



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA DIVISION I FOOTBALL RULES SUBCOMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 24-25, 2026, ANNUAL MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items. The NCAA Division I Football Subcommittee approved the following rules change proposals for the 2026 season. Division I Football Rules Subcommittee requests approval from the FBS and FCS Oversight Committees:

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. Players Uniform and Enforcement (Rule 1-4-4-h & 1-4-8)

1. Recommendation. Change player uniform requirements.

- 1-4-4-h

- Leg Coverings. Game socks and/or leg coverings must cover the entire area from the top of the shoe to the bottom of the pants (no skin gap).
- All players must wear the same covering style and color (either socks and/or leg coverings) in any particular game.
- (Exceptions: Unaltered knee braces, tape or a bandage on the lower leg to protect or prevent an injury, and barefoot kickers).
- These game socks and/or leg coverings requirements will be in effect for the 2026 season for all DI Teams.

- 1-4-8

- If an official discovers illegal equipment, or if a player is not wearing mandatory equipment, the player must leave the game for at least one down and is not allowed to return until the equipment is made legal.
- For the 1st occurrence when the official stops the game for an equipment issue, the player(s) must leave the game, the head coach will receive a warning, and the Referee will make an announcement [S23].
- For the 2nd occurrence when the official stops the game for an equipment issue, the player must leave the game, the team will be penalized 5-yards, and the Referee will make an announcement [S23].
- For the 3rd and subsequent occurrences when the official stops the game for an equipment issue, the player must leave the game, the team will be penalized 15-yards, and the Referee will make an announcement [S23].
- The player may be allowed to return without missing a down if the team takes or is charged a team timeout, and the equipment is made legal.
- If equipment becomes illegal through play, the player is not required to leave the game for one down, but the player may not participate until the equipment is made legal.

2. Effective date. Immediately.

3. Rationale. The college football community has a responsibility to have uniform rules that are consistent with the sport. This is a shared responsibility, and the committee is

attempting to create a clear rule with several options for compliance, mirroring the National Football League rules.

4. Estimated budget impact. Some budget impact to acquire more leg coverings.
5. Student-athlete impact. None.

c. 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.

d. 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.
- e. **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 2nd or 4th 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.
- f. **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.

g. 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.

h. 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.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and announcements.** AJ Edds, chair of the Division I Football Rules Subcommittee, welcomed the subcommittee 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. **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 2 weeks leading up to the Annual Meeting.
4. **Director of Instant Replay Report.** Dean Blandino, director of instant replay, recapped statistics about the use of instant replay from the past season. The committee spent some time comparing different approaches to instant replay, including a streamlined approach (e.g., automatic reviews for scoring plays, turnovers, etc. but other items would be subject to a team challenge.). The

committee plans to continue reviewing options for instant replay in conjunction with the conference coordinators of officials and administrators.

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. **Other business.** The other business included a review of recent bylaws adopted by the Division I Cabinet to modify legislation regarding the use of commercial or nonprofit trademarks or logos on student-athlete uniforms, apparel and equipment; and use of commercial or nonprofit logos on playing surfaces. The subcommittee discussed restricting placement of the commercial logos as well as permitting additional locations of non-commercial logos (e.g. captain's patch, manufacturers logo, etc.).
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 5:25 p.m. Eastern time on February 25, 2026.

Committee Chair: AJ Edds, Big Ten Conference
Staff Liaison(s): Ty Halpin, Championships and Alliances, Playing Rules and Officiating

NCAA Division I Football Rules Subcommittee February 24-25, 2026, Annual Meeting
Attendees:
AJ Edds, Big 10 Conference.
Steve Shaw, NCAA National Coordinator of Officials and Secretary-Rules Editor.
Alberto Riveron, Atlantic Coast Conference.
Mike Defee, Mountain West Conference.
Eli Drinkwitz, University of Missouri.
Eric George, Rice University.
Merton Hanks, Pac 12 Conference
Kia'i Keone, University of Northern Colorado
Brian Gordon, Coastal Athletic Association.
Blaine McCorkle, Northwestern State University.
Brent Vigen, Montana State University.
Oliver "Buddy" Pough, South Carolina State University.
Terry Mohajir, University of Central Florida.
Matthew Dennis, Wake Forrest University.
Guests in Attendance:
Dean Blandino, Director of Instant Replay.
Scott Draper, Big 12 Conference.
Bob Nielsen, American Football Coaches Association.
David Cutcliffe, Southeastern Conference.
Michael Strickland, Atlantic Coast Conference.
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:
Ty Halpin.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Paden Alie, Leilani Hubbard, Greg Johnson, Connor Lancashire, Autumn Monaghan.