

RULE 2

Definitions

SECTION 1. Approved Ruling and Officials' Signals

- ARTICLE 1. a. An Approved Ruling (A.R.) is an official decision on a given statement of facts. It serves to illustrate the spirit and application of the rules. The relationship between the rules and an Approved Ruling is analogous to that between statutory law and a decision of the Supreme Court. If there is a conflict between the official rules and approved rulings, the rules take precedence.
- b. An official's signal [S] refers to the Official Football Signals 1 through 47.

SECTION 2. The Ball: Live, Dead, Loose

Live Ball

ARTICLE 1. A live ball is a ball in play. A pass, kick or fumble that has not yet touched the ground is a live ball in flight.

Dead Ball

ARTICLE 2. A dead ball is a ball not in play.

Loose Ball

- ARTICLE 3. a. A loose ball is a live ball not in player possession during:
1. A running play.
 2. A scrimmage or free kick before possession is gained, regained or the ball is dead by rule.
 3. The interval after a legal forward pass is touched and before it becomes complete, incomplete or intercepted (NOTE - This interval is during a forward pass play and the ball may be batted in any direction by a player eligible to touch it).
- b. All players are eligible to touch, catch, or recover a ball that is loose from a fumble (Exceptions: Rules 7-2-2-a-2, 7-2-2-b-2 and 8-3-2-d-5) or a backward pass, but eligibility to touch a ball loose from a kick is governed by kick rules (Rule 6) and eligibility to touch a forward pass is governed by pass rules (Rule 7).

When Ball is Ready for Play

- ARTICLE 4. A dead ball is ready for play when:
- a. With the 40-second play clock running, an official places the ball at an inbounds mark or between the inbounds marks and steps away to his position.
 - b. With the play clock set at 25 seconds, the referee sounds his whistle and either signals to start the game clock [S2] or signals that the ball is ready for play [S1]. (**A.R. 4-1-4:I and II**)

In Possession

ARTICLE 5. “In possession” is an abbreviation meaning the holding or controlling of a live ball or a ball to be free kicked.

- a. A player “gains possession” when he is firmly holding or controlling the ball while contacting the ground inbounds.
- b. A team is “in possession” when one of its players is “in possession” or attempting to punt, drop kick or place kick; while a forward pass thrown by one of its players is in flight; or one of its players was last in possession during a loose ball.

Belongs To

ARTICLE 6. “Belongs to” as contrasted with “in possession” denotes temporary custody of a dead ball. Legality of such custody is immaterial because the ball must next be put in play in accordance with rules governing the existing situation.

Catch, Interception, Recovery

ARTICLE 7. A catch is an act of firmly establishing player possession of a live ball in flight.

- a. A catch of an opponent’s fumble or pass is an interception.
 - b. Securing player possession of a live ball after it strikes the ground is “recovering it”.
 - c. To catch, intercept or recover a ball, a player who leaves his feet to make a catch, interception or recovery must have the ball firmly in his possession when he first returns to the ground inbounds with any part of his body or is so held that the dead-ball provisions of Rule 4-1-3-p apply. **(A.R. 2-2-7:I-V) (A.R. 7-3-6:IV)**
 1. If one foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception even though a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out of bounds.
 2. Loss of ball simultaneously with returning to the ground is not a catch, interception or recovery.
 - d. A catch by any kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion or interception (Rules 7-3-1 and 7-3-2) (Rules 7-3-6 and 7-3-7).
 - e. When in question, the catch, recovery or interception is not completed.
- **Approved Ruling 2-2-7**
 - I. B1 attempts to catch a punt (no fair catch signal) that crosses the neutral zone, strikes his shoulder (a muff) and bounces into the air. The ball does not touch the ground and airborne A1 receives the ball in flight and first returns to the ground out of bounds. **RULING:** Team B’s ball at the spot where the ball crossed the sideline. First and 10 (2-2-7-c). [Cited by 2-2-7-c]
 - II. On third down, B1 blocks a Team A scrimmage kick that goes into the air and does not cross the neutral zone. The ball does not touch the ground and A1 jumps and receives the ball in flight and first returns to the ground out of bounds. **RULING:** Team B’s ball at the spot where the ball crossed the sideline. First and 10 (2-2-7-c and 7-3-7-a). [Cited by 2-2-7-c]
 - III. Airborne A3 receives a pass at Team A’s 40-yard line. As he receives the ball, he is contacted by B1 and comes to the ground out of bounds with the ball at Team A’s 37-yard line. **RULING:** Incomplete pass (7-3-7-a). [Cited by 2-2-7-c, 7-3-6, 7-3-7-a]
 - IV. On second down, A1 fumbles the ball, which strikes the ground and bounces high in the air. B2 receives the ball while off the ground and returns to the ground out of bounds (a) in advance of the spot of the fumble or (b) behind the spot of the fumble. **RULING:** In (a)

