FOREWORD

Who taught you to throw a ball? To shoot baskets? To swing a bat? To run correctly? Chances are good that you remember those first coaches by name, even if they were not parents or family members. If you were lucky, your early coaches were patient and encouraging. They didn't give up on you when the ball seemed too large or when you thought you had failed. They made sure you were safe, but they let you make the mistakes you needed to make and they applauded your successes.

We never outgrow the need for supportive coaches, but at no time is that need more intense than during the adolescent years. It is during those years that boys and girls become young men and women; it is during those years that they will decide the kind of people they will become. Too many students lack the family and community support they need to make good choices. For many young people, coaches are the most stable, positive, and significant role models in their lives. It is a position of great trust and responsibility, one not to be entered into lightly.

For this reason, the Maine Principals’ Association administers a set of guidelines to ensure that coaches meet minimum standards, that they are prepared to ensure the safety of student athletes, and that the interscholastic program available to Maine students is of the highest quality. We believe that through these guidelines, we are putting into action our belief that coaches are teachers of students first and coaches of a sport second.

These guidelines are contained in this Coaches’ Handbook, along with other material helpful to coaches, athletic administrators, and principals. It is also important for you to review the MPA Handbook as stipulated in the coaches’ eligibility policy. Please take some time to review the contents of both of these handbooks and reflect on the importance of your role. Yours is a high calling, and I hope that this Coaches’ Handbook will be useful in helping you be the best coach you can be. Your student athletes deserve no less.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Durost
Executive Director

Richard A. Durost
Executive Director
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INTRODUCTION

This handbook serves two purposes. First, it addresses important sports medicine issues such as concussions, heat stress, and ways to avoid neck injuries in football. The sport season policy and eligibility rules are clarified through the frequently asked questions which illustrate the interpretation of these rules.

The handbook also contains information on important topics such as ethics, safety, and media relations that can make your coaching experience more satisfying and productive. It is not intended to be an exhaustive resource containing all the information that Maine coaches need; rather, it is a primer that can serve to remind coaches of their important responsibilities and advise them where to get further information as needed.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE MAINE PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION

To assure a quality education for all students, the Maine Principals' Association will:

1. promote the principalship;
2. support principals as educational leaders; and
3. promote and administer interscholastic activities in grades 9-12.

MPA Staff

Richard Durost, Executive Director
Michael Burnham, Assistant Executive Director
Phyllis Deringis, Assistant Executive Director
Jeffrey Sturgis, Assistant Executive Director
Debra Cates, Secretary/Receptionist
Diane Patnaude, Bookkeeper
Tammy McNear, Secretary
Patty Newman, Executive Assistant
What is the MPA?

The MPA is an association whose membership includes public school principals, assistant principals, private school headmasters, assistant headmasters, technical and career center directors. The MPA has, in part, grown out of a group formed in 1921 to eliminate some of the confusion surrounding high school athletic tournaments in Maine. Since that time, the MPA has joined with elementary and middle schools to develop two goals that shape its activities: (1) to encourage professional improvement and cooperation among principals, and (2) to promote and regulate all educationally sound student activities in Maine high schools.

How Does the MPA Work
To Achieve These Goals?

The Professional Activities Division of the MPA is responsible for the first goal of encouraging professional improvement and cooperation among principals. This division has committees made up of Maine principals who are concerned with educational policies, curriculum, middle level education, supervision and evaluation of staff members and programs, and legislative activities. In addition, the MPA is a sponsor of the Maine Principals’ Academy and supports the Maine Education Leadership Consortium, an educational collaboration made up of major organizations and associations promoting K-12 public education. The MPA publishes two monthly newsletters for its members--The Maine Apprise and School Law for Principals. Several conferences and workshops are held each year, designed specifically to meet the professional needs of school building administrators.

The Interscholastic Activities Division is responsible for the promotion and regulation of interscholastic activities in Maine. The MPA sponsors nine regional and two statewide One Act Play Festivals, a statewide Science & Technology Fair, and the Maine State Debate Championship. The MPA also supports student councils and the National Honor Society by providing staff and funds to help organize these activities.

The MPA also sponsors invitational championships or tournaments in the whole range of high school sports—cross country, field hockey, football, golf, soccer, volleyball, basketball, cheerleading, ice hockey, skiing, swimming, indoor track, wrestling, baseball, lacrosse, softball, tennis, and outdoor track.

Thanks to the work of the MPA Interscholastic Division, each year 155 Maine high schools from Kittery to Madawaska enjoy the benefits of participation in fair, well-regulated, and educationally sound athletic competition. Plus, thousands of Maine parents, friends, relatives, and neighbors enjoy the special excitement of regular season and post-season play in each of the sports mentioned above.

How Does the MPA Pay
For All of These Events?

The MPA receives money from tournament activities, institutional dues, and individual professional dues. The moneys received from tournament activities help defray the costs of activities that don’t bring in enough revenue to offset their expenses. For example, the income from the state basketball tournament will be used to pay tournament-related expenses, but will also be used to fund non-income-producing students’ activities. Of the twenty-three activities sponsored by the MPA, a few show a profit, some have income but not enough to cover expenses, and others have no income at all.

Want More Information
about the MPA?

We are happy to answer any questions you have about the MPA and its activities. Please write to us at P.O. Box 2468, Augusta, ME 04338-2468, call us at 622-0217, or email us at mpa@mpa.cc.
**SCOPE**

We sometimes forget why high school sports exist. The mission of educational athletics is just that – to educate. To that end, MPA member schools develop and agree to enforce essential eligibility standards for student-athletes and other regulations. Local school districts are welcome to establish stricter guidelines.

Over 26 committees, made up of principals, assistant principals, athletic administrators, coaches and officials liaison, impact the MPA’s rules process. The association’s 12-member Interscholastic Management Committee is its member school-elected legislative body.

The Management Committee, entirely independent of any governmental agency, meets four times annually to pass and modify regulations and to hear rule appeals from member schools.

Member schools, leagues, and allied organizations, such as associations of coaches, administrators, and officials, are welcome to submit proposals for new or modified regulations to be discussed by the membership.

The association’s executive staff, part of the 8-person team working for member schools at its headquarters office in Augusta, interpret rules daily. All rule appeals, however, are heard and granted by the Management Committee.

**EDUCATION**

Over 6,827 coaches are registered with the MPA. Within twelve (12) months of their hire or appointment, all coaches are required to successfully complete a Coaching Eligibility Course, a Sport First Aid Program, and a CPR/AED Certification Program.

Athletic administrators take part each year in an orientation program for new athletic administrators designed to better prepare them for the day-to-day rigors of their jobs.

In most sports, mandated rules clinics are conducted annually across the state for coaches.

The MPA’s educational efforts serve to better everyone involved in interscholastic athletics.

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**SAFETY**

An on-going concern of member schools is the well-being of their young athletes – on and off the playing field. The MPA is involved in a variety of safety issues.

The MPA also provides schools with educational materials to better acquaint them about communicable diseases in athletics, and how to best deal with them.

A leadership role is also taken by the MPA nationally to help develop competition rules which help keep injuries at a minimum and the levels of competition high.

**ACADEMIC**

Athletic participation is a critical component in the education of the majority of students attending the 153 MPA member schools.

Research indicates:

- 95% of corporate officers recently surveyed had participated in high school athletics;
- student athletes have better grades than non-athletes; and
- student athletes have higher attendance rates and higher graduation rates than non-participants.

**SOCIAL**

For many students, high school sport programs provide the most stable environment in their lives.

These programs often represent the best practices in:

- drop out prevention
- crisis intervention
- supervised activity
- and drug prevention programs

that a community can provide. The cost is minimal (1%-3% of the local school budget) while the benefits are priceless.

**CHARACTER**

Within high school sport programs, young people learn the value of discipline, teamwork, sacrifice, respect, loyalty, time management, accountability, citizenship, and sportsmanship. They also learn the value of organizational skills, confidence, leadership, commitment, effort, and the importance of a good work ethic. They enjoy team activities which will benefit their future.

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Ethics, integrity, playing within the spirit of the rules, and good sportsmanship are all important parts of the fabric of the high school interscholastic program.
**LINES OF AUTHORITY**

**MPA Authority**
The authority of the MPA to organize and regulate interscholastic activities is derived from the responsibility each school assumes when it applies for and receives membership status. At that time, the school agrees to abide by the Constitution, Bylaws, rules, regulations, and procedures of the MPA. The principal is held solely responsible for the athletic programs within his/her school.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q.** How do I file a complaint against a school I think has violated the rules?

**A.** Any participant school by its representative, or MPA committee by majority vote of its members, or any game official or supervisor may, for good cause, file with the MPA executive director a complaint alleging violation of the association’s Code of Ethics or Rules Relating to Interscholastic Activities. Complaints made on behalf of student participants shall be made by the representative school system. The complaint — made in writing and addressed to the MPA Interscholastic Management Committee — must set forth the names of the complainant and the party or parties complained against; a concise statement of the nature of the complaint or violation; the date and place of occurrence; and the code or rule provisions alleged to have been violated. The complaint may be mailed or delivered to the MPA headquarters in Augusta.

What happens next? Upon receiving a complaint, the MPA executive director will record the date and time of receipt and will proceed to investigate the facts. The director will present the complaint and his/her summary statement at the next Management meeting or any special meeting called for that purpose.

If the complaint is believed to be negotiable, the executive director or any designee appointed by the Management Committee will meet with the parties, arbitrate the claim, and report the outcome to the committee.

If the attempt at a negotiated settlement fails, the complaint will be set for an adversarial hearing. Note: The Recruitment Policy has an additional process for negotiating recruitment violations.

**Q.** What penalty may be imposed?

**A.** Whenever a determination is made that a violation of the Code of Ethics or Rules Relating to Interscholastic Activities has occurred, the Management Committee may penalize the offending parties, according to the gravity of the offense, in the following manner:

- Issuance of a letter of admonition or reprimand.
- Placement of the offender on probationary status for a period of up to one year.
- Loss or withdrawal of awards related to the area of the offense.
- Suspension from participation in MPA-sponsored interscholastic activities up to 365 calendar days.
- Any combination of the above.

Summaries of all actions wherein a violation of the Code of Ethics or Rules Relating to Interscholastic Activities has occurred shall be published in the MPA newsletter.
Local School District Authority
While the MPA has authority to organize and regulate interscholastic activities at the state level, local decision makers establish policies and regulations which apply to their student athletes. Local lines of authority in Maine districts generally follow this pattern:

```
Board of Education/School Committee
    Superintendent
        Principal
            Athletic Administrator
                Interscholastic Athletic Program
                   Coaches  Students  Officials  Support Personnel  Related Organizations
```

PLAYING RULES AND RULES MEETING ATTENDANCE

A. Schools shall adhere to the playing rules adopted by the MPA to govern games and meets in baseball, basketball, competitive cheer, cross country, field hockey, football, golf, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, skiing, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling.

B. The National Federation of State High School Associations publishes playing rule books for baseball, basketball, competitive cheer, cross country, field hockey, football, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling, and those codes shall be official. Unless modified in these regulations, the official rules for golf shall be those of the United States Golf Association; women's lacrosse, U.S. Lacrosse endorsed by the NFHS; skiing, MPA's Interscholastic Skiing Rules; and tennis, United States Tennis Association, supplemented by the MPA Tennis Rule Book.

C. Coaches or representatives of the school, as indicated in each sport bulletin, in baseball, basketball, competitive cheer, field hockey, football, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, volleyball, and wrestling must attend a scheduled mandatory clinic. The penalty for non-attendance is explained in each sport bulletin and varies from a $35 fine to non-participation in the tournament.

D. Recommendation forms for tournament officials submitted by the coaches are extremely important. Whether or not you are going to qualify for the tournament, you want the very best officials involved.
MPA CODE OF ETHICS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The Code of Ethics for Secondary School Activities has been developed for the purpose of stating the behavioral expectations of everyone involved with (secondary) school activities programs.

Adherence to the Code is expected at all MPA sponsored or sanctioned activities. Reported consistent and/or flagrant violations of the Code may result in punitive action by the MPA Interscholastic Management Committee if charges are substantiated at a hearing convened for that purpose.

In order to promote desirable behavior and enhance the overall quality of secondary school activities programs for which the MPA has assumed responsibility, the following Code of Ethics shall be in effect:

It is the duty of all concerned with secondary school activities programs to...

1. Cultivate awareness that participation in school activities is part of the total education experience. No one should either seek or expect academic privileges for the participants.
2. Emphasize sportsmanship, ethical conduct, and fair play as they relate to the lifetime impact on participants and spectators.
3. Develop an awareness and understanding of the rules and guidelines governing competition and comply with them in all activities.
4. Recognize the purpose of activities in school programs is to develop and promote physical, mental, moral, social, and emotional well-being of participants.
5. Avoid any practice or techniques which endanger the present or future welfare of a participant.
6. Avoid practices that encourage students to specialize or that restrict them from participation in a variety of activities.
7. Refrain from making disparaging remarks to opponents, officials, coaches, or spectators.
8. Encourage the development of proper health habits and discourage the use of chemicals.
9. Exemplify self-control and accept adverse decisions without public display of emotion.
10. Encourage everyone to judge the success of the activities programs on the basis of the attitudes of participants and spectators, rather than on the basis of a win or loss.

Adopted by the MPA Membership: April 29, 1988; Revised: April 29, 1999

COACHES CODE OF ETHICS

The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student-athlete should be treated as though he or she were the coaches' own, and his or her welfare should be uppermost at all times. Accordingly, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the NFCA Board of Directors.

The coach shall be aware that he or she has a tremendous influence, for either good or ill, on the education of the student-athlete and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.

The coach shall uphold the honor and dignity of the professional. In all personal contact with student-athletes, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media, and the public, the coach shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.
The coach shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol, and tobacco abuse.

The coach shall avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products when in contact with players.

The coach shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct his or her program in harmony with the total school program.

The coach shall master the contest rules and shall teach them to his or her team members. The coach shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.

