

RULE 9

Conduct of Players and Others Subject to the Rules

SECTION 1. Personal Fouls

All fouls in this section (unless noted) and any other acts of unnecessary roughness are personal fouls. For flagrant personal fouls mandating disciplinary authority review, see Rule 9-6. Except as otherwise noted, the penalties for all personal fouls are as follows:

PENALTY – Personal foul. 15 yards. For dead-ball fouls, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Penalties for Team A live-ball personal fouls behind the neutral zone are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the live-ball foul occurs behind Team A’s goal line. [S7, S24, S25, S26, S28, S34, S38, S39, S40, S41, S45 or S46: PF-*]. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47: DSQ].

For Team A fouls during free or scrimmage kick plays: Enforcement may be either 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 personal 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.

Flagrant Personal Fouls

ARTICLE 1. Before the game, during the game and between periods, all flagrant personal fouls (Rule 2-10-3) require disqualification. Team B flagrant personal fouls require first downs if not in conflict with other rules.

Striking Fouls and Tripping

ARTICLE 2. a. No person subject to the rules shall strike an opponent with the knee; strike an opponent’s helmet (including the face mask), neck, face or any other part of the body with an extended forearm, elbow, locked hands, palm, fist, or the heel, back or side of the open hand; or gouge an opponent.

b. No person subject to the rules shall strike an opponent with their foot or any part of their leg that is below the knee.

c. There shall be no tripping. Tripping is intentionally using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the knee (Rule 2-28). **(A.R. 9-1-2:I)**

Approved Ruling 9-1-2

- I. A player on defense sticks out their foot and trips an opponent. (a) The opponent is a wide receiver running a passing route. (b) The opponent is the ball carrier. **RULING:** (a) and (b) Personal foul, tripping. Penalty — 15 yards, automatic first down. [Cited by 9-1-2-c]
- II. A1, a ball carrier, strikes tackler B6 with their extended forearm just before being tackled. **RULING:** Personal foul. Penalty — 15 yards. Enforce from the previous spot if foul occurs behind the neutral zone. Disqualification if flagrant. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A’s goal line.

- III. A11 completes a forward pass to A88 who is tackled in the field of play. During the play defensive end B88 is flagged for a personal foul against A79. **RULING:** The 15-yard penalty is enforced at the spot where A88 is tackled (Rules 7-3-12 and 9-1 Penalty). [Cited by 10-2-2-e, 7-3-12]
- IV. 1/10 @ A-25. Defender B21 is in press coverage, and at the snap strikes wideout A88 in the face mask. A88 is initially disrupted from running the route. A12 is sacked for a 7-yard loss. **RULING:** Personal foul by B21 for striking A88. Team A will have 1/10 @ A-40. With this type of action, continuous contact to the opponent's face, helmet (including the face mask) or neck is not a requirement to be a foul as per Rule 9-1-8-a.

Targeting and Making Forcible Contact With the Crown of the Helmet

ARTICLE 3. No player shall target and make forcible contact against an opponent with the crown of their helmet. The crown of the helmet is the [top segment of the helmet; namely, the circular area defined by a 6-inch radius from the apex \(top\) of the helmet](#). This foul requires that there be at least one indicator of targeting (see Rule 2-35). (**A.R. 9-1-3:I**)

PENALTY – Flagrant foul. In addition to the 15-yard penalty, automatic disqualification. The 15-yard penalty is not enforced if the video judge overturns the disqualification [S38, S24 and S47: PF-TGC/DSQ]

Approved Ruling 9-1-3

- I. Forward passer A12 inside the tackle box is looking for an open receiver. Before or just as they release the ball, A12 is hit from the side at the ribs, thigh or knee by B79, who dives forward and leads with the crown (top) of their helmet. **RULING:** Foul by B79 for targeting their opponent and making forcible contact with the top of their helmet. 15 yards, first down. B79 is automatically disqualified. [Cited by 9-1-3]

Targeting and Making Forcible Contact to Head or Neck Area of a Defenseless Player

ARTICLE 4. No player shall target and make forcible contact to the head or neck area of a defenseless opponent ([Rule 2-27-14](#)) with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulder. This foul requires that there be at least one indicator of targeting (see Rule 2-35). (**A.R. 9-1-4:I-VI**)

PENALTY – Flagrant foul. In addition to the 15-yard penalty, automatic disqualification. The 15-yard penalty is not enforced if the video judge overturns the disqualification. [S38, S24 and S47: PF-TGD/DSQ]

Approved Ruling 9-1-4

- I. Receiver A83 has just leaped and received a forward pass. As A83 is about to regain their balance, B45 launches and drives into A83 above the shoulder area with their helmet or shoulder. **RULING:** Foul by B45 for targeting and making forcible contact with a defenseless opponent above the shoulders. 15 yards, first down. B45 is automatically disqualified. [Cited by 9-1-4]
- II. As ball carrier A20 sweeps around the end and heads upfield, they lower their head and (a) unintentionally contact; or (b) intentionally attack defensive end B89 who is trying to tackle them. [B89's head is up and the players meet helmet to helmet](#). **RULING:** (a) No foul. Neither A20 nor B89 is a defenseless player and neither has targeted their opponent in the sense of Rule 9-1-3. (b) Foul by A20 for targeting. By choosing to attack with their head, A20 has become subject to Rule 9-1-3. [Cited by 9-1-4]
- III. A44 is covering the kickoff that opens the second half. During the return, as A44 is running at the Team B 45-yard line, B66 targets and launches into A44 from the side, a blind-side block. B66 first makes contact with their forearm at A44's (a) neck; (b) upper arm or shoulder. **RULING:** (a) Foul by B66 for an illegal blind-side block and targeting a defenseless player by making forcible contact at the head or neck area. 15-yard penalty at the end of the run. B66 is disqualified. (b) Foul for an illegal blind-side block. This is not a foul for targeting because the contact by B66 is not to the head or neck area. (Rule 2-27-14). [Cited by 9-1-4]

- IV. A12 who normally plays quarterback is lined up as a wide receiver in the backfield and A33 is five yards behind the snapper in a shotgun formation. A33's pass intended for A12 is intercepted. During the interception return B55 targets and launches at A33, striking them in the side of the helmet. **RULING:** Foul by B55 for targeting and making forcible contact at the head of a defenseless player. For the purposes of Rule 2-27-14, A33 is a defenseless player since they played the down in the role of the quarterback. [Cited by 9-1-4]
- V. End A81 is split far to the left of the formation, to the outside of defensive end B89. On a sweep play in their direction B89 moves to their left to focus on the ball carrier, losing sight of A81. A81 then cuts to the inside, takes aim and launches at B89, forcibly contacting them with their forearm to B89's neck. **RULING:** Foul for blind-side block with targeting. Under Rule 9-1-4, 15 yard penalty, A81 is disqualified. B89 is a defenseless player as they are subject to the blind-side block (Rule 2-27-14). [Cited by 9-1-4]
- VI. Ball carrier A33 has gained several yards and is in the grasp of two defenders. [A33's forward progress has been stopped and is being driven back](#), but the ball has not been declared dead. Linebacker B55 crouches and thrusts themselves forward, driving their forearm into the side of A33's helmet. **RULING:** Targeting foul by B55. 15 yard penalty, B55 is disqualified. A33 is a defenseless player since they are in the grasp of the opponents and their forward progress has been stopped (Rule 2-27-14). [Cited by 9-1-4]
- VII. Pass receiver A88 has just caught the ball when defender B55 launches and drives their shoulder and forearm into their upper body. The back judge flags B55 for targeting to the head-neck area and they are disqualified. The referee makes their announcement of the targeting foul, and the play goes to review. **RULING:** After review, the video judge rules that there was not forcible contact to the head-neck area, overturning the disqualification of B55. The referee announces that B55 is not disqualified and that there will be no 15-yard penalty.
- VIII. Punt receiver B44 is in position to catch a punt. A88 races down the field and launches at B44, driving the side of their helmet and shoulder into B44's upper body the instant before the ball arrives. The side judge and field judge throw their flags and report to the referee that A88 is charged with kick-catch interference with targeting to the head-neck area. The referee makes their announcement of kick-catch interference with targeting to the head-neck area. The play goes to review. **RULING:** After review, the video judge rules that A88 did not make forcible contact to the head-neck area, overturning their disqualification. The referee announces that A88 is not disqualified and that the 15-yard penalty for interference with the opportunity to catch a kick will be enforced. ^x
- IX. On a punt return, B44 launches at A66 from the blind side and drives their shoulder into them. The force of the contact is at A66's side below the shoulder. **RULING:** Foul for blind-side block. A66 is a defenseless player because B44 executes a blind-side block. However, this is not a targeting foul because the forcible contact is not to the head/neck area.

