

# RULE REFINEMENTS

## NFHS Rule Revisions to Subs, DOGSO, Equipment for '23-'24



Manuel Del Rio, Indio, Calif., and the crew scanned over players for equipment issues prior to the game's start. High school match officials must review NFHS Rule 4, which was revised for 2023-24 to provide additional clarity on player equipment and penalties.

By John Van de Vaarst

The NFHS clarified what constitutes a denial of a goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO), more clearly defined fouls that involve physical contact, and reorganized the substitution rules. Those are some of 11 revisions recommended by the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee for the 2023-24 high school soccer season. All 11 changes were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Referee thanks Julie Cochran, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the NFHS soccer rules committee, and Dr. Stan Latta, who recently completed his term as chair of the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee, for reviewing this article.

As a reminder, the NFHS sends out a rules questionnaire to member state associations to review the previous year's rules changes and gather feedback on possible changes for the following year. When discussing a proposed change, the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee considers the following factors: risk minimization, the spirit and purpose of education-based athletics, the ability to officiate the rule fairly and consistently, consideration of national/state/localized issues and enhancing the high school experience.

The changes are covered in the order they appear in the NFHS Soccer Rules Book.

### Substitutions 3-3-2b (2,3) (NEW)

A new 3-3-2(b) has been included and will replace 3-3-2 and 3-3-3. This change includes all players and does not distinguish between field players and the goalkeeper and reads, "If the referee stops the clock and beckons a coach or appropriate health-care professional on to the field

for an apparent injury to any player, the player shall leave the field. If the referee signals for the clock to be stopped and the health-care professional or coach is not beckoned, the player does not have to leave the field.” The first portion clarifies that while the referee might stop the clock to initially review a game situation, it clearly defines when an injured player must leave the field, which is contingent upon team personnel entering the field — beckoned by the referee. The second change merely states an injured player may be replaced by a substitute.

**Play 1:** A3 and B1, the goalkeeper, collide while challenging for the ball. The goalkeeper saves the ball but remains on the ground. The referee stops the clock to review the game situation and the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper gets up and is ready to resume play. The referee restarts the game with a drop ball to the goalkeeper. **Ruling 1:** Legal.

Taking a few moments to review game situations before beckoning the coach or appropriate health-care professional (AHCP) onto the field is the proper mechanic. Once the individual is beckoned onto the field, the injured player must leave. If this were a penalty kick situation and the goalkeeper appeared injured, a new goalkeeper would have to enter the game and be ready to deal with the penalty kick. This creates an unfair advantage. Providing a few moments for the goalkeeper allows the potential to remain in the game. However, it is important to note that if there is an apparent head injury, the referee should not delay beckoning the coach or AHCP onto the field.

A good pregame mechanic is to discuss the stopping of the clock with the head coach and/or appropriate health-care professional to let them know they are not to enter the field until they are beckoned. If one of these individuals enters the field without being beckoned and the player gets up ready to play, the player must still be removed.

**Play 2:** Field player, A1, falls to the ground and the referee stops the clock and (a) the referee beckons team A’s coach and/or AHCP onto the field, (b) and team A’s coach and/or AHCP enters the field without the referee beckoning them onto the field, (c) A1 jumps up and is ready to play. **Ruling 2:** In (a), (b) and (c), the referee properly stopped the clock. In (a) and (b), the player must leave the field of play since the coach and/or AHCP was beckoned onto the field or entered the field without being beckoned. The coach may decide not to replace the player immediately to assess the player’s injuries and play a person down. In (c), since A1 was ready to play before anyone was beckoned onto the field, the player does not have to leave the field.

### Substitutions 3-3-7

A sentence has been added to the end of Article 7 which provides the location where the player may re-enter, which is the official area at midfield. This clarifies where the player must be to re-enter the game and alleviates confusion as to who is in or not in the game as a player.

### Procedures for Substitution 3-4-1e (NEW)

The change from scorer to official’s area was made to assist the official in the managing of substitutions as scorers may sometimes be found in the press box and not at field level. Substitutes go to the official’s area at midfield and wait to be beckoned into the game. Additionally, players must now exit the field into their team’s bench area and not that of the opponent’s. If a player leaves the field on the opposite side and walks around to the bench, there are several potential problems.

### Player Equipment 4-2-12 (NEW)

Rule 4, Player Equipment, has been reorganized so that it is easier to understand — placing items in a more logical sequence

## BY THE NUMBERS

# 32.9

Average roster size of an NCAA institution’s men’s soccer team (all divisions) in 2021-22. The number is the highest-ever recorded, with the smallest average squad size coming at 24.9 in 1981-82 — the earliest data available.

