



**2022 NFHS  
FOOTBALL  
CASE BOOK**

**Dr. KARISSA L. NIEHOFF, Publisher**  
Bob Colgate, Editor  
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PO Box 690  
Indianapolis, IN 46206  
Phone: 317-972-6900  
[www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)

## Foreword

This Football Case Book has been designated as the official supplement to the football rules book by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). The case book is universally used by game officials who are interested in football game administration, by coaches and instructors as a textbook for directed study by football squads, and in sports officiating courses.

Football leaders in all sections of the country have contributed accounts, reports and summaries of situations in games under their authority. Much assistance has been given by the executive officers of the member state high school associations and all who use this book in their football training program. It is recognized that when NFHS rules are changed, re-ordered or eliminated, plays may be rendered obsolete. If you find plays you think may be in error, please report them to your member state high school association.

### CASE BOOK FORMAT

A1 and B1 are players of the offensive Team A and the defensive Team B, respectively. A2 is a teammate of A1. K refers to the kicking team and R the receiving team.

The situation numbers identify the primary rule, section, article of the rules book which supports the interpretation. Situation numbers are designated with a "decimal" whereas rule references are shown with a "dash." Example: 7.2.7 is the case book play and 7-2-7 is the rules-book reference.

New or Modified Situations – Part I: All material in Part I is new. Part II: All situations which have been revised or which are new are shaded. All material has been brought up to date to coordinate with the current rules.

The case book contains some paragraphs entitled "Comment." The information contained in these sections is included to give the reader an insight into the background and development of a particular rule. These comments are intended to express the philosophy of the committee and the "spirit" of the rules.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The interpretations and rulings for all situations have been approved by the NFHS Football Rules Committee and are official. Additional interpretations are available from the inquirer's state high school association. The NFHS will assist in answering rules questions from member state associations whenever called upon.

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# PART I

## *Comments on the 2022 Rules Changes*

**Team Box May Be Extended By State Association Adoption [1-2-3g NOTES 3. (NEW), TABLE 1-7 (3.) (NEW)]** — By state association adoption, the team box may now be extended beyond the 25-yard line.

**Ball May Be Changed Between Downs [1-3-3]** — Any game official may order the ball changed between downs.

**SITUATIONS** — 1.3.3A, 1.3.3B

**The Number "0" is Now Legal [1-4-3, Figure 1-4-2, 1-5-1c(1), 7-2-5b EXCEPTIONS, 7-5-6a]** — The single digit number "0" is now a legal number.

**SITUATION** — 1.4.3

**A Chop Block Has Been Redefined [2-3-8]** — A chop block has been redefined as an illegal combination block where contact is made above and below the waist.

**SITUATION** — 9.3.2F

**Changed The Offended Team's Game Clock Options [3-4-7]** — Changed the offended team's game clock options following a foul committed with less than two minutes remaining in either half.

**SITUATIONS** — 3.4.7A, 3.4.7C, 3.4.7D

**Added A New Exception To The Play Clock Administration [3-6-1a(1)e EXCEPTION 2. (NEW)]** — Added a new exception to the play clock administration following a foul committed only by the defensive team.

**Added a New Exception For The Passer [7-5-2d EXCEPTION 2. (NEW), TABLE 7-5-2, TABLE 7-5]** — Added a new exception that allows the passer to legally throw the ball away to conserve yardage.

**SITUATIONS** — 7.5.2A, 7.5.2C

# PART II

## *Other Play Situations*

**NOTE:** Situation number is also the principal rule reference. Other related rule references are shown at the end of the ruling. A new situation in Part II or a revised situation is shaded.

## Rule **1** The Game, Field, Players and Equipment

### NUMBER OF PLAYERS

**1.1.3 SITUATION:** During the waning moments of the game, a fight erupts and several players from each team are disqualified. When order is restored, it is discovered Team A has 11 players available and B has only nine. There are no other team members eligible for participation following the mass disqualification.

**RULING:** Each team must have at least 11 players in order for the game to start. The game may continue even though one team does not have 11 players. There is no penalty for a team having fewer than 11 players, except when that team is on offense, there must be at least five players on the line of scrimmage. (2-14-1, 7-2-5a)

### TEAMS ENTERING FIELD

**1.1.6 SITUATION:** Prior to the game, both teams wait for the other team to go on the field first. **RULING:** The referee shall direct the home-team coach to have his team enter first. The referee has authority to rule on any situation not specifically covered in the rules.

### GAME OFFICIALS AUTHORITY

**1.1.7 SITUATION:** With 35:00 on the countdown clock, individuals on the field for pregame warm-up engage in unsportsmanlike behavior. The state association rule is that game officials: (a) assume authority 30 minutes before the game; (b) assume authority 45 minutes before the game; or (c) authority prior to the game is not addressed in state association rules. **RULING:** In (a) and (c), there is no foul as this is a game administration issue and not one under authority of the game officials. In (b), the unsportsmanlike conduct fouls would be assessed prior to the kickoff, and should be explained thoroughly by the referee prior to the coin toss options being given.

**1.1.8 SITUATION A:** A fight occurs toward the end of a game and the game has been terminated early. In (a) game officials identify the players in the altercation

on the field immediately and report the numbers to head coaches of both teams; in (b) game officials meet in the locker room to reconcile and agree on information and record the player numbers who were involved in the altercation. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), this is correct procedure. Game officials must then adhere to state association policy with regard to the filing of post-game reports.

**1.1.8 SITUATION B:** A fight occurs during or at the immediate end of the game and game officials record the known player numbers who were involved in the altercation. After the game, the state association requests a copy of the game film and in accordance with adopted state association procedures, determines additional players were involved and revises the numbers and names of the players involved and issues final rulings. **RULING:** This is correct procedure.

**1.1.8 SITUATION C:** Immediately following the contest, the coach of Team A curses the game officials as they are leaving the field and prior to their return to their dressing room. This occurs: (a) before; or (b) after the referee has declared the end of the contest with the proper signal. **RULING:** In either situation, this is an unsportsmanlike act. Fouls such as this foul will not involve a distance penalty as the game has ended for the purpose of on-field play, but unsportsmanlike acts such as this remain under the authority of the game officials for the purpose of filing necessary reports regarding unsportsmanlike acts. Incidents such as this shall be reported to the home school state association in accordance with adopted procedures.

### **VIDEO REPLAYS PROHIBITED**

**1.1.9 SITUATION:** A1 advances the ball to near B's goal line where several B players try to prevent the score. The covering official rules a touchdown. Sideline replay equipment clearly shows: (a) A1 fumbled the ball at B's 1-yard line; or (b) A1 stepped out of bounds on B's 2-yard line; or (c) A2 was illegally in motion at the snap. **RULING:** Unless the state association has approved replay for a post-season game, the touchdown is scored in all cases. Video monitoring or replay equipment shall not be used by game officials to make any decision relating to the game unless used in compliance with 1-3-7 NOTE as authorized in a state association postseason contest. (1-3-7 NOTE)

### **FIELD MARKINGS AND PYLONS**

**1.2.3 SITUATION:** The game officials inspect the playing field as a part of their pregame routine and determine that (a) the game field does not have the required markings such as a restraining line marked at all on the field from the sidelines and end lines or contains commercial logo art that obstructs the yard lines; or (b) the 3-yard line that is marked on the game field for the try is only 12 inches in length. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), the field markings are not legal by rule, but the game will be played. In (a), a 4-inch-wide restraining line shall be placed around the outside of the field, at least 2 yards from the sidelines and end lines, as an extension of the line limiting the team box area, except in stadiums where

the total playing enclosure does not permit. In (b), a line 4 inches wide and a minimum of 24 inches in length shall be centered in the field of play, 3 yards from each goal line. **COMMENT:** The game officials shall notify game management and the football administrator in their respective state association office to let them know that the football game field at this school was not properly marked as stated by NFHS football rules. (1-2-3d, 1-2-3k, 1-2-3l)

### GOAL POSTS

**1.2.5 SITUATION:** During the pregame meeting with the visiting coach, the coach complains to the referee that the distance between the goal posts is 18 feet, 6 inches as used at the college level. The college field is the home field for the host school: (a) The uprights are permanently set at 18 feet, 6 inches; or (b) the uprights are adjustable to 23 feet, 4 inches. **RULING:** In (a), it is permissible for the game to be played using the 18 feet, 6 inches goals. In (b), the adjustable goals shall be set at 23 feet, 4 inches.

### CHOICE OF BALL

**1.3.2 SITUATION A:** Prior to the start of the game, A has provided two balls for the referee's examination, but B has not provided a ball. **RULING:** There is no penalty if a team does not provide a ball; however, in this case, B will have to use the ball(s) provided by A until such time B offers a legal ball for the referee's approval.

**1.3.2 SITUATION B:** The referee has examined and verified the legality of a number of balls provided by each team prior to the game. However, during the course of the game, the weather conditions change dramatically and the teams wish to have additional balls approved for use. **RULING:** This is permissible and is within the intent of the rule.

**1.3.3 SITUATION A:** Team A: (a) requests a rubber ball on second down after using a leather ball on first down; or (b) on a dry day, requests a different leather ball on fourth down; or (c) after a score and before the try, requests a different leather ball than used during the touchdown play; or (d) recovers on the kickoff and requests a new ball. **RULING:** The Team A request is denied in (a), (b) and (c), unless the change in balls is ordered by the referee or other game official for reasons other than the Team A request. The Team A request is approved in (d). (1-3-2, 5-1-1a)

**1.3.3 SITUATION B:** During play in the fourth period, the quarterback of A (Visitor) informs the referee that their ball is losing air pressure and is no longer usable. A does not have another legal ball. The home-team coach complains when the referee secures the Team B ball from the ball person for use by Team A. **RULING:** The visiting team may use the home-team ball if it wishes. (1-3-2)

### LINE TO GAIN CREW

**1.3.5 SITUATION:** The "chain crew" who has been "doing this for 25 years," wants to have the line-to-gain equipment on the sideline even though there is plenty of

room to have the equipment 2 yards off the sideline on the restraining line. **RULING:** All "chain crews" must comply with Rule 1-3-5b. If the "chain crew" is insistent, the game officials should contact game administration to address the situation.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY EQUIPMENT**

**1.3.7 SITUATION:** The game officials are advised by the home-team management that supplementary equipment such as: (a) a ball-spotting device; (b) a ball-tracking device; (c) a visible play clock; or (d) instant-replay equipment (postseason contests), will be used during the game. **RULING:** None of the supplementary devices as described may be used unless the state association has given specific authorization. **COMMENT:** If responsibility for such supplementary equipment (such as the visible play clock) is given to a nonofficial, the operator must be capable and approved.

### **CAPTAIN'S DECISION/DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE**

**1.4.1 SITUATION:** Team A's captain requests a time-out prior to: (a) the designated representative making a penalty decision; or (b) deciding whether A will snap or free kick following a fair catch; or (c) designating where the ball is to be spotted on the 3-yard line for a try. **RULING:** Not allowed in (a), but permissible in (b) and (c). **COMMENT:** In the case of considering an awarded fair catch, the designated representative would have to make his decision on the penalty prior to requesting a time-out. After accepting the penalty via an awarded catch, a time-out can be taken to consider whether to snap or free kick. (2-32-5, 6-5-4, 10-1-1)

### **PLAYER NUMBERS**

**1.4.3 SITUATION:** After the ball has been marked ready for play, but prior to the snap, it is discovered: (a) A1 and A2 are both wearing number 81, or (b) B2 is wearing 00. **RULING:** In (a), it will become a foul at the snap for illegal numbering. In (b), it is a foul before the snap for illegal numbering and B2 will not be permitted to participate with that number, because 00 is not a legal number. If the illegal numbering is discovered during the down, it is a foul which occurred at the snap. [1-5-1c(1), 7-2-5d]

### **LEGAL EQUIPMENT**

**1.5.1 SITUATION A:** When the game officials arrive on the field they notice that both teams are wearing non-white jerseys. The visiting team's coach indicates that he was not informed prior to the game as to the color of the home-team's jerseys. **RULING:** It is the responsibility of the visiting team to wear its white jerseys when playing away from home. Whether the home team did or did not notify the visiting team of its school colors, the rules specify that the visiting team is to wear its white jerseys. The referee may require the home team to change to its white jerseys. This incident should be reported to the proper administrative authorities



at the visiting-team's school and the state association office.

**1.5.1 SITUATION B:** During the pregame visits with both teams, the referee and another game official note that the players are wearing brand new "throw back" jerseys with undersized and off-set numbers on the front of the jerseys. **RULING:** The referee may require both teams to change to legal jerseys, and should report the incident to the proper administrative authorities of each school and the state association office. (1-5-1c)

**1.5.1 SITUATION C:** During the down, A4 is noticed to (a) have a clear tooth and mouth protector; or (b) have a tooth and mouth protector that is only covering the upper, front teeth. **RULING:** In (a), there is no foul. In (b), an official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. **COMMENT:** Any time the play clock is interrupted for improperly worn or missing equipment by a player, and this was not due to game action, the player is to be removed from the contest for at least one play. All tooth and mouth protectors shall cover the posterior teeth but have no color requirement. The game officials should, through normal observations, attempt to verify that each player is legally equipped prior to the ball becoming live. [1-5-1d(5), 1-5-5, 1-5-6, 3-5-10e]

**1.5.1 SITUATION D:** During the pregame warm-ups, a game official notices some of the players of Team A wearing (a) sweatbands on their biceps, (b) sweatbands on their calves, or (c) pants which clearly do not cover the knees. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the uniform adornments must be removed prior to the individual becoming a player. In (c), the player may not participate without the pants covering the knees. [1-5-1e, 1-5-3a(5)]

**1.5.1 SITUATION E:** The umpire notices that a player does not have protrusions indicating that hip pads and tailbone protector are being worn. Upon investigating, it is found that (a) the player is not wearing any padding or (b) the player is wearing a manufactured girdle with closed cell, "bubble type" protective padding that conforms and covers the hips and tailbone. **RULING:** In (a), hip pads and tailbone protector are required equipment. An official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. **COMMENT:** Any time the play clock is interrupted for improperly worn or missing equipment by a player, the player is to be removed from the contest for at least one play. In (b), there is no padding criteria listed for hip pads and tailbone protector and, therefore, the pads are legal. [1-5-1d(1), 1-5-5, 1-5-6, 3-5-10e]

### **LEGAL AND ILLEGAL EQUIPMENT**

**1.5.2 SITUATION A:** During the pregame warm-up period, the home team's coach informs the umpire that all players' football gloves are new but none of the gloves have the required NOCSAE or SFIA label/stamp indicating compliance with the NOCSAE standard or the SFIA Specification. **RULING:** The gloves may not be

worn; all gloves must have the required NOCSAE or SFIA label/stamp.

**1.5.2 SITUATION B:** During the game, the umpire notices that a few of A's linemen have hand pads which do not have separate sections for each finger and do not have label/stamp indicating compliance with test specifications. **RULING:** These hand pads are legal. A NOCSAE or SFIA label/stamp is not required.

**1.5.3 COMMENT:** There are many items that would be considered to be illegal uniform adornments. Examples include but are not limited to: 1) Play cards designed for the wrist, but strapped to the belt as in 1-5-3c(8); 2) Eye shade as detailed in 1-5-3c(3) or that extends outside the eye socket or below the cheek bone; 3) Bandanas and other items if exposed from under the football helmet; and 4) Sweat bands not placed properly. Examples of items that have been determined to be legal are 1) Spats that properly cover the shoes as intended by the manufacturer; 2) Skull caps manufactured to be worn on the head that do not alter the fit of the football helmet and are not exposed outside of the football helmet; 3) Tinted eyewear worn on the face and under the face mask; 4) Hand warmers that do not enhance grip or create an advantage for a player.

