**2023 NFHS Rule Book – Rule 9 – Conduct of Players and Others**

**SECTION 1 HELPING THE RUNNER**

An offensive player shall not push, pull, or lift the runner to assist his forward progress.

**PENALTY:** Helping the runner (S44)- 5 yards.

**SECTION 2 ILLEGAL USE OF HANDS AND HOLDING**

ART. 1 ... An offensive player (except the runner) shall not:

a. Use a blocking technique which is not permissible by rule. (2-3-2, 2-3-3)

b. Grasp or encircle any teammate to form interlocked blocking.

c. Use his hands, arms, or legs to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent.

ART. 2 ... The runner may not grasp a teammate.

ART. 3 ... A defensive player shall not:

a. Use a technique that is not permissible by rule. (2-3-2, 2-3-5)

b. Use his hands to add momentum to the charge of a teammate who is on the line of scrimmage.

c. Use his hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent other than the runner.

d. Contact an eligible receiver who is no longer a potential blocker.

**PENALTY**: Arts. 1a, 2, 3a, b, d - Illegal use of hands or arms - (S42) -10 yards; Art. 1b - interlocked blocking - (S44) -10 yards; Arts. 1c, 3c – holding - (S42) -10 yards.

**SECTION 3 ILLEGAL BLOCKING**

ART. 1 ... Blocking by a player either on offense or defense is illegal when it is:

a. Kick-catching interference as in 6-5-6.

b. Forward-pass interference as in 7-5-10.

c. A personal foul as in 9-4.

ART. 2 ... A player shall not block an opponent below the waist except:

a. In the free-blocking zone when the contact meets the requirements of 2-17.

b. To tackle a runner or player pretending to be a runner.

ART. 3 ... A receiver who has given a valid or invalid fair-catch signal shall not block an opponent until the kick has ended.

ART. 4 ... The kicker or place-kick holder of a free kick may not be blocked before:

a. He has advanced 5 yards beyond his free-kick line; or

b. The kick has touched the ground or any other player.

ART. 5 ... A player shall not block an opponent in the back except:

a. In the free-blocking zone when the contact meets the requirements of 2-17.

b. Using hands and arms to contact an opponent above the waist in warding off a blocker, or when attempting to reach a runner, or catch or recover a loose ball which he may legally touch or possess.

c. To tackle a runner or player pretending to be a runner.

ART. 6 ... A player shall not chop block or clip.

ART. 7 ... No member of the kicking team shall initiate contact to (block) an opponent on a free kick until:

a. The legal kick has traveled 10 yards;

b. The kicking team is eligible to recover a free-kicked ball; or

c. The receiving team initiates a block within the neutral zone.

**PENALTY:** Art. 2 - Blocking Below the Waist-(S40)-15 yards; Art. 3- Blocking After Signal - (S43)-15 yards; Art. 4- Blocking Kicker or Place-Kick Holder- (S30) -15 yards; Art. 5 - Blocking in the Back- (S43) -10 yards; Art. 6 - Chop Block (S41)-15 yards; Art. 6- Clipping-(S39)-15 yards; Art. 7 - Illegal Block- (S43), live ball foul, 10 yards.

**SECTION 4 ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT**

ART. 1 ... No player or nonplayer shall fight.

ART. 2 ... No player or nonplayer shall intentionally contact a game official.

ART. 3 ... No player or nonplayer shall:

a. Swing the foot, shin, or knee into an opponent, nor extend the knee to meet a blocker.

b. Charge into or throw an opponent to the ground after he is obviously out of the play, or after the ball is clearly dead either in or out of bounds.

c. Pile on any player who is lying on the ground.

d. Hurdle an opponent.

e. Position himself on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.

f. Throw a helmet to trip an opponent.

g. Make any other contact with an opponent, including a defenseless player (as in 2-32-16) which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness.

h. Grasp an opponent's face mask, any edge of a helmet opening, chin strap, or a tooth and mouth protector attached to the face mask and twist, turn, or pull the face mask, helmet opening, chin strap or a tooth and mouth protector attached to the face mask; or incidentally grasp an opponent's face mask, helmet opening, chin strap or a tooth and mouth protector attached to the face mask.

