

# THE MERCY RULE

Effective fall of 2011, a **Mercy Rule** will be in effect for all football contests, which includes pre-season games and playoff games, including the Championship finals. This means that if one team has a lead of 35 point or more at the end of the third quarter, there will be a **“running clock”** for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, until the end of the contest. If schools wish to invoke a **“running clock”** prior to the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, they can do so by mutual agreement of both coaches.

The details of **THE MERCY RULE** are as follows:

1. During the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters, by mutual agreement of opposing coaches and the referee, a **“running clock”** may be used, if the point differential between, the two teams reaches 35 points or more.
2. If at the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter or any time or any time during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, the point differential is 35 points or more, a **“running clock”** shall be used for the remainder of the contest.
3. Once the **“running clock”** is in effect, it shall remain in effect for the balance of the contest, even if the team that is behind subsequently scores to make the deficit less than 35 points.

The **“running clock”** will be administered as follows:

1. A 1<sup>st</sup> down is awarded to either team, including following a change of possession.
2. The ball or run is out-of bounds.
3. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete.
4. A play results in a touchback.
5. An inadvertent whistle occurs.
6. During **ALL** penalty enforcements.

**The game clock shall be stopped for the following:**

1. **The end of a period.**
2. **A score (including touchdown, try, field goal or safety).**
3. **The free kick following a fair catch or awarded fair catch.**
4. **A charged team time-out.**
5. **A coach-referee conference.**
6. **An official's time out (injury, equipment, 1<sup>st</sup> down measurement, or as required).**

Following a stoppage for any reason above, the game clock will start when the ball is next:

1. Marked ready-for-play or
2. Legally touched on the free kick following a score, a fair catch or awarded fair catch.