

**NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE**

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**COMMUNICATIONS**

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**POSTSEASON OVERTIME**

Prior to the 2010 season, NFL owners voted to amend overtime rules for the postseason to a **MODIFIED SUDDEN DEATH** format. Teams have the opportunity to possess the ball at least once in the extra period unless the team that receives the overtime kickoff scores a touchdown on its first possession.

A look at the NFL's overtime procedures for the postseason:

**POSTSEASON – MODIFIED SUDDEN DEATH**

The **modified sudden death** system of determining the winner shall prevail when the score is tied at the end of regulation for postseason NFL games. The system guarantees each team a possession or the opportunity to possess, unless the team that receives the opening kickoff scores a touchdown on its initial possession.

- At the end of regulation time, the Referee will immediately toss a coin at the center of the field in accordance with rules pertaining to the usual pregame toss. The captain of the visiting team will call the toss prior to the coin being flipped.
- Following a three-minute intermission after the end of the regulation game, play will be continued in 15-minute periods until a winner is declared. Each team must possess or have the opportunity to possess the ball unless the team that has the ball first scores a touchdown on its initial possession. Play continues in sudden death until a winner is determined, and the game automatically ends upon any score (by safety, field goal, or touchdown) or when a score is awarded by the Referee for a palpably unfair act. Each team has three timeouts per half and all general timing provisions apply as during a regular-season game. The try is not attempted if a touchdown is scored. Disqualified players are not allowed to return.
- Instant Replay: No challenges are allowed. All reviews are initiated by the replay official.

**Key Definitions:**

- **Possession:** Actual possession of the ball with complete control. The defense gains possession when it catches, intercepts, or recovers a loose ball.
- **Opportunity to possess:** The opportunity to possess occurs only during kicking plays. A kickoff is an opportunity to possess for the receiving team. If the kicking team legally recovers the kick, the receiving team is considered to have had its opportunity. A punt or a field goal that crosses the line of scrimmage and is muffed by the receiving team is considered to be an opportunity to possess for the receivers. Normal touching rules by the kicking team apply.

There have been 27 overtime postseason games, starting with the 1958 NFL Championship.

## POSTSEASON OVERTIME HISTORY – CHRONOLOGICAL

(Home team in CAPS)

DATE	SEASON	PLAYOFF ROUND	GAME	LENGTH
Dec. 28, 1958	1958	NFL Championship	Baltimore 23, N.Y. GIANTS 17	68:15
Dec. 23, 1962	1962	AFL Championship	Dallas Texans 20, HOUSTON 17	77:54
Dec. 26, 1965	1965	Divisional	GREEN BAY 13, Baltimore 10	73:39
Dec. 25, 1971	1971	Divisional	Miami 27, KANSAS CITY 24	82:40
Dec. 24, 1977	1977	Divisional	Oakland 37, BALTIMORE 31	75:43
Jan 2, 1982	1981	Divisional	San Diego 41, MIAMI 38	73:52
Jan. 3, 1987	1986	Divisional	CLEVELAND 23, N.Y. Jets 20	77:02
Jan. 11, 1987	1986	AFC Championship	Denver 23, CLEVELAND 20	65:38
Jan. 3, 1988	1987	Wild Card	HOUSTON 23, Seattle 20	68:05
Dec. 31, 1989	1989	Wild Card	Pittsburgh 26, HOUSTON 23	63:26
Jan. 7, 1990	1989	Divisional	L.A. Rams 19, N.Y. GIANTS 13	61:06
Jan. 3, 1993	1992	Wild Card	BUFFALO 41, Houston 38	63:06
Jan. 8, 1994	1993	Wild Card	KANSAS CITY 27, Pittsburgh 24	71:03
Jan 17, 1999	1998	NFC Championship	Atlanta 30, MINNESOTA 27	71:52
Dec. 30, 2000	2000	Wild Card	MIAMI 23, Indianapolis 17	71:16
Jan. 19, 2002	2001	AFC Divisional	NEW ENGLAND 16, Oakland 13	68:29
Jan. 11, 2003	2002	AFC Divisional	TENNESSEE 34, Pittsburgh 31	62:15
Jan. 4, 2004	2003	Wild Card	GREEN BAY 33, Seattle 27	64:25
Jan. 10, 2004	2003	Divisional	Carolina 29, ST. LOUIS 23	75:10
Jan. 11, 2004	2003	Divisional	PHILADELPHIA 20, Green Bay 17	64:48
Jan. 8, 2005	2004	Wild Card	N.Y. Jets 20, SAN DIEGO 17	74:55
Jan. 15, 2005	2004	Divisional	PITTSBURGH 20, N.Y. Jets 17	71:04
Jan. 14, 2007	2006	Divisional	CHICAGO 27, Seattle 24	64:53
Jan. 20, 2008	2007	NFC Championship	N.Y. Giants 23, GREEN BAY 20	62:35
Jan. 3, 2009	2008	AFC Wild Card	SAN DIEGO 23, Indianapolis 17	66:12
Jan. 10, 2010	2009	Wild Card	ARIZONA 51, Green Bay 45	61:18
Jan. 24, 2010	2009	NFC Championship	NEW ORLEANS 31, Minnesota 28	64:45

