

Home Team Uniform Requirements Clarified in High School Football Rules

By NFHS on February 08, 2024

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Language in the 2024 NFHS Football Rules Book will be changed in an effort to ensure consistent interpretation of the rule regarding requirements for home team uniforms in high school football. Next season, all home team jerseys must be the same dark color(s) that clearly contrasts with white.

This uniform change in Rule 1-5-1b(3) was recommended by the NFHS Football Rules Committee at its January 14-16 meeting in Indianapolis and subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors. The Football Rules Committee is composed of one member from each NFHS member state association that uses NFHS playing rules, along with representatives from the NFHS Coaches Association and NFHS Officials Association.

Previously, the rule regarding home team jerseys stated that the jerseys of the home team “shall be a dark color that clearly contrasts to white.” The revised rule will state that the jerseys of the home team “shall **all be the same** dark color(s) that clearly contrasts to white.”

“We kind of had a loophole in the rule that we didn’t specify that everyone on the home team had to wear the same color dark jersey,” said Richard McWhirter, chair of the NFHS Football Rules Committee and assistant executive director of the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association. “Even though you didn’t see a major issue with it, it was a loophole in the rule that could possibly be a major issue in the future if it wasn’t corrected.”

McWhirter noted that while this was the only rules proposal that was approved by the committee, there was considerable discussion related to the other eight proposals that advanced to the full committee. He said there was considerable discussion dealing with sportsmanship, particularly unsporting acts in dead-ball situations.

“There was solid agreement by the committee that the rules of the game are in good shape,” McWhirter said. “There was great discussion regarding the need for consistent enforcement of the existing rules specifically in regard to equipment and sportsmanship. Several proposals garnered substantial interest and discussion and may merit further consideration in future committee meetings.”

Three Points of Emphasis were identified by the committee for the 2024 season, including Player Equipment and Enforcement, Sportsmanship and Protocols, and Formation Requirements.

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

According to the 2022-23 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, 11-player football is the most popular high school sport for boys with 1,028,761 participants in 13,670 schools nationwide. In addition, there were 35,301 boys who participated in 6-, 8- and 9-player football, along with 3,838 girls in all four versions of the game for a grand total of 1,067,900. There also were 20,875 participants in girls flag football in 2022-23.



2024 NFHS FOOTBALL JERSEY and PANT RULES

(April 2024)

RULE 1-4-3:

ART. 3 . . . Each player shall be numbered 0 through 99 inclusive. Any number preceded by the digit zero is illegal. See 7-2-5.

RULE 1-5-1:

ART. 1 . . . Mandatory Equipment. Each player shall participate while wearing the following pieces of properly fitted equipment, which shall be professionally manufactured and not altered to decrease protection:

b. Jersey:

1. A jersey, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, and which shall be long enough to reach the top of the pants and shall be tucked in if longer. It must completely cover the shoulder pads and all pads worn above the waist on the torso.
2. Players of the visiting team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:
 - (a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) shall **all** be white.
 - (b) The body of the jersey shall contain only the listed allowable adornments and accessory patterns in a color(s) that contrasts to white:
 - (1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1c or as the school's nickname, school logo, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders,
 - (2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3.5 inches,
 - (3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width, and/or
 - (4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any non-white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.

NOTE: One American flag, not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches, may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel. By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the uniform without compromising its integrity.

- (c) The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors, but if there is doubt, the referee may require players of the home team to change jerseys.
3. Players of the home team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:
 - (a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) may not include white, except as stated below.
 - (b) The jerseys of the home team shall **all** be **the same** dark color(s) that clearly contrasts to white. If white appears in the body of the jersey of the home team, it may only appear:
 - (1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1c or as the school's nickname, school logo, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders,
 - (2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point

within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3.5 inches, (3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width, and/or (4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.

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c. Numbers:

1. The numbers shall be clearly visible and legible using Arabic numbers 0-99 inclusive and shall be on the front and back of the jersey.
2. The numbers, inclusive of any border(s), shall be centered horizontally at least 8 inches and 10 inches high on front and back, respectively.
3. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) exclusive of any border(s) shall be approximately 1½-inches wide.
4. The color and style of the number shall be the same on the front and back.
5. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) shall be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the body color of the jersey.

d. Pads and Protective Equipment – The following pads and protective equipment are required of all players:

1. Hip pads and tailbone protector which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.
2. Knee pads which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, which are worn over the knee and under the pants and shall be at least ½ inch thick or 3/8 inch thick if made of shock absorbing material.
3. Shoulder pads and hard surface auxiliary attachments, which shall be fully covered by a jersey.
4. Thigh guards which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.

e. Pants - which completely cover the knees, thigh guards and knee pads and any portion of any knee brace that does not extend below the pants.

RULE 1-5-3:

ART. 3 . . . Illegal Equipment. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the umpire is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

a. The following items related to the **Game Uniform**:

1. Jerseys and pants that have:
 - (a) A visible logo/trademark or reference exceeding 2¼ square inches and exceeding 2¼ inches in any dimension.
 - (b) More than one manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference on the outside of either item. (The same size restriction shall apply to either the manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference).
 - (c) Sizing, garment care or other nonlogo labels on the outside of either item.
3. Tear-away jerseys or jerseys that have been altered in any manner that produces a knot-like protrusion or creates a tear-away jersey.
4. Any transverse stripe on the sleeve below the elbow.

c. The following items related to **Other Illegal Equipment**:

1. Ball-colored helmets, jerseys, patches, exterior arm covers/pads, undershirts or gloves.
5. Jerseys, undershirts or exterior arm covers/pads manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent.
9. Equipment not worn as intended by the manufacturer.