

To: All Athletic Directors, Football Coaches and Football Officials

From: Mario Martinez, Associate Director
Dana Sanchez, Commissioner of Officials

Subject: Football Points of Emphasis and Clarification for the 2009 Season
from the NMAA Football Rules Interpreters

Date: August 20, 2009

As you may already know, the NMAA has developed a statewide rules interpreters program for all sports for the first time this year. The purpose of the rules interpreters program is to assist our officials in the consistent application of rules throughout the state and to ensure that coaches and officials are on the same page relative to football rules. In addition, the four individuals serving as rules interpreters will be the go-to contacts for rules interpretations for our coaches and officials. Their contact information is supplied at the end of this memo.

Our office staff met with the football interpreters last week and the group came up with a number of items for clarification and emphasis. They are as follows:

LIGHTNING POLICY:

The following procedures will be put in place for lightning disturbances or other weather related issues (NMAA Handbook 7.15.1J):

Lightning Delay Procedures (Guidelines for Officials):

- 1) Use the NFHS Rulebook as a guide to implement lightning delay procedures
**From the NFHS Rulebook, "When thunder is heard or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location. Suspend play and take shelter immediately."*
- 2) Adhere to the 30-minute rule before resuming play, regardless of the point of interruption (first or second half).
- 3) Communicate with host school administration, visitor administration (if present), and with head coaches of both teams as conditions or decisions change.
- 4) Attempt to finish contests, if at all possible, once lightning disturbances subside.
- 5) Contests can be delayed up to two hours using the 30-minute rule.
- 6) After a two hour delay, it is ultimately the responsibility of the game officials in communication with the host site administration as to whether to suspend the contest or extend the delay additionally.
- 7) Officials should contact Mario Martinez, NMAA Director of Football (505-977-5383) or Dana Sanchez, NMAA Commissioner of Officials (505-977-5388) for clarification if needed.

NOTE: These lightning delay procedures are for varsity contests only. Sub-varsity or junior high contests are at the discretion of game officials and host site administration.

SIDELINE MANAGEMENT

A major rules change has been implemented regarding sideline management during football games. The rules change can be found in the NFHS Football Rulebook (1-2-3g). It states:

“Team boxes shall be marked on each side of the field outside the coaches’ area between the 25-yard lines for use of coaches, substitutes, athletic trainers, etc., affiliated with the team. The coaches’ area is a minimum of a 2-yard belt between the front of the team box and the sideline, and becomes a restricted area when the ball is live.”

Further, Rule 9-8-3 states,

“A non-player shall not be outside the team box unless to become a player or to return as a replaced player. A maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area. No player, non-player or coach shall be in the restricted area when the ball is live.”

Coaches: Please assist the officials in conformance to this rule. This is a risk minimization rule and we ask for your cooperation in keeping all personnel in the team box. As a reminder, no one may be in the restricted area during live play. Officials are being instructed to enforce this rule strictly and consistently from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Your cooperation and assistance is appreciated.

TIE-BREAKER PROCEDURES AT THE END OF THE GAME

The tie-breaking procedures in the National Federation rulebook are used in all games at all levels (varsity, sub-varsity and middle school) between New Mexico schools, as well as out-of-state guests, with the results determining the winner. See NMAA Handbook 7.15.1H.

MERCY RULE

The mercy rule in New Mexico, which appears in NMAA Handbook Section 7.15.1I, applies to ALL levels of competition (varsity, sub-varsity and middle school). It is as follows:

- 1) **6-Man** – A game is ended at half-time or during the second half if a team is 45 or more points behind.
- 2) **8-Man and 11-Man** – When a team is ahead at half-time by 35 or more points or becomes 35 or more points ahead in the second half, the clock will not stop during out of bounds, incomplete passes or first downs. The clock only stops for **time-outs, scores or penalties**. If the point differential becomes less than 35 points, regular timing resumes.

NOTE: Timing in a game may be adjusted, by mutual consent of both head coaches and the referee. Pursuant to NFHS Football Rule 3-1-3, 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 period may be shortened at any time or the game terminated.

3-MINUTE WARM-UP CLOCK CLARIFICATION

The 3-minute warm-up starts immediately when half-time ends. Teams must be on the field at 0:00. The opportunity for the 3-minute warm-up begins then. Captains will meet with officials at the beginning of the 3-minute warm-up.

PRE-GAME TIME MANAGEMENT

School home site administration is asked to assist in managing time prior to kickoff. Introductions, singing or playing of the National Anthem and any other ceremonies need to take place prior to kickoff. If a game is scheduled to start at 7:00 p.m. , all pre-game festivities should already be completed by kickoff.

POINTS AFTER TOUCHDOWN(S) AT THE END OF A GAME:

- 1) District Games – At the varsity level only, teams must attempt PAT's for all district games.
- 2) Non-District Games – For non-district competition, the PAT attempt is not needed.

GAME AND PLAYER EQUIPMENT AND FIELD CONDITIONS

The following items were discussed as points of clarification for game and player equipment:

- 1) Wilson Football – It is mandatory that any Wilson football be used at all NMAA playoff games. Footballs by any other manufacturer are prohibited as the game ball during the playoffs.
- 2) The Use of "Spats" – Players may wear spats (debris inhibitors) provided the following conditions exist:
 - a. Spats must be the same color as the player's shoes. If black spats are worn, shoes must be black. If white spats are worn, shoes must be white. If red spats are worn, shoes must be red.
 - b. Please note that this rule does not apply to athletic tape. Tape is legal and does not follow the same rule as spats.
- 3) Eye Shields Worn on Helmets – Players can only wear a CLEAR shield on their helmets. Shields with any tint will not be allowed; regardless of if the player has a doctor's note. Players may wear prescription glasses with a tint but in NO circumstance are tinted shields permitted.
- 4) Knee pads – If knee pads don't cover the knees, they are not legal equipment. Coaches are responsible for ensuring that all player equipment is safe and legal and they assume responsibility for this by signing off on the online district clinic. Officials must deal with these issues immediately and appropriately beginning with Week One, in the interest of player safety.
- 5) Field Conditions – If an official encounters a field that has unsafe field conditions, the referee should write a report to the NMAA and the NMAA will address the issue with local school administration.

The football rules interpreters for the 2009 season are:

Central Region:

John Conner
Home: (505) 237-0286
Cell: (505) 280-4010
Email: john_char6@hotmail.com

Northeast Region:

Kerry Coffelt
Cell: (505) 412-2809
Email: bluezebra17@msn.com

Northwest Region:

Robert Posey
Home: (505) 634-2220
Cell: (505) 793-2333
Email: robert_posey_1@hotmail.com

Southeast Region:

Mike Madry
Home: (575) 887-5325 or (575) 687-2402
Work: (575) 887-7575
Cell: (575) 361-6325
Email: mnmadry@valornet.com

Southwest Region:

Ed Helsel
Home: (575) 524-3409
Work: (575) 523-2505
Cell: (575) 644-3616
Email: ed.helsel@anpacnm.com

Donn Fishburn of Albuquerque is also a contact for rules interpretations, as he was in attendance at the NFHS Football Rules meeting. His information is as follows:
(505) 771-2641 or (505) 948-0300
Email: ref@fishburn.org

If you have rules questions, you are asked to call or email the individual in your region of the state for clarification and interpretation.

Thank you for your attention to this information. If you have questions or if you need additional information on the rules interpreters program, please feel free to contact us. Have a great season!