



## POINTS OF EMPHASIS

### SPORTS MEDICINE

#### - CONCUSSION RECOGNITION AND RISK MINIMIZATION

Concussions continue to be a focus of attention in contact and collision sports at all levels of athletic competition. The NFHS has been at the forefront of national sports organizations in emphasizing the importance of concussion education, recognition, and proper management. Widespread education on best practices in concussion management has led to the adoption of rules changes and concussion-specific policies by multiple athletic organizations, state associations and school districts.

Recent research has shown that early recognition of concussion symptoms and immediate removal from play result in a quicker recovery time. Coaches and game officials must be familiar with the signs and symptoms of a possible concussion so that appropriate steps can be taken to safeguard the health and safety of injured students.

There is no evidence that any type of soft headgear will prevent concussions in basketball. However, many concussions result from player to player collisions, or falls onto the court. Therefore, if coaches and officials strive to eliminate rough play through proper instruction and rigorous enforcement of the rules, the opportunity exists to greatly minimize concussion risk in practices and contests.

#### - GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SKIN INFECTIONS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

While the incidence is low, the close physical contact during basketball practices and contests pose a risk for transmission of skin and other infections. The transmission of skin infections such as Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and herpes, blood-borne pathogens such as HIV and Hepatitis B, and general illnesses like influenza can be greatly reduced through proper hygiene and following Universal Precautions. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) has outlined and listed below some general guidelines for the prevention of the spread of these diseases:

- Do not share towels or personal hygiene products (razors) with others.
- Students should clean hands with an alcohol-based gel or soap and water before and after every practice and contest to decrease bacterial load on the hands.
- An athlete who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on his/her uniform, or has blood on his/her person, shall be directed to leave the activity (game or practice) until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to activity.
- Anyone cleaning a uniform or playing surface must wear gloves and use Universal Precautions to prevent blood or body fluid-splash from contaminating themselves or others.
- Any blood exposure or bites to the skin that break the surface must be reported and immediately evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.
- Make certain that students, coaching staff, and medical staff are current on all required vaccinations (MMR, Hepatitis B, Chickenpox, etc.) and strongly encourage yearly influenza vaccinations.

#### - ANKLE SPRAINS

Ankle sprains are the most common injury seen in boys and girls high school basketball, often forcing athletes to miss significant playing time. Upon returning to activity, if not properly treated, an ankle sprain may limit the athlete's ability to play effectively for weeks, months, or even years following the initial injury. Fortunately, many of these injuries can be prevented.

The NFHS SMAC strongly advises that all basketball coaches take a proactive role in minimizing the risk of ankle sprains in their athletes. There is a great deal of research that shows a simple series of exercises and the regular use of ankle braces will eliminate 50-60% of all ankle sprains in high school basketball players.

An effective exercise program can be performed with minimal equipment in as few as 5-10 minutes a day, 3 days a week, prior to and throughout the season. The program should include a proper warm-up, lower leg stretches, ankle strengthening with elastic bands, and exercises focusing on jumping and balance. Lace up ankle braces should be worn over a single pair of socks and the braces must be used for all practices and games. Wearing ankle braces does not affect an athlete's speed or agility, nor do they "weaken" the ankles or lead to other injuries.

#### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROPER UNIFORM AND APPAREL**

The NFHS Basketball Rules Committee remains concerned with the number of reports of improper uniforms, uniform adornments, and non-compliant accessories being worn by players in games. State associations report that an inordinate amount of time is being spent with interpretations, clarifications, and reminders concerning items worn on both the arms and legs that contradict current rule language. At the same time, there is not unified support according to nationwide questionnaires for either more restrictive or less restrictive rule code changes.

