



Coaches Tackle Football Meeting

2026

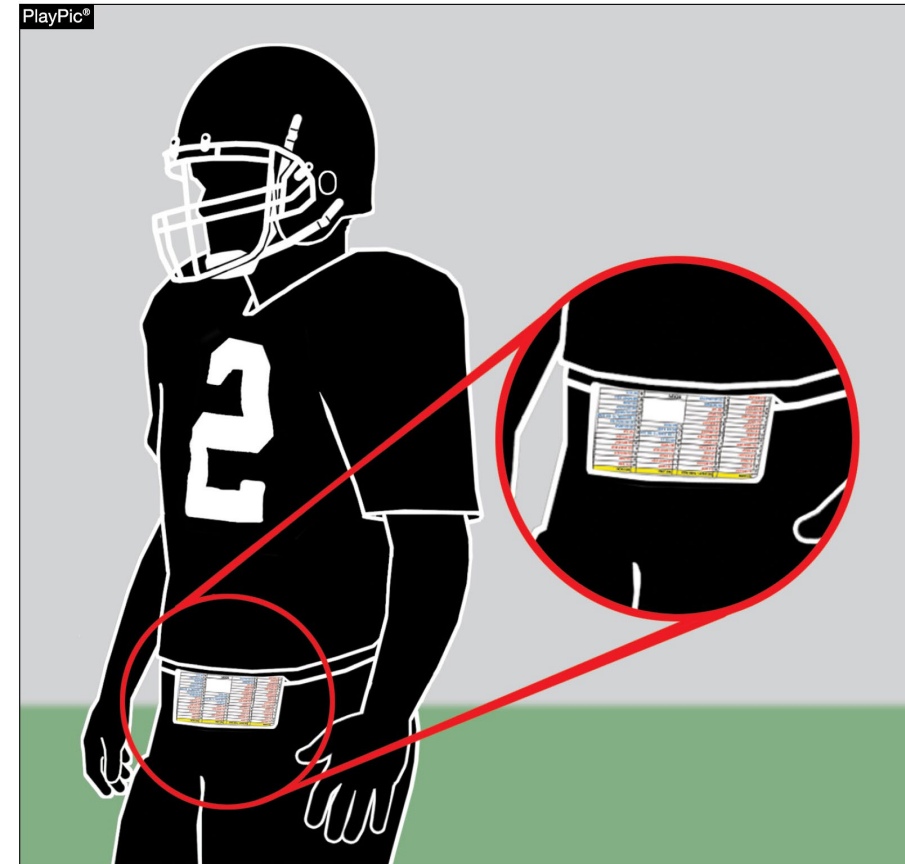


2026 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

PLAY CARDS

RULE 1-5-3c(9)

- “Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:
9. Play cards not worn on the wrist, arm **or belt.**”

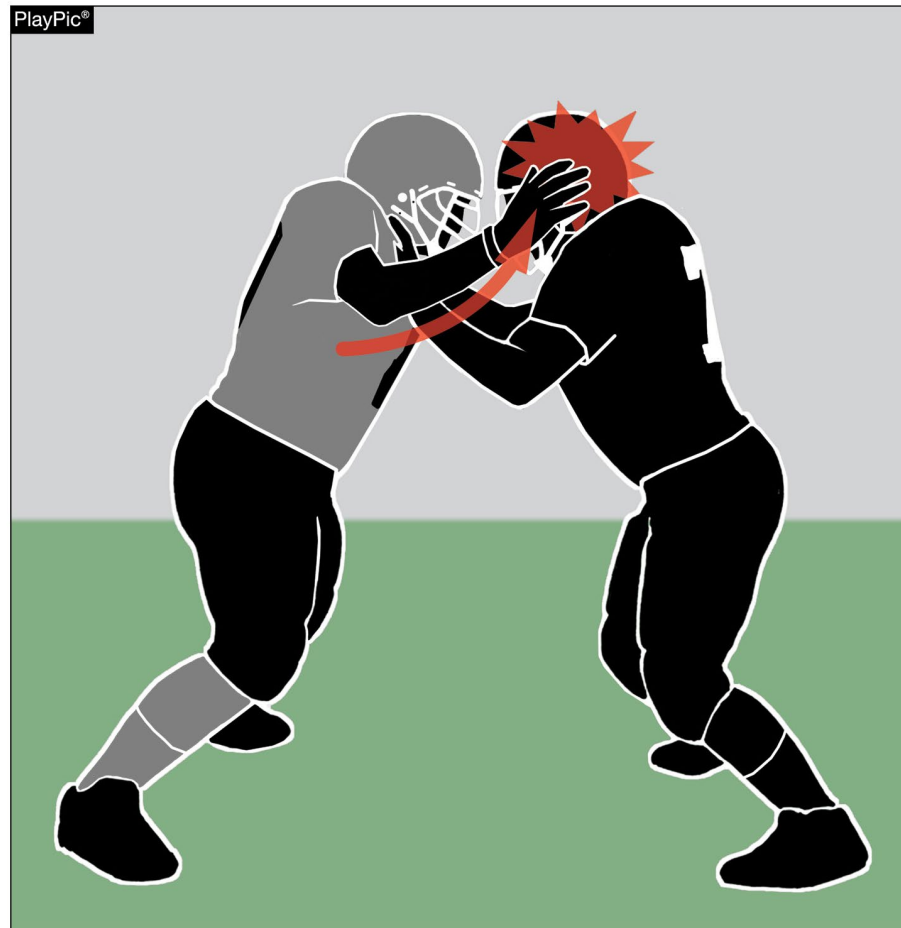


LEGAL

HEAD SLAP

RULE 9-4-7

- “No player may use the hand(s) to slap the opponent’s head.”



ILLEGAL



PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.

