WELCOME (again) to the 2015 OHSAA Field Hockey Season! Practice has begun and State Rules Interpretation Meetings have been held in the Northeast, Central, and Southwest Districts. It was a true pleasure meeting so many of you for the first time! Based on your initial input, I am extremely pleased that we are beginning a dialogue that can and should lead toward the growth and development of our sport in Ohio. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and submitting those cards!

My week of State Meetings concluded yesterday (Friday) as I attended the NFHS Field Hockey Rules Meeting in Harrisburg, PA as a part of the PIAA Annual Officials Convention. That was a great session. I look forward to sharing some of the materials that I gathered there, with officials and coaches in Ohio.

This bulletin is focused on two issues: The goggles/facemask issue and some general remarks about playing the ball at any height, a significant new rule. The former (goggles/facemask) is intended for coaches and schools rather than being instructional to officials. The latter is more general in nature.

Item 1: Goggles/facemask
Yes, as we discussed in our three State Rules Interpretation Meetings, there are a few discrepancies in the rulebook. (Those discrepancies will be addressed.) As I had predicted to those in attendance, there was, indeed, some additional discussion among the NFHS Rules Committee Members, the NFHS Rules Editor, and other participants at the PIAA and NFHS Field Hockey Rules Meeting. That was followed up by a discussion between Dr. Deborah Moore and myself (and referenced by the OHSAA attorneys). A decision has been reached and this clarification ends our debate on the matter for, at least, the current Field Hockey Season in Ohio.

Ohio Field Hockey players are required (by NFHS Rules) to wear goggles during play and live practice. Ohio Field Hockey Players MAY NOT wear a full facemask while playing or practicing. Therefore, Ohio Field Hockey Players MAY NOT wear goggles and a facemask simultaneously.

Item 1 Background: As explained in the Points of Emphasis section of the 2015-16 NFHS Field Hockey Rules (page 65-66), there are changes being mandated to the markings on the eyewear, but goggles are still mandated. The section goes into further detail (and in agreement with Rule 1.6.7 (page 13) stating “By rule, required equipment shall not be modified and shall be worn as the manufacturer. Manufacturers spend hundreds of hours researching and testing products before they are released to
the public. They ensure that their products will perform at the highest level possible when if it is worn properly....”

Comments:
1. Not wearing the goggles as intended by the manufacturer would invalidate any manufacturers warrantee. It could also put the coach, school, umpires, and the OHSAA in an unenviable legal position.
2. During my meeting with NFHS Rules Committee Members, it was brought forth that there has been some preliminary testing done on the safety of the full facemask. No formal results were released (a full report is due in January of 2016), but preliminary results lean strongly toward a those being unsafe when being struck with the force of a blow (70 mph) from a field hockey ball or from being struck with a stick.
3. The single eye injury that was identified in the slide presentation to coaches and officials (State Rules Interpretation Meetings) has been clarified. There was one eye injury in the country in 2013. A player took a blow to the goggle and “the goggle did its job.” The player ended up with 5 stitches but no damage to her eye.

To reiterate:

Ohio Field Hockey players are required (by NFHS Rules) to wear goggles during play and live practice. Ohio Field Hockey Players MAY NOT wear a full facemask while playing or practicing. Therefore, Ohio Field Hockey Players MAY NOT wear goggles and a facemask simultaneously.

Item 2: Playing the Ball at any Height
Just some general information from the PIAA (This is their verbiage with only a change to the appropriate practice date in our state). To keep it simple, please remember that there are no changes to the definition of danger or dangerous play (these still require judgement of the official). The only change to the rule is that the ball can now be played at any height (providing it is not dangerous and does not lead to dangerous play). Please read each of these scenarios on its own and as a given in the way that it is presented. (For example, #5 is correct unless circumstances make it a dangerous situation.)

Playing the ball at any height

This year, players will have the opportunity to play the ball legally even if it is above the shoulder provided that the play is safe and with regard for others around the play. In the NFHS Rule Book under Rule 3 section 2 article 11 it describes “playing the ball” and the manner in which it can be played. Even though this rule has been played in the US at many levels for more than a year, it is the first time it is being brought to the High School game.
With most teams beginning practice on or about August 1st, they will have a chance to begin playing by the rule before many of the umpires have a chance to see it with their own eyes. In some cases it will be two weeks before any scrimmages or play days take place and up until that point the umpires will only be able to watch some video and talk about the rule.

Since the teaching of this skill will begin at practice, it is important to start off with the proper information on the rule....

1. All players must play safe and with regard for others around them.
2. All attempts to play the ball must be in control and not aggressive.
3. Playing the ball in the air is legal. Taking a “wild” swing at it while in the air is dangerous and intimidating.
4. A controlled swing or inherent movement of the stick to play the ball while in the air is legal.
5. The stick does not have to be “still” or just trying to “stop” the ball.
6. Missing the ball while attempting to play it above the shoulder is not a foul, unless dangerous to other in close proximity.
7. If danger is judged during an attempt to play the ball above the shoulder, **this is not a hold whistle situation.** An umpire should blow the foul immediately.
8. This rule DOES NOT change any of the parameters for receiving an aerial ball (5 yd. Rule). Any decision while the ball is in flight and an attempt to “cut it off” by playing the ball over the shoulder is judged solely on the dangerous aspect surrounding the action.

I know there will be more as we move forward. I look forward to some great opportunities as we move to grow our sport in Ohio

As always, your ideas will be considered (and presented anonymously) for inclusion in subsequent Field Hockey Bulletins!

*Have a great start to your season!*

Rick