

NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE

2016 Rules Changes

The following rules changes received final approval by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) on March 8, 2016.

1. Field markings for neutral-site games. (Rule 1-2-1) (FR-15)

Additional language in paragraph *h-1* (New language is in ***bold italics***)

“1. For post-season ***and neutral site*** games the title sponsor...”

2. TV Access Inside the Limit Lines (Rule 1-2-3) FR-16

Add exception to paragraph *b*:

“Exception: Hand-held cameras under the supervision of the television partners may briefly be between the limit lines and the sideline after the ball is dead and the game clock has been stopped. This exception does not allow cameras to be on the field of play or in the end zone at any time.”

Comments: Results from the experimental rule used in the 2015 season.

3. Technology for Coaching Purposes (Rule 1-4-11) FR-25

Changes to paragraph *a*. (New language is in ***bold italics***)

“Video images, photographs and computers may be used by coaches and for coaching purposes in the press box and the team locker rooms. They are not allowed in the team area, on the playing field, or on the sideline. Television monitors may only be used in the press-box coaching booths to view the live broadcast or webcast. Game management is responsible for assuring identical television capability and identical video and Internet connectivity in the coaches’ booths of both teams. Television replay or monitoring equipment is otherwise prohibited at the sidelines or other locations within the playing enclosure for coaching purposes during the game.”

Comments: Expands the use of video and Internet technology in the press-box coaches’ booths and in the team locker room.

4. Scrimmage Kick Formation (Rule 2-16-10) FR-35

Change to paragraph *a*: (New language is in ***bold italics***)

“A scrimmage kick formation is a formation with no player in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap from between the snapper’s legs, ***and with either (1) at least one player 10 or more yards behind the neutral zone; or (2) a potential holder and potential kicker seven or more yards behind the neutral zone in position for a place kick. For either (1) or (2) to qualify as a scrimmage kick formation, it must be obvious that a kick will be attempted.***”

Comments: This clarification of the definition of a scrimmage kick formation reinforces the intent of the rule that allows exceptions to the numbering rule when a team apparently is going to punt or attempt a field goal.

5. Sliding Ball Carrier: Defenseless Player (Rule 2-27-14) FR-41 and Note 2 (FR-88)

Add new paragraph j:

“j. A ball carrier who has obviously given himself up and is sliding feet-first.”

Comments: A sliding ball carrier is now protected under the defenseless-player portion of the targeting rules.

6. Outcome of a Suspended Game (Rule 3-3-3) FR-50

Add sentence to the end of paragraph c:

“In the event that the directors of athletics do not reach an agreement, the conference policy of the home team shall be used to determine the outcome.”

Comments: Establishes the default position when a suspended interconference game cannot be resumed.

7. Game Clock in the Last Two Minutes of a Half (Rule 3-4-3) FR-54

Insert this sentence before the last sentence of the paragraph:

“If the game clock is stopped only to administer the penalty for a foul by the team ahead in the score inside the last two minutes of a half, the game clock will start on the snap, at the option of the offended team. (*Exception:* Rule 3-4-4)”

Comments: Provides consistent application of the authority of the referee in circumstances where the game clock is most critical. The exception verifies that the ten-second runoff rule takes precedence.

8. Tripping the Ball Carrier (Rule 9-1-2-c) FR-87

Delete the Exception. Add the following:

“Tripping is intentionally using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knees. (Rule 2-28)”

Comments: Affords the ball carrier the same protection from tripping that other players have had for many years.

9. Blocking Below the Waist (Rule 9-1-6) FR-89

Changes to paragraph a: (New language is in *bold italics*)

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

1. The following Team A players may legally block below the waist inside the *tackle box until they leave the tackle box or* until the ball has left the *tackle box*: (a) players on the line of scrimmage completely *inside the tackle box* and (b) stationary backs who are at least partially inside the tackle box and at least partially inside the frame of the body of the second lineman from the snapper.

2. **Except as in paragraph 3 (below)**, players not covered in paragraph 1 (above) while the ball is still in the **tackle box**, and all players after the ball has left the **tackle box**, are allowed to block below the waist only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front. “From the front” is understood to mean within the clock-face region between “10 o’clock and 2 o’clock” forward of the player being blocked.

3. Players not covered in paragraph 1 (above) may not block below the waist toward the **line through the** original position of the ball at the snap **until the ball carrier is clearly beyond the neutral zone**.

4. Once the ball has left the **tackle box** a player may not block below the waist toward his own end line.”

Comments: Simplifies and clarifies the rule. Note that the “low-blocking zone” is no longer defined, and everything is in reference to the tackle box. Also clarifies the rule regarding the crackback block.

10. Low Hits on the Passer (Rule 9-1-9-b) FR-90

Change to Exception (2): (New language is in **bold italics**)

“It is not a foul if the defender grabs or wraps this opponent in an attempt to make a conventional tackle **without making forcible contact with the head or shoulder.**”

Comments: Clarifies the rule when a player makes a conventional tackle.

11. Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Coach (Rule 9-2-6) FR-96

Change in paragraph a (New language is in **bold italics**)

“a. Any **coach**, player, or identified squad member in uniform who commits two unsportsmanlike conduct fouls in the same game shall be disqualified.”

Add new paragraph c:

“A coach disqualified from the game must leave the playing enclosure within a reasonable amount of time after the disqualification and must remain out of view of the field of play for the remainder of the game.”

Comments: Strengthens the coach’s accountability for sideline behavior and brings football in concert with all other major intercollegiate sports.

12. Instant Replay: Medical Observer (Rule 12-3-5) FR-108

Add new paragraph f.

“An injured player at the initiation of the Medical Observer.”

Comments: Results from the experimental rule used in the 2015 season.

13. Instant Replay: Broadened Authority for Review of Targeting Fouls (Rule 12-3) FR-109

Delete paragraph f of 12-3-5 and create new Article 5. The current Article 5 (Miscellaneous) and Article 6 (Limits on Reviewable Plays) are re-numbered.

“Targeting

ARTICLE 5. a. The replay official shall review all targeting fouls, Rules 9-1-3 and 9-1-4. The review includes all aspects of the targeting foul to ascertain whether there is at least one indicator of targeting action (Note 1 to Rules 9-1-3 and 4), and:

1. Whether the crown of the helmet is used to make forcible contact (Rule 9-1-3); OR

2. Whether there is forcible contact to the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent (Rules 9-1-4 and Rule 2-27-14).

b. The replay official may create a targeting foul only in egregious instances in which a foul is not called by the officials on the field. Such a review may not be initiated by a coach’s challenge.”

Comments: Gives the instant replay official expanded flexibility to review all aspects of a targeting ruling. Also calls upon the instant replay official to make a ruling of targeting when an egregious targeting action goes undetected by the on-field officials.

Rogers Redding

Secretary-Rules Editor, NCAA Football Rules Committee

March 8, 2016