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NCAA Rule Changes 2004

It's that happy time of the year when the new rule book is published. There are 9 major rule changes and 53 editorial changes. This year there are changes to a couple of personal foul rules, further strengthening of the illegal substitution rules, a couple of changes to Rule 1, and the head coach can now call a timeout. Below are all of the major rule changes and the editorial changes for the coming season, together with some analysis of their implications. They appear here in the same order as in the rulebook, with the major changes first, followed by the editorial changes and the Approved Rulings. The wording is exactly as it appears in the book. As always, I am grateful to Dick Honig for checking over my work and adding a few comments of his own. My thanks also to Tony Martin of the Victoria Gridiron Officials Association for proof-reading the draft.

One note to readers of *Referee* Magazine. In the June 2000 issue they reported that an editorial change had been made to Rule 10-2-2-e Exception 3a that added a successful field goal to the list of situations in which post-scrimmage kick enforcement did not apply. There have been no changes made to that rule in the printed rulebook.

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Major Changes

Rule 1-4-5-m

Gloves or hand pads that are not gray in color or not in conformance with Rule 1-4-5-b. A glove is a fitted covering for a hand having separate sections for each finger and thumb, without any additional material that connects any of the fingers and/or thumb, and that completely covers each finger and thumb.

The new element to this rule is the banning of webbing between the fingers, which obviously helps with catching the ball. There's no major impact on us in New Zealand, but we should proceed as for other illegal equipment if we detect any.

Rule 1-4-9-c Exception 3

A camera, with no audio component, may be attached to cables that extend over the team area.

This change allows cameras over the team area, but not over the field of play yet.

Rule 3-3-4

When timeouts are not exhausted, an official shall allow a charged team timeout when requested by any player or head coach when the ball is dead (A.R. 3-3-4-I and II).

The only change to this rule is that head coaches may now request a timeout. This removes one of the obstacles that we faced with the lack of understanding that coaches had with the old rule. However, it now presents a number of new issues. Wing and deep officials must ensure that it is the head coach that is making the call, and not another participant. The head coach must not leave the team area to make the call, which can make identifying the caller difficult when play is at one end of the field. If he is not on the sideline at all (in the press box for example) he may not deputise this privilege. Most importantly, though, the officials have a primary duty to observe the play and any dead-ball action. They must not ignore what is happening in front of them on the field in order to grant a timeout request from an eager coach.

Rule 3-5-2-e

While in the process of substitution or simulated substitution, Team A is prohibited from rushing quickly to the line of scrimmage with the obvious attempt of creating a defensive disadvantage. If the ball has been declared ready for play, the game officials will not permit the ball to be snapped until Team B has placed substitutes in position and replaced players have left the field of play. Team B must react promptly with its substitutes.

PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Delay of game on Team B for not completing its substitutions promptly, or delay of game on Team A for causing the 25-second clock to expire. Five yards from the previous spot [S7 and S21]. The referee will then notify the head coach that any further use of this tactic will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul.

PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. An official will sound his whistle immediately. 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S27].

This rule, introduced two years ago and reinforced last year, has been strengthened again with some major rewording. Previously, Team A was prohibited from rushing quickly to the line of scrimmage and snapping the ball with the obvious attempt to create a defensive disadvantage. Now, they no longer have to actually snap the ball to fall foul of the rule. The 2003 rule did not afford the defensive team with any protection when a team rushed quickly to the line of scrimmage, forcing them to take a timeout to protect their interests because they could not be certain a foul would be called until the ball was snapped, rendering the rule a little toothless. Remember that this only applies if Team A are substituting or simulating substitution. Effectively the rule itself has not changed much, but the rule now prescribes some major mechanical changes.

Dick advises that the CCA Supervisors will ask the officials to handle the situation in the following manner:

- a) When possible the Umpire will step in over the football and the Referee will hold the snap until he is satisfied that the defense has had an opportunity to make a substitution. If this hold results in Team A being called for a delay of game penalty, so be it. If a delay penalty is called a warning will also be issued at this time. After that warning, any further instances results in a 15-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct Foul.
- b) When a) is not possible, the Referee will step in and shut down the play and warn the offending team. There is no penalty for this, but there will be only one warning per game: subsequent acts of this nature will result in a 15-yard USC.
- c) When there is any question – issue the warning.
- d) He suggests that if a team is making substitutions that force you to have the Umpire step in more than a couple of times, then shut the play down and warn that team, with subsequent stoppages resulting in fouls.

This is not a return to the old mechanic that had the Umpire standing over the ball until it was readied. Under normal circumstances, the Umpire will still be moving off the ball prior to the ready. If Team A have substituted and is trying to rush the snap, the Umpire should move quickly to stand over the ball

and prevent Team A from snapping it. If Team B make no attempt to substitute, then the Umpire should back off and allow Team A to proceed. However, if Team B do substitute, then he must stay over the ball until Team B has its substitutes actually in position. Dick notes that at no time when the offense runs a substitute directly to the LOS is it a five yard foul. It is only a delay foul if you hold a team from snapping and that causes a delay.

Referee magazine makes the note that if Team A rushes to the line before the ready, then the Referee should hold off readying the ball until Team B has completed their substitution. However, if the play clock is already running and it expires while Team B is attempting to substitute, then Team A is initially penalised for delaying the game and warned. However, if Team B is abusing the process by not acting promptly and substituting in a timely manner, then it is Team B that is penalised for delaying the game.

These situations generally present themselves after a change of possession or following a timeout. *RefMag* notes and Dick confirms that if Team A is in a ‘hurry-up’ or ‘no-huddle’ offense, then the rule does not apply as it will generally not be substituting.

