On July 15, 2024, the NFHS Football Committee announced that KNEE PADS was one the "Points of Emphasis" for the upcoming high school football season.  The NFHS statement is as follows:

"To support the safety of all participants, players must wear equipment and uniforms that are properly fitted and worn as intended by the manufacturer. Before starting each game, the head coach must verify that all players are properly and legally equipped.

The use of ***knee pads*** is an area targeted for emphasis. Due to potential injury, it is essential that players only be allowed to participate if their pants and knee pads comply with the rules. ***Pants must completely cover the knees, and knee pads must be worn over the knee***. In pregame duties, game officials should be watchful and proactive in addressing potential equipment, and more specifically, knee pad issues. Players often wear pants that slide up and expose the knee during movement. Game officials should communicate with coaches and/or players and ensure that only legally and properly equipped players are allowed to participate – ***noncompliance results in nonparticipation***."

<https://www.nfhs.org/sports-resource-content/football-points-of-emphasis-2024/>

Unfortunately, many high school students are influenced by college and NFL players who do not wear knee pads that cover their knees. Our student-athletes see it on TV and many of our high seniors know that in year, if they play football in college and/or on local semi-pro teams, knee pads may be a thing of the past. Therefore, many high school football players have side-stepped the NFHS rule and wear pants that are two short to legally cover their knees. This practice has increasingly caused a dilemma for officials and coaches.

Here's what I think is the **reality of this issue:**

1) Knee pads are mandatory equipment - players must have knee pads and pants that cover the knee or they cannot participate.

2) Prior to the game and/or sometimes during the game, some Head Coaches whose team abides strickly by the NFHS's knee pad mandate, will look from their team area and see some of their opponents with exposed knees.  They often will then point that equipment violation out to the officials.  This puts officials in the middle of this infamous uniform compliance issue.

3) Before any high school game is played under NFHS rules, the Head Coach must certify the all his players have the mandatory equipment (including knee pads) and will wear the mandatory equipment and know what to do if the equipment becomes illegal during the contest.

4) Even though the knee pad enforcement issue is a point of emphasis, I know it will be a challenge again this year.  Some officials will take the "Head Coach's pre-game certification" at face value believing any safety liability issues are owned by the Head Coach.  Other officials will monitor closely and enforce the knee pad point of emphasis rule.

5) Players need to have a visible unaltered knee pad that the umpire and other officials can see.  It is true that manufactures produce knee pads in various sizes, some knee pads are smaller than others.  The point is, players must wear knee pads.

6) The knee pad issue will not go away, or diminish, until all adults come together to find common ground; ensuring that only legally and properly equipped players are allowed to participate.

7) Knee pads are mandatory safety equipment.

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,
Tom Brow

ANEFO Rules Interpreter