

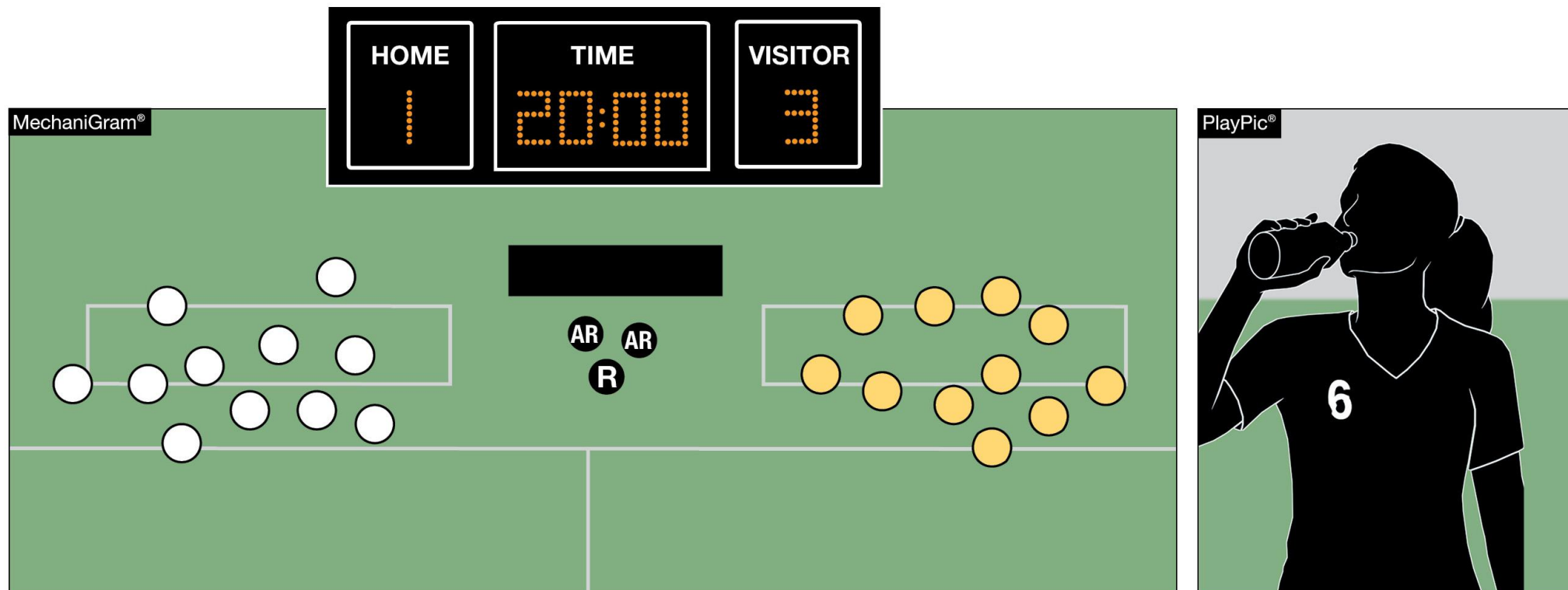


2025-26 NFHS Soccer Rules Changes



SUBSTITUTIONS

RULE 3-3-2c



In addition to being able to substitute players after a goal is scored or when a player is injured, teams may substitute players **when a game is temporarily suspended.**

SUBSTITUTIONS

RULE 3-3-2b2



Amended language clearly states that **once the appropriate health care official is beckoned by the referee**, an injured player (including a goalkeeper) must leave the game.

