



COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In what situations is blocking below the waist always illegal?

Blocking below the waist is always illegal during a down that includes a free kick or a scrimmage kick. It is also illegal after a change of possession. In both cases, the ball carrier is excluded: it is OK to block the ball carrier below the waist.

What is a “10-2 block”?

Think of a player’s arms extended, with his left hand being at “10 o’clock” and his right hand at “2 o’clock.” This defines a region directly in front of him. A “10-2 block” is one that an opponent makes from the front within that region.

What is a “crackback block”?

The crackback block is a block below the waist directed toward the line that runs lengthwise through the original position of the ball at the snap. This block is illegal unless the ball carrier is clearly beyond the neutral zone.

What is a “peelback block”?

The peelback block is a block that is directed back toward the offensive team’s end line. This block is illegal if the ball has left the tackle box.

Is 10-2 block below the waist always legal?

No. Any block below the waist, including a 10-2 block, is illegal if it is:

- During a kick down—free kick or scrimmage kick.
- After a change of team possession.
- A crackback block.
- A peelback block.

What is meant by “restricted” and “unrestricted” players?

The terms “restricted” and “unrestricted” refer to Team A players, and only for plays involving blocking below the waist. **While the ball is in the tackle box, the following players are *unrestricted* until they leave the tackle box:**

(1) linemen who are inside the tackle box at the snap, and (2) backs who are stationary at the snap, and who are at least partially inside the tackle box and also “getting a piece” of the second lineman from the snapper.

Everyone else is restricted.

Is the tight end always restricted?

The intent of the rule is for the tight end to be restricted. This will be the case for a normal alignment, since the tight end is usually more than five yards from the snapper, and thus outside the tackle box. It is theoretically possible in a very tight alignment, where the players are effectively shoulder-to-shoulder, for the tight end to be inside the tackle box. However, the spirit of the rule due to safety concerns is that the tight end is restricted.

What may an unrestricted player legally do that a restricted player is not allowed to do?

An unrestricted player may legally block below the waist *from the side* as well as from the front (10-2) as long as he has not left the tackle box or as long as the ball has not left the tackle box.

There is one exception: an offensive lineman may block an opposing defensive lineman below the waist at the side. Although the offensive lineman might technically be outside the tackle box when he makes this block, the spirit and intent of the rule is to allow it. However, if the offensive lineman goes to the second level and blocks below the waist at the side, it is a foul.

When does an unrestricted player become restricted?

An unrestricted player becomes restricted when either he or the ball leaves the tackle box. And as soon as the ball leaves the tackle box, all Team A players become restricted.

Once a player becomes restricted, can he later become unrestricted again?

No.

When may Team B players legally block below the waist?

Think of a 10-yard-wide strip of the field running from sideline to sideline: five yards on each side of the line of scrimmage. Team B players may legally block below the waist inside that region.....with these restrictions:

- They may not block below the waist against an opponent in position to receive a backward pass.
- They may not block below the waist against an eligible receiver beyond the neutral zone—unless they are trying to get to the ball or the ball carrier.
- And, as always, they may not block below the waist during a kick down or after a change of possession.

Of course, Team B may block the ball carrier below the waist.

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