

Updated: Jan. 24, 2016

Section 4 Officiating Philosophies

The following rules-based philosophies have been adopted for NCAA games. They also appear in the appropriate sections of this manual.

Ball-Spotting

1. The ball can be placed on a yard line to begin the next series after a change of possession. (Exception: If the change of possession occurs on a fourth-down running or passing play, the ball will be left at the dead-ball spot to begin the next series.) For example, if a punt return ends with the ball between Team B's 33 and 34-yard lines, move the ball forward to Team B's 34 yard line. At all other times, the ball is placed where it became dead.
2. If a punt is downed on the ground inside team B's five-yard line, the ball should be left and not moved to the next yard line.

Line of Scrimmage

1. When in question as to whether an action is a false start or illegal motion, it is a false start.
2. Officials will work to keep offensive linemen legal and will call only when obvious or when a warning to the player and a subsequent warning to the coach are ignored. Don't wait till the fourth quarter to enforce rule.
3. If the offensive player is lined up with his head clearly behind the rear end of the snapper, a foul will be called without a warning.
4. Don't be technical on an offensive player who is a wide receiver or slot back in determining if he is off the line of scrimmage. When in question, it is not a foul.
5. Wide receivers or slot backs lined up outside a tight end will be ruled on the line of scrimmage and covering the tight end if there is no stagger between their alignments. If in question, he is not covered up.
6. When in question regarding player position on movement by the defense into the neutral zone which causes the offense to move, a player is moving toward the offensive player. This protects both that player and the two adjacent offensive players.
7. Any time a defensive player **initially aligned tight to the neutral zone** jumps toward the neutral zone and there is a question whether he was in the neutral zone and the appropriate offensive player(s) moves, shut down the play and penalize the defense.
8. Any time a defensive player shoots the gap, and there is a question as to contact, err on the side of offside and shut the play down to avoid a free shot on the quarterback.
9. Formations during the execution of a trick or unusual play have the highest degree of scrutiny and should be completely legal.
10. When in question, a quick or abrupt movement by the center or quarterback is a false start.

Fumbles Philosophies

1. When in question, the runner fumbled the ball and was not down.

Updated: Jan. 24, 2016

2. When in question regarding whether the quarterback passed or fumbled, it will be ruled a fumble.

Defensive Pass Interference

Actions that constitute defensive pass interference include, but are not limited to, the following six categories:

1. Early contact by a defender who is not playing the ball is defensive pass interference provided the other requirements for defensive pass interference have been met, regardless of how deep the pass is thrown to the receiver.
2. Playing through the back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
3. Grabbing and restricting a receiver's arm(s) or body in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
4. Extending an arm across the body (arm bar) of a receiver thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of the fact of whether or not the defender is looking for the ball.
5. Cutting off or riding the receiver out of the path to the ball by making contact with him without playing the ball.
6. Hooking and restricting a receiver in an attempt to get to the ball in such a manner that causes the receiver's body to turn prior to the ball arriving.

Offensive Pass Interference

Actions that constitute offensive pass interference include but are not limited to the following four categories:

1. Initiating contact with a defender by shoving or pushing off thus creating separation in an attempt to catch a pass.
2. Driving through a defender who has established a position on the field.
3. Blocking downfield during a pass that legally crosses the line of scrimmage.
4. Picking off a defender who is attempting to cover a receiver.

Not Offensive Pass Interference

1. Offensive pass interference for blocking downfield will not be called if the passer is legally grounding the ball out of bounds, near or beyond the sideline.
2. Offensive pass interference will not be called on a screen pass when the ball is overthrown behind the line of scrimmage but subsequently lands beyond the **expanded** line of scrimmage (**up to three yards**) and linemen are blocking downfield, unless such blocking prevents a defensive player from catching the ball.
3. It is not offensive pass interference on a pick play if the defensive player is blocking the offensive player when the pick occurs and the offensive player doesn't make a separate action, **or if the blocker's entire body is clearly not beyond the neutral zone.**

Other Passing Situations

1. When in question on action against the passer, it is roughing the passer if the **defender attempts** to punish.

Updated: Jan. 24, 2016

2. The quarterback can throw the ball anywhere if he is not under duress, except spiking the ball straight down. The clock is not a factor. Exception: Rule 7-3-2-e allows the quarterback to spike the ball to stop the clock.
3. An uncatchable pass must be blatantly uncatchable in order to disregard a foul for pass interference.
4. If the quarterback is outside the tackle box and is throwing the ball away to avoid a sack, when in question as to whether the ball is beyond the neutral zone, it is beyond the line. **When in question as to whether the quarterback is or has been outside the tackle box, he is outside.** Don't be technical.
5. If the passer is contacted after he starts his passing motion, it may be ruled no intentional grounding due to this contact.
6. If the passer is contacted clearly before he starts his passing motion, there will be a foul for intentional grounding if there is no eligible receiver in the vicinity or if the pass does not reach the line of scrimmage after the quarterback has been outside the tackle box.
7. If an interception is near the goal line **(inside the one yard line)** and there is a question as to whether possession is gained in the field of play or end zone, make the play a touchback.
8. If the passer is legally throwing the ball away out of bounds, and it lands near or beyond the sideline, do not penalize the offense for having ineligible players downfield.

