

2026 MHSA and NFHS Volleyball Changes and Information

For the 2026 season, below we have listed the major NFHS and MHSA Rule changes and also some other important MHSA volleyball information. Please contact Kip in the MHSA Office if you have any questions.

FIRST DAY OF VOLLEYBALL PRACTICE AND CONTESTS

The starting date for volleyball practice will be Friday, August 14th and the first date for volleyball competition will be Thursday, August 27th. No individual shall play in any Association volleyball contest until she has a minimum of eight (8) days of volleyball practice of at least one practice session per day on eight (8) different days (no practice is permitted on Sunday), prior to the date of the first allowable match.

VOLLEYBALL TO BE USED FOR THE 2026 SEASON

Once again for all 2026 MHSA volleyball post season play, the **Baden Lexum Comp VX450c-210 red/white/navy blue microfiber composite volleyball** will be used. For regular season play, a solid white volleyball may be used. **If a colored volleyball is used for regular season play, it can only be a red/white/navy blue colored volleyball.** For both post and regular season play, any volleyball used for all levels of play shall include the NFHS authenticating mark.

VOLLEYBALL MATCH LIMIT

Eighteen (18) volleyball matches will be the maximum limit for schools in Classes A, B and C, Class AA nineteen (19) with no more than three (3) 3-out-of-5 matches [or five (5) 2-out-of-three matches in dual tournament format only] on any one date excluding Association sponsored tournaments. These match limits apply for each squad: varsity, junior varsity, sophomore, freshman.

VOLLEYBALL PARTICIPATION

- Individual volleyball players shall be allowed to play in no more than two matches/levels of competition (freshman, sophomore, junior varsity, varsity) in any school's dual match. Entering a contest for one live ball counts as participation in one match. As per MHSA By Laws, Section 2 General Penalties, the contest in which a participant exceeds the limitation will be followed. The player limitation rule doesn't apply during invitational or dual tournaments. Montana volleyball teams will always follow the MHSA match limitation rule when playing in neighboring states.
- For post season volleyball play, volleyball teams will not be allowed on the playing floor with balls until 30 minutes before the start time of the match.
- The volleyball prematch conference (with the head coaches and captains) will occur before the twenty (20) minute warm-up countdown.

THE COIN FLIP TO START MATCH RULE 1-6

Art. 1: Upon entering the facility, the home team selects its team bench.

Art. 2: Prior to the timed warmups, a conference shall be conducted with the head coach and a captain(s) from each team.

Art. 3: During the prematch conference, a coin toss shall be conducted between the captains and head coach of each team. A visiting captain shall call the toss. The winner shall choose either to serve or receive.

Art. 4: A timed warm-up period shall be afforded each team.

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TEAM BENCHES COURT PROTOCOL –NFHS RULE

Rule 9-2-2:

Art. 2: For sets two, three, and four in a five-set match, teams shall change playing areas and benches immediately when directed by the first referee. (According to the rule adopted by MHSA, teams do not have the choice they must switch sides)

Note: In a three-set match, teams shall change playing areas and benches for set two.

VOLLEYBALL WARM-UP PROCEDURE

20-minute Varsity warm-up procedure

- A. Coaches' / Captains' Meeting occurs before the 20-minute clock starts – coaches should not hold up this meeting by not being available
- B. 8 Minutes – Shared Court
- C. 4 Minutes – Serving Team Court Time (receiving team may warmup in the non-playable areas)
- D. 4 Minutes – Receiving Team Court Time (serving team may warmup in the non-playable areas)
- E. 2 Minutes – Serving Team Court Time (used as desired) (receiving team may not warmup during this time, must be at the team bench)
- F. 2 Minutes – Receiving Team Court Time (used as desired) (serving team may not warmup during this time, must be at the team bench)

15-minute Sub Varsity warm-up procedure:

- A. Coaches' / Captains' Meeting occurs before the 15-minute clock starts – coaches should not hold up this meeting by not being available
- B. 3 Minutes – Shared Court
- C. 4 Minutes – Serving Team Court Time (receiving team may warmup in the non-playable areas)
- D. 4 Minutes – Receiving Team Court Time (serving team may warmup in the non-playable areas)
- E. 2 Minutes – Serving Team Court Time (used as desired) (receiving team may not warmup during this time, must be at the team bench)
- F. 2 Minutes – Receiving Team Court Time (used as desired) (serving team may not warmup during this time, must be at the team bench)

Please share this information with your volleyball coaches and if you have any questions or concerns, please call Kip Ryan at 442-6010 or email at kryan@mhsa.org.

2026-27 VOLLEYBALL RULES CHANGES

4-2-1a, 4-2-1i(3) (NEW), 4-2-2: Libero uniform bottoms may be any color and no longer must match the team uniform bottoms.

Rationale: Allows more flexibility in the libero uniform bottoms while ensuring that the libero uniform top continues to contrast with their teammates.

5-5-3b(21): The second referee will provide a double whistle warning between sets at two minutes, 30 seconds (4:30 when intermission is used) instead of 2 minutes, 45 seconds.

Rationale: Improves pace of play between sets by notifying teams earlier to make their way

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onto the court for the officials to administer lineup checks before the final audio signal and resumption of play.

6-4-2, 10-4-3a, 10-4-3d: A team may designate up to two liberos, but only one libero can be in the game at a time. When a team designates two liberos and one is injured/ill, a new libero may be re-designated. When a team designates two liberos and one is disqualified; the team must continue with one libero.

Rationale: Allows more student-athletes to participate by creating an additional opportunity for coaches without having to utilize a substitution.

6-4 PENALTIES 1c (NEW), 12-2-8b NOTE (NEW): If non-playing teammate(s) (bench players) enter the court during play it is illegal alignment. It remains a conduct violation if a coach or team attendant (anyone not in uniform) enters the court while the ball is in play.

Rationale: More appropriately assesses illegal alignment (loss of rally/point awarded to the opponent) to non-playing teammates who enter the court while the ball is in play. A player who enters the court during play may still receive a conduct violation if they engage in disconcerting acts, disrespectful language, etc. This penalty realignment allows officials to appropriately penalize teams based on participant actions.

6-5-1: Players on the serving team are not permitted to raise their hands above their heads during service until the ball has passed beyond the net.

Rationale: Discourages player positioning during the serve that prevents the receiving team from viewing service contact and/or the flight of the ball and assists officials when evaluating the existence of screening. This change aligns with all other volleyball rules codes.

9-2-1 NOTE 1 (NEW): Players shall not wear any audio or video devices during the match.

Rationale: Clarifies the prohibition of electronic communication with and by players during the match and aligns with other NFHS rules codes.

12-2-8m (NEW): It is an unsporting conduct violation if coaches, non-playing teammates or team attendants use props on the bench during celebrations.

Rationale: Clarifies appropriate bench conduct for consistent enforcement by eliminating the use of props in bench celebrations while promoting sportsmanship and preventing disruption and potential safety concerns.

2026-27 Volleyball Editorial Changes

1-5-1, 5-2-1b, 5-4-3c(1), 5-4-4a, 7-1-1a, 7-1-1 PENALTIES 3, 7-1-2a, 7-1-4 PENALTIES 1, 9-9-1h

2026-27 Volleyball Points of Emphasis

1. Host Management Best Practices

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2. Electronic Devices
3. Bench Personnel – Non-Playing Teammates
4. NFHS Authenticating Mark