

2012 Football Questions

ILLEGAL BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST

In high school football, there are very specific rules regarding the time and circumstances when blocking below the waist is legal. There continues to be problems with game officials not enforcing these restrictions on who can block, who can be blocked and where/when these blocks can occur. In order for a block below the waist to be legal, the following criteria must be met:

1. Both players must be lined up in the free-blocking zone at the snap and on the line of scrimmage. The free-blocking zone is defined as 3 yards on either side of the line of scrimmage and 4 yards either side of the ball.
2. The contact/block must occur in the free-blocking zone.
3. The ball must still be in the free-blocking zone.

The NFHS Football Rules Committee wants to emphasize several examples where it is important to enforce this rule. When a team is lined up in shotgun formation, the restrictions on blocking below the waist begin the moment that the ball leaves the free-blocking zone. Because a shotgun quarterback is usually positioned more than 3 yards behind the line at the snap, when the ball is snapped the ball very quickly leaves the zone and therefore, the only legal blocks below the waist have to be initiated simultaneously with the snap.

Another common example of an illegal block below the waist is when running backs, who line up in the backfield, are "cut" by defenders on sweeps or on roll-out passes. This is clearly a violation of the blocking-below-the-waist rule because it occurs by a player who was not originally on the line of scrimmage and occurs outside the free-blocking zone.

Remember, players on the line of scrimmage and in the free-blocking zone at the time of the snap can legally block below the waist, but only if the free-blocking zone still exists because the ball has not left the zone.

The rule applies equally to the offense and the defense.

Q1: – This question concerns the rule change regarding the wearing of Play Cards: The 2012 Rule Book contains three references to this new rule and unfortunately, they differ. The second page of the rule book (which is unnumbered) is titled "2012 NFHS Football Rules Changes" it states 1-5-3c(8) (NEW) "Play cards must be worn on the wrist." 1-5-3c(8) on page 22, under Other Illegal Equipment lists "Play cards not worn on the wrist or arm." On page 88, under Comments on the 2012 Rules Changes, it states "Play cards must be worn on the wrist." So my question is can Play Cards be worn on the wrist only or can they be worn on either the wrist or arm?

A1: – The NFHS interpretations are on the web site under football rules and officials sports football:

<http://www.wiaawi.org/Officials/Sports/Football.aspx>

Play cards must be worn on the wrist, but may extend further than a sweatband which is limited to 3 inches beyond the thumb.

Q2: – Reading the new rule regarding the requirements for when the kicking team can start blocking. There is a discrepancy on the enforcement. The rule states it being a 10 yard penalty, then it tells us to use signal #40. That signal (#40) is for blocking below the waist and carries a 15 yard penalty. Am I misreading something here as I don't want to signal for a 15 yarder and only walk off 10.

A2: – The NFHS editorial committee decided it was a 10-yard penalty but use the same signal as block below the waist. If you notice, the signal chart last year had signal 40 as "Blocking Below the Waist" only. This year they've added "Illegal Block." While some knowledgeable fans may know the difference between the two penalties and their yardage and some may not, you will be providing the proper signal.

Q3: – On the part one of the NFHS rules test, Question #8 is: A football shall have a continuous 1-inch white or yellow stripe centered 3 to 3 1/4 inches from each end of the ball and can have decorations or logos added during or after production. False - 1-3-1c After researching, the NFHS changed the rule

(1-3-1c) to state the ball must be free of logos: “A continuous 1-inch white or yellow stripe centered 3 to 3¼ inches from each end of the ball free from decorations or logos added during or after production. Stripes shall be located only on the two panels adjacent to and perpendicular to the seam upon which the laces are stitched.” Does that mean no logos may be placed on the football? What about the conference logo?

A3 – The rule applies to the white stripe stated in rule 1-3-1c only. A logo may be placed elsewhere on the ball.

Q4: – A question arose about the legality of helmet coverings and attachments. The interpretation at that time was that such protective accessories were not conforming equipment.

A4: – The Committee, after reviewing materials and information from ProCap, Shockstrip and Guardian Cap, has determined that permissive use of those products is not a violation of NFHS Football Rules.

It is important to note that the NFHS and the WIAA do not endorse football equipment. This ruling only means that the ProCap is not illegal under NFHS Football Rules. Currently, the Shock Strips and the Guardian Cap do not comply with NFHS Football Rules, but both companies are appealing to the NFHS Rules Review Committee. Before using, check with the manufacturer. The manufacturers may say that use of the products “may” or “could” void their warranties.

Q5: – What is the WIAA rule on football helmet visors?

A5: – Football sport rules are NFHS rules. They are not WIAA season regulation or Constitution, Bylaws, or Rules of Eligibility. The NFHS rule for visors in football are on page 22.

SECTION 5 PLAYER EQUIPMENT

ART. 3 – Illegal equipment. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the umpire is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

c. The following Other Illegal Equipment:

4. Eyeshield attached to the helmet that is not:
 - (a) Constructed of a molded rigid material; or
 - (b) Clear without the presence of any tint.

Common questions and answers are on the web site at:

<http://www.wiaawi.org/Sports/Football/RulesRegulations.aspx>

Clear visors are OK. Tinted visors are not OK. There are no waivers for safety rules and doctor’s notes don’t exempt an athlete from this rule. An athlete must have a clear visor. They may wear tinted athletic goggles or glasses. In fact, this rule has been covered in the Rules meeting the last three years.

Q6: – In a recent game B scored a touchdown during the first half. The runner was face-masked (5-yard variety) on the field of play before crossing the goal line, and a flag was thrown. B was given the option of EITHER the touchdown OR the penalty. At halftime, I spoke to the game officials, saying that B should've been given the option of BOTH the touchdown AND having the penalty assessed on the ensuing kickoff or try. All 5 officials said I was wrong. Given Rule 8.2.2, were the officials wrong? And why do so few officials seem to be aware of this unique HS rule?

A6: – Yes. The option should be enforcement on the try or on the next kickoff.

ART. 2 . . . If an opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike conduct or a nonplayer foul) during a down in which a touchdown is scored and there was not a change in possession during the down, A may accept the results of the play and choose enforcement of the penalty:

- a. On the try, or
- b. On the subsequent kickoff.

See additional Q&A from 2011 and 2010 on the following pages.

2011 Football Questions

Q1: – Could you interpret the horse collar rule because some officials are saying any tackle being made by the back of the shoulder pads is a horse collar. If I understand the rule correctly, if the tackler grabs the back of the shoulder pads and the runner goes down backwards with the knees buckling it's a penalty. If the tackler grabs the back of the shoulder pads to catch up to make the tackle and they both fall forward it is not a penalty. If this is not correct please let me know. Some officials may call the penalty to avoid the confrontation with the coach which means they enforce the rules incorrectly. I heard this at a scrimmage because one the players in a JV scrimmage did this and the official told me they cannot grab any part by the back of the shoulder pads to make a tackle.

A1: – Rule 4-3-3k states:

ART. 3 . . . No player or nonplayer shall:

k. Grab the inside back or side collar of the shoulder pads or jersey of the runner and subsequently pull that opponent to the ground (Horse-collar).

(See the Horse Collar PowerPoint on the officials center which includes slides from 2009, 2010, and 2011. The evolution of the rule which changed from being a runner only to changing to opponent in the second use, to making it a live ball foul.)

- A horse-collar tackle is a foul. A horse-collar tackle occurs when a defender grabs the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and subsequently pulls the runner down.

- If one would-be tackler has grabbed the shoulder pads or collar of the runner, but the runner is brought down as the result of a more conventional tackle by another player, there is no foul.

If the runner pulls on the side or inside back of the collar and pulls the opponent to the ground it is a Horse-Collar. The NCAA rules specify the knees buckling. The NFHS rules stipulate the opponent being pulled down. If they fall forward, no foul.

Q2: – A question came up during a game on a call the sideline judge made that got us both thinking and we agreed to look further into it and that is why I am emailing you. On our offensive play, our tight end was sealing the outside on a sweep play. In an effort to avoid a clip, he threw his forearm in front of the defender and made contact with the opponent's chest. It was a straight arm and no hand was involved and there was no grasping or encircling that defender with a bent elbow. This is a technique that our coaching staff learned at the WFCAs clinic several years back called a "long arm" and is used with the intention of finishing a block in front of the defender, avoiding a clip and should finish with a basketball style "box-out." The speaker was a UW assistant for special teams and it was during the Thursday "chalk talk" sessions with the UW staff.