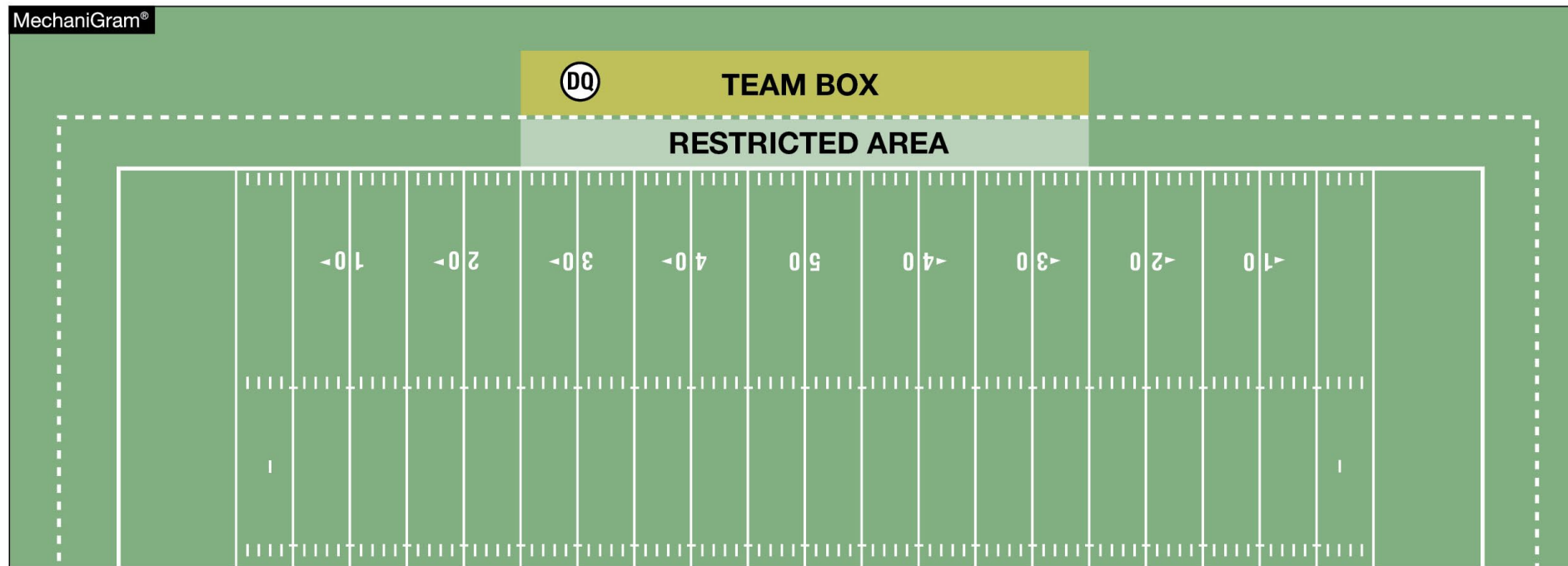


2026 NFHS FOOTBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES

DISQUALIFIED PLAYER

RULE 2-32-6

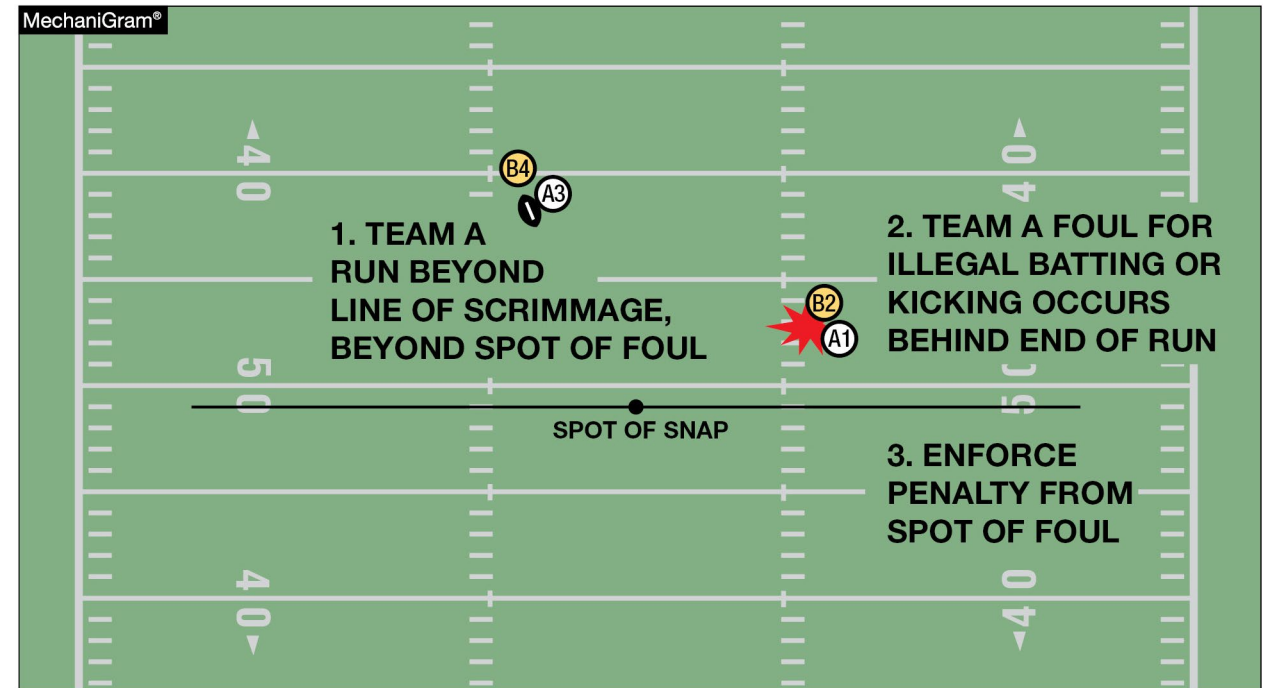
- A disqualified player is a player barred from further participation in a game. A disqualified player can be permitted to remain in the team box area.



BASIC SPOT

RULE 10-4-4a

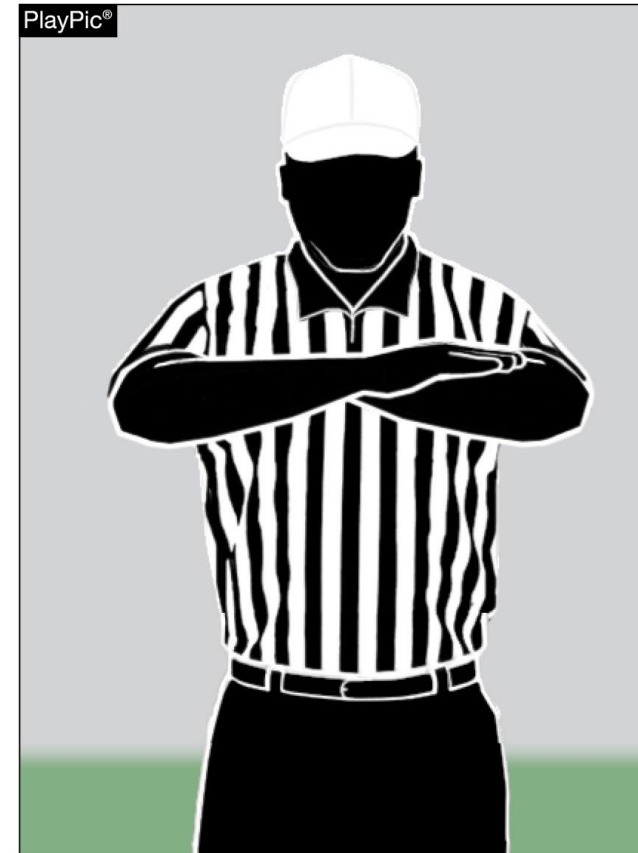
- The basic spot is the spot of the foul for:
 - a. Illegal batting or illegal kicking by A that occurs behind the basic spot.



