



September 30, 2026

NFHS Field Hockey Weekly Rule Interpretations

Authenticating Mark

Rule Reference: 1-3-4

Purpose: The purpose of this interpretation is to explain why the NFHS Authenticating Mark matters and what officials and schools must do when a ball does not have the mark. The authenticating mark is a simple way to show that the ball is approved for use in competition under NFHS rules. In elementary terms, the mark tells everyone, “This ball is acceptable for this level of play.” Without the mark, officials cannot confirm that the ball meets the required standard. This interpretation helps coaches, administrators and officials understand that equipment compliance is part of fair and consistent competition.

Rule Language: Game balls used in interscholastic competition for which NFHS writes playing rules must display the NFHS Authenticating Mark. If a ball does not have the required mark, it is non-compliant and shall be reported to the state association for potential penalties following the contest.

Interpretation: The authenticating mark requirement is not difficult to apply, but it must be taken seriously. Officials should inspect the ball before the contest and confirm that the mark is present. Coaches and administrators should make sure legal balls are available before game day. If the ball does not have the mark, the issue should not be ignored. The official should follow the required reporting process after the contest. This requirement helps prevent teams from using balls that may be inconsistent in size, weight, construction or performance. It also creates one standard for all schools, so contests are played with compliant equipment.

Game Scenario: SITUATION 1: Before the contest, the officials inspect the game ball. The ball appears usable, but it does not display the NFHS Authenticating Mark. **RULING:** The ball is non-compliant and must be reported to the state association for potential penalties following the contest. **COMMENT:** The ball may look acceptable, but the rule requires the authenticating mark. Officials should not rely only on appearance or feel when the rule requires a specific mark.

In another situation, the home team provides several balls. One ball has the NFHS Authenticating Mark and another does not. **RULING:** The compliant ball should be used. The non-compliant ball should not be

used as the game ball and should be addressed through the proper reporting process if required.

COMMENT: Having one compliant ball available does not make every ball legal. Each ball used for competition should meet the rule requirement.

Points of Emphasis for Officials and Coaches: Officials should include the authenticating mark in the pregame equipment check. Coaches should inspect equipment before the season and again before contests to avoid preventable issues. Administrators should purchase and provide balls that meet NFHS requirements. Players should understand that game equipment is not selected only by preference; it must comply with the rules. The simplest explanation is: if the ball is going to be used in the game, it must have the NFHS Authenticating Mark. Consistent enforcement protects fairness, supports rule compliance and avoids confusion at the start of the contest.