

A close-up photograph of a football field. In the foreground, a bright orange rectangular marker stands upright on a white yard line. To its right, a brown football with white laces lies on the grass. The background shows the green turf and white yard lines receding into the distance.

The Goal Line

Officiating the Routine,
Extreme, and Unseen

Rule references for Pylon plays

1-2-4: "When properly placed, the goal line pylon is out of bounds at the intersection of the sideline and the goal line extended."

2-26-1: "When related to a live ball in a runner's possession (touching inbounds) while the ball is over the out of bounds area, the goal line includes the extension beyond the sidelines."

2-29-1: "A player or other person is out of bounds when any part of the person is touching anything, other than another player or game official, that is on or outside the sideline or end line."

2-29-2: "A ball in player possession is out of bounds when the runner or the ball touches anything, other than another player or game official that is on or outside a sideline or end line."

4-3-2: "If the ball touches a pylon, it is out of bounds behind the goal line."

8-2-1: "Possession of a live ball in the opponent's end zone is always a touchdown."

- a. It is a touchdown when a runner advances from the field of play so that the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line.

Case Book References

4.3.3.A: "It is 4th down and the line to gain is B's 45-yard line. A1, running near the sideline, is blocked by B1 on the 46 and he: (a) travels several feet in the air landing out of bounds opposite B's 44 ½-yard line..."

RULING: In (a), the covering official must locate the spot where the ball crossed the sideline and then determine whether the foremost point of the ball was behind or beyond the line to gain when A1 crossed the plane of the sideline.

8.2.1: "Runner A10 dives into the pylon at the intersection of the goal line and sidelines and the ball breaks the plane of the goal line.

RULING: Touchdown. Assuming the pylon was placed properly, the ball broke the plane prior to the touching of the pylon.

Other Considerations

The player's body/arm/leg/etc. crossing directly over or inside the pylon is not relevant - to get the goal line extended, the player must touch the ground.

Three ways a runner can score a touchdown:

1. Live ball crosses the goal line plane, over or inside the pylons (including making contact with the pylon itself) while in player possession
2. Live ball is already crossing the EXTENDED goal line plane when any part of the runner's body touches the ground inbounds.
3. Live ball crosses the EXTENDED goal line plane subsequent to the runner touching the ground in the endzone, and before he touches anything out of bounds.

Situation

Runner crosses goal line with possession of the live ball.
Both runner and ball crosses inside the pylon.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner steps on the goal line with possession of the live ball. Runner is inside the pylon and the ball is outside of the pylon, already breaking the plane of the goal line extended.

Ruling?



Situation

Striding runner reaches the point of the ball across the goal line inside the pylon at the exact instant his foot touches out of bounds

Ruling?



Situation

Runner gets hit near the goal line, causing him to become airborne. The runner's body hits the pylon before the ball penetrates the goal line.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner gets hit near the goal line causing him to leave his feet. Both runner and ball cross inside pylon.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner dives and crosses goal line with possession of the ball. Both runner and ball cross over the pylon.

Ruling?.



Situation

Runner dives and crosses goal line with possession of the ball. Both runner and ball cross inside the pylon.

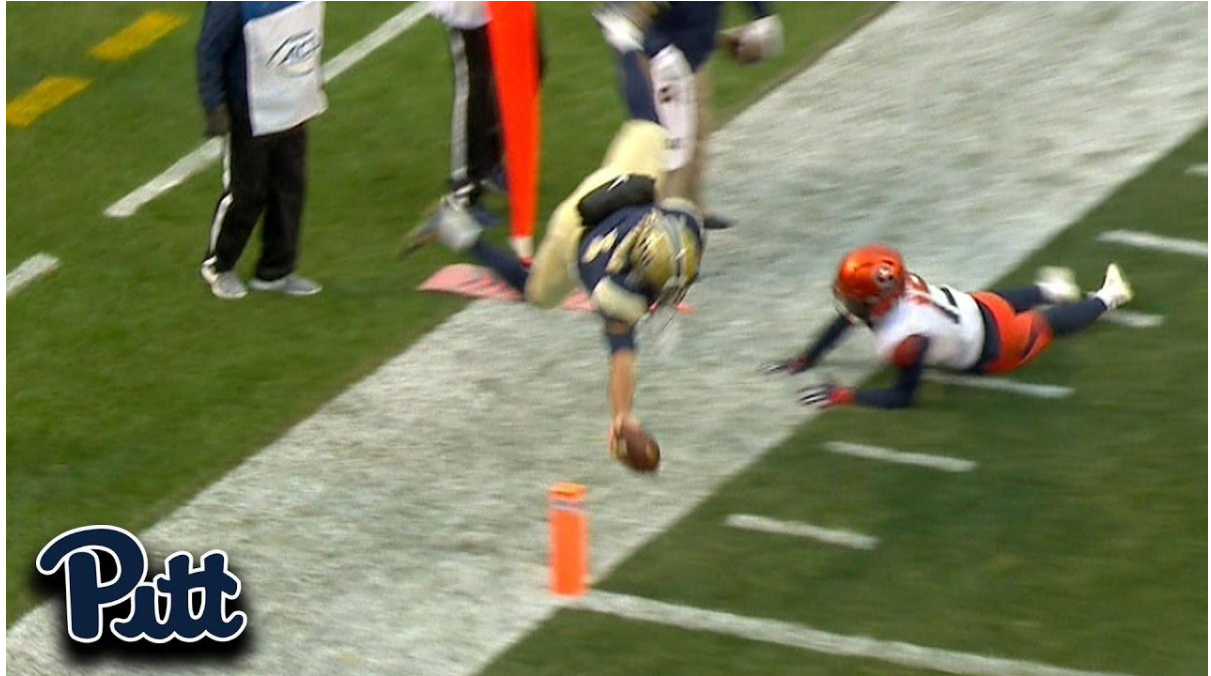
Ruling?



