



NATIONAL INDOOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE 2017 RULE BOOK

February 2017

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NATIONAL INDOOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE 2017 RULE BOOK

ARTICLE 1: CONDUCT OF THE GAME

1.1 THE FIELD

A. Regulation Field

- 1) The field shall be 50 yards long by 28 yards wide.
- 2) The end zones shall be a minimum of 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ yards in depth and may be rounded due to hockey board configurations.
- 3) The area bounded by walls shall be called the field-of-play.
- 4) The wall, 8 yards behind each goal line and parallel to it, shall be named the end wall. The end wall may be curved due to the nature of the facility.
- 5) The sidewalls extended from goal line to end walls shall be named the sidewalls of goal.
- 6) The area bounded by the goal line, the end wall and the sidewalls of goal shall be named the goal area.
- 7) The bounds shall be defined as the walls, sidewalls of goal and end walls.
- 8) Goal posts shall be placed and centered on each end line. Goal posts are to be 10 feet high to the crossbar and 10 feet wide. The uprights shall be an additional 20 feet high from the crossbar. The diameter of each post shall be not less than 3 inches or greater than 4 inches. A wishbone type or single shaft goal post assembly may be used provided that it complies with the above standards.

B. Line Markings

- 1) The field-of-play shall be marked every 5 yards with lines extending from wall to wall and parallel to the goal lines.
- 2) Hash marks are 12 inches in length and begin 5 feet from the center of the field. The hash marks are placed on both sides of the field every five yards perpendicular to the yard line.
- 3) The dasher boards marking the sides of the field shall be named sidelines.

C. Playing Fields Less Than Regulation Size

If the regulation length or width of a field is not available because of a wall, seating or any other object, the field shall be marked as closely as possible to regulation, subject to the approval of the League.

1.2 THE BALL

- A. The Home Team will supply enough game balls, approved by the league, to complete the game. A minimum of 20 approved balls shall be used in a game and changed at the discretion of the Referee. The balls shall be kept clean and in playable condition. In the event the Home Team runs out of approved game balls a fine of \$250.00 will be levied by the League. The Home Team will also be required to reimburse the Visiting Team for any balls that were used and lost due to promotional activities.
- B. The Visiting Team is required to bring at least eight (8) new balls to replace any game ball that a Visiting Team player throws into the stands, takes, or is awarded by his coach.

1.3 LENGTH OF GAME

- A. Four quarters to be 15 minutes in length.
- B. Halftime shall be a minimum of 15 minutes and a maximum of 20 minutes in length.
- C. Team time-outs shall be 60 seconds in length.
- D. The two-minute warning shall be two minutes in length and double as a media time-out.
- E. Media time-outs shall be two minutes in length.
- F. Time between the 1st and 2nd Quarter and between the 3rd and 4th Quarter may be not longer than 90 seconds.

1.4 UNIFORMS

The Head Coach shall certify to the Referee prior to the game that all of his players are equipped properly pursuant to the National Indoor Football League's Uniform Rule as described below:

- A. All players shall be numbered 1 through 99.
- B. No two players of the same team may participate on the same down with identical numbers.
- C. Numbers may not be changed during the game to deceive the opponents.
- D. Numbers may be changed during a game, but all such number changes shall be reported to the Referee and the information conveyed to the opposing team and game statisticians.

- E. Players of opposing teams shall wear jerseys of contrasting colors, and all players on a team shall wear jerseys of the same color and design. Such jerseys shall cover all pads worn under the jersey. The jersey must be full length and tucked into the pants or reach the belt line when a player assumes a normal standing position. Any altered jerseys shall be prohibited and players wearing such jerseys shall not be allowed to participate until such jersey is restored to its original condition in compliance with this rule.
- F. Each player must have his surname or nickname (nicknames must be approved by the League office). If a team has players with the same surname, each such player's first initial must appear before the surname on the back of the game jersey.
- G. All players of a team shall wear pants of the same color and design.
- H. All players, including kickers, must wear visible socks or leg coverings that are of the same color, design and length. Any taping or spats over the shoes and/or ankles shall be the same color for all members of the same team.
- I. All players, other than a kicker lined up to attempt a free kick or a scrimmage kick, must wear shoes suitable for football or turf activities. No slippers, boots or other shoes not designed for football or turf activities may be worn in a game. The umpire is the sole judge of the legality of equipment.
- J. If worn, gloves or hand pads must be gray in color, or may be the appropriate colors of the team's jersey. However, gloves which are the same color or nearly the same color as the game ball may not be worn.
- K. All players shall wear the following mandatory equipment:
 - 1) Helmets and facemasks, commercially manufactured for professional, college or high school football. All players of a team shall wear helmets of the same color and design;
 - 2) Shoulder pads;
 - 3) An intra-oral mouthpiece; and
 - 4) Hip-, tailbone-, thigh- and knee-pads are optional and by the discretion of the coaching staff and the Team's ownership.
- L. Illegal equipment
 - 1) Any equipment that, in the judgment of the umpire, is dangerous to other players.
 - 2) Hard, abrasive or unyielding substances worn on the hand, wrist, forearm or elbow, unless covered with adequate foam padding as approved by the umpire.
 - 3) Any metal or other hard substance that may be dangerous to a player or his opponent.
 - 4) Helmets, jerseys or gloves that will conceal the ball by closely resembling the ball in color.

- 5) Adhesive material, paint, grease or any other slippery substance applied to a player's body or clothing that may affect the ball or an opponent.
- 6) Jerseys that are taped or tied in any manner.
- 7) Any visible bandana worn under a helmet.
- 8) Towels, streamers or long belts. Only the quarterback and the center may wear a white towel, which must be of reasonable size. The umpire's decision on the size of the towel may not be appealed.
- 9) Eye shield that is not clear, unless there is a physician's prescription on file, and the official has given approval.
- 10) Any adornment to the uniform, which serves no football purpose, but only serves to highlight the individual's appearance.

M. The umpire is the sole judge of legal and illegal equipment, and may rule on such without appeal.

1.5 POSSESSION

- A. Possession means having the ball firmly in hand or hands, in arm or arms or under the body.
- B. When players of the opposite teams have possession of the ball, it shall belong to the player who first gained possession and who has not lost possession.
- C. If players of both teams legally gain possession of the ball simultaneously it shall belong to the team that previously had possession.
- D. A ball not in the possession of a player is still in play. A ball will be considered a fumble if the last player in possession of the ball has lost control of it.

1.6 DEAD BALL

- A. The ball is dead:
 - 1) When a field official blows his whistle;
 - 2) When an official has signaled a score;
 - 3) When the ball goes out-of-bounds;
 - 4) When a forward pass is declared incomplete;
 - 5) When a kicked ball strikes the opponent's goal post assembly in flight, without first touching the ground, a player or an official and is ruled no good;

- 6) When the ball carrier is tackled and his forward progress has been halted (tackling is defined as the act of grasping or encircling a ball carrier with hands and arms);
- 7) When the ball carrier behind the line of scrimmage is firmly in the grasp and control of a tackler to the extent that he cannot throw the ball;
- 8) When a ball carrier is tackled and driven back towards his own goal line the official must assume that he was attempting to advance the ball and that only the actual contact with an opponent prevented such advance. Therefore, the most forward point of advance shall be considered the point where the ball became dead;
- 9) When the ball carrier is contacted by an opponent and loses his balance so that a portion of his body, other than his hands or feet touched the ground, the ball shall be dead at the point where it was held when he touched the ground;
- 10) When the quarterback or any other player, in possession of the ball, intentionally kneels on the ground;
- 11) When the quarterback, in possession of the ball, dives in a feet first sliding motion, the ball shall be declared dead at the point it was held when another part of the quarterback's body, other than his hands or feet, touched the ground;
- 12) When a player, having possession of the ball in his own goal area, intentionally kneels on the ground;
- 13) When a ball carrier, in the judgment of the official, is not attempting to advance the ball, the official shall immediately declare the ball dead;
- 14) When a player in possession of the ball is down and makes no attempt to regain his feet, particularly if the player is vulnerable to a hit by a defensive player; and
- 15) A ball, lying on the ground and not in possession of a player, is not dead until blown dead by an official.

1.7 TEAMS

For reference: the team that puts the ball in play will be identified as the Offense (Team A) and the other team will be called Defense (Team B). The game is played by two opposing teams of eight men.

1.8 TEAM CAPTAINS

At all times each team must have on the field a player designated as captain, and so identified to the Referee. The captain shall be the sole communicator between his team and the officials and he may appeal to the Referee only on questions of interpretation and application of rules. Such consultations should be held apart from other players on the field.

The captain may request the Referee to call in the yardsticks to determine whether a first down has been made or how much distance is required.

If, in the judgment of the Referee, the position of the ball is within one yard of the first down marker he may signal time-out and call for the measurement, otherwise he shall refuse the request and order play to continue. The Referee's decision cannot be disputed. A captain is entitled to an explanation of any decision but no prolonged discussion is to be allowed. When the yardsticks are called from the sidelines to determine whether a first down has been gained the on-field captain for each team shall be the only player permitted in the vicinity of the measurement. In case of a foul, the captain of the non-offending team shall be given the choice of the penalty or the option provided.

1.9 STARTING AND TIMING

A. Start of Game

- 1) The game shall start promptly at the scheduled time.
- 2) If a team is late appearing on the field at the start of the first or third periods the team shall be penalized for delay of game.

Penalty: 5 yards – scrimmage down after kickoff

- 3) At the start of the game the captains of both teams shall meet the Referee at center field. The Referee or a dignitary shall toss a coin with the visiting team captain making the call. The captain of the team winning the coin toss has the following choices:
 - a) Kicking off or receiving the kickoff; or
 - b) Which end of the field to defend; or
 - c) Defer choice to second half.
- 4) The captain of the other team shall have first choice at the start of the second half when both captains shall again meet the officials at center field to inform them of their choices.

