

RULE 5

Series of Downs, Line to Gain

SECTION 1. A Series: Started, Broken, Renewed

When to Award Series

- ARTICLE 1. a. A series (Rule 2-24-1) of up to four consecutive scrimmage downs shall be awarded to the team that is next to put the ball in play by a snap after a free kick, touchback, fair catch or change in team possession, or to the offensive team in overtime.
- b. A new series shall be awarded to Team A if it is in legal possession of the ball on or beyond its line to gain when the ball is declared dead.
- c. A new series shall be awarded to Team B if, after fourth down, Team A has failed to earn a first down. **(A.R. 10-1-5:I)**
- d. A new series shall be awarded to Team B if Team A's scrimmage kick goes out of bounds or comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it (**Exception:** Rule 8-5-1-a).
- e. A new series shall be awarded to the team in legal possession when the ball is declared dead:
1. If a change of team possession occurs during the down.
 2. If a scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone (**Exceptions:** (1) When the down is repeated; (2) Rule 6-3-7).
 3. If an accepted penalty awards the ball to the offended team.
 4. If an accepted penalty mandates a first down.
- f. A new series shall be awarded to Team B whenever Team B, after a scrimmage kick, elects to take the ball at a spot of illegal touching (**Exception:** When the down is repeated) (Rules 6-3-2-a and 6-3-2-b).

Line to Gain

- ARTICLE 2. a. The line to gain for a series shall be established 10 yards in advance of the most forward point of the ball; but if this line is in the opponent's end zone, the goal line becomes the line to gain.
- b. The line to gain is established when the ball is made ready for play before the first down of the new series.

Forward Progress

- ARTICLE 3. a. The most forward point of the ball when declared dead between the end lines shall be the determining point in measuring distance gained or lost by either team during any down (**Exceptions:**
1. Rule 8-5-1. **(A.R. 8-5-1:I)**
 2. When an airborne pass receiver of either team completes a catch inbounds after an opponent has driven the receiver backward and the ball is declared dead at the spot of the catch, the forward progress is where the player gained and maintained firm control of the ball.

The ball always shall be placed with its length axis parallel to the sideline before measuring (Rule 4-1-3-p) **(A.R. 5-1-3:I, III, IV and VI) (A.R. 7-3-6:V)**.

- b. Questionable distance for a first down should be measured without request. Unnecessary measurements to determine first downs shall not be granted.
- c. No request for a measurement shall be granted after the ball is ready for play.

Approved Ruling 5-1-3

- I. Airborne A88 gains firm control of a legal forward pass one yard within the opponent's end zone. As A88 gains firm control of the ball (a) they are contacted by B21 and A88 first comes to the ground on their knees at the one-yard line and maintains firm control of the ball; (b) A88 is contacted by B21 and A88 first comes to the ground on their feet at the one-yard line and maintains firm control of the ball. **RULING:** Touchdown in both (a) and (b) (Rule 5-1-3-a-2, 8-2-1-b). [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a-2, 8-2-1-b]
- II. Receiver A88 runs a route deep into Team B's end zone and circles back toward the QB A12 who throws the ball to A88. As A88 is coming back toward A12, A88 leaps and gains firm control of A12's legal forward pass one yard within Team B's end zone. Airborne A88 is not touched by a Team B player and first comes to the ground maintaining firm control of the ball at the one-yard line landing (a) on their knees; (b) on their feet. After A88 regains their balance, A88 runs and is downed at Team B's five-yard line. **RULING:** Not a touchdown: (a) Team A's ball at the B-1 where the ball is declared dead. (b) Team A's ball at the B-5 where the ball is declared dead. [Cited by 2-9-2, 8-2-1-b]
- III. Airborne A2 receives a legal forward pass at Team A's 35-yard line. As A2 receives the ball, they are contacted by B1 and first comes to the ground with the ball at Team A's 33-yard line, where the ball is declared dead. **RULING:** Team A's ball at the 35-yard line. This is the point of forward progress. [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a-2]
- IV. A4, with the ball breaking the plane of the 50-yard line while in their possession, dives over the 50-yard line, which is the line to gain for a first down. They are knocked back to Team A's 49-yard line, where any part of their body except their hand or foot touches the ground. **RULING:** First down at forward progress spot (Rule 4-1-3-b). [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a-2]
- V. A6 has the ball in their possession and is not controlled by an opponent, as they dive over the 50-yard line, which is the line to gain for a first down, and is forced back across the 50-yard line. A6 continues to run and is tackled at Team A's 49-yard line, where any part of their body, except their hand or foot, strikes the ground. **RULING:** No first down. The point of forward progress is Team A's 49-yard line. [Cited by 2-9-2]
- VI. A5, with the ball breaking the plane of the goal line while in their possession, dives over the goal line and is knocked back to the one-yard line, where any part of A5's body except their hand or foot touches the ground. **RULING:** Touchdown. The ball is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line in A5's possession. [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a-2]

Continuity of Downs Broken

ARTICLE 4. The continuity of a series of scrimmage downs is broken when:

- a. Team possession of the ball changes during a down.
- b. A scrimmage kick crosses the neutral zone.
- c. A kick goes out of bounds.
- d. A kick comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it.
- e. At the end of a down, Team A has earned a first down.
- f. After fourth down, Team A has failed to earn a first down.
- g. An accepted penalty mandates a first down.
- h. There is a score.
- i. A touchback is awarded to either team.
- j. The second period ends.
- k. The fourth period ends.

