News Release – Ohio High School Athletic Association
Commissioner Daniel B. Ross, Ph.D.


For Immediate Release – July 13, 2015
Contact – Tim Stried, Director of Information Services, tstried@ohsaa.org

OHSAA Adopts National Recommendations for Minimizing Concussion Risks in Football Practice
Report by NFHS Concussion Summit Task Force results in modifications for football practices beginning immediately

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Beginning immediately, the Ohio High School Athletic Association has joined dozens of states in adopting recommendations from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Concussion Summit Task Force, which will reduce the risk in football for concussions and head impact exposure. The recommendations were approved by the OHSAA’s Joint Advisory Committee on Sports Medicine in June and presented to OHSAA Commissioner Dan Ross and the OHSAA staff. The OHSAA Board of Directors unanimously approved the changes in a conference call vote Monday.

The changes, which are listed below, become effective immediately, beginning with the start of football practices in Ohio on August 1. The NFHS is the governing body of high school sports in this country and Ohio follows its playing rules.

“With the support and leadership from the football coaches association, we have been out in front of concussion awareness and education, and these changes will now bring Ohio up to a place as a national leader in this area,” Dr. Ross said. “Like many of our regulations, these guidelines are to be followed and monitored by member schools and coaches, but we are fortunate in Ohio that many coaches have already been following these safety measures. There will always be a risk for concussion, but football is safer now than it has ever been, and these guidelines will make it even safer.”

The three principles that the guidelines reflect include exposure of an individual athlete to full contact in terms of frequency and duration, the cumulative effect of the exposure on an individual athlete, and recovery time for each athlete after contact. The recommendations adopted for immediate compliance include:

Spring, Summer and All Off-Season Contact
Already the rule in Ohio, there is no contact permitted except during the season, and pads may not be worn at any time except during the season. (Many states that allow spring football practice and contact in the summer have a much higher rate of concussions.)

Preseason Practice (all practices prior to the first regular-season game)
Note: the following regulations apply to individual student-athletes. Position groups, etc., can alternate contact to adhere to the regulations. Also, contact with soft equipment such as bags, shields, sleds, etc., does not count toward contact limitations. Additionally, the task force noted that preseason practices may require more full-contact time than practices occurring later in the regular season to allow for teaching fundamentals with sufficient repetition:

1. Physical Examinations: Already the rule in Ohio, a medical examiner must certify each individual’s physical fitness no less than once each calendar year and these signed forms must be on file at the school before any candidate for a team may participate in practice.

2. Acclimatization Period: Already the rule in Ohio, a five-day acclimatization period is mandatory prior to any contact drills. Only helmets are permitted on the first and second days of practice. Shoulder pads may be added on days three and four. Full pads may be worn on the fifth day. Full contact is permitted on the sixth day.

3. Full Contact Limited During Two-A-Day Practices: When more than one practice takes place in a day, full contact is permitted only during one of the practices. With the importance of recovery time to help minimize concussion risks, consideration should also be given to the timing of full contact during the next day (i.e. if full contact occurs during session 2 of two-a-days, there should not be full contact in session 1 of two-a-days the following day).

– CONTINUED –
Practice During the Season (all practices after the first regular-season game)

Note: the following regulations apply to individual student-athletes. Position groups, etc., can alternate contact during the week to adhere to the regulations. Also, contact with soft equipment such as bags, shields, sleds, etc., does not count toward full contact limitations:

1. Consider limiting full-contact on consecutive days.
2. A student-athlete is limited to 30 minutes of full contact in practice per day.
3. A student-athlete is limited to 60 minutes of full contact in practice per week.
4. A student-athlete can be involved in full contact in a maximum of two practices in a seven-day span.

“These regulations are being put into place for the safety of our student-athletes, and it is incumbent on coaches to monitor the contact in their practices,” Ross said. “Our coaches are educators and leaders. They want what’s best for kids, and these regulations are in line with these safety recommendations. As the report also states, these regulations will evolve and may become more restrictive as additional concussion research emerges.”

In addition, the NFHS Concussion Summit Task Force has advised the OHSAA to review its current policy on total quarters permitted, which currently stands at 50 quarters total for the season for high school student-athletes and 32 quarters for 7th-8th grade student-athletes (or 28 quarters if only seven games are played). The Task Force also asks the OHSAA and all member schools to:

1. Continue to work with the football coaches association and all member schools to ensure that coaches have completed the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching course, which is a requirement in Ohio.
2. Continue to place emphasis on proper fitting and care of helmets.
3. Continue to place emphasis on proper tackling and hitting techniques at all times, especially before full contact begins.
5. Develop and put into practice an Emergency Action Plan (will be distributed by the OHSAA in the fall 2015 as part of the “Anyone Can Save a Life” program).
6. Whenever possible, have a certified athletic trainer present at all football practices and contests.
7. Continue to place emphasis on hydration.
8. Continue to place emphasis on inclement weather regulations.

The report of recommendations and guidelines from the NFHS Concussion Summit Task Force can be found at the following link: http://www.ohsaa.org/medicine/2014NFHSMinimizingHeadImpact.pdf

### OHSAA ###

Tim Stried  
Director of Information Services  
Ohio High School Athletic Association  
614-267-2502, ext. 124 office  
tstried@ohsaa.org  
www.OHSAA.org  
www.Twitter.com/OHSAASports  
www.Facebook.com/OHSAA  
614-267-1677 fax  
4080 Roselea Place  
Columbus, OH 43214