

## **2013 Regular Season Bulletin 7**

### **Illegal Participation**

Play: (From an Official) "4th & 15 from K's 3 yard line. At the end of the 3rd down, Team K makes their substitutions for a punt. The ball is marked ready-for-play and I positioned myself on the end line. After the ready, but well before the snap, K1 accidentally steps on the end line as he takes his "warm up" kicks. He then positions himself within 1 foot of the end line, receives the snap and kicks the ball without ever stepping on the end line again. I did not penalize Team K."

"We felt that by the book, K1 would be guilty of illegal substitution. Was stepping on the line a foul, as K1 did not intentionally go out of bounds, nor did he do it to deceive Team R?"

Ruling: Look at Rule 9-6-2. There are four elements, a through d, that cause a player to be guilty of illegal participation, not illegal substitution as you incorrectly note. All of these elements have to be 1) intentional and 2) occur during the down. Rule 2-7-1 tells us that a down starts with a legal snap.

In your play, K1 "accidentally" steps on the end line before the snap. He has not violated any part(s) of Rule 9-6-2 and thus is NOT GUILTY of illegal participation. You were correct to not throw the flag for illegal participation.

### **25-Second Clock**

Whenever the 25-second clock is interrupted, usually for a ball or an equipment problem, it must be reset to 25 seconds with a new ready-for-play signal. If you believe a time advantage has been gained, the game clock, if it was running, can be stopped and restarted on the snap, but, bottom line, you have to give the offense 25 seconds to run their play following the last ready-for-play.

### **Fair Catch**

Play: 4th and 5 at the B45. The snap goes way over the head of punter A12. He runs back to the A30, picks up the loose ball and punts it where it lands at the B48. A25 picks up the ball at the B48 and runs to the B30. While the ball was in the air, B45 gave a fair catch signal at the B42.

Ruling: B45's fair catch signal is valid anywhere beyond, in or behind the neutral zone while a legal kick is in flight. The kick did not cross the line of scrimmage. A25 may advance the ball upon gaining possession behind the line of scrimmage. The result of the play would be 1st and 10 for Team A at the B30. Rules 6-2-3, 6-5-1 and 6-5-2.

### **Penalty Enforcement**

Play: On a try, A86 holds B46 in the end zone during a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone. Eligible A27 catches the pass in the end zone. Team B accepts the penalty.

Ruling: The foul is for offensive pass interference rather than holding. If the 15-yard penalty is accepted, the try will be repeated from the 18-yard line. Rule 7-5-10.

### Attempt/Intent to Deceive

Play: (From an Official) "After the first scoring drive, Team A set up for the try in the "swinging gate" formation with the main portion of the team well to the left side of the field. The QB brought out a kicking tee, not a flat rubber block, and tossed it (haphazardly) to the ground well behind and a bit left of the snapper and QB. The QB was in position to receive a direct snap. The tee was upside down such that it was not in a position/condition to be used as a tee. I told the QB the tee would have to be removed from the field. He said that they might use it. I said that if they might use it, the tee would have to be placed in a useable position/condition such that it could be used without further adjustment, otherwise it represented a safety hazard and could not stay. The QB tossed the tee to the sideline and shifted his team into a normal formation and ran a play for a successful 2-point try. The head coach was confused about why I instructed the QB to reposition/remove the tee. I said the tee would have to be placed in a usable position/condition to be on the field during a play."

Comment: This official did the right thing by removing the tee. My question to all of you is do you think Team A brought the tee onto the field in an attempt to deceive the other team? What causes me to think about a possible deceit issue is the statement that the QB "tossed (the tee) haphazardly to the ground away from the snapper and the QB." If there was a potential to actually use the tee, I would think the QB would be more careful in how he positioned the tee. The fact that he was sloppy in just tossing it to the ground leads me to believe that the tee was just a "prop" to make the defense think the PAT would be via a place kick rather than a 2-point attempt. And therein is the potential for possible deceit..... There is also concern that a free-kick tee was brought onto the field as opposed to a flat tee that we normally see for place kicks.

Actions or verbiage designed to confuse the defense into believing there is a problem and the snap is not imminent are not legal. Included is pretending to have a problem with the called play, an equipment problem or a problem with a kicking tee. These are unfair acts, 15-yard dead ball penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct.

There's a broad area of judgment here, so discretion is advised before going down this road. Look at the Comment to Case Book play 9.9.1 Situation B.