Clipping

ARTICLE 5. There shall be no clipping (Rule 2-5).

Exceptions:

1. Offensive players who are on the line of scrimmage at the snap within the free-blocking zone (Rule 2-3-6) legally may clip in the free-blocking zone, subject to the following restrictions:
 - (a) A player in the free-blocking zone may not block an opponent with the force of the initial contact from behind and at or below the knee.
 - (b) A player on the line of scrimmage within the free-blocking zone may not leave the zone and return and legally clip.
 - (c) No player may violate Rule 9-1-6 (Blocking Below the Waist).

NOTE: The free-blocking zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone (Rule 2-3-6).

2. When a player turns their back to a potential blocker who has committed themselves in intent and direction of movement.
3. When a player attempts to reach a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier or attempts to legally recover or catch a fumble, a backward pass, a kick or a touched forward pass, they may push an opponent below the waist at or to the buttocks (Rule 9-3-5 Exception 3).
4. When an eligible player behind the neutral zone pushes an opponent below the waist at or to the buttocks to get to a forward pass (Rule 9-3-5 Exception 5).
5. Clipping is allowed against the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.

Blocking Below the Waist

ARTICLE 6.

a. *Team A prior to a change of team possession:*

1. 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 up to 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.
2. 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.

3. All other Team A players are not allowed to block below the waist.

b. *Team B prior to a change of team possession:*

1. 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.
2. All other Team B players are not allowed to block below the waist except against a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.

c. *Kicks:*

During a down in which there is a free kick or scrimmage kick, blocking below the waist by any player is illegal except against a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.

d. *After change of team possession:*

After any change of team possession, blocking below the waist by any player is illegal except against a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.

e. *Clipping.* No player may violate Rule 9-1-5 (Clipping).

Approved Ruling 9-1-6

- I. 1/10 @ A-40. Back A44 in lined up just behind the RT, and has his left foot inside the RT's outside foot. At the snap, A44 works back across the formation and blocks B77 below the waist from the side. B77 is inside the tackle box and 1 yard in the offensive backfield at the time of the block. During the play, A33 runs for a 12-yard gain. **RULING:** The block by A44 is an illegal block below the waist because it is not directed from the front. Stationary backs lined up within the tackle box may block below the waist in the tackle box until the ball leaves the tackle box only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front. The penalty is 15 yards and is enforced from the previous spot. Team A will have 1/25 @ A-25.

- II. 1/10 @ A-40. Back A44 is stationary and lined up 4 yards deep and is just behind the RG. After the snap, QB A12 takes a deep drop, and remains in the tackle box looking downfield. Linebacker, B55 blitzes between the LG and LT, and A44 crosses over to the left side of the formation and blocks B55 below the waist at the A-36. The block is directed from the front. After the block, A12's pass is completed to A88 for a gain of 15-yards. **RULING:** There is no foul on the play. The block by back A44 is legal as a stationary back lined up within the tackle box may block below the waist in the tackle box until the ball leaves the tackle box only if the force of the initial contact is directed from the front. Team A will have 1/10 @ B-45.
- III. Back A41 is stationary at the snap directly behind the right tackle in a balanced line formation. Their left shoulder is inside the tackle box. The quarterback hands the ball to back A22 who runs straight ahead. A41 blocks B2 who moves into the offensive backfield to make a play on the ball carrier before A22 reaches the line of scrimmage. The block is below the waist and clearly at the side. **RULING:** Illegal block. A41 is partially inside the tackle box and behind the second lineman at the snap, but the block is not from the front.
- IV. Defensive end B88 is lined up on the outside shoulder of tackle A75. On the initial line charge, B88 blocks tackle A75 below the waist from the side inside the tackle box. **RULING:** No foul for an illegal block below the waist.
- V. Back A22 is stationary inside the tackle box at the snap. After the snap, A22 shoots between the tackle and the guard and blocks B55 below the waist directed from the front. The initial contact is three yards beyond the neutral zone. **RULING:** Illegal block below the waist. The block is directed from the front, but is beyond the neutral zone.
- VI. Third and seven at the A-30. The ball is at the left hash mark. Back A22 is split completely outside the frame of the tackle on the left side, and B40 moves out to cover them. The handoff goes to back A44 who sweeps around the right end. As the play develops B40 follows the play and A22 chases them. At the A-40 beyond the right hash mark, A22 overtakes B40 and blocks them below the waist clearly and directly at the front (10-to-2). × A44 is tackled at the B-45. **RULING:** Illegal block below the waist. A22's initial position is outside the tackle box, so A22 may not legally block below the waist.
- VII. First and 10 at the A-40. A12 takes the snap and starts on a sweep to their right. Guard A66 pulls and leads the play. As the play develops, linebacker B55 blocks A66 from the front at the thigh at the A-39. A12 is driven out of bounds at the A-48. **RULING:** Illegal block below the waist. B55 was not aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage and therefore cannot block below the waist.
- VIII. At the snap tight end A85 is aligned six yards from the snapper. Before the ball has left the tackle box, A85 blocks tackle B77 below the waist at the side. **RULING:** Illegal block below the waist. A85's initial position is outside the tackle box at the snap, so A85 may not block below the waist. 15-yard penalty.
- IX. First and 10 at the A-45. Guard A66 is next to the snapper. Immediately after the snap, A66 blocks (a) nose guard B55 at the A-46, or (b) linebacker B33 at the A-48. In either case the block is below the waist at the side of the opponent. **RULING:** (a) Legal block. A66 has left the tackle box, but a block initiated one yard beyond the neutral zone is considered within the tackle box. (b) Foul, illegal block below the waist. In this case, A66 has left the tackle box[×] and has gone to the second level to make this low block. To be legal this block may not be below the waist.

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Late Hit, Action Out of Bounds

- ARTICLE 7. a. There shall be no piling on, falling on, or throwing the body on an opponent after the ball becomes dead. (A.R. 9-1-7:I)
- b. No opponent shall tackle or block the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier when they are clearly out of bounds or throw them to the ground after the ball becomes dead.
- c. It is illegal for any player to be clearly out of bounds when they initiate a block against an opponent who is out of bounds. The spot of the foul is the point on the sideline nearest to where the contact occurs.

Approved Ruling 9-1-7

- I. After the ball is dead, a player throws himself onto an opponent lying on the ground. **RULING:** Personal foul. Penalty — 15 yards from the succeeding spot and first down if by a Team B player and not in conflict with other rules. "Piling on" applies to a ball carrier or to any other opponent who is prostrate when the ball becomes dead. [Cited by 9-1-7-a]
- II. On a sweep play toward the sideline, linebacker B55 goes out of bounds to avoid a block. Guard A66 is leading the play, and just as they step on the sideline with their front foot they drive their shoulder in the waist at the front of B55 who is still out of bounds. **RULING:** Legal block. A66 does not have both feet out of bounds.

Helmet and Face Mask Fouls

- ARTICLE 8. a. No player shall continuously contact an opponent's face, helmet (including the face mask) or neck with hand(s) or arm(s) (**Exception:** By or against the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier). [S26: PF-HTF]
- b. No player shall grasp and then twist, turn or pull the face mask, chin strap or any helmet opening of an opponent. It is not a foul if the face mask, chin strap or helmet opening is not grasped and then twisted, turned or pulled. When in question, it is a foul.

Roughing the Passer

- ARTICLE 9. a. No defensive player shall unnecessarily rough a forward passer when it is obvious the ball has been thrown. Illegal actions include but are not limited to:
1. Targeting fouls as noted in Rules 9-1-3 and 9-1-4.
 2. Forcible contact to the head or neck area that does not meet the requirements of Rule 9-1-4 (also reference Rule 9-1-2).
 3. Forcible contact that is avoidable after it is obvious the ball has left the forward passer's hand. (**Exception:** A defensive player who is blocked by a Team A player(s) with a force so that they have no opportunity to avoid contact with the forward passer. However, this does not relieve the defensive player of responsibility for personal fouls as described elsewhere in this section.)
 4. Forcibly driving the forward passer to the ground and landing on them with action that punishes the player.
 5. Any action that is a personal foul as described elsewhere in this section.
- b. When an offensive player is in a passing posture with one or both feet on the ground, no defensive player rushing unabated shall hit them forcibly at the knee area or below. The defensive player also may not initiate a roll or lunge and forcibly hit this opponent in the knee area or below.

Exceptions:

1. It is not a foul if the offensive player is a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier not in a passing posture, either inside or outside the tackle box.
2. It is not a foul if the defender grabs or wraps this opponent in an attempt to make a conventional tackle without making forcible contact with the head or shoulder.
3. It is not a foul if the defender is not rushing unabated or is blocked or fouled into this opponent.

