

2012: NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE ACTION
Summary Report: Rules Changes For 2012

The NCAA Football Rules Committee in its annual meeting in Charlotte, NC, on February 8, 2012, adopted these rules changes. Final approval was granted by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel on February 21, 2012. These changes will be in effect starting with the 2012 season.

1. KICKOFF

A. The kickoff will be at the 35-yard line (unless relocated by a penalty). The free kick following a safety will remain at the 20-yard line.

B. After the ball has been made ready for play all players on the kicking team except the kicker must be no more than five yards behind their restraining line. If one player is more than five yards behind the restraining line and any other player kicks the ball, it is a foul.

PENALTY—Illegal Formation. Five yards from the previous spot and re-kick, or five yards from the spot where the dead ball belongs to the receiving team.

**NOTE: By interpretation, a player is legal when both feet are either on or beyond the line five yards behind the restraining line (i.e. the 30-yard line in typical situations).

C. A player of the receiving team who is in position to receive the ball has the same kick-catch and fair-catch protection whether the ball is kicked directly off the tee or is immediately driven to the ground, strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of the ball kicked directly off the tee.

D. If a free kick results in a touchback the ball will belong to the receiving team at its 25-yard line. On all other touchbacks the ball will be placed at the 20-yard line.

2. BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST

Team A

A. Before a change of team possession any Team A player who is beyond the neutral zone may not block below the waist toward his own goal line. When in question the block is directed toward his goal line.

B. The following players of Team A are **restricted** with regard to blocking below the waist:

1. A lineman who at the snap is more than seven yards from the middle lineman of the offensive formation.

2. A back who at the snap is aligned with the frame of his body completely outside the tackle box or completely outside the frame of

the body of the second lineman from the snapper in either direction toward a sideline.

3. A back who is in motion at the snap and had been outside the area in B-2 any time after the ball was ready for play and before the snap.

All other players are **unrestricted**. In particular, after the ball is ready for play a player who is in motion at the snap and is never outside the area in B-2 before the snap is unrestricted.

C. Inside the area in B-2 a restricted player may not block below the waist against any opponent.

D. Outside this area a restricted player may not block below the waist in a direction away from his adjacent sideline. He may block below the waist along the north-south line or toward his adjacent sideline (subject to the restrictions in Paragraph A).

Team B

Blocking below the waist by players of Team B before a change of team possession is allowed only within the area defined by lines parallel to the goal line five yards beyond and behind the neutral zone extended to the sidelines. Blocking below the waist by players of Team B outside this zone is illegal.

NOTE: Blocking below the waist remains illegal (except against the ball carrier):

- By Team B against a player behind the neutral zone in position to receive a backward pass.
- By Team B against a player eligible to receive a legal forward pass beyond the neutral zone.
- By any player during a down in which there is a free kick or a scrimmage kick.
- By any player after a change of team possession.

3. HELMET COMES OFF

A. If during the down a player's helmet comes completely off, other than as the direct result of a foul by an opponent, the player must leave the game for the next down. The game clock will stop at the end of the down. When the helmet coming off is the only reason for stopping the clock the following conditions apply:

1. With one minute or more remaining in either half the game clock will stop and will start on the referee's signal. The play clock will be set at 25 seconds if the player is on offense and at 40 seconds if the player is on defense.

2. If there is less than one minute in the half the game clock will stop and the opponent has the option of a 10-second runoff. The play clock will be set at 25 seconds and the game clock will start on the referee's signal. If a timeout is available the 10-second runoff may be avoided by the use of the timeout.

B. If the ball carrier's helmet comes off the ball is dead (Rule 4-1-3-q). If it is a player other the ball carrier the ball remains alive, but he must not continue to participate in the play beyond the immediate action in which he is engaged. Prolonged participation is a personal foul. Such a player by definition is a player obviously out of the play (Rule 9-1-12-b).

PENALTY—15 yards. Fouls by Team B include an automatic first down.

C. A player who intentionally removes his helmet during the down commits a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct.

PENALTY---15 yards. Fouls by Team B include an automatic first down.

4. DEFENSIVE TEAM PLAYER LEAPING THE SHIELD ON A PUNT

A Team B player may not attempt to block a punt by leaving his feet in an attempt to jump over a Team A player behind the neutral zone inside the tackle box. It is not a foul if the player jumps straight up without attempting to jump over the opponent. It is also not a foul if the player jumps through the gap between two players.

PERSONAL FOUL: 15 yards, previous spot and automatic first down.

5. INTERFERENCE WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH A KICK

The following sentence will be added to Rule 6-4-1 to further protect the receiver of a kick:

Before the receiver touches the ball, if a member of the kicking team enters the area defined by the width of the receiver's shoulders and extending one yard in front of him, it is a foul.

PENALTY—Receiving team's ball, first down, 15 yards from the spot of the foul. For a foul behind the receiver's goal line: award a touchback plus 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified.