



**NCAA Soccer Rules Questions and Interpretations**  
**2022 Season, Volume 3**  
**Rich Grady, Secretary-Rules Editor**

This update includes issues addressed up to September 21, 2022. Volumes 1 and 2 may be viewed on [Center Circle](#) under Rules of the Game or the NCAA playing rules [website](#) under Updates.

- 1. Goalkeeper Handling Pass From the Foot of a Teammate.** Referees must be familiar with Rule 12.3.3 and the difference between handling the ball inside the penalty area when not otherwise permitted to do so and handling as a second touch violation inside the penalty area.
  - a. Handling a pass from the foot of a teammate **IS NOT** considered misconduct, even if it stops the ball from entering the goal or takes away a promising attack.
  - b. Handling while playing the ball a second time after a restart (second touch after a goal kick or free kick) **IS** considered misconduct if the violation stops a promising attack (caution/yellow card) or if the offense denies an opponent or the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (red card).
- 2. Players Receiving Two Yellow Cards in a Game.** Referees, coaches, and administrators must know how to administer and report a second caution (yellow card). On the field, the referee is expected to show a yellow card for the caution, followed immediately by the red card for the ejection. Statistically, a player or coach who receives two yellow cards and thus a red card in the same game is considered to have accumulated one (1) yellow card and one (1) red card. For example, if a player enters the game with three (3) yellow cards and proceeds to receive two (2) cautions/yellow cards in the same game, the player will be suspended one (1) game for receiving a red card and that player will have a season total of four (4) yellow cards and one (1) red card. In this scenario, the player would then sit another game for yellow card accumulation when they receive their next caution during the regular season.
- 3. Retrieving the Ball From the Net After a Goal.** In college soccer, the clock stops when a goal is scored. Therefore, there is no reason for the scoring team to rush to retrieve the ball in order to get it back in play and there is no reason for the team that just conceded a goal to prevent the retrieval of the ball. Such behavior has led to a number of confrontations and ejections so far this season. Coaches should and must educate their teams about this so that players do not simply mimic what they see at the professional level. Referees should be proactive to prevent these disputes from occurring, but should not hesitate to deal with misconduct that arises from these situations.
- 4. Medical Personnel.** The rules book does not explicitly address the presence of medical personnel such as athletic trainers or team physicians. However, their presence is outlined by the NCAA Concussion Safety Protocol Checklist available [here](#). A player(s)

removed from the game under Rules 3.6.3.2 and 3.6.3.3 will not be able to re-enter the game until they receive clearance from appropriate medical personnel.

**5. Fighting and Violent Behavior II Ejections.** So far this season, there have been five (5) successful protests where a fighting or violent behavior II ejection (red card) has been reduced to a violent behavior I ejection (red card) as per Rule 5.8.1.1. Referees are again reminded that there are specific criteria for fighting (throwing a punch) and for violent behavior II (spitting, biting, and unwarranted malicious and extreme acts that pose a risk of physical injury). Referees should only assess a fighting or violent behavior II red card when the criteria for that penalty have been met. Offenses which do not meet these criteria should be considered as Violent Behavior I.

**6. Dropped Ball Procedures.** Rule 9.3.2 and its subsections outline the dropped ball procedures. Here are the basics:

- If the ball is in the penalty area or last touched in the penalty area, the ball is dropped for the goalkeeper.
- If the ball is outside the penalty area and was not last touched inside the penalty area, it is dropped for one player of the team last touching the ball at the location of the last touch.
- All other players must be at least five (5) yards away.
- The ball is in play as soon as it touches the ground.
- If referees choose to blow their whistle as a means of alerting teams that play is going to restart, that should be done before dropping the ball rather than when the ball hits the ground.

Referees need to know the location of the ball, which team touched it last, and where that touch occurs when stopping the game. Crew collaboration is essential to getting the game restarted correctly.

**7. Penalty Kick Administration.** Rule 14.2.4 allows the player taking the kick to use a stutter step as long as the motion toward the ball is continuous. Rule 14.3.3 states that the penalty for an infringement by the kicker before the ball is put in play is a retake. The only circumstances in which an indirect free kick can be awarded to the defending team for actions committed before the ball is in play is if the kicker deliberately plays the ball backward or a different player than the one identified takes the kick. Referees must correctly administer the rules in these critical situations.