

THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE FOR KNOWING THESE RULES

When football was played in the 1930s, players went both ways, participating on offense and defense. When substitutes wanted to enter the contest, they had to first report to an official.

Substitution rules have evolved over the years, becoming more liberal than players hit the field with a leather helmet and no facemask. However, there are specific rules for players coming in and out of the game.

Before a play, any number of offensive or defensive players may enter the field from their team area to replace a teammate. A replaced player must leave the field and go directly to his team area. He also must begin exiting the field when his substitute comes in. All substitutes must be on their team's side of the neutral zone before the snap (3-7-1 and 2).

It is a dead-ball five-yard penalty for illegal substitution if a player withdraws and then re-enters, and for a player to become a substitute and then go back to the sideline. That means subs must participate in at least one play and replaced players must stay out of the game for at least one play (3-7-3).

Play 1: Team A sends in substitutes A12 and A13, replacing A1 and A2. The period ends or

there is an officials or team timeout. **Ruling 1:** A1 and A2 may return to the game and A12 and A13 may leave the field before the next play.

After the snap no one can enter the field during a live play. It is a 15-yard penalty for illegal participation (3-7-6).

Play 2: Team B realizes it only has 10 players on the field and sends in B11. As he is running to get on his side of the neutral zone, the ball is snapped when he is on team A's side of the neutral zone. **Ruling 2:** It is illegal substitution.

Play 3: Three team A subs come in but only two leave. One departing player remains inbounds just in front of his team area. The defense does not notice him. He goes downfield and catches a pass. **Ruling 3:** That is a 15-yard penalty for illegal participation. The substitution process may not be used to deceive or confuse opponents (9-6-4d).

Play 4: B1 is late to recognize B2 came in to replace him. He makes a mad dash to get off the field. But the snap occurs when B1 is five yards from the sideline. **Ruling 4:** Live-ball foul for illegal substitution (3-7-4).

A sub can request a timeout as soon as he steps on the field (3-5-2a). ■

THE SUB WAY

THE INS AND OUTS OF SUBSTITUTION RULES

The original football rules allowed substitutions only for injured or disqualified players. It took almost a century (until 1965) to evolve to the current rule that places no limit on the number of substitutions in a game and allows any number of players to be replaced when the ball is dead.

A substitute is a team member who replaces a player already in the game. A substitute becomes a player when he enters the field and communicates with a teammate or official, enters the huddle, is positioned in a formation or participates in a play (2-32-15). A replaced player is one who has been notified by a substitute that he is to leave the field (2-32-12).

Offense. A replaced team A player must leave the field within three seconds of when his substitute enters the huddle (3-7-1). When responsible officials observe an incoming substitute, they should monitor the time it takes the replaced player to leave. If that doesn't happen within the acceptable limit, it is a dead-ball foul for illegal substitution and a five-yard penalty from the succeeding spot — the spot from which the ball would next be snapped.

Frequently, officials may not be able to directly monitor the substitution. That may occur because the official is performing other duties or the substitution is obscured by an influx of players entering and leaving. A recommended procedure in those cases is if the first count reveals more than 11 players, a second count is immediately started. If the second count is the same as the first, the dead-ball foul is whistled and flagged. By default, that indicates at least one replaced player did not depart within the allowable limit.

Officials should not allow the ball to be snapped if either team has 12 or more players on the field. If that were to happen, it is a live-ball foul for illegal participation with a 15-yard penalty. Not counting twice before the snap is considered an officiating shortfall. If the count is being completed as the ball is being snapped, the whistle should be blown. That will keep the penalty at five yards and avoid the appearance of an officiating error. If the 12th player enters

just before the snap and the ball is snapped before the three-second limit is reached, there is no foul until the snap and the whistle should be blown at that time.

Play 1: Team A breaks its huddle and moves to the line. As the quarterback is barking signals, the referee counts 11 team A players on the field. Suddenly, A12 enters the field and no team A player departs. **Ruling 1:** Team A must be given an opportunity for the replaced player to attempt to depart; three seconds is allowed. After that time, if no team A player attempts to depart and the ball has not been snapped, it is a dead-ball illegal-substitution foul.

