

2025 MSHSAA FOOTBALL RULES MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS – OFFICIALS

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

- | | <u>OPEN</u> | <u>CLOSE</u> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| • ON-LINE-Rules Review - | AUGUST 4 | AUGUST 22 |
| • PART II Football Test - | AUGUST 4 | AUGUST 22 |
| • POST-SEASON Application - | AUGUST 25 | SEPTEMBER 29 |
| • HEAT/HYDRATION-Mandatory Timeouts | See 7H below | |
1. **RULES INTERPRETERS** – Football Rules Interpreters are available to coaches and officials for game rule interpretations – Dana Williams (SW), Jim Rosen (STL), George Bays (SE), Durante’ Davis (KC), Bob Lade (NW), Chuck Snow (Central). Please contact your local rules interpreter with rules questions prior to contacting the MSHSAA office.
 2. **RULES MEETINGS REQUIREMENT** –
The rules meeting requirement is “mandatory” and must be completed either online through the MSHSAA website or with a face-to-face rules meeting organized/approved through the MSHSAA office by local officials associations.
 3. **PART II FOOTBALL TEST** - The test is an open-book examination. **All officials are required to complete the Part II Test. Any official that scores less than 75% on the NFHS Part II Rules Test or does not complete the Part II Test prior to the deadline noted above will NOT be eligible for post-season.**
 4. **POSTSEASON APPLICATION** -
***The Referee of each crew shall complete the Postseason Form for Football on the MSHSAA Website in order for the crew to be eligible for post season selection. NOTE: All postseason officials will be required to complete an Authorization Form For Direct Deposit in order to receive payment for officiating a postseason contest(s). This authorization form is located on each official’s page of the MSHSAA website by using the “Personal Information” link.**
 5. **The application will NOT be available until ALL crew members have completed both their Rules Meeting Requirement and the Part 2 Test.**
 6. **SPECIAL REPORT FORMS** – **Officials SHALL file a special report for all unsportsmanlike conduct, within “48 hours” of when the act occurs.**
They are to be used to report matters such as officiating procedures, game administration, unsportsmanlike conduct, etc., that need immediate attention. Unsportsmanlike/Ejection related special reports must be filed for **ALL** levels of play. Officials are strongly encouraged to take the time to submit positive reports on outstanding game administration and good sportsmanship. **Note: Log onto the officials page on the MSHSAA Website.**
 7. **MSHSAA RULES ADOPTIONS:**
 - A. **10-YARD BUFFER ZONE** – During warm-ups, pregame and halftime there will be a mandatory 10-Yard Buffer Zone 5 yards both sides of midfield. This zone will allow preventative officiating to avoid potential conflicts (taunting or other unsportsmanlike acts) between both teams with the understanding that occasionally balls will cross the buffer zone unintentionally.
 - B. **LENGTH OF QUARTERS FOR JUNIOR HIGH and HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAMES** : **7th grade only - 8 minutes; 8th grade only - 8 minutes; 9th grade and/or JV – 12 minutes (or less if mutually agreed upon); Varsity - 12 minutes; teams of mixed grades(7th, 8th, 9th) - the limit for the lower grade shall apply (MSHSAA By-Law 3.29.9).**
 - C. **RUNNING CLOCK**: After the first half (**this includes BOTH the 3rd and 4th quarters**), any time the score differential reaches 35 points or more for BOTH 11-man and 8-man, the following changes, and only these changes, will be made regarding rules determining when the clock will be stopped. The point differential applies to ALL levels. The clock will be stopped when:
 1. An official's time-out is called, except:
 - a) when a first down is declared
 - b) following a change of team possession
 - c) to dry or change the game ball
 2. A charged time-out is called;
 3. At the end of a period;
 4. A score occurs.**NOTE:** The clock will continue to run in all other situations.
NOTE: The use of this rule does not preclude the use of NFHS Rule 3-1-3 which reads: "A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining periods may be shortened at any time or the game terminated."
 - D. **TIE-BREAKING PROCEDURE (Regular Season, Including District Games, and State Playoff Series):** For ALL varsity high school games (regular season and playoff contests) that end in a tie, at the end of regulation, play shall follow a "25-yard Overtime Procedure" to determine the winner. The procedure, as outlined in the National Federation Football Rules Book, will be followed with the following exceptions:
 1. The ball will be placed on the 25-yard line.
 2. First and tens may be obtained to maintain possession. Once the line-to-gain has not been achieved the ball will be turned over to the defense.Lower Level Contests: Games contested below the senior high school varsity level (Junior Varsity, Freshman) that end in a tie at the end of regulation play, may utilize one (1) overtime period to break the tie if both coaches agree before the game. If a tie remains at the end of the one overtime period, then the contest will remain a tie. Combined 8th and 9th grade contests that end in a tie will remain a tie.
 - E. **TRY DURING REGULAR SEASON GAMES (Week 1-9):** NFHS Rule 8-3-1 EXCEPTION states "If a touchdown is scored during the last down of the 4th period, the try shall not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying." **During games for Week 1 through 9 the TRY shall be attempted if the score-difference is 12 or less points when the winning team scores. It shall also be attempted if the score-difference is 14 or less points when the losing team scores.**
NOTE: This applies only to the 4th quarter, not to any overtime periods.
 - F. **SUSPENDED GAME:** If a game is interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible authority (weather, lights, etc.), the game by rule shall be continued from the point of interruption unless the teams mutually agree to terminate the game with the existing score (a winner must be determined under this option).
 - G. **RECOGNITION AND EVALUATION OF THE ATHLETE WITH A CONCUSSION:**
 1. An official shall not be responsible for making the diagnosis of a concussion. The official can assist coaches and medical staff by recognizing signs and symptoms of a concussion and informing the coach and medical staff of their concerns.
 - H. **HEAT/HYDRATION-MANDATORY OFFICIALS TIMEOUTS:** **It is a MSHSAA Rules Adoption that for Wet Bulb Globe Thermometer readings at or above 82.1, assessed 30 mins prior to the start of competition; a timeout shall be called at the halfway point of the quarter or the next dead ball immediately following the halfway point. It is the responsibility of the host school administrator to notify the Referee if the mandatory Heat/Hydration timeouts are to be implemented for the game.**