The committee is left to conclude that the existing rule code adequately addresses the requirements, but must be understood by coaches and players, and properly applied by contest officials. The responsibilities in this area are clear:

- It is the coach's role to know the rules, allowances, and restrictions, and to ensure the players are properly informed. The head coach, by rule, shall not permit a team member to participate while wearing an illegal uniform. It is therefore incumbent on the coach to be sure the rules and restrictions have been reviewed by the team including and especially, allowable accessories.
- It is the officials' role to monitor the players and the uniform. This role begins in pre-game warmups, even when all of the uniform and accessories may not be visible. Vigilance, visual monitoring, and communication with both coaches and players during this time may prevent unfortunate situations and their subsequent penalties. Violations cannot be ignored. When preventative monitoring can prevent a player from entering the game with non-compliance items, those steps should be taken. If that isn't possible, then proper penalties must be levied, whether it be against the player or the coach (dependent upon the rule).

While it is difficult to stay in front of these issues with an ever-changing marketplace, the rules in place are clear, and if properly applied by all parties, additional measures may not be necessary.

#### **RULES REVIEW AND AREAS OF EMPHASIS**

The NFHS Basketball Rules Committee has identified three areas where it feels the rules in place are appropriate for this level of play but need renewed emphasis as the skill level, and the ability of players continues to improve, and players attempt to duplicate actions performed on other levels.

##### **- ESTABLISHING PIVOT FOOT AND TRAVELING**

At least eight times in the last thirty years, traveling has been a point of emphasis at the high school level. By definition, traveling is moving a foot or feet in any direction more than prescribed limits while holding the ball.

The strategies for properly enforcing the rules require officials to first and foremost, determine that player's options for the use of a pivot foot. Officials must be in the proper position with a good, wide-angle view of the player's feet and body.

With the advent of popular moves such as the "euro step," officials at times appear to call infractions that are not violations because they "look funny" and at the same time, miss violations that should be called. A great deal of this can be solved by reminders concerning what is allowed by the player with his/her pivot foot.

After coming to a stop and establishing a pivot foot, a pivot foot may be lifted, but not returned to the floor, before the ball is released on a pass or try for goal. If the player jumps, neither foot may be returned to the floor before the ball is released on a pass or try for goal. The pivot foot may not be lifted before the ball is released to start a dribble.

Knowing the rules will better allow the officials to administer the rules related to traveling.

- **LEGAL GUARDING POSITION, BLOCK/CHARGE, SCREENING, VERTICALITY**

For 2018-19, the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee feels it imperative to remind coaches, officials and players about the restrictions in specific contact situations. Fundamental to each of these is the establishment of a legal guarding position with these reminders: Rule 4-23 defines guarding position.

- Once established, the defense can adjust to absorb contact or react to play while maintaining that position.
- Once established and maintained legally, block/charge must be ruled when occurring.
- Many times, a no call is not appropriate as a determination must be made.
- A defender does NOT have to remain stationary for a player control foul to occur. After obtaining a legal position, a defender may move laterally, even, diagonally to maintain position but may NOT move toward an opponent
- Blocking is illegal personal contact with impedes the progress of an opponent with or without the ball.
- Charging is illegal personal contact caused by pushing or moving into an opponent's torso.
- There must be reasonable space between two defensive players or a defensive player and a boundary line to allow the dribbler to continue in her path.
- If there is less than 3 feet of space, the dribbler has the greater responsibility for the conduct.
- A player with the ball is to expect no leniency regarding space.
- A player without the ball is to be given distance to find and avoid the defender (two strides by rule).
- A player must be in-bounds to have a legal guarding position.
- If an opponent is airborne (whether or not he/she has the ball), legal guarding position must be obtained before the opponent left the floor

Diligence and constant review of game video and the rules code will help officials be consistent in the application of these rules.

- **LOOSE BALL RECOVERY**

The final rules reminder emphasis deals with contact recovering a loose ball and options for the person recovering the ball. The committee feels that with these reminders, excessive physical contact while recovering a loose ball can be properly administered and prevent situations from escalating into more egregious acts. Also, the rules about recovery of the ball require constant review to ensure that acts are not deemed as violations that are in fact legal.

