULING:** Team B has the option of taking the ball where it was blown dead or having the down replayed from the previous spot, with Team A in possession. Note the whistle was blown during a running play, not during the kick.

EXAMPLE 12-3: Deep receiver R19 recovers a kickoff and advances the ball. As he crosses the R-15 the whistle blows. **RULING:** The receiving team may take the ball where it was blown dead or have Team K repeat the free kick from the previous spot.

Additional Examples: 1, 2.

Fumble, Backward Pass, or Illegal Forward Pass

When the whistle is blown while the ball is loose (4-2-3b) under one of these circumstances, the fumbling or passing team has the option of taking the ball where the player *lost possession* or replaying the down at the previous spot. Remember the fumbling or passing team still has "team possession" even though the ball is not in the possession of a player. In this case, if the team in possession chooses not to have the down replayed, it will keep the ball where player possession was lost (not where the ball was at the time the whistle blew), and the down will count.

EXAMPLE 12-4: On second and seven, A29 carries the ball for a four-yard gain and fumbles. The loose ball rolls forward for another nine yards when it is blown dead by an official. **RULING:** Team A has the option of taking the ball where it was fumbled (four yards beyond the neutral zone) for third down and three or replaying the down second and seven at the previous spot.

EXAMPLE 12-5: On third and seven, A17 rolls out and is two yards behind the neutral zone when he throws a backward pass to A41 who muffs the ball. While the ball is still in the air an official sounds his whistle. **RULING:** Team A has the option of replaying the down at the previous spot (third and seven) or keeping the ball where A17 passed it, making it fourth and nine.

Legal Forward Pass or Kick

Whenever an inadvertent whistle sounds during a kick or a legal forward pass, there is no option: the ball is returned to the previous spot and

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the down is replayed (4-2-3a). Remember a pass ends when the ball is caught, intercepted, or incomplete. Likewise for a kick: a kick ends when it is caught, recovered, or becomes dead.

EXAMPLE 12-6: Team K's punt is (a) in flight or (b) rolling along the ground when an official inadvertently sounds his whistle. **RULING:** The ball is dead immediately. The down must be replayed and the clock starts on the ready. In (b), it does not matter if Team R touches the kick.

EXAMPLE 12-7: A15 throws a legal forward pass that is tipped by B67 and goes high in the air. As the ball is coming down but still airborne, an official sounds his whistle. **RULING:** The whistle was blown during the pass, so the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down is replayed.

EXAMPLE 12-8: Team K's kickoff is muffed by R28. The ball rolls towards Team R's end zone when an official blows it dead. **RULING:** Inadvertent whistle during a kick. Replay the down.

On A Try

An inadvertent whistle during a try is treated exactly the same as other similar situations during the game.

How Do We Treat A Foul?

The best thing that can happen to an official who blows his whistle prematurely is for there to be a live-ball foul and the penalty accepted. If that happens, the penalty is administered and the inadvertent whistle is ignored (4-2-3d).

EXAMPLE 12-9: Second and 10 at the A-30. During A25's run, A31 is guilty of a clip at the A-35. When A25 has gained eight yards, an official sounds his whistle inadvertently. **RULING:** The penalty is obviously accepted and Team A is penalized from the spot of the clip. It will be second and 20 at the A-20.

In the preceding example, the official is off the hook for his inadvertent whistle. The penalty is enforced under the all-but-one principle from the spot of the foul. Had the whistle not been blown

prematurely, the end of the run would have most likely been farther downfield, but that would not have changed the enforcement spot.

If a penalty is declined, Team A would have the same inadvertent whistle options they would have had if there had not been a foul.

EXAMPLE 12-10: Second and one at the A-35. As A13 drops back to pass, B40 holds A89 at the line. A89 breaks free, catches the pass and runs. At the B-40, A89 slips, but gets his hand down to break his fall without touching a knee to the ground. He continues to score a touchdown. When A89's hand touches the ground, the back judge blows his whistle. **RULING:** Team A will decline the penalty for the holding foul; acceptance would result in a first down at the A-45. Team A's remaining options are replaying the down or accepting the result of the play. They will accept the latter; first and 10 at the B-40.

Ignoring the inadvertent whistle when a foul occurs, means ignoring the administrative procedure in 4-2-3. Under no circumstances can Rule 4-2-2 be ignored – the ball is immediately dead when the whistle is blown. The following example illustrates

EXAMPLE 12-11: At the snap, B22 immediately grabs and twists the face mask of A88. The line judge flags it. A11 then throws a forward pass. While the pass is in flight, the line judge follows up his flag with a whistle. The ball is caught by A84 in the end zone for an apparent touchdown. **RULING:** The whistle kills the play and the ball is immediately dead; there is no touchdown. The 15-yard penalty for the facemask foul is enforced from the previous spot and the down is replayed unless a first down results from the penalty. The whistle cannot be ignored and the touchdown allowed because the whistle ended the play while the ball was in flight.

If an inadvertent whistle is sounded during a scrimmage kick and after Team R has fouled, Team K will want to have the penalty enforced from the previous spot. Post-scrimmage kick enforcement does not apply since Team R is not in possession at the end of the down (the down ended when the whistle was blown). Choosing to replay the down under the inadvertent whistle rule is not a viable alternative.

EXAMPLE 12-12: Fourth and 17 at the K-45. During Team K's punt that crosses the neutral zone, R63 blocks below the waist five yards beyond the neutral zone. An official sounds his whistle while the kick is still in the air. **RULING:** Post-scrimmage enforcement does not apply because Team R is not in possession at the end of the down. The penalty for Team R's foul is enforced from the previous spot. It will be fourth and two for Team K at the R-40. Administration of the penalty takes precedence over the inadvertent whistle.

