

# **NCAA Rules Review - 2026**

**A quick look at common rules that we often forget**

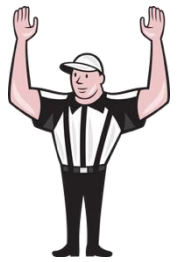
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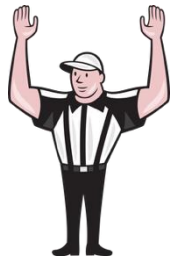
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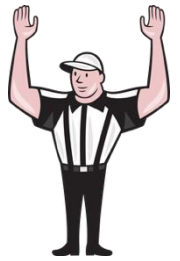
# Free Kick



- Team A will kickoff from the 35 yard line
- All team A players, except the player that kicks the ball, must be no more than 5 yards behind A's restraining line from the Ready For Play until the ball is kicked
- Team A can keep the ball if they recover or catch a kick, unless KCI occurs:
  - beyond B's restraining line –OR–
  - after B touches kick –OR–
  - after ball touches ground, official or player beyond B's restraining line (even if it subsequently bounces back)
- Team A must have at least 4 players on either side of kicker when kicked
- Team A player that goes out of bounds during the kick and returns (unless forced out)
  - 5 yard penalty from **Previous Spot** or **Succeeding Spot where ball belongs to B**
- Team A may not block until eligible to touch kick
  - 5 yard penalty from **Previous Spot** or **Succeeding Spot where ball belongs to B**
  - Blocking before eligible to touch is reviewable



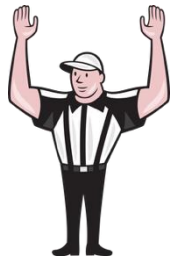
## Free Kick (cont'd)



- Penalty for free kick out of bounds is, at Team B's option:
  - **30 yards Beyond Free Kick Line, B 1/10 –OR–**
  - **5 yards from the Previous Spot, A free kick –OR–**
  - **5 yards from the Out of Bounds Spot, B 1/10 (inbounds hash)**
- If the result of the play is a touchback or a B player completes a catch after his waving signal (valid or invalid ( including the “T” signal ) fair catch signal) inside his 25-yard line, the ball will be put at the 25 anywhere between the hashes.
- If free kick is caught by an airborne Team B player who jumps from in-bounds and lands out-of-bounds, it is **not** a foul against Team A for kick out-of-bounds
- If free kick is touched by Team B player who is straddling the sideline, or by **any** out of bounds player, the ball becomes dead and it is a foul against Team A for kick out-of-bounds
- Team B right to accept spot of Illegal Touching can only be canceled if a penalty is accepted (penalty acceptance has priority)
- Penalty for blocking or contact by Fair Catch signaler before touching the ball is 10 yards from the spot of the foul.



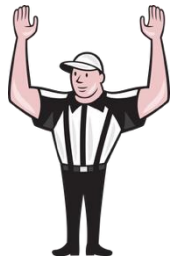
## Free Kick (cont'd)



- Any Team A foul during a free kick (except Kick Catch Interference) can be enforced from
  - **Previous Spot** –OR–
  - **Dead Ball Spot** if Team B has possession at the end of the down –OR–
  - **25 Yard Line** if play results in touchback or completed catch after signal inside his 25
- A player is not considered to have touched a free kick if
  - He is blocked into the ball by an opponent –OR–
  - An opponent bats the ball into the player
- Game clock starts when ball is legally touched in the field of play
- Team B is prohibited from intentionally aligning two or more players shoulder-to-shoulder for the purpose of blocking [15 yard penalty for Illegal Wedge]
  - Exception - If result is a touchback, free kick out of bounds, or fair catch there is no foul



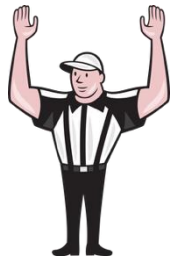
# Scrimmage Kick



- Scrimmage Kick Formation (allows for numbering exceptions):
  - No Team A player other than the potential kicker (or holder) aligned within the frame of the snapper and no player aligned in the clear path from the snapper to the potential kicker (or holder).
  - If using the Numbering Exception (less than 5 players 50-79): **[New for 2026]**
    - **At least two players must be on both sides of snapper in the tackle box (2x2 formation) clearly on the line of scrimmage**
    - **Become numbering exceptions and ineligible when the snapper takes his position regardless of hand positioning**
    - **Numbering exceptions may not shift or move to another position**
  - Must be obvious that a kick will be attempted (inclusive of formation for punts, i.e. “other backs split wide” does not satisfy) and:
    - At least one Team A player 10 or more yards behind NZ or
    - A potential holder and potential kicker 7 or more yards behind the NZ for place kick.
- Team A can recover but cannot advance a kick that lands beyond the neutral zone and then bounces back behind the neutral zone
  - If touched by B after the kick goes beyond neutral zone, A would maintain possession
- Ball is dead if kick lands in Team B’s end zone (unless touched by B after kick crosses the neutral zone)
- If Team A commits Illegal Touching by batting the ball in Team B’s end zone, B may elect a touchback. If foul is accepted, illegal touching spot is ignored.



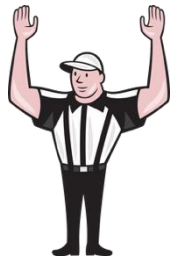
## Scrimmage Kick (cont'd)



- Team A player that goes out of bounds prior to the end of the kick and returns (unless forced out)
  - 5 yard penalty from **Previous Spot** or **Succeeding Spot** belonging to B
- Any Team A foul (except Kick Catch Interference) prior to the end of the kick can be enforced from the **Dead Ball Spot** where it belongs to Team B (except field goal attempts) if the ball crosses the neutral zone
- Penalty for blocking or contact by Fair Catch signaler before touching the ball is 10 yards (PSK enforcement)
- A player is not considered to have touched a scrimmage kick if
  - He is blocked into the ball by an opponent **–OR–**
  - An opponent bats the ball into the player
- Blocking below the waist
  - Prohibited by any player (A or B) from the time of the snap (not the kick) if team kicks



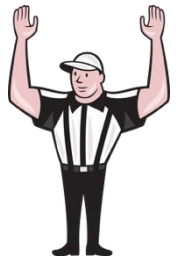
## Scrimmage Kick (cont'd)



- Team B players in the tackle box attempting to leap into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent to try to block a punt results in a 15 yard personal foul, automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down
  - Jumping straight up without breaking that plane or between players is legal.
- Team B players within one yard of the line of scrimmage must be completely outside the frame of the body of the snapper unless the snapper is on the end of the line.
  - 5 yard penalty
- When a team is in scrimmage kick formation and the snapper is not on the end of the line of scrimmage a defensive player may not initiate contact with the snapper until one second has elapsed after the snap
  - 15 yard penalty



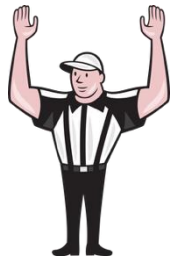
# Field Goal & Try Kick



- Field Goal
  - If unsuccessful FG attempt is declared dead beyond the neutral zone, ball is returned to **Previous Spot** (if snapped on or outside of the 20) or **20 Yard Line** (if snapped inside of the 20) -unless touched by Team B after kick crosses neutral zone
    - Note: The **Previous Spot** or **20 Yard Line** will also serve as the basic spot for post scrimmage kick enforcement under these conditions
- **3-on-1** by Team B on FG or Try Kicks
  - Three Team B Players are prohibited from aligning shoulder-to-shoulder in the blocking zone and moving forward together, as a unit, to make contact against a single Team A Player.
    - Five yard penalty for Illegal Formation from the **Previous Spot**



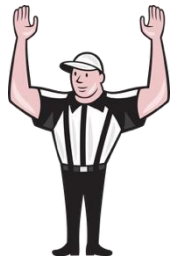
# At The Snap



- Offense
  - Formation:
    - Team A must have at least 5 linemen wearing numbers 50-79 on the line of scrimmage (exception: scrimmage kick formation). These players are allowed to interlock legs
    - Team A may not have more than 4 players in the backfield
    - One Team A player that is not a lineman may be in motion at the snap as long as he's not moving toward Team B's goal line
  - Shift / False Starts: **After huddle or shift**, all Team A players must be set for at least one second.
    - Abruptly shifting a player or player that simulates a start of the play will be called a false start
    - If Team A does not come to a one-second stop and then illegally shifts, it is a dead-ball false start. The play should be shut down.
    - If Team A comes to a one second stop and then illegally shifts, it is a live ball illegal shift foul.



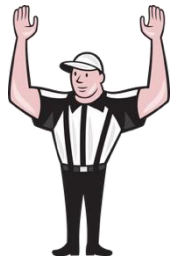
## At The Snap (cont'd)



- Defense
  - Team B players within one yard of the line of scrimmage (stationary or not) may not make quick and abrupt or exaggerated actions that simulate action at the snap and are not part of normal defensive player movement in an obvious attempt to make the offense foul (false start). DOD- 5 yds
  - Team B is prohibited from entering the neutral zone causing ‘threatened’ Team A linemen to react. A Team B player may threaten a maximum of three Team A linemen.
    - Team B player enters directly toward a Team A player, that A player and the 2 adjacent linemen are threatened.
    - Team B player enters in a gap, only those 2 adjacent linemen are threatened.



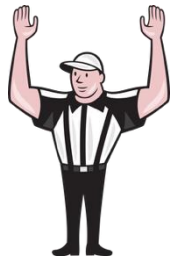
# Forward Pass



- Pass Eligibility Lost
  - Team A player goes out of bounds (unless forced out and attempts to return immediately)
- Pass Eligibility Gained (or Regained)
  - Ball touches Team B player (or official)
- Pass Interference Restrictions End
  - Any touching (Team A, Team B or official)
- Illegal Touching by an originally ineligible player
  - 5 yards from **Previous Spot** (not spot of foul) and loss of down
- Illegal Touching by a player who steps out of bounds on his own and becomes an inbounds player
  - **Loss of Down** from **Previous Spot**
- Ineligible Receiver Downfield
  - Exception - will not be called if the passer is legally throwing the ball away and it lands near or beyond the sideline
- Team B UNR, UNS, and holding fouls prior to or during a forward pass include an automatic first down



