



2026 and 2027 Division I Men's and Women's Soccer Rules Changes

*The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Rules Subcommittee, Women's Soccer Rules Subcommittee, Men's Soccer Oversight Committee and Women's Soccer Oversight Committee.
All rules changes are effective with the 2026 and 2027 seasons.*

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
Rule 1	
1.1 (Dimensions)	<p>Increase the maximum width of the field of play from 75 yds to 80 yds.</p> <p>Rationale: This aligns with IFAB maximum suggested width for international matches.</p>
1.3.6 (Field Markings and Measurements – Commercial Logos)	<p>Permit up to four (4) commercial logos (two in each half of the field), not larger than 15-foot-by-15-foot square, on the field provided they are not in the penalty area and do not obscure any required field markings.</p> <p>Rationale: To increase revenue opportunities for institutions and to align with other NCAA sports that permit commercial advertising on the playing surface.</p>
Rule 2	
2.2 (The Ball - Style, Shape and Material)	<p>No fewer than nine (9) game balls shall be used and available during the game. <i>Note: This applies to Division I matches only.</i></p> <p>Rationale: This will reduce lost time and get the ball back in play more quickly.</p>
Rule 3	
3.4.2 (When Substitutes Are Allowed)	<p>Permit substitutions at any time the clock is stopped. <i>Note: This is currently permitted for Division I men.</i></p> <p>Rationale: This will help speed up the game by allowing substitutions at a time when the game is already stopped.</p>
Rule 4	
4.5.7 (Permissible Equipment)	<p>Devices for the collection of data may be worn on the wrist or arm if properly taped down and padded.</p> <p>Rationale: This will expand opportunities for data collection while also making sure the devices are not considered dangerous to any player.</p>
Rule 5	
5.1 (The Referee)	<p>For Division I, require a fourth official for all games/matches.</p> <p>Rationale: The demands of the modern game require the presence of a fourth official to assist the referee.</p>
5.6.7 (The Referee –	<p>If a player from each team seeks medical evaluation or is treated on the field after a penalty kick has been awarded, both players can remain on the field.</p>

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Discretionary Power)	Rationale: This avoids a situation where a forward who might otherwise take the kick is forced to leave the game after seeking medical evaluation or treatment while the goalkeeper can remain.
5.7.1 (Video Review)	<p>Changes to Video Review procedures as follows: Referees can initiate a review at any time for timing issues or for the ball crossing the endline. All other reviews will require a coach's challenge. Each team will have two (2) challenges per match. If a team is out of challenges, the referee can initiate a review on their own during the last 10 minutes of regulation or in overtime.</p> <p>Rationale: This will eliminate uncertainty over when a review should take place and will reduce unnecessary reviews. Coaches will have more control over the decision to review a play.</p>
5.7 (Video Review)	<p>Permit the addition of the following offenses by the attacking team as reviewable play situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A foul prior to the scoring of a goal; • A foul or an offside prior to the award of a penalty kick or the issuing of a red card for Denial of an Obvious Goal Scoring Opportunity; and • Offside prior to the scoring of a goal. <p>Rationale: Increases fairness and aligns with current practice under IFAB.</p>
Rule 6	
6.3 (Video Match Official)	<p>The governing sports authority may appoint a video match official to assist the referee with all aspects of video review. The video match official may be located at the game site or at a centralized location. <i>Note: This rule applies to Division I matches only.</i></p> <p><i>New</i></p> <p>Rationale: Will make reviews quicker and more efficient as well as adding a safety net for suggesting reviews in the last ten minutes of a match or in overtime when a team is out of challenges.</p>
6.3.5 (Timekeeper)	<p>During the last 15 minutes of the second half, when there is a margin of five (5) or more goals, the clock will only stop for serious injuries and video reviews. Normal timing rules will resume if the margin drops below five (5) goals. <i>Note: This does not apply for Division I men.</i></p> <p>Rationale: This will avoid unduly prolonging the game when games have become non-competitive.</p>
Rule 7	
7.7.4 (Suspended Game –	Games that have progressed to 70 minutes or beyond with a margin of three (3) or more goals will be considered final if the game is suspended and cannot be resumed the same day. If the margin is less than three (3) goals after 70 minutes or the game

