**RULE 1 - The Game, Field, Players and Equipment**

**CHOICE OF BALL**

**1.3.2 SITUATION A:** Prior to the start of the game, A has provided two balls for the referee's examination, but B has not provided a ball. **RULING:** There is no penalty if a team does not provide a ball; however, in this case, B will have to use the ball(s) provided by A until such time B offers a legal ball for the referee's approval.

**1.3.2 SITUATION B:** The referee has examined and verified the legality of a

number of balls provided by each team prior to the game. However, during the course of the game, the weather conditions change dramatically, and the teams wish to have additional balls approved for use. **RULING:** This is permissible and is within the intent of the rule.

**1.3.3 SITUATION A:** Team A: (a) requests a rubber ball on second down after using a leather ball on first down; or (b) on a dry day, requests a different leather ball on fourth down; or (c) after a score and before the try, requests a different leather ball than used during the touchdown play; or (d) recovers on the kickoff and requests a new ball. **RULING:** The Team A request is denied in (a), (b) and (c), unless the change in balls is ordered by the referee or other game official for reasons other than the Team A request. The Team A request is approved in (d). (1-3-2, 5-1-1a)

**1.3.3 SITUATION B:** During play in the fourth period, the quarterback of A (Visitor) informs the referee that their ball is losing air pressure and is no longer usable. A does not have another legal ball. The home-team coach complains when the referee secures the Team B ball from the ball person for use by Team A. **RULING:** The visiting team may use the home-team ball if it wishes. (1-3-2)

**THE EXPANDED NEUTRAL ZONE**

**2.28.2 SITUATION A**: B1 is on his defensive line of scrimmage when he is contacted by ineligible lineman A1 and driven back about 2 yards downfield. **RULING**: A1 is not illegally downfield, nor has he committed pass interference if a forward pass crosses the neutral zone, since he contacted B1 in or behind the neutral zone and after driving him downfield did not go beyond the neutral zone expanded. If it is a low scrimmage kick and B1 touches it, the touching is ignored. B1 is considered to be on his line when he is within 1 yard of his line of scrimmage at the snap. If a scrimmage kick occurs, the neutral zone may not be expanded into the end zone. (2-25-3, 6-2-6, 7-5-12)

**ACCEPTED PENALTY INSIDE TWO MINUTES OF EITHER HALF**

**3.4.7 SITUATION A**: With time expiring inside the last two minutes in the second or fourth period and A behind in the score. A1 intentionally throws the ball forward to the ground in order to stop the game clock. A1's action took place: (a) immediately after receiving the snap while A1 was lined up 3 yards deep; or (b) immediately after receiving the snap; or (c) after A1 delayed and throws an illegal forward pass. **RULING**: In (a) and (b), the grounding is legal, and the game clock remains stopped until the subsequent snap. Illegal forward pass in (c), and the game clock shall be started on the ready-for-play signal unless Team B chooses to start the game clock on the snap. (7-5-2d EXCEPTION)

**3.4.7 SITUATION B**: With less than a minute remaining in the game, the score is 21-20 in favor of B. The game clock is running, and the ball is on B's 10-yard line. An option play on third down gains 5 yards but is short of a first down. Following the tackle, the tackler B1 holds A1 down for a few moments, but the covering official does not judge the action to be illegal. **RULING**: Though B1 may have held A1 down momentarily, the game clock will continue to run because no foul was called. **COMMENT**: In some situations, there is a delay in unpiling, and no individual player or team is to blame. In such situations the referee is authorized to stop the game clock momentarily so no more clock time than normal is used in getting the ball ready for play. (3-4-3h)

**3.4.7 SITUATION C**: With less than a minute remaining in the game, Team B trails 21-20. B1 commits a holding foul during the down. Following the play, A2 commits an unsportsmanlike conduct foul. **RULING**: The fouls are administered separately and in order of occurrence. In addition, Team A is given the choice of starting the game clock on the snap. If Team A declines to start the game clock on the snap, Team B is then given the option of starting the game clock on the snap. With Team B trailing, Team B will likely choose to start the game clock on the snap. (10-1-3)

**3.4.7 SITUATION D**: Team B is trailing with less than 2 minutes remaining in the game. On third down, A53 commits a holding foul and Team A is stopped short of the line to gain inbounds. **RULING**: Whether or not B accepts A’s foul for holding, B may choose to start the clock on the snap. (3-6-1)

**PLAY CLOCK, BALL READY FOR PLAY AND READY-FOR-PLAY SIGNAL**

**3.6.1 COMMENT 2:** Is there suggested guidance in helping coaches and game officials better understand the times when the play clock and game clock might not be starting or running together, or when one should be running and one not running? Yes, the following represent examples of play situations but is not intended to be an exhaustive listing: 1) The ball is run up the middle and is short of the line-to-gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead, but the game clock does not stop; 2) An incomplete pass is thrown. A 40-second play clock starts immediately when the ball is declared dead, and the game clock stops and then starts on the snap; 3) The ball is run to gain a first down and the tackle is inbounds. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead, the game clock stops for the first down and the game clock starts on the referee's signal (without a whistle being blown) when the ball is spotted, and the placing official is in position: 4) A sweep play is run to the right side and the runner is forced out of bounds short of the line-to-gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead and the game clock stops when the runner is forced out of bounds and starts on the snap; 5) A pass is complete for a first down and the tackle is inbounds, but A77 is flagged for holding during the play. The game clock stops to administer the penalty if accepted. If two minutes or more remain in either half, Team B is given the option to start the game clock on the snap. 6) After a run short of the line-to-gain, A22 fumbles and a pile forms; A88 recovers, and the game clock is stopped to determine who recovered the fumble. The ball is spotted, and the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal to start a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock; 7) After either team takes a time-out, the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal to start a 25-second play clock and the game clock starts on the snap; 8) During a run short of the line-to-gain, A22 is injured, the game clock stops and A22 must leave the game for at least one play. The ball is spotted, and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock; 9) The ball is punted, and a fair catch is made. The ball is spotted, and the referee blows his whistle and gives the ready-for-play signal to start a 25-second play clock and the game clock starts on the snap.