The playoffs have featured at least one overtime game in nine of the past 11 postseasons. [A look at NFL overtime playoff games since 2000:](#)

SEASON	ROUND	TEAMS	GAME-WINNING SCORE
2000	WC	Miami 23, Indianapolis 17	RB Lamar Smith scores on 17-yard TD run.
2001	Div.	New England 16, Oakland 13	K Adam Vinatieri connects on 23-yard FG.
2002	Div.	Tennessee 34, Pittsburgh 31	K Joe Nedney wins it with 26-yard FG.
2003	WC	Green Bay 33, Seattle 27	CB Al Harris returns INT 52 yards for TD.
2003	Div.	Carolina 29, St. Louis 23 (2 OT)	QB Jake Delhomme connects with WR Steve Smith on 69-yd TD.
2003	Div.	Philadelphia 20, Green Bay 17	K David Akers wins game with 31-yard FG.
2004	WC	NY Jets 20, San Diego 17	K Doug Brien converts 28-yard FG.
2004	Div.	Pittsburgh 20, NY Jets 17	K Jeff Reed connects on 33-yard game-winner.
2006	Div.	Chicago 27, Seattle 24	K Robbie Gould converts game-winning FG from 49 yards out.
2007	Champ.	NY Giants 23, Green Bay 20	K Lawrence Tynes wins it with 47-yard FG.
2008	WC	San Diego 23, Indianapolis 17	RB Darren Sproles scores on 22-yard TD run.
2009	WC	Arizona 51, Green Bay 45	LB Karlos Dansby scores on 17-yard FR-TD.
2009	Champ.	New Orleans 31, Minnesota 28	K Garrett Hartley converts 40-yard game-winning FG.

An overtime history of the 2011 playoff participants:

<b>TEAM</b>	<b>2011 OT RECORD</b>	<b>ALL-TIME REGULAR-SEASON OT RECORD</b>	<b>PLAYOFF OT RECORD</b>
Atlanta Falcons	0-1	13-20-2 (.400)	1-0
Baltimore Ravens	0-0	9-7-1 (.559)	0-0
Cincinnati Bengals	0-0	15-11-1 (.574)	0-0
Denver Broncos	3-0	25-15-2 (.619)	1-0
Detroit Lions	1-0	14-16-1 (.468)	0-0
Green Bay Packers	0-0	11-15-4 (.433)	2-3
Houston Texans	0-0	1-7-0 (.125)	0-0
New England Patriots	0-0	17-20-0 (.459)	1-0
New Orleans Saints	1-0	9-11-0 (.450)	1-0
New York Giants	0-0	18-14-2 (.559)	1-2
Pittsburgh Steelers	0-0	20-14-2 (.583)	2-2
San Francisco 49ers	0-1	19-14-1 (.574)	0-0

