

High School Field Hockey Moves from Halves to Quarters in 2020 Season

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[field hockey article](#)

High school field hockey games will be played in four quarters instead of two halves beginning with the 2020 season.

This significant change was one of several rules revisions recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Field Hockey Rules Committee at its January 13-15 meeting in Indianapolis. All rules changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

“The NFHS Field Hockey Rules Committee continues to strive to find ways to improve the ease and use of the rules for officials and coaches, which is evident in many of the changes made for the 2020 field hockey season,” said Julie Cochran, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the NFHS Field Hockey Rules Committee.

The rules committee's change moves the game to four 15-minute periods from two 30-minute halves. The committee believes this will allow teams to maximize their play for the entire match. Set stoppage times of two minutes between the first and second quarters – as well as between the third and fourth quarters – will provide student-athletes breaks for rest, hydration and strategizing. The length of halftime is set for 10 minutes, with teams changing goals.

“I think the shift to quarters is going to be interesting,” said Sherry Bryant, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) associate director and chair of the NFHS Field Hockey Rules Committee. “From an educational athletics point of view, a standardized break between quarters to address health and safety of athletes provides consistent opportunity for coaching, all while enhancing the excitement and flow of the game. It seems like a true win-win scenario.”

Changes to the sport's period lengths primarily affect Rule 4-1-1; however, they also impact Rules 5-1-1, 5-1-2 and 5-2-2. To be specific, the rules now detail the start of a game with a center pass and the restart of play by a center pass following each goal by a player of the team not scoring.

As a result of the change in periods, the committee removed language pertaining to the starting and stopping of the game clock. Consequently, the sport no longer features time-outs. Rule 4-2-3 previously stated each team is permitted two 90-second time-outs per game. With the change to four quarters, teams now have guaranteed breaks for rest, hydration and coaching opportunities.

Cochran added that the rules committee adjusted team time-outs in an effort to keep the game fluid with the guaranteed stoppage of play now between quarters.

The rules committee also made significant changes that clarify the intent of penalties found as part of Rule 12-1. The committee also added definitions of cards related to coaches' conduct.

Previously, Rule 12-1 PENALTIES consisted of six items and a note. It has been reduced from six penalties to three penalties, including the removal of definitions for each offense.

Rule 12-1 PENALTY 1 has been expanded to clarify when a penalty card is issued, and it also defines green, yellow and red cards. The newly adopted third penalty details restarting play when a foul is called prior to clock stoppage, when the ball goes out of bounds, and if no foul is called prior to clock stoppage.

An overhaul of the player uniform rule – Rule 1-5-1 through 1-5-8 – was also notable. Changes carried out by the committee reorganized the uniform rule and provided further clarity with the addition of language regarding uniform bottoms.

Changes to the player uniform rule reflect recent changes in high school volleyball rules. In field hockey, players are permitted to wear a single-colored short or long-sleeved shirt. If worn, home-team undershirts must be white. The visiting team's undershirt must match the color of the jersey or be black or a dark color. All players who choose to wear an undershirt must wear the same color as her teammates.

Other uniform rules changes include like-colored uniform bottoms, which include styles such as shorts, skirts, kilts or pants, provided shin guards are visible. The home team must wear solid, knee-length white socks/sock guards, while the visiting team must have a dark, contrasting color. The committee's actions also included defining the use of player numbers, which also must be a solid, contrasting color and feature no more than two digits (00-99).

Another rules change for 2020 introduces the definition of shadowing to the rules. Shadowing is the act of being within playing distance of an opponent and following the player's movement on the field without impeding progress. The new rule, Rule 3-3-9, is found among definitions of techniques within the rules book.

The final change, Rule 10-3-2, specifies that the criteria for completion of a penalty corner during extended play will mirror the procedures for ending a penalty corner during regulation play.

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 2018-19 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, field hockey has 60,824 girls participating in more than 1,700 schools nationwide.