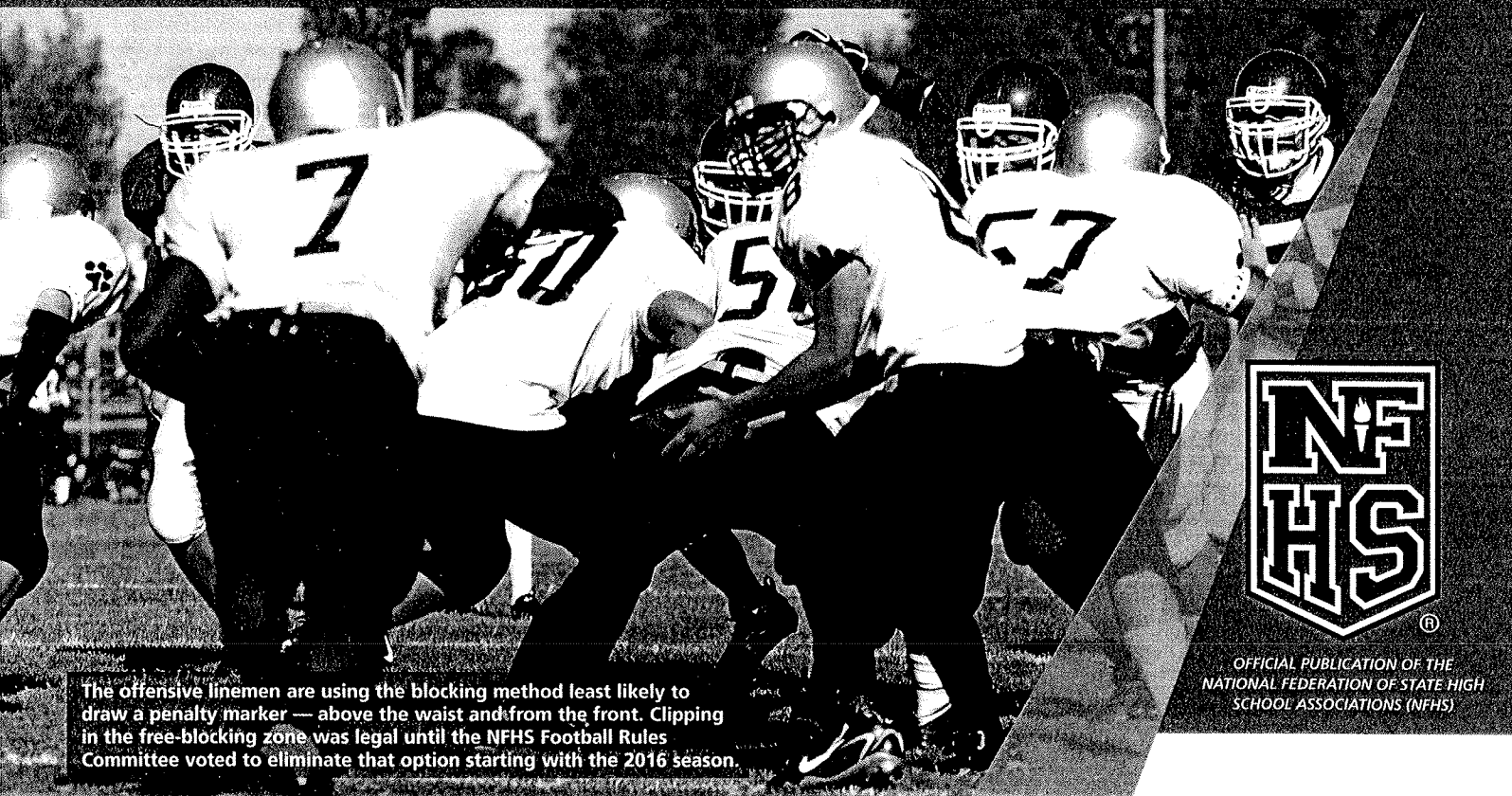
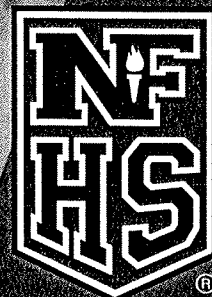


2016 PRESEASON GUIDE

FOOTBALL



The offensive linemen are using the blocking method least likely to draw a penalty marker — above the waist and from the front. Clipping in the free-blocking zone was legal until the NFHS Football Rules Committee voted to eliminate that option starting with the 2016 season.



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE-HIGH
SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS (NFHS)

Clipping Exception Eliminated

The NFHS Football Rules Committee continued its mission of managing risk by voting to make clipping illegal anywhere on the field. Since 1984, clipping by offensive linemen was legal when the free-blocking zone was in effect.

That was the most significant change made by the committee during its meeting in Indianapolis, January 22-24, 2016. All changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Clipping as defined in Rule 2-5-1 is a block against an opponent when the initial contact is from behind, at or below the waist, and not against a player who

is a runner or pretending to be a runner. Rule 2-17-3 and Rule 9-3-5 previously provided the exceptions that allowed clipping by offensive linemen who were on the line of scrimmage and in the free-blocking zone — the rectangular area extending laterally four yards either side of the spot of the snap and three yards behind each line of scrimmage at the snap — against defensive players who were on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at the snap. Additionally, the contact had to occur in the zone. The change eliminates that exception.

"The NFHS Football Rules Committee's action this year on making clipping illegal in the free-blocking zone

once again reinforces its continued effort to minimize risk within the game," said Bob Colgate, Director of Sports and Sports Medicine at the NFHS and staff liaison for football.

Brad Garrett, Chair of the NFHS Football Rules Committee and Assistant Executive Director of the Oregon School Activities Association, added, "I look forward to ongoing conversations about how best to limit exposure to harm within the free-blocking zone and in situations involving defenseless players."

Offensive linemen who are on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at

SEE "CLIPPING" P. 2

REFEREE

PUBLISHED BY REFEREE
IN COOPERATION
WITH THE NFHS

► Clipping CONT. FROM P.1

the snap are still allowed to block in the back defensive players who are in the zone at the snap if the contact is in the zone and while the zone exists.

Offensive and defensive linemen who are on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at the snap are allowed to block opponents below the waist from the front or side if the contact is in the zone and while the zone exists. The free-blocking zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone.

Play 1: Immediately after the snap, A1 blocks B2 below the waist (a) from

behind, or (b) from the front. A1 and B2 were lined up on their respective lines of scrimmage at the snap and were in the free-blocking zone when the contact occurred. **Ruling 1:** A1 is guilty of clipping in (a). The 15-yard penalty is enforced from the basic spot. The block in (b) is legal.

Play 2: A1 is among the players blocking for runner A2. A1 blocks B3 from behind but the covering official is in doubt as to whether initial contact was above or below B3's waist. **Ruling 2:** By NFHS interpretation, A1's block is below the waist. As a result, team A is

penalized 15 yards for clipping, not 10 yards for a block in the back.

Three other changes regarding clipping have been adopted over the years. Starting in 1984, the rules restricted clipping to blockers on the line and inside the free-blocking zone against opponents in the zone at the snap. Confusion over whether a push in the back above an opponent's waist was illegal use of hands or clipping ended in 1989, when the committee determined that to be a clip. That interpretation remained in place until 2002, when a separate foul, block in the back, was adopted. □

Equipment Rules Modified

Rules regarding tooth and mouth protectors, gloves and jerseys have been modified for 2016.

Reversing a rule change from 2006, the NFHS Football Rules Committee voted to eliminate color restrictions on tooth and mouth protectors. Completely white or completely clear protectors as seen in PlayPic A are now legal according to Rule 1-5-1d(5)a.