EXAMPLE 12-13: Fourth and 12 at the R-45. While K8's punt is in the air, R6 blocks K4 in the back at the R-22. An inadvertent whistle is blown (a) before R1 touches the loose ball, or (b) after R1 recovers the kick and fumbles. **RULING:** If the penalty is accepted, in (a), the penalty is enforced from the previous spot. Since the whistle ended the play before the kick ended, R6's foul cannot be a post scrimmage kick foul. In (b), the whistle also blew while the ball was loose, but after the kick ended. Team R may not choose to replay the down because administration of the penalty takes precedence over the inadvertent whistle.

First touching, similar to a foul, should take precedence over the inadvertent whistle. (*Note: 4-2-3 and 6-2-5 have overlapping coverage. An inadvertent whistle is not one of the acts which cancel the first touching privilege. Replaying kick downs should be avoided whenever possible.*)

EXAMPLE 12-14: Fourth and 10 at the K-40. K6's punt hits K88 in the leg on the R-35. R48 dives for the ball but muffs it. Anticipating a recovery, the back judge inadvertently blows his whistle when the ball is on the R-30. **RULING:** Team R could elect to replay the down or take the ball at the spot of first touching.

The Clock

Whenever the clock is stopped for an errant toot and the down is replayed, it will start on the ready unless Team B or Team R is in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle and chooses to accept the result of the play (3-4-2c). The clock is discussed in Chapter 7.

Extending the Period

If an inadvertent whistle occurs during the last timed down of a period, the period is extended for an untimed down. See Additional Example 4. Extension of a period is discussed in Chapter 7.

Unusual Circumstances

The inadvertent whistle rule is applied in unusual circumstances such as a forward pass striking a dog or spectator inbounds (4-2-2e3, 4.1.5) and should also be applied if the ball somehow becomes deflated while it is live.

Additional Examples: 3-5.

Down Errors

While the inadvertent whistle is probably the most visible of officiating errors, there are other ways for officials to make mistakes. Thoroughly understanding the rules will help avoid incorrect penalty enforcement. That includes setting the chains when a new series is awarded before enforcement of a dead-ball foul instead of following enforcement. In such case, once the ball is legally snapped, it is too late to make a correction (5.1.1B).

Another possible mistake is giving a team an extra down, or shorting them one. The referee can correct the number of the next down prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs is awarded and prior to the declaration of the end of any period (5-1-1b).

If Team A is given a fifth down and it's discovered before the ball becomes live for the down after the fifth-down play, the extra down is canceled and play reverts to what should have been the fourth down play. That means Team B will always be awarded the ball at that spot. If the officials realize an extra down has been given during a series, the correct down is placed on the down marker and play continues (5.1.1A).

EXAMPLE 12-15: A21 runs for two yards on third down and four. After the play, the marker is flipped to second down. The error is caught. **RULING:** A correction can be made; it is now fourth down and two.

EXAMPLE 12-16: After an incomplete pass with the down marker showing third down, it is realized it was actually fourth down. The error was made when the down was not changed after the (a) first down play, (b) second down play, or (c) third down play. **RULING:** A correction can be made in each case: Team B's ball, first and 10.

If discovered in time, a fifth down play is always canceled. Neither team has an option to take the result of a fifth-down play. If a touchdown is scored by either team during an extra down, and the extra down is canceled, the touchdown is also canceled. Also, if a fifth down play is canceled, so

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are any penalties that occurred during it, except all personal and unsportsmanlike conduct fouls are penalized as dead-ball fouls and any disqualification stands (5.1.1A, 2015 Interps, #2).

EXAMPLE 12-17: During a fifth down play, Team A is flagged for (a) illegal formation, (b) holding, (c) twisting the face mask, (d) taunting, or (e) fighting. **RULING:** The penalties are canceled in (a), and (b). In (c), (d) and (e), the penalty is marked off as a dead-ball foul before Team B snaps. In (e), the offender is disqualified.

If Team A is *shorted* a down, the down marker can be adjusted to reflect the correct down at any time until the ball is snapped after a new series is awarded (5.1.1A).

EXAMPLE 12-18: A38 runs for two yards on second down and four. After the play, the marker is flipped to fourth down. The error is caught. **RULING:** A correction can be made; it is now third down and two.

EXAMPLE 12-19: On a first and 10 play, A32 runs for five yards and the marker is changed to third down (should have been second down). An incomplete pass is thrown and the marker is flipped to fourth down (should have been third down). The error is recognized. **RULING:** Team A was shorted a down and the correction should be made: Team A's ball third and five.

EXAMPLE 12-20: With the down marker showing fourth down, Team K punts and a fair catch is made. It is then recognized the previous play should have been third down. **RULING:** A correction can be made. Third down is replayed.

EXAMPLE 12-21: On a fourth down play that should have been third down, A32 is stopped short of the line-to-gain. The error is recognized (a) before, or (b) after, the ball is snapped following the first down for the opponents. **RULING:** In (a), a correction is made; it's Team A's ball, fourth down. In (b), once the ball was snapped for Team B, it was too late to make an adjustment.

Additional Example: 6.

Judgment Errors

Another type of error is when the officials allow action to take place after the ball is dead by rule. Examples of this include, but are not limited to allowing Team R to advance the ball after a fair catch signal or return a kick out of the end zone,

allowing Team K to advance a kick, and keeping the ball live after an incomplete forward pass.

When this occurs, only personal and unsportsmanlike fouls are enforced. The following example illustrates.

EXAMPLE 12-22: A8 throws a pass slightly forward which hits the ground. The covering official incorrectly rules it to be a backward pass and does not blow his whistle. While the ball is loose there is a (a) five-yard face mask foul, (b) holding foul, or (c) clipping foul. After the play ends, the officials confer and correctly rule the play was an incomplete forward pass. **RULING:** The ball is returned to the previous spot. In (a) and (b), the fouls are ignored. In (c), the foul is enforced since it is a personal foul.

Official's Jurisdiction

The officials assume authority for the contest 30 minutes prior to the scheduled game time or as soon thereafter as they are able to be present (1-1-7). The state association may allow the official's jurisdiction to begin at an earlier time.

