

Dangerous Plays - Clarifications and Interpretations for XVI.H.4

(USA Ultimate Spirit, Officiating, and Rules (SOAR) Committee – 5/10/2018)

XVI.H.4. Reckless disregard for the safety of fellow players or other dangerously aggressive behavior (such as significantly colliding into a stationary opponent), regardless of whether or when the disc arrives or when contact occurs¹ is considered dangerous play and is treated as a foul². This rule is not superseded by any other rule.

Annotations:

- 1. If no contact occurs, there is no callable dangerous play. Contact need not be severe.*
- 2. The proper call in this case is "Dangerous Play." The caller should then briefly explain the grounds for the call. This call trumps any foul rules and should be used in situations where the play presented serious risk of injury.*

Clarification for “is treated as a foul” with respect to the Continuation Rule

The language of this rule is structured to say that the dangerous play is treated as a foul regardless of the timing of the disc arriving and the contact. Players should not treat the dangerous play in isolation as a foul and then apply the continuation rule to say “the contact happened after the play was decided and therefore did not affect the specific play, so the turnover stands.”

Examples:

1. If a dangerous play is made against an opponent (receiver) attempting to make a play on a playable disc, the dangerous play is treated as a receiving foul, regardless of the order of the contact with the disc and the player. This means that the fouled player is awarded possession of the disc under XVI.C.2.b.1 and XVI.H.3.b.2. Furthermore, in treating the play as a foul, the contact is treated as if it affected the play for continuation purposes.
2. If a dangerous play is made in a thrower/marker situation, the dangerous play is treated as a throwing foul, regardless of the exact timing of the contact and the release of the throw (thus ignoring XVI.H.3.a.5 regarding contact on follow-through). Furthermore, in treating the play as a foul, the contact is treated as if it affected the play for continuation purposes.
3. If a dangerous play is made away from the disc or on an obviously unplayable throw (out of bounds or rolling on the ground), the dangerous play is treated as a general foul. Thus, the opponent may call the dangerous play and stop play, but the continuation rule will apply normally and a turnover won't necessarily be negated.

Scenario: Dangerous Play Call and Outcome

A defender knocks the disc away and then crashes hard into the receiver.

Receiver: “Foul! You crushed me. That was a dangerous play. I’m calling a dangerous play.”

Defender: “I’m sorry. Are you OK? I know that was significant contact, so I’m not contesting the foul, but I did get the disc first before I hit you, so I think it should remain a turnover.”

Receiver: “It doesn’t matter if you got the disc first if the play was dangerous. I still think it was a dangerous play.”

Defender: “You’re right. That was significant contact. I’m sorry again. No contest on the dangerous play call.”

Because the play was dangerous, it is treated as if it affected the play, so the receiver should get the disc at the spot of the contact.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are some examples of a dangerous play?

The common theme in these examples is that they create the risk of dangerous contact.

Non-Exhaustive Examples:

1. Attempting to bid around or through a player from behind or other attempted bids (e.g., “backpacking” and “outside shoulder bids”) that result in landing on the receiver’s back or legs
2. Taking a running jump that will carry one’s hips/legs into the head of a non-jumping player who is stationary or moving in the opposite direction
3. Scrum going up for a floaty disc and an outside person comes crashing in
4. Running into or running in front of the path of a receiver with knowledge that the receiver is unaware of your position (i.e. “blindsiding” a receiver)
5. Jumping right in front of a sprinting cutter in a manner where contact is unavoidable (i.e. attempting to “take a charge”)
6. Wild, uncontrolled throwing motions (e.g., thrower following through into a marker’s face)

2. What are some examples of non-severe contact that could still be dangerous?

Generally, if a play involves contact that poses a risk of injury, it is dangerous, even if contact is not severe. The less controlled the player, the more likely it qualifies (it was luck, and not body control, that prevented the dangerous contact).

Non-Exhaustive Examples:

1. A defender jumps completely over the top of a receiver slightly grazing the receiver on the way over. If the receiver were to jump at all, which can reasonably be expected and they are entitled to do, this play would have resulted in a violent collision instead of the slight grazing. Note: If a defender manages to jump over a player without causing *any* contact, it is not a callable dangerous play.
2. A defender attempts to dive past a receiver and the upper body of the defender grazes the knee of the receiver *on the way in*. This contact would be considered dangerous.

Note: Minor contact between the defender's legs and the receiver's feet *after* the defender's body has passed the receiver is not dangerous.

3. A receiver cuts up the line chasing down a pass, senses the presence of a downfield defender approaching, and dives blindly toward the disc to catch it before it is blocked. The defender stops short to avoid a collision, and the receiver either grazes the defender in the air or slides into the defender's feet. Note: In most blind-approach situations like this one, either player who chooses to dive without having identified a clear, safe, path will likely be committing a dangerous play if contact occurs.

3. Can a dangerous play call be contested? If so, what happens?

Yes. A dangerous play call can be contested (XVI.B.). The outcome should be treated as a contested foul, applying the continuation rule as appropriate.

Example:

A receiver attempting to make a play on playable disc calls dangerous play against an opponent. The disc was not caught. The opponent contests, saying the play was not dangerous. The disc should be sent back to the thrower with the stall count coming in at the count reached plus one or 6 if over 5.

4. What is the right outcome for non-dangerous contact that happens after the play has been decided on a reception attempt?

Unless it's a dangerous play, contact is only a foul if it affects continued play. The disc should only go to the fouled player's team if the foul affected the specific play. Note: although only certain contact constitutes a foul, players have a responsibility to avoid contact in every way reasonably possible, while still playing Ultimate. Some contact is inevitable, but players have an affirmative obligation to make reasonable efforts to avoid contact (XVI.H).

Example:

A defender lays out and hits the disc away, but then subsequently initiates contact with the receiver. Unless the receiver feels that the contact was the result of a dangerous play or that the contact interfered with the receiver's second attempt on the disc, it is not a receiving foul. A receiving foul can only be called when a player feels that their attempt to make a play on the disc has been interfered with. Some amount of incidental contact before, during, or immediately after the attempt often is unavoidable (XVI.H.3.b1.1). In the case of *non*-incidental contact after the attempt, it still could be a general foul if the receiver was knocked over or tripped and needs to stop play to be able to get up. However, in this case, the turnover would still stand.