



Memorandum

To: State Executive Directors and Commissioners

From: Dr. Karissa Niehoff, NFHS Executive Director
Michael Koester, M.D., Chair, NFHS SMAC

Subject: Soccer Headgear

Date: August 1, 2018

In April of 2018, Virginia Tech released its independent safety ratings for soccer headgear (Virginia Tech News, 30 April 2018). The ratings were based on laboratory studies involving crash test dummies. The performance of the 22 tested models of headgear showed varying levels of impact resistance, which may theoretically correlate to a reduction in concussion risk when worn by high school players.

The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) continues to monitor new studies and technological advances in the area of risk-minimization for concussion and head trauma. The NFHS SMAC is aware of an ongoing study evaluating 3,000 male and female high school soccer players with and without headgear while participating in practices and competitions. When this study or others is available for publication, the NFHS SMAC will inform the membership and make appropriate recommendations for headgear use at that time.

At this time, NFHS soccer rules make it permissive for student-athletes to wear soft-padded headgear in soccer (2018-19 NFHS Soccer Rules Book, Rule 4-2-9). This recent and ongoing studies on the potential protective effects of headgear in soccer in relation to concussive and subconcussive impacts are noteworthy. In order to minimize student-athlete injury risk, everyone with an interest in soccer should stay alert to developments in this area of research.