The new procedure places a heavier burden on the officials, who must now detect a potential infraction earlier and react immediately. Officials must recognise that Team A is in position to the snap the ball quickly and is deliberately trying to get an advantage.

The irony is that in an attempt to speed up the game (cheating as they go), Team A could now have the opposite effect of actually slowing it down.

Rule 6-1-2-a Penalty and 10-2-2-e Exception 5

PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot, five yards from the spot where the dead ball belongs to Team B after Team B’s run, or the spot where the ball is placed after a touchback [S19].

Encroachment by Team A on a free kick may be enforced from the previous spot or from the spot where the dead ball belongs to Team B after Team B’s run (Rule 6-1-2-a).

NB: This was originally announced as a change to 6-1-2-b (and this has been carried across into *RefMag* and notes from Dick and Rom Gilbert). However, one of this year’s editorial changes is to swap the order of 6-1-2-a and b.

This adds the option, on some free kicks, for the receiving team to add five yards to the end of the run rather than having the ball kicked again after a 5-yard penalty. However, Team B must have possessed and remain in possession of the ball at the end of the play. If the play results in a touchback, then the 20-yard line is the enforcement spot. If the kick goes out of bounds untouched, then the new penalty may not be added to the KOOB (Kick Out Of Bounds) enforcement.

Dick has provided some examples. In all cases, Team A have encroached.

1. Receivers return the kick to the B25 – option to take the ball at B30 or re-kick from the A30
2. The kick is a touchback – option to take the ball at the B25 or re-kick from the A30
3. The kick goes O/B at the B25 – option to take ball at the B35 or re-kick from the A30
4. The receivers muff the kick at the B10 and it goes O/B at the B15 – option to take the ball at the B15 or re-kick from the A30
5. A short kick is Fair Caught at the B40 – option to take the ball at the B45 or re-kick from the A30
6. The Receivers recover a attempted on-side kick at the A45 – option to take the ball at the A40 or re-kick from the A30
7. Team A commits a first touch at the A42 and they recover the ball at the A49 – option is to re-kick from the A30

8. The receivers catch the ball at the 10 – run to the B30, fumble, but recover the ball at the B40 – option to take the ball at B45 or re-kick from the A30

Rule 7-3-8-c-4

When a Team A potential kicker, from scrimmage kick formation, simulates a scrimmage kick by throwing the ball high and deep, and contact by a Team B player occurs.

This change deletes the possibility of pass interference being called when a kicker simulates a scrimmage kick by throwing the ball in the same trajectory that a kicked ball would have made. Whilst we have not seen this tactic in New Zealand, some teams in the States have been using this deceptive technique in order to collect a DPI call. The defender, who is marking one of Team A's 'fly men', assumes that the ball has been kicked and continues to block his opponent's path. If the pass was catchable and B's contact occurred during its flight you have all the ingredients needed for DPI. The requirement the defensive player to know the status of the ball (kick v pass) placed him at a disadvantage because he would have to watch the kicker rather than the player he is marking.

No-calling the foul or, more likely, picking up the flag will be a collaborative effort between covering official and Referee. The covering official will still need to judge the DPI and throw the flag because the rule does not make any changes to genuine attempts to gain yardage by passing the ball. The Referee will need to make a call as to whether the pass simulated the kick instead. The flag would then be picked up 'by rule'. However, the Rules Committee (and most commentators) expect that the practice will stop now that it is in the rule book.

Remember that this change only affects the concept of DPI. It does not legitimise holding, blocking in the back or a personal foul that may still occur and that could have been called as DPI on a pass play.

Rule 9-1-2-o

No defensive player shall charge into a passer or throw him to the ground when it is obvious the ball has been thrown. This is roughing the passer, and the penalty is added to the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of team possession during the down (**Exception:** A defensive player who is blocked by a Team A player[s] with a force so that he has no opportunity to avoid contact with the passer. However, this does not relieve the defensive player of responsibility for personal fouls as described in Rule 9-1-2-a.) (A.R. 2-30-4-I and II; A.R. 9-1-2-XIV, XXVII and XXVIII; and A.R. 10-2-2-XXXIII, XXXV and XXXVI).

This is one of two major changes to player safety-related rules this year. The change here is the addition of the exception. Whilst this is a change to the rule book, Dick says that this effectively only clarifies what officials in the States have always called. A defensive player that has been blocked in such a manner that he is 'out of control' is absolved of normal contact with the QB. It does not matter if the contact with the passer was as the result of a legal or illegal block (which is a factor for the similar rule for running into or roughing the kicker). If the contact with the passer would otherwise qualify for a personal foul (such as spearing or unnecessary roughness), then it would still be called, but only as a personal foul and not as roughing (remember the difference in enforcement: previous spot versus end of the run). However, Dick notes that if the contact is above the shoulders, no matter what has happened to the rusher, it is a roughing foul.

NB: There is effectively a major change to this rule with the introduction of two new ARs. See below for further information.

Rule 9-1-2-q

No defensive player, in an attempt to gain an advantage, may step, jump or stand on an opponent. No defensive player who runs forward from beyond the neutral zone and leaps in an obvious attempt to block a field goal or try may land on an opponent.

The change here is the addition of the second sentence, which brings in a variation of the NFL's leaping rule. A Team B player who runs towards that line of scrimmage, leaps into the air and then lands on an opponent will be penalised for 15 yards (with the addition of the automatic first down if it's not a try). This is quite a severe penalty when you think about it, but the NCAA Rules Committee believed that a player who ran forward and leaped would generate a significant amount of force, which could result in significant injury. However, any player that starts on or within a yard of the line of scrimmage or who is stationary when he leaps is not penalised. John Adams has also clarified that the Team B player must initiate the contact for it to be a foul.

