



FOOTBALL 2007

A supplement to the *NCAA Football Rules* • Prepared by the editors of *Referee* magazine

NCAA Reinstates Previous Timing Rule

Remember those bygone days when the clock started on the snap after a change of possession? They're back.

The NCAA Football Rules Committee voted to revert to the clock rule that was in place before the 2006 season. Attempts to shorten games will take other forms.

"The changes we made last year, overall, did not have a positive effect on college football at all levels," said Michael Clark, chair of the committee and head coach at Bridgewater (Va.) College.

Starting the clock (3-2-5).

The game clock starts on the snap after any change of

possession when Team B is awarded a first down. Also, language in 3-2-5-d will revert to its pre-2006 language, stating that the clock starts on the snap at the end of a legal kick down.

Play 1: Team B gains possession to start a new series. Possession was obtained after B21 (a) made a fair catch of a punt, (b) intercepted A10's pass
(see Timing Rule p. 5)

Big East referee Dennis Hennigan will revert to an old mechanic — signaling the ready instead of starting the clock for the new series after a change of possession — when college games are played this fall. Last year's rule mandating that the clock start on the ready in that situation was rescinded.



TED OREGANO

Maintaining Pace of Game Emphasized

Although the NCAA Football Rules Committee reinstated timing rules in place prior to 2006, the length of games continues to be a concern. That is the reason for modifications to other rules regarding the game clock, 25-second clock and time-outs the committee hopes new rules involving timeouts and the play clock will be helpful.

The committee asks officials and coordinators of officials to attempt to

maintain a consistent pace of play and marking the ball ready for play. The referee should target approximately 12 to 15 seconds from the end of the play to the ball being declared ready for play.

Officials have no control over how many passes are caught, how many points are scored and whether runners stay inbounds. But there are things officials can do to keep the game flowing and minimize dead time.

Ball-handling.

A crisp ball relay from the sideline to the wing official to the middle of the field not improves pace of the game. Keep throws short (move closer to the recipient if you have to) and strive for a soft underhanded spiral that is caught at chest level by the official on the receiving end. Don't throw the ball over or through clusters of players.

(see Pace p. 11)

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Editorial Changes Alter Rules Language

A number of editorial changes were made for 2007. Those that directly involve officiating are:

- The game officials shall test the game balls. Rule 1-3-2-a previously specified it was the referee's duty.

- Rule 2-25-11 was reworded to make it clear that penalties for Team B fouls are enforced either from the post-scrimmage kick (PSK) spot or, if the foul is behind the PSK spot, from the spot of the foul.

- The ball touching a player, official or anything beyond the neutral zone in or

out of bounds has been added as a means of excusing what would normally be intentionally grounding. The previous wording in 7-3-2-f-1 did not address the ball touching something other than the ground.

- Rule 8-3-3-c-2 was reworded for clarity. The new wording makes it clear that if Team A commits a foul for which the penalty includes loss of down, the try is over, any score is cancelled and there is no yardage walkoff on the succeeding kickoff.

- An exception in 8-5-2 was clarified. If a safety occurs on a try, the free kick is from Team A's 30-yard line. If a safety occurs in extra periods, the ball is next put in play by a snap because there is no kickoff. Previous wording gave the incorrect impression that a safety in those situations resulted in a free kick from Team A's 20-yard line.

- The passer is not to be considered an eligible receiver for the purposes of rule 9-3-4-e. That clears up a question regarding whether Team A gets an automatic first down if the defense commits a foul against the passer other than pass interference on a legal forward pass.

Play 1: Second and 10 from Team A's 20-yard line. A10 scrambles to evade a heavy rush but throws a legal forward pass intended for A88, who is at Team A's 40-yard line. While A10 is throwing, B55 grasps but does not twist A10's facemask. The pass is incomplete. **Ruling 1:**

A10 is not considered an eligible receiver on that play. Therefore the automatic first down provision of 9-3-4-e does not apply. If Team A accepts the penalty, it will be second and five from Team A's 25-yard line.

- A successful field goal is added to a try as a situation in which PSK does not apply. Also, Team A may choose to have a penalty enforced from the previous spot if Team B commits a live-ball foul on a successful field goal (10-2-2-g-4).

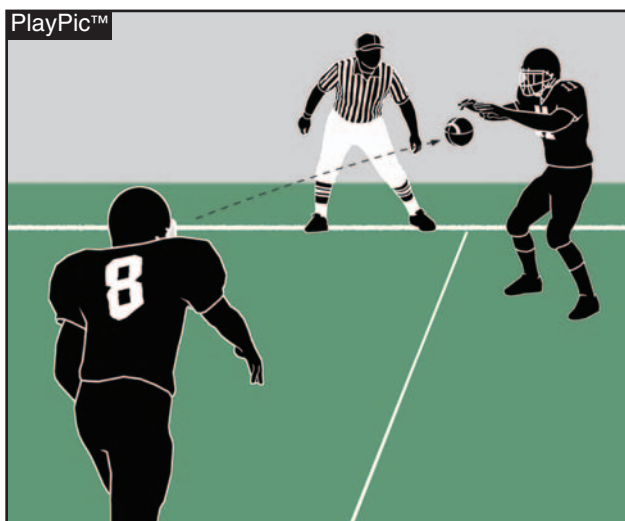
Play 2: Fourth and four for Team A from Team B's 30-yard line. A10's field goal is successful. While the ball is live, B20 grasps but does not twist A34's facemask at Team B's 20-yard line. **Ruling 2:** PSK does not apply on a successful field goal. Team A may choose to have the penalty enforced from the previous spot, resulting in a new series at Team B's 25-yard line, or decline the penalty, keep the points and kick off from its own 30-yard line. □

Straightlined vs. Right in Line

The term "straightlined" has a negative connotation in officiating. It implies that the official was out of position and unable or unwilling to get a good angle on a play. Ninety-nine percent of the time, that's true.

But there are exceptions to every rule. A situation in which it may be advantageous to have a direct angle involves a potential backward pass.

In the PlayPic, the official is directly in line with the passer. From that position, he can easily tell the pass is forward. While being in line with the receiver would be equally helpful in determining the direction of the pass, facing the passer allows you to keep your eyes on the ball rather than trying to look through the back of the receiver.



Aiding a Teammate Illegal

A rule change for 2007 means defensive players face additional restrictions for helping teammates. Team B players may not be picked up by a teammate or elevated, propelled or pushed.

The change outlaws a maneuver most often used

on extra points and field goals in which defensive linemen are pushed from behind by teammates, creating a dangerous situation for the kicking team's linemen. The penalty is 15 yards. The rule reference is 9-3-5-b-3. □

Acknowledgments

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Several Rule Changes Involve Kicks

A number of rule changes that affect kicking plays have been approved for 2007. The NCAA Football Rules Committee altered rules 3-2-5, 6-1-1 and 6-2-1 Pen. On free kicks, the game clock starts when the ball is legally touched in the field of play or crosses the goal line after being touched legally by Team B in its end zone. The free-kick line is moved from Team A's 35-yard line to its 30-yard line. If a free kick goes out of bounds untouched inbounds by Team B, Team B may choose a re-kick after enforcement of a five-yard penalty from the previous spot, may have the penalty enforced from the yard line the ball went out of bounds or begin a new series 35 yards from the previous spot.

Unless relocated by penalty, free kicks following a safety will continue to be from Team A's 20-yard line.

Unsportsmanlike vs. Personal Fouls

Because ramifications and enforcements vary, distinguishing a personal foul from unsportsmanlike conduct is important.

Two unsportsmanlike fouls by the same player result in disqualification. That is not true for a player guilty of two personal fouls.

A coach or other team personnel can accumulate multiple unsportsmanlike conduct fouls without ejection. Ejected players may remain in their team area.

Here are general statements about select personal fouls and unsportsmanlike conduct

Play 1: B21 catches A11's free kick (a) at Team B's four-yard line, or (b) in Team B's end zone. In both cases, B21 advances to his own 15-yard line, where he is downed. **Ruling 1:** In (a), the game clock starts when B21 touches the ball. In (b), the game clock starts when B21 breaks the plane of his own goal line and brings the ball into the field of play.

