

SOUTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOLS

The purpose of this document is to warn students and their parents of the possibility of serious injury or death while playing a contact sport.

Football is a contact sport and injuries will occur. Safety is the major concern of the Rules Committees of the National Federation of High School Associations and recent rule changes have reduced the number of serious injuries.

This document does not cover all potential injury possibilities in playing football, but it is an attempt to make the players and their parents aware that fundamentals and proper fitting equipment is important to their safety and enjoyment in playing football.

TACKLING, BLOCKING, AND RUNNING THE BALL

By rule, the helmet is not to be used as a "ram". Initial contact is not to be made with the helmet. It is not possible to play the game safely or correctly without making contact with the helmet when properly blocking and tackling an opponent. Therefore, technique is most important to prevention of injuries.

Tackling and blocking techniques are basically the same. The player should always be in a position of balance, knees bent, back straight, body SLIGHTLY bent forward, HEAD UP, target area as near to the body as possible with the main contact being made with the shoulder.

Blocking and tackling by not putting the helmet as close to the body as possible could result in shoulder injury such as a separation or a pinched nerve in the neck area. The dangers of not following the proper techniques can be from minor to disabling to even death. The reason for following the safety rules in making contact with the upper body and helmet is that improper body alignment can put the spinal column in a vulnerable position for injury.

If the head is bent downward, the cervical (neck) vertebrae are in a bind and contact on the TOP OF THE HELMET could result in a dislocation, nerve damage, paralysis or even death. If the back is not straight, the thoracic (mid-back) and lumbar vertebrae are also vulnerable to injury with similar results if contact again is made to the TOP OF THE HELMET.

BASIC CONTACT POSITION AND FUNDAMENTAL TECHNIQUE

If the knees are not bent, the chance of knee injury is greatly increased. Fundamentally, a player should be in the proper hitting position at all times during live ball play. The injury could be anything from strained muscles, to ankle injuries, to serious knee injuries requiring surgery. The rules have made blocking below the waist (outside a two-yard by four-yard area next to the football) illegal. Cleats have been restricted to no more than 1/2-inch to further help in preventing knee injuries. A runner with the ball, however, may be tackled around the legs.

In tackling, the rules prohibit initial contact with the helmet or grabbing the face mask or edge of the helmet. These restrictions were placed in the rules because of serious injuries resulting from non-compliance to these safety precautions. Initial helmet contact could result in a bruise, dislocation, broken bone, head injury, internal injury such as kidneys, spleen, bladder, etc. Grabbing the face mask or helmet edge could result in a neck injury which could be anything from a muscle strain to a dislocation, nerve injury, spinal damage causing paralysis or death.

The above information has been explained to me and I understand the possibility of serious injury or death as a result of playing a contact sport. I also understand the necessity of using the proper techniques while participating in the football program.