- Officials need to concentrate on possession of the ball and the players being hindered or obstructed from their legal path to the loose ball in determining infractions. If the loose ball is possessed by opponents, blow the whistle immediately. If a player is impeded by an opponent, rule a foul immediately.
- A fumble is the accidental loss of player control when the ball unintentionally drops or slips from a player's grasp. After losing control of the ball, distance is not a factor in going to recover the ball.
- If a player dives for a loose ball, gets control of it and his or her momentum causes the player to slide with the ball, there is no violation. It does not matter how much distance the slide covered. Once the sliding player has stopped, the player may sit up, but the player cannot roll over or attempt to rise from the floor while holding the ball.
- A defender trying to recover the ball from the player in possession has a responsibility to avoid illegal contact. If there is illegal contact, then the appropriate foul should be ruled.
- If a player is going for a loose ball and an opponent dives or throws his or her body which changes the direction of the player going for the loose ball, this must be considered illegal contact and a foul ruled. If a player is in possession of a loose ball and an opponent dives on top of that player, a foul must be ruled.

Without question, incidental contact is part of the judgment in loose ball situations. However, much contact is not incidental to getting the ball, but rather is violent contact with no chance to get the ball. The loose ball situation with players diving or rolling on the floor is a situation where

the potential for injury increases in proportion to the number of players involved and the amount of time the ball is loose. The player who gains possession while on the floor is often fouled two or three times before passing the ball or before a held ball is called.

A review of past situations shows that in some cases, officials have also erroneously called a "held ball" prematurely to stop action rather than calling the contact foul before a player gains possession. A player going after a loose ball should not expect to be pushed, grabbed, elbowed, blocked or tackled as a penalty for going after the ball.

The committee feels that the rules of the game in these three areas are in good shape, as evidenced by the very limited number of proposals for additional change. The constant review will allow for consistent understanding by players and coaches, and consistent application by contest officials.

- **OFFICIATING PROFESSIONALISM AND USE OF PROPER TERMINOLOGY**

The final point of emphasis by the committee deals with professionalism by officials. In an era where officials are more needed than ever, it is important that officials maintain an air of professionalism that leaves no one questioning their motivations. Key in this professionalism is the use of proper terminology. In an era of round-the-clock commentators using today's latest lingo to describe game situations to entertain, officials cannot be caught up in that shift to less than professional terminology. A few examples of using the proper terminology include-

- Backboard (NOT Glass)
- Division Line (NOT Center, Mid-Court, or Time Line)
- End Line (NOT Baseline)
- Fumble (NOT a Muff)
- Goal (NOT Basket)
- Grant Time-Out (NOT Call Time-Out)
- Held Ball (NOT Jump Ball)
- Obtain (NOT establish)
- Officiate Game (NOT Call, Control, Manage, Ref, Work; Officials Officiate the Game)
- Request Time-Out (NOT Call Time-Out)
- Ring (NOT Rim)
- Screen (NOT Pick)
- 60-Second Time-Out (NOT Full Time-Out)
- Traveling (NOT Walk)

The use of proper terminology is one of many steps to ensure that the perception of game officials and the reality of their actions, remains on a higher plane and a critical part of the game.

Also, wearing the proper uniform is critical. A neatly groomed official instantly has more credibility with the coaches, game administration, and even the patrons at the game. This includes the proper uniform, properly maintained shoes, a ~~new~~ neatly maintained pre-game jacket if worn, and the wearing of only approved items by all contest officials.

Lastly, this professionalism is always on display when the officials interact with others at the site.

Professional interaction with the other contest officials while on the court, with the game management and table crew, and with the coaches involved in the game are a vital step in "selling" yourself as an official. As the saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Maintaining a level tone of voice in all conversations, professionally addressing and interacting with the table crew are very visible signs of your professionalism. Those individuals are key to your maintaining a good game atmosphere and will help ensure the accuracy of all of the necessary elements in managing the games.

All interactions with coaches must be professional, and the conduct of the officials during these situations must be above reproach. Game officials must ensure that no matter the situation, professional actions carry the day!

A good relationship with game management is also critical. Officials must identify their "go to" person in the event of a situation such as the need to address a conduct situation involving fans. Officials should

not, as a rule, have any dealings with fans but must rely on the game administration to intercede in these cases. Therefore, the development and nurturing of that positive relationship with game management are essential to the conduct of a contest.