

**OKLAHOMA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION**  
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**Web Site [www.ossaa.com](http://www.ossaa.com)**

TO: Head High School Football Coach

FROM: Trinity Johnson, Associate Director

SUBJECT: 2025-26 School Year Football

DATE: July 2025

Enclosed is the 2025 National Federation High School Football Rules Book, plus additional related information within this memorandum. Please go to our football page of our website ([www.ossaa.com](http://www.ossaa.com)) for additional information.

**BEGINNING AND ENDING OF FOOTBALL SEASON**

The football season shall open officially in week nine on the OSSAA calendar. Varsity games for students in grades nine through twelve must be scheduled on that week. Junior High and junior varsity teams may schedule games on earlier days during week 9 (week 9 begins **Monday, September 1**). Varsity teams may choose to open their season on the weekend of week eight on the OSSAA calendar (**Thursday, August 31, Friday, September 1, or Saturday September 2**). Schools who choose to open their season during week eight (Zero-Week) will be limited to one inter-school scrimmage (week 8 begins **Monday, August 26**.)

The football season for member schools, school personnel, and players shall close on Saturday of week eighteen on the OSSAA calendar, except for those teams having elimination games following week eighteen, whose season shall close with their last elimination game. **An individual who has represented his/her school during the current season shall not participate in football unattached or as a member of a team for the remainder of the school year.**

In case of death, impassable roads, or extreme weather conditions, a game that is postponed with no date open to play the postponed game, the Board of Directors shall have jurisdiction in deciding whether the season shall be extended.

**PRACTICE REGULATIONS**

- A. A school team may begin practice without pads on Monday of week 6 of the OSSAA calendar. Practice shall not be permitted on Sundays during the pre-season practice period. For the 2025 season, practice without pads may begin on Monday, **August 11**.
- B. For the 2025 season, practice with pads may begin on Friday, **August 15**.
- C. Schools must have a minimum of three days of conditioning without pads immediately preceding the beginning of practice with pads.
- D. During the first four days of the pre-season training period, the only protective equipment to be used are helmets. Players **shall not** participate in drills that are designed to cause direct contact with another person. There must be a form of protection between any player and incidental contact. Training devices such as air and stand-up dummies, tackling wheels, or blocking shields, which are non-attached, as well as, tires, ropes, boards, and any other equipment not requiring body contact, **may be used**.

**EXTREME HEAT POLICY (Pending Board Approval August 13, 2025)**

The OSSAA recognizes that exertional heat related illness is the leading cause of preventable death in high school students participating in activities. The Board adopted the following policies:

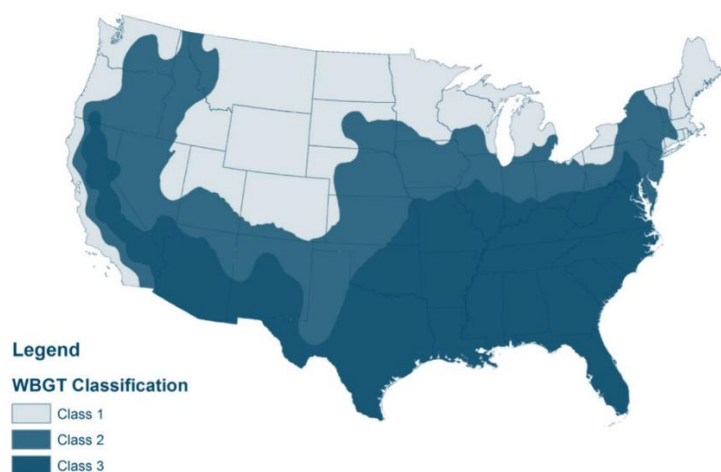
- All athletic coaches are required to view *A Guide to Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention* at [www.NFHSLearn.com](http://www.NFHSLearn.com), annually. A certificate of completion shall be kept on file for each coach or Marching Band Director at the member school. All marching band staff must view the Band Safety course on [www.NFHSLearn.com](http://www.NFHSLearn.com).
- Preseason practice shall be limited to 2 ½ hours per session with a minimum of one hour between practice sessions. No more than 5 hours of practice per 24-hour period will be allowed. There will be no physical activity during the one-hour rest period. Any time a coach is present during football practice, the time will count toward the maximum 5 hours, except for strength training.
- If a practice session is interrupted by inclement weather or heat restrictions, and it is required the session be divided for the good of the student-athlete's welfare the total practice time for the interrupted session may not exceed 2 ½ hours.
- When multiple practices are conducted in the same day, it is required that either practice not exceed 2½ hours in length and students do not participate in more than five total hours of practice activities, including walk-through sessions. Warm-up, stretching, cool down and conditioning activities are included as part of the practice time.
- Practices should be separated by at least one hour, where there is no physical activity between the end of the first practice and the beginning of the second practice.

## Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) Policy

Wet Bulb Globe Temperatures (WBGT) guidelines dictate modifications in activity (work: rest ratios, hydration breaks, equipment worn, length of practice) at given WBGT temperatures to prevent Exertional Heat Stroke. The below table represents modified guidelines regarding:

1. The scheduling of practices at appropriate WBGT levels
2. The ratio of workout time to time allotted for rest and hydration at various WBGT levels.
3. The WBGT levels at which practice, and workout conditions should be terminated.
4. OSSAA member schools shall utilize WBGT to monitor practice and workout conditions and modify activity as outlined in the chart below:

WBGT Activity Guidelines		
Region 2	Region 3	Activity Guidelines
< 79.7	< 82.0	Normal Activities – Provide at least 3 separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 3 min each during the activity.
79.7 – 84.6	82.0 – 86.9	Use discretion for intense prolonged exercise; Provide at least 3 separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each.
84.7 – 87.6	87.0 – 90.0	Maximum practice time is 2 hours. FOR FOOTBALL: Players are restricted to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice. If the WBGT rises to this level during practice, players may continue to work out wearing football pants without changing into shorts. FOR ALL SPORTS: Provide at least 4 separate rest breaks each hour with a minimum duration of 4 min each.
87.7 – 89.7	90.1 – 92.0	Maximum practice time is 1 hour. FOR FOOTBALL: No protective equipment may be worn during practice, and there may be no conditioning activities. FOR ALL SPORTS: There must be 20 min of rest breaks distributed throughout the hour of practice.
> 89.8	> 92.1	No outdoor activity. Delay activity until a cooler WBGT is reached.