Rom Gilbert, one of the top Referees in the SEC, notes that this places some added pressure on the Umpire and, in larger crews, the Side Judge. The two officials must take a deeper position at the snap and be aware of the potential leapers prior to the snap. First coverage must be given to the action at the line of scrimmage before paying attention to the action of these leapers.

Rule 11-2-1-d

The referee shall administer penalties, being sure that both captains understand the procedure and outcome. He will check the Umpire's penalty enforcement. The referee, if equipped with a microphone, shall announce the number of the player committing the foul.

The change here is that the Referee must now announce the number of the fouling player. However, those of us who are not in the habit of doing this can breathe a sigh of relief – it only applies if the Referee is equipped with a microphone. Despite this, I still firmly believe that it is a good habit to get into. A few years ago, the Northern Conference officials were poor at being able to provide participants with the number of the offending player. When we introduced the requirement that the Referee announce the number, the incidences of this happening dropped off significantly, as the Referee was always asking the covering official for the offending player's number. Now, the participants expect it and are rightly disappointed when we cannot supply the number.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
1-2-7-a	Any other line-to-gain indicator that accurately measures the line to gain is permitted when teams mutually agree. Before the game, the linesman shall test and approve all line-to-gain indicators for accuracy and security.	Any other line-to-gain indicator that accurately measures the line to gain is permitted outside the sideline opposite the press box when teams mutually agree. Before the game, the linesman shall test and approve all line-to-gain indicators for accuracy and security.	This closes the perceived loophole that if an alternative device was used, it could be utilised somewhere other than the normal position of the chains.
1-2-7-b	The down indicator shall be mounted on a rod not less than 5 feet high.	The down indicator shall be mounted on a rod not less than 5 feet high operating approximately six feet outside the sideline opposite the press box.	This reinforces that the box should also be six feet back, although this is so specified a couple of inches above in the preamble.
1-2-9 Title	The Field	Field Areas	
1-2-9-a Penalty	PENALTY—Penalize under Rule 9-2-3-c, referee’s discretion [S27].	PENALTY— Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot [S27].	The penalty for improving or degrading the playing surface to gain an advantage has now been specified as 5 yards instead of at the Referee’s discretion, but the signal remains that for USC.
1-3-1-i	The ball may not be altered. This includes the use of any ball-drying substance. Ball-drying devices are not permitted near the sidelines or in the team area.	The ball may not be altered. This includes the use of any ball-drying substance. Mechanical ball-drying devices are not permitted near the sidelines or in the team area.	This fixes one of the more entertaining anomalies. It is now clear that mechanical devices are banned, as opposed to non-mechanical drying devices – such as towels...