Play 2: A11's free kick from his 30-yard line goes out of bounds at Team B's 10-yard line. **Ruling 2:** Team B may choose to have the penalty enforced from the previous spot and have Team A rekick, may choose to begin a new series 35 yards from the previous spot (in that case, its own 35-yard line), or have a five-yard penalty enforced from the spot where the ball belongs to Team B (the 10-yard line).

Play 3: After Team A's successful try, A52 is flagged

situations:

- Fighting and flagrant personal fouls require ejection.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct is enforced as a dead-ball foul. A flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct foul requires player ejection.
- If a player's non-football-related act (e.g. taunting or cursing) causes an opponent to physically retaliate, it is considered fighting and both players are ejected. It is considered fighting if a player swings at an opponent and misses or attempts to kick an opponent and misses. □

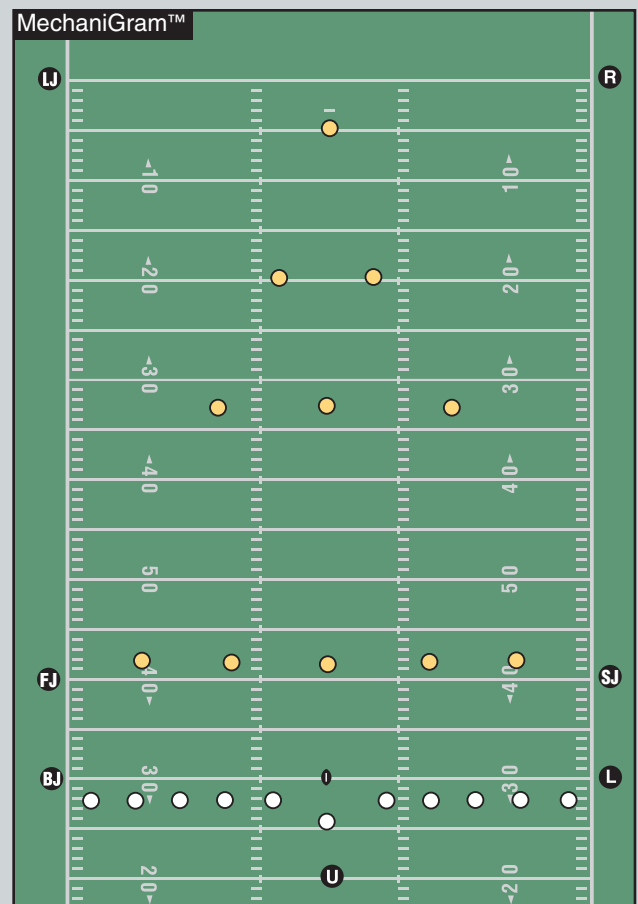
for a dead-ball personal foul. A10's subsequent free kick goes out of bounds at Team B's 25-yard line untouched by Team B. **Ruling 3:** The penalty for A52's dead-ball foul moves the ball to Team A's 15-yard line for the free kick. When the free kick goes out of bounds untouched by Team B, Team B may choose

a re-kick after enforcement of a five-yard penalty from the previous spot (the kick would be from Team A's 10-yard line), may choose to start a new series at its own 25-yard line or may choose to start a new series 35 yards from the previous spot (in that case, the 50-yard line). □

Late Mechanics Change

CCA supervisors approved a late mechanics change during their annual preseason meeting June 10-11. Because of the timing of the change, it does not appear in the 2007 CCA manual for crews of seven.

As seen in the MechaniGram, the linesman will be positioned on Team A's restraining line, opposite the back judge, for all free kicks. Previously, that positioning was used solely when an onside kick was expected.



Flashback: 2006 Rule Changes

In addition to familiarizing yourself with this year's rule changes, you can use this review to refresh your memory on the modifications approved before last season. If a 2007 change rendered the 2006 change moot, last year's change is not addressed here.

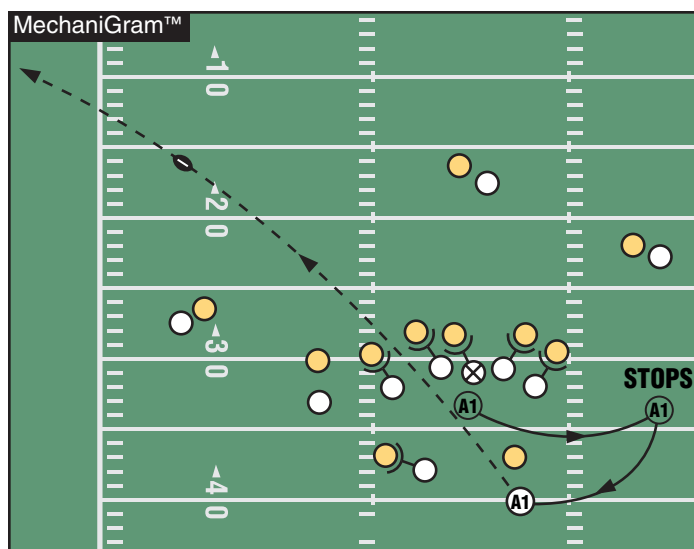
Replay (Rule 12).

One instant replay procedure is to be used by all institutions and conferences. The procedure, which was developed by the Big 10 three years ago, calls for the replay official in the pressbox to review all plays on the field and stop the game. The official may only stop play if the play is on the list of reviewable plays and has a direct, competitive impact on the game.

Each team will be allowed one challenge during the course of the game, but may use it only if has charged team time outs remaining. The head coach may request a review by signaling for a timeout (the coach will not have a red flag or buzzer at his disposal). If the challenge overturns the call on the field, the team is not charged a timeout. If the call on the field is not reversed by the challenge, the team is charged a timeout.

For consistency, the script the referee will use when reporting the results of a replay stoppage was included as part of the rule. Additionally, a visiting non-conference institution is not able to opt out of using replay if the host institution chooses to implement the system.

Although instant replay will be the norm in Division



Among the editorial changes approved last year by the NCAA Football Rules Committee was one involving intentional grounding (7-3-2f-1).

Under the change, once a passer has been outside the frame of the body of the normal tackle position toward a sideline, rules regarding legally grounding the ball apply even if he reverses field and returns to the pocket. Under the old rule, the ball could be legally grounded only if thrown from outside the so-called tackle box.

However, the ball must still land in or out of bounds beyond the neutral zone and touch a player, an official or anything beyond the neutral zone, as depicted in the MechaniGram.

I-A, the rule is open to all divisions of play.

Three other changes were also approved to provide consistency. In 3-3-4-e-1, only the referee may stop the clock for a head coach's conference or a coach's challenge; in 3-3-4-e-2, a request for a head coach's conference or challenge must be made before the ball is snapped or free-kicked for the next play and before the end of the second or fourth period; and in 3-3-4-e-3, after a head coach's conference or challenge, the full team timeout is granted if charged by the referee.

Seven types of plays are reviewable by rule. They are:

- A runner ruled to have fumbled. (Note: If a runner is

ruled down, the play is not reviewable).

- A runner's forward progress with respect to a first down.
- Touching of any type kick by any player.
- The number of players participating by either team during a live ball.
- A scrimmage kicker beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is kicked.
- Clock adjustment when a ruling on the field is reversed.
- A fumble recovery by a Team A player during fourth down or a try and before any change of possession.

Fouls on scrimmage kicks (7-1-3-b, 7-1-4-h, 10-2-2-d-6).

When Team A commits a live-ball foul when the snap

starts during a scrimmage-kick play other than a field goal, Team B may choose enforcement from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B, or may choose a replay of the down after enforcement.

The enforcement choice is similar to that involving Team A offside fouls on free kicks. The fouls involved on scrimmage kicks include illegal shift, illegal motion, illegal substitution and illegal formation.

Equipment (1-4-5-s, 2-15-4-c).