If a replaced player tries to leave the field before the snap, the officials should allow play

FREQUENTLY, OFFICIALS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DIRECTLY MONITOR THE SUBSTITUTION.

to continue. If he doesn't make it off the field before the snap, it is a live-ball foul for illegal substitution; however, in NFHS that is only true as long as he did not draw coverage or otherwise participate in which case it would be illegal participation (3-7-4, 9-6-3).

Play 2: Fourth and 10 on team A's 30 yardline. A12 thinks he is part of the punt team but belatedly realizes his error. When the ball is snapped, A12 is halfway between the hashmarks and his sideline. **Ruling 2:** That is a live-ball, illegal substitution foul. Team B will have the choice of the result of the play or a five-yard penalty against team A from the previous spot.

Breaking the huddle. The rules do not prohibit team A from breaking the huddle with 12 or more players. When the offense substitutes between downs, often there are momentarily more than 11 players in the huddle, and that is not necessarily illegal. In other words, if the 12th player begins to depart within three

KNOW THE RULES

seconds of being replaced and the huddle breaks during that three-second interval, it is not a foul. The only criterion is whether or not there were more than 11 players in the huddle for more than three seconds (3-7-1).

Play 3: Team A has 11 players in the huddle when A12 enters the game. After two seconds have elapsed, (a) A5 leaves the huddle and team A subsequently breaks the huddle, or (b) the huddle breaks. **Ruling 3:** Legal in either case.

Play 4: Team A has 11 players in the huddle. Just as the huddle is breaking, A12 enters the game. Within three seconds, A11 departs for the sideline. **Ruling 4:** Legal. A12 did not participate in the huddle, so at no time did team A have 12 players in the huddle.

Please note the huddle may take place

along the sideline, especially after a change of possession or timeout. The rule applies to all huddles regardless of where they are held and officials should be extra vigilant in those situations.

Defense. The substitution rules are the same for the defense as they are for the offense. Any defensive substitution infraction that occurs before the snap, or if the defense has more than 11 players on the field at the snap, is a live-ball foul. ■

Shawn Chamberlain, Woodland Hills, Calif., indicates he counts only 10 team A players in the formation. That crew communication signal is important in alerting crewmates if someone comes onto the field late, there is a formation issue or some other occurrence that may be legal or illegal.

BOB MESSINA



THE ART OF SUB-TRACTION

It seems pretty easy to count to 11. But when it comes to having 11 players on the field for each team, especially when coaches are trying to send in substitutes in chaotic situations, it becomes more challenging.

The rules distinguish players, replaced players and substitutes. The rules indicate a player is one of the 22 individuals on the field involved in playing the game. They continue to hold that designation until a teammate (a substitute) enters the field to take their place (2-32-1).

When a substitute enters the field, the replaced player has three seconds to begin to leave the field (3-7-1). If the replaced player does not begin to leave within three seconds, it is a dead-ball foul for illegal substitution.

There is no "broke the huddle with 12" interpretation in high school. If a late substitute runs to the huddle and the replaced player begins to leave the field within three seconds, and as long as there is no attempt to deceive the

defense, there is no foul.

