

Football Coaches Packet

2026



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For additional information related to sports medicine issues concerning athletic participation, please click the “Sports Medicine” tab on the opening page of our website.



West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission



2875 Staunton Turnpike, Parkersburg, WV 26104-7219

Phone: (304) 485-5494

E-Mail: wvssac@wvssac.org

Web: www.wvssac.org

BULLETIN

To: High School Football Coaches
From: Chris Wells, Assistant Executive Director
Date: **Updated September 23, 2026**
SUBJECT: 2026 Football Season

NFHS Rulebook was mailed to your school.

The following special points of emphasis are presented for the coming season:

1. August 3 – Conditioning drills may begin. The use of football uniforms, protective equipment (except helmets), tackling or blocking dummies, charging sleds or similar devices are **strictly prohibited** during this conditioning period.
2. August 5 – First date with shoulder pads – **NO LIVE CONTACT** – This refers to no live contact between players. The use of sleds, shields, and blocking dummies will be allowed. The purpose of this period is to permit a gradual adaptation of the players to carry the weight of the pads and adjust to temperature variation as well as providing a gradual adaptation to the body's level of contact.
3. August 7 – Full pads – **No live contact** – The use of sleds, shields, and blocking dummies will be allowed.
4. August 8 – First date live contact allowed.
5. August 14 – Earliest date for pre-season scrimmage or Grid-O-Rama. Must be after 4:00 PM.
6. (Section 127-3-23.4): Maximum contest: a) The total number of quarters for a player in one season is 50 exclusive of the playoff games. b) A player can only play 4 quarters in one day. c) Any player who participated in one or more downs in one quarter shall be charged with one quarter of play, except those downs in which the football teams are in a free kick formation or the offensive team is in a scrimmage kick formation, as defined in the National Federation Rule 2-14-2, the down will not count as a down. **A violation of the quarter rule will cause suspension of the student for the next varsity and junior varsity contest of that sport.**
7. Playoff Structure Modifications:
 - A. The Football Playoff Manual may be viewed and printed from the WVSSAC website (www.wvssac.org).
 - B. Football Playoff Manual: Modifications to III. Teams with Identical Point Rating If (A) does not select a sixteenth place team or eliminate a tie above sixteenth, the wins of opponents will be totaled and the team with the most bonus points in their class or higher as computed by the WVSSAC Rating Plan will be selected or move up for pairing.
 - C. All games in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd rounds will be played at the home site of the highest rated team. If the home site is not approved, the game will be played at an approved site selected by the highest rated team subject to approval of the WVSSAC office. If necessary, the Executive Director may send a committee to inspect the site. Reimbursement may be adjusted depending on site.

- D. The Wilson GST or Wilson GRT football shall be used in a playoff game. Schools cannot use a product from another company. This was approved unanimously by the Board of Directors.
 - E. Pre-game Coin Toss – Teams are to leave the playing field 15 minutes before the game and return promptly at five minutes before kick-off time. Upon returning to the playing field, the captains will participate in tossing the coin.
 - F. In playoff games, teams may enter the field 1½ hours before the game.
 - G. For playoff games, the game administrator must attend all playoff meetings.
8. The WVSSAC promotes good sportsmanship in all sport programs. We encourage you to inform parents and athletes of the importance of supporting sportsmanship. Please review sportsmanship with your team; WVSSAC guidelines and rules are in the **WVSSAC Rules & Regulations Handbook**. Lead by example.
 9. Rule 127-4-3. Code for Interscholastic Athletes – Coaches are hereby notified to carefully review this rule with their athletes.
 10. Recruitment/Suspension Policies – Carefully review the enclosed rule clarifications and contact me if you have any questions.
 11. Head and Neck Trauma Guidelines – Refer to the approved Return to Play/Concussion Protocol. RTP refers to return to play and return to practice. Only the appropriate health care professional will determine when a concussed athlete may return to participation.
 12. Use of Performance Enhancing Substances by Athletes – It is the philosophy of the National Federation and the WVSSAC that students be encouraged and supported in their efforts to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. In promotion of safety and healthy lifestyles, the WVSSAC Sports Medicine Committee requests that coaches assume the responsibility of informing athletes that the uses of such substances should be discontinued especially during the times when dehydration may occur due to potential life-threatening consequences. The committee further encourages all athletic trainers to support coaches in promoting healthy lifestyles.
 13. Injury/Participation Procedure at WVSSAC Championship Events – Medical personnel (athletic trainers) will have the jurisdiction concerning the return of a player to competition after an injury.
 14. Post all scores on the WVSSAC website by noon on Monday after each contest.
 15. Please study the enclosed bulletin for WVSSAC Modifications and Points of Special Emphasis.
 16. Information concerning concussions, sudden cardiac arrest, helmets, heat, catastrophic insurance, warning labels for helmets and suggestions for football coaches are enclosed. Please review this information carefully.
 17. First year, Class III officials are not allowed to officiate high school varsity games.
 18. State-sponsored rules clinics are required for all high school and middle school head coaches and officials. Dates and sites for the football clinics are listed on the enclosed clinic schedule. If your school sponsors a separate 9th grade team, the head coach of that team is required to attend the rules clinic.
 19. Head Coaches are responsible for discussing the Bench Clearing Rule with all other coaches and players prior to the first contest.
 20. NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Regulations
 - A. Insulin Pumps with Shirt must be padded and a physician's letter indicating the need for the athlete to wear the pumps must be given to the official prior to the start of the game.
 - B. Inhalers – A physician's letter indicating the need for the athlete to use the inhaler must be given to the official prior to the start of the game.

2026 FOOTBALL CLINICS

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	COORDINATOR
July 19	Interpreter's Clinic WVSSAC Office	10:00 AM	Chris Wells
July 22	Stonewall Resort	10:00 AM	Mike Rogers
July 27	Chapmanville High School	6:00 PM	George Barker
July 28	Parkersburg High School	6:00 PM	Chris Way
July 29	John Marshall High School	6:00 PM	Roger Simmons
July 30	Huntington High School	6:00 PM	Bruce Senior
August 3	Woodrow Wilson High School	6:00 PM	Andrew Pinnick
August 4	Herbert Hoover High School	6:00 PM	Richard Parsons
August 6	East Fairmont High School	6:00 PM	James Beckman
August 7	Spring Mills High School	6:00 PM	Glen Simpson
August 8	Frankfort High School	9:00 AM	Jay Hesse
August 11	Make-up Clinic WVSSAC Office	6:00 PM	Chris Wells

SCHOOLS: The Head Coach shall be required to attend any sports rules clinics which are sponsored by this Commission in his/her coaching assignment. Schools failing to have a head coaching position filled at the time of the clinic will be required to have a school representative present at the rules clinic. An individual can only represent one school unless he/she is head coach at both schools. In a 9-12 school, both the varsity and 9th grade coach are required to attend. Failure to have a representative at one of the above clinics will result in a \$50.00 fine.

The clinic attendance requirement may not be granted if the coach or representative is late in excess of 10 minutes.

§127-3-23. Football.

23.1. Rules: Football rules published by the NFHS are the official rules for all interscholastic competition unless otherwise provided by Commission modification.

23.2. Organized Team Practice: Organized team conditioning practice will begin on Monday of Week 5 and the first contest may be played during Week 8.

23.2.a. The following table establishes for **high school** the equipment/contact level, earliest date for scrimmage or Grid-O-Rama, date for first contest, and date season must be completed.

Year	First Date Organized Practice Helmets Only No Contact	First Date Helmet & Shoulder Pads Soft Equipment Contact: Bag, shields sleds, tackling wheel, etc.	Full Pads Soft Equipment Contact: Bag, shields sleds, tackling wheel, etc.	Full Pads Full Contact	Earliest Scrimmage Or Grid-O-Rama After 4:00 PM	First Contest	Date Season Must Be Completed
2026	Aug. 3 & 4	Aug. 5 & 6	Aug. 7	Aug. 8	Aug. 14	Aug. 24	Nov. 7
2027	Aug. 2 & 3	Aug. 4 & 5	Aug. 6	Aug. 7	Aug. 13	Aug. 23	Nov. 6
2028	Jul. 31 & Aug. 1	Aug. 2 & 3	Aug. 4	Aug. 5	Aug. 11	Aug. 21	Nov. 4
2029	Jul. 30 & Jul. 31	Aug. 1 & 2	Aug. 3	Aug. 4	Aug. 10	Aug. 20	Nov. 3
2030	Aug. 5 & 6	Aug. 7 & 8	Aug. 9	Aug. 10	Aug. 15	Aug. 26	Nov. 9
2031	Aug. 4 & 5	Aug. 6 & 7	Aug. 8	Aug. 9	Aug. 14	Aug. 25	Nov. 8
2032	Aug. 2 & 3	Aug. 4 & 5	Aug. 6	Aug. 7	Aug. 13	Aug. 23	Nov. 6
2033	Aug. 1 & 2	Aug. 3 & 4	Aug. 5	Aug. 6	Aug. 12	Aug. 22	Nov. 5
2034	July 31 & Aug. 1	Aug. 2 & 3	Aug. 4	Aug. 5	Aug. 11	Aug. 21	Nov. 4
2035	July 30 & 31	Aug. 1 & 2	Aug. 3	Aug. 4	Aug. 10	Aug. 20	Nov. 3

23.2.b. Individual students of a team must have practiced on 12 separate days, exclusive of the day of a contest, before participating in an interscholastic contest.

23.2.c. In season football camps sponsored by a member school or by other school related organizations where football coaching and instruction are given are not permitted.

23.2.d. The use of football uniforms, protective equipment, tackling or blocking dummies, charging sleds, or similar devices are strictly prohibited during the conditioning program. During the date of pads no live contact, the use of sleds, shields, and blocking dummies is allowed to permit gradual adaptation of the students to carrying the weight of their pads and adjusting to temperature variation.

23.3. Length of Season: The football season will end for each team at the end of the regular season or by play-off elimination.

23.4. Maximum Team Contests: A football team will be permitted to play no more than 10 games exclusive of the play-off games.

23.4.a. The total number of quarters for a student in one season is 50 exclusive of the play-off games.

23.4.b. A student may only play 4 quarters in one day.

23.4.c. Any student who participated in one or more downs in one quarter shall be charged with one quarter of play, except those downs in which the football teams are in a free kick formation, or the offensive team is in a scrimmage kick formation, as defined in the National Federation Football Rule Book, the down will not count as a down.

23.4.d. Overtime is considered as an extension of the fourth quarter.

23.4.e. Interscholastic practice game or games in which teams representing a member school play against alumni or other people shall not be allowed.

23.5. A football team is permitted to participate in a Grid-O-Rama and one (1) preseason scrimmage or two (2) preseason scrimmages. See Glossary for definitions of Grid-O-Rama and Scrimmage.

23.6. Special Regulations:

23.6.a. All rules and regulations of these Bylaws pertaining to football are also applicable to six-man and eight-man football.

23.6.b. Any member of a freshman team in a 4-year high school that plays in a varsity contest (scrimmage, grid-o-rama or game) is ineligible to return to the freshman team.

23.6.c. A student may not play or practice on a non-school football team while a member of his school team.

23.7. A student may accept awards only in WVSSAC sanctioned events during the school year. These awards must be consistent with the items specified in the Awards Rule. Students may accept only this same type of an award in non-sanctioned event during non-school months.

