



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Teams Limited to One Forward Pass in High School Football

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jerry Diehl

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (January 21, 2005) — Effective with the 2005 high school football season, a team will be limited to one forward pass during a down. Previously, a team could throw more than one forward pass during a down as long as the passes were thrown from in or behind the neutral zone.

This was one of 13 rules changes approved by the NFHS Football Rules Committee at its January 8-9 meeting in Hilton Head, South Carolina. The rules subsequently were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors. The NFHS Football Rules Committee is composed of one voting member from each NFHS state high school association that uses NFHS football rules, as well as representatives of the NFHS Coaches Association and NFHS Officials Association.

“The throwing of multiple passes in a down in high school football is not a very common occurrence,” said Jerry Diehl, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Football Rules Committee. “Because teams don’t see it that often, confusion has existed regarding the second pass.

“Since teams rarely use this option, the committee determined it would be best to not allow more than one forward pass in an effort to reduce confusion regarding when pass interference rules are in effect for either team. This change should assist the offense, the defense and the game officials in determining when pass eligibility rules apply.”

Two changes were made in Rule 1-5 (player equipment) with risk management in mind. Beginning with the 2006 season, all helmets shall be secured with a four-snap chin strap, and a colored tooth protector (not clear or white) will be required.

Diehl said that in a survey of helmet manufacturers, it was determined that new helmets are being produced with the four-snap chin strap. He said the four-snap chin strap will increase the possibility of the helmet staying in place during game action more than the traditional two-snap chin strap.

“The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee recommended that a colored tooth protector be required,” Diehl said. “The official’s responsibility is more easily completed with the use of a colored product. There is no additional cost for a colored tooth protector.”

Two changes were approved by the committee to help officials better determine the 11 legal offensive players in the game. The first change will require a mark 12 inches in length, 4 inches in width and 9 yards from each sideline to be located on each 10-yard line. The other change will require all offensive players to be, momentarily, between the 9-yard marks after the ready for play and prior to the snap, and adhere to all other pre-snap requirements. The 9-yard markings are not required on fields that are visibly numbered.

“The Football Rules Committee has considered various issues over the past few years to address substitutions and the balance between offense and defense,” said Brad Cashman, executive director of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association and chairman of the NFHS Football Rules Committee. “Teams were reportedly returning to previous practices of hiding players near the sideline, as well as attempting to deceive the opponents with various substitution abnormalities.

“The previous rule requiring each offensive player to be within 15 yards of the ball was inconsistently applied, as it contained no easily verifiable fixed reference point for officials to administer.”

In addition to the substitution rule mentioned above, several other substitution and illegal participation rules were revised by the committee to clarify omissions and eliminate conflicts within the rules.

In Rule 3, the substitution rule was changed to make the entry of a substitute during the down a foul for illegal participation rather than illegal substitution. Rule 3-7 was amended to require all players, replaced players and substitutes to leave the field on the side of their team box, and that replaced players or substitutes go directly to their team box. Rule 9-6 was amended to classify the entry of a player, replaced player or substitute as illegal participation if such happens during the down, and to clearly state the penalty for illegal participation.

In addition to the one forward pass restriction, two other changes were approved in Rule 7-5 dealing with forward passes. Hindering an opponent’s vision without making an attempt to catch, intercept or bat the ball is pass interference, even though no contact was made. This change provides rules support for what has been interpreted as a foul. In addition, contact by a defender obviously away from the direction of the pass is not considered pass interference.

“This addition to the forward-pass classification clarifies that contact away from the direction of the pass would not constitute forward-pass interference,” Diehl said. “This change does not remove the restrictions on illegal use of the hands, holding or a personal foul that is committed during any play.”

Beginning with the 2008 season, hand pads must meet the same standard as gloves concerning the level of tackiness. The hand pads shall bear the NF/NCAA label indicating compliance with test specifications on file with the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association as of January 1, 1994.

“More and more products are being produced that apparently are tackier than the specifications allowed for gloves,” Diehl said. “This situation is causing concern that players are gaining an advantage; therefore, the same requirements for gloves will apply (in 2008) to hand pads.”

With a revision to the exception in Rule 8-5-2a, the momentum rule will now apply to a grounded ball. Previously, the momentum rule applied only to an intercepted forward pass, fumble or backward pass by an opponent or a caught scrimmage or free kick.

Other changes approved by the committee:

Rule 1-5-3 – The manufacturer logo/trademark restriction now includes any company reference.

Rule 3-3-4 – A period shall not be extended when a foul occurs that specifies a loss of down. This will prevent a team from gaining an advantage by committing a “loss of down” foul.

Rule 7-2-1 Penalty – “Illegal procedure” terminology has been removed from the rules book and signal chart.

Rule 9-4-2 – Non-players were added to those who are covered under the illegal personal contact rule.

Six- and Eight-Player Football – At least five offensive players shall be on their line of scrimmage at the snap and may have any legal jersey number.

In addition to these rules changes, the Football Rules Committee approved four points of emphasis for the 2005 high school season – heat and hydration and their effect on weight; spearing, butt blocking, face tackling and chop blocks; sideline management; and game management.

In terms of participants, football is the No. 1 sport for boys at the high school level. Combined with 24,958 participants in six-player, eight-player and nine-player football, a total of 1,057,640 boys participated in high school football in 2003, according to the 2003-04 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. Eleven-player football (1,032,682 participants) ranks fourth in terms of school sponsorship for boys with 13,680 high schools sponsoring the sport. In addition, 1,615 girls participated in football (1,527 in 11-player) during the 2003 season.

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