

2017 MSHSAA FOOTBALL RULES MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

- APPROVAL OF OFFICIALS** - MSHSAA By-Law 6.1.1 - officials shall be agreed upon by both schools at least 30 days before each contest. **The host school is responsible for making certain game officials are registered with the MSHSAA and to initiate the agreement on officials with the visiting school.** However, if the visiting school has not been provided the opportunity to approve the game officials, contact should be made with the host school to arrange for approval. Approval by both schools is to be obtained prior to employing officials. Officials shall be engaged by a written contract.
- COACHES and OFFICIALS** - We need your continued help in recruiting new officials and providing them with opportunities to work so they can improve their skills. Coaches can help by encouraging graduating seniors to become officials. Officials should be encouraging all young officials to continue to study, develop and remain patient for varsity level experiences.
- RULES INTERPRETERS** – Football Rules Interpreters are available to coaches and officials for game rule interpretations. Emry Dilday (Southwest), Jim Rosen (STL), George Bays (Southeast), Durante Davis (KC), Bob Lade (Northwest) & Chuck Snow (Central). Please contact your local rules interpreter with rules questions prior to contacting the MSHSAA office. If further clarification is needed, the interpreters will contact the MSHSAA Office.
- RULES MEETINGS REQUIREMENT** –
COACHES: Coaches are required to complete the Football Online Rules Meeting. The online rules meeting may be completed through the MSHSAA website from **(July 31- August 31, 2017)**. The online rules meeting for coaches can be located by logging on to your school's homepage of the MSHSAA website and selecting the "Online Rules Reviews" link located under the Education category.
OFFICIALS: must complete the rules meeting requirement by **August 31, 2017**. The rules meeting requirement is "mandatory" and may be completed online through the MSHSAA website from **(July 31- August 31, 2017)**. The online rules meeting for officials can be located by logging on to your official's page/account and selecting the "Online Rules Reviews" link listed under the Correspondence category. Additionally, some areas of the state will have face to face rules meetings that have been organized/approved through the MSHSAA office by local officials associations. The times/locations for the face to face rules meetings are posted on the MSHSAA website and can be found by selecting the "Officials" tab. The rules meetings are located on the main page of the officials tab. Officials will be credited for completing the mandatory rules meeting requirement by completing either the online rules meeting or the face to face rules meeting in your area. If you want your attendance or completion verified to another bordering state association, please notify Pam Martin at the MSHSAA office.
- MSHSAA OFFICIALS MANUAL** - Officials are reminded to study the MSHSAA Officials Manual located on the MSHSAA web site under the Official's Tab on the main page for Officials. It contains information you will need to be familiar with such as registration procedures, minimum renewal standards, instructions for game protests, code of ethics, uniform requirements, postseason assignments, etc. **Please note that the renewal deadline for football officials is July 1 of each year. This renewal deadline applies to all fall sports. The final deadline for fall sports registration is July 15th.**
- OFFICIALS RATING PROCEDURES** - Each head coach shall submit a rating for each official working his/her **VARSIY REGULAR SEASON CONTESTS (home and away)**. Officials are not rated for the post season contests. Schools are required to submit their ratings to renew their membership for the succeeding year. **It is recommended that coaches wait 24 hours after the game, but no longer than 72 hours to rate officials.** Officials ratings are completed through the MSHSAA Web Site. **Coaches, please submit your official's ratings online throughout the season (week by week) and not wait until the season has concluded.** Rate each official every time he/she officiates for you. If you play a nine game schedule you are responsible for evaluations of 45 officials (5man crew per game). Officials must give coaches their correct registration number and coaches must request this information from the officials. The MSHSAA Board of Directors requires the High School Athletic Director to verify that his/her school's fall sports officials ratings have been completed accurately by the respective head coach. **If a 5 rating has been given to an official, the head coach shall provide an explanation in writing as to why that rating was necessary.