

## **MHSA Soccer Study Club Topics 2025 Season**

Thirteen soccer study clubs are provided. Except for Topic #1, they do not have to be used in the order in which they appear in this handout. Pools should select the topics that are most relevant to their area at any given time.

### **Table of Contents**

1. Starting the Season with Current Information
  - A. 2025 NFHS Rules Changes
  - B. 2025 NFHS Points of Emphasis
  - B. 2025 NFHS Rule Interpretations
  - C. 2025 MHSA Handbook Update
2. Concussion Management
3. Officials' Exit Strategy
4. Game Reports
5. Procedures for Addressing Player Equipment
6. Dual Referee Mechanic
7. Fourth Official Responsibilities
8. Rules Comparison: NFHS/NCAA/FIFA
9. Evaluating Knowledge of the Game (Rules Exam)
10. Safety
11. Procedures for Postseason Play

Resources and Items of Interest

## **Topic 1: Current Information**

### ***Background***

This year's NFHS Soccer Rules Book several changes as listed below. Also, concussion management and other safety issues continue to be points of emphasis.

### ***Activity – Part A – 2025 NFHS Soccer Rule Changes***

**3-3-1,2,3,2c (NEW):** Removes redundant language and permits substitutions during a temporarily suspended game.

**Rationale:** Eliminates redundant language and allows substitutions during a temporarily suspended game. In hot weather, state associations often authorize stoppages within a half for water breaks. Under this change, teams would now be permitted to make substitutions during these stoppages.

**3-3-2b(2):** Clarifies that an injured player must leave the field if the referee beckons a coach or appropriate health-care provider.

**Rationale:** The rules change clarifies the current rule that if an official beckons a coach or appropriate health-care provider for any injured player, including the goalkeeper, that player must leave the field regardless of the reason the clock is stopped.

**4-1-2:** Clarifies that a number is required on the front of the jersey and/or the shorts.

**Rationale:** This language supports the rule prior to the reorganization of Rule 4 and adds clarification to the overall interpretation to clarify that a number is required on the front of the uniform which may be on the jersey and/or the shorts.

**7-2-4 (NEW):** Prohibits a coach or team personnel other than the team captain from speaking with a referee during interval between periods, unless beckoned by a referee.

**Rationale:** The time between periods of play is designated for rest for all participants, not for engaging with officials. This rule change introduces specific language and penalties for coaches who confront officials during these intervals, aiming to reduce unnecessary disputes and maintain a respectful game environment.

**12-4-4:** A misconduct penalty may be given to the head coach if team or bench misconduct occurs.

**Rationale:** To encourage and support sporting and positive bench decorum, the rule change reinforces the head coach's responsibility for the conduct of their team and bench personnel within the team area. It provides officials with additional tools, allowing them to warn, caution, or eject the head coach if any bench personnel engage in misconduct.

**Rule 18:** Elimination of Rule 18. Incorporating the definitions into their corresponding rules while expanding the index to serve as a quick reference tool to streamline the rules, improve clarity, remove unnecessary duplication and eliminate conflicting definitions.

**Rationale:** This change relocates definitions into their corresponding rules, streamlining the rules book by reducing redundancies and contradictions. The expanded index at the back of the book continues to serve as a helpful quick reference tool, while definitions were updated and aligned in context with appropriate rules.

### **2025-26 Editorial Changes**

3-3-2b(5), 3-3-3b(4), 3-3-3c(2), 3-3-3d(3), 3-3-7 4-1-1c, 4-1 Notes, 5-1-2, 13-1-5

## ***Activity – Part B – 2025 NFHS Soccer Points of Emphasis***

### **EDUCATION BASED HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS**

High school athletics play a vital role in the overall growth of student-athletes, providing opportunities to develop physically, mentally, and emotionally. Soccer serves as a platform for building essential life skills such as teamwork, discipline, leadership, and resilience. Coaching priorities focus on fundamental skills, strategic gameplay, and decision-making while instilling respect for opponents, officials, and teammates. As the game evolves, a strong understanding and application of the rules are essential to maintaining fair and safe competition, making rule education a key responsibility for players, coaches, and officials.

A well-rounded high school soccer program should emphasize both athletic and academic development, reinforcing the importance of discipline, time management, and perseverance. Education-based athletics prepare students not only for success in sports but also for their future endeavors by teaching valuable life lessons through competition. Schools, coaches, and administrators must work together to ensure that high school soccer fosters growth, responsibility, and leadership, creating a positive experience that supports student success both on and off the field.

