



COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

TARGETING AND CROWN-OF-HELMET GUIDELINES FOR COACHES, PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS

INTRODUCTION

With the 2013 rule change that makes ejection from the game a part of the penalty for targeting fouls coaches, players and officials need to have a clear understanding of Rules 9-1-3 and 9-1-4. It is very important to understand that **these fouls have not changed from previous years**, and officials should officiate these plays as in the past. The characterization of defenseless players has been expanded (see below), but otherwise these rules for the fouls remain as they have been. It is the **penalty** that has changed.

These guidelines are intended to assist everyone involved in the game to understand these rules, which are so important in protecting the safety of the student-athlete.

RULES

Targeting and Initiating Contact With the Crown of the Helmet (Rule 9-1-3)

No player shall target and initiate contact against an opponent with the crown (top) of his helmet. When in question, it is a foul.

Targeting and Initiating Contact to Head or Neck Area of a Defenseless Player (Rule 9-1-4)

No player shall target and initiate contact to the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent with the helmet, forearm, fist, elbow or shoulder. When in question, it is a foul. (Rule 2-27-14)

Note: Beginning in 2013, ejection from the game is a part of the penalty for violation of both Rule 9-1-3 and Rule 9-1-4.

KEY ELEMENTS

Target—to take aim at an opponent for purposes of attacking with forcible contact that goes beyond making a legal tackle or a legal block or playing the ball.

Crown of the Helmet—the top portion of the helmet.

Contact to the head or neck area—not only with the helmet, but also with the forearm, fist, elbow, or shoulder—these can all lead to a foul.

Defenseless player—a player not in position to defend himself.

Examples (Rule 2-27-14):

- A player in the act of or just after throwing a pass.
- A receiver attempting to catch a pass, or one who has completed a catch and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a ball carrier.
- A kicker in the act of or just after kicking a ball, or during the kick or the return.
- A kick returner attempting to catch or recover a kick.
- A player on the ground.
- A player obviously out of the play.
- A player who receives a blind-side block.
- A ball carrier already in the grasp of an opponent and whose forward progress has been stopped.
- A quarterback any time after a change of possession.

KEY INDICATORS

Risk of a foul is **high** with one or more of these:

- Launch—a player leaving his feet to attack an opponent by an upward and forward thrust of the body to make contact in the head or neck area
- A crouch followed by an upward and forward thrust to attack with contact at the head or neck area—even though one or both feet are still on the ground
- Leading with helmet, forearm, fist, hand or elbow to attack with contact at the head or neck area
- Lowering the head before attacking by initiating contact with the crown of the helmet

These indicate **less risk** of a foul:

- Heads-up tackle in which the crown of the helmet does not strike above the shoulders
- Wrap-up tackle
- Head is to the side rather than being used to initiate contact
- Incidental helmet contact that is not part of targeting but is due to the players changing position during the course of play

HINTS FOR PLAYERS

- Don't lead with your head
- Lower your target--don't go for the head or neck area with anything
- Tackle: Heads-up and wrap-up

Rogers Redding

National Coordinator of Football Officials

March 2013