

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

OFFICIAL NATIONAL INTERSCHOLASTIC RULES HANDBOOK

GRADES 6 – 8 | MIDDLE SCHOOL INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS

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In Time of Need Incorporated | 501(c)(3) Nonprofit

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This handbook governs all regular-season and postseason competition for NFMS-affiliated member schools. All rules contained herein are original NFMS standards developed independently for middle school interscholastic athletics. Coaches, Athletic Directors, officials, and athletes are bound by these rules for all sanctioned contests.

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PART I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Articles 1 – 4

ARTICLE 1 — PURPOSE, PHILOSOPHY & SCOPE

The National Federation of Middle School Sports (NFMSS) exists to govern, promote, and protect interscholastic athletics at the middle school level. NFMSS operates under the authority of In Time of Need Incorporated, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The rules contained in this handbook are original NFMSS standards, developed independently for the developmental, physical, and educational needs of students in Grades 6 through 8.

Rule 1.1 — Education-Based Mission

All NFMSS-sanctioned athletic competition shall serve as an extension of the school's educational mission. Participation is a privilege, not a right. Athletic programs must demonstrate positive outcomes in character development, academic engagement, physical literacy, and community responsibility.

Rule 1.2 — Scope of Application

These rules apply to all regular-season contests, invitational tournaments, postseason competition, and championship events sanctioned by NFMSS. Member schools, their coaching staffs, athletes, and designated representatives are bound by these rules from the moment they register as NFMSS members through the conclusion of the academic year.

Rule 1.3 — Prohibition of Non-NFMSS Rules

No member school may substitute, supplement, or replace any NFMSS rule with rules from AAU, club circuits, travel leagues, or any other non-NFMSS governing body at any NFMSS-sanctioned event.

PENALTY: Game forfeiture and administrative review of the offending school's membership status.

Rule 1.4 — Amendments & Interpretations

NFMSS reserves the right to issue rule interpretations, emergency amendments, and clarifications at any time. All official communications shall be distributed via the NFMSS member portal at nfmss.org and are effective upon publication.

ARTICLE 2 — DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Athletic Director (AD)	The school-designated administrator responsible for managing the school's interscholastic athletic program and ensuring compliance with all NFMSS rules.
Coach	Any adult who instructs, directs, or supervises student athletes in practice or competition under the auspices of a member school athletic program. Includes head coaches and all assistant coaches.
Contest	Any regular-season game, match, meet, or dual meet between two or more NFMSS member schools.

Event	Any organized athletic activity sanctioned by NFMSS, including but not limited to regular-season contests, invitationals, tournaments, and championships.
Member School	Any elementary or middle school institution that has completed NFMSS registration, paid applicable membership fees, and agreed to abide by NFMSS rules and bylaws for the current school year.
Official	A licensed or certified individual assigned to administer the rules of a contest as the referee, umpire, judge, or meet director.
Student Athlete	Any student enrolled in Grades 6, 7, or 8 at an NFMSS member school who participates in an NFMSS-sanctioned athletic program.
Ejection	The removal of a student athlete, coach, or spectator from an event by an official or school administrator for a rules violation or conduct infraction.
Suspension	A period during which a student athlete or coach is prohibited from participating in NFMSS-sanctioned competition, practice, or events.
Forfeiture	The administrative assignment of a loss to a school due to a rules violation, use of an ineligible player, or failure to comply with NFMSS requirements.
Mercy Rule	A competitive management rule that transitions to a running clock or ends a contest early when a predetermined point differential has been established.
Running Clock	A clock that continues to run without stopping except for official timeouts and injury stoppages, used to manage game length when a large scoring margin exists.

ARTICLE 3 — MEMBERSHIP & MEMBER SCHOOL OBLIGATIONS

Rule 3.1 — Annual Registration

Member schools must complete NFMS registration annually, no later than 30 days before the school's first scheduled athletic contest. Registration requires submission of the completed member school application, payment of all applicable fees, and agreement to abide by all current NFMS rules, bylaws, and policies.

PENALTY: Schools that compete before completing registration are subject to forfeiture of all contests played during the unregistered period.

Rule 3.2 — Handbook Distribution Obligation

Each member school Athletic Director must distribute a copy of this handbook — or a link to the current digital edition at nfmss.org — to every head coach, assistant coach, and designated team representative prior to the first practice of each season.

PENALTY: Failure to distribute: Written warning on first violation; \$100 compliance fee on subsequent violations.

Rule 3.3 — Rule Modification Distribution

Member school ADs must provide sport-specific rule modifications to all coaching staff and the local officials' assignor no later than 14 days before the first scheduled contest.

Rule 3.4 — Cooperation with Compliance Reviews

Member schools must cooperate fully with all NFMS compliance inquiries, audits, and investigations. Failure to respond to a compliance inquiry within 10 business days constitutes non-cooperation.

PENALTY: Suspension of membership and forfeiture of all contests until compliance is established.

Rule 3.5 — Record Retention

Member schools must retain all eligibility records, incident reports, PPE forms, and compliance documentation for a minimum of three (3) years from the date of creation. Records must be made available to NFMS upon request.

ARTICLE 4 — OFFICIAL AUTHORITY & ENFORCEMENT

Rule 4.1 — Authority of Officials During Contests

Certified officials have sole and absolute authority over all matters occurring within the field of play during a sanctioned contest. No coach, AD, parent, or spectator may overrule, rescind, or interfere with an official's ruling during play. Officials' decisions on judgment calls are final and not subject to protest.

Rule 4.2 — NFMS Compliance Authority

NFMS retains authority over all matters of eligibility, membership, conduct, and sanctions. The NFMS Compliance Office may review any contest, event, or conduct matter and issue findings, penalties, or remedies as appropriate.

Rule 4.3 — Mandatory Reporting

Any ejection, significant injury, law enforcement contact, or conduct violation occurring at an NFMS-sanctioned event must be reported to the NFMS Compliance Office within 48 hours using the official NFMS Incident Report form.

PENALTY: Failure to file within 48 hours: Written warning. Repeated failure: \$250 fine and compliance review of the member school's athletic program.

Rule 4.4 — Hierarchy of Authority

In any conflict between a member school policy and NFMS rules, NFMS rules govern. In any conflict between an official's ruling and a coach's interpretation, the official's ruling governs during the contest.

PART II

ELIGIBILITY & ROSTER STANDARDS

Articles 5 – 9

ARTICLE 5 — GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Rule 5.1 — Enrollment Requirement

To be eligible for NFMS-sanctioned competition, a student athlete must be currently enrolled full-time in Grades 6, 7, or 8 at an NFMS member school. Part-time, homeschool dual-enrollment, and online-only students must apply for eligibility determination through the NFMS Compliance Office prior to competition.

PENALTY: Use of an ineligible student: Forfeiture of all contests in which the student participated.

Rule 5.2 — Maximum Eligibility Period

A student athlete may not participate in NFMS-sanctioned middle school athletics for more than three (3) consecutive or non-consecutive academic years. Any year in which a student athlete participates in at least one official contest counts as one year of eligibility.