REQUIRED UNIFORM

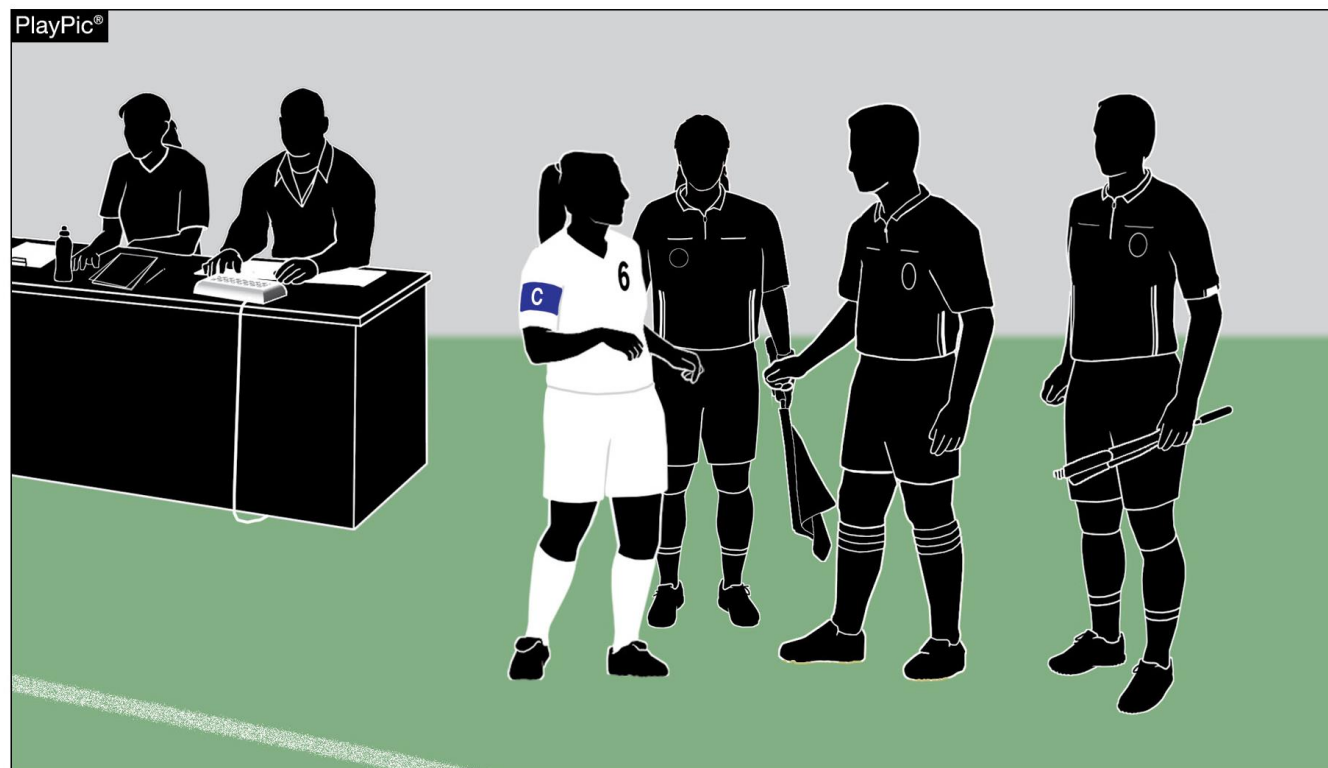
RULE 4-1-2



Amended language clarifies a player's number may be placed on the **front of the jersey and/or shorts** in addition to the back of the jersey.