B. Playing and Rest Periods

- 1) The length of a game shall be 60 minutes of actual playing time, divided into four periods of 15 minutes each. The scoreboard clock shall be the official time for the game, and shall be operated by the timekeeper under the direction and control of the Referee.
- 2) Goals shall be changed at the end of the first and third periods. At the start of the second and fourth periods the ball shall be put at a point corresponding exactly to the point at the other end of the field where the ball became dead at the end of the previous period. It shall be put into play in exactly the same manner as if the play had not been interrupted.
- 3) The kickoff to start the second half shall take place exactly twenty minutes after the conclusion of the first half and a team shall be subject to penalty if the players are not lined upon the field ready to start the second half.

C. Clock Stoppage

- 1) Time shall start when the ball is touched following the kickoff at the start of a half and shall continue until the ball is ruled dead and an official signals to the Timekeeper that time shall stop for any of the following reasons:
 - a) When a score is made (the game clock and 25-second clock start on the Referee's "ready for play" signal on a point after touchdown attempt);
 - b) For the application of penalties (the game clock and 25 second clock start on the officials signal when the ball is ready for play);
 - c) For delay caused by player injury;
 - d) When time expires at the end of each period;
 - e) On incomplete passes after the two-minute warning has been given in any half;
 - f) When a player requests a team time-out;
 - g) If a touchdown is scored on the last play of a period the period shall be extended to include the point after touchdown attempt;
 - h) When the Referee deems it necessary to suspend play; or
 - i) Anytime under the two-minute warning, if a team has no time-outs remaining and an injury occurs to a member of the team behind in the scoring that stops the clock, ten seconds will be deducted from the clock prior to resuming the game.
- 2) If in any period, time expired during a play in which a foul occurs, the offended team may:
 - a) Decline the penalty and accept the play which has ended the period, or
 - b) Accept the penalty, in which case the team entitled to possession shall be required to put the ball into play. If the additional play is terminated by an official's whistle prior to the ball being put into play, the penalty shall be applied and the period extended for another play.

D. Running Clock

- 1) After a stopped clock for any reason, time shall start again on the "ready for play" signal of the Referee, when it is ready to be scrimmaged.
- 2) After a stopped clock for any reason, the time will start on the snap of the ball:
 - a) After a delay of game foul;
 - b) Following an official's time-out due to crowd noise;
 - c) Following a team time-out or a media time-out;

- d) Following a play during which possession changed in the last two minutes in any half;
- e) Following an incomplete legal forward pass in the last two minutes in any half;
- f) Following an out-of-bounds in the last two minutes of either half.

E. Team Time-out

During a half a team shall be permitted to call three time-outs, subject to the following:

- 1) The time-out may be requested by any player on the field and may be directed to any official on the field.
- 2) The time-out shall be 60 seconds in duration.
- 3) The game time will resume on the snap.

F. Media Time-Out

- 1) During each quarter, two media time-outs may be utilized for on-field promotions, contests or performances, or to air radio and television advertisements.
- 2) Media time-outs will be taken as close as possible to the 9-minute mark in all four quarters and near the 4-minute mark in the first and third quarter. In the second and fourth quarter, the two-minute warning will double as a media time-out. All media time-outs will be taken at a change of possession or following a score and are at the discretion of the Referee.
- 3) A media time-out will be administered like a team time-out. One coach may enter the field to consult with his team, or the team may assemble in front of the team bench and consult with more than one coach.
- 4) A media time-out shall be two minutes in length.
- 5) Media time-outs are not required, but home management must consult with the visiting team before a decision to waive media time-outs is made. The game officials must be informed of any decision to eliminate or modify the provisions of the media time-outs.
- 6) The game time will resume on the snap.

G. Ball in Play

- 1) The ball is considered in play until an official stops the action by sounding his whistle.
- 2) The game shall not be stopped because of injury of a player until the ball is dead.
- 3) The Referee shall not stop the game to impose a penalty until the ball is dead.

H. Delay of Game

The game shall not be delayed except by permission of the Referee. Any unauthorized delay shall be subject to a penalty.

- 1) If the Referee finds it necessary to suspend play while a player in the game has repair done to his equipment, that player shall be required to leave the game for a minimum of one play. If the player does not leave the game, the team is charged with a time-out.
- 2) If the Referee finds it necessary to suspend play while an injured player received medical attention on the field that player shall be required to leave the game for a minimum of one play. If the player does not leave the game, the team is charged with a time-out.
- 3) On a kickoff, the kicking team shall be required to kick the ball within 25 seconds of notification by the Referee that play is to commence.
- 4) If a receiving team player interferes with the placement of the ball, after it has been declared in play by the Referee, his team shall be penalized.

Penalty: Delay of Game - 5 yards

I. Crowd Noise, Music or Public Address Interference

- 1) If in-arena music, lights, the scoreboard or the public address system interferes with the team in any way, the Referee shall give the home team one warning and thereafter shall penalize the home team. In-arena music and public address announcements or comments must be concluded by the time the offensive team reaches the line of scrimmage.

Penalty: Delay of Game - 5 yards

- 2) If in-arena music, lights, the scoreboard or the public address system continue to interfere with the team or playing of the game, the Referee may also take away the sideline privileges of the home team coach.

Penalty: Removal of coach's sideline privileges

J. Ball in Goal

The ball is in goal if it is on or behind the goal line.

1.10 OVERTIME RULES

A. Coin Toss

If the score is tied at the end of the second half, there shall be a two-minute intermission, followed by an overtime period. Prior to the start of the overtime, the captains of both teams shall meet the Officials at center field to inform them of their choices.

The Referee shall toss a coin with the visiting team captain making the call. The captain of the team winning the coin toss shall choose one of the following options:

- 1) Offense or defense, with the offense at the 25 yard line to start the first series;
- 2) Which end of the field will be used for both series of that overtime period.

The winner of the toss may not defer his choice. The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option for the first overtime period, and shall have first choice of the two options for subsequent even-numbered periods. The winner of the coin toss shall have first choice of the two options for subsequent odd-numbered periods. No additional coin toss is conducted in additional overtime periods.

B. Overtime Period(s)

An overtime period shall consist of a series by each team, with each team putting the ball in play by a snap on or between the hash marks on the 25-yard line.

C. Team Series

Each team retains the ball during a series until it scores or fails to make a first down. The ball remains alive after a change of team possession until it is declared dead, however, Team A may not have a first and ten if it again possesses the ball after a change of team possession.

D. Scoring

The team scoring the greater number of points during the regulation game and the overtime period(s) shall be declared the winner. There shall be an equal number of series as defined in C. above, in each extra period, except if Team B (the team first on defense in a given period) scores during a period other than on a try. If the teams remain tied at the end of an overtime period, a subsequent overtime period is played. Beginning in the third overtime period, teams scoring touchdowns must attempt a two-point conversion. A one-point try, although not illegal, will not score a point.

E. Fouls After Team B Possession

- 1) Distance penalties by either team are automatically declined by rule in overtime periods. (Exception: Dead ball fouls and live ball fouls enforced as dead ball fouls).
- 2) Scores by the fouling team are cancelled.
- 3) If there are offsetting fouls, whether one or both occur after Team B's possession, the down is not replayed.
- 4) Penalties for flagrant personal fouls committed after a change of possession carry over to the next possession series within that period or to the next extra period.

Penalty: 10 yards – flagrant personal foul, and player is ejected, if warranted

F. Timeouts

Each team will have one time-out in each overtime period. Time-outs do not carry over from the second half, or from any previous overtime period. Media time-outs are not permitted during any overtime period, nor may team time-outs be extended for media purposes.

1.11 OUT OF BOUNDS

A. Definitions:

- 1) Sidewalls are in play for a player in possession of the ball until contact is made with the wall as a result of defensive contact or no forward motion and play is blown dead. If a loose ball (fumble, muff, forward or backward pass, bat or kick) touches sidewall the ball is dead, and the play will be blown dead.
- 2) End zone walls are in play for a player, but not the ball, when catching a pass or fielding a free kick or scrimmage kick.
- 3) End zone walls and sidewalls are out of bounds for the ball. The ball is dead and the play shall be blown dead immediately anytime a loose ball, including a forward pass, backward pass, bat, muff, fumble, free kick or scrimmage kick strikes the end zone wall.
- 4) A player who stands on the top of the end zone or side walls, or utilizes an end wall or sidewall to enhance their vertical height shall be ruled out of bounds.

B. Rulings

- 1) The ball shall remain in play when it is knocked or batted back into the field of play by a player who is off the ground and who has not touched the ground or any object out of bounds.
- 2) If a player gains possession of the ball while off the ground in bounds and is contacted by an opponent in a manner which causes him to land out of bounds in possession of the ball such player shall retain possession.
- 3) If a player gains possession of the ball near the sideline and touches the ground in bounds with his first step he shall retain possession even if his next step takes him out of bounds.

C. Kick Out of Bounds – Free Kicks

- 1) When a free kick goes out of bounds through the end zone before touching the ground or a player of the receiving team it shall belong to the receiving team at the 25-yard line. The back wall is considered to be out of bounds in the end zone when touched by a free kick.

- 2) When a free kicked ball goes out of bounds through the sideline, beyond the 25-yard line, before touching the ground or a player of the receiving team it will belong to the receiving team at the 25-yard line. If the spot it went out of bounds, before touching the ground or a player of the receiving team, is behind the 25-yardline the ball will belong to the receiving at the spot it went out of bounds.
- 3) When a free kick goes out of bounds through the end zone after first touching the ground or a player of the receiving team it shall belong to the receiving team at the 5-yard line. The back wall is considered to be out of bounds in the end zone when touched by a free kick.
- 4) When a free kicked ball goes out of bounds through the sideline, after touching the ground or a player of either team, and before possession is gained, it will belong to the receiving team at the spot the ball went out of bounds.
- 5) When a free kick hits the ceiling, or any object suspended from the ceiling of the facility, it is immediately dead, and it will belong to the receiving team at the 25-yard line, unless the Referee, with great certainty, can spot the ball at the spot it hit the ceiling behind the 25-yard line.

For the purposes of free kicks, beyond the 25-yard line means on the receiving team's side of the 25-yard line, and behind the 25-yard line means the kicking team's side of the 25-yard line. In some facilities, there may be certain items suspended from both the walls and the ceiling and appropriate ground rules shall be adopted prior to the beginning of the season.

