



COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

PLAY SITUATIONS: LOW HITS ON THE PASSER

PROP Approves Rule Change

The NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) on April 16, 2014, voted to approve the following rule change. This change is now official as a new rule:

Rule 9-1-9, Roughing the Passer (FR-90)

Add new paragraph b. (The current article becomes paragraph a.)

“When an offensive player is in a passing posture with one or both feet on the ground, no defensive player rushing unabated shall hit him forcibly at the knee area or below. The defensive player also may not initiate a roll or lunge and forcibly hit this opponent in the knee area or below. [Exceptions. (1) It is not a foul if the offensive player is a runner not in a passing posture, either inside or outside the tackle box. (2) It is not a foul if the defender grabs or wraps this opponent in an attempt to make a conventional tackle. (3) It is not a foul if the defender is not rushing unabated or is blocked or fouled into this opponent.]”

PLAY SITUATIONS for Rule 9-1-9-b

1. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. Just as he releases the ball he is hit by end B88 who drives his shoulder into A11’s knee. The pass is (a) incomplete; (b) caught by A44 who is tackled after a 12-yard gain to the B-40.

RULING: Foul by B88 for forcibly hitting the passer at the knee or below, in violation of Rule 9-1-9-b. Automatic first down and 15-yard penalty enforced at

(a) the previous spot;

(b) at the B-40, the end of the run by A44.

2. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. He then scrambles to his right and is on the run when he releases the pass to A44 who is tackled at the B-40. Just as A11 releases the ball he is hit by end B88 who drives his shoulder into A11’s knee.

RULING: No foul by B88 since A11 was not in a passing posture when B88 hits him, and because of the timing this is not a “traditional” roughing-the-passer foul. Whether A11 is inside or outside the tackle box when he releases the ball is irrelevant for this rule.

3. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. He then scrambles to his right, sets up again, and is in a passing posture when he releases the pass to A44 who is tackled at the B-40. Just as A11 releases the ball he is hit by end B88 who drives his shoulder into A11’s knee. The pass is intercepted and returned to the A-40.

RULING: Foul by B88 for forcibly hitting the passer at the knee or below, in violation of Rule 9-1-9-b. Automatic first down and 15-yard penalty enforced at the previous spot. This is a foul even though A11 had scrambled, because he had reestablished in the passing posture when B88 hit him.

4. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. End B88 tries to get around tackle A77 who blocks him into A11 just as he releases the ball. A11 is in a passing posture when B88 makes contact with his shoulder at A11’s shin. In the referee’s judgment this contact is caused by A77’s block.

RULING: No foul by B88. The contact was due to his being blocked into A11.

5. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. Tackle A77 moves into pass protection and blocks end B88 to the ground. From his prone position B88 lunges and forcibly hits A11 just as he releases a pass from a passing posture. B88’s contact against A11 is at the lower part of his leg.

RULING: Foul by B88, violation of Rule 9-1-9-b. The second act of lunging leads to the illegal contact. Depending on the result of the play the penalty is enforced at the previous spot or the end of the last run by Team A.

6. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. He then scrambles to his right, sets up again and is in the passing posture when he is hit by end B88 who (a) drives his shoulder into A11’s knee; (b) grabs A11 around the shin and ankles. A11 then pulls the ball in and goes to the ground because of being tackled by B88.

RULING: (a) Foul by B88, violation of Rule 9-1-9-b. While A11 is technically not a passer because he did not release the ball, the action by B88 is a foul under 9-1-9-b because of the vulnerability of A11 as a potential passer in a passing posture.

(b) No foul. This is not forcible contact.

7. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. Tackle A77 moves into pass protection and blocks end B88, slowing his path to A11. B88 then surges again and forcibly hits A11 just as he releases a pass from a passing posture. B88’s contact against A11 is at the lower part of his leg.

RULING: If the referee judges that the block on B88 did not diminish the power of his contact against A11, then this is a foul under 9-1-9-b. Note that “unabated” does not mean that B88 has a clear path all the way to A11; instead it means that his action is not diminished in force.

8. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. Tackle A77 moves into pass protection and blocks end B88, slowing his path to A11. Trying to play off the block, B88 continues on to rush A11, and contacts him with his shoulder at the lower part of his leg just as A11 releases a pass from a passing posture. The referee judges that the contact by B88 is not forcible and that its potential force was diminished by A77's block.

RULING: No foul. B88 was not unabated in his rush to the quarterback.

Rogers Redding
Secretary-Rules Editor
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