



# **2021 Playing Rules, Bylaw and Resolution Proposals**

## **2021 Playing Rule Proposals Summary**

1. By Competition Committee; to amend Rule 16, to eliminate overtime in the preseason.
2. By Competition Committee; to amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 3, for one year only, to establish a maximum number of players in the setup zone.
3. By Competition Committee; to amend Rule 12, Section 2, Article 4, to expand the prohibition on blocking below the waist by offensive and defensive players on scrimmage downs when contact occurs beyond five yards on either side of the line of scrimmage and more than two yards outside of either offensive tackle, by Competition Committee.
4. By Competition Committee, Coaches Subcommittee, and Baltimore; to amend Rule 15, Section 3, Article 9, and Rule 19, Section 2, to permit the Replay Official and designated members of the Officiating department to provide certain objective information to the on-field officials.
5. By Chicago; to amend Rule 11, Section 3, Article 3, to ensure the enforcement of all accepted penalties committed by either team during successive Try attempts.
6. By Los Angeles Rams; to amend Rule 8, Section 1, Article 2, to add a loss of down for a second forward pass from behind the line and for a pass thrown after the ball returns behind the line.
7. By Kansas City Chiefs; to amend Rule 5, Section 1, Article 2, to expand jersey number options for certain positions.
8. By Baltimore and Philadelphia; to amend Rule 16, Section 1, to change the options for winner of an overtime coin toss, and create a true sudden death format.
9. By Baltimore; to amend Rule 16, Section 1, to change the options for winner of an overtime coin toss, eliminate sudden death format, and eliminate overtime in the preseason.
10. By Philadelphia; to amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 1, to permit a team to maintain possession of the ball after a score by substituting one offensive play (4<sup>th</sup> and 15 from the kicking team's 25-yard line) for an onside kickoff attempt.
11. By Baltimore; to amend Rule 19, Section 1, Article 1, to add an eighth official who is positioned somewhere other than the playing field, with full communication to on-field officials and access to a television monitor.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 1

Amend Rule 16 (Overtime Procedures, pg. 36) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### SECTION 1 OVERTIME PROCEDURES

**ARTICLE 1. SCORE TIED.** If the score is tied at the end of the regulation playing time of all ~~preseason~~, regular season, and postseason NFL games, a system of modified sudden-death overtime shall be in effect, pursuant to the following.

**ARTICLE 2. END OF REGULATION.** At the end of regulation playing time, the Referee shall immediately toss a coin at the center of the field, in accordance with rules pertaining to a usual pregame toss (4-2-2). The visiting team captain is to again call the toss.

**ARTICLE 3. EXTRA PERIOD.** Following an intermission of no more than three minutes after the end of the regular game, the extra period shall commence.

- (a) Both teams must have the opportunity to possess the ball once during the extra period, unless the team that receives the opening kickoff scores a touchdown on its initial possession, in which case it is the winner, or if the team kicking off to start the overtime period scores a safety on the receiving team's initial possession, in which case the team that kicked off is the winner. If a touchdown is scored, the game is over, and the Try is not attempted.
- (b) If the team that possesses the ball first does not score on its initial possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.
- (c) If the team that possesses the ball first scores a field goal on its initial possession, the other team (the second team) shall have the opportunity to possess the ball.
  - (1) If the second team scores a touchdown on its possession, it is the winner.
  - (2) If the second team scores a field goal on its possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.
  - (3) If the second team does not score on its possession, the game is over, and the first team is the winner, subject to (4) below.
  - (4) If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, the down will be permitted to run to its conclusion, and all rules of the game will be enforced as customary, including awarding points scored by either team during the down. If the second team scores a touchdown on the down after regaining possession, it is the winner. Only fouls that require the down to be replayed, fouls that negate a score, or palpably unfair acts will be enforced.

**Notes:**

- (1) *In such situations, if the player who intercepts the pass or recovers the fumble goes to the ground and makes no effort to advance, the covering official will blow his whistle to end the game.*

- (2) *If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, but the first team committed a foul prior to the change of possession, the second team's possession has not legally ended, and the game cannot end on the down. However, in certain situations, the second team cannot decline the penalty and accept the result of the play, no matter how beneficial, because it would create a second possession for itself. It must accept the penalty enforcement, which will extend its initial possession.*
- (3) *The situation in (2) may also affect the team that receives the opening kickoff during its first possession. If there is a foul by the second team followed by a double change of possession, and the first team declines the penalty and accepts the result of the play, the second team has had its required possession, and the first team has possession of the ball for the second time and needs only a field goal to win. However, if it accepts the penalty, it will extend its initial possession.*
- (d) A player is in possession when he is in firm grip and control of the ball inbounds (3-2-7). The defense gains possession when it catches, intercepts, or recovers a loose ball.
- (e) The opportunity to possess applies only during kicking plays. A kickoff is the opportunity to possess for the receiving team. If the kicking team legally recovers the kick, the receiving team is considered to have had its opportunity. A punt or field goal attempt that crosses the line of scrimmage and is muffed by the receiving team is considered to be an opportunity to possess for the receiving team. Normal touching rules by the kicking team apply.
- (f) All replay reviews will be initiated by the Replay Official. Coaches' challenges will not be allowed.

**ARTICLE 4. OVERTIME IN ~~PRESEASON AND REGULAR~~ SEASON.** The following shall apply to overtime games in the ~~preseason and~~ regular season.