The sideline judge, however, called a holding call on the play and told me that the blocker was "impeding the defender from getting to the ball carrier" and he interpreted that as a hold. He explained that if the blocker had gotten his body in front of the defender, it would have been OK. I quickly explained the "long arm" technique. At that point, I think we were both questioning our own interpretations and we both agreed to check on it. I vaguely remember something being addressed a few years back regarding this, but I could be wrong. It may have been in regards to a "clothesline" where the arm bar is above the shoulders. Not sure.

Two comments here. First, if this is no longer legal or we are interpreting the rule incorrectly, we certainly do not want to be teaching this to our athletes. If it is legal, maybe it needs to be clarified as to how this should be called. I can certainly see where this could be a gray area in the rule. Two, it was very refreshing to have the give and take with this official in a positive/productive/non-confrontational manner. I compliment him on allowing me to have this discussion so that we both could learn.

A2: – I asked an official what he thought since I always stuck with the frame of the body as my reference and keeping arms extended. Here's the response:

2-3-2b-2 says the blocker's hands must be Inside the frame of the blocker's body; the frame of the blocker's body is the front of the body at or below the shoulders. I'm not sure extending an arm sideways (laterally) qualifies as inside the frame. I don't understand how this action prevented a clip. I assume the coach means a block in the back. At any rate, as described, if the blocker impeded the defender and prevented him from moving toward the play or the runner, I would flag it.

Q3: – I have 2 questions about exam 1.

First: The restriction on prohibiting blocking below the waist is in effect even though the opponent has both feet off the ground when contacted. Correct test answer is T. Rule 2-3-7 Blocking below the waist is making initial contact below the waist from the front or side against an opponent other than the runner. Blocking below the waist applies only when the opponent has one or both feet on the ground. Shouldn't the correct answer be false?

Second: After completing the catch, receiver A12's momentum carries him into B's team box where non-player B44 pushes A12 in the bench. What is the ruling? Why is it an automatic disqualification? Granted, it is a cheap shot and a personal foul.

A3: – Question 18 is false. Rule reference is 2-3-7. The intent of the rule is protecting the player from an injury; which doesn't if the player is being blocked while airborne. If their foot or feet are on the ground, and their spike(s) are in the turf, there is a much better chance for injury.

Question 95 is a matter of interpretation. Rule 9-4-3b Penalty mandates a 15-yard penalty but does not require disqualification. However, given the nature of the foul, I would certainly deem it flagrant (2-16-2c) and would indeed disqualify B44.

It is illegal contact, a personal foul or unnecessary roughness.

By rule [9-4-3] No player or nonplayer shall:

[b] Charge into or throw an opponent to the ground after he is obviously out of the play, or after the ball is clearly dead either in or out of bounds.

[g] Make any other contact with an opponent which is deemed unnecessary and which incites roughness.

Penalty: Personal fouls [Arts. 3a through g] – 15 yards. Disqualification also if the any foul is flagrant.

Rule 2-16-2c: Flagrant - a foul so severe or extreme that it places an opponent in danger of serious injury...

Casebook – Flagrant Foul - Play 9.4.3:

“Comment” talks about defenseless players and unnecessary roughness. It also covers [h] Any player who has relaxed once the ball has become dead.

In ruling on the play given above, this definitely falls under many of the examples shown here – Non-player B44 is disqualified and a 15-yard penalty is assessed from the succeeding spot.

Q4: – Are unpadded forearm sleeves legal, as long as they are not "ball colored" ?

A4: – Legal equipment is covered in the NFHS rule book under Player Equipment.

Rule 1 - The Game, Field, Players and Equipment

SECTION 5 PLAYER EQUIPMENT

ART. 2 – The following auxiliary equipment may be worn if sanctioned by the umpire as being soft, nonabrasive, non-hardening material:

Forearm pads, which may be anchored on each end with athletic tape.

ART. 3 – Illegal equipment. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the umpire is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

b. The following items related to Pads and Padding:

1. Hard and unyielding items (guards, casts, braces, etc.) on the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, or upper arm unless padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than ½" thick.
4. Plastic material covering protective pads whose edges are not rounded with a radius equal to half the thickness of the plastic.

Q5: – A question of clarification, please. Last year it was emphasized that games only need to be suspended if the lightning is ground-to-sky; the parallel flashes (heat lightning) and thunder were not immediate concerns. Has this changed or were we (our area officials) misinterpreting the information being distributed?

A5: – The rule states: “When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play and take shelter immediately.” I do not interpret the kind of lightning.

Q6: – I would like to debate the answer to the following question: It is illegal for a member of either team to use any other part of the body or equipment to initiate contact to the head. TRUE (9-4-3g; POE)

X FALSE

Case 1 - If runner A1 stiff arms tackler B1 with an open hand to the side of the helmet is this illegal?

Case 2 - Passer A1 throws the ball and hits defender B1 in the helmet with the ball is this illegal. (Rule 1-3-1 lists the ball as "equipment")

Now to the question. First, what purpose does the word “other” serve in this question as no first set of conditions are set? Second the qualifier "any" means this is an absolute question meaning there can be no case where a player may contact the head with any equipment including the ball. By rule, if a punter were to kick a ball that was blocked by a defender's helmet, a flag should be thrown on the punter for illegal contact.

I understand the intention of "taking the head out of football," however this question sets an absolute condition that in reality is false. 9-4-3g deals with roughness not helmet contact. 9-4-3i deals with "illegal" contact, which implies there can be legal helmet contact. 9-4-3i seems to contradict the answer to this question.

A6: – You have a point about the stiff arm to the helmet. Assuming there is no grasping of the facemask or helmet opening, rules would allow a stiff arm to the helmet. Obviously the question was designed to be a reminder that we want to rid of the game of illegal helmet contact. But as you point out, "any" is an absolute and I think you pointed out a case in which "any" does not apply.

Q7: – We had a situation arise in last Friday's game regarding a mouth guard. Two of my athletes went to their orthodontist to get a mouth guard and they were issued a clear mouth guard except for an orange dime-sized dot on the underside of it. One athlete has had a concussion and the parents said the mouth guard cost close to \$100 and do not want to spend that much again nor have him wear a school issued one. I know the rules state that the mouth guard is supposed to be over 50% something other than white or clear, can they get a waiver from their orthodontist indicating that this mouth guard is acceptable?

A7: – The rule is very clear:

5. A tooth and mouth protector (intraoral) which shall include an occlusal (protecting and separating the biting surfaces) and a labial (protecting the teeth and supporting structures) portion and covers the posterior teeth with adequate thickness. It is recommended the protector be properly fitted and:
 - (a) Constructed from a model made from an impression of the individual's teeth, or

(b) Constructed and fitted to the individual by impressing the teeth into the tooth and mouth protector itself.

(c) The tooth and mouth protector shall be of any readily visible color, and may not be:

(1) completely white; or

(2) completely clear.

Not sure where the 50% part came in. We don't have waivers on safety rules. Unfortunately, I don't have the authority for a waiver.

From our doctor: mouth guards have not been proven to prevent concussions.

Q8: – A number of players on our team have bought the new Under Armor chin straps. My question is, they have a small 1 inch logo on them are they legal for game play?

A8: – At this time there is no rule preventing logos on chin straps. There is a clean shirt rule.

Q9: – If a player has metal piercings in his lip and they are removed, can he replace them with soft rubber blanks and then play with a mouthpiece in?

A9: – The rules do not differentiate between the substances the Piercings are composed of. Therefore, I would say not allowed.

Q10: – I want to make sure that I/we are properly applying a rule. We had 2 separate instances in the last couple of weeks that pertain to the extension of a period. Situation 1: ball is snapped, play is run, a holding penalty brings the ball back with 1 second remaining in the 3rd period, the clock was wound and expired. We then had an untimed down as a foul occurred and was accepted during the last timed down of a period. Situation 2: The clock was running, a false start occurred and was penalized. Because the clock was running prior to the penalty it was re-started after enforcement. The period then expired. We had a disagreement about the extension of the period. I believe that even though the false start occurred prior to the snap the period should have been extended. Is it necessary for the foul to occur during a live ball situation for the period to be extended?

