

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE  
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



**NEWS RELEASE**

**High School Football Players with Improper Equipment Will Be  
Removed for One Down**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Bob Colgate

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 9, 2018) — Players in high school football who are detected with missing or improperly worn equipment during playing action will be removed from the game for at least one down, unless the improper equipment is directly attributable to a foul by the opponent.

This revision in Rule 1-5-5 and other related rules was one of five rules changes for the 2018 season recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Football Rules Committee at its January 19-21 meeting in Indianapolis. All changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Rule 1-5-5 also states that if the player is wearing otherwise legal equipment in an illegal manner, the participant must also be replaced for one down. If proper and legal equipment has become improperly worn through use during the game, and prompt repair does not delay the ready-for-play signal for more than 25 seconds, the repair can be made without replacing the player for one down.

In a related change (1-5-4), the head coach is responsible for verifying that all players are legally equipped and will not use illegal equipment. The penalty provisions for any use of illegal equipment remain unchanged and result in an unsportsmanlike foul charged to the head coach.

“I commend the entire football rules committee for its thoroughness and focus on the state of the game of football,” said Todd Tharp, chair of the NFHS Football Rules Committee and assistant director of the Iowa High School Athletic Association. “The committee recognizes that the state of high school football focuses on risk minimization and the responsibility that coaches, players and game officials play in continuing to protect our student-athletes. By emphasizing that the coach is ultimately responsible for assuring his players are using legal equipment by issuing an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for violations and that players will be removed for using legal equipment in an illegal manner, the committee continues to focus on minimizing risk for all players.”

The second rules change approved by the NFHS Football Rules Committee provides another option for teams in Rule 6-1-9 on fouls committed by the kicking team during free kicks and scrimmage kicks. Now, the receiving team can accept a 5-yard penalty from the succeeding spot. The previous three options remain: accept a 5-yard penalty from the previous spot and have the kicking team re-kick, put the ball in play at the inbounds spot 25 yards beyond the previous spot, or decline the penalty and put the ball in play at the inbounds spot.

Bob Colgate, NFHS director of sports and sports medicine and liaison to the NFHS Football Rules Committee, said this additional option was approved by the committee in an effort to reduce re-kicks, further minimize risks and ensure that appropriate penalties are in place for all fouls.

“The ability to ‘tack on’ penalty yardage on free kicks will potentially reduce the amount of repeated free kicks,” Tharp said. “In addition, this rule change is consistent with NFHS rules that no foul should go unpenalized.”

The third change approved by the committee was a revision related to the examples of a defenseless player. In Rule 2-32-16a, the committee clarified that defenseless player provisions do not apply to a passer until a legal forward pass is thrown. The passer continues to be a defenseless player until the pass ends or the passer moves to participate in the play.

The committee also changed the signal for free-kick infractions, other than encroachment of the neutral zone, from Signal 18 to Signal 19.

The final change approved by the NFHS Football Rules Committee concerned six-player football in Rule 3. The timing rule between periods and intermission for six-player football has been standardized to match the current NFHS rules for 8-player, 9-player and 11-player football.

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

According to the 2016-17 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, football is the most popular sport for boys at the high school level with 1,057,407 participants in 11-player football. Another combined 29,341 boys participated in 6-, 8- and 9-player football. In addition, 2,115 girls participated in one of the four football offerings during the 2016 season.

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

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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