Team A's ball at spot of fumble and in (b) Team A's ball at the spot where the ball crossed the sideline (4-2-4-e). [Cited by 2-2-7-c]

- V. A1 fumbles the ball, which strikes the ground and bounces high into the air. B1 receives the ball while off the ground and returns to the ground inbounds. **RULING:** Team B's ball at spot where Team B recovered the fumble. Ball continues in play (2-2-7-c). [Cited by 2-2-7-c]

Simultaneous Catch or Recovery

ARTICLE 8. A simultaneous catch or recovery is a catch or recovery in which there is joint possession of a live ball by opposing players inbounds. (**A.R. 7-3-6:II and III**)

SECTION 3. Blocking

Blocking

ARTICLE 1. a. Blocking is obstructing an opponent by contacting him with any part of the blocker's body.

- b. Pushing is blocking an opponent with open hands.

Below Waist

ARTICLE 2. a. Blocking below the waist is the initial contact below the waist with any part of the blocker's body against an opponent, other than the runner. When in question, the contact is below the waist (Rule 9-1-2-e).

- b. Blocking below the waist applies to the initial contact by a blocker against an opponent who has one or both feet on the ground. A blocker who makes contact above the waist and then slides below the waist has not blocked below the waist. If the blocker first contacts the opposing player's hands at the waist or above, it is a legal "above the waist" block (Rule 9-1-2-e).

Chop Block

ARTICLE 3. A chop block is a high-low or low-high combination block by any two players against an opponent (not the runner) anywhere on the field, with or without a delay between contacts; the "low" component is at the opponent's thigh or below (**A.R. 2-3-3:III-IV**)

• Approved Ruling 2-3-3

- I. On a forward pass play, A75 is blocking B66 at the waist behind the neutral zone. While A75 maintains contact, A47 subsequently blocks B66 at his thigh. **RULING:** Chop block. 15 yards from the previous spot.
- II. As the flow of the play moves to the left, right tackle A77 is disengaging from his contact above the thigh with B50 when A27 blocks B50 at his knee. **RULING:** Chop block. 15 yards from the basic-spot. Previous-spot enforcement if the foul occurs behind the neutral zone.
- III. Immediately after the snap, left guard A65 and left tackle A79 simultaneously block B66, who is in the neutral zone. (a) Both contacts are at the thigh. (b) One contact is at the waist and the other is at the knee. **RULING:** (a) Legal blocks. (b) Foul, chop block. [Cited by 2-3-3]
- IV. Tight end A87 and wingback A43 are leading the play when both simultaneously block linebacker B17, who is three yards beyond the neutral zone. (a) both blocks above the waist. (b) One block is above the waist and the other is at the knee. **RULING:** (a) Legal blocks. (b) Chop block. Basic-spot enforcement. [Cited by 2-3-3]
- V. As tight end A88 leaves the line of scrimmage, he is blocked by B76 in an attempt to restrict A88's path. After a short delay and while B76 maintains contact, B53 blocks A88 at the

knee. **RULING:** Legal. Both blocks are below the thigh.

Block in the Back

ARTICLE 4. a. A block in the back is contact against an opponent occurring when the force of the initial contact is from behind and above the waist (*Exception:* Against the runner) When in question, the contact is below the waist. (Rule 9-3-3-c) (**A.R. 9-1-2:XX and XXI**) (**A.R. 9-3-3:VII**) (**A.R. 10-2-2:XXXIV**)

b. The position of the blocker's head or feet does not necessarily indicate the point of initial contact.

Frame (of the Body)

ARTICLE 5. The frame of a player's body is at the shoulders or below other than the back (Rule 9-3-3-a-1-c Exception).

SECTION 4. Clipping

ARTICLE 1. a. Clipping is a block against an opponent occurring when the force of the initial contact is from behind and at or below the waist (*Exception:* Against the runner) (Rule 9-1-2-d).

b. The position of the blocker's head or feet does not necessarily indicate the point of initial contact.

SECTION 5. Deliberate Dead-Ball Advance

ARTICLE 1. Deliberately advancing a dead ball is an attempt by the runner to advance the ball after any part of his person, other than a hand or foot, has touched the ground or after the ball has been declared dead by rule *Exception:* (Rule 4-1-3-b).

SECTION 6. Down and Between Downs

ARTICLE 1. A down is a unit of the game that starts with a legal snap or legal free kick after the ball is ready for play and ends when the ball next becomes dead. Between downs is the interval during which the ball is dead. [*Exception:* The try is a scrimmage down that begins when the referee declares the ball ready for play (Rule 8-3-2-b).]

