



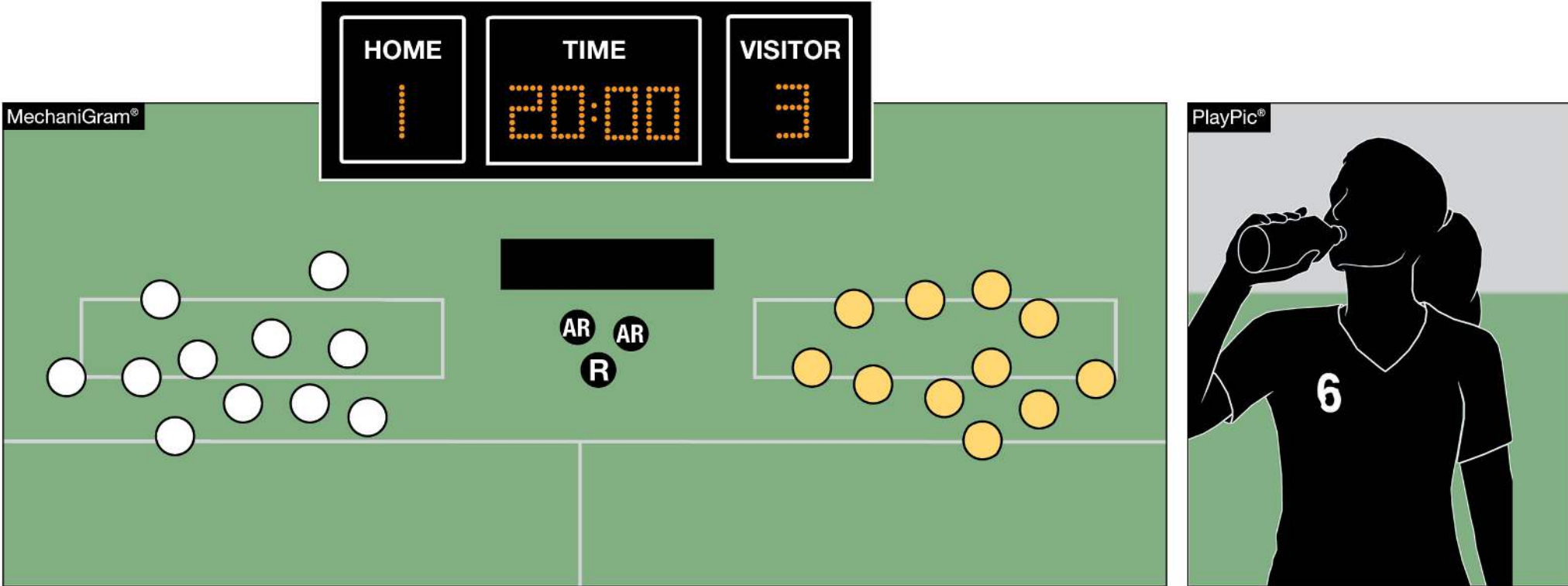
2025-26 NFHS Soccer Rules Changes





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



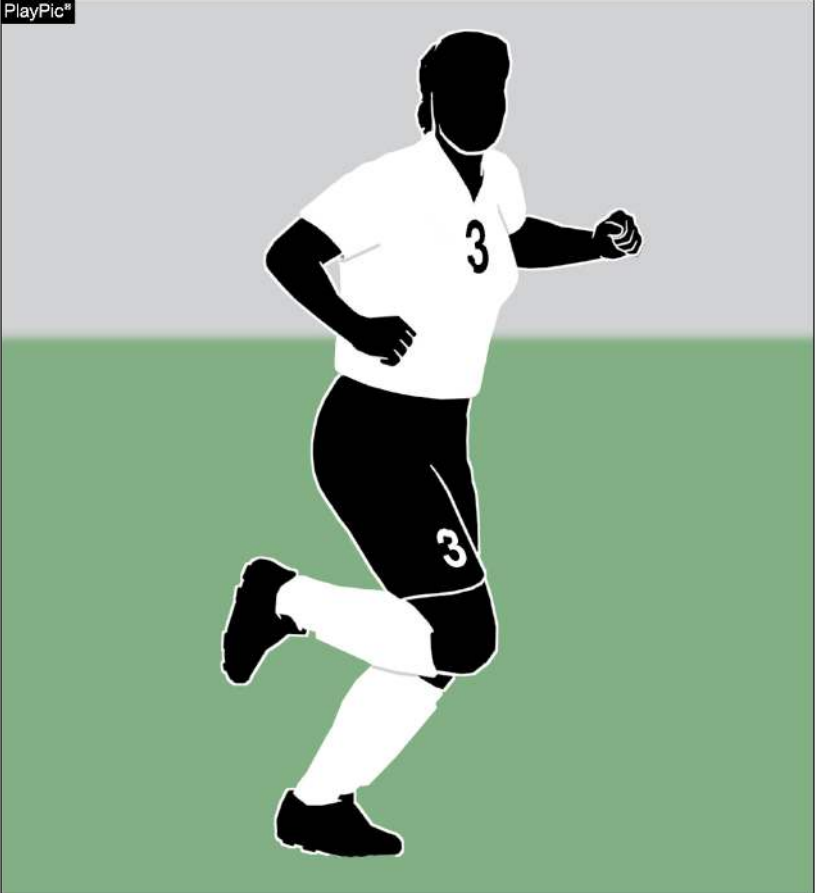
Amended language clearly states that **once the appropriate health care official is beckoned by the referee**, an injured player (including a goalkeeper) must leave the game.





