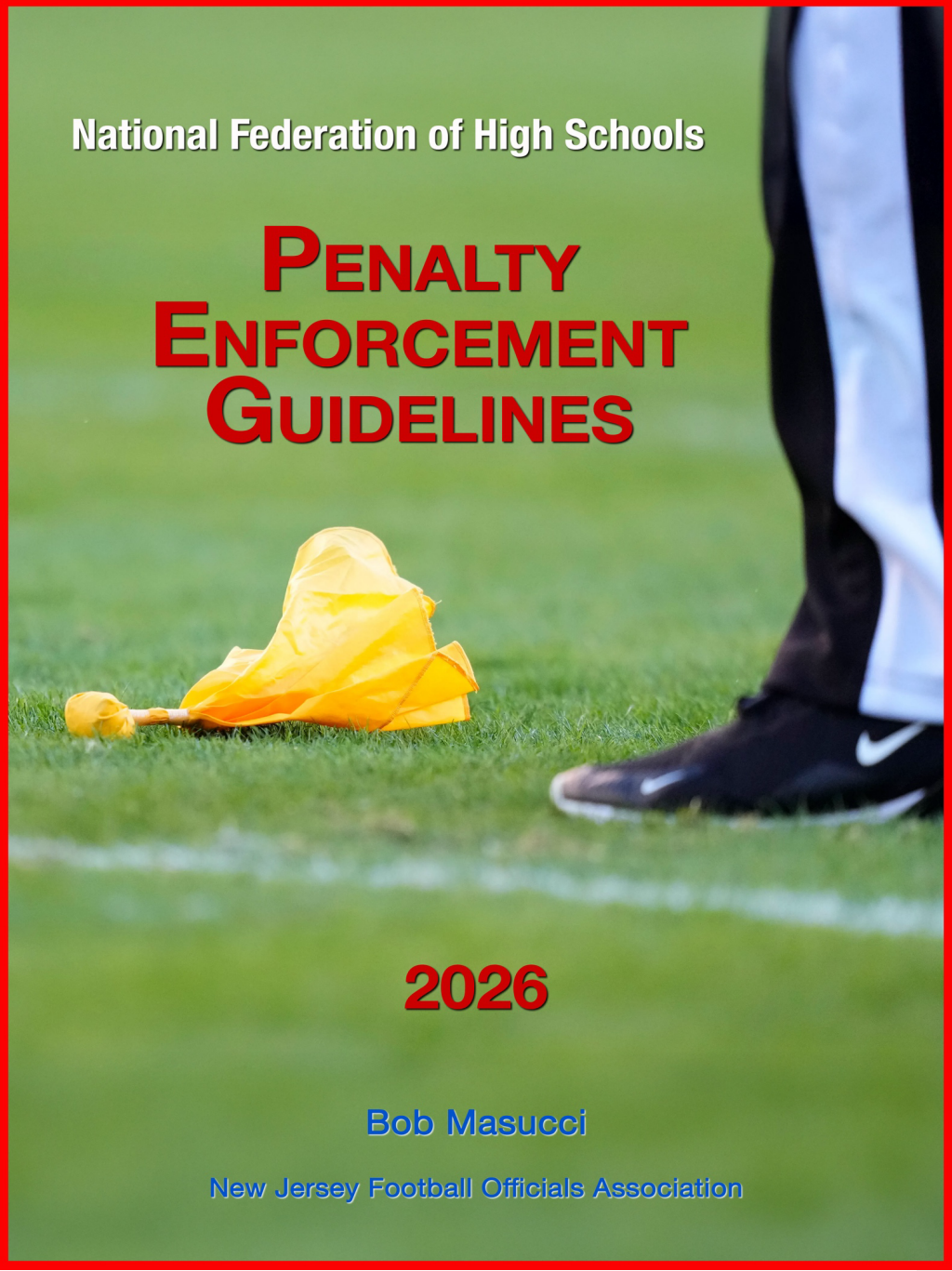




National Federation of High Schools

# **PENALTY ENFORCEMENT GUIDELINES**

**2026**

Bob Masucci

New Jersey Football Officials Association



# National Federation Penalty Enforcement

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A guide to enforcing penalties according to the 2026 National Federation Football Rules

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North Jersey Chapter  
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Material revisions to this guide for this season’s enforcement changes and any substantive editorial changes are indicated using **gray-highlighted text**.

**Gender References:** In this manual, the masculine should be understood to include the feminine, and vice-versa, throughout.

## Introduction

Fouls are an integral part of every football game. The result of a game may just turn on a foul and a team's decision of whether or not to accept the penalty for the transgression. In almost every case, that decision will hinge on the referee's knowledge of the penalty options and his ability to clearly and succinctly explain them to the offended team's coach. Referees are not infallible, contrary to some widely held opinions—primarily among referees. They can make mistakes. Because of this, it is each official's responsibility to understand the basic fundamentals of penalty enforcement and to speak up and offer his help immediately if he believes that an enforcement error is about to occur. This ensures that the game flows smoothly and guarantees that neither team will gain an undeserved advantage because of an enforcement error. Whatever you do, don't wait until halftime or post-game to question a possible enforcement error! Errors in judgment on the field are never welcomed but are at least somewhat defensible due to positioning, speed of action, etc. Errors in rule interpretations—including in penalty enforcement—cannot be defended. Nothing will get a crew into more trouble than the misapplication of a rule or an incorrect enforcement.

In order to properly administer the penalty for a foul (or series of fouls), the referee must know *WHAT* foul occurred, *WHEN* it occurred, *WHERE* it occurred, and *WHO* committed it. Knowing these facts allows the referee to translate that knowledge into a rules-based set of options for the offended team to consider.

While developing a sound officiating philosophy and the ability to exercise proper judgment in a game might be considered the most difficult skills facing the newer official, knowing how to properly enforce penalties might well run a close second in the list of challenges faced by the novice. A full understanding of penalty enforcement will not come overnight. It's not easy. It will require considerable study and experience. The real test will be your ability to properly rule, not on a test, but rather in the heat of battle when a game is on the line, the environment is something less than cordial, and you don't have the luxury of time—or a rule book. This book attempts to take all aspects of the Federation rules related to penalty enforcement, reorder them as necessary, and translate them into language which is just as precise as that of the rule book but maybe slightly more understandable.

In 2023, the Federation changed the enforcement spot for two classifications of fouls. This should have been a fairly easy exercise to incorporate the change into the prior year's (2022) rule book. However, the NFHS took the rather perplexing option of unnecessarily rewriting a good portion of rule 10. In so doing, they introduced errors and omissions some of which still remain today. They removed a tried-and-true methodology which would still work and instead force officials to learn more than a dozen individual enforcements rather than have a few principles from which the correct enforcement can be easily determined. This booklet will provide an easier means of determining enforcement spots.

## Types of Fouls

The 2026 NFHS Rules Book identifies nine distinct types of fouls in rule NF 2-16-2:

- a. **Dead ball**—a *dead ball* foul occurs in the time interval after a down has ended and before the ball is next snapped or free kicked. This includes fouls which occur just before the

snap—like encroachment or false starts—as well as those which occur just after the ball had become dead, like a “late hit” personal foul.

- b. **Double**—a *double foul* occurs when one or more live ball fouls (other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike fouls) are committed by each team at such a time that the penalties offset and the prior down is replayed with no enforcement of any penalty—a simple ‘do-over.’ There are some specific times when there are live ball fouls committed by each team when the penalties do not offset and are not technically double fouls. But more on that later.
- c. **Flagrant**—a *flagrant foul* is one so severe or dangerous that player safety is significantly and recklessly compromised. Several rule changes over the last few years, including the 2014 addition of the definition of “targeting” to the Federation Rule Book, have put increased emphasis on hits that may rise to the level of flagrant fouls. Likewise, an unsportsmanlike non-contact violation that is particularly vulgar or persistent may qualify as a flagrant foul as well. [Note: Either a contact foul or a non-contact foul may qualify as “flagrant.”]
- d. **Live ball**—Very simply, a *live ball foul* occurs during a down, i.e. between the snap (or free kick) and the moment at which the ball becomes dead.
- e. **Multiple**—A *multiple foul* occurs when two or more live ball fouls (other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike) are committed during a down by same team at such a time that the offended team is permitted a choice of penalties. Only one penalty can be accepted by the offended team.
- f. **Nonplayer or unsportsmanlike**—these fouls are by their very nature noncontact fouls. They may occur while the ball is dead or during the down. Specifically, they exclude illegal participation and must not influence the play in progress. *Nonplayer fouls* are those committed by persons other than the 22 players legally in the game at the time of the foul. They may be committed by coaches, substitutes, team attendants, etc. *Unsportsmanlike fouls* may be committed by players and nonplayers alike. For purposes of enforcement, both nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls are treated and enforced like dead ball fouls regardless of when they occurred.
- g. **Player**—a *player foul* is a foul (other than unsportsmanlike) committed by one of the 22 players legally in the game at the time of the foul. Sometimes it’s just referred to as a “foul.” When you see the word “foul” used alone, this is typically what’s meant. They include, for example, holding, pass interference, grasping the facemask, roughing the kicker, etc.
- h. **Post-scrimmage kick**—*Post-scrimmage kick fouls* may occur only during downs in which a legal scrimmage kick occurs. Specifically, they are fouls by Team R that meet several criteria which we will discuss in the section on special enforcements.
- i. **Simultaneous with the snap**—Fouls that occur *simultaneously with the snap* happen when an act, perfectly legal prior to the down during the dead ball period, becomes a foul only by virtue of the ball actually being snapped or free kicked. Typically, these involve illegal offensive team movements and formations, substitution infractions, or violations of other administrative requirements which are illegal at the snap—but not before. They are considered *live ball* fouls and you should throw your flag into the air and allow the play to continue. Do not blow these plays dead!

Knowing the type of foul is critical for determining the options to be presented. Another important thing to note: These types are not necessarily mutually exclusive; there is overlap, and a particular foul may fall into multiple categories. For example, a **live ball** foul may be a **player** foul, or it may be part of a **double** foul. And any foul can be of the **flagrant** variety. The important thing here is to fully understand the definitions.

## Basic Enforcement Fundamentals

According to the Federation rules, there are some basics that need to be understood:

- **No foul causes loss of the ball.** While certain circumstances related to *when* the foul occurs may indeed result in turning the ball over to the offended team, it is not the foul itself that results in this. For example, a foul committed by the offense on 4<sup>th</sup> down that also involves loss of down will turn the ball over to the defense upon acceptance. But that's just a coincidence resulting from when (on what down) the foul occurred and the offense's failure to advance the ball beyond the line to gain in the allotted four downs. No foul by itself ever causes the offending team to forfeit the ball.
- **No live ball foul causes the ball to become dead.** Another way of saying it...no live ball foul should ever cause you to blow the whistle. However, dead ball fouls do cause the ball to remain dead. Officials should not permit the ball to become live when a dead ball foul occurs just prior to the snap or free kick. Likewise, should a play begin immediately after a dead ball foul occurs, all officials should be sounding their whistles to stop any further action and kill the play. Note that the Federation has sort of tap-danced around this Fundamental with their introduction of the free kick formation restrictions on Team K and the prohibition on pop-up kicks. Fouls related to those restrictions technically occur when—or shortly after—the ball is kicked (live ball), but the Federation rules call for us to blow the play dead and enforce as a dead ball foul *prior* to the kick.
- **The distance penalty for any foul may be declined, while any other penalty associated with the foul can be accepted.** For example, on kick catching interference, the receiving team may accept the penalty and the awarded fair catch that accompanies it, but decline to have the fifteen yards marched off against the kickers. Likewise, a team may accept a penalty and have a down replayed but not have any distance penalty assessed. Though rare, one occasion where you will see this is if B fouls during an unsuccessful kick try. Team A will certainly want to replay the down, but very often they may decline the distance penalty so that the kicker/holder can set up as he normally would. That yard and a half is insignificant to Team A should it choose to kick again.
- **If the penalty is declined or if there is a double foul, there is no loss of yardage.** Either continue play from the succeeding spot as if no foul occurred (if the penalty is declined) or return the ball to the previous spot for a replay of the prior down (if a double foul occurred).
- **In case of a double foul where the penalties automatically offset, the teams need not be consulted because they have no choice to make.** Speaking to the them in such a situation will only cause confusion and disrupt the flow of the game. Rather, let your wing officials convey the appropriate information directly to the sidelines if requested, wipe out the offsetting penalties, and move on.
- **The team's choice of penalty options may not be revoked once it is made.** The potential for an incorrect choice has been mitigated significantly with the 2020 rule change, removing the captain as the mandatory decision maker. Now, the team will designate who will make the penalty decisions, and you can bet that 99.9% of the time this will be the head coach.
  - First piece of advice here: Don't even speak to the offended team if the choice is obvious. Make game flow the priority here. Consider...Team A completes a pass for a gain of 35 yards, but is guilty of holding in the backfield. What's to be gained from discussing options with Team B? "Coach...do you want to allow

them the 35-yard gain, or do you want to penalize them the ten yards for their hold?” Duh !!!

