



MEMORANDUM

August 19, 2026

VIA EMAIL

TO: NCAA Divisions I, II, and III Women's Lacrosse Conference Commissioners, Directors of Athletics and Head Coaches.

FROM: Amy Foster, Chair
Division I Women's Lacrosse Rules Subcommittee

Jaclyn Lawrence, Chair
Division II and Division III Women's Lacrosse Rules Committee

Stefanie Sparks-Smith, Secretary-Rules Editor
Women's Lacrosse Rules Committee

SUBJECT: NCAA Women's Lacrosse Rules Changes Effective with the 2027 Season.

The NCAA Division I Women's Lacrosse Oversight Committee and NCAA Division II and Division III Playing Rules Oversight Panel recently approved major rules changes that will be effective at the start of the 2027 season. These rules change may be viewed by going to "2027 Rules" under the "Updates" section at the following links:

[Women's Lacrosse Rules of the Game - NCAA.org](https://www.ncaa.org/sport-division-ii-commission/news/2026-08-19-womens-lacrosse-rules-changes)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Stefanie Sparks-Smith (ssmithsre@gmail.com) for more information regarding the rules changes.

AF/JL/JD:ap

cc: Division I Women's Lacrosse Rules Subcommittee
Division II and Division III Women's Lacrosse Rules Committee
Selected NCAA Staff

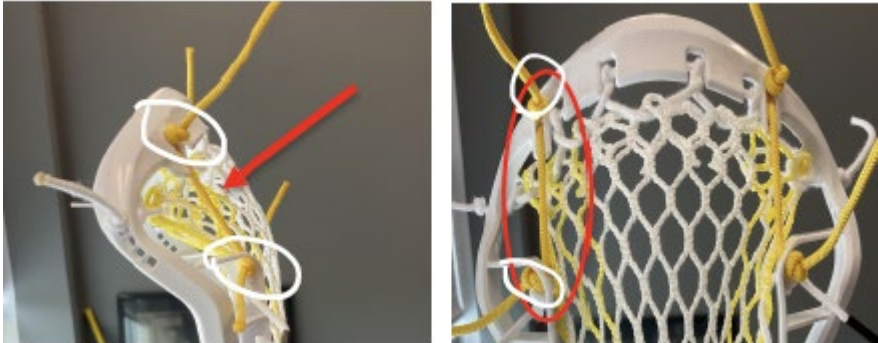


2027 Women's Lacrosse Rules Changes

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Women's Lacrosse Division I Oversight Committee and the NCAA Division II and Division III Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rules changes are effective with the 2027 season.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
Approval of the Date for Equipment Rule 2	Require that all equipment subject to certification or governing body approval under the applicable equipment rule be commercially available to all institutions by January 1 preceding the applicable spring season. Equipment that does not meet both requirements shall not be permitted for use during that season. Rationale: This requirement promotes consistency, ensures equitable access across the membership, provides institutions sufficient time to obtain approved equipment before the season begins, and helps maintain a level playing field.
Stringing Rule 2-2	Strung pockets shall be attached directly to the head exclusively through stringing holes located on the side rail, scoop and ball stop. Strung pockets must be attached to the bottom of the bottom rail of the head. Mesh pockets are permitted. If mesh, the nylon string must be tight to the side rail using the stringing holes, scoop and ball stop to the degree that the gap between pocket and head is not greater than the width of two nylons (0.6 cm). The top of every stringing hole shall be located within 1.0 cm of the bottom of the side rail. Each attachment to the sidewall shall be no more than 1.5 inches from its adjacent attachment when measured in a straight line from hole to hole (measured from the inside edges). a. All vertical stringing must be in the same plane as the pocket. b. Additional strings not directly required for attachment of the pocket to the head of the stick are not allowed. NOTE: Every component of a pocket, including each thong, cross-lace, sidewall string, shooting string, and every strand of mesh, shall be structurally integral to the pocket assembly. Integral means either continuously woven into the pocket, tied to at least two adjacent pocket components, or stitched along its full length to the adjacent surface. Shooting Strings: a. If strung with shooting strings, the pocket of the stick must have no more than two shooting strings, which must be directly attached to the sidewalls. Shooting strings are not required. Shooting strings must be attached through the stringing holes on the siderail.

