

New Spirit Rules Help Minimize Risk

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Susan Loomis

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 8, 2008) - Five revisions related to flyers and transitional stunts were among the changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Spirit Rules Committee at its January 6-8 meeting in Indianapolis. These revisions were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The committee recognized the increasing number of loss-of-contact transitional stunts, and revised rules requiring flyers to "maintain hand-to-hand/arm contact with at least one bracer during the entire loss of contact with her bases." This increases the stability of the transitions, which helps minimize the risk to the flyer.

"Cheerleading teams are getting so good that we want to continue to allow loss-of-contact stunts," said Susan Loomis, liaison to the NFHS Spirit Rules Committee. "But we also want to help maintain the well-being of our participants."

For this reason, Rule 2-6-10 was revised to include conditions similar to Rule 2-12-1 and 2. These conditions must be met or physical contact must remain between the flyer and base. Some of the conditions include that "the flyer does not become inverted, the flyer has at least two bases and each flyer and bracer has a separate spotter." Along with other conditions, the flyer's weight must not be supported by the bracer.

"Bracers have become a huge part of stunts," Loomis said. "But, they are there to brace and not to support a flyer's weight."

Changes were made to Rule 2-8-2b to state that during a stunt in which the flyer is inverted, the "base or spotter must maintain contact with the flyer from the inverted position until the flyer is no longer inverted," helping to stabilize the stunt.

A change in Rule 2-9-1a allows a forward suspended roll to also be legal from the performing surface if "the flyer begins from the performing surface or from a stunt at shoulder height or below." Allowing a forward suspended roll from the performing surface does not present more risk than forward suspended rolls from stunts, provided two bases are used.

The committee also changed the definition of an inverted position to say "shoulders below waist" to accurately reflect the intent of the inverted flyer rule.

There were also revisions to injury-related rules. Rule 2-1-14 was adjusted to maintain consistency with all other NFHS sports regarding participants who are bleeding.

An exception was added to Rule 3-1-6 to allow "Pedini-style dance shoes or others with heels of sufficient height to raise the bottom of the foot off the floor" to prevent injury and disease.

In addition to rules changes, the Spirit Rules Committee also adopted four points of emphasis for the upcoming season. The identified topics include why rules matter, progressions, transitional stunts with loss of contact, and removing the coaches' responsibilities and participants' responsibilities sections.

Since spirit is a relatively new sport, the committee places emphasis on encouraging coaches to be aware of the rules, and to use them in the "why rules matter" section.

To simplify the rules book, the committee removed the "coaches' responsibilities and participants' responsibilities" sections. However, these sections will be available online at <http://www.nfhs.org/> on the spirit Web page.

"They are wonderful at guiding coaches, so we are going to keep them on the Web," Loomis said.

According to the NFHS 2006-07 High School Athletics Participation Survey, 3,743 schools sponsor a competitive spirit squad with 95,177 girls participating and 2,147 boys participating in 500 schools.

This press release was written by Jennifer Searcy, a spring semester intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a junior at Franklin (Indiana) College.