

# Survey of NCAA Division 1 Officials on the Helmet-Contact Rules in Football- Jon Heck, MS, ATC

Helmet-contact penalties refer to the following three rules for this survey:

1. Spearing is the deliberate use of the helmet (including the face mask) in an attempt to punish an opponent.
2. No player intentionally shall strike a runner with the crown or top of the helmet.
3. No player intentionally shall use his helmet (including the face mask) to butt or ram an opponent.

## 1. How many games have you worked so far this year?

Total Responses: **205**  
Total of 2,027 games  
Range 0-18 Games.  
Average of 9.9 games each

## 2. Do you feel the PRIMARY purpose of the helmet-contact penalties is to protect:

Total Responses: **203**  
The athlete who initiates contact  43.8% (89)  
The athlete who gets hit  56.2% (114)

## 3. How many helmet-contact penalties have you called this year?

Total Responses: **204**  
0 Penalties 80% (164)  
1 Penalty 16% (32)  
2 Penalties 2% (10)  
3 Penalties 2% (9)

**51 Penalties Called**

## 4. Do you feel the helmet contact rules are easily interpreted?

Total Responses: **205**  
Yes  60.0% (123)  
No  40.0% (82)

**5. How comfortable would you feel calling a helmet-contact penalty during the tackling process?**

Total Responses: **205**

Very Comfortable  21.0% (43)

Comfortable  37.1% (76)

Somewhat Comfortable  22.9% (47)

Uncomfortable  16.6% (34)

Very Uncomfortable  2.4% (5)

**6. How likely are you to enforce the helmet-contact penalties in this situation?**

Total Responses: **205**

Very Likely  30.2% (62)

Likely  33.2% (68)

Somewhat Likely  20.0% (41)

Not Likely  15.6% (32)

Very Unlikely  1.0% (2)

**7. How comfortable would you feel calling a helmet-contact penalty on an athlete who is blocking?**

Total Responses: **205**

Very Comfortable  6.3% (13)

Comfortable  18.0% (37)

Somewhat Comfortable  26.3% (54)

Uncomfortable  36.1% (74)

Very Uncomfortable  13.2% (27)

**8. How likely are you to enforce the helmet-contact penalties in this situation?**

Total Responses: **204**

Very Likely  8.8% (18)

Likely  18.6% (38)

Somewhat Likely  24.5% (50)

Not Likely  35.3% (72)

Very Unlikely  12.7% (26)

**9. How comfortable would you feel calling a helmet-contact penalty on a late hit?**

Total Responses: **205**

Very Comfortable  84.9% (174)

Comfortable  13.7% (28)

Somewhat Comfortable  1.5% (3)

Uncomfortable  0.0% (0)

Very Uncomfortable  0.0% (0)

**10. How likely are you to enforce the helmet-contact penalties in this situation?**

Total Responses: **205**

Very Likely  84.4% (173)

Likely  13.7% (28)

Somewhat Likely  1.5% (3)

Not Likely  0.5% (1)

Very Unlikely  0.0% (0)

**11. Can a ball-carrier initiate illegal helmet contact?**

Total Responses: **203**

Yes  75.4% (153)

No  24.6% (50)

**12. How comfortable would you feel calling a helmet-contact penalty on a ball-carrier?**

Total Responses: **205**

Very Comfortable  4.9% (10)

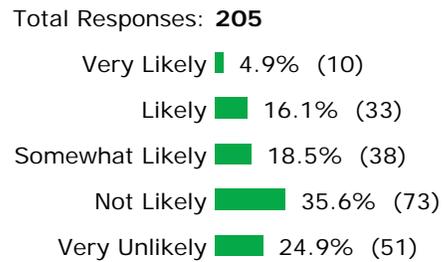
Comfortable  11.7% (24)

Somewhat Comfortable  19.5% (40)

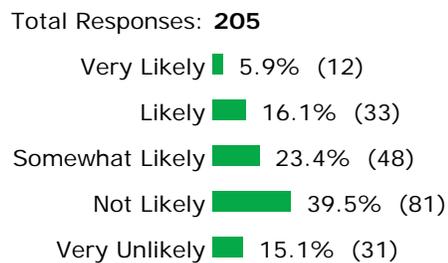
Uncomfortable  37.1% (76)

Very Uncomfortable  26.8% (55)

