



2024 Football Memo – Week 9

October 16, 2024

Pre-Contest Preparation Questions

Crew chiefs make sure you are having this conversation with the activities director and get the following questions answered prior to the contest, preferably during the week:

1. Who is the game administrator for each team?
2. Is there a qualified medical professional on site?
3. Is there an Emergency Action Plan for this venue?
4. Is there an **AED** available?
5. Where is the emergency entrance/exit for this facility?

Injured Game Officials

Discuss how the crew will adjust assignments if a game official is injured or becomes too ill to work. Which game officials will move where is up to the crew, but generally a crew of four works without a line judge and a crew of five works without a back judge when a crewmate is ill or injured. When a crew is reduced to two game officials, one game official should work as the referee and the other as a head linesman. (*NFHS Football Officials Manual 2024-2025, Page 13*)

In the unlikely event an official cannot work, implement the following steps:

1. Huddle up – Take a minute to focus
2. Confirm your plan – Who moves to the open position
3. Review mechanics – Confirm positioning on free kicks and scrimmage kicks
4. Relax – Be confident and rely on your football instincts

Definitions – Free Blocking Zone versus Expanded Neutral Zone

Free blocking zone

A rectangular area that extends **4** yards laterally on either side of the ball and **3** yards behind each line of scrimmage. Players can block below the waist or in the back in the free blocking zone if certain conditions are met.

Expanded neutral zone

An area that expands **2** yards behind the defensive line of scrimmage after the snap. Ineligible players are not allowed to advance beyond the expanded neutral zone on a legal forward pass play.

Automatic First Downs in NFHS Rules

There are **only three fouls** that result in an **automatic** first down (*all are 15-yards penalties*):

1. Roughing the passer
2. Roughing the kicker or holder
3. Roughing the snapper



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A Twist on a Free Kick Out of Bounds and Illegal Participation

We have all seen it on TV: a college or NFL team lines up for a free kick, launching the ball deep downfield toward the sideline. As it rolls dangerously close to going out of bounds, it takes a surprising bounce back into the field. A returner, reacting at the last moment, steps out of bounds and reaches back in to down the ball while it is still in play. The referee throws a flag against the kicking team for a free kick out of bounds—classic! But hold on, high school football has its own twist on this play.

NFHS Rule 9-7, Art. 2, states no player can intentionally go out of bounds during the down and then: **a.** return to the field; **b.** intentionally touch the ball; **c.** influence the play; or **d.** otherwise participate.

The key word here is ***"intentionally."*** If a player intentionally steps out of bounds and then touches the ball, it is illegal participation, resulting in a 15-yard penalty against the receiving team. This quirky rule not only showcases the unique flavor of high school football but also reminds players to be cautious about emulating their favorite college or pro players. Recognizing the subtle differences between Friday night rules and Saturday/Sunday rules can truly transform game strategy and keep the excitement high.

Key Rule Differences - NFHS versus NCAA

Rule	NFHS	NCAA
Defensive Holding	No automatic first down	Automatic first down
Defensive Pass Interference	If there is contact while pass in flight, it is NOT a foul if contact is away from direction of the pass. Penalty is 15 yards; NO automatic first down. Interference restrictions apply if a forward pass is touched behind the line by A and goes beyond line.	Pass must be catchable. Spot foul if less than 15 yards. Automatic first down. No interference if eligible receiver goes OOB & returns. Interference restrictions DO NOT apply if a forward pass is touched behind the line by A and goes beyond line.
Face Mask Fouls	Grasping face mask without pulling, turning or twisting is a foul with a 5-yard penalty.	Grasping face mask without pulling, turning or twisting is not foul.
False Start	If the entire team does not become set before the snap, it is an illegal shift.	If the entire team does not become set before the snap, a false start is called.
FG Outside the 20	Unsuccessful kick results in touchback if the ball crosses goal line.	Ball returned to previous spot if untouched by B beyond the neutral zone.
Forward Pass	Initial direction must be forward.	Point of first touching must be forward.
Forward Pass – Spike to Conserve Time	If the snap is muffed, it cannot be spiked.	A muffed snap that does not touch the ground can be spiked immediately after the ball is controlled.
Free Kick Line	Team K's 40-yard line.	Team A's 35-yard line.
Free Kick OOB	Place ball 25 yards from previous spot or 5-yard penalty and re-kick or a five-yard penalty from where the ball belongs to R.	Place ball 30 yards from previous spot, 5-yard penalty and re-kick, or a five-yard penalty from where the ball belongs to R.



