



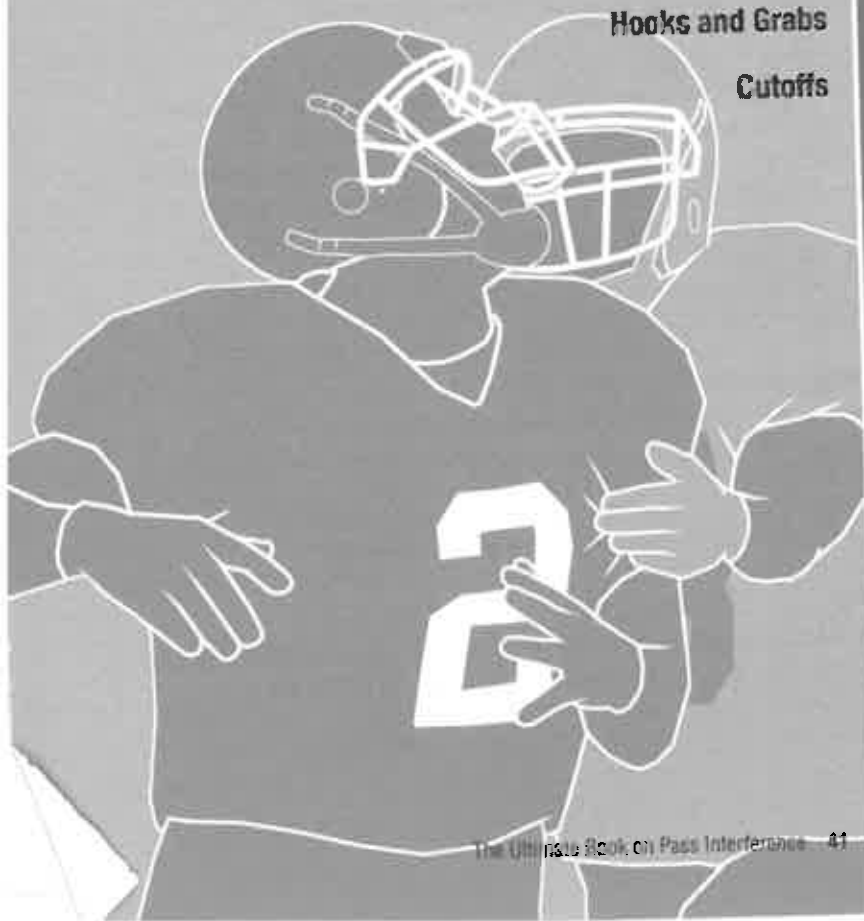
Defensive Interference

In This Chapter

Illegal Contact

Hooks and Grabs

Cutoffs



IN AN EFFORT TO AID OFFICIALS in determining what is defensive pass interference and what is not, a list of seven acts has been developed. An official who can mentally place suspect contact into one of the following categories improves his chances of being correct.

Playing through the back/early contact

A defender cannot come over a receiver's back to try to play a pass. Be careful not to penalize a defender who actually gets around the side of the receiver to bat down or perhaps even intercept a pass. From the wrong vantage point, it can look like early contact from behind and the official can improperly penalize a good defensive play. Also, don't throw the flag when the contact by the defender and the touching of the pass by the receiver occur so closely together in terms of timing that one needs a slow motion replay to see which really occurred first.

When a safety hits the receiver even a split second before the ball arrives, the contact is illegal. Make sure, though, that you actually see the interference; don't let crowd reaction help you to call it.

Not playing the ball

The rules give defenders and receivers equal rights to try to catch a pass, but for a defender to exercise that right, it follows that he must be looking at the ball. If, while a pass is in the air, the defender is looking at the receiver and contact materially impedes the receiver in his attempt to catch the pass, interference should be called. Officials need to be alert to the tricky defender who plays the receiver, contacts him and then, just after the contact, spins his head around to try to find the ball and avoid an interference call.

Grabbing the arm

Interference should be called when a defender grabs and pins one of the receiver's arms as he begins to reach up to catch the ball, thus allowing him to get only one arm up to make the catch. That can be very difficult for officials to see. Often, an official substantially farther away from the action has the best look and can make the call.

Cutoff

A defender who is not playing the ball cannot veer into a receiver's path and make contact. That particularly occurs on sideline routes when the defender and receiver are running in close proximity and the defender uses his body to force the receiver out of his route. It can

be a subtle move but remember that it doesn't take much to disrupt a receiver's route and prevent him from getting where he is trying to get to catch a pass.

Examples of interference by cutoff:

A defender moves in front of a receiver who is trying to make a play on the ball and intentionally slows down or screens the receiver from moving to the ball.

A receiver and defender are running shoulder to shoulder and side by side. The receiver is nearest to the sideline. When a pass intended for the receiver is thrown, the receiver breaks to the inside. The defender does not move, makes no attempt to go for the pass and the receiver collides with the defender.

Arm bar

A defender cannot put his forearm across an offensive player's chest or arm(s) while the two are running side by side and use it as leverage to restrict him from getting to the ball or raising his arms. That applies whether the defender is playing the receiver or the ball. As in the other instances, there must be a material restriction or impeding of the receiver — something other than minor, inadvertent contact.

Hook and turn

A defender cannot grab a receiver around the torso and use his arm as a hook to spin the receiver around before the pass arrives, thus preventing him from catching the pass. In calling the foul, officials must ensure that there is a material restriction; simply placing an arm on the receiver is not enough for a flag. A defender, for example, might drape his arm on a receiver's waist and reach around the receiver with his other arm to bat down a pass, and there is no foul because the receiver has not been materially impeded in his attempt to catch the pass. Remember that in order for interference to occur, the contact must materially affect the play. Officials must also be careful not to throw a flag if the hook and turn occurs after the ball touches or passes the receiver.

