



November 12, 2025

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule References: 4-6-1a & 4-6-1b – Basket Interference (2025)

Purpose

The purpose of this interpretation is to clarify the expanded definition of basket interference and ensure consistent enforcement by officials. It emphasizes that actions which unfairly affect the ball while in a scoring position—whether direct contact with the ball or manipulation of the basket/backboard—will be penalized to preserve fairness and integrity in scoring situations.

Rule Language

4-6-1a & 4-6-1b – Basket Interference:

“Basket interference occurs when a player touches the ball, backboard, or basket in a manner that unfairly affects a scoring attempt. This includes slapping or striking the backboard, causing the backboard or basket to vibrate, while the ball is on or within the basket, touching the backboard, or within the cylinder.”

Interpretation

This rule change clarifies and expands the definition of basket interference to include additional actions that unfairly affect the ball while it is in a scoring position.

Key points:

- Basket interference applies not only when touching the ball directly in the cylinder or on the rim, but also when causing movement or vibration to the basket or backboard that affects a live scoring attempt.
- Any attempt to manipulate the basket, backboard, or ball to gain an advantage while the ball is in a scoring position is considered a violation.

Game Scenario

- Team A attempts a lay-up. While the ball is touching the backboard and is directly above the cylinder. A Team B player slaps the backboard, causing it to vibrate, and the ball falls out without going through the basket. This is considered basket interference by Team B. The official awards the basket to Team A. **RULING:** Correct Procedure **COMMENT:** The rule ensures fairness in scoring situations by preventing players from using physical manipulation of the basket or backboard to influence the outcome of a shot.

Officials must:

- Watch for players slapping or striking the backboard while the ball is in a scoring position.
- Penalize any interference with the basket, cylinder, or backboard that unfairly affects the ball.
- Award the basket if the violation occurs during a live scoring attempt.
- Understand the distinction between **basket interference** (manipulating basket/backboard) and **goaltending** (touching the ball illegally, defensive penalty only).

Points of Emphasis for Officials and Coaches

- **Expanded definition** includes causing vibration to the basket or backboard.
- Basket interference now covers indirect actions affecting a scoring attempt, not only direct contact with the ball.
- Proper enforcement maintains fairness and prevents exploitation of the backboard or basket.
- Educate players on avoiding actions that could constitute interference.
- Distinguish between **basket interference** and **goaltending** to ensure correct rulings.



November 19, 2025

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations
Rule Reference: 4-34-1 – Definition of a Player (2025)

Purpose

The purpose of this interpretation is to clarify the updated definition of a player and ensure consistent enforcement by officials. By recognizing that a player is one of the five team members legally on the court at any given time—except during time-outs or intermissions—officials, coaches, and players can avoid misapplication of penalties and maintain accountability for all team conduct. This clarification:

- Helps distinguish between players on the court, substitutes, and bench personnel during dead ball periods.
 - Supports consistent enforcement of rules regarding penalties for technical fouls.
 - Reinforces that coaches are accountable for the conduct of all team members during time-outs and intermissions.
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Rule Language

4-34-1 – Definition of a Player:

“A player is defined as one of the five team members legally on the court at any given time, except during time-outs or intermissions. This clarification ensures proper identification of players and accountability of the team.”

Interpretation

- A player is only considered as such while actively on the court during live play or during brief dead ball periods other than time-outs or intermissions (e.g. after fouls, violations, held ball situations, etc.)
 - During time-outs and intermissions, all five players for each team become bench personnel for the purpose of penalizing unsporting behavior.
 - During time-outs, intermissions, or other stoppages, all individuals who are part of or affiliated with a team, including, but not limited to: substitutes, coaches, manager(s) and statistician(s) are considered bench personnel.
 - Time-outs start when the official signals for the table to start the time-out clock.
 - Intermissions begin when the signal illuminates or sounds indicating time has expired in the previous quarter/extra period except when free throws are awarded because of a foul as time expires. When this additional activity is needed, the quarter ends when free throws are completed.
 - Officials should focus enforcement on players on the court, while maintaining accountability of the team through the coach for any misconduct by substitutes or bench personnel.
 - Time-outs and intermissions end when the ball becomes live following the time-out or intermission.
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Game Scenario #1:

After a time-out is granted, A-1 is walking toward the bench area and directs an unsporting comment toward an official **a) before** the official directs the timer to start the clock for the time-out **b) after** the official directs the timer to start the clock for the time-out.