- Next piece of advice: When talking to a coach, don’t speak Referee-ish. Avoid giving the coach options using rule terms like “previous spot”, “spot of the foul”, “related run,” and the like. Speak to him in his language and give it to him in bottom line English—“Coach, your choice: 2<sup>nd</sup> and 15, or 3<sup>rd</sup> and eight”.
- Another piece of advice: Make sure that when you do need to discuss options with the offended team, you don’t “hear” their choice until you’ve fully explained the options. Don’t allow the coach to make a fool of himself. A common practice of many referees is to offer what you consider the most advantageous option first. If the situation is complicated and the choice is not very obvious, be prepared to go to the sideline to explain the options clearly to the coach. Don’t even feel reluctant to point him in the right direction—especially if the options are complicated. If you feel the team has made the wrong choice, feel free to say, “Coach, maybe I didn’t explain this well...,” and then repeat the options. However, if the coach insists, you’ve got to go with whatever he chooses.
- And also, in these days of newer technology, if you use official-to-official two-way radios (O2Os), use those to your advantage communicating options to, and getting choices from the coach through your sideline officials.
- **A decision on whether to accept or decline a penalty must be made before any charged time-out is granted either team.** However, if acceptance of a penalty results in a choice of how the offended team will put the ball in play, that decision may be deferred until after the time out is over, or may even be changed after reconsideration during the time out. For example, suppose that Team K commits kick catching interference. Team R must decide prior to a time out whether they will accept the penalty and if so, whether they will penalize K from the previous spot and replay, or whether they will accept an awarded fair catch 15 yards in advance of that spot. If they accept the awarded fair catch, Federation rules allow them to either snap or free kick from that spot. But that decision (whether to snap or free kick) does not need to be made prior to the time out. Frequently near the end of either half where time is critical, a player or the head coach will be urgently asking for a time-out, even though there is a flag on the field. Calmly tell the captain (and have your wings tell the coaches) that there is an official’s time out in progress and that after that’s completed and the penalty is disposed of, you will revisit his request for a charged time-out. And when you do revisit the request for a TO, be sure to tell the coach whether the clock will start on the ready-for-play or the snap. Or inform him of a choice that he or his opponent might make considering the restarting of the game clock. That may very well determine whether or not he still wants to use a valuable charged time out.
- **When a live ball foul by one team is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, or when dead balls fouls are committed by opponents, the penalties are administered separately and in the order in which they occurred.** (a) For the situation where there is a live ball foul followed by a dead ball foul, first deal with the live ball foul and get that enforced and out of the way. Be sure to note whether the prior down will count or be replayed, and make note of whether acceptance or declination of the penalty for the live ball foul results in a new series to be awarded to the offense, or if on fourth down leaves the offense short of the line to gain, thereby causing the ball to go over to Team B. Then separately deal with the dead ball foul from the succeeding spot determined by the acceptance or declination of the live ball foul that preceded it. (b) For multiple dead ball

fouls committed by opponents, the ‘separately and in order of occurrence’ statement is still *generally* correct. However, a 2015 rule change says that we will now offset (effectively “cancel out”) an equal number of 15-yard penalties for dead ball fouls (including live ball unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls) by opponents provided that each ‘offsetting’ foul occurs before another of them has been enforced. Any 5-yard dead ball fouls that might occur, as well as any residual 15-yard penalties not paired-off and offset, are enforced according to the general rule of ‘order of occurrence.’ This new offset enforcement effectively removes a great deal of the possibility for one team being assessed full penalty yardage while the other is assessed half the distance. Regardless of whether these fouls are eligible for offset or not, it’s important that we not mistake these situations for a double foul and look to replay the prior down. The prior down will count. See plays #28 and #29 in Appendix B for application of this rule.

- **When the same team commits a live ball foul followed by one or more dead ball fouls, all fouls may be penalized.** Don’t mistake such a scenario for a multiple foul. Again, take them one at a time in order. Dispose of the live ball foul first and determine what the next down will be; then deal with the dead ball foul(s).
- **Enforcement of a penalty cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team’s goal line.** If the prescribed penalty would cause this to happen, the ball is placed halfway from the enforcement spot to the offending team’s goal line. Obviously, this can only happen when the enforcement spot is inside either team’s 30-yard line.

## Down After Penalty

In most cases, following enforcement of a penalty for a live ball foul, the previous down will be replayed. However, there are some exceptions, primarily those fouls that include a loss of down and those which include the awarding of an automatic first down. Another exception to this principle exists for certain fouls that occur during kicks. Likewise, fouls by the opponents of a team scoring a touchdown, a field goal, or a successful try may also result in an exception to this general rule. We will discuss all of these exceptions in later sections. For now, understand that ‘Loss of down’ is a short way of saying “loss of the right to replay a down.” The offending team really doesn’t lose a down. They simply are deprived of the opportunity to replay it even though the penalty for their foul has been accepted.

Here are the specific fouls that include loss of down as an additional penalty:

1. Illegally handing the ball forward.
2. Illegal forward pass/intentional grounding.
3. Illegal touching of legal forward pass by an ineligible behind, in, or beyond the neutral zone.

[Note: If one of these fouls occurs after a change of team possession, the loss of down provision of the penalty doesn’t apply. **A new series always begins with a first down.** Similarly, if after penalty enforcement, Team A still has the ball beyond the line to gain, the loss of down provision of the penalty is likewise ignored, and Team A is awarded a new series, first and ten.]

And there are specific fouls for which an automatic first down (new series) is awarded in addition to any penalty yardage:

1. Roughing the kicker or holder.

2. Roughing the passer.
3. Roughing the snapper.

If the penalty for a foul is declined, the number of the next down will be the same as if the foul had not occurred. If a double foul occurs, the down will be replayed from the previous spot, i.e. the number of the next down will be the same as that of the down in which the double foul occurred and the line to gain will remain unchanged. Additionally, some fouls that occur during downs that result in a change of possession, and any live ball unsportsmanlike or nonplayer fouls are also exceptions to this “repeat the down” principle. We’ll be referencing them often throughout the book.

### “Clean Hands Principle”

Two of the basic principles governing penalty enforcement rules are:

1. The offending team should not gain any advantage by committing a foul
2. The offending team should not be forced to give up any advantage they legally obtained *prior* to their foul other than, of course, the yardage penalty associated with the foul.

The “clean hands” principle is a perfect example of these two governing principles in action during a play that involves a change of possession. It is designed to allow the team in possession at the end of the down to keep the ball provided that they did not foul prior to the final change of possession. This ensures, as best we can, that their foul played no role in helping them gain possession. That is, as long as they got the ball before they fouled, they will be allowed to keep it. We refer to this as getting the ball “with clean hands.” In such a case they will be subject to any penalties arising from their post-possession fouls, but they will retain the ball. For example: A12 throws a forward pass. B3 intercepts and begins to return. A team B player holds an opponent during that return. B may keep the ball after enforcement of the holding penalty since they had not fouled prior to the interception, i.e. team B got the ball with “clean hands.” Should Team A so choose, and they probably will, the holding penalty will then be enforced against B according to standard enforcement principles.

Another application of the “clean hands principle” occurs when there are fouls by *each* team during a down where there is a change of possession. The procedure is a bit more complicated than the one above, and we’ll discuss it in further detail in the Special Enforcements section. Also, if Team R fouls during a scrimmage kick play, and that foul is subject to post scrimmage kick enforcement (see the section on Special Enforcements), R will also be able to retain the ball even though their foul technically occurred prior to the final change of possession.

### Types of Plays

One of the fundamental concepts used in penalty enforcement for live ball player fouls is the concept of “type of play.” When a live ball player foul like holding, roughing the kicker, or pass interference occurs during a down, you need to determine what type of play was in progress when the foul occurred. Don’t confuse *type of play* with the *kind* of offensive play (pass, draw, sweep, etc.) that took place during the down. There are two types of plays defined for the purposes of penalty enforcement: **loose ball plays** and **running plays**. A single down may consist of one of these or a combination of them. Here are the definitions:

The term ‘loose ball play’ is really a misnomer and might lead one to incorrectly assume that the ball is literally ‘loose’ when the foul occurs. It may be, but you’ll see below that’s not necessarily true.

A **loose ball play** is action during:

- a. A free kick or scrimmage kick up until the point when the kick ends.
- b. A legal forward pass. (Note: action during an *illegal* forward pass is not considered to be part of a loose ball play)
- c. A backward pass (including the snap) or an illegal kick, or fumble made by team A from in or behind the neutral zone before any change of team possession.
- d. Any run(s) or action which precedes the legal kick, legal forward pass, backward pass, or fumble described here in a, b, or c. Said another way, if a legal kick, or a legal forward pass, or a fumble, illegal kick, or backward pass from behind the neutral zone actually occurs, all action leading up to these things is considered part of that loose ball play. As an example, suppose a rugby-style punter ‘runs’ toward his right before punting the ball. That ‘run’ is considered to have been part of the loose ball play which includes his scrimmage kick once he puts his foot to the ball. Please note...the runs described in (d) are only considered parts of a loose ball play if the runs are followed by a legal kick, legal forward pass, or by a backward pass, illegal kick, or fumble behind the neutral zone. If not, all of this action is considered to be part of a running play (see below).

Clearly, the **loose ball plays** described in a, b, and c above all involve situations where the ball is ‘loose’ – that is not in player possession – at the time the foul occurs. However, the **loose ball plays** described by d above include situations where the ball is actually in player possession (not ‘loose’) when the foul occurred.

A **running play** is any other action not included in the definition of a loose ball play. Note: If a runner fumbles the ball or throws a backward or forward pass from beyond the neutral zone, this loose ball is considered part of that prior running play. Even though the ball is technically “loose,” this interval is not considered a loose ball play, but rather part of the prior running play for the purposes of penalty enforcement. Once that loose ball is caught or recovered, the prior running play concludes, and a new running play may begin.

A down may consist of a loose ball play only, a series of one or more running plays, or a *single* loose ball play followed by one or more running plays. If a down consists of more than one running play, each of them for the purpose of penalty enforcement is treated distinctly and is referred to as a “**related run**,” i.e. *related* to the foul being considered. Two other things... (1) if a down consists of a loose ball play, there can be only one of them, and it must occur in the beginning portion of the down, i.e. before any running play and (2) after a change of possession, it is no longer possible to have a loose ball play for the remainder of the down.

