



2019 PRESEASON GUIDE

FOOTBALL

25



TIME TO GO

40-Second Play Clock Goes Into Effect This Season

In an effort to ensure a consistent interval play-to-play and game-to-game, the NFHS Football Rules Committee adopted the 40-second play clock beginning with the 2019 season. The change came after state associations in Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee and Colorado reported positive results of experiments over the past several seasons. The affected

rules are 2-35, 3-6-1, 3-6-2a and 7-2-1.

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 following:

- 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 umpire will need to be alert to substitutions and not leave the ball too quickly after placing it down without observing both teams to prevent possible substitution advantages and fouls. The application

In addition to a 25-second play clock, NFHS games will use a 40-second play clock starting in 2019. Note that a visible field play clock is not required.

SEE "RULE CHANGE" P. 2

► RULE CHANGE CONT. FROM P.1

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.

The following is suggested 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.

- First down and 10, the ball is run up the middle for a five-yard gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead but the game clock does not stop.

- Second down and 5, an incomplete pass is thrown. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead and the game clock stops and starts on the snap.

- Third down and 5, the ball is run for a 10-yard gain 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.

- First down and 10, a sweep play is run to the right side and the runner is forced out of bounds after a three-yard 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.

- Second down and 7, a pass is completed for a 20-yard gain and the tackle is inbounds, but A77 is flagged for holding during the play. The game clock stops to administer the penalty if accepted, 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.

- Third down and 2, 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.

- Third down and 2, A22 runs for

no gain but 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.

- Fourth down and 2, 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.

PLAY 1: 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

A CONSISTENT INTERVAL PLAY-TO-PLAY AND GAME-TO-GAME.

(both palms open in an over-the-head pumping motion). that the play clock should be reset at 40 seconds and started immediately.

PLAY 2: 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.

PLAY 3: 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 it is

being placed on the ground, sees that it is one of Team B's balls. The ball is tossed to the line judge who attempts to get a Team A ball from the ball person. **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, the referee signals to start the play clock.

PLAY 4: 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.

PLAY 5: 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:** The 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. In (a), the referee immediately will signal the game clock to start. In (b), the game clock will start on the referee's signal when the ball is ready for play.

PLAY 6: Team A fumbles or the ball is loose after a backward pass. Several players dive on the ball, attempting recovery. **RULING:** The covering official(s) shall stop the game clock. If recovered by A short of the line to gain (no first down), the 40-second play clock shall start. If recovered by B, the 25-second clock will start on the ready-for-play following a reset of the 25-second play clock. □

COMMITTEE DOES A NUMBER ON JERSEYS

All involved in the game are having difficulty identifying players on the field because jersey colors and numbers are often close or identical in color, differentiated only by the borders around the numbers. As a result, the NFHS Football Rules Committee modified its jersey rule for the present and adopted rules that will be in force starting in 2024.

Jersey numbers are covered in Rule 1-5-1c.

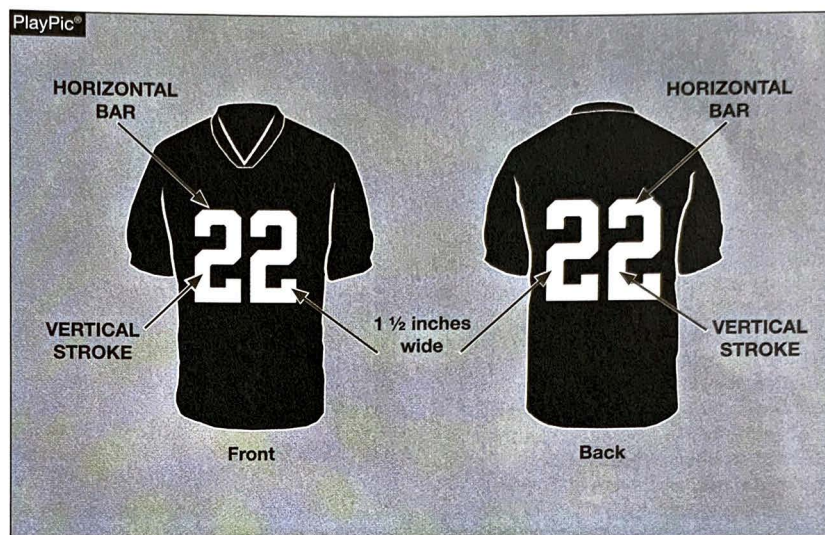
As before, the numbers shall be clearly visible and legible using Arabic numbers 1-99 inclusive and shall be on the front and back of the jersey. The color and style of the number shall be the same on the front and back. The numbers, inclusive of any borders, shall be centered horizontally at least 8 inches and 10 inches high on front and back, respectively. The phrase "inclusive of any borders" was added this year.

The committee approved a change requiring that the entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) exclusive of any border(s) shall be approximately 1-1/2 inches wide.

Through the 2023 season, the body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) shall be a continuous color contrasting with the jersey color or the same solid color(s) as the jersey with a minimum of one border that is at least 1/4 inch in

width of a single solid contrasting color.

Effective with the 2024 season, the entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) shall be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the body color of the jersey. □



STATES MAY APPROVE REPLAY ONLY FOR POSTSEASON

State associations may create instant replay procedures that permit game or replay officials to use a replay monitor during state postseason contests to determine if a decision by the on-field game officials is incorrect.

Applicable rules are 1-3-7 NOTE (NEW) and TABLE 1-7.

The state associations of Alabama, New Jersey and Minnesota experimented with different systems and protocols but all were happy with the concept.

PLAY: 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 postseason 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). □

QUICK TIP

Make your signals quick but crisp. Most signals don't require repetitions. One or two turns of the fists on a false start (and use fists, not flat palms). Signal holding or face mask below your face, so your face won't be obscured, but don't yank your arm up and down. Extend your arms for pass interference once, not back and forth multiple times. An obvious incomplete pass doesn't merit more than one pass of the arms. **Communication is important. Excess isn't.**

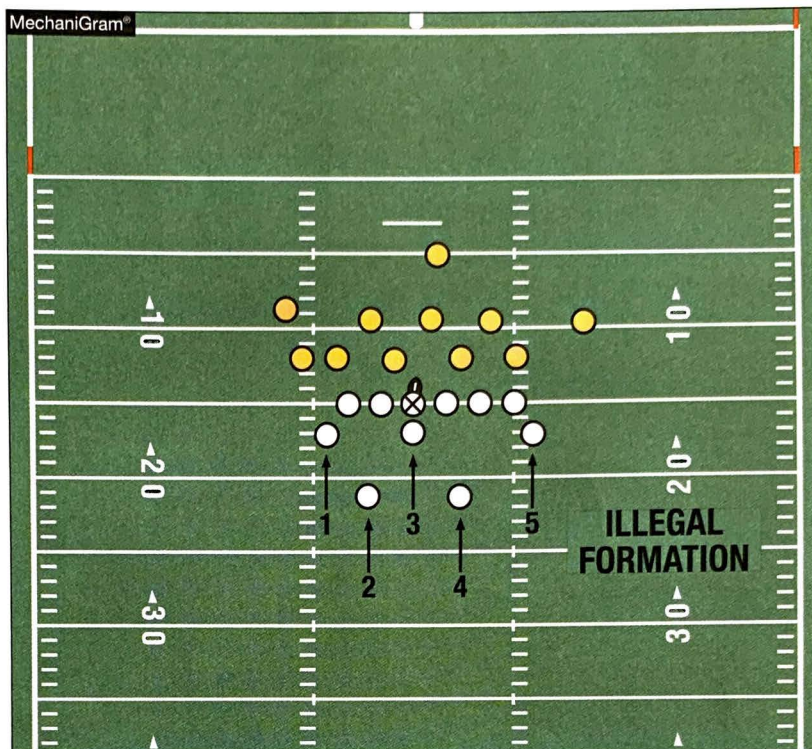
FORMATION RULE ALTERED

Under changes to Rules 2-14-1 and 7-2-5a, Team A now needs only five players on its line at the snap, but cannot have more than four in the backfield. That is a departure from the old rule in which Team A fouled by not having seven players on its line at the snap. In a related editorial change, the foul is now considered illegal formation rather than illegal numbering.

