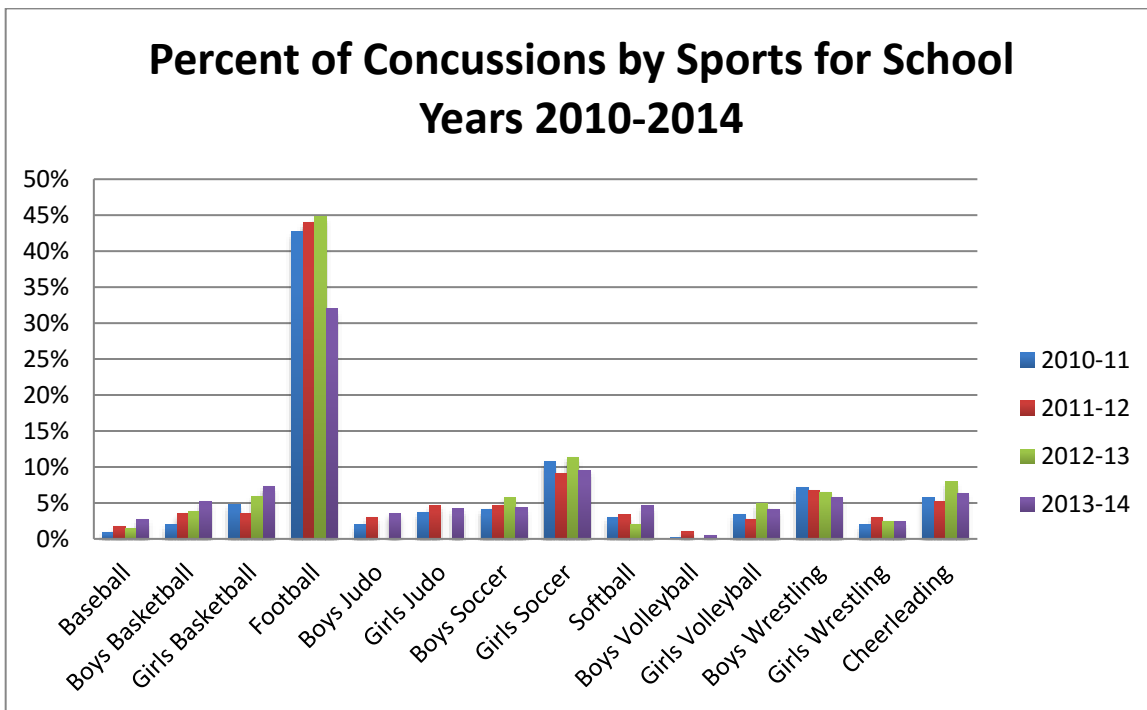


HHSAA  
 Rules for Minimizing Head Impact  
 2016-17

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Board of Directors and Sports Medicine Advisory Committee recently approved recommendations from their July 2014 Concussion Summit Task Force. These recommendations, combined with data collected from the Hawaii Concussion Awareness & Management Program since school year 2010, have demonstrated a need for the HHSAA to implement its own guidelines. The purpose of the guidelines is to reduce the amount of head impact to minimize both risk of concussions and minimize risk of long-term brain trauma to Hawaii high school football players. Over the course of the last 4 years in Hawaii, football has accounted for 32-45% of all the concussions reported. State high school athletics and activities associations are increasingly being held accountable for the steps they take to prevent both injuries and risk of long-term injury or illness.



The following are recommendations from the NFHS:

1. Full-contact should be limited during the regular season, as well as during activity outside of the traditional fall football season. For purposes of these recommendations and guidelines, full-contact consists of both “Thud” and “Live Action” using the USA Football definitions of *Levels of Contact*.

**Rationale:** By definition, “Thud” involves initiation of contact at, or up to, full speed with no pre-determined winner and no take-down to the ground. Accordingly, the task force supports that initial contact, particularly with linemen, is just as violent with “Thud” as with “Live Action.” However, the task force also recognizes that “Live Action” likely carries a higher risk for other injuries to the body than does “Thud.” The USA Football Levels of Contact “Air,” “Bags” and “Control” are considered no contact or light contact, and thus no limitations are placed on their use.

2. Member state associations should consider a variety of options for limiting contact in practices. The task force strongly recommends full-contact be allowed in no more than 2-3 practices per week. Consideration should also be given to limiting full-contact on consecutive days and limiting full-contact time to no more than 30 minutes per day and no more than 60-90 minutes per week.

**Rationale:** The task force acknowledges that there are insufficient data to specify with certainty a research-validated “best practices” standard for contact limitations. Several states (Alabama, Arizona, Maryland, and Texas) adopted varying limitations on contact prior to the 2013 football season. Preliminary *High School RIO (Reporting Information Online)* injury surveillance data suggest these states have seen a statistically significant decrease in concussion rates during practices, with no increase in concussion or other injuries during games.

3. Pre-season practices may require more full-contact time than practices occurring later in the regular season, to allow for teaching fundamentals with sufficient repetition.