PENALTY – The 15-yard 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. (A.R. 9-1-9:II-III)

Approved Ruling 9-1-9

- I. After forward passer A17 releases the ball, B68 takes two strides and charges into A17, showing no attempt to avoid contact. **RULING:** Roughing the passer. The forward passer is a defenseless player who is vulnerable to injury and must be fully protected. After taking two strides, B68 should be aware that A17 has released the ball and be able to avoid contacting them.
- II. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. Just as they release the ball they are hit by end B88 who drives their shoulder into A11's knee. The pass is (a) incomplete; (b) caught by A44 who is tackled after a 12-yard gain to the B-40. **RULING:** Foul by B88 for forcibly hitting the forward passer at the knee or below, in violation of Rule 9-1-9-b. Automatic first down and 15-yard penalty enforced at (a) the previous spot; (b) the B-40, the end of the run by A44. [Cited by 9-1-9 Penalty]
- III. Quarterback A11 drops back in the pocket and sets up to pass. They then scramble to their right, sets up again and is in the passing posture when they are hit by end B88 who drives their shoulder into A11's knee. A11 then pulls the ball in and goes to the ground because of being tackled by B88. **RULING:** Foul by B88, violation of Rule 9-1-9-b. While A11 is technically not a forward passer because they did not release the ball, the action by B88 is a foul under 9-1-9-b because of the vulnerability of A11 as a potential passer in a passing posture. [Cited by 9-1-9 Penalty]

Chop Blocking

ARTICLE 10. There shall be no chop blocking (Rule 2-3-3). **(A.R. 9-1-10:I-V)**

Approved Ruling 9-1-10

- I. On a forward pass play, A75 is blocking B66 at the waist behind the neutral zone. While A75 maintains contact, A47 subsequently blocks B66 at their thigh. **RULING:** Chop block. 15 yards from the previous spot. [Cited by 2-3-3, 9-1-10]
- II. As the flow of the play moves to the left, right tackle A77 is disengaging from their block above the thigh with B50 when A27 blocks B50 at their knee. **RULING:** Chop block, 15 yards. Previous-spot enforcement if the foul occurs behind the neutral zone. [Cited by 2-3-3, 9-1-10]
- III. Immediately after the snap, left guard A65 and left tackle A79 simultaneously block B66, who is in the neutral zone. (a) Both blocks are at the thigh. (b) One contact is at the waist and the other at the knee. **RULING:** (a) Legal blocks for a low-low combination. (b) Foul, chop block. [Cited by 2-3-3, 9-1-10]
- IV. Tight end A87 and wingback A43 are leading the play when both simultaneously block linebacker B17, who is three yards beyond the neutral zone. (a) Both blocks are above the waist. (b) One block is above the waist and the other at the knee. **RULING:** (a) Legal blocks. (b) Foul, chop block. [Cited by 2-3-3, 9-1-10]
- V. After snapping the ball, snapper A54 brushes by nose guard B62 on their way to block a linebacker. A54 makes slight contact with B62, or B62 reaches out and uses their arm to initiate contact with A54. While B62 and A54 are in contact, right guard A68 blocks B62 at the knee from the front. **RULING:** Legal. A54 is not blocking B62. The incidental contact or B62's initiating contact does not constitute part of a combination block, and hence there is no chop block. [Cited by 2-3-3, 9-1-10]

Leverage and Leaping

- ARTICLE 11. a. No defensive player, in an attempt to gain an advantage, may step, jump or stand on an opponent.
- b. It is a foul if a defensive player moves forward and tries to block a kick or apparent kick on a field goal or try by leaving their feet and leaping into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent. It is not a foul if the player was aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped.
 - c. It is a foul if a defensive player who is inside the tackle box tries to block a punt or an apparent punt by leaving their feet and leaping into the plane directly above the frame of the body of an opponent.

1. It is not a foul if the player tries to block the punt by jumping straight up without attempting to leap over the opponent.
2. It is not a foul if a player leaps through or over the gap between players.
- d. No defensive player, in an attempt to block, bat or catch a kick or apparent kick, may:
 1. Step, jump or stand on a teammate.
 2. Place a hand(s) on a teammate to get leverage for additional height.
 3. Be picked up by a teammate, or be elevated, propelled or pushed.

PENALTY – 15 yards from the previous spot and automatic first down. [S38: PF-LEA]

- e. No player may position themselves with their feet on the back or shoulders of a teammate before the snap.

PENALTY – Dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules [S27: UC-UNS].

Contact Against an Opponent Out of the Play

- ARTICLE 12. a. No player shall tackle or run into a receiver when a forward pass to that receiver is obviously not catchable. This is a personal foul and not pass interference.
- b. No player shall run into or throw themselves against an opponent obviously out of the play either before or after the ball is dead.

Hurdling

ARTICLE 13. There shall be no hurdling (*Exception:* The ball carrier may hurdle an opponent).

Contact Against the Snapper

ARTICLE 14. When a team is in scrimmage kick formation, a defensive player may not initiate contact with the snapper until one second has elapsed after the snap. (**A.R. 9-1-14:I-III**)

Approved Ruling 9-1-14

- I. A10 is in a shotgun-type formation 5½ yards behind the snapper, who has their head down and is looking backward through their legs. Immediately after the snap, nose guard B55 charges directly at the snapper and contacts them by pushing them backward. **RULING:** Legal. The snapper is not afforded any special protection because Team A is not in a scrimmage kick formation, since A10 is not at least 7 yards deep (Rule 2-16-10). The snapper does have the usual protection against any personal foul for unnecessary roughness. [Cited by 2-16-10-a, 9-1-14]
- II. Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation with the punter 15 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Immediately after the snap, nose guard B55 charges directly at the snapper, contacts them, and drives them backward. The ball is snapped to an upback three yards behind the scrimmage line or to the potential kicker, who instead runs with or passes the ball. **RULING:** Foul. Penalty — 15 yards and automatic first down. The snapper may not be contacted until one second has elapsed after the snap when Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation. [Cited by 2-16-10-a, 9-1-14]
- III. Immediately after the snap, with Team A in a scrimmage kick formation, B71 is lined up within one yard of the line of scrimmage and is outside of the frame of the snapper. B71 attempts to "shoot the gap" between the snapper and the adjacent lineman. B71's initial legal contact is with the lineman next to the snapper. **RULING:** Legal. Incidental contact with the snapper after this initial legal contact is not a foul (Rule 2-16-10). [Cited by 2-16-10-a, 9-1-14]

Horse-Collar Tackle

ARTICLE 15. All players are prohibited from grabbing the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, the nameplate area of the jersey or above, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and abruptly pulling the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier toward the ground. This does not apply to a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier, including a potential forward passer, who is inside the tackle box (Rule 2-34). Note that the tackle box disintegrates when the ball leaves it.

NOTE: It is not necessary for a player to pull the opponent completely to the ground in order for the act to be illegal. If the opponent's knees are buckled by the action, it is a foul even if they are not pulled completely to the ground.

Approved Ruling 9-1-15

- I. As ball carrier A20 races down the field near the sideline, defender B56 grabs them from behind by the back of the jersey at the collar or by the collar of their shoulder pad. B56 continues with this contact for several yards but A20 does not go to the ground until tackled by another defender. **RULING:** Legal play. B56 did not foul because they did not abruptly pull A20 down.

Roughing or Running into Kicker or Holder

ARTICLE 16. a. When it is obvious that a scrimmage kick will be made, no opponent shall run into or rough the kicker or the holder of a place kick. (**A.R. 9-1-16:I, III and VI**)

1. Roughing is a live-ball personal foul that endangers the kicker or holder.
2. Running into the kicker or holder is a live-ball foul that occurs when the kicker or holder is displaced from their kicking or holding position but is not roughed. (**A.R. 9-1-16:II**)
3. Incidental contact with a kicker or holder is not a foul.
4. The kicker's protection under this rule ends:
 - (a) When the kicker has had a reasonable time to regain their balance (**A.R. 9-1-16:IV**); or
 - (b) When the kicker carries or possesses the ball outside the tackle box (Rule 2-34) before kicking.
5. When a defensive player's contact against the kicker or holder is caused by an opponent's block (legal or illegal), there is no foul for running into or roughing.
6. A player who makes contact with the kicker or holder after touching the kick is not charged with running into or roughing the kicker.
7. When a player other than one who blocks a scrimmage kick runs into or roughs the kicker or holder, it is a foul.
8. When in question whether the foul is *running into* or *roughing*, the foul is *roughing*.

