

# NEW JERSEY STATE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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## NJSIAA Boys & Girls Tennis General Rules

The following tennis rules are in addition to those found in the NJSIAA Constitution, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations Handbook, Sport Specific Regulations Girls Tennis (Fall) and Boys Tennis (Spring). Coaches should have a copy of these rules and regulations at each match.

### 1. TEAM MATCH

A Team Match shall consist of five matches; a First Singles match, a Second Singles match, a Third Singles match, a First Doubles match and a Second Doubles match. The team winning the majority of the five matches shall be the winner of the Team Match.

### 2. MATCH

A Match OFFICIALLY begins when players are introduced and there will be no substitution after that point. Substitution would be allowed only if the team match has been decided and one court has not yet begun play. However, if weather intervenes, and a match has to be rescheduled for a different day, there may be substitution as long as the first point on any court has not been played. (See #11 for Interrupted Play).

A match must consist of the best of three tie-break sets. No-ad scoring, pro-sets or match tie-breaks in lieu of third (3rd) sets are not permitted unless the match has been decided. If the match is decided and any of the remaining courts split sets, a 10 Point Match Tiebreak will be Mandatory. Coaching during the 10-point tie break will be permitted at the changeovers.

Because of travel time and darkness, during the fall season only, conferences may request permission from the NJSIAA to play no-ad scoring for all matches. Non-league matches played at conference schools requesting permission, must also be played using no-ad scoring.

Ladder matches must be played using regulation (ad) scoring. All state tournament competition will use regulation (ad) scoring.

### 3. SCHEDULING OF MATCHES (Priorities)

- A. A school may not schedule or participate in more than one full match at the end of a regular school day. In addition, prior unfinished match make-ups will be allowed.
- B. A school may not schedule or participate in more than two matches on a non-school day.

Once a team's schedule for the season has been established, the necessity for rescheduling matches due to postponement, tournaments and bipartisan requests will arise. The order of priority should be as follows:

- |                                    |                           |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1st - State Tournament matches     | 4th - Conference matches  |
| 2nd- Conference Tournament matches | 5th - Independent matches |
| 3rd - County Tournament matches    | 6th - Practices           |

The rationale for listing State, Conference and County matches preferentially is those tournaments adhere to strict dates for their conclusions and it is imperative that matches leading to these deadlines be played on schedule.

#### **4. MATCH PROCEDURES**

##### **A. LINE-UP**

Each coach shall establish his/her line-up in writing before the first match begins. The coach is obligated to present his/her line-up, in proper order, at the time and place the match is played. This may necessitate additional challenge matches during the season. Results of matches played in high school tournaments will count as challenge matches. This means that the best player scheduled to play at this time must play 1st Singles, the next best 2nd Singles, and the third best 3rd Singles. With the remaining members of the squad, two doubles teams are to be selected with the stronger doubles combination playing 1st Doubles and the weaker playing 2nd Doubles as determined by challenge matches. Due to the difference in skill level among doubles players, the singles ladder is not the defining criteria for establishing doubles.

A team may not forfeit 1st or 2nd Singles. If 1st or 2nd Singles players are absent, singles players must be moved up. Third Singles may be forfeited in order to keep both doubles teams intact. If a team has seven players, it may not forfeit any position.

Team line-ups shall be determined by challenge matches to establish a proper team ladder; challenge matches must be a minimum of one (1) set, however the three (3) singles positions must be determined by the best of a three-set match. The results of these matches and the team line-up along with subsequent line-up changes must be substantiated in writing, on the official NJSIAA form, and must be given to the opposing coach before the meet begins. (Please duplicate official form included on page 10 of the Rules and Regulations).

Once a line-up is established, a player(s) may move up or down the ladder no more than one (1) position, based on each subsequent challenge match. Penalties: failure to provide a complete, valid, accurate form will result in a one game penalty plus loss of toss, at each position. Penalty must be implemented prior to start of play. A coach failing to present the challenge match form before the match, must fax or present the form to the opposing school within 24 hours or risk forfeiture of the match. If the match was played with an invalid line-up, the result will be forfeiture of all positions from the infraction through second doubles.