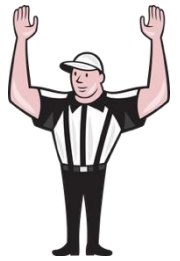
# Catch



- A player completes a catch if the following three criteria are met:
  - Secures firm control of a ball in flight (with hands or arms) **–AND–**
  - Is an inbounds player and touches the ground inbounds with any part of his body **–AND–**
  - Maintains control long enough to perform an act common to the game (such as advance, pitch, hand or protect himself, stretch out the ball)
    - *Note 1: He does not have to perform one of these acts, he must simply control it long enough to have the opportunity*
    - *Note 2: The criteria for completing a catch is the same whether in the field of play or end zone. The only difference is that you cannot have a catch/fumble in the end zone (that would be a touchdown)*
- If a player is going to the ground in the act of completing the catch, then:
  - He must maintain control when he contacts the ground (even on the sideline)
    - *Note 1: If he loses and regains control of the ball when he hits the ground in the field of play or end zone, it can still be ruled a catch if the ball did not touch the ground*
    - *Note 2: If he loses and regains control of the ball when he hits the ground on the sideline or anywhere else out of bounds, it is an incomplete pass*



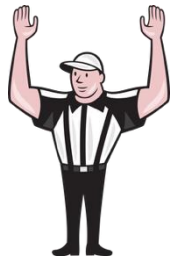
# Impetus



- Initial Impetus is caused by the player who carries, passes, kicks, fumbles, or snaps a ball from the field of play into the end zone.
- Once the ball is loose, impetus can only be changed if a player
  - Bats the ball after it strikes the ground
  - Kicks the ball (regardless of whether it has struck the ground)
  - Contacts the ball after it has come to rest
- Note: Muffing a loose ball that is still rolling and batting a ball in flight do not change the original impetus!



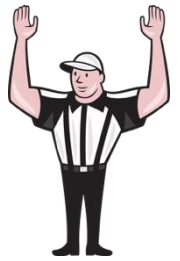
# Penalty Enforcement – Basic Principles



- **Basic Spot** is normally:
  - **End of Related Run** ...for running plays that end beyond the neutral zone
  - **Previous Spot** ...otherwise
- Offensive Fouls that occur behind the basic spot (but beyond the neutral zone) are enforced from the **Spot of the Foul** (this is the "1" in 3-and-1)
- Offensive Fouls (all contact fouls, illegal touching, and live ball UNS) that occur behind the neutral zone are enforced from the **Previous Spot**. The only fouls that can be enforced from behind the neutral zone are:
  - Intentional Grounding
  - Illegal Forward Pass
  - Illegal Batting
  - Illegal Kicking
- Contact Fouls by Team A in their own end zone result in a safety
- Defensive Fouls are never enforced from behind the neutral zone



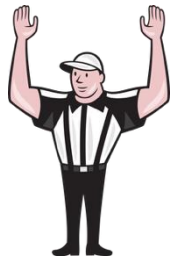
# Post Scrimmage Kick Enforcement



- Criteria for Post scrimmage Kick Enforcement
  - Foul occurs during scrimmage kick
  - Ball crosses neutral zone
  - Team B will next snap the ball
  - No PSK on try or extra periods
- PSK does not apply on a successful field goal (penalty is enforced from **Previous Spot**)
- If punt ends in Team B end zone then PSK spot is the **20 Yard Line**
- If unsuccessful FG attempt (untouched by Team B beyond NZ) is declared dead beyond the NZ then PSK spot is the **Previous Spot** (if snapped on or outside the 20 yard line) or **20 Yard Line** (if snapped inside the 20 yard line)
- If Team A bats kick in Team B end zone (touchback) and kick is untouched by Team B beyond NZ then PSK spot is the **20 Yard Line**



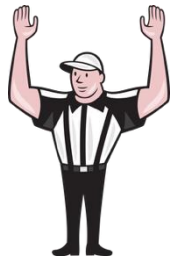
# Penalty Enforcement when result is a Touchback, Momentum Exception or Safety



- If the result of a play is a **touchback** then
  - The **basic spot** of enforcement is the **20 yard line**
    - Fouls by Team B behind the **20 yard line** are enforced from the **spot of the foul**
    - Fouls by Team B in the **end zone** result in a **safety**
    - Fouls by Team A are enforced from the **20 yard line**
- If the result of a play is the **momentum exception** then
  - The **basic spot** of enforcement is the **momentum spot**
    - Fouls by Team B behind the **momentum spot** are enforced from the **spot of the foul**
    - Fouls by Team B in the **end zone** result in a **safety**
    - Fouls by Team A are enforced from the **momentum spot**
- If the result of a play (after a change of possession) is a **safety** then
  - The **basic spot** of enforcement is the **goal line**
    - Fouls by Team B result in a **safety**
    - Fouls by Team A are enforced from the **goal line**
- Note: If Team B player fumbles the ball forward from his end zone and the ball goes out of bounds in the field of play then the **touchback / momentum spot** are still in effect (treat as if ball never left end zone).



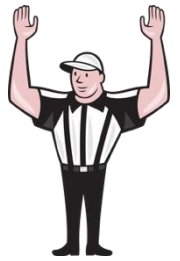
# Fouls on Scoring Plays



- During Touchdown
  - Personal and unsportsmanlike fouls by opponents of scoring team are enforced on try, succeeding kickoff, or succeeding spot in extra periods (offended team has choice)
- During Dead Ball Interval between Touchdown and Try
  - Personal (or unsportsmanlike) fouls after the touchdown but before the ready for play by either team are enforced on try, succeeding kickoff, or succeeding spot in extra period (offended team has choice)
  - Fouls after the ready for play are enforced prior to the next snap
- During Try
  - Personal foul and live-ball UNS fouls by Team B – Team A may keep point(s) and have penalty enforced from succeeding spot
  - Live ball fouls penalized as dead ball fouls during the try are enforced on the succeeding kickoff (or succeeding spot in extra periods)
  - Defensive Pass Interference penalties are enforced  $\frac{1}{2}$  the distance from the previous spot if try was attempted from on or inside the B3 (declined if try successful)
- During Field Goal
  - No special rules apply. Team A cannot keep points and have penalty enforced unless PF or UNS against B



