NCAA Soccer Rules Questions and Interpretations
2026 Season, Volume 5
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This update includes issues addressed up to October 30, 2026.

1. **Definition of Postseason Play.** Postseason play begins with conference tournaments that select the automatic qualifier for the NCAA tournament. Any postseason game that is tied at the end of regulation will proceed to overtime as detailed in #4 below.

2. **Importance of Proper Marking of the Team and Coaching Areas.** To aid in proper enforcement of bench decorum rules and to ensure that assistant referees have enough room to do their jobs properly, it is vital that fields be properly marked, with both a coaching area and a team area. The relevant sections of the rules are quoted here:
   - Rule 1.12.1 – "There shall be a coaching area marked parallel to the touchline and situated at least 5 feet from the touchline beginning at least 5 yards from the extension of the halfway line and extending 20 yards toward the corner flag on that end of the field. The coaching area shall have a depth of at least 5 feet."
   - Rule 1.12.2 – "There shall be a team bench area marked parallel to the touchline and beginning at least 5 yards from the extension of the halfway line and extending 20 yards. The line marking the back edge of the coaching area shall be considered the front edge of the team bench area."
   - In the absence of lines, cones shall be used to demarcate the boundaries of the coaching and team areas.
   - Examples of improperly marked coaching and team areas can be found at the end of this document.

3. **Postgame Interactions Between Coaches and Officials.** There have been multiple examples this season of coaches receiving red cards for postgame interactions with officials. It is vital for both coaches and officials that professionalism be maintained at all times. Coaches should not use the tradition of a postgame handshake as an excuse to berate or abuse officials. Officials, particularly after a contentious game, should try to be proactive and avoid these situations by not loitering near the bench areas or the center circle. Coaches can contact the conference assignor or the NCAA National Coordinator of Men's and Women's Soccer Officials (National Coordinator) to discuss the performance of officials. On the field after a game is not the time or place to engage in that critique.

4. **Card Accumulation and Suspensions.** Please see the following for a concise explanation of accumulation thresholds. If conferences or teams are in any doubt about a situation, they should contact the Secretary-Rules Editor immediately.

   a. **Regular season accumulated cautions (Rule 12.5):**
      - Five (5) cautions in one season = suspension from the next game, whether it is regular season, the first game of postseason, or the first game of the following season.
      - Three (3) additional cautions in one season (8 total) = suspension from the next regularly scheduled game.
      - Each two (2) additional cautions (10 total, 12 total, etc.) = suspension from the next regularly scheduled game.
      - Suspensions carry over to postseason (conference tournament/NCAA tournament)

and/or the next season if the team doesn't participate in postseason.

b. Postseason accumulated cautions (Rule 12.6). Note: Regular season caution accumulation carries into postseason (conference tournament/NCAA tournament):

1. Eight (8) cautions from regular and postseason combined = suspension from the next postseason game (or the first regularly scheduled game of the following season).
2. If a player enters postseason with four (4) or fewer cautions, they are not required to serve a suspension until they reach their 8th caution. Each two (2) additional cautions (10 total, 12 total, etc.) = suspension from the next postseason game (or the first regularly scheduled game of the following season).
3. Cautions do not carry an immediate ejection even if a threshold listed above is met during the game. Players are permitted to continue playing for the entirety of that game.
4. A second caution issued to a player in the same game results in a red card, which requires immediate ejection. Second cautions in the same game are not considered part of the caution accumulation.

c. Ejections.

- All red card ejections = immediate ejection and at least a one (1) game suspension.
- As has been the case during the regular season, the suspension length for all ejections for Violent Behavior will be determined by a committee consisting of the National Coordinator, the Secretary-Rules Editor, and one of the NCAA Officiating Advisors
- Two (2) red card ejections in the same season for violent behavior II, fighting or referee assault (or any combination) will result in suspension for the remainder of the season (Rule 12.8.4).
- All suspensions must be served during the next postseason game(s) or the first regularly scheduled game(s) of the following season.

5. Overtime Rules for Postseason.

a. There will be a maximum of two ten-minute sudden-victory overtime periods. Teams will change ends after the first overtime period. If a goal is scored, the game is over.
b. The clock will stop on all substitutions during overtime.
c. Players who are substituted during any overtime period may not return during that period unless one of the exceptions in Rule 3.7 applies.
d. For Division 1 Men Only: Teams will retain any unused substitution moments from regulation time. Each team will receive an additional moment for use during overtime. This is one moment for all of overtime, not one moment per overtime period.

6. Video Review in Overtime.

a. If teams have challenges remaining from regulation, those challenges must be used to initiate a video review in overtime.
b. If teams are out of challenges, the referee may initiate a review for any aspect of a play that would otherwise require a coach's challenge.
c. Video review cannot be used to issue cards for actions that are committed after the

conclusion of the game (whether via a sudden death goal or via penalty kicks). Such misconduct shall be evaluation and punished by the appropriate Governing Sports Authority. Referees retain the authority to issue cautions and ejections for anything that they personally observe without the use of video review.

7. Penalty Kick Tiebreakers.

a. Any non-ejected player on the roster may be selected to participate.
b. Teams must designate either: 10 kickers and a goalkeeper who will not kick, or 10 kickers including the goalkeeper. Note: This designation is the same regardless of how many ejections may have occurred during the game.
c. Once designated, the goalkeeper can only be replaced if injured or ejected. The replacement will be from any of the eligible players on the roster.
d. Unless there are weather or safety considerations, the choice of which goal to shoot at shall be by the toss of a coin.
e. Teams will only eliminate a kicker from the order if there is an ejection to the opponent during the tiebreaker
f. If the game is still tied after all 10 kickers from each team have participated, teams may change the order of kickers for the next set of kicks.
g. Video review may only be used to determine if the ball completely crossed the goal line. It may not be used to determine the legality of actions by the kicker or the goalkeeper.
h. All warnings and cautions given during regulation and overtime carry over to the tiebreaker.
i. Per Rule 14.2.4, the player taking the penalty kick is permitted to use a stutter step or a hesitation move, but may not come to a complete stop and must maintain continuous motion toward the ball.

Examples of Improperly Marked Coaching and Team Areas:








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