

Soccer Rules Changes - 2025-26

BY NFHS ON March 5, 2025 | OFFICIALS, COACHES, SOCCER, RULES CHANGE

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3-3-1,2,3,2c (NEW): Removes redundant language and permits substitutions during a temporarily suspended game.

Rationale: Eliminates redundant language and allows substitutions during a temporarily suspended game. In hot weather, state associations often authorize stoppages within a half for water breaks. Under this change, teams would now be permitted to make substitutions during these stoppages.

****3-3-2b(**2):** Clarifies that an injured player must leave the field if the referee beckons a coach or appropriate health-care provider.

Rationale: The rules change clarifies the current rule that if an official beckons a coach or appropriate health-care provider for any injured player, including the goalkeeper, that player must leave the field regardless of the reason the clock is stopped.

****4-**1-2:** Clarifies that a number is required on the front of the jersey and/or the shorts.

Rationale: This language supports the rule prior to the reorganization of Rule 4 and adds clarification to the overall interpretation to clarify that a number is required on the front of the uniform which may be on the jersey and/or the shorts.

7-2-4 (NEW): Prohibits a coach or team personnel other than the team captain from speaking with a referee during interval between periods, unless beckoned by a referee.

Rationale: The time between periods of play is designated for rest for all participants, not for engaging with officials. This rule change introduces specific language and penalties for coaches who confront officials during these intervals, aiming to reduce unnecessary disputes and maintain a respectful game environment.

12-4-4: A misconduct penalty may be given to the head coach if team or bench misconduct occurs.

Rationale: To encourage and support sporting and positive bench decorum, the rule change reinforces the head coach's responsibility for the conduct of their team and bench personnel within the team area. It provides officials with additional tools, allowing them to warn, caution, or eject the head coach if any bench personnel engage in misconduct.

Rule 18: Elimination of Rule 18. Incorporating the definitions into their corresponding rules while expanding the index to serve as a quick reference tool to streamline the rules, improve

clarity, remove unnecessary duplication and eliminate conflicting definitions.

Rationale: This change relocates definitions into their corresponding rules, streamlining the rules book by reducing redundancies and contradictions. The expanded index at the back of the book continues to serve as a helpful quick reference tool, while definitions were updated and aligned in context with appropriate rules.

2025-26 Editorial Changes

3-3-2b(5), 3-3-3b(4), 3-3-3c(2), 3-3-3d(3), 3-3-7 4-1-1c, 4-1 Notes, 5-1-2, 13-1-5

2025-26 Points of Emphasis

1. Education Based High School Athletics
2. Courage, Character and Consistency
3. Team Areas and Bench Decorum
4. Player Uniform Equipment and Safety