Regarding the PlayPics

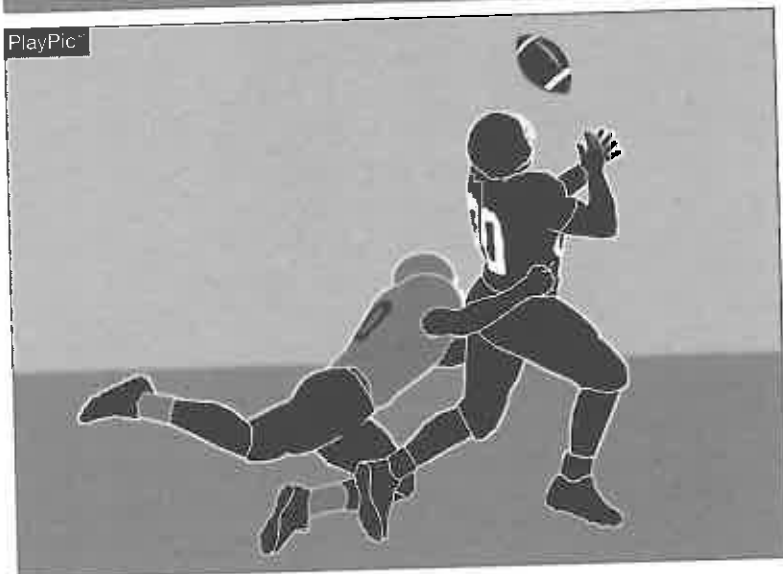
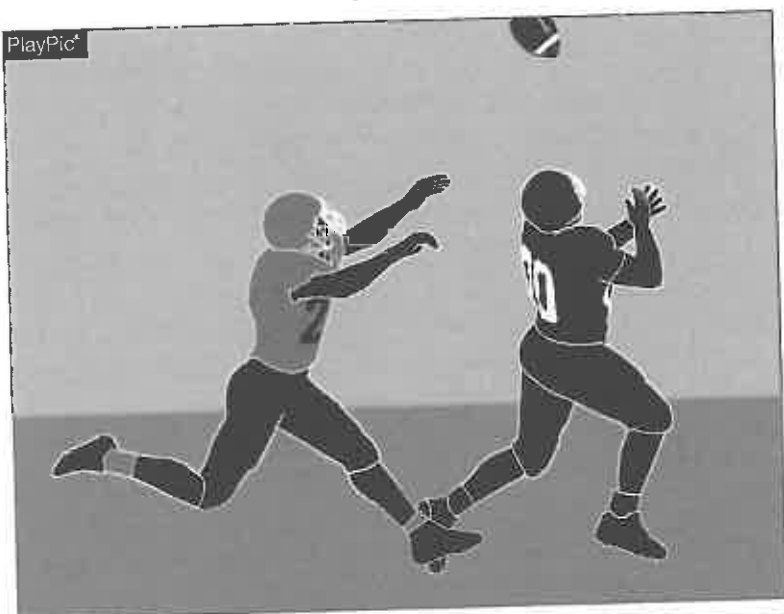
As a further aid, each type of defensive interference is depicted in the following pages. The acts are shown from a perspective to best illustrate the illegal act. In each PlayPic, the defense is wearing gray jerseys.

Playing Through the Man



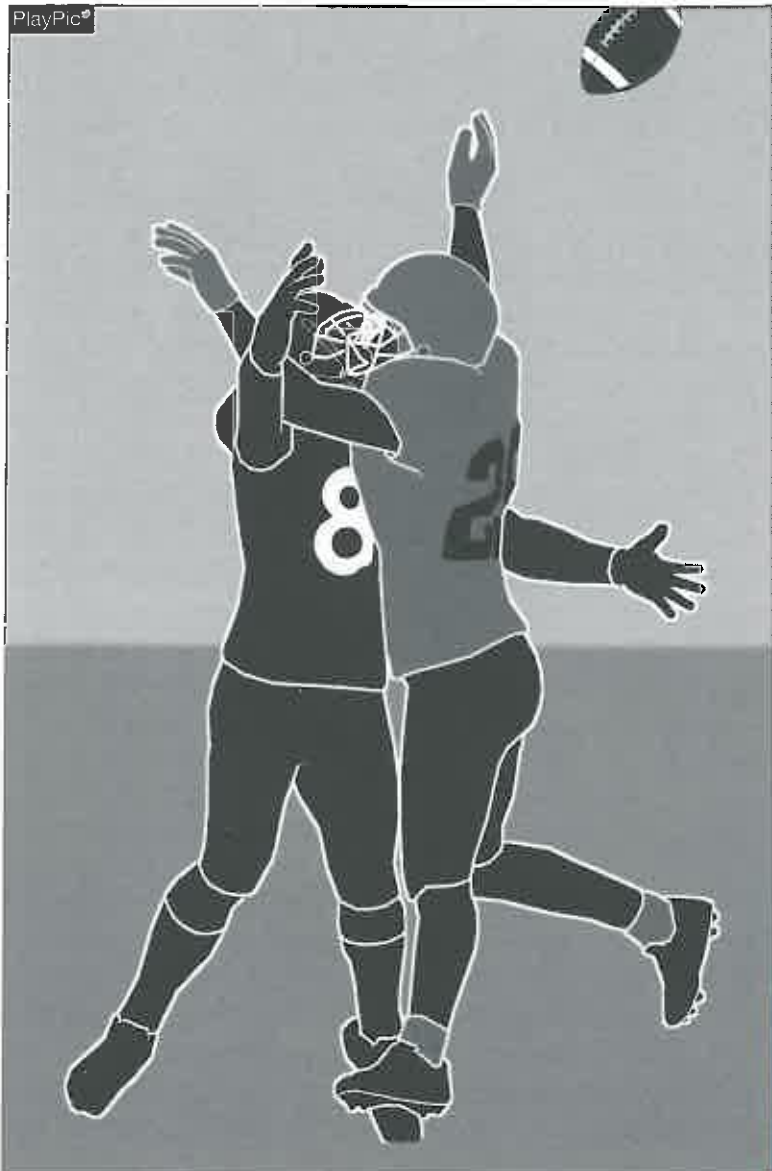
Early contact often occurs when the offensive player has inside position. The defender will either try to time the contact so it occurs as or just after the ball arrives at the receiver's hands, thus jarring the receiver and causing him to miss the pass, or will try to outleap the receiver, reach over his shoulder and knock the ball down.