Rule 5.3 — One-Sport-Per-Season Rule

A student athlete may compete in only one NFMS-sanctioned sport per season. Athletes who are active on a roster for more than one sport simultaneously during the same season are ineligible in both sports until the conflict is resolved.

PENALTY: Ineligibility in both sports and forfeiture of affected contests.

Rule 5.4 — Physical Examination Requirement

Every student athlete must have a completed Pre-Participation Physical Evaluation (PPE) on file with the Athletic Director before participating in any practice or contest. PPE forms must be signed by a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant. PPE forms are valid for one academic year.

PENALTY: Participation without PPE on file: Immediate removal from practice/competition; retroactive forfeiture if discovered after competition.

ARTICLE 6 — AGE & GRADE ELIGIBILITY

Rule 6.1 — Maximum Age

A student athlete must not have reached their 15th birthday on or before August 1 of the current school year to be eligible for NFMS competition. Birth certificates or official government-issued identification may be required to verify age.

PENALTY: Use of over-age athlete: Forfeiture of all affected contests; compliance review.

Rule 6.2 — Grade Limitation

Only students enrolled in Grades 6, 7, or 8 are eligible. A student who has advanced to Grade 9 or beyond is ineligible regardless of age, even if they remain enrolled at a middle school facility.

Rule 6.3 — Repeating a Grade

A student who repeats a grade level due to academic failure retains eligibility provided they still meet all other eligibility requirements and have not exceeded their three-year maximum eligibility period.

Rule 6.4 — Early Graduation / Acceleration

Students who complete middle school coursework early and advance academically are ineligible for NFMS competition as soon as they are officially classified as high school students, regardless of physical age.

ARTICLE 7 — TRANSFER ELIGIBILITY

Rule 7.1 — Transfer Definition

A transfer is any student athlete who changes enrollment from one school to another after having participated in any NFMS-sanctioned athletic activity at their previous school during the current or immediately preceding academic year.

Rule 7.2 — Bona Fide Residence Transfer

A student athlete who transfers as a result of a documented bona fide family change of primary residence to the new school's attendance zone is immediately eligible upon enrollment at the new school, provided all other eligibility standards are met.

Rule 7.3 — Non-Residence Transfer

A student athlete who transfers for reasons other than a bona fide change of residence must sit out a minimum of 90 calendar days from the date of enrollment at the new school before becoming eligible for NFMS competition.

PENALTY: Competing during the 90-day waiting period: Immediate ineligibility and forfeiture of all contests in which the athlete participated.

Rule 7.4 — Athletic Motivation Transfer

Any transfer that NFMS determines to have been motivated primarily by athletic gain — including but not limited to inducement by a coach, booster, or school representative — shall result in the athlete being declared ineligible for a period of not less than one full academic year.

PENALTY: One-year ineligibility; possible suspension of the school's membership.

Rule 7.5 — Transfer Paperwork Requirement

The receiving school's Athletic Director must complete and file a Transfer Eligibility Verification form with the NFMS Compliance Office before the transferred athlete may practice or compete.

PENALTY: Failure to file: Game forfeiture if athlete competed; written warning to AD.

ARTICLE 8 — AMATEURISM STANDARDS

Rule 8.1 — Amateur Status Required

All student athletes must maintain amateur status in each sport in which they compete. Amateur status is defined as participation in sport without receiving financial compensation, prize money, or commercial endorsement based on athletic ability.

Rule 8.2 — Prohibited Compensation

The following activities constitute violations of amateur status: receipt of salary or payment for athletic participation; acceptance of prize money based on athletic performance; signing a contract with a professional sports organization or agent; endorsing products based on athletic fame; or entering into any Name, Image & Likeness (NIL) agreement.

PENALTY: Loss of eligibility for the remainder of the current season and up to one full academic year, depending on severity and duration of the violation.

Rule 8.3 — Permitted Activities

The following do not affect amateur status: participating in non-school club or travel teams during the off-season; receiving academic scholarships not based on athletic ability; accepting trophies, medals, or plaques of nominal value from NFMSS-sanctioned events; or working a job unrelated to athletic ability.

Rule 8.4 — Disclosure Obligation

All student athletes must complete and submit an NFMSS Amateurism Affirmation form annually. Any change in amateur status during the school year must be disclosed to the Athletic Director within five (5) business days.

PENALTY: Failure to disclose: Retroactive ineligibility and forfeiture of affected contests.

ARTICLE 9 — ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

Rule 9.1 — Minimum Academic Standard

Student athletes must meet their school's minimum academic eligibility requirements as established by school or district policy. NFMSS defers to member schools on specific GPA or credit thresholds, provided the standard is applied consistently to all athletes at the school.

Rule 9.2 — Mandatory Academic Progress Monitoring

Member schools must implement a grade-check system at minimum every four (4) weeks during each sport season. Coaches must report academic eligibility concerns to the Athletic Director within 48 hours of any grade-check result.

Rule 9.3 — Academic Suspension

A student athlete who falls below the school's academic eligibility threshold must be immediately suspended from competition (not practice) until the next scheduled grade check demonstrates academic recovery.

Rule 9.4 — Academic Priority

No practice, contest, or team travel obligation may be used as justification for a student missing a required academic exam, standardized test, or mandatory school event. Coaches who pressure students to miss academic obligations for athletic purposes are subject to immediate suspension.

PENALTY: Coach suspension pending investigation; potential dismissal for repeated violations.

PART III

CONTEST ADMINISTRATION

Articles 10 – 14

ARTICLE 10 — OFFICIALS: AUTHORITY, JURISDICTION & CONDUCT

Rule 10.1 — Pre-Contest Jurisdiction

Officials' jurisdiction begins upon their arrival at the contest venue and continues until they have left the premises following the conclusion of the contest. Officials have authority over all players, coaches, and bench personnel throughout this entire period.

Rule 10.2 — Official Certification

All officials working NFMS-sanctioned contests must hold current certification from a recognized officials' association or have been approved by the NFMS Compliance Office. No uncertified individual may serve as a primary official.

PENALTY: Use of uncertified official: The contest result may be invalidated upon complaint and review by NFMS.

Rule 10.3 — Officials' Misconduct

Officials are held to the same conduct standards as coaches and athletes. An official who exhibits bias, uses profane language, fails to report required information, or engages in any form of misconduct may be reported to their officials' association and to NFMS for review.

Rule 10.4 — Judgment vs. Rule Decisions

Judgment calls (e.g., whether a ball was in or out, whether a foul occurred) are final and may not be protested. Rule interpretation decisions (e.g., whether a penalty was correctly applied) may be protested per Article 14.

ARTICLE 11 — PRE-CONTEST RESPONSIBILITIES

Rule 11.1 — Facility Inspection

The host school Athletic Director is responsible for ensuring the competition facility is safe, properly prepared, and meets NFMS minimum standards before each home contest. This includes playing surface condition, boundary markings, lighting, spectator areas, and availability of emergency equipment.

PENALTY: Failure to meet facility standards: Officials may delay or cancel the contest without forfeiture penalty to the visiting school.

Rule 11.2 — Roster Certification

The head coach of each competing team must submit a signed roster to the official scorer and the opposing team's AD or coach no later than 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the contest. The roster must identify each athlete's name, jersey number, and grade level.