During any running play, the **end of a related run** is:

- a. Where the ball becomes dead in the runner's possession, i.e. where he's tackled, or where he steps out of bounds, or where his forward progress is stopped.
- b. Where the runner loses possession, but only if his run is followed by a loose ball, e.g. when he fumbles the ball or throws a pass from beyond the neutral zone. One implication of this definition is that if a runner legally hands the ball to a teammate, it is not considered the end of one related run and the beginning of another. Both runners' possessions are considered to be parts the initial running play and a single related run for the purpose of penalty enforcement—just as if there was no handoff at all. Also, even though a loss of player possession ends the related run, that *running play* is still in progress, up to the point that the down ends or a subsequent running play begins.
- c. The spot of the catch, interception, or recovery when the momentum exception is in effect. (See NF 8-5-2a Exception for more information on this.)

**Think about it...**

If a foul occurs while the ball is in a runner's possession prior to a change of possession, you can't definitively determine at that time whether it has occurred during a loose ball play or a running play. Only after the play reaches its conclusion can you determine the type of play that was actually in progress when the foul occurred.

For some enrichment material on **Types of Plays**, see Appendix A at the conclusion of this document.

## Basic Spots

If a foul occurs during a down, the **basic spot** of enforcement is determined by the type of play that was in progress at the time of the foul. The basic spot can be thought of as the “starting point” for determining penalty enforcement. It is a point of reference from which you will ultimately determine the correct enforcement spot. You might want to think of it as the “default” spot of enforcement.

- **The basic spot is the previous spot**, i.e., the spot where the ball was last snapped or free-kicked:
  - a. For any foul which occurs simultaneously with the snap or free kick. We discuss this type of foul in more detail later.
  - b. For a foul which occurs during a loose ball play. There are two “special enforcement” exceptions to this enforcement: (i) when the foul is roughing the passer, and (ii) for certain fouls by Team R during scrimmage kicks. We'll discuss these two exceptions later in the section on Special Enforcements.
- **The basic spot is the spot where the related run ends** (see above) for a foul which occurs during a running play.
- **The basic spot is the succeeding spot**, i.e., where the ball would next be snapped or free-kicked if there was no foul:
  - a. For any unsportsmanlike foul whether it occurs during a live ball or during the dead ball period that follows that live ball.
  - b. For a dead ball foul.
  - c. For a nonplayer foul—even if it occurred *during* the down.

- d. When the final result of a running play is a touchback and the basic spot would have been the end of the run in the end zone. (See play #7 in Appendix B for a practical application of this principle)

## Specific Enforcements for Fouls

**Dead Ball Fouls** When enforced, dead ball fouls are always enforced from the succeeding spot, i.e. the spot where the ball would next be snapped or free kicked had no such foul occurred. These fouls may occur just prior to a snap or free kick (encroachment, illegal substitution, false start, snap infraction) or just after the ball becomes dead (late hit--personal fouls). Likewise, unsportsmanlike fouls and nonplayer fouls occurring during a down but which have no material impact on the play in progress may technically be live-ball fouls but are treated as dead ball fouls for the purpose of enforcement and are enforced from the succeeding spot. For that reason, you may hear such fouls described as “live ball fouls treated as dead ball fouls.”

If a dead ball foul occurs prior to a free-kick down, the down to be played after enforcement will usually be another free-kick down. If it occurs before or after a scrimmage down, the number of the next down will be the same as if the foul hadn't occurred, unless of course enforcement of the penalty for the dead ball foul before the down takes the offense to a position in advance of the line to gain. Additionally, if a dead ball foul occurs after a down (before the next “ready-for-play”), and a new series is to be awarded, the line to gain is not established, i.e. the chains are not set, until after the penalty for the foul is enforced. If, however, a dead ball foul occurs after the ready-for-play, the line to gain remains fixed where it was at the ready-for-play. See plays #10 & #22 in Appendix B. Note: these last two principles have nothing at all to do with determining whether or not a new series is awarded. They only refer to setting the chains after it's determined that a new series is to be awarded.

**Double Fouls** It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls, other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer,

- a) during the same live ball period in which there is no change of team possession, or
- b) during a live ball period where there is a change of team possession, but both fouls occurred prior to the change of possession.

In such cases, the penalties offset (cancel each other out) and the prior down is replayed. It becomes an old-fashioned sandlot “do-over.” In such situations, there is no need to speak to a coach because there are no decisions on enforcement to be made.

If, however, there is a change of possession and both teams have fouled during the down and at least one of the fouls was after the change of possession, it's not an automatic double foul. It requires additional analysis to determine whether a double foul has occurred. Let's use a simple change of possession with the team designations A and B for this analysis where team B is the team in final possession, i.e. ball is in Team B possession when the down ends:

- If there is change of team possession and Team B fouled prior to gaining possession, you will indeed have a double foul. (Note: This is essentially b) above). The rationale here is that the change of possession may have occurred because of Team B's foul. The rules will not allow them to benefit by fouling. There is one notable exception to this rule occurring during scrimmage kicks. We will discuss that in the last paragraph below.
- If a change of possession occurs and both teams have fouled during the down, team B may retain the ball if they got it with clean hands, but they must decline the penalty for all of Team A's live ball fouls (other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer), regardless of

whether Team A's fouls occurred before or after the change of possession. After Team B's decision to decline the penalty for Team A's foul(s), Team A is given the option of accepting or declining the penalty for Team B's foul. In almost all cases, it will be to Team A's obvious advantage to accept. If, however, Team B insists on accepting the penalty for any of its opponent's fouls, it is a double foul, they give up the ball, and the previous down will be replayed. Why might Team B choose to give the ball back to Team A for a replay? See Play # 17 in Appendix B for a possible answer. So as a result of this analysis, three situations may occur:

- > All fouls offset as a result of the double foul (rare, but can happen occasionally)
- > There is a penalty enforced against Team B and none against Team A (by far the most common occurrence)
- > All penalties are declined by both teams (remote chance). Please note that if both Team B and then Team A decline the penalties for their opponents' fouls, this is *not* an offsetting foul (double foul) situation since you will be next putting the ball in play from the succeeding spot—not the previous spot. It is simply treated as a play where no fouls occurred. The importance of this distinction relates to the number of the next down and what will happen if this situation occurs during a down in which time for a period expires (see "Extension of Periods" on p. 24).

In all double fouls, the penalties offset, there is no loss of yardage for either team, and the prior down is replayed from the previous spot.

Also, if the change of possession occurs during a scrimmage kick, R may retain possession of the ball if their only foul(s) is/are subject to post scrimmage kick enforcement even though technically it occurred before the final change of possession (See Play #27 in Appendix B.). As an enforcement aid, Appendix C provides a decision tree for determining the correct options when each team fouls during a down.

**Multiple Fouls** When two or more live ball fouls are committed by the same team during the same down, this is referred to as a *multiple foul*. Only one penalty may be enforced, except when one of those foul(s) is for unsportsmanlike conduct or is a nonplayer foul. In such cases, the penalty (or penalties) for unsportsmanlike conduct/nonplayer fouls is administered from the succeeding spot that is established by the acceptance or declination of the penalty for the other live ball foul. In simple terms, it's enforced as if it was a dead ball foul occurring after the play. When only one penalty is to be enforced, the offended team may choose which one it shall be, or he may decline all penalties.

Just a reminder about an enforcement fundamental mentioned earlier...A dead ball foul is never coupled with a live ball foul or another dead ball foul to create a double or multiple foul.

**Simultaneous with the Snap** Certain fouls involve actions by a team which are legal during the dead ball period and only become illegal by virtue of the fact that the snap has occurred. For example, an offensive team may be poised to commit an illegal formation foul (five players in the backfield, for example) but until the snap occurs, they always have the opportunity to shift that 'extra' back onto the line making the formation legal or to call a time out to regroup. Therefore, you cannot flag it as a dead ball foul. You must wait until the ball is snapped. Hence, it is the snap that causes the formation to become illegal. And since no foul causes the ball to

become dead, you must let the play continue to its logical conclusion, i.e. until the ball becomes dead by rule. The following fouls are deemed to have occurred simultaneously with the snap:

- Illegal motion
- Illegal shift
- Illegal position or formation (player neither on line or in backfield, less than five players on line, more than four backs, linemen locking legs except for C and G's, 9-yard mark violation)
- Most illegal substitution fouls
- Illegal participation when 12 or more players are participating at the snap
- Illegal numbering

Penalties for fouls that occur simultaneously with the snap—if accepted—are generally enforced from the previous spot.

**Player Fouls** Now comes the fun part...enforcing the live ball player foul like holding, clipping, grasping the face mask, roughing the snapper, kicker, holder, or passer, pass interference, ineligible down field, illegal forward pass, and a host of others. This is where you earn your money! Enforcement of penalties for these fouls hinges on knowing the basic spot and on certain enforcement rules. It in turn is based upon the fundamental principles that (1) no team should benefit from committing a foul, and (2) a team that fouls during a down should be entitled to whatever benefit (yardage, or a turnover for example) they might have achieved legally prior to committing their foul(s).

Some definitions and principles might be in order: The “offense” is the team in possession of a live ball; the “defense” is their opponents. Team A (or K) is the offense at the beginning of a down; Team B (or R) of course is the defense. During the course of the down, the offense/defense designations will flip if there is a change of team possession like an interception, a fumble recovery, or a free or scrimmage kick return. However, by convention, the team labels (A, B, K, or R) will not change and will remain as they were at the snap.

## 2023 Enforcement Update

In 2023, the National Federation updated its enforcement procedures to provide different enforcement spots for certain fouls. In their update to the 2023 rule book however, there were several errors some of which were corrected in 2024. Despite those corrections, other errors/omissions still exist. **A fundamental error which still exists is their confounding misuse of the defined term “basic spot” in portions of rule 10-4. It is incorrectly used when the term “enforcement spot” should rightfully be used instead.** The update is also extremely complicated and would require the reader to memorize over a dozen specific enforcement spots. Additionally, their 2023 update removed the All-but-One principle which for years guided officials in determining the ultimate enforcement spot for most player fouls. Needlessly removing the all-but-one principle complicated matters further.

As a result, I will try to present a much-simplified process for determining the correct enforcement spots. It is just as precise as what the rules makers intended for 2023 but is much easier to comprehend and corrects the rule book’s errors and omissions. It simply builds on what we already knew from 2022. It will redefine and use the ‘removed’ All-but-One principle for fouls that occur during certain running plays.

## Basic Enforcement Principles

Determining the enforcement spot for fouls committed during a live ball is not an easy exercise. It requires the official to consider several factors (type of play, behind/beyond neutral zone, spot of the foul, before/after change of team possession). To simplify the thought process for enforcing penalties for fouls committed during a down, I've created a "*bucket system*" to categorize fouls and simplify the rather random placement of enforcement rules inside Rule 10-4



- (1) **Loose Ball Plays:** ALL FOULS COMMITTED DURING LOOSE BALL PLAYS FALL INTO BUCKET #1. Penalties for fouls by either team committed during a loose ball play are enforced from the previous spot (see EXCEPTIONS below). Note: The 2025 NFHS Rule Book mistakenly only includes loose ball play fouls committed *behind* the neutral zone, thus inadvertently ignoring fouls like defensive holding or pass interference fouls committed *downfield*. This is obviously an error, but I believe it is being corrected in the 2026 NFHS Football Rules Book. The enforcement spot for fouls committed during a loose ball play—regardless of the spot of the foul—is the previous spot.



- (2) **Running Plays:** ALL FOULS COMMITTED DURING A RUNNING PLAY WHERE THE RELATED RUN ENDS BEHIND THE NEUTRAL ZONE FALL INTO BUCKET #2. *If the end of the related run is behind the neutral zone*, penalties for fouls committed by either team prior to a change of possession are enforced from the previous spot regardless of the spot of the foul. (see EXCEPTIONS below).



