

# RULE 5. Series of Downs, Line to Gain

## SECTION 1. A Series: Started, Broken, Renewed

### When to Award Series

#### ARTICLE 1.

- a. A series of four consecutive scrimmage downs shall be awarded to the team that is next to put the ball in play by a snap after a free kick, touchback, fair catch or change in team possession.
- b. A new series shall be awarded to Team A if it is in legal possession of the ball on or beyond its line to gain when the ball is declared dead.
- c. A new series shall be awarded to Team B if, after fourth down, Team A has failed to earn a first down (A.R. 5-1-1-I and A.R. 10-1-5-III).
- d. A new series shall be awarded to Team B if Team A's scrimmage kick goes out of bounds or comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it (**Exception:** Rule 8-5-1-a) (A.R. 8-5-1-II).
- e. A new series shall be awarded to the team in legal possession:
  1. If a change of team possession occurs during the down.
  2. If a player of Team B first touches a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone (**Exception:** When the down is replayed).
  3. If an accepted penalty awards the ball to the offended team.
  4. If an accepted penalty mandates a first down.
- f. A new series shall be awarded to Team B whenever Team B, after a scrimmage kick, elects to take the ball at a spot of illegal touching (**Exception:** When the down is replayed) (Rules 6-3-2-a and b).

### Line to Gain

ARTICLE 2. The line to gain for a series shall be established 10 yards in advance of the most forward point of the ball; but if this line is in the opponent's end zone, the goal line becomes the line to gain.

### Forward Progress

#### ARTICLE 3.

- a. The most forward point of the ball when declared dead between the end lines shall be the determining point in measuring distance gained or lost by either team during any down. The ball always shall be placed with its length axis parallel to the sideline before measuring (A.R. 8-2-1-I-IV) (**Exception:** When an airborne pass receiver of either team completes a catch inbounds after an opponent has driven him backward and the ball is declared dead at the spot of the catch, the forward progress is where the player received the ball) (Rule 4-1-3-p) (A.R. 5-1-3-I, III, IV and VI, and A.R. 7-3-6-VI).
- b. Questionable distance for a first down should be measured without request. Unnecessary measurements to determine first downs shall not be granted.
- c. No request for a measurement shall be granted after the ball is declared ready for play.

### Continuity of Downs Broken

ARTICLE 4. The continuity of a series of scrimmage downs is broken when:

- a. Team possession of the ball changes during a down.
- b. A player of Team B first touches a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone.
- c. A kick goes out of bounds.
- d. A kick comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it.
- e. At the end of a down, Team A has earned a first down.
- f. After fourth down, Team A has failed to earn a first down (A.R. 8-7-2-VIII and IX and A.R. 10-1-6-II).
- g. An accepted penalty mandates a first down.
- h. There is a score.

- i. A touchback is awarded to either team.
- j. The second period ends.
- k. The fourth period ends.

## **SECTION 2. Down and Possession After a Penalty**

### **Foul During Free Kick Down**

ARTICLE 1. When a scrimmage follows the penalty for a foul committed during a free kick down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with a new line to gain.

### **Penalty Resulting in First Down**

ARTICLE 2. It is a first down with a new line to gain:

- a. After a penalty that leaves the ball in possession of Team A beyond its line to gain.
- b. When a penalty mandates a first down (A.R. 5-2-2-I).

### **Foul Before Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 3. After a distance penalty between the goal lines incurred during a scrimmage down and before any change of team possession during that down, the ball belongs to Team A and the down shall be repeated, unless the penalty also involves loss of a down, mandates a first down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the line to gain (**Exceptions:** Rules 10-2-2-e Exception 3 and 10-2-2-g).

If the penalty involves loss of a down, the down shall count as one of the four in that series (A.R. 5-2-3-I and II, A.R. 10-1-6-IV, and A.R. 10-2-2-IX).

### **Foul After Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 4. If a distance penalty is accepted for a foul incurred during a down after change of team possession, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred. The down and distance established by any distance penalty incurred after change of team possession during that down shall be first down with a new line to gain (**Exception:** Rule 10-2-2-g-1) (A.R. 5-2-4-I).

### **Penalty Declined**

ARTICLE 5. If a penalty is declined, the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

### **Foul Between Downs**

ARTICLE 6. After a distance penalty incurred between downs, the number of the next down shall be the same as that established before the foul occurred, unless enforcement for a foul by Team B leaves the ball on or beyond the line to gain or a penalty mandates a first down (Rules 9-1-1 and 9-1-2) (A.R. 5-2-6-I and II and A.R. 10-1-5-I-VI).

### **Foul Between Series**

ARTICLE 7. The penalty for any dead-ball foul (including live-ball fouls penalized as dead-ball fouls and fouls after a free kick down) incurred after a series ends and before the next ready-for-play signal shall be enforced before the line to gain is established. The penalty for any dead-ball foul incurred after the ready-for-play signal shall be enforced after the line to gain is established (A.R. 5-2-7-I-VI).

### **Fouls by Both Teams**

ARTICLE 8. If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down shall be repeated (Rule 10-1-4 Exceptions) (A.R. 10-1-4-II-X).

### **Fouls During a Loose Ball**

ARTICLE 9. Live-ball fouls not penalized as dead-ball fouls when the ball is loose shall be penalized from the basic or previous spot (**Exception:** Rule 10-2-2-g-1) (Rules 10-2-2-c, d, e and f) (A.R. 10-2-2-IV-IX).

### **Rule Decisions Final**

ARTICLE 10. No rule decision may be changed after the ball is next legally snapped, legally free-kicked or the second or fourth periods have ended (Rules 3-2-1-a, 3-3-4-e-2 and 11-1-1).