

Football Rules of Emphasis and Rule changes 2026

2026 Points of Emphasis

- **Flagrant and Unsportsmanlike Fouls:** Strict enforcement against actions that threaten player safety or the tone of the game, including targeting, late hits, taunting, and profanity.
- **Helping the Runner:** A renewed focus on eliminating illegal direct pushing or pulling of the ball carrier by teammates (similar to college-style "tush push" tactics) which remain illegal under high school rules.
- **Sideline Management and Control:** Keeping coaches, players, and non-essential personnel inside the designated team box and away from the live-play boundary to ensure safety and smooth game flow.
- **Identification of the NFHS Authenticating Mark on Game Balls:** Requiring all game balls used in interscholastic competition to clearly display the official NFHS authentication mark.

2026 NFHS FOOTBALL RULES CHANGES

Committee Approves an **Additional Option for Wearing Play Cards** [1-5-3c(9)] — The committee has approved the wearing of play cards on both the forearm/wrist and belt areas of the body. The committee feels that the wearing of play cards on the belt poses no health risk issue to the player and poses no danger to the opponent.

Committee Gives **Clarity to Illegal Personal Contact Actions Related to All Players** (9-4-7) — In a concerted effort to clarify illegal personal contact actions as they relate to all players, the committee approved language to include the prohibition to apply equally to the offense and defense. By eliminating the words "defensive" and "blocker's" from the rule prohibiting slapping an opponent's head, the prohibition now applies to all players.