- (a) There shall be a maximum of one 10-minute period, even if the second team has not had an opportunity to possess the ball or if its initial possession has not ended. If the score is tied at the end of the period, the game shall result in a tie.
- (b) Each team shall be entitled to two timeouts, and if there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5). The general provisions for the fourth quarter of a game, including timing, shall apply.

**ARTICLE 5. OVERTIME IN POSTSEASON.** The following shall apply to overtime games in the postseason:

- (a) If the score is tied at the end of a 15-minute overtime period, or if the second team's initial possession has not ended, another overtime period will begin, and play will continue, regardless of how many 15-minute periods are necessary.
- (b) Between each overtime period, there shall be a two-minute intermission, but there shall be no halftime intermission after the second period. At the beginning of the third overtime period, the captain who lost the coin toss prior to the first overtime period shall have the first choice of the two privileges in 4-2-2, unless the team that won the coin toss deferred.
- (c) At the end of the first and third extra periods, etc., teams must change goals in accordance

with 4-2-3.

- (d) Each team is entitled to three timeouts during a half. If there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5).
- (e) At the end of a second overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the first half. At the end of a fourth overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the fourth quarter.
- (f) At the end of a fourth overtime period, there will be another coin toss pursuant to Section 1, Article 2, and play will continue until a winner is declared.

**ARTICLE 6. DISQUALIFIED PLAYERS.** Disqualified player(s) shall not re-enter during any extra period or periods in the ~~preseason~~, regular season, and postseason.

**ARTICLE 7. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RULES APPLY.** Except as provided for above, all other general and specific rules shall apply during any extra period or periods in the ~~preseason~~, regular season, and postseason.

Submitted by Competition Committee

*Effect:* Eliminates overtime in the preseason.

*Reason:* Game presentation; Pace of play.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 2

For one year only, amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 3 (Free Kick Formation, Page 24) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

**ARTICLE 3. FREE KICK FORMATION.** When the ball is kicked on a free down:

- (a) From the time the kicker begins his approach to the ball and until the ball is kicked,
  - (1) all kicking team players other than the kicker must be lined up with at least one foot on the yard line that is one yard behind their restraining line, and both feet must remain on the ground until the ball is kicked; and
  - (2) no more than five players of the kicking team may be on either side of the ball; and
  - (3) at least two players (other than a holder) must be lined up inbounds between the sideline and the bottom (outside) of the yard-line number, and at least two players (other than a holder) must be lined up between the top (inside) of the yard-line number and the inbounds lines.

***Note:** A holder for a free kick counts as one of the required five players on either side of the ball, regardless of where he is positioned. The holder is never counted as one of the required two players between the inbounds line and the top (inside) of the numbers, regardless of where he is positioned.*

- (b) All kicking team players must be inbounds and behind the ball when it is kicked, except:
  - (1) the holder of a placekick (3-18-1-Item 2) may be beyond the line, and
  - (2) the kicker may be beyond the line, provided that his kicking foot is not beyond the line.
- (c) Until the ball is kicked, all receiving team (Team B) players must be inbounds and behind their restraining line, and at least eight, but no more than nine, players must be positioned between their restraining line and a spot 15 yards behind their restraining line (the “setup zone”). (See Section 2, Article 1, Item 2-b).

**Penalty: For a player being beyond the restraining line when the ball is kicked (offside), a player being out of bounds when the ball is kicked, or either team being in an illegal formation when the ball is kicked: Loss of five yards.**

- (d) Prior to the ball being touched by the receiving team or the end of the kick, it is a foul if a kicking team player voluntarily goes out of bounds (without being contacted by a receiving team player) to avoid a block.

**Penalty: For voluntarily going out of bounds without contact: Loss of 5 yards.**

Submitted by Competition Committee

*Effect:* For one year only, establishes a maximum number of players in the setup zone.

*Reason:* Provides excitement and competition.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 3

Amend Rule 3 (Definitions, Page 10) and Rule 12, Section 2, Article 4 (Blocking Below the Waist on Kicks and Change of Possession, Page 49) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### **SECTION 34 TACKLE BOX AND TIGHT END BOX**

**ARTICLE 1. TACKLE BOX.** The Tackle Box is an area between the outside edges of the normal tackle positions extending from three yards beyond the line of scrimmage to the offensive team's end line. After the ball leaves the tackle box, this area no longer exists.

**ARTICLE 2. TIGHT END BOX.** The Tight End Box is an area that is between two yards outside the normal tackle positions and extends five yards on either side of the line of scrimmage.

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**ARTICLE 4. BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST ~~ON KICKS AND CHANGES OF POSSESSION~~.** Blocks below the waist are prohibited in the following situations:

- (a) By players of either team after a change of possession; or
- (b) By players of the kicking team after a Free Kick, Safety Kick, Fair-Catch Kick, Punt, Field-Goal Attempt, or Try Kick; or
- (c) By players of the receiving team during a down in which there is a Free Kick, Safety Kick, Fair-Catch Kick, Punt, Field- Goal Attempt, or Try Kick-; or
- (d) By players of either team during a scrimmage down prior to a change of possession unless the contact occurs in the Tight End Box. (*Note:* Players are prohibited from initiating contact below the waist of an opponent outside of the Tight End Box, except against a runner or a player who is attempting to catch a forward or backward pass.)