** Failure to submit ratings for a sport shall result in the school's program, for that sport(s), being placed on probation and could lead to a team not being assigned to participate in the MSHSAA district and state playoff series. Deadline for the submission of ratings is **November 15, 2017**. Schools that fail to submit the required official's ratings by the established deadline shall be issued a **\$25.00** late penalty fee and sent a reminder letter to the principal, giving the school until the end of the month to submit the required official's ratings. Schools that fail to submit the required official's ratings by the end of the month shall be placed on probation in the sport concerned by the MSHSAA Board of Directors and assessed a penalty fee of **\$100.00. (Total Fine \$125.00)**
- OFFICIALS: PART II FOOTBALL TEST** - Tests will be available through the MSHSAA website **August 14, 2017**. The test is an open-book examination. **All officials are required to complete the Part II Test by September 11, 2017.** All officials must take the test even though they might not officiate any contests or they will be automatically placed on probation beginning **September 12, 2017**. **Any official that scores less than 75% on the NFHS Part II Rules Test or does not complete the Part II Test prior to the deadline noted above will be placed on probation.**
- SPECIAL REPORT FORMS** – Special Report forms are located and submitted through the MSHSAA Web Site. They are to be used to report matters such as officiating procedures, game administration, unsportsmanlike conduct, etc., that need immediate attention. The report may be a complimentary report as well as one to call attention to problems. **Officials SHALL file a special report for all unsportsmanlike conduct, within "48 hours" of when the act occurs.** Unsportsmanlike/Ejection related special reports must be filed for **ALL** levels of play (junior high, freshman, sophomore, junior varsity and varsity contest). Under MSHSAA Board of Directors policy, action will be taken against officials who fail to file a report of unsportsmanlike conduct. When unsportsmanlike conduct or misconduct occurs, the school shall forthwith take appropriate action to correct or resolve the matter per MSHSAA by-laws. Both schools and officials are strongly encouraged to take the time to submit positive reports on outstanding officiating, game administration and good sportsmanship. **Note: All special reports shall be submitted by logging onto the MSHSAA Web Site (www.mshsaa.org) and filling out the appropriate special report form.**
- COACHES' AND OFFICIALS' RESPONSIBILITIES** – **Referee and Umpire are to conduct a pre-game meeting with each head coach at the locker room of each team prior to taking the field for warm-up. Coaches have a responsibility to make themselves available to the R/U for this meeting 1 hour before game time or earlier.** Both coaches and officials are expected to be professional and business-like toward each other. This type of behavior is to prevail at all times, especially during and after the game. Regardless of the outcome of the game, there is no justification for coaches to ridicule officials. Host schools are to provide security for officials to ensure their safety and well-being. There is to be no admittance to officials' dressing rooms before, during or after games unless by designated school authorities who are there on official business to carry out their assigned duties. Mutual respect and courtesy shown by both coaches and officials are the keys to providing the proper example and environment for our athletes, students and fans. If a school is dissatisfied with the work of some official(s), don't hassle them -- simply do not rehire them.
- OFFICIALS - REGULAR SEASON AND POSTSEASON** – Officials for football contest taking place during weeks 1-9 will be contracted by the host school and should have approval from the visiting school. Week 10 (district-first round) officials thru the state championship games will be selected and assigned through the MSHSAA office. It is important that each school completes the officials recommendation form on the MSHSAA Website under district entries for football by **October 2, 2017**. Please recommend or not recommend officials by name of the Referee/Crew Chief. Each school may choose to "not recommend" up to three (3) crews of which they prefer to not have assigned to a post season game.
***The Referee of each crew shall complete the Postseason Form for Football on the MSHSAA Website by August 31, 2017 in order for the crew to be eligible for post season selection. NOTE: All postseason officials will be required to complete an Authorization Form For Direct Deposit in order to receive payment for officiating a postseason contest(s). This authorization form is located on each official's page of the MSHSAA website by using the "Personal Information" link.**

