



New Zealand Gridiron Officials Association

31 Ayton Drive  
Glenfield  
Auckland 0629

+64 9 444-9818  
021-1897630

From: The Editor, NZGOA Rules Committee

email: sbowness@ihug.co.nz

## NCAA Rule Changes 2006

It's that happy time of the year when the new rule book is published. This year, I'm trying something different. As I'm spending a week at the beginning of September with Dick Honig, and will actually get a chance to experience the rules in action, this document will contain preliminary observations on the new rules. Once I get back from the States at the beginning of October, I'll produce an update. Once again, the NCAA Rules Committee has released the original memorandum of changes with its rationales for change. This has proven most helpful and helped reduce some of my occasional bewilderment.

This year there are 5 major rule changes and 36 editorial changes. The number of editorial changes is remarkably low, but many of the changes have a significant impact. Also, for the first time in many years there is a completely new rule, covering Instant Replay. This year there is a further tweak to the rules regarding eye shields and the introduction of the NFL's rule regarding the enforcement of procedure penalties concurrent with the snap on scrimmage kick plays. However, most attention has been given to three changes designed to speed up games. If forum chatter can be taken as a guide (which is always a little dodgy), then it is these changes, and one in particular, that have created significant discussion and just a little controversy. As has occurred in the last couple of years, a change to half time (reducing it from 20 to 15 minutes), which appears both in the Rules Committee's original list of changes and the June 2006 edition of *Referee* magazine has not made it to the Rule Book.

A welcome change this year is the highlighting of editorial changes in the Rule Book for the first time (at least, that's what it looks like in the online edition).

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.

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### Major Changes

#### **Rule 1-4-5-s**

Eye shields that are not clear or made from molded or rigid material.

This is part of the prohibited equipment rule. The operative words here are "not clear". Last year, the rule said "not transparent", and this change makes it absolutely clear (pardon the pun) what is required. Also, last year's Appendix B covering procedures to allow exceptions has been removed. There is now no exception to the rule.

### **Rule 2-15-4-c**

c. A tee is a device that elevates the ball for kicking purposes. It may not elevate the ball's lowest point more than **one** inch above the ground (A.R. 2-15-4-I).

### **Rule 3-2-5**

When the ball is free-kicked, the game clock shall be started and subsequently stopped when the ball is dead by rule.

### **Rule 3-2-5-e**

When Team B is awarded a first down, the clock will be stopped and will start on the ready for play signal. (*Exceptions:* After a team timeout and the succeeding play after the end of a period.)

I've grouped these three changes together as they constitute the most significant part of this year's changes. All three are designed to speed up the length of games. For some time now, games have been considered to be too long. Last season, average times ranged from 3:14 in the Sun Belt Conference to 3:35 in the Big 12 (the Big 10 was respectably quick at 3:18). The Rules Committee has chosen to make these changes, one of which is quite radical for College Football.

This first change is to reduce the height of the tee so that the ball's lowest point is now no more than one inch above the ground instead of two. The NFL made this change a few years ago, and it is designed to reduce the number of touchbacks in the game and thus keep the clock moving (as well as creating a more exciting game).

The second change again alters the point at which the clock starts on the kickoff. Now, the clock starts when the ball is kicked without exception. This is a rule which has changed a couple of times since 1997. Again, the aim is to trim the total length of games, although in this case the time saved cannot be considered to be considerable, as it only amounts to the flight time of the ball.

The third change is the most radical, and introduces the NFHS rule of starting the clock on the ready when Team B is awarded a first down. This change has generated a large amount of chatter on the forums, and is the first time in many years that the NCAA has moved towards a NFHS rule rather than a NFL rule. A bulletin has also been issued by John Adams emphasising that when a penalty occurs and if one of the reasons for stopping the clock is to award a first down to Team B, including following a touchback, the clock will start on the ready (except when the period ends or a team timeout is called). The Rules Committee estimates that this was cut about 5 minutes from the length of a game.