MSHSAA ON-SITE PROTEST PROCEDURE

1 – Ask Coach:

What are you protesting? - ONLY misapplication of a rule can be protested. Judgement calls CANNOT be protested.

2 – Coach has 10 minutes to produce rule (either via rule book or electronic version rule book on phone). Officials can assist with locating rule.

3 – If Coach produces evidence – Then CORRECT the error.

4 – If Coach CANNOT produce evidence – Assess the Coach a team timeout and then resume game.

5 – GET IT RIGHT! If a mistake has been made, admit it, correct it and resume game.

For specific details, please review the full procedure of the MSHSAA Board Policy in the MSHSAA Handbook

2025 MECHANICS AND PROCEDURES

This section is to clarify areas of football mechanics and procedures where vague or no specific direction is presented by the NFHS.

- 1. ENTERING THE FIELD**– Pre-game: The officiating crew should enter the field together 60 minutes before game time. All officials are to perform their assigned duties in a business-like manner, including the Referee and another official meeting with the home team head coach and then the visiting team head coach. Other crew members should observe players, uniforms, equipment, etc., while they are warming up. The Line Judge and Linesman check the chain crew equipment along with meeting with ball boys. The Referee and Back Judge shall inspect the entire field per the NFHS Manual. Crew then comes together for information from head coaches meeting. 30 minutes prior to kick-off, meet timekeepers on the field. After duties are performed, if ONE team leaves the field, the crew may leave the field and return to locker room or designated area. At the time the coach stated, or no later than 5 minutes prior to kick-off, the crew MUST arrive at the field. Referee and umpire go to their sideline. Line Judge and Back Judge will escort their team from their field of access entry point to their sideline. Linesman takes care of duties with the chain crew. NOTE: At any time, from 60 minutes before kick-off until the coin toss with captains, if BOTH teams are on the field, the officials MUST be on the field. 3 minutes before kick-off – coin toss with captains and head coaches. Halftime: At five minutes prior to the end of halftime, officials shall report to the field and remain as a crew on the end line of the end zone of which they enter the field in the case of needed communication relating to potentially starting the second half with a penalty. At the moment both teams have re-entered the field of play (whether before or after the starting of the 3-minute warm-up clock) the crew will proceed down their assigned sideline. The Referee will go to the sideline opposite of the press box and the Umpire will go to the press box sideline. Once the time has expired for the 3-minute warmup then the officials will take their positions to start the second half kickoff. If a team has reported to the field late, and after the crew has taken their positions for the second half choice, the Referee or Umpire (depending on the team being penalized) will throw a penalty flag approximately 2-4 yards (or to the bottom of the numbers) in front of them indicating the second half beginning with a penalty. The Referee will then give the appropriate signal indicating the penalty followed by the procedure for second half choices as listed below in #6. The BJ will give the appropriate signal indicating the penalty as the final signal, then mark of the penalty, before kick-off for the second half
- 2. 2nd Half Choice Procedure-MSHSAA 2nd Half Mechanic Adoption**: After completing the “Entering The Field” procedure after halftime(as explained in #5 above). Communication regarding the second half choice will be done by the Referee and Umpire at the fifty yard line from their sidelines. he Referee or Umpire, depending on which team has the second half choice, will confer with the “Head Coach” of the second half choosing team as to their choice to begin the second half. After securing the second half choice from the head coach, the Referee/Umpire will give a subtle signal of the choice selected to the Referee/Umpire on the opposite sideline. The Referee/Umpire will then relay to the opposing coach the choice selected by the second half choosing coach, at this time the opposing coach will decide on his choice that remains. The Referee/Umpire will then relay back to the Referee/Umpire a subtle signal of the option selected by the opposing coach. Begin the second half.
