



## **INSIDE THE ROOM: NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE**

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*Editor's Note: This article is a follow-up to the February 2016 Football Rules Committee annual meetings. The rules process included a membership comment period and ultimately a timing delay on some rules relating to technology, so the posting of this article has been delayed.*

ORLANDO, Florida – If you've ever read the NCAA rule changes for the coming season and thought to yourself, "how in the world did the committee come up with that one?!", then join the club because I too have had those very thoughts during my 20-year career as a college football official.

Then a strange thing happened. In February 2015, I was invited to be the active official representative on the NCAA Football Rules Editorial Subcommittee which consists of: Secretary-Rules Editor Rogers Redding, NCAA Associate Director Ty Halpin, three conference football officiating coordinators, a head coach and me, the active official.

The task of this committee is to consider each of the recommended rule changes submitted from officials, coaches, coordinators, administrators, etc. Not every suggestion gets this far as many are eliminated through surveys and discussion at conference coordinator meetings. But the ones that do are put through a battery of what-ifs, Devil's advocates, unintended consequences and the simple question of "can this be officiated?"

The changes that pass this step must then be written so that they fit into the flow of rule book. It is amazing to me how a single word can alter the interpretation of the change. Rule changes that do not pass muster with the subcommittee are still be forwarded to the full rules committee with the recommendation to leave the rule as is.

After the afternoon/evening of meetings, the subcommittee is ready to meet with the full rules committee to present its recommendations. The Committee is made up of 12 voting members who are coaches, athletic directors and conference administrators representing all divisions of NCAA football. Also in attendance are representatives from the American Football Coaches Association, the National Athletic Trainers Association, the Board of College Football Officiating, LLC and the newly-formed NCAA Division I Football Oversight Committee.

Each rule change is formally read to the committee along with the subcommittee's rationale for the change. Discussion (sometimes vigorous) follows leading to a call for a motion and second. A vote is then taken and in my experience almost all of the recommendations were passed. I believe there was only a single nay vote for any of the rules changes, although there were a few abstentions. There is an air of transparency in everything that is done with the committee's processes.

As an official I was amazed at how calm the coaches remained while discussing what could result in a major change in how they will have to teach their players to play the game. If only they could remain that calm on the sidelines during games!

Being part of the subcommittee was a very rewarding experience and the opportunity to engage with the full committee on the sport as a whole was eye-opening. To represent officials nationally was truly an honor and I hope I brought some perspective to the discussions. To be involved in the rules process for the sport that all of us hold so dear was especially meaningful.

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