PENALTY – Roughing or any other personal foul against the kicker who is in the act of or just after kicking the ball; or roughing the holder: 15 yards from the previous spot, plus automatic first down if not in conflict with other rules [S38 and S30: PF-RTK/PF-RTH]. Running into the kicker or holder: five yards from the previous spot [S30: RNK/RNH].

- b. A kicker or holder simulating being roughed or run into by a defensive player commits an unsportsmanlike act. (**A.R. 9-1-16:V**)

PENALTY – 15 yards from the previous spot or, if the scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone, can be enforced where the subsequent dead ball belongs to Team B [S27: UC-SBR].

- c. The kicker of a free kick may not be blocked until they have advanced five yards beyond their restraining line, or until the ball has touched a player, an official or the ground.

PENALTY – 15 yards from the previous spot [S40: PF-RFK].

Approved Ruling 9-1-16

- I. A1 catches a long snap and plans to punt from behind their line of scrimmage, but misses the ball, which falls to the ground. A1 is then contacted by B1. **RULING:** Team A fumble. No foul by B1. There is no kicker until the ball is kicked. [Cited by 9-1-16-a]
- II. A1 kicks the ball, after which B1, unable to stop their attempt to block the kick, makes contact with the kicker or holder. **RULING:** This action could be either "Roughing" or "Running into" the kicker or holder. When in question, the ruling is to be "Roughing", which carries a penalty of 15 yards and an automatic first down. [Cited by 9-1-16-a-2]
- III. A1, from a non-scrimmage kick formation, makes a quick, unexpected kick so suddenly that B1 cannot avoid contact. **RULING:** This is not roughing or running into the kicker, since the rule applies only when it is obvious that a kick will be made. [Cited by 9-1-16-a]
- IV. B1 runs into player A1, who has kicked the ball and has had a reasonable time to regain their balance. **RULING:** Not a foul by B1 unless ruled as running into or throwing themselves against an opponent obviously out of the play (Rule 9-1-12). [Cited by 9-1-16-a-4-a]
- V. After B1 runs into the kicker, kicker A25 simulates being roughed. **RULING:** Offsetting fouls. [Cited by 9-1-16-b]
- VI. Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation. Punter A1 moves laterally two or three steps to recover a faulty snap, or recovers a snap that went over their head, and then kicks the ball. B2 contacts A1 in an unsuccessful attempt to block the kick. **RULING:** A1 does not automatically lose their protection in either case unless they carry or possess the ball outside the tackle box. While in the tackle box, A1 is entitled to protection as in any other kicking situation. When it becomes obvious that A1 intends to kick in a normal punting position, defensive players must avoid them after they kick the ball. [Cited by 9-1-16-a]
- VII. Punter A22 is 15 yards behind the neutral zone when they catch the long snap, sprints to their right at an angle toward the line of scrimmage, and runs outside the tackle box. They then stop and punt the ball, and (a) is immediately hit by a diving B89; or (b) is immediately hit by B89, and B89 is guilty of targeting. **RULING:** (a) Legal play, no foul by B89. A22 loses their roughing or running-into protection by carrying the ball outside the tackle box. (b) Even though the kicker is outside the tackle box, targeting is a personal foul and the penalty will be enforced at the previous spot.

Continued Participation Without Helmet

ARTICLE 17. A player whose helmet comes completely off during a down may not continue to participate beyond the immediate action in which they are engaged, whether or not they put the helmet back on during the down. **(A.R. 9-1-17:I)**

Approved Ruling 9-1-17

- I. During a down B55's helmet comes off without a helmet foul by Team A. B55 immediately picks up their helmet, puts it on and continues to chase the ball carrier. **RULING:** Personal foul by B55 for continuing to participate after losing their helmet. The clock stops at the end of the down and B55 must leave the game for the next down (Rule 3-3-9). [Cited by 9-1-17]

Blind-side block

ARTICLE 18. No player shall deliver a blind-side block by attacking an opponent with forcible contact. **(Exceptions:**

1. the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier;
2. a receiver in the act of attempting to make a catch.)

NOTE: In addition, if this action meets all the elements of targeting, it is a blind-side block with targeting (Rules 9-1-3 and 9-1-4). **(A.R. 9-1-18:I)**

Approved Ruling 9-1-18

- I. B44 intercepts the pass of A12 at the B-20 and turns back up-field on the return. During the return, B21 approaches A88 at midfield from the blind side and blocks A88 (a) with extended hands; (b) with a screen type block; (c) by attacking with forcible contact with their shoulder into the chest of A88; (d) by attacking with forcible contact with the shoulder into the head of A88. B44 returns the pass to the A-20. **RULING:** (a) No foul. (b) No foul. (c) Personal Foul, blind-side block, 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul. (d) Personal Foul, blind-side block with targeting, 15-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and B21 is disqualified. [Cited by 9-1-18 Exception 2-Note]

SECTION 2. Unsportsmanlike Conduct Fouls**Unsportsmanlike Acts**

ARTICLE 1. There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct or any act that interferes with orderly game administration on the part of players, substitutes, coaches, authorized attendants or any other persons subject to the rules, before the game, during the game or between periods. Infractions for these acts by players are administered as either live-ball or dead-ball fouls depending on when they occur. **(A.R. 9-2-1:I-X)**

a. Specifically prohibited acts and conduct include:

1. 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 but not limited to:
 - (a) Pointing the finger(s), hand(s), arm(s) or ball at an opponent, or imitating the slashing of the throat.
 - (b) Taunting, baiting or ridiculing an opponent verbally.
 - (c) Inciting an opponent or spectators in any other way, such as simulating the firing of a weapon or placing a hand by the ear to request recognition.
 - (d) Any delayed, excessive, prolonged or choreographed act by which a player (or players) attempts to focus attention upon themselves (or themselves).
 - (e) An unopposed ball carrier obviously altering stride when approaching the opponent's goal line or diving into the end zone.
 - (f) A player removing their helmet after the ball is dead and before they are in the team area (**Exceptions:** Team, media or injury timeouts; equipment adjustment; through play; between periods; and during a measurement for a first down).
 - (g) Punching one's own chest or crossing one's arms in front of the chest while standing over a prone player.
 - (h) Going into the stands to interact with spectators, or bowing at the waist after a good play.
 - (i) Intentionally removing the helmet while the ball is alive.
 - (j) Dead-ball contact fouls such as pushing, shoving, striking, etc. that occur clearly after the ball is dead and that are not part of the game action. **(A.R. 9-2-1:X)**
 - (k) After the ball is dead, using forcible contact to push or pull an opponent off the pile. **(A.R. 9-2-1:XI)**
 - (l) Feigning an injury.

PENALTY – Unsportsmanlike conduct. Live-ball fouls by players: 15 yards [S27: UC-*]. Live-ball fouls by non-players and all dead-ball fouls: 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S27: UC-*]. Automatic first down for live-ball and dead-

ball fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified. [S47: DSQ].

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. After a score or any other play, the player in possession immediately must return the ball to an official or leave it near the dead-ball spot. This prohibits:
 - (a) Kicking, throwing, spinning or carrying (including off the field) the ball any distance that requires an official to retrieve it.
 - (b) Spiking the ball to the ground (*Exception:* A forward pass to conserve time (Rule 7-3-2-f)).
 - (c) Throwing the ball high into the air.
 - (d) Any other unsportsmanlike act or actions that delay the game.

PENALTY – Unsportsmanlike conduct. Dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S27: UC-*]. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47: DSQ].

b. Other prohibited acts include:

1. During the game, coaches, squad members and authorised attendants in the team area shall not be on the field of play or outside the 20-yard lines to protest an officiating decision or to communicate with players or officials without permission from the referee. (*Exception:* Rules 1-2-4-f, 3-3-4-d, 3-3-8-c and 3-5-1).
2. No disqualified person shall be in view of the field of play (Rule 9-2-6).
3. No person or mascot subject to the rules, except players, officials and eligible substitutes, shall be on the field of play or end zones during any period without permission from the referee. If a player is injured, attendants may come inbounds to attend them, but they must obtain recognition from an official.
4. No substitute(s) may enter the field of play or end zones for purposes other than replacing a player(s) or to fill a player vacancy(ies). This includes demonstrations after any play (**A.R. 9-2-1:I**).
5. Persons subject to the rules, including bands and audio/video/lighting systems operators, shall not create any noise or distraction that prohibits a team from hearing its signals or obstructs play (Rule 1-1-6).

PENALTY – [1-4] Unsportsmanlike conduct. Dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S27: UC-*]. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47: DSQ].

[5] Unsportsmanlike conduct. The referee may take any action they consider equitable, which includes directing that the down be repeated, assessing a 15-yard penalty, awarding a score, or suspending or forfeiting the game [S27: UFA].

