

2026 Football Preseason Guide



SAFETY

Blitz

Annual Gameplan for Promoting and Preserving Safety Measures in Football



2026 MHSAA Football Preseason Guide

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

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NOTES AND RESOURCES

Accident Medical Insurance: Since 1970-71 the MHSAA has arranged for Athletic Accident Medical Insurance Coverage for eligible participants at each member school and all registered officials. The program is excess accident medical insurance (\$25,000 deductible) intended to help pay medical bills to administer to injuries sustained in athletic activities in MHSAA tournament sports. Details of the coverage and claims administration are posted on the Administrators page of MHSAA.com, and also can be found in the current MHSAA Handbook.

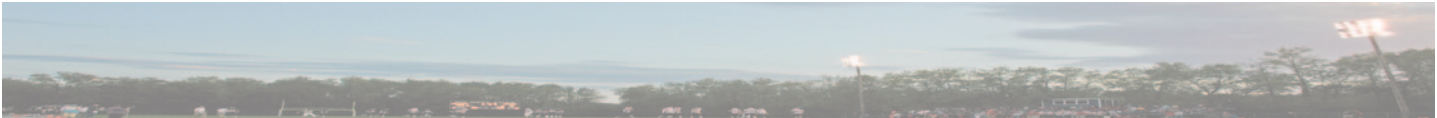
Concussion Insurance: The Michigan High School Athletic Association is also providing athletic participants at each MHSAA member junior high/middle school and high school with additional insurance that is intended to pay accident medical expense benefits resulting from a suspected concussion. The injury must be sustained while the athlete is participating in an MHSAA in-season covered activity (practice or competition). Policy limit is \$25,000 for each accident. Covered students, sports and situations follow the accident medical insurance.

This program intends to assure that all eligible student-athletes in MHSAA member schools in grades 6 through 12, male and female, in all levels of all sports under the jurisdiction of the MHSAA, receive prompt and professional attention for head injury events even if the child is uninsured or under-insured. Accident medical deductibles and co-pays left unpaid by other policies are reimbursed under this program to the limits of the policy.

Summer Dead Period, Preseason Down Time: For clarifications check the *MHSAA Handbook*, or visit the Administrators page of MHSAA.com

Resources:

- Visit MHSAA.com's Health and Safety page or the Football page for frequent updates.
- NOCSAE FB Helmet Standards: <https://nocsae.org/standards/standards-matrix/#/football/performance/current>



Coaching Requirements at All Levels for 2026-27

Following is a summary of the coaching requirements for the 2026-27 school year and a review of recent requirements.

plans shall be posted, documented, and rehearsed at least once per season. Schools are expected to impose the penalty of Section 8(B) on high school head coaches (varsity and subvarsity teams) who do not meet this requirement.

- 1. REGULATION II, SECTION 3(B)** - High schools must attest by each season's established deadline that all head coaches at all levels of each high school team have a valid, current Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification. The established deadline for coaches (regardless of level) shall be the latest date set for the completion of the MHSAA rules meeting for the sport. A person who is the head coach for more than one sport during the school year must meet the deadline for the first of those sports. It is expected that schools will impose the penalty of Section 8(B) on head coaches who do not meet this requirement.
- 2. REGULATION IV, SECTION 3(B)** - Junior high/middle schools must attest by each season's established deadline that all head coaches at all levels of each junior high/middle school team have a valid, current Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification. The established deadline for coaches (regardless of level) shall be the first contest date for the sport. A person who is the head coach for more than one sport during the school year must meet the deadline for the first of those sports. It is expected that schools will impose the penalty of Section 8(B) on head coaches who do not meet this requirement.
- 3. REGULATION II, SECTION 3(C)** - Each head coach of a varsity team in an MHSAA tournament sport hired for the first time as a high school varsity head coach at any MHSAA member high school after July 31, 2016, shall have completed either Level 1 or Level 2 of the MHSAA Coaches Advancement Program (CAP). If the head coach does not complete CAP Level 1 or 2 prior to the established deadline, that coach shall be prohibited from coaching in that season's MHSAA tournament for the sport involved and shall not be present at the facility where the MHSAA tournament involving that coach's team is being held. See Regulation II, Section 15(H)4. An administrator or faculty member designee of that school shall be present with supervisory capacity over the school's competitors. Failure to receive reminder notifications (email or other) does not change the requirement of this Section. The MHSAA may substitute an alternative coach's education program for late hires, which will fulfill the requirement on a temporary basis.
- 4. REGULATION II, SECTION 3(D)** - Starting with the 2024-25 school year, high schools shall attest by each season's established deadline that all high school teams (varsity and subvarsity) have an emergency action plan specific to their practice and contest locations. These
- 5. REGULATION II, SECTION 8(B)** - Each head coach of a varsity team in a sport under MHSAA jurisdiction shall complete (in person or online) the MHSAA rules meetings for that sport for the current school year prior to the deadline if meetings are provided and attendance is required. If the head coach does not complete a rules meeting prior to the deadline, that coach shall be prohibited from coaching in that season's MHSAA tournament for the sport involved and shall not be present at the facility where the MHSAA tournament involving that coach's team is being held. See Regulation II, Section 15(H)4. An administrator or faculty member designee of that school shall be present with supervisory capacity over the school's competitors. Failure to receive reminder notifications (email or other) does not change the requirement of this Section.
- 6. REGULATION II, SECTION 8(C)** - Schools shall attest that all assistant and subvarsity coaches have completed an MHSAA rule meeting (online or in person) for that sport for the current school year prior to the deadline. Assistant or subvarsity coaches who coach more than one sport during a school year must fulfill the requirement each season unless the sport is the same and the coach had completed the MHSAA sport-specific rules meeting earlier in the school year for that sport (e.g., JV boys and JV girls soccer coach). It is expected that schools will impose the penalty of Section 8(B) on assistant or subvarsity coaches who do not meet this requirement by the deadline.

FOOTBALL RULES MEETINGS 2026

Start Date

Mon., July 20

End Date

Thur., Sept 10

School Attests: Fall head coaches have valid CPR. High school teams (varsity and subvarsity) have EAPs. Subvarsity and assistant coaches have met MHSAA rules meeting requirements by Thursday, Sept 10.



FOOTBALL COACHING RULES & CLARIFICATIONS

SUMMER ACTIVITY

Monday after Memorial Day → July 31

- One or more coaches may work with a maximum of 7 players at one time on an unlimited number of dates. Coaching includes, but is not limited to, technique work, on-field demonstrations, classroom instruction, and video review.
- Full team practice is allowed on 15 dates with helmets only. Any football instruction with more than 7 players at one time must count as one of the 15 summer practice dates.
- Seven dates of 7-on-7 competition are allowed against another school(s), counted as part of the 15 practice dates. Only 7 offensive and 7 defensive players allowed on the field at once.
- All MHSAA travel rules apply to 7-on-7 competition during the summer.
- Schools may conduct camps with athletes from multiple schools. Any camp where a coach works with more than 7 players counts toward the 15-day limit.
- 11 players on defense may act as a "demonstration" defense, but must use shields or dummies on the defensive front line during a summer practice.
- 11-on-11 drills between different schools are never allowed during the summer.
- All football activities and strength/conditioning must stop during the one-week (7 consecutive days) Summer Dead Period as determined by each school.

PRESEASON DOWN TIME

August 1 → First Allowable Practice Date

- Four-player football instruction is allowed, along with strength and conditioning, with an unlimited number of students.
- All other allowable summer activities are no longer permitted, including sport-specific activity with more than 4 students at any one time.

PRESEASON PRACTICE

First Practice → First Contest

- No interscholastic scrimmages may take place until Wednesday of the second week of practice.
- Any joint practice with two or more schools is a scrimmage, and it may not occur until the second Wednesday of practice.
- The allowed practice equipment is as follows: Days 1-2, helmets only; Days 3-4, helmets and shoulder pads; and on Day 5, full pads may be worn.
- No single practice may exceed 3 hours. Max 5 hours total of practice per day.
- Collision contact is limited to 6 hours per week (Monday through Sunday). Scrimmages count as half-time (a 2-hour scrimmage = 1 hour of collision).
- Thud contact is unlimited during preseason practice. It is full speed, above the waist, and no players go to the ground.