**1.5.3 SITUATION A:** During the pregame visits with both teams, the referee notices that Team B's jerseys have a series of symbols representing a company or the jersey has both a logo and a company reference, but it is not the company's logo/reference or trademark. The referee indicates that the jersey is illegal and that the symbols must be removed. **RULING:** The referee is correct. Jersey and pants may not have anything representing the manufacturer except for one logo/reference or trademark, and that mark must meet the size restrictions. [1-5-3a(1)]

**1.5.3 SITUATION B:** A1 is wearing: (a) a biceps pad; or (b) a partially exposed hip pad; or (c) an ankle support. In all three cases a hard plastic surface on the outside of the pad/support is not covered, but all the edges are rounded and there are no cutting or abrasive surfaces. **RULING:** The items described in (a), (b) and (c) are legal. The exposed plastic does not require a covering on these specific items of equipment. However, if any of the plastic surface is cracked or has a cutting edge it would not be legal. If the biceps pad is connected to the shoulder pad, it must be fully covered by the jersey.

**1.5.3 SITUATION C:** Prior to the game, the coach of B requests the umpire to examine a cast/splint on the forearm of a player. The protective item has "hard" material, but is padded with at least ½-inch thick, closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding. The coach: (a) provides; or (b) does not provide to the umpire prior to the start of the game, a written authorization from a licensed medical physician directing the use of the cast/splint as necessary to protect an injury. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the cast/splint may be worn during the game. Written authorization is no longer required but the umpire must ensure the cast/splint is properly padded. [1-5-3b(1)]

**1.5.3 SITUATION D:** During the pregame visit with the head coach of A, the referee or another game official notices that some squad members have eyeshields which are: (a) dark, or (b) clear with no tint. The head coach of A has a letter from

a physician indicating that the dark shield is a necessity for the player. **RULING:** In (a), the game officials indicate to the head coach only eyeshields which are clear without the presence of any tint may be worn as a physician's statement cannot supersede this rule without expressed written consent of the state association. In (b), the eyeshield is legal if, in addition to being clear, it is also molded and rigid, and securely attached to the helmet. [1-5-3c(4)]

**1.5.3 SITUATION E:** A1, wearing jersey 68 and lined up as an ineligible, and A2, wearing jersey 98 and lined up as an end, desire to switch positions without switching jerseys and attempt to enter the huddle: (a) wearing Velcro replacement numbers; or (b) wearing a pullover dickie/shimmel/practice shirt with the correct number that would permit a position switch. **RULING:** Illegal in (a), as the jersey must be worn as intended by the manufacturer. Illegal in (b), because unless the new garment meets all of the specifications of the jersey requirements, including the number, it is illegal. (1-5-1)

### **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY**

**1.6.1 SITUATION A:** During the game, the coach of B is observed talking into (a) a tape recorder; (b) tablet computer; or (c) a mobile phone. **RULING:** In (a), (b) and (c), legal for use during or after the game, provided these (or any other electronic communication devices) are not used to communicate with a player during a between 9-yard marks conference. This precludes the use of any type of direct in-helmet communication with any player, and does not allow for the use of any electronic communication devices during a between 9-yard marks conference, allowing for their use only during outside 9-yard mark conferences. (1-6-2)

**1.6.1 SITUATION B:** During the game, the coach of Team B reports to the referee that (a) his wireless access has been interrupted and that he cannot use the software package he normally uses to record in-game details, or (b) Team B's headphones are not working. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), whether or not the headphones are working on either side does not come under the authority of the game officials, unless directed by the state association. (1-6-2)

**1.6.1 SITUATION C:** The coach of Team A calls time-out and chooses a between 9-yard marks conference. As the coach heads out to the field, the wing official notices that he is carrying a tablet computer or other electronic communication device that he has been using during the game. **RULING:** The game official covering that huddle should observe to ensure that the electronic communication device is not used to communicate with any player during the conference. (1-6-2)

**1.6.1 SITUATION D:** The quarterback of A: (a) after leaving the game and while in the team box, uses a headset to talk to a coach in the scouting booth; or (b) during a charged time-out, comes near the sideline to confer with two coaches who are wearing headphones; or (c) during a charged time-out, is handed the headset during a between 9-yard marks conference. **RULING:** Legal in (a) and (b)

during an authorized conference. Illegal in (c). (1-6-2, 9-8-1e)

**1.6.1 SITUATION E:** Between plays during the first period, the game officials notice that one of the teams is using electronic signage to signal plays from the sideline or to signal information to the players during a between 9-yard marks conference. **RULING:** Use of electronic signage is not permitted. The game officials should stop play and direct the coach to immediately disable/disconnect the device. If such use persists, a foul should be called. (9-8-1e)

**1.6.1 SITUATION F:** During the intermission between the third and fourth periods, A players come to the area in front of their team box to confer with their coaches. During the conference, the head coach talks via his headset to another coach in the press box and thereafter he: (a) discusses this conversation with his team; or (b) hands A1 his headset so that A1 may speak directly with the coach in the press box. **RULING:** Legal procedure in (a) and (b) as this is an authorized, sideline conference. The action in (b) would have been illegal during a between 9-yard marks conference. (2-6, 9-8-1e)

**1.6.1 SITUATION G:** During the first period, an assistant coach of B takes: (a) individual photographs of each set or formation of A and makes these available to the head coach during the halftime intermission; or (b) digital or other instant developing sequence photographs of A and gives these to the coach during the game. **RULING:** Legal in (a) and (b) provided they are not shown to the players during a between 9-yard marks conference. (1-6-1, 1-6-2, 9-8-1e)

**1.6.1 SITUATION H:** Team A has a computer at the game site and enters a record of offensive plays, defensive formations and other important data. This computer information is used: (a) after the game for evaluation of game performances; or (b) during the intermission between the first and second periods, the coach receives a computer printout of B's defensive alignments against various offensive formations; or (c) during the halftime intermission in the locker room, the coach views a computer screen displaying a summary of A's offensive play effectiveness. **RULING:** Legal in (a), (b) and (c) provided they are not shown to the players during a between 9-yard marks conference. (1-6-1, 1-6-2, 9-8-1e)

### STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTIONS

**1.7 SITUATION A:** During the pregame visit with the visiting team, the head coach asks the referee or other game official to examine an artificial: (a) arm; or (b) leg which is attached below the knee; or (c) leg which is attached above the knee. The coach has a letter or statement signed by the executive officer of the state association indicating approval of the artificial limb for football. **RULING:** The game officials have no decision to make as to whether it can be worn, unless required padding, etc., is missing. The artificial limbs in (a), (b) and (c) may be used since proper approval has been given as required by rule. Without the letter or statement of approval, the artificial limb could not be worn. **COMMENT:** State associations are permitted to provide reasonable accommodations to individual

participants with disabilities under the conditions of Rule 1-7. While the determination on the legality of this equipment, as well as the individual's ability to minimize risk, requires the judgment of medical authorities, it also requires the judgment of football administrators knowledgeable with the football rules and their purpose and philosophy. Each case must be handled on an individual basis, and each state association determines its own procedure for approval.

**1.7 SITUATION B:** A state association receives a request to allow a special uniform, patch or other insignia which is illegal by rule for a special purpose game (i.e., cancer awareness, military recognition, etc.). How should that be handled: **RULING:** Rule 1-7 allows for states to make special accommodations. However these accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athlete/others or place opponents at a disadvantage. Rather than allowing for illegal equipment, state associations should refer to other legal alternatives such as the allowances for commemorative or memorial patches, colors of sweatbands and other means of recognition that do not violate the rules. In the end, the state association must make the final determination.

## Rule **2** Definitions of Playing Terms

### ENCROACHMENT

**2.8 SITUATION A:** After the ball is marked ready for play for a scrimmage down: (a) B1 enters the neutral zone to give defensive signals; or (b) B2, the nose guard, places his hand on the ground so that it is in contact with the ball. After the ready-for-play signal and the snapper places hand(s) on the ball: (c) A1 or B3 break the plane of the neutral zone; or (d) B1 is conferring with his coach and is on A's side of the neutral zone. **RULING:** Encroachment in (a), (b), (c) and (d). Whenever a player is illegally in the neutral zone, it is encroachment. (7-1, 7-2)

**2.8 SITUATION B:** After the ball is marked ready for play for a free kick, but before it is kicked: (a) place-kick holder K1 kneels so one leg and part of his body are beyond K's free-kick line; or (b) K2 who is near the kicker or the place-kick holder is beyond K's free-kick line before the ball is kicked. **RULING:** In (a), it is permissible for the place-kick holder or the kicker to be beyond the free-kick line prior to the time the ball is kicked. In (b), it is encroachment for any other player to be beyond his free-kick line prior to the time the ball is kicked.

**2.8 SITUATION C:** Following the ready-for-play signal, but before the free kick: (a) R1 advances to block the kicker/holder and is beyond the plane of R's free-kick line before the ball is kicked; or (b) R has only four players within 5 yards of its free-kick line; or (c) R2, who is one of several R players within 5 yards of his free-kick

line, retreats from this area prior to the time the ball is kicked. **RULING:** In (a), it is encroachment. The covering official will sound his whistle to prevent the ball from being kicked when encroachment occurs. In (b) and (c), the action is legal, as there is no requirement for positioning of R players on their side of the neutral zone.

### **FORWARD PROGRESS AIRBORNE**

**2.15.2 SITUATION:** It is first and 10 for A at B's 12-yard line. A1 sprints near the end line and then buttonhooks. He jumps and possesses a forward pass while in the air above the end zone. (a) A1's momentum carries him back into the field of play and he lands and is downed on the 1-yard line; or (b) while in the air in the end zone, he is contacted by B1 and he is carried out of the end zone and downed on B's 2-yard line. **RULING:** In (a), it is A's ball first and goal at B's 1-yard line. In (b), it is a touchdown because A1 was contacted in the end zone. (2-4-1)

### **HELMET OR FACE-MASK CONTACT**

**2.20.1 SITUATION A:** From a four-point stance on the offensive line, interior lineman A1: (a) initially contacts an opponent by driving his face mask directly into the opponent's chest who is not the runner; or (b) contacts an opponent with his shoulder so that his head is to the side of the opponent's body and the helmet does not make initial contact; or (c) attempts to block an opponent with a shoulder, but because of a defensive slant, primary contact with the opponent is made with A1's helmet. **RULING:** The block in (a) is illegal butt blocking. In (b), even though there was some contact with the helmet, the block is legal because the helmet or face mask was not used to deliver the blow. In (c), the covering official will have to judge whether or not it is a foul. Because of defensive slants and stunts, there will be instances in which the blocker attempts to make a legal shoulder block, but inadvertently contacts an opponent with either his face mask or helmet. When this is the case, contact does not result in a direct blow and is legal. (9-4-3i)

**2.20.1 SITUATION B:** A1 is a flanker outside the free-blocking zone. Immediately following the snap, he comes back toward the ball and contacts B1 from the front above the waist in delivering a blow with his face mask. **RULING:** Even though the contact with B1 was above the waist, it is butt blocking because the front of the helmet was used to make initial contact. (9-3-2, 9-4-3i)

**2.20.1 SITUATION C:** During a running play beyond the neutral zone, A1 is momentarily in the clear and B1 comes up to make the tackle. B1 keeps his head in an upright position with his eyes on the numbers of A1 and: (a) moves his head at the last moment so that he contacts A1 with his shoulder; or (b) moves his head to attempt a shoulder tackle, but because of a sharp cut by A1, there is some contact with the side of the helmet of B1. **RULING:** A legal tackle in both (a) and (b). (2-42)

**GOAL-LINE EXTENDED**

**2.26.3 SITUATION:** Runner A1 is advancing towards B's goal line and is very near the sideline. (a) A1 advances into B's end zone while holding the ball outside the sideline plane; or (b) A1 dives toward the end zone, but is hit by B1 which causes him to land out of bounds beyond the goal-line extended. A1's last contact with the ground was short of the goal line. In both cases the ball breaks the plane of B's goal-line extended. **RULING:** In (a), it is a touchdown because A1 was touching inbounds when the ball broke the plane of the goal-line extended. However, in (b) since A1 was not touching inbounds and was short of the goal line when he was hit, it is not a touchdown even though the ball did break the goal-line plane extended. The ball is spotted at the inbounds spot on the yard line where the foremost point of the ball crossed the sideline plane when A1 was driven out of bounds.

**THE EXPANDED NEUTRAL ZONE**

**2.28.2 SITUATION A:** B1 is on his defensive line of scrimmage when he is contacted by ineligible lineman A1 and driven about 2 yards downfield. **RULING:** A1 is not illegally downfield, nor has he committed pass interference if a forward pass crosses the neutral zone, since he contacted B1 in or behind the neutral zone and after driving him downfield did not go beyond the neutral zone expanded. If it is a low scrimmage kick and B1 touches it, the touching is ignored. B1 is considered to be on his line when he is within 1 yard of his line of scrimmage at the snap. **If a scrimmage kick occurs, the neutral zone may not be expanded into the end zone.** (2-25-3, 6-2-6, 7-5-12)

**2.28.2 SITUATION B:** On a scrimmage kick R1 is 1½ yards behind his line of scrimmage when he jumps up and deflects the kick. (a) R1 was, or (b) was not, driven off the line of scrimmage by a block by K1. Is the touching of the kick ignored? **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), the touching of a low scrimmage kick is ignored. Whether a player was or was not blocked into the expanded zone does not affect this ruling.

**FREE KICK TOUCHES GAME OFFICIAL**

**2.29.3 SITUATION:** A free kick by K1 is touched by R1 on his 15-yard line and then it: (a) rolls out of bounds at R's 5-yard line; or (b) contacts a game official in the field of play and thereafter rolls out of bounds at the 5-yard line; or (c) contacts a game official who is straddling the sideline at the 5-yard line; or (d) contacts a game official in the end zone. **RULING:** The ball will be put in play by R from its 5-yard line in (a), (b) and (c). In (a), R1 was the last to touch the kick before it went out of bounds. In (b), the fact that the ball touched a game official who was inbounds does not change its status. In fact, this touching is ignored and therefore R1, in effect, was the last to touch the ball before it went out of bounds. In (c), when the loose ball touches a game official who is straddling the sideline, it causes the ball to be out of bounds and R1 was the last to touch it. In (d), the ball is dead when it breaks the goal-line plane and a touchback results. (6-1-9, 8-5-3a)

**PASS OR FUMBLE**

**2.31.2 SITUATION:** Quarterback A1 drops back to pass and is under a heavy rush. A1 is hit and the ball drops to the ground and B1 recovers. At the instant A1 was hit and lost possession, his passing arm was: (a) moving backward; or (b) was extended back, but not moving in either direction in relation to the line of scrimmage; or (c) was moving forward toward the line of scrimmage. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), it is a fumble and B gains possession. In (c), since A1's arm was moving forward toward the line of scrimmage, it is an incomplete forward pass and the ball becomes dead when it hits the ground. (2-18)

**DEFENSELESS PLAYER APPLICATION**

**2.32.16 COMMENT:** The following chart should help game officials distinguish application rules related to contact against defenseless players as defined in 2-32-16, provided the contact is not judged excessive per 9-4-3g.