A. Pre-season acclimatization protocols and regulations regarding heat and hydration take precedent and should always be followed.

B. While total full-contact practice days and time limitations may be increased during the pre-season, the emphasis should focus on the proper principles of tackling and blocking during the first several practices, before progressing to “Thud” and “Live Contact.”

**Rationale:** The task force acknowledges regular season practice limitations may need to be revised during the pre-season. This should be done in a specific and systematic manner to allow coaches to spend sufficient time teaching proper tackling and blocking techniques. Emphasis should be placed upon inexperienced players, as they slowly work through tackling and blocking progressions with “Air,” “Bags,” and “Control” using the USA Football definitions of “*Levels of Contact*.”

4. During pre-season twice-daily practices, only one session per day should include full contact.

**Rationale:** The adolescent brain needs sufficient recovery time following full-contact practices. In addition, concussion signs and/or symptoms may not develop for several hours after the initial injury.

5. Consistent with efforts to minimize total exposure to full-contact, head impact exposure, and concussion risk, member state associations with jurisdiction over football outside of the traditional fall football season should review their current policies to assess if those policies stand in alignment with the Fundamentals discussed within this report and, if needed, modify the policies accordingly.

**Rationale:** Football played outside of the traditional fall football season presents an opportunity for learning, physical activity, and skill development. However, athletes are at further risk for head impact exposure and concussion during any full-contact activity. Consideration should be given to significantly limiting the total time of full contact. Other factors to consider include time elapsed since the previous football season and whether individual athletes have recently been, or are currently, participating in other contact/collision sports (e.g., ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, and wrestling).

6. Each member state association should reach out to its respective state coaches' association on designing and implementing a coaches education program that appropriately integrates youth, middle school, and high school football programs in every community. USA Football and the NFHS "Fundamentals of Coaching" courses should be the primary education resources for all coaches. Education for coaches should also include the proper fitting and care of helmets.

**Rationale:** The game of football continues to evolve and proper coaching technique at each level is fundamental to keeping the game safe and enjoyable. A proper-fitting helmet may help decrease, but not eliminate concussion risk.

7. Each member state association should regularly educate its schools on current state concussion law and policies and encourage schools to have a written "Concussion Management Protocol." Schools should also be encouraged to share this information with coaches, parents, and students annually.

**Rationale:** Many schools experience frequent turnover of athletic directors and coaches. Frequent "refreshers" on state concussion laws and policies as well as sample concussion management protocols should be made available to ensure all schools are up-to-date and prepared for safe and effective concussion management.

8. An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with clearly defined written and practiced protocols should be developed and in place at every high school. When possible, an athletic trainer should be present at all practices and games.

**Rationale:** An effective EAP should be in place, as a prompt and appropriate response to any emergency situation can save a life. The EAP should be designed and practiced to address all teams (freshman, junior varsity, and varsity) and all practice and game

sites. An athletic trainer is a key component in any strategy to minimize injuries and optimize safety for all participants.

### **HHSAA Head Impact Rules**

1. Full contact shall be limited during the regular season (after week 3) as well as during activities outside the traditional Fall football (weeks 21-52) season. For the purposes of these recommendations and guidelines, full contact consists of both "Thud" and "Live Action" using USA Football definitions of Levels of Contact.
2. During the regular season (after week 3) full contact shall not be allowed in more than 3 practices per week.
  - a. There shall be only 30 minutes of full contact during each practice with no more than 90 minutes per week.
3. Pre-season practices may require more full-contact time than practices occurring later in the regular season, to allow for teaching fundamentals with sufficient repetition.
  - a. Pre-season acclimatization protocols and regulations regarding heat and hydration take precedent and shall always be followed.
  - b. While total full-contact practice days and time limitations may be increased during the pre- season, the emphasis shall focus on the proper principles of tackling and blocking during the first several practices, before progressing to "Thud" and "Live Action."
4. During pre-season twice-daily practices, only one session per day shall include full contact.
5. During spring football there will be NO contact and NO equipment worn during this time. Emphasis shall be on teaching skill development.
6. All coaches, paid and volunteer, must participate in annual concussion awareness education via NFHS online course or education provided by their school's athletic trainer(s) or a course approved by the HHSAA.
7. All schools shall have a written and practiced emergency action plan (EAP) for each venue they use. It is best practice to have an athletic trainer accessible at all practices and games when possible.

#### **Definitions:**

1. **Air.** Players run a drill unopposed without contact, with no resistance
2. **Bags.** Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.
3. **Control.** Drill is run at an assigned speed until the moment of contact; one player is predetermined the "winner" by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet. This applies to simulations and drills involving any number of players.
4. **Thud.** Drill is run at assigned speed through the moment of contact; no predetermined "winner." Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill. This applies to simulations and drills involving any number of players.

5. Live Action. Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground. This applies to simulations and drills involving any number of players.
6. Full Contact. Is defined as “Thud” or “Live Action”.