Approved Ruling 9-2-1

- I. Team B scores a touchdown on a kickoff return, and substitutes from the Team B area, with no intention of entering the game, run to the end zone to congratulate the ball carrier.
RULING: Unsportsmanlike act. Penalty — 15 yards, enforced on the try, the succeeding kickoff or from the succeeding spot in extra periods. Officials should note the numbers of the offending players, for possible disqualification later in the game upon committing a second unsportsmanlike conduct foul (9-2-1-a-Penalty). [Cited by 9-2-1, 9-2-1-b-4]
- II. Third and 15 at the B-20. Eligible A88 catches a pass at the B-18 and heads for the goal line. At the B-10 they go into a "goose step" and continue this action as they cross the goal line.
RULING: Live-ball foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. Fifteen-yard penalty enforced at the spot of the foul, which is the B-10, and repeat third down. Third and 20 at the B-25. [Cited by 9-2-1]
- III. Second and five at the B-40. Back A22 takes a backward pass from the quarterback, circles right end, and heads for the goal line. Guard A66, who had pulled out to lead the play, legally blocks B90 to the ground and then stands over them at the B-30 taunting and screaming obscenities. This draws a flag from the head linesman, when A22 is at the B-10 before continuing into the end zone. **RULING:** Live-ball foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. Fifteen-yard penalty enforced at the spot of the foul, which is the B-30, and repeat second down. Second and 10 at the B-45. [Cited by 9-2-1]
- IV. Third and 15 at the B-20. Eligible A88 catches a pass at the B-18 and heads for the goal line. Very close to the goal line they dive into the end zone, with no Team B player closer than about 10 yards. The field judge is uncertain of the exact spot where A88 started their diving action. **RULING:** Foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. Administer as a dead-ball foul. The touchdown counts and the penalty is enforced on the try, the succeeding kickoff, or from the succeeding spot in extra periods. [Cited by 9-2-1]
- V. Second and seven at the B-30. Nose guard B55 is lined up in the neutral zone at the snap. Back A22 takes the ball on a quick play up the middle, bursts into the open, and at the B-10 they turn around and prance backward into the end zone. The head linesman and the line judge both have flags for the offside foul, and the back judge drops their flag for the action by A22. **RULING:** Offsetting fouls, repeat the down. Second and seven at the B-30. [Cited by 9-2-1]
- VI. First and 10 at the 50. The quarterback pitches out to running back A44 who circles right end and races toward the goal line. The line judge trailing the play flags linebacker B57 for screaming obscenities at them, complaining that they were held by the tight end. A44 scores a touchdown. **RULING:** Live-ball unsportsmanlike conduct against B57. The penalty carries over to either the try or the kickoff, at the option of Team A. [Cited by 9-2-1]
- VII. Third and 15 at the A-45. A12 drops back to pass and is sacked by tackle B77 for a 10-yard loss. B77 leaps to their feet, beats their chest, stands over A12 and taunts them, and showboats to the crowd, drawing flags from the referee and the line judge. **RULING:** Dead-ball unsportsmanlike conduct by B77. Fifteen-yard penalty at the dead-ball spot plus automatic first down. First and 10 for Team A at the 50. [Cited by 9-2-1]
- VIII. Safety B33 intercepts a pass at the B-10 and returns for a touchdown. As they are coming down the sideline covering the play, the line judge drops their flag after they run into the Team B head coach who is just on the field of play near the B-40. **RULING:** Although this is a foul that takes place while the ball is alive, it is treated as a dead-ball foul against the team because it is committed by a non-player. The touchdown counts and the 15-yard penalty is enforced on the try, the succeeding kickoff, or from the succeeding spot in extra periods. [Cited by 9-2-1]
- IX. Second and five at the A-45. Ball carrier A33 breaks out into the open and has a clear path to the goal line. At the B-2 they suddenly make a sharp left turn and trot along the B-2 as the Team B players begin to catch up to them. They then carry the ball into the end zone. A33 next runs to the stands and begins to exchange "high-fives" with the fans. **RULING:** No score. A33 is charged with two fouls for unsportsmanlike conduct, one live-ball and the other dead-ball. Both 15-yard penalties are enforced and A33 is disqualified from the game. First and 10 for Team A at the B-32 (Rule 9-2-6). [Cited by 9-2-1]
- X. After the ball carrier is tackled, A55 and B73 engage in a scuffle such that officials have to separate them and throw flags. Both A55 and B73 are charged with dead-ball personal fouls. **RULING:** Offsetting dead-ball fouls. Each player is also charged with an

unsportsmanlike conduct foul which counts toward the two such fouls leading to automatic disqualification. The referee announces either the first or second unsportsmanlike conduct foul for A55 and B73. [Cited by 9-2-1, 9-2-1-a-1-j]

- XI. During the play, the ball carrier fumbles and several players dive for the ball. B55 grabs A33 and slings them off the pile. **RULING:** B55 is charged with a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. 15 yards and automatic first down. The referee announces that this is either the first or second unsportsmanlike conduct foul against B55. If it is the second, B55 is disqualified from the game. [Cited by 9-2-1-a-1-k]
- XII. During a dead-ball time, a head coach or an assistant coach is flagged for coming out to the numbers and cursing the officials in a loud and abusive manner. **RULING:** The officials charge either the head coach or the assistant coach with a foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. The referee announces that this is either the first or second unsportsmanlike conduct foul against the coach in question. If it is the second, the coach in question is disqualified from the game.

Unfair Tactics

- ARTICLE 2. a. No player shall conceal the ball in or beneath their clothing or equipment or substitute any other article for the ball.
- 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 (Rule 3-5-2-e). **(A.R. 9-2-2:I-VI)**
- c. No equipment may be used to confuse opponents (Rule 1-4-2-d).
- d. No unusual action or verbiage may be used by Team A to confuse an opponent into believing the snap or free kick is not imminent. **Team A may not advance the ball nor consume more than 3 seconds having indicated to their opponents that they do not intend to advance the ball (a "take-a-knee" play).**
- e. No action that simulates an injury may be used to confuse opponents or officials.

PENALTY – [a-e] — Unsportsmanlike conduct. Live-ball foul. 15 yards from the previous spot [S27: UFT]. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. Flagrant offenders shall be disqualified [S47: DSQ].

- f. No more than one squad member may be assigned or wear the same jersey number (*Exception:* Non-competitive games).

PENALTY – Unsportsmanlike conduct charged against the Head Coach and the players must immediately correct the numbering and report the change. Administer as a dead ball foul - 15 yards [S27: UC-2PN].

Approved Ruling 9-2-2

- I. After the ball is ready for play, Team A goes into a formation with two players split wide on both sides of the snapper and two other Team A linemen adjacent to the snapper. No more than four players are legally in the backfield. Team A sends in two substitutes, who take positions on the line of scrimmage adjacent to the two split offensive linemen on the opposite side of the field of play from their team bench. This leaves Team A with nine players on the line of scrimmage and four backfield players all legally in position. Immediately and before the snap, two Team A linemen nearest their team's bench leave the field and are off at the snap. Seven players are on the line of scrimmage, five of whom are Team A linemen numbered 50 to 79. **RULING:** Penalty — 15 yards from the previous spot. This is a simulated replacement of a player to confuse the opponents. [Cited by 9-2-2-b]
- II. On fourth down at Team B's 12-yard line, A1 enters the field with a kicking shoe while their 11 teammates are in the huddle. A1 kneels and measures the distance from the neutral zone to the kicking spot. While their teammates are leaving the huddle, A1 leaves the field with the shoe. Team A quickly runs a play from scrimmage. **RULING:** Team A foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. Penalty — 15 yards from the previous spot. There shall be no simulated replacement of a player to confuse the opponents, and a player who communicates must remain in the game for one down. [Cited by 9-2-2-b]

- III. A1 leaves the field of play during a down. Team A huddles with 10 players. Substitute A12 enters and A2 simulates leaving the field, but sets near the sideline for a "hide-out" pass. **RULING:** Penalty — 15 yards from the previous spot. This is a simulated replacement of a player to confuse opponents. [Cited by 9-2-2-b]
- IV. While a team is legally set to attempt a field goal, the potential holder for the kick goes toward their team area asking for a shoe. A shoe is thrown on the field and the player, in motion toward their team area, turns toward the goal line. The ball is snapped to the player in the kicking position, who throws a pass to the player who had turned upfield after asking for a shoe. **RULING:** Penalty — 15 yards from the previous spot. [Cited by 9-2-2-b]
- V. Team A is lined up in scrimmage kick formation and has been set for one second. One of the offensive backs shouts to and motions to A40, the blocker on the right wing, to get off the field. At the snap, A40 is in legal motion toward their sideline. A40 turns downfield and becomes a pass receiver. **RULING:** Penalty — 15 yards from the previous spot. This is a tactic associated with the substitution process to deceive opponents. [Cited by 9-2-2-b]
- VI. After the down is over, Team A sends in three substitutes, and three players begin to leave the field. A88, who participated in the previous play trails the three replaced players toward the Team A sideline. The three replaced players continue into the team area, but A88 stops and sets up on the line of scrimmage very close to the sideline. After the ball is snapped A88 runs down the sideline and catches a forward pass. **RULING:** Team A foul at the snap, unsportsmanlike conduct for unfair tactics: using the substitution process to deceive the opponents. Live-ball foul. Penalty — 15 yards from the previous spot. [Cited by 9-2-2-b]
- VII. 4/10 @ A-35. As Team A begins substitutions for a potential punt, it is discovered that Team A has assigned three players wearing the number 2. **RULING:** Unsportsmanlike Conduct charged against the head coach. After enforcement, 4/25 @ A-20. This counts toward the two Unsportsmanlike Conduct fouls that lead to automatic disqualification.