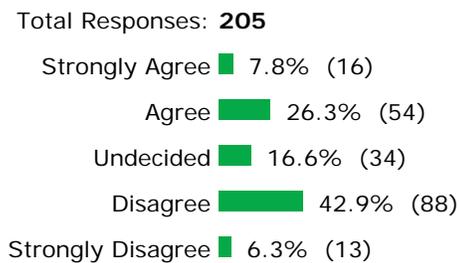
**13. How likely are you to enforce the helmet-contact penalties in this situation?**



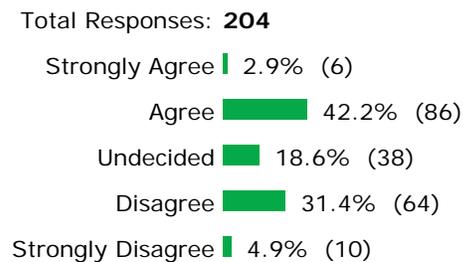
**14. How likely are you to call a penalty on an athlete whom you feel accidentally initiated head-down contact?**



**15. All head-first contact is illegal in college football.**



**16. The helmet- contact rules are written in a way that allows easy enforcement.**



**17. Head-down contact is the primary injury mechanism of severe cervical spine injuries.**

Total Responses: **204**

Strongly Agree  37.3% (76)

Agree  45.6% (93)

Undecided  15.7% (32)

Disagree  1.5% (3)

Strongly Disagree  0.0% (0)

**18. There is little or no head-first contact in college football.**

Total Responses: **204**

Strongly Agree  1.0% (2)

Agree  14.7% (30)

Undecided  15.2% (31)

Disagree  54.9% (112)

Strongly Disagree  14.2% (29)

**19. There is little or no head-down contact in college football.**

Total Responses: **204**

Strongly Agree  1.5% (3)

Agree  23.5% (48)

Undecided  16.2% (33)

Disagree  51.0% (104)

Strongly Disagree  7.8% (16)

**20. Head and neck injuries can occur with head-first contact regardless of the athlete's intent to use the head.**

Total Responses: **204**

Strongly Agree  34.3% (70)

Agree  59.8% (122)

Undecided  4.9% (10)

Disagree  1.0% (2)

Strongly Disagree  0.0% (0)

**21. Trying to decide on athlete's intent or if a head-first contact was purposeful makes the penalty hard to enforce.**

Total Responses: **205**

Strongly Agree  17.1% (35)

Agree  52.7% (108)

Undecided  5.4% (11)

Disagree  22.0% (45)

Strongly Disagree  2.9% (6)

**22. Because of the severity of the helmet- contact penalties (15 yards or ejection), you are very selective in enforcing the rule?**

Total Responses: **205**

Strongly Agree  10.2% (21)

Agree  38.0% (78)

Undecided  4.4% (9)

Disagree  40.0% (82)

Strongly Disagree  7.3% (15)

**23. If the penalty were less severe (5 or 10 yards) you would be more likely to enforce it.**

Total Responses: **205**

Strongly Agree  3.9% (8)

Agree  17.6% (36)

Undecided  17.1% (35)

Disagree  46.8% (96)

Strongly Disagree  14.6% (30)

**24. Better enforcement of the helmet-contact penalties will reduce the incidence of head-first contact.**

Total Responses: **203**

Strongly Agree  14.8% (30)

Agree  41.4% (84)

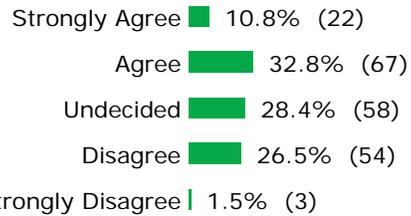
Undecided  17.2% (35)

Disagree  24.1% (49)

Strongly Disagree  2.5% (5)

