



**Rule 5**  
**Series of Downs,**  
**Number of Down, and**  
**Team Possession after Penalty**



## Series of Downs

- **Four consecutively numbered downs are awarded to a team to put the ball in play from scrimmage after a free kick, touchback, or fair catch**
- **Until a new series is awarded, the Referee shall have authority to correct an error in the number of a down.**
- **In order to be awarded a new series of downs the team must advance the ball to/or beyond the line to gain**
- **On any down other than fourth, the line to gain can be achieved by considering the action that took place during the down and the effect of any dead ball foul**
- **On fourth down a new series is awarded after considering the effects of any act that occurred during the down other than a non-player or unsportsmanlike foul (these fouls are treated as dead ball fouls)**



## New Series to **B**

- **A new series is awarded to B if**
  - The ball belongs to **B** at the end of the down
  - After the completion of fourth down the ball belongs to **A** and the down ends with the ball behind the line to gain



## New Series to **R**

- **A new series is awarded to **R** if**
  - a. The ball is legally kicked and recovered by **R**
  - b. After a legal kick the ball is in joint possession by **R** and **K**
  - c. A legally kicked scrimmage kick goes out of bounds
  - d. A legally kicked scrimmage kick becomes dead with no team in possession
  - e. **K** is first to touch a scrimmage kick beyond the expanded neutral zone before it is touched beyond the zone by **R** and before it comes to rest



## New Series to Team in Possession

- **A new series is awarded to the team in possession at the end of the down**
  - When there has been a change of team possession unless the penalty is accepted for a foul that occurred prior to the change of team possession
  - On a scrimmage kick if **R** is the first to touch the ball after it has gone beyond the expanded neutral zone, unless a penalty is accepted for a foul which occurred prior to the end of the kick



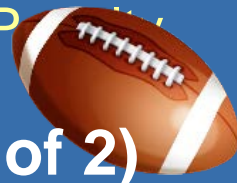
## Scrimmage Kicks

- If **K** recovers a scrimmage kick in or behind the neutral zone and the ball has not been first touched beyond the neutral zone by **R**, the ball remains live and belongs to **K** and the down counts
  - In this case the ball can be advanced



## Free Kicks

- **On free kicks a new series is awarded to R**
  - For kicks going out of bounds last touched by R
  - For kicks in joint possession of R and K
  - At the spot of recovery by K if the ball has not traveled the required 10 yards and R has not touched the ball
  - At the spot of first touching by K if K is the first to touch the ball prior to it going the required 10 yards
    - This right is cancelled if during the down R touches the kick and then commits a foul or the penalty for any foul is accepted
- **On free kicks a new series is awarded to the team in final possession when the ball has traveled a least 10 yards and touched the ground**
  - These two things can happen in any order

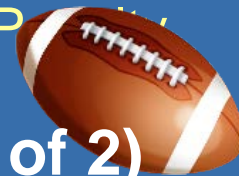


## Down and Possession after Penalty

(1 of 2)

- A. When a penalty is declined, the number of the next down is the same as if the foul had not occurred**
- B. If a double foul occurs during the down, the number of the next down is the same as the down just played**
- C. After a distance penalty the ball belongs to the team that was in possession when the foul occurred. Team possession may change if a new series is awarded.**
- D. When an accepted penalty occurs during a scrimmage down before any change of team possession the ball will belong to team **A** and the number of the next down is the same as the down just played**
  - Exception – if the penalty for the foul includes an automatic first down or the loss of down then the down may change





## Down and Possession after Penalty

(2 of 2)

- E. When a foul occurs prior to the down or simultaneous with the snap, the number of the next down is the same as the number established prior to the foul, unless enforcement results in a first down for **A****
  
- F. When a foul occurs prior to or during a free kick down and before there is a change of team possession, the down that follows is a free kick down, unless after a fair catch or awarded fair catch a scrimmage down is chosen**



## New Series Awarded

- **Following a foul a new series is awarded when**
  - Acceptance of a penalty includes the award of a first down
  - Acceptance or declination of a penalty leaves **A** in possession beyond the line to gain
  - Declination of any penalty leaves **A** in possession after fourth down and the line to gain has not been reached by **A** (new series for team **B**)
  - Acceptance of a penalty against team **A** that carries a loss of down and leaves team **A** in possession behind the line to gain on fourth down (new series for team **B**)
  - Declination of any penalty leaves **B** in possession
  - Acceptance or declination of the penalty for any foul that occurs after team possession has changed during the down
  - **R** is first to touch a scrimmage kick while it is beyond the neutral zone and there is a foul that is declined



## Line to Gain and Measurement

- **The line to gain is always 10 yards in advance of the ball's foremost point when a new series is awarded. If the goal line is less than 10 yards away, the goal line is the line to gain.**
  - The penalties for all fouls (including non-player and unsportsmanlike) that occur prior to the ready for play signal are administered prior to the establishment of the line to gain
- **A measurement for a possible first down may be made by the captain prior to the ball being marked ready for play. The request can be denied if the referee feels the line to gain has or has not been reached.**
- **On a change of possession that does not include an incomplete fourth down pass, the foremost point of the ball now becomes the rear point when the direction of the offense is changed**
- **On an incomplete fourth down forward pass the ball is placed at the previous spot so that the rear point of the ball becomes the foremost point of the ball when the direction of the offense is changed**