In both **a)** and **b)** A-1 is charged with an unsporting technical foul. In **b)** the technical foul is also charged indirectly to the head coach of Team A which results in loss of coaching-box privileges.

RULING: Correct Procedure. After the timer was directed to start the clock for the time-out, A-1 become bench personnel.

Game Scenario #2

During a timeout in the final minute, a substitute A-6 leaves the bench area and verbally directs a comment toward an official in a manner deemed unsportsmanlike. A-6 is considered bench personnel is charged with a technical foul. The technical foul is also indirectly charged to the Team A head coach, who is responsible for bench conduct.

RULING: Correct Procedure

COMMENT: These scenarios help officials:

- Correctly distinguish players versus bench personnel during dead ball periods during the game.
- Prevent misapplication of penalties for technical fouls that will be charged to players, bench personnel and head coaches.
- Hold coaches accountable for team conduct during time-outs and intermissions.

Points of Emphasis for Officials and Coaches

- Player designation: Only five team members on the court are players at any given time.
- Non-player personnel: Substitutes, bench staff, and others on the floor during time-outs or intermissions are not considered players.
- Accountability: Coaches are responsible for the behavior of all team personnel during non-play periods.
- Consistent enforcement: Ensures correct application of technical fouls penalties and avoid confusion and misinterpretation of the rules.



November 26, 2025

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule Reference: 7-5-4 – Throw-In Spot Determination (2025)

Purpose

The purpose of this interpretation is to clarify the updated procedure for determining the designated throw-in spot in both the frontcourt and the backcourt following a stoppage of play not caused by the ball going out of bounds. Beginning in 2025, officials are to use the three-point line to determine the location of a designated-spot throw-in, instead of relying on an imaginary line. This change enhances:

- Accuracy: Clear, visible court markings, in both the frontcourt and the backcourt, reducing judgment errors.
 - Consistency: All officials can apply the rule the same way across all facilities.
 - Clarity: Coaches and players better understand throw-in locations since the markings are familiar and visible.
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Rule Language

7-5-4 – Throw-In Spot:

Officials shall determine the designated spot by using the three-point line. If the stoppage of play occurs on or within the three-point line, the designated spot shall be the nearest point on the end line 3-feet outside the lane line. (See Diagram.) If the stoppage occurs outside the three-point line, the designated spot shall be the nearest sideline at the 28-foot line.

Interpretation

- When play is stopped for any reason other than an out-of-bounds violation, a technical foul, or to begin a quarter, the throw-in spot is now based on the three-point line.
 - Officials no longer use an imaginary line to approximate the throw-in area.
 - This provides a more visible and consistent reference point for both teams and officials.
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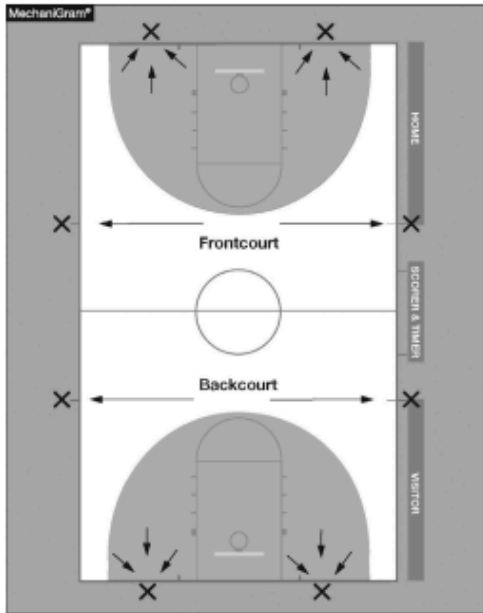
Game Scenario