A10: – In situation 1, the clock starts on the ready and the period will be extended. In order to extend the period, the foul must occur during the last timed down. See Casebook 3.3.3B which presents the exact scenario. In situation 2, the clock again starts on the ready. However, if time expires before A can get off a legal snap, the period is over and is not extended. Since the false start is a dead-ball foul, there is no down.

Q11: - I was coaching a freshmen football game at an area school Monday night and a situation came up that I questioned an official about. Our player was running the ball to our sideline and was violently tackled by an opposing player that wrenched the helmet around as our runner was tackled. He had his hand wrapped around the earhole part of the helmet and used it for leverage to help make the tackle. I said you can't grab and tackle by the helmet in high school football. Was I incorrect in that situation? If allowed this type of tackling would surely injure a player at some point in time.

A11: – You are correct. If any opening is grabbed during a play, it is face masking. NFHS Football Rule Book (p. 69): Rule 9 – Conduct of Players and Others – SECTION 4 ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT ART.3 . . . No player or nonplayer shall: h. Grasp an opponent's face mask, any edge of a helmet opening or the chin strap. Penalties: Other personal fouls (Arts. 3a through g) – (S38) – 15 yards; incidental grasping (Art. 3h) – (S45) – 5 yards; grasping and twisting, turning or pulling the face mask or helmet opening (Art. 3h) – (S38, 45) – 15 yards.

Q12: – I was emailed from a JV HS coach on wedge blocking interpretation. Coaches have been teaching their offense linemen to put their inside shoulder into the ribs of the player next to them and put the inside hand in the middle of the back of that offense lineman and push. Just want to make sure this interpretation is proper technique and legal under National Federation rules. Especially from your September 9th email to officials on blocking technique I would think that the blocker's hands are not inside their frame if they are extending them to the middle of the back of the offense lineman next to them. Correct? 2-3-2b-2 blocker's hands must be inside the frame of the blocker's body; the frame of the blocker's body is the front of the body at or below the shoulders...

A12: – You have the correct rule in the definitions (2-3-2b). b. Open hand technique. The hand(s) shall be:

1. In advance of the elbow.
2. Inside the frame of the blocker's body; the frame of the blocker's body is the front of the body at or below the shoulders.
3. Inside the frame of the opponent's body, except when the opponent turns his back to the blocker during the block or after the blocker is committed to his charge. The frame of the opponent's body is at the shoulders or below other than the back.
4. At or below the shoulders of the blocker and the opponent, except when the opponent squats, ducks or submarines during the block or after the blocker is committed to his charge.
5. Open, when the palm(s) are facing the frame of the opponent or when the forearms are extended beyond the 45 degree angle from the body.

In addition in the case book (p. 66):

9.2.1 SITUATION F: A1 is blocking with open hands: (a) outside his own frame; or (b) outside B1's frame, during contact. RULING: A1 is using an illegal blocking technique in both (a) and (b). When the hands are outside the frame, as described above and grasps the opponent or his equipment, it is a holding foul instead of illegal use of hands.

Q13: – Can a quarterback, while scrambling, cross the neutral zone and then return behind it and throw a legal forward pass? It seems like he should not be able to, but on the principle of “what is not prohibited is legal,” I can't find anything in Rule 7-5 prohibiting it. It's not addressed in the Case Book either.

A13: – College rules are different. But in NFHS, as long as the pass originates behind the line, the pass is a legal forward pass. You may find the following link helpful.
<http://www.wiaawi.org/football/comparisons.pdf>

Q14: – A receiver from the team on offense lines up legally, the ball is snapped and the receiver proceeds downfield – let say 10 yards and goes to make a slant to the inside. The safety comes up and “chucks” this receiver – knocking him to the ground. The ball was not in the air (no quarterback pass) at the time the contact was made. The way I read the rule book.....short of this contact being malicious, unsportsmanlike or deserving of a personal foul, the contact is ignored. Is that an accurate interpretation? As a former tight end and receiver in my high school and college days, it doesn't seem right that a defender should be able to take a receiver off his route or out of the play without penalty. But I don't find anything specifically addressing this being illegal.

A14: – If the ball is not in the air, no interference. You are correct. But other penalties may exist such as holding.

Q15: – I was wondering if you could interpret the horse collar rule because some officials are saying any tackle being made by the back of the shoulder pads is a horse collar. If I understand the rule correctly is that if the tackler grabs the back of the shoulder pads and the runner goes down

backwards with the knees buckling is a penalty. If the tackler grabs the back of the shoulder pads to catch up to make the tackle and they both fall forward it is not a penalty. If this is not correct please let me know. If this is correct some officials are going to call the penalty to avoid the confrontation with the coach which means they enforce the rules incorrectly and take matters into their own hands. I heard this at our scrimmage because one of our players in the JV scrimmage did this and the official told me they cannot grab any part by the back of the shoulder pads to make a tackle.

A15: – Rule 4-3-3k states: ART. 3 . . . No player or nonplayer shall: k. Grab the inside back or side collar of the shoulder pads or jersey of the runner and subsequently pull that opponent to the ground (Horse-collar). (See the website for a PowerPoint which includes slides from 2009, 2010, and 2011. The evolution of the rule which changed from being a runner only to changing to opponent in the second use, to making it a live ball foul.)

- A horse-collar tackle is a foul. A horse-collar tackle occurs when a defender grabs the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and subsequently pulls the runner down.

- If one would-be tackler has grabbed the shoulder pads or collar of the runner, but the runner is brought down as the result of a more conventional tackle by another player, there is no foul.

If the runner pulls on the side or inside back of the collar and pulls the opponent to the ground it is a Horse-Collar. The NCAA rules specify the knees buckling. The NFHS rules stipulate the opponent being pulled down. If they fall forward, no foul.

Q16: – Hoping that you can clarify a swinging gate question for our crew. A team notified us prior to the game that they would use a swinging gate on extra point tries and the snapper (with an eligible number) would start on the end of the line. Due to the circumstances of the game, they did not run it but we have been discussing as a crew for a while. I don't know the specific numbers, what the coach told me was the snapper would be on the end of the line with an eligible number and there would be four players numbered 50-79 on the field. As I read rule 7-3-5b, exception 2, the snapper must be covered even with an eligible number, which would make him ineligible - would you please clarify for me?

A16: – If they have five guys numbered 50-79, then 7-2-5b never comes into play. So if he is eligible by position (he's the end and he's in a good number), then he's ok. The fact he is the snapper doesn't mean he's ineligible. However, if they had only had four in the game numbered 50-79, then we would have deemed him to be in the game as a numbering exception. 7-2-5b would have kicked in and he would have been required to in between the ends, and therefore ineligible by rule.

Q17: – When did they ban spearing in high school football?

A17: – In 1976, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) changed their football rules, making the deliberate use of the helmet to ram or punish (spear) an opponent illegal.

Q18: – I have a question regarding defensive pass interference. When I looked up the rule in the rule book, it made it appear that if the quarterback has the ball in his possession defensive pass interference is not possible. I am hoping to see if this is the correct interpretation of the rule. Also, if the quarterback still has the ball, can a linebacker hit or chuck a crossing receiving past five yards?

One of our linebackers has been flagged for pass interference on this scenario and my defensive coordinator wanted to know if that was correct. I know that defensively we cannot grab or hold, but I was hoping for a little more clarity on the rule if he can chuck, bump, or redirect a receiver after 5-yards when the quarterback still has the ball in his hands.

A18: – Pass Interference in high school is when the ball is in the air beyond the neutral zone (NFHS Rules, pp. 61-62): **Rule 7 – Snapping, Handing and Passing the Ball**

SECTION 5 FORWARD-PASS CLASSIFICATION

ART. 7 . . . Pass interference restrictions only apply beyond the neutral zone and only if the legal forward pass, untouched by B in or behind the neutral zone, crosses the neutral zone. Pass interference restrictions are in effect for all A and B players until the ball is touched or the pass is incomplete.

