

= Fair catch kick =

The fair catch kick is a rule at the professional and high school levels of American football that allows a team that has just made a fair catch to attempt a free kick from the spot of the catch . The kick must be either a place kick or a drop kick , and if it passes over the crossbar and between the goalposts of the defensive team 's goal , a field goal , worth three points , is scored to the offensive team .

The fair catch kick has its origins in rugby football . The rule is considered to be obscure and unusual , as most fair catches are made well out of field goal range , and in most cases a team that has a fair catch within theoretical range will attempt a normal drive to score a touchdown . The fair catch kick is generally used when a team has fair caught a ball within field goal range and there is insufficient time to score a touchdown . At the professional level , the last successful fair catch kick was made in 1976 .

= = Rule = =

The fair catch kick rule states that , after a player has successfully made a fair catch or has been awarded a fair catch (as the result of a penalty such as kick catch interference) , their team can attempt a kick from the spot of the catch ; the NFHS also allows a kick to be made if the down following the fair catch or awarded fair catch has to be replayed . Prior to the kick , the opposing team must be lined up at least ten yards beyond the spot of the ball . The kick itself can be either a place kick or drop kick ; a kicking tee cannot be used at the professional level , but use of a tee up to two inches in height is permitted at the high school level . Like other field goal attempts , the kicking team is awarded three points if the kick goes above the crossbar and between the goalposts of the opposing team 's goal and did not touch a player of the offensive team after the kick . If the attempt fails , the opposing team is awarded control of the ball from the spot of the kick . The opposing team can also return the kick if it does not go out of bounds .

In the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) rulebook , the fair catch kick is specifically defined as a free kick . The National Football League (NFL) rulebook specifically states that the fair catch kick is not a free kick , instead considering the fair catch kick to be a distinct type of kick . Despite this , reporters at both levels describe the fair catch kick as a free kick .

= = History = =

The fair catch kick found in American football originated in rugby football . A similar rule in rugby , the goal from mark , allowed a player who had fair caught a ball to attempt an uncontested free kick from the spot of the fair catch . Both major codes of rugby have eliminated the rule ; rugby league abolished the goal from mark in 1922 , and rugby union removed it in 1977 . Australian rules football has retained the rule , and it is a vital part of the Australian game ; a " fair catch " of a ball kicked more than 15 metres in the air is called a " mark " , and the player making the mark is then awarded a free kick . The fair catch kick has been present in the National Football League (NFL) rulebook since the league 's inception , and also remains in the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) rulebook . The fair catch kick is not legal in National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) football ; the NCAA abolished the fair catch in 1950 , but re @-@ added it a year later . When the fair catch returned to the rulebook , however , the option to attempt a kick after the fair catch was removed .

= = Usage = =

The fair catch kick rule is very rarely invoked , and is one of the rarest plays in football . The rule has been regarded as " obscure " , " bizarre " , and " quirky " . A unique set of circumstances is required for a fair catch kick to be a viable option . For one , the fair catch would need to be made at a point on the field where a field goal attempt has a reasonable chance of being successful ; most

fair catches are made well outside of field goal range (even more so since 1974 , when the goal posts were moved back to the end line , adding 10 yards to such attempts) . Furthermore , for a fair catch kick to be a viable option near the end of the fourth quarter , the team attempting the kick needs to be either tied or behind by three points or less . In exceptional circumstances a team might try the kick at the end of the first half if only a few seconds remained , but Art McNally , who led the officiating department of the National Football League from 1968 to 1990 , notes that , even in the event a fair catch is made within field goal range , most teams would attempt to score a touchdown unless there is not enough time left to score one . Accordingly , most fair catch kick attempts occur when a team has fair caught a ball from a punt from deep in their opponent 's territory , and there is not enough time left in the half to go for a touchdown .

Despite its drawbacks , there are several advantages to using the fair catch kick . Because the defense is required to be ten yards beyond the spot of the kick , the kicker can take a running start before kicking as opposed to the typical two steps taken on regular field goal attempts . Similarly , the kicker does not have to worry about a low snap because the ball is not snapped . The defense is not able to block the kick , allowing the kicker to give the ball a lower trajectory than usual . The fair catch kick would also be of a shorter distance than a normal field goal attempt from the same spot , because the fair catch kick is taken from the spot of the catch , while a typical field goal is taken seven yards back from the line of scrimmage .

= = Known attempts in the NFL = =

The following tables contain all confirmed fair catch kick attempts in the NFL ; the NFL does not keep a record of fair catch kick attempts , so the true number of attempts is unknown . Out of the twenty @-@ four recorded fair catch kick attempts in non @-@ exhibition games , only six were successful ; all five known attempts in exhibition games were unsuccessful . With the exception of the second recorded attempt , which was made in the 3rd quarter , all fair catch kick attempts were made within the last thirty seconds of either the 2nd or 4th quarter . The last successful attempt was made in 1976 by Ray Wersching of the San Diego Chargers (45 yards) , and the longest successful attempt was made in 1964 by Paul Hornung of the Green Bay Packers (52 yards) . The most recent fair catch kick attempt was by San Francisco 49ers kicker Phil Dawson , who missed a 71 @-@ yard fair catch kick on September 26 , 2013 .

= = = Regular season and post @-@ season games = = =

= = = Exhibition games = = =