

**FHSAA**  
**Soccer Rules Modifications**  
***2023-24 Edition***

**Edited and annotated by the  
North Florida Soccer Officials Association**

**Updated September 2023**

*NFSOA Annotation: The numbers at the beginning of each section refer to the NFHS rule number that is modified by FHSAA. If there are any conflicts between the rule modification as written by FHSAA and the NFSOA annotations or comments, the FHSAA rule as written shall prevail. All NFSOA comments and annotations are shown in italics.*

NFHS Soccer Rules, as modified by the FHSAA, are the official rules for all soccer games. The following modifications to those rules have been adopted by the [FHSAA] Board of Directors.

**NFHS Rule 4-1-1(d).** Compression/bicycle shorts may be worn under the uniform bottom in accordance with the National Federation rule. Such shorts, however, may not be worn in lieu of the uniform bottom.

*NFSOA comment: Clarifies that compression shorts are not an acceptable substitute for uniform shorts*

**NFHS Rule 5-1-1.** The minimum crew size that may be used during a regular season game is two officials (head referee and assistant referee). The use of three officials for regular season games is optional. When three officials are utilized during competition, the Double Dual System of Control shall be utilized.

*NFSOA comment: The dual system of control (two referees with whistles) may be used during the regular season. If three referees are used, the Double Dual system must be used (three whistles). Under no circumstances is the Diagonal System of Control allowed in FHSAA games.*

**NFHS Rule 6-2-1.** The official time will be kept by a contest official on the field, and if the stadium clock is available, it is unofficial.

*NFSOA comment: Reverses the NFHS rule book which states that the scoreboard clock is official. Referees should ensure the stadium clock is reasonably in sync with the referee's watch, as players expect the scoreboard to be accurate.*

**NFHS Rule 7-1-1.** Sub-varsity may play two 30-minute halves upon mutual agreement of opposing schools.

*NFSOA comment: "Sub-varsity" means junior varsity and middle school games.*

**NFHS Rule 7-1-2.** Varsity shall play 40-minute halves and periods may not be shortened.

*NFSOA comment: Reverses the NFHS rule that allows varsity games to be shortened by mutual agreement of the head coaches.*

**NFHS Rule 7-1-3.** A soccer game that has completed one-half or more of play is an official game. A game that has been called because of weather or darkness prior to the first half being completed is a suspended game and, if played, shall restart from the point of suspension. (See also the FHSAA “Policy on Inclement Weather.”)

*NFSOA comment: The NFHS Rules leaves the decision of whether to replay or restart a suspended game to the state association. FHSAA will restart from the point of suspension.*

**NFHS Rule 7-1-5.** Eight (8) goal differential attained at end of the first half or secured at any point during the second half terminates the game. If an eight (8) differential is reached at any time during the first half, the game clock shall continue to run after goals are scored. Once the game clock starts running due to an eight-goal differential, the game clock must continue to run for the duration of the game.

*NFSOA Comment: This is commonly known as the “Mercy Rule”.*

**NFHS Rule 7-3-1.** Regular season games that are tied at the end of regulation play will end as a tie. Games in invitational tournaments that are tied at the end of regulation play may be resolved using the overtime procedure. The overtime procedure shall be used in the FHSAA State Soccer Series.

*NFSOA comment: No overtime is played in regular season games. For in-season tournaments, e.g. the Gateway Conference tournament, the overtime procedure detailed on page 89 of the rule book (“Sample Tie-Breaking Procedure”) is adopted by FHSAA. In summary, teams play 2 10-minute halves to completion. If the game is still tied, the standard kicks from the mark procedure is used to determine a winner.*

**NFHS Rule 7-3-2.** There will be a five-minute interval between the second half and the first of the two overtime periods and a two-minute interval between the overtime periods.

*NFSOA comment: these details were left to state associations, so FHSAA is making clear the procedure to be followed.*

**Timeouts.** There shall be a one-minute timeout in each half for re-hydration of players and for coaches to deal with player situations. Players shall remain on the field and there shall be no delay in substitution. Substitutes may enter per NFHS Rule 3-3-1. The timeout shall occur when there is stoppage immediately prior to or after the 20-minute mark at the discretion of the referee when there is no immediate offensive scoring opportunity.