<b>Defenseless Player Rule 2-32-16</b>	<b>Is contact allowed?</b>	<b>If Not Illegal Helmet Contact or Targeting:</b>
(a) A passer.	Yes	No foul if contact is legal and not late; otherwise roughing the passer. (9-4-4)
(b) A receiver attempting to catch a pass who has not had time to clearly become a runner.	Yes	No foul if contact is legal and not late; otherwise unnecessary roughness. (9-4-3g)
(c) The intended receiver of a pass in the action during and immediately following an interception or potential interception.	Yes	For an interception, no foul. For a potential interception, no foul if contact is unavoidable and not late; otherwise unnecessary roughness. (9-4-3g)
(d) A runner already in the grasp of a tackler and whose forward progress has been stopped.	No	Unnecessary roughness. (9-4-3g)
(e) 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.	Yes	For an attempt to catch, kick catching interference. (6-5-6) For an attempt to recover, no foul. For a completed catch or recovery, no foul.
(f) A player on the ground including a ball carrier who has obviously given himself up and is sliding feet first.	No	Unnecessary roughness. (9-4-3g)



(g) A player obviously out of the play or not in the immediate vicinity of the runner.	No	Unnecessary roughness. (9-4-3g)
(h) A player who receives a "blindside" block with forcible contact not initiated with open hands.	No	Illegal blindside block. (9-4-3n)

### PLAYER POSSESSION

**2.34.1 SITUATION:** R1 muffs a scrimmage kick after making a valid fair-catch signal. The kick is near the sideline where K1 attempts to recover, but muffs it and it goes out of bounds. **RULING:** The ball belongs to R at the inbounds spot. The touching by K1 prior to the ball going out of bounds does not constitute possession. (2-29-3, 2-41-4)

### ILLEGAL SHIFTS

**2.39 SITUATION:** Is it a shift if before the snap: (a) A's guards and tackles go from a hands-on-knees position to a three-point stance; or (b) back A1 misses the snap count and takes a half step forward while going from an upright position to a four-point stance; or (c) quarterback A1 takes a step forward and puts his hands under the center; or (d) quarterback A1 is in an upright position as he looks over the defense, but he then bends his knees and puts his hands under center? **RULING:** Yes, in (a), (b), (c) and (d). Each of these movements constitutes a shift. Normal shoulder and head movements by the quarterback are not considered a shift.

### DEAD-BALL SPOT

**2.41.3 SITUATION:** Runner A1 is tackled and one knee contacts the ground, but he holds the ball several feet forward. **RULING:** The dead-ball spot is below the ball's foremost point in the direction of the opponent's end line the instant the ball becomes dead by rule (because knee touched the ground), or is declared dead by a game official.

### TACKLING RUNNER

**2.42.1 SITUATION:** B1 tackles runner A1 with: (a) a cross-body block at the knees; or (b) a block from behind and below the waist; (c) his arms and shoulder; or (d) a trip with his foot. **RULING:** The techniques in (a), (b), and (c) are all legal methods of tackling the runner. The technique in (d) is not a legal method of tackling the runner. (2-45, 9-4-3o)

# Rule **3** Periods, Time Factors and Substitutions

## HALFTIME INTERMISSION

**3.1.1 SITUATION A:** The home management notifies the game officials and the visiting-team coach 30 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff that the halftime intermission will be extended for homecoming activities. **RULING:** The maximum length of the halftime intermission is 20 minutes. Any greater extension is not permitted either by mutual agreement or prior notification. **COMMENT:** By agreement of the opposing coaches, the halftime intermission may be reduced to a minimum of 10 minutes unless there has been a delay of at least 30 minutes due to weather in the last three minutes of the second period. (3-1-6, 3-1-6c, 3-1-6c EXCEPTION)

**3.1.1 SITUATION B:** Prior to the game, the participating schools have agreed to a 20-minute halftime intermission: (a) After 20 minutes have been placed on the game clock, planned band performances are canceled because of cold weather. Both teams arrive on the field with six minutes remaining on the game clock. Both coaches tell the game officials they have agreed to shorten the halftime intermission and want the game to start as soon as they have both had three minutes to warm up; or (b) As the teams leave the field, the timer places 20 minutes on the game clock and upon reaching 0:00, places three additional minutes on the game clock. **RULING:** In (a), mutual agreement of coaches to shorten the halftime intermission is permitted. They may not, however, shorten it to less than 10 minutes unless there has been a delay of at least 30 minutes due to weather in the last three minutes of the second period. Regardless of what it is shortened to, the three-minute warm-up time always must be added to whatever is agreed to for the halftime intermission. In (b), the time has been posted properly. (3-1-6, 3-1-6c, 3-1-6c EXCEPTION, 3-1-7)

**3.1.1 SITUATION C:** Upon returning to the field near the end of the normal 15-minute halftime intermission, the game officials notice one team standing quietly in front of its bench during the entire three minutes posted for warm-up. The game officials: (a) start the game as soon as the three minutes have elapsed, or (b) inform the coach of that team that the team must actively warm up by running or doing some kind of exercises. **RULING:** The game officials are correct in (a), but in error in (b). The rules book contains no definition of what constitutes a warm-up. It simply requires that an opportunity to warm up be made available. (3-1-7)

**3.1.1 SITUATION D:** Both teams are informed of a 15-minute halftime intermission. The game officials remind the teams that the halftime intermission period is nearing an end, and that the three-minute warm-up period will begin immediately. Team A returns to the field prior to the end of the halftime intermission, however

Team B is not on the field when the halftime intermission ends and the timer immediately and appropriately starts the three-minute warm-up period. Team B does not arrive on the field until the three-minute warm-up period has expired.

**RULING:** The head coach of Team B is charged with unsportsmanlike conduct and B is penalized 15 yards to start the second half. Though Team B has violated the rule by not being on the field at the end of the halftime intermission, and by not being on the field at the end of the three-minute warm-up period, only one unsportsmanlike conduct foul is penalized. (3-1-7, 9-8-1g)

### **DELAYING OR SUSPENDING PLAY**

**3.1.5 SITUATION A:** During the second period, a cloudburst brings a torrent of rain onto a grass field. The game officials suspend play and after a 20-minute delay determine the field is no longer playable. **RULING:** While the game officials are authorized to delay or suspend a game when weather conditions are construed to be hazardous to life or limb, such as lightning, tornado alert, etc., a heavy shower which only affects the playing conditions, may or may not be judged by the game officials to be hazardous to life or limb. While the game officials are the final authority on suspending play, it is a good practice for the game officials to discuss the alternatives with game management and representatives of both teams before suspending the game.

### **REFEREE'S DECISION**

**3.1.5 SITUATION B:** During the third period, a thunderstorm moves into the area. The crew of game officials huddle to assess the situation. There is disagreement among the crew as to whether the game should be suspended. **RULING:** The referee will make the final decision. If possible, he should involve game administration from each school before making the final decision unless there is no time for discussion. Risk minimization must always be the primary consideration. **COMMENT:** Game officials should study and observe the "NFHS Guidelines on Handling Contests During Lightning Disturbances" as printed in the back of the NFHS Football Rules Book, as well as applicable state association guidelines. (1-1-5)

### **FOULS DURING DOWN IN WHICH TIME EXPIRES – EXTENDING A PERIOD**

**3.3.3 SITUATION A:** With the score B-7 and A-6, it is second and goal from B's 9-yard line. The game clock is stopped due to an incomplete pass with four seconds remaining in the game. A1's pass into the end zone is intercepted by B1 who runs to his 30-yard line where he is downed. Following the interception and during the run by B1, there is clipping in the end zone by B2. Time expires during the run. **RULING:** If the penalty for the foul by B2 is declined, the period is over. If the penalty is accepted, it results in a safety (two points) for A; however, the period is not extended. If this occurs at the end of period one or three, the teams will change ends of the field and B will kick from B's 20-yard line. [3-3-4b(5)]

**3.3.3 SITUATION B:** Near the end of the third period, it is third and 4 for A from B's 48-yard line. A1 advances to B's 45 and during the run there is holding by B1. The penalty is accepted. At the end of the down there are three seconds remaining in the period. Because the penalty was the only reason for the game clock to be stopped, it is started with the ready-for-play signal and the period ends before A snaps the ball. **RULING:** A is not entitled to an untimed down as time did not expire during the down.

#### **INADVERTENT WHISTLE**

**3.3.3 SITUATION C:** During a down when time expires, A1 gains 10 yards and fumbles. The covering official inadvertently sounds his whistle while the ball is loose. **RULING:** The period shall be extended for an untimed down and A may put the ball in play where it lost possession or it may choose to replay the down from the previous spot. (3-3-3c)

#### **DEAD-BALL FOUL – NO EXTENSION**

**3.3.3 SITUATION D:** With the ball at B's 1-yard line and 12 seconds remaining in the game, A1 advances to the ½-yard line. After the ball is dead, B1 fouls. The game clock is stopped with five seconds remaining in the game. A has the option to start the game clock on the snap, but chooses to start the game clock on the ready-for-play signal. The game clock is restarted when the ball is marked ready for play. Before A can snap the ball, time expires. **RULING:** The game is ended. There is no extension of the period for an untimed down, unless there is acceptance of the penalty for a foul that occurs during a down in which time expires. B1's foul did not occur during the down. However, if the referee judges B1 committed the foul to consume time, he shall delay starting the clock until the snap. **COMMENT:** When either team attempts to conserve or consume time illegally, the referee shall invoke Rule 3-4-6 and start or delay the start of the game or play clocks as authorized. (3-4-6, 3-4-7, 3-6-2f, 9-10-2)

#### **TRY OR NOT**

**3.3.3 SITUATION E:** A1 breaks free on B's 20-yard line and is near the goal line on a run which will score the go-ahead touchdown. Just before entering the end zone, A1 turns and taunts B1. Time in the fourth period expires during the run. **RULING:** The touchdown is scored and the unsportsmanlike foul by A1 cannot be penalized. While such situations do not occur frequently, it must be recognized that at some point penalty enforcement is ended. If the try is required for playoff qualification, the penalty is enforced on the try. (10-4-5a)

**3.3.3 SITUATION F:** With the score A-14, B-23, A scores a touchdown: (a) as time expires in the fourth period; or (b) as time expires in the third period; or (c) as time expires in the fourth period in a state in which a tie-breaking procedure for playoff qualification is based on points scored. **RULING:** In (a), the try will not be permitted

– the game is over and the final score is A-20, B-23. In (b), the try is attempted as part of the third period. The try in (c) is permissible if the potential point(s) is needed in a tie-breaker system for playoff qualification. Each state must interpret this provision as it applies to its particular qualifying plan. (8-3-1 EXCEPTION)

### **AWARDED CATCH EXTENDS PERIOD**

**3.3.3 SITUATION G:** K1 punts on fourth and 15 from his own 20-yard line. R1 signals for a fair catch at R's 30. K2 commits kick-catching interference at R's 35 and time for the second period expires during the down. R2 recovers the kick at R's 28. **RULING:** If R declines the penalty, the period is over. If R accepts an awarded catch or has the penalty otherwise enforced, the period will be extended by an untimed down. (6-5-6 PENALTY)

### **NO UNTIMED DOWN**

**3.3.4 SITUATION A:** Time expires for the second period as A11 runs the ball beyond the line to gain and A11 then throws a forward pass to A9 who scores a touchdown. **RULING:** Team B will likely accept the penalty, which will negate the touchdown. The period will not be extended as A's foul contained a loss-of-down provision.

**3.3.4 SITUATION B:** The game clock is running with 10 seconds remaining in the fourth period as A1 drops back about 4 yards and intentionally grounds a forward pass to stop the game clock. The penalty is accepted and B will likely decline the option to start the game clock on the snap. The referee starts the game clock on the ready following penalty enforcement and time expires before A can snap the ball. **RULING:** If B accepted the penalty for A's foul and declines the option to start the game clock on the snap, the game is over. There is no untimed down as the game clock did not expire during the down in which A1 committed the foul. (3-4-6, 3-4-7)

**3.3.4 SITUATION C:** On a down in which time expires for the period, Team A throws a pass which is intercepted by B1. B1 advances to the 3-yard line 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 an apparent touchdown. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), B has thrown an illegal forward pass. In (c), B is guilty of illegal handing the ball forward. In (a), A will accept the penalty. In (b) and (c), A will accept the penalty to negate the score. If this occurs at the end of the first or third period, B will have the ball first and 10 to start the subsequent period following enforcement of the penalty. If this occurs at the end of the half, the half is over. In (a), (b) and (c), the period will not be extended as Team B has committed a foul for which the loss-of-down aspect does not apply to the penalty when enforced. (5-2-2)

**3.3.4 SITUATION D:** In the middle of a period, Team A throws a pass which is intercepted by B1. B1 advances to the 8-yard line where he: (a) throws an incom-

plete 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 after enforcement of the distance penalty, as the loss-of-down aspect of the penalty would not apply. (5-2-2)

### END OF PERIOD

**3.3.5 SITUATION A:** A trails by three points in the fourth period with the ball on B's 20, fourth and 10 and two seconds on the game clock. A1 throws an incomplete pass into B's end zone with time expired. The referee quickly glances to each sideline and then begins to leave the field. After the referee crosses the sideline, the referee hears the line judge blowing his whistle. The line judge explains that B1 committed pass interference during the down in which time expired. **RULING:** The game is not officially over even though the referee left the field. Since a foul had been called, the referee will give A a chance to accept the penalty and extend the period with an untimed down from B's 10-yard line. **COMMENT:** The game is officially over when the referee holds the ball overhead and leaves the field. Before doing this however, the referee should pause briefly and glance to both sidelines and make sure there are no fouls, no obvious timing error, no request for a coach-referee conference, etc.

**3.3.5 SITUATION B:** Time expires at the end of the second period during a scrimmage kick. After the down, K1 piles on and R1 strikes K2. **RULING:** The penalties for these dead-ball fouls cancel. R1 will be disqualified for fighting. (9-4-1, 10-2-5b, c; 10-4-5b)

### STARTING AND STOPPING THE GAME CLOCK

**3.4.2 SITUATION A:** Near the end of the second period, there is a false start by A1 clearly for the purpose of stopping the game clock: (a) in the first or third periods or with two minutes or more remaining in the second or fourth periods; or (b) with less than two minutes remaining in the second or fourth periods. When will the game clock be restarted? **RULING:** In (a), because the foul was the only reason for stopping the game clock, it will be restarted on the ready-for-play signal following the enforcement of the penalty unless the referee feels compelled to start the game clock on the snap by 3-4-6. In (b), Team B shall have the option to start the game clock on the snap. (3-4-7)

**3.4.2 SITUATION B:** K1's kickoff is caught by R1 and returned to R's 30. While the kick is in flight, R2 blocks K2 below the waist on R's 40. **RULING:** If the penalty is declined, R will have the ball first and 10 on R's 30. Since the game clock is stopped for a new series following a legal kick, the game clock will start with the snap. If the penalty is accepted, K will rekick from R's 45. The game clock will start when the kick is touched other than first touching by K. When a free kick down is replayed, the game clock will start the same as it does on the original free kick. (3-4-1, 3-4-3)

**3.4.2 SITUATION C:** Near the end of a period with 28 seconds left, K1 punts on fourth down. During the kick the covering official inadvertently sounds his whistle. The game clock is stopped with 23 seconds remaining. **RULING:** The game clock will be started with the ready-for-play signal. The down must be replayed.

**3.4.2 SITUATION D:** There are 55 seconds to go in the game when K11 punts the ball from a fourth and 10 situation. R1 catches the kick and returns 10 yards. During the down, but prior to the catch, K3 holds R2. R accepts the penalty. **RULING:** After enforcement, the game clock starts on the ready-for-play signal unless the offended team chooses to start the game clock on the snap inside the last two minutes of either half. [3-4-2b(3)]

**3.4.3 SITUATION A:** During a scrimmage kick: (a) R1 signals for and makes a fair catch; or (b) R2 is contacted by K1 before he can attempt to catch the kick. **RULING:** In (a), the game clock was stopped because of the fair catch. It will start when the ball is snapped, or if put in play by a free kick, when the ball is touched other than first touching by K. In (b), the action which caused the game clock to be stopped was the foul by K1. When there is kick-catching interference, the offended team has a number of choices. If an awarded fair catch is accepted, the game clock will start as in (a). (3-4-2b)

**3.4.3 SITUATION B:** There are 40 seconds to go in the first period when A is faced with a punting situation against a strong wind while deep in its own territory. After running 23 seconds off the game clock, A is called for a false start. **RULING:** If B accepts, A will be penalized 5 yards and the referee has the discretion to start the game clock on the snap if it is judged that A was consuming time illegally. (3-4-6)

**3.4.3 SITUATION C:** Receiver A1 controls a pass while airborne near A's sideline. B1 contacts A1 (but does not carry him) who then lands out of bounds in possession of the ball. B1 does not drive the receiver backward from his forward progress. The covering official rules an incomplete pass. **RULING:** The game clock is stopped because of the receiver being out of bounds; therefore, the pass is incomplete. The game clock will start with the snap.

