

# FOOTBALL COACHES PRESEASON ALERTS

## JUNE, 2009

In addition to this football specific material coaches and administrators must review the Fall Sports Coaches Alerts especially regarding heat illness, injury, concussions and conditioning.

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Go to: [WWW.UNC.EDU/DEPTS/NCCSI/](http://WWW.UNC.EDU/DEPTS/NCCSI/) for complete survey

### Notes:

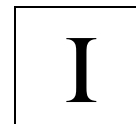
**Football Helmets and Face Masks:** Visible exterior warning labels which detail the risk of injury are mandatory. It is required that helmets and facemasks (properly secured to the helmet) meet the NOCSAE test standard at the time of manufacture.

**Catastrophic Insurance:** Since the 1970-71 the MHSAA has arranged for Catastrophic Athletic Accident Insurance Coverage for eligible participants at each member high school and all registered officials. The program is catastrophic excess accident insurance intended to help pay medical bills to administer to injuries sustained in athletic activities under MHSAA jurisdiction. Details of the coverage and claims administration for 2008-09 are posted on [mhsaa.com](http://mhsaa.com). Click on "Administrators"

**Summer dead period, pre season down:** For clarifications click on <http://www.mhsaa.com/resources/deadperiod.pdf> or check the MHSAA *Handbook*.



michigan high school athletic association



John E. Roberts, Executive Director | Nate Hampton, Assistant Director

1661 Ramblewood Drive • East Lansing, MI 48823-7329 • 517-332-5046 • Fax 517-332-4071 • Web [mhsaa.com](http://mhsaa.com) or [mhsaa.net](http://mhsaa.net)

TO: Principals, Athletic Directors, Head Football Coaches of MHSAA Member Schools Which Sponsor Football

FROM: John E. Roberts, Executive Director

RE: Risk Minimization and Conditioning for the Sport of Football

DATE: June 2009

It is estimated that there are approximately 1,500,000 participants in high school, junior high school and youth football leagues in the United States. Although statistics reveal that fatalities have decreased markedly since 1976, there is concern that we experienced 7 fatalities directly related to football in 2008.

It is necessary to remind all that are involved with football programs on the local level to continue to be vigilant in our pursuit for a risk free environment for our students. In those efforts, coaches should be aware of the following:

1. During off-season conditioning, it is more important to stress weight training than passing leagues. The most important weight training is that which focuses not on bulk and bench presses but on strengthening of shoulder, back and neck muscles.
2. During preseason practices, it is imperative to teach proper blocking and tackling techniques, and to prohibit butt blocking, face tackling, spearing and any other activity that makes the head the principal point of contact in blocking and tackling.
3. During games, don't stop teaching. Demand proper techniques of blocking and tackling even during emotionally charged games. Don't send the message that wild, reckless, kamikaze play is especially praiseworthy.
4. At all times, assign player positions sensibly. Don't put younger, slighter, less mature players in positions where they will be more likely to make open-field tackles: at defensive back, or on punt and kick-off coverage teams.

JER/tw

**SUGGESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS AND FOOTBALL COACHES**

**PRINCIPALS:** We are recommending that you discuss the following suggestions with your entire football coaching staff prior to your first football practice in August. Similar subjects should be discussed with coaches of other sports.

1. Point out all foreseeable dangers for each student in football participation.
2. Rules must be followed in every respect.
3. Correct procedures, techniques, conditioning, must be taught. The coach must be knowledgeable and drills must be conducted with minimal risk. Do not use dangerous drills to demonstrate procedures. Terminology such as "kill", "maim", etc. should be eliminated.
4. Take positive steps when disciplining a student who has violated a rule involving risk factors. Create a minimum risk learning environment.
5. Protect yourself by keeping thorough records. Document practice sessions, schedules, statements, precautions, etc. Inform parents and students regarding instructional procedures involving risk minimization.
6. Establish a set, written procedure in the event of injury during practice and games.

**COACHES:** We suggest that, at a total squad meeting, coaches have all players place and review the warning labels on the outside lower back part of the helmet and instruct that only certified facemasks may replace the original..

Also, at the team meeting, it would be a good time for the coaches to state the following to the entire squad:

1. Helmets cannot prevent all head and neck injuries (Poster--Attention Football Players).
2. The helmet check is a shared responsibility and all damaged equipment should be reported to the coach. Share with all team members the suggested inspection checklist items (see enclosed).
3. In any sport there is always the chance that someone can be injured and, in a small percentage of cases, a player could sustain a very serious injury.
4. Spearing, butt blocking, and face and head tackling are illegal. The danger in these techniques is that too often the player's head is not in the proper position when contact is made with the opponent. Executed improperly head down, the neck is most vulnerable to injury. A blow to the top of the head when the neck is straightened is the most frequent cause of permanent injury.