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
1-4-5-p Exceptions	Uniform attachments [<i>Exceptions:</i> (1) One white towel without markings worn by one interior offensive lineman and a 4-inch-by-12-inch white towel without markings worn on the front belt of one offensive backfield player; (2) One 4-inch-by-12-inch white towel without markings worn on the front belt of a maximum of two defensive players; and (3) Hand warmers worn during inclement weather].	Uniform attachments [<i>Exceptions:</i> (1) On scrimmage plays , one white moisture-absorbing towel without markings may be worn by one interior offensive lineman, one offensive backfield player and a maximum of two defensive players. The towels of the offensive backfield and defensive players must be 4-inches by 12-inches and must be worn on the front or side belt . There are no restrictions on the size or location of the towel worn by the offensive lineman; (2) On free kicks, one white moisture absorbing towel without markings may be worn by a maximum of two Team A and two Team B players. The towels worn on free kicks must be 4-inches by 12-inches and must be worn on the front or side belt; and (3) Hand warmers worn during inclement weather].	Further enhancements to my favourite rule – the Towel Rule. Not enforced in NZ. However, this is a major change. Two players may now wear towels, but they must be functional and not just fashion accessories.
1-4-9-a 1-4-9-b		<i>1-4-9-a and 1-4-9-b paragraphs rearranged. No change to content of rules.</i>	
2-25-9 Exception 2	On an unsuccessful field goal attempt that has crossed the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone and declared dead beyond the neutral zone, the postscrimmage kick spot is the previous spot. If the previous spot is between Team B's 20-yard line and the goal line, and the unsuccessful field goal attempt that has crossed the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B and is declared dead beyond the neutral zone, the spot where the kick ends is the 20-yard line (A.R. 10-2-2-XXV).	On an unsuccessful field goal attempt that has crossed the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone and declared dead beyond the neutral zone, the postscrimmage kick spot is the previous spot. If the previous spot is between Team B's 20-yard line and the goal line, and the unsuccessful field goal attempt that has crossed the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone , and is declared dead beyond the neutral zone, the spot where the kick ends is the 20-yard line (A.R. 10-2-2-XXV).	Tidies up the wording and makes both halves of the rule consistent.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
3-1-3-h	<p>Timeouts: Each team shall be allowed one timeout for each extra period. Timeouts not used during the regulation periods may not be carried over into the extra period(s). Unused extra-period timeouts may not be carried over to other extra periods. Timeouts between periods shall be charged to the succeeding period.</p> <p>Radio and television timeouts are not permitted during any extra period, and charged team timeouts may not be extended for radio and television purposes. The extra period(s) begins when the ball is first snapped.</p>	<p>Timeouts: Each team shall be allowed one timeout for each extra period. Timeouts not used during the regulation periods may not be carried over into the extra period(s). Unused extra-period timeouts may not be carried over to other extra periods. Timeouts between periods shall be charged to the succeeding period.</p> <p>Radio and television timeouts are permitted only between extra periods (first and second, second and third, etc.).</p> <p>Charged team timeouts may not be extended for radio and television purposes. The extra period(s) begins when the ball is first snapped.</p>	Oh, to have radio or television so that we could have a radio or TV timeout.
3-2-4-a	Playing time shall be kept with a game clock that may be either a stop watch operated by the line judge, back judge or field judge or a game clock operated by an assistant under the direction of the appropriate judge. The type of game clock shall be determined by the game management.	Playing time shall be kept with a game clock that may be either a stop watch operated by the line judge, back judge, field judge or side judge , or a game clock operated by an assistant under the direction of the appropriate judge. The type of game clock shall be determined by the game management.	This ties in with the new mechanic (see below) that the Side Judge now takes the game clock and the Back Judge takes the play clock on a 7-man crew.
3-3-4-d	<i>See 3-3-4-e below</i>	A head coach who is in, or in the vicinity of, his team area or coaching box may request a timeout between the time the ball is declared dead and the next snap.	Expansion of the preamble contained in the main part of the rule.
3-3-4-e	A player or incoming substitute may request a head coach's conference with the referee if the coach believes a rule has been enforced improperly. If the rule enforcement is not changed, the coach's team will be charged a timeout, or a delay penalty if all timeouts have been used...	A player, incoming substitute or head coach may request a head coach's conference with the referee, if the coach believes a rule has been enforced improperly. If the rule enforcement is not changed, the coach's team will be charged a timeout, or a delay penalty if all timeouts have been used...	Renumbering of the rule and addition of the head coach as a valid timeout-caller.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
3-3-6	For noncompliance with Rules 1-4-4, 1-4-5 or 9-2-2-d during a down, or noncompliance with Rules 1-4-5-r, 1-4-6-b, 3-3-3-f-4-(g) or 3-3-4-d while the ball is dead, a timeout shall be charged to a team at the succeeding spot (Rule 3-4-2-b).	For noncompliance with Rules 1-4-4, 1-4-5 or 9-2-2-d during a down, or noncompliance with Rules 1-4-5-r, 1-4-6-b, 3-3-3-f-4-(g) or 3-3-4-e while the ball is dead, a timeout shall be charged to a team at the succeeding spot (Rule 3-4-2-b).	Corresponds with the renumbering above.
3-3-7-a	A charged team timeout requested by any player shall not exceed one minute, 30 seconds (<i>Exception:</i> Rule 3-3-4-d-3). Any charged team timeout shall be 30 seconds in duration upon a visual signal of the hands touching the shoulders, made by the head coach of the team requesting the timeout. The signal must be made promptly after the timeout is requested. Other timeouts shall be no longer than the referee deems necessary to fulfill the purpose for which they are declared, including a radio or TV timeout, but any timeout may be extended by the referee for the benefit of an injured player (Refer to Appendix A [page FR-138] for the guidelines for game officials to use during a serious on-field player injury).	A charged team timeout requested by any player or head coach shall not exceed one minute, 30 seconds (<i>Exception:</i> Rule 3-3-4-e-3). Any charged team timeout shall be 30 seconds in duration upon a visual signal of the hands touching the shoulders, made by the head coach of the team requesting the timeout. The signal must be made promptly after the timeout is requested. Other timeouts shall be no longer than the referee deems necessary to fulfill the purpose for which they are declared, including a radio or TV timeout, but any timeout may be extended by the referee for the benefit of an injured player (Refer to Appendix A [page FR-140] for the guidelines for game officials to use during a serious on-field player injury).	More renumbering and head-coach-inserting. Appears in a number of further occurrences.
3-4-2-b-2	When a team has expended its three timeouts and commits a Rule 1-4-4, 1-4-5, 1-4-6-b, 3-3-3-f-4-(g), 3-3-4-d or 9-2-2-d infraction.	When a team has expended its three timeouts and commits a Rule 1-4-4, 1-4-5, 1-4-6-b, 3-3-3-f-4-(g), 3-3-4-e or 9-2-2-d infraction.	