SECTION 7. Fair Catch

Fair Catch

ARTICLE 1. a. A fair catch of a scrimmage kick is a catch beyond the neutral zone by a player of Team B who has made a valid signal during a scrimmage kick that is untouched beyond the neutral zone.

b. A fair catch of a free kick is a catch by a player of Team B who has made a valid signal during an untouched free kick.

c. A valid or invalid fair catch signal deprives the receiving team of the opportunity to advance the ball, and the ball is declared dead at the spot of the catch or recovery or at the spot of the signal if the catch precedes the signal (Rule 6-5-1-a Exception).

d. If the receiver shades his eyes from the sun, the ball is live and may be advanced.

Valid Signal

ARTICLE 2. A valid signal is a signal given by a player of Team B who has obviously signalled his intention by extending one hand only clearly above his head and waving the hand from side to side of the body more than once.

Invalid Signal

ARTICLE 3. An invalid signal is any signal by a player of Team B that does not meet the requirements of a valid signal (Rule 6-5-3).

SECTION 8. Forward, Beyond and Forward Progress**Forward, Beyond**

ARTICLE 1. Forward, beyond or in advance of, as related to either team, denotes direction towards the opponent's end line. Converse terms are backward or behind.

Forward Progress

ARTICLE 2. Forward progress is a term indicating the end of advancement by the ball carrier or airborne pass receiver of either team and applies to the position of the ball when it became dead by rule (Rules 4-1-3-a, 4-1-3-b and 4-1-3-p; Rules 4-2-1 and 4-2-4; and Rule 5-1-3-a Exception) (A.R. 5-1-3:I-VI) (A.R. 8-2-1:I-IV) (*Exception:* Rule 8-5-1-a, (A.R. 8-5-1:I)).

SECTION 9. Foul and Violation

ARTICLE 1. a. A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed. A flagrant personal foul is a rule infraction so extreme or deliberate that it places an opponent in danger of catastrophic injury.

b. A violation is a rule infraction for which no penalty is prescribed; it does not offset a foul.

SECTION 10. Fumbling, Muffing, Touching, Batting or Blocking a Kick**Fumble**

ARTICLE 1. A fumble is any act other than passing, kicking or successful handing that results in loss of player possession. (A.R. 2-19-2:I) (A.R. 4-1-3:I) (A.R. 7-2-2:I)

Muff

ARTICLE 2. A muff is an unsuccessful attempt to catch or recover a ball that is touched in the attempt.

Batting

ARTICLE 3. Batting the ball is intentionally striking it or intentionally changing its direction with the hands or arms.

Touching

ARTICLE 4. Touching of a ball not in player possession denotes any contact with the ball. It may be intentional or unintentional, and it always precedes possession and control. Intentional touching is deliberate or intended touching. When in question, a ball has not been touched on a kick or forward pass (**Exceptions:** Rules 6-1-4-a, 6-1-4-b, 6-3-4-a and 6-3-4-b).

Blocking a Scrimmage Kick

ARTICLE 5. Blocking a scrimmage kick is touching the ball by an opponent of the kicking team in an attempt to prevent the ball from advancing beyond the neutral zone (Rule 6-3-1-b).

SECTION 11. Lines

Goal Lines

ARTICLE 1. Each goal line is part of a vertical plane separating an end zone from the field of play when the ball is touched or is in player possession. The plane extends beyond the sidelines (**Exception:** Rule 4-2-4-e). A team's goal line is that which it is defending. (**A.R. 2-11-1:I**)

- **Approved Ruling 2-11-1**

- I. Team A's untouched scrimmage kick strikes the ground in the field of play and breaks the plane of Team B's goal line. While the ball is in the air, A81, who is on the one-yard line, bats the ball into the field of play. **RULING:** Violation. Team B option, touchback or possession of the ball where declared dead (**Exception:** Rule 8-4-2-b). [Cited by 2-11-1, 6-3-11, 6-3-2-a]

Restraining Lines

ARTICLE 2. A restraining line is part of a vertical plane when a ball is touched or is in possession. The plane extends beyond the sidelines. (**A.R. 2-11-2:I**)

- **Approved Ruling 2-11-2**

- I. A free kick breaks the plane of Team B's restraining line. While the ball is in the air, A1, who is behind Team B's restraining line, touches the ball. **RULING:** Legal touching (6-1-3-a-2). [Cited by 2-11-2, 6-1-3-a-2]

Yard Lines

ARTICLE 3. A yard line is any line in the field of play parallel to the end lines. A team's own yard lines, marked or unmarked, are numbered consecutively from its own goal line to the 50-yard line.

Inbounds Lines (Hash Marks)

ARTICLE 4. The two inbounds lines are 60 feet from the sidelines. Inbounds lines and short yard-line extensions shall measure 24 inches in length.

Out of Bounds Lines

ARTICLE 5. The area enclosed by the sidelines and end lines is "inbounds" and the area surrounding and including the sidelines and end lines is "out of bounds".