The coach shall exert his or her influence to enhance sportsmanship by spectators, both directly and by working closely with cheerleaders, pep club sponsors, booster clubs, and administrators.

The coach shall respect and support contest officials. The coach shall not indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.

Before and after contests, coaches for the competing teams should meet and exchange cordial greetings to set the correct tone for the event.

A coach shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give student athletes special consideration.

A coach shall not scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by the league and/or state high school athletic association.

**SAFETY FIRST**

The greatest responsibility of any coach is to ensure the safety of the student athletes under his/her care. The following articles have been included to provide you with some basic rules and guidelines to help you protect your team. Many of these articles may be found in the National Federation of State High School Associations' *Sports Medicine Handbook*, Third Edition.

**CONCUSSIONS**

- Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications that range from prolonged brain damage to death if not managed properly.
- An athlete who has a head injury should not return to play without evaluation by medical personnel.
- Do not allow any athlete to return to participation if he/she has any symptoms.
- If an apparent head injury occurs, even if uncertainty exists about the severity of the injury and whether a true concussion occurred, that athlete should not return to action until medical clearance is obtained.
- Even a seemingly minor head injury, often referred to as “a ding” or “bell ringer,” is now considered a true concussion and must be managed as such to avoid potential long-term consequences.
- Neither loss of consciousness, vomiting or amnesia is necessary for a head injury to be considered a concussion.
RECOGNITION

A concussion, by definition, means “to shake violently.” A blow to the head that causes the brain to shake inside the skull and result in EVEN A BRIEF AND MILD alteration in brain function is considered a concussion. Although no obvious signs or symptoms may show up immediately, listed below are some of the symptoms that may suggest a concussion has occurred. Any of these should be taken seriously.

- Headache
- Dazed and vacant expression (“foggy”)
- Confusion
- Difficulty with balance and coordination skills
- Difficulty with concentration, memory and organizational skills
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Amnesia
- Slurred and/or inappropriate speech
- Repeating the same questions or comments
- Apparent loss of consciousness
- Moves slowly and/or clumsily
- Unsure of game, score or opponent
- Forgets play responsibilities
- Double vision or blurred vision
- Increased sensitivity to light or noise
- Sleep difficulties
- Increased irritability
- Hypersensitivity to light and noise
- Abnormal vision, hearing, smell and/or taste
- Excessive fatigue
- Abnormal sleep patterns
- Ringing in the ears
- Numbness and tingling
- Emotional problems, especially sadness and depression

MANAGEMENT

Immediate or Sideline Management

- Any athlete suspected of even a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately.
- An athlete should not return to activity after an apparent head injury, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance.
- For apparently minor injuries, close observation of the athlete should continue for a few hours.
- The athlete should be sent for emergency care if symptoms seem serious, seem to worsen, or if other injuries are suspected.

PREVENTION

- Make sure that helmets are fitted properly and are regularly sent for inspection or reconditioning.
• Football players should be taught to not initiate contact with the helmet and all athletes should follow the rules of the sport.
• Do not allow an athlete to return if he/she has any symptoms of concussion.
• Follow current guidelines on return to play following injury.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

• All coaches, athletes, administrators and parents should be made aware of the signs and symptoms of concussions, post-concussion syndrome and second-impact syndrome. See “Heads-up” reference for free coach’s tool kit.
• Each school should have a standard policy in place regarding the management and return to play of the concussed athlete.
• For athletes participating in high-risk sports or with a history of previous concussion, baseline testing to establish individual abilities in memory, brain function tests and balance-oriented testing by qualified medical personnel is recommended. This can then be used to assist in return-to-play decisions if an injury occurs.

**RETURN TO PARTICIPATION**

The International Conferences on Concussion at Vienna (2001) and Prague (2004), have significantly changed the thinking of proper management of head injuries in athletes. Some of the conclusions are highlighted below:

• The grading systems for concussions previously utilized are no longer considered useful in determining how serious an injury may be or in determining when an athlete can safely return to play. No symptom(s) or signs (including loss of consciousness or amnesia) accurately predict the severity of the injury or help decide when an athlete can return to play.
• New guidelines recommend monitoring the course of the symptoms and beginning a gradual return-to-play protocol when all symptoms have cleared. (See Table 8 – Sideline Decision-making and Table 9 – Return-to-play)
• There are now objective, validated methods of evaluating brain function in athletes to help physicians determine with greater confidence when an athlete does seem to be clear of symptoms and can start through the graduated return-to-play regimen. These include questionnaires, various pencil-and-paper tests, balance tests, neurological and memory tasks, and computerized tests. Recognizing that athletes, with the mentality of “playing through the pain,” are not always totally candid about admitting symptoms, guidelines now recommend the use of these more objective methods to evaluate how an athlete’s brain is functioning. Tests requiring little cost like Sideline Assessment of Concussion (SAC), Sideline Concussion Checklist (SCC), and Sport Concussion Assessment Tool (SCAT) have been shown to be helpful. Newer computerized neuro-psychological screening like ImPACT, CRI and Sentinel have also been shown to be helpful for physicians making return-to-play decisions.
• Guidelines further suggest that athletes playing high-risk or collision sports or with a history of previous concussions, should have these tests administered prior to the season to serve as a baseline in case an injury does occur.
• Mental exertion appears to worsen and prolong concussion symptoms to the same degree as physical exertion. Therefore, the concept of “cognitive rest” should be adhered to in concussion management. This may involve a limited class schedule for several days following a concussion, or rescheduling tests. More severely concussed athletes may require more detailed and long-lasting special accommodations.

• A requirement to begin the return-to-play protocol is that the athlete must have no Symptoms. Then, gradual increase in mental activity as tolerated will be followed by a similar gradual return to full physical activity. If symptoms recur, then the athlete must regress to a previous level of performance. (See Tables 8 and 9 below)

Table 8. Sideline Decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Clearance RTP Protocol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No exertional activity until asymptomatic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When the athlete appears clear, begin low-impact activity such as walking, stationary bike, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Initiate aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as skating, running, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Begin non-contact skill drills specific to sport such as dribbling, ground balls, batting, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Then full contact in practice setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If athlete remains without symptoms, he or she may return to play.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sideline Decision-making</th>
<th>Medical Clearance RTP Protocol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) after head injury even if clear in 15 minutes without medical clearance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Any athlete removed from play for a head injury must have appropriate medical clearance before practice or competition may resume.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Close observation of athlete should continue for a few hours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a stepwise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based on return of any signs or symptoms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Athlete must remain asymptomatic to progress to the next level.

B. If symptoms recur, athlete must return to previous level.

C. Medical check should occur before contact.
Table 9. Return-to-play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Return-to-play Medical Clearance Protocol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No mental or physical activity should occur until athlete’s symptoms are gone. Avoid physical exertion but also avoid studying, school attendance, test taking, video games, computer use and TV until clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When clear, begin with short periods of reading, focusing and an abbreviated school day as tolerated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When tolerating full day of school attendance, begin low-impact activity such as walking, stationary bike, etc. Gradually increase intensity and duration as tolerated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance to aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as skating, running, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance to non-contact skill drills sports specific such as dribbling, batting, shooting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full contact in practice setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If accomplishes all the above without return of signs and symptoms, may return to play following final clearance. Some athletes, especially if multiple previous concussions, should consider having a baseline computerized neuropsychological test performed because of the increased risk of concussions in those with previous ones.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MORE ON CONCUSSIONS

Significance

The initial recognition and management of concussions are particularly important in high school athletes in preventing two potential complications associated with concussions in this age group: post-concussion syndrome and second-impact syndrome (see page 81). Younger athletes may be at increased risk of cerebral swelling after a mild head injury with greater vulnerability for post-concussion symptoms for a longer period of time. Proper management should minimize the risk for these catastrophic results.

Recognition of concussions

Severity
The severity or seriousness of a concussion is primarily based on how long the symptoms last. The number and severity of symptoms may have some correlation but no specific symptoms are more likely to help determine severity. Restricting mental and physical activity immediately after the concussion seems to correlate with a quicker return to play.
Signs and Symptoms of Concussions
Coaches, administrators, officials, (See Table 10 below) parents and athletes need to be aware of the observable signs and reported symptoms of a concussion.

Table 10. Signs and Symptoms of Concussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs observed by medical staff</th>
<th>Symptoms reported by athlete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player appears dazed</td>
<td>Headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player has vacant facial expression</td>
<td>Nausea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusion about assignment</td>
<td>Balance problems or dizziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlete forgets plays</td>
<td>Double or fuzzy vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorientation to game, score, opposing team</td>
<td>Sensitivity to light or noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate emotional reaction (laughing, crying)</td>
<td>Feeling slowed down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player displays incoordination or clumsiness</td>
<td>Feeling &quot;foggy&quot; or &quot;not sharp&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player is slow to answer questions</td>
<td>Change in sleep pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of consciousness</td>
<td>Concentration or memory problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any change in typical behavior or personality</td>
<td>Irritability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating the same questions or comments over and over again</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling more emotional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CONCUSSIONS

Post-concussion Syndrome
Following a concussion, athletes may suffer a number of lingering symptoms for varying lengths of time. Below are listed some of the more common symptoms that may last for weeks or months. Again, no athlete with any symptom related to head injury should even begin the return-to-play protocol.

• Impaired attention
• Concentration and memory deficits
• Dizziness
• Tinnitus (ringing in the ears)
• Prolonged or recurring headaches (especially with exertion)*

• Fatigue
• Irritability
• Visual problems
• Neurasthenia, weakness or numbness

*Often high school athletes may return to sport prematurely because the headache can mistakenly be seen as a common ailment. However, recent research has shown that athletes with residual headaches even a week post concussion do poorly on specialized tests such as reaction time and memory (Collins et al, 2003). It is imperative that even a seemingly non-significant headache not be dismissed as a common ailment prior to returning to sports.
**Second-Impact Syndrome**

Second-impact syndrome is a rare event, which poses a significant concern for athletes who return too soon after suffering a previous concussion. Second-impact syndrome occurs when a second concussion occurs before a previous concussion has completely healed even if both of the injuries were very mild. Second-impact syndrome is characterized by an autoregulatory dysfunction that causes rapid and fatal brain swelling, and can result in death in as little as two to five minutes (McCrory, 1998). It is particularly important to note that virtually all of the second-impact syndrome cases that have been reported have occurred in adolescent athletes. The signs of second-impact syndrome are as follows:

- Previous history of concussion
- Visual, motor or sensory changes
- Difficulty with memory and/or thought process
- Collapse into coma
- Neurological abnormalities in strength, range of motion or sensory feelings.

**Cumulative Effects of Repeated Concussions**

A three-year, follow-up study shows that athletes having a previous history of at least one concussion are at an increased risk for further concussions. As the number of concussions increase, so do the risk for future injuries (Guskiewicz et al, 2003). It has also been shown that repeated concussions have been linked to longer recovery periods. Highlighting the importance of making sure athletes are symptom free prior to returning to competition from a previous MHI, research has shown that 1 in 15 athletes with a concussion have recurring concussions within 7-10 days from the first concussion. Because of these findings and the potential for complications resulting from MHI's, it is recommended that athletes sustaining more than one concussion should be referred for follow-up evaluation and assessment to determine any residual effects that might preclude participation in contact or collision sports. Cases of individuals suffering permanent brain damage from multiple concussions have been reported but no consensus on how many concussions are too many or what leads to that permanent damage.

**Medical Clearance to Return to Participation After Head Injury**

There is unanimous agreement within the medical community that NO athlete who has signs and symptoms of post concussion should be returned to action. There is also unanimity that there is increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after a preceding concussion and from cumulative damage of multiple head injuries. The more concussions an individual has, the greater is the risk of having additional concussions. The exact period of increased vulnerability or the number of concussions that is “too many” has not been determined. Traditionally, physicians have advised athletes not to return to action until they have been free of symptoms for a minimum of a week. (McCrea et al, 2003). Now, rather than discuss a length of time to be free of symptoms, guidelines suggest using the gradual return-to-play protocol shown above while monitoring the athlete for symptoms. This could be longer or shorter than a week. Research, utilizing some of the testing instruments mentioned above, is now revealing subtle residual effects of concussion not found by traditional evaluation. These identifiable deficits frequently persist after the obvious signs of concussion are gone and appear to have relevance to whether an athlete can return to action with relative safety.
REFERENCES

• Cantu RC. Posttraumatic Retrograde and Anterograde Amnesia; Pathophysiology and Implications in grading and Safe Return to Play. Journal of Athletic Training 2001; 36: 244-248.

**PRE-HOSPITAL CARE OF SPINAL INJURIES**

The Sports Medicine Committee of the Maine Principals’ Association (MPA) feels there needs to be standardized guidelines to be used by all providers in the pre-hospital care of spine-injured athletes. The MPA has reviewed and is in complete agreement with the guidelines and recommendations published by the National Athletic Trainer’s Association (NATA) in 2001, and updated in 2007*, concerning the pre-hospital care of the spine-injured athlete.

Controversy exists regarding helmet removal in spine-injured football players. In part, this controversy stems from the accepted practice of helmet removal from motorcycle riders who suffer injuries to the spine. Generally, these helmets are removed by medical personnel after an accident to ensure control of the airway. Motorcycle helmets usually do not have a removable facemask, are not worn with shoulder pads, and do not snugly fit the head. Therefore, they are removed prior to transportation to achieve neutral spine alignment and insure adequate stabilization of the injured motorcyclist on a spine board with obstructed access to the airway. In contrast, a properly fitted football helmet will hold the head in a position of neutral spine alignment, provided the athlete is wearing shoulder pads. Access to the airway is easily obtained by removing the facemask. Therefore, the MPA and Intra-Association Task Force of the NATA recommend that neither the football helmet nor shoulder pads be removed prior to transportation of a spine-injured athlete, unless the airway can not be controlled and/or spine immobilized with the helmet and shoulder pads in place. This recommendation is in agreement with the Maine EMS Prehospital Treatment Protocols**.