Early Contact



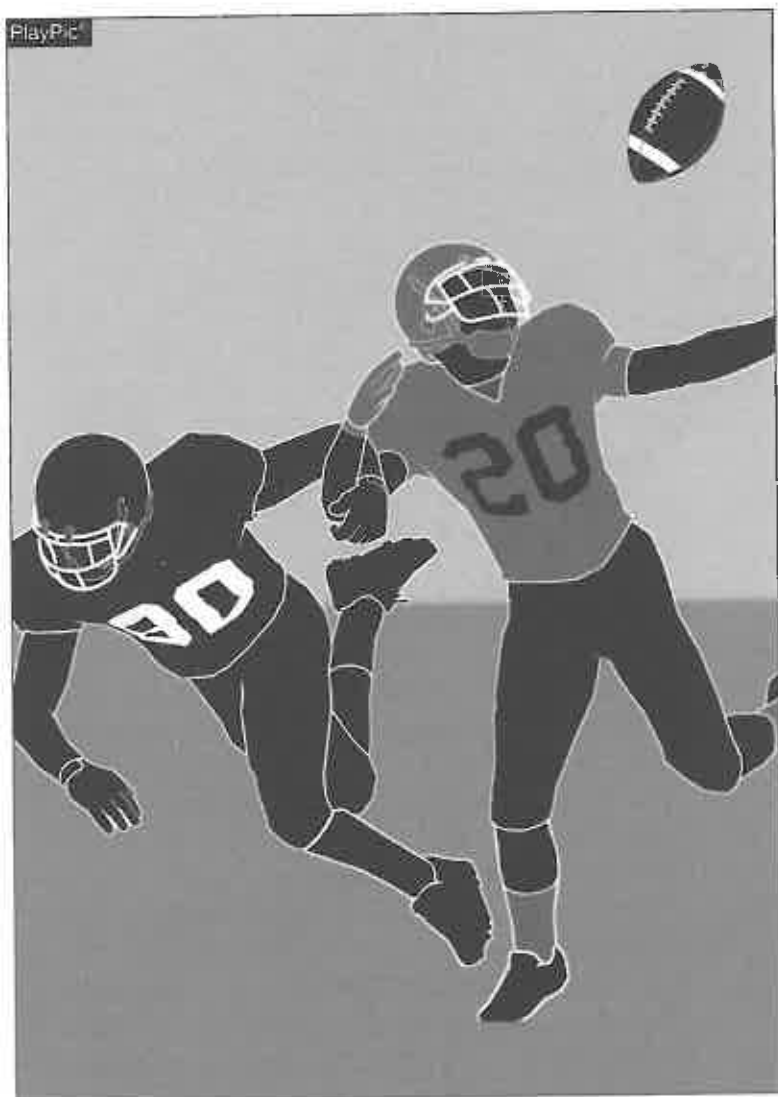
A defender who is clearly beaten will sometimes resort to desperate measures and tackle the receiver before the ball arrives. Under NFHS rules, such a tactic can be considered Intentional Interference, which carries an additional 15-yard penalty.

