

IHSA Girls Flag Football

Bill Orris



IHSA Officials Uniform Requirement

The committee approved the following uniform requirements for Flag Football Officials:

- A. Black and white vertically striped, long, or short sleeved knit shirt. The shirt shall have 1-inch stripes, black knit cuffs, and Byron collar. All officials in a given game are to wear the same type of shirt
- B. Standard black pants/Shorts with the white stripe down the leg (Note: The crew must be in the same) for all regular season games. Pants are required for post-season (regionals, sectionals, state)
- C. Socks and Shoes will be black with black shoelaces, or a turf style shoes or cleats that may be black with white markings and soles
- D. Black baseball cap with white piping. The referee will wear a white cap
- E. Black leather belt 1 1/4 to 2 inches wide
- F. Optional Black warm-up jacket (not to be worn during game)
- G. The uniforms should fit properly and be clean and neat. Shoes should be shined before each game
- H. Required IHSA patches must be properly worn
- I. Crew must match in shirt and shorts/pants worn

Football officials should not wear jewelry but are allowed a referee style watch, wrist down marker, wrist bands)

Whistle – black (can use finger whistle or whistle with lanyard)



IHSA Rules Book for 2026-27

- Mailed to ALL registered IHSA Flag Football Officials in early June 2026
- Read and Familiarize
- Attend Clinics
- Take Note of Changes from 2025
- Ask Questions of Your Clinicians



NFHS Rules Changes 2026

1-1-3:

Standardized that all teams must start the game with 7 players.

1.5.1.3c:

- 4. ...not include any attachment(s) that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth;
and
- 5. ...not include anything on it that is a health risk issue and can pose a danger to themselves or other players

2-18:

Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump (hurdle) with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is contacting the ground with no part of their body except one or both feet.

NFHS Rules Changes 2026

8.3.9 - “Onside”

The scoring team may (if trailing in score) elect to keep possession of the ball.

The scoring team would take possession, 4th down, on their own 20-yard line. All rules, including timing, for a scrimmage down shall apply.

Notes:

- Must declare immediately
- Can run “onside” play anytime during the game when trailing
- Remind both team coaches during pregame of requirements for “Onside” play

NFHS Rules Changes 2026

3-4-3L:

ART. 3 . . . The game clock shall start with the snap if the game clock was stopped because:

- a. The ball goes out of bounds, unless 4-3-1 EXCEPTION for forward fumble applies.
- b. B or R is awarded a new series.
- c. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
- d. The ball becomes dead behind the goal line.
- e. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- f. A runner goes out of bounds with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- g. A request for a charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.
- h. A period ends.
- i. A team attempts to consume time illegally.
- j. The penalty for a delay-of-game foul is accepted.
- k. The two-minute warning has occurred.
- l. The scoring team elected to keep the ball.**

NFHS Rules Changes 2026

3-5-1:

ART. 1 . . . Each team is entitled to **three** charged team time-outs during each half. Unused first half time-outs cannot be used in the second half. Unused second half time-outs cannot be used in overtime.

4-1-1:

ART. 1 . . . To start each half and to resume play after a try or successful field goal (by state association adoption), the ball shall be put in play by a snap from scrimmage from A's 14-yard line (**unless A is attempting to keep the ball utilizing 8-3-9 EXCEPTION or 8-4-3 EXCEPTION**). Following a safety, the team whose goal line was involved shall put the ball in play by scrimmage **kick** from its own **20**-yard line.

NFHS Rules Changes 2026

8-3-9 exception:

ART. 9 . . . After a try, the opponent of the scoring team shall gain possession at their 14-yard line.

EXCEPTION: The scoring team may (if trailing in score) elect to keep possession of the ball. The scoring team would take possession, fourth down, on their own 20-yard line. All rules, including timing, for a scrimmage down shall apply.

8-4-3 exception:

ART. 3 . . . After a successful field goal, the opponent of the scoring team shall gain possession at their 14-yard line.

EXCEPTION: The scoring team may (if trailing in score) elect to keep possession of the ball. The scoring team would take possession, fourth down, on their own 20-yard line. All rules, including timing, for a scrimmage down shall apply.

IHSA Rule Adoptions for 2026

Mercy Rule

- 30+ points or more in the 3rd or 4th quarter will activate the running clock.
- Once the 30-point spread is reached the clock will run and will not return to the timing in the 1st and 2nd quarter.
- Clock only stops on timeouts, quarter changes, and injuries during the mercy rule.

