



2020 Playing Rules Change Proposals Submitted by Clubs

Club Playing Rule Proposals Summary

Playing Rule Proposals

1. By Philadelphia; to amend Rule 12, Section 2, Article 7, to modify the blindside block rule to prevent unnecessary fouls.
2. By Philadelphia; to amend Rule 15, Section 2, to make permanent the expansion of automatic replay reviews to include scoring plays and turnovers negated by a foul, and any successful or unsuccessful Try attempt.
3. By Philadelphia; to amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 1, to provide an alternative to the onside kick that would allow a team who is trailing in the game an opportunity to maintain possession of the ball after scoring.
4. By Philadelphia; to amend Rule 16, Section 1, to restore preseason and regular season overtime to fifteen minutes and to implement rules to minimize the impact of the overtime coin toss.
5. By Miami; to amend Rule 4, Section 3, Article 2, to provide the option to the defense for the game clock to start on the Referee's signal if the defense declines an offensive penalty that occurs late in either half.
6. By Baltimore and Los Angeles Chargers; to amend Rule 19, Section 2, to add a "booth umpire" as an eighth game official to the officiating crew.
7. By Baltimore and Los Angeles Chargers; to amend Rule 19, Section 2, to add a Senior Technology Advisor to the Referee to assist the officiating crew.

2020 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 1

Amend Rule 12, Section 2, Article 7 (Blindside Block, Page 47) and Rule 12, Section 2, Article 9(a)(10) (Players in a Defenseless Posture, Page 48) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

ARTICLE 7. BLINDSIDE BLOCK. It is a foul if a player initiates a block, when his path is toward or parallel to his own end line, and makes forcible contact with his ~~helmet,~~ forearm, or shoulder to an opponent who cannot reasonably expect such contact. See 12-2-10 for restrictions on use of helmet.

Note 1: A player may initiate forcible contact in an area between the offensive tackles and three yards on either side of the line of scrimmage (until the ball leaves that area) but is still subject to the restrictions for crackback and “peel back” blocks.

Penalty: For a Blindside Block: Loss of 15 yards.

ARTICLE 9. PLAYERS IN A DEFENSELESS POSTURE. It is a foul if a player initiates unnecessary contact against a player who is in a defenseless posture.

(a) Players in a defenseless posture are:

- (10) A player who receives a “blindsided” block when the path of the blocker is toward or parallel to his own end line. (Also see Article 7)

Submitted by Philadelphia

Effect: Modifies the blindside block rule to prevent unnecessary fouls.

Reason: Simplifies Rule.

2020 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 2

Amend Rule 15, Section 2 (Instant Replay, pg. 62) (new language underlined):

ARTICLE 2. REPLAY OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR REVIEW. Only the Replay Official or the Senior Vice President of Officiating or his or her designee may initiate a review of a play:

- (a) that begins after the two-minute warning of each half;
- (b) throughout any overtime period;
- (c) when points are scored by either team;
- (d) that is a successful or unsuccessful Try attempt; and
- (e) when on-field officials rule:
 - (1) an interception by an opponent;
 - (2) a fumble or backward pass recovered by an opponent or that goes out of bounds through the opponent's end zone;
 - (3) a scrimmage kick touched by the receiving team and recovered by the kicking team; or
 - (4) a disqualification of a player.

Such plays may be reviewed regardless of whether a foul is committed on the play that, if accepted, would negate the on-field ruling.

The Replay Official may only challenge a play until the next legal snap or kick. The Replay Official may consult with a designated member of the Officiating department at the league office regarding whether to challenge a play.

Submitted by Philadelphia

Effect: Makes permanent the 2019 additions to the list of plays subject to automatic review.

Reason: Competitive equity.

2020 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 3

Amend Rule 6, Section 1 (Procedures For A Free Kick, pgs. 23-25) (new language underlined):

ARTICLE 1. FREE KICK. A free kick is a kickoff or safety kick that puts the ball in play to start a free kick down. It must be made from any point on the kicking (offensive) team's restraining line and between the inbounds lines.

(a) A kickoff puts the ball in play at the start of each half, after a try, and after a successful field goal. A dropkick or placekick may be used for a kickoff.

