

## **2012 SRI Bulletin 8**

### **Illegal Participation:**

Question: (From a Coach) Fourth down/long yardage. Team A substitutes all 11 players from the previous down and 11 different players come on the field for a scrimmage kick. One of the incoming 11 players runs around the top of the 9-yard marks, heads for his sideline and stops 2-yards inbounds. If the defense does not cover this player, the play is designed to throw a pass to him; if he is covered, the team will proceed to punt the ball. Legal play?

Answer: While this player/substitute has met the requirement of Rule 7-2-1, being inside the 9-yard marks before the snap, there is a higher threshold that he must also meet. Rule 9-6-4d says a substitute may not be used "to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap." I think this is what this play is designed to do. The penalty for such deception is Illegal Participation, a 15-yard live ball foul enforced from the previous spot if accepted.

### **Foul or No Foul:**

Play: QB releases a pass under heavy pressure with a defender jumping in the air in front of him, arms upraised partially deflecting the pass. The defender's finger tips roughly strike the QB's facemask as the defender falls. The defender made no move toward the QB's head, there was no grasping of the facemask, and the QB ducked partially into the path of the defender's hands. Does striking the mask of the QB with the fingers count as a) roughing the passer, b) a personal foul, or c) no foul?

Ruling: Without seeing the play, I'm going to say no foul, and cite Rules 9-4-5b and c. Although those rules deal with roughing/running into the kicker, I think we can interchange words and apply the same philosophy to your play.

In 9-4-5b, the words "The defense touches the (pass) and contact is unavoidable" apply. In 9-4-5c, the words "Contact is slight and is partially caused by movement of the (passer)" apply.

I'm not too concerned about "roughly strike" since the pass was deflected unless the defensive player was trying to strike the QB and accidentally deflected the pass – again, very hard to reach any conclusion without seeing the video.

### **Scrimmage Kicks:**

On a scrimmage kick, after a legal snap, any member of Team K can advance downfield. Team K members DO NOT have to wait for the kick to cross the expanded neutral zone before going downfield.

### **Intercepted Pass:**

When the defense intercepts a forward pass in their end zone, the ball remains live. The defense has the right to run it out or down the ball for a touchback. If the defensive player is tackled in the end zone while trying to run the ball out of the end zone, the result of the play is still a touchback and NOT A SAFETY. Rule 8-5-3d.

### **Roughing the Kicker:**

Play: On 3rd down, Team A is in a shotgun formation and quick-kicks the ball. After he kicks the ball, the kicker gets hit by a Team B player trying to tackle him.

Ruling: Where the offense quick-kicks from a shotgun formation, Team A is attempting to conceal their intent and disguise the type of play they will run. Accordingly, the defensive team may be unable to rapidly detect or recognize that an offensive player may kick the ball and some latitude should be given to defensive team players.

In this play, if the contact is significant, I would flag the defense for a personal foul for unnecessary roughness instead of a roughing the kicker penalty as there was no certainty that a kick would be made. Rule 9-4-5a. Slight contact could be flagged for a 5-yard running into the kicker foul, but with slight contact, the best call might be a "no-call." Judgment all the way!

### **Defensive Holding:**

Play: "As a wing official, I observed a receiver go out on a pass route 8-yards downfield and cut towards the sideline. On the cut, a defender grabbed the receiver causing a stumble but not pulling him down. I took a quick glance to see the QB and noticed that the ball had not been thrown but the QB was looking in that general direction. The QB continued to roll out, with the ball released forward over the sideline, away from possible receivers."

"I threw a flag for defensive holding, not pass interference. Several comments and "issues" were raised from both benches about the call but defensive holding was what was penalized. At halftime, the issue amongst my crew was should it have been DPI or holding."

Ruling: Defensive holding is the correct call. The contact was observed after the eligible receiver had made his cut and was no longer a potential blocker. Rule 9-2-3d. By rule, DPI is not possible if the contact was prior to the pass being thrown. DPI restrictions begin when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Rule 7-5-8b.

### **Clock Management:**

Every official on the field is ultimately responsible for clock management. Regardless of which official is mainly responsible for the game clock, everyone on the crew should be aware of the clock status and prepared to make an adjustment if necessary. If you're not the covering official on a play, take a quick glance at the clock so it can be reset if an error has been made. This is especially important at the end of a half or a game when the score is close as clock management errors can be very costly.

### **Training Videos:**

This week's training video highlights plays involving blocks in the back, blocks below the waist, roughing the kicker and forward progress. Another training video from the LeMonnier series will also be posted.