INTERVALS BETWEEN PERIODS

RULE 7-2-4

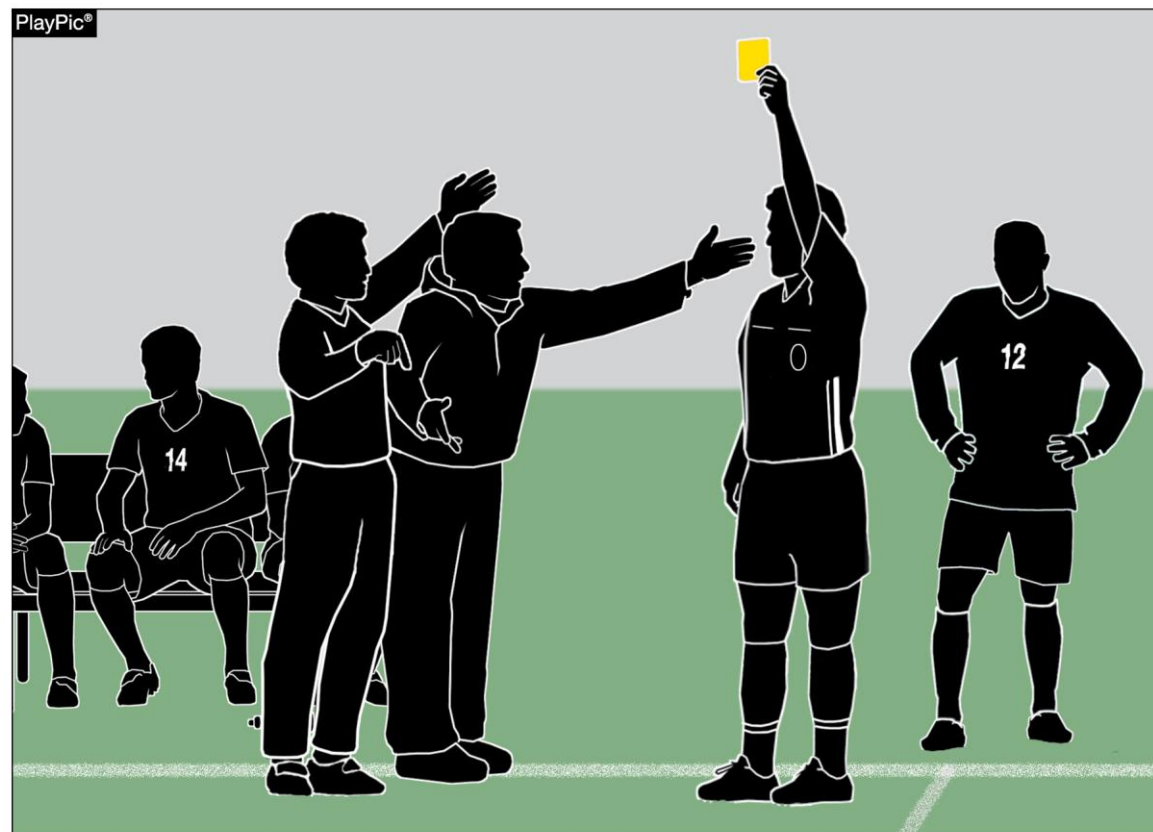


This time is for officials to talk amongst themselves and for coaches to work with their players.

No coach, player, substitute or other team personnel other than the team captain shall approach or speak to the officials during an interval between periods, unless beckoned by an official.

MISCONDUCT

RULE 12-4-4b



The head coach is responsible for conduct of their team, inclusive of all bench personnel in the team area. The head coach may be warned, cautioned or ejected for misconduct committed by bench personnel.

