

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATIONS**

APRIL 2003, BASKETBALL PRESS RELEASE

Re: "MERCY RULE"

[CCS Basketball Coaches input? Click here](#)

4/28/03

FYI. The basketball advisory committee should make a recommendation and then the FC should take action no later than the Oct/Nov meeting.

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Marie M. Ishida
Executive Director, CIF

510.639.4445 -- office
510.639.4449 -- fax

ishidasan@cifstate.org

From: "Bruce Howard" <BHoward@nfhs.org>
Date: Wed, 23 Apr 2003 13:08:54 -0500
Subject: Basketball rules press release

Following is the press release on the high school basketball rules changes for 2003-04 as approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Basketball Rules Committee. The release is also included as an attachment for those preferring to receive information in that manner.

Mercy Rule by State Adoption Approved For High School Basketball

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mary Struckhoff INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 23,

2003) - State high school associations will have the option to adopt a "mercy" rule in high school basketball beginning next season. In its April 13-15 meeting in Indianapolis, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Basketball Rules Committee voted that a state association may institute a running clock when a specified point differential is reached at a specified time in the game. Since the committee did not approve the change as a playing rule, each state association will make its own determination regarding whether to implement a mercy rule, as well as the point differential and the time in the game such rule would be implemented.

"More contests are experiencing extremely large point differentials between the two competing teams," said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and staff liaison to the Basketball Rules Committee. "In addition, in many cases, the number and intensity of fouls increase, thereby putting player safety in jeopardy. The committee believes it is appropriate for the sport of basketball to permit states to adopt a mercy rule of some kind. Precedent has been set in other NFHS rules codes to allow states to adopt mercy rules and to determine guidelines for the rules."

Currently, mercy rules by state adoption are in effect in the team sports of baseball, football, field hockey, ice hockey, soccer and softball. In lacrosse, a mercy rule automatically goes into effect if the differential is 10 or more goals at the beginning of the second half. In wrestling, by playing rule, a match is stopped when a 15-point advantage is gained over an opponent.

Although the mercy rule has received great interest across the country, perhaps a more significant change approved by the committee for next year is one involving free-throw administration.

Beginning with the 2003-04 season, the number of players permitted on marked lane spaces

during free throws (not including the free-throw shooter) will be six - four defensive players and two offensive players. The lane spaces closest to the free-throw line (and the shooter) must remain vacant.

The first marked lane spaces (ones adjacent to the end line) shall be occupied by opponents of the free-throw shooter, unless the resuming-of-play procedure is in effect. The second marked lane spaces on each side may be occupied by teammates of the free-throw shooter, and the third marked lane spaces may be occupied by opponents of the free-throw shooter. "The committee believes that this change will help reduce the amount of rough play during free throws and may provide the defense the rebounding advantage it was intended to have," Struckhoff said. "Fewer players on the lane should make the free-throw situation easier to officiate." Statistical information shows that offensive rebounding has increased in free-throw situations since the switch back to the ball hitting the rim as point of release, rather than the release of the ball by the free-throw shooter.

In other changes, the committee voted to change wording in specifications for the ball, which will make the new 10-panel basketball legal. Previously, the language limited the number of panels to eight. The new language in Rule 1-12-1c will state that a legal basketball shall consist of "a deeply-pebbled cover with horizontally shaped panels bonded tightly to the rubber carcass." The committee believes that new products have been developed that may permit players to control the ball better, and the change will provide schools with more options.

A change in Rule 4-6-4 adds a new article under basketball interference. The new interpretation of basketball interference will include when a player pulls down a movable ring so that it contacts the ball before the ring returns to its original position. This situation was not covered by rule previously. In an effort to keep the game moving as prescribed by rule, Rule 2-12-5 now will require a warning signal at 20 seconds before the expiration of the 30-second interval permitted for replacing a disqualified or injured player. The warning horn will be consistent with other timing situations and will communicate to the coach that the interval is about to end. The final change approved by the committee concerns changing the penalty from an indirect to a direct technical foul on the head coach for a player participating after being disqualified. The committee believes that the head coach should be aware of the fact that a player has been disqualified because the coach and the player would have been notified by the official. Therefore, the penalty should be charged directly to the head coach. In addition, the committee approved one change in the signal chart. The signal for a kicked ball will be leg straight, kicking motion straight forward about 1 foot. Previously, there was no signal for this violation. Basketball is the No. 1 sport for girls with 456,169 participants in 16,851 schools, according to the 2001-02 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. In terms of school sponsorship, it also is No. 1 for boys at the high school level with 17,135 schools offering the sport. In terms of participants, it ranks second to football with 540,597.

MEDIA CONTACT: Bruce Howard or John Gillis, 317-972-6900

Bruce L. Howard, National Federation of State High School Associations, Director of Publications and Communications, PO Box 690, Indianapolis, IN 46206; 317-822-5724 (phone), 317-822-5700 (fax), bhoward@nfhs.org (e-mail).