

# NIRSA

# Flag & Touch

# Football Rules

**21st Edition, 2023 & 2024**

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# **Flag and Touch Football Fundamentals**

## **I. Possession**

1. A live ball is always in the possession of a team.
2. A live ball is in player possession or is loose.
3. A loose ball is in the possession of the team whose player was last in possession.
4. A player in possession of a live ball is a runner.
4. A player cannot fumble before gaining possession. Once a fumble, muff, or backward pass touches the ground, it is dead.
5. No foul causes loss of the ball.
6. After a distance penalty, the ball belongs to the team that was in possession at the time of the foul according to applicable rules. Team possession may then change if a new series is awarded.
8. Possession of a live ball in the opponent's end zone is always a touchdown.

## **II. Downs and the Zone Line-to-Gain**

1. A down begins when the ball becomes live and ends when it becomes dead.
2. Whether the next down will be 1st is determined at the time the ball becomes dead and after considering the effect of any act, except a nonplayer foul or unsportsmanlike conduct, that occurred during the down.
3. If Team R is first to touch a punt beyond K's scrimmage line, a new series will be awarded to the team in possession at end of the down, unless there was a foul before the punt and the penalty was accepted, or there was a double foul, or there was an inadvertent whistle during the punt following the touching by Team R.
4. The only defensive fouls that automatically cause a 1st down are Roughing the Passer and Illegally Tampering with the Flag Belt.
5. If the penalty is accepted for a live ball foul by either team during a down in which time expires, the period must be extended by an untimed down. The exceptions are unsportsmanlike fouls, nonplayer fouls, fouls that specify a loss of down, or fouls as specified in 3-2-3A.
6. No series can ever start on a down other than 1st.
7. The zone line-to-gain is established when the referee blows the ready for play whistle on 1st down of a new series for Team A. The zone line-to-gain will be the 20, 40, or goal line closest to Team A's scrimmage line in the direction of Team B's end zone. During overtime, however, the zone line-to-gain will always be the goal line.

### **III. Dead Ball**

1. A game official's whistle seldom kills the play. The ball is already dead by Rule.
2. No live ball foul causes the ball to become dead.
3. A dead ball may become live only by a legal snap.
4. Catching is always preceded by touching of the ball; thus, if touching causes the ball to become dead, securing possession of the ball has no significance.

### **IV. Punts**

1. For Team K to legally punt the ball, Team K must declare a punt prior to the ready for play. Team K may punt the ball only once per down.
2. A punt always ends as soon as any player secures possession.
3. Any Team R player may catch or recover a punt in the field of play and advance. All muffs by Team R that strike the ground are dead at the spot where the ball touches the ground.
4. Any fair catch signal will be ignored by the players and officials—the ball remains live.
5. A punt becomes dead when it breaks the plane of Team R's goal line and is a touchback.
6. Punts may be legally batted in the following manner: Team R may block the ball: (a) once it has been punted, and Team K may bat an airborne or grounded punt beyond their scrimmage line toward their own goal line; or (b) if a punt in flight beyond the neutral zone is batted by Team K toward its own goal line when no Team R player is in position to catch the ball.
7. First touching of a punt by Team K is ignored if the penalty is accepted for a foul during the down.

### **V. Passes**

1. All players are considered eligible receivers.
2. Team A may throw one forward pass per down.
3. A handed ball is not a pass.
4. Any pass in flight may be batted in any direction by an eligible receiver unless it is a backward pass batted forward by the passing team.
5. A forward pass interference foul can occur only beyond A's scrimmage line.

### **VI. Screen Blocking and Deflagging/Tagging**

1. Blocking other than screen blocking by either team is not permissible.
2. Using hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to block or displace an opponent is illegal.
3. A player in possession of a live ball is considered deflagged once their flag belt has been removed legally by an opponent. No player may remove their flag belt or the flag belt of an opponent not in possession of a live ball.
4. Players in possession of the ball without a flag belt must be tagged with 1 hand between the shoulder and knees.
5. No player may tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hand(s) or arm(s) and taking the opponent toward the ground as in tackle football.

## **VII. Fouls**

1. No live ball foul causes the covering official to sound their whistle immediately.
2. A live ball foul cannot be paired with a dead ball foul to create a double or multiple foul.
3. A double foul results only when both teams commit fouls—other than nonplayer fouls or unsportsmanlike conduct—during the same live ball period, or if team possession changed during the down and the foul by the team in final possession was prior to the change, or if there were a change of possession and the team in final possession accepted the penalty for its opponent's foul.
4. While it is possible to have several running plays during a down, there can only be one loose ball play during a down.

## **VIII. Penalty Measurement**

1. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined.
2. Penalties are either 5 or 10 yards.
3. Penalties are given according to the All-But-One Enforcement Principle for any live ball foul except the following:
  - a. Fouls that occur simultaneously with the snap
  - b. A foul by the opponents of the scoring team during a successful Try or touchdown when the score is accepted
  - c. A nonplayer foul or unsportsmanlike conduct
  - d. Roughing the Passer when the dead ball spot is beyond the neutral zone and there has been no change of team possession
  - e. Kick Catching Interference when the offended team accepts a penalty of 10 yards from the spot of the foul
  - f. Fouls by the kicking team during a punt play when the receiving team elects to have the penalty enforced from the dead ball spot
4. Penalty enforcement for any dead ball foul, nonplayer foul, or unsportsmanlike conduct is from the succeeding spot unless the foul occurs on a scoring play and the scoring team chooses enforcement at the succeeding spot (14 yard line or 10 yard line in overtime).
5. The penalty for any one of the 5 illegal passes is a loss of 5 yards, and the down is counted, except for a forward pass following change of team possession.
6. No penalty directly results in a safety. However, if a distance penalty is enforced from behind the offender's goal line toward their end line, it is a safety.
7. The penalty for a live ball foul by the defensive team is administered from the basic spot, except when that spot is in the end zone.
8. The loss of down aspect of a penalty has no significance following a change of possession or if the line-to-gain is reached after enforcement.

## **IX. Co-Rec**

1. A Team A runner who is a man may not advance the ball through the Team A scrimmage line unless the ball has been touched beyond the Team A or K scrimmage line or after a legal forward pass.
2. A legal forward pass completion from a man to a man makes the next play closed. The play remains closed until: (a) there is a legal forward pass completion involving a woman who is a passer or receiver, and (b) the play gains positive yardage. This also applies to the Try.
3. Team A cannot have two consecutive man-to-man forward pass completions. (Illegal Reception carries a loss of down, and the play remains closed.) This also applies to the Try. A legal forward pass caught jointly by teammates, one of whom is a man and one of whom is a woman, is considered a reception by a woman.
4. All fouls other than a foul for Illegal Reception, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next play is open or closed.

## **X. If in Doubt ...**

1. Continue the game (Rule 1).
2. Consider the safety of all participants to be paramount to the game (Rules 1 and 3).
3. That a player has maintained control of the ball after going to the ground, it is not a catch (Rule 2).
4. It is not a foul (Rule 2).
5. Enforce Illegally Consuming Time (Rule 3).
6. A snap close to the ground remains live (Rule 4).
7. The flag belt has been pulled (Rule 4).
8. The ball is released (Rule 4).
9. The out-of-bounds punt is short of the zone line-to-gain (Rule 5).
10. A punt blocked by R is blocked behind K's scrimmage line (Rule 6).
11. The A player first touched the snap 2 yards behind A's scrimmage line (Rule 7).
12. The pass is backward (Rule 7).
13. The passer is behind A's scrimmage line (Rule 7).
14. The pass is legal (Rule 7).
15. A forward pass has touched the ground, it is a catch (Rule 7).
16. It is a touchback (Rule 8).
17. The out-of-bounds punt near the goal line is a touchback (Rule 8).

# **Rule 1. The Game, Field, Players, and Equipment**

## **Section 1. General Provisions**

### **Article 1. Object of the Game.**

It is the object of the game for 1 team to carry or pass the ball across the opponent's goal line. The game is won by the team that accumulates the most points.

### **Article 2. The Game.**

The game shall be played between 2 teams of 7 players each. Four players are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit. The game may be continued with fewer than 4 players as long as the team has a chance to win. NOTE: If in doubt, continue the game.

### **Article 3. The Co-Rec Game.**

The co-rec game shall be played between 2 teams of 8 players, 4 men and 4 women. Teams with 7 players shall be 4 men and 3 women or 4 women and 3 men. Teams with 6 players shall be 3 men and 3 women, 4 men and 2 women, or 4 women and 2 men. Teams with 5 players, 3 men and 2 women or 2 men and 3 women, are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit. The game may be continued with fewer than 5 players as long as the team has a chance to win. NOTE: If in doubt, continue the game.

### **Article 4. Supervision.**

The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 to 4 officials. The officials are Referee, Back Judge, Line Judge, and Field Judge. It is recommended strongly that a minimum of 3 officials be used. Positions and responsibilities are found in the Officials' Manual.

### **Article 5. Captains.**

Each coach or player-coach shall designate to the Referee the captain(s). If more than 1 player is designated, a speaking captain must be selected to make all decisions.

### **Article 6. Persons Subject to the Rules.**

Players, nonplayers, and spectators affiliated with the team are subject to the Rules of the game and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

### **Article 7. Referee's Authority.**

The Referee shall have authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sporting behavior, on any situation not specifically covered in the Rules. The Referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.

### **Article 8. Officials' Authority.**

The officials shall assume authority for the contest 30 minutes prior to the scheduled game time, or as soon as they arrive. The officials' jurisdiction extends through the Referee's declaration of the end of the 4th period or overtime.

## **Section 2. The Field.**

### **Article 1. Safety Margin.**

No hard and unyielding rigid fixtures (e.g., trees, poles, fences) shall be located within 5 yards of the sidelines or 10 yards of the end lines, unless covered with at least 1/2" of closed-cell, slow-recovery rubber or other material of the same minimum thickness and having similar physical properties. NOTE: If in doubt, consider the safety of all participants to be paramount to the game.

### **Article 2. Adjacent Fields.**

When fields are located in close proximity, there shall be a minimum of 5 yards between "side by side" fields and 10 yards between "end on end" fields.

### **Article 3. Field Markings.**

The width of the field shall be lined at 20-yard intervals from goal line to goal line. These zone markings may be changed according to field dimensions. All yard lines inside the boundaries shall stop 4" from each sideline. There shall be 2 hash marks. They shall run parallel with each sideline, located 15 yards "in" from each sideline. The 3 and 10 yard Try lines and the 30 yard lines shall be 2 yards wide and 4" thick. Both 14 yard lines shall be marked with an "X" and shall have a height of 1 yard and a line thickness of 4". White is the recommended color for all field markings.

### **Article 4. Facility Limitations.**

In case of facility limitations, distances of field length and width can be modified. However, end zone length must always be 10 yards. If the field length is modified, shorten all 4 zones equally so they are the same length. NOTE: When zones are shortened, the 3 and 10 yard Try lines remain the same. The 14 yard lines must be located 6 yards from the nearest zone line. The 30 yard lines must each be located 10 yards from the 40 yard line.

### **Article 5. Goal Line.**

The entire width of each goal line shall be a part of the end zone.

