

Photo by Jeff Paslay

Kickers around the country may collect subpar stats this year, as the NCAA Football Rules Committee narrowed the goal post by almost five feet.

Kickers, linemen limited by 1991 NCAA rule changes

Tougher posts, penalties the result

By Dave Charbonneau
Emerald Sports Reporter

Oregon kicker Gregg McCallum had not missed an extra point try in two seasons and 73 attempts with the Ducks. But on his first attempt in the opening game of the season, McCallum misfired.

McCallum's miss may have been a result of one of the NCAA's 1991 rule changes.

"If the goalposts had been wider like they used to, it would have gone through," McCallum said after the Ducks' opening win over Washington State. McCallum seems to have adjusted. Although he has missed one of two field goal attempts so far, he has hit eight PATs since Washington State.

But if McCallum collects poor final stats this year, he won't be alone. The goalposts across the country are being narrowed by almost five feet, from 23-feet-4 to 18-6.

The NCAA Football Rules Committee adopted the rule, believing that teams were putting too much emphasis on kickers, and that PAT and short field goals were becoming much too routine. Two years ago, the committee tried to hinder the kicking game by prohibiting the use of tees, but that rule has had little effect on the game.

Last year, 97 percent of extra point attempts and 88 percent of field goal attempts from inside the 30-yard line were converted.

The new width is the same as the NFL, which could ease the transition from college to the pros for kickers, but the college hash marks (which are much wider than the pros) have been left intact.

The result is that kickers are going to be faced with tough angles on some field goals. In the NFL, the hash marks are lined up with the goal posts (70-feet-9 from the sidelines);

the college hash marks are 53-feet-4 from the sidelines.

While it may be tougher for kickers to score points, offensive linemen will be drawing more flags this season due to another rule change: Holding calls will continue to warrant a five-yard penalty, but the penalty will be assessed from the spot of the foul rather than from the line of scrimmage.

Assistant Head Coach Neal Zoumboukos, the Oregon offensive guards and centers coach for the Ducks, said he is strongly opposed to the new rule.

"As an offensive line coach, I think it's a terrible rule," he said. "It's almost like a double

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— Neal Zoumboukos,
Coach, offensive guards and centers

whammy. You get the five-yard penalty, plus the yardage loss from the spot of the foul."

Defensive line coach Joe Schaffeld is also opposed to the rule despite the benefits to the defense.

"It's a great rule when they hold our guys," he said, "but it's not when it hurts our team. I just think it's too harsh of a rule."

Zoumboukos agrees.

"In practice, we had a player hold 13 yards behind the line of scrimmage, so you're looking at 1st down and 28," he said.

Both coaches said the rule has not had an effect in a game situation so far this year.

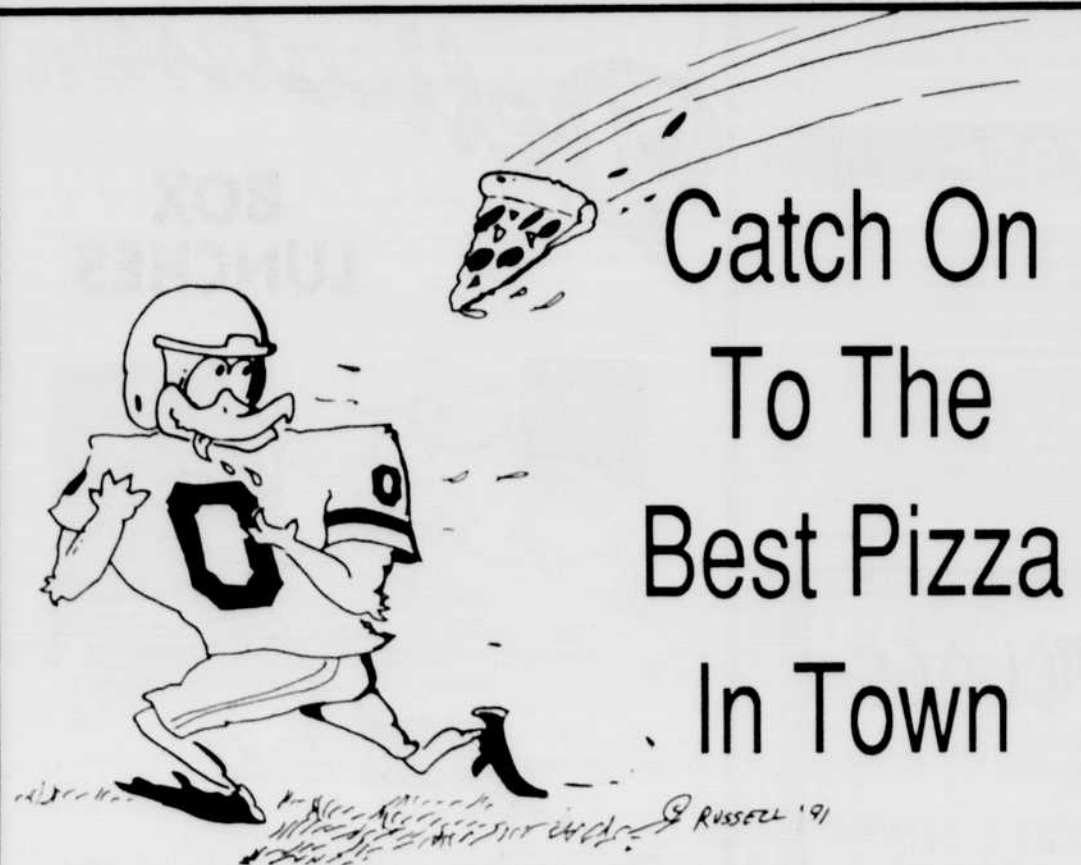
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