PENALTY: Failure to submit roster: The team may be restricted to the athletes present at the time of the deadline; no additions permitted after start of contest.

Rule 11.3 — Medical & Emergency Preparedness

A first aid kit, AED, and a person trained in first aid/CPR must be accessible at all NFMS-sanctioned contests. The host school must have an Emergency Action Plan on file and available at the venue. This is a mandatory non-negotiable safety requirement.

PENALTY: Failure to meet medical preparedness standards: Officials must delay the contest until the requirement is met. If not resolved within 30 minutes, the contest may be postponed.

Rule 11.4 — Officials' Pre-Game Meeting

Officials must conduct a pre-game meeting with both head coaches no later than 15 minutes before the scheduled start. The meeting must cover: any local facility ground rules, emergency procedures, and confirm understanding of NFMS-specific rule modifications.

ARTICLE 12 — GAME MANAGEMENT & TIMING PROTOCOLS

Rule 12.1 — Official Timekeeper

The official timekeeper must be a school representative or neutral party approved by both teams. The timekeeper operates under the authority of the officials and must follow all timing directives from the head official.

Rule 12.2 — Clock Malfunctions

In the event of a scoreboard or clock malfunction, officials shall use a certified stopwatch as the official timepiece. The official nearest the bench shall serve as the interim timekeeper. Play must not be delayed more than five minutes for a clock malfunction.

Rule 12.3 — Delays of Game

Intentional delay of game — including but not limited to deliberately slowing play to run out the clock in an unsportsmanlike manner, stalling on inbounds plays, or unnecessary prolonging of dead-ball situations — is a violation subject to warning and penalty.

PENALTY: First offense: Warning to head coach. Second offense: Technical foul, free throw, or equivalent penalty per sport-specific rules.

Rule 12.4 — Forfeiture for Failure to Appear

A team that fails to appear at a scheduled contest within 30 minutes of the scheduled start time without prior notification to NFMS and the opposing school forfeits the contest. Repeated forfeiture may result in suspension of the school's competitive schedule.

PENALTY: Forfeiture recorded; \$50 administrative fee assessed for first no-show.

ARTICLE 13 — SCORING & TIEBREAKER PROCEDURES

Rule 13.1 — Official Score

The score recorded by the official scorer at the conclusion of a contest is the official score of record. Scoreboard scores are for informational purposes; in case of discrepancy, the official scorer's book governs.

Rule 13.2 — Score Correction

Score corrections must be raised by the head coach immediately upon discovery and before the start of the next live-ball situation. Corrections not raised in a timely manner may not be honored at the official's discretion.

Rule 13.3 — Tiebreaker Procedures (Non-Tournament)

For regular-season contests that end in a tie, the result stands as a tie unless sport-specific rules in Part V provide for overtime periods.

Rule 13.4 — Tiebreaker Procedures (Tournament/Postseason)

All postseason and tournament contests must have a decisive outcome. Sport-specific overtime and tiebreaker procedures detailed in Part V shall be followed. If sport-specific rules do not provide for a tiebreaker, a sudden-victory period (first team to score) shall determine the winner.

ARTICLE 14 — PROTESTS & APPEALS

Rule 14.1 — Protestable Matters

Only rule interpretation decisions — not judgment calls — may be protested. A protest must allege that an official applied a rule incorrectly or failed to apply an applicable NFMS rule. Examples: incorrect penalty application, incorrect ineligible player ruling, incorrect forfeit decision.

Rule 14.2 — Filing a Protest

The head coach must notify the head official of the intent to protest before the next live-ball situation following the disputed ruling. A written protest must be submitted to the NFMS Compliance Office within 48 hours of the conclusion of the contest.

PENALTY: Protests not filed per this procedure will be dismissed without review.

Rule 14.3 — Protest Review Process

The NFMS Compliance Office will acknowledge receipt of a protest within 3 business days and issue a ruling within 10 business days. Both schools will be notified of the ruling in writing.

Rule 14.4 — Appeals

A school that disagrees with a protest ruling may appeal to the NFMS Board of Directors within 10 business days of the ruling. The Board's decision is final. Appeal submissions must include: the original protest, the ruling, and a written statement of the grounds for appeal.

PART IV

CONDUCT STANDARDS & PENALTIES

Articles 15 – 20

ARTICLE 15 — ATHLETE CONDUCT CODE

Student athletes represent their school, community, and the mission of NFMS at all times during sanctioned events. The following conduct standards apply from the time of arrival at the venue through departure following the contest.

Rule 15.1 — Respect for Officials

Athletes must at all times treat officials with respect. Disputing calls, arguing, using profane language toward an official, or making threatening gestures constitutes a conduct violation.

PENALTY: First offense: Warning. Second offense: Technical foul or equivalent per sport. Third offense: Ejection and minimum 1-contest suspension.

Rule 15.2 — Respect for Opponents

Athletes must treat opposing players, coaches, and school representatives with dignity at all times. Taunting, trash talk, deliberate physical provocation, or intimidation is prohibited.

PENALTY: Warning → Technical/flagrant penalty → Ejection, depending on severity.

Rule 15.3 — Physical Misconduct

Any athlete who strikes, shoves, spits at, or makes threatening physical contact with any official, opposing player, coach, or spectator shall be immediately ejected and suspended.

PENALTY: Automatic ejection. Minimum 3-contest suspension. Review for season-long or permanent ban depending on severity.

Rule 15.4 — Substance Prohibition

Athletes are prohibited from possessing, using, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or any performance-enhancing or controlled substance at any NFMS-sanctioned event or practice.

PENALTY: First offense: Minimum 3-contest suspension and mandatory parent conference. Second offense: Season suspension. Third offense: Dismissal from program.

Rule 15.5 — Social Media Conduct

Athletes are prohibited from posting content that defames, threatens, or demeans officials, opposing athletes, coaches, or school representatives in connection with NFMS competition. Posts discovered after a contest are subject to retroactive penalty.

PENALTY: Warning → suspension, depending on severity and reach of the content.

Rule 15.6 — Bench Conduct

Athletes on the bench must remain seated in the designated bench area except to warm up in designated areas. Leaving the bench to approach the court/field during an altercation is an automatic ejection.

PENALTY: Ejection of all players who leave the bench area during an altercation. Minimum 1-contest suspension for each ejected player.

ARTICLE 16 — COACH CONDUCT CODE

Rule 16.1 — Professional Standard

Coaches are held to the highest standard of professional conduct as adult role models for student athletes. Conduct that a reasonable person would find to be abusive, unprofessional, or threatening is prohibited at all times.

Rule 16.2 — Disputing Officials

A coach may, in a professional and respectful manner, request clarification of a rule interpretation from an official. A coach may not berate, demean, threaten, follow, or make sustained argument with an official.

PENALTY: First offense: Warning. Second offense: Bench technical or equivalent. Third offense: Ejection and 1-contest suspension.

Rule 16.3 — Abusive Language

Use of profane, racially offensive, sexually explicit, or personally demeaning language by a coach at any time during an event is grounds for immediate ejection regardless of prior warnings.

PENALTY: Immediate ejection. Minimum 2-contest suspension. Mandatory conduct review.

