



## 2023-24 Soccer Rules Changes

- 3-3-2b (2,3) (NEW)** Permits the referee to stop the clock to review game situations at any time without negatively impacting a player's ability to remain in the game.
- Rationale:** This rule change affords the ability for the referee to stop the clock and review situations without negatively affecting a player's ability to remain in the game. However, once the referee beckons medical professional or coach onto the field to further assess, the player must leave the field of play.
- 3-3-7** Clarifies where a player should re-enter the game to avoid confusion.
- Rationale:** This rule change clarifies that a player should re-enter the game from the official area at midfield. This avoids potential confusion as to who is or is not in the game.
- 3-4-1e (NEW)** Clarifies players should exit the field on the bench side unless unable to do so due to injury.
- Rationale:** To assist the officials in the managing of substitutions, players should exit the field from the bench side when the substitute(s) are beckoned on by the referee unless the player(s) is unable to do so because of an injury. This avoids unnecessary interaction with opposing teams and fans and minimizes the potential for unsporting behavior.
- 4-2-12 (NEW)** Defines how wearable technology devices may be worn.
- Rationale:** Sets a national standard for wearable technology. This change clarifies that these devices may be worn as a part of the shoe and/or under the uniform but not worn on the arm. Coaches and players are still not permitted to utilize technology to communicate during the game.
- Rule 4 Reorganization** Adjusts the structure of the uniform rule to offer clarity.
- Rationale:** The reorganization of the uniform rule breaks up the rule into bite-size pieces that are easier for coaches and officials to apply.
- 11-1-5 (NEW)** Defines deliberately playing the ball to clarify the existing rules.
- Rationale:** Defines the criteria for deliberately playing the ball when determining an offside infraction.
- 12-1-1 thru 3 (NEW), 18-1-1** Clarifies various foul categories and defines the seven direct free kick fouls to provide consistency.
- Rationale:** The new article in Rule 12 and added definitions to Rule 18 define the seven direct free kick fouls and provide consistency for officials interpreting misconduct.

**12-2-2,3  
(NEW)**

Clarifies that neither accidental nor deliberate hand/arm contact can result in a goal.

**Rationale:** The new articles eliminate the necessity for the referee to determine if the hand/arm contact was accidental or deliberate. Now, neither accidental nor deliberate contact with the hand/arm result in a goal for greater consistency and ease of interpretation.

**12-7-5  
(NEW)**

Offers clarity regarding goalkeeper handling not permitted outside and inside the penalty area.

**Rationale:** Adding language and direction for officials regarding goalkeeper handling outside the penalty area and inside the penalty area when they are not permitted to handle the ball.

**12-8-4  
(NEW),  
12-8-1f(14, 15),  
12-8-2d (3,4)**

Defines considerations of denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO).

**Rationale:** This rule defines the considerations of an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to provide additional consistency and clarity for referees.

## **2023-24 SOCCER EDITORIAL CHANGES**

9-1-1a

### **2023-24 Points of Emphasis**

1. Wearable Technology
2. Coaching and Team Area Decorum
3. Denying an Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunity (DOGSO)
4. Substitutions



# 2023-24 NFHS SOCCER RULES INTERPRETATIONS

**Publisher's Note:** The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented.

Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff, Publisher, NFHS Publications © 2023

**SITUATION 1:** Team B No. 3 was asked to leave the field to correct improper equipment. The player exits the field on the end line and runs back on the field after fixing the improper equipment. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** The player must exit the field on the bench side unless the player is injured. Additionally, all re-entries shall occur from the official area after being beckoned on by the official. (3-3-7, 3-4-1e)

**SITUATION 2:** Team A attacker, (a) uses a shoulder to deflect the ball into the opponent's goal, (b) uses a forearm to deflect the ball into the opponent's goal, (c) has the ball accidentally deflect off their arm into the opponent's goal. The referee declares all to be a goal for Team A. **RULING:** Correct procedure for (a); incorrect procedure for (b) and (c). **COMMENT:** For the purposes of determining handling, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit. Additionally, a player is penalized for handling if the player scores a goal directly from their hand or arm – even if it is accidental. In (b) and (c), the ball hit below the armpit in both cases and even though (c) was accidental, neither goal would stand. In (a), the player deflected the ball from their shoulder above the armpit so the goal would stand. (12-3-1, 12-3-2)

**SITUATION 3:** Team B goalkeeper (a) loses track of their location and accidentally picks up the ball outside the penalty area, (b) catches a ball off a throw-in from a teammate in the penalty area, (c) mis-kicks a goal kick and runs and picks up the ball in the penalty area with no other player around. The official awards a direct free kick in (a) and an indirect free kick in (b) and (c). **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** 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. If the violation is playing the ball a second time after a restart before it touches another player, the goalkeeper must be cautioned if the offense stops a promising attack or disqualified if the offense denies an opponent or the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO). In this scenario there was no opponent around, so DOGSO was not considered. (12-3-3, 12-8-4, 12-8-5)

**SITUATION 4:** Player No. 3 from Team B tackles the opponent with excessive force inside the penalty area. The referee disqualifies the player for serious foul play. A penalty kick is awarded, and the offender's team must play

short-sided. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The foul may also be a DOGSO inside the penalty area; the nature of the foul rises to the level of disqualification. [12-1-3c, 12-9-2d(1), 12-9-4]

**SITUATION 5:** Team A is awarded a free kick and multiple players from Team B line up for a wall at appropriate distance from the spot per the official, and then another player from Team B (the defending team) lays down behind the wall. Before allowing the play to start, the official instructs the player from Team B to stand up. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** A player may play the ball while on the ground provided the player's action does not create a danger to that player or any other player. Laying down behind the wall of defensive players creates a dangerous situation to both the player on the ground and those defending in the wall. (12-7-1)

**SITUATION 6:** Player No. 6 from Team A carelessly slide-tackles an opponent right outside the penalty area, denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity. The referee disqualifies the player and issues a red card to No. 6 and restarts play with a direct free kick. **RULING:** Correct procedure. [12-9-2d(3), 12-9-4]