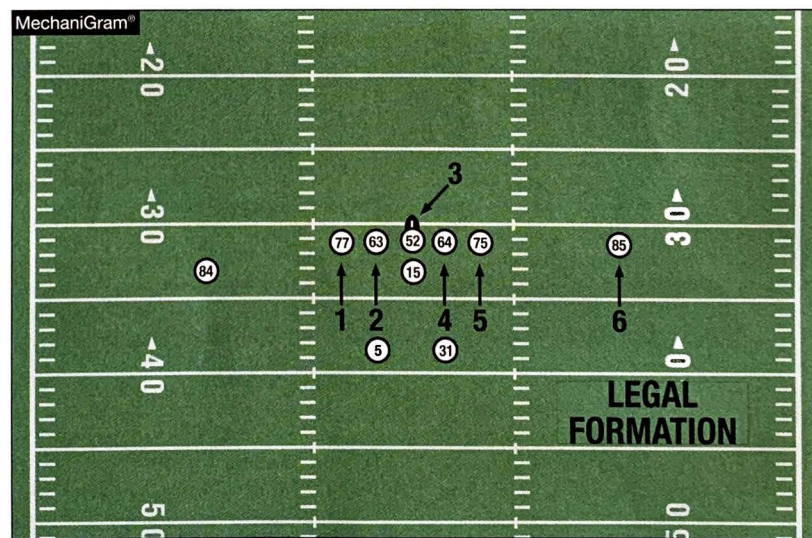
PLAY: Team A comes to its line of scrimmage with tackles 70 and 71, guards 60 and 61, center 50 all on the line of scrimmage, a quarterback and three other backs in the backfield, and: (a) ends 80 and 89 on the line of scrimmage; (b) end 80 on the line of scrimmage and no other players on the field; (c) end 80 on the line of scrimmage and player 89 meeting neither the definition of a back nor a lineman; or (d) players 80 and 89 on the field meeting neither the definition of a back nor a lineman. **RULING:** The formations and numbering in both (a) and (b) are legal because there are five players numbered 50-79 on the line of scrimmage, a minimum of five players on the line of scrimmage, and no more than four players meeting the definition of a back, including the quarterback. In both (c) and (d), the formations are legal because there are five players numbered 50-79 on the line of scrimmage, a minimum of five players on the line of scrimmage, and no more than four players meeting the definition of a back; however, the other players in the game are not eligible receivers in the event of a legal forward pass. □

QUICK TIP

In pressure situations, game officials must remain calm in order to perform their best. For example, game officials should know that the pressure will rise on fourth and goal late in a close game. **Avoid getting caught up in the moment** — take a deep breath and relax. Give the “big play” the same focus you did the first play of the game and it will increase your confidence.



This formation is illegal not because there are six players on the line, but because there are five players in the backfield.



Even though there are only six players on the line of scrimmage, this formation is legal because there are fewer than five backs.

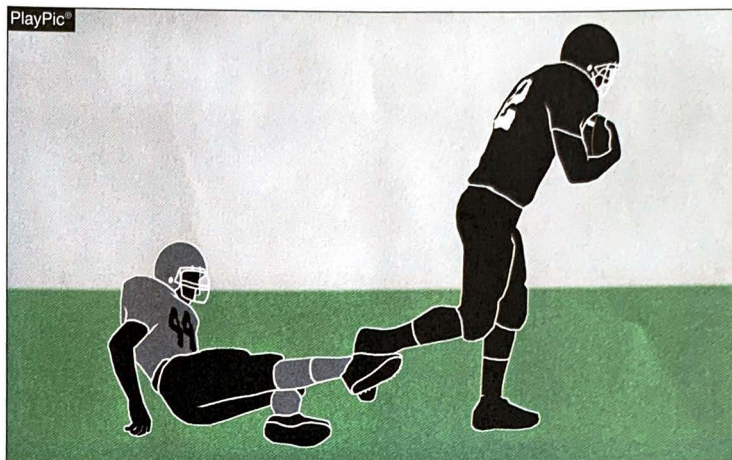
TRIPPING THE RUNNER IS A FOUL

The exception that made it legal to trip the runner has been eliminated from the NFHS Football Rules Book.

Tripping the runner is the same as tripping any other player and carries a 15-yard penalty. Tripping is defined as intentionally using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knee.

See Rules 2-45, 9-4-3o (NEW) and 9-4-3o PENALTY (NEW).

PLAY: 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). □



POINT OF EMPHASIS

2019 NFHS FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Following are the 2019 Points of Emphasis as identified by the NFHS Football Rules Committee.

PROPER PROCEDURES FOR WEATHER DELAYS

At some point during the high school football season, many parts of the country have to address weather issues. Some of these, according to NFHS guidelines, dictate a suspension/delay during a game. Most of the time, the delay is due to lightning and thunder (either lightning seen or thunder heard); and when a suspension or delay occurs, the teams are sent to a safe, sheltered area until the weather situation has ended. NFHS guidelines on handling lightning and thunder delays require use of the 30-minute rule, meaning when the game has been suspended, play cannot resume until at least 30 minutes have elapsed following the last sighting of lightning or the sound of thunder. Once the game is suspended, each further instance of lightning or thunder requires a reset of the clock and the commencement of a new 30-minute interval.

Seldom is there a problem with game officials or site administrators following the basic 30-minute rule when there is lightning or thunder. However, some game officials and administrators are not abiding by the mandatory halftime intermission and warm-up rule when there is a lightning delay near the end of the first half. If there is such a delay late in the second period, once the second period is completed, NFHS playing rules require a halftime intermission of at least 10 minutes followed by the required 3-minute warm-up period before the third period may begin. **Coaches or game officials cannot shorten the halftime intermission or the warm-up period.** However, both coaches could agree to shorten (end) the second period during the delay, and then the third period could start after the delay as soon as the mandatory warm-up period is completed.

It is important for game officials, coaches and administrators to be aware of the halftime intermission and warm-up rules on nights when the weather could present delays and to administer those NFHS football rules correctly.