**Note:** The following blocking restrictions may result in a foul even if they occur in the Tight End Box:

- (i) Illegal cut block. See 8-4-5.
- (ii) Clipping. See 12-2-1.
- (iii) “Peel Back” Block. See 12-2-2.
- (iv) Chop Block. See 12-2-5.
- (v) Crackback Block. See 12-2-6.

**Penalty: For illegally blocking below the waist: Loss of 15 yards.**

Submitted by Competition Committee



*Effect:* Expands the prohibition against blocking below the waist by offensive and defensive players on scrimmage downs when contact occurs beyond five yards on either side of the line of scrimmage and more than two yards outside of either offensive tackle.

*Reason:* Player safety.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 4

Amend Rule 15, Section 3, Article 9 (Game Administration, Page 66), and Rule 19, Section 2 (Game Administration Support From NFL Officiating Staff, Page 73) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### **RULE 15      INSTANT REPLAY**

**ARTICLE 9. GAME ADMINISTRATION.** The Replay Official and designated members of the Officiating department may consult with on-field officials, or conduct a replay review, or advise the game officials on specific, objective aspects of a play when clear and obvious video evidence is present, ~~of and/or to address~~ game administration issues, including, but not limited to:

- (a) penalty enforcement;
- (b) the proper down;
- (c) spot of a foul; ~~and~~
- (d) the game clock;
- (e) possession;
- (f) completed or intercepted pass;
- (g) touching of a loose ball, boundary line, goal line, or end line;
- (h) location of the football or a player in relation to the boundary line, the line of scrimmage, the line to gain, or the goal line; or
- (i) down by contact (when a player is not ruled down by contact on the field).

Nothing in this Article precludes a Head Coach or Replay Official from initiating a challenge or review otherwise allowed under Rule 15, Section 1.

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### **RULE 19      OFFICIALS**

#### **SECTION 2    ~~GAME ADMINISTRATION~~ SUPPORT FROM NFL OFFICIATING STAFF.**

The Replay Official and designated members of the Officiating department at the League office may consult with the on-field officials to provide objective information regarding on-field rulings and on the correct application of playing rules, ~~including appropriate assessment of penalty yardage, proper down, and status of the game clock.~~ In addition, if the designated members of the Officiating department determine that a foul for a football or non-football act called on the field is flagrant, then they can instruct the on-field officiating crew to disqualify the player(s) who committed the foul. Those players who were not penalized, but who engaged in football or non-football acts that were determined to be flagrant and directly related to the foul called on the field, may also be disqualified by designated members of the Officiating department. The determination

that a foul is flagrant must be based on the available video provided on the television broadcast, and the designated members of the Officiating department must instruct the officiating crew to disqualify the identified player(s) before the ball is next legally put in play. The Officiating department does not have the authority to instruct the on-field game officials to assess a penalty against a player.

Submitted by Competition Committee, Coaches Subcommittee, and Baltimore

*Effect:* Permits the Replay Official and designated members of the officiating department to communicate to the Referee certain objective and administrative aspects of the game.

*Reason:* Competitive equity.

## **2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 5**

Amend Rule 11, Section 3, Article 3 (Fouls Committed During Try, Page 43-44) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### **ARTICLE 3. FOULS COMMITTED DURING TRY.**

If a foul results in a retry, Team A will have the option to enforce the penalty from the spot where it attempted the try (previous spot) or from the yard line for the other try option, the location of which is determined by any previously enforced penalty, if applicable.

Submitted by Chicago

*Effect:* Ensures the enforcement of all accepted penalties committed by either team during successive Try attempts.

*Reason:* Competitive equity.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 6

Amend Rule 8, Section 1, Article 2 (Legal Forward Pass, Page 31) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

**ARTICLE 2. LEGAL FORWARD PASS.** The offensive team may make one forward pass from behind the line during each down. If the ball, whether in player possession or loose, crosses the line of scrimmage, a forward pass is not permissible, regardless of whether the ball returns behind the line of scrimmage before the pass is thrown.

**Item 1. Illegal Passes.** Any other forward pass by either team is illegal and is a foul by the passing team, including:

- (a) A forward pass thrown when the passer is beyond the line of scrimmage.

*Note: It is a forward pass from beyond the line of scrimmage if the passer's entire body and the ball are beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is released, whether the passer is airborne or touching the ground. The penalty for a forward pass thrown from beyond the line is enforced from the spot where the ball is released.*

- (b) A second forward pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.
- (c) A forward pass thrown after the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage and has returned behind it.
- (d) A forward pass thrown after there has been a change of possession.

**Item 2. Intercepted Illegal Pass.** If an illegal pass is caught or intercepted, the ball may be advanced and the penalty declined.

### Penalties:

- (a) **For a forward pass from beyond the line: Loss of down and five yards from the spot of the pass. See S.N. below.**
- (b) **For a second forward pass from behind the line, or for a forward pass that was thrown after the ball returned behind the line: Loss of down and five yards from the previous spot.**
- (c) **For a forward pass that is thrown after a change of possession: Loss of five yards from the spot of the pass.**

Submitted by Los Angeles Rams

*Effect:* Modifies penalty to add a loss of down for a second forward pass from behind the line and for a pass thrown after the ball returns behind the line.