- (3) **Running Plays:** ALL FOULS COMMITTED DURING A RUNNING PLAY WHERE THE RELATED RUN ENDS BEYOND THE NEUTRAL ZONE BUT THE FOUL OCCURS BEHIND THE NEUTRAL ZONE FALL INTO BUCKET #3 *If the end of the related run is beyond the neutral zone and the spot of the foul is behind the neutral zone*, fouls committed during such running plays follow these rules of enforcement:
- Penalties for fouls committed by Team A are enforced from the previous spot
  - Penalties for fouls committed by Team B are enforced from the end of the related run.

**EXCEPTIONS:** As mentioned above, there are some exceptions to the Basic Enforcement Principles for certain fouls committed *by Team A* when the spot of the foul is behind the neutral zone. For these specific fouls, enforcement will be from the spot of the foul—not the previous spot. Those fouls are:

- Illegal batting or illegal kicking (only applies to fouls by Team A behind the neutral zone though 2025 NFHS Rules fails to mention that). I believe this correction is also coming in 2026.
- Illegal forward pass and intentional grounding
- Fouls committed by the offensive team in their end zone. **The penalty for such fouls results in a safety as in the past.** Previous spot enforcement for these fouls is set aside.



4. **Running Plays:** Buckets #1, #2, and #3 leave two conditions not yet covered: ALL FOULS COMMITTED DURING A RUNNING PLAY WHERE EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING TWO SITUATIONS FALL INTO BUCKET #4:
- If both the end of the related run and the spot of the foul are beyond the neutral zone (think of a long run with a block in the back downfield or a face mask foul), and*
  - If the foul occurs after a change of team possession (like during a punt return or an interception return).*

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For either of these two situations, the penalty for such fouls is enforced from the end of the related run, unless the foul is by the offense and spot of the foul was behind the end of the run. In that case, the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul.

Does this sound familiar?? For those who were officiating prior to 2023, it should.

As mentioned above, prior to 2023, the Federation Rules included a basic enforcement procedure known as the ‘All-But-One’ principle (a.k.a, the ‘Three and One’ principle) which was used to determine the ultimate spot of enforcement using the basic spot. The needless complexity of the 2023 update documented in Rule 10 made the All-But-One unnecessary, though no less desirable. So sadly, it was removed. Despite that, it remains the ideal way to determine the correct enforcement for all Bucket #4 situations.

“All-but-one” Principle

Used for fouls which fall into Bucket #4

For fouls by either team during running plays where (a) *both* the end of the related run and the spot of the foul are beyond the neutral zone, or (b) the foul occurs following a change of team possession when there is no longer a neutral zone, the “all-but-one” principle determines the actual spot of enforcement. Here’s what it says:

| <i>If the foul was by...</i> | <i>...and it occurred...</i>      | <i>...then enforce the penalty from...</i> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| the Defense                  | Beyond the end of the related run | end of the related run                     |
| the Defense                  | Behind the end of the related run | end of the related run                     |
| the Offense                  | Beyond the end of the related run | end of the related run                     |
| the Offense                  | Behind the end of the related run | <b>the Spot of the Foul</b>                |

So for all situations except one, the penalty is enforced from the end of the related run, hence the name “all-but-one.” The lone exception is a foul by the offense that occurs behind the end of the related run. The penalty for such a foul will be enforced from the spot of the foul. For that reason, such a foul is often referred to as a “spot foul.” That’s why it’s important that on player fouls, your flag is not just thrown into the air, but rather is thrown directly to the spot of the foul or at least dropped on the yard line where the foul occurs.

Another result of this principle and a point to be clarified here: **The spot of the foul is NEVER used as the enforcement spot for fouls committed by the defense. Penalties for fouls by the defense are always enforced either (a) from the previous spot, or (b) from the end of the related run.**

While it might be considered intuitive, the Federation rules never specifically define what they mean by “behind” and “beyond” the end of the related run. To clear that up, *BEYOND* the end of the related run implies that the foul occurred on the defense’s side of the end of the related run; *BEHIND* means it occurred on the offense’s side of the end of the related run.

A “Bucket System” Summary is included as Appendix E.

## Special Enforcements

There are a set of special enforcements in Federation rules. Some might more accurately be considered exceptions to the enforcement principles we’ve already discussed, but others are more related to enforcing penalties for fouls that occur with extenuating circumstances. This section of the Federation code (Rule 10-5) also includes some other principles related to penalty enforcement that are not mentioned elsewhere.

- 1. Free kick out-of-bounds untouched by R.** If a free kick goes out-of-bounds untouched by R, it is a foul by K. In such a case, R generally is offered three options:
- Penalize K five (5) yards from the previous spot and replay the free kick down, or
  - Based upon the 2018 change, award Team R the ball and penalize Team K five (5) yards from the spot where the kick went out of bounds and place ball at the inbounds spot nearest to the spot where the kick went out of bounds, or
  - Take the ball 25 yards in advance of the previous spot, at the inbounds spot nearest to the spot where the kick went out of bounds. Typically, this is R’s 35 for kickoffs from K’s 40.

Two interesting notes on option c.:

- Taking the ball 25 yards in advance of the previous spot is **not** considered an award of penalty yardage. It is simply the designation of a succeeding spot. Hence, the traditional “half-the-distance” limitation does not apply. So, let’s assume that K free kicks from R’s 30 after an awarded fair catch, and he kicks it out-of-bounds untouched by R at R’s 20. Choice c. above would give R the ball at his own 5—the full 25 yards in advance of the previous spot. R will most likely choose to take the ball at the out-of-bounds spot and accept the five-yard penalty from there (choice b. above) in this situation.
- If by some remote chance, K’s free kick is from inside R’s 25 and goes out of bounds, the third option is no longer possible and therefore is not offered.

- 2. Kick Catching Interference (KCI).** If K interferes with R’s opportunity to catch either a scrimmage kick or a free kick, R may accept the penalty in one of two forms: (a) they may choose to penalize K fifteen yards from the previous spot and have Team K replay the down, or (b) they may choose to accept an *awarded* fair catch after enforcement of a fifteen-yard penalty from the spot of the foul. By ‘*awarded*,’ we mean that R can take over the ball with all the “privileges” normally accorded a team that actually completes a fair catch. Of course, they may also choose to decline the penalty entirely. The first option is typical loose ball play enforcement. Only the second option of an awarded fair catch + 15 yards can properly be characterized as a “special enforcement.”

### 3. Fouls During Scoring Plays

Over the years, probably no subset of the Federation rules has undergone as many changes, additions, deletions, and tweaking as the rules surrounding the special enforcement options for penalties that occur during a play that results in a score of some type. Touchdowns, field goals, and tries have all been affected by rule revisions. The next few sections address the current rules regarding fouls that occur during these types of plays.

- a. **Fouls by the defense during a down in which a field goal is scored.** If a foul by the defense occurs during a down in which a successful field goal results, the offense may accept the results of the play (3 pts.) and have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot—normally the resulting kickoff, but possibly even into an overtime period. Or, they may choose to take the three points off the board, have the penalty enforced according to regular enforcement procedures and replay the down.
- b. **Fouls during a down in which a touchdown is scored.** If a team scores a touchdown, and their opponents commit a foul during the down, the scoring team has two acceptance options: (1) They may accept the result of the play (6 pts.) and have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot—the spot of the try, or (2) they may accept the results of the play (TD), play the try from B's 3-yard line as they normally would, and have the penalty for their opponent's foul carried over (also known as "bridged") to the ensuing kickoff. Note: This option (2) of bridging to the kickoff is not permitted from regulation into overtime or between successive overtime periods since there is no ensuing kickoff involved. However, it is permitted to bridge enforcement to the second half kickoff if the touchdown was scored on the final play of the second period, meaning that the penalty would be enforced after the halftime intermission on the kickoff which begins the third quarter. Such bridging applies regardless of which team kicks off to start the second half. The rules also stipulate that if a team scores a TD after a change of possession, the penalty for an opponent's foul can only be enforced if the foul occurred after the change of possession. Otherwise, the penalty is automatically declined, and the scoring team attempts the try from his opponent's 3-yard line as usual and kicks off from his own 40-yard line following the try.

Additionally, any dead ball fouls by either team after the TD-scoring play but prior to the initial ready-for-play for the try may have their penalties enforced either (a) from the succeeding spot (spot of the try), or (b) bridged to the succeeding kickoff. Again, this potential for bridging the penalty exists only within regulation.

Also, penalties for unsportsmanlike or nonplayer fouls by either team *during* a TD-scoring play may be enforced on the try or bridged to the ensuing kickoff, at the offended team's choice, again with the restriction that bridging may not be into an overtime period.

- c. **Fouls by B on a successful try.** If Team B fouls during the down in which Team A successfully converts a try, A may take the point(s) off the board, penalize B and replay the try. Obviously, they would not choose this option if they successfully converted a two-point try. But in either situation (one-point or two-point tries), they may choose to keep the point(s) and penalize B from the succeeding spot—including carrying the penalty into overtime or from one overtime period to the next.

**One important note:** If the defense fouls during a touchdown, then commits a dead ball foul after the TD, and then fouls again during a successful try, all three of those fouls accumulate

and may be bridged to the succeeding kickoff. Of course, the offense could always choose to accept the penalty for the foul during a successful kick try and replay the try and continue with their plan for bridging the penalty for the other fouls during the TD to the free kick. Despite this restriction, the penalties for any dead ball fouls that occur after try as well as any unsportsmanlike or nonplayer fouls occurring during the try may accumulate to the succeeding spot.

**Carry-over enforcement** In the prior three situations where the defense fouls during scoring plays, the offended team has options for penalizing their opponent. All of them include some potential for bridging the penalty to either the succeeding spot or the succeeding kickoff. Appendix D provides a chart that helps determine the options permitted.

**4. Fouls during running plays when the related run ends in an end zone after a change of team possession.** These situations come in two varieties:

- a. Following a change of team possession, running plays where the related run ends in an end zone in possession of the team defending that goal line and that team is responsible for the ball being there, i.e. the team in possession provided the force which sent the ball across their own goal line. In effect, this can be called, for lack of a better term, a “pending safety.” The basic spot for fouls that take place during this running play is that team’s goal line.
- b. Following a change of team possession, running plays where the related run ends in the end zone of the team in possession and the opponent of that team is responsible for the ball being there, i.e. the opponent of the team in possession provided the force which sent the ball across the goal line. This can be referred to as a “pending touchback.” The basic spot for fouls that take place during this running play is the 20-yard line of the team defending that goal line.

In both situations, it doesn’t matter whether the ball ultimately becomes dead in the end zone, or whether the related run is followed by a loose ball which rolls into the field of play where it becomes dead, or rolls into the field of play and then out of bounds outside the field of play. The basic spot remains the same for all three possible dispositions of the play.

- 5. Nullified scores.** Except for an unsportsmanlike or a nonplayer foul, if the defense accepts the penalty for a foul committed by the offense during a down in which the offense scores a touchdown, field goal, or a successful try, the score will be nullified. Common sense, right?
- 6. Illegal Forward Pass, etc.** If the offensive team throws an illegal forward pass from its end zone, or if they commit any foul for which the penalty is accepted and has its enforcement spot on or behind its goal line, it is a safety. Note that even if the illegal forward pass is incomplete, the rules call for the ball to be returned to the spot of the pass—not to the previous spot as it would be for an incomplete legal forward pass. So declining the penalty still leaves the offending team with the ball behind its goal line—and therefore also results in a safety.
- 7. Roughing the passer.** While roughing the passer is a foul by the defense that occurs during a loose ball play, it may not be equitable to penalize from the previous spot if the pass is completed for a long gain. In the past, the passing team might have needed to decline the penalty in order to gain the maximum advantage in such a situation. In 1997, the Federation revised the enforcement for roughing the passer to provide the passing team more equity.

