



NCAA Soccer Rules Questions and Interpretations
2026 Season, Volume 1
Rich Grady, Secretary-Rules Editor

This update includes issues addressed up to August 19, 2026. Additional video examples can be found on the NCAA Soccer Center Circle Central Hub on RQ+ in the 2026 NCAA Soccer Rules Questions and Interpretations Volume 1 document.

1. **Clarification on Video Review Possible Outcomes.** There has been some confusion about the meaning of Rule 5.7.3.7, which states that reviews for potential second cautions are not permitted. The rule was written during a time when all reviews were referee initiated, and the intent was to limit the scope of reviews to potential red cards and not review things like kicking the ball away or delaying the restart. Rule 5.7.3.3 (Violent Behavior) and Rule 5.7.3.8 (DOGSO/SPA) specifically permit the referee to review the entire scope of the play once it is challenged, with all options on the table, including:

- a. No foul or free kick;
- b. Free kick only (no misconduct);
- c. Caution; or
- d. Ejection.

Therefore, the same interpretation will apply to 5.7.3.7 (Straight Red Cards). When a play is challenged or reviewed under this parameter, the referee will be able to choose from the same four options above in arriving at a final decision. As always, indisputable video evidence is required to change the call on the field.

2. **Clarification on Access to Video on the Bench.** This topic was addressed in this year's Points of Emphasis and Volume 4 of Interpretations for the 2024 Season. The intent of those documents was about equality of access. The major concepts include:

- a. Each team is expected to provide their own technology (i.e., iPads, tablets, or laptops) for viewing video on the bench.
- b. Teams are responsible for securing their own access to the broadcast feed or livestream of the match unless the broadcast/streamed video is a pay-per-view platform with a specific conference or institution, in which case the host institution should provide free access to the stream for visiting team for the duration of the match.
- c. If the platform being used for video review is a non-publicly available feed (i.e., DVSPORT, Spideo, Veo, or Vogo, etc.), both teams should have access to the same video that the referee will use to make decisions. The referee should confirm prior to the game that both head coaches have access to all video that will be utilized for reviews. If the referee is not satisfied that both teams have equal access, the video available to the referee for reviews should be limited to what is available to both teams.

3. **Assistant Coach Behavior.** As noted in the preseason points of emphasis, assistant coaches should not be arguing calls.

4. **Offside.** Officials must remember to take an accurate mental snapshot of where the defenders are when the ball is played. The following questions must be answered:

- a. Was the attacker in an offside position when the ball was headed by their teammate? Yes.
- b. Was this a deliberate play by the defender under the meaning of Rule 11.3.3? No. The defender does not have time to set themselves, and the ball deflects off their head.

- c. Does the attacker in the offside position infringe Rule 11.2.1 by clearly interfering with an opponent by...
 - i. Preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by clearly obstruction the opponent's line of vision? No.
 - ii. Preventing an opponent from playing or being able to play the ball by challenging for the ball? No.
 - iii. Clearly attempting to play a ball which is close to an opponent when this action clearly impacts an opponent? No.
 - iv. Making an obvious action which clearly impacts on the ability of an opponent to play the ball. No.

The attacker in the offside position is not in the goalkeeper's line of sight. The goalkeeper is positioned near the front post and never makes a dive for the ball, which goes into the net last being touched by the defender. The goalkeeper never squares up to the attacker in the offside position indicating that they are preparing to defend against a touch by that attacker. The preferred outcome in this scenario is that the on-field decision of goal stands. If the on-field decision had been offside, the expectation is that the call would stand. In either case, the video evidence is not indisputable, so the on-field decision should stand. The fact that this review takes over 5 minutes is an indication that the video evidence is not indisputable. This highlights the importance of arriving at the correct decision prior to video review.

5. **New Substitution Rules.** It is important that everyone understand the new provisions of Rule 3.4.2. Teams are now permitted to substitute up to 11 players, without them having checked in prior to the clock stoppage, when the clock is stopped. The two most common misconceptions about this change are:
- a. Teams can sub on any stoppage. This is incorrect, other than for DI men, who may sub on any stoppage but have a limited number of moments to do so over the course of a game.
 - b. Teams can just send players into the game from the bench without checking in with the 4th official or the official scorer. This is incorrect. The rule permits teams to sub without checking in prior to the clock stoppage, but it does not free teams from the obligation to report to the nearest official or the official scorekeeper prior to being beckoned onto the field.