

Fee Increase Part of Changes to NFHS Authenticating Mark Program; Other Rules Update

By Marty Maciaszek NSGA Communications and Team Dealer Director

And

Tom Van Jacobs NSGA Marketing Coordinator

Upcoming changes to the National Federations of State High School Associations (NFHS) Authenticating Mark Program (AMP) were addressed by CEO Dr. Karissa Niehoff at the annual Team Sports Conference hosted by the Sports Fitness & Industry Association (SFIA) on April 16 in Indianapolis.

The NFHS is changing the minimum royalty rate of 50 cents to a standard royalty rate of 5% by manufacturers for sales of NFHS stamped inflatable balls or for a dozen baseballs, softballs, lacrosse and field hockey balls and pucks. The fee increase is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2025 and was approved by the NFHS Board of Directors on October 9, 2023. NSGA staff only recently learned of the NFHS plan.

The NFHS also updated the NFHS mark to be utilized on balls used for game play. The old mark was phased out January 16, 2024 and the new marks have a minimum size of 2½ inches on inflatable balls and 1¼ inches on non-inflatable balls. Any remaining on-hand inventory can be sold through 2024 and inventory with the old NFHS mark can be used until it is retired, according to NFHS.

Niehoff said the board voted on a shift in the business model where the revenue will be used for NFHS education programs. She said the change to a standard royalty rate is more secure for NFHS about where the money is coming from and more in alignment with what's going on in the sports industry.

Niehoff also said, "we will never choose to do a national ball contract and that's not in our future at all."

The NFHS increase will be a subject of discussion at the NSGA 2024 Leadership Conference.

Here is a look at some other rules information from the Team Sports Conference.

Football

NFHS

A football arm sleeve standard is being developed for the NFHS rules committee to review, according to Bob Colgate of NFHS.

NFHS will be writing rules for flag football for the 2025-26 season that will include boys, girls, unified and co-ed and 5- and 7-player. The jersey changes where the jersey color clearly contrasts to the number go into effect in the fall of 2024. Colgate reiterated that a change was made requiring players to all wear the same color jerseys. The NFHS rules committee is not looking at player-to-coach communication right now and Colgate said "that would probably be a long ways off." Players can wear the single number "0" but not "00" as a zero before a second numeral is not allowed on the uniform.

NCAA

Optional technology rules in football, effective for the 2024 season, were approved by the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel on April 18. In games involving Football Bowl Subdivision teams, each school will have the option to use coach-to-player communications through the helmet to one player on the field. That player will be identified by having a green dot on the back midline of the player's helmet.

The communication from the coach to the player will be turned off with 15 seconds remaining on the play clock or when the ball is snapped, whichever comes first.

For all three divisions, teams have the option of using tablets to view in-game video only. The video can include the broadcast feed and camera angles from the coach's sideline and coach's end zone. Teams can have up to 18 active tablets for use in the coaching booth, sideline and locker room. Tablets cannot be connected to other devices to project larger additional images and cannot include analytics, data or data access capability or other communication access. All team personnel will be allowed to view the tablets during the game.

The Football Rules Committee, which met the last week of February, had a thorough discussion regarding wearable technologies. The committee invited non-FBS conferences interested in using wearable technologies to submit an experimental proposal to the committee. Any proposals must be made to the committee by June 15.

The PROP did not support a uniform rule proposal made by the Football Rules Committee. Panel members were not comfortable with on-field officials having to enforce the recommended rule about stronger

enforcement for clear violations, specifically pants. The panel understands the rules committee's concern but encourages the committee to look for an administrative solution that does not include game official enforcement.

Basketball

NFHS

A final decision on these proposals is expected in May:

A school or conference logo/mascot to be located below the neckline and above the number. Currently, only lettering is allowed in the space above the numbers.

One manufacturer logo to be located anywhere on the uniform top, provided placement does not interfere with the visibility of the player's number. Currently, manufacturer logos cannot be in the apex of the neckline and must be located no more than 5 inches below the shoulder seam on the front of the jersey, or 2 inches from the neckline on the back of the jersey; or in either side insert.

The NFHS stated that 27 states have implemented a shot clock to basketball in some capacity with several other states continuing to survey, discuss and vote on implementation.

NCAA

There are no women's uniform rule changes on the horizon. The NCAA has continued to make changes to uniforms to be more liberalized and flexible. Numbers have to contrast and the two teams' jerseys have to

clearly contrast.

Volleyball

NFHS

Numbers with a leading zero are not legal on jerseys beginning in July 1, 2028.

The NFHS Volleyball Rules Committee discussed two potential rules changes to the ball – to allow boys only to play with a textured ball or to allow boys and girls to play with a textured ball. The committee felt there was not enough NFHS membership support, based on data from a questionnaire, to advance the proposal. But the interest from NFHS boys programs and conversations with the NCAA Women's Volleyball Committee warranted an opportunity for states to experiment with a textured ball.