- 3. COIN TOSS** – The coin toss or simulated coin toss will take place in the center of the field 3 minutes prior to game time, with not more than four team members in game uniform(captains) from each team. The walk to centerfield is part of the coin toss; therefore, the walk begins at 3 minutes prior to game time. Honorary personnel, approved by the school administration, may be present at the start of the coin toss procedures but must leave the field at the same time the coaches are dismissed. If both teams agree to an early coin toss it shall not take place on the playing field but will be simulated in the center of the field 3 minutes prior to game time. The Referee, Umpire, Line Judge, and Back Judge shall escort the team captains and head coaches toward the center of the field starting from the sideline at 3 minutes prior to game time, with Line Judge and Back Judge stopping at the hash marks and facing the sidelines. The Referee can either face the scoreboard or have his back to the scoreboard during the coin toss. The captains should be closest to the Referee with the head coaches closest to the Umpire. The coin should be tossed and either hit the ground or caught and displayed without turning the coin over onto the top of the wrist/hand. If the winner of the toss defers, signal #10 is given prior to asking the other captain his “choice”. Since “defer” is an option and not a choice, if the captain winning the toss defers, the other team’s captain becomes the “first choosing captain”. The Referee concludes the coin toss by signaling only the choice of the first choosing captain.
- 4. AT THE END OF THE FIRST HALF WHEN LEAVING THE FIELD** – When both teams dressing rooms are situated in close proximity and opposing teams are leaving the field together, the Line Judge and Linesman should accompany the teams on the way to their dressing rooms to insure no unsportsmanlike conduct occurs. **If facilities require teams to enter/exit the field at the same location, the L and LJ shall permit the visiting team to exit first.** The Umpire and the Back Judge should stay with the Referee while he insures that the correct timing for the halftime interval starts at the proper time.
- 5. WING OFFICIALS SCRIMMAGE POSITION/NEXT DOWN** – Straddle the yard line that the ball is on with next down indicated on the chest. It is your responsibility to keep the coaches in the team box and not on the field. Crews must make it a priority to keep the restricted area free of players and coaches by NFHS rule. At the conclusion of each down the wing officials should get forward progress. As they hold forward progress, with both feet perpendicular to the sideline they should signal the number of the next down to the Referee on their chest. Once the Referee signals the next down the wing officials should extend one hand above the head with the number of the down indicated with fingers (fist for fourth down) and check down marker number. Use extended arm signal, until the snap, to indicate closest “A” player is off the line of scrimmage.

2025 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

Committee Clarifies and Restricts Attachments on Tooth and Mouth Protectors Effective with the 2026 Season [1-5-1d(5)a - 4, 5 (NEW)]

– Items that are attached to the tooth and mouth protector that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth will not be allowed. Items that are a part of the tooth and mouth protector that are a health or risk issue to the player and can pose a danger to themselves or other players, will not be allowed.

Arm Sleeve Specifications Developed to Guide Manufacturers, Players and Coaches Effective with the 2027 Season [1-5-2d (NEW), 1-5-3c(6)] – The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), in working with the football arm sleeve manufacturers and the NFHS, has developed new football arm sleeve performance specifications to be effective with the 2027 playing season. These new specifications closely align with the current rules for football gloves.

Electronic Equipment Approved to Permit Non-Audio and Still Images to Assist with Relaying Plays from the Sideline to Players [1-5-3c(2)] – This change allows for the use of some additional equipment, but continues to preclude in-helmet communication. This would allow for fixed electronic signs with play signals as well as non-audio methods but still would not permit the players between the numbers to watch video.

Rules Additions Further Prohibit the Use of Video and Audio Devices by Players [1-5-3c(3) (NEW)] – No player participating in the game will be allowed to wear any type of audio or video device in order to record or transmit audio or video.

Forward Fumbles Out of Bounds to be Returned to the Spot of the Fumble [3-4-2d (NEW), 3-4-3a, 4-3-1 EXCEPTION (NEW), 8-5-2a EXCEPTION] – A situation potentially giving an unfair advantage to a fumbling team was revised. When a forward fumble goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball shall be returned to the spot of the fumble.

Further Clarifications Made to Rule 10-4 in Specific Situations [9-6 PENALTY, 10-4-4b (DELETED)] – The committee continues its revisions and clarifications within the penalty enforcement rules to ensure consistency, particularly among illegal participation fouls.

2025 NFHS FOOTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Illegal and Improperly Worn Player Equipment
- Sportsmanship
- Defenseless Player/Targeting

2024-25 NFHS FOOTBALL GAME OFFICIALS MANUAL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Pregame Administration
- Clock Management
- The Importance of Dead-Ball Officiating