



NCAA Soccer Rules Questions and Interpretations
2025 Season, Volume 2
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This update includes issues addressed up to September 11, 2025. Additional video examples can be found on the NCAA Soccer Center Circle Central Hub on RQ+ in the 2025 NCAA Soccer Rules Questions and Interpretations Volume 2 document.

1. **Video Review and Offside.** Rule 5.7.3.10 allows the officials to use video review to determine whether a goal should have been disallowed for an offside offense. This includes **all plays** where the decision on the field is a goal. Therefore, any missed offside in the buildup to a goal may be reviewed. Plays where the call on the field is offside may be reviewed as long as the referee has not blown the whistle for offside before the ball enters the goal. This play is therefore reviewable. This is not VAR as applied under International Football Association Board (IFAB) laws, and there are no VAR delayed flags. The intent is to limit review of plays where offside has been called on the field to very close decisions close to goal. Assistant referees should raise their flag as normal when calling offside, but referees are encouraged to delay their whistle slightly in a game with video review when a flag is raised as a shot is being taken. This would allow the play to be reviewed if the ball goes into the goal.
2. **Use of Video Review.** Under Rule 5.7.1, if video review equipment is available, it shall be used. The only exception to this is if there is a conference-wide policy stating that video review is not being used. It is considered best practice for officials, once they confirm the availability of video review, to make sure that both coaches are aware that video review will be used. Officials should be mindful that there is no requirement that one or both coaches consent to the use of video review.
3. **Discretionary vs. Mandatory Cautions.** This topic was addressed multiple times over the last two seasons, but it continues to be an area of concern.
 - a. **Removal of jersey in celebration of a goal and excessive celebration.** Rule 12.4.3.5 provides that a caution may be given for “engaging in taunting or ridiculing another player, bench personnel, officials or spectators or excessive celebration. Note: Removal of the jersey is not automatically considered to be a cautionable offense.” Because the official time is stopped after a goal is scored, officials should not be looking for reasons to caution players for celebrating goals unless the player’s actions clearly cross the line into taunting the opposing team or their spectators. Scoring a game-winning goal is a life-long memory for a player. Let them enjoy the moment with their teammates unless they do something that clearly displays poor sportsmanship. Because the official time is stopped after a goal is scored, officials should not be looking for reasons to caution players for celebrating goals unless the player’s actions clearly cross the line into taunting the opposing team or their spectators. For example, the team runs to the corner flag after scoring, and the goal scorer punches the corner flag. The referee issued a caution for this action, which was the player’s second of the game. This is the type of incident where referees should not look for problems. No one on the opposing team is being taunted or targeted here, and there is not an unduly long delay in restarting. These are not cautions that should be given in an NCAA soccer game.

- b. **Delaying the restart of play.** Please see the 2025 Point of Emphasis Memo on Timing published on [RQ+](#) and on [NCAA Soccer Rules of the Game](#) on July 28. Rules 6.3.5.8 and 6.3.5.9 give the referee the authority to stop the clock without issuing a caution when they need to address participant behavior or when they feel time wasting is taking place. Cautions may be given for acts such as kicking the ball away or not taking a restart quickly enough, but the preference is for the clock to be stopped and the referee to manage these incidents, saving the yellow card for egregious examples.
4. **Clarification on Penalty Kicks.** The intent of the recent change in penalizing encroachment at the taking of a penalty kick was to penalize **only** those actions that had an impact. If players from both teams encroach, the result of the kick should be allowed to stand, unless one of the players plays the ball, challenges for the ball or prevents an opponent from playing the ball, in which case the player from the team whose encroachment had an impact should be penalized. In the rare cases where players from both teams encroach and there is an impact by both players (i.e., they challenge each other for the ball), the kick should be retaken.
5. **Inclement Weather Delays.** Rule 7.8.3 requires that games that have been started and are then suspended for inclement weather must be restarted not later than three hours after the original start time unless there is prior mutual agreement between the coaches or as determined by the governing sports authority. Officials should be proactive and ask coaches about this prior to the game. Conferences that have specific policies that apply to these situations should make sure that all parties are aware of and have access to these policies.
6. **Serving Suspensions and Avoiding Ineligible Participation.** There have been multiple instances this season where players or coaches failed to properly serve a suspension. Players who are suspended may be in the team area, but may not be in uniform and may not take part in the pregame warmup. Coaches who are suspended may not be in the venue from one hour prior to the game until thirty minutes after the conclusion of the game. During that time, they must be out of sight and sound of the game, and may not be in contact in any manner with any member of the team or coaching staff. If there is any question at all about card accumulation or suspensions for ejections, the institution should contact the secretary-rules editor directly prior to allowing the individual in question to participate.