Team A has the ball in its frontcourt when B2 commits a foul outside the three-point line, near the scorer's table. Play is stopped, and Team A is awarded a throw-in at the 28-foot mark table-side. (See Diagram) **RULING:** Correct Procedure **COMMENT:** Using the three-point line provides a clear and fixed marker, preventing confusion about where the ball should be inbounded and reduces inconsistency

Points of Emphasis for Officials and Coaches

- Throw-in spots in the frontcourt and the backcourt after stoppages not caused by the ball going out of bounds, technical fouls and to begin a quarter are now determined by the three-point line.
- Imaginary lines are no longer used.
- Officials must consistently apply this rule for all frontcourt and backcourt throw-ins.

- Coaches should ensure players are aware of this new procedure to avoid confusion during games.
- Throw-ins resulting from a technical foul or to begin a quarter will continue to be administered at the division line.





December 3, 2025

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule Reference: 9-2-12 & 9-3-4 (NEW) – Thrower Returning Inbounds

Purpose

The purpose of this interpretation is to clarify the new rule addressing throwers who purposely and/or deceitfully delay returning inbounds after legally being out of bounds and then become the first to touch the ball upon re-entering the court.

Beginning in 2025, this action is treated as a violation instead of a technical foul. This change:

- Reduces severity: Shifts from a technical foul (which carried harsher consequences) to a violation, aligning with similar out-of-bounds provisions.
- Encourages consistency: Officials can more uniformly enforce the rule across varying situations.
- Prevents unfair advantage: Eliminates deceptive tactics used by throwers to delay and then re-enter in a way that disrupts fair play.

Rule Language

9-2-12 & 9-3-4 (NEW):

“A thrower who purposely and/or deceitfully delays returning inbounds after legally being out of bounds and then becomes the first player to touch the ball upon re-entering the court commits a violation. This was previously penalized as a technical foul.”

Interpretation

- A thrower who is out of bounds legally during a throw-in must re-enter the court promptly.
- If the thrower intentionally delays re-entry and then becomes the first to touch the ball, it is now ruled a violation.
- This aligns with other rules regarding out-of-bounds players, removing the harsher penalty of a technical foul.

Game Scenario

During a throw-in, A1 is legally out of bounds to complete the throw-in. After releasing the ball, A1 deliberately delays re-entry to allow a screen to develop and then quickly steps back onto the court to catch a return pass, becoming the first player to touch the ball. This action is ruled a violation. The ball is awarded to Team B at one of the four designated spots nearest to where the violation occurred. **RULING:** Correct Procedure

COMMENT

- Under prior rules, this would have resulted in a technical foul against Team A.

- The updated rule ensures the action is penalized but with the appropriate severity of a violation, promoting more consistent enforcement.
- The intent is to stop deceptive re-entry tactics while keeping the penalty proportional to the infraction.

Points of Emphasis for Officials and Coaches

- This is no longer a technical foul; it is a violation.
- Officials should be alert for players attempting to delay or deceive during re-entry after a throw-in.
- Coaches must instruct players that re-entry must be immediate and legal.
- The penalty: Opponents are awarded the ball at one of the four designated spots nearest the violation.



December 10, 2025

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule Reference: 4-11 (Continuous Motion)

Purpose

The continuous motion rule exists to allow an offensive player to complete a legitimate try or tap for goal when a defensive foul occurs during the shooting attempt. When a defensive foul occurs after the habitual throwing motion has begun but before the ball is clearly in flight, the rule permits the shooter to complete the normal shooting motion, including customary arm, foot, and body movements. This rule applies only to defensive fouls and only within the defined interval from the start of the habitual throwing motion until the ball is released.