FOOTBALL COACHING RULES & CLARIFICATIONS

SEASON

First Contest → **End of Football Season** (One Day After Football Finals)

- One game in five consecutive calendar days. Max 9 regular season games.
- Player limit: 5 quarters per week, 4 quarters per day. One play, including special teams plays, equals participation in a quarter. Football week runs from Wednesday to Tuesday.
- Collision practice time is limited to 30 minutes per week (Monday-Sunday).
- No practice exceeds 3 hours.

OFF SEASON

End of Football Season → **Start of Summer Activity**

- Coaches may coach 4 students in grades 7-12 from their District at a time. One or more coaches present = maximum of 4 students.
- Coaching includes coordinating, assisting, and instructing. Organizing prohibited activities (e.g., 7-on-7 teams) is not allowed during this period.
- Coaching is defined as instruction in technique, position-specific coaching, classroom instruction, or video review (the use of a football is optional).
- Unlimited coaches may be present, but only 4 players at a time when one or more coaches are present.
- Rotations including strength and conditioning is allowed, with only one station of football instruction.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Collision:** Live, game-speed, player vs player contact in pads involving any number of players executing full tackles a competitive pace, taking players to the ground.
- **Thud Contact:** Full-speed contact above the waist, no player taken to the ground, no winners/losers, no grading physical domination.
- **Practice Rules:** Apply to both middle school and high school. Warm-up, stretching, agility, and cool down count towards practice time. Strength training and classroom sessions do not count toward the 3/5-hour limits.

"For more detailed information and interpretations please consult the MHSAA Handbook or your athletic director"





Current MHSAA Football Practice Policies

Adopted by the Representative Council 3/21/14, modified 5/8/17 and 5/5/2019

During the first week of practice of the season, only helmets are allowed the first two days, only shoulder pads may be added on the third and fourth days, and full pads may not be worn until the fifth day of team practice.

DEFINITIONS and LIMITATIONS:

1. **“Collision”** practice is one in which there is live, game-speed, player-vs.-player contact in pads (not walk-throughs) involving any number of players executing full tackles at a competitive pace, taking players to the ground.
2. **First two weeks of practice before first contest:** Collision contact is limited to no more than 6 hours in a week (Monday – Sunday). Inter-squad scrimmages will calculate collision contact based on $\frac{1}{2}$ of the total time (2-hour scrimmage = 1 hour of collision contact, 3 – hour scrimmage = 1.5 hours of collision contact).
3. **Thud:** Full speed, contact above the waist only, with no player being taken to the ground. There is no winner or loser, predetermined or otherwise. Coaches are not grading physical domination in thud. Teammates are merely trying to give each other a simulation of full-speed game action. Thud is not collision contact and is an alternative to live/full contact. Thud drills and segments are unlimited during the football season.
Note: Thud tempo drills and activity is not considered Collision contact and is unlimited.
 - During any additional practice sessions, players may wear helmets and other pads (neither is mandatory). Blocking and tackling technique may be taught and practiced. However, full-speed contact is limited to players vs. player in thud activity or calculated in collision practice.
4. **After the first regular-season game,** teams may conduct no more than 30 total minutes of collision practice in any week, Monday through Sunday. During other practice sessions, players may wear helmets and other protective pads (neither is mandatory). Blocking and tackling technique may be taught and practiced.
5. **No single practice may exceed three hours,** and the total practice time for days with multiple practice sessions may not exceed five hours.
 - Warm-up, stretching, speed and agility drills and cool down are all considered part of practice. Neither strength/weight training activities nor video/classroom sessions are considered practice for the purposes of the three- or five-hour limits.

Football Practice Policy Q & A

- A. Q Do the policies apply at both the high school and junior high/middle school levels?
A Yes.
- B. Q Is the purpose of the proposals to improve student-athlete acclimatization or reduce head trauma?
A Both.
- C. Q Are “girdle pads” allowed during the first week of practice?
A Girdle pads may be worn under or in place of shorts during the first four days of acclimatization practice that precede the first day in full pads.
- D. Q Does the three-hour limit on single practices and the five-hour limit for multiple practices on the same day apply only to football?
A Yes. The MHSAA recommends that the limits be added as soon as possible to the MHSAA “Model Policies for Managing Heat & Humidity” and apply to all sports.
- E. Q How much time is required between sessions on days with multiple practices?
A Because practice venues differ greatly and some may raise questions regarding supervision and the possibility of injury risks as great off the field as on, the Task Force declined to set a maximum and minimum length of rest periods. However, one hour between practices when there is no physical activity is the minimum recommendation. Classroom sessions would be allowed during the period of physical rest.
To be clear, break time is not included in the five-hour limit.
- F. Q Can a team have different collision practices for different levels of players?
A If varsity and sub-varsity squads practice separately, their collision sessions may be different. However, if the squads practice together, then their collision sessions must be the same.
- G. Q How are the 6-hours or 30-minutes of collision practices per week calculated?
A Any part of a full contact drill or live scrimmage where players are taken to the ground constitutes time that should be included in the 6-hour or 30-minute total. Team breaks or time out from the collision portions of practice where players are being given instruction or resting from contact, need not be included in the 6-hour or 30-minutes. Moving from a huddle to the line of scrimmage or standing in line to enter a full contact segment of a drill are to be counted as part of the 6-hour or 30-minute total. The calculation is to the team or portion of a team within a week. It is not intended that time be counted and recorded separately for each individual player. See points 2 and 3 in the practice policies for the criteria of a Collision vs. Thud practice.

MHSAA Football Limitations of Competition & 5-Quarter Allowance

Regulation II, Section 10-A (6)

Football Participation Defined:

“Participation” means to have entered and competed in a football scrimmage or contest for at least one offensive, defensive, scrimmage kick (punt, FG, PAT) or free kick. Participation in one down, constitutes participation in that quarter.

- For the purposes of this regulation, a “football week” is defined as Wednesday to Tuesday.
 - o Wednesday = Day 1 Saturday = Day 4 Monday = Day 6
 - o Thursday = Day 2 Sunday = Day 5 Tuesday = Day 7
 - o Friday = Day 3
- A team shall participate in no more than:
 - o ONE game of interscholastic football in five consecutive calendar days,
 - o FOUR interscholastic scrimmages,
 - o NINE games in a season, exclusive of the MHSAA tournament.
 - o Example: The JV team plays on Wednesday (day 1 of the football week), the JV team would not be eligible to play another game until Monday (day 6 of the football week).
- A student shall participate in no more than:
 - o FOUR interscholastic scrimmages and in no more than,
 - o NINE games in a season, exclusive of the MHSAA tournament.

FIVE QUARTER ALLOWANCE:

- A student may participate in no more than:
 - o FOUR quarters in a day, and...
 - o FIVE quarters in a week.
Five or fewer quarters in a week shall constitute one of the nine allowed games.
Example: A student participates in 4 quarters of varsity football on Friday (day 3 of the football week), they would be eligible to participate in another quarter before that football week ends on Tuesday (day 7 of the football week).
- The 5-quarter allowance is restricted to high school football teams only.
- Special teams’ participation is not exempt from this rule.
- Overtime is considered an extension of the fourth quarter insofar as this section is concerned.
 - o Example: A JV player plays in all four quarters during their JV game. They then enter the game in the 3rd quarter of the varsity contest and reaches their quarter limit for the week. Once the third quarter ends, they may not play in any additional quarters – including any overtime. However, had they entered the game in the 4th quarter of the subsequent varsity contest instead of the 3rd, the student would also be eligible to compete in any overtime period, since overtime is an extension of the 4th period.

Penalty Update:

In May of 2022, the representative council voted to change the penalty for 5-quarter allowance violations to forfeiture of the contest(s) in which the rule violation occurred (varsity or sub-varsity). Additionally, the head coach of the team in which the violation occurred is ineligible for the next day of competition.

NOTE: The 5-quarter allowance is an individual student rule, while the 1 game in 5 days regulation pertains to the team.

Risk Minimization and Conditioning

It is estimated that there are approximately 1,400,000 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. The National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research reported in the calendar year 2025 there were 5 fatalities at the high school level caused by exertional/medical issues indirectly related to football.

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. Enhanced sanitation for practice apparel, facilities, personal protection equipment and all other equipment.
2. 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.
3. During preseason practices, it is imperative to teach proper blocking and tackling techniques, to prohibit butt blocking, face tackling, spearing and any other activity that makes the head the principal point of contact in blocking and tackling.