**25. The helmet-contact penalties need to be changed to allow better enforcement.**

Total Responses: **204**



**26. Should there be increased emphasis regarding head- first contact for officials, coaches and student-athletes?**

Total Responses: **204**



**27. What would you recommend in terms of possible rule changes and education regarding helmet-contact?**

1. Make the calls. So many occurrences go without being called.
2. I would emphasize that anytime the crown of the helmet is used it is a foul or if the face mask is used to deliver a blow.
3. Regardless of the rule changes, the rule needs to be specific and remove intentional vs accidental. The current rule puts Officials in a tough position to determine whether the young man intentionally made helmet contact to inflict injury or if it was accidental. I give the benefit of the doubt to the player. I feel this is the main reason the rule is not enforced. Not because of the severity of the penalty enforcement. Education with regards to helmet-contact and tackling technique starts with the Coaches.
4. coaching. Football is a contact sport just teach them to keep their eyes up
5. call only obvious late hit possible when runner is down
6. No recommendations
7. None. It is impossible to avoid head-first contact in the game of football.
8. Needs to be a point of emphasis every year. I don't believe the head is used as much as in the past, but there are still some flagrant, late fouls that aren't being called.
9. None, We need to enforce the current rule. Make it a point of emphasis in 2005
10. Make "live ball" helmet contact fouls a 10 yd penalty from end of run. Keep dead ball helmet contact fouls 15yd. with ejection for flagrant fouls.
11. make sure officials understand the ejection is optional
12. Stressing the dangers and providing examples of the negative, sometimes tragic results
13. Undecided
14. Game tapes reviewed by the NCAA and make the coaches and school admin responsible. Officials

cannot see all these violations and still officiate the game.

15. I agree about 5 or 10 on borderline helmet contact. Flagrant should still be 15 and automatic ejection. Helmets coming up under the chin should fall under automatic ejection.
16. Just looking at the questions it has generated a different thought process for me. I would suggest it better be defined within rule 2 and have a couple FI's to assist in the interps. Coaches do a good job teaching the right technique on tackling and address safety issues responsibly.
17. helmet to helmet usually on a receiver or a QB has to be called and a rule for this should be separate from the head down contact. It should have major emphasis and a severe penalty, The coaches must take a part in this. bbw hardly ever happens however block in the back and kick catch interference seem to happen quite often rule emphasis on the helmet could be like bbw if the coaches help. a 15 yd penalty if seen and called is very insignificant if the result is a concussion or worse yet permanent injury
18. There is not contact in practice like it used to be, because coaches are scared that players will get hurt. Lack of form tackling at practice creates players to not know how to tackle.
19. education sessions...coach should show a film session, showing the difference between the head down and head up, or leading the tackle with you head. remember the old days, put your face mask on the player keeping the head up, see what your hitting. i think it's hard to change but with the proper education and film session, you can make it the right way to tackle.
20. I believe the companies that make the helmets can make them safer. Padding on the outside would reduce injuries and risk to the athletes that use the helmets.
21. I don't think rule changes will help this. This needs to be a point of emphasis every year.
22. When in doubt the contact is illegal.
23. Unsure
24. No recommendation.
25. Face mask closer to face and not protruding so much. More padding inside helmet and neck bracing requirement.
26. Helment contact by defensive player should be a foul. Helment contact by an offensive player other than the ball carrier should also be considered a foul.
27. I guess the question I have had throughout this survey is "are we officials looking for no first helmet contact or no head down helmet contact. These are two very different things and would involve different rules and education to enforce. Coaches may train certain heads up tackling techniques that almost force first head contact.
28. No rule change. Put more emphasis on the danger of serious injury.
29. I would not recommend any change in the rule in the way it is written, with the education I would recommend that it starts on the practice field with the coaches and trainers instealing in the minds of their of their players of the serverity of this type contact, both to them and their opponent.
30. Suspend the head coach after a certain number of helmet penalties.
31. Similar to face-mask(example: 5 yards or 15 yards) or like unsportsmanlike(two times and you are suspended).
32. none
33. I think that this problem is more pronounced in the pro ranks vs. the college ranks. However, it still

needs to be addressed in the college ranks and any points of emphasis in this regard would be welcomed.

