

# 2020 Official Football Rule Changes

We now have access to the 2020 NFHS Football Rule Book and the statements that follow detail the official changes that have been approved.

1.) Referees have recently begun to look for the head coach for penalty acceptance or declination rather than speak with a team captain on the field. This change will now provide rule book support for this practice. Prior to the contest, the head coach will be given the opportunity to designate a “team representative” for the purpose of penalty acceptance or declination. This individual can be the head coach, any assistant coach, a team captain, or any player. The person that is designated will then be responsible for accepting or declining any penalty throughout the contest as long as that person is available on the field or in the team area. (Rule 1-4-4)

2.) This change in the 40/25 second play clock language clarifies that any down that involves a legal kick and results in a new series for either team will result in a 25 second play clock with the standard ready for play chop. (Rule 3-6-1a-(1)f)

3.) This is another change in the 40/25 second play clock language. If the game is stopped for a medical issue or is stopped for an equipment issue AND this involves a team B (defensive) player, the play clock will be set to 40 seconds instead of 25 seconds followed by the standard ready for play chop. (Rule 3-6-1a-(1)e)

4.) It will now be a legal play for a team A player to spike the football from a shotgun/pistol formation to stop the game clock if and only if the player receiving the direct snap is positioned directly behind the snapper (any distance), the snap is not muffed or grounded and the ball is immediately thrown forward to the ground. The player who receives the direct snap cannot start to run or start to survey the defense for a possible pass and then spike the ball – it must be immediate. (Rule 7-5-2e EXCEPTION)

5.) Although this is typically a very rare situation, this rule change will call for only a 5 yard penalty for disconcerting acts or words used by any team B player(s) in an effort to create a team A false start – this is no longer a 15 yard penalty for an unsportsmanlike foul. (Rule 7-1-9)

6.) This change does not involve the actual playing of the game, but provides specific language and rule support for what to do with a halftime intermission if and when the contest is interrupted during the last part of the second period by weather conditions and the delay is longer than 30 minutes which is pretty common when lighting is involved. (Rule 3-1-6c EXCEPTION)

“If the game is interrupted due to weather during the last 3 minutes of the second period, and the delay is at least 30 minutes, the opposing coaches and the referee can mutually agree to shorten the halftime intermission, provided there is at least a one-minute intermission and must be followed by the mandatory three-minute warm-up period.” It is wise to involve school administration in this decision.

7.) Please note that this final item is NOT a rule change, but an editorial change to rule 7-5-12 that clarifies where an ineligible receiver may be until a legal forward pass that travels beyond the neutral zone is released. The ineligible receiver may be anywhere inside or behind the expanded neutral zone whether or not the player is in contact with an opponent. The key to an ineligible receiver downfield foul is his location until the pass is released and team B does not touch the pass in or behind the neutral zone.

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Feel free to contact David Gore if you have questions or need any clarification about this information.

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## 2020 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

**Defining Team Designated Representative for Penalty Decisions [1-4-1, 1-4-4 (NEW), 2-32-5, 3-5-2, 10-1-1, 10-1-2, 10-2-4]** — Prior to the game, the head coach will notify the referee of the designated representative (coach or player) who will make decisions regarding penalty acceptance or declination.

**Halftime Intermission Option Following Weather Delay [3-1-6c EXCEPTION (NEW)]** — The halftime intermission may be shortened by mutual agreement of opposing coaches if a weather delay occurs during the last three minutes of the second period.

**40-Second Play Clock Clarification [3-6-1a(1)e EXCEPTIONS 2 and 3 (NEW)]** — To eliminate a potential timing advantage gained by the defensive team, the rules committee approved the play clock being set to 40 seconds when an officials' time-out is taken for an injury to a defensive player or a defensive player has an equipment issue.

**25-Second Play Clock Clarification [3-6-1a(1)f (NEW)]** — Following a legal kick when either team is awarded a new series, the play clock will be set to 25 seconds.

**Disconcerting Act Foul and Penalty Reclassified [7-1-9 (NEW), 7-1-9 PENALTY (NEW)]** — Disconcerting acts or words by the defense has been reclassified from a unsportsmanlike foul to a disconcerting act foul, and the penalty changed from 15 yards to 5 yards.

**Spiking the Ball to Conserve Time (7-5-2e EXCEPTION, TABLE 7-5-2e EXCEPTION, TABLE 7-5e EXCEPTION)** — The exception to allow a player to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball forward to the ground immediately after receiving the snap, has been expanded to include any player positioned directly behind the center. This exception now includes snaps that are not hand-to-hand.

## 2020 EDITORIAL CHANGES

NOCSAE Warning Label, 1-3-1d and g, 1-3-1i (NEW), Table 1-7, 2-33-2, 2-41-9, 3-1-6 (NEW), 3-1-7 (NEW), Table 3-1, 3-4-8, 3-4-9 (NEW), 7-2-5a, 7-5-12, Table 7-5, 8-2-4, 9-5-1d, 9-9 PENALTY, 10-4-2 EXCEPTION, 10-5-1j, Penalty Summary, Official Signal 17 (NEW) and 23, Appendix H (NEW), Index

## 2020 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. Sportsmanship
2. Intentional Grounding
3. Ineligible Downfield and Line of Scrimmage Formation

**\*\*FINAL As of April 1, 2020**