

BASIC RULES IN KEEPING STATISTICS

The following was submitted by Bob Barton, who has been keeping statistics at high school football games for more than 50 years. He is co-editor of the Connecticut State High School Football Record Book.

Note: The National Federation of State High School Associations at one time published a manual for high school statisticians incorporating football, basketball and baseball statistical rules. This is no longer available through the CIAC office in Cheshire. Because the Federation rules on football statistics were derived from the NCAA Football Statisticians' Manual, what follows also is derived from the NCAA manual. In no case should high school statisticians employ National Football League rules, which differ from NCAA rules on such matters as passing yardage and quarterback ratings.

In this digest of rules, Amity and Branford are used instead of Team A and Team B, the NCAA manual's designations.

1. Lengths of all plays are recorded in whole yards, no fractions.

Comment: You may write in your story that a team was 6 inches short of a first down, but statistically it was a yard short.

2. In game statistics, report net yardage, deducting yards lost from yards gained.

3. Only yardage between the goal lines counts. *Comment: There is no such thing as a 107-yard interception return.* Exception: Field goals are measured from the spot where the ball is teed up to the goal posts.

4. In determining ball position, there must always be at least 1 yard to gain for a first down and 1 yard to gain for a touchdown. *Situation: Amity's ball, first down, nose of the ball on Amity's 40. Aaron advances the ball 9 yards and 32 inches, short of the 50. Credit him with a 9-yard gain to the 49. Next play, Abrams advances the ball 6 inches for a first down. Credit a 1-yard gain to the 50. Situation: Amity makes a first down between Branford's 10- and 11-yard lines. Consider the ball on the 11, because there must be a yard to go for the touchdown if Team A makes a first down inside the 1. Situation: Amity moves the ball just inside the 1 but short of a first down. Consider the ball on the 2, because there must be a yard to make for the first down and another to make for the touchdown.*

5. Subject to the previous paragraph, if the ball is touching a yard line, it is on that yard line; if it is between yard lines, it is on the line in advance of the offensive team. *Situation: Amity's ball, first down between Branford's 33- and 32-yard lines. Consider the ball on the 32. Situation: Amity turns the ball over on downs between Branford's 25 and 24. Credit Amity's final play as reaching the 24. Start Branford's offensive series on the 25, the line in advance of the offensive team.*

6. Rule of thumb: Every gain or loss of yardage is credited or charged to an individual. Exceptions: The team, not an individual, is credited or charged with:

A loss resulting from an obvious wild pass from center;

A blocked punt, unless the punter fumbled a properly centered ball;

An incomplete pass when the quarterback spikes the ball immediately to save time;

Yards lost when the quarterback takes a knee to consume time;

The 2 points scored on a safety. *Comment: A defender may be credited with a tackle for loss and with a sack on a safety, but not with the 2 points.*

7. A pass that goes forward is a forward pass. A pass that does not go forward is not a forward pass but a lateral. *Comment: A forward pass can be overhand, underhand, one-handed, two-handed. How it is thrown has nothing to do with whether it goes forward.*

8. On a completed forward pass, the passer gets credit for the full length of the play under passing; and the receiver gets credit for the full length of the play under receiving.

9. All offensive plays are rushing plays until the ball is either thrown forward or kicked. If a player attempting to pass is tackled for a loss, charge him with a rush and the yards lost. *Situation: Amity's ball on its 20. Aaron, attempting to pass, is sacked by Baker on the 12. Charge Aaron with an 8-yard loss by rushing and credit Baker with a tackle, tackle for loss and sack. Situation: Amity's ball on its 20, Aaron in punt formation. Azcue's snap goes over Aaron's head and (a) Aaron recovers on the 2, or (b) Baker recovers on the 2 and scores. In either case, charge Amity with a team rush of minus 18 yards. In (b) credit Baker with a 2-yard fumble return.*

10. On a play involving a lateral pass when the ball has been advanced past the line of scrimmage, or a fumble recovered by the offensive team when the ball has been advanced, consider any subsequent advance in the same statistical category as the original play. *Situation: Amity's ball on the 50. Aaron runs to the 40 and (a) laterals or (b) fumbles, and Abrams (a) receives the ball or (b) recovers the ball on the 42 and advances to the 20. Credit Aaron with a rush of 8 yards, i.e. to the spot where Abrams obtained the ball. Credit Abrams with no rush but with 22 yards rushing (not with a fumble return). Situation (from a Masuk-East Lyme game): Amity's ball on Branford's 20. Aaron completes a forward pass to Abrams, who fumbles on the 6, the ball rolling into the end zone where Ackley recovers for a touchdown. Credit Aaron with a pass attempt, a 20-yard completion and a touchdown pass. Credit Abrams with a pass reception for 20 yards, i.e. to the point where Ackley obtained the ball. Credit Ackley with no reception and no yards receiving but with a touchdown by receiving.*

If a lateral pass takes place entirely within the offensive backfield, or (on a designed option play) within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage, treat the play as a rush by the player who receives the lateral.

11. If a fumble occurs in the offensive backfield, for example on a pitchout, and results in a loss, the statistician rules which player is at fault or bears the greater responsibility and charges him with a rush and the yards lost. (*Comment: In this regard, the statistician functions like the official scorer at a baseball game, deciding whether to charge an error to the shortstop or first baseman.*)

12. If a spot foul is called against the offense after the ball has been advanced past the line of scrimmage, credit the offensive team and player(s) with the yardage to the spot of the foul. *Situation: Amity's ball on the 50. Aaron runs to the Branford 20, but Axthelm clips at the 33 and Amity is penalized to the Branford 48. Credit Aaron with a rush of 17 yards (to the spot of the foul) and charge Amity with a 15-yard penalty.*

If a spot foul is called behind the scrimmage line, charge the offensive team with a penalty from the scrimmage line to the spot where the next play starts. *Situation: Amity's ball on the 50. Aaron retreats to pass and Azcue holds at the Amity 42. Amity is penalized to its 32. Charge Amity with a penalty of 18 yards. Comment: In college, the penalty would be walked off from the 50, so the penalty would be only 10 yards.*

13. If an official errs in spotting the ball after a penalty, compute the penalty to where the ball is spotted. *Situation: Amity's ball on the 50. Before the snap, Branford encroaches. The penalty is walked off to the Branford 44. Charge Branford with a 6-yard penalty.*

14. Total offense is defined as the sum of rushing and passing only. Total offense yardage does not include yardage from receiving or returns. The NCAA maintains a statistical category called all-purpose running that includes rushing, receiving and returns but excludes forward passing.

15. Statistics of a game that is forfeited or otherwise terminated while in progress are recorded and incorporated into the season's statistics if the game has been played to a reasonable conclusion. The NCAA standard for a reasonable conclusion is three quarters. Under Federation rules, results of a game may become official if less time has been played (*example: Ftich-New London 2001, ended by weather in the second quarter with the score 44-0*).

Statistics of a game forfeited by conference action after completion become part of the season record regardless. (*Comment: This accords with Article 31.10.5 of the NCAA Manual, precedent for which goes back to the Bert Coan case at Kansas in 1960.*)