Only legal techniques should be taught or practiced. The players should be instructed to keep their heads up and necks bulled when making contact with opponents. The players should be warned about putting their heads down and initiating contact.

TO: Head Football Coaches  
FROM: John E. Roberts, Executive Director  
RE: MHSAA Summer Regulations Regarding Football  
DATE: June 2009

See *Handbook* Regulation II, Section 11(H) that will address football activities of coaches and players during the summer.

1. During the summer prior to Friday, August 1, a maximum of seven players at one time may engage in organized competition with their school coach present for a maximum of 7 days (more than seven players may be present on the sideline). In addition, informal activities (with footballs, helmets and football shoes not sleds and dummies) may take place on any number of days during the summer (**not summer dead period**) as long as no more than seven students in grades 7-12 of the district are assembled with a football coach of that district.

These seven days with competition in the summer are subject to the same out-of-state travel limits that apply to school teams during the school season under Regulation II, Section 6, except for camps that are conducted within Michigan.

2. During the summer prior to August 1, except as limited during the summer dead period, football coaches may participate at bona fide summer football skills camps where more than seven students from their school district in grades 7 through 12 are participating; **school transportation may not be used**.

- a) Bona fide football camps are those sponsored by institutions or business enterprises including colleges, individual schools or intermediate school districts, community school programs, etc.
- b) The camps must be open to students from any school district, and are subject to player equipment limitations of shoes and helmets. Sleds and dummies may be used at these camps.
- c) Camps limited to students entering grades 9-12 must be promoted and advertised in public media to be open to students from more than one high school.
- d) Camps sponsored by a high school and limited to students entering grades 9-12 may not extend more than 10 days total.

3. **Schools should alert all players:** At no time during the summer or school year outside of the defined football season may MHSAA member student-athletes participate in a camp, clinic, practice, tryout or combine where more than football helmets and football shoes are worn (in-state or out-of-state).

4. Preseason “Down Time” – Beginning August 1 for all fall sports no open gyms, camps or clinics which involve that sport shall occur at the school or be sponsored elsewhere by the school; and no competition, intersquad or intrasquad between groups that resemble school teams (more than 3 students of grades 7-12 of the district) may occur at any location with any of that school district’s personnel present. The preseason downtime allows voluntary conditioning and has a 4-player limitation (previously 7 players).



## SUMMER REGULATIONS - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Regarding Regulation II, Section 11(H)

1. Q When does “summer” vacation begin for a school?  
A The Monday after Memorial Day observed June 7, 2010 (New common date for all schools in 2009-10). The summer dead period may not occur when teams are finishing spring seasons.
2. Q May the coach of a school football team involve 20 of his players voluntarily in a practice session he conducts in July?  
A No. The limit is 7 players, except at a bona fide skills camp or 7 on 7 competition, where there is no limit to the number of players but involves other limitations.
3. Q May a football coach attend and work at a football skills camp in the summer where a dozen members of that coach’s team are enrolled?  
A Yes, prior to August 1, but not during the summer dead period.
4. Q May a school sponsor a bona fide football skills camp?  
A Yes, it must be open to students from any district; and participants are subject to the equipment limitations of footballs, helmets and football shoes. It may last no longer than 10 days.
5. Q May a football coach be actively involved in coaching in a summer 7-on-7 passing league conducted by a college, community or school?  
A Yes, prior to August 1, but not during the summer dead period, coaches may actively coach students in such competition subject to equipment limitations and a maximum of 7 days.
6. Q May a football coach conduct conditioning programs for players in grades 7-12 during the summer?  
A Yes, but not during the summer dead period, “Conditioning programs” are permitted out of season if they are voluntary and do not involve equipment that is specific to football conducted on an interscholastic basis. Examples of prohibited equipment include, but are not limited to footballs, dummies and equipment. Generic equipment such as cones, weights, jump ropes, and other fitness apparatuses are permitted.
7. Q May a football team use school transportation to assemble at a site other than the regular location of practice?  
A Yes, the use of school transportation is allowed for such purposes, but only **one** day before the first official day of practice. School transportation may not be used for camps, 7 on 7 competition or other summer activities.
8. Q May a MHSAA member school athlete participate in a full contact camp, clinic, practice, tryout or combine where attendees are wearing either full equipment or helmets, shoulder pads and football shoes?  
A **NO.** Michigan athletes may not participate in any out of season activity while wearing more equipment than football helmets and football shoes in-state or out-of-state.

## 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 you want 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 under the NOCSAE recertification program.

