

2019 PRESEASON GUIDE



FOOTBALL



TIME TO GO

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.

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

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.

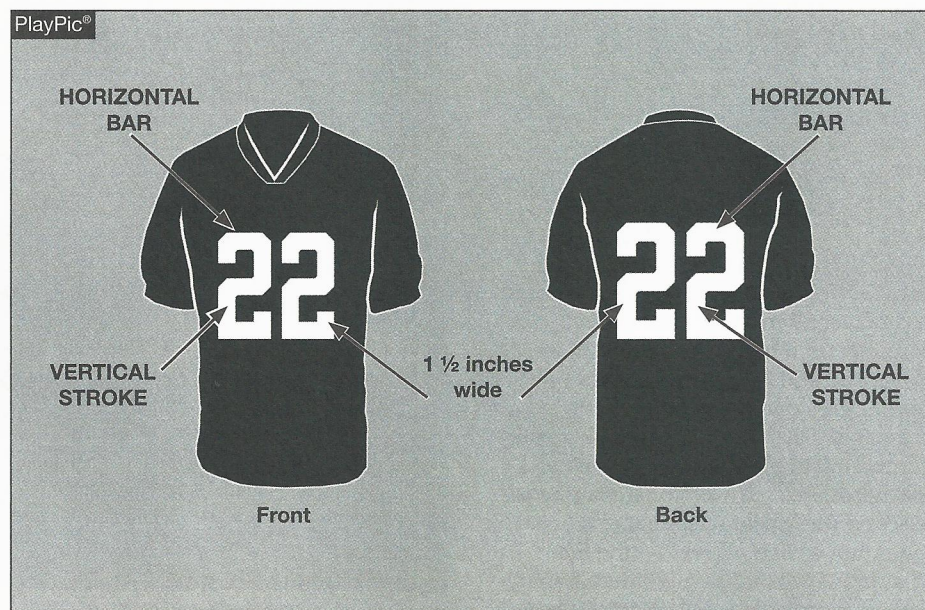
As before, the numbers shall be clearly visible and legible using Arabic numbers 1-99 inclusive and shall be on the front and back of the jersey. The color and style of the number shall be the same on the front and back. The numbers, inclusive of any borders, shall be centered horizontally at least 8 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.**

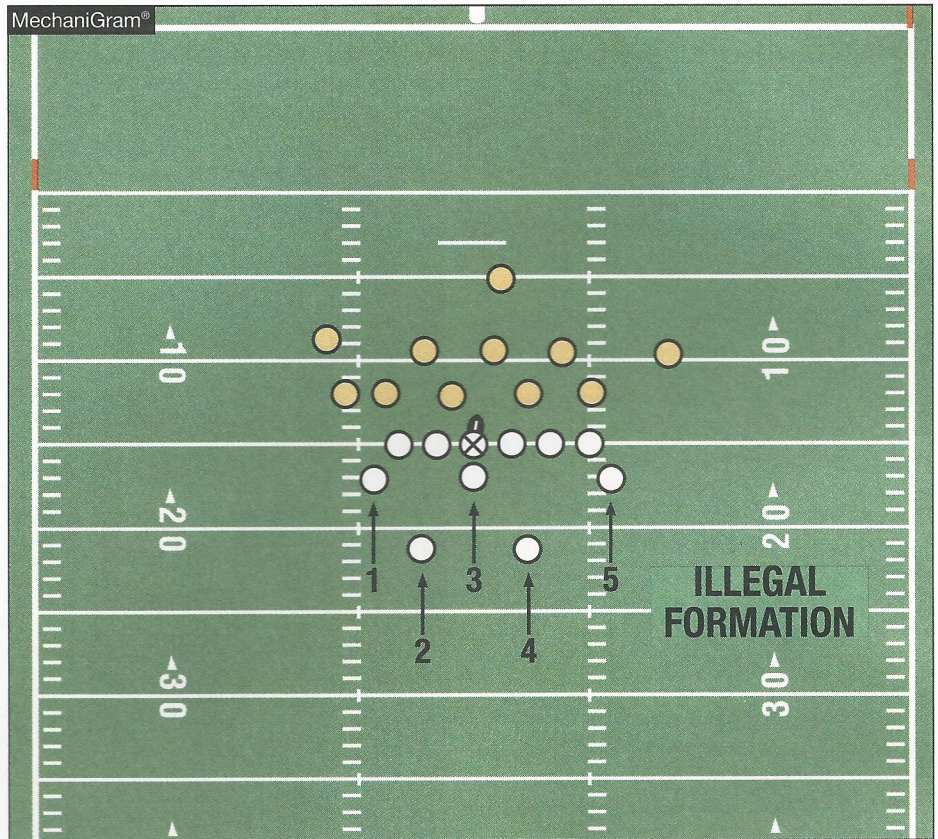
FORMATION RULE ALTERED

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.