### **COURAGE, CHARACTER AND CONSISTENCY**

Courage, character, and consistency are essential qualities for any soccer official. These qualities encourage the game to be managed fairly, effectively, and with integrity. Officials must have the courage to make difficult decisions, calling fouls equally for both teams without fear of backlash from players, coaches, or spectators. This courage extends to maintaining authority on the field, recognizing and firmly addressing any attempts to challenge their control or interfere with the game. Character is reflected in professionalism and the official's personality they incorporate into their management philosophy, fostering cooperation and mutual support within the officiating team. By maintaining composure and a focused attitude, officials uphold the integrity of the game, ensuring their decisions are based on the rules within the spirit of the game, rather than external pressures or emotions.

Consistency ties these attributes together, ensuring officials apply the rules uniformly and fairly throughout the game. Players and coaches expect predictability from officials in decision-making, which reinforces trust in the official's authority. An official who applies the rules consistently, while managing interactions with confidence and conviction, fosters a controlled and respectful environment. An official who successfully combines these attributes bolsters acceptance when managing dissent and conflicts, while emphasizing calmness, direct communication, and resolution without unnecessary escalation. Ultimately, courage, character, and consistency define an official's ability to manage the game effectively, uphold fairness, and maintain order, ensuring a positive experience for all participants.

### **TEAM AREAS and BENCH DECORUM**

Effective communication is essential for officials in maintaining control over the match, particularly when dealing with bench decorum and sportsmanship. An official's role is to keep the game safe, fair, and fun, which requires adapting to the level of play and responding to game situations as they develop. High school soccer is an extension of the classroom, meaning officials must uphold the highest standards of professionalism, composure, and integrity. By setting a respectful tone, referees can prevent escalation and unnecessary conflict. Recognizing and addressing dissent early is crucial—while emotional reactions can be ignored, public, provocative, or persistent complaints must be dealt with decisively.

Coaches and bench personnel set the tone for their teams, and poor behavior can spread if not managed properly. In education-based athletics, adult leaders must be champions of

character. Bench decorum must be actively monitored, as unchecked misconduct from the team area can quickly influence players and spectators. The head coach has an obligation to manage their team's behavior. A firm but fair approach ensures that the game remains under control while demonstrating respect for all participants. Officials have tools to warn coaches and must take action to sanction misconduct when it occurs. Ultimately, head coaches are responsible for their team area, including assistant coaches and substitutes, and must be held accountable for any misconduct occurring within it.

### **Player Equipment (Shinguards)**

Ensuring student-athlete safety is a top priority, and proper equipment plays a key role in maintaining a safe and fair playing environment. NFHS Rule 4 provides clear guidelines on required player equipment, including shinguards, which are essential for protecting athletes during competition. Given that high school players are still in their developmental stages, shinguards must be age- and size-appropriate, meeting NOCSAE safety standards. Each shinguard must display the NOCSAE seal, permanently marked on the front, indicating the approved height range for that model.

While coaches are responsible for ensuring their players are properly equipped before the game, officials take a proactive approach by observing warm-ups to identify any potential concerns. Rather than conducting formal equipment checks, referees use preventive officiating by maintaining awareness during pregame activities and addressing any noticeable issues. If a player's shinguards appear inadequately sized, officials should engage with the coach in a professional and approachable manner to confirm compliance.

By prioritizing communication and proactive observation, officials help reinforce safety standards while allowing players to focus on the game. A consistent and safety-conscious approach ensures that every student-athlete competes with the necessary protective equipment, contributing to a positive and well-regulated match experience.