Arbitrary changes in line-up position due to injury, illness, discipline, or for any other reason are not permitted; position changes must be based on challenge matches which start at the position previously played; e. g. Any team member, at the discretion of the coach, may challenge a player at the next highest position only, i. e. #8 may challenge #7, #7 may challenge #6, #6 may challenge #5, #5 may challenge #4, #4 may challenge #3, #3 may challenge #2, #2 may challenge #1.

A player moving into the singles line-up, having won a singles challenge match with the player just above him/her, may not play in his/her new position until he/she has a loss to the next highest player, thus establishing his/her position on the ladder.

Any challenge match halted due to injury or unsportsmanlike conduct will count as a completed match.

A player who is absent from competition for a prolonged period (7 or more consecutive calendar days) must participate in challenge matches or compete at his/her previous line-up position upon returning to competition.

##### **B. STACKING**

The NJSIAA regulations re line-ups is quite clear, i. e., the best player scheduled to play, at the time and place of the match, plays #1, second best #2, and third best #3. From the remainder of the squad, two doubles teams will play with the better being #1 and the other #2. The absence of one (1) 'regular' 1st, 2nd, or 3rd singles player does not necessitate the "breaking of the doubles" unless the absence is for a prolonged period (more than seven [7] consecutive calendar days). If it is evident that the player will not be available for at least seven (7) days, or the remainder of the season if less than seven (7) days; this rule will be in effect immediately. If two (2) or more 'regular' singles players are absent, the positions must be filled with the fourth and fifth singles players even if it requires breaking up the doubles teams to establish the proper team ladder. When one (1) or both players from

the 1st Doubles team is unable to play, the 2nd Doubles team must play as 1st Doubles unless challenge matches determine otherwise. ***If you are missing one 1<sup>st</sup> doubles player and one 2<sup>nd</sup> doubles player, the remaining doubles players must play 1<sup>st</sup> Doubles!*** If time allows, challenge matches are mandatory under these circumstances.

"Stacking" occurs when a player is deliberately played out of order. Proving that a line-up is "stacked" can sometimes be difficult. The proof cannot be subjective: It must be based on evidence, either oral or written.

**CHALLENGE MATCHES:** Players are required to give a 100% effort in all challenge matches. When players purposefully lose a match to gain an advantage at a lower position it is unsportsmanlike conduct and is called stacking. Players and coaches who are aware of such situations must prevent, stop and report them to school officials and the NJSIAA Tennis Rules Interpreter. This practice is another form of stacking and is unethical, dishonorable and against the rules. This unsportsmanlike conduct reflects negatively on the school district and the tennis community.

"Stacking or permitting an injured player to start a match and then defaulting are very serious breaches of tennis ethics which could result in censure of the coach and school and/or forfeiture of the tennis meet. It is recommended that Athletic Directors review their school's tennis line-up to prevent any such problems.

#### C. FORFEITURE OF MATCHES

Any violation of Rule #4 will cause forfeiture of all matches from the point of infraction through the 2nd Doubles match. Example: #2 Singles is arbitrarily moved to the 1st Doubles Team. Penalty - forfeiture of #2 and #3 Singles, and #1 and #2 Doubles.

#### D. PARTICIPATION

No player shall play twice, i. e., a team shall consist of at least seven (7) players.

#### E. SUBSTITUTION

Substitutions will be permitted after the outcome of the meet has been decided; However, #4 (**A**) shall still apply. Once players have started a match, substitution is not permitted.

### 5. ATTIRE

Players must wear appropriate tennis attire. SCHOOL UNIFORMS ARE MANDATORY. Manufacturers logos may not exceed two and one-quarter (2 1/4) inches. Tank-tops, cut-off shirts or cut-off pants and any article of clothing that is in poor taste or distracting to an opponent, is not considered an appropriate uniform. Each player must wear an identical shirt or identical dresses; each player must wear the same color shorts/skirts (umpires: common sense to allow for slightly different dye lots or log sizes) A player not wearing an appropriate uniform, may NOT participate. Please contact the NJSIAA, in writing, should a problem exist relative to a school's inability to provide uniforms.