34. Don't change the rules to allow unintentional head first contact to become a foul.
35. Head to head contact inside the box is usually okay. Problems arise where momentum is associated with the hit -either on QB or receiver downfield. Both cases recipient is unprotected. Limit head to head only in the box and never against ball carrier.
36. take the word intent out of the rule, better coaching by schools
37. This is a tough issue. From an official's perspective it is extremely difficult to determine intent and/or the initiator of the head to head contact on the use of the helmet as a weapon during regular play as opposed to late hits, which are fairly easily called. In recent years there has been emphasis on helmet blows on the QB and receivers and several of those have been called, but beyond those and the late hits I don't think I have ever seen this called in a major college game. It is rare to see a straight up tackle occur where the helmets of both the runner and the tackler are not involved in the contact and in many cases the helmet to helmet is caused by the runner lowering his head to advance and accidentally resulting in the helmets ended up at the same place at the same time. Because of that I am not sure this could ever be legislated out of the game. In my opinion the key here is coaching this out of the game, not trying to officiate it out of the game.
38. make it a point of interest for a couple of years in a row
39. Yes-it is a very tough call and the result can be damaging to the players/players involved. The head does not know if it is an accident hit-it can be taught by the coaches at how to use their bodies to play and what not to do. It really starts with coaching a player. It is a judgement call which takes a split second decision to make and with big penalty calls.
40. If an illegal helmet contact foul occurs during a game, but is not detected until film review, it should not go unpunished. The player and school should still be held accountable. Just like the NFL.
41. mandatory athletic department training, increase the severity of the penalty
42. I do not believe there need to be changes. Head-first and head-down contact occurs with 99.9% of it being part of the game and unintentional. Tougher enforcement has been introduced and is working. Education has been initiated but could be stronger, especially in the areas where the player has a choice about where his head is during a play (i.e., spearing, intentional helmet-to-helmet contact against an opponent).
43. Any time a player leads with his head, regardless of the intent, penalize 15 yards personal foul, automatic first down on defense fouls, and a 15 yard loss of down on offense fouls.
44. If this were to become a point of emphasis. This would be helpful and would help in calling these fouls. ie illegal contact in the NFL. We know we teach players to punish the opponent. If we put an emphasis on this, coaches would change the way they teach this part of the game. The same way they had to adjust in the NFL for illegal contact.
45. Rules are fine, educate players to dangers.
46. 15 yards & ejection.
47. Enforce helmet contact above the shoulders.
48. The issue here is not the severity of the penalty, the issue is the clarity of the rule. As an official it is far easier to call the foul if it is not subject to interpretation--head down it's a 15 yd foul--regardless of who's head is down--ball carrier or tackler--punish the opponent has to go out--it's open to

interpretation--most of time when we see it--it's on a QB or on a open field tackle--overthrown pass--etc--but many times we may miss the head dip--I've never seen it called on an offensive player--  
coaches have to get away from teaching about using the helmet in any fashion--finally you have to take away our judgment as to whether the helmet contact is intentional--all helmet to helmet should be intentional

49. I think education is the best way rather than adding additional rules regarding helmet contact. I think that if ALL helmet first contact irregardless of the manner in which it occurred it we would honestly be calling fouls on virtually every play. There are times when a player makes head first contact through no fault of his own due to field conditions or the opponent changing directions and the continuation of the players momentum then was a head first rather than a helmet first contact. This would be totally unfair. I think that to call a "heads down" contact ALL the time might be something that officials could do as this is usually more of a technique or measure of the athlete's conditioning.
50. Teaching proper technique. Teaching the danger of launching and danger of using helmet as weapon can have catastrophic effect on each player with the hit and then the aftermath of living with what occurs.
51. Whether the foul is called or not maybe additional punishment should come from the conference office after reviewing the film.
52. A clearer and more comprehensive rule and definition of what helmet contact - if any - is allowed.
53. Any block or hand to the helmet of any opponent would be illegal
54. Spearing or head first contact is usually accepted if the contact is led by the facemask, except for head to head or "lunging" action. If the intent is to eliminate head first action, then the definition must include the facemask. I was taught, when playing, that using the facemask was part of the "form tackle". From my survey, I called no spearing or "head first contact" fouls all year, but it is probably a 2-3 times per game warning to players to "keep their heads" up during tackles.
55. Supervisors dictate what will or will not be called by officials on the field. ALL supervisors must be on the "same page" in order to have this or any other rule uniformly enforced in college football. When watching a crew on national TV fail to punish acts that are points of emphasis sends a message to the college football community that this act is acceptable. Then the following week the next crew from another conference enforces the act as it has been suggested, that crew or conference gets told "they didn't call that last week". How do we call the play where opponents running toward each other both lower their upper body, lean forward and subsequently make helmet-to-helmet contact in order to "get lower" than their opponent? Everyone knows that the use of the helmet to intentionally punish an opponent is an act that cannot be tolerated. We have the rules in place to protect the players. We simply need to enforce them.
56. Educate our athletes to the dangers of helmet to helmet contact.
57. The leaping rule for both offense and defensive players, regardless of who they contact first.
58. Coaches should strongly emphasize and teach not to use helmet - contact.
59. Coaches need to coach use of the head better and officials need to enforce more consistently....
60. The coaches need to teach and do teach the correct way of tackling.
61. def. player launching/leading with the helmet
62. We have to deal with rules enforcement during the game. The best way to eliminate any use of the head is the teaching and instruction that takes place by coaches. Why not make players who use the

