

2023-24 NFHS Soccer Rules Interpretations

SITUATION 1: Team B No. 3 was asked to leave the field to correct improper equipment. The player exits the field on the end line and runs back on the field after fixing the improper equipment. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** The player must exit the field on the bench side unless the player is injured. Additionally, all re-entries shall occur from the official area after being beckoned on by the official. (3-3-7, 3-4-1e)

SITUATION 2: Team A attacker, (a) uses a shoulder to deflect the ball into the opponent's goal, (b) uses a forearm to deflect the ball into the opponent's goal, (c) has the ball accidentally deflects off their arm into the opponent's goal. The referee declares all to be a goal for Team A. **RULING:** Correct procedure for (a); incorrect procedure for (b) and (c). **COMMENT:** For the purposes of determining handling, the upper boundary of the arm is in line with the bottom of the armpit. Additionally, a player is penalized for handling if the player scores a goal directly from their hand or arm – even if it is accidental. In (b) and (c), the ball hit below the armpit in both cases and even though (c) was accidental, neither goal would stand. In (a), the player deflected the ball from their shoulder above the armpit so the goal would stand. (12-3-1, 12-3-2)

SITUATION 3: Team B goalkeeper (a) loses track of their location and accidentally picks up the ball outside the penalty area, (b) catches a ball off a throw-in from a teammate in the penalty area, (c) mis-kicks a goal kick and runs and picks up the ball in the penalty area with no other player around. The official awards a direct free kick in (a) and an indirect free kick in (b) and (c). **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The goalkeeper has the same restrictions on handling the ball as any other player outside the penalty area. If the goalkeeper handles the ball inside the penalty area when not permitted to do so, an indirect free kick is awarded but there is no disciplinary sanction. If the violation is playing the ball a second time after a restart before it touches another player, the goalkeeper must be cautioned if the offense stops a promising attack or disqualified if the offense denies an opponent or the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO). In this scenario there was no opponent around, so DOGSO was not considered. (12-3-3, 12-8-4, 12-8-5)

SITUATION 4: Player No. 3 from Team B tackles the opponent with excessive force inside the penalty area. The referee disqualifies the player for serious foul play. A penalty kick is awarded, and the offender's team must play short-sided. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The foul may also be a DOGSO inside the penalty area; the nature of the foul rises to the level of disqualification. [12-1-3c, 12-9-2d(1), 12-9-4]

SITUATION 5: Team A is awarded a free kick and multiple players from Team B line up for a wall at appropriate distance from the spot per the official, and then another player from Team B (the defending team) lays down behind the wall. Before allowing the play to start, the official instructs the player from Team B to stand up. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** A player may play the ball while on the ground provided the player's action does not create a danger to that player or any other player. Laying down behind the wall of defensive players creates a dangerous situation to both the player on the ground and those defending in the wall. (12-7-1)

SITUATION 6: Player No. 6 from Team A carelessly slide-tackles an opponent right outside the penalty area, denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity. The referee disqualifies the player and issues a red card to No. 6 and restarts play with a direct free kick. **RULING:** Correct procedure. [12-9-2d(3), 12-9-4]