### ***Activity – Part C – 2025 NFHS Soccer Rules Interpretations***

**SITUATION 1:** Player A uses a deliberate verbal tactic to gain possession of the ball by confusing their opponent. The referee stops play and cautions Player A who committed misconduct (unsporting conduct 12-5-1g). The referee awards an indirect free kick to the opposing team from where Player A committed the offense. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** If play is stopped because a player commits misconduct, but a foul is not associated with the misconduct, then an indirect free kick is awarded and taken from the point of infraction. If foul accompanies the misconduct, then the foul's restart takes precedence. (12-5-1g, 13-2-2k)

**SITUATION 2:** Legal home jersey or illegal home jersey?

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



**RULING:** (a) Illegal, (b) illegal, (c) illegal, (d) legal. **COMMENT:** The home team shall wear dark jerseys, and dark is defined as any color which contrasts with white. (4-1-2)

**SITUATION 3:** Legal visitor's or illegal visitor's jersey?

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



**RULING:** (a) Illegal, (b) illegal, (c) illegal, (d) illegal. **COMMENT:** The visiting team jersey shall be solid white. (4-1-2)

**SITUATION 4:** While the ball is in play, Player A4 (a) standing in line with their penalty area off the field (next to the goal) punches B1, who is also standing off the field; (b) punches a person on the bench in front of the opponent's bench. The referee stops play, ejects player A4 and awards a (a) penalty kick (b) direct free kick from the point of the infraction. **RULING:** Correct

procedure. **COMMENT:** If an active player commits an offense against an opposing player outside of the field of play, the direct free kick is taken on the field closest to the point of the infraction. (12-1-9, 12-6-1, 13-1-2, 13-2-1)

**SITUATION 5:** Attacker B2 is dribbling along the end line and pushes the ball past A4 and steps off the field to go around A4. While off the field, Player A3 steps off the field as well and impedes B2, denying B2 the ability to get back onto the field of play. The referee stops play, awards an indirect free kick from the point of the infraction. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** If an active player impedes an opposing player outside of the field of play, the indirect free kick is taken on the field near the boundary line closest to the point of the infraction. (12-3-4, 13-2-2)

**SITUATION 6:** Team A is awarded a direct free kick. The referee delays the restart for an injury, requiring a second whistle before the ball may be put into play. Before the referee whistles for the restart, Player A2 kicks the ball. **RULING:** Illegal. Play shall be restarted by a second whistle. **COMMENT:** A2 may be warned or cautioned for their actions which may constitute unsporting conduct. Regardless of any subsequent actions, the ball was not legally put into play, and the game must be restarted with the original restart: a direct free kick for Team A. (9-1-3)

**Activity- Part D** - Listed below are key sections of the MHSA Handbook for soccer season:

**Soccer goal differential language for**

- Class AA When a team is winning by:
  - 8 goals, they will reduce their number of players playing from 11 to 10.
  - 9 goals, they will reduce their number of players playing from 10 to 9.
  - 10 goals, the contest ends.
  - If at any time the goal deficit decreases, then the winning team may put a player back into the game for the 2021-22 season.
  
- Class A When a team is winning by:
  - 10 goals, the contest ends

**Behavior improvement plan:**

All member schools with soccer programs are subject to the Soccer Behavior Improvement Plan. The objectives of the plan are listed on this slide:

- To improve the overall soccer experience for players, coaches and fans.
- To reduce the incidents of negative behavior and the number of cards issued for unsporting behavior.
- To ensure that all MHSA activity participants and coaches are held to similar standards of conduct, specifically in terms of sportsmanship.

This year, we are making a major change to the BIP – with the main focus of the plan to address behavior fouls and issues – not all yellow cards.

The previous rule stated - Any student or coach who receives three yellow cards in three separate games for any reason (except for a coach who receives a card for an illegally equipped player) will serve a one-game suspension. This year component of the BIP reduces the yellow cards from 3 to 2 but focuses on the “behavior” yellow cards. This will state:

- Two (2) yellow cards in two separate games to any one player or coach for any of the following 12-8 yellow cards misconduct will result in a 1 game suspension for player or coach that is caution accordingly. These are the yellow cards that are currently considered to go against your overall team card count
  - Dissent [(12-5-1c) yellow]
  - Attention seeking/taunting [12-5-1f-11 (yellow)]

Officials should include all cards on their reports again this season. This rule will remain the same for players and coaches regarding red cards.

(b) One red card in a game to any one player or coach for any of the following 12-8 misconduct sending off will result in a 1 game suspension (in addition to loss of playing time in the game from which they are ejected).

- Inappropriate or offensive language/gestures [12-8-1d and 12-8-2f (red)]
- Attention seeking/taunting [12-6-1-e1 (red)]
- Violent conduct [12-6-1i (red)]
- SFP Leaving Biting or spitting at someone [12-6-1g (red)]
- SFP Leaving the team area to enter the field during a fight[12-6-1h (red)]

Cards will clear at the end of regular season play. A separate accumulation of two cards will apply to post-season.

