

2025 NSAA FOOTBALL NOTES

Mark Football Field Properly

RULE 1-2-3 ... Lines and other markings:

- a. Lines shall be marked with a noncaustic, nontoxic material designed for marking fields such as powdered gypsum, calcium carbonate and liquid aerosol paint. It is recommended that these lines be white. Neither lime, hydrated lime, or other chemical derivatives of lime, nor caustic material of any kind may be used for marking football fields.

RULE 1-2-3 ... Lines and other markings:

- d. A 4-inch-wide restraining line shall be placed around the outside of the field, at least 2 yards from the sidelines and end lines, as an extension of the line limiting the team box area, except in stadiums where the total playing enclosure does not permit the restraining line. It is recommended that the restraining line be marked by placing 12-inch-long lines, separated at 24-inch intervals.

NOTE: Game administration may place 4-inch wide and 12-inch long bisecting marks along the restraining line at each 5-yard line between the goal lines.

RULE 2-26-8. . . A restraining line is a line placed around the outside of the field. No person, including but not limited to, spectators, game administrators or members of the media, shall be allowed within the restraining line. A maximum of three coaches as well as permitted nonplayers are allowed within the restraining line in front of the team box, as provided for in Rule 9-8-3.

RULE 9-8-3 . . . A nonplayer shall not be outside his team box unless to become a player or to return as a replaced player. A maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area. No player, nonplayer or coach shall be in the restricted area when the ball is live.

Comment on Rules:

- This rule is to minimize risk and other issues regarding sideline safety. This rule defines a restricted area where a maximum of three coaches may communicate with players and substitutes during dead-ball situations. This restricted area disintegrates, and the coaches must retreat into the team box before the ball becomes live. There will no longer be an allowance for three coaches to remain in an area adjacent to the sideline during play. This new area results in a 2-yard belt that is clear of team personnel and helps eliminate sideline congestion while helping to minimize the risk for the participating players, coaches and officials.
- When the ball is dead, a maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area. The two-yard area formerly known as the coaches' box has been renamed the restricted area and may only be used when the ball is dead. Once the ball is snapped, no non-player may be in the restricted area. The first offense results in a team warning; the second offense, a five-yard penalty for the sideline interference; and subsequent offenses, 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct charged to the head coach.

Tick marks or field reference marks: These marks shall be 12 inches in length and 4 inches in width and shall be located 9 yards from each sideline on an 11-man football field and 7 yards from each sideline on an 8-man or 6-man football field. The 9-yard or 7-yard marks shall be marked so that at least each 10-yard line bisects the 9-yard or 7-yard marks. These marks shall not be required if the field is visibly numbered. If on-the-field numbers are used, the tops of those numbers shall be 9 yards from the sideline on the 11-man football field and 7 yards from the sideline on an 8-man or 6-man football field.

The football field must be marked properly, and every possible hazard removed in compliance with the provisions of the rules. Unless the turf is in good condition, the players are subjected to unnecessary injury hazards. Extreme care should be taken to provide every protection possible.

Football Helmet Warning Labels Required

All players shall wear helmets that carry a warning label. (Please refer to page 19 of the 2025 NFHS Football Rules book for more detailed information.)

35-Point Rule

35-Point, Running Clock Rule (All Classes): A running clock is used for regular-season and playoff games for six, eight, and eleven-man football whenever a 35-point differential in score is reached **after the first half of play.**

Normal clock operating and timing procedures resume if the point differential is reduced to fewer than 35 points. **(The 35-point rule is optional for non-varsity competition.)**

The clock will run continuously except for the following times:

1. During called timeouts. (Restart on the snap)
2. During the break between the 3rd and 4th quarters. (Restart on the snap)
3. Following a score. (Restart on the kick-off, 1st touching or ensuing snap, kick out of bounds or touchback)
4. During penalty enforcement. (Restart on “ready for play”)
5. Extended injury, if coach comes on the field. (Restart on “ready for play”)
6. Anytime the officials deem it necessary for safety reasons. (Restart on “ready for play”)
7. NOTE: NFHS RULE 3.1.3 – A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time, or the game terminated.

Sidelines and Fences and Goal Posts

Outside the sidelines the rules require a “Team Box” be marked. There shall be a barrier, preferably a wire fence at a distance of at least 5 yards or more, to keep spectators and everyone having no official connection with the game, at a distance. If boxes for the players and coaches are on both sides of the field, they shall extend between the 25-yard lines. If both benches are on the same side, each shall extend from the 20-yard line to 45-yard line. These boxes shall be at least 2 yards from the sidelines. Substitutes must remain within these boxes. Three coaches may be in the coaches’ box, which is between the team box and the sideline.

