

2017 PRESEASON GUIDE

FOOTBALL

Because the blocker has his hands extended, this blindside block is legal.



Restrictions Placed on Blindside Block

In its continuing effort to minimize risk, the NFHS Football Rules Committee adopted a definition and penalty for a blindside block. Affected rules are 2-3-10, 9-4-3n and 9-4 Penalty.

A blindside block is a block outside of the free-blocking zone against an opponent other than the runner who does not see the blocker approaching. A blindside block with forceful contact must be initiated with open hands to be legal, inside or outside of the free-blocking zone.

Players on the receiving end of blindside blocks are, because of physical positioning and focus of concentration,

vulnerable to injury. The rule is aimed at restricting those blocks outside of the free-blocking zone.

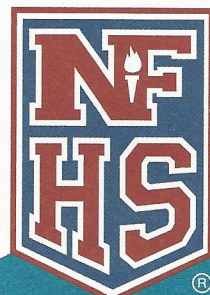
The penalty for an illegal blindside block is 15 yards.

"With this new definition of a blindside block and the penalty to be assessed, the committee stresses the importance of proper coaching techniques under the rules and accurate enforcement by the game officials," said Todd Tharp, chair of the NFHS Football Rules Committee and assistant director of the Iowa High School Athletic Association.

Play 1: As A1 is advancing for a

touchdown from B's 10-yard line, B1 commits a block with open hands against A2 who is obviously out of the play at B's 15-yard line. The covering official rules that not only was the contact unnecessarily rough, it was judged by the game official to be flagrant. **Ruling:** The penalty for the foul may be enforced from the succeeding spot or the succeeding kickoff and A's

SEE "BLINDSIDE" P. 2



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► Blindsides CONT. FROM P.1

touchdown stands. B1 is disqualified because the foul was judged by the game official to be flagrant. **COMMENT:** Game officials must be alert for flagrant fouls and enforce the disqualification portion of the penalty if necessary.

Play 2: Is there rules coverage on a "defenseless player" who should be protected from unnecessary roughness? **Ruling:** Yes, defenseless players are especially vulnerable to potential injury. Game officials must diligently observe all action and watch for contact against players who are deemed defenseless. The game official must draw distinction between contact necessary to make a legal

block or tackle, including the restrictions on blindsides blocks, making unnecessary or excessive contact on a defenseless player and targeting any player at any time.

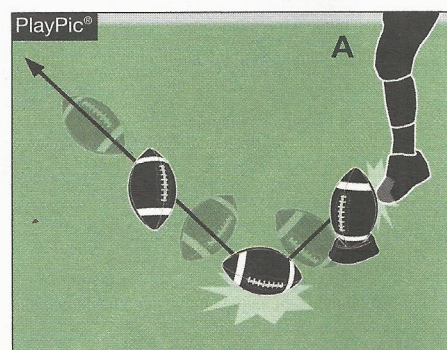
Play 3: A1 is in possession of the ball in the backfield running parallel to the line of scrimmage with B1 trailing attempting to make a tackle. A2 executes a blindsides block with forcible contact against B1 that is not otherwise excessive or unnecessary with: (a) open hands; or (b) leading with the forearms and shoulders against B1, while: (c) inside the free-blocking zone; or (d) outside of the free-blocking zone. **Ruling:** In (a), this is a legal block regardless of where the ball is located. In (b), the

block would be legal if executed in (c), inside the free-blocking zone, but illegal if executed in (d), outside of the free-blocking zone.

Play 4: R1 is running downfield with a punt return when R2 executes a blindsides block against K1: (a) in the immediate vicinity of R1; or (b) five yards behind R1. **Ruling:** In (a), the game official must determine if the block is executed with forcible contact and if so, it must be made with open hands and not viewed as excessive or unnecessary. In (b), the block must be executed with open hands and not viewed as excessive or unnecessary in order to be legal. □

Pop-up Kick Now Illegal

Rules 2-24-10, 6-1-11 and 6-1 PENALTY address a pop-up kick,

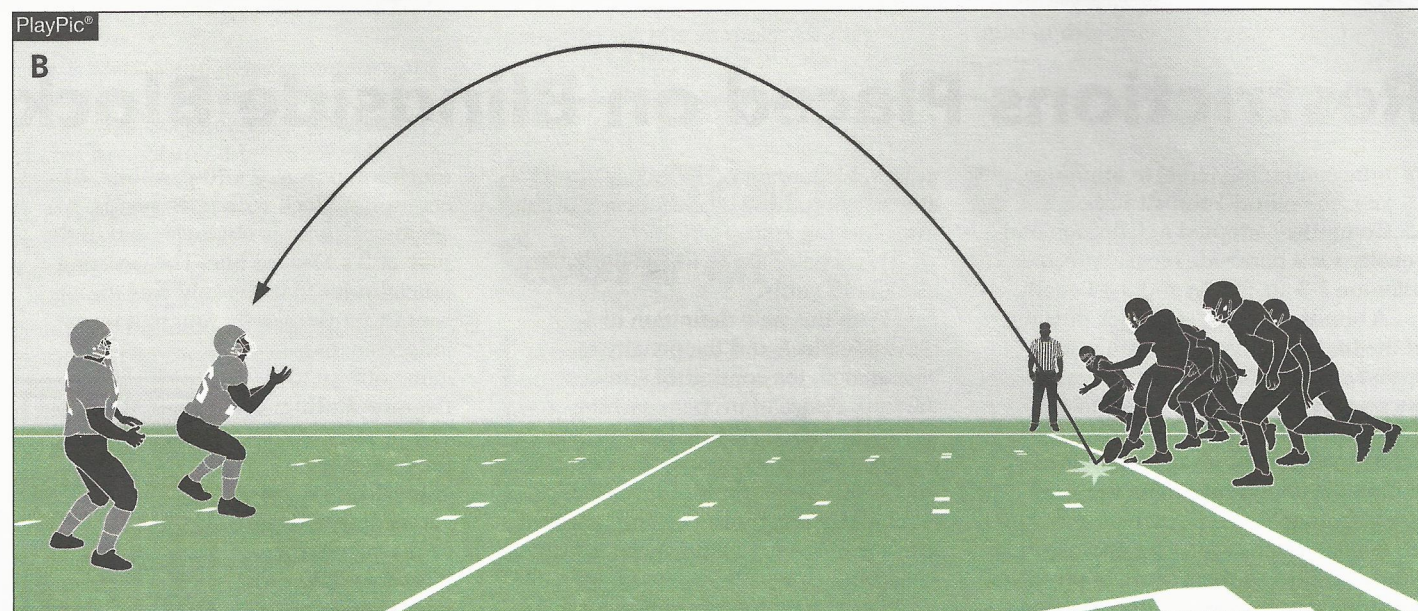


a free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately into the ground (PlayPic A), the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee (PlayPic B). Such kicks are illegal and will be penalized as a dead-ball foul with a five-yard penalty.

A pop-up kick is not to be confused with a pooch kick (a kick designed to hit the ground in the open area between the forward-most players on team R's free-kick line and those in the next group); a "kangaroo" kick (in which the kicker drives the ball into the ground

to create two or three low bounces then one high, arching bounce); and a drop kick, in which the ball is allowed to hit the ground and kicked as it is rising. The pooch, kangaroo and drop kicks remain legal.