### **Rule 7-1-3-b, 7-1-4-b**

For live-ball fouls occurring when the snap starts during scrimmage kick plays: Five yards from the previous spot or five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (Field Goal Plays Exempted.) (S18, S19, S22).

This change introduces to the NCAA a change the NFL made last year. It only occurs during a scrimmage-kick play that is not a field goal attempt, and only applies to illegal shift, illegal motion, illegal substitution and illegal formation fouls. It allows Team B to choose enforcement from the subsequent dead ball spot (if the ball belongs to Team B) or from the preceding spot. If Team A remain in possession at the end of the down, then the penalty must be enforced from the preceding spot. In many ways this is another time-saving change. Last year in the NFL, most teams chose enforcement from the dead ball spot, thus avoiding replaying the down and saving time.

### **Rule 12 – Instant Replay**

As I mentioned, a completely new rule has been introduced for the first time in many years. As this will not apply to New Zealand, I won't make any comment here. However, it does make interesting reading.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
1-4-5-s	<p>Eye shields that are not transparent and made from molded or rigid material.</p> <p><b>Exceptions must be documented by an ophthalmologist with the request signed by the player’s head trainer, athletics director and the player’s parents or guardians if the player is under 21 years of age. The finalized information is then under the jurisdiction of the head trainer, who then will determine when it becomes public information. (Refer to Appendix B [page FR-142] for the procedure to apply for an exception.)</b></p>	<p>Eye shields that are not clear or made from molded or rigid material.</p>	<p>The exceptions to the eye shield rule have been removed, as has Appendix B.</p>
1-4-9-a	<p>Television replay or monitor equipment is prohibited at the sidelines, press box or other locations within the playing enclosure for coaching <b>or officiating</b> purposes during the game. Motion pictures, any type of film, facsimile machines, videotapes, photographs, writing transmission machines and computers are prohibited for coaching purposes anytime during the game or between periods.</p>	<p>Television replay or monitor equipment is prohibited at the sidelines, press box or other locations within the playing enclosure for coaching purposes during the game. Motion pictures, any type of film, facsimile machines, videotapes, photographs, writing transmission machines and computers are prohibited for coaching purposes anytime during the game or between periods.</p>	<p>Instant replay change.</p>
2-2-4-b	<p>If time is out, sounds his whistle and signals either “start the clock” or “ball ready for play” <b>[Exceptions: Rules 3-3-3-f-4-(c) and (f)]</b> (A.R. 4-1-4-I and II).</p>	<p>If time is out, sounds his whistle and signals either “start the clock” or “ball ready for play” (A.R. 4-1-4-I and II).</p>	<p>The crowd noise rule has been removed, and this change corresponds with that.</p>
2-2-7	<p>A catch is an act of establishing player possession of a live ball in flight.</p>	<p>A catch is an act of <b>firmly</b> establishing player possession of a live ball in flight.</p>	<p>A significant change. The definition of a catch has now been changed to include the word ‘firm’. The bottom line interpretation will not change. The player still has to do something with the ball to demonstrate firm possession.</p>