**3.4.3 SITUATION D:** With third and 10: (a) A1 fumbles the ball and B recovers, or (b) A1's pass is intercepted by B. When will the game clock be restarted? **RULING:** Since a change of possession has occurred in both (a) and (b) and B is awarded a new series of downs, the game clock will start on the snap.

**3.4.3 SITUATION E:** On fourth down (a) K1's punt is blocked by R1 behind the neutral zone where K2 recovers and advances beyond the line to gain, or (b) is stopped behind the line to gain. **RULING:** In (a) and (b) the game clock will start on the snap because a new series has been awarded following a legal kick.

**3.4.3 SITUATION F:** K11 punts on fourth and 10. R1 catches the kick after giving a legal fair catch signal. Prior to the snap, K2 was illegally in motion. R accepts the penalty for illegal motion. **RULING:** Regardless of where R chooses enforcement, after enforcement the game clock shall start on the snap as both the down ending and game clock stopping was due to the fair catch.

**3.4.3 SITUATION G:** A1 throws an incomplete pass on third down. During the play, A3 holds. B accepts the penalty. **RULING:** After enforcement, the game clock shall start on the snap. (3-4-3e)

#### **REFEREE ORDER GAME OR PLAY CLOCK STARTED/STOPPED**

**3.4.6 COMMENT:** Is there suggested guidance in determining situations where a team may be conserving or consuming time illegally and the referee should consider starting/stopping the game or play clock, as in Rule 3-4-6 outside of the final two minutes of either half? Yes. In general, the referee must be aware of game situations where A could manipulate the game or play clock by repeatedly committing dead-ball fouls, or in other ways, intentionally try to restart the play clock in a situation when it would normally start on the ready in order to manipulate the remaining time.

The following represent examples of plays where the referee may need to start or stop the game or play clock to ensure competitive fairness to both teams: a) With 19 seconds remaining on the game clock but only 5 seconds remaining on the play clock, the game clock is running in the first period. Team K is in punt formation on fourth down. K will apparently be kicking into a strong wind. Lineman K62 commits a 'false start' just before the snap. If this occurs, K should be penalized 5 yards if accepted. The referee shall invoke Rule 3-4-6 and start the game clock on the snap. b) With the game clock running, A2 does not have his chinstrap snapped as the ball is about to become "live." In this case, the play clock should be stopped and the player removed from the game for one play unless the halftime intermission or overtime intermission occurs. The game clock will start on the snap, unless the referee invokes Rule 3-4-6 if he felt an advantage was intentionally gained. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but only to offer guidance to referees.

#### **ACCEPTED PENALTY INSIDE TWO MINUTES OF EITHER HALF**

**3.4.7 SITUATION A:** With time expiring inside the last two minutes in the second or fourth period and A behind in the score, A1 intentionally throws the ball forward to the ground in order to stop the game clock. A1's action took place: (a) immediately after receiving the snap while A1 was lined up 3 yards deep; or (b) immediately after receiving the snap; or (c) after A1 delayed and throws an illegal forward pass. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the grounding is legal and the game clock remains stopped until the subsequent snap. Illegal forward pass in (c), and the game clock shall be started on the ready-for-play signal unless Team B chooses to start the game clock on the snap. (7-5-2d EXCEPTION)

**3.4.7 SITUATION B:** With less than a minute remaining in the game, the score is 21-20 in favor of B. The game clock is running and the ball is on B's 10-yard line. An option play on third down gains 5 yards, but is short of a first down. Following the tackle, the tackler B1 holds A1 down for a few moments, but the covering official does not judge the action to be illegal. **RULING:** Though B1 may have held A1 down momentarily, the game clock will continue to run because no foul was called. **COMMENT:** In some situations there is a delay in unpling and no



individual player or team is to blame. In such situations the referee is authorized to stop the game clock momentarily so no more clock time than normal is used in getting the ball ready for play. (3-4-3h)

**3.4.7 SITUATION C:** 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 game clock on the snap. If Team A declines to start the game clock on the snap, Team B is then given the option of starting the game clock on the snap. With Team B trailing, Team B will likely choose to start the game clock on the snap. (10-1-3)

**3.4.7 SITUATION D:** Team B is trailing with less than two minutes remaining in the game. On third down, A53 commits a holding foul and Team A is stopped short of the line to gain inbounds. **RULING:** Whether or not B accepts A's foul for holding, B may choose to start the clock on the snap. (3-6-1)

#### **TIMING ERROR**

**3.4.8 SITUATION:** During the second down of a series, the game clock goes directly from 1:45 to :45 and is not detected. Following third down, time expires for either the first or second period: (a) before, or (b) after the referee has indicated the period has officially ended, the error is discovered. **RULING:** In (a), the timing error is correctable because it was discovered prior to the second live ball and before the period officially had ended. However, in (b), the timing error cannot be corrected whether it is the first or second period. (3-3-5)

#### **TIME-OUT: CONFERENCE, SUCCESSIVE, HEAT**

**3.5.1 SITUATION A:** Team A and Team B are tied at the conclusion of the fourth period and the state association has adopted the procedure for resolving tied games as listed in the NFHS Football Rules Book. Team A has utilized one time-out in the second half and Team B has used three. The procedure for resolving tied games grants one time-out to each team in each overtime period. The coach of Team A asks the referee if his team will now have three time-outs in overtime (the two unused plus the one for the first overtime). **RULING:** The team has only one time-out per period, and that the unused second half time-outs do not carry over to overtime. Both teams will have one time-out in each overtime period.

**3.5.1 SITUATION B:** Team A and Team B are in the third overtime series attempting to resolve a tied game using the NFHS-recommended Resolving Tied Games procedure. Team A has not utilized any time-outs during overtime. As Team B sets up for a field-goal attempt in the third overtime, Team A calls time-out. Following the time-out, the head coach requests another time-out due to the fact that he has not yet utilized a time-out during overtime. **RULING:** The request is denied because unless otherwise altered by the state association, the NFHS-recommended Resolving Tied Games procedure limits time-outs to one per overtime period.

**3.5.2 SITUATION A:** The captain of A requests a time-out and informs the referee that the coach wishes to have a conference concerning the previous play. During the conference: (a) the captain or all A players go near the sideline to confer with their coaches, or (b) the coach of B goes on the field to the team's huddle to confer. **RULING:** Permissible in both (a) and (b). The time-out, when granted, is charged to A, thus legalizing the conferences. If a game official has erred and a correction is made, the conference in both (a) and (b) is terminated. In that case, the time-out is not charged to A, but is an official's time-out. If the coach is in error, the time-out remains charged to A. (2-6, 3-5-2c)

**3.5.2 SITUATION B:** Team A wishes to call a time-out: (a) a player requests a time-out; (b) the head coach on the field requests a time-out; (c) an assistant coach on the field requests a time-out; (d) the head coach is in the press box and an assistant coach on the field requests a time-out; or (e) the head coach has been disqualified and an assistant coach on the field requests a time-out. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), upon visual contact, the time-out is granted. In (c), (d) and (e), the time-out is granted only if the coach is the head coach's designee.

**NOTE:** The designee shall remain in place for the entire game except in case of emergency.

**3.5.4 SITUATION:** Near the end of the second period, A requests and is granted a charged time-out. After both teams are ready to play, A comes to the line of scrimmage in an unusual formation. The captain of B immediately requests a time-out which is granted. At the end of this time-out period, when A comes to the line of scrimmage again, A1 notices B has adjusted its defense. A1 then requests a second charged time-out during the same dead-ball period. **RULING:** If A has time-outs remaining, the referee will grant the request for the charged time-out. Successive time-outs by the same team, or by one team followed by the other team, are permissible.

**3.5.8 SITUATION A:** During a charged time-out, an official's time-out for heat/humidity, a TV/radio time-out, or the intermission between the first and second or the third and fourth periods, or following a try: (a) team members of A confer with their head coach in front of the team box near the sideline; or (b) the coach of B goes to the huddle of B between the 9-yard marks, and talks to an assistant via a headset he brought to the huddle; or (c) the coach of B goes on the field and uses the time to berate and loudly question the referee regarding a previous play; or (d) the coach wishes to discuss the previous play with the referee; or (e) the head coach of A goes to the team huddle on the field for 30 seconds and then comes out and another coach takes his place for the rest of the time-out. **RULING:** It is a legal conference in (a) and (b). In (a), the players may use the headsets. In (b), the players may not use the headsets. In (c) and (e), it is illegal. In (d), this conference must be held at the sideline in front of the team box regardless of which authorized conference procedure is used. (2-6-2, 9-8-1c, 9-8-1i)

**3.5.8 SITUATION B:** A game official stops the game clock for an injury to player A1. While the injured player is being attended to, the coach of Team B attempts to hold a conference (a) between the 9-yard marks; or (b) in front of the team box outside the 9-yard marks. **RULING:** In (a) the conference must move outside the 9-yard marks; in (b), legal conference. **COMMENT:** If the injured player is being attended in the area outside the 9-yard marks, the game officials should relocate the conference outside the 9-yard marks to an area that allowed for uninhibited access to the injured player by all appropriate health-care professionals.

### **INJURED/BLEEDING PLAYER – TIME-OUT**

**3.5.10 SITUATION A:** A game official stops the game or play clock when he notices quarterback A1 has a bloody nose. A1 is directed to go to his team box. The coach of A then requests a time-out and A1's bleeding is stopped during the time-out. A1 re-enters with other teammates following the time-out. **RULING:** A1 must remain in the team box for at least one down. A time-out called after a game official has stopped the game or play clock for an injured player does not allow the injured player to remain in the game. Any conference during the official's time-out must be held outside the 9-yard marks. If the coach's request for a charged time-out is granted, either type of conference may be used, but A1 may not re-enter the game until one play has elapsed and cannot participate in an on-field conference. [3-5-8a(3), 3-5-8c, 3-5-10]

**3.5.10 SITUATION B:** A1 has an open wound or scratch on his arm. In (a) Team A takes a charged team time-out before the wound is noticed by a game official; or (b) the covering official calls an official's time-out for the player's injury to be evaluated. **RULING:** In (a), if A1's wound is properly treated before the time-out ends, he may return to the game immediately; in (b), because the covering official's time-out was taken, A1 must leave the game for at least one down and may not return until the wound is properly treated. In (b), any conference must be held outside the 9-yard marks. [3-5-8a(3), 3-5-8c]

**3.5.10 SITUATION C:** Midway through the second period, the game clock is stopped for: (a) an incomplete forward pass; or (b) a measurement; or (c) an out-of-bounds play, when a game official notices that A1 appears to be injured. **RULING:** A1 must be replaced for at least one down in (a), (b) and (c). As it is an official's time-out. If A1 is injured during the last down of either half, he may return for the first play or down of the second half or overtime period.

### **CONCUSSION**

**3.5.10 SITUATION D:** What guidelines should the game officials follow in determining if a player may have a concussion? **RULING:** Game officials should observe players. If any player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems), the game officials shall ensure that the player is

immediately removed from the game. All game officials should review the NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports in the back of the NFHS Football Rules Book.

### HELMET COMING OFF

**3.5.10 SITUATION E:** During a down, the helmet of A1 or B1 comes off: (a) after an opponent grasps the face mask, chin strap or tooth and mouth protector; (b) after a legal block to the opponent; (c) after a legal block by an opponent; or (d) after either falls to the ground without contact; (e) after either falls to the ground immediately following the ball becoming dead. **RULING:** In (a), the player does not have to be replaced for one down. In (b), (c), (d) and (e), the player must be replaced for one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. When in doubt, and particularly when no foul is called, the player must be replaced for one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. An officials or charged team time-out does not exempt the player from being replaced for one down.

**3.5.10 SITUATION F:** While tackling runner A1, B1's helmet comes off as a result of the legal tackle. **RULING:** B1 must be replaced for one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs.

**3.5.10 SITUATION G:** Runner A1 is tackled legally by B1 and B2. A1's helmet comes off during the tackle. **RULING:** A1 must be replaced for one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. The ball becomes dead when A1's helmet comes off. (4-2-2k)

### MISSING OR IMPROPERLY WORN EQUIPMENT

**3.5.10 SITUATION H:** B10 has (a) a two-attachment points chin strap or (b) a four-attachment points chin strap and the umpire notices that not all attachment points are secured. **RULING:** All available attachment points must be secured and all helmets must be secured with a four-attachment points system. An official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. **COMMENT:** Any time the play clock is interrupted for improperly worn or missing equipment by a player, the player is to be removed from the contest for at least one play. (1-5-5, 1-5-6, 3-5-10e)

**3.5.10 SITUATION I:** Team A's players are wearing jerseys: (a) just covering the shoulder pads, and their midriffs are exposed; or (b) that extend below the top of their pants, but some players have them tucked in, while others have them outside their pants; or (c) that are waist length, but have tucked them up under the bottom of their shoulder pads; or (d) with an undershirt that extends below the top of the waist line of the pants and is not tucked in. **RULING:** The jerseys in (a) and (c) are not legal. An official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. This incident should be reported to the proper administrative authorities at the vis-

iting team's school and the state association office. In (b) and (d), the jerseys (and undershirts) of all players will have to be tucked inside the pants upon discovery and tucking the jerseys may not delay the ready-for-play signal. If repair cannot be made without delaying the ready-for-play signal, an official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. **COMMENT:** Any time the play clock is interrupted for improperly worn or missing equipment by a player, the player is to be removed from the contest for at least one play. [1-5-1b(1), 1-5-5, 1-5-6, 3-5-2b, 3-5-10e]

**3.5.10 SITUATION J:** During a play during the first period, B1 is detected wearing: (a) an earring; or (b) a necklace; or (c) a ring; or (d) a medical alert bracelet; or (e) a religious medallion. **RULING:** In (a), (b) and (c), an official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. B1 must comply with the rules before further participation. **COMMENT:** Any time the play clock is interrupted for improperly worn or missing equipment by a player, the player is to be removed from the contest for at least one play. In (d), legal if securely attached to the body and visible, if necessary, and judged by the game official not to present a hazard to the wearer or other players. In (e), the medallion must be taped to the body. [1-5-3c(6)]

**3.5.10 SITUATION K:** Near the end of the first period, A1 is discovered to be wearing: (a) shoes with cleats which are more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in length; or (b) a slippery substance on his uniform, exposed body part or hands; or (c) a knee brace which has an unpadded strip of metal across the front of the leg; or (d) a glove that does not contain the appropriate NOCSAE or SFIA glove seal; or (e) a helmet without an exterior warning label. **RULING:** In (a), (b) and (e), an unsportsmanlike penalty is assessed from the succeeding spot because the head coach has previously verified all players were using only legal equipment. In (c) and (d), an official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. If the equipment is detected between downs and can be removed or made legal without delaying the ready-for-play signal, the player may remain in the game. **COMMENT:** Any time the play clock is interrupted for improperly worn or missing equipment by a player, the player is to be removed from the contest for at least one play. (1-5-4)

**3.5.10 SITUATION L:** In the first period, the umpire observes three linemen for Team A wearing towels. One towel is solid blue, and the other two are white. **RULING:** An official's time-out is declared and the player must be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. If the equipment is detected between downs and can be removed or made legal without delaying the ready-for-play signal, the player may remain in the game. If towels are worn by multiple players, they must all be of the same solid color, and must conform to the limitations on size and restrictions on manufacturers'

logo/trademark reference. **COMMENT:** Any time the play clock is interrupted for improperly worn or missing equipment by a player, the player is to be removed from the contest for at least one play. [1-5-3a(5)a]

### **MISAPPLICATION OF RULES**

**3.5.11 SITUATION A:** It is third and 8 from A's 45 when A1 throws an incomplete forward pass. Erroneously the ball is spotted at the 50, the ball marked ready for play, and K1 punts the ball into R's end zone. Following the down, the R captain requests a time-out so the coach may discuss the misapplication of the rules with the referee on the missed spotting of the ball after third down. **RULING:** It is too late to make any correction. The error had to be recognized and correction made before the ball was snapped on fourth down.