D. Kick Out of Bounds – Scrimmage Kick

- 1) When a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds through the end zone it shall belong to the receiving team at the 5-yard line. The back wall is considered to be out of bounds in the end zone when touched by a scrimmage kick.
- 2) When a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds through the sideline beyond the 25-yard line, before touching the ground or a member of the receiving team, it will belong to the receiving team at the 25-yard line.
- 3) When a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds behind the 25-yard line, it will belong to the receiving team at the spot it went out of bounds.
- 4) When a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds through the sideline after touching the ground or a member of either team, and before possession is gained, it will belong to the receiving team at the spot the ball went out of bounds.
- 5) When a scrimmage kick hits the ceiling, or any object suspended from the ceiling of the facility, the ball is immediately dead and it will belong to the defensive team at the 25-yard line, unless the Referee, with great certainty, can spot the ball at the spot it hit the ceiling behind the 25-yard line.

For the purposes of scrimmage kicks, beyond the 25-yard line means on the receiving team's side of the 25-yard line, and behind the 25-yard line means the kicking team's side of the 25-yard line.

In some facilities, there may be certain items suspended from both the walls and the ceiling and appropriate ground rules should be adopted prior to the beginning of the season.

E. Fumble Out of Bounds

When on any play the ball is fumbled out of bounds or touches a player in the field of play and then goes out of bounds, it shall belong to the team that last possessed the ball in the field of play. If the ball is fumbled backwards then the ball shall next be scrimmaged at the point where the ball went out of bounds. If the ball was fumbled forward, the ball is spotted at the point where the ball was fumbled.

F. Fumble Out of Bounds in Opponents Goal Area

- 1) When a player fumbles the ball, other than by kicking, from the field of play over the opponent's goal line and goes out of bounds in the goal area without the ball touching an opponent, it is a touchback.
- 2) When a player directs the ball, other than by kicking, from the field of play over the opponent's goal line where an opponent recovers it or an opponent touches it before going out of bounds in the goal area, there is no score and the ball is awarded to the opponent's team at its 5-yard line. If in attempting to run the ball out of the goal area the opponent's team commits an infraction, the penalty is applied from the 5-yard line.
- 3) If the defense recovers a fumble or intercepts a pass in the end zone and does not forward it outside of the end zone, then they will have possession at the 5-yard line.

G. Lost Possession Into Own Goal Area

When a player fumbles or directs the ball from the field of play into his own goal area, where the ball goes out of bounds without possession being gained by either team, a safety shall be awarded.

H. Fourth Down Fumble Rule

On fourth down only the offensive player who fumbled the ball may recover the advance the ball for the offense. Any defensive player may still recover and advance a fumble on fourth down. A try for point (PAT) following a touchdown is considered a fourth down play. (NCAA fourth down fumble rule.)

1.12 SUBSTITUTION

- A. A substitute may enter the field of play at any time the ball is dead and only at that time.
- B. If the substitute enters the game to the extent that he can communicate with a teammate on the field he must remain in the game for at least one play.
- C. A player leaving the game shall proceed directly to the sideline on which his bench is located and, thence, outside the field of play to his bench.
- D. A team is not permitted to use player substitution as a means of deceiving the opponent.

- E. If a team breaks its huddle with more than eight players, it shall immediately be penalized for illegal substitution.

Penalty: Illegal Substitution - 5 yards

- F. If a team has more than eight players on the field at the snap of the ball, it is illegal participation.

Penalty: Illegal Participation - 10 yards

ARTICLE 2: SCORING

2.1 POINTS FOR SCORING

A. The following point total can be scored by the offense and the defense:

Touchdown	6 points (offense)
Field Goal	3 points (offense)
Drop Kick Field Goal	4 points (offense)
Safety	2 points (defense)
Point after touchdown by running/passing	2 points (offense)
Returned PAT to goal following PAT	2 points (defense)
Point after touchdown by kick	1 point (offense)
Rouge-kickoff downed in end zone	1 point (kicking team)

B. The team having scored the most points at the conclusion of the game is the winner.

2.2 TYPES OF SCORING

A. Touchdown (TD) (6 points)

- 1) A touchdown is scored when a player, with the ball in his possession:
 - a) Is in his opponent's goal area, or
 - b) Crosses or touches the plane of his opponent's goal line.
- 2) The ball becomes dead at the instant of scoring a touchdown.

B. Field Goal (FG) (3 points/4 points)

- 1) A field goal is scored when a player kicks the ball:
 - a) By drop kick from scrimmage formation between the opponent's uprights and over the crossbar, or
 - b) By place kick from scrimmage formation between the opponent's uprights and over the crossbar. The ball, once having been kicked, cannot touch the ground before breaking the plane of the uprights.
- 2) Touching of a field goal kick in flight **"BEHIND THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE"** by players of either team or game officials once the ball has been kicked is ignored; however, batting of the ball in flight **"BEYOND THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE"** by any player is not permissible.
- 3) The ball in flight during a field goal attempt may be caught in the goal area and advanced into the field of play by a defensive player. A ball not breaking the plane of the goal line remains a live ball and may be advanced by a defensive player.

- 4) If an opponent of the kicking team gains possession of the ball after an unsuccessful field goal attempt, whether blocked or the ball fell short of goal, the ball is live and may be advanced for a touchdown.
- 5) If the ball becomes dead inbounds in the field of play beyond the line of scrimmage, or goes out of bounds beyond the line of scrimmage, it belongs to the receiving team at that point.

C. Safety (S) (2 points)

A safety is scored when a player is:

- 1) In possession of the ball in his own team's goal area, other than on a free kick, and the ball is declared dead, or
- 2) Responsible for bringing or placing the ball anywhere behind his own team's goal line by carry, kick, fumble, bat, or backward pass, or snap and subsequently the ball is then declared dead, or
- 3) Intentional grounding while in the goal area.

D. Point After Touchdown (PAT) (1/2 points)

- 1) After scoring a touchdown, the offense will have an attempt to score again by a run, pass, or kick attempt from the 2-yard line.
 - a) A kick attempt is worth one point.
 - b) A two-point attempt may be tried from a scrimmage formation or may be attempted by a fake kicking formation. 2 points are awarded upon running or passing successfully into the goal area.
- 2) If the defense gains possession of the ball either by fumble recovery, pass interceptions, or blocked kick recovery during the point after touchdown attempt; they may advance the ball and score two points by advancing it into the opposite goal area. A backward pass is considered a lateral and can be recovered as a fumble and advance as such.
- 3) A try for PAT point(s) is not required if the outcome of the game is already determined.

E. Rouge (R) (1 point)

A rouge is scored when a member of the receiving team "DOES NOT ATTEMPT" to advance a free kick out of his own end zone, AND is down with the ball in his possession in his own end zone. Rouge may only be scored on a free kick.

ARTICLE 3: SCRIMMAGE

3.1 LINES OF SCRIMMAGE AND SCRIMMAGE ZONE

The lines of scrimmage are imaginary lines that extend from sideline to sideline, parallel to the goal lines and passing through the foremost and rear most points of the football. The area between the line of scrimmage (the length of the football) is the neutral zone. The offensive line of scrimmage is on the offensive team's side of the football while the defensive line of scrimmage is on the defensive team's side of the football. Both offensive and defensive players are considered to be on their respective lines of scrimmage when they are within one yard of their respective lines.

3.2 ALLEY

- A. The alley is a zone designated by imaginary lines perpendicular to the outside shoulder of the offensive lineman that runs from end line to end line. The alley is not to exceed five yards wide.
- B. A defensive player "blitzing" must be in the alley, and out of the defensive box, at the snap of the ball five yards from the line of scrimmage. The "blitzer" must notify the officials by raising his hand prior to the snap of the ball.

3.3 BOX

- A. The box is a zone designated by imaginary lines perpendicular to the outside shoulder of the offensive lineman, not to exceed five yards wide, and five yards deep on either side of the line of scrimmage. The depth of the defensive box is reduced to the distance between the line of scrimmage and the goal line when the ball is snapped inside the five-yard line.
- B. No part of an offensive player in motion may be in the box at the snap. Offensive players in motion may be in the offensive box prior to the snap, provided they are not in the box at the snap.

No part of a defensive player, other than the three down defensive linemen, may be in the defensive box at the snap.

Penalty: Illegal Offense or Defense - 5 yards, Live Ball Foul

Note: Officials need to consider the circumstances that may have caused a defensive player, while mirroring the actions of an offensive player, to be in the box at the snap, and may not allow the offense to generate penalties in this manner.

3.4 OFFENSIVE ALIGNMENTS

A. Positioning

- 1) After the “ready for play” signal from the official and just prior to the snap, all offensive players are either on the line of scrimmage or in the backfield. Offensive players are considered in the backfield when any part of their body does not intersect with an imaginary line drawn parallel to the goal lines, from sideline to sideline, through the waist of the center.
- 2) There shall be at least four offensive players on the line of scrimmage prior to the scrimmage snap; three of who are ineligible receivers. Offensive players may set in two, three or four point stances. To be considered on the line of scrimmage, offensive players must have their shoulders substantially parallel to the line of scrimmage. The ineligible receivers are the center and the two guards who are aligned on either side of the center. All eligible receivers, who are set at the snap, must line up at least three yards from the nearest guard. The ineligible receivers must have ineligible receiver numbers.
- 3) The eligible offensive player(s) whether on the line of scrimmage or in the backfield must have an eligible receiver number.
 - a) Eligible receivers shall be numbered 1-49 or 80-99.
 - b) Ineligible receivers shall be numbered 50-79.
- 4) No more than two backs, including the quarterback, may be in the offensive box at snap, both of who must have been in a set position for at least one second prior to the snap.

Penalty: Illegal Formation - 5 yards

Penalty: Illegal numbering - 5 yards

- 5) Ineligible Receivers Downfield

On any pass play where the pass crosses the line of scrimmage, ineligible receivers may not be more than three yards downfield (expanded neutral zone) until the pass has crossed the line of scrimmage. Such restrictions end if the pass is deflected by a defensive player.

Penalty: Ineligible downfield - 5 yards

3.5 DEFENSIVE ALIGNMENTS

A. Positioning

- 1) After the “ready for play” by the official, all defensive players must be on their side of the line of scrimmage.