The Ohio High School Athletic Association is using textured volleyballs for the 2024 boys season and will track data for the NFHS. Two other states discussed the possibility of experimenting with a textured ball in the 2024 season.

NCAA Women

For 2024, uniform bottoms will be allowed to include a single conference/school logo or nickname. It will have the same specs as the tops (2 ¼ inches). Headbands and hair-controlled devices need to be a single color.

There were discussions about the use of a non-smooth ball (textured)

for women's play but there has been little support to go away from the current type of ball. NCAA had spring volleyball experiment with a non-smooth ball but there has not been feedback on it yet.

Lacrosse

NFHS

Boys helmets and chin straps must be worn in the proper way. They cannot be altered and shall be worn as the manufacturer intended. If a helmet comes off during play, play will be suspended, and player has to leave field to get helmet fixed and cannot return until next dead ball.

Girls goalkeeper's thigh padding must be shorts or pants manufactured with integrated protective padding.

For boys and girls, tooth and mouth protector rules were aligned with other NFHS sport rules and eliminated restrictions related to color and graphics.

Field players may wear compression shirts that meet the NOCSAE ND200 lacrosse commotio cordis standard under the uniform and does not require these shirts to meet the color requirements of visible undergarments.

Only school-related or player identifying names (school's name, nickname, logo, mascot and/or team member's name) will be allowed on the team jersey above the uniform number beginning in 2027.

NCAA

It is a men's rule change year and in 2024, jersey numbers that clearly

contrast are required, but they will have flexibility with what is considered contrasting. Gloves have to be a team color.

Wrestling

There will be 45 states that will have high school wrestling state championships solely for girls next year. Elliot Hopkins of NFHS said “there is a huge opportunity for women in wrestling and it would help more product” in terms of uniforms designed solely for girls. Women’s wrestling is an NCAA emerging sport and its first championship is scheduled for 2026.

Softball

NFHS

The uniform ball compression specifications with USA Softball and NCAA go into effect for NFHS on January 1, 2025.

Only school-related or player identifying names (school’s name, nickname, logo, mascot and/or team member’s name) will be allowed on the team jersey above the uniform number as of January 1, 2027.

A playbook/playcard must be worn on the player’s non-pitching wrist or arm.

Sandy Searcy of NFHS said coach-to-catcher defensive communication has been talked about and anticipates it being addressed at the June rules meeting. Searcy also said the pregame equipment check requirement may be coming back.

NCAA

There will be a discussion about allowing electronic offensive communication between players and coaches, said NCAA rules editor Dee Abrahamson. Use of the “oven mitt” for sliding is growing in popularity.

Baseball

NFHS

North Dakota and Louisiana are experimenting with communication from the coach to all defensive players. Elliot Hopkins of NFHS said there will probably be a proposal for it at the June rules meeting.

Some states are seeing illegal bat wraps being used for the Warstic Bonesaber bat. The bat and handle itself are legal for use by NFHS rules.

NCAA

There is growing interest in a rule for a double-first base, although it is currently permitted, according to the NCAA's Ben Brownlee. He said there has not been a push for the 18-inch sized bases now used in Major League Baseball.

Amateur Youth

Perfect Game suspended use of the Easton Hype Fire bats that are a drop-5 (-5) in its events, effective April 8.

The suspended bats are:

- 2023 Easton Hype Fire 2¾-inch barrel USSSA Bat 2024 (-5)

- 2024 Easton Hype Fire 2¾-inch barrel USSSA Bat 2024 (-5)
- 30-inch/25-ounces
- 31-inch/26-ounces
- 32-inch/27-ounces

The Easton Hype Fire drop-8 (-8) and drop-10 (-10) are still legal for play in Perfect Game events. Track and Field The Ohio High School Athletic Association approved a transition to electronic starting (instead of a starting pistol) over the next two years in track and field. Electronic starting will become mandatory for regional and state meets beginning in 2025.

The OHSAA will set aside grant money for member schools and timing companies to upgrade to electronic starting systems. The move to electronic starting was the result of a shortage of starter shells and other reasons. Officials will not be responsible for purchasing electronic starting systems.

Water Polo

NFHS

A new goal area has been established for high school water polo, effective for the 2024-25 season. New rule 1-6-1e states "a continuous red marking must be placed on the goal line, 2 meters from outside of both goal posts. An imaginary line from the end of each red markings to the 2-meter line creates the 'goal area.'" This change affects four other rules, along with creating guidelines for the new goal area.

Ball descriptions were another point of focus. According to Rule 1-16, the ball must be of a color that contrasts with the colors of the players' caps and is clearly and safely visible. The committee noted that predominantly yellow panels on a ball can be difficult to see in a stadium or under night lighting. The change gives a team the ability to choose a ball that is suitable for its team's conditions.