I. Initiate illegal helmet contact. (butt block, face tackle or spear)

**NOTE:** Illegal helmet contact may be judged by the game official a flagrant act. Acts that may be judged to be flagrant include, but are not limited to:

1. Illegal helmet contact against an opponent lying on the ground,

2. Illegal helmet contact against an opponent being held up by other players, and/or

3. Illegal helmet-to-helmet contact against a defenseless opponent.

j. Strike an opponent with his fist, locked hands, forearm, or elbow, nor kick or knee him.

k. Grab the inside back or side collar, or the name plate area (directly below the back collar), of either the shoulder pads or the jersey of the runner and subsequently pull (backward or sideward) that opponent to the ground (Horse-collar), even if possession is lost. The horse-collar foul is enforced as a live-ball foul.

I. Initiate contact with an opposing player whose helmet has come completely off.

m. Target an opponent.

n. Execute a blindside block outside of the free-blocking zone with forceful contact unless initiated with open hands.

o. Trip an opponent.

ART. 4 ... Roughing the passer. Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer, who has thrown the ball from in or behind the neutral zone, after it is clear the ball has been thrown. No defensive player shall commit any illegal personal contact foul listed in 9-4-3 against the passer.

ART. 5 ... Running into or roughing the kicker or holder. A defensive player shall neither run into the kicker nor holder, which is contact that displaces the kicker or holder without roughing; nor block, tackle, or charge into the kicker of a scrimmage kick, or the place-kick holder, other than when:

a. Contact is unavoidable because it is not reasonably certain that a kick will be made.

b. The defense touches the kick near the kicker and contact is unavoidable.

c. Contact is slight and is partially caused by movement of the kicker.

d. Contact is caused by R being blocked into the kicker or holder by K.

ART. 6 ... Roughing the snapper. A defensive player shall not charge directly into the snapper when the offensive team is in a scrimmage-kick formation.

ART. 7 ... No defensive player may use the hand(s) to slap the blocker's head.

ART. 8 ... Unintentional contact between a nonplayer and a game official in the restricted area while the ball is live.

**PENALTY:** Arts. 1, 2, 3j- Fighting, intentionally contacting a game official, striking, kicking, or kneeing - (S38-47)-15 yards and disqualification. If a coach is the offender in Article 2, see 9-8 Penalty for disqualification procedure; Arts. 3a through g, I- Other personal fouls-(S38)-15 yards; Art. 3h- incidental grasping the face mask, helmet opening, chin strap or tooth and mouth protector - (S45)- 5 yards; Art. 3h- grasping and twisting, turning or pulling the face mask, helmet opening, chin strap or tooth and mouth protector - (S38-45) -15 yards; Art. 3i - illegal helmet contact- (S38-24)-15 yards; Art. 3k- illegal horse-collar- (S38-25)-15 yards; Art. 3m-targeting an opponent-(S38-24)-15yards; Art. 3n - illegal blindside block - (S38-26) -15 yards; Art. 3o - illegal tripping

- (S38-46)-15 yards; Art. 4- roughing the passer- (S38-34-8) -15 yards and a first down from the dead ball spot when the dead ball spot is beyond the neutral zone and A has possession of the ball at the end of the down and there has been no change of team possession and the foul is not for an incidental face mask as in 9-4-3h, or otherwise 15 yards and first down from previous spot; Art. 5 - running into kicker/holder- (S30)- 5 yards from the previous spot; Art. 5- roughing kicker or holder - (S38-30-8) - 15 yards and first down from the previous spot; Art. 6 - roughing snapper- (S38-8)-15 yards and first down from the previous spot; Art. 7 - Slap to the head - (S38) -15 yards; Art. 8 - Unintentional contact with a game official in the restricted area - (S38-29)-15 yards- Nonplayer foul. For the first offense, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. For the second offense (S38-29-47)-15 yards from the succeeding spot and disqualification of the head coach. Arts. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8- Disqualification also if any fouls under these articles are judged by the game official to be flagrant - (S47).