Just prior to the snap, there must be at least three defensive players on the line of scrimmage aligned head-to-head or shoulder-to-shoulder with the offensive guards. In determining whether the defensive player has covered the offensive guard, the officials shall use the outside foot of the offensive guards with the inside foot of the defensive lineman for the alignment. The defensive lineman covering the offensive center must be head-to-head with the center. Defensive lineman must be in a 3- or 4-point stance.

- 2) Defensive linebackers are players behind their line of scrimmage but within six yards of the scrimmage zone in the 5-yard belt. The 5-yard belt extends sideline to sideline, from the defensive line of scrimmage to 5 yards parallel to the defensive line of scrimmage. Defensive linebackers may align themselves on the line of scrimmage with offensive eligible receivers in set positions at the scrimmage snap. Defensive linebackers may not align themselves with the quarterback or with offensive eligible receivers who are in set positions and in the alley at the snap. Defensive linebackers are not required to align themselves with receivers who are in motion. When the opponent is inside the defense's 5-yard line, linebackers may align themselves on the goal line.
- 3) Defensive lineman may drop into pass coverage, however must first make contact with their offensive lineman counterpart or the space that offensive lineman occupied at the snap.
- 4) Defensive players may not stunt, which is defined as an intentional act involving two or more players. Individual stunts, twists and other individual defensive techniques are permitted.

DEFENSIVE ALIGNMENTS (RULE 3.5—Summary/Examples)

1. Three (3) defensive lineman **MUST** be on the defensive line, aligned head to head or shoulder to shoulder with the offensive guards (must have a piece of the opponent, and that is determined by aligning the outside foot of the offensive guard with the inside foot of the defensive end), and the defensive nose guard must be head to head with the offensive center.
2. Defensive lineman **MUST** be in a three or four point stance at the snap
3. Defensive linebackers/cornerbacks **MAY** line up on the line of scrimmage head up on a set eligible receiver who is not in the box (i.e., end, flanker, wingback, slotback). The eligible receiver does not have to be on the line of scrimmage for the defensive player to take a position on the line.
4. Defensive players "covering" set offensive players in the box, **MUST** be at least five yards behind the line of scrimmage.
5. Defensive linebackers/cornerbacks **MAY NOT** line up on the line of scrimmage if there is no corresponding set eligible receiver (cannot be on the line of scrimmage when no eligible receiver exists on the offensive side of the ball). In this case the linebacker/cornerback **MUST BE** at least five yards behind the line of scrimmage

6. A defensive linebacker/cornerback MAY mirror an eligible receiver in motion maintaining a similar distance from the line of scrimmage. If the offensive player's motion is towards, or turns towards, the line of scrimmage, the defensive player MAY likewise approach the defensive line of scrimmage to meet the eligible receiver.
7. Defensive linebackers/cornerbacks may not align themselves with the quarterback or offensive eligible receivers who are in set positions and in the alley at the snap.
8. Defensive linebackers are not required to align themselves with eligible offensive receivers in motion, and if they are not aligned with an eligible receiver, they must be at least five yards behind the line of scrimmage.
9. Inside their own five-yard line, defensive players may align themselves on the goal line.

B. Blitzing

- 1) Only one defensive player may blitz at any one time and such blitzing must occur within the area designated by the inside shoulders of the guards and the line of scrimmage at the scrimmage snap. The defensive player blitzing must indicate he is eligible to blitz by raising his hand above his head in a whirling motion prior to the scrimmage snap. He is not required to blitz.
- 2) Additionally, this player must start behind the 5-yard box and in the alley at the scrimmage snap.

Penalty: Blitzing infraction - 5 yards, previous spot

3.6 SCRIMMAGE PLAY

A. Ready for Scrimmage Play

The Referee shall begin scrimmage play by giving the "Ready for Play" signal. This signifies that the offensive team has 25 seconds in which to put the ball in play by means of a scrimmage snap, scrimmage kick or a free kick. Each team shall not delay in returning to their respective line of scrimmage and huddle once play has ceased.

Penalty: Delay of game – 5 yards, Dead ball foul

B. Scrimmage Snap

The offensive team may put the football into scrimmage play by means of a scrimmage snap once the Referee has given the ready for scrimmage play signal. A scrimmage snap is initiated by the center that shall take his position over the football facing his opponent's goal line. He shall put the ball in play by snapping it back between his legs in one continuous motion to another offensive player who is behind the line of scrimmage in the backfield. The ball must leave the center's hands and he shall not touch the ball again until it has been in possession of another player.

Penalty: Illegal procedure - 5 yards, previous spot

C. Illegal Movements

- 1) The center shall not fake a snap or, having assumed his stance over the ball, bob his head, move his shoulders, flex his knees, or make some other movement simulating a snap in an effort to draw the defense across its line of scrimmage.

Penalty: Snap Infraction - 5 yards, Dead ball foul

- 2) After the line of scrimmage is set, no player of the offense may be offside.

Penalty: Offsides - 5 yards, Dead ball foul

- 3) After the line of scrimmage is set, no player of the defense may be in the neutral zone at the snap.

Penalty: Offsides - 5 yards, Live ball foul

- 4) After the line of scrimmage is set, no player of the defense may make contact with an offensive player prior to the snap, nor be unabated to the quarterback.

Penalty: Encroachment – 5 yards, Dead ball foul

Situations:

- 1) Defensive player jumps in neutral zone, gets back with no contact with the offense and returns to his three- or four-point stance. No foul.
- 2) Defensive player jumps through the neutral zone with no contact with the offense, ball is not snapped (unabated to the quarterback). Kill play. Dead ball – Encroachment on the defense.
- 3) Defense jumps into the neutral zone, the offense flinches. Dead ball – Encroachment on defense.
- 4) Defense jumps into the neutral zone, the defense contacts offense. Dead ball – Encroachment on defense.
- 5) Defense jumps in scrimmage zone, no contact but the ball is snapped. Offside defense, the down is played and offense gets choice of accepting the penalty or the result of the down.
- 6) A down defensive lineman fakes charge but does not violate the neutral zone, offense moves. Dead ball – Illegal procedure on offense but defense is warned that the next time he fakes a charge, the foul will be on the defense.

- 5) The offensive team may have up to three players in lateral or forward motion toward their opponent's goal line prior to the scrimmage snap, as long as:
 - a) They clearly started in motion while being in their backfield.
 - b) The player must be behind or at the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. Players in motion cannot be covered by another eligible receiver, nor can they cover another set receiver or receiver in motion. However, if a man in motion sets on the line of scrimmage

- i) outside the original set receiver, the original set receiver is covered; or
 - ii) inside the set original set receiver, the man in motion is then covered.
- c) They are not in the box at the scrimmage snap.
 - d) An offensive player in motion and in the box at the scrimmage snap is illegally in motion, and not eligible to receive a hand off or a pass. Players deeper than 5 yards may take a hand off, or receive a forward or backward pass.

With exception of the offensive player(s) in motion, all other offensive players shall remain motionless for a period of at least one second prior to the scrimmage snap.

Penalty: Illegal motion – 5 yards, previous spot

Penalty: Illegal touching (motion back in the box also receiving a pass or handoff) – 5 yards from the spot of foul

- 6) No offensive player on the line of scrimmage may make any motion that simulates the start of the play prior to the scrimmage snap. All offensive players on the line of scrimmage must remain motionless for at least one second immediately prior to the scrimmage snap.

Penalty: False Start – 5 yards, dead ball foul

- 7) No offensive player in the backfield shall simulate the start of the play prior to the scrimmage snap. This includes the quarterback, having assumed his position under the center, bobbing his head, moving his shoulders or flexing his knees, making any quick movement, using his voice inflection, or any other movement or signal which is an attempt to simulate the start of the play prior to the scrimmage snap.

Penalty: False Start – 5 yards, dead ball foul

- 8) All offensive players in motion at the snap may block only above the waist.

Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 yards

3.7 SERIES OF DOWNS

A. Downs

- 1) The offensive team shall have a series of four downs to gain a distance of ten yards. A down shall be repeated following the application of a penalty, unless the penalty requires a loss of down or an automatic first down. If in a series of four downs the offensive team has not gained the required ten yards, the ball shall be awarded to the opponents at the point where the ball became dead. If the required ten yards are gained, a new series is awarded to the offensive team. A series of downs may be interrupted:

- a) When the offensive team does not make its ten yards for a new series;
- b) When the offensive team kicks the ball out of bounds or it crosses the offensive line scrimmage, or
- c) When the ball is intercepted or recovered by the defense.

B. Measurement

- 1) The offensive or defensive team captain may request the Referee at any time for a measurement of distance required for an offensive team's new series of downs to be awarded. The Referee, in his discretion, may grant the request or not, but he may at any time make such a measurement himself.
- 2) In making such a measurement, the Referee will measure from the furthest most marked yard line perpendicularly to the forward point of the ball. He may, if required, rotate the ball so that its long axis is parallel to the sidelines. A touchdown cannot be awarded as a result of such a rotation.
- 3) If the offensive team has failed to make a new series by advancing the ball ten yards at the end of the four downs, the ball is not moved and its rear end becomes the forefront for the new series awarded the former defensive team, which has become the offensive team.

ARTICLE 4: KICKING

4.1 DEFINITIONS

A. Kicked Ball

- 1) A kicked ball is the intentional striking of the ball by a player's foot or leg below the knee.
- 2) If a ball accidentally strikes a player's foot or leg, it is not ruled a kick.

B. Place Kick

- 1) A place kick is a legal kick made by kicking the ball after it has been placed in a fixed position on the ground. The ball, also, may be held in position on the ground by a teammate of the kicker. No substance or device may be used to improve the kicker's footing.
- 2) A place kick may be used for a kickoff, scrimmage kick, or free kick following a safety.
- 3) On a kickoff or free kick, the ball may be placed on a one-inch tee. On a point after touchdown **"OR FIELD GOAL"** attempt, a kicking tee may not be used.

C. Drop Kick

- 1) A legal dropkick by a player who drops the ball to the ground and kicks it when it is rising from the ground or has touched the ground.
- 2) A drop kick may be used for a kickoff, a scrimmage kick or a free kick following a safety.

