



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Head Coach May Call Time-out in High School Football

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jerry Diehl

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (January 12, 2004) — The head coach may now request a time-out in high school football, effective with the 2004 season. Previously, only a player could request a time-out.

This was one of 10 rules changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Football Rules Committee at its January 5-6 meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. 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.

“One of the purposes of time-outs is to legally conserve time,” said Jerry Diehl, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Football Rules Committee. “It is not a major issue whether the head coach or a player requests the time-out.”

The head coach must be able to clearly be seen by the official in order for the coach to request a time-out. Diehl said that head coaches who operate from the press box cannot designate an assistant to call time-outs. The head coach on the field must request the time-out.

In another change regarding time-outs, a coach may now talk to any number of team members during an authorized time-out. This procedure can only be used when the players come to the sideline during a time-out. If the coach elects to confer with the team in its huddle between the inbounds marks, that conference must still be limited to the 11 players on the field.

Although it is a situation that does not occur frequently, the committee approved a significant change in the exception to Rule 8-5-2a regarding safeties. The momentum exception that occurs within a player’s own 5-yard line will now be in effect if there is a second change of possession on a given play. Previously, the rule applied only to the original defensive team.

If a defensive player intercepts a forward pass, fumble, backward pass or catches a scrimmage kick or free kick between his 5-yard line and the goal line and returns the ball to the opposite end of the

field, where another turnover occurs between the 5-yard line and goal line, the team then in possession of the ball would have the same momentum rule in effect. In both cases, the exception nullifies the safety and returns the ball to the spot where it was recovered.

In addition to the change allowing the head coach to request a time-out, two other changes were made in Rule 3 regarding periods, time factors and substitutions. Rule 3-1-4, which addresses games that are interrupted because of events beyond the control of game administration, was clarified to provide state high school associations more authority over interrupted games.

“In these types of situations in the future, state association policies regarding interrupted games will apply,” Diehl said. “This change should reduce expenses on a second travel day for participants, and spectators will not be exposed to continuing hazardous weather conditions. State associations will be able to continue using previously adopted tied-game provisions.”

In Rule 3-3-3, a change was made to state that if a foul occurs on the last timed down of a period, any replay action will take place before ends of the field are exchanged. Diehl said that language was eliminated last year that caused confusion in administering penalties prior to the changing of goals to begin the next period.

Two clarifications regarding the changes made last year in post-scrimmage were approved by the Football Rules Committee. In Rule 2-16-2g, language will be altered to state that a post-scrimmage kick situation begins with the snap and that a successful field goal is not included in any post-scrimmage kick enforcement.

Clarifications also were made in Rules 10-2-1 and 10-2-2 to note that post-scrimmage kicks, if the only foul(s) are committed by the receiving team, are not considered a part of a double-foul definition.

In other changes, Rules 6-1-5 and 6-2-4 were revised to state that during a free kick, if the kicking team muffs the ball into a receiver, the action shall be ignored. Also, during a scrimmage kick a ball that is legally batted or muffed by the kicking team into a receiver shall be ignored.

“Prior to this change, if pushing or blocking by a member of the kicking team forced a receiver into contact with the ball, this touching was ignored during kicks,” Diehl said. “This addition now includes muffs by the kicking team as well as legally batted or muffed balls going into a receiver.”

Other changes approved by the committee:

Rule 8-2-2 – A clarification was made concerning a foul that is committed by the defending team on a touchdown that involves a change of possession. In this case, the foul must occur after change of possession.

Rule 1-5-3i, k – Legal towels must be made of moisture-absorbing material. Also, any sticky or slippery substance is not permitted on the towel.

In addition to the 10 rules changes, the Football Rules Committee approved three points of emphasis for the 2004 high school season – helmet contact, substitution and participation, and properly marked fields. The committee annually adopts points of emphasis to make players, coaches and officials aware of specific areas that need attention.

While the number of direct fatalities annually in high school football has dropped from an all-time high of 26 in 1968 to an average of five a year the past five years, the rules committee continues to emphasize the proper use of the head and helmet so that the risk is minimized and any illegal use is removed from the game.

The emphasis of substitution and participation is related to the proliferation of specialty players and specialty situations within games.

“The number of players entering and exiting the playing area on any given down should not confuse either the opponents or officials,” said Ronnie Matthews, chair of the NFHS Football Rules Committee and executive director of the South Carolina High School League. “While deception is part of football, the rules committee does not believe this rule or any rule should create a situation where the offense, defense or officials are confused or distracted.”

Regarding properly marked fields, Diehl said, if at all possible, auxiliary markings should be used on the field, especially those associated with controlling the team area and media. He said only the people necessary for game administration should be allowed in close proximity to the playing area.

In terms of participants, football is the No. 1 sport for boys at the high school level. Combined with 24,743 participants in six-player, eight-player and nine-player football, a total of 1,047,885 boys participated in high school football in 2003, according to the 2002-03 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. Eleven-player football (1,023,142 participants) ranks fourth in terms of school sponsorship for boys with 13,642 high schools sponsoring the sport. In addition, 1,542 girls participated in football (1,477 in 11-player) during the 2003 season.

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