**3.5.11 SITUATION B:** Following a fourth-down incomplete forward pass late in the fourth period, a time-out is properly requested for a coach-referee conference regarding possible misapplication of a rule. (a) The coach of B questions a pass interference call on B1 during a second forward pass by A1; or (b) the coach of A questions why no pass interference by the defense was called and why the covering official inappropriately signaled that the pass was not catchable. In either case the referee determines the coach was correct and an incorrect ruling and inappropriate signal had been applied. **RULING:** In (a), the penalty marker is picked up. In (b), a penalty marker may be dropped and the pass interference penalized. Misapplication of a rule or an incorrect signal may result in picking up a flag or dropping a marker to indicate a foul did occur and giving the appropriate signal.

### **PLAY CLOCK, BALL READY FOR PLAY AND READY-FOR-PLAY SIGNAL**

**3.6.1 COMMENT 1:** Is there guidance for game officials in the implementation of the 40/25 play clock rule regarding the ready-for-play in general? Yes, when a 40-second play clock is running at various times while the game clock is already running, game officials will need to be alert to situations such as the fact there may be no distinct signal that the ball is ready for play and as such, all members of the crew will need to be alert for the moment the ball-placing game official (umpire) is in position after placing the ball to enforce formation rules properly. The application of the rule could also create a "silent wind," a time when the referee gives the start-the-clock signal following a first down but does not blow the whistle. Game officials should be alert to this moment and communicate as a crew to ensure smooth application of the rules.

**3.6.1 COMMENT 2:** Is there guidance in helping coaches and game officials better understand the times when the play clock and game clock might not be starting or running together, or when one should be running and one not running? Yes, the following represent examples of play situations but is not intended to be an exhaustive listing: 1) The ball is run up the middle and is short of the line-to-gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead but the

game clock does not stop; 2) An incomplete pass is thrown. A 40-second play clock starts immediately when the ball is declared dead but the game clock stops and then starts on the snap; 3) The ball is run to gain a first down and the tackle is inbounds. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead, the game clock stops for the first down and the game clock starts on the referee's signal (without a whistle being blown) when the ball is spotted and the placing official is in position; 4) A sweep play is run to the right side and the runner is forced out of bounds short of the line-to-gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead and the game clock stops when the runner is forced out of bounds and starts on the snap; 5) A pass is complete for a first down and the tackle is inbounds, but A77 is flagged for holding during the play. The game clock stops to administer the penalty if accepted. If two minutes or more remain in either half, the ball is spotted and the referee gives the ready-for-play signal to start a 25-second play clock and start the game clock. If inside the last two minutes of either half, Team B is given the option to start the game clock on the snap; 6) After a run short of the line-to-gain, A22 fumbles and a pile forms; A88 recovers and the game clock is stopped to determine who recovered the fumble. The ball is spotted and the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal to start a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock; 7) After either team takes a time-out, the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal to start a 25-second play clock and the game clock starts on the snap; 8) During a run short of the line-to-gain, A22 is injured, the game clock stops and A22 must leave the game for at least one play. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock; 9) The ball is punted and a fair catch is made. The ball is spotted and the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal to start a 25-second play clock and the game clock starts on the snap.

**3.6.1 SITUATION A:** The 40-second play clock does not start or the play clock is interrupted for reasons beyond the control of the game officials or the play-clock operator (e.g., clock device malfunction). **RULING:** The referee shall stop the game clock and signal (both palms open in an over-the-head pumping motion) that the play clock should be reset at 40 seconds and started immediately.

**3.6.1 SITUATION B:** The 40-second play clock is running and reads 25 before the ball is ready for play. **RULING:** The referee shall declare a time-out and signal that the play clock be set at 25 seconds. When play is to be resumed, the referee will give the ready-for-play signal and the play clock shall begin the 25-second count with the game clock also starting if it was previously running.

**3.6.1 SITUATION C:** 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 time-out 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.

**3.6.1 SITUATION D:** When the ball is dead after a running play that ends in the side zone, the game 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 game officials are ready, the play clock is 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 reset to 25 without any delay, the game clock does not stop. Only if the play clock operator does not quickly respond to the referee’s “pump” signal does the referee declare a time-out, signal for the play clock to be set at 25, and then signal to start the game clock and the play clock.

**3.6.1 SITUATION E:** On third and two, A45 fumbles after gaining three yards. The game officials cannot determine who has recovered the fumble, so the line judge signals the game clock to stop while the ball is being located. A45 is found to be in possession of the ball and (a) has not made his line to gain or (b) has made his line to gain. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), when the ball is ready for play, the referee immediately will give the ready-for-play signal starting the play clock and signal the game clock to start due to this administrative stoppage.

### **DELAY OF GAME/NO MISAPPLICATION**

**3.6.2 SITUATION A:** During the down, there is a foul by A1 and the penalty is enforced. The captain of A requests a time-out for a coach-referee conference regarding misapplication, even though A has no time-outs remaining. The referee confers with the coach and there is no change of decision. **RULING:** A will be penalized for delay of game and the game clock will be started with the snap unless Rule 3-4-6 applies.

### **CARRYING DEAD BALL FROM FIELD**

**3.6.2 SITUATION B:** (a) A1’s forward progress is stopped, but he continues to attempt to break free despite repeated blasts of the whistle by the covering official; or (b) B1 intercepts, is tackled, and then intentionally runs off the field with the ball. **RULING:** Delay of game in (a) and unsportsmanlike conduct in (b). (9-5-2)

### **SUBSTITUTIONS**

**3.7 COMMENT:** A procedure has been adopted to provide an equitable penalty as it relates to illegal substitution. The following are examples of the most common situations and rulings:

1. If a replaced player or substitute attempts to leave the field, but does not get off prior to the snap, the foul is considered as having occurred simulta-



neously with the snap and the penalty is enforced from the previous spot. (3-7-4, 10-4-2a)

2. If a replaced player does not leave the field within three-seconds, it is a dead-ball, illegal-substitution foul. (3-7-1)
3. If a replaced player or substitute goes off the field on the wrong side of the field during the down, it is an illegal substitution (live-ball foul). (10-4-2a)
4. If an entering substitute is not on his team's side of the neutral zone at the snap, illegal substitution is considered to have occurred simultaneously with the snap. If he then participates, it becomes a live-ball foul, illegal participation. (3-7-5, 9-6-4a)
5. When a replaced player or substitute leaves on the wrong side of the field or goes across the end line prior to the snap, it is a dead-ball foul for illegal substitution. (3-7-2, 10-4-5b)
6. If a replaced player or substitute enters the field during the down, but does not participate, it is a foul for illegal substitution by a nonplayer, a 5-yard penalty from the succeeding spot. (3-7-5, 9-6-4a)

In addition, the chart below should help game officials distinguish the actions of various team members who enter the field, during the down, but do not participate.

<b>Play Situation (team member does not participate)</b>			
Nonplayer enters during down	3-7-6	5 yards	Succeeding spot (nonplayer)
Substitute enters during down	3-7-6	5 yards	Succeeding spot (nonplayer)
Player re-enters during down after being on field of play for previous down and then leaving the field	3-7-3	5 yards	Nonplayer foul
Player who should be on field of play enters during down (11th or fewer player)	3-7-6	5 yards	Succeeding spot (nonplayer)

**3.7.1 SITUATION A:** Substitutes A12 and B12 properly enter the game between downs. The replaced player of A remains in the team huddle while the replaced B player leaves the field within three seconds. **RULING:** In this situation, A is charged with a 5-yard penalty (dead ball) for an illegal substitution because the replaced player of A did not leave within three seconds as required.

**3.7.1 SITUATION B:** A number of team substitutes enter the field between downs. The game officials do not recognize that one replaced player does not leave the field within three seconds. When the ball is snapped: (a) B12 is attempting to get off the field, or (b) A12 is in the formation as an extra lineman. **RULING:** In (a), it is an illegal substitution foul and in (b) it is illegal participation. **COMMENT:** In a related situation, if the covering official's count of players has determined there are more than 11 prior to the snap, a dead-ball illegal substitu-

tion foul should be charged since a replaced player(s) did not leave within three seconds. However, if the covering official's count is not completed before the snap is imminent or if the substitution has not been monitored, it becomes illegal participation at the snap if more than 11 are in the formation. Each team is responsible for substituting legally and for replaced players to leave within three seconds as required. (3-7-4, 9-6-4c)

**3.7.3 SITUATION A:** B11 mistakenly believes he is his team's 12th player and leaves the field before the snap (a) on his opponent's sideline, or (b) on his sideline and enters his team box. B11 then discovers his error and returns to field on his team's side of the neutral zone before the snap. **RULING:** In (a) B11 has committed illegal substitution by leaving on the opponent's sideline. (3-7-2) In (b), there is no foul as long as B11 remains a player. (2-32-1) If done intentionally to gain an advantage, it is an illegal participation foul or it could be an unsportsmanlike foul. If B11 returns to the field after the snap in either (a) or (b) and participates, it is a live-ball foul for illegal participation. (9-5-1e; 9-6-4a, d)

**3.7.3 SITUATION B:** It is first and 10 on B's 12-yard line and substitute B12 comes onto the field to replace B2 and communicates with him. Prior to the ball becoming live: (a) B2 leaves the field of play through the end zone and across B's sideline without crossing the end line and continues toward his team box; or (b) B12, seeing that he will be unable to replace B2 before the ball is snapped, returns to his team box; or (c) B2, seeing that he will not be able to reach the sideline before the ball is snapped, leaves the field through the end zone and remains to observe the play; or (d) B12 becomes confused and withdraws through the end zone across the end line and goes around the field to return to B's team box. **RULING:** In (a), the act is legal. In (b), (c) and (d), it is a nonplayer foul for illegal substitution. A player, replaced player or substitute is required to go directly to his team box. A substitute may not enter and withdraw in the same dead ball interval.

**3.7.3 SITUATION C:** With fourth and 5 from B's 40, B12 enters and takes a position as a punt-returner and the replaced player leaves the field. B12 then realizes A is not going to punt and he returns to his team box. **RULING:** Illegal substitution. B12 became a player when he positioned in the formation and he must remain in the game for at least one down unless a penalty is accepted, a dead-ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out or the period ends. (2-32)

**3.7.3 SITUATION D:** It is third and 3 on A's 30 and A1 is downed short of the line to gain on his 28. Specialized kicker A12 immediately enters the field to replace A3 when the whistle is sounded, but prior to the referee signaling a time-out, because he had detected holding by B1. The designated representative of A accepts the penalty which results in first and 10 for A from its 38. Realizing the change of status: (a) A12 returns to his team box and is replaced by A3; or (b) A4 requests and is granted a charged time-out during which A12 returns to the team box. **RULING:** In (a), A12 may return as a penalty has been accepted for a

foul which occurred during the down. In (b), A12 may be replaced without penalty because the substitution was made during a charged time-out.

**3.7.5 SITUATION A:** Substitute (a) A1, or (b) B1, noticing his team has only 10 players on the field, comes onto the field just as the ball is about to be snapped.

**RULING:** In (a), A1 must be on the field on A's side of the neutral zone, inside the 9-yard marks, and not violate the shift or motion provisions. Furthermore, the act of his coming onto the field must not deceive the defensive team. In (b), the substitution is legal as long as B1 is on the field on B's side of the neutral zone prior to the snap. (3-7-6, 7-2-1, 7-2-6, 7-2-7, 9-6-4)

**3.7.5 SITUATION B:** Prior to the snap, B11 recognizes he is to be in the game and he enters on A's side of the neutral zone. The ball is snapped before B11 gets to his team side. **RULING:** Illegal substitution at the snap. If the 5-yard penalty is accepted, it is enforced from the previous spot. (10-4-2)

## Rule **4** Ball in Play, Dead Ball and Out of Bounds

### LIVE BALL STRIKES GAME OFFICIAL OR DOG INBOUNDS

**4.1.5 SITUATION:** A forward pass strikes: (a) a game official standing inbounds, after which it rebounds into the air and is caught by A1 or B1; or (b) a dog or a spectator inbounds. **RULING:** In (a), A1 or B1 has caught a live ball. Nothing has occurred to cause the ball to become dead. In (b), the ball becomes dead immediately and is administered under the provisions of the inadvertent-whistle rule with a replay of the down. (4-2-2e, 4-2-3a)

### HOLDER WITH KNEE ON GROUND

**4.2.2 SITUATION A:** K1 has one knee on the ground to hold for an apparent field-goal attempt. K2 is in position to kick. K1 catches the snap and: (a) places the ball which is kicked by K2; or (b) rises and either runs or passes; or (c) without rising, flips the ball to K2 who attempts to run. **RULING:** Legal in (a) and (b). In (c), the ball becomes dead immediately when K1 tosses it to K2 while K1 has his knee on the ground. (4-2-2a EXCEPTION)

**4.2.2 SITUATION B:** During a try K1, who is apparently a place-kick holder, receives the snap with one knee on the ground and places the ball for a kick. Just as K2 comes forward to kick the ball, K1 lifts the ball, rises and: (a) throws a forward pass to K3 in the end zone; or (b) carries the ball into the end zone; or (c) starts to run, fumbles and the ball is recovered by K4 who advances into the end zone;

or (d) fumbles and it is recovered by R1; or (e) takes several steps and then drops to one knee to place it for a kick. **RULING:** Successful try in (a), (b) and (c). The ball remains live and may be advanced since the place-kick holder had his knee in contact with the ground at the time of the snap and a teammate was in position to kick. In (d), the try ended with the recovery and R1 may not advance. In (e), the ball is dead immediately when K1's knee touches the ground after rising with the ball in his possession. (4-2-2a)

**4.2.2 SITUATION C:** At the snap, K1 is in position to kick and K2 is in position to hold for a place kick with one knee on the ground. The snap is high or bounces once and it is necessary for K2 to lift his knee off the ground in order to catch or recover the ball. K2 catches the snap and: (a) immediately drops to one knee and places the ball for a kick; or (b) immediately drops to his knees and then rises and passes the ball; or (c) takes several steps and then drops to his knees to place the ball; or (d) takes several steps and fumbles the ball which is subsequently recovered and advanced by K1 or K2. **RULING:** The ball remains live in (a), (b) and (d). In (c), the ball is dead when K2's knee touches the ground, because he did not go back down immediately after catching or recovering the errant snap. In (d), the advance by K1 or K2 is legal. (4-2-2a EXCEPTION)

### **KICK BECOMES DEAD**

**4.2.2 SITUATION D:** K1's free kick or scrimmage kick hits the ground at R's 10-yard line and bounces into R's end zone. **RULING:** The ball became dead immediately when it broke the plane of R's goal line.