Eye shields are allowed only if they are clear (no tint whatsoever) and made from molded or rigid material. There is no procedure for allowing exceptions to the rule. Kicking tees may not elevate the ball more than one inch above the ground. The lower tee is expected to decrease kickoff distance, resulting in more returns. Umpires should have a device allowing them to measure the tee. If an improper tee is discovered, it should be removed.

Try not necessary (8-3-2-a).

If a touchdown is scored during a down in which time in the fourth period expires, the try need not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game. The old rule required that the try be attempted unless the trailing team left the field.

Fouls on tries (8-3-3-b-1, 8-3-3-c-2, 8-3-3-d-2).

Any personal foul by Team B (not just those against the

(see Flashback p. 7)

Offended Team has Additional Penalty Option on Kicks

With a change to rules 7-1-3, 7-1-4, 9-1-2 and 9-3-3-a, an additional penalty option will be available when a foul occurs on kicks other than field goals. In those situations, Team B may choose enforcement from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B for any Team A foul other than kick-catch interference that occurs during a free or scrimmage kick.

Previously, offside was the only foul that provided

that option on free kicks and only procedural fouls (e.g. illegal shift, illegal motion) were eligible for end-of-run enforcement on scrimmage kicks.

Play 1: A11's free kick is in flight when A42 is flagged for (a) being offside at the kickoff, (b) blocking B51 below the waist in an effort to break up the wedge in front of the kick returner, or (c) grasping but not twisting B21's facemask. The play

results in B32 advancing the ball to Team B's 30-yard line.

Ruling 1: In all cases, Team B has the choice of having the penalty enforced from the end of B21's run (Team B's 30-yard line) or enforcement from the previous spot and a replay of the down.

Play 2: B21 catches A11's free kick at his own five-yard line and advances to Team B's 25-yard line, where he steps out of bounds. During

B21's run, A72 is flagged for (a) blocking B51 below the waist in an effort to break up the wedge in front of the kick returner, or (b) grasping but not twisting B21's facemask. **Ruling 2:** The fouls in (a) and (b) occurred during B21's run. If Team B wants to accept either penalty, it must be enforced from the end of B21's run (Team B's 25-yard line).

There is no option to have

(see Kicks p. 8)

Timing Rule

continued from p. 1

in Team B's end zone and was downed there, (c) tackled A20 short of the line-to-gain on fourth down, or (d) batted down A10's pass on fourth down. **Ruling 1:** In (a), (b), (c) and (d), Team B is awarded a new series. Therefore, the clock starts on the snap.

Play 2: R21 is in position to catch a punt. R21 (a) catches the kick, advances and fumbles with A52 recovering, or (b) muffs the kick with A52 recovering. **Ruling 2:** In (a) and (b), Team A is awarded a new series. The clock will start with the snap because there was a legal kick during the down.

Play 3: Fourth and five on Team A's 35-yard line. B31 commits pass interference on A10's forward pass. B31 (a) intercepts the pass and is tackled inbounds on Team B's 42-yard line, (b) intercepts the pass and is tackled out of bounds on

Team B's 42-yard line, or (c) knocks down the pass. In all cases, the penalty is accepted. **Ruling 3:** In (a), (b) and (c), Team A is awarded a new series. In all of those cases, the clock starts on the snap because it was stopped to award Team B a first down.

Play 4: Fourth and five on Team B's 35-yard line. Team A is flagged for illegal motion as A21 punts. Team A downs the ball at Team B's one-yard line. Team B chooses to have the penalty enforced from the previous spot. **Ruling 4:** Because the previous down included a legal kick, the clock starts on the snap.

A number of other time-related changes were approved as well.

Shorter timeouts for TV games (3-3-7-a).

Charged team timeouts have been shortened by 30 seconds for televised games only. Timeouts will now last 60 seconds (30 seconds for the actual timeout, five seconds for the ball to be

declared ready for play, plus 25 seconds to put the ball in play). If a contract between a conference and a television entity specifies length of timeouts, the contract supercedes the rule.

In non-televised games, teams will continue to have the option of a 30-second or 60-second timeout.

Twenty-five second clock (3-2-2-h, 3-4-2-a, 3-4-2-b-3, 4-1-5).

The referee shall declare the ball ready and the 25-second clock will begin once the official hands the ball to the kicker for a free kick.

Teams will have 15 seconds, rather than 25, to resume play from scrimmage after a television timeout. Again, the change applies only to televised games. The rule does not apply if the television timeout precedes a free kick.

Next year, the committee will consider use of a 25-second/40-second combination clock. That

method, currently used in the NFL, is expected to provide a more uniform pace of play. The committee will continue to study feasibility of implementation for next season.

Clock status after inadvertent whistle (3-2-2-i).

If an inadvertent whistle results in a down being replayed, the game clock will be reset to reflect the time when the whistle was blown.

Play 5: Team A snaps the ball with 2:35 showing on the game clock. Runner A22 is hit and fumbles after a five-yard gain. The covering official doesn't see the fumble and blows his whistle, then realizes he was mistaken. The game clock reads 2:25 when the officials stop the clock to sort out the situation.

Ruling 5: If Team A chooses to replay the down, the clock will be reset to 2:35. If Team A chooses to take the ball where possession was lost, the clock stays at 2:25. □

Get in Touch With Touchback Rules

Many officials believe the most important line on the football field is the goal line. The logic behind that is apparent — depending on the circumstances, crossing that line may result in a team scoring six points.

In other situations, whether or not the goal line was crossed may make a difference of more than 19 yards. A touchback results in a first down at the 20-yard line. If the ball is ruled out of bounds short of the goal line, the next snap could be from inside the one-yard line.

The key to determining whether the result of a play is a safety or touchback is the impetus that caused the ball to go from the field of play into the end zone. Impetus is the energy that causes movement of the ball.

Impetus is of significance only when the ball crosses the goal line and only when it goes from the field of play into the end zone. The initial impetus results from a carry, fumble, kick, pass or snap. A new impetus cannot be imparted to a ball in flight, but once it is grounded a new impetus may result from a bat, illegal kick or muff. Merely touching, deflecting or being struck by a ball does not provide a new impetus. When a player pushes or blocks an opponent into the ball, the impetus is attributed to the player who pushed or blocked. For grounded balls, a muff is not a new impetus; by rule a new impetus results only when a grounded loose ball is batted or illegally kicked. For a safety to occur, a team must provide the impetus that puts the ball into its own end zone. A



DALE BARNES

A player who catches a kick in his own end zone and chooses not to run it out signals his intention by downing the ball. Covering officials can help protect the player by moving in front of him, blowing the whistle loudly and signaling the touchback.

touchback can occur when a team provides the impetus that puts the ball into its opponent's end zone.

Kicks.

Touchbacks occur most frequently on kickoffs. When a non-scoring kick goes into Team B's end zone, the ball remains live and in play unless it touches the ground in the end zone before the kick is touched by a Team B player.

Play 1: B31 is standing in his end zone when he (a) catches a kickoff, or (b) recovers a kickoff that bounces from the two-yard line. B31 then takes off down the sideline for a touchdown.

Ruling 1: In (a) or (b), the touchdown stands. The ball stayed live because B31 touched it before it could hit the ground in his end zone.

Play 2: B31, on his five-yard line, touches (muffs) a kickoff as it bounds past him. The ball bounces into Team B's end zone, where (a) A24 recovers after the ball hits the ground in the end zone, (b) A24 recovers before the ball hits the ground in the end zone, or (c) prone B22 recovers after the ball hits the ground in the end zone or before it can hit the ground in the end zone. **Ruling 2:** A24 scores a touchdown in (a) and (b). In (c), it's a touchback when prone B22 recovers.

Play 3: A31's kickoff caroms off B23's chest at his two-yard line. The ball is at rest on the three-yard line when B20 hastily tries to grab it, instead muffing and forcing the ball into and out of the end zone. (B20's muff is not judged to be an illegal bat.)

Ruling 3: The result is a safety and two points are scored by Team A. Although B20 never had possession, when he muffed the ball while it was at rest, he supplied a new impetus, causing the ball to go into the end zone.

