



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Taunting Becomes More Serious Violation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 3, 2005) — Taunting will become a more serious violation in high school soccer as a result of a rule change at the January 23-24 National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Soccer Rules Committee meeting. The taunting rule and nine other changes made by the committee were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Rule 12-8-3 (b) was amended so that the violation results in a “hard red card” in place of the “yellow/red card.” “Since 1994, if a player was taunting (degrading an opponent in some form), that player would be disqualified with the yellow/red card,” said Tim Flannery, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee. “Because taunting is increasing, we are making the violation a hard red card.”

The yellow/red card disqualified the player at fault, but allowed for a replacement. The hard red card disqualifies the player at fault and does not allow a replacement, forcing the team to play down one person.

According to Flannery, taunting happens all too frequently, as a result of high school players imitating inappropriate actions that occur at other levels of play. Flannery said this rule change hopefully will decrease the number of taunting incidents by making it a more serious offense in which the violation will not just punish the player at fault, but also the team.

Other revisions addressed at this year's meeting include requiring head coaches to attend pregame meetings, as well as several changes in penalty rules.

Soccer joins most other high school sports rules in requiring head coaches to attend pregame meetings. Rule 5-2-2 was changed to specify that the head coach is required to be present at the pregame meeting. In its previous form, the rule did not specify the head coach, which resulted in assistant coaches often attending in place of the head coach. According to the rules committee, this change allows for more positive pregame dialogue with teams' head coaches and the officials at one time.

Rules 12-8-1, 2 and 3 all prescribe penalties resulting from misconduct. As the rules were previously written, the indirect or direct free kick (depending on the penalty) occurred from the spot of the ball. The revised rules now stipulate that the free kick be awarded at the spot of the infraction.

"The rule change falls in line with both college and club soccer," said Bob Lombardi, chair of the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee and associate executive director of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association. "This change will help us clear up confusion, resulting in smoother transitions for officials who also officiate at other levels."

Another modification was applied to Rule 4-2-1 (g), which deals with illegal knee braces. The previous wording of the rule was vague and confusing to officials, and has been changed to read that "knee braces with exposed metal" are illegal. Beyond the prohibition of exposed metal, officials still have the authority to determine the legality of any equipment. "In soccer, anything that is dangerous or confusing to the official can be deemed illegal," Lombardi said.

Contained within the soccer rules book is a sample tournament progression illustrating the order of "Making the Call" by the official; this year's meeting brought changes to the order. The revised order requires the official to: 1) give a short sharp blast of the whistle, 2) visually indicate signal for the type of foul and 3) visually indicate the direction and type of free kick and for the spot of the throw-in.

"We've streamlined the order to make it more seamless and easier for officials to execute," Lombardi said about the change.

In addition to the rules changes each year, the committee identifies certain aspects of the game that need special attention, and are deemed Points of Emphasis. This year's Points of Emphasis focused on six themes: taunting; the restart from the point of infraction; legal equipment; substitutions; participant conduct; and official, team and spectator areas.

Soccer is the fifth-most popular sport in both boys and girls high school athletics. Girls soccer was the biggest gaining sport in 2003-04 according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS, with an increase of 7,582 participants, bringing it to 309,032 total participants. Boys soccer had 349,785 participants.

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