D. Loose Ball

- 1) A loose ball occurs when the ball is kicked or blocked during a kick on a kickoff or a kick from scrimmage or during a pass or fumble. It continues to be a loose ball until a player secures possession of the ball or it becomes dead by rule, whichever comes first.
- 2) During a free kick, it is first touching, if the ball has been touched by any kicking team player before it crosses the receiver's free-kick line and before any player on the receiving team has touched it. The receiving team may elect to take possession of the ball at the spot of first touching, or any spot if there is more than one spot of first touching.

Penalty: Ball is awarded to opponent at the spot of first touching, or option of additional first touching.

- 3) It is a foul if the ball is touched by any player of the kicking team and goes out of bounds in an opponent's goal area.

Penalty: Ball is awarded to opponent at their 5-yard line.

- 4) It is a foul if the ball is last touched by any player of the kicking team and goes out of bounds in his own goal area.

Penalty: Ball is awarded to opponent at their 15-yard line or 2 points scored (safety).

- 5) A loose ball by the offense across the line of scrimmage does not interrupt the continuity of downs.

E. Scrimmage Kicking Team Restrictions

- 1) If a team lines up in kicking formation, they may attempt a fake scrimmage kick.
- 2) Scrimmage Kick Personnel
 - a) 5 men down and 1 personal protector, holder and kicker
 - b) Neither the holder nor kicker may be in motion prior to the snap.
- 3) Pass eligibility of players in a kicking formation are determined by position and number. Each player on the end of the line and each player in the backfield is an eligible pass receiver, provided they are also wearing an eligible receiver number, which is 1 to 49 or 80 to 99. A player wearing an ineligible number and positioned at the end of the line may become eligible by reporting to the Referee prior to play, and the Referee shall announce such eligibility over the public address system.

4.2 FREE KICK

A. Spot of Free Kick

The ball shall be kicked off by a place kick or drop kick from any point between the sidelines on the kicking team's goal line at the beginning of each half of the game, after a successful field goal, after a successful or unsuccessful point after touchdown and after a safety. All free kicks must occur from the goal line. Any penalty which otherwise might be enforced on the succeeding play, will be enforced on the first scrimmage play following the free kick.

B. Rules of Free Kick

- 1) The ball, unless touched by a member of the receiving team, must be kicked more than 10 yards towards the opponent's goal line before it may be legally touched by a member of the kicking team.

Penalty: Kicking Team Touching Violation – Receiving team may take possession of the ball at the spot the ball was first touched by a kicking team player or option provided.

- 2) No player of the kicking team may block or contact a player of the receiving team until the receiving team has touched the free kick or the kick has traveled ten (10) yards.

Penalty: Illegal block—10 yards

- 3) Once a free kick has traveled ten (10) yards it may be recovered by either the kicking team or the receiving team. Only the receiving team may advance such free kick.
- 4) If the kicked ball is first possessed in the receiving team's goal area by a receiving team player that player must attempt to advance the ball. If that player does not attempt to advance the ball out of the goal area, the ball will be put in play on the receiving team's 5-yard line. Kicking team will receive 1 point (Rouge).
- 5) If the kicked ball goes out of the back of the receiving team's goal area without making contact with the field of play or players, the ball will be put in play on the 25-yard line.
- 6) If the kicked ball goes out of bounds anywhere inside the opposing team's 25-yard line of play without making contact with the field of play or players, then the ball will be spotted at the 25-yard line.
- 7) If the kicked ball strikes any part of the goal post in flight, the ball is dead and will be spotted at the 25-yard line.
- 8) If the kicked ball is simultaneously recovered by players from each team or simultaneously touched by players from each team before going out of bounds, the ball belongs to the receiving team:
 - a) At the spot of recovery; or
 - b) At the spot of last touching; or
 - c) At the spot where the ball went out of bounds.
- 9) If the kicked ball strikes any overhanging objects above the field of play (i.e. scoreboard), the ball is dead and will be put in play at the 25-yard line. If the obstruction is hit inside the 25-yard line, the ball is placed at the spot of hit. If the obstruction is behind the 25-yard line, the ball is placed on the 25-yard line.
- 10) If a kickoff hits in the field of play or players and then:
 - a) Exits the goal area, the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line;
 - b) Goes out of bounds inside the 5-yard line, the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line;
 - c) Goes out of bounds further up field than the 5-yard line, then the ball will be spotted at the point it went out of bounds.

C. Offside on Free Kick – Kicking Team

During a free kick, the instant the ball is kicked; no player of the kicking team shall be in advance of the ball, except the kicker and player who may be holding the ball for the free kick.

Penalty: Offside—“LIVE” ball, 5 yards before the first scrimmage play following the free kick

D. Offside on Free Kicks – Receiving Team

During a free kick after the Referee has given the ready for scrimmage play and until the instant the ball is kicked, all players of the receiving team must be a minimum of 10 yards from the kicking team’s free kick line.

Penalty: Offside – “LIVE” ball, kicking team has the option to replay. This is the only situation in the NFL where a re-kick is allowed

E. Blocking By the Receiving Team

During a free kick, a player of the receiving team may block an opponent within bounds commencing from the moment the ball is kicked and provided that the contact is made legally above the waist of the opponent and from the front or side.

Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 yards at the spot of foul or option provided

F. Blocking by the Kicking Team

- 1) Before gaining possession while the ball is loose a player of the kicking team shall not be permitted to block an opponent until his team is eligible to touch the kicked ball.

Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 yards at succeeding spot

- 2) After gaining possession:
 - a) By the receiving team, any kicking team member may block opponents in accordance with the rules above the waist.
 - b) By the kicking team, the ball is immediately dead so there would be no continuation of play including blocking. If the kicking team recovers a fumbled kick return, it may advance the ball and may block opponents in accordance with the rules above the waist.

4.3 SCRIMMAGE KICK

A. Definition

A scrimmage kick is a kick by the offense during one of its scrimmage downs or plays from scrimmage.

It can be used for a field goal attempt, point after touchdown attempt, or as a means to place an opponent at a disadvantage in field position. A team may also use a fake scrimmage kick formation.

- B. A scrimmage kicking formation must have five linemen, a place kicker, a holder and a personal protector. If a kicker intends to drop kick a scrimmage kick, no holder is required. No kicking pad or tee is permissible. Only the personal protector may be in motion prior to and at the snap.
- C. A player who kicks a scrimmage kick or a player who holds for a scrimmage kick cannot be contacted while the kick has a possibility of being successful. A defensive player blocked into the kicker or holder will not be penalized unless, in the opinion of the Referee, there is intent to injure. Touching of scrimmage kicks behind the defensive line of scrimmage is not a factor in this determination. However, the restriction on contacting the kicker or holder are removed if the scrimmage kick is blocked or partially blocked, unless such contact could have been avoided by the defensive player.
- D. Defensive scrimmage formation for field goals and point after touchdown attempts consist of four linemen who may not stunt, which is defined as an intentional act involving two or more players. Individual stunts, twists or other defensive linemen techniques are permitted. The defensive ends must either line up head-to-head with the ends of the kicking team, or in the gap between the kicking team ends and guards. The two interior defensive players must line up in the gap between the center and the two offensive guards. All four defensive linemen must be in a three- or four-point stance at the snap.

Defensive players may not contact the center until the center has a chance to defend himself.

Penalty: Personal Foul—10 yards and an automatic first down

The remaining four defenders may line up anywhere else, as long as they remain behind the defensive line of scrimmage during a kick attempt. They may leap or otherwise attempt to block a scrimmage kick while behind the defensive line of scrimmage, but at no time may they use a teammate or opponent to enhance their vertical height, and they may return or block for a return on an unsuccessful field goal attempt.

During a scrimmage kick formation, only the four (4) down linemen may rush the kicker. If any player who is not one of the four down linemen rushes the kicker/holder, the play shall be blown dead and the receiving team penalized.

Penalty: Illegal Scrimmage Kick Rush – 5 yards from the previous spot and an automatic first down

Defensive linemen may drop into pass coverage, just as on any scrimmage down, after making contact with the offensive lineman or the space that offensive lineman occupied at the snap.

- E. On fourth down or any other down when a team lines up in a scrimmage kick formation, if the ball is spotted inside the offensive teams 4-yard line, the ball shall be moved to the 4-yard line.

In addition, regardless of field position, the ball may be spotted up to three yards outside either hash mark or any point between the inside and outside hash mark to avoid hitting the ceiling or an object suspended from the ceiling. If the ball is on the left hash, it may only be moved to the left, and if on the right hash, it may only be moved to the right. If the ball is between the two inside hash marks it may be moved either direction, at the option of the kicking team.

4.4 FIELD GOAL KICK

When a failed field goal attempt becomes dead in the end zone, the ball belongs to the receiving team, and is placed on the receiving team's 5-yard line.

4.5 PUNTING

A. No punting is allowed.

Penalty: Illegal Kicking – 10 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down

B. Scrimmage Kick – Blocked

- 1) A blocked kick is a kick from scrimmage in which, after being kicked, the ball is prevented from crossing the defensive line of scrimmage because of contact with an opponent or a player of the kicking team.
- 2) If the kick is blocked without going out of bounds and does not cross the defensive line of scrimmage, it may be recovered legally and advanced by a player of either team. If a kicking team player recovers and advances the ball, it is considered as any other play from scrimmage.
- 3) If a kick is blocked in the field of play or the goal area and without being touched the ball goes directly out of bounds in the goal area, a safety shall be scored. This also applies if immediately prior to the ball going out of bounds in the goal area, a player of the receiving team in the goal area last touches it.

C. Blocking

- 1) Once a kick has been made, a player on the receiving team may block any player on the kicking team provided that contact is above the waist and from the front or side.
- 2) Once a scrimmage snap has been made on a scrimmage kick play, a player on the kicking team may block any player on the receiving team up to one yard in advance of the defensive line of scrimmage. After the ball has been kicked, kicking team players may use their hands and arms to ward off blockers of the receiving team.

Penalties for 1 and 2: Illegal Block – 10 yards at succeeding spot, or option provided

D. Kicking Play Restrictions

1) Reception of Kicks

- a) No fair catches are allowed on free kicks or scrimmage kicks. On all kicks, kicking team players shall allow 3 yards to a receiving player attempting to catch a kicked ball in flight. This 3 yard zone (halo) is determined by a circle with a radius of 3 yards (the center point being the player). The receiving player can not be touched prior to the catch.