### 6. EQUIPMENT

Only approved USTA tennis balls shall be used, and three (3) new tennis balls must be provided for each match. New balls **must** be used for the third set in the event the team match is not yet decided.

It is required that each court have flip cards for players to use in keeping the set score, adjustable net straps and nets in good condition. Penalty: If flip cards are not provided, the offending/home team will be required to start the match with a one game penalty plus loss of toss, on any court without scorecards. Penalty must be implemented at the start of play.

## **7. FORFEIT TIME**

The issue of tardiness in arriving for a match is not regulated by the NJSIAA. Waiting for the opposition should be for a reasonable period (as you interpret the word under the circumstances involved). The tardy party should call to alert the opponent as to the situation. Teams arriving late or close to start time are entitled to a 10 (ten) minute warm-up prior to the introductions.

All players participating in the varsity match must be present for team introductions at the designated start time for the match.

## **8. ORDER OF PLAY**

The order of play shall be 1st Singles, 2nd Singles, 3rd Singles, 1st Doubles, and 2nd Doubles. This can be modified by mutual agreement of both coaches.

The choice of courts is the home team.

When there are less than five (5) courts, the order of play shall be 1st Singles, 2nd Singles, 3rd Singles, 1st Doubles, then 2nd Doubles, unless another order is mutually agreed upon by the coaches.

If the courts are at "split" sites, the visiting team may request the matches be played at one site. The rationale being, his/her responsibility to his/her players legally and as their coach.

Both sites may be used only with the consent of both coaches. Once started, a match may be moved to an alternate site only with the consent of both coaches.

## **9. WARM-UP PERIOD**

There will be a maximum warm-up period of ten (10) minutes, including practice serves, which must be taken prior to the start of the match, this includes doubles.

This time limit may be expanded by mutual agreement of both coaches.

Coaching may take place during the ninety (90) second period between the end of warm-up and the start of the match.

If a match is interrupted by weather conditions for more than 15 minutes or if there is a transfer of sites, a 10-minute warm-up is mandatory before the match resumes.

## **10. CONTINUOUS PLAY**

Play shall be continuous from the first service to the completion of the match.

- A. The official shall be the judge of slow play with the power to penalize the offender. In lieu of an official, both coaches shall mutually agree upon the action to be taken. If no agreement can be reached, the match shall be completed, and protest may be filed.
  - In general, no match should be unilaterally terminated by either team. All matches must be completed.
  - All protests must be filed within one hundred twenty (120) hours.
- B. A three (3) minute rest period on court between the 1st and 2nd sets and before a 10 Point Match Tiebreak and a ten (10) minute rest period between the 2nd and 3rd sets will be permitted. The players will be allowed to leave the court only between the 2nd and 3rd sets. Coaching may take place at these times.

- C. During the match, in a game, no more than twenty (20) seconds is to elapse between the end of one point to the time the next ball is served.
- D. During the odd-game changeover, coaching is permitted, even after the first game; however, a maximum of ninety (90) seconds shall elapse from the last point of the game just ended to the time when the ball is served for the first point of the next game. The changeover may not exceed ninety (90) seconds. Coaching is also permitted on the changeovers of the 10-point match tiebreak.
- E. Except during changeovers, **NO** instructional comments may be made. (Violators will be subject to point penalty system. Rule 18 & 19)
- F. Time violations will be addressed by a warning for the first offense and a point penalty for each subsequent violation.

## **11. INTERRUPTED PLAY**

Whenever a **TEAM MATCH** is postponed after at least one (1) point has been played in any individual match, the entire line-up must remain the same for the rescheduled team match or individual matches will be forfeited.

The continuation of interrupted play shall begin at the exact point it was discontinued with regard to score, the person serving, and the side of the court each player was on. A player who is unable to compete at the time of the rescheduled team match must forfeit that individual match.

The ultimate responsibility for terminating play in regard to darkness, weather conditions, or safety hazard rests with the home coach. In the case of tournament play, or any umpired matches, the responsibility rests with the NJSIAA official, when present.

## **12. INJURY** (Accident, loss of physical ability or condition/blood)

Injury is defined in the USTA regulations, as occurring from such mishaps as collision with a stationary object, i. e., net, post, fence, etc. or being hit with a ball or racquet or other object or a fall. Vomiting, dizziness, blisters or other similar treatable conditions are considered injuries.