EXAMPLE 12-23: The officials arrive at the playoff game site two hours prior to game time. The officials (a) inspect the field in casual dress, or (b) enter the field in uniform to meet the coaches 45 minutes prior to the game. **RULING:** The officials do not have jurisdiction until 30 minutes prior to the game unless the state association has issued a policy allowing for earlier jurisdiction.

The official's jurisdiction normally ends when the referee holds the ball over his head at the end of the game. After the last play of the final period, the referee will pause briefly to ensure there are no questions about correctable errors, coach-referee conferences, etc. If there are no reasons to defer ending the game, the referee will hold the ball over his head. If the ball is not available (or the referee does not use the signal), the officials' jurisdiction ends when the referee leaves the field. The referee has left the field when he crosses the sideline or end line (1-1-8 and 3-3-5).

If the referee holds the ball over his head or leaves the field, and a foul had been called on the last play and the referee did not know there had been a foul, the game cannot end until the penalty is enforced or declined (3.3.5A).

The game officials now maintain authority for the contest through the completion of any required reports or correspondence in response to any action occurring while the officials have jurisdiction.

Chapter 12: Loose Ends and Other Stuff

State Associations may adopt policies that allow for intercession by the state association or its designee after the officials have signaled the end of the game in the event of unusual incidents such as fights or altercations or in the event that a game is terminated prior to the conclusion of regulation play.

Equipment

All required equipment must be professionally manufactured, worn as intended by the manufacturer and not altered to decrease protection (1-5-1, 1-5-3c9). Equipment specifications can be found in Rule 1 and there is no great value in repeating them here.

The referee may use his authority to rule on any situation not specifically covered in the rules, including ordering the removal of any markers or obstructions which constitute a hazard (1-1-6). The use of any replay or television monitoring equipment in making any decisions related to the game is prohibited (1-1-9).

Additional Example: 7.

The following summary is not inclusive.

Must Have
Helmet with face mask (1-5-1a)
Mouthpiece (1-5-1d5)
Shoulder pads (1-5-1d3)
Jersey (1-5-1b)
Hip pads with tailbone protector (1-5-1d1)
Thigh guards (1-5-1d4)
Knee pads (1-5-1d2)
Pants (1-5-1e)
Shoes (1-5-1f)

May Have
Rib pads (1-5-3b5)
Back protector (1-5-3b5)
Forearm pads (1-5-2a)
Gloves (1-5-2b)
Hand pads (1-5-2b Nt 1)
Hand Warmers
Towel (1-5-3a5a)
Knee brace (1-5-3b2, 1-5-3b3)
Play card worn on the arm (1-5-3c8)
Shin guards (1-5-3b6)
Spats (1.5.3 Cmt)
Skull caps (1.5.3 Cmt)
Eye shade that is solid black (1-5-3c3)
Sunglasses or tinted eyewear (1.5.3 Cmt)
Sweat band worn on the wrist (1-5-3a5b)
Tape or support wrap (1-5-2c)

Cannot Have
Anything which in the umpire's judgment is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate (1-5-3), including but not limited to:
Ball-colored helmets, jerseys, patches, exterior pads, undershirts, or gloves (1-5-3c1)
Hard substances or sharp plastic edges (1-5-3b1, 1-5-3b4, 1-5-3c7)
Slippery or sticky substances (1-5-3a2)
Items that enhance contact (1-5-3c5)
Tear-away jerseys or knots (1-5-3a3)
Adornments other than a towel or sweat band (1-5-3a5)
Jewelry (1-5-3c6)
Eye shields other than clear (1-5-3c4)
Electronic communications (1-5-3c2)
Exposed bandanas (1.5.3 Cmt)
Bicep bands (1-5-3a5)

