



2023 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES with *italicized notes, examples*-Sanders

Clarified That Towels Do Not Have To Be The Same Solid Color For Each Player [1-5-3a(5)a 4, 5 (NEW)]

Player towels may contain one manufacturer's logo and/or one school logo neither exceeding 2¼ square inches. Towels must be a solid color but now do not have to be the same solid color for each player. Towels may not be ball- or penalty-flag colored. *Dimensions of towel not changed. Only one towel per player.*

Clarified When A Player Is Inbounds After Being Out of Bounds [2-29-1]

This change clarifies when a player is inbounds after being out of bounds. There is no change to any foul or subsequent penalty provisions, or any rules related to illegal participation or the provisions regarding eligibility to catch a pass. *A player who is out-of-bounds may not jump into the air and deflect a loose ball back into the field of play. The ball becomes dead when touched by the out-of-bounds player.*

Added A List Of Criteria To Help Identify Players Who Should Be Defined As Defenseless Receivers [2-32-16d, 9-4-3g]

This change adds to the list of criteria to help identify players who should be defined as defenseless receivers related to application of unnecessary or excessive contact. This clarification should help game officials and coaches by defining allowable contact against defenseless receivers. *Allowable contact now includes incidental contact as a result of making a play on the ball; contact initiated with open hands; or an attempt to tackle by wrapping arm(s) around the receiver.*

Intentional Grounding Exception Changed [7-5-2 EXCEPTION 2a, c (NEW)]

This change permits the exception for intentional grounding to the first and only player to possess the ball after the snap ends. Play: QB A12 takes the snap and hands the ball off to RB A44. A44, under defensive pressure, to avoid being tackled behind the LOS, throws the ball away which lands beyond the NZ expanded. Ruling: *Illegal forward pass. Intentional grounding. A12 is the only player legally allowed to intentionally ground the ball.*

Removed "Intentional" From Pass Interference in TABLE 7-5 [TABLE 7-5(2)c (DELETE), 7-5 PENALTY] By removing "intentional" from pass interference, this change puts the rule in line with how it is already enforced which is a 15-yard penalty. *The additional 15 yard penalty for "intentional" PI has been removed from the rules. Rarely, if ever, called. Bottom line, all pass interference is now treated the same.*

Changes In Basic Spot Penalty Enforcement [10-4, 6]

This change restructures and clarifies the amendments to Rule 10 to eliminate the excessive penalty enforcements for offensive fouls that occur behind the line of scrimmage. This revision stipulates the basic spot for enforcement of fouls behind the line of scrimmage is the previous spot rather than the spot of the foul. Current penalties for illegal kicking, batting and participation fouls, and provisions for offensive fouls occurring in the end zone that may result in a safety remain intact. The All-But-One principle has been replaced with basic spot enforcement. Some general statements:

The basic spot for loose ball fouls is the previous spot and the penalty is enforced from there.

When Team A fouls on a running play before a change of team possession:

- If the foul is **behind** the neutral zone, the penalty will be enforced from the previous spot. It does not matter where the run ends.
- If the run ends **behind** the neutral zone, the penalty will be enforced from the previous spot. It does not matter whether the foul occurs behind or beyond the neutral zone.
- If both the foul and the end of the run are beyond the neutral zone, the basic spot is the spot which is nearest to the line of scrimmage (old all-but-one principle.)

When Team B fouls on a running play before a change of team possession:

- If the run ends **behind** the neutral zone, the penalty will be enforced from the previous spot. It does not matter where the foul occurs.
- If the run ends **beyond** the neutral zone, the penalty will be enforced from the succeeding spot. It does not matter where the foul occurs.

For specific non-contact fouls, the basic spot is the spot of the foul as follows:

- Illegal batting or illegal kicking when the foul occurs behind the end of the run or related run.
- Illegal participation as in 9-6-4a (entry during down) and 9-6-4g (helmet off) (10-4-4b.)
- An illegal forward pass as in 7-5-2c (second forward pass) and 7-5-2d (intentional grounding) (10-4-4c.)
- The penalty for any Team A foul which occurs in their end zone results in a safety.

Clarification On The Ball Being Handed Forward On A Running Play [Six-Player – Rule 7 (NEW)]

The change allows the ball to be handed forward on a running play, including to the guards/ends, while prohibiting handing the ball to the snapper provided both players are behind the neutral zone. Prohibits handing the ball forward to the snapper which foreseeably could be made under/between the snapper's legs.