- helmet have to sit out some amount of time during the game or series on plays by offense or defense.
63. Automatic ejection for head down helmet contact (similar to fighting penalty enforcement). With two fouls during the year automatic suspension by the NCAA for the season. That way the officials won't know who has one foul, and shy away from calling the 2nd. The severity of the penalty, will cause the coaches to place emphasis at "coaching out" the practice of hitting with the head from the game of Football. The coaches are the first line of defense in getting this out of the game. Officials only call what has already happened. If a sincere effort has been made by the coaching staff to stop this type of behavior, then "we all" owe it to that player to enforce this type penalty so he (or his opponent) does not end up in a wheel chair some day.
  64. Conferences should be able to review game film and discipline players who commit intentional acts away from the ball even when the officials do not see the infraction.
  65. Believe that the education has to start with the schools and coaches. Changing the rules to eliminate "intent" in the wording would be helpful, if you want all helmet contact enforced as a penalty.
  66. Language like launching, or pointed projection would simplify the rules and bring into play the intentional contact. Don't make it a 5 or 15 as we have that on face mask and fouls against kicker and it seems we don't have the guts to make the 15 automatic 1st when we should. Be definitive on exactly how and what you want called. We are not definitive on running into and roughing the kicker. Give examples-the NFL has definitive examples.
  67. None
  68. HAVE COACHES INFORM PLAYERS ABOUT THE DANGER OF HEAD CONTACT.THE PENALTY IN SUFFICIENT,AND I THINK IT IS CALLED WHEN OFFICIALS ACTUALLY SEE THE INITIAL CONTACT.SOMETIMES IT IS HARD TO SEE AT FULL SPEED.REPLAY WOULD HELP.
  69. ANY HEAD TO HEAD CONTACT, OR CONTACT INITIATED BY THE DEFENSE IN WHICH FIRST CONTACT IS WITH THE HEAD IS A FOUL, ESPECIALLY ON THE PASSER OR PRONE PLAYER.
  70. It is almost impossible to tackle without leading with your head. This makes it difficult on officials. That is probably why other than late hits it is not called as much. The speed at which players hit also makes it difficult to determine whether the shoulder or head delivered the blow. Unprotected receivers could be a point of emphasis.
  71. Nothing.
  72. Reduce the penalty to ten yds for incidental head first contact.
  73. Coaches need to teach better technics
  74. The coaches need to emphasized this at the beginning of two a days. They are the ones that can have the greatest impact on the players.
  75. A clear definition of the contact that is penalized. The term "with intent to punish" is very vague.
  76. No helmet contact
  77. On going point of emphasis starting now nad ongoing. It will take several years to make an impact. Like steering the titantic. Players have been leading with their heads for a long time.
  78. films showing head down contact and the players being carried off the field
  79. Develop specific language - minimize interpretive differences and make it a technical violation to eliminate as much need to interpret intent as possible. Film training of calls and no-call situations would be helpful