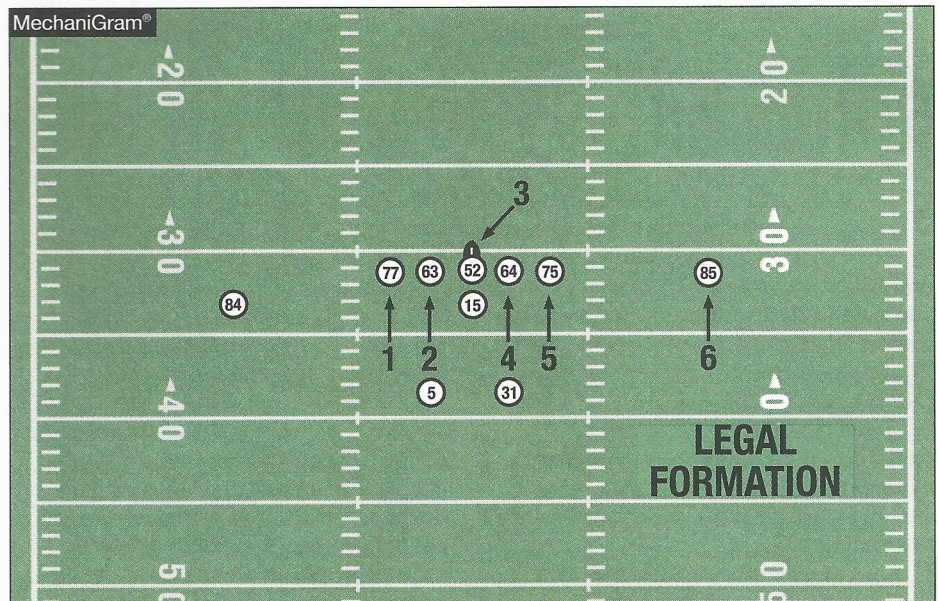
PLAY: Team A comes to its line of scrimmage with tackles 70 and 71, guards 60 and 61, center 50 all on the line of scrimmage, a quarterback and three other backs in the backfield, and: (a) ends 80 and 89 on the line of scrimmage; (b) end 80 on the line of scrimmage and no other players on the field; (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.