Rule Language

- 4-11-1: Continuous motion applies to a try or tap for field goals and free throws, but it has no significance unless there is a foul by any defensive player during the interval which begins when the habitual throwing movement starts a try or with the touching on a tap and ends when the ball is clearly in flight.
- 4-11-2: If an opponent fouls after a player has started a try or tap for field goal, the player is permitted to complete the customary arm movement, and if pivoting or stepping when fouled, may complete the usual foot or body movement in any activity while holding the ball. These privileges are granted only when the usual throwing motion has started before the foul occurs and before the ball is in flight.
- 4-11-3: Continuous motion does not apply if a teammate fouls after a player has started a try or tap for field goal and before the ball is in flight. The ball becomes dead immediately.

Game Scenario # 1

A1 has ended their dribble in the free throw lane and (a) is stepping toward the basket; (b) is pivoting toward the basket. In both cases, B1 fouls A1. In (a), A1 legally finishes their last step. In (b), A1 completes the pivot, before immediately jumping to attempt a try. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), if the try is successful, the goal counts. If the try is unsuccessful, A1 will be awarded two free throws as it was a two-point attempt. **COMMENT:** It should be noted that A1 does not have to be stepping toward the goal for continuous motion to apply. Some shot attempts require a player to step away from the basket to begin the habitual motion that precedes a try (e.g. "step back" jump shot, 'euro step').

Game Scenario # 2

A1 starts the free-throwing motion when B5 fouls A5. **RULING:** The continuous motion rule applies and A1 may release the ball and if the throw is successful, the point counts.

Interpretation & Enforcement

- Continuous motion applies both to tries and taps for field goals and free throws, but it has no significance unless there is a foul by the defense during the interval which begins when the habitual trying or tapping movement starts and ends when the ball is clearly in flight.
- If a player with the ball is pivoting or stepping when fouled, they may complete the usual foot or body movement in any activity while holding the ball to complete the try.



December 17, 2025

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule Reference: Rule 4-49 — Faking Being Fouled

The rule exists to preserve the integrity of the game and protect the credibility of officiating. Players who fake being fouled gain an unfair advantage, place undue influence on officials, and misrepresent legitimate basketball actions. By penalizing such behavior:

- Officials ensure the game is decided by skill and legal play, not deception.
- Coaches and players understand that attempts to manipulate officiating will not be tolerated.
- Consistency is promoted across all levels of play, reinforcing respect for the rules.

For 2025–26, the NFHS has reaffirmed this point of emphasis to ensure renewed focus and consistent adjudication.

Rule Language

Rule 4-49 defines and establishes a procedure for addressing unsporting acts where a player fakes being fouled in an attempt to deceive officials. This includes actions such as:

- Exaggerating or embellishing contact on block/charge plays.
- Simulating impact during a shooting attempt.
- Using movements such as a head bob to create the appearance of illegal contact.

A corresponding official signal (#15) was introduced for enforcement. Faking being fouled results in a team warning on the first occurrence and escalates to a team technical foul if repeated.

Types of Faking Being Fouled

- **Head Bob**
 - Occurs when a player in control of the ball snaps their head back to simulate contact.
 - First infraction: Display signal #15, immediately sound the whistle, and report a team warning. The offending team retains possession and receives a throw-in.
 - Subsequent infractions: Display signal #15, immediately sound whistle, and charge a team technical to the offending team. The opponents are awarded two free throws and the ball at the division line opposite the scorer's table.
- **In the Act of Shooting**
 - Occurs when a shooter falls or exaggerates contact without defensive contact after releasing the ball.
 - First infraction: Display signal #15 displayed, the whistle is withheld, and play is allowed to continue.
 - Play stops when:
 - The try is successful;
 - The defense secures the rebound;
 - The offense rebounds without immediate attempt to score; or

