



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA FOOTBALL RULES COMMITTEE
MARCH 1-3, 2017, ANNUAL MEETING**

KEY ITEMS.

- 1. Collaboration with Division I Football Competition Committee.** The committee met for the first time in conjunction with the newly formed Division I Football Competition Committee, taking the opportunity to look at the game broadly and review key topics. Representatives from the both committees also met with representatives from the National Football League's competition committee and staff, again providing valuable insight to the game overall and at the professional level. Everyone agreed that the schedule and overlap it provides is a positive model and asked staff to maintain this approach for the 2018 meetings.
- 2. Playing Rules and Health and Safety.** The committee discussed many topics relating to the way the game is played, coached and officiated. Members reviewed several areas of the rules that deal with health and safety and noted that the targeting rule had a positive impact on player behavior. The committee recommended that no changes in the targeting rule be made at this time.
- 3. Length of Game and Pace of Play.** The committee reviewed this topic in detail, noting several pieces of data and historical rules changes and the impact of television on this issue. The committee believes that overall game length in Division I continues to be an issue that could impact the health of the sport. The group did note that efforts should first be made to reduce or eliminate some administrative downtime, where possible, to positively impact this aspect of the sport before significant rules changes or other means to reduce game time are considered.

As such, the committee recommended the following points of emphasis: (1) For conference administrators and game officials to ensure that the halftime period last no longer than 20 minutes; (2) For game officials, where applicable, to use available on-field technology to directly communicate with replay officials, in lieu of moving to the sideline for this purpose; (3) For the national coordinator to stress tighter consistency in officiating mechanics under the current rules to keep the game moving; and (4) For the conference administrators and coordinators to work with the officials on the field to maintain the contracted time periods for television breaks.

ACTION ITEMS.

- 1. Legislative items.**
 - None.

National Collegiate Athletic Association

Supporting student-athlete success on the field, in the classroom and for life

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer

2. Nonlegislative Items. The NCAA Football Rules Committee approved the following rules change proposals for the 2017 season. The three recommended changes are proposed for health and safety reasons. Although 2017 is a non-rule change year for football, the rules committee requests permission to do so since student-athlete safety is one of the five reasons a rules committee may request a rule change during a non-rule change year. These proposals are currently out for membership comment and will move forward to the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) for review on April 19. The Division I Football Competition Committee has reviewed and endorsed these proposals and the points of emphasis listed in the informational items below.

a. Knee pads (Rule 1-4.4.d).

- (1) Recommendation. To add the bolded language to this rule: “Knee pads must be at least one-half-inch thick and must be covered by pants. **Further, the pants and knee pads must cover the knees.**”
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. Currently, the rules require a knee pad but only recommend that the pad be located on the knee. In recent seasons, the spirit and intent of this rule has not been followed in some cases. Padding the knee protects both the player wearing the pad and the opponent and is an important part of the required equipment in the sport. While there is no data indicating knee injuries have been impacted by this rule being only a recommendation, the committee is proposing this requirement to enhance protection.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. Enhances student-athlete safety.

b. Leaping and Hurdling (Rule 9-1.11.b).

- (1) Recommendation. To add the bolded language to this rule: “No defensive player who runs forward from beyond the neutral zone **may leap or hurdle** in an obvious attempt to block a field goal or try.”
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. This type of action, similar to a few years ago, in punting situations has become a trend. The current leaping rules do not technically prohibit this technique unless the player lands on an opponent; this change makes it clear that this type of action is prohibited. This change is being made to enhance the safety of the student-athlete.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Enhances student-athlete safety.

c. Horse Collar Tackle (Rule 9-1.15).

(1) Recommendation. To add the bolded language to this rule: “All players are prohibited from grabbing the inside back collar of the shoulder pads or jersey, **the nameplate area**, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and immediately pulling the ball carrier down.”

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. The clarification expands an important safety rule that prohibits this style of tackling. Grabbing and immediately pulling down a ball carrier from the nameplate area has the same impact as a tackle that uses the inside of the collar and therefore should be prohibited.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Enhances student-athlete safety.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. Welcome and Introductions. The chair welcomed the committee and invited guests and noted appreciation on behalf of the NCAA for volunteering to serve. Committee members introduced themselves and provided a brief overview of their background.