Table 12-1

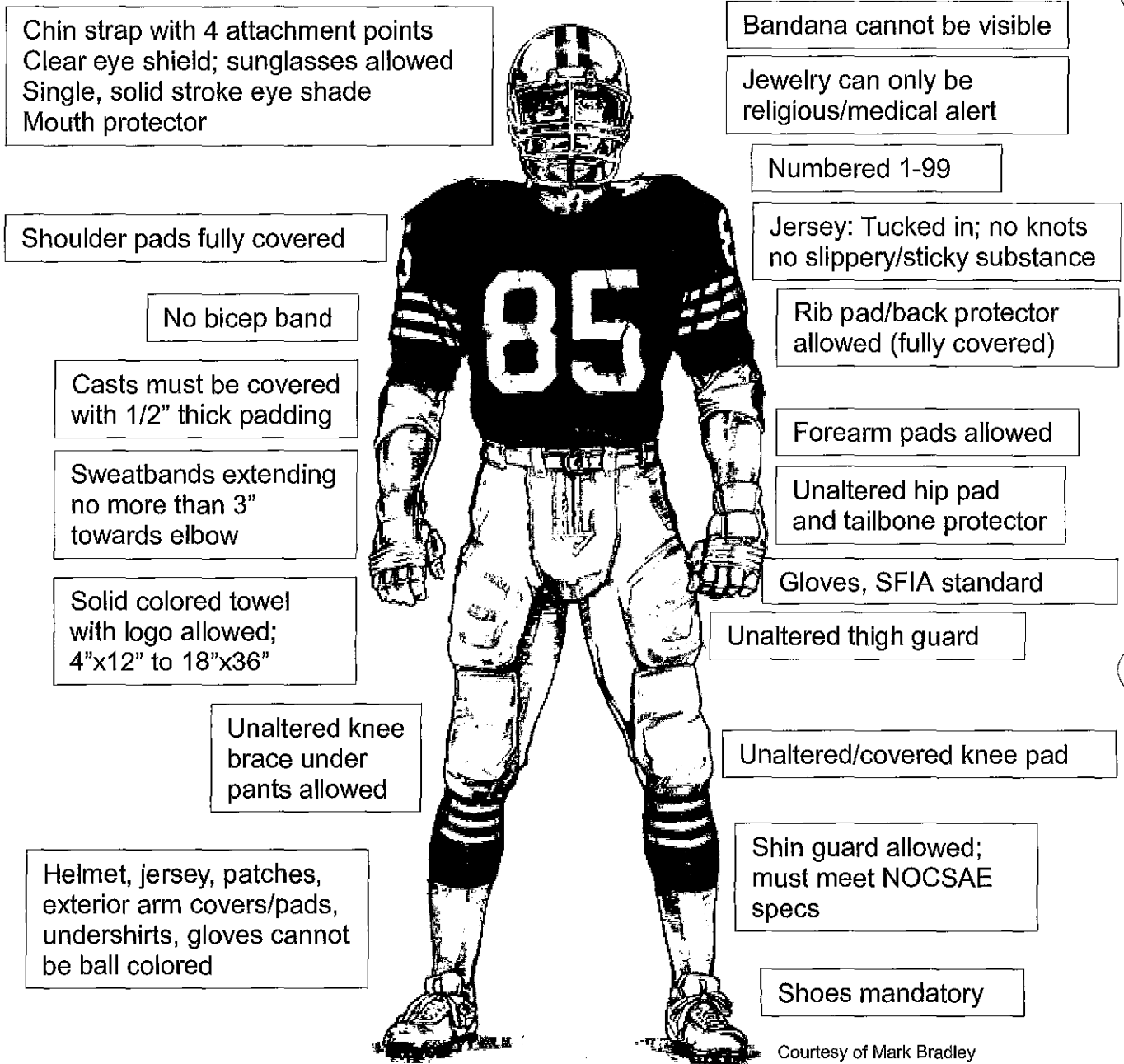


Figure 12-1

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Equipment Infractions

Prior to a game, the head coach equipment verification can be to the referee and any other official (1-5-4). The head coach must certify his players are legally equipped and will not use any illegal equipment (1-5-4). Players with improperly worn or missing equipment will be required to be replaced for at least one down (1-5-5).

If the missing or improperly worn equipment is detected during the down or during subsequent dead ball action related to the down without being directly attributable to a foul by an opponent or if a player is wearing otherwise legal equipment in an illegal manner, the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless halftime or an overtime intermission occurs. If proper and legal equipment has become improperly worn through use, but prompt repair is possible and does not delay the ready-for-play signal for more than 25 seconds, such repair may be made without penalty. An example is allowing a player to tie his shoelaces.

The rules distinguish between wearing illegal equipment which is a 15-yard unsportsmanlike foul charged to the head coach (9-8-1h), and failing to properly wear mandatory equipment (1-5-6) or missing required equipment, which mandates the player to be replaced for at least one down. A charged timeout cannot be used to allow the player to remain in the game.

Missing equipment means the item is not with the player on the field such as a tailbone pad left in the team area. When required equipment is missing correction must be made before the player re-enters the game (1-5-5, 9.8.1G).

Not properly wearing required equipment means the item is with the player, but he's not using it; e.g., unfastened chip strap.

Equipment infractions can be classified as safety-related, advantage/disadvantage or just plain adornment.

Safety-related

Mouthpieces and helmets are two of the most important items of required equipment. All helmets must have a four-point chin strap and all points must be fastened (1-5-1a2, 1.5.1A). Each player must wear a tooth protector. There are no color restrictions on mouthpieces; they may be completely white or clear (1-5-1d5, 1.5.1C).

Good judgment should be exercised when ruling on failure to properly wear required equipment. It is possible for chin straps,

mouthpieces, and other items to come loose or be displaced as the result of contact. If there is any doubt, a player should not be penalized.

All required items - thigh guards, knee pads, tailbone protectors, etc. - are intended to prevent injury and officials must insist they be used. Officials should be extra vigilant for missing knee pads on receivers and missing tailbone protectors on linemen, who may think the pads will slow them down.

EXAMPLE 12-24: Between downs, A10 is discovered to be not wearing hip pads or a tailbone protector. **RULING:** A10 is missing required equipment; he must be replaced for at least one down and cannot return until his equipment conforms to the rules.

EXAMPLE 12-25: An official observes A65 is not wearing his mouthpiece (a) as the huddle breaks or, (b) just as the ball is about to be snapped. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the play count is interrupted. A65 must leave the game for at least one down and cannot return until he wears his mouthpiece properly.

EXAMPLE 12-26: During a down in which Team A scores a touchdown, an official observes A75 (a) is not wearing his mouthpiece or, (b) taking his mouthpiece out. **RULING:** In either case, the touchdown counts. In (a), the official should assume it came out as a result of play. A75 is directed to reinsert his mouthpiece and may remain in the game. In (b), A75 must leave the game for at least one down and cannot return until he wears his mouthpiece properly.

Properly-padded hard substances can be worn. Padded casts may be worn on the hand, wrist, forearm or elbow. The cast and padding must be approved by the umpire, preferably before the game.

The cast must be covered on all exterior surfaces with no less than one-half inch thick, high-density, closed-cell polyurethane, or a material of the same minimum thickness and similar physical properties. If any one of these criteria is not met, the player may not participate while wearing the cast. There is no requirement to provide before the game the written approval of a licensed medical practitioner for a player to wear a padded cast (1-5-3b1, 1.5.3C).

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EXAMPLE 12-27: Before the game, the umpire inspects A66's cast and determines it meets all specifications of the rule. However, a physician's note is not available. **RULING:** A written note from a physician is not required. A66 may participate while wearing the cast if it is properly padded.

EXAMPLE 12-28: A66 plays with an unpadded cast and is flagged. **RULING:** An unpadded cast is illegal equipment. The 15-yard penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct is charged to Team A's head coach. A66 must leave the game immediately and cannot return unless the cast is properly padded.

Knee and ankle braces that are unaltered from the manufacturer's original production do not require any additional padding (1-5-3b2 Nt). The umpire must still check to ensure braces are nonabrasive. Altered braces must be properly padded. Any thigh guard which is unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production is legal (1-5-1d4).

EXAMPLE 12-29: Before the game, the umpire inspects A74's knee brace and notices that although the brace has not been altered, a portion of the metal hinge is exposed. **RULING:** A74 may participate while wearing the brace if it is properly padded.