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
3-5-2-e Penalty	PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. An official will sound his whistle immediately. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S22]. The referee will then notify the head coach that any further use of this tactic will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.	PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Delay of game on Team B for not completing its substitutions promptly, or delay of game on Team A for causing the 25-second clock to expire. Five yards from the previous spot [S7 and S21]. The referee will then notify the head coach that any further use of this tactic will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul .	Change to correspond with the new substitution delays. Penalty is now a delay of game, not a substitution infraction, hence the change of signal from S22 to S21. The last change corresponds with the principle that actions result in a foul, and it is that foul that may result in a penalty.
4-1-4 Penalty	PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S19].	PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S21].	Putting the ball into play before it is ready is now classified as a delay of game and not illegal procedure. Makes sense.
5-2-10	No rule decision may be changed after the ball is next legally snapped, legally free-kicked or the second or fourth periods have ended (Rules 3-2-1-a, 3-3-4-d-2 and 11-1-1).	No rule decision may be changed after the ball is next legally snapped, legally free-kicked or the second or fourth periods have ended (Rules 3-2-1-a, 3-3-4- e -2 and 11-1-1).	
6-1-2-a 6-1-2-b	b. Each Team A player, except the holder and kicker of a place kick, must be behind the ball [S19]. a. All players of each team must be inbounds [S18 or S19].	a. Each Team A player, except the holder and kicker of a place kick, must be behind the ball (A.R. 6-1-2-V and VI) [S19]. PENALTY—Live-ball foul. Five yards from the previous spot, five yards from the spot where the dead ball belongs to Team B after Team B’s run, or the spot where the ball is placed after a touchback [S19]. b. All players of each team must be inbounds [S18 or S19].	This is a change of order, probably to emphasise the new major rule change. There is cross-referencing to two new ARs.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
6-1-2-d	After a safety, when a punt or drop kick is used, the ball may be kicked from behind the kicking team's restraining line. If a yardage penalty for a live-ball foul is enforced, administration is from the 20-yard line, unless the kicking team's restraining line has been relocated by a previous penalty [S19].	After a safety, when a punt or drop kick is used, the ball may be kicked from behind the kicking team's restraining line. If a yardage penalty for a live-ball foul is enforced from the previous spot , administration is from the 20-yard line, unless the kicking team's restraining line has been relocated by a previous penalty [S19].	This removes an inequity for live-ball fouls which are not penalised from the previous spot.
7-1-5-a-4	Player(s) aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage cannot make quick or abrupt actions that are not part of normal defensive player movement in an obvious attempt to cause an offensive player(s) to foul (false start). An official shall sound his whistle immediately [S7 and S21].	Player(s) aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage may not make quick or abrupt actions that are not part of normal defensive player movement in an obvious attempt to cause an offensive player(s) to foul (false start). An official shall sound his whistle immediately [S7 and S21].	Semantic change. Players can always do what they like, but the rules are there to tell them what they may not do.
7-2-2-a	If caught in flight , the ball continues in play (A.R. 7-2-2-I and II).	If caught, the ball continues in play (A.R. 7-2-2-I and II).	Another semantic change. Obviously you can only catch a ball while it is in flight.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
<p>7-3-2-f Exception 1</p> <p>7-3-2-f Exception 2</p> <p>7-3-2-f Penalty</p>	<p><i>Exception:</i> It is not a foul when the passer, who is five or more yards toward a sideline from the position of the ball at the snap, throws the ball so that it lands beyond the neutral zone to avoid loss of yardage (A.R. 7-3-2-IX). PENALTY—Loss of down at the spot of the foul if the illegal pass is thrown by Team A to save loss of yardage [S36 and S9].</p>	<p><i>Exceptions:</i></p> <p>1. It is not a foul when the passer, who is five or more yards toward a sideline from the position of the ball at the snap, throws the ball so that it lands in or out of bounds beyond the neutral zone. (A.R. 7-3- 2-IX). 2. It is not a foul when the passer, who is five or more yards toward a sideline from the position of the ball at the snap, throws the ball so that it touches a player, an official, or anything beyond the neutral zone. PENALTY—Loss of down at the spot of the foul [S36 and S9].</p>	<p>A number of changes here. The new wording of the first part clarifies the accepted practice that a pass landing out of bounds beyond the neutral zone was good enough to avoid intentional grounding. It was not necessary for the ball to land in bounds.</p> <p>The second part is a more substantial change. It is no longer intentional grounding if the ball hits anything beyond the neutral zone and not just the ground. This corresponds with most other similar provisions within the rulebook.</p> <p>The wording of the penalty has been changed so as not to repeat the wording that appears at the start of the rule. Have to save ink somehow...</p>
<p>7-3-7-a</p>	<p>Any forward pass is incomplete when the pass touches the ground or is out of bounds by rule. It also is incomplete when a player leaves his feet and receives the pass but first lands on or outside a boundary line, unless his progress has been stopped in the field of play (Rule 4-1-3-p) (A.R. 2-2-7-III and A.R. 7-3-7-I).</p>	<p>Any forward pass is incomplete when the pass touches the ground or is out of bounds by rule. It also is incomplete when a player leaves his feet and receives the pass but first lands on or outside a boundary line, unless his progress has been stopped in the field of play or end zone (Rule 4-1-3-p) (A.R. 2-2-7-III and A.R. 7-3-7-I).</p>	<p>Quite a major change. This change removes the anomaly that a catch was complete if the receiver caught the pass whilst airborne and his forward progress was stopped in the field of play, but not in the end zone, and he was driven out of bounds. Forward progress now also accrues in the end zone in such circumstances.</p>

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
7-3-8-b	<p>Offensive pass interference by a Team A player beyond the neutral zone during a legal forward pass play in which a forward pass crosses the neutral zone is contact that interferes with a Team B eligible player. It is the responsibility of the offensive player to avoid the opponents. It is not offensive pass interference if it is the type that occurs (A.R. 7-3-8-VI, VII, XIII, XVIII and XIX):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When, after the snap, a Team A ineligible player immediately charges and contacts an opponent at a point not more than one yard beyond the neutral zone and does not continue the contact more than three yards beyond the neutral zone. 2. When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch or bat the pass. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball (A.R. 7-3-8-XII). 3. When the pass is in flight and two or more eligible players are in the area where they might receive or intercept the pass and an offensive player in that area impedes an opponent, and the pass is not catchable. 	<p>Offensive pass interference by a Team A player beyond the neutral zone during a legal forward pass play in which a forward pass crosses the neutral zone is contact that interferes with a Team B eligible player. It is the responsibility of the offensive player to avoid the opponents. It is not offensive pass interference (A.R. 7-3-8-VI, VII, XIII, XVIII and XIX):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When, after the snap, a Team A ineligible player immediately charges and contacts an opponent at a point not more than one yard beyond the neutral zone and does not continue the contact more than three yards beyond the neutral zone. 2. When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch or bat the pass. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball (A.R. 7-3-8-XII). 3. When the pass is in flight and two or more eligible players are in the area where they might receive or intercept the pass and an offensive player in that area impedes an opponent, and the pass is not catchable. 	<p>This changes serves to focus the exceptions. The old wording has latitude that allowed for a certain amount of interpretation. Now, the exceptions are clearly limited to three specific circumstances.</p>