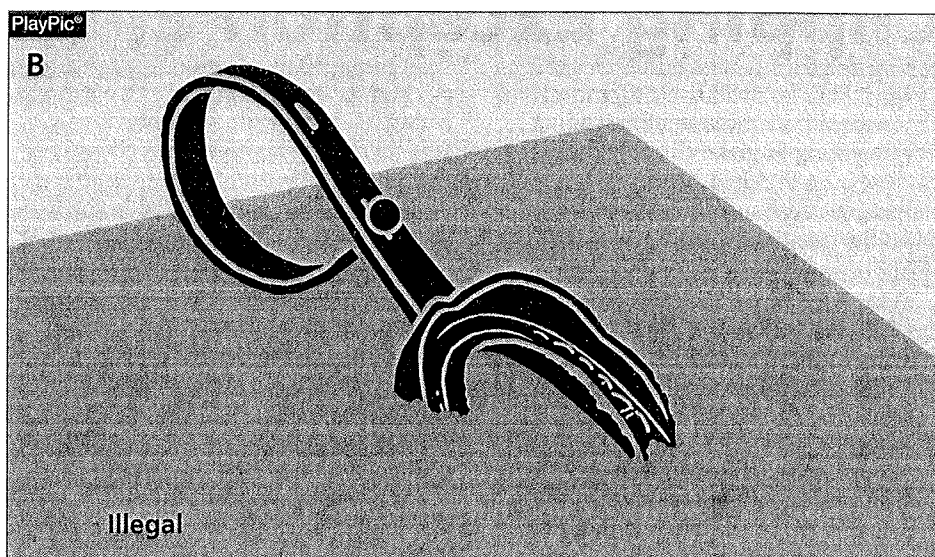
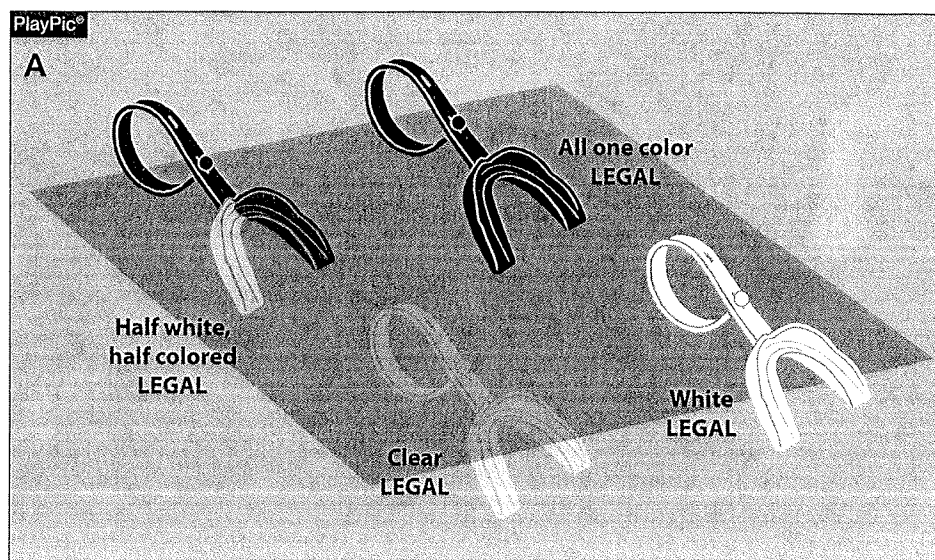
Other rules pertaining to tooth and mouth protectors are unchanged. A legal protector must include an occlusal (protecting and separating the biting surfaces) portion; include a labial (protecting the teeth and supporting structures) portion; cover the posterior teeth with adequate thickness and may not be altered as in PlayPic B.

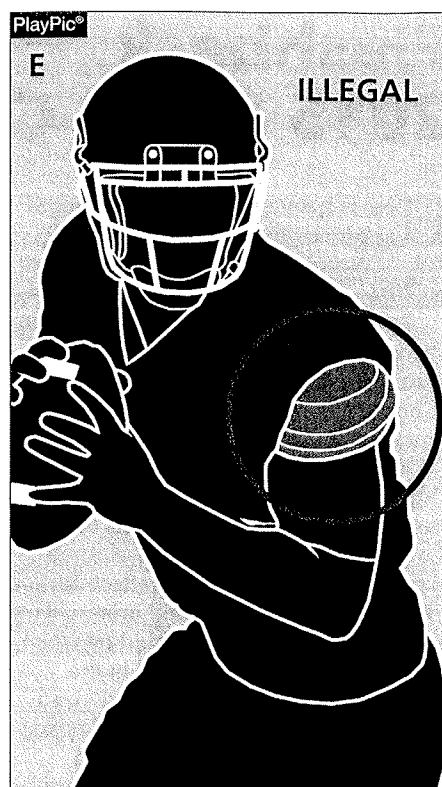
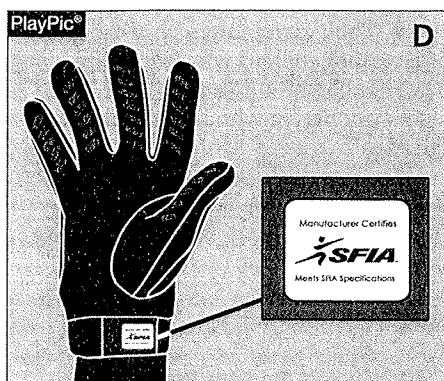
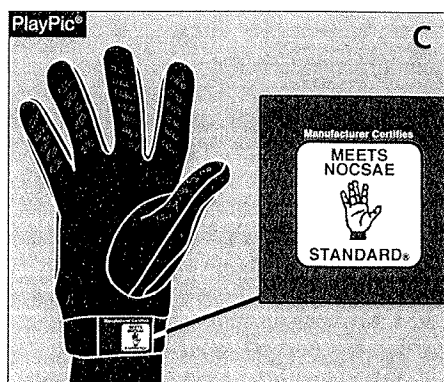
It is recommended that the protector be properly fitted, protecting the anterior (leading) dental arch and: constructed from a model made from an impression of the individual's teeth, or constructed and fitted to the individual by impressing the teeth into the tooth and mouth protector itself.

Tooth and mouth protectors that have been altered from the manufacturer's original design/production or have been chewed to the point they no longer provide the required protection must be replaced before the athlete may participate in the game.

In Rule 1-5-2b, the football gloves are now required to meet either the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) specifications or the existing National

SEE "EQUIPMENT" P. 3





► Equipment CONT. FROM P.2

Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) test standard at the time of manufacture. Whichever seal is used, it must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior wrist opening of the glove (PlayPics C and D).

Two editorial changes involve jerseys. Language added to Rule 1-5-1b(1) notes that jerseys must completely cover the shoulder pads (PlayPic E) and all pads worn above the waist on the torso. It has become common to see players with shoulder pads protruding from sleeves that are either rolled up, modified or designed to be shorter than necessary to cover the pads. The change also addresses the problem of exposed back pads.

Restrictions on what may appear on the front and back of jerseys were also put in place. The school nickname, school name, school logo or player's name may appear on the front and/or back of the jersey (PlayPic F). Team nicknames or slogans such as "Tradition" or "Pride" are not allowed (PlayPic G). Verbiage will be found in Rules 1-5-1b(2)a and 1-5-1b(3)a. □

Time to Think About Clock Status

Does this sound familiar? There are one or more live and/or dead-ball fouls. After the game officials sort out the infractions, the penalty administration process starts. That includes the referee's signals and the mechanics to walk off the proper penalty yardage. Now comes that moment of uncertainty we have all experienced: Should the clock start

on the snap or on the ready-for-play signal?

Is the onus on the referee to know what to do with the clock? Or should that be a responsibility of other crewmembers? Someone has to know if the clock was running or not when the last play ended. The referee has enough to worry about, so it might make sense for another game official

to know that information. It does not have to be a penalty scenario for that dilemma to occur. It can happen after the clock is stopped for other reasons, such as an injured player or a measurement.

Without a technique to know if the clock should run or remain stopped, game officials must recall clock

► SEE "CLOCK STATUS" P. 4

► Clock Status CONT. FROM P.3

status when the previous play ended. Without such knowledge, it might be embarrassing to have to ask a non-game official such as a statistician or the line-to-gain crew.

Logically, clock awareness is within the purview of whoever has clock responsibilities. Based on crew size, association or league policy, it is typically the back judge, side judge or line judge.

Here is a suggested mechanic to remember clock status. In addition to a regular down indicator on your dominant hand, put another down indicator on your other hand. Place the loop of the second indicator on your index finger if the clock is running when the last play ended or if the clock should start on the ready-for-play signal when the clock stopped at the end of a play. An example is if A earns a first down and the play ends inbounds. Remove the down indicator from your index finger if the clock stopped when the last play ended. You must then determine if that stoppage means the clock will not start until the snap (such as an incomplete forward pass or a charged team timeout).

The umpire is exempt from that mechanic as he customarily uses a second down indicator to keep track of ball placement between the hash marks.

The second indicator procedure may take time to get used to, but once mastered, you will know what to do with the clock by looking at your hand. A way to practice that mechanic is to put on a down indicator the next time you watch a televised football game. The indicator changes or remains the same based on what happens at the end of every play. If you have timing duties, you will be the hero when the referee does not know what to do with the clock.

More than one game official can keep clock status. Even the referee can employ that system to help know what to do with the clock. A suggestion is to cover that in the pregame meeting so the referee knows who to look at to get that timing data.

Time is critical to a team, especially near the end of either half. The proper management of clock rules is important and can affect the game's outcome. □

Flashback: 2015 Rules Changes

Here is a review of the 2015 changes approved by the NFHS Football Rules Committee that are still in force for 2016.

Spearing, Unnecessary Roughness.

The unnecessary roughness provisions in Rule 9-4-3g were expanded. No player or nonplayer shall make any other contact with an opponent, including a defenseless player, which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness. The additions of the words "including a defenseless player" and "or excessive" reflect the committee's desire to curtail unnecessary rough play. An example would be when a defensive player who is not in the vicinity of the ball is "blindsided" by a blocker on the offensive team.

Rule 2-20-1c was expanded and now it states spearing is an act by any player who initiates contact against an opponent at the shoulders or below with the crown (top portion) of the helmet.

With "targeting" now defined as contact to an opponent above the shoulders, the committee more clearly defined "spearing" as contact to an opponent at the shoulders or below. Examples of defenseless players include, but are not limited to:

- A quarterback moving down the line of scrimmage who has handed or pitched the ball to a teammate, and then makes no attempt to participate further in the play.
- A kicker who is in the act of kicking the ball, or who has not had a reasonable amount of time to regain his/her balance after the kick.
- A passer who is in the act of throwing the ball, or who has not had a reasonable length of time to participate in the play again after releasing the ball.
- A pass receiver whose concentration is on the ball and the contact by the defender is unrelated to attempting to catch the ball.
- A pass receiver who has clearly relaxed when he/she has missed the pass or feels he/she can no longer catch the pass.
- A kick returner attempting to catch a kick.