NEW DELAY OF GAME SIGNAL



PREVIOUS
DELAY OF GAME SIGNAL



NEW
DELAY OF GAME SIGNAL

2026 NFHS FOOTBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES



1-3-5b	Changed “Head Linesman” to “Head Line Judge”. TSSAA did not adopt change.
1-5-3a(2)	Deleted the reference to “opponent.”
2-15-1	Further clarified to make definition more consistent with forward fumble rule that was approved in 2025.
3-5-7g	Replaced “heat and humidity” with “circumstances and conditions” better covers a variety of situations that may create a health risk to players.
4-1-3	Deleted “if elected” from the rule as it was not needed.
5-3-1	Added “ball being” before ready-for-play for clarification.
5-3-2	Changed “Head Linesman” to “Head Line Judge”. TSSAA did not adopt change.
8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4, 8-2-5	Changed “subsequent kickoff” to “succeeding spot” for clarification. See next slide.



TSSAA OT and KO Procedures

2026

TSSAA Overtime Procedure:



- **Page 89 in the Football Rules Book**
- **Only Dead Ball and Unsportsmanlike Penalties that occur prior to the Overtime Procedure are carried over to Overtime.**

TSSAA Kick Off Experiment:



Violations of 6-1-3a,b or 6-1-4 (encroachment on a free kick, or a formation violation by K on a free kick) would be treated as a live ball foul, as opposed to the current dead ball foul.

Pop up kick violations (rule 6-1-11) would remain a dead ball foul.

TSSAA Kick Off Experiment:



This change would enhance player safety by eliminating the need for re-kicks in many scenarios. Assuming R has possession of the ball at the end of the play, R would have the option of having the foul enforced at the succeeding spot per 10-4-2 EXC., or previous spot enforcement. Many times on a very short or onside kick, if an encroachment or formation violation occurs, by the time the covering official has processed the violation, thrown the flag and blown his/her whistle to kill the play, the time interval for that to occur and players to react is so short that players have already come together and the play is “over”. It is likely that if R has possession of the ball, that the 10-4-2 EXC option would be chosen in most cases. In addition to the safety benefit of not having to expose players to another kickoff, it would enhance game flow efficiency.

