

RULE 2-3-4-a

BLOCK IN THE BACK

"A block in the back is contact against an opponent occurring when the force of the initial contact is from behind and above the waist."

There are two types of BIB's (IBW's - Illegal Block Above the Waist) that generally take place:

(A) THE CHASE MODE

Generally takes place on free kicks and scrimmage kicks (punts) when the receiving team player is chasing, trailing, or running behind the kicking team player. The blocker is suspect.

In this situation a shoving hand/hands or shoulder in the back of the kicking team player will invite a flag. In most cases this is true regardless of which way a player falls. In the chase mode we would be more technical when enforcing the rule.

In addition, in the chase mode we have the "influence block" that occurs just in front of the receiver or at the corner as he turns upfield. Initial contact in the shoulder area of the back is enough force to prevent player from making a play on the runner.

(B) THE SIDE ANGLE BLOCK

When the player is blocked from a side angle the total initial force must be in the back to be an BIB / IBW.

A hand on the side and one in the back would not dictate a foul unless the initial force was from the back.

Two hands on the back with force would be a foul. If the two hands contact the body from the side and back with identical forces the block becomes legal. **WHEN IN QUESTION - LEGAL BLOCK**

GUIDELINES

"CHASE MODE"

BE TECHNICAL - CONTACT IN THE BACK = FOUL

"SIDE ANGLE MODE"

NOT TECHNICAL UNLESS TWO HANDS IN THE BACK EXERT FORCE OR THE INITIAL SHOVING OR FORCE HAND IS IN THE BACK. IF POSSIBLE READ THE DIRECTION THE BLOCKED PLAYER TAKES AFTER THE CONTACT.

MECHANICS

MECHANICS MUST BE THOROUGHLY DISCUSSED AND COORDINATED IN THE PREGAME CONFERENCE TO COVER ALL PLAYS

KICKOFFS

- Regardless of the mechanics you are using to cover the kickoff, the side judge and field judge must allow kicker to go by them and then move down under control. They must focus on their area of coverage and their keys and work **"THEIR SIDE OF THE STREET."** Help is needed from the linesman and line judge when possible.
- Umpires move downfield under control and cover the middle area behind the flow of players.
- Above all, officials must focus and discipline themselves to see the whole play.

SCRIMMAGE KICKS (PUNTS)

- Back Judge has receiver and the ball. Secondary help with blocks around receiver.
- Side judge and field judge position yourself on the sideline depending on field position. **You must focus on gunners** and be able to see through the action.
- Side Judge and Field Judge must focus on chaser in front of receiver. Do not focus on the receiver. Help with blocks at the corner.
- Side Judge and Field judge must be ready to take runner after he turns upfield.
- Linesman and Line Judge move downfield after kick crosses "LOS." The distance varies with playing conditions and quality of kickers.
- Linesman and Line Judge move downfield under control and support coverage of the second wave of blockers. Focus on your area of coverage. Help if possible with blocks at the corners. Be ready for reverse mechanics.
- Umpire 5 to 10 yards off "LOS" moves downfield under control after separation of players take place. Cover players in the middle of the flow or to the sides if necessary
- Referee is to clean up behind umpire

BIB / IBW

When in question, the block is legal

SOME GUIDELINES AND THOUGHTS PRESENTED BY COORDINATORS

- We basically use as a guideline the direction of the player being blocked takes after the block. A hand or shoulder into one of the numbers on the back of the jersey also dictates a block in the back.
- Field judge, Side Judge, and Back Judge must see chaser from beginning to end. Hand on back and hand on side "-which one exerts force or push. Direction the man blocked can be a key. When in doubt not a foul!
- Unless the numbers are involved in the block, then most times the block is legal. A hand on the side and one on the back, but not touching the numbers, is legal. If contact initiates on the numbers whether one or both hands, a foul would then be called.
- Bottom line is that the block has to be clearly in the back. Be sure they know the rules and the definitions associated with it. The block has to be clearly in the back, no hands or head in front or side.
- For an illegal block to occur, initial contact (even back of the shoulder) blocks are legal. If in doubt, no foul.
- Clearly in the numbers. Consider the direction he falls - forward a foul, sideways no foul.
- The guideline for a BIB / IBW is whether the player blocked goes head first after contact. If a player goes sideways when contacted, then it should not to be ruled a block in the back.
- If the blocker is coming from the side, one hand can be on the side and one hand on the back. The official is to read if he does down on his "nose," a foul; or goes down on his side, not a foul.
- It is a foul when the block is clearly in the back and the player that is blocked goes down to the ground in a straight line from his running position. It is not a block in the back if the blocked player goes sideways. If one hand is in the back and the other hand is somewhere on the body it does matter, the key is how does the blocked player fall or land.
- Look for the position of the hands and if one or two hands cover number and the push occurs it is a foul.
- Try to determine initial contact. If from side, no foul; if from the back a foul. A hand in back is also what we look for but one hand in the back and one hand on side of shoulder we are back to above. To a lesser degree, we look at how the player blocked "initially" falls - to the front (foul) or towards side (no foul). Key word is *initially* and this gets tough. For example, a player can initially fall sideways and land on his stomach and hands, in fact, that normally happens because the player will twist and try to regain his balance by getting his hands under him

Some Guidelines and Thoughts Presented by Coordinators
Page 2

- Contact should be clearly in the back. A general rule, but not the gospel, would be that contact should block out at least one number on the back of the jersey to be clearly in the back. Whether a player lands on his "nose" or "side" should not be a determining factor.
- The severity of the contact does not determine if action in the back is or is not a foul; sometimes, a light contact in the back is all that is needed to spring the runner for a big gainer.

Mechanics

Deep officials should put themselves in position to see through the action. On punts, Side Judge and Field Judge in line with or slightly behind the deepest receiver and adjust with the kick, but keeping eyes on the gunners. After ball has crossed the neutral zone the Head Linesman and Line Judge to move slowly downfield covering play behind the deep official and ahead of the runner. Umpire sets up 5- 10 yards off the LOS . Turn and move toward the return area. The Referee cleans up action behind the umpire, after action and potential action against the punter has subsided.

- If the contact is simultaneous or in front first, the block is legal.
- If the initial contact is in the back, the block is illegal.
- Mechanics - When the contact is "gray" it is considered to be a legal block.