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## **KYORUGI MODIFIED HEAD CONTACT RULES**

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## **Article 1. Purpose**

1. The USATKD Kyorugi Modified Head Contact Competition Rules (“Modified Head Contact Rules”) are a subset of the USATKD Kyorugi Competition Rules. These rules are primarily for the safety of our non-World Class sparring competitors. They regulate all matters pertaining to USA Taekwondo competition that are not governed by full-contact sparring rules and are intended to standardize safety guidelines for all non-World Class Taekwondo competition in the United States.

### 1.1. Purpose of Modified Head Contact Rules

1.1.1. Ensure that non-World Class persons participating in competitive Taekwondo sparring are protected, insofar as possible, from concussive head injuries

1.1.2. Allow developing Taekwondo athletes to compete with the reasonable assurance that they will not be subjected to forceful head contact

### 1.2. Modified Head Contact Rules are divided into two classes, depending on belt level and age groups

1.2.1. No head contact: Contact to the head is not permitted

1.2.2. Light head contact: Only light contact to the head is permitted

## Article 2. No Head Contact

1. No Head Contact divisions:
  - 1.1. Ages 7 & Under (All Belts)
  - 1.2. Ages 8–11 (Color Belts)
2. Head area definition
  - 2.1. In accordance with USATKD Kyorugi Competition Rules, the “head” is defined as “the area of the body above the collar bone,” including the neck.
3. No Head Contact procedure
  - 3.1. Under “No Head Contact” rules, any kick that touches the head area will result in a “Gam jeom” penalty for Misconduct to the kicker.
  - 3.2. In the event of a hard kick to the head—anything more than a light touch—the referee will immediately declare, “Kye-shi” and call the tournament medical staff to inspect the injured contestant.
  - 3.3. If, in the opinion of tournament medical staff, a competitor cannot continue because of a kick to the head, the attacker will be disqualified.
  - 3.4. The decision whether a competitor is able to continue is made solely by the referee in consultation with the tournament medical staff.
    - 3.4.1. Any decision not to continue made by the player or coach, in spite of the tournament medical staff’s decision that it would be safe for the competitor to continue, will constitute withdrawal by the player, who shall lose the match by WDR.
4. Guidelines for officiating:
  - 4.1. Inability to continue: Inability to continue because of fright, crying or loss of will following a kick to the head does not constitute grounds for disqualification of the attacker.
  - 4.2. Careless attacks to the head: If a technique is directed at the head and does not make contact, the referee may give a verbal warning. Multiple instances of the same action may result in “Gam-jeom” penalty, or even disqualification, if the player continues to ignore the referee’s directives.
  - 4.3. Verbal reminders: Before and during the match, referees should remind players and coaches that No Head Contact rules are in effect.

## Article 3. Light Head Contact

1. Light Head Contact divisions:
  - 1.1. Ages 8–11 Black Belts
  - 1.2. Ages 12–14 (Cadet) Grass Roots Black Belts and Color Belts
  - 1.3. Ages 15–17 (Junior) Color Belts
  - 1.4. Ages 33+ (Ultra) All Belts
2. Head area and legal scoring area
  - 2.1. In accordance with USATKD Kyorugi Competition Rules, the “head” is defined as “the area of the body above the collar bone,” including the neck.
  - 2.2. In accordance with USATKD Kyorugi Competition Rules, the legal scoring area is “the entire head above the bottom line of the head protector.”
3. Light Head Contact procedure
  - 3.1. Under “Light Head Contact” rules, competitors are allowed to kick to the head using light contact only.
  - 3.2. A competitor who executes a successful, light contact kick to the head shall be awarded three (3) points. Under Modified Head Contact Rules,
    - 3.2.1. There are no extra point(s) for a turning kick to the head; and
    - 3.2.2. Turning kick to the head is not considered as a valid turning kick in determining penalty for falling down and superiority (Articles 14.4.1.2 and 15.5 of the Kyorugi Competition Rules)
  - 3.3. If a competitor executes a kick to the head that is deemed by the referee to be more than light contact, he/she will be given a “Gam-jeom” penalty.
  - 3.4. The referee will immediately call “Kal-yeo,” and then “Kye-shi,” and summon the tournament medical staff to inspect the contestant.
  - 3.5. The referee will declare a “Gam-jeom” penalty and then invalidate any points that have been awarded for the technique.
  - 3.6. If, in the opinion of the tournament medical staff, the competitor cannot continue because of excessive contact to the head, the attacker will be disqualified.
  - 3.7. The decision whether a competitor is able to continue is made solely by the referee in consultation with the tournament medical staff.
  - 3.8. Any decision not to continue made by the player or coach, in spite of the tournament medical staff’s

decision that it would be safe for the competitor to continue, will constitute withdrawal by the player, who shall lose the match by WDR.

#### 4. Guidelines for officiating:

- 4.1. Inability to continue: Inability to continue because of fright, crying or loss of will following a kick to the head does not constitute grounds for disqualification of the attacker.
- 4.2. Careless or excessively forceful attacks to the head: If the referee sees that a player is directing excessively forceful techniques to the head area, even if the foot does not make contact, the referee may give a verbal warning. Multiple instances of the same offense may result in “Gam-jeom” penalty, or even disqualification, if the player continues to ignore the referee’s directives to observe light contact rules.
- 4.3. Verbal reminders: Before and during the match, referees are encouraged to remind players and coaches that Light Head Contact rules are in effect.