### WBGT Means and Methods of Measurement when practices are outside in WBGT of 82.0 or higher.

OSSAA member schools shall utilize a scientifically approved instrument that measures WBGT or other scientifically proven methods, such as an internet-based weather station software or application, to monitor the WBGT.

- Devices, internet-based weather stations, mobile applications
- Kestrel 5400
- Perry Weather, Earth Networks, or other onsite weather station services measuring WBGT.
- <https://www.mesonet.org/weather/human-comfort/wet-bulb-globe-temperature-risk>

- <https://www.convergence.unc.edu/tools/wbgt>
- Zelus WBGT (phone app)
- Heat Safety: Heat Index & WBGT (phone app)

If utilizing an on-site instrument, the instrument should be set up 30 minutes prior to practice and should be read 15 minutes prior to the start of practice.

If utilizing an internet-based application, the WBGT should also be checked at the 15-minute mark prior to practice. WBGT readings should be taken every 30 minutes during practice.

When there is a change in WBGT from one level to the next, responsible modifications to practice activities should be made based on the above WBGT Activity Guidelines.

It is required that schools record and keep on file the WBGT temperatures associated for outside practices. This should be done before and during outside practices.

Practices are defined as the time that a participant engages in a coach/director-supervised, school-approved sport. “Practice” means the act of school personnel directly or indirectly giving individual or team instruction concerning fundamentals, conditioning activities, training, and workouts.

Practices are timed from when players report to the outside practice/workout area until the players leave the area.

### **Plans & Procedures for the Prevention of Exertional Heat Related Illness**

Each member school’s emergency action plan must include procedures to address exertional heat emergencies that include onsite rapid cooling using cold-water immersion or equivalent means.

Rapid cooling zones must be available for each outdoor athletic and marching band contest, practice, workout, or conditioning session that is held in WBGT of 82.0 degrees or higher. Rapid cooling zones are required to have immediate availability of cold-water immersion tubs or tarps that can be filled with ice and water and wrapped around individuals to rapidly cool internal body temperature (TACO method) and are encouraged to include a combination of the following options: ice sponges, towels, water misters, and shade. The presence of an employee or volunteer trained to administer cold-water immersion is recommended.

Coaches must adopt a heat injury prevention philosophy by always promoting unrestricted access to water and a student-athlete should never be denied access to water.

Rest breaks must involve unlimited hydration intake and rest without any activity involved.

For football, helmets should be removed during rest time.

### **Competitions & Modifications to Competitions**

WBGT practice guidelines and limitations do not apply to OSSAA competitions, but it is recommended that schools monitor WBGT conditions prior to and during the competition and use appropriate recommendations for modifying these types of contests.

Any contest played in WBGT of 82.0 degrees or higher must always have a rapid cooling zone on site and available to allow for full body, rapid cooling of athletes experiencing exertional heat illness.

It is recommended that additional appropriate and responsible modifications to contests are made as needed to keep participants safe.

Modifications that potentially can be made include but are not limited to:

#### **Football:**

- If kick off WBGT is in the **RED** (90.1 – 91.9) – A mandatory hydration break should take place at approximately the 6-minute mark of each quarter until the WBGT level is ORANGE (87.1-90.0)
- The hydration break will last 3 minutes, and all players will remove their helmets and go to the sideline for a break. No coaches allowed on the field.
- **If kick off WBGT is in the BLACK (>92.1)** – A mandatory hydration break should take place at approximately the 4 and 8-minute mark of each quarter until WBGT levels fall into ORANGE (87.1-90.0) level.
- The hydration break will last 3 minutes, and all players will remove helmets and go to the sidelines. No coaches allowed on the field.

## **EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

Any time a member school is hosting a planned activity at a school facility there must be an Emergency Action Plan in place. The plan must be shared with any visiting school. An Emergency Action Plan, or EAP, is a formal written plan, developed by the host site, that identifies potential emergency conditions at the event site and prescribes the procedures to be followed to minimize or prevent loss of life and property.

## **MATERIALS USED TO MARK PLAYING FIELDS**

It is the responsibility of the host school to meet all rule-book specifications for marking athletic fields. All lines shall be marked with non-caustic material. Neither lime, hydrated lime, other chemical derivatives of lime, nor non-caustic material of any kind may be used.

Failure to be in complete compliance with the above, or any safety rule or regulation, could result in a game forfeiture by the host school, or it could eliminate the possibility of the school hosting play-off contests.

Powdered gypsum, calcium carbonate, and liquid aerosol paint designated for marking playing fields and containing only non-toxic material, meet the specifications or qualifications for marking playing fields.

PLEASE CAREFULLY CHECK MATERIALS THAT ARE BEING USED FOR MARKING PLAYING FIELDS.

