

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

Offside Rule Revised in High School Soccer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 18, 2016) — A new interpretation of the offside rule in high school soccer is among the rules changes approved for the 2016-17 season.

The new language regarding offside in Rule 11-1-4 is one of two major changes recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Soccer Rules Committee at its January 25-27 meeting in Indianapolis. All rules changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

“The rules are in fairly decent shape,” said Theresia Wynns, NFHS director of sports and officials and liaison to the Soccer Rules Committee. “The committee wasn’t looking to make wholesale changes. They were looking at existing rules and making sure they reflected today’s trends in the playing of the game.

“Offside is one call in soccer that was identified in the annual NFHS survey as being incorrectly administered,” Wynns said. “This change makes offside more understandable and should result in better administration of the offside rule.”

Previously, an attacking player who was in an offside position at the time that the ball was played by a teammate, could be penalized and ruled offside when the ball was deflected by or rebounded from a defender to the attacking player even though the defender tried to play the ball.

The new rule changes this situation as the attacking player in an offside position when the ball was kicked by a teammate who gets a rebounded or deflected ball after it was deliberately played by the opponent (except from a deliberate save), is no longer offside and is not considered to have gained an advantage.

“An example of this new rule would be if attacking player A1 kicks the ball to teammate A2 who is in the offside position behind defender B, and defender B jumps to play the ball but is unable to control the ball as it touches the top of his/her head and deflects to Player A. In this situation, since B played the ball, A2, although in an offside position, is not offside,” Wynns said. “One important point to remember about offside is that being in an offside position does not mean that a player is offside. To be offside, a player must be involved in active play, interfering with play or an opponent, or seeking an advantage.”

A change in Rule 14-1-4 now mandates a penalty for a violation by the kicker prior to taking a penalty kick to be the same as a violation by any other member of the attacking team. Previously, a violation by the kicker prior to taking the penalty kick resulted in the kick being retaken. The rules committee felt that all attacking team violations during a penalty kick should be treated equally.

“An example of a violation by the kicker in a penalty kick situation is an interruption of movement in the approach to the ball,” Wynns said. “Previously, this violation would result in a verbal warning and a rekick. Under the new rule, the ball can be kicked and the result is the same as any other attacker violation. One result might be that the goalkeeper saved and held the ball. In this case, play will now continue, where previously a rekick would occur. The committee wanted to be a little more consistent with penalty kicks.”

A complete listing of all rules changes will be available soon on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page, and select “Soccer.”

According to the 2014-15 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, soccer is the fifth-most popular sport for boys with 432,569 participants and the fourth-most popular sport for girls with 375,681 participants. A total of 11,838 schools offered boys soccer in 2014-15 and 11,502 schools offered girls soccer.

This press release was written by Cody Porter, graphic arts/communications assistant in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department.

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 16 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.8 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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