**4.2.2 SITUATION E:** With fourth and goal from R's 20-yard line, K1 attempts a field goal. The attempt is above the crossbar level, but is just wide of the left upright. **RULING:** The ball becomes dead immediately when the covering official determines the attempt is unsuccessful and the ball has broken the plane of R's goal line. [4-2-2d(2)]

### **FAIR-CATCH SIGNAL**

**4.2.2 SITUATION F:** K1 punts from midfield and R1 gives a fair-catch signal at R's 10-yard line. R1 muffs the catch and the ball bounces toward R's end zone. (a) R2 recovers at the 1-yard line and his momentum takes him into the end zone where he is tackled; or (b) R3 recovers and is downed on R's 2-yard line; or (c) K2 recovers and is downed on R's 5. **RULING:** In (a), it is R's ball on the 1-yard line because the ball became dead when R2 recovered following the fair-catch signal. In (b), it is R's ball on the 2 and in (c) it is K's ball on the 5-yard line.

**4.2.2 SITUATION G:** K1's punt on fourth and 10 is from his own 20-yard line. The kick is high and short. R1 gives a valid signal beyond the neutral zone and muffs the kick. The ball rebounds behind the neutral zone where: (a) K1 recovers the ball and advances to his 18-yard line; or (b) K1 falls on the ball at his 15-yard line; or (c) R2 falls on the ball at K's 9-yard line; or (d) R2 recovers the ball at K's

9-yard line and is tackled immediately. **RULING:** Legal advance by K1 in (a). It will be an automatic first down for K in both (a) and (b) because R1 touched the kick beyond the neutral zone. In (c), it is R's ball first and goal at K's 9-yard line. In (d), the signal by R1 causes the ball to become dead at the spot of recovery. The covering official should sound his whistle as soon as R2 or any other receiver recovers the ball. (4-2-2g, 6-1-5, 6-2-2, 6-2-3, 6-5-5)

**4.2.2 SITUATION H:** R1 gives a fair-catch signal immediately following his catch of a kick. **RULING:** Illegal fair-catch signal, because it was given after the kick was caught and R1 had become a runner. The signal does not cause the down to end. If accepted, the 5-yard penalty is enforced under the all-but-one principle. (2-9-5, 3-4-2c, 4-2-2g, 6-5-8)

### **TOUCHING IGNORED**

**4.2.2 SITUATION I:** During a try, K1's place kick hits lineman K2 who is behind the neutral zone, and caroms between the uprights and above the crossbar. **RULING:** The try is successful. Touching a kick is ignored if the touching is in the neutral-zone expanded, or on K's side of it. It is important to remember the neutral zone does not expand into the end zone. If the same touching occurs beyond the plane of the goal line, the ball becomes dead and the try is ended. (2-28-2, 6-2-6)

### **HELMET COMES OFF RUNNER**

**4.2.2 SITUATION J:** With fourth down and 8 from the 50, A1 runs to B's 45-yard line where: (a) B1, in attempting to tackle A1, unsnaps A1's chin strap and play continues to the 40-yard line where A1 is finally downed; or (b) B1, in attempting to tackle A1, grasps the face mask/helmet opening and A1's helmet comes off; or (c) B1 contacts A1 at B's 46 and A1's helmet comes off and he subsequently fumbles the ball. **RULING:** In (a), play continues and it is a first down for A after enforcement of the face mask foul. In (b), the ball becomes dead at the spot A1's helmet came off and B is penalized for the face-mask/helmet opening violation. In (c), the ball becomes dead at the spot where A1's helmet came off and because it was fourth down and the line to gain was not obtained, the ball goes over to B. The fumble is disregarded because it happened after the ball became dead and A1 must leave the field for one play. (3-5-10d, 4-2-2k)

**4.2.2 SITUATION K:** In attempting to tackle A1, B1's helmet comes completely off. A1 does not go down and he runs for a touchdown. **RULING:** The score stands. Play is not stopped and the ball does not become dead if the helmet comes off any player other than the runner. B1 must leave the field for one play. (3-5-10d, 4-2-2k)

### **INADVERTENT WHISTLE**

**4.2.3 SITUATION A:** With fourth and 2 from K's 38-yard line, a scrimmage kick by K1 is muffed beyond the neutral zone by R1 following his signal for a fair catch.

While the ball is loose following the muff, the covering official sounds his whistle inadvertently. **RULING:** Because the whistle was inadvertently sounded during a kick, the down will be replayed even though R1 was first to touch the scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone. The game clock will start on the ready-for-play signal. (3-4-2c)

**4.2.3 SITUATION B:** While a legal forward pass is in flight: (a) B1 interferes with eligible A1 and then there is an inadvertent whistle; or (b) a whistle is inadvertently sounded after which B2 contacts A2 while the ball is still in flight. **RULING:** In (a), if the designated representative accepts the penalty for a foul which occurred prior to the inadvertent whistle, the penalty takes precedence. In (b), the contact by B2 occurred during a dead-ball period and unless it is a personal foul, will be ignored. Because the whistle was inadvertently sounded while a legal forward pass was in flight, the down shall be replayed. (7-5-10a)

**4.2.3 SITUATION C:** With fourth and goal on B's 4-yard line, A1 is hit and fumbles, and as the ball rolls into the end zone, an inadvertent whistle is sounded. The fumble occurs: (a) at the 5-yard line, or (b) at the 3-yard line. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), A will have a choice of taking the play at the spot of the fumble or replaying the down. If A takes the play, it is B's ball at the 5 in (a), and at the 3 in (b). **COMMENT:** Whenever an inadvertent whistle sounds while the ball is loose following a fumble, the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble or spot of last possession. Theoretically, this is where the ball becomes dead. Regardless of where the ball is fumbled, the team last in possession may choose to have the ball put in play where possession was lost and count the down or choose to replay the down. (4-2-3b)

**4.2.3 SITUATION D:** A1 throws a forward pass from his own 40-yard line. B1 intercepts on his 2-yard line and circles back into his end zone. While B1 is in the end zone, the covering official inadvertently sounds his whistle. **RULING:** Since B1 is in possession, B has the option of accepting the results of the play at the time of the whistle or asking for a replay of the down. Since the result of the play would be a safety, B would normally choose to replay the down. (4-2-3c, 8-5-2a)

**4.2.3 SITUATION E:** K's ball, fourth and 12, on R's 45-yard line. K8's punt is rolling on R's 16 when an inadvertent whistle sounds. R76 blocks K84 in the back on R's 22-yard line during the down prior to the whistle. **RULING:** By rule, an inadvertent whistle during the kick (loose-ball play) and declination of all fouls, stipulates a replay of the down. However, if the penalty for R's illegal block is accepted, the penalty is enforced from the previous spot and K will replay fourth down, fourth and 2 from R's 35-yard line. (2-16-2h, 4-2-2j, 4-2-3a, 4-2-3d, 6-2-7, 10-4-3)

**4.2.3 SITUATION F:** A1 is in scrimmage-kick formation with his back heel near the end line in the end zone. On a high snap, the potential kicker jumps and is able to keep the ball from going out of the end zone. It falls to the ground and is rolling around 5 yards into the end zone. In a panic, A1 then kicks the ball off the

ground and it rolls to the A25 and is bounding around when there is an inadvertent whistle. The ball rolls dead at the A27. **RULING:** B has a choice of accepting the penalty for an illegal kick, which if accepted, results in a safety against A. If the penalty is declined, the inadvertent whistle rule allows for A to ask for a replay of the down since the ball was not in player possession at the time of the whistle.

**4.2.3 SITUATION G:** A's ball, third and 8 on A's 30-yard line. A1's pass is intercepted by B2. Prior to the interception, B1 is flagged for defensive pass interference. After the ball is intercepted by B2, the covering official blows an inadvertent whistle with B2 in possession at the B40. **RULING:** If A accepts B's penalty for pass interference, it is A's ball, first and 10 at A's 45-yard line as the inadvertent whistle aspect is ignored. If A declines B's penalty for pass interference, B will accept the ball at B's 40-yard line. (4-2-3c)

### **INBOUNDS SPOT**

**4.3.3 SITUATION A:** It is fourth down and the line to gain is B's 45-yard line. A1, running near the sideline, is blocked by B1 on the 46 and he: (a) travels several feet in the air landing out of bounds opposite B's 44½-yard line; or (b) lands inbounds on B's 44 and slides out of bounds. **RULING:** In (a), the covering official must locate the spot where the ball crossed the sideline and then determine whether the foremost point of the ball was behind or beyond the line to gain when A1 crossed the plane of the sideline. In (b), it is first down and 10 for A from B's 44-yard line.

**4.3.3 SITUATION B:** A has third down and seven yards to gain at B's 30. A1 leaps near the sideline to attempt to catch a pass near B's 30-yard line. A1 is: (a) airborne trying to make the catch and is knocked backwards by B2 attempting to make the tackle and A1 lands outside the sideline at B's 32 or (b) airborne when he controls the ball attempting to complete the catch and is carried off the field by B2 landing out of bounds. **RULING:** In (a), the pass is incomplete and the game clock should start on the snap. In (b), it is a catch and the game clock should not stop. If the game clock was stopped inadvertently by the covering official, it should be immediately restarted. (2-15-1, 2-15-2, 4-3-2)

### **CAPTAIN'S CHOICE ON PLACING BALL**

**4.3.6 SITUATION:** Prior to the ready-for-play on a try, A's captain requests the ball be placed on the right side hash mark. A then deploys in a spread formation. (a) A1 does not like the defensive coverage and requests a time-out; or (b) a dead-ball foul occurs. The captain of A then asks the referee to move the ball to a position midway between the uprights. **RULING:** The request is denied in (a) and honored in (b). The captain may, in seven situations, ask that the ball be placed at a certain point between the hash marks. However, once spotted the ball may not be moved because of a second request. If a dead-ball foul occurs, or a foul occurs during the down and the penalty is accepted, the captain again will be given an opportunity to pick a spot for the replay. The request for placement of the ball is permissible for a

try or kickoff, after a safety, fair catch, awarded fair catch, touchback, or the start of each series, using the 10-Yard Line Overtime Procedure. (8-3-1)

### CHOICE TO SNAP OR FREE KICK

**4.3.7 SITUATION:** With the score tied near the end of the fourth period, R1 signals for a fair catch and catches the kick at K's 40. After a time-out, the captain of R advises the referee that he wishes to put the ball in play by snap. A1 throws a pass intended for A2. B1 interferes with A2 and the pass is incomplete. Following administration of the penalty, the captain of R decides to put the ball in play by free kick from K's 25 as a field-goal attempt. **RULING:** This is permissible and the game clock will not start until the kick is touched, other than first touching by K. This is one of the times a field goal may be scored by a free kick. The captain may request a time-out prior to making the decision on whether to snap or free kick. In putting the ball in play in this situation, the captain of R is privileged to designate the point on K's 25, anywhere between the hash marks he wishes the ball to be placed. (1-4-1, 5-2-4, 6-5-4)

## Rule **5** Series of Downs, Number of Down and Team Possession After Penalty

### INCORRECT DOWN

**5.1.1 SITUATION A:** What procedure is used to correct an error if it is discovered: (a) a fifth down has been run and the discovery is 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; or (b) A has not been given its allotted four downs and the discovery is 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? **RULING:** In both cases, the number of the next down can be corrected by the referee. In (a), play will revert to where it was before the fifth down was run after the enforcement of any personal, dead ball or unsportsmanlike fouls that occurred during the down. In (b), the referee can declare the proper next down and resume play.

**5.1.1 SITUATION B:** Second down and six. On the last play of the third period, A38 gains three yards. After the play, the down-marker indicator is flipped to fourth down. Following a brief pause to ensure no reason to defer ending the period, the referee holds the ball over his head to signify the end of the period.



Both teams change ends of the field and the chains are reversed. Before the ball is snapped for the first play of the fourth period, Team A's coach notifies the game officials that he believes there is an error in the down. **RULING:** The third period officially ended when the referee held the ball over his head, and therefore the down error may not be corrected.

**5.1.1 SITUATION C:** 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 not enforced in (a) or (b). In (c), (d) and (e), the penalty is enforced as a dead-ball foul before Team B snaps the ball. In (e), the offending player is also disqualified.

**5.1.1 SITUATION D:** The ball is on the 50-yard line with 10 yards to go for a first down. The down-marker indicator erroneously indicates fourth down when Team K punts on what is actually: (a) third down or (b) fifth down. R6 returns the punt for an apparent touchdown. Prior to the try and without the period ending, it is brought to the attention of the game officials that the down-marker indicator was in error. **RULING:** In (a), the score is cancelled and the ball is returned to the 50-yard line, third down and 10 for A as Team A. In (b), the fifth down was run in error, the score is cancelled and the ball is returned to the 50-yard line, first down and 10 for R.

**5.1.1 SITUATION E:** 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:** Until the ball is legally snapped. After that point, it is too late.

### **AWARDING A NEW SERIES**

**5.1.2 SITUATION A:** Following the ready-for-play signal for a new series by A: (a) B1 encroaches, or (b) A1 false starts. **RULING:** In (a), it is first and 5 and in (b) it is first and 15 for A.

**5.1.2 SITUATION B:** During A1's run for a first down to B's 20-yard line, B12 commits a nonplayer foul for a substitute entering the field during the down, but not participating. Immediately following the down, A1 taunts an opponent. **RULING:** If accepted, the penalty for B entering during the down is enforced from the succeeding spot. After the decision on this penalty, A will be penalized 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct and A will have the ball for a new series, first and 10. (3-7-6, 9-5-1a)

**5.1.2 SITUATION C:** Third and 10 for A from B's 40-yard line. A1 gains 10 yards and is downed on B's 30. A2 taunts B1 during the run. **RULING:** Since the live-ball action gave A a new series, the line to gain shall be established after A is penalized for A2's unsportsmanlike act. It will be first and 10 for A from B's 45-yard line.

**5.1.2 SITUATION D:** With fourth and 5 on B's 20, A1 is downed on B's 16-yard line. During the down, the coach of B is on the field arguing with a game official. Following the down, A1 uses profanity. **RULING:** Since A did not gain a first down on the fourth-down run by A1, B has a new series. Enforcement of the penalties

for the foul on the coach of B and for the foul on A1 offset. B will have the ball first and 10 at B's 16-yard line.

**5.1.2 SITUATION E:** Fourth and 2 on B's 25-yard line. A1 is tackled at the 26, short of the line to gain, and B2 then piles on. **RULING:** The referee shall signal a change of possession by signaling first down toward A's goal. The penalty for B2's dead-ball foul is administered and the line-to-gain equipment then set, making it first and 10 for B from its own 13-yard line. **COMMENT:** On fourth-down plays, A must get a first down by virtue of the yardage gained, including any yardage or an automatic first down from penalties for player fouls during the down, or it is a new series for B automatically when the down ends unless the down is to be repeated. The penalties for all unsportsmanlike and nonplayer fouls which occur during the down in which a new series is awarded, and dead-ball fouls prior to the subsequent ready-for-play signal, will be administered before the new line to gain is established and the chain and box are set. In all cases it will be first and 10 for A unless it is inside the opponent's 10-yard line. On plays other than on fourth down, A may gain a first down by virtue of the yards gained or from penalty enforcement.

**5.1.2 SITUATION F:** With second and 5 at B's 40, A1 advances to B's 30. Following the down, A2 illegally contacts B1. **RULING:** The 15-yard penalty is enforced and then the chain is set. It will be first and 10 for A at B's 45.