Not Playing the Ball



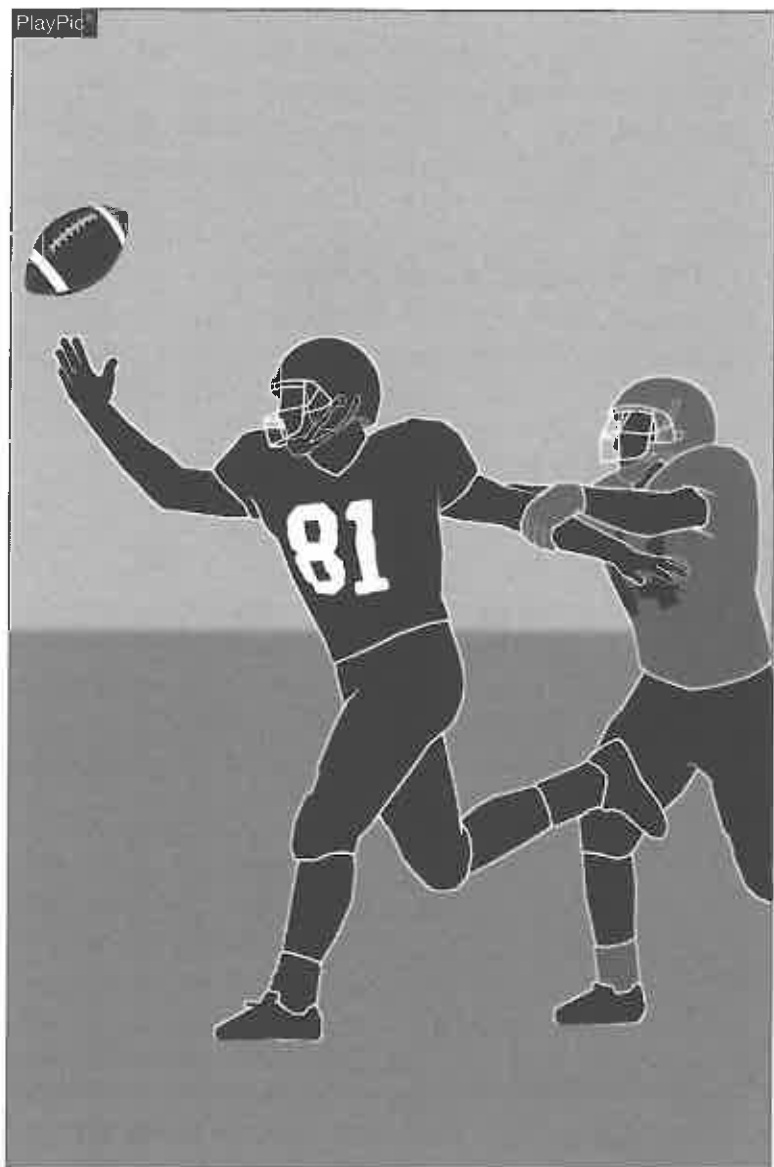
One of the easier Interference calls involves the defender focusing his attention on the receiver rather than the ball. Since he cannot see the ball, the contact inevitably occurs before the ball arrives. If every interference call were this easy, this book would not be necessary.

Arm Grab



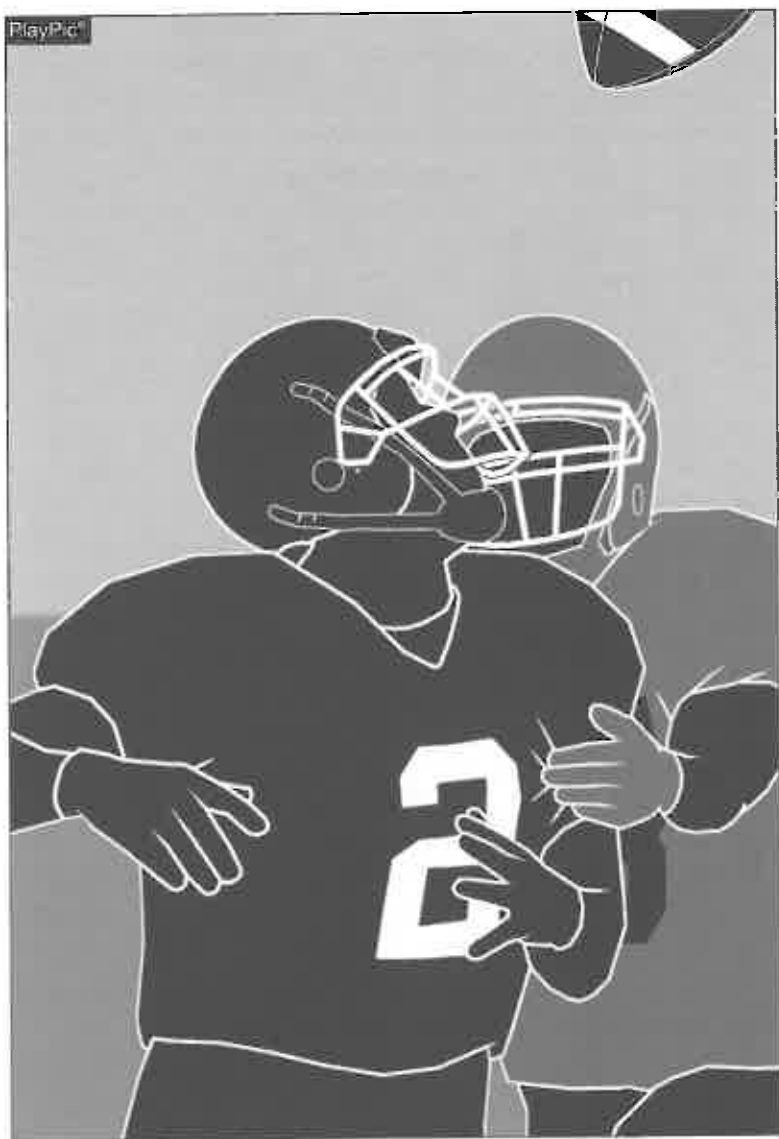
An arm restriction sometimes occurs when the receiver is in his pattern and the defender reaches out to slow him down. Other times it also qualifies as early contact. The PlayPic illustrates both. The defender (gray jersey) has hooked his arm through the receiver's arm, preventing the receiver from lifting both arms to attempt the catch. That has knocked the receiver off stride. The early contact is more obvious, but the covering official can report both acts.

