

# **RULE 7**

## **THE SCRIMMAGE, SNAPPING, HANDING, AND PASSING THE BALL**

### **Section 1. The Scrimmage**

#### **The Start**

ARTICLE 1. All plays from scrimmage must be started by a legal snap from a point between the inbounds lines, unless the rules provide for a free kick.

#### **Scrimmage**

ARTICLE 2. Any infraction of the following is a foul:

- a. Before the ball is snapped:
  1. The Snapper, after assuming the position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of a play until it is snapped. An infraction of this provision may be penalized whether or not the ball is snapped and the penalty for any resultant encroachment or contact foul by an opponent shall be cancelled.
  2. All offensive players must be within fifteen yards of the ball when it is declared ready-for-play.
  3. After the ball is ready-for-play and until it is snapped, no player on defense may touch the ball, nor may any player contact opponents or in any other way interfere with them. This includes standing in the zone to give defensive signals, or shifting through the zone.
  4. No player of the offensive team shall make a false start. A false start includes feigning a charge, or a play. An infraction of this rule may be penalized whether or not the ball is snapped and the penalty for any resultant encroachment or contact foul by an opponent may be cancelled.
  5. In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all players of the offense must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position without movement of feet, body, head, or arms, for at least one full second before the ball is snapped.
  6. Snap must go between snappers legs, and he must face down field.
- b. When the ball is snapped:
  1. At least four players on the offensive line must be on their scrimmage line. The remaining players must be either on their scrimmage line or behind their backfield line, except as follows:

**Section 2**

One player may be between the scrimmage line and the backfield line if placed in a position to receive a hand-to-hand snap from between the Snapper's legs. When in such position, that player may receive the snap himself or it may go directly to any back.

2. All players must be inbounds and only the Snapper may be encroaching on the neutral zone, but no part of their persons may be beyond the neutral zone and their feet must be stationary behind the ball.
3. One offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line. If such player starts from the scrimmage line player must be at least five yards behind that line when the ball is snapped. Other offensive players must be stationary in their positions without movement of the feet, body, head or arms.
4. No offensive player, while on the scrimmage line, may receive a snap. *Penalty: For all above — five yards and ball remains dead.*

**Section 2. Handing the Ball****Handing Forward**

ARTICLE 1. No player may hand the ball forward except as follows: A Team A player who is behind the scrimmage line may hand the ball forward to a backfield teammate who is also behind that line; or to a teammate who was on the scrimmage line when the ball was snapped, provided that teammate left the line position, faced his own end line and was at least one yard behind the scrimmage line when player received the ball. *Penalty: 5 yards from spot of foul; also, loss of down if by Team A before team possession changes during a scrimmage down.*

**Handing Backward**

ARTICLE 2. A ball carrier may hand the ball backward at anytime.

**Section 3. Backward Pass and Fumble****At Anytime**

ARTICLE 1. A Ball Carrier may pass the ball backward or lose player possession by a fumble at anytime except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds to avoid loss of yardage.

**Caught or Intercepted**

ARTICLE 2. A backward pass or fumble may be caught in flight inbounds by any player and advanced.

## Section 4

**Out-of-Bounds**

ARTICLE 3. A backward pass or fumble which goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines belongs to the team last in possession at the out-of-bounds spot behind a goal line it is a touchback or safety.

**Dead When Ball Hits Grounds**

ARTICLE 4. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the team last in possession unless lost on downs. In the event a ball is fumbled forward in advance of the line of scrimmage, it shall be ruled dead at the point it leaves the players hand.

**Section 4. Forward Pass****Legal Forward Pass**

ARTICLE 1. All players are eligible to receive a forward pass. During a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a forward pass may be thrown provided the ball, when it leaves the passer's hand, is on A's side of the defensive team's line of scrimmage. Team A may make as many forward passes as desired from in or behind the neutral zone.

**Illegal Forward Pass**

ARTICLE 2. A forward pass is illegal:

- a. If the passer is beyond the neutral zone when the ball leaves the hand.
- b. If thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
- c. If intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds.

*Penalty: 5 yards from spot of foul; also loss of down if by Team A before change of team possession during a down.*

**Eligible Receivers**

ARTICLE 3. All players of both teams are eligible to touch or catch a pass.

**Eligibility Lost By Going Out-of-Bounds**

ARTICLE 4. An offensive player who voluntarily goes out-of-bounds during a passing down loses eligibility until the ball has been touched by an opponent.

*Penalty: Loss of down at previous spot.*

**Section 4****Completed Pass**

ARTICLE 5. A forward pass is completed when caught by any player of the passing team who is inbounds and the ball continues in play. If the pass is caught in-bounds simultaneously by opponents, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing team at spot of simultaneous catch. Receiver must have both feet in bounds.

**Incomplete Pass**

ARTICLE 6. A forward pass is incomplete when the ball touches the ground or goes out-of-bounds. It is also incomplete when a player jumps from inbounds and catches the pass but lands on or outside a boundary line. An incomplete legal forward pass belongs to the passing team at the previous spot unless lost on down. An incomplete illegal forward pass belongs to the passing team at the spot of the pass unless lost on down. Fourth down incomplete pass into end zone, inside 20 yard line, ball goes back to previous spot.

**Contact Interference**

ARTICLE 7. Contact by a player which interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the neutral zone during a legal forward pass is pass interference unless it occurs:

- a. When two or more players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat the pass.
- b. When, immediately following the snap, opposing players charge into the contact opponents within one yard beyond the neutral zone.
- c. When a Team B player contacts an opponent before the pass is thrown.
- d. Interference beyond the line of scrimmage is prohibited by Team A from the time the ball is snapped until the pass is touched by any player. Interference by Team B is prohibited from the time the pass is thrown until it is touched by any player. The restriction does not apply if the pass does not cross the line of scrimmage.
- e. Face guarding by A or B shall be pass interference. See page 48, no. 22.  
*Penalty: For pass interference: 10 yards, if by A and down counts. If by B, first down for A at spot of foul, if by B in end zone first down for A at one yard line.*

ARTICLE 8. If a Ball Carrier inadvertently loses a Flag, play shall be stopped at the spot where the flag is dropped. If any player loses a Flag, he still is eligible to catch a forward pass, but may not advance the ball, and the play is dead where ball is caught.