

Proposed Amendment to Bylaw 508.00 - Football

(deleted language, proposed language)

Submitted by: Minnesota State High School League Board of Directors Bylaw 508.2 - Pre-Season Practice/Heat Acclimatization Policy

This amendment will replace the current number 2 and all other numbers will be changed accordingly.

Portions of this policy are based on National Athletic Trainers' Association Preseason Heat-Acclimatization Guidelines for Secondary School Athletics, June 2009 AND Recommendations from the National Federation of High School Associations Concussion Summit, July 2014.

1. SEASON BEGINS

Practice may begin on the 15th Monday preceding the finals of the state tournament.

2. FOOTBALL PRE-SEASON PRACTICE/HEAT ACCLIMATIZATION POLICY

Definitions

Heat Acclimatization Period is defined as the initial 14 consecutive day period of pre-season practice, which begins the first day of practice prior to the regular season. Any practices or conditioning conducted before this time shall not be considered a part of the heat-acclimatization period.

Practice is defined as the period of time a participant engages in coach-supervised, school approved, sport or conditioning-related physical activity, including stretching, running, conditioning or physical training in the skills and fundamentals. Strength training and team meetings or video sessions do not count as a practice for the purpose of this policy.

Levels of Contact – as defined by USA Football, focuses on varying intensity levels throughout practices, to build player confidence, ensure their safety and prevent both physical and mental exhaustion. Six intensity levels are used to introduce players to practice drills which position them to master the fundamentals and increase skill development.

AIR: Intensity = 0 Players run a drill unopposed without contact.

BAGS: Intensity = 1 Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.

CONTROL: Intensity = 2 Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact; one player is pre-determined the 'winner' by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet when involved with contact.

RESTRICTED CONTACT: Intensity = 3 Teaching safe & proper techniques (block, shed, tackle) involving shoulder pads, and wearing helmets for protection. Contact above the hips only with hands, shoulders and chest. Keep the head out! Use quick whistle; no gang-tackling or cut blocking/tackling. Players stay on their feet when involved in contact.

THUD: Intensity = 4 Drill is run at assigned speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined "winner." Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.

LIVE ACTION: Intensity = 5 Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.

Contact Practice is defined as a practice during which drills and/or team work includes "Thud" or "Live Action," as described below. There are no restrictions on "Air;" "Bags;" "Control;" and "Restricted Contact." The Contact portion of this practice may not exceed 30 minutes.

Walk-thru is defined as a teaching opportunity with the athletes not wearing protective equipment. A walk-thru is not considered part of the 3 hour practice, cannot last more than 1 hour, and does not include any kind strength training or conditioning activities. A "walk thru" is only for running plays and teaching team schemes and assignments – full speed drills and physical contact is not allowed. Special team skills (punting and catching punts, kickoffs, and place kicking) is allowed.

Recovery Period is defined as the time between the end of one practice or walk-thru and the beginning of the next practice or walk-thru. During this time athletes must rest in a cool environment (65-80 degrees F), with no sport or conditioning-related activity permitted. Team meetings and video may be part of this recovery period if conducted in a cool environment.

POLICY -- Schedule for 14 Calendar Day Acclimatization Period:

Days 1 – 5: “Contact Practices” are not allowed.

- No single practice may last more than 2 hours with total practice time per day not to exceed 4 hours
- There must be at least a 2 hour recovery period prior to the second practice.
- Double practice days must be followed by a single practice day.
- A 1 hour walk-thru is allowed each day that there is a single practice, but there must be at least a 1 hour recovery period prior to the walk-thru.

Day 1: Helmets only

Day 2: Shoulder pads may be worn for up to 1 hour of practice time

Days 3 & 4: Helmets and shoulder pads only

Day 5: Full pads are allowed – No thud or live action

Day 6 and 7: Rest days, no practice is allowed. (Exception for 2015: Teaching practice is allowed on Day 6 – helmets only, no pads, no contact, no conditioning)

Days 8 – 12: No restrictions on what equipment can be worn.

- No practice may last more than three hours, with total practice time per day not to exceed five hours.
- Double practice days must be followed by a single practice day.
- There must be at least a two hour recovery period prior to the second practice.
- A one hour walk thru is allowed on single practice days, but there must be at least a one hour recovery period prior to the walk-thru.
- There may not be more than one contact practice per day.

Day 12 (day prior to scrimmage): Contact practices are not allowed.

Day 13: Schools may participate in one “live action” interschool scrimmage event (multiple teams may be involved). Exception for 2015: first day on which a game may be played.

Day 14: No practice -- rest day – 14 Day Acclimatization ends.

Exception for 2015: Allow a Walk-thru practice on double practice days – up to one hour in length with at least a one hour recovery period. – OK with Sports Medicine Committee

Option for one “long” practice: When two practices per day are held and the two hour recovery period creates an issue, teams may opt to have a second practice of one hour in length, if there is a one hour recovery period, AND conditioning is conducted only during one of the two practices. A long practice day must be followed by a single practice day.