**5.1.2 SITUATION G:** With fourth and 40 from A's 10-yard line, A1 runs to A's 44 where he is downed. During the down, B1 commits a personal foul against A2. **RULING:** B1's foul is penalized from the end of the run. It is A's ball first and 10 from B's 41-yard line. (2-16-2f, 5-1-2b)

### EFFECT OF R TOUCHING KICK

**5.1.3 SITUATION A:** K1's field-goal attempt is partially blocked behind the neutral zone, but deflects beyond the neutral zone and is then muffed by R1. The muffed ball is recovered: (a) behind, or (b) beyond the neutral zone by K2. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), it is a first down for K. In (a), K2 could have advanced after recovering. (5-1-3f)

**5.1.3 SITUATION B:** During a fourth-down scrimmage kick by K1 from K's 40, R1 is first to touch the kick beyond the neutral zone where he muffs it at R's 30-yard line. The kick is recovered by R2 at R's 10-yard line. Following the muff by R1, while the ball is loose, there is holding by K2. **RULING:** The foul occurred before the end of the kick and if the penalty is accepted by R, R may elect to accept the distance penalty from the previous spot, or may elect enforcement from the succeeding spot. (5-1-3d, 10-4-2 EXCEPTION)

**5.1.3 SITUATION C:** Fourth and 10 on K's 45-yard line. K1 punts the ball beyond the neutral zone. R1 muffs the ball back behind the neutral zone where K1 recovers and: (a) falls on the ball at K's 40-yard line; or (b) throws a forward pass to K3 which is complete at the 50-yard line and R1 interferes with K3; or (c) K1 punts the ball and R1 fair catches at his 30-yard line. **RULING:** Since R1 touched

the kick beyond the neutral zone, it will be first down for the team in possession in (a), (b) and (c). In (a), it is a first down for K at K's 40-yard line. In (b), the pass is legal as there had been no change of team possession. If K accepts the penalty for pass interference, it will be K's ball at R's 40-yard line. In (c), the second punt is legal as there had been no change of team possession. The ball belongs to R first and 10 on its own 30-yard line. (5-1-3f, 6-2-1, 7-5-1)

**5.1.3 SITUATION D:** K's ball, fourth and 2 at midfield. The scrimmage kick crosses the expanded neutral zone and is muffed by R at the R 40-yard line. The ball then bounds back behind the line of scrimmage and is recovered by K2 at K's 43-yard line. K2 advances to K's 49-yard line where he throws an incomplete pass to eligible receiver K80 at the R38. **RULING:** This is not an illegal forward pass as the ball was legally thrown behind the neutral zone. There has been no change of possession during the down. K is awarded a new series as the ball was touched by R beyond the expanded neutral zone and K is in possession at the end of the down. It will be K's ball, first and 10 at midfield due to the incomplete pass. (7-5-2, 2-34-3, 5-1-3f, 7-5-5)

### TEAM POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

**5.2.2 SITUATION A:** With fourth and 5 from B's 30, A1 throws a forward pass that is intercepted by B1 on his 10-yard line and returned to B's 29. While the pass was in flight, ineligible A2 was illegally downfield, and the ball: (a) is muffed by A2 at the 12-yard line prior to being intercepted, or (b) did not touch A2 prior to the touching and interception by B1. **RULING:** In (a), A has committed two fouls – illegal touching and ineligible downfield. B1 will decline the ineligible downfield penalty to keep the football, but will accept the penalty for illegal touching as the ball will be at B's 35 following enforcement, and will be B's ball due to the loss of down foul. In (b), the foul carries a 5-yard penalty and B would then likely decline the penalty and keep the ball first and 10 from its own 29-yard line.

**5.2.2 SITUATION B:** With fourth down and 4 from the 50, A1 runs to B's 40 and then throws an incomplete forward pass. **RULING:** If B declines the penalty, it will be A's ball first and 10 from B's 40-yard line. If B accepts the 5-yard penalty for the illegal forward pass, it will still be a first down for A from B's 45-yard line. The loss of down part of the penalty has no significance since the succeeding spot is beyond the line to gain and a new series is awarded.

**5.2.5 SITUATION:** K1 punts the ball to R1. R1 catches the punt on his own 10-yard line and begins to advance. During the run, K1 grabs R1's face mask/helmet opening at R's 20-yard line. R1 continues to advance, but is hit and fumbles the ball on K's 10-yard line. K2 recovers the fumble on K's 5-yard line and K commits a dead ball foul. **RULING:** If R accepts the penalty for the face-mask/helmet opening foul, it will be enforced from the end of R1's run (the spot of the fumble), thus making it first and goal for R from K's 5-yard line. The dead-ball foul would be

administered from that point making it first and goal for R from K's 2½-yard line. If R refuses the face-mask/helmet opening penalty, the ball would belong to K on K's 5-yard line. R then may accept the penalty for the dead-ball foul by K3 making it K's ball first and 10 from K's 2½-yard line. The box and chain are set following enforcement of the dead-ball foul. (5-2-1, 5-2-5e)

### MEASUREMENT – ROTATING BALL

**5.3.2 SITUATION A:** With fourth and 1 from A's 47, quarterback A1 keeps the ball and is downed very near the line to gain. When the down ends, the ball in possession of A1 is: (a) positioned so that its long axis is diagonal to the sideline; or (b) positioned so that its long axis is parallel to the yard line. A measurement is requested. **RULING:** The ball must be aligned so the long axis is parallel to the sideline in both (a) and (b) prior to measurement. The referee will place his hand at the foremost point of the ball when it became dead and rotate the ball so that its long axis is parallel to the sideline and there is no gain or loss in distance. Following the rotation, measurement will be to the foremost point of the ball.

**5.3.2 SITUATION B:** Following a third-down play, with either the 25- or 40-second play clock running, the game officials do not measure as the referee judges the line to gain clearly has not been reached. A lines up in punt formation. Just before assuming his set position, the captain of A requests a measurement. **RULING:** The request is denied for two reasons. The captain must make a request for measurement before the ball is ready for play and no measurement is made if it is obvious the line to gain has not been reached. **COMMENT:** In any situation where there is doubt, game officials should measure. Following measurement in a side zone, the chain should be used to place the ball at the hash mark. (5-3-2 NOTE)

**5.3.3 SITUATION:** On fourth and goal from the 5-yard line, the ball is ready for play with the nose of the ball just touching the 5-yard line. Following A1's incomplete pass, B takes over and the referee places the ball in line with the down box as it was prior to A1's fourth-down incomplete forward pass, i.e., with the foremost point (nose) of the ball just touching the 5-yard line. **RULING:** This is incorrect procedure. The ball shall be spotted in the same position it was at the start of the down. When a team fails to reach its line to gain on a fourth-down run, the foremost point of the ball at the time it became dead would become the rear point when direction of the offense is changed. After a fourth-down incomplete pass, the ball is placed "as it was at the start of the down" (or previous fourth-down play). Unless the fourth-down play resulted in a touchback or safety, or A reached its line to gain, B will gain approximately 11½ inches (the length of the football) in field position, and the down box will have to be moved. Following a touchback or safety, the ball is placed with its foremost point touching the 20-yard line. Many game officials seem to find it convenient to merely reset the line-to-gain chains following an incomplete fourth-down pass by using the previous line of scrimmage (down marker) as the position for the rear rod when the direction is changed. This procedure is not correct.

**BALL ON GOAL LINE**

**5.3.4 SITUATION A:** With first and 10 from A's 4-yard line, A1 is tackled and the ball is lying on the 5-inch line with its long axis parallel to the goal line. How is the ball to be spotted? **RULING:** The referee will, by rule, rotate and place the ball so that its rear point is not penetrating the plane of A's goal line. The ball is rotated with its rearmost point moved forward just enough so it isn't touching the goal line. A gains a few inches in the process.

**5.3.4 SITUATION B:** A1 receives the snap behind his own goal line. A1 advances, but is tackled and the ball becomes dead with its foremost point in the field of play, but part of the ball is in the end zone. **RULING:** Safety. To avoid a safety, the ball must be advanced completely out of the end zone with no part of it touching the goal line. (8-5-2)

## Rule **6** Kicking the Ball and Fair Catch

**FREE-KICK FORMATIONS**

**6.1.3 SITUATION A:** After the ready for play and prior to the ball being kicked, Team K has five players to the left of the kicker and five players to the right of the kicker with the ball spotted at the K40. The potential kicker, K1, is lined up at the K32 to begin his kick and all other K players are clearly outside of the K35. As K1 approaches the kick, he suddenly slows down and K2 then kicks an onside kick that is recovered by R1. **RULING:** Team K has committed a free kick infraction and the ball shall be blown dead immediately. R is given the option to accept the distance penalty of 5 yards for the dead-ball foul.

**6.1.3 SITUATION B:** After the ready for play and prior to the ball being kicked, Team K has five players to the left of the kicker and five players to the right of the kicker with the ball spotted at the K40. Prior to the ball being kicked, player K2: (a) has both feet just beyond the K35 (toward midfield); (b) has a foot touching the K35; (c) has one foot touching beyond the K35 toward the K36 and one foot behind the K35; or (d) K has both feet clearly beyond the K35 (toward midfield) but his hand is touching behind the K35 (toward K's goal line). **RULING:** Legal in (a) and (d). Free kick infraction in (b) and (c).

**6.1.4 SITUATION:** After the ready for play and as the ball is being kicked, Team K has three players to the left of the kicker and seven players to the right of the kicker. **RULING:** It is a free kick infraction by K. The ball shall be blown dead immediately and R given the option to accept the distance penalty of 5 yards for the dead-ball foul. **COMMENT:** Communication between the game officials and both teams is critical and the referee should ensure that all opportunities for assembling in a proper formation have been given before sounding the ready-for-play signal.

**RECOVERY BY K**

**6.1.6 SITUATION A:** A kickoff by K1 from K's 40 is muffed by R1 near his 20-yard line. The muff is caught by K2 at the 18 and he advances into R's end zone. **RULING:** It will be K's ball first and 10 from R's 18. K2 may catch or recover the muffed kick, but may not advance. The ball is dead when K gains possession. The covering official should sound his whistle to stop play immediately when the ball becomes dead.

**6.1.6 SITUATION B:** K's free kick is bouncing on the ground in the neutral zone where R1 and K1 are engaged in blocking one another. K2 muffs the ball and the ball touches R1 on the leg and K3 recovers the ball. **RULING:** The touching by R is ignored and R will be awarded possession of the ball at the spot of first touching or at the dead-ball spot.

**FIRST TOUCHING OF A FREE KICK**

**6.1.7 SITUATION A:** A free kick from K's 40 is high and comes down over K's 45 where it is muffed in flight by K2 after which it is recovered by K3 on R's 40. **RULING:** This is first touching and also kick-catching interference by K2. R may choose to take the ball at the spot of first touching, take the results of the play or accept the 15-yard penalty for kick-catching interference. If the distance penalty is accepted, it is R's choice to have the penalty enforced from the spot of the foul or to have it enforced from the previous spot and require K to rekick. **COMMENT:** The game clock will not be started when there is first touching of a free kick. The purpose is to prevent the kickers from taking advantage by touching the ball to start the game clock and thereby deny the receivers the opportunity of putting the ball in play. The exception "the game clock not starting with first touching," is protection for the receiving team and is consistent with the philosophy that the receiving team be given an opportunity of putting the ball in play following a free kick. (3-4-1, 6-5-4, 6-5-6)

**6.1.7 SITUATION B:** The ball is free kicked from K's 40-yard line and in flight, it crosses the 50-yard line before a strong wind blows it back to K's 45 where it: (a) is touched in flight by K1, or (b) touches the ground and is recovered by K2. **RULING:** Kick-catching interference in (a), first and 10 for K in (b). **COMMENT:** The free-kick lines marking the neutral zone for K and R are vertical planes. When the free kick penetrates R's free-kick line in flight, it is considered to have gone the required 10 yards. If it also has touched the ground, before or after going 10 yards, it can be recovered, but not advanced by K. (6-1-6)

**CAUSING FREE KICK TO BE OUT OF BOUNDS**

**6.1.9 SITUATION A:** The free kick by K1 is possessed by R1 who: (a) is airborne and alights with one foot in contact with the sideline at his 26, or (b) contacts the sideline on the 26 after completing the catch. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), R will put

the ball in play, first and 10, from its 26-yard line because R1 caused the ball to go out of bounds at the 26. (2-4-1)

**6.1.9 SITUATION B:** The free kick by K1 from K's 40-yard line: (a) is touched by R1 at R's 5-yard line and goes out of bounds at the 8-yard line; or (b) is muffed by R1 at his 15-yard line and then touched by K2 before it rolls out of bounds at R's 10-yard line; or (c) bounces out of bounds on R's 30-yard line untouched by R or K. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the ball belongs to R at the inbounds spot. In (c), it is a foul by K. The receivers may accept the 5-yard penalty and have K free kick from K's 35-yard line, accept a 5-yard penalty from the succeeding spot, take the ball at the inbounds spot at R's 35 which is 25 yards beyond the previous spot, or take the ball at the inbounds spot. (2-41-4, 6-1-10)

**6.1.9 SITUATION C:** R1 is running near a sideline as he attempts to catch a free kick in flight. R1 has: (a) both feet inbounds; or (b) one foot on the sideline, when he reaches through the plane of the sideline. The ball bounces off his hands and lands out of bounds. **RULING:** In (a), the ball is not yet out of bounds until it hit the ground there. Since R1 touched it, he caused it to go out of bounds and R will have the ball at the inbounds spot. In (b), since R1 is out of bounds when the ball is touched, the kicker has caused the ball to be out of bounds.

**6.1.9 SITUATION D:** K1 tries an onside kick from K's 40-yard line. As the ball bounces near the sideline, the ball is muffed out-of-bounds by K2 at R's 49. **RULING:** R may accept the 5-yard penalty and have K free kick from K's 35-yard line, accept a 5-yard penalty from the succeeding spot, take the ball at the inbounds spot at R's 35 which is 25 yards beyond the previous spot, or take the ball at the inbounds spot.

**6.1.9 SITUATION E:** K1 squib kicks the kickoff to R's 30 where (a) R muffs the ball out-of-bounds at R's 28, (b) R muffs the ball toward the side lines where K2 muffs the ball out-of-bounds at R's 28. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), R would put the ball in play at R's 28.

**6.1.9 SITUATION F:** K1 tries an onside kick from K's 40. K2 muffs the ball at K's 48, and the ball bounces off R and is muffed out of bounds by K3 at R's 45. K did not force the ball into R. **RULING:** R can either choose to take the ball at K's 48 at the spot of first touching or at R's 45 where the ball went out of bounds.

**6.1.9 SITUATION G:** Team K free kicks from its own 40-yard line. K1's onside kick is rolling at R's 46-yard line, when K2 muffs the ball, causing it to touch R3's leg and goes out of bounds at R's 42-yard line. **RULING:** Since R's touching is now ignored, this is a free kick that went out of bounds. R may accept the 5-yard penalty and have K free kick from K's 35-yard line, accept a 5-yard penalty from the succeeding spot, take the ball at the inbounds spot at R's 35 which is 25 yards beyond the previous spot, take the ball at the inbounds spot. (10-5-1a)

**6.1.9 SITUATION H:** Team K, after accepting the penalties for multiple R fouls, is now free kicking from R's 20-yard line. In attempting to onside kick, the ball goes out of bounds untouched in the field of play. **RULING:** R may accept the

5-yard penalty and have K free kick from R's 25-yard line, accept a 5-yard penalty from the succeeding spot or take the ball at the inbounds spot.

**6.1.9 SITUATION I:** K's attempt for a field goal is unsuccessful and (a) the ball enters the end zone where it is declared dead; or (b) the ball is fielded by R at the R 5-yard line and returned to the 25-yard line. During the kick, K commits a holding foul. **RULING:** In (a), while R has other options by rule, R will likely accept the distance penalty enforced from R's 20-yard line. In (b), while R has other options by rule, R will likely accept the distance penalty enforced from R's 25-yard line. (6-1-9, 10-4-2c EXCEPTION)

### POP-UP KICK

**6.1.11 SITUATION:** K1 executes a pop-up kick from the K40 in a free-kick situation. **RULING:** The play is immediately blown dead, K is penalized five-yards for a free-kick infraction and, if the distance penalty is accepted, must re-kick from the K35. If the distance penalty is declined, K shall re-kick from the K40.