This remaining part of the rule will remain the same rule will remain the same as in the past:

- Accumulation of cards in a single game – four or more cards in any one game will result in an MHSA review of the game.
- Accumulation of cards in a particular program – ten or more of the cards (identified above as behavioral yellow and all red) in any program (for a single gender) will result in a one-game suspension for the head coach.
- Cards will clear at the end of regular season play. A separate accumulation of two cards will apply to post-season.
- Any player who is issued 2 yellow cards in one game or a straight red card in a game is disqualified from further play in the match and cannot be replaced.

## **Topic 2: Concussion Management**

In April 2013, the Montana Legislature passed the Dylan Steigers Protection of Youth Athletes Act. Review the current MHSA Rules and Regulations regarding concussion/serious injury:

### **Section (4) CONCUSSIONS/SERIOUS INJURY REQUIREMENTS AND RETURN TO PLAY**

#### **A. Return to Play:**

In accordance with the Dylan Steigers Protection of Youth Athletes Act, an athletic trainer, coach, or official shall remove a youth athlete from participation in any organized youth athletic activity at the time the youth exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion. The youth cannot return to play until he/she is evaluated by a licensed health care professional and receives written clearance to return to play from the licensed health care professional.

In addition, the MHSA also requires that an athletic trainer, coach, or official shall remove a student-athlete from participation in any MHSA activity at the time the student exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a serious injury. The student cannot return to play until he/she is evaluated by a licensed health care professional and is cleared by a licensed health care professional, although written clearance is not required for serious injury other than concussion unless mandated by the local school district.

#### **B. MHSA Policy in Accordance with State Legislation:**

Each (high) school district in this state offering organized youth athletic activities shall adopt policies and procedures to inform athletic trainers, coaches, officials, youth athletes and parents or guardians of the nature and risk of brain injuries, including the effects of continuing to play after a concussion.

(Sections C and D pertain to schools)

E. Officials Education and Awareness:

Each MOA or non-MOA official who works MHSA contests must take the NFHS Concussion in Sports course each year. That course must be taken after June 1<sup>st</sup> for the subsequent school year and must be completed before officiating scrimmages or contests. Schools using non-MOA officials for sub varsity games must verify those officials have completed training.

Review the language in **Substitutions, Rule 3, Section 3.**

It is the officials' responsibility to monitor play and to observe players and situations for safety and fair competition.

It is not the officials' responsibility to diagnose concussions. Officials who observe possible injuries or health-related concerns should stop play and tell the coach to evaluate the player.

Review the information presented in the rules clinic:

**Officials, coaches and administrators are being asked to make all efforts to ensure the safety of athletes who participate in MHSA activities. In regard to players experiencing possible concussions or other serious injuries during MHSA contests or practices, the following procedures will be implemented:**

**Officials' Responsibilities:**

- Officials must complete the online *Concussion in Sport* course.
- Officials are asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors of a concussion and other possible serious injuries. If there is a player that exhibits signs and symptoms of an injury/serious illness, officials will make coaches aware of the injured player and call an injury time out.
- The official should notify the coach by making the following statement:
  - *“Coach, you need to take a look at this player; he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an injury.”*
- Once the official notifies the coach, it is now the coach's responsibility.
- The official does not need to view written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional. These responsibilities belong to the coach.
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.

**Concussion Resource Information**

Various information and resources are available on the MHSA website. Visit [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org) and proceed to the Sports Medicine page from the link on the home page.

## Topic 3: Officials' Exit Strategy

### **Background**

NFHS Soccer Rule 5-1-2 outline the officials' jurisdiction.

### **Activity**

Review the sample plan below. Establish a specific timeline for your local pool, then follow-up by having your pool coordinator communicate the plan to the local administrators. Variations might occur for weather, levels of play (varsity, jv, freshman), emergencies etc.