ART. 8 . . . Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass begin for:

- a. A with the snap.
- b. B when the ball leaves the passer's hand.

ART.9 . . . Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass end for:

- a. All eligible A players when the pass has been touched by any player.
- b. All ineligible A players when B touches the pass, however it is not pass interference for ineligible A players to use hands and arms in a legal block to ward off an opponent.
- c. All B players when the pass has been touched by any player.
- d. All players when the pass is incomplete.

ART.10 . . . It is forward-pass interference if:

- a. Any player of A or B who is beyond the neutral zone interferes with an eligible opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
- b. Any player hinders an opponent's vision without making an attempt to catch, intercept or bat the ball, even though no contact was made.

ART.11 . . . It is not forward-pass interference if:

- a. Unavoidable contact occurs when two or more eligibles are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
- b. Contact by A is immediately made on a B lineman and the contact does not continue beyond the expanded neutral zone.
- c. Contact by B is obviously away from the direction of the pass.

The following was taken from: <http://www.wiaawi.org/football/comparisons.pdf>

25. PROHIBITED ACTS WHILE THE BALL IS IN THE AIR

ALL: The following statements, taken from the 2010 NFL Rules Book (8-5-2), apply to all levels of play. Acts that are pass interference include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Contact by a player who is not playing the ball that restricts the opponent's opportunity to make the catch.
- (2) Playing through the back of an opponent in an attempt to make a play on the ball.
- (3) Grabbing an opponent's arm(s) in such a manner that restricts his opportunity to catch a pass.
- (4) Extending an arm across the body of an opponent, thus restricting his ability to catch a pass, regardless of whether the player committing such act is playing the ball.
- (5) Cutting off the path of an opponent by making contact with him, without playing the ball.
- (6) Hooking an opponent in an attempt to get tot the ball in such a manner that it causes the opponent's body to turn prior to the ball arriving.
- (7) Initiating contact with an opponent by shoving or pushing off, thus creating a separation in an attempt to catch a pass.

That is, playing-through, grabbing, arm-bar, hooking, pushing are "pass interference." In college and professional games, contact is necessary for pass interference. In high school games, in addition, "face-guarding" (non-contact) is pass interference.

27. CHUCKING HIGH SCHOOL:

Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass end for:

- (a) All eligible Team A players when the pass has been touched by any player.
- (b) All ineligible Team A players when a Team B player touches the pass. However, it is not "pass interference" for ineligible Team A players to use hands and arms in a legal block to ward off an opponent.
- (c) All Team B players when the pass has been touched by any player.
- (d) All players when the pass is incomplete. (7-5-9)

27. CHUCKING

There are no provisions for “chucking.” Defensive players can block eligible offensive forward pass receivers without committing “pass interference” fouls until the ball leaves the passer’s hand. (7-5-7, -8, -9; 9-3-1-b) In high school games, in addition, “face-guarding” (non-contact) is pass interference.

Q19: - I have a question about “mechanics” during a running clock situation (35+ point differential). Our crew discontinues normal clock start/stop mechanics during this time. For example, when a player goes out of bounds, we give the signal to keep the clock running versus the signal to stop a clock. I have seen other crews in the running clock period signal the clock to stop on the aforementioned out of bounds situation then immediately they “wind” the clock. Which is the correct mechanic?

A19: - It is very difficult for officials to change a routine that occurs only once in a while. That is probably why you saw officials stop the clock then re-start it immediately.

Of course while the 35-point differential rule is in operation, the signal to stop the clock should not be given when a player goes out of bounds.

The WIAA procedure adopted many years ago states that the clock runs continuously except –

- (1) For time-outs charged to either team;
- (2) After a score; (the clock then begins running as after any kickoff -- when the ball is legally touched);
- (3) For the intermission between the 3rd and 4th periods;
- (4) For player injuries (on the field);
- (5) For an official's time-out for safety reasons.

A historic note: before the running clock rule was mandatory, both coaches had to agree to have the running clock. We had a game in which the LOSING coach DID NOT want the clock to run continuously. As a result, the losing team players became "very aggressive," to which the winning coach objected.

It can be argued that the running clock prevents non-starting players from seeing game action. However, coaches have an obligation to see that as many dirty players' uniforms as possible result from games. We officials cannot control that action.

Q20: - A question regarding definition of a “legal” snap. If the center snaps the ball backward, say for this sake...to a QB in shotgun formation, and ball never gets airborne, but rolls along ground, this is technically a legal snap and now a loose ball situation...correct? Just trying to clear up verbiage. Discussion with a few officials and some are on both sides of this being a legal snap...please advise. I’m aware what would constitute an illegal snap, but several of us got into a discussion on when you would kill a play (or not).

If the center (A55) snapped the ball back and it went; a) went straight back along the ground, loose bouncing back to the QB (A12) without getting airborne at all. Or b) backward from LOS but still under the center, without being touched by any other A player.

Most of us are in agreement that they would kill the play in “b” for a snap infraction (some not...saying live ball), but varied opinions regarding the play in “a.” Please provide your best response when time permits.

ART. 4 . . . A snap shall be such that the ball immediately leaves the hand or hands of the snapper and touches a backfield player or the ground before it touches an A lineman. A scrimmage down must start with a legal snap. An illegal snap causes the ball to remain dead.

SECTION 40 SNAP

ART. 1 . . . A snap is the legal act of passing or handing the ball backward from its position on the ground.

ART. 2 . . . The snap begins when the snapper first moves the ball legally other than in adjustment. In a snap, the movement must be a quick and continuous backward motion of the ball during which the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches a back or the ground before it touches an A lineman.

ART. 3 . . . The snap ends when the ball touches the ground or any player.

A20: - The snap ends when the ball hits the ground and it becomes a loose ball. Since the snap from the center touched the ground, the snap ended and it is a fumble. If recovered by the offense they may continue the play. It would be a loose ball. Team A could recover the loose ball and advance, as could B.

If the snapper were to fail to release the ball, you'd have an illegal snap. But if he immediately releases the ball and it is loose, I would keep the ball live. So in both (a) and (b) scenarios presented below, live ball.

When I thought about this situation, a long snap to a punter came into my mind. Many times the ball hits the ground and the punter gathers the ball and punts. Or if unable to gather the ball, both teams go after the loose ball.

Q21: - We would like some help clearing up a question that we have regarding 12 men on the field - Illegal participation –

I am a Back Judge - I count the defense on every play - when we have had 12 or more players on the field, I would throw the flag at the snap and let the play proceed and then penalize the defense 15 yards for illegal participation.

It has come to our attention that other crews will kill the play before the snap when they realize that there are 12 men on the field and penalize the defense 5 yards for illegal substitution, they say that safety is the reason.

Would you please help us clear up this question about this situation and give us your interpretation of the rule.

A21: - Whenever possible, we try to make this a dead-ball foul for illegal substitution. It is an easier penalty to swallow and it eliminates the huge advantage of allowing a team to play with one more player than the opponent. The replaced player has three seconds to begin to leave the field (3-7-1). That's about the same amount of time it takes you to count 12. So get it early and maintain the competitive balance.

I'm a firm believer in preventative officiating when possible. However, if you see or hear it, you flag it.

Q22: - I was watching a high school lower level game when I observed an unusual play.

K kicks off. They execute an onside kick. The kick goes 8 yards and is recovered by K. A penalty flag was thrown. The officials then marked off a 5 yard penalty against K and re-kicked.

I asked the officials why R didn't get the ball at the K 48 yard line. I was told that since it was a clean recovery if R had declined the penalty K would have gotten the ball since the result of the play was K recovering the on-side kick.

The way it was explained to me made sense. I still think the guy was wrong though.

A22: - If it had hit the ground and was rolling when K touched or recovered it, it would be first touching. The play would be allowed to continue. Team R could then take the result of the play or take the ball at the spot of first touching. If K touches the ball before it goes 10 yards, it's a foul. The only way there would be a foul (kick catching interference) on the play described is if K caught the kick. And it wouldn't matter if the ball how far the ball traveled.

