

NFHS Volleyball Points of Emphasis - 2019

Informal Signals

Communication is an essential proactive approach used by officials to alleviate questions about decisions and non-decisions on the court. This communication takes place between the two officials and between officials and coaches. It can take the form of verbal communication during a dead ball and nonverbal communication during play. There are times, during play, when it is necessary for the referees to communicate between each other; for instance, a discreet four-hit signal in front of the chest of the second referee can eliminate a conference between officials. The mechanics and timing of how these informal signals are to be communicated should be addressed in the referees' prematch conference.

An additional focus of the 2019-20 Volleyball Rules Committee is on the use of informal signals used to communicate during play between officials and coaches. These signals can be used to communicate to coaches that the referee was aware of a potential decision or to provide information regarding the reason for the continuation of play. The previously labeled signal #7 "Legal Back-Row Attack" has been removed from the NFHS Official Volleyball Signals chart and the NFHS Officials Manual section regarding informal signals has been expanded to include two informal signals that can be used to communicate additional information regarding a legal back-row attack. The first referee can signal that the attacker was behind the line or below the net.

For more information regarding the mechanics and use of informal signals see the 2019-20 NFHS Officials' Manual/Case Book.

Side Folding Retractable Backboards

The rule book's use of the phrase "vertical backboard" when referring to a backboard that is hanging in the vertical position (not retracted) over the playing area has created some confusion with the side folding retractable backboards. An extended vertical backboard that is not retracted hanging over a playable area is considered restricted play and upon contact the referee can signal replay or out of bounds depending on if, in the judgment of the referee, the ball would have or have not remained in play. A vertical backboard raised to the side and up toward the ceiling, even though still technically vertical, is considered a playable overhead obstruction. A ball striking the raised backboard, regardless of how it is raised, above a playable area shall remain in play provided the ball contacts the raised backboard on the side of the net extended that is occupied by the team that last played the ball, and the ball is legally played next by the same team.

Ball Handling

Ball handling decisions can be the toughest decisions a volleyball official has to make. The pace of the game and athleticism of today's athlete only makes the job of an official tougher. Ultimately, they are judgment calls. However,

a focus of every official should be to have consistency in ball handling judgement. The following criteria can be used to develop consistency when judging ball handling as the first referee:

- Only the contact point should be considered when judging legality.
- Outside influences such as player technique, spin, coaches' expectations or crowd reaction should not be considered when judging the legality of the contact.
- There is no body/ball position or playing technique that automatically results in illegal contact.

Additionally, when evaluating ball handling it is important to understand the focus of an **increase in continuation of play** when judging second ball contacts that are **directed to a teammate**. Below are tips to use when assessing second ball contacts:

- A player in good position must play the ball without discernible double contacts.
- Less severe judgement is applied to a contact by a player who makes a challenging or spectacular play while maintaining a legal play.
- Mishandled balls resulting in a blatant fault should still be called, regardless of the challenging or spectacular nature of the play.

The NFHS Learning Center hosts an Officiating Volleyball: Ball Handling course that incorporates many of these techniques and much more. For more information visit www.nfhslearn.com.