4. 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.
5. At all times, assign player positions sensibly in practice and games, in scrimmages and drills. 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.
6. No existing football helmet is concussion proof. Proper helmet fit is a major concern and is imperative that athletes, coaches and athletic trainers take an active role in the proper fitting of helmets. Comfort shortcuts are not permitted. (See MHSAA Concussion Protocol)
7. When a player has experienced or shown signs of head trauma (loss of consciousness, visual disturbances, headache, inability to walk correctly, obvious disorientation, memory loss), he should receive medical attention and should not be allowed to return to practice or competition without permission from a physician.

Get on the Same Page Before Practice Begins

Suggestions for Principals/Athletic Directors and Coaches

PRINCIPALS/ATHLETIC DIRECTORS

Discuss the following topics with the entire football coaching staff prior to your school's first 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. Including required proper fitting, and unaltered equipment.
3. Correct procedures, techniques, conditioning, proper equipment fitting 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

At a total squad meeting, 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. Consult helmet manufacturers for policies on "after-market" attachments.

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

1. Helmets cannot prevent all head and neck injuries. Proper fit is a must.
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.

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 as directed by the manufacturer.

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 misshaped.
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.



COACHES MUST HAVE PLAYERS inspect their helmets 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, players must notify the coach at once!

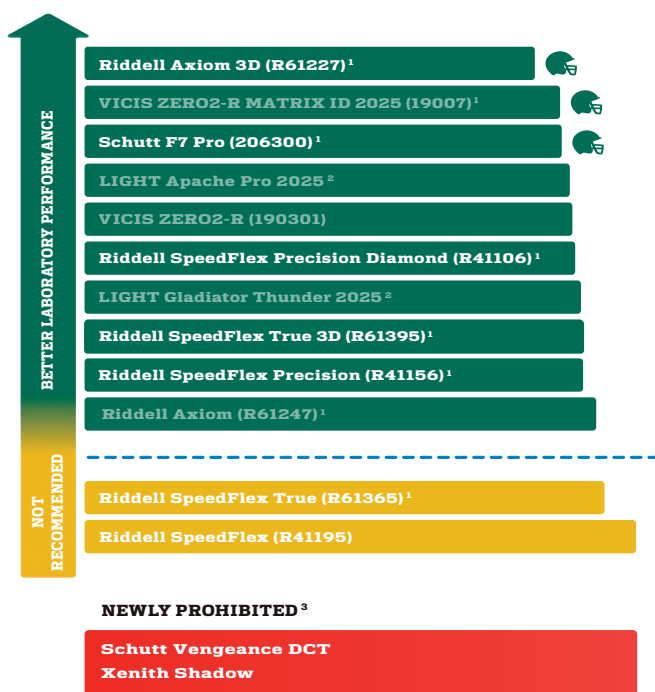
VISIT the MHSAA.com Football Page for Updates

NFLPA Helmet Lab Testing Performance Results

NOTE: The annual list below offers a guideline for coaches and athletic directors when considering football helmet purchases.



2026 HELMET LABORATORY TESTING PERFORMANCE RESULTS



¹Actual performance and ranking may vary since these helmets are customized for each player's head shape.

²Helmets were submitted for testing in size medium. While these helmets meet the current fit pressure requirements for the test protocol, more than 95% of LIGHT helmets worn by NFL players were size large or x-large.

³These helmets join a list of previously-prohibited models and are prohibited for all players. Note: Models worn by less than 1% of NFL players are greyed-out.

These models are part of a list of 10 models for which any player in a Guardian Cap-required position may choose to wear one of these helmets without a Guardian Cap in practices. Players should consult the full list of these models.

THE NFL AND NFLPA, THROUGH THEIR RESPECTIVE APPOINTED BIOMECHANICAL EXPERTS AND THE JOINT ENGINEERING AND EQUIPMENT SAFETY COMMITTEE, ANNUALLY COORDINATE EXTENSIVE LABORATORY RESEARCH TO EVALUATE WHICH HELMETS BEST REDUCE HEAD IMPACT MAGNITUDE. THE RESULTS OF THOSE TESTS, WHICH ARE GENERALLY SUPPORTED BY ON-FIELD PERFORMANCE, ARE SET FORTH ON THIS POSTER.

The helmet models are listed in order of their performance, with a shorter bar representing better performance. The rankings are based exclusively on the ability of the helmet to reduce head impact magnitude measures in laboratory testing. Performance variation related to helmet fit, retention, temperature-dependence, and long-term durability are not addressed in these rankings.

All helmets in green are recommended for use by NFL players. These Top-Performing helmets performed similarly to top-ranked helmets based on a statistical grouping analysis. Helmets with poorer laboratory performance were placed in the Not Recommended (yellow) or Prohibited (red) groups. Players using helmets from the yellow group should consider offerings in the green group. Red helmets are prohibited for all players.

Players are encouraged to discuss their helmet options with their clubs' equipment and athletic training staffs, including other model offerings such as position-specific helmets and models that may be worn without a Guardian Cap NXT 1.8 or NXT 2.0 in practices.

The laboratory test conditions were intended to represent potentially concussive head impacts in the NFL. The results of this study should not be extrapolated to collegiate, high school, or youth football.

POSITION-SPECIFIC HELMET TESTING



Top-performing helmets were evaluated using position-specific test methodologies for quarterbacks, and offensive and defensive linemen. Position-specific helmet rankings are available at this link.



NO HELMET SYSTEM CAN COMPLETELY PROTECT AGAINST SERIOUS BRAIN AND/OR NECK INJURIES A PLAYER MIGHT SUSTAIN WHILE PARTICIPATING IN FOOTBALL.

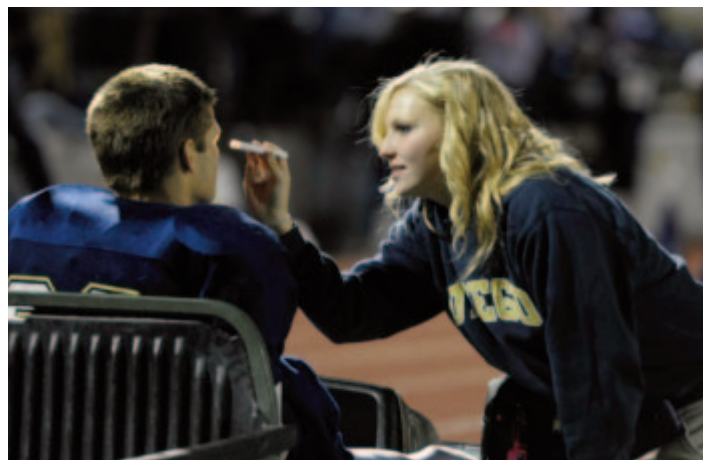
Reducing Brain and Spinal Injuries in Football and Other Athletic Activities

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. No concussion should be dismissed as “minor.” 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 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’s presence is encouraged during games, and emergency contact information and procedures should be readily available and rehearsed throughout the season. The entire 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 athletic 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

MHSAA Protocol for Implementation of National Federation Sports Playing Rules for Concussions

“Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.”

The language above, which appears in all National Federation sports rule books, reflects a strengthening of rules regarding the safety of athletes suspected of having a concussion. This language reflects an increasing focus on safety and acknowledges that the vast majority of concussions do not involve a loss of consciousness.

This protocol is intended to provide the mechanics to follow during the course of contests and practices when an athlete sustains an apparent concussion.

1. The officials will have no role in determining concussion other than the obvious one where a player is either unconscious or apparently unconscious. Officials will merely point out to a coach that a player is apparently injured and advise that the player should be examined by a health care professional for an exact determination of the extent of injury.
2. If it is confirmed by the school’s designated health care professional that the student did not sustain a concussion, the head coach may so advise the officials during an appropriate stoppage of play and the athlete may reenter competition pursuant to the contest rules.
3. If a student is removed during practice by a coach or other staff member, he or she shall not return to practice that day unless it is confirmed by the designated health care professional that the student did not sustain a concussion.
4. Otherwise, if competition continues while the athlete is withheld for an apparent concussion, that athlete may not be returned to competition that day but is subject to the return to play protocol.
 - a. The clearance may not be on the same date on which the athlete was removed from play.
 - b. Only an M.D., D.O., Physician’s Assistant or Nurse Practitioner may clear the individual to return to activity.
 - c. The clearance must be in writing **and must be unconditional. It is not sufficient that the M.D., D.O., Physician’s Assistant or Nurse Practitioner has approved the student to begin a return-to-play progression. The medical examiner must approve the student’s return to unrestricted activity.**
 - d. Individual school, districts and leagues may have more stringent requirements and protocols including but not limited to mandatory periods of inactivity, screening and post-concussion testing prior or after to the written clearance for return to activity.
5. Following the contest, an Officials Report shall be filed with a removed player’s school and the MHSAA **if the situation was brought to the officials’ attention.**
6. **ONLINE REPORTING:** Member schools are required to complete and submit an online report designated by the MHSAA to record and track head injury events when they occur in all levels of all sports during the season in practices and competitions. Schools with no concussions for a season (fall, winter and spring) are required to report this at the conclusion of that season.
7. **POST-CONCUSSION CONSENT FORM:** Prior to returning to physical activity (practice or competition) the student and parent (if a minor student) must complete the Post-Concussion Consent Form which accompanies the written unconditional clearance of an M.D., D.O., P.A or N.P. **This form should be kept on file at the school for seven years after the student’s graduation and emailed to concussion@mhsaa.com.**
8. In cases where an assigned MHSAA tournament physician (MD/DO/PA/NP) is present, his or her decision to not allow an athlete to return to activity may not be overruled.

