

2005 NCAA Football Rules and Editorial Changes and Their Impact on Officiating

This document is intended to address the “impact on officiating” that new rule changes and new editorial changes will have on the game of college football. Keep in mind that these changes will provide for questions and concerns to be directed to the Secretary-Editor and to the Rules Committee, and that further clarifications from the committee or the Secretary-Editor may occur between now and the beginning of the 2005 season. Usually, the Secretary-Editor provides a final overview of changes and clarifications when he meets with the Coordinators of Officials at their summer meeting.

Editorial Changes

Rule 1-2-1-a, exception

Goal lines. Add language to exception that allows the goal line to be four or eight inches wide.

Rationale: Some multiuse fields already have an eight-inch wide goal line, and some officials believe close touchdown calls are easier with the wider line.

Impact on Officiating: No significant impact.

Rule 1-4-5-p

Towels. For clarification, change to “side of the belt.”

Rationale: Clarification.

Impact on Officiating: No significant impact.

Rule 2-2-7-c

Catch, Interception, Recovery. Propose adding “...when he first returns to the ground inbounds with any part of his body inbounds or is so held...”.

Rationale: This clarifies situations where a catch is made, but the point of contact with the field is not the foot or knee, etc.

Impact on Officiating: Clarifies the rule and makes it read the way it was being officiated.

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Rule 2-31-4

Playing Surface. Add “field of play” to the end of this section.

Rationale: Clarification.

Impact on Officiating: No significant impact.

Rule 3-1-3-g-2

Overtime Fouls. Make this section read: “A score by a team committing a foul during the down is canceled.”

Rationale: This is consistent with other times in a football game but was never written for overtime situations.

Impact on Officiating: Eliminates another “exception to the rules.” Note that live balls fouls treated as dead ball fouls will still cancel a score in overtime, but not during regulation play.

Rule 3-1-3-g, new example 4

Overtime Fouls. Add an interpretation for a foul that occurs by the scoring team during the down.

Rationale: Added to make it clear that the score is negated in these situations.

Impact on Officiating: Example 4 will further clarify rule 3-1-3-g

Rule 3-5-2-e

Legal Substitutions. Penalty for e is incorrect (should be 5 yards from succeeding spot).

Rationale: Correcting error in previous year’s book.

Impact on Officiating: Makes the rule read as it was being officiated.

Rule 5-1-1-a

When to Award Series. Add “to the offensive team in overtime” to this section.

Rationale: Including an overtime situation to a general rule.

Impact on Officiating: Adds language to the rule for overtime that was already being in practice.

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Rule 5-1-4-b

Continuity of Downs Broken. Delete reference to Team B player: “A scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone.”

Rationale: Clarification.

Impact on Officiating: No change in the way this will be officiated. Touching by a Team B player had no significance to the continuity of the down being broken –the fact that the scrimmage kick crossed the neutral zone was all that was needed.

Rule 7-3-2-f, examples 1 and 2

Illegal Forward Pass. Change the language from “who is five or more yards” to “outside the frame of the tackle.”

Rationale: This wording is more flexible and clearer for officials.

Impact on Officiating: This wording change will do little in regard to the intent of the rule but the wording “frame of the tackle”(or as officials refer to this area as the “tackle box,”) will give referees a better reference point when determining if the referee can legally throw the ball away. (Note: most referees were probably using this as their reference point in the past.)

Rule 7-3-4

Eligibility Lost by Going Out of Bounds. Change from “no eligible offensive player” to “no eligible offensive receiver” for consistency with other areas of the book.

Rationale: Clarification and consistency.

Impact on Officiating: No significant impact. The wording does not change the way officials were officiating this action.

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Signals, No. 19

Official Football Signals. In No. 19, Illegal procedure was eliminated from the National Federation of State High School Associations rules book. Also, add to No. 18, “**Offside Kicker.**”

Rationale: The NCAA publishes officiating signals in conjunction with NFHS and this reflects a change in the high school code.

Impact on Officiating: Makes the two groups more consistent in their “naming of signals. The addition of the wording “Offside Kicker” makes for a clearer explanation of the neutral zone infractions by the kicking team on Free Kicks, because the general fan had no idea what the term “encroachment” meant.

2005 Major Rules Changes

Rule 1-4-5-s

Eye shields. The committee did not recommend any changes to requirements, but did alter the procedure for applying for tinted eye shield exception.

Rationale: The committee believes this responsibility should fall to the **athletic training staff and should be handled through the NCAA’s health and safety department**, who are best suited to make determinations on eye conditions.

Impact on Officiating: None. There is a fear that more tinted eye shields will now be approved and this could become a problem for medical staff when evaluating injured players on the field.

Rule 2-24-1

Spearing. Delete “intentional” from this rule. (Also, see change to Rule 9-1-2-1 and n.)

Rationale: After reviewing survey data from the AFCA and officiating organizations, it appears officials are hesitant to call this foul in some cases because intent is difficult to determine. The Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sport also recommended this alteration.

Impact on Officiating: Officials must be cognizant of the tremendous danger that is created by spearing –both for the player who is speared and by the spearing player... but they must not over-react to this change. One of the causes for alarm was the small number of recorded “spearing” fouls. Coordinators who were present at the rules committee, made the committee aware that in most cases, “spearing action” is a dead ball action and is probably recorded under the “late hit” or “late hit out of bounds” category on the NCAA foul report.

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Rule 6-4-1-a

Interference With Opportunity. Changes this section, which is intended to protect the player returning a kick from “touched by any player” to “muffed by any player.”