** Protective Headgear removal; Section Gray, Article 27; Maine EMS Prehospital Treatment Protocols. Maine Emergency Medical Services, 152 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333. Effective July 1, 2005.

**REDUCING BRAIN AND SPINAL INJURIES IN FOOTBALL**

Frederick O. Mueller, Ph.D. and Robert C. Cantu, M.D., University of North Carolina

Brain and spinal injuries in football have been dramatically reduced since the rules were changed in 1976 to prohibit butt blocking and face tackling, and any other technique in which the helmet and facemask purposely received the brunt of the initial impact. There are still a small number of football players (and fewer in other sports) that become paralyzed, but the lesson to keep the head and face out of blocking and tackling remains.

Generally, about 3 - 5% of the injuries experienced by participants in athletics are concussions, e.g., temporary dizziness, confusion, nausea, headaches, and perhaps unconsciousness. Concussions are given grades from Grade 1 (a hit that dazes for a few minutes) to Grade 3 (unconscious). No concussion should be dismissed as minor until proven so by medical personnel. The task is to be sure that the athlete no longer has any post-concussion symptoms at rest and exertion before returning to competition. What is now called "the second impact syndrome" with its high rate of morbidity if not mortality, is the result of returning to play too soon.
Several suggestions for reducing brain and spinal injuries follows:

1. Preseason physical exams should be required for all participants. Identify during the physical exam those athletes with a history of previous brain or spinal injuries. If the physician has any questions about the athlete’s readiness to participate, the athlete should not be allowed to play.

2. A physician should be present at all games and practices. If it is not possible for a physician to be present at all games and practice sessions, emergency measures must be provided. The total staff should be organized in that each person will know what to do in case of a brain or spinal injury in game or practice. Have a plan ready and have your staff prepared to implement that plan. Prevention of further injury is the main objective.

3. Athletes must be given proper conditioning exercises which will strengthen their neck muscles in order for them to be able to hold their head firmly erect when making contact. Strong neck muscles help prevent neck injuries.

4. Coaches should drill the athletes in the proper execution of the fundamentals of football skills, particularly blocking and tackling. KEEP THE HEAD OUT OF FOOTBALL.

5. Coaches and officials should discourage the players from using their heads as battering rams. The rules prohibiting spearing should be enforced in practice and in games. The players should be taught to respect the helmet as a protective device and that the helmet should not be used as a weapon.

6. All coaches, physicians, and trainers should take special care to see that their players’ equipment is properly fitted, particularly the helmet.

7. Strict enforcement of the rules of the game by both coaches and officials will help reduce serious injuries.

8. When a player has experienced or shown signs of brain trauma (loss of consciousness, visual disturbances, headache, inability to walk correctly, obvious disorientation, memory loss) he/she should receive immediate medial attention and should not be allowed to return to practice or game without permission from the proper medical authorities. Coaches should encourage players to let them know if they have any of the above mentioned symptoms (that can’t be seen by others, such as headaches) and why it is important.

9. Both athletes and their parents should be warned of the risks of injuries.

10. Coaches should not be hired if they do not have the training and experience needed to teach the skills of the sport and to properly train and develop the athletes for competition.

Following is a list of post-concussion signs/symptoms: Depression, numbness/tingling, dizziness, poor balance, drowsiness, poor concentration, excess sleep, ringing in the ears, fatigue, sadness, feel "in fog", sensitive to light, headache, sensitivity to noise, irritability, trouble falling asleep, memory problems, vomiting, nausea, and nervousness.
COLD ILLNESS, HEAT ILLNESS, AND HYDRATION

RECOGNITION AND MANAGEMENT:

Hypothermia: A decrease in core body temperature

- **Mild hypothermia** - shivering, cold sensation, goosebumps, numb hands.
- **Moderate hypothermia** - intense shivering, muscle incoordination, slow and labored movements, mild confusion, difficulty speaking, signs of depression, withdrawn.
- **Severe hypothermia** - Shivering stops, exposed skin is bluish and puffy, inability to walk, poor muscle coordination, muscle rigidity, decrease in pulse and respiration rate, unconsciousness.

Management:

- Remove athlete from cold environment.
- Remove wet clothing and replace with dry clothing and/or blankets.
- Refer all moderate cases to the emergency room once safe to transport.
- Treat severe hypothermia as a medical emergency! Wrap the athlete in an insulated blanket and seek emergency medical care immediately.

Frostbite: Thermal injury to the skin caused by cold exposure: (See Figure 1 - Wind Chill Index)

- **Frostnip** - Skin appears white and waxy or gray and mottled; possible numbness and pain.
- **Superficial frostbite** - Skin appears white, mottled, or gray; feels hard or rubbery but deeper tissue is soft, insensitive to touch.
- **Deep frostbite** - Skin is white and has a wooden feel, numbness, and anesthesia.

Management:

- Do not rub the area.
- Gently rewarm the area by blowing warm air onto the area, placing the area against a warm body part, or placing the affected area into warm (101 deg. - 108 deg. F) water for several minutes.
- If not absolutely certain that the tissue will stay warm after rewarming, do not rewarm it. **Refreezing newly thawed frostbitten tissue can cause extensive tissue damage!**
- If a person is also suffering from hypothermia, the first concern is core rewarming.

Prevention: The best method of management is prevention.

- Dress in layers.
- Cover the head to prevent excessive heat loss from the head and neck. Stay dry by wearing a wicking fabric next to the body and a breathable, water repellent outer layer.
- Stay adequately hydrated.
- Eat regular meals.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine.
- Educate participants, coaches, officials and administrators in recognition of cold-related illnesses.
- Consider cancellation of athletic events if weather conditions warrant.
- If unsure whether an athlete is hypothermic, err on the side of caution and treat accordingly.

Figure 1. Wind Chill Index

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Wind (mph)</th>
<th>Calm</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>35</th>
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<td>-28</td>
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<td>-58</td>
<td>-65</td>
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</table>

*Reproduced from NWS – 2001*
**RECOGNITION:**

The early warning signs of heat-related illness include:

- Exhaustion
- Headache
- Muscle cramping
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Thirst
- Decreased athletic performance

Other general symptoms include feeling hot or cold, incoherence, visual disturbances, vomiting, stomach cramps, and heart palpitations. Predisposition to heat-related illness should be recognized before it occurs, by making coaches, administrators, officials, and athletes aware of individuals at-risk for heat-related pathologies.
MANAGEMENT:

The key to management is early recognition of symptoms, and immediate and effective treatment and referral. Symptoms of heat illness represent a continuum, and can worsen quickly if proper care is not rendered. In all cases, appropriate actions include:

• Cessation of activity.
• Removing the athlete from the sun at the first sign or symptom of heat illness.
• Assisting in cooling the body.
• Using ice packs on sides of neck, armpits, groin, and the crease at the top of the thigh.
• Administering fluids; cool water or an electrolyte drink with a low sugar content.
• Monitoring vital signs.

Under no circumstances should an athlete with symptoms be allowed to return to play the same day. **The best management of heat-related illness is PREVENTION.**

PREVENTION:

Most heat-related illnesses are preventable through the following steps/precautions:

• Ensure the athlete is well-hydrated prior to the start of any and all activity.
• Allow frequent periods of rest and hydration during activity.
• Allow unrestricted fluid replacement; encourage fluids before, during, and after activity.
• Weigh athletes before and after activity to monitor body water loss from the activity and to ensure adequate rehydration has occurred prior to next session.
• Gradually increase activity in the heat over a period of 7-10 days to allow adequate acclimatization.
• Wear light-weight and light-colored clothing.
• Schedule activities at the coolest time of the day.
• Routinely perform mandatory temperature and humidity readings on playing surfaces (indoor/outdoor).
• Routinely monitor changing weather conditions with close attention to temperature and humidity on playing surfaces (indoor/outdoor)
• Strongly consider postponing or canceling for extreme heat and humidity conditions (see Figure 2 Heat Index Chart).


**FLUID REPLACEMENT FOR ATHLETES**

SIGNIFICANCE

A loss of just one to two percent body weight (1-1/2 to 3 pounds for a 150-pound athlete) can negatively impact performance. A loss of three percent or more can increase the risk for exertional heat-related illness. In general, athletes do not voluntarily drink sufficient water to prevent dehydration during physical activity. However, drinking behavior can be modified by education and implementation of a hydration protocol to prevent dehydration.
RECOGNITION

Dehydration is common in sports and can occur within an hour of exercise. It can occur even more rapidly if the athlete begins the session less than fully hydrated.

**Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration:**
- Thirst (however, one can be dehydrated without feeling thirsty)
- Irritability
- Headache
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Cramps
- Chills
- Nausea and vomiting
- Heat sensations in the head or neck
- Decreased performance

PREVENTION OF DEHYDRATION

Implementation of a hydration protocol is the key to the prevention of dehydration. Athletes, coaches, athletic trainers, team physicians, officials, parents must realize the importance of maintaining proper hydration status (not only during, but prior to and following activity) and the steps required to accomplish this goal.

Body weight changes during exercise provide the best indication of hydration status, thus obtaining a body weight before and after practice is recommended. The athlete should be dressed in only a T-shirt and shorts for each weigh-in.

**General Guidelines and Strategies**
- Educate athletes regarding the risks of dehydration and overhydration on health and physical performance.
- Inform athletes, coaches, and parents how to monitor hydration status.
- Establish individual and team hydration protocols, based on athlete sweat rate, sport dynamics (rest breaks, exercise intensity and duration, fluid access), environmental factors (heat and humidity), state of acclimatization and training, and individual needs.
- Implement a hydration protocol during all practices and games, and adapt as needed.
- Encourage coaches to mandate rehydration during practices and competitions.
- Provide the optimal oral rehydration solutions (water, carbohydrates [CHO], electrolytes) before, during, and after exercise. For intense or sustained activity (longer than 45 minutes), access to a sports drink with six to eight percent CHO concentration is recommended.
- Closely monitor weight changes and hydration status in hot and humid environments and adapt hydration protocols accordingly.

**Fluid Guidelines:** Dehydration is largely preventable when proper strategies are employed to optimize hydration before, during, and after exercise. The following guidelines are provided to assist in the development of these strategies:
**Before Exercise**
Athletes should begin all sessions well hydrated. To ensure proper pre-exercise hydration:
- Confirm adequate rehydration following previous exercise session by pre-exercise, body-weight monitoring. Assuming proper hydration, pre-exercise body weights should be consistent across exercise sessions.
- Drink 16 ounces of water two hours before exercise.
- Drink another 8-16 ounces of water 15 minutes before exercise.

**During Exercise**
Fluid replacement during exercise should approximate loss of fluids through sweat and urine output, with the goal of minimizing dehydration to less than two percent loss of body weight.
- Drink early and often. Do not let thirst guide fluid intake.
- Allow unrestricted fluid replacement.
- In general, drink 4-16 ounces of water every 15-20 minutes.
- Modify protocol as necessary for athletes with a high sweat rate, in sports where breaks or fluid access is limited, and during high intensity training.
- Ideally, individual fluid containers should be readily available and flavored to athlete preference (individual containers allow monitoring of individual's fluid intake).

**After Exercise**
Post exercise hydration strategies should be aimed at correcting any fluid loss occurring during practice or competition.
- Ideally, lost fluids should be replaced within two hours following completion of exercise.
- Rehydration should consist of water to restore hydration status, CHO to replenish glycogen stores and electrolytes to speed rehydration as appropriate.
- Drink 24 ounces of an appropriate sports drink or water, as indicated, for every pound of weight lost due to exercise.
- Weigh athletes before and after activity to monitor body water loss from the activity and to ensure adequate rehydration has occurred prior to next session. If there is a significant decrease in body weight, athletes should not be allowed to participate, especially in hot weather, until they are rehydrated back to previous weight.

**MANAGEMENT OF DEHYDRATION**
Dehydration of more than three percent of body weight dramatically increases an athlete’s risk of heat illness.
- The key to management is prevention.
- Those supervising athletes should be able to recognize signs of dehydration.
- If signs of dehydration are recognized.
  - Aggressively rehydrate through oral consumption of beverages if the athlete is conscious, coherent, and without gastrointestinal distress.
  - Transport for medical care if the athlete shows sign of mental compromise, gastrointestinal distress (nausea, vomiting, etc.) or signs of heat-related illness.

POSITION OF STATEMENT ON DIETARY AND OTHER ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUG SUPPLEMENTS

The use of any drug, medication, or food supplement for the purpose of performance enhancement is ethically wrong. In order to minimize health and safety risks for student athletes, maintain ethical standards, and reduce liability risks, school personnel and coaches should never supply, recommend, or encourage the use of any drug, medication, or food supplement for performance and enhancement purposes.

Please refer to Table 7. providing quick facts on currently used ergogenic substances found in the NFHS Sport Medicine Handbook.


School personnel and coaches should not dispense any drug, medication, or food supplement except when prescribed by a medical doctor.

