

FOOTBALL PRE-SEASON HEAT-ACCLIMATIZATION GUIDELINES

Practice or competition in hot and/or humid environmental conditions poses special problems for student-athletes. Heat illness is a primary concern in these conditions. Having a scripted practice plan with breaks from activity as well as scheduled hydration and cooling off periods will be of great assistance in preparing student-athletes for the football season.

Core Principles:

1. **Acclimatization Period:** All schools sponsoring high school football are recommended to institute the heat acclimatization program on Monday or Tuesday (August 10 or 11, 2015) for 5 consecutive days prior to the Monday starting date (August 17, 2015) for the 2015 football season. If a school opts to institute heat acclimatization during this period, the intent is to have all members of the team be present and participate in all 5 consecutive days of the heat acclimatization period, but minimally, a player must be present for 3 consecutive days of these first 5 days of heat acclimatization to satisfy the requirement. A school must have 5 consecutive days of heat acclimatization prior to their first contact drills and contact drills may not be initiated before Monday, August 17, 2015 (the first legal practice date of fall sports).
 - The practices for this week are limited to a 5-3-5-3-5 hours of practice daily for the 5 days of heat acclimatization. Practice sessions may be no longer than 3 hours in length and teams must have 2 hours of rest (recovery period) between sessions. Days 1,3 and 5 are limited to 5 hours per day and Days 2 and 4 are limited to 3 hours per day.
 - Helmets and shoulder pads with shorts are permitted the first 5 days of heat acclimatization. Full gear and contact may not be worn until Monday, August 17th after the completion of the five consecutive day heat acclimatization period.
 - If a school starts heat acclimatization on Monday, August 10th, if they choose, they may practice on Saturday, August 15th, but there may be no contact on this day the same as the previous 5 days of heat acclimatization since it is prior to the first contact day of Monday, August 17th. If a school starts heat acclimatization on Tuesday, August 11th, then Saturday August 15th is their 5th consecutive day of heat acclimatization and no contact is permitted.
 - If a school starts heat acclimatization on the first practice day, Monday, August 17th, they must have 5 consecutive days of heat acclimatization with helmets, shoulder pads, shorts, prior to their first legal practice with contact. If starting on August 17th, a school must have 5 heat acclimatization days, plus the 5 regular practice days (where contact and full gear is permitted) before their first scrimmage. If they are scheduled to play on the first play date of the fall season, this schedule may limit them to only 1 scrimmage. Schools are advised to be cautious in scheduling a second scrimmage if starting heat acclimatization on August 17th.
2. **Scrimmages:** A team shall not participate in a scrimmage prior to the first available scrimmage date as provided in Article XVI: Season and Out-of-Season Rules and Regulations of the PIAA By-Laws.
3. **Participation Limitation:** No Team, no individual member or members of such Team, and no individual representing any PIAA member school, may Practice or participate in an Inter-School Practice, Scrimmage, Contest, and/or Open Gym on more than six days in any Calendar Week during the Regular Season.
4. **Out-of-Season Activities:** General conditioning provides only partial heat acclimatization. Therefore, student-athletes should be exposed gradually to hot and/or humid environmental conditions to provide better heat acclimatization. Each exposure also should involve a gradual increase in the amount of exercise that is undertaken over a period of days to weeks until the exercise intensity and duration is comparable to that likely to occur in competition. If conditions are extreme, training or competition should be held during a cooler time of the day.
 - When protective gear and clothing is authorized by the school Principal outside of the defined season, frequent rest periods should be scheduled so that the gear and clothing can be loosened to allow evaporation of sweat and other forms of heat loss. During the acclimatization process, it may be advisable to use a minimum of protective gear and clothing and to Practice in T-shirts, shorts, socks and shoes. Excessive tape and outer clothing that restrict sweat evaporation should be avoided. Rubberized suits should never be used.

Maximum Practice Time: The maximum allotted time per day for practice is 5 hours and teams must have 2 hours of rest between sessions.

Minimum Practice Time: The minimum practice time for the first five days is 3 hours per day.

Practice: The time a player engages in physical activity. It is defined that any practice session be no greater than three (3) hours in length. Warm-up, stretching, conditioning, weight training and 'cool-down' periods are all considered practice.

Recovery Period: A minimum of a two (2) hour recovery period must be provided after any session.

Walk-through: No protective equipment or strenuous activity permitted. Only balls and field markers (cones) may be used.

Prevention of Heat Illness from the Sport Medicine Guidelines of the PIAA Handbook should be observed. These include regular measurements of environmental conditions. See Sports Medicine Guidelines for more detail or consult with your athletic trainer and/or team physician.

CONTACT GUIDELINES FOR FOOTBALL

Regular and Postseason: No football player is allowed to participate in more than **three (3) days of contact and ninety (90) minutes of full contact practice per week**. A team may continue to dress in full pads for practice, but may only participate in live action drills and game time simulations **no more than ninety minutes per athlete per week**. It is assumed that when players are in shells (shorts, shoulder pads, and helmets) no live action drills or simulations will occur. This rule is intended to limit live action drills and simulations and not the number of practices a team may participate in full pads. A team may participate in "air," "bags," and "wrap," drills and simulations at any point. Live Action and Thud are considered full contact drills. These contact levels are defined below:

- **Air** – Players should run unopposed without bags or any opposition.
- **Bags** – Activity is executed against a bag, shield or pad to allow for a soft-contact surface, with or without the resistance of a teammate or coach standing behind the bag.
- **Wrap** – Drills run at full speed until contact, which is above the waist with players remaining on their feet.
- **Full Contact:** For the purposes of the rule, "full contact" is defined as football drills or live game simulations where "live action" occurs.
- **Live Action:** as defined by USA Football, is contact at game speed where player execute full tackles at a competitive pace taking players to the ground.
- **Thud:** – Same as wrap but tempo is competitive with no pre-determined winner and the players are not tackling to the ground.

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL/MIDDLE SCHOOL FOOTBALL PRACTICE CANNOT BEGIN PRIOR TO AUGUST 17, 2015

The first three (3) days of mandatory football Practice for junior high/middle schools shall be non-Physical Contact. Players may wear helmets, shoulder pads, and football shoes; however, all other contact pads are PROHIBITED during the first three (3) days of mandatory football Practice for junior high/middle schools.