Tinted eye shields, including polarized eye shields, are prohibited without exception; they must be completely clear. No form of medical authorization can be used to allow such equipment. It is legal for a player to wear sunglasses or other tinted eyewear, either with or without a clear eye shield on his helmet.

EXAMPLE 12-30: During the pre-game, the umpire is shown a physician's written note or prescription for A22's yellow tinted eye shield. The shield clearly allows the player's eyes to be seen. **RULING:** A22 may not play while wearing that eye shield; it must be clear allowing 100% light transmission.

Play cards may only be worn on the wrist. They cannot be attached to the belt (1-5-3c8).

Additional Example: 8.

Gaining an Advantage

Illegal shoe cleats may yield an advantage. The half-inch shoe cleat was mandated in 1972 and

has helped reduce knee injuries. The length is measured from tip of cleat to sole of shoe (1-5-1f1d, 1-5-1f2). The NFL allows longer cleats, so manufactured illegal cleats are available.

EXAMPLE 12-31: Tackle A77 is wearing $\frac{3}{4}$ inch cleats. That is discovered (a) before the game, (b) during the game while A77 is in the team area, or (c) between downs while A77 is a player. **RULING:** No foul in (a) or (b) because the infraction was discovered when A77 was not a player. In (c), a 15-yard penalty is marked off; it is an unsportsmanlike foul and charged to the head coach. Also, A77 must leave the game until he gets legal cleats.

EXAMPLE 12-32: After the ready on a try, kicker A22 enters the field without a shoe on his kicking foot. **RULING:** A22 may not participate unless he is wearing two legal shoes. He is requested to obtain the missing required equipment, and if the 25-second count expires Team A is assessed a five-yard penalty for delay (3-6-2a).

EXAMPLE 12-33: Place kicker K17 wants to kick wearing a shoe that is "tied up" on his kicking foot. **RULING:** K17 may legally kick with a tied up shoe or with an attached kicking toe as long as the shoe has not been altered to make it dangerous.

Slippery or sticky substances of a foreign nature on equipment, towels, uniforms or the exposed part of the body which affects the ball or an opponent are prohibited.

Gloves may now have either a SFIA or NOCSAE label. The label must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior wrist opening of the glove. The SFIA specification is a manufacturer's self-certified specification with independent lab validation that assures gloves for football play do not exceed the allowed tackiness (1-5-2b, 1.5.2A). Hand pads are legal and the label is not required (1.5.2B).

In addition to being free of tacky substances, gloves may not be ball-colored. Penalty flag-colored pads or gloves are allowed (1-5-3c1).

Additional Examples: 9-12.

Adornment

Some uniform requirements are for the sake of consistency and have no impact on safety, nor does a violation yield an advantage. Some items are not regulated. As an example, socks are not required and there is no rule provision regarding

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color, length or design of socks or other leg coverings (1-5-1).

The home team is required to wear dark jerseys (1-5-1b3) and the visiting team is required to wear white jerseys (1-5-1b2). In rivalry games or other special occasions, both teams may want to wear non-white jerseys. That is possible if the state association approves a one-time special exception. Of course, the jerseys must be of contrasting colors. It is also possible for there to be a mix-up. That may happen where schools share one stadium and forget that they are the visiting team for a game and thus wear their home jerseys. Although it is the responsibility of the visiting team to wear its white jerseys when playing away from home, the referee may require the home team to change to its white jerseys. It is also possible for an entire team to have illegal jerseys e.g., undersized and off-set numbers on the front of the jerseys. In those cases, the referee should require the team to change to legal jerseys, if possible. In all these types of incidents the game should be played without any penalties assessed and reported to the proper administrative authorities (1.5.1A, B).

Jerseys must completely cover the shoulder pads and all pads worn above the waist on the torso (1-5-1b1). Jerseys must be long enough to reach the top of the pants and if longer, must be tucked in (1-5-1b1, 1.5.1B). Effective in 2021, home team jerseys must be a dark color that clearly contrasts to white (1-5-1b3).

REMEMBER FROM 2019: Effective 2024, the body of the number shall be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the jersey color (1-5-1c6).

Towels and sweat bands, made of moisture absorbing material, are the only uniform adornments permitted (1-5-3a5).

Towels may be of any solid color that is not ball- or penalty flag colored. One visible manufacturer's logo is allowed. All players who wear a towel must have the same colored towel (1-5-3a5a).

The towel must measure at least four inches by 12 inches and not more than 18 inches by 36 inches (1-5-3a5a). Sweat bands are limited to a three-inch width.

Bandanas are considered a uniform adornment and may only be worn under the helmet provided they are not visible; they may not be tied to the leg or arm (1.5.3 Cmt). It is legal to wear spats on the shoes, skull caps and other head liners.

EXAMPLE 12-34: An official notices A45 is wearing a bandana that protrudes from the back of his helmet while A45 is (a) in the bench area, or (b) returning to the huddle after participating. **RULING:** In (a) no foul; however, the official should advise A45 that the bandana must be adjusted so it no longer protrudes before he enters the game. In (b), an unsportsmanlike foul for illegal equipment charged to Team A's head coach; however, most officials would simply send A45 to the sideline for one down.

Jewelry such as earrings, necklaces bracelets and rings cannot be worn. Religious medals may be worn if taped to the body and worn under the uniform. Medical alert medals must also be taped but may be visible (1-5-3c6).

If eye shade (grease, no-glare strips or stickers) is worn, it must be a single solid stroke with no words, numbers, logos or other symbols within the eye shade (1-5-3c3). The purpose is to protect the eyes and not create an intimidating pattern.

It is interesting to note other than ball-colored items (1-5-1c1), only jerseys and towels have color restrictions. Players are not required to have the same color pants and helmets as their teammates.

There are some items not directly addressed in the rules. Hooded sweat shirts can be worn under the jersey, but the hood must be tucked in. Compression sleeves are considered forearm pads as no pad thickness is specified.