DEFINITIONS

RULE 18

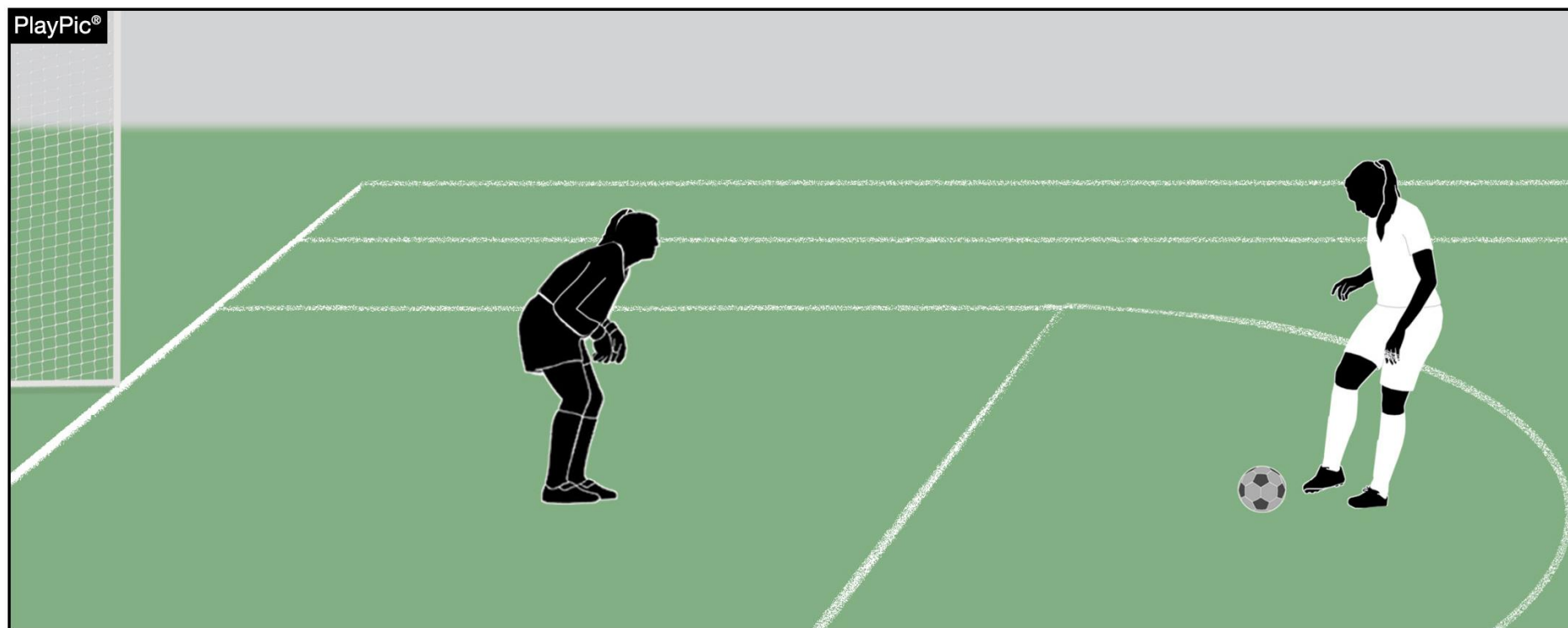


Rule 18, which previously contained the rulebook's definitions, has been eliminated. The terms and definitions have been relocated to their respective rules sections within the rulebook. They also remain accessible via the index for quick reference. This change aims to reduce redundancy.



2025-26 EDITORIAL CHANGES

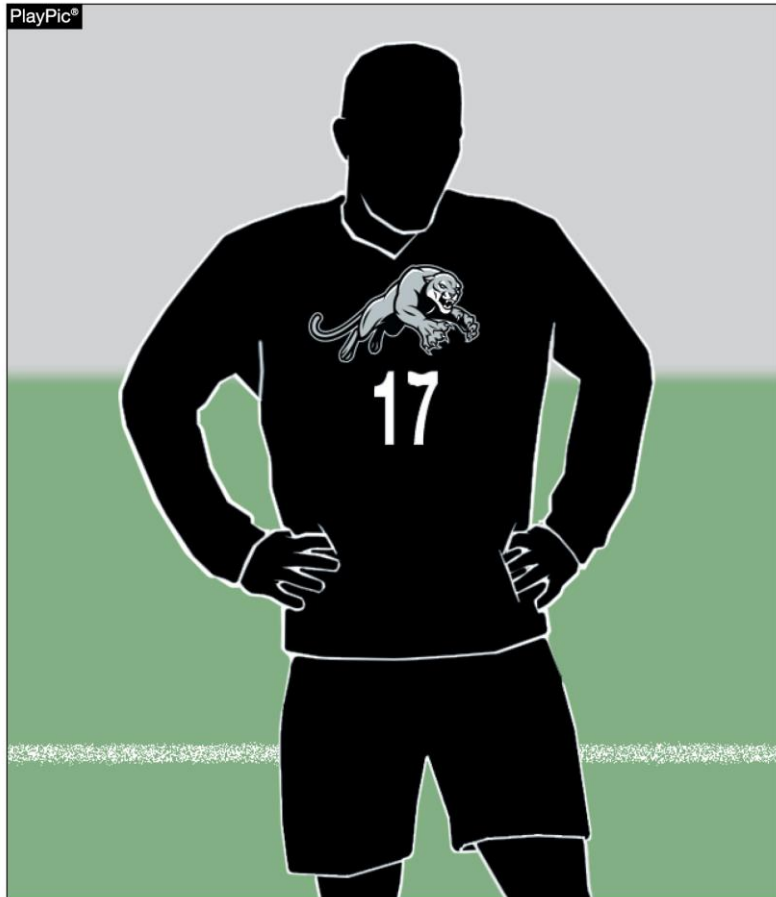
3-3-7 Substitutions



If a player is being replaced during a penalty kick situation, the substitute may not take the penalty kick.