NON-COMPLIANCE WITH CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT POLICY

Following are the consequences for not complying with National Federation and MHSAA rules when players are removed from play because of a concussion:

- A concussed student is ineligible to return to any athletic meet or contest on the same day the concussion is sustained.
- A concussed student is ineligible to enter a meet or contest on a *subsequent day* without the written authorization of an M.D., D.O., Physician’s Assistant or Nurse Practitioner and the MHSAA-designated “Post-Concussion Return to Activity Consent Form” also signed by the student and parent.

These students are considered ineligible players and any meet or contest which they enter is forfeited.

In addition, that program is placed on probation through that sport season of the following school year.

For a second offense in that sport during the probationary period – that program is continued on probation through that sport season of the following school year and not permitted to participate in the MHSAA tournament in that sport during the original and extended probationary period. A school which fails to submit required online concussion reports will be subject to the penalties of Regulation V, Section 4 A. This includes reporting zero if no concussions occurred in a season.

Member School Concussion Reporting

Post-Concussion Return-to-Play Requirement: In addition to the written clearance from an MD, DO, PA or NP, signatures are also required of both students and their parents/guardians before the student can return to activity. It is also required that the Return to Activity & Post-Concussion Consent Form be emailed or faxed to the MHSAA and kept on file at the school for seven years following a student's high school graduation. The same form signed by the medical professional must then be signed by the student and parent before the student may return to activity. Students who participate without the required approvals are ineligible athletes.

The form is on the MHSAA website – Health and Safety – Return to Activity & Post-Concussion Consent Form. The reverse side of the form has information for parents on the MHSAA Concussion Care Gap Insurance that covers deductibles, copays and students with no insurance. The form also can be scanned at right.



SAMPLE -- MHSAA MEMBER SCHOOL CONCUSSION REPORTING -- SAMPLE

PRIMARY INFORMATION

- School and Reporting Individual & Title (AD, Coach, Athletic Trainer, Secretary, Other):
- Email and Primary Phone

STUDENT INFORMATION

- Grade, Gender, Age, Sport
- Level (Varsity, JV, Fr., Etc)
- Date and Time of Occurrence
- Event Occurrence: Practice or Contest

DETAILED INCIDENT INFORMATION

- Prior to this incident had the student ever been diagnosed with a concussion? Month/Year
- Was protective equipment worn on the head at the time of the event?
- Did the event result from (select one): person to person contact; person to object contact; person to ground contact; uncertain as to the cause of the event
- If during a practice (select one): During a drill; During simulated competition- scrimmage; Other
- If during a practice (select one): The event occurred near the start of practice; The event occurred near the middle of practice; The event occurred near the end of practice
- If during a contest (select one): The event occurred near the early portions of the contest; The event occurred near the middle; The event occurred near the end of the contest
- On what surface did the injury occur: Wooden gym floor, rubberized gym floor, wrestling-type mat, indoor tile type floor, carpeted floor, rubber weight room floor, artificial turf, natural grass, concrete, asphalt, other
- The student was initially examined at the time of the event by (select all that apply): Coach; Athletic Trainer; Athletic Director; Sideline Emergency Personnel; Other Appropriate Health Care Professional; MD; DO; NP; PA; Other; or Student was NOT initially examined at the time of the suspected head injury as the student did not disclose or present any signs or symptoms of concussion during the event
- Was the student removed from activity at the time of the injury?
- Did the student return to activity on the same day because a concussion did not occur?

FOLLOW-UP TO INITIAL CONCUSSION EVENT REPORT

- Was the student determined to have a concussion?
- The student was given a written authorization to return to activity by a: MD; DO; NP; PA
- Date of written authorization to return to activity:
- Please select the type of medical facility from which the authorization to return to activity was provided: Hospital; Urgent or ready care business; Primary care physician or pediatrician's office; Neurologist's office; Team Doctor; Other
- Were there comments or conditions written on the authorization to return to activity?
- How many days was this student absent from school as a result of this concussion event?
- The student was NOT given a written authorization to return to activity by the end of the season in which the event occurred (Dec 1, April 1 or July 1 or later).

Following completion of the required material above, schools will be provided the opportunity to describe any additional information regarding the incident occurrence, or follow-up to the incident.

MHSAA Return to Activity Form



RETURN TO ACTIVITY & POST-CONCUSSION CONSENT FORM

This form is to be used after an athlete is removed from and not returned to activity after exhibiting concussion symptoms. MHSAA rules require 1) Unconditional written authorization from a physician (MD/DO/Physician's Assistant/Nurse Practitioner), and 2) Consent from the student and parent/guardian. **Both Sections 1 & 2 of this form must be completed prior to a return to activity. This form must be kept on file at the school and emailed to Concussion@MHSAA.com or faxed to 517-332-4071.**

Student: _____ School: _____

Event/Sport: _____ Date of Injury: _____

1. Action of M.D., D.O., Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner

- **The clearance must be in writing and must be unconditional.** It is NOT sufficient that the M.D., D.O., Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner has approved the student to begin a return-to-activity progression, nor is it sufficient that the student is authorized to return pending the completion of a return-to-activity progression. The medical examiner must approve the student's return to unrestricted activity.
- Individual schools, districts and leagues may have more stringent requirements and protocols including but not limited to mandatory periods of inactivity, screening and post-concussion testing prior to or after the written clearance for return to activity.
- A school or health care facility may use a locally created form for this portion of the return-to-activity protocol, provided it complies with MHSAA regulations. (See MHSAA Protocol.)

☐ Permission is granted for the athlete to return to **unrestricted activity** (may not return to practice or competition on the same day as the injury).

SIGNATURE (must be MD or DO or PA or NP – circle one)

DATE: _____

Examiner's Name (Printed): _____

2. Post-Concussion Consent from Student and Parent/Guardian.

- I am fully informed concerning, and knowingly and voluntarily consent to, my/my child's immediate return to participation in athletic activities; I understand, appreciate, acknowledge, and assume the risks associated with such return to activity, including but not limited to concussions, and agree to comply with all relevant protocols established by my/my child's school and/or the MHSAA; and I/my child has been evaluated by, and has received written clearance to return to activity from an M.D., D.O., Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner.
- In consideration of my/my child's continued participation in MHSAA-sponsored athletics, I/we do hereby waive any and all claims, suits, losses, actions, or causes of action against the MHSAA, its members, officers, representatives, committee members, employees, agents, attorneys, insurers, volunteers, and affiliates based on any injury to me, my child, or any person, whether because of inherent risk, accident, negligence, or otherwise, during or arising in any way from my/my child's participation in an MHSAA-sponsored sport.
- I/we consent to the disclosure to appropriate persons, consistent with HIPAA and FERPA, of the treating medical examiner's written statement.

Student's Signature (Required): _____ Date: _____

*Parent/Guardian's Name: _____ *Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

**Required if student is less than 18 years of age.*

The Heart of the Matter: Potential Life-Saving Resources

From the Mayo Clinic:

Sudden cardiac arrest symptoms are immediate and drastic.

- Sudden collapse
- No pulse
- No breathing
- Loss of consciousness



Sometimes other signs and symptoms precede sudden cardiac arrest. These may include fatigue, fainting, blackouts, dizziness, chest pain, shortness of breath, weakness, palpitations or vomiting. But sudden cardiac arrest often occurs with no warning.

This page offers just some of the resources available to schools to encourage preparedness for such situations.

