



2021 NCAA FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES (Including Major Editorial Changes and Points of Emphasis) (PROP Approval on April 22,2021)

Rules Changes

Team Area and Coaching Box (Rule 1-2-4-a)

After evaluating the adjustment in 2020 for COVID-19 and to allow for social distancing, the Rules Committee has made a permanent extension of the Team Area and Coaching Box. On each side of the field, a team area in back of the limit line and between the 20-yard lines shall be marked for the exclusive use of substitutes, athletics trainers and other persons affiliated with the team. The front of the coaching box shall be marked with a solid line six feet outside the sideline between the 20- yard lines.

Extra Periods (Rule 3-1-3-e, 3-1-3-f)

The committee is proposing this change to enhance student-athlete health and safety and minimize the number of additional plays in overtime games. In Football Bowl Subdivision competition during the 2020 season, overtime accounted for an average of 16.8 additional plays per overtime period in those games. There shall be an equal number of possession series unless Team B scores other than on the try. Beginning with the second extra period, teams scoring a touchdown must attempt a two- point try. Although not illegal, a one-point try attempt by Team A will not result in a score. Beginning with the third extra period, a team's possession series will be one play for a two-point try from the three-yard line, unless relocated by penalty.

Feigning Injuries (Rule 3-3-5-b) "UIL will NOT Follow this rule for 2021-22"

Feigning an injury for any reason is unethical. An injured player must be given full protection under the rules, but feigning an injury is dishonest, unsportsmanlike, and contrary to the spirit of the rules. For questionable game action, an institution or conference has the option to consult the National Coordinator of Football Officials who would then facilitate a video review. After the review, the National Coordinator will communicate any findings with the Director of Athletics at the institution for further action.

Major Editorial Changes

Administration and Enforcement, Game Balls (Rule 1-3-2-a)

The game officials shall test and be sole judge of not more than ten balls offered for play by each team before and during the game. The game officials may approve additional balls if warranted by conditions.

Extension of Periods (Rule 3-2-3-a-1)

A period shall be extended for an untimed down if the following occurs during a down in which time expires: A penalty is accepted for a live-ball foul(s) (Exception: Rule 10-2-5-a). At the option of the offended team, the period is not extended if the foul is by the team in possession and the statement of the penalty includes loss of down.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Other Prohibited Acts (Rule 9-2-1-b-5)

Persons subject to the rules, including bands, video / audio / 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 details all persons subject to the rules. The penalty statement will now include that the Referee may take any action he considers equitable, which includes directing that the down be repeated, including assessing a 15-yard penalty, awarding a score, or suspending or forfeiting the game.

Jersey Design (Rule 1-4-5-a-1)

The jersey must have sleeves that completely cover the shoulder pads. It must not be altered or designed to tear. The jersey must be full-length and tucked into the pants or made even with the waistline. No other undergarment (e.g., T-shirt) shall extend below the waistline at the torso. It must cover all pads worn at or above the waist. A second jersey meeting all requirements of Rule 1-4-5 worn concurrently is allowed. Vests and/or altered jerseys with zippers, Velcro, clasps or other fasteners are not allowed.

Points of Emphasis

Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Taunting Opponents.

Currently the Rules Committee is satisfied with the solid judgment that officials are demonstrating evaluating celebration issues, and this focus will continue. For the 2021 season, it will be a point of emphasis for officials to penalize any taunting action that is directed at an opponent. These actions are a bad look for the game, can lead to unnecessary confrontations between the teams, and must be eliminated.

Uniform – Knee Pads and Pants, Jersey and T-Shirts.

Officials will be alert to players that are significantly in violation of the uniform rules, and - when discovered - will send the player out of the game to correct the issue. This will include specifically the pants / knee pads that are significantly above the knee and the jersey rule including a T-shirt that is untucked and hanging down below the top of the pants. The intent with these points of emphasis is not to distract officials or make them overly involved in equipment monitoring, but to encourage officials to act when players are blatantly disregarding the rules involving the uniform to protect the look of the game.

Coaches – Out on the Field of Play Debating Officiating Decisions.

Rule 9-2-1-b-1 states that during the game, coaches, squad members, and authorized attendants in the team area may 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. Coaches that need to have conversations with officials about specific rulings within the game must do so from the team area. Coaches are encouraged not to enter the field of play or leave the team area to debate officiating decisions, and those that do so will have committed an automatic Unsportsmanlike Conduct foul. All officials need to be consistent in enforcing this rule.

Steve Shaw

*CFO National Coordinator of Football Officials Secretary-Rules
Editor, NCAA Football Rules Committee April 2021*