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Georgia Southern University Athletics



Rule Changes For 2021 College Football Season Football

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IRVING, Texas – As the season begins, it is time for the National Football Foundation (NFF) & College Hall of Fame to highlight the key rule changes that will take effect during the 2021 college football season.

Since 2011, the NFF has partnered with the College Football Officiating (CFO), led by **Steve Shaw** and chaired by Mid-American Conference Commissioner **Jon Steinbrecher**, to help generate awareness for the rule changes in college football. The CFO functions as the national professional organization for all football officials who work games at the collegiate level, and the organization has held its annual winter meeting of conference coordinators for football officials at the NFF headquarters in Irving, Texas for eight consecutive years (2013-2020) prior to the pandemic.

Shaw, who became the CFO National Coordinator of Football Officials in March 2020, previously served the Southeastern Conference and Sun Belt Conference as coordinator of officials. He also serves as the Secretary-Rules Editor of the NCAA Football Rules Committee, a position critical to the development of competition rules and policies. Shaw excelled as a head referee for 15 years in the SEC, earning 14 postseason assignments, including two national championship games. He has been a leader in revamping the sport's officiating mechanics and advancing the use of technology to assist officials.

"With the 2021 season under way, let me first say that I'm very proud of our officials and all of college football for finding a way to safely play the 2020 season," said Shaw. "And even though it was a trying year, we successfully made it to the finish line. Maximum flexibility for all involved will again be required to make this season a success.

"The mission of the Rules Committee is to develop and evaluate rules changes that will enhance the sport, protect the image of the game, and enhance the student athlete's health and safety. Player safety has been the highest priority of the committee for many years now resulting in significant changes that have improved the game in terms of mitigating injuries. The modifications to the rules for 2021 will be a benefit for the student-athletes, the fans and the game."

2021 Rules Changes

Overtime 2-Point Conversion Requirements

Teams will be required to run a 2-point conversion play after a touchdown when a game reaches a second overtime period. Previously, a 2-point attempt was required after the third overtime period. Also, if the game reaches a third overtime, teams will run alternating 2-point plays, instead of starting another drive at the opponent's 25-yard line. This is a change from the previous rule, which started to use 2-point plays in the fifth overtime period. This rules change is being made to limit the number of plays from scrimmage and bring the game to a quicker conclusion. Teams can still choose whether to kick the point after touchdown or run a 2-point conversion play during the first overtime period.

Team Area

The team area will be permanently extended to the 20-yard lines, starting in the 2021 season. Previously, the team area extended to the 25-yard lines, but this area was expanded to the 15-yard lines last season to create more spacing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unsportsmanlike Tactics

Video board and lighting system operators have been included in those personnel who may not create any distraction that obstructs play.

Feigning injuries

A new framework has been created to allow a school or conference to request a postgame video review about questionable actions through the NCAA secretary-rules editor/national coordinator of officials.

Instant Replay – Clock Adjustments

In order to keep the game moving, when Instant Replay overturns a call on the field, The clock will only be reset when there is less than two minutes remaining in the 2nd quarter and less than five minutes remaining in the 4th quarter.

Points of Emphasis:

- For the 2021 season, targeting and dangerous contact fouls will continue to be a priority for all officials. The NCAA Football Rules Committee continues to embrace the targeting rule to promote player safety and reduce head contact.
- It will be a point of emphasis for officials to penalize any taunting action directed toward an opponent. Committee members think these actions reflect poorly on the game and can lead to unnecessary confrontations.
- Officials are directed to be alert to players who are significantly in violation of uniform rules and to send violators out of the game to correct the issue. This will include specifically the pants, jerseys and T-shirts that extend below the torso.
- Coaches should not enter the field of play or leave the team area to debate officiating decisions. Those who do so will have committed an automatic unsportsmanlike conduct foul.