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



Any Game Official May Join Referee at Pregame Meeting with Head Coach

A crew member other than the umpire may accompany the referee to the pregame meeting with the head coaches, during which the coach verifies his team is legally equipped and using legal game equipment.

The change, found in Rules 1-5-1a(2) Note and 1-5-4, allows the crew to get necessary information from the coaches even if the umpire's arrival is delayed. The state association may designate which game official is to join the referee for the meeting.

Play 1: During the pregame visits with both teams, the referee and another game official note that the players are wearing brand new "throw back" jerseys with undersized and off-set numbers on the front of the jerseys.

Ruling: The referee may require both teams to change to legal jerseys, and should report the incident to the proper administrative authorities of each school and the state association office.

Play 2: During the pregame warm-ups, a game official notices some of the players of Team A wearing (a) sweatbands on their biceps, (b) sweatbands on their calves, or (c) pants which clearly do not cover the knees.

Ruling: In (a) and (b), the uniform adornments must be removed prior to the individual becoming a player. In (c), the player may not participate without the pants covering the knees.

Play 3: During the pregame visit with the head coach of A, the referee or another game official notices that some squad members have eyeshields which are: (a) dark, or (b) clear with no tint. The head coach of A has a letter from a physician indicating that the dark shield is a necessity for the player. **Ruling:** In (a), the game officials indicate to the head coach only eyeshields which are clear without the presence of any tint may be worn as a physician's statement cannot supersede this rule without expressed written consent of the state association. In (b), the eyeshield is legal if, in addition to being clear, it is

also molded and rigid, and securely attached to the helmet.

Play 4: During the pregame visit with the visiting team, the head coach asks the referee or other game official to examine an artificial: (a) arm; or (b) leg which is attached below the knee; or (c) leg which is attached above the knee. The coach has a letter or statement signed by the executive officer of the state association indicating approval of the artificial limb for football.


Ruling: The game officials have no decision to make as to whether it can be worn, unless required padding, etc., is missing. The artificial limbs in (a), (b) and (c) may be used since proper approval has been given

as required by rule. Without the letter or statement of approval, the artificial limb could not be worn.

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

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Expanded Definition: Defenseless Player



A player in the act of or just after throwing a pass is a defenseless player.

Rule 2-32-16 has been expanded to provide specific examples of a defenseless player. Adding examples continues the focus on risk minimization.

A defenseless player is a player who, because of his physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury. When in question, a player is defenseless.

"A great deal of time was spent by the committee creating specific criteria to define exactly what a defenseless player is," said Todd Tharp, chair of the NFHS Football Rules Committee and assistant director of the Iowa High School Athletic Association.

"Coaches can use these examples to focus on the proper mechanics of blocking and tackling, and game officials now are able to use this expanded definition to focus on continued risk

minimization of the players."

Examples of defenseless players include, but are not limited to:

- A player in the act of or just after throwing a pass.
- A receiver attempting to catch a pass who has not had time to clearly become a runner.
- The intended receiver of a pass in the action during and immediately following an interception or potential interception.
- A runner already in the grasp of a tackler and whose forward progress has been stopped.
- A kickoff or punt returner attempting to catch or recover a kick, or one who has completed a catch or recovery and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a runner.
- A player on the ground including a

runner who has obviously given himself up and is sliding feet-first.

- A player obviously out of the play or not in the immediate vicinity of the runner; and
- A player who receives a blindside block with forceful contact not initiated with open hands.

Play: Is there rules coverage on a "defenseless player" who should be protected from unnecessary roughness?

Ruling: Yes, defenseless players are especially vulnerable to potential injury. Game officials must diligently observe all action and watch for contact against players who are deemed defenseless. The game official must draw distinction between contact necessary to make a legal block or tackle, including the restrictions on blindside blocks, making unnecessary contact on a defenseless player and targeting any player at any time. □

Post-Scrimmage Kick Situation Added

Illegal participation fouls by team R occurring during the kick are now enforced under post-scrimmage kick enforcement. Illegal substitution and illegal participation fouls by team R occurring at the snap continue to be enforced from the previous spot. The change to Rule 2-16-2h eliminates a conflict in enforcement spots.

Play: Fourth and 15 on K's 30-yard

line. R1 enters the game as the 12th player while K1's punt is in the air. R2 catches the punt at the R35 and returns to the R42 before being tackled. **Ruling:** This is an illegal participation foul against R1. If accepted, the penalty is enforced from the post-scrimmage kick spot (R35) and results in first and 10 for R after enforcement. □

Game Clock Option Added

An option involving the game clock for the offended team has been added as new Rule 3-4-7. When a penalty is accepted with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team will have the option to start the game clock on the snap.

That prevents the offending team from benefitting from a foul that would normally cause the clock to start on the ready-for-play signal and consume more time.

The referee continues to have the authority to start or stop the clock if a team attempts to conserve or consume time illegally at any point in the game.

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

Play 2: Time expires for the second quarter as A11 runs the ball beyond the line to gain and A11 then throws a forward pass to A9 who scores a touchdown. **Ruling:** Team B will likely accept the penalty, which will negate the touchdown. The period will not be extended as A's foul contained a loss-of-down provision.

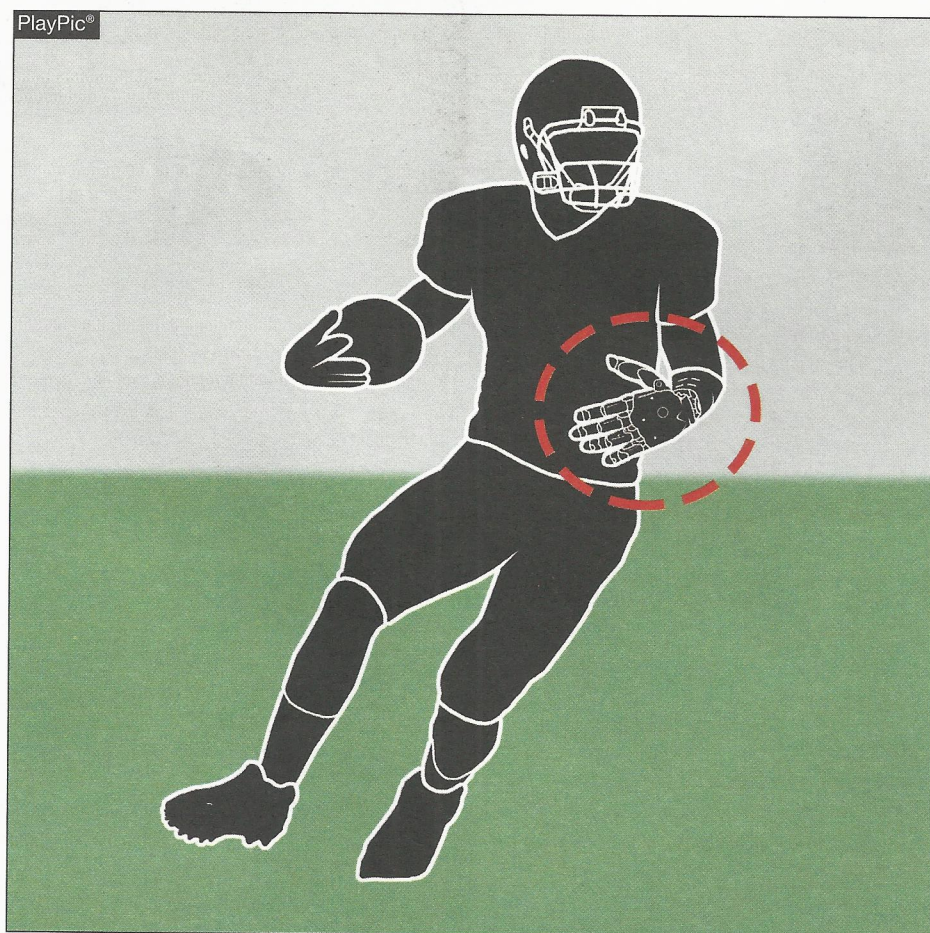
Play 3: The clock is running with 10 seconds remaining in the fourth period

SEE "GAME CLOCK" P. 8

Detached Prosthetic Causes Dead Ball

The ball will become dead and the down ended if a prosthetic limb

comes completely off of the runner (Rule 4-2-2l). □



Equipment-Related Rule Changes Address Ball Markings, Jerseys

The NFHS Football Rules Committee restricted what type of decoration may adorn the panels on the ball and changed a rule regarding player jerseys.