Arm Grab



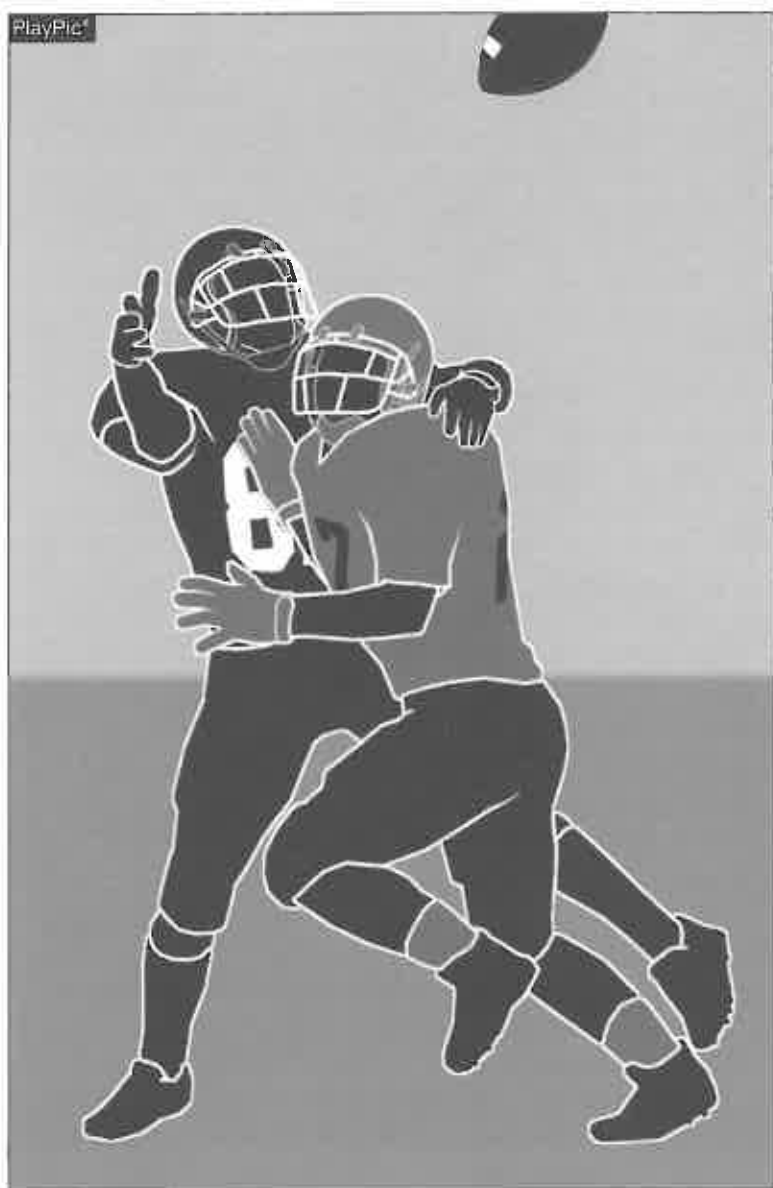
The receiver has beaten the defender. In an act of desperation, the defender resorts to grabbing the receiver's arm in an effort to slow him up and prevent the catch.

Arm Grab



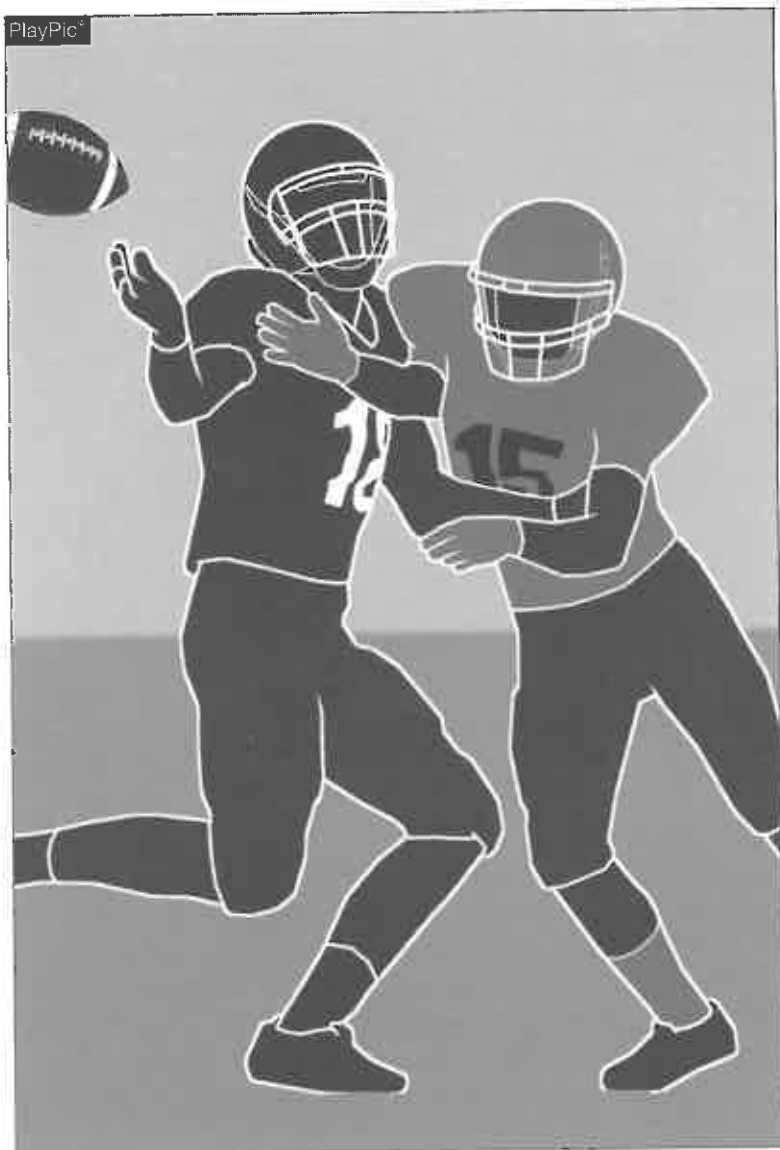
By grabbing the receiver's arm, the defender in the PlayPic has met several criteria for pass interference. In addition to grabbing the arm, the defender has made early contact and is not playing the ball. If he follows the arm grab with a tug, he could be considered to be guilty of a hook and turn as well.