REQUIRED UNIFORM

RULE 4-1-1c



A school's nickname and/or mascot are **permitted on a uniform**, in addition to the school's name, logo and/or player's name.



5-1-2 Officials

SECTION 1 GENERAL

ART. 2 . . . The jurisdiction of the officials shall begin on arrival at the field of play and its immediate surroundings (to begin official responsibilities), which shall be no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the game and end with the officials leaving the field of play and its immediate surroundings.

- a. The officials shall enforce the rules, and their decisions on points of fact are final.
- b. The officials can only correct a decision so long as the game has not been restarted.
- c. The officials retain clerical authority over the contest through the completion of any reports, including those imposing ejections, that are responsive to actions occurring while the referees had jurisdiction.
- d. State associations may intercede in the event of unusual incidents that occur before, during or after the officials' jurisdiction has ended or in the event that a contest is terminated prior to the conclusion of regulation play.
- e. Protests of NFHS rules are not recognized.
- f. The officials shall not use any form of alcohol, tobacco, or controlled or illicit substance(s) for non-medicinal purposes beginning with arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.



2025-26 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS ARE EDUCATION-BASED



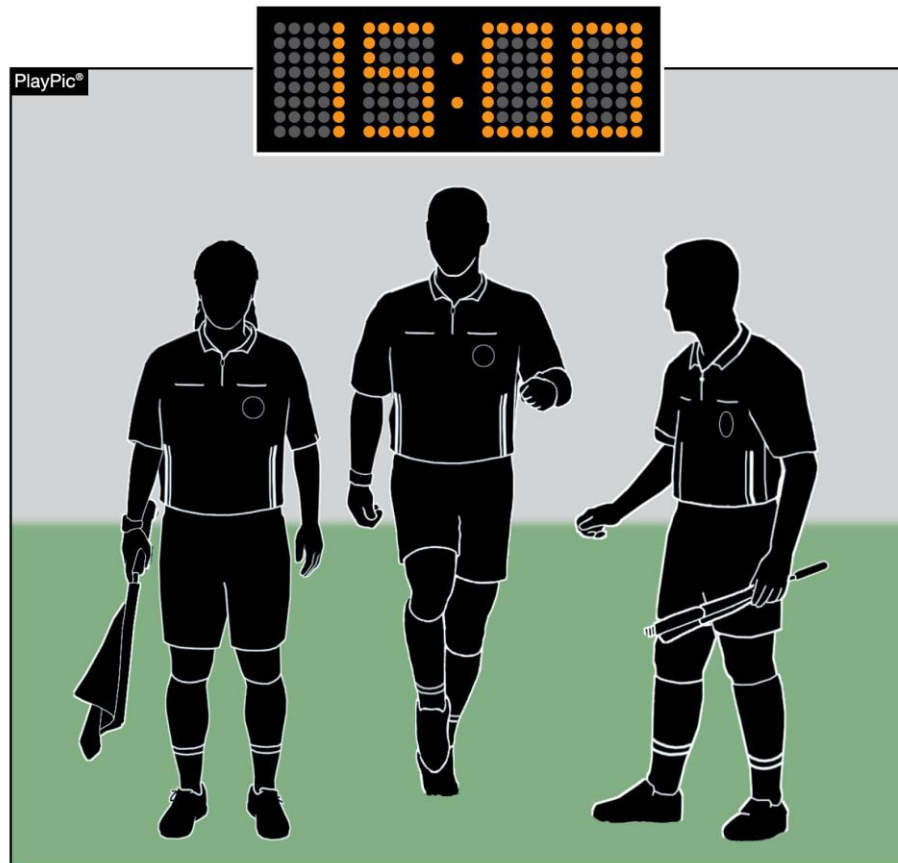
- High school athletics play a vital role in the overall growth of student-athletes, providing opportunities to develop physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- Soccer serves as a platform for building essential life skills such as teamwork, discipline, leadership, and resilience.
- Coaching priorities focus on fundamental skills, strategic gameplay, and decision-making while instilling respect for opponents, officials, and teammates.
- As the game evolves, a strong understanding and application of the rules are essential to maintaining fair and safe competition, making rule education a key responsibility for players, coaches, and officials.



HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS ARE EDUCATION-BASED

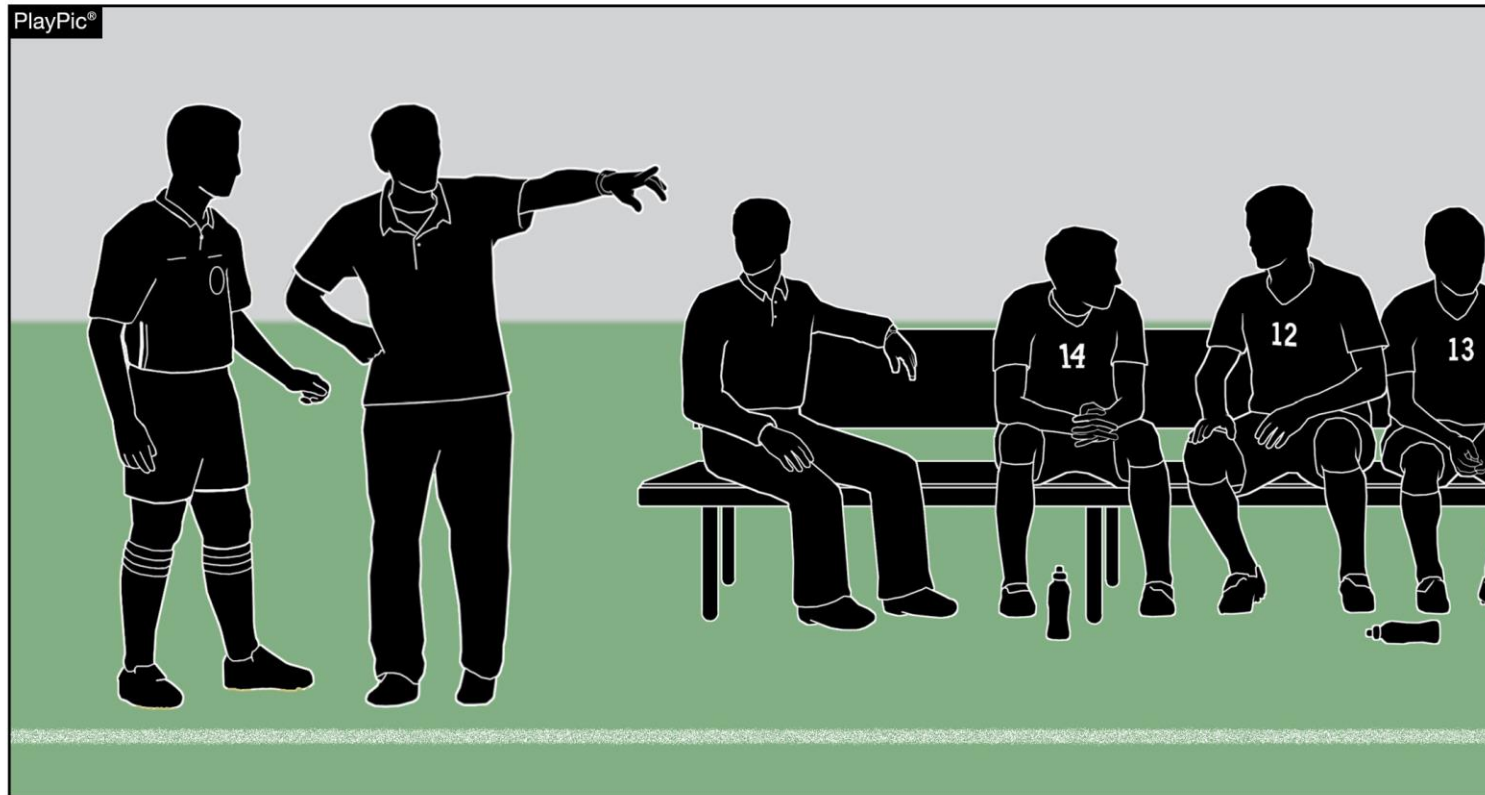
- A well-rounded high school soccer program should emphasize both athletic and academic development, reinforcing the importance of discipline, time management, and perseverance.
- Education-based athletics prepare students not only for success in sports but also for their future endeavors by teaching valuable life lessons through competition.
- Schools, coaches, and administrators must work together to ensure that high school soccer fosters growth, responsibility, and leadership, creating a positive experience that supports student success both on and off the field.