According to new Rule 1-3-1h, the ball may contain only the following permissible items: ball manufacturer's name and/or logo; school name, logo

and/or mascot; conference name and/or logo; state association name and/or logos; and NFHS name and/or logos.

Addressing a trend in which home teams are wearing light-colored home jerseys, the committee voted to require the home jersey to be a dark color that clearly contrasts with white.

The key word in Rule 1-5-1(b)3 is "clearly." Technically the gray jerseys meet the current rule because they are not white. But because the color is so muted, the jerseys create confusion among game officials and opposing teams. The revised rule goes into effect in 2021. □

Bunch of Trouble Ahead



Onside kicks are difficult to execute and challenging to officiate. The bunch kick — in which team K players group up to create a manpower advantage in the area where the ball is kicked — presents plenty of possibilities. Here are some things to consider.

1 Some teams use the bunch formation throughout the game but never attempt an onside kick. If it's an obvious onside kick situation (e.g. late in the game, team K trailing) the game officials use onside kick positioning. In a crew of four, the head linesman is responsible for team K's

free-kick line and the umpire and line judge are in charge of team R's free-kick line. In crews of five, two game officials are on each free-kick line. Regardless of crew size, the referee is responsible for ensuring that team K has at least four players on each side of the kicker.

2 It is common but not automatic that the ball will be kicked favoring the strong side (the one with more players on that side of team K's formation). Additionally, team K might zero in on team R's number 73. His number leads one to believe

Interrupted Snap is Encroachment

After the ready-for-play signal and after the snapper is in contact with the ball, it is encroachment if a defensive player makes contact with the ball prior to the end of the snap; a defensive player makes contact with the hand(s) or arm(s) of the snapper prior to the snapper releasing the ball.

Rule 7-1-6 was revised to eliminate a tactic in which the defense tries to create a loose ball by slapping the ball after the

snap has begun. The snap begins when the snapper first moves the ball legally other than in adjustment. The ball must immediately leave the hand(s) of the snapper and touch a back or the ground before it touches an A lineman. The snap ends when the ball touches the ground or any player.

Play: Snapper A1 takes his position over the ball and places one or both hands on the ball. The ready-for-play signal is

given and as A1 begins the motion to snap the ball, B1 swipes at the ball attempting to dislodge it from the snapper, touching the snapper's hand or the ball: (a) prior to the snapper releasing the ball for the snap; or (b) after the snapper has released the ball on the snap. **Ruling:** In (a), this is a foul for encroachment. Repeated attempts at this act could be considered unsportsmanlike conduct by the game officials. In (b), there is no foul. □



he is a lineman; they are typically not accustomed to handling the ball. Remember that if the ball is legally kicked into the air, team R may signal for a fair catch. In that case, kick-catching interference rules would be in effect.

3 The rules offer protection to team R's first line of defense. Neither number 73 nor any teammate may be blocked until team K is eligible to touch the ball. Restrictions on team

K end when the kick has traveled 10 yards and has touched the ground (in either order); team R initiates a block within the neutral zone; or team R is first to touch the ball (9-3-8).

4 One of the game officials (the back judge in a crew of five and the head linesman in a crew of four) is responsible for knowing if it is an illegal pop-up kick, which results in a dead-ball foul. The line judge in a crew of five and four is secondary.

The primary game officials also need to know if the ball strikes the ground before going airborne in a legal manner, such as a pooch kick, kangaroo kick or drop kick.

5 A game official also must be assigned to watch the kicker since he may not be blocked before he has advanced five yards beyond his free-kick line or the kick has touched the ground or any other player (9-3-4).

► Game Clock CONT. FROM P.5

as A1 drops back about 4 yards and intentionally grounds a forward pass to stop the clock. The penalty is accepted and B will likely decline the option to start the clock on the snap. The referee starts the clock on the ready following penalty enforcement and time expires before A can snap the ball. **Ruling:** If B accepted the penalty for A's foul and declines the option to start the clock on the snap, the game is over. There is no untimed down as the clock did not expire during the down in which A1 committed the foul.

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

Play 5: K1's kickoff is caught by R1 and returned to R's 30. While the kick is in flight, R2 blocks K2 below the waist on R's 40. **Ruling:** If the penalty is declined, R will have the ball first and 10 on R's 30. Since the clock is stopped for a new series following a legal kick, the clock will start with the snap. If the penalty is accepted, K will rekick from R's 45. The clock will start when the kick is touched other than first touching by K. When a free kick down is replayed, the clock will start the same as it does on the original free kick unless the offended team chooses to start the clock on the snap inside the last two minutes of either half.

Play 6: There are 55 seconds to go in

the game when K11 punts the ball from a fourth and 10 situation. R1 catches the kick and returns 10 yards. During the down, but prior to the catch, K3 holds R2. R accepts the penalty. **Ruling:** After enforcement, the clock starts on the ready-for-play signal unless the offended team chooses to start the clock on the snap inside the last two minutes of either half.

Play 7: Is there suggested guidance in determining situations where a team may be conserving or consuming time illegally and the referee should consider starting/stopping the clock as in Rule 3-4-6 outside of the final two minutes of either half? **Ruling:** Yes. In general, the referee must be aware of game situations where A could manipulate the clock by repeatedly committing dead-ball fouls, or in other ways, intentionally try to restart the play clock in a situation when it would normally start on the ready in order to manipulate the remaining time.

The following represent examples of plays where the referee may need to start or stop the clock to ensure competitive fairness to both teams:

- With 19 seconds remaining on the game clock but only 5 seconds remaining on the play clock, the game clock is running in the first quarter. Team K is in punt formation on fourth down. K will apparently be kicking into a strong wind. Lineman K62 commits a "false start" just before the snap. **Ruling:** If this occurs, K should be penalized 5 yards if accepted. The referee shall invoke Rule 3-4-6 and start the clock on the snap.

- With the game clock running, A2 does not have his chinstrap snapped as the ball is about to become "live." **Ruling:** In this case, if the delay foul is accepted, the clock will start on the snap, unless the referee invokes Rule 3-4-6 if he felt an advantage was intentionally gained.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but only to offer guidance to referees.