*NFSOA comment: This is commonly referred to as the “water break” rule. Water breaks are required in all games, without regard to weather conditions.*

*NFSOA Comment: This section defines an additional category of misconduct which is punishable by a disqualification but for which no referee report is required, and no further disciplinary action is taken against the player. For this category of misconduct, the blue card is displayed. Only players and substitutes can be shown a blue card. The team of a player who is shown a blue card may not substitute for that player; that is, they must play short.*

**Card System for Misconduct.** Administration of the Card System for Misconduct in all contests must be administered as follows:

- (a) A player, coach, or bench personnel who commits any of the violations listed in **NFHS Rule 12-9-1 (a-f(1-11, 13-15))** shall be cautioned (issued a yellow card). A player may be substituted for immediately and shall be required to leave the field until the next legal substitution opportunity. An official may issue a red card and eject a player, coach, or bench personnel on a first offense if the situation warrants.

*NFSOA comment: this modification identifies misconduct punishable by a yellow card:*

- *Entering or leaving the field without permission;*
- *persistent infringement;*
- *dissent;*
- *incidental use of profanity;*
- *use of electronic communication devices to communicate with on-field players;*
- *unsporting conduct, including DOGSO by foul inside the penalty area with attempt to play the ball;*

- (b) A player who commits a second violation of any of the violations listed in **NFHS Rule 12-9-1 (a-f(1-11, 13-15))** shall be issued a second caution (blue card), shall be disqualified from further participation in the game and shall not be replaced on the field with a substitute. The official shall first show the yellow card by raising the card above the head, followed by raising the blue card above the head. (Note: the yellow and blue cards shall not be shown simultaneously).

*NFSOA comment: A second yellow card to a player for any of the misconduct listed above shall be punished with a blue card. Note that the use of “player” above includes substitutes (but not coaches or other team officials, as they cannot be shown a blue card).*

- (c) A coach or bench personnel who commits a second violation of any of the violations listed in NFHS Rule 12-9-1 (a-f(1-11, 13-15)), or a first offense of NFHS Rules 12-9-1 (g), 12-9-1 (f) (12), or 12-9-2 (a-c, d(1), e-f) shall be issued a red card, shall be ejected and must exit the premises, and shall be subject to the provisions of the FHSAA Policy of Unsporting Conduct.

*NFSOA comment: Coaches or other team officials who commit a second yellow card offense are shown a red card and a report must be filed with FHSAA.*

- (d) A player who commits any of the violations listed in NFHS Rules 12-9-1 (g) or 12-9-2 (a-b, d(1), e-g) shall be guilty of unsporting conduct, shall be issued a red card, shall be ejected from the contest and shall not be replaced on the field with a substitute. This player shall be subject to the provisions of the FHSAA Policy on Unsporting Conduct.

*NFSOA comment: FHSAA lists the specific types of player misconduct punishable by a red card disqualification:*

- *Use of tobacco or e-cigs*
- *Violent conduct*
- *Taunting*
- *Serious foul play, specifically “disproportionate and unnecessary force against an opponent while playing for the ball”*
- *Spitting at an opponent, teammate or game official*
- *Insulting, offensive or abusive language or gesture*
- *Leaving the team area during a fight*

- (e) A player who violates NFHS Rule 12-9-2 (d) (2) shall be guilty of a hand ball foul (non-contact with opponent) and disqualified. The player shall be issued a blue card and shall not be replaced on the field with a substitute.

*NFSOA comment: DOGSO by handling is punished by a blue card disqualification.*

- (f) A player who violates NFHS Rule 12-9-2 (d) (3) shall be guilty of committing a foul (non-violent) attempting to deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity outside the penalty area and shall be disqualified from the contest. The player shall be issued a blue card and shall not be replaced on the field with a substitute.