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	b. The top shooting strings should be attached in the 1/3 of the head of the stick; the second or lower shooting string may be attached in the top 1/3 of the head of the stick or be an inverted U and attached in the top 2/3 of the head. c. Shooting strings also cannot be coiled more than once per mesh gap or twice between thongs if traditionally strung. d. Flat laces may not be used for shooting strings. Runners: a. Runners, longitudinal stringing components, shall satisfy the following requirements: i. Full length – anchored and continuous from the ball stop to scoop without break, splice or knotting that interrupts the ball mobility. ii. Shall be .3 cm to 1.0 cm in diameter. iii. Shall not be bunched along the width of the head, woven back up through the pocket and shall not touch in the top third of the head. iv. Mesh pockets shall also satisfy this rule, any mesh panel or construction that constitutes dedicated longitudinal strands of equal or greater diameter than the surrounding mesh. Nylon Requirements: a. The nominal diameter of the shooting string nylon cord and side wall string nylon shall be 0.3 cm maximum. b. The nominal diameter of pocket nylon including the mesh shall be 0.3 cm maximum unless fused mesh is utilized to attach the pocket to the head of the stick. c. Pocket nylon and all related stringing material, including mesh, thongs, cross-lacing, shooting strings, and sidewall strings, shall meet elasticity standards as established in the Manufacturer's Specifications. Rationale: These proposed changes promote greater consistency in equipment standards, improve enforcement by officials, and provide clearer guidance to coaches and student-athletes. They also align the NCAA rule with current standards adopted by other governing bodies, helping to promote consistency across levels of play. This change will deem the following type of stringing illegal because of its effect on mobility.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
	
Stick Check Rule 2-6	Require officials to conduct at least one stick check of both drawers' sticks during each quarter. The stick check shall be conducted immediately prior to a draw. In addition, officials shall conduct a stick check of both drawers' sticks immediately prior to the opening draw of each overtime period. The stick check shall include verification of pocket depth and ball mobility on both the front and back of each stick. Rationale: Requiring routine checks of pocket depth and ball mobility promotes consistent enforcement of equipment rules, discourages gamesmanship involving draw sticks, and helps ensure the draw is conducted fairly, preserving competitive equity.
Clock Management Rule 4-1	Require the game clock and possession clock to be stopped during official warnings (e.g., non-engagement and misconduct) and during defensive false starts on an 8-meter free position. Rationale: Stopping both the game clock and possession clock during official warnings ensures that neither team gains or loses a competitive advantage because of an administrative stoppage. Stopping both clocks during a defensive false start on an 8-meter free position prevents the defense from benefiting from its own violation by allowing game time to expire before play resumes. This change eliminates an opportunity for gamesmanship, preserves the attacking team's opportunity to execute the free position, and promotes a fair and consistent administration of the rules.
Reinstate Power Play Rule 5-1	Reinstate the power play rule that was in effect during the 2025 season, with one modification to the definition of possession for purposes of this rule, as follows: If a team with a numerical advantage due to penalties retains possession, as determined by the possession clock, at the expiration of a quarter or overtime period, that team shall be awarded possession to begin the subsequent quarter or overtime period. The 2026 rule permitting any team in possession at the end of the first and third quarters to retain possession at the start of the subsequent quarter, regardless of any numerical advantage, is no longer applicable.

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	Rationale: Reinstating this rule will enhance student-athlete safety by discouraging dangerous cardable play during the closing moments of a quarter or overtime period and by discouraging unnecessary last-second shots by the team in possession. It also promotes fairness by ensuring that a team awarded a player advantage due to a cardable foul receives the full benefit of that advantage, rather than having it effectively negated by the automatic draw that begins the subsequent quarter or overtime period before the penalty has expired. Finally, the rule provides teams with additional strategic options when managing possession at the end of a quarter or overtime period.
Video Review Rules 5-51 through 5-61	Add the following to the video review rule, along with the edits identified below in red: permit only coaches to request a video review; require officials to notify both teams' coaches whenever a video review request has been made; and provide that, once a video review has been granted, officials shall strive to complete the review within two minutes. SECTION 52. Required Officials' Video Review. Officials shall utilize video review in the following situations. Video review shall be utilized whenever there is uncertainty in making a determination related to items a–d below and shall always be utilized for items e, regardless of uncertainty: a. To correct the game clock or possession clock when a malfunction or timing error occurs. b. To determine the timing of the release of a shot relative to the expiration of the game clock or possession clock at the end of a possession, quarter, or overtime period. c. To determine whether a shot resulted in contact with the goal pipe or a deflection off the goalkeeper's stick. d. To identify or confirm the correct offender for a yellow or red cardable foul. Note: Green card fouls are not reviewable. SECTION 55. Timing of Video Review Requests. Video review requests shall be made promptly and before play has progressed beyond the action subject to review. Review shall not be granted once play has clearly continued. A video review request must be made before the defensive team advances the ball from the goal circle beyond the defensive 30-yard line following a no-goal ruling or undetected goal; before the expiration of the draw clock following a goal; before a change of possession; before the ball goes out of bounds and play is restarted; or before a restart is administered. During a timeout, any video review request must be made within the first 30 seconds of the timeout. SECTION 56. Administration of Video Review. Except in cases involving fouls committed during the act of shooting, Officials shall render an on-field ruling before initiating video review.

