

RULE 12

Instant replay

With the approval of the Chair of the IFAF Rules Committee, a specific game or competition may use a modified review system employing a video judge in place of the procedures specified in this Rule.

SECTION 1. Purpose and Philosophy

Purpose

ARTICLE 1. Instant replay is a process whereby video review is used to confirm, reverse or let stand certain on-field decisions (Rule 12-3) made by game officials.

Philosophy

ARTICLE 2. The instant replay process operates under the fundamental assumption that the ruling on the field is correct. The replay official may reverse a ruling if and only if the video evidence convinces him beyond all doubt that the ruling was incorrect. Without such indisputable video evidence, the replay official must allow the ruling to stand.

SECTION 2. Eligibility for Instant Replay

Participation

ARTICLE 1. □ Any competition authority may use instant replay, but there is no requirement to do so. If instant replay is used, it must be used in full compliance with this rule.

SECTION 3. Reviewable Plays

Scoring Plays

ARTICLE 1. Reviewable plays involving a potential score include:

- a. A potential touchdown or safety. (*Exception:* Safety by penalty for fouls that are not specifically reviewable.)
- b. Field goal attempts if and only if the ball is ruled (a) below or above the crossbar, or (b) inside or outside the uprights when it is lower than the top of the uprights. If the ball is higher than the top of the uprights as it crosses the end line, the play may not be reviewed.

Approved Ruling 12-3-1

- I. First and 10 on the Team A 4-yard line. A22 fumbles and B45 recovers near Team A's goal line. Officials award the ball to Team B at the Team A 1-yard line. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding where the fumble was recovered in relation to the goal line. Possible touchdown for Team B.
- II. First and 10 at the A-2. Ball carrier A22 fumbles when hit. B45 possesses the loose ball in Team A's end zone, possibly with his right knee down, but A22 knocks the ball out of B45's hands and A10 recovers the loose ball in the end zone. Officials rule Team A recovered for a safety. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether B45 was down when he recovered the ball. Possible touchdown for Team B.

- III. First and goal on the B-5. Ball carrier A22 loses possession as he nears Team B's goal line and the officials signal touchdown. The ball rolls out of bounds in the end zone. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether A22 lost possession before the ball broke the plane of the goal line.
- IV. First and 10 on the B-35. B45 intercepts a forward pass near his one-yard line and continues into the end zone where he is tackled. Officials rule the momentum exception to a safety applies and award Team B the ball at its one-yard line. Potentially the ball in B45's possession had broken the plane of the goal line when B45's foot came down at the one-yard line. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether B45 caught the ball before or after it broke the plane of the goal line.
- V. Fourth and 10 on the B-35. Team A's field goal attempt is ruled good. The ball goes very close to the upright and is possibly wide to the left. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the ball was between the uprights if it was below the top of the uprights. Not reviewable if the ball crossed the plane of the goal posts above the top of the uprights.

Passes

ARTICLE 2. Reviewable plays involving passes include:

- a. Pass ruled complete, incomplete or intercepted anywhere in the field of play or an end zone.
- b. Forward pass touched by a player (eligible or ineligible) or an official.
- c. Forward pass or forward handing when a ball carrier is or has been beyond the neutral zone.
- d. A forward pass or forward handing after a change of team possession.
- e. Pass ruled forward or backward.
 1. If the pass is ruled forward and is incomplete, the play is reviewable only if the ball goes out of bounds or if there is clear recovery of a loose ball in the immediate continuing action after the loose ball. If the replay official does not have indisputable video evidence as to which team recovers, the ruling of incomplete pass stands. (**Exception:** Rule 12-3-1-a)
 2. If the replay official reverses an incomplete forward pass ruling and the ball is recovered, it belongs to the recovering team at the spot of the recovery and any advance is nullified.
- f. Location of the passer when he is obviously in the field of play and a ruling of intentional grounding would result in a safety by penalty.

