

OUR GUIDE TO HIGH SCHOOL REPLAY

The only things certain in life are death and taxes — and the inevitable expansion of replay at the high school level. If it's coming, here's how to do it right.

By **Referee** - August 29, 2022



With permission from the NFHS, the Alabama High School Athletic Association became the first in the nation to experiment with instant replay in high school football, testing it during two spring games in 2016. Photo Credit:



ince its regular season introduction to pro football officiating in 1986, replay has found its way into nearly all of the major professional sports. Even the so-called beautiful game of soccer is currently testing whether video assistant referees can enhance the ability for officials to get calls right.

College sports have embraced replay as well. In baseball, basketball, football and volleyball, replay is being used to confirm correct rulings or overturn incorrect calls.

The use of replay has also been approved by the NFHS in basketball state championship series since 2009 and many states have put it into practice. The NFHS approved the use of replay in hockey starting with the 2010-11 season. It is used for reviewing goals and undetected goals and determining the correct time on the clock.



And as the cost of technology drops, the tide of replay shows no signs of stopping in basketball and hockey. In 2016, the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) became the first state association to test replay in high school football. The AHSAA received permission from the NFHS to test out replay in preseason games. Many states are now using replay for state championship football events.

While many games at the pro and college levels feature a dozen or more cameras with high-quality views of the action, that's not the case at the high school level. Outside of state championships in basketball and football, the television camera coverage is poor. But that may not matter, as Alabama's preseason experiment showed. Alabama relied upon specially mounted cameras in the press box and end zone to provide two possible views of a play.

As state leaders contemplate expanding the use of replay, they should take the lessons pro and college levels have had to learn and put them into action. What are the best practices for high school replay?

QUICKLY ACCESSIBLE

Going to replay shouldn't cause significant delays, particularly at the high school level, where busing costs and curfew issues could come into play. Any video should be easy to pull up and the system intuitive for officials to use.



LIMITED USE

The rules should be structured so that only certain matters can be reviewed, and coaches are allowed only so many reviews during a game. That keeps a lid on replay encroachment, helping avoid delays mentioned in the last item. At its best, replay helps fix big errors. When it starts nitpicking every close call, games

risk becoming bogged down. The initial technology that will make high school replay possible won't always bring the capability to nitpick anyway.





A MINIMUM NUMBER OF CAMERAS ARE NEEDED TO ENSURE ANGLES THAT WILL BE OF USE

Additionally, the placement of the cameras should be such that they provide optimal views of the likely plays that will go to replay. For example, goalline cameras are good in football. Cameras that capture the foul poles are useful in baseball, etc. Without the needed camera angles, any video is going to have limited value in a replay situation.

IF GAME OFFICIALS ARE BEING ASKED TO REVIEW VIDEO, THEY SHOULD HAVE A TENT OR OTHER SHADED AREA

Especially for outdoor competitions, a shaded area is necessary for ease of seeing screens on sunny days. Additionally, the review space should be away from the teams and others. This provides the officials a place to freely view the video footage and perhaps discuss the appropriate ruling without players or coaches applying pressure.



THE SCREEN THAT OFFICIALS USE TO VIEW REPLAY SHOULD BE ADEQUATELY SIZED

Cell phones – even the plus sized Androids or iPhones – won't cut it. It is difficult to see the playing action on those small screens. At a minimum, the screen should be a full-sized iPad. Bigger screens are even better.



In the Alabama High School Athletic Association experiment with high school football replay, the officiating crew accessed game footage on tablets. Photo Credit: AHSAA

IDEALLY, A REPLAY OFFICIAL WOULD BE ASSIGNED

This would be like the setup in college football. That frees up the onfield crew to focus on their duties and lets someone else focus on replay.

PARTICULARLY FOR SPORTS WITH A CLOCK, THERE NEEDS TO BE SOME WAY TO LINK THE CLOCK TO FOOTAGE

Without that technology, officials will be guessing in situations where replay corrects a situation and there needs to be a clock adjustment.

SOME MECHANISM NEEDS TO BE IN PLACE TO ANNOUNCE A REPLAY DECISION

Coaches and those in the stands need to clearly hear the explanation of the ruling when video replay is involved. This is necessary since most High School facilities do not have high definition video boards showing the same video the officials are reviewing. Barring that, a conference between officials and coaches should be held after the correct ruling is determined so both teams are fully informed.

IF THERE IS A VIDEO SCOREBOARD, NOTHING SHOULD BE SHOWN THAT THE OFFICIALS DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO SEEING

Showing different video makes for a bad situation. Officials can only rule on things shown on their screen. If the crowd is seeing totally different, problems will arise.

SUPPORT STAFF

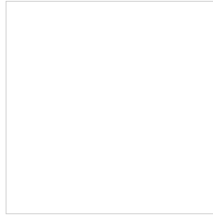
Someone needs to make sure the equipment is working and that officials have quick access to it if the need arises. Officials shouldn't be expected to have the technical know-how to operate the equipment. That assistance should come from someone knowledgeable in the particular system in use, especially if systems differ between venues.

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