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## 2015 Football Rules Interpretations

**Publisher's Note:** The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented. Robert B. Gardner, Publisher, NFHS Publications © 2015

**SITUATION 1:** Second down and six. On the last play of the third period, A38 runs for 3 yards. After the play, the down-marker indicator is flipped to fourth down. Following a brief pause to ensure no reason to defer ending the quarter, the referee holds the ball over his head. Both teams change ends of the field and the chains are reversed. Before the ball is snapped for the first play of the fourth period, Team A's coach recognizes the down error. **RULING:** The third period officially ended when the referee held the ball over his head. The down error may not be corrected. (5-1-1)

**SITUATION 2:** During a fifth-down play, Team A is flagged for: (a) an illegal formation; (b) holding; (c) twisting the face mask; (d) taunting; or (e) fighting. **RULING:** The penalties are not enforced in (a) or (b). In (c), (d) and (e), the penalty is enforced as a dead-ball foul before Team B snaps the ball. In (e), the offending player is also disqualified. (5-1-1)

**SITUATION 3:** The ball is on the 50-yard line with 10 yards to go for a first down. The down-marker indicator erroneously indicates fourth down when Team K punts on what is actually: (a) third down or (b) fifth down. R6 returns the punt for an apparent touchdown. Prior to the try, it is brought to the attention of the game officials that the down-marker indicator was in error. **RULING:** In (a), the score is cancelled and the ball is returned to the 50-yard line, third down and 10 for A as Team A. In (b), the fifth down was run in error, the score is cancelled and the ball is returned to the 50-yard line, first down and 10 for R. **COMMENT:** Consistent enforcement standards involving change-of-possession situations on any improper down is required to create a fair and level playing field for participating teams. (5-1-1)

**2015 NFHS Football Rules Book Clarification** (Underlining shows additions; ~~strikethrough~~ shows deletions.) **Page 63, Rule 7-5 PENALTY:** PENALTY: ... Arts. 2d, e 3 – intentional grounding – (S36-9) – 5 yards plus loss of down; ...

**2015 NFHS Football Case Book Clarifications** (Underlining shows additions; ~~strikethrough~~ shows deletions.)

### Page 38, \*5.1.1

**SITUATION A:** What procedure is used to correct an error if it is discovered: (a) a fifth down has been run; or (b) A has not been given its allotted four downs? **RULING:** In both cases, the number of the next down can be corrected by the referee ~~until~~ prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs is awarded. In (a), play will revert to where it was before the fifth down was run if it was determined ~~before~~ prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs was awarded. In (b), the referee can declare the proper next down provided prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs has not been awarded. ...

### Pages 74-75, \*9.4.1

**SITUATION B:** It is A's ball, third down and 1, on A's 10-yard line. B1 tackles A1 with a hard legal tackle at the line of scrimmage. A1, feeling the tackle was unjustly harsh, jumps to his feet and attacks B1, delivering blows with his fist. In response, B1 directs a profanity toward A1. **RULING:** The penalties for A1's dead-ball personal foul and B1's unsportsmanlike conduct foul would cancel. A1 shall be disqualified for fighting; B1 would remain in the game unless the game officials judged that his reaction was flagrant. It's A's ball, fourth down and 1 ~~first and 10~~ on its own 10-yard line. (2-11; 9-8-1 Penalty; 10-2-5b, c)

### Page 97, \*10.2.5

**SITUATION C:** On third and 8 from B's 45-yard line, runner A1 falls to the ground as he goes out of bounds at B's 40. B1 piles on. A2 then punches B2. The covering official indicates the fouls by both B1

and A2. The coach of B A then insults the game official for calling the foul on B1 A2. **RULING:** The distance penalties for B1's dead-ball personal foul and A2's punch cancel. The unsportsmanlike foul against the coach of B A will be enforced with a 15-yard penalty, giving A a first and 10 from B's 25. A2 shall be disqualified for fighting. (9-4-1; 9-4-3c; 9-8-1c; 10-2-5b, c; 10-4-4)

**2015 NFHS Football Rules By Topic Clarifications** (Underlining shows additions; ~~striketrough~~ shows deletions.)

**Page 110, \*5.1.1**

**SITUATION A:** What procedure is used to correct an error if it is discovered: (a) a fifth down has been run; or (b) A has not been given its allotted four downs? **RULING:** In both cases, the number of the next down can be corrected by the referee ~~until~~ prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs is awarded. In (a), play will revert to where it was before the fifth down was run if it was determined ~~before~~ prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs was awarded. In (b), the referee can declare the proper next down ~~provided~~ prior to the ball becoming live after a new series of downs has ~~not~~ been awarded.

**Page 194, \*9.4.1**

**SITUATION B:** It is A's ball, third down and 1, on A's 10-yard line. B1 tackles A1 with a hard legal tackle at the line of scrimmage. A1, feeling the tackle was unjustly harsh, jumps to his feet and attacks B1, delivering blows with his fist. In response, B1 directs a profanity toward A1. **RULING:** The penalties for A1's dead-ball personal foul and B1's unsportsmanlike conduct foul would cancel. A1 shall be disqualified for fighting; B1 would remain in the game unless the game officials judged that his reaction was flagrant. It's A's ball, fourth down and 1 ~~first and 10~~ on its own 10-yard line. (2-11; 9-8-1 Penalty; 10-2-5b, c)

**Pages 228-229, \*10.2.5**

**SITUATION C:** On third and 8 from B's 45-yard line, runner A1 falls to the ground as he goes out of bounds at B's 40. B1 piles on. A2 then punches B2. The covering official indicates the fouls by both B1 and A2. The coach of B A then insults the game official for calling the foul on B1 A2. **RULING:** The distance penalties for B1's dead-ball personal foul and A2's punch cancel. The unsportsmanlike foul against the coach of B A will be enforced with a 15-yard penalty, giving A a first and 10 from B's 25. A2 shall be disqualified for fighting. (9-4-1; 9-4-3c; 9-8-1c; 10-2-5b, c; 10-4-4)

**2015 NFHS High School Football Rules Simplified and Illustrated Clarification** (Underlining shows additions; ~~striketrough~~ shows deletions.)

**Page 67, 2-9-1:** The prohibition against contacting a player who has given a valid fair-catch signal ceases if the kick is muffed. When No. 80 catches the ball in PlayPic D, it is a fair catch. The contact in PlayPic C ~~is ignored unless unnecessarily rough or flagrant.~~ not kick-catch interference. The captain may choose to snap or free kick anywhere between the hash marks on the yard line through the spot of the catch.

**2015 NFHS Football Preseason Guide Clarification** (Underlining shows additions; ~~striketrough~~ shows deletions.)

**Page 3, Mechanigram D Caption:**...In Mechanigram D, K5 (who was not more than 5 yards behind his free-kick line kicks the ball. That is not a foul. ...