Again, it would only be a foul (KCI) if the ball were caught. Also, it would be KCI whether or not an R player was in position to touch or catch the free kick in flight. That is a major difference between interference with a free kick and a scrimmage kick.

The rule is 6-1-6:

ART.6 . . . If any K player touches a free kick before it crosses R's free-kick line and before it is touched there by any R player, it is referred to as "first touching of the kick." R may take the ball at the spot of first touching, or any spot if there is more than one spot of first touching, or they may choose to have the ball put in play as determined by the action which follows first touching. Such touching is ignored if it is caused by R pushing or blocking K into contact with the ball. The right of R to take the ball at the spot of first touching by K is canceled if R touches the kick and thereafter during the down commits a foul or if the penalty is accepted for any foul committed during the down.

Also see rule 6-1-7:

ART.7 . . . A free kick is not repeated unless:

- a. A foul occurs prior to a change of possession and the penalty acceptance requires a replay of the down.
- b. There is a double foul.
- c. There is an inadvertent whistle during the kick.

From the NFHS Casebook:

FIRST TOUCHING OF A FREE KICK

6.1.6SITUATIONA: A free kick from K's 40 is high and comes down over K's 45 where it is muffed in flight by K2 after which it is recovered by K3 on R's 40. RULING: This is first touching and also kick-catching interference by K2. R may choose to take the ball at the spot of first touching, accept the 15-yard penalty for kick-catching interference and have K re-kick or R may choose to accept the penalty of an awarded fair catch at the spot of the interference. COMMENT: The clock will not be started when there is first touching of a free kick. The purpose is to prevent the kickers from taking advantage by touching the ball to start the clock and thereby deny the receivers the opportunity of putting the ball in play. The exception "the clock not start with first touching," is protection for the receiving team and is consistent with the philosophy that the receiving team be given an opportunity of putting the ball in play following a free kick. (3-4-1; 6-5-4, 6)

Q23: - My captains came to me to ask if the entire team can wear pink socks in recognition of breast cancer awareness. I checked with a friend of mine who is a football official and he thought I needed to check with the WIAA.

A23: - You may wear pink socks. In fact, just about anything may be pink in football as long as it fits within the NFHS rules. The only restriction is patches on jerseys which must be clean with only the flag or commemorative patch.

Q24: - Over the past couple of weeks our crew have been told about some of the inconsistencies of crews and the lack of enforcement of certain rules. For instance, this past weekend, a player on one team had a tinted face shield on and we asked him to remove it because it was not legal. The coaches were not happy about this and asked "Why is this first an issue now? It's week 5!" My response was simply that the crews they had the first four weeks missed it and/or did not enforce the rules properly. They also had players in different uniforms which we also said couldn't be done. Again they were not happy. This has happened several times over this season and in past seasons and it is a concern of mine because if we are all consistent in the way we enforce the rules we don't run into these situations in the fifth week and have to deal with a bitter and upset coaching staff prior to the game even starting. I don't know how this can be addressed but I felt it is something you should know.

A24: - Only one athlete from one school has been provided a signed waiver for a tinted eye shield. Contact our office if you need to know which school.

There is no rule stating identical uniforms. They should be the same color.

Q25: - Just wondering if you could clear up the visor rule. I know tinted is not legal for play, but is a clear shield legal. My son has been wearing one since 5th grade with not one official questioning it. Now as a freshman playing football it has been brought up that it is not legal. Some help would be great.

A25: - The visor rule has been in existence at the high school level for some time. (1997 Prohibits use of eye shields which prevent visual examination of an injured player's eyes.) It is an NFHS rule for safety so the pupils may be examined without removing the helmet. They may use tinted goggles that can be removed without removing the helmet.

Rule 1 – The Game, Field, Players and Equipment

SECTION 5 PLAYER EQUIPMENT

ART. 3 . . . Illegal equipment. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the umpire is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

c. The following Other Illegal Equipment:

4. Eyeshield attached to the helmet that is not:
 - (a) Constructed of a molded rigid material; or
 - (b) Clear without the presence of any tint.

Q26: - When a field goal (in high school football) is attempted, missed, and enters the end zone, where do you spot the football.

A26: - The ball broke the plane of the end zone, therefore, the ball is placed at the 20 yard line. Some people may get confused by the various levels of football. Visit the web site and review the comparisons offered by Dick Fredericks: <http://www.wiaawi.org/football/comparisons.pdf>

34. UNSUCCESSFUL FIELD GOAL ATTEMPTS

HIGH SCHOOL:

Unsuccessful field goal attempts are treated as punts. (2-24-4)

Kicks into the end zone are touchbacks. (8-5-3)

Kicks that become dead inbounds belong to the receivers at that spot. (8-4; 6-2-1; 6-2-7) A field goal can be scored by a free kick after a fair catch or an awarded fair catch. (8-4-1-a) Also, a free kick after a fair catch or awarded fair catch has all the attributes of any free kick (kickoff). (2-24-3) See 6-2-1 and #26, above.

COLLEGE:

After an unsuccessful field goal attempt during which the ball crosses the neutral zone and is untouched by Team R (B) after it crosses the neutral zone, the ball is next be put in play (by a snap) at the previous spot or the 20-yard line if the previous spot was inside the 20-yard line. The spot of the subsequent snap by Team R (B) is midway between the inbounds lines (on the 20) unless Team R (B) selects a different position before the ready-for-play signal. (8-4-2- b) Blocked field goal attempts during extra periods (overtimes) are treated the same as blocked field goal attempts during regulation play, and the ball stays live. (3-1-3-e-Examples- (4), (5), (6), (7))

PRO:

If there is a missed field goal attempt and the ball has not been touched by the receivers beyond the line in the field of play, the following shall apply: (11-4-2)

- (1) If the spot of the kick was inside the receiver's 20-yard line, it is the receiver's ball at the 20-yard line. (Note: This option applies only if the ball has been beyond the line.) (11-4-2 (a))

(2) If the spot of the kick was from the receiver's 20-yard line or beyond the receiver's 20-yard line, it is the receiver's ball at the spot of the kick. (Note: This option applies only if the ball has been beyond the line.) (11-4-2 (b))

If there is a missed field goal attempt and the ball is touched by the receivers beyond the line of scrimmage in the field of play, all general rules for a kick from scrimmage apply and the special rules pertaining to field goals are not applicable. (11-4-2 Exception 1)

If a field goal attempt from anywhere on the field is blocked and the ball has not been beyond the line, general rules for scrimmage kicks apply and the special rules pertaining to missed field goal are not applicable. (11-4-2 Exception 2)

If the ball has gone beyond the line and returns behind the line untouched by Team B beyond the line and either team recovers and attempts to advance the ball, all special rules for missed field goals are no longer applicable and general rules for scrimmage kicks apply. (11-4-2 Exception 3)

A "fair catch kick" can score 3-points, but it is not a free-kick. The kicking team cannot get the ball unless it is first touched or possessed by the receivers. (11-4-3 Note) The game clock starts when the ball is kicked. (4-3-3; Rules Book AR 11.16 & 11.17)

Q27: - We had a situation this past Friday night that I am wondering if we handled it correctly or not. The home team has contracted sky divers to deliver the US Flag at the beginning of the game. Pre-game clock hits 0:00 at 6:55—no plane. We wait about 5 minutes—no plane. I find the AD of the home team and want to know how long are we going to wait. She says to start the National Anthem and player introductions. The pep band plays the Anthem, visiting players are announced, and about half of the home players are announced when the plane flies over and drops 3 sky divers. After the final diver lands, with a US Flag, the field is cleared and we are ready for the kick-off. It is 7:10. The visiting coach is upset and wants a delay of game penalty on the home team. We get together as a crew and decide to not penalize the home FB team for something out of their control. This is the second game this year where we have had sky divers. The first one went very well and on time. How should this be handled by game officials when it delays the start of the game?

A27: - When we look at the pre-game ceremonies, several factors should be taken into consideration: keeping in mind that players warm up in order to be ready for the start of the game, the length of the delay to start time, the game management's responsibility for the delay, etc. In this situation, you need to work with game management to come to a reasonable solution (1-1-6).

Rule 1 – The Game, Field, Players and Equipment

SECTION 1 THE GAME

ART.6 . . . The referee has authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.