REQUIRED UNIFORM

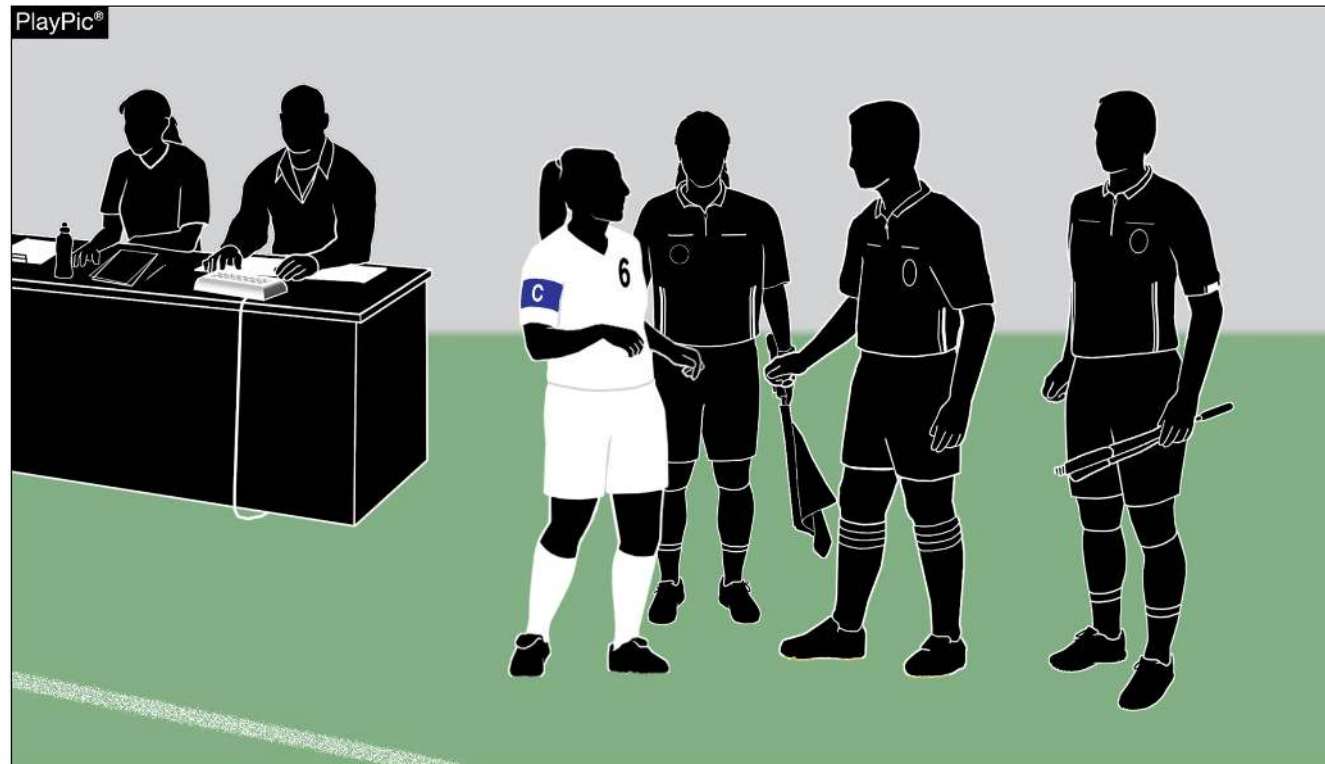
RULE 4-1-2



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



