

Following is the press release on the 2003 high school soccer rules changes approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations Soccer Rules Committee.

Few changes made in high school soccer rules

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: Tim Flannery
INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 10, 2003) - Three changes in rules regarding fouls and misconduct, and two clarifications of player equipment rules highlighted the January 26-27 meeting of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Soccer Rules Committee.

Article 2 of Rule 12-3, which stated that a player could not place a hand on an opponent in an effort to reach the ball, was deleted.

"Placing one's hands on an opponent is never a foul," said Tim Flannery, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Soccer Rules Committee. "Holding and pushing are fouls, but merely touching an opponent is not a foul."

"Simulating a foul" was added to the list of unsporting conduct in Rule 12-8-1(f). A player, coach or bench personnel shall be cautioned (yellow card) for displays of unsporting conduct.

In Rule 12-8-4, the committee divided that section into two parts to further clarify that officials have the authority to caution or disqualify a coach under certain circumstances and to emphasize the responsibility of coaches with regard to player conduct. Rule 12-8-4 will be divided into the two following sections:

12-8-4(a) - The coach may be cautioned or disqualified either for team misconduct or for bench misconduct that cannot be attributed to a specific individual.

12-8-4(b) - A coach who is disqualified shall leave the vicinity of the playing area immediately and is prohibited from any contact, direct or indirect, with the team during the remainder of the game. Failure to comply shall result in termination of the game.

Two player-equipment revisions were made in Rule 4-1-1 regarding shinguards and logos on stockings. To help coaches and officials in determining the legality of shinguards, the committee added language to state that shinguards are to be worn with the bottom edge no higher than 2 inches above the ankle. In 4-1-1(a), the committee agreed that a manufacturer's logo/trademark could appear on both sides of a stocking.

"For the first time, the committee has provided some specific direction to coaches and officials with regard to shinguards," Flannery said.

Changes also were approved in two soccer signals. The signal for starting time in Signal No. 19 will be changed to a wind-up motion, and Signal No. 14 for unsporting conduct will be removed from the signal chart. Since an official displays a card for unsporting conduct, it is no longer necessary for the unsporting conduct signal.

Soccer is the fifth-most popular sport for boys at the high school level with 339,101 participants, according to the 2001-02 High School Athletics Participation Survey. It ranks seventh in terms of school sponsorship with 9,903. On the girls side, it also is fifth in popularity with 295,265 participants in 9,186 schools.

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