

# THE PASSING GAME

## BASIC INFORMATION:

- A pass is an intentional act of throwing the football no matter how you release the ball.
- A catch includes possession in flight plus your first contact with the ground inbounds. Maintaining possession when you return to the ground or fall is required.
- A simultaneous catch involves opponents that are both inbounds, and belongs to the passing team, and becomes a dead ball.
- Normal line play (blocking) does include an expanded neutral zone.
- The initial direction determines a forward / backward pass including the direction of the passer's arm when it is hit during the release.
- Only 1 forward pass by A is allowed during a scrimmage down.
- A legal or illegal forward pass is complete if caught by any player and the ball remains alive OR it is incomplete and becomes dead if not caught.
- A forward pass crosses the neutral zone when the entire ball is beyond the zone regardless of where the pass may have been first touched.
- Any eligible receiver (A or B) may bat a forward pass.
- The passer is protected from roughing if he has thrown a legal, forward pass.
- Roughing the passer includes a 15 yard penalty that is tacked on to the dead ball spot if it is beyond the neutral zone and there was no change of possession. Otherwise, penalize from the previous spot AND it does include an automatic first down.

## ILLEGAL FORWARD PASSES:

- Thrown from beyond the neutral zone.
- Thrown following a change of possession.
- A second forward pass by A during the down.
- Intentional grounding (to save time or to save yardage or there is no eligible receiver) and please note that there is no "outside the tackle box" rule in grades 6-12. (NFHS)
- A spike to conserve time if it is not released immediately following a direct snap OR it is released following a muffed snap or a snap that has touched the ground.
- Any incomplete illegal pass belongs to the passing team at the spot of the pass.
- 5 yard penalty from the spot of the pass plus a loss of down in most cases.

## ELIGIBILITY RULES:

- Only applies to a legal, forward pass.
- All team B players are eligible.

- Team A players must be eligible both by their number AND by their position at the snap.
- All team A players become eligible if and when B touches the pass.
- If eligible at the snap, a receiver remains eligible throughout the down although illegal participation may become an issue.
- Ineligibles may not go beyond the expanded neutral zone until the forward pass is released. This restriction only applies if the forward pass crosses the neutral zone.

### **ILLEGAL TOUCHING:**

- Can be behind, in, or beyond the neutral zone.
- An ineligible catches, bats, or muffs a pass (intentional act) before it is touched by B.
- 5 yd penalty plus a loss of down (all-but-one principle).

### **PASS INTERFERENCE RULES:**

- These rules only apply beyond the neutral zone AND only apply on a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone.
- Contact is NOW required - face guarding is no longer a pass interference foul.
- A and B have equal rights to the ball.
- Catchability is NOT a factor in our Federation rule book for grades 6 – 12.
- “Interfering with an eligible opponent’s opportunity to move toward, catch, or bat the ball.”
- Offensive interference can happen from the time of the snap (until B touches the pass) and is a 15 yd penalty. It is no longer a loss of down.
- Defensive interference can happen from the time of the release of the forward pass (until the pass is touched) and is a 15 yd penalty. It is no longer an automatic first down. DPI CANNOT happen away from the direction of the pass.

### **BACKWARD PASSES:**

- Any player in possession of a live ball at any time may throw a backward pass.
- 22 players are eligible to touch/catch a backward pass and the ball remains alive even if it touches the ground in bounds.
- The passing team may NOT bat it forward.
- The opponents may bat it in any direction.
- NO ONE may bat a backward pass after it has touched the ground.
- Any legal snap is a backward pass unless it is a successful hand-to-hand snap.

**MOMENTUM EXCEPTION: ALWAYS be alert for an interception or recovery of a pass by the opponents that occurs inside the opponent's own 5 yard line!!!**