### **Article 6. Team Box.**

On each side of the field a team box shall be designated for the players and nonplayers. This team box is located 2 yards off the sideline and between the 20 yard lines. When the playing area is modified, so shall be the team box. If teams cannot agree on a sideline, the Referee shall conduct a coin toss. Both team boxes may be located on the same side of the field, provided each team box is marked between their respective 20 and 35 yard lines.

### **Article 7. End Zone Pylons.**

Twelve soft, flexible pylons shall be placed at the inside corner of the intersections of the sideline with the goal lines and the end lines, and at the intersections of the end lines and hash marks extended. The 4 pylons located at the hash marks extended shall be positioned 3' beyond the end line.

### **Article 8. Sideline Zone Line-to-Gain Markers.**

20 yard line and 40 yard line markers, constructed of soft and pliable materials, shall be located 6' beyond the sideline.



**Article 9. Field Numbers and Hash Marks.**

White field yard line numbers shall be 6' in height and 4' in width, with the tops of the numbers 5 yards from the sidelines, if used. Hash marks shall be 6' long and 4" wide, and intersect with the 20 and 40 yard lines. Additional hash marks, 3' long and 4" wide, shall touch the goal line and extend into the field of play.

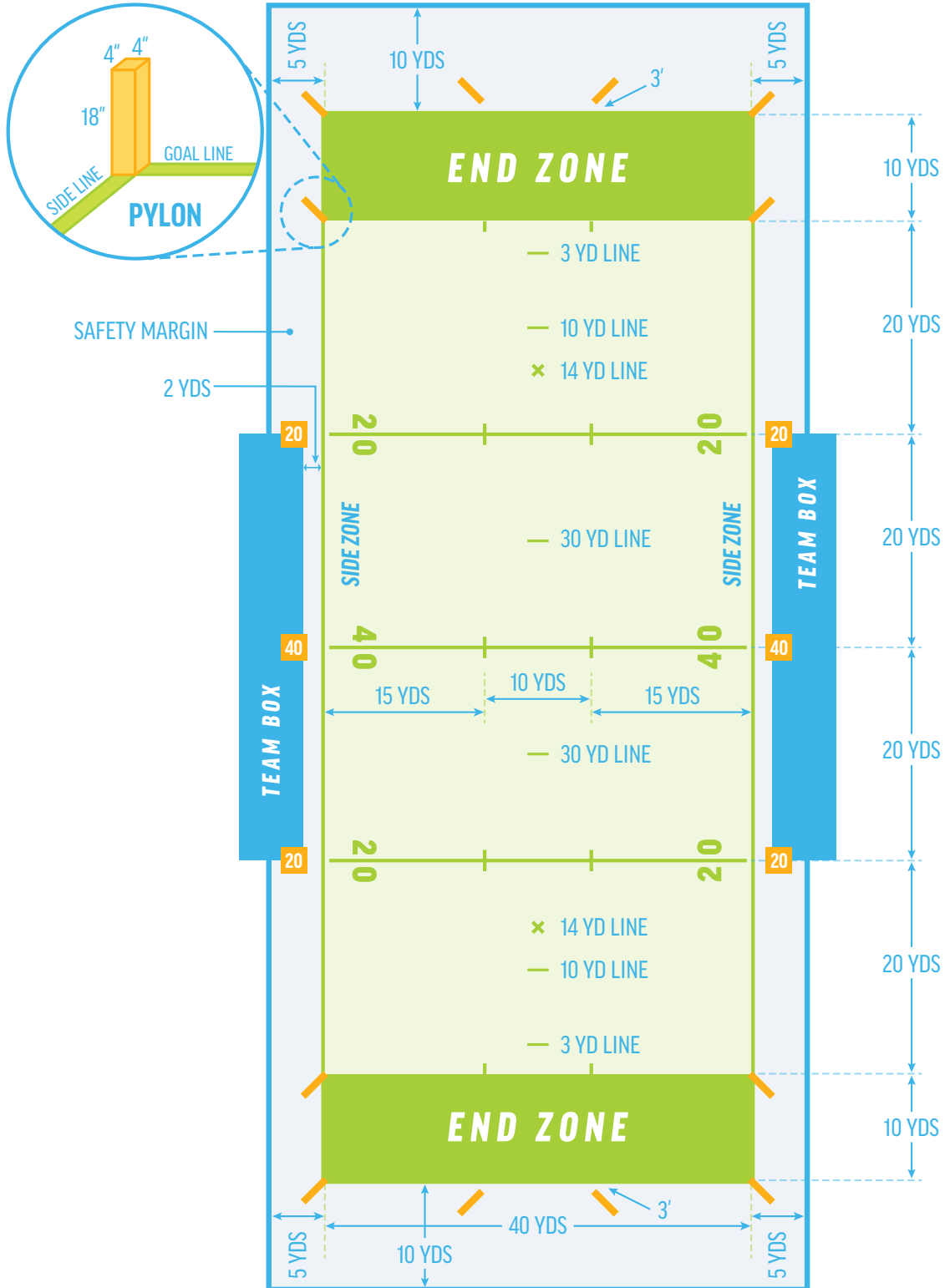
**Article 10. Field Orientation.**

It is highly recommended that fields be laid out in a north/south orientation when new facilities are planned.

**Article 11. Field Slope.**

It is recommended there be a slope of 1/4" per foot from the center of the field to each sideline on a natural grass field.

**Standard Flag Football Field Diagram**



### **Section 3. Game Equipment**

#### **Article 1. The Ball.**

The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered and meet the recommendations of size and shape for a regulation football. There are no requirements regarding ball pressure and markings. Games involving only men shall use the regular size ball. The regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size football shall be used for all other games. The Referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his or her discretion. During the game, each team shall use a legal ball of its choice when in possession.

#### **Article 2. Ball Spotters.**

2 soft and pliable ball spotters shall be used. 1, orange in color, shall mark A's scrimmage line. The 2nd, gold in color, shall mark B's scrimmage line. The ball spotters shall always be 1 yard apart.

#### **Article 3. Down Box.**

A down box shall be used to indicate the number of the down and placed at the zone line-to-gain. It shall be positioned 2 yards out of bounds and operated under the jurisdiction of the Line Judge. During the Try, the down box shall display the point value (1, 2, or 3) declared by A and be placed at the goal line.

### **Section 4. Required Player Equipment**

#### **Article 1. Jersey.**

Players of opposing teams shall wear contrasting-colored jerseys, without pockets, numbered on the front or rear. Players of the same team shall wear the same color or similar colored jerseys with different numbers. The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors. Jerseys shall be either:

- A. long enough so they remain tucked into the pants/shorts during the entire down or
- B. short enough so there is a minimum of 4" from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline. The Referee shall use a fist to measure the distance between the waistline and the bottom of the jersey.

#### **Article 2. Pants/Shorts.**

Each player shall wear pants or shorts. They shall be a different color than the flags.

#### **Article 3. Flag Belt.**

Each player shall wear a one-piece quick release belt, without any knots, at the waistline with 3 flags permanently attached, 1 flag on each side and 1 in the center of the back. The flags shall be a minimum of 2" wide and 14" long when measured from the edge of the belt. The flags should be of a contrasting color to the opponent's flags. The belt must have a spring-loaded clip. NOTE: If the flags are not located on each hip and the tailbone, then the player must change to an appropriate size belt that meets the Rule.

#### **Article 4. Shoes.**

Shoes shall be made of a canvas, leather, or synthetic material that covers the foot attached to a firm sole of leather, rubber, or composition material that may have cleats or be cleatless. Cleats are limited to studs or projections that do not exceed 1/2" in length and are made with nonabrasive rubber or rubber type synthetic material that does not chip or develop a cutting edge. Rubber cleats with a tipped metal material are legal.

## **Section 5. Optional Player Equipment**

### **Article 1. Elastic Bandage.**

Players may use an elastic bandage no more than 2 turns thick in any given area. It can be anchored at each end by tape not to exceed 2 turns.

### **Article 2. Gloves.**

Players may wear gloves that must consist of a soft, pliable, and nonabrasive material.

### **Article 3. Headwear.**

- A. Players may wear a knit or stocking cap. The cap will have no bill. It can have a knit ball on top.
- B. Players may wear a headband no wider than 2" and made of nonabrasive, unadorned, single colored cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather, or rubber. Rubber or cloth elastic bands may be used to control hair.
- C. Players may wear a soft rubber hat.

### **Article 4. Pads.**

Players may wear soft, pliable pads on the lower leg, knee, and ankle. Soft and yielding padded compression shorts and shirts are legal apparel.

### **Article 5. Mouth and Tooth Protector.**

It is strongly recommended that a mouth piece be worn by all players.

### **Article 6. Play Books.**

- A. Players may carry a play book inside their clothing made of a yielding material only and must not be visible. If carried on the field, a player must keep the play book rather than throw it on the ground.
- B. Players may wear a soft, pliable wrist/forearm band that contains plays.

### **Article 7. Sunglasses.**

Players may wear pliable and non-rigid sunglasses.

### **Article 8. Face Shield.**

Players may wear a face shield molded to the face with no protrusions to protect against a facial injury.

## **Section 6. Illegal Player Equipment.**

A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play. This applies to any equipment that, in the opinion of the Referee, is dangerous or confusing. Types of equipment or substances that shall always be declared illegal include the following:

- A. Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats, or items containing exposed knots. EXCEPTION: Face shield.
- B. Jewelry.
- C. Pads or braces worn above the waist. Casts worn above or below the waist.
- D. Shoes with ceramic, screw-in, detachable cleats, or any projecting metal. EXCEPTION: Screw-in cleats are allowed if the screw is part of the cleat.

- E. Shirts or jerseys that do not remain tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt that does not remain tucked in. Tear-away jerseys or jerseys that have been altered in any manner that produces a knot-like protrusion or creates a tear-away jersey. Jerseys that have an arm opening more than 4" below the armpit. The Referee will use a fist to measure the distance of the jersey arm opening.
- F. Pants or shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), pocket(s), or exposed drawstring(s).
- G. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped, and any other hard substance unless covered with at least 1/2" of closed-cell, slow recovery rubber, or other material of similar thickness and physical properties.
- H. Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body.
- I. Equipment that includes computers or any electronic or mechanical devices for communication.
- J. Exposed metal on clothes or person. This includes "O" or "D" rings used to secure flag belts.
- K. Towels attached at the player's waist.
- L. Flags that can be detached from the flag belt.
- M. Hand warmers worn around the waist.

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, Illegal Player Equipment, 10 yards.**

### **Section 7. Missing or Improperly Worn Player Equipment**

Each player shall properly wear the mandatory equipment while the ball is live. When any required player equipment is missing or worn improperly, an official's time-out shall be declared. If the missing or improperly worn equipment is detected during the down or subsequent dead-ball action related to the down without being directly attributable to a foul by an opponent or if a player is wearing otherwise legal equipment in an illegal manner, the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. If proper and legal equipment has become improperly worn through use but prompt repair is possible and does not delay the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds, such repair may be made without replacing the player for at least one down.

### **Section 8. Coaches' Field Equipment**

Local Area Network (LAN) phones and/or headsets may be used by coaches, other nonplayers, and players. However, players may use LAN phones and/or headsets only during authorized sideline conferences.