- Another dead ball occurs.
- Subsequent infractions: Display signal #15, immediately sound whistle, count the goal counts if the try is successful. Charge a team technical foul to the offending team. The opponents are awarded two free throws and the ball at the division line opposite the table.
- **While on Defense**
 - Defensive player simulates being fouled by falling to the floor without illegal contact.
 - First Infraction/subsequent infractions: Display signal #15, the whistle is withheld, and play is allowed to continue.
 - Play should then be stopped when:
 - The offensive team scores (which may include multiple attempts at the basket),
 - The defensive team gains control of the ball,
 - The offensive team stops attacking the basket, or
 - Any other action creates a dead-ball situation.
 - First Infraction: A team warning is charged to the offending team. Play is resumed at the Point of interruption.
 - Subsequent Infraction: A team technical foul is charged to the offending team. The opponents are awarded two free throws and the ball for a division line throw-in.

Scenario

In the second quarter, A1 dribbles into the lane and snaps their head backward to simulate contact from B1, though no contact occurs. The lead official immediately recognizes the “head bob”, sounds the whistle, displays signal #15, and reports a team warning for faking being fouled. Team A retains possession of the ball at the designated throw-in spot nearest the infraction, determined by its location relative to the three-point line.

Ruling: Correct procedure.

Contrast: Later in the game, A2 attempts a jump shot and, after releasing the ball, falls backward to simulate contact though no contact occurs. The official immediately displays signal #15 and sounds the whistle to stop play. If A2’s try is successful, the goal will count. Because Team A has already received a prior warning, a team technical foul is assessed to Team A. Team B is awarded two free throws and possession of the ball at the division line opposite the table.

Interpretation & Enforcement

- The first offense by a team = *team warning*.
- Immediate whistle on “head bob” (all infractions) and jump shooter faking (second or subsequent infraction)
- Delayed the whistle on jump shooter faking (for the first infraction) or defensive flop (all infractions)
- After a team warning for faking, any subsequent infraction = *team technical foul*.
- Proper use of signal #15 communicates the infraction to players, coaches, and spectators.
- Consistency in enforcement deters faking and supports fair competition.

Conclusion: Rule 4-49, when correctly applied, strengthens game integrity and ensures that officiating decisions are based on actual play rather than deception.



January 7, 2026

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule 10-5 (Bench Decorum), Rule 10-6 (Head Coach's Rule), Rule 4-48 (Warning for Coach/Team Conduct), and 2025 POE: Bench Decorum and Sportsmanship

Purpose:

The purpose of this Point of Emphasis is to reaffirm the importance of proper behavior by coaches, substitutes, and bench personnel. The bench area sets the tone for a team's overall sportsmanship, and actions from this area directly impact game management and the perception of high school basketball. Emphasizing consistent enforcement of bench decorum prevents escalation of unsporting behavior, promotes respect for officials, and maintains the integrity of competition. This POE reminds officials to strictly enforce restrictions on leaving the bench area, standing, and engaging in unsporting communication, while holding coaches accountable for the behavior of their teams.

Interpretation:

- Rule 10-6-1 limits the head coach's privilege to remain standing within the confines of the coaching box for coaching purposes. Assistant coaches and bench personnel must remain seated, except under specific exceptions outlined in the rules.
- Rule 10-5 outlines unsporting conduct and includes actions such as disrespectfully addressing officials, inciting spectators, or otherwise engaging in behavior that discredits the game.
- Under the 2025 POE, officials are instructed to consistently enforce penalties for violations of these rules. Leniency in enforcement leads to inconsistent game management and undermines the authority of officials.

First infractions may result in a warning (when appropriate per Rule 4-48, (such as a first-time bench decorum issue) or a technical foul for subsequent or severe infractions. Coaches are ultimately responsible for ensuring substitutes and bench personnel demonstrate sportsmanship at all times.