Penalty: Kick Catch Interference for contact with the receiver– 10 yards

Kick Catch Interference for violation of the halo –5 yards.

In the field of play, the receiving team will put the ball in play **5** yards in advance of the spot of the foul. In the goal area, the receiving team will put the ball in play **5** yards in advance of the 5-yard line **(10 yard line).**

- b) If the kicked ball is not touched and a player of the receiving team fakes an attempt to recover the ball, he may be tackled without penalty. If a player of the kicking team touches the ball, it is first touching and the ball shall be awarded to the receiving team in accordance with these rules.
- c) If the kicked ball is not touched and, in the judgment of the officials, there is no effort by either team to recover the ball, the covering official may declare the ball dead and award possession to the receiving team at the spot of the dead ball.

2) Place and Drop Kicked Ball Striking Uprights

- a) If the ball after being kicked, strikes the opponent's upright assembly in flight and returns to the field of play, the ball shall be declared dead and awarded to the receiving team at its 5-yard line.
- b) If the ball strikes the upright assembly after having touched an official, or another player, provided it did not hit the ground, it shall remain in play.
- c) If a kicked ball on a field goal or convert attempt strikes an upright in flight and then proceeds through the uprights above the crossbar, it remains alive and scores points in accordance with these rules.

ARTICLE 5: PASSING

5.1 LATERAL OR BACKWARD PASS

A. Definition

A lateral or backward pass is one thrown, batted, or fumbled by a player parallel to or in the direction of his own end line.

B. Determinants of a Lateral or Backward Pass

The initial direction and the point at which the ball is caught, strikes another player, an official, the ground or goes out of bounds is the factor which determines whether it is a forward or backward pass, regardless of the direction in which it goes afterwards.

C. Pass Striking the Ground

A lateral or backward pass striking the ground and is not dead and may be recovered by either team without penalty and can be recovered and advanced.

D. Pass Out of Bounds

When a lateral or backward pass goes out of bounds in the field of play, the ball shall be put in play by scrimmage snap at the outer hash mark perpendicular from the point where the ball went out of bounds.

5.2 FORWARD PASS

A. Definition

A forward pass is one thrown by any offensive player from a point behind the defensive line of scrimmage, towards the opponent's end line, to any eligible receiver or receivers. The location of the passer's forward foot determines whether or not the player passing the ball is behind or beyond the defensive line of scrimmage.

B. Legal Forward Pass

The offense shall make only one forward pass during a scrimmage down, and it must be thrown from behind the defensive line of scrimmage.

C. Possession

During a forward pass, the ball is considered to be in possession of the offense until the pass is ruled complete or incomplete.

D. Eligibility of the Passer

- 1) The offensive player who throws a forward pass is called the passer. He is also an eligible receiver.
- 2) The passer does not need to be the first player to receive the ball (scrimmage snap) from the center.

E. Eligibility of Receivers

- 1) Any offensive player who is identified by number as an eligible receiver and who, at the scrimmage snap, is occupying an end position either at the end of the line of scrimmage or is in the backfield at least one yard back from the offensive line of scrimmage is considered an eligible receiver.
 - a) Eligible offensive players who can receive forward passes shall be identified by the following numbers: 1-49 and 80-99. Ineligible offensive players shall be identified by the numbers 50-79.
 - b) Any defensive player, whether or not the forward pass is legally thrown.
- 2) In a kicking formation, a player with an ineligible number may become eligible if he lines up as an offensive end, and reports to the Referee, who shall announce over the public address system that the player is eligible for that down.
- 3) If a forward pass is touched by, or touches a defensive player, all players of both teams become eligible receivers.
- 4) No ineligible offensive player may be downfield on pass play where the pass crosses the line of scrimmage more than 3 yards (expanded neutral zone).

Penalty: Ineligible downfield—5 yards from previous spot

F. Exceptions to Player Eligibility Numbering

- 1) An offensive player wearing an eligible receiver number may, upon notification to the Referee, enter the game at an ineligible receiver position under the following circumstances:
 - a) On a fourth down play, or
 - b) On a point after touchdown attempt, or
 - c) On a kicking formation on the understanding that he is not eligible as a pass receiver.
- 2) An offensive player wearing an ineligible receiver number may not be declared eligible as a receiver unless it is a scrimmage kick formation and he occupies an end position (See Rule 4.1-E/3 and Rule 5.2-E/2).

G. Illegal Touching

No ineligible player shall deliberately touch or catch a legal forward pass until it has touched an opponent.

Penalty: Illegal touching or catching a forward pass behind the defensive line of scrimmage – 5 yards from previous spot, loss of down

H. Complete Forward Pass

A pass is completed under the following conditions:

- 1) When caught by an eligible receiver or by two or more such receivers simultaneously.
- 2) When caught by a defensive player or, simultaneously, by defensive players or when such a pass is touched by or touches a defensive player and then is caught by another player.
- 3) When caught simultaneously by players of both teams who maintain possession until the play is dead. The ball shall be awarded to the offense.
- 4) If an eligible receiver of either team catches a pass while off the ground and in bounds but is carried or pushed by the opponent in a manner which causes him to land out of bounds in possession of the ball. If in the judgment of the official, the player would have gotten a foot on the ground, absent the defensive contact, the player is ruled in bounds and the pass is ruled completed. The pass shall be ruled complete at the furthest point of advance.
- 5) If an eligible receiver of either team catches a pass near the sideline and touches the ground in bounds, the team of the player receiving the ball shall retain possession even if the receiver's next step takes him out of bounds.

I. Incomplete Forward Pass

A forward pass shall be declared incomplete and the ball will next be put in play at the point of last scrimmage snap, with downs continuing:

- 1) When the ball strikes the ground or any overhead obstruction, flag, etc.
- 2) When the ball goes out of bounds, even if touched by a player in the field of play.
- 3) When the passer has commenced his forward passing motion with the ball moving forward and as a result of contact with an opponent, the ball leaves the passer's hand and strikes the ground.
- 4) When the ball first contacts a sidewall or end wall before being caught or when the ball contacts a sidewall or end wall prior to being caught by a player. No pass completion can occur on a ricochet off a sidewall or end wall.

J. Intentional Grounding

If an offensive passer deliberately, in the official's opinion, throws the ball out of bounds or to an area in which there is not an eligible receiver for the purpose of avoiding loss of yardage, his team shall be penalized.

Penalty: Intentional Grounding – loss of down at spot of foul (point at which pass was thrown). If pass is thrown from the goal area, a safety shall be awarded to the defense subject to the options provided.

It is not intentional grounding if the quarterback is outside the alley and throws the ball toward the line of scrimmage, provide the ball first touches the ground or goes out of bounds beyond the line of scrimmage.

K. Pass Interference

- 1) Pass interference restrictions for the offense begin at the snap. Offensive pass interference is when contact by an offensive team player interferes with a defensive team player after the scrimmage snap. Offensive team players contacting defensive team players within 1 yard of the defensive line of scrimmage shall not be deemed as offensive pass interference. Offensive pass interference cannot occur if the pass does not cross the line of scrimmage.
 - a) Any offensive player may interfere with an opponent anywhere within bounds after the pass has been completed.
 - b) Prior to the pass being completed or declared incomplete, an offensive player may interfere with an opponent anywhere within bounds provided that the pass is thrown to a receiver behind the offensive line of scrimmage.
 - c) An ineligible offensive player may not touch or catch a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage.

Penalty: Offensive Pass Interference – 10 yards

- 2) Pass interference restrictions begin for the defense when the ball is thrown. Defensive pass interference is contact by a defensive player on an eligible offensive player after the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. Such interference must be ruled as intent by a defensive player to impede an eligible offensive player or prevent an eligible offensive player from receiving a catchable forward pass. Defensive pass interference cannot occur if the pass does not cross the line of scrimmage.
 - a) A defensive player may interfere with an offensive team player in an area 3 yards in depth beyond the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - b) Prior to a pass being thrown beyond the defensive line of scrimmage, a defensive player occupying a position beyond the line may use his hands or arms to ward off an opponent who threatens his defensive position as a potential blocker.

- c) When a pass crosses the defensive line of scrimmage, a defensive player shall not interfere with an eligible offensive player who is not threatening his defensive position.
- d) A defensive player shall not interfere illegally with an eligible offensive player's attempt to catch the ball.

Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference – Spot foul, Automatic first down, and the ball is awarded to the offense at the spot of the foul. If the infraction occurs in the defensive goal area, the ball will be placed on the opponent's 2-yard line, if the previous spot was on or inside the 2-yard line, it will be first down halfway between the previous spot and the goal line.

- 3) A defensive player may not "chuck" or hold an eligible receiver who is more than 3 yards beyond the defensive line of scrimmage and is not a potential blocker. The fact that the ball is not thrown in that direction has no bearing on this violation.

Penalty: Defensive Holding – 5 yards and automatic first down

- 4) A defensive player shall not interfere with an eligible offensive player on a point after touchdown attempt.

Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference – If point after touchdown attempt was good, "penalty may be administered on the first scrimmage play following the kickoff"– 10 yards.

If the point after touchdown attempt was no good, the offense will repeat the point after touchdown attempt at the defensive team's 1-yard line.

- 5) When a pass has been intercepted by the defense, any defensive player may interfere with an opponent anywhere within bounds provided that contact is made legally only above the waist of the opponent and from the front or side.
- 6) Pass interference shall not be penalized if in the judgment of the official:
 - a) During the pass, offensive and defensive players make contact in a simultaneous attempt to catch or bat the ball; or
 - b) During the pass, the ball has previously been touched by an eligible player; or
 - c) The pass is clearly uncatchable; or
 - d) The pass does not cross the line of scrimmage.

L. Interception in the Goal Area

- 1) An intercepted ball that is down in the defensive team goal's area, is dead without a score.

- 2) An intercepted ball that is fumbled in the defensive goal area may be legally recovered by the offense for a touchdown.
- 3) Any rough play fouls (personal fouls) by the offensive team in the field of play or in the defensive goal area after the defense intercepts a pass in its own goal area where the ball is ruled dead, the foul is administered from the defensive team's 5-yard line.