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards.**

## **Rule 2. Definitions of Playing Terms**

### **Section 1. Ball Status; Dead, Live, and Loose**

#### **Article 1. Dead Ball.**

A dead ball is a ball not in play. The ball is dead during the interval between downs.

#### **Article 2. Live Ball.**

A live ball is a ball in play. A ball becomes live when the ball is legally snapped and a down is in progress.

#### **Article 3. Loose Ball.**

A loose ball is a pass, fumble, or a kick. A loose ball that has not yet touched the ground is in flight. A grounded loose ball is one that has touched the ground. Any loose ball continues to be a loose ball until a player secures possession of it or until it becomes dead by Rule, whichever comes first.

#### **Article 4. When the Ball Is Ready for Play.**

A dead ball is ready for play when the Referee sounds the whistle and signals ready for play.

### **Section 2. Batting**

Batting is intentionally slapping, striking, or redirecting the ball with the hand or arm.

### **Section 3. Catch, Interception, Simultaneous Catch, and Touching**

#### **Article 1. Catch.**

A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball that is in flight by first contacting the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball.

- A. If 1 foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception even though a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out of bounds.
- B. A catch by any kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion or interception.
- C. It is not a catch or interception if a player's initial contact with the ground causes a loss of player possession and either the ball contacts the ground or the player is out of bounds prior to regaining player possession. NOTE: If in doubt that a player has maintained control after going to the ground, it is not a catch.

#### **Article 2. Interception.**

An interception is the catch of an opponent's fumble or pass.

#### **Article 3. Recovery.**

A recovery is gaining possession of a live ball after it strikes the ground.

#### **Article 4. Simultaneous Catch or Recovery.**

A simultaneous catch or recovery is a catch or recovery in which there is joint possession of a live ball by opposing players who are inbounds.

#### **Article 5. Touching.**

Catching is always preceded by touching the ball; thus, if touching causes the ball to become dead, securing possession of the ball has no significance. Touching refers to any contact with the ball.

### **Section 4. Down and Between Downs**

A down is a unit of the game and starts, after the ball is ready for play, with a legal snap and ends when the ball next becomes dead. Between downs is the interval during which the ball is dead.

### **Section 5. Encroachment**

Encroachment is a term to indicate a player is illegally in the neutral zone. An entering substitute is not considered to be a player for encroachment restrictions until they are on their side of the neutral zone.

### **Section 6. Field Areas**

#### **Article 1. The Field.**

The field is the area within the sidelines and end lines, which includes both end zones.

#### **Article 2. Field of Play.**

The field of play is the area within the sidelines and goal lines.

#### **Article 3. Side Zones.**

The side zones are the areas bounded by the sidelines, hash marks, and goal lines.

#### **Article 4. End Zones.**

The end zones are located at each end of the field, between the goal line and the end line. The goal line is in the end zone, and a team's end zone is the one it is defending.

#### **Article 5. Restricted Area.**

The restricted area is the 2 yard belt between the sidelines and the team box, and it extends around the entire perimeter of the field. While coaches may occupy this area while the ball is dead, all nonplayers must vacate the restricted area when the ball is live.

### **Section 7. Fighting**

Fighting is any attempt by a player or nonplayer to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s), or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact.

## **Section 8. Forward Progress**

### **Article 1. Runner.**

Forward progress is the end of advancement of the ball toward the opponent's goal in a runner's possession, and it determines the dead-ball spot.

### **Article 2. Airborne Player.**

When an airborne player makes a catch, forward progress is the furthest point of advancement after they possess the ball if contacted by a defender.

## **Section 9. Foul and Flagrant Foul**

### **Article 1. Foul.**

A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed. NOTE: If in doubt, it is not a foul.

### **Article 2. Flagrant Foul.**

A flagrant foul is so severe or extreme that it places an opponent in danger of serious injury and/or involves violations that are extremely or persistently vulgar or abusive conduct.

## **Section 10. Fumble**

A fumble is a loss of player possession other than by handing, passing, or punting the ball.

## **Section 11. Goal Line**

Each goal line is a vertical plane separating the end zone from the field of play. The plane of the goal line extends beyond the sideline.

## **Section 12. Handing the Ball**

Handing the ball is transferring player possession from 1 teammate to another without throwing or punting it.

## **Section 13. Huddle**

A huddle is 2 or more offensive players grouped together after the ball is ready for play and before assuming scrimmage formation prior to the snap.

## **Section 14. Hurdling**

Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump (hurdle) with 1 or both feet or knees over an opponent who is contacting the ground with no part of their body except 1 or both feet.



## **Section 15. Kicks**

### **Article 1. Kicker.**

The kicker is any player who legally punts. The kicker is a runner until they actually punt the ball.

### **Article 2. Legal and Illegal Kicks.**

A legal kick is a punt by a player of the team in possession when such a kick is permitted by Rule. Any punt continues to be a punt until it is caught by a player or becomes dead. Kicking the ball in any other manner is illegal.

### **Article 3. Punt.**

A punt is made by K under restrictions that prohibit either team from advancing beyond their scrimmage lines until the ball is punted. A player becomes a kicker when their knee, lower leg, or foot makes contact with the ball before it strikes the ground.

## **Section 16. Loss of a Down**

Loss of a down means loss of the right to repeat the down.

## **Section 17. Muff**

A muff is an unsuccessful attempt to catch a ball, with the ball being touched in the attempt.

## **Section 18. Neutral Zone**

The neutral zone is from the forward point of the football 1 yard to B's scrimmage line and extended to each sideline. It is established when the ball is marked ready for play.

## **Section 19. Passes**

### **Article 1. Passer.**

The passer is the player who has thrown a legal forward pass. They remain the passer while the ball is in flight or until they move to participate in the play.

### **Article 2. Passing.**

Passing the ball is throwing it. In a pass, the ball travels in flight. A pass continues to be a pass until caught, intercepted, or the ball becomes dead. The initial direction determines whether a pass is forward or backward.

### **Article 3. Forward Pass and Backward Pass.**

A forward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction toward the opponent's end line. A backward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the passer's end line. A backward pass or fumble that hits the ground is ruled dead at that spot.

## **Section 20. Penalty**

A penalty is a result imposed by Rule against a team or team member that has committed a foul.

## **Section 21. Possession**

A ball in player possession is a live ball held or controlled by a player after it has been handed or snapped to them, or after they caught or recovered it. A ball in team possession is a live ball that is in player possession or one that is loose following loss of such player possession. A live ball is always in the possession of a team. A change of possession occurs when the opponent gains player possession during the down.

## **Section 22. Removing the Flag Belt**

### **Article 1. Flag Belt Removal.**

When the flag belt is clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the ball is declared dead and the down shall end. If a flag belt inadvertently falls to the ground, a 1 hand tag between the shoulders and knees constitutes capture. A player may leave their feet to remove the flag belt.

### **Article 2. Contact.**

In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, an opponent may contact the body, but not the face, neck, or any part of the head of the runner, with their hands. An opponent may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag belt.

## **Section 23. Screen Blocking**

Screen blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without using any part of the body to initiate contact.

## **Section 24. Scrimmage Line**

The scrimmage line for A is the yard line and its vertical plane that passes through the forward point of the ball. The scrimmage line for B is the yard line and its vertical plane that passes 1 yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. B's scrimmage line may extend into their end zone.

## **Section 25. Shift**

A shift is the action of 1 or more offensive players who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap.

## **Section 26. Spots**

### **Article 1. Basic Spot.**

The basic spot is a point of reference for penalty enforcement. See 10-2.

### **Article 2. Enforcement Spot.**

The enforcement spot is the point from which a penalty is enforced.

### **Article 3. Dead Ball Spot.**

The dead ball spot is the spot under the foremost point of the ball when it becomes dead by rule. EXCEPTIONS: See 7-6-4B, 7-6-5B, and 8-8-1A EXCEPTION.

#### **Article 4. Inbounds Spot.**

The inbounds spot is the intersection of the hash marks and the yard line:

- A. through the forward point of the ball when the ball becomes dead in a side zone; or
- B. through the forward point of the ball on the sideline between the goal lines when a loose ball goes out of bounds; or
- C. through the spot under the forward point of the ball in the possession of a runner when they cross the plane of the sideline and goes out of bounds.

#### **Article 5. Out-of-Bounds Spot.**

The out-of-bounds spot is where the ball becomes dead because of going out of bounds.

#### **Article 6. Post Scrimmage Kick Spot.**

The post scrimmage kick spot is the spot where the kick ends. R retains the ball after penalty enforcement from the post scrimmage kick spot when a post scrimmage kick foul occurs. The post scrimmage kick spot is the 14 yard line for kicks that result in a touchback. Fouls by R behind the post scrimmage kick spot are spot fouls.

#### **Article 7. Previous Spot.**

The previous spot is where the ball was last snapped.

#### **Article 8. Spot of a Foul.**

The spot of a foul is where the foul occurs. If a foul occurs out of bounds, the spot of the foul is at the intersection of the nearer hash mark and the yard line extended on which the foul occurs.

#### **Article 9. Spot Where a Run Ends.**

The spot where a run ends is:

- A. where the ball becomes dead if the runner does not lose possession or if the runner's fumble/ backward pass from beyond the scrimmage line touches the ground or goes out of bounds behind the spot of the fumble/backward pass; or
- B. where the player loses possession if their run is followed by their fumble/backward pass that touches the ground or goes out of bounds beyond the spot of the fumble/backward pass, their illegal forward pass, or their fumble/backward pass beyond the scrimmage line is intercepted; or
- C. the spot of the catch or recovery when the momentum rule is in effect.

#### **Article 10. Succeeding Spot.**

The succeeding spot is where the ball would next be snapped if a foul had not occurred. When a foul occurs during a down in which a touchdown is scored, as in 10-3-10, the succeeding spot may, at the option of the offended team, be the succeeding spot after the Try.

### **Section 27. Tagging**

Tagging is placing 1 hand anywhere between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm, of an opponent with the ball. The tagger may leave their feet to make the tag. Pushing, striking, slapping, and holding are not permitted. If the player trips the runner in their attempt to make a diving tag, it is a foul.

## **Section 28. Player and Team Designations**

### **Article 1. A and B.**

A is the team that snaps the ball. The opponent of A is B. A player of A is A-1 and teammates are A-2 and A-3. Other abbreviations are B-1 for a player of B, K-1 for a player of the kickers, and R-1 for a receiver.

### **Article 2. Disqualified Player.**

A disqualified player is one who becomes ineligible and is removed from further participation in the game.

### **Article 3. Offensive and Defensive Team.**

The offensive team is the team in possession or the team to which the ball belongs. The defensive team is the opposing team.

### **Article 4. Player and Nonplayer.**

A player is any one of the participants in the game. A nonplayer is a coach, trainer, other attendant, a substitute, or a replaced player who does not participate by touching the ball, hindering an opponent, or influencing the play.

### **Article 5. Runner.**

The runner is the player in possession of a live ball or simulating possession of a live ball. Once a player catches or intercepts a pass, they become a runner.

