



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Changes in Transitional-Stunt Rule Made in High School Spirit Rules

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (January 25, 2005) — Changes in the transitional-stunt rule highlighted the January 8-10 meeting of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Spirit Rules Committee in Indianapolis.

Transitional-stunt rule 2-13-2a was amended so that the torso of the flyer no longer has to remain upright (vertical), as long as the flyer does not become inverted.

“There are a variety of ‘loss of contact’ transitions in which the torso does not remain upright, but do not present unreasonable risk to participants,” said Susan Loomis, liaison to the NFHS Spirit Rules Committee.

Another transitional-stunt rule (2-13-2d) was rewritten to address concerns that have been expressed about the loss-of-contact transitions. The new rule states, “The loss of contact is a continuous up-and-down movement that is not supported by the bracer(s) and does not pause at the top.”

“The changes to the transitional-stunt rule were made because the committee felt that there are some ‘loss of contact’ transitions that do not present unreasonable risk to the participants,” Loomis said. “In the former rule, the wording prevented some cheer teams from attempting a reasonably safe stunt. Secondly, the committee wanted to make sure that spirit coaches completely understood the rule and, therefore, removed the term ‘significantly exceed’ because of the confusion in interpretation of the term.”

In addition to the transitional-stunt rule, the committee approved several changes in the General Risk Management section (Rule 2). Supports and braces that are hard and unyielding or have rough edges

or surfaces must be appropriately covered. A participant wearing a cast (with the exception of a properly covered air cast) must not be involved in a stunt. Formerly, a forward roll could be performed by a participant wearing a cast.

A rule regarding the length of fingernails was made more specific after numerous requests from states, said Spirit Rules Committee Chair Diane Wolf, assistant director of the Idaho High School Activities Association. Fingernails, including artificial nails, must be kept an appropriate length (**short, near the end of the fingers**) to minimize risk for the participants.

A dismount rule has been changed, deleting a section that read, “On backward dismounts, the readiness of everyone involved must be verified before the dismount is initiated.” This is required of all dismounts, not just backward dismounts. The term “backward dismounts” was removed from the rules book, and the phrase “dismounts to catchers who were not the original bases” will be inserted in its place.

In another change, Rule 2-8-9a allows a flatback to be legal as long as the flyer begins in a vertical position and is transitioned to a horizontal, straight-body position between two bases with two additional catchers at the head and shoulders. This change allows the flatback to be performed to a face-up or face-down straight-body landing.

A change in the apparel rule will establish a standard of dress consistent with other NFHS rules books. Effective in the 2006-07 school year, apparel must cover the midriff when standing at attention. “This rule will impact all spirit teams, not just competitive teams,” Loomis said.

Three changes were made in Rule 3 dealing with dance, drill and pom risk management. Two of the three changes were the same as ones approved in Rule 2 – the covering of hard supports and braces, and the 2006-07 apparel rule regarding covering the midriff. In addition, all dance, drill and pom teams must wear athletic shoes or appropriate dance shoes that cover the toes and entire sole of the foot.

Competitive spirit squads is ninth in popularity on the 2003-04 NFHS Athletics Participation Survey, with 89,443 girls participating last year. It ranks 10th for girls in school sponsorship with 3,693 schools offering spirit, which includes dance, drill and pom squads, in addition to cheerleading. An additional 2,251 boys in 545 schools are involved in spirit programs.

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