



To: NJSIAA Program Review Committee

From: Colleen Maguire, Director of Finance

Date: January 8, 2020

RE: NCAA Football Open Recruiting/Evaluation Period

Summary:

The NJSIAA Staff is recommending approval of a policy that will provide the necessary guidelines surrounding the NCAA Football Open Recruiting/Evaluation Period. The NJSIAA Staff feels that these guidelines will provide the best recruiting opportunity for NJ high school student-athletes in the sport of football. These opportunities are applicable to any student-athlete seeking college acceptance, including, but not limited to, preferred admission, partial or full scholarships or preferred financial awards.

Background:

Currently, the NCAA allows a 6-week open recruiting period for football. During this open recruiting period, NCAA coaches are allowed to visit prospective high school recruits at their high school to evaluate their academic and athletic abilities. The athletic evaluation allows the college coach to watch the prospective student-athlete work out on the football field, in a gym or in a weight room, while also allowing the college coach to speak to the prospective student-athlete's high school coaching staff.

This open recruiting period runs annually from April 15th through May 31st. During the open recruiting period, a college football program is allowed two in person visits to one high school...one must include an academic evaluation. Football is unique with this 6-week in person open recruiting/evaluation period at the prospective student-athlete's high school. It is also important to note that in the sport of high school football, these student-athletes only get to compete in full-contact, 11 v 11 football games during their high school season...many participating in 10 games or less per season. Therefore, due to the nature of the sport, there are less recruiting opportunities available as opposed to almost every other high school sport.

NJSIAA Student-Athlete Guidelines, Section 2. Out-of-Season Period (NJSIAA Rules and Regulations) places limitations on out of season practices and contact with coaches. Per Section 2. Out-of-Season Period, the out-of-season period shall be from the end of the season until the official starting practice date for that sport (excluding the summer recess period) as defined in Program Regulations, Section 5. Sports Season Dates.

Per NJSIAA Rules and Regulations:

1. Out-of-Season practice is not permitted under the direction of an instructor or coach, or student leaders (i.e. captain's practices). This eliminates the use of any kind of equipment under any form of instruction. The object of this explanation is to make clear the point that there shall be absolutely no practice during the out-of-season period for a particular sport.
2. Coaches/Student-Athletes: Coaches may not instruct their Student-Athletes during the out-of-season period, including Open-Gym Programs.

Issue:

In recent years, the NJSIAA has learned that there has been confusion and often miscommunications regarding the relevance of the Out-of-Season Period guidelines during this open recruiting/evaluation period for football. Miscommunications have been between athletic administrators, football coaches, student-athletes and college coaches which have led to varying levels of exposure for the student-athletes at NJSIAA member schools while college coaches are onsite.

Also, in recent years, there has been growth in third-party/private organizations involvement in high school football. These third-party/private organizations have traditionally not been involved in high school football but have had significant involvement in almost every other high school sport for many years. The primary motivation of these third-party/private organizations is financial, and not the health, safety and well-being of student-athletes.

It is the NJSIAA's opinion that the high school football coach is the best advocate and most knowledgeable resource to promote a prospective student-athlete's best interest. Any third-party/private individual is not involved with the student-athlete during the rigors of summer workouts, the emotional ebb and flow of a football season nor instilling the self-discipline and work ethic necessary to compete at the college-level.

Therefore, the NJSIAA proposes the following guidelines that will allow for consistent college acceptance opportunities for its student-athletes.

Recommendation:

The NJSIAA would like to propose the following guidelines for all member schools to adhere to during the NCAA Open Recruiting Period:

1. When a college coach is onsite at a NJSIAA-member high school, the high school coach shall be permitted to administer a football specific evaluation session at the request of a college coach.
2. High school coaches shall be permitted to attend and assist with any workout observed by the college coach.
3. The workouts to be observed by a college coach may include:
 - a. Strength training
 - b. Agility, speed and endurance training
 - c. Position specific skills workouts (see details below)
4. Position specific skills workouts include, but is not limited to, throwing, blocking, running routes, kicking/punting, or defensive positioning.
5. The workouts SHALL NOT resemble any form of organized practice. Therefore, no diagramed plays may be executed, no individual skills training may occur, and no scrimmaging of any kind regardless of the number of players participating in the workout.

6. Each onsite visit/workout may not exceed one hour in length.
7. No player protective gear may be used. Protective gear includes, but is not limited to, helmets, shoulder pads, rib pads or thigh/knee pads.
8. THUD or live contact with another student-athlete is not allowed at any time. The only football-specific equipment that may be in use are blocking/tackling dummies, blocking/tackling sleds or hand-shields.

A high school coach that violates any part of these guidelines will receive an automatic two-game suspension, such suspension to be served during the first two regular season games during the immediate next season.