



REPORT OF THE  
NCAA DIVISIONS II AND III FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 26-27, 2026, ANNUAL MEETING

**ACTION ITEMS.**

**1. Legislative items.**

- None.

**2. Nonlegislative items.** The NCAA Division II and III Football Rules Committee approved the following rules change proposals for the 2026 season. The Football Rules Committee requests approval from the Division II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel of the following rules changes:

**a. Targeting Penalty (Rule 9-1-3 & 9-1-4 Penalty)**

1. Recommendation. Change the penalty structure of the targeting foul.

- This change will be an experimental rule for 2026.
- Targeting fouls that are upheld will include a disqualification for the current game, and the rule will eliminate the carryover disqualification for fouls in the second half.
- If a player receives a second Targeting foul within the same season, disqualification for the remainder of the game and the first half of the team's next scheduled game within that season.
- If a player receives a third or subsequent Targeting foul within the same season, disqualification for the remainder of the game and that player will receive an automatic one-game suspension in their team's next scheduled game of that season.
- If a player receives a second and/or subsequent upheld targeting fouls within the same season, the conference has the option to consult the national coordinator of football officials who would then facilitate a video review. Based on the review, if and only if the national coordinator concludes that it is clearly obvious the player should not have been disqualified on the first, second or any subsequent targeting foul, the suspension will be vacated. If the national coordinator supports the disqualification, the suspension for the next game will remain.

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. This continues the evolution of this important player safety rule. The committee believes the rule has had a profound positive impact on technique and removing the carryover aspect of second-half fouls is appropriate. Increasing the progressive penalty aspect is intended to underscore the continued importance of this rule.

4. Estimated budget impact. None.

5. Student-athlete impact. None.

**b. Numbering Exceptions – Scrimmage Kick Formation (Rule 7-1-4)**

1. Recommendation. Change requirements of a scrimmage kick formation.

- In a scrimmage kick formation at the snap (Rule 2-16-10) Team A may have fewer than five linemen numbered 50-79, subject to the following conditions:
- The snapper and two adjacent linemen on either side not numbered 50-79 who are lined up in (or touching) the tackle box are ineligible receivers by position and become exceptions to the numbering rule when the snapper takes his position.
- Any and all such numbering-exception players must be clearly on the line of scrimmage, and all backs must be clearly in the backfield. Otherwise, Team A commits a foul for illegal formation.

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. Current rules in this area have allowed for significant confusion and created difficulty in officiating these plays. This proposal clarifies responsibilities and alignments for all.

4. Estimated budget impact. None.

5. Student-athlete impact. None.

**c. Offensive Pass Interference - Penalty (Rule 7-3-8-b)**

1. Recommendation. The penalty for offensive pass interference is being adjusted to 10-yards.

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. The committee believes the previous penalty (15 yards) was too stringent.

4. Estimated budget impact. None.

5. Student-athlete impact. None.

**d. Play Clock Following a Replay Review after the Two-Minute Timeout (Rule 3-2-4-c-12)**

1. Recommendation. Change the play clock procedure regarding replay stoppages.
  - The play clock is set to 25 seconds following an Instant replay review with the following exception:
  - After the Two-Minute Timeout in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quarters, when the Replay Official stops the game for review, the play clock will be frozen at that point and will be restarted following the review when the ball is made ready for play by the Referee's signal.
  - If the play clock displays less than 10 seconds when it is frozen, it will be reset to 10 seconds and started when the ball is made ready for play by the Referee's signal.
2. Effective date. Immediately.
3. Rationale. This change avoids teams from gaining an advantage when video replay is involved late in either half due to the status of the play clock.
4. Estimated budget impact. None.
5. Student-athlete impact. None.

**e. Modernize the Unsportsmanlike Conduct Rule (Rule 9-2-1-a)**

1. Recommendation. Update the rule to meet the enforcement of unsportsmanlike conduct penalties.
  - The Rules Committee is satisfied with the solid judgement that officials are demonstrating evaluating Unsportsmanlike Conduct.
  - In order to update the rule and stay in pace with the modern game, Rule 9-2-1 is being adjusted to ensure that officials will use good judgement in penalizing actions that interfere with orderly game administration, taunting actions that are directed at an opponent, and abusive, threatening, or celebratory actions that are demeaning to the game or an opponent.
  - The list of automatic unsportsmanlike conduct fouls will be minimized and will be consistently penalized including:
    - Any form of gun violence including brandishing a weapon.
    - A slashing of the throat or a nose wipe signal.
    - A player removing their helmet after the ball is dead (with exceptions for timeouts and equipment adjustments).

- Dead-ball contact fouls such as pushing, shoving, striking, etc. that occur clearly after the ball is dead and that are not part of the game action.
- After the ball is dead, using forcible contact to push or pull an opponent off the pile.

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. The committee believes the sport is in a positive place overall with unsportsmanlike conduct and this adjusts the rules to meet enforcement on the field.

4. Estimated budget impact. None.

5. Student-athlete impact. None.

**f. Game Stop – Additional Coach Replay Challenge (Rule 12-5-1-b)**

1. Recommendation. Provide the coach with an additional replay challenge.

- A head coach initiates a challenge by taking a team timeout before the ball is next legally put into play and informing the referee that they are challenging the ruling of the previous play.
- The head coach has two replay challenges per game. If a coach wins at least one of their first two challenges, they are awarded a third challenge. A challenge can only be made if the team has a timeout remaining and available.