Play 8: With time expiring inside the last two minutes in the second or fourth period and A behind in the score, A1 intentionally throws the ball forward to the ground in order to stop the clock. A1's action took place: (a) immediately after receiving the snap while A1 was lined up 3 yards deep; or (b) immediately after receiving a direct hand-to-hand snap; or (c) after A1 delayed and took more than one step after receiving a direct hand-to-hand snap. **Ruling:** Illegal forward

pass in (a) and (c) and the clock shall be started on the ready-for-play signal unless Team B chooses to start the clock on the snap. In (b), the grounding is legal and the clock remains stopped until the subsequent snap.

Play 9: With less than a minute remaining in the game, the score is 21-20 in favor of B. The clock is running and the ball is on B's 10-yard line. An option play on third down gains 5 yards, but is short of a first down. Following the tackle: (a) B players are slow unpinning and a penalty marker is dropped; or (b) the tackler B1 holds A1 down for a few moments, but the covering official does not judge the action to be illegal. **Ruling:** In (a), the delay penalty is a situation which automatically dictates the clock will not be started until the snap. In (b), even though B1 held A1 down momentarily, the clock will continue to run because no foul was called. **COMMENT:** In some situations there is a delay in unpinning and no individual player or team is to blame. In such situations the referee is authorized to stop the clock momentarily so no more clock time than normal is used in getting the ball ready for play. □

Contact Required for Pass Interference

Contact is now required in order to have pass interference (Rule 7-5-10). Faceguarding in and of itself is no longer considered an act of interference.

Play: A1 or B1 is in a position to catch or intercept a forward pass beyond the neutral zone. An opponent, who is in the vicinity, turns his back to the ball. The opponent directs his attention to A1 or B1 and waves his arms to block the vision of the potential receiver or interceptor but does not make contact. **Ruling:** No foul. □

DID YOU KNOW?

A hustling game official actively works the game and does not sit back and react or walk through it. Avoid coasting. Be in the right position. Trotting to a spot, even when it's not required, indicates the game official is "working" the game, rather than being perceived as tired and uninterested.

Flashback: 2016 NFHS Rules and Editorial Changes

Here is a review of NFHS rules changes from 2016 that still apply for 2017.

Clipping exception eliminated. The exception allowing clipping by offensive linemen when the free-blocking zone was in effect (as in the PlayPic) was eliminated.

Clipping is defined as a block against an opponent when the initial contact is from behind, at or below the waist, and not against a player who is a runner or pretending to be a runner.

Offensive linemen who are on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at the snap are still allowed to block in the back defensive players who are in the zone at the snap if the contact is in the zone and while the zone exists. Offensive and defensive linemen who are on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at the snap are allowed to block opponents below the waist from the front or side if the contact is in the zone and while the zone exists. The free-blocking zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone.

Equipment. Color restrictions on tooth and mouth protectors was eliminated. Completely white or completely clear protectors are legal.

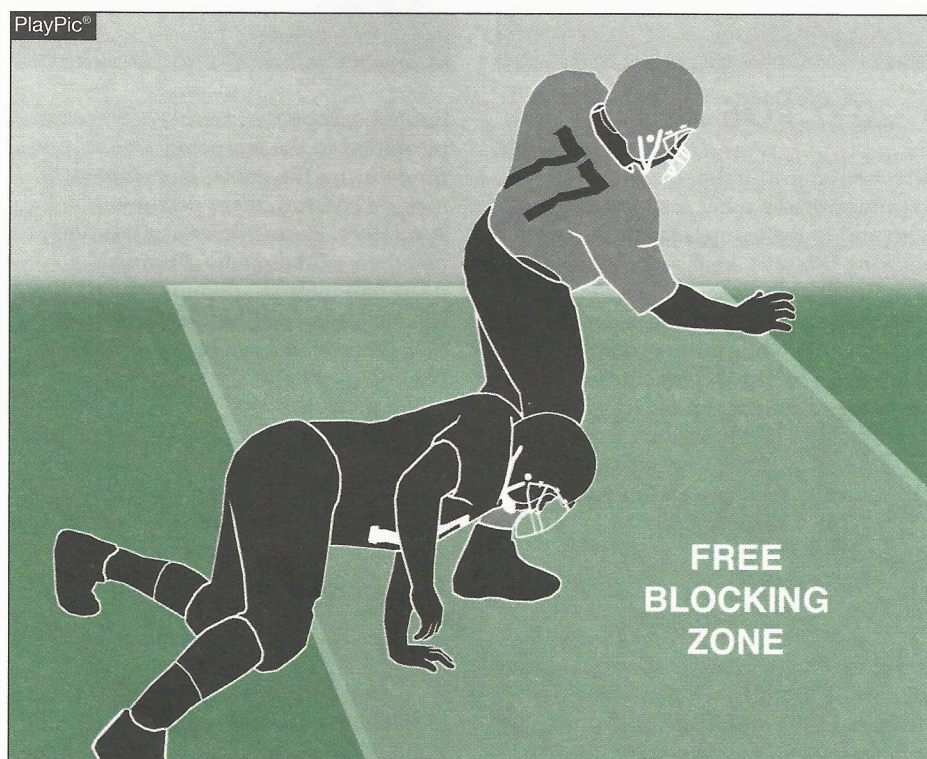
Football gloves are required to meet either the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) specifications or the existing National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) standard at the time of

manufacture. Whichever seal is used, it must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior wrist opening of the glove.

Editorial changes. Jerseys must completely cover the shoulder pads and all pads worn above the waist on the torso. It has become common to see players with shoulder pads protruding from sleeves that are either rolled up, modified or designed to be shorter than

necessary to cover the pads. The change also addressed the problem of exposed back pads.

What may appear on the front and back of jerseys is restricted. The school nickname, school name, school logo or player's name may appear on the front and/or back of the jersey. Team nicknames or slogans such as "Tradition" or "Pride" are not allowed. □



2017 Points of Emphasis

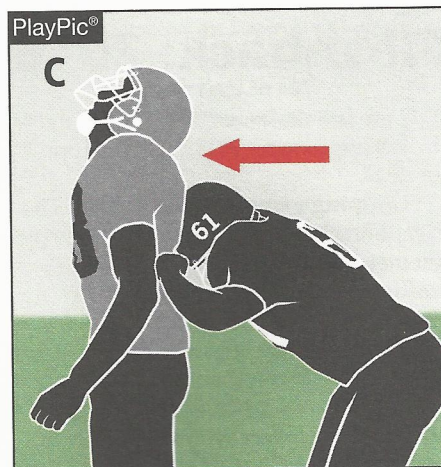
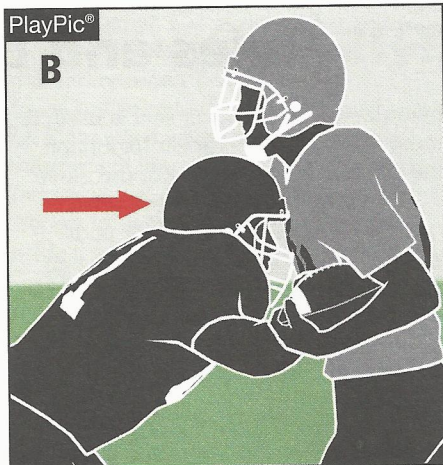
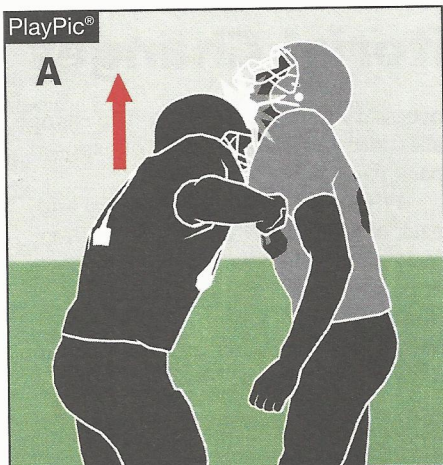
Responsibility on players to avoid illegal contact. With a continued emphasis on minimizing risk in high school football, it is imperative for coaches to continue educating their student-athletes regarding the importance and responsibility of avoiding illegal contact. With the recent implementation of NFHS football rules prohibiting targeting, illegal contact on defenseless players, illegal blindside blocks, illegal pop-up kicks and other illegal personal contact fouls, the NFHS is reiterating