Again in 2011, the Federation changed the penalty for this foul so that the enforcement spot is the dead ball spot when that spot is beyond the neutral zone, provided there has been no change of team possession during the down. [Note that “*change of team possession during the down*” means a situation where a B player has actually possessed the live ball at some point during the down.] This enforcement prevents the defense from getting a “free shot” at the QB when a long pass is completed. However, if the dead ball spot is behind the neutral zone or if there has been a change of team possession during the down or if the dead ball spot is behind a goal line, the enforcement is from the previous spot in accordance with regular loose ball play enforcement principles. In all cases, regardless of the enforcement spot, the offense is awarded an automatic first down.

**8. Fouls by R during a Scrimmage Kick (Post Scrimmage Kick enforcement).** By definition, all fouls that occur during the interval between the snap and the end of a legal scrimmage kick are committed during a loose ball play. Once upon a time, penalties for such fouls were always enforced from the previous spot. Often such enforcement for fouls by Team R led to results which were excessively severe and inequitable for Team R, especially since by their punt, Team K was signaling its intention to give up the ball. As a result, the Federation decided to include in their rule code “post scrimmage kick enforcement” (PSK) beginning with the 2003 season. This enforcement had been part of the NCAA and NFL codes for some time. PSK is really an exception to the typical loose ball play enforcement. It is invoked only when certain criteria are met. In order to facilitate PSK enforcement, we must note the “end of the kick.” The end of the kick (also called the “post scrimmage kick spot”) is the spot where possession of the kick is gained or where the kick otherwise becomes dead by rule. It is the basic spot for PSK enforcement. For completeness and for the purpose of PSK enforcement, a kick which becomes dead in Team R’s end zone, i.e. a touchback, is defined to have its PSK spot relocated to R’s 20-yard line—the succeeding spot. In order for PSK enforcement to be considered, all of the following criteria must be met:

- a. The foul must be committed by team R beyond the expanded neutral zone during a down in which a scrimmage kick occurs and before the kick ends.
- b. The scrimmage kick must cross the neutral zone. [Note: *It does not have to end beyond the neutral zone, but it must have crossed the neutral zone at some point during the kick.*]
- c. Kick tries for point, successful field goals, and unsuccessful FG attempts during OT are NOT eligible for PSK enforcement. [Note: *Federation rules don’t explicitly state the exclusion for fouls during a FG attempt in OT, but PSK enforcement would be impossible since Team R will not snap the ball in continuous action on a failed attempt in OT*]
- d. Team K would not next be entitled to put the ball in play if the foul had not occurred

When all of these criteria are met, R may retain the ball. The basic spot of enforcement for their foul is the post scrimmage kick spot—the spot where the kick ended. If R’s foul occurred behind the PSK spot (basic spot), the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul under the “all-but-one” principle.

If any foul before the kick ends fails to meet one or more of the above PSK criteria, it will be enforced from the previous spot like all other penalties for fouls occurring during loose ball plays. This includes Team R fouls committed during a try, a successful field goal, or an unsuccessful field goal during extra periods.

What are some typical game situations that would call for PSK enforcement?

- Team R holds, illegally blocks in the back, or otherwise fouls Team K players **beyond the expanded neutral zone** who are running downfield to cover the kick.
- Team R bats or illegally kicks a ball which is loose **beyond the expanded neutral zone** following a legal scrimmage kick.
- Team R player gives an invalid fair catch signal. This was always a tough previous spot enforcement especially when Team K got a new series as a result.
- Team R player, after he signals for a fair catch, blocks prior to the end of the kick.

Aside from the rules, PSK enforcement requires the back judge or other official covering the end of the kick to drop a bean bag at the spot where the kick ends since that spot may become significant if PSK enforcement is necessary.

9. **Disqualified Player.** It's not said anywhere else, but it is common sense...a disqualified player shall be removed from the game and may not participate any longer in that game. This is true even if the penalty for the foul which resulted in the disqualification is declined by the offended team or declined by rule. Also, check your state and local association rules for any special record-keeping or reporting required by them or any specific rules related to player/coach disqualification.
10. **Unfair Acts.** For any patently unfair act where there is no specific rule coverage, the referee has the liberty to enforce any penalty he considers equitable—including the award of a score. Same is true if either team commits acts which tend to make a travesty of the game. Also, no team may repeatedly commit fouls that halve the distance to the goal. In this specific case, the referee may forfeit the game to the offended team. Note that if an unfair act does have specific rule coverage, the referee is not at liberty to set that coverage aside and choose instead to use his own discretionary penalty. He must in such cases abide by any prescribed penalty.
11. **Improperly Equipped Players.** This probably should not be included in the section on Special Enforcements, but we need to mention it somewhere. In fact, it's now no longer a yardage 'enforcement.' Whereas in the past, failure to wear required equipment, or wearing of required equipment improperly constituted a foul with prescribed yardage penalty enforcements, a 2018 change eliminated the foul. Rather this violation now results in the offending player being removed from the game for a down and treated identically as an injured player or a player whose helmet has come off during a down. Please note that this rule does not extend to players wearing *illegal* equipment. Such infractions remain unsportsmanlike fouls charged to the head coach who verified prior to the game that his players were equipped *legally*. And it should be obvious that in addition to the penalty for illegal equipment, any players so equipped need to be chased for a down—just as you would for an improperly equipped player.
12. **Team K Fouls During Kicking Plays.** Now this is indeed a special enforcement 'option' which began with the 2018 season. Though the Federation has spread this change across no fewer than four places in the rule book, we'll summarize it here in this one section. Fouls by Team K committed during either free kick or scrimmage kick plays prior to the end of the kick may now be enforced (Team R's choice) from the succeeding spot, provided that Team K is not entitled to next put the ball in play. See play #30 in Appendix B for examples of this

new rule being applied to game situations. Note that (a) this option is not permitted when the Team K foul is for kick-catching interference, since KCI already has its own special enforcement, and (b) the option only applies to Team K fouls occurring simultaneously with the snap or for fouls occurring during the loose ball play portion of the down, i.e. it only applies to fouls committed by K before the kick ends. Fouls occurring after the kick ends will occur during the resulting running play and will be enforced accordingly.

## The Enforcement Spot

If you've followed everything thus far, you probably have a good idea of which yard line to enforce from. But what spot along that yard line do you use? Using the wrong lateral spot on the field is probably one of the most common enforcement errors made by officials. The important thing to remember is that the enforcement *spot* is just that—a spot. It is determined not only by the yard line of enforcement, but also by its lateral position on the field, i.e. its 'east-west' position across the field relative to the sidelines.

While previous spot and succeeding spot aren't too difficult to envision, spot fouls and basic spot fouls during running plays are typically the ones that get enforced improperly. If a foul occurs during a running play, and application of the 'all-but-one' principle calls for enforcement from the spot of the foul as in Figure 1 below, enforcement will be from the spot of the foul—regardless of where the run ends, meaning that the succeeding spot will be at the end of the red arrow between the inbounds spots. The same would be true for spot fouls which occur during a loose ball play. Enforce from the exact spot of the foul which may not correspond to the lateral position on the field of the previous spot. If however, the same foul occurs beyond the basic spot, and procedures call for enforcement from the end of the run (see Figure 2), enforce from the spot at which the related run ended. Note that now with more fouls calling for previous spot enforcement, we must be diligent in locating the actual spot where the ball was last snapped—

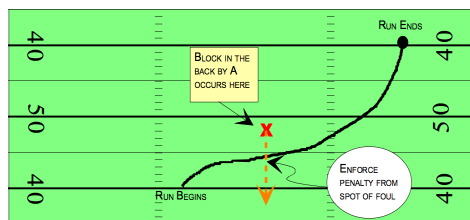


Figure 1 – Spot foul

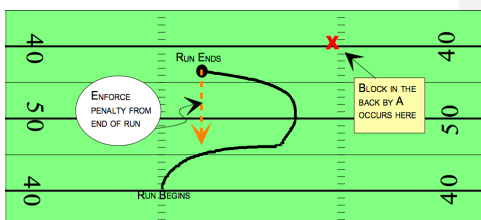


Figure 2 – Enforcement from end of related run

not just the line where it was snapped.

## Thought Process for Enforcing Fouls

During the dead ball period following a foul, the referee must gather all related information from the reporting official(s) and determine the options to be presented to the offended team's captain. Some of the questions you should ask yourself for determining the options (if any) you will offer the offended team:

- What was the result of the play absent any fouls? This may result in an obvious declination of the penalty, in which case, you signal that and move along.
- Are any special enforcements at work in this play?
- Is there more than one live ball foul (excluding nonplayer and unsportsmanlike fouls) to consider?

- Are there dead balls after the down ends, or nonplayer fouls, or unsportsmanlike fouls during or after the play to consider? Remember all of these call for succeeding spot enforcement after all other fouls have been disposed of. Put these on the back burner until you've dealt with everything else. And recall that an equal number of 15-yard dead ball fouls against opponents will cancel each other out.
- Did the foul occur simultaneously with the snap? If so, previous spot enforcement is called for.
- What kind of play was in progress when the foul occurred? And what's the basic spot for enforcement?
- Who (offense or defense) committed the foul and where did it occur relative to the neutral zone?
- On running plays, where did the related run end? And where did the foul occur relative to the end of the related run and relative to the neutral zone?
- Consider whether acceptance of a penalty will have an effect on the awarding of a new series to either team or a possible loss of down for the offensive team.
- Did time for a period expire during the down in which the foul occurred? (See below "Extension of Periods")

Remember, if dead ball fouls occur *after* a fourth down play, or if nonplayer or unsportsmanlike fouls occur during a fourth down play, the awarding of a new series is determined prior to considering the effect of these fouls. Therefore, if A fails to make the line to gain, the new series will be awarded to Team B and then the penalty yardage for the dead ball foul will be enforced—regardless of the offending team. Or if A does reach the line to gain during the down, a new series is awarded to them and then the penalty for the dead ball foul is enforced. A will get that new series even though enforcement of the penalty for their dead ball foul may ultimately bring the ball back to a spot behind the previous line to gain. And recall that even after any such enforcement is made, the line to gain is not established (i.e. the chains are not set) until after enforcement of the penalties for these fouls. In other words, the resulting situation will be first and ten.

## Penalty Enforcement – Crew Responsibilities

OK...the clock is stopped; the referee and umpire are discussing enforcement. The rest of the crew can take a breather, right? Wrong! Depending on your crew size, the remaining three, four, or five officials have duties too.

Typically, at least one, possibly two, officials should be heading to the succeeding spot to make sure that the umpire arrives at that same spot in due order. If not, a conversation needs to occur between the umpire and that wing official—why aren't we in the same spot? It's advisable that the other wing stay at the enforcement spot until enforcement is complete—just in case there's a question regarding the enforcement spot. The deep official(s) may be needed to facilitate communication with the sidelines and be ready to assist the referee in determining whether the game clock is to start on the RFP or with the snap. Messing up an enforcement is inexcusable. Check with your association to see what official mechanics they expect.

## And what about the clock?

So now that we've enforced the penalty, there's another decision to be made...we must now determine when the clock will next start. In general, if the clock was stopped only for the

purpose of completing the penalty (an official's time out), it will start with the ready-for-play. However, if the action that caused the down to end also called for simultaneous stoppage of the clock (score, runner or ball out-of-bounds, incomplete pass, touchback, fair catch), the clock will start on the snap after the penalty is disposed of, just as it would if no penalty had occurred. Same would hold true if after penalty enforcement, either team was granted a charged time out. A simple way to remember all of this: If you have competing factors for starting the clock (one says start on 'ready; the other says start on snap), then start on the snap. A reason for starting the clock on the snap always trumps a reason for starting it on the ready for play.