23.8. The Board of Directors is authorized to adopt a point rating system and overall procedure for determining a state champion in each class.

23.9. Middle School - The above rules will apply for Middle School with the following adaptations:

23.9.a. Organized team conditioning practice will begin on Monday of Week 6 and the first game played during Week 9.

23.9.b. The following table establishes, for middle schools, the first date for organized practice, the first date pads with no live contact, the first date for live contact, earliest date for a scrimmage, the date for first game and the date season must be completed.

Year	First Date Organized Practice Helmets Only. No Contact	First Date Helmet and Shoulder Pads. Soft Equipment Contact (Bag, Shields, Sleds, Tackling Wheel, Etc.)	Full Pads. Soft Equipment Contact (Bag, Shields, Sleds, Tackling Wheel, Etc.)	Full Pads Full Contact	Earliest Scrimmage	First Contest	Date Season Must be Completed
2026	Aug. 10, 11, and 12	Aug. 13, 14, and 15	Aug. 17 and 18	Aug. 19, 20, 21, and 22	Aug. 24	Aug. 31	Oct. 31
2027	Aug. 9, 10 and 11	Aug. 12, 13, and 14	Aug. 16 and 17	Aug. 18, 19, 20, and 21	Aug. 23	Aug. 30	Oct. 30
2028	Aug. 7, 8 and 9	Aug. 10, 11 and 12	Aug. 14 and 15	Aug. 16, 17, 18, and 19	Aug. 21	Aug. 28	Oct. 28
2029	Aug. 6, 7, and 8	Aug. 9, 10, and 11	Aug. 13 and 14	Aug. 15, 16, 17, and 18	Aug. 20	Aug. 27	Oct. 27
2030	Aug. 12, 13, and 14	Aug. 15, 16, and 17	Aug. 19 and 20	Aug. 21, 22, 23, and 24	Aug. 26	Sept. 2	Nov. 2
2031	Aug. 11, 12, and 13	Aug. 14, 15, and 16	Aug. 18 and 19	Aug. 20, 21, 22, and 23	Aug. 25	Sept. 1	Nov. 1
2032	Aug. 9, 10, and 11	Aug. 12, 13, and 14	Aug. 16 and 17	Aug. 18, 19, 20 and 21	Aug. 23	Aug. 30	Oct. 30

2033	Aug. 8, 9, and 10	Aug. 11, 12, and 13	Aug. 15 and 16	Aug. 17, 18, 19 and 20	Aug. 22	Aug. 29	Oct. 29
2034	Aug. 7, 8, and 9	Aug. 10, 11, and 12	Aug. 14 and 15	Aug. 16, 17, 18, and 19	Aug. 21	Aug. 28	Oct. 28
2035	Aug. 6, 7, and 8	Aug. 9, 10, and 11	Aug. 13 and 14	Aug. 15, 16, 17, and 18	Aug. 20	Aug. 27	Oct. 27

23.9.c. The football season will end on Saturday of Week 17.

23.9.d. Not more than eight (8) interscholastic football games shall be played, with the exception of league playoff games in which one (1) game may be added for playoffs. There shall be a nine (9) game limit even if league playoff games are used, and the extra game would be limited to only two (2) teams in the league having the playoff. Leagues choosing to have the extra playoff game may participate in a 2 quarter Grid-O-Rama in place of a scrimmage game. This must be decided prior to the start of the season.

23.9.e. The total number of quarters for a student in one season is 40, exclusive of the playoff game in Rule 127-3-23.4.

23.9.f. A Middle School football team is allowed one preseason scrimmage under the following conditions:

23.9.f.1. Scrimmage will not be played under game conditions.

23.9.f.2. Scrimmage must be played prior to first game of regular season.

23.9.f.3. Admission may be charged.

23.9.f.4. Registered officials may be used.

23.9.g. Middle School football teams will play overtime until a winner is determined.

23.9.h. Middle School game ball: The football used involving only students in the eighth grade and below shall be the youth football. Games involving students of a combination seventh, eighth, and ninth graders may use the youth football by mutual agreement. Modification of the rule is listed in Rule 1-3-1, National Federation Football Rule book.

23.9.i. Length of Quarters: For teams composed of students in any combination of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, the length of quarters shall be eight minutes.

23.9.j. A 9th grade team in a high school program will follow the rules provided for high school.

WEST VIRGINIA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES COMMISSION

FOOTBALL ALERTS - - 2026

Modifications and Points of Special Emphasis

1. **Mouthpiece** – Rule 1-5-1d,5: The only exception to the mouth and tooth protector rule is by a dentist's written exclusion on file in the WVSSAC office.
2. **Artificial Limb** – Rule 1-7: Requires WVSSAC authorization (see enclosed policy, ATTACHMENT A).
3. **Game Ball** – Rule 1-3-1 Note and Table 1-3-1; the small ball for players below the 9th grade shall be used (GST-TDY). Rule 1-3-2 Note; for varsity playoffs a Wilson GST or GRT football shall be used.
4. **Length of Quarters** - Rule 3-1; Table 3-1: Note: WVSSAC adoption; games involving only students below the 9th grade shall be played in 8-minute quarters.
5. **Half-time** - Rule 3-1 Table, Intermission: All HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY games involving WVSSAC member schools played in West Virginia will have a maximum 20 minute half-time. This includes regular season and playoff games. Notification to coaches of the end of half-time by officials is permissible, but not required. Coaches are responsible for teams being on the field for the mandatory warm-up at the end of the half-time. Out-of- state varsity opponents must be notified of the 20 minute half-time. The half-time length shall not be lengthened.
6. **Interrupted Games** - Rule 3-1-4 & 3-1-5: For any interruption continued the same day, resume from the point of interruption and complete the game. If both schools agree not to resume, Rule 3-1-4 may be used to declare the interrupted game as a completed contest.

For interrupted games to be resumed at a later date: "If the interruption is in the 1st (including the coin toss), 2nd or 3rd quarters, resume from the point of interruption; if in the 4th quarter, the game is over and the score stands".
7. **Game shortening Rule: Rule 3-1-2. 42 Points Halftime/3rd quarter or 35-point differential in 4th quarter. Clock runs; see also 3-1-3: "By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time or the game terminated."**
8. **Overtime:** Rule 3-1-1 NOTE: By state adoption, all varsity/middle school regular season games that end in a tie after regulation time, shall use the 20-yard line overtime procedure until a winner is determined. There is NO overtime in JV contests

There shall be no PSK applications in overtime periods.
9. **Heat and Humidity Problems** – Rule 3-5-7g: Coaches need to be aware of the HEAT INDEX during practices. During games if, in the opinion of the officials, heat and/or humidity may cause problems for the players, an official's time-out may be taken and water administered to the teams. An authorized conference may be held during this official's time-out, outside the numbers and in front of the team box.

10. **Side Line and Team Box Area**: The diagram associated with Rule 1-2-1 (11-player field diagram) and the operation of the down marker and line-to-gain equipment as in Rule 1-3-5 and 9-8-3 specifically require the sideline to be kept clear. **The restricted area is to be clear when the ball is live**. Safety is always a main concern.
11. Rule 7-5-6 covers pass eligibility numbering. **All levels of play** must follow this rule. Numbers 50-79 are always ineligible receivers.
12. **NFHS / WVSSAC Point of emphasis**. Flagrant/Unsportsmanlike Fouls, Helping the Runner/ Sideline Management And Control, Legal Formations, Substitutions
13. The WVSSAC requires each game of High School level Varsity, JV and Middle School football be administered by appropriately registered officials. **1st Year Class III officials may not work varsity contests.**
14. **SPORTSMANSHIP**: Coaches and Officials – we are on the same team. Maintain good behavior in practices as well as games. Let us eliminate bad behaviors in sports. (See Penalty 9-5 and 9-8).
15. **Remember**, if there is only one (1) flag for a foul the calling official shall give the preliminary signal. The foul must also be reported to the referee.

- ***SPORTSMANSHIP IS LEARNED. TEACH IT!***
- ***Enforce Illegal Equipment per the NFHS Rule as written.***
- ***ILLEGAL CONTACT TO THE HEAD AND NECK MUST BE ELIMINATED!***
- ***SEE WHAT YOU HIT!!***

2026

WVSSAC 20-YARD LINE OVERTIME PROCEDURE

REGULAR SEASON OVERTIME PROCEDURE

Regular season high school football games, which are tied at the end of regulation time shall be continued by using the 20-yard line overtime procedure. Overtime periods will be played until a winner is determined.

Overtime for middle schools will be played until a winner is determined. No overtime will be played in JV Games.

PSK shall not be used in overtime periods.

PLAYOFF OVERTIME PROCEDURE

The 20-yard line overtime procedure shall be used and a winner shall be determined.

PROCEDURE:

Modify the 10-yard overtime procedure in the Rules Book to have Team A put the ball in play at their 20-yard line, 1st and 10. A first down may be gained and Team A shall continue to attempt to score.



SCOREBOARD

TIME: 00:00

PERIOD 4

HOME: 7

VISITORS: 7



Revise National Federation 2025 Football Rules Book - pages 87-90.

1st & 10 from the 20 yard line procedure will be used in WV for OT procedure (unless moved by penalty).

A three-minute intermission shall precede the first overtime period. All other overtime periods shall be preceded with a two-minute intermission. Team captains come out to begin each OT period. The overtime is considered as an extension of the 4th period.

Only 1 coin toss will be conducted to prior to the 1st overtime. If a 2nd overtime is played, the loser of the coin flip from the 1st overtime, will have choice to begin the 2nd overtime. No more coin flips will take place no matter how many overtimes are played.

Larry McCloy,
WVSSAC Football Clinician
June 15, 2026



**To: Head Football Coaches
Junior Varsity, Freshmen, Middle School**

Subject: Numbering Requirements for Sub Varsity Contests for 11-man football.

The NFHS Football Rules regarding number requirements (Rule 7-2-5) and pass eligibility requirements (7-5-6a) will be in effect for all Sub Varsity Contests beginning with the 2019 Football season.

Unless in scrimmage kick formation, at least 5 offensive linemen must be numbered 50-79 for a scrimmage down. To be an eligible pass receiver, the player must be eligible by both position and number (1-49 or 80-99).

Please make note when equipping players for Sub Varsity contests.

**Larry McCloy
WVSSAC Football Clinician**



To: All Junior Varsity, Freshmen & Middle School Football Coaches

Subject: Eight-Player Football

At the sub varsity level, by agreement of both head coaches, teams are permitted to play 8 player football contests in lieu of 11 player contests.

EIGHT-PLAYER

GENERAL: Eleven-player rules are used for eight-player football with the following modifications.

RULE 7: a. At least five A players shall be on their line at the snap and may have any legal jersey number.

c. Each A player (regardless of jersey number) who at the snap was on the end of the scrimmage line (total of two) and each A player who at the snap was legally behind the scrimmage line (possible total of three) is eligible.

Chris Wells, Assistant Executive Director
chris.wells@wvssac.org

Larry McCloy
WVSSAC Football Clinician



Protocols for the 40/:25 Second Play Clock

The 40- second play clock will provide more consistency as the ball must be snapped within 40 seconds after the end of the previous play and is not dependent on the referees' subjective signal.