Based upon Legislation passed in 2006, school policies must add steroids and other performance enhancing drugs in their school policies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Creatine</th>
<th>Androstenedione</th>
<th>Anabolic Steroids</th>
<th>Growth Hormone</th>
<th>Stimulants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is it?</strong></td>
<td>A synthetic version of a compound produced in the body from three amino acids. It is also available in diet from meat and fish.</td>
<td>Adrenal hormone that converts to testosterone in the body.</td>
<td>Synthetic version of the male hormone testosterone.</td>
<td>Polypeptide hormone secreted by the pituitary gland.</td>
<td>Caffeine, ephedrine, amphetamine, methylphenidate and many others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How does it work?</strong></td>
<td>Increases the level of creatine in skeletal muscles</td>
<td>Short-term increases in testosterone levels</td>
<td>Increases levels of testosterone in body</td>
<td>Increases level of growth hormone in the body</td>
<td>Increases blood pressure, metabolic rate, respiration, heart rate, acts as a diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposed benefits</strong></td>
<td>Boost muscle stores of creatine, ability to do more intense short-term work</td>
<td>Allows one to train harder and recover more quickly from exercise</td>
<td>Increases muscle development and strength; recover more quickly from injury</td>
<td>Increases muscle mass and strength; recover more quickly from injury</td>
<td>Increases workload, endurance, and energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side effects</strong></td>
<td>Nausea, GI distress, muscle cramping, strains, sprains, decrease in body’s production of creatine</td>
<td>Enhancement of female characteristics in men, male characteristics in women, increased risk of heart disease and cancers</td>
<td>Affects liver and cardiovascular function, increased aggression</td>
<td>Affects cardiovascular and liver function</td>
<td>Nervousness, dehydration, nausea, muscle tremors, heart palpitations, diarrhea</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term effects</strong></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown. Likely similar to other anabolic steroids</td>
<td>Liver and heart disease, stroke, drug dependence, menstrual abnormalities in females, increase in male sex characteristics in females</td>
<td>Thickening of soft tissue, excessive bone growth, pathological growth of the heart, kidneys, colon, cardiomyopathy, insulin resistance</td>
<td>Addiction, withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, irritability, fatigue and upset stomach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age factors</strong></td>
<td>Theoretical concerns about extra load placed on kidneys and other organs and the effects on muscle/bone junctions in the skeletally immature</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>In adolescents, potentially serious health problems during puberty, premature physeal closure (decrease in adult height)</td>
<td>In adolescents, potentially serious health problems during puberty</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Who bans it?</strong></td>
<td>No sports governing body at this time</td>
<td>WADA, NCAA, NFL, MLB, NBA, PGA, LPGA</td>
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<td><strong>Available over the counter?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

—*National Federation of State High School Associations and the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook, Third Edition*
ADVISORY ON SPORTS PRESEASON OR PREPARTICIPATION PHYSICAL EXAMS


The MPA Sports Medicine Committee believes it is necessary to examine the athletes every other year between the sixth grade and high school graduation. The complete exam should be done when the athlete enters the competitive sports program, and in most instances this is in the sixth or seventh grade. The history portion of the PPE should be completed by the athlete and signed by his/her parents each year. In the off year, the athlete’s health history form should be viewed by the school nurse. If there are changes in the medical history, the school nurse should bring it to the attention of a physician and a decision can be made concerning whether the student athlete needs to have another complete physical examination, or not, before proceeding with the upcoming athletic school year. The examination can be done by a medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, nurse practitioner, or a physician’s assistant.Athletes who sustained major injuries or have medical illnesses during the interim; i.e., the time that elapses between the two examinations, should be recycled into the physical examination program at the start of the next school year, no matter what grade they attend.

Updated and approved by the MPA Interscholastic Management Committee and Membership, April 2005.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE AND SKIN INFECTION PROCEDURES

The risk for blood-borne infectious diseases, such as HIV and Hepatitis B, remains low in sports and to date has not been reported. However, proper precautions are needed to minimize the potential risk of spreading these diseases. In addition to these diseases that can be spread through transmission of bodily fluids only, skin infections that occur due to skin contact with competitors and equipment deserve close oversight, especially considering the emergence of the potentially more serious infection with Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). (See position statement on this on NFHS website and in the third edition of the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook.)

Universal Hygiene Protocol for All Sports

• Shower immediately after all competitions and practice.
• Wash all workout clothing after practice.
• Wash personal gear, such as knee pads, periodically.
• Don't share towels or personal hygiene products with others.
• Refrain from (full body) cosmetic shaving.

Infectious Skin Diseases

Means of reducing the potential exposure to these agents include:

• Notify guardian, athletic trainer and coach of any lesion before competition or practice. Athlete must have a health-care provider evaluate lesion before returning to competition.
• If an outbreak occurs on a team, especially in contact sport, consider evaluating other team members for potential spread of the infectious agent.
• Follow NFHS or state/local guidelines on "time until return to competition." Allowance of participation with a covered lesion can occur if in accordance with NFHS, state, or local guidelines and is no longer considered contagious.
Blood-Borne Infectious Diseases
Means of reducing the potential exposure to these agents include:

• An athlete who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on his/her uniform, or has blood on his/her person, shall be directed to leave the activity until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to competition.
• Certified athletic trainers or caregivers need to wear gloves and take other precautions to prevent blood-splash from contaminating themselves or others.
• Immediately wash contaminated skin or mucous membranes with soap and water.
• Clean all contaminated surfaces and equipment with disinfectant before returning to competition. Be sure to use gloves with cleaning.
• Any blood exposure or bites to the skin that break the surface must be reported and evaluated by a medical provider immediately.

For more detailed information, refer to the "Infectious Disease" and "Skin Disorders" sections contained in the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook.  

ELIGIBILITY

Student Eligibility

These are the basic MPA student eligibility rules. Check with your school's athletic director or principal when in doubt. Do not jeopardize the eligibility of your players. Your principal is responsible for the eligibility of a school's athletes.

LOCAL RULES: You must meet all eligibility rules of your own school.

AGE: You must be under 20 years of age.

ENROLLMENT: You must be regularly enrolled and academically active in the school you represent.

UNDERGRADUATE: You must not have graduated from high school or its equivalent.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY: You must successfully complete at least 4 one credit courses (or their equivalent) each quarter or you will be ineligible for a period of time to be determined by your local school.

MAXIMUM SEMESTERS: You will become ineligible after eight consecutive semesters of time (four years) from your entrance into the ninth grade.

SEASONS OF COMPETITION: You may not participate in more than four seasons of a particular sport at the high school level.

OUTSIDE COMPETITION: You may not participate on a non-school team during your regular sport season unless you have permission from your principal.
TRANSFER STUDENTS: You may not transfer from one school to another for primarily athletic purposes. If you have transferred within the last 12 months, check with your principal or athletic administrator to determine your eligibility status. If there has not been a corresponding change of residency by your parent/guardian, a Transfer Waiver Request Form is required.

PENALTY: The penalty for a team that uses an ineligible athlete in team sports is automatic forfeiture of all contests played in which the ineligible athlete participated.

WAIVERS: Requests for a waiver of any MPA eligibility rule must be made by the principal and submitted to the executive director.

**Coaches' Eligibility**

The Coaches' Eligibility Policy was established by the MPA membership to provide proper training of coaches, to ensure the safety of student athletes, and to improve the overall quality of the interscholastic program.

A person shall be eligible to coach in any interscholastic high school athletic contest, provided the person satisfies all of the following conditions (for purposes of this section, "coach" shall mean all persons who coach an interscholastic high school athletic team in any way, whether for pay or as a volunteer at the varsity, junior varsity, and freshman level):

A. The person's appointment as coach must be approved by the local educational agency responsible for the member school at which the person coaches.

B. The coach must be at least 20 years of age or a high school graduate at the commencement of the sport season for which the person has been appointed to coach. For purposes of this section, a season shall be deemed to have commenced on the first day on which the team practices, including practices scheduled to determine the members of the team.

C. The coach must sign a statement acknowledging that he/she has read, understood, and agreed to comply with and abide by all MPA bylaws, policies, and the Code of Ethics.

D. The coach must have successfully completed a coaching eligibility course. (Refer to Appendix R, Coaches' Eligibility, on page 39 of the MPA Handbook and Directory).

E. The coach must have successfully completed a sport first aid course. Every coach must take a first aid course every five years.

F. Every coach must have successfully completed a basic CPR/AED program and must maintain/carry a current CPR-AED card.

A coach who fails to satisfy, comply with or conform to the requirements of this section shall be ineligible to coach in any interscholastic athletic contest.

**Implementation**

All coaches shall have a period of twelve (12) months after their date of hire or appointment to satisfy the requirements of successfully completing the coaching eligibility course, the sport first aid program and the CPR/AED program. Components A, B, and C must be met prior to the start of the season.
The principal (or his/her designee) is responsible for determining the eligibility of coaches prior to the start of each sport season.

**The school must maintain a current portfolio for each coach containing evidence of compliance. The MPA may request access to the portfolio if a challenge occurs. Coaches should also maintain copies of their portfolio.**

The association strongly suggests that this information be reviewed at a meeting of all coaches prior to the start of each season. A pre-season meeting may be used to discuss the school's athletic philosophy when reviewing the MPA Handbook, Code of Ethics, and bulletins. Several athletic administrators have suggested that each coach submit a copy of his/her eligibility card and the sign-off sheet when returning their coaching contracts.

**If a coach changes assignments to another school, the school of hire will be expected to review the coach's portfolio and eligibility.**

Upon receipt of verification of completion of the components of the Coaches' Eligibility standards, the Maine Principals' Association will issue an eligibility card free of charge to the school's athletic administrator for distribution to the individual. A fee will be charged for replacement cards. A file of coaches who have completed eligibility requirements will be maintained by the MPA office.

**Acceptable / Equivalent Programs**

In the MPA Bylaws, Article II, Section 3 Coaches' Eligibility and Appendix R, reference is made to equivalents for both coaching eligibility courses and sport first aid programs. The following information is provided to assist the high school principal in determining what programs are acceptable and to help determine what is an equivalent program.

Any of the following will meet the requirement of the coaches' eligibility course:

1. NFHS Online Fundamentals of Coaching Course
2. UMaine/MCSC Maine Coaching Eligibility Course
3. ASEP Coaching Principles Course
4. "Coaching Principles" reflected on a college transcript
5. Physical Education major at college
6. Coaching minor at college
7. Equivalent Instruction: Course content must include the course content listed below:

An equivalent program in "Coaches Eligibility" is defined as one in which the following topics are thoroughly covered:

- Role of the coach
- Development of a coaching philosophy
- Sport psychology
- Proper nutrition and health
- Physical training and conditioning
- Communication and motivation
Any of the following will meet the requirement of the sport first aid course, taken after January 1, 2005 and renewed every five years:

1. NFHS Sport First Aid Program
2. Maine Athletic Trainers’ Association course
3. ASEP Sport First Aid course
4. First Aid reflected on college transcript, taken after January 1, 2005 and renewed every five years
5. American Red Cross - Sport Safety Training
6. Equivalent Instruction: Course content must include the course content listed below:

An equivalent program in "Sport First Aid" is defined as one in which the following topics are thoroughly covered:

• Your Role on the Athletic Health Care Team
• Sport First Aid Game Plan
• Anatomy and Sport Injury Terminology
• Primary Survey and Providing Life Support
• Secondary Survey and First Aid Techniques
• Moving Injured or Sick Athletes
• Respiratory Emergencies and Illnesses
• Closed Head and Spine Injuries
• Internal Organ Injuries
• Sudden Illnesses
• Weather-Related Problems
• Upper Body Musculoskeletal Injuries
• Lower Body Musculoskeletal Injuries
• Facial and Scalp Injuries
• Skin problems

Any of the following will meet the requirement of the CPR/AED requirement:

1. American Red Cross (1 year certification)
2. American Heart Association (2 year certification)
3. Emergency and Safety Institute (2 year certification)

An equivalent program in "CPR/AED" may be provided by a certified instructor through individual schools. Examples of certified instructors may be:

• Certified Athletic Trainer
• School Nurse
• EMT

The course fees are the responsibility of either the individual coach seeking eligibility or a sponsoring school.
Sample Coaches' Eligibility Certification Form

I certify that I have completed the following requirements set forth by the Maine Principals' Association's Bylaws related to coaches' eligibility:

A. I have been approved by the local educational agency.

B. I am at least 20 years of age or am a high school graduate.

C. I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the MPA's Bylaws, policies, and Code of Ethics. (MPA Handbook)

D. I have successfully completed a coaching eligibility course or an equivalent which has been approved by the principal of the school where I coach.

E. I have successfully completed a sport first aid program or an equivalent which has been approved by the principal of the school where I coach.

F. I have successfully completed a basic CPR-AED program.

Evidence of completion is on file with my principal or his/her designee.

Name (Please Print):________________________________________________
Signature:_________________________________________________________
Date:____________________________

EJECTION RULE

In all team and individual sports (varsity or subvarsity), ejection or disqualification from a game, meet, or match for unsportsmanlike behavior of any form, by a coach or a player shall result in the suspension of that player or coach. The coach or player ejected from a contest must sit out all contests at all levels until the coach or athlete completes the ejection penalty by sitting out the next game at the level from which he/she was ejected. This rule applies to a game, meet, or match suspended before completion as well as a completed contest. This penalty may not be served by sitting out an exhibition, subvarsity, or other competition. A suspended coach may not be present at the game site. Not being physically present at the site means the disqualified coach is not to be present in the locker room, on the sidelines, in the stands, or site area before, during, or after the game/meet. Any coach or player ejected from the last game, meet, or contest of a sports season shall serve a one game suspension in the opening countable game, meet, or contest in the next varsity sport in which he/she participates. He/she may participate in preseason contests prior to serving the suspension.

This policy will not prevent standing committees from imposing more restrictive disciplinary action.

Effective Date: 1997; Revised: 1998; 2000; 2007; 2008; 2009
ASSAULT PROVISIONS

A coach who intentionally strikes, shoves, kicks, or makes other physical contact with an official before, during, or after an interscholastic contest, as determined by the school, shall be disqualified immediately and his/her coach's eligibility will be suspended for one full year. At the end of the suspension, the coach may request the reinstatement of his/her eligibility. At this time, the Interscholastic Management Committee will place the request on their next meeting agenda, at which meeting the coach and principal must attend. The Interscholastic Management Committee will make the determination whether or not to reinstate the coach's eligibility.

Any member of the team who intentionally strikes, shoves, kicks, or makes other physical contact with an official before, during, or after an interscholastic contest, as determined by the school, shall be disqualified immediately and shall be ineligible to participate in all sports for one full year. NOTE: Member of the team includes player, manager, score keepers, timers, and statisticians.

