

NFHS Rule Changes/OHSBVA Commentary

Four NFHS Points of Emphasis for 2009–10

1. Head Coach Standing
 2. Match Officials' Responsibilities
 3. Ball Handling:
 4. Libero Uniform
- **Head coach standing – NFHS change:** Head coaches were allowed to stand in the libero replacement zone to coach their players. During a live ball, the head coach could be no closer to the court than 6 feet from the sideline. During a dead ball, the coach was allowed to advance to the sideline to instruct players. The new visibility of coaches by the adoption of this rule places additional emphasis on the conduct displayed by coaches during a match. Coaches are reminded that they are role models for athletes, schools and communities.

For NFHS, it was the head coach and only the head coach allowed to stand during play in the libero replacement zone, no closer than 6 feet from the court and without disrupting player or otherwise acting in an unsporting manner. For OHSBVA, the head coach OR assistant coach who is standing on any rally may not be within 6 feet of the court which modifies last year's coach's distance from the sideline [1.75 meters/5 feet 10 inches] by two inches. No substantive difference!

Along with the head coach gaining the privilege to stand during play, Rule 12-2-5 was revised to clarify when it is appropriate for an assistant coach to stand and the actions he/she may perform. These changes didn't address "coaching." They simply allowed an assistant coach to ask certain procedural and informational questions. During a match, for NFHS, the assistant coach still isn't permitted to stand and coach except during a time-out or between sets. Regardless of these changes, the challenge for referees is to stay focused on what is going on as each match unfolds while ensuring that coaches' behavior meets the standard of reasonability as stated or implied by the NFHS Coaches' Code of Conduct. The focus must remain on the players on the court, and the head coach is not permitted to become the center of attention through disruptive coaching including using the standing position privilege on a live ball to scream at the match officials regarding their calls and non-calls. This was not the OHSBVA's intention in allowing coaches to be off the bench during a rally. Coaches may NOT enter the sub zone while the ball is in play and should also remain outside the sub zone when coaching the team on a dead ball.

Rule 12-2-5 was changed and requires assistant coaches remain seated on the bench during a set except, during a dead ball, to ask the R2 to review the accuracy of the score; verify number of time-outs, verify serving order of the team ("lineup check"), or verify proper server for the opponent. Left off the list of what assistant coaches are now permitted to do was requesting number of subs used; this was an oversight that will be corrected next year for NFHS. An assistant coach is also permitted to stand at the bench to greet a replaced player, confer with players during time-outs, spontaneously react to an outstanding play by a member or members of his/her own team or to attend to an injured player with permission of a referee. Nowhere in these extended privileges did the NFHS/OHSAA give an assistant coach the right to stand and coach anywhere on a dead ball or on a live ball.

OHSBVA has gone a different route and allows all coaches to stand and coach on a dead ball and the head coach to choose which coach (only one coach) stands on a live ball. However, neither NFHS nor OHSBVA rules allow an assistant coach to address the referees regarding judgment calls. Second referees have responsibility for ensuring that coaches do not use a standing position to inappropriately repeatedly address the referees on judgment calls.

- **Match officials' responsibilities – NFHS Commentary:** A volleyball match is administered by the first referee and the second referee. Assistant officials include scorer, libero tracker, a timer and line judges. In order to administer a successful match all officials need to be aware of their responsibilities. Since part of the R1 and R2 duties is to review specific responsibilities with the assistant officials it is imperative that all officials are competent and updated on all aspects of these tasks. In training and preparation, officials should pay special attention to the areas of scorer and libero tracker responsibilities. Pre- match duties of the R1 include a conference with the line judges to review their responsibilities. Just as time is spent training the athletes for a match the host school should train the scorer, libero tracker, timers and line judges prior to the matches they work.

For OHSBVA, responsibilities should include an effective pre-match discussion between R1 and R2 before EACH match and a post-match debriefing to address match situations, how effective the referees partnered and areas where they could have done better including what could have been done that would have better facilitated the match. Conflicts and unusual situations should not be ignored. Professional officials do not race off after a match but fulfill their obligations through a post-match discussion. Training for support crews is supposed to be a responsibility of the schools; however, referees have to invest the time in ensuring that line judges, scorers and libero trackers understand what they are doing and that these services are performed with sufficient competence to not detract from the match. Therefore, questioning to assess capacities can help referees determine how much they can expect and what they have to focus on with support crews. Unfortunately, one element out of the control of match officials is when support crews are identified and show up ready for a discussion.

- **Ball handling** – A legal contact is a touch of the ball by a player's body which does not allow the ball to visibly come to rest or involve prolonged contact with a player's body. The only valid criterion for judging illegal hits is vision. If you did not see it, it did not happen. Officials should look ahead of the ball and watch the ball contacted by the hands to ensure accurate ball handling decisions. Prolonged contact is a call that NFHS rules require to be enforced. Any ball that comes to rest on a player should be whistled a violation. A ball rolling up the arms or a player over running a pass may result in prolonged contact. Officials should pay special attention to the setters during warm ups in an effort to become familiar with the styles of setting to be displayed during the match. Spin, sound, speed, body position, and technique are not criteria to determine illegal handling of the ball. Officials should strive to be consistent when making ball handling calls. A player may not throw the ball. If the body is divided into 4 quadrants, bisecting the head at the ears/ nose, a player may not carry the ball from the initial contact quadrant to the release in a different quadrant.

