

2018 High School Field Hockey Rules Changes Address Pace of Play, Substitution Rule

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[*field hockey article*](#)



Among the rules revisions in high school field hockey for 2018 are changes designed to increase the pace of play, and a new penalty for a team having too many players on the field.

These rules changes were among those recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Field Hockey Rules Committee at its January 10-12 meeting in Indianapolis. All rules changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

"The committee wasn't looking to make wholesale changes to the rule book, but instead examined the existing rules to make sure they reflected the current trends of the game," said Julie Cochran, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the NFHS Field Hockey Rules Committee. "The committee provided clarity for officials by redefining a dribble to include aerial dribbling, defined goalkeeper playing actions in and outside the 25-yard line, and established a penalty for a team having too many players on the field."

Rule 4-4-8 now states that too many players on the field is a violation of the substitution rule, and the committee approved two new penalties concerning the new rule.

If the violation is discovered immediately, the extra player(s) is removed. When the extra player(s) is discovered after a goal is scored, but before play has restarted, the goal will not count and the extra player(s) will be removed. In both scenarios, a misconduct penalty will be assessed to the head coach of the offending team using the card progression.

Increasing pace of play was the focus of Rule 9-1-3. A free hit within 5 yards of the circle now will be taken at the spot of the foul. Previously, the attack's free hit within 5 yards was taken on the broken line circle. The revision not only speeds up the game, but also keeps up with current trends in field hockey.

"Taking a free hit within 5 yards of the circle at the spot of the foul was one area that was identified in the NFHS annual questionnaire that coaches, officials and state association members were all in favor of changing," Cochran said. "The committee felt this change would increase the pace of play by allowing for faster restarts in the game."

A change in Rule 1-7-2 clarifies goalkeeper play outside the circle. At that time, the goalkeeper may only play the ball with her stick up to the 25-yard line she is defending, and may not play the ball past the 25-yard line unless she is taking a penalty stroke.

A revision to the definition of dribbling in Rule 3-3-9 allows a player to maintain possession of the ball while moving it with the stick either on the ground or in the air. Previously, the ball's movement was performed with a series of taps.

In other changes, the committee approved:

- Revisions which clarify that an extra player on the field is an ineligible player (3-1-6);
- An addition of language to ensure the timer is watching both officials on the field and is consistent with officials training as well as current trends of the sport (2-1-5); and
- Changes that clarify the playing actions of the goalkeeper. (1-7-1a-f)

A complete listing of the field hockey rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on "Activities & Sports" at the top of the home page and select "Field Hockey."

According to the 2016-17 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, field hockey has 60,549 girls participating in more than 1,700 schools nationwide. The total number of girls participating in the sport has increased by nearly 1,000 from the 2015-16 school year. In addition, there are four schools with as many as 87 boys participating in field hockey.