### **Article 6. Snapper.**

The snapper is the player who snaps the ball.

### **Article 7. Substitute.**

A substitute is a team member who may replace a player.

## **Rule 3. Periods, Time Factors, and Substitutions**

### **Section 1. Start of Each Half**

#### **Article 1. Coin Toss.**

3 minutes before the start of the game the Referee shall instruct the visiting captain to give a "heads" or "tails" choice before the coin toss. The Referee will then toss the coin in the presence of the opposing captains. All officials shall be present for the coin toss.

The captain winning the toss shall have the 1st choice of options for the 1st half or shall defer their option to the 2nd half. The options for each half shall be as follows:

- A. To choose whether their team will start on offense or defense.
- B. To choose the goal their team will defend.

The captain who did not win the 1st choice of options for a half shall exercise the remaining option.

#### **Article 2. Change Periods.**

Between the 1st and 2nd and between the 3rd and 4th periods, the teams shall change goals. Team possession, number of the next down, and the zone line-to-gain remain unchanged.

#### **Article 3. Forfeit Time.**

Game time is forfeit time.

#### **Article 4. Start 1st and 3rd Periods.**

Unless moved by penalty or field dimensions have been shortened, the ball shall be snapped on the 14 yard line to start the 1st and 3rd periods.

### **Section 2. Game Time**

#### **Article 1. Playing Time and Intermissions.**

Playing time shall be 48 minutes, divided into 4 periods of 12 minutes each. The intermission between the 2nd and 3rd periods shall be 5 minutes. When overtime is used, there will be a 3 minute intermission. NOTE: Timing rules may be modified due to institutional program needs.

#### **Article 2. Interrupted and Shortened Games.**

- A. When thunder is heard or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, suspend play immediately. Wait at least 30 minutes prior to resuming play. If subsequent thunder is heard or lightning is seen after the beginning of the 30-minute count, reset the clock and another 30-minute count will begin. NOTE: If in doubt, consider the safety of all participants to be paramount to the game.
- B. When weather conditions are construed to be hazardous to life or limb of the participants, the crew of officials is authorized to delay or suspend the game.

- C. By mutual agreement of the opposing captains or head coaches and the Referee, any remaining period may be shortened or the game terminated at any time.
- D. Games interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible administrative authority shall be continued from the point of interruption, unless the Referee and the opposing captains and/or head coaches agree to terminate the game with the existing score, or there are institutional or governing body rules that apply.

**Article 3. Extension of Periods.**

A period shall be extended by an untimed down if 1 of the following occurred during a down in which time expires:

- A. There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted, except for: (1) unsportsmanlike or nonplayer fouls, (2) fouls that specify loss of down, (3) fouls on a scoring play that are enforced following the Try, or (4) fouls for which enforcement by rule result in a safety. NOTE: For loss of down fouls, any score by the team that fouls is cancelled.
- B. There was a double foul.
- C. There was an inadvertent whistle.
- D. If a touchdown was scored, the Try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the 4th period and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying. NOTE: The Try shall always be attempted as part of the same period as the touchdown it follows.

If (A), (B), or (C) occurs during the untimed down, the procedure is repeated. NOTE: The period shall not be extended further when the defense fouls during a successful Try and the offended team accepts the results of the play with enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding spot.

**Article 4. Game Timer.**

It is recommended that playing time be kept on a stopwatch operated by the Back Judge.

**Article 5. First 22 Minutes of Each Half.**

The clock shall start on the snap. It will run continuously for the first 22 minutes of each half unless it is stopped for one of the following reasons:

- A. Team time-out – clock restarts on the snap. NOTE: If a team time-out is called prior to a Try and/or onside conversion, the Try down and onside conversion shall be untimed, and the clock shall restart on the snap of the play that follows the Try or onside conversion.
- B. Official's time-out – clock restarts on the ready for play.
- C. End of the 1st or 3rd period – clock restarts on the snap.

**Article 6. 2 Minute Warning.**

Approximately 2 minutes before the end of the 2nd and 4th periods, the Referee shall stop the clock and inform both captains of the playing time remaining in that period. The clock starts on the snap. The Back Judge will announce to the captains the remaining time and status of the clock after every play during the final 2 minutes of the 2nd and 4th periods.

### **Article 7. Last 2 Minutes.**

During the final 2 minutes of the 2nd and 4th periods the clock will stop for one of the following reasons:

- A. Incomplete legal or incomplete illegal forward pass – clock restarts on the snap.
- B. Out of bounds – clock restarts on the snap.
- C. Safety – clock restarts on the snap.
- D. Team time-out – clock restarts on the snap.
- E. First down – clock restart is dependent on the previous play.
- F. Touchdown – clock restarts on the snap (after the Try and onside conversion).
- G. Penalty and administration – clock restart is dependent on the previous play.
- H. EXCEPTION 1: Delay of game foul is accepted – clock restarts on the snap.
- I. EXCEPTION 2: Any foul occurs – offended team may elect to restart the clock on the snap.
- J. Official's time-out – clock restarts at their discretion.
- K. Touchback – clock restarts on the snap.
- L. A is awarded a new series – clock restart is dependent on the previous play.
- M. B is awarded a new series – clock restarts on the snap.
- N. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal punt – clock restarts on the snap.
- O. Team attempting to conserve time illegally (includes intentional grounding and a backward pass thrown intentionally out of bounds) – clock restarts on the ready.
- P. Team attempting to consume time illegally – clock restarts on the snap.
- Q. Inadvertent whistle – clock restarts on the ready.

### **Article 8. Correct Timing Errors.**

The Referee shall have authority to correct obvious timing errors if discovery is prior to the 2nd live ball following the error unless the period has officially ended.

### **Article 9. Ending a Period.**

End the period following a short delay to ensure:

- A. no foul has occurred,
- B. no obvious timing error has occurred,
- C. no request for a coach-Referee conference has occurred, or
- D. no other irregularity has occurred.
- E. The Referee shall hold the ball in 1 hand overhead to indicate the period has officially ended.

## **Section 3. Tie Game**

### **Article 1. Mandatory Meeting.**

If a game ends with a tie score, the officials shall bring all players and coaches of both teams to the center of the field. They shall discuss the tie breaker procedures and answer all questions prior to the coin toss. After this meeting, the captains will stay while the remaining players and coaches return to their respective team box.

**Article 2. Coin Toss.**

A coin will be tossed by the Referee to determine the options as in the start of the game. The visiting captain shall call the toss. There will be only 1 coin flip during the overtime. If additional overtime periods are played, captains will alternate choices. The winner of the toss shall be given options of offense, defense, or direction. The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.

**Article 3. Tie Breaker.**

Unless moved by penalty, each team shall start 1st and goal from B's 10 yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown. An overtime period consists of a series of 4 downs by each team. If the score is still tied after 1 period, play will proceed to a 2nd period or as many as are needed to determine a winner. If the 1st team awarded the ball scores, the opponent will still have a chance to win the game. A Try will be attempted and scored as indicated in Rule 8. When B secures possession, the ball is dead and the series is over. The ball will be placed at B's 10 yard line, and the original defense will begin their series of 4 downs, if available. Each team is entitled to only 1 time-out during the entire overtime.

**Article 4. Fouls and Penalties.**

Fouls and penalties are administered similar to the regular game. A shall be awarded a new series of 4 downs when an automatic 1st down foul is accepted. Dead ball fouls following a touchdown are penalized on the Try. Dead ball fouls following a successful Try will be penalized from the succeeding spot, B's 10 yard line, if accepted. NOTE: The goal line shall always be zone line-to-gain in overtime, regardless of the number of overtimes played.

## **Section 4. Time-Outs**

**Article 1. How Charged.**

The Referee shall declare a time-out when they suspend play for any reason. Each time-out shall be charged either to the Referee or 1 of the teams.

**Article 2. Official's Time-Out.**

The Referee shall declare an official's time-out when an excess time-out is allowed for an injured player. The Referee may declare an official's time-out for any contingency not covered elsewhere by the Rules. If a time-out is for repair or replacement of player equipment that becomes illegal through play and is considered dangerous to other players, the time-out is charged to the Referee.

**Article 3. Charged Time-Outs.**

Each team is entitled to 3 charged time-outs during each half. Successive charged time-outs may be granted to each team during a dead ball period. If the ball is dead and a team has not exhausted its charged time-outs, the Referee shall allow a time-out and charge that team or complete a coach-Referee conference. NOTE: Number of time-outs may be modified due to institutional program needs.

**Article 4. Length of Time-Outs.**

A charged time-out requested by any player, player-coach, or head coach that is legally granted shall be 1 minute and can be shortened if both teams are ready. Other time-outs may be longer only if the Referee deems it necessary.



#### **Article 5. Coach-Referee Conference.**

When a team requests a charged time-out for a misapplication or misinterpretation of a Rule, the Referee and 1 other official will confer with the captain, player-coach, or head coach. The request must be made prior to the time the ball becomes live following the play to be reviewed unless the half has officially ended. If the Referee changes their ruling, it is an official's time-out. If the ruling is not changed, it is a charged time-out. If the team has used its available time-outs, a delay of game penalty will be assessed.

#### **Article 6. Notification.**

The Referee shall notify both teams 5 seconds before a charged time-out expires. When 3 time-outs have been charged to a team in a half, the Referee shall notify both captains, both head coaches, and all officials. NOTE: The Referee will communicate the number of team time-outs remaining for each team to the A and B captains and all officials after each charged time-out is taken.

#### **Article 7. Authorized Conferences.**

There are 2 types of authorized conferences permitted during charged time-outs:

- A. Players and nonplayers may meet directly in front of the team box within 5 yards of the sideline; or
- B. One coach or player-coach may enter their team's huddle between the hash marks to confer with no more than 7 players (Co-Rec Rule: 8 players).

#### **Article 8. Injured Player.**

An injured or apparently injured player who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped shall be replaced for at least 1 down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has any amount of blood on their uniform shall be considered an injured player.

#### **Article 9. Concussion.**

Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.

### **Section 5. Delay of Game**

The ball must be put in play promptly and legally. Any action or inaction by either team that tends to prevent this is delay of game. This includes any of the following:

- A. Failure to snap within 25 seconds after the ball is declared ready for play.
- B. Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready for play.
- C. Deliberately advancing the ball after it is declared dead.
- D. Coach-Referee Conference after all permissible charged time-outs for the coach's team have been used, and during which the Referee is requested to reconsider the application of a Rule and no change results.

**Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Delay of Game, 5 yards from the succeeding spot.**

## **Section 6. Illegally Conserving or Consuming Time.**

When a team attempts to conserve or consume time illegally, the Referee shall order the clock started or stopped. If the kicking team delays kicking the ball, as described in 6-1-4, the Referee may also reset the clock to the time of the previous snap and start the clock on the snap. When a foul occurs with less than 2 minutes remaining in either half, the offended team will have the option to start the game clock on the snap. **Penalty: Illegally Consuming Time, 5 yards from the previous spot.** NOTE: If in doubt, apply a penalty for Illegally Consuming Time.

