



## COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

### 2022 NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE CHANGES (Including Major Editorial Changes) (PROP Action on April 20)

#### Rules Changes:

#### **PROP Tabled: Specifications: Mandatory Equipment (Pants / Knee Pads / Socks) (Rule 1-4-4-d & h)**

In order to make more consistent the expectations and enforcement for wearing mandatory equipment, the Rules Committee has enabled the following changes:

d. Knee Pads. Knee pads must be covered by pants. Furthermore, the pants and knee pads **are recommended to** cover the knees. No pads or protective equipment may be worn outside the pants. (See Appendix E.)

h. Socks. Game socks and/or leg coverings must cover the entire area from the shoe to the bottom of the pants. Players are permitted to wear multiple layers of game socks and/or leg coverings, provided all players wear the same covering style and color in any particular game.

(Exceptions: Unaltered knee braces, tape or a bandage on the lower leg to protect or prevent an injury, and barefoot kickers).

This mandatory equipment requirement will be in effect for the 2023 season for all FBS and FCS Teams. DII and DIII teams must comply with the rule no later than the start of the 2024 season.

#### **PROP Approved: Injury Timeout – Feigning Injury (Rule 3-3-5-b)**

Feigning an injury is an integrity issue. To curtail a possible time-gaining advantage by feigning injuries, the committee strengthened the appeal process to now include the conference office for further action against violators of the spirit of this rule:

b. Feigning an injury for any reason is unethical. An injured player must be given full protection under the rules, but feigning an injury is dishonest, unsportsmanlike and contrary to the spirit of

the rules. For questionable game action, an institution or conference has the option to consult the national coordinator of football officials who would then facilitate a video review. After the review, the national coordinator will communicate any findings **to the conference office** for further action. Attention is directed to the strongly worded statement in The Football Code (Coaching Ethics, Section g).

**PROP Approved: Ball Declared Dead – Sliding Ball Carrier (Rule 4-1-3-r)**

A ball carrier who slides feet first is protected as a defenseless player and is considered down as soon as any part of their backside is lowered. The rule is in place to protect players who give themselves up and is designed to minimize contact. When a player starts or simulates a slide, the play must be considered over in order to allow defenders to pull up and avoid / minimize contact with the ball carrier:

ARTICLE 3. A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound their whistle or declare it dead:

r. When a ball carrier obviously begins a feet-first slide. **Any time a ball carrier simulates or fakes a feet-first slide, the ball should be declared dead by the on-field officials at that point.**

**PROP Approved: Illegal Block or Contact – Fair Catch (Rule 6-5-4)**

A receiver that makes a fair catch signal during a kick and subsequently blocks an opponent has committed a foul. This block is not considered a personal foul. Thus, the penalty will be modified to 10-yards. If any personal foul is committed in conjunction with this blocking action, then the personal foul penalty enforcement will be followed:

ARTICLE 4. A player of Team B who has made a valid or invalid signal for a fair catch and does not touch the ball shall not block or foul an opponent during that down (A.R. 6-5-4-I and II).

**PENALTY—Free kick: Receiving team’s ball 10 yards from the spot of the foul [S40]. Scrimmage kick: 10 yards, postscrimmage kick enforcement [S40]. If a Personal Foul is committed in conjunction with this action, the penalty is 15 yards and flagrant offenders shall be ejected or disqualified.**

**PROP Approved: Illegal Touching - Penalty (Rule 7-3-11)**

The Illegal Touching penalty will now include a loss of down:

ARTICLE 11. No originally ineligible player while inbounds may intentionally touch a legal forward pass until it has touched an opponent or an official (A.R. 5-2-3-I and A.R. 7-3-11-I-II).

