

2024 CFOA Football Bulletin I
August 23, 2024

To: Commissioners, Board Interpreters, Curriculum reps, CIAC and league reps, media.

From: Bill Riccio, Jr. State Interpreter

Re: Interpretations for 2024 season

The NFHS Rules Committee passed only one rule in January, and that has to do with jerseys. However, some editorial changes and other notes have prompted the six boards to adopt the following interpretations and guidelines. Since these were adopted, other questions have come up and will be addressed as well.

I. Uniform Compliance: Jerseys & Pants

A. Jerseys -- Anticipate that all new jerseys comply with the amended rule of 2024. If a jersey is not in compliance due to a school's purchase, we ***will not penalize the coach for illegal equipment***. Play the game and alert the assigning commissioner of the non-compliance. The CIAC will be notified by him.

If a team or teams are playing a Veterans Night game and using camo jerseys, there is no problem. If schools ask a commissioner about camo jerseys, just make sure there are definable numbers put on the jerseys.

B. Pants – The head coach will be alerted to the problem of tucked-in knee pads, exposing the knee at the pregame walk. There will be no warning of players who come in with "biker shorts." Entrance onto the field and into the huddle will result in an officials' timeout, and the player is to remain out for one play. Exception: when halftime or overtime period occurs. (3-5-10e).

NOTE: Pants are legal if, in a standing position, the knees are covered (**even if partially uncovered**) by the pants. If the player goes into a stance and the pants ride up, the pants are still legal. If there is part of the knee that is uncovered due to length problems, the pants are still legal. In talking to

coaches, it was found the length of pants' legs are standardized to size, not variable.

II. Defenseless Players

A. Under the edited 3-32-16 rule for 2024: "A Players is no longer defenseless once the players' physical position and focus of concentrations no longer makes the player especially vulnerable to injury."

1. Receivers – Once a receiver alights to the ground after making a leaping catch, he gets two steps to establish his route (the second being the "football move"). This applies to airborne receivers. He remains defenseless for the purposes of this rule until the second step is made. Exception: An airborne receiver hit "head up, hands out" may be contacted and/or wrapped legally at any time.
2. Runners – Once a player is defined as a "runner" he is never defenseless he is the ball carrier. He can be hit as long as the hit is legal under the rules.
3. Blockers/other players – All hits under the "defenseless player" rules must be within the peripheral vision of the player hit. This is defined as a "10-and-2" sight area. Hits outside 10-and-2 that are not "heads up, hands out" are liable to be blindside blocks or hits on defenseless players. Exception: Any player obviously out of the play cannot be hit under any circumstances, blindside or otherwise.

III. Formations

A. Split receivers – Any "stagger" in position between the slot receiver and the outside receiver(s), regardless of which is on the LOS will be considered legal. However, the covering official should alert the players to get back when possible (not before the play). Err on the side of the play being legal.

Split receivers where more than one receiver is on the line should be called if there is a legal pass play and the inside receiver is ineligible. This is especially true if a tight end is included in a "trips" to one side.

NOTE: What we are looking for is the "gray area." Correct it if you can, but don't split hairs.

- B. Line bowing back – Officials must be aware of lineman creeping back away from the line of scrimmage. If the bow-back looks like a Flying Angels formation, it's probably illegal. Get the linemen up. There is a definite advantage to the bow-back, especially in pass protection.
- C. Punt formations – The position of the up backs sometimes comes into question on punt formations. Only one player can be neither on the line or in the backfield, and that is the person receiving a snap. This should be called as an illegal formation if it is seen. Coaches should be made aware of the problem.

IV. Assisting the Runner

- A. Push the pile – Last year's interpretation is still in force. If an offensive back or other players become part of the scrum and shoulders the pile or bodies the pile, no call.
If a player becomes part of the scrum and extends his arms in a pushing motion in contacting the ball carrier or encircles or tries to pick up the ball carrier, we have a foul.

V. Complete, Incomplete

- A. Catch/No Catch – An airborne receiver who has alighted to the ground must survive the ground if he falls and makes contact. A player who alights and is contacted, or alights and is not contacted, gets two steps to complete the catch process, and become a runner.
 1. The first step is a balance step.
 2. The second step establishes him as a runner (football move).Loss of ball within those steps results in an incompleteness.
When in doubt – it's incomplete.
- B. Toe-heal – When a receiver alights to the ground and toes the sideline, but in completing his landing his heel lands on the sideline, the ball is incomplete. This type of catch is one move, not two.

VI. Tries/Field Goals

Umpire under goalpost – For all Tries and Field Goals attempted where the snap is inside the 15, the Umpire will be positioned under the goal post with

the Back Judge. The wings stay in position. If the snap is outside the 15, the Line Judge goes under.