Scroll to the bottom of the Personal Information page to access the authorization form/banking information. Postseason football crews will not be eligible for postseason assignment unless "ALL" crew members have completed the Authorization Form For Direct Deposit.

11. **NFHS AUTHENTICATING MARK** – All game balls used for interscholastic competition shall possess the NFHS Authenticating Mark. Game officials shall inspect all balls provided for competition for the NFHS Authenticating Mark. Should the host school be unable to provide conforming balls, the official will put into play conforming balls provided by the visiting school. Contest officials are required to notify the MSHSAA office in writing regarding the failure of any host school to provide the marked balls. No contest shall be cancelled and no contest penalties shall be assessed for nonconforming balls.
12. **MSHSAA RULES ADOPTIONS:**
- A. **LENGTH OF QUARTERS FOR JUNIOR HIGH and HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAMES** : 7th grade only - 8 minutes; 8th grade only - 8 minutes; 9th grade and/or JV – 12 minutes (or less if mutually agreed upon); Varsity - 12 minutes; teams of mixed grades(7th, 8th, 9th) - the limit for the lower grade shall apply (MSHSAA By-Law 3.29.9).
- B. **RUNNING CLOCK**: The point differential applies to all football contests. The National Federation's Football Rules permit state associations to adopt a "running clock" when a point differential is attained. The Football Advisory Committee, with approval of the Board of Directors has approved the following plan for all football playing schools for all levels: After the first half, any time the score differential reaches 35 points or more, for 11-man and 45 points or more, for 8-man, the following changes, and only these changes, will be made regarding rules determining when the clock will be stopped: The clock will be stopped when:
1. An official's time-out is called, except:
 - a) when a first down is declared
 - b) following a change of team possession
 - c) to dry or change the game ball
 2. A charged time-out is called;
 3. At the end of a period;
 4. A score occurs.
- NOTE: At the beginning of the fourth quarter, when a 35pt differential (11man) or a 45pt. differential (8man) exists, the Running Clock shall not be stopped with the exception of #1 and #2 listed above.**
- NOTE:** The clock will continue to run in all other situations.
- NOTE:** The use of this rule does not preclude the use of NFHS Rule 3-1-3 which reads: "A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining periods may be shortened at any time or the game terminated."
- C. **TIE-BREAKING PROCEDURE (Regular Season, Including District Games, and State Playoff Series)**: For ALL varsity high school games (regular season and playoff contests) that end in a tie, at the end of regulation, play shall follow a "25-yard Overtime Procedure" to determine the winner. The procedure, as outlined in the National Federation Football Rules Book, will be followed with the following exceptions:
1. The ball will be placed on the 25-yard line.
 2. First and tens may be obtained to maintain possession. Once the line-to-gain has not been achieved the ball will be turned over to the defense.
- Lower Level Contests: Games contested below the senior high school varsity level (Junior Varsity, Freshman) that end in a tie at the end of regulation play, may utilize one (1) overtime period to break the tie if both coaches agree before the game. If a tie remains at the end of the one overtime period, then the contest will remain a tie. Combined 8th and 9th grade contests that end in a tie will remain a tie.
- D. **TRY DURING REGULAR SEASON GAMES (Week 1-9)**: NFHS Rule 8-3-1 EXCEPTION states "If a touchdown is scored during the last down of the 4th period, the try shall not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying." **During games for Week 1 through 9 the TRY shall be attempted if the score-difference is 12 or less points when the winning team scores. It shall also be attempted if the score-difference is 14 or less points when the losing team scores.**
- NOTE: This applies only to the 4th quarter, not to any overtime periods.**
- E. **SUSPENDED GAME**: If a game is interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible authority (weather, lights, etc.), the game by rule shall be continued from the point of interruption unless the teams mutually agree to terminate the game with the existing score (a winner must be determined under this option).
- F. **EXPLOSIVE DEVICES at CONTESTS**: The use of any explosive device is prohibited within the vicinity of any contest (districts through finals) that may pose a possible hazard to spectators or participants.
- G. **ANY PLAYER OR COACH DISQUALIFIED (ejected) from an interscholastic football contest under NFHS Football Rule 9-4, 9-5 & 9-8**: A player who is ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct shall at a minimum be prohibited from playing in the next interscholastic contest at that same level. A coach who is ejected during a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct shall at a minimum be prohibited from coaching and attending the next interscholastic contest at the same level of which the ejection occurred, **as well as complete the NFHS Online Sportsmanship Course.**
- H. **STAR SPANGLED BANNER**: If played, it shall be completed prior to the required coin toss (3 minutes prior to the kickoff) and the area between the 40 yard lines must be vacated by all non-toss participants at the same time.
- I. **COIN TOSS - All games**: The head coach and captain(s) (**NO MORE THAN 4 PLAYERS IN GAME UNIFORM**) shall attend the actual or simulated coin toss at the three minute mark at midfield. Honorary captains as approved by school administration are permitted at the coin toss. Honorary captains shall be dismissed from the coin toss at the same time as the coaches. All other team personnel must remain outside the field of play (NFHS Rule 3-2-2). This does not preclude having an early toss off the field followed by a simulation on the field three minutes prior to kickoff.
- J. **TEAM BENCHES for Week 10 through State Championships contests**: Team's fans will be located behind their team's bench. If spectator bleachers are available on only one side of the field, the visitors may have the option to be placed on the side away from the spectator bleachers.
- K. **RECOGNITION AND EVALUATION OF THE ATHLETE WITH A CONCUSSION**:
1. Recognition of the signs and symptoms of a concussion is important. Every member of the team-athlete, teammates, coaches, parents or guardians, officials, athletic trainers, and team physicians have a duty to report a suspected concussion. Not all school districts have medical personnel available to cover every practice and competition; therefore, the coach is the person in the best position to protect the player and must be aware that not all student athletes will be forthcoming about their injury.
 2. **An official shall not be responsible for making the diagnosis of a concussion. The official can assist coaches and medical staff by recognizing signs and symptoms of a concussion and informing the coach and medical staff of their concerns.**
- L. **HEAT/HYDRATION-MANDATORY OFFICIALS TIMEOUTS**: Per NFHS Football Rule 3-5-7g, additional official's timeouts may be taken due to excessive heat/humidity which may create a health risk to players. It is a MSHSAA Rules Adoption that a mandatory additional official's timeout must be issued at the half-way point of each quarter during ALL football games for the first four weeks of the season. These additional official's timeouts shall be taken at the most natural break in play as possible. The mandated additional official's timeouts shall be taken during ALL football games beginning with August 18, 2017 and ending September 12, 2017.