VIII. 4/1 @ B-40. QB A12 moves from shotgun formation to under center and barks signals in an unsuccessful attempt to draw Team B offside. With 10 seconds remaining on the play clock, A12 backs away from the center and jogs toward the sideline being very demonstrative with his arms and waiving to the bench. As A12 approaches the sideline, the ball is snapped directly to back A44 just before the play clock expires and A44 runs to the B-38. **RULING:** Team A, 4/16 @ A-45 -Unsportsmanlike Conduct by A12; penalise Team A 15 yards from the previous spot. The action by A12 is in violation of the spirit of Rule 9-2-2-b.

Unfair Acts

ARTICLE 3. The following are unfair acts:

- a. A team refuses to play within two minutes after ordered to do so by the referee.
- b. A team repeatedly commits fouls for which penalties can be enforced only by halving the distance to its goal line.
- c. An obviously unfair act not specifically covered by the rules occurs during the game. This includes substitutes, coaches or any other persons subject to the rules, other than a player or official, interfering in any way with the ball or a player while the ball is in play (A.R. 4-2-1:II) (A.R. 9-2-3:I and IV).

PENALTY – Unsportsmanlike conduct. The referee may take any action they consider equitable, which includes directing that the down be repeated, assessing a 15-yard penalty, awarding a score, or suspending or forfeiting the game [S27: UFA].

Approved Ruling 9-2-3

- I. After the ball is ready for play and the umpire (or centre judge) is in their regular position, Team A quickly replaces some players with substitutes, gets set for the required one second and snaps the ball. The umpire (or centre judge) is attempting to get to the ball to allow the defense to match up, but they are unable to prevent the snap. **RULING:** The play is shut down, the game clock is stopped and the defense is allowed to substitute in response to Team A's late substitutions. No foul. The play clock is set to 25 seconds and starts on the ready-for-play signal. The game clock starts on the ready-for-play signal or the snap,

- depending on its condition when play was stopped. The referee informs the Team A head coach that any subsequent such actions will result in a foul against the team for unsportsmanlike conduct (Rule 3-5-2). [Cited by 9-2-3-c]
- II. Team A, trailing by nine points, has 1st-and-10 on the B-22 with 0:35 showing on the game clock. At the snap, B21, B40 and B44 blatantly hold, wrapping both arms around Team A's wideouts and take them to the ground. Quarterback A12 has no receiver in the route, scrambles and then legally throws the ball away. After the play, the game clock reads 0:26. The back judge, field judge and side judge have a flag down for Team B holding on each of their keys. **RULING:** This is a blatant and obvious unfair act designed to take time off the clock. The referee will convert the holding fouls to unsportsmanlike conduct fouls. Penalise half the distance to the goal. Team A will have 1st and 10 at the B-11. The game clock is reset to 0:35 and starts on the next snap. B21, B40 and B44 each have one unsportsmanlike foul counter.
 - III. Team A, ahead in the score by four points, has 4th-and-10 at the A-30 with 0:14 seconds remaining in the game. From a shotgun formation, A12 receives the snap, retreats back toward their own goal line, and moves out of the tackle box. At the snap, each Team A lineman blatantly holds the Team B player in front of them, preventing the defensive linemen from immediately rushing the passer. When rushers approach A12, they throw the ball high so that it lands beyond the line of scrimmage and out of bounds. When the pass hits the ground, the game clock reads 0:00. The umpire, centre judge (if applicable) and referee each have a flag on the ground for holding on Team A. **RULING:** This is a blatant and obvious unfair act designed to take time off the clock. The referee will convert the holding fouls to unsportsmanlike conduct fouls. Penalise Team A 15 yards from the previous spot. Team A will have 4th and 25 at the A-15. The game clock is reset to 0:14 and starts on the next snap. Each Team A lineman guilty of holding will have one unsportsmanlike foul counter.
 - IV. 1/10 @ A-25 with 0:01 remaining in the game and Team A trails by 5 points. A12 throws a pass that is complete to A88 at midfield. After the catch by A88, there are a series of legal backwards passes keeping the ball alive in Team A possession. Eventually A21 laterals the ball toward teammate A44, and the ball hits the ground with no recovery. The Team B bench thinking that the ball is dead rushes the field and many squad members are on the field. A44 recovers the ball and begins running and encounters heavy traffic with the Team B squad members on the field, reverses field and is finally tackled by B50 at the B-30. **RULING:** No substitute, coach or any person subject to the rules, other than a player or official may interfere in any way with the ball or a player while the ball is in play. This unfair act will be penalised 15 yards as a live ball foul. The Referee may enforce any penalty that they consider equitable, including awarding a score. [Cited by 9-2-3-c]

Contacting an Official

ARTICLE 4. Persons subject to the rules (Rule 1-1-6) shall not intentionally contact a game official forcibly during the game.

PENALTY – Unsportsmanlike conduct. Administer as a dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot and automatic disqualification. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules [S7, S27 and S47: UC-FCO/DSQ].

Game Administration and Sideline Interference

ARTICLE 5. While the ball is alive and during the continuing action after the ball has been declared dead:

- a. Coaches, substitutes and authorised attendants in the team area must be behind the coaching line.

PENALTY – Administer as a dead-ball foul.

First infraction: Warning for sideline interference. No yardage penalty. [S15: SLW]

Second and third infractions: Delay of game for sideline interference, five yards from the succeeding spot. [S21 and S29: SLI]

Fourth and subsequent infractions: Team unsportsmanlike conduct for sideline interference, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. [S27 and S29: SLM]

- b. Physical interference with an official is a foul charged to the team for unsportsmanlike conduct. (A.R. 9-2-5:I)

PENALTY – Team unsportsmanlike conduct. Administer as a dead-ball foul. 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for fouls by Team B if not in conflict with other rules. [S27: UNS]

Approved Ruling 9-2-5

- I. On the opening kickoff, B22 catches the kick at their goal line and returns the ball down the sideline on Team B's side of the field. As they move down the sideline officiating the play, the side judge either runs into or must run around a Team B coach or squad member in the restricted area ("the white"). B22 is driven out of bounds at the A-20. **RULING:** Either situation is physical interference with an official during the play. No warning. Team B foul for unsportsmanlike conduct administered as a dead-ball foul. After the 15-yard penalty, Team B will have first and 10 at the A-35. [Cited by 9-2-5-b]
- II. During a long kickoff return, the Side Judge has to stop and run around the head coach who is out of the coaching box in the restricted area or on the field of play near the sideline. **RULING:** Team foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. Administer as a dead-ball foul. Penalise 15 yards at the succeeding spot. This is a team foul, and is not charged as an unsportsmanlike conduct foul against the head coach.
- III. During a long kickoff return, the head coach and/or other coaches are outside the coaching box and are in the restricted area or on the field of play near the sideline. No physical interference is made with an official during the play. **RULING:** Administer as a dead-ball foul.
- First infraction:* Warning for sideline interference. No yardage penalty.
Second and third infractions: Delay of game for sideline interference, five yards from the succeeding spot.
Fourth and subsequent infractions: Team unsportsmanlike conduct foul for sideline interference. Penalise 15 yards at the succeeding spot. This is a team foul, and is not charged as an unsportsmanlike conduct foul against any coach.

Disqualified players and coaches

- ARTICLE 6. a. Any coach, player or identified squad member in uniform who commits two unsportsmanlike conduct fouls in the same game shall be disqualified.
- b. A player disqualified from the game (Rule 2-27-12) must leave the playing enclosure (Rule 2-31-5) under team supervision within a reasonable amount of time after their disqualification. They must remain out of view of the field of play under team supervision for the remainder of the game.
- c. A coach disqualified from the game must leave the playing enclosure within a reasonable amount of time after the disqualification and must remain out of view of the field of play for the remainder of the game.
- d. A head coach disqualified from the game may designate a new head coach.

