

# RULE 4

## BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT-OF-BOUNDS

### Section 1. Ball in Play — Dead Ball

#### Dead Ball Becomes Alive

ARTICLE 1. A dead ball, after having been declared ready-for-play, becomes a live ball when it is snapped or free kicked, legally or illegally.

#### Live Ball Becomes Dead

ARTICLE 2. A live ball becomes a dead ball as provided in the rules or when an official sounds his whistle (even through inadvertently).

#### Ball Declared Dead

ARTICLE 3. A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound the whistle or declare it dead:

- a. When it goes out-of-bounds or when it touches the goal line (vertical plane) of the Ball Carrier's opponents. (Flags must cross)
- b. When any part of the Ball Carrier's person other than a hand or foot touches the ground. *Exception:* The ball remains alive when it will ostensibly be held for a kick.
- c. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, field goal or successful try-for-point is made.
- d. When, during a try-for-point, Team B obtains possession of the ball or when it becomes certain a try-for-point kick will not score the point.
- e. When a player of the kicking team catches or recovers any free kick or a scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone; when a free kick or an untouched scrimmage kick comes to rest on the ground and no player attempts to secure it.
- f. When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
- g. When a backward pass or fumble by a player touches the ground. *Note:* (*Exception*) A ball snapped from scrimmage, which hits the ground after getting to or past the intended receiver, is dead at the spot at which it hits the ground. On a declared kick down a snap which hits the ground after getting to, or past the intended receiver.
- h. When a legal forward pass is legally completed, or a loose ball is caught or recovered by a player on, above, or behind the opponents' goal line.

**Section 2**

- j. When a Ball Carrier has a flag removed legally by a defensive player.
- k. A muff of a kicked ball is dead when it strikes the ground.
- l. Following a valid fair catch signal when the kick is caught or recovered between the goal lines by any receiver beyond K's line (unless the kick has been touched by one of the kickers beyond the line).

**Inadvertent Whistle**

ARTICLE 4. If there was an inadvertent whistle when:

- a. A legal pass or snap is in flight, or during a kick, or while the ball is loose behind the line, and before hitting the ground, the down will be replayed.
- b. If the ball was loose and before hitting the ground following a backward pass or fumble beyond A's line of scrimmage, or behind A's line following a change of team possession, the ball will be awarded to the team last in possession at the spot where possession was lost and the down will be counted.
- c. When a player is in possession, the team may choose to accept the play at that point or choose to replay the down.

**Ready For Play**

ARTICLE 5. No player shall put the ball in play until it is declared ready-for-play. *Penalty: 5 yards.*

**25 - Second Count**

ARTICLE 6. The ball shall be put in play within 25 seconds after it is declared ready-for-play, unless, during that interval, play is suspended by the Referee. *Penalty: 5 yards.*

**Section 2. Out-of-Bounds****Player or Held Ball Out-of-Bounds**

ARTICLE 1. A player is out-of-bounds when any part of that player touches anything other than another player or a game official which is on or outside a boundary line. A ball in player-possession is out-of-bounds when either the ball or any part of the runner touches the ground or anything else, except a player or game official, which is on or outside a boundary line.

**Ball Out-of-Bounds**

ARTICLE 2. A loose ball (other than a kick which scores a goal) or a forward pass is out-of-bounds when it touches the ground, a player or anything else which is on or outside a boundary line.

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**Out-of-Bounds at Crossing Point**

ARTICLE 3. If a live ball crosses a boundary line and is then declared out-of-bounds it is out-of-bounds at the crossing point.

**Out-of-Bounds at Forward Point**

ARTICLE 4. If a live ball is declared out-of-bounds because of contact with a player or anything else, and the ball does not cross a boundary line, it is out-of-bounds at the ball's most forward point when it was declared dead.