Rationale: This protects the player receiving the kick in the situation where he does not cleanly catch the ball. This change allows him the opportunity to field the punt.

Impact on Officiating: There is no change in the intent of this rule and will be officiated the same in 2005 and beyond as it has been officiated in the past. This change could very easily have been in the Editorial Change section. The wording “muffed” is consistent with similar wording in the rulebook, when referring to mis-handled kicks. Also, if the receiver has “muffed” the kick, you can assume he has had the opportunity to catch it. The “touching” of the kick does not clearly define “the opportunity to catch the kick.” There is no change in the officiating of this rule –if a player is hit “just as” or “just after” he touches the kick, it is a foul for failure to give the receiver the opportunity to catch the kick. Remember that a player who gives a fair catch signal and muffs the kick must still be given an opportunity to catch the ball when it is determined by the ruling official that he could have gotten to the muffed kick before it contacted the ground.

Rule 9-1-2-d

Clipping.

Changed all references from “legal clipping zone” to “rectangular area.”

Added subsection (a) in the first exception to read: “A player in the rectangular area may not block an opponent with the force of the initial contact from behind and at or below the knee (Exception: Against the runner).”

Rationale: Clipping is extremely dangerous and must not be legal at any time. This changes the rule to allow contact from behind, but only above the knee.

Impact on Officiating: This is a significant rule change and will require diligence by officials and conference coordinators to work through changes in mechanics so that blocks that were legal in years 'past can now be seen and officiated according to the new rule. Officials have been “programmed” in many situations to officiate action at the “point of attack” and many of these, now, illegal blocks in the back of the legs in the “rectangular area” are backside blocks made by backside linemen who are cutting down defensive linemen and linebackers who are pursuing the play. Wing officials will have to provide backside help to the Umpire and Referee when the play goes away.

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Rule 9-1-2-l and n.

Spearing.

Change to read in l: No player ~~intentionally~~ shall use his helmet...to butt or ram an opponent or attempt to punish him.”

Change to read in n: “No player ~~intentionally~~ shall strike a runner with the crown or top of his helmet in an attempt to punish him.”

Rationale: See rationale from Rule 2-24-1.

Impact on Officiating: See comments from Rule 2-24-1

Rule 9-1-2-q

Leaping.

Changed “an opponent” to “any player(s).” Also, added a sentence to read: “It is not a foul if the leaping player was originally lined up within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped.”

Rationale: Clarification that a leaping player is guilty of a foul if the player lands on any other player.

Impact on Officiating: This clarification will make this rule easier to officiate. Last year officials had to decide if a “leaper” contacted an opponent, and they had to decide in many cases if the opponent was contacted prior to contacting a teammate, when both the teammate and the opponent were in close proximity. Landing on a teammate in 2004 was not a foul, and landing on a teammate and opponent simultaneously was not a foul in 2004. In 2005, both of these scenarios will result in a “leaping” foul by Team B player if that leaping player was lined up more than one yard from the line of scrimmage.

Rule 9-2-1-a-1-a

Unsportsmanlike acts. Added listing of examples developed by CCA supervisors of officials and others to this section to encourage more consistent application of this rule:

“Examples of such acts include, but are not limited to:

- Imitating a slash of the throat;
- Resembling the firing of a weapon;
- Bowing at the waist;
- Punching one’s own chest excessively;
- Crossing one’s arms in front of the chest;
- Placing one’s hand by the ear as if to indicate that the player cannot hear the spectators;

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- Diving into the end zone when unchallenged by an opponent;
- Entering the end zone with an unnatural stride (e.g., high stepping);
- Going significantly beyond the end line to interact with spectators;
- Standing over a prone player in a taunting manner;
- Attempting to make the ball spin as it were a top;
- Performing a choreographed act with a teammate(s) (e.g., pretending to take a photo, falling down in unison); and
- Entering the field of play by coaches or substitutes in protest of officials' calls."

Additionally, the committee added language to the rule that reads: **"Spontaneous celebrating with teammates on the field of play, provided it is not prolonged, taunting or intended to bring attention to the individual player, is allowed."**

Rationale: By providing a list of examples, the committee hopes to assist officials to consistently enforce this penalty. Also, the **committee believes there are some situations in which celebration penalties are flagged where the celebration was spontaneous and not excessive or prolonged. This isn't a lessening of the penalty, but a reminder that team celebrations encouragement should be allowed.**

Impact on Officiating: By having this list published in the rulebook, it should give more emphasis to the types of actions that are considered "unsportsmanlike acts" and clarify for coaches, players, fans and the media the types of acts that are to be penalized consistently across the nation. It should be noted that this list is not all-inclusive and serves as a representative lists of common "unsportsmanlike acts."

Use of Instant Replay

The committee recommended the experimental use of instant replay (this was granted to the Big Ten Conference only last season) for all institutions and conferences. The statement the committee passed is below:

"Approve the experimental use of video replay in football for the 2005 regular season, using the same criteria as was approved for the 2004 regular season. Any conference that wishes to use video replay must confirm their administrative plans (e.g., equipment) and system for use with the rules committee by June 1, 2005. Any exceptions to the approved process must be requested to the rules committee and will be discussed on a conference call June 8, 2005. Video replay will not be allowed in post-season bowl games, as the committee feels further experimentation is needed."

Rationale: The committee believes – based on a Big Ten presentation and feedback from officials, coaches and conferences – that instant replay is a potential enhancement to the college game. The committee decided that some experimentation is necessary and also is asking that conferences/institutions interested in using instant replay confirm plans with the committee. The Big Ten ran a pilot program prior to requesting experimental use of review and felt this was critical to the success of its program.