Following are the Approved Rulings pertaining to postseason overtime as found on pages 111–113 of the 2011 Official Casebook of the NFL, a supplement to the NFL Rule Book:

## Approved Rulings

### RULE 16—SUDDEN DEATH

#### A.R. 16.1 KICKOFF RETURN FOR TOUCHDOWN

Team B receives the opening kickoff and returns it for a touchdown.

**Ruling:** Game over. Team B wins.

#### A.R. 16.2 ONSIDE KICK

On the opening kickoff of overtime from the A35, Team A legally recovers the ball at the A46.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on A46. A kickoff is considered an opportunity to possess for the receiving team. Team B is considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball.

#### A.R. 16.3 ONSIDE KICK

On the opening kickoff of overtime from the A35, Team A attempts an onside kick. A2 legally touches the ball at the A47, but muffs it and it is recovered by B1 at the A48.

**Ruling:** B's ball, first-and-10 on A48. Team A is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball.

#### A.R. 16.4 MUFFED KICKOFF

Following a successful field goal on the opening possession of overtime, Team A's kickoff is muffed by B1 at the B35 and is recovered by A2.

**Ruling:** Game over. Team A wins. Team B had an opportunity to possess the ball.

#### A.R. 16.5 TOUCHDOWN ON FIRST POSSESSION

Team A drives down the field on the opening possession of overtime and scores a touchdown.

**Ruling:** Game over. Team A wins.

#### A.R. 16.6 FIELD GOAL ON FIRST POSSESSION

Team A kicks a field goal on the opening possession of overtime.

**Ruling:** Three points for Team A, but the game is not over. Team A must kick off to Team B. If Team B scores a touchdown or does not score, the game is over. If Team B scores a field goal, the game continues in sudden death.

#### A.R. 16.7 MUFFED PUNT

On the opening possession of overtime, Team A punts and B3 muffs the punt at the B20. A6 recovers at the B22.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on B22. Team B had the opportunity to possess the kick. Both teams have met the minimum requirements for possession. The first team to score wins.

#### A.R. 16.8 FUMBLER KICKOFF RETURN

On the opening kickoff of overtime, B3 returns the ball to the B30 where he is hit and fumbles. A6 muffs the loose ball to the B28 where B5 recovers.

**Ruling:** B's ball, first-and-10 on B28. Since the ball was loose from a fumble as opposed to a kick, Team A is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball.

#### A.R. 16.9 BLOCKED PUNT

Fourth-and-5 on A45. On the opening possession of overtime, Team A's punt is blocked by B3 at the A35. A2 picks up the loose ball at the A40 and runs to the 50 for a first down.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on 50. Team B is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball because it did not touch the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.

#### A.R. 16.10 BLOCKED PUNT

Fourth-and-5 on A45. On the opening possession of overtime, Team A's punt is blocked by B3 at the A35. B4 attempts to pick up the loose ball at the A40, but muffs it to the A33 where it is recovered by A4 who runs to the B40 for a first down.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on B40. Team B is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball because it did not touch the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.

#### A.R. 16.11 BLOCKED PUNT

Fourth-and-5 on A45. On the opening possession of overtime, Team A's punt is blocked by B3 at the A35. The ball hits the ground beyond the line at the B48 and bounces back to the A43 where it is recovered by A4 who runs to the B40 for a first down.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on B40. Team B is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball because it did not touch the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.

**A.R. 16.12 BLOCKED PUNT**

Fourth-and-5 on A45. On the opening possession of overtime, Team A's punt is blocked by B3 at the A35. The ball bounces beyond the line to the A48, where B4 muffs the loose ball to the A45 where it is recovered by A4.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on A45. Because Team B touched the punt beyond the line of scrimmage, a new series is awarded to Team A. Since Team B had the opportunity to possess the ball, both teams have met the minimum requirements for possession.