FREE-BLOCKING ZONE AND LEGAL BLOCKING

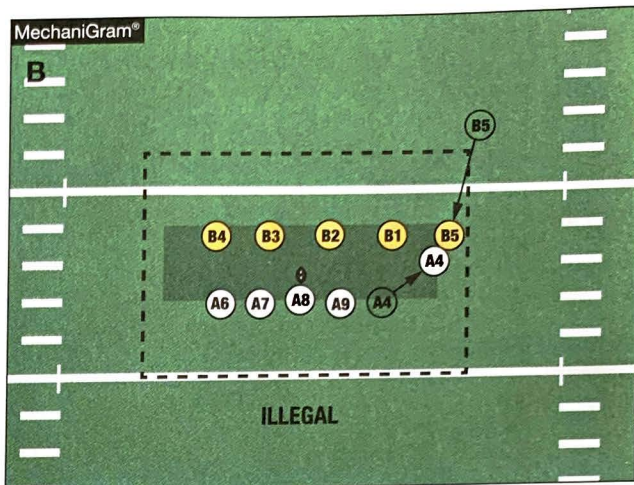
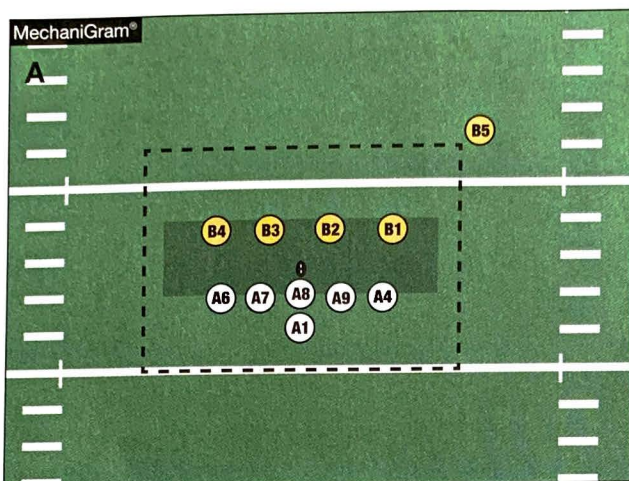
The free-blocking zone is a rectangular area established when the ball is snapped. It extends 4 yards laterally on either side of the ball, and 3 yards behind each line of scrimmage. Blocking below the waist and blocking in the back may be permitted in the free-blocking zone provided that certain conditions are met.

Offensive and defensive linemen may block each other below the waist in the free-blocking zone provided that all players involved in the blocking are on their line of scrimmage and in the free-blocking zone at the snap, and the ball is in the zone. Each team's line of scrimmage is a vertical plane through the point of the ball closest to that team's goal line.

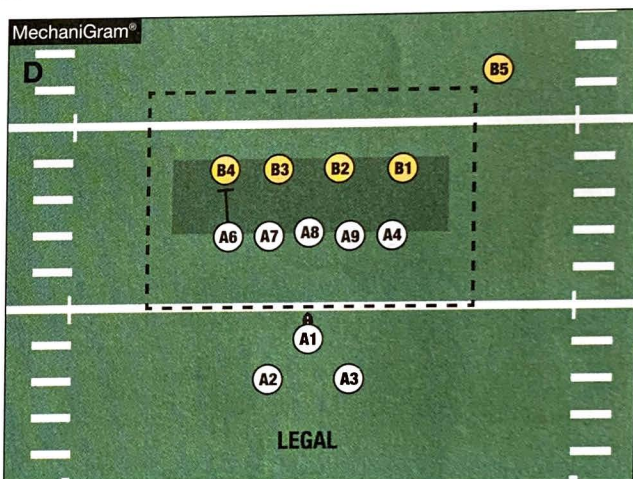
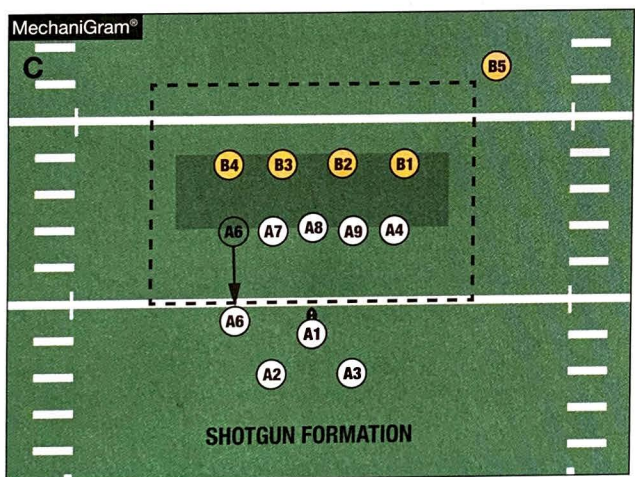
Offensive linemen may block defensive players in the back in the free-blocking zone as long as the blocker is on his line of scrimmage and in the free-blocking zone at the snap, the opponent is in the free-blocking zone at the snap, and the contact is in the zone.

□ SEE "POE" P. 6

► POE CONT. FROM P.5



In Mechanigram A, A4 is in the free-blocking zone but B5 is not. In Mechanigram B, when A4 blocks B5 below the waist, even though the block occurs in the free-blocking zone while the free-blocking zone exists, it is a foul.



Team A is in shotgun formation. In Mechanigram C, because A6 did not immediately begin his block on the snap, he may not block below the waist. In Mechanigram D, the initial thrust is simultaneous with the snap. That is a legal block.

To determine whether blocking below the waist and blocking in the back are legal, game officials must first determine whether players are in the free-blocking zone at the snap. Since offensive linemen are in the zone if any part of their body is in the zone at the snap, game officials must check the spacing between offensive linemen. As long as the line is using "normal" splits and the formation is "balanced" (i.e., the distance between the outside foot of each lineman and the inside foot of the adjacent linemen is no greater than 2 feet and an equal number of linemen are on each side of the

snapper), all players, including the tight end, are deemed to be in the zone at the snap. If the splits are wider than 2 feet, the tight end is considered out of the zone and therefore cannot legally block below the waist or in the back.

Once game officials determine which players are in the zone at the snap, the next determination is whether a block below the waist or a block in the back occurs in the free-blocking zone. Because the free-blocking zone disintegrates once the ball leaves the zone, it may be difficult to determine whether the ball is in the zone at the time the block occurs

when the offense is using a "shotgun" formation, due to the very short time interval between the snap and the ball leaving the zone.

In addition to observing blocking by offensive linemen, game officials must also be alert to defenders "cutting" running backs and wide receivers who are not on their line of scrimmage or in the free-blocking zone at the snap. Restrictions on blocking below the waist apply equally to offensive and defensive players. Finally, offensive players in the backfield can never legally block below the waist or in the back. □

HORSE-COLLAR TACKLE RULE EXPANDED

The area directly below the back collar of the jersey, known as the name plate, has been added to the horse-collar rule. No player shall grab the inside back or side collar or the name plate area of either the shoulder pads or the jersey of the runner and subsequently pull (backward or sideward) that opponent to the ground. It is a foul even if possession is lost. The penalty is 15 yards and is enforced as a live-ball foul.

The change in Rule 9-4-3k makes it easier for game officials who won't have to decide if the collar or the area just below it was grabbed.

PLAY: A1 is carrying the ball when B1 grabs him by the back or side of the collar of the shoulder pads (or jersey) or grabs the jersey directly below the back collar in the name plate area. A1 then: (a) fumbles the ball and is subsequently brought to the ground by B1; (b) crosses the goal line to score a touchdown and is then brought down by B1; or (c) crosses the sideline and is then brought down by B1. **RULING:** In (a), (b) and (c), a horse-collar foul should be called. □



Grabbing the jersey in this manner is a foul. The official is Andy Miller, Renton, Wash.

FLASHBACK

2018 RULE CHANGES REVIEWED

The following is a review of rule changes approved for the 2018 season:

- Players who fail to properly wear required equipment or are missing required equipment during a down shall be replaced for one down rather than incur a yardage penalty. When any required player equipment is missing, an official's timeout shall be declared.

If the missing or improperly worn equipment is detected during the down or subsequent dead-ball action related to the down without being directly attributable to a foul by an opponent, or if a player is wearing otherwise legal equipment in an illegal manner, the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless the halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs.

If proper and legal equipment has become improperly worn through use but prompt repair is possible and does not delay the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds, such repair may be made without replacing the player for at least one down.

The head coach is still responsible for verifying to the referee and another game official before the game that all of his players have all required game equipment and will use no illegal equipment.

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.

- Signal 19 (rolling fists) is used to indicate that K had a player or players

more than 5 yards behind the kicking team's free-kick line; if one K player was more than 5 yards behind that restraining line and any other player kicked the ball; or, if at the time the ball is kicked, K did not have at least four on each side of the kicker.