## **2025-26 OSSAA FOOTBALL MANUAL:**

The 2025-26 OSSAA Football Manual contains information that you will need throughout your season and is posted on-line on the OSSAA football page. Please carefully review it with your staff, as it should provide answers to most of your questions. Do not hesitate to call if you have questions that you could not find answers to in the manual. **The manual can be found online at [www.ossaa.com](http://www.ossaa.com) on the football page.**

## **CONTACT PRACTICE**

From the start of the limited practice through the close of the season, school teams are limited to a maximum of 90 minutes per week of "full contact" practice. "Full Contact" is considered "Thud" or "Live Action" drills as defined by USA Football "levels of contact". Those levels of contact consist of the following definitions:

- 1.) **Air**- Players run a drill unopposed without contact.
- 2.) **Bags**- Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.
- 3.) **Control**- Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact: one player is pre-determined "winner" by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet.
- 4.) **Thud**- Drill is run at competitive speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined "winner". Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.
- 5.) **Live Action** - Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.

## **MANDATORY EQUIPMENT:**

In your 2025 National Federation Football Rules Book, please review Rule 1-5-1. This article and section of the rules book deals with mandatory equipment. **MAKE SURE** that your players have mandatory and legal equipment. You cannot pay too much attention to this issue. Illegal equipment is covered in Rule 1-5-3.

## **GAME OFFICIALS:**

It is a requirement of the OSSAA that all game officials provide their name and OSSAA identification number to the head coaches of the respective schools involved in a game. The referee of a football officiating crew should present the crew's names and OSSAA identification numbers to the head coaches of each school during his/her pre-game conference with the head coaches. This includes junior high, sophomore, junior varsity, and varsity games. If the game officials do not offer this information to you, please ask the referee of the crew for it. You will need this information during the season if a problem arises with an official(s). You will also need this information to evaluate the officials after each game.

The most recent list of eligible officials is available on-line (ossaa2026 is the login code). By providing the list on line your school will have the most up-to-date information regarding eligible 2025-26 school year football officials. Using a game official who is not eligible for the 2025-26 school year puts a school in a possible liability situation and jeopardizes the catastrophic insurance provided member participants in grades 9-12. Please do not take any chances.

If you need to file a report on an official during the season, you can find the instructions to do so on our web page, [www.ossaa.com](http://www.ossaa.com). Click on the "Sports" tab, then click on the "Football" tab and scroll down to "Information about Officials".

**IT IS UNETHICAL FOR A COACH TO CONTACT A GAME OFFICIAL BY PHONE TO CRITICIZE HIS/HER OFFICIATING. THIS WILL BE VIEWED BY THE ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION AS UNSPORTSMANLIKE BEHAVIOR AND WILL BE DEALT WITH THROUGH YOUR SCHOOL'S ADMINISTRATION.**

**NOT HONORING A PROTEST** OSSAA will not consider requests to overturn the determinations of game/contest officials in interpreting or enforcing rules at games or contests. In agreeing to participate in a game or contest, a member school, and the individual participants and the coaches or sponsors representing that member school, accept the risk that game/contest officials may make errors in interpreting or enforcing rules at games of contests. Any errors by game/contest officials should be raised with those officials, in a respectful manner, and in accordance with the rules established for that particular activity. The decisions of the game/contest officials are accepted as final.

An exception to this Policy may be granted if in the case of an ejection of a participant from a contest, the game/contest official misidentifies the individual who should have been ejected. The request to review the misidentified player must be submitted to the OSSAA in writing.

**OSSAA FIGHTING/CURSING/FOUL LANGUAGE RULE:**

**PLEASE TAKE TIME TO REVIEW THIS POLICY WITH YOUR PLAYERS BEFORE THE START OF THE SEASON AND SEVERAL TIMES THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THE SEASON.**

A. A student who is disqualified during a game or contest because of a flagrant foul or unsportsmanlike conduct shall be ineligible. When an ejection occurs for unsportsmanlike conduct, the sit-out period will be a minimum of 4 quarters, beginning with the subsequent quarter after the ejection. If the ejection occurs at the end of a season and there are not enough contests left in the activity for the season to satisfy the sit out period, then the student shall sit out an appropriate number of contests in the next activity in which the student participates. If the student is a senior and there are not enough contests left in the activity for the season to satisfy the sit out period, then the student shall sit out an appropriate number of contests in the next activity in which the student participates.

B. A student whose flagrant or unsportsmanlike conduct consists of cursing or using foul language toward a game official will be automatically suspended from participating in a minimum of the next two regularly scheduled games or contests on the same level of competition that his/her team plays. In football, a student ejected for fighting will be suspended for a minimum of 4 quarters at the same level of play, beginning with the quarter following the quarter in which the ejection occurred. The suspension may be extended for extreme acts of unsporting conduct. Fighting is defined, but is not limited to any player or non-player (bench personnel) striking an opponent with arm(s), leg(s), foot (feet), or other object(s); attempting to strike an opponent with arm(s), leg(s), foot (feet), or other object(s), regardless if there is contact with an opponent; or instigating a fight by committing an act(s) that causes an opponent to retaliate by fighting related to an OSSAA sponsored activity in which the players and non-players are participating. A player or non-player who retaliates by fighting is in violation of the fighting rule. The fighting rule will apply to pre-contest and post-contest sponsored activities. It is mandatory that all head coaches remind his/her team that fighting during the post-game hand shaking ceremonies or conducting themselves in an unsportsmanlike manner after the game will be severely penalized. The head coach and team will be subject to additional suspension penalties beyond the normal penalties imposed on fighting and unsportsmanlike acts that occur during the contest. Injuries have occurred because of fans climbing over walls and fences, being trampled, or partaking in dog-pile celebrations, etc., at the conclusion of a contest. Therefore, school administrators should be aware that if their student body and fans come onto the playing area after a contest, penalties may be imposed. Any substitute or team member, who leaves the team bench (football player leaving the team box, baseball or softball player leaving the dugout, basketball player or wrestler leaving the team bench, etc.) and enters the playing area during a fight or any other serious unsportsmanlike act, shall be ejected. Those players or team members identified by game officials, school administrators, or video tape will be suspended a minimum of one game if they were not involved in the altercation and a minimum of two games if they participated in the altercation. This rule applies to both regular season and play-off games. The suspension applies to individuals/teams on the same level of competition, i.e., varsity to a varsity game, junior varsity to a junior varsity game, etc. Any additional penalties by the National Federation Rule Book and OSSAA Rules and Regulations Handbook would also apply. The rule will apply to all OSSAA sponsored activities. Any student involved directly or indirectly for fighting or any other serious unsportsmanlike act a second time during a season shall be suspended for the remainder of the season.

