

Line Judge Procedure Modified in High School Volleyball

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Line judges will be required to change sides of the court between sets when teams remain on the same bench. The change in officiating procedure highlights the 2024-25 high school volleyball rules changes.

In all, four rules changes were recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Volleyball Rules Committee at its annual meeting January 7-9. All rules changes were reviewed and approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Rule 5-9-2b, which outlines line judge responsibilities, includes the new note requiring that they switch sides of the court when, by state association adoption, teams remain on the same bench throughout the match. The corresponding item on the state association adoption chart was also amended to add the requirement, which was added to promote fair officiating.

“Since the pandemic many state associations have adopted the rule to require teams to remain on the same bench throughout the match,” said Lindsey Atkinson, NFHS Director of Sports and liaison to the Volleyball Rules Committee. “The unintended consequence of this adoption is that the same line judge officiates the same lines for the same teams throughout the match. This change allows teams to see both line judges and promote equity in officiating.

In other rules changes, Rule 11-4-1b now allows teams to substitute for a replacement player during a referee’s time-out when the libero is injured or ill, allowing the team to avoid playing the replacement out of position.

Two rules dealing with uniforms and rosters were amended to address when a uniform is damaged or has blood on it. Rule 4-2-3 Note was added to allow a player to change uniforms and for the roster to be adjusted accordingly with no penalty when a uniform is bloodied or damaged. Rule 7-1-1 Note was also changed to specify that blood on or damage to the uniform are acceptable reasons to change uniforms.

The first referee’s responsibilities were modified in Rule 5-4-3c(1) to direct players to the end lines prior to the first set and then direct starting players onto the court for play. Previously, only starting players were directed to the end lines for prematch announcements. The rule now allows but does not require teams to include more team members in the prematch ceremony.

A complete listing of the volleyball rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Volleyball.”

According to the most recent NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, volleyball is the second-most popular sport for girls (trailing track and field) with 470,488 participants in 16,610 schools nationwide. In addition, there are 77,287 boys participating in the sport at 3,376 schools.