

2021-22 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Line Judge Basics

One of the first referee's prematch duties is to instruct both line judges (5-4-1f, g). Most of the time, the local governance (school or officials' assignor) decides who works as a line judge. Line judges may be paid officials, paid adults (teachers/parents), unpaid volunteers – while many times, line judges are players who have already played or are waiting to play. Regardless, your crew members should work the entire match. Communicate this expectation with both coaches to eliminate any potential resistance as coaches may plan to have their players rotate through from set to set.

Unfortunately, lack of attention and preparedness by the school to adhere to match management protocol impacts everyone. Coaches and even officials can find themselves scrambling just before game time to find someone to be the line judge. Host management plays an important role in confirming that the essential personnel is designated for each match. This ensures that communication by the first referee can continue without delay.

Ideally, the first referee needs to:

- Meet with both line judges, with flags, in a safe area near the court, while teams warm up;
- Provide a friendly atmosphere with introductions and explain that they are now officials and not to engage in cheering for either team;
- Quickly assess the knowledge and experience level of each line judge by asking questions;
- Define and demonstrate the line judge's base position;
- Explain that they may need to move to get out of the way of a player(s) or ball;
- Encourage line judges to move when a server encroaches in their area – they will need to take a position parallel to the end line, about 4-5 feet from the corner, with the idea that they need to immediately return to their base position after the contact of serve or once the player(s) enters the court;
- Explain that a server cannot make contact with the end line while contacting the ball for the serve – demonstrate the signal;
- Define their two lines of responsibility – their end line and the sideline on their court and the other court;
- Remind them that a ball that lands on the line is in – demonstrate or ask them to show the signal for inbounds and out-of-bounds;
- Remind them that out also includes a ball contacting either antenna or if the entire ball goes outside either of the antenna (the antenna extends above the ceiling to infinity) – review the antenna signal;
- Briefly explain the touch signal and that it is only needed at the end of a play;
- Invite them to join you, at each attack line, near the referee's stand during time-outs;
- Encourage them to communicate if a coach or fan is being inappropriate toward them; and
- Remind the line judges that they are not ball retrievers.

Coach and Official Communication

Pre-Match

- It is preferable to have both referees walk into the assigned site together, arriving well in advance, no less than 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.
- Referees should introduce themselves to one another.

- After communicating with the home management, referees should introduce themselves to each coach at an appropriate time during their warm-ups.
- If assigned to multiple-level matches, it may not be possible to meet the varsity coaches upon arrival. Prior to that match, make the necessary introductions before the coin toss.
- The dialogue between any coach should prove that the officials can be cordial and have the ability to engage, without crossing the line causing a perception of familiarity.
- Spending too much time with one coach over another will be noticed.
- Take on the role of a facilitator rather than an enforcer.
- The degree of separation will come once the game begins, but if the officials establish a rapport of harmony rather than discord, it will bode well as the match proceeds.

During the Match

- Because the officials have established a good rapport with each coach during the pre-match, this environment should continue during the match.
- Regardless of previous history or familiarity, all coaches must be treated consistently and humanly.
- A good referee listens rather than reacts when a coach genuinely inquires about a non-judgment play. Simply listening, providing a quick response, then giving the game back to the first referee is much more productive, while keeping in mind that this interruption cannot be a ploy to delay the game.
- The second referee has the task to serve and protect and can certainly pre-empt or defuse potential unsporting conduct by a coach or another participant.

Post-Match

- After the second referee initials the scoresheet, the R2 gathers both referees' belongings and meets the first referee at a predetermined location to exit together.
- There is no need for any discussion between a referee and coach or a referee and a spectator.
- Protect each other and go to a location where a productive post-conference can be conducted.

State Association Adoptions – Team Benches

The NFHS Volleyball Rules Book, like many other NFHS rules books, includes specific rule modifications that are allowed by state level adoption. These specific rules are found throughout the rules book and address match format, forfeit protocol, uniform and equipment accommodations, line judge flags, electronic devices and even bench rotation. These adoptions allow for decisions to be made at a local level regarding rules that have local implications or have no impact on play. For example, states with more rural competition – long bus rides – might opt to have their schools play best two-of-three sets to allow for shorter competition times.

One accommodation of note is the ability for a state association to authorize permission for teams to remain on the same benches throughout the match. A rules consideration for the 2020-21 season due to the spread of COVID-19 – the elimination of rotating benches between sets – was universally well received. The 2021 Volleyball Rules Committee is making the communication of this state association adoption a point of emphasis for the 2021-22 season.

A chart listing all rules that allow for state association adoption can now be found on page 72. This chart is meant to simplify and organize the options that states have when it comes to administering the sport of volleyball. The adoption of these rules accommodations is the sole decision of the governing state association.

Addressing Uniform Concerns

Uniform rules have evolved over time – with many changes occurring in recent years. These rules are in place to create consistency and balance the needs of officials and coaches to easily identify players while providing room for players to creatively demonstrate school pride without sacrificing style in the process. No official wants to penalize a player or notify the state association for individual or team violations of the uniform rules. To avoid penalties related to uniforms, the committee would like to emphasize the following rules regarding uniform requirements:

1. **Manufacturer's Logo Restriction:** Logos cannot exceed 2.25 square inches and only one logo is permitted on each piece of the uniform. This includes the waistband.
2. **Numbers:** When ordering new uniforms, refer to Rule 4-2-4 for number size and location requirements. Beginning in the 2023 season, the body of the number must clearly contrast from the body of the uniform regardless of trim.
3. **Style of Uniform Bottoms:** Multiple styles of uniform bottoms [shorts, spandex, pants (leggings) or skirt] are allowed by rule. A combination of like-colored bottoms may be worn within a team. Coaches should communicate these options to players and parents that are supplying the uniform bottoms to accommodate for different levels of comfort with the current trends in style.
4. **Process of Notification:** If there are uniform violations that cannot be fixed on a given night, the appropriate process of notification shall be followed in communicating those uniform concerns. The official shall first notify the coach about the illegal uniform(s). If the coach cannot fix the problem for the match and therefore does not have six players wearing legal uniforms, a loss of rally/point shall be awarded to the opponent at the beginning of the match and the state association shall be notified. The goal is to allow teams to compete provided there are no safety concerns and allow the state office to work with the school to correct the issue(s).

For all the uniform rules and penalties associated with uniform violations see Rule 4-2.