



# 2023 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES



## NFHS FOOTBALL RULES

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### ❖ Comment on Slide:

This statement appears at the bottom of page three in the 2023 NFHS Football Rules Book.

## RULE 1-5-3a(5)a 4, 5 (NEW) UNIFORM ADORNMENTS - TOWELS

It is legal for a player to have one moisture-absorbing solid-colored towel that has no more than one visible manufacturer's logo/trademark reference that does not exceed 2¼ square inches and does not exceed 2¼ inches in any dimension; and has no more than one school logo/trademark reference that does not exceed 2¼ square inches and does not exceed 2¼ inches in any dimension.

Towels do not have to be the same solid color for each player.



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### ❖ Rule Change:

#### **RULE 1 – 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:

a. The following items related to the Game Uniform: ...

5. Uniform adornments, with the exception of:

(a) One moisture-absorbing solid-colored towel that:

(1) is not ball- or penalty flag-colored;

(2) is no less than 4 inches in width and 12 inches in length;

(3) is no greater than 18 inches in width and 36 inches in length;

(4) has no more than one visible manufacturer's logo/trademark reference that does not exceed 2¼ square inches and does not exceed 2¼ inches in any dimension; and

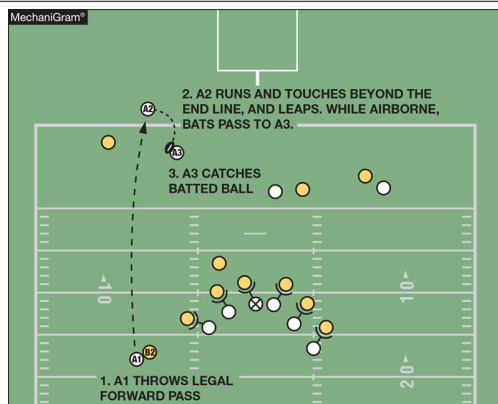
(5) has no more than one school logo/trademark reference that does not exceed 2¼ square inches and does not exceed 2¼ inches in any dimension. ...

### ❖ Rationale for Change:

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.

❖ Case Book: See SITUATION 3.5.10L

## RULE 2-29-1 PLAYER OUT OF BOUNDS



A2 is out of bounds as he has not had any body part touch inbounds. Therefore, when A2 intentionally touches the ball after being out of bounds, he has caused the ball to become dead. The pass is incomplete and A2 is guilty of illegal participation.

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### ❖ **Rule Change:**

#### **RULE 2 – SECTION 29 OUT OF BOUNDS**

**ART. 1 . . .** A player or other person is out of bounds when any part of the person is touching anything, other than another player or game official that is on or outside the sideline or end line, and that player remains out of bounds until returning to the field with any body part touching the field and no body part touching out of bounds.

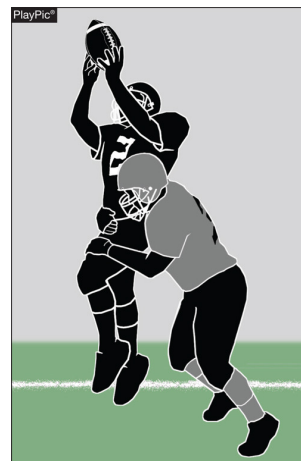
### ❖ **Rationale for Change:**

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.

❖ **Case Book:** See SITUATIONS 7.5.4C, 9.6.2A, 9.6.2B, 9.6.2C

## RULE 2-32-16d (NEW), 9-4-3g DEFENSELESS RECEIVERS

The receiver is not defenseless because the opponent is attempting to tackle by wrapping arm(s) around the receiver.



