

Week 2 Flag Football Bulletin

CIF State Rules Interpreter, M. Menlove

Please review the following rules, mechanics, and expectations. These items need to be applied **consistently at all CIF games and at all levels.**

1. HASH MARKS & FIELD SETUP

CIF uses hash marks that are **23 feet apart**. When a play ends outside the hash marks, the ball is spotted on the **nearest hash mark**.

When permanent hash marks are not present, proper field setup requires **cones or pylons beyond each end line** to identify the location of the hash marks. If the field is centered on a field with uprights (e.g., a tackle field), the uprights can also be used to indicate hash marks.

Officials are expected to **take the field 30 minutes before each game** to inspect the field and ensure it is properly set up.

This includes checking hash-mark indicators, team boxes, pylons, sidelines, and other required field markings. Problems should be identified and addressed **before the game begins**, not after they become an issue during play.

2. TEAM BOXES — THIS MUST BE ENFORCED

The **team box extends from the 20-yard line to the 20-yard line**. Coaches and nonplayers are required to remain within the team box.

A coach may step **one or two steps onto the field to call in a play**, but the coach **must be back in the team box before the snap**.

This week, I witnessed this restriction being ignored repeatedly. Coaches were standing well outside the team box, including **at or near the 10-yard line**, and in some cases coaches were **five or six yards onto the field**. These violations were occurring with **no consequence from the officiating crew**.

This needs to be corrected starting this week.

Officials should not allow coaches to remain outside the team box or on the field at the snap. When a coach is outside the team box at the snap, **this is a foul and should be penalized.**

There is a difference between allowing a coach to briefly step onto the field to communicate a play and allowing a coach to disregard the team-box restrictions throughout the game. **One or two steps to call in a play is reasonable. Standing at the 10-yard line, remaining on the field, or being several yards onto the field at the snap is not.**

Officials need to establish this boundary early and enforce it consistently. **Repeated violations carry increasingly severe penalties.**

This is also why our **30-minute pregame field inspection matters.** Team boxes should be clearly marked from the 20-yard line to the 20-yard line with cones, lines, or other appropriate markings when permanent markings are not available.

Do not ignore obvious team-box violations. If we expect coaches and players to follow the rules, we must enforce them.

3. OVERTIME — KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT OVERTIMES

Overtime procedures change after the first overtime period. Officials need to know the difference.

FIRST OVERTIME

In the **first overtime**, each team receives a **series of downs from the 10-yard line.**

A touchdown is scored when the ball crosses the goal line **in Team A's possession**, just as during regulation play.

THESE ARE LIVE PLAYS. TURNOVERS CAN BE RETURNED FOR A SCORE.

If Team B gains possession during the series, the ball remains live and **Team B may return the turnover for a score.**

If Team A scores a touchdown during the first overtime, it has the same PAT options available during regulation:

- **1-point try from the 3-yard line**
- **2-point try from the 10-yard line**

Remember, however, that the PAT is different from the preceding overtime series.

ALL PATs ARE DEAD WHEN TEAM B GAINS POSSESSION. Team B may **not** return a turnover for a score during a PAT.

SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT OVERTIMES

Beginning with the **second overtime**, the procedure changes.

Each team will **alternate PAT attempts from the 3-yard line**.

There is **no choice of a 1-point or 2-point attempt** in the second or any subsequent overtime period. All attempts are from the **3-yard line**.

As with every PAT, **the try ends if Team B gains possession. There is no return by Team B.**

Remember the distinction:

1st OT = Series from the 10. Turnovers are LIVE and may be returned.

**After a TD in 1st OT = Normal PAT choice: 1 from the 3 or 2 from the 10.
Turnovers are DEAD.**

2nd OT and beyond = Alternating PATs from the 3. No choice. Turnovers are DEAD.

All overtime periods will follow – A – B – B – A – A – B - etc., with only one coin toss to begin all overtime.

4. UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS — SHORTS

NFHS 1-5-1d requires shorts to be a **single solid color**. This is the same basic rule as last season, with one exception: shorts may now display a **school or manufacturer logo**.