COURAGE, CHARACTER AND CONSISTENCY



It is important for contest officials to conduct themselves in a professional manner that upholds the dignity of the position. This includes arriving on time, conducting the proper pregame, knowing and applying the **NFHS rules** properly, speaking to players and coaches in a professional manner, and completing any necessary postgame reports.

TEAM AREAS AND BENCH DECORUM

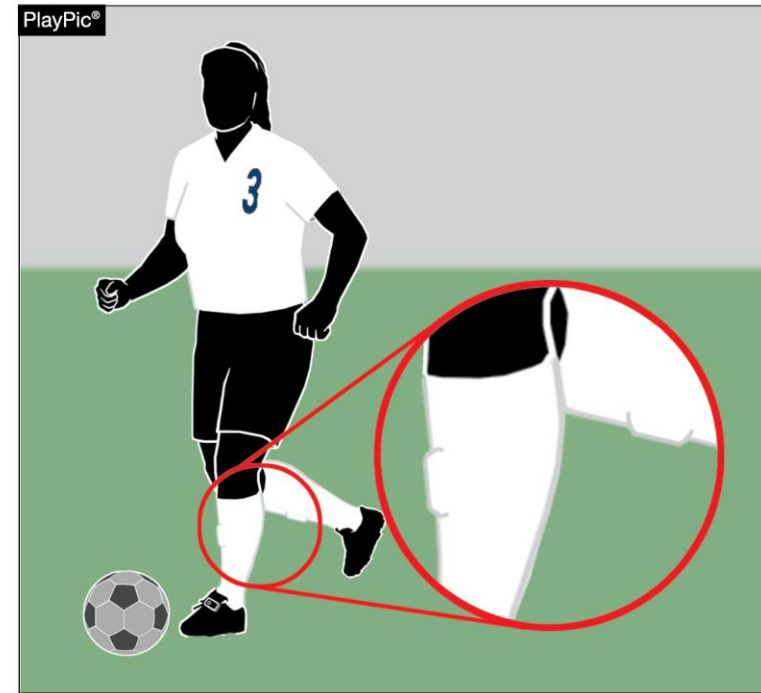
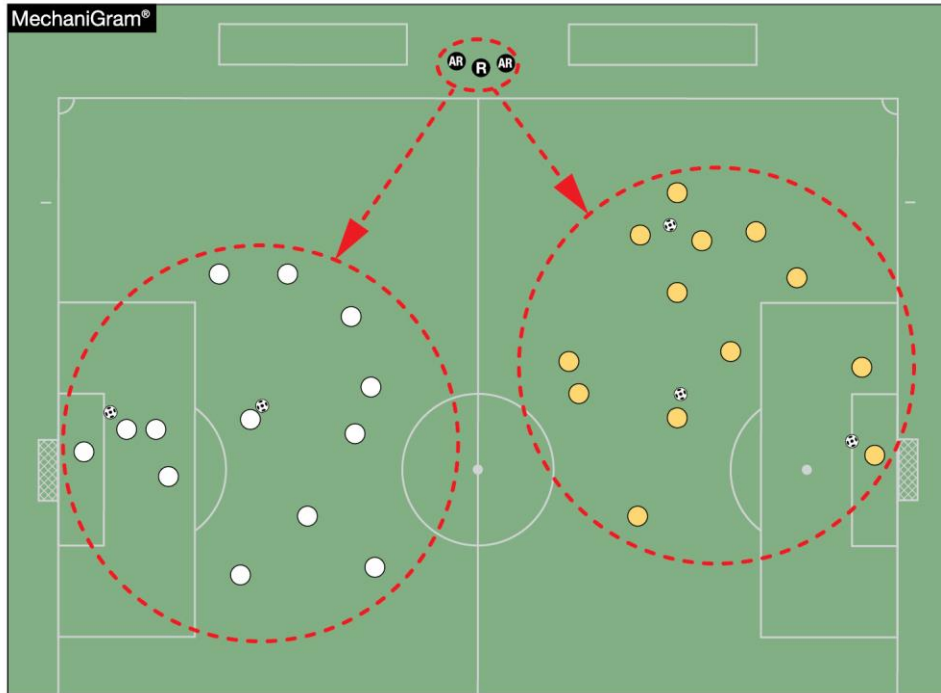