Interceptions and fumbles.

A touchback may also result from an interception or a fumble during a scrimmage down. If Team B intercepts a pass in its end zone, the impetus that put the ball in the end zone is Team A's pass. If the ball becomes dead behind the goal line without ever having left the end zone, it is a touchback. A common misconception is such a play is ruled a safety if a Team B player attempts to advance the ball out of the end zone, but is tackled behind the goal line.

If a Team A fumble is recovered by Team B in Team B's end zone or goes out of bounds there, it is a touchback.

Play 4: First and goal on Team B's five-yard line. A22 takes a quick handoff and tries to dive over the line. He loses control of the ball at the two-yard line and the ball (a) goes out of bounds in the end zone, (b) is recovered by B58 in the end zone, or (c) is recovered by A78 in the end zone. **Ruling 4:** The result is a touchback in (a) and (b); touchdown in (c). □

Fumbles vs. Muffs: There's a Difference

Have you ever had a game without at least one fumble? It's pretty rare to have a fumble-free game, even if the loose ball doesn't result in a turnover. Muffs are less common. Muffs and fumbles are treated differently.

A fumble is the loss of player possession and is characterized by an act other than passing, kicking or successful handing of the ball. In order to fumble, a player must first have possession of the ball. On the other hand, a muff is an unsuccessful attempt to get possession (catch or recover) of the ball and is always preceded by a touch.

Here are some plays to illustrate the differences.

Play 1: Quarterback A11 takes the snap and attempts to hand off to back A32. The ball falls to the ground.

Ruling 1: A11 has fumbled; he had possession of the ball before it became loose. A32 has muffed the ball; he never had possession of the ball.

Play 2: As quarterback A11 takes the snap from A55, the ball falls to the ground.

Ruling 2: A11 has muffed the snap; he never had possession of the ball. There is no fumble on the play. A55 never had possession as the ball did not become live until it left his hands.

When a fumble occurs, any player of either team can recover or catch the ball and advance it regardless of whether the fumble occurs beyond or behind the line. There is an exception: On fourth-down plays and tries, before a change of team possession, a fumble caught or recovered in advance of the spot of the fumble by a member of the fumbling team other than the fumbler results in a dead ball. The ball then is returned to the spot of the fumble. If the fumble is caught or recovered behind the spot of the fumble by a member of the fumbling team other than

the fumbler, the ball is dead at that spot. The restrictions apply only to Team A; Team B may legally advance any fumbled ball.

Play 3: Fourth and 10 on Team A's 30-yard line. A84 catches a pass at his 38-yard line and fumbles there. The ball is recovered at Team A's 32-yard line and advanced to Team A's 45-yard line by (a) A84, or (b) A35. **Ruling 3:** In (a), the play stands since A4 recovered his own fumble. In (b), the ball is dead when A35 recovers and it is returned to the spot where possession was lost, making it Team B's ball, first and 10 on Team A's 38-yard line.

Play 4: Same as play 3, except the ball is recovered at Team A's 28-yard line.

Ruling 4: In (a), the play stands since A84 recovered his own fumble. In (b), the ball is dead when A35 recovers, resulting in Team B's ball at the spot of recovery, first and 10.

Out of bounds.

A fumble out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble is returned to the fumbling team at the spot of the fumble.

Play 5: Third and 10 on Team A's 30-yard line. A11 pitches to A23 for a sweep. As A23 approaches the line, he is hit and fumbles at his 30-yard line. The ball goes out of bounds at (a) Team A's 28-yard line, or (b) Team A's 33-yard line.

Ruling 5: In (a), the ball belongs to Team A at the out-of-bounds spot (Team A's 28-yard line) and it will be fourth and 12. The clock starts on the snap. In (b), the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble, where it will be fourth and 10 for Team A on its own 30-yard line. The clock starts on the ready.

End zone.

If a fumble is recovered by the opponent in its end zone, or goes out of bounds there, it is a touchback.

(see *Fumbles vs. Muffs* p. 9)

Flashback

continued from p. 4

snapper, holder, kicker or passer) may be enforced from the previous spot or the ensuing kickoff.

Similarly, live-ball fouls penalized as dead-ball fouls occurring during the try down, or fouls after a try, are penalized on the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods.

Penalties against Team A on a try which include loss of down only or loss of down and yardage, nullify the score and any yardage

is not penalized on the succeeding kickoff.

Leaping (10-1-2-q).

It is not a foul if the leaping player was aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped. A player who runs toward the line of scrimmage but is within a yard of the line and has stopped before the snap may legally leap in an attempt to block a field-goal attempt.

The committee also approved a number of editorial changes. Those that affect officiating:

Fouls after a change of possession (3-1-3-g).

The heading, "Fouls after Team B Possession," was changed to "Fouls after a Change of Possession." The change addresses a situation in which there is more than one change of possession during a down in extra periods.

Similarly, the heading for 8-3-3, "Fouls During a Try Before Team B Possession," became "Fouls During a Try Before a Change of Possession."

Crowd noise rule deleted (3-3-3-f-4).

Rules regarding crowd noise are no longer necessary because the issue has not been a problem.

"Catch" definition (2-2-7, 2-2-7-c).

The word "firmly" was added to two definitions regarding catches. A catch is an act of firmly establishing player possession of a live ball in flight. Likewise, a player who leaves his feet to catch, intercept or recover a ball, must have the ball firmly in his possession. □

Kicking Rules: Don't Kick 'em

Specialists are plentiful in the game of football. In some cases, a player enters the game for only two or three plays per game. It is those limited roles and the particular portions of the game that provide the name “special teams.” Free kicks are one such area.

A significant portion of the pregame should be devoted to kick plays. It's important for all officials to understand the rules regarding free kicks and to make the right call, not only on the opening kickoff, but on all free kicks.

During any free kick, Team A players cannot block until they are eligible to touch a free kick. That is most often an issue on onside kicks, as Team A tries to “clear a path” for a teammate to recover the kick. The penalty for that type of illegal block is five yards from the previous spot. Also, Team A must have at least four players on either side of the kicker (6-1-2-b).

The tee.

A tee can be used for any free kick (2-15-4b). If the wind blows the ball off the tee, either before or during the kicker's approach, the whistle should be sounded to stop play. A good rule of thumb is to allow the ball to be reset on the tee once. If it is blown off again, a holder should be used.

Team A offside.

Both the holder and the kicker can be beyond the free-kick line when the ball is kicked. If any other

player is beyond the free-kick line when the play is kicked, it is a foul (6-1-2b).

Play 1: As A11 starts his approach for the opening kickoff, overanxious A40 steps across the line before the ball is kicked. The ball (a) is caught by B22 and returned to Team B's 20-yard line, or (b) rolls beyond the end line for a touchback. **Ruling 1:** In both cases, A40's foul is a live-ball foul. Team B could choose to have the five-yard penalty enforced from the end of the run, meaning Team B would start a new series from its own 25-yard line, or to have the penalty enforced from the previous spot, resulting in a re-kick.

Out of bounds.

A free kick that goes out of bounds without being touched by a member of the receiving team is a foul. The ball may be put in play five yards from the yard line where it went out of bounds or at the same inbounds spot 35 yards from where it was kicked. Team B may also choose to have the ball kicked again after a five-yard penalty (6-2-1).

Play 2: A11's kickoff hits the ground and rolls out of bounds untouched at Team B's (a) 40-yard line, or (b) 20-yard line. **Ruling 2:** Team B will either elect to have the down replayed after a five-yard penalty, or choose to take the ball at the inbounds spot on its (a) 40-yard line, or (b) 35-yard line. Although in (b) Team B also has the option of taking the ball at the spot it

went out of bounds, that is not likely to happen.

If Team A is offside on a free kick and the ball goes out of bounds untouched by Team B, Team A has committed two fouls and Team B may accept the penalty for one. The five-yard penalty may be enforced at the previous spot or added on at the spot where the ball went out of bounds in either case. Or, Team B may accept the penalty for the kick out of bounds by putting the ball in play 35 yards from the spot of the kick. However, the five-yard penalty may not be tacked on at that spot, since that would mean accepting both penalties.