*NFSOA comment: DOGSO outside the penalty area is punished by a blue card disqualification.*

- (g) A player who violates NFHS Rule 12-9-2 (d) (4) shall be guilty of committing a foul inside the penalty area, while not attempting to play the ball and a goal is not scored and shall be disqualified from the contest. The player shall be issued a blue card and shall not be replaced on the field with a substitute.

*NFSOA comment: DOGSO inside the penalty area with no attempt to play the ball is punished by a blue card disqualification.*

- (h) A player who violates NFHS Rule 12-9-1 (f) (12) shall be guilty of delayed, excessive or prolonged act(s) by which the player attempts to focus attention upon his or herself and/or prohibits a timely restart to the game and shall be disqualified from the contest. The player shall be issued a blue card and shall not be replaced on the field with a substitute.

*NFSOA comment: Commonly known as “excessive celebration” — but not strictly limited to celebrations alone — FHSAA makes clear that players who engage in this activity will be punished by a blue card disqualification. Referees are strongly advised to proactively manage these situations so that disqualifications are not necessary.*

*NFSOA Comment: Ties are allowed in regular season games. The following rule defines the overtime procedure for tournaments and playoffs.*

**Overtime Procedure.** The overtime procedure to be used in the Florida High School State Championship Series, as well as invitational tournament games, is as follows (Note: schools hosting invitational tournaments during the regular season may use this overtime procedure or go directly to penalty kicks:

- (a) Following a five-minute interval, there shall be **two (2)** 10-minute overtime periods. A coin toss as specified in NFHS Rule 5-2-2(d)(3) shall be held in advance of this overtime period. After the end of the first 10-minute overtime period the teams shall change ends of the field and a second 10-minute overtime period shall be played after a two-minute interval. The team with more goals at the conclusion of the second overtime shall be declared the winner of the contest.
- (b) If a tie still exists following the second overtime period, the head coaches and team captains for both teams will meet with the officials at the halfway line to review the procedure for penalty kicks as follows:
  - (1) The referee will choose the goal at which all of the kicks from the penalty line will be taken.
  - (2) Each coach will select any five players, including the goalkeeper, on or off the field (except those who may have been disqualified) to take the penalty kicks.
  - (3) A coin toss will be held as in NFHS Rule 5-2-2(d)(3). The team winning the toss will have the choice of kicking first or second.
  - (4) Teams will alternate kickers. There is no follow-up on the kick.
  - (5) The defending team may change the goalkeeper prior to each penalty kick.
  - (6) The team scoring the greatest number of these kicks will be declared the winner.
  - (7) Add one goal to the winning team score and credit the team with a victory. An asterisk [\*] may be placed by the team advancing to indicate the advancement was the result of a tie-breaker system.
- (c) If the score remains tied after each team has had five penalty kicks:
  - (1) Each coach will select five different players than the first five who already have kicked to take the kicks in a sudden victory situation, wherein if one team scores and the other team does not score, the game is ended without more kicks being taken. If a team has fewer than 10 available players at the end of the first set of kicks from the penalty mark due to either injuries or disqualification, the coach must use all players who have not participated in the first five kicks. The coach may choose additional players from the first five kickers to ensure that five different players participate in the second set of kicks.
  - (2) If the score remains tied, continue the sudden victory kicks with the coach selecting any five players to take the next set of alternating kicks. If a tie remains, repeat 4.10.1.1.4 (c)(1)
- (d) The Misconduct Procedure as listed in **12-9** in the NFHS Rules Book shall be in effect during the penalty kick phase of overtime.

**Suspended Contest.** A suspended contest shall be resumed from the point of interruption under the provision of NFHS Rule 7-1-3.

*NFSOA comment: If a game is suspended before completion of the first half, it will be restarted from the point where the game was suspended. Referees who work a suspended contest are reminded to send a report to the assignor with all of the relevant details of the game, including:*

- *Time remaining in the first half when the game was suspended*
- *Score*
- *Which team is attacking each goal*
- *Which team kicked off to the start the game*
- *Any misconduct cards shown, including the team, player number and reason for the card*
- *How the game should be restarted and from where on the field the restart should take place*