



P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
Telephone: 317/917-6222

Shipping/Overnight Address:
1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

www.ncaa.org

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

MEMORANDUM

April 22, 2010

TO: Head Football Coaches, Conference Commissioners and Coordinators of Officials.

FROM: Ty Halpin, liaison
NCAA Football Rules Committee.

SUBJECT: 2010 Football Rules Committee Report.

Attached to this cover memorandum are several documents summarizing the Football Rules Committee's actions at its annual meeting in February. These actions were approved on a recent conference call by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel.

Please review this information carefully and distribute it as appropriate. The NCAA will be producing educational materials and videos in the near future to assist in the understanding of any changes and to reinforce the points of emphasis the committee approved.

Any questions should be directed to Randy Edsall, chair of the committee, or Rogers Redding, secretary-rules editor of the committee, at footballrules@ncaa.org. Thank you and good luck as you prepare for the season.

Enclosures

TH:nb

N a t i o n a l C o l l e g i a t e A t h l e t i c A s s o c i a t i o n

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NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE ACTION FOR 2010

Summary

PLAYER SAFETY

- **Wedge-Formation on Kickoffs (NEW RULE IN 2010).** On kickoffs the receiving team may not form a wedge (shoulder-to-shoulder) of **three or more players** to block for the ball carrier. This foul carries a 15-yard penalty.
- **Heightened Awareness of Injured Players.** When the game is stopped for any injury, the injured player must leave the game for at least one down. He may not return **without approval by medical personnel**.
- **Targeting and Initiating Contact.** The rules for crown-of-the-helmet fouls and for targeting defenseless players in the head or neck area have been strengthened and highlighted.

SPORTSMANSHIP

- **Pregame Warm-Ups.** If there is no conference policy on pregame warm-ups, teams will be encouraged to observe a 10-yard buffer zone between the 45-yard lines beginning 60 minutes before the opening kickoff.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct Fouls (RULE CHANGE IN 2011).** **Beginning in 2011** penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct fouls will be administered according to when the foul occurs, just as with all other fouls. For 2010 they will continue to be treated as dead-ball fouls, even if they take place during live-ball action.

EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS

- **Pants and Socks.** Pants are not required to cover the knees. Socks must be of the same color and design but do not need to be the same length.
- **Eye Shade.** If worn, eyeshade must be **solid black** with no words, numbers, logos or other symbols.
- **Television Monitors in Coaches' Booths (RULE CHANGE IN 2011).** **Beginning in 2011** television monitors will be allowed in the press-box coaches' booths.

NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE ACTION FOR 2010

INTRODUCTION

The NCAA Football Rules Committee met for the first time under the NCAA rules process which now calls for rules changes to be made only in alternate years. However, on a conference call subsequent to the annual meeting the committee unanimously approved a new rule regarding safety of the student-athlete. Effective in 2010 it is illegal on a kickoff for the receiving team intentionally to *form a wedge of three or more players* to block for the kick-return player.

This year's annual meeting gave members an opportunity to look at the game of college football holistically, consider trends in the game, and discuss and alert the membership to possible future action. The committee approved some editorial clarifications that will go into effect in 2010 by editorial bulletin and approved some rules changes to take effect in 2011.

PLAYER SAFETY

Wedge Formation on Kickoffs

EFFECTIVE IN 2010 (NEW RULE)

During a kickoff it is illegal for the receiving team intentionally to form a wedge of three or more players to block for the ball carrier. Penalty: Fifteen yards from the spot of the foul, or from the end of the run if this is behind the spot of the foul. There is no foul if the kick is from an obvious on-side kick formation. Note that the foul is for the formation of the wedge, whether or not there is contact between opponents.