2. Review Committee Structure, Process and Timeline. The meeting schedule and agenda were reviewed. The committee reviewed the Committee Operations Manual, which included the NCAA conflict of interest policy, as well as guidance for committee members regarding meeting reports, notes and email, voting procedures, principles for rules writing, and experimental playing rules guidelines.

3. Discussion of Significant Topics. The committee reviewed a lengthy list of rules and officiating topics, including game trends and key data reports. Several noteworthy topics are listed here:

a. Rules items. The committee noted some concern with low blocks and the difficulties with coaching and officiating to the current rule. Members discussed the trend of hurdling/leaping the line of scrimmage during a field goal or extra point attempt and

recommended that this type of action be removed from the game for health and safety reasons.

- b. Equipment.** The committee noted the need for some additional research with regard to helmets and the number on the jersey (mainly with different uniform combinations). The group believes it is important for players to be properly equipped and to wear the equipment as intended for protection of both the player and the opponent.
 - c. Jerseys.** Committee members suggested that conference offices should review all uniforms well in advance of production to ensure compliance with the rules book and clear visibility of the number from a long distance (e.g., press box) and in a variety of weather and lighting conditions.
 - d. Special Causes.** The committee discussed the potential of having some time period (e.g., one month) to allow an annual, one-game event to benefit a cause or community philanthropic organization, which could include a relaxing of some jersey and uniform attachment rules to raise awareness/funds.
 - e. Field Specifications.** The group noted that there are some standards for field use and care in place and encouraged institutions to use some best practices in this area, including periodic testing. Staff will communicate with the NFL on their research on this topic.
 - f. Neutral-site Games.** The group reviewed neutral-site events and noted an area where the bylaw and playing rules may be in conflict. The bylaw allows a title sponsorship to be worn in some sports, with a reference to bowl games, but the playing rules seem to prohibit such a designation and make an exception only for bowl games. The committee will revisit this matter in the future to attempt to clarify any differences between regular-season and neutral-site games.
 - g. Kickoffs.** The committee discussed the Ivy League's experimental rule and is interested in additional data being collected next season. The group also discussed reviewing these plays in a more detailed way and considering different approaches to kickoffs in general.
 - h. Technology.** The committee discussed the impact of technology on coaching and officiating. Members supported advances with regard to health and safety and noted that the rules allow for the use of devices that support and enhance player safety. The group believes items that impact coaching during the game, at this point, do not seem to be necessary in collegiate football. The group also noted the continuing difficulty the National Football League has had with coordinating and managing technology.
- 4. Instant Replay.** The committee noted efficiencies gained from the collaborative approach used this season and supported continuing it with the rules committee. Additionally, the

committee urged the officiating coordinators to find ways to shorten the time for review stoppages, when possible, without impacting the accuracy of the decision.

5. Points of Emphasis. The Football Rules Committee and Division I Football Competition Committee endorsed the following points of emphasis for the 2017 season:

a. Game Length. The committees are encouraging tighter enforcement on the administrative/dead time in the sport. The committees endorsed the following items in this area:

- (1) To encourage conference administrators and game officials to enforce the current policy and limit the halftime period to no more than 20 minutes;
- (2) For game officials, where applicable, to use available on-field technology to directly communicate with replay officials, in lieu of moving to the sideline for this purpose;
- (3) For the national coordinator to stress tighter consistency in officiating mechanics under the current rules to keep the game moving; and,
- (4) For the conference administrators and coordinators to work with the on-field officials to maintain the contracted time periods for television breaks.

b. Sideline Control and Coaching Behavior. The committee endorsed a document from the national coordinator and the Division I coordinators of officials to better enforce the sideline areas and penalize coaches who enter the field of play to protest officiating decisions. In recent years, a small number of coaches have been allowed to have a negative impact on the image of the sport. The rules in the book are clear; enforcement is the point of emphasis.

c. Targeting. The committee thoroughly reviewed this rule and considered some suggested adjustments. Ultimately, the committee believes this rule continues to change player behavior and any adjustment that could be seen as lessening the impact would not be appropriate at this time. The committee decided to keep this rule the same and continue to work on correct enforcement of the rule.