SECTION 2. Down and Possession After a Penalty

Foul During Free Kick Down

ARTICLE 1. When a scrimmage down follows the penalty for a foul committed during a free kick down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with a new line to gain.

Penalty Resulting in New Series

ARTICLE 2. It is a new series with a new line to gain:

- a. After a penalty that leaves the ball in possession of Team A beyond its line to gain.
- b. After a penalty that mandates a first down.

Foul Before Change of Team Possession

- ARTICLE 3. a. If a penalty is accepted for a foul that occurs between the goal lines before a change of team possession during a down, the ball belongs to Team A. The down shall be repeated, unless the penalty also involves loss of a down, mandates a first down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the line to gain (*Exceptions*: Rules 8-3-3-b-1, 10-2-3, 10-2-4 and 10-2-5). (**A.R. 10-2-3:I**)
- b. If the penalty involves loss of a down, the down shall count as one of the four in that series.

Approved Ruling 5-2-3

- I. Team A's fourth-down legal forward pass strikes the ground after it touches an originally ineligible receiver who is illegally more than three yards beyond the neutral zone.
RULING: Foul, ineligible receiver downfield. Penalty — Five yards from the previous spot. Team B's ball, first and 10, if the penalty is declined (Rule 7-3-10). [Cited by 7-3-11]

Foul After Change of Team Possession

ARTICLE 4. If a penalty is accepted for a foul that occurs during a down after a change of team possession, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred. The down and distance established by any such penalty shall be first down with a new line to gain (*Exception*: Rule 10-2-5-a).

Penalty Declined

ARTICLE 5. If a penalty is declined, the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if the foul had not occurred.

Foul Between Downs

ARTICLE 6. After a distance penalty incurred between downs, the number of the next down shall be the same as that established before the foul occurred, unless enforcement for a foul by Team B leaves the ball on or beyond the line to gain or a penalty mandates a first down (Rule 9-1). (**A.R. 5-2-6:I**) (**A.R. 10-1-5:I-III**)

Approved Ruling 5-2-6

- I. Fourth and two on Team A's 35-yard line. A1 takes the snap and fumbles the ball on Team A's 38-yard line, with the ball going out of bounds on (a) Team A's 40-yard line or (b) Team A's 30-yard line. Immediately after the ball goes out of bounds, Team A commits a personal foul. **RULING:** (a) Team A's ball, first and 10 on Team A's 23-yard line. Start the clock on the ready-for-play signal. (b) Team B's ball, first and 10 on Team A's 15-yard line. Start the clock on the snap. [Cited by 5-2-6]

Foul Between Series

- ARTICLE 7. a. The penalty for any dead-ball foul (including live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls) that occurs after a series ends and before the ball is ready for play shall be completed before the line to gain is established.
- b. The penalty for any dead-ball foul that occurs after the ball is ready for play shall be completed after the line to gain is established. (**A.R. 5-2-7:I-V**)

Approved Ruling 5-2-7

- I. Third and four on Team B's 30-yard line. Ball carrier A22 goes out of bounds on the 18-yard line. B88 commits a foul immediately after the ball is out of bounds. **RULING:** First and goal for Team A at the nine-yard line. Clock starts on the ready-for-play signal except in the last two minutes of a half. [Cited by 5-2-7-b]
- II. Fourth and four at the A-16. Ball carrier A22 goes out of bounds at the A-18. A77 commits a foul immediately after the ball is out of bounds. **RULING:** Team B's ball on the nine-yard line. First and goal. Start the clock on the snap. [Cited by 5-2-7-b]
- III. On fourth and five, Team A gains six yards and is awarded a new series. After the ball is made ready for play and before the snap, A55 commits (a) a personal foul, or (b) a false start. **RULING:** (a) First and 25. (b) First and 15. [Cited by 5-2-7-b]
- IV. Team A's ball, third and four from the 50-yard line. After the ball is made ready for play and before the snap, B60 charges across the neutral zone and contacts snapper A50. A61 then fouls B60. A61's foul is a personal foul. **RULING:** Penalise Team B five yards for B60's offside, then penalise Team A 15 yards and reset the line-to-gain indicator to indicate first and 10 from Team A's 40-yard line. [Cited by 5-2-7-b]
- V. After Team A has made a first down, the umpire has placed the ball on the ground at the B-30. The referee waves the umpire away from the ball but before they signal the ball ready for play, snapper A55 snaps the ball. **RULING:** Team A dead-ball foul for delay of game. Five-yard penalty, first and 10 at the B-35. NOTE: This is a foul between series in that it takes place before the ball is declared ready for the next series. Hence it is first and 10, not first and 15 (Rules 4-1-1, 4-1-4). [Cited by 5-2-7-b]
- VI. Ball carrier A22 is tackled hard by B44 at the B-5, resulting in first and goal. After the ball is dead, A22 gets up and punches B44. **RULING:** 15-yard penalty against Team A; A22 is disqualified. After enforcement of the penalty, Team A will have first and 10 at the B-20.

Fouls by Both Teams

ARTICLE 8. If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down shall be repeated (Rule 10-1-4 Exceptions). (**A.R. 10-1-4:III-VI and VII**)

Rules Decisions Final

ARTICLE 9. No rule decision may be changed after the ball is next legally snapped, legally free kicked or the second or fourth periods have ended (Rules 3-2-1-a, 3-3-4-e-2 and 11-1-1). (**Exception:** The number of a down may be corrected any time within that series of downs or before the ball is legally next put in play after that series.)