Injured Player Procedures

EFFECTIVE IN 2010 (Editorial Clarification)

The revised language in Rule 3-3-5-a is as follows:

Injury Timeout

ARTICLE 5. a. In the event of an injured player(s):

1. An official will declare a timeout and the player(s) must leave the game. He must remain out of the game for at least one down. When in question, officials will take a timeout for an injured player.
2. The player(s) may not return to the game until he receives approval of professional medical personnel designated by his institution.
3. Officials and coaches shall give special attention to players who exhibit signs of a concussion.
4. Whenever a participant (player or game official) suffers a laceration or wound from which oozing or bleeding occurs, the player or game official shall go to the team area and be given appropriate medical treatment. He may not return to the game without approval of medical personnel.

Strengthening Of Existing Rules Regarding Targeting and Initiating Contact

EFFECTIVE IN 2010 (Editorial Clarification)

Current Rule 9-1-3 replaced by 9-1-3- and 9-1-4, as follows:

Targeting/Initiating Contact with Crown of the Helmet

ARTICLE 3.

No player shall target and initiate contact against an opponent with the crown (top) of his helmet.

When in question, it is a foul.

PENALTY—Personal foul. 15 yards. For dead-ball fouls, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Also, automatic first down for Team B fouls if not in conflict with other rules. (Exception: Penalties for Team A personal fouls behind the neutral zone are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line) [S7, S24, S34, S38, S39, S40, S41, S45 or S46]. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47].

For Team A fouls during free or scrimmage kick plays: Enforcement may be at the previous spot or the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (field-goal plays exempted) (Rules 6-1-8 and 6-3-13).

Defenseless Player: Contact to Head or Neck Area

ARTICLE 4

No player shall target and initiate contact to the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent with the helmet, forearm, elbow or shoulder. *When in question, it is a foul.* (See Points of Emphasis for a description of "Defenseless Player.")

PENALTY—(Same as above)

SPORTSMANSHIP

Pregame Warm-ups

The committee encourages conferences that do not have a pregame warm-up policy to direct that there be a 10-yard no-player zone between the 45-yard lines beginning 60 minutes before kickoff. This reinforces the *Statement on Sportsmanship* which was adopted by the committee for inclusion in the 2009-2010 NCAA Football Rule Book.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct Fouls

EFFECTIVE IN 2011 (RULE CHANGE)

Following up on the *Statement on Sportsmanship* adopted last year, the committee approved by unanimous vote the following rule change **which will take effect in 2011**:

A live-ball foul for unsportsmanlike conduct will be treated as any other live-ball foul, rather than being administered as a dead-ball foul. When in question it is a dead-ball foul. In 2010 such fouls will continue to be treated as dead-ball fouls.

Example 1: A ball carrier is in the open field racing for the goal line. At the opponent's 10-yard line he turns, makes a taunting gesture to his opponents pursuing him and then scores an apparent touchdown.

RULING IN 2011: Live-ball foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. Fifteen-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and the score is negated. First and 10 at the 25-yard line. *(Under current rules the touchdown counts and the penalty is enforced on the try or the kickoff.)*

Example 2: Third and seven at the defensive team's 35-yard line. A defensive player is lined up in the neutral zone at the snap. The quarterback completes a pass to the tight end who races toward the end zone. At the 10-yard line he turns and taunts the players pursuing him and then crosses the goal line.

RULING IN 2011. Offside against the defense and unsportsmanlike conduct by the offense. The fouls offset and the down is repeated. No score. Third and seven at the 35-yard line. *(Under current rules the offside penalty is declined by rule, the touchdown counts, and the penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct is enforced on the try or the kickoff.)*

Example 3: After scoring a touchdown the ball carrier punts the ball into the stands. **RULING:** Dead-ball foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. The touchdown counts. The 15-yard penalty is

enforced on either the try or on the succeeding kickoff, at the option of the defensive team. *(No change from the current rule)*

EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORMS

Uniforms and Player Adornment

1. Officials are admonished to be more diligent about enforcing the equipment rules (chin straps buckled, mouth pieces in, etc.)