Approved Ruling 9-2-6

- I. During a long kickoff return, the head coach of the kicking team comes onto the field of play, vigorously and angrily protesting that there should have been a flag for holding by the receiving team during the return. **RULING:** Unsportsmanlike conduct foul against the head coach. Administer as a dead-ball foul. Penalise 15 yards at the succeeding spot. This counts as one of the unsportsmanlike conduct fouls against the head coach. If this were their second foul for unsportsmanlike conduct, the head coach would be disqualified from the game. A head coach disqualified from the game may designate a new head coach.

Removing persons from the playing enclosure

ARTICLE 7. The referee may require game management to remove any person from the playing enclosure (Rule 2-31-5) who they believe poses a threat to the safety of persons subject to the rules or the officials, or whose behaviour is prejudicial to the orderly conduct of the game. The referee may suspend the game (Rule 3-3-3-a) while this takes place.

SECTION 3. Blocking, Use of Hands or Arms

Who May Block

ARTICLE 1. Players of either team may block opponents, provided it is not pass interference, interference with the opportunity to catch a kick, or a personal foul (*Exception:* Rules 6-1-12 and 6-5-4).

Interfering for or Helping the Ball Carrier or Passer

ARTICLE 2. a. The ball carrier or forward passer may use their hand or arm to ward off or push opponents.

b. The ball carrier shall not grasp a teammate; and no other teammate shall grasp, pull, or lift the ball carrier to assist in forward progress. (**A.R. 9-3-2:I**)

c. Teammates of the ball carrier or forward passer may interfere with opponents by blocking but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner while contacting an opponent.

PENALTY – Five yards [S44: ATR].

Approved Ruling 9-3-2

l. In trying to gain yardage, ball carrier A44 is slowed by defensive players attempting to make the tackle. Back A22 (a) puts their hands on the buttocks of A44 and pushes them forward; (b) pushes the pile of teammates who begin to surround A44; (c) grabs the arm of A44 and tries to pull them forward for more yardage. **RULING:** (a) and (b) Legal. It is not a foul to push the ball carrier or the pile. (c) Foul for assisting the runner. Five-yard penalty with three-and-one enforcement (Rule 9-3-2-b). [Cited by 9-3-2-b]

Holding and Use of Hands or Arms: Offense

ARTICLE 3. a. *Use of hands*

A teammate of a ball carrier or a forward passer legally may block with their shoulders, their hands, the outer surface of their arms or any other part of their body under the following provisions.

1. The hand(s) shall be:
 - (a) In advance of the elbow.
 - (b) Inside the frame of the opponent's body (*Exception:* When the opponent turns their back to the blocker). (**A.R. 9-3-3:VI and VII**)
 - (c) At or below the shoulder(s) of the blocker and the opponent (*Exception:* When the opponent squats, ducks or submarines).
 - (d) Apart and never in a locked position.
2. The hand(s) shall be open with the palm(s) facing the frame of the opponent or closed or cupped with the palms not facing the opponent. (**A.R. 9-3-3:I-IV, VI-VIII**)

b. *Holding*

The hand(s) and arm(s) shall not be used to grasp, pull, hook, clamp or encircle in any way that illegally impedes or illegally obstructs an opponent.

PENALTY – 10 yards. Penalties for Team A fouls behind the neutral zone are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line [S42: IUH/OFH].

c. *Kicking team*

A player on the kicking team may:

1. During a scrimmage kick play, use their hand(s) and/or arm(s) to ward off an opponent attempting to block them when they are beyond the neutral zone.
2. During a free kick play, use their hand(s) and/or arm(s) to ward off an opponent who is attempting to block them.
3. During a scrimmage kick play or a free kick play, when they are eligible to touch the ball, legally use their hand(s) and/or arm(s) to push an opponent in an attempt to reach a loose ball.

d. *Passing team*

An eligible player of the passing team legally may use their hand(s) and/or arm(s) to ward off or push an opponent in an attempt to reach a loose ball after a legal forward pass has been touched by any player or official (Rules 7-3-5, 7-3-8, 7-3-9 and 7-3-11).

Approved Ruling 9-3-3

- I. A6 is advancing the ball. During the run, A12 vigorously blocks B2 with a rough push in the back above the waist. **RULING:** Illegal block in the back. Penalty — 10 yards. [Cited by 2-3-4-a, 9-3-3-a-2, 9-3-5]
- II. A teammate of the forward passer or ball carrier, while charging across the neutral zone, contacts an opponent with their hands and arms not parallel to the ground or their hands cupped or closed but with the palms not facing the opponent. **RULING:** Legal use of hands. [Cited by 9-3-3-a-2]
- III. A teammate of the forward passer or ball carrier, behind the neutral zone, has their arms parallel to the ground and contacts an opponent above the shoulders. **RULING:** Illegal use of hands. Penalty — 10 yards or 15 yards for personal foul, previous-spot enforcement. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line. [Cited by 9-3-3-a-2]
- IV. A teammate of the forward passer or ball carrier delivers a blow with the hand(s) closed to an opponent below the shoulders. **RULING:** Personal foul. Penalty — 15 yards. Enforce at the previous spot if foul occurs behind the neutral zone. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line. [Cited by 9-3-3-a-2]
- V. A2's hands contact defensive player B2 in a legal block. B2 spins to avoid blocker A2 whose hands then contact B2's back. **RULING:** Legal block. [Cited by 2-3-4-a]
- VI. A2's hands contact defensive player B2's back when B2 spins to avoid A2. A2 keeps their hands on B2's back while B2 advances toward the forward passer. **RULING:** Legal block. [Cited by 2-3-4-a, 9-3-3-a-1-b, 9-3-3-a-2]
- VII. A2's hands contact defensive player B2 when B2 spins to avoid blocker A2, whose hands then contact B2's back. After A2's hands lose contact with B2, A2 advances and pushes B2 in the back. **RULING:** Illegal block in the back. Penalty — 10 yards. Enforce at the previous spot if the foul occurs behind neutral zone (Rule 2-3-4). Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line. [Cited by 2-3-4-a, 9-3-3-a-1-b, 9-3-3-a-2, 9-3-5]
- VIII. A1 in, beyond or behind the neutral zone contacts an opponent with an open hand or with hands closed or cupped and palms not facing the opponent. **RULING:** Legal block. [Cited by 9-3-3-a-2]
- IX. A12 takes the snap and retreats to pass. Defensive end B95 gets past tackle A75 and is about to tackle A12, who is still inside the tackle box. A75 pushes B95 in the back at the numbers to prevent them from making the tackle. A12's pass is complete for a touchdown. **RULING:** Foul for an illegal block in the back. Penalty — 10 yards. [Cited by 2-3-4-a, 9-3-5]

Holding and Use of Hands or Arms: Defense

ARTICLE 4. a. Defensive players may use hands and arms to push, pull, ward off or lift offensive players:

1. When attempting to reach the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier
2. Who are obviously attempting to block them.

- b. A defensive player legally may use their hands or arms to ward off or block an opponent in an attempt to reach a loose ball (Rule 9-1-5 Exceptions 3 and 4 and Rule 9-3-5 Exceptions 3 and 5):
 - 1. During a backward pass, fumble or kick that they are eligible to touch.
 - 2. During any forward pass that crossed the neutral zone and has been touched by any player or official.
- c. When making no attempt to get at the ball or the ball carrier or simulated ball carrier, defensive players must comply with Rules 9-3-3-a and 9-3-3-b above.
- d. Defensive players may not use hands and arms to tackle, hold or otherwise illegally obstruct an opponent other than a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier.
- e. Defensive players may ward off or legally block an eligible pass receiver until that player occupies the same yard line as the defender or until the opponent could not possibly block them. Continuous contact is illegal. **(A.R. 9-3-4:I)**

PENALTY – [c-e] 10 yards plus automatic first down if the first down is not in conflict with other rules [S42: IUH/DEH].

Approved Ruling 9-3-4^x

- I. Before a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone is thrown, Team B holds eligible A1, who is beyond the neutral zone. **RULING:** Team B foul, holding. Penalty — 10 yards and automatic first down, previous-spot enforcement. **[Cited by 9-3-4-e]**

- II. 3/15 @ B-45. QB A12 drops back and looks downfield for A88 who is the primary receiver and defender B21 is holding A88 at the B-35. A12 throws a forward pass to his checkdown receiver A44 but the ball falls incomplete at the B-46. **RULING:** Team A, 1/10, B-35, Snap. The penalty for B21's holding foul is enforced 10 yards from the previous spot and an automatic 1st down. Holding by defense carries an automatic first down.