Table 12-2 summarizes how to deal with equipment infractions.

Additional Examples: 13-17.

Team Equipment

The kicking tee cannot elevate the ball more than two inches. Any modified tee should be checked carefully.

Any item of team equipment such as the football, is treated the same as illegal player equipment and results in an unsportsmanlike foul charged to the head coach, except for the use of an illegal kicking tee which is an unfair act (9-9-4).

Each team provides at least one legal game ball to the referee before the game for approval (1-3-2). Each team may use any referee-approved ball of its choice to free kick or to start a new series of downs. A try is part of a previous series. However, following a change-of-possession, the scoring team may use its referee-approved ball for the try.

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Equipment Infraction	When Noticed	Penalty
Illegal Equipment Worn	Before substitute becomes player	No foul; refuse entry (1-5-5, 9.8.1H)
	While participating	15 yards, USC, succeeding spot charged to head coach (9-8-1h)
Required Equipment Missing or Improperly Worn	Before substitute becomes player	No foul; refuse entry (1-5-5, 9.8.1H)
	While participating	Player must be removed for one down (1-5-5, 1-5-6)
Required Equipment becomes improperly worn through use and prompt repair possible	After a down	Repair made without penalty

Table 12-2

Advertising is prohibited on the ball. The allowable markings are: (1) Ball manufacturer's name or logo, (2) school logo, name or mascot, (3) conference name or logo, (4) state association name or logo, and (5) NFHS name or logo (1-3-1h).

If weather conditions are such that a ball becomes unusable due to wetness, mud, etc., the referee may change the ball as necessary.

Additional Examples: 18-20.

Other Equipment

Illegal player equipment includes any communication devices other than LAN phones or headsets.

Electronic equipment can be used during the game but cannot be conveyed to players on the field or during a conference between the nine-yard marks (1-6-1). That includes any form of electronic signaling from the sideline such as a video board.

Nonplayers and coaches may use any electronic equipment at any time. Players may use any electronic equipment only during sideline conferences (1-6-2). Communication devices cannot be brought out to players if the conference is held on the field between the nine-yard marks.

Coaches, substitutes, trainers or other team attendants may use communication devices for coaching purposes during the game, including intermissions (1-6-1, 1.6.1H, 9-8-1e).

Inoperative headsets do not fall under the jurisdiction of the officials unless directed by the state association (1.6.1B).

EXAMPLE 12-35: Team A uses a video camera to tape the game. The coach shows the team (a) a video of the first half during the halftime intermission, or (b) video highlights on an iPod or tablet computer during a sideline conference.
RULING: Legal.

By state association adoption, a team comprised of deaf or partially deaf players may use a drum to establish a rhythmic cadence following the ready-for-play signal. Also, the state association may authorize through a licensed medical physician, use of a device to enhance the efficiency of a required hearing aid (1-6-1 Nt).

EXAMPLE 12-39: Quarterback A11 (a) after leaving the game and while in the team box uses a headset to talk to a coach in the press box; (b) comes to the sideline during a timeout and uses a coach's headset to talk to another coach in the press box. **RULING:** Legal in (a) and (b). In (a), A11 is a nonplayer. In (b), a player may use communications equipment at the sideline.

When In Doubt

Over 30 when in doubt axioms have been developed at various levels of football and are recognized for NFHS play by interpretation. These guidelines are not intended to modify any rule, or change how officials are to interpret the rule, but to assist in making a decision when the official is not exactly sure what transpired. A list of these guidelines is in Appendix C.

The Myth of the Muff

One of the popular "sound bites" that football officials constantly hear is: "The defense may not advance a muff." However, when we examine this ancient bromide we find it springs from an actual rule: "The kicking team cannot advance a kick." Most of the time, the kicking team recovers a kick after the receivers have muffed the ball, hence the exaggeration which has evolved into perhaps the most well-known myth in football. In order to fully appreciate the myth of the muff, we must have a basic understanding of the rules which govern all

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three types of loose balls: passes, kicks and fumbles.

Here's a kicking play: A Team R player is in position to receive a punt, but the ball hits his shoulder pad and bounces away. The receiver has muffed the ball. If a Team K player catches or recovers it, the ball is dead. So, some will say, they "can't advance a muff."

Look at a passing play: Team A's forward pass is tipped by the intended receiver, and thus muffed. It is subsequently intercepted by a defensive back. Would anyone argue the defense may not advance the muff in this instance?

Of course not, the ball remains live after a pass interception, and the defensive team is entitled to advance the ball.

What is the difference between these two plays? A muff does not give the ball a new status. The word "muff" does not describe the status of the ball - the ball remains a pass, kick, or fumble. Any pass, kick or fumble can be muffed while it is loose.

When a player loses possession by other than a handoff, pass, or legal kick, the loose ball is a fumble. When he throws the ball that is a pass. When kicked according to rule, it is a kick. When kicked in violation of the rules, such a loose ball is a fumble. The key fundamental is that a muffed pass, kick, or fumble retains its status. It is still a pass, kick, or fumble after being muffed, and there are separate rules which govern each type of loose ball. In the case of the muffed punt, it is still a kick, which Team K may not advance. The tipped forward pass has also been muffed, but it is

still a pass. Passing rules apply and the defense may advance it provided they catch the ball before it touches the ground.

So when a kick is muffed, kicking rules determine what players may or may not do. When a pass is muffed, passing rules apply. Other rules cover fumbles. In any event, there are no "muff rules".

So why is the concept and definition of a "muff" important? There are three situations where it is critical for the official to rule if a loose ball has been muffed:

- A muff might provide a new force, and force determines if the result of a play is a safety or a touchback.
- Accidentally contacting the ball with the foot in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession is a muff, and not a foul for an illegal kick. However, batting the ball is not a muff, since batting is not an attempt to secure possession.
- An ineligible receiver who muffs a legal forward pass behind the line has fouled. Being touched by the pass accidentally is legal; however, batting, catching, or touching the ball is a foul for illegal touching.