### SUGGESTED INSPECTION CHECK LIST

1. Check helmet fit for agreement with manufacturer's instructions and procedures.
2. Examine shell for cracks particularly noting any cracks around holes (where most cracks start) and replace any 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 looseness. **Repair as necessary.**
4. Replace face guards if bare metal is showing, there is a broken weld or if guard is grossly misshapen. NOTE: Face protectors must meet NOCSAE test standards at the time of manufacture.
5. Examine for helmet completeness, and replace any parts that have become damaged, such as sweatbands, nose snubbers and chinstraps.
6. Replace jaw pads when damaged. Check for proper installation and fit.
7. Examine 4-point chinstrap for proper adjustment, and inspect to see if it is broken or stretched out of shape; also inspect hardware to see if it needs replacement.
8. Read instructions provided by manufacturer regarding care and maintenance procedures. Always follow these instructions:

**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 affect its risk minimization performance.

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

### SUSPENSION STYLE

Check hardware, i.e., screws or rivets that may be loose/missing.

Check webbing for tears in threads, stretching, or pulling away at rivet locations.

If crown webbing is adjustable, check that crown rope is properly adjusted and is tied tightly using a square knot.

Check interior padding for proper placement and condition.

### 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.

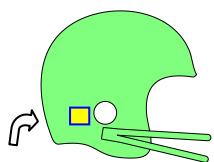
Check that protective system or foam padding has not been altered or removed.

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. THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.**

NEVER WEAR A



MEETS NOCSAE

DAMAGED HELMET

## Horse-collar Tackle To Be Penalized in High School Football

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bob Colgate

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 13, 2009) - The horse-collar tackle has been added to the list of illegal personal contact fouls in high school football.

This addition to Rule 9-4-3 was one of 10 rules changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Football Rules Committee at its January 24-25 meeting in Indianapolis. The rules changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Effective with the 2009 season, it will be illegal to grab the inside back or side collar of the runner's shoulder pads or jersey and subsequently pull the runner to the ground. The penalty will be 15 yards from the succeeding spot.

Julian Tackett, assistant commissioner of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association and chair of the NFHS Football Rules Committee, said the committee felt the need to continue to address risk minimization issues for the runner.

"Risk minimization continues to be one of the most important fundamentals to the rules-writing process of the NFHS," Tackett said. "Though this play does not happen often, we must ensure that our coaches and officials understand the importance of penalizing this act."

Another risk-minimization change in Rule 9-4-3 will make it illegal to grasp an opponent's chin strap, in addition to the opponent's face mask or edge of a helmet opening.

The committee made a significant change in Rule 9-8-3 in an effort to reduce the risk of injury along the sidelines. A maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area to communicate with players during dead-ball situations. Before the ball becomes live, however, the coaches must retreat into the team box.

Bob Colgate, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Football Rules Committee, said this rule change results in a 2-yard belt that is clear of team personnel and helps eliminate sideline congestion while helping to minimize the risk for participating players, coaches and officials during live-ball situations.

"There no longer will be an allowance for three coaches to remain in an area adjacent to the sideline when the ball is live," Colgate said. "The results of a three-year experiment were favorable, which led to the committee's support for this rule change in 2009."

A change in Rule 9-8-1g clarifies that the mandatory three-minute warm-up period begins immediately following the conclusion of the halftime intermission. An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed to the head coach if the team is not back on the field prior to the start of the warm-up period.

Changes in Rules 7-2-5 and 2-14-2 clarify the numbering-exception rule from when it was originally approved in 1982.

"The definition of a scrimmage-kick formation was clarified to differentiate formations that have been used traditionally for attempting a field goal or kick try from those used for a punt," Colgate said. "In addition, the circumstances under which the numbering exception can be utilized have been changed to clarify what can be done on first, second, third and fourth downs."

Two changes were made in Rule 1 - The Game, Field, Players and Equipment. The committee clarified Rule 1-3-1c regarding the stripes on the football. The change states that the stripes located on the football must be adjacent to and perpendicular to the seam upon which the laces are stitched. In Rule 1-2-3b, a note was added stating that all required field markings must be clearly visible. Further, when other markings such as logos are placed on the field, the required markings shall remain visible.

Other changes approved by the Football Rules Committee:

- Rule 3-3-4b5 - If a penalty resulting in a safety occurs on the last timed down of a period, the period is not extended. The teams will change goals to start the next period.
- Rules 8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4 (new), 10-5-1f - Three rules were revised and a new article was created regarding penalty enforcement for dead-ball, non-player or unsportsmanlike fouls that occur during or after a touchdown-scoring play. The revisions now allow the offended team, in most situations, the option of enforcing the penalty on the subsequent kickoff. Fouls committed after the initial ready-for-play signal following the touchdown are not affected by this change.
- Rule 9-7-2 Exception: A foul will now occur for illegal batting by the kicking team if it bats a scrimmage kick that has not yet been grounded unless it is batted by the kicking team toward its own goal line.

