

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE  
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



## NEWS RELEASE

### Players to be Penalized in High School Soccer for Illegal Equipment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mark Koski

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 3, 2008) — Effective with the 2008–09 high school soccer season, players will be penalized (yellow card) for subsequent violations of illegal equipment rules.

A change in the penalty for illegally equipped players was one of three rules revisions approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Soccer Rules Committee at its annual meeting January 27–28 in Indianapolis. The rules changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The first caution (yellow card) for an illegally equipped player is issued to the coach, a rule that was implemented last year. Beginning next season, all subsequent cautions for illegally equipped players will be issued directly to the player and not to the coach. The coach is held responsible for ensuring that each of his or her players is properly and **legally** (new this year) equipped.

Both illegally and improperly equipped players will be instructed to leave the field of play at the discovery of illegal equipment. The removed player(s) who has not been cautioned may re-enter during a dead ball. A player(s) who has been cautioned

can only re-enter at the next legal substitution opportunity. There shall be no replacement for non-cautioned players until the next opportunity to substitute. In all situations, the removed player(s) may re-enter only after reporting to an official who shall be satisfied the player's equipment and uniform are in order.

The committee added definitions for "illegally equipped" and "improperly equipped" as well. An illegally equipped player is a player not wearing equipment required by rule or wearing an item or items not allowed by rule. An improperly equipped player is a player wearing legal equipment that is being worn incorrectly or becomes illegal during play. Cautions are not issued for improperly equipped players.

"In the past, the coach could be cautioned subsequent times in a single game for equipment violations," said Mark Koski, NFHS staff liaison to the Soccer Rules Committee and editor of the NFHS Soccer Rules Book. "The previous rule placed too much responsibility on the coaches when players should be shouldering some of the responsibility."

Beginning with the 2008-09 high school soccer season, shinguards must meet the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) standard. This risk-minimization rule was passed two years ago for implementation in 2007-08; however, the start-up was delayed one year to allow manufacturers another year to supply these types of shinguards to local equipment suppliers.

The new NOCSAE shinguards will be stamped or labeled with the NOCSAE logo. They will specify which size is correct for a particular-sized player, making it easy for players, coaches and officials to differentiate which shinguards are to be worn.

"This is a significant change as players no longer will be able to wear inappropriate, undersized shinguards," Koski said. "Shinguards need to be placed no

higher than two inches above the ankle for safety purposes. This change should definitely minimize risk to players.”

In another change, the issue of sportsmanship is to be addressed by the head referee during the pregame conference with the head coach and team captains. At this same meeting, the referee is to inquire of each head coach whether each of his or her players is properly and **legally** equipped.

Since many states play games on college or professional fields, the committee altered Rule 1-1-1 regarding the allowable width of fields. To allow for the use of other fields, the maximum width was expanded from 75 to 80 yards. The new recommendations are 100 to 120 yards long and 55 to 80 yards wide.

In addition to the emphasis on shinguards bearing the NOCSAE stamp of approval, other points of emphasis for the coming season are team benches, knee braces, game management, pregame responsibilities and handling.

With regard to game management, Koski said, “Host schools should develop a game management plan. Game managers should meet with the referees prior to the game and discuss the following matters, which include but are not limited to: field conditions, unusual situations, security, end-of-game procedures, game fees and officials’ area.”

“Regarding handling, a player shall be penalized for deliberately playing, carrying, striking or propelling the ball with hand or arm,” Koski said. “It is not handling if the ball makes contact with the hand in a natural position.”

Soccer is the fifth-most popular sport for boys and girls at the high school level. According to the 2006-07 High School Athletics Participation Survey, 377,999 boys are involved in soccer and 337,632 girls participate in the sport.

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### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 18,500 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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