❖ **Rule Change:**

**RULE 2 – SECTION 32 PLAYER DESIGNATIONS**

**ART. 16 . . .** A defenseless player is a player who, because of his physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury. A player who initiates contact against a defenseless player is responsible for making legal contact. When in question, a player is defenseless. Examples of defenseless players include, but are not limited to:

- a. A passer;
- b. A receiver attempting to catch a pass who has not had time to clearly become a runner;
- c. The intended receiver of a pass in the action during and immediately following an interception or potential interception;
- d. A receiver in (b) and (c) above, including the person intercepting the pass, who is forcefully contacted by an opponent and that contact is not:
  - 1. Incidental contact as a result of making a play on the ball;
  - 2. Initiated with open hands; or
  - 3. An attempt to tackle by wrapping arm(s) around the receiver.
- e. A runner already in the grasp of a tackler and whose forward progress has been stopped;
- f. A kickoff or punt returner attempting to catch or recover a kick, or one who has completed a catch or recovery and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a runner;
- g. A player on the ground including a runner who has obviously given himself up and is sliding feet-first;
- h. A player obviously out of the play or not in the immediate vicinity of the runner; and
- i. A player who receives a blindside block with forceful contact not initiated with open hands.

**RULE 9 – SECTION 4 ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT**

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

- g. Make any other contact with an opponent, including a defenseless player (as in 2-32-16), which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness. ...

❖ **Rationale for Change:**

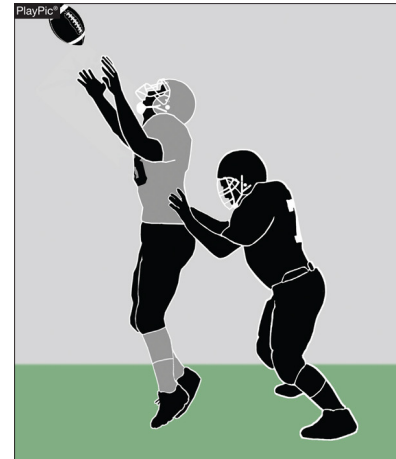
This change adds to the list of criteria to help identify players who should be defined as defenseless receivers related to application of unnecessary or excessive contact. This clarification should help game officials and coaches by defining allowable contact against defenseless receivers.

- ❖ **Case Book:** See SITUATIONS 2.32.16 COMMENT, 9.4.3 COMMENT



## **RULE 2-32-16d (NEW), 9-4-3g DEFENSELESS RECEIVERS**

The receiver is not defenseless even if the contact by the opponent is forceful because the contact is initiated with open hands. The contact could be pass interference, however.



❖ **Comment on Slide:**

See comments on slide.



## RULE 2-32-16d (NEW), 9-4-3g DEFENSELESS RECEIVERS

The receiver is not defenseless because of the incidental contact as a result of the defender making a play on the ball.



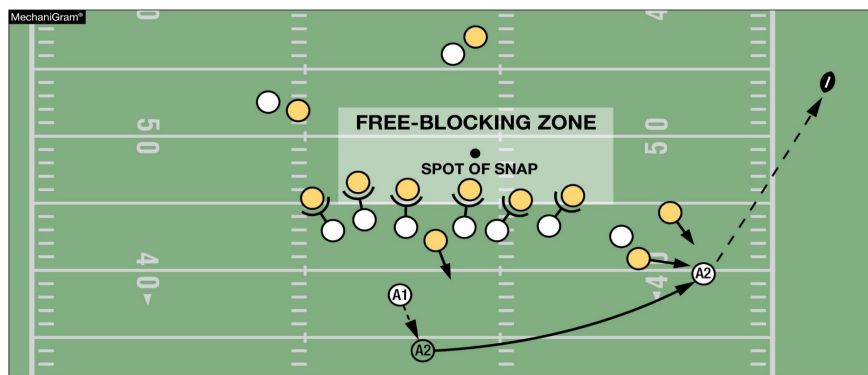
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Rule Change

RULE 7-5-2d EXCEPTION 2a, c (NEW), TABLE 7-5-2 d EXCEPTION 2a, c (NEW),  
TABLE 7-5 (1) d EXCEPTION 2a, c (NEW)

## INTENTIONAL GROUNDING EXCEPTION



This is a foul for intentional grounding since A2 is the second player to possess the ball. Only the player who possessed the ball after the snap ends may take advantage of the intentional grounding exception.

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❖ **Rule Change:**

### RULE 7 – SECTION 5 FORWARD-PASS CLASSIFICATION

**ART. 2 . . .** An illegal forward pass is a foul. Illegal forward passes include:

- a. A pass after team possession has changed during the down.
- b. A pass from beyond the neutral zone.
- c. A second and subsequent forward pass(es) thrown during a down.
- d. A pass intentionally thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible offensive receiver, or thrown incomplete to save loss of yardage or to conserve time.