Effective communication and game management are essential. Recognizing and addressing dissent early is crucial — public, provocative and/or persistent complaints must be dealt with decisively.

The official's role is to keep the game safe and fair.

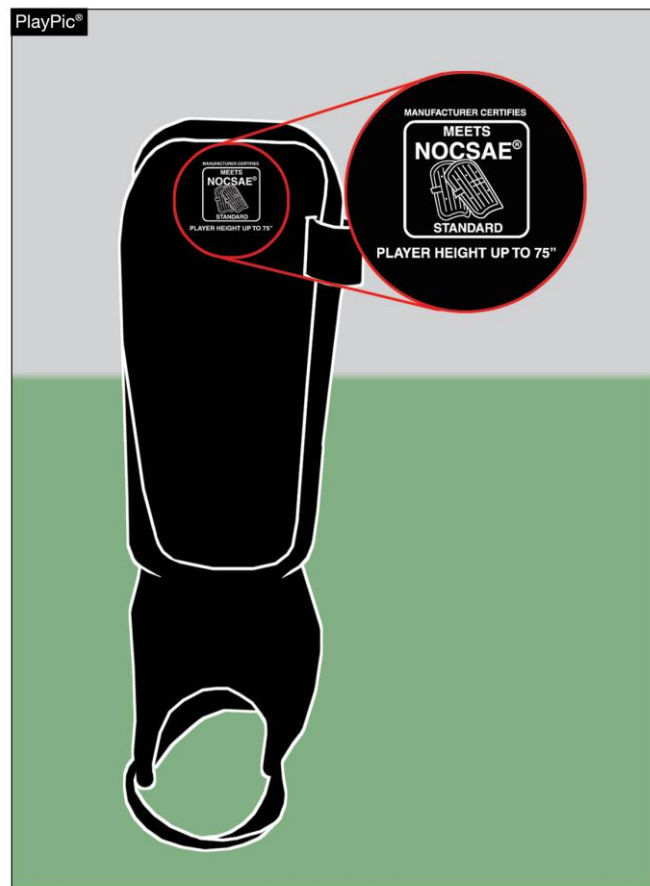
Coaches set the tone for their teams. Adult leaders must be champions of character.

UNIFORM/EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS



Student-athlete safety is a priority, and that starts with players wearing proper uniforms and equipment. Specifically, **players are required to wear shinguards** suitable for their age and size. **This is a non-negotiable item in the NFHS**, not a player's or coach's decision.

UNIFORM/EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS



Shinguards must have a NOCSAE seal and information about height requirement. The coach is responsible for ensuring their players adhere to this and referees must enforce the rule. Referees should inspect and, if needed, correct the issue in a professional manner. Officials should also be on the lookout for players with micro guards. **No one is to play at the NFHS level with illegal or improper shinguards.**



PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.
TOGETHER.

Thank You

National Federation of State High School Associations

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