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
2-2-7-c	To catch, intercept or recover a ball, a player who leaves his feet to make a catch, interception or recovery must have the ball in his possession when he first returns to the ground inbounds with any part of his body or is so held that the dead-ball provisions of Rule 4-1-3-p apply (A.R. 2-2-7-I-V and A.R. 7-3-6-IV).	To catch, intercept or recover a ball, a player who leaves his feet to make a catch, interception or recovery must have the ball <b>firmly</b> in his possession when he first returns to the ground inbounds with any part of his body or is so held that the dead-ball provisions of Rule 4-1-3-p apply (A.R. 2-2-7-I-V and A.R. 7-3-6-IV).	
2-10-3	Batting the ball is intentionally striking it or intentionally changing its direction with a hand or arm.	Batting the ball is intentionally striking it or intentionally changing its direction with <b>the hands or arms.</b>	
2-12-1-c	Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble [ <b>Exception:</b> The snap (Rule 2-23-1-c)].	Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble <b>by the last player in possession</b> [Exception: The snap (Rule 2-23-1-c)].	A fumble is now charged to the player last in possession of the ball. RefMag's analysis indicates that this has a major ramification when it comes to fourth down plays. However, in reality, nothing has changed. Because the snap is a backward pass, a muffed snap does not fall within the fourth down fumble rule.
2-15-4-b	A free kick place kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession while the ball is positioned on a tee or the ground. It may be controlled by a teammate.	A free kick place kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession while the ball is positioned on a tee or the ground. It may be controlled by a teammate. <b>The ball may be positioned on the ground and contacting the tee.</b>	In addition to reducing the height of the tee, the ball may now be laid on the ground as long as it contacts the tee. This has been allowed in the NFL for some time and makes kicking the ball for an onside kick easier.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
3-1-1	Each half shall start with a kickoff. Three minutes before the scheduled starting time, the referee shall toss a coin at midfield in the presence of no more than four field captains from each team and another game official, first designating the field captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss.	Each half shall start with a kickoff. Three minutes before the scheduled starting time, the referee shall toss a coin at midfield in the presence of no more than four field captains from each team and another game official, first designating the field captain of the visiting team to call the coin toss. <b>Before the second half, the captains will meet with the referee to select the second half options.</b>	The second half option has been missing from the rule book all this time.
3-1-3-g  3-1-3-g-1	Fouls after Team B possession:  Distance penalties by either team are declined by rule in extra periods (Exceptions: Dead-ball fouls, live-ball fouls penalized as dead-ball fouls <b>and flagrant personal fouls</b> are enforced on the succeeding play).	Fouls after <b>a change of team</b> possession:  Distance penalties by either team are declined by rule in extra periods (Exceptions: Dead-ball fouls and live-ball fouls penalized as dead-ball fouls are enforced on the succeeding play)	Two major changes. In overtime, the rule now accounts for multiple changes of possession during a down. Additionally, flagrant personal fouls are now no longer carried across to the succeeding play. This simplifies the rule to include only dead-ball-enforcement fouls.
3-2-1-b	The intermission between halves, which begins when the field is clear of all players and coaches, shall be 20 minutes.	The intermission between halves, which begins when the field is clear of all players and coaches, shall be 20 minutes. <b>The 20 minutes may be altered, before the game, by mutual agreement of the administration of both schools.</b>	The Rules Committee had originally proposed reducing half time to 15 minutes. However, this never got to the rule book (presumably zapped the the Playing Rules Oversight Panel), and has been modified to this.
3-2-2-e	When the 25-second count is interrupted by circumstances beyond the control of either team, a new 25-second count shall be started and the game clock shall start on the snap.	When the 25-second count is interrupted by circumstances beyond the control of either team <b>(without positive knowledge of game clock elapsed time)</b> , a new 25-second count shall be started and the game clock shall start on the snap.	The play clock interruption rule now only applies if the amount of time lost is not known. It is implied that an adjustment would be made in these circumstances. If the game clock is not running, then no adjustment is made. The 25-second clock would not be reset in that situation.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
3-2-5	The clock stops at the end of a legal kick down and starts on the snap ( <i>Exception:</i> When the next play is a free kick or a try).	The clock stops at the end of a legal kick down and starts on the snap (Exception: When the next play is a free kick or a try <b>or Team B is awarded a first down.</b> )	Corresponds with the major change to Rule 3-2-5-e.
3-2-5-a-6	For a head coach's conference.	For a head coach's conference <b>or challenge.</b>	Coaches challenges are included in the new Rule 12.
3-2-5-a-11	For a fumble out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble ( <i>Exceptions: On legal kick downs and when Team B is awarded a first down.</i> )	For a fumble out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble (3-2-5-a).	Another change resulting from the major change to Rule 3-2-5-e.
3-2-5-d	The clock stops at the end of a legal kick down and starts on the snap ( <i>Exception:</i> When the next play is a free kick or a try).	The clock stops at the end of a legal kick down and starts on the snap (Exception: When the next play is a free kick or a try <b>or Team B is awarded a first down.</b> )	And another.
3-3-3-f-4		Rule related to crowd noise deleted	Oh, to have a crowd...
3-3-4-e-2	A request for a head coach's conference must be made before the ball is snapped or free-kicked for the next play and before the end of the second or fourth period (Rules 5-2-10 and 11-1-1).	A request for a head coach's conference <b>or challenge</b> must be made before the ball is snapped or free-kicked for the next play and before the end of the second or fourth period (Rules 5-2-10 and 11-1-1).	
3-3-4-e-3	After a head coach's conference, the full team timeout is granted if charged by the referee.	After a head coach's conference <b>or challenge</b> , the full team timeout is granted if charged by the referee.	
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, <b>3-3-3-f-4-(g)</b> 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).	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, 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).	The crowd noise rule has been deleted.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
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, <b>3-3-3-f-4-(g)</b> , 3-3-4-e 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, 3-3-4-e or 9-2-2-d infraction.	
4-1-5	The ball shall be put in play within 25 seconds after it is declared ready for play, unless, during that interval, play is suspended. If play is suspended, the 25-second count will start again ( <b>Exception: Unfair crowd-noise situations</b> ).	The ball shall be put in play within 25 seconds after it is declared ready for play, unless, during that interval, play is suspended. If play is suspended, the 25-second count will start again.	
6-3-10-c	A scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone is a live-ball foul that causes the ball to become dead.	A scrimmage kick <b>made</b> beyond the neutral zone is a live-ball foul that causes the ball to become dead.	Clarification.
7-3-2-f Exception 1	It is not a foul when the passer, who is outside the frame of the body of the normal tackle position toward a sideline, throws the ball so that it lands in or out of bounds beyond the neutral zone. (A.R. 7-3- 2-IX).	It is not a foul when the passer, who is <b>or has been</b> outside the frame of the body of the normal tackle position toward a sideline, throws the ball so that it lands in or out of bounds beyond the neutral zone. (A.R. 7-3-2-IX).	A major change. The passer can now be called for intentional grounding once he has left the pocket and returned again. Whilst this was a common interpretation last year, it is now explicit that the tackle box vanishes once the passer is outside it and does not reappear if he runs back inside.
7-3-2-f Exception 2	It is not a foul when the passer, who is outside the frame of the body of the normal tackle position toward a sideline, throws the ball so that it touches a player, an official, or anything beyond the neutral zone.	It is not a foul when the passer, who is <b>or has been</b> outside the frame of the body of the normal tackle position toward a sideline, throws the ball so that it touches a player, an official, or anything beyond the neutral zone.	
8-3-2-a	The ball shall be put in play by the team that scored a six-point touchdown. If a touchdown is scored during a down in which time in the fourth period expires, the try is mandatory unless the team behind in the score leaves the field of play.	The ball shall be put in play by the team that scored a six-point touchdown. If a touchdown is scored during a down in which time in the fourth period expires, the try <b>shall not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game.</b>	Another significant change. If time has expired at the end of the fourth quarter and the PAT would make no difference to the result, then it doesn't happen. This is another time-saver, as well as a pragmatic change.

Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
8-3-3	Fouls During a Try Before Team B Possession	Fouls During a Try Before <b>a Change of Team Possession</b>	This change corresponds with the similar change in overtime.
8-3-3-b-1	Team A shall have the option of declining the score and repeating the try after enforcement, or declining the penalty(ies) and accepting the score. Team A may accept the score with personal fouls <b>against the snapper (in a scrimmage kick formation), holder, kicker or passer</b> enforced on the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods (A.R. 3-2-3-VII; A.R. 8-3-2-II; A.R. 8-3-3-I; and A.R. 10-1-7-XIV, XV and XVII).	Team A shall have the option of declining the score and repeating the try after enforcement, or declining the penalty(ies) and accepting the score. Team A may accept the score with personal fouls enforced on the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods (A.R. 3-2-3-VII; A.R. 8-3-2-II; A.R. 8-3-3-I; and A.R. 10-1-7-XIV, XV and XVII).	Here's where overtime and the PAT differ. All personal foul penalties against Team A during the PAT can be carried across to the succeeding kickoff.
8-3-3-c-2	Penalties against Team A on a try, which includes loss of down only, or loss of down and yardage, nullify the score and any yardage is not penalized on the succeeding kick-off <b>or from the succeeding spot in extra periods.</b>	Penalties against Team A on a try, which include loss of down only or loss of down and yardage, nullify the score and any yardage is not penalized on the succeeding kick-off.	<i>RefMag's</i> analysis of the first and third of the next three changes is not helpful. The actual change removes overtime from the equation. These two rules now only apply to regulation.
8-3-4	Fouls During a Try After Team B Possession	Fouls During a Try After <b>a Change of Team</b> Possession	
8-3-5	Fouls after a try are enforced on the succeeding kickoff <b>or from the succeeding spot in extra periods</b> ( <i>Exception:</i> Rule 10-1-6) (A.R. 10-1-7-XIX and XX).	Fouls after a try are enforced on the succeeding kickoff. ( <i>Exception:</i> Rule 10-1-6) (A.R. 10-1-7-XIX and XX).	