**A.R. 16.13 FUMBLE**

Third-and-5 on A30. On the opening possession of overtime, A2 takes a handoff and runs to the B35 where he fumbles the ball. B2 recovers the ball and runs to the B40.

**Ruling:** B's ball, first-and-10 on B40. Both teams have had an actual possession. The first team to score wins.

**A.R. 16.14 FUMBLE**

Third-and-5 on A30. On the opening possession of overtime, A2 takes a handoff and runs to the B35 where he fumbles the ball. B2 recovers the ball and runs to the B40 where he is hit and fumbles. A5 recovers at the B41.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on B41. Both teams have had an actual possession. The first team to score wins.

**A.R. 16.15 INTERCEPTION**

Third-and-5 on A30. On the opening possession of overtime, B2 intercepts a pass at the 50 and returns it for a touchdown.

**Ruling:** Game over. Team B wins. Each team has had an actual possession.

**A.R. 16.16 FUMBLE**

Second-and-10 on A30. On the opening possession of overtime, A2 takes a handoff and runs to the A38 where he fumbles the ball. B2 muffs the loose ball at the A35 and it is recovered by A5 at the A33.

**Ruling:** A's ball, third-and-7 on A33. Since the ball was loose from a fumble as opposed to a kick, Team B is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball.

**A.R. 16.17 TOUCHING OF A PASS**

Third-and-5 on A30. On the opening possession of overtime, A1 drops back to pass and throws the ball from the A23. The ball is tipped by B4 at the A25 and is caught by A3 at the A34. A3 runs to the A40 where he is tackled.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on A40. Touching of a pass by Team B does not constitute an opportunity to possess the ball.

**A.R. 16.18 INCOMPLETE PASS**

Second-and-5 on A30. On the opening possession of overtime, A1 drops back to pass and throws the ball from the A23 toward A2 at the B40. B4 jumps up to intercept the pass and lands with his left foot inbounds and his right foot on the sideline.

**Ruling:** A's ball, third-and-5 on A30. An incomplete pass is not considered an opportunity to possess.

**A.R. 16.19 SAFETY**

Third-and-5 on A7. On the opening possession of overtime, A1 is tackled in his own end zone for a safety.

**Ruling:** Game over. Team B wins. Both teams have met the minimum requirements for possession.

**A.R. 16.20 FIELD GOAL**

Fourth-and-5 on B25. On the opening possession of overtime, Team A's field-goal attempt is blocked by B3 at the line of scrimmage and lands at the B28 where it is recovered by A4 who runs to the B18 for a first down.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on B18. Team B is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball because it did not touch the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.

**A.R. 16.21 FIELD GOAL**

Fourth-and-5 on B25. On the opening possession of overtime, Team A's field-goal attempt is blocked by B3 at the line of scrimmage. The ball hits the ground beyond the line at the B22 and bounces back to the B28 where it is recovered by A4 who runs to the B18 for a first down.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on B18. Team B is not considered to have had an opportunity to possess the ball because it did not touch the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.

**A.R. 16.22 FIELD GOAL**

Fourth-and-5 on B25. On the opening possession of overtime, Team A's field-goal attempt is blocked by B3 at the line of scrimmage. The ball bounces beyond the line to the B20, where B4 muffs the loose ball to the B18 where it is recovered by A4.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on B18. Because Team B touched the kick beyond the line of scrimmage, a new series is awarded to Team A. Since Team B had the opportunity to possess the ball, both teams have met the minimum requirements for possession.

