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Six Types of Holding

By George Demetriou

Holding is arguably the most contentious foul in football and the most inconsistently called. Officials who can mentally place what they see into categories can better judge whether the action is holding.

TACKLE



BILL NICHOLS

Just as a tackle needs little explanation, it doesn't happen very frequently. A tackle as a block is most likely to occur as part of a block below the waist at the line. On occasion, defensive linemen will tackle offensive guards to keep them from pulling. Snappers who have to take several steps to get to their targeted linebacker might also **convert their low block to a tackle** as might the lead blocker on a sweep.

PULLOVER



ED PARCELL

That type of hold almost always occurs on a pass play. The offensive lineman grabs his opponent at or near the arm pits and then pulls on top of himself, making it look like the defender ran over the blocker and fell down in the process. Some linemen may be clever enough to **grab the opponent's jersey** and then attempt to step on his feet. That technique will likely create the appearance that the blocker has been run over. That is also a tactic used by diminutive players.

HOOK AND RESTRICT



ED PARCELL

In order to hook an opponent, the blocker must allow his hands to get outside the frame of his body. That is usually easily discernable. For a foul to occur, that act must result in a restriction that affects the play. If the defender immediately blows through the extended arm, no holding has occurred. This technique is also referred to as an "armbar" and no actual holding takes place. If the armbar causes the opponent to **take a circuitous route**, then a restriction has taken place. One example is a pass rusher who is forced to add extra steps to his route to the quarterback.

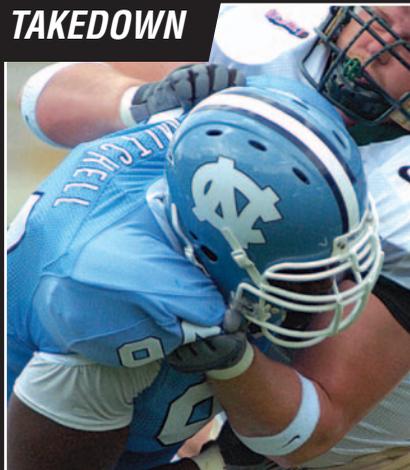
GRAB AND RESTRICT



ED PARCELL

If the defender beats his blocker, the blocker may grab the defender's jersey as he is moving away. Again, the grab must result in a restriction for a foul to occur. Or the blocker may attempt to control the defender by putting his arms around the opponent and **grabbing onto the back of the jersey**.

TAKEDOWN



ED PARCELL

A takedown is similar to a tackle, but not as obvious. It may **momentarily look like a wrestling match**. It is often preceded by the blocker manipulating his opponent. The takedown may occur in three general directions. A defender going down directly opposite the direction he wanted to advance is the easiest takedown to discern. Most often, the takedown occurs in the direction the defender wanted to go. At a glance that may appear to be a legitimate block. A size mismatch between blocker and rusher increases the probability of a takedown. A factor to keep in mind is that backfield pass blockers are often smaller than defensive linemen, making the need for an "equalizing" technique more probable. The takedown that is the most difficult to rule on is the pullover.

JERK AND RESTRICT



ED PARCELL

That type of hold begins with two hands on the opponent's chest. After contact is made, the blocker slides his hands up under the opponent's shoulder pads and grabs the jersey. With that firm grasp, the blocker **jerks the opponent aside** or moves him away from the point of attack, thus delaying his advance.