Rule	Old wording	New Wording	Notes
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 from beyond the neutral zone in an obvious attempt to block a field goal or try may land on any player(s). It is not a foul if the leaping player was originally lined up within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped.	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 from beyond the neutral zone in an obvious attempt to block a field goal or try may land on any player(s). It is not a foul if the leaping player was <b>aligned in a stationary position</b> within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped.	This is a further tweak to the two-season-old leaping rule. Now, a player who was originally lined up more than a yard from the line of scrimmage but who runs in and stops within a yard of the LOS is not guilty of leaping.
9-2-1-b-1	During the game, coaches, substitutes and authorized attendants in the team area shall not be on the field of play or outside the 25-yard lines without permission from the referee unless legally entering or leaving the field ( <i>Exceptions:</i> Rules 1-2-4-g and 3-3-8-c).	During the game, coaches, substitutes and authorized attendants in the team area shall not be on the field of play or outside the 25-yard lines without permission from the referee unless legally entering or leaving the field (Exceptions: Rules 1-2-4-g and 3-3-8-c). <b>Team area personnel who are outside the team area and who have involvement or impact on live ball play are subject to penalty under Rule 9-1-4- a.</b>	This makes clear the common practice that personnel who have an impact on play whilst outside the team area are subject to the illegal interference rule and not unsportsmanlike conduct.
10-2-2-b	Snap or free kick—The enforcement spot for fouls occurring simultaneously with a snap or free kick is the previous spot (A.R. 10-2-2-I).	Snap or free kick—The enforcement spot for fouls occurring simultaneously with a snap or free kick is the previous spot <b>(Rules 6-1-2-a, 7-1-3-b and 7-1-4-b)</b> (A.R. 10-2-2-I).	This cross reference brings in the rules covering Team A encroachment on the kickoff, Team A illegal procedure fouls and illegal shifts.
10-2-2-e-6 Exception		For live-ball fouls occurring when the snap starts during scrimmage kick plays: Five yards from the previous spot or five yards from the spot where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B (7-1-3-b, 7-1-4-b).	This is a new exception which corresponds with the change to enforcement of procedure penalties on scrimmage kick downs.

## **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 no new ARs.

There are a massive 28 editorial changes, most of them to deal with the changes to the rules. I have seen no reports that suggest that any of these are material changes.

## **Changes to Mechanics**

I'll discuss any changes to the mechanics after I return from the States.

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/2006/2006\\_football\\_rules.pdf](http://www.ncaa.org/library/rules/2006/2006_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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Bowness', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Bowness  
Editor, NZGOA Rules Committee