

Oregon School Activities Association

Soccer Bulletin #1

2026

This is the best time of the season. Everyone is undefeated, no one has been carded and there hasn't been a single bad referee decision anywhere! But the actual season starts next week. Coaches and referees are the adults out there. It is our job to give the players their chance to represent their school, use their skills and learn the life lessons that we learned as members of high school teams 'back then.'

Please remember that we use NFHS rules for high school soccer, not IFAB/FIFA/USSF or NCAA. We can get confused during the crazy fall season, when we may be using three different rule books in three days.

The rules (1.5) require that team areas be marked. This is done to help remind the wandering coach that they have to stay in the bench area. If there are no lines for the bench area, and there probably won't be at most fields, then ask them to put down cones before the game. On the usual high school football field, it's from the 40 yard line to the 20. If the host school is unable or unwilling to do this, play the game and include this in your game report.

I am sure that you will run across players this year who are wearing playing card sized shin guards, due to the IFAB Laws of the Game. The high school rule (4.1.5) has NOT changed, however. Particularly early in the season, please walk around before the game and check that shin guards appear to be large enough. If they do not, ask them to pull them out and show them to you. They must have the NOCSAE seal on the front of the shin guard, with a height range that seems reasonable for the athlete.

For many years, "ref and run" has been the OSAA policy for referees at the end of the game. OSAA has changed its policy to allow the referees to remain on the field, watch the handshakes, etc. This change does not mean that you must stay. If the game was heated, maybe with a controversial decision or two, you should still leave immediately. The head referee should make this decision for the whole crew. E.g. when the horn/whistle sounds at the end of the game, the crew meets in the center of the field. The head referee will then decide whether the crew will stay or leave immediately.

Any time a player is removed from the game due to a possible concussion, all of the officials must report that in their game report. In the very unusual circumstance that such a player returns to the game, that particularly must also be noted in the game report.

There is a good chance that you will have some games this year that hit the goal differential rule. Any time the difference in the score is eight goals (not necessarily that one

team has scored eight goals) or more at halftime or any time after that, the game is over. This applies to all OSAA soccer games, whether its varsity, JV, JV2, middle school, boys, girls, league game or not. Your game report should show the game clock time the game was ended.

In high school games, remember that if there are any substitutions in the last five minutes of the game made by the team that is ahead, the clock must be stopped. It doesn't matter if both teams are subbing. If the game is tied, then no one is ahead, are they?

NFHS rules do not directly address players wearing medical devices, such as an insulin pump. Please allow this, if they are securely fastened to the player's body and do not constitute a risk to the player or any other player.

As, I hope, you know, the high school rules now allow the goalkeeper eight seconds before they distribute the ball. I know that I will have to retrain myself to start silently counting down from eight, as soon as the keeper has 'control of the ball.' 12.3.2.a reads "The goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball with the hand(s)/arm(s) when: 1. The ball is between the hands or between the hand and any surface (e.g. ground, own body, goal post) or by touching the ball with any part of the hands or arms." This is a very strict rule. The eight seconds starts the second that the keeper has the ball held against their chest after a save, for example, or they are sprawled on the ground with one or both hands on the ball. It is only goalkeeper control of the ball, not of their body that counts.

We will count silently for "eight, seven, six" and then with both our fingers held above our head and with our voice, loud enough for the goalkeeper to hear you, counting down to one. If they are about to punt the ball and you are at one, don't blow the whistle, just play on. I am sure there will be goalkeepers this year who will have to learn that we are now serious about how long they can hold the ball. Don't be 'the referee last week [who] didn't do this.'

We had far too many incidents last year of players using or reported as using discriminatory language. This requires zero tolerance. First time, every time. Rinse and repeat as necessary. If you hear it and know who said it, red card immediately. If you don't know who it was or it was reported to you by others, stop the game, stop the clock, and meet with the coaches, letting them know that they have a minute or two to talk to their players. And, if you decide that it will help the situation, you can issue a card to the head coach. All such incidents must be reported in your game report, even if no card was shown.

Be safe out there.

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