Blocking in the Back

ARTICLE 5. A block in the back (other than against the ball carrier) is illegal.

(A.R. 9-3-3:I, VII and IX) (A.R. 10-2-2:XII)

Exceptions:

1. Offensive players who are on the line of scrimmage at the snap within the free-blocking zone (Rule 2-3-6) may legally block in the back in the free-blocking zone, subject to the following restrictions:
 - (a) A player on the line of scrimmage within this free-blocking zone may not leave the zone, return and block in the back.
 - (b) The free-blocking zone disintegrates when the ball leaves the zone (Rule 2-3-6).
2. When a player turns their back to a potential blocker who has committed themselves in intent and direction of movement.
3. When a player attempts to reach a ball carrier or simulated ball carrier or legally attempts to recover or catch a fumble, a backward pass, a kick or a touched forward pass, they may push an opponent in the back above the waist (Rule 9-1-5 Exception 3).
4. When the opponent turns their back to the blocker under Rule 9-3-3-a-1-b.
5. When an eligible player behind the neutral zone pushes an opponent in the back above the waist to get to a forward pass (Rule 9-1-5 Exception 4).

PENALTY – 10 yards. Penalties for Team A fouls behind the neutral zone are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A's goal line [S43: IBB].

SECTION 4. Batting and Kicking

Batting a Loose Ball

ARTICLE 1. a. While a pass is in flight, only a player who is eligible to touch the ball may bat it in any direction (*Exception:* Rule 9-4-2).

b. Any player may block a scrimmage kick in the field of play or the end zone.

c. No player shall bat other loose balls forward in the field of play or in any direction if the ball is in the end zone (Rule 2-2-3-a) (*Exception:* Rule 6-3-11). (**A.R. 6-3-11:I**) (**A.R. 9-4-1:I-X**) (**A.R. 10-2-2:II**)

PENALTY – 10 yards and loss of down for fouls by Team A if the loss of down is not in conflict with other rules [S31 and S9: BAT]. [*Exception:* No loss of down if the foul occurs when a legal scrimmage kick has crossed the neutral zone].

Approved Ruling 9-4-1

- I. Team A attempts a field goal from Team B's 30-yard line. A Team B player in the end zone leaps above the crossbar and bats the ball in flight. The ball goes into the end zone and is recovered by Team A. **RULING:** Foul for batting the ball in the end zone. The result of the play is a touchdown. [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- II. Team A attempts a field goal from Team B's 30-yard line. A Team B player in the end zone leaps above the crossbar and bats the ball in flight. The ball goes into the end zone and is recovered by Team B. **RULING:** Foul for batting the ball in the end zone. The result of the play is a touchback. Safety if penalty is accepted. [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- III. Team A attempts a field goal from Team B's 30-yard line. A Team B player in the end zone leaps above the crossbar and bats the ball in flight. The ball goes into the field of play. **RULING:** Foul for batting the ball in the end zone. During regulation play, postscrimmage kick enforcement gives a safety by penalty. The ball remains alive, and normal scrimmage kick rules apply. Team A may elect the result of the play. If Team A recovers, does not score and accepts the penalty, or if the play occurs in an extra period, enforcement is at the previous spot. [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- IV. Team A attempts a place kick on the try. A Team B player in the end zone leaps above the crossbar and bats the ball in flight. The ball goes out of bounds in the end zone. **RULING:** Foul for batting the ball in the end zone. Penalty — Half the distance from the previous spot. Postscrimmage kick rules do not apply on the try (Rule 10-2-3). [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- V. Team A attempts a place kick on the try. A Team B player in the end zone leaps above the crossbar and bats the ball in flight. The ball goes into the end zone and is recovered by Team A. **RULING:** Foul for batting the ball in the end zone. Team A may decline the penalty and scores two points. [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- VI. Team A attempts a field goal, and B23, in the end zone, goes above the crossbar and catches the ball. **RULING:** Legal play. [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- VII. Team A's fumble in flight is batted forward by B1, and the ball goes out of bounds behind Team A's goal line. **RULING:** Safety. Batting a fumble in flight does not add a new impetus (Rule 8-7-2-b). Team B foul. Penalty — 10 yards. [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- VIII. Team A's backward pass in flight is batted by B1, and the ball goes out of bounds behind Team A's goal line. **RULING:** Safety. A pass may be batted in any direction and the impetus is charged to Team A's pass (Rule 8-5-1-a). [Cited by 8-5-1-a, 9-4-1-c]
- IX. A free kick is muffed in flight by a Team B player in their end zone. While the ball is loose in the end zone, a Team B player bats the ball out of the end zone. **RULING:** The result of the play is a touchback. Team B foul for illegally batting a ball in the end zone. Penalty — 10 yards from the previous spot. [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- X. After intercepting a legal forward pass at the B-20, B1 fumbles at the B-38. At the B-30, B2 illegally bats the loose ball, which goes forward and out of bounds. **RULING:** Team B foul. Penalty — 10-yards from the spot of the foul. Team B's ball, first and 10 at the 20-yard line. No loss of down is included in the penalty since Team B is awarded a new series after the penalty enforcement (Rule 5-1-1-e-1). [Cited by 9-4-1-c]
- XI. Team A is prepared to kick off. The ball is on the tee and the referee has signaled it ready for play. As the kicker approaches the ball it begins to roll off the tee just as they start their

kicking motion. The kicker follows through and kicks the ball as it continues to roll off or near the tee. **RULING:** No foul. This is not a violation of either 9-4-4 or 9-2-1-a-2-a. The officials should stop play and have the teams line up for a new kickoff. If weather conditions dictate, Team A should have a player hold the ball on the tee. [Cited by 9-4-4]

Batting a Backward Pass in Flight

ARTICLE 2. A backward pass in flight shall not be batted forward by the passing team.

PENALTY – 10 yards [S31: BAT].

Batting Ball in Possession

ARTICLE 3. A ball in player possession may not be batted forward by a player of that team.

PENALTY – 10 yards [S31: BAT].

Illegally Kicking a Ball

ARTICLE 4. A player shall not kick a loose ball, a forward pass or a ball being held for a place kick by an opponent. These illegal acts do not change the status of the loose ball or forward pass; but if the player holding the ball for a place kick loses possession during a scrimmage down, it is a fumble and a loose ball; if during a free kick, the ball remains dead. (A.R. 8-7-2:IV) (A.R. 9-4-1:XI)

PENALTY – 10 yards, plus loss of down for fouls by Team A if the loss of down is not in conflict with other rules [S31 and S9: IKB] (Exception: No loss of down if the foul occurs when a legal scrimmage kick has crossed the neutral zone).

Approved Ruling 9-4-4

- I. Fourth and eight at the A-48. From a scrimmage kick formation, A32 punts the ball to the B-7 where it hits B25 on the leg. As the ball rolls along the ground, B25 then kicks it at the B-4 to prevent Team A from recovering. The ball bounces into Team B's end zone and over the end line. **RULING:** The result of the play is a safety, as B25's kicking the ball provides new impetus. Foul by B25 for illegally kicking the ball. Team A may decline the penalty and take the two points, or accept the penalty. The foul by B25 is governed by postscrimmage kick rules, so the accepted penalty would give Team B the ball at the B-2, first down and 10 (Rules 8-5-1-a and 8-7-2-b).

SECTION 5. Fighting

ARTICLE 1. a. Before, during and after the game, including the half-time intermission, squad members in uniform or coaches shall not participate in a fight (Rule 2-32-1).

PENALTY – 15 yards. For dead-ball fouls, 15 yards from the succeeding spot.

Automatic first down for Team B fouls if not in conflict with other rules.

Disqualification for the remainder of the game [S7, S27 or S38, and S47: FGT/DSQ].

- b. During either half, coaches and substitutes shall not leave their team area to participate in a fight, nor shall they participate in a fight in their team area.

PENALTY – 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Automatic first down for Team B fouls if not in conflict with other rules. Disqualification for the remainder of the game and the next game [S7, S27 or S38, and S47: FGT/DSQ].

ARTICLE 2. The referee will notify (in writing) their assigning agency of all disqualifications for fighting. The assigning agency becomes responsible for implementation of the penalty.

SECTION 6. Flagrant Fouls

Player Ejection

ARTICLE 1. When a player is disqualified from the game due to a flagrant personal foul (Rule 2-10-3), or flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct, the disciplinary authority shall where possible initiate a video review for possible additional sanctions before the next scheduled game.

Foul Not Called

ARTICLE 2. If subsequent review of a game by the disciplinary authority reveals plays involving flagrant personal fouls or flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct that game officials did not call, the disciplinary authority may impose sanctions prior to the next scheduled game.