Rule 16.4 — Ejection Protocol for Coaches

An ejected coach must leave the facility completely — not just the bench area — within two minutes of ejection. The coach may not communicate with players, assistants, or officials from any location at the facility.

PENALTY: Failure to leave facility: Contest forfeiture. Additional suspension.

Rule 16.5 — Physical Misconduct

Any coach who makes physical contact with an official, opposing player, coach, or spectator in an aggressive or threatening manner shall be immediately ejected and suspended for a minimum of one calendar year.

PENALTY: Ejection. Minimum 1-year suspension. Review for permanent ban.

Rule 16.6 — Coach Certification

All head coaches must hold current first aid and CPR certification before the start of each season. ADs must verify and document certification annually. Certification records must be kept on file for three years.

PENALTY: Coaching without current certification: Removal from bench until certified.

ARTICLE 17 — SPECTATOR & FAN CONDUCT

Rule 17.1 — Spectator Responsibility

All spectators attending NFMSS-sanctioned events are guests of the host school and are subject to NFMSS Fan Conduct Policy. By entering the venue, spectators agree to abide by all conduct standards.

Rule 17.2 — Prohibited Spectator Conduct

The following are strictly prohibited: verbal threats or abuse directed at athletes, coaches, or officials; use of profane, obscene, or discriminatory language; entering the field/court without authorization; possession or use of alcohol or controlled substances; and any form of physical intimidation.

PENALTY: Warning → Ejection from venue → Law enforcement contact → Event ban, escalating based on severity.

Rule 17.3 — Parent/Guardian Responsibility

Parent or guardian conduct that results in ejection from an NFMSS event may, at NFMSS discretion, result in the affiliated athlete being suspended from the next scheduled contest, particularly when the parent's conduct endangered the safety of athletes, officials, or other spectators.

PENALTY: Athlete suspension of 1 contest when parent ejection endangers safety.

Rule 17.4 — Photography & Video

Photography and video recording of NFMSS events is permitted for personal use. Publication, broadcast, or online posting of content that defames, demeans, or inappropriately identifies student athletes (who are minors) is prohibited and may result in ejection and ban from future events.

ARTICLE 18 — PENALTY FRAMEWORK & SANCTIONS

NFMSS applies a tiered penalty framework designed to be proportionate to the severity and frequency of violations. The following table summarizes the standard penalty tiers:

Tier	Violation Category	Standard Penalty	Escalation
1	Minor conduct (bench decorum, verbal outbursts)	Warning from official	Technical foul/equivalent on 2nd offense
2	Technical foul / misconduct (arguing, profanity)	1-contest suspension	Ejection if continued; 2-contest suspension
3	Ejectable offense (flagrant foul, threatening behavior)	2-contest suspension	Compliance review; possible season suspension
4	Severe misconduct (physical assault, discrimination)	3-contest suspension	Review for season-long or permanent ban
5	Rules violation / eligibility fraud	Forfeiture of affected contests	Season suspension; possible expulsion from NFMSS

Rule 18.1 — Cumulative Violations

Penalties accumulate across the season. A student athlete or coach who receives three technical fouls or equivalent penalties in a single season is automatically suspended for the next two contests without further action required by the AD.

Rule 18.2 — Carryover Suspensions

Suspensions that are not fully served during the current season carry over to the next season the athlete or coach is active in an NFMS program. Suspensions may not be served during non-sanctioned events.

Rule 18.3 — Financial Penalties

NFMS may assess financial penalties against member schools for repeated compliance failures, failure to file required reports, or conduct violations at the institutional level. Financial penalties range from \$50 to \$1,000 per violation depending on severity.

Rule 18.4 — Forfeiture vs. Default

A forfeiture is a loss assigned due to a rules violation. A default is a loss assigned when a team is unable to compete due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g., illness, weather). Defaults do not carry the same compliance implications as forfeitures.

ARTICLE 19 — EJECTION PROCEDURES

Rule 19.1 — Ejection Authority

Officials, game administrators, and school administrators all have authority to eject individuals from an NFMS event. Officials may eject players and coaches. Administrators may eject spectators.

Rule 19.2 — Ejection Notification

When an athlete or coach is ejected, the head official must clearly and audibly announce the ejection and the reason. The ejected individual must leave the playing/bench area immediately.

Rule 19.3 — Mandatory Reporting

Every ejection must be documented and reported to NFMS on the Official Event Incident Report form within 48 hours of the event.

PENALTY: Failure to report: Written warning; \$100 administrative fee on second failure.

Rule 19.4 — Automatic Suspension Following Ejection

An ejected athlete or coach is automatically suspended from the next scheduled contest at minimum. The automatic suspension goes into effect immediately upon ejection and does not require NFMS confirmation to be enforced.

Rule 19.5 — Return from Ejection

An ejected individual may not return to any NFMS event in any capacity until the automatic suspension has been fully served. No exceptions.

PENALTY: Attendance at NFMSS event during suspension: Extended suspension doubled from original term.

ARTICLE 20 — SUSPENSION & DISQUALIFICATION

Rule 20.1 — Suspension vs. Disqualification

A suspension is a temporary removal from NFMSS competition for a defined number of contests or days. A disqualification is a permanent removal from NFMSS competition and may apply to individuals or schools.

Rule 20.2 — Serving Suspensions

Suspended athletes must be physically present at their school during all games missed due to suspension, unless the school determines the athlete poses a safety risk. Attending and sitting in the bleachers does not constitute serving a suspension for coaches.

Rule 20.3 — Reinstatement After Suspension

Reinstatement following a suspension of more than 3 contests requires written confirmation from the Athletic Director that the suspension has been fully served and all conditions of reinstatement have been met.

Rule 20.4 — Disqualification Process

Disqualification requires a formal hearing before the NFMSS Compliance Committee. The affected individual or school representative must be given written notice at least 10 business days before the hearing and an opportunity to present their case.

PART V

SPORT-SPECIFIC RULES & MODIFICATIONS

Articles 21 – 29

ARTICLE 21 — BASKETBALL (BOYS & GIRLS)

All NFMSS basketball contests shall be conducted under NFMSS rules as defined herein. These rules apply to all grade levels and divisions unless noted otherwise.

21A — GAME STRUCTURE & TIMING

Rule 21.1 — Quarter Length

Games shall consist of four (4) quarters of six (6) minutes each, stopped-clock. Halftime shall be ten (10) minutes. There shall be a two-minute intermission between quarters 1-2 and quarters 3-4.

Rule 21.2 — Overtime

If a game is tied at the end of regulation, a maximum of two (2) overtime periods of two (2) minutes each shall be played. If still tied after two overtime periods, a sudden-victory period begins — the first team to score 2 points wins.

Rule 21.3 — Timeouts

Each team is granted four (4) timeouts per game: two (2) full timeouts (60 seconds) and two (2) 30-second timeouts. One additional 30-second timeout is granted per overtime period. Unused timeouts do not carry over to overtime.

Rule 21.4 — Mercy Rule

When a team establishes a lead of twenty (20) or more points in the fourth quarter, the clock shall become a running clock. The clock returns to stopped-clock timing only if the lead falls below ten (10) points.