2. EFFECTIVE IN 2010 (Editorial Clarification)

(a) Players must wear soft knee pads at least ½” thick. Beginning in 2010 there is no reference to the pants covering the knees.

(b) Socks must be of the same color and design. Beginning in 2010 there is no reference to length of the socks.

3. EFFECTIVE IN 2010 (Editorial Clarification)

If eye shade is worn it must be **solid black** with no words, numbers, logos or other symbols.

Television Monitors in Coaches Booths

EFFECTIVE IN 2011 (RULE CHANGE)

Television monitors will be allowed in the press box coaches’ booths. The home team has responsibility for insuring that coaches’ booths for both teams have identical television capability.

NEW RULE FOR 2010: WEDGE FORMATION ON FREE KICKS

Rule 6-1-9 (FR-88)

Illegal Wedge Formation

ARTICLE 9.

- a. A wedge is defined as two or more players aligned shoulder to shoulder within two yards of each other.
- b. Free-kick down only: After the ball has been kicked, it is illegal for three or more members of the receiving team intentionally to form a wedge for the purpose of blocking for the ball carrier. This is a live-ball foul, whether or not there is contact between opponents.
- c. Formation of the wedge is not illegal when the kick is from an obvious onside kick formation.

PENALTY—Noncontact foul treated as occurring during the kick. 15 yards, spot of the foul; or 15 yards, spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B if this is behind the spot of the foul. If the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team A: 15 yards, previous spot with the down repeated. [S27]

EXAMPLE 1. Team A kicks off at its 30-yard line. While the ball is in the air, receiving team players B45, B32 and B84 retreat to the B-22 and align shoulder-to-shoulder so that there is no more than two yards between adjacent players. Receiver B21 catches the ball at the B-10 and is tackled at the 50-yard line.

RULING: Foul for formation of an illegal wedge. The 15-yard penalty is enforced half the distance to the goal from the B-22. The receiving team has the ball, first and 10 at its 11-yard line.

EXAMPLE 2. Team A kicks off at its 30-yard line. While the ball is in the air, receiving team players B45, B32 and B84 retreat to the B-22 and align shoulder-to-shoulder so that there is no more than two yards between adjacent players. Receiver B21 catches the ball at the B-10 with one knee on the ground.

RULING: The ball is dead where B21 caught it while grounded at the B-10. The 15-yard penalty is enforced from that spot, half the distance to the goal. The receiving team has the ball, first and 10 at its five-yard line.

EXAMPLE 3. Team A kicks off at its 30-yard line. While the ball is in the air, receiving team players B45, B32 and B84 retreat to the B-22 and align shoulder-to-shoulder so that there is no more than two yards between adjacent players. In an attempt to break up the wedge, A44 blocks below the waist against B45. Receiver B21 catches the ball at the B-10 and runs for an apparent touchdown.

RULING: Foul by Team A for blocking below the waist during a kick down. Foul by Team B for forming an illegal wedge. The fouls offset, and Team A re-kicks from its 30-yard line.

EXAMPLE 4. Team A kicks off at its 30-yard line. While the ball is in the air, receiving team players B45 and B84 retreat to the B-22 and align shoulder-to-shoulder so that there is no more than two yards between them. Receiver B21 catches the kick at the B-10 and is tackled at the A-45.

RULING: No foul. A two-man wedge is not illegal. Team B's ball, first and 10 at Team A's 45-yard line.

EXAMPLE 5. Team A kicks off at its 30-yard line. Receiver B17 catches the ball at the B-20 and begins his return. After the catch receiving team players B45, B32 and B84 gather at the B-33 in front of the ball carrier and align shoulder-to-shoulder so that there is no more than two yards between adjacent players. B17 is tackled at the 50-yard line.

RULING: Foul for formation of an illegal wedge. The three-man wedge formation is illegal even if formed after the kick has been caught. The 15-yard penalty is enforced at the spot of the foul. Team B's ball, first and 10 at its 18-yard line.