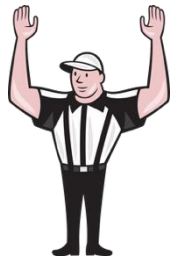
# Non-Standard Penalty Enforcements



- Team B player fouls after giving a valid, invalid or illegal fair catch signal during **free or scrimmage** kick he did not touch
  - Free kick: 10 yards from **Spot of Foul** unless a personal foul is involved then **15 yards** (not previous spot)
  - Scrimmage Kick: 10 yards unless a personal foul is involved then **15 yards- PSK** or Previous Spot Enforcement
- Illegal kick beyond neutral zone once the ball has been carried beyond the NZ
  - 5 yards from **Previous Spot** (not spot of foul) and **Loss of Down** and **Ball Becomes Dead**
- Return kick (kick after change of possession)
  - 5 yards from **Spot of Foul** and **Ball Becomes Dead**
- Illegal Kick (using a tee)
  - Dead ball foul, 5 yards from **Previous Spot**
- Team A player that goes out of bounds and returns and touches a forward pass (unless blocked out **OR** pass touches Team B **OR** pass touches official)
  - **Loss of Down** from **Previous Spot**
- Personal fouls and UNS fouls by the defense during legal forward pass plays and last run ends beyond the neutral zone
  - 15 yard penalty enforced at the end of the last run
    - Exception - Change of possession occurs during the down (previous spot)



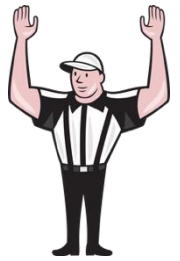
## Non-Standard Penalty Enforcements (cont'd)



- Kick-catching interference (free kick or scrimmage kick)
  - 15 yards from **Spot of Foul** (not previous spot)
  - For a foul on a free kick play behind the B-25-yard line against a player who has given a valid fair catch signal, 15 yards from B-25
    - Receiver gets 1 yard, shoulder-to-shoulder, directly in front of him in which A cannot enter until B touches the ball
    - For free kicks, protection is not provided if the kick strikes the ground more than once and/ or not immediately driven into the ground.
- Illegal forward handing from a player who has not had his entire body past the LOS to teammate who was on the line and did not turn 180 degrees to receive the ball (and must be 2 yards behind line to legally receive ball)
  - 5 yards from **Spot of Foul** and **Loss of Down**
- Throwing the ball backwards intentionally out of bounds to conserve time
  - 5 yards from **Spot of Foul** and **Loss of Down**



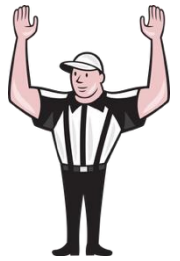
## Non-Standard Penalty Enforcements (cont'd)



- Illegal Forward Pass / Intentional Grounding
  - **Spot of Foul** and **Loss of Down** *if thrown to avoid loss of yardage or to conserve time*
  - 5 yards from **Spot of Foul** and **Loss of Down** *otherwise*
  - Note: Not a foul if there is an eligible receiver in the area. Receiver does not need an “opportunity to catch the pass” (for example, thrown at feet).
  - Note: CCA Manual guidance for “in the area”
- Defensive Holding- 10 yards and Automatic First Down for all DH
- **Offensive Pass Interference- 10 yards from Previous Spot [New for 2026]**
- Planned loose ball
  - 5 yards from **Previous Spot** and **Loss of Down**
- Delay of Game Penalty if game clock was running [5 yards]
  - Clock on snap *if Scrimmage Kick Formation or Team A intentionally consuming time*
  - Clock on ready *otherwise*



# Blocking Below the Waist



- Restrictions on Offensive Players
  - Linemen with initial position completely inside the tackle box may legally block below the waist inside the tackle box on their initial line charge. A block within 1 yard beyond the LOS is considered within the tackle box. After initial charge may block below the waist from the front until the ball leaves the tackle box.
  - Stationary backs lined with any part of their body within the tackle box may block below the waist from the front until the ball leaves the tackle box. A block within 1 yard beyond the LOS is considered within the tackle box.
  - All other players are NOT allowed to block below the waist.

*Note: A block is considered "from the front" if the direction of the block is between "10 o'clock and 2 o'clock" forward of the player being blocked.*



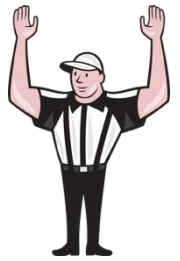
## Blocking Below the Waist (cont'd)



- Restrictions On Defensive Players
  - Players aligned in a stationary position within 1 yard of the LOS within the tackle box may block below the waist in the tackle box on their initial line charge
  - All other players are NOT allowed to block below the waist except against the runner.
- Free Kick
  - Prohibited (both teams) for entire down
- Scrimmage Kick
  - Prohibited (both teams) for entire down if Team A kicks the ball
- Change of Team Possession
  - Prohibited (both teams) for remainder of down



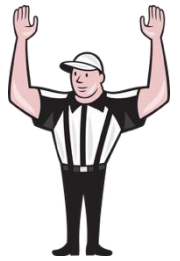
# Blocking Out of Bounds



- A player is prohibited from going out of bounds to block an opponent that is out of bounds
  - The block is illegal if the blocker and the player being blocked are **both** clearly out of bounds at the time of the block.
  - The block is legal if the block starts inbounds and continues across the sideline.
- Enforcement: **The spot of the foul is where the blocker crosses the sideline to go out of bounds to block.** PSK Enforcement could apply.
- Note: if the block out of bounds happens during a kick down and the block is by a receiving team member that went out of bounds prior to the kick ending, the kicking team player that goes out of bounds on his own may not return inbounds without committing a foul in his own right.