**Any student ejected directly or indirectly for fighting or any other serious unsportsmanlike act a second time during the season shall be suspended for the remainder of the season.**

NOTE: Game officials do not have the authority to determine the penalty for flagrant or unsportsmanlike conduct. They report the incident to the OSSAA and the OSSAA makes the determination on the penalty.

**COACH'S EJECTION**

Any coach who is ejected from an interscholastic game, meet, or contest shall be suspended from coaching the next regularly scheduled game, meet, or contest (same team and level) in which the team participates. This includes all OSSAA sponsored

and play-off activities. A coach who has been suspended from coaching may attend the contest, but he/she must be seated in the spectator area and may not give instructions to the players or the individual who has been assigned to coach the team anytime during the contest including half time. The coach may not coach directly or indirectly in any capacity. The coach may not enter the dressing room at half time nor will he/she be allowed to be on the court, field, etc., before or during the contest. **The suspended coach must also complete the NFHS “Teaching and Modeling Behavior” course within seven days of the ejection before he/she can be reinstated.** Any coach who is ejected from a contest a second time during the same activity season shall be suspended from coaching until reinstated by the OSSAA Board of Directors. NOTE: The ejected coach is not to be seated in the press box during the game.

Any time a coach who does not hold a valid Oklahoma teaching certificate (lay or volunteer coach) is ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct, including but not limited to arguing a call, language or gestures directed toward a game official, he or she will be required to complete the NFHS Teaching and Modeling Behavior course within seven (7) days of the ejection, the course can be found at NFHSLearn.com. Additionally, personnel not holding a valid Oklahoma teaching certificate must meet with a representative of the OSSAA prior to being reinstated to coach the school team. A school administrator will also be required to attend the meeting.

#### **SCRIMMAGE:**

Before the opening date of the regular season, member schools and individual students are limited to two inter-school scrimmage dates. **Schools who choose to open their season during week eight (Zero-Week) will be limited to one inter-school scrimmage.** For any scrimmage, there shall be no kick-off nor return of other kicks. Coaches must be on the field, and they shall be responsible for the supervision and administration of the scrimmage. **ALL OSSAA RULES AND REGULATIONS REGARDING UNSPORTSMANLIKE ACTS INCLUDING THE FIGHTING/CURSING RULE AND NATIONAL FEDERATION PLAYING RULES APPLY TO SCRIMMAGES.**

#### **PARTICIPATION:**

A student may participate in a maximum of two football games during a week (Monday thru Sunday). A student in uniform with his/her team shall be considered as having participated.

#### **PHYSICALS AND PARENT CERTIFICATES:**

No pupil shall be eligible to represent his/her school in athletics until there is on file with the principal a physical examination and parental consent form. The form used shall contain the information on the standard OSSAA form. Other forms may be utilized by the physician, physician’s assistant, or the advanced practice nurse, if the information contained is compliant with the information on the OSSAA form. Any other information depicting the athlete’s previous history can be added to this form for the purpose of clearance for athletic participation. A qualified physician, physician’s assistant, or an advanced practice nurse covered by professional liability insurance, shall give the physical examinations. If you have any questions concerning the qualifications or the insurance coverage of a health care practitioner offering to give examinations, it is suggested that you check with your school district attorney for an opinion. Physical examinations are required for students each year. All physicals given for OSSAA participation must be given no earlier than May 1 of the preceding year in which the students are to participate and before the first day of practice in that student’s particular sport. The physical will be valid from the date of the physical given until the next required physical. Parent(s) or guardian(s) must sign the parental consent form each year before the pupil participates in any organized athletic practice session including contest participation.

#### **CONCUSSION INFORMATION**

We have detailed information regarding head trauma. There is specific information designed to inform the coach, student, and parent on the sports medicine tab of our website. You can find the Concussion Form on the Sports Medicine tab or your respective activity page on OSSAA.com.

We also ask that you post these in locker rooms, dugouts etc. There is also a return to learn and return to play document that should be distributed to participants, parents, teachers and administrators.

#### **ON-LINE RANKING PROGRAM**

The OSSAA has an on-line ranking program for use by school administrators, coaches, and the general public. The program is accessible at the OSSAA website, ([www.ossaa.com](http://www.ossaa.com)).

For the sports of Football, Fall Baseball, Spring Baseball, Basketball, Fast-Pitch Softball, Slow-Pitch Softball, Volleyball, Soccer, and Wrestling (all match scores and team results of invitational tournaments) and Golf (team score), it is mandatory that results from each regular season contest be entered into the ranking program within 24 hours of the conclusion of the contest throughout the season. Once any athletic activity, with the exception of Cross Country, Swimming, Track and Field, Tennis, enters the play-series for that activity, those results must also be entered within 24 hours of the conclusion of the play-off contest.



