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MEMORANDUM

February 23, 2007

TO: Head Football Coaches, Conference Commissioners and Coordinators of Officials.

FROM: Michael Clark, chair
NCAA Football Rules Committee.

SUBJECT: Comment period.

The Football Rules Committee approved the attached major rules changes during its annual meeting February 11-14. Before these rules changes are implemented into the rules book, they must be approved by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP). PROP will review these rules proposals on a March 12 conference call. PROP evaluates the new rules in terms of negative impact on the image of the game, safety concerns or financial impact on institutions.

You have the opportunity to give your feedback to PROP and the committee regarding any of the attached changes before final approval is granted. The article that will appear in the NCAA News is also included in this mailing.

Please e-mail or fax Ty Halpin at the NCAA (thalpin@ncaa.org or fax: 317/917-6800) your comments **by March 9 if possible**. Please reference the rule and specify whether your feedback concerns a negative impact to the image of the game, student-athlete safety or a significant financial impact.

MC:nkb

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Grant Teaff, American Football Coaches Association.
Selected Staff Members

National Collegiate Athletic Association

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, February 14, 2007

CONTACT:
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Rules Administration
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NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE VOTES TO RESTORE PLAYS WHILE ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN SHORTER OVERALL GAME TIME

ALBUQUERQUE, New Mexico—The NCAA Football Rules Committee proposed several rules items intended to restore the number of plays while limiting the amount of elapsed time needed to play a college contest. The committee voted to eliminate provisions used last year that helped shave 14 minutes off of game times. All rules proposals will be considered by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel March 12 before taking effect.

“The changes we made last year, overall, did not have a positive effect on college football at all levels,” said Michael Clark, chair of the committee and head coach at Bridgewater (Virginia) College. “Our charge is to protect the game and do what is best for college football. Last year’s game lost too many plays, but it accomplished the need to shorten the overall time it takes to play a game. The changes we have made for 2007 balance both of these issues.”

In Rule 3-2-5-e, the committee altered its rule to have the clock start on the snap after a change in possession, as opposed to the 2006 rule which started the clock when the referee signaled the ball ready for play. Also, the committee returned its rules on free kicks to 2005 standards, starting the clock on kickoffs only when the ball is legally touched in the field of play.

After approving these proposals, the committee addressed reducing some of the dead time in the game with the intent to have overall game times in 2007 comparable to those in 2006. The group approved the following items to address this issue:

Action Taken	Elapsed Time Eliminated	Playing Time Impact
Limit the play clock to 15 seconds following a television timeout.	Three minutes (about 20 timeouts per game and about 10 seconds per timeout).	No effect on playing time.
Kickoffs moved from 35-yard line to 30-yard line.	One minute (Average of 11 kickoffs per game; more kickoffs will be returned.)	No effect on playing time.
Reduced charged team timeouts by 30 seconds.	3-6 minutes, depending on how many timeouts are taken in a game.	No effect on playing time.
Penalties for all kicking team fouls that occur during the kick can be enforced at the end of the run.	About two minutes per game.	No effect on playing time.
Encourage coaches, officials, game management personnel, media partners to manage the game in a more efficient manner.	Variable, but would reduce total elapsed time.	No effect on playing time.
Play clock is started when the ball is handed to the kicker by the umpire on all free kicks.	About two minutes per game (about 10 seconds per kickoff with 11 kickoffs per game).	No effect on playing time.
Limit instant replay reviews to two minutes to decide to overturn or confirm the ruling on the field.	Caps the review time to eliminate lengthy delays.	No effect on playing time.
Total	11-14 minutes.	No effect on playing time.

The committee briefly considered moving to a federated process for its rules, as the changes were made primarily in response to Division I games, but had an effect on all institutions.

“Separating our rules by division is not something the committee is in favor of pursuing,” Clark said. “NCAA football includes all the divisions and we have always had tremendous cooperation at all levels. This will continue.”

In other news, starting in 2008 the committee approved a 40-second/25-second play clock combination. The committee, reviewing strong support for a 40-second/25-second play from coaches, officials and administrators, approved this move to achieve a more uniform pace of play.

-30-

TH:dt

NCAA Football Rules Committee

2007 Major Rules Changes

Rule 3-1-1

The coin toss begins when the field captains leave the nine-yard marks and ends when the captains return to the nine-yard marks.

