

KNOW THE RULES

By Sandi Hoffman, MSHSL Rules Clinician

Have you ever attended a game where a stunt is performed too close to the bleachers or some other obstacle? If so, you probably didn't enjoy the stunt but rather were worried about the students' safety. As coaches we devote a lot of time teaching our cheerleaders how to stunt correctly and safely but we also need to remind them to be aware of their surroundings when stunts are performed during a game.

Think for a moment about all the different settings our cheerleaders may find themselves in. At football or soccer they are outdoors where they may encounter gravel, concrete, uneven surfaces, wet fields and fences. Even indoor events can present their own set of challenges. Space may be extremely limited, warm-ups may be in area with low baskets or, during time outs, spectators may be moving through the area designated for cheerleaders. Hockey arenas can be particularly cramped! These are just a few of the potentially hazardous situations our students may encounter.

The NF rules book makes references to this issue. Article 2-1-3 states: "Performing surfaces must be suitable and free of objects." Article 2-1-4 goes on to say: "Stunts must be modified to be appropriate for the performing surface/area."

There are some excellent examples of surfaces on page 21, (2-1-4-B): "Participants are stunting: (a) while the gymnasium lights are off except for the spotlight on the players; (b) on a cinder track; (c) on a wet track at a football game; (d) on an asphalt track; (e) on ice at a hockey game, (f) on concrete. Ruling: only (d) is legal. Comment: Stunting should be performed only on appropriate surfaces and where there is adequate space and lighting. An asphalt surface is appropriate, provided the surface is dry and free of loose gravel."

As coaches it is our responsibility to minimize the risk to our cheerleaders. It is our responsibility to recognize when stunts must be modified for the surroundings or eliminated all together. So now you Know the Rules!

Note: If you have a rules question that you would like to have answered, email me at bs4467@iw.net. Also, a new feature has been added to the MCCA website! It offers you the opportunity to submit a rules question and see the answer appear on the website. Check it out at www.mccacheer.com.