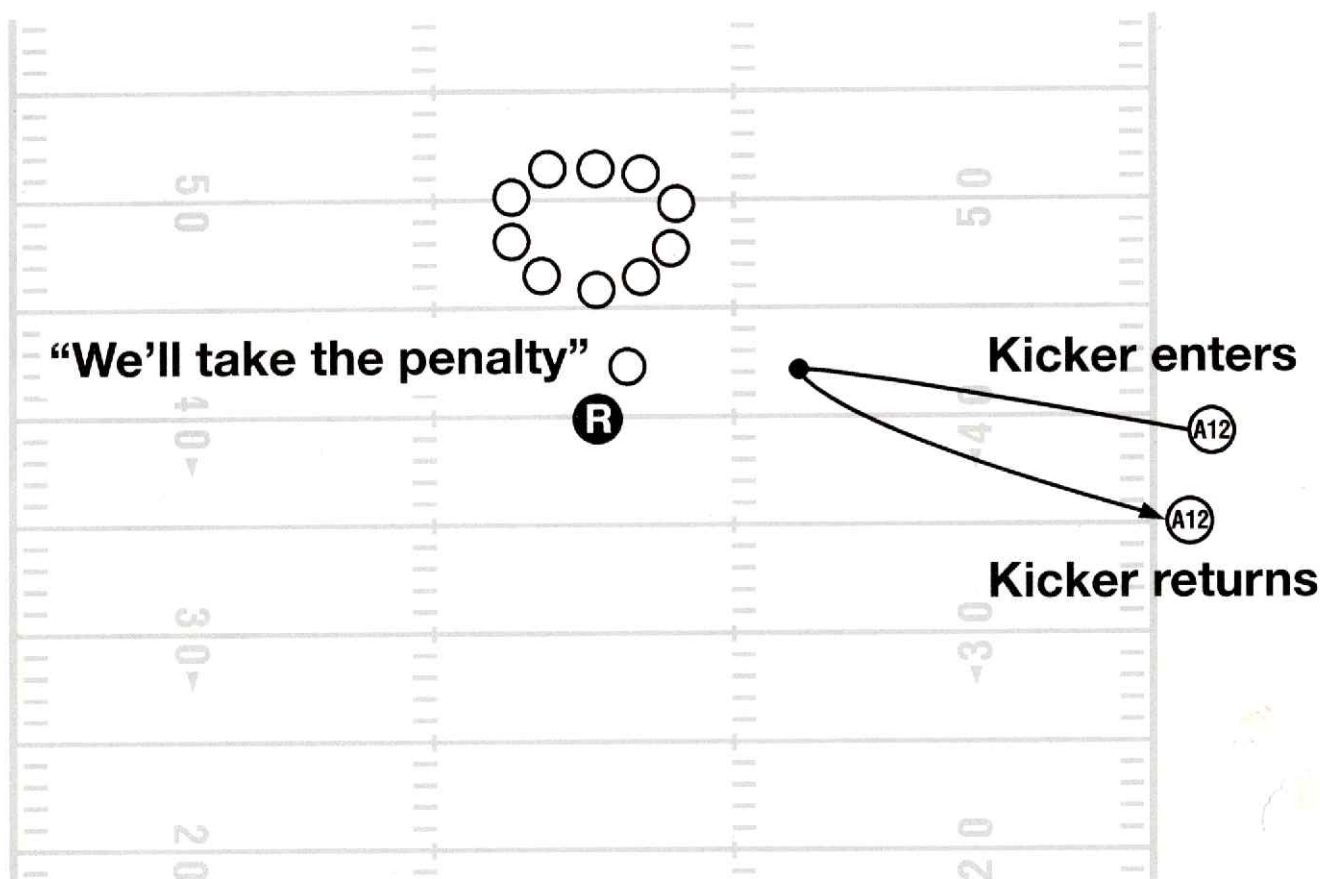
The substitution rules apply the same for the defense. If a defensive substitute comes on the field, the replaced defender has three seconds to begin to leave the field.

It is illegal participation if a replaced player or substitute hinders an opponent, touches the ball, influences the play or otherwise participates. That foul carries a 15-yard penalty (9-6-3).

The replaced player can only go to his team's sideline. The replaced player cannot go out the back of the end zone (NFHS 3.7.2 B). The result is a dead-ball foul for illegal substitution.

It is a five-yard foul for illegal substitution if a player withdraws and re-enters, or a substitute becomes a player and then withdraws during the same dead-ball interval unless a penalty is accepted, a dead-ball foul occurs, there is a charged timeout or the period end (3-7-3).

Play: As seen in the MechaniGram on the next page, it's third and 10. Team A's coach



sends punter A12 onto the field. Team A's coach then realizes there is a penalty on team B that results in a first down for team A. A12 then races off the field. **Ruling:** Legal in both codes. A player who enters the field but leaves before the substitution is made does not commit a foul because no substitution occurred.

So, who is responsible for enforcing the rules? State associations may differ, but the referee and umpire usually count the offense. In five-official crews, the line judge and back judge count defense. In crews of six or more, the deep judges count team B.

The referee is in the best position to look to see if team A is substituting. The umpire is usually busy spotting the ball and might not catch an early sub. The umpire, once positioned, can then count the offense and assist in ruling on late substitutions. If a substitute is racing off to the sideline, the wing official can assist in determining if the replaced player gets off the field before the snap.

