

## NFHS Spirit Rules Changes 2007-08

2-1-4 (New) When discarding props (signs, etc.) that are made of solid material, or have corners or sharp edges, team members must gently toss or place the props.

RATIONALE: This rule was written to avoid injury of a team member, spectator, or official.

2-1-7 The use of mini-tramps, spring boards, spring-assisted floors or any height-increasing apparatus is illegal for use during performances/competitions.

RATIONALE: These devices are by definition “height-increasing apparatuses” and should not be used for anything other than a teaching tool. (See Points of Emphasis)

2-5-2 (New) Bases of extended stunts must have both feet in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface.

RATIONALE: Adding this restriction will help ensure the stability of extended stunts. Under the current rule, both bases of a liberty could legally perform one-leg stunts (ex. Heel stretch), causing greatly increased risk to the flyer.

2-8-3  
(Exceptions 1 and 2  
New)

In braced partner stunts/pyramids, at least one bracer of each pair must be at shoulder height or below.

Exception 1: The following extended stunts may brace any other extended stunt:

- a. Chair
- b. Multi-base deadman lift
- c. Multi-base straddle lift

Exception 2: Extensions may brace the stunts listed above and other extensions (except a totem pole.)

RATIONALE: Exception 1: As the variety of partner stunts and transitions increases, the role of the bracer must keep pace. Allowing these relatively stable extended stunts to brace an expanded number of extended stunts does not present unreasonable risk to participants. Exception 2: Extensions have a higher center of gravity than the stunts listed in Exception 1, and should not brace extended stunts that are less stable.

2-9-1 (c) New

A forward suspended roll is legal provided all the following conditions are met:

- a. It begins from a stunt shoulder height or below.
- b. In multi-base stunts, the flyer maintains continuous hand-to-hand/arm contact with two bases/posts.
- c. In single base stunts, the flyer maintains continuous hand-to-hand/arm contact with two posts.
- d. The bases control the flyer's dismount to the performing surface or cradle.

RATIONALE: In (c), Allowing a single base to also assist the flyer's dismount can cause a twisting rotation and an unsteady landing on the performing surface.

2-10-1 (e) New

In all tosses:

- a. The flyer must be directed vertically and be caught by the original bases.
- b. Participants must not pass over or under other participants
- c. The catchers and spotter must remain in their original positions unless making adjustments for safety purposes.
- d. The flyer must not become inverted (head below waist)
- e. The flyer must not hold objects in her/his hands (i.e. poms, signs, etc.) Exception: Load-in tosses. (previously called "tosses into partner stunts" or "toss to hands, etc.")

RATIONALE: In (e), holding objects during a toss presents considerable risk to all participants, especially if safety adjustments become necessary. The exception for load-in tosses (previously known as "tosses into partner stunts: or "toss to hands") was added because the loss of contact in that type of toss is not high enough to present unreasonable risk to participants.

## **Spirit Rules Changes - Points of Emphasis**

Points of Emphasis highlight the major rules changes and emphasize other rules for which additional clarification may be needed.

Coaching – Spirit coaches are to be reminded that these rules are the minimum safety standard for all interscholastic high school spirit programs. If in the opinion of the qualified spirit coach situations seem unsafe, the coach should make appropriate accommodations. Coaches' responsibilities include appropriate progressions when training teams and enforcing general risk management rules. If trends continue in poor execution of stunts the NFHS will be forced to review these stunts and minimize risk. Furthermore, coaches need to continue to make reasonable accommodations for all athletes including special needs students. These accommodations, however, should not fundamentally alter the game, competition or performance.

Double downs – Currently there are no restrictions on double downs (double twist into a cradle). The double down is a higher level skill and it is imperative that coaches follow the progressions in learning this skill. Athletes should not be allowed to perform skills for which they are not properly prepared.

Spring-assisted surfaces – Recent developments in non-school cheerleading programs have created a trend of using spring floors for cheerleading performances. This trend is a concern for high school programs for several reasons. Spring floors are designed to assist a performer in tumbling skills. Therefore, they can give a false sense of security to athletes who are not performer-ready, potentially resulting in additional risks. In addition, high school safety rules are written with the understanding that the primary performance surface will be a gym floor, outdoor grass or track, or matted floor. Spring floors are typically associated with high-level tumbling skills such as double full twisting layouts which are prohibited for high school spirit teams.

The standard of care for school cheerleading performance surfaces is generally accepted as a non-spring floor. Spring-assisted devices such as spring floors, springboards and mini-trampolines can be valuable teaching tools to assist in skill acquisition and development. These devices, under the supervision of a person specifically trained in their use, can be used in practice as a teaching tool.

Tosses – Basket tosses and other similar multi-base tosses are allowed on soft yielding surfaces. If a mat is used, it should cover the entire area under the stunt group and provide flat, uniform thickness with a consistent surface free of obstructions and uneven edges. Basket tosses and other similar multi-based stunts are not allowed on gym floors.

The flyer in a basket toss and other similar multi-based stunts is not allowed to hold objects in his/her hands (poms, signs, etc.) Holding props during a toss presents risk to participants especially if safety adjustments become necessary.

Bracers - Extended Stunts as Bracers - Certain extended stunts are very stable and are therefore acceptable to brace other extended stunts. Chairs, multi-base dead man lifts and multi-base straddle lifts are now permitted to brace any other extended stunt.

Officials - Other NFHS sport specific rules books have regulations that may limit where spirit teams are located and the equipment they may use. In all cases, the game official's decision is final.