#### 5. What is meant by “light contact”?

- 5.1. “Light contact” is defined as anything from a touch to a tap— “0.1” to “3” on a scale of 1 to 10.
- 5.2. The degree of allowable contact does NOT increase according to the age, gender, size or rank of the competitors.
- 5.3. The level of contact is determined solely by the observed force of the kick, not by the reaction, or non-reaction, of the recipient. Indications of excessive contact include:
  - 5.3.1. Abrupt snapping or displacement of the head as a result of the blow
  - 5.3.2. Abrupt rotation of the head as a result of the blow
  - 5.3.3. An audible “thump” or sound of the foot contacting the headgear or face
  - 5.3.4. Bleeding or injury
    - 5.3.4.1. Injury can result with even minimal force when contact is made to the head area; for example, a light tap may be sufficient to cause a bloody nose, or grazing contact with a toenail might cause a minor cut. Conversely, a very serious blow to the head may show no visible injury, despite the possibility of a fracture, dislocation or concussion. Therefore, blood, injury—or apparent absence of injury—may not be valid criteria for determining whether a kick is light or excessive contact.

#### 6. After the contest

- 6.1. A contestant who, in the opinion of the tournament medical staff, is unable to continue the match as a result of hard contact to the head, will not be allowed to continue in the bracket, and will not be able to compete further on that day in any kyorugi event.



- 6.2. In addition to the above, and in accordance with USATKD Kyorugi Competition safety protocols, after the match the contestant must undergo a full concussion assessment by qualified tournament medical staff. Unless fully cleared, he/she will not be allowed to compete in sparring for the next 50 days (14 and under), 40 days (15 – 17), or 30 days (18 and over). Before returning to play, the contestant must be examined by a medical doctor designated by USATKD as a concussion specialist, who must certify that he/she is fully recovered and able to return to competition.
- 6.3. NOTE: Most states have enacted Youth Sports Concussion Safety Laws. These laws govern youth athlete return-to-play protocols following a possible concussion.

## 7. Guidelines for officiating:

- 7.1. 8-Count: Under Modified Head Contact Rules, the referee SHALL NOT give an 8-count for any kick, even a legal one, to the head area. If a kick to the head is powerful enough to warrant an 8-count, it is excessive, and the appropriate penalty procedure shall be applied.
- 7.2. Note that the referee can and should begin an 8-count for any strong legal kick or punch to the trunk area that results in a knock-down condition. This situation does not necessarily call for medical evaluation.
- 7.3. Turning Kicks: Successful turning kicks to the body shall be awarded four (4) points in all divisions. Turning kicks to the head in Modified Head Contact Rules divisions shall be awarded three (3) points.

## 8. Responsibility for Correct Application:

- 8.1. During a match, it is the center referee's responsibility to correctly apply Light Head Contact rules. If the T.A. / Ring Captain sees that a referee is allowing excessive head contact, he/she must take immediate action to correct the referee's actions and instruct the center referee to enforce the appropriate penalty. At the discretion of the Referee Chair, a referee who refuses to accept correction in this regard will not be allowed to referee Light Head Contact matches and may be subject to disciplinary action or sanction.
- 8.2. During the course of a tournament, the T.A. / Ring Captain will be responsible for the correct application of Light Head Contact rules by all of the center referees under his/her supervision.

## **Article 4. Cadet Black Belt Competition**

1. Ages 12–14 Cadet Black Belt Divisions
  - 1.1. Grass Roots Division
  - 1.2. World Class Division
2. There will be two Black Belt Cadet divisions: Grass Roots and World Class.
  - 2.1. The Grass Roots Cadet Black Belt division will use Modified Head Contact Rules.
  - 2.2. The World Class Cadet Black Belt division will use Full Head Contact.
3. All USATKD Grand Prix's, National Championships and State Championships will have both Grass Roots and World Class Cadet Black Belt Divisions.
4. All USATKD Cadet Team Trial events will use Full Head Contact.

## **Article 5. Divisions Governed by Full Head Contact Sparring Rules**

1. Full Head Contact divisions:
  - 1.1. Ages 12–14 (Cadet) Black Belts
  - 1.2. Ages 15–17 (Junior) Black Belts
  - 1.3. Ages 17–32 All Belts
2. In USATKD State Championships, USATKD National Championships and other USATKD-sanctioned events with sparring competition, the Senior Black Belt Full Head Contact shall apply for these divisions.
3. In USATKD State Championships, USATKD National Championships and other USATKD-sanctioned events with sparring competition, the Ultra divisions shall follow Light Head Contact Rules.

## Article 6. Modified Head Contact Chart

Age	Belt Color	Applicable Rules
Dragon 6 – 7	Yellow	No Head Contact
	Green	
	Blue	
	Red	
	Black	
Tiger 8 – 9	Yellow	No Head Contact
	Green	
	Blue	
	Red	
	Black	Light Head Contact
Youth 10 – 11	Yellow	No Head Contact
	Green	
	Blue	
	Red	
	Black	Light Head Contact
Cadet (12 – 14)	Yellow	Light Head Contact
	Green	
	Blue	
	Red	
	Black (Grass Roots) Black (World Class) Black (Non World Class)	Full Head Contact
Junior (15 – 17)	Yellow	Light Head Contact
	Green	
	Blue	
	Red	
	Black (World Class) Black (Non World Class)	Full Head Contact
Senior (18 – 32)	Yellow	Full Head Contact
	Green	
	Blue	
	Red	
	Black (World Class) Black (Non World Class)	
Ultra (33+)	Yellow	Light Head Contact
	Green	
	Blue	
	Red	
	Black	