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
7-3-8-c	<p>Defensive pass interference is contact beyond the neutral zone by a Team B player whose intent to impede an eligible opponent is obvious and it could prevent the opponent the opportunity of receiving a catchable forward pass. When in question, a legal forward pass is catchable.</p> <p>Defensive pass interference occurs only after a legal forward pass is thrown. It is not defensive pass interference if it is the type that occurs (A.R. 7-3-8-I, IV, V, IX-XI, XIV and XV):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When, after the snap, opposing players immediately charge and establish contact with opponents at a point that is within one yard beyond the neutral zone. 2. When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch or bat the pass. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball (A.R. 7-3-8-XII). 3. When a Team B player legally contacts an opponent before the pass is thrown (A.R. 7-3-8-XIII). 	<p>Defensive pass interference is contact beyond the neutral zone by a Team B player whose intent to impede an eligible opponent is obvious and it could prevent the opponent the opportunity of receiving a catchable forward pass. When in question, a legal forward pass is catchable.</p> <p>Defensive pass interference occurs only after a legal forward pass is thrown. It is not defensive pass interference (A.R. 7-3-8-I, IV, V, IX-XI, XIV and XV):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When, after the snap, opposing players immediately charge and establish contact with opponents at a point that is within one yard beyond the neutral zone. 2. When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch or bat the pass. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball (A.R. 7-3-8-XII). 3. When a Team B player legally contacts an opponent before the pass is thrown (A.R. 7-3-8-XIII). 4. When a Team A potential kicker, from scrimmage kick formation, simulates a scrimmage kick by throwing the ball high and deep, and contact by a Team B player occurs. 	Same as above. The fourth exception is the major change discussed in depth earlier.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
7-3-10	No originally ineligible player shall be or have been beyond the neutral zone until a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone has been thrown (A.R. 7-3-10-I and II).	No originally ineligible receiver shall be or have been beyond the neutral zone until a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone has been thrown (A.R. 7-3-10-I and II).	Strange change. Last year, a major editorial change was made to Rule 7-3-8-b-1 that removed eligible receivers from the 3-yards-grace provision when blocking downfield and turned it into OPI. The wording of this rule was also amended for consistency to talk about ineligible players. There is no definition of ‘receiver’ in Rule 2, although there are a number of occurrences of the term throughout the rulebook. To me, this change seems to make the rule a little less precise, although it is now consistent with most of the language of the rest of Rule 7. However, there has been no change to Rule 7-3-11, which still talks about an “originally ineligible player”, nor to Rule 7-3-8-b-1 which was amended last year.
7-3-10 Exception 1	When, after the snap, a Team A ineligible player immediately charges and contacts an opponent at a point not more than one yard beyond the neutral zone and does not continue the contact more than three yards beyond the neutral zone.	When, after the snap, a Team A ineligible receiver immediately charges and contacts an opponent at a point not more than one yard beyond the neutral zone and does not continue the contact more than three yards beyond the neutral zone.	
8-3-3-b-2	A replay after a penalty against Team B may be from any point on or between the inbounds lines on the yard line where the penalty leaves the ball.	A replay after a penalty against Team B may be from any point on or between the inbounds lines on or behind the yard line where the penalty leaves the ball.	This change brings the rule into line with Rule 8-3-2-c. This is a little-used provision that allows the try attempt to be from anywhere on <u>or behind</u> the 3-yard line. This removed the inconsistency that a replayed try attempt had to be on the new line after the penalty enforcement, with no option for having the ball placed behind that line.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
8-5-1-a	<p>It is a safety when:</p> <p>a. The ball becomes dead out of bounds behind a goal line, except from an incompleting forward pass, or becomes dead in the possession of a player on, above or behind his own goal line, and the defending team is responsible for the ball being there (A.R. 6-3-1-IV and V; A.R. 7-2-4-I; A.R. 8-5-1-I-III, VIII and XI; A.R. 8-7-2-V; and A.R. 9-4-1-IX).</p> <p>When in question, it is a touchback, not a safety.</p>	<p>It is a safety when:</p> <p>a. The ball becomes dead out of bounds behind a goal line, except from an incompleting forward pass, or becomes dead in the possession of a player on, above or behind his own goal line (or becomes dead by rule), and the defending team is responsible for the ball being there (A.R. 6-3-1-IV and V; A.R. 7-2-4-I; A.R. 8-5-1-I-III, VIII and XI; A.R. 8-7-2-V; and A.R. 9-4-1-IX).</p> <p>When in question, it is a touchback, not a safety.</p>	<p>This is a clarification that brings in the provisions of Rule 4-1-3 into the equation when declaring a safety. The previous wording implied that the ball had to be dead physically in a player's possession (regardless of the Rule 2 definition of the phrase) for it to be a safety. The wording is now clear that it includes all of the circumstances when an official blows that ball dead, like when a kick comes to rest and no one attempts to recover it (AR 8-5-1-III), a runner simulates placing his knee on the ground, Team B make an illegal return kick from their own end zone, or when the runner's helmet comes off (very unlucky). In a situation where inadvertent whistle provisions were to apply, then the team in possession would almost certainly replay the down. However, there are a number of tactical situations where they may choose to take the safety.</p> <p>Rogers Redding, author of the Referee's Study Guide, lists this as a major editorial change, but it does beg the question of what we would have done had these situations occurred before now.</p>