SOURCE: NCAA 2021-22 PARTICIPATION STATISTICS

## SIDELINE

### Wisconsin Adopts Game-Ending Mercy Rule

The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association approved a measure beginning this fall for boys’ and girls’ soccer that will end games at a certain margin as opposed to a running clock. Following 60 minutes of play, if the score differential is eight or more goals, the match will end.



## DID YOU KNOW?

According to IFAB Laws, the coin is not technically part of a referee’s “Compulsory Equipment” in Law 5. Yet, the referee is required to use a coin for the coin toss. The IFAB said many referees hand the coin to another match official for safekeeping during the match. So, compulsory equipment consists of whistle(s), watch(es), red and yellow cards and a notebook (or other means of keeping a recording of the match). The referee may carry the coin after the coin toss, but is not required to do so. (Just be sure the assistant referee or fourth official doesn’t lose the coin in case of extra time or kicks from the penalty mark!)



**TEST YOURSELF**

In each of the following you are given a situation and at least two possible answers. You are to decide which answer or answers are correct for NFHS, NCAA or IFAB rules/Laws. **Solutions: p. 81.**

**1.** The ball is rolling along the touchline and is about to cross the line. The referee sounds the whistle.

- a. Award a throw-in to the opposing team.
- b. Have a drop ball with a player from the team who last had possession.
- c. Award an indirect free kick to the team that last had possession.

**2.** A1 takes a throw-in to A2. Then A1 runs onto the field of play beyond the second-to-last defender. A2 passes the ball to A1.

- a. This is a legal play since there is no offside on a throw in.
- b. This is a legal play since A1 was running forward prior to the pass.
- c. Offside.

**3.** During the course of play, the goalpost is inadvertently moved and is just behind the goalline. A shot is taken and it crosses the goalline but does not enter the goal.

- a. No goal since the ball did not enter the goal.
- b. Award a goal since the ball crossed the goalline between where the goal posts should have been.
- c. Award a drop ball to the goalkeeper.

**4.** A1 is moving forward within the attacking penalty area and passes the ball back to A2. A1's momentum causes A1 to cross the goalline and go off the field. A2 shoots and puts the ball in the goal.

- a. No goal since A1 is considered offside.
- b. Award a goal since A1 did not interfere with play.
- c. No goal and caution A1 for leaving the field without permission.

— and one article was added to section 4-2. “Wearable technology devices must be securely fastened and not present a risk to the player, teammates or opponents. Devices may be worn on the shoes or on the body under the uniform but not worn on the arm. Note: Medical appliances and/or medical devices are not considered wearable technology.”

**Play 3:** A1 is wearing a fitness device that tracks performance such as motion, heart rate and/or blood oxygen levels. The device is worn: (a) as a watch on the wrist, (b) on the upper arm, (c) on the shoes, (d) on the ankle over the socks/shinguards, (e) on the ankle under the socks/shinguards, (f) on the chest under the jersey top. **Ruling 3:** Medical appliances and/or medical devices are not considered wearable technology. If the device is used for medical purposes, team A must have received prior authorization from the state association. Without such authorization, the device is only legal in (c), (e) and (f) since the device is worn either “on the shoes or on the body under the uniform.” The device cannot be worn on the arm without state association approval as a medical device.

**Offside 11-1-5 (NEW)**

High school soccer’s offside rule has been updated to include criteria on what is to be determined as deliberately playing the ball when determining offside. When a player in an offside position receives the ball from an opponent, the referee must determine if the defender deliberately played the ball. An exception remains in that while a save is deliberately playing the ball, this is not considered a deliberate play for purposes of determining offside.

In determining whether a ball was deliberately played or not, the following criteria is used:

- 1. Did the defender pass the ball in the direction of a teammate?
- 2. Did the defender gain possession of the ball?
- 3. Did the defender clear the ball?

Ultimately, the defender must have time and space (including sufficient sight of the ball) in order to control it. Also, it is considered a save when a player (not limited to the goalkeeper) stops or attempts to stop a ball which is going into or very close to the goal.

**Play 4:** A2 attempts to pass the ball to A3 who is in an offside position. The ball deflects off the head of B3 and continues to A3 who shoots and scores. **Ruling 4:** No goal. A3 gained an advantage by being in the offside position. B3 did not make a deliberate play on the ball. The touching of the ball on the head did not satisfy the criteria specified above.