CPR Requirement FAQs

- | | |
|--|--|
| Q Which coaches are required to have CPR certification? | candidates of the necessary modifications for children and infants, and vice versa. |
| A Head coaches at all levels of high school and junior high/middle schools must have a valid current Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation certification by the established deadline for completion of the rules meeting, for the first sport in which the coach is a head coach during the school year. | Q Does an online course satisfy the requirement? |
| Q How expensive is the certification? | A Yes. While not as effective as face-to-face courses, an online course does satisfy the requirement. |
| A \$0 to \$95. | Q Is it necessary for varsity, junior varsity and 9th grade head coaches to also have training in AED? |
| Q How long does certification take? | A AED training is often a part of CPR certification and is preferred. |
| A Two to five hours. | |
| Q How long does the certification last? | |
| A Generally, two years | |
| Q Does the MHSAA specify the age level for the CPR training? | |
| A No. Generally, the course for adults alerts | |

Become a MI HEARTSafe School

If someone in your school community suffers a sudden cardiac arrest, would you know what to do? Did you know that early recognition of a cardiac arrest, calling 9-1-1, bystander response with hands-only CPR, and use of an AED greatly increase the chance of survival?



Important questions for schools to consider are:

- Does your school have a cardiac emergency response plan?
- How many students and staff can recognize the symptoms of cardiac arrest and know how to get help "on the way, right away"?
- Who knows CPR in your school and is ready to use it when necessary?
- Where are the automated external defibrillators (AEDs) located in your school building, are they properly maintained and inspected, and who knows how to use them?

The MI HEARTSafe Schools Award Program was developed to help schools be prepared for a cardiac emergency. Schools meeting the minimum criteria will be awarded the MI HEARTSafe School designation, receive a letter of commendation, and be spotlighted on our website, all at no cost to the school.

More than 330 schools and/or districts in Michigan have HEARTSafe status. The program provides valuable resources and training, and the price is right: free! The MHSAA encourages schools to join the list.

To apply for MI HEARTSafe School designation at no cost, download and follow the instructions on the application form at <https://migrc.org/Library/HEARTSafe.html>

CPR Requirement: Who Can Help?

The MHSAA does not dictate which organization or individual must provide CPR education and certification. However, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services lists the following organizations that are approved to provide CPR training:

American CPR Training	americancpr.com
American Heart Association	heart.org
American Red Cross	redcross.org
American Safety and Health Inst.	hsi.com
American Trauma Event Management	atem.us
American Health and Safety	asha_safety@sbcglobal.net
Emergency Care and Safety Institute	ecsinstitute.org
Emergency First Response Corp.	emergencyfirstresponse.com
EMS Safety Services, Inc.	smssafetysservices.com
Pro Trainings LLC	proftristaid.com

NFHS Course on Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)

The NFHS online course on sudden cardiac arrest is free and available by scanning the code at right.

This topic will again receive attention in the risk management portion of the required head coaches rules meetings this year.

The NFHS is also offerse many other health and safety courses linked from MHSAA.com and NFHSLearn.com.



MHSAA Model Policy for Managing Heat and Humidity

Adopted March 22, 2013

1. **Thirty minutes prior to the start of an activity, and again 60 minutes after the start of that activity**, take temperature and humidity readings at the site of the activity. Using a digital sling psychrometer is recommended. Record the readings in writing and maintain the information in files of school administration. Each school is to designate whose duties these are: generally the athletic director, head coach or certified athletic trainer.
2. **Factor the temperature and humidity into the Heat Index Calculator and Chart** to determine the Heat Index. If a digital sling psychrometer is being used, the calculation is automatic.

3. If the Heat Index is below 95 degrees:

All Sports

- o Provide ample amounts of water. This means that water should always be available and athletes should be able to take in as much water as they desire.
- o Optional water breaks every 30 minutes for 10 minutes in duration.
- o Ice-down towels for cooling.
- o Watch/monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.

If Heat Index is 95 to 99 degrees:

All Sports —

- o Provide ample amounts of water. This means that water should always be available and athletes should be able to take in as much water as they desire.
- o Optional water breaks every 30 minutes for 10 minutes in duration.
- o Ice-down towels for cooling.
- o Watch/monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.

Contact sports and activities with additional equipment:

- o Provide ample amounts of water. This means that water should always be available and athletes should be able to take in as much water as they desire.
- o Optional water breaks every 30 minutes for 10 minutes in duration.
- o Ice-down towels for cooling.
- o Watch/monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.

Contact sports and activities with additional equipment:

- o Helmets and other possible equipment removed while not involved in contact.

• **Reduce time of outside activity. Consider postponing practice to later in the day.**

- **Recheck temperature and humidity every 30 minutes to monitor for increased Heat Index.**

If Heat Index is 99 to 104 degrees:

All Sports —

- o Provide ample amounts of water. This means that water should always be available and athletes should be able to take in as much water as they desire.
- o Mandatory water breaks every 30 minutes for 10 minutes in duration.
- o Ice-down towels for cooling.
- o Watch/monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.
- o Alter uniform by removing items if possible.
- o Allow for changes to dry t-shirts and shorts.
- o Reduce time of outside activity as well as indoor activity if air conditioning is unavailable.
- o Postpone practice to later in the day.

Contact sports and activities with additional equipment:

- o If helmets or other protective equipment are required to be worn by rule or normal practice, suspend practice or competition immediately and resumption may not occur until the index is 99 degrees or below.

- **Recheck temperature and humidity every 30 minutes to monitor for increased Heat Index.**

If Heat Index above 104 degrees:

All Sports

- o **Stop all outside activity in practice and/or play, and stop all inside activity if air conditioning is unavailable.**

Note: When the temperature is below 80 degrees there is no combination of heat and humidity that will result in need to curtail activity.

— See Next page for Heat Index Chart —

HEAT INDEX CALCULATION AND CHART

Temperature (Fahrenheit)