its focus on player safety. Players are ultimately responsible for using legal blocking and tackling techniques, and coaches have a responsibility to emphasize the use of legal contact. Therefore, unnecessary contact with opponents who are clearly out of the play, or contact that is excessive and unnecessary, have no place in the game of football. These unnecessary hits are unsafe acts and the techniques cannot be tolerated by those responsible for the game of football. Coaches need to exercise leadership in eliminating

illegal contact and game officials must act decisively to penalize illegal contact to minimize the risk of injury to players.

Illegal helmet contact. While wearing a football helmet can never guarantee the elimination of head and neck injuries, coaches at all levels of football have increased their focus on reducing these types of injuries as much as possible. One of the biggest efforts in this endeavor is to eliminate

SEE "2017 POE" P. 10



► 2017 POE CONT. FROM P.9

direct helmet-to-helmet contact and to minimize any other contact both with and to the helmet, including butt blocking (PlayPic A), face tackling (PlayPic B) and spearing (PlayPic C).

Coaches and game officials must continue to be diligent in promoting the elimination of direct contact to and with the helmet through consistent adherence to proper and legal coaching techniques and through strict enforcement of playing rules and game administration.

The No. 1 responsibility for game officials must be player safety. Any initiation of contact with the helmet is illegal; therefore, these fouls must be penalized consistently and without warning. Player safety is simply a matter of attitude, technique, attention and supervision. Proper coaching techniques and consistent enforcement of illegal helmet contact by game officials will be a positive step toward reinforcing player safety.

Sideline management and control, professional communication between coaches and game officials.

Sideline management and consistent enforcement of the rules pertaining to the restricted area and the team box continue to be an issue in many areas of the country. The restricted area is the area extending two yards outside the perimeter of the entire field (i.e., outside both sidelines and end lines). This restricted area is designated by the restraining line. The team box is the area immediately outside the restricted area between the 25-yard lines on each side of the field. With

limited exceptions, nonplayers are not permitted in the restricted area at any time during the game. Nonplayers include coaches, team personnel, spectators, game administrators and members of the media. During a dead-ball interval, no more than three coaches are permitted in the restricted area directly in front of the team box. No one may be in the restricted area when the ball is live.

The restricted area is designated to make the sidelines safer for everyone and to allow game officials ample room to work. If the restricted area is not clearly delineated or not enforced by game administration, coaches or game officials, individuals in the restricted area are at risk for injury during or after a play.

Game administration is required to enforce the restricted area beyond the boundaries of the team boxes. No one should be in this area including media, photographers, statisticians, school boosters, cheer squads, pep bands, security personnel and medical staff.

Coaches are encouraged to instruct team personnel of the parameters and boundaries of the team box, and to effectively communicate the requirements to stay in the team box at all times. Coaches are also required to remain outside the restricted area when the ball is live, and no more than three coaches are in the coaches' area when the ball is dead.

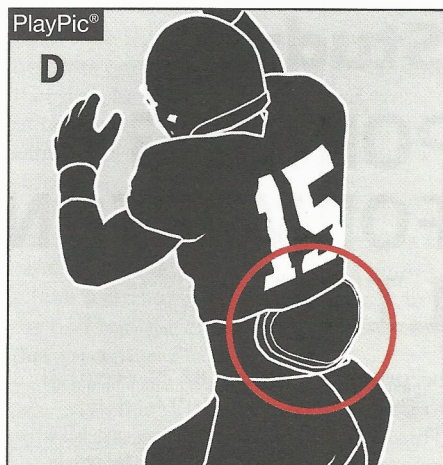
Game officials must consistently enforce the rules pertaining to the coaches' area and restricted area and other sideline violations that occur during the game. Effective enforcement begins with respectfully communicating

expectations to coaches and game administration prior to the start of the game. Violations of the restricted area should immediately result in the beginning of the progression of the penalties prescribed in Rule 9-8. Violations of the unsportsmanlike conduct rules should immediately result in a 15-yard penalty and a disqualification of the offender if flagrant, or if it is the offender's second such foul. Examples of such conduct include the actions listed in Rule 9-8-1. A coach or a nonplayer on the field of play is enforced as an unsportsmanlike conduct foul rather than a violation of the restricted area.

Coaches, game administration and game officials are reminded that the primary purpose of high school activities is to teach student-athletes how to become responsible adults. All adults involved in a contest should recognize they are teacher-coaches and teacher-officials, and that their use of professional and courteous communication sets a positive example for the student-athletes to follow, and is crucial in creating an optimal and meaningful learning environment. Game officials and coaches should always work together in a professional manner to ensure all rules are communicated, understood and enforced.

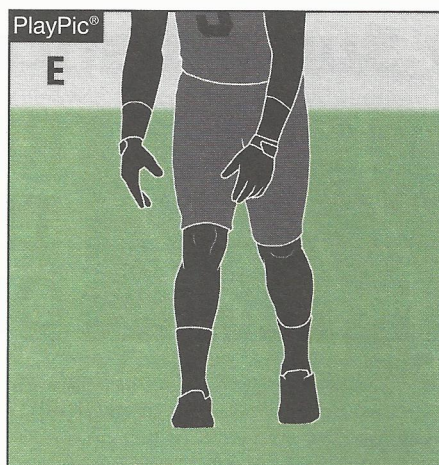
Proper enforcement of penalties for violations of the equipment rules.

All players are required to wear properly fitted equipment and uniforms that are worn in the manner intended by the manufacturer, as specified in the rules. The purpose of equipment rules is to promote the safety and



protection of both the player wearing the equipment and his opponent. Players may not wear any equipment/adornments that are deemed illegal. In addition, it is the responsibility of head coaches to ensure players have been issued properly fitted equipment and have been instructed in its proper use and verify this requirement to game officials prior to each contest. Due to the potential for injury, game officials must strictly enforce equipment and uniform rules.