Nine-Yard Marks

ARTICLE 6. Nine-yard marks 12 inches in length, every 10 yards, shall be located nine yards from the sidelines. They are not required if the field is numbered according to Rule 1-2-1-j.

SECTION 12. Handing the Ball

ARTICLE 1. a. Handing the ball is transferring player possession from one teammate to another without throwing, fumbling or kicking it.

- b. Except when permitted by rule, handing the ball forward to a teammate is illegal.
- c. Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble by the last player in possession (*Exception:* The snap (Rule 2-23-1-c)).
- d. A backward handoff occurs when the runner releases the ball before it is beyond the yard line where the runner is positioned.

SECTION 13. Huddle

ARTICLE 1. A huddle is two or more players grouped together after the ball is ready for play and before a snap or a free kick.

SECTION 14. Hurdling

ARTICLE 1. a. Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is still on his feet (*Exception:* The runner) (Rule 9-1-2-i).

- b. "On his feet" means that no part of the opponent's body other than one or both feet is in contact with the ground.
- c. Hurdling an offensive player before the snap is a dead-ball foul. This includes offensive players in a three- or four-point stance.

SECTION 15. Kicks

Legal and Illegal Kicks

ARTICLE 1. Kicking the ball is intentionally striking the ball with the knee, lower leg or foot. When in question, a ball is accidentally touched rather than intentionally kicked.

- a. A legal kick is a punt, drop kick or place kick made according to the rules by a player of Team A before a change of team possession. Kicking the ball in any other manner is illegal. (**A.R. 6-1-2:I**)
- b. Any free kick or scrimmage kick continues to be a kick until it is caught or recovered by a player or becomes dead.

Punt

ARTICLE 2. A punt is a kick by a player who drops the ball and kicks it before it strikes the ground.

Drop Kick

ARTICLE 3. A drop kick is a kick by a player who drops the ball and kicks it as it touches the ground.

Place Kick

ARTICLE 4.

- a. A field goal place kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession while the ball is controlled on the ground by a teammate.
 - b. A free kick place kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession while the ball is positioned on a tee or the ground. It may be controlled by a teammate. The ball may be positioned on the ground and contacting the tee.
 - c. A tee is a device that elevates the ball for kicking purposes. It may not elevate the ball's lowest point more than one inch above the ground. **(A.R. 2-15-4:I)**
- **Approved Ruling 2-15-4**
 - i. On a free kick to start a game, the kicker uses the toe of a teammate for a tee or builds a tee with a mound of dirt or sod. **RULING:** Illegal kick. Dead-ball foul. Penalty — Five yards from the succeeding spot. [Cited by 2-15-4-c, 4-1-1]

Free Kick

- ARTICLE 5. a. A free kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession made under restrictions specified in Rules 4-1-4, 6-1-1 and 6-1-2.
- b. A free kick after a safety may be a punt, drop kick or place kick.

Kickoff

ARTICLE 6. A kickoff is a free kick that starts each half and follows each try or field goal (*Exception:* Extra periods). It must be a place kick or a drop kick.

Scrimmage Kick

ARTICLE 7. A scrimmage kick made in or behind the neutral zone is a legal kick by Team A during a scrimmage down before team possession changes. A scrimmage kick has crossed the neutral zone when it touches the ground, a player, an official or anything beyond the neutral zone (*Exception:* Rule 6-3-1-b). **(A.R. 6-3-1:I-V)**

Return Kick

ARTICLE 8. A return kick is a kick by a player of the team in possession after change of team possession during a down and is an illegal kick. It is a live-ball foul, and the ball becomes dead.

Field Goal Attempt

ARTICLE 9. A field goal attempt is a scrimmage kick. It may be a place kick or a drop kick.

Scrimmage Kick Formation

- ARTICLE 10. a. A scrimmage kick formation is a formation with at least one player seven yards or more behind the neutral zone, no player in position to receive a hand-to-hand snap from between the snapper's legs, and it is obvious that a kick may be attempted. **(A.R. 1-4-2:I) (A.R. 9-1-2:XXII-XXIV)**
- b. If Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation at the snap, any action by Team A during the down is deemed to be from a scrimmage kick formation.

SECTION 16. Loss of a Down

ARTICLE 1. “Loss of a down” is an abbreviation meaning: “loss of the right to repeat a down”.

SECTION 17. The Neutral Zone

ARTICLE 1. The neutral zone is the space between the two lines of scrimmage extended to the sidelines and is the length of the ball. The neutral zone is established when the ball is ready for play and is resting on the ground with its long axis at right angles to the scrimmage line and parallel to the sidelines.

