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Helmet-to-helmet hits draw closer NCAA scrutiny

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CONFERENCE REVIEW RULE

Flagrant Personal Fouls (Rule 9-6). For 2009-10 the rules committee has added a new section that calls for conferences in the days following a game to review certain particularly dangerous plays. This new rule says that if a player is ejected for any flagrant personal foul the conference must review the game video for possible further action. In addition, if the officials call fouls for targeting defenseless players or using the crown of the helmet and the player is not ejected, the rules mandate a conference review. Furthermore, if the review by the conference reveals actions that should have resulted in a personal foul but were not called, the conference may impose sanctions.

Source: NCAA

By **Kelly Whiteside, USA TODAY**

College football officials are cracking down on flagrant fouls, particularly helmet-to-helmet contact, as a result of a new NCAA rule which mandates a post-game video review by conference officials after a dangerous foul is committed.

"The message is clear that we don't want these vicious hits to the head that can lead to serious injury," said Dave Parry, the national coordinator of officials. "And kids who dip their head and go in like a spear can be injured just as badly (as the player who gets hit)."

Ohio State safety Kurt Coleman was suspended by the Big Ten on Monday for one game after a helmet-to-helmet hit against Illinois, which prompted a sharp reply from Ohio State. In a joint statement, athletics director Gene Smith and coach Jim Tressel said the league acted with "poor judgment."

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Helmet-to-helmet hits have been a point of emphasis for several years, now even more so. The Sun Belt also suspended a player this month as a result of Rule 9-6. The Pac-10 keeps a log of players flagged for fouls involving helmet-to-helmet contact. "We think it will be helpful to know in determining potential disciplinary action if a player has been called for this infraction previously," said Pac-10 spokesman Jim Muldoon.

The rule also states if a personal foul was not called, the conference may impose sanctions after a league review. "Everybody prefers the foul or act to be seen, called and handled on the field, but the rules committee put the rule in the book to emphasize good, clean play and avoid unsportsmanlike acts," Parry said. "On the rules committee, we worked long and hard on shots to the head. We looked at lots of video and the committee was unanimous (12-0) that these fouls have to be a point of emphasis."

The Big Ten issued in a statement that it supports "Rule 9-6 as a way of deterring the targeting of an opponent which poses a risk of injury to defenseless players."

After Coleman, a team captain, hit Illinois backup quarterback Eddie McGee on the final drive of the Buckeyes' 30-0 win, a penalty was called but Coleman was not ejected. "We concur that Kurt's hit was late and a result of poor judgment; he was thus penalized and removed from the game by his coaches," Smith and Tressel said. "We do not agree that it was 'pre-meditated' or that he was 'targeting a defenseless' player."

"The decision to suspend points to the conference office's feeling as if there was poor judgment by the game officials for their decision not to eject at the time.

"In our estimation, the final 'poor judgment' is in levying a one-game suspension in this particular case."

Three Big Ten football players have been suspended for one game each just a month into the season. Last year, the Big Ten imposed no football suspensions all season. However, the first two suspensions were not a result of Rule 9-6 but because of league rules. In the first instance, Michigan linebacker Jonas Mouton punched a Notre Dame player. In the second, Purdue offensive guard Zach Reckman was penalized for a late hit at the end of the Northern Illinois game. Still, both point to less tolerance and greater vigilance from officials.

The most replayed hit of the weekend was certainly the sack which forced Florida quarterback Tim Tebow to leave the Kentucky game with a concussion. Southeastern Conference coordinator of officials Rogers Redding deemed it a legal tackle not needing any formal review, according to SEC spokesman Charles Bloom. Parry agreed after watching TV replays of the hit.

"He's not defenseless, he's got a ball in his hands and it just looked to me it was a hard hit in the center of the chest," Parry said. "Though I got a nasty e-mail today from someone who thought it was murder."

Contributing: Jack Carey and Thomas O'Toole

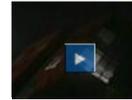
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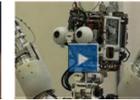
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roughing the kicker penalty when the kicker was never touched, but knocked down by the Iowa offensive player.

One can only assume that there are some officials venting against Paterno due to his taking them to task over the past few years for some horrible calls. A change, or improvement may never be made, as an official review is never allowed in many situations.

One cannot help but notice that the Big Ten officials are not on a par with the SEC, Pac Ten, ACC, or The Big East-they appear to be unfazed by being bad.

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wild bill 1 (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1h 20m ago

Come on people! Tebow's concussion was a freak accident. The hit was clean. A Florida lineman's knee is what caused the concussion. Florida fans please stop your crying, I mean you won the game. As for stiffer penalties for "Helmet to Helmet", all I can say is if this crying continues we'll end up with a game looking more like soccer than football. MEN play football. If you think it's too rough, play soccer. Some of you guys are really in touch with your feminine side.

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CRBROWN (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 1h 28m ago

will someone answer this question if a defense player leads with his helmet it a foul. if an offensive player leads with his helmet it is not. if a defense player touches a face mask it a foul. if an offensive player straight arms a face mask its not..... seems the ncaa needs to rethink the rules.

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duckfan100 (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 3h 24m ago

Boise State, not Boie State!

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duckfan100 (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 3h 25m ago

Hey, let's call this the Boie State rule. They get away with late hits, spearing, etc and no one ever gets punished by the team. So it has to fall to the Conference to actually enforce penalties when coaches won't do the right thing.

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