*Reason:* Competitive equity.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 7

Amend Rule 5, Section 1, Article 2 (Players Numbered By Position, Page 64) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

**ARTICLE 2. PLAYERS NUMBERED BY POSITION.** All players must wear numerals on their jerseys in accordance with Rule 5, Section 4, Article 3, Item 3. Such numerals must be by playing position, as follows:

- (a) quarterbacks, punters, and placekickers: 1–19;
- ~~(b) running backs and defensive backs: 20–49;~~
- ~~(b)(c) running backs, full backs, tight ends, H-backs, and wide receivers: 1–49 and 80–89~~
- ~~(c)(d) centers offensive linemen: 50–79;~~
- ~~offensive guards and tackles: 60–79;~~
- ~~(d) wide receivers: 10–19 and 80–89;~~
- ~~(e) tight ends and H-backs: 40–49 and 80–89;~~
- ~~(f)(e) defensive linemen: 50–79 and 90–99;~~
- ~~(g)(f) linebackers: 40–59 and 90–99.~~

If a player changes his position during his playing career in the NFL, and such change moves him from a position as an ineligible pass receiver to that of an eligible pass receiver, or from a position as an eligible pass receiver to that of an ineligible pass receiver, he must be issued an appropriate new jersey numeral. A change in jersey numeral is not required if the change is from an ineligible position to another ineligible position, or from an eligible position to another eligible position, provided that the player has participated at least one season at his position prior to the change.

Any request to wear a numeral for a special position not specified above (~~e.g., H-back~~) must be made to the Commissioner. During the preseason period when playing rosters are larger, the League will allow duplication and other temporary deviations from the numbering scheme specified above, but the rule must be adhered to for all players during the regular season and postseason. Clubs must make numerals available to adhere to the rule, even if it requires returning to circulation a numeral that has been retired or withheld for other reasons. See 5-3-1 for reporting a change of position.

Submitted by Kansas City

*Effect:* Expands jersey number options for certain positions.

*Reason:* Flexibility in assigning jersey numbers.



## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 8

Amend Rule 16, Section 1 (Overtime Procedures, Pages 68-69) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### SECTION 1 OVERTIME PROCEDURES

**ARTICLE 1. SCORE TIED.** If the score is tied at the end of the regulation playing time of all preseason, regular season, and postseason NFL games, a system of modified sudden-death overtime shall be in effect, pursuant to the following.

**ARTICLE 2. END OF REGULATION.** At the end of regulation playing time, the Referee shall immediately toss a coin at the center of the field, ~~in accordance with rules pertaining to a usual pregame toss (4-2-2)~~ with modified coin toss rules (16-1-3). The visiting team head coach or captain is to ~~again~~ call the toss.

**ARTICLE 3. TOSS OF COIN.** Not more than three minutes before the kickoff of overtime, the Referee, in the presence of both team's head coaches or captains, shall toss a coin at the center of the field. Prior to the Referee's toss, the call of "heads" or "tails" must be made by the head coach or captain of the visiting team. The winner of the toss must choose one of two privileges, and the loser is given the other. The two privileges are:

- (a) The option to "Spot" the ball on the field for the first play of overtime, including designation of end zone to be defended. (Overtime will not begin with a kickoff, but rather with a set of downs from scrimmage from the chosen spot.)
- (b) The option to "Choose" whether to start on offense or defense from the other team's designated spot and direction.

Regardless of which privilege is chosen by the winner of the toss, privilege (a) is to be exercised before privilege (b), so that the selection of whether to play offense or defense is made after the starting field position is chosen.

**ARTICLE 34. EXTRA PERIOD.** Following an intermission of no more than three minutes after the end of the regular game, the extra period shall commence. As determined by the coin toss and head coaches' or captains' choices, play will begin without a kickoff from the designated field position, in the designated direction, and with the designated team on offense. The team next scoring by any method will be the winner.

- ~~(a) Both teams must have the opportunity to possess the ball once during the extra period, unless the team that receives the opening kickoff scores a touchdown on its initial possession, in which case it is the winner, or if the team kicking off to start the overtime period scores a safety on the receiving team's initial possession, in which case the team that kicked off is the winner. If a touchdown is scored, the game is over, and the Try is not attempted.~~

- ~~(b) If the team that possesses the ball first does not score on its initial possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.~~
- ~~(c) If the team that possesses the ball first scores a field goal on its initial possession, the other team (the second team) shall have the opportunity to possess the ball.~~
  - ~~(1) If the second team scores a touchdown on its possession, it is the winner.~~
  - ~~(2) If the second team scores a field goal on its possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.~~
  - ~~(3) If the second team does not score on its possession, the game is over, and the first team is the winner, subject to (4) below.~~
  - ~~(4) If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, the down will be permitted to run to its conclusion, and all rules of the game will be enforced as customary, including awarding points scored by either team during the down. If the second team scores a touchdown on the down after regaining possession, it is the winner. Only fouls that require the down to be replayed, fouls that negate a score, or palpably unfair acts will be enforced.~~

