

NFHS Rule 9-1: Helping the Runner – Interpretation Summary

Endorsed by UHSAA Joint Board 8/4/25

Rule Text:

“An offensive player shall not push, pull or lift the runner to assist his forward progress.”

Key Points for Enforcement

- **Pulling or lifting the runner** is clearly illegal and easy to identify.
- **Pushing the runner** is only a foul when:
 - The teammate **makes direct contact only with the runner, not an opponent, and**
 - The runner’s **forward progress is clearly assisted**, gaining an advantage.

Indicators to Heighten Awareness (Pre-snap Clues)

- Game Situation
- Field Position
- Offensive Formation

Observable Illegal Actions (Post-snap Criteria)

- A teammate **pulls or lifts** the runner in any way.
- A teammate **pushes the runner** directly, with **no contact on any opponent**.
- The push results in a **clear gain in forward progress**.

Philosophy & Teaching Notes

- The line between legal and illegal pushing can be difficult to judge.
- Officials should focus on **fair, coachable, observable, and non-intrusive** enforcement.
- Consistency across the state is essential.
- Coaches should be informed of this evolving **point of emphasis**, including the shift from historical leniency to current enforcement.