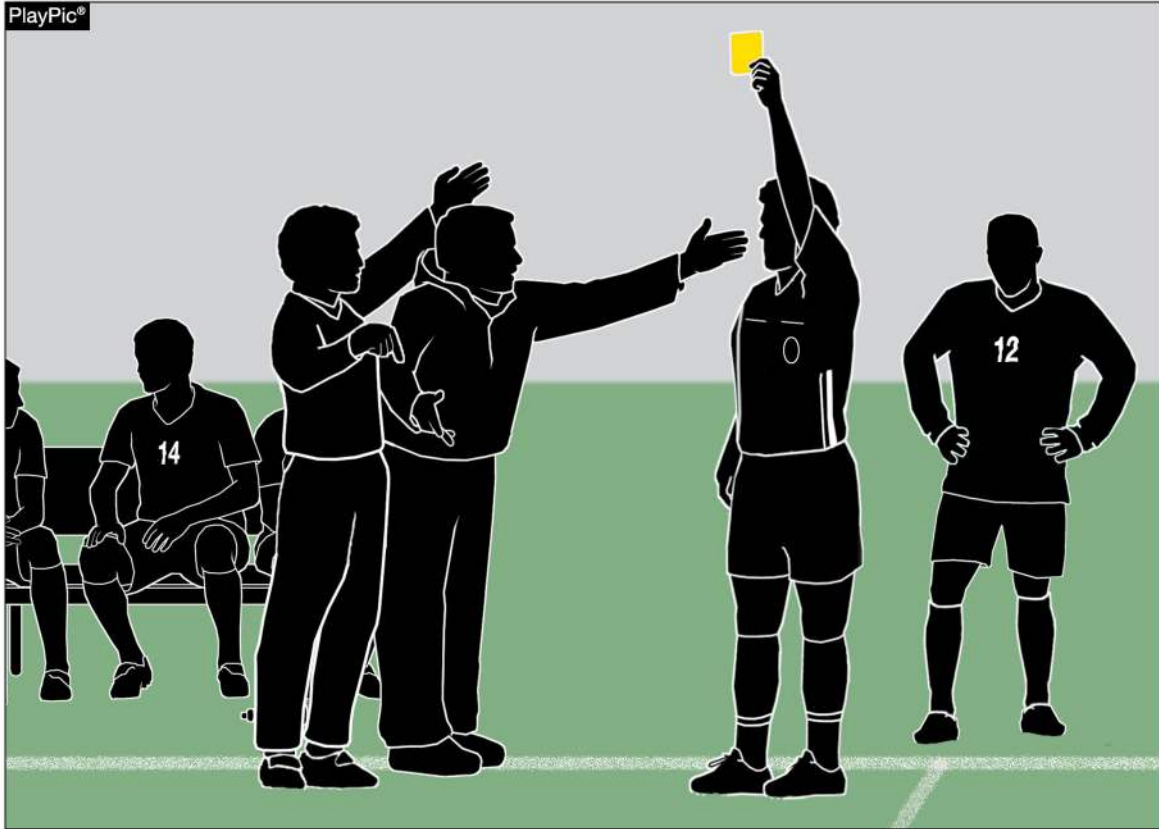
This time is for officials to talk amongst themselves and for coaches to work with their players.