Blocking

1. If a player is illegally blocked or held "into" making a tackle, no foul should be called unless the action is a personal foul or there is an element of time between the foul and the tackle.
2. **Obvious and intentional takedowns** at the point of attack, those in the open field, within the tackle box and affecting the result of the play create special focus and should be called in those situations.
3. If there is a potential offensive holding but the action occurs clearly away from the point of attack and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, offensive holding should not be called.
4. If there is a potential for defensive holding but the action occurs clearly away from the point of attack and has no (or could have no) effect on the play, defensive holding should not be called. Example: A defensive back on the opposite side of the field holding a wide receiver on a designed run play to the other side.
5. For blocks in the back, if one hand is on the number and the other hand is on the side and the initial force is on the number, it is a block in the back. The force of the block could be slight and still a foul if the contact propels the player past the runner or prevents him from making the play. If the force is clearly **from** the side, it is not a foul. If the blocker is in a "chase mode" all the action must be **from** the side.
6. Blocks that start on the side and subsequently end up in the back are not fouls as long as contact is maintained throughout the block.

Updated: Jan. 24, 2016

7. Blocks in the back that occur at or about the same time a runner is being tackled **should not be called, unless they are in the nature of a personal foul or there is forcible contact that involves player safety.**
8. A grab of the receiver's jersey that **materially** restricts the receiver and takes away his feet should be defensive holding if other criteria are met, and could also be defensive pass interference.
9. Holding can be called even if the quarterback is subsequently sacked **and there is an element of time between the foul and the tackle.**
10. **Blocks in the back that are personal fouls in nature should be called regardless of their timing relative to the runner being tackled.**
11. Rarely should you have a hold on a double team block unless there is a takedown or the defender breaks the double team and is pulled back.
12. When in question if an illegal block occurs in the end zone or field of play, it occurs in the field of play.
13. Regarding blocking below the waist, when in question, the ball has not left the low blocking zone.

Kicking Plays

1. The kicker's restraining line on onside and short pooch kickoffs should be officiated as a plane. Any player (other than the kicker or holder) breaking the plane before the ball is kicked should be called for offside. The same plane applies on normal kickoffs, but officials should not be too technical in regard to players breaking the plane.
2. Illegal block in the back can be called on fair catches, but not if the illegal block occurs away from the play as the fair catch is being made, or the play results in a touchback and contact is slight. (Note: Personal fouls should always be called **or there is forcible contact that involves player safety.**)
3. **Blocks in the back that are personal fouls should be called regardless of their timing relative to a fair catch.**
4. It shall always be roughing the kicker when there is forcible contact to the plant leg, whether or not that leg is on the ground. It shall be running into the kicker if a defender simply "runs through" the kicking leg **and there is no forcible contact.** All other contact shall be based on the severity and the potential for injury to the kicker.
5. On kicks into the end zone, when in question, during the return the ball has not left the end zone.
6. When in question, a foul by the receiving team on a scrimmage kick occurs after the ball is kicked.

Plays at the Sideline

1. Substitution mechanics will be used in a situation in which a play ends with Team A player(s) going out of bounds into their own team area.
2. If legal contact occurs before the runner has a foot down out of bounds, consider it a legal hit unless the runner has obviously given up on the play very near the sideline and forcible contact is made **attempting** to punish.

Updated: Jan. 24, 2016

3. If the whistle has blown and a runner continuing to advance down the sideline has eased up, contact by the opponent against the runner is a foul. Officials should be alert and be sure any action is not part of the initial play before calling a foul.
4. When in question as to whether the runner stepped out of bounds, officials should rule the runner did not step out of bounds.

Scoring Plays

1. When in question, it is not a touchdown.
2. When in question, it is not a safety.
3. **When in question, a** non-airborne runner crossing the goal inside the pylon with the ball crossing the goal line extended is a touchdown.

Personal Fouls

1. If action is deemed to be "fighting," the player must be disqualified
2. When in question if an act is a flagrant personal foul or fighting, the player is not fighting.
3. Players committing flagrant personal fouls must be disqualified.
4. When in question regarding hits away from the ball near the end of the play, consider it a dead-ball rather than live-ball foul.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. When in question whether an unsportsmanlike act is a live-ball or dead-ball foul, it is a dead-ball foul.
2. Do not be overly technical in applying Rule 9-2-1.
3. Allow for brief, spontaneous, emotional reactions at the end of a play.
4. Beyond the brief, spontaneous bursts of energy, officials should flag those acts that are clearly prolonged, self-congratulatory, and that make a mockery of the game.
5. A list of specifically prohibited acts is in Rule 9-2-1-a-1 (a) thru (k). That list is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive. All agree that when those acts are clearly intended to taunt or demean, they should be penalized.
6. Spitting on an opponent requires disqualification.

Game Clock

1. When in question, a charged team timeout precedes a foul that prevents the snap.
2. 5/5 axiom: In order to adjust game clock errors, there must be more than a five-second differential if there is more than five minutes remaining in either half.
3. Any time loss due to the clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead-ball foul is called, the clock must be adjusted.
4. As a guideline, Referees should consider invoking Rule 3-4-3 when the game clock is under five minutes of each half.

Miscellaneous

Updated: Jan. 24, 2016

1. The ankle or wrist **is** considered part of the foot or hand, respectively, and **does** not make a runner down.