• A kick receiver who is immediately contacted after touching the ball.

- A player on the ground.
- Any player who has relaxed once the ball has become dead.
- A player who receives a blindside block.
- A ball carrier already in the grasp of an opponent and whose forward progress has been stopped.
- Any player who is obviously out of the play.

The game official must draw distinction between contact necessary to make a legal block or tackle, making unnecessary contact on a defenseless player and targeting any player at any time.

Timing of Foul for Free Kick Formation Altered. The timing of the foul in Rules 6-1-3 and 6-1-4 for not having at least four players on both sides of the kicker has been changed from the ready signal to the time of the kick. Other elements of the formation rule — no team K player other than the kicker or holder may be beyond the free-kick line and if one player is more than five yards behind the free-kick line, he/she must kick the ball — remain unchanged.

The change continues to allow lateral movement by the kicking team within the five-yard belt but requires game officials to ascertain whether or not the formation is legal when the ball is kicked. The referee will have the best view of the formation after lateral movement takes place.

Communication between the game officials and both teams is critical and the referee should ensure that all opportunities for assembling in a proper formation have been given before sounding the ready-for-play signal.

Down Errors May Be Corrected. Rule 5-1-1b gives the referee authority to correct the number of the next down prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs being awarded.

◉ SEE "FLASHBACK" P. 5

► Flashback CONT. FROM P.4

Dead-Ball Fouls May Offset. Under a change to Rule 10-2-5, the distance penalty for unsportsmanlike, nonplayer or dead-ball personal fouls committed by teams can offset. Equal numbers of 15-yard penalties by both teams will cancel and remaining penalties may be enforced.

If both teams commit unsportsmanlike, nonplayer or dead-ball fouls prior to the completion of penalty administration for those fouls, the

distance penalty for an equal number of 15-yard unsportsmanlike, nonplayer or dead-ball fouls will offset. Any remaining penalties will be enforced separately and in the order of occurrence.

Roughing the Passer. Rule 9-4 when committed against the passer (such as an illegal horse-collar tackle or grasped and twisted face mask) were to be penalized as roughing the passer. In that way, the penalty would include an automatic first

down.

The committee clarified in 2015 that even though an incidental (five-yard) face mask grasp is among the fouls listed in Rule 9-4, an incidental grasp of the quarterback's face mask is a five-yard penalty but an automatic first down is not part of the penalty. □

Rules and Mechanics on Goal Line Plays

Although a touchdown can be scored on any play, snaps from inside B's 10-yard line are generally thought of as goal line plays. On all plays it is essential to understand which game official has the prime responsibility for covering the goal line. If a touchdown is erroneously signaled, the crew will find it difficult to overcome the mistake.

Wing movement. In a crew of five, the wings pick up coverage of the goal line when the ball is snapped from inside B's 10-yard line. If it is a running play, they must get to the goal line before the runner.

If the ball is snapped from inside B's 5-yard line, the wings must go to the goal line immediately at the snap and then, if necessary, officiate back toward the ball.

If the play ends near the goal line, both game officials need to pinch in all the way to the ball. The umpire must be careful to avoid blocking the wing's view of the ball. While the wings are pinching in, the game officials need to ensure the ball isn't being moved under the pile. Once the ball is located, a decision can be made, but the spot where the ball was found is not necessarily the dead-ball spot. If there is any doubt, a touchdown should not be called.

The touchdown signal. The touchdown signal is given only by a game official who actually sees the ball in possession of a runner break the plane of the goal line. Mirroring the signal is not recommended and is fraught with peril; if the covering official is incorrect, the crew will find it difficult to explain how two game officials made the same mistake. If the primary game official is

correct, there is no need for a second signal. It is a good idea to hesitate once you know that all the requirements for a touchdown have been met and then give a clean, crisp, professional signal without any theatrics.

Umpire secret signals. It is difficult

to envision a scenario in which an umpire signals a touchdown, but they exist — perhaps a clear fumble recovery at the umpire's feet. The real question is what signal, if any, should the umpire give.

SEE "MECHANICS" P. 6

REFEREE MAGAZINE

SPECIAL EMPHASIS EVERY MONTH ON:

- FOOTBALL • BASEBALL
- BASKETBALL • SOFTBALL
- VOLLEYBALL • SOCCER

84 pages every month focusing on in-depth analysis of the latest rule changes, mechanics, points of emphasis, hot topics and plays that everybody is talking about!

GET A FREE NO OBLIGATION ISSUE OF REFEREE AT
WWW.REFEREE.COM/FOOTBALL

OR CALL 1-800-733-6100

MLB'S GERRY DAVIS
 COLLEGE Don Williams on Pancakes
 Good Gets
 LOCK 'N KEY
 BLINDING
 SHOP

► Mechanics CONT. FROM P.5

Over the years, lots of clever signals have been concocted: hand to the chest, touch the bill of the cap, etc. The coaches know them all and they're bound to show up on video. Those signals are unnecessary and can cause problems if a touchdown is not called and the coach sees what he interprets as a touchdown signal.

First of all, an umpire is not in a position where he can convey correct and useful information via a signal. He certainly has seen things that can be helpful but it's virtually impossible for him to convey that without verbal communication. Yelling "yes, yes, yes" is not the answer.

An umpire can say if he saw something other than the runner's hand or foot touch the ground short of the goal line, but he probably can't relate where the ball was when that happened. Each play will be slightly different and if a wing official needs information from the umpire to make a decision, he should simply ask. That will assist the wing officials to make the right call.

The referee. There are very few circumstances under which the referee is responsible for the goal line. He probably signals a safety more often than a touchdown, but he does have goal line coverage when there is an unplanned change of possession (interception or fumble return). On planned changes of possession (punt returns), the wings are responsible for forward progress and the

goal line.

Goal line plays do not change the mechanics for the referee very much. He must be wary of anticipating a running play and not line up too close to the line. He must be especially vigilant for the offense not getting set properly. The "rolling sneak" when the ball is snapped the moment the quarterback gets behind the center is an illegal shift.

Pylon plays. The goal line pylons, which are placed at the intersection of the goal lines extended and the sideline, are a big aid to the wings in determining if a touchdown has been scored.

When a runner approaches a goal line pylon, the goal line plane is extended out of bounds if the runner is still touching the ground inbounds. If the ball is held outside the sideline plane and breaks the goal line plane extended, it is a touchdown. However, if a runner dives or jumps and the ball breaks the plane of the goal line extended while he is airborne and he lands out of bounds, the runner's forward progress is marked where the ball crossed the plane of the sideline. It is not spotted where it is when the runner first touches out of bounds. Consequently, there is no score unless the ball was inside or over the pylon when it broke the plane of the sideline.

Pylons are also very helpful when a fumble occurs near the goal line. If the loose ball strikes a pylon, it is dead and a touchback results. If the ball passes outside the pylon, it is dead at the spot where it crossed the sideline. If it passes

inside the pylon, it remains live and if it subsequently goes out of bounds, it is a touchback.

Receiver at the goal line. 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. Any such player who strikes a pylon on his way to the ground has touched out of bounds and the pass is incomplete.

If an airborne receiver possesses the ball while airborne over the end zone, it is not a catch until the receiver touches the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball. When such a player is contacted by a defender and comes to the ground in the field of play, the catch is completed. The ball is dead when he completes the catch by touching the ground. Thus a touchdown is scored.

Reverse goal line. When A has the ball is deep in its own territory, the goal line demands the same attention as when B's goal line is threatened. Plays on which the ball is snapped inside A's 5-yard line are of particular importance. The game officials must have a plan for covering the goal line.

On pass plays where the quarterback is sacked, the referee will have to determine if a safety has occurred. As such, the referee's initial position should be wider than usual so he can get to the goal line without interfering with the play. □

2016 NFHS Points of Emphasis

RISK MINIMIZATION

Concussions

Concussions continue to be a focus of attention in football at all levels of competition. The NFHS has been at the forefront of national sports organizations in emphasizing the importance of concussion education, recognition and proper management.

Discussion of proper concussion management at all levels of play in all sports has led to the adoption of rules changes and concussion-specific policies by multiple athletic organizations, state associations and school districts. Coaches and game officials need to

become familiar with the signs and symptoms of concussed athletes so that appropriate steps can be taken to safeguard the health and safety of participants.

There continues to be concern from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) about the cumulative effects of non-concussive blows to the head and body in practice and games. Research data is showing that there are significant impacts to the head during "non-contact" practice (such as "control"), and even in practices when players wear only helmets for protective gear. Therefore, the NFHS

SMAC recommends that coaches consider holding their non-contact practices without helmets and pads for the purpose of reducing the number of blows to the head and body.