**Notes:**

- ~~(1) In such situations, if the player who intercepts the pass or recovers the fumble goes to the ground and makes no effort to advance, the covering official will blow his whistle to end the game.~~
  - ~~(2) If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, but the first team committed a foul prior to the change of possession, the second team's possession has not legally ended, and the game cannot end on the down. However, in certain situations, the second team cannot decline the penalty and accept the result of the play, no matter how beneficial, because it would create a second possession for itself. It must accept the penalty enforcement, which will extend its initial possession.~~
  - ~~(3) The situation in (2) may also affect the team that receives the opening kickoff during its first possession. If there is a foul by the second team followed by a double change of possession, and the first team declines the penalty and accepts the result of the play, the second team has had its required possession, and the first team has possession of the ball for the second time and needs only a field goal to win. However, if it accepts the penalty, it will extend its initial possession.~~
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- ~~(d) A player is in possession when he is in firm grip and control of the ball inbounds (3-2-7). The defense gains possession when it catches, intercepts, or recovers a loose ball.~~
  - ~~(e) The opportunity to possess applies only during kicking plays. A kickoff is the opportunity to possess for the receiving team. If the kicking team legally recovers the kick, the receiving team is considered to have had its opportunity. A punt or field goal attempt that crosses the line of scrimmage and is muffed by the receiving team is considered to be an~~

~~opportunity to possess for the receiving team. Normal touching rules by the kicking team apply.~~

All replay reviews will be initiated by the Replay Official. Coaches' challenges will not be allowed.

**ARTICLE 45. OVERTIME IN PRESEASON AND REGULAR SEASON.** The following shall apply to overtime games in the preseason and regular season.

- (a) There shall be a maximum of one 10-minute period, even if the second team has not had an opportunity to possess the ball or if its initial possession has not ended. If the score is tied at the end of the period, the game shall result in a tie.
- (b) Each team shall be entitled to two timeouts, and if there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5). The general provisions for the fourth quarter of a game, including timing, shall apply.

**ARTICLE 56. OVERTIME IN POSTSEASON.** The following shall apply to overtime games in the postseason:

- (a) If the score is tied at the end of a 15-minute overtime period, ~~or if the second team's initial possession has not ended,~~ another overtime period will begin, and play will continue, regardless of how many 15-minute periods are necessary.
- (b) Between each overtime period, there shall be a two-minute intermission, but there shall be no halftime intermission after the second period. At the beginning of the third overtime period, the captain who lost the coin toss prior to the first overtime period shall have the first choice of the two privileges in ~~4-2-216-1-3, unless the team that won the coin toss deferred.~~
- (c) At the end of the first and third extra periods, etc., teams must change goals in accordance with 4-2-3.
- (d) Each team is entitled to three timeouts during a half. If there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5).
- (e) At the end of a second overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the first half. At the end of a fourth overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the fourth quarter.
- (f) At the end of a fourth overtime period, there will be another coin toss pursuant to ~~Section 1, Article 216-1-3,~~ and play will continue until a winner is declared.

**ARTICLE 67. DISQUALIFIED PLAYERS.** Disqualified player(s) shall not re-enter during any extra period or periods in the preseason, regular season, and postseason.

**ARTICLE 78. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RULES APPLY.** Except as provided for above, all other general and specific rules shall apply during any extra period or periods in the preseason, regular season, and postseason.

Submitted by Baltimore and Philadelphia

*Effect:* Changes options for winner of overtime coin toss and creates a true sudden death format.

*Reason:* Creates excitement. More competitive.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 9

Amend Rule 16, Section 1 (Overtime Procedures, Pages 68-69) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### SECTION 1 OVERTIME PROCEDURES

**ARTICLE 1. SCORE TIED.** If the score is tied at the end of the regulation playing time of all ~~preseason, regular season, and postseason NFL games, a system of modified sudden death~~timed overtime format shall be in effect, pursuant to the following.

**ARTICLE 2. END OF REGULATION.** At the end of regulation playing time, the Referee shall immediately toss a coin at the center of the field, ~~in accordance with rules pertaining to a usual pregame toss (4-2-2).~~with modified coin toss rules (16-1-3). The visiting team head coach or captain is to ~~again~~ call the toss.

**ARTICLE 3. TOSS OF COIN.** Not more than three minutes before the kickoff of overtime, the Referee, in the presence of both team's head coaches or captains, shall toss a coin at the center of the field. Prior to the Referee's toss, the call of "heads" or "tails" must be made by the head coach or captain of the visiting team. The winner of the toss must choose one of two privileges, and the loser is given the other. The two privileges are:

- (a) The option to "Spot" the ball on the field for the first play of overtime, including designation of end zone to be defended. (Overtime will not begin with a kickoff, but rather with a set of downs from scrimmage from the chosen spot.)
- (b) The option to "Choose" whether to start on offense or defense from the other team's designated spot and direction.

Regardless of which privilege is chosen by the winner of the toss, privilege (a) is to be exercised before privilege (b), so that the selection of whether to play offense or defense is made after the starting field position is chosen.

**ARTICLE 34. EXTRA PERIOD.** Following an intermission of no more than three minutes after the end of the regular game, the extra period shall commence. As determined by the coin toss and head coaches' or captains' choices, play will begin without a kickoff from the designated field position, in the designated direction, and with the designated team on offense.

The length of the extra period will be 7 minutes and 30 seconds. Each team shall be entitled to two timeouts for this period, and if there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5). The general provisions for the fourth quarter of a game, including timing, shall play.

The extra period will continue until the expiration of the game clock. At the conclusion of the period, the team with the higher score will be declared the winner. If the score is tied at the end of the period, the game shall result in a tie.