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

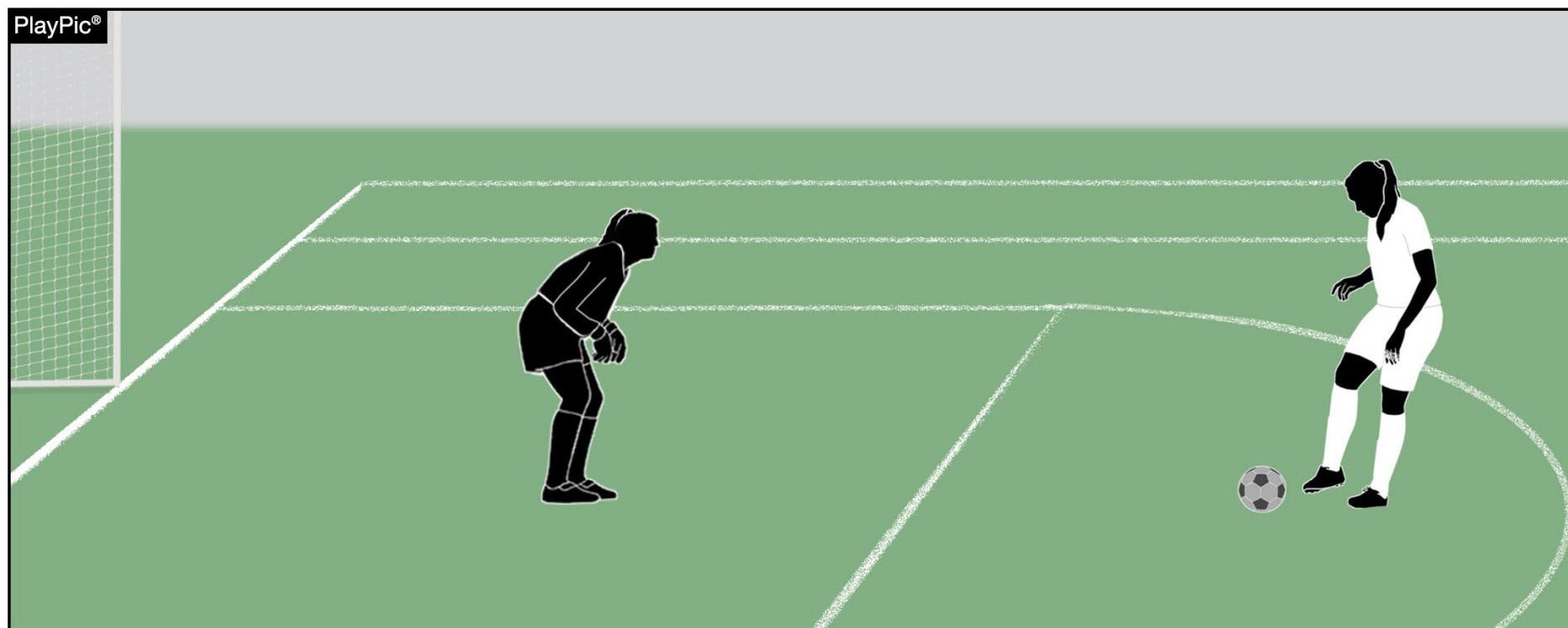


Rule 18, which previously contained the rulebook's definitions, has been eliminated. The terms and definitions have been relocated to their respective rules sections within the rulebook. They also remain accessible via the index for quick reference. This change aims to reduce redundancy.



