

NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE ACTION FOR 2009-10

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Introduction

This year the NCAA Football Rules Committee made a very small number of changes in the rules, reflecting the general satisfaction of the college football community for the rules currently in place. The committee continues to focus on *player safety* and *sportsmanship* as areas that need vigilance. Added to the rule book is a *Statement on Sportsmanship* that draws coaches' attention to their responsibility for the behavior of the student-athletes.

Consistent with the other NCAA sports, the football rules committee introduced a two-year process for playing rules changes. Thus the new rule book will cover the period 2009-2010.

The changes summarized below have been adopted by the NCAA Football Rules Committee and approved by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP), which has jurisdiction over the rules committees for all sports.

Rules Changes

1. Player Safety.

Flagrant Personal Fouls (Rule 9-6). For 2009-10 the rules committee has added a new section that calls for conferences in the days following a game to review certain particularly dangerous plays. This new rule says that if a player is ejected for any flagrant personal foul the conference must review the game video for possible further action. In addition, if the officials call fouls for targeting defenseless players or using the crown of the helmet and the player is not ejected, the rules mandate a conference review. Furthermore, if the review by the conference reveals actions that should have resulted in a personal foul but were not called, the conference may impose sanctions.

Chin Strap Included in Face-Mask Fouls (Rule 9-1-2-q) The helmet chin strap is included in the face-mask foul. It is a personal foul if a player twists, turns or pulls the face mask, any helmet opening, or now the *chin strap* of an opponent.

2. Sportsmanship.

The committee made no changes in the sportsmanship rules. Furthermore, the committee was unanimous in its endorsement of the way the sportsmanship rules are currently written and officiated. To underscore its concerns, the committee added a *Statement on Sportsmanship* to the introductory section of the rule book. This statement emphasizes the importance of discipline by players and coaches, and reminds coaches of their responsibility for controlling the behavior of their players.

3. Competitive Balance.

Rugby-Style Kicker (Rule 9-1-4-a-5) The recent trend toward punters using a rugby-style kick has created a competitive disadvantage favoring the punting team. Because the player runs for several yards before kicking the ball, his teammates have more time to move downfield for coverage. Furthermore, there has been officiating

inconsistency regarding whether such a rugby-style kicker has the same protection afforded a “normal” punter. Under the new rules, if a potential kicker carries the ball outside the tackle box (defined as extending five yards on each side of the snapper) before kicking the ball, there will be no foul for running-into or roughing if he is blocked or tackled by an opponent. The kicker remains protected, as always, from unnecessary roughness fouls.

4. Other Changes.

Jersey Colors (Rule 1-4-3-a) The rules for many years have required white jerseys to be worn by one team, which must be the visiting team unless the opponent agrees otherwise prior to the start of the season. The new rule creates a process whereby both teams may wear colored jerseys if the visitors have received written permission from the home team, and if the home team’s conference agrees that the jerseys are of contrasting colors. If the visitors wear colored jerseys without having such agreements, they will receive a 15-yard penalty following the opening kickoff of each half.

Extension of Periods (Rule 3-2-3) If a foul takes place on a play during which time expires in a quarter, the period is normally extended if the penalty is accepted. Starting in 2009, the period is not extended if the penalty includes loss of down.

Offensive Scrimmage Formation (Rules 1-1-1-b-2 and 7-1-3-b) The requirement for having at least seven offensive players on the line of scrimmage has been re-stated to allow no more than four players in the backfield. This is not a rule change but merely a different way of writing the same requirement. It does eliminate the foul for a team having ten players when there are only six on the line of scrimmage. Otherwise, the requirements for scrimmage formations remain the same.