Another potential area of clock confusion—especially for newer officials—exists when a down is to be replayed following enforcement of a penalty. Whether the clock starts after enforcement on the ready-for-play or the snap is dependent on the circumstances surrounding the clock stoppage for the down in which the foul occurred. For example, suppose Play 1 ended with an incomplete pass. Obviously, for Play 2 the clock will start on the snap. Suppose Play 2 ends inbounds, but Team A is guilty of holding. Enforcement results in a replay of the Play 2 down. Since the Play 2 down is replayed, some mistakenly believe that you would start the clock with the snap—just like Play 2 did originally. That's incorrect. After enforcement of the penalty for A's holding foul, the clock will start with the ready-for-play since the play during which the holding foul occurred ended inbounds, and the only reason to stop the clock was because of A's holding foul during the down.

If a dead ball foul occurs while the clock is running, the clock will generally restart on the ready-for-play following completion of the penalty. If a dead ball foul occurs while the clock is stopped, it will remain stopped until the penalty is completed and on the ready for play, the referee will either start the clock or will keep the clock stopped until the snap. This decision is made based upon the conditions under which the clock was stopped. It's a good idea to have the line judge or a deep official keep track of this and remind the referee before the ready for play, "snap" or "ready."

By rule, the referee is given some discretion if he believes that the offending team fouled in an attempt to illegally conserve or consume time. In such cases, he is allowed to start the clock on the ready for play or cause it to remain stopped until the snap to thwart any such illegal tactics. Note that there must be a foul in order for the referee to invoke this privilege.

A 2017 rule change formalized a procedure to use if a foul occurs during the last two minutes of either half. If a team fouls with 2:00 or less remaining in either half and the clock is due to next start on the ready for play, the offended team has the option to request that the clock next start on the snap. This option for the offended team exists whether or not the penalty for the foul is accepted. Note that this rule only provides an option to start on the snap, preventing an 'illegal' *consumption* of time. There is no analogous option for the offended team to request the clock start on the ready instead of the snap, though the referee can (and should!) use his discretionary power to do so if he believes there is an illegal attempt to *conserve* time by the offending team. And none of this ever prevents the use of legal tactics to consume/conserve time. Such tactics are still permitted and should have no effect on starting the clock and no provision for asking a coach about his preference.

The introduction of the 40-second play clock into NFHS football in 2019 brought its own new set of rules and procedures for dealing with the play clock after a penalty is completed (accepted or declined). In general, after a penalty is completed, the play clock is set to 25 seconds and is

started on the Referee's signal. However, if there is a foul (or fouls) by Team B only which causes the game clock to stop, once the penalty is completed, the play clock will be set to 40 seconds and started on the Referee's signal.

### **Extension of periods.**

And remember that if a live ball foul that does not include a loss of down provision (regardless of whether or not the loss of down can actually be enforced) occurs during a down in which time for a period expires, and the penalty for that foul is accepted, you must extend the period with an untimed down and continue to do so until a foul-free down officially ends the period. Contrary to some conventional wisdom, this is true regardless of whether the foul is by the offense or defense. In such cases, be sure to inform the offended captain (coach) of the need to run an untimed down since it might very well affect his choice to either accept or decline the penalty. However, if the foul does include a loss of down as part of the penalty—whether or not the loss of down can actually be enforced—the prior period is over. No extension is permitted. Note that a period is also extended if during a down in which the game clock expires a double foul occurs.

Also, you don't extend the period to enforce penalties for:

- fouls during a TD-scoring play which result in enforcement on the succeeding kickoff
- dead ball fouls after a TD-scoring play where enforcement will be on the succeeding kickoff
- fouls during a successful try or successful field goal when the penalties are to be enforced from the succeeding spot
- fouls where enforcement results in a safety.

What do these last four exceptions have in common? For three out of the four, the extension would result in a free-kick down. Even for the fourth exception (fouls during a successful try or field goal), the extension would most likely result in a free kick down, but could be bridged into overtime to a non free-kick down. In general, if extension of a period would result in the untimed down being a free kick down, don't extend the period. In these cases, enforcement will be made on the first play of the subsequent quarter, or in the case of a successful try or a successful field goal only, possibly from the succeeding spot in overtime.

### **Inadvertent whistle.**

By far, these two words are the vilest in a football official's vocabulary and create the most fear and embarrassment should one actually be guilty of an inadvertent whistle (IW). As bad as an IW is, a foul during a play which ends with one can be your best friend. Don't get me wrong. Should you blow an IW, you're still going to get all the 'treatment' you so aptly deserve for this faux pas (including the traditional picking up of the post-game refreshment tab), but the foul often allows you a way out gracefully. If a foul occurs during a down in which an IW ends the play, the penalty for the foul—if accepted—makes the normal procedure for resolving the IW moot. You just enforce the penalty as you would have if the down ended normally and resume play.

### **Closing.**

*"I don't need to worry about enforcing penalties. That's the referee's job."* You may have heard that before, sometimes in jest, but probably just as likely in all seriousness. Nothing could be further from the truth. All officials need to fully understand the subject thoroughly: The umpire

needs to actually walk off the correct penalty, from the correct spot; the linesman is supposed to go to the succeeding spot and ensure that the umpire arrives there in due order; the line judge is told to hold the enforcement spot until the succeeding spot is correctly determined; both wings and possibly the back judge or deep wings are charged with relaying information about the foul and its enforcement to the sidelines.

And since the referee isn't infallible (despite his protestations to the contrary), all officials must be ready to jump in if they see that an enforcement mistake is about to occur. **Don't ever let an incorrect enforcement go unchallenged. Forget about feelings. Don't just try to hide in the shadows. If you feel an enforcement—or a clock restart after enforcement—was incorrect, stop the proceedings and discuss your concerns with the referee.** Nothing will get a crew of officials into more trouble than an incorrect enforcement or a clock mistake at a key juncture in the contest. Football is a team game and the officiating crew is the “third team” involved in the game. Take it seriously. Study it diligently. It will increase your enjoyment of what is already a very enjoyable and rewarding avocation. Good luck!

## Appendix A – Type of Play

### Type of Play (Loose Ball Play, Running Play)

The following play situations are designed solely to help clarify the type of play that is in progress during the various parts of a typical (or not-so-typical) down. No fouls are mentioned, nor are enforcements considered. But as you read these plays, just think about fouls occurring during the various intervals mentioned.

| Play 1: QB A12 takes the snap at his 20 yard line and hands off to running back A35 at A's 15. A35 runs to A's 35 where he fumbles. A80 recovers the fumble and advances to A's 40 where he is tackled. |                            |                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The interval between...                                                                                                                                                                                 | ...and...                  | is part of a...                                                                 |
| <i>The snap</i>                                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>the handoff</i>         | Running play (call it related run #1)                                           |
| <i>The handoff</i>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>A35's fumble</i>        | Running play (still related run #1 since a loose ball did not follow A12's run) |
| <i>Fumble</i>                                                                                                                                                                                           | <i>A80's recovery</i>      | Running play (still related run #1)                                             |
| <i>A80's recovery</i>                                                                                                                                                                                   | <i>the end of the down</i> | New Running play (call it related run #2)                                       |

| Play 2: QB A12 takes the snap at his 20 yard line and hands off to running back A35 at A's 15. A35 fumbles at A's 18. B75 recovers the fumble and advances to A's 5 where he is hit and fumbles the ball through A's end zone. |                       |                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| The interval between...                                                                                                                                                                                                        | ...and...             | is part of a...                       |
| <i>The snap</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>the handoff</i>    | Loose ball play                       |
| <i>The handoff</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <i>A35's fumble</i>   | The same loose ball play              |
| <i>Fumble</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <i>B75's recovery</i> | The same loose ball play              |
| <i>B75's recovery</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>B75's fumble</i>   | Running play (call it related run #1) |

|                     |                            |                                     |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>B75's fumble</i> | <i>The end of the down</i> | Running play (still related run #1) |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|

| <b>Play 3: Punter K10 takes the snap at his 20 yard line and kicks. R42 catches the kick at R's 40 and runs to midfield where he fumbles. The ball rolls out of bounds at K's 45.</b> |                            |                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| The interval between...                                                                                                                                                               | ...and...                  | is part of a...                       |
| <i>The snap</i>                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>the kick</i>            | Loose ball play                       |
| <i>The kick</i>                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>R42's catch</i>         | The same loose ball play              |
| <i>R42's catch</i>                                                                                                                                                                    | <i>His fumble</i>          | Running play (call it related run #1) |
| <i>His fumble</i>                                                                                                                                                                     | <i>The end of the down</i> | Running play (still related run #1)   |

| <b>Play 4: Punter K10 takes the snap at his 40 yard line and kicks. R42 muffs the kick at R's 20. The ball rolls to R's 5 where K22 attempts to recover. He muffs the ball across R's goal line.</b> |                            |                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| The interval between...                                                                                                                                                                              | ...and...                  | is part of a...          |
| <i>The snap</i>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>the kick</i>            | Loose ball play          |
| <i>The kick</i>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>R42's muff</i>          | The same loose ball play |
| <i>R42's muff</i>                                                                                                                                                                                    | <i>K22's muff</i>          | The same loose ball play |
| <i>K22's muff</i>                                                                                                                                                                                    | <i>The end of the down</i> | The same loose ball play |
| <b>Play 5: Punter K14 takes the snap from midfield and kicks. R22 fields the kick at R's 25 and advances to R's 45 where he fumbles. K34 recovers and advances for a TD.</b>                         |                            |                          |
| The interval between...                                                                                                                                                                              | ...and...                  | is part of a...          |
| <i>The snap</i>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <i>the kick</i>            | Loose ball play          |

|                       |                                 |                                                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>The kick</i>       | <i>R22's catch</i>              | The same loose ball play                                        |
| <i>R22's catch</i>    | <i>R22's fumble</i>             | Running play (call it related run #1)                           |
| <i>R22's fumble</i>   | <i>K34's recovery</i>           | Running play (still related run #1; team R still in possession) |
| <i>K34's recovery</i> | <i>The end of the down (TD)</i> | New Running play (call it related run #2)                       |

**Play 6: QB A8 takes the snap in a shotgun formation from midfield. He passes downfield. His pass is batted into the air by B45 at B's 30. B14 intercepts at B's 25 and returns it to midfield where he fumbles. A55 recovers and advances till he is pushed out of bounds at B's 35.**

| The interval between...   | ...and...                     | is part of a...                           |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <i>The snap</i>           | <i>A8's catch of the snap</i> | Loose ball play                           |
| <i>A8's catch</i>         | <i>A8's pass</i>              | The same loose ball play                  |
| <i>A8's pass</i>          | <i>B45's bat</i>              | The same loose ball play                  |
| <i>B45's bat</i>          | <i>B14's interception</i>     | The same loose ball play                  |
| <i>B14's interception</i> | <i>B14's fumble</i>           | Running play (call it related run #1)     |
| <i>B14's fumble</i>       | <i>A55's recovery</i>         | Running play (still related run #1)       |
| <i>A55's recovery</i>     | <i>The end of the down</i>    | New Running play (call it related run #2) |

**Play 7: QB A8 takes the snap at his 35. He hands to A25 at his 30. A25 advances to midfield where he hands the ball to A86 who runs for a TD.**

| The interval between... | ...and... | is part of a... |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------|

|                      |                      |                                               |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <i>The snap</i>      | <i>A8's handoff</i>  | Running play (call it related run #1)         |
| <i>A8's handoff</i>  | <i>A25's handoff</i> | <u>The same running play</u> (related run #1) |
| <i>A25's handoff</i> | <i>A86's TD</i>      | <u>The same running play</u> (related run #1) |

For the purposes of penalty enforcement, neither A8's handoff nor A25's handoff constitute the end of one related run and the beginning of another. A8's, A25's and A86's runs are considered parts of the same related run. See NF 10-3-3b for clarification.

