



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

## NEWS RELEASE

### **Reducing Injury Risk During Inversions, Release Stunts and Tosses Focus of 2021-22 High School Spirit Rules Changes**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: James Weaver

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 6, 2021) — Adjusted points of contact that reduce injury risk during inversions and release stunts and tosses are the most notable revisions in the 2021-22 high school spirit rules.

At its recent virtual meeting, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Spirit Rules Committee produced rules changes that emphasized the committee's continued focus on risk minimization. A total of seven proposals were recommended to the NFHS Board of Directors, which reviewed and later approved the changes to take effect next year.

"The NFHS Spirit Rules Committee continues its efforts to increase the health and safety of all cheer and dance participants," said Dr. James Weaver, NFHS director of performing arts and sports and liaison to the NFHS Spirit Rules Committee. "This year's rules changes allow for good safety practices and allow for education and practice in the sport of spirit."

To reduce injury risk for the top person in a pyramid during a braced inversion that does not flip or roll, Rule 3-3-3 no longer mandates that the top person make hand-to-hand or hand-to-arm contact with a bracer. Removing this contact requirement keeps the top person out of a potentially dangerous position caused by attempting an unnatural connection with the bracer.

The same change was made in Rule 3-5-5c, which deals with contact between a top person and a bracer during a transition from a release stunt or toss. This modification also allows a top person to land in other positions besides a cradle position after a hand-to-foot release.

An alteration to Rule 4-1-21 now permits spirit participants to wear religious head coverings during performance without seeking state association approval beforehand. The rule states headwear must be made of non-abrasive and soft materials, fit securely and be attached in such a way that it is unlikely to come off while performing. The NFHS Spirit Rules Committee is the fourth NFHS sports rules committee to adopt or adjust a rule related to the wearing of religious head coverings so far in 2021.

An exception was added to Rule 3-2-1 (Rule 4-2-1 for dance) that allows a base and top person to share a pom during a dismount from a thigh stand, a shoulder sit or straddle, a shoulder stand or a prep. Previously, bases could not hold any objects or accessories while supporting a top person in these positions; only a hand-to-hand connection was acceptable.

Finally, language was removed from Rule 3-3-6 and Rule 4-2-8. Rule 3-3-6d was deleted as a response to a 2020 rule change that withdrew the requirement for upper body contact during a suspended stunt. Minute changes were made to Rule 4-2-8 to clarify that a spotter is required anytime the feet of the top person are in the hands of a base, or during the toss portion of a toss to shoulder stand.

A complete listing of the spirit rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org). Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Spirit.”

According to the most recent NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, competitive spirit ranks ninth in participants for girls with 161,358 in 7,214 schools.

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#### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors

professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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