There are three types of fouls associated with improper equipment: (1) failure to properly wear required equipment, (2) failure to wear or use legal and/or required equipment, and (3) wearing illegal equipment. The first foul occurs when the required equipment is present, but is not worn properly. The penalty for this foul is a 5-yard penalty, and it can be either a dead-ball foul (if the foul occurs when the snap is imminent) or a live-ball foul (if a player is observed removing or discarding required equipment during a down). Examples of such fouls include, but are not limited to, unsnapped chin straps, tooth and mouth protectors that are dangling, jerseys that do not fully cover pads (PlayPic D) and knee pads that do not cover the knee (PlayPic E). If game officials observe any improperly worn equipment during a dead-ball period, they should use preventive officiating and tell the player to make a correction. However, if the snap is imminent and equipment is not properly worn, the game official should blow the whistle to prevent the snap from occurring and a dead-ball



foul should be called. The second foul occurs when a player is missing any required equipment. That foul is an unsportsmanlike conduct foul charged to the head coach (Rule 9-9). The third foul occurs when a player wears illegal equipment. Examples of this type of foul include, but are not limited to, the

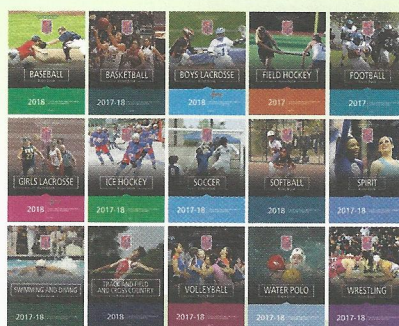
wearing of cleats that exceed 1/2 inch, or the presence of a sticky substance on a player's uniform. If a player is detected wearing illegal equipment, his head coach is charged with an unsportsmanlike conduct foul under Rule 9-9.

If any equipment becomes illegal or defective during the game, correction must be made before the player continues to participate. Examples include chin strap snaps which break off of the helmet or a jersey that slides up over the top of the shoulder pad. If the correction can be made within 25 seconds and without the assistance of a team attendant, an official's time-out may be called to perform such correction. Alternatively, a team may request a charged time-out to perform the correction. However, if correction cannot be completed within 25 seconds, or during a charged time-out, the player may not continue to participate until correction is made. □

National Federation of State High School Associations



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Football Injury Surveillance Study

After 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 12th year of sports exposure and injury data.

High School RIO data shows that in 2015/16, concussions (24.0% of all injuries) were the most common injury in football followed by ankle strain/sprain (11.0%). Rates of concussion have increased over the past 10 years. However, the proportion of football players returning to activity the same



REPORTING INFORMATION ONLINE

day or within a week of sustaining a concussion has decreased dramatically over the past six years. In fact, in 2015/16 only 0.3% of all concussed football players returned to play the same day they were injured.

In 2014/15, High School RIO also began collecting data on whether practice injuries happened during a full contact drill/activity. If the injury occurred during a "Thud" or "Live Action" practice, the injury was categorized as due to full-contact. If it occurred during an "Air," "Bags," or "Control" practice activities, the injury was marked as not due to full-contact. In 2015/16, 39.8% of all football concussions were sustained during practice. Of these concussions that

occurred in practices, 87.7% occurred during a full contact drill/activity. This finding supports the recent 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. □

When the Ball Is in the End Zone, Knowing How it Got There Matters

End zones are part of the field but are not part of the field of play. Thus the rules for action in the end zone, including contact, may differ depending upon the status of the ball.

A team's own end zone is the one it is defending. The opponent's end zone is the one every player wants to get to — with the ball, because possession of a live ball in the opponent's end zone is always a touchdown.

The ball becomes dead when a runner advances the ball in his possession so that it breaks the plane of the opponent's goal line. But that doesn't mean contact on such a runner in the end zone is prohibited. Allowance must be made for contact or a tackling motion that is initiated in the field of play. However, if there is renewed effort after

the runner has crossed the goal line, it is a foul for a late hit the same as if the runner had gone out of bounds.

It is also a touchdown when a player catches a forward pass in the opponent's end zone. In those cases, much more contact is permissible. When a receiver gets possession of a pass in the end zone, the ball is not immediately dead because the process of completing the catch is not finished. To catch a ball means that a player must secure control of the ball in flight with his hands or arms before it touches the ground and maintain control of the ball long enough to enable him to perform an act common to the game. If he is airborne when he secures the ball, he must also return to the ground in bounds with any part of his body. Until those things happen, legal contact is

permissible.

Additionally, it is a touchdown if a fumble or backward pass is recovered, caught or intercepted in the opponent's end zone.

Own end zone. Team A is most likely to end up with possession of the ball in its own end zone when it snaps from deep in its own territory. The ball may be carried into the end zone after the quarterback drops back to either pass or hand off the ball, or it may be taken there by another runner who attempts to avoid the defense. The ball may also enter the end zone via a snap, either in flight or after it hits the ground as a result of a muff.

While the ball is live in team A's end zone, the end zone is treated the same as the field of play. Any action which is

otherwise legal can occur. If a runner is near the end line and steps on or beyond that line, he is out of bounds and any unnecessary hits are personal fouls, the same as if the action occurred outside a sideline.

If the ball becomes dead in team A's end zone in possession of team A, it is a safety or a touchback depending upon which team supplied the force that put the ball into the end zone. Here is a play that illustrates the difference.

Play 1: Fourth and 10 on team A's 5-yard line. K2's punt is blocked in the neutral zone by R3 and (a) is deflected into the end zone, or comes to rest on the 2-yard line, where the ball is muffed into the end zone by (b) K4, or (c) R5. In all cases the ball is recovered in the end zone by K6. **Ruling:** In (a), the force that caused the ball to go into the end

zone was the kick, so the play results in a safety. In (b), it is also a safety because the force is attributed to K4's muff. However in (c), it is a touchback as the force belongs to R5.

Team B could end up with the ball in its own end zone as a result of an interception or a fumble recovery there.

If the ball becomes dead in team B's end zone in possession of team B, it is a safety or a touchback depending upon which team supplied the force that put the ball into the end zone. Here is an illustrative play.

Momentum exception. The momentum exception applies when, under the following conditions, a team B or team R player secures possession between his 5-yard line and the goal line and his original momentum carries him into his end zone, where the ball is

declared dead in his team's possession or the ball goes out of bounds in the end zone. If the momentum exception applies, it is team B's or team R's ball at the spot where possession was gained.

The momentum exception applies to team B or team R only. It comes into play when a team B player intercepts a team A pass (backward or forward); catches or recovers a team A fumble; or catches or recovers a team K scrimmage or free kick.

Play 2: A1's pass is intercepted by B3 (a) in team B's end zone, or (b) at team B's 2-yard line. In either case, B3 retreats (no momentum) near the end line and is tackled there. **Ruling:** In (a), it is a touchback. The force that caused the ball to go into the end zone was the pass. In (b), it is a safety as the force belongs to B3, who voluntarily carried the ball into the end zone. □

Successfully Successive Time-Outs

Successive time-outs — one time-out to be followed by another — are rare, but they are legal. In the PlayPic, the coach of the team that was granted a charged team time-out requests another when the first time-

out expires. As long as that team has time-outs remaining, the request is granted.

Perhaps more rare are successive time-outs charged to each team. But those are also legal. That is most

likely to occur when team A has come out of a time-out and team B wants to see team A's formation. The time-out will then be requested so team B can decide the best defense for the apparent play. □



Kick-Catching Interference Enforcement Options

Rule 6-5-6 gives the offended team an additional option for penalty enforcement when team K commits kick-catching interference: Team R may choose an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty enforced from the spot of the foul. After enforcement, team R may snap or free kick.

Team R may also decline the penalty and take the results of the play, or have a 15-yard penalty enforced from the previous spot.

If team R has the ball for the next down, it has the option of a free kick.