In the case where play is continuing with no stoppage or interruption, the offense will have 40 seconds from the end of the previous play to snap the ball. If play has been stopped (timeout or penalty), the offense will have 25 – seconds from the time the umpire sets the ball and the referee starts the ready for play following the administration of the timeout or penalty.

Basic Premise: The play clock will **ALWAYS** start at :40 seconds (started by BJ or stadium clock operator within 3 seconds of the end of the previous play) unless there is an administrative stoppage. The following administrative stoppage situations are when the play clock will be set at :25 seconds under varsity timing rules.

<u>Situation</u>	<u>Play Clock</u>	<u>Referee Signal</u>
Administration of a foul & penalty (Team A)	25 Seconds	Chop or Wind
At the start of a period	25 Seconds	Chop
Measurement	25 Seconds	Chop or Wind
Helmet Comes Off Team A	25 Seconds	Chop or Wind
Injury Or Equipment Team A	25 Seconds	Chop or Wind
After any score	25 Seconds	Chop
Start of Team A's possession in OT	25 Seconds	Chop
Inadvertent whistle	25 Seconds	Wind
Timeout by either team	25 Seconds	Chop
Timeout by official	25 Seconds	Chop
Touchback	25 Seconds	Chop
Untimed down	25 Seconds	Chop
Period Extension	25 Seconds	Chop
Following a change of team possession	25 Seconds	Chop

Notes:

- This change only affects the play clock, not the game clock.

- The Back Judge has primary responsibility for the play clock and will signal at :05 left by raising arm
- Following the end of a down the Back Judge will (after seeing there are no penalties or other delays) start the 40-second play clock.
- All members of the crew will react to ball movement and ball placement as efficiently and as accurately as possible. (there are no warnings for waiting on the ready for play)
- If the: 40 - second play clock has started and runs down below :25 seconds remaining and the ball is not yet placed on the ground and ready for play through no fault of the players (long run, long pass and ball is being relayed back, etc.), the referee shall sound the whistle, reset the play clock to :25 seconds and start the play clock (and possibly the game clock) on his whistle/signal.
- If the referee is re-setting the :40 play clock, he will signal with both palms open in an over-the-head pumping motion to the back judge to reset the :40 play clock. If the referee is re-setting the :25 play clock, he will signal with one palm open in an over-the-head pumping motion to the back judge to reset the :25 play clock.

The ball is ready for play with the 40 second clock running when the ball has been spotted by the official and they have stepped away to position.

- Pre-game discussion is a must. Discuss procedures and 40-second clock start signals with head coaches. Identify that the play clock will start within 3 seconds after the previous play ends.
- Be consistent in starting the 40-second play clock, ball movement, spotting the ball and being in position for the snap.

Larry McCloy
WVSSAC
Football Clinician



WEST VIRGINIA MECHANICS – 2026



These pages dictate the commonalities with the NFHS Football Officials Manual and some add-ons that make the mechanics more efficient. **We need greater consistency across the State. Work at it.**

1. **PRE-GAME MEETING WITH COACHES AND THE COINTOSS:**

The Coaches Pre-game meetings shall occur between 1 1/2 to 1 1/4 hours prior to the kickoff in or near a team locker room. The coin toss shall be conducted 3 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff in the center of the field. Only 4 captains from each team shall be on the field. All other team members shall be off the field of play. Any request to send other players on the field shall be denied.

Sportsmanship shall be addressed with the captains at this time. The LJ and BJ shall be at their respective hashes with a ball from the team on their side of the field. For 2nd half, take captains out for options (can take out all 4 captains or just one).

2. **KICKOFF (5-man):**

- The Referee shall take a position near the hash mark opposite the press box. Depth will vary with the ability of the kickers. Check K's formation.
- The Line Judge shall assist in counting the kicking team.
- If a kickoff goes out of bounds and has been touched by the receivers, the covering official shall go to the spot, no need in using a bean bag.
- BJ has kicking line, LJ has receiving line. After kick, both BJ/LJ officiate the play remaining on the sideline using the accordion effect as the HLJ/LJ do on a regular scrimmage play.

3. **SCRIMMAGE DOWN:**

- The wings will give a hand signal for the closest wide-out near them OFF the LOS ONLY. DO NOT PUNCH ON THE LOS.
- The covering official on out of bounds plays will hold the out-of-bounds spot and continue to observe action from that vantage point. Wings must be aware to assist Umpires with ineligible downfield.
- The chain clip shall be placed in the middle of the yard line closest to the back stake.
- **6-man: New: Deep judges, start on sideline for scrimmage plays. Distance yourself 20 yards downfield from LJ & HLJ**

4. Types of formations will determine how the referee will give the ready-for-play and take his position to cover the play.

a) If the offense has a normal huddle the referee should always be near the line of scrimmage to help with ball exchanges. Be sure your Back Judge and Timer can see you give the ready signal and always face the line of scrimmage.

b) If the offense is a no-huddle set, the Referee may drop back 12-15 yards to give the ready signal. (when needed). Always face the line of scrimmage.

5. **SHORT FREE KICK MECHANICS (5-man):**

- Kick comes to BJ/HLJ side of the field, focus on touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. LJ/U key on blocking by K players and the ball traveling 10 yards.
- Kick comes to LJ/U side of the field, focus on touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. BJ/HLJ key on blocking by K players and the ball traveling 10 yards.

For an unexpected Short Free Kick:

- BJ-Team K's Free Kick Line — LJ- Team R's Free Kick Line, others in **normal** free kick positions.

- Kick comes to BJ side of the field, BJ takes touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. LJ keys on blocking by K players and on the ball traveling 10 yards.
 - Kick comes to LJ side of the field, LJ takes touching of the ball by R players and First Touching by K players. BJ keys on blocking by K players and on the ball traveling 10 yards.
6. **PUNT COVERAGE DOWN FIELD (5-man)**
 - The Back Judge will cover his 2/3 of the field favoring the Line Judge's side. If the Back Judge starts out behind the deepest receiver he must move forward to view the catch/no catch or muff.
 - The Head Line Judge will leave when he is sure ball will be kicked and cover his 1/3 of the field. One official has the ball the other is observing action in front of and around the receiver/runner.
 - The Line Judge will not leave the line-of-scrimmage until the kick has crossed the line.
 - If the punt is short, the Back Judge may get help from the Line Judge.
 7. **TRY BY KICK OR FIELD GOAL ATTEMPT (5-Man):**
 - Umpire goes back under the uprights with the Back Judge. U takes upright on the home team side as this is the sideline the Umpire goes up after the try for point or FG is successful. BJ has the whistle after the kick is ruled successful or no good.
 - Referee shall look into the holder's face, and be at least 10 yards wide and 3 yards deeper than kicker.
 8. **Official's uniforms shall follow the WVSSAC Officials' Handbook regulations for ALL LEVELS of contest. Blue bean bags and if necessary white bean bags for a PSK spot or aiding the down-marker in 1st and goal situations. Predominately black shoes with black laces and some white accents. If an official wears a towel it must be black with the black pants. NO SUNGLASSES ARE TO BE WORN (unless prescription)**
 9. **TIMING INTERVALS AND INTERMISSION:**
 - All intermissions are to be timed by the Back Judge (and perhaps the Referee).
 - Put 3 minutes on the clock for the mandatory warm-up period after the halftime intermission expires.
 10. **INITIAL COVERAGE OF ELIGIBLES:**
 - Follow the mechanics illustrated in the most recent Official's Manual.
 11. **PSK shall not be used in overtime periods.**
 - There are to be no overtime periods for JV football.
 12. **6-MAN MECHANICS:**
 - In 6-man, deep judges have outside eligibles. With trips, take two outside eligibles.

Umpire shall raise his hand when the ball becomes dead following a scrimmage down (this helps the wings on making sure ball is secured).

If there is only one flag, that official shall give the preliminary signal and report foul to the referee. If there are two flags, referee will get call and give signals.

Misc. Referees may operate either on the wide side of the formation or on the passing arm/kicking leg side for scrimmage downs (other than kick tries).

Be certain the chain crew has been properly instructed as to their duties and to stay alert and move out of the way when a play comes toward them.

Reminders for 2026: Referee, give penalty options to the Head Coach. **Preliminary signal is optional but not recommended by R.**

Reminders for 2026: Referee, announce number of offender on penalty announcement. (Ex. "Holding, offense, #74")

Reminder for 2026: We will not be doing the 2+2 anymore (Incomplete pass followed by stopping the clock signal). Officials, when an incomplete pass is thrown, covering official give incomplete pass signal. Other officials glance at game clock to make sure it has stopped.

REMINDER FOR 2026: Umpires/When the snap is inside the 5 yard line going in, U may position themselves toward the end line if they feel uncomfortable near the GL if they feel they are in harms way.

WVSSAC 6-MAN CREW MECHANICS

Referee, Umpire, Head Line Judge, Line Judge, Field Judge, Side Judge

Linesman and Side Judge on chain side; Line Judge and Field Judge opposite.

Game timing is the responsibility of the Side Judge. The Field Judge has the timing of the time outs and intermissions. The 40/25-second clock is the responsibility of the Field Judge (**Side Judge echo raising hand signal to notify teams of less than 5 seconds on the play clock when no visible field clocks are present**)

Pre-Game Duties: Once field inspection completed R, LJ and FJ remain on press box side of field. FJ responsible to get captains of his team to coin toss location at least three minutes prior to kickoff. The U, HLJ and SJ are opposite the press box and the SJ has the responsibility for his captains.

Coin Toss: The Referee and Field Judge escort their captains toward the center of the field. FJ has ball from his team and will stop at hash. Line Judge remains at sideline. The Umpire and Side Judge accompany their captains to the center. SJ has ball from his team and stops at the hash. The Head Line Judge remains on his sideline. Crew meet in center of field after toss.

Kickoff: R deeper than deepest receiver and in center of field. LJ, on press box sideline at about 20-yard line. HLJ, opposite press box on sideline at about 15-yard line. U has the kickers and remains with the kicker and will instruct him when the kick the ball after R give the ready signal. SJ has the kicker's restraining line (normally the 40). FJ has the restraining line of the receivers (normally the 50). FJ and R count receivers and U and SJ count kickers.

R has goal line, end zone, momentum and center of field. SJ and FJ have sidelines to goal and neutral zone. U has kicker and holder if there is one and center of field to his goal.

For a short free kick, FJ moves to kicker's free kick line, HLJ moves up to receiver's free kick line. LJ moves to receiver's 45-yard line. Again, staggered coverage by HLJ and LJ is desirable. R will be centered, deep.

Scrimmage Plays: R and U count the offense while SJ and FJ count the defense. **SJ and FJ shall be 15-20 yards deep or deeper than deepest defensive back and positioned on the sideline.**

HLJ and LJ have LOS responsibilities, don't leave too rapidly. HLJ and LJ are responsible for the sideline **all the way to the 2 yard line**. If HLJ and LJ can cover down sideline with flow, they should do so. SJ and FJ watch all perimeter action after play is dead, unless covering a sideline deep play.

SJ & FJ pinch in at an angle to the top of the numbers when the play is dead to observe dead ball action.

Wings start on the sideline and have forward progress to the 2-yard line unless the ball is snapped from the 10-yard line in where they have goal line responsibility.

Passing keys for deep wing officials is widest eligible their side. If trips to one side, deep wing has widest eligible, HLJ/LJ have two inside eligibles.