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
8-5-1-b Exception 3		When, following a change of team possession, a Team A player intercepts an illegal forward pass, or intercepts or recovers a fumble or backward pass between Team A's five-yard line and the goal line, and the runner's original momentum carries him into the end zone, where the ball is declared dead in his team's possession, the ball belongs to Team A at the spot where the illegal forward pass, fumble or backward pass was intercepted or recovered.	A major change. Team A players are now afforded the same protection of the momentum rule as Team B players are, but only after a further change of possession during that down (i.e., when Team A loses possession and Team B coughs the ball straight back). Notably it includes interceptions of illegal Team B forward passes.
8-7-2-a	The impetus imparted by a player who kicks, passes, snaps or fumbles the ball shall be considered responsible for the ball's progress in any direction even though its course is deflected or reversed after striking the ground or after touching a player of either team (A.R. 6-3-4-IV; A.R. 8-5-1-II, III, VIII, IX and XI; and A.R. 8-7-2-I-IX).	The impetus imparted by a player who kicks, passes, snaps or fumbles the ball shall be considered responsible for the ball's progress in any direction even though its course is deflected or reversed after striking the ground or after touching an official or a player of either team (A.R. 6-3-4-IV; A.R. 8-5-1-II, III, VIII, IX and XI; and A.R. 8-7-2-I-IX).	This adds one further case to the class of rules that deal with what happens when a ball touches an official.
9-1-2-e-2	Bucks at the snap positioned completely outside the normal tackle (second player from the snapper) position in either direction toward a sideline, or in motion at the snap, are prohibited from blocking below the waist toward the original position of the ball in or behind the neutral zone and within 10 yards beyond the neutral zone (A.R. 9-1-2-XXVI).	Bucks at the snap positioned with the frame of their body completely outside the frame of the body of the normal tackle (second player from the snapper) position in either direction toward a sideline, or in motion at the snap, are prohibited from blocking below the waist toward the original position of the ball in or behind the neutral zone and within 10 yards beyond the neutral zone. The frame of the body does not include arms or legs extended sideways (A.R. 9-1-2-XXVI).	This is clarification of last year's major change to the illegal block below the waist rule. The final sentence is the telling one. The rule now makes it absolutely clear that we are talking about the frame of the body, and that a player cannot bring himself into the list of players allowed to block below the waist by sticking his arm or leg out. The rule is now says what it was originally intended to mean.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
9-2-1-a-1	No player, substitute, coach or other person subject to the rules shall use obscene or vulgar language or gestures, or engage in acts that provoke ill will or are demeaning to an opponent, to game officials or to the image of the game, including:	No player, substitute, coach or other person subject to the rules shall use abusive, threatening or obscene language or gestures, or engage in such acts that provoke ill will or are demeaning to an opponent, to game officials or to the image of the game, including:	A major change to the wording that brings the rule into line with the generally accepted interpretation and current on-field practice by added more proscribed activities. There is no change to the intent of the rule, but the new wording spells out clearly what is <u>not</u> expected of players. The next four changes also add to that proscription.
9-2-1-a-1-(a)	Pointing the finger(s), hand(s), arm(s) or ball at an opponent.	Pointing the finger(s), hand(s), arm(s) or ball at an opponent, or imitating the slashing of the throat.	
9-2-1-a-1-(b)	Baiting or insulting an opponent verbally	Taunting , baiting or ridiculing an opponent verbally.	
9-2-1-a-1-(e)	Obviously altering stride as an unopposed runner approaches the opponent's goal line.	Obviously altering stride as an unopposed runner approaches the opponent's goal line, or diving into the end zone when unopposed.	
9-2-1-a-2-(a)	Kicking, throwing or carrying (including off of the field) the ball any distance that requires an official to retrieve it.	Kicking, throwing, spinning or carrying (including off of the field) the ball any distance that requires an official to retrieve it.	
9-2-1-a-2-(b)	Spiking the ball to the ground [<i>Exception: A forward pass to conserve time (Rule 7-3-2-e)</i>].	Spiking the ball to the ground [<i>Exception: A forward pass to conserve time (Rule 7-3-2-d)</i>].	The cross-reference has been wrong since 2002 when the rule was re-ordered.
9-2-2-b	No simulated replacements or substitutions may be used to confuse opponents. No tactic associated with substitutes or the substitution process may be used to confuse opponents (Exception: Rule 3-5-2-d) (A.R. 9-2-2-I-VII).	No simulated replacements or substitutions may be used to confuse opponents. No tactic associated with substitutes or the substitution process may be used to confuse opponents (Rule 3-5-2- e) (A.R. 9-2-2-I-VII).	The cross-reference has been changed to match the major change discussed above. However, the original cross-reference exception referred to players remaining in the game for one play. As the new rule is more prescriptive, this is now redundant.
9-3-3-d-1	The fist(s) and arm(s) shall not be used to deliver a blow (A.R. 9-3-3-IV).	The fist(s) and arm(s) shall not be used to deliver a blow (Rule 9-1-2-a) (A.R. 9-3-3-IV).	Rule 9-3-3 covers use of the hands or arms by the offense and has now been cross-references with the rule that covers striking an opponent in general.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
10-2-2-e	Kick plays—The basic enforcement spot for fouls that occur during a legal free or scrimmage kick play before possession is gained or regained or the ball is declared dead by rule is the previous spot (Rules 2-25-10-e and 2-30-2 and 3) (A.R. 8-7-2-VII and A.R. 10-2-2-II, III, VIII, XIII, XIV and XIX-XXI).	Kick plays—The basic enforcement spot for fouls that occur during a legal free or scrimmage kick play before possession is gained or regained or the ball is declared dead by rule is the previous spot (Rules 2-25-10-e and 2-30-2 and 3) (A.R. 6-1-2-V and VI , 8-7-2-VII and A.R. 10-2-2-II, III, VIII, XIII, XIV and XIX-XXI).	Two new ARs have been added to cover the new penalty enforcement for encroachment on a free kick.
10-2-2-e Exception 5		Encroachment by Team A on a free kick may be enforced from the previous spot or from the spot where the dead ball belongs to Team B after Team B's run (Rule 6-1-2-a).	Another change to correspond with the encroachment change.
11-4-1-a	The linesman is responsible for the operation of the line-to-gain indicator and down indicator. He instructs a line-to-gain crew consisting of a minimum of two assistants and a third person who operates the down indicator on the sideline opposite the press box. The down indicator marks the football's position.	The linesman is responsible for the operation of the line-to-gain indicator and down indicator. He instructs a crew consisting of a minimum of two assistants and a third person who operate the line-to-gain and down indicators outside the sideline opposite the press box. The down indicator marks the football's position.	

