

SPECIAL 2021 ADDENDUM
to
THE REDDING STUDY GUIDE to NFHS FOOTBALL RULES
2020 EDITION

The following updates should be made to the *The Redding Study Guide to NFHS Football Rules, 2020 Edition* as a result of rules changes.

A new edition will be published for 2022.

I. Major Rules Changes for 2021

Blocking Below the Waist

Blocking below the waist is must now be contact which is immediate and the initial action following the snap (2-17-2c). See Chapter 8 for additional information.

Jerseys

A provision passed several years ago becomes effective for the current season: Home team jerseys must be a dark color that clearly contrasts to white (1-5-1b3). The change effectively eliminates light gray as a jersey color.

II. Changes to Chapter 3, Scrimmage Requirements and Live/Dead Ball

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SCRIMMAGE REQUIREMENTS

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).

EXAMPLE 3-0: With A7 three yards behind snapper A55, A55 lifts the ball and holds it behind his buttocks. A22, who was in motion takes the ball from A55 as A7 simulates have received the snap.
RULING: Illegal snap, the ball remains dead.

Pages 11-12:

Defensive (Team B) Requirements

Any time a defensive player who is initially lined up tight to the neutral zone jumps toward the neutral zone and there is question as to whether he was in the neutral zone and opposite offensive player(s) move, the defense should be penalized See Additional Example 18A.

18A. Defensive End B99 is lined up outside Right Tackle A66. B99 starts to charge the line of scrimmage on the outside shoulder of A66. A66 reacts to the oncoming charge by standing up out of a three-point stance. The official is uncertain if B99 entered the neutral zone during this action.
RULING: By philosophy the defense is penalized.

III. Changes to Chapter 4, The Running Game and Forward Progress

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Snap Location

EXAMPLE 4-23A: On a try, a pass is completed in the end zone, but A65 is flagged for holding at the B-4 near the left hash. For the replay from the B-14, the kicking team comes on the field and asks to move the ball back to the middle of field. **RULING:** Legal.

IV. Changes to Chapter 5, The Passing Game

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

- The passer, spiking the ball in an effort to stop the clock, does not release it immediately after controlling the snap, or does so after a muffed snap has touched the ground.

V. Changes to Chapter 6, The Kicking Game

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A penalty for a foul by Team K can never be enforced from a spot of first touching which is not also the dead-ball spot because acceptance of a penalty for a live-ball foul cancels the right to take the ball at the spot of first touching. Succeeding spot enforcement is discussed further in Chapter 11.

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Next Play

When a fair catch is made, the ball may be next put in play with a snap by the receiving team on the yard line through the spot of the catch anywhere between the hash marks or with a free kick as discussed in the following section(4-3-5d, 6-5-4a).

VI. Changes to Chapter 7, The Clock and Overtime

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Starting the Clock

The other exception only applies when there are less than two minutes remaining in either half in which case the offended team has the option to start the game clock on the snap (3-4-7). 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 (see the following section entitled "Referee's Discretion").

Play Clock

A double change of possession can be confusing to officials in regard to both the game and play clocks. The primary scenario is known in officiating lingo as A-B-A. The following play illustrates.

EXAMPLE 7-18A: Team A either has a forward pass intercepted or fumbles the ball which Team B recovers. On the return, Team B fumbles and Team A recovers inbounds. **RULING:** The game clock stops to award a first down to Team A and is started on the silent wind; the play clock is set to 40 seconds.

The preceding play is simply a first down inbounds by Team A. It is to be distinguished though from K-R-K in which Team K's kick is caught and returned by Team R, who then fumbles with Team K recovering. In that case, the game clock stops to award a first down to Team K and is started on the snap because of the legal kick; the play clock is set to 25 seconds.

Delay of Game

- Any other conduct which unduly prolongs the game (3-6-2e).

EXAMPLE 7-44A: On a running play late in the half, A44 is tackled inbounds at the B-17. Team B players hold A44 down and are deliberately slow to "un-pile" in an obvious attempt to consume time and prevent the officials from making the ball ready for play. **RULING:** A Team B foul for delay of game. The penalty is administered five yards at the succeeding spot. The game clock will start on the snap.

VII. Changes to Chapter 8, Major Fouls

Blocking Below the Waist

NEW IN 2021: The contact must be immediate and the initial action following the snap (2-17-2c).

Even though a lineman is in the zone, if he rises or takes a step back at the snap, he cannot block low. He may take a forward or lateral step as he lowers his torso to initiate the block. He may then take a second step as he initiates the contact. If contact is not made by the completion of the second step, the block is illegal. In most cases, a block of a head-to-head opponent will be legal. A block of an opponent lined up in an adjacent gap or opposite an adjacent teammate in the zone may be legal in a normal offensive formation; however, if the offensive formation has wide splits, the block is likely to be illegal. The initiation of the block and the contact must be a continuous motion.

The type of offensive formation e.g., shotgun, pistol or scrimmage kick, does not matter as long as the block is initiated immediately at the snap and is the initial action while the ball is passing through the zone. It also does not matter what type of stance the blocker begins his movement from (2.17.2E).

EXAMPLE 8-6A: A7 takes the hand-to-hand snap and hands the ball to A24 who plunges to the left of the snapper. Right Guard A66 steps back and blocks low against linebacker B54 who had stepped up to the line before the snap and attempted to shoot the gap to A66's right. **RULING:** The block is illegal. Although the ball was still in the zone and both players were on the line at the snap, A66's block was not his initial action at the snap.

EXAMPLE 8-6B: Same as the preceding example, except A66 takes two steps to his right and blocks low against B59 who had lined up head-to-head with Right Tackle A73. **RULING:** Again, the block is illegal. Although the ball was still in the zone, both players were on the line at the snap, and A66's block was his initial action at the snap, the block was not initiated immediately because A66 took too many steps to get to B59.

VIII. Changes to Chapter 9, Scoring

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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 10 yards from the previous spot, the K-20, and would give Team A a new series at the K-30.

VIII. Changes to Chapter 11, Penalty Enforcement

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The Try

The try begins when the ball is ready for play (8-3-2), thus fouls committed after the ready and before the snap on the try are enforced on the try (10-4-5b). They cannot carry over to the succeeding kickoff.

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Change of Possession Fouls *Additional Examples:*

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), the fumble was not a change of possession, so Team B can decline Team A's foul and keep the ball. In (b), the foul by the team last gaining final possession is prior to the change of possession, so the down must be replayed.

20A. On a kickoff, R20 catches the ball at the R10 and returns it to the R-40 where he is tackled by the facemask. During the return, R66 blocks K82 in the back at the R-25. **RULING:** Team R has the option of keeping the football by declining Team

K's foul. The team not last in possession, Team K, can then choose whether or not to accept Team R's foul, but they obviously will. It will be Team R's ball, first and 10 at the R-15. Otherwise, the fouls offset and the down is replayed.