

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

Spirit Rules Committee Clarifies Use of Assisted Stunts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Susan Loomis

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 5, 2010) – Among several new rules changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Spirit Rules Committee, there are now guidelines for teams that wish to perform stunts involving suspended splits with bracers.

Rule 2-8-14 states that in a suspended splits stunt involving bracers, the flyer must have both hands in contact with the bracer or bracers, may not be inverted and must have at least two bases. In addition, each bracer and the flyer must have separate spotters unless the bracer is in a shoulder sit or thigh stand. The rule change also states that if the flyer is not released by the bases, the bracers must maintain hand or arm contact with the flyer until he or she is no longer in a split position.

“The previous Rule 2-8-13 had rules for both suspended splits stunts with and without bracers,” said Susan Loomis, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Spirit Rules Committee. “We realized we had to be more specific in how we wrote the rules for that stunt.”

To be consistent with Rule 2-13-2, there was an exception added to Rule 2-6-7 regarding stunts involving twists. During stunts, participants are now permitted to do 1¼ twists from side-facing stunts.

According to the committee, twist cradles from side-facing stunts present only minimally more risk than single twists and the extra quarter-twist allows the flyer to face forward before completing the rotation.

There were also two rule changes that apply specifically to dancers.

While dancers were once required to wear footwear during competition, another exception was made to Rule 3-1-6 that allows dancers an alternative. Dancers are now allowed to wear dance paws and as well as pedini-style dance shoes that have heels of sufficient height to raise the bottom of the foot off the floor.

Dance paws allow movement of the foot without compromising the look and feel of barefoot dancing while preventing friction burns and skin tears.

“As a compromise, we’ve allowed these dance paws,” Loomis said. “We still believe there should be something on the ball of the foot.”

Also, with the growing use of hip-hop routines in dance competitions, new Rule 3-7 addresses assisted inverted floor stunts.

With this rule, athletes are allowed to do assisted floor stunts provided the inverted participant is in direct contact with the performing surface and provides primary self-support throughout the stunt and that the assisting, non-inverted participant is in direct weight-bearing contact with the performing surface and is providing only partial support for the inverted participant.

“The number of hip-hop routines is increasing dramatically,” Loomis said. “We never really had a section on assisted floor stunts and previously there were no rules on this, so we felt it necessary with its growing popularity to add the rule.”

Loomis said all rule changes are made in the interest of safety for all participants.

“The goal of the committee is always to minimize risk for the participants,” Loomis said. “As our athletes become more sophisticated, our committee has to look at all aspects of stunting and participation in terms of safety.”

Following are other changes made by the NFHS Spirit Rules Committee:

- A significant change to Rule 2-1-15 that will affect all sports requires that any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, including but not limited to loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems, must be removed from the contest immediately and shall not return to play before being cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.
- Rule 2-2-8 outlines the guidelines for guards, casts and braces allowed during play. Additionally, the use of prostheses must be authorized by the individual state association. They must be determined to not be any more dangerous to players than the corresponding human body part or parts and do not put the opponent at a disadvantage. This update was made in order to provide consistency among all sports.

A complete listing of all rules changes approved by the committee is available on the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Athletics & Fine Arts Activities” on the home page, and select “Spirit.”

Competitive spirit is the ninth-most popular sport for girls at the high school level, according to the 2008-09 High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS, with 117,793 participants nationwide. It ranks 10th in school sponsorship with 4,748 schools sponsoring the sport. In addition, 2,251 boys participate in competitive spirit at 456 schools. Also, there are 10,635 boys and girls who participate in dance and drill nationwide.

Additionally, a 2009 survey by the NFHS reports there are nearly 400,000 spirit participants nationwide, including both competitive and sideline cheer.

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This press release was written by Emily Newell, a spring intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a sophomore at Butler (Indiana) University.

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and Rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing Rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.5 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Bruce Howard or John Gillis, 317-972-6900
National Federation of State High School Associations
PO Box 690, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
bhoward@nfhs.org or jgillis@nfhs.org