

### **Subsection 1.10 Participant Behavior**

In addition to the unsportsmanlike conduct fouls available to officials under NFHS Rule 9, the following fouls are added to address participant behavior:

**Sportsmanship Warnings.** When a game participant (coach, player, or any other team affiliated personnel) exhibits poor sportsmanship behavior that in the opinion of an official does not rise to the level of a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct foul, the official shall issue a sportsmanship warning to the offending team. The official shall indicate the foul by throwing their flag at the time the conduct occurs. The warning shall be issued during the dead ball period if the conduct occurs during a dead ball period or at the next dead ball period if the conduct occurs during a live ball period.

There is no yardage penalty assigned to the first warning issued to a team and the clock shall maintain the same status as it had at the time the warning is issued.

For a second warning, the penalty is a 5-yard penalty enforced from the succeeding spot. The clock shall maintain the same status as it had at the time the warning is issued.

If a team continues to exhibit poor sportsmanship, all additional infractions shall be penalized under NFHS Rule 9.

The signal for a Sportsmanship Warning shall be an open hand over the mouth.



### **Rationale**

This rule is intended to address participant behavior and promote respect for the game, opponents, and officials. Below is the statement from NFHS before the 2021 season:

#### *Respectful Communication Between Coaches and Game Officials*

*If the primary mission of high school football was to win state championships then, by design, 99 percent of all teams would never fulfill the goal. If winning games was the primary goal then, for sure, 50 percent of teams would never be fulfilling the goal. All NFHS sports rules books include a*

*“Mission Statement” (Appendix A in the NFHS Football Rules Book) that clearly states the primary goals as promoting “leadership, respect, integrity and sportsmanship.”*

*To that end, coaches and game officials should always be communicating with each other in a manner that models such behaviors for the student-athletes. Guidelines to model such communication is always included as Appendix F (for Coaches) and Appendix G (for Officials) in the NFHS Football Rules Book.*

*NFHS Football Rule 9-8-1 states that it is unsportsmanlike conduct and thereby clearly illegal for any non-player (coach) to “attempt to influence a decision by a game official” such as screaming for holding by a defensive coach over and over, or consistently asking for a pass interference call by an offensive coach.*

*The rule further defines that it is unsportsmanlike conduct to “indicate an objection to a game official’s decision.” While it is likely not appropriate to be calling such a foul unless it is an extreme case, game officials and coaches need to keep in mind that young student-athletes are watching their every move. If a coach disagrees with a decision, he or she should be requesting a “conference time-out” and respectfully presenting his or her case. Note that this procedure calls for both coach and game officials to discuss any disagreement specifically “in front of the team bench” (as a learning opportunity for players to see how adults respectfully speak with other adults) as opposed to some secret screaming session in the middle of the field. If they are not sure enough about their position to risk a time-out, then they need to abide by NFHS Football Rule 9-8-1.*