

2018 Pre-Season Bulletin 4

This Bulletin will answer questions and concerns that have arisen from Sub-Varsity Rules Modification situations and also summarize the options for free and scrimmage kicks.

Free Kick Option

Coaches **will** inform the Referee in the Pre-Game meeting if they choose to kick the ball or start on the 35-yard line. The coach's pre-game decision is final and not subject to change during the duration of the contest. If the coaches cannot agree, regular NFHS Rules will apply.

Exceptions: In the 4th quarter only, if the scoring team (touchdown or field goal) is still behind in the score, they may choose to have the ball placed 4th and 10 at their own 40-yard line. If successful in reaching a first down, possession continues until a first down is not made whereupon possession is turned over to the opposing team.

If teams have **agreed** to use kickoffs, in the 4th quarter only, the scoring team has the option to kick the ball to their opponent **OR** allow their opponent to start from their own 35-yard line. Again, coaches must make this choice prior to the coin toss.

4th Down Play Options

Because teams can choose a different option on each and every 4th down, Team A shall **promptly** notify the Referee and their opponent of their intention to choose one of the three 4th down options listed below. Remember, the game clock may be running after the previous play, the 25-second clock will be running and failure to make a prompt decision may result in a flag for delay of game. The choices are...

- 4th Down will be a "Normal Football Play!" – Regular NFHS Football Rules.
- 4th Down will be a "35-Yard Advancement Option" - Team B is awarded the ball 35 yards in advance of the spot. NOTE: If Team A chooses this option when the spot is anywhere between the B 35-yard line and the B goal line, the ball shall be placed on the B 5-yard line.
- 4th Down will be a "Modified Punt Play" - The snapper shall legally snap the ball to a player in position to receive a long snap who is positioned 10 or more yards behind the LOS. The receiver of the long snap shall **promptly** kick the ball; any unusual delay in punting the ball will result in a foul for delay of game with the down repeated after a 5-yard penalty and the game clock adjusted per Rule 3-4-6 to reflect any intentional consumption of time.

The ball is ruled dead and B takes over on offense at that point when:

- The snapped ball touches the ground anywhere behind the LOS for any reason.
- The kicked ball touches the ground anywhere on the field of play.
- The kicked ball touches any player anywhere on the field of play.
- The kicked ball goes out-of-bounds anywhere.
- The kicked ball results in a touchback (R 1/10 @ B 20-yard line)

Question 1: If the punt option is chosen and no rush is in effect, if the receiver **muffs** the punt (they cannot return it under the option) is it live and can the kicking team recover?

Answer 1: The ball will be declared dead when it touches a Team R player or the ground. The kicking team has opted to turn the ball over to their opponent; they don't get the opportunity to recover a muffed punt and retain possession.

Question 2: What prevents the team that's ahead from selecting the punt option (no rush, no return) with 26-30 seconds remaining in the half/game and snapping the ball over the punter's head and fumbling around for the ball while letting the game clock run out?

Answer 2: If a team purposely snaps the ball over the punter's head to intentionally consume time, officials will blow the whistle and shut the play down when the ball touches the ground. Team R's ball at the dead ball spot. Again, Team K has opted to turn the ball over to their opponent and they should not be allowed to gain an unfair advantage by intentionally consuming time. The Referee may consider invoking Rule 3-4-6 and adding time to the game clock.

Question 3: What's the penalty for rushing the punter? Is rushing the punter ever permitted at the sub-varsity level?

Answer 3: No penalty as this won't happen. Officials will remind the defense prior to the snap not to rush the punter. Rushing the kicker is permissible if the offense uses a place kick as a punt, i.e. with a holder and place kicker. That's considered a field goal (scoring kick) attempt and not a punt, even though there's no intent to score a field goal with the result of the play the same as a punt. The ball remains live when it touches the ground or a Team R player.

Question 4: if the "no punt" option is selected from on or inside the 35-yard line, where is the succeeding spot for spotting the ball? Are there options for a touchback or placing the ball half-the-distance from the previous spot?

Answer 4: If the previous spot is outside the Team B 35-yard line, the ball will be placed 35 yards in advance of the previous spot. If the previous spot is on or inside the Team B 35-yard line, the ball will be placed at the Team B 5-yard line. With the "no-punt" option, there are no possible opportunities for a touchback or placing the ball half-the-distance from the previous spot. **The goal is to create a result as close to the ball being punted without actually kicking the ball.**