- Fists are bumped together at chest level to indicate an illegal blindside block. The signal appears as Signal 26 in the signal chart.

- Defenseless player provisions do not apply to a passer until a legal forward pass is thrown.

- With a change in the six-player rules, timing rules for the break between periods for all forms of football were standardized. In each game, teams get a one-minute break between the first and second and third and fourth periods. □

BATting, KICKING PENALTIES REDUCED

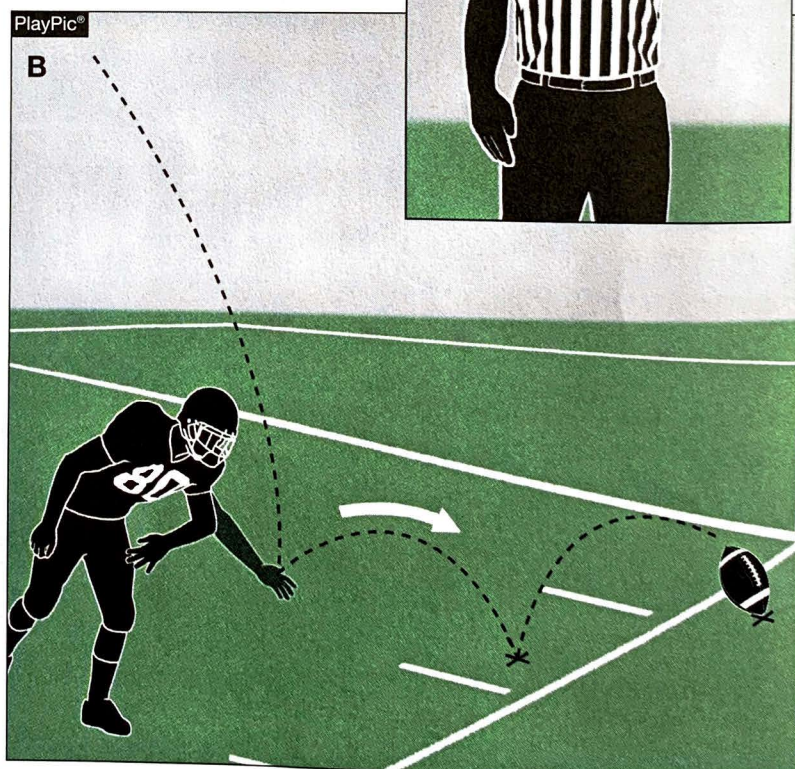
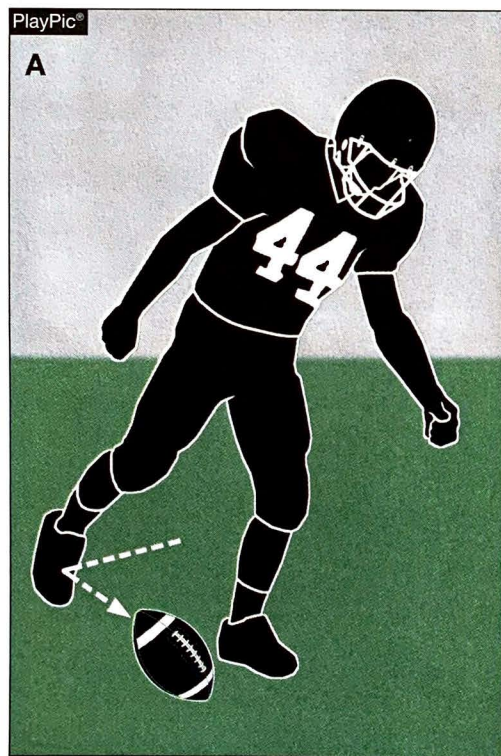
The penalties for illegal batting and kicking have been reduced from 15 to 10 yards. The NFHS Football Rules Committee believes those fouls are not as severe as illegal personal contact fouls and should not carry as steep a penalty. The coverage is found in Rule 6-2-1 PENALTY and Rule 9-7 PENALTY.

PLAY 1: It is fourth and 10 for A from its own 15-yard line. A1 fakes a kick and runs beyond the neutral zone and kicks the ball at the 20. The kicked ball: (a) is caught by A2 at A's 30 and he is downed there; or (b) goes out of bounds at midfield; or (c) comes to rest on A's 45 and no player of either team will touch it, so the covering official sounds his whistle. **RULING:** The kick is illegal and the resulting loose ball is treated as a fumble. The normal kicking rules and restrictions are not in effect during an illegal kick. In (a), (b) and (c), if the penalty for

the illegal kick is declined, it will be A's ball first and 10 from the yard line where the ball became dead. If the distance penalty is accepted, B may elect enforcement from the end of the run which is the spot of the illegal kick or may elect enforcement from the succeeding spot [2-24-9, 2-33, 4-2-2e(2), 6-2-1, 10-4-2 EXCEPTION].

PLAY 2: A is in punt formation and the ball is snapped to A1, who turns his back to the line of scrimmage and throws a backward pass into the air. A2 comes forward and bats the ball 20 yards downfield where: (a) A3 recovers it 5 yards beyond the line to gain; or (b) it is caught by A4 who advances for an additional 5 yards; or (c) it goes out of bounds in advance of the line to gain; or (d) B1 intercepts and returns it for an apparent touchdown. **RULING:** In (a), (b), (c) and (d), the batting by A2 is illegal. In (a), (b) and (c), it will be B's advantage

to accept the distance penalty which will be administered from the spot of the foul because the batting occurred during the loose-ball play and behind the basic spot. In (d), because the foul was during a loose-ball play, before a change of possession, B may keep the touchdown by declining the penalty for A's foul. Otherwise, the penalty will be enforced from the spot of the foul and A will retain possession of the ball if B accepts the penalty. □



The penalty for illegally kicking a loose ball (PlayPic A) or illegally batting a loose ball forward (PlayPic B) is now 10 yards. The penalty signal is seen in the inset.

YOU'LL GET A KICK OUT OF THIS ONE

Unlike a scrimmage play, a kick play will involve most of the players and they will be spread over a wide area of the field. Add some rule variations, and you quickly understand how kick plays got their reputation as often being tricky.

Consider the one depicted in the MechaniGram.

On fourth down, K1 attempts a field goal from Team R's 10-yard line. The kick is partially blocked behind the neutral zone by R2. The ball bounces toward the open sideline (the one abandoned by the wing official who is behind the goalposts) where R3, in attempting to pick up the ball which has not come to rest near Team R's 5-yard line, muffs it across the goal line. The ball then skips out of bounds after hitting the ground in the end zone.

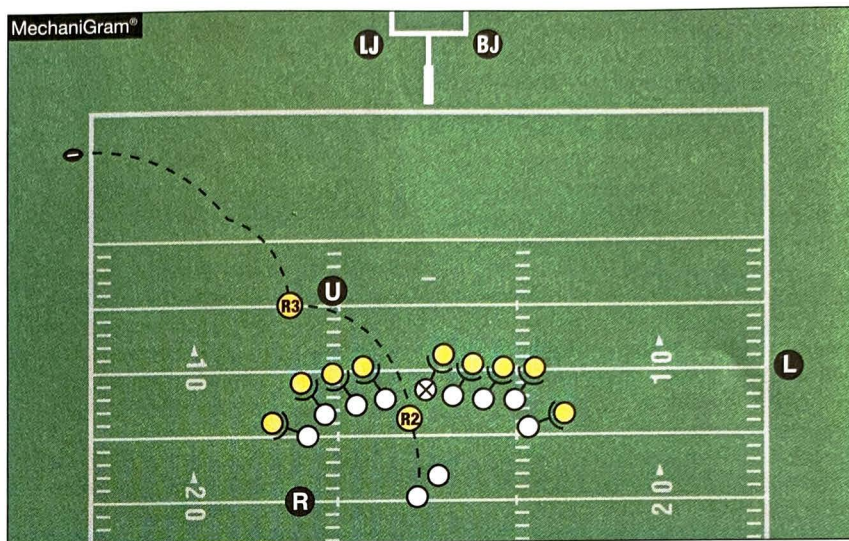
Who is most likely to see Team R touch the kick? The line judge may be able to sprint to that spot, but likely could not arrive in a timely fashion. The most likely observer is the umpire.