Please make sure that the coaches’ area and the team box area is properly marked. Also, it is recommended that a marking (dashed lines), be in place on the outside of the playing field so as to keep the media, non-game personnel, etc. away from the sideline. Barriers around the football field should be no closer than 5 yards or more from the sideline. **All goal posts shall be padded with resilient, shock absorbing material to a height of at least 6 feet above the ground.**

Football Clock Operators

Clock operators should meet with the officials at least 30-45 minutes prior to kick-off. It is the responsibility of the clock operator to go to the field and meet with officials. Do not conduct this meeting in the press box. Schools should have a stopwatch available at all games in the event the field clock stops or fails to work satisfactorily. The Football Clock Operators and/or Scoreboard Operators should be adults and not students. Please refer to the “General Instructions for Football Clock Operators” for more detailed information. Clock operators should review the 35-Point Rule and when the clock is started and stopped. Communication with the Referee is essential.

Line-to-Gain Crew

In order for the Linesman to serve efficiently as a football official, he must have the assistance of good help in the person of a Boxman and two Chainmen. They should wear white jackets or other distinctive type of uniform so that they can be easily identified.

Football coaches and school administrators should select these assistants with care. They should have some knowledge of the game and, if possible, the same assistants should be used in each game. They must assume the attitude of an official and perform their duties according to the instructions of the Linesman. The Line-to-Gain Crew should be made up of all adults – no students. These individuals should have the physical ability to handle the required responsibilities and should be able to move out of the way of a play coming out of bounds. They should report to the sideline opposite the press box approximately 15 minutes before game time to receive instructions. Please refer to the “General Instructions for Football Line-to-Gain Crews” for more detailed information. The line-to-gain crew shall be 6’ outside the sideline.

*** NSAA football officials shall report all schools that fail to follow this mandatory procedure to the NSAA.**

Football Public Address Announcer

Activities Directors, coaches and officials need to make sure that the public address announcers at all football games are not doing live play-by-play announcing during the game. The announcers should be done announcing when the teams break the huddle and come to the line of scrimmage and should not announce again until the play is concluded. There is to be no announcing while a play is in progress.

Bands Playing During the Game

Please be sure your band instructors understand these guidelines for all football games.

1. The participation of bands at a school football contest is an exciting aspect of the event. The band contributes to the event by increasing the level of excitement and adding a “touch of class” to the festivities. In order to maintain a proper perspective and to ensure equity in competition for the participating teams, a few guidelines must be followed.
2. Band instruments, including drums, are not to be played at any time other than when the entire band is playing.
3. The use of artificial noisemakers is prohibited. (Examples: air horns, whistles, bells, etc.) Megaphones are to be used by cheerleaders only.
4. Persons subject to the protocols, including bands, shall not create any noise that prohibits a team from hearing their signals.
5. Bands are allowed to play at the following times (same rules apply to recorded music):
 - a. Pre-game
 - b. Between quarters
 - c. Halftime
 - d. Post-game
 - e. Time-outs (except injury time-outs)
 - f. After scoring plays prior to the try and / or kick off
 - g. Change of possession
 - h. Between plays stopping when:
 - i. The umpire has placed the ball and moved into position; or
 - ii. The offense breaks the huddle or, in the case of a no-huddle offense, approaches the line of scrimmage and move into formation
6. Violation of these protocols may result in penalties which include Delay-of-Game, Unsportsmanlike Conduct, or Unfair Acts.
7. When bands want to warm-up prior to halftime, directors should arrange this so that it is done in an area that is not a distraction to the contest. Note: No whistles may be used while the game is in progress.
8. Because the band acts as a spirit group, members should always act in a positive manner and must not do anything to distract or negatively affect the opposing team. It is the director’s responsibility to prevent his/her band from playing at inappropriate times, playing inappropriate music, or taunting the opposing team.
9. The band must display courtesy and respect toward the players, cheerleaders, and fans. To do anything else is not only a distraction from the contest but also reflects negatively on the band, the director, and the school. Support your school and team in a positive manner! Please be sure your band instructors understand these guidelines for all football games.
10. Please let the officials and the opposing team know when they arrive at the game site, if the intermission is going to be increased to a maximum of 20 minutes, if you’re having special ceremonies or an extended band performance.