



# NEWS RELEASE

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## Efforts Continue to Reduce Risk of Concussions

With the 2015 high school football season in the rearview mirror, Commissioner Bobby Cox recently communicated with school administrators and football head coaches of continuing efforts to minimize the risk of concussions.

Playing the nation's most popular sport with more than one million participants coast-to-coast, there is certainly a degree of risk assumed in the full-contact, collision sport of high school football. But the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) remain committed to player safety.

Through the NFHS rules-writing process, the use of online courses available to anyone at [NFHSLearn.com](http://NFHSLearn.com), and the adoption of state laws and protocols for managing concussion, attempts to educate and minimize player risk is at an all-time level. Information also is available within NFHS rules books, at [IHSAA.org](http://IHSAA.org) and IHSAA publications.

"High school football in our state has grown to enjoy its largest participation and the greatest number of member schools participating in our tournament series," says Cox. "With state laws and rules administration in place to govern removing individuals from games who exhibit concussion-like symptoms, to the reduction of contact in practices, and the continued education and awareness efforts, the focus on risk minimization has never been higher."

Within the past 10 years, the following are some of the important steps taken by the NFHS and IHSAA to manage the risk of concussions in not just football – but in all high school sports:

- **2005-present** – Through the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance System and Dr. Dawn Comstock, the NFHS and its member associations have used comprehensive injury data as a resource in the rules-writing process to reduce risk of future injuries.
- **2008** – The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee advocated that a concussed athlete must be removed from play and not allowed to play on the same day. The IHSAA followed the lead of the NFHS and began to develop its own concussion protocol.
- **2009-present** – All NFHS rules publications have contained guidelines for management of a student exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion. Such player shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.
- **2010** – The NFHS developed its "Concussion in Sport" online course at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com). This course is mandatory for every high school football coach in Indiana.
- **2011-2012** – The NFHS Football Rules Committee adopted "Concussions Related to Proper Use of the Helmet" as a Point of Emphasis.
- **2013-14** – The Indiana Football Coaches Association proposes language to the IHSAA speaking to pre-season and summer time limitations on activity days and full contact. The IHSAA unanimously approves the new language into its by-laws.

- **2014** – Indiana becomes the first state in the nation to require concussion awareness training for high school and youth football coaches. The legislation authored by Senator Travis Holdman, R-Markle also calls for a 24 hour waiting period for a youth football player suspected of suffering a concussion.
- **2014** – The NFHS Concussion Summit Task Force met in Indianapolis and adopted recommendations for reducing the amount of full contact in practices. State associations crafted their own policies based on these recommendations for implementation in the 2015 football season.
- **2014** – The NFHS Football Rules Committee adopted a definition and penalty for targeting aimed at preventing players from hitting an opponent – primarily with the helmet – above the shoulders.
- **2014-15** – The IHSAA develops an online tracking system whereby member schools may report a concussive event involving a student athlete in or out of the school setting. Athletic trainers report statistics to the IHSAA for data comparisons and study.
- **2015-16** – The Indiana Football Coaches Association continues discussions about live contact focusing on in-season practices.

With the topic of brain injury on the conscience of the sports-minded in recent years, it is important to know that the NFHS Football Rules Committee has made risk minimization its No. 1 priority and will do so again in January 2016 when it meets to examine the state of the game and address the needs of the students who play the sport. Equally, the IHSAA continues to work collaboratively with the Indiana Football Coaches Association (IFCA), the NFHS and other allied organizations to ensure the health and safety of our student athletes.

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***About the Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc. (IHSAA)***

*The IHSAA is a voluntary, not-for-profit organization that is self-supporting without the use of tax monies. Since its founding in 1903, the Association’s mission has been to provide wholesome, educational athletics for the secondary schools of Indiana. Its member high schools - public, institutional, parochial and private – pay no annual membership fee or incur entry fees to play in the Association’s tournaments. A state tournament series is conducted annually in 21 sports, 10 for girls, 10 for boys and one co-ed (unified track and field). A 19-person board of directors, elected by member school principals, governs the organization.*

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