**Any coach failing to report the score within 24 hours of the conclusion of a contest will initially be notified in writing of his or her failure to comply by OSSAA Staff. A copy of that correspondence will be sent to the coach's school administrator as well. A second incident of failure to report will result in the coach being placed on warning for a period of one year. A third and each subsequent failure to report will result in the suspension of the coach for the next contest.**

#### **STATE RULES MEETING REQUIREMENTS FOR COACHES:**

Each head coach of all varsity teams shall attend an OSSAA state rules meeting for that sport for the current school year. If the head coach does not attend a meeting, an online rules meeting is available at [www.ossaa.com](http://www.ossaa.com). **Written verification of the online rules meeting must be submitted to the OSSAA. All head coaches of fall activities must complete their state rules meeting by September 1<sup>st</sup>, all head coaches of winter activities must complete their state rules meeting by December 1<sup>st</sup>, and all head coaches of spring activities must complete their state rules meeting by March 1<sup>st</sup>.** The penalty for failure to attend a state rules meeting or to complete an online rules meeting and proper documentation submitted to the OSSAA office by the prescribed deadlines, will result in the school suspending the head coach for all interscholastic competition until the coach is in compliance and proper documentation has been submitted and verified by the OSSAA. **There will be a ZOOM meeting on August 6, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. If you are unable to attend the meeting via ZOOM, you may view the meeting on the Football page of OSSAA.com on or after August 9.**

#### **TIMING RULE FOR SUB-VARSITY HIGH SCHOOL AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL GAMES:**

The OSSAA Board of Directors unanimously voted to use the following timing rule for sub-varsity high school and junior high school games during the 2025 football season:

The clock shall start for a period:

- a. If a period begins with a free kick when the kick is touched, other than first touching by K.
- b. If a period begins with a snap, when the ball is legally snapped.

The clock shall start with the ready-for-play signal for situations other than a free kick if the clock was stopped:

- a. For an official's time-out.
- b. Because the ball has become dead following any foul provided in either (a) or (b).
  1. There has been no charged time-out during the dead ball interval.
  2. The down is not an extension of a period or a try.
  3. The action which caused the down to end did not also cause the clock to be stopped.
- c. Because of an inadvertent whistle.

The clock shall start with the snap or when any free kick is touched, other than first touching by K, if the clock was stopped because of the following:

- a. The ball goes out-of-bounds.
- b. A fair catch is made.
- c. A fair catch is awarded.
- d. The ball became dead behind the goal line.
- e. A forward pass is incomplete.
- f. A request for a charged or television/radio time-out is granted.
- g. A period ends.
- h. A team attempts to consume time illegally.
- i. The penalty for a delay of game foul is accepted.

NOTE: In high school varsity games, the National Federation Football timing rule will be used.

### **EDUCATION-BASED ACTIVITY PROGRAMS**

The National Federation of State High School Associations and the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association recognize the numerous potential benefits of participation by students in education-based activities. While education-based activities may differ between the stakeholder groups, all should be centered on optimizing the student's scholastic activity experience. Students will change, develop and expand abilities over time; coaches, administrators and parents should not only be cognizant of the fluid process, but also foster a safe, positive environment in which development can occur. Education-based activities must always be viewed as an evolving and unpredictable path.

The NFHS and the OSSAA recognize the influential role played by coaches and directors in all activities, and therefore emphasis should be placed on those individuals to instill and reinforce fundamentals and best practices, not only to minimize risk but also to promote an environment in which a student has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. The common goal for all the stakeholders involved with education-based activities should be to make the experience enjoyable and rewarding for the all.

While our position is not intended to squelch dreams of achieving a college scholarship or professional or Olympic glory, we do place emphasis on the student's entire scholastic activity experience with the goals of enhancing participation, reducing injury risk, and optimizing performance and success (however defined) during the student's high school career. The ultimate goal; Producing an individual who is competent, confident, connected to his or her peer group and community, and of high character. This essential principle is at the core of the scholastic activity experience and is fundamental to the mission of the OSSAA and NFHS.

## **EXTREME HEAT POLICY (2024-2025 Policy)**

The OSSAA recognizes that heat related illness is the leading cause of preventable death in high school students participating in activities. The Board adopted the following policies:

**Acclimatization Period:** Whenever students are participating in an environment in which the temperature cannot be controlled there should be acclimatization period. The acclimatization period is defined as the first 14 days of participation beginning with the first date of practice in that sport or activity, or the first date a participant begins practice, whichever is later. Any speed, strength, or conditioning programs shall not be considered a part of the acclimatization period. All students participating in athletics or activities, including those who arrive to preseason practice after the first day of practice, are required to follow the guidelines of the first days of the acclimatization period.

- a. Every coach or activity sponsor is required to view *A Guide to Heat Acclimatization and Heat Illness Prevention* at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com), annually. A certificate of completion shall be kept on file for each coach or activity sponsor at the member school.

## **FOOTBALL (Mandates)**

- b. Preseason practice shall be limited to 2 ½ hours per session with a minimum of one hour between practice sessions. No more than 5 hours of practice per 24-hour period will be allowed. There will be no physical activity during the one-hour rest period. Any time a coach is present during football practice, the time will count toward the maximum 5 hours, with the exception of strength training.
- c. If a practice session is interrupted by inclement weather or heat restrictions, it is required the session be divided for the good of the student-athlete's welfare as long as the total practice time does not exceed 2 ½ hours.
- d. When multiple practices are conducted in the same day, it is required that either practice not exceed 2½ hours in length and students not participate in more than five total hours of practice activities, including walk-through sessions. Warm-up, stretching, cool down and conditioning activities are included as part of the practice time. Practices should be separated by at least one hour, where there is no physical activity between the end of the first practice and the beginning of the second practice.
- e. Immediately prior to any practice, coaches are required to use a smart-phone AP, or other mechanism or program to get heat index, such as CoachSmart or the OSHA AP. There are also programs available on the Internet, such as AccuWeather, or Weather.com. These programs are free and can be used on any smart-phone, tablet, or computer. A chart outlining recommendations for making concessions for extreme heat is available on the OSSAA website, as well as a form for schools to record the heat index each practice session. Schools may develop their own form to record the heat index each practice session.
- f. All practices must be held under the supervision of a coach employed by the school.
- g. Practices must always be conducted with an open water policy.
- h. Cooling stations should be made available when possible (buckets of cool water, wet towels, sponges, etc.)
- i. Each program must have a heat related emergency plan on hand at all times.