Impact Sensors

Impact sensor technology continues to advance and improve. These sensors can now be used to look at impact forces in real-time, while the players are actively participating in a sport. While these sensors are valuable as a research tool, they still cannot be used to diagnose a concussion. Players, parents, coaches and administrators need to be

► SEE "2016 POINTS" P. 7

► 2016 Points CONT. FROM P.6

careful not to rely primarily on unproven technology to diagnose a concussion, or even as a tool to decide if a concussion should or should not be suspected.

Heat Illness

The NFHS SMAC continues to encourage athletic trainers, coaches, players and parents to be vigilant about heat illness. The pre-season is the time of greatest risk. An important component of heat illness awareness and preparation is to have in place a well-rehearsed Emergency Action Plan. This includes protocols for treating heat illness, including strategies for rapid cooling of at-risk athletes and guidelines for practice/game modification when indicated by Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) monitoring. Coaches need to remain open and flexible to change practice and game plans if environmental conditions are such that their players are at risk for heat illness. This is especially true during the heat-acclimation period at the start of pre-season training.

LEGAL AND ILLEGAL BLOCKS

Blocking is obstructing an opponent by contacting the opponent with any part of the blocker's body. Illegal blocking includes kick-catching interference, forward-pass interference, personal fouls and any other contact which is specifically prohibited such as targeting, blocking below the waist or in the back, chop blocking or clipping. Blocking can involve significant personal contact between a player and an opponent. When proper blocking techniques are taught by coaches and executed by players, risks of injury are minimized. Remember, a player may attempt to take an opponent out of a play, but it is **NOT** legal to attempt to take an opponent out of a game.

A 2016 NFHS football rules change prohibits clipping anywhere on the field at any time, other than against a runner. Clipping is defined as a block against an opponent (other than a runner or pretended runner) when the initial contact is from behind and is at or below the waist. This action, under certain circumstances, was previously legal in the free-blocking zone. Such is no longer the case. Coaches are encouraged to teach blocking techniques that do not include contact from the rear at or below

the waist.

Game officials are reminded to maintain the integrity of the game and uphold their responsibilities to officiate blocking within the spirit and intent of the rules. Player safety and risk minimization are central objectives of officiating. Efforts by the NFHS rules committee, NFHS member state associations and school administrators should be supported by coaches and appropriate rules enforced by game officials to minimize risks to student-athletes.

LEGAL JERSEYS, PANTS AND PADS

In order to provide for the safety and protection of all participants, players are required to wear equipment and uniforms which are properly fitted and worn in the manner intended by the manufacturer. Jerseys are required to completely cover the shoulder pads and any auxiliary pads, such as rib pads or back pads. Pants must completely cover the knees and knee pads, and knee pads must be worn over the knee.

It is becoming more common to see the sleeves of jerseys slide up over the top of the shoulder pad, thus exposing a portion of the pad or untucked jerseys that do not cover the back pads. Additionally, many players wear pants that slide up during use, thus exposing the knee pad or the knee.

Due to the potential for injury to either the player wearing such jersey, pants or pads, or to an opponent, it is essential that players not be permitted to participate unless their jerseys and pants fully comply with the rules. A player whose jersey or pants slide up during game action must immediately make an adjustment to the garment to ensure that it covers all pads and protective equipment or, in the case of pants, fully covers the knees and knee pads. If adjustment to the jersey or pants during a dead-ball period cannot be made, the player should not be permitted to continue as a participant on the field of play. Game officials should not permit the ball to become live when they observe any player whose jersey or pants fail to comply with the rules.

UNFAIR ACTS

Rule 9-10 states that a player or non-player or person(s) not subject to the rules shall not hinder play by an unfair

act that has no specific rule coverage. Teams shall not commit any act which, in the opinion of the referee, tends to make a travesty of the game.

The spirit of the game of football lives in effective blocking, fundamental tackling, tireless pursuit, skillful running, passing and kicking, and well-planned game strategy. This positive atmosphere cannot be maintained unless both the spirit and intent of the NFHS football rules are observed. If the potential values of the game experience are to be attained, that the action of the players must conform with the rules, which specifically prohibit unfair tactics and unsportsmanlike conduct. Unfair tactics detract from the positive atmosphere and the values of interscholastic athletics, and have no place in the game of football.

The prohibition of unfair tactics will encourage sportsmanship, which permeates every aspect of our game. Coaches should exemplify the highest moral character, behavior, integrity and leadership, adhering to strong ethical standards, and abiding by and teaching the rules of the game in both spirit and intent.

Student-athletes should understand the seriousness of their responsibility to teammates and opponents and the privilege of representing their school and community.

As leaders, we must recommit ourselves to the preservation of fair play, which includes eliminating illegal, unfair or dangerous acts both on the practice field and on the field of play.

The NFHS Football Rules Book specifically prohibits unfair acts. Rule 9-10 lists some examples of unfair acts, including hiding the football under a jersey or using an illegal kicking tee. Other unfair acts are prohibited by the spirit and intent of other rules, include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Uniforms which do not conform to specified standards or which have a foreign substance on them;

2. Use of disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offensive team's signals or movements; and

3. "Hide-Out" plays, including those that use a substitution or pretended substitution in order to deceive opponents at or immediately before the

◉ SEE "2016 POINTS" P. 8

► 2016 Points CONT. FROM P.7

snap or free kick.

Of course, it is impossible to list every unfair act that could take place. Deliberately violating the rules in the hope or expectation of not being detected is deplorable and indefensible, and should be penalized.

To this end, the referee is given great discretion in penalizing unfair acts and may enforce any penalty he or she considers equitable, including the awarding of a score. If an unfair-act foul occurs and the foul already has a penalty associated with it, the referee may invoke another equitable penalty if the foul is so unfair that its normal penalty would be insufficient. For example, a substitute coming off the sideline to tackle the runner has committed illegal participation, which normally carries a 15-yard penalty. The normal penalty may be sufficient if this happens while the runner is surrounded by other defensive players and would likely be tackled anyway. However, the normal penalty would be insufficient, and enforcing it would make a travesty of the game, if the act occurred on the last play of the game while a runner was heading to the opponent's end zone well beyond the reach of any other defender. In such a case, the awarding of a score would be more equitable.

The prohibition of unfair acts is not a prohibition of special or "trick" plays. Such plays are permissible, but they must be run within the spirit and intent of the rules. Game time and circumstance are factors to consider as to the legality of any such play. Teams attempting to run trick plays must follow all NFHS football rules precisely without any leeway. Coaches are encouraged to discuss any such plays, including the time they are likely to run such plays, with the referee in the pre-game conference.

It is imperative that coaches, players and game officials make an extra effort to model the type of behavior that illustrates the educational values of interscholastic athletics in general, and football in particular. No true sportsman will violate any of the unwritten rules which exist for the good of the game. The spirit of good sportsmanship depends on conformance to a rule's intent as well as to the letter of a given rule. □

When the Goal Line is the Basic Spot for Enforcement

Determining the basic spot is an important part of the penalty enforcement process. Most of the time, the basic spot is fairly obvious. But when the goal line of the team in possession is involved, things get a little tricky.

According to NFHS Rule 10-4-7, the basic spot is the goal line for fouls, which are committed during running plays by the opponent of the team in possession at the time of the foul when the team in possession is responsible for forcing the ball across its own goal line, and the related run ends in the end zone and is followed by a loose ball, regardless of where the loose ball becomes dead.

The following situations illustrate such an occurrence.

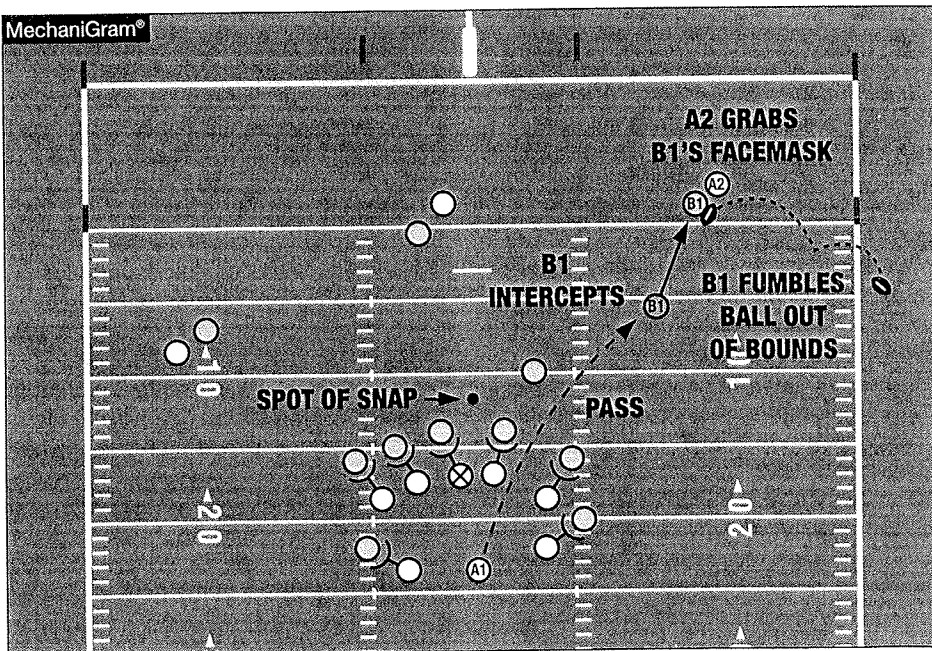
Play 1: As seen in the MechaniGram, B1 intercepts A1's pass at B's 6-yard line and retreats to B's end zone. B1's face mask is grabbed but not twisted by A2. B1 then fumbles while in the end zone. The ball rolls back into the field of play and then goes out of bounds at B's 3-yard line. **Ruling:** The basic spot is the goal line and the accepted penalty will result in a first down for Team B at its 5-yard line.

