

PONY's position on helmet modifications with equipment attachments

(WASHINGTON, Pennsylvania - June 15, 2018) PONY Baseball and Softball requires its athletes to wear a batting helmet that meets the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) specifications and bears the NOCSAE stamp on the helmet.

Helmet attachments (c-flap, etc.) have recently become popular and are being used throughout baseball and softball. As we prepare for the tournament season, we have started to receive inquiries from our families, players and volunteers as to whether or not they are permitted in PONY competition.

Altering a helmet or any equipment in any way is not permitted and may cause the NOCSAE certification and warranty of that helmet to become void; thus, making it illegal in PONY play. If you have altered your helmet or intend to, please contact the helmet manufacturer to determine if altering the helmet will void the NOCSAE certification.

What are helmet attachments?

Helmet attachments are products that are sold separately from the helmet, that you, the consumer, are responsible for attaching to the helmet. They include the "c-flap" and similar face guards, which are hard-plastic extensions that attach to the ear-flap of a batter's helmet.

How is this different from a facemask?

A facemask is an attachment that covers the entire face and typically does not require the helmet to be altered by drilling holes into the helmet to attach the facemask. Many manufacturers sell helmets with a facemask already attached that are NOCSAE certified.

Can we use helmet attachments?

No. Because attaching c-flaps or similar face guards requires the altering of a helmet, it would cause the NOCSAE certification and warranty to become void; thus, making it illegal in PONY play. However, manufacturers are exploring the development and testing of helmet attachments connected to helmets with pre-drilled holes that do not void the helmet's warranty, nor the helmet's NOCSAE certification. Manufacturers anticipate such helmets entering the marketplace in the coming months.

Therefore, in order to use a helmet attachment in PONY play, the helmet manufacturer must provide a notice indicating that affixing the protector to the helmet has not voided the helmet's NOCSAE certification. That notice must be shown to the umpire prior to the game. PONY has asked manufacturers to clarify whether or not their helmets with an added attachment are still NOCSAE certified, and therefore, permitted for PONY use.

What's NOCSAE?

The mission of the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) is to commission research in sports medicine and science and establish standards for athletic equipment, where feasible, this includes batters' helmets. PONY regulations mandate that helmets meet NOCSAE specifications and bear the NOCSAE stamp.

Why can't we use them without manufacturer approval?

According to NOCSAE, adding "products to a helmet previously certified as meeting the appropriate NOCSAE standard will make the certification voidable by the helmet manufacturer. Such additions to the helmet create a new and untested model, as defined in the NOCSAE standards."

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