

Risk Minimization Tops 2009-10 Field Hockey Rules Changes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 17, 2009) - The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Field Hockey Rules Committee highlighted risk minimization as it made 14 rule revisions for the 2009-10 school year. The rules changes were made by the committee at its January 17-19 meeting in Indianapolis and were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

One of the most significant rule changes was the emphasis on the forehand edge hit. Rule 3-4-4 states that players shall not hit the ball hard on the forehand with the edge of the stick. This change does not prohibit use of the edge of the stick on a forehand 1) in a controlled action in a tackle, 2) when raising the ball in a controlled way over an opponent's stick or over a goalkeeper who is lying on the ground, or 3) when using a long pushing motion along the ground.

According to the committee, the forehand edge hit is less predictable than that of the backhand, which could risk injury to players.

"We are concerned about control," said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of educational services and liaison to the NFHS Field Hockey Rules Committee. "The forehand edge hit is a new technique and skill being taught at the college and international levels, which is most impressive, but is unpredictable when defenses are judging the angle of the ball."

In further attempts to minimize risk, Rule 1-6-6 was revised to clarify how casts, splints and braces must be worn during play. The change calls for at least one-half inch of padding to be on all casts and splints. Also, braces must be worn as the manufacturer intends, and may be padded or unpadded.

In order to be consistent with other sports, Rule 4-2-4a-c stresses when time-outs should be taken in regard to injury, or when a team may play short of players. If a team is playing short, an injured player may return to the game at any time. If bleeding occurs, the bleeding player is directed to leave the game until the wound is covered and any adjustments are made to the uniform. It is also permitted to play short if a player is rendered unconscious during a game; however, the player may not resume participation that day without written authorization from a physician.

In the remaining rule revisions, the committee concentrated on making the rule book easier to understand.

"[The committee] did a lot of clean-up to the rules book so that we could clarify between the meanings of rules. By doing this, it makes it easier for officials to administer and coaches to teach what each rule is emphasizing," Hopkins said.

Other rules changes included:

- Rule 1-2-4m was added and reads, "Each team's area shall be on the same side of the field, at least five yards outside the sideline extending from its own 25-yard line to the marked substitution line."
- Rule 1-5-1m-n was added to clarify how an American flag and manufacturer's logo/trademark shall be worn on the uniform. The main rationale is to ensure visibility of the number on the uniform.
- Rule 1-6-10 clarifies that the use of video monitoring, replay equipment or personal wireless communications devices during the game by officials, coaches or players is prohibited.
- Rule 4-2-2 Note now reads, "By state association adoption, the clock may continue to run when one team is ahead by a specified number of goals, or alternative game-ending procedure may be established after having completed the first half."
- Rule 4-4 Penalty was changed to replace the current penalties section for this rule in its entirety. The five changes included:

1. For violations by the team with the ball, a free hit shall be awarded to the opponent nearest the spot where the play stopped.
2. For violations by the team without the ball, the coach shall be notified with no other penalty assessed.
3. For simultaneous violations by both teams, the game shall be stopped at the first dead ball. The game is restarted with a bully on a spot chosen by the officials.
4. For subsequent violations by either team, misconduct penalties will be assessed to the coach(es) of the offending team(s).
5. An ineligible player who has entered shall be removed when discovered and her team penalized for misconduct (yellow card to coach and team plays short).

· Rule 9-1 was added to organize the section to include all free hit situations and which players must allow seven yards.

· Rule 9-2-3 was added and states: "Opposing players shall not be within seven yards of the spot where the free hit is taken. Sufficient time shall be allowed for players to leave this area."

· Rule 9-2-4 states, "On a free hit by the attacking team within five yards of the circle, the ball shall be placed on the broken line circle nearest where the foul occurred. No player shall be within seven yards of the spot where the free hit is taken except attacking team members positioned outside of the broken line circle."

· Rule 12-2-2 Penalty 1 notes that if fans misbehave, officials should suspend play, inform game management of the problem, and let game management resolve the issue.

· Rule 12-2-2 Penalty 2 was added for further fan misbehavior and states: "For the second offense, the official shall suspend the game on the first dead-ball situation and request assistance from the appropriate game manager/administrator. If, after resuming play, the problem continues, the officials shall declare the game a suspended game and shall follow state association procedures for reporting sportsmanship incidents. The offending spectator(s) should be removed from the venue."

The committee also established five points of emphasis for the 2009-10 season. The topics include host school responsibility, tooth protectors and mouthguards, raised stick, rough and dangerous play, and good sporting behavior.

According to the NFHS 2007-08 High School Athletics Participation Survey, 1,778 schools sponsor a competitive field hockey team with 62,557 girls participating and 408 boys participating.

This press release was written by Lauren Hensley, a spring semester intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a senior at Franklin (Indiana) College.