**Fouls 12-1-1 thru 3 (NEW), Definition of Playing Terms 18-1-1c, n, oo, yy, zz**

A new 12-1-1, under Fouls and Misconduct, has been created which reformats and numbers various sections of Rule 12. In essence, if a player commits any of the following offenses against an opponent, a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team: a player who charges, jumps at, kicks or attempts to kick, pushes, strikes or attempts to strike (including head-butt), tackles or challenges and/or trips or attempts to trip an opponent. Additionally, the terms “Careless,” “Excessive Force,” “Serious Foul Play” and “Tactical Fouls” are all new definitions. The definition of “Violent Conduct” has been revised to more clearly convey that a player who uses “excessive force or brutality” is guilty of violent conduct, as well as a player when not challenging for the ball, deliberately strikes an opponent or any other person on the head or face with the hand or arm.

**Handling 12-2-2, 12-2-3**

The handling rule was revised to eliminate the necessity for the referee to determine if the hand/arm contact was accidental or deliberate after a player handles a ball which directly results in a goal. Now, a player is penalized

for handling even if the contact is accidental.

### Restrictions on the Goalkeeper 12-7-5

12-7-5 has been added to provide clarity on restrictions by the goalkeeper and handling the ball inside or outside the penalty area and when the goalkeeper is not permitted to handle the ball. The new article reads, "The goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as any other player outside the penalty area. If the goalkeeper handles the ball inside the penalty area when not permitted to do so, an indirect free kick is awarded but there is no disciplinary sanction. However, if the violation is playing the ball a second time (with or without the hand/arm) after a restart before it touches another player, the goalkeeper must be cautioned if the offense stops a promising attack or ejected if the offense denies an opponent or the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity."

**Play 5:** B1, the goalkeeper, deliberately parries the ball to the ground, dribbles to the edge of the penalty area with the feet and then picks the ball up with the hands to clear it. **Ruling 5:** Indirect free kick for the opponents at the point where the goalkeeper picked the ball up which is a second touch of the ball with the hands before it is touched or played by another player.

### Misconduct 12-9-4 (NEW), 12-9-1f(14,15), 12-9-2d(3,4)

The denying of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO) is now clearly defined in the new 12-8-5. The following elements must be considered and all are present when determining a DOGSO offense:

1. Distance between the offense and the goal.
2. General direction of play.
3. Likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball.
4. Location and number of defenders.

COURTESY OF JIM REUTHER

## 5 MINUTES WITH JIM REUTHER

Referee liaison officer discusses experiences with MLS team.

**Officiating Experience:** SUNY Oneonta Intramurals, 1970-72. USSF State 5 Emeritus, 1988-2002. Ohio High School Athletic Association Class 1, 1989-2002. NISOA National Emeritus, 1990-2002. Officiated Big 10, North Coast Athletic and Ohio Athletic Conference games. Also worked NAIA and NIRSA competition. Officiated the 1994 NCAA Division III Final Four. NISOA National Assessor/Clinician. E-Town Camp Instructor. Recipient of the NISOA Robert Sumpter Excellence in Teaching Award and enshrined in the Ohio Soccer Hall of Fame.

**Occupation:** Ph.D. chemical physicist. Retired associate professor, Penn State, 1984. Retired research leader, Battelle, 2015. Subject matter expert, Department of Defense, 2015-present.

**REFEREE:** What is your current position with the Columbus Crew?

**REUTHER:** Referee liaison officer (RLO) for Columbus Crew SC (reporting to PRO) and U.S. Men's/Women's National Teams (USSF) as an independent contractor.

**REFEREE:** How long have you held this position?

**REUTHER:** More than 20 years: I served in this position from 2002-2011 for MLS and from 2012-present for PRO. That includes more than 350 matches at Historic Crew Stadium/Lower.com Field in Columbus, Ohio as well as two MLS Cup Finals, six Women's World Cup Finals, six Men's World Cup Qualifiers and six Internationals, including Real Madrid vs. Paris Saint-Germain in front of 90,000 at Ohio Stadium.