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	SECTION 58. Equipment Malfunction. If video review cannot be conducted due to a malfunction that prevents video from being viewed, the requesting team shall not be charged with a video review request. Loss of a single camera angle or poor video quality does not constitute a malfunction. If equipment becomes available after a malfunction, video review may be used when functional. The Head Official may discontinue use of video review if repeated failures occur or if delays in receiving video unreasonably interfere with the timely administration of the game. SECTION 60. Officials' Authority During Video Review. Officials shall correct clock errors and administer any yellow or red cardable fouls, including any flopping violations, observed during any video review, regardless of the original purpose of the review. This shall not apply to a review conducted under Rule 5-52.a, which shall be limited solely to the timing issue. Rationale: These proposed changes clarify and refine the video review rule based on lessons learned during its first season as a permissive rule in 2026. The proposals address unintended consequences identified during game administration by clarifying the procedures governing when and how video review may be requested and administered. They promote greater consistency and efficiency while minimizing unnecessary delays and disruptions to the flow of the game.
Combine Embellishment and Flopping Into one Single Foul Rules 6-4.c and d	Combine the fouls of embellishment and flopping into a single foul, flopping, as follows: A player may not exaggerate, dramatize, or simulate contact or the effects of contact in an effort to deceive an official into calling or escalating a foul or card. Examples include, but are not limited to, a player grabbing their head, body, or eyewear when no contact was made; a player exaggerating or dramatizing a fall in a manner inconsistent with the original contact; or a player snapping their head to simulate illegal contact. Classify flopping as a flagrant foul, resulting in a yellow card and a non-releasable two-minute penalty. Rationale: This proposal simplifies and clarifies the rule book by consolidating two similar fouls into a single rule with one clear definition. Combining the two fouls will make it easier for officials to identify and enforce the rule consistently. Overall, this change promotes consistent application of the rules, simplifies officiating, and helps ensure fairness and integrity in the game.
Exchange Sticks. Rule 6-6	Permit players to exchange sticks with another player on the field when they are not in possession of the ball. A player may not take an active part in the game if they are holding multiple sticks. A coach or other team personnel in the team bench area only may hand a stick to a player when the play is dead (e.g., after a goal and before a draw, during a timeout). A stick may never be thrown in an attempt to exchange sticks with a teammate, coach, or team personnel. During live play, a player may leave the field through the substitution area to exchange sticks in the bench area.

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	Rationale: This proposed change provides teams with greater flexibility to exchange sticks and addresses unintended consequences of a rules change from 2025. This proposed change also aligns the NCAA rule with current standards adopted by other governing bodies, helping to promote consistency across levels of play.
Egregious Conduct and Misconduct Foul Rules 6-20 and 6-22	Revise the egregious conduct foul and the misconduct foul as reflected in the edits below. Additionally, permit, but do not require, an initial warning for misconduct involving a coach leaving the coaching area, a coach communicating in a manner that is not respectful, calm, concise, or professional, and repeated or persistent violation of the rules. Egregious Conduct: a. Excessively rough, dangerous, or unsportsmanlike play. b. Deliberately endangering the safety of another person. c. Excessive dissent or abusive physical or verbal behavior. Misconduct: The following are misconduct fouls: 1. A coach leaving the coaching area. See Rule 1-14. 2. A coach communicating in a manner that is not respectful, calm, concise, or professional. 3. Any deliberate attempt to impede the officials from obtaining the goal-scorer's stick. 4. Deliberately tripping an opponent. 5. Baiting or taunting that is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others. 6. Repeated or persistent violation of the rules, including repeated or persistent major, minor, or delay-of-game fouls. 7. Excessively rough, dangerous, or unsportsmanlike play. Rationale: Moving subsection (a) from the egregious conduct foul to the misconduct foul provides officials with greater flexibility to address dangerous conduct by allowing officials to elevate minor and major fouls when warranted by the nature and severity of the physical contact. In addition, permitting, but not requiring, officials to issue an initial warning for specified coach misconduct fouls provides an additional game-management tool. Together, these changes give officials the flexibility to respond appropriately to the circumstances of each situation while reinforcing player safety, sportsmanship, and respect for the game.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale			
Targeting Rule 6-22	Add targeting as a new flagrant foul. A player who commits targeting shall be assessed a red card. The proposed definition is as follows: Any action in which a player initiates forcible contact with an opponent without making a legitimate attempt to play the ball, and where the primary purpose of the contact is to strike, hit, or otherwise make significant physical contact with a high potential for injury rather than to contest possession. Rationale: Current rules do not specifically address situations in which a player intentionally delivers dangerous contact without making a legitimate attempt to play the ball, particularly when the contact occurs off the ball. This proposal provides officials with a rule that directly addresses those situations and gives them a clearer basis for penalizing contact whose purpose is to strike or make significant physical contact with an opponent rather than to contest possession. The change is intended to discourage unnecessary dangerous contact, improve player safety, and better address off-ball fouls that are not always adequately covered under the existing rules.			
Yellow Cards Rules 6-29 through 33	Make all yellow card penalties two-minute, non-releasable penalties. Rationale: Standardizes yellow card penalties, simplifying administration and promoting consistency.			
Red Cards Rule 6-34	Modify the current red card rule to eliminate the automatic suspension for the subsequent game while retaining the in-game ejection. Rationale: By eliminating the automatic subsequent-game suspension while retaining the in-game ejection, officials may be more inclined to issue a red card when warranted, without concern that it will automatically sideline a student-athlete for the following game. More consistent use of the red card can improve game control, deter dangerous play, and enhance student-athlete safety.			
Penalty Categorization and Administration : Revised Penalty Structure	<u>Penalty Restructure</u>			
	Categorization	Refinements to Foul Inclusion	Language	Refinements to Penalty Structure
	Flagrant	Dangerous Contact		All yellow cards are non-releasable.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale			
		Dangerous Follow-Through Dangerous Propelling Egregious Conduct Flopping Illegal Body Ball in the Circle Illegal Stick (excluding pocket depth) Dangerous Stick in the Sphere Misconduct Slash Suspended Player Substitute Targeting		
	Technical Fouls	Shooting Space Three Seconds Goal Circle Fouls	Once the ball crosses the goal line and the official sounds the whistle, play has ended and no subsequent goal circle violation shall be called. This does not apply to deliberate or avoidable contact initiated by the player with the goalkeeper, which remains illegal regardless of timing. In such cases, the goal shall not count, and a foul may be assessed in accordance with these rules. Contact with the goalkeeper after the	