COACHES' AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

I. Coaches’ Professional and Personal Relationship Expectations
   A. RAPPORT
      A coach must be able to develop a good rapport with any number of individuals and groups: team personnel, the student body, the professional staff (faculty, administration, maintenance, etc.), the community as a whole, spectators, officials, fellow coaches in the conference, media representatives, and the parents of his/her players. Good rapport and an image of competency are invaluable for the coach.
   B. COOPERATION
      The district expects a maximum of cheerful give and take among all individuals associated in any degree with the comprehensive program. Coaches must work hand in hand with their athletic director, principal, and other members of their staff.
   C. LEADERSHIP
      Diligence, enthusiasm, honesty, and a love for the game are all part of a professional pride that should be exhibited by any coach. Personal appearance, dress, physical condition, following practice schedules, and building positive attitudes are very important.
   D. DISCIPLINE
      Every facet of discipline is the coach's responsibility. Individually, the coach becomes a model of all that the program represents—observation of school codes, training rules, rules of the game, ideals of good sportsmanship, behavior of participants throughout the season—at home and away, and the conduct of the crowd—especially where the student body is concerned. The desire to do well, to win well, to lose well, should be emphasized. Staff, players, and spectators should be motivated toward established goals.
   E. IMPROVEMENT
      A coach must constantly take advantage of opportunities presented for self-improvement. Attendance at district meetings, rules clinics, special workshops, and clinics in specific fields and similar in-service training programs is a must. Membership should be maintained in professional organizations, coaches’ associations, and similar groups whose programs are geared toward greater achievement and fuller performance. Keeping abreast of current literature in professional journals, newspapers and magazines, and utilizing enrichment material available in other media forms is also expected.
II. **Coaching Techniques**
   A. Use sound and acceptable teaching practices.
   B. Run well-organized practice sessions.
   C. Complete preseason planning well in advance of starting date.
   D. Adhere to a highly efficient and technically sound program of injury prevention. When injuries do occur, follow a prescribed routine and maintain good communications with patient, trainer, doctor, and parents.
   E. Construct a well-organized game plan.
   F. Develop a system for equipment accountability, including seasonal inventory, repair, reconditioning, and replacement. A purchase should be accomplished through the allocated budget.
   G. Keep assistant coaches, student managers, and statisticians well-informed as to what is expected. Cooperate fully with maintenance staff, transportation people, and others similarly involved in the overall program.

III. **Coaches’ Responsibilities**
   A. **TO THE PLAYERS ON THE TEAM**
      • The main reason for having athletic teams within the school is to help provide opportunities for young men and women to develop their respective capabilities to the fullest extent. Development of positive attitudes is an important means to accomplishing this aim. We must promote and teach only clean, aggressive, and fair play, while stressing sportsmanship at all times. The coach must be the leader and set the example.
      • The coach should be fair and unprejudiced with players, considering their individual differences, needs, interests, temperaments, aptitudes, and environments.
      • Players have a right to expect coaches to have a genuine and up-to-date knowledge of that which they propose to teach.
      • The safety and welfare of players should always be uppermost in the coach’s mind.
      • The coach’s primary responsibility is to the individual boy or girl. The athlete’s family must not be ignored, however, since consideration must be given to the family and to its requests.
   B. **TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT**
      • As a coach, you are a frequent topic of conversation at various community locations—the home, the work place, and at the meetings of many civic organizations. Your profession, as well as your reputation as a coach, is constantly under scrutiny.
      • Your actions and statements should always reflect confidence and respect for your school district. Much can be done by the coach in public contacts to build and maintain a high level of confidence in the athletic program and the school district.
   C. **TO THE SCHOOL**
      • A coach owes his/her school his/her efforts and loyalty at all times. He/she must constantly strive for excellence in all areas of his/her school.
      • To be effective, a coach must be respected. To be respected, good personal habits and a neat appearance are important; but most important are the examples set by the coach. Being respected is much more important than being well-liked. Treat the faculty, the players, and the general students with the same honor and respect that you desire to be shown to you. Private, firm, fair, and constant discipline must be maintained. The work of the coach must be an integral part of the educational program of the school. The coach should show mastery of the principles of education and consequent improvement in teaching and coaching. The coach should give support to all endorsed activities of the school. At every opportunity, the coach should urge the student body to be polite, courteous, and fair to the visiting team.
D. TO THE PROFESSION
- A coach should continue professional growth in both the academic teaching area and the athletic coaching area. To best accomplish this, a coach should belong to the various coaching associations open to the profession.

E. TO FELLOW COACHES
- The makeup of a coaching staff is basically a quasi-autocratic society. The head coach must always be in command. Despite this position of authority, the wise head coach will encourage independent thought on the part of the staff. An important factor is human relations skills which provide for an open exchange of ideas in a courteous, thoughtful manner.
- A wise head coach will praise the assistants and award recognition whenever possible. Misunderstandings between coaches should be discussed as soon as possible and in an appropriate location away from the athletes and other people not concerned with the program.
- The head coach expects all staff to contribute a full measure of time, effort, thought, and energy to the program. The assistant coaches must be willing and able to do things that they may not wish to do, or even like to do. They must fulfill the responsibility to the head coach, the athletes, and the sport itself.
- It is most difficult to be a good assistant coach; however, the success of the school, the team, and the coaching staff is dependent upon the quality and effort to the sport itself.

F. TO OTHER COACHES IN YOUR SCHOOL
- One must always bear in mind that his or her sport is not the only sport; it is only part of the total athletic educational program of the school. Therefore, it is important to support, promote, and cooperate with all the other coaches and activity sponsors for the well-being of the total program.
- A coach should support and serve fellow coaches whenever possible. All remarks should reflect confidence in one’s fellow coaches. A strong, harmonious, interpersonal relationship must exist among coaches and other faculty members.

G. TO FACULTY MEMBERS
- A coach is responsible for cooperating with every faculty member on the staff. If the coach cooperates with the teachers of academic subjects by allowing an athlete to make up a test on practice time, he/she can be certain that cooperation and help will be returned twofold in efforts by other faculty members to keep the athletes eligible and to get that extra helping hand when the going gets tough.

H. PHYSICAL PLANT
- Each coach is responsible for the following:
  1. Keeping practice areas and locker rooms in order.
  2. Storing equipment neatly and using equipment properly. Pride in the equipment and facilities is of primary importance to all athletes and coaches.
  3. Keeping storage areas locked.

IV. Duties of a Coach
A. Provide safe environments.
B. Properly plan an activity.
C. Evaluate athletes or students for injury.
D. Match or equate athletes.
E. Provide proven effective equipment.
F. Warn of inherent risks of the sport.
G. Supervise closely.
H. Know and use emergency procedures and first aid.
I. Keep adequate records.
J. Know, document, post, and operationalize school policies.
V. **Coaches’ Liability**
   A. Coaches can be sued for failure to teach fundamentals in their particular sports and protective skills.
   B. Coaches should teach athletes to protect themselves.
   C. Coaches should teach proper fundamentals.
   D. If athletes are praised or encouraged for doing something improperly, it will come back to haunt the coach.
   E. Negligent entrustment (entrusting authority/activity to someone who is not qualified to carry out that particular authority/activity).
      1. Assistant Coaches
      2. Volunteer Coaches
   F. Athletes and parents must be warned of the inherent dangers of competition in each sport before practice begins.

VI. **Coach’s Obligation to Supervise**
   A. If you are not there, you will be liable.
   B. The more hazardous or the more contact, all the more closely the activity must be supervised. (Senior captains must never supervise any drill.)
   C. You must be at least immediately accessible.
      1. Accessible to all aspects of practice or activity. (Head coach spends time here and there.)
   D. Systematic supervision
      1. Written itinerary.
      2. Emergency policies.
      3. Locker rooms rules/regulations, posted.

VII. **School Policy**
   A. The coach must know school policy in every situation.
      1. If school policy does not exist, go to the Board/Superintendent.
      2. If you fulfill school policy, you automatically fulfill your duties as a reasonably prudent administrator or coach.
      3. Know if you have a school policy and do not deviate from it.
      4. Adopt the policy rules of the superior administrative agencies.

VIII. **Health and Safety Issues**
   A. Over the last twenty years, through thousands of lawsuits, the courts have defined and continue to define the legal responsibilities of a coach. Sport litigation continues throughout the country. No coach is immune from legal action, but there are well-established procedures that can reduce the risk of being sued. There are several obligations each coach must accept as part of his/her duties.

   These obligations are:
   1. Coaches have a duty to properly plan the activities for the athletes under their supervision. This responsibility has been repeatedly so ruled in court cases.
   2. Coaches have a duty to teach skills correctly and thoroughly so that athletes are not injured and so that their actions do not injure others.
   3. The coach must provide a safe physical environment for the activities that will take place.
4. It is a coach’s obligation to not only provide adequate and proper equipment, but also to explain its correct use and any unique characteristics of that equipment.

5. There is an obligation for coaches to match their athletes by size and age. This, of course is especially pertinent in contact and collision sports. It is also, however, relevant in sports where balls are thrown or hit to players.

6. A coach must always evaluate his/her athletes for injury or incapacity. This is a duty that should be shared with other professionals. Coaches must insure the athlete's health is satisfactory for participation and that the athlete is not playing while injured.

7. The duty of a coach to supervise all activities cannot be stressed too much. There are times that general supervision is satisfactory, and there are other times when that supervision must be more specific. As a coach you must be immediately accessible to the activity, alert to any conditions that may be dangerous, and ready to react immediately to any emergencies.

8. The coach is responsible to provide instructions regarding the safety of the sport. They are expected to warn your athletes of any inherent risks and how to react to any potentially dangerous situations.

9. A coach has the duty to provide or secure appropriate medical assistance for injured athletes that they coach. If medical assistance is not immediately available, they have a duty to provide appropriate first aid.

10. A coach must reduce his/her risk of losing a lawsuit by keeping adequate records, providing safe transportation, and having properly trained assistant coaches.

11. A coach must check equipment on a regular basis and make sure it fits properly. If an injury should occur, equipment should be labeled and sequestered. If the injury is on film, study film and keep it.

B. The best way to avoid ruinous litigation is to always take a positive approach and do what is best for the athletes. Legal liability is a responsibility or duty to others that is enforceable by court. Negligence is a legal term for failure to fulfill a responsibility or duty. Negligence is determined when three conditions are met: you have a legal duty; there was an injury to someone to whom you had a duty; and your failure to fulfill the duty caused the injury.

IX. Reasons for Coach and Administrator Liability
   A. Failure to supervise an activity.
   B. Negligently entrusting a duty to an underqualified or unqualified individual.
   C. Failing to teach proper skills.
   D. Failing to teach protective skills.
   E. Failing to provide and maintain a safe coaching and playing environment.
   F. Failing to inspect, repair, and recondition equipment properly.
   G. Failing to teach athletes to inspect their own equipment.
   H. Failing to provide proper effective equipment.
   I. Failing to properly play an activity.
   J. Failing to create and set policies and procedures for an activity.
   K. Failing to follow and enforce such policies and procedures.
   L. Failing to adopt safety standards of pertinent superior administrative organization.
   M. Failing to match or equate athletes.
   N. Failing to properly administer first-aid.
   O. Failing to warn off inherent dangers of the activity.
   P. Failing to assess an injury or incapacity in an athlete.
   Q. Failing to keep adequate and accurate records.
**X. Coaching Rules To Live By**

A. Upholding and enforcing all rules is crucial to success—not only in letter but also in spirit.

B. Good Sportsmanship is more than just a slogan—it's a way of living.

C. You are more than just a coach. You are an adult leader and your number one concern must be for the welfare of the student athlete.

D. The athletes who play for you look to you for leadership. Your actions set the tone that your players follow.

E. Not only are you a leader, you are a role model. You must set a positive example for your players to follow.

F. Exhibit a genuine respect for opponents and officials.

G. Treat your players with respect and coach with enthusiasm—not some of the time, but all of the time.

H. Always remember the responsibilities that you owe to the school, community, parents, and athletes.

I. Know your players as individuals and be free with your praise.

J. Know your own limitations. Recognize what you can control and when you must ask for help.

K. Be aware of a problem among team members. Seek out appropriate staff members who are trained to help.

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**SPORTS SEASON POLICY**

MPA member schools are requested to limit all participation, play, or practice in a sport by all teams and individuals to the season to which the sport is assigned. Please refer MPA Bylaws, Article III, MPA Sport Season Policy, for a complete definition of the MPA Sport Season Policy.

### Sport Season Dates

**Fall 2009-Spring 2013**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Possible Practice Date</th>
<th>Opening Date</th>
<th>Closing Date</th>
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<td>September 5</td>
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Many of the following questions were generated by member schools. Please consult your principal or athletic administrator on a regular basis to assist you in understanding MPA guidelines and policies.

**STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

Q. **What is the penalty for an athlete being ejected from a game, meet, or match?**
A. In all team and individual sports (varsity or subvarsity), ejection or disqualification from a game, meet, or match for unsportsmanlike behavior of any form, by a coach or a player, shall result in the suspension of that player or coach. The coach or player ejected from a contest must sit out all contests at all levels until the coach or athlete completes the ejection penalty by sitting out the next game at the level from which he/she was ejected. This rule applies to a game, meet, or match suspended before completion as well as a completed contest. This penalty may not be served by sitting out an exhibition, subvarsity, or other competition. A suspended coach may not be present at the game site. Not being physically present at the site means the disqualified coach is not to be present in the locker room, on the sidelines, in the stands, or site area before, during, or after the game/meet. Any coach or player ejected from the last game, meet, or contest of a sports season shall serve a one game suspension in the opening countable game, meet, or contest in the next varsity sport in which he/she participates. He/she may participate in preseason scrimmages and exhibition contests.

Q. **What occurs if a team member assaults an official?**
A. Any member of the team who intentionally strikes, shoves, kicks, or makes other physical contact with an official before, during, or after an interscholastic contest, as determined by the school, shall be disqualified immediately and shall be ineligible to participate in all sports for one full year. **NOTE:** Member of the team includes player, manager, scorekeepers, timers, and statisticians.

Q. **At the conclusion of the 8th grade or junior high season, may 8th grade students practice with or observe the practices or games of the freshman, JV, or varsity teams?**
A. No, this may not occur at any time during the season and may result in the 8th grader losing a year of eligibility. The high school coaches are responsible for enforcement of this rule.

Q. **May team members assist the high school coach with middle school programs which start at the conclusion of the sport season?**
A. Yes, the principal may establish a three-week period of mentoring following the season when this may occur.

