

NEWS

Iowa High School Athletic Association
P.O. Box 10 • Boone, IA 50036-0010
(515) 432-2011 • Fax (515) 432-2961

<http://www.iahsaa.org>

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**Contact: Bud Legg, Information Director
Todd Tharp, Assistant Ex. Director**

IHSAA Pre-Season Football Changes Target Pre-Season Practices, Player Safety, Heat Acclimatization

New guidelines for pre-season football practices have been explained to Iowa High School Athletic Association member school's athletic directors and administrators and will go into effect this fall.

The new measures incorporate many of the recommendations from research and studies by the medical community relative to the length of practice, the amount of contact in pre-season drills, and the acclimatization of young athletes.

In December, the new regulations were discussed and approved by the Football Playoff Committee, a group representing school administrators and the Iowa Football Coaches Association. The regulations were approved by the Board of Control and in March explained to the Representative Council.

Specifically, the new regulations during the acclimatization period that effect the state's 342 programs and 21,200 athletes addresses the following areas

- (1) There shall be no more than one practice per day.
- (2) A practice is defined as a period of time in which a student participates in physical activity.
- (3) A practice cannot exceed three (3) hours in length. Warm-up, stretching, speed and agility rules, strength training, and cool down are all considered part of a practice. Optional weight training activities that are available to all students are not considered part of the practice.
- (4) On the first two (2) days of practice helmets and mouth guards may be worn and no activities that require protective equipment shall be done.
- (5) During days three through five (3-5), helmets, mouth guards, and shoulder pads may be worn and contact with blocking sleds, tackling dummies and technique drills for blocking and tackling may begin, but no full contact. Above the waist contact between players focusing on proper tackling and blocking techniques may occur.
- (6) Starting on day six (6), all protective equipment may be worn and full contact drills may begin.
- (7) The first two Sundays during the 14-day acclimatization period shall be days of complete rest (no practice, stretching, conditioning, speed and agility drills, strength training, etc.)

Todd Tharp, assistant executive director at the IHSAA and the administrator for football noted, "We had great discussions with the football committee and representatives of the coaches association", he said.

“The health and safety of athletes is always everyone’s number one priority and these new measures apply equally to all schools.”

Several states implemented many of the above measures in 2012.

Iowa has been among the national leaders in addressing player safety and health issues including being among the first to define illegal helmet contact, heat and hydration issues, and addressing protocol for dealing with possible concussions/head injuries.

In other Board of Control action related to football, four other items were approved effective this fall. They are: (1) The IHSAA and the Football Coaches Association will work jointly to produce a football safety video; (2) Schools are now allowed to have a scrimmage with another school prior to the first legal playing date and after 10 days of practice; (3) In games where the continuous clock is being used the clock will stop for the administration of penalties; and (4) The UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls will be used only for semifinal and championship round contests unless the host school uses the UNI-Dome as their primary home facility.