Relative Humidity at Site

	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
100	84	87	91	95	99	103	107	112	116	121	126	132	137	143	149	155	161	168	174	181	188	195
99	84	87	91	94	98	102	106	111	116	120	125	131	136	142	147	153	160	166	172	179	186	193
98	84	87	90	94	98	102	106	110	115	120	124	130	135	140	146	152	158	164	171	177	184	191
97	84	87	90	94	97	101	105	110	114	119	124	129	134	139	145	151	157	163	169	176	182	189
96	83	87	90	93	97	101	105	109	113	118	123	128	133	138	144	149	155	161	167	174	180	187
95	83	86	90	93	97	100	104	108	113	117	122	127	132	137	142	148	154	160	166	172	179	185
94	83	86	89	93	96	100	104	108	112	116	121	126	131	136	141	147	152	158	164	170	177	183
93	83	86	89	92	96	99	103	107	111	116	120	125	130	135	140	145	151	157	162	169	175	181
92	83	86	89	92	95	99	103	106	111	115	119	124	129	133	139	144	149	155	161	167	173	179
91	83	86	89	92	95	98	102	106	110	114	118	123	127	132	137	143	148	154	159	165	171	178
90	83	86	88	91	95	98	102	105	109	113	117	122	126	131	136	141	147	152	158	164	170	176
89	83	85	88	91	94	98	101	105	109	113	117	121	125	130	135	140	145	151	156	162	168	174
88	83	85	88	91	94	97	101	104	108	112	116	120	125	129	134	139	144	149	155	160	166	172
87	83	85	88	91	94	97	100	104	107	111	115	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	159	164	170
86	83	85	88	90	93	96	100	103	107	110	114	118	123	127	132	136	141	146	152	157	163	168
85	83	85	87	90	93	96	99	102	106	110	113	117	122	126	130	135	140	145	150	155	161	167
84	83	85	87	90	93	96	99	102	105	109	113	117	121	125	129	134	139	144	149	154	159	165
83	82	85	87	90	92	95	98	101	105	108	112	116	120	124	128	133	137	142	147	152	158	163
82	82	85	87	89	92	95	98	101	104	108	111	115	119	123	127	132	136	141	146	151	156	162
81	82	84	87	89	92	94	97	100	104	107	110	114	118	122	126	131	135	140	144	149	155	160
80	82	84	86	89	91	94	97	100	103	106	110	113	117	121	125	129	134	138	143	148	153	158
79	82	84	86	89	91	94	96	99	102	106	109	113	116	120	124	128	133	137	142	146	151	157
78	82	84	86	88	91	93	96	99	102	105	108	112	115	119	123	127	131	136	140	145	150	155
77	82	84	86	88	90	93	96	98	101	104	108	111	115	118	122	126	130	135	139	144	148	153
76	82	84	86	88	90	93	95	98	101	104	107	110	114	117	121	125	129	133	138	142	147	152
75	82	84	85	88	90	92	95	97	100	103	106	109	113	116	120	124	128	132	136	141	145	150
74	82	83	85	87	90	92	94	97	100	103	106	109	112	116	119	123	127	131	135	140	144	149
73	82	83	85	87	89	91	94	96	99	102	105	108	111	115	118	122	126	130	134	138	143	147
72	82	83	85	87	89	91	93	96	99	101	104	107	111	114	117	121	125	129	133	137	141	146
71	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	96	98	101	104	107	110	113	116	120	124	127	131	136	140	144
70	81	83	85	86	88	90	93	95	98	100	103	106	109	112	116	119	123	126	130	134	138	143
69	81	83	84	86	88	90	92	95	97	100	102	105	108	111	115	118	122	125	129	133	137	141
68	81	83	84	86	88	90	92	94	97	99	102	105	108	111	114	117	121	124	128	132	136	140
67	81	83	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	99	101	104	107	110	113	116	120	123	127	131	135	139
66	81	82	84	86	87	89	91	93	96	98	101	103	106	109	112	115	119	122	126	129	133	137
65	81	82	84	85	87	89	91	93	95	98	100	103	105	108	111	114	118	121	125	128	132	136
64	81	82	84	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	102	105	108	110	114	117	120	123	127	131	135
63	81	82	84	85	87	88	90	92	94	97	99	101	104	107	110	113	116	119	122	126	130	133
62	81	82	83	85	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	101	103	106	109	112	115	118	121	125	128	132
61	81	82	83	85	86	88	90	91	93	96	98	100	103	105	108	111	114	117	120	124	127	131
60	81	82	83	84	86	88	89	91	93	95	97	100	102	105	107	110	113	116	119	123	126	129
59	81	82	83	84	86	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	102	104	107	109	112	115	118	122	125	128
58	81	82	83	84	85	87	89	90	92	94	96	99	101	103	106	109	111	114	117	120	124	127
57	80	81	83	84	85	87	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	103	105	108	111	113	116	119	123	126
56	80	81	83	84	85	86	88	90	92	93	95	98	100	102	105	107	110	113	115	118	122	125
55	80	81	82	84	85	86	88	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	104	106	109	112	114	117	120	124
54	80	81	82	83	85	86	87	89	91	93	94	96	99	101	103	106	108	111	114	116	119	123
53	80	81	82	83	84	86	87	89	90	92	94	96	98	100	103	105	107	110	113	116	118	121
52	80	81	82	83	84	86	87	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	107	109	112	115	117	120
51	80	81	82	83	84	85	87	88	90	91	93	95	97	99	101	104	106	108	111	114	116	119
50	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	88	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	108	110	113	115	118
49	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	88	89	91	92	94	96	98	100	102	105	107	109	112	115	117
48	80	81	81	82	84	85	86	87	89	90	92	94	96	97	100	102	104	106	109	111	114	116
47	80	81	81	82	83	85	86	87	88	90	92	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	108	110	113	115
46	80	80	81	82	83	84	86	87	88	90	91	93	95	96	98	100	103	105	107	109	112	114
45	80	80	81	82	83	84	85	87	88	89	91	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	109	111	114
44	80	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	88	89	91	92	94	96	97	99	101	103	106	108	110	113
43	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	89	90	92	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	107	109	112
42	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	90	91	93	95	96	98	100	102	104	106	109	111
41	79	80	81	82	82	83	85	86	87	88	90	91	93	94	96	98	100	101	104	106	108	110
40	79	80	81	81	82	83	84	85	87	88	89	91	92	94	95	97	99	101	103	105	107	109
39	79	80	81	81	82	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	93	95	97	98	100	102	104	106	108
38	79	80	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	89	90	91	93	95	96	98	100	102	104	106	108
37	79	80	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	90	91	93	94	96	97	99	101	103	105	107
36	79	80	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	91	92	94	95	97	99	100	102	104	106
35	79	80	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	92	93	95	96	98	100	102	104	106
34	79	79	80	81	82	82	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	93	94	96	98	99	101	103	105
33	79	79	80	81	82	82	83	84	85	86	87	89	90	91	93	94	96	97	99	101	102	104



Note: By its very nature, a “model” policy is intended to be flexible so that when it is being considered for local adoption, local authorities can factor in the details of their unique facilities and schedules as they prescribe the manner in which this heat and humidity management policy is implemented.

Remember that even with rigorous implementation of this policy, the need remains for supervising staff to provide for adequate hydration and rest breaks at all times and places, and to arrange for cooling devices and strategies that respond to heat illness emergencies.

1. Where do I find a device that automatically provides the heat index?

A Most health care professionals with whom schools work know about these devices, called digital psychrometers, and know where to obtain them. Many medical supply stores carry the devices. Even Home Depot does.

If you Google “Devices for measuring heat and humidity,” you will find many options.

The MHSAA has established a relationship with School Health. Place orders by phone, 866-323-5465, or by fax, 800-235-1305, or by email, orders@schoolhealth.com, or via Web, sportshealth.com. School Health accepts credit card or PO payments or can invoice schools. Discount pricing will be received by referring to the reference code for the particular item, MK90727 (Heat Watch) or MK61253.

2. If I don’t have a digital psychrometer that provides the heat index calculation, how do I get readings for temperature and relative humidity, and how do I calculate the heat index?

A A thermometer and humidity gauge will usually be necessary. Get each reading and then refer to the “Heat Index Calculation and Chart” to determine the heat index.

3. Are there cell phone applications that can be utilized?

A There are cell phone applications that can do the calculations. There are also applications that can provide the heat index at certain locations, but those locations are unlikely to be close enough to the actual site of the practice or event to be useful.

Readings will differ indoors and out, on hills or in valleys, on natural grass or artificial turf. These and other variables make it necessary for the person designated to record and file the readings to actually take those readings 30 minutes before and 60 minutes into the activity.

4. Where in the school should the readings be filed?

A They should be placed on a regular and frequent basis in files maintained in the office of the superintendent, principal or athletic director. Those files may be electronic. Coaches might record the readings on their written practice plans which schools should then keep on file.

5. Are there any MHSAA sports or any venues for which the policy is inapplicable?

A Every practice and competition in every sport at every venue is intended to be subject to the policy when the temperature at the venue nears 80°F.

In the case of swimming & diving, the risk is greater to spectators than participants, who compete in water that may be cooler than the air temperature. While most attention will be given to outdoor sports, do not neglect conditions at indoor venues, such as volleyball in facilities that are not air conditioned.

While most attention will be given to early fall and late spring activities, do not neglect conditions for winter sports, such as in the wrestling room.

Sometimes conditions will vary for different aspects of the same competition. For example, one tennis court may be in the shade, and another out of the wind. One part of a cross country course may be much hotter or more humid than other parts. The best course of action is to take the heat index at the place of the most severe conditions.

6. Who and what control when there are multiple devices and different heat index readings at a venue?

A Host management makes the decisions to suspend and to resume activity using those devices or systems usually relied upon at that venue.

7. After a heat index reading that would require delay or suspension of activities, is there a period of time that must pass before activities resume?

A No. Readings can be taken continuously during the delay or suspension of activities. When relief from high temperature and humidity is unlikely, local authorities should be implementing previously-considered contingency plans to relocate events to different venues or reschedule events to different days or times.

8. May a school decide to implement this model policy for practices but not regular season contests?

A Yes. However, MHSAA tournament managers will follow this policy for MHSAA tournament contests.

9. When the temperature at the site of the activity is less than 80°, do we need to check and record the heat and humidity?

A No. When the temperature is less than 80°, there is no combination of heat and humidity that will result in a need to curtail activity.

However, if the temperature is near 80°, it would be prudent to record that temperature in the usual way and to have a digital psychrometer programmed to alert you to increasing temperature or a heat index that prescribes precautions.

10. The Model Policy calls for a heat index reading 30 minutes before and 60 minutes into an activity. How frequently thereafter should the heat index be checked for half-day or day-long events?

A A reasonable expectation is to continue to check every 60 minutes while the temperature is 80°F or higher.