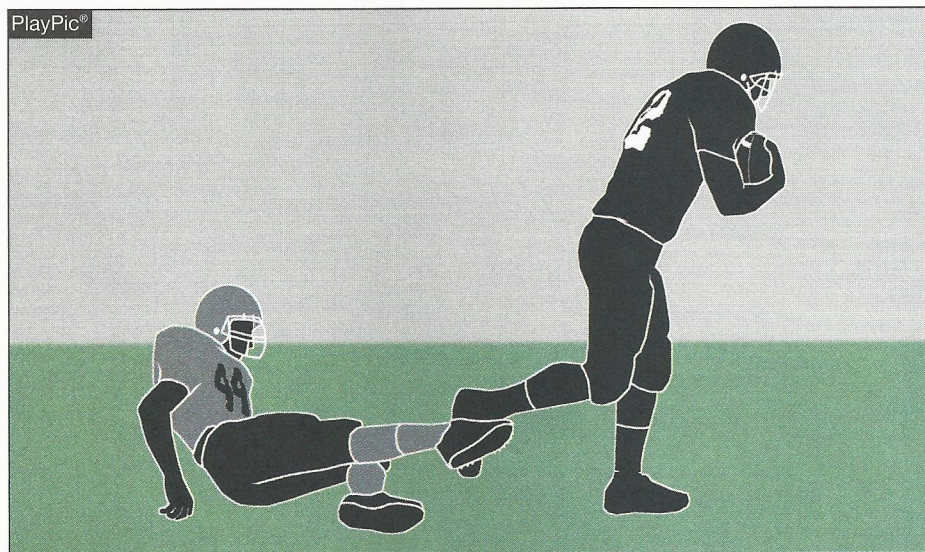
TRIPPING THE RUNNER IS A FOUL

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

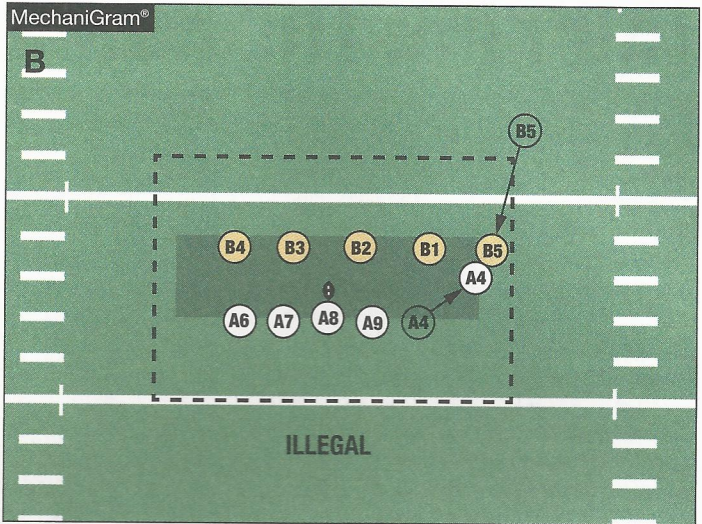
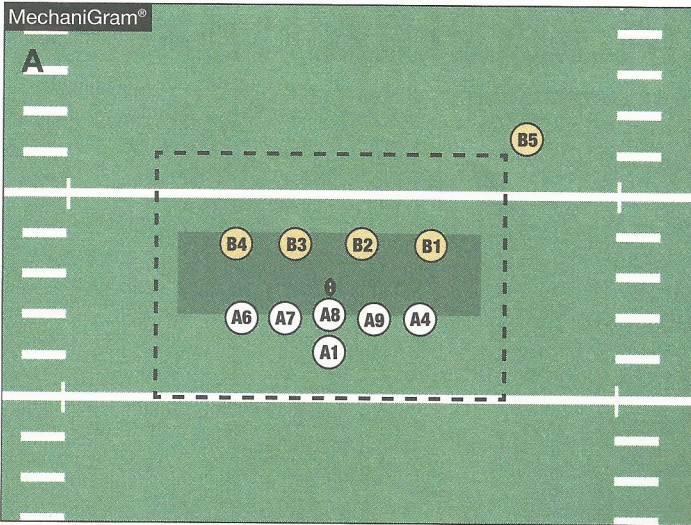
The free-blocking zone is a rectangular area established when the ball is snapped. It extends 4 yards laterally on either side of the ball, and 3 yards behind each line of scrimmage. Blocking below the waist and blocking in the back may be permitted in the free-blocking zone provided that certain conditions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

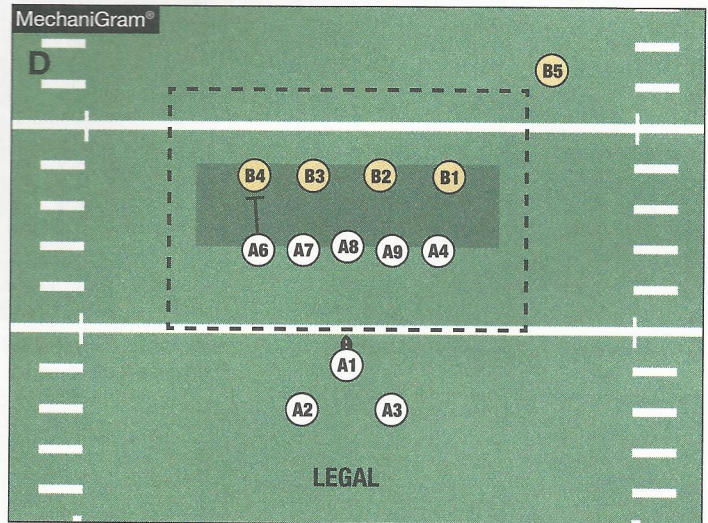
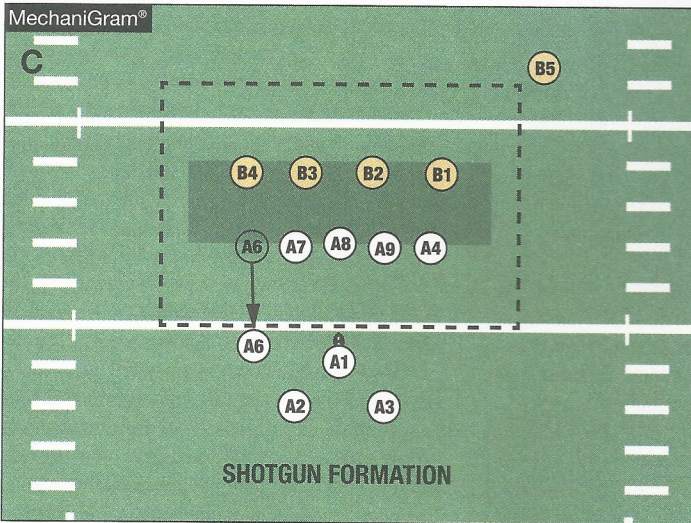
Offensive linemen may block defensive players in the back in the free-blocking zone as long as the blocker is on his line of scrimmage and in the free-blocking zone at the snap, the opponent is in the free-blocking zone at the snap, and the contact is in the zone.

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. □