

“Tommy Tough” Football Safety Standards

Section XI – NYSPHSAA

Section XI in its never ending mission to provide its student-athletes with positive and safe athletic experiences has embarked on a journey to make the great game of football even better. Through the vision of the Cutinella Family and the stakeholders of Suffolk County football it is our hope that we can introduce and implement changes that will protect the integrity of the game, minimize risk and allow for positive growth.

Meetings with the Section XI Football Committee, Section XI Safety Committee, Suffolk County Football Officials Association and the Suffolk County Football Coaches Association have zeroed in on the following goals that will begin to be implemented in the spring of 2016.

1. Implementation of a mandatory safety statement that will be read pre-game by the officials to all players in grades 7-12 at all contests commencing in the fall of 2016.
2. Identification of a “Player Safety Coach,” as per USA Football.
3. Develop, promote and implement an education program for Athletic Directors, coaches, players, parents, spectators and communities focusing on safety and proper techniques as it relates to illegal helmet contacts. Programs will be designed and implemented targeting all stakeholders with our vision of minimizing risk thereby creating a safer game for all participants. Programs will begin in spring 2016.
4. Support officials associations in the enforcing of NFHS rules and regulations related to the penalties for illegal contacts and hits. Flagrant fouls will result in the appropriate yardage penalty as well as the ejection of the athlete from the contest. The illegal hits of targeting, **illegal helmet contact (butt blocking, face tackling and spearing)** and defenseless player hits will result in the appropriate yardage penalty as well as the player being removed from the field for at least one play.
5. Players and/or coaches ejected from a contest will be suspended from the next regularly scheduled contest as per the NYSPHSAA and Section XI Misconduct Policy. Repeated infractions may lead to additional penalties.
6. The Suffolk County Football Coaches Association has pledged its support to the officials to make the calls necessary to minimize the risks of the all participants as well as maintain the integrity of the game.
7. Support head coaches in the downloading of game film to the Officials Association for their review and use in the education and professional growth of all of its membership.
8. Support and work with USA Football in its efforts to promote and implement programs that are being created for the benefit of all in the game.
9. Work with Suffolk County Officials Association and Coaches Association in its commitment to dramatically reduce illegal hits. Data on the illegal hits of targeting, **illegal helmet contact (butt blocking, face tackling and spearing)** and defenseless player hits will be tracked and reported to Section XI for compilation. This data will aid us in the evaluation of our work.
10. Work with our Officials Association in the exploration and development of the best possible evaluation programs.
11. Commitment to bring each of these initiatives to the NYSPHSAA and NFHS level.

We are confident that through the implementation of these strategies and commitment by all who love this great game we can create an even better experience for our student-athletes.

Pre-Game Officials Statement:

“In an effort to minimize risks to you and your opponent, helmets are not to be considered weapons and are not to be used as weapons. Helmets are not to be intentionally used to initiate illegal helmet contact against an opponent, such as spearing, targeting, butt blocking and face tackling.”

Sample Public Announcement During Football Game (should be announced at least 2 times during contest):

“The (insert name of both schools) school districts salute the Suffolk County Football coaches, officials and Athletic Administrators for implementing the Tommy Tough Football Standards, therefore reducing risks for all Suffolk County football players. We ask all spectators to join the Suffolk County coaches in supporting the officials when they make calls pertaining to targeting, illegal helmet contact and defenseless player hits. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.