Play 2: B1 intercepts A1's pass at B's

6-yard line and retreats to B's end zone. B1's face mask is grabbed and twisted by A2. B1 then fumbles while in the end zone and the ball rolls back into the field of play, where B7 recovers the ball at B's 5-yard line. **Ruling:** As in Play 1, the basic spot is the goal line. Because the penalty is 15 yards, the accepted penalty will result in a first down for Team B at its 15-yard line.

The basic spot is the 20-yard line for fouls by either team when the opponent of the team in possession at the time of the foul is responsible for forcing the ball across the goal line of the team in possession, and the related run ends in the end zone and is followed by a loose ball, regardless of where the loose ball becomes dead (10-4-6).

Play 3: B1 intercepts A1's pass in B's end zone, where B1 is grabbed by the face mask by A2 who twists the mask. B1 then fumbles while in the end zone and (a) the ball rolls back into the field of play and then goes out of bounds at B's 2-yard line; (b) the ball rolls back into the field of play where B7 recovers the ball at B's 5-yard line. **Ruling:** In both (a) and (b), the basic spot is the 20-yard line and the accepted penalty will result in a first down for Team B at its 35-yard line. □



No Passing Fancy



It's no secret that the ball is in the air more often than in the good old days of "three yards and a cloud of dust." A seemingly routine pass play can have a lot of elements. This one is no exception.

1. In NFHS mechanics, the referee should start on the passing-arm-side of the quarterback.

2. Did the defender's rush take him past the blocker, or did his momentum in that direction get a boost via a block in the back? Remember that both codes have exceptions for offensive linemen that allow blocking in the back under specific circumstances.

3. The defender appears to be fighting through the block. If so, that might inspire the blocker to grab a handful of jersey. Additionally, the initial block is above the waist, but the blocker may try to cut off the opponent's advance by continuing the block below the waist. That may or may not be legal, depending on the circumstances and rules code.

4. This defender is unblocked at the moment. He may make a late charge at the passer. Be alert for contact on the passer after the ball has been passed. It is suggested that the referee give a verbal notification such as, "It's gone!" or "Ball's away!" as a preventive officiating measure.



Hat's Off to Helmet Rules

To lose one's head is a familiar idiom. It may happen to a coach or player if something on a football field goes awry. But no one wants it to happen literally. That's why the NFHS Football Rules Book addresses situations in which a player's helmet comes completely off his head.

Rule 3-5-10d indicates that a player whose helmet comes completely off during subsequent dead-ball action related to the down is treated the same as one whose helmet comes off during the down.

According to Rule 9-4-3l, initiating contact with an opponent whose helmet has come completely off is a personal foul. In a companion addition, Rule 9-6-4g states that a player who continues to participate beyond the immediate action in which the player is engaged after their helmet has come completely off shall be penalized for illegal participation.

Any situation in which a player whose helmet comes completely off during the down without being attributable to a foul will result in a game official's timeout and handled the same as an injured or bleeding player. The player must sit out one down unless the halftime or an overtime intermission occurs. Players who leave the game under those circumstances may not "buy their way back" into the game with a charged team time-out.

If, however, a foul directly leads to the helmet coming off, the fouled player may remain in the game.

Note that if the player whose helmet comes completely off is in possession

of the ball, the ball becomes dead immediately per Rule 4-2-2k. But if it is another player, the ball remains live.

Play 1: As seen in PlayPic A, runner A1 is contacted so that his helmet comes completely off. **Ruling:** Because A1 is the runner, the ball is dead immediately. A1 must leave the game for one down (PlayPic B).

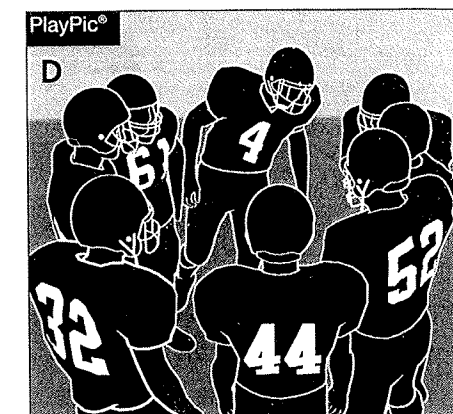
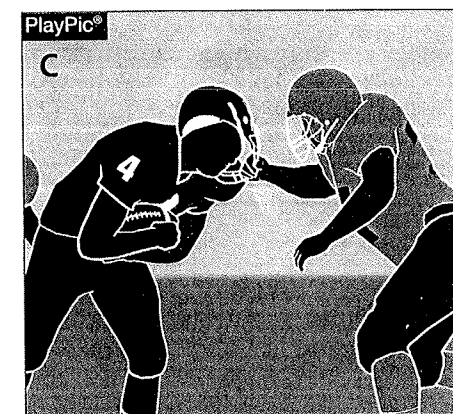
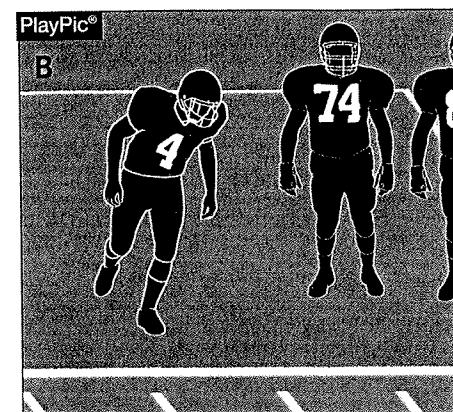
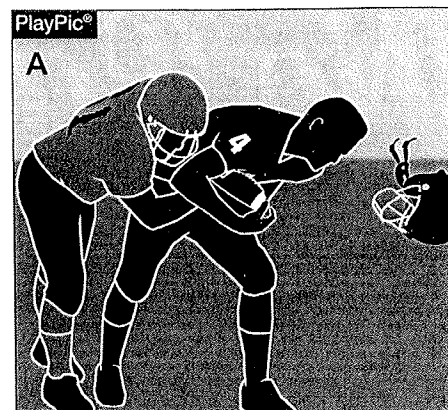
Play 2: As seen in PlayPic C, A1's helmet comes off due to a facemask foul by a B player. **Ruling:** Because A1 is the runner, the ball is dead immediately. A1 may remain in the game (PlayPic D).

Play 3: During a down, B1's helmet comes off (a) due to a foul by A1, or (b) without a foul. B1 either immediately picks up the helmet, puts it on and continues to chase the runner, or continues to chase the runner while not wearing a helmet. **Ruling:** In (a), the foul by A1 that caused B1 to lose the helmet, and B1's continued participation in the play, result in a double foul. The penalties cancel. Because B1 lost the helmet as the result of a foul, B1 may remain in the game. In (b), B1 is guilty of illegal participation. When the down ends, B1 must leave the game for the next down.

Play 4: During a down, B1's helmet comes off due to a foul by A1. B1 freezes. A2 then initiates contact against B1. **Ruling:** The foul by A1 that caused B1 to lose the helmet and A2's contact against a helmetless opponent constitute a multiple foul against team A. Team B will have the choice of penalties. Because B1 lost the helmet as the result of a foul, B1 need not leave the game for the next down.

Play 5: During a down, B1's helmet comes off without a foul. B1 freezes. A1 then initiates contact against B1. **Ruling:** A1's contact against a helmetless opponent constitutes a personal foul. Because no foul caused B1 to lose the helmet, B1 must leave the game for the next down.

Play 6: Runner A1 is contacted by team B players so that his forward progress is stopped. When A1 falls onto the ground, his helmet comes completely off. **Ruling:** A1 must leave the game for one down. □



DID YOU KNOW?

Today, the head coach, the head coach's designee or any player may request a charged team timeout, but that wasn't always the case. Until the rule changed in 1974, an official had to wait for a team captain to ask for a timeout before one could be granted. Equipment rules have also evolved over the years. Shoulder and hip pads became mandatory equipment in 1976. The next year, the rule mandating thigh guards was implemented.

Football Injury Surveillance Study

After a decade of injury surveillance, football continues to have the highest injury rates of all high school sports included in the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study (High School RIO).

As high school sports participation continues to increase in the United States, the number of sports injuries will also likely increase unless effective injury prevention programs are implemented. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Sport Rules Committees use information from High School RIO to monitor rates and patterns of sports injuries among high school athletes. High School RIO is currently collecting the 11th year of sports exposure and injury data.

High School RIO data shows that in 2014/15, concussions (25.4% of all injuries) were the most common injury in football followed by ankle strain/sprain (10.1%) and knee strain/sprains (8.2%). Rates of concussion

have increased over the past 10 years. However, the proportion of football players returning to activity the same day or within a week of sustaining a concussion has decreased dramatically over the past six years. In fact, in 2014/15 less than 0.5% of all concussed football players returned to play the same day.

