

VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE HANDBOOK

27-11-1 SPORTSMANSHIP RULE-Member schools are required to conduct all their relations with other schools in a spirit of good sportsmanship. Acts which are prima facie evidence of failure to abide by this rule are those which are noted below and others of a similar nature which transgress the usually accepted code for good sportsmanship. All incidents of conduct relating to either athletic or academic activities that are violations of the Sportsmanship Rule must be reported to the Virginia High School League.

27-11-2 Spectator/Crowd Control-Failure to provide for proper control of spectators at a contest constitutes a violation of the Sportsmanship Rule. Incidents where spectators during or after the contest engage in verbal or physical altercations with players, coaches, officials or other spectators which disrupt the normal flow of a contest or endanger the safety of a player, official, coach or other spectators shall be reported. Uniformed police are not required by rule, however, it is expected that the host school shall have taken reasonable and proper steps that would be expected to assure proper control of spectators under any foreseeable conditions if uniformed police are not provided.

27-11-3 Completing Contest-Failure of any team or competitor to stay in a contest until its normal end when the failure to do so is related to dissatisfaction with the officiating of the contest, unless the physical safety of the team or competitor would have been endangered by continuing the contest, is a violation and is to be reported.

27-11-4 Harassment of Officials-Harassment of contest officials by a coach or a coach's ejection from a contest constitutes a violation of the Sportsmanship Rule. Any coach's ejection is to be reported in writing to the League office by the school whose coach is ejected with copies placed in the school's and officials' association files. Any incidents involving a spectator, coach or other school personnel or player striking or pushing an official is to be reported. A coach going on the floor or field to interrupt a contest while the ball is "alive" in

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protest of a decision by an official, conduct which invokes a penalty against the team because of the conduct of a coach or team member or any individual in the official party of a team, continued and visible actions on the part of a coach which will indicate to team members and/or to spectators that the coach believes the game is being improperly officiated, public demonstrations with game officials which indicate to others extreme dissatisfaction with officiating, and such related actions when exhibited in aggravated form are evidence of poor sportsmanship.

27-11-5 Sportsmanship Education-Failure of a school to use every means at its disposal to impress upon its faculty, student body, team members, coaching staff and officials the values of sportsmanship in the preparation for, and the conduct and management of interscholastic contests and the importance of observing published or accepted rules governing coaches, competitors or spectators relating to the conduct of competition constitutes a violation of the Sportsmanship Rule. School personnel must make every effort to ensure that substitute players and bench personnel do not enter the playing field/court during a verbal or physical altercation and that team personnel do not engage in other excessive unsportsmanlike conduct before, during or after the contest; such action is a violation of the Sportsmanship Rule and is to be reported. A school whose substitute players or bench personnel enter the playing field/court during a verbal or physical altercation, or whose team personnel engage in excessive unsportsmanlike conduct before, during or after a contest shall be subject to a fine as stated in 30-5-1.

27-11-6 Ejection of Player and/or Coach-Players and coaches who are ejected from a contest, scrimmage, jamboree or Benefit Game for unsportsmanlike conduct and are ineligible for the team's next scheduled contest must be reported to the VHSL office on the form provided on the VHSL website. For engaging in fighting (including throwing punches as an instigator, in retaliation, or intentionally kicking or stomping an opponent), biting or aggressive physical contact shall result in a suspension from contests totaling a minimum of 30% of the total contest limitations for that sport (a player shall be ineligible for the team's scheduled contests until the suspension is completed) and a coach from contests totaling a minimum of 30% of the contest limitations. Profanity directed at a game official will result in a suspension from contests totaling a minimum of 20% of the total contest limitations for that sport. Student/athletes who leave the bench area and become actively involved in an altercation will result in a suspension from contests totaling a minimum of 20% of the total contest limitations for that sport. Coaches ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct will not be physically present or communicate in any way with the team at that next scheduled contest. (For the purposes of this rule, a basketball player who collects five personal fouls and must therefore leave the game is not considered to be ejected and is not automatically guilty of a sportsmanship violation.) Any player assessed two technical fouls is considered to have committed a sportsmanship violation and must sit out the next contest. The decision to eject and therefore suspend from the next scheduled contest(s) may be appealed by conforming with the following procedure.

(1) The parents, guardians or coach of a suspended player or suspended coach must request in writing that the principal review the decision to eject.

(2) The principal will review the facts utilizing available and appropriate resources and decide whether to appeal the decision. The principal may terminate the appeal at this point if there is insufficient merit.

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(3) If, after review of the facts, including consultation with officials, the principal concludes that an appeal is warranted, he/she shall contact the principal(s) or designee(s) of the other schools involved and present his/her case. If, after review of the facts, all principals or designees, together with the commissioner of the association responsible for officiating that game, agree that the appeal had merit and that because of an error or misapplication of the rules by the officials the ejection was not warranted, it will be sustained and the player reinstated for the next contest. If any two of the three individuals hearing the appeal agree that the appeal has merit, the appellant may request a review by the VHSL Executive Director or designee, who may sustain or deny the appeal based upon review of the facts using all available and appropriate resources. At no time may this reduction eliminate the games suspension completely.