SECTION 18. Encroachment and Offside

Encroachment

ARTICLE 1. a. After the ball is ready for play, encroachment occurs when an offensive player is in or beyond the neutral zone after the snapper touches or simulates (hand(s) at or below his knees) touching the ball before the snap (*Exception:* When the ball is put in play, the snapper is not encroaching when he is in the neutral zone).

Offside

- ARTICLE 2. a. After the ball is ready for play, offside occurs when a defensive player is in or beyond the neutral zone when the ball is legally snapped, contacts an opponent beyond the neutral zone before the ball is snapped, contacts the ball before it is snapped, threatens an offensive lineman (who immediately reacts) before the ball is snapped, or is not behind his restraining line when the ball is legally free-kicked (Rule 7-1-5-a-2) (**A.R. 7-1-3:VIII Note**).
- b. Offside occurs when a player of the kicking team is not behind his restraining line when the ball is legally free-kicked (*Exception:* The kicker and holder are not offside when they are beyond their restraining line).

SECTION 19. Passes

Passing

ARTICLE 1. Passing the ball is throwing it. A pass continues to be a pass until it is caught, intercepted by a player or the ball becomes dead.

Forward and Backward Pass

- ARTICLE 2. a. A forward pass is determined by the point where the ball first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything beyond the spot of the pass. All other passes are backward passes. When in question, it is a forward pass rather than a backward pass when thrown in or behind the neutral zone.
- b. When a Team A player is holding the ball to pass it forward toward the neutral zone, any intentional forward movement of his hand or arm starts the forward pass. If a Team B player contacts the passer or ball after forward movement begins and the ball leaves the passer’s hand, a forward pass is ruled regardless of where the ball strikes the ground or a player. (**A.R. 2-19-2:I**)
- c. When in question, the ball is passed and not fumbled during an attempted forward pass.
- d. A snap becomes a backward pass when the snapper releases the ball. (**A.R. 2-23-1:I**)

- **Approved Ruling 2-19-2**

- I. A1 intends to throw a forward pass but B1 bats the ball from his hand before A1's hand or arm starts forward. **RULING:** Fumble (2-10-1 and 2-19-2-b). [Cited by 2-10-1, 2-19-2-b]

Crosses Neutral Zone

ARTICLE 3. a. A legal forward pass has crossed the neutral zone when it first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything beyond the neutral zone inbounds. It has not crossed the neutral zone when it first strikes the ground, a player, an official or anything in or behind the neutral zone inbounds.

- b. A player has crossed the neutral zone if his entire body has been beyond the neutral zone.
- c. A legal forward pass is beyond or behind the neutral zone where it crosses the sideline.

Catchable Forward Pass

ARTICLE 4. A catchable forward pass is an untouched legal forward pass beyond the neutral zone to an eligible player who has a reasonable opportunity to catch the ball. When in question, a legal forward pass is catchable (**A.R. 2-19-4:I and II**) (**A.R. 7-3-8:XVIII**).

- **Approved Ruling 2-19-4**

- I. A88, beyond the line of scrimmage, is manoeuvring to catch a legal forward pass thrown directly to his position. Just before the ball reaches A88, defensive back B30 drives through A88's back. B12 then steps in front of A88 and intercepts the pass. **RULING:** Pass interference by B30, if the pass is ruled as catchable and the interception occurs after the block by B30. [Cited by 2-19-4]
- II. A88, beyond the line of scrimmage, is manoeuvring to catch a legal forward pass thrown directly to his position. Just before the ball reaches A88, defensive back B30 drives through A88's back. B12 intercepts or touches the pass before the block by B30. **RULING:** Not pass interference. Even though the pass was thrown directly to A88's position, the touching voids pass interference, but another foul is possible (7-3-8-a). [Cited by 2-19-4]

SECTION 20. Penalty

ARTICLE 1. A penalty is a result imposed by rule against a team that has committed a foul and may include one or more of the following: loss of yardage, loss of down, automatic first down or disqualification

SECTION 21. Scrimmage

Scrimmage

ARTICLE 1. A scrimmage play is the action between the two teams during a down that begins with a legal snap.

Scrimmage Line

ARTICLE 2. a. The scrimmage line for each team when the ball is ready for play is the yard line and its vertical plane that passes through the point of the ball nearest its own goal line and extends to the side lines.

SECTION 22. Shift

ARTICLE 1. A shift is a simultaneous change of position by two or more offensive players after the ball is ready for play for a scrimmage and before the next snap. (**A.R. 7-1-3:II and III**) (**A.R. 7-1-4:I-IV**)

SECTION 23. Snapping the Ball

ARTICLE 1. a. Legally snapping the ball (a snap) is handing or passing it backward from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hand or hands, the ball actually leaving the hand or hands in this motion (Rule 4-1-4).