Rule 21.5 — Ball Size Standards

Girls divisions (all grades) and Boys 6th Grade divisions shall use a 28.5-inch (Size 6) basketball. Boys 7th and 8th Grade divisions shall use a standard 29.5-inch (Size 7) basketball.

PENALTY: Use of incorrect ball size: Official warning; ball replaced before next live-ball situation.

21B — FOULS & VIOLATIONS

Violation	Penalty
Personal foul	Free throws per standard rules; 5 fouls = player disqualification
Technical foul (player)	2 free throws + possession; automatic 1-game suspension on 2nd technical
Technical foul (coach)	2 free throws + possession; 1-game suspension on 2nd technical in same game

Flagrant foul	2 free throws + possession + ejection; minimum 2-game suspension
Intentional foul (non-flagrant)	2 free throws + possession
Leaving bench during altercation	Ejection + 1-game suspension minimum
Delay of game	Warning → technical foul on second offense
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Warning → technical → ejection based on escalation

21C — PLAYING RULES

Rule 21.6 — Full-Court Press Restriction (6th Grade)

In 6th Grade divisions, no team may employ a full-court press defense during the first three quarters of any regular-season contest. A full-court press is permitted during the fourth quarter and all overtime periods. This restriction does not apply to tournament or postseason play.

PENALTY: Illegal press: Violation; ball awarded to offense at mid-court.

Rule 21.7 — Mercy Rule Conduct

When the mercy rule running clock is in effect, the team with the lead may not deliberately extend their advantage through pressing defense or fast-break offense designed to run up the score. The emphasis shall shift to controlled, developmental play.

PENALTY: Warning to coach. Continued violation: Technical foul.

Rule 21.8 — Playing Time Guideline

NFMSS strongly encourages all member schools to implement an equitable playing time policy ensuring that every rostered athlete participates in at least one quarter of every regular-season contest.

Rule 21.9 — Post-Game Protocol

Both teams must participate in a post-game handshake line. Refusal to participate or conduct during the handshake that is disrespectful or provocative is subject to conduct penalties retroactively.

PENALTY: Individual refusal: 1-game suspension. Team-wide refusal: Administrative review.

ARTICLE 22 — FOOTBALL (11-ON-11 CONTACT)

22A — GAME STRUCTURE

Rule 22.1 — Quarter Length

Games shall consist of four (4) quarters of eight (8) minutes each, stopped-clock. Halftime shall be ten (10) minutes with a mandatory three-minute warm-up period immediately preceding the second half.

Rule 22.2 — Kickoff Modification — 6th Grade

There are no kickoffs in 6th Grade divisions. To start each half and following every score, the ball shall automatically be placed at the 35-yard line. The receiving team begins the drive from that spot.

Rule 22.3 — Timeouts

Each team is granted three (3) timeouts per half. Timeouts do not carry over between halves. Injury timeouts are charged to the injured team unless the injured player is removed from the game for a minimum of two plays.

Rule 22.4 — Mercy Rule

When a team establishes a lead of thirty-five (35) or more points at any point in the second half, the clock shall become a running clock. Clock stops only for scores, timeouts, and injuries.

22B — MANDATORY SAFETY RULES

Rule 22.5 — Weight-Based Position Restriction

Any student athlete exceeding 160 lbs (6th Grade) or 185 lbs (7th/8th Grade) must wear a high-visibility identification sticker on the rear of their helmet and is restricted to playing on the offensive or defensive line (tackle-to-tackle). These athletes are ineligible to carry, receive, or pass the football.

PENALTY: Violation: Illegal player penalty. If athlete scores or makes an eligible receiver play: score nullified; team penalized 15 yards.

Rule 22.6 — Equipment Inspection

All players must wear properly fitted, certified helmets, shoulder pads, hip pads, knee pads, thigh pads, and mouthguards. Officials shall conduct an equipment inspection before each game. Any player found to be wearing illegal or improperly fitted equipment must be removed until corrected.

PENALTY: Player removed from game until equipment is corrected. No delay penalty for first equipment correction per game.

Rule 22.7 — Spearing & Targeting

Any contact made by using the crown of the helmet as the primary point of impact is prohibited. This includes contact with any opponent, regardless of ball-carrier status.

PENALTY: Ejection + 15-yard penalty. Minimum 2-game suspension. Mandatory safety review.

Rule 22.8 — Late Hits

Contact made to any player who is clearly out of bounds, in a defenseless position, or after the play has been whistled dead is prohibited.

PENALTY: 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Repeat offense: Ejection.

Rule 22.9 — Concussion Removal

Any player who exhibits signs of concussion must be immediately removed from the game. Officials and coaches share responsibility for identifying affected players. A removed player may not return on the same day.

PENALTY: Failure to remove: Coach ejection and compliance review.

22C — FOOTBALL PENALTIES TABLE

Violation	Penalty
Offsides / Encroachment	5 yards
False Start	5 yards
Illegal Formation / Motion	5 yards
Delay of Game	5 yards
Holding (Offense)	10 yards + replay of down
Pass Interference (Offense)	10 yards + replay of down
Pass Interference (Defense)	Automatic first down at spot of foul
Illegal Contact (Defense)	5 yards + automatic first down
Roughing the Passer	15 yards + automatic first down
Unnecessary Roughness	15 yards; repeat: ejection
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	15 yards; 2nd offense: ejection
Targeting / Spearing	15 yards + ejection + 2-game suspension
Weight Restriction Violation	15 yards + nullification of score if applicable
Illegal Block in Back	10 yards from spot of foul
Clipping	15 yards from spot of foul
Face Mask (accidental)	5 yards
Face Mask (flagrant)	15 yards + ejection review

ARTICLE 23 — SOCCER (BOYS & GIRLS)

23A — GAME STRUCTURE

Rule 23.1 — Match Duration

Matches shall consist of two (2) halves of thirty (30) minutes each, running clock. Halftime shall be ten (10) minutes. The referee may add stoppage time at their discretion at the end of each half.

Rule 23.2 — Ball Size

6th Grade divisions shall use a Size 4 ball. 7th and 8th Grade divisions shall use a standard Size 5 ball.

PENALTY: Incorrect ball size: Replace ball before next restart.

Rule 23.3 — Heading Prohibition — 6th Grade

Deliberate heading of the ball is strictly prohibited in all 6th Grade matches. This applies to all practice sessions as well as regular-season and postseason competition. The restriction is in place for player safety given the developmental stage of 6th Grade athletes.

PENALTY: Illegal heading: Indirect free kick to opposing team from spot of infraction. Repeat violations by same player: Yellow card.

Rule 23.4 — Overtime — Regular Season

Regular-season matches ending in a tie shall remain a tie. No overtime is played in regular-season play.

Rule 23.5 — Overtime — Postseason/Tournament

Tournament and postseason matches that end in a tie after regulation shall proceed to two (2) golden-goal periods of five (5) minutes each. If still tied, a standard penalty shootout (5 kicks per team, alternating, sudden victory if still tied) shall determine the winner.

Rule 23.6 — Substitution Rule

Unlimited re-entry substitutions are permitted. Substitutions may only be made during dead-ball situations with the referee's approval. A substituted player may return to the match an unlimited number of times.