What would have been the result of the play if a member of the kicking team had downed the ball in the end zone? The player would be in possession of a dead ball, thus a touchback. It would be Team R's ball on its 20-yard line.

What would have been the result of the play if Team K downed the ball on Team R's 1-yard line before it crossed the goal line (after Team R had touched it)? It would be Team K's ball, first and goal. R3's muff gives Team K the chance for a new series.

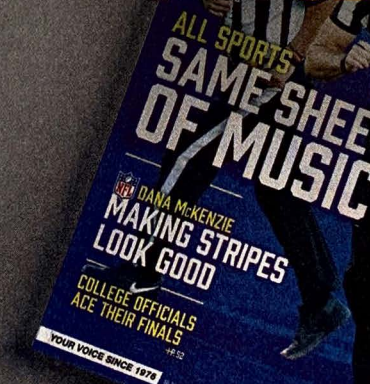
The head linesman must observe the snap and action of linemen from both teams and move in rapidly toward players after the kick. In the case of the tipped ball described, the head linesman might help on penetration of the goal line plane by moving to the goal line.

The umpire should slightly favor the line judge's side of the field, four to seven yards beyond the line of scrimmage. The umpire must watch for contact on the snapper; tripping and/or holding; and the pull and shoot (defenders pulling Team K to one side, allowing teammates through a gap). The umpire could also help rule on action to the open side of the field in the event of a broken play. □



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FOOTBALL INJURY SURVEILLANCE STUDY

After over a decade of injury surveillance, football continues to have the highest injury rates of all high school sports included in the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO™).

As high school sports participation continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries will also likely increase unless effective injury prevention programs are implemented. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sport Rules Committees use information from High School RIO™ to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO™ is currently collecting the 14th year of sports exposure and injury data.

High School RIO™ data shows that in 2017/18, concussions (22.8% of all injuries) were the most common injury in football followed by ankle strains/sprains (12.7%). Rates of concussion have increased over the past 10 years. However, the proportion of football



REPORTING INFORMATION ONLINE

players returning to activity the same day or within a week of sustaining a concussion has decreased dramatically over the past six years. In fact, in 2017/18 only 1.6% of all concussed football players returned to play the same day they were injured.

Data from High School RIO™ shows a statistically significant decrease in practice related concussion rates in the three-year time period after the NFHS contact practice limitation recommendations were made. Practice related concussion rates in the three-year time period post NFHS recommendation (2015/16-2017/18) was nearly 20% lower compared to rates in the three-year time period

prior to the recommendation (2012/13-2014/15). This finding supports the NFHS recommendations regarding limiting full contact activities in football practice. Understanding such patterns of injury is one important tool in the efforts to keep football players as safe as possible.

If you are interested in more information on the High School RIO™ Study or a certified athletic trainer is interested in becoming a reporter for football, please visit <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/ResearchProjects/piper/projects/RIO/Pages/Study-Reports.aspx> for summary reports. □

GAME OFFICIALS' ONFIELD MANNERISMS AFFECT HOW THEY ARE PERCEIVED

One of those cooking competition shows was on TV the other night and the amateur watched nervously as the world-famous chef tasted her creation. The chef was effusive in his praise of the sauce. The vegetables were crisp. The meat had a crusty exterior and a nice pink interior. All in all, a winning effort. Except, the chef sighed, the presentation was horribly lacking. It didn't matter that everything tasted good if it didn't look good.

That's sort of analogous to a football crew. You can get all of your rulings correct. Your rules knowledge can be first rate. But if your mechanics, mannerisms and cohesion aren't on the same level,

you won't pass the eye test.

Some aspects of your performance are so technical that only other game officials or an observer would notice or care. Others are so obvious that even casual observers will raise an eyebrow and wonder what turnip truck dropped you off at the gate.

Check these out and see if they apply to you or your crew.

Failure to stop the clock. Often game action obscures the clock operator's vision and a signal is missed, such as a fumble out of bounds on the far side of the field near a goal line. The solution is for game officials to get in the habit of echoing one

another's stop-the-clock signals.

Sometimes rather blatant miscues occur, resulting from either sloppy signaling or outright lapses. Crews often fail to stop the clock for pre-snap violations, on fair catches, after kick returns and even on ordinary first downs.

Line judges and umpires are alerted to look for the lead stake and react accordingly on plays that end near that stake, calling to the linesman that a first down has been achieved. Some game officials, however, are not very conscientious about doing that consistently. As a result, the clock improperly runs while the referee sorts ▶

► out the enforcement. Timers who don't see a signal will just let it run. They're only doing what they've been told.

Measurements. The wing official on the side of the field opposite the chains is a key cog when the ball becomes dead beyond or close to the line to gain. That game official can see the chains and can alert the referee if the ball is clearly short, is clearly beyond the line to gain or is so close the referee needs to take a look. The linesman should never peek over a shoulder to check the line to gain. Best practice is for the linesman to memorize the line to gain; failing that, observing the line judge will provide the information needed.

The tape on the chain helps determine if Team A will achieve a first down on a five-yard penalty, thus precluding the need for a measurement. For instance, if the down marker is three links behind the tape and Team B is flagged for a five-yard penalty, the linesman can check the tape and tell the referee, "They'll still be short." Conversely, if the down marker is slightly beyond the tape, the linesman can place his hand on his chest, which has come to mean "Five will get you one."

When the referee calls for a measurement, the linesman should have the down marker moved behind the lead stake. That is a reference point in case the line to gain should somehow become lost during the process. The NFHS manual indicates the down should not be changed on the down marker.

A bean bag may be placed at the yard line on the sideline where the line-to-gain indicator is clipped. If Team A is short, that enables the linesman to go directly to the spot with certainty.

As the chains are being brought onto the field, the line judge should use his foot to indicate the intersection of the five yard line where the line-to-gain indicator is clipped and a line through the ball parallel to the sideline. That is the spot where the linesman will place the line-to-gain indicator.

The linesman brings the chain in from the sideline with the crew members. Putting one hand on the links on each side of the line-to-gain indicator improves the linesman's chances of keeping track of the proper link in case the line-to-gain indicator falls off the chain. The line-to-gain indicator must be placed on the back edge of the line for the measurement. A

good double-check is for the linesman to state that the next down will be first if the ball is beyond the stake or the next down of the series if it is short. (Example: "It will either be first or fourth.")

The back judge holds the ball, in a position outside of the forward stake facing the offensive huddle, and does not let go of the ball until the measurement is totally finished. In some areas, it is customary for the line judge to step on the chain to prevent any movement when the umpire pulls the stake. Once the linesman tells the referee the chain is on the proper mark, the umpire takes the forward stake from the crew member, then pulls the stake to ensure the chain is taut. The referee makes the determination.

If the measurement is in a side zone and does not result in a first down, the umpire should keep control of the stake. The referee uses his hands (or thumb and index finger if the ball is inches short of the front stake) to indicate how short the

play ended of a first down.

The referee grasps the chain at the link in front of the ball and rises. Referee, umpire, line judge and linesman walk to the nearest hashmark. The line judge should have another ball ready to be placed. It's OK if it's not the offensive team's game ball. Once the ball is set and the chains removed, the balls are switched so the offense will snap its own ball.

