



WISCONSIN INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

"In the Trenches" by Jake Beschta (11-Player) and Chad Schultz (8-Player) Episode 2

Episode 2: Rule Change - Forward Fumble Out-of-Bounds

Resource: MIBT's Understanding the High School Football Forward Fumble Out of Bounds Rule Change! [YouTube Video](#)

Rules book references: 3-4-2d, 3-4-3a, 4-3-1 EXCEPTION, 8-5-2a EXCEPTION

"A situation potentially giving an unfair advantage to a fumbling team was revised. When a forward fumble goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball shall be returned to the spot of the fumble." pg 93

Important Definitions:

Fumble (2-18 pg 33) - A fumble is any loss of player possession other than by handing, passing, or legal kick.

Muff (2-27 pg 36) - A muff is the touching of a loose ball by a player in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession.

There is no provision for a ball fumbled forward that is muffed by the defense to remain at the succeeding spot. If a fumble is not possessed, and it goes OOB, it has to be returned to the spot of the fumble.

Additionally, a grounded backwards pass is not a fumble. If a player intentionally throws the ball backwards and it somehow changes direction after it's grounded and goes OOB in front of the spot of the pass, the ball is placed at the OOB spot. An example of that play:

1/10 from the A-20. A32 runs for 6 yards up the right numbers to the A-26. As he is about to be tackled, A32 pitches the ball backwards towards A80, who is at the A-24. A80 muffs the ball forwards, and it goes OOB at the A-29. The ball is placed at the A-29.

Game Clock on forward fumble OOB - Starts on the ready for play. This will be something officials will want to review during pre game with clock operators. Play clock on forward fumble OOB - 40 second Play Clock starts on the ready for play signal from R.

Best practices for officials -

1. Get in the habit of bean bagging all fumbles regardless if they are in, beyond or behind the neutral zone.
2. Utilize good cross-field mechanics to have the wing official opposite to help with bean bagging and identifying the spot of the fumble.
3. Situational Checklist:
 - Identify status of the game clock and play clock
 - Identify the line to gain
 - Identify possession status
 - Do we have a penalty on the play?

... see page 2 for Case Book examples

Case Book Examples: pg 39 and 40 (Highlighted case book situations and written below)

4.3.1 SITUATION A: It is third and 6 from B's 35-yard line. A1 advances to B's 30 where B1 attempts to tackle A1 forcing a fumble that rolls forward and out of bounds at B's 27-yard line. RULING: The ball is returned to the 30-yard line when the fumble occurred and it is fourth and 1 from B's 30-yard line. The game clock will start on the ready-for-play signal and the play clock will start when the covering official uses S17 to indicate to the play clock operator to start. COMMENT: Any foul occurring during the play is administered with the end-of-the-run being B's 30-yard line and in accordance with Rule 10.

4.3.1 SITUATION B: It is third and 2 from A's 35-yard line. A1 pitches the ball back to A2 at A's 31-yard line. A2 muffs the ball which (a) rolls forward and out of bounds at A's 38-yard line; or (b) rolls forward and out of bounds at A's 36-yard line. RULING: In (a), the ball is spotted at the inbounds spot at A's 38-yard line giving A first and 10 at the spot; or (b) the ball is spotted at the inbounds spot A's 36-yard line and it will be fourth and 1 from A's 36-yard line. In either case, the play clock will be set at 40 seconds and start on the ready-for-play signal and the game clock will start on the snap. COMMENT: The EXCEPTION in Rule 4-3-1 applies exclusively to a fumble forward out of bounds by a player in possession, and does not apply to a muff.

4.3.1 SITUATION C: It is third and 5 from A's 5-yard line. A1 retreats to pass and eventually scrambles and is in his end zone when B1 attempts to tackle him. During the attempted tackle, A1 fumbles the ball forward into the field-of-play and the ball goes out of bounds not otherwise touched by either team at A's 2-yard line. RULING: The end of the run by A1 is in the end zone as the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble resulting in a safety. (8-5-2) COMMENT: Any foul occurring during the play is administered with the end-of-the-run being A's end zone and in accordance with Rule 10.

4.3.1 SITUATION D: It is third and goal from B's 5-yard line. A1 advances to B's 1-yard line where B1 attempts to tackle A1 forcing a fumble that rolls forward and out of bounds over the (a) sideline in the end zone or (b) the end line in the end zone. RULING: In either case, the ball is not returned to where the fumble occurred as it did not go out of bounds in the field of play. The result is a touchback for B in both situations (8-5-3). COMMENT: Any foul occurring during the play is administered with the end-of-the-run resulting in a touchback and in accordance with Rule 10.

4.3.1 SITUATION E: B1 intercepts a pass on B's 4-yard line with his momentum taking him directly toward his goal line and into the end zone. B1 fumbles from the end zone into the field-of-play and out of bounds at the 1-yard line. RULING: For the purpose of administering this play, the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble. The momentum exception in 8-5-2 applies and it will be B's ball, first and 10 at B's 4-yard line. (8-5-2a EXCEPTION) COMMENT: Had the fumble occurred in the field of play prior to crossing the goal line, the momentum exception would not have applied and the ball would have been returned to the spot of the fumble.

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