2017 MECHANICS AND PROCEDURES

This section is to clarify areas of football mechanics and procedures where vague or no specific direction is presented by the NFHS.

- 1. MEETING WITH HEAD COACHES** – The Referee and another game official, dressed in game uniform, should visit each head coach in their team's dressing room. Visit with the home team coach one hour prior to game time and then visit with the visiting coach thereafter.
- 2. WARM-UP JACKET, SHORTS, WATCHES, TOWELS, BLACK PANTS, UNIFORM SHIRT**
Warm-up Jacket: The vertically striped black and white jacket may be worn prior to the game and at half time but shall not be worn during the game. The players are not allowed to play in warm-ups and the officials should not wear their warm-up jackets during the game. Shorts: Officiating shorts **shall not** be worn by officials during interscholastic contests at any level, including interscholastic scrimmages/jamborees. Officials Watches: All officials are permitted to wear a sport wrist watch for the synchronizing of correct time, so long as it is black in color and made of a non-metal, non-abrasive material. Towels: Towels of reasonable size should be worn only when needed due to field conditions. Black Football Officiating Pants: Full length, lined, black football officiating pants with a single 1 ¼" white stripe down each leg may be worn in place of the traditional knickers if worn by the entire crew. **Uniform Shirt:** Black-and-white striped, long or short-sleeved knit shirt shall be worn. The shirts shall have either 1-inch stripes or state association (MSHSAA) adopted shirt of 2 ¼ inch stripes, and a black knit cuff and Byron collar. **All game officials, in a given game, are to wear the same type shirt. Note: The MSHSAA patch/emblem shall be located 1 inch below the seam line of the left shoulder. Further, the MSHSAA patch/emblem shall only be worn when officiating MSHSAA contests. See MSHSAA Officials Manual for more details regarding the officials uniform.**
- 3. WIRELESS CREW COMMUNICATION DEVICES: Purpose:** With the progression of technology in our society, communication devices worn by football officials to assist with immediate communication between crew members has become an attraction and gaining popularity. Although many understand that these devices can certainly benefit the communication between members of a football crew, there are still concerns that there are officials who are not prepared to deal with the use of such communication devices; therefore, the recommendation that was approved by the MSHSAA Board of Directors is to only allow the use of such devices by "VARSITY" football crews. **The wireless crew communication devices are not permitted for use by officials who are officiating lower level games. (Restricted Contests: JV, freshmen, 8th and 7th grade contests). SEE GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS DOCUMENT INCLUDED IN YOUR RULES BOOK MAILING FOR OFFICIALS.**
- 4. WIRELESS COMMUNICATION-INTERACTIVE TRAINING DEVICE (CITD): Purpose:** To permit an educational and training experience for beginning officials in which timely and immediate feedback can be received in regards to position and mechanics during a contest. For purposes of the MSHSAA Wireless Communication-Interactive Training Device, the CITD is defined as a two way radio with an attached earpiece and push to talk microphone. Other communication devices are prohibited. **The CITD may only be used at 7th, 8th and 9th grade contests.** Furthermore, trainers and officials may use CITD's at any school's practice/inter squad scrimmage in which an official(s) are invited to participate. **SEE GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS DOCUMENT INCLUDED IN YOUR RULES BOOK MAILING FOR OFFICIALS.**
- 5. ENTERING THE FIELD– Pre-game:** The officiating crew should enter the field together at least 30 minutes before game time. All officials are to perform their assigned duties in a business-like manner. As the crew enters the field they should proceed around the field with the Referee and the Line Judge proceeding down the sideline opposite the press box. The Umpire, Linesman and Back Judge should go down the sideline on the press box side. As the officials circle the field each crew member should perform the duties as assigned in the NFHS Officials Manual. After circling the field and performing their assigned duties, officials should go to the sideline they will be on for the coin toss. Stretching and warm-ups should be done in the dressing room. **Halftime:** At five minutes prior to the end of halftime, officials shall report to the field and remain as a crew on the end line of the end zone of which they enter the field in the case of needed communication relating to potentially starting the second half with a penalty. At the moment both teams have re-entered the field of play (whether before or after the starting of the 3 minute warm-up clock) the crew will precede down their assigned sideline to the assigned positions for beginning the second half choice procedure. If a team has reported to the field late, and after the crew has taken their positions for the second half choice, the Referee or Umpire (depending on team being penalized) will throw a penalty flag approximately 2-4 yards in front of them indicating the second half beginning with a penalty. The Referee will then give the appropriate signal indicating the penalty followed by the procedure for second half choices as listed below in #4. The BJ will give the appropriate signal indicating the penalty as the final signal, then mark of the penalty, before kick-off for the second half