Only one time-out is permitted for the same injury or for cramping. The injured player will have no more than ten (10) minutes, before play is resumed or a default is declared. Coaches may speak with their players during an injury time-out.

No allowance is to be made for natural loss of physical condition, as per USTA regulations.

If play is stopped for a bleeding player, it shall be resumed as soon as the bleeding has stopped, the court is cleaned up and contaminated item disposed of. A bleeding time out may not exceed fifteen (15) minutes. If further bleeding cannot be treated on change overs or set breaks, the match will be terminated

If the player is injured during the warm-up period, a substitute may not replace him/her.

## **13. COACHES ARE OFFICIALS**

### **A. Matches played without officials**

It is imperative to the game that players be coached to call the lines honestly and to make any call that is in doubt in favor of their opponent.

Occasionally, situations will arise where a need for a linesman occur. The player recognizing the need should inform his coach immediately. The coach, in turn, should contact the opposing coach and together they should inform the players that they will act as observers to establish that calls are either proper or improper.

The coaches will go inside the fence and stand close enough to observe the entire court. The players will continue to make their own calls. If a player feels a bad call has been made, he/she may appeal to the coaches. If the appeal is upheld, the player making the bad call will lose that point. If the ball is so close that a question exists as to whether it was good or not the call shall stand.

If a mutually agreeable third party is present, he/she may become the linesman.

This is a situation that is not in the best interest of the sport or its players and every attempt, including withdrawal of an offending player, by his coach, should be made to avoid it.

#### B. Matches played with officials

**When a player is over-ruled by an official, he/she automatically loses that point. After two over-rules by an official during a match, the player will be subject to the point penalty system for any further over-rules.**

Either school may hire an NJSIAA certified roving official through the NJSIAA assignor, to deal with on court situations. The school requesting an official will compensate the official and must notify the opposing team that an official will be used.

WHETHER OFFICIATED OR NOT, COACHES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF THEIR PLAYERS.

**PLAYERS ARE REMINDED THAT THEY MUST CALL OUT THE SCORE ON EVERY SERVE!** When an official is present on the court there will be one warning to the server for not clearly calling the score before each point. After that, there will be a one-point penalty each time the score is not called.

In the State Tournament, the higher seeded high school is responsible for contacting the appropriate assignor to obtain an official for each match up to and including the Sectional Finals. For preliminary games, the higher seeded school will pay the official, and the lower seeded school will pay transportation expenses.

When the match is played at a neutral site, the schools shall share the cost of the official(s).

#### **14. CALLING OF FOOT-FAULTS**

If a player is foot-faulting, his/her opponent should warn him/her and notify his/her own coach. If it continues, both coaches will act as foot-fault judges. They will position themselves where they can see the baseline and call all foot-faults. Foot-faults, when called, must be called for or against all players involved.

#### **15. LOSING TRACK OF SCORE**

"In any argument about 'facts' it should be remembered that the position of each side has equal weight." Count all points and games agreed upon by the players and replay only the disputed points or games.

When an official is not present, players may request help from their coaches (not spectators or teammates) in establishing the correct score.

#### **16. TIEBREAK**

Sets which reach a 6-6 score shall be decided by playing a 7-point tiebreak. The first team that reaches 7 points by a margin of at least two wins the set.

A. SINGLES

**A** serves first point from right court; **B** serves points 2 and 3 (left and right); **A** serves points 4 and 5 (left and right); **B** serves point 6 (left) and after they change ends, point 7 (right); **A** serves points 8 and 9 (left and right); **B** serves points 10 and 11 (left and right); and **A** serves point 12 (left).

If points reach 6-all, players change ends and continue as before: **A** serves point 13 (right); **B** serves points 14 and 15 (left and right); etc., until one player establishes a margin of two points.

(Changes of ends during a tie-breaker are to be made without any delay other than the twenty (20) seconds allowed between points.)

Players change ends for one game to start the next set, with Player **B** to serve first.

B. DOUBLES

Doubles follow the same pattern, with partners preserving the sequence of their serving turns.

