

2011-12 NCAA FOOTBALL RULES AND INTERPRETATIONS: 2012 CHANGES

The 2012 action of the NCAA Football Rules Committee has resulted in several changes to the current edition of the rule book. These are to take effect with the 2012 season and, pending additional changes, will be incorporated into the 2013-14 edition.

FREE KICK

Rule 6-1-1 (FR-61)

In the last sentence of Article 1, delete “30” and replace with “35.”

Rule 6-1-2 (FR-61)

In Article 2 the first sentence begins a paragraph labeled *a*.

A new paragraph *b* is added ahead of the sentence beginning “When the ball is kicked...”:

b. After the ball has been made ready for play all players on the kicking team except the kicker must be no more than five yards behind their restraining line. A player satisfies this rule when one foot is on or beyond the line five yards behind the restraining line. If one player is more than five yards behind the restraining line and any other player kicks the ball, it is a foul.

Rule 6-1-7 (FR-62)

The sentence in Article 7 becomes paragraph *a*.

A new paragraph *b* is added:

b. If the result of the play is a touchback (Rule 8-6) for Team B, they will put the ball in play at their 25-yard line.

This is accompanied in **Rule 8-6-2 (FR-81)** by inserting “**Exception:** Free Kick” following the words “20-yard line” in the first sentence and by deleting the words “on the 20-yard line” in the second sentence.

Rule 6-4-1 (FR-66)

Add new paragraph *e*:

e. During a free kick a player of the receiving team in position to receive the ball has the same kick-catch and fair-catch protection whether the ball is kicked directly off the tee or is immediately driven to the ground, strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of the ball kicked directly off the tee.

This is accompanied by an exception in paragraph *a* regarding the kick touching the ground.

BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST

Rule 9-1-6 (FR-84)

ARTICLE 6. There shall be no blocking below the waist (other than against the ball carrier) except as allowed below. (Rule 2-3-2 and A.R. 9-1-6-I-VII)

a. Scrimmage Downs

1. Before a change of team possession a Team A player who is beyond the neutral zone may not block below the waist toward his own goal line. When in question, the block is directed toward his goal line.

2. Before a change of team possession the following players of Team A are **restricted** with regard to blocking below the waist:

a. A lineman more than seven yards from the middle lineman of the offensive formation at the snap.

b. A back aligned at the snap with the frame of his body completely outside the tackle box or completely outside the frame of the body of the second lineman from the snapper in either direction toward a sideline.

c. A back who is in motion at the snap and was outside the area in *b* (above) any time after the ball was ready for play and before the snap.

3. A restricted player may not block below the waist against any opponent who is inside the area in paragraph 2-*b*. Outside this area a restricted player may not block below the waist in a direction away from his adjacent sideline. He may legally block below the waist along the north-south line (Rule 2-12-9) or toward his adjacent sideline, but not toward his own goal line when he is beyond the neutral zone (see *a-1* above).

4. All other players of Team A are **unrestricted** and may legally block below the waist, other than in *a-1* above. In particular, a player is unrestricted if he is in motion at the snap and is never outside the area in paragraph 2-*b* after the ball is ready for play and before the snap.

5. Before a change of team possession players of Team B may block below the waist only within the area defined by lines parallel to the goal line five yards beyond and behind the neutral zone extended to the sidelines. Blocking below the waist by players of Team B outside this zone is illegal.

6. A Team B player may not block below the waist against an opponent who is in position to receive a backward pass.

7. Players of Team B may not block below the waist against an eligible Team A pass receiver beyond the neutral zone unless attempting to get to the ball

or ball carrier. This prohibition ends when a legal forward pass is no longer possible by rule.

b. *Kicks*

During a down in which there is a free kick or scrimmage kick, blocking below the waist by any player is illegal except against a ball carrier.

c. *Change of possession*

After any change of team possession, blocking below the waist by any player is illegal except against a ball carrier.

Rule 2-12-10 (FR-32) (New Article)

Adjacent Sideline

Article 10. a. For a player stationary or in motion at the snap, the adjacent sideline is the sideline to his outside.

b. For a player in motion who is effectively behind the snapper at the snap and it is not clear which is the sideline to his outside, the adjacent sideline is the sideline toward which he is moving.

HELMET COMES OFF DURING PLAY

Rule 3-2-4-c (FR-47)

Add new item 13:

13. An offensive team player's helmet comes completely off during the down. The play clock is set to 40 seconds if the helmet comes completely off a player of the defensive team. (**Exception:** With less than one minute remaining in either half the play clock is set at 25 seconds for any player.)

Rule 3-3-2-e (FR-48)

Add new item 16:

16. A player's helmet comes completely off during the down.

Rule 3-3-10 (FR-51) New Article

Helmet Comes Off--Timeout

ARTICLE 9.

a. If during the down a player's helmet comes completely off, other than as the direct result of a foul by an opponent, the player must leave the game for the next down. The game clock will stop at the end of the down.

b. When the helmet coming off is the only reason for stopping the clock, the following conditions apply:

1. With one minute or more remaining in either half the play clock will be set at 25 seconds if the player is on offense and at 40 seconds if the player is on defense. The game clock will start on the referee's signal.

2. If there is less than one minute in the half the opponent has the option of a 10-second subtraction. The play clock will be set at 25 seconds. If there is a 10-second subtraction the game clock will start on the referee's signal. If there is no 10-second subtraction the game clock will start on the snap. The 10-second subtraction may be avoided by the use of a team timeout, if available.

c. If the ball carrier's helmet comes off as in paragraph *a* (above) the ball is dead (Rule 4-1-3-q). If the player is not the ball carrier the ball remains alive, but he must not continue to participate in the play beyond the immediate action in which he is engaged. Prolonged participation is a personal foul (Rule 9-1-17). By definition such a player is obviously out of the play (Rule 9-1-12-b).

d. A player who intentionally removes his helmet during the down commits a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct (Rule 9-2-1-a-1-i).

**Rule 9-1-17 (FR-87) (New Article)
Continued Participation Without Helmet**

ARTICLE 17.

A player whose helmet comes completely off during a down may not continue to participate in the play beyond the immediate action in which he is engaged.

Rule 9-2-1-a-1 (FR-87)

Add new item i.

i. Intentionally removing the helmet while the ball is alive.

ATTEMPTING TO LEAP OVER THE PUNT SHIELD

Rule 9-1-11 (FR-85)

Add new paragraph *c*:

c. No defensive player who is inside the tackle box may try to block a punt by leaving his feet in an attempt to leap directly over an opponent.

1. It is not a foul if the player tries to block the punt by jumping straight up without attempting to leap over the opponent.

2. It is not a foul if a player attempts to leap through or over the gap between players.

OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH A KICK

Rule 6-4-1 (FR-66)

Add new paragraph *a* and re-label the existing paragraphs.

a. It is an interference foul if, before the receiver touches the ball, a Team A player enters the area defined by the width of the receiver's shoulders and extending one yard in front of him. When in question it is a foul.

March 1, 2012