Scrimmage Kicks: PUNTS: HLJ and LJ hold until ball crosses neutral zone. [1] FJ on sideline slightly in front of deepest receiver. Responsible for kicks in you side zone. SJ be slightly behind the deepest receiver but be able to see a catch of the punt. [2] These two positions may be reversed, depending on lateral field position of the ball. If the ball is near middle, go with [1] mechanic. [1] SJ responsible for goal line. FJ and SJ cover momentum rule. Covering official drop bean bag where kick ends in field of play.

FIELD GOAL and TRYS BY KICK: FJ rules on cross bar. FJ and SJ slightly behind their respective upright to rule on ball passing between uprights. Nearer official communicates as to success or failure and both step into end zone and signal. Be alert to break away to cover fakes and broken plays. FJ has the whistle.

Goal Line Plays: When the ball is **from the 7 yard line and in**, HLJ and LJ lead runner to goal. SJ and FJ start on end line at the corner pylons, U initial position is on or near the goal line. Assist wings on runner being downed near goal since they are concentrating on the ball breaking the plane. All four flank officials need to communicate prior to each down concerning coverage.

Umpire- When the snap is inside the 5 yard line going in, U may position himself near the end line to get out of harms way if they feel uncomfortable near the goal line action.

Time-outs: HLJ assumes a position near team on your side, LJ be near team on your side, SJ and FJ be about half way between sidelines and hash on your side. U over the ball and R communicate with all.

Measurements: FJ has ball responsibility throughout measurement. HLJ, with clip (which is in middle of the yard line farthest from the front stick). U, take sticks from front chain crew member, wait till the LJ has made sure the HLJ has the chain stretched, then place front stick on side of ball opposite the press box. SJ, if it is a first down see that the down marker is properly set. SJ can do same if HLJ is marking forward progress and line-to-gain has been passed. SJ can help with maintaining spot of front stick while measurement is progressing.

Flags: U, HLJ, LJ, FJ and SJ; when foul is called by another official assist by covering and holding spot of flag and dead ball spot. Leave ball on ground until called for. Free officials continue to observe players. LJ have enforcement spot if different from previous spot. HLJ must go to succeeding spot to check measurement of U.

End of Period: SJ keep R informed of clock status near end of period. You are responsible if clock is to R's back. LJ cover your team during this period while SJ covers team on HLJ's sideline. FJ continue on down the field observing all players and be near new spot. FJ is responsible for timing the length of the interval between periods and halftime. FJ and SJ alert respective teams with about 5 minutes remaining in half-time.

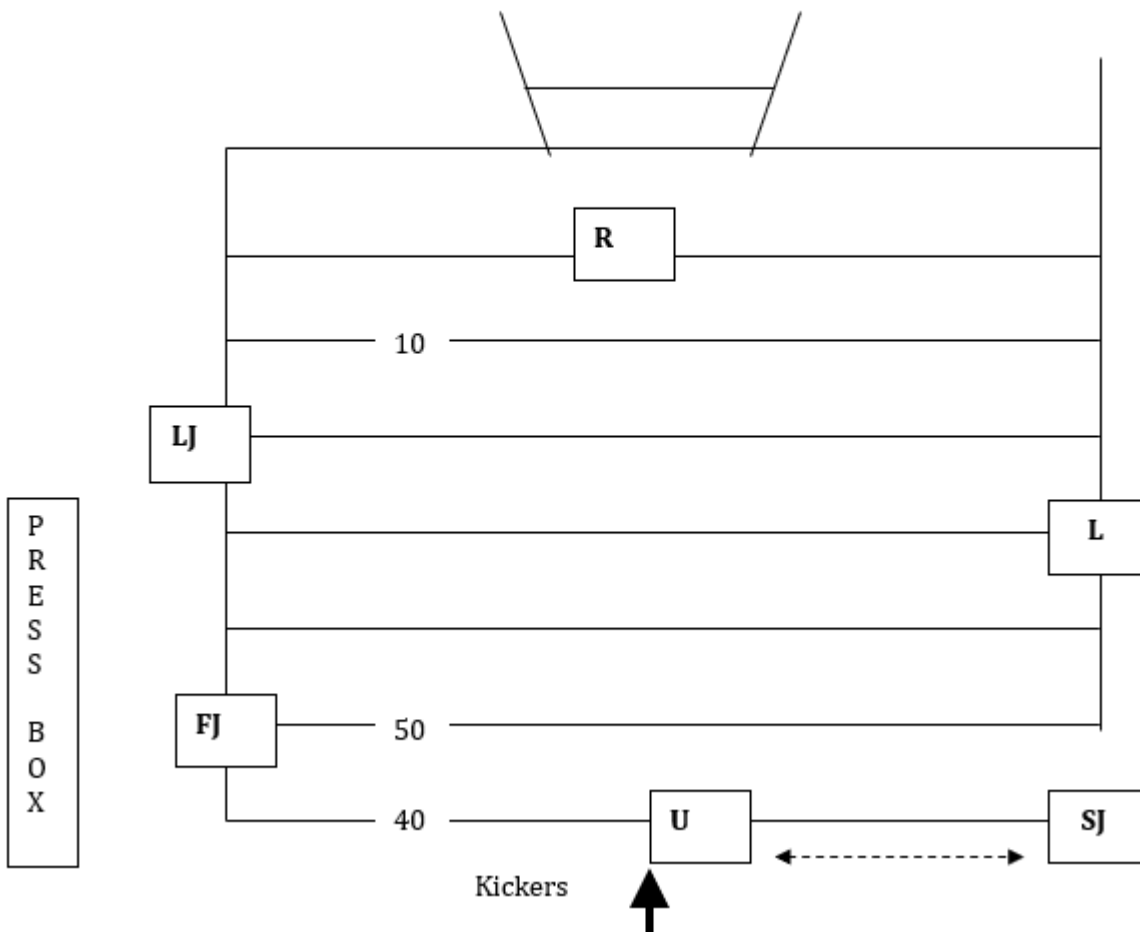
Any additions or corrections to these mechanics will be communicated from the WVSSAC office when necessary. Unless noted, the general mechanics for a 5-man crew shall prevail.

PRINCIPLES OF SIX-MAN MECHANICS

1. Don't officiate the ball. Officiate around the ball and be good dead ball officials.
2. Wide and deep. The less you move, the better you see.
3. Position yourself so that the play is coming toward you or going away from you. Try to avoid allowing the play to cross your face (Umpire is exception).
4. Short wings: do not leave the line of scrimmage on running plays until the ball crosses the line. Trail the play by five to seven yards. If it's a slow developing play, take three of steps up field and wait for the play to come to you.
5. Short wings: on passes, know when to go and when to hold.
6. Short wings: you have all the spots to the two yard line!
7. Deep wings: you have the spots from the two yard line only!
8. Deep wings: fade mechanics. Try to maintain at least a 20 yard cushion.
9. Short Wings: cross-field mechanics and soft spots.
10. Short Wings: bracket the play between you and the other deep official on your side. Don't turn your six into a five!
11. The most important line on the field is the goal line; the second most important line on the field is the sideline. The most important spot on the field is the intersection of the goal line and sideline – the goal line PYLON. Someone needs to be there!
12. These principles apply to free kicks and scrimmage kicks as well.
13. The sixth man is added value on all plays, preventive officiating (let them know there are six of us out there) and dead ball officiating, especially when the opposing team players enter the team box area.

- SJ and FJ take original position 20 yards deep on the sideline.
- After the snap, if the play is to the other side of the field, SJ and FJ may move into field of play no farther than the bottom of the numbers (just like HLJ/LJ when play goes away from them). Have goal line and sideline.
- SJ and FJ keep a 20-yard buffer unless wings are not at the spot. Eye contact and communication.
- SJ and FJ should have "an accordion" effect, coming in on plays to let players know they are there and back pedaling back to position.
- U: On pass plays over the middle, turn and look to help out. We are vulnerable on this play so special attention is needed. Off wing and deep officials step onto the field to also help with this play.

6-MAN KICKOFF



Note:

Can fill positions with any official you like (other than the Referee) as long as we are in these 6 positions. It is set this way because the U is positioned in the middle of the field on all scrimmage plays, so they are used to this look and angle.

Larry McCloy
WVSSAC Football Clinician
June 16, 2026

ATTACHMENT A

ARTIFICIAL LIMB POLICY

Any school that has a student with an artificial limb who wishes to participate in athletics must do the following:

1. Obtain a statement from an orthopedic surgeon licensed to practice medicine in the state of West Virginia that student's participation in the particular sport(s) he desires to participate in is not likely to cause harm to the student with the artificial limb or the other participants in that sports through the use of such artificial limb.
2. Submit such statement and photograph of the artificial limb to the Executive Director of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission before the student commences practice for or participates in said sport.
3. Obtain written permission from the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission to participate in such sport before commencing practice or participation.
4. Advise opponents and contest officials at least one week before each contest of such student's participation with such artificial limb.
5. Should the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission find that the use of such artificial limb is likely to cause harm to the student using the same or to other participants in the particular sport(s) for which participation is sought, the Commission may withhold such permission or make participation in any particular sport contingent upon the student's exercise of such safeguards as the Commission may prescribe. Any student, parent, principal, or school may appeal the Commission's ruling in this regard the same as any other adverse decision of the Executive Director.

PROPER SELECTION AND FITTING OF FOOTBALL HELMETS

BY RICK BAKER, A.T.C. • STAFF SUPERVISOR • THE SPORTS MEDICINE CENTER AT BAPTIST HOSPITAL

The proper fit, care and condition of athletic equipment is essential to the prevention of athletic injuries. In general, coaches take on this task as their respective athletic seasons begin. However, coaches and staff members should continually check equipment throughout the season for the proper fit and condition regardless of the sport or activity. Injuries to the head and neck occur frequently and can also be catastrophic. This type of injury can be significantly reduced by the coaches teaching proper blocking and tackling techniques to their players. Also, this trauma can be reduced by properly fitting their helmets.

There are some key points on the issue of properly selecting the various equipment products. These would include:

- The customary budget-minded "lowbid" approach for other types of equipment would not be appropriate criteria for athletic equipment. The protection of the athlete from injury is too vital a goal to take chances on inferior products.
- One must have both awareness of the various products that are available, and grasp of the functional qualities of the equipment. This is usually achieved by experience.
- Every item of protective equipment recommended and made mandatory for a particular sport should be available to each participant. The team should be no larger than the number of players that can be properly equipped with quality equipment to reduce the likelihood of litigation.
- One needs to look toward the equipments' protective characteristics, instead of the frills when purchasing these products.
- Equipment should be carefully fitted to the individual participant. If it cannot be done, it should not be utilized and another style or manufacturer should be considered.
- Once the equipment is purchased and fitted to the athlete, it must also be inspected and sent for reconditioning to assure its protective qualities are maintained.

The design of the football helmet is both durable and impact resistant, even at the various temperature extremes. However, every individual will vary in the size and shape of their skull. Because of this, there are several types of helmets on the market. These types will vary in sizes and inner linings to ensure a proper fit can be obtained for the athlete.

There are some general rules which must be followed to insure proper fitting of football helmets; these include the following:

- Inspect the helmet
- Check for cracks in the outer shell
- Check for loose screws or fasteners of the chin straps
- Check for worn out padding. This can be done by observing if the padding springs back to its original shape after compression. If it does not, it needs to be replaced.
- Check for leakage of air or fluid cells within the inner lining. (If in doubt, submerge the inner lining in water to check for leakage.)
- Check for any sharp edges.