**PENALTY—Five yards from the previous spot and loss of down [S16 and S9].**

**PROP Approved: Targeting - Penalty Adjustment (Rule 9-1-3 & 9-1-4)**

Targeting is a player safety rule and is in place to change player behavior in terms of the use of the helmet to target opponents and for protection of defenseless players. This change to the penalty component is to ensure accuracy when there is a carryover disqualification in games involving instant replay:

**PENALTY—[ARTICLE 3 and ARTICLE 4]—15 yards. For dead-ball fouls, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. For fouls in the first half: Disqualification for the remainder of the game. (Rule 2-27-12) For fouls in the second half: Disqualification for the remainder of the game and the first half of the next game. If the foul occurs in the second half of the last game of the season, players with remaining eligibility shall serve the suspension during the postseason or the first game of the following season.**

**If a player receives a third Targeting foul within the same season, disqualification for the remainder of the game and that player will receive an automatic one-game suspension in their team's next scheduled game. Targeting fouls subsequent to the player's third Targeting foul within the same season, disqualification for the remainder of that game and the player will receive an automatic one-game suspension in their team's next scheduled game. If the foul occurs in the last game of the season, players with remaining eligibility shall serve the suspension during the postseason or the first game of the following season. The disqualification must be reviewed by Instant Replay (Rule 12-3-5). [S38, S24 and S47] When the Instant Replay Official reverses the disqualification:**

**If the targeting foul is not in conjunction with another personal foul by the same player, the 15-yard penalty for targeting is not enforced. If the player commits another personal foul in conjunction with the targeting foul, the 15-yard penalty for that personal foul is enforced according to rule. (A. R. 9-1-4-VII-VIII)**

**If a player is disqualified in the second half, the conference has the option to consult the national coordinator of football officials who would then facilitate a video review. Based on the review, if and only if the national coordinator concludes that it is clearly obvious the player should not have been disqualified, the conference may vacate the suspension. If the national coordinator supports the disqualification, the suspension for the next game will remain.**

**PROP Approved: Blocking Below the Waist (Rule 9-1-6)**

Blocks below the waist in the open field have not been allowed on kicks and change of possession plays for many years for player safety. The previous change in 2019 that limited blocking below the waist on scrimmage plays beyond 5 yards from the neutral zone has proven safer for the players. There is statistically significant injury data that knee injuries to players being blocked have been reduced since 2019. This new rule change further limits blocking below the waist in the open field:

**ARTICLE 6.**

***a. Team A prior to a change of team possession:***

1. Linemen with initial position completely inside the tackle box may legally block below the waist inside the tackle box on their initial line charge. A block initiated 1-yard beyond the neutral zone is considered within the tackle box.  
After the initial line charge, these linemen may block below the waist within the tackle box until the ball leaves the tackle box only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front.
2. Stationary Backs lined up within the tackle box may block below the waist within the tackle box until the ball leaves the tackle box only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front.  
“Directed from the front” is defined as within the clock face region between “10 o’clock and 2 o’clock” forward of the area of concentration of the player being blocked.
3. All other Team A players are not allowed to block below the waist.

**b. Team B prior to a change of team possession:**

1. Players aligned in a stationary position within 1-yard of the line of scrimmage within the tackle box may legally block below the waist in the tackle box on their initial line charge.
2. All other Team B players are not allowed to block below the waist except against a ball carrier.

**PROP Approved: Unsportsmanlike Conduct Fouls - Penalty (Rule 9-2-1-a-1 Penalty)**

The change to the Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty brings the penalty enforcement in line with the enforcement for Personal Fouls on pass plays and kick plays. Namely, on successful pass plays, the unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may now be added to the end of the last run by the offense if there is no change of team possession during the down to ensure that the foul is penalized. Previously, if the pass were to gain more than 15 yards, a personal foul penalty by the defense during the pass would be added on, but an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty would have to be declined. This rule change aligns these two penalty enforcements:

**PENALTY—Unsportsmanlike conduct. Live-ball fouls by players: 15 yards [S27]. Live-ball fouls by non-players and all dead-ball fouls: 15 yards from succeeding spot [S7 and S27]. Automatic first down for live-ball and dead-ball fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders, if players or substitutes, shall be ejected [S47].**

