

**Section 1**

## **RULE 5 SERIES OF DOWNS AND ZONE-TO-GAIN**

### **Section 1. A Series – How Started – How Broken –Renewed**

#### **A Down is a Unit**

ARTICLE 1. A down is a unit of the game which starts with a snap or free kick, and ends when the ball next becomes dead. Between downs is any period when the ball is dead.

#### **Series of Downs**

ARTICLE 2. A team, in possession of the ball, shall have four consecutive downs to advance to the next zone by scrimmage. Any down may be repeated if provided for by the rules.

#### **Zone Line To Gain**

ARTICLE 3. The line to gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the line to gain. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.

#### **Measurement of Distance**

ARTICLES 4. The most forward point of the ball when declared dead between the goal lines shall be the determining point in establishing distance gained or lost by either team in a down. If the ball is in player possession, and declared dead as a result of a tackle (flag pull), the ball shall be spotted where the flag was pulled and that shall be the determining point in establishing distance.

#### **Awarding A New Series**

ARTICLE 5. A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the opponents move the ball into the next zone; or their opponents or they have obtained legal possession of a ball as a result of a penalty, free kick, kick from scrimmage, touchback, pass interference or failure to gain the zone in advance of the ball.

Section 2

**Section 2. Down and Possession After a Penalty**

**Foul During Free Kick**

ARTICLE 1. When a scrimmage follows the penalty for a foul committed during a free kick, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with next zone to gain.

**Penalty Resulting in First Down**

ARTICLE 2. After a penalty which leaves the ball in possession of Team A beyond its line-to-gain, or when a penalty stipulates a first down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with next zone to gain.

**Foul Before Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 3. After a distance penalty between the goal lines incurred during a down and before any change of team possession during that down, the ball belongs to Team A and the down shall be repeated unless the penalty also involves loss of a down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the zone line-to-gain. If the penalty involves loss of a down, the down shall count as one of the four in that series.

**Foul After Change of Team Possession**

ARTICLE 4. After a distance penalty for a foul committed during a down and after team possession has changed during that down, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred and the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with zone to gain.

**Penalty Declined**

ARTICLE 5. If a penalty is declined the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

**Foul Between Downs**

ARTICLE 6. After a distance penalty incurred between downs, the number of the next down shall be the same as that established before the foul occurred unless enforcement for a foul by Team B leaves the ball on or beyond the zone line-to-gain.

**Section 2****Foul Between Series**

ARTICLE 7. A scrimmage following a penalty incurred after a series end and before the next series begins shall be first down but the zone line-to-gain shall be established before the penalty is enforced.

**Fouls by Both Teams**

ARTICLE 8. If offsetting fouls occur during a down, or while the ball is ready-for-play for such down, that down shall be repeated. If each offsetting foul occurs between successive downs, the next down shall be the same as it would have been had no fouls occurred. Exception: If there is a change of team possession during a down or at the end of a down, the team last gaining possession may decline offsetting fouls and retain possession after completion of the penalty for its infraction providing that team had not fouled prior to possession. If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul was not prior to the final change of possession and it declined the penalty for its opponents foul.