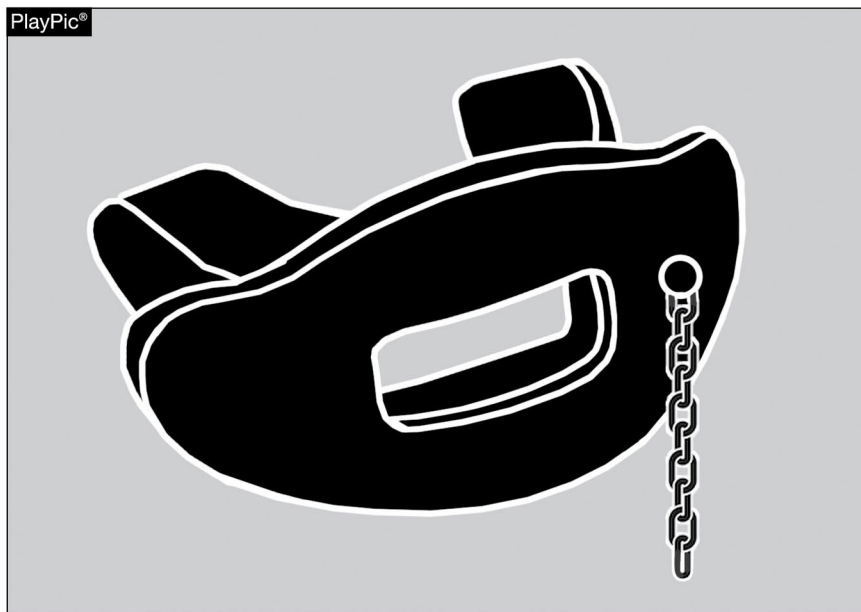


2026 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES REMINDERS

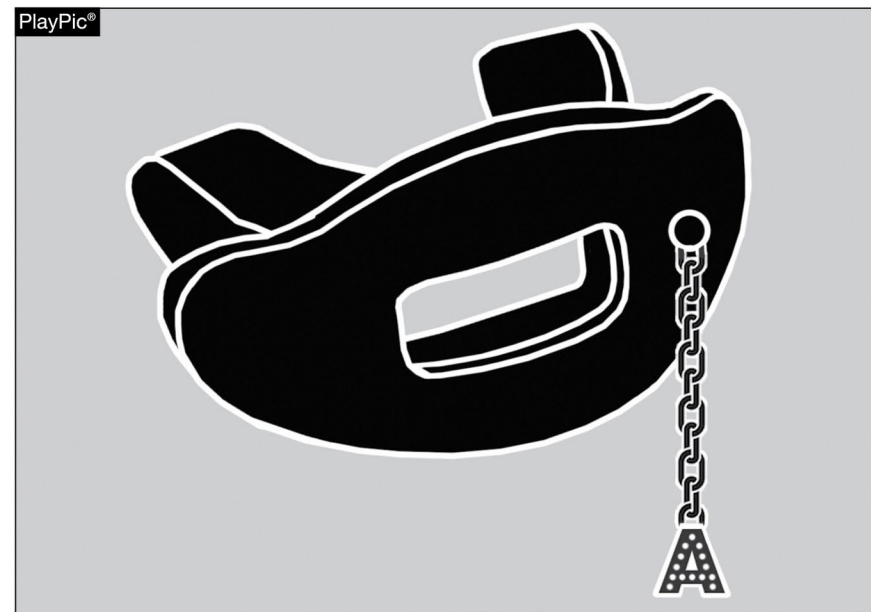


TOOTH & MOUTH PROTECTOR

RULE 1-5-1d(5)a – 4



ILLEGAL

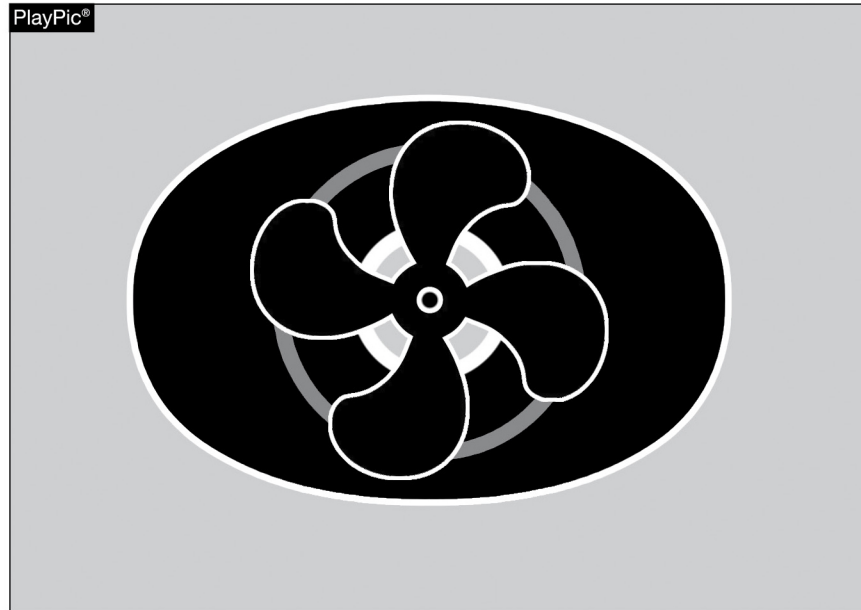


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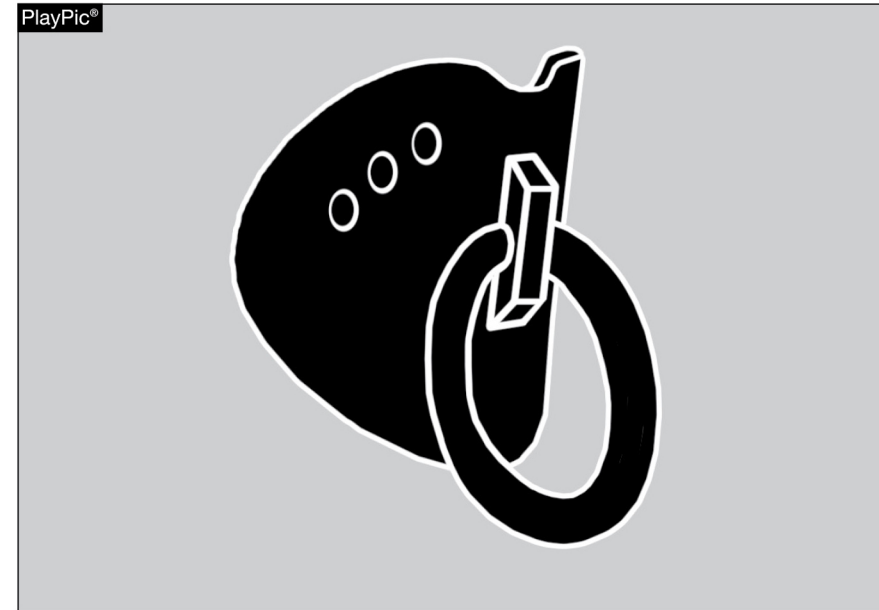
Effective 2026: Tooth and mouth protectors may not include any attachment(s) that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth.

TOOTH & MOUTH PROTECTOR

RULE 1-5-1d(5)a – 5



ILLEGAL

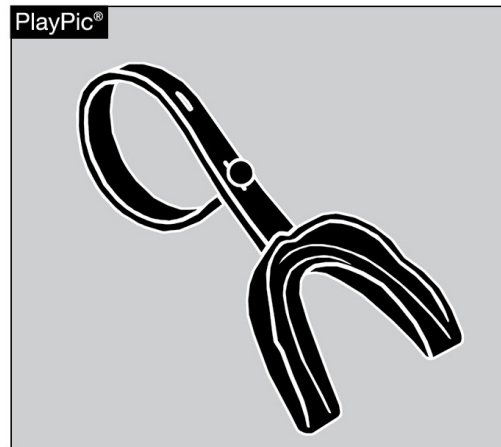


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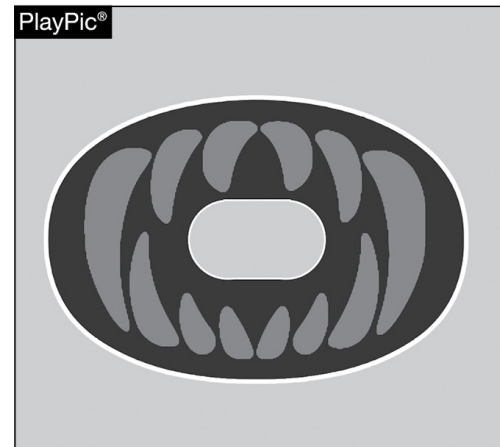
Effective 2026: Tooth and mouth protectors may not include anything on them that is a health or risk issue and can pose a danger to themselves or other players.

TOOTH & MOUTH PROTECTOR

RULES 1-5-1d(5)a – 4, 5



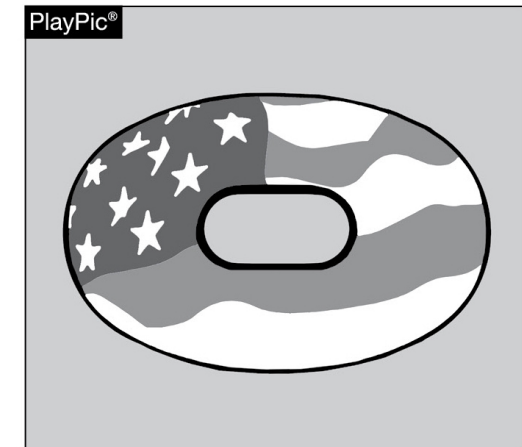
LEGAL



LEGAL



LEGAL



LEGAL

These tooth and mouth protectors neither include any attachment(s) that does not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth, nor anything that is a health or risk issue posing a danger and are not impacted by this rule change.

ARM SLEEVES

RULES 1-5-2d, 1-5-3c(6)



Effective 2027: Arm sleeves, whether attached to a shirt or unattached, manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent must meet the SFIA Specification at the time of manufacture.