Play 3: A11's kickoff hits the ground and rolls out of bounds untouched at Team B's 10-yard line. A32 is offside before the ball is

kicked. **Ruling 3:** Team B may accept the penalty for one of Team A's fouls. The five-yard penalty may be enforced at the previous spot or added on at the spot where the ball went out of bounds in either case. Or, Team B may accept the penalty for the kick out of bounds by putting the ball in play 35 yards from the spot of the kick.

Near the goal line.

A non-scoring kick remains live until a ball untouched by Team B hits the ground in Team B's end zone (6-1-7).

Play 4: B32 is the primary kick returner and is standing in his own end zone. A11's kickoff (a) is caught by B32, (b) hits the ground at the two-yard line and bounces directly to B32, *(see Kicking Rules p. 14)*

Kicks

continued from p. 5

the penalty enforced from the previous spot.

Play 3: A11's free kick (a) results in a touchback, or (b) goes out of bounds untouched by Team B at Team B's 10-yard line. A44 was flagged for offside.

Ruling 3: In (a), Team B may choose a rekick after enforcement of the five-yard penalty from the previous spot or have the five-yard penalty enforced from spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (the 20-yard line). In (b), Team B may choose to take the ball 35 yards from the previous spot, choose a rekick after

enforcement of the five-yard penalty from the previous spot, have the penalty enforced from the yard line the ball went out of bounds or have the five-yard penalty enforced from spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (the 10-yard line).

Play 4: B25 makes a fair catch of A11's punt at Team B's 30-yard line. Before the kick ended, A30 was flagged for (a) holding, or (b) illegal motion. **Ruling 4:** Team B may choose to have the penalty for either foul enforced from the previous spot or choose enforcement from the end of the run (in that case, the spot of B25's fair catch). □

Fumbles vs. Muffs

continued from p. 7

Play 6: First and goal on Team B's five-yard line. A23 takes a handoff and tries to dive over the line. He loses control of the ball at the two-yard line and the ball (a) goes out of bounds over the end line, (b) is recovered by B54 in the end zone, or (c) is recovered by A66 in the end zone. **Ruling 6:** It is a touchback in (a) and (b) and a touchdown in (c).

Muffs.

It is a muff when a defender deflects a pass he is attempting to intercept. A muff may also occur after a fumble as several players vie for the ball.

Arguably muffs occur most frequently during kicking plays. Muffs in those situations present a challenge to officials.

Muffed kicks cannot be advanced by the kicking team. The underlying reason for that is not because the ball muffed, but because the status of the ball hasn't changed: It's still a kick.

Let's go back to the defender who muffs a pass in flight. If his deflection ends up in the hands of a teammate or an opponent (perhaps the intended receiver), the ball remains live and may be advanced. When the kicking team gains possession of a free kick, the ball is always dead.

Play 7: A31's punt hits the ground at Team B's 30-yard line and rolls. B21 muffs the kick at his 26-yard line, and the ball is recovered at Team B's 24-yard line and advanced for an apparent touchdown by

(a) B35, or (b) A22. **Ruling 7:** In (a), a legal play. In (b), since Team B was the first to touch the kick beyond the line, Team A is entitled to possession; however, the ball is immediately dead on the recovery and no advance by Team A is possible. It is Team A's ball, first and 10 on Team B's 24-yard line.

Fumble or muff?

In most situations, the distinction between a muff or fumble will not make any difference, but here are a couple of plays where that knowledge is essential.

Play 8: A31's punt is very high and B43 decides to catch it without signaling for a fair catch. The ball hits B43's chest at Team B's 30-yard line. B43 takes a step forward as he struggles to get a firm grip on the ball. A55 contacts B43 and the ball falls to the ground. A55 recovers the ball and takes it into the end zone. **Ruling 8:** The covering official must judge whether B43 had possession of the ball before he was contacted. If he had possession, B43 fumbled and A55's touchdown stands. If B43 never had possession, his muff may be recovered by A55, but the ball is dead and cannot be advanced. It will be first and 10 for Team A at the spot of recovery.

Play 9: Fourth and goal at Team B's two-yard line. The ball falls to the ground during the exchange between snapper A55 and quarterback A11. A73 recovers the ball and scores. **Ruling 9:** The score counts; the fourth-down fumble rule does not apply. A11 muffed a backward pass. □

Jersey or Mask?

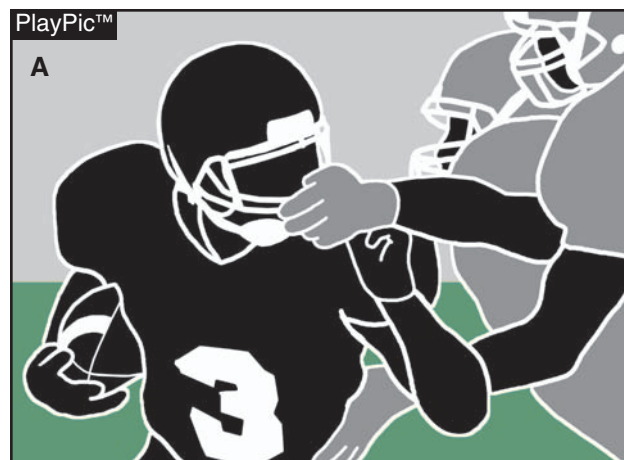
Deciding whether a facemask penalty will result in a five- or 15-yard penalty is tough enough for an official. But what can often be even more difficult is discerning whether the mask was grasped at all.

In PlayPic A, the defender clearly has a hold of the runner's facemask and has fouled. If the mask is subsequently yanked, the more severe penalty is appropriate.

The more challenging call is depicted in PlayPic B. It is the collar of the runner's jersey — not his facemask — that has been grabbed. What makes the call difficult is that the runner's head often jerks violently to one side, the same as if the facemask was being pulled. Everyone in the stadium will want a facemask call. If you're absolutely sure you saw a handful of material and not plastic, you cannot bow to the masses.

If, however, you're not positive, you'll find yourself in a tough spot. You'll have to choose between one of two camps: "Make it be there," or, "If I'm going to err, it's going to be on the side of safety."

There is no formal "when in question" statement to handle the scenario. But based on how other such quandaries are handled in the rulebooks, a wise official would flag it. If nothing else, it sends a message to tacklers that grabbing runners above the shoulders is not a good technique.



Illegal Helmet Contact Must Be Penalized

Catastrophic cervical spine and close-head injuries are among the most devastating injuries in all of sports. The primary mechanism for those injuries in football is axial loading, which occurs when contact is made with the crown or the top of the helmet. Whether that occurs intentionally or unintentionally, the axial load mechanism or spearing significantly increases the risks of both permanent cervical spine injuries as well as close-head injury.

In January 2005, a joint task force formed by the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) and the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) met to discuss spearing and head-down contact in football. The 32-

member task force was composed of physicians, certified athletic trainers, researchers, coaches, officials and administrators from the NCAA and other governing bodies. The task force looked for ways to prevent head and neck injuries.

The task force was formed due to concerns about increased numbers of cervical spine injuries and close-head injuries in recent years in football. There is no doubt that the game of football has evolved over time. The development of improved

helmet and facemask technology has led to increased use of the head in contact, both intentional and unintentional. In the early 1970s, college rules first addressed spearing and head-down contact. At the time of the rule adoption, more than 30 episodes of permanent quadriplegia were occurring per year in American football. With the implementation of the rule, there was a significant decrease in catastrophic cervical spine injuries. However, recent years have shown resurgence in the number of spine injuries as well as close-head injuries.

The normal cervical spine has a curvature allowing it to absorb shock. When the neck is flexed slightly forward, the cervical spine becomes straight. When force is applied to the top of the head in that position, the energy is transmitted along the axial cervical spine. With the collision, when the athlete strikes with the crown or top of the helmet, the head is stopped suddenly; however, the trunk continues moving from the body's momentum, crushing the spine between the head and the trunk. When maximum compression is reached, the spine may fail.


