

# SPIRIT

The MHSА will conduct mandatory spirit coach/advisor rules clinics for all MHSА member schools. **All** spirit coaches (**head, assistant, volunteer**) and **all** dance/drill team coaches (**head, assistant, volunteer**) must complete the clinic requirement. MHSА member schools' spirit squads are allowed to perform stunts ONLY if the spirit coach and dance/drill coach has completed and is current with the AACCA Safety Certification Course.

All provisions of the National Federation Spirit Rule Book as well as regulations listed in the MHSА Handbook shall be in effect for all spirit team activities including practices, games, performances and competitions (dance/drill included). Violations of these regulations are subject to penalties as outlined in Article VIII, Section (2) of the MHSА By-Laws. An individual school district may place further restrictions on their spirit squads than what is placed by the National Federation and the MHSА.

A spirit participant and coach must not commit an unsporting act. This includes, but is not limited to, acts or conduct such as: (a) disrespectfully addressing or contacting a game official or gesturing in such a manner as to indicate resentment; (b) Using profane or inappropriate language, music, or gestures; and (c) Baiting or taunting an opponent. The MHSА disapproves of any form of taunting which is intended to embarrass, ridicule or demean others under any circumstances including on the basis of race, religion, gender or national origin.

Schools' administrators and spirit / dance / drill team coaches need to make certain that the music being played during half-time entertainment is lyrically appropriate Spirit teams are required to keep dance movements non-offensive and non-suggestive. High school contests are family events and music should be appropriate for an audience of all ages.

It is important to note that it is the coach's responsibility to follow all rules found in the National Federation Spirit Rule Book as well as the rules found in the MHSА Handbook.

- (1) No individual shall participate in a game until he/she has a minimum of ten (10) days of practice with one practice session per day on ten (10) different days (no practice permitted on Sunday) prior to the date of the first allowable game.
- (2) The Association prohibits spirit teams from participating in any spirit related activity on a Sunday.
- (3) Spirit teams shall be placed under the direction of a qualified and knowledgeable coach/advisor. The coach/advisor shall be in attendance and accessible at all scheduled practices and school-approved spirit activities. In case of an emergency, another designated school representative shall be in attendance. The coach/advisor should be knowledgeable in first aid techniques and emergency procedures.
- (4) All spirit team members shall receive proper training before attempting any form of tumbling, partner stunts, and/or pyramids. Professional training in proper spotting techniques shall be mandatory for all spirit teams.
- (5) Suitable mats or a grassy area shall be used while all stunts are being learned. Step-by-step procedures shall be used to master all stunts, and learning sessions shall be supervised by a qualified coach/advisor. An active spotter is required until a tumbling or partner stunt or a pyramid/mount is mastered. An inattentive person is not considered a spotter. Practice sessions must be held in a location suitable for the activities of spirit squads and must be supervised by the coach/advisor. For instance, it would not be appropriate to hold stunt practice in front of a glass trophy case.

- (6) Coaches/advisors must recognize a team's particular ability level and must limit the team's activities accordingly. "Ability level" refers to the team's talents as a whole and individuals should not be pressed to perform activities until safety is perfected.
- (7) If stunting, spirit teams should always be at a safe and appropriate distance away from player introductions and/or starting line-ups.
- (8) Spirit teams should not lead fans in a cheer that poses a safety risk, including fans jumping or bouncing on the bleachers at any time.
- (9) Participation at games/contests is limited to a school's spirit team (no children younger than the sixth grade for those schools that don't have an adequate student population) except for performances prior to the game or during intermission. Participation in spirit team activities during interscholastic contests must be limited to bona-fide students of the school district who are designated as members of the school's spirit team. All team members must be in position of close proximity to the playing field (team members may not be brought out of the stands). A bona-fide student is one who has not graduated and is eligible to participate with and/or compete for a designated school according to the rules of the MHSAA.
- (10) Cheerleaders are prohibited from throwing any type of object into or from the spectator section.
- (11) Mascots while in mascot uniform are not allowed to be stunts or spotters.
- (12) Gum chewing, candy and food are not to be allowed during practice or games.
- (13) Tumbling and partner stunts shall not be performed on concrete, wet or uneven surfaces, or where there is inadequate lighting or space. Stunting during basketball and volleyball games must be performed at a reasonable distance away from bleachers and/or walls. Spirit team members must not stand behind the free throw lane extended during a basketball game. Stunts shall not be performed during a basketball or volleyball game when the ball is in play, including free throws, player warm-up, school song or when players enter the floor/field via a "run through." Cheerleaders are not permitted on the playing floor during 30-second timeouts.
- (14) All members of a team shall wear their hair away from the face and off the shoulders. Hair devices (ornamental and functional) shall be safe and secure. Hard headbands or devices to lift the hair (bump-its) are not considered safe and secure. **No head covering is** allowed unless being worn as part of a costume during a **non-stunting** half time performance. The team is to remove hats or bandanas before they resume spirit activities.
- (15) Wearing any hard or soft jewelry during spirit activities is prohibited. Religious or medical medals, if worn, shall be taped to the body under the uniform without the chain. Piercing spacers are also prohibited.
- (16) All spirit team members must be dressed appropriately for the activity, i.e. a uniform designated by the school. Appropriate athletic shoes must be worn at all times in practice and during any spirit activity. Slippers would not be considered appropriate footwear.
- (18) Fingernails (including artificial nails) **must** be kept **short, near the end of the fingers.**
- (19) Glitter shall not be on the hair, face, body, uniform, or costume. If glitter is used on a sign, the sign shall be laminated.

