Forward-Pass Classification
7-5

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Definitions - Passing

• Forward Pass [2-29-2] – A pass thrown with its initial direction toward the opponent’s end line.  Note: Prior to releasing the ball on a pass, if the potential passer is contacted, and the ball is released, it is a forward pass if his arm was moving forward on contact.

• Forward Pass [2-29-4] – A forward pass ends when it is caught, touches the ground or is out of bounds

• Catch [2-4] – a catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball which is in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds or being contacted by an opponent in such a way that he is prevented from returning to the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball. (The ground CAN cause an incompletion)
Definitions – Player Designations

• Player in the backfield [2-30-3] – a back is any player who has no part of his body breaking the plane of an imaginary line drawn parallel to the line of scrimmage through the waist of the nearest teammate who is legally on the line, except for the player under the snapper, who is also considered a back.

• Player on the line of scrimmage [2-30-9] – a lineman is any A player who is facing his opponent’s goal line with the line of his shoulders approximately parallel thereto and with his head or foot breaking an imaginary plane drawn parallel to the line of scrimmage through the waist of the snapper when the ball is snapped.
Eligible Receivers for Team A

Imaginary line through waistline of nearest teammate legally on line

88
43
79
71
55
12
60
77
20
80

LOS

Eligible receivers for Team A are 88, 80, 22, 20, and 12. 43 is not eligible but could be eligible if he moved back a step.
Eligible Receivers for Team A

Imaginary line through waistline of nearest teammate legally on line

Eligible receivers for Team A are 88, 80, 22, 20, and 12. 43 is not eligible but could be eligible if he moved forward a step.
Team A has a four man line. 77, 79, 20 and 43 are not on the line. This is illegal formation – not enough men on the line.
Conditions for Legal Forward Pass

• It is a legal forward pass if:
  – During a scrimmage down
  – Before team possession has changed
  – A player of A throws the ball with both feet of the passer in or behind the neutral zone when the ball is released

• More than one forward pass may be thrown during the down.
  – It does not matter if a runner advances beyond the zone and then returns behind the zone to throw a legal forward pass.

• Team B, and Team R can never throw a legal forward pass.
Conditions for Illegal Forward Pass

• The ball is thrown forward when the passer is beyond the neutral zone.
• The ball is thrown forward by either team after a change of team possession during the down.
• The passer, to save yardage or to stop the clock, intentionally grounds the ball, or throws it into an area where there is no eligible Team A receiver.
• The passer, spiking the ball in an effort to stop the clock, does not release it immediately after controlling a hand-to-hand snap, or does so after a muffed snap has touched the ground.
• Exception: It is legal to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball forward to the ground immediately after receiving a direct hand-to-hand snap.
Eligibility Requirements [7-5-6]

- To be eligible, a Team A player must be legally in the backfield or on the end of the line.
- Eligible Team A players must be numbered other than 50 – 79.
- Team A players wearing numbers 50 – 79 are ineligible regardless of their position at the snap.
- All Team A players who were eligible receivers at the snap remain eligible throughout the down, however, once an eligible Team A receiver intentionally goes out of bounds, he may not return (Penalty is Illegal Participation).
- All Team A players who were ineligible at the snap remain ineligible until Team B player touches the last forward pass.
- All Team B players are eligible at all times.
## Summary of Downfield Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legal Forward Pass</th>
<th>Behind Neutral Zone</th>
<th>Beyond Neutral Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can ineligible receiver bat, muff, or catch pass?</td>
<td>No – illegal touching, 5 yards and loss of down. (7-5-13)</td>
<td>No – Offensive Pass Interference, 15 yards and loss of down (7-5-10b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can ineligible receiver be touched by pass?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No – Offensive Pass Interference, 15 yards and loss of down (7-5-10b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can ineligible receiver go downfield?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No – ineligible downfield, 5 yards. (7-5-12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pass Interference Restrictions [7-5-8&9]

• Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass \textbf{begin} for:
  – A with the snap.
  – B when the ball leaves the passer’s hand.
• Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass \textbf{end} for all:
  – A players, when B touches the pass, or last forward pass if more than one.
  – Eligible A players when A touches the pass, or last forward pass if more than one.
    • Ineligible A players may not touch the pass, but can use hands or arms in a legal block to ward off an opponent.
  – B players when the first pass has been touched by A or B.
Conditions for Pass Interference

- The pass is a legal forward pass that crosses the neutral zone and is untouched by Team B in or behind the neutral zone (7-5-7).
- The interference occurs beyond the neutral zone (7-5-10).
- The interference is with an eligible opponent (7-5-10a).
- The interference occurs during a pass before restrictions have ended (7-5-9a).
- Face-guarding is the only non-contact act which can be judged to be interference (7-5-10d).
- “Catchability” of a pass is not a factor for pass interference.
- If pass interference by either team is intentional, an additional 15 yards are added to the original 15-yard penalty (7-5-10 Pen).
Penalty Review

• Illegal forward pass – 5 yards plus loss of down
  – Enforce as running play from end of run (spot of illegal forward pass)
• Intentional Grounding – 5 yards plus loss of down
  – Enforce from spot of illegal pass
• Offensive Pass Interference – 15 yards plus loss of down
  – Enforce from previous spot
• Defensive Pass Interference – 15 yards and automatic first down
  – If pass interference by either player is intentional, his team shall be penalized an additional 15 yard.
  – Enforce from previous spot (If Team A scores TD then enforced on the try)
• Ineligible downfield – 5 yards
  – Enforce from previous spot (no loss of down)
• Illegal touching – 5 yards and loss of down
  – Enforce from spot of illegal touch
References

• Diehl, Jerry. “NFHS Football Simplified & Illustrated”, 2004 Edition