**SECTION 5 NONCONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY PLAYERS**

ART. 1 ... No player shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the game officials assume authority for the game. Examples are, but not limited to:

a. Baiting or taunting acts or words or insignia worn which engenders ill will.

**NOTE**: The NFHS disapproves of any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstances.

b. Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.

c. Any delayed, excessive, or prolonged act by which a player attempts to focus attention upon himself.

d. Kicking at the ball, other than during a legal kick.

e. Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or unless with permission of a game official.

f. Refusing to comply with a game official's request.

g. Using any form of alcohol or tobacco, or be under the influence of (i.e., impaired by) a controlled or illicit substance(s) beginning with the arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.

ART. 2 ... When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he shall not:

a. Intentionally kick the ball.

b. Spike the ball into the ground.

c. Throw the ball high into the air or from the field of play or end zone.

d. Intentionally fail to place the ball on the ground or immediately return it to a nearby game official.

**PENALTY:** Arts. 1, 2- Unsportsmanlike conduct-{S27) 15 yards. If dead ball, (S7-27) - 15 yards. Also disqualification if judged by the game official to be flagrant - (S47). In Article 1a, the player must remove the offending item be­ fore he is allowed to participate. The second unsportsmanlike foul results in disqualification.

**SECTION 6 ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION**

ART. 1 ... Prior to a change of possession, or when there is no change of possession, no player of A or K shall go out of bounds and return to the field during the down unless blocked out of bounds by an opponent. If a player is blocked out of bounds by an opponent and returns to the field during the down, he shall return at the first opportunity.

ART. 2 ... No player shall intentionally go out of bounds during the down and:

a. Return to the field;

b. Intentionally touch the ball;

c. Influence the play; or

d. Otherwise participate.

ART. 3 ... No replaced player, substitute, coach, athletic trainer, or other attendant shall hinder an opponent, touch the ball, influence the play, or otherwise participate.

ART. 4 ... It is illegal participation:

a. When any player, replaced player, substitute, coach, athletic trainer or other attendant enters and participates during a down.

b. If an injured player is not replaced for at least one down; unless the halftime intermission or overtime intermission occurs.

c. To have 12 or more players participating at the snap or free kick.

d. To use a player, replaced player, substitute, coach, athletic trainer or other attendant in a substitution or pretended substitution to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap or free kick.

e. For a player to be lying on the ground to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap or free kick.

f. For a disqualified player to re-enter the game.

g. For a player whose helmet comes completely off during a down to continue to participate beyond the immediate action in which the player is engaged.

**PENALTY:** Arts. 1, 2, 3, 4a, g - Illegal participation - (S28) - 15 yards, live­ ball, basic spot; Arts. 4b-f - Illegal participation (S28) - 15 yards, live-ball, previous spot.

**SECTION 7 ILLEGAL KICKING AND BATTING**

ART. 1 ... No player shall intentionally kick the ball other than as a free or scrimmage kick.

ART. 2 ... No player shall bat a loose ball other than a pass or a fumble in flight, or a low scrimmage kick in flight which he is attempting to block in or behind the expanded neutral zone.

**EXCEPTION:** A K player may bat toward his own goal line a grounded scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone and may also bat toward his own goal line a scrimmage kick in flight beyond the neutral zone, if no R player is in position to catch the ball.

ART. 3 ... Any pass in flight may be batted in any direction, by an eligible receiver unless it is a backward pass batted forward by the passing team.

ART. 4 ... A ball in player possession shall not be batted forward by a player of the team in possession.

**PENALTY:** Arts. 1, 2, 3, 4 - Illegal kicking or batting - (S31) -10 yards.

**SECTION 8 NONCONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY NONPLAYERS**

ART. 1 ... No coach, substitute, athletic trainer, or other team attendant shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the game officials assume authority for the game. Examples are, but not limited to:

a. Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.