- (20) When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff. Skirts, pants or shorts are to remain zipped and/or buttoned and should be worn in the manner intended.
- (21) The formation of "rally lines" by spectators, fans and/or students on or near the playing field/floor during the introduction of players or at any other time before, during, or after a game is prohibited. Props which players run through are legal if being held by spirit squad members in an appropriate area of the playing surface, however, no stunting is allowed while holding the player run-through.
- (22) Megaphones are permitted when being used appropriately by spirit squads to magnify the words of a cheer or chant.
- (23) All pyramids and/or mounts are limited to two persons high, meaning the top person is in direct contact with the base(s) who is in direct weight bearing contact with the floor or ground.
- (24) For all catch/cradle dismounts, the catcher(s) shall have continual visual contact with the top person. All dismounts from shoulder height or above surface shall have assisted landings.
- (25) Dismounts from a multi base stunt shoulder height and below to a cradle require two catchers, and have a separate head-and-shoulder spotter.
- (26) *A twist to a cradle is permitted only on grass (real or artificial) or a mat.***
- (27) Basket tosses and similar multi-based tosses are permitted only on appropriate mats, grass, rubberized and soft-yielding surfaces. Clarification: Any toss, other than a popped cradle, is considered a multi-based toss. (A toss cannot significantly exceed the height of the intended stunt).
- (28) *Airborne twisting tumbling skills are permitted only on grass (real or artificial) or a mat. Exception: round offs and aerial cartwheel.***
- (29) For all cradle dismounts, the flyer must not hold props (signs etc.) that are made of solid material and have corners or sharp edges.
- (30) Suspended splits involving bracer(s) that originate at any height and drop to any level are legal provided all of the following conditions are met: (a) the flyer has both hands in contact with the bracer(s); (b) the flyer does not become inverted; (c) the flyer has at least two bases; (d) The flyer and bracer(s) each have a separate spotter (exception – bracers in shoulder sits or thigh stands); and (e) In suspended splits in which the flyer is not released by the bases, the bracer(s) must maintain hand/arm contact with the flyer until she/he is no longer in a split position.

## DANCE / DRILL TEAM

Head dance/drill team coaches must complete the spirit rules clinic. MHS A member schools' dance/drill teams are allowed to perform stunts ONLY if the dance/drill coach has completed and is current with the AACCA Safety Certification Course

Note: Dance/drill/pom and other spirit teams that use props as a base must also follow the appropriate National Federation safety limitations in Rule 2 of the NFSRB.

- (1) Wearing any "hard" jewelry (i.e., metal, hard plastic etc.) is prohibited except religious or medical medals which shall be taped to the body under the apparel.
- (2) Fingernails shall be kept at a length appropriate for safe participation.

- (3) Hair devices shall be safe and secure. The hair shall be worn in a manner to ensure safety while performing.
- (4) Participants shall wear apparel (i.e., uniform, costume, shoes etc.) which is appropriate of the activity involved. When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff.
- (5) ***Dance, drill and pom teams must wear footwear that is appropriate for the activity involved. At a minimum, footwear must cover the ball of the foot. Exception: dancers performing on a floor cover during a competition may be barefoot.***