Note: During a placekick on a kickoff, the kicking team may use a manufactured tee that is one inch in height and approved by the League. Once the ball has been placed on the kicking tee, the kicking tee cannot be moved. If the ball falls off the tee, or the tee is moved, the covering officials must stop play and restart the timing process without penalty to the kicking team. If the ball falls off the tee a second time during the same free kick down, the kicking team then must either use a player to hold the ball or must kick it off the ground. The ball may be placed on the ground leaning against the tee, provided the tee is in its normal upright position.

(b) A safety kick puts the ball in play after a safety. A dropkick, placekick, or punt may be used for a safety kick. A tee cannot be used for a safety kick.

(C) As an alternative to the Free Kick a team may elect to retain possession, subject to the following rules:

(1) A team may elect to retain possession no more than two times during the game.

(2) The kicking team must notify the Referee of its intention to forego a kickoff or safety kick and retain possession. The Referee will then notify the opponent of the scoring team's election.

(3) The ball will be spotted on the kicking team's 25-yard line, and the kicking team will possess the ball with the down and distance being fourth and 15 (Line to gain is the kicking team's 40-yard line).

(4) The Play Clock will be set to 25 seconds and winds on the ready for play signal. The Game Clock starts on the snap, and normal NFL timing rules apply.

(5) Standard rules for a scrimmage down apply.

(6) If the offense reaches the line to gain, the result of the play is a first down and all customary rules are in effect. If the defense stops the offense, the defense assumes possession at the dead-ball spot.

(7) If the offense is penalized on its one scrimmage down (fourth and 15), the offense cannot elect to kick off after the penalty is enforced. Example: the kicking team may not elect to kick after incurring a holding penalty on its one scrimmage down.

(8) Scrimmage kicks are prohibited.

(9) Nothing in this exception prohibits a team from attempting a legal onside kickoff under Rule 6.

Penalty: For illegal kick on a free kick down: Loss of five yards.

Submitted by Philadelphia

Effect: Permits a team to maintain possession of the ball after a score by substituting one offensive play (4th and 15 from the kicking team's 25-yard line) for an onside kickoff attempt.

Reason: Provides excitement and competition late in the game.

2020 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 4

Amend Rule 16, Section 1 (Overtime Procedures, pgs. 65-66) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

SECTION 1 OVERTIME PROCEDURES

ARTICLE 1. SCORE TIED. If the score is tied at the end of the regulation playing time of all preseason, regular season, and postseason NFL games, a system of modified sudden-death overtime shall be in effect, pursuant to the following.

ARTICLE 2. END OF REGULATION. At the end of regulation playing time, whichever team has scored more touchdowns during regulation will have the same options as a team that wins the pregame coin toss (4-2-2). If the teams have scored an equal number of touchdowns, the Referee shall immediately toss a coin at the center of the field, in accordance with rules pertaining to a usual pregame toss (4-2-2). The visiting team captain is to again call the toss.

ARTICLE 3. EXTRA PERIOD. Following an intermission of no more than three minutes after the end of the regular game, the extra period shall commence.

- (a) Both teams must have the opportunity to possess the ball once during the extra period, unless the team that receives the opening kickoff scores a touchdown on its initial possession, in which case it is the winner, or if the team kicking off to start the overtime period scores a safety on the receiving team's initial possession, in which case the team that kicked off is the winner. If a touchdown is scored, the game is over, and the Try is not attempted.
- (b) If the team that possesses the ball first does not score on its initial possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.
- (c) If the team that possesses the ball first scores a field goal on its initial possession, the other team (the second team) shall have the opportunity to possess the ball.
 - (1) If the second team scores a touchdown on its **possession**, it is the winner.
 - (2) If the second team scores a field goal on its possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.
 - (3) If the second team does not score on its possession, the game is over, and the first team is the winner, subject to (4) below.
 - (4) If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, the down will be permitted to run to its conclusion, and all rules of the game will be enforced as customary, including awarding points scored by either team during the down. If the second team scores a touchdown on the down after regaining possession, it is the winner. Only fouls that require the down to be replayed, fouls that negate a score, or palpably unfair acts will be enforced.

Notes:

- (1) *In such situations, if the player who intercepts the pass or recovers the fumble goes to the ground and makes no effort to advance, the covering official will blow his whistle to end the game.*
- (2) *If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, but the first team committed a foul prior to the change of possession, the second team's possession has not legally ended, and the game cannot end on the down. However, in certain situations, the*

second team cannot decline the penalty and accept the result of the play, no matter how beneficial, because it would create a second possession for itself. It must accept the penalty enforcement, which will extend its initial possession.