Play 1: As seen in MechaniGram A, K1 punts on fourth and 10 from team K's 45-yard line. At team R's 15-yard line, K2 interferes with R1's opportunity to catch the kick. R1 makes the catch despite the interference and is downed immediately. **Ruling:** Team R may choose one of the following options: an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty enforced from the spot of the foul,

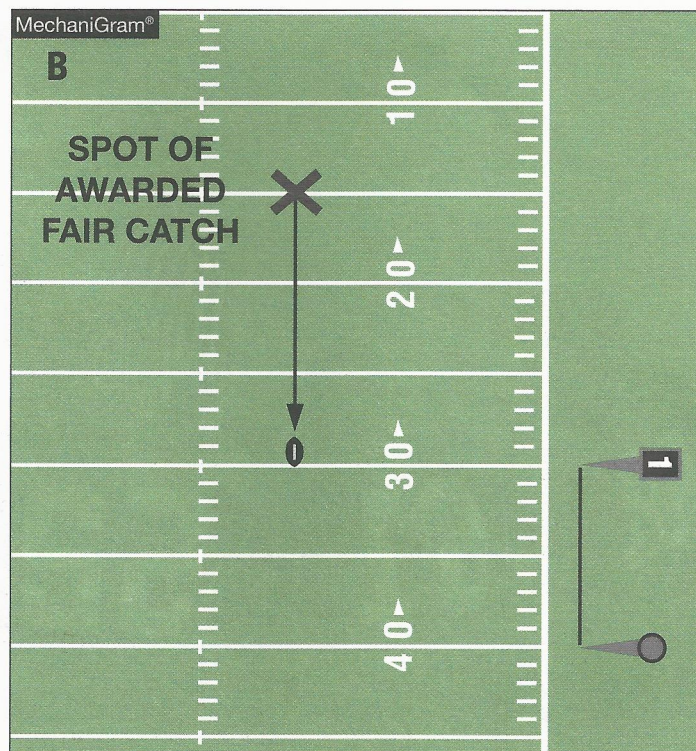
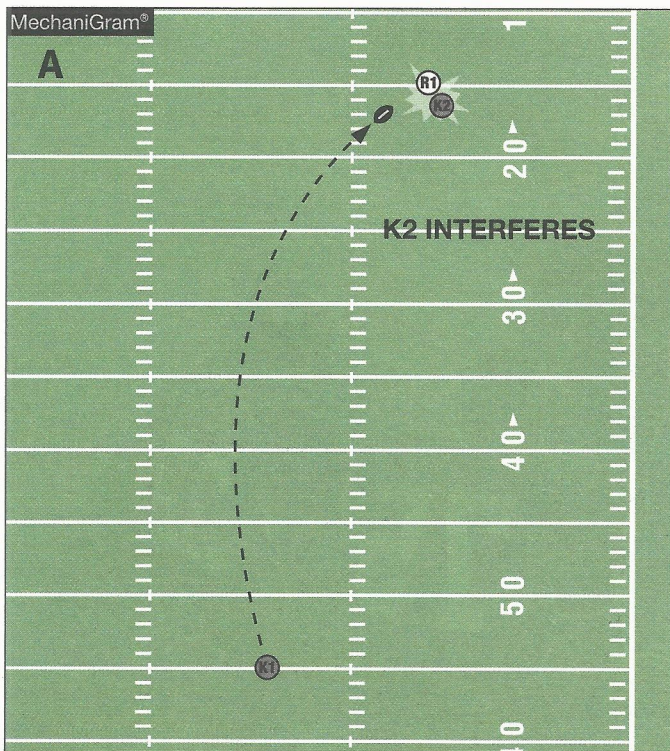
yielding first and 10 for team R from team R's 30-yard line (MechaniGram B); or enforcement from the previous spot.

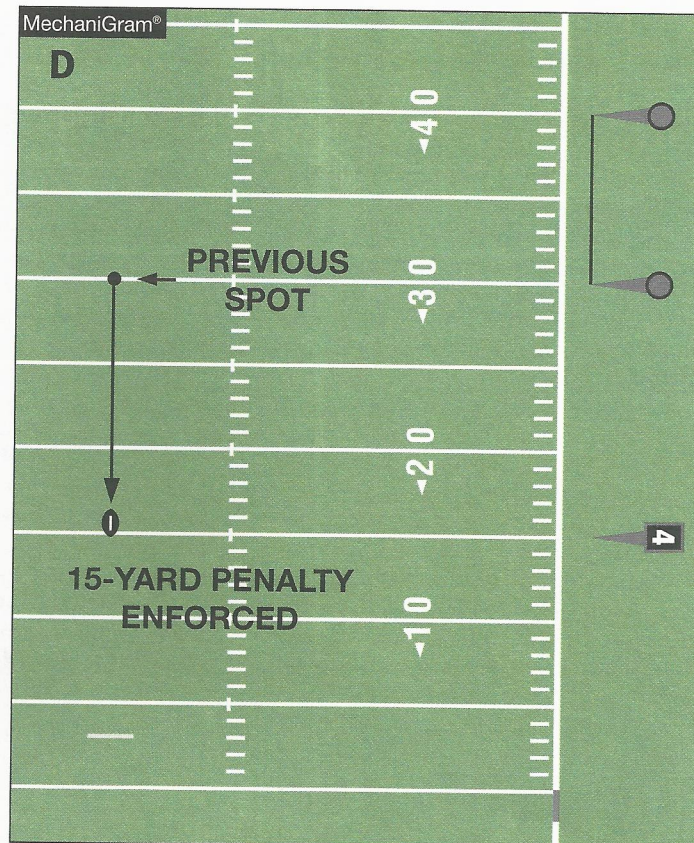
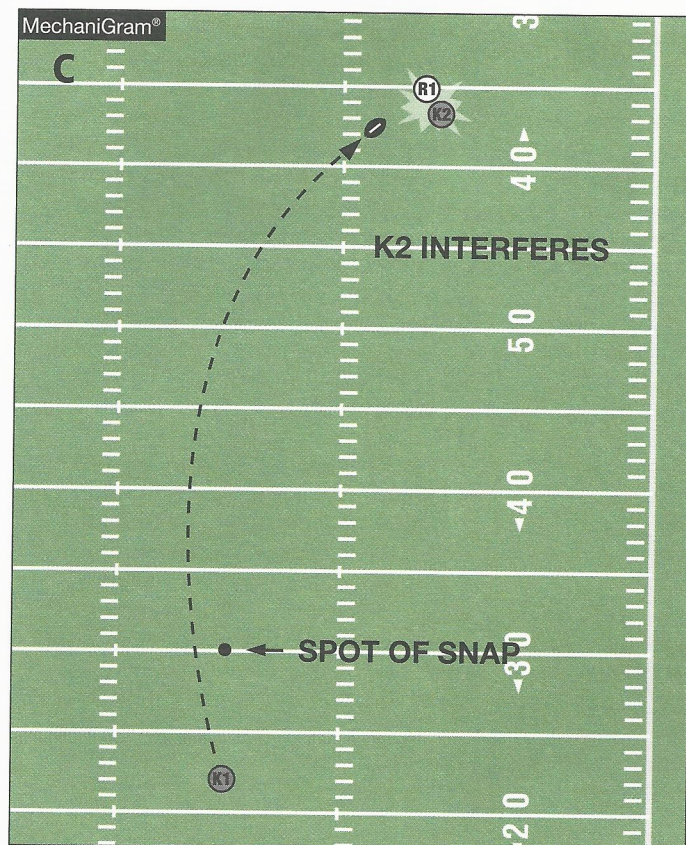
Play 2: As seen in MechaniGram C, K1 punts on fourth and 10 from team K's 30-yard line. At team R's 35-yard line, K2 interferes with R1's opportunity to catch the kick. R1 makes the catch despite the interference and advances (a) for a touchdown, or (b) to team K's 27-yard line. **Ruling:** In (a) team R will decline the penalty. The penalty cannot be enforced on the try or on the subsequent kickoff because the foul occurred before the change of possession. In (b), team R will probably decline the penalty since R1's advance is more advantageous than enforcement of the penalty from the spot of the awarded fair catch. However, team R may only snap and cannot free kick.

