

2025 NFHS Football Rule Differences

This document has been prepared following the press release from the NFHS listing the revisions made during the January meetings in Indianapolis. It must be noted that the actual 2025 rule book language is now available and this document utilizes the new language.

Item #1 – (Rule 1-5-1-d-5) Additional language that applies to the required single tooth and mouth protector now indicates that **effective in 2026** the mouth piece may **not include any attached adornments that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth** AND may **not include anything on it that is a health or risk issue and can pose a danger to the players**. Specific examples of the mouth pieces that **would be illegal equipment in 2026** will be shown and explained during the summer state rules meetings.

Item #2 – (Rule 1-5-2-d) A new statement has been added to this section that addresses a new product that has begun to appear. Players are starting to wear arm sleeves that may contain material that would enhance their contact with the football or an opponent. This material may be attached to an existing long sleeve shirt or may be a separate item worn on their arm.

Effective in 2027, these arm sleeves must meet the SFIA specification at the time of the manufacture AND must have a permanent, exact replica of the SIFA seal that indicates that the product meets these standards AND this seal must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior of the arm sleeve. This new requirement will align closely with the current requirement regarding the seal required on football gloves.

Item #3 – (Rule 1-5-3-c-2) This revision will allow **fixed electronic signs with play signals as well as non-audio methods from the sideline (team box area).** It is critical to emphasize at this point that **ANY AUDIO (MICROPHONE) OR VIDEO (CAMERA) WORN BY A PLAYER IS NOT PERMITTED! IT IS TO BE REMOVED IMMEDIATELY AND THE UNSPORTSMANLIKE FOUL ASSESSED TO THE HEAD COACH! IT IS ALSO CRITICAL TO NOTE THAT COACH-TO-PLAYER AUDIO COMMUNICATION CANNOT BE USED!**

Item #4 – (Rule 4-3-1 EXCEPTION) A brand new statement has been added to rule 4-3-1 that addresses a fumble (the loose ball) that goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds due to touching **between the goal lines**. **This exception now requires that the ball will be returned to the spot of the fumble AND the game clock will start on the ready for play UNLESS another rule requires that the game clock remains stopped such as a 4th down play that is short of the line-to-gain.** It is important to note at this point that **rules 8-5-2 and 8-5-3 have not changed and if the fumble occurred in A's end zone or the out of bounds spot occurred in B's end zone, the result of the down will remain a safety or a touchback!**

Item #5 – (Rule 10-4-4-b) Illegal participation fouls as indicated in 10-4-4-b have been relocated in rule 10-4 as the enforcement spot may or may not be the spot of the foul depending on the type of play in progress and the location of the foul. This will be clarified during our summer meetings after the 2025 rule book language is available.

Additional information that addresses the fumble that goes out of bounds is listed here.

(Rule 4-3-1 EXCEPTION) A brand new statement has been added to rule 4-3-1 that addresses a **fumble** (the loose ball) that goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds due to touching **between the goal lines**. **This exception now requires that the ball will be returned to the spot of the fumble AND the game clock will start on the ready for play unless another rule requires that the game clock remains stopped such as a 4th down play that is short of the line-to-gain.** It is important to note at this point that **rules 8-5-2 and 8-5-3 have not changed and if the fumble occurred in A's end zone or the out of bounds spot occurred in B's end zone, the result of the down will remain a safety or a touchback!**

EXAMPLES:

*Any player (A or B) who has possession of the ball and loses possession (**FUMBLE**) and the ball goes **FORWARD** and out of bounds **BETWEEN** the goal lines will have the ball returned to the spot of the fumble and will retain possession unless another rule such as short of the line-to-gain on a 4th down or the spot of the fumble by A occurred inside A's end zone.

* A team A runner fumbles the ball inside his own end zone and the ball goes out of bounds between the goal lines. The ball is returned to the spot of the fumble and the result of this play is a **SAFETY** that awards 2 points to team B.

* A team A runner fumbles the ball inside the field of play and the loose ball enters team B's end zone where team B gains possession and the ball is dead or the loose ball goes out of bounds across the sideline or end line. The result of this play is a **TOUCHBACK** or is a **SAFETY** depending on the ruling by the official(s) concerning the force that put the loose ball into B's end zone. (It is possible that team B is responsible for the force that caused the loose ball to enter B's end zone. Extremely rare but possible!)

* A team B player intercepts a forward pass by team A inside team B's end zone and chooses to run is out, but fumbles inside his end zone and the loose ball goes out of bounds between the goal lines. The result of this play is a **TOUCHBACK**. The ball is returned to the spot of B's fumble so team A's pass is the force that put the ball into B's end zone and by rule, the ball never left the end zone since the forward fumble is returned to the spot of the fumble.

This new rule **does not** apply to a **MUFF** that causes a loose ball to go out of bounds in advance of the spot of the muff. A muff that goes out of bounds is spotted where it went out of bounds and the team in possession retains possession at the in-bounds spot unless another rule requires a different result.