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. The committee believes including an additional replay challenge is appropriate and in the cases a challenge is successful, teams should be rewarded.

4. Estimated budget impact. None.

5. Student-athlete impact. None.

**g. Fair Catch Kick (Rule 6-5-1-e)**

1. Recommendation. Add a fair catch kick rule.

- Following a fair catch, the ball shall be put in play by a snap or a Fair Catch Kick by the receiving team at the spot of the catch.
- To trigger the Fair Catch Kick, a fair catch must be completed on an opponent's scrimmage kick or free kick.

- The receiving team may choose to attempt a Fair Catch Kick from the spot of the fair catch or the succeeding spot after penalties.
- If the fair catch occurs as time expires in a half, the team is allowed to make the Fair Catch Kick as an untimed down.
- The defense must remain at least 10-yards behind the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.
- The kick must be a field goal place kick with a holder (no tee) or a drop kick, and if the kick passes over the crossbar and through the uprights, a field goal is scored and 3 points are awarded.
- If the Fair Catch Kick is unsuccessful, all rules pertaining to scrimmage kicks and the Next Play provisions of an unsuccessful field goal apply.

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. This rule, used successfully in most other levels of football, provides additional strategy in the kicking game, particularly at the end of a half or game.

4. Estimated budget impact. None.

5. Student-athlete impact. None.

**a. Technology – Division II coach-to-player communications (Rule 1-4-11-b Exception).**

1. Recommendation. Implement the existing coach-to-player communication rules as permissive in Division II.
  - Only one (1) player may be on the field per team at a time with radio receiving capability and the player must be identified by an unbranded green dot on the back midline of the helmet.
  - Coach-to-player communications will be shut off when the play clock reaches 15 seconds or at the snap, whichever comes first, and will remain off throughout the down. When the play clock is reset to 25/40, the communications will be restored. If more than one green dot helmet per team is detected on the field by the game officials, the result is a live ball 5-yard equipment violation penalty, and this penalty initiates a conference review.
  - On free kick plays, the coach-to-player communications will not be in effect. There is no limitation to the number of green dot helmets for either team during free kick plays.
  - A conference may develop a policy to provide guidance in handling situations dealing with communications failure (See Appendix I). (Coach-to-player communications will be permissive for Divisions II and III for the 2026 season).

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. As communicated previously, this officially proposes the permissive use of coach-to-player technology for the 2025 season in Division II competition.
4. Estimated budget impact. Varies depending on type of equipment used.
5. Student-athlete impact. None.

### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.**

1. **Welcome and announcements.** Matt Moore, interim chair of the Divisions II and III Football Rules Committee, welcomed the committee and invited guests and thanked them for their time.
2. **Review schedule, agenda and subcommittee operations.** The rules subcommittee reviewed the meeting schedule, agenda and operations manual, which included the NCAA conflict of interest policy, guidance for committee members regarding meeting reports, notes and email, voting procedures, the federated rules process for Division I, Division II and Division III, principles for rules writing, and experimental playing rules guidelines.
3. **Election of Chair.** Matt Moore, University of Northwestern-St. Paul, was selected to serve as chair for the 2026-27 cycle.
4. **National Coordinator of Officials Report.** Steve Shaw, national coordinator of officials, shared broad statistics and trends in officiating. Mr. Shaw also gave an overview of the rules survey results that were collected in the two weeks leading up to the annual meeting.
5. **Review 2026 rules proposals.** The rules subcommittee reviewed and considered several rules proposals as noted above in the Action Items section of this report
6. **Wearable Technology.** The committee discussed the potential use of wearable technology as an alternative to coach-to-player helmet technology. The committee did not support continuing to explore this as an option for Divisions II and III college football.
7. **Future Meetings.** The committee planned to reconvene after the membership comment period is completed and will resume its regular cadence of meetings after the rules cycle is complete.
8. **Adjournment.** The subcommittee adjourned at 5:30 p.m. Eastern time on February 26, 2026.

*Committee Chair:* Matthew Moore, University of Northwestern-St. Paul  
*Staff Liaison(s):* Ty Halpin, Championships and Alliances, Playing Rules and Officiating

<b>NCAA Divisions II and III Football Rules Committee February 26-27, 2026, Annual Meeting</b>
<b>Attendees:</b>
Doug Geiser, Ashland University.
Jason Lerner, Westminster College.
Jonathan Drach, Union College.
Matthew Scott, Pennsylvania Western University.
Michael Salinas, Texas A&M University – Kingsville.
Matthew Moore, University of Northwestern-St. Paul.
Steve Shaw, NCAA National Coordinator of Officials and Secretary-Rules Editor.
Eddie Weatherington, Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.
<b>Guests in Attendance:</b>
Dean Blandino, College Football Officiating, LLC.
Chad Eisele, NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel.
Matt Young, Coordinator of Division II Football Officials.
Jim Corpora, Coordinator of Division III Football Officials.
<b>NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:</b>
Ty Halpin.
<b>Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:</b>
Paden Alie, Leilani Hubbard, Greg Johnson, Connor Lancashire.