
2022-23 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Sportsmanship

Good sporting behavior is one of the fundamental ingredients to the continued success and enjoyment of education-based high school sports and activities. In fact, in the 103-year history of organized high school sports in the United States, good sportsmanship has been one of the most important outcomes of high school activity programs.

NFHS playing rules are written to encourage sportsmanship. Participation in these programs should promote respect, integrity and sportsmanship. However, for these ideals to occur, everyone involved in these programs must be doing their part.

The NFHS is concerned that unsporting behavior in education-based athletics has increased across all sports. As a result, the NFHS has made sportsmanship the No. 1 Point of Emphasis for the 2022-23 school year.

Sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior, is about treating one another with respect and exhibiting appropriate behavior. It is about being fair, honest and caring. When these types of appropriate behavior occur, competitive play is more enjoyable for everyone.

Coaches set the tone at athletic contests with their display of sportsmanship. If these individuals act in a sportsmanlike manner, their behavior sets the tone for players, spectators and others. If coaches, however, are complaining constantly about the decision of contest officials, spectators are more likely to do the same.

There must be a collaborative, working relationship between contest officials and game administration to promote good sportsmanship and safely conduct the contest. Everyone has their roles to play in creating a positive, sportsmanlike atmosphere at contests.

Officials should focus on the actions of players, coaches and other bench/sideline personnel. A positive, open line of communication between officials and coaches ultimately results in a better contest for everyone involved.

Contest officials, however, should never engage with spectators who are exhibiting unsporting behavior. Once the contest begins, school administration is responsible for dealing with unruly spectators. A proactive approach by school administration includes monitoring the behavior of spectators and intervening as needed.

If spectators are using demeaning or profane language at officials – or at others in the stands – those individuals should be removed from the contest by school administration.

In recent years, a heightened level of unsportsmanlike behavior has been occurring by spectators at high school sporting events, and it must be stopped. The use of demeaning language, or hate speech, by students, parents and other fans must cease.

High school sports and other activities exist to lift people up, not demean or tear people down. The goal is to treat everyone fairly and treat each other with respect. Any speech or harassment that is insulting, demeaning or hurtful will not be tolerated.

High schools must establish a culture that values the worth of every single person – both players on the school's team and players on the opposing team. There must be a no-tolerance policy regarding behavior that shows disrespect for another individual.

Good sports win with humility, lose with grace and do both with dignity. It takes the efforts of everyone every day to ensure that sportsmanship remains one of the top priorities in education-based activity programs.

Playable-Nonplayable Situations

It is the responsibility of the host school to adhere to the requirements of both the court and all game equipment as outlined in Rules 2 and 3. The match shall not be played when padding requirements are not met and the state association shall be notified to determine further action or penalty, as deemed necessary. When game equipment, other than required padding, does not meet rule specifications, the match shall be conducted, and the improper conditions reported to the appropriate authority.

Officials evaluate each site before their assigned match and determine playable and non-playable areas, keeping risk minimization and fairness in mind in the application of the rules. Confusion occurs when officiating crews interpret ground rules differently at a school within the same season and/or the same week. State or regional assignors may create and provide a compilation of ground rules for each school prior to each season to help mitigate potential confusion.

Upon arrival to a site, officials may need to establish and communicate ground rules during the pre-match conference addressing the following:

- Extended space needed for serving when the minimum 6 feet (2 meters) is not available;
- Change of playing surface;
- Adjacent courts and the encroachment of players – during and after contact;
- Divider nets;
- Playing area between the official's table and benches;
- Overhead obstructions (basketball goals, batting cages, wrestling and/or cheer mats, running tracks, ceiling fans, speakers, beams, air ducts, divider curtains, ropes, lighting, banners, flags, scoreboard, etc.).

During a match, referees are tested when a player pursues a teammate's errant pass near the bleachers or another nonplayable area. The rules allow a player to retrieve a ball near a nonplayable area, if a body part is in contact with the playable area during the player's contact of the ball – regardless of if a foot or another body part is in the nonplayable area. It is not the location of the ball, but the locale of the player. A player can reach into a nonplayable area. A player can also enter the nonplayable area after contact. Being in contact with anything to gain an advantage, like a chair or first row of bleacher, is illegal.

While playing a ball near spectators, a fan might interfere with a player or the ball, even without contacting the ball or player. Referees must determine if the player had a legitimate effort to make a play. There are times when both referees need to convene to decide if there was interference and the play should be replayed or if the ball is ruled dead.

Injury Procedures

General:

Risk minimization is the officials' primary responsibility. If an injury occurs during play, either referee can suspend play by sounding a loud double whistle and holding up both hands. Both officials should signal a referee's time-out.

- The first referee remains on the stand, while the second referee allows the injured players' coach or medical staff to attend to the injured player.
- Line Judges should take their time-out position near the first referee.
- All officials should refrain from taking a position near the injured player, as it may appear that the official is assessing the injury.
- The rule allows the coach 30 seconds to decide on continuing to play, substituting for the injured player, or taking a time-out (if the team still has one remaining). The second

referee should use common sense when starting and stopping their watch and approach the difficult situation with compassion and flexibility while enforcing the rules.

- The second referee needs to communicate with one of the injured team's coaches regarding their options and then explain that they have 30 seconds to choose an option before starting the watch.
- A player does not have to be moved within the 30-second period. Only team personnel or medical staff decides on the appropriateness of moving an injured player, regardless of how long it may take.
- If the coach opts to substitute, the injured player does not follow normal substitution protocol.
- Once the injured player is removed from the playing surface safely, the second referee follows the substitution protocol – signal/whistle – to ensure that the substitute is recognized and recorded by the scorer.
- If play was interrupted, the referees will administer a replay and continue play.
- The injured player who is legally replaced may return to the set.

Blood Situations:

As soon as an official recognizes blood on a player, uniform, equipment or playing surface, play shall be suspended.

- Team personnel can aid a player.
- If there is blood on a jersey or player equipment, it must be appropriately cleaned or removed.
- The referees will allow a player to change jerseys – away from the court area.
- The second referee should scan the court to ensure there is no blood.
- The second referee should check the game ball(s) to ensure there is no evidence of blood.
- Medical staff can attend to the court and game ball(s) with the appropriate solution to remove any blood.

Concussion Protocols:

Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.

- It is not the responsibility of an official to assess a potential concussion.
- It is appropriate for an official to suggest to a coach to attend to a player exhibiting the above signs refraining from assessing that you think the player has a concussion.

Exceptional Substitution:

If a team has exhausted its allowable 18 substitutions or no legal substitutes are available, and an injury occurs where a replacement is needed, a team may be granted an exceptional substitute in priority order.

- By a teammate who has never played in the set or a player who has played in that position.
- By any non-libero teammate on the bench who is not currently being replaced by the libero.
- By a libero if no other possible substitutes exist. (Must change jerseys.)

The substitute counts as a team substitution and the injured player cannot re-enter that set if replaced by an exceptional substitute.