**For Team A fouls during free or scrimmage kick plays: Enforcement may be at the previous spot or, if the scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone, the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (field-goal plays exempted) (Rules 6-1-8 and 6-3-13).**

**For Team B unsportsmanlike conduct fouls during a legal forward pass play (Rules 7-3-12 and 10-2-2-e): Enforcement is at the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of team possession during the down. If the pass is incomplete or intercepted, or if there is a change of team possession during the down, the penalty is enforced at the previous spot.**

**PROP Approved: Holding and Use of Hands or Arms: Defense (Rule 9-3-4 [c-e] Penalty) (Delete Rule 9-3-5 & Rule 10-2-2-e-2)**

When the defense is guilty of holding, the current rule adds an automatic first down only if during the play a pass crosses the neutral zone and the defense commits a holding foul against an eligible receiver and the foul is beyond the neutral zone before the ball is touched. This will simplify the enforcement of holding by the defense and the penalty will include an automatic first down.

ARTICLE 4.

**PENALTY [c-e]—10 yards plus automatic first down if the first down is not in conflict with other rules [S42].**

**Major Editorial Changes:**

**Coaches' Booth (Rule 1-4-11-b)**

This codifies in the Rules for game management the expectation that the Coaches' booth for both teams are approximately equivalent in all aspects including locations in relation to the field.

b. Only voice communication between the press box and team area is permitted. Coaches' booth space and location must be approximately equivalent for the home and visiting teams and should be located in the traditional press box area. Where press-box space is not adequate, only voice communication may originate from any area in the stands between the 20-yard lines extended to the top of the stadium. No other communication for coaching purposes is permitted anywhere else.

**Defenseless Player - Passer (Rule 2-27-14-a & 9-1-4 Note 2)**

To fully protect a defenseless player that is in a passing posture, the defenseless player rule is updated to reflect language that is in line with how the play is being officiated in the game.

ARTICLE 14. A defenseless player is one who because of their physical position and focus of concentration is especially vulnerable to injury. When in question, a player is defenseless. Examples of defenseless players include but are not limited to:

a. A player in the act of or just after throwing a pass. This includes an offensive player in a passing posture with focus downfield.

**Fumble at Rest (Rule 7-2-5-b)**

Currently, when a fumble is at rest with no player attempting to secure it, the ball is declared dead and belongs to the fumbling team at the dead ball spot. This change will have fumbles at rest mirror the rule for fumbles out of bounds.

ARTICLE 5.

a. *Backward Pass.* When a backward pass comes to rest inbounds and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing team at the dead-ball spot.

b. *Fumble.* When a fumble comes to rest inbounds and no player attempts to secure it:

1. In advance of the spot of the fumble, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the spot of the fumble.

2. Behind the spot of the fumble, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the dead ball spot.

**Crown of the Helmet (Rule 9-1-3)**

Based on the new helmet designs, the crown of the helmet definition must be updated. This will also give greater clarity for the use of the crown of the helmet by players.

ARTICLE 3. No player shall target and make forcible contact against an opponent with the crown of their helmet. The crown of the helmet is the top segment of the helmet; namely, the circular area defined by a 6-inch radius from the apex (top) of the helmet. This foul requires that there be at least one indicator of targeting (See Note 1 below). When in question, it is a foul. (Rule 9-6) (A.R. 9-1-3-I)

**Instant Replay – Clock Adjustment (Rule 12-3-6-b)**

The replay official may address any clock adjustment and status when a ruling is reviewed with less than two minutes in the second quarter or fourth quarter.

ARTICLE 6. Situations that may be addressed by the replay official:

b. Clock adjustment and status when a ruling is reviewed with less than two minutes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter or less than two minutes in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

**Illegal Blindside Block (Appendix F, Signal 28)**

Adding a new signal for an Illegal Blindside Block in the Official Signals - Appendix F. Signal 28 will follow Signal 38, Personal Foul during the penalty announcement. It is important that Referees include the word “Illegal” in their verbal penalty announcement - “Personal Foul, Illegal Blindside Block”.



Illegal blindside block

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