2026 NFHS Football Rules Changes

Committee Approves an Additional Option for Wearing Play Cards [1-5-3c(9)] — The committee has approved the wearing of play cards on both the forearm/wrist and belt areas of the body. The committee feels that the wearing of play cards on the belt poses no health risk issue to the player and poses no danger to the opponent.

Committee Gives Clarity to Illegal Personal Contact Actions Related to All Players (9-4-7) — In a concerted effort to clarify illegal personal contact actions as they relate to all players, the committee approved language to include the prohibition to apply equally to the offense and defense. By eliminating the words “defensive” and “blocker’s” from the rule prohibiting slapping an opponent’s head, the prohibition now applies to all players.

2026 EDITORIAL CHANGES

1-1-8; 1-3-5b; 1-5-1d(5)a - 4, 5; 1-5-3a(2); 2-15-1; 2-32-6; 3-5-7g; 4-1-3; 5-3-1; 5-3-2; 8-2-2; 8-2-3; 8-2-4; 8-2-5; 9-4-3p; 9-8 PENALTY; 10-4-2; 10-4-2b; 10-4-4a; 10-5-3; FOOTBALL FUNDAMENTALS – PENALTY MEASUREMENT (4); RESOLVING TIED GAMES – (3-1); SIX-PLAYER RULES DIFFERENCES; NFHS OFFICIAL FOOTBALL SIGNALS – (21).



2026 NFHS Football Points of Emphasis

FLAGRANT AND UNSPORTSMANLIKE FOULS

In high school football, flagrant fouls and unsportsmanlike fouls are serious rule violations that threaten player safety and the integrity of the game. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) places a strong emphasis on sportsmanship and risk minimization because players are still developing physically and emotionally. Game officials play a critical role in identifying and penalizing these fouls to ensure the game is played fairly, safely, and with respect for all participants.

Flagrant fouls are the most severe type of personal foul in high school football. These actions involve intentional, reckless or excessively violent behavior that shows a clear disregard for the safety of others. Flagrant fouls are fouls so severe or extreme that they place an opponent in danger of serious injury. They may also involve violations that are extremely or persistently vulgar or abusive. Examples include fighting, maliciously targeting the head or neck area, striking an opponent, or delivering a violent illegal blindside block or late hit. When a flagrant foul occurs, the penalty is 15 yards and automatic disqualification of the offending player. Removing players who commit flagrant fouls helps prevent serious injuries and stops situations from escalating into further violence.

In high school football (NFHS rules), unsportsmanlike fouls are non-contact fouls that violate standards of fair play, respect and sportsmanship, while personal fouls are fouls that involve illegal personal contact. Unsportsmanlike fouls are penalized even if they don’t directly affect the play, and while they may not be physically violent, they harm the tone of the game. Common examples include:

- taunting,
- threatening gestures or posturing,
- racist comments,
- trash talking,
- excessive or choreographed celebrations,
- aggressively spiking, spinning or throwing the ball high into the air,
- using profanity,
- spitting,
- arguing with game officials, or
- throwing equipment.

Unsportsmanlike fouls can be committed by players, coaches or other team personnel. Each unsportsmanlike foul results in a 15-yard penalty, and a player who commits two such fouls in one game is disqualified.

Game officials must consistently penalize both flagrant and unsportsmanlike fouls to maintain control of the game. When these actions go unpunished, players may feel emboldened to act more aggressively or disrespectfully, increasing the risk of fights and injuries. Proper enforcement sends a clear message that dangerous or unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated, helping to keep emotions



2026 NFHS Football Points of Emphasis

in check and the game orderly.

Penalizing flagrant and unsportsmanlike fouls is important because high school football is about more than winning; it is about teaching values such as respect, discipline, and responsibility. By enforcing these rules, game officials protect players, promote good sportsmanship, and set a positive example for young athletes. Consistent enforcement helps ensure that high school football remains a safe, competitive and educational experience for everyone involved.

HELPING THE RUNNER

Collegiate and professional football rules allow offensive players to pile in behind and directly push the runner. The “tush push” is an example of such a play often used at those levels. Although direct contact with the runner is illegal under NFHS rules, these plays are becoming more common in the high school game. As guardians of the game, it is imperative that all stakeholders work together to remove “illegally helping the runner” from our high school game.

Administrators, coaches and football game officials all have a responsibility to know, respect and teach/enforce the NFHS rules of high school football. Football is a vigorous, physical contact game and, for this reason, much attention is given to minimizing risk of injury to all players. Each respective rules code (NFL, NCAA and NFHS) has rules that coincide with the physical development of competing athletes and their goals for the game.

The NFHS Football Rules Committee focuses on minimizing risk and supporting a balance between offensive and defensive rules. Illegally helping the runner to assist forward progress presents a risk of injury to the runner and others. The additional momentum to a particular offensive player, as opposed to the pile, swings the balance toward the offense in a manner not intended by the rules.

Football game officials should be aware of ruling plays dead when a runner’s forward progress is clearly stopped, and they should penalize actions by offensive teammates who directly contact the runner and push, pull or lift the runner forward in a clear and obvious attempt to keep the runner’s progress moving forward.

Of course, not all contact with the runner is illegal. Game officials should observe and judge an offensive teammate’s actions and the runner’s progress to determine whether a foul for illegally helping the runner is warranted. Although a foul can occur on any play, game officials should especially be alert for this type of action on short-yardage plays near the goal line and line to gain. Remember, pushing the pile is legal; direct contact while pushing, pulling, lifting of the runner to assist forward progress is not.

The NFHS Coaches Code of Ethics states: “Coaches shall master the contest rules and shall teach the rules to their team members. Coaches shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules. Coaches have a tremendous influence, for good or ill, on the education of the student, and thus shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.”

If school administrators/athletic directors truly believe that activities are an extension of the classroom, they must be actively involved with programs they supervise and redirect coaches when they observe them teaching prohibited tactics.

Removing “illegally helping the runner” from high school football will, at times, be met with resistance, especially considering the visibility of this type of play at other levels of the game. School administrative support of football game officials, re-focus of coaches and education of players will lead to a smooth transition. All stakeholders must remain committed to trying to minimize risk to all players and maintain the balance between offensive and defensive play.

SIDELINE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Sideline management has become a recurring “point of emphasis” because it improves game safety by keeping game officials, players, coaching staff and other team personnel clear of the active game play areas. It promotes good sportsmanship and professionalism across all levels of play and also prevents unnecessary delays and confrontations that can impact game flow and fairness.

The sideline includes the team area and any restricted zones around the field where players and coaches stand during the game. Game officials expect this area to be organized and kept clear of unnecessary personnel. Coaches must remain in the designated team area when interacting with game officials, especially for rule discussions. Leaving that area to step onto the field or challenge calls results in an automatic unsportsmanlike conduct foul. Coaches are generally only allowed to step toward the sideline (into the working area, often a marked 2-yard border) to call offensive or defensive signals after play has stopped.

Game officials are instructed to strictly enforce NFHS Football Rules when the following behaviors are observed:

- Coaches or team personnel entering the field of play to dispute rulings or address game officials outside the coaching area.
- Prolonged or excessive celebrations or demonstrations that carry onto the field.
- Failing to maintain professional behavior. Coaches and team personnel are expected to set a standard for sportsmanship.
- Game officials shall call fouls for violations of sideline control when they are observed.
- Infractions such as approaching game officials with devices (e.g., to view or review video).

The following is a summary checklist for coaches/teams to follow during a game:



2026 NFHS Football Points of Emphasis

- Remain inside your team area for game official discussions.
- Only move toward the sideline after play is dead, and for signal/play calling.
- Keep non-essential personnel and spectators off the field level.
- Avoid approaching game officials during play or with electronic/video devices.
- Set a professional, sportsmanlike example for the entirety of the contest.

To minimize the risk of all involved, non-players (including substitutes, athletic trainers and coaches) must remain in their team box and out of any restricted areas, especially while the ball is live. Non-players may never be on the field while the ball is live and may only be on the field when the ball is dead in very limited situations. In the excitement of the game, it is not uncommon for substitutes and other non-players to move closer to the sideline beyond their team box area. This inevitably causes coaches to move up into restricted areas and closer to the field - often impeding game officials in their essential duties. Crowding at the sideline puts players, non-players, coaches and game officials in danger of severe injury. Game officials and coaches must be aware of this problem and take the necessary steps to prevent and correct these occurrences. Coaches, substitutes, athletic trainers and others affiliated with the team may be in their team's area, which is out-of-bounds and between the 25-yard lines (unless otherwise approved to be adjusted by state association adopted policy). Their movements and positions are limited by this designated area. The coaches' area extends at least a 2-yard depth out-of-bounds from the sideline. A maximum of three coaches – and only coaches – may be in this area when the ball is dead between plays. However, all coaches must leave this area when the ball is about to become live, such as when the snapper is approaching the ball, and no one may be in this area while the ball is live. The team box area is outside the field, beyond the restricted area and between the 25-yard lines. All coaches and non-players associated with the team may be in this area. A nonplayer may not be outside of this area unless to become a player or return as a replaced player.