Q. **May a student participate on more than one team during a season?**
A. This is a decision made by local school authorities.

Q. **May a student participate on an outside team during a sport season?**
A. No, unless they have permission of the high school principal.
Q. May a homeschool student participate on a school’s athletic team?
A. Yes, homeschool students are eligible as long as their equivalent instruction program has been approved. They must meet all local eligibility rules and may only participate for the local public school in the community in which they reside.

Q. May a student who missed almost an entire year of school because of illness participate during his/her 5th year of high school?
A. No, unless a waiver of eligibility has been granted. Please refer to Article II, Section 6 of the MPA Handbook for more information regarding student waivers.

COACHES’ ELIGIBILITY

Q. Must a coach be certified prior to the first practice or contest?
A. No, coaches have a 12 month period after their date of hire or appointment to satisfy the coaches’ eligibility, sport first aid, and CPR/AED requirements. All other requirements must be met prior to the start of the season.

Q. Does a school have to submit proof of certification for all of its coaches?
A. No, the school must maintain a current portfolio for each coach. Should a challenge occur, the school may be asked to provide a copy of the coach’s portfolio.

Q. Are volunteer coaches bound by the same MPA policies and regulations as stipend coaches?
A. Yes, anyone who works with the athletes on a regular basis must meet the coaches’ eligibility standards.

Q. If a school coach resigns from his/her position, may he/she work with underclass athletes following the season?
A. No, a coach is considered the coach of his/her team until a replacement has been appointed.

Q. Can a cross country coach serve as a volunteer coach on the indoor or outdoor track coaching staff?
A. Yes, as long as he/she has been appointed by the superintendent or school board and meets all other coaches’ eligibility standards.

Q. Team A has a certified diving coach. That team does not have any diving practices (their home pool has no board). Its diver practices with a private club or on his/her own. The diving coach attends every meet in which the diver participates. Does this satisfy the new rule?
A. No, if a school has divers, the school needs to have diving practice with the high school coach in attendance.

Q. When a diving coach can’t attend a meet due to a legitimate reason, can the head coach take his/her place in order to satisfy the rule?
A. The head coach can be the diving coach, but the same rules apply in which he/she must be at the practices and meets or the diver will not be allowed to dive. The head coach is knowledgeable and aware that he/she is assuming legal liability for the event.
Q. How does a school designate who is the secured diving coach and his/her possible secured sub? Is there something on the MPA roster page or submitting something in writing to the MPA?
A. The diving coach will be added to the winter coaches’ eligibility roster under an "assistant coach." The diving coach must meet all the MPA standards for coaching.

Q. What is the penalty for a coach being ejected from a game, meet, or match?
A. In all team and individual sports (varsity or subvarsity), ejection or disqualification from a game, meet, or match for unsportsmanlike behavior of any form, by a coach or a player shall result in the suspension of that player or coach. The coach or player ejected from a contest must sit out all contests at all levels until the coach or athlete completes the ejection penalty by sitting out the next game at the level from which he/she was ejected. This rule applies to a game, meet, or match suspended before completion as well as a completed contest. This penalty may not be served by sitting out an exhibition, subvarsity, or other competition. A suspended coach may not be present at the game site. Not being physically present at the site means the disqualified coach is not to be present in the locker room, on the sidelines, in the stands, or site area before, during, or after the game/meet. Any coach or player ejected from the last game, meet, or contest of a sports season shall serve a one game suspension in the opening countable game, meet, or contest in the next varsity sport in which he/she participates. He/she may participate in preseason scrimmages and exhibition contests.

Q. What occurs if a coach assaults an official?
A. A coach who intentionally strikes, shoves, kicks, or makes other physical contact with an official before, during, or after an interscholastic contest, as determined by the school, shall be disqualified immediately and his/her coach’s eligibility will be suspended for one full year. At the end of the suspension, the coach may request the reinstatement of his/her eligibility. At this time, the Interscholastic Management Committee will place the request on its next meeting agenda, at which meeting the coach and principal must attend. The Interscholastic Management Committee will make the determination whether or not to reinstate the coach’s eligibility.

TRANSFER RULE

Q. If a student transfers to a new school after the opening game date of a competitive season, is he/she eligible to play on a varsity team during that season?
A. No, he/she may only play JV sports during that season.

Q. If a family is split by divorce or separation and each parent lives in a different community, may an athlete move between schools as sports seasons change? (i.e. An athlete plays football in one community and moves to another community to participate in indoor track.)
A. No, when a student’s parents divorce or separate, he/she has four weeks to decide with which parent he/she will reside. After this period, a transfer waiver form must be submitted.

Q. If an athlete attends a preseason practice and then transfers to another school, may that student participate on the team at the school to which he/she transferred?
A. Yes, as long as the transfer was prior to the scheduled opening game date of the season and if all other aspects of the transfer rule are met.
**RECRUITMENT**

**Q.** May a coach attend meetings where potential students are being recruited? Example: Town pays tuition to outside district.

**A.** No, coaches should not attend academic meetings, nor should 8th graders be invited to a practice, games, or activities at any high school, whether freshman, JV, or varsity.

**Q.** May a school show a highlight film of the school’s athletic teams to prospective 8th grade students?

**A.** No, any solicitation of prospective students for athletic purposes is prohibited.

**Q.** If a student is enrolled in High School A and enrolls in High School B for the next school year, when may a coach from High School B contact the potential new athlete?

**A.** When he/she has enrolled in High School B and no longer attends High School A (following the close of the school for the year).

**Q.** May 8th graders or high school athletes observe coaches and/or practices with the idea of enrolling on or transferring to that school?

**A.** No, these students should not be allowed to observe school practices at any time for any reason.

**SPORTS SEASON**

**Q.** Where can a full copy of the MPA Sport Season Policy be found?

**A.** In Article III of the MPA Handbook and on the MPA website.

**Q.** What is the purpose of the Sport Season Policy?

**A.** The MPA Sport Season Policy was written and accepted by the membership for the following reasons:

- To provide a “level playing field” between schools, so that one set of students is not placed at a disadvantage to others with whom they compete for state championships.
- To create definable seasons of competition which allow students to participate in various activities without coaches feeling the need to “compete” with each other for athletes within their own school.
- To discourage specialization in the sense that students are not deprived of a variety of cocurricular experiences which the high school “exploratory” life stage provides.
- To create a corridor which protects some personal time for students between activities.
- To provide opportunity for families to clearly define times for vacations and other family functions.
- To prevent the exploitation and “burn out” of participant student athletes and coaches.

**Q.** Are there any exceptions to the Sport Season Policy?

**A.** Yes.

- MPA invitational tournaments
- Aroostook potato harvest
- Deering-Portland football game (Thanksgiving Day)/Cony-Gardiner football game
- Faculty/student exhibition game conducted following the sport season
Q. Is the Sport Season Policy intended to limit students’ participation in any one activity?
A. No, it is intended to limit a school’s involvement with any one interscholastic athletic activity to a designated sport season.

Q. What constitutes a school’s involvement outside a designated sport season?
A. Use of school equipment and facilities, use of school transportation, use of school name, and contact with school coaches/advisors.

Q. What is an Open Gym or Activities Period?
A. According to the MPA Sports Season Policy, (page 25 in the 2009-2010 Handbook), an Open Activities Period includes activities approved by the principal, announced to all students, and scheduled for a school gym, pool, or other facility for which all students or age groups are invited to participate. Adults involved in such activities must be supervising and must not be coaching or giving instruction. The emphasis must be on recreation not practice, participation not instruction, and must not be a captain’s practice which is a sports season violation on or off school property. Similarly, a weight room session must be pre-announced and open to all students whether attending for the purpose of preparing for a high school sport or not.

Q. How would a reasonable person determine if an Open Activities Period is in compliance?
A. If a school official from another school walked through the activity without being suspicious, you are probably okay.

Q. What is acceptable for an off-season conditioning program?
A. A school’s off-season conditioning program may include such activities as muscular strength and endurance exercises, cardiovascular fitness activities, agility, speed, power, balance, coordination, and flexibility training. The program must be voluntary, open to all students, and should not include sport-specific skill development or coaching.

Q. Can a coach be used to supervise an “open gym,” or “open pool” in a sport/activity he/she coaches?
A. Yes, if the gym, pool or weight room is open to all students in the school and if the predominant number of participants are not his/her players, a coach may supervise providing there is no instruction involved.

Q. What can coaches, athletes, and booster clubs related to high school sports do during the two week "hands-off" period?
A. **Athletes:** May continue their off-season conditioning program so they do not lose ground with their conditioning. They may not participate in any sport specific activities.

**School Facilities:** Fields, gymnasiums, or classrooms may not be used for school athletic activities. This includes the use of any school fields for clinics whether they are school related or not. Facilities or instructors may not be paid for by boosters or a benefactor, and volunteer coaches from the community may not run clinics for grades 9-12.

**Coaches:** May have no contact with their athletes whether or not they coach a fall, winter, or spring sport. The only exception to this would be their one meeting with team members allowed by MPA bylaws if they did not meet with them from the end of their previous season to the end of the spring season. The one meeting could be used to issue equipment or to allow athletes and their parents to attend a preseason meeting together. Coaches may not be at a camp if their athletes are present whether they work directly with them or not.
Q. Who is responsible in each school for the interpretation and enforcement of the Sport Season Policy?
A. The high school principal.

Q. Has the MPA considered not allowing coaches to work with students during the summer?
A. No, however, the membership has limited activity two weeks prior to the start of the fall sport season.

Q. May volunteer coaches work with high school athletes before or after the dates that define a sport season?
A. No.

Q. Can a coach participate in a pre- or postseason all-star, AAU, Olympic Development, Youth League, or other game as long as he/she has none of his/her players on the team?
A. Yes.

Q. Can a coach participate in a pre- or postseason all-star, AAU, Olympic Development, Youth League, or other game when members of his/her school team are on the playing field/court/ice/etc., participating on an opposing team?
A. No, unless it occurs during the summer.

Q. Can middle school coaches work with high school athletes before or after the MPA's sport season?
A. No.

Q. Can a coach(es) attend a clinic in the off-season?
A. Yes, but they cannot take players with them or make arrangements for players to attend the same clinic unless it is held during the summer.

Q. Can students from a school attend a clinic in their sport out-of-season?
A. Yes, as long as no member of the school’s coaching staff attends with them or is in attendance at the same clinic. The coach should not make arrangements for students to attend a clinic.

Q. Can a coach who is participating in an out-of-season clinic or as an instructor use his/her own players for demonstration purposes?
A. No, unless during the summer.

Q. Can a girls’ coach (boys’ coach) coach a boys’ team (girls’ team) in the off season?
A. No, unless during the summer.

Q. Can a league (Classes A, B, C, or D) sponsor a tournament or all-star game for non-tournament qualifiers after the last countable game date, provided it is over by the final day of the sport season (must meet the five maximum non-countable dates provision)?
A. Yes.

Q. If a team is eliminated from MPA-sponsored postseason play prior to the end of the sport season, can the team continue to practice until the close of the sport season?
A. Yes.
Q. May a coach work with senior athletes following the season’s conclusion?
A. Yes, in all sports after the close of the sport season with the exception of fall cheering, cross country, and winter track. Underclassmen may not be present.

Q. May a high school coach work with (coach) students in grades K-8 following the sport season’s conclusion?
A. Yes.

Q. May a player wear his/her uniform to a tryout for a college coach outside of the sport season?
A. No, this is a direct violation of the Sport Season Policy because of the use of school equipment.

Q. Can a school’s underclassmen participate in postseason play?
A. No, unless it falls within the sport season or during the summer.

Q. May a team’s booster club hold and advertise a fund-raiser out of the sport season?
A. Yes, however, team members and coaches may not take part in the fund-raiser.

Q. When can a coach or an athlete work with a booster club to raise funds for the team?
A. Only during their current season or after the close of the spring season and prior to the start of the "hands-off" period.

Q. A principal is able to approve using underclassmen to assist with middle level programs for three weeks following a season. May he/she also approve a three-week period for players to fundraise following the season?
A. No, the principal may allow grade 9-11 athletes three weeks to assist the coach with middle level athletics program but not for a fundraising activity.

Q. May a fall cheering squad raise funds to support the winter team?
A. No, teams may raise funds only during the season in which they are participating and during the summer.

Q. Are tryouts for a team considered part of preseason practice?
A. Yes.

Q. Can cheerleaders for fall sports be selected at tryouts in the spring so they can attend summer camps?
A. No, to do so would not give the less talented aspirants an opportunity to improve by attending a camp. Fall cheerleaders may not be selected until after the opening practice date for the fall season.

Q. Can a school’s fall cheering squad work to enhance their winter routine?
A. No, fall squads are strictly intended to exist in support of the fall teams and should not be practicing winter stunts or take gymnastic or tumbling lessons.

Q. May a coach select one cheering team in the fall to represent the school during the fall and winter program?
A. No, separate tryouts must be held to select the team for each season.
Q. A team has five seniors and they decide to run together prior to the start of the season. Is this a violation?
A. No, as long as no pressure has been applied by the coaching staff and as long as running is not an "expectation" among the group.

Q. If a high school freshman is injured and unable to play a sport, such as soccer, may his/her high school coach work with them during the following winter indoor soccer season?
A. No.

Q. May a coach practice with his/her athletes in the summer?
A. Yes, from the end of the spring sport season to the start of the hands-off period.

Q. Can a school provide players with equipment, transportation, or facilities for summer sports activities?
A. Yes, however, liability issues should be considered.

Q. What type of activities may a coach and his/her athletes be involved with during the summer?
A. The MPA Sport Season Policy places no restriction on schools or coaches during the summer recess. A school's principal or league may restrict summer activities.

Q. May a preseason letter be sent to potential athletes during the summer?
A. Yes, but not during the two weeks prior to the season. Another way would be to have the athletic department do a mailing for all fall sports.

Q. May a coach have one organizational team meeting prior to the season during the hands-off period?
A. Yes, if he/she did not meet with the team prior to the close of the spring season.

