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2007 NFL RULES CHANGES

A number of playing-rules changes were adopted by NFL owners at the NFL Annual Meeting in late March.

Following are the changes, with comments from the co-chairman of the NFL Competition Committee,
RICH MC KAY:

- **INSTANT REPLAY:** Made a permanent rule. "We think instant replay has been an accepted part of our game now for a number of years," says McKay. "It's worked quite well." Also, high-definition replay equipment will be installed in NFL stadiums.
- **INSTANT REPLAY:** Also made permanent in the replay system were "down-by-contact" as a reviewable play and each review being limited to a maximum of 60 seconds.
- **SPIKING OF BALL:** It will now be a five-yard penalty for a player to spike or throw the ball after a down has ended, except for after a touchdown. "We did not think this type of spiking was good for sportsmanship or the administration of the game by officials," says McKay.
- **PLAYER SAFETY:** It will now be a 15-yard penalty (rather than five yards) for a player to make a block below the waist against an eligible receiver while the quarterback is in the pocket. Also, when a player who receives the snap fumbles or muffs the ball, the restrictions on the defensive team relative to illegal contact and an illegal cut-block will end.
- **TWO-MINUTE WARNING/10-SECOND RUNOFF:** The requirement that the offense has to be behind in the score or the score has to be tied for a 10-second clock runoff to be exercised against the offense for an excess timeout with two minutes to go in the first half or in the game has been eliminated. Now a 10-second runoff will take place no matter what the game situation. Any possible advantage for the offense (e.g., the old rule would not require a 10-second runoff if it were ahead) has been eliminated. The defense has the option to decline a 10-second runoff (which will give it more time should it get the ball back).
- **CLOCK STOPPAGE:** Two exceptions were added to the rule that dictates that the play clock be restarted at the time at which it was stopped prior to the snap. Now an instant replay review prior to the two-minute warning will reset the clock at 25 seconds (as has been the case with other stoppages such as a penalty), as will an instant replay review after the two-minute warning that results in a reversal. These changes will make the administration of the rule more consistent.
- **PACE OF GAME:** The foul for unintentional touching of a forward pass by an interior lineman has been eliminated. It was felt that no advantage was gained by the offense on such a play, and elimination of the rule would speed up the game.
- **CROWD NOISE:** The five-yard penalty against the defense for excessive crowd noise has been eliminated. The penalty had not been called in many years.

Although they are not playing-rule changes, two procedures for coaching employment also were changed:

- Assistant coaches on Super Bowl teams may now interview for a second time with a club for its head-coaching position during the off-week after the championship game. "We wanted to make sure that coaches on Super Bowl teams did not feel it was a disadvantage," says McKay.
- Clubs now have the exclusive right to an assistant coach's contract through the second Tuesday after their season has ended or last playoff game, rather than the third Tuesday as in the past.