

CLASSIFICATION OF HOLDING—From USA Football

BEAR HUG

Arms around opponent

WRAP/GRAB & TURN

Hands are on the outside of the shoulders and opponent is actually turned over to one side or the other

SHOULDER DIP

Player may have hands inside on the chest or outside on the shoulders. When the runner passes there is a noticeable dip in the shoulders of the opponent

SHIRT STRETCH

Player's hand inside on the chest, as players disengage there is a clear stretch of the shirt

PULLOVER

It looks like the player is being run over by the opponent but has grabbed the shirt on the chest and has pulled the opponent down on himself

GRAB OF LEG

Generally done by a player who is on the ground. He will reach out and grab the opponent's leg.

PULL AND SHOOT

The pull and shoot is a tactic used by defensive players (usually linemen) designed to create a gap in the offensive line. The defensive lineman grabs the offensive lineman and pulls him to one side, allowing a teammate to rush through the opening and rush the quarterback or block a kick. It is illegal and is considered defensive holding.

YOU MUST

Make sure something happens, even if a player attempts to hold but the opponent runs right through his attempt. No foul should be called

KEY FACTORS

- Clearly Visible: Make It Be There
- See It All
- Observe the blocker's disengagement (end of blocking action) with the blocker as well as the engagement (initial blocking action).
- A blocker is allowed to work for and maintain his position
- Release followed by a push in the back or clip, grab of the leg

POINT OF ATTACK

- Most holds occur at or near the point of attack
- Judgment
- Does the offensive blocker gain an advantage and/or put the defensive player at a disadvantage by his action?
- Effect on the play
- Does action of the defensive player influence offensive player technique?

Offensive holding is the most inconsistent call. Officials must have a slow flag and see the whole play. What is foul! What is not a foul!

Offensive holding involves grabbing, encircling, twisting or pulling defenders to impede them in their effort to get at a runner or the quarterback. Defenders may push or pull offensive players if they are making a legitimate effort to get at the runner.

When the NFHS changed the rules several years ago to let offensive players use their hands more liberally in blocking the result was a lot contact at first look appears to be holding.

Officials must take into account several factors in deciding whether to throw a flag for holding:

1. Ask whether an act is potentially a foul
2. Ask whether it meets the rulebook criteria for that holding foul
3. Then if it is a foul ask whether it created an unfair advantage for the offender

It is far better to have a late flag for a holding call than for an official to call a “phantom foul.” Coaches, players and observers are far more willing to accept a foul that is mistakenly not called than they are a non-foul that is called.

Point of Attack. The first requirement for holding to be called is that it occurred at the point of attack—that is, fairly close proximity to where the runner is trying to go. **It would be unwise to urge officials to never call holding if it does not occur at the point of attack.** But the point of attack is the general rule of thumb.

Holding in the offensive line or backfield should not be called once the pass leaves the passer’s hand, because at that point it is irrelevant to the outcome of the play. With umpire mechanics, after the pass is thrown the umpire need to pivot so they can help the wing and deep official with catch-or-trap over the middle. A catch or trap 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and in the middle of the field is one of the toughest calls in the game. An alert umpire who spins when the pass is thrown can save the crew by making the call himself or helping another official who has to try to make the call while looking through the receiver’s back.

When reporting a holding foul to the referee and then the coach, describe the foul that was called. Such as “Number 79 twisted the defender and took him to the ground at the point of attack.” **If you as an official cannot describe the offensive player’s act with an action verb, it most likely did not restrict the defender.**

The key to calling holding is whether there was restriction involved (grabbing, encircling, twisting or pulling defenders). See it, process it. If an official is too quick with his flag, did not see the whole play or took insufficient time to process what he saw, he may erroneously call a holding foul.

Instead of throwing a flag the instant that one perceives what seems to be a hold, an official must carefully process what has occurred. **Tell yourself “That’s A Hold”; “That’s A Hold”; “That’s A Hold”. If you can say “That’s A Hold” three times to yourself—you probably have a holding call.**