



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 (February 9, 2006) — Thirteen rules changes in high school field hockey aimed at minimizing risk and maintaining the integrity of the sport were approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Field Hockey Rules Committee at its January 22-23 meeting in Indianapolis. The field hockey rules changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

One significant change requires defenders to move back seven yards during a free hit in order to allow more time to react to the ball.

“We wanted to create more space for the safety of the athletes,” said Elizabeth Wilson, chair of the NFHS Field Hockey Rules Committee.

Another risk-minimizing rule permits chest protectors that provide additional coverage of the abdomen, sides or shoulders. In addition, eye protection equipment must meet ASTM standards for field hockey.

“If you’re going to wear goggles voluntarily, they should be standard and sport-specific,” said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS liaison to the Field Hockey Rules Committee.

Other non-traditional playing equipment must be reviewed by the Field Hockey Rules Committee before it will be permitted in order to maintain equitable equipment standards. Also to minimize risk, penalty corner hits awarded at the end of a game will now only be carried out if the scoring of a goal will influence the outcome of the game.

The committee also focused this year on maintaining the honor of the game by prohibiting sticks designed to cup, grasp or hold the ball other than the flat-faced curved end.

“While we do not want to inhibit creativity and design by the manufacturers, we are concerned about the performance of the sticks,” Hopkins said.

Personal wireless devices were also examined by the committee and player-to-player or player-to-coach electronic communication was prohibited, as was official-to-official electronic communication.

“We’re trying to keep the game pure and maintain the sound tradition of the sport,” Hopkins said.

Other changes focused on clarification and definitions, such as Rule 3-3-3 that defines a drag flick, and Rule 11-2-5, which clarifies that the player taking a stroke must stand behind and within a stick’s reach of the ball before beginning the stroke.

The Coaches’ Conduct Penalties listed in Rule 12-1-7 have been condensed for the purpose of easing their understanding and application by officials. The Points of Emphasis summary has been moved to the front of the rules book in order to be more readily accessible.

Field hockey is played by 62,980 girls in 1,684 high schools nationwide, according to the 2004-05 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS.

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This article was written by Jennifer Gunnels, a spring semester intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department. She is a recent graduate of Indiana University, where she majored in journalism and political science.

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