Approved Ruling 12-3-2

- I. Third and five on the Team A 30-yard line. In attempting to catch a low pass in the middle of the field, the receiver at the B-45 attempts to get his hands under the ball and control it. The pass is ruled incomplete. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the pass was complete. If the ruling on the field is reversed, it will be Team A's ball, first and 10 at the B-45.
- II. First and 10 on the Team A 20-yard line. A10 throws a pass toward eligible A80 near the sideline at the A-35. A80 leaps, completes the catch, and carries the ball across Team B's goal line. Officials say A80 was touching the side line as he gained possession and rule the pass incomplete. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether A80 was out of bounds when he gained possession. Note that if the ruling on the field is reversed, the offense is entitled to the catch but not the advance.
- III. First and 10 on the Team A 20-yard line. A10 scrambles and throws a pass that is completed for an apparent touchdown. The line judge flags A10 for being beyond the neutral zone when he throws the pass. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the forward passer was completely beyond the neutral zone when he released the ball.
- IV. Third and 10 at the A-30. A forward pass directed toward A80 is incomplete, but B45 is flagged for defensive pass interference. The pass possibly was tipped at the line of scrimmage by B77. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether B77 touched the pass. Note the possible cancellation of the foul for defensive pass interference.

- V. Second and 10 at the 50. As B45 dives trying to intercept a forward pass, his action results in the ball bouncing off his hands and high into the air. A80 catches the ball and runs for an apparent touchdown. The back judge rules the pass incomplete. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the pass is complete or incomplete. If the ruling on the field is reversed, the ball is dead where A80 gained possession.
- VI. First and 10 on the B-20. Flanker A88 moves from the backfield toward the line of scrimmage where he is set at the snap, apparently "covering up" tight end A80. A80 goes downfield and catches a pass. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- VII. Fourth and 10 on the Team B 20-yard line. A10 drops back to pass, is hit and loses possession of the ball. Eligible A22 catches the ball in mid-air at the Team B 25-yard line and runs to the B-5. The referee rules a forward pass. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether it is a pass or fumble. If the ruling on the field is reversed, a fourth-down fumble is created.
- VIII. First and 10 on the A-20. Wide receiver A88 catches a pass at the 50 and carries the ball across Team B's goal line. Officials flag A88 for illegal touching after he apparently stepped on the sideline at the A-38 prior to the catch. It is possible that A88 was blocked out of bounds by his defender. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether A88 contacted the sideline. Replay official could reverse the ruling ONLY if the video showed absolutely that the receiver went out of bounds due to a block by the opponent.

Dead Ball and Loose Ball

ARTICLE 3. Reviewable plays involving potential dead balls and loose balls include:

- a. Loose ball by a potential forward passer ruled a fumble.
- b. Loose ball by a forward passer ruled incomplete forward pass when there is clear recovery in the immediate continuing action after the loose ball.
 - 1. If the replay official does not have indisputable video evidence as to which team recovers, the ruling of incomplete pass stands.
 - 2. If the replay official rules fumble, the ball belongs to the recovering team at the spot of the recovery and any advance is nullified.
- c. Live ball not ruled dead in possession of a ball carrier.
- d. Loose ball ruled dead, or live ball ruled dead in possession of a ball carrier when the clear recovery of a loose ball occurs in the immediate continuing action.
 - 1. If the ball is ruled dead and the replay official does not have indisputable video evidence as to which team recovers, the dead-ball ruling stands.
 - 2. If the replay official rules that the ball was not dead, it belongs to the recovering team at the spot of the recovery and any advance is nullified.
- e. Ball carrier's forward progress, spot of fumble, or spot of out-of-bounds backward pass, with respect to a first down.
- f. Catch or recovery of a fumble by a Team A player other than the fumbler before any change of possession during fourth down or a try.
- g. Ball carrier in or out of bounds. If a ball carrier is ruled out of bounds, the play is not reviewable, except as in Rules 12-3-1-a and 12-3-3-d.
- h. Catch, recovery or touching of a loose ball by a player in bounds or out of bounds.
- i. A loose ball touching on or beyond a sideline, goal line or end line, touching a pylon, or breaking the plane of a goal line.
- j. Catch or recovery of a loose ball in the field of play or an end zone.
- k. Forward fumble that goes out of bounds with respect to a first down.