- Check for any distorted face mask onto the shell of the helmet. (Is the face mask the right size for the shell?)
 - Check the manufacturers rules on how to properly fit each type of helmet.
- Have the athlete wet his hair prior to fitting. This simulates practice and game conditions of the perspiration of the scalp.

NOTE: If a player cuts his hair after the helmet fitting, it is suggested to have the helmet refitted to that athlete.

- Measure head circumference approximately 3/4" (one to two finger widths) above the eyebrows.
- After the athlete places his helmet on, the bottom of the shell should be one to two finger widths above the eyebrow.
- Properly adjust the chin strap.
- The back of the helmet shell should not impinge on the cervical spine when the neck is extended.
- Check the fit of the neck, back, side and front pads.
- Check the fit of the jaw pads.

NOTE: These pads should be snug and firm fit, but comfortable. However, the protection of the athlete should never be sacrificed for comfort.

Check the fit of the face mask.

NOTE: The face mask:

- Should be two to three fingers off the tip of the nose.
- Should be the proper type and size for the helmet and the position of the player.

There are some tests to assure a proper fit of the football helmet is obtained. These include:

NOTE: One should perform this test without the chin strap being attached.

- Try to forcefully rotate the helmet down on the nose of the athlete. Never do this test by pulling down on the face mask.
- Try to rotate the helmet side to side on the athlete's head. (Watch the skin of the forehead - When the helmet rotates, the skin should pull the skin with it.)
- Find out where the pressure is when the athlete pushes down on the top center of the helmet. The pressure should be at the top of the head. If it is on the forehead or the back of the head, the helmet is too tight.
- Make sure that the helmet's ear openings are properly aligned during each of the procedures.

FOOTBALL HELMET INSPECTION

To assist the person responsible for repair and maintenance of helmets, NOCSAE has developed a number of guidelines to observe when inspecting helmets. There may be other things to check as this list is not intended to cover every observation which may be made. NOCSAE recommends that a periodic inspection of all helmets be made and that they be periodically retested in a recertification program.

Suggested Inspection Check List

1. Check helmet fit for agreement with manufacture's instructions and procedures.
2. Examine shell for cracks, particularly noting any cracks around holes (where most cracks start) and replace any shells that have cracked. **DO NOT USE A HELMET WITH A CRACKED SHELL.**
3. Examine all mounting rivets, screws, velcro and snaps for breakage, distortion and/or looseness. **Repair as necessary.**
4. Replace faceguards if bare metal is showing, if there is a broken weld or if guard is grossly misshapen.
5. Examine for helmet completeness, and replace any parts which have become damaged, such as sweatbands, interior parts, nose snubbers and chinstraps.
6. Replace jaw pads when damaged. Check for proper installation and fit.
7. Examine chinstrap for proper adjustment, and inspect to see if it is broken or stretched out of shape; also inspect the hardware to see if it needs replacement.
8. Read instructions provided by manufacturer regarding care and maintenance procedures. Always follow these instructions. Use only factory approved parts when replacements are needed.
9. Never allow anyone to sit on helmets. This practice could crush or deform the helmet.

CAUTION: Only paints, waxes, decals or cleaning agents approved by the manufacturer are to be used on any helmet. It is possible to get a severe or delayed reaction by using unauthorized materials, which could permanently damage the helmet shell and effect its performance and durability.

PLAYERS: Inspect your particular helmet prior to each usage as follows:

SUSPENSION STYLE

According to NAERA, suspension style helmets are no longer reconditioned due to age.

PADDED STYLE

- Foam/Air/Liquid
- Check foam padding for proper placement and any deterioration.
- Check for cracks in vinyl/rubber covering of air, foam, liquid padded helmets.
- Check that protective system or foam padding has not been altered or removed.
- Check for proper amount of inflation in air padded helmets. Follow manufacturer's recommended practice for adjusting air pressure at the valves.
- Check all rivets, screws, velcro and snaps to assure they are properly fastened and holding protective parts.

If any of the above inspections indicate a need for repair and/or replacement, notify your coach immediately. **This is your responsibility.**

NEVER WEAR A DAMAGED HELMET

No faceguard/helmet system can protect from all injuries. Head and neck injuries can best be avoided by practicing proper blocking and tackling techniques. **ASK YOUR COACH.**



For back of helmet

WARNING

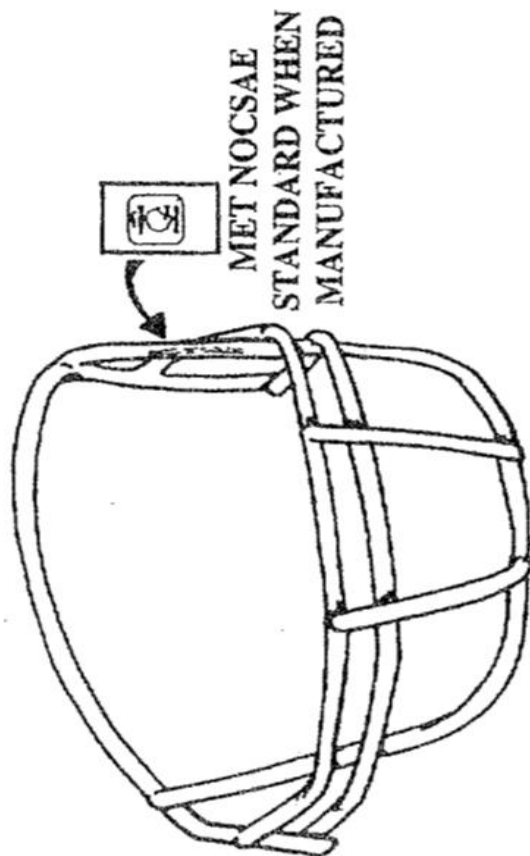
Do not strike an opponent with any part of this helmet or face mask. This is a violation of football rules and may cause you to suffer severe brain or neck injury, including paralysis or death.

Severe brain or neck injury may also occur accidentally while playing football.

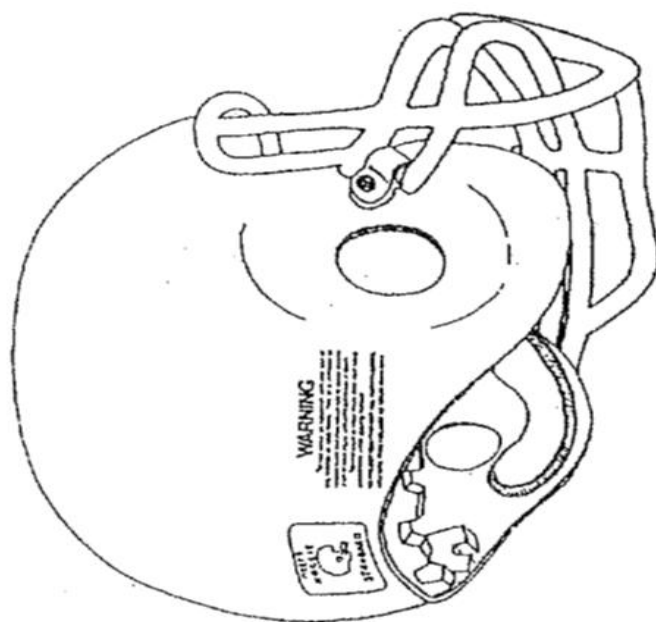
NO HELMET CAN PREVENT ALL SUCH INJURIES. YOU USE THIS HELMET AT YOUR OWN RISK. ♦



CHECK ALL HELMETS FOR PROPER WARNING LABELS BECAME REQUIRED IN 1992



1-5-1a Each player shall wear a face mask which met the NOCSAE standard when it was manufactured. This requirement was adopted in 1989 with the effective date beginning with the 1992 season.



1-5-1b A visible exterior warning label is required on each player's helmet. The warning label is a statement concerning the risk of injury. The coaches' pregame verification that all players are equipped in compliance with the rules includes the exterior warning label. ■

History

During the 1960s, organized athletics enjoyed increasing popularity. High school and college athletic contests brought sports enthusiasts out to watch the games, and media coverage of athletic events began to increase dramatically. Many young athletes were motivated to perform aggressively in order to secure an athletic scholarship or a lucrative professional contract after college.

Unfortunately, along with the increased participation and intensity of effort came an increase in serious injuries. There were 32 football fatalities in 1968 in organized competition and 4 in sandlot play. Head trauma accounted for the vast majority of these deaths and serious injuries.

HEAD INJURIES

To address the issue of head injuries and death, NOCSAE® was formed in 1969 through the joint efforts of the American College Health Association, the NCAA, the National Federation of State High School Associations, and the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, to draft standards and commission research directed toward injury reduction and prevention. Priorities had to be established because of limited funds, and research was directed where there was a most urgent need for a standard. Therefore, football helmets were targeted for the initial research effort.

Because the football helmet standard was the first, and because the research and knowledge gained during the preparation of that standard helped give rise to the other NOCSAE® standards, the history of the development of that standard is important.

Football Helmet Standard – History

After extensive research, a helmet test system was designed which included the use of an artificial humanoid headform fitted with scientific instruments to determine the degree of impact force experienced by the headform, and compare that force to published impact information already developed by others. Through extensive research and innovation by Dr. Voigt Hodgson at Wayne State University, a headform was designed specifically for use in helmet drop tests. This headform mimics the human head's response to impact accelerations and includes the



use of glycerin in a sealed cranium and the placement of a three-dimension accelerometer at the center of gravity to measure the g-forces acting on the headform at impact. This human-like headform with its electronic data collection system became the centerpiece of the NOCSAE® testing protocol.

The NOCSAE® football helmet test standard was first published in 1973 after extensive investigation and review. Voluntary changes which have occurred in football helmets since 1972 include shell size and material changes, substitution of stiffer for softer materials in the liner, and more space for softer materials inside the helmet. More recently, manufacturers have made changes to shell design and other components to address issues relating to concussion reduction and prevention.

The equipment designed for the initial certification tests and described in the football helmet standard was soon installed by manufacturers in their plants, and the manufacturers assumed responsibility for certification. Helmet reconditioners followed suit. In a pioneering effort by one of the largest helmet reconditioners, installation of drop test equipment in 1975 and subsequent testing found that 84% of used helmets being reconditioned could not meet the new NOCSAE® testing protocols, and were discarded. In 1975, the National Athletic Equipment Reconditioners Association ("NAERA") was formed and its members installed the helmet test equipment for the 1976 season.

Because of the extensive use of reconditioned football helmets by youth, high school, and college teams, the NOCSAE® Board decided in 1976 to include a representative from NAERA as a Board member. Recognizing a need, the NOCSAE® Football Helmet Standard was revised in 1977 to allow reconditioners to recertify helmets to their original NOCSAE® certification. This program, along with the NAERA membership test results, provides NOCSAE® and others with a data collection system on used helmet performance. The data collection system was improved in 1996 through the installation of proprietary data collection software and upgrades in computer hardware by reconditioners, manufacturers, and other NOCSAE® licensees. This computer based testing and data collection system was further revised in 2004 with the second generation of data acquisition and testing software. The creation and development costs for all of these new programs were underwritten by NOCSAE® and are provided to licensees at cost.