## **Section 7. Substitutions**

### **Article 1. Eligible Substitutions.**

Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players provided the substitution is completed by having the replaced players off the field before the ball is snapped. An incoming substitute must enter the field directly from their team area. A replaced player must leave the field immediately at the sideline nearest their team area prior to the ball being snapped. An entering substitute shall be on their team's side of the neutral zone when the ball is snapped. **Penalty: Illegal Substitution, 5 yards. If it is a dead ball or nonplayer foul, 5 yards from the succeeding spot.**

### **Article 2. Legal Substitutions.**

During the same dead ball interval, no substitute shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and then re-enter as a substitute unless a penalty is accepted, a dead ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out, or a period ends. **Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Illegal Substitution, 5 yards from the succeeding spot.**

## **Rule 4. Ball in Play, Dead Ball, and Out of Bounds**

### **Section 1. Ball in Play: Dead Ball**

#### **Article 1. Dead Ball Becomes Live.**

A dead ball, after having been declared ready for play, becomes a live ball when it is snapped legally.

#### **Article 2. Ball Declared Dead.**

A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound their whistle or declare it dead when one of the following occurs:

- A. The ball goes out of bounds.
- B. Any part of the runner other than a hand(s) or foot (feet) touches the ground.
- C. A touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful Try is made.
- D. The ball strikes the ground following 1st touching by K.
- E. K catches a punt that is beyond the neutral zone or when an untouched punt comes to rest on the ground and no player attempts to secure it.
- F. A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
- G. A backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players. A snapped ball that hits the ground before or after getting to the intended receiver is dead at the spot where it hits the ground. NOTE: If in doubt, a snap close to the ground remains live.
- H. A forward pass is legally completed or a loose ball is caught by a player on, above, or behind the opponent's goal line.
- I. A runner has a flag belt removed legally by an opponent. A flag belt is removed when the clip is detached from the belt, the belt is torn into more than 1 piece, or the flag is torn off the belt (flag only). NOTE: If in doubt, the flag belt has been pulled.
- J. A runner is legally tagged (flag only).
- K. A runner is legally tagged with 1 hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm (touch only).
- L. A passer is deflagged/tagged prior to releasing the ball. NOTE: If in doubt, the ball is released.
- M. A muff of a punt strikes the ground.
- N. K's punt breaks the plane of R's goal line.
- O. B secures possession during a Try or overtime.
- P. A prosthetic device becomes dislodged from a player who is in possession of the ball.

- Q. An official sounds their whistle inadvertently during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined and the status of the ball is as follows:
1. The ball is in player possession. The team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where declared dead or replay the down.
  2. The ball is loose from a fumble, backward pass, illegal kick, or illegal forward pass. The team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down.
  3. The ball is in flight during a legal forward pass or a punt. The ball is returned to the previous spot and the down replayed.

If a foul occurs during any of the above downs, an accepted penalty shall be administered as in any other play situation. When the foul is accepted, disregard the inadvertent whistle. NOTE: There is no time added to the game clock during a down with an inadvertent whistle.

## **Section 2. Succeeding Spot**

### **Article 1. Placement of Dead Ball.**

When the ball becomes dead between the hash marks, play is resumed at the dead ball spot. If the ball becomes dead in a side zone, place the ball at the nearest hash mark at the corresponding yard line.

### **Article 2. Anywhere Between the Hash Marks.**

Before the ready for play signal, A may designate the spot from which the ball is put in play anywhere between the hash marks for the start of each half; for a Try; following a touchback, safety, Try, and awarded catch after a punt; for the start of each series in overtime.

## **Section 3. Out of Bounds**

### **Article 1. Player Out of Bounds.**

A player or other person is out of bounds when any part of the person is touching anything, other than another player or official, that is on or outside the sideline or end line.

### **Article 2. Player in Possession Out of Bounds.**

A ball in player possession is out of bounds when the runner or the ball touches anything, other than another player or official, that is on or outside the sideline or end line.

### **Article 3. Loose Ball Out of Bounds.**

A loose ball is out of bounds when it touches anything, including a player or official, that is out of bounds.

## **Rule 5. Series of Downs, Number of Downs, and Team Possession After Penalty**

### **Section 1. A Series: How Started, How Broken, How Renewed**

#### **Article 1. A Down Is a Unit.**

A down is a unit of the game that starts with a legal snap and ends when the ball next becomes dead. Between downs is any period when the ball is dead.

#### **Article 2. Series of Downs.**

A shall have 4 consecutive downs to advance to the next zone. Any down may be repeated or lost if provided by the Rules.

#### **Article 3. Zone Line-to-Gain.**

The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line-to-gain. The forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.

#### **Article 4. Awarding a New Series.**

A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the opponents moves the ball into the next zone; or an accepted penalty against the opponents involves an automatic 1st down; or after enforcement of a penalty against A, the ball is in advance of the zone line-to-gain; or either team has obtained legal possession of the ball as a result of a punt, touchback, pass interception, or failure to gain the zone in advance of the ball.

NOTE: If in doubt, the out-of-bounds punt is "short" of the zone line-to-gain.

#### **Article 5. Incorrect Down.**

Until a new series is awarded, the Referee shall have authority to correct an error in the number of downs.

### **Section 2. Down and Possession After a Penalty**

#### **Article 1. Penalty Resulting in a 1st Down.**

After a penalty that leaves the ball in the possession of a team beyond its zone line-to-gain, or when a penalty stipulates a 1st down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be 1st down with next zone line-to-gain.

#### **Article 2. Foul Before Change of Team Possession.**

Following a distance penalty between the goal lines that occurs during a down and before any change of team possession during that down, the ball belongs to A. The down shall be repeated unless the penalty also involves loss of a down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the zone line-to-gain. If the penalty involves loss of a down, the down shall count as 1 of the 4 in that series.

**Article 3. Foul After Change of Team Possession.**

Following a distance penalty for a foul committed after team possession has changed during that down, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred. The down and distance established by that penalty shall be 1st down with zone line-to-gain.

**Article 4. Penalty Declined.**

If a penalty is declined, the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

**Article 5. Rule Decisions Final.**

A Rules decision may not be changed after the ball is next legally snapped.

## Rule 6. Kicking the Ball

### Section 1. Punt

#### Article 1. Legal Punt.

A legal punt is a kick made in accordance with the Rules. Quick punts are illegal. **Penalty: Illegal Kick, Quick Punt, 10 yards.**

#### Article 2. Punt.

Prior to marking the ball ready for play on 4th down, the Referee must ask the A captain if they want to punt. The Referee must announce this decision to all A and B players and all officials. The A captain may declare a punt on any down. After such announcement, the ball must be punted.

EXCEPTION: If (a) an A or B time-out is called, (b) the period ends, (c) a foul occurs, or (d) an inadvertent whistle is blown any time prior to or during this down after the A captain's decision that results in the kicking team having the right to repeat the down again, the Referee must ask the A captain whether or not they want to punt and communicate this decision to the B captain.

#### Article 3. Crossing the Scrimmage Line.

Neither K nor R may enter the neutral zone until the ball is punted. **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards.** NOTE: Rules 7-1, 7-2, and 7-3 apply prior to and during the snap only.

#### Article 4. Punting the Ball.

After receiving the snap, the kicker must punt the ball immediately in a continuous motion. **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards.** NOTE: See 3-6.

#### Article 5. After Being Punted.

Once the ball is punted, any R player may block the kick. If the blocked punt hits the ground, it is dead at that spot. If the punt is blocked by any R player behind K's scrimmage line and then caught by any K player behind K's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange), K may run and/or throw a pass. R may advance the punt anywhere in the field of play. A K player cannot punt the ball to themselves or any other K player. K may punt the ball only once per down. **Penalty: Illegal Kicking, 10 yards.** NOTE: If in doubt, a punt blocked by R is blocked behind K's scrimmage line.

#### Article 6. Punt Crosses K's Scrimmage Line.

When a punt that has clearly crossed K's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange), touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, the ball is dead and belongs to R. If it hits an R player and then is caught in the air, it can be advanced by R. If the ball hits an R player beyond R's scrimmage line and is then caught by K beyond R's scrimmage line, the ball is dead, belongs to K, and a new series begins for K.

**Article 7. 1st Touching.**

If any K player touches a punt after it crosses K's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange) and before it is touched there by any R player, it is referred to as "1st touching". R may take the ball at that spot or may choose to have the ball put in play as determined by the action that follows 1st touching. The right of R to take the ball at the spot of 1st touching by K is cancelled if R touches the punt and thereafter during the down commits a foul or if the penalty is accepted for any foul committed during the down.

**Article 8. Punt Out of Bounds Between the Goal Lines or at Rest.**

If a punt goes out of bounds between the goal lines or comes to rest untouched in the field of play and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at that spot.

**Article 9. Punt Behind the Goal Line.**

When a punt breaks the plane of R's goal line, it is a touchback unless R chooses the spot of 1st touching by K.

**Section 2. Kick Catching Interference**

While any punt is in flight beyond K's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange), K shall not touch the ball or R, nor obstruct R's path to the ball, unless the punt has been touched by R. K may catch, touch, muff, or bat a punt in flight beyond K's scrimmage line if no R player is in position to catch the ball. **Penalty: Kick Catching Interference, 10 yards.**

**Section 3. Signals**

Players shall ignore any signals given by K or R. The ball remains live.



## **Rule 7. Snapping, Handing, and Passing the Ball**

### **Section 1. The Scrimmage**

#### **Article 1. The Start.**

All plays must be started by a legal snap next to the orange ball spotter, which is on or between the hash marks. The ball may be moved with approval by the Referee due to poor field conditions.

#### **Article 2. Ball Responsibility.**

All players are responsible for retrieving the ball after a down. The snapper will bring the ball from the huddle to the A scrimmage line (1st ball spotter–orange). A small towel may be placed under the ball, regardless of weather or field conditions.

#### **Article 3. Stances.**

Players may use a 2, 3, or 4 point stance.

### **Section 2. Prior to the Snap**

#### **Article 1. Encroachment.**

Following the ready for play signal and until the snap, no B player may encroach or touch the ball, nor may any player contact opponents or interfere with them in any other way. This includes standing in the neutral zone to give defensive signals or shifting through the zone. After the snapper has placed their hand(s) on the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the scrimmage line plane, except for the snapper's right to be over the ball. **Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Encroachment, 5 yards from the succeeding spot. During the interval between downs when 2 or more encroachment fouls are committed by B, the penalty will be 10 yards for the subsequent encroachment fouls.**

#### **Article 2. False Start.**

No A player shall make a false start. A false start includes simulating a charge or start of a play. An infraction of this Rule may be penalized whether or not the ball is snapped and the penalty for any resultant encroachment shall be cancelled. **Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, False Start, 5 yards from the succeeding spot.**

#### **Article 3. Snap.**

The snapper, after assuming position for the snap at A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter–orange) and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of a play until it is snapped. An infraction of this provision may be penalized, whether or not the ball is snapped, and the penalty for any resultant encroachment foul by an opponent shall be cancelled. When over the ball, the snapper shall have their feet behind their scrimmage line (1st ball spotter– orange). The snapper shall pass the ball back from its position on the ground/towel/orange ball spotter with a quick and continuous motion of the hand(s). The ball shall leave the hand(s) in this motion. There is no Rule restriction regarding placement of the long axis of the ball at right angles to A's scrimmage line. **NOTE: The snapper may have one or both knees on the ground during the snap. Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Illegal Snap, 5 yards from the succeeding spot.**

#### **Article 4. Disconcerting Act.**

No defensive player shall use disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with A's signals. **Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Disconcerting Act, 5 yards from the succeeding spot.**

### **Section 3. Position and Action During the Snap**

#### **Article 1. Legal Position.**

Anytime on or after the ball is marked ready for play, each A player must momentarily be at least 5 yards inbounds before the snap. **NOTE:** If a B player covers an A player positioned within 5 yards of the sideline, it is not a foul.

**Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards.**

#### **Article 2. Minimum Line Players.**

The snapper is the only A player required to be on their scrimmage line (1st ball spotter–orange) at the snap.

#### **Article 3. Motion.**

Only 1 A player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line at the snap. Other A players must be stationary in their positions without movement of their feet, body, head, or arms. **Penalty: Illegal Motion, 5 yards.**

#### **Article 4. Direct Snap.**

The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter– orange). The distance is determined by the point at which the ball is first touched following the snap. The snapper may not snap the ball to himself. **Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards.** **NOTE:** If in doubt, the A player 1st touched the snap 2 yards behind A's scrimmage line.

#### **Article 5. Shift.**

In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all A players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position without movement of feet, body, head, or arms for at least 1 full second before the snap. **Penalty: Illegal Shift, 5 yards.**

### **Section 4. Handing the Ball**

Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time.

### **Section 5. Running the Ball – Co-Rec Rule**

An A runner who is a man cannot advance the ball through A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter– orange). There are no restrictions:

- A. Once the ball has been touched by any player beyond the A or K scrimmage line.
- B. During a run by a runner who is a woman.
- C. After a change of team possession.
- D. After a legal forward pass.

**Penalty: Illegal Advancement, 5 yards from the previous spot.** **NOTE:** See 7-7-3: Illegal Reception – Co-Rec Rule.

## **Section 6. Backward Pass and Fumble**

### **Article 1. When Legal.**

A runner may pass the ball backward or lose player possession by a fumble anytime except if intentionally thrown out of bounds to conserve time. **Penalty: Illegal Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass or fumble and loss of down.** The Referee will start the clock on the ready for play. NOTE: If in doubt, the pass is backward. See 9-5.

### **Article 2. Caught or Intercepted.**

A backward pass or fumble in flight may be caught or intercepted by any other player inbounds and advanced. A player may not throw an untouched backward pass to himself. **Penalty: Illegal Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass and loss of down if by A before possession changes during a scrimmage down.**

### **Article 3. Simultaneous Catch by Opposing Players.**

If a backward pass or fumble in flight is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams inbounds, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.

### **Article 4. Out of Bounds.**

A backward pass or fumble that goes out of bounds is dead. If the backward pass/fumble goes out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball belongs to the offensive team:

- A. at the out-of-bounds spot if it is behind the spot of the pass or fumble, or
- B. at the spot of the pass or fumble if it goes out of bounds beyond the spot of the pass or fumble. If out of bounds behind a goal line, it is a touchback or safety.

### **Article 5. Ball Dead When It Hits the Ground.**

A backward pass or fumble that touches the ground is dead. If the backward pass/fumble touches the ground in the field of play, the ball belongs to the offensive team:

- A. at the spot where it touches the ground if it is behind the spot of the pass or fumble, or
- B. at the spot of the pass or fumble if it touches the ground beyond the spot of the pass or fumble.

If the fumble/backward pass touches the ground in either end zone, it is a touchback or safety.

## **Section 7. Legal and Illegal Forward Pass**

### **Article 1. Legal Forward Pass.**

All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. During a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are on or behind the plane of A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter–orange) when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Only 1 forward pass can be thrown per down. NOTE: If in doubt, the passer is behind the A scrimmage line.

### **Article 2. Illegal Forward Pass.**

A forward pass is illegal:

- A. if the passer's foot is beyond the plane of A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter–orange) when the ball leaves their hand.
- B. if a passer catches their untouched forward pass.

- C. if there is more than 1 forward pass per down.
- D. if thrown after a team possession has changed.
- E. if intentionally thrown to the ground or out of bounds to save loss of yardage or conserve time.

EXCEPTION: When the QB catches the snap from the center and IMMEDIATELY throws the ball into the ground to stop the clock, it is not a foul. This play is legal provided the QB is not trying to avoid a loss of yardage.

Penalty: (A, B, & C) Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass and a loss of down. (D) Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass. (E) Intentional Grounding, 5 yards from the spot of the pass and a loss of down.

### Article 3. Illegal Reception – Co-Rec Rule.

- A. The term “open” means any player can complete a legal forward pass to any other player. The term “closed” means a player who is a man may NOT complete a legal forward pass to any other player who is a man.  
NOTE: All illegal forward pass fouls are classified as fouls during a running play. Thus, illegal forward passes do not change the open/closed status of a down.
- B. The 1st down of each half or overtime possession shall be open. The 1st down of a new series following a team change of possession shall be open.
- C. If the crew of officials erroneously indicate the open/closed status of a down, the play is nullified and the down will be repeated.
- D. During the offensive team’s possession there may not be 2 consecutive legal forward pass completions from a player who is a man to a receiver who is a man. This Rule applies to the Try.
- E. If a passer who is a man completes a legal forward pass to a receiver who is a man, the next legal forward pass completion must involve either a passer who is a woman or receiver who is a woman for positive yards. The spot where the ball becomes dead by Rule must be beyond A’s scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange). There is NO foul for a receiver who is a woman being tagged or deflagged behind A’s scrimmage line. The next legal forward pass completion remains closed.
- F. A legal forward pass caught jointly by teammates who are a man and a woman is considered a reception by a woman.
- G. There are no other restrictions concerning a passer who is a man completing legal forward passes to a receiver who is a woman, or a woman to a woman, or a woman to a man.
- H. If a receiver who is a man catches a pass from a passer who is a man on a closed play, it is a foul for Illegal Reception. Whether the penalty is accepted or declined, the next down shall remain closed.
- I. Any other foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is open or closed.

Penalty: Illegal Reception, 5 yards from the previous spot, and a loss of down. The next down is closed.

### Article 4. After Illegal Forward Pass.

When an illegal forward pass touches the ground or goes out of bounds, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing team at the spot from where the pass was thrown, unless a new series of downs has been created. In such a case the ball belongs to the passing team if, after enforcement of the penalty, the ball is left in advance of the zone line-to-gain, or belongs to the opponents if the ball, after the penalty, did not make the next zone line-to-gain and the foul occurred during 4th down. If a player catches an illegal forward pass, the ball continues in play until declared dead.

## **Section 8. Completed or Intercepted Passes**

### **Article 1. Pass Caught or Intercepted.**

A forward pass is completed when caught by a member of the passing team inbounds. A forward pass is intercepted when caught by a member of the opposing team inbounds. It is counted as a completion or interception as long as the 1st part of the receiver to make contact with the ground after the catch, usually 1 foot, touches inbounds. NOTE: If in doubt that a forward pass has touched the ground, it is a catch.

### **Article 2. Simultaneous Catch by Opposing Players.**

If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams inbounds, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.

## **Section 9. Incomplete Pass**

When a forward pass touches the ground or anything out of bounds, it becomes dead.

## **Section 10. Forward Pass Interference**

### **Article 1. Interference.**

During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange), contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange) is pass interference unless it occurs when 2 or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged/tagged prior to touching a forward pass thrown beyond A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange).

### **Article 2. Offensive Pass Interference.**

After the ball is snapped and until the pass has been touched by any player there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange). **Penalty: Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot.**

### **Article 3. Defensive Pass Interference.**

After the pass is thrown and until the pass has been touched by any player there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange) while the pass is in flight. **Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot. If the pass interference by either player is intentional or unsportsmanlike, their team shall be penalized an additional 10 yards.**

### **Article 4. Not Interference.**

Contact by B that is obviously away from the direction of the forward pass is not pass interference but may be a personal foul.

### **Article 5. Catchable/Uncatchable.**

Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on offensive and defensive forward pass interference.

## **Rule 8. Scoring Plays and Touchback**

### **Section 1. Communication**

The Referee will communicate the current score to the A and B captains, head coaches, and all officials after each touchdown, Try, and safety. If there is a disagreement regarding the current or final score, the Referee will make the final decision after consulting with the other officials and, if available, the scorekeeper.

### **Section 2. Forfeited Game**

The score of a forfeited game shall be: Offended Team-1, Opponent-0. If the offended team is ahead at the time of the forfeit, the score stands. A Referee's decision to forfeit a game is final.

### **Section 3. Mercy Rule**

#### **Article 1. 2 Minute Warning.**

If a team is 19 or more points ahead when the Referee announces the 2 minute warning for the 4th period, the game shall be over. Prior to implementing the Mercy Rule, the Referee shall apply the Extension of Period Rule (3-2-3).

NOTE: Game clock starts according to Rule 3.

#### **Article 2. After 2 Minute Warning.**

If a team scores during the last 2 minutes of the 4th period and that score creates a point differential of 19 or more points, the game shall end at that point.

### **Section 4. Player Responsibility**

The player scoring must raise their arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the player is not able to be deflagged and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the score is disallowed, the offending team is penalized, and the player is disqualified. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Tampering with the Flag Belt, 10 yards from the previous spot. If by A, loss of down. If by B, automatic 1st down.**

### **Section 5. Touchdown Value: 6 Points**

It is a touchdown when a runner advances from the field of play so that the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line. It is a touchdown when a loose ball is caught by a player while the ball is on or behind the opponent's goal line.

## **Section 6. Try Value: 1, 2, or 3 Points**

### **Article 1. Referee's Responsibility and Team's Choice.**

The Referee must speak to the coach or captain, asking them whether the Try shall be from the 3, 10, or 20 yard line. Once the A coach/captain makes the choice, they may change the decision only when an A or B charged time-out is taken. The value of the Try may not be changed if a dead ball foul occurs after the ready for play signal, or if a live ball foul occurs during the Try. The Referee will ask the scoring coach/captain where they would like the ball placed on or between the hash marks. Enforcement of yardage penalties does not change the value of the Try. The point(s) shall be awarded if the Try results in what would have been a touchdown.

### **Article 2. 1, 2, or 3 Points.**

An opportunity to score 1 point from the 3 yard line, 2 points from the 10 yard line, or 3 points from the 20 yard line by running or passing only shall be granted the team scoring a touchdown. NOTE: If a touchdown is scored on the last timed down of the 4th period, the Try is not attempted, unless it will affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

### **Article 3. Try Begins and Ends.**

The Try begins when the ball is marked ready for play. The Try ends when B secures possession, the Try is successful, or the ball becomes dead by Rule. B cannot score during the Try.

### **Article 4. Next Play.**

After a Try, the ball shall be snapped by the opponent of the scoring team at their own 14 yard line, unless moved by penalty, to begin overtime, or if an onside conversion is elected.