### TOUCHING AND RECOVERING SCRIMMAGE KICKS

**6.2 SITUATION:** R returns K's scrimmage kick for a touchdown and (a) during the kick, K commits a holding foul, or (b) during the runback, K commits a foul for blocking below the waist. **RULING:** In (a), the succeeding spot from this play is the goal line (touchdown). Therefore R may accept the distance penalty enforced on the try or decline the penalty. In either case, the touchdown will score; however, since the foul occurred before the change of possession, there is no option to enforce the distance penalty from the succeeding kickoff. In (b), because the foul occurred on a play in which a touchdown was scored after the change in possession, R can count the touchdown and have the penalty enforced on the try or on the succeeding kickoff per 8-2-3. (6-1-9, 8-2-3)

**6.2.3 SITUATION A:** A scrimmage kick by K1 is partially blocked in the neutral zone by R1. The kick goes beyond the neutral zone where R2 muffs it back behind the neutral zone. K2 recovers behind the neutral zone and advances across R's goal line. **RULING:** Touchdown for K. **COMMENT:** The right of the kickers to advance their recovered scrimmage kick depends entirely upon whether the kick is recovered in, behind or beyond the neutral zone. Whether the kick went beyond the neutral zone and then rebounded behind it is of no consequence. The spot of recovery is the only factor. If the recovery is in or behind the neutral zone, K may advance. If the recovery is beyond the neutral zone, K may recover, but may not advance.

**6.2.3 SITUATION B:** With third and 10 on K's 10-yard line, K1's punt is blocked and recovered on K's 4-yard line: (a) simultaneously by K2 and R1, or (b) by K2 who advances to K's 15. **RULING:** In (a), the ball is dead immediately and is awarded to R because of the joint recovery. In (b), since K may recover in or behind the neutral zone and advance, it is fourth and 5 for K from its own 15-yard line. The series for K did not end because the kick was blocked. (4-2-2e)



**6.2.4 SITUATION:** It is fourth and 10 and K11 punts the ball from K's 40-yard line. While R1 and K1 are engaged in blocking downfield at R's 30-yard line, K2 legally bats the ball at R's 28-yard line and the batted ball touches R1 on the leg. Then, K3 recovers the ball at the 30-yard line. **RULING:** This touching by R is ignored and R will have the choice of taking the ball at the spot of first touching or the dead-ball spot.

**6.2.5 SITUATION A:** K1 attempts to down a punt beyond the neutral zone, but his touching only slows it down. The bouncing ball is subsequently recovered by R1, who advances 25 yards but then fumbles and K2 recovers. K2 is immediately tackled. **RULING:** R may either take the results of the play or retain possession by taking the ball at the spot of K1's first touching. R can exercise this option, unless after R1 touches the ball, R commits a foul or the penalty is accepted for any foul committed during the down.

**6.2.5 SITUATION B:** K2, running toward R's end zone, leaps in the air to catch K1's punt which is in flight. K2 has the ball in his grasp over the 1-yard line, but first touches the ground in R's end zone. No player of R is in position to catch the punt. **RULING:** R can take the ball at the spot of first touching, his own 1-yard line, or take a touchback since K2 has not possessed the ball until he came to the ground in the end zone. (6-3-1)

**6.2.5 SITUATION C:** With fourth and 5 from K's 30-yard line, K9 punts the ball downfield where it is grounded and touched by K88 (first touching) at R's 30. The ball continues rolling and is picked up by R35 at R's 25-yard line. R35 is subsequently hit and fumbles at R's 28. The loose ball is recovered by K88 on the ground at R's 26. During the kick, R55 is flagged for holding. **RULING:** If K accepts the penalty for R's foul for holding, then it is enforced from the previous spot since post-scrimmage kick cannot apply as K is next to put the ball in play as a result of the recovered fumble. Also, if K accepts the penalty, the awarded spot for first touching is not applied. If K declines the penalty for R's foul, R will take the ball at the spot of first touching. (2-12-1, 2-12-2, 2-16-2h)

**6.2.6 SITUATION:** What is the reason for having an expanded neutral zone during scrimmage kicks and how does it affect the touching of a low kick in that area? **RULING:** The purpose of expanding the neutral zone during a scrimmage kick is to permit normal line play. The neutral zone is expanded up to a maximum of 2 yards behind the defensive line of scrimmage (beyond the neutral zone) to allow offensive linemen to block and drive defensive linemen off the line of scrimmage. Low scrimmage kicks may touch or be touched by players of K or R, and such touching is ignored if the kick has not been beyond the expanded neutral zone. The zone disintegrates immediately when the kick has crossed the expanded zone or when the trajectory is such that it cannot be touched until it comes down. Once the zone disintegrates, touching of the kick by K in flight beyond the neutral zone is kick-catching interference if an R player is in position to catch the ball. If touched by R beyond the neutral zone, it establishes a new series. (2-28-2, 5-1-3f, 6-5-6)

**SIMULTANEOUS RECOVERY**

**6.2.7 SITUATION:** Fourth and 3 for K from their own 10-yard line. A scrimmage kick by K1 is muffed in flight prior to being grounded beyond the neutral zone by R1 and rebounds back into K's end zone where it is simultaneously recovered by opposing players. **RULING:** Touchdown for R. If K is in possession in K's end zone at the end of the down, it is a safety. If R is in possession or if there is joint possession, it is a touchdown. The ball is awarded to R when any scrimmage kick is out of bounds between the goal lines, becomes dead inbounds between the goal lines while no player is in possession or becomes dead inbounds anywhere while opponents are in joint possession. Since the kick was muffed beyond the neutral zone and there has been no possession, it is still a kick into K's own end zone. (4-2-2e, 8-2-1b)

**KICKS INTO R'S END ZONE – TOUCHBACK**

**6.3.1 SITUATION A:** A scrimmage kick by K1 comes to rest on R's 6-yard line. R1 attempts to recover and advance, but muffs the ball so that it rolls into the end zone where: (a) R2 downs the ball; or (b) R3 recovers and advances out of the end zone; or (c) K2 recovers and downs the ball in the end zone. **RULING:** The ball became dead as soon as it broke the plane of R's goal line. It is a touchback in (a), (b) and (c). The kick had not ended because muffing does not constitute possession, therefore, it is a kick into R's end zone which is an automatic touchback. The covering official should sound the whistle immediately when the ball becomes dead as a result of breaking the goal-line plane. Force is not a factor on kicks going into R's end zone. R will put the ball in play, first and 10, from their 20-yard line. (2-24-2, 8-5-3a)

**BLOCKING KICK FROM CROSSBAR**

**6.3.1 SITUATION B:** During a field-goal attempt, R1, who is in the end zone, leaps up and blocks the ball away from the crossbar. **RULING:** Touchback. The touching by R1 in the end zone causes the ball to become dead, unless the ball caroms through the goal, thus scoring a field goal. This is not illegal batting, as the touching caused the kick to fail. [4-2-2d(2), 6-3-1b]

**FAIR-CATCH SIGNAL DURING KICK**

**6.5.1 SITUATION A:** R1 and R2 both signal for a fair catch and: (a) the punt is short and is caught by R3; or (b) the punt is over the head of R1, and R2 blocks K1 who is attempting to down the ball near the goal line; or (c) R2 muffs the punt which is then muffed by K2 and finally recovered by R1. **RULING:** R3 did not make a fair catch in (a), but the ball became dead when it was caught. In (b), it is an illegal block because R2 blocked before the kick ended after giving a signal and the penalty, if accepted, will be administered from the post-scrimmage kick spot. In (c), the ball became dead as soon as R1 recovered. (4-2-2g, 6-5-5, 9-3-3)

**6.5.1 SITUATION B:** K1 attempts an onside kick from his own 40, but instead of causing the ball to strike the ground and bounce, he pops it up into the air. R1 signals for a fair catch while the kick is in flight and catches the ball: (a) before it crosses R's free-kick line; or (b) after it has gone beyond R's free-kick line. **RULING:** R1 has made a fair catch in both (a) and (b). A fair catch is permitted from in or beyond the neutral zone to R's goal line during a free kick. (2-9-1)

**6.5.2 SITUATION A:** During a scrimmage kick beyond the expanded neutral zone, R1 gives a fair-catch signal. He muffs the kick into the air, where: (a) R1 catches it 5 yards in advance of his muff; or (b) K2 pushes R1 in an attempt to reach the ball; or (c) K3 tackles R1 following the muff, preventing R1 from catching the kick; or (d) R1 is blocked below the waist by K4 and K5 recovers. **RULING:** In (a), R1 has made a fair catch and the ball will be put in play at the spot where the catch was completed. In (b), the contact on R1 by K2 is legal because K may retain possession following the muff by R1. In (c), it is a holding foul for K3 to tackle R1 following the muff, thus preventing him from reaching the ball. The block by K4 is illegal in (d). The fouls in (c) and (d) are fouls during a loose-ball play and the penalty, if accepted, will be administered from the previous spot and the down replayed. (2-3-5b, 6-2-4, 9-3-2)

**6.5.2 SITUATION B:** K2's punt is high and a strong wind blows it back toward the neutral zone. R1 gives a valid signal while he is beyond the neutral zone. However, the ball comes down: (a) in, or (b) behind the neutral zone and K2 pushes R1 and then catches the kick and advances. **RULING:** Since K may catch or recover a scrimmage kick in or behind the neutral zone and advance, the action in (a) and (b) is legal. Since R may not fair catch in or behind the neutral zone, he may be legally contacted there.

**6.5.3 SITUATION:** R1 signals for a fair catch of a scrimmage kick by K1. Teammate R2 catches the kick and is tackled immediately by K1 who did or did not have a chance to see the signal. The contact which was not a personal foul occurred before the covering official sounded his whistle. R2 fumbles when tackled and the ball is recovered by K2. **RULING:** The ball became dead when it was caught by R2. The contact by K1 was not a foul because R2 did not signal for a fair catch. R2 fumbled a dead ball and there could be no recovery by K2. **COMMENT:** Contacting a receiver who did not give a fair-catch signal or contacting a receiver who has given a signal but is contacted where he cannot make a fair catch, is not a foul unless the contact is judged by the game official to be a personal foul. The receiver is not afforded special protection in such situations. Members of the kicking team have the responsibility for knowing when the ball is dead. If a kicker could not have seen a fair-catch signal made by the teammate of the receiver, there is no foul. However, if he could have seen the signal, he does not have license to contact the receiver. (4-2-2g)

**CHOICE TO SNAP OR FREE KICK**

**6.5.4 SITUATION:** R1 signals for a fair catch beyond the neutral zone on K's 40. K2 interferes with R1's opportunity to make the catch. R chooses an awarded catch and to put the ball in play with a snap. During the next down: (a) A1 gains 15 yards and the coach of B is charged with an unsportsmanlike foul; or (b) B2 commits pass interference; or (c) an inadvertent whistle sounds during A1's forward pass. **RULING:** In (a), the unsportsmanlike foul during the down does not give A another choice to snap or free kick. However in (b), A may snap or free kick following penalty enforcement. In (c), the down is replayed and A has the option to snap or free kick. (10-4-5a)

**KICK-CATCHING INTERFERENCE**

**6.5.6 SITUATION A:** K2's punt is partially blocked by R1 in or behind the neutral zone and it then travels beyond the neutral zone. R2 is in position to catch the ball, but it first touches K2's shoulder before hitting the ground where it is recovered by R2. **RULING:** Since R1's touching is ignored, it is kick-catching interference by K2, because R2 was in position to catch the ball.

**6.5.6 SITUATION B:** K1's punt is coming down over R's 15-yard line and (a) R2 is in position to catch the ball, or (b) all R players have moved away from where the ball will land. In both (a) and (b), K3 catches the ball. **RULING:** In (a), it is kick-catching interference and R has the option to take the results of the play, or accept the 15-yard penalty for kick-catching interference. If the distance penalty is accepted, it is R's choice to have the penalty enforced from the spot of the foul or to have it enforced from the previous spot and require K to rekick. In (b), the play is legal and the ball is dead as soon as K3 catches it. The spot of the catch is also a spot of first touching and R will put the ball in play on that yard line, first and 10.

**6.5.6 SITUATION C:** K5, running down field under a punt, has the kick strike him on his helmet: (a) R1 is in a position to catch the kick if he so chooses; or (b) no R player is in position to be able to get to the ball and catch it. **RULING:** In (a), K5 has committed kick-catching interference. In (b), there is no foul.

**6.5.6 SITUATION D:** K1's punt is high but short. R2, from well down field, runs toward the ball to get in position to attempt to catch it. K2 is also moving toward the ball or just standing there when: (a) K2 is contacted by R2; or (b) K2 causes R2 to veer away from the ball but there is no contact by K2. The ball strikes the ground and is recovered by R3. **RULING:** K2 has committed kick-catching interference in both (a) and (b) since K2 did not provide R2 an unobstructed opportunity to catch the ball. R may choose to take the results of the play, or accept the 15-yard penalty for kick-catching interference. If the distance penalty is accepted, it is R's choice to have the penalty enforced from the spot of the foul or to have it enforced from the previous spot and require K to replay the down.

**6.5.6 SITUATION E:** While K1's punt is in flight beyond the neutral zone, R2 (a) gives a valid fair catch signal, or (b) does not give a signal. The ball strikes R2 on the shoulder and bounces high into the air. While the loose ball is still airborne, K4 pushes R2 in the chest and K4 catches the ball at that spot. **RULING:** In both cases, the ball is dead when K4 catches it. There is no foul for kick-catching interference since R2's protection ended when the kick was touched.

### **INVALID SIGNAL**

**6.5.7 SITUATION A:** Fourth and 5 for K on its own 9-yard line. K1's punt is very high and very short, but it goes beyond the expanded neutral zone. R1 gives an invalid fair-catch signal at K's 20-yard line and the untouched kick hits the ground and rebounds behind the neutral zone where K1 recovers and is downed at his own 10-yard line. **RULING:** This is a post-scrimmage kick foul and the ball belongs to R by rule. If K accepts the penalty for R's foul, it will be R's ball on K's 25-yard line and first and 10, as the kick ended at K's 10-yard line and the foul was behind the basic spot. (2-16-2h)

**6.5.7 SITUATION B:** During a scrimmage kick, R1 signals for a fair catch by: (a) extending and holding one arm above his head; or (b) partially extending and waving one hand in front of his face; or (c) fully extending and laterally waving both hands above his head or in front of the body without extending one hand at arm's length above his head; or (d) extending and laterally waving one arm at full length above his head. **RULING:** The signals in (a), (b) and (c) are invalid. In (d), the signal is valid. Giving an invalid signal is a foul for which the penalty is enforced under the post-scrimmage kick provision. **COMMENT:** When a receiver shades his eyes during a legal kick, he must do so in a manner which is clearly not an invalid fair-catch signal. The responsibility of shading the eyes with a bent arm and not waving it is completely and entirely upon the receiver. (2-9-3, 2-41-6, 6-5-1, 6-5-6)

### **ILLEGAL SIGNAL BY RUNNER**

**6.5.8 SITUATION A:** R1 catches K1's punt and then quickly gives a fair-catch signal after advancing a couple of steps. **RULING:** An illegal fair-catch signal by R1. The spot of the illegal signal is the spot of the foul for enforcement under the all-but-one principle. (2-9-5)

**6.5.8 SITUATION B:** R2 gives a fair-catch signal just after R1 begins to advance after catching a punt. **RULING:** No foul, as only the runner can give an illegal fair-catch signal. Opponents must continue to play and not be deceived by a player waving an arm after a kick-catching situation. (2-9-5)