If the measurement occurred on fourth down and Team A is short, the referee signals the change of possession. The referee then sets the ball in the same position as it was when it became dead so its foremost point becomes the rear point when the direction is changed. The new rear stake is then moved to the new foremost point of the ball.

If the measurement results in the award of a new series for Team A, the referee signals the first down. The linesman need not hold the chain as the crew returns to the sideline, but must go

► SEE "MANNERISMS" P. 12

National Federation of State High School Associations

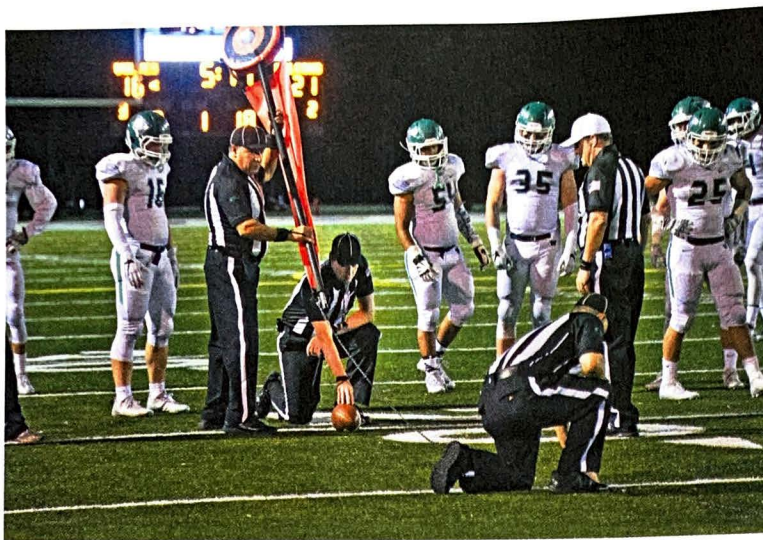


NFHS RULES APP



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Washington state game officials see if a first down has been achieved: (from left) Terry Granillo, North Bend; Aaron Wells, Seattle; Kevin Corbett, Bothell; and Michael Livingston, Seattle. Although artificial turf fields have reduced the number of measurements needed, knowing how to conduct one is necessary.

► MANNERISMS CONT. FROM P.11

all the way to the sideline and indicate to the crew where the new series will begin.

Regardless of the result of the measurement, the referee must wait for the linesman's signal that the crew is back in position before giving the ready signal.

Quit officiating. Some game officials quit officiating once they've tossed a flag. It happens often when game officials hurl a flag and then simply stop in their tracks, eyes transfixed on the spot. Referees periodically toss a flag for holding in the backfield or running into a kicker and then remain over their flags, oblivious to subsequent player contact nearby or action downfield.

Sliding the flag out of a pocket, particularly if it has to be dug out for more than a second, and shoveling it underhanded invariably results in crowd displeasure, because spectators don't see the flag come out to designate the foul. Flags should be propelled overhanded, like pegging a dart at a dartboard, but of course not aimed at the players themselves.

Marking progress. A crew, even though it may consist of five individuals who have never worked together before, can look sharp and coordinated if two things are done. First, the forward progress spot must be obtained quickly

and without confusion between the two wing officials.

If the far wing is blocked out from the forward progress spot, the near wing can mark it until the near wing is ready to take it. That procedure should be discussed in the pregame conference in conjunction with the umpire, who must know from which game official to take the spot. If necessary, the wings can communicate verbally.

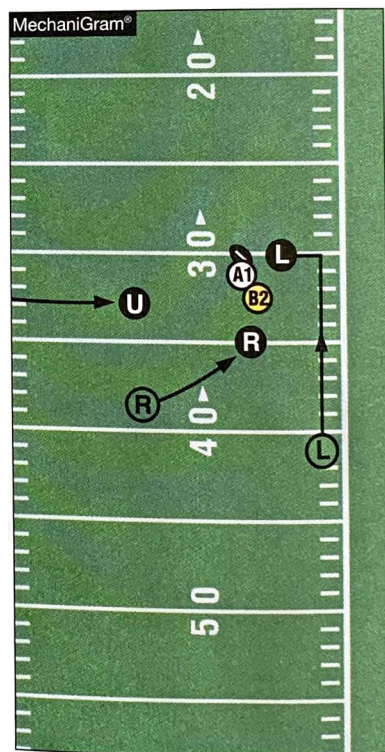
In moving to mark forward progress, the wings should treat forward progress as a line. The umpire will determine the exact spot once shown the appropriate yard line. The wings should be in an "L" as seen in the MechaniGram at right. From their live-ball position on or near the sideline, the wing should move in straight to the forward progress line and then move in toward the ball, if necessary, to complete the "L." That movement not only appears crisper than angling in, it also enhances dead-ball officiating by leaving the wing with a wider view.

Cleaning up after the play. Instead of going past the sidelines to cover players who end up in the bench area, some game officials reach for a ball from ball assistants and ignore the players. Few back judges get to the sidelines on scrimmage downs to assist in clean-up on plays that carry out of bounds. Some

referees decline to enter a side zone on scrimmage plays — not following runners on sweeps — and therefore miss vital follow-up coverage and do not help in ball relays. Here is how some of those errant habits result in problems.

A back judge can only get to a sweep out of bounds if the runner advances seven or more yards before being driven out. In any event, a top-notch back judge will move into a side zone whenever a play carries that way, ready to check all blocking ahead of the runner, and ready also to help with ball relaying if the play should end inbounds.

Say the runner goes outside on a sweep on the line judge's side, is barreled into by a couple of defenders and driven back a number of yards before being dumped on his back. The line judge will have to give ground so as not to get entangled with the players and won't get an accurate progress spot. That's an opportunity for the crew to use crossfield spotting. The line judge can look across the field to see that the linesman is mirroring his spot. Then the line judge can still practice dead-ball officiating while moving toward and finally marking a spot that both can agree upon. □