Approved Ruling 12-3-3

- l. First and 10 on the Team A 30-yard line. Ball carrier A22's run takes him very close along the sideline, until he is pushed out of bounds at the B-24. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding A22 possibly stepping on the sideline during his run before being pushed out.

- II. First and 10 on the A-20. Ball carrier A22 runs to the A-28 and fumbles. B77 falls on and gains possession of the ball at the A-30, possibly with his foot touching the sideline. Officials rule that the ball belongs to Team B. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether B77 was contacting the sideline when he touched the ball. Replay official should remember the possibility of a forward fumble out of bounds.
- III. Fourth and five on the A-20. B45 muffs a punt at the 50. A80 recovers very close to the sideline at the B-45, and the officials award the ball to Team A. It is possible that A80's right foot was touching the sideline as he made the recovery. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether A80 was touching the sideline.
- IV. Team A's punt apparently hits a sideline at the Team B 27-yard line. The ball bounces back toward the middle of the field where B25 picks it up and carries it across Team A's goal line. The officials rule touchdown. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the ball hit the sideline.
- V. A punt hits the ground untouched very close to Team B's goal line and then bounces to the B-5. There B45 recovers and returns the ball to the B-38, where he is tackled. Officials give the ball to Team B at that spot. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the ball touched the goal line.
- VI. First and 10 on the A-20. Ball carrier A40 runs to the A-25 where he loses the ball. B15 recovers. Officials rule fumble and give possession to Team B. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether A40 was down before losing the ball.
- VII. First and 10 on the A-20. A22 carries to the A-25 where he loses possession of the ball, which is quickly recovered by B79. The line judge rules A22 down. **RULING:** Reviewable because of the immediate recovery.
- VIII. First and 10 on the A-20. A22 carries to the Team A 25-yard line, where he loses possession of the ball, which quickly becomes buried under a pile of players. The head linesman rules A22 down. **RULING:** Reviewable because the ball was immediately recovered. If the replay official cannot determine which player recovered the ball, the ruling on the field stands.
- IX. Second and goal on the B-9. Ball carrier A22 is hit, stumbles forward and finally goes completely to the ground at the Team B 2-yard line. The line judge rules him down at the B-5. **RULING:** Not reviewable. The play does not involve a first down, sideline or a score.
- X. The quarterback drops back to pass. He has his arm cocked to pass and the ball comes out, hitting the ground. As the referee is signalling an incomplete pass, B88 recovers the ball and carries it across Team A's goal line. **RULING:** The play is reviewable because B88's recovery was in the immediate continuing action following the ball coming loose. If the replay official reverses the ruling, Team B's score is cancelled, and it is Team B's ball at the spot of the recovery.
- XI. The quarterback is behind his neutral zone when he throws a flare pass toward a receiver who is also behind the neutral zone. The head linesman blows his whistle and signals incomplete forward pass. (a) The ball bounces out of bounds. (b) Defender B45 assumes it is a backward pass and recovers the ball, carrying it for several yards before realising that the play has been blown dead. **RULING:** (a) Not reviewable. (b) Play is reviewable because B45's recovery was in the immediate continuing action after the pass hit the ground. If the replay official rules that the pass was backward, Team B will have the ball at the point of recovery with no advance.

Kicks

ARTICLE 4. Reviewable plays involving kicks include:

- a. Touching of a kick.
- b. Player beyond the neutral zone when kicking the ball.
- c. Kicking team player advancing a ball after a potential muffed kick/fumble by the receiving team.
- d. Scrimmage kick crossing the neutral zone.
- e. Blocking by Team A players before they are eligible to touch the ball on an on-side kick.

