



**REPORT OF THE  
NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE  
MARCH 2-4, 2022, ANNUAL MEETING**

KEY ITEMS.

**Communication and collaboration.** The NCAA Football Rules Committee continued to communicate with internal committees (e.g., NCAA Division I Football Competition Committee) and other organizations, like the National Football League and National Federation of State High School Associations in reviewing and developing its rules proposals. This collaboration continues to be successful and helpful to the Football Rules Committee.

ACTION ITEMS.

**1. Legislative items.**

- **None.**

**2. Nonlegislative items.** The Football Rules Committee approved the following rules change proposals for the 2022 season. The Football Rules Committee requests approval from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel for the following items:

**a. Blocking Below the Waist (Rule 9-1-6-a and -b).**

(1) Recommendation. Change this rule to read: "a. Team A prior to a change of team possession:

**(a) Linemen with initial position completely inside the tackle box may legally block below the waist inside the tackle box on their initial line charge. A block initiated 1-yard beyond the neutral zone is considered within the tackle box.**

**After the initial line charge, these linemen may block below the waist within the tackle box until the ball leaves the tackle box only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front.**

**(b) Stationary Backs lined up within the tackle box may block below the waist within the tackle box until the ball leaves the tackle box only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front.**

"Directed from the front" is defined as within the clock face region between "10 o'clock and 2 o'clock" forward of the area of concentration of the player being blocked.

**(c) All other Team A players are not allowed to block below the waist.**

- **Team B prior to a change of team possession:**

- o **Players aligned in a stationary position within 1-yard of the line of scrimmage within the tackle box may legally block below the waist in the tackle box on their initial line charge.**
  - o **All other Team B players are not allowed to block below the waist except against a ball carrier."**
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. This rule change is to enhance player safety and to simplify the rules governing blocking below the waist. The low blocking rules currently have several exceptions and caveats that make it difficult to coach, use in play and to officiate. Blocks below the waist in the open field have not been allowed on kicks and change of possession plays for many years for player safety. The previous change in 2019 that limited blocking below the waist on scrimmage plays beyond 5 yards from the neutral zone.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.
- b. Targeting (Rules 9-1-3 & 9-1-4 – PENALTY).**

- (1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to the targeting penalty, in games where instant replay is used, to allow an appeal to impact the carryover for the player's next game:

"If a player is disqualified in the second half, 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, the conference may vacate the suspension. If the national coordinator supports the disqualification, the suspension for the next game will remain."

- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. The Football Rules Committee is proposing this rule to impact those rare instances when a targeting foul is incorrectly applied and not corrected using instant replay during the game. The intent is to further support the proper enforcement of this important rule, not to diminish its importance. Targeting is a player safety rule and is in place to change player behavior in terms of the use of the helmet to target opponents and for protection of defenseless players. This change to the penalty component is to ensure accuracy when there is a carryover disqualification in games involving instant replay.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. This change is intended to enhance the appropriate application of the targeting rule, which directly impacts the fairness of the rule to a student-athlete that was incorrectly penalized.

**c. Sliding Ball Carrier (Rule 4-1-3-r).**

(1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to this rule to read:

"ARTICLE 3. A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound their whistle or declare it dead:

r. When a ball carrier obviously begins a feet-first slide. (A.R. 4-1-3-III) **Any time a ball carrier simulates, or fakes a feet-first slide, the ball should be declared dead by the on-field officials at that point.**"

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. The purpose of providing the ball carrier the ability to declare themselves down is for player protection. In return for this protection, the ball is declared dead at the spot the player begins the slide. This removes the need for contact by the defense. Any attempt to simulate a slide that causes the defense to let up should not be rewarded, particularly since safety is central to this rule. A ball carrier who slides feet first is protected as a defenseless player and is considered down as soon as any part of their backside is lowered. The rule is in place to protect players who give themselves up and is designed to minimize contact.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. This adjustment removes a potential use of a rule intended to protect the ball carrier to gain an advantage. The continued player protection element is central to this rule.

**d. Illegal Touching (Rule 7-3-11 - PENALTY).**

(1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to this rule to read:

"ARTICLE 11. No originally ineligible player while inbounds may intentionally touch a legal forward pass until it has touched an opponent or an official (A.R. 5-2-3-I and A.R. 7-3-11-I-II).

