CONTACT ABOVE THE SHOULDERS

Every season in NFHS basketball, rule changes occur. This season, a player who rebounds the ball will need to find **elbow room** without swinging his/her elbows. With continued emphasis on reducing concussions and decreasing excessive contact situations, the rules committee determined that more guidance is needed for penalizing contact above the shoulders.

(a) A player shall not swing his/her arm(s) or elbow(s) even without contacting an opponent. The penalty for excessively swinging the arms or elbows when no contact has occurred, is a violation under Rule 9-13-Art 1 Penalty. Excessive swinging of the elbows occurs when arms and elbows are swung about while using the shoulders as pivots and the speed of the extended arms and elbows is in excess to the rest of the body as it rotates on the hips or on the pivot foot.

(b) Examples of illegal contact above the shoulders and resulting penalties.
   1. Contact with a stationary elbow may be incidental or a common foul.
   2. An elbow in movement, but not excessive, should be an intentional foul.
   3. A moving elbow that is excessive can be either an intentional foul or a flagrant personal foul.

Summary: Under the new interpretation, officials will no longer have an option of ruling a common foul. More than incidental contact above the shoulders with the elbows must be a minimum of an intentional foul and, if the contact is deemed to be excessive, the ruling would be a flagrant foul. Swinging of elbows usually occurs when a player gathers a rebound and is surrounded by opponents attempting to dislodge the ball but it can happen in numerous other instances in the game. This new interpretation is also for protecting a player that has possession immediately following a rebound by quickly calling reach-ins or other contact. It is vital that officials call it correctly and that coaches coach their players correctly in regards to this aspect of the game.

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