Please remember that a muff does not change the status of the ball, and that there are only three situations where it is important to identify when the ball has been muffed. The myth of the muff takes its rightful place between Zeus and Mother Goose.

II. Additional Examples

1. B21 intercepts A7's pass on the B-3, and circles back into the end zone. An official inadvertently sounds his whistle while B21 is in the end zone. **RULING:** The play results in a safety leaving a tough choice for Team B, either taking the safety and giving Team A two points or giving Team A an opportunity to replay the down.

2. While a legal forward pass is in flight (a) B44 interferes with A86, who catches the ball, and then there is an inadvertent whistle, or (b) the whistle precedes the interference. **RULING:** In (a), if the penalty is accepted, the whistle is disregarded. In (b), the down will be replayed. The penalty occurred after the ball was dead, and unless it was a personal foul, it is disregarded.

3. With two seconds remaining in the first period, A7 takes the snap and hands the ball to A23. After a short gain, A23 is hit and fumbles. As B55 falls on the ball, an official sounds his whistle. B55 muffs the ball which rolls out of bounds. **RULING:** Team A may put the ball in play where they lost possession, or may choose to have the down replayed. In either case, the period is extended for an untimed down (3.3.3C).

4. R14 is awaiting a punt at the R-20. As he is about to catch the ball, the sprinklers come on. R14 is distracted by the water spraying on him and muffs the ball. **RULING:** The down is replayed as if an inadvertent whistle had occurred.

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5. Team A has the ball on the A-40 with 0:06 remaining in the game and trailing by five points. A12 throws a pass to A88 that is completed. A88 runs to the B-4 where the back judge has an inadvertent whistle. A88 fumbled before the whistle was sounded. During the play, time expired. A23 recovered the fumble in the end zone. **RULING:** Team A is entitled to an untimed down from the B-4.
6. Erroneously, the chains are set before enforcement of a dead-ball foul instead of following enforcement. Up to what point can this be corrected? **RULING:** Once the ball is legally snapped, it is too late.
7. Fourth and goal at the B-2. Quarterback A6 takes the snap and dives over the line. A touchdown is ruled. Video replay equipment shows (a) A5 fumbled before breaking the plane of the goal line, or (b) A6 was not set for one second. **RULING:** The touchdown counts. Video equipment cannot be used to make any decision relating to the game unless the state association is using post season replay (1.1.9).
8. B55 is observed wearing a mouth guard that is (a) yellow, (b) white, or (c) transparent. **RULING:** Legal in all cases.
9. As time expires in the game, K2 kicks the game winning field goal. The referee then notices (a) a three-inch tee was used, or (b), a regulation tee was stabilized with a piece of plywood bolted to it. **RULING:** In both cases the tee is illegal and the field goal is negated. The penalty for the unfair act is enforced from the spot of the foul – where the tee was placed.
10. Before the game, the umpire notices all player gloves are new, but the leather gloves although not sticky, do not have the required label/stamp. **RULING:** The gloves are illegal. All gloves must have the SFIA label unless made of plain unaltered cloth.
11. Players are observed wearing gloves that are (a) ball-colored, (b) penalty-flag colored, (c) gray, or (d) the same color as the player's jersey. **RULING:** The gloves in (a) are illegal. In (b), (c) and (d), they are legal. Gloves cannot be ball-colored, but they may be any other color.
12. Tight end A89 is wearing jersey #54 underneath his regular jersey so he can alternate as the snapper by switching jerseys on the sideline. **RULING:** Legal; no advantage is gained.
13. A91 is discovered to have participated in a play with (a) a white unmarked towel with a tacky substance, hanging from his belt, or (b) a piece of white unmarked plastic attached to his belt. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b) the material does not meet the requirements of the rule and is illegal. Since the player was in the game while illegally equipped, a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty is assessed to Team A's head coach.
14. Team A takes a charged timeout. Tackle A76 removes his helmet, uncovering a bandana. **RULING:** No foul.
15. During the pre-game, the officials observe (a) A84 wearing a jersey cut off at the navel, or (b) B76 wearing a jersey down to his thighs. **RULING:** Illegal in both (a) and (b). The jersey must be long enough to reach the top of the pants and if longer, must be tucked in.
16. A Team A back and lineman each wear white towels with no markings that measure two inches by 10 inches. **RULING:** Illegal equipment for both players.
17. Several players on both teams each wear a white towel with no markings that measure four inches by 16 inches. **RULING:** Legal for all players.
18. A31 is tackled between the hash marks after a short gain on third down. Team A asks the referee to switch the ball to one its punter prefers. **RULING:** Unless there is something physically wrong with the ball being used, the request is denied.
19. A touchdown is scored by (a) A82 after a completed pass, or (b) B26 on an interception return. Before the ready on the try, the offense requests to use a different ball for the try than was used to score the touchdown. **RULING:** In (a), the request is denied; in (b), the request is honored.
20. A2 gains yardage for a first down and the ball is dead (a) between the hash marks, (b) just outside the hash mark, or (c) near the sideline. Team A asks the referee to switch the ball. **RULING:** The request is granted in all cases because a new series is to begin.

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III. Review Test

(True or False)

