

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER'S FOOTBALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN RESPONSE AND ADDRESSING THE NFHS TASK FORCE, "RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR MINIMIZING IMPACT EXPOSURE AND CONCUSSION RISK IN FOOTBALL"

The Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Football met in Lexington on January 21 and considered the report issued by the NFHS and recommendations on minimizing impact exposure and concussion risks. The recommendations of the NFHS were as follows:

1. *Full-contact should be limited during the regular season, as well as during activity outside of the traditional fall football season. For purposes of these recommendations and guidelines, full-contact consists of both "Thud" and "Live Action" using the USA Football definitions of Levels of Contact.*
2. *Member state associations should consider a variety of options for limiting contact in practices. The task force strongly recommends full-contact be allowed in no more than 2-3 practices per week. Consideration should also be given to limiting full-contact on consecutive days and limiting full-contact time to no more than 30 minutes per day and no more than 60-90 minutes per week.*
3. *Pre-season practices may require more full-contact time than practices occurring later in the regular season, to allow for teaching fundamentals with sufficient repetition.*
 - a. *Pre-season acclimatization protocols and regulations regarding heat and hydration take precedent and should always be followed.*
 - b. *While total full-contact practice days and time limitations may be increased during the pre-season, the emphasis should focus on the proper principles of tackling and blocking during the first several practices, before progressing to "Thud" and "Live Contact."*
4. *During pre-season twice-daily practices, only one session per day should include full contact.*
5. *Each member state association should review its current policies regarding total quarters or games played during a one-week time frame.*
6. *Consistent with efforts to minimize total exposure to full-contact, head impact exposure, and concussion risk, member state associations with jurisdiction over football outside of the traditional fall football season should review their current policies to assess if those policies stand in alignment with the Fundamentals discussed within this report and, if needed, modify the policies accordingly.*
7. *Each member state association should reach out to its respective state coaches' association on designing and implementing a coach education program that appropriately integrates youth, middle school, and high school football programs in every community. USA Football and the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching courses should be the primary education resources for all coaches. Education for coaches should also include the proper fitting and care of helmets.*
8. *Each member state association should regularly educate its schools on current state concussion law and policies and encourage schools to have a written Concussion Management Protocol. Schools should also be encouraged to share this information with coaches, parents, and students annually.*
9. *An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with clearly defined written and practiced protocols should be developed and in place at every high school. When possible, an athletic trainer should be present at all practices and games.*

In consideration of the recommendations of the NFHS Task Force, "Recommendations and Guidelines for Minimizing Impact Exposure and Concussion Risk in Football", the KHSAA Football Advisory Committee recommends the following policies be implemented, solely for football and that they be implemented immediately for the 2015 playing season.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That all prior use of the word "contact" in existing regulations and interpretations, be changed to "full gear", "shells (helmet & shoulder pads)", "helmets only" and "no gear", based solely on the gear that is being worn. The use of equipment to define "contact" should be eliminated.

RECOMMENDATION 2

For the purpose of guidelines for football, the KHSAA adopt the definitions contained in the USA Football Regulations. These specific guidelines and terminologies would

Definition of Levels of Contact:

“Air” - Players run a drill unopposed without contact.

“Bags” – Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.

“Control” – Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact; one player is pre-determined the 'winner' by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet.

“Thud” – Drill is run at assigned speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined "winner." Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.

“Live Action” - Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.

For the purposes of this rule, "Contact" will be defined as drills run at the Thud and Live Action Level.

Drills run at the Air, Bags and Control level would not be considered “Contact”.

When players are in shells (shorts, shoulder pads, and helmets) no contact will occur.

A team may participate in "air," "bags," and "control" drills and simulations at any point during a permitted practice.

RECOMMENDATION 3

In response to NFHS recommendation 1, 2 and 6 (spring practice), the committee recommends that the Board approve reinterpretation and changes in policy to state:

During the regular season and during spring practice, during non-game situations (practice), a team may participate in “Thud” or “Live Action” drills and game time simulations for no more than ninety-minutes per team, per week.

RECOMMENDATION 4

In response to NFHS recommendation 1, 2 and 6, the committee recommends that the Board approve reinterpretation and changes in policy to state:

During the spring practice period, a team may participate in “Thud” or “Live Action” drills and game time simulations for no more than six of the practice sessions, and that the practice sessions be structured as follows:

Two days Non-Contact (Air, Bags, Control)

Two days Contact (Thud, Live Action)

One day Non-Contact (Air, Bags, Control)

Two days Contact (Thud, Live Action)

One day Non-Contact (Air, Bags, Control)

Two days Contact (Thud, Live Action)

RECOMMENDATION 5

In response to NFHS recommendation 3, the committee recommends that the Board approve reinterpretation and changes in policy to state:

The committee feels strongly that existing rules address these recommendations, and that the only change necessary is clarification in the existing interpretations using Thud and Live Contact to illustrate allowable actions during practice as well as highlighting what is not permissible during the acclimatization and acclimation periods.

RECOMMENDATION 6

In response to NFHS recommendation 4, the committee recommends that the Board approve reinterpretation and changes in policy to state:

While the committee feels a majority of this limitation is in place, the committee feels that only one period on the multiple practice days be allowed to involve “Thud” or “Live Action”, regardless of permitted gear.

RECOMMENDATION 7

In response to NFHS recommendation 5, the committee recommends that the Board approve reinterpretation and changes in policy to state:

The football players be limited to eight (8) quarters per week with the following provisions:

Each week is a Friday through Thursday period;

Participating in one play in a game at any level counts as one quarter;

Any playing time greater than 6 minutes counts as one quarter;

A playing time period of 6 minutes or less counts as one half quarter;

A player be limited to 4 quarters in any one day.

RECOMMENDATION 8

In response to NFHS recommendation 6, the committee recommends that the Board approve reinterpretation and changes in policy to state:

Approve Recommendations 3 and 4 as detailed above

RECOMMENDATION 9

In response to NFHS recommendation 7, the committee feels that the education component is contained in existing training and recommends staff to include helmet fitting information in the annual rules review for coaches.

The committee felt strongly that provisions already in place in existing KHSAA regulations clearly address recommendations 8 and 9 of the NFHS Task Force information.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE NOT RELATED TO THE TASK FORCE

The Committee was unanimous in its desire to change the rules before published documents and recommendations forced them into a libelous situation that meant potential legal trouble for their programs.

The Committee wants the Board to again consider the change in the start of the football season to start one week later, with ten weeks to play ten games. Notable on the committee some schools that had historically indicated that might be problematic voiced a different opinion. The concern comes in light of the potential in 2017 and 2018 where the schools will have less than ten days of practice before the first scrimmage, if playing week 0.

The Committee wants training emphasis on covering the Run/Pass option, particularly with linemen downfield. Staff committed to review film to assist with that.

The Committee supported a mechanics experiment where the Linesman and Line Judge change sides at halftime to help with team/official relations and consistent mechanics coverage.

The Committee wants mechanics emphasis on the play clock, particularly the manual, visible countdown in the last five seconds as required by the Officials Manual.