Minute	Activity
>60	Field prepped, goals/flags in place, lines drawn clearly, benches out
-60 to -50	Teams and officials arrive and begin warming up
-50 to -40	Officials inspect field & meet with school administrator to discuss crowd control, emergency plans, game exit plan, sign for checks etc.
-40 to -25	Officials conduct pre-game instruction/review
-25	Officials greet visiting coach, exchange rosters
- 20	Officials greet home coach, get game balls, exchange roster & meet/instruct ball handlers
-10	Captains and coaches meet with officials to review rules, inquire about equipment, conduct coin toss & conduct sportsmanship talk
-5	National Anthem or pledge of allegiance (optional)
-3	Introductions of visitors and home
-1	Officials and players take the field
<b>Kick Off</b>	AR even with 2 <sup>nd</sup> to last defender, bench personnel seated or pinnies, balls in bags
<b>Halftime</b>	Officials meet at center circle, leave field as a team. Discuss game issues
<b>Kick Off</b>	AR even with 2 <sup>nd</sup> to last defender, bench personnel seated or pinnies, balls in bags
<b>Game Ends</b>	Officials meet at center circle, leave field as a team. Go to neutral spot and do not engage in a postgame handshake with teams. Confirm scores, cautions issued. Leave field complex as a team (when possible)
<b>W/in 24 hrs</b>	Referee send report to MHSA of cards or issues ( <b>cc to home/away school administrator</b> )

### **Exiting the Field**

- Discuss as a pool what things should be considered when developing an exit plan for each field.
- Examine each field where varsity and sub varsity games will be held in your area. Look for natural exit paths that would avoid contact with bench or fans.
- Develop routes and plans for each area and suggest to pool members that they follow the agreed upon route and procedure.

- Have referee bags located in a “neutral area” perhaps in cars parked away from the fan parking area.
- If 4<sup>th</sup> officials are used, delegate responsibility to the 4<sup>th</sup> to gather referee gear and meet up with the team at the predetermined location.
- Discuss how you will handle exceptions to the plan (like 2 games back to back where some members of the officiating team need to remain to work the next game and others need to leave.)
- Inform the site administrators of your plan and get input from them. Your plan should have the officials meeting at mid field and leaving directly from there, avoiding the request for a postgame handshake with the players. Ask the site administrator to inform both benches that you will not be available after the match.

## Topic 4: Game Reports

### **Background**

The Soccer Behavior Improvement Plan adopted by the MHSА Executive Board is in effect. This study club is designated as rules review and discussion of reporting relevant items to MHSА/MOА.

### **Activity**

1. Review NFHS Rule 12, Section 8 – Misconduct found on pages 58-65 of the NFHS rules book. Officials are asked to discuss best practices and strategies for applying the rules of the game consistently, particularly those rules involving good sporting behavior.
2. As a group, discuss the requirements for game reports to be submitted to the MHSА/MOА.
  - a. **An Electronic form has been developed – please submit your game reports electronically this year.** Brian Michelotti is the MHSА contact listed on the bottom of the form). [Click Here](#) for a link to the electronic game report.
  - b. **The report will be sent to Brian Michelotti and automatically to the home and away school administrator.**

All cards and unusual situations must be reported to the MHSА office, including but not limited to:

- **All yellow cards** (please include the specific rule reference of the misconduct). Even though the BIP has been changed to track Behavioral Yellow cards, we still would like all cards reported.
- **All red cards** (please include the specific rule reference of the misconduct). Red Cards need to be reported to the MHSА office as soon as possible.
- Any improper or illegal uniform situations (refer to study club #4)
- Any game situation in which a field barrier was not apparent
- Any unusual situation about which the MHSА/MOА should be aware

### MHSА Soccer Behavior Improvement Plan

Last Revised: June 2023

The MHSА Executive Board has implemented the following additional administrative penalties for soccer. These penalties are in addition to the ejection penalties as outlined in the MHSА By-Laws, Article VIII, Section (2) General Penalties and do not contradict the published NFHS Soccer Rules.