80. The best way to enforce the rules is to teach them in the fundamentals. Points of emphasis should be provided to coaches, trainers, and players concerning legal and illegal helmet contact.
81. 15 yards and automatic 1st down without DQ.
82. I feel strongly there was a time when the potential injury factor was emphasized by the Rules Committee, coaches and officials. My thinking is that those groups have become somewhat complacent as it pertains to that emphasis. Maybe all groups associated with the game of college football need to re-emphasize the potential-injury factor of helmet-first contact.
83. Continued emphasis on non direct helmet-contact is vital to the education of the student athlete.
84. Totally eliminate all head first contact on defenseless players, and against the runner.
85. This problem arises through coaching technique and/or philosophy. As officials we are alert for the flagrant fouls regarding the improper use of the helmet or 'head first' contact. This is no different than other late hit or unsportsmanlike fouls. We try to employ preventive efforts before we resort to penalizing a player(s). At the college level players and coaches have enough skill and experience to remedy this problem. My only rule suggestion would be to compare the NFL penalty and/or handling of these types of fouls. Many of their rules have been successfully incorporated into the college game.
86. Make it more of a point of emphasis. The coaches must be in agreement that helmet contact is a problem and understand stricter enforcement is needed
87. coaches need to understand why we call this penalty. we call it due to safety for the players. they don't like fouls called period but if you call this on a goal line play they dang sure don't like it. coaches and players need to be better educated on what can happen as a result of helmet contact.I personally believe that any contact that comes from leading with the helmet should be an automatic ejection of the player.that's the only way the point can be made with players and coaches. the NFL has the ability to fine the players and increase the fine based on the number of times the same player is involved. college football can't do this. this is taught by some coaches as a way to get the other teams best player out of the game.IT HAS NO PART IN THE GAME OF FOOTBALL.
88. This should be a priority. Don't decrease the penalty, encourage supervisors and officials to call these penalties.
89. See below
90. I think this is very hard to officiate because body positions change so quickly that intent is difficult to judge.
91. This is a very difficult topic. Coaches teach that players lead with their head up. The body follows the direction of the head. Tackling and blocking is where the head typically makes the first contact. I believe the flagrant helmet to helmet and the spear contact is a must to call. Play that takes place in the line whether it's tackling or blocking is most difficult to call, less of course a late player comes sailing in head first. I believe placing and emphasis on this by changing the rules will continue to deteriorate the game and not improve the safety. Keep the emphasis on the flagrant hits and the other contact is part of the game.
92. First make it a point of emphasis. Second make any helmet to helmet contact or contact above the neck a foul whether intentional or not.
93. Films to show legal and illegal.
94. 1 point of emphasis, 2 defensive helmet contact, unintentional< 5 yds no first down. intentional 15 yds auto fist down no ejection

95. I have not given this much thought. Based only on what I have seen in the past few years, I have not seen cases where unintentional helmet contact created an injury problem.
96. Perhaps deviate by action of fouler; if he leaves his feet and leads with the helmet in projectile fashion, 15 yds; if he hits opponent with helmet while still standing, only 5 yds.
97. remove the word intentionally, or else make the helmet rules similar to facemask, i.e, 5 yards incidental and 15 yds intentional or for any late hits or after progress stopped
98. Education of the young men playing the game and those who coach these young men as to the ramifications of head/neck injuries and their long term effects could go a long way in preventing though not eliminating helmet-contact and its related costs.
99. The spearing, butt blocking, and use of the helmet as a weapon has not been that serious this season. There have been isolated incidences where these fouls were committed but not called. I feel coaches, trainers and players need to reinforce the severe nature of this act and the possible injury to all players involved.
100. Will have to be clearly thought through. Illegal helmet contact can occur incidentally but I think head down contact could be enforced more with a lesser penalty
101. Use of "face-mask" area of the helmet is ok, using the top or "crown" of the helmet to hit another would be illegal.
102. a narrower interpretation of the rules, with stricter enforcement and support from the conference and supervisors
103. Identifying it as a point of emphasis, provide training videos.
104. If it is the intent of the Committee, I would propose a clear, strong and unequivocal statement penalizing head-to-head contact regardless of intent. I also recommend training tapes similar to the NCAA tape on unsportsmanlike conduct.
105. 1) Make it a point of emphasis in 2005 2) Make the penalty 15 yards against the tackler and late hits or hits out of bounds and 10 yards against the blocker
106. No rule changes.
107. Uncertain at this time.
108. Coaches and supervisors of officials need to come to agreement on the severity of the helmet contact issue and what needs to be the possible penalty ramifications.
109. make any head to head contact an unsportsmanlike 15 yd penalty, no questions regardless of who, how or why it occurred
110. THE RULES ARE CLEAR. ENFORCEMENT AND EDUCATION NEED TO BE ADDRESSED.

**29. If you have any comments about the questions please feel free to use this space.**

- 1L. Helmet contact being a foul cannot be judged simply by the contact. If your intent is to punish an opponent by helmet contact and you have only a slight, glancing blow, it will not be called. If you happened to end up with your helmet making contact directly with an opponent, lets say helmet-to-helmet, and the contact was due to the fast movement and ability of both players involved, it will probably be called although the contact was not intentional. Each act has to be judged on it's own merit with many other factors considered such as the attitude and intensity of the player making the contact, the player being contacted, the quality of the contact and the result of the contact. That creates many

issues for game officials to deal with on helmet contact. There needs to be some specific guidelines for helmet contact. The rules committee needs to tell the game officials specifically what kind of helmet contact needs to be called and it will get called. Every team needs to know the guidelines as well so coaches can teach players. If we are all on the same page with this and all the other issues of the game, the game will be better officiated and issues like illegal helmet contact will be reduced and player safety will be improved.