Penalty: Personal Foul – 10 yards from the 5-yard line

- 4) **A pass intercepted by a defensive player INSIDE HIS OWN 5 YARD LINE WHOSE MOMENTUM CARRIES HIM INTO HIS OWN GOAL AREA AND THEREAFTER BECOMES DEAD IS RULED MEMENTUM, AND THE DEFENSIVE TEAM WILL RETAIN POSSESSION AT THE SPOT OF THE INTERCEPTION, 1ST DOWN AND 10. THIS ALSO APPLIES TO ANY LOOSE BALL (IE. KICKS AND FUMBLES).**

5.3 HAND OFF

A. Definition

A hand-off is made on a scrimmage play when the ball is handed by one offensive team player to another behind the offensive line of scrimmage. There is no restriction on the number of hand-offs that can be made on any one scrimmage play.

B. Ineligible to Receive Hand-Off

The player receiving a hand-off must not be an ineligible offensive receiver or occupying the position of an ineligible offensive receiver (center or guard) at the instant he receives the ball.

Penalty: Illegal Procedure – 5 yards from the previous spot.

ARTICLE 6: FOULS AND PENALTIES

6.1 ILLEGAL TACTICS

A. Holding

Holding is using the hands and/or arms to grasp, encircle, or hinder an opponent, except the ball carrier. Holding hands or interlocking arms during any play is prohibited.

Penalty: Holding – 5 yards

B. Clipping

Clipping is blocking an opponent, except the ball carrier, from the rear in such a manner that the player contacts across the back of the legs. The application of a penalty is determined by the initial contact, which must be observed by the official, and shall not be called, if, in the official's judgment:

- 1) The block occurs in the area between the offensive guards, within 2 yards of either side of the scrimmage zone and is executed by an offensive player who, at the scrimmage snap, was positioned within this area; or
- 2) The initial contact is made on the side of the opponent; or
- 3) The opponent could see the blocker approaching and deliberately turned his body in order to be contact from behind.

Penalty: Clipping—10 yards

C. Block in the Back

A block in the back is blocking an opponent, except the ball carrier, from the rear in such a manner that the player contacts the opponent's back, above the waist. The application of a penalty is determined by the initial contact, which must be observed by the official, and shall not be called, if, in the official's judgment:

- 1) The block occurs in the area between the offensive guards, within 2 yards of either side of the scrimmage zone and is executed by an offensive player who, at the scrimmage snap, was positioned within this area, or
- 2) The initial contact is made on the side of the opponent, or
- 3) The opponent could see the blocker approaching and deliberately turned his body in order to be contact from behind.

Penalty: Block in the Back—5 yards

D. Crack Back Blocking

An offensive player is not permitted to move laterally toward the ball and contact an opponent unless the block is in front and above the waist.

Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 yards

E. Chop Blocking

Chop Blocking is contacting an opponent below the waist: at the time that opponent is already being engaged above the waist by another player.

Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 yards

F. Cut Blocking

Cut Blocking is contacting an opponent at or below the waist. The only time cut blocking is legal is by the running back that is protecting the passer who is still in the alley. He may cut block the attacking linebacker who has legally established himself as the only player who is allowed to blitz by raising his hand prior to the snap and starting his blitz five or more yards from the ball at the snap.

No cut blocking (blocking below the waist) is allowed once the quarterback leaves the alley.

Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 yards

G. Contacting the Kicker

- 1) It is illegal to touch the kicker when he is in the act of kicking from scrimmage, EXCEPT:
 - a) If prior to kicking the ball, the kicker has recovered a loose ball on the ground or made a motion to pass or run with the ball. The kicker shall not be entitled to protection in these instances.
 - b) An opponent who blocks or touches the ball shall not be penalized for contacting the kicker.
 - c) An opponent shall not be penalized when a blocker of the kicking team causes the opponent to contact the kicker. If, in the Referee's opinion, a defensive player attempting to block the kick makes slight and incidental contact which does not affect the kicker or the play, and the kicker is only dislodged, it shall be penalized as running into the kicker.

Penalty: Personal Foul – Roughing the Kicker or Holder – 10 yards and first automatic down.

Penalty: Running into the kicker—5 yards

- 2) The act of kicking begins when the kicker's kicking foot leaves the ground and terminates when his foot returns to the ground after kicking, or attempting to kick the ball.

H. Pyramiding

It is illegal for a player to use the body of another player in any manner to elevate himself in an attempt to block a field goal or convert.

Penalty: Pyramiding – 10 yards

I. Tripping

A player shall not use his leg below the knee to hinder the progress of an opponent, except the runner.

Penalty: Tripping – 5 yards

J. Aiding the Runner

It is illegal to assist the forward progress of a ball carrier by providing impetus from behind.

Penalty: Aiding the Runner– 5 yards

K. Personal Fouls or Unnecessary Roughness

A player shall be penalized for any personal foul or act of unnecessary roughness against an opponent except if the contact, in the opinion of the officials, is caused by the movement of the opponent. Personal fouls/acts of unnecessary roughness are live ball fouls and include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Piling on by a player who falls or jumps on the ball carrier after the play has terminated;
- 2) Contacting an opponent out of bounds in any manner;
- 3) Contacting the passer unnecessarily;
- 4) Contacting the kicker, kicker's holder, or snapper for one second after he has snapped the ball, during a scrimmage kick;
- 5) Grasping and twisting, turning or pulling an opponents face mask or helmet opening;

Penalty: Personal foul – 10 yards if by the offense, and 10 yards and automatic first down if by the defense

Penalty: Incidental grasping – 5 yards

- 6) Using the helmet to butt, ram, or spear an opponent. This includes, but is not limited to, action on a passer, a receiver in the act of catching a pass, a ball carrier already down on the playing surface not attempting to advance;

- 7) Contacting an opponent above the shoulders;
- 8) Any other act of roughness or unfair play provided it is not excessive to warrant disqualification;
- 9) Any player who removes his helmet and uses it or any other object as a weapon, will be penalized for unnecessary roughness and ejected. Additionally, the player shall be suspended by the League for the remainder of the season.

Penalty: Personal Foul or Unnecessary Roughness – 10 yards if by the offense, and 10 yards and automatic first down for the offense if by the defense. If the infraction is flagrant in the judgment of the official, the player shall be ejected from the contest.

L. Coaches on the Field

- 1) During a time-out, ONLY ONE coach is allowed on the field in the team huddle. If the team comes to the sideline in front of the team box, there is no limit to the number of coaches who may confer with the team.
- 2) During live play, one coach from each team is allowed on the field, however, he must be behind the offensive team after the ready for play has sounded until the down ends. During the down he must be against the sidewall.
- 3) Coaches shall remain on their own team's sideline if teams are on different sides.
- 4) If both team boxes are on the same sideline, the home team shall determine the side of the field the home team coach shall use.
- 5) Coaches are allowed on the field for the purpose of coaching, not complaining to officials. If coaches address officials in a professional manner, officials may respond to questions and offer explanations.
- 6) Coaches MUST stay outside the numbers, (similar to a coaching box). A coach who comes inside the numbers may require a warning if it is inadvertent, but in no circumstances may he cross the numbers to consult with players or protest an official's call. The penalty will be called when he violates the rule.

Penalty: Sideline violation—5 yards

- 7) A penalty on the coach for a violation of the sideline privilege forfeits that privilege for his team (both offense and defense) for the remainder of the game.

Penalty: Sideline violation—5 yards

- 8) If a coach interferes or causes interference with the game, the ball or a player as a result of being on the field, he SHALL be penalized for interference. The game officials shall determine the penalty, which shall be at a minimum 3 yards, or placement of the ball or forward progress where in the judgment of the officials the player would have advanced, or the officials may award a score, if appropriate.

M. Fan Interference With a Forward Pass

- 1) If a fan interferes with a forward pass and in the judgment of the official it was catchable by the offense, then the down is replayed.
- 2) If a fan interferes with a forward pass and in the judgment of the official it was either **NOT** catchable by the offense, or it could have been intercepted, it shall be ruled an incomplete pass.
- 3) If there is interference by anyone from either team not competing at the time, a judgment will be made giving the opposing team the benefit of what may have been a result of the play.

N. Fan Interference On a Free Kick

- 1) If a fan interferes with a free kick that is ruled playable by the official, the ball will belong to the receiving team at their 20-yard line, or at the spot the interference occurred before the 20-yard line, and it will be 1st and 10 from that spot.
- 2) If a kicked ball hits in the field of play, then a fan interferes with the ball, the ball will be spotted where the fan interference took place.

O. Fan Interference Of a Scrimmage Kick

- 1) If a fan interferes with a scrimmage kick, which is ruled playable, the ball will be spotted at the 20-yard line, and be 1st and 10.
NOTE: This applies only when a scrimmage kick has not touched the turf.

6.2 UNSPORTSMANLIKE FOULS

The Rules Committee has declared its total abhorrence of rough play and unnecessary roughness. Officials are instructed that no tolerance is to be given to this type of play. Unsportsmanlike fouls are enforced as dead ball fouls.

A. General Application

- 1) The penalty for an unsportsmanlike foul is always applied at the spot where the ball would next be put on play:
- 2) If the foul occurs during a scoring play, the score shall count and the penalty shall be applied at the spot where the ball would next be put on play. The non-offending team can choose the following spots:
 - b) After a touchdown, it may be penalized on the point after touchdown or on the first scrimmage play after the subsequent kickoff.
 - c) After a successful point after touchdown, penalize on the first scrimmage play after the subsequent kickoff.

- d) All kickoffs shall be from the goal line, and any penalty which would move the kickoff to another yard line shall be enforced on the first scrimmage play after the kickoff.

C. Rough Play

A player shall be penalized and disqualified from any further game participation for any act of rough play against an opponent. Fouls for rough play, whether during a live ball or during a dead ball are enforced as dead ball fouls. These include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Striking or swinging at an opponent with a fist, hand, knee, or elbow in any manner whether physical contact is made;
- 2) Kicking or kicking at an opponent whether or not physical contact is made;
- 3) Any act or action considered by the Referee to warrant disqualification;
- 4) Any player who removes his helmet and uses it or any other object as a weapon will be penalized for unnecessary roughness and ejected. Additionally, the player shall be suspended by the League for the remainder of the season.

