

GHSA HEAT POLICY – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHEN DOES THE HEAT POLICY STOP?

Some aspects of the heat policy are always in effect regardless of the sport. The limitations in By-law 2.67 (Institutional Heat Policy) are in effect anytime the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) reading registers in an elevated level. The limitation on activities that are on the published chart must be followed.

WHAT IS THE WBGT?

The Wet Bulb Globe Temperature reading is a composite temperature used to estimate the effect of air temperature, humidity, and solar radiation on the human body. The reading is expressed in degrees, but should not be equated with degrees of air temperature. For example: A WBGT reading of 92 is somewhat comparable to a Heat Index reading of 104-105 degrees.

A Heat index reading merely reflects the combination of heat and humidity as “how hot it feels” on a person who is normally dressed and not involved in strenuous activity. Therefore, the Heat Index has little relevance to a football practice setting.

HOW FREQUENTLY SHOULD WBGT READINGS BE TAKEN IN PRACTICE?

Obviously, the reading should be taken just before the scheduled starting time for the practice to determine what levels of activity are permissible – or if the practice will need to be postponed until the WBGT reading gets to an acceptable level. The frequency of readings during the practice will likely depend on when the practice is scheduled. An early practice with temperatures increasing during the practice time may require several readings being taken. A late afternoon or evening practice with temperatures decreasing during the practice time should not require as many readings. The important thing is that the risks to the players are being monitored appropriately.

WHY DOES THE HEAT POLICY APPLY TO PRACTICES AND NOT TO GAMES?

The researchers who conducted the 3-year study on heat illness agreed with the GHSA administrators that there are enough built-in opportunities for players to get rest and hydration breaks during the course of a game. Everyone on the team is not participating intensely at one time. Officials and coaches are available to monitor 22 players in a game setting, while coaches may have 100 or more players to monitor during a practice setting.

It is important to remember that scrimmages are practices and they do fall under the heat policy guidelines. These interscholastic contests often occur early in the acclimatization process and extra attention needs to be given to player well-being.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A “CONDITIONING ACTIVITY”?

Conditioning activities involve weight-training, distance running, “gassers”, “running the stadium”, and other such things. Whether these activities are done before or after a practice, they are considered to be a part of the

practice and must be figured into the time restrictions. The heat policy should be in effect for “voluntary conditioning” programs since statistics at both high school and collegiate levels indicate that a large percentage of serious heat illness episodes occur during these activities.

WHAT ARE “WALK-THROUGHS”, WHEN MAY THEY BE HELD?

Walk-throughs are not considered a part of a practice since they have so many limitations placed on them. A walk-through session may last no longer than one hour. During a walk-through period, players may not wear protective equipment so no contact drills may be held. No conditioning activities may be held during a walk-through period. A walk-through may not be held on a day when there are two practices being held. These sessions are designed to work on offensive and defensive schemes and techniques without being involved in contact work.