ARM SLEEVES

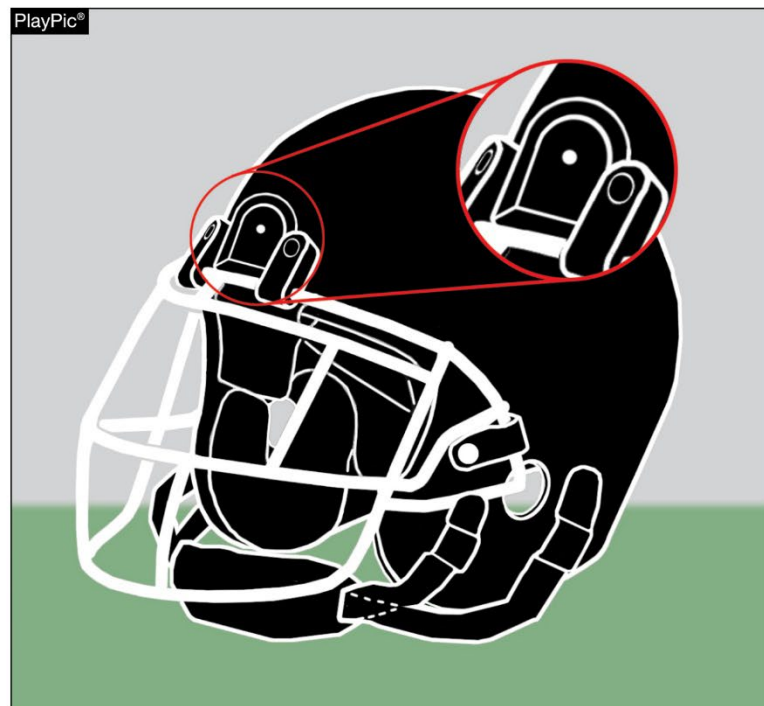
RULES 1-5-2d, 1-5-3c(6)



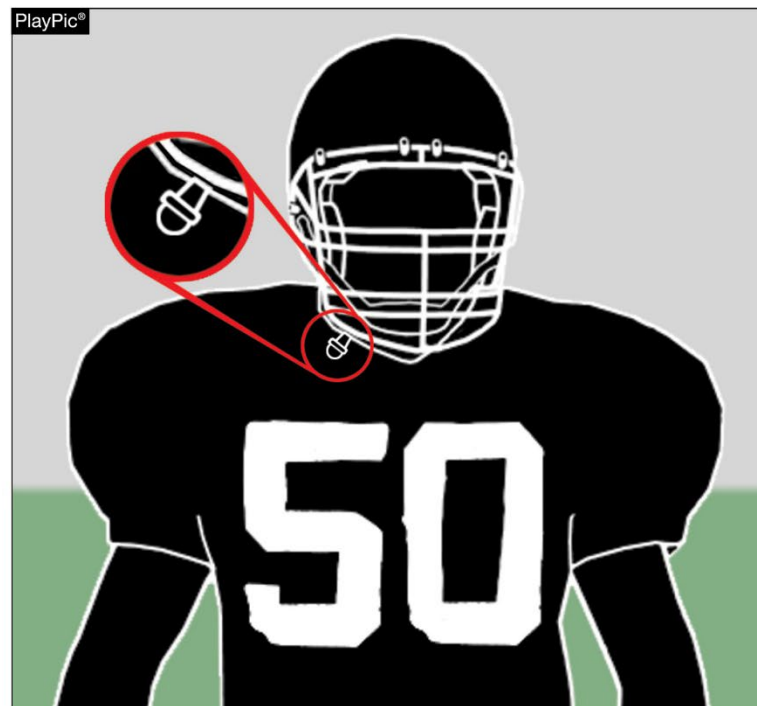
Effective 2027: Arm sleeves must have a permanent, exact replica of the SFIA arm sleeve seal (meets SFIA Specification), that must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior of the arm sleeve.

ILLEGAL EQUIPMENT

RULE 1-5-3c(3) (NEW)