**A.R. 16.23 FOUL ON B PRIOR TO CHANGE OF POSSESSION**

Trailing 13-10 after the first team to possess the ball in overtime kicks a successful field goal, Team A receives the kickoff and is downed at the A30. On its first play from scrimmage, QBA1 throws a pass that is intercepted at the 50 by B1, who is tackled immediately. B2 is called for roughing the passer during the play.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on A45. Team B did not gain possession of the ball legally; therefore the game is not over, and Team A's initial possession will continue.

#### **A.R. 16.24 FOUL ON B PRIOR TO DOUBLE CHANGE OF POSSESSION**

Trailing 13-10 after the first team to possess the ball in overtime kicks a successful field goal, Team A receives the kickoff and is downed at the A30. On its first play from scrimmage, QBA1 throws a pass that is intercepted at the 50 by B1, who continues to run with the ball. B1 fumbles at the A20, where A2 scoops it up and runs for a touchdown. B2 is called for roughing the passer during the play.

**Ruling:** A's ball, first-and-10 on the A45. Team A must accept the penalty, since that is the only way its initial possession will continue. If A declines the penalty and takes the result of the play, the game is over since A's initial possession ended when the pass was intercepted.

#### **A.R. 16.25 FOUL ON B PRIOR TO DOUBLE CHANGE, OPTION FOR A**

First-and-10 on A20. On the opening possession of overtime, QBA1 throws a pass that is intercepted at the A49 by B1, who continues to run with the ball to the A30 where he is hit and fumbles. A2 recovers the ball and is downed at the A30. B2 is called for roughing the passer during the play.

**Ruling:** If A accepts the penalty for roughing the passer, it will be A's ball, first-and-10 on A35, and Team B is not considered to have had its opportunity to possess the ball. If A declines the penalty, it is A's ball, first-and-10 on A30, Team B has had its possession, and the first team to score will win the game.

#### **A.R. 16.26 FOUL ON B AFTER CHANGE OF POSSESSION**

Trailing 13-10 after the first team to possess the ball in overtime kicks a successful field goal, Team A receives the kickoff and is downed at the A30. On its first play from scrimmage, QBA1 throws a pass that is legally intercepted at the 50 by B1, who continues to run with the ball and is downed at the A30. B2 is called for holding during B1's return.

**Ruling:** Game over, Team B wins. Since Team A's possession ended legally, both teams have met the requirement for possession, and the game is over.

#### **A.R. 16.27 DOUBLE FOUL WITH A CHANGE, GAME OVER**

Trailing 13-10 after the first team to possess the ball in overtime kicks a successful field goal, Team A receives the kickoff and is downed at the A30. On its first play from scrimmage, QBA1 throws a pass that is legally intercepted at the 50 by B1, who continues to run with the ball and is downed at the A20. Team A is called for holding prior to the interception, and Team B is called for an illegal block above the waist after the interception.

**Ruling:** Game over, Team B wins. Since Team A's possession ended legally, both teams have met the requirement for possession, and the game is over.

#### **A.R. 16.28 DOUBLE FOUL WITH A CHANGE, GAME NOT OVER**

Trailing 13-10 after the first team to possess the ball in overtime kicks a successful field goal, Team A receives the kickoff and is downed at the A30. On its first play from scrimmage, QBA1 throws a pass that is intercepted at the 50 by B1, who continues to run with the ball and is downed at the A20. Team B is called for holding prior to the interception, and Team A is called for a low block after the interception.

**Ruling:** Fouls offset, and Team A's initial possession continues. A's ball, first- and-10 on A30.

#### **A.R. 16.29 DOUBLE FOUL AFTER CHANGE, GAME OVER**

Trailing 13-10 after the first team to possess the ball in overtime kicks a successful field goal, Team A receives the kickoff and is downed at the A30. On its first play from scrimmage, QBA1 throws a pass that is legally intercepted at the 50 by B1, who continues to run with the ball and is downed at the A20. After the interception, Team B is called for holding, and Team A is called for a facemask.

**Ruling:** Game over, Team B wins. Since Team A's possession ended legally, both teams have met the requirement for possession, and the game is over.