(4) If a player or coach ejection occurs at a state tournament where one or both principals and/or non-coach designee is/are not available and a VHSL-appointed sportsmanship or games committee is in place, that committee shall sustain or deny the appeal after hearing the facts from the appealing school, the appealing school's opponent, the game officials, the VHSL-appointed supervisor and event director.

Penalties: If the disqualification occurs in the final contest of the season (including playoffs and tournaments), the penalty shall carry over to the next sports season for students who are seniors in eligibility or to the next school year for underclassmen and coaches. A second violation in the same sport shall carry a minimum two-contest suspension (See 30-5-1 (14)).

(5) The decision of the principal(s) or VHSL-appointed sportsmanship or games committee shall be final.

PM 27-11-6 (1) SPORTSMANSHIP RULE/Player and/or Coach Ejection Penalty (4-00)-Players and coaches who are ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct and are ineligible for the team's next contest(s) . . . must sit out the next contest(s) played by the same team, meaning that if the ejection is from a varsity contest, the penalty is applied to the next varsity contest(s); a junior varsity ejection means the penalty is applied to the next junior varsity contest(s). Further, the penalty means a LOSS of one or two contests under the Contest Limitation Rule, and a player could not suit up for games at another level of competition to replace those he/she is required to sit out.

PM 27-11-6 (2) SPORTSMANSHIP RULE/Player Ejection Rule (5-94)-The following would NOT be considered reason for player ejection for an unsportsmanlike act.

(a) A basketball player who collects five personal fouls and must therefore leave the game.

(b) If a technical foul results in the fifth foul on a basketball player and thus that player is disqualified from the game but the act which resulted in the technical foul would not have normally led to an ejection.

27-11-7 Situations Which Must Be Reported to the League-Situations which must be reported to the League are listed, but not limited to those below:

(1) Incidents involving damage to school property, including buses or other vehicles.

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(2) Physical or verbal altercations or other unsportsmanlike conduct between players, coaches, spectators or officials.

(3) Verbal abuse by players, coaches, or spectators directed toward opposing teams, coaches, or officials.

(4) Public criticism of officials by coaches in news media.

(5) Coach ejection from the game.

(6) Player ejection from the game.

All situations which are a violation of the Sportsmanship Rule must be reported to the League. An initial report shall be submitted to the League office within 24 hours with the complete official report within 5 business days. Failure to report violations will result in a fine as stated in 30-5-1.

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27-16-1 Use of Hate Speech, Ethnically or Racially Insensitive Expressions-Any coach, team personnel and/or contestant who confronts or addresses a coach, contestant or official using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions will be disqualified for the contest and will be ineligible from contests totaling a minimum of 30% of the total contest limitations for that sport and/or subsequent contests until penalties and educational/restorative interventions are completed.

Procedure:

(1) A school is expected to inform the League office of any alleged incident involving the use of hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions within two working days after the school administration becomes aware of the incident.

(2) A copy of the report will be transmitted to the principal of each school(s) involved.

(3) Within five working days of receiving the report, each principal concerned shall file a response or provide information concerning the incident to the League office.

(4) A VHSL committee consisting of three or four principals, athletic directors, and coaches will review the incident report and response from each school(s) involved. Following the completion of the review, the committee will make a recommendation to the VHSL Executive Director and/or designee for action.

Penalties-The following represents degrees of VHSL discipline which will be referred to in interpreting a violation of using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression.

(1) **Ejection**-Any coach, team personnel and/or contestant who confronts or addresses a coach, contestant, or official using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression will be disqualified for the remainder of the contest.

(2) **Player/Coach Suspension**-Any coach, team personnel and/or contestant who is ejected from a contest for using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression will be ineligible from contests totaling a minimum of 30% of the total contest limitations for that sport. If a coach or player commits a second offense, he/she will be ineligible for the remainder of that sport/activity season.

(3) **School Warning**-A school's program may be placed on warning status for a one-year period of time by a Sportsmanship Committee for repeated infractions of using hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression.

(4) **School Probation**-Probation is a more severe penalty, based on repeated offenses with-in a two-year period of time by the same program or cumulative warnings over a period of time within the school. A school or program on probation may not enter any play-off toward a district, regional, or state championship nor may the school enter any sanctioned event.

(5) **School Suspension**-A school suspended from the League may not compete in interscholastic competition of any kind with a member of the League or a school that is a member of another state associated with the National Federation of State High School Associations.

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(6) **School Fine**-A fine not to exceed \$1,000 may be levied with or without any other penalty on a school. Failure to report violations involving the use of hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expression will result in a fine per occurrence.

Appeals-A decision may be appealed to a Sportsmanship Committee.

Parents, Players, and Coaches-Schools will hold parent, player, and coach preseason meetings to discuss expectations for students, parents, coaches, and spectator's behavior related to cultural awareness and equity.

Spectators-The authority and rules of the VHSL govern the schools themselves, including athletes and coaches. Schools are responsible for the conduct of its spectators except at championship events which are conducted by the VHSL.

The VHSL does provide the following recommendations for schools when dealing with spectators who use race and hate speech, ethnically or racially insensitive expressions.

- (1) First Offense – removal from the audience/school property
- (2) Second Offense – suspension from attending contests for a semester
- (3) Third Offense – suspension from attending contests for a year, no trespassing letter

Hate Speech-Abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group, especially on the basis of race, religion, or sexual orientation.