



Football Rules Committee proposes modifying targeting protocols

Progressive penalty and instant replay changes among recommendations

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Greg Johnson

The NCAA Football Rules Committee met this week in Indianapolis and recommended two adjustments to its targeting rules to strengthen one of the most important calls of the game.

The committee, chaired by Stanford coach David Shaw, proposed a progressive penalty for those student-athletes who receive a second targeting foul in the same season. In addition to being disqualified from that game, the player would be suspended for the team's next contest.

The second adjustment to the targeting rule deals with the instant replay review. Instant replay officials will be directed to examine all aspects of the play and confirm the foul when all elements of targeting are present. If any element of targeting cannot be confirmed, then the replay official will overturn the targeting foul. There will not be an option for letting the call on the field stand during a targeting review.

"The targeting rule has been effective in changing player behavior," said Steve Shaw, NCAA secretary-rules editor. "The progressive penalty is to ensure that a player re-evaluates his technique, with coaching staff support, after he receives a targeting foul. Additionally, the instant replay review changes will ensure that when a player is disqualified, it is clearly warranted."

Before taking effect, the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel must review and approve the committee's proposals. A membership comment period will be conducted to collect feedback for committee consideration. PROP is scheduled to review these proposals April 17. The proposals will be shared with the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports, which will be invited to comment.

Kickoffs

The committee conducted a robust examination of the kickoff play, including the fair-catch change made in 2018. Approximately 12 percent of all kickoff plays in the Football Bowl Subdivision were touchbacks as a result of the fair-catch rule. Data showed that overall injuries on kickoffs declined during the 2018 season.

In an effort to continue this positive momentum, the committee voted to eliminate the two-man wedge formation on all kickoffs. The group will continue to review all aspects of the kickoff play and will consider future adjustments, if needed, in the coming seasons.

Overtime

The committee proposed a tweak to the overtime rules. If a game reaches a fifth overtime, teams would run alternating 2-point plays, instead of starting another drive at the opponent's 25-yard line. This recommendation is being made to limit the number of plays from scrimmage and to bring the game to a conclusion.

The committee also is proposing a two-minute rest period after the second and fourth overtimes. The rules for the first four overtimes would remain unchanged.

In the past four seasons, only seven games across all divisions lasted longer than four overtimes.

“The NCAA overtime rules continue to be very popular with our fans and coaches,” Steve Shaw said. “This change impacts only a small number of our contests but will eliminate plays from long overtime games.”

Blind-Side Blocks

The committee recommended a change in blind-side blocking technique. Players will not be allowed to deliver a blind-side block by attacking an opponent with forcible contact. It will be considered a personal foul and a 15-yard penalty. If the block also includes the elements of targeting, it will be a blind-side block with targeting.

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