- b. The snap starts when the ball is moved legally and ends when the ball leaves the snapper's hands. (**A.R. 7-1-5:I-II**)
- c. If, during any backward motion of a legal snap, the ball slips from the snapper's hand, it becomes a backward pass and is in play (Rule 4-1-1).
- d. While resting on the ground and before the snap, the long axis of the ball must be at right angles to the scrimmage line (Rule 7-1-3-a-1).
- e. Unless moved in a backward direction, the movement of the ball does not start a legal snap. It is not a legal snap if the ball is first moved forward or lifted.
- f. If the ball is touched by Team B during a legal snap, the ball remains dead and Team B is penalised. If the ball is touched by Team B during an illegal snap, the ball remains dead and Team A is penalised (**A.R. 7-1-5:I-II**).
- g. The snap need not be between the snapper's legs; but to be legal, it must be a quick and continuous backward motion.
- h. The ball must be snapped on or between the inbounds lines.
- i. The position of the ball at the snap (Rule 9-1-2-e) refers to an imaginary line through the ball parallel to the sidelines from end line to end line (**A.R. 9-1-2:IV-XI**).

- **Approved Ruling 2-23-1**

- i. Fourth and goal on Team B's five-yard line. A55's legal snap is muffed by A12 and (a) any player of Team A recovers and advances the ball into the end zone, or (b) a player of Team B recovers and advances the ball. **RULING:** (a) Touchdown. Since the snap becomes a backward pass, there is no restriction on a Team A player recovering and advancing the ball. (b) Ball continues in play. The snap is a backward pass and may be advanced by the defence. [Cited by 2-19-2-d, 7-2-2-b, 8-2-1-a]

SECTION 24. Spearing

ARTICLE 1. Spearing is the use of the helmet (including the facemask) in an attempt to punish an opponent.

SECTION 25. Spots

Enforcement Spot

ARTICLE 1. An enforcement spot is the point from which the penalty for a foul or violation is enforced.

Previous Spot

ARTICLE 2. The previous spot is the point from which the ball was last put in play.

Succeeding Spot

ARTICLE 3. The succeeding spot is the point at which the ball is next to be put in play

Dead-Ball Spot

ARTICLE 4. The dead-ball spot is the point at which the ball became dead.

Spot of the Foul

ARTICLE 5. The spot of the foul is the point at which that foul occurs. If out of bounds between the goal lines, it shall be the intersection of the nearer inbounds line and the yard line extended through the spot of the foul. If out of bounds between the goal line and the end line or behind the end line, the foul is in the end zone.

Out-of-Bounds Spot

ARTICLE 6. The out-of-bounds spot is the point at which, according to the rule, the ball becomes dead because of going or being declared out of bounds.

Inbounds Spot

ARTICLE 7. The inbounds spot is the intersection of the nearer inbounds line and the yard line passing through the dead-ball spot, or the spot where the ball is left between an inbounds line and a sideline by a penalty.

Spot Where Run Ends

ARTICLE 8. The spot where the run ends is at that point:

- a. Where the ball is declared dead in player possession.
- b. Where player possession is lost on a fumble.
- c. Where a legal (or illegal) handing of the ball occurs.
- d. Where an illegal forward pass is thrown.
- e. Where a backward pass is thrown.
- f. Where an illegal scrimmage kick is made beyond the line of scrimmage.
- g. Where a return kick occurs.

Spot Where Kick Ends

ARTICLE 9. A scrimmage kick that crosses the neutral zone ends at the spot where possession is gained or regained or the ball is declared dead by rule.

Exceptions:

1. When a kick ends in Team B's end zone, the postscrimmage kick spot is Team B's 20-yard line.
2. On an unsuccessful field goal attempt that has crossed the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone and declared dead beyond the neutral zone, the postscrimmage kick spot is the previous spot. If the previous spot is between Team B's 20-yard line and the goal line, and the unsuccessful field goal attempt that has crossed the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B after crossing the neutral zone, and is declared dead beyond the neutral zone, the spot where the kick ends is the 20-yard line. **(A.R. 10-2-2:XXV)**
3. When Rule 6-3-11 is in effect, the postscrimmage kick spot is the 20-yard line.

Basic Spot

ARTICLE 10. When “basic spot” is stated in a penalty, fouls during a running play, a legal pass play or a legal kick play are penalised from the “basic spot”. Fouls by the offensive team behind the “basic spot” are enforced from the spot of the foul.