Cut Off

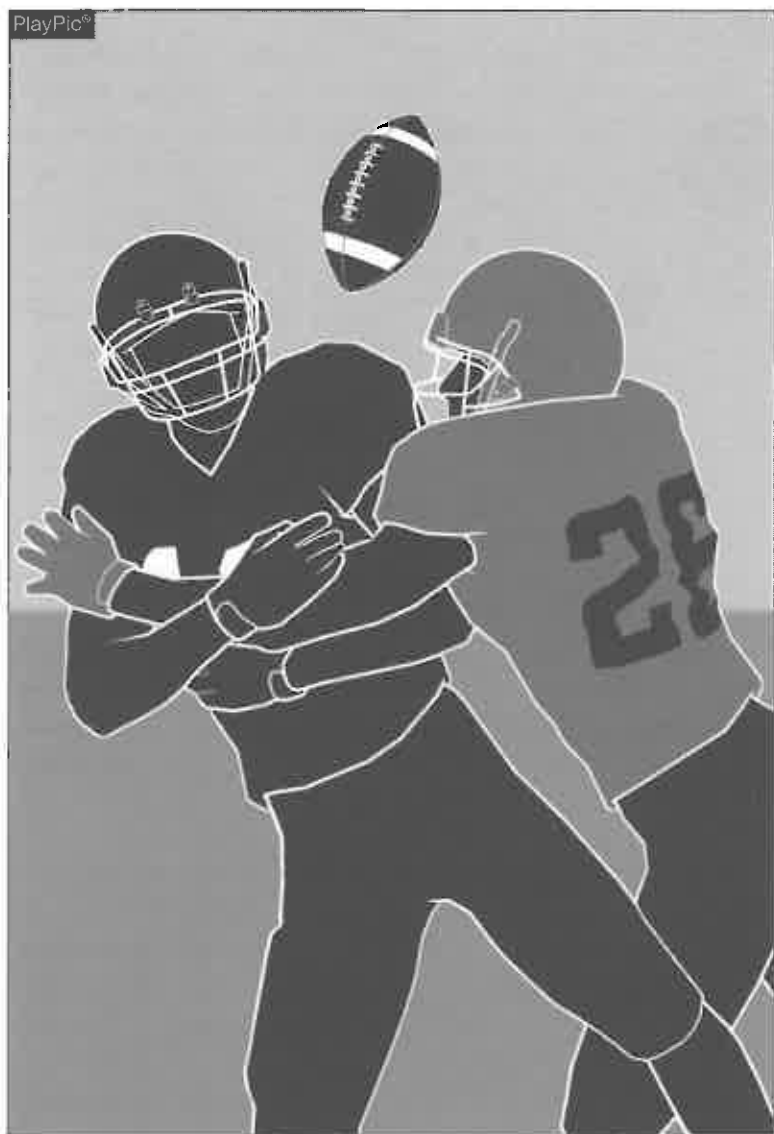


The players in the PlayPic are in close proximity. The defender causes contact by preventing the receiver from adjusting his route to attempt a catch.

Cut Off



When a receiver is looking back for the ball, the defender may cut in front of the receiver in an attempt to catch or bat the pass. Although defenders and their coaches will argue (with some justification) that the defender is playing the ball, he has cut off the receiver's route and caused contact. The foul is on the defense in that case.

Arm Bar/Early Contact

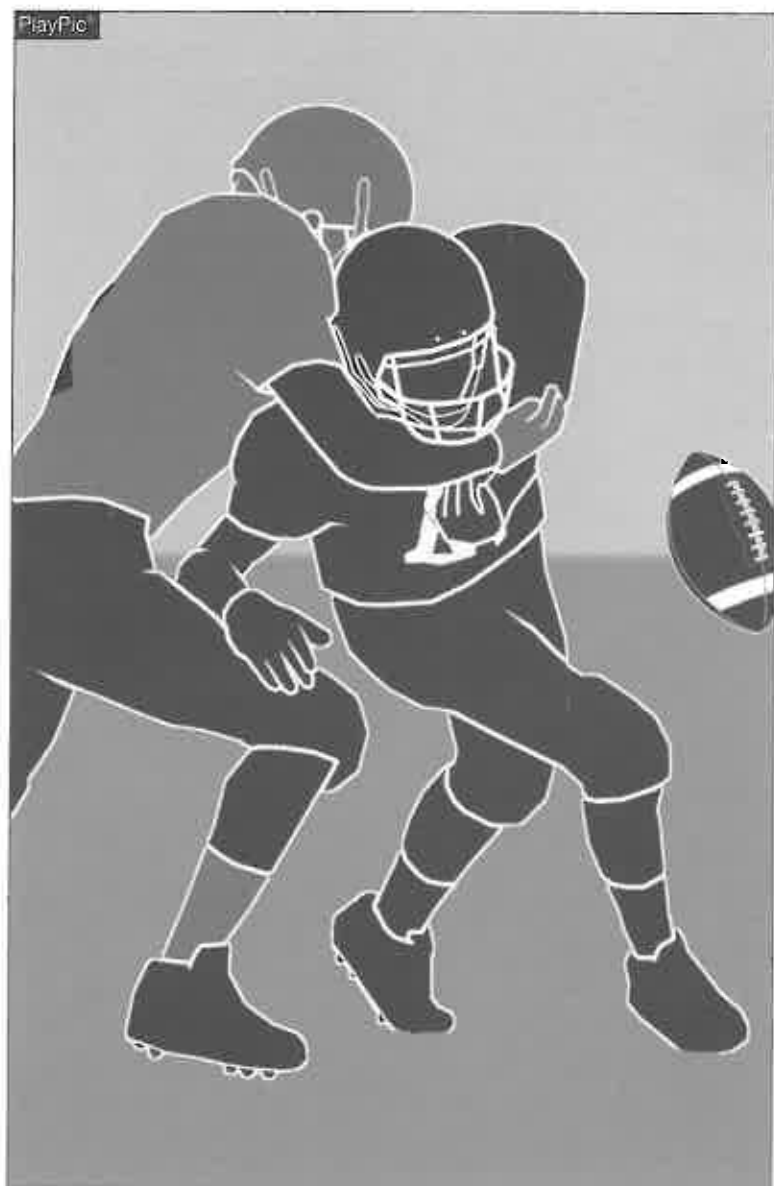
The defender has his arm so it is across the receiver's chest with the arm pinned underneath. Any time an official sees a receiver having to attempt a one-handed catch, it should sound as a warning bell in the official's mind. Although receivers are gifted athletes fully capable of making circus catches, they prefer to attempt those grabs using both hands.

