



NEWS RELEASE

Neck Laceration Protectors Mandated in High School Ice Hockey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Dan Schuster

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (May 16, 2024) — All high school ice hockey players will now be required to wear a neck laceration protector – in its original manufactured state and as intended by the manufacturer – during competition.

This landmark new rule, along with four additional rules alterations, was proposed by the NFHS Ice Hockey Rules Committee as a product of its annual rules meeting held April 22-23 at The Alexander hotel in Indianapolis. All five rules changes were accepted by the NFHS Board of Directors and are effective with the 2024-25 season.

“The committee has done such great work the past several years, which has the rules in a really good place,” said Dan Schuster, NFHS director of educational services and liaison to the Ice Hockey Rules Committee. “After great discussion again this year, the committee made some changes that will help minimize risk for participating players and also add some clarity to the current language within the rules book.”

Mandating neck laceration protectors, which is detailed in the new Rule 3-4-4 in the NFHS Ice Hockey Rules Book, furthers the NFHS’ commitment to risk minimization and the health and safety of participants and aligns the national rules with the measures taken by many state high school associations and youth hockey leagues across the United States.

Should a player enter a contest without a neck laceration protector, or if it comes off during play, the player will be directed to the bench and may return to the ice once the apparatus has been properly affixed. In the event the player refuses to wear the equipment, play will be stopped, and the player will be assessed a two-minute minor penalty.

Corresponding changes were made to Rules 3-3-1 and 3-3-5 outlining proper neck laceration protector protocols for goalkeepers. In addition to requiring the new item, Rule 3-3-1 states that the neck laceration protector must be worn underneath and separate from the “flapper-style” throat protector attached to the bottom of the goalkeeper’s mask. Any modifications made to the piece of equipment will bring about a minor penalty. In Rule 3-3-5, which specifically addresses goalkeepers, the neck laceration protector is now included as a piece of “broken or displaced” equipment that will immediately result in a stoppage of play.

Clarifying the difference between “control” and “possession” of the puck was also a major priority for the NFHS Ice Hockey Rules Committee this year and is reflected in the new Rules 9-4-5 and 9-4-6. The following definitions were discussed by the committee over the course of multiple rules meetings and are being added to the rules book to correct any inconsistencies in their previous usage.

“Control” is defined in Rule 9-4-5 as:

“Control of the puck is the act of propelling the puck with the stick, hand or feet. Control of the puck is not lost when contact with the puck is made by an opponent, the boards or the net, provided the player in control of the puck continues propelling the puck.”

The definition of “possession” laid out in Rule 9-4-6 reads as follows:

“The last player to physically touch the puck with the stick or body shall be considered in possession of the puck. NOTE: A player can have possession of the puck without control but cannot have control of the puck without possession.”

A complete listing of the ice hockey rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Ice Hockey.”

According to the 2022-23 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, 33,013 boys participate in ice hockey in 1,601 high schools across the country, and 8,601 girls play ice hockey in 713 schools.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,800 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.8 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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