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Memorandum

To: All Ice Hockey Officials, Coaches and Athletic Directors
From: Tony Maselli, Chief Operating Officer
Date: December 7, 2022
Re: Protective Equipment

As we prepare for the beginning of the new season, the NJSIAA wishes to remind everyone of the importance we place on ensuring player safety and the need to enforce the protective equipment rules as written by the NFHS and where applicable, modified by the NJSIAA. The game of Ice Hockey is extremely fast and physical, all while being played in an unforgiving, contained space. We have a collective responsibility to one another to take all reasonable precautions for player safety and these precautions are directly related to our efforts to have our players properly equipped. To be clear, protective equipment enforcement is a **collaborative effort between the teams (player, coaches, and administrators) and the on-ice officials.**

The NFHS rules concerning protective equipment are quite explicit and the NJSIAA expects that these rules are being conveyed and compliance monitored regularly by the coaches with their players and that the players come prepared to play each and every game, properly equipped. Over the last number of years, the NJSIAA has modified several rules specifically for our state. For the avoidance of any confusion:

- ALL players, INCLUDING GOALKEEPERS, must have a mouthpiece ATTACHED TO THE FACEMASK AND INSERTED IN THEIR MOUTHS DURING PLAY
- ALL players, INCLUDING GOALKEEPERS, must wear an NFHS approved throat protector that is CLEARLY VISIBLE TO THE OFFICIALS. It is recommended that the throat guard be separate from any under garments.
- All GOALKEEPERS must wear a separate, commercially manufactured flapper attached to their helmets. These helmets MUST conform to current HECC guidelines specified by the NFHS. Non-compliant Cat eye masks are a serious concern, so if there are any questions as to whether a particular helmet is conformant, we urge coaches to confer with the NFHS rule book to verify the status of the goalkeeper mask.
- NO modifications to protective equipment is permitted. In specific, helmet s MUST have earpieces installed, and all chinstraps MUST be working and connected.

The rules clearly state, and I would like to reinforce, that protective equipment is required by players at ALL times during the contest, starting with the pregame warmups. There is no excuse for players not to know what is expected from them when they are participating in any NJSIAA contest, nor should the coaches allow for players to shirk their obligations.

The required pre-game meeting between the officials and the teams establishes the certification by the coaches to the officials that players are properly equipped. We fully expect that coaches are educating their players on their obligations, that players are being held accountable by the teams to come prepared, and that the required affirmation to the official to begin the game is based upon direct knowledge of player readiness.

This year, the NJSIAA is instituting a new conduct reporting system. It is our hope that by reinforcing a clear message to both the teams/players and officials that NJSIAA insists upon participants being properly equipped, we can reduce/eliminate disruptions in game flow related to protective equipment enforcement. Rather than having to remove players from the ice or handing out penalties and potentially impacting the outcome of a match, we would rather see the reasons for these potential disruptions eliminated. However, when non-compliance becomes excessive, there should be no recourse but to penalize according to the rules and to report the situation through the conduct system for follow-up by the NJSIAA.