<b>Component 1:</b> <b><u>Cards per Individual</u></b>	<p>Two (2) yellow cards in two separate games to any one player or coach for any of the following 12-8 yellow cards misconduct will result in a 1 game suspension for player or coach that is caution accordingly. These are the yellow cards that are currently considered “team cards:”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dissent [(12-8-1c) yellow]</li><li>• Attention seeking/taunting [12-8-1f-12 (yellow)]</li></ul> <p><b><u>Interpretations:</u></b></p> <p><b><i>If an individual who already has one yellow cards receives two <u>more</u> yellow cards in a single game, he/she will serve a one-game suspension, which will clear only two of the three cards. The third yellow remains as part of the active card count for that individual.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Following the first suspension, <u>two</u> yellow cards in <u>two</u> separate games for behavioral yellow cards reason (except for a coach who receives a card for an illegally equipped player) will serve a one-game suspension for that individual.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Individual yellow cards during the regular season will not carry into the post season. However, if a penalty is incurred during the last regular season game, that penalty must be served in the post season.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>In post season play, any student or coach who receives <u>two</u> yellow cards in <u>two</u> separate games for any reason (except for a coach who receives a card for an illegally equipped player) will serve a one-game suspension.</i></b></p>
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<b>Rationale:</b>	This provides a means of addressing the major behavioral cards given to individual students or coaches.
<b>Definition of a one-game suspension:</b>	<p>A student (coach) who plays (coaches) only sub-varsity soccer will serve a one-game suspension at the sub-varsity level.</p> <p>A student (coach) who plays (coaches) sub-varsity and varsity soccer will serve a one-game suspension at both the sub-varsity and varsity level, regardless of the level of play at which the yellow cards were issued.</p> <p>A student (coach) who plays (coaches) only varsity soccer will serve a one-game suspension at the varsity level and may not participate in a sub-varsity contest in any way until the varsity suspension is served.</p>

<b>Component 2: <u>Cards per Program by Gender</u></b>	<p>If any program (gender) accumulates ten cards for any of the following violations the head coach will serve a one-game suspension at the varsity level. The specific violations include any of the following under NFHS Soccer Rules, 12-8 Misconduct:</p> <p>Dissent [12-8-1c (yellow)]          Inappropriate or offensive language/gestures [12-8-1d (yellow) and 12-8-2f (red)]          Attention seeking/taunting [12-8-1f-12 (yellow) and 12-8-2b (red)]          Violent conduct [12-8-2a (red)]          Spitting [12-8-2e (red)]          Fighting [12-8-2g (red)]</p>
<b>Rationale:</b>	This penalty provides a means of addressing systemic issues within an entire program. This penalty makes the head coach accountable for behavior, regardless of the individuals who are receiving cards. In addition, it ensures that the administration is informed of violations that are largely preventable and often times have little to do with playing rules.
<b>Definition of a one-game suspension:</b>	The head coach will serve a one-game suspension at the varsity level and may not assist in a sub-varsity contest in any way until the varsity suspension is served.

<b>Component 3: <u>Cards per Game</u></b>	If in any single game four or more yellow and/or red cards are issued to the students and/or coaches of one team for any reason (except for a coach who receives a card for an illegally equipped player), the school will be required to respond in writing to the game report submitted by the official. The reports will be reviewed by the Executive Director and the school(s) will be subject to penalty at the Executive Director's discretion.
<b>Rationale:</b>	This component provides a means of addressing those game situations in which regard for behavior becomes secondary to regard for winning. While unusual, there have been games in which one team has accumulated four or more cards that are issued because of behavior or playing rule violations.

<b>Component 4: <u>Sideline Barriers</u></b>	Rules and Regulations, Section (34) Crowd Control, item L requires that schools erect sideline barriers for soccer fields during all contests. Unless soccer contests are conducted in stadiums, soccer field barriers must be placed at least fifteen (15) feet from the touchline on the spectator side. If the facility layout or structure does not allow for the minimum fifteen feet, the maximum possible distance will be used. A painted line on the grass is not an acceptable barrier for this purpose.
<b>Rationale:</b>	In consideration of spectator behavior as well as safety of the assistant referee, a standard minimum distance between the field and the spectators should be consistent for all high school contests (whenever feasible).

<b>Component 5: <u>MOA Commissioner Action</u></b>	The MOA Commissioner will develop mandates for officials in enforcing the NFHS soccer rules and adhering to the tenets of high school participation. This includes emphasis on the published rules, as well as focusing on participation and sportsmanship as essential components of school-sponsored competition. Certain behaviors that are considered inappropriate in high school activities will be prohibited, i.e. officials, coaches and/or students addressing one another by first name while on the field of play.
<b>Rationale:</b>	Reinforcement of the education-based message is key to the success of the previous components.

## **Topic 5: Procedures for Addressing Player Equipment**

### ***Background1***

Equipment and uniform issues are ongoing, as evidenced by the number of major editorial changes that refer to uniforms. This was a study club in previous years, but a review is certainly in order, especially if your pool has new officials.