- 6. 2nd Half Choice Procedure-MSHSAA 2nd Half Mechanic Adoption:** After completing the "Entering The Field" procedure after halftime(as explained in #3 above), the crew will be located in their same positions as they were located for the coin toss to start the game. Communication regarding the second half choice will be done by the Referee and Umpire at the fifty yard line from their sidelines. The Referee or Umpire, depending on which team has the second half choice, will confer with the "Head Coach" of the second half choosing team as to their choice to begin the second half. After securing the second half choice from the head coach, the Referee/Umpire will give a subtle signal of the choice selected to the Referee/Umpire on the opposite sideline. The Referee/Umpire will then relay to the opposing coach the choice selected by the second half choosing coach, at this time the opposing coach will decide on his choice that remains. The Referee/Umpire will then relay back to the Referee/Umpire a subtle signal of the option selected by the opposing coach. Begin second half. (See Taking Positions for Kick-off in item #7 below) **Note: "Varsity" football crews officiating "varsity" contests that choose to use the approved Wireless Crew Communication Devices are permitted to use the devices to forego the subtle signaling of 2nd half choices as described above.**
- 7. GAME BALL/BALL BOYS/MANAGERS** – After the game balls from each team are approved by the Referee, the Line Judge is to secure the ball with the ball boys. It is preferred that ball boys from both teams are placed on the line judge's sideline; however, it is permissible to use a ball boy(s) on each team's respective sideline. Ball boys and managers should never be on the field of play. Managers or ball boys shall not be allowed to retrieve the kicking tee.
- 8. COIN TOSS** – The coin toss or simulated coin toss will take place in the center of the field **3 minutes** prior to game time, with not more than four team members in game uniform(captains) from each team. The walk to centerfield is part of the coin toss; therefore, the walk begins at 3 minutes prior to game time. Honorary personnel, approved by the school administration, may be present at the start of the coin toss procedures but must leave the field at the same time the coaches are dismissed. If both teams agree to an early coin toss it shall not take place on the playing field but will be simulated in the center of the field 3 minutes prior to game time. The Referee, Umpire, Line Judge, and Back Judge shall escort the team captains and head coaches toward the center of the field starting from the sideline at 3 minutes prior to game time, with Line Judge and Back Judge stopping at the hash marks and facing the sidelines. The Referee should have his back to the clock during the coin toss. The captains should be closest to the Referee with the head coaches closest to the Umpire. The coin should be tossed, caught and displayed without turning the coin over onto the top of the wrist/hand. The coin shall not be allowed to hit the ground. **If the winner of the toss defers, signal #10 is given prior to asking the other captain his "choice". Since "defer" is an option and not a choice, if the captain winning the toss defers, the other team's captain becomes the "first choosing captain". The Referee concludes the coin toss by signaling only the choice of the first choosing captain.**
- 9. TAKING POSITIONS FOR KICK-OFF OF EACH HALF** – Following the coin toss and after second half choices are determined, all officials should meet briefly at center field for any short communication that may be necessary. From that point, the crew shall simultaneously "fan out" and jog directly to their positions for the kick-off. The Back Judge handles the ball for the kick. **Please note and implement the Five-Game Officials Kickoff coverage positions and mechanics as found in the 2016-2017 NFHS Game Officials Manual.**
- 10. BETWEEN PERIODS** – Prior to moving the chains the Referee, Umpire and Linesman should confer at the ball and record down, distance, yard line, etc. **The entire crew should follow the mechanics in the NFHS Football Game Officials Manual.**