## Appendix B – Plays & Rulings

### Enforcement Plays & Rulings

The following play situations have been included to reinforce the basic enforcement principles. While not every play is simple, the situations presented are not intended to confuse. Nor are they so esoteric or hypothetical that you will never see them during your officiating career. Rather, they are precisely those kinds of things that will typically happen in a football game. They are presented in no particular order, but each answer explains the type of foul(s) committed and presents an orderly process for determining enforcement.

#### Plays:

1. On a free kick, K2, who is neither the kicker nor the holder, is beyond his free kick line before the ball is kicked.
2. 3<sup>rd</sup> -10 for A from B's 30. Quarterback A1 drops back to pass from B's 48. He is tackled there by B3 who pulls him down by twisting his facemask.
3. A1 runs for a touchdown. During A's successful try for point by run, B2 is detected holding. After the try, B3 slugs A1.
4. 4<sup>th</sup> -10 for A on B's 25. A1 drops back to pass from B's 35 where he purposefully incompletes a pass to save loss of yardage. Referee rules that this was intentional grounding and *not* a legal grounding of a forward pass.
5. K punts from R's 40 as time for the 2nd quarter expires. During R's runback, K's coach calls the linesman "... a fat #%&\$." R is tackled finally on K's 3-yard line. Linesman flags coach for unsportsmanlike conduct.
6. During a run by A1, A2 is holding B2. Thereafter, a fumble by A1 is recovered by B3 who advances for a touchdown. While the ball was loose following A1's fumble, B3 clips A3.
7. B1 intercepts A's pass in his own end zone. He tries to run it out but (a) is tackled while still behind the goal line, or (b) he fumbles and the ball rolls into the field of play and out of bounds at B's 3-yard line. During the run, B2 clips A2 on B's 4-yard line.
8. 1<sup>st</sup> -10 for A on the 50. A1 throws a forward pass to A2 for a 20 yard gain. While the pass was in flight A6 was holding B4 at A's 43.
9. 4<sup>th</sup> - 2 for A on B's 25. A1 runs to B's 18 where he is tackled. After the ball is dead, B1 piles on A1.
10. Same play as #9, except that A1 charges into B1 after the ball is dead.
11. 4<sup>th</sup> -10 for K on R's 40. At the snap, K is illegally in motion. K's punt is returned by R1 to R's 45. During R's run, R4 is flagged for holding at R's 25.
12. 2<sup>nd</sup> - 8 for A from B's 40. Quarterback A1 drops back to pass. At midfield he is hit and fumbles. While the ball is rolling loose, B5 holds A4. A10 recovers the fumble at B's 45.
13. 3<sup>rd</sup> - Goal from B's 5. A25 runs for a TD. During his run, B67 incidentally grabs A25's face mask.
14. 4<sup>th</sup> - 7 from R's 18. While K's successful field goal is in flight, R65 roughs holder K11.

15. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 14 from A's 35. A2 runs to midfield where he fumbles. While the ball is loose, A3 blocks B4 below the waist at B's 45. A7 recovers the loose ball and is down at B's 40.
16. 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from midfield, Team A is illegally in motion at the snap. A4 runs to B's 45 where he is tackled. During his run, A4 held B3 at B's 40.
17. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15 from B's 25. Team A commits an illegal shift at the snap. A1's pass is intercepted by B2 at B's 1. B2 takes it 99 yards for a TD. During his run, B3 clipped A8 in B's end zone.
18. On 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8 from B's 45, A3 completes a pass to A10 who runs to B's 35 where he is tackled. B2 roughed the passer on the play.
19. Team A's try for point by kick is good. During the down, B3 roughed the holder.
20. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9 from A's 3. QB A1 drops back to pass. In the end zone, B2 incidentally grabs his face mask and (a) then tackles him there, or (b) A1 fumbles the ball which rolls into the field of play where B3 recovers at A's 3-yard line.
21. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2 from A's 40. A4 runs to B's 45 where B5 grabs and twists his face mask. He keeps his feet and runs to B's 16 where he is tackled.
22. After A1's run for a first down, a new series is awarded at midfield, and the ball is set ready for play. Team A's coach screams at the line judge that he's "...an incompetent jerk." The LJ flags him for unsportsmanlike conduct.
23. Team K punts from midfield. R10 fields the punt at his 10-yard line and advances to his 25. During the kick, R14 holds K32 who is covering the kick at R's 20.
24. Team K punts from K's 40. R25 gives an invalid signal at R's 15. R25 muffs the kick which rolls forward and out of bounds at R's 24.
25. Team K punts from K's 45. During the kick, R45 holds K12 at R's 25. The ball, untouched by R, is rolling loose at R's 14 where K24 recovers it.
26. Team K punts from midfield. R24 signals for a fair catch at R's 10. The ball goes over his head and into R's end zone. Before the kick crosses R's goal line, R24 blocks K11 at R's 8-yard line who is attempting to down the ball close to the R's goal line.
27. K's ball 4<sup>th</sup> -9 from R's 45. K is illegally in motion at the snap. K's punt is caught by R15 at his 5 yard line and he returns it to midfield where he's tackled. During the kick, R45 illegally blocks K in the back at R's 2 yard line.
28. A3 breaks loose for a long TD run. At the 10 yard line, he turns and backpedals into the end zone, pointing at the defense with the ball held aloft. After he clearly crosses the goal line, B2 cleans his clock with a hard shoulder block. A3 gets up and shoves B2 to the ground.
29. On 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5 from A's 20, A runs to B's 45 where he is tackled. During his run, A75 held at A's 18. After the play, A22 taunts B7, and B7 retaliates by shoving A22 to the ground.
30. 4<sup>th</sup> - 7 from R's 45. K8 punts the ball which (a) rolls into Team R's end zone, (b) is caught by R32 and advanced to R's 35 where he is tackled, or (c) is muffed by R32 and recovered by K12 at R's 18. In all three situations, K67 is guilty of holding at R's 48 before the punter kicks the ball.

31. K's ball, 4th-5, on R's 47. During A's punt, R45 holds K87 at R's 38. R13 fields the punt at R's 8 and returns it to R's 40 where he is hit and fumbles the ball. K19 recovers the loose ball at R's 43.

### Rulings:

1. A dead ball foul. Play should be blown dead immediately. Penalize K 5 yards for encroachment and replay the free kick down. Clock will start when the kick is legally touched.
2. A live ball foul by the defense during a running play. Enforce from the previous spot (2023 change). Result will be A's ball, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 15.
3. A live ball holding foul by B followed by a dead ball personal foul by B. Team A is awarded two points and the penalty for B's hold will be assessed on the succeeding kickoff. The dead ball personal foul will then be enforced from that succeeding spot. Team A will free kick from B's 35. Player B3 is disqualified. [Note: this is not a multiple foul.]
4. A live ball illegal forward pass (intentional grounding). Enforce from the spot of the pass (it's a running play since the foul took place during an illegal forward pass). The penalty also involves loss of down. The result, therefore, is B's ball, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 40.
5. K's coach's comments constitute a nonplayer unsportsmanlike conduct foul. This is treated as a dead ball foul. The half is over. The DBF will be enforced (15 yards) on the free kick that begins the third quarter.
6. There are live ball fouls by each team during the down. Team B (the team in final possession) fouled while A's fumble was loose. This was prior to their gaining possession. They did not get the ball with clean hands. The result is a double foul. No consultation with the coaches regarding options since there are none. Signal the fouls, wipe them out, and Replay the down from the previous spot.
7. First thing to note is that the run ended in B's end zone and Team A provided the force that took the ball across B's goal line. In (a) the result of the play is a touchback. In (b) the run ended in B's end zone even though it became dead out of bounds outside the field of play. In both situations, since the run ended in B's end zone, the basic spot of enforcement is B's 20-yard line. However, the foul was by the offense behind the basic spot. Therefore, in both cases, enforce from the spot of the foul. B's ball, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 2.
8. A live ball holding foul against A6 during a loose ball play. Since the foul was by the offense behind the neutral zone, the penalty is enforced ten yards from the previous spot (2023 change). Result will be A's ball, 1<sup>st</sup> and 20 from A's 40.
9. Team A has made the line to gain. They are awarded a new series, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 18. Now penalize the dead ball foul against B1 half the distance to the goal. Result is A's ball 1<sup>st</sup> and goal from B's 9.
10. Again, Team A has made the line to gain. They are awarded a new series, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 18. Now penalize the dead ball foul against A1, 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Line to gain is established after enforcement. Result is A's ball, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 33.
11. Live ball fouls are committed by each team during the down. The team in final possession (R) had not fouled prior to gaining possession. They got the ball with clean hands. They may keep it provided they decline the penalty for K's motion foul. Then penalize R4's hold from the spot of the foul since it's behind the end of the related run (R's 45). The result is R's ball 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from R's 15. Note that if Team R doesn't like the field position this gives them,

they can choose to accept the penalty for K's motion foul. This would result in a double foul and K would then replay 4<sup>th</sup> down.

12. B's hold took place during A1's fumble behind the neutral zone, hence during a loose ball play. Enforce the penalty from the basic spot (previous spot). A's ball 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 30.
13. Award Team A 6 points. Since B's foul took place during a down in which their opponents scored a TD, They can either (a) penalize B from the succeeding spot in which case A's try will be from B's 1½, or (b) they can execute their try from B's 3 (as usual) and bridge B's foul over to the ensuing kickoff which will now take place from A's 45.
14. Choice for Team K: Either (a) accept the 3 points for the successful field goal and penalize R 15 yards on the succeeding kick off (K will kick from R's 45) or (b) take the points off the board, penalize R's roughing as a foul during a loose ball play, and K will play it 1<sup>st</sup> – G from R's 9.
15. A's block below the waist is a live ball foul during a running play. The basic spot of enforcement is the end of the run, i.e. the spot of A2's fumble. In this case, the spot of the foul is beyond the end of the related run. Therefore, enforcement of the penalty for A's foul is 15 yards from the end of the related run. The result is A's ball, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 14 from A's 35.
16. Team A has committed two live ball fouls during the down—a multiple foul. B has the choice of accepting either penalty or none at all. If they accept the motion penalty (simultaneous with the snap), A will play 1<sup>st</sup> and 15 from A's 45; if they accept the holding penalty, enforcement will be from the basic spot (end of the run). Team A will play 1<sup>st</sup> and 15 from A's 45. Or B could decline both penalties and A will play 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5 from B's 45
17. There were live ball fouls by each team during the down. Team B got the ball with clean hands. They may keep it by declining the penalty for A's shift. But be careful! If they do, the all-but-one principle dictates that the penalty for their clip will have the enforcement spot in B's end zone, hence a safety. We must be sure to let B know that he can only avoid the safety by accepting the penalty for A's shift. This will result in a double foul and a replay of the prior down.
18. The penalty for roughing the passer is a special enforcement that supersedes the all-but-one principle. It says that if the pass is completed and the dead ball spot is beyond the neutral zone, enforcement will be from the dead ball spot provided there has been no change of team possession. That's the case here. The result is A's ball, 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from B's 20.
19. Team A has two options here: (1) they can accept the penalty, take the point off the board, enforce half the distance to B's goal and replay the try from B's 1½, or (2) they can accept the point, and have the 15 yards enforced on the succeeding free kick. They will kick from B's 45.
20. In (a), B2's foul occurred during a running play which ended behind the neutral zone. As a result of the 2023 rule change, the penalty is enforced from the previous spot. Result will be A's ball, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4 from A's 8. In (b), since A eventually fumbled the ball from behind the neutral zone, B's face mask foul took place during a loose ball play. Hence, enforcement is also from the previous spot. The result of the enforcement will be A's ball, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4 from A's 8.
21. B5's foul took place during a running play. The basic spot is the end of the run. Penalize the foul from there. Result is A's ball 1<sup>st</sup> and goal from B's 8.