In 2014/15, High School RIO also began collecting data on whether practice injuries happened during a full contact drill/activity. If the injury occurred during a "Thud" or "Live Action" practice, the injury was categorized as due to full-contact. If it occurred during an "Air", "Bags", or "Control" practice activities, the injury was marked as not due to full-contact. In 2014/15, 40.8% of all football concussions were sustained during practice. Of these concussions that

REPORTING INFORMATION ONLINE

occurred in practices, 89.6% occurred during a full contact drill/activity. This finding supports the recent NFHS recommendations regarding limiting full contact activities in football practice. Understanding such patterns of injury is one important tool in the efforts to keep football players as safe as possible.

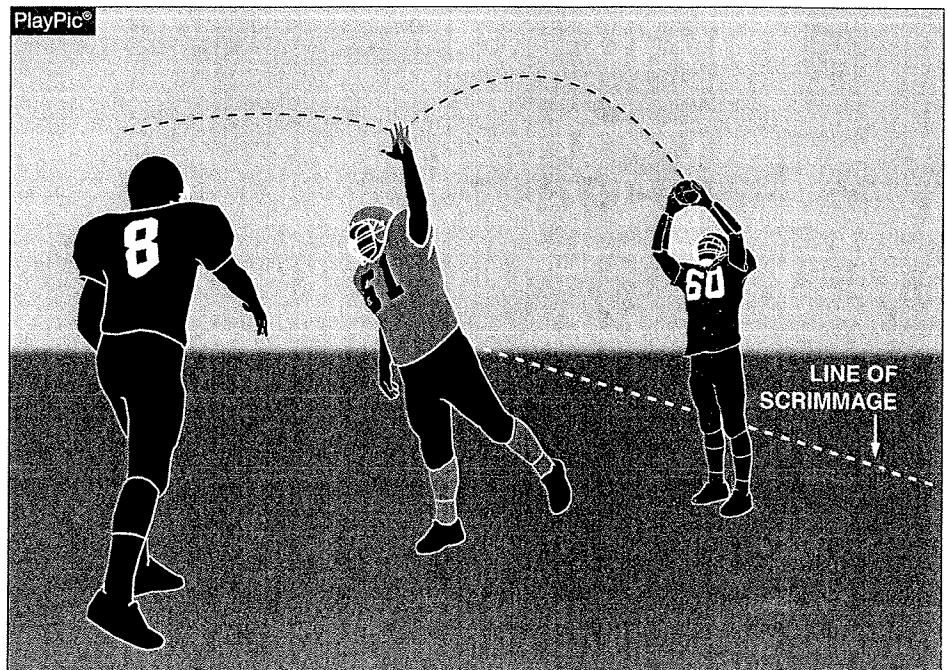
If you are interested in more information on the High School RIO Study or a certified athletic trainer is interested in becoming a reporter for football, please visit <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/ResearchProjects/piper/projects/RIO/Pages/Study-Reports.aspx> for summary reports. □

All Bets Are Off When Team B Touches the Legal Forward Pass

The rules give Team A more restrictions than Team B when it comes to passing plays. Offensive linemen are restricted in how far downfield they may venture. Pass interference restrictions apply and ineligible receivers are prohibited from being the first to touch the forward pass.

But those rules go by the boards when Team B is first to touch the pass. As seen in the PlayPic, a Team B player deflects a legal forward pass. That means previously ineligible number 50 may catch the tipped ball.

Additionally, pass interference restrictions for both teams end because of the touching and previously ineligible Team A players may legally be more than two yards beyond the expanded neutral zone. □



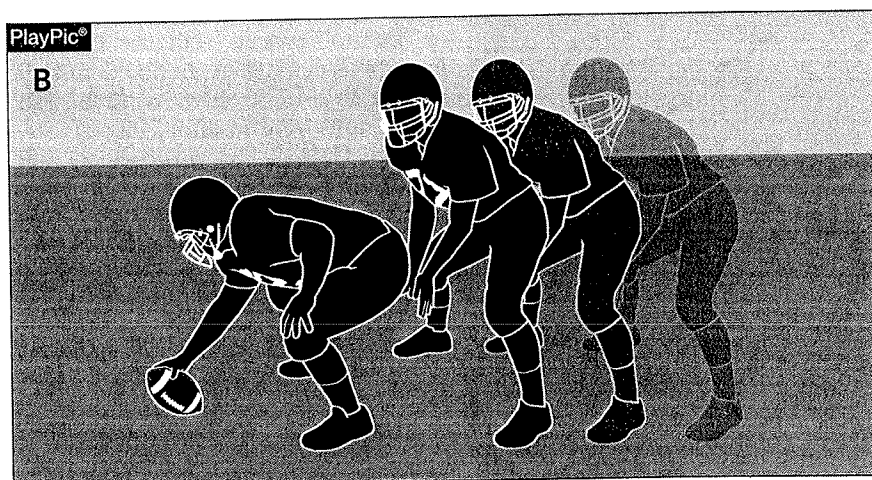
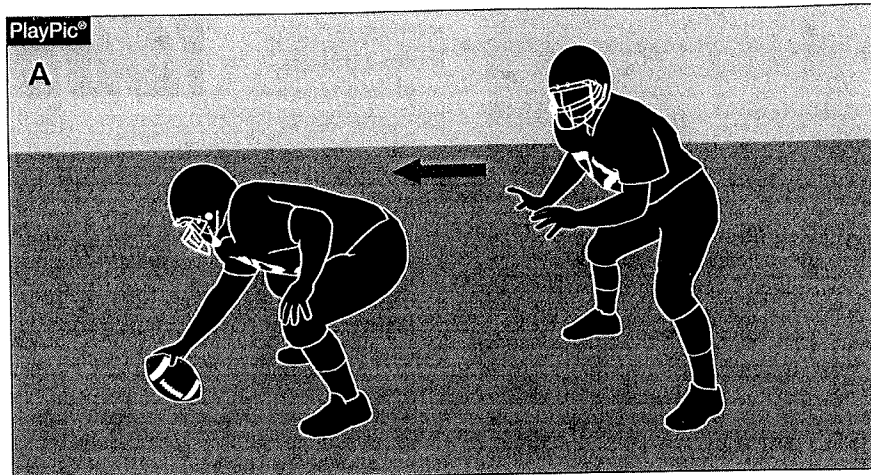
Beware of 'Rolling Starts' by the Quarterback

In short-yardage situations — particularly near Team B's goal line — it is not unusual for Team A to snap the ball on the first sound or even a silent count in order to catch the defense by surprise.

In the latter instance, the quarterback will walk up behind the center while the snapper has his hand or hands on the ball and the offensive linemen are getting set (PlayPic A). Either on the first sound or upon feeling the quarterback's hands on his rump (PlayPic B), the center snaps the ball.

All of that can be legal, but game officials should be especially alert for illegal acts by Team A in those situations. Remember that all Team A players must be set for one second before the snap. In Team A's haste to snap the ball quickly, it is not unusual for the snap to occur before everyone has had a chance to take that required pause. If the movement simulates action at the snap, it's a dead-ball foul for a false start.

Also be prepared for the quarterback to employ a "rolling start." That occurs when he approaches the snapper but never stops moving forward before taking the snap. That is an illegal shift. □



Try, Try Again

According to the NFHS Football Rules Book, the play that occurs after a touchdown is called a try. In common parlance it is an extra point, conversion or point after touchdown (PAT).

By any name, the bottom line is the team that scored the touchdown may score two points from what would be a touchdown under rules governing play at other times during the game, or one point from what would normally be a field goal.

Unless moved by penalty, the ball is snapped from a spot designated by

A anywhere between the hash marks on B's 3-yard line. The down is neither numbered nor timed.

A live-ball foul that occurs during a try down may or may not result in the down being repeated. If during a successful try, a loss of down foul by A occurs, there is no score and no replay. If during an unsuccessful try, a foul by A occurs, the penalty is obviously declined, the results of the play stand and there is no replay.

If B fouls and the penalty is accepted, the down is replayed after enforcement. If a double foul occurs,

the down shall be replayed.

When a try is replayed, the snap may be from any point between the inbounds lines on the yard line through the spot of the ball.

If a touchdown is scored during the last down of the fourth period, the try shall not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

The try begins when the ball is ready for play. It ends when B secures possession, the try is successful or the ball becomes dead for any other reason.

SEE "TRY AGAIN" P. 13

► Try Again CONT. FROM P.12

After a successful try, the opponent of the scoring team shall designate which team will kick off. A live-ball foul by one team is not paired with a dead-ball foul to create a double foul.

During a try, only A may score.

Play 1: A has a huge lead and scores another touchdown in the third period. The captain of A informs the referee that his team (a) does not wish to attempt the try; or (b) wishes to kick off. **Ruling:** In (a), there is no choice. A shall attempt a try, or at least snap the ball. Legal request in (b).

Play 2: During a try, A1 completes a pass to A2 in the end zone and (a) ineligible A3 was illegally beyond the neutral zone; (b) A4 interfered with B1; or (c) B2 interfered with A2. **Ruling:** In (a), if the 5-yard penalty is accepted, the try will be repeated. In (b), if the 15-yard penalty is accepted, the try

will be repeated. In (c), A undoubtedly will accept the result of the play and enforce the penalty from the succeeding spot.

