

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, or to the offensive team in overtime.
- 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) (A.R. 10-1-5:II)**
- 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 when the ball is declared dead:
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 6-3-2-b).
- **Approved Ruling 5-1-1**
 1. After Team A's fourth-down fumble out of bounds between the goal lines, with the spot of the fumble short of the line to gain, the ball belongs to Team A at the spot of the fumble or out-of-bounds spot, but Team B is awarded a new series of downs. The clock starts on the snap. [Cited by 5-1-1-c]

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 opponents' 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) (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 ready for play.
- **Approved Ruling 5-1-3**
 - I. Airborne A1 receives a legal forward pass one yard within the opponent's end zone. As A1 receives the ball, he is contacted by B1 and first comes to the ground with the catch at the one-yard line, where the ball is declared dead. **RULING:** Touchdown (8-2-1-a). [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a, 8-2-1-b]
 - II. Airborne A1 receives a legal forward pass one yard within Team B's end zone. As A1 receives the ball, he is contacted by B1 and first comes to the ground, on his feet, with the catch at the one-yard line. After he regains his balance, he runs and is downed at Team B's five-yard line. **RULING:** Not a touchdown. Team A's ball at the spot where the ball is declared dead. [Cited by 2-9-2, 8-2-1-b]
 - III. Airborne A2 receives a legal forward pass at Team A's 35-yard line. As A2 receives the ball he is contacted by B1 and first comes to the ground with the ball at Team A's 33-yard line, where the ball is declared dead. **RULING:** Team A's ball at the 35-yard line. This is the point of forward progress. [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a]
 - IV. A4, with the ball breaking the plane of the 50-yard line while in his possession, dives over the 50-yard line, which is the line to gain for a first down. He is knocked back to Team A's 49-yard line, where any part of his body except his hand or foot touches the ground. **RULING:** First down at forward progress spot (4-1-3-b). [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a]
 - V. A6 has the ball in his possession and is not controlled by an opponent, as he dives over the 50-yard line, which is the line to gain for a first down, and is forced back across the 50-yard line. A6 continues to run and is tackled at Team A's 49-yard line, where any part of his body, except his hand or foot, strikes the ground. **RULING:** No first down. The point of forward progress is Team A's 49-yard line. [Cited by 2-9-2]
 - VI. A5, with the ball breaking the plane of the goal line while in his possession, dives over the goal line and is knocked back to the one-yard line, where any part of A5's body except his hand or foot touches the ground. **RULING:** Touchdown. The ball is dead when it breaks the plane of the goal line in A5's possession. [Cited by 2-9-2, 5-1-3-a]

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 scrimmage kick crosses 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**).
- 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**)
 - **Approved Ruling 5-2-2**
 - i. Fourth and 20 on the 50-yard line. Team B roughs the kicker. **RULING:** Penalty — 15 yards from the previous spot. Team A's ball, first and 10 (Rule 9-1-4-a). [Cited by 5-2-2-b, 9-1-4-a]

Foul Before Change of Team Possession

ARTICLE 3. a. If a penalty is accepted for a foul that occurs between the goal lines before a change of team possession during a scrimmage down, the ball belongs to Team A. 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 8-3-3-b-1, 10-2-3 and 10-2-5).

b. 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-II**) (**A.R. 10-1-6:III**) (**A.R. 10-2-3:I**).

- **Approved Ruling 5-2-3**
 - i. Team A's fourth-down legal forward pass strikes the ground after it touches an originally ineligible receiver who is illegally more than three yards beyond the neutral zone. **RULING:** Penalty — Five yards from the previous spot. Team B's ball, first and 10, if the penalty is declined (Rule 7-3-10). [Cited by 5-2-3-b, 7-3-11]
 - ii. A Team A ball carrier attempts a backward pass that is ruled forward and illegal. The pass strikes the ground. **RULING:** Penalty — Five yards from the spot where the pass was thrown and, unless thrown after a change of team possession, the scrimmage down counts (7-3-2-a). [Cited by 5-2-3-b]

Foul After Change of Team Possession

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

- **Approved Ruling 5-2-4**
 - i. Team B runs back Team A's kick or intercepted pass. During the run, a Team B player clips. **RULING:** Penalty — 15 yards. Team B's ball, first and 10. Start the clock on the snap. [Cited by 5-2-4]

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**) (**A.R. 10-1-5:I-IV**).

- **Approved Ruling 5-2-6**

- I. Fourth and two on Team A's 35-yard line. A1 receives the snap and fumbles the ball on Team A's 38-yard line, with the ball going out of bounds on (a) Team A's 40-yard line or (b) Team A's 30-yard line. Immediately after the ball goes out of bounds, Team A commits a personal foul. **RULING:** (a) Team A's ball, first and 10 on Team A's 23-yard line. Start the clock on the ready-for-play signal. (b) Team B's ball, first and 10 on Team A's 15-yard line. Start the clock on the snap. [Cited by 5-2-6]
- II. First and 10 for Team A. A Team A ball carrier gains seven yards, then deliberately advances the ball after it is declared dead. **RULING:** Delay of game. Penalty — Five yards from the succeeding spot. Second down for Team A (Rule 2-6). [Cited by 5-2-6]

Foul Between Series

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

- **Approved Ruling 5-2-7**

- I. Team A's punt goes out of bounds at Team B's 20-yard line, immediately after which a Team B player clips. **RULING:** First and 10 for Team B on its 10-yard line. Start the clock on the snap. [Cited by 5-2-7]
- II. Team A's ball on Team B's 30-yard line. Third and four. A Team A ball carrier goes out of bounds on the 18-yard line. Team B commits a foul immediately after the ball is out of bounds. **RULING:** First and goal for Team A's at the nine-yard line. Clock starts on the ready-for-play signal except in the last two minutes of a half. [Cited by 5-2-7]
- III. Team A's ball on Team A's 16-yard line. Fourth and four. A Team A ball carrier goes out of bounds on the 18-yard line. A Team A player commits a foul immediately after the ball is out of bounds. **RULING:** Team B's ball on the nine-yard line. First and goal. Start the clock on the snap. [Cited by 5-2-7]
- IV. B20 intercepts a legal forward pass at the 50-yard line and returns the ball to Team A's 18-yard line, where he goes out of bounds. Immediately after the ball becomes dead, A55 commits a personal foul. **RULING:** Team B's ball on the nine-yard line. First and goal. Start the clock on the snap. [Cited by 5-2-7]
- V. On fourth and five, Team A gains six yards and is awarded a new series. After the ball is made ready for play and before the snap, A55 commits (a) a personal foul, or (b) a false start. **RULING:** (a) First and 25. (b) First and 15. [Cited by 5-2-7]
- VI. Team A's ball, third and four from the 50-yard line. After the ball is made ready for play and before the snap, B60 charges across the neutral zone and contacts snapper A50. A61 then fouls B60. A61's foul is a personal foul. **RULING:** Penalize Team B five yards for B60's offside, then penalize Team A 15 yards and reset the line-to-gain indicator to indicate first and 10 from Team A's 40-yard line. [Cited by 5-2-7]

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**).

Rules Decisions Final

ARTICLE 9. 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).