**EXCEPTIONS:**

1. It is legal for a player positioned directly behind the snapper to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball forward to the ground immediately after receiving the snap that has neither been muffed nor touched the ground.
2. It is legal for a player to conserve yardage by intentionally throwing an incomplete forward pass if all of the following conditions are met:
  - a. The passer has possessed the ball beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone as established at the snap;
  - b. The pass reaches the neutral zone, including the extension beyond the sideline; and
  - c. The passer is the only player to possess the ball after the snap ends.

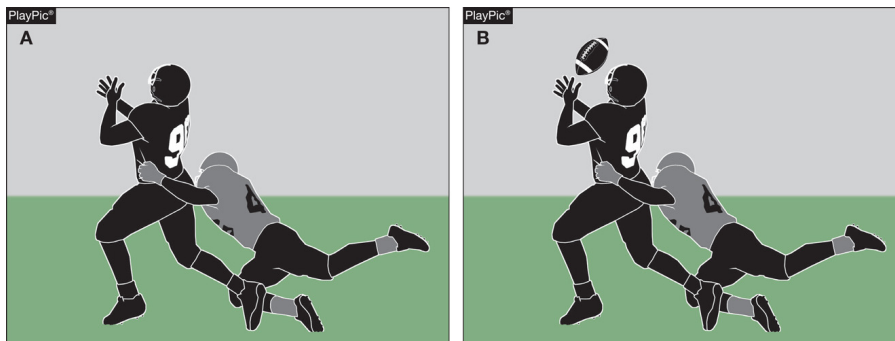
❖ **Rationale for Change:**

This change permits the exception for intentional grounding to the first and only player to possess the ball after the snap ends.

❖ **Case Book:** See SITUATION 7.5.2D



## TABLE 7-5 2c (DELETED), 7-5 PENALTY INTENTIONAL PASS INTERFERENCE



The additional penalty for intentional pass interference as illustrated in PlayPic A has been deleted. The Team B player in the gray jersey will be penalized 15 yards for the pass interference foul committed in PlayPic B.



### ❖ Rule Change:

#### RULE 7 – SECTION 5 FORWARD-PASS CLASSIFICATION

#### TABLE 7-5 – SUMMARY OF FOULS THAT CAN OCCUR DURING FORWARD PASS PLAYS AND THEIR PENALTIES AND ENFORCEMENT SPOTS ...

##### 2. Forward Pass Interference (7-5-10)

Restrictions apply only to a legal pass, untouched by B in or behind the neutral zone which crosses the neutral zone and interference may occur only beyond the neutral zone.

- a. A hinders B. (Restriction begins with the snap.)
- b. B hinders A. (Restriction begins when the pass is thrown.)

### ❖ Rationale for Change:

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.

## RULE 10-4, TABLE 10-4 (NEW), 10-6 (DELETED) BASIC SPOT

### SUMMARY OF MANY FOULS THAT CAN OCCUR DURING RUNNING PLAYS AND THEIR PENALTIES AND BASIC SPOTS UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED BY RULE

FOUL BY	SPOT OF FOUL	END OF PLAY	BASIC SPOT	REFERENCE
A	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2d
A	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2e
A	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2f
A	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Foul Behind End of Run or Related Run – Spot of Foul	10-4-4d
A	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Foul Advance of End of Run or Related Run – Succeeding Spot	10-4-5e
B	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2d
B	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Succeeding Spot	10-4-5f
B	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Behind Line of Scrimmage	Previous Spot	10-4-2d
B	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Beyond Line of Scrimmage	Succeeding Spot	10-4-5f



**NOTE:** The basic spot is the spot of the foul when A commits any foul in his end zone for which the penalty is accepted (8-5-2c).

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#### ❖ Rule Change:

#### **RULE 10 – SECTION 4 BASIC SPOTS**

#### **TABLE 10-4 - SUMMARY OF MANY FOULS THAT CAN OCCUR DURING RUNNING PLAYS AND THEIR PENALTIES AND BASIC SPOTS UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED BY RULE**

Enforcement provisions apply to all player fouls, and the committee philosophy is based on the fact that a team is given the advantage of the distance which is gained without the assistance of a foul. All fouls are penalized from the basic spot unless the spot is otherwise specified by rule.