## **Section 7. Force and Responsibility**

### **Article 1. Force.**

The force imparted by a player who punts, passes, snaps, or fumbles the ball shall be considered responsible for the ball's progress in any direction even though its course is deflected, or reversed, after striking the ground or after striking a player of either team. However, the initial force is considered expended and a new force is provided if a loose ball is illegally kicked or batted or it is contacted again after coming to rest.

### **Article 2. Responsibility.**

The team responsible for a ball being on, above, or behind a goal line is the team whose player

- A. carries the ball to or across that goal line.
- B. imparts to the ball an impetus that forces it to or across that goal line.
- C. incurs a penalty that leaves the ball on or behind the goal line.

## **Section 8. Momentum, Safety, and Touchback**

### **Article 1. Safety Value: 2 Points.**

It is a safety when one of the following occurs:

- A. A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across their own goal line, and it becomes dead there in their team's possession. This includes when a player's fumble or backward pass from inside their own end zone lands or goes out of bounds between the goal lines.  
EXCEPTION: Momentum Rule: When a defensive player intercepts their opponent's forward pass, fumble, or backward pass, or an R player catches or recovers a punt between their 5 yard line and the goal line and their original momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball is declared dead in their team's possession behind the goal line, the ball belongs to the defensive team at the spot where possession was gained.
- B. A player punts, passes, fumbles, snaps, muffs, or bats a loose ball from the field of play to or across their goal line and the ball subsequently becomes dead there in their team's possession. This includes when the ball is declared dead on or behind their goal line. However, it does not apply to a legal forward pass that becomes incomplete.
- C. A player on offense commits any foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from a spot in their end zone; or throws an illegal forward pass from their end zone and the penalty is declined in a situation that leaves them in possession at the spot of the illegal pass and with the ball having been forced into the end zone by the passing team.
- D. After a safety, the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team at their own 30 yard line, unless moved by penalty.

### **Article 2. Touchback.**

It is a touchback when 1 of the following occurs:

- A. K's punt breaks the plane of R's goal line.
- B. The ball is out of bounds behind a goal line (except from an incomplete forward pass), when the ball becomes dead in the possession of a player on, above, or behind the player's own goal line, or when the ball becomes dead not in possession on, above, or behind the team's own goal line and the attacking team is responsible. NOTES: If in doubt, it is a touchback. If in doubt, the out-of-bounds punt near the goal line is a touchback.
- C. After a touchback, the ball shall be snapped from the nearest 14 yard line, unless moved by penalty.



## **Section 9. Onside Conversion**

### **Article 1. When Allowed.**

A team may elect to attempt an onside conversion at any time in the second half if they score a touchdown unless they are leading by 19 or more points following the Try.

### **Article 2. Referee's Responsibility and Team's Choice.**

The Referee must speak to the coach or captain immediately following the Try, asking them whether they would like to attempt an onside conversion from the 20 yard line. Once the coach/captain makes the choice, they may change the decision only when an A or B charged time-out is taken. The Referee will ask the coach/captain where they would like the ball placed on or between the hashes. Possession will be retained by A if the onside conversion results in what would have been a touchdown.

### **Article 3. Onside Conversion Begins and Ends.**

The onside conversion begins when the ball is marked ready for play. The onside conversion ends when B secures possession, the onside conversion is successful, or the ball becomes dead by rule. Neither team can score during the onside conversion.

### **Article 4. Next Play.**

After a successful onside conversion, the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team at their own 30 yard line, unless moved by penalty. After an unsuccessful onside conversion, the ball shall be snapped by the opponent of the touchdown-scoring team at their opponent's 30 yard line, unless moved by penalty.

## **Rule 9. Conduct of Players and Others**

### **Section 1. Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

#### **Article 1. Noncontact Acts.**

No player or nonplayer shall commit noncontact acts during a period or intermission. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Refusal to comply with or abide by the request or decision of an official
- B. Intentionally kicking at the ball, other than during a punt
- C. Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or with permission of the Referee
- D. Participate while wearing illegal player equipment
- E. Being outside the team box, but not on the field, during a live ball. NOTE: During a dead ball, coaches can be a maximum of 2 steps on the field for coaching purposes only.

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards. If flagrant in (A), (B), and (C), the offender shall be disqualified. In (E) the 1st offense is a warning, the 2nd offense is 5 yards, and each subsequent offense is 10 yards.**

#### **Article 2. Dead Ball Fouls.**

When the ball becomes dead in the possession of a player, they shall not:

- A. intentionally kick the ball,
- B. spike the ball into the ground, or
- C. throw the ball high into the air.

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender will be disqualified.**

#### **Article 3. Prohibited Acts.**

There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players or nonplayers. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Attempting to influence a decision by an official
- B. Disrespectfully addressing an official
- C. Indicating objections to an official's decision
- D. Holding an unauthorized conference, or being on the field illegally
- E. Using profanity or taunting, insulting, or vulgar language or gestures
- F. Intentionally contacting a game official (DQ)
- G. Leaving the team box and entering the field during a fight (DQ)

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified. In (F) and (G), the offender will be disqualified.**

#### **Article 4. 2nd Unsportsmanlike Foul.**

The 2nd unsportsmanlike foul by the same player or nonplayer results in disqualification.

### **Article 5. Ejection.**

If a player or nonplayer is ejected from a game due to unsportsmanlike conduct, they may be allowed to remain on the bench. If the ejected player or nonplayer creates a problem for the game officials from the bench area, they will be told to leave the field area. The field area is defined as “out of sight, out of sound.” If the ejected player or nonplayer refuses to leave after a reasonable amount of time, the Referee will inform the captain/coach that the game will be forfeited.

### **Article 6. 4th Unsportsmanlike Foul.**

The 4th unsportsmanlike foul by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game. NOTE: By institutional adoption this number can be reduced to 3.

## **Section 2. Unfair Acts**

### **Article 1. Refusal to Play or Halving the Distance.**

If a team refuses to play within 2 minutes after being ordered by the Referee, or if a team repeatedly commits fouls that can be penalized only by halving the distance to its goal line, the Referee may enforce any penalty they consider equitable, including the awarding of a score. For refusal to play or for repeated fouls, the Referee shall, after 1 warning, forfeit the game to the opponents.

### **Article 2. Unfair Acts.**

No player or nonplayer shall use verbiage or commit any act not in accordance with the spirit of fair play for the purposes of confusing the opponent. **Penalty: Unfair Act, 10 yards.**

## **Section 3. Personal Fouls**

### **Article 1. Restrictions.**

No player or nonplayer shall commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. Any player or nonplayer commits a personal foul when they take any of the following actions:

- A. Strips or attempts to strip the ball from a runner by punching, striking, or grabbing the ball. NOTE: Any player who controls a pass with both feet off the ground becomes a runner when the 1st part of the player touches the ground.
- B. Throws the runner to the ground
- C. Hurdles an opponent
- D. Contacts an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead
- E. Makes contact of any nature with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary including using fists, locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm or hand, except according to the Rules
- F. Drives or runs into an opponent
- G. Positions their body on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage
- H. Tackles the runner by grasping or encircling with the hand(s) or arm(s) and taking the opponent toward the ground as in tackle football (DQ)

- I. Fights an opponent (DQ). NOTE: Each player who participates in the fight will be assessed 1 flagrant personal foul for fighting.
- J. Be in the restricted area and cause unintentional contact with a game official (nonplayers only).

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender will be disqualified. In (H) and (I), the offender will be disqualified.

#### **Article 2. Roughing the Passer.**

Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as they are considered out of the play after the pass. Roughing the passer restrictions do not apply if the forward pass is thrown from beyond A's scrimmage line (1st ball spotter-orange). **Penalty: Roughing the Passer, 10 yards, automatic 1st down.**

#### **Article 3. Screen Blocking.**

An offensive screen block may occur anywhere on the field and shall take place without contact. The screen blocker is recommended to have their hands and arms at their sides or behind their back when screen blocking. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact that displaces an opponent during a screen block is illegal. A blocker may use their hand(s) or arm(s) to break a fall or retain their balance. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Contact, 10 yards.**

#### **Article 4. Screen Blocking Fundamentals.**

A player who screens shall not do any of the following:

- A. Initiate contact when blocking a stationary opponent from any direction.
- B. Prevent an opponent from avoiding contact by (1) taking a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent or (2) taking a position within 1 or 2 steps of a moving opponent so that the opponent cannot stop or change direction before contact.
- C. After taking a legal position, move to maintain it, unless the screener moves in the same direction and path as the opponent. If a screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, they have committed a foul.

Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Contact, 10 yards.

#### **Article 5. Interlocked Blocking.**

Teammates of a runner or passer may legally screen block, but they shall not use interlocked blocking such as grasping or encircling one another in any manner. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Interlocked Blocking, 10 yards.**

#### **Article 6. Use of Hands or Arms by the Defense.**

Opponents must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to displace the opponent. A defender may use their arms or hands to break a fall or retain their balance. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Contact, 10 yards.**

## Section 4. Runner

### Article 1. Flag Belt Removal.

- A. Players must have possession of the ball before they can be deflagged legally by an opponent.
- B. When a runner loses their flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose, play continues. The deflagging reverts to a 1 hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and knees by an opponent.
- C. In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally by a player, play should continue with the option of a penalty on the play. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Flag Belt Removal, 10 yards.**
- D. An opponent intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Flag Belt Removal, 10 yards.**
- E. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage, including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts, is illegal. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Tampering with the Flag Belt, 10 yards from the previous spot, and player disqualification. If by A, loss of down. If by B, automatic 1st down.**
- F. A nonplayer deflags or interferes with a runner. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Nonplayer Deflagging/ Interfering with the Runner, 10 yards. The Referee will award a touchdown and disqualify the nonplayer.**

### Article 2. Guarding the Flag Belt.

A runner shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to cause contact between the runner and an opponent that denies the opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
- B. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt
- C. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that places the arm over the flag belt

**Penalty: Flag Guarding, 10 yards.**

### Article 3. Stiff Arm.

The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. This includes the use of a "stiff arm" extended to ward off an opponent attempting to deflag/tag. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Contact, 10 yards.**

### Article 4. Help the Runner.

The runner shall not grasp a teammate or be grasped, pulled, or pushed by a teammate. **Penalty: Helping the Runner, 5 yards.**

### Article 5. Obstruct the Runner.

An opponent shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt or making a legal tag. **Penalty: Holding, 10 yards.**

### **Article 6. Charge.**

A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in their path nor attempt to run between 2 opponents or between an opponent and a sideline, unless the space is such as to provide a reasonable chance for them to go through without contact. If a runner in their progress has established a straight line path, they may not be crowded out of that path, but if an opponent is able to legally establish a defensive position in that path, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Contact, 10 yards.**

## **Section 5. Batting and Kicking**

### **Article 1. Batting a Loose Ball.**

Players shall not bat a loose ball other than a pass or fumble in flight. EXCEPTION 1: A backward pass in flight shall not be batted or thrown forward by the passing team. EXCEPTION 2: K may bat a grounded or an airborne punt beyond K's scrimmage line toward their own goal line. **Penalty: Illegal Batting, 10 yards.**

### **Article 2. Batting a Ball in Player Possession.**

A ball in player possession shall not be batted forward by a player of the team in possession. **Penalty: Illegal Batting, 10 yards.**

### **Article 3. Illegal Kicking.**

No player shall intentionally kick a ball other than a punt. NOTE: An illegal kick shall be treated like a fumble. **Penalty: Illegal Kicking, 10 yards.**

## **Section 6. Illegal Participation**

The following actions are considered illegal participation:

- A. To have 8 (Co-Rec Rule: 9) or more players participating at the snap.
- B. To have more than the legal number of men or women participating at the snap (Co-Rec Rule).
- C. If an injured player is not replaced for at least 1 down; unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs.
- C. To use a player, replaced player, or substitute in a substitution or pretended substitution to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap.
- D. For a disqualified player to reenter the game.
- E. For a replaced player or substitute to hinder an opponent, touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate.
- F. If, prior to a change of possession, an A or K player goes out of bounds and returns inbounds during the down to participate, unless blocked out of bounds by an opponent. If a player is blocked out of bounds by an opponent and returns inbounds during the down, they shall return at the first opportunity. During the down, no player shall intentionally go out of bounds and return to the field, intentionally touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate.
- G. When any player, replaced player, or substitute enters during a down.