- ~~(a) Both teams must have the opportunity to possess the ball once during the extra period, unless the team that receives the opening kickoff scores a touchdown on its initial possession, in which case it is the winner, or if the team kicking off to start the overtime period scores a safety on the receiving team's initial possession, in which case the team that kicked off is the winner. If a touchdown is scored, the game is over, and the Try is not attempted.~~
- ~~(b) If the team that possesses the ball first does not score on its initial possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.~~
- ~~(c) If the team that possesses the ball first scores a field goal on its initial possession, the other team (the second team) shall have the opportunity to possess the ball.
  - ~~(1) If the second team scores a touchdown on its possession, it is the winner.~~
  - ~~(2) If the second team scores a field goal on its possession, the team next scoring by any method shall be the winner.~~
  - ~~(3) If the second team does not score on its possession, the game is over, and the first team is the winner, subject to (4) below.~~
  - ~~(4) If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, the down will be permitted to run to its conclusion, and all rules of the game will be enforced as customary, including awarding points scored by either team during the down. If the second team scores a touchdown on the down after regaining possession, it is the winner. Only fouls that require the down to be replayed, fouls that negate a score, or palpably unfair acts will be enforced.~~~~

***Notes:***

- ~~(1) In such situations, if the player who intercepts the pass or recovers the fumble goes to the ground and makes no effort to advance, the covering official will blow his whistle to end the game.~~
- ~~(2) If the second team loses possession by an interception or fumble, but the first team committed a foul prior to the change of possession, the second team's possession has not legally ended, and the game cannot end on the down. However, in certain situations, the second team cannot decline the penalty and accept the result of the play, no matter how beneficial, because it would create a second possession for itself. It must accept the penalty enforcement, which will extend its initial possession.~~
- ~~(3) The situation in (2) may also affect the team that receives the opening kickoff during its first possession. If there is a foul by the second team followed by a double change of possession, and the first team declines the penalty and accepts the result~~

~~of the play, the second team has had its required possession, and the first team has possession of the ball for the second time and needs only a field goal to win. However, if it accepts the penalty, it will extend its initial possession.~~

~~(d) A player is in possession when he is in firm grip and control of the ball inbounds (3-2-7).~~

~~The defense gains possession when it catches, intercepts, or recovers a loose ball.~~

~~(e) The opportunity to possess applies only during kicking plays. A kickoff is the opportunity to possess for the receiving team. If the kicking team legally recovers the kick, the receiving team is considered to have had its opportunity. A punt or field goal attempt that crosses the line of scrimmage and is muffed by the receiving team is considered to be an opportunity to possess for the receiving team. Normal touching rules by the kicking team apply.~~

~~All replay reviews will be initiated by the Replay Official. Coaches' challenges will not be allowed.~~

**ARTICLE 45. OVERTIME IN PRESEASON AND REGULAR SEASON.** ~~The following shall apply to overtime games in the preseason and regular season.~~

~~In the regular season, there shall be a maximum of one 10-minute extra period (with a length of 7 minutes and 30 seconds), even if the second team has not had an opportunity to possess the ball or if its initial possession has not ended. If the score is tied at the end of the period, the game shall result in a tie.~~

~~Each team shall be entitled to two timeouts, and if there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5). The general provisions for the fourth quarter of a game, including timing, shall apply.~~

**ARTICLE 56. OVERTIME IN POSTSEASON.** The following shall apply to overtime games in the postseason:

(a) ~~If the score is tied at the end of a 15-minute~~ the first extra overtime period, or if the second team's initial possession has not ended, another overtime extra period will begin, and play will continue, regardless of how many 15 minute periods are necessary (pursuant to the rules in 16-1-4). Additional extra periods will be added until a winner is declared.

(b) ~~Between each overtime extra period, there shall be a two-minute intermission, but there shall be no halftime intermission after the second period. At the beginning of the third overtime period, the captain who lost the coin toss prior to the first overtime period shall have the first choice of the two privileges in 4-2-2, unless the team that won the coin toss deferred.~~

(c) At the start of each additional extra period, the ball will be placed on the field, and a possession team selected, according to the "Spot and Choose" mechanic described above (16-1-3). Each period, the team to "spot" shall be the team that did not "Spot" at the beginning of the previous period; the team to "Choose" shall be the team that did not "Choose" at the beginning of the previous period. There will be no coin tosses before extra

periods beyond the first. ~~At the end of the first and third extra periods, etc., teams must change goals in accordance with 4-2-3.~~

- ~~(d) Each team is entitled to three timeouts during a half. If there is an excess timeout, the usual rules shall apply (4-5).~~
- ~~(e) At the end of a second overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the first half. At the end of a fourth overtime period, timing rules shall apply as at the end of the fourth quarter.~~
- ~~(f) At the end of a fourth overtime period, there will be another coin toss pursuant to Section 1, Article 2, and play will continue until a winner is declared.~~

**ARTICLE 7. OVERTIME IN PRESEASON.** There shall be no extra periods in the preseason. If the score is tied at the end of regulation of a preseason game, the game shall be declared a tie.

**ARTICLE 68. DISQUALIFIED PLAYERS.** Disqualified player(s) shall not re-enter during any extra period or periods in the preseason, regular season, and postseason.

**ARTICLE 79. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RULES APPLY.** Except as provided for above, all other general and specific rules shall apply during any extra period or periods in the preseason, regular season, and postseason.

Submitted by Baltimore

*Effect:* Changes options for winner of overtime coin toss and eliminates “sudden death” format. Also eliminates overtime in preseason.

*Reason:* Creates excitement. More competitive.



## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 10

Amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 1 (Free Kick, Page 24-26) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

**ARTICLE 1. FREE KICK.** A free kick is a kickoff or safety kick that puts the ball in play to start a free kick down. It must be made from any point on the kicking team's restraining line and between the inbounds lines.

- (a) A kickoff puts the ball in play at the start of each half, after a try, and after a successful field goal. A dropkick or placekick may be used for a kickoff.

***Note:** During a placekick on a kickoff, the kicking team may use a manufactured tee that is one inch in height and approved by the League. Once the ball has been placed on the kicking tee, the kicking tee cannot be moved. If the ball falls off the tee, the covering officials must stop play and restart the timing process without penalty to the kicking team. If the ball falls off the tee a second time during the same free kick down, the kicking team then must either use a player to hold the ball or must kick it off the ground. The ball may be placed on the ground leaning against the tee, provided the tee is in its normal upright position.*

- (b) A safety kick puts the ball in play after a safety. A dropkick, placekick, or punt may be used for a safety kick. A tee cannot be used for a safety kick.

(c) As an alternative to a free kick, a team may elect to retain possession, subject to the following rules:

- (1) A team may elect to retain possession no more than two times during the game.
- (2) The kicking team must notify the Referee of its intention to forego a kickoff or safety kick and retain possession.
- (3) The ball will be spotted on the kicking team's 25-yard line, and the kicking team will possess the ball with the down and distance being fourth and 15 (line to gain is the kicking team's 40-yard line).
- (4) Play clock will be set to 25 seconds and starts on the ready for play signal. Game clock starts on the snap, and normal NFL timing rules apply.
- (5) Standard scrimmage play rules apply.
- (6) If the offense reaches the line to gain, the result of the play is a first down and all customary rules are in effect. If the defense stops the offense, the defense assumes possession at the dead-ball spot.
- (7) If the offense is penalized on the one scrimmage down (fourth and 15), the offense cannot elect to then kick off after the penalty is enforced. Example: The kicking team may not elect to kick after incurring a holding penalty on the one scrimmage down.

(8) Scrimmage kicks are prohibited.

(9) Nothing in this exception prohibits a team from attempting a legal onside kickoff under Rule 6.

**Penalty: For illegal kick on a free kick down: Loss of five yards.**

Submitted by Philadelphia

*Effect:* Permits a team to maintain possession of the ball after a score by substituting one offensive play (4<sup>th</sup> and 15 from the kicking team's 25-yard line) for an onside kickoff attempt.

*Reason:* Competitive equity; fan engagement.

## 2021 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 11

Amend Rule 19, Section 1, Article 1 (Game Officials, Page 73) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

**ARTICLE 1. GAME OFFICIALS.** The game shall be played under the supervision of seven~~eight~~ officials: the Referee, Umpire, Down Judge, Line Judge, Field Judge, Side Judge, ~~and~~ Back Judge, and Booth Umpire. In the absence of seven~~eight~~ officials, the crew is to be rearranged according to the remaining members of the crew.

Submitted by Baltimore

*Effect:* Adds an eighth official who is positioned somewhere other than the playing field, with full communication to on-field officials and access to a television monitor.

*Reason:* Competitive equity; pace of play; player health and safety.

## **2021 Bylaw Proposals Summary**

1. By Competition Committee; to amend Article XVIII, Section 18.1 of the Constitution and Bylaws to prohibit clubs participating in the playoffs from signing players waived and terminated by clubs whose seasons have concluded.
2. By Competition Committee; to amend Article XII, Section 12.4 of the Constitution and Bylaws to require clubs to submit tryouts and visits to the League office throughout the entire year; however, such transactions will only be reported to clubs from the start of training camp through the conclusion of the Super Bowl, unless it is with a Restricted or Unrestricted Free Agent.

## 2021 BYLAW PROPOSAL NO. 1

Amend Article XVIII, Section 18.1 of the Constitution and Bylaws to reflect the following (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### **Claiming Period**

18.1 (B) Clubs may claim a player placed on waivers by notifying the Commissioner within the claiming period. Clubs may file claims on players for whom waivers have been requested beginning at 4:01 p.m., New York time, on the day such waivers are requested and ending at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on a subsequent date, pursuant to the following:

- (1) For any waivers requested during the period commencing on the first business day after the Pro Bowl or the Super Bowl, whichever occurs later, through 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the Friday prior to the final regular season weekend, a 24-hour claiming period shall be in effect, except for waiver requests on Friday and Saturday of each week, which shall expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the following Monday. [Exception: During the two weekends preceding the first full weekend of preseason games, waivers requested on Friday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Saturday; waivers requested on Saturday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Sunday; and waivers requested on Sunday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Monday.]

If the claiming period is scheduled to expire on a holiday, or such other day when the League office is not open for customary business, the claiming deadline shall be extended until 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the next League business day.

Waivers requested on the Friday preceding the final regular season weekend shall expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Saturday.

If any waiver request has been designated as Procedural Recall, the club requesting such waivers shall thereafter have an additional 24 hours to recall such waiver request.

- (2) A claiming period of 24 hours shall be in effect for any waivers requested during the period from the Saturday of the final regular season weekend through the conclusion of the final postseason game, except for waiver requests on Friday and Saturday of each week, which shall expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the following Monday.

