



Oregon School Activities Association

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Dance Coaches and Technical Judges:

Dance competitions within the state of Oregon are sanctioned by the OSAA and follow the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Rules. When NFHS rules do not cover a particular rule scenario, Coaches and Technical Judges may request for a rule interpretation from the NFHS Ruling committee. Rulings from the NFHS cover all 50 states and over 7.8 million high school participants.

During Category season, the use of “hands free poms” came into question, in that some Oregon dance teams were performing stunts/lifts/ tumbling while participants had hands free poms in performer’s hands. The 2019-20 NFHS Spirit rules book does not list hands free poms as an exception to rules about the access to a full hand.

The definition of hands free poms was provided to the NFHS as: Hands Free Poms are defined as poms with a strap across the palm of the hand making them easily transferrable to place a clean hand on the ground for skill, tricks, etc. A hair tie, rubber band, or tying pom strings together will not be counted as a hands free pom.

Oregon dance rules interpretation question posed to the NFHS for comment:

What is the ruling on the use of Hand Free Poms for the execution of stunts/ lifts/tumbling in which the hands are used to hold, support, grab a performer?

Dr James Weaver, NFHS Director, gathered input from Spirit Rules interpreting committee members prior to sending an interpretation. The NFHS ruled:

The consensus we have come up with is that hand free poms should be treated like jewelry and thus should not be used. The idea here is if there are deductions taken for a simple hair tie around a wrist, the hands free pom should not be used.

With this ruling, hand free poms are not permitted for use when doing stunts/lifts/tumbling. Like the use of pom poms, hand free poms are acceptable as long as they stay within the established NFHS Spirit rules. Hands free poms may be used as a prop, however, the moment a hands free pom is strapped onto the hands of a performer the hands free pom becomes jewelry and that is not allowed.

This rule interpretation on hand free poms means the following is not permitted:

- a) Bases holding objects (hand free poms and anything else) in hands (10 pts)
- b) Tumbling, including kip-ups, using hand free poms in hands (3 pts)
Teams using pom poms and executing kip-ups must not have anything in the performer’s hands when executing.
- c) Stunts/ Lifts, including T-Lifts, using hand free poms in hands (10 pts)
- d) And any other situation in which the full hand is required for execution (3 pts)

Although hand free poms is likened to a simple hair tie around the wrist, the potential risk factor related to stunts/lifts/ tumbling with hand free poms exceeds the basic apparel ruling.

If you have additional questions about this interpretation please contact KT Emerson or Oregon Dance SRI, Christine Andersen.