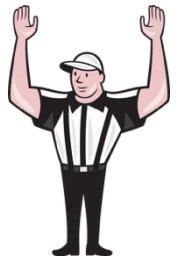
# Clipping



- Offensive Lineman positioned within 5 yards of the middle lineman (blocking zone)
  - Legal in the Blocking Zone (10 x 6 rectangle centered on middle lineman)
    - Ball must be in area at time of clip
    - Player may not leave zone then reenter and clip
    - Contact must be above the knee (at or below the knee is a foul)



# Illegal Chop Blocks



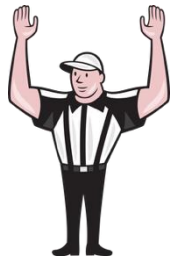
- Combination Block with or without delay (except against runner):
  - High/Low
  - Low/High

“Low” means at the thigh or below

- Notes (2):
  1. High/High and Low/Low combination blocks are legal (no foul),
  2. If defender initiates contact with offender, and that defender is blocked low, the block is legal (no foul).



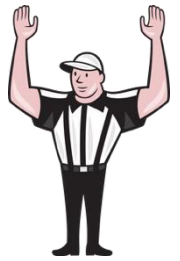
# Illegal Substitution



- If the offense rushes quickly to the line from the sideline or the huddle:
  - Umpire (or Center Judge) will cover the ball and allow defense an opportunity to match up
    - If play clock expires it will be a Delay of Game (DOG) foul against Team A
- If the offense is at the line of scrimmage and quickly substitutes and it appears that a quick snap is imminent then the Referee will shut down the play and allow B to substitute:
  - DOG on A, 5 yard penalty for each occurrence



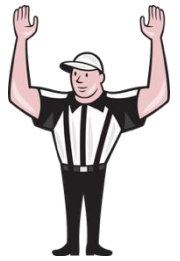
## Illegal Substitution (cont'd)



- Illegal Substitution (Live Ball Fouls – 5 yards)
  - 12<sup>th</sup> player (either team) running off the field at the snap
  - Substitute (either team) enters and then departs during same dead ball interval
  - Player (either team) departs then re-enters during same dead ball interval
  - 12 or more participating players detected during or after a down is over
    - Includes option to reset game clock to previous time and to start on the snap if after the Two Minute Timeout
  - More than 11 B players on the field (whether in formation or departing)
- Illegal Substitution (Dead Ball Fouls – 5 yards)
  - Substitute (either team) enters from outside of designated team area and enters the formation
  - Team A breaks huddle with 12 or more players
  - Replaced A player does not leave within 3 seconds
  - More than 11 A players in formation
  - Player leaves on wrong side of field



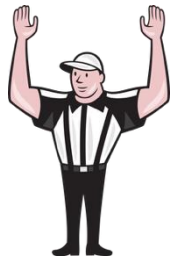
# Batting / Kicking a Loose Ball



- Batting a Loose Ball
  - Forward Pass in Flight
    - Legal: Any eligible player in any direction
  - Backward Pass in Flight
    - Legal: Bat backward (can be batted forward by non-passing team)
    - Illegal: Bat forward by passing team [10 yards but **no** loss of down]
  - Fumble in Flight or Grounded Loose Ball in Field of Play
    - Legal: Bat backward
    - Illegal: Bat forward [10 yards and **Loss of Down**]
  - Fumble in Flight or Grounded Loose Ball in End Zone
    - Illegal: [10 yards and **Loss of Down**]
      - Exception: Team A batting a kick untouched by opponent in opponent's end zone
  
- Kicking a Loose Ball
  - Always a foul [10 yards and **Loss of Down**]
  - Is an intentional act



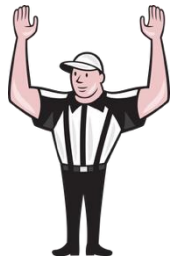
# Try Exceptions



- Fourth-down fumble rule is in effect on a Team A fumble
- Any personal foul or unsportsmanlike conduct foul by Team B may be enforced from succeeding spot if try is successful.
- Kick Catch Interference penalties are declined (or combined to form offsetting penalties)
- Defensive Pass Interference fouls are enforced  $\frac{1}{2}$  the distance to the goal if the ball was snapped from on or inside the 3 yard line.
- If there is a change of possession and both teams foul during the try, the Team B foul will dictate whether the try is replayed:
  - Team B fouls prior to change of possession – Replay Try from **Previous Spot** (penalties offset)
  - Team B fouls after the change of possession (“clean hands”) – Try ends; no replay
- PSK fouls by Team B (if accepted) are enforced from **Previous Spot**
- After a change of possession, unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, live ball fouls enforced as dead ball fouls and flagrant personal fouls (including TGT) are enforced from the **Succeeding Spot** (i.e., carryover)
- If Team A commits a foul that includes a loss of down, the try ends (no score)
- If touchdown is scored on the last play of regulation, the try will not be attempted when ahead by one or two points