## **Guidelines for any activities:**

- a. Coaches or activity sponsors should use a smart-phone AP, or other mechanism or program to get heat index, such as CoachSmart or the OSHA app. There are also programs available on the Internet, such as AccuWeather, or Weather.com. These programs are free and can be used on any smart-phone, tablet, or computer. A chart outlining recommendations for making concessions for extreme heat is available on the OSSAA website, as well as a form for schools to record the heat index each practice session. Schools may develop their own form to record the heat index each practice session.
- b. All practices should be held under the supervision of a coach, director, or sponsor employed by the school.
- c. Practices should always be conducted with an open water policy.
- d. Each program should have a heat related emergency plan on hand at all times.
- e. Preseason practice should be avoided if possible between the hours of 12 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- f. Parents and students should be educated on the importance of hydration during extreme heat conditions.
- g. Cooling stations should be made available when possible (buckets of cool water, wet towels, sponges, etc.)
- h. Equipment should be removed for conditioning.





## **2025 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SCHEDULE**

*THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4th*

12:00 pm = CLASS B-II

7:00 pm = CLASS B-I

*FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5th*

12:00 pm = CLASS C

7:00 pm = CLASS 6A-II

*SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6th*

12:00 pm = CLASS 5A

7:00 pm = CLASS 6A-I

*THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11th*

12:00 pm = CLASS A-II

7:00 pm = CLASS A-I

*FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12th*

12:00 pm = CLASS 2A-II

7:00 pm = CLASS 2A-I

*SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13th*

12:00 pm = CLASS 3A

7:00 pm = CLASS 4A

### **SEMI-FINALS SCHEDULE**

*FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28th*

B-I, B-II, C, 6A-I, 6A-II, 5A

### **SEMI-FINALS SCHEDULE**

*FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5th*

A-I, A-II, 2A-I, 2A-II, 3A, 4A

### **BYE WEEK SCHEDULE**

*FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28th*

A-I, A-II, 2A-I, 2A-II, 3A, 4A

# **REVISED – 7/28/2025**

## **Equipment Issue Requirements**

This document is prepared to inform all **coaches and officials** concerning decisions that have been made and will be implemented in 2025. This is an effort to make certain that everyone is aware and on the same page as we address the very first **Point of Emphasis** that is found on page 4 of the 2025 Football Rules Book. It clearly deals with **Illegal and Improperly Worn Player Equipment**! All coaches and officials are to expect the following steps to be taken before and during the football game.

- 1.) **Officials** are expected to continue the communication with a head coach prior to his last trip to the dressing room with the team before the kick off! They are to inform the head coach about any specific player(s) who must correct an equipment issue prior to any game participation.
- 2.) Once the game begins, **officials** are expected to keep a simple tally of each time any player is removed from the game as stated in rule 3-5-10-e. (Jersey numbers or player names **WILL NOT** be necessary or expected.) The total number of times that any player is removed will be recorded on the **WHITE HAT GAME REPORT** for each team.
- 3.) **Officials** will remove the player from the game if an equipment issue exists as stated in rule 3-5-10-e the **first 4 times** that it is necessary. An additional penalty **may** exist if and when the issue involves **Illegal Equipment**. (Example: Any coach to player communication device or any player wearing video recording or audio communication equipment)
- 4.) If it becomes necessary to address an equipment issue beyond those **first 4 times**, the officials will continue to remove the player from the game for at least one down **AND will enforce a dead-ball Delay of Game penalty** against the offending team and will continue to do so each time for the remainder of the entire game. Naturally, we certainly hope we **NEVER** get past the first 4 times.

**It is crystal clear that every coach, official and player would prefer that we never have to deal with this equipment issue. Every state association office has heard very clearly the message from the NFHS in Indianapolis that the rules that apply to improperly worn equipment, missing required equipment or illegal equipment are to be enforced!**

**Your cooperation in carrying out your responsibility will be expected and appreciated. This issue will not go away until we all do our part!**

## 2025 NFHS Football Rule Differences

This document has been prepared following the press release from the NFHS listing the revisions made during the January meetings in Indianapolis. It must be noted that the actual 2025 rule book language is now available and this document utilizes the new language.

**Item #1** – (Rule 1-5-1-d-5) Additional language that applies to the required single tooth and mouth protector now indicates that **effective in 2026** the mouth piece may **not include any attached adornments that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth** AND may **not include anything on it that is a health or risk issue and can pose a danger to the players**. Specific examples of the mouth pieces that **would be illegal equipment in 2026** will be shown and explained during the summer state rules meetings.

**Item #2** – (Rule 1-5-2-d) A new statement has been added to this section that addresses a new product that has begun to appear. Players are starting to wear arm sleeves that may contain material that would enhance their contact with the football or an opponent. This material may be attached to an existing long sleeve shirt or may be a separate item worn on their arm.

**Effective in 2027, these arm sleeves must meet the SFIA specification at the time of the manufacture** AND **must have a permanent, exact replica of the SIFA seal that indicates that the product meets these standards** AND **this seal must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior of the arm sleeve**. This new requirement will align closely with the current requirement regarding the seal required on football gloves.