EDITORIAL CHANGE CLARIFIES R'S PENALTY OPTIONS ON KICK PLAYS

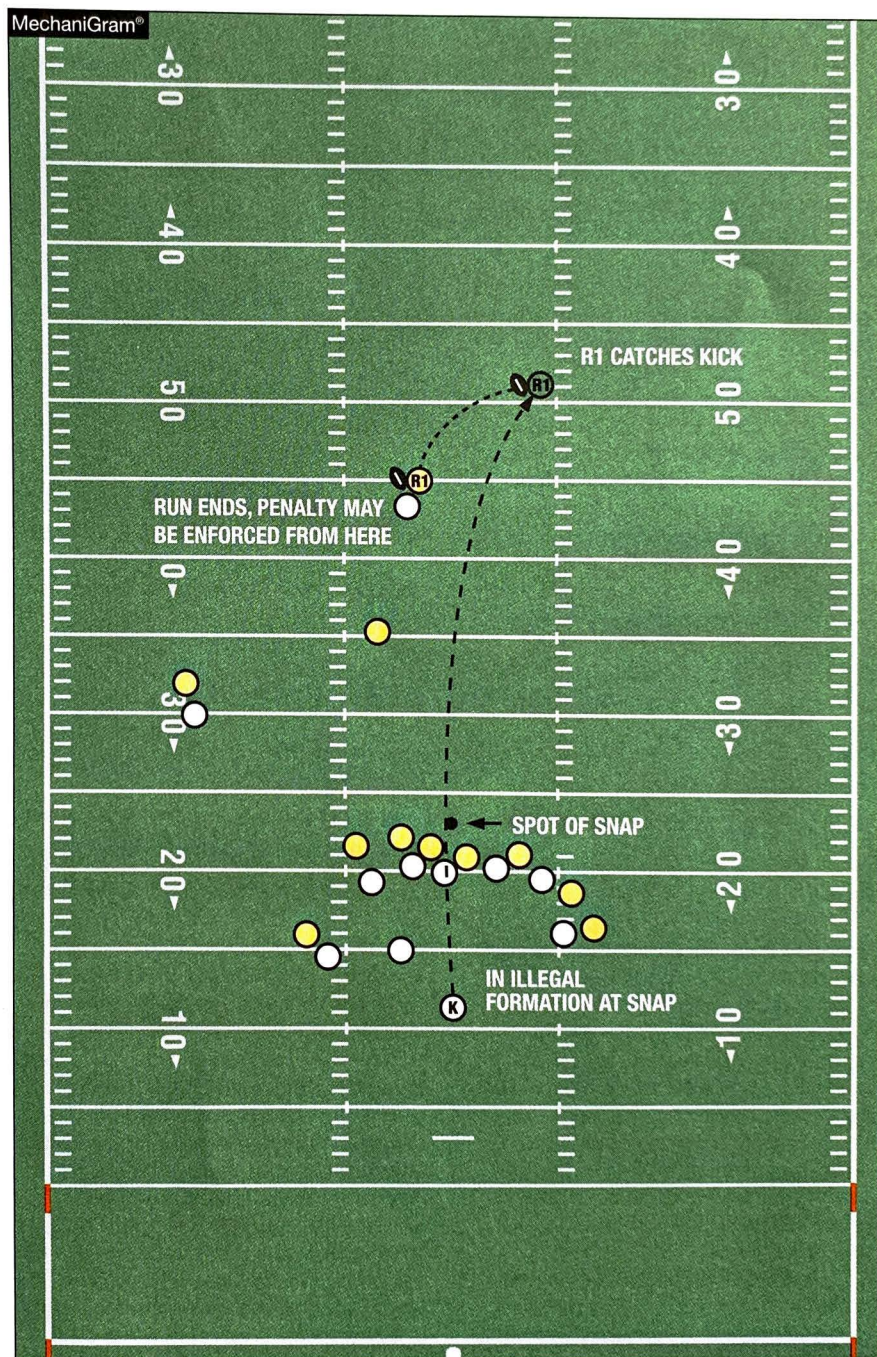
Language in Rules 5-2-2, 5-2-4, 10-4-2c EXCEPTION and 10-5-1j underwent minor modification to clarify Team R's options when Team K commits a foul other than kick-catching interference.

The editorial change makes it clear that the basic spot may, at the option of the offended team, be the succeeding spot for fouls by K during a free or scrimmage kick down (other than kick catch interference) prior to the end of the kick when K will not be next to put the ball in play. The receiving team has all of the previous options as well as accepting the distance penalty at the end of the down.

PLAY 1: K's free kick from its 40-yard line goes out of bounds untouched at R's 20-yard line. **RULING:** R may accept a five-yard penalty from the previous spot and have K rekick; put the ball in play at the inbounds spot 25 yards beyond the previous spot; decline the penalty and put the ball in play at the inbounds spot; or accept a five-yard penalty enforced from the dead-ball spot. That would put the ball at team R's 25-yard line.

PLAY 2: As seen in the MechaniGram, it's fourth and 10 from K's 23-yard line. At the snap, K is flagged for an illegal formation. K1's punt is caught by R2 at the 50-yard line and returned to K's 45-yard line. **RULING:** Team R may have the five-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot, or have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot (K's 45-yard line).

PLAY 3: Fourth and 10 from K's five-yard line. At the snap, K is flagged for illegal motion. K1's punt is blocked and the ball (a) rolls out of the back of K's end zone, or (b) is recovered by R2, who advances across K's goal line. **RULING:** In (a), if team R wants the two points for a safety it must decline the penalty. The penalty cannot be enforced on the succeeding kickoff because K will be next to put the ball in play. R could have the penalty enforced from the previous spot. In (b), team R scores a touchdown. The penalty will be enforced on the try. □



Team R may choose penalty enforcement from the succeeding spot for a foul other than kick-catching interference that occurs from the start of a kick down until the kick ends.

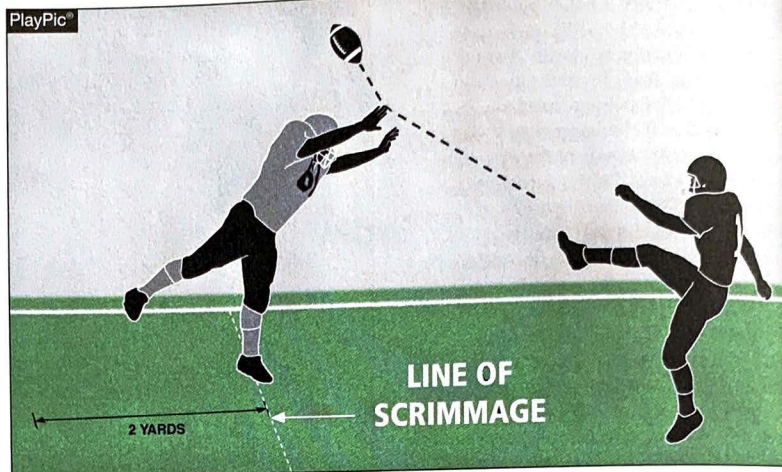
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE NEUTRAL ZONE EXPANDS ON A KICK PLAY?

The neutral zone is the space between the two scrimmage lines during a scrimmage down. It is established when the ball is ready for play. The neutral zone may be expanded following the snap up to a maximum of 2 yards behind the defensive line of scrimmage, in the field of play, during any scrimmage down.

For scrimmage kick plays, the neutral zone may be expanded following the snap to a maximum of two yards beyond the defensive line of scrimmage in the field of play.

As seen in the PlayPic, touching of a low scrimmage kick by any player is ignored if the touching is in or behind the expanded neutral zone. Because R's touching was in the expanded neutral zone, R is not considered to have touched the kick.

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. □

PLAYERS AS GAME OFFICIALS' PARTNERS

Trying to manage a football game would be nearly impossible without effective communication. Although managing players is primarily the responsibility of the coaching staff, game officials can facilitate the conduct of the game if specific game officials manage certain players. To do that, game officials must talk to and with players frequently. There are a few special relationships and here are the most notable ones.

Referee-quarterback. The referee's first priority is the quarterback. The referee helps protect the quarterback not only by holding late-hitting defenders accountable, but also by deterring unnecessary contact through

his presence and the use of his voice.

Shouting phrases such as "The ball's gone!" after the pass is thrown tells rushing defensive players not to contact the quarterback and reinforces the notion they are being watched by a game official. After the ball is released, the referee must stay with the quarterback until there is no longer a possibility of him being roughed.

Umpire-snapper. The lower the level of play, the more dialogue is necessary. A snap before the ball is ready for play can make a game ugly in a heartbeat. While that act is clearly a foul, it can easily be prevented. The penalty is five yards for delay of game.

Long snappers inevitably prefer

the laces in a different position than the regular snapper so his fingers can grip the laces. Some long snappers like to move the ball forward to gain momentum before passing it backward and the umpire should address that as necessary.

As the referee is with the quarterback, the umpire is the protector of the snapper and when the offense is in a scrimmage kick formation, the umpire should remind the defense not to hit the snapper. In that formation, no defensive player may charge directly into the snapper until the snapper is able to protect himself, blocks or otherwise moves to participate in the play. "Protect ▶

himself” means the snapper has time to look up and regain his balance. If contacted directly while his head is still down and before the snapper has been given a chance to look up, the contact is likely to be a foul. If the contact is slight and indirect, it is unlikely to be a foul.