Q. May the coach issue equipment during the one approved preseason meeting during the hands-off period?
A. Yes.

Q. When may equipment for camps be issued if the one organizational meeting has already been held?
A. Prior to the two-week hands-off period.

Q. If an athlete attends a camp during the hands-off period, may the coach work at the camp?
A. No.

Q. May a school have its athlete/parent/coach informational meeting during the hands-off period?
A. Yes, this would not be considered the preseason meeting for the players.

Q. May the coach develop and monitor a practice schedule during the hands-off period?
A. No, students must be working on their own.
Q. Does the hands-off period during the two weeks prior to the season apply to all sports or just fall sports?
A. All high school coaches must cease to work with prospective members of their teams the two weeks prior to the start of the fall season.

Q. The recreation department runs a camp for K-8 students during the summer. The high school coaches run the camp with the help of their athletes during the two weeks prior to the season. Is this a violation?
A. Yes, during this period coaches must find a way to be separate from their athletes. The best solution would be to run the camp prior to the two-week period.

Q. How does the two week hands-off policy affect those schools in Aroostook County that start early for the potato harvest?
A. Team practice in Aroostook County may start three weeks prior to the scheduled start of the fall season. Due to the shortness of the summer, they are exempt from the hands-off policy.

Q. May a team leave for a sports camp on Sunday night prior to the start of the fall season?
A. No, schools may not leave for camp the night before the fall season starts.

Q. May a captain supervise practice during the hands-off period?
A. No, captains are not allowed to lead practice because of liability issues.

Q. Is it a violation if students get together to run a road race during the two weeks prior to the start of the fall season?
A. No, if it is not organized by the coaches, parents, boosters or co-captains. The students must do it on their own.

**COUNTABLE COMPETITIONS**

Q. If a school is not able to complete its season for any reason will that school be able to field a team in that sport during the next season?
A. No, any member school that does not complete that season's schedule will be prohibited from participating in varsity competition in that sport for the next two years.

Q. May a school schedule a countable game against a nonmember school?
A. No, all countable games must be played against MPA member schools.

Q. How many preseason exhibition games may a team play?
A. Each MPA sanctioned sport, with the exception of wrestling, is permitted five non-countable dates of competition. This includes scrimmages, exhibition games, and tournaments. It applies to preseason, season, and postseason. The only exception is that a sixth date will be permitted in sports where preliminary round games for tournaments are played. The exception is limited to teams that qualify for the tournament but do not play a preliminary round game. A sixth date would be permitted between the end of the regular season and that team's first tournament game. Conference championship games would count as this sixth date.
Q. May two teams practice together at one facility and not have it count as one of the five countable exhibition dates?
A. No, two teams practicing together would be considered a scrimmage and would count as one of the five allowable dates. If teams are sharing a facility (i.e. ice hockey, swimming) for cost savings measures, please contact the MPA office to request a waiver.

Q. May a team forfeit a game at any point in the season?
A. No, forfeitures of MPA sanctioned events are generally not allowed.

Q. How many teams qualify for the tournament?
A. 50% of the teams in each classification region qualify for the post-season tournament.

**COOPERATIVE TEAMS/COOPERATIVE INDIVIDUALS**

Q. May more than two schools come together to form a cooperative team?
A. Yes, provided they meet all of the requirements for establishing a cooperative team as outlined in Article VI of the MPA Handbook.

Q. May a student who attends a non MPA member school participate in a sport at an MPA member school as a cooperative individual?
A. No, participation in all MPA sanctioned activities is limited to students from member schools.

Q. May a student whose school does not offer a particular sport play that sport at a neighboring high school?
A. An individual student may participate in one of the following sports under a cooperative individual agreement with a neighboring school: cross country, golf, ski, swim, indoor track, wrestling, outdoor track, and tennis. In this case, they would practice with and compete with the neighboring school team but would represent their own school at all competitions. Individual students may not participate with another school in the following team sports: field hockey, football, soccer, volleyball, basketball, ice hockey, cheering, baseball, softball, and lacrosse.

**PROTESTS**

Q. May a school protest the outcome of a game if they disagree with an official's call?
A. No, protests must be dealt with in the manner prescribed by the individual sport rulebook. In the absence of a statement, the results shall be final when the contest has been concluded by the officials.

**SUNDAY ACTIVITIES**

Q. May a school reschedule a game to a Sunday if both teams agree to play?
A. No, the MPA does not recognize contests played on Sunday.

Q. May a team practice on Sunday?
A. This is a decision made by local school authorities.
SANCTIONING

Q. If a team is invited to participate in an out-of-state tournament must they complete an MPA and NFHS Sanctioning Form?
A. Yes, many out of state events do require sanctions. Below are events requiring sanctioning:
   • Any interstate event involving 2 or more schools which is cosponsored by or titled in the name of an organization outside of the high school community (i.e. a university, a theme park, an athletic shoe/apparel company).
   • Non-bordering events if five or more states are involved.
   • Non-bordering events if eight or more schools are involved.
   • Any event involving two or more teams from a foreign country. The host school should complete the sanction form. (Canada and Mexico are considered “bordering states”)
   • New Hampshire (NIAAA) requires a sanction form for all events, including Maine teams.

Competitions involving border states shall be sanctioned by each state’s own procedures. It is not necessary to request sanctions for contests involving only Maine schools.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE / FOREIGN STUDENTS

Q. What is the difference between a foreign exchange student and a foreign student?
A. A foreign exchange student does not pay tuition, must have a J1 visa limited to one academic year, and should be placed by CSIET approved foreign exchange program. Foreign students pay tuition and must have an F1 visa.

Q. If a foreign exchange/foreign student arrives after the start of a semester is he/she eligible to participate in varsity sports?
A. Any student who transfers from one school to another after the start of a season may not play at the varsity level. If the student is a foreign exchange student and the placement occurs after the start of the sport season please contact the MPA office.

Q. Must foreign exchange/foreign students meet the same eligibility standards as other students?
A. Yes, both foreign exchange and foreign students must meet all MPA eligibility requirements. A transfer waiver form must be filed for all foreign exchange/foreign students.

Q. If a foreign exchange/foreign student has graduated from high school, or his/her country’s equivalent of high school, may that student participate in varsity sports?
A. No, schools must ensure that a student has not graduated from the home country’s equivalent of high school. Schools should also pay close attention to age requirements, the eight semester rule and the four seasons of competition rule.

Q. A student is going away to participate in a foreign exchange program two to three weeks into the second semester, may he/she continue playing on a varsity team until his/her departure?
A. Yes, if it is a program approved by the principal, he/she may compete in the winter program until departure.
Q. May a coach videotape an upcoming opponent’s contest as part of a scouting report?
A. No, it is considered unethical and is prohibited by policy in a number of MPA sanctioned sports.

Q. Who may be on the team bench during MPA tournaments and/or take part in MPA warm-ups or award ceremonies?
A. Athletes listed on the eligibility roster, managers, student statisticians, athletic trainers, and adults that have met the eligibility standards and are listed on the coaches' eligibility roster are the only personnel that are allowed on the bench. Legal limitation does not allow anyone below the 9th grade to be on the bench. Exception: Article II, Section 2-B-3.

Q. May a pitching instructor who is not coaching at the high school level use or rent your gym to give baseball, softball, or pitching instructions?
A. Yes, but only if none of the students from the high school attend the clinic.

Q. If a school has less than forty boys or forty girls, may they use an 8th grade athlete?
A. Yes, the policy is in place to allow small schools to field a team in the team sports (field hockey, football, soccer, volleyball, basketball, cheering, ice hockey, baseball, softball, and lacrosse). Eighth grade students may not participate in individual sports (cross country, golf, swim, skiing, wrestling, indoor track, tennis, and outdoor track).

Q. If a school has less than forty boys or forty girls, may they send an 8th grade athlete to another school under the Cooperative Team Policy?
A. No, the policy is in place to allow small schools to field a team in a team sport (field hockey, football, soccer, volleyball, basketball, cheering, ice hockey, baseball, softball, and lacrosse) not to permit an 8th grader to gain a fifth year of competition.

Q. Is Greco Roman wrestling considered different from high school wrestling?
A. No, a high school coach may not work with his/her athlete during the spring or fall to coach Greco Roman wrestling. The coach may work with his/her 7th or 8th grade middle school program.

Q. May a school apply to play in a lower classification?
A. No, a school’s classification is based on its April 1 enrollment and shall be in effect for two years. Schools that wish to play in a larger enrollment class are committed to that classification for four years.
FORFEITURES

Forfeitures of MPA-sponsored events are generally not allowed. There may be cases because of concerns for the safety of the student athletes or the inability of a school to field a team for an extended period of time, which, after consultation with the MPA staff and the appropriate MPA committee, will lead to a forfeiture. The decision to forfeit a game can be made only by the MPA committee. Forfeitures may lead to a two-year exclusion from participation in the sport in which the season was not completed.

What Is Negligence In Coaching?
As printed in MHSAA Bulletin.
by Samuel H. Adams
taken from National Federation Coaches Quarterly,
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Most sports injury cases are brought to court under the heading of negligence. The law of negligence deals with conduct, either action or inaction, which is claimed by the injured person, that does not measure up to the standard of behavior required by the law of all persons in society. That law requires coaches and school districts to act in a way that avoids creating an unreasonable risk of injury to athletes. Black's Law Dictionary defines negligence as: “the omission to do something which a reasonable (person) guided by those ordinary considerations which ordinarily regulate human affairs, would do, or the doing of something which a reasonable and prudent (person) would not do.”

Negligent conduct is conduct that falls below this standard. In other words, negligence consists of either doing something a reasonable coach would not do because it poses an unreasonable risk of harm or injury to an athlete, or failing to do some act necessary to protect athletes which the law requires a coach to perform (Schubert, Smith, Trentadue, 1986).

The historical development of the law of negligence has resulted in the development of a group of elements necessary to the successful maintenance of suit based on negligence (Leibee, 1965). These elements are duty, breach of duty, proximate cause of casual relationship, and harm, or substantial damage to the athlete. In the past, all four of these elements needed to be present for negligence to be determined.

Duty. Legal duty means that the coach is responsible or obligated to conform or perform to a certain standard of behavior. This is also called a standard of care and standard of performance.

Coach. In general a coach must perform to a certain level of performance or conduct that will protect the athlete from unreasonable risk of harm or injury. Within each athletic sport there exists hypothetical standards at which professionally trained professionals, and a coach is a trained professional, are expected to perform. To perform at a lesser level is to expose oneself to negligence. A good general axiom to remember is that the greater the risk of injury or danger in a sport or activity such as a drill, the greater standard of behavior is required. As the possibility or probability for injury increases, the need for better trained coaches increases.

Breach of Duty. A breach is a failure, in legal cases, to perform up to the standard of conduct required in a particular situation. It is usually misfeasance, doing something that is legally right to do but doing it wrong, or nonfeasance, failing to do something that should have been done. An example of misfeasance
would be a situation in which a coach might teach a technique such as tackling in football, but taught an incorrect technique, such as putting the helmet in the numbers of the opposing player’s jersey. Tackling is an acceptable and right technique to teach, but putting the helmet in the numbers of an opposing player’s jersey is an illegal technique because of the risk of injury and should not be taught.

Nonfeasance could be failure to provide water and/or breaks during practice on hot, humid days. Another example could be the failure to make provisions for first aid at either practice or game sessions. Both of these situations should be provided for by a reasonable coach.

The so-called reasonable coach whom the jury measures the defendant against is, of course, a coach of the mind. He or she is an ideal; the coach who always has a practice plan; the plan for the season would cover all techniques; all instruction is proper and correct—both in teaching skills and techniques; the practice field is checked constantly for any harmful situations; equipment is checked daily for safety; water is provided and monitored for the athletes; an injury is always checked by a trainer or doctor before reentering competition, etc. He or she is not the average coach but is rather the ideal coach who is always up to standard. However, as far as physical characteristics are concerned, the prudent coach is exactly the same as the defendant coach; same sex, eyesight, hearing, or other physical defects. If the defendant is blind, his or her conduct must meet the standard of the prudent blind coach. It is always a professional duty for a coach to practice and teach safety to protect his/her athletes.

However, no allowances are made for mental, emotional, or temperamental differences. A fool is liable for his/her own folly even though he/she did know how (Liebee, 1965). If a coach cannot meet the standard of care for coaching a sport, he/she should not attempt to coach that sport. This standard also could apply to coaching or teaching a specific technique or drill within a sport. If administrators assign or hire unqualified personnel to coach a sport, the administrators may be held liable. This is understood as the respondent superior doctrine, “let the master answer.”

**Proximate Cause.** The cause of the injury must be proven to have been the breach of duty by the coach. Did the coach’s conduct cause the athlete’s injury? Proximate cause or causal relationship is like the domino effect. If you have ever seen dominoes placed on end and lined up in a long line and then pushed the first one over, it sets off a sequence that will knock over all the other dominoes in the line. If what the coach did or did not do sets off a sequence of events that eventually ends in an injury, that initial act of the coach is the proximate cause of the injury and thus negligence.

In the Thompson v. Seattle case, the cause of injury was an omission (nonfeasance) in that the coach did not teach Mr. Thompson not to lower his head when being tackled. By not teaching this technique it caused the injury that occurred later in the season in a game.

A commission (misfeasance) example could be the situation in which a coach teaches a wrong technique such as putting the helmet in the numbers of an opposing ball carrier in making a tackle. If an injury should occur, the cause (proximate cause) of the injury would be the teaching of the incorrect technique. The coach would be negligent in both cases. The actual injury may not occur until months later but the cause of the element that precipitated the injury was put in force earlier. If the injury would not have occurred but for the coach’s negligence, then the coach stands in causal relation to that injury.

**Harm or Substantial Damage.** For there to be negligence, there must be an injury or substantial damage to the athlete. The athlete must be incapacitated or suffer a catastrophic injury. There must be an injury before a negligent act is found by the court.
If an athlete were to tackle an opposing ball carrier by putting his head in the numbers of the player’s jersey but suffered nothing more than a stiff neck, there would be no negligence. However, the next time he may not be so fortunate. One can imagine the effect on the jury whenever a quadriplegic is brought into a courtroom in a wheelchair.