Rationale: This change clarifies when the coin toss begins and ends and avoids unnecessary confrontations between teams.

Rule 3-2-2-h

Following television timeouts, the ready for play period will, with the teams on the field, be 15 seconds.

Rationale: This change will eliminate some dead time during televised games and encourage teams to be on the field ready for play. The committee estimates about three minutes of time savings.

Rule 3-2-5

When the ball is free-kicked, the game clock shall be started when the ball is legally touched in the field of play or crosses the goal line after being touched legally by Team B in its end zone and subsequently stopped when the ball is dead by rule.

Rationale: This reverts to the 2005 rule. The 2006 rule, which started the clock when the ball was kicked, created some difficult situations at the end of the half and game and the rule overall did not achieve its intended effect.

Rule 3-2-5-e

When Team B is awarded a first down, the game clock is stopped and starts on the snap.

Rationale: This reverts back to the 2005 rule. This rule change last year was a large part of changes that eliminated about 16 plays from the game and cut about 15 minutes of elapsed time off of the game. The committee believes the elimination of participation opportunities for student-athletes is too much and addressed the overall length of game issues in other ways.

Rule 3-3-7-a

A team timeout is 30 seconds plus the 25-second play clock interval.

Rationale: This change eliminates 30 seconds from team timeouts. The committee believes many timeouts are called to simply stop the clock (or when a team has formation, substitution or play clock problems). This reduction in time will save about three to six minutes, depending on how many timeouts are used during the game.

Rule 3-4-2-a (Effective 2008)

Consuming more than 40 seconds to put the ball in play after declared ready for play is an illegal delay.

Exceptions (administrative duties):

- Free kick.
- Measurements
- Fumbles.
- Penalties.
- Touchbacks.
- Injury timeouts.
- Live ball out of bounds.
- Team B awarded a first down.
- Team timeouts.
- Try.

Rationale: This change is being proposed now to alert conferences and teams to the change in how the ball will be marked ready for play. When the play is completed, the 40 second clock will start. The administrative duties listed above will continue to use the 25 second play clock. This will bring consistency to the amount of time teams have between plays.

Rule 6-1-1

Unless relocated by penalty, the kicking team's restraining line on kickoffs shall be the 30-yard line.

Rationale: This change will create more kickoff returns and therefore create more action. This change will save about one minute of playing time and eliminate a play with no action (touchbacks).

Rule 6-1-2

Insertion following the second sentence in the rules regarding kickoffs:

"...between the inbounds lines. The referee shall declare the ball ready for play when the kicker receives the ball from the official. After the ball is ready ..."

Rationale: This change will eliminate some down time when the kicker receives the ball. When the kicker receives the ball, the kicker will have 25 seconds to kick. This will save about two minutes of elapsed time in the game.

Rule 6-2-1-Penalty

Penalty for a free kick out of bounds altered to be five yards from the previous spot or the receiving team awarded the ball 35 yards beyond Team A's restraining line.

Rationale: This change is in relation to the kickoff spot being moved to the 30-yard line. The committee decided that the penalty for a kickoff out of bounds should remain at the 35-yard line (or 35 yards from the spot it was kicked). Teams also have the option of moving the kicking team back five yards and kicking again.

Rules 7-1-3, 7-1-4, 9-1-2, 9-3-3-a

Team A fouls added to administration of all kicks at the previous spot or succeeding spot.

Rationale: This change allows penalties to be assessed on the kicking team at the end of the run, if the receiving team chooses. This change is estimated to save about two minutes of elapsed time, depending on how many times this change occurs in a game.

Rule 9-3-5-b-3

Defensive players may not "be picked up by a teammate or **elevated, propelled or pushed.**"

Rationale: This change is intended to address blocks on extra points and field goals where linemen are pushed from behind by other players, creating a dangerous situation for the kicking team's blocking linemen. This type of blocking scheme is becoming more prevalent and the committee believes it creates a significant safety risk.

Rule 12-3-1

Egregious fouls added to reviewable instant replays:

- Five or three downs, which must be corrected within that series of downs.
- Tackle or interference from bench that goes undetected on the field.
- Kick caught or muffed.

Rationale: These changes allow video replay to correct errors otherwise not allowed by rule, but obvious and correctable.