Halftime

- 6 Minutes – Can be altered with agreement by coaches & officials

IHSA Rule Adoptions for 2026

Overtime Rule

Overtime will occur if the score is tied at the end of regulation.

- A coin toss is held before overtime; the visiting team calls the toss.
- Toss winner chooses either:
 - Offense or defense first
 - Which end zone the OT is played
- Both teams will get a single extra point attempt:
 - 1 point from the 3-yard line
 - 2 points from the 10-yard line
- Interceptions end the down (no return for points)
- The order of offense and defense flips with each OT period
- Each team gets 1 timeout per overtime period (non-cumulative)

IHSA Points of Emphasis for 2026

Blocking – Obstructing an opponent by **contacting** them with any part of the blocker's body - ILLEGAL

Screen Blocking – Taking position to obstruct the path of an opponent **without contacting** the opponent with any part of the blocker's body - LEGAL

Things to Consider – “inadvertent” contact:

- Is the screener moving away from the defender or in the same direction as the defender?
- If there is contact, who initiated it?
 - If Offense- illegal screen.
 - If Defense- illegal contact.
- The screener can always stay between the ball and defender as long as they don't make contact.

IHSA Points of Emphasis for 2026

Roughing the passer

- Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer or player attempting to pass the ball.
- Defensive players must make an effort to pull the passer's flag.
- Defensive players may not contact the passing arm or head of the player attempting to throw a pass.
- Defensive players may not bat a ball from the attempted passer's arm.
- No defensive player shall commit any illegal personal contact foul listed in 9-4-3 against the passer.

IHSA Points of Emphasis for 2026

Game Ball

- The host school shall supply a top-quality **Wilson** leather or composition covered ball, sized TDY. If the visiting team desires to use a different type (leather or composition) it may do so provided the ball is a **Wilson**, sized TDY, and the team furnishes the ball. If non-Wilson, ball must be a youth - size 8.

Jewelry

- Religious medals and a medical-alert indicator are not considered jewelry. Religious medals or other religious items must be taped to the body and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert indicator must be taped to the body and may be visible.
- **TAPE IS NOT ALLOWED TO COVER JEWELRY**

Best Practices 2026

25-26 NFHS Flag Football Best Practices

Field and Equipment Guidelines

Spot Discs and Down Markers

- The host school/home team is required to provide a down box and operator.
- A additional down box, without changing the down number, can be used as an option to note the zone to gain.

Play Clock

- If a site does not provide a clock operator:
- The referee will keep the game and play clock.
- The referee may defer clock duties to another official on the crew.

Officials

- Officials and coaches are allowed to use headsets on the field.

Best Practices 2026

Jewelry

- Not allowed under any circumstances.

Hair

- A helmet is a hair control device. Do not be over officious with athletes securing hair.
- It is the coach's responsibility to monitor their players and make sure their hair is "controlled" and doesn't interfere with the waistline/flags.

Protective Equipment

- Mouthguards are required.
- Must be simple and standard.
- Mouthguards with adornments (e.g., Battle, Shock Doctor) are not permitted.

Headbands

- Permissible by NFHS Rules
- Example on the right - allowable



Reminders for 2026

- 25 Second play clock
- 14-yard line
 - Start of game*
 - Start of 2nd Half*
 - After score*
- Snapper's **feet** must be behind the ball
- QB must receive snap 2 yards behind LOS
- Ball is dead if it hits the ground
- All offensive players are eligible receivers
- Extra Points
 - 3-yard line – 1point
 - 10-yard line – 2 points
- Only snapper is required to be on the LOS to be legal formation
- Ball to be placed in middle of field only (no hash marks)
- Defense must be 1 yard from the LOS
- Punt return team cannot “jump” or “yell” - can only stand with their arms raised
- “Onside” play by trailing team at anytime during the game
- Scrimmage kick for K 20 yard line after safety

*- unless impacted by penalty enforcement



Game Management

- **Maintain a Consistent Pace Throughout the Game** - (25sec play clock...hustle into position)
- **Use Preventive Officiating** - (Pre-snap Alignment, "Teams! Check Your Flags"...)
- **Communicate with Partners, Players and Coaches** - (We Have New Players, We Have New Rules, Coaches and Officials Learning the Game!)

**Get out your rule
book...make note of
the following edits!**

