



COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

INTERPRETATION

BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST: DEFENSIVE PLAYERS

The following replaces Rule 9-1-6-Exception 2(c) on FR-85:

Players of the defensive team may block below the waist until the ball has gone more than five yards beyond the neutral zone.

However, they may not block below the waist against a Team A player in position to receive a backward pass. They also may not block below the waist against an eligible Team A receiver beyond the neutral zone unless attempting to get to the ball or the ball carrier.

RATIONALE This clarification results from concerns and questions raised by members of the NCAA football rules committee, head coaches, conference coordinator of officials, and active officials. This interpretation preserves the rule change that makes blocking below the waist illegal in the interest of the safety of the student-athlete while providing specific exceptions that are more nearly comparable for both the offense and the defense.

EXAMPLE 1 First and 10 at the A-40. A12 receives the snap at the A-35 and starts on a sweep to his right. Guard A66 pulls and leads the play. At the A-39 defensive end B88 blocks A66 from the front at the knees and cornerback B33 makes the tackle at the A-42.

RULING: The block by B88 is legal because the ball has not gone more than five yards beyond the neutral zone. Second and eight at the A-42.

EXAMPLE 2 First and 10 at the A-40. A12 receives the snap at the A-35 and starts on a sweep to his right. Guard A66 pulls and leads the play. At the snap linebacker B55 is positioned at the A-42. As the play develops A12 has carried the ball to the A-47 when B55 at the A-44 blocks A66 from the side at the thigh. A12 is driven out of bounds at the A-48.

RULING: Foul by B55, blocking below the waist after the ball is more than five yards beyond the neutral zone. Fifteen-yard penalty enforced at the end of the run. First and 10 for Team A at the B-37.

EXAMPLE 3 First and 20 at the A-40. QB A12 takes the direct snap from center and takes a shallow drop to the A-42. Back A22 is at the A-44 in position to receive a backward pass when he is blocked from the front at the knees by defensive end B99. A12 is sacked at the A-35.

RULING: Foul by B99, blocking below the waist against a player in position to receive a backward pass. Fifteen-yard penalty at the previous spot and automatic first down. First and 10 for Team A at the B-45.

EXAMPLE 4 First and 20 at the A-40. QB A12 takes the direct snap from center and drops back to pass. Flanker A25 runs a down-and-out pattern and is blocked from the front at the thigh by cornerback B17. A12 is sacked at the A-35.

RULING: Foul by B17, blocking below the waist against an eligible receiver beyond the neutral zone. Fifteen-yard penalty at the previous spot and automatic first down. First and 10 for Team A at the B-45.

EXAMPLE 5 First and 10 at the A-40. A12 receives the snap at the A-35 and starts on a sweep to his right. He turns the corner and heads up the field. End A88 is ahead of the play, and safety B33 blocks him below the waist from the front at the 50. The back judge throws a flag as he believes that A12 has carried the ball just beyond the A-45 when B33 makes his block, but he is not certain.

RULING: Foul by B33, blocking below the waist. Because the default position is that blocking below the waist is illegal, if there is a question in any given situation about it being a foul, it is a foul.

Rogers Redding
Secretary-Rules Editor
NCAA Football Rules Committee

June 22, 2011