- 2L. IT is a very hard penalty to call. Unless it is out in the open and with everything else you are looking for it is not something that is easily called.
- 3L. #16- Helmet contact is easy to spot and call. However, the foul will continue unless coaches are made responsible for this action. Officials can not prevent this foul, we can only flag it.
- 4L. As with any special emphasis from the NCAA, i. e. socks, uniform etc., I believe that the NCAA should fine institutions for violations instead of leaving it up to the officials. This would allow for more consistent enforcement.
- 5L. I think the supervisors would have to take a strong support stand and emphasis on encouragement to make the call.
- 6L. I think the questions are written in such a way that the information from this report will not be highly effective.
- 7L. Coaches can prevent this by using better coaching methods.
- 8L. I think all blocking below the waist should be eliminated in college football. We are having too many leg injuries also.
- 9L. The rule is clear as it is written however at full speed in a game it is more difficult to apply and then enforce the penalty accurately every time.
- 10L. Regardless of what decisions are made, they will likely be usurped during the Bowl games around New Years Day. Time and again, points of emphasis that officials are encouraged to enforce are disregarded by the crews working the bowl games with widespread TV viewership. It means that the following season, those of us who work at the division 1-AA, II, and III levels have little credibility because the coaches have seen a lack of enforcement in the post-season's biggest games.
- 11L. Player safety has been a part of every pre-game preparation that I have been associated with. The fans(media) need to be educated along with the enforcement. Too many believe that this type of contact gets you on the highlight film quicker.
- 12L. I think as long as officials are consistent with calling this penalty, then there is no need to change the rules or enforcements.
- 13L. #2. The rule is written in such a way that it implies protection for the player who gets hit by the helmet contact. This protects all hit body parts potentially hit by the helmet used as a weapon. But often the player who initiates the illegal strike with the helmet may suffer the greater injury to his own spine, neck, and/or head.
- 14L. Thought the survey is a very good start to evaluating very difficult situations. Can blocking below the waist (outside the box) be far off?
- 15L. Two things: 1. This issue is primarily a coaching issue at the younger levels - or lack thereof. Officials are generally not willing to call this penalty. Too many old time officials and coaches think head first is just part of the game, a good, clean hit. There needs to be significant injury education with example hits and have the injured kids talk on the film.

- 16L. A lot of coaches applaud head first helmet to helmet tackles. Penalty should be on the head coach. A second helmet to helmet offense head coach is DQ
- 17L. Good to cover this type of situation but it first must be taught on how a player should be using their head/helmet correctly-starts with coaching. rule should carry a 5 or 10 or 15 depending on the intent (if there is one) and ejection if obvious to hurt player.
- 18L. protection of vulnerable players is key. increase the penalty for infractions on QB, receivers after the ball is uncatchable, late hits out of bounds, etc.
- 19L. Action is fast, very difficult to call unless obvious in open field. Coaches need to put more emphasis on not using head in tackling.
- 20L. Intent is something that is hard to always know for certain, However when a player leaves his feet and leads with his helmet, I would support automatic ejection in that case.
- 21L. In addition to the rule, the event could be reviewed by the Conference Office and further penalty, ie suspension or expulsion if a player uses the helmet as a weapon or shows that propensity.
- 22L. I have, in all honesty, not known or observed helmet contact to be an issue of any degree in the games I have worked in the previous few years.
- 23L. I think the only time we have even look at a penalty involving the helmet is a late hit, block on the center or a hand to the head of a quarterback. Other are very subjective.
- 24L. The questions make the distinction between "calling" and "enforcing". Calling is the the real question, all of us will enforce it if it is called.
- 25L. In past years the rules committee has added the 5-yard facemask and the 10-yard illegal block in the back because officials were reluctant to levy the 15-yard foul for facemask or clip. In the question section it appears something similar is being considered as a possibility to the current penalty.
- 26L. If you are looking at safety as a factor then you need to look at the face mask penalty and eliminate the 5 yd penalty and eliminate eye shields all together with no exceptions.
- 27L. The game at the Div 1 level is so fast today, it is very difficult at times to determine if contact is intentional. Players attempting to tackle sometimes commit to a spot and the runner moves in a way that can cause initial contact on the runner with the helmet. This should not be a foul. Any intentional contact by A or B should be a foul, but brings into play a difficult judgement on a major foul. I think we do a good job on helmet to helmet contact on the passer and scrimmage kick receiver, but calls on the tackle or the runner are not called often. Calls on the linemen in blocking are never called.
- 28L. The word deliberate and intentionally need to stay in the rule. If these words are removed the rule would be impossible to rule on.
- 29L. Educate the media, especially TV commentators, who in turn educate the fans.
- 30L. It is a good questionnaire, please put some teeth in the rule. It is very obscure as it now reads.
- 31L. QUESTIONS ASK QUESTIONS THAT ARE CONFUSING, WHICH MAKES ANSWERS APPEAR TO CONTRADICT. TOO MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT SAME THING.
- 32L. If the penalty for illegal helmet contact were reduced to 5 or 10 yards but the automatic first down was retained, this would still be classified as a major penalty and selectiveness would probably remain. I think the coaches and conferences could be the best weapons against this problem. Discipline against the player by the team/conference might be more effective than the penalty.
- 33L. Any personal foul (not just kicker, holder passer) should carry over to the kick off. Substitute rule still