**NOTE:** The NFHS disapproves of any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstances.

b. Attempting to influence a decision by a game official.

c. Disrespectfully addressing a game official.

d. Indicating objections to a game official's decision.

e. Using any illegal communication equipment as outlined in 1-5-3c(2) and 1-6.

f. Holding an unauthorized conference.

**NOTE:** Between downs, communications between players and coaches near the sideline are not considered conferences, as defined in 2-6.

g. The failure of a team to:

1. Comply with the restrictions of 3-2-2 at the coin toss or simulated coin toss;

2. Be ready to start the first half;

3. Be on the field following the conclusion of the halftime intermission or be ready to start the second half at the conclusion of the mandatory warm-up period.

h. Following pregame verification as in 1-5-4, a coach allowing his/her players to use illegal equipment. (1-5-3)

i. Being on the field except as a substitute or replaced player. (3-7-6, 9-6-4a)

j. Using any form of alcohol or tobacco, or be under the influence of (i.e., impaired by) a controlled or illicit substance(s) beginning with the arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.

k. Being outside the team box, but not on the field. (9-8-3)

I. A substitute leaving the team box during a fight.

ART. 2 ... Three attendants, none of whom is a coach, may enter the field to attend their team during a charged time-out or a TV/radio time-out, during the one-minute following a try, a successful field goal or safety, and prior to the suc­ceeding free kick, between periods and during an official's time-out for unusual heat and humidity. During a time-out for injury, the coach and/or such attendants as may be deemed necessary by the referee may, with permission, enter to attend the injured player(s). In no other case, except as in 2-6, shall any nonplayer other than an entering substitute enter without the referee's permission.

ART. 3 ... A nonplayer shall not be outside his team box unless to become a player or to return as a replaced player. A maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area. No player, nonplayer or coach shall be in the restricted area when the ball is live.

**PENALTY**: Art. 1a through j- Nonplayer foul - (S27), (S7-27 if dead ball)-15 yards. Arts. 1g and 1h - Nonplayer foul charged to the Head Coach - (S27), (S7-27 if dead ball) -15 yards. Art. 2 - Nonplayer foul - (S19) - 5 yards, unless repeated - or unsportsmanlike (S27) -15 yards. Arts. 1k, 3 - Nonplayer foul-First offense-(S15)-warning, Second offense-(S7-29)-5 yards, Each subsequent offense - (S7-29-27) -15 yards; Art. 11 - Nonplayer foul - (S27-47)-15 yards and disqualification. Arts. 1, 2, 3-Any single foul judged by the game official to be flagrant is disqualification. A second unsportsmanlike foul with a 15-yard penalty results in disqualification. A disqualified member of the coaching staff shall be removed from the stadium area and be prohibited from any further contact with his team, direct or indirect, during the remainder of the game. For failure to comply, the referee may forfeit the game.

**SECTION 9 UNFAIR ACTS**

ART. 1 ... A player or nonplayer or person(s) not subject to the rules shall not hinder play by an unfair act which has no specific rule coverage.

ART. 2 ... No team shall repeatedly commit fouls which halve the distance to the goal line.

ART. 3 ... No player shall hide the ball under a jersey.

ART. 4 ... No player shall use a kicking tee in violation of Rule 1-3-4.

ART. 5 ... Neither team shall commit any act which, in the opinion of the referee, tends to make a travesty of the game.

**PENALTY:** Arts. 1, 2, 5 - Unfair act - (S27) - the referee enforces any penalty he/she considers equitable, including the award of a score; Art. 2 - Repeated fouls - the game may be forfeited; Art. 3 - Hiding the ball under a jersey - (S27) -15 yards basic spot; Art. 4 - Using illegal kicking tee (S27) -15 yards basic spot.

**NOTE:** The penalties in Rules 9-9-3 and 9-9-4 are not charged to the coach or player for the purpose of unsportsmanlike conduct disqualifications.