

Fumbles & Backward Passes

Pre-Game:

A. Fumbles

1. Bean bags – spot where you SEE ball come loose*(end of run or fumble behind line of scrimmage)
2. Fourth down / try - signal
3. Special rules
 - a. Fumble forward out of bounds – spot of fumble / start clock
 - b. Fumble backward out of bounds – spot out of bounds / snap
 - c. Fumble in field of play – ball out of bounds behind goal line- touch back (Team B at 20) or Safety
Who put the ball in the end zone?
 - d. Momentum rule inside 5 yard line – recovery / interception

B. Backward Pass

1. Quick pass - R primary call (wings help)
 - a. Whistle and signal if forward and incomplete
 - b. Stay off whistle if backward pass
 - c. Signal if backward
2. Who can advance
 - a. Recovered by defense - Live ball
 - b. Caught by defense - Live ball
 - c. Offense may advance always
3. Backward pass beyond line of scrimmage
Bean bags – spot where backward pass made (end of run)
*No bean bag if backward pass behind line of scrimmage
4. Muffed backward pass out of bounds – out of bounds spot is succeeding spot / snap

*“Spot Marker” (Bean Bags) – used to mark spots for penalty enforcement.
Fumble or backward pass beyond LOS = “end of related run” for enforcement purposes.

Fumbles & Backward Passes

Expanded

Rule 2

Fumble

ARTICLE 1. A fumble is any act other than passing, kicking or successful handing that results in loss of player possession (A.R. 2-19-2-I, A.R. 4-1-3-I and A.R. 7-2-2-I).

Muff

ARTICLE 2. A muff is an unsuccessful attempt to catch (pass) or recover (fumble) a ball that is touched in the attempt.

SECTION 12. Handing the Ball

ARTICLE 1. a. Handing the ball is transferring player possession from one teammate to another without throwing, fumbling or kicking it.

- d. Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble by the last player in possession [Exception: The snap (Rule 2-23-1-c)].

SECTION 19. Passes

Passing

Forward and Backward Pass

ARTICLE 2.

- c. When in question, the ball is passed and not fumbled during an attempted forward pass.
- d. A snap becomes a backward pass when the snapper releases the ball

SECTION 23. Snapping the Ball

ARTICLE 1.

- c. If, during any backward motion of a legal snap, the ball slips from the snapper's hand, it becomes a backward pass and is in play (Rule 4-1-1).

Running Play

ARTICLE 4.

- c. If a ball carrier loses possession by a fumble, backward pass or illegal forward pass, the running play includes the spot where the run ends and the loose-ball interval before possession is regained or the ball is declared dead (A.R. 2-30-4-I and II).
- d. A new running play begins when a player gains or regains possession.

Rule 3

Starting and Stopping the Clock

ARTICLE 2.

- d. ***Starts on the Snap.*** For each of the following, the game clock is stopped. If the next play begins with a snap, the game clock will start on the snap:
 - 2. Team A ball carrier, fumble backward or backward pass is ruled out of bounds. (Exception: After a Team A forward fumble, the clock starts on the referee's signal.)
- e. ***Starts on the Referee's Signal.*** For each of the following reasons, the game clock is stopped. If the next play begins with a snap, the game clock will start on the referee's signal:
 - 2. A Team A forward fumble goes out of bounds.

Rule 7

SECTION 2. Backward Pass and Fumble

During Live Ball

ARTICLE 1. A ball carrier may hand or pass the ball backward at any time, except to throw the ball intentionally out of bounds to conserve time.

PENALTY—Five yards from the spot of the foul; also loss of down if by Team A before team possession changes during a scrimmage down (A.R. 3-4-3-III) [S35 and S9].

Caught or Recovered

ARTICLE 2. a. When a backward pass or fumble is caught or recovered by any inbounds player, the ball continues in play (A.R. 7-2-2-I and II, A.R. 2-23-1-I).

1. Rule 8-3-2-d-5 (Team A fumble on the try).
 2. On fourth down before a change of team possession, when a Team A fumble is caught or recovered by a Team A player other than the fumbler, the ball is dead. If the catch or recovery is beyond the spot of the fumble, the ball is returned to the spot of the fumble. If the catch or recovery is behind the spot of the fumble, the ball remains at the spot of the catch or recovery.
- b. When a backward pass or fumble is caught or recovered simultaneously by opposing players, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the team last in possession (Exception: Rule 7-2-2-a Exceptions).

Out of Bounds

ARTICLE 4. a. *Backward Pass.* When a backward pass goes out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball belongs to the passing team at the out-of-bounds spot.

b. *Fumble.* When a fumble goes out of bounds between the goal lines:

1. In advance of the spot of the fumble, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the spot of the fumble (Rule 3-3-2-e-2).
2. Behind the spot of the fumble, the ball belongs to the fumbling team at the out-of-bounds spot.

c. *Behind or Beyond Goal Line.* When a fumble or backward pass goes out of bounds behind or beyond a goal line, it is a safety or touchback depending on impetus and responsibility (Rules 8-5-1, 8-6-1 and 8-7) (A.R. 7-2-4-I, A.R. 8-6-1-I and A.R. 8-7-2-VIII-IX).

At Rest

ARTICLE 5. When a backward pass or fumble comes to rest inbounds and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing or fumbling team at the dead-ball spot.