6. Review of Rules Survey. The committee was pleased with the response on the rules survey at all levels, but particularly with Division I (86% of FBS head coaches, 64% of FCS head coaches, 100% of FBS commissioners and 85% of FCS commissioners responded). The committee plans to survey the membership around the spring conference meeting opportunities regarding two important rules topics: Blocking below the waist and ineligible receivers downfield. The committee has directed staff to create a survey and to prepare information,

including video clips, that each conference can review during spring meetings with coaches and administrators.

- 7. Reports from Invited Guests.** The committee received reports from Bob Colgate, National Federation of State High School Associations; Susan Elza, University Interscholastic League (Texas); David Polanski, National Athletic Trainers Association; and Bret Bielema, American Football Coaches Association.
- 8. Meeting with Television Partners.** Ed Placey (ESPN) and Craig Silver (CBS) joined the committee and discussed the presentation of the sport and potential ways to improve and enhance the in-stadium experience as well as broadcasts.
- 9. Review of Injury Data.** The committee received a report from Erin Wasserman, Datalys Center, and John Parsons from the NCAA regarding the injury data collected in the most recent cycle. The committee pledged support to help Datalys with encouraging more institutions to participate in the data collection moving forward.
- 10. College Football Officiating, LLC Report.** Jon Steinbrecher provided a report from the College Football Officiating, LLC, which manages Division I football officiating and noted several key areas, including the continued emphasis on player safety and technology to advance the game in officiating. In particular, the CFO is monitoring the use of collaborative replay as a means to assist on-field officials to the proper and correct decisions.
- 11. Selection of New Chair.** The committee nominated Larry Fedora, North Carolina, to replace outgoing chair Bob Nielson. The group thanked Mr. Nielson for his excellent leadership and service to the committee and the sport.
- 12. Secretary-Rules Editor.** The group also noted that this would be the last meeting of service for Rogers Redding as the committee's secretary-rules editor. Mr. Redding will remain involved as the national coordinator of officials for the CFO, and that Steve Shaw, Southeastern Conference, will replace him as secretary-rules editor on September 1. The group thanked Mr. Redding for his dedicated service and leadership.
- 13. Future Meeting Schedule.** The committee agreed that the overlap with the National Football League combine provided several opportunities for engagement that otherwise did not exist. Additionally, meeting with the Division I Football Competition Committee was a positive, and the group agreed this should continue if possible.
- 14. Adjournment.** The committee adjourned at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, March 3.

Committee Chair: Bob Nielson University of South Dakota, Missouri Valley Football Conference

Staff Liaison(s): Ty Halpin, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Football Rules Committee March 1-3, 2017, Meeting
Attendees:
Mark Alnutt, University of Memphis; American Athletic Conference.
Monte Cater, Shepherd University; Mountain East Conference.
John Chandler, Coe College; Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.
Dave Eavenson, Methodist University; USA South Athletic Conference.
Keith Emery, Western New England University; Commonwealth Coast Conference.
Larry Fedora, University of North Carolina; Atlantic Coast Conference. (Via telephone.)
Joey Jones, University of South Alabama; Sun Belt Conference. (Via telephone.)
Bob Nielson, South Dakota State University; Missouri Valley Football Conference.
Rogers Redding, secretary-rules editor.
Peter Rossomando, Central Connecticut State University; Northeast Conference.
David Sharp, Ouachita Baptist; Great American Conference.
Ed Stewart, Big 12 Conference.
Paul Winters, Wayne State University; Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.
Absentees:
None.
Guests in Attendance:
Ray Anderson, Arizona State University; Pacific-12 Conference.
Bret Bielema, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; Southeastern Conference. (American Football Coaches Association.)
Bob Colgate, National Federation of State High School Associations.
Susan Elza, University Interscholastic League. (Texas.)
Ed Placey, ESPN.
Michael Mothershed, active official; Pacific-12 Conference.
David Polanski, Tulsa University; American Athletic Conference. (National Athletic Trainers Association.)
Steve Shaw, Southeastern Conference. (Secretary-rules editor-elect.)
Craig Silver, CBS.
Jon Steinbrecher, Mid-American Conference.
Erin Wasserman, Datalys Center.
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:
Ty Halpin.
Other NCAA Staff in Attendance:
Dan Calandro, Greg Johnson, Matt Maginnis, Keith Martin, John Parsons and Ron Prettyman.