1. A disqualifying foul during the down causes the official to sound his whistle immediately.
2. Any foul that occurs after an inadvertent whistle is a dead-ball foul.
3. If an inadvertent whistle sounds but the penalty is accepted for a foul which occurred prior to the whistle, the inadvertent whistle is ignored.
4. If an inadvertent whistle sounds while the snap is in flight to the potential punter, it results in an automatic replay.
5. If an official sounds his whistle when K44 first touches a scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone, it is an inadvertent whistle and the down will be replayed.
6. When an inadvertent whistle is sounded during a forward pass, but after the pass was touched by B26, the down shall be replayed.
7. If B46 interferes with A81 during a forward pass and an inadvertent whistle sounds while the ball is in the air after the contact, the down must be replayed.
8. If an inadvertent whistle sounds during an illegal forward pass, the penalty is automatically accepted and the whistle is ignored.
9. If an inadvertent whistle sounds when the ball is loose behind the line following a change of possession, it results in an automatic replay.
10. Following a change of possession, if an inadvertent whistle is sounded, the down must be replayed.
11. If an inadvertent whistle sounds while A40 is in possession beyond or behind the line, the down may be replayed.
12. If an inadvertent whistle sounds when the ball is loose on a fumble by A32 beyond the line, the down automatically counts and it is A's ball at the spot of the fumble.
13. Relative to ball choice when there has been no change of possession, the try is not considered to be part of the previous series in which the touchdown was scored.
14. The referee is the final judge as to the legality of the game ball.
15. Rib pads are mandatory equipment.
16. The helmet shall be secured by a properly fastened chin strap with at least four attachment points.
17. Players are required to wear a face mask which met the NOCSAE test standard when it was manufactured.
18. The head coach's verification that his players have the required equipment includes a visible exterior warning label on the helmet regarding the risk of injury.
19. Both teams can use white jerseys if the home team has agreed in writing prior to the game and the jersey numbers have significantly different colored numbers.
20. Mandatory knee pads must be worn over the knees and the pants must cover the knee pads.
21. The sleeves on the jersey must fully cover the required shoulder pads and any hard surface auxiliary attachments.
22. Players are not required to wear thigh guards.
23. Completely clear or completely white tooth and mouth protectors are legal.
24. Soft nonabrasive gloves may be worn if approved by the umpire.
25. A gray neoprene glove with a stitched white leather palm is legal.
26. Football gloves are required to meet either the new SFIA specification or the existing NOCSAE test standard at the time of manufacture.
27. Tape wrapped around the hand to protect an injury need not be approved by the umpire.
28. Any equipment which the umpire rules dangerous or confusing is illegal.
29. The umpire may require an unaltered knee brace to be padded if he determines it to be dangerous or abrasive.
30. There are no color restrictions for athletic gloves worn by offensive and defensive linemen.
31. A player whose team colors are red and blue may legally wear penalty flag colored gloves.
32. Ball-colored helmets are legal player equipment.
33. If a player has a play card specifically manufactured for wear on the belt, he may wear it.
34. If the coach allows it, a player is permitted to wear a properly padded hard cast/splint on his forearm.
35. A knee brace which has metal in front at the knee may be worn if padded properly.
36. Knee braces can be worn over the pants.

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37. Jerseys may not be altered to produce a knot like protrusion or a tear away type jersey.
38. A player's towel may be any color other than ball or penalty flag colored.
39. The quarterback may use a towel containing a product to make a wet ball tacky.
40. It is illegal for a player to wear a bandana if it is fully covered by his helmet.
41. A player may wear an eye shield that is not clear, if written authorization from a medical doctor is presented to the referee.
42. If worn attached to the helmet, an eye shield is illegal unless it is constructed of a molded, rigid, clear material.
43. It is legal for a player to wear sunglasses under a helmet with a clear eye shield.
44. Any adult member of the coaching staff may legally verify that all their players are properly equipped.
45. Prior to the game the head coach shall be responsible for verifying to the referee that all of his team's players are equipped in compliance with the rules and will use no illegal equipment.
46. A player may remain in the game with illegal equipment after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty for the infraction.
47. When any required equipment is missing, correction must be made before participation.
48. The penalty for a player who is not properly equipped is not a distance penalty but requires removal of that player for at least one down.
49. The umpire is the only official who can correct or penalize a player that is missing required equipment.
50. The foul for not properly wearing required equipment during the down carries a 15-yard penalty.
51. Electronic communication equipment such as videotapes and computers shall not be used for coaching purposes during the game.
52. Phones and headsets may be used by players during a charged timeout when the sideline conference is used.
53. Accidentally kicking the ball in an effort to gain possession is a muff.

Answer Key

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|-------|--------------------|-------|---------------|
| 1. F | 4-2-1 | 28. T | 1-5-3 |
| 2. T | 2-16-2a, 4-2-2j | 29. T | 1-5-3b2 Nt |
| 3. T | 4-2-3d | 30. F | 1-5-3c1 |
| 4. T | 4-2-3a | 31. T | 1-5-3c1 |
| 5. T | 4-2-3a | 32. F | 1-5-3c1 |
| 6. T | 4-2-3a | 33. F | 1-5-3c8 |
| 7. F | 4-2-3a, 4-2-3d | 34. T | 1-5-3b1 |
| 8. F | 4-2-3b | 35. T | 1-5-3b2 Nt |
| 9. F | 4-2-3b | 36. F | 1-5-3b3 |
| 10. F | 4-2-3c | 37. T | 1-5-3a3 |
| 11. T | 4-2-3c | 38. T | 1-5-3a5a |
| 12. F | 4-2-3b | 39. F | 1-5-3a2 |
| 13. F | 1-3-2 | 40. F | 1.5.3 Cmt |
| 14. T | 1-3-3 | 41. F | 1-5-3c4b |
| 15. F | 1-5-1, 1-5-3b5 | 42. T | 1-5-3c4 |
| 16. T | 1-5-1a2 | 43. T | 1.5.3 Cmt |
| 17. T | 1-5-1a1 | 44. F | 1-5-4 |
| 18. T | 1-5-1a Nt, 1-5-4 | 45. T | 1-5-4 |
| 19. F | 1-5-1b2e, 1-5-1b3e | 46. F | 1-5-5, 9-8-1h |
| 20. T | 1-5-1d2 | 47. T | 1-5-5 |
| 21. T | 1-5-1d3 | 48. T | 1-5-5 |
| 22. F | 1-5-1d4 | 49. F | 1-5-5 |
| 23. T | 1-5-1d5a | 50. F | 1-5-6 |
| 24. T | 1-5-2b | 51. F | 1-6-1, 1-6-2 |
| 25. T | 1-5-2b | 52. T | 1-6-1 |
| 26. T | 1-5 Nt, 1-5-2b | 53. T | 2-24-1, 2-27 |
| 27. T | 1-5-2c Exc | | |