



NFHS RULES REVIEW INTERPRETATION TAPING OF WRESTLING EAR GUARDS

The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee issued a rules reminder for 2011-12 on wrestling ear guards, specifically as it relates to Rules 4-1-4 and 4-1-5. That rules reminder does not constitute a change in Rules 4-1-4 or 4-1-5; rather, it represents an emphasis in the manner the Committee believes the rules should be administered and enforced.

Rule 4-1-4:

ART. 4 . . . Wrestlers shall wear wrestling ear guards, which provide:

- a. adequate ear protection;*
- b. no injury hazard to the opponent; and,*
- c. an adjustable locking device to prevent it from coming off or turning on the wrestler's head.*

Rules 4-1-5:

ART. 5 . . . The uniform shall be worn as intended/designed by the manufacturer.

Comment: "...tape on the ear guards is not allowed by rule."

There has been some confusion about whether tape is permissible on wrestling ear guards. The rationale offered by some has been that the tape can (1) adhere the straps together to provide a better fit; (2) cover exposed Velcro to prevent a rough, sharp or abrasive area from being exposed; and (3) secure padding for wrestlers with cauliflower ear. According to the interpretation of the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee, none of these taping scenarios would be acceptable under the previously mentioned rules or rules reminder.

It is the responsibility of the NFHS Rules Review Committee to determine whether deviations from rules are "playing rules" or "administrative rules." If a state deviates from a "playing rule," that state is prohibited from having representation on the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee. If it is deemed that the deviation is for an "administrative rule," that modification is duly noted, but it does not adversely impact participation on the Rules Committee.

The rules and rules reminder on ear guards was referred to the NFHS Rules Review Committee for consideration, and the Rules Review Committee was strongly aligned with the concept of wearing equipment as intended/designed by the manufacturer. There was discussion about whether tape on the ear guards fairly represented wearing the uniform or equipment as the manufacturer intended/designed.

The NFHS Rules Review Committee's decision was that the rules reminder by the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee should stand as written. However, if a state should make the decision to permit taping of the ear guards for perceived safety reasons, that modification of Rules 4-1-4 and 4-1-5 will be considered an "administrative rule" modification for the 2011-12 school year only.

Prior to the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee meeting next April, further information will be gathered from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, state associations and others in order for the Wrestling Rules Committee to provide another review of the impacted rules and rules reminder. If necessary, the NFHS Rules Review Committee and/or the NFHS Board of Directors will revisit whether future modifications of these rules should be considered "playing rule" or "administrative rule" modifications.

If your state determines that you will permit taping of the wrestling ear guards for this season (2011-12), schools that wrestle in another state that has a more restrictive rule will be expected to comply with the ear guard rule of that host state.