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Completed Game)	<p>has not progressed to 70 minutes, the game will either be resumed at a later date or considered a no contest. <i>Note: This rule applies to Division I men and women only.</i></p> <p>Rationale: This reflects a desire to base results that impact postseason selection on full length games whenever possible.</p>
7.8 (Inclement Weather Policy, Expiration of Time)	<p>Unless agreed to by the teams or determined by the governing sports authority, no game may be started if more than three hours have elapsed between the scheduled start time and the all clear being given. Once the all clear is given, teams shall have adequate warm up time.</p> <p>Once a game has been started and suspended, no game may be resumed the same day if more than three hours have elapsed between the first suspension of play and the all clear being given for the first and all subsequent delays unless the teams or the governing sports authority have agreed to a longer waiting period.</p> <p>The teams and/or governing sports authority may agree to resume a suspended game at a later date. If teams have hard departure deadlines necessitated by travel considerations, these shall be communicated to the governing sports authority as soon as possible.</p> <p>Rationale: This extends the window for teams to resume games the same day and allows for more games to be completed.</p>
Rule 12	
12.3.1.1 (Goalkeeper Delay) New	<p>If goalkeepers hold onto a live ball for more than eight (8) seconds, a corner kick will be awarded. <i>Note: The official will visually and verbally count down the last five (5) seconds.</i></p> <p>Rationale: This will reduce the amount of time consumed by goalkeepers holding onto the ball. This aligns with IFAB in terms of the count and the penalties for violations.</p>
12.4.3.1 & 12.4.3.2 (Cautions)	<p>Cautions shall be issued to the head coach when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple substitutes run through the opposing team's bench area or illegally enter the field beyond the immediate vicinity of the touchline during the celebration of a goal; and • Misconduct punishable by a caution takes place in the coaching or team area and the individual offender cannot be located. <p>Cautions shall be issued to assistant coaches and other bench personnel when they argue with officials.</p> <p>Rationale: Improve accountability for poor behavior and reduce dissent.</p>
12.5.1.1 (Accumulated Cautions)	<p>All yellow cards issued to bench personnel during a game shall be charged against the head coach for the purposes of accumulation. <i>Note: During a game, a head coach is not penalized for cards given to assistants, but the totals after the game shall reflect the accumulation of all cards to the coaching staff.</i></p>

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<i>New</i>	Rationale: This will encourage head coaches to ensure that their assistants are behaving appropriately.
12.7.10, 12.7.11 & 12.7.12 (Ejections - Violent Behavior II, Fighting, Referee Assault)	<p>While these rules remain in place, the determination will now be made after the game by a committee of NCAA Soccer Officiating staff rather than be the referee on the field. The referee’s job will simply be to issue the red card and describe the incident. The committee will examine the report and video and decide if the criteria for Violent Behavior II, Fighting, or Referee Assault have been met.</p> <p>Rationale: This will lead to greater consistency and accuracy. Referees will no longer have to decide in the moment and will not have to go to video review to determine how to categorize an ejection.</p>
12.8 (Suspensions and Illegal Participation)	<p>The penalty for failure to serve a suspension will be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two game suspension for the individual; and • Two game suspension for the head coach. <p>Rationale: Encourages greater accountability and restores a team consequence for failure to serve a suspension.</p>
12.8.1 (Suspensions and Illegal Participation)	<p>Each ejection carries its own penalty, but additional games will not be added for each subsequent ejection beyond the first.</p> <p>Rationale: Eliminates a rule that was excessively punitive. Conference and institutions may still choose to impose penalties beyond the ones imposed by rule.</p>
12.9.5 (Serving a Suspension)	<p>Suspensions incurred prior to a regular season game against a non-divisional opponent cannot be served against a non-divisional opponent. These suspensions must be served in the next game against an opponent from the same division. Suspensions earned in games against non-divisional opponents will be served in the next regular season game. <i>Note: Applies to Division I men and women only.</i></p> <p>Rationale: Avoids games being scheduled against non-divisional opponents for the purposes of manipulating suspensions.</p>

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