## Extra Periods Exceptions



- If Team B gains possession the play continues but the Team A series will end (A can score on a double change of possession but cannot regain 1<sup>st</sup>-and-10)
- Only 2-point tries may be scored from the 2<sup>nd</sup> extra period on
- Beginning with the 3rd extra period, a team's possession period will be one play for a 2-point try from the 3 yard line unless relocated by penalty
- Each team shall be allowed one timeout for the first extra period and one timeout for the second extra period. Each team will be allowed one timeout beginning with the third extra period until the game is ended.
- If there is a change of possession and both teams foul during the down, the Team B foul will dictate whether the down is replayed:
  - Team B fouls prior to change of possession – Replay down from **Previous Spot** (penalties offset); Team A series continues.
  - Team B fouls after the change of possession (“clean hands”) – Series ends; no replay
- PSK fouls by Team B (if accepted) are enforced from **Previous Spot**
- After a change of possession, unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, live ball fouls enforced as dead ball fouls and flagrant personal fouls are enforced from the **Succeeding Spot** (i.e., carryover)



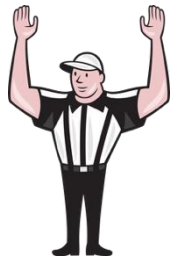
# Sideline Interference



- Sideline interferes with official (*Game Administration Interference*)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> offense
    - Warning
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> offense
    - 5 yard penalty from **Succeeding Spot**
  - 4<sup>th</sup> and subsequent offense (and subsequent offenses)
    - 15 yard penalty from **Succeeding Spot**
- Physical interference with an official is a foul charged to the team for unsportsmanlike conduct unless the individual can be readily identified.
- Sideline interferes with live ball or player (*Illegal Interference*)
  - 15 yard penalty from the **Succeeding Spot**
    - Referee may enforce any penalty he considers equitable including a score
    - This is also covered under unfair acts
    - Additionally, if the non-player touches a loose ball, the play is immediately dead and inadvertent whistle procedures also apply
- Coach enters field to question, protest, or in disagreement including showing an official a tablet to show them video
  - 15 yard penalty from the **Succeeding Spot**
    - This unsportsmanlike conduct foul counts as one of the two leading to ejection from the game.



# Roughing the Passer / Kicker



- Roughing the Passer
  - No foul if defender is legally/illegally blocked into passer
  - Includes contact to an offensive player in a passing posture with focus downfield
  - Foul if unabated defender forcibly hits a passer at the knee area or below regardless if a pass is thrown. “Forcibly hitting” includes rolling into and lunging into. No foul for “conventional” tackle by defender grabbing/wrapping without forcible contact with head or shoulders.
  
- Roughing the Kicker
  - No foul if defender is blocked into kicker (legally or illegally)
  - No foul for Roughing the Kicker (or Running into Kicker) if kicker is outside tackle box (more than 5 yards wide from position where ball was snapped) or when the kicker carries or possesses the ball 5 yards deeper than his original position in scrimmage kick formation
  - If Player B1 touches the kick and Player B2 illegally contacts the kicker, it is still a foul against Team B. Only the player that touches is exempt from roughing/running into penalties.



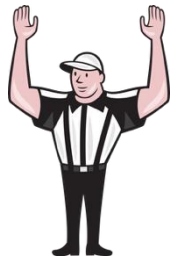
# Unsportsmanlike Conduct vs. Personal Foul



- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
  - Non-contact fouls such as Taunting, Excessive Celebration, Disrespecting an official
  - Dead-ball contact fouls such as pushing, shoving, and striking that occur clearly after the ball is dead and is not a part of game action as well as using forcible contact to push or pull an opponent off the pile
  - Contacting an official (plus ejection)
  - Team A live ball fouls are enforced via 3 and 1 enforcement or previous spot
  - Team B fouls include an automatic first down
  - When in doubt, it is a dead-ball foul
  - Ejection: Two UNS fouls on player or coach.
- Personal Fouls
  - Automatic first down (if foul against defense)
  - Contact fouls such as:
    - Late Hits
    - Fighting (plus ejection)
      - If a player's unsportsmanlike act (such as taunting) causes opponent to physically retaliate it is considered fighting and both players are ejected



# Defenseless Player / Targeting



- The following players are considered **Defenseless** and are given *targeting* protection:
  - *Passer* - player in the act or just after throwing a pass
  - *Receiver* - player in act of completing a catch who has not had an opportunity to protect himself
  - *Kicker* - player in the act of kicking or after kicking the ball (protection continues for remainder of down)
  - *Returner* - player attempting to catch or recover a kick
  - *Prone* - player on the ground
  - *Passive* - *player obviously out of the play*
  - *Blind-sided* - *player who receives a blind-side block*
  - *Downed* - *runner already in grasp of opponent where forward progress is stopped*
  - *Quarterback* - *quarterback any time after a change of possession*
  - *Sliding Ball Carrier* - *runner that's obviously given himself up and is sliding feet-first*
- If any **Defenseless** player is **targeted**, it is a 15 yard penalty and the offending player is disqualified.  
**Targeting** is:
  - **Making forcible contact to** the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent with the head, forearm, helmet or shoulder **–OR–**
  - **Making forcible contact with** the crown of the helmet (6in radius from top of helmet) [New for 2022]
- Replay can:
  - remove targeting penalty. For games without replay, halftime video review by Referee may reverse the disqualification
  - create targeting in egregious instances when not called by on-field officials
  - Replay must uphold or reverse the on-field decision, “stands” is no longer an option



