

2012 SRI Pre-Season Bulletin 3

Helmet Covers

In last week's Bulletin, I talked about helmet covers that Brad and I believed to be illegal equipment. We have just received new information from the NFHS, as follows:

“Football is a sport with inherent dangers, including the risk of head and neck injuries. Equipment manufacturers have stepped forward with various products intended to address such risks. Questions arise from time to time as to whether a given product may, rather than diminishing the incidence of injuries, in fact enhance it.

There has been some discussion lately about the efficacy of attachments to the exterior of football helmets. Until this year, we were unaware of any regulation of such products at the professional, college, high school or youth levels. Recently, the NFHS has been looking at a number of such products to see if they conflict with NFHS football rules by causing helmets to be altered in such a way as to decrease protection.

The NFHS does not perform scientific tests on any specific items of equipment to determine if the equipment poses undue risks to student-athletes or others. Such determinations are the responsibility of the equipment manufacturers.

That being said, the NFHS football committee has been concerned about helmet attachments. To this point, the NFHS, has not been able to form a definitive conclusion as to whether a number of such products are, on balance, beneficial or detrimental. The Committee looked at three products: ProCap, Shockstrip and Guardian Cap. From a common sense standpoint, padding would seem to be helpful.

On the other hand, the larger circumference of a padded helmet increases the likelihood of contact, and there may be a change with respect to the coefficient of friction.

Because of the inconclusiveness of the available information, the NFHS Rules Review Committee does not feel itself in a position to determine that the products in question violate its rule by decreasing protection.”

I'm not sure if we'll see helmet covers in Oregon. If you do, based on the above statement, **they are to be considered legal equipment.** Please let Brad and myself know if you do see any helmet covers being used by Oregon football players.

Helmet Coming Off

At the NFHS Interpreter's meeting in July, several clarifications/explanations were given for the new helmet rule, as follows:

- “During the down” is interpreted to mean “completely off through play.” That covers the situation where a player's helmet comes off after the ball has become dead and the whistle has blown. The intent of the rule is that this player should leave the game for one down.
- “For one down” is interpreted to mean “one tick of the clock.” The exception is an extra point or try which is specifically defined as “a scrimmage down that is neither numbered or timed.” Rule 8-3-1. Please review Rule 2-7-1 which defines when a down starts (with a legal snap) and ends (when the ball becomes dead.) A false start is not a legal down.

- “Directly attributable to a foul by an opponent” is interpreted to mean a “helmet related foul” and not just any opponent’s foul. Examples include any type of illegal helmet contact, face mask or helmet opening fouls, and personal fouls caused by blows or slaps/strikes to the helmet that cause the helmet to come off. Examples of fouls that would not allow a player whose helmet has come off to remain in the game include clipping, holding, blocks in the back or blocks below the waist.
- If the player whose helmet comes off is also the player in possession of the ball, the ball becomes dead and the down is over. Rule 4-2-2k.

A player whose helmet comes off may continue to participate. This is analogous to a player losing his/her shoe while the ball is live. This IS NOT a violation of Rule 1-5-6.

Definition of a Catch

In an attempt to simplify the definition of a **CATCH**, NFHS rules now simply require an airborne receiver to **TOUCH** inbounds while **MAINTAINING POSSESSION** of the ball. Regardless of any contact by the opponent, if the airborne receiver does not touch inbounds, the play is ruled an incomplete forward pass. **FORWARD PROGRESS** can be awarded to an airborne receiver only when the receiver meets the definition of a catch as described above.

So, if an airborne receiver is contacted by an opponent at the 50 yard line and such contact causes the airborne receiver to come down inbounds on his own 48-yard line, the play is ruled a "Catch" and the "Forward Progress" is the 50. However, if the airborne receiver does not touch inbounds, the pass is ruled incomplete.

Likewise, if an airborne receiver is contacted by an opponent over his opponent’s end zone, and such contact causes the airborne receiver to come down on his opponent’s 1-yard line, the play is ruled a catch and forward progress results in a touchdown. However, again, if the airborne receiver does not touch inbounds, the pass is ruled incomplete.

An exception to all of this is when an airborne receiver controls the football but is caught, held or carried out-of-bounds by an opponent in such a manner that prevents him/her from returning to the ground inbounds. If this occurs **AND** the airborne receiver’s forward progress is stopped, then, and only then, the play is ruled a catch regardless of the whether or not the airborne receiver comes down inbounds or not.

So...to simplify all of this, only one of three things can happen to an airborne receiver:

- He touches inbounds while maintaining possession of the football – Ruling: The play is ruled a catch and forward progress may or may not apply.
- He does not touch inbounds - Ruling: Incomplete pass. Exception: The carry-out as noted above.
- He does not touch inbounds because he was caught, held or prevented from returning to the ground inbounds – Ruling: Completed catch, forward progress applies.

Training Video

Starting this week, and throughout the regular season, a weekly training video will be posted to the Central Hub under the heading of “Training Video of the Week.” This week’s video highlights 3 examples of hurdling. Officials are reminded that hurdling is a Point of Emphasis for the 2012 season and must be penalized when observed.