Approved Ruling 12-3-4

- I. On the opening kickoff at the A-30, Team A tries an onside kick. A80 has his feet at the Team A 39-yard line when he picks up the ball that is on the ground apparently at the Team A 41-yard line. Officials rule illegal touching. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the ball had gone 10 yards before being touched by Team A.
- II. On an onside kick attempt at the A-30, the ball is apparently first touched by A20 at Team A's 36-yard line and then is recovered by A80 at the A-45. Officials award the ball to Team A at the 45. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding possible touching by A20.
- III. On the kickoff to open the second half, the officials rule that B45 touched the ball before it went out of bounds at the A-47 and give Team B the ball at that spot. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding possible touching by B45. If B45 did not touch the ball, there is a foul by Team A for a free kick out of bounds.
- IV. With five seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, the kickoff goes between the legs of receiver B15 and out of bounds at the B-5. Officials rule the ball touched B15 and wind the clock accordingly. The game clock runs down to 0:00 during the play. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding possible touching by B15. If the ruling on the field is reversed, there is a Team A foul for a free kick out of bounds and the game clock should be re-set to 0:05.
- V. A80 voluntarily touches a sideline while running downfield to cover a punt, then downs the ball at the B-37. Officials rule a foul by A80 for illegally returning inbounds. It is possible that A34 touched the ball at the B-40 before it was downed by A80. **RULING:** Reviewable for possible touching by A34. Not reviewable for A80 going out of bounds.
- VI. Team A's punt goes out of bounds untouched at the B-9. The officials mark the ball at the B-7. **RULING:** Not reviewable. The play did not involve the ball hitting a sideline or the kick being touched.

Miscellaneous

ARTICLE 5. Situations that may be addressed by the replay official:

- a. The number of players on the field for either team during a live ball.
- b. Clock adjustment and status when a ruling is reviewed.
- c. Clock adjustment at the end of any quarter.

If at the end of any quarter the game clock expires, either during a down in which it should be stopped by rule through play when the ball becomes dead or after the down upon a request for an available team timeout, the replay official may restore time only under these conditions:

1. The replay official has indisputable video evidence that time should have remained on the game clock when the ball became dead or when the team timeout was granted;
 2. In the second and fourth quarters only, the team in possession when the ball became dead would next put the ball in play from scrimmage (not the try);
 3. In the fourth quarter only, either the score is tied or the team that will next snap the ball is behind by eight points or fewer; and
 4. The replay official's video evidence includes the timeout signal by an official in the case where the game clock should have stopped for a requested team timeout.
- d. Correcting the number of a down.
 1. This includes the result of a penalty enforcement that includes an automatic first down or loss of down.
 2. The correction may be made at any time within that series of downs or before the ball is legally put in play after that series.
 - e. Any person who is not a player interfering with live-ball action occurring in the field of play (Rule 9-2-3).
 - f. ∇ A competition authority may adopt regulations to permit review of:
 1. Any player disqualification.

Approved Ruling 12-3-5

- I. First and 10 on the A-20. A low pass that A80 apparently catches on his knees at the Team A 35-yard line is ruled complete. The game clock shows 10:00 remaining. After setting the chains and re-starting the game clock, the replay official stops the game to review the play with 9:40 on the clock. **RULING:** Reviewable, regarding whether the pass was complete or incomplete. If the ruling on the field is reversed, the game clock will be adjusted to 10:00 and started on the snap.
- II. Second and 15 at the A-20. The quarterback runs to the A-26 before throwing a forward pass that falls incomplete. In enforcing the penalty the referee announces that second down will be repeated. **RULING:** The replay official should correct the number of the down on the loss-of-down penalty.

Limitations on Reviewable Plays

ARTICLE 6. No other plays or officiating decisions are reviewable. However, the replay official may correct egregious errors, including those involving the game clock, whether or not a play is reviewable. This excludes fouls that are not specifically reviewable (Reviewable fouls: Rules 12-3-2-c, 12-3-2-d, 12-3-4-b, 12-3-4-e and 12-3-5-a).