Situation 1:

During the third quarter, the officiating crew issues a warning to Team A's assistant coach who is repeatedly standing and yelling instructions outside of the coaching box. Later, after a foul is called against Team A, the assistant coach again leaves the bench area, steps onto the court, and argues the call with an official.

RULING: A bench technical foul is assessed to Team A. This action falls under Rule 10-5 (bench decorum) and Rule 10-6 (Head Coach's Rule). The technical foul results in two free throws for Team B and the ball awarded at the division line. The head coach of Team A is also charged indirectly with the technical foul, as they are responsible for bench personnel.

NOTE: The head coach/team bench should receive only one warning which should be recorded in the scorebook for unsporting behavior. All other unsporting behaviors should be ruled as such and a technical foul assessed.

Contrast:

If, instead, the head coach of Team A respectfully questions the call from within the coaching box without gesturing or stepping onto the floor, no penalty is warranted. Officials should distinguish between respectful communication permitted under the rules and unsporting or excessive actions that disrupt the game.

Situation 2:

Following a goal by A1, the head coach of B confronts an official with language that is considered to be profane.

RULING: The official rules a technical foul on the head coach because of profane language.

COMMENT: A head coach/bench warning is not required to be issued before a technical foul may be assessed. If the behavior is considered major, a technical foul should be assessed.

Conclusion:

The 2025 POE on Bench Decorum and Sportsmanship reinforces that enforcement of these standards is not optional. Coaches and bench personnel must model the highest level of respect and sportsmanship. Officials are instructed to apply the rules consistently, using warnings when appropriate but assessing technical fouls without hesitation when behavior exceeds rule allowances. Strict adherence ensures fairness, minimizes game disruptions, and upholds the educational mission of interscholastic athletics.



January 14, 2026

NFHS Weekly Basketball Rule Interpretation

Rule 4-22-3 (NEW): Goaltending

Purpose:

The adoption of Rule 4-22-3 clarifies that once the ball contacts the backboard, it is considered to be on its downward flight. If any part of the ball is above the ring level and is then touched by a defensive player and still has the possibility of entering the basket, it is goaltending.

The purpose of this rule change is threefold:

1. Protect legitimate shot attempts by ensuring that players do not interfere with a try after it has contacted the backboard.
2. Reduce rough rebounding situations by discouraging premature player contact with the ball once it contacts the backboard.
3. Addresses a common misconception among coaches, players, and fans because of differences with other rules codes (e.g. NCAA) by providing officials with a clear and enforceable standard.

This change promotes consistency in officiating by removing ambiguity and ensures that offensive attempts are not interfered with once the ball has contacted the backboard.

Interpretation:

- Under the new rule, when the ball contacts the backboard, it immediately signifies the ball is on its downward flight.
- If the ball has the possibility of entering the basket, any defensive touch is considered goaltending.
- Points are awarded accordingly: two points (or three, if the try is attempted from beyond the arc) are scored for the shooter's team.
- This differs from basket interference, which involves touching the ball any part of the ball while it is within the cylinder.

Officials must understand that when the ball contacts the backboard, they no longer need to determine "if the ball is on its downward flight?"-Touching the ball after it contacts the backboard is goaltending if the ball has a chance to enter the basket.

Situation 1:

A1 drives to the basket and attempts a layup. The ball contacts the backboard on its upward flight when B2 jumps and makes contact with the ball.

RULING: Goaltending. By rule (4-22-3), once the ball contacted the backboard, it was considered to be on its downward flight. Since the ball still had a chance to enter the basket, two points are awarded to Team A.

Situation 2

A1 attempts a try that is offline and has no chance to enter the basket. The ball contacts the backboard when B2 jumps and makes contact with the ball.

RULING: Legal Play. Since the ball still had no chance to enter the basket, this is legal and play should be allowed to continue.