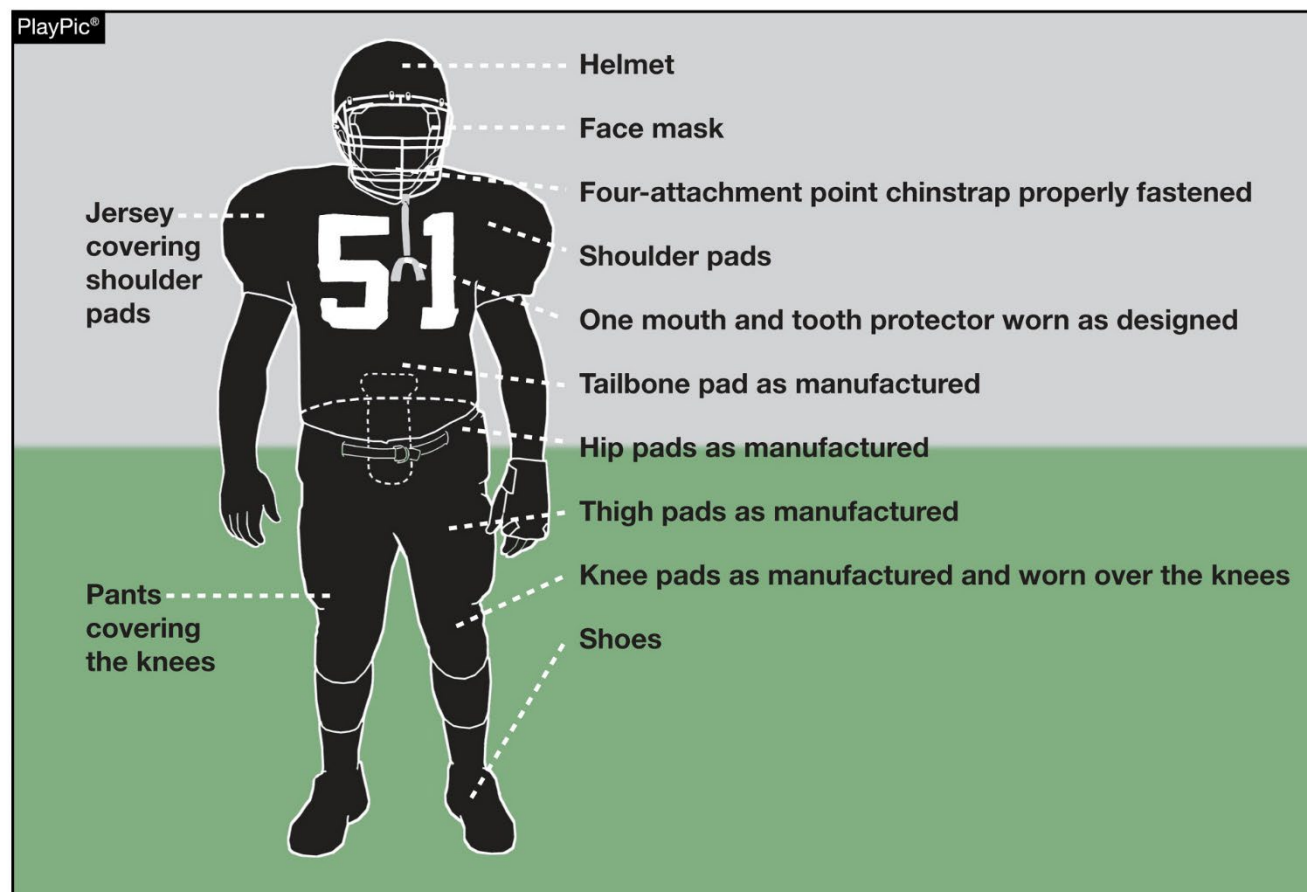
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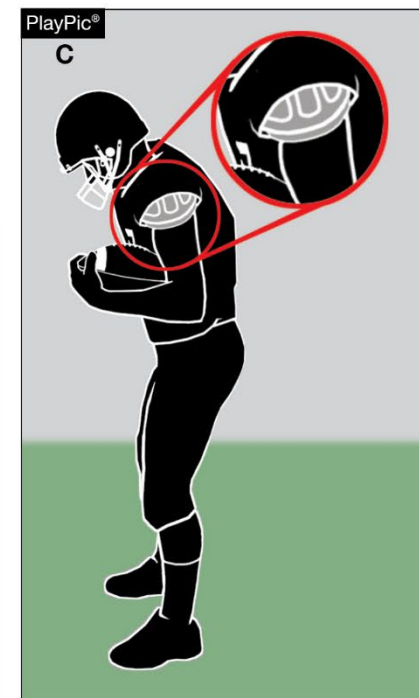
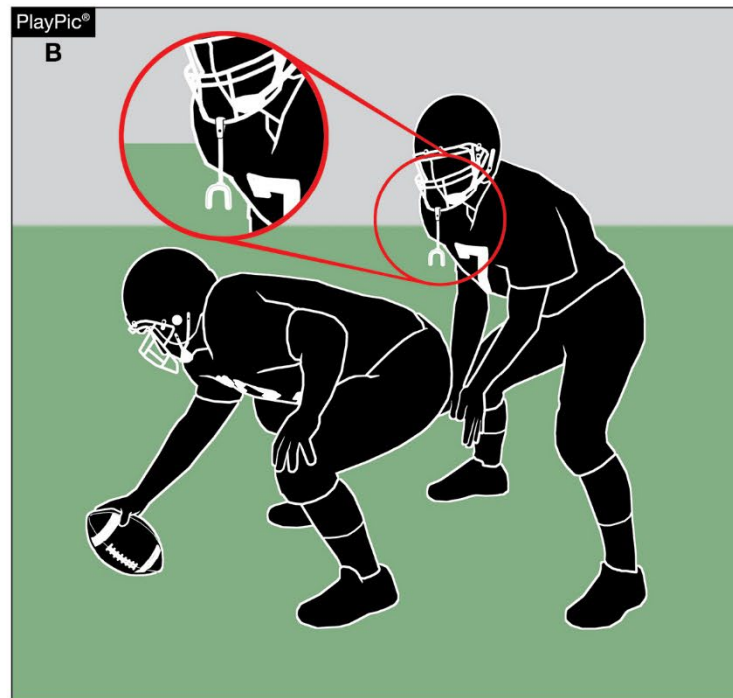
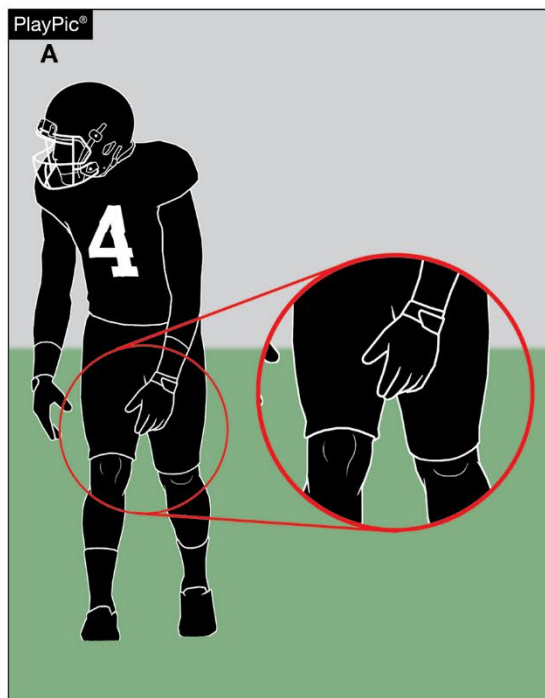
Any video (camera) device or audio (microphone) worn by a player during the game is illegal.

ILLEGAL AND IMPROPERLY WORN PLAYER EQUIPMENT



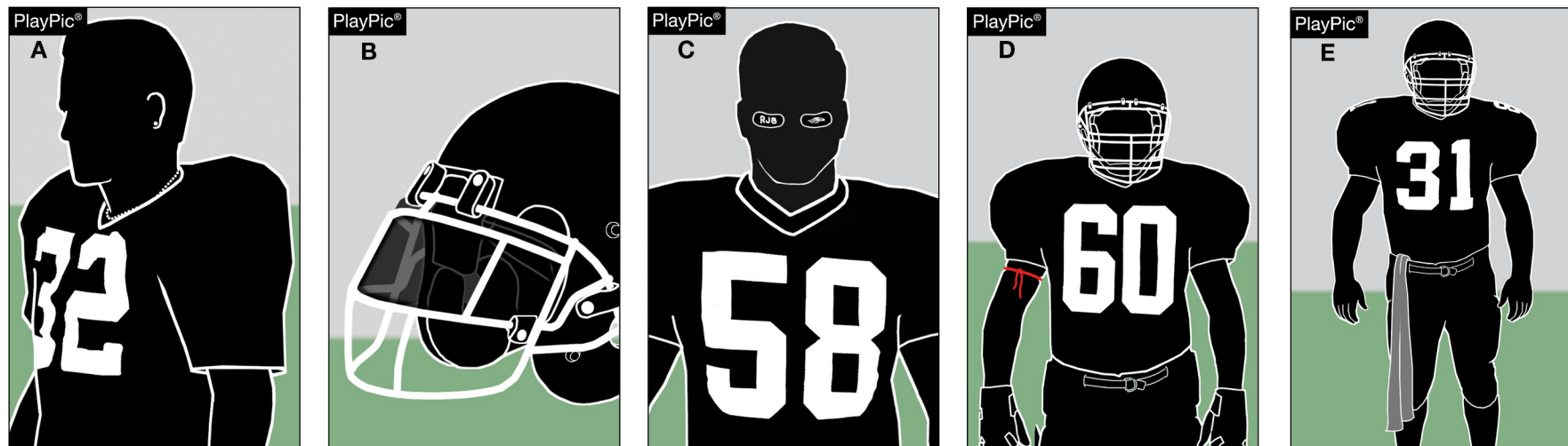
To support the safety of all participants, players must wear equipment and uniforms that are properly fitted and worn as intended by the manufacturer. Before starting each game, the head coach must verify that all players are properly and legally equipped. Allowing players to use illegal equipment or to wear required equipment improperly could subject the coach to a penalty.