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
11-7-1-a	The side judge is responsible for timing the 25-second count and observing eligible receivers, kicks and passes on his side of the field.	The side judge is responsible for timing the game and observing eligible receivers, kicks and passes on his side of the field.	This is a major mechanical change. The side judge now has the game clock on a 7-man crew and the back judge has the play clock. The change appears to have been made to allow for the nomenclature change made in 1998 that saw the back judge dropped from a 6-man crew and not the side judge. However, there is a major hole. The line judge still has the game clock on a 4-man crew, but no one has the game clock on a 5-man crew! No doubt there will be a further change next year. Dick advises that in the US they are retaining the old mechanics for 5-man crews, BJ with the game clock, R with the play clock. However, there is a lot to be said for the game clock being kept in the centre of the field with the BJ for both 5- and 7-man crews when there is no visible game clock. It is easier for all participants, both on the field and on each sideline, to hear how much time is remaining than when the clock is kept on one sideline, when the team who is on that sideline has a distinct advantage. Additionally, we in NZ don't have many 6-man games, so it makes sense to keep the clock with the LJ and BJ who already have the experience.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
11-8-1-a	The responsibilities of the back judge include counting the defensive team, timing the game, ruling on long passes and kicks, and the status of the ball in his area.	The responsibilities of the back judge include counting the defensive team, timing the 25-second count , ruling on long passes and kicks, and the status of the ball in his area.	Mechanically, this provides some benefit to the offense. Previously, when the play clock dropped below ten seconds the mechanics required the side judge to raise his arm when there was no visible play clock. Now that the back judge has this responsibility, the raised arm will be more apparent to the offense. The Referee continues to have the play clock when the back judge is not present (4- and 6-man crews). I suspect that many Referees outside the States will continue to prefer to keep the play clock themselves, regardless of crew size.
Summary Of Penalties		<p><i>Added:</i> Loss of Five Yards – Alteration of playing surface for advantage Loss of 15 Yards – Intentionally contacting an official</p> <p><i>Deleted:</i> Referee’s Discretion – Field improvement</p>	
Appendix C	The current recommendation of the National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) is to consider terminating play when the lightning is six miles away (flash-to-bang time of 30 seconds or less). All individuals should have left the game site and reached a safe structure or location. This recommendation was developed as a practical way to make a judgment in situations where other resources such as technology and instrumentation are not available.	National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL) staff strongly recommend that all individuals should have left the game site and reached a safe structure or location by the time the person monitoring the weather obtains a flash-to-bang (lightning-to-thunder) count of 30 seconds (equivalent to lightning being six miles away). This recommendation was developed as a practical way to make a judgment in situations where other resources such as technology and instrumentation are not available.	

Wagging the dog – Changes to Approved Rulings

So often over the years changes to the ARs have lead to rule changes in succeeding years as the Rules Committee realised that it had got ahead of itself. Having said this, it is noticeable that a change from 2001 (AR 7-1-5-III), which effectively introduced the NFL's unabated-towards-the-quarterback rule still has not been ratified by a genuine rule change.

This year there are four new ARs. Two of them simply cover the new enforcement for encroachment on the kickoff. However, two new ARs, 9-1-2-XXVII and XXVIII introduce the NFL's one step rule for roughing the passer. Rule 9-1-2-o states that no defensive player may charge into a passer or throw him to the ground when it is obvious that the ball has been thrown. Previously, Referees used a number of methods to determine what made it obvious. One method was to call "pass is gone", and if the hit came after that it was too late. Now, there is a prescription (albeit in the ARs) - "one step good, two steps bad" (with apologies to George Orwell).

There are only 5 editorial changes. I have seen no reports that suggest that any of these are material changes.

Changes to Mechanics

This year there are three significant changes to the mechanics at this stage. In addition to the aforementioned changes to the procedures covering quick substitutions and ownership of the game clock, the CCA has made one change. On scrimmage kick plays, the Umpire (and Side Judge if he's there) now moves 10 yards off the line of scrimmage instead of the usual five to seven yards. From that position, the Umpire can get a better look at the 'pull and shoot' manoeuvre (where a defensive lineman grabs an opponent, pulls him off to one side, opening up a gap for a team mate to shoot up the middle), but more importantly is better able to judge the action covered in the new Rule 9-1-2-q.

Less significant changes include the removal of the requirement that bean bags be white, just the same colour throughout the crew, methodology for communicating information within the crew for uncatchable passes in pass interference situations and the requirement that another official should always accompany the Referee when he is conferencing with the coach.

So there you have it: the wonder that is this year's rule changes. I hope you enjoyed reading about them as much as I enjoyed writing about them. If you don't have access to a printed copy of the rulebook, an online version can be downloaded from the NCAA's website:

http://www.ncaa.org/library/rules/2004/2004_football_rules.pdf

You'll need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view it. Go to <http://www.adobe.com/> and follow the links.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and I will endeavour to get an answer.

Happy reading.



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