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

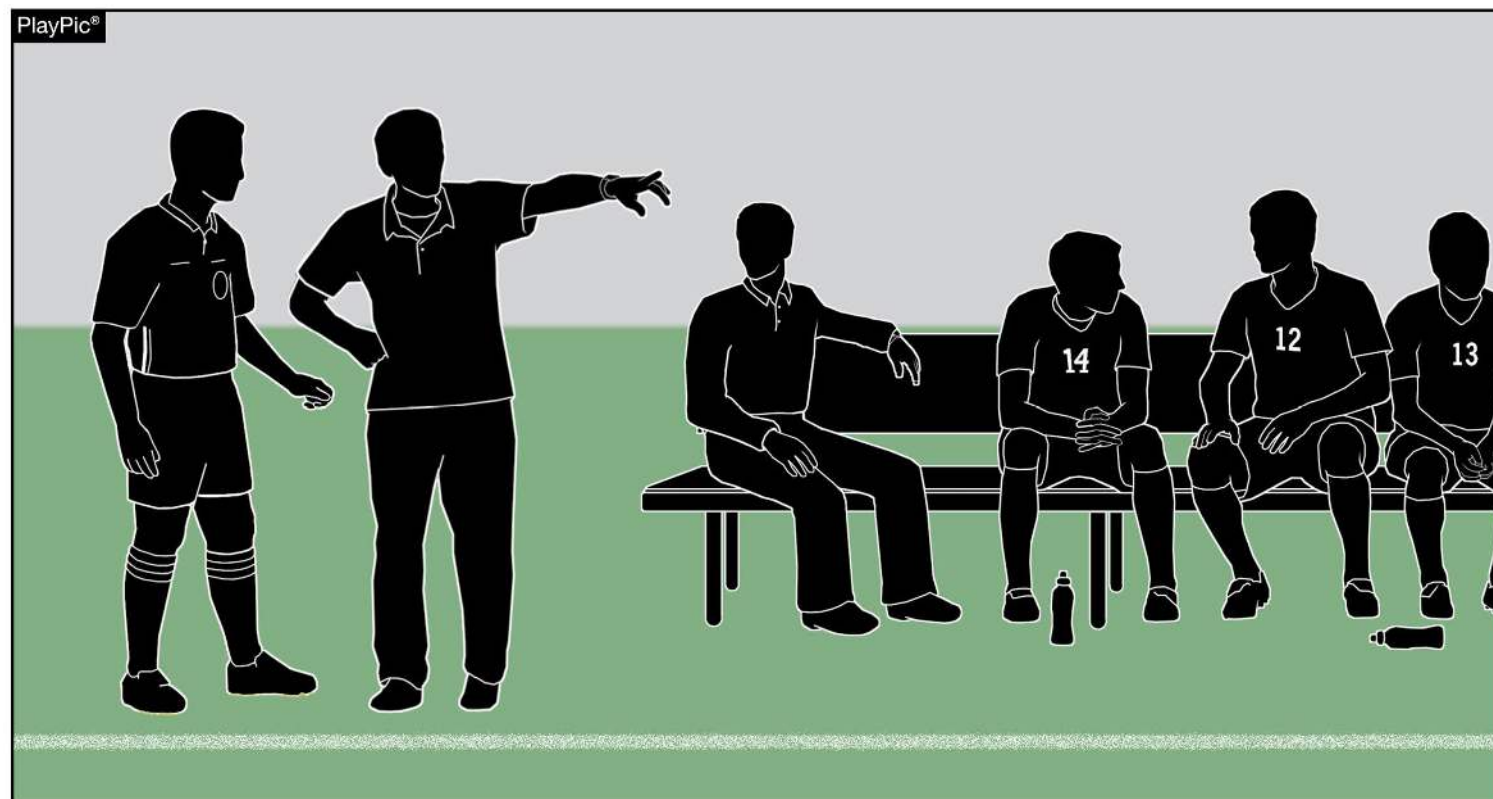
- A well-rounded high school soccer program should emphasize both athletic and academic development, reinforcing the importance of discipline, time management, and perseverance.
- Education-based athletics prepare students not only for success in sports but also for their future endeavors by teaching 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