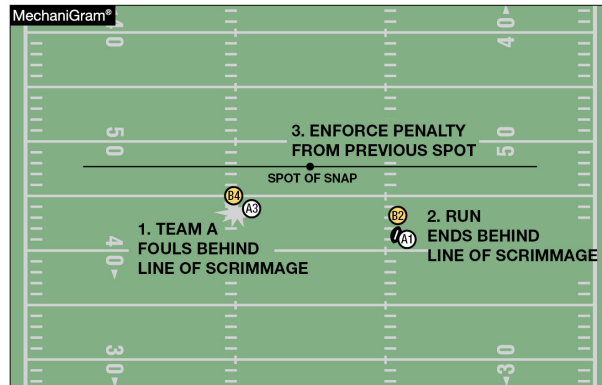
The type of play has significance if a foul occurs. If a foul does occur, the game officials must know the type of play as defined in 2-33, as this will aid in determining the basic spot of enforcement when the spot is otherwise specified by rule. Recent changes to 10-4 specify the data needed by the game official regarding the spot of the foul and the result of the play to help guide penalty enforcement.

#### ❖ Rationale for Change:

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 unless otherwise specified by rule. 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.

## RULE 10-4-2d

### BASIC SPOT FOR RUNNING PLAY PENALTY ENFORCEMENT



The basic spot is the previous spot for a foul by A when the run or related run ends behind the line of scrimmage where there is no change of possession.

❖ **Rule Change:**

**RULE 10 – SECTION 4 BASIC SPOTS**

**ART. 1 . . .** If a foul occurs during a down, the basic spot is determined by the action that occurs during the down. This is the basic spot for penalty enforcement.

**ART. 2 . . .** The basic spot is the previous spot unless 8-5-2c applies for:

- a. A foul which occurs simultaneously with the snap or free kick.
- b. A foul which occurs during a loose ball play, as defined in 10-3-1. See 10-5-5 for special enforcement on roughing the passer. See 10-5-1b for special enforcement on kick-catching interference.
- c. A foul which occurs during a down in which a legal kick occurs and an inadvertent whistle ends the down prior to possession by either team.
- d. A foul by A or B when the run or related run ends behind the line of scrimmage where there is no change of possession;
- e. A foul by A that occurs behind the line of scrimmage when the run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage;
- f. A foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage when the run or related run ends behind the line of scrimmage; and
- g. A foul by A or B when the run or related run ends behind the line of scrimmage before a change of possession. . .

**ART. 4 . . .** The basic spot is the spot of the foul for:

- a. Illegal batting or illegal kicking when the foul occurs behind the end of the run or related run;
- b. Illegal participation as in 9-6-4a and 9-6-4g;
- c. An illegal forward pass as in 7-5-2c and intentional grounding as in 7-5-2d;
- d. A foul by the team in possession that occurs behind the end of the run or related run following a change of possession;
- e. When A commits any foul in his end zone for which the penalty is accepted(8-5-2c); and
- f. A foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 when:
  - 1. The run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage; and
  - 2. The foul occurs behind the end of the run or related run.

**ART. 5 . . .** The basic spot is the succeeding spot for:

- a. An unsportsmanlike foul.
- b. A dead-ball foul.
- c. A nonplayer foul.
- d. When the final result is a touchback.
- e. A foul by B when the run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage;
- f. A foul that occurs beyond the end of the run or related run following a change of possession; and
- g. A foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 when:
  - 1. The run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage; and
  - 2. The foul occurs in advance of the end of the run or related run.

**NOTE:** The succeeding spot may, at the option of the offended team, be the subsequent kickoff as in 8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4 and 8-2-5. . .