NCAA rules mandated the use of helmets certified to NOCSAE® standards beginning with the 1978 season, and the NFHS required the use of helmets certified to NOCSAE® standards for high school play, beginning with the 1980 season. The U.S. Military Youth Sports Services, Amateur Softball Association, Little League, Pop Warner Football, and US Lacrosse are just a few organizations that also require the use of equipment that is certified to meet NOCSAE® standards.

Head Injury Reduction

By 1985, a significant downward trend in head injury related fatalities in football was observed, leading to zero deaths during the 1990 season for the first time since such records were kept. Comparing the incidences of head injury fatalities for pre- and post-NOCSAE® periods ranging from the 1959 through 1990 seasons in organized high school football, a 74% reduction was documented. Of even more fundamental importance, the incidence of serious but non-fatal head injuries (the leading cause of disability and death in football, estimated to average 4.25/100,000 players in the 1964-68 era, immediately prior to the formation of NOCSAE®), has averaged only 0.68/100,000 players during the 1987-90 seasons, an 84% reduction. For the football seasons from 2002 through 2006, the injury rate for serious non-fatal head injuries declined even more to 0.51/100,000. Helmets are not the sole injury reduction factor. Player education, improved coaching techniques, and stricter rules enforcement also play a substantial role.

With increased awareness and understanding of concussive type head injuries, now generally referred to as Mild Traumatic Brain Injury, or MTBI, work is underway to revise NOCSAE® standards to attempt to reduce those types of injuries. A proposed revision to the NOCSAE Football Helmet Standard is currently being developed in part, to address MTBI reduction.

NECK INJURIES

During part of this period of progress in head injury reduction (1971-1975 seasons), permanent quadriplegia from neck injuries averaged 20 annually. In 1976, rules-making committees were responsible for initiating changes which prohibited initial contact of the head in blocking and tackling. These changes helped to significantly reduce quadriplegic injuries. **Unfortunately there is no helmet that can prevent or reduce the chance of neck injuries in sports.**

Just as playing the game requires a team effort among players, continued reduction of head and neck injuries requires a concerted effort among players, rules makers, coaches, officials, equipment manufacturers, reconditioners, and NOCSAE®.

REMEMBER:

**HELMETS DO NOT PROTECT THE NECK.
TEACH PROPER BLOCKING, RUNNING,
TACKLING TECHNIQUES.**

"SEE WHAT YOU HIT"

SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES IN REDUCING SPORTS-RELATED INJURIES

Prevention and reduction of sports injuries involves education and communication with the players by all those involved in team sports. Participation in almost every sport involves accepting some risk of injury. Players need to know the nature of the risks involved in a particular sport, and one of the ways to communicate the risks is through the helmet warning statement. The NOCSAE® standards require a warning label on the helmet. These warnings help to educate the player as to the risks of the sport, and explain that the use of even the best protective equipment is no guarantee that serious injury or even death can be prevented in that sport activity.

Athletes rightfully expect that those who are responsible for the conduct of sports have taken reasonable precautions to minimize the risk of significant injury. NOCSAE® underwrites research which includes periodic analysis of injury patterns in sports. This information has led to refinements in the rules and/or other guidelines as well as an improvement of equipment and standards.

However, legislating safety precautions via rules books and equipment standards, though necessary, is seldom effective in and by itself. Relying only on officials to enforce rules compliance is as ineffective as relying only on warning labels to change player behavior. Improved player safety relies on everyone's respect for rules and guidelines.

Some sports-related health risks are easily identified and addressed (such as heat exhaustion/stroke and the administration of liquid freely during a long, hot practice). However, other risks may be less clearly identified or understood (such as the likelihood of head or neck injuries, and even concussions). An informed athlete's compliance with all basic principles of head/neck injury prevention, will result in reducing these risks. The NOCSAE® committee therefore encourages football coaches to discuss the following information with their teams and medical training staff at the onset of the season, and to remind them of the essentials periodically during the season:

1. Serious head and neck injuries leading to death, permanent brain damage or quadriplegia (extensive paralysis from injury to the spinal cord at the neck level) occur in football. Football helmets do not protect the neck from injury, and cannot protect the head from all injuries. The impact forces in football collisions can be tremendous, but they can be and are reduced significantly by manufacturer, coach and player compliance with accepted and mandated equipment standards and playing techniques.



Playing Hot: Heat Illness in Sport Kit-NTSC

By [ASEP](#)

E-Mail

TEXT SIZE

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Accompanying the video is a CD-ROM. You can use this instructional package to conduct an educational program on heat illness prevention with your team. Included on the CD ROM are handouts that can be duplicated and given to athletes.

When your players turn to you for advice on exercising and competing in hot and humid weather, turn to *Playing Hot* for your complete source for answers.



West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission

2875 Staunton Turnpike, Parkersburg, WV 26104-7219

Phone: (304) 485-5494

E-Mail: vvssac@vvssac.org

Web: www.vvssac.org



BULLETIN

To: High School Football Coaches
From: Chris Wells, Assistant Executive Director
SUBJECT: NATA Heads Up Video

For many years viewing a video providing education to reduce the risk of cervical spine injuries and paralysis has been a SSAC requirement for our football players and coaches. In reviewing the materials that have been used over the years it has been determined that the NATA Heads Up video which can easily be located on You Tube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05MQjZH_n08 provides excellent information not only about C-spine injuries and paralysis, but concussion as well as appropriate blocking and tackling technique. As we have previously noted, because of education such as this and rule changes catastrophic head and neck injuries have decreased over the years. As such it is mandatory that you and your staff study this material and review it with your team prior to live contact. Hopefully, we can reduce this type of catastrophic injury to zero.

Google or search YouTube: NATA Heads Up Video

Reducing Brain and Spinal Injuries in Football & Other Athletic Activities

Frederick O. Mueller, Ph.D.

Robert C. Cantu, M.D.

Brain and spinal injuries in football have been dramatically reduced since the rules were changed in 1976 to prohibit butt blocking and face tackling, and any other technique in which the helmet and facemask purposely received the brunt of the initial impact. There are still a small number of football players (and fewer in other sports) that become paralyzed, but the lesson to keep the head and face out of blocking and tackling remains.

Generally, about 3 - 5% of the injuries experienced by participants in athletics are concussions, e.g., temporary dizziness, confusion, nausea, headaches, and perhaps unconsciousness. Concussions are given grades from Grade 1 (a hit that dazes for a few minutes to Grade 3 (unconscious). No concussion should be dismissed as minor until proven so by medical personnel. The task is to be sure that the athlete no longer has any post concussion symptoms at rest and exertion before returning to competition. What is now called “the second impact syndrome” with its high rate of morbidity if not mortality, is the result of returning to play too soon.

Several suggestions for reducing brain and spinal injuries follows:

1. Preseason physical exams for all participants. Identify during the physical exam those athletes with a history of previous brain or spinal injuries. If the physician has any questions about the athlete's readiness to participate, the athlete should not be allowed to play.
2. A physician should be present at all games and practices. If it is not possible for a physician to be present at all games and practice sessions, emergency measures must be provided. The total staff should be organized in that each person will know what to do in case of a brain or spinal injury in game or practice. Have a plan ready and have your staff prepared to implement that plan. Prevention of further injury is the main objective.
3. Athletes must be given proper conditioning exercises which will strengthen their neck muscles in order for them to be able to hold their head firmly erect when making contact. Strong neck muscles may help prevent neck injuries.
4. Coaches should drill the athletes in the proper execution of the fundamentals of the football skills, particularly blocking and tackling. **KEEP THE HEAD OUT OF FOOTBALL.**
5. Coaches and officials should discourage the players from using their heads as battering rams. The rules prohibiting spearing should be enforced in practice and games. The players should be taught to respect the helmet as a protective device and that the helmet should not be used as a weapon.
6. All coaches, physicians and trainers should take special care to see that the players' equipment is properly fitted, particularly the helmet.

7. Strict enforcement of the rules of the game by both coaches and officials will help reduce serious injuries.
8. When a player has experienced or shown signs of brain trauma (loss of consciousness, visual disturbances, headache, inability to walk correctly, obvious disorientation, memory loss) he/she should receive immediate medical attention and should not be allowed to return to practice or game without permission from the proper medical authorities. Coaches should encourage players to let them know if they have any of the above mentioned symptoms (that can't be seen by others, such as headaches) and why it is important.
9. Both athletes and their parents should be warned of the risks of injuries.
10. Coaches should not be hired if they do not have the training and experience needed to teach the skills of the sport and to properly train and develop the athletes for competition.

Following is a list of Post Concussion Signs/Symptoms

Headache—Nausea—Vomiting—Numbness/Tingling—Dizziness— Poor Balance—Ringing in the ears

Drowsiness—Excess Sleep—Trouble falling asleep—Memory Problems—Feel “in fog”—Nervousness

Depression—Sadness—Fatigue—Poor Concentration—Irritability—Sensitive to Light—Sensitivity to Noise

(http://www.nfhs.org/web/2003/11/sports_medicine_reducing_brain_and_spinal_injuries_in_football_.aspx)



COACHING REMINDERS

Practice: Team members must have 12 practices on 14 separate days - 5 days sports specific if participating in another sport during the same sports season. A student must have 5 days of practice if coming from one sports season into the next sports season without interruption of school days. Only students enrolled in the specific member school and a member of team is allowed to practice. Rule 127-2-13. Football participants must follow sport specific progressions.

Sunday Contests: Contests or practice on Sunday is prohibited. Practice refers to any group or individual meeting to view films or activity associated with the activity of that sports season. Rule 127-3-14.

Physical Exam: Team members must have Athletic Participation/Parental Consent/Physician's Certificate form completed and on file before beginning practice. Rule 127-3-3. (Must be on or after May 1st.)

All-Star Competition: Any student completing athletic eligibility at the end of current school year because of age or competition of semesters of eligibility may play in one (1) all-star game upon conclusion of the season without loss of eligibility for balance of year. Rule 127-3-4.

Awards: Team members can accept awards from school sponsoring a sanctioned event or the school. Wearing apparel, championship rings, equipment, athletic goods that exceeds \$100.00 are prohibited from any source. Rule 127-3-5.

Out of Season Coaching: Coaches may not promote, initiate, organize, supervise or participate in out-of-season events involving students of the same sport as the grade level coaching assignment and preceding grade level except as specified in Rules 127-3-7.2 and 127-3-7.3. Rule 127-3-7.7.

Amateur: Any team member competing for money, receiving any award or prize of monetary value that has not been approved by the WVSSAC, capitalizing on athletic fame or signing a professional playing contract in that sport is prohibited. Rule 127-2-11.

Participation as Ineligible: Any student who participates as ineligible may forfeit eligibility for up to 365 days. Rule 127-2-12.

Non-School Participation: Participation is limited to school teams only with a few exceptions in individual sports provided the school principal approves and no school contests/activities are missed. Participation includes but is not limited to, practice, fund raising, team pictures, tryouts, etc. Rule 127-2-10.

Sanctioning and Travel: A member school shall not enter a contest, tournament, or competition which requires sanctioning until it is approved 30 days prior to the event. Rule 127-3-16.

*For complete details regarding the above regulations and those governing team memberships, scholarship, undue influence, age, semester, etc. refer to the **Rules & Regulations Handbook***

or at www.wvssac.org.

This is not a comprehensive listing.

§127-2-13. Practice.