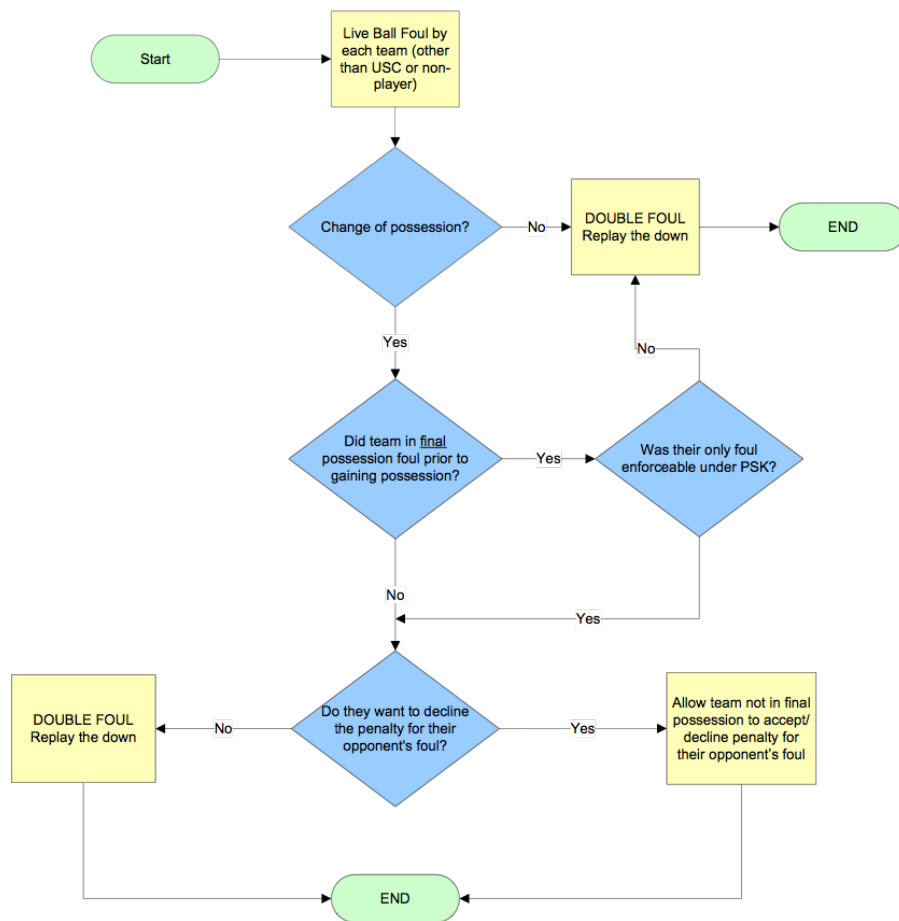
22. Since the dead ball foul took place after the ready-for-play, the line to gain had already been established. Enforce 15 yards from the succeeding spot. Leave the line to gain fixed. The result is A's ball 1<sup>st</sup> and 25 from A's 35.
23. PSK enforcement. R's ball 1-10 from R's 5. The penalty is enforced from the end of the kick.
24. Scrimmage kick ends at R's 24. R's PSK foul occurred at his 15. Enforce from the spot of the foul since it is behind the PSK spot. Result is R, 1-10 from R's 10.
25. Use PSK enforcement. K would not be entitled to put the ball in play from the succeeding spot if there was no foul since their recovery constituted first touching, entitling Team R to the ball. Enforce from the PSK spot since it is behind the spot of the foul. Result is R, 1-10 from R's 7.
26. Kick ended in R's end zone—touchback. As a result the end of the kick (PSK spot) is prescribed to be R's 20-yard line. R's illegal block foul occurred at R's 8 (behind the PSK spot). Enforce as a spot foul—R, 1-10 from R's 4.
27. Take your time on this one. Since R's foul is otherwise subject to PSK enforcement, they can keep the ball after enforcement if they decline the penalty for K's foul. Result: R's ball 1-10 at R's 1-yard line. But remember...R can choose not to decline the penalty for K's foul. By R's acceptance of that penalty, the result would be a double foul. K will replay 4th down. This might be a better choice for R considering their field position if they decline K's foul. Don't forget to offer R that choice!
28. A3's foul is for unsportsmanlike conduct during the play. B2's late hit is a personal foul after the play, as is A3's retaliation. The penalties for A3's unsportsmanlike foul and B2's personal foul cancel each other. However, the penalty for A3's retaliatory personal foul may be enforced on the try (A attempts from B's 18) or on the ensuing kickoff (A free kicks from A's 25). B makes the choice of where to enforce.
29. Penalize Team A from the previous spot (2023 change) and repeat 3<sup>rd</sup> down. A's ball, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 15 from A's 10. The penalties for the two 15-yard dead ball fouls, one each by opponents, offset (cancel each other).
30. For (a), the result of the play is a touchback. Team R may choose to penalize Team K 10 yards from the previous spot (2023 change) and have them replay 4<sup>th</sup> down from K's 45 or he may choose to take the ball 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from R's 30. For (b), Team R can also choose to penalize from R's 45 and have K replay the down, but probably won't. Rather they will opt to penalize K's holding foul from the succeeding spot—R's 35, giving them 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 from R's 45. In (c) since Team K would be next to put the ball in play, there is no option to penalize from the succeeding spot. Only choice for Team R is to penalize back at R's 45 and have K replay 4<sup>th</sup> down, 4<sup>th</sup> and 17 from K's 45.
31. This play isn't terribly difficult from an enforcement perspective, but it's a great lesson on the need for the referee not to get caught up in the emotion of the game. He needs to slow down, consider everything, and make sure that he doesn't have a knee-jerk reaction to the turnover. While probably everyone on Team K's sideline is doing cartwheels because of the turnover, and Team K coaches on the sideline are likely gesturing wildly, and yelling, "Decline!...Decline!," YOU need to slow down, divorce yourself from the emotion, and consider K's options. Clearly, if K does decline the penalty, they will take over 1st and 10 at R's 43, probably what they think they want. BUT...what if they accept the penalty? R45's hold would typically qualify for PSK enforcement where R would retain the ball after

enforcement, which is why the coaches are falling over themselves trying to let you know they want to decline the penalty. But because R fumbled and K19 recovered, K will next be entitled to put the ball in play. That means that PSK is no longer an option, and the ten-yard enforcement for R's hold would be from the previous spot since the holding foul occurred during a loose ball play. That would move Team K beyond the line to gain and give them a first down at R's 37. So, by giving up the turnover and accepting the penalty, they actually will get the ball with 6 yards better field position—at R's 37 rather than at R's 43. If you were unable to slow down here and just went with the flow and gave them the turnover, probably no one would have noticed and it likely wouldn't have made much of a difference in the grand scheme of things. Also likely that it would not have made the 6 o'clock news, not become a YouTube viral video, nor would a video of the play end up in your supervisor's inbox either. But precision and thoroughness should be one of your goals as an official, and that would have been lacking here.

## Appendix C – Rule 10-2 Decision Tree

### Fouls by Each Team -- Decision Tree

#### National Federation Rules 10-2-1 and 10-2-2



## Appendix D – Carry-over Options

| Interval                                        | Regulation                                  |                                                                                                                     | Overtime                        |                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                 | Fouls:                                      | Carryover to:                                                                                                       | Fouls:                          | Carryover to:                                                                                   |
| During TD play                                  | Against scoring team (no COP, or after COP) | Try or KO <sup>1</sup> (but not into OT)                                                                            | Against scoring team            | Try                                                                                             |
|                                                 | Against scoring team but before COP         | None (declined by rule)                                                                                             |                                 |                                                                                                 |
|                                                 | NP/USC (by either team)                     | Try or KO <sup>1</sup> [but not into OT]                                                                            | NP/USC                          | Try                                                                                             |
| After TD and before the initial RFP for the try | All                                         | Try or KO <sup>1</sup> [but not into OT]                                                                            | All                             | Try                                                                                             |
| During successful try                           | Team B fouls (excluding NP/USC)             | Succeeding Spot <sup>1</sup> (including into OT)<br><br>[unless Team A chooses to replay the try after enforcement] | Team B fouls (excluding NP/USC) | Succeeding Spot <sup>1</sup><br><br>[unless Team A chooses to replay the try after enforcement] |
| After Try or NP/USC fouls during the try        | All                                         | Succeeding Spot <sup>1</sup> (including into OT)                                                                    | All                             | Succeeding Spot <sup>1</sup>                                                                    |
| During successful field goal                    | Team B fouls                                | Succeeding Spot <sup>2</sup> (including into OT)<br><br>[unless Team A chooses previous spot enforcement]           | Team B fouls                    | Succeeding Spot <sup>2</sup><br><br>[unless Team A chooses previous spot enforcement]           |
| After successful field goal                     | All                                         | Succeeding Spot <sup>2</sup> (including into OT)                                                                    | All                             | Succeeding Spot <sup>2</sup>                                                                    |

COP: Change of Possession

NP/USC: Live ball fouls penalized from the succeeding spot (nonplayer; unsportsmanlike conduct)

<sup>1</sup> Any penalties that carryover to the ensuing kickoff may accumulate with other such penalties.

<sup>2</sup> Team B fouls during a successful field goal and all fouls following a successful field goal may accumulate to the succeeding spot

**Important!! For any penalties that carry over from regulation into overtime, or from one overtime period to another, you must make each head coach specifically aware of that, since it may very well affect their offense-defense-end of field choices for that overtime period.**

## Appendix E – “Bucket System” Summary For Rule 10-4



INCLUDES FOULS COMMITTED BY EITHER TEAM DURING LOOSE BALL PLAYS (SPOT OF THE FOUL IS IRRELEVANT)

Penalties for fouls by either team are enforced from the previous spot



INCLUDES FOULS COMMITTED BY EITHER TEAM DURING RUNNING PLAYS WHERE THE END OF THE RELATED RUN IS BEHIND THE NEUTRAL ZONE.

Penalties for fouls by either team are enforced from the previous spot



INCLUDES FOULS COMMITTED BY EITHER TEAM DURING RUNNING PLAYS WHERE THE END OF THE RELATED RUN IS BEYOND THE NEUTRAL ZONE, AND THE SPOT OF THE FOUL IS BEHIND THE NEUTRAL ZONE.

- (a) Penalties for fouls by Team A are enforced from the previous spot
- (b) Penalties for fouls by Team B are enforced from the end of the related run



INCLUDES FOULS COMMITTED BY EITHER TEAM DURING RUNNING PLAYS (A) WHERE BOTH THE END OF THE RELATED RUN AND THE SPOT OF THE FOUL ARE BEYOND THE NEUTRAL ZONE, OR (B) FOLLOWING A CHANGE OF TEAM POSSESSION WHEN THERE IS NO NEUTRAL ZONE.

Penalties for such fouls are enforced from the end of the related run, unless the foul is by the offense and spot of the foul was behind the end of the run. In that case, the penalty is enforced from the spot of the foul. (AKA the All-But-One Principle)

### Exceptions from Bucket enforcements:

- a. Illegal batting or kicking by Team A behind the neutral zone (becomes a spot foul)
- b. Illegal forward pass and intentional grounding (becomes a spot foul w/ loss of down)
- c. Foul by Team A in it's own end zone (Safety – rule 8-5-2c governs this situation)