We know that if a team is not ready to start the first half, it's a foul (3-6-3).

Rule 3 – Periods, Time Factors and Substitutions

SECTION 6 BALL READY FOR PLAY AND DELAY

ART.2 . . . Action or inaction which prevents promptness in putting the ball in play is delay of game. This includes:

f. Any other conduct which unduly prolongs the game.

ART.3 . . . Failure of a team to play within two minutes after being ordered to do so by the referee. Or if home management is unable to clear the field so that play is not delayed, it's a foul (3-6-4).

Rule 3 – Periods, Time Factors and Substitutions

SECTION 6 BALL READY FOR PLAY AND DELAY

ART.4 . . . Game management is responsible for clearing the field of play and the end zones at the beginning of each half so play may begin at the scheduled time.

PENALTY: Delay of game – (Arts. 2a,b,c,e,f; 4) – (S7-21); (Art. 2d) – (S7-21-23) – 5 yards; (Art. 3) – forfeiture.

But the rules don't really address outside agencies or unusual circumstances. The home team had nothing to do with the timing of the sky divers and game management had little control as well. In the case cited, the skydivers were late, the teams were ready and the field was clear. It would be difficult to penalize the home team for something out of the team's control. The visiting coach may be upset, but it's out of the officials' and the home school management's control. To begin the game with the knowledge that three individuals were going to drop out of the sky onto the field of play with 22 players and 5 officials playing a game would be unsafe as well. No foul. BUT while a foul may not be necessary, the expectation would be that it is a lesson learned about relying on sky divers to be able to land a specified time and future pre-game ceremonies would take potential timing problems into consideration.

Q28: - Can a defensive lineman have a single digit number on his jersey, 1-9?

A28: - Number restrictions only apply to the offense.

Q29: - During a play the quarterback loses control of the ball behind the line of scrimmage. During the scramble for the football the defensive player chasing for the ball from behind the quarterback realizes he will not be able to secure the ball as the quarterback is closer to the ball so the defensive player pushes the quarterback in the back to propel him past the football. Is this a foul? A) Illegal use of hands on the defense?

A29: - As long as it is clear to the covering the official the push is an attempt to reach the loose ball, there is no foul. If the opponent grabbed, pushed or otherwise restricted the quarterback in an attempt to allow a teammate to recovery, different story.

Q30: - Here are situations that it would be nice to be clarified:

(1.A.) A has ball at 30 yard line going in, 4th down and five to go. A1 advances ball to 19 yard line, at which point he laterals the ball forward to A2, who is tackled at the 15. It's a five yard penalty from the spot of the foul and loss of down That means the ball is placed at the 24. Does A get to keep the ball because even after enforcement it made the YTG?

(1.B.) What if in the same situation A advances to the 22 and then laterals forward? Does A turn the ball over on downs even though A1 first made the YTG before the violation occurred because after enforcement the YTG has not been reached?

(2.A.) A has ball at B's 12 yard line, 2nd down and 3 yards for a FD. A completes a run to B's six-yard line. After the play is over but before the ready-for-play whistle is blown, an sportsmanlike foul is called on A. Is it first down and 10 at the 21 yard line? Ditto if it's a personal (contact) foul?

(2.B.) What if the violation occurs AFTER the ready-for-play whistle is blown? First and goal at the 21?

A30: - Situations A and B: Because the line to gain was reached legally, A will have a first down after enforcement. The loss of down portion of the penalty has no significance. This exact play can be found in the casebook, 5.2.2 situation B.

Situation C: The line to gain was legally reached. The penalty is enforced and the chains are set at that spot. First and 10 for team A.

Situation D: Any dead-ball foul that occurs after the ready (and after the chains are set) is enforced but the chains are not moved. So yes, first and goal at the 21.

Q31: - Prior to a varsity contest, during the coaches meeting, the head coach asked me, (the referee) if it was legal to have #50 line-up as a full back. I then orally reviewed the numbering requirements: 5 players numbered 50-79 on the line of scrimmage and that there must be 7 players on the line of scrimmage at the snap. If those conditions were met, then 50 could line-up as a full back, but he would still be an ineligible receiver because of his number. The coach asserted that the numbering requirements and the 7 players on the line conditions would be met, but he wanted 50 to be an eligible receiver and "he would report." I told him that 50 could line-up as a fullback and would remain ineligible, even if "he reported." Of course, he contended that he had been doing this all season.

As I understand NFHS rules, there are "no reporting" of ineligible numbers to make the players eligible. Is this different in Wisconsin? Or is this a case of confusing NCAA/NFL rules? One of my crew members agreed with the coach, so am I the one that is mistaken? Could you please clarify?

A31: - You are correct (NFHS 7-2-5). The player should change the jersey to an eligible number.

SECTION 2 FORMATION/POSITION, NUMBERING AND ACTION AT THE SNAP

ART. 5 . . . Player formation and numbering requirements include:

- a. At the snap, at least seven A players shall be on their line of scrimmage.
- b. At the snap, at least five A players on their line of scrimmage must be numbered 50-79.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. On first, second or third down, when A sets or shifts into a scrimmage-kick formation as in 2-14-2a, the snapper may be a player numbered 1 to 49 or 80 to 99. If Team A has the snapper in the game under this exception, Team A shall have at least four players wearing numbers 50-79 on its line of scrimmage. The snapper in the game under this exception must be between the ends and is an ineligible forward-pass receiver during that down unless the pass is touched by B (7-5-6b).
2. On fourth down or during a kick try, when A sets or shifts into a scrimmage-kick formation, any A player numbered 1 to 49 or 80 to 99 may take the position of any A player numbered 50 to 79. A player in the game under this exception must assume an initial position on his line of scrimmage between the ends and he remains an ineligible forward-pass receiver during that down unless the pass is touched by B (7-5- 6b).
 - c. Players of the same team shall not participate during the same down while wearing identical numbers.
 - d. B players may be anywhere on or behind their line of scrimmage.

In your rule book, you will find the rules which the state association may change adaptations and the adaptations which we have in Wisconsin are in the Fall Season Regulations: Overtime using the NCAA 25 yard line Tie Breaker and Running Time. Numbering is not one of rules to which an adaptation may be used. Each state high school association adopting these NFHS football rules is bound to use the NFHS rules as they are and coaches or referees may not change them. No other model football rules interpretations should be considered.

It appears they are confusing the numbering with the NFL. See the rule comparisons on line at:

<http://www.wiaawi.org/football/comparisons.pdf> in section 10 – Scrimmage Formations.

Q32: - I have a quick question regarding the legality of wearing a "Playmaker" wristband. Is it legal to wear it looped through a player's belt rather than on the wrist? (Rule Ref 1-5 Article 3a5 pg. 21)

A32: - Wristbands are legal if worn by NFHS rule which states on the wrist at the base of the thumb which does not allow at the elbow or on the belt. They are not allowed on the belts and that was a point of emphasis in 2009:

UNIFORMS (2009 Point of Emphasis):

- A greater focus must be made by coaches, players and officials on players having and properly wearing mandatory football equipment as required by NFHS Football Rules. A parallel focus must also be on not allowing players to wear illegal equipment or adornments.

- Through normal observation, officials should attempt to verify that each player is legally equipped prior to the ball becoming live, and if illegal equipment is detected or required equipment is missing, that player must rectify the problem or leave the game.
- Prior to the ball becoming live, if the officials are unable to detect the illegal or missing equipment, and the player(s) are observed wearing illegal equipment or participating without the mandatory equipment during the down, a foul must be called.
- Towels and Sweatbands: One unmarked moisture-absorbing white towel not less than 4 inches wide and 12 inches in length and no greater than 18 inches in width and 36 inches in length and/or one moisture-absorbing sweatband worn on one or both wrists beginning at the base of the thumb and extending no more than 3 inches toward the elbow are the only two uniform adornments that are legal.