In the laboratory, fracture or dislocation of the neck has been demonstrated to occur with less than 150 foot pounds of kinetic injury. It is important to realize that a running football player can generate 10 times that energy. Each time a player initiates contact with his head down,

he risks quadriplegia. Each time a player initiates contact head first, he increases the risk of close-head injury.

Defensive football players sustain the majority of fatalities in catastrophic cervical spine injuries, with four times as many as offensive players. Tackling is a leading cause followed by being tackled and then blocking. Defensive backs and special team players are at the greatest risk due to the speed generated with the open field running that those players demonstrate. Next greatest risk includes ball carriers, linebackers and defensive lineman.

In 2005, the NATA/AFCA task force conducted a survey of NCAA officials on the existing helmet contact rule. More than 200 officials from the Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big 10, Big 12, Pac-10 and Southeastern conferences responded. In the 2005 season, those officials called 2,027 games with the average of 9.9 games each. When questioned regarding how many helmet contact penalties they had called over the past year, 80 percent said they had not called a helmet contact penalty the entire season. Sixteen percent had called one, two percent had called two and two percent had called three. No official called more than three of those penalties.

To further study the problem, the task force reviewed a year of NCAA Division I football statistics. For the year in review, 20,837 penalties were called. Of those penalties only 25 helmet (see *Illegal Helmet Contact* p. 13)



Head-down contact can lead to injury for both the blocker and the player being blocked.

The Two-Minute Drill

The last two minutes of a half, especially in the fourth quarter, can be a particularly stressful time for an officiating crew. Working as a crew, knowing and applying the clock rules, keeping track of timeouts and being alert for timeout requests are always important, but especially so during the dying stages of the second and fourth quarters.

Perhaps the best way to think about officiating a football game during those critical waning minutes is to work your normal game but operate at a higher level of alert. For example, it is important that the referee develop a consistent pace for marking the ball ready for play throughout the game and he should maintain that pace as a half draws to a close. A crew that can spot the ball and blow the ready 12-14 seconds after it has been declared dead on the previous play keeps the game moving while allowing ample time. Clearly, the referee must adjust that time length for factors such as the weather, a long incomplete pass, the runner going out of bounds and other circumstances.

However, maintaining a steady pace allows the teams to become accustomed to the pace they need to set in getting plays in from the sideline, the cadence of the signal-calling, etc. Don't allow the offense in its "hurry-hurry" mode to lure you into speeding up your work. Remember that there are two teams out there and the defense has as much right to fair and consistent clock treatment as the offense. "Hustle but don't hurry" is as good a rule of thumb late in the half as it is during the rest of the game.

Pay special attention to the clock during those two minutes. Again, it's important to monitor the game clock all the time, but even more so as a half draws to a close. One official has primary responsibility for the clock, but the entire crew should also have a heightened sense of clock awareness late in the half. If the stadium has only one end zone clock and it is to the referee's back, the referee should remind the umpire to keep one eye on the clock.

The referee must have a complete knowledge of the clock rules. He controls when the clock starts. Winding or not winding the clock incorrectly during the middle of the first quarter, say, should not happen, of course, but it has very little impact on the game and will likely go unnoticed. During the waning moments of a tight game, however, a bright spotlight shines on the referee and his understanding of clock rules is more critical.

A cautionary note about time outs. Savvy teams will hold onto their time outs for the last few minutes of a half, so the officiating crew must be alert to time out requests by players and head coaches. That does not mean officials should stop officiating and hunt for someone requesting a time out, but it does mean being especially sensitive in anticipating a request. It is also good practice for officials to remind each other at every available opportunity about the number of time outs each team has left.

The excitement that accompanies the last couple of minutes of a game is a great test for officials. It is the well-prepared officiating crew that keeps its cool and maintains especially strong concentration during that time. □

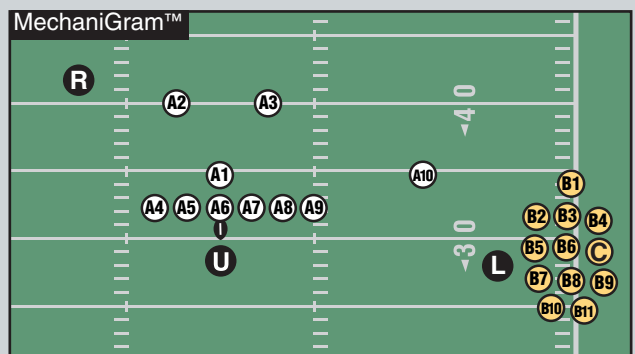
When the Defense Delays

Ninety-nine percent of the time, delay penalties are assessed against the team with the ball. But the rules apply equally to both teams (3-4-2b-3). The MechaniGram illustrates a situation in which a defensive delay of game penalty might occur.

Team A, which has begun a new series after a change of possession, is at the line and in formation. Team B, however, is still at its sideline in the middle of a legal conference.

If the referee has not yet blown the ready, he should withhold it. The official on Team B's sideline (the linesman in this instance) must urge the team to take the field. Failure to comply in a timely fashion should result in a penalty. If the ready signal has been given, officials should react the same as if the ready hadn't been given since the game clock isn't running. If Team B does not take the field upon the official's notification, a delay penalty is appropriate.

Note that the umpire is still over the ball. That is to help ensure that the play doesn't begin until both teams are in position. Under no circumstances should Team A be allowed to run a play with Team B at the sideline or scrambling to get into position.



Pace

continued from p. 1

Enforcing penalties.

If a foul prevents a legal snap, the wing officials can move toward the referee while giving the appropriate signal and reporting the number of the player who fouled. That mechanic will most often be used when a false start has occurred; however, it does not preclude an umpire from reporting a hold in the same manner once the play is over.

Keep discussions to a minimum.

Unless there are multiple fouls or a complicated set

of circumstances, the process of reporting a foul to the referee should be a brief one. The referee should give the preliminary signal promptly. It is not necessary for the referee to signal from the middle of the field, but he should be clear of players.

Some fouls such as false starts and delay of game are relatively obvious in nature and are almost always accepted. Those don't need both a preliminary and a second signal — particularly if the referee has a microphone. One signal and the announcement suffice. □

Out of Bounds, Not Out of Mind

Almost every play in a football game requires the officials to determine the dead-ball spot. The key to doing that is usually forward progress. It is essential to understand forward progress is the end of advancement of a runner toward the opponent's goal. Barring an inadvertent whistle, the runner's advancement can be stopped with the down ending in three ways: he is down by rule, his forward progress is stopped or he steps out of bounds. This column addresses the latter.

A runner is out of bounds when any part of his person or the ball touches anything, other than another player or official, who is on or outside a sideline or end line. Forward progress is marked at the ball's location when that occurs.

Runners at the sideline.

For tackles near the sideline, determining the forward progress spot can be challenging. When the runner is airborne as he crosses the sideline, forward progress is where the ball crosses the plane of the sideline, not where the ball is when the runner first touches out of bounds.

Play 1: First and 10 on Team A's 34-yard line. Runner A20 sprints around the right end and dives for a first down near the sideline. A20's last step inbounds is at his 42-yard line and, while airborne, he stretches the ball and lands prone out of bounds. The side of his body is first to contact the ground, and when that happens the ball is at Team A's 45-yard line. **Ruling 1:**



DALE GARREY

Pac-10 field judge Daniel Spriesterbach, Seattle, indicates the spot a punt went out of bounds. Although the game is intended to be played within the confines of the sidelines and endlines, the ball and players wind up out of bounds on occasion.

The covering official must decide where the ball was when it crossed the plane of the sideline. If it crossed beyond Team A's 44-yard line, Team A will be awarded a new series. In making that judgment, the official should note how close to the sideline the dive began.

If the runner is stopped in the field of play, the clock is not stopped, but if he went out of bounds, the clock is stopped. A runner who is contacted by an opponent and crosses the sideline as he is moving forward has been forced out of bounds and the clock is stopped. If the runner is displaced laterally or backward and touches the sideline, his progress has been stopped in the field of play and the clock continues to run unless it is stopped for another reason such as a

penalty or the awarding of a new series.