D. Objectionable/ Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- 1) Any player or coach may be penalized for any act which, in the opinion of the officials, is objectionable conduct. Objectionable/Unsportsmanlike Conduct fouls are enforced as dead ball fouls. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a) Verbal abuse or objectionable gestures directed at opponents, officials, or spectators.
 - b) Throwing the ball at an opponent, official, or an occupant in the opponent's bench area.
 - c) Interfering with the placement of the official's flag marking the spot of a foul.
 - d) Continued objectionable conduct after a penalty has been applied
 - e) Any ball, which is spiked or thrown into the stands will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty against the team whose player spiked or threw the ball.
A ball handed to a fan is not a foul.

Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Foul – 10 yards

- 2) A second unsportsmanlike foul is also a disqualification.

E. Disqualifications

- 1) Any player may be disqualified, and substitution permitted, for any act of rough play, or excessive objectionable or unsportsmanlike conduct.

- 2) A player shall be disqualified for a second foul in the same game for rough play or excessive objectionable or unsportsmanlike conduct.
- 3) Any player who is ejected the first time during the season for fighting will be fined a game fee. If he is ejected for fighting during the remainder of the season he will be fined a game fee and suspended for the next game. Substitution will be permitted in both cases.
- 4) Any player who leaves his team box during a fight will be ejected for the remainder of the game and suspended for a minimum of one (1) game.

Note: The definition of fighting is the swinging at and hitting or the swinging at and missing of an opponent.

Penalty: Excessive Misconduct or Unsportsmanlike Infraction – 10 yards plus disqualification.

Any player or coach disqualified from the game must leave the bench area and shall not return. Failure to do so will result in forfeit of the game for the offending team.

ARTICLE 7: APPLICATION OF PENALTIES

(NIFL follows NCAA penalty enforcement fundamentals)

7.1 DEFINITION

A. Loss of Down

In any penalty “loss of a down” means that the down upon which the foul occurred is not repeated.

B. Spots

The enforcement spots are: the previous spot, the spot of the foul, the succeeding spot and the spot where the run or scrimmage kick ends.

C. Enforcement Spots

- 1) Dead ball—The enforcement spot for a foul committed when the ball is dead is the succeeding spot
- 2) Snap—The enforcement spot for fouls occurring simultaneously with a snap is the previous spot
- 3) Free kick—The enforcement spot for fouls occurring simultaneously with the free kick, or penalties carried over from a touchdown or point after attempt is the spot where the ball will next be put in play following the kick-off.
- 4) Running Plays

The basic enforcement spots for fouls that occur during a running play in the field of play or end zone are as follows:

- a) When the run ends beyond the neutral zone, the basic enforcement spot is the end of the related run (Exceptions: Offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding and illegal blocks and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind the offensive team’s goal line.)
- b) When the run ends behind the neutral zone before a change of team possession, the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot (Exceptions: Offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding and illegal blocks and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind the offensive team’s goal line.)
- c) When there is no neutral zone, the basic enforcement spot is the end of the related run.

5) Pass Play

The basic enforcement spot for fouls during a legal forward pass play is the previous spot. Exceptions:

- a) Roughing the passer enforcement on a completed forward pass from the end of the last run when that run ends beyond the neutral zone, and there is no change of team possession during the down.)
- b) Offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding and illegal blocks and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind the offensive team's goal line.

6) Scrimmage Kick Plays

The basic enforcement spot for fouls that occur during a scrimmage kick play before possession is gained or regained or the ball is declared dead by rule is the previous spot. **EXCETIONS:**

- a) Interference with the opportunity to make a catch—spot foul.
- b) Post scrimmage kick enforcement: The enforcement spot is the spot where the kick ends when Team B fouls occur.
 - i) During a scrimmage kick play in which the ball crosses the neutral zone;
 - ii) Three or more yards beyond the neutral zone;
 - iii) Before the end of the kick;
 - iv) When team A does not have possession of the ball when the down ends.

Team B fouls behind the post scrimmage kick spot are spot fouls. Offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding and illegal blocks and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind the offensive team's goal line.

7) Free Kick Plays

The enforcement spot for fouls that occur during a free kick before possession is gained, regained or the ball is declared dead by rule is the succeeding spot.

EXCEPTIONS:

- a) Interference with the opportunity to make a catch – spot foul.
- b) Offsetting fouls are declined by rule. Any resultant score is allowed.
- c) Team B offsides on a free kick play – Team A has the option to replay. This is the only situation in the NFL where there can be a re-kick.

- d) Team A offsides on a free kick play with Team A recovery – Team B's ball at succeeding spot.

8) Behind the Goal Line

- a) The enforcement spot is the goal line for fouls by the opponents of the team in possession after a change of team possession (not on a try) in the field of play when the run ends behind the "team in possession's" goal line.
- b) The basic enforcement spot is the 5-yard line for fouls that occur after a change of team possession (not on a try) in the end zone and the ball remains in the end zone where it is declared dead.
- c) The enforcement spot is the goal line for fouls by the opponents of the team in possession after a change of team possession in the end zone (not on a try) when the run ends behind the goal line and any subsequent loose ball is recovered in the field of play.

9) Fouls During or After a Touchdown, Field Goal or Try

- a) Dead ball or unsportsmanlike fouls on a successful touchdown or after the touchdown and before the ball is ready for play on the try may either be enforced on the succeeding try or the first scrimmage play following the subsequent kick-off;
- b) Defensive pass interference fouls on the try are penalized half the distance to the goal line, or if the try is successful the penalty is declined;
- c) Live ball fouls on scoring plays (touchdowns and field goals) will be penalized by rule. To accept a score, the penalty must be declined. A successful field goal may be cancelled and the penalty enforced by rule.
- d) Fouls during and after a try are penalized on the first scrimmage play following the subsequent kick-off.

10) Half the Distance Enforcement Procedures

No distance penalty, including tries, shall exceed half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line.

7.2 PENALTY ENFORCEMENT FUNDAMENTALS

- A. Any penalty may be declined, but a disqualified player must be removed.
- B. When a foul is committed, the penalty shall be completed before the ball is declared ready for play for the next down.
- C. A foul that occurs simultaneously with the snap or free kick is considered as having occurred during that down.

- D. When two or more live-ball fouls are committed by the same team, they are called multiple fouls, and the Referee shall explain the alternative penalties to the field captain of the offended team, who may then elect to accept only one of the penalties.
- E. If live ball fouls are committed by both teams, they are called double fouls, and each such foul is an off setting foul, the penalties cancel each other and the down is replayed. (Exception: When there is a change of possession during the down or at the end of the down by rule, the team last gaining possession may decline offsetting fouls and thereby retain possession after completion of the penalty for its infraction if it had not fouled before its last gaining possession.
- F. When Team B's foul calls for post scrimmage kick enforcement, Team B may decline offsetting fouls and accept post scrimmage kick enforcement.
- G. Any dead ball fouls, or a live ball foul which is administered as a dead-ball foul, do not offset and all such dead ball or live ball fouls are administered enforced separately and in their order of occurrence.
- H. When a live ball is committed by one team and one or more dead ball fouls are committed by either team, both the live ball and dead ball fouls are enforced, in the order of their occurrence, provided that the live ball is enforced first.

NIFL Summary of Penalties

LOSS OF DOWN

Illegal forward pass or handing
Intentionally grounding
Illegal kicking, touching or batting

AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN

Defensive pass interference or illegal contact with an eligible receiver
Unnecessary roughness/personal foul on defense, including:
 Striking, kicking, kneeling, elbowing, etc
 Piling on, late hit
 Facemask
 Helmet contact (spearing, butt blocking, face tackling)
 Illegal contact to the head/helmet
 Roughing the passer/kicker/holder
Illegal scrimmage kick rush
Illegal batting

FIVE (5) YARD PENALTIES

Delay of Game	Illegal scrimmage kick rush
Coach interference /Coach field violation	Snap infraction
Illegal Substitution	False start
Illegal motion	Offsides
Offensive motion man in the box at the snap	Encroachment
Defensive man in box at the snap	Illegal forward pass/handling
Blitzing infraction	Ineligible receiver downfield
Illegal offense/defense	Illegal touching
Illegal formation	Any equipment violations
Illegal numbering	Minor face mask violation
Illegal procedure	Running into kicker/holder
Holding	Aiding the runner
Tripping	Block in the Back
	Kick catch interference (halo violation)

TEN (10) YARD PENALTIES

Illegal Participation
Illegal block (below waist, chop, cut or crackback)
Clipping
Personal foul (including roughing passer/kicker/holder)
Unnecessary roughness or fighting
Kick Catch Interference (contact with receiver)
Face Mask—grasping and twisting
Piling on (late hit)—live ball
Illegal contact out of bounds
Illegal contact above the shoulders
Illegal contact with snapper
Butt blocking, face tackle, spearing
Offensive pass interference

Butt blocking, face tackle, spearing
Offensive pass interference
Illegal kicking or Illegal batting
Hurdling
Pyramiding
Unsportsmanlike (misconduct) including contact with an official

DISQUALIFICATION

Fighting
Two unsportsmanlike fouls
Contact with an official
Flagrant live ball fouls

SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT

Defensive pass interference—spot foul and automatic first down, ball is spotted at the spot of the foul

Pass Interference in the end zone—place on 2 yard line

Offsides on kick-off—dead ball foul, 5 yards enforced on the first scrimmage down after the kick-off

Coach interference—at least 5 yards, up to awarding a score (loss of privilege to be on the field)

Penalties occurring after a change of possession in overtime:

- By Team B: No score by B can occur
- By Team A: Penalties are automatically declined and Team B is awarded its team possession on the 25-yard line
- By both teams: Penalties are automatically declined and the down is NOT replayed
- Exception: Dead ball fouls or live ball fouls enforced as dead ball fouls, which are enforced at the succeeding spot
- Banked penalties: Any penalty which cannot be enforced on the kick-off, but that will be administered prior to the first scrimmage down following the kickoff.

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