"Though many of the changes in the rules were subtle clarifications, each of this year's changes ensures that the sound traditions of the game are protected and that student-athlete safety remains our top priority," Tackett said.

In addition, the committee identified six points of emphasis for the 2009 season: Illegal Personal Contact, Blocking and Illegal Blocks, Helmet and Face Mask, Uniforms, Sportsmanship and NFHS Guidelines on Handling Contests During Lightning Disturbances.

In terms of the number of participants, football is the most popular high school sport for boys. According to the 2007-08 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, 1,108,286 boys played 11-player football with another 27,075 involved in six-, eight- and nine-player football. In addition, 1,225 girls played high school football in 2007-08.

# 2009 NFHS Football Rules Changes



1-2-3b NOTE 2 (NEW): All required field markings must be clearly visible.

1-3-1c: Stripes located on the football must be adjacent to and perpendicular to the seam upon which the laces are stitched.

2-14-2; 7-2-5: The definition of a scrimmage-kick formation was clarified to differentiate formations that have been used traditionally for attempting a field goal or kick try from those used for a punt. The circumstances under which the numbering exception can be used have been changed to clarify what can be done on first, second, third and fourth downs.

Table 3-1; 9-8-1g: The mandatory three-minute warm-up period begins immediately following the conclusion of the halftime intermission. The head coach of each team is responsible for his team being on the field for the warm-up period.

3-3-4b5 (NEW): If a penalty resulting in a safety occurs on the last timed down of a period, the period is not extended.

8-2-2; 8-2-3; 8-2-4 (NEW); 10-5-1f: Three rules were refined and a new article created regarding penalty enforcement for dead-ball, non-player or unsportsmanlike fouls that occur during or after a touchdown scoring play. Now, the scoring team, in most situations, has the option of enforcing the penalty on the subsequent kickoff.

9-4-3h: It is now illegal to grasp the opponent's chin strap.

9-4-3k (NEW): The horse-collar tackle has been added to the list of illegal personal contact fouls, regardless of where it occurs on the field. It is illegal to grasp the inside back or side opening of the collar of the jersey or shoulder pads of the runner and subsequently pull the runner to the ground.

9-7-2 EXCEPTION: The kicking team cannot bat a scrimmage kick that has not yet been grounded unless it is toward its own goal line. Scrimmage kicks may only be batted by the kicking team towards its own goal line.

1-2-3g; 9-8-3: A restricted area has been defined where a maximum of three coaches may communicate with players and substitutes during dead-ball situations. The coaches must move into the team box before the ball becomes live. There will no longer be an allowance for three coaches to remain in an area adjacent to the sideline during play.

## Editorial and Other Changes

1-2-1; 1-2-3d; 1-3-1f; 1-5-1c(5b, 6b); 1-5-1i; 1-5-3a, b, c; 1-5-3k, l, n, o (NEW); 2-11; 2-16-2h; 2-35; 2-41-1, 9; 3-3-4b; 3-3-4b NOTE; 3-4-3j (NEW); 3-5-10c; 6-2-1; 7-5-2; 7-5-6a; 8-2-2, 3; 8-5-2a EXCEPTION; 9-4 PENALTY; 9-8-1; 9-9 PENALTY NOTE; 10-2-2b; 10-2-3; 10-4-2c; 10-5-1f; 10-6; FUNDAMENTALS: II-5, II-6 (NEW), IV-6, IX-3, X-4; OFFICIAL FOOTBALL SIGNALS "15, 25 (NEW)

## Points of Emphasis

1. NFHS Guidelines on Handling Contests During Lightning Disturbances
2. Illegal Personal Contact
3. Blocking and Illegal Blocks
4. Helmet and Face Mask
5. Uniforms
6. Sportsmanship

# REDUCING BRAIN AND SPINAL INJURIES IN FOOTBALL AND 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 follow:**

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:

Depression  
Numbness/tingling  
Dizziness  
Poor Balance  
Drowsiness  
Poor Concentration  
Excess Sleep  
Ringing in the ears  
Fatigue  
Sadness  
Feel "in fog"  
Sensitive to Light  
Headache  
Sensitivity to Noise  
Irritability  
Trouble falling asleep  
Memory Problems  
Vomiting  
Nausea  
Nervousness

**ANNUAL SURVEY OF CATASTROPHIC FOOTBALL INJURIES**

**1931- 2008**

*National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research*



[WWW.UNC.EDU/DEPTS/NCCSI](http://WWW.UNC.EDU/DEPTS/NCCSI)