- (3) *The situation in (2) may also affect the team that receives the opening kickoff during its first possession. If there is a foul by the second team followed by a double change of possession, and the first team declines the penalty and accepts the result of the play, the second team has had its required possession, and the first team has possession of the ball for the second time and needs only a field goal to win. However, if it accepts the penalty, it will extend its initial possession.*
- (d) A player is in possession when he is in firm grip and control of the ball inbounds (3-2-7). The defense gains possession when it catches, intercepts, or recovers a loose ball.
- (e) The opportunity to possess applies only during kicking plays. A kickoff is the opportunity to possess for the receiving team. If the kicking team legally recovers the kick, the receiving team is considered to have had its opportunity. A punt or field goal attempt that crosses the line of scrimmage and is muffed by the receiving team is considered to be an opportunity to possess for the receiving team. Normal touching rules by the kicking team apply.
- (f) If the result of a kickoff is a touchback, the ball shall be spotted at the 20-yard line.
- (g) All replay reviews will be initiated by the Replay Official. Coaches' challenges will not be allowed.

ARTICLE 4. OVERTIME IN PRESEASON AND REGULAR SEASON. The following shall apply to overtime games in the preseason and regular season.

- (a) There shall be a maximum of one ~~40~~ 15-minute period, even if the second team has not had an opportunity to possess the ball or if its initial possession has not ended. If the score is tied at the end of the period, the game shall result in a tie.
- (b) Each team shall be entitled to two timeouts, and if there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5). The general provisions for the fourth quarter of a game, including timing, shall apply.

ARTICLE 5. OVERTIME IN POSTSEASON. The following shall apply to overtime games in the postseason:

- (a) If the score is tied at the end of a 15-minute overtime period, or if the second team's initial possession has not ended, another overtime period will begin, and play will continue, regardless of how many 15-minute periods are necessary.
- (b) Between each overtime period, there shall be a two-minute intermission, but there shall be no halftime intermission after the second period. At the beginning of the third overtime period, the captain who lost the coin toss prior to the first overtime period shall have the first choice of the two privileges in 4-2-2, unless the team that won the coin toss deferred.
- (c) At the end of the first and third extra periods, etc., teams must change goals in accordance with 4-2-3.
- (d) Each team is entitled to three timeouts during a half. If there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5).
- (e) At the end of a second overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the first half. At the end of a fourth overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the fourth quarter.

(f) At the end of a fourth overtime period, there will be another coin toss pursuant to Section 1, Article 2, and play will continue until a winner is declared.

ARTICLE 6. DISQUALIFIED PLAYERS. Disqualified player(s) shall not re-enter during any extra period or periods in the preseason, regular season, and postseason.

ARTICLE 7. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RULES APPLY. Except as provided for above, all other general and specific rules shall apply during any extra period or periods in the preseason, regular season, and postseason.

Submitted by Philadelphia

Effect: Minimizes the effect of the overtime coin toss and extends overtime to 15 minutes in the preseason and regular season.

Reason: Competitive equity. Fan engagement.

2020 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 5

Amend Rule 4, Section 3, Article 2 (Starting the Game Clock, Pages 12-13) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

SECTION 3 STARTING THE GAME CLOCK

ARTICLE 2. SCRIMMAGE DOWN. Following any timeout (3-37-1), the game clock shall be started on a scrimmage down when the ball is next snapped, except in the following situations:

- (a) Whenever a runner goes out of bounds on a play from scrimmage, the game clock is started when an official spots the ball at the inbounds spot, and the Referee gives the signal to start the game clock, except that the clock will start on the snap:
 - (1) after a change of possession;
 - (2) after the two-minute warning of the first half; or
 - (3) inside the last five minutes of the second half.
- (b) If there is an injury timeout prior to the two-minute warning, the game clock is started as if the injury timeout had not occurred.
- (c) If there is an excess team timeout after the two-minute warning, the game clock is started as if the excess timeout had not occurred.
- (d) If there is a Referee's timeout, the game clock is started as if the Referee's timeout had not occurred.
- (e) If the game clock is stopped after a down in which there was a foul by either team, following enforcement or declination of a penalty, the game clock will start as if the foul had not occurred, except that the clock will start on the snap if:
 - (1) the foul occurs after the two-minute warning of the first half;
 - (2) the foul occurs inside the last five minutes of the second half; or
 - (3) a specific rule prescribes otherwise.