Day 15: No restrictions on number or length of practices. No more than two contact practices per week. Consideration in regard to the amount of contact must be given to players involved in lower level games.

Day 18: First date on which interscholastic contests are allowed. Note: If the varsity team plays on Day 18, a lower level game (B/JV) may be scheduled on day 17.

PENALTY:

1st Offense: Head Coach suspended for two games. 2nd Offense: Head Coach suspended for four games and not allowed to coach in post-season.

Note: This schedule and progression is safer and better for kids and may keep more kids involved with football. Less contact, less heavy conditioning will keep kids safer; they will retain more mentally; there will be less time missed due to injuries, and by the time of the first game your team may actually be more effective than by following previous practice schedules.

2-3 PRACTICE SESSIONS BEFORE FIRST CONTEST

Cross Reference: Bylaw 411.10 (Scheduling of Contests)

The season must begin with a five-day organized conditioning program and two weeks of organized practice must precede the first scheduled game. The first three days of conditioning will be conducted only with the issue of helmets, mouth proctors, dummies and shoes. The final two days of the conditioning week players may dress in full protective pads and may be allowed to hit dummies and sleds and may have full, person-to-person contact.

A. The five days of conditioning must be conducted during the first week of practice.

B. Five separate and complete days of organized practices must be held, beginning on the second Monday of the season, prior to any inter-school practices or scrimmages being held.

C. Games may be scheduled beginning the Thursday of the second week of practice exclusive of the five days of conditioning. If the varsity plays a game on that first Thursday, a lower level game (B/JV) may be scheduled on the previous day (Wednesday of the second week).

3-4 CONTESTS

Cross Reference: Bylaw 501 (Maximum Number of Contests)

Maximum number allowed – 9

Non-League Tournaments

The champion of any conference, section or division of a conference may schedule a 10th game to determine an inter-conference or an intra-conference championship. The game must be listed on the school schedule.

4-5. PLAYER PARTICIPATION LIMITATIONS

Cross Reference: Bylaw 502 (Daily/Season Player Participation Limitations)

5-6. EQUIPMENT ISSUED

Equipment may be issued on the Friday or Saturday preceding the authorized date for the opening of practice (except Sunday).

6-7. LAST DATE TO JOIN A TEAM

A. To be eligible for section and state competition, a student must be a member of that school's team no later than the fourth Monday (the 22nd calendar day) from the official start of that sport season.

B. Membership Defined: A student must:

- 1) be practicing with the high school team;
- 2) be on the school's master eligibility list; and
- 3) be under the bylaws of the League.

C. Exceptions: At the member school's discretion, students may be allowed to join a team after the fourth Monday (the 22nd calendar day) from the official start of that sport season and be fully eligible for regular season and post-season competition if they meet any of the four conditions below:

- 1) transfer students who become eligible in their new school; or
- 2) students who are participating in another sport and wish to drop that sport or participate in a second sport during that same sport season, provided they have not delayed their membership in order to gain a competitive advantage; or
- 3) students who, were under the care of a physician and were medically unable to join the team by the specified date (students must have written documentation from the physician); or
- 4) students who join a team after the fourth Monday (the 22nd calendar day) from the official start of that sport season, and have not participated in the same sport:
 - a) on a non-school team or as an individual competitor; or
 - b) in a camp or clinic; or
 - c) received private instruction in that sport during the high school season.

D. Students who join a team after the fourth Monday (the 22nd calendar day) from the official start of that sport season are eligible for the regular season only (not post-season) if they have participated in the same sport:

- 1) on a non-school team or as an individual competitor; or
- 2) in a camp or clinic; or
- 3) received private instruction in that sport during the high school season.

Rationale:

- Heat Acclimatization has been a major emphasis at the national level, and many other states have adopted similar policies, some even more restrictive than the above.
- This bylaw proposal is based on what has been recommended by the National Association of Athletic Trainers and what is currently being done at both the NCAA and NFL levels – where athletes are training and conditioning at a much higher level than most high school athletes.
- Additional restrictions on physical contact are being put in place as a recommendation from the NFHS Concussion Summit held in July, 2014.
- This bylaw specifically relates to the amount of physical contact, and making sure that there is adequate time for the brain to rest.
- Research has shown that following a program such as that outlined above is not only safer in regard to heat acclimatization, but will also result in fewer injuries and is better for brain health.
- Research has also shown that students will learn more and retain more with shorter practices and in situations where conditioning is accomplished by starting slow and progressing to more intensity.
- At the end of the 14 day period students can be conditioned to the same level as with current policies, with fewer injuries, and greater retention of what they have been taught.
- This bylaw has been reviewed and approved by the MSHSL Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and the Football Coaches Advisory Committee, which represents the Minnesota Football Coaches Association.
- The Board of Directors fully supports and endorsed approval of this bylaw.

The effective date for all MSHSL Bylaw changes is August 1 of each calendar year.