Rule 12-6-2-b

Two minute limit placed on review to determine overturn or confirmation of on-field ruling.

Note: Additional time may be needed to determine time on the game clock, spot of the ball, etc.

Rationale: This limits the amount of time allowed for video review. Most reviews were under two minutes in 2006 (average review time was 1:49). This time limit does not include extra time when a reversal is made that requires correcting the time on the clock or spot on the field.

TYH/February 19, 2007

NCAA Football Rules Committee

2007 Editorial Rules Changes

1-2-1-h

Alter this rule to read: “Advertising is prohibited on the field...*Note: If a commercial entity has purchased naming rights to the facility, that name is allowed to be painted on the field; however, the commercial logo is not allowed to be in the field of play.*”

Rationale: This wording confirms several recent interpretations in response to the growing number of stadiums named for companies. NCAA legal counsel has confirmed the committee’s distinction between the placement of the name of the company in conjunction with the stadium name and the company’s commercial logo.

1-2-4-e

Add sentence to read: “In stadiums where the team area extends to the spectator seating area, a pass through area should be made available for media to move from one end of the field to the other on both sides of the field.”

Rationale: In some stadiums, the team area extends to the seating area. This alteration will allow media personnel to pass through to the opposite end of the stadium.

1-2-7

Amended to read: “The official line-to-gain and down indicators **may** be operated approximately six feet outside the sideline opposite the press box...”

Rationale: This allows management some flexibility with regard to how close to the field the chains must be.

1-3-2-a

Change to read “**Game officials**” shall test...

Rationale: Clarity.

1-3-2-d

Change wording from “I-AA” to “**Championship Subdivision.**”

Rationale: Change to reflect NCAA’s new designations for football subdivisions.

1-3-2-g

Change wording to ...nearer “**a**” sideline...

Rationale: Clarity.

1-4-4-b

Change to read “**A helmet with a facemask and a secured four or six point chin strap.**”

Rationale: Clarity.

1-4-5-p

Change to read: “**interior**” **offensive lineman**; in last sentence

Rationale: This makes it clear that the only offensive lineman allowed to have a towel as an attachment must be interior lineman.

1-4-9-a

Delete “are prohibited” in second sentence and add “**may not be used by coaches or** for coaching purposes...”

Rationale: Clears up an otherwise unenforceable rule.

1-4-9-c

Add “**computers**” to prohibited items.

Rationale: This change reflects what is already in practice.

2-25-11

“**The postscrimmage kick spot, as related to certain Team B fouls, is the spot where the kick ends. Team B retains the ball after penalty enforcement. Penalties for Team B fouls are enforced either from the postscrimmage kick spot or, if the foul is behind the postscrimmage kick spot, from the spot of the foul.**”

Rationale: Rewords this rule for clarity.

2-32-1-b

Rewrite to read: “An unsportsmanlike act toward an opponent that causes **any** opponent to retaliate by fighting ...”

Rationale: This makes it clear that this rule applies to all student-athletes and can apply to more than one opposing player.

3-2-5-a-2 and 3-3-2-a-19

Add: ...helmet comes “**completely**” off...

Rationale: There are some situations where a player will adjust the helmet after a play and this should not affect how the clock is started. This makes this point clear.

3-2-5-a-10

Add “**live**” ball in official’s possession.

Rationale: Clarity.

3-2-5-e

Rewrite to read: “When Team B is awarded a first down **and will next snap the ball, ..**”

Rationale: Clarity.

4-1-3-d

Add a reference to **8-3-2-d-5**.

Rationale: Clarity.

4-1-3-n

Add “ **a live**” ball is in possession ...

Rationale: Clarity.

5-2-3

Add **10-2-2-e-6** to the exceptions to this rule.

Rationale: Needed adjustment to allow for management of other exceptions.

6-3-10-c

Add is “**an illegal kick and a live ball foul ...**”

Rationale: Clarity.

7-3-2-f-1

After “lands,” add: “**or touches a player, an official, or anything beyond the neutral zone in or out of bounds.**”

Rationale: Provides more guidance to officials when administering intentional grounding rules.

Delete 7-3-2-f-2

The previous editorial change now covers both situations.

Rationale: Elimination of unneeded wording.