23B — SOCCER CARDS & PENALTIES

Violation	Penalty
Yellow Card (caution)	Player warned; remains in game. 2 yellow cards in same match = red card.
Red Card (ejection)	Player immediately removed; team plays with one fewer player remainder of match. Minimum 1-match suspension.
Violent conduct red card	Ejection + minimum 3-match suspension + compliance review.
Deliberate handball in goal area	Penalty kick awarded to opposing team.
Illegal heading (6th grade)	Indirect free kick. Repeat: yellow card.
Simulation / diving	Yellow card for unsporting behavior.
Goalkeeper holding ball >6 seconds	Indirect free kick to opposing team.

Encroachment on penalty kick	Penalty kick retaken if infraction affected outcome.
Coach entering field without permission	Yellow card shown to coach; warning to bench.
Coach red card	Coach removed from technical area; 1-match minimum suspension.

ARTICLE 24 — BASEBALL

24A — FIELD DIMENSIONS & GAME STRUCTURE

Grade Level	Pitching Distance	Base Paths	Innings
6th & 7th Grade	50 feet	70 feet	6 innings
8th Grade	60 feet 6 inches	90 feet	6 innings

24B — PITCH COUNT & MANDATORY REST REQUIREMENTS

Strict compliance with pitch count limits is mandatory to protect developing arms. Coaches are responsible for monitoring pitch counts throughout every game. Violations are non-negotiable and carry immediate consequences.

Grade	Max Pitches/Day	0 Days Rest Required	1 Day Rest Required	2+ Days Rest Required
6th Grade	75	1–20 pitches	21–35 pitches	36+ pitches
7th / 8th Grade	85	1–25 pitches	26–40 pitches	41+ pitches

PENALTY FOR PITCH COUNT VIOLATION: Immediate removal of pitcher from pitching duties for the remainder of the contest; game forfeiture if violation is discovered after the fact and outcome was affected; coach suspension for repeat violations.

Rule 24.1 — Run Limit — No Mercy Rule

Baseball does not employ a per-inning run limit during regular season. A mercy rule applies if a team leads by fifteen (15) or more runs after four (4) complete innings (3.5 innings if the home team is ahead), or by ten (10) runs after five (5) complete innings. The game shall be declared complete.

Rule 24.2 — Balks

The balk rule is enforced in 8th Grade divisions. In 6th and 7th Grade divisions, a warning is issued on the first balk per pitcher per game; subsequent balks result in all runners advancing one base.

Rule 24.3 — Dropped Third Strike

The dropped third strike rule applies in all grade divisions.

Rule 24.4 — Infield Fly Rule

The infield fly rule applies in all grade divisions when runners occupy first and second base (or first, second, and third) with fewer than two outs.

ARTICLE 25 — SOFTBALL (FASTPITCH)**Rule 25.1 — Field Dimensions**

All 6th through 8th Grade divisions use a pitching distance of forty (40) feet and base paths of sixty (60) feet.

Rule 25.2 — Game Length

Regulation games shall be six (6) innings. A hard time limit of one hour and thirty minutes (1:30) applies to all regular-season games. No new inning may begin after the time limit has expired. Games that are tied when the time limit expires shall be recorded as ties for regular-season play.

Rule 25.3 — Early-Inning Run Limit

A maximum of five (5) runs per half-inning may be scored during innings one (1) through three (3). Beginning in the fourth inning, there is no per-inning run limit. This rule applies to all regular-season contests.

Rule 25.4 — Mercy Rule

If a team leads by fifteen (15) or more runs after three (3) complete innings, or by ten (10) or more runs after four (4) complete innings, the game shall be declared complete.

Rule 25.5 — Re-entry Rule

A starting player who is substituted out may re-enter the game one time, provided they return to their original position in the batting order. A substitute who replaces a starter may not re-enter once removed.

Rule 25.6 — Courtesy Runners

One courtesy runner per inning per team is permitted for the pitcher and catcher to speed up play. The courtesy runner must be a player who is not currently in the batting order.

ARTICLE 26 — TRACK & FIELD**Rule 26.1 — Events Offered**

Member schools may offer any combination of the following events: 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1600m, 4x100m relay, 4x400m relay, shot put, long jump, high jump, and triple jump. Hurdle events are permitted at 7th/8th Grade only.

Rule 26.2 — Implement Weights

Shot put: Boys 6th Grade — 6 lb; Boys 7th/8th Grade — 8 lb; All Girls — 6 lb.

Rule 26.3 — False Start Rule

One false start is allowed per heat without disqualification. The second false start by any athlete in that heat results in the offending athlete's disqualification from that event only.

PENALTY: Disqualification from the specific event. No further sanction unless the behavior was intentional or unsportsmanlike.

Rule 26.4 — Field Event Attempts

All competitors receive three (3) attempts in all field events. The top eight (8) competitors after preliminary attempts advance to three (3) additional attempts in finals. Best mark of all attempts counts.

Rule 26.5 — Relay Exchange Zone

Baton exchanges must occur within the designated exchange zone. Failure to exchange within the zone results in disqualification of the relay team.

PENALTY: Disqualification of the relay team from that event.

Rule 26.6 — Spikes

Pyramid or needle spikes not exceeding 1/4 inch are permitted. All other spike types are prohibited. Officials may inspect spikes before competition.

PENALTY: Disqualification from the event until legal spikes are in place.

ARTICLE 27 — CROSS COUNTRY**Rule 27.1 — Course Distances**

Standard race distances: 6th Grade — 1.5 miles (2.4 km); 7th Grade — 2.0 miles (3.2 km); 8th Grade — 2.5 miles (4.0 km). Host schools must measure and certify course distance prior to the first meet of the season.

Rule 27.2 — Scoring

Team scoring uses displacement scoring (place points). The five lowest-place finishers from each team count toward the team score. Lowest total wins. 6th and 7th place runners are scored as displacers.

Rule 27.3 — Course Interference

Any runner who intentionally impedes, blocks, or interferes with an opponent on the course shall be disqualified from that meet.

PENALTY: Disqualification from the meet. Repeat offense: Season suspension.

Rule 27.4 — Assistance

No athlete may receive physical assistance of any kind during a race. Verbal encouragement from coaches and spectators is permitted from designated zones only.

PENALTY: Disqualification of the athlete who received assistance.

ARTICLE 28 — VOLLEYBALL

Rule 28.1 — Match Format

Matches shall be played best-of-three sets. Sets 1 and 2 are played to twenty-five (25) points with a minimum two-point margin. Set 3 (if needed) is played to fifteen (15) points with a minimum two-point margin. There is no point cap at any level.

Rule 28.2 — Ball Specifications

All NFMSS volleyball competitions shall use an approved indoor volleyball. 6th Grade divisions may use a lighter training ball (NFMSS approved) to promote skill development.

Rule 28.3 — Net Heights

Girls divisions (all grades): 7 feet 4-1/8 inches. Boys 6th Grade: 7 feet 4-1/8 inches. Boys 7th/8th Grade: 7 feet 11-5/8 inches.

Rule 28.4 — Libero

Each team is permitted one (1) libero player who wears a contrasting jersey. The libero may not serve, attack the ball above net height, or complete an overhand set from the front zone.