Play 3: With R behind in the score late in the game, K1 punts on fourth and 10 from team K's 30-yard line. At

team R's 45-yard line, K2 interferes with R1's opportunity to catch the kick. R wants to accept the penalty from the previous spot and a replay of the down. **Ruling:** After enforcement from the previous spot (MechaniGram D), K faces fourth and 25 from its own 15-yard line.

Play 4: K1 punts on fourth and 10 from team K's 20-yard line. At team K's 45-yard line, K2 interferes with R3's opportunity to catch the kick. R3 makes the catch despite the interference and is downed immediately. Team R chooses an awarded fair catch after enforcement of a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul. Team R chooses to snap the ball on first down and (a) either team is flagged for a dead-ball foul prior to the snap, (b) either team commits a live-ball foul and enforcement results in a replay of the down, or (c) the down is replayed due to an inadvertent whistle. **Ruling:** In (a), (b) and (c), team R retains the option to choose a free kick. □





Pause, Read and React

In the world of baseball and softball umpiring, pause, read and react is a familiar phrase. It is also a succinct summation of how to call a game. In umpiring, the concept of timing is extremely important. Traditional training techniques consisted of telling the umpire to wait and to make sure the play was over before making a call. Another technique was to watch the "replay" — no call until you see the play a second time in your mind's eye.

For football officiating, proper timing of a call is helpful in some situations such as roughing the kicker, but for the most part a game official has luxury of a delay. It is still important to make a call and signal the decision as quickly as possible but only after all the facts are in and that is the process the phrase "pause, read, and react" conveys.

The following refers to a five-person crew.

Pause. As game officials observe

action in their primary coverage area, they should hesitate momentarily (take a deep breath) and assess the potential situation. Many plays are not a single act, but evolve through a sequence of actions.

Read. While paused, they focus on player reactions and their consequences to determine the implications of what they just observed.

React. The final step is to assess the information they gathered and make a decision which may involve throwing a flag, refraining from throwing a flag or moving to gather more information.

With no intent to minimize the difficulty of umpiring a baseball game, it is essential to point out that a routine baseball game involves three basic decisions: ball or strike; fair or foul; and safe or out. Football game officials have a much wider array of decisions that may present themselves. On most plays, it is difficult if not impossible to

anticipate which ones need to be made. Umpires can use pause, read and react to recognize play possibilities and react appropriately to position themselves properly. The football game official has a more detailed technique to do that; thus pause, read and react becomes a subset of a more comprehensive process: snap, tackle, key, coverage.

Snap. Each game official must be aware of the snap, albeit it varies by position.

Tackle. Following the snap, each game official must observe the initial block of an interior lineman to determine whether the play is a pass or run.

Key. After determining the nature of the play, the wings and back judge will immediately shift their focus to their key. The referee will continue to observe the blocking of the opposite tackle. The umpire will likely continue to observe the blocks of the two

SEE "PAUSE" P. 16

► Pause CONT. FROM P.15

adjacent linemen they have elected to observe.

Zone. Once game officials have observed the actions of the key receiver, they must be prepared to shift focus at least one more time. Then pause, read and react come into play.

Here are some examples.

A flanker, the back judge's key, runs a route to the numbers on the line judge's side. A defender is nearby and places his hand on the receiver's arm. Is that an arm bar? Both game officials pause to see if a restriction will prevent a catch. They then read the play by focusing on the receiver's reaction. The receiver shakes off the defender's hand and opens a palm while locking the elbow to maintain separation from the defender. The ball arrives and the receiver, without any hindrance, raises one arm to reach

the ball, which falls to the ground. The game officials assess what they just observed and conclude no implications arose from the apparent arm bar. They react by keeping their flags in their pockets and signaling incomplete pass.

On the next play, the quarterback takes the snap. The referee watches the left tackle (his key). The tackle steps back, indicating pass. By now the quarterback is in the pocket. The defensive right end bull rushes the left tackle, causing the tackle's feet to become tangled. The referee pauses to see if a hold will occur and reads the tackle's reaction. As the defender moves outside, the tackle extends his left arm. The hand is outside the frame. Is that a hold?

The referee continues to read the play. The pass rusher blows right through the extended arm. The referee

assesses the information gathered and considers whether the brief blocking violation prevented a sack. Based on the fact the defender was still three steps from the quarterback when the pass was released, the referee reacts by deciding no hold occurred. The referee pauses again to see if the defender contacts the passer, reads the play and observes a late swipe from the defender brushes the quarterback's shoulder. The referee reacts once more by withholding the flag.

Many sports require a game official to make an immediate call and those that are slow to react appear indecisive. That is not true in football officiating. While it is natural for humans to react to events before thinking; snap judgments can be devastating. The words pause, read and react will serve any game official very well. □

Illegal Forward Pass Rules Reviewed

A forward pass may be illegal for any number of reasons. Enforcement procedures vary depending on the foul.

The illegal passes are:

- A pass after team possession has changed during the down.
- A pass from beyond the neutral zone.
- A second and subsequent forward pass(es) thrown during a down.
- A pass intentionally thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible offensive receiver.
- A pass intentionally thrown incomplete to save loss of yardage or to conserve time.

The first on that list is the rarest example. The second on the list is considered having occurred during a running play. The penalty in those two cases is five yards from the spot of the illegal pass.

For the remaining fouls on the list, the penalty is five yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.

As for an illegal forward pass intentionally thrown incomplete to conserve time, there is an exception. A

legal tactic to save time is to "spike" the ball after the passer gets the snap. The pass has to be thrown directly to the ground immediately upon receiving a direct hand-to-hand snap.

Play: A1 receives the snap and attempts to spike the ball, but his spike attempt hits snapper A2's leg

and ricochets into the air. A1 catches the ball and immediately spikes it forward. **Ruling:** That is a foul for an illegal forward pass. Once the ball touches the ground, a player or a spike attempt is unsuccessful, it may not be grounded legally, fumbled or otherwise mishandled. □

Clarification: Only A Can Score on a Try

Language in Rule 8-3-3 makes it clear that only team A can score on a try. Although a situation could occur on a try that, during a regular scrimmage play, could give team B a safety, the clarification insures that cannot be the case.

Play: Early in the first quarter, a series of penalties before a try have moved the ball deep into team A's territory. Quarterback A1 muffs the

snap and the ball rolls into team A's end zone where (a) A1 kicks the ball over the end line, or (b) B2 recovers it. **Ruling:** Ordinarily A1's illegal kick in (a) would result in a safety for team B, and the recovery by B2 in (b) would result in a team B touchdown. However, since team B cannot score on a try, the try is considered unsuccessful and play resumes with team A's kickoff. □