Hook and Turn



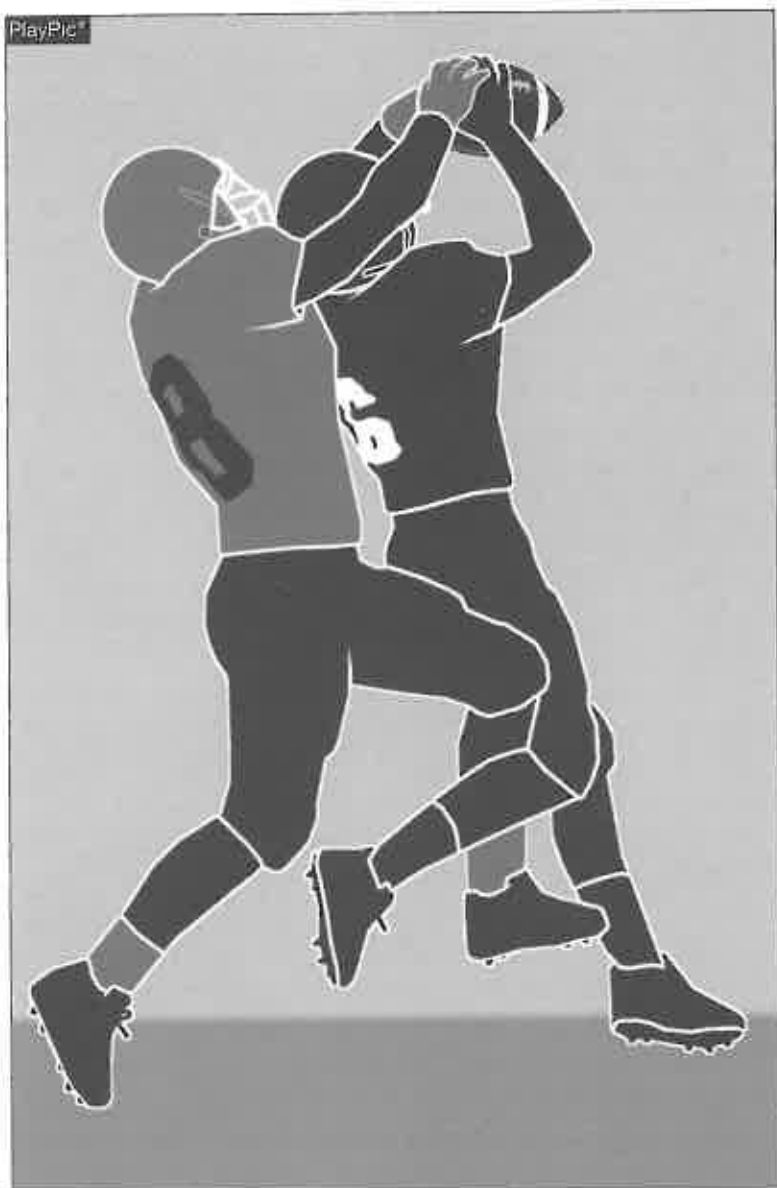
The typical hook and turn occurs with the defender behind the receiver. In the PlayPic, the defender hooks the receiver around the waist and turns him away from the ball. That disrupts the receiver's pattern and restricts his ability to go after the pass.