13.1. Only students enrolled and eligible to be listed on the eligibility certificate for that sport in the specific member school are allowed to participate in that school's practices. Exceptions are §§127-2-3.2, 127-2-3.5, and 127-2-13.6.

13.2. The frequency and length of practice is at the discretion of each member school. **Football must follow the WVSSAC Football Practice Guidelines listed in this packet.**

13.3. Member schools of the WVSSAC may practice on any day of the year with the exception of Sunday practice. §127-3-14.2 further clarifies Sunday practice.

13.4. Individual players of a team must have practiced:

13.4.a. on five separate days before participating in an interscholastic scrimmage.

13.4.b. on 12 separate days, exclusive of the day of a contest, before participating in an interscholastic contest. The following sport(s) is exempted from the provisions of this rule: golf.

13.4.c. a student athlete who is absent from practice with their team for non-medical reasons, and not under a doctor care, for more than 14 consecutive days must have the required 12 separate practice days before resuming participation in a contest. Students participating in football must follow the practice progression as set forth in §127-3-23.

13.5. A student shall not be permitted to engage in interscholastic practice until that student has filed with the principal a completed Athletic Participation/Parental Consent/Physician's Certificate Form. §127-3-3 further explains this required form.

13.6. A student academically ineligible may begin practicing 15 school days immediately prior to the date of regaining full eligibility. (All other ineligible students may not practice.)

13.7. If a student has established eligibility in a sport requiring 12 separate days of practice and is continuing to participate in that sport or no school days have lapsed from one sport to another sport in a same season, the student may participate in another sport of the season after completing five separate days of sport specific practice in the second sport.

13.8. Students participating in a sport(s) in one season must have practiced 12 separate days, exclusive of the day of a contest, to be eligible to participate in a sport in the next season with the following exception: the student has continued to practice or participate in tournament play without an interruption of school days. The student must complete five separate days of sport specific practice in the second sport.

Ejection Rule / Bench Clearing

§127-4-3. Code for Interscholastic Athletics.

3.1. The school administrator shall:

- 3.1.a. Encourage and promote friendly relationships and good sportsmanship throughout the school by requiring courtesy and proper decorum at all times, by acquainting students and others in the community with ideals of good sportsmanship. These concepts and attitudes shall be publicized so that all members of the school and community can understand their meaning.
- 3.1.b. Ensure full compliance with all rules and regulations of the West Virginia Secondary School Activities Commission, hereinafter referred to in this rule as the WVSSAC.
- 3.1.c. Secure WV registered officials for all contests.
- 3.1.d. Ensure adequate safety provisions for all activities, for both participants and spectators.
- 3.1.e. Approve activities and schedules which are educationally and physically sound for the student.
- 3.1.f. Encourage all to judge the success of the athletic program on the basis of the education goals and the attitude of the participants and spectators, rather than on the basis of the number of games won or lost.
- 3.1.g. Ensure that the students exemplify the highest standards of good sportsmanship as a means of inculcating desirable spectator attitudes.
- 3.1.h. Provide adequate hygienic, sanitary, and appropriately maintained facilities for the dressing and housing of visiting teams and officials.
- 3.1.i. Review with staff the Sportsmanship Rule.

3.2. The coach shall:

- 3.2.a. Demonstrate good sportsmanship in personal behavior and demand the same standards of the students.
- 3.2.b. Recognize that the purpose of competition is to promote the physical, mental, social, and emotional well-being of the students and that the most important values of competition are derived from playing the game fairly.
- 3.2.c. Accept adverse decisions without public display of emotion or of dissatisfaction with the officials.
- 3.2.d. Cooperate with the school administrator in the planning, scheduling and conduct of sports activities.
- 3.2.e. Utilize appropriate educational methods in coaching, giving all students an opportunity to use and develop initiative, leadership, and judgment.

3.2.f. Monitor the physical condition and well-being of the students by refusing to jeopardize the health of an individual for the sake of improving the team's chances to win.

3.2.g. Prohibit gambling, profanity, abusive language, and similar violations of good sportsmanship.

3.2.h. Refuse to disparage an opponent, an official, or others associated with athletic activities and discourage gossip and questionable rumors concerning them.

3.2.i. Properly supervise students under their immediate care and specifically observe a coach's responsibilities in conjunction with state interscholastic contests.

3.3. The spectator shall:

3.3.a. Realize that they represent the school just as definitely as does the member of a team, and, therefore, has an obligation to exhibit good sportsmanship.

3.3.b. Recognize that good sportsmanship is more important than victory by approving and applauding good team play, and individual skill exhibited by either team.

3.3.c. Recognize the primary purpose of interscholastic athletics is to promote the physical, mental, moral, social, and emotional well-being of the students through the medium of contests.

3.3.d. Treat visiting teams and officials as guests, extending to them every courtesy.

3.3.e. Respect the judgment and integrity of officials, realizing that their decisions are based upon game conditions as they observe them.

3.4. The student shall:

3.4.a. Demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times, which shall include being courteous to visiting teams and officials.

3.4.b. Participate to the limit of their ability. The true student does not give up, nor do they quarrel, cheat, bet, or grandstand.

3.4.c. Maintain a high degree of physical fitness by observing team and training rules conscientiously.

3.4.d. Demonstrate loyalty to the school by maintaining satisfactory scholastic standing and by participating in and supporting other school activities.

3.4.e. Understand and observe the rules of the game and the standards of eligibility.

3.4.f. Respect the integrity and judgment of officials and accept their decisions without questions.

3.4.g. Respect the facilities of host schools and the trust entailed in being a guest.

3.4.h. The cheerleader shall always cheer positively for the team and never negatively against the opponent.

3.5. The official shall:

- 3.5.a. Place the welfare of the student above all other considerations.
- 3.5.b. Know the game rules thoroughly and give intelligent interpretations.
- 3.5.c. Maintain confidence and control from start to finish.
- 3.5.d. Work cooperatively with fellow officials and school administrators.
- 3.5.e. Refrain from exhibiting emotions or arguing with a student, coach or spectator. Maintain self-control under all conditions.
- 3.5.f. Be fair, impartial and professional.
- 3.5.g. Be neat and dress in the appropriate uniform.
- 3.5.h. Be in adequate physical condition for the demands of the particular sport.
- 3.5.i. So conduct the game as to enlist the cooperation of students, coaches, and spectators in the interest of good sportsmanship.

3.6. Protection, Facilities, and Assistance. The home team shall furnish supervision. Outdoor facilities or playing facilities should be separated from the spectators by a restraining barrier (fence, wire, rope, etc.). Officials should be provided with a parking space, private dressing facilities not accessible to unauthorized personnel, and should be paid in a timely manner. The use of trained, competent, adult “assistant officials,” i.e., scorers, timers, chain and down marker crews, etc., is strongly recommended.

3.7. Statement of Policy. As far as unsportsmanlike actions by students, school administrators, officials, coaches, faculty members, and spectators are concerned, the identical items under the Sportsmanship Rule along with the following guides will be referred to by the WVSSAC:

- 3.7.a. The school whose coach behaves in a manner likely to have adverse influence on the attitudes of students or spectators may be provided with the choice of taking disciplinary action against that coach or having the entire school disciplined by the WVSSAC.
- 3.7.b. Any student who in protest lays hands or attempts to lay hands upon an official may be declared ineligible by the principal or by the WVSSAC for up to one year. Any student who strikes an opponent, coach, or a spectator during or following an athletic event may be declared ineligible by the principal or the WVSSAC for a specified period of time up to one year, depending on the seriousness of the act.
- 3.7.c. Any coach, player, team member, student, or bench personnel ejected or disqualified by rule or by an official, referee, judge, or other such person charged to administer participation, will be suspended for the remainder of a game, match, meet, contest or other interscholastic event, (ejected, disqualified, or disqualification hereafter) (excepting any applicable ejection or disqualification sport specific rule not involving sportsmanship). The coach, player, team member, student, or bench personnel ejected or disqualified will also be suspended an additional contest(s); the suspension is assessed based upon ten (10) percent of the allowed regular season contests for that sport. Regardless of when the suspension occurs (regular season or post season), the length of the suspension (number of contests) will be as follows: golf (two); cross country (two); soccer (two); volleyball (two play dates); football (one); cheer (one); swim (two); wrestling (two weigh ins); boys basketball (two); girls basketball (two); tennis (two); track (two); softball (three);

and baseball (three). The suspension will include the number of indicated contests in that sport and at that level and all other sport contests in the interim at any level. A second ejection or disqualification will result in the doubling of the suspension assessed for the first ejection. If an individual is ejected or disqualified for a third time during the same sport season, the individual will be suspended from participating or coaching for 365 calendar days from the date of ejection or disqualification. In accordance with Rule §127-3-15.3, an individual ejected or disqualified may not appeal that ejection or disqualification, but may appeal any subsequent suspension that is a consequence of the ejection or disqualification.

3.7.c.1. Any coach, player or bench personnel who has been ejected shall not be permitted to attend any contest(s) during said suspension. This would include but not be limited to transportation to or from the contest, meeting with the team before, during or after said contest. He/she is not permitted to be in sight or sound of said contest venue. Regular practice or team meetings not affiliated with a contest are permitted.

3.7.c.2. If suspensions are imposed to a student or bench personnel at the end of the sport season and no contest remains, the suspension is carried over to that particular sport until the next school year. In the case of a senior student, the penalty will continue to the next WVSSAC sponsored sport. In the case of an 8th grade student, the suspension shall be served either in the same sport the next school year or in the same school year in the next WVSSAC sponsored sport in which the student participates.

3.7.c.3. Any coach suspension that cannot be enforced during the sport season in which the ejection occurs will be enforced at the beginning of the next season of that same sport.

3.7.d. In case of spectators physically molesting an official, administrator, coach, or student, the school may be given one of two options: 1) file charges against the offender (s) or 2) accept discipline from the WVSSAC. Any person found guilty of W. Va. Code §61-2-15(a) Assault, Battery on Athletic Officials, while these individuals are working or as a result of working an athletic contest, shall be banned from all WVSSAC athletic events for a minimum of 365 days from the date of being found guilty. The school filing charges shall notify the WVSSAC of the incident and outcome of any legal action.

3.7.e. The school that does not lend complete cooperation in the host school's effort to promote the spirit of good sportsmanship may be disciplined by the WVSSAC.

3.7.f. A coach may be considered as committing unsportsmanlike conduct if they make degrading remarks about officials during or after a game either on the field of play, from the bench, or through any public news media, argues with officials, or goes through motions indicating dislike for a decision, protests the decision and actions of officials pertaining to the game during and after the contest, or detains the official on the field of play following a game to request a ruling or explanation of some phase of the game. If a coach feels he/she has a legitimate criticism of a penalty call or a request for a rule interpretation, such criticism or request should be made in the privacy of the coach's office or the official's quarters and should be made in a courteous manner.

3.7.g. In the event of an altercation, a student or team attendant shall not leave the bench area, team box area, or their designated off-field area during a game or contest other than during that time permitted by game or contest rules. A coach shall not leave the bench area, team box area, or the designated off-field area during a game or contest other than during that time permitted by game or contest rules unless a student altercation is taking place and the official requests assistance. Violation of this rule shall cause the coach, student, or team attendant to be

immediately ejected from the contest; team penalized according to game or contest rules; and that coach, student, or team attendant will not be eligible to participate in the next contest as outlined in §127-4-2.3.

