FACE-MASK REMOVAL

- The face mask should be removed prior to transportation, regardless of the athlete's respiratory status.
- Those involved in the pre-hospital care of injured football players should have the tools for face mask removal readily available. (screwdriver, power screwdriver, Trainer's Angel™, FM Extractor™, or a modified anvil pruner. A backup removal tool should also be on hand if a screwdriver is the first tool of choice.)

FOOTBALL HELMET REMOVAL

The athletic helmet and chin strap should only be removed:

- If the helmet and chin strap do not hold the head securely, such that immobilization of the helmet does not also immobilize the head.
- If the design of the helmet and chin strap is such that even after removal of the face mask the airway cannot be controlled, or ventilation provided.
- If the face mask cannot be removed after a reasonable period of time.
- If the helmet prevents immobilization for transportation in an appropriate position.

If the helmet does need to be removed:

- Spinal immobilization must be maintained while removing the helmet.
- Helmet removal should be frequently practiced under proper supervision. Specific guidelines for helmet removal need to be developed.
- In most circumstances, it may be helpful to remove cheek padding and/or deflate air padding prior to helmet removal.

HELMET REMOVAL IN OTHER SPORTS

It is recommended that each situation be treated individually and held to the same criteria for determining the removal of football helmets. In all cases it is recommended that the helmet be left on during pre-hospital management of the spine-injured athlete, unless:

- The helmet is not form fitted to the head, such that the head is able to move within the helmet and is not provided adequate immobilization.
- The design of the helmet does not allow for airway control even after the face mask is removed.
- The face mask is difficult to remove and cannot be done in a reasonable amount of time.
- The helmet does not allow immobilization in a safe position for transportation.