Play 3: During a successful two-point try (a) B1 roughs the passer; or (b) B2 holds tight end A8. **Ruling:** In both (a) and (b), Team A may accept the score and have the penalty assessed from the succeeding spot.

Play 4: During a successful one-point try, B1 roughs the kicker. **Ruling:** A may keep the point and have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot, or have the penalty enforced from the previous spot and replay the down.

Play 5: During a successful two-point try, B1 is flagged for pass interference against A1. After the untimed down is over, A1 taunts B1. **Ruling:** Team A may accept the score and have the penalty enforced at the succeeding spot. However, B may

accept the penalty for the dead-ball foul by A, and have 15 yards marked off from the spot where the ball is placed after enforcement of B's penalty. The ball would then be free-kicked from K's 40-yard line.

Play 6: A series of penalties has left A snapping the ball for a try deep in its own territory. A1's backward pass (a) goes through A's end zone and over the end line, or (b) is in A's end zone when B2 recovers the loose ball. **Ruling:** In (a) and (b) the try is unsuccessful and A will kick off to resume play. Under normal circumstances, B would score a safety in (a) and a touchdown in (b). However, only A can score on a try.

Play 7: During a successful two-point try, A1 is flagged for an illegal forward pass. **Ruling:** B will accept the penalty. Because the penalty includes loss of down, the try will not be repeated. □

Forced Touching is No Touching

Rule 8-5-1, regarding who is responsible for forcing a ball across a goal line, has two subsections. The second subsection — Rule 8-5-1b — notes that the accidental touching of a loose ball by a player who was blocked into the ball is ignored and does not constitute a new force. For instance, touching of a scrimmage kick by R caused by K pushing or blocking R into contact with the ball or legally batting or muffing the ball into R is ignored. Also, touching of a free kick by either team is ignored if it is caused by being blocked or pushed into contact with the ball.

Play: It is first down and 10 on A's 12. A fumble by A1 is still rolling slowly on A's 4-yard line. During an attempt to recover the ball, A2 pushes B1 into the ball, causing the ball to roll across the goal line where it is recovered by: (a) A3 who is downed there; or (b) A4 who advances to A's 15-yard line; or (c) B2 who is downed immediately. **Ruling:** Safety in (a). In (b), it is A's ball on the 15-yard line and the next down is second and 7. In (c), it is a touchdown. □

National Federation of State High School Associations



GET NFHS RULES ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE

Have you been without your printed rules book and needed to find an obscure rule quickly, make a note or highlight a rule?

E-books Features:

- Searchable
- Highlight Areas of Interest
- Make Notes
- Desktop/Laptop Availability
- Easy Navigation
- Adjustable Viewing Size
- Immediate Availability



www.nfhs.org/ebooks

NFHS Rules and Case e-books for \$5.99 each

Download from iTunes or Amazon

The Importance of Facilitating NFHS Football Rules

Many often wonder how the rules that govern high school football are developed and why they are written the way they are. The NFHS football playing rules reflect a national perspective based on decisions that best serve the needs of the sport on a national level. Therefore, the purposes of the playing rules are to:

- Minimize risk to participants.
- Preserve the sound traditions of the sport.
- Standardize competition.
- Provide for orderly administration.
- Facilitate the decision-making process of game officials.

- Permit common records.
- Provide for evaluating competition.
- Maintain a balance between offense and defense.

With these goals in mind, the NFHS Football Rules Committee believes the rules and the game facilitate and enrich a well-rounded educational experience that promotes academic achievement, encourages positive school/community relations and develops good citizenship and healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, the committee believes the current code of ethics for both coaches and game officials facilitate these goals as written.

One aspect of coach and official

ethics is to teach and officiate the rules within the intent of NFHS Football Rules Book. THE COACH shall master the contest rules and shall teach them to their team members. THE COACH shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules. THE OFFICIAL shall master the rules of the game, and also the officiating mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, and shall exercise that responsibility in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.

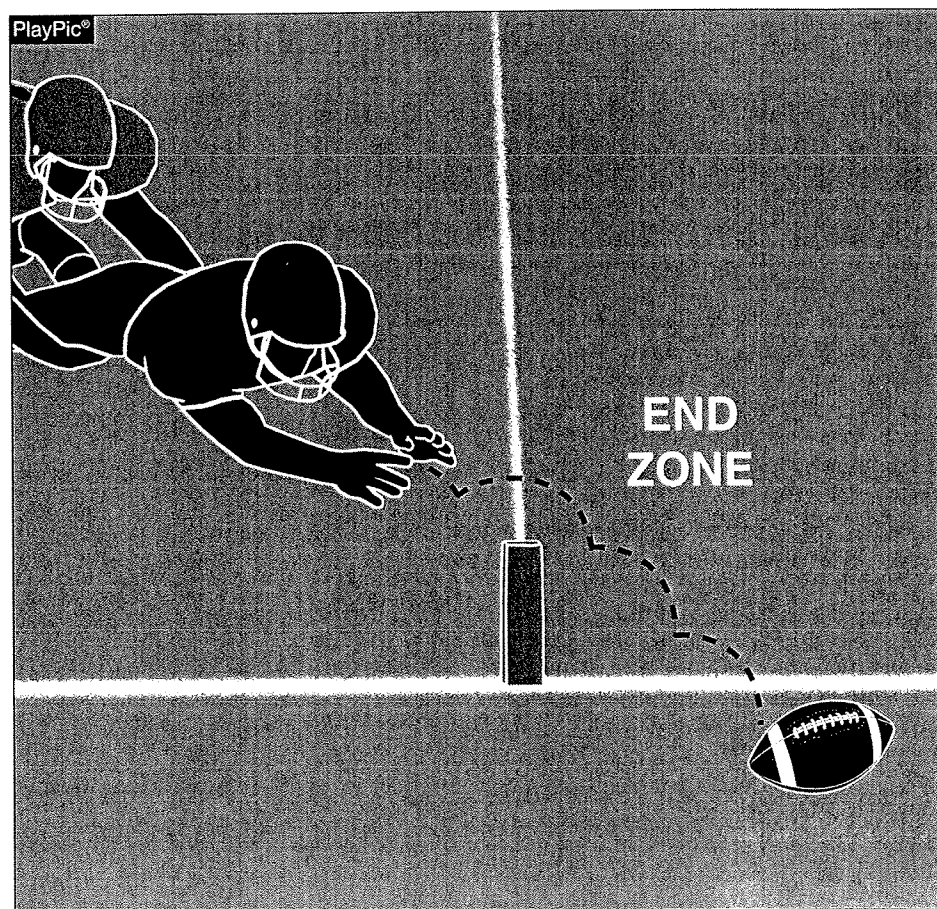
Coaching and officiating the rules are extremely important to maintain the integrity of the game, and to minimize risk to the athletes participating in the game. □

Touchback or Safety? It Depends

When a loose ball goes out of bounds in the end zone, the first questions an official must answer are, "How did the ball get there?" and "Who put it there?" If the answer to the first question is "fumble," you have two possibilities. The result of the play will either be a touchback or a safety.

If the runner in the PlayPic fumbles into the opponent's end zone, his team provided the force. The result is a touchback and the opponent will next snap from its own 20-yard line. If the runner fumbles the ball and it goes out of bounds in his own end zone, it's a safety.

Whenever a ball is loose near a goal line, be especially alert for bats and muffs. A bat in that situation may or may not be a foul, depending on location of the ball and the direction in which the ball is batted. Muffs are common because players are in a hurry to secure possession of an oddly shaped ball that is bouncing every which way. After a fumble, kick or backward pass has been grounded, a new force may result from a bat, an illegal kick or a muff. The muffing or batting of a pass, kick or fumble in flight is not considered a new force. □



Start the Play Legally? That's a Snap!

The word "center" is a layman's term for the player who snaps the ball. But the proper football term is "snapper." In the context of players, you will not find the word "center" in the NFHS Football Rules Book. Similarly, the ball is "snapped," not "hiked." In the past some referred to the ball being "centered," but that is no longer common parlance.

A snap is one of two ways in which the ball is put into play (a free kick is the other). From a scrimmage formation, no down starts until there is a legal snap.

Several fouls can prevent the snap. False start, encroachment and an illegal snap are among the most common. Those are dead-ball fouls and may occur after the ready-for-play signal and before a legal snap. The referee, umpire and wing officials are most likely to call those fouls.

A snapper is the player who lines up over the ball and places a hand or hands on the ball. The snapper is exempt from encroachment; his hands and upper body can be in the neutral zone before the snap.

The snap must occur on or between the hash marks. If a previous play ends in a side zone or out-of-bounds, the ball is placed at the nearest hash mark for the next snap. When snapped, the ball must be parallel to the sideline.

After a safety or touchback and before the ready-for-play signal, a team may select the ball's lateral position between the hash marks. That privilege also applies before a try down, kickoff or the start of an overtime series, or after a fair catch or awarded fair catch.

The snapper cannot make any movement that simulates the start of a play. That includes any jerky body gestures or abruptly moving the ball. He may lift the ball in order to rotate it laterally, but not rotate it end for end.