needs some work, as it is possible to create a foul by the offense when play clock is under 12 sec (approx.) when offense substitutes by "automatically" sending a sub on the defense side of the ball into the game...something is missing here, as it is being coached.

- 34L. Judgement is so important in officiating that it is difficult to answer black and white questions.
- 35L. Intentional use of the helmet by any player at any time should be penalized. The trick will be to develop tools to aid in judging intent in this situation and to have the unqualified support of all concerned with the issue.
- 36L. I appreciate the fact that the survey includes officials.
- 37L. See 27 above. THANKS for your efforts. I'd be interested in being involved with this study. (tfjcrowley@aol.com)
- 38L. I believe this type of foul should be addressed, even if not called in the game, by the supervisors in their review of game tapes and should still be enforced then by not allowing the player to play in the next game. Player safety is the number one thing that should be in all of our minds in the game of football and regardless of when it is picked up, on the field or on game tapes in the conference offices on Monday. No one wants to see a life long injury occur to any player.
- 39L. ADD/clarify the rule regarding helmet contact on a defenseless receiver.
- 40L. Unless one shoulder-tackles, all tackles begin with the helmet. It may be with the mask first, but they do begin with the helmet. Let's face it, players do try to punish their opponents. At times it is difficult to determine where the initial contact occurs (chest, chin etc). The action happens very fast. One suggestion may be for the NCAA or the conference to administer and enforce these types of dangerous plays, called or not called on the field, via tape. Just because it was not called on the field, does not mean an infraction did not occur.
- 41L. The questions are leading the person to agree that there is a need to change the rules to improve safety. The rules are fine. Start putting more emphasis or consequences on the coaches for the flagrant activity of his players. Then you might see a new style of coaching and teaching. Thank You
- 42L. Football as played today is fast paced and reactionary, there are times when a blow is struck with the helmet that just looks like good aggressive football and it is very difficult to call a helmet penalty in those instances. The players and coaches love a good "stick" and I feel most officials who have played the game are hesitant to flag such plays. It is a no win situation for the officials, either someone gets hurt or coaches, players and fans feel you are penalizing them for playing the game to its fullest.
- 43L. The coaches should emphasize proper tackling and head contact so that it does not place the entire onus on the officials.
- 44L. This starts at the coaching level. Coaches should spend more time on how to make a "quality" tackle and not just "hit hard"...
- 45L. Helmet contact requires quite a bit of judgment on part of the official. No one wants a player injured nor do we want to unduly penalize a player or team in the course of a game. Difficult dilemma
- 46L. THE HEAD AND HELMET ARE PART OF THE GAME. I WAS TAUGHT (MANY YEARS AGO) TO STICK THE FACE MASK IN THE CHEST OF THE BALL CARRIER AND DRIVE THROUGH. EVENTUALLY THIS WOULD LEAD TO A HEAD-DOWN CONTACT. WHEN TACKLING WITH THE SHOULDER THERE WOULD BE TIMES THAT A SIDE HEAD CONTACT WOULD CAUSE A STINGER. THE HEAD AND HELMET WILL CONTINUE TO BE A PART OF THE TACKLING PHASE OF FOOTBALL. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IS EDUCATE AGAINST TO INTENT OF USING THE HEAD AND HELMET TO PUNISH THE OPPONENT.