ILLEGAL AND IMPROPERLY WORN PLAYER EQUIPMENT



Improperly worn equipment pertains to all equipment that is otherwise legal but not worn as intended. Examples include pants not covering the knees, tooth and mouth protectors not being worn as play starts and shoulder pads not properly covered by the jersey.

ILLEGAL AND IMPROPERLY WORN PLAYER EQUIPMENT



Illegal (prohibited) equipment includes jewelry (A), tinted visors (B), non-compliant eye shade (C), bands worn around the upper arm, neck or legs (D), and uniform adornments like towels that do not conform to rules (E).



Illegal and Improperly Worn Player Equipment:

- **First Offense:**
 - Player is sent off the field
- **Second Offense:**
 - Flag is thrown
 - Player is sent off the field
 - Head Coach will be given a warning



Illegal and Improperly Worn Player Equipment:

- **Third Offense:**
 - Flag is thrown
 - Player is sent off the field
 - The Team is penalized for Delay of Game
 - Head Coach is verbally reminded that the next offense will result in a 15-Yard Penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct being charged to the Head Coach.



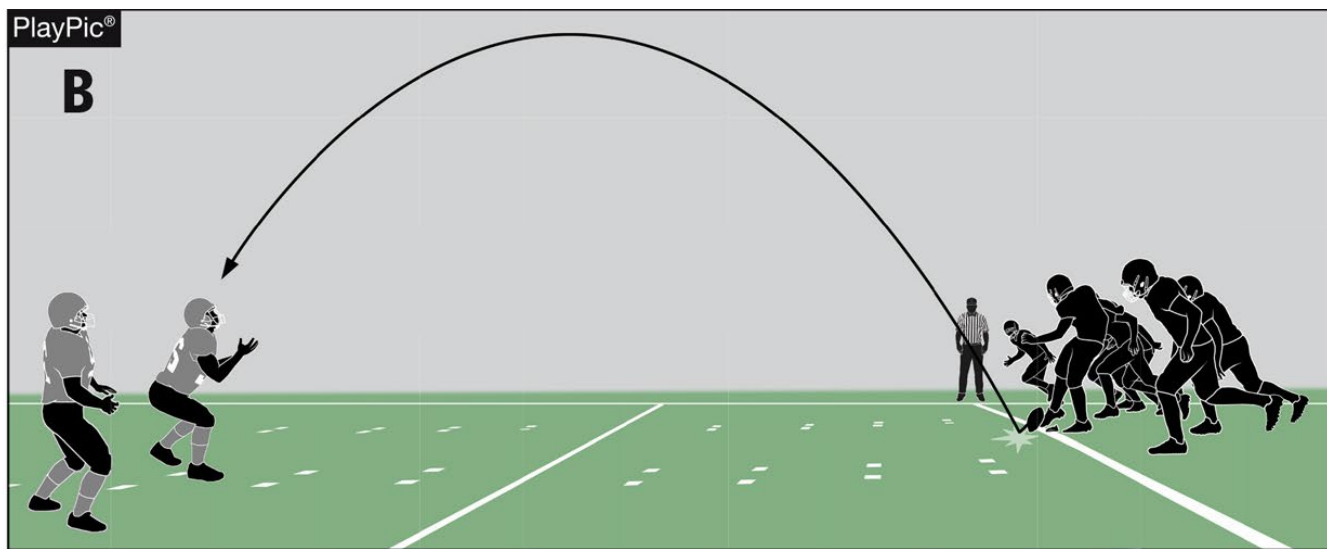
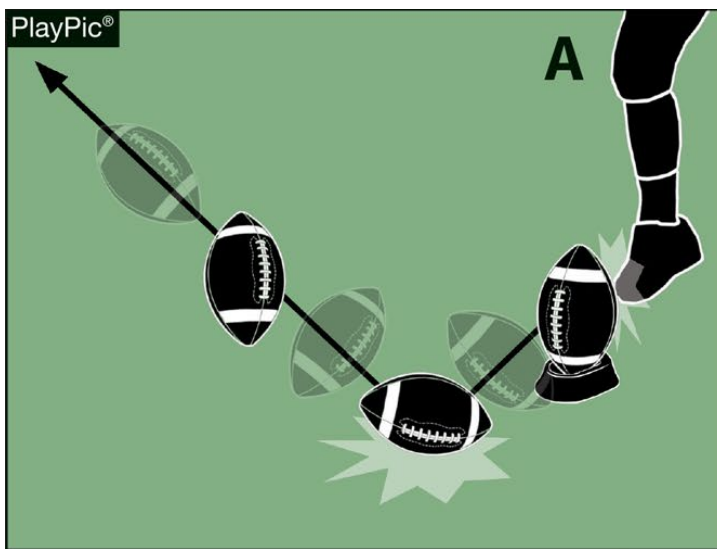
Illegal and Improperly Worn Player Equipment:

- **Fourth and Subsequent Offenses:**
 - Flag is thrown
 - Player is sent off the field
 - Head Coach receives a 15-Yard Penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct. The second such penalty will result in ejection.

POP-UP KICK

RULES 2-24-10; 6-1-11; 6-1 PENALTY

- A pop-up kick is a free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately to the ground, the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee. Such kicks are penalized as a dead-ball foul.





2026 NFHS FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

2026 NFHS FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS



- 1. Flagrant and Unsportsmanlike Fouls**
- 2. Helping the Runner**
- 3. Sideline Management and Control**
- 4. Identification of the NFHS Authenticating Mark on Game Balls**

SPORTSMANSHIP



In determining whether an action rises to the level of an unsportsmanlike conduct foul, game officials should allow for brief, spontaneous, emotional reactions at the end of a play. However, game officials should penalize acts that are prolonged, choreographed or directed at an opponent.