Conclusion:

Rule 4-22-3 provides officials with a clear standard for adjudicating goaltending on plays that involve touching the ball after it contacts the backboard. By eliminating guesswork about whether the ball, after striking the backboard, is on its upward or downward flight the officials can apply the rule with consistency and accuracy. This rule protects offensive players' scoring opportunities, reduces confusion for coaches and fans, and strengthens game integrity.

Goaltending Chart

Category	Goaltending
Definition (4-22-1)	Illegal touching of a live ball, by a <u>defensive</u> player, while it is on its downward flight toward the basket, entirely above ring level, and has the possibility of entering the basket.
Key 2025 Rules Change (4-22-3)	Ball contacting the backboard = automatically considered on its downward flight (Rule 4-22-3).
Examples	- Defensive player touching ball on its downward flight outside cylinder with a chance to enter the basket. - Touching the ball after it hits the backboard.
Penalty	2 or 3 points awarded depending on where the try originates. Ball awarded to opponent for throw-in.



January 21, 2026

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

2025-26 Points of Emphasis: Contact on the Ball Handler and End-of-Game Contact

Rule Reference: 4-19-3 (Intentional Foul)

Purpose

This 2025-26 Point of Emphasis reinforces the need for consistent enforcement of illegal contact involving the ball handler.

Particular attention is required during late-game situations, where strategic fouling often occurs. While fouling to stop the clock is an accepted coaching and playing strategy, it does not change the standards by which the contact is evaluated.

Prior to the 2025-26 season, the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee approved an editorial revision deleting the phrase on contact “that is specifically designed to stop the clock or keep it from starting,” from the intentional foul rule (4-19-3c), further clarifying that intentional foul rulings are based on the nature of the contact, not the game situation.

- Officials must apply the same standards throughout the game, including late-game scenarios.
- Determinations regarding intentional fouls must be based on the act itself, not on game context, score, time remaining, or verbal directives from the head coach. (e.g., “foul” or “red”).
- Distinguishing between incidental contact, common fouls and intentional fouls is imperative to ensure we are fair to both teams at the end of the game.

Rule Language

Rule 4-19-3 defines an intentional foul as a personal or technical foul that may or may not be premeditated and is not based solely on the severity of the act.

An intentional foul includes, but is not limited to:

- Contact that neutralizes an opponent’s obvious advantageous position.
- Contact away from the ball with an opponent who is clearly not involved in a play.
- Contact that is not a legitimate attempt to play the ball or the player.
- Excessive contact with an opponent while the ball is live or until an airborne shooter returns to the floor.
- Contact with a thrower-in.

Game Scenario #1

Late in the fourth quarter, Team B trails by six points. Team B's head coach instructs players to foul. B1 responds by reaching for the ball but illegally contacting A1 on the arm.

RULING: Reaching for the ball but illegally contacting A1 on the arm is a common foul, as B1 made a legitimate attempt to play the ball.

COMMENT: Fouling near the end of a game is an acceptable coaching and playing strategy. Officials must determine if a foul is intentional by judging the fouling act itself, not whether or not the coach instructed a player to perform the act. (4.19.3D)

Game Scenario #2

Late in the fourth quarter, Team A leads by three points and Team B wishes to foul to stop the clock. B1 from behind grabs A1 and pulls them to the floor.

RULING: This is an intentional foul as the contact is not a legitimate attempt to play the ball or the player. (4.19.3.G)

Game Scenario #3

Late in the fourth quarter, Team A leads by three points and Team B wishes to foul to stop the clock. From behind, B1 reaches but is unable to keep a hand on A1 as they advance the ball toward the frontcourt.

RULING: The contact is incidental and play shall continue. B1 could not keep a hand on the dribbler, and the contact did not inhibit the freedom of movement of A1.