**Item #3** – (Rule 1-5-3-c-2) This revision will allow **fixed electronic signs with play signals as well as non-audio methods from the sideline (team box area)**. It is critical to emphasize at this point that **ANY AUDIO (MICROPHONE) OR VIDEO (CAMERA) WORN BY A PLAYER IS NOT PERMITTED! IT IS TO BE REMOVED IMMEDIATELY AND THE UNSPORTSMANLIKE FOUL ASSESSED TO THE HEAD COACH! IT IS ALSO CRITICAL TO NOTE THAT COACH-TO-PLAYER AUDIO COMMUNICATION CANNOT BE USED!**

**Item #4** – (Rule 4-3-1 EXCEPTION) A brand new statement has been added to rule 4-3-1 that addresses a fumble (the loose ball) that goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds due to touching **between the goal lines**. **This exception now requires that the ball will be returned to the spot of the fumble** AND **the game clock will start on the ready for play UNLESS another rule requires that the game clock remains stopped such as a 4<sup>th</sup> down play that is short of the line-to-gain**. It is important to note at this point that **rules 8-5-2 and 8-5-3 have not changed and if the fumble occurred in A's end zone or the out of bounds spot occurred in B's end zone, the result of the down will remain a safety or a touchback!**

**Item #5** – (Rule 10-4-4-b) Illegal participation fouls as indicated in 10-4-4-b have been relocated in rule 10-4 as the enforcement spot may or may not be the spot of the foul depending on the type of play in progress and the location of the foul. This will be clarified during our summer meetings after the 2025 rule book language is available.

Additional information that addresses the fumble that goes out of bounds is listed here.

**(Rule 4-3-1 EXCEPTION)** A brand new statement has been added to rule 4-3-1 that addresses a **fumble** (the loose ball) that goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds due to touching **between the goal lines**. **This exception now requires that the ball will be returned to the spot of the fumble AND the game clock will start on the ready for play unless another rule requires that the game clock remains stopped such as a 4<sup>th</sup> down play that is short of the line-to-gain.** It is important to note at this point that **rules 8-5-2 and 8-5-3 have not changed and if the fumble occurred in A's end zone or the out of bounds spot occurred in B's end zone, the result of the down will remain a safety or a touchback!**

### **EXAMPLES:**

\*Any player (A or B) who has possession of the ball and loses possession (**FUMBLE**) and the ball goes **FORWARD** and out of bounds **BETWEEN** the goal lines will have the ball returned to the spot of the fumble and will retain possession unless another rule such as short of the line-to-gain on a 4<sup>th</sup> down or the spot of the fumble by A occurred inside A's end zone.

\* A team A runner fumbles the ball inside his own end zone and the ball goes out of bounds between the goal lines. The ball is returned to the spot of the fumble and the result of this play is a **SAFETY** that awards 2 points to team B.

\* A team A runner fumbles the ball inside the field of play and the loose ball enters team B's end zone where team B gains possession and the ball is dead or the loose ball goes out of bounds across the sideline or end line. The result of this play is a **TOUCHBACK** or is a **SAFETY** depending on the ruling by the official(s) concerning the force that put the loose ball into B's end zone. (It is possible that team B is responsible for the force that caused the loose ball to enter B's end zone. Extremely rare but possible!)

\* A team B player intercepts a forward pass by team A inside team B's end zone and chooses to run is out, but fumbles inside his end zone and the loose ball goes out of bounds between the goal lines. The result of this play is a **TOUCHBACK**. The ball is returned to the spot of B's fumble so team A's pass is the force that put the ball into B's end zone and by rule, the ball never left the end zone since the forward fumble is returned to the spot of the fumble.

This new rule **does not** apply to a **MUFF** that causes a loose ball to go out of bounds in advance of the spot of the muff. A muff that goes out of bounds is spotted where it went out of bounds and the team in possession retains possession at the in-bounds spot unless another rule requires a different result.

# SPORTS MEDICINE

## Handbook



**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS**

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# ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

## Lightning Safety

By Kevin D. Walter, M.D., FAAP

- Education and prevention are the keys to lightning safety.
- Practice and competitions should be immediately suspended as soon as lightning is seen or thunder is heard.
- All athletes and spectators should seek safe shelter during severe weather.
- Play should not resume for at least 30 minutes after the last lightning strike or thunderclap.

### SIGNIFICANCE

Lightning is one of the most consistent causes of weather-related deaths and injury in the U.S. According to the National Severe Storms Laboratory, there are approximately 100 lightning-related deaths and over 1000 injuries yearly.

### BACKGROUND

Lightning-related injuries mainly occur between May and September. Most lightning-related casualties happen between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m., with the majority of those occurring between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Therefore, the risk of lightning-related injury appears to be highest during some of the most active periods for outdoor athletic activities. The average distance between successive lightning flashes is about two to three miles, which means that **risk is present WHENEVER lightning can be seen or thunder can be heard.**

Game administrators, officials and the sports medicine staff can be aware of adverse weather by following local forecasts and by monitoring the National Weather Service (NWS). The NWS issues storm watches and warnings during times of severe weather. A watch means that the conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, while a warning indicates severe weather has been reported and appropriate precautions should be taken. It must be remembered that any thunderstorm poses a risk of injury, even if not deemed "severe" by the NWS.

### MANAGEMENT

As soon as lightning is seen or thunder is heard, practice and competition should be suspended immediately. A **Lightning Safety Plan** should be a component of the Emergency Action Plan (see Emergency Action Plan chapter) and should be in place for every sport and facility. This plan should contain instructions for participants and spectators, designation of safe shelters, and designation of warning and all clear signals. This plan must be disseminated to the proper personnel and reviewed and practiced on a routine basis.