Approved Ruling 12-3-6

- I. On a kickoff to start the game, A12 attempts an onside kick. The ball possibly hits the ground as soon as it leaves the tee and bounds high in the air to the Team A 43-yard line, where B25 signals for a fair catch. A20 contacts B25 before the ball arrives and A30 recovers it. Officials rule kick-catch interference. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- II. On an onside kick attempt, the untouched ball goes out of bounds apparently at the Team A 39-yard line. The officials mark the ball at the Team A 41-yard line and give possession to Team B at that spot. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- III. Team A kicks off and the ball apparently goes out of bounds at the Team B 1-yard line. Officials rule touchback. **RULING:** Not reviewable. However, the play would be reviewable regarding whether the ball possibly hit the pylon, and if it did, the ruling from the replay official would be a touchback.
- IV. First and 10 on the A-20. A22 carries to the A-25 and fumbles. A80 and B45 both dive for the ball and possibly recover it simultaneously in the middle of the field. Officials gave the ball to Team B. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- V. First and 10 on the Team B 20-yard line. A22 catches a screen pass and runs for an apparent touchdown. A70 possibly was down field at the B-15 prior to the pass was thrown. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- VI. First and 10 on the A-20. A10 is under pressure and throws a pass that lands incomplete behind the line of scrimmage. The referee flags A10 for intentional grounding. It is possible that eligible A22 was within two yards of the ball when it hit the ground. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- VII. Fourth and seven on the A-23. A80 voluntarily touches a sideline while running downfield to cover a punt. B45 muffs the punt, and A80 recovers at the B-30 yard line. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- VIII. During a punt, A80 contacts receiver B45 before B45 touches the ball. The ball bounces off B45 and rolls to the Team B 35-yard line, where A88 recovers. Team A is awarded possession. **RULING:** Not reviewable.
- IX. During Team A's punt, B45 clearly signals for a fair catch. The ball hits the ground and bounces to B45, who returns it for an apparent touchdown. The officials on the field do not declare the ball dead when B45 recovers it. **RULING:** Not reviewable. However, the replay official may correct an egregious error.
- X. Team A's punt bounces untouched into Team B's end zone for a touchback when the game clock reads 7:35 in the first quarter. Team B will have the ball at its 20-yard line. After the ball is dead, the officials on the field do not notice that the game clock continues to run. When the referee declares the ball ready for play, the game clock reads 6:22. **RULING:** Although there is no play to review, the replay official may interrupt the game before the ball is snapped and correct the clock error. He instructs the referee to announce that the game clock should be set to 7:35.

SECTION 4. Instant Replay Personnel, Equipment and Location

Personnel

ARTICLE 1. Instant replay personnel shall consist of the number of persons needed to operate the replay equipment within the necessary time constraints. There shall be a minimum of three persons to ensure that all plays are reviewed in an efficient and a timely manner. Such persons are normally referred to as replay official, communicator and technician. Additional personnel may be used as needed.

Equipment

ARTICLE 2. ∇ The type of equipment used to carry out necessary instant replay duties shall be determined by the competition authority using instant replay.

Location

- ARTICLE 3. a. All equipment used in reviewing a play during the replay process and the personnel using that equipment shall be located in a separate, secure location in the press box. This room shall not be available or accessible to any person not directly involved in instant replay.
- b. Additional telephonic equipment needed to allow instant replay personnel to communicate with the game referee when a game has been stopped for a play review shall be located on a sideline near the field of play and preferably outside a team area. Such equipment shall provide the game referee and the replay official a secure and private means of communication.

SECTION 5. Initiating the Replay Process

Game Stop

ARTICLE 1. There are two methods to stop a game to review a ruling on the field.

- a. The replay official and his crew shall review every play of a game. He may stop a game at any time before the ball is next legally put in play (*Exception: Rule 12-3-5-c*) whenever he believes that:
1. There is reasonable evidence to believe an error was made in the initial on-field ruling.
 2. The play is reviewable.
 3. The outcome of a review would have a direct, competitive impact on the game.
- b. The head coach of either team may request that the game be stopped and a play be reviewed by challenging the on-field ruling.
1. A head coach initiates this challenge by taking a team timeout before the ball is next legally put in play (*Exception: Rule 12-3-5-c*) and informing the referee that he is challenging the ruling of the previous play. If a head coach's challenge is successful, he retains the challenge, which he may use only once more during the game. Thus, a coach may have a total of two challenges if and only if his initial challenge is successful.
 2. After a review has been completed, if the on-field ruling is reversed, that team's timeout will not be charged.
 3. After a review has been completed, and the on-field ruling is not reversed, the charged team timeout counts as one of the three permitted that team for that half or the one permitted in that extra period.