3.8. Procedure. Unsportsmanship action must be reported in detail to the WVSSAC. A copy of the complaint must also be filed with the principal of the school involved. Each principal involved shall report such information or answers to the report as they deem appropriate. Upon receipt of all reports, the Executive Director and/or the Board of Directors of the WVSSAC shall investigate and adjudicate such reports in accordance with the powers afforded in W. Va. §127CSR1, Constitution, sections 8.6, 8.7, 12.2, and 12.3. Penalties up to and including suspension of member schools may be made in accordance with §127CSR4.

3.9. Appeals. All cases involving disciplinary action against member schools, coaches, students, team attendants, or officials may be protested in accordance with W. Va. §127CSR6, Violations of the Rules (Rule §127CSR6). However, disciplinary action imposed by an official, including disciplinary action that is a consequence of a decision by an official, such as a suspension for an additional game or games as a consequence of an ejection, is governed by Rule §127CSR3, section 15.3, and is not subject to appeal.

3.10 Review of Ejections. Disciplinary action imposed by a contest official, including disciplinary action that results in a suspension for an additional game or games as a consequence of an ejection, is not subject to appeal pursuant to Rule §127CSR6. However, if the individual ejected believes the ejection was improper, he/she may request a review of the ejection by his/her principal. If the principal believes there is merit in the requested review, the principal shall complete and submit the WVSSAC Ejection Review Form within 24 hours or the next business day of the ejection to the Executive Director of the WVSSAC. If a review is properly requested, the WVSSAC will review the officials' special report, the WVSSAC Ejection Review Form, and such other information as the WVSSAC deems appropriate. Upon review, the WVSSAC Executive Director or the designated Assistant Director will either sustain the ejection and any consequent suspension(s) or will determine the ejection was improper and void any consequent suspension(s). A decision by the WVSSAC upon reviewing an ejection is not subject to appeal pursuant to Rule §127CSR6.

2026-2027 WVSSAC REQUIRED FOOTBALL PRACTICE GUIDELINES

GUIDELINE 1: Implementing a Preseason Football Heat Acclimatization Period

Reported cases of exertional heat stroke (EHS) currently rank among the top-three causes of sport participation fatalities. Setting mandatory guidelines for heat acclimatization provides a vital standard to protect athletes against exertional heat illnesses and possibly save lives. The majority of EHS cases occur during summer workouts when athletes are unprepared to cope with environmental conditions and physiological demands placed upon them. Heat acclimatization guidelines recommend that athletes be introduced slowly to environmental stresses during practice sessions, resulting in a lowered risk for EHS. These guidelines call for a two-week period (10-14 days) when coaches gradually increase the length and intensity of practice and the amount of equipment that can be worn. At all times, athletes should have access to fluids and have periods of rest throughout a practice.

GUIDELINE 2: Preseason Team Practices:

Days 1-2 – no pads, helmets may be worn **CONTACT – AIR**

Days 3-4 – pads but no live contact. **CONTACT – BAG**

Day 6- full pads including pants. **CONTACT – BAG**

Remainder of preseason **CONTACT – CONTROL, THUD and LIVE ACTION**

Two-a-days shall not be held on consecutive days. Provide at least a 3-hour recuperation period between two-a-day practices.

A practice session (physical activity) shall not exceed 3 hours

Live Action Contact time during any single practice shall be limited to no more than 30 minutes with weekly limits of 90 minutes.

12 days of practice are required for each individual player before playing in any game.

GUIDELINE 3: During the Season:

Types of Contact – Control, Thud and Live Action

Team Practice Sessions (physical activity) shall not exceed 3 hours. No two-a-days permitted.

GUIDELINE 4: Emergency Action Plan:

Ambulance available, medical personnel contacts, location of AED with trained personnel, drinking water, ice, athletic trainer, weather guidelines, heat index guidelines.

GUIDELINE 5: Contact Definitions

<u>CONTACT</u>	<u>INTENSITY</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
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AIR	0	Players run a drill unopposed without contact
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BAG	1	Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.
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CONTROL	2	Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact, one player is pre-determined the “winner” by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet.
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THUD	3	Drill is run at assigned speed to competitive speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined “winner.” Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.
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LIVE ACTION	4	Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.
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During the regular season, “contact” will be defined as drills run at the Thud and Live Action Level. Drill run at the Air, Bags and Control level would not be considered contact.

Interpretation – A team may continue to dress in full pads for practice, but may only participate in “Thud” drills, “Live Action” drills and game time simulations no more than ninety minutes per team per week. It is assumed that when players are in shells (shorts, shoulder pads, and helmets) no contact or simulations at any point.

Game Participation Recommendation – During the regular season, a player may play no more than 6 quarters per week. Week is defined as Monday to Saturday.



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2875 Staunton Turnpike, Parkersburg, WV 26104-7219

Phone: (304) 485-5494

E-Mail: wvssac@wvssac.org

Web: www.wvssac.org

BULLETIN

To: Principals, Athletic Directors, and Football Coaches
From: Chris Wells, Assistant Executive Director
Date: May 4, 2026
Subject: Out-of-Season Football Progressions

There has been some confusion over what is permitted regarding football progressions during out-of-season flex days. Please refer to the following guidelines when participating in out-of-season football flex days.

- Player to player contact is strictly prohibited.
- Helmet only participation is recommended.
- Individual players may progress to wearing shoulder pads on the third consecutive day and start soft equipment contact (bag, shields, sleds, tackling wheel, etc.).
- At no point shall a player be permitted to wear full pads. Helmet and shoulder pads are the most an individual may progress to wearing.
- If a player misses three or more consecutive days within the progression, the player must start over the progressions.
- An athletic trainer must be present during Flex Days unless there is a coach present that is certified in CPR, AED, and First Aid.
- Follow the WVSSAC Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Policy and Procedures.

Microphone Instructions

USE OF THE MICROPHONE

The Referee's use of a field microphone adds a positive dimension to communication when used properly. The microphone should be used to explain penalties and unusual situations. The Referee should have control (on/off switch) of the microphone.

If used, the microphone should be tested prior to the start of the contest and the following guidelines should be followed.

The Referee will:

- I. Move to an open area on the field, face the press box, and stand still.
- II. After the penalty is accepted or declined, the Referee will give the signal with the microphone.
- III. Do not turn on the microphone until any crew conference on a foul is concluded. The Referee will have all pertinent information before turning on microphone (e.g. whether or not the penalty will result in a first down).
- IV. Use normal voice quality when speaking with the microphone. Shouting is not necessary.
- V. Be aware that there often is a delay between speaking and hearing over the loud speakers.
- VI. Say "dead ball" rather than "Prior to the snap."
- VII. Do not announce the colors of the teams. Say "Offense" or "Defense".
- VIII. Speak in short phrases and pause briefly between phrases.
- IX. Announce the number of the player who committed the foul while referencing the team by position on the field (e.g. Offense/Defense, Kicking Team/Receiving Team). The Referee will use team names only for unusual situations

Example of Proper Announcement:

"Holding, Offense, Number 74. 10 Yard Penalty From The Previous Spot, Replay 2nd Down"

Larry McCloy

WVSSAC Football Clinician

2026 Football Bulletin

WVSSAC Football Game Shortening Rule:

Re: NFHS Football Rule 3-1-2

42 Point Differential at Halftime or in the 3rd Quarter, game shortening procedures will take effect for the remainder of the contest

Beginning with the start of the 4th period if a 35-point differential has been reached the clock operator will keep the game clock running except for the following situations:

- Clock stopped for an injured player
- A charged Team timeout is awarded
- There is a change of possession
- There is a score
- For a try after touchdown
- Any extended delay

When these instances occur the **Referee** will face the clock operator and give the Stop the Clock signal (**signal 3**).

When the clock is stopped for any of the above reasons the clock will start on the Ready-for- Play by the Referee. The **Referee** will face the clock operator and give the start the clock signal (**signal 2**).

The game clock will run during the following:

- Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass
- Runner goes out of bounds
- For Penalty Administration including delay of game fouls
- When a first down is gained with no change of team possession
- When there is a change of possession and the team that had possession at the beginning of the down has possession at the end of the down.

Game officials will use all normal mechanics within the Game Shortening Period. The remainder of the 3rd and/or 4th period will be under this rule even if the differential is lessened.

NFHS Rule 3-1-3 may still may be utilized. "A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time or the game terminated."

Larry McCloy
WVSSAC

Football Clinician

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2026-2027 Championship Programs

Dear Principal and Athletic Director:

If you have a team that qualifies for the State Championship/Tournament, program information is due by the deadlines listed below.

If your team qualifies you will need to submit a team picture and coach picture in one email please. Also send as a JPG attachment, and sponsor information if you have a sponsor/business paying for your page. The team page cost is \$125.00 Please put your school's name in the subject line when emailing all the information for the program.

Email all information to: anna.brown@wwssac.org.

Send your room list in a separate email, not with photos.

Deadlines for All State Tournaments:

Golf	Oct.7 @ NOON	Wrestling	Feb.23 @ NOON
Cross Country	Oct. 26 @ NOON	Girls Basketball	Mar. 5 @ NOON
Soccer	Nov. 2 @ NOON	Boys Basketball	Mar.12 @ NOON
Volleyball	Nov. 6 @ NOON	Tennis	May 10 @ NOON
Cheerleading	Nov.13 @ NOON	Track	May 17 @ NOON
Football	Nov. 6 @ NOON	Softball AAA/AAAA	May 19 @ NOON
Swimming	Feb.12 @ NOON	Softball A/AA	May 19 @ NOON
Girls Wrestling	Feb.16 @ NOON	Baseball	May 28 @ NOON

*Please mail payment to:
WVSSAC
2875 Staunton Turnpike
Parkersburg, WV 26104

***Please let this letter serve as an invoice for payment.



SPECTATOR SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR TOURNAMENTS

The following sport support information is provided for each specified sport. ONLY those items marked with “Yes” are allowed during tournament play (sectional, regional, and state). It is recommended that schools follow these regulations during regular season play.

Vocal cheering and support from team bench areas are encouraged, however, the items indicated on this page are for use by spectators. Schools must stress GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP when allowing any item to be used. All items must be for support of your team and not directed against the opponent.

Legend: BSK Basketball	CC Cross Country	SB Softball	TE Tennis	WR Wrestling
BB Baseball	FB Football	SC Soccer	TR Track & Field	
CH Cheer	GO Golf	SW Swimming	VB Volleyball	

SPORT	BSK	BB	CH	CC	FB	GO	SB	SC	SW	TE	TR	VB	WR
Apparel Required Upper/Lower Body Garments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balloons	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Banners on wall/ Stadium	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Cheer & Band Member “Human” Tunnels	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Permanent Signage/ Advertisement Senior Pictures	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Confetti/Paper Debris	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Hand-held Signs (one holder)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inflatable Tunnels	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Laser Pointer	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Miniature sports Balls thrown to crowd	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Noise makers (Horns, cow bells, bells, buzzers, clickers, etc.	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Opening Prayer / Invocation	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Paper banners for team to run through	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spirit Towels	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pom poms	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recorded/taped. music over amplifying system (only pregame or halftime)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School Band, Pep Band	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Pressurized Air Horn Electronic Bull Horn	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Megaphones (as intended)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cannons & Muskets	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
50-50 Drawing	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Reserve Seating State Only	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Revised 2/13/26 CW