

## CIF State Rules Interpreter

### Clarifications –

August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

- A legal scrimmage formation requires a snapper on the LOS and a player set 2 yards off the LOS to receive the snap.
  - These are the ONLY formation requirements.
  - The CIF interpretation of “2 yards” in this ruling is the feet of the person receiving the snap.
  - Officials will not “be using a measuring stick” to guarantee 2 yards.
  - **This rule intends to prevent crowding the snapper with multiple players in an attempt to deceive as to who will receive the snap, not to stop players from taking “snaps under center.”**

In addition, any deceptive snap. If a player steps up, behind the center, and within 2 yards of the LOS, that player must receive the snap.

Teams may not use this interpretation of the rule to deceive their opponent. For example, if a player steps in behind the Center (within 2 yards of the LOS), the center may not snap the ball to the side to another player. This is a Snap Infraction on the offense.

Any snap made with the “intent to deceive” the player(s) receiving the snap is required to be 2 yards behind the LOS, and any other player in a position to receive the snap must also be two yards behind the LOS.

- The ball used in each contest will meet the requirements outlined in rule 1.3.1

The ball used for CIF Contests must be tan/brown, the proper size, and properly inflated to meet NFHS requirements. It DOES NOT have to have the “white stripes” at each end of the laces to meet CIF standards.

- K may not continue to take “delay of game penalties” under rule 3.6.2b to delay the game or run out the clock. This is UNFAIR ACTS rule 9.9. The Referee will always return the game clock to the time it was when the first punt was declared, and the clock will start when the receiving team first touches the ball.
- 9.2.3c says – Use hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle, or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent other than the runner.
  - The CIF Interpretation is that this should NOT say “other than the runner”. The defense may not hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle, or hold in an effort to restrain the ball carrier, either. It will be a **HOLDING** foul if the defense restricts the progress of the ball carrier by any means other than removing a flag from the belt.
- 9.3.2 allows that the screen blocker may maintain a legal position by moving in the same direction as the opponent or block the path of the opponent by holding their “right of place” (be still, with time and space for the opponent to change directions). When it comes to blocking on punts or blocking downfield for a ball carrier, pay close attention to “moving in the same direction” when it comes to maintaining a legal screen blocking position. If the blocker is moving with the ball carrier,

they are likely moving in a different direction from the opponent. Should there be contact, this can be a blocking foul.

- There is no foul in the NFHS rule book for illegally or intentionally de-flagging a player other than the ball carrier. Should a ball carrier be missing a flag, they are downed by a touch between the shoulders and knees.
  - Should a team “intentionally” de-flag a player or players repeatedly during a game, and in the judgment of the officials, they are doing so to gain an advantage, officials will use 9.9 “unfair acts”
- We occasionally notice that defenders pull the flag of a player who is “about to” gain possession of the ball. For example, a receiver is catching a pass, but has not yet “gained possession,” and the defender de-flags the player. In CIF, the interpretation will be that players are down as soon as they gain possession of the ball in this scenario.

Another possibility is a fake handoff, where the defense de-flag a player other than the ball carrier. This is not a penalty, and the flag of the ball carrier must be pulled to end the down. If a player muffing a handoff has their flag pulled, they are considered down at the spot where the ball was when the flag was pulled. We do not wait for them to gain possession of a muff.

- A player who is attempting to secure possession of a pass or a handoff, and possession is **IMMINENT**, is ASSUMED TO have possession and may be de-flagged and downed at that spot.
- The player may not be de-flagged before attempting to secure possession of a pass or a handoff.

- Uniform requirements
  - If a uniform top or bottom is impeding the defender's ability to grasp a flag, **a flag-guarding penalty will be enforced.**
  - It is recommended that players wear properly fitted tops and bottoms to prevent what is described above.
  - **It is recommended that players wear "compression shorts", leggings, or other types of covering undergarments underneath their uniform. We often see uniform bottoms being pulled "off" when players are being de-flagged.**

We continue to field calls and emails about this and want to do everything we can to protect the players.

- Coaches need to understand that they must "declare" punt prior to the ball being put into play by the Referee. They will have 3-4 seconds to make this decision. Should they delay, the ball will be put into play without a punt being declared. See 6.1.1 for rules as to when a coach may change their declaration to punt.
- The mercy rule will be running clock in the 4<sup>th</sup> when the point spread is 21 or greater. This is the same as last year. There may have been some miscommunication about the number being 28 points. It is, in fact, 21 points in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

Further communication – The CIF State Rules Interpreter will continue to update throughout the season. It is the responsibility of the CIF Sections and the Officiating Units to communicate these updates.