**PENALTY—Five yards from the previous spot and loss of down [S16 and S9]."**

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. While rare, the Football Rules Committee believes scenarios where an ineligible receiver catches or intentionally touches a pass should include a loss of down penalty. The previous penalty for this rule was five yards without the loss of down.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

**e. Injury Timeout – Feigning Injury (Rule 3-3-5-b).**

(1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to this rule to read:

"b. Feigning an injury for any reason is unethical. An injured player must be given full protection under the rules, but feigning an injury is dishonest, unsportsmanlike and contrary to the spirit of the rules. For questionable game action, an Institution or Conference has the option to consult the national coordinator of football officials who would then facilitate a video review. After the review, the national coordinator will communicate any findings with the conference office for further action."

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To address teams that are awarded an injury timeout through deceptive actions, the Football Rules Committee proposed a process to report and investigate these situations. The Football Rules Committee believes conference office involvement in the process is an important next step. Several in-game options were considered, including requiring all injured players to remain out of the game until the end of the possession series, but the impact on players that are injured was a concern. The Football Rules Committee believes this is the appropriate next step to address this unethical behavior.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

**f. Unsportsmanlike Conduct Fouls – Unsportsmanlike Acts Penalty (Rule 9-2-1-a-1).**

(1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to this rule to read:

**"PENALTY—Unsportsmanlike conduct. Live-ball fouls by players: 15 yards [S27]. Live-ball fouls by non-players and all dead-ball fouls: 15 yards from succeeding**

spot [S7 and S27]. Automatic first down for live-ball and dead-ball fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders, if players or substitutes, shall be ejected [S47].

For Team A fouls during free or scrimmage kick plays: Enforcement may be at the previous spot or, if the scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone, the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (field-goal plays exempted) (Rules 6-1-8 and 6-3-13).

For Team B unsportsmanlike conduct fouls during a legal forward pass play (Rules 7-3-12 and 10-2-2-e): Enforcement is at the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of team possession during the down. If the pass is incomplete or intercepted, or if there is a change of team possession during the down, the penalty is enforced at the previous spot."

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. The change to the Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty brings the penalty enforcement in line with the enforcement for Personal Fouls on pass plays and kick plays. Namely, on successful pass plays, the unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may now be added to the end of the last run by the offense if there is no change of team possession during the down to ensure that the foul is penalized. Previously, if the pass were to gain more than 15 yards, a personal foul penalty by the defense during the pass would be added on, but an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty would have to be declined. This rule change aligns these two penalty enforcements.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

**g. Holding and Use of Arms (Defense) (Rule 9-3-4 [c-e] PENALTY).**

(1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to this rule to read:

~~"PENALTY [c-e]: 10 or 15 yards plus automatic first down [S42]."~~

**PENALTY [c-e]—10 yards plus automatic first down if the first down is not in conflict with other rules [S42]."**

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. When the defense is guilty of holding, the current rule adds an automatic first down only if during the play a pass crosses the neutral zone, and the defense

commits a holding foul against an eligible receiver and the foul is beyond the neutral zone before the ball is touched. This will simplify the enforcement of holding by the defense and the penalty will include an automatic first down.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

**h. Mandatory Equipment (Pants/Knee Pads/Socks) (Rule 1-4-4-d and -h).**

(1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to this rule to read:

"d. Knee Pads. Knee pads must be covered by pants. Furthermore, the pants and knee pads **are recommended to** cover the knees.

**h. Socks. Game socks and/or leg coverings must cover the entire area from the shoe to the bottom of the pants. Players are permitted to wear multiple layers of game socks and/or leg coverings, provided all players wear the same covering style and color 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).**

**Note: This mandatory equipment requirement will be in effect for the 2022 season for all Football Bowl Subdivision teams. Football Championship Subdivision teams must be in compliance no later than the start of the 2023 season and all Division II and Division III teams must comply no later than the start of the 2024 season]."**

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. This is an effort by the Football Rules Committee to reestablish a more uniform team appearance for NCAA football players. In recent years, the Football Rules Committee has made the pants covering the knees a point of emphasis, but sustained enforcement has been a challenge. This adjustment aligns the NCAA rule with the successful National Football League specifications and will make more consistent the expectations and enforcement for wearing mandatory equipment.