Rule 28.5 — Substitutions

Each team is permitted twelve (12) substitutions per set. The libero's replacements do not count toward the substitution limit.

28B — VOLLEYBALL VIOLATIONS & PENALTIES

Violation	Penalty
Illegal hit (lift, double, carry)	Point awarded to opposing team
Net violation (touching net)	Point awarded to opposing team
Center line violation (full foot over)	Point awarded to opposing team
Illegal libero action (serving, attacking)	Point awarded to opposing team
Rotation error	Point + side-out to opposing team
Delay of game	Warning → point to opposing team
Unsportsmanlike conduct (player)	Yellow card (warning) → red card (point + re-serve)
Unsportsmanlike conduct (coach)	Yellow card → red card → expulsion from team bench
Exceeding substitution limit	Point awarded to opposing team; substitution denied

ARTICLE 29 — WRESTLING

Rule 29.1 — Weight Classes

NFMSS wrestling weight classes for all divisions: 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, 120, 130, 145, 160, 180, and Heavyweight (181+ lbs, max 235 lbs). Member schools may offer any subset of these weight classes based on roster.

Rule 29.2 — Match Duration

Matches consist of three periods. Period 1: two (2) minutes. Periods 2 and 3: one and one-half (1.5) minutes each. Overtime: one (1) minute sudden-victory period; if still tied, referee's position (30-second sudden-victory) determines winner.

Rule 29.3 — Weight Certification

All wrestlers must be certified at a weight class by a licensed healthcare provider or certified athletic trainer before the first dual meet of the season. Wrestlers may not compete below their certified minimum weight class.

PENALTY: Competing below certified weight: Disqualification from that match; forfeiture.

Rule 29.4 — Weight Management

Extreme weight-cutting practices including dehydration, use of diuretics, laxatives, steam rooms, rubber suits, or any practice designed to cause rapid weight loss are strictly prohibited.

PENALTY: First offense: Disqualification and parent conference. Severe case: Season suspension and medical clearance required to return.

Rule 29.5 — Illegal Holds

The following holds are prohibited: full nelson, hammerlock above 90 degrees, headlock without arm included, slam, any action designed to cause injury rather than control. All NFMSS wrestling rule interpretations are final.

PENALTY: Warning → point deduction → disqualification, escalating per offense.

Rule 29.6 — Stalling

Any wrestler who fails to make a good-faith effort to score or improve position shall be warned for stalling. Continued stalling results in point penalties.

PENALTY: Warning → 1 point to opponent → 1 point per additional stalling call.

PART VI

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELFARE

Articles 30 – 34

ARTICLE 30 — CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

Rule 30.1 — Removal from Play

Any athlete who exhibits any sign or symptom consistent with a concussion must be immediately removed from practice or competition by the coach, athletic trainer, or official. The athlete may not return on the same day under any circumstances.

PENALTY: Failure to remove: Coach ejection and immediate compliance review.

Rule 30.2 — Graduated Return-to-Play

An athlete removed for suspected concussion must complete the NFMSS Graduated Return-to-Play Protocol (minimum 6 steps over 6 days) before returning to full contact practice or competition. Written clearance from a licensed healthcare provider is required before Step 5.

Rule 30.3 — Documentation

Every concussion removal must be documented on the NFMSS Concussion Protocol & Return-to-Play form. Completed forms must be kept on file for three years.

Rule 30.4 — Coach Training

Every head coach must complete an approved concussion awareness training course before the start of each season. Completion must be documented and kept on file by the Athletic Director.

PENALTY: Coaching without completed training: Removal from bench until training is current.

ARTICLE 31 — EXERTIONAL HEAT ILLNESS PROTOCOL

Rule 31.1 — Heat Index Monitoring

The host school is responsible for monitoring heat index or Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) at all outdoor practices and contests. A reading device must be available on site, or local weather service data must be actively monitored.

Rule 31.2 — Activity Modification Thresholds

When heat index exceeds 90°F (32°C), mandatory water breaks every 10-15 minutes are required and intensity must be reduced. When heat index exceeds 100°F (37°C), outdoor activity should be suspended or moved indoors. When heat index exceeds 104°F (40°C), all outdoor activity must cease.

PENALTY: Failure to implement modifications: Coach ejection; compliance review.

Rule 31.3 — Heat Stroke Emergency

Exertional heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. Any athlete displaying high body temperature combined with mental status changes (confusion, disorientation, loss of consciousness) must have 911 called immediately and cooling initiated via cold-water immersion before EMS arrives.

Rule 31.4 — Acclimatization

Preseason practice periods must include a minimum ten-day acclimatization period: Days 1–5 helmets only, single practice, maximum 3 hours. Days 6–10 shoulder pads added, still single practice. Full equipment and two-a-days only after day 10.

ARTICLE 32 — SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST (SCA) PROTOCOL

Rule 32.1 — AED Requirement

An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) must be present and accessible at every NFMS-sanctioned contest and practice. The AED must be inspected for operational status at the start of each season and monthly thereafter.

PENALTY: Competition without AED on site: Contest suspended until AED is secured.

Rule 32.2 — Response Protocol

Any athlete who collapses and is unresponsive triggers an immediate response: Call 911; begin CPR; retrieve and apply AED. Do not delay any step. All coaches must be trained in CPR and AED use.

Rule 32.3 — SCA Awareness Training

Every student athlete and parent/guardian must complete the NFMS SCA Awareness Acknowledgment & Sign-off form before participating in any practice or contest.

PENALTY: Participation without SCA sign-off on file: Removal from practice/contest.

ARTICLE 33 — SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

Rule 33.1 — Lightning Policy

The 30-30 rule applies to all outdoor NFMS events: if thunder is heard within 30 seconds of a lightning flash, all outdoor activity must cease immediately. Activity may not resume until 30 minutes have passed after the last lightning or thunder.

Rule 33.2 — Evacuation

Upon lightning suspension, all athletes, coaches, and officials must immediately move to a permanent enclosed structure. Vehicles may be used if a permanent structure is unavailable. Open areas, dugouts, and tents do not provide adequate protection.

Rule 33.3 — Contest Resumption or Postponement

If a lightning delay exceeds 90 minutes from the originally scheduled start time, officials may declare the contest postponed. Both schools must reschedule within the current season if possible.

Rule 33.4 — Other Severe Weather

Officials may suspend play for tornado warning, severe thunderstorm, dense fog, or any condition deemed to pose a safety risk to participants or spectators. The host school AD has final authority on postponement.

ARTICLE 34 — EQUIPMENT & UNIFORM STANDARDS

Rule 34.1 — Helmet Standards

All contact sport helmets must meet current NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) certification standards. Coaches must conduct helmet inspections at the start of each season and remove from use any helmets that are cracked, improperly fitted, or exceed their recertification date.

PENALTY: Use of non-compliant helmet: Player removed from play until replaced.

Rule 34.2 — Uniform Requirements

All athletes must wear their school's official uniform during competition. Uniforms must include a clearly visible jersey number. Undergarments that extend below the uniform must be the same color as the corresponding uniform item.

PENALTY: Non-compliant uniform: Warning; if not corrected before next play, technical foul.