Some umpires ask both snappers before the game, "How do you like your laces?" That allows the umpire to position the ball on the ground to the snapper's specifications and avoids pre-snap adjustments. Other umpires simply spot the ball and have the snapper adjust it to his liking.

Once the snapper touches the ball, the snapper may remove one but not both hands from the ball.

The snap begins when the snapper

legally moves the ball. The snap must be a quick, fluid and continuous backward motion. The ball must touch a back or the ground before it touches an A lineman. The snap ends when the ball touches the ground or any player.

The penalty for an illegal snap (dead-ball foul) is five yards from the succeeding spot.

Play 1: After putting both hands on the ball, the snapper (a) tilts the ball to a 90-degree angle, (b) lifts the ball before backward movement, (c) rotates the ball laterally, or (d) removes both hands.

Ruling: Legal in (a) and (c). Illegal snap

in (b) and (d).

Play 2: Before a punt, the snapper moves the ball forward before starting the backward motion. R1 bats the ball while still in the snapper's hands. The loose ball is recovered by R2. **Ruling:** Illegal snap. The ball never became live, thus R2's recovery is nullified.

On a wet field, the umpire should be proactive to keep balls dry. That might entail frequently bringing in a new dry ball to avoid game delay. The key is game officials and ball persons having dry towels.

SEE "START LEGALLY" P. 16

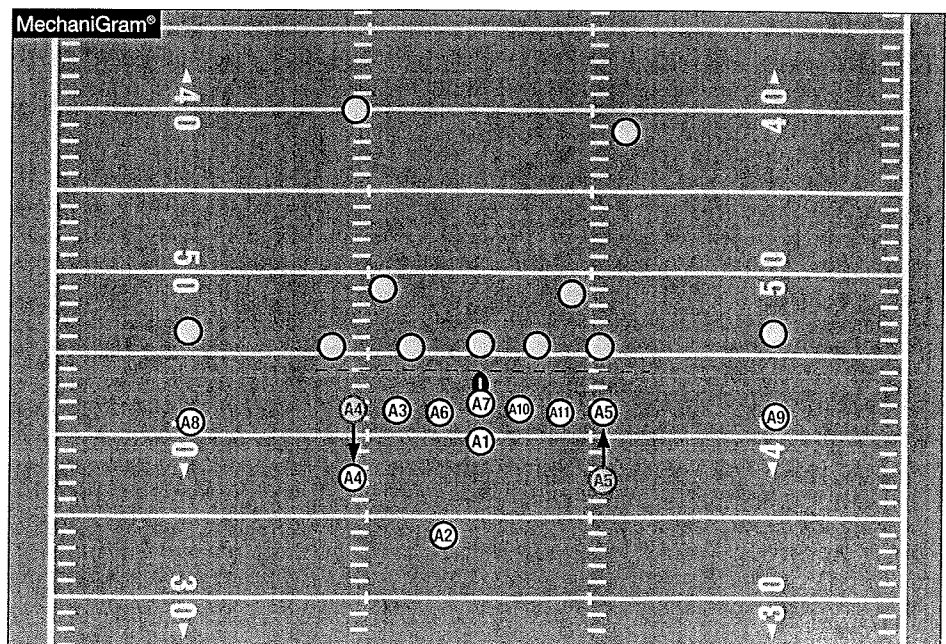
Shifty Business

Legend has it that the shift was invented by legendary coach Knute Rockne, who came up with the idea after watching the choreographed movements of a chorus line.

A shift is the action of one or more offensive players who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap.

The movement of one or more offensive players to new set positions

is a shift. This formation is legal A3 is now on the end of the line; if he is also wearing an eligible receiver's number, he is an eligible receiver. A9 is also on the end of the line and is eligible if he is wearing an eligible receiver's number. Following a shift, all 11 players must simultaneously meet the one-second motionless requirement prior to the snap. Note that A5, who is no longer on the end of the line, is ineligible by position even if he's wearing an eligible receiver's number. □



► Start Legally CONT. FROM P.15

When in a scrimmage formation, the snapper's number does not have to be 50-79 as long as there are five players numbered 50-79 on the line.

When in a scrimmage-kick formation, the snapper can have any number. Players with numbering exceptions do not have to report to a game official prior to a kick play. The player in the game using that exception is an ineligible receiver because of his position. The umpire can note numbering exceptions on one side of the line and the referee the other. Then if players end up downfield, the game officials will know which one(s) are not eligible to touch a forward pass.

It's rare but not unheard of to see the snapper on the end of the line. That might happen during what is called a "swinging gate" formation. Be prepared for K to shift to a typical scrimmage-kick formation.

When K is in scrimmage-kick formation, the snapper has certain protection. With his head down, he is especially vulnerable during the snap. The snapper cannot be contacted by a defensive player until the snapper has a reasonable chance to regain his balance and can protect himself, or until he blocks or moves to participate in the play.

The penalty for roughing the snapper is 15 yards from the previous spot and an automatic first down.

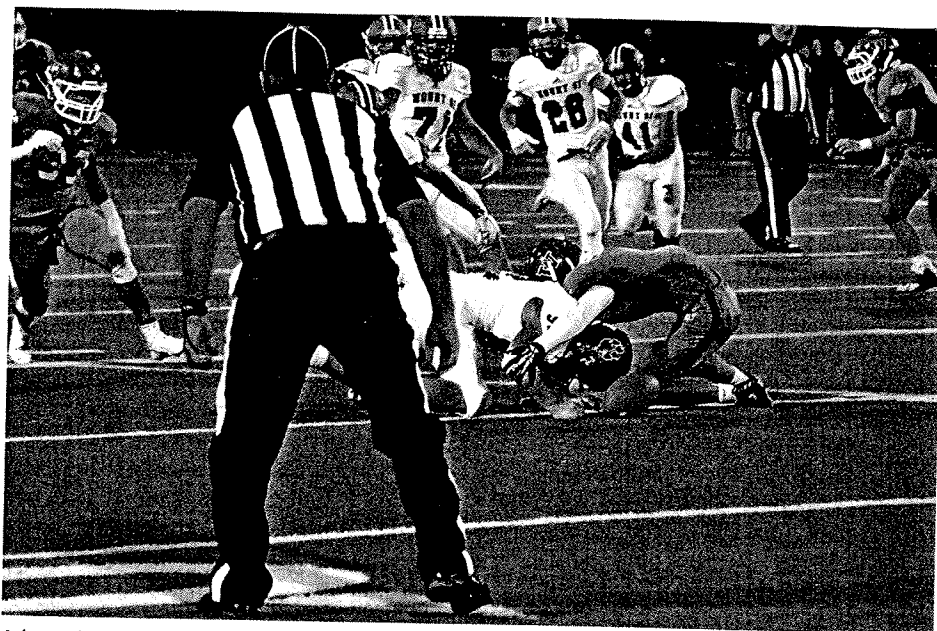
Play 3: K is in scrimmage-kick formation. After the snap, R1 charges directly into the snapper. Punter K2 (a) muffs the snap and the loose ball is recovered by R3, or (b) throws an incomplete forward pass. **Ruling:** Roughing the snapper in both cases. Even though no kick was made, the snapper is still protected.

There are no specific snapper protections when a team is not in a scrimmage-kick formation. He is treated no differently than other A lineman. □

DID YOU KNOW?

Crawling with the ball was once a foul. Defined as "an attempt by the runner to advance the ball after any part of his person, other than a hand or foot, has touched the ground," crawling resulted in a five-yard penalty. The rule was deleted in 1981.

DALE GANNEY



A loose ball is one situation in which a game official may be tempted to put air in the whistle. Greg Olmstead, Sammamish, Wash., rules the runner was down before the ball came loose.

Inadvertent Whistle Options Explained

There's nothing like an inadvertent whistle to mess up an otherwise well-officiated game.

How to deal with inadvertent whistles is covered in Rule 4-2-3.

A down shall be replayed if during a down, or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while a legal forward pass or snap is in flight, or during a legal kick.

The team last in possession may choose to either put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while the ball is loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass or illegal kick.

The team in possession may choose to either accept the results of the play at the dead-ball spot or replay the down if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while the ball is in player possession.

The penalty shall be administered as determined by the basic spot, and takes

precedence over inadvertent whistle administration if, during a down a live-ball foul occurs prior to the inadvertent whistle and the penalty is accepted.

Here are some examples:

Play 1: A1 rolls out and is two yards behind the neutral zone when he throws a backward pass to A2. While the backward pass is still in flight, a game official sounds his whistle.

Ruling: A will likely choose to replay the down.

Play 2: While a legal forward pass is in flight: (a) B1 interferes with eligible A1 and then there is an inadvertent whistle; or (b) a whistle is inadvertently sounded after which B2 contacts A2 while the ball is still in flight. **Ruling:** In (a), if the captain accepts the penalty for a foul which occurred prior to the inadvertent whistle, the penalty takes precedence. It will be a new series for A, 15 yards in advance of the previous spot. In (b), the contact by B2 occurred during a dead-ball period and unless it is a personal foul, will be ignored. Because the whistle was inadvertently sounded while a legal forward pass was in flight, the down shall be replayed. □