For the 2025 season, CIF allowed shorts that were not a single solid color. Schools were informed that this was a **one-year allowance** and that they needed to be in compliance with the solid-color requirement for the 2026 season.

For the **2026 season**, if shorts do not meet the uniform requirements of NFHS 1-5-1d:

- **Play the game** if the flags clearly contrast with the shorts.
- **Submit an incident report** regarding the uniform violation.

There is an important distinction with **belt loops, pockets, and exposed drawstrings**.

Shorts may **never have belt loops, pockets, or exposed drawstrings**. This is more than an incident-report issue. A player **cannot participate** while wearing shorts with belt loops, pockets, or exposed drawstrings.

Do not confuse the solid-color uniform requirement with these equipment restrictions.

FLAGS

As was permitted during the 2025 season, **flags may have school names and/or school logos on them for the 2026 season**.

However, the flags **must clearly contrast with the uniform shorts**. If the flags do not clearly contrast with the shorts, **they cannot be used**.

5. FOLLOWING A SAFETY

Following a safety, the ball will next be put into play by a **scrimmage kick from Team A's 20-yard line**.

This is a **play from scrimmage**, just like any other punt play, and all normal rules governing a punt apply.

6. BACKWARD PASS — MUFF

PLAY: A12 pitches the ball backward to teammate A45. A45 muffs the backward pass. The muff travels forward beyond the spot where A12 released the backward pass and then touches the ground.

RULING: This is now ruled as a **fumble, not a backward pass**.

Because A45 never possessed the ball, officials will spot the ball where possession was lost — **the spot where A12 originally released the backward pass**.

Officials need to recognize the distinction between a backward pass that goes directly to the ground and a backward pass that is subsequently muffed by another player.

7. DIRECT HAND-TO-HAND SNAPS ARE NOT ALLOWED

Direct hand-to-hand snaps are not legal.

A legal snap must be a **backward pass and travel a minimum of two yards**.

Officials should address illegal snapping procedures consistently. Do not allow teams to continue using an illegal snap simply because it has not previously been called.

8. LEGAL SCREEN BLOCKING — NFHS 9-3-1 & 9-3-2

Any block that is not a legal screen block is illegal.

For a screen block to be legal, the blocker must first **establish position while allowing the opponent sufficient space and time to avoid the block**.

Once position has been established, if the blocker moves, that movement must be **in the same direction or path as the opponent**.

Two important points:

- If **contact is caused by the blocker**, it is a foul.
- **Contact is not required for an illegal block to occur.** A blocker who moves in a manner that prevents an opponent from getting to the ball carrier may commit a foul even when there is no contact.

Officials should pay particular attention when a blocker **moves in the opposite direction of the opponent's path**. Depending on the positioning and movement, this can still constitute an illegal block even without contact.

WATCH THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

We most often see this issue in **short-yardage situations and plays that resemble Run-Pass Option (RPO) plays**.

Be especially alert when players on the line of scrimmage **move forward at the snap while a ball carrier comes in behind them**. These players are at high risk of committing an illegal block because they are moving into defenders' paths rather than establishing a legal stationary position or moving in the same direction as the opponent.

Officials need to recognize and call this foul.

*Do not use contact as the only indicator of whether a block is legal. **Position, space, time, and direction of movement all matter.***

9. MERCY RULE — FOURTH QUARTER ONLY

The CIF mercy rule is a **running clock in the fourth quarter when one team is ahead by 27 points or more**.

Reaching a 27-point differential **does not create a running clock before the fourth quarter**.

Do not shorten games or use a running clock simply because the score is lopsided. Proper clock management is expected **at every level and in every game**.

CONSISTENCY MATTERS

Many of these items are not new. Our responsibility is to ensure they are enforced consistently from crew to crew and game to game.

When one crew chooses not to enforce a rule, it creates problems for the next crew that does. Coaches and players should receive the **same rules and the same expectations regardless of which officials are assigned to the game.**

Know the rules. Apply them correctly. Enforce them consistently.