

2008-09 High School Basketball Rules Changes

In an effort to reduce rough play in free-throw situations in high school basketball, the two marked lane spaces closest to the end line will be vacant effective with the 2008-09 season.

This revision in Rule 8-1-4 was one of three changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Basketball Rules Committee at its April 13-15 meeting in Indianapolis. The changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Beginning next season, all players will move up one lane space during a free-throw attempt. A new mark will be applied to the lane line near the free-throw line to designate the last 3-foot marked lane space.

The committee reviewed data from the Georgia High School Association, which experimented with the free-throw lane change last year.

"According to data from the experiment, the number of fouls during free-throw rebounding action was reduced," said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and staff liaison to the Basketball Rules Committee. "At the same time, defensive rebounding percentages fell within an acceptable range. This data was the most compelling the committee had seen to date."

Perhaps as significant as the changes approved by the committee was one that was not. After much discussion, the committee voted against the use of instant replay to review specific situations during state tournaments. Three proposals were considered by the committee this year after three states had last-second shots in championship games.

"The committee discussed the issue extensively, but there was very little support for implementing video review at the high school level," Struckhoff said. "Some felt the use of video to review officials' decisions is against the philosophy of high school sports. Others said that video review doesn't always provide a conclusive decision, and the equipment would not be consistently available in facilities throughout the country. The committee also felt it would be difficult for officials to officiate without replay throughout the season and then be expected to use it at a state championship."

Another significant change approved by the committee will directly affect high school coaches. If a player is wearing an illegal jersey, illegal pants/skirt and/or an illegal number, a technical foul will be charged directly to the head coach. Previously, one technical foul was assessed to each improperly uniformed player per team.

Improvements have been made in ordering and purchasing legal uniforms, and the NFHS is working with manufacturers to improve compliance with NFHS uniform design specifications. Struckhoff said the committee wants to encourage and promote the use of legal uniforms.

"In the past few years, there has been a proliferation of illegal uniforms worn by teams, and the committee wanted to put the penalty where it belonged," Struckhoff said.

The committee also clarified Rule 3-5-3 to state "any item that goes around the entire head (elastic strips/bands, pre-wrap, headbands, etc.) shall meet the rule requirements regarding color, maximum size, logo restrictions and team uniformity." The committee also added black and beige

to the list of legal colors. The change was made to make the rule more consistent in application and enforcement.

Other editorial changes approved by the committee:

- Rule 3-4 was reorganized to separate the topics by articles and adjust the language to reflect current industry standards/terminology.

- In Rule 4-27-2, a portion of the first sentence of the "incidental contact" definition will be removed to clarify that a foul should be called when displacement occurs while opponents attempt to secure a loose ball.

- Rule 4-42-5 will be reorganized into sub-articles for clarity.

- Rule 10-5 will be reorganized for better understanding and clarity.

The committee also adopted five points of emphasis for the upcoming season. The identified topics include legal uniforms, rough play, time-outs, slapping the backboard and officials' mechanics and signals.

Basketball is the second-most popular sport for boys and first for girls at the high school level, according to the 2006-07 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, 556,269 boys and 456,967 girls, for a total of 1,013,236 participants nationwide. The sport ranks first in school sponsorship with 17,762 schools sponsoring a boys team and 17,458 fielding a girls program.