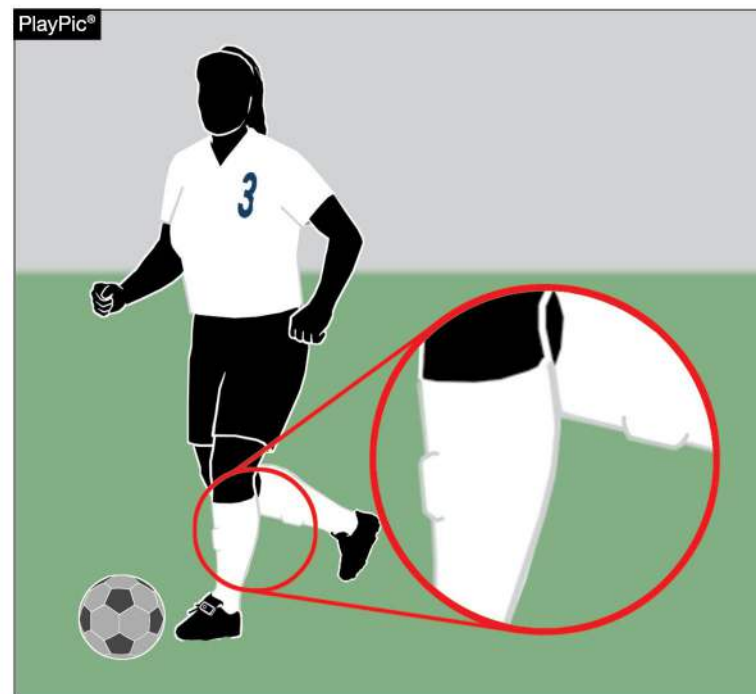
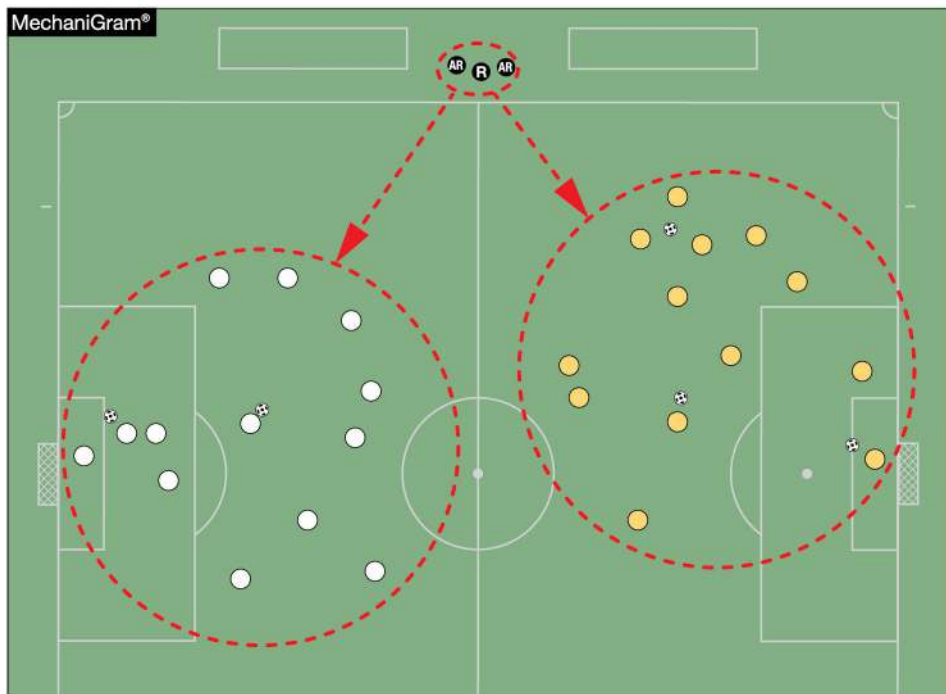


Effective communication and game management are essential. Recognizing and addressing dissent early is crucial — public, provocative and/or persistent complaints must be dealt with decisively.