SPORTSMANSHIP

Examples of unsportsmanlike conduct that should be penalized without warning are as follows:

- Demonstrations of violence such as brandishing guns and throat slashes.
- Excessive choreographed poses or celebrations.
- Gestures with sexual connotation.
- Dunking the ball over the crossbar.
- Removal of helmet to celebrate or protest.
- Dancing, somersaults or flips.
- Intentionally spiking, spinning or throwing the ball high into the air.
- Threatening gestures or posturing.
- Racist comments.
- Use of profanity.
- Spitting.
- Arguing with game Officials.
- Throwing equipment.
- Any other act clearly intended to taunt, demean or show disrespect to an opponent.



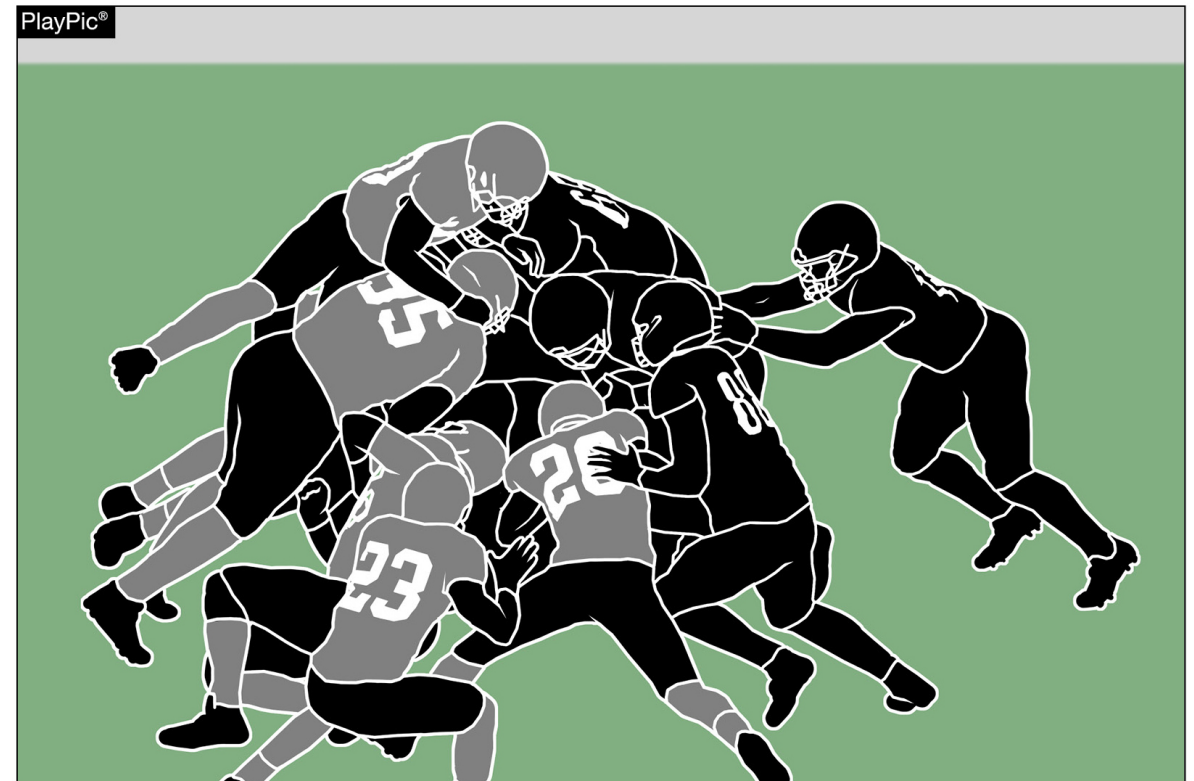
SPORTSMANSHIP

Group Unsportsmanlike:

- If you can get the orchestrator of the group celebration:
 - One unsportsmanlike penalty charged to that athlete.
- If it is a group and not one ring leader:
 - One 15 yard penalty but everyone involved gets an unsportsmanlike charged to them.
- Examples:
 - All Lineman do a pose
 - Everyone comes off the sideline (GA vs FL)

HELPING THE RUNNER

- 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 competitive balance toward the offense in a manner not intended by the rules.



Football



Old Size



Current Size





TSSAA POLICIES



**PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.**



Mercy Rule- HS and MS

- NFHS Football Rule 3-1-2 (Mercy Rule); Beginning in the second half, if the point differential is 30 points or more, a continuous clock will be used. The clock will only stop for charged time-outs, injuries, and scores. The try will always be an un-timed down. The clock shall start when the ball is kicked on the kickoff. If the point differential goes below 30 points, go back to regular timing rules.



Uniforms - HS and MS

- The jerseys of the home team shall be a dark color that clearly contrasts to white.
- The jerseys of the visiting team shall be white.
- Penalty – Unsportsmanlike charged to the Head Coach.
- At the Middle School level, the home team wearing dark and the visiting team wearing white does not apply.

Drones



- Drones are the responsibility of the home administration. The only time the Referee gets involved would be if the drone gets too low and interferes with the game.

New TSSAA Scrimmage Policy

(Adopted by TSSAA Board of Control)



If Officials are asked to work scrimmage:

- No coaches or substitute players can be on the field.
- Players must be legally equipped.
- Ejections will be reported, and players will have to sit out the first regular season game.
- Officials will leave if policy is not followed.

TSSAA Policies



- Concussion Policy
- Heat Policy
- Lightning Policy
- Emergency Action Plan Meeting



TSSAA Football Manual

2026



TSSAA Football Manual:

- 2026 was a print year for the TSSAA Football Game Officials Manual.
- Manual Will Be Used For Two Years



TSSAA Football Manual:

- Umpire in the Offensive Backfield. Starting Position for the R and U are the same.
- Simulated Coin Toss
- When the game is over get off the field and back to the locker room as a crew.
- If a functioning visible play clock is being used, the Back Judge will not give a visible signal.
- At the end of a Regulation game if the game is decided, the clock is running and is less than the play clock, and both teams leave the sideline, all Officials can move to the end of the field where they go off, but the Referee must still signal (S14) before leaving the field.



2026 TSSAA FOOTBALL INFORMATION



**PLAY.
PERFORM.
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TOGETHER.**

2026 TSSAA Play-Offs



- 7 Man Crews will be used for 2nd round, quarterfinals, semifinals, and championship games.
- In play-offs, play clocks must be run by registered football officials.
- Championships in Chattanooga (December 3-5, 2026)
- Play-Off Pay paid through ArbiterPay



QUESTIONS



**PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.**



ATTENDANCE CARDS



**PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.**

Thank You

National Federation of State High School Associations

NFHS.org

Phone # 317-972-6900

Email



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