

Proposed Amendment to Bylaw 508.00 - Football

(deleted language, proposed language)

Submitted by: Minnesota State High School League Board of Directors

Bylaw 508.2 - Pre-Season Practice/Heat Acclimatization Policy

(Based on National Athletic Trainers' Association Preseason Heat-Acclimatization Guidelines for Secondary School Athletics, June 2009)

PRACTICE SESSIONS BEFORE FIRST CONTEST

Cross Reference: Bylaw 411.10 (Scheduling of Contests)

~~A five-day organized conditioning program and two weeks of organized practice must precede the first scheduled game. The first three days of conditioning will be conducted only with the issue of helmets, mouth protectors, dummies and shoes. The final two days of the conditioning week players may dress in full protective pads and may be allowed to hit dummies and sleds and may have full, person-to-person contact. The five days of conditioning must be conducted during the first week of practice. Five separate and complete days of organized practices must be held, beginning on the second Monday of the season, prior to any inter-school practices or scrimmages being held. Games may be scheduled beginning the Thursday of the second week of practice exclusive of the five days of conditioning. If the varsity plays a game on that first Thursday, a lower level game (B/JV) may be scheduled on the previous day (Wednesday of the second week).~~

Heat Acclimatization Period is defined as the initial 14 consecutive day period of pre-season practice, which begins the first day of practice prior to the regular season. Any practices or conditioning conducted before this time shall not be considered a part of the heat-acclimatization period.

Practice is defined as a session in which a participant engages in a coach-supervised, school approved, sport or conditioning-related physical activity, including stretching, running, conditioning or physical training in sport specific skills and fundamentals. All conditioning and strength training activities are considered as part of the practice time. Team meetings and video sessions do not count as a practice for the purpose of this policy.

Each individual practice shall not last more than 3 hours – this includes warm-up, stretching, and cool-down activities. All strength-training and conditioning activities are also considered part of this practice time.

CONTACT PRACTICE is defined as a practice during which there is contact of a physical nature between players in the act of blocking and or tackling. Contact with sleds or dummies, as well as minimum risk, close range contact, used to teach form blocking, form tackling and shed techniques is not considered to be physical contact.

Walk-thru is defined as a teaching opportunity with the athletes not wearing protective equipment. A walk-thru is not considered part of the 3 hour practice, cannot last more than 1 hour, and does not include any kind of strength training or conditioning activities. A "walk thru" is only for running plays and teaching Team schemes – full speed drills and physical contact is not allowed. Special team skills (punting and catching punts, Kickoffs, and place kicking) is allowed.

Recovery Period is defined as the time between the end of one practice or walk-thru and the beginning of the next practice or walk-thru. During these time athletes should rest in a cool environment (65-80 degrees F), with no sport or conditioning-related activity permitted. Team meetings and video may be part of this recovery period if conducted in a cool environment.

Schedule for 14 Calendar Day Acclimatization Period:

Days 1 – 5: “Contact Practices” are not allowed.

- Total practice time per day not to exceed 4 hours
- A second practice is allowed, but there must be a recovery period of at least 2 hours.
- Double practice days must be followed by a single practice day.
- A 1 hour walk-thru is allowed each day that there is a single practice, but there must be at least a 2 hour recovery period prior to the walk-thru.

Days 1 & 2: Helmets only

Days 3 & 4: Helmets and shoulder pads only

Day 5: Full pads are allowed

Day 6 and 7: Rest days, no practice is allowed

Days 8 – 12: No restrictions on pads and physical contact.

- Double practice days must be followed by a single practice day.
- There must be at least a 2 hour recovery period prior to the second practice.
- A 1 hour walk thru is allowed on single practice days, but there must be at least a 2 hour recovery period prior to the walk-thru.
- On a double practice day neither practice shall exceed 3 hours in duration and student athletes shall not participate in more than 5 hours of practice in one day.

Day 13: Schools may participate in one interschool scrimmage event (multiple teams may be involved).

Day 14: No practice -- rest day – 14 Day Acclimatization ends.

Day 18: First date on which interscholastic contests are allowed. Note: If the varsity team plays on Day 18, a lower level game (B/JV) may be scheduled on day 17.

Rationale:

Heat Acclimatization has been a major emphasis at the national level, and many other states have adopted similar policies, many times even more restrictive than the above. This is based on what has been recommended by the National Association of Athletic Trainers and what is currently being done at both the NCAA and NFL levels – where athletes are training and conditioning at a much higher level than most high school athletes. Research has shown that following a program such as that outlined above is not only safer in regard to heat acclimatization, but will also result in fewer injuries. Research has also shown that students will learn more and retain more with shorter practices and in situations where conditioning is done starting slow and progressing to more advanced level. At the end of the 14 day period students can be conditioned to the same level as with current policies, with less injuries, and greater retention of what they have been taught. This policy has been reviewed and approved by the MSHSL Sports Medicine Advisory Committee.