4. A head coach may not challenge a ruling in which the game was stopped and a decision has already been made by the replay official.
5. If a head coach requests a team timeout to challenge an on-field ruling and the play being challenged is not reviewable, the timeout shall count as one of the three permitted his team during that half of the game or the one permitted in that extra period.
6. A head coach may not challenge an on-field ruling if all the team's timeouts have been used for that half or in that extra period.

Approved Ruling 12-5-1

- I. Trailing 28-0 midway through the fourth quarter, Team A has third and 10 at its 20-yard line. Ball carrier A22 is downed, with his knee touching the Team A 29-yard line. Officials spot the ball at the Team A 29-yard line, although A22 had possibly extended the ball to the Team A 31-yard line when his knee hit the ground. **RULING:** In principle, this is a reviewable play, regarding a possible first down. However, given the score and the time, this play would not be reviewed due to the lack of a direct competitive impact on the game. If the head coach challenges the ruling, the challenge is honored because the rules allow for the play to be reviewed.
- II. A head coach has not yet used his challenge when he decides to challenge a play that is reviewable. The challenge is successful, with the ruling on the field being reversed by the replay official. **RULING:** The team is not charged with a timeout. The head coach may challenge one more reviewable play during the game.

When to Stop a Game

- ARTICLE 2. a. A game may be stopped, either by the replay official or by a head coach's challenge at any time before the ball is next legally put in play (**Exception:** Rule 12-3-5-d).
- b. No game official may request that a game be stopped for a play to be reviewed.

SECTION 6. Reviewing an On-field Ruling

Procedures

- ARTICLE 1. a. When a game is to be stopped either by the replay official or by a head coach's challenge, the designated officials on the field will be notified by a buzzer system or other appropriate means.
- b. If the review is initiated by the replay official, the referee shall announce:
"The ruling on the previous play is ... (brief description of ruling). The play is under further review."
If the game has been stopped due to a head coach's challenge, the referee shall announce:
"The (name of team) head coach has challenged the ruling of (state the ruling). The play is under further review."
- c. All reviews shall be based upon video evidence provided by and coming directly from the televised production of the game or from other video means available to the replay official.
- d. After the referee has conferred with the replay official and the review process has been completed, he shall make one of the following announcements:
1. If the video evidence confirms the on-field ruling:
"After further review, the ruling on the field is confirmed."
 2. If there is no indisputable (conclusive) evidence to reverse the onfield ruling:
"After further review, the ruling on the field stands."

3. If the on-field ruling is reversed (Rule 12-7):
"After further review, the ruling is [followed by a brief description of the video evidence]. Therefore, [followed by a brief description of the impact of the ruling]."
- e. If a ruling is reversed, the replay official shall supply the referee with all pertinent data as needed (next down, distance, yard line, position of the ball, clock status/adjustment) in order to resume play under the correct game conditions.

Restrictions

- ARTICLE 2. a. There is no restriction on the number of times the replay official may stop a game for reviews.
- b. The replay official is under no time limit for a review.

SECTION 7. Reversing an On-Field Ruling

Criterion for Reversal

ARTICLE 1. To reverse an on-field ruling, the replay official must be convinced beyond all doubt by indisputable video evidence through one or more video replays provided to the monitor.

SECTION 8. Half-time video review

Purpose

ARTICLE 1. ∇ Competitions may adopt regulations to permit disqualifications in the first half to be reviewed at half time.

Source and location

ARTICLE 2. The video source(s) and the location of the review will be determined prior to the game through mutual agreement of the teams and the Referee. The review will normally take place in the officials' private secure location (e.g. their changing room).

Process

- ARTICLE 3. a. As soon as possible during the intermission between halves the Referee will be provided a video of the play(s) in question for his review.
- b. The Referee will review the video to determine whether the disqualification is reversed. The decision of the Referee is final.
- c. The criterion for reversal is the same as in Rule 12-7-1.