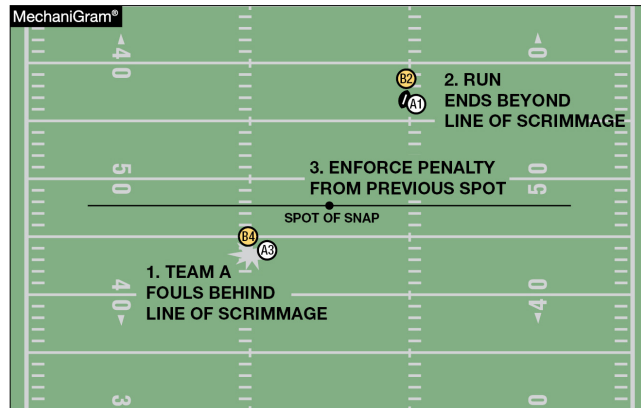
**ART. 8 . . .** The basic spot is the spot where the related run ends for a foul which occurs during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 unless the provisions of 10-4-2 through 10-4-7, or 10-5 apply.

❖ **Rationale for Change:**

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 unless otherwise specified by rule. 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.



## RULE 10-4-2e BASIC SPOT FOR RUNNING PLAY PENALTY ENFORCEMENT



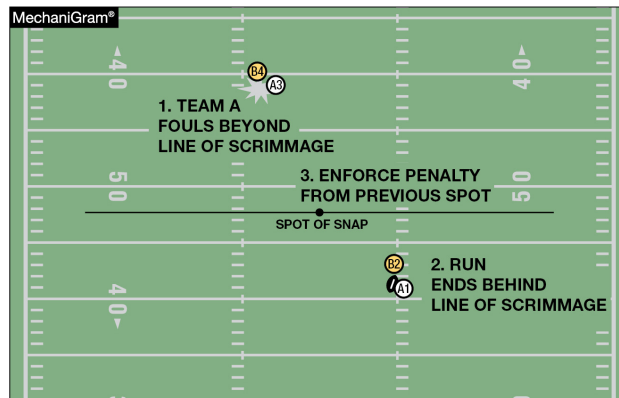
The basic spot is the previous spot for a foul by A that occurs behind the line of scrimmage when the run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage.

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## RULE 10-4-2f BASIC SPOT FOR RUNNING PLAY PENALTY ENFORCEMENT



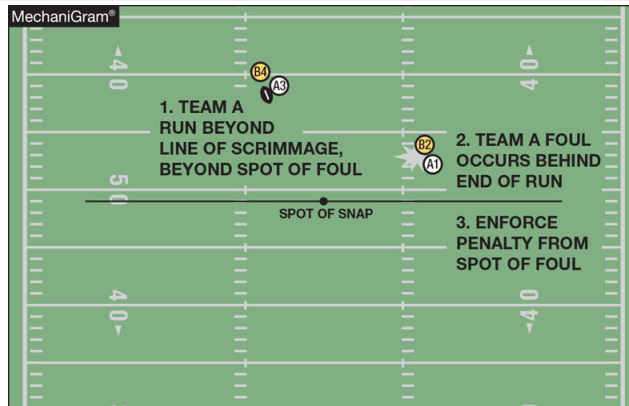
The basic spot is the previous spot for a foul that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage when the run or related run ends behind the line of scrimmage.

### ❖ Comment on Slide:

See comments on slide.



## RULE 10-4-4d BASIC SPOT FOR RUNNING PLAY PENALTY ENFORCEMENT



The basic spot is the spot of the foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 when the run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage and the foul occurs behind the end of the run or related run.

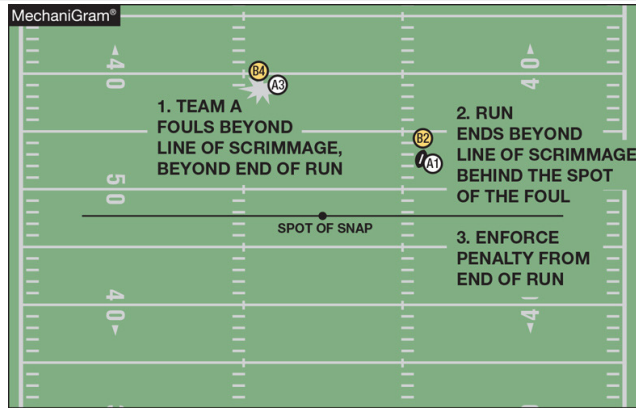
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# RULE 10-4-5e

## BASIC SPOT FOR RUNNING PLAY PENALTY ENFORCEMENT



The basic spot is the spot of the foul for a foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 when the run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage and the foul occurs in advance of the end of the run or related run.

### ❖ Comment on Slide:

See comments on slide.