**REFEREE:** How did you get involved with the MLS initially?

**REUTHER:** I refereed USISL (United States International Soccer League) before MLS, then MLS "friendlies."

**REFEREE:** As referee liaison, what are your duties and responsibilities?

**REUTHER:** Be responsive and dependable, taking care of subordinate details/needs/issues behind-the-scenes so referees are not distracted and can focus on officiating the match. I am also the point of contact for coaches, the match director, stadium operations, medical and security. I confirm directions, parking, arrival times, credentials, tickets. I complete locker room setup compliant with MLS competition: match balls/pressure; pump/gauge; sub boards/passes; match notices/timelines; radios/headsets; marker spray; wet bulb globe

thermometer (for hydration breaks). I coordinate field inspection/prep with ground crew and participate in match coordination by meeting with the fourth official, team representatives/athletic trainers, venue medical, operations/security on player concussion protocols and severe-weather contingencies. I issue warnings on timelines (fines if late by broadcast) and confirm communications with video operations in Atlanta (VAR). I back up the fourth official on start/end/added times; number of substitutions/number of windows; cautions/sendoffs. And I submit a RLO match report within 36 hours on compliance/issues.

**REFEREE:** Are there any interesting anecdotes or stories you would like to share about this position?

**REUTHER:** I was co-RLO with Ben Gutierrez at TCF Bank Stadium in Minnesota in March 2017. We had six inches of snow. The ground crew was directed to clear the snow off lines by using leaf-blowers. When I was RLO for the USA-EI Salvador World Cup Qualifier in January 2022, the Guatemalan referees had never seen snow. I gave them hand warmers. They nicknamed me "The Sorcerer."

**REFEREE:** As liaison, do you listen to pregame or postgame conversations by the officiating team? If so, what are the more interesting or helpful tips you have picked up over the years?

**REUTHER:** Yes. Referees thoroughly and thoughtfully discuss responsibilities/strategies even after working together. They review points of emphasis, player matchups and the latest feedback from referee coaches. They pledge to be composed, fair and get all the calls right by supporting each other. They are candid, humble, agree-to-disagree on performance. They use lessons learned to improve and earn their next assignments.



CASEPLAYS

**'You Missed It'**

**Play:** A1 and A2 are strikers moving forward. A2 is in an offside position and A1 is behind the second-to-last defender. The ball is played forward by A3 and both A1 and A2 move forward toward the ball. A1 reaches the ball and shoots on goal. The assistant referee who ran with the play does not raise the flag for offside and play continues. The coach from team B begins to yell, "Offside — you missed it!" **Ruling:** The assistant referee made the correct decision. A1 was behind the second-to-the-last defender so A1 was not in an offside position. A2 did not interfere with play or gain an advantage so she should not be penalized. The referee can determine if the comment from team B's coach warrants a formal sanction (NFHS 11-1-3; NCAA 11.3.1; IFAB 11.2).

**Knight's Play**

**Play:** A1 strikes the ball forward and it is rolling toward the goalline, but not near the goal. B2 runs behind the ball so that A1 cannot make a play on it. B2 then looks over the shoulder to see where A1 is and stops so that A1 cannot get around B2. **Ruling:** Initially, this was a legal play since B2 was shielding the ball. However, when B2 stopped so that A1 could not play the ball it became illegal, impeding/obstruction. The referee is to stop play and award an indirect free kick for team A (NFHS 12-5-1; NCAA 12.2.13; IFAB 12.2).

**A Gentle Tug**

**Play:** A1 is moving forward with the ball near the touchline. B2 grabs A1's shirt in an attempt to stop the play. A1 continues to move forward and passes the ball to A3 and the attack continues. **Ruling:** The referee should award advantage since the play continued to move forward. At the next stoppage, the referee should not allow play to resume until B2 is cautioned. The restart would remain the same as it was at the time of the stoppage (NFHS 5-3-1d, 12-8-1f-3; NCAA 5.4.3, 12.4.3.5; IFAB 5.3, 12.3).

A player guilty of DOGSO is disqualified. It is important to remember that DOGSO, which can include handling offenses, is not limited to the penalty area.

**Editorial Change:**

The corresponding diagram

from 9-1-1b has been moved to 9-1-1a to better align with the subarticle's language.

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# Crash Causation

The assistant referee is in excellent position to observe both the ball and the players for any potential fouls.

The defender is shielding (not obstructing) the ball while it is heading toward the touchline or goalline.

The attacker is sliding between the legs in an attempt to play the ball.

Both the assistant referee and referee must see if the attacker plays the ball cleanly or fouls

the defender by striking the back of the leg, tripping the defender or playing in a reckless manner (caution).

Both officials must also observe the attacker to determine if the leg strikes the opponent's ankle. This can cause a serious injury and an ejection from the match.

It is critical for the referee to move close to the play and yet be in a position to observe other players. □



Chadwick Thresher, Seattle, has several contact points to observe, in addition to the ball's position relative to the touchline and the goalline.

DALE GARNEY