

# IHSA rolls back stance on waistband issue



QUINCY -- It took less than minute for four of the starters on the Quincy Notre Dame girls basketball team to get sent to the bench during the Dec. 7 game against Bethalto Civic Memorial at the Pit.

All Raiders coach Eric Orne could do was look on in frustration as it happened.

One of the game officials noticed the players had rolled the waistbands on their shorts down and told them to check out to fix the problem. As the four starters walked to the bench, Orne shook his head in displeasure.

"We've been warned by the (Illinois High School Association) and the officials that this was going to be a point of emphasis," Orne said. "We had a heads up they'd be checking."

It's a point of emphasis that seems a little absurd to some.

"Every year it seems there are new restrictions," Orne said. "It used to be how big the logos could be. I think honestly the officials would like to worry more about the game than the uniform, but they're being fair about it and give you a warning pregame."

Rolling the waistbands is a popular trend in high school and college basketball. However, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations, it breaks a rule of how uniforms are supposed to be worn.

According to Todd Reichert, an Illinois High School Association certified clinician who also officiates games in West Central Illinois, said the NFHS has had a rule about the rolled waistband for a few years, but wanted to make a zero tolerance policy this season.

The rule states only one manufacturer's logo -- Nike, Under Armour, Adidas, etc. -- may be visible on the shorts. When the waistband is

rolled, another logo located inside the shorts becomes visible, which causes a violation.

"The NFHS rule states that the uniforms have to be worn as the manufacturer intended," Reichert said.

There's also a safety concern centered around the drawstring on the shorts.

Kurt Gibson, IHSA assistant executive director, said an exposed string potentially creates an issue if a player setting a screen accidentally gets a hand or finger caught in the loop.

Although most players and coaches understand that, how the rule was being enforced was never smooth for anyone.

"It's frustrating for an office like ours when we have to spend an excessive amount of time on uniform related matters," Gibson said. "If we wanted to point the finger on who to blame, there's a lot of directions they could be pointed in."

That made the IHSA modify its original stance.

About five weeks into the season, the IHSA sent a memorandum out to officials and schools they were changing the stance on the zero tolerance policy on rolled waistbands.

The modified rule now states the waistbands can be rolled as long as another manufacturer's logo is not visible. Players can roll their waistbands if they double roll them, or roll them inside their shorts instead.

That has seemed to find a remedy.

"We haven't had anyone come off the floor in two weeks," Orne said. "So I think the emphasis has been derailed a little bit. The officials here do a great job of communicating."

Gibson said changing the IHSA's stance helped put the focus back on the game.

"It's clearly a battle we've lost," Gibson said. "We're taking away from other rules that are a little more important. If it gets things focused on the game again, then we're good. We need to get the focus back on the game."