

2008 High School Football Rules Changes Announced

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Contact: Bob Colgate

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 12, 2008) - Four changes in rules regarding penalty options for teams that are fouled on scoring plays were among the 17 revisions in high school football rules approved for the 2008 season by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Football Rules Committee at its January 19-20 meeting in Indianapolis. The rules changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Rules 2-16-2e and 10-2-4 were revised to state that a team must foul twice during the same down to commit multiple fouls. These changes allow for enforcement of both fouls when the opponent of the scoring team commits a foul on both a touchdown-scoring play and the subsequent try.

An addition to Rule 3-3-4 clarifies issues at the end of the half if there is a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted for unsportsmanlike fouls, non-player fouls, fouls that specify a loss of down and fouls that are enforced on the subsequent kickoff as in Rule 8-2-2.

Changes to Rule 8-2-2 stipulate that fouls by the opponents of the scoring team on the last timed down of the first half can carry over to the second-half kickoff; however, fouls by the opponents of the scoring team on the last timed down of the second half cannot carry over to overtime play.

"By adopting these changes, the rules committee has further clarified that fouls by opponents of the scoring team may be fully enforced," said Brad Cashman, executive director of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association and chairman of the NFHS Football Rules Committee.

In other rules changes, the committee removed the option of carrying over unused second-half time-outs into overtime. The NFHS-recommended overtime procedure continues to provide for one time-out per overtime period with the revisions stipulating that unused time-outs do not carry over to subsequent overtime periods.

A change in Rule 3-5-2a provides the head coach an option of designating another coach for the purpose of requesting time-outs. The appointed replacement shall remain in place for the entire game except in case of emergency.

Six changes were approved by the committee in Rule 1 - The Game, Field, Players and Equipment. References to hip pads, knee pads and thigh guards in Rule 1-5-1 will now state that these required pieces of equipment must not be altered from the manufacturer's original design or production. Also, shinguards, if worn, must meet specifications of the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE).

"There are concerns that players and coaches are altering mandatory equipment and, therefore, sacrificing safety by changing the original design by the manufacturer to protect the player," said Bob Colgate, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Football Rules Committee.

In Rule 1-2-3d, the committee altered last year's rule change regarding the use of a 4-inch-wide restraining line around the outside of the field to state that this line can either be solid or broken. The committee recommends a broken line be used and marked by placing 12-inch-long lines separated by 24-inch intervals.

Although the rules allow for use of other colors for field markings when appropriate, the committee clarified that white is the recommended color for all field markings.

In Rule 1-5-2, the committee provided a definition for hand pads and delayed the implementation date for a mandatory securely attached label or stamp on hand pads to 2012. A hand pad is now defined as "a covering for the hand which may have separate openings for each finger and thumb, is absent of any web-like material between the finger and/or thumb, and not covering each finger and thumb."

Other changes approved by the committee:

- In Rule 10-4-6, the basic spot is the 20-yard line for fouls by either team, in addition to just the team without the ball, which went into effect last year.
- A change in Rule 10-4-7 helps clarify the basic spot on running plays for fouls by the opponent of the team in possession when the team in possession puts the ball in the end zone and, subsequently, possession is lost.
- New wording was formulated for Rule 4-2-3 regarding the inadvertent whistle, which makes the choosing of an option an easier process to understand.
- In Rule 9-9-4, the use of an illegal kicking tee will now be penalized as an unfair act committed by the player.
- Hiding the ball under the jersey will be enforced as a basic spot foul and makes the enforcement consistent with the all-but-one principle.

In addition, the committee identified five points of emphasis for the 2008 season: MRSA and Communicable Skin Conditions; Purpose of a Football Helmet; Altering Legal Football Equipment; Sideline Management and Control; and False Starts, Shifts and Motion.

In terms of the number of participants, football is the most popular high school sport for boys. According to the 2006-07 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, 1,104,548 boys played 11-player football with another 26,000 involved in six-, eight- and nine-player football. In addition, 1,073 girls played high school football in 2006-07.