Part of the problem for coaches is that there are very few standards that have been established in sports. Coaches and other professionals in athletics should create and establish professional standards for coaching each sport in their programs. The court presently goes by the prudent, careful person standard which measures the coach by the hypothetical, and in many cases unreasonable standard.

The Thompson case was an example of these hypothetical standards and was applied to a school district’s athletic program. The Seattle School District was accused and found guilty of accusations concerning standards no other sports program in the United States has. They were ideal standards; however, they were hypothetical at the time. The complete gamut of accusations in this case should be studied and appropriate standards set in accordance with these accusations. Standards should then be written, adopted by the state, and adhered to. It would set a standard for certification of both programs and coaches. It also would give coaches more security in knowing the parameters of their legal duties.

Generally speaking, liability exists for all injuries that are a result of a coach’s negligence. The practice of safety is the best way to prevent injuries and liability. It is always a professional duty for a coach to practice and teach safety to protect his/her athletes.

Susan Smith, a lawyer in Philadelphia who toured the United States speaking to coaches and administrators on liability prevention, adds a fifth element to negligence, sufficient anger to sue. Ms. Smith maintains that if coaches maintain a good public relations program with athletes, parents, and community, the likelihood of being sued is greatly diminished.

In other words, a coach who is interested in the well-being of his/her athletes, loves working with athletes in more than just athletics, but is interested in their life development, in them as persons, keeps parents informed and involved on the intent and progress of the program, is less likely to be sued even if negligence on an injury to an athlete is present. If the “sufficient anger to sue” is not present, a lawsuit possibility is greatly diminished. This is not an excuse for not being qualified and knowledgeable in the sport, however, being a knowledgeable, up-to-date coach is a prime requisite in public relations and coaching.
WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Interscholastic activities are often among the most visible components of the school curriculum. As a coach, you are known and respected in the community, and will undoubtedly find yourself developing relationships with your local reporters and journalists. These relationships can either support or undermine your program and your coaching career – so it pays to be thoughtful in your approach. The following article provides you with some helpful insights.

Tips For Mastering The Public-Relations Game
Coaches Should Answer Questions from Media
as Honestly as Possible
by David Hoch
taken from National Federation Coaches’ Quarterly,
Spring 1997, Volume 1, Number 3

Do you ever cringe when you read some quotes from coaches in newspaper articles or in other published materials? Some statements and comments are often inappropriate and made without considering their consequences or how they will be perceived. Consider the following real examples.

• A high school volleyball coach stated in a preview article, “This will probably be a rebuilding year. We don’t have the talent as in previous years.” How will the seniors feel upon reading this? This season is their last and perhaps only season to be part of the program. With this comment, the coach has already written off the season and is preparing for the next one.
• A basketball coach at a small college was quoted, “We didn’t come ready to play.” Later in the article, he stated, “We still don’t know how to win.” Isn’t this the responsibility of the coach? These statements are actually an admission that he didn’t do his job!
• In a preseason article, a high school basketball coach said, “We expect to win 20 or more games and to advance in the playoffs.” Injuries, illness, or foul trouble can change the complexion in any game. Never predict a degree of success. Anything can happen to change it. Better to take a ‘cautiously optimistic approach’ and say something such as, “We should have a good season.”
• In the season program, the fans are chastised by a girls’ basketball coach for sitting in the stands and not actually cheering for the team. This statement comes across in an irritating and tasteless fashion. Instead of achieving its objective, the statement does not inspire more support. It creates instead, another problem.

While you certainly want your own personality and style to come through when dealing with the media, the following guidelines and suggestions may assist you with this complex and perhaps bewildering task. Whether answering the questions over the phone or in a live interview, be ready to answer the following:
• Call the newspaper after every contest, even if it is a loss. They have to fill the space regardless of the result of the contest. Your dependability is very important to them.
• Answer the questions as honestly as possible.
• Deal with the reporter in a respectful and courteous fashion. Even if a question seems foolish or is aggravating, maintain your composure.
• Ask the reporter to repeat a question or to rephrase it, if you do not understand something.
• Do not allow the reporter to start your answer, “Well, you probably meant....” You have to have the sole responsibility for all of your answers.
• Understand that the reporter is also merely trying to do his or her job.
• Invite the reporter to visit a practice session. This is a great way to educate him or her with regard to your style of play and your athletes.
As a coach, you already may have tactical knowledge, experience in motivation, and skill with instruction, but handling public relations also is extremely important. It can be mastered as with the other aspects of coaching. Forethought, tact, poise, and consideration can go a long way in your development, and you can be the ultimate winner in the public relations game.

For Further Thought
The following articles are included as reflections on the ethical dimensions of the coaches’ role:

**What Every Coach Should Know**

*This article is a reprint from the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference, CAS Bulletin, May 1995*

Only a few students go on to become professional or Olympic athletes. Some will be able to earn scholarships to colleges or universities because of their athletic achievements—but even that number is small compared to the vast number of students who participate in sports in our schools. Therefore, coaches must focus on instilling good values and building character through sports opportunities.

Here are some important guidelines to follow if you are to reach your goal of guiding young people to their highest achievements on and off the playing field—and be respected by students and parents at the same time.

Every coach must take the absolute and unequivocal stance that “sports are for kids.” All coaching actions should stem from this stance, including the following:

- Cut as few kids as possible.
- Play as many kids as possible. Also, keep in mind that if you tell parents and student-athletes that your intention is to play as many kids as possible, and you don’t, you will lose credibility.
- If kids who are interested in athletics cannot be involved as athletes, look for other possibilities. Perhaps these students can be managers or team assistants.
- Structure practices so that students can handle them, considering their academic day and their physical endurance.
- Always treat players with respect. Recognize the desire, as well as the sacrifices they are making, to be out for the sport.
- Never put down a player in any way during practice, during games or meets, on or off the field.
- Never physically assault a student.
- Never tell a student that he or she cannot improve. Always offer assistance for improving. Encourage and teach. Think before you speak. Every word you say has an impact.
- Students should never be discriminated against because they couldn’t participate in the sport during the summer.
- Remember that you are coaching fragile, maturing, growing human beings - some of whom won’t reach the peak of their athletic ability for many years. Your job is to try to keep them participating.
- Remember, students participate in other activities too. Have appreciation and empathy for that fact and encourage it. Never encourage a student to participate only in the sport you are coaching.
- Make certain there is no child who is unable to participate due to lack of funds.
- Allow no athlete to put down another athlete. If you see or hear of this happening, address it. In the process, make sure your “stars” know their responsibilities to teammates.
- Emphasize improvement—not just winning—as a sign of success.
- Don’t put a player in a game, and then spend the entire time screaming at him or her. Everyone will be disgusted.
• Try to talk to every person on the team daily if possible. Just a quick, “Good effort today!” can do wonders.
• Be careful not to direct excessive coaching interest toward an exceptional athlete or athletes.
• Make certain every player has the proper equipment, and ensure that all equipment meets safety guidelines.
• Continually work with players to maintain their academic standards.
• Remember that a student's first responsibility is to academic pursuits. Remember, too, that you are part of the teaching faculty of the school, and you should seek the advice of the faculty as to what the academic needs are of your players.

**The Successful Coach**

Learning is more important than winning. But your attention to the information in this book and your cooperation with the administrators of your school will help your teams be successful in the upcoming season.

It is important that you see yourself as the teacher of students more than the coach. Your support of coaches of other sports and your encouragement that "your athletes" participate in other sports and school activities will help these students receive a complete educational experience that will serve them better than any one-dimensional experience.

The high school coaching profession is a unique calling to men and women who are interested in the total education of high school students. Boys and girls entering high school are placed in charge of their coaches, and soon graduate from high school as adults to be challenged by the adult world.

Although the high school coach may occasionally contribute to the development of that rare athlete who will derive substantial future benefits from his or her skills, the overwhelming number of student athletes will leave organized sport upon graduation from high school. They will leave school armed with the "lessons of life" provided by their high school coaches.

Like any profession, coaching has its highs and lows, but if you are well prepared, they can be mostly highs. You can be a successful coach experiencing all of the highs without capturing a championship. Successful coaching is about much more than just winning games. Successful coaches help athletes master new skills, enjoy competing with others, and feel good about themselves. Successful coaches not only are well versed in the techniques and skills of their sport; they know how to teach those skills to young people. Successful coaches not only teach athletes sport skills, they also teach and model the skills needed for successful living in our society. Being a successful coach is an enormous challenge and places a heavy burden on the person serving as a coach. It demands a lot from each individual.

Your success as a coach will depend more on the beliefs and principles that guide the actions you take than on any factor. The decisions you make will determine how much success and enjoyment you and your athletes will have. The athletic environment and the coach's influence over his or her students will often exceed the intensity that exists within the classroom and in the traditional relationship between student and teacher. Coaches must be professional in the way that they teach and behave. They must recognize that they are always "on stage" and student-athletes look to them for examples of how to act.
When I began my career some twenty years ago, the answer to the question “Why coach?” was quite simple. It’s fun. Championship seasons and community celebrations danced through my head. I would be happy as a coach and every athlete, parent, administrator, and booster would make each day worthwhile. Money was never a consideration. God must really love me to give me this opportunity.

Well, it is fun! Championships are attainable. Athletes, parents, administrators, and boosters make my day, one way or another. Money is nice and God did give me an opportunity.

Here is the deal with coaching. You get to teach a subject you love, with students who want to be there, in a setting they like. It is the ultimate classroom. You have the opportunity to expand the three R’s to include responsibility and respect. You get to make a difference by standing up for the values you believe in. You can provide a great opportunity for athletes to develop leadership, character, teamwork, and discipline. You can promote skill development to a level many athletes never even consider possible. Student-athletes do want direction. They love to excel. They need positive role models, teacher/coaches that care. If not you, then who?

It is a tough job. You will become a taskmaster, an organizer, a fundraiser, a diplomat, a liaison, a counselor, a disciplinarian, a politician, a mother/father figure, a friend, and a motivator. Most rewards are intrinsic, the kind that really count. Yet, until you have worn the title “coach,” you can never realize what it is really all about. Try it on. You will like it.

At a recent clinic, I listened intently as Morley Fraser, Sr. told the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association members that “we are the last bastions of discipline.” I believe that. I also believe that we, the coaches, can make a difference.

NFHS COACHES’ ASSOCIATION

Membership in the NFHS Coaches' Association is optional and benefits include the following:

• Coaches’ Quarterly magazine, a professional publication developed by and for coaches.

• Insurance coverage, including excess general liability. Additional insurance information may be secured at www.bollingernfhs.com.

• State, Sectional, and National Awards.

• Exclusive online services for members only. Includes rules and case information and other educational materials.

• Representation on National Rules Committee and other NFHS Standing Committees.

Further information may be secured at 317-972-6900 or at www.nfhs.org.
## COACHES’ LIAISONS TO MPA COMMITTEES

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<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Liaison Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseball</strong></td>
<td>Al Livingston</td>
<td>Cheverus High School</td>
<td>267 Ocean Avenue, Portland</td>
<td>774-6238</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Basketball</strong></td>
<td>Peter Murray</td>
<td>Dexter Regional High School</td>
<td>12 Abbott Hill Road, Dexter</td>
<td>924-5536</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cheerleading</strong></td>
<td>Debbie Lebel</td>
<td>Biddeford High School</td>
<td>28 Maplewood Avenue, Biddeford</td>
<td>282-1596</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cross Country</strong></td>
<td>Jorma Kurry</td>
<td>Falmouth High School</td>
<td>74 Woodville Road, Falmouth</td>
<td>781-7429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field Hockey</strong></td>
<td>Moe McNally</td>
<td>Gardiner Regional Middle School</td>
<td>161 Cobbossee Avenue, Gardiner</td>
<td>582-1326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Football</strong></td>
<td>John Morin</td>
<td>Massabesic High School</td>
<td>88 West Road, Waterboro</td>
<td>247-3141</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lacrosse</strong></td>
<td>Charlie Burch</td>
<td>Kennebunk High School</td>
<td>89 Fletcher Street, Kennebunk</td>
<td>985-1110</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ski</strong></td>
<td>Buzz Bean</td>
<td>Mt. Abram High School</td>
<td>1513 Salem Road, Strong</td>
<td>678-2701</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Soccer</strong></td>
<td>Mike Jeffrey</td>
<td>Brewer High School</td>
<td>79 Parkway South, Brewer</td>
<td>989-4140</td>
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<td><strong>Softball</strong></td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td><strong>Swim</strong></td>
<td>Jon Millett</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 Balsam Drive, Windsor</td>
<td>626-2460</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tennis</strong></td>
<td>Anita Murphy</td>
<td>Lewiston High School</td>
<td>156 East Avenue, Lewiston</td>
<td>795-4190</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Track (Indoor)</strong></td>
<td>Art Feeley</td>
<td>Edward Little High School</td>
<td>77 Harris Street, Auburn</td>
<td>783-8528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Track (Outdoor)</strong></td>
<td>Chris Mazzurco</td>
<td>North Yarmouth Academy</td>
<td>148 Main Street, Yarmouth</td>
<td>846-9051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volleyball</strong></td>
<td>Gary Powers</td>
<td>Falmouth High School</td>
<td>74 Woodville Road, Falmouth</td>
<td>781-7429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wrestling</strong></td>
<td>Kip Devoll</td>
<td>Noble High School</td>
<td>388 Somersworth Road, North Berwick</td>
<td>03906,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Maine Principals' Association

President, Linda Bleile, Wiscasset Middle School
President-elect, Gus LeBlanc, Lewiston High School

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Robert Birmingham, Oak Hill High School, Wales
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E-mail: mpa@mpa.cc
Website: http://www.mpa.cc
Telephone: 622-0217

The MPA would like to express its appreciation to the Michigan High School Athletic Association for its sharing material published in this handbook.
SPORTSMANSHIP ...

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