11. **AT THE END OF THE FIRST HALF WHEN LEAVING THE FIELD** – When both teams dressing rooms are situated in close proximity and opposing teams are leaving the field together, the Line Judge and Linesman should accompany the teams on the way to their dressing rooms to insure no unsportsmanlike conduct occurs. **If facilities require teams to enter/exit the field at the same location, the L and LJ shall permit the visiting team to exit first.** The Umpire and the Back Judge should stay with the Referee while he insures that the correct timing for the halftime interval starts at the proper time.
10. **UMPIRE POSITION PRIOR TO SNAP** – The Umpire should always spot the ball. **Once the ball has been spotted the Umpire should remain over the ball “facing the Referee” on all downs until the Referee gives the ready-for-play signal or until the referee signals him to move on a quick snap.**
11. **WING OFFICIALS SCRIMMAGE POSITION/NEXT DOWN** – Straddle the yard line that the ball is on with next down indicated on the chest. It is your responsibility to keep the coaches in the team box and not on the field. **Crews must make it a priority to keep the restricted area free of players and coaches by NFHS rule.** At the conclusion of each down the wing officials should get forward progress. As they hold forward progress, with both feet perpendicular to the sideline they should signal the number of the next down to the Referee on their chest. Once the Referee signals the next down the wing officials should extend one hand above the head with the number of the down indicated with fingers (first for fourth down) and check down marker number. Use extended arm signal, until the snap, to indicate closest “A” player is off the line of scrimmage.
12. **Tobacco/Alcohol** – Schools are tobacco/alcohol free. Officials shall not use or possess tobacco/alcohol anywhere on school property.

2016 and 2017 NFHS FOOTBALL GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

TARGETING

The NFHS Football Rules Committee continues to focus on player safety and risk minimization. It is the responsibility of coaches, game officials and players to know and understand not only the rule concerning targeting, but the risk involved when players engage in targeting. In most cases, this contact poses a risk to both players. It is especially risky when the offending player uses the crown of his helmet to contact an opponent.

Targeting is defined in Rule 2-20-2 as: "Targeting is an act by any player who takes aim and initiates contact against an opponent above the shoulders with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulders." The key words in the definition are "who takes aim." This phrase clearly indicates that targeting is an intentional act. Targeting usually takes place in the open field against a player who is defenseless. Examples would include but not be limited to: A receiver who has no opportunity to complete a catch, a player who is making no effort to participate in the play, an R player attempting to catch a kick, a passer or a kicker. It is important for game officials to know that targeting can take place anywhere on the field and is not limited to players who are directly involved in the play. The penalty for targeting is 15 yards, and if deemed flagrant, carries disqualification.

RESTRICTED AREA

Application of rules for the restricted area has improved over the past few years; the following points of clarification are intended to resolve remaining misconceptions and aid in the consistent and correct application for sideline management.

The restricted area is the 2-yard belt that runs from the 25-yard line to the 25-yard line. It is an extension of the restraining line (Rule 1-2-3d) that is marked around the playing field. Misconceptions exist about the restricted area from both game officials and coaches. Game officials consider the restricted area their area; coaches will consider the restricted area as their area. And, depending on the status of the ball, both are correct. In reality, the restricted area belongs to both the game officials and the coaches and with the correct application of rules, allows both to do their jobs effectively and safely. Rule 1-2-3g states: "Team boxes shall be marked on each side of the field outside the coaches' area between the 25-yard lines for use of coaches, substitutes, athletic trainers etc., affiliated with the team. The coaches' area is a minimum of a 2-yard belt between the front of the team box and the sideline, and becomes a restricted area when the ball is live." The restricted area is provided for the safety of players, nonplayers, coaches and game officials. The application of the restricted-area rules should be understood by both coaches and game officials and should be applied in all aspects of the game. While the ball is dead, the restricted area is the coaches' box, where a maximum of three coaches and substitutions are allowed. Although there is no specific statement as to when the restricted area should be cleared, a good point of reference is when the snap is imminent. While the ball is live, this is the restricted area and should be clear between the 25-yard lines. Rule 9-8-3 states: "A nonplayer shall not be outside his team box unless to become a player or to return as a replaced player. A maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area. No player, nonplayer or coach shall be in the restricted area when the ball is live." Substituting, coaching and officiating in the restricted area are not to be ignored at any time during the game. Game officials need to focus on two areas: 1. Red zone application. When the line of scrimmage is in the red zone, and the wing official is downfield beyond the end of the team box, the restricted area can become occupied with nonplayers and coaches. 2. "Up-field" situations. When the line of scrimmage is within the restricted area, nonplayers and coaches stand in the restricted area up-field, behind the line of scrimmage. Game situations can change quickly and may create a safety situation. During live-ball action, no coach, substitute, athletic trainer, anyone affiliated with the team or any other person is allowed in the restricted area regardless of where the line of scrimmage is on the field of play. Pregame is an opportunity for the wing official to communicate with the head coach and identify who can assist him/her if he/she needs help with the restricted area. Communication between game officials and coaches that brings a possible resolution and support to defuse a potential issue before it occurs benefits both parties. Remember that a game official has a process supported by rule in dealing with the restricted area. Game officials can prevent a negative situation with proactive, positive communication and by applying the restricted-area rules early in the game.

