



Key HS Football Rule Differences from NCAA/NFL Rules

Officials

- Most HS games are officiated by five officials: Referee (white hat), Umpire (behind the defensive front 7), Head Linesman (line of scrimmage with the chains), Line Judge (line of scrimmage on press box side) and the Back Judge (deep in the center of the field). For this year's Semifinal and Final games, the crews will be made up of seven officials, adding the Side Judge (deep sideline opposite of the press box) and the Field Judge (deep sideline on press box side). Some regular season games utilize seven officials as well.

Play Clock

- The play clock between downs is 40 seconds and will automatically begin following the result of most plays. This even includes when the game clock is stopped to reset the chains following a first down, an incomplete pass or when a runner goes out of bounds. A 25-second play clock will be used following an administrative stoppage by the officials. This would include team or official timeouts, scores, intermissions, or penalty enforcements. When the 25-second play clock is used, it is started by the Referee's signal.

Overtime Procedures

- Following regulation, a 3:00 minute intermission will take place.
- Each team gets 1 timeout per OT....no carry-over from the 2nd half or previous OT periods.
- Once the 3:00 expires, the coin toss is conducted at midfield. The winner of the toss has three options: offense first, defense first, or end of the field. The loser of the toss has the remaining options.
- To start each OT, the offensive team will ALWAYS start out first and goal to go. The starting point will be the 10-yard line unless moved from a penalty on the previous play in regulation or earlier OT period. If the ball has been moved by penalty, it is still first and GOAL TO GO.
- If the defense gains possession at any time, the ball becomes dead immediately. The defense may not return the ball for a score.
- There will be only 1 coin toss. If additional OT periods are needed, then the loser of the coin toss to start OT will have the three options for all even OT periods (2nd OT, 4th OT, etc).
- If additional OT periods are needed, there is a 2-minute intermission between those periods in which the options are given to the appropriate teams.
- No try for point will be attempted if the winner of the game has been determined.
- A team can get a first down via an automatic first down foul by the defense (roughing fouls, for example).
- At no time is the offense required to go for 2 points.

Catch

- For a catch to be complete, the player must have possession and control of the ball and one foot or other body part must first come down in-bounds. A receiver knocked out of bounds while still in flight is not deemed in-bounds for being "forced out".

Point Differential Rules

- If one team is ahead by 35 points or more during the second half, the clock will run continuously except:
 - 1) During a timeout
 - 2) During an injury
 - 3) To administer a penalty
 - 4) After a score
- If one team is ahead by 50 points or at any time during the game, the clock will run continuously except during an injury timeout.
- If the point differential ever falls below 35, normal clock administration will occur (or timing rules for 35-49 point differential, if it falls below 50)

Fouls

- There is no such thing as an “uncatchable” exception to pass interference. If there is illegal contact while the ball is thrown, it is a foul. Face-guarding with no contact is not a foul.
- There is no such thing as a “tackle box” as it pertains to intentional grounding. A QB that attempts to throw the ball away must do so with an eligible receiver in the general area. Being out of the pocket or getting the pass to the line of scrimmage does not eliminate the possibility a QB could be flagged for grounding. He may immediately spike the ball on a hand-to-hand snap.
- The only fouls in HS football that result in an automatic first down are roughing the passer, roughing the kicker, roughing the snapper, and roughing the holder. Most personal fouls and pass interference penalties only result in a first down if the yardage penalized causes the offense to reach the line to gain.
- “Horse collar” tackles only occur if the runner is pulled down to the ground backward or sideways, and he must be grabbed inside the uniform shirt or pads or (NEW) in the nameplate area.
- Targeting is a personal foul, but does not result in an immediate ejection. Just like any personal foul, the player may be disqualified if it is deemed “flagrant”.
- “Offsides” is not a rule in high school football. It is encroachment and the ball is dead immediately when a defensive player enters into the neutral zone. There is no drawing them off and getting free play.

Kicks

- On free kicks (kickoffs), the kicking team may not advance a recovered kick. The kicking team may not:
 - Drive the ball directly into the ground to have it pop up high into the air.
 - Block a receiving team member (unless initiated by the receiving team) until the kick travels ten yards.
 - Touch/recover the ball before it is either touched by the receiving team or has been grounded AND traveled ten yards.
- When any kick breaks the plane of the goal line, the ball is dead immediately and cannot be advanced or recovered.
- Field goal attempts are treated the same as a punt. If a field goal attempt comes up short of the goal line, it is live and in play. It can be first touched by the kicking team, go out of bounds, or be picked up and returned by the receiving team.
- On a PAT (kick or 2-pt attempt), if the ball is kicked or the defense gains possession, the try is over. The defense cannot recover or advance the ball, and the offense cannot pick up a ball that has been kicked and blocked to advance.
- If the holder is to throw a pass or flip the ball to another player on a PAT, he must first raise his knee off the ground beforehand.