This above guidance is not in conflict with two OHSBVA documents that address ball handling: "Establishing Standards for Calling Hands" and "Ball Handling 2010." Applying the concept of quadrants is difficult when a ball is on the edge of a quadrant, and there is no prolonged contact as the ball moves to an adjacent quadrant during ball handling. In addition, calling ball handling needs to be reactive in relationship to a standard and the "quadrants" concept takes too long to process in making calls. OHSBVA does not accept the quadrants concept for calling hands. OHSBVA guidance is for referees to tighten up on ball handling on second and third contacts.

OHSBVA coaches are asking referees to tighten up on hands calls with special focus on second and third contacts as well as not allowing a low receive, high release on first ball contacts. Consistency is always an issue including setting hands reasonably and early in the first set and staying with the hands that were set throughout the match so that players can adjust appropriately to what is being called and what is being allowed. All clear faults are to be called, and faults are only to be based on what the referees see when contact with the ball occurs, including using R2 help when the R1 is not in a good position to see the contact.

- **Libero uniform** – The libero must wear a uniform top that is immediately recognized from all angles as being in clear contrast to and distinct from the other members of the team. When ordering libero tops coaches should consider the following: hue (color), value (lightness or darkness of a color), and saturation (intensity or purity of a color). Attention should be given to the color of the regular uniform as well as the libero jersey. Similar dark colors such as maroon and black or light colors such as gray and peach should not be used together. The number is equally important when ordering libero tops. It must be clearly visible and in contrast to the predominant color of the uniform top.

The OHSBVA has offered clear guidance in terms of libero jerseys for years. However, schools continue to order jerseys that are reverse colors with the regular uniform jerseys, often making the libero jersey illegal as well as light/light, medium/medium, and dark/dark combinations.

Additional Rule Changes for 2010 and OHSBVA Commentary

2-1-1 Clarifies the court and the adjacent playable area must be flat, smooth and free of obstructions other than required equipment and padding.

Rationale: Clarifies court/floor requirements for playable area.

For OHSBVA, this rule change makes good sense and is something that our officials should have been requiring already. Where there are floor obstacles that are not movable, ground rules must be set that support a safe playing environment.

3-2-1 Beginning in 2010-11, the game ball may be either solid white or a maximum combination of three colors (with each panel being a solid color) and of which at least one-third of the panels shall be solid white.

Rationale: Allows for the optional use of the colored-panel ball beginning with the 2010-11 season. The colored-panel ball makes it easier to track for players/spectators and adds excitement to the game.

In one more year, this rule change will put OHSAA and OHSBVA on the same page in terms of allowing a multi-colored ball. However, the OHSAA is likely to contract for a competition volleyball that will not be the color combination of either the NCAA or USA Volleyball.

4-1-5 Unadorned bobby pins, no longer than 2 inches, may be worn to control a player's hair.

Rationale: Allows players a practical means of dealing with hair control.

For OHSBVA, this rule change is inconsequential.

5-3-4d Prior to the deciding set, captains will be called for the coin toss by the R1 and then teams shall be released to their team bench.

Rationale: Releasing teams to their bench rather than the end line during the deciding-set coin toss will allow coaches to provide instruction and facilitate players being ready to take the court for the final set.

For OHSBVA, this rule change makes total sense and will be facilitated by the R1 and R2. Coaches will be able to begin preparing their teams for the final set without delay. Upon signaling the loss of rally that ends the set, the R1 signal "end of set," then whistles and calls the floor captains off the end line to join the R2 for the coin toss, called by the home team. Upon whistling/signaling for the captains, the R1 whistles again to release the players from the end lines to their respective benches. Some effort may need to be made to break the players/teams of the habit of staying on the end line.

Rationale: Adds to the responsibilities of the second referee.

This change simply puts in rule a practice that already existed. Logically, the R2 has to manage illegal libero replacements in conjunction with the officials' table to ensure the appropriate player is put back on the court, as needed; that the score is corrected, as needed; that players for both teams are in the correct positions in the rotation if a loss-of-rally is awarded; and/or that an unnecessary delay is properly administered. The R2 always deals with consequences of an illegal libero replacement, frequently unaided by the libero tracker. This means the R2 also has to know when a time-out is called whether the libero for each team is on or off the court to ensure this is the condition when teams return to the court.

9-4-5

A legal contact is a touch of the ball by any part of the player's body.