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

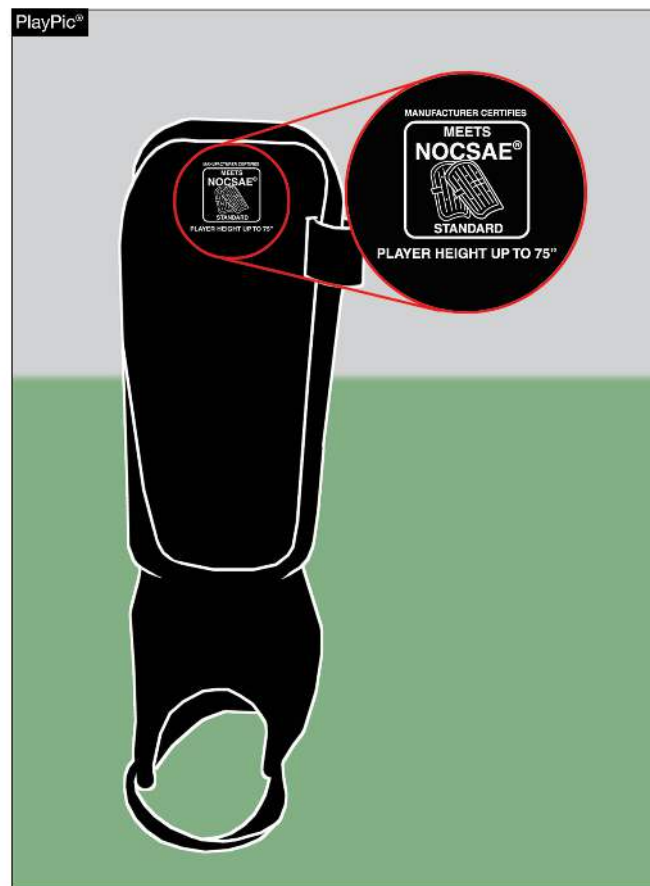
Coaches set the tone for their teams. Adult leaders must be champions of character.

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.**



2024-25 NFHS SOCCER RULES POWERPOINT



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Required Uniform

4-1-4d



If tape or a similar material (stays/straps) is applied externally to the socks **above the ankle**, it shall be a similar color as that part of the sock to which it is applied.

Below the ankle, tape or similar material may be any color.



2023-24 HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER



- Rules Changes
- Editorial Changes
- of Emphasis



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OTHER EQUIPMENT

4-2-2

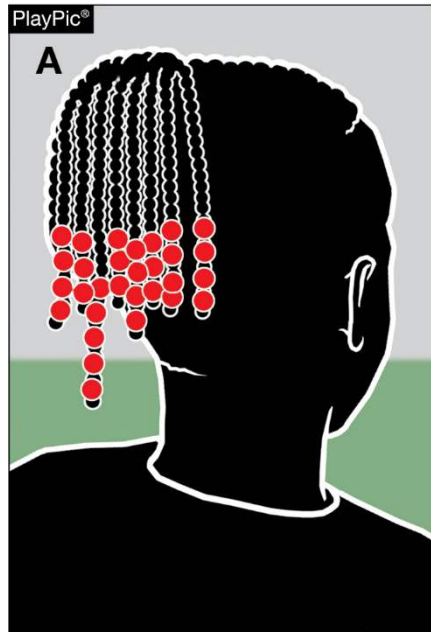


Hair control devices and other adornments worn in the hair must meet the following criteria:

- Be securely fastened to the head.
- Do not present an increased risk to the player, teammates or opponent.
- This change promotes the inclusion of participants based on their cultural and religious beliefs.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

4-2-2



Illegal



Legal



Illegal



Legal

In PlayPics A and C, the beads worn by each player are not securely fastened to the head. In PlayPic B and D, the beads worn are securely fastened to the head.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

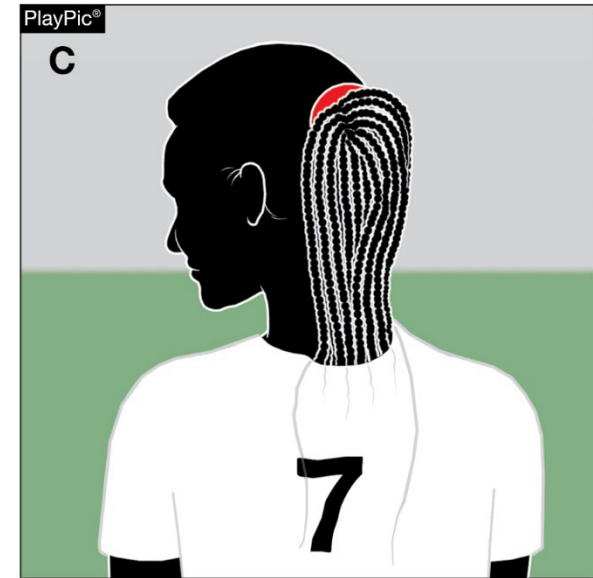
4-2-2



Illegal



Legal



Legal

- In PlayPics A, the player cannot participate with the hair adornments worn in the current position since the adornments are not securely fastened to the head. Play Pics B and C are options to make legal.