### ***Activity***

Review the applicable rules for player equipment, coaches' responsibilities, and the role of the official.

#### **Rule 4-1 Required Equipment (page 24 of the NFHS rules book)**

**Section 1, Articles 1 & 5 . . .** The required player equipment includes a jersey, shorts, socks, suitable shoes and shinguards. The shinguards shall provide adequate and reasonable protection, be professionally manufactured, age- and size-appropriate, not altered to decrease protection, worn under the socks, and are worn with the bottom edge no higher than 2 inches above the ankle. (see illustrations regarding shinguards). Shinguards must meet the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) specifications. The NOCSAE seal and height range shall be permanently marked on the front of the shinguard. Equipment shall not be modified from its original manufactured state and shall be worn in the manner the manufacturer intended it to be worn. It is also recommended that male players wear a supporter and protective cup.

#### **Rule 4-4 Coaches' Responsibilities (pages 28 of the NFHS rules book)**

Each head coach shall be responsible for ensuring that each of his/her players is **properly** and **legally** equipped.

##### Illegally Equipped Players (4-4-2 page 28)

The head coach shall receive the first caution issued (yellow card) for an illegally equipped player. All subsequent cautions (yellow cards) for illegally equipped player(s) shall be issued directly to the player(s) and not to the head coach. Illegally equipped player(s) shall be instructed to leave the field of play when the ball next ceases to be in play. Play shall not be stopped for an infringement of this rule except that the referee may stop play immediately where there is a dangerous situation. The player(s) must be removed and may be replaced at the time of the caution to the coach or player(s). The removed player(s) may re-enter at the next legal substitution opportunity only after reporting to an official who shall be satisfied the player's equipment and uniform are in order.

##### Improperly Equipped Players (4-4-3 page 28)

**Cautions will not be issued for improperly equipped player(s). If not immediately correctable, improperly equipped player(s) shall be instructed to leave the field of play when the ball next ceases to be in play. The player(s) may be replaced. The removed player(s), if not replaced, may re-enter at the next dead ball only after reporting to an official, who shall be satisfied the player's equipment and uniform are in order. Play shall not be stopped for an infringement of this rule except that the referee may stop play immediately where there is a dangerous situation.**

#### **Rule 3-1-3 Players and Substitutions (pages 16-22 of the NFHS rules book)**

Each team shall submit a team roster, containing the names and numbers of all players, and substitutes, all bench personnel and coaches to the officials at least five minutes prior to the start of the contest. The game shall not begin until this is complete. Players, substitutes, numbers, bench personnel and coaches may be added to the roster after the start of play. Goalkeepers may have two numbers listed on the roster, a goalkeeper's number and a field player's number.



## **Topic 6: Dual Referee Mechanic**

### ***Background***

The two referee (DUAL) mechanic continues to be used throughout the country at the high school and collegiate level.

Although Montana has adopted the diagonal system of soccer officiating, MOA Rules and Regulations allow for the use of the dual mechanic, provided the following conditions are met:

- 1. The dual mechanic is used ONLY for sub-varsity contests.**
2. The dual mechanic is used ONLY after every attempt has been made to assign three officials or in the event that an official does not show up for a particular contest.
3. There is no gender-bias in assignment of the dual mechanic. Dual mechanic usage must be comparable between boys and girls contests.
4. If one of the three assigned officials have not arrived or is injured at varsity game time, MHSA may provide a variance for varsity games, provided permission is obtained PRIOR to the contest. The event manager/AD must contact Greta Buehler to obtain permission.

Greta Buehler [406-690-0714] or Amy Bartels [406-250-9714].

**No varsity game may use fewer than three officials without prior authorization.**

### ***Activity***

It is imperative that each official not only familiarize himself or herself with the Dual Mechanic (pages 50-60 of the Officials Manual) but also practice this mechanic in a scrimmage setting. This approach will help insure proper use of the system if circumstances require its use.

Each referee functions as a "lead" or "trail" referee, depending on the situation. In addition to calling fouls/misconduct, the 2 referees must also cover all boundaries normally handled by Assistant Referees and be positioned to observe and penalize offside violations.