In years past, for NFHS/OHSAA, the ball was only able to hit a player from the waist up in order to remain in play,

Rationale: In today's fast-paced game, allowing legal contact of the ball by any part of the player's body will assist in keeping the ball in play and provide longer and more exciting rallies. This will reward great plays and provide more excitement for players and fans. Contact between the ball and a player below the waist is now legal for both NFHS/OHSAA and OHSBVA.

Not a change for OHSBVA. The NFHS adopted something OHSBVA chose to go with years ago.

10-2-3

If more than one substitution is to occur, the substitutions shall be made in succession. One pair of players after another and only one substitute shall be in the substitution zone at a time.

Rationale: The procedure of recording multiple substitutions thus becomes easier for the scorer to record. This speeds up the substitution process and assists in maintaining the tempo of play. One substitute at a time is now permitted to enter the sub zone, and additional subs for that team on the same dead ball must wait outside the sub zone to enter as soon as the first substitution has been authorized to enter the court; any appreciable delay will lead to additional subs being denied without penalty unless this becomes an on-going issue.

- Rule 10-2-3, the procedure of substituting in and out of the set, was changed. If more than one substitution is occurring, the substitutions must be made in succession. Only one substitute shall be in the substitution zone at a time, while the second pair waits outside of the zone. By having the first substitute ready in the substitution zone, it will help the scorer record who is coming in and out of the game. The second player will be up and ready, but will not be permitted into the substitution zone until the other players have been released.

OHSBVA will benefit by this change since it is easier for the scorer and libero tracker to see and record sub information. Multiple substitutes entering the sub zone, especially with an inexperienced scorer, can cause delays that are preventable. If more than one substitution is occurring, the substitutions must be made in succession. Only one sub may be in the substitution zone at a time, while the second pair waits just outside of the zone. Having the first substitute ready in the substitution zone will help the scorer and libero tracker record who is coming in and out. The second player should be up and ready, positioned near the sub zone but not in the substitution zone until the other players involved in the substitution have been released (authorization to enter signal). In other rulesets, subs are processed sequentially without appreciable delay.

This change will help scorers and libero trackers get the correct player numbers marked on the scoresheet/book and libero tracking sheet when there are multiple subs and, especially, when both teams are substituting at the same time. The R2 will need to educate as needed to ensure the second sub isn't in the sub zone until the first sub entry is authorized. Particularly when both teams are subbing, the R1 may have to hold the subs from one of the teams by whistle/hand signal until the R2, scorer and LT have completed the recording of the subs for the opponents.

12-2-5 Clarifies when an assistant coach may stand and actions the coach may perform.

Rationale: Clarifies the role and bench decorum of the assistant coach now that the head coach has the privilege to stand during the match.

For OHSBVA, this would allow an assistant coach during a dead ball to address the R2 to verify the team's serving order (line-up check), that the opponent's server is correct, that the score is accurate, the number of time-outs used or number of subs used or, with referee permission, attend to an injured player. An assistant coach is still not allowed to question judgment calls or address the referees other than to ask for the above-cited interruption requests. What hasn't changed is that the head coach may also ask for the same types of information noted above and is the only coach who may call a time-out or request a substitution (verbally or by signal).

12-2-6, 9-1-1 During play, allows the head coach to stand in the replacement zone, no closer to the sideline than 6 feet, to coach his/her players.

Rationale: Due to the growing spectator popularity, resulting in louder crowd noise, this change will allow the head coach to communicate more effectively with his/her players. The permitted location for standing preserves the necessary area for clear line of sight by the second referee and line judges to observe play and playable area around the court for the players.

Head coach standing to coach has been addressed earlier in this document. Simply put, in lieu of a rule exception, for OHSBVA, this means using 6 feet instead of 1.75 meters (5 feet, 10 inches) as the distance from the sideline a standing coach needs to maintain on a live ball. Coaches struggle with staying back on occasion, and referees should deal with this in a reasonable manner. OHSAA allows only the head coach to stand, so the OHSBVA rules exception allowing one coach but only one coach (head coach or any assistant coach) to stand during play remains with the minor change of distance from the court of an additional 2", moving from 5'10" to 6'.

- With the head coach gaining the privilege to stand during play, Rule 12-2-5 was revised to clarify when it is appropriate for an assistant coach to stand and the actions he/she may perform. While assistant coaches still have no right to address match officials regarding their decisions (judgments), it is now permissible for assistant coaches to request information that previously could only be requested by the head coach. While the ball is dead, an assistant coach is permitted to ask the R2 to review the accuracy of the score, verify the number of time-outs used, the serving order of his/her team, or verify the proper server for the opponent. It is implicit that this also includes requesting the number of substitutions used and asking for a generic lineup check or for the court to be wiped due to moisture. However, assistant coaches have no inherent speaking rights in addressing the officials beyond what is specified in rule.
- The main editorial change for the upcoming season is Rule 1-2-1, which changes the term "game" to "set." This updates and reflects the current terminology of the sport and replaces all references in the rules to set. **This is not a substantive change for OHSBVA.**