The following are the basic spots for enforcement on running plays, forward pass plays and legal kick plays:

- a. The basic spot on running plays when the run ends beyond the neutral zone is **the spot where the related run ends**, and fouls by the offensive team behind the basic spot are **spot fouls** (Rules 2-30-4 and 10-2-2-c-1). (*Exception:* Offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding, illegal block and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A’s goal line).
- b. The basic spot on running plays when the run ends behind the neutral zone is the previous spot, and fouls by the offensive team behind the basic spot are spot fouls (Rules 2-30-4 and 10-2-2-c-2) (*Exceptions:* Offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding, illegal block and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A’s goal line).
- c. The basic spot on running plays that occur when there is no neutral zone (interception runbacks, kick runbacks, fumble advances, etc.) is **the spot where the related run ends**, and fouls by the offensive team behind the basic spot are **spot fouls** (Rules 2-30-4 and 10-2-2-c-3) (*Exception:* Rule 8-5-1 Exception).
- d. The basic spot on legal forward pass plays is the previous spot, and fouls by the offensive team behind the basic spot are spot fouls (Rules 2-30-1 and 10-2-2-d).

Exceptions:

1. Defensive pass interference may be a spot foul.
2. Enforce roughing the passer on a completed forward pass from the end of the last run when it ends beyond the neutral zone and there is no change of team possession during the down. (**A.R. 2-30-4:I and II**)
3. Enforce illegal-touching fouls from the previous spot.
4. Enforce offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding, illegal block and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, from the previous spot. (*Exception:* Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A’s goal line).
- e. The basic spot on legal kick plays before a change of possession is the previous spot, and fouls by the offensive team behind the basic spot are spot fouls (*Exception:* Offensive team facemask, illegal use of hands, holding, illegal block and personal fouls, behind the neutral zone, are enforced from the previous spot. Safety if the foul occurs behind Team A’s goal line). (Rule 2-30-2, 2-30-3 and 10-2-2-e) (*Exception:* Rule 9-1-4-b on scrimmage kicks).

Postscrimmage Kick Spot

ARTICLE 11. The postscrimmage kick spot, as related to certain Team B fouls, is the spot where the kick ends. Team B retains the ball after penalty enforcement. Penalties for Team B fouls are enforced either from the postscrimmage kick spot or, if the foul is behind the postscrimmage kick spot, from the spot of the foul.

SECTION 26. Tackling

ARTICLE 1. Tackling is grasping or encircling an opponent with a hand(s) or arm(s).

SECTION 27. Team and Player Designations

Teams A and B

ARTICLE 1. Team A is the team that is designated to put the ball in play, and it retains that designation until the ball is next ready for play. Team B designates the opponent.

Offensive and Defensive Teams

ARTICLE 2. The offensive team is the team in possession, or the team to which the ball belongs; the defensive team in the opposing team.

Kicker and Holder

- ARTICLE 3. a. The kicker is any player who punts, drop kicks or place kicks according to rule. He remains the kicker until he has had a reasonable time to regain his balance.
- b. A holder is a player who controls the ball on the ground or on a kicking tee. During a scrimmage-kick play, he remains the holder until no player is in position to make the kick or, if the ball is kicked, until the kicker has had a reasonable time to regain his balance.

Lineman and Back

ARTICLE 4. a. Any Team A player in one of the following positions is a lineman

1. A lineman is any Team A player legally on his scrimmage line when the ball is snapped. An interior lineman is any Team A player legally on his scrimmage line and positioned between the end Team A players who are also on the line of scrimmage at the snap. An ineligible pass receiver of Team A is “on his scrimmage line” at the snap when he faces his opponent’s goal line with the line of his shoulders parallel thereto and his head breaking the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper.
 2. An eligible pass receiver of Team A is “on his scrimmage line” at the snap when he faces his opponent’s goal line with the line of his shoulders approximately parallel thereto and his head breaking the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper.
 3. A Team A player also is a lineman when, after the ball is ready for play and the snapper touches or simulates (hand(s) at or below his knees) touching the ball, his head breaks the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of /the snapper (*Exception:* Rule 7-1-3-b-1).
- b. A back is any Team A player whose head or body does not break the plane of the line drawn through the rear-most part, other than the legs or feet, of the nearest Team A player (except the snapper) on the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. A lineman becomes a back before the snap when he moves to a legal backfield position and stops. (**A.R. 2-27-4:I**)
- **Approved Ruling 2-27-4**
 1. A player between the snapper and the lineman adjacent to the snapper does not have his head breaking the plane of the line drawn through the waistline of the snapper but does break the plane of the line drawn through the rear-most part (other than the legs or feet) of the adjacent lineman. **RULING:** Illegal formation. Penalty – Five yards

previous spot. [Cited by 2-27-4-b, 7-1-3-b-1]

Passer

ARTICLE 5. The passer is the player who throws a legal forward pass. He is a passer from the time he releases the ball until it is complete, incomplete, intercepted or he moves to participate in the play. (A.R. 10-2-2:XXXIII)

Player

ARTICLE 6. a. A player is any one of the participants in the game who is not a substitute or a replaced player and is subject to the rules when inbounds or out of bounds.

b. An airborne player is a player not in contact with the ground.

c. A departing player is a player leaving the field, having been replaced by a substitute.

