

### **ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL???**

Let's fashion a player with a helmet to withstand those collisions that seem to conjure up all the hype these days, shoulder pads, knee pads, cleats... and let's send him off to a 100-yard field with 10 of his teammates huddled together. This particular player is engaging in his first NFL game, departing from the realms of college football. But it's okay. He may struggle because the men he is playing with may be bigger and faster, but everything should be fine, because the rules are the same. This right here is the general misconception that even the most zealous football fans have. Many believe that the jump from high school football to college football and then to the NFL is simply a transition to playing with larger, faster, and possibly smarter players. This cannot be further from the truth. As a player changes from high school football to college football, the rules that dictate the game change too. As this player graduates from playing college football and enters into the world of profession football, the rules change once again.

There are many differences in how the high school level, the college level, and the NFL play the exact same game. It can be as subtle as a difference in the time allowed between plays, to something as prodigious as overtime rules. All of these different rules that characterize each level of play must be studied prior to entering the next level. These distinctive rule changes can seem trivial at first glance; however, with greater thought, the individual differences can add up to make a considerable effect on the outcome of the game. For instance, any football fan realizes how important the 3-pointers can be from a field-goal kick for any game. You don't need to go that far back in history to find out that Super Bowl XXXVI was won by a 48-yard field goal kick by Adam Vinatieri for the Patriots in a game played against the St. Louis Rams. However, there are those infamous field-goal kicks in the play-offs where the ball barely missed the space between the yellow goal posts by inches. These are inches that the high school level has, as their goal posts are much wider than those in the NFL. For both levels, the goal posts are 10 feet high, but the goal posts in the high school level are a whopping 58 inches wider, probably making field-goal kickers in the NFL want to go back to the days of playing high school football.

There are many other differences in rules that separate each level. A few of these differences are noted below:

- Distance between hash marks – HS (53 ft 4in); College (40 ft); NFL (18 ft 6in).
- Overtime – HS (each team starts from the opponent's 10 yard line with equal number of possessions); College (each team starts from the opponent's 25 yard line with equal number of possessions); NFL (First team to score wins – pre-season and regular season games only)
- Kick-off line of scrimmage – HS (40-yard line); College (30-yard line); NFL (35-yard line)
- Defensive pass interference – HS (15-yard penalty and automatic first down); College (Penalty is spot of ball, up to a maximum of 15-yards from previous line of scrimmage); NFL (spot of the penalty)

One of the more interesting rules that the high school football game has, and that no other level has, is the Mercy Rule. In fact, when the DMHS football team played their first varsity game against Mountain View for this season, the end result was 43-7. At one point in the 2nd half, our

team was up 40-0. If the team had racked up two (or more) points to make it 42-0, the Mercy Rule would have come into effect, with the game clock then running continuously until game's end.

It is surprising when you understand how the same game can be so different depending on the level that you play. Desert Mountain players who are going to participate at the collegiate level should seriously study the different rules that the college level plays by. Don't just be worried about how much faster you'll have to get or how much more fit you'll have to become, but also keep in mind that there are many subtle differences between the two levels that are imperative to understand before charging onto the field some future Saturday to play your first college game.

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