Roughing the snapper results in a 15-yard penalty with an automatic first down.

Back judge-kicker (kickoffs).

The dialogue between those two is essential, especially because most of it should take place before the game begins. The back judge should know how many players are in the formation, and if there are less than 11, should ask the kicker to count teammates. The back judge should also advise the kicker if any player is in a position that would result in a foul when the ready is blown.

The back judge can help prevent a premature kick (one before the ready is sounded) by communicating to the kicker how it will be made clear to him that it is OK to kick the ball. In many stadiums, the crowd may preclude hearing the referee’s ready whistle. Some back judges prefer to point at the kicker when the ready is blown.

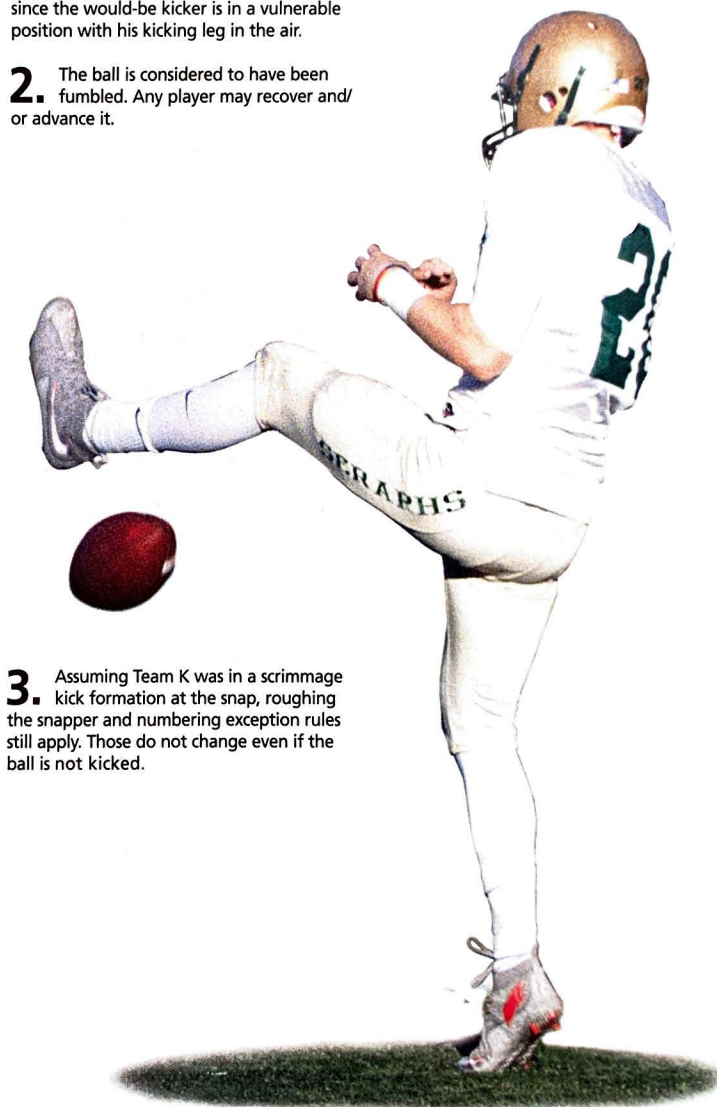
Back judge-punt returner. On the first punt for each team, the back judge should remind the receiver how to signal properly. A valid fair catch signal is the extending and lateral waving of one arm, clearly above the head, by any member of the receiving team. NFHS specifies at full arms’ length. Examples of invalid signals include a limp wave, partially extending and waving one hand in front of the face or chest and fully extending and laterally waving both hands above the head. When a receiver shades his eyes during a kick, it must be done with a bent arm and without waving so it cannot be interpreted as an invalid signal.

Wing officials. Game officials on the sideline don’t have a relationship with a specific player, but communicating properly with the widest player in the formation to indicate that player is on or off the line is essential. A game official should never tell a player to move. That will likely get the game official blamed for causing a foul. □

SWING AND A MISS

The title is stolen from the bat-and-ball sports, of course. But the kicker’s leg swing failing to produce a punt brings the following rules to the fore:

1. There cannot be roughing or running into the kicker because there was no kick, thus no kicker. Personal fouls or targeting fouls are still possible, especially since the would-be kicker is in a vulnerable position with his kicking leg in the air.
2. The ball is considered to have been fumbled. Any player may recover and/or advance it.



3. Assuming Team K was in a scrimmage kick formation at the snap, roughing the snapper and numbering exception rules still apply. Those do not change even if the ball is not kicked.

INJURY RISK FOCUS OF HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



By Karissa Niehoff,
NFHS Executive
Director, and
David Jackson,
NFHS President

Football. Mention of the word elicits various responses. To

many people, it is the most popular high school sport and has been the focus of Friday nights in the fall throughout their lives. To some individuals, it occupies every Sunday, Monday night and Thursday night in the fall as they follow their favorite professional teams. And to others, it is a sport with concerns about risk of injury.

Despite a drop of 20,565 participants in 11-player football from 2016 to 2017, there are more than one million (1,039,079) boys and girls playing high school football. Although some of the decrease may be the result of concern regarding concussions, there are other factors as well. In some cases, a decline in enrollment has caused schools to discontinue 11-player football and start 8- or 9-player football, and in other cases, students may be electing to compete in other sports.

If attendance at some recent state football championships is any indication, interest in watching high school football and supporting the local team remains strong. In Texas, 48,421 fans attended the Class 6A-Division II final at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, and more than 228,000 attended the 12 Texas University Interscholastic League state title games, an average of 19,000 a game. And in Alabama, the seven "Super 7" state championships games totaled 51,651 – up 30 percent from last year. In Ohio, the seven state championship games totaled 52,390 – an average of 7,480 – and in 2017 in Kentucky, an all-

time record of 52,796 fans attended the six state title games in Lexington.

As has always been the case, weather and location of the schools involved in the games affects attendance; however, these were good reports during a time when the future of the sport is being questioned by some.

In the end, whether it is a parent of a youth or high school football player, leaders of the sport at all levels, insurance companies or the participants themselves, the question

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is the same: What is the risk associated with playing the sport? And with regard to the answer to that question at the high school level of football, we would say that the focus on risk minimization is strong across the country.

The NFHS has been writing and publishing its own rules in football since 1932, and the organization has had an unwavering focus on limiting the inherent risk of injury. However, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the number of deaths in high school

football had accelerated, with a high of 35 in 1970. In 1975, spearing was outlawed and several other equipment and safety-related changes were put in place and the number of fatalities dropped significantly.

In 2016 and 2017, there were only two direct deaths each year compared to an average of 20 annually in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, as opposed to 50 years ago, today playing rules are in place at the high school level to manage a student who exhibits signs and symptoms of a concussion. Thanks to these guidelines and state laws in place, the incidence of high school players incurring a repeat concussion has been greatly reduced. In addition, practice restrictions and contact limits have been adopted by all member state associations.

The NFHS and its 51-member associations have never been more committed to the health and safety of the almost eight million participants in high school sports. Early last year, the NFHS provided more than 400 AEDs to schools and state associations through a grant from the NFHS Foundation. This past January, more than 600 additional units were shipped to schools and states. The goal is to have one AED in every high school in the United States, and we will not stop short of that goal. The free "Concussion in Sports" online education course through the NFHS Learning Center (www.NFHSLearn.com) was updated last year and has been taken by an amazing four million people since 2010.

While football is a contact sport and injuries do occur, rules are in place to lower the risk of concussion, and the ability to detect and manage concussions has never been higher. Football continues to bring communities together on Friday nights in the fall across this country, and we expect those lights to burn bright for years and years to come. □