VII. Substitutions on punt plays

Iron Cross – On punt and field goal situations we are recommending use of the “iron cross” to alert the crew of punt substitutions. The Umpire should stay on the ball in these situations until Referee waves him off. The wing on the offensive side will signal the Iron Cross, to be repeated by (at least) the Referee and the Back Judge until the substitution is complete.

Late substitutions on kick plays – We have some teams that try to take advantage of the play clock by making late substitutions on kick plays. If there is a late substitution on these plays (late is to be considered more than 10 seconds into the play clock).

In the case of a late substitution or a “jail break” off the offensive sideline, rushing a team onto the field, the U (even if he has placed the ball on the ground) will move over the ball and stay until waved off by the Referee.

Note: We do not have a “match-up” rule in high school, but we can mitigate an unfair advantage by slowing the process.

VIII. Guardian Caps

Guardian Caps are legal in Connecticut and have been since 2016, when the subject first arose. Questions have been posed to me and the CIAC from various schools. They may be worn.

Note: If the cap comes off, but the helmet stays in place, it is not considered a loss of helmet under the current rules.

IX. Weather Policy

After last year’s trouble with thunderstorms and delays, the CFOA made a proposal to the CIAC and the Football Committee. The following has been adopted:

Standard Procedure

A delay or combination of delays should exceed no more than 90 minutes total, calculated from the time the field is cleared initially to the time the most recent delay is begun because of continued thunder/lightning.

1. Any combination of suspension (continued thunder/lightning) totaling 90 continuous minutes would be subject to suspending/shutting down the contest. Teams would then determine to suspend the game or accept the game score and recognize the game as complete.
2. Suspension of a contest for a second or subsequent time should not exceed an aggregate time of 90 minutes total. Teams would determine suspension or completion as in No. 1.

The decision to shut down the contest should be made in coordination with the game administration, coaches, officials, and any ADs present as under Rule 3-1-4.

Note 1: There is no "legal game" rule. If teams decide to end the game at any point with the current score, it is official under the rules.

Note 2: Consideration for contests played either in the morning or afternoon can exceed this recommended standard with the agreement of the participating schools in consultation with the Referee.

X. Ejection Policy for Coaches

The last thing any official should have to do is eject a coach. Every effort should be made to de-escalate a situation before a second Unsportsmanlike Foul, or any other action that might precipitate an ejection should be taken. The CIAC has adopted the following, and is stressing to officials that ejection of a coach should be the "court of last appeal."

CIAC Ejection Policy

As amended in 2024

For Student-Athletes:

1. Any student-athlete who physically assaults an official, coach, opposing player, spectator or other person in attendance at the event may be deemed immediately ineligible for the remainder of the season/
2. When an athlete is ejected from any CIAC contest the athlete is **ineligible to participate in the next contest at the same level of play (even if the next contest does not occur until league or CIAC tournament play or next year)**. If one or more different level contests are scheduled prior to the next contest at the same level of play, the athlete shall be ineligible to

participate in the next (but no more than one) contest at each level of play. The ejected player cannot be in attendance at the game for which he/she is serving their suspension.

- 3. When a player is ejected from a contest he/she can remain on the bench or sidelines as long as their presence does not interfere with the contest in any way. Never should an athlete be sent away from the site without adult supervision.** Coaches are responsible for the care and safety of students and should not be placed in a position which does not allow them to provide reasonable care and supervision.

For Coaches:

- 1. When a coach is ejected from any CIAC contest the coach is ineligible to participate in the next two contests at the same level of play (even if the next two contests do not occur until league or CIAC tournament play or next year).** If one or more different level contests are scheduled prior to the next two contests at the same level of play, the coach shall be ineligible to participate in the next two contests at each level of play. **The ejected coach cannot be in attendance at the games for which he/she is serving their suspension.**
- 2. In addition, all coaches who are disqualified at any level will be suspended for the next two games, take two NFHS coaching courses (“Teaching and Modeling Behavior” and “Sportsmanship”) and the school will pay a \$50 fine. In addition to the two-game suspension and fine, the CIAC reserves the right to review any incident that results in a coach’s disqualification and may assess additional game suspensions up to and including a one-year ban.** The fine and proof of taking the coaching courses must be submitted to the CIAC office before the coach can resume his coaching responsibilities.
- 3. When a member school’s coach is ejected from a game for an infraction as prescribed by the rules, the game may not continue until the member school replaces the ejected coach with a certified coach. The coach must leave the premises. If this cannot be accomplished within fifteen (15) minutes after the ejection, the official in charge will declare a forfeit win for the opposing team.**
- 4. Upon receiving a second disqualification for initiating a fight or retaliating in a fight (as determined by the game official), that student-athlete will be declared ineligible for the remainder of the season.**

The scrimmages are beginning, with the opening kickoff just weeks away. This is a long preseason bulletin, but many things had to be covered. Get in shape and have fun.

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