Rule 1 – The Game, Field, Players and Equipment (NFHS Football Rule Book, p. 21)

SECTION 5 PLAYER EQUIPMENT

ART. 3 . . . Illegal equipment. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the umpire is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

5. Uniform adornments, with the exception of:

- (a) One unmarked moisture-absorbing white towel, which shall be no less than 4 inches in width and 12 inches in length and no greater than 18 inches in width and 36 inches in length; or
- (b) Moisture-absorbing sweatbands, when worn on the wrist beginning at the base of the thumb and extending no more than 3 inches toward the elbow.

I have seen clips on TV sports highlights and it is frustrating to see rules not being followed or enforced properly. Pink sweatbands are allowed, but not pink towels. Play card sweatbands are allowed, but not if worn on the belt.

Q33: - I had a coach ask me about using a kicking tee for a free kick after a fair catch. I have never had that happen in a game so I looked it up and by the definition of a free kick they would be able to use any type of tee (either kickoff or extra point)?

A33: - Yes. (When I was in high school under the direction of Jim Haluska, we actually tried a free kick. Came up a little short, but it was interesting and I remember it well.)

Rule 2 – Definitions of Playing Terms (NFHS Football Rule Book, p. 32)

SECTION 24 KICKS

ART. 7 . . . A place kick is a legal kick made while the ball is in a fixed position on the ground or on a kicking tee. No material or device may be placed on the ground to improve the kicker's footing. The ball also may be held in position on the ground or on a kicking tee by a place-kick holder who shall be a teammate of the kicker. A place kick may be used for a scrimmage kick, a kickoff, a free kick following a safety or for a free kick following a fair catch or awarded fair catch.

Q34: - I have 2 questions for you. 1) Our Officials Association said that if we're in a punt formation, if the punter runs with the ball 5 yards, stops and punts it, he is no longer protected. I feel that he is established as a punter and is still protected. Who is right? 2) I am trying to find in the rule book on a 4 man crew, does the referee have to give the signal for the hand count. Is it mandatory or optional?

A34: - The punter does not lose his protection if he moves (assuming he remains behind the line) nor if the snap hits the ground. Two of the great myths in football. The punter is protected unless the covering official determines it was not obvious he was going to kick. A tough judgment call as opposed to an automatic, "he ran so he's on his own."

I believe the second question deals with who counts who in a four-official crew. The referee and umpire count the offense (giving the appropriate signal when they count 11) and the linesman and line judge count the defense. This would be found in the manual, not the rulebook.

Q35: - On a 4 man crew, who counts, the seconds on the 25 second clock?

A35: - In your official's manual on page 11, the answer can be found:

E. Line Judge:

1. Carry an accurate watch that has correct time when in a four-person crew.
2. Other officials synchronize their watches with yours.
3. Check starting time and assist in getting game started on time.
4. When there is no field clock, time game in four-person crew.
5. Take care of game ball after referee has approved.

On page 80 it states:

FOUR OFFICIALS

III. LINE JUDGE(If field clock is not used, keep official time):

A. Notify referee approximately four minutes before end of second and fourth periods.

B. Notify referee approximately 30 seconds before time for period expires that time may expire during next down.

C. When time expires and ball becomes dead, signal referee by raising arm above head, sound whistle, and give time-out signal (S #3) twice.

Q36: - How is it that a high school athlete is shown on WSN football site with eye shadows with a saying on them? If I'm not correct that this is illegal this year. But for WSN to picture a highly recruited athlete with eye shadows with lettering on them is the rules.. it should be looked at in more depth.

A 36: - The National Federation of State High School Associations is the authority of the competition rules for sport contests (i.e. uniforms, length of contest, game rules). As a member of the NFHS, the WIAA adheres to those rules as a member in good standing. While I don't know if the picture is from last season or this season, you are correct that the new rule does not allow sayings on the eye black. Both the coach and the official should have caught the rule violation before the game. *[The photograph has been identified as being taken in 2010, prior to the rule change.]*

Q37: - Offense comes to the Line of scrimmage and goes into a 2 point stance. QB calls a signal after which the line stands up and looks at their wristband for an audible. At the start of the game it is at a relatively slow and steady pace. as the game progresses it gets a little faster and faster. Is there intent to draw the defense off? It's a fine line. My question is how does the WIAA expect this to be called?

A37: - The philosophy on this has always been based on game situation and consistency. If a team does that every play, or at least the vast majority of the time, officials should let it go. However, if they save it for, say, third or fourth and three, and it causes the defense to jump, it's a false start.

At this point in the season, we have to believe teams have seen it on film enough to know and should not be caught by it. By the same token, the offense has the responsibility to do it so the officials are convinced it's not designed to draw the defense into then neutral zone.

Q38: - There has been a lot of discussion lately on the so-called "swinging gate" formation. Here is my view. If #80 is on the end of the line of scrimmage. and is the snapper..and let's say #82 is on the other end. The other five on the LOS are all numbered between 50 and 79. (They are not taking advantage of the scrimmage kick numbering exception provision). I would rule that # 80 is an eligible receiver. I am either wrong on this...or some others are reading the "numbering exception" provision differently than I am.

A38: - If the snapper is on the end of the line of scrimmage, he is eligible. But if they cover him to snap for a kick, they would have six ineligible.

Q39: (Referencing Q31) - Relative to # 50 lining up as a fullback (happens quite a bit, especially with smaller schools and with option teams). He is not an eligible receiver. The trickier nuance here is "Could he catch a forward pass behind the line of scrimmage?" My interpretation is that he cannot. A forward pass is determined by the initial direction of the throw. (I don't recall ever having to rule on that, but I have answered the question that way.)...and a forward pass is a forward pass (excepting a touching by B etc.). Assuming for the moment I'm correct on that, I would, however, rule that he could be the legal recipient of a forward handing behind the line of scrimmage, as on a "stretch" play. I just find that interesting. Whenever one asks a question like this, it's bound to happen the next game. Am I thinking straight on this?

A39: - I would maintain that ineligible numbers are all treated the same on both sides of the line of scrimmage. Unless B is first to touch the pass, no A player numbered 50-79 inclusive may catch or touch a forward pass anywhere on the field. He could catch a backward pass, carry the ball or pass the ball, but not catch or touch a forward pass.

2010 Football Questions

Q1: We have a question that we are struggling with on equipment. We noticed in looking at some newspaper photos online a couple weeks back the towels that were worn by both teams. They all have an Under Armour logo at the belt, where they are attached. They are legal in size and color, but does the logo that is on the towel violate the provisions for being "unmarked" by rule. We as a crew think that it does, however, last week we walked onto a wet field. Many of the players had a towel adorned with the NFL Equipment logo. However, it was difficult to tell them to take them off, without a definitive ruling, knowing we were going to have a rather sloppy game, and that the towels would be needed. Please provide clarification on these.

A1: By rule 1-5-3-3a, the towels with logos would be illegal and should be reversed so the logo is not displayed. We'll add this to the web site for rule interpretations.

Q2: My son has a medically documented eye condition, which makes him very sensitive to bright light. We talked to our athletic director about his condition last year and he told us that he could wear tinted eye goggles under his helmet. The rules do not allow him to wear a tinted shield. He played with the tinted goggles last year without incident. However, he participated in a football scrimmage on Friday and several of the officials told our coach that they didn't think tinted eye goggles were allowed. Can you send me, or the school, some documentation about the legality of tinted eye goggles?

A2: Football rules state in the NFHS rule book on page 22 in rule 1-5-3-1 – Illegal Equipment: An eye shield attached to the helmet that is not: (a) constructed of a molded rigid material; or (b) Is not clear without the presence of any tint. While tinted eye-shields are not allowed by rule because of difficulty to remove the eye-shield to analyze the eyes if necessary, goggles or glasses which are can be removed are allowed.

Q3: When wearing shorts, do we need to wear the black stripe socks? I've seen on TV some crews don't.

A3: The only change brought forward by the Officials advisory was the black pants, therefore, the black shorts have not been adopted by the WIAA. In the officials manual, on page 10, the socks stated are the Northwestern socks. I am not aware of an option to wear different socks. The changes to the Officials manual can be found on the WIAA web site: <http://www.wiaawi.org/index.php?id=465>.

Q4: I am confused on your equipment rules. Is it legal to wear just compression shorts with thigh pads under my football pants without having to put in the regular pads that go in the pants (I would still wear regular knee pads.)