COMMENT: It is imperative for officials to understand that ruling incidental contact to be illegal in late game situations can create an unfair advantage for the team that is behind. The team that is ahead would prefer to maintain possession and keep the clock running. Officials should not change how they rule on incidental contact, even when they know the defensive team wants to foul. (4.19.3.G)

Interpretation & Enforcement

- Incidental Contact: Contact which does not hinder the opponent from participating in normal offensive movements.
- Common foul: Any illegal contact during a legitimate basketball plays on either the ball handler or while playing defense on a player away from the ball.
- Intentional foul: Excessive, non-basketball in nature, away from the ball, or clearly removes an opponent's advantageous position.

Officials must penalize all illegal contact that restricts the ball handler's freedom of movement, regardless of game time or strategy.



January 28, 2026

NFHS Basketball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule 4-41 Act of Shooting

Purpose:

The "airborne shooter" rule is intended to discourage defensive players from illegally contacting an airborne player who has released a ball on a try but has not yet returned to the floor. This rule clarifies that a player is still in the act of shooting while airborne, even after the release of the try, and grants appropriate free throws based on whether or not the try was successful.

Rule Language:

- An airborne shooter is a player who has released the ball on a try or tap for a goal or has tapped the ball and has not returned to the floor.
- The airborne shooter is considered to be in the act of shooting.
- The act of shooting begins simultaneously with the start of the try or tap for field goal and ends when the ball is clearly in flight, and includes the airborne shooter.

Interpretation:

Situation 1:

A1 is high in the air on a jump shot in the free-throw lane. A1 releases the ball on a try and is then fouled by B1 who has also jumped in an unsuccessful attempt to block the shot. A1's try is unsuccessful.

RULING: A1 is an airborne shooter when the ball is released until one foot returns to the floor. An airborne shooter is in the act of shooting. B1 has fouled A1 in the act of shooting. A1 is awarded two free throws for being fouled in the act of shooting. (b). (4-41-1) **COMMENT:** A player is awarded one free throw if fouled while attempting a successful two-point or three-point field goal. If the shot attempt is unsuccessful, the player receives two free throws for a two-point try or three free throws for a three-point try.

Situation 2 (New):

A1 attempts to dunk the ball. The ball contacts the ring and bounces away with no chance of entering the basket. To regain balance and avoid injury, A1 grasps the ring. As A1 releases the ring and returns to the floor, A1 makes contact with B1.

RULING: A1 is not penalized for hanging on the ring, as it was done to prevent injury. Once A1 grasps the ring, A1 is no longer considered an airborne shooter. If the contact by A1 does not restrict B1's freedom

of movement, it is incidental. If the contact is illegal, A1 is charged with a common foul. If the bonus is in effect, B1 is awarded free throws. While the ball remains in the imaginary cylinder or is on or within the basket, the basket interference rules apply. (4-6, 4-19-2, 10-4-2)

COMMENT: This clarifies that when a player hangs on the ring following a dunk attempt, they are no longer considered an airborne shooter, even if they have not yet returned to the floor. If A1 commits illegal contact after releasing the ring, it should not be considered a player-control foul. If the defender B1 committed illegal contact on A1 before A1 returns to the floor, it is not a foul in the act of shooting. In each of these situations, the penalty is determined by the bonus situation.

Situation 3 (New):

A1 dunks the ball into the basket. A1 hangs on the ring to regain balance and avoid injury. As A1 releases the ring and returns to the floor, A1 makes contact with B1. **RULING:** A1 is not penalized for hanging on the ring, as it was done to prevent injury. Once A1 grasps the ring, A1 is no longer considered an airborne shooter. As soon as the ball passes through the net, it becomes dead, and the goal is scored. Contact after the ball has become dead is incidental unless it is ruled intentional or flagrant or is committed by or on an airborne shooter. (4-19-1 Note, 10-4-2) **Conclusion:** The "airborne shooter" rule is designed to protect players in the act of shooting by preventing illegal contact while they are airborne after releasing a shot. It ensures that a player remains in the act of shooting until they return to the floor except when they have attempted to dunk the ball into the basket and hang on the ring.