Hook and Turn



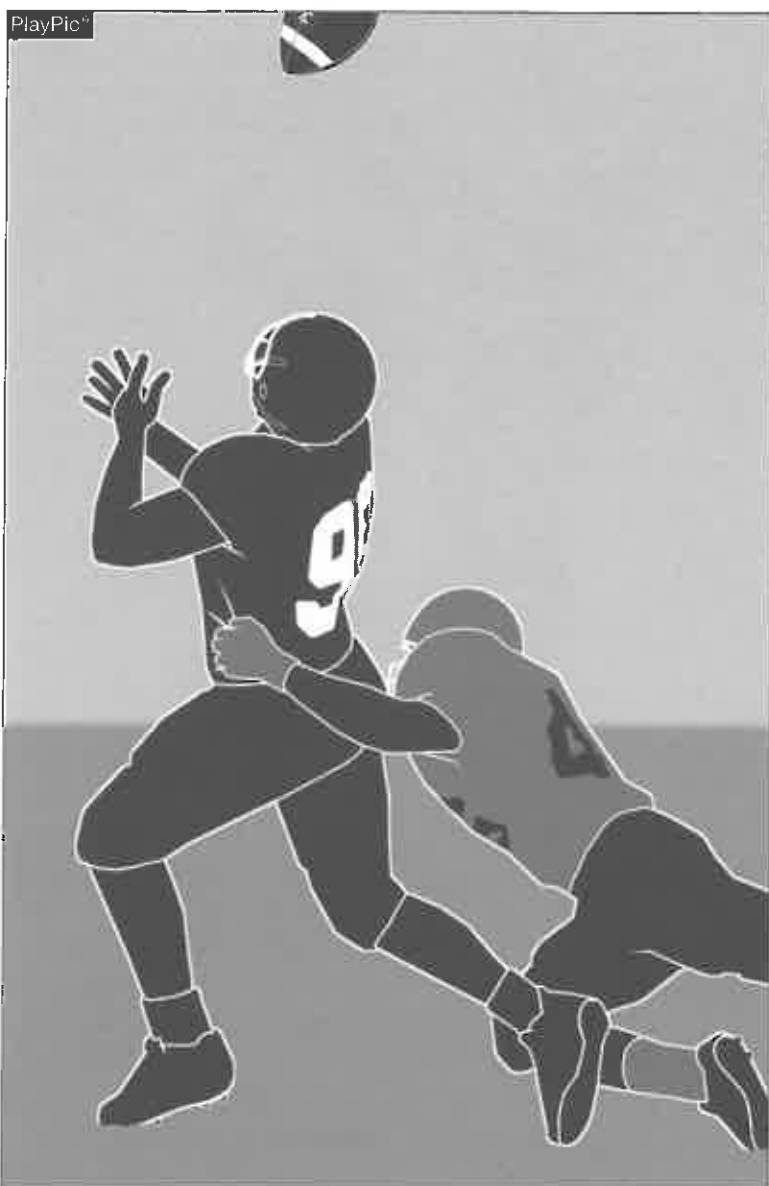
A hook and turn may also occur from the side. The defender will grab the receiver's shoulder or waist and twist the receiver toward himself.

Playing Through the Man



Even if there is space between the defender and receiver, the defender cannot grab the receiver's arms or hands to prevent an attempted catch. Note that if the receiver is first to touch the ball, such contact is legal.

Early Contact/Not Playing the Ball



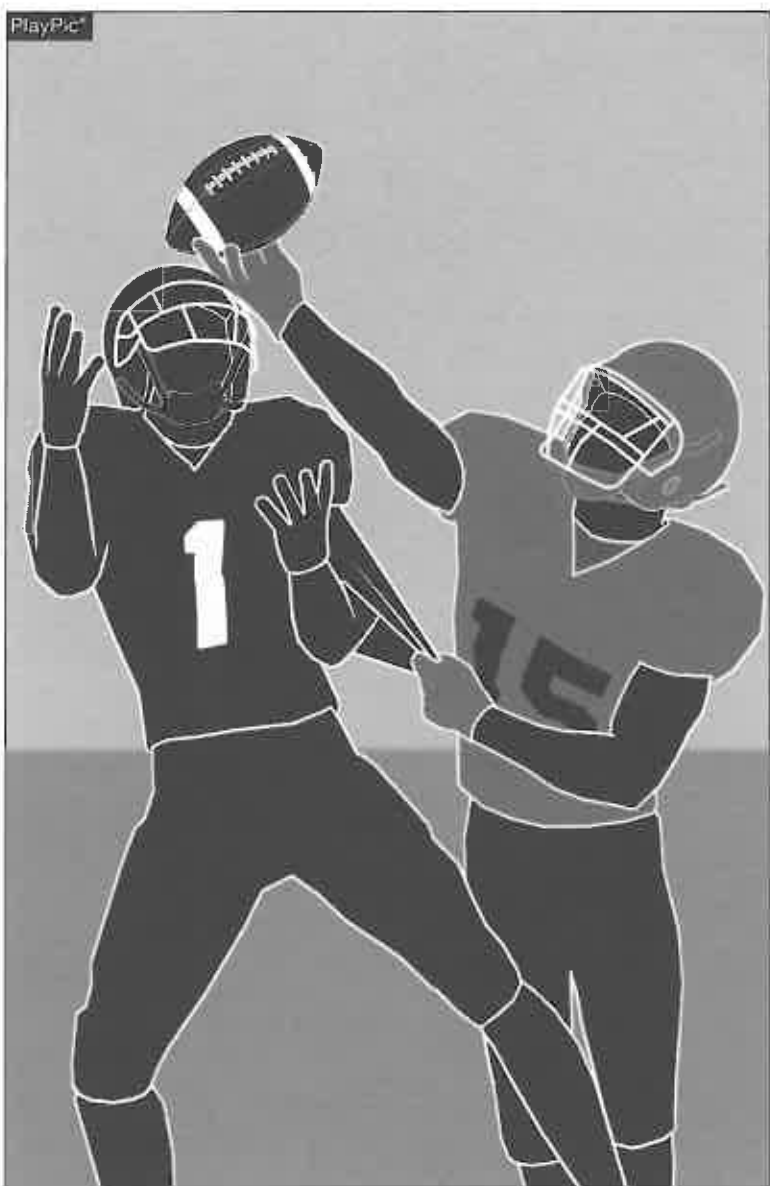
The defender is guilty of a specific type of early contact, a jersey grab. Defenders in the situation depicted may also use the receiver's jersey as a handle to execute a hook and turn.

Not Playing the Ball



Faceguarding is only illegal in NFHS play. However, even in NCAA ball, the defender may not focus attention on the receiver and ignore the ball.

Jersey Grab



An example of why angle and focus are so important. If the covering official is straightlined, too close or intent on watching the ball, the jersey grab may go undetected.