Have the pool discuss placement and responsibilities of Lead and Trail at various situations including:

1. Start of match
2. Goal Kick
3. Corner Kick
4. Penalty Kick
5. Offside
6. Substitutions
7. Goals
8. Throw-ins
9. End of period

Following this study club, work with local high schools to schedule some practice scrimmages (only one school can be involved in scrimmage situations). Have the entire pool attend the scrimmages and take turns functioning in the dual mechanic. Critique each other.

## **Topic 7: Fourth Officials**

### ***Background***

In Montana, not all officials' pools are large enough to have the opportunity to use fourth officials (or perhaps not on a regular basis). As a result, when the opportunity to use a fourth does arise, not everyone has had enough experience to execute the fourth official's duties.

### ***Activity***

A sample list of fourth officials' duties has been added to the NFHS Soccer Officials Manual. Review the duties as a pool. Even if you rarely use fourth officials, those duties are part of many post season contests, so this study club presents an occasion for discussion of that role.

Refer to pages 84-85 of the current Officials Manual.

## **Topic 8: Rules Comparison: NFHS/NCAA/IFAB**

### ***Background***

Many officials work a variety of levels throughout the year. With so many teams to cover, it's not unforeseeable that mistakes can occur when moving from one level to another.

### ***Activity***

Review the rules comparison of NFHS and NCAA Rules and IFAB Rules.

## **Topic 9: Evaluating Knowledge of the Game (Rules Exam)**

### ***Background***

Most officials work in a variety of rules' venues: club, high school and college. Use a study club opportunity to review the rules that are specific to high school.

### ***Activity***

Take the following NFHS Soccer Rules Exam Part I. Discuss the significant rules differences among club, high school and collegiate rules.

Place an emphasis on the use of signals. The use of signals is mandatory.

## **Topic 10: Safety**

### ***Background***

Aside from winning and losing, the coaches, players and parents all hope for the same outcome: a safe and healthy game experience. The officials play a significant role in achieving that outcome.

### ***Activity***

1. Refer to page 17 of the Officials Manual for the pregame Responsibilities of the Officials. Being familiar with the field of play and its surrounding areas is one of the most important ways to ensure safety.
2. Weather: You know the saying about Montana weather. The high school soccer season will begin with temperatures in the 90's and end in the 40's (hopefully no lower!). Officials need to be cognizant of weather factors that affect the field of play, the players, and the officials themselves. Discuss ways to minimize the impact of varying weather conditions on players and on the officials' crew.
3. Discuss ways to help minimize the risk of injury to officials. Experienced officials should mentor newer officials about physically preparing for the game situations.
4. The NFHS has provided a free online course titled, "Heat Illness Prevention." Although geared toward coaching, this course gives a 20-minute overview of minimizing risk for students when participating outside in the heat and might be of interest to officials. This course highlights the importance of hydration and understanding the best methods to acclimate students to warm temperatures. For more information, please visit [nfhslearn.com](http://nfhslearn.com) or contact the MHSAs office.

## **Topic 11: Procedures for Postseason**

### ***Background***

Overtime procedures and other issues that do not apply to regular season games take effect during the post season.

### ***Activity***

#### **Postseason Competition**

Review Montana's tiebreaker before postseason.

*By state association adoption, a winner shall be determined in all playoff/tournament games with overtime play as follows:*

*a. There shall be two full ten-minute overtime periods (not sudden victory). A coin toss shall be held, and the winner shall choose a goal to defend or to kick off first. The loser of the toss shall be given the remaining choice. At the end of the first ten-minute period the teams shall change ends.*

*b. If the score remains tied after both ten-minute overtime periods, proceed to kicks from the mark. Kicks from the mark should be administered as outlined on pages 91-92 of the National Federation Soccer Rules Book.*

## RESOURCES

### **Need game reporting forms?**

The game reporting forms are all online. Refer to the MOA page or the soccer page of the MHSAs website: [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org).

### **Need to refer to the MHSAs or MOA handbooks?**

A copy of the complete MHSAs Handbook is available online. Go to the MHSAs website: [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org) and click on Handbook. Some of the sections that might be of use are:

Rules and Regulations – includes Return to Play rules as well as the coaching rule, which might affect officials who also coach the sport.

Soccer – includes the general rules governing the administration of high school soccer in Montana.

MOA – includes the general rules for members of the Montana Officials Association.

### **Need national resources?**

The website for the National Federation of State High school Associations contains a variety of information. Navigate to [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org) for more information. For concussion, heat and other soccer-related courses, visit [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).