There should also be a systematic plan for monitoring weather. The weather forecast should be closely followed throughout the day prior to any practice or competition. A weather radio is helpful in providing current information. Weather can also be monitored over the Internet or through the use of lightning strike monitors. However, such



technology should never be a substitute for directly hearing or seeing dangerous weather. There should also be one person designated to monitor threatening weather and make decisions regarding participation. However, if anyone hears thunder or sees a lightning strike, appropriate action should begin.



**If lightning is imminent or a thunderstorm is approaching, all personnel, athletes and spectators should be evacuated to safe structures.** A list of the closest safe structures should be announced and displayed on placards at all venues. The ideal safe structure is a fully enclosed building with plumbing, telephone and electrical service, which aid in grounding the structure. A fully enclosed automobile or school bus with all of the windows rolled up is a reasonable shelter, although care must be taken to avoid contact with any metal inside the vehicle. The hard metal frame and roof, not the rubber tires, dissipate the current around the vehicle. Golf carts and convertible cars are not safe shelters. Dugouts and golf shelters are not safe shelters and are not grounded for the effects of lightning.

Avoid the use of shower facilities for shelter and do not use showers or plumbing during a thunderstorm as the electrical current from lightning can enter the building through plumbing connections. It is also unsafe to stand near utilities or use a landline telephone during a thunderstorm because of the risk of the current traveling through the lines. Cellular and cordless telephones are considered to be safe.

If a suitable safe shelter is not available, it is best to avoid tall objects (trees, light poles, etc) that allow lightning an easy path to the ground. It is important to avoid being the tallest object. In an open field, people should crouch with their legs together, the weight on the balls of their feet, arms wrapped around their knees, and head down with their ears covered. The person should minimize contact with the ground and should NOT lie flat.

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electric charge. Therefore, it is safe to perform CPR, if needed. Ideally, injured persons are moved into a safe shelter. Lightning-strike victims who show signs of cardiac or respiratory arrest need emergency help.

## RETURN TO PLAYING FIELD

The NFHS recommends following the 30-minute rule when making return-to-play decisions. After the last flash of lightning is witnessed or the last thunderclap is heard, it is recommended to wait at least 30 minutes before resuming practice or competition. Given the average rate of thunderstorm travel, the storm should move 10 to 12 miles away from the area, reducing the risk of local lightning strike. **Any subsequent lightning strike or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count should reset the clock and another count should begin.**

## PREVENTION

In order to prevent lightning-related injuries, it is important to formulate and implement a Lightning Safety Plan and provide adequate education for all athletes and personnel. The plan needs to be reviewed and practiced periodically. The plan also must include a systematic approach for monitoring local weather activity and recognizing signs of nearby danger (thunder and lightning strikes). Criteria for suspension and resumption of activity should be clear. Appropriate safe shelters for each athletic venue should be clearly identified.

## References

- Bennett BL. A model lightning safety policy for athletics. *Journal of Athletic Training* 1997;32:251-253.
- Cooper MA, et al. Lightning injuries. In: Auerbach PS, ed. *Management of Wilderness and Environmental Emergencies*. 5th ed. C.V. Mosby, 2007:68-108.
- Holle R, Lopez R. Lightning-impacts and safety. *WMO Bulletin* 1998;47:148-155.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. Guideline 1d: Lightning safety. 2010-11 Sports Medicine Handbook (21st edition).

## Resources

[www.lightningsafety.com](http://www.lightningsafety.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)

# EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

SPORT: \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

1. FIRST TO ARRIVE ON THE SCENE PROVIDES FIRST AID.
2. SEND A COACH, MANAGER, OR UNINJURED ATHLETE TO NOTIFY THE ATHLETIC TRAINER (ATC) AND GET THE AED (IF NOT ON-SITE).
3. IF THE ATC CAN NOT BE LOCATED, THE HEAD COACH WILL BECOME THE LEADER.

LEADER: \_\_\_\_\_

- Will be in charge of the emergency situation and will instruct all others on the emergency team

LEADER'S ASSISTANT: \_\_\_\_\_

- Will assist the leader in the evaluation of the injured athlete

PHONE CALLER: \_\_\_\_\_

- Will go to the nearest phone and activate the EMS
- Will inform the dispatcher of:
  - The nature of the injury and age of the athlete
  - The location of the athlete and directions to the site
  - Will not hang up until the dispatcher advises him/her to do so

NEAREST PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

AMBULANCE ENTRANCE: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSON TO MEET THE EMS: \_\_\_\_\_

- Will contact any necessary staff to assure access for the ambulance
- Will meet the ambulance at the designated entrance and lead them to the injured athlete

PERSON TO ACCOMPANY ATHLETE TO HOSPITAL: \_\_\_\_\_

- Will ride with the athlete in the ambulance in the event the parents cannot be located
- Will take the athlete's emergency info to the hospital

- \* It is the certified athletic trainer or coach's responsibility to inform the administrator of the incident
- \* It is the certified athletic trainer or coach's responsibility to inform the athlete's parents of the injury immediately.
- \* It is the certified athletic trainer's responsibility to document the circumstances surrounding the activity and all actions taken.
- \* Emergency medical info for each athlete is to accompany the team at all times.

**EMS (Fire, Police, Ambulance): 911**  
**Athletic Department:**

**Any High School:**  
**Athletic Training Room:**

**ATC:**

**Site contact:**

**Nearest Hospital:**

# SPORTSMANSHIP

The OSSAA's vision for sportsmanship is built on expectations. Expectations that the school community—administrators, teachers, coaches, students, and patrons strive for displaying only positive behavior and good sportsmanship in everything they do at all interscholastic contests.

As educators we have the unique opportunity to teach the value of discipline, dignity, integrity, fairness and respect to young people each day.

We encourage all school personnel to take advantage of the opportunity and make a lasting difference.