**FORWARD PASS – LEGAL/ILLEGAL**

**7.5.2 SITUATION A**: Quarterback A1 drops back to pass, but is unable to find a receiver and: (a) throws the ball to the ground; or (b) throws the ball to the ground in an area occupied by only defensive players; or (c) deliberately throws the ball at the legs of onrushing defensive linemen. In (a), (b) and (c), the pass does not meet any of the 7-5-2d EXCEPTIONS.

**RULING**: An illegal forward pass in (a), (b) and (c). Penalize A 5 yards from where the run ended and count the down in each situation. (7-5-2b, d)

**7.5.2 SITUATION B**: Quarterback A1 is in positioned directly behind the snapper. (a) A1 muffs the snap but is able to take the ball from the ground and spike it forward as in 7-5-2d EXCEPTION 1; or (b) A1 receives the snap, but his forward spike attempt hits snapper A2's leg and ricochets into the air. A1 catches the ball and immediately spikes it forward. **RULING**: An illegal forward pass in both (a) and (b). Once the ball touches the ground, 7-5-2d EXCEPTION is not permitted as the ball may not be grounded legally thereafter using this exception. In order to be a "direct snap" and therefore meet the allowance within the exception, the ball must go immediately from the snapper to the person in position to take the hand-to-hand snap without being muffed, fumbled, or otherwise mishandled.

**7.5.2 SITUATION C**: Quarterback A1 drops back to pass and whether or not under defensive pressure, throws the ball forward: (a) at the feet of two onrushing defensive linemen; or (b) inbounds or out of bounds to an area not occupied by an eligible receive. **RULING**: Illegal forward pass in (a). In (b), the game officials must determine if (1) the passer has been beyond the lateral boundary of the free-blocking zone as established at the snap, and (2) if the pass went beyond the neutral zone extended including the extension beyond the sideline. In (b), if both (1) and (2) were true, the pass is legal under 7-5-2d EXCEPTION 2, the down counts and there is no foul. In (b), if either (1) and (2) were not true, it is an illegal forward pass as it does not meet 7-5-2d EXCEPTION 2.

**7.5.2 SITUATION E**: A1 throws a legal forward pass: (a) which is tipped by B1 behind the expanded neutral zone and A1 catches the pass and then throws a second pass which is completed to A8; or (b) to A5 who is behind the line of scrimmage and who then throws another forward pass to A11 who advances the ball for a first down. **RULING**: Illegal forward pass in (a) and (b). (7-5-2d EXCEPTION 1)

**Rule 8 - Scoring Plays and Touchbacks**

**8.2.2 SITUATION F**: (a) During a touchdown run by A1, B1 holds. (b) On the ensuing successful kick try, there is a foul by B2. **RULING**: In (a), the designated representative of A is given options for the foul during the touchdown run prior to the try. If A accepts the penalty for B's holding foul during the touchdown run, A may accept the score and attempt the try from the 1½-yard line or accept the score and have the penalty enforced on the subsequent kickoff. In (b), after the try, A may accept and replay the try from the 3/4-yard line or accept the 1-point try and enforce the penalty for B's try foul on the subsequent kickoff. It is within the rules for A to have both penalties enforced on the subsequent kickoff.

**Rule 9 - Conduct of Players and Others**

**9.3.2 SITUATION F:** A1 and A2 combine in blocking B1 as follows: (a) both block B1 downfield with A1 making contact above the waist and A2 simultaneously making contact below the waist but above the knees: or (b) both block B1 in the free-blocking zone with A1's block above the waist and A2’s block below the waist, or (c) A1 blocks B1 above the waist as part of immediate, initial action following the snap and at the same time, A2 blocks B1 below the waist and above the knees; or (d) both A1 and A2 block B1 below the knees from the front of B1 while in the free-blocking zone.

**RULING:** Illegal block below the waist by A2 in (a) since the block is not in the free-blocking zone even if part of the immediate, initial action following the snap; in (b) illegal chop block by A2; in (c) illegal chop block by A2; in (d) this combination or multiple block is legal if the block and both blockers were in the free-blocking zone at the snap and the block was part of the immediate, initial action following the snap. (2-17-2, 9-3-6)

**ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT**

**9.4.3 Comment:** Is there guidance for game officials and coaches as to the application of 9-4-3(g) and what contact should be considered excessive, particularly against defenseless players? Yes. While there is not universal agreement on a specific list of items, several have been identified as problematic and particular emphasis should be made on these acts, in addition to a general emphasis on the protection of defenseless players, particularly receivers. Any play with a player executing forceful contact against a defenseless player (as defined in 2-32-16b and 2-32-16c) that is not incidental as a result of playing the ball, initiated with an open hand or a wrap-up tackle should be carefully considered by the game official as a possible excessive act.