



# The Running Game and Forward Progress

# The Running Game

## The Runner

- The runner is a player who is in possession, or is simulating possession, of a live ball.
- Tackling is the primary method available to stop the runner.
- Tackling is not, however a license for the defense to do whatever they want to the runner.

# The Running Game

## The Runner

- A horse collar tackle that begins while the ball is live is always enforced a live-ball foul.
- The runner may ward off would be tacklers, but he cannot kick them or otherwise deliver a blow. The runner may stiff arm and use a hand on an opponents helmet or face mask, but just like any other player, he cannot grasp or pull the tackler's face mask.

# The Running Game

## The Runner

- If the player in possession of the ball completely loses his helmet, the ball is immediately dead.
- A runner is out of bounds when any part of his person or the ball touches anything, other than another player or official, who is on or outside a sideline or end line.
- The runner cannot be assisted by a teammate who pushes, pulls or lifts him to assist his forward progress.
- A runner may not grasp a teammate.

# The Running Game

## Handoffs

- It is legal for any player to hand the ball backward at any time. “Handing the ball” involves simultaneous touching by two players during the transfer of possession..
- Handing the ball forward is not allowed when either player is beyond the neutral zone or after a change of possession.

# The Running Game

## Handoffs

- Handing the ball forward is allowed when both players are behind the line of scrimmage.
- When handing the ball forward to an interior lineman, or to an end who is the snapper or adjacent to the snapper, that player must turn his body (feet included), face his own end line, and be at least one yard behind his line of scrimmage when he receives the ball.
- A team A lineman may not advance a planned loose ball in the vicinity of the snapper. It is a live ball foul and a the penalty is five yards.

# The Running Game

The running game consumes a significant portion of any football game. It includes the unusual runs from scrimmage as well as kick and interception returns and runs following a completed pass. Handoffs and fumbles are also part of the running game.

# The Running Game

## The Running Game in Depth

The runner may lower his head when contacted to gain yardage, but he cannot use his head to butt, ram or punish an opponent. The illegal helmet contact rules apply equally to all players (2-20-1, 9.4.3D).



# Forward Progress

## Forward Progress

- Forward progress is the end of advance of a runner towards the opponent's goal.
- Barring an inadvertent whistle or runner's helmet coming off, the runner's advance can end four ways.
  - He is downed by rule;
  - His forward progress is stopped;
  - He steps out of bounds; or
  - He loses possession of the ball.

# Forward Progress

- A runner is down by rule when any part of his body other than a hand or foot touches the ground and his forward progress is marked at the ball's foremost point when that occurs and is considered the dead-ball spot.

# Fumble Out of Bounds

- When a fumble goes out of bounds between the goal lines, it belongs to the fumbling team.
- Even though the fumbling team may gain an advantage if it fumbles out of bounds, the governing philosophy is simplicity of the rules.
- A fumble is no different than a backward pass.
- When the ball is fumbled and goes out of bounds, the clock will start on the snap (3-4-3a).

A fumble that goes out of bounds in the end zone merits particular attention.

# Fumble Out of Bounds in the End Zone

When the offensive team fumbles and the ball goes out of bounds from an end zone, the ball belongs to the team defending that goal line and it is a touchback or safety depending on which team provided the force (7-4-4).

# Fumble Out of Bounds in the End Zone

When the offensive team fumbles in the field of play and forces the ball into and out of bounds from the opponent's end zone, it is a touchback (8-5-3c). The ball belongs to the defensive team at their 20 yard line.

# Fumble Out of Bounds in the End Zone

When the offensive team fumbles in the field of play and forces the ball into and out of bounds from their own endzone, it is a safety

# Momentum Exception

This rule (8-5-2a exc) allows for the possibility a defender might intercept or recover a fumble inside his 5-yard line and his momentum carries him into his own endzone.

Without this special rule, such a play would result in a safety, since the player responsible for carrying ball into his own endzone,



# Inbound Plays

Although running plays are easier to deal with than passing plays, difficulties arise if you don't have a consistent methodology for determining the forward progress spot.

# Inbound Plays

- When the runner gets “lost” in a cluster of linemen in the middle of the field, it can be difficult to determine the exact forward progress spot.
- When the runner’s voluntary movement is stopped, the whistle should be blown.
- Remember on some occasions, defenders will relax when they hear the whistle while the runner fights on, giving the appearance of a premature whistle.

# Inbound Plays

When the quarterback is sacked, there is often a substantial difference between the spot where the quarterback is contacted and where he goes to the ground.

# Sideline Plays

- If the runner steps out of bounds, the forward progress spot is the foremost point of the ball when the runner touches the ground out of bounds.
- That applies regardless of whether the ball is held inside or outside the sideline.
- For tackles near the sideline, determining the forward progress spot can be challenging.

# Inbound Plays

- If the runner's forward progress is stopped in the field of play, even if he is subsequently thrown out of bounds, the clock is not stopped.
- If he went out of bounds before his forward progress is stopped, the clock is stopped.

# Inbound Plays

- Another difficult spot to determine is when the runner is airborne as he crosses the sideline.
- Forward progress is where the forward most part of the ball crosses the plane of the sideline, not where the ball is when the runner first touched out of bounds.

Questions????????????