



**NCAA Soccer Rules Questions and Interpretations
2021 Season, Volume I
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This update includes issues addressed up to Aug. 27, 2021.

1. **Messages on undergarments.** A player scored a goal and lifted up their jersey to reveal a statement about social justice. NCAA rules permit the expression of social justice messages on uniforms. They are silent on the issue of messages on undergarments. This is something that could be reported to the governing sports authority, but referees should not issue yellow cards for this unless the message is delivered in a taunting manner or inherently unsportsmanlike.

2. **Can clocks count up or down?** Rule 6.3.1 states, “When an electronically controlled scoreboard clock is visible to both benches and spectators, it shall be used as the official timepiece. The clock may count up or down; however, it is recommended that it count down.” In NCAA tournament games, the clock will count down per NCAA committee procedures. During the regular season, each school can make its own decision on whether the clock counts up or down.

3. **Hair pulling and reporting of violent behavior.** Referees are reminded that hair pulling is not automatically classified as Violent Behavior II. A brief grab of the hair is different than yanking a player down by their hair or snapping their head back. The rules references are included below.
12.7.4.8.2 Violent behavior II is an unwarranted excessive act or use of force, which is malicious and so extreme and severe that it places a participant in danger of physical injury. These acts may include, but are not limited to, head butting, elbow to the face or head, stomping, kicking a defenseless person, or hair pulling...*Note: The clear intent of violent behavior II is to eliminate conduct that presents a serious risk of injury and has no place in college soccer. The key differentiators of an act or conduct that reach the level of violent behavior II are premeditation, malice and severity.*

In addition to getting the call correct, referees must follow the correct protocol for notifying the player, head coach, and official scorekeeper that there has been an ejection for Violent Behavior II. There is no justification for telling a coach on the field that an ejection was for Violent Behavior I and then filling out the ejection report after the game and labeling the conduct as Violent Behavior II.
12.7.4.8.2.1 The referee shall inform the player(s), the head coach(es) and the official scorekeeper, who shall record on the official NCAA box score form that an ejection for violent behavior II has been issued.

4. **Suspended games.** What happens if the start of the game is delayed more than three hours by bad weather and the teams mutually agree on a new start time? Is the referee obligated to agree and to stay and officiate the game? The referee must be notified of the decision, but has no right to exercise a veto over the decision. As a practical matter, teams should coordinate with the officials or the assignor to ensure that officials are available at the

agreed upon rescheduled time. Issues regarding contracts and payment should be resolved at the governing sports authority level. The rules reference is included below.

7.6.2 No game may be started more than three hours after the originally scheduled start time unless the referee has been notified and the new start time mutually agreed upon before the start of the game by the teams or determined by the governing sports authority.

5. **Suspensions for red cards or yellow card accumulation that were earned in either 2019 or 2020/21 seasons.** Penalties for any cards that were earned must be served in the next regular game. The rules reference is included below.

12.8.1 A player, coach or bench personnel ejected from a game under Rules 12.7.4.1 to 12.7.4.8.1 cannot participate in the next regularly scheduled game, including postseason games, or, if the offense occurs in the final game of the season, in the first scheduled game of the next season.

6. **Are schools allowed to play pre-recorded snippets of amplified music during the game?** Pre-recorded music is treated differently from live bands and artificial noisemakers. It is only permitted when the clock is stopped and the ball is not in play. See rules reference below.

A.R. 5.6.9.a. Is amplified music permissible? **RULING:** Yes, during pregame, period intervals, and anytime the clock is stopped and the ball is not in play.

7. **Can a player be charged with more than one red card in a game?**

Yes, in certain limited circumstances. Referees cannot assess additional ejections that fall outside VB II / fighting / referee assault. They should simply note the additional misbehavior in the report and leave it up to the governing sports authority to deal with. However, if a player commits Violent Behavior II, Fighting, or Referee Assault after the ejection, they should not escape punishment simply because they have already been shown a red card. The additional punishments stipulated in the rule book should still apply. The following scenarios will illustrate the concept.

Scenario 1: A player is ejected for abusive language to the referee continues to use abusive language toward the referee, either at the time or after the game. **RULING:** 1 ejection, with mandatory 1 game suspension, but the referee should note the other conduct in the ejection report. The governing sports authority can impose additional discipline as they deem appropriate.

Scenario 2: A player is ejected for two yellow cards. After receiving the red card, they spit on an opponent and headbutt the referee. **RULING:** 3 ejections, all of which should be reported on separate ejection reports and which carry their own penalties. Player will be suspended 1 game for two yellow cards; 2 games for the Violent Behavior II plus an additional game for the second red card of the season; 3 games for the referee assault plus 2 additional games for the third red card of the season. In addition, the player would

be suspended for the rest of the season per 12.8.1.3 for two violent behavior II/Referee assault ejections in the same season.