Rule 4-3 improperly equipped

Improperly Equipped Players (18-1-1u)

- Cautions will not be issued for improperly equipped player(s).
- If not immediately correctable, improperly equipped player(s) shall be instructed to leave the field of play when the ball next ceases to be in play. The player(s) may be replaced. The removed player(s), if not replaced, may re-enter at the next dead ball only after reporting to an official, who shall be satisfied the player's equipment and uniform are in order. Play shall not be stopped for an infringement of this rule except that the referee may stop play immediately where there is a dangerous situation.

MIAA GAME OFFICIALS FALL SEASON NEWSLETTER

The MIAA includes a link on Player Equipment (Shinguards). Ensuring student-athlete safety is a top priority, and proper equipment plays a key role in maintaining a safe and fair playing environment. NFHS Rule 4 provides clear guidelines on required player equipment, including shinguards, which are essential for protecting athletes during competition. Given that high school players are still in their developmental stages, shinguards must be age- and size-appropriate, meeting NOCSAE safety standards. Each shinguard must display the NOCSAE seal, permanently marked on the front, indicating the approved height range for that model.

While coaches are responsible for ensuring their players are properly equipped before the game, officials take a proactive approach by observing warm-ups to identify any potential concerns. Rather than conducting formal equipment checks, referees use preventive officiating by maintaining awareness during pregame activities and addressing any noticeable issues. If a player's shinguards appear inadequately sized, officials should engage with the coach in a professional and approachable manner to confirm compliance.

By prioritizing communication and proactive observation, officials help reinforce safety standards while allowing players to focus on the game. A consistent and safety-conscious approach ensures that every student-athlete competes with the necessary protective equipment, contributing to a positive and well-regulated match experience.



MIAA HANDBOOK RULES 23 25

- 78.1.3 Shin guards must be worn by all players during contests and practices.
- 78.1.4 Soccer players are not allowed to wear shoes with metal cleats, or any metal on the cleat.
- 78.1.5 Mouth guards are highly recommended for all soccer players while on the field.
- 78.1.6 The home team shall wear dark jerseys and socks, and the visiting team shall wear white or light jerseys and socks.
- 78.2.1 All leagues/conferences must conduct a pre-season meeting for all head soccer coaches to review sportsmanship goals and objectives.

MIAA HANDBOOK RULES CON'T

- 78.2.4 Any player who receives a yellow card shall be replaced and shall not re-enter the contest until the next opportunity for substitution occurs.
- 78.2.5 A player committing a second yellow card infraction in the same contest receives a red card. There are no exceptions. *It should be reported as only a red card (not two yellows or a yellow and a red).*
- 78.2.16 Any team whose players/coaches receive collectively five (5) yellow and/or red cards in a contest(including pre & post-game) will result in immediate termination of the contest, and result in forfeiture by the offending team.

MIAA HANDBOOK RULES CON'T

78.2.18 Game officials will not receive compensation unless they remain present at the conclusion of the soccer contest until the student-athlete handshake is completed.

78.2.20 For all varsity soccer contests, the home team must assign an adult contest manager, other than a member of the soccer coaching staff, to be responsible for all aspects of administration of the contest

78.2.22 The MIAA Taunting Policy must be reviewed by game officials with the captains and coaches in a meeting before each soccer contest.

78.2.23 Each team will be allowed a one-minute time out per half and each extended time. The time-out may be called by the coach or any player on the field during an offensive restart. For more information on the time out rule, [click here](#).

MIAA Handbook 23_25 Timeout 78.2.23

Each team will be allowed a one-minute time out per half and each extended time period. The time-out may be called by the coach or any player on the field during an offensive restart.

Specifics:

- One per half. One minute length
- Unlimited subs after timeout
- Called by team owning restart
- Called by either team after a card, goal, injury, dropped ball
- Non-cumulative
- No timeouts in shootout
- Injured player may return upon either team calling a timeout
- Cautioned player may not return until next legal substitution