



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Field Hockey Rules Changes Focus on Risk Minimization

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 28, 2005) — Several risk-minimization rules in high school field hockey, including reducing the bow of the stick and establishing a maximum height of grass on fields, were approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Field Hockey Rules Committee at its January 23-24 meeting in Indianapolis. All 15 rules changes and clarifications were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Effective January 1, 2007, the player's stick shall weigh no more than 23 ounces and not exceed a bow of 25 millimeters.

"Stick manufacturers have agreed to meet the international standard (FIH), so there will not be a separate high school stick manufactured after inventories are exhausted," said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS liaison to the Field Hockey Rules Committee. "Reducing the bow of the stick will reduce the possibility of lifting the ball off the ground, which is always a concern from a risk-of-injury standpoint."

To ensure a more consistent and uniform playing surface, which, in turn, should minimize the risk of injury on field hockey playing fields, the rules committee stated that the grass should be cut to a maximum height of 1½ inches.

In another risk-minimization move, Rule 1-6-5c was changed to state that if protective eyewear is worn, it must meet the ASTM standard.

Other changes include Rule 1-4-5, which will allow field players who leave the field for injury treatment or refreshment, to change equipment, or for some other nonsubstitution reason to re-enter at the 50-yard line on either side of the field. Previously, players were permitted to re-enter only between the substitution gates on one side of the field.

"This change will contribute positively to the flow of the game," Hopkins said, and "should not detract from the momentum of the match."

While tooth protectors have been mandatory in high school field hockey for a number of years, beginning with the 2006-07 season, the tooth protector must be any visible color other than white (or clear).

“The NFHS Sports Medicine Committee recommended that a colored tooth protector be required,” Hopkins said. “The official’s job of checking to make sure players are wearing a tooth protector is made easier with the use of a colored product. There is no additional cost for a colored tooth protector.”

Regarding penalty strokes, the committee ruled that the player taking the penalty stroke must stand behind and within playing distance of the ball before beginning the stroke. The player taking the stroke must not feint at playing the ball. Hopkins said this change brings the rule in line with current game strategies.

Among the other changes were six clarifications to existing rules, including Rule 1-6-8, which notes that a player shall not exchange a stick with a teammate between the award and completion of a penalty corner or penalty stroke, and Rule 1-7-1e, which emphasizes that a chest protector specifically manufactured for field hockey had to be worn under the shirt.

Other clarifications include Rule 4-4-3, which states that substitution shall be permitted prior to a penalty stroke; Rule 7-Penalty, which says that a penalty corner shall be awarded for fouls by the defending team; and Rule 8-1-Penalty, which re-emphasizes that if a red card is issued, it is considered a flagrant foul, the offender shall be disqualified, the team shall play short-handed and the opponent is awarded a penalty stroke.

Field hockey is played by 61,984 girls in 1,634 high schools nationwide, according to the 2003-04 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS.

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