

## Plays You Won't See in the Superbowl



*Over 30 years, beginning in 1876, football evolved from a slight variation on rugby into (roughly) its present-day form. Along the way, spectators saw some plays that would baffle today's football fans. Choose the answer that best describes each play below.*

1. Which of the following describes a "Mass Play?"

- Between 4 and 8 offensive players would make a formation, with interlinked arms (or by grabbing handles on their teammates' pants) and fling themselves against a single point in the defensive line in order to break through and protect the ball carrier, pulled or pushed along with them.
- In the case of a tie, both teams would mass all their players on the field. The referee would roll the ball between them, one of the teams would gain possession, and the game would be played with all the players on the field until one team or the other scored.

2. Which of the following describes "The Dribble?"

- A technique borrowed from basketball, in which the ball carrier, pursued by a tackler, bounced the football (which was rounder than it is now) off the ground, making him momentarily immune from a legal tackle because he did not "possess" the ball.
- An offensive strategy consisting of making a sequence of onside kicks and touchdowns without giving up possession of the ball in order to bring the ball out from the sideline toward the center, which would lessen the angle toward the goalposts through which the kick for the goal would have to be made.

3. Which of the following describes "The Fair?"

- A catch signaled by the team before receiving a punt in which the receiver could not legally be tackled, but in which he was not allowed to advance the ball downfield.
- The usual way of putting the ball in play after it had gone out of bounds ("in touch"), in which one player from the team that ran it out stood at the sideline and threw it between a double line of players from both sides lined up perpendicular to the sideline.



4. Originally, the prohibition against offsides play required the team on the offensive line to remain motionless after the ball was snapped and not interfere with the rushers until the ball was run forward, beyond the line of scrimmage.

Is this definition of "offsides" true or false?

- True
- False

5. Originally, no forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage was allowed.

Is this true or false?

- True
- False

Sources:

Walter Camp, *American Football* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891).

Walter Camp, ed., *Spalding's Official Foot Ball Guide for 1904* (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1904)

"Football: Some Recent Modifications Suggested in the College Game," *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, April 10, 1887, p. 22.

David M. Nelson, *The Anatomy of a Game: Football, the Rules, and the Men Who Made the Game* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1994).

"The New Game of Football," *New York Times*, September 30, 1906, p. SM5.

Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/quiz>