(4) Estimated budget impact. Depending on an institution's ordering cycle, there could be an impact; however, the committee is delaying mandatory implementation for Football Championship Subdivision and Division II and III institutions to allow time to plan for any additional cost.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

**i. Illegal Block or Contact – Fair Catch (Rule 6-5-4).**

(1) Recommendation. The Football Rules Committee is proposing an adjustment to this rule to read:

"ARTICLE 4. A player of Team B who has made a valid or invalid signal for a fair catch and does not touch the ball shall not block or foul an opponent during that down (A.R. 6-5-4-I and II).

**Penalty - Free kick: Receiving team's ball 10 yards from the spot of the foul [S40]. Scrimmage kick: 10 yards, postscrimmage kick enforcement [S40]. If a Personal Foul is committed in conjunction with this action, the penalty is 15 yards and flagrant offenders shall be ejected or disqualified."**

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. A receiver that makes a fair catch signal during a kick and subsequently blocks an opponent has committed a foul. This block is not considered a personal foul. Thus, the penalty will be reduced from 15-yards to 10-yards. If any personal foul is committed in conjunction with this blocking action, then the personal foul penalty enforcement will be followed.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Welcome and introductions.** The chair welcomed the Football Rules Committee and invited guests and reviewed the schedule for the meetings.
- 2. Review committee structure, process and timeline.** The Football Rules Committee reviewed the committee operations manual, which included the NCAA conflict of interest policy, as well as guidance for committee members regarding meeting reports, notes and email, voting procedures, principles for rules writing, and experimental playing rules guidelines. The Football Rules Committee noted that this is a year in which any rules changes may be considered.
- 3. Review of injury data.** The Football Rules Committee received a report from Avinash Chandran, Datalys Center, regarding the injury data collected in the most recent cycle. The Football Rules Committee also received an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the research and offered support to assist with data collection.

4. **College Football Officiating, LLC report.** Jon Steinbrecher, commissioner of the Mid-American Conference and chair of the College Football Officiating, LLC, provided a report. Jon Steinbrecher noted the CFO's continued emphasis on player safety and continued consideration of technologies that would assist in officiating the game.
5. **National Football League joint session.** The Football Rules Committee met with the National Football League's competition committee and staff to share ideas and information. The meeting continues to be a productive part of the rules process.
6. **Future meeting schedule.** The Football Rules Committee plans to review its meeting cadence moving forward. There is some interest in having any rules adjustments finalized before spring practice sessions; this will be a topic of discussion for the Football Rules Committee to review at a future meeting. A joint meeting with the Football Competition Committee continues to be critical.
7. **Committee chair.** The Football Rules Committee voted to request that the NCAA Division I Nominating Committee approve a term extension for chair David Shaw. With the COVID-19 disruptions and significant pressure on the sport, the Football Rules Committee believes an extension is appropriate.



Report of the Football Rules Committee

March 2-4, 2022, Annual Meeting

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*Committee Chair:* David Shaw, Stanford University.

*Staff Liaison(s):* Ty Halpin, Championships and Alliances, Playing Rules and Officiating.

<b>NCAA Football Rules Committee March 2-4, 2022, Annual Meeting</b>	
<b>Attendees:</b>	
Aaron Best, Eastern Washington University.	
Bill Carollo, Big Ten Conference.	
Stan Hodgins, Shenandoah University.	
Zac Selmon, University of Oklahoma.	
Steve Shaw, Secretary-Rules Editor.	
David Shaw, Stanford University, <i>chair</i> .	
Kirby Smart, University of Georgia.	
Rich Wanninger, Patriot League.	
John Wristen, Colorado State University, Pueblo.	
Doug Zipp, Ohio Wesleyan.	
Bill Zwaan, West Chester University (Pennsylvania).	
<b>Guests in Attendance:</b>	
Dean Blandino, CFO.	
Avinash Chandran, Datalys Center.	
Bob Colgate, National Federation of State High School Associations.	
Keith Gill, Sun Belt Conference, Playing Rules Oversight Panel.	
Jon Steinbrecher, Mid-American Conference.	
<b>NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:</b>	
y Halpin.	
<b>Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:</b>	
Amanda Conklin, LaGwyn Durden, Chris Johnson, Greg Johnson, John Parsons and Kris Richardson.	