

Policy 39

HEAT-ACCLIMATIZATION

Heat illness is the leading cause of preventable death in high school athletes. These heat stroke deaths mainly occur in the summer months, at the beginning of conditioning for all sports. Heat production during intense exercise is 15 to 20 times greater than at rest and can raise body core temperature one to two degrees Fahrenheit every five minutes unless heat is dissipated. The following policy provides guidelines and procedures for conducting preseason practices and activities to insure the well-being of student-athletes.

39.1 Intent. The intent of this policy is to require FHSAA member schools to follow a preseason acclimatization and recovery model for all sports that enhances student-athlete well-being.

39.1.1 These guidelines provide general recommendations for conducting preseason practice for secondary school-age student-athletes.

39.1.2 These guidelines can be applied during the academic year to ensure the athletes arrive with adequate sport-specific conditioning.

39.1.3 Application of these guidelines should not be based solely on the information contained in these guidelines, but should be customized to the specific geographic location of the school or practice facility.

39.1.4 Individuals using these guidelines are responsible for prudent judgment with respect to each practice, athlete and facility and each athlete is responsible for exercising caution when following these general requirements.

39.2 Rationale. The recommendation of the National Federation of High School Association's (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the National Athletic Trainers' Association's (NATA) Secondary School Committee that all sports use acclimatization and recovery principles to develop their all preseason practice schedules for the purpose of enhancing the student-athlete well-being, is based on the following:

39.2.1 Research has supported the findings, which indicate an increase in heat-related injuries resulting from inadequate preseason acclimatization practices.

39.2.2 The incidence in stress-related injuries (i.e. stress fractures, tendonitis) has been found to be directly proportional to the work-rest ratio of the athlete.

The primary focus of the preseason period should be to provide an adjustment period to the intensity and duration of exercise and environmental conditions. The guidelines and procedures are based on medical literature that differentiates sports with equipment due to the unique stress on the body's heat dissipation capabilities. Equally important, consideration should be given to the varying levels of fitness in the high school student-athlete.

39.3 Definitions

39.3.1 Practice. A practice is defined as one continuous period of time in which a participant engages in physical activity. It is required that each practice be no more than three hours and 30 minutes (3 ½ hours) in length and consist of no more than 90 minutes of intense exercise. Warm-up, stretching,

and cool-down activities are to be included as part of the practice time. All conditioning and/or weight room activities shall be considered practice.

39.3.2 Acclimatization Period. The acclimatization period is defined as the first 14 calendar days of the season beginning with the first allowable date of practice in that sport or the first date an athlete begins practice, whichever is later. This period shall begin once equipment is used. Any practices conducted prior to the utilization of any equipment, protective or otherwise, shall not be considered a part of the acclimatization period. All student-athletes, including those who arrive to preseason practice after the first day of practice, are required to follow the guidelines of the first days of the acclimatization period. During the acclimatization period, it is required that student-athletes not participate in more than six consecutive days of practice.

39.3.3 Walk-Through. A walk-through shall be defined as a teaching opportunity with no protective equipment (i.e. helmets, shoulder pads, shin guards) or equipment related to a given sport (i.e. footballs, blocking sleds, pitching machine, soccer balls, and marker cones). It is recommended the time engaged should not be more than one hour in length. This time does not include conditioning or weight room activities.

39.3.4 Recovery Period. A recovery period is defined as the time between the end of one practice or walk-through and the beginning of the next practice or walk-through. During this time, it is recommended that no physical activity be permitted (speed, strength, conditioning, agility, or walk-through).

39.4 Procedures

39.4.1 Prior to participation in any preseason practice activities, all student-athletes are required to undergo a Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (see Bylaw 9.7, Form EL 2) administered as required by state law.

39.4.2 The student and parent or legal guardian, duly appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction, must submit a release form provided by the association (Form EL3CH – Concussion & Heat Related Illness Information Release Form).

39.4.3 During the first seven calendar days, it is required that participants not engage in more than one practice per day. **Weekly practice time must not exceed 18 hours per week.** Competition day counts as 3 hours. No practice before or after competition is permitted.

39.4.4 If a practice session is interrupted by inclement weather or heat restrictions, it is required the session be divided for the good of the student-athlete's welfare as long as the total practice time does not exceed three hours and 30 minutes (3 ½ hours) for that session.

39.4.5 A walk-through is permitted during Days 1 – 6 of the acclimatization period. However, a one-hour recovery period is required between the end of practice and the start of the walk-through or vice-versa.

39.4.6 Football only: The first three full days of practice shall be restricted to conditioning drills. Helmet and dental guards may be issued, but deliberate contact as well as contact with sleds during this three-day period is prohibited.

39.4.7 Beginning Day 8, it is required that the practice schedule not exceed a 2-1-2-1 format. This means that a day consisting of two practices should be followed by a day with only one practice. One walk-through session would be permitted each day. If a two-practice day were followed by a day off, a two-practice day would be permitted on the following day.

39.4.8 On days when two practices are conducted, it is required that either practice not exceed three hours and 30 minutes (3 ½ hours) in length and student-athletes not participate in more than five total hours of practice activities on these days, excluding walk-through sessions. Warm-up, stretching, and cool-down activities are included as part of the practice time. Practices should be separated with at least three continuous hours of recovery time between the end of the first practice and the beginning of the very next practice. **Weekly practice time shall not exceed 18 hours per week.**

39.4.9 On days when a single practice is conducted, it is required that practices not exceed three hours and 30 minutes (3 ½ hours) in length. A walk-through is permitted and should be separated with at least one hour of continuous recovery time between the end of the first practice and the walk-through, or vice-versa.

39.4.10 Cross Country: Individuals must participate in a minimum of 10 practice sessions on 10 separate days prior to the first contest.

39.5 Hydration and Rest. The following procedures related to hydration and rest periods during a practice or contest (where applicable):

- For every 30 consecutive minutes of a practice, there must be at least a **minimum 5 minute rest and hydration break.**
- **During every practice and contest, there must be unrestricted access to water at all times.**
- A student-athlete shall never be denied access to water if he/she requests.
- Once the 14 day acclimatization expires, each school or school district is required to create a hydration and rest policy to implement for the remainder of the season.

39.6 Sanctions on Coaches

39.6.1 Level 1 Suspension. A head coach who commits a violation of any condition listed in Policy 39 will be ineligible to coach or attend any contest, at any level, for a minimum of the next two (2) contests during the period of suspension, in all sports except football. For football, the coach will be ineligible for a minimum of one (1) football game; or

39.6.2 Level 2 Suspension. A head coach who receives a second Level 1 Suspension due to a violation of any condition listed in Policy 39, or commits multiple violations in Policy 39 will be ineligible to coach or attend any interscholastic athletic contest in any sport, at any level, for a period of up to six (6) weeks; or

39.6.3 Level 3 Suspension. A head coach who receives a second Level 2 Suspension for violating any condition of Policy 39 or commits an egregious violation of Policy 39, as determined in the sole discretion of the Executive Director, will be ineligible to coach or attend any interscholastic athletic contest in any sport for a period of up to one (1) year.