(Assuming **A & B** vs **C & D**) Player **A** serves first point (right); **C** serves points 2 and 3 (left and right); **B** serves points 4 and 5 (left and right); **D** serves point 6 (left) and after the teams change ends point 7 (right) ...

**A** serves points 8 and 9 (left and right); **C** serves points 10 and 11 (left and right); and **B** serves point 12 (left) ...

If points reach 6-all, teams change ends and continue as before: **B** serves point 13 (right); **D** serves points 14 and 15 (left and right); etc., until one team establishes a margin of two points.

Team change ends for one game to start the next set with team **C & D** to serve first.

The set shall be recorded as 7 games to 6.

17. SPECTATOR INTERFERENCE

Spectators are not allowed to interfere with play. Most spectator interference is of a verbal nature, with the applauding of a player's errors and intimidation the most common problems. Spectators are not allowed to coach during play, change-overs, between sets, or any other time. Infractions will be penalized according to #18 B as illegal coaching.

Communication in any language other than English shall be considered illegal coaching.

Team members are considered spectators and may not coach.

If a player feels that spectators are interfering with the match, he should inform his/her coach immediately and cease play until the coach has contacted the opposing coach and the situation resolved.

Each coach has the responsibility for controlling spectators associated with his/her team with ultimate control resting with the coach of the home team.

If a coach feels that the conduct of the spectators, not his/her own, is such that there is an unfair advantage given to his/her opponent, the Athletic Director is directed to contact the Administrator/Athletic Director of the opposing school the day following said match. The match must be completed.

18. PLAYER CONDUCT AT TENNIS MATCHES

- A. Since high school tennis is usually played without officials, it is imperative that all participants and coaches exhibit the utmost sportsmanship. Coaches are responsible for the actions of their players and for maintaining a high level of conduct and sportsmanship at all times. It is the coaches' responsibility to prevent difficulties and immature and/or inappropriate behavior, and to handle related problems.

The use of a language other than English, shall be considered unsporting behavior since officials are unable to monitor emotional outbursts by the player or illegal coaching in a foreign language.

A player is required to call all shots on his/her side of the court. Any ball which lands so close to the line that you are undecided is your opponent's point. Never enlist the aid of a spectator and never prejudge a ball. There is no excuse for bad line calls, cheating, gamesmanship, or the like. Any player who appears to be deliberately making bad line calls in the opinion of coaches or tournament officials is to be defaulted.

Every coach and player should have a copy of "Friend at Court". (NJSIAA Coaching Rule supersedes Rule #4) published by the USTA. Copies are available and can be ordered on the USTA Web Site: [www.USTA.com](http://www.USTA.com).

- B. Profanity, obscene gestures, crossing the net, ball abuse, racket abuse, emotional outbursts, delaying play by stalling, threatening an opponent with physical violence, taunting, excessive celebration, being illegally coached, or any other unsportsmanlike act will be penalized as follows:
- 1st offense - Point Penalty
  - 2nd offense - Game Penalty
  - 3rd offense - Default

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF NJSIAA POINT PENALTY SYSTEMS:

- While normally the imposition of penalties will be in accordance with the basic table, a flagrantly unsportsmanlike act may result in the imposition of an immediate penalty, even a default, for a first offense.
  - A penalty on a member of a doubles team is considered to have been imposed on the team.
  - All penalties are treated as though the points or games actually had been played so far as serving order is concerned.
  - Point penalty is scored as though the player had played and lost what would have been the next point.
  - Penalties may only be imposed by the offending player's coach. If a codeable violation is observed by the opposing coach, he/she may stop play and summon the other coach to review the situation.
- C. Each coach is responsible for the behavior of his/her own players and is responsible for enforcing the rule as outlined and must inform the opposing coach accordingly.
- During tournament play the coach is still responsible for enforcing the rule, but the tournament officials may also enforce this rule. During tournament play the coach must inform a tournament official of any warning or penalty imposed during play. The coach should not leave the court area during play to find an official, thus leaving players unsupervised.
- D. During the regular season play, any coach not enforcing this rule is to be reported in writing by the athletic director of the opposing coach to their conference executive board. Copies must be sent to the athletic director of the offending coach and to the NJSIAA.
- E. When a player/coach is defaulted (disqualified) by an official or a NJSIAA Tournament Director, or as a result of point, game default procedure for a flagrant verbal or physical act, the additional two (2) match disqualification rule will be in effect. The Individual Tournament will count as one match.