When nonplayers are outside of the team box area, or anyone is in the restricted area while the ball is live, game officials will give a sideline warning to the team involved. A second offense results in a 5-yard penalty. All subsequent offenses result in 15-yard penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, which are charged to the head coach. If a game official unintentionally contacts a coach or other nonplayer in the restricted area while the ball is live, the team is assessed a 15-yard penalty for a nonplayer, illegal personal contact foul. As a nonplayer foul, the penalty is enforced from the succeeding spot. A second such offense would result in the head coach's disqualification. Unlike a foul for sideline interference (non-contact, Rule 9-8-1k or 9-8-3), no warning or 5-yard penalty is required in this situation.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE NFHS AUTHENTICATING MARK ON GAME BALLS

The NFHS Authenticating Mark ensures easy identification of inflated and non-inflated balls used in interscholastic competition for which the NFHS writes playing rules. All such balls are required to display the NFHS Authenticating Mark.

The use of conforming equipment is essential to the integrity of contests played under the NFHS rules. This mark helps to promote a level playing field by ensuring consistency in the equipment being used. The mark allows for the development of more sophisticated standards in balls and clearly communicates to administrators, coaches, and game officials that these standards are being met.

Non-compliance with these requirements will be reported to the state association for potential penalties, following the contest. Administrators and coaches play a pivotal role in making sure all inflated and noninflated balls meet these specifications. They must instill the importance of proper equipment use through consistent reinforcement during the pre-competition certification meeting and throughout the season. Game officials must also remain vigilant and report any non-compliant balls to the state association office.



MHSAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee Guidance

Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

Regulation II, Section 3 (D) – Emergency Action Plans Requirement: High schools must attest by each season’s established deadline that their high school sports coaches have emergency action plans (EAP) in place specific to sport and location – which are posted, dispersed, rehearsed, discussed, and documented within individual practice plans.

BENEFITS OF HAVING AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN:

- Provides a risk management strategy.
- Readily prepared for emergency situations.
- Ensures appropriate care is provided in a timely manner.
- Decreases the chance of legal action taking place.
- Protects liability of coach, school staff/administration, and medical providers.
- Leads to a more effective emergency response.
- Reducing further (or secondary) injury.

WHAT DOES AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (EAP) DO?

- The EAP provides information to ensure a response to an emergency is rapid, appropriate, and controlled. All personnel involved with the organization of athletic activities share a responsibility to ensure that guidelines are in place to manage any emergency that could arise. While being comprehensive, an EAP should also be flexible enough to be applicable to any emergency situation.
 - A documented, venue-specific athletic emergency action plan is the most effective way for schools to prepare for and respond to emergencies. It is important to formulate and implement a proactive, comprehensive venue-specific emergency action plan for each school venue which includes:
1. **Emergency personnel** – Describe the emergency team involved when the EAP is activated and the roles of each person.
 2. **Emergency communication**—Determine which communication devices are available, where, what number to call in an emergency, and specific information and directions to the venue to provide to the EMS response team.
 3. **Emergency equipment** – Determine where equipment is and how it can be accessed quickly. Access considerations should be made for weekends, evenings, and when administrative or healthcare personnel are not on site. Equipment needs to be maintained per manufacturer guidelines.
 4. **Emergency transportation** – Describe options and estimated response times for emergency transportation. Emergency responses via 911 are best provided by EMS services directly. Appropriate transportation options may be discussed in advance, as well as what initial care may need to be provided at the venue prior to the arrival of EMS services.
 5. **Venue directions with a map**—These directions should be specific to the venue and provide instructions for easy access. Parking should be monitored for blocked access.
 6. **Roles of first responders** – Activate the EAP by actively or designating the following responsibilities
 - Activation of EMS
 - Establish scene safety
 - Crowd/parental control
 - Team control/emotional care
 - Immediate care of the athlete
 - Equipment retrieval
 - Actively directing of EMS to the scene
 - If the institution maintains emergency transfer of care/insurance forms, they should be organized, accessible, and transparent to EMS in a timely fashion
 - First Responders should be mindful to properly care for, inform, and lead visiting teams when an EAP is activated
 - Present school employees and coaching staff should expect to be active participants in the EAP



7. **Action plans for non-medical emergencies** – These emergencies can refer to the school emergency action plan for lightning, fire, severe weather, school safety, etc. In the event that teams need to be removed from the venue, a safe, predetermined location needs to be available. First Responders should be mindful to properly inform and lead visiting teams when an EAP is activated.
8. **Distribution of the EAP** – The EAP should be distributed to all athletic staff members and healthcare professionals who will or may provide medical care during practices, games, and/or other events on-site.
9. **After-action report** – This should be completed after an EAP rehearsal and/or following any actual emergency event.
10. **Yearly rehearsal** - At a minimum, a yearly rehearsal should be held, and it should include pertinent school staff and onsite medical providers. Documentation of this rehearsal and those in attendance should be maintained.
11. **Appraisal** - A year-end appraisal/review/evaluation should include an objective review of EAPs and all pertinent school staff involved. Local EMS should be included as necessary and as available. Documentation of this appraisal should be maintained and distributed to all stakeholders.

Statement of Air Quality and Sport Participation Policy

Recent fires and smoke from outside our state continue to raise questions regarding safe participation in sports and practice for young athletes. This position statement serves as a resource to coaches, administrators, parents, and students who have questions about participation in outdoor activity during periods of diminished air quality for MHSAA member schools.

A valid and reliable standardized national air quality resource is the National Weather Service (NWS) Air Quality Forecast System. This system provides constant monitoring of ozone, particulate matter, and pollutants with accurate and advanced notice to prevent the adverse effects of decreased air quality. The key component of the standardized air quality resource is the NWS Air Quality Index (AQI). The AQI is reported as a single number based on a scale of 0 to 500 with 0 being completely safe and 500 indicating the most hazardous levels of air pollution.

The MHSAA offers the following guidance to institutions seeking to make decisions about the appropriateness of practice or competition in questionable air quality situations. MHSAA recommends following these guidelines. If specific guidelines have not yet been provided, the following are useful guidelines consistent with NCAA and NFHS position statements on air quality.

1. Monitoring of local AQI and associated air quality alerts, especially during times of extreme environmental conditions is recommended. Advice and monitoring is best done by the primary athletics health care providers (athletic trainers, school nursing staff, team physicians) who have training in such monitoring. Schools may choose to delegate this responsibility to a staff member with knowledge of AQI.
2. At AQI values **above 150**, local host consideration should be given to shortening, delaying, modifying, rescheduling the activity or moving it indoors if possible. Prolonged exposure and heavy exertion should be reduced, shortened or even avoided.
3. At AQI values **above 200**, outside events should be rescheduled, postponed or cancelled.

School Emergency Action Plans may guide the emergency care response in these circumstances and the staff should be made aware of this plan. The Preparticipation Physical Examination for Sport will be used as a tool to identify students at risk for smoke inhalation exposure such as asthma, cardiac disease, and respiratory disease. Emphasize to student-athletes that the wearing of masks, such as for protection against COVID-19, does not protect against exposure to hazardous air quality. Consequently, wearing masks will not allow competition or practices when AQI is at hazardous levels.

There are now validated online applications to smartphones which can track not only AQI in a town or city, but also AQI regionally near each neighborhood within each town or city. The MHSAA recommends using the www.airnow.gov application for this purpose. The AQI may even be checked periodically during a day of competition or practice in case of changing conditions. The application was created with the collaboration of the Environmental Protection Agency and contains not only air quality data but also current fire conditions, webcams, and email notifications consistent with local and regional up-to-date conditions.

References

1. *Air Quality Position Statement*. NCAA Sports Science Institute, Sept 2018
2. *NFHS Position Statement on Physical Activity, Air Quality, and Wildfires*, April 2019
3. *US Environmental Protection Agency*. Air Now website www.airnow.gov