



# SDHSAA 2025-26 Basketball Newsletter # 7

## One Rule One Interpretation

February 25, 2026

### SDHSAA NOTES

As we gear up for the most competitive part of the season, your pregame discussions should evolve as the season starts to wind down. It should no longer be necessary to spend a considerable amount of time and attention on the basic rules and mechanics. We should focus and discuss at length broader issues such as team and coaching styles, common opponents, game wreckers, “go to” players and their tendencies and player matchups. Narrow your thoughts to the game at hand as opposed to the game of basketball in general.

As we head down the home stretch here are a few things to remember:

- a. Region, SoDak and State Tournaments: no banners, no signs, no fat heads; it is the responsibility of game management. No noisemakers to include but not limited to - plastic hand shakers, thunder sticks, as well as all sorts of projectiles. Megaphones are prohibited except when used by a cheerleader.
- b. Mercy rules are in effect for Regions and SoDak 16 Only
- c. A coach may include as many players on the list or roster as he/she wishes. However, only 15 players may dress for any tournament game. The actual players making up the 15 may change from game to game, day to day, etc.

### DON'T SWALLOW THE WHISTLE COME CRUNCH TIME

As officials, we hear all the time from coaches and fans that we need to “let players decide the game.” Some officials have allowed that train of thought to morph into an “anything goes” brand of chaos, especially in the closing moments of a quarter, period, or half, afraid to put air in the whistle and risk influencing the outcome. Instead of fulfilling their responsibility to keep the game safe and fair, they allow these moments to become nothing more than a “survival of the fittest.”

This is problematic on multiple levels. First, and most important, the officials are the guardians of the game. We are the only ones on the floor who do not have a personal stake in the outcome, and as already mentioned, our two primary responsibilities are to keep the game safe and fair. We have been given a rulebook to help us accomplish those means, and those rules do not suddenly go on hiatus just because there is less than a minute remaining and the score is tied. Second, by deciding not to enforce fouls and violations at certain points of the game, we are doing exactly what coaches and fans do not want us to do, we are influencing the outcome. If an official chooses not to call a clear shooting foul committed against a player launching a possible game-winning three pointer in the final seconds, that official has made the decision that the rules do not matter in that situation. The official has, in effect, “decided” the game, and that is not what he or she is being tasked and has the responsibility to do.



### **Uniform – NFHS ruling update...**

The SDHSAA office has received questions about the interpretation concerning the picture below. The NFHS has reversed their original interpretation of the previous ruling concerning the picture below. This jersey below “is legal to wear” because it meets Rule 3-5-5 (2025-26 rule book pg. 29) allowed for uniforms designed not to be tucked in (including those with trim along the bottom edge) to be worn outside of the uniform bottoms.

**ART. 5 . . .** Equipment which is unnatural and/or designed to increase a team member's height or vertical reach or to gain a competitive advantage shall not be permitted. **Equipment and apparel shall not be modified from the original manufactured state and shall be worn in the manner the manufacturer intended it to be worn.**



### **In All Other Cases Where Jersey is Designed to be Tucked in – What Is an Untucked Jersey Violation?**

An untucked jersey violation occurs when a player enters or remains in the game with their jersey not properly tucked into their shorts. This includes throughout all warmup periods, (pregame, halftime). While it may seem like a minor fashion faux pas, this rule is about uniformity, professionalism, and respect for the game.

In the NFHS (high school), players are required to keep their jerseys tucked in during live play. If they don't, officials can stop the game and issue a delay-of-game warning or technical foul, depending on the level and circumstance.

### **Why Is This Rule Enforced?**

- While some might see it as nitpicky, there are clear reasons for the rule:
- Uniform Standards: Basketball prides itself on presenting a professional, clean image. The untucked jersey disrupts team uniformity.
- Safety: Loose jerseys can get caught during play, increasing the risk of injury or interference.
- Game Control: Enforcing small rules like this helps referees set the tone that all rules matter, players stay disciplined and focused.
- Efficiency: Keeping jerseys tucked in avoids delays from having to constantly address uniform issues during live play.

### **How Officials are Instructed to Handle**

The consequences of an untucked jersey depend on the level of play and when the violation occurs:

- If a player checks in with an untucked jersey, officials shall prevent them from entering until it's corrected. When the untucked jersey is noticed during play, the player shall be instructed to correct the untucked jersey without



delaying play or gaining an advantage. With repeated offenses, the player may be instructed to be subbed out or warned for delaying game and may eventually lead to a technical foul.

### **Final Thoughts**

In a game where every detail matters, the untucked jersey rule reinforces discipline, safety, and respect for the sport. It's not about style, it's about standards. Whether you're coaching, playing or officiating at the high school level, or just watching as a fan, understanding the purpose behind this rule makes you appreciate the structure that keeps the game flowing smoothly.

So next time we hit the court, let's tuck it in.

### **Focus Area**

#### **Sportsmanship**

Unsporting conduct will not be tolerated by players, coaches and fans. Rule 2-8 Art 1 and note. Officials shall penalize unsporting conduct by any player, coach, substitute, team attendant or follower. We have tools to use during the game for unsporting conduct by players and coaches. (Stop sign, Bench warning these for coaches only) If a coach starts to incite the crowd there is no warning. There is no warning for players. That needs to be addressed immediately. If you let it go it will only get worse as the game progresses. For fans see the note after Rule 2-8 Art 1.

#### **SDHSAA Officiating Coordinator**

Justin Ingalls [coordinator@sdhsaa.com](mailto:coordinator@sdhsaa.com) 605-201-9721

#### **Basketball Statewide Captains**

Larry Osborne [oz@sdhsaa.com](mailto:oz@sdhsaa.com) 605-381-4108

Levi Pearson [lpearson@watertownsd.us](mailto:lpearson@watertownsd.us) 605-360-6854

Chris Long [chris.long@k12.sd.us](mailto:chris.long@k12.sd.us) 605-838-6002