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale			
			goal is scored is not a violation if, but for the actions of the goalkeeper, the player would not have made contact upon entering the goal circle. *This is also addressed in the Scoring section of the rules book.	
	Delay of Game Fouls	Delay with Free Positions in the Critical Scoring Area Delay after Cardable Penalty Delay Leaving the Field – Head Disconnected from Shaft, Broken Shaft, or Broken Head General Delay Illegal Stick Request Illegal Substitutes/Substitutions Illegal Switching of Sticks (see proposal) Illegal Timeout Illegal Video Review Non-Engagement Fouls		

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale			
		Repetitive False Starts Repetitive False Starts on 8-Meter Free Position Repetitive Self-Starts		
	Major	Cross Check Embellishment Holding Illegal Check (new foul includes slash, slap checks, hand checks, striking, rough or reckless check, etc.) Illegal Use of the Stick	Illegal Check: A check is illegal if a player initiates contact using an uncontrolled or swinging (chopping or hacking) motion of the stick to strike an opponent's stick, hand, or body, regardless of whether the opponent is in possession of the ball, rather than executing a short, controlled check directed at the exposed head or exposed shaft (above or below the hands) of the opponent's stick. A defender-initiated check directed at the shaft of the stick between an opponent's hands is also illegal.	
	Minor	Blocking/Illegal Pick Charging Covering Draw Clock Violation Empty stick check (below the	Add to Illegal Body Ball: A player may not use their body to cover, conceal, or trap the ball in a manner that prevents an opponent from legally playing it, including sitting or lying on the ball. Illegal Contact: Using one's stick or body against an opponent's body in a manner that is unsafe, reckless, or that	Possession If possession, reset possession clock (59 or fewer seconds reset to 60; otherwise, reset to 90).

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale			
		waist) False Start (attacking false starts and defensive false starts excluding 8-meters) Forcing Through Illegal Body Ball *Add language prohibiting a player from covering the ball with one's body (e.g., sitting on the ball). Illegal Contact (replacing Illegal Use of the Stick and Holding including the v-hold) Illegal Cradle Illegal Draw Illegal Stick (pocket depth) Pass From Out of Bounds Play From Out of Bounds Pushing Tripping (Incidental) Warding Off	pins, restrains, or detains an opponent's movement is illegal. This does not include a short, quick check or the momentary redirection of an opponent's path. Players may engage in strong, physical defense through legal stick-to-body contact and may legally influence or redirect an opponent's movement. Using the webbed area of the stick to hook is illegal.	

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale		
		<u>Minor Fouls will also include the following Procedural Delays:</u> Delay from Timeout/Quarter Break/Halftime Delay to Pregame Meeting Eye Protection Goalkeeper Fouls Illegal Re-entry Jewelry Mouthpiece No stick Throwing a Stick	
	Rationale: This proposed change simplifies and clarifies foul language, foul categorization, procedures, and administrative responsibilities for officials while addressing unintended consequences of the penalty restructure for the 2026 season. It promotes greater consistency in game management and enhances student-athlete safety.		

****Reminder:** Effective with the 2027 season, all officials shall be required to use headsets during games to enhance communication, improve game management, and promote greater consistency among the officiating crew.