Runner and Ball Carrier

ARTICLE 7. a. The runner is a player in possession of a live ball or simulating possession of a live ball.

b. A ball carrier is a runner in possession of a live ball.

Snapper

ARTICLE 8. The snapper is the player who snaps the ball. He becomes the snapper when he assumes his position and touches or simulates (hand(s) at or below his knees) touching the ball (Rule 7-1-3-a-1).

Substitute

ARTICLE 9. a. A legal substitute is a replacement for a player or a player vacancy during the interval between downs.

b. A legal incoming substitute becomes a player when he enters the field of play or end zones and communicates with a teammate or an official, enters the huddle, is positioned in an offensive or defensive formation, or participates in a play.

Replaced Player

ARTICLE 10. A replaced player is one who participated during the previous down, has been replaced by a substitute and has left the field of play, and the end zones.

Player Vacancy

ARTICLE 11. A player vacancy occurs when a team has fewer than 11 players in the game.

Disqualified Player

ARTICLE 12. A disqualified player is one who is declared ineligible for further participation in the game.

Squad Member

ARTICLE 13. A squad member is part of a group of potential players, in uniform, organized for participation in the ensuing football game or football plays.

SECTION 28. Tripping

ARTICLE 1. Tripping is intentionally using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent (except the runner) below the knees.

SECTION 29. Timing Devices

Game Clock

ARTICLE 1. The game clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the 60 minutes of the game.

Play Clock

ARTICLE 2. Each stadium should have a visual play clock at each end of the playing enclosure. The play clock (if provided) must be capable of counting down from both 40 seconds and 25 seconds. It should automatically default to 40 seconds and start immediately upon being re-set by the play-clock operator when any official signals that the ball is dead after a play. (Rule 13-2-2)

- a. Otherwise, the 25-second clock is any device under the direction of the appropriate official used to time the 25 seconds between the ready for play signal and the ball being put in play.

SECTION 30. Play Classification

Forward Pass Play

ARTICLE 1. A legal forward pass play is the interval between the snap and when a legal forward pass is complete, incomplete or intercepted.

Free Kick Play

ARTICLE 2. A free kick play is the interval from the time the ball is legally kicked until it comes into player possession or the ball is declared dead by rule.

Scrimmage Kick Play

ARTICLE 3. A scrimmage kick play is the interval between the snap and when a scrimmage kick comes into player possession or the ball is declared dead by rule.

Running Play

- ARTICLE 4. a. A running play is any live-ball action other than that during a free kick play, a scrimmage kick play, or a legal forward pass play.
- b. A run is that segment of a running play during which a ball carrier has possession.
 - c. If a ball carrier loses possession by a fumble, backward pass, or illegal forward pass, the running play includes the spot where the run ends and the loose-ball interval before possession is regained or the ball is declared dead (**A.R. 2-30-4:I and II**).
 - d. A new running play begins when a player gains or regains possession.
- **Approved Ruling 2-30-4**
 - i. A21 catches a forward pass with his knees on the ground. The passer is roughed during the pass. **RULING:** A21's catch started a running play, which ended immediately. Penalise 15 yards from the end of the run, first down for Team A. [Cited by 2-25-10-d-2, 2-30-4-c, 9-1-2-l]

- II. Third and 10. A21 catches a forward pass and fumbles when tackled after gaining 10 yards. The fumble is recovered by grounded A24 five yards in advance of the fumble. During the pass, the passer is roughed. **RULING:** Penalise 15 yards from the spot of recovery by A24 (end of last run), first down for Team A. [Cited by 2-25-10-d-2, 2-30-4-c, 9-1-2-l]

SECTION 31. Field Areas

The Field

ARTICLE 1. The field is the area within the limit lines and includes the limit lines and team areas and the space above it (*Exception:* Enclosures over the field).

Field of Play

ARTICLE 2. The field of play is the area within the boundary lines other than the end zones.

End Zones

ARTICLE 3. The end zones are the 10-yard areas at both ends of the field between the end lines and the goal lines. The goal lines and goal line pylons are in the end zone and a team's end zone is the one it is defending. (**A.R. 8-5-1:X**) (**A.R. 8-6-1:I**)

Playing Surface

ARTICLE 4. The playing surface is the material or substance within the field of play, including the end zones.

Playing Enclosure

ARTICLE 5. The playing enclosure is that area bounded by the stadium, dome, stands, fences or other structures (*Exception:* Scoreboards are not considered within the playing enclosure).

SECTION 32. Fighting

ARTICLE 1. Fighting is any attempt by a player, coach or squad member in uniform to strike an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to:

- a. An attempt to strike an opponent with the head, arm(s), hand(s), leg(s) or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact.
- b. An unsportsmanlike act toward an opponent that causes any opponent to retaliate by fighting (Rules 9-2-1 and 9-5-1).