**Penalty: Illegal Participation, 10 yards.**

## **Rule 10. Enforcement of Penalties**

### **Section 1. Procedure After a Foul**

#### **Article 1. Definitions.**

A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed. Types of fouls are listed below:

- A. **Dead Ball:** A foul that occurs in the time interval after a down has ended and before the ball is next legally snapped.
- B. **Live Ball:** A foul that occurs during a down.
- C. **Simultaneous With the Snap:** An act that becomes a foul when the ball is snapped.

#### **Article 2. Coach's/Captain's Choice.**

When a foul occurs during a live ball, the Referee shall, at the end of the down, notify both coaches/captains. They shall inform the coach/captain of the offended team regarding the rights of penalty acceptance or declination and shall indicate to them the number of the ensuing down, distance to be gained, and status of the ball for each available choice. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined. If the penalty is declined or if there is a double foul, there is no loss of distance. The coach's/captain's choice of options may not be revoked. Decisions involving penalties shall be made before any charged time-out is granted.

#### **Article 3. Dead Ball Foul.**

When a foul occurs during a dead ball either between downs or before a snap, the officials shall not permit the ball to become live. The penalty for any foul between downs, any nonplayer foul, or any unsportsmanlike foul, is enforced from the succeeding spot (EXCEPTION: 10-3-10 and 10-3-11). If a dead ball foul occurs after time expires for any period, the penalty shall be measured from the succeeding spot. The succeeding spot is where the ball would next be snapped if a foul had not occurred.

#### **Article 4. Live Ball/Dead Ball Foul.**

When a live ball foul by 1 team is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. When the same team commits a live ball foul followed by 1 or more dead ball fouls, all fouls may be penalized.

#### **Article 5. Establishing the Zone Line-to-Gain.**

- A. On a live ball foul, mark off the penalty yardage first then establish the zone line-to-gain.
- B. Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement that occur prior to the ready for play signal shall be administered before setting the zone line-to-gain down box for a new series.
- C. Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement that occur after the ready for play signal shall be administered after setting the zone line-to-gain down box for a new series. NOTE: During overtime, the zone line-to-gain is always the goal line.

## **Section 2. Types of Play and Basic Enforcement Spots**

### **Article 1. Live Ball Fouls.**

Any live ball foul is penalized according to the All-But-One Enforcement Principle (10-2-2), except as follows:

- A. A foul that occurs simultaneously with the snap is penalized from the previous spot.
- B. A nonplayer foul, unsportsmanlike foul, or dead ball foul is penalized from the succeeding spot.
- C. A foul by K during a punting down (other than Kick Catching Interference or Illegally Consuming Time) may be penalized from the succeeding spot, at R's option, when K will not be next to put the ball in play.

### **Article 2. All-But-One Enforcement Principle.**

Enforcement philosophy is based on the premise that a team is given the advantage of the distance that is gained without assistance of a foul. It is assumed that the only foul that would give this aid is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot. Therefore, all fouls but this one, which is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot, are penalized from the basic spot. This 1 foul is penalized from the spot of the foul (See Figure 1). EXCEPTION: Roughing the passer—see Article 4 below.

### **Article 3. 2 Types of Plays.**

Whenever the ball is live, 1 of 2 types of plays is in progress, either a loose ball play or a running play. The type of play has no significance unless a foul occurs. If a foul does occur, the officials must know whether it was during a loose ball play or during a running play. This determines the basic spot of enforcement.

### **Article 4. Loose Ball Play.**

A loose ball play is action during 1 of the following:

- A. A punt, other than post scrimmage kick fouls
- B. A legal forward pass
- C. A backward pass (including the snap), illegal kick, or fumble made by A from on or behind their scrimmage line (1st ball spotter—orange) and prior to a change of team possession D. The run or runs which precedes such legal pass, punt, or fumble

If a foul occurs during a loose ball play, the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot (2-25-7).

EXCEPTION 1: The penalty for roughing the passer on a completed forward pass will be enforced from the dead ball spot when the run ends beyond A's scrimmage line and no change of possession has occurred.

EXCEPTION 2: A post scrimmage kick (PSK) foul is an R foul that occurs on R's side of the neutral zone prior to the end of the kick during a punt that ends beyond the neutral zone and K does not have possession of the ball when the kick ends. The PSK spot is the spot where the kick ends. R retains the ball after penalty enforcement from the PSK spot when a PSK foul occurs. R fouls behind the PSK spot are spot fouls. The spot where the kick ends is R's 14 if the kick ends in R's end zone.

EXCEPTION 3: Kick catching interference, 10 yards from the spot of the foul and a 1st down, or 10 yards from the previous spot and replay the down.



### **Article 5. Running Play.**

A running play is any action that is not a loose ball play. There are 2 types of running plays:

- A. Behind the line, it includes
  1. a run that is not followed by a loose ball behind the line or
  2. a run that is followed by an illegal pass from behind the line.
- B. Beyond the line, it includes any run.

If a foul occurs during a running play, the basic enforcement spot is the spot where the run ends (2-25-9).

## **Section 3. Special Enforcements**

### **Article 1. Automatic 1st Down Fouls.**

Fouls by B that give A an automatic 1st down are Roughing the Passer and Tampering with the Flag Belt.

### **Article 2. Dead Ball Fouls.**

Penalties for dead ball fouls are enforced separately and in the order of occurrence. Dead ball fouls are not coupled with live ball fouls or other dead ball fouls to create double or multiple fouls. Where there are 10 yard dead ball fouls (or live ball fouls treated as dead ball fouls) committed by each team prior to penalty administration, each 10 yard foul will cancel a 10 yard foul on the other team. Any remaining 10 yard fouls will be enforced. Any 5 yard dead ball fouls will be enforced separately and in order of occurrence and would never cancel with a 10 yard foul.

NOTE: Even though the yardage penalties for these fouls cancel each other out, the fouls count toward both the disqualification of the involved players and the overall team total toward a forfeit.

### **Article 3. Double Foul.**

It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during the same down in which

- A. there is no change of team possession,
- B. there is a change of team possession and the team in possession at the end of the down fouls prior to the final change of possession, or
- C. there is a change of team possession and the team in final possession accepts the penalty for its opponent's foul.

In (A), (B), and (C), the penalties cancel and the down is replayed.

EXCEPTION 1: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul is not prior to the final change of team possession and it declined the penalty for its opponent's foul(s) (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer). This exception is commonly referred to as the principle of "clean hands." NOTE: This Rule does not apply to double fouls during a Try or overtime period.

EXCEPTION 2: PSK foul. R must decline the K fouls (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer).

**Article 4. Goal Line.**

For a defensive team foul, if the enforcement spot, which is now the basic spot, is on or behind the offended team's goal line, any measurement is from the succeeding spot or goal line.

**Article 5. Half the Distance.**

A measurement cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line. If the penalty is greater than this, the ball is placed halfway between the enforcement spot and the goal line.

**Article 6. Last Play of 4th Period or Overtime.**

Succeeding spot fouls that occur: (a) during the last play of the game or (b) during the last play of an overtime period; or (c) dead ball fouls that occur after the last play of a game or overtime period can be carried over to overtime, unless a touchdown is scored on that play, in which case the penalty can only be enforced on the Try.

**Article 7. Loss of Down Fouls.**

Loss of down fouls by A: Illegal Backward Pass, Illegal Forward Pass, Intentional Grounding, Illegal Reception, Tampering with the Flag Belt, and any live-ball foul by A during an onside conversion.

**Article 8. Multiple Foul.**

When 2 or more live ball fouls (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) are committed during the same down by the same team, only 1 penalty may be chosen by the offended team.

**Article 9. Safety.**

If the offensive team throws an illegal forward pass from its end zone or commits any other foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from on or behind its goal line, which is now the basic spot, it is a safety.

**Article 10. Onside Conversion.**

- A. If either team commits a dead ball foul following a Try and prior to the initial ready for play on an onside conversion, the penalty will be enforced after the onside conversion, at the succeeding spot.
- B. If there is a live-ball foul by A (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down that results in a successful onside conversion, acceptance of the penalty nullifies the conversion. The foul carries a loss of down and the onside conversion is not replayed.
- C. If there is a foul by B during a successful onside conversion, the penalty may be enforced from the succeeding spot.
- D. If a double foul occurs, the down is replayed

**Article 11. Touchdown.**

- A. If there is a foul by the scoring team (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down that results in a touchdown, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score.
- B. If an opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down in which a touchdown is scored, and there was not a change of team possession during the down, A may accept the results of the play and then choose to have the foul enforced either on the Try or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.

- C. If an opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down in which a touchdown is scored and there was a change of team possession during the down, and such foul occurs after the change of team possession, the scoring team may accept the results of the play and then choose to have the foul enforced either on the Try or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.
- D. If either team commits an unsportsmanlike or nonplayer foul during the down in which a touchdown is scored, the opponent may accept the results of the play and then choose to have the foul enforced either on the Try or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.

NOTE: In (B), (C), and (D) above, unless moved by penalty, the succeeding spot will be the 14 yard line if an onside conversion is not elected, the 30 yard line if an onside conversion is elected, or the 10 yard line in overtime.

**Article 12. Try.**

- A. If either team commits a dead ball foul following a touchdown and prior to the initial ready for play on a Try, the offended team has the option of enforcing the penalty on the Try or after the Try, at the succeeding spot.
- B. If there is a foul by A (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer) during a down that results in a successful Try, acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score. If the foul carries a loss of down, the Try is not replayed.
- C. If there is a foul by B during a successful Try, the penalty may be enforced at the succeeding spot.
- D. If a double foul occurs, the down is replayed.

NOTE: In (A) and (C) above, unless moved by penalty, the succeeding spot will be the 14 yard line if an onside conversion is not elected, the 30 yard line if an onside conversion is elected, or the 10 yard line in overtime.

**Article 13. Fouls by K During Punts.**

When K fouls during a punt (other than Kick Catching Interference or Illegally Consuming Time), R may have the penalty enforced at either the previous spot or the succeeding spot, provided K will not be next to put the ball in play.

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