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Rule	NFHS	NCAA
Fumble – OOB 4 th down	Spotted where it becomes dead. Clock starts on snap. No fourth down fumble rule.	Forward fumbles are returned to spot of fumble – clock starts on ready. Fourth down fumble rule; also applies on a try.
Game Clock	<p>The game clock starts on the snap when the ball becomes dead out of bounds.</p> <p>The game clock starts on the snap after a legal kick only when a new series is awarded. The game clock always starts on the snap after a delay penalty is accepted.</p> <p>When a penalty is accepted with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team has the option to start the game clock on the snap.</p> <p>The game clock stops for Team A first downs inbounds.</p>	<p>The game clock starts on the snap only during the last two minutes of each half when the ball becomes dead out of bounds except for forward fumble. The game clock starts on the snap after a legal kick. The game clock starts on the snap after a delay penalty, regardless of whether it is accepted or declined, if committed by a team in scrimmage-kick formation. Inside the last two minutes of a half, if the game clock is stopped to administer the penalty for a foul by the team ahead in the score, the game clock will start on the snap, at the option of the offended team. The clock does not stop for Team A first downs inbounds except for the last two minutes of a half.</p>
Intentional Grounding	Loss of down and 5-yard penalty from spot of pass (end of run). Boundary is free-blocking zone.	Loss of down at the spot of pass, no yardage assessed. Boundary is tackle box.
Kick-Catch Interference	Interference occurs if a free kick is touched inflight by K.	Interference on a free kick in-flight only applies if an R player is positioned to make a catch. The receiving team has the same kick-catch and fair-catch protection whether the ball is kicked directly off the tee or is immediately driven to the ground. Kicking team players cannot enter the area defined by the width of the receiver's shoulders and extending one yard in front of the receiver before he touches the ball.
Leaping	Defensive players may leap from the ground to block a kick as long as they don't violate a different rule such as hurdling or leverage.	It is illegal to leap into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent unless the player was aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped as long as he doesn't move forward before leaving his feet.
Neutral Zone Infractions	Offensive false start and encroachment – dead-ball foul. Defensive encroachment – dead-ball foul. Defensive lineman quick/abrupt actions– disconcerting act.	Offensive false start and encroachment – dead-ball foul. Defensive offside – dead-ball or live-ball foul. Defensive lineman quick/abrupt actions – dead-ball delay foul.
Placekick Holder	Must rise to keep ball live. May rise to catch or recover a snap.	Need not rise to keep ball live.



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Rule	NFHS	NCAA
Onside Kick	Kicking the ball directly into the ground so that it goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee (pop-up kick) is illegal and is a dead-ball foul.	Players have the same kick-catch and fair catch protection whether the ball is kicked directly off the tee or is immediately driven to the ground (pop-up kick).
Participation	12 or more players on the field at the snap result in a 15-yard penalty for illegal participation.	12 or more players on the field at the snap are a 5-yard penalty for illegal substitution.
Play Clock	A 40/25-second play clock is used. After a touchdown and following a kickoff, the play clock will be set at 25 seconds.	A 40/25-second play clock is used. After a touchdown and following a kickoff, the play clock will be set at 40 seconds.
Substitution	Replaced player must depart within 3 seconds of arrival of substitute. Breaking the huddle with 12 or more players is not a foul unless it violates the above.	Replaced A player must depart immediately (3 seconds), but A cannot break huddle with 12 players. While in the process of substitution, Team A is prohibited from rushing quickly to the line of scrimmage and snapping.
10-second Runoff	No provision.	A 10-second runoff of the game clock is part of the penalty option for fouls that stop the clock with less than two minutes in either half.
Targeting	Not an automatic DQ unless flagrant. Applies to all players.	Automatic DQ, subject to review (player may remain in team box). Unless hit is with crown of helmet, applies only to defenseless players.
Touchback	Ball is next snapped at 20-yard line.	Same as NFHS; except 25-yard line if during a free kick. Receiver can signal fair catch on a free kick inside the 25-yard line and still have ball placed at 25.
Wedge Formation	It is legal to block from a wedge formation during any down.	It is illegal for two or more members of the receiving team to intentionally form a wedge for the purpose of blocking for the ball carrier after the ball has been kicked, except when the kick is from an obvious onside kick formation.
Knee Pads	Must cover the knee.	The pants and knee pads are recommended to cover the knees.

These NFHS/NCAA Football Rules Differences are presented in summary form and should only be used as a guide; not all nuances are described. This information is in no way meant to replace the NFHS Rules Book. These differences have been generously compiled and provided by George Demetriou, Rules Interpreter for Colorado. The NFHS is not responsible for content accuracy or the maintenance of this information. You may contact the author at georgedemetriou@comcast.net.



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Week 7 – Plays of Interest

Check out the link below or go directly to the Bound website for additional plays to review and learn from:

<https://www.sdhsaa.com/Officials/Newsletters/FB-Oct14Clips.pdf>

Thank You Officials - You All Make an Impact!

The football season is an extremely busy time for every one of you. It takes hard work to become a good official. We appreciate your investment in time and your time spent away from family. We would like to give you all a heartfelt thank you for the job you are doing as an official.

Stay Focused
2024 SDHSAA playoffs begin in 1 week

Remember, MIBT = Make it be there

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