DOWN-MARKER INDICATOR MECHANICS

The NFHS Football Case Book notes situations with the proper procedures to be used when a play is run with the incorrect down on the down-marker indicator. These situations and procedures should be reviewed and should give game officials a heightened awareness of the importance of making sure the down on the down-marker indicator is correct prior to the ball being marked ready for play. It is important to note that when an error is discovered, in other than a fifth-down situation, the procedure calls for the replay of that down. There is no option to continue play with the results of the play that was run with the incorrect down on the down-marker indicator. Mechanics currently exist to prevent this type of error from occurring.

An increased awareness, including pregame discussion and crew coordination of pre-snap mechanics, will help keep errors to a minimum. If a game official thinks the down-marker indicator is incorrect, blowing the whistle and making sure it is correct is preferable to letting the play go and having to replay the down because the down-marker indicator was incorrect. While the Referee and the Head Linesman may have primary responsibility, it is imperative that the entire crew know the down is correct when the ball is marked ready for play.

2017 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

1-3-1h (NEW): Added that commercial advertising is not permitted on the ball.

Rationale: The ball cannot have commercial advertising added to the surface. The only permissible items on the ball are the ball manufacturer's name and/or logo; school name, logo and/or mascot; conference name and/or logo; state association name and/or logos; and NFHS name and/or logos.

1-5-1b(3): Further clarifies that the jersey of the home team shall be a dark color clearly contrasting to the white jersey required for the visiting team.

Rationale: Home game jersey specifications were further revised to provide schools and manufacturers additional clarification regarding the current trend of utilizing lighter gray shades. The implementation date of 2021 affords schools and manufacturers the opportunity to ensure that newer dark-colored jerseys will clearly contrast with white jerseys. The requirement for contrasting colors to white is not a new rule, and this new clarification will allow changes to be made during normal replacement cycles.

1-5-1a(2) NOTE, 1-5-4: This change now permits any of the game officials to accompany the referee to meet with the head coach for equipment verification.

Rationale: Member state associations may determine the game official who is to accompany the referee during the required pre-game meeting with each head coach.

2-3-10 (NEW), 9-4-3n (NEW), 9-4 PENALTY: Added a new definition for a blindside block and specifies a penalty for an illegal blindside block.

Rationale: Continuing with the focus on risk minimization, the committee created a definition for a blindside block. This block involves contact by a blocker against an opponent who, because of physical positioning and focus of concentration, is vulnerable to injury. Unless initiated with open hands, it is a foul for excessive and unnecessary contact when the block is forceful and outside of the free-blocking zone.

2-16-2h: Clarified that illegal participation fouls by the receiving team occurring during the kick are now enforced under post-scrimmage kick fouls.

Rationale: Illegal participation fouls by the receiving team occurring during the kick are now enforced under post-scrimmage kick fouls. Illegal substitution and illegal participation fouls by the receiving team occurring at the snap continue to be enforced from the previous spot.

2-24-10 (NEW), 6-1-11 (NEW), 6-1 PENALTY: Added a new definition for a pop-up kick and specifies a penalty for a pop-up kick.

Rationale: Continuing with the committee's efforts to minimize risk, a pop-up kickoff has been defined. A pop-up kick is a free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately to the ground, the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee. Such kicks will be penalized as a dead-ball free-kick infraction.

2-32-16: Expands the definition of a defenseless player by incorporating specific examples.

Rationale: The committee adopted specific examples of a defenseless player. By adding these examples, the committee continues to focus on risk minimization and responded to requests on the annual NFHS football rules questionnaire from participating coaches, game officials and state association representatives.

3-4-7 (NEW): Added a new option to the offended team to start the clock on the snap for an accepted penalty inside the last two minutes of either half.

Rationale: The committee added an option for the offended team on an accepted penalty inside the last two minutes of either half. The referee continues to have the authority to start or stop the clock if a team attempts to conserve or consume time illegally.

4-2-2l (NEW): Specifies that the ball is declared dead if a prosthetic limb comes completely off the runner.