For Live Ball fouls in (1) or (2) above, the defense may decline a penalty by the offense and elect to start the game clock when the Referee signals the ball is ready for play.

- (f) If a fumble or backward pass by any player goes out of bounds, the game clock starts on the Referee's signal that a ball has been returned to the field of play.
- (g) When there is a 10-second runoff, the game clock starts when the Referee signals that the ball is ready for play.
- (h) During the Try, which is an untimed down.
- (i) When a specific rule prescribes otherwise.

Submitted by Miami

Effect: Provides the option to the defense for the game clock to start on the Referee's signal if the defense declines an offensive penalty that occurs late in either half.

Reason: Competitive equity.

2020 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 6

Amend Rule 19, Section 1 (Officials, pg. 70) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

ARTICLE 1. GAME OFFICIALS. The game shall be played under the supervision of seveneight officials: the Referee, Umpire, Down Judge, Line Judge, Field Judge, Side Judge, ~~and~~ Back Judge, and Booth Umpire. In the absence of seveneight officials, the crew is to be rearranged according to the remaining members of the crew.

ARTICLE 2. JURISDICTION. The officials' jurisdiction begins 100 minutes before the scheduled kickoff and ends when the Referee declares the final score.

ARTICLE 3. REFEREE'S AUTHORITY. The Referee is to have general oversight and control of the game. The Referee is the final authority for the score. If there is a disagreement between members of the crew regarding the number of down, any decision, or the application, enforcement, or interpretation of a rule, the Referee's decision will be final. The Referee's decisions upon all matters not specifically placed under the jurisdiction of other officials by rule are final.

ARTICLE 4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND MECHANICS. Officiating responsibilities and mechanics are specified in the Mechanics Manual, published annually by the National Football League.

Submitted by Baltimore and Los Angeles Chargers

Effect: Creates an officiating advisor who is positioned somewhere other than the playing field, with full communication to on-field officials and access to a television monitor that displays all broadcast angles provided through the NFL's network independence system.

Reason: Competitive equity. Pace of play. Player health and safety.

2020 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 7

Amend Rule 19, Section 1 (Officials, pg. 70) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

ARTICLE 1. GAME OFFICIALS. The game shall be played under the supervision of seven officials and a Senior Technology Advisor to the Referee (STAR); the Referee, Umpire, Down Judge, Line Judge, Field Judge, Side Judge, and Back Judge. In the absence of seven officials and STAR, the crew is to be rearranged according to the remaining members of the crew.

ARTICLE 2. JURISDICTION. The officials' jurisdiction begins 100 minutes before the scheduled kickoff and ends when the Referee declares the final score.

ARTICLE 3. REFEREE'S AUTHORITY. The Referee is to have general oversight and control of the game. The Referee is the final authority for the score. If there is a disagreement between members of the crew regarding the number of down, any decision, or the application, enforcement, or interpretation of a rule, the Referee's decision will be final. The Referee's decisions upon all matters not specifically placed under the jurisdiction of other officials by rule are final.

ARTICLE 4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND MECHANICS. Officiating responsibilities and mechanics are specified in the Mechanics Manual, published annually by the National Football League.

ARTICLE 5. SENIOR TECHNOLOGY ADVISOR TO THE REFEREE (STAR). The STAR will be located in the Replay Booth with access to video technology and the ability to hear and communicate with game officials through the official-to-official communication system. The STAR is an officiating expert who has on-field experience as a game official. The STAR will advise the officiating crew of any relevant information on the following types of rulings:

(a) Game Administration.

(b) Possession.

(c) Touching of a loose ball, boundary line, goal line, or end line.

(d) The location of the football relative to the boundary line, line of scrimmage, line to gain, or goal line.

(e) Down by contact (when the player is not ruled down by contact on the field).

(f) Fouls for Facemask and Unnecessary Roughness Against a Defenseless Player

(g) Number of players on the field at the snap.

(h) Any other information requested by the Referee.

Submitted by Baltimore and Los Angeles Chargers

Effect: Creates an officiating advisor who is positioned somewhere other than the playing field, with full communication to on-field officials and access to a television monitor that displays all broadcast angles provided through the NFL's network independence system.

Reason: Competitive equity. Pace of play. Player health and safety.