

Football Advisory and SMAC Meeting

3/4/15

Meeting minutes –

Attendance: Nat Zunkel, Liz Short, Robert Ybarra, Mike Noll, Matt Fisher, Dennis Canny, Greg Gaa, Matt Walsh, David Vieth, Dr. Preston Wolin, Dr. Cynthia LaBella, Guest: Anthony Aldridge, IHSA Office staff, Associate Executive Director, Kurt Gibson, and Assistant Executive Director, Craig Anderson.

The committees reviewed current IHSA policies and by-laws related to football. By-law 3.157 provides limitations regarding summer participation for football players during the use of the 25 contact days. Football policy 13 provides specific restrictions on practice time and equipment during the first two weeks (week 6 and week 7 of the IHSA standardized calendar) of the practice season.

The committees reviewed the details provided by the NFHS Task Force on the Fundamentals for Minimizing Head Impact Exposure and Concussion Risk in Football. The NFHS Task Force identified 9 areas that state associations address if they haven't previously. In reviewing these areas, the committees were able to recognize a number of the areas having been addressed with the recent changes to IHSA by-law 3.157 and football policy 13. In addition, the educational component of concussions has recently been addressed with the concussion education courses required of high school coaches and athletic directors.

One of the areas to consider for state associations is limiting full-contact in practices. The committees discussed a variety of options for limiting contact in practices. Members of the football advisory committee shared that the majority of coaches are currently limiting full-contact during their game-week practices already to ensure that their players are healthy leading into their weekend contests. Taking into account all levels of football at the high school level (freshman – senior) and all experience levels, the committees agreed upon the following recommendation regarding full-contact during the season:

Beginning week 8 of the IHSA standardized calendar and through the remainder of the season, full-contact will be allowed in no more than 3 practices per week and full-contact time is limited to no more than 90 minutes per week.

The committee also provided the following recommendation regarding twice-daily practices at any time during the season:

When schools conduct twice-daily practices, only one session per day may include full contact.

The NFHS Task Force paper also suggests member state associations review current policies regarding total quarters or games played during a one-week time frame. The committee took some time to review this suggestion and discussed some key points regarding this issue. The committee understands that current IHSA guidelines provide no individual player limitations on the number of quarters or the number of games played per week. The SMAC committee members recalled a movement years ago

within the association to eliminate playing two play-off football games in one week as statistical data indicated an increase in injuries during that time. The committees discussed concerns over individual players competing in more than one contest in one day or over consecutive days. When reviewing a possible limit on quarters per week, the committees discussed the burden that could be placed on smaller schools trying to provide multiple levels of play with limited numbers of players. In general, the committees agreed that a limitation in this area needs to be considered in the future. Members of the football advisory committee noted that they play in conferences that already have a quarter limitation for individual players. The committee recommends the IHSA gather this information from each conference for review in considering a statewide restriction on quarters per week and/or games per week.

The committees recommend no additional restrictions on types of contact allowed during the pre-season (weeks 6 and 7 of the IHSA Standardized calendar). The committees do recommend an emphasis in policy noting the goal of the pre-season practice time should be to teach proper fundamentals of football, most importantly blocking and tackling.

The committees received a copy of and reviewed an Amendment to Illinois Senate Bill 7 of which Dr. Cynthia LaBella provided some information. Dr. LaBella asked that the committee members review the details of the Amendment and follow-up with her regarding any questions. The Amendment is to bring the IHSA Concussion Return to Play policies to all organized sport teams in Illinois. The educational component of this policy would also extend to licensed sport officials.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25pm.