## **19. WITHDRAWAL OF PLAYER(S)**

Sometimes, when a match has already been decided, a coach elects to withdraw his/her player(s) and forfeit the remaining match or matches; this counts as a loss on the individual player's record.

This is within the rules of the game, although it is not fair, from an ethical point of view, to the opponent. It is more acceptable in tournament play when a team must play another round later that day.

Weather, darkness, travel time, sickness, injury, and mutual consent are examples of justifiable reasons for withdrawing players. To arbitrarily withdraw a player(s) is discourteous and should not be done.

## **20. DISPUTES & PROTESTS**

Every attempt should be made to resolve a dispute first by the players, and then by the opposing coaches after being requested by the players, at the time and place it occurs, as quickly as possible.

A dispute must either be resolved or become a protest. Upon becoming a protest, the steps outlined should then be used to arrive at a resolution.

In any case the match is to be completed, the proper method to resolve "protests" is as follows:

- A. The coach wishing to file a protest should first make the opposing coach aware that a protest will be made and second consult with his athletic director with regard to establishing that it is a protestable situation and describing the protest in detail.
- B. The athletic director of the protesting school should contact the athletic director of the opposing school and attempt a resolution.
- C. If the protest involves a Conference Match, and cannot be resolved at the athletic director's level, it should be brought before the Conference for resolution.
- D. If the protest involves a County Match, then it would be brought before the County Athletic Association if it could not be resolved at the athletic director's level.
- E. If the Conference/County cannot resolve the protest, then it should be brought to the NJSIAA for resolution within the provisions of the NJSIAA By-Laws, Article VII, Sect. 1.

The NJSIAA Tournament Director is available as a resource person to assist in all situations of this nature.

Resources for resolving disputes incurred in dual matches are:

- USTA - Playing Rules of Tennis
- NJSIAA Tennis Rules and Regulations
- Conference Rules - if applicable
- County Rules - if applicable
- State Tournament Rules - if applicable
- "The Code" - Col. Nick Powell - USTA

## **21. DISQUALIFICATION**

Participation by an ineligible player in any team match during the regular season results in forfeiture of points achieved by the ineligible player and all players who follow in that team match. If such forfeiture of points would have caused the school and/or player to fail to qualify for a tournament or if an ineligible player participates in a tournament **TEAM MATCH** and/or match, said school/player will be disqualified from the tournament immediately and the last opponent will advance

in their place; schools and/or players eliminated prior to the last opponent will not re-enter tournament or competition.

## **22. INDIVIDUAL VS TEAM PLAY**

There is no set regulation with regard to a player(s) competing in independent tournaments while a member(s) of a school team. How this is regulated is strictly "local option."

As a guideline, the State Tournament Director will adhere to the scheduled time and dates for team play and State Singles' play.

Your guidelines as a coach should be fairness to the individual(s) and to the team. Each situation is unique; however, the welfare of the team should not be jeopardized for the benefit of an individual.

### **SPORTSMANSHIP POLICY DEALING WITH BIAS INCIDENTS**

There will be **no tolerance** for negative statements or actions between players and coaches. This includes taunting, baiting, berating opponents, "trash-talking" or actions which ridicule or cause embarrassment to them. Any verbal, written, or physical conduct related to race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion shall not be tolerated, and could subject the violator to ejection, and may result in penalties being assessed against your team. If such comments are heard, a penalty will be assessed immediately.

## PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF LIGHTNING

Termination, or temporary suspension, must always take place when an electrical storm is imminent. The decision to terminate or suspend a game/meet/event when an electrical storm is imminent may be made by either the host school or the official.

As noted previously, a chain of command and designated decision-maker should be established for each organized practice and competition.