8-3-3-c-2

Replace wording to read: “**If Team A commits a foul for which the penalty includes loss of down, the try is over, any score is canceled, and no yardage penalty is assessed on the succeeding kickoff.**”

Rationale: Clarity.

8-5-2

Add “**and try**” to the exception after extra-period.

Rationale: Clarity.

9-3-4-e

Add “**other than the passer**” after “eligible receiver” in the penalty.

Rationale: Clarity.

9-4-1-c

Add reference to **Rule 2-2-3-a**.

Rationale: Clarity.

10-1-4

Rewrite Exception 4 to read: “**Rules 8-3-4-c and 3-1-3-g-3 (during a try or extra period after Team B possession).**”

Rationale: Clarity.

10-2-2-e-3

Remove “**enforcement**” and replace with The “**postscrimmage kick spot.**”

Rationale: Wording is more clear for this specific rule.

10-2-2-e-3-a

Alter wording to read: “**During scrimmage kick plays other than a try or a successful field goal, and during extra periods.**”

Rationale: Clarity.

10-2-2-g-4

Alter to read: **“Penalties for live ball fouls during field goal plays are administered by rule. To accept points on a successful field goal, Team A must decline penalties for Team B live-ball fouls. By accepting the penalty for a Team B live-ball foul, Team A elects to cancel the score and have the penalty enforced at the previous spot. Penalties for live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls and those for dead-ball fouls after a field goal down are enforced at the succeeding spot. (AR 10-2-2-XXIV)”**

Rationale: This new wording clearly shows what options the kicking team has after a successful field goal.

12-2

Change typeset to be consistent with other section headings.

Rationale: Typographical error.

12-2-g

Change “Exception” to “**Note.**”

Rationale: Correction.

12-3-2-b

Add “originally” in front of ineligible receiver.

Rationale: Clarity.

12-5-1-a

Add in the second sentence: “legally” put in play...

Rationale: Clarity.

12-5-1-b-3

Add “or for that extra period” at the end of the sentence.

Rationale: Consistency with other rules.

12-5-1-b-5

Add “or for that extra period” after that half of game at the end of the first sentence.

Rationale: Consistency with other rules.

12-5-1-b-6

Add “or for that extra period” at end of sentence.

Rationale: Consistency with other rules.

Interpretations

Add on FI-44 under **Approved Ruling 7-3-6:**

- XI. Airborne receiver A85 possesses the ball and in the process of going to the ground, first contacts the ground with his left foot as he falls to the ground inbounds. Immediately upon hitting the ground, the ball comes loose and touches the ground. Ruling: Incomplete pass. An airborne receiver must maintain control of the ball if going to the ground in the process of completing a catch.**
- XII. Airborne receiver A85 possesses the ball and in the process of coming to the ground, first contacts the ground with his left foot as he falls to the ground inbounds. Immediately upon hitting the ground, the ball comes loose but never touches the ground prior to him regaining control. Ruling: Catch. If the receiver is inbounds and is going to the ground and loses control, as long as the player remains inbounds and the ball never touches the ground, it is a completed pass.**
- XIII. Airborne receiver A85 possesses the ball and in the process of coming to the ground, first contacts the ground with his left foot inbounds as he falls to the ground out of bounds. Immediately upon hitting the ground out of bounds, the ball pops loose, and A85 catches it before it hits the ground. Ruling: Incomplete pass regardless of whether or not the ball hits the ground because the receiver is out of bounds when the ball is possessed.**
- XIV. Receiver A85 stretches out at the B2 and possesses the ball but is going to the ground on his own as he is attempting to complete the catch. As A85 falls to the ground in the end zone, the ball immediately comes loose and falls to the ground. Ruling: Incomplete pass. Any receiver going to the ground on his own in the process of making a catch must maintain control of the ball when he hits the ground.**
- XV. Receiver A85 is airborne in the end zone and possesses a pass but while airborne is hit by a defender which causes A85 to fall to the ground. Immediately upon hitting the ground, the ball comes loose. Ruling: Incomplete pass. An airborne receiver contacted prior to completing all the requirements of a catch must still maintain control of the ball after hitting the ground.**

Rationale: Most officials use these guidelines when determining whether or not a catch was made. Clarifying these items and including them in the rules book as interpretations will assist with the consistency of the application of the rules regarding whether or not a catch is made.