On defense, the back judge has the best look at subs coming off both benches with the line judge providing assistance. In crews of six or seven, the deeps can coordinate the count and

the deep wings can judge if the replaced player gets off his sideline before the snap.

It is vital for the officials to complete the count before the snap. Avoid the 15-yard illegal participation fouls where 12 players participate. Officials who count 12 players in the formation

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should blow the play dead and throw the flag for illegal substitution.

The substitution rules are sometimes glossed over, but it is vital for all crewmembers to know the rules. If they don't, the teams will be quick to point out the miss. Loudly. ■

YOU CAN COUNT ON IT

Team K trails team R, 21-20. With fourth and goal and time winding down in the fourth quarter, team K lines up to kick a field goal that could win the game. The ball is snapped with two seconds on the clock. R1 blocks the kick and falls on the ball. Team R then floods the field to celebrate its win.

Two days later, the assigner gets a video from the losing coach. It shows 12 team R players were on the field during the last play. Would you want to be on the crew guilty of that egregious error? Would you expect a reprimand or loss of future assignments?

That highlights the importance of knowing how many participants are on the field. It is absolutely vital both teams are counted before every down. You cannot allow one team a personnel advantage, even for a single play.

YOU CANNOT FALL ASLEEP VERIFYING HOW MANY PLAYERS ARE ON THE FIELD.

Counting players is probably your most important pre-snap activity. You cannot fall asleep verifying how many players are on the field. Even when there are no replacements between plays, that is not a reason to skip that essential task.

Based on crew size and local association mechanics, certain positions will count the offense or defense. Typically for crews of four and five, the referee and umpire count team A or team K and the wings and back judge count the other team.

A counting technique is an individual preference. It could be one at a time, in pairs, three at a time, etc. Try to avoid pointing your finger or bobbing your head at players as you count. You needn't make a show of it. But whatever is your method, be consistent. Defensive counting is easier as the players are more spread out. A good time to count the offense is when its breaks the huddle or when

the players are lined up before the snap.

After arriving at your tally, verify with a field partner(s) either verbally or with a signal. There are a number of variations. Agree in the pregame meeting what signals will be used. Suggestions are seen in the PlayPics. A fist raised in front at waist level (A) can be used to indicate 11 players. Fingers splayed on the chest (B) signify 10. Some crews arriving at a count of 12 will conduct a recount if there is time before the snap. A twirled finger is used in that case (C). A consensus should be always be reached.

The counting process ends if 11 is indicated and confirmed. Move on to whatever is next in your pre-snap routine. If there are fewer than 11, you must be aware of someone entering the field before or after the snap. Possible fouls include illegal formation, illegal substitution or illegal participation. A player or players in excess of 11 may be trying to get to the team area before the play starts. Additionally, something could happen to prevent the snap, such as a team timeout, end of a quarter or a dead-ball foul such as a false start.

There should be greater awareness for substitutions on special plays. Multiple substitutions usually precede punts, try downs and field goal attempts.

Kickoff formations are easier to count as team K is near the same yardline and team R is spread out. However, you may be counting a team different from the one you normally count for scrimmage plays.

A suggestion is to never let a team have fewer than 11 people lined up before a kickoff. Preventive officiating permits telling coaches they need one or more players on the field.

As the contest progresses, try to recognize a team's substitution tendencies. Accelerate counting for no-huddle or hurry-up offenses. Game factors (e.g. score, down, distance, time on the clock) may result in replacements for a run, pass or special package. Thus, anticipate when multiple personnel exchanges are likely.

In all cases and for every play, it is imperative to get the player tally correct. You don't want to get that postgame phone call from your assigner. ■

PlayPic®
A



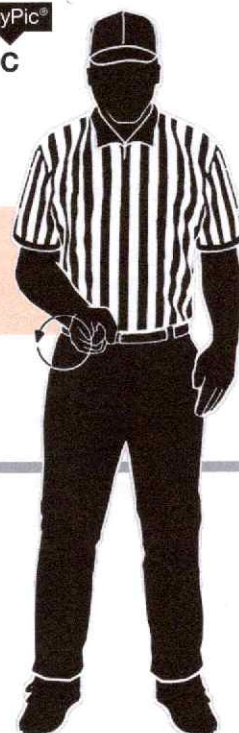
11 PLAYERS

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