- a) Assignment of player contracts will be deferred until the first business day after the Pro Bowl or the Super Bowl, whichever occurs later.
- b) Terminations of player contracts of clubs not participating in the playoffs will be deferred until the first business day after the Pro Bowl or the Super Bowl, whichever occurs later.
- c) Terminations of player contracts of clubs participating in the playoffs will occur at the expiration of the claiming period.
  - i. A club that is participating in the playoffs may sign players whose contracts have been terminated to its Active/Inactive List, Practice Squad, or Reserve/Future List.
  - ii. A club that is not participating in the playoffs may sign players whose contracts have been terminated to its Reserve/Future List only.

All waiver notices released by the Commissioner during training camp, regular season, or postseason shall be sent by NFLNet or facsimile.

The Commissioner shall notify each club in both conferences simultaneously of any waiver request in the manner prescribed above. Any club within the League may, upon request, secure from the Commissioner all available salary information on any player for whom waivers have been requested, which information shall be supplied prior to the time for the filing of any claim on such player.

Submitted by Competition Committee

*Effect:* Prohibits clubs participating in the playoffs from signing players waived and terminated by clubs whose seasons have concluded.

*Reason:* Integrity of postseason games.

## 2021 BYLAW PROPOSAL NO. 2

Amend Article XII, Section 12.4 of the Constitution and Bylaws to reflect the following (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

### Rules and Regulations

12.4 (A) After the ~~first mandatory roster reduction in the preseason~~ start of the first training camp in the League and for the remainder of the season, a member club is permitted to transport a free agent player to its home city or any other site for two visits, one for the purpose of a tryout and/or physical examination, the other for a physical examination only. A player may not visit the same club more than two times unless, following the player's most recent visit to that club, the player signs an NFL Player Contract with another club and that contract is subsequently terminated. A visit for the purpose of a physical examination is limited to one day only, while a visit for a tryout and physical examination is limited to two days, but the tryout portion of the two-day visit must be completed in one day. The involved player or players shall not be on the club's practice field at the same time as regular practice or any on-field activities being conducted. Clubs are prohibited from conducting tryouts of players at the stadium on game day, even if the tryout occurs prior to or during the official warm-up period that begins one hour prior to kickoff. The club shall be allowed a maximum of two players from its Active List to participate with the tryout player during his tryout. The player's presence with the club must be reported to the League office prior to the completion of the visit. The League, in turn, shall promulgate all such visits to member clubs.

Beginning the day after the Super Bowl, tryouts for free agent players are not limited in duration, but must not exceed a few days, and other members of the squad are permitted to participate, subject to collectively bargained restrictions. The player's presence with the club must be reported to the League office prior to the completion of the visit; however, the transactions will not be shared with member clubs, unless they are with Restricted or Unrestricted Free Agents.

During any tryout conducted at any time, Helmets and protective pads for elbows and knees are permitted ~~for tryouts~~; all other pads are prohibited. ~~The involved player or players shall not be on the club's practice field at the same time as regular practice or any on-field activities being conducted. The club shall be allowed a maximum of two players from its Active List to participate with the tryout player during his tryout. Multiple tryouts of the same player in the same session by a club are prohibited unless, following the most recent tryout, the player is placed under contract and released by another club in the League.~~



Nothing in this subsection is to be interpreted in any way as a modification of Section 17.4(B) of this Constitution and Bylaws, and therefore such player may not participate in practice with the playing squad. No remuneration of any kind, except normal travel and lodging expenses, may be paid to such player while not under contract. Players tried out under this rule are not subject to the provisions of Section 17.4(C), which restrict the return to a former club.

The above restrictions also apply to any tryouts and/or physical examinations conducted for or administered to free agent players at any location, even if the club does not transport the player to the site.

Submitted by Competition Committee

*Effect:* Requires clubs to submit tryouts and visits to the League office throughout the entire year; however, such transactions will only be reported to clubs from the start of training camp through the conclusion of the Super Bowl, unless it is with a Restricted or Unrestricted Free Agent.

*Reason:* Provides more comprehensive information and increased transparency.

## **2021 Resolutions Proposals Summary**

- G-1. By Buffalo; to amend the Anti-Tampering Policy, for one year only, to require all clubs and personnel interviewing for available Head Coach and Coordinator positions to operate under the same time frame for the hiring process.

## 2021 RESOLUTION G-1

*Whereas*, the NFL's Anti-Tampering Policy provides to strike a balance between protecting member clubs' rights and investment in their employees, protecting the integrity of the game, preserving competitive balance among member clubs, promoting employee loyalty and maintaining the organizational stability of employer clubs during the playing season, while also providing realistic advancement opportunities for employees if other clubs desire their services.

Be it *Resolved*, that for one year only, the Anti-Tampering Policy (Section 4, Non-Players) will be amended to reflect the following:

1. Notwithstanding as to when a Club's season has ended, the designated time period to conduct any interview for a Head Coaching Position, an Offensive, Defensive or Special Teams Coordinator Position, or initiate contact with the candidate or his/her representative, shall begin on the day following the conclusion of Conference Championship weekend.
2. No employment opportunity for the above positions may be offered to an individual until 9:00 AM New York Time on the day following the Super Bowl.
3. These time limitations for interviews and offers of employment apply to coaches who are under contract with NFL clubs and those who are not employed by NFL clubs.

Submitted by Buffalo

*Effect:* For one year only, requires all clubs and personnel interviewing for available Head Coach and Coordinator positions to operate under the same time frame for the hiring process.

*Reason:* Promotes club organizational stability and inter-club fairness, while preserving legitimate opportunities for personnel to explore other positions.