Rationale: With this change, the ball becomes dead when a prosthetic limb comes completely off the runner.

7-1-6: Now stipulates that it is encroachment to strike the ball or the snapper's hand/arm prior to the snapper releasing the ball.

Rationale: Defensive players are restricted from contacting the ball or the snapper's hand(s) or arm(s) until the snapper has released the ball.

7-5-10: Removes non-contact face guarding from the pass interference restrictions.

Rationale: This change eliminates the previous foul for non-contact face guarding forward-pass interference.

BOARD POLICY FOR ON-SITE PROTESTS OF ATHLETIC CONTESTS

The Board of Directors adopted the following Policy, March, 1997, to address protests. The Board acknowledges that mistakes are made by officials in judgment and even sometimes in misapplication of game rules. However, the decisions rendered by officials at the contest site are to be final and any further process other than the one outlined below would not truly serve a useful purpose in the overall scope of high school athletics.

1. Within the procedures established within each individual sport rule code, the head coach must request a review of an official's application of a rule through appropriate channels.
2. If, after the review is complete, the coach still believes there has been a misapplication of a rule by a contest official(s), the coach shall then file a formal verbal protest with the game officials who will then notify the opposing coach immediately of the protest. A coach shall not protest a decision of judgment.
3. Following this notification of protest, the head coach shall be allowed approximately ten minutes to use his/her National Federation Rules Book, National Federation Case Book, MSHSAA Rules Meeting Announcements and/or MSHSAA Sport Manual to locate and show the game official(s) the appropriate rule reference which clarifies a misapplication of the game rule. If the head coach does not have personal copies of the above mentioned materials at the game site or the specific rule reference(s) or case book play(s) cannot be located within the maximum allowable ten minutes, the protest shall automatically be disallowed and the game shall continue from the point of interruption. If a rule reference(s) or case book play(s) is found that indicates a misapplication of a rule has occurred, the official's decision shall be corrected at that time before any further action occurs, and the contest shall be resumed from the point of interruption after the correction as provided in the contest rules. When appropriate, the game officials may assist the head coach in locating appropriate rule and case book references.
4. All protests shall be resolved at the contest site before any further game action occurs.
5. Protests that are not filed in a timely manner by that sport rule code shall be automatically disallowed.
6. The MSHSAA Board of Directors and/or Staff shall not review contest protests.

APPLICATION OF PROTEST PROCEDURE

- A. **Introduction:** Protests rarely occur and the new protest procedure policy is not intended to increase the frequency of protests. It is however, intended to resolve the protest on site. For this to occur the following must take place:
 1. Coaches and Officials must be professional with each other. This should be a non-confrontational conference.
 2. As stated above, protests involve application of rules only -- not judgment calls. (Examples of items which could be protested: Football -- penalizing 5 yards instead of 15 yards; Wrestling -- allowing 1 minute for injury time instead of 2 minutes; Softball -- allowing only two charged defensive conferences instead of three.) (Examples of items that could not be protested: Football -- pass interference; Wrestling -- stalling; Softball -- out or safe calls.)
 3. **GET IT RIGHT!** If the official has made a mistake; admit it, correct it and move on. Contest officials and the head coach filing the official protest shall notify the MSHSAA Office in writing of any contest in which an official protest has occurred and the resolution of that protest. The MSHSAA Special Report Forms shall be used for this purpose.
- B. **Process.**
 1. Once a head coach has filed a formal verbal protest with the game officials, they shall then notify the opposing head coach of the protest and the playing field, court, mat, etc. shall be cleared of all participants and they shall report to their respective team bench areas.
 2. The head coach shall then be allowed approximately ten minutes to locate specific rule references from the National Federation Rules Book, National Federation Case Book, MSHSAA Rules Meeting Announcements and/or MSHSAA Sport Manual to substantiate the claim that a misapplication of a game rule has occurred. The game officials shall also confer among themselves during the period to address the claim of the coach as to the potential rule misapplication.
 3. If the head coach is able to produce rule evidence from the above mentioned sources to support the claim of a misapplication of a game rule, the officials shall correct the error as provided in the contest rules and the contest shall proceed from the point of interruption. If the head coach cannot produce the evidence, the protest shall be disallowed and the contest shall continue from the point of interruption. The previously mentioned materials must be immediately available for review at the playing field sideline, court-side, mat-side etc. (Time shall not be provided to go to a locker room, team bus, coach's office, etc.)
 4. Once the final decision regarding the protest has been rendered, the game officials shall provide the participants sufficient opportunity to warm-up before the contest is resumed.