Play 2: Second and 16 on Team A's 20-yard line. Runner A37 sweeps around left end toward the sideline. B55 attempts the tackle and he (a) shoves A37 from behind so A37 steps out of bounds at Team A's 35-yard line while moving forward, (b) blocks A37's path and grabs him at Team A's 33-yard line, carrying him laterally out of bounds at Team A's 33-yard line, or (c) blocks A37's path and grabs him backward and out of bounds at Team A's 31-yard line.

Ruling 2: In (a), A37's forward progress was not stopped in the field of play and the dead-ball spot is where the ball was located when A37 stepped out of bounds — Team A's 35-yard

line. The clock must be stopped. In (b) and (c), A37's forward progress was stopped in the field of play. In (b), the ball is spotted at Team A's 33-yard line. In (c), the spot is at Team A's 32-yard line. The clock continues to run in (b) and (c) unless there was a penalty on the play.

When a runner steps on the sideline, wing officials almost always mark the progress spot where the runner's foot contacted the sideline. That usually is a fairly accurate spot. However, since the progress spot is at the location of the ball, the spot where the runner's foot touched the sideline is not necessarily the correct location. The ball's location can be judged depending on two factors: whether the ball was held in the arm closest to the sideline (outside arm) or the arm away from the sideline (inside arm) and whether it was the lead or rear foot that first touched out of bounds. The extra precision may be appropriate for plays that end near the goal line or the line-to-gain.

Runners are coached to carry the ball in their outside arm to increase the chances of the ball going out of bounds if it is jarred loose by an opponent. If the runner steps out of bounds with his lead foot and is carrying the ball in his outside arm, the location of the ball and the spot where his foot touches the sideline are virtually identical. However, if the ball is in his inside arm, the official must "look through" the runner to determine the spot.

Cases in which a runner touches the sideline with his
(see *Out of Bounds* p. 15)

Hall of Famer's Comment Applies to Officials

A teammate once asked baseball great Joe DiMaggio why he played so hard in a game that means nothing in the standings. "Because," the Yankee Clipper explained, "there may be somebody watching who's never seen me play before."

DiMaggio was in effect saying, "There is no such

thing as a meaningless game." That attitude can very easily translate to officiating.

It's a trite old saying but it's true: "Every game you work is important to somebody." Thing is, that somebody may be you.

Many officials moved up the ladder because they were

seen by someone who was there to scout another official.

Even if you have no desire to work beyond the level at which you're working, you owe it to all involved — including your crewmates and yourself — to come prepared, work hard and dispatch your duties as

they should be carried out. Work hard all the time, regardless of the weather, score or records of the teams

The likelihood is that no one will be scouting the officials. But remember that integrity is how you act when you think no one's watching. □

Illegal Helmet Contact

continued from p. 10

contact penalties were called, or one tenth of one percent. In other words, one helmet contact penalty was called for every 50 games. To put that in perspective, one in six penalties is for offensive holding. Spearing was called once for every 833 calls.

One of the misconceptions identified in that survey was that the majority of the officials felt the primary purpose of the helmet contact penalties was to protect the athlete who gets hit. On the contrary, injury statistics and injury surveillances systems have shown that the athlete who delivers the blow is at significantly greater risk for catastrophic injury. Other key points brought out by the officials in the survey was the feeling that the existing rule was too subjective and it was difficult for the officials to be able to determine intent. Officials also felt that more education needed to be conducted in that area.

Due to the concerns over continued head and neck injuries related to head-down contact and spearing,

the NCAA changed the spearing rule effective for the 2005 football season. The word "intent" was removed from the rule. In reviewing statistics from the season following the rule change, there was essentially no change in enforcement in collegiate football. According to the 2005 NCAA Football Consolidated Foul Reports, 21 total spearing calls were made and 21 calls for butting, ramming with the helmet.

It is important to note that helmet contact penalties are unique in football. When properly enforced, they are the only action penalties to penalize the player for his own protection. Head-down contact and spearing pose a risk to players regardless of intent. Many officials indicated in the survey that they did not feel comfortable calling spearing or helmet contact foul on a person that they felt performed head-down contact unintentionally.

Cervical spine and close-head injuries are among the most devastating injuries in all of sports. They have overwhelming social, financial and psychological impact on the athletes, their

families and their teammates. There is currently no surgery or rehabilitation that will resolve paralysis. Additionally, litigation may involve coaches, the institution and potentially officials. Members of the task force felt that enforcement of the new rules will make a significant difference.

As demonstrated with other rules, coaches are more prone to react to penalties that are called. For example, if multiple violations such as offside or holding occur during the game, those will generally be addressed by the coaching staff the following week to correct those mistakes and hopefully prevent them from occurring again. However, it is human nature not to address issues that may not be brought to our attention. When head-down contact and spearing fouls are not enforced and addressed, student athletes develop poor habits in blocking and tackling. If left uncorrected, those actions may lead to potentially serious injuries.

In addition to enforcement, the other way to make a significant difference in the prevention

of those injuries lies with education. Within the past year, the NCAA has developed an educational poster to be posted in the locker room. That poster serves as a daily reminder of proper contact techniques for student athletes.

Additionally, the NATA in conjunction with helmet maker Riddell has produced a video, "Heads Up: Reducing the Risk of Head and Neck Injuries in Football." The 14-minute video promotes proper tackling and blocking technique. The DVD is \$10 and may be obtained from NATA, 2952 Stemmons Freeway, Dallas, Texas, 75247.

Football is a great sport. Participants learn lessons about hard work, discipline and the team concept that last beyond football. However, football, as a collision sport, also carries inherent risk of injury. By working together, officials, coaches and sports medicine professionals can work to keep that great game safe through proper enforcement of rules and continued education.

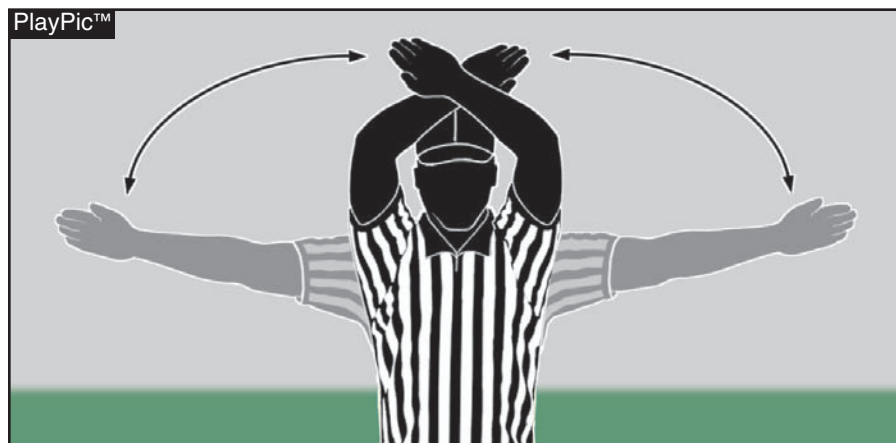
Editor's note: This column was written by Ron Courson, director of sports medicine at the University of Georgia. □

Stopping the Clock is a Good Habit to Start

The stop-the-clock signal is important but often forgotten. It's simple enough to make — two or three crosses of the arms above the head. Yet officials often neglect it.

The signal should always be given when the ball is dead during a down in which a penalty has occurred, or the ball should remain dead due to a foul such as a false start.

Five signals (touchdown, safety, incomplete pass, touchback and scoring kick fails) mean the same as stop-the-clock. They stand alone and don't need to be supplemented with the stop-the-clock signal.



Kicking Rules

continued from p. 8

or (c) hits the ground at the two-yard line and rolls over the goal line to B32. **Ruling 4:** In (a) and (b), the ball remains live and can be returned by B32. In (c), the ball is dead when it touches the ground in the end zone and results in a touchback.

