

NCAA approves changes to college football overtime and targeting rules

By [Jacob Bogage](#)

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The NCAA on Tuesday implemented a number of new rules aimed at player safety, including stiffer penalties for targeting fouls and blind-side blocks and rules to shorten overtime games.

The NCAA's football rules committee overhauled the overtime format for games that exceed four extra sessions. In the fifth and subsequent overtimes, teams will alternate running two-point conversions from the 3-yard line, instead of beginning a new series from an opponent's 25-yard line.

The rule is meant to spare players from extra hits late in games when fatigue could effect player safety. The committee also implemented mandatory two-minute rest periods after the second and fourth overtimes.

The committee also toughened punishments for targeting and blind-side block infractions.

Beginning with the 2019-20 season, players who commit three targeting fouls, making forcible contact against an opponent with the crown of the helmet, will face a one-game suspension.

Players penalized for targeting under the old rule were disqualified for the rest of the game if the foul occurred in the first half and the remainder of the game and the first half of the next game if it occurred in the second half.

Officials are now required to review each targeting foul and render it "confirmed," meaning the call on the field was correct and the yardage and disqualification penalty will be assessed, or "overturned," meaning the call was incorrect and the penalty will be revoked.

Previously, officials could state that the ruling on the field "stands" in circumstances where they could not with indisputable evidence overturn a call. Now, the burden of proof will lie with confirming targeting, otherwise, the penalty will be washed out.

"The purpose of the rule is not debated: It's how do you enforce the rules, how do you discipline for violations of the rules, how do you have consistency in identifying and enforcing the rules, those are the things we're struggling with and, we think, making some progress," Arizona State Athletic Director Ray Anderson, who chairs the NCAA's football overnight committee, said on [a podcast released with the rule changes](#). "We think the targeting rule has made the game better because it's changed behavior and most importantly because it's protecting players."

Rules regarding blind-side blocks also were expanded. Under the new rules, a player who delivers a blind-side block anywhere to an opponent's body with forcible contact will earn a 15-yard personal foul penalty. Blind-side blocks previously had to hit an opponent in the head or neck or below the waist to be illegal.

The two-man wedge formation, a popular blocking technique on kickoffs in which two blockers link hands or stand shoulder to shoulder, also has been banned.

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