A4: The rule which you refer to is an NFHS rule. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) is the authority of the competition rules for sport contests (i.e. uniforms, length of contest, game rules). As a member of the NFHS, the WIAA adheres to those rules as a member in good standing. The WIAA, as well as all state associations in the NFHS, has input with an advisory role in the review and promulgation of the playing rules. The NFHS office is located in Indianapolis, Ind.

Compression shorts with hip pads are allowed as substitutes. However, the thigh guards on compression shorts do not conform to the NFHS rules. Therefore, the standard and approved thigh guards must be worn in the pants or the player is in violation.

The NFHS rule is 1-5-6-h: Thigh guards, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, which shall have any hard surface covered with material such as closed-cell vinyl foam which has minimum compression, resistance of 4-8 pounds from 25 percent compression or other material with equivalent specifications or is at least 1/4 inch thick on the outside surface and at least 3/8 inch thick on the inside surface and the overlap of the edge.

Q5: Some girdle manufactures state that their girdles with thigh pads meet NFHS standards. Which models meet the standards?

A5: All of the following girdles as far as I can tell comply with the NFHS Football Rules except for the one highlighted in RED and BOLD. On the Rawlings site it says it exceeds NFHS specifications but I have no documentation that says we have approved it.

336705-100	NIKE	PRO COMBAT FOOTBALL SHORT	\$70
1201500-100	UNDER ARMOUR	MPZ LEVEL III DEMOLITION GIRDLE	\$80
7555T	MCDavid	HEXPAD 5 PAD HARDSHELL GIRDLE	\$65
1585	STROMGREN	5 PAD GIRDLE	\$55
1587	STROMGREN	7 PAD GIRDLE	\$65
1502HTPT	STROMGREN	5 PAD GIRDLE	\$40
ZBAG5	RAWLINGS	ZOOMBANG HIP/TAILBONE/THIGH PADDED GIRDLE	\$70

Q6: I'm a football coach and would like to alter a jersey in order to allow easy access to change numbers. The boy is a tackle and tight end. We would like to take an eligible number and cut the jersey to create a vest. The rule 1-5-1-b-1 does not allow unaltered jerseys. What is allowed in this situation?

A6: By NFHS Football Rules, they cannot alter the football jersey at all. The player would need to switch into a legal jersey. NFHS Football Rules do not allow for a pullover vest to be worn, as this is not a legal football jersey.

Q7: Our head coach's wife has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. Our players were wondering about the possibility of wearing a pink ribbon decal on their helmets to show support for our football family this year.

A7: Decals on football helmets are acceptable with school approval. Patches are not allowed on jerseys.

Q8: In the case book (page 11) 1.5.3 comment it states that examples of items that have been determined to be legal are "2) Skull caps manufactured to be worn on the head that do not alter the fit of the football helmet and are not exposed outside of the football helmet" is legal. Is this a change that is now legal?

A8: Skull caps are not allowed in Wisconsin as they alter fit of the helmet and we have not had a manufacturer say otherwise.

Q9: Regarding number marking on fields. If we cannot get our field numbered with paint before the 1st game is there an alternative marking that we need to have on the field?

A9: P. 13 of the FB rule book: Rule 1-2-3f – Nine-yard marks, 12 inches in length and 4 inches in width, shall be located 9 yards from each sideline. The 9-yard marks shall be marked so that at least each successive 10-yard line bisects the 9-yard marks. They are not required if numbers appear and the top of the numbers are at the 9-yard marks.

SITUATIONS

SIT 1: In a punt formation with a Rugby-style kicker. Once the punter starts to move around in the backfield, does he ever regain punter protection? Even if he kicks the ball on the run.

ANS 1: The key is the definition of a kicker in the NFHS football rule book (2-32-8): "ART. 8 . . . A kicker is any player who legally punts, drop kicks or place kicks. A player becomes a kicker when his knee, lower leg or foot makes contact with the ball. He continues to be the kicker until he has had reasonable opportunity to regain his balance or until after a free kick, he has advanced 5 yards beyond his free-kick line or the kick has touched the ground or any other player."

The penalty is addressed in rule 9-4-5 (Illegal Personal Contact): "ART. 5 . . . Running into or roughing the kicker or holder. A defensive player shall neither run into the kicker nor holder, which is contact that displaces the kicker or holder without roughing; nor block, tackle or charge into the kicker of a scrimmage kick, or the place-kick holder, other than when:

- a. Contact is unavoidable because it is not reasonably certain that a kick will be made.
- b. The defense touches the kick near the kicker and contact is unavoidable.
- c. Contact is slight and is partially caused by movement of the kicker.
- d. Contact is caused by R being blocked into the kicker or holder by K."

The player is a runner until the time he becomes a kicker and when he is no longer kicker.

SIT 2: On a punt A1 is the gunner and is blocked out of bounds by B1. A1 remains out of bounds and B1 keeps or blocks him out of bounds during the rest of the play. Is there a foul?

ANS 2: No foul. Rule 9-6-2 states, "During a down, no player shall intentionally go out of bounds and return." Note the words "intentionally" and, also, "and return." Rule 9-6-1 states, in part, "... If a player is blocked out of bounds by an opponent and returns to the field during the down, he shall return at the first opportunity."

SIT 3: Our crew would like to know a rule citation for when linemen can release downfield on a punt.

ANS 3: There is none. That is an NFL rule only. Under National Federation rules all linemen can go downfield on scrimmage kicks (punts, drop kicks, place kicks-- e.g., field goal attempts). Federation Rules 6-2 (Scrimmage Kicks) and 2-37 (paraphrased -- "anything is legal unless it is illegal") cover the situation.

NCAA rules are comparable to the Federation rules.

However, NFL rules (9-1-2 and ARs 8.64 to 8.68) state that only the end-men as eligible receivers on the line of scrimmage are permitted to go beyond the line before the ball is kicked.

Further information on this situation can be found in item #32 of Dick Fredericks' "Comparison of Some High School, College and Professional Football Rules -- Year 2010."

<http://www.wiaawi.org/football/comparisons.pdf>

SIT 4: We had a play that one Coach and I disagreed on. Not upset, just disagreed. The situation was this, ABC had 12 players in the huddle. As the huddle broke, player 12 began to jog off the field. I flagged them for breaking with 12 players. I am not sure if I was right or wrong. My understanding was that if the player entered the huddle the team had 3 seconds to

make the huddle 11. If the huddle broke then it was a penalty as would be the case if the 12th player entered the huddle and I counted to 3 and still did not leave. I know he was in the huddle for an extended period but was it 3 seconds from the time I recognized that fact, I don't know that answer?

My concern that in a close game any penalty can weigh heavily and I want to get this right. I would like to be able to tell the ABC people one way or the other as well. His interpretation was that you have 3 second to leave the field whether the huddle is breaking or not. It was not deception but on the other hand having a late breaking huddle can cause a change in defensive personnel as well.

ANS 4: A quick review -- The (new) high school (National Federation) rule states that a replaced player must leave the field within 3-seconds. NCAA rules state that the offensive team cannot break its huddle with more than 11-players. NFL rules state that the offensive team cannot have more than 11-players in its huddle.

Problems arise when high school teams do not huddle as, for example, on PATs. Offensive teams (e.g., kicking teams) have come onto the field with 12 (or more) players. Also, offensive teams who use the no-huddle-offense have been guilty of having 12 (or more) players on the field. In some cases, the offensive team has sent its 12th player off the field (toward his own bench) as though he were a man in motion.

You can break the huddle with 12. The substituted player must begin to leave within three seconds. **Rules Change: ART. 1 . . .** Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players. Replaced players shall leave the field within three seconds. **Rationale for Change:** This rule change clarified when a replaced player is expected to leave the field. The 3-second provision inserted into the rule applies to both teams at all times, and is not impacted by whether or not a team huddles. **Comment on Slide:** Upon recognition, the replaced player has 3 seconds to start to his/her bench area. A replaced player is one who has been notified by a substitute that he/she is to leave the field. A player is also replaced when the entering substitute become a player. **Case Book:** See 3.7 COMMENT, SITUATIONS 3.7.1A and 3.7.1B. Does not affect breaking the huddle as in the college rule.