Play 5: A11's kickoff hits the ground and bounces high into the air at Team B's five-yard line. A32 attempts to recover the ball, but muffs it into the end zone. It is recovered there by (a) A35, or (b) B17. **Ruling 5:** Since the ball touched the ground in the end zone before it was touched by a member of the receiving team, it is dead and results in a touchback.

Kick-catch interference.

The receiving team must be given an unhindered opportunity to catch the kick. That right exists whether or not Team B signals for a fair catch. The kicking team must stay out of the path between the receiver and the spot

where the ball will land. There doesn't have to be physical contact for there to be a foul. It's a 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul for physical interference or non-contact interference (6-4).

Illegal touching.

When Team A touches a free kick and is not entitled to possession, it is a violation termed illegal touching. Illegal touching occurs when Team A touches the ball first, but before it has traveled 10 yards or before a Team B player touches it. That violation gives Team B the option to take the ball at any spot of illegal touching, unless there is an accepted penalty for a live-ball player foul, or offsetting fouls (6-1-3).

Play 6: A11's kickoff goes five yards and is downed by (a) B24, or (b) A35. **Ruling 6:** In both cases it will be Team B's ball, first and 10, at the spot of the recovery. In (b), Team B will choose to take the ball at the spot of illegal touching.

Play 7: A11's kickoff goes eight yards and is muffed by B23. The ball is then downed at Team A's 42-yard line by (a) B26, or (b) A48. **Ruling 7:** In (a), it will be Team B's ball, first and 10, at the spot of the recovery. In (b), it will be Team A's ball, first and 10, at the spot of the recovery. Illegal touching only applies when Team A touches the kick before Team B prior to the ball traveling 10 yards.

Team A possession.

Once the ball travels 10 yards, both teams are generally entitled to possession.

Play 8: A11's kickoff is short and high and goes about 20 yards. There are no Team B players near the descending ball. The ball is caught by A32. **Ruling 8:** There is no foul because no Team B player was hindered in an effort to catch the ball. Team A keeps the ball at the spot of the catch.

Please note Team A may recover a free kick if it has gone beyond the plane of Team B's free-kick line. There is no requirement that the ball

first touch the ground; however, if a Team B player is in position to catch the kick, all Team A players must stay away.

Play 9: A11's kickoff goes to midfield. It is scooped on the bounce by A89, who takes it to Team B's 35-yard line before being tackled. **Ruling 9:** Team A is entitled to retain the ball, but cannot advance it. The ball is dead when A89 recovers and belongs to his team, first and 10, at the 50-yard line.

Onside kicks.

In addition to blocks by Team A players before they may legally touch the kick, an onside kick increases the odds the kicker will be blocked, because there will be more Team B players in his vicinity and some of them will try to get to the ball. The kicker may not be blocked until he has advanced five yards beyond his restraining line or the kick has touched the ground or touched any other player. Fouls result in a 15-yard penalty for an illegal block. □

Three More Replay Situations

Instant replay can now be used to correct three situations not previously covered in the replay rules. According to the language in rule 12-3-1, replay can help determine whether a kick was caught or muffed; if there was interference or a tackle from bench personnel that goes undetected on the

field; and if a team is shorted a down or given one too many. In the latter case, discovery must be made within that series of downs in order to be corrected.

Replay can also be used to help determine the correct clock time in the inadvertent whistle situation reference in rule 3-2-2-i. □

Out of Bounds

continued from p. 12

rear foot are rare. When that happens, the ball should be spotted about a ball's length in front of the spot where his foot touched out of bounds (outside arm) and slightly in front of that if the ball was in his inside arm.

End line.

Plays on which a runner (as opposed to an airborne receiver) steps on or beyond the end line are rare. That can only happen from a runner's own end zone. It would be very unusual for a runner to go 10 yards deep into his end zone, but a potential punter may start from a position near his end line. If such a player touches the end line while in possession of the ball, he is out of bounds, the ball is dead and the opponent scores a safety.

Airborne receivers.

In order to complete a catch, a player who has left his feet and is not contacted by an opponent while airborne must obtain control of the ball and first come to the ground inbounds. Only his first contact with the ground

(usually a foot) need be inbounds. Thus, if the second foot lands on or beyond the end line, it is still a catch.

Please note the pylons on the extension of the inbounds lines were moved three feet beyond the end line in order to eliminate the possibility of contact by an inbounds player. Pylons should be part of the pregame check and those that are improperly placed, should be moved back, if possible. The new style of pylons are weighted and are not attached to the ground. Those can be easily moved. The old style, which are staked to the ground, most likely cannot be moved. If an airborne receiver contacts a pylon that is on the end line, the receiver has touched out of bounds and the catch is incomplete.

Loose balls.

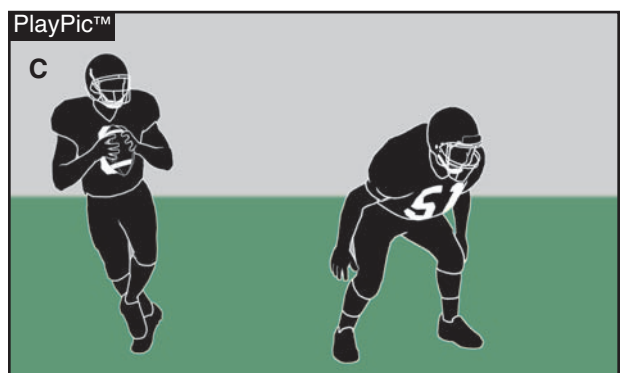
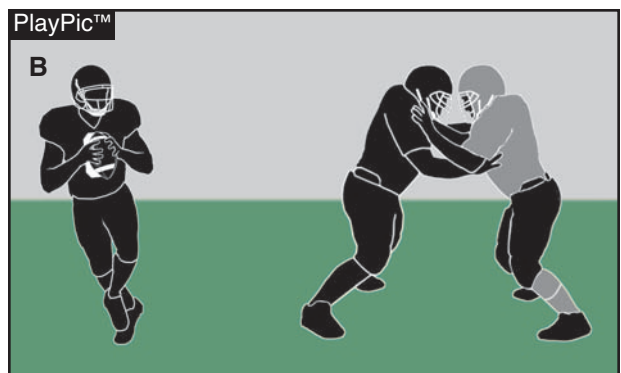
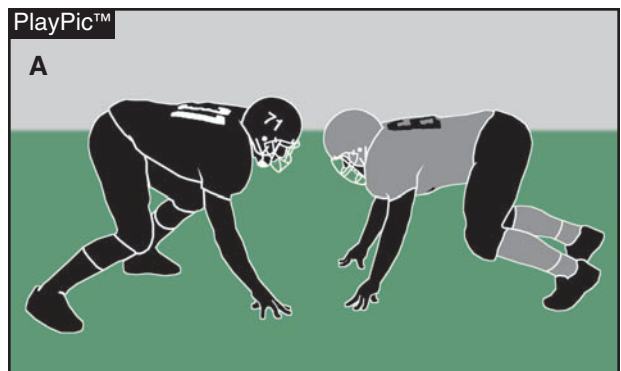
A loose ball is out of bounds when it touches the sideline or the ground outside the sideline, or if it touches anything that is out of bounds, including a player or an official (4-2-3-a). Pylons are out of bounds as are goalposts and their padding. □

Observing the Block of the Tackle

Although wing officials have pass coverage responsibility, they are also partly responsible for the block of the offensive tackle. A quick look at the initial contact, however, can help the wing determine how long he needs to spend on observing that block.

In PlayPic A, the defensive end (right) is head-up on the offensive tackle. When the ball is snapped and the quarterback begins his drop into the pocket, the tackle immediately engages the end (PlayPic B). In that case, the wing must pay attention to the action. If the end clearly beats the tackle, the wing may see a shirt grab or arm hook that would call for a flag.

In other situations, the tackle retreats and is not confronted by a defender (PlayPic C). In that case, the wing can concentrate totally on the receivers in his coverage area because the tackle has no one to block. In the case of a late charge by an opponent, the referee should be in a position to see both the passer and that block.



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