



Philosophies for Football Officiating

Ball-Spotting

- The ball can be placed on a yardline to begin the next series after a change possession. For example, if a punt return ends with the ball between team B's 33 and 34 yardlines, move the ball forward to team B's 34 yardline. At all other times, the ball is placed where it became dead. (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.)

Line of Scrimmage

- Officials will work to keep offensive linemen legal and will call a foul 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 the rule.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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, the tight end is not covered up.
 - 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.
 - Anytime a defensive player 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 the play down and penalize the defense.
 - Formations during the execution of a trick or unusual play have the highest degree of scrutiny and should be completely legal.
 - When in question, a quick or abrupt movement by the center or quarterback is a false start.

Fumbles

- When in question, the runner did not fumble the ball and was down.
- When in question regarding whether the quarterback passed or fumbled, it will be ruled a pass.

Defensive Pass Interference

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

- 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.
- Playing through the back of a receiver in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
- Grabbing and restricting a receiver's arm(s) or body in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
 - Extending an arm across the body (arm bar) of a receiver thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of whether or not the defender is looking for the ball.
 - Cutting off or riding the receiver out of the path to the ball by making contact with him without playing the ball. **(this only when it's a big foul)**
 - 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.
 - Face guarding

Offensive Pass Interference

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

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

Not Offensive Pass Interference

- 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.
- It is not offensive pass interference on a pick play if the defensive player is blocking the offensive player when the contact occurs and doesn't make a separate action, or if the contact occurs within one yard of the line of scrimmage.

Other Passing Situations

- When determining if an untouched pass is beyond the line of scrimmage, the neutral zone will be expanded one yard.
- When in question on action against the passer, it is roughing the passer if the defender's intent is to punish.
 - If the passer is contacted after he starts his passing motion, then it may be ruled no intentional grounding due to this contact.
 - If an interception is near the goal line (inside the one yardline) and there is a question as to whether possession is gained in the field of play or end zone, make the play a touchback.

Blocking

- 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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 on the side, it is not a foul. If the blocker is in a "chase mode" all the action must be on the side.
 - 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.
 - Blocks in the back that occur at or about the same time a runner is being tackled shall not be called, unless they are personal foul in nature.
 - A grab of the receiver's jersey that restricts the receiver and takes away his feet should be defensive holding if other criteria are met, and could also be defensive pass interference.
 - Holding can be called even if the quarterback is subsequently sacked as it may be the other half of an offset foul.
 - Illegal block in the back can still 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 touchback occurs and contact is slight (personal foul type actions should always be called).
 - Blocks in the back that are personal fouls in nature should be called regardless of their timing relative to the runner being tackled.

- 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.
- When in question if an illegal block occurs in the end zone or field of play, it occurs in the field of play.

Kicking Play

- 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.
- 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.)
- Blocks in the back that are personal fouls should be called regardless of their timing relative to a fair catch.
- It shall always be roughing the kicker if there is forcible contact to the plant leg, whether that leg is on the ground or not. It shall be running into the kicker if a defender simply "runs through" the kicking leg.
- All other contact shall be based on the severity and the potential for injury to the kicker.

Plays at the Sideline

- If legal contact occurs before the runner has a foot down out of bounds, consider it a legal hit.
- 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.
- 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

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

Personal Fouls

- If action is deemed to be “fighting,” the player must be disqualified. When in question if an act is a flagrant personal foul or fighting, the player is not fighting.
- Players committing flagrant personal fouls must be disqualified.
- 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.
- Spitting on an opponent requires disqualification.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Do not be overly technical in applying Rule 9-5-2.
- Allow for brief, spontaneous, emotional reactions at the end of a play.
- 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.
 - A list of specifically prohibited acts is in Rule 9-5-1 (a) thru (h). 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.

Game Clock

- 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.
- Any time loss due to the clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead-ball foul is called, the clock must be adjusted.

Miscellaneous

- The ankle or wrist are considered part of the foot or hand, respectively and do not make a runner down.