



## 2026 and 2027 Divisions II and III Men’s and Women’s Soccer Rules Changes

*The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Divisions II and III Men’s and Women’s Soccer Rules and Divisions II and III Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rules changes are effective with the 2026 and 2027 seasons.*

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
<b>Rule 1</b>	
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>
<b>Rule 3</b>	
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>
<b>Rule 4</b>	
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>
<b>Rule 5</b>	
5.6.7 (The Referee – Discretionary Power)	<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> <p>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.</p>
5.7.1 (Video Review)	<p>Changes to Video Review procedures as follows:</p> <p>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>

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
	<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>
<p>5.7 (Video Review)</p>	<p>Permit the addition of the following offenses by the attacking team as reviewable play situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A foul prior to the scoring of a goal;</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Offside prior to the scoring of a goal.</li> </ul> <p>Rationale: Increases fairness and aligns with current practice under IFAB.</p>
<b>Rule 6</b>	
<p>6.3.5 (Timekeeper)</p>	<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>
<b>Rule 7</b>	
<p>7.8 (Inclement Weather Policy, Expiration of Time)</p>	<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>
<b>Rule 12</b>	
<p>12.3.1.1 (Goalkeeper Delay)</p>	<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>

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
<i>New</i>	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.
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"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Misconduct punishable by a caution takes place in the coaching or team area and the individual offender cannot be located.</li> </ul> <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)  <i>New</i>	<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> <p>Rationale: This will encourage head coaches to ensure that their assistants are behaving appropriately.</p>
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"> <li>• Two game suspension for the individual; and</li> <li>• Two game suspension for the head coach.</li> </ul> <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>