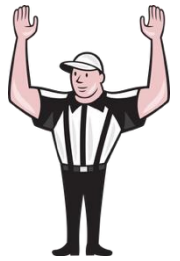
## Leaping / Hurdling



- No defensive player can run forward from beyond the neutral zone and **leave his feet or leap into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent to** attempt to block a kick or apparent kick on a field goal or try. It is not a foul if the player was aligned in a **stationary** position **within one yard of the line of scrimmage** when the ball was snapped. It no longer matters if the player lands on another player or not.
- No defensive player attempting to block, bat or catch a kick or apparent kick may step, jump, stand on a teammate, place hands on teammate to get additional height (leverage), be picked up, elevated, propelled or pushed by a teammate.
- No defensive player who is inside the tackle box can leap into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent in an attempt to block a punt or an apparent punt.
  - It is not a foul if the defensive player tries to block the punt by jumping straight up without attempting to leap over the opponent or if a defensive player attempts to leap through or over the gap between players.



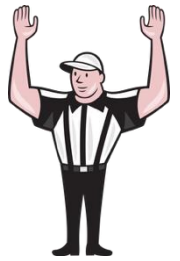
## Blind Side Block



- All players are prohibited from delivering blocks with forcible contact against an opponent in the open field from outside the opponent's field of vision (exceptions: extended hands, receiving the contact in a "basketball screen"-like manner, buzz blocks).
- The recipient of the block needs to have a reasonable opportunity to defend himself.
- Personal foul with possible targeting if all targeting criteria are met.



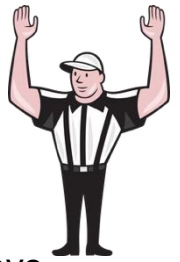
## Horse Collar Tackle



- All players are prohibited from grabbing the inside back collar of the shoulder pads, jersey, nameplate area, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and abruptly pulling the ball carrier down anywhere on the field including the tackle box.



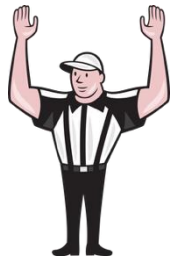
# Loss of Helmet



- Any player whose helmet comes completely off, other than as a direct result of a foul, must leave the game for the next down (unless offending team calls timeout. This does to an injured player)
  - Game clock will be stopped:
    - Immediately if the player is the ball carrier
    - After the down if any other player
  - If outside the **Two Minute Timeout** of either half
    - Play clock set to 40 if player is on defense (or both)
    - Play clock set to 25 if player is on offense
  - If after the **Two Minute Timeout** of either half
    - Play clock is set to 40 seconds if player is on defense (or both) ,25 seconds if player is on offense
    - Opponent has option of 10 second reduction after the **Two Minute Timeout**
      - Team can “buy” their way out of 10 second reduction with a timeout (player can return without sitting out one play)
- Player who loses helmet must not continue to participate in the play unless it is in the immediate action in which he is engaged
  - 15 yard foul personal foul
  - Contact against player is a foul unless in immediate action (15 yard personal foul, automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down if by Team B prior to change of team possession)



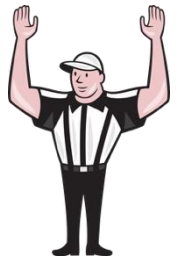
# Player Numbering & Illegal Equipment



- Equipment
  - Knee pads must be covered by pants and pants must be to at least the top of the knee and cover the knee
  - Jerseys must be tucked; Jerseys that are taped, tied or knotted are illegal
  - All team members must wear socks or leg coverings that are identical in color and design
  - Cleats that are longer than ½ inch are illegal (player wearing illegal cleats is DQ'ed by rule)
  - Umpire must inspect/approve tape or bandage on hand, wrist, forearm or elbow
  - Visible bandanas are illegal
  - Eye shields, **Eyeglasses, and goggles** that are not clear are illegal (eye shields can be “nearly clear”)
  - Gloves may be of any color
  - Towels (must be solid white) may be worn by any player
    - Must be solid white
    - No lettering, symbols, et cetera, *except* for Team Logo.
    - Must be **no smaller than 4” x 12” and no larger than 6” x 12”**
- Player must leave game for at least 1 down until fixed or else use a timeout. Can be fixed without leaving game or using a timeout if becomes illegal during down
- One player during a down may wear coach to player communication denoted by a green dot on the helmet
- Numbering
  - A player that changes his jersey number during the game must report the change to the Referee.
  - Two players wearing the same number are not allowed to play the same position during the game.
    - **15 yard penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct**
  - Two players wearing the same number are not allowed to participate during the same down.
    - **5 yard penalty from the previous spot**
  - No more than two players may be assigned or wear the same jersey number
    - **15 yard penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct charged to Head Coach, correct numbering and report change**