Recognition: Coaches, certified athletic trainers, athletes and administrators must be educated regarding the signs indicating thunderstorm development. Since the average distance between successive lightning flashes is approximately 2-3 miles, any time that lightning can be seen or thunder heard, the risk is already present. Weather can be monitored using the following methods:

1. Monitor Weather Patterns - Be aware of potential thunderstorms by monitoring local weather forecasts the day before and morning of the practice or competition, and by scanning the sky for signs of potential thunderstorm activity.
2. National Weather Service (NWS) - Weather can also be monitored using small, portable weather radios from the NWS. The NWS uses a system of severe storm watches and warnings. A watch indicates conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop in an area; a warning indicates severe weather has been reported in an area and for everyone to take proper precautions.

### Management:

1. Evacuation - If lightning is imminent or a thunderstorm is approaching, all personnel, athletes and spectators must evacuate to available safe structures or shelters. A list of the closest safe structures must be announced and displayed on placards at all athletic venues.
2. Thirty-minute rule - Once lightning/thunder has been recognized, it is mandatory to wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning is witnessed or thunder is heard. Given the average rates of thunderstorm travel, the storm should move 10-12 miles away from the area. This significantly reduces the risk of local lightning flashes. Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count must reset the clock and another count must begin.
3. When one contest is suspended on a site due to thunder being heard and/or lightning being observed, all contests/activities on that site must be suspended.

### Education on Lightning Danger:

Coaches, athletic trainers, officials, administrators, as well as athletes, must be educated regarding the signs indicating nearby thunderstorm development. Generally speaking, it is felt that anytime that lightning can be seen, or thunder heard, risk is already present.

#### Criteria for Suspension and Resumption of Activity

Once lightning has been recognized or thunder heard, by an official, a coach, the host site management personnel, or by a lightning detection system, the game must be suspended immediately with all players, coaches, spectators, and officials directed to appropriate shelters.

After the suspension, the plan should include strict, documented criteria for the resumption of activities. It is mandatory to wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning is witnessed or thunder is heard. Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count must reset the clock and another count must begin.

Once the contest has been suspended, the 30-minute mandatory suspension in play is in effect. If the lightning detection system gives an "all clear signal" prior to the end of the 30-minute suspension time, the contest shall not be resumed until the 30-minute suspension time limit has elapsed, per the NJSIAA and NFHS policy.

However, if a member school has a Board policy that states no play/no activity may resume until the lightning detection system gives the “all clear signal” even though the 30-minute suspension time has elapsed per NJSIAA/NFHS rule, that Board policy shall supersede NJSIAA/NFHS policy.

Evacuation Plan:

All personnel, athletes and spectators must be clearly informed of available safe structures or shelters in the event a thunderstorm approaches. A list of the closest safe structures should be announced and displayed on placards at all athletic venues when applicable. The person in authority must be aware of the amount of time it takes to get to each structure and the number of persons each structure can safely hold. For large events, time needed for evacuation is increased and there must be a method (i.e., announcement over loud speaker) for communicating the need for evacuation and directing both athletes and spectators to the appropriate safe shelters.

Safe Structures: The most ideal structure is a fully enclosed, substantial building with plumbing, electrical wiring and telephone service, which aids in grounding the structure. A fully enclosed automobile with a hard metal roof and rolled up windows is also a reasonable choice. School buses are an excellent lightning shelter that can be utilized for large groups of people. However, it is important to avoid contact with any metal while inside the vehicle.

Avoid using shower facilities for safe shelter and do not use showers or plumbing facilities during a thunderstorm as the current from a local lightning strike can enter the building via the plumbing pipelines or electrical connections. It is also considered unsafe to stand near utilities, use corded telephones or headsets during a thunderstorm, due to the danger of electrical current traveling through the telephone line. Cellular and cordless telephones are considered reasonably safe and can be used to summon help during a thunderstorm.

When caught in a thunderstorm without availability or time to reach safe structures, you can minimize the risk of lightning-related injury by following a few basic guidelines:

1. Avoid being the highest object. Seek a thick grove of small trees or bushes surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch.
2. Avoid contact with anything that would be attractive to lightning. Stay away from freestanding trees, poles, antennas, towers, bleachers, and baseball dugouts, metal fences, standing pools of water and golf carts.
3. Crouch down with legs together, the weight on the balls of the feet, arms wrapped around knees, and head down with ears covered.