

UNIFORMS – APPROPRIATE ATHLETIC UNIFORM GUIDELINES

ATHLETES SHOULD BE AFFORDED MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY IN THE CHOICE OF UNIFORM FABRICS AND STYLES.

Selection of appropriate sport competition and practice apparel is influenced by many factors that support this basic position:

(1) PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS SUCH AS COMFORT, DRAG REDUCTION, PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT AND PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS SUCH AS REDUCTION OF FATIGUE

Example: A player may prefer loose fitting clothing that presents the least restrictions to movement and reduces the incidence of skin irritation.

Example: A player may prefer wearing compression garments that research demonstrates may improve (a) proprioception, thereby improving accuracy and efficiency of movement, faster and improved response to required movement and improved body awareness and feedback from muscles and (b) force and power production.

Example: A player may prefer to wear a garment made of fabric that wicks moisture away from the body to maximize both comfort and response to high heat and humidity conditions

Example: A player may prefer to wear a tight fitting garment that reduces air or water drag in sports in which speed is a dominant performance consideration

Example: A player may prefer to wear a garment that covers more or less of the body dependent on weather considerations such as cold, wind, and humidity

(2) MEDICAL AND SAFETY CONCERNS

Example: Garments covering more body surface may reduce susceptibility to bruises, abrasions or other types of injuries created by coming into contact with playing surfaces or contact with other opponents.

Example: Compression garments reduce muscle vibration, thereby reducing muscle fatigue and athlete predisposition to muscle injury.

(3) DIFFERENCES IN BODY TYPE AND THE IMPACT ON BODY PRESENTATION ON PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS

Example: Larger and/or heavier athletes or exceptionally thin athletes may not feel comfortable or may feel self-conscious in form fitting uniforms, briefs or minimalist apparel. An athlete's psychological attitude is an important aspect of performance.

Example: Female athletes wearing pads during menstruation may feel uncomfortable in form-fitting apparel with such discomfort possibly inhibiting freedom of movement.

(4) ISSUES RELATED TO RESPECT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND/OR THE REALITY OR PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF INAPPROPRIATE MARKETING EXPLOITATION

Example: Requiring minimalist uniforms of females to increase their attractiveness to male spectators, a standard which is even more suspect if such requirements are not identically applied to male athlete uniforms.

(5) CULTURAL DIFFERENCES RELATED TO THE ACCEPTABILITY OF EXPOSING THE BODY IN PUBLIC

Example: Athletes from the South Pacific and Middle East countries refuse to consider some sports (i.e., beach volleyball, track, etc.) because of uniform requirements.

Athletic organizations should have the right to limit or mandate an athlete's selection of competitive apparel in the following circumstances:

- prohibition of garments that provide participants with an unfair competitive advantage
- prohibition of garments that may interfere with the performance of an opponent
- prohibition of garments that may inhibit the effective officiating of a contest
- prohibition of garments that may cause injury to the competitor or his/her opponents
- mandating that all members of the same team wear the same garments in order to permit visible and ready distinction between opposing teams on the part of players and officials.

Such uniform restrictions should not discriminate by gender, race or other inappropriate distinction. Before mandating athletic apparel regulations which limit the equipment or apparel choices of athletes, sport organizations should be responsible for producing research, evidence or other objective analysis that demonstrates the need for such restrictions.