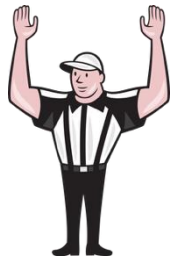
# Game Clock Considerations



- Ready for play versus Snap
  - Runner out of bounds / Backward Pass out of bounds / Fumble backwards out of bounds
    - *Ready* - prior to the **Two Minute Timeout** of the half
    - *Snap* – after the **Two Minute Timeout** in the half
  - Fumble forward out of bounds
    - *Ready* – regardless of clock status (*return ball to spot of fumble*) unless followed by the **Two Minute Timeout**
  - Team B ends down in possession of ball and no scoring (TD, FG, Safety) occurred
    - *Snap* – if Team B is next to snap the ball
    - *Ready* – if enforcement of a Team B penalty results in Team A retaining possession (Exception: *Snap* if scrimmage kick down) unless followed by the **Two Minute Timeout**
    - **Snap** – if after the **Two Minute Timeout** of the half, game clock is stopped to administer a penalty, by the team ahead (or tied) in the score at the option of the offended team; referees should consider under five minutes of each half
  - **Illegal Substitution (12 or more players participating during the down)**
    - **Snap at the option of the offended team and reset the clock to time at start of previous down**



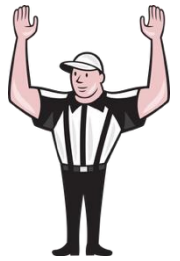
# Game Clock Considerations (cont'd)



- Minimum time for another play
  - If game clock is stopped and will start on the ready
    - With **three or more seconds** remaining in quarter, the ball can be grounded and there be another play.
    - With **two seconds or one second** remaining in the quarter, there is time for only one play.
- Clock Status on First Downs
  - The game clock will continue to run when A reaches the line to gain prior to the **Two Minute Timeout**
  - The clock will be stopped after a first down after the **Two Minute Timeout** and will start on the Referee's signal
- Timeouts
  - Consecutive charged team timeouts are not allowed during same dead ball period by the same team.
  - If a player presents as injured after the ball is spotted by officials, that team will be charged a Team Timeout or a delay penalty if all timeouts have been used.
- Extension of Periods
  - A quarter will only be extended at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters at the option of Team B if loss of down foul.



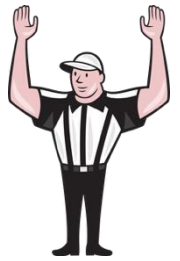
## 40/25 Second Play Clock



- Generally, the play clock will be reset to **40 seconds** and immediately start counting down at the conclusion of each play. This includes:
  - Ball dead inbounds or out of bounds (even if a first down is awarded) unless followed by the **Two Minute Timeout**
  - Incomplete Pass unless followed by the **Two Minute Timeout**
  - Injury Timeout for Team B (or A and B) player unless in conjunction with the **Two Minute Timeout or a charged team timeout**
  - Helmet off Team B (or A and B) player unless in conjunction with the **Two Minute Timeout or a charged team timeout**
  - After a touchdown prior to the try
  - After a free kick and prior to the down following the free kick down
- Play clock will be set to 25 if ball is not ready to be snapped when play clock reads 25
- **The play clock regardless of time left in either half will be run due to coach-to-player communications**



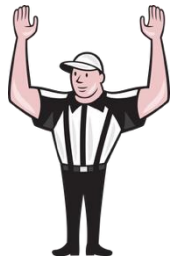
## 40/25 Second Play Clock (cont'd)



- The play clock countdown will be reset to **25 seconds** if one of the following occurs:
  - Start of Period (or start of series in Extra Periods)
  - At the **Two Minute Timeout**
  - Change of Possession (but not A-B-A intradown, 40)
  - Timeout
    - Charged Team Timeout
    - Media Timeout (unless in conflict with other rules)
  - Injury Timeout for Team A player
  - Helmet off Team A player
  - Administrative Stoppage
    - Measurement
    - Instant Replay Review
      - **Exception: After Two Minute Timeout [New for 2026]**
        - Play clock is frozen at the time of stoppage, unless it is less than 10 seconds where it will be reset to 10 seconds
        - If upheld, the play clock will start at that point on the referee's signal



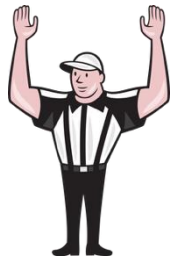
# 10 Second Subtraction



- 10-Second Subtraction, **after the Two Minute Timeout** and the clock is running
  - For a foul by either team that stops the clock (e.g., False Start, Team B contact in NZ, Intentional Grounding to stop the clock, *Incomplete* Illegal FWD Pass, etc.)
  - For an injured player **and** the injured player is the only reason to stop the clock
  - For a helmet coming off **and** the helmet coming off is the only reason to stop the clock
  - Instant Replay if a stopped clock is changed to a running clock (No other stoppages must have occurred)
  - With less than 10 seconds in either half for an injured player and the clock will restart on the Ready.
  - No time subtracted if:
    - For a foul, the offended team accepts yardage and declines time subtraction
    - For a foul, the offended team declines the yardage
    - For a foul, the fouling team calls a timeout
    - For an injured player or a player's helmet coming off, that player's team takes a timeout.
  - Clock will start on the *ready* if time is subtracted
  - Clock will start on the *snap* if foul or time subtraction is declined



# Inadvertent Whistle



- Sounded while ball in player possession
  - Team in possession may take ball at the spot (down counts) or replay the down
- Sounded while ball is loose following backward pass, fumble or illegal forward pass
  - Team in possession may take ball at end of run (down counts) or replay the down
- Sounded during legal forward pass, scrimmage kick or free kick
  - Replay down
- Sounded while Team B is in possession on try or in extra periods
  - Down ends. No replay
  
- Penalty enforcement (accepted penalty) or accepting the spot of Illegal Touching (on a kick) take precedence over the inadvertent whistle procedure