Rule 34.3 — Jewelry & Accessories

No metal jewelry may be worn during competition in any NFMS sport. Religious or medical items must be securely taped to the body. Hard casts must be padded to the satisfaction of the head official.

PENALTY: Jewelry not removed: Player removed until jewelry is removed or taped.

Rule 34.4 — Footwear

All footwear must be appropriate for the sport and playing surface. Cleats with metal tips are prohibited in all NFMS sports except baseball and softball on natural grass.

PART VII

POSTSEASON & CHAMPIONSHIPS

Articles 35 – 37

ARTICLE 35 — POSTSEASON ELIGIBILITY

Rule 35.1 — Regular Season Requirement

To be eligible for postseason play, a student athlete must have participated in a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the team's regular-season contests. ADs may appeal this requirement for documented medical absences.

Rule 35.2 — Eligibility Certification

Each school must submit a certified postseason roster to NFMSS no later than 72 hours before the first postseason contest. Any athlete found to have competed in postseason while ineligible will cause their school's postseason results to be vacated.

PENALTY: Vacatur of postseason results involving ineligible player.

Rule 35.3 — Suspended Athletes

Any athlete serving a suspension during the postseason must complete their suspension in postseason contests. Suspensions do not pause for postseason participation.

ARTICLE 36 — TOURNAMENT & CHAMPIONSHIP PROCEDURES

Rule 36.1 — Seeding

Tournament seeding shall be determined by regular-season win-loss record, then head-to-head results, then point differential (capped at 20 points per game), then coin flip.

Rule 36.2 — Format

NFMSS championships shall use a single-elimination bracket format. NFMSS may designate a third-place consolation contest at its discretion.

Rule 36.3 — Neutral Site

All championship contests beyond the quarterfinal round shall be played at a neutral site designated by NFMSS. Host site selection shall consider geographic accessibility and facility quality.

Rule 36.4 — Conduct During Championships

All conduct rules contained in this handbook apply with full force during championship events. Ejections during championship play carry additional weight in compliance review.

Rule 36.5 — Championship Officials

NFMSS reserves the right to assign officials for all postseason and championship contests. Neither school may object to NFMSS-assigned officials.

ARTICLE 37 — AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Rule 37.1 — Individual Awards

NFMSS recognizes individual athletes at the championship level for outstanding performance. Awards include: Tournament MVP, All-Tournament Team selections, and the NFMSS Sportsmanship Award.

Rule 37.2 — Team Awards

Championship trophies are awarded to first-place and second-place teams. Academic Excellence Awards are presented to teams with the highest collective GPA among all rostered athletes.

Rule 37.3 — Sportsmanship Recognition

The NFMSS Sportsmanship Award is presented to one individual or team per championship event that has demonstrated exceptional conduct, character, and embodiment of the NFMSS education-based athletics mission. Nominations are accepted via the NFMSS Report of Good Sportsmanship form.

APPENDICES

QUICK REFERENCE CHARTS & SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDES

APPENDIX A — PENALTY SUMMARY QUICK-REFERENCE CHART

The following chart summarizes the most common conduct violations and their standard penalties across all NFMSS sports. Sport-specific penalties in Part V take precedence where applicable.

Violation	Penalty
Disrespecting an official (verbal)	Warning → Technical → Ejection
Profane or obscene language	Ejection + 2-game suspension
Physical contact with official	Ejection + minimum 1-year suspension
Fighting / physical assault	Ejection + minimum 3-game suspension + review
Taunting / trash talk	Warning → Technical → Ejection
Leaving bench during altercation	Ejection + minimum 1-game suspension
Alcohol / substance at event	Ejection; 3-game suspension; parent conference
Use of ineligible player	Game forfeiture; compliance review
Pitch count violation (baseball)	Pitcher removal; forfeiture if discovered late
Deliberate heading (soccer 6th grade)	Indirect free kick; yellow card on repeat
Weight restriction violation (football)	15-yard penalty; score nullification if applicable
Failure to file incident report (48hr)	Written warning; \$100 fee on second offense
No AED on site at contest	Contest suspended until AED is secured
Playing without PPE on file	Removal from practice/game; retroactive forfeiture
Coach ejection — failure to leave facility	Contest forfeiture; additional suspension
Post-game handshake refusal (individual)	1-game suspension
Post-game handshake refusal (team)	Administrative review; potential suspension

APPENDIX B — PITCH COUNT & REST REQUIREMENTS

This table is reproduced here for quick reference. See Article 24 for full context.

Grade	Max Pitches/Day	0 Days Rest	1 Day Rest	2+ Days Rest
6th Grade	75	1–20 pitches	21–35 pitches	36+ pitches
7th / 8th Grade	85	1–25 pitches	26–40 pitches	41+ pitches

APPENDIX C — EQUIPMENT STANDARDS BY SPORT

Sport	Required Equipment	Ball / Implement Spec
Basketball	Jersey + shorts; athletic shoes (no hard soles)	28.5" (Girls/6th Gr Boys); 29.5" (7th/8th Gr Boys)
Football	Certified helmet (NOCSAE); shoulder pads; hip/knee pads; mouthpiece; eye protector	Regulation baseball; batting gloves; full gear
Soccer	Jersey + shorts + socks; shin guards required; soft cleats	Size 4 (6th Grade); Size 5 (7th/8th Grade)
Baseball	Batting helmet (NOCSAE) with earflap; cup (catcher's)	Regulation baseball; batting gloves; full gear required
Softball	Batting helmet with face mask; cup/protective cup (catcher's)	Regulation softball; batting gloves; full gear required
Track & Field	School uniform; spikes ≤1/4" pyramid or needle on shoe	Shot: 6 lb (6th/Girls), 8 lb (Boys 7th/8th)
Cross Country	School uniform; appropriate running shoes	N/A
Volleyball	Jersey + shorts; athletic shoes	Regulation indoor volleyball; lightweight option permitted 6th Grade
Wrestling	Singlet; headgear required; wrestling shoes; mouthpiece	N/A

APPENDIX D — SPORTSMANSHIP RECOGNITION PROGRAM

NFMSS believes that recognizing exceptional conduct is as important as penalizing violations. The NFMSS Sportsmanship Recognition Program allows coaches, athletic directors, and officials to formally nominate individuals or teams who have demonstrated outstanding character, dignity, and commitment to education-based athletics.

Nominations may be submitted at any time during the season using the NFMSS Report of Good Sportsmanship form available at nfmss.org. Outstanding nominations may result in formal recognition at the state or national level, feature on the NFMSS website, and consideration for the annual NFMSS Sportsmanship Award presented at the Championship level.

Schools that consistently demonstrate exemplary sportsmanship across all programs may be considered for the NFMSS School Sportsmanship Designation — a formal recognition that may be displayed on school signage and promotional materials.

This handbook constitutes the complete and binding Official National Interscholastic Rules of the National Federation of Middle School Sports for Grades 6–8. All prior editions are superseded. Questions regarding rule interpretation should be directed to the NFMS Compliance Office at compliance@nfmss.org or (404) 477-8781. © National Federation of Middle School Sports (NFMSTM) | In Time of Need Incorporated | 501(c)(3) Nonprofit | nfmss.org Dorian Williams — Founder, Chairman & CEO