Situation

Runner dives and crosses goal line with possession of the ball. Runner crosses outside pylon and ball crosses inside pylon.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner is running towards the pylon and kicks the pylon before the ball crosses the goal line.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner dives towards the pylon and loses the ball short of the goal line. The loose ball goes over the pylon and lands out of bounds.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner dives towards the pylon and loses the ball short of the goal line. The loose ball hits the pylon.

Ruling?



Situation

Receiver jumps from the endzone back towards a forward pass. The receiver catches the ball while airborne over the goal line and lands at the one yard line. The runner is tackled short of the goal line.

Ruling?



Situation

Receiver jumps from the endzone back towards a forward pass. The receiver catches the ball while airborne over the goal line and is immediately contacted by a defender and driven to the ground at the 1 yard line.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner A1 fumbles the ball at the 2 yard line and the ball comes to rest in the field of play. Neither team recovers the football.

Ruling?



Situation

Runner A1 fumbles the ball at the 2 yard line and the ball comes to rest in the endzone. Neither team recovers the football.

Ruling?



Momentum Exception

Why is the exception needed?

Prior to 1982, high school players could make apparent game changing plays and be personally responsible for adding two points to the opponent's score.

The exception prevents the defense and/or return team from being unfairly punished for making great plays through no fault of their own. No cheap safeties mirrors the philosophy of no cheap turnovers.

Momentum Exception

8-5-2-a: “It is a safety when: A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his goal line, and it becomes dead there in his team’s possession.

EXCEPTION: When a defensive player intercepts an opponent’s forward pass; intercepts or recovers an opponent’s fumble or backward pass; or an R player catches or recovers a scrimmage kick or free kick between his 5-yard line and the goal line, and his original momentum carries him into the end zone where the ball remains in the end zone and is declared dead in the end zone in his team’s possession or it goes out of bounds in the end zone, the ball belongs to the team in possession at the spot where the pass or fumble was intercepted or recovered or the kick was caught or recovered.

What conditions need to be met?

1. The momentum exception applies between the defensive team's five yardline and goalline.
2. It applies to an interception or a recovery.
3. It applies to a forward or backward pass, free or scrimmage kick, or fumble.
4. It applies only to the interception or recovery of an opponent's pass, kick, or fumble.
5. The ball must be declared dead in the end zone in the defending team's possession or the ball must go out of bounds in the end zone.
6. The defending player's original momentum must take him into the end zone.

How do we officiate the play?

1. Be prepared! Understanding the rule and its application will make adjudicating these plays easier.
 - a. Back Judges/Wing Officials - Interceptions and fumble recoveries will be primary officials
 - b. Back Judges - Primary official on scrimmage kick plays
 - c. Referee - Primary official on free kick plays
2. Physical Positioning
 - a. Be where you need to be to see what you need to see
 - b. Know the game situation so that you are ready to move to your live ball position.
3. When in doubt?
 - a. The ball was possessed inside the 5 yard line.
 - b. The kick reached the endzone.
 - c. The fumble was recovered in the endzone.
 - d. It is NOT a safety.

Situation

Play 1: R1 catches a free kick on the R-3. His original momentum takes him into the end zone where he takes a knee.

Ruling?

Situation

Play 2: B1 intercepts a pass on the B-4 and his original momentum takes him into the end zone. He is hit while in the end zone and fumbles out the back of the end zone.

Ruling?

Situation

Play 3: B1 intercepts a pass on the B-4 and his original momentum takes him into the end zone. He is hit while in the end zone and fumbles. The ball rolls out of the end zone and out of bounds on the B-6.

Ruling?

Situation

Play 4: R1 intercepts a pass on the R-4 and runs parallel to the goal line. He is hit and fumbles on the R-4. R2 catches the fumble and his original momentum carries him into the end zone where he is downed.

Ruling?

Situation

Play 5: R1 muffs a free kick in the end zone and the ball rolls into the field of play. R2 recovers the ball on the R-4 and his momentum carries him into the end zone where he is downed.

Ruling?

Situation

Play 6: Second and 8 from the B-9. A1 fumbles at the B-6. B1 bats A1's fumble at the B-4. B2 recovers at the B-3 and his original momentum carries him into the end zone where he is downed.

Ruling?

Situation

Play 7: B1 intercepts a pass on the B-4 and his original momentum takes him into the end zone. He is hit while in the end zone and fumbles out of the back of the endzone. While B1 was in possession in the endzone, B55 blocked A37 in the back in the endzone.