



March 25, 2026

NFHS Soccer Weekly Rule Interpretations

Substitutions: The following can be found in the 2025-26 NFHS Rules Book. They were developed to illustrate potential situations concerning the substitution changes.

SITUATION 1: A goal is scored for which the referee stops the clock. The defending goalkeeper, A8, appears injured. With the clock already stopped for the goal, the referee beckons a trainer onto the field to assess A8. The trainer determines that A8 is not injured and shows no signs of a concussion. The referee requires A8 to leave the field and allows a substitute goalkeeper to replace A8. **RULING:** Legal. **COMMENT:** Regardless of the reason the clock is stopped, if a coach or medical personnel are beckoned on the field by the referee to assess a player, that player must be removed from the field of play. This includes goalkeepers who must be replaced by either a field player or a substitute. [3-3-2]



SITUATION 2: With the ball in play, two opposing players collide and appear to be injured. The ball crosses the touchline and goes out of play. Without stopping the clock, the referee beckons the trainer onto the field to assess the injured players. The trainer determines that neither player is injured and they do not require treatment. The referee allows both players to remain in the game because the clock was not stopped. **RULING:** Illegal. **COMMENT:** The clock is to be stopped for an injury as per 7-4-1. The referee's omission to stop the clock does not negate the requirement for players to leave the field if a coach or appropriate health-care professional is beckoned onto the field. The head referee or center referee has the authority per 5-3-2i to instruct the timer to correct the clock to adjust for the time lost from the injury assessment. [3-3-2]

SITUATION 3: Player A2 goes down and is apparently injured. The referee stops play to check on A2. Since A2 appears to have a leg injury, the referee stops the clock and beckons A2's coach or athletic trainer onto the field to attend the injured player. A2's coach or athletic trainer (a) refuses to enter the field; (b) enters the field and tends to A2's injury; (c) enters the field and deems A2 only slightly injured and able to keep playing. **RULING:** In (a), (b), and (c), Player A2 shall leave the field and may be replaced. **COMMENT:** Regardless if the coach comes out onto the field, the official beckoned for the coach to attend to the injured player so the player must leave the field of play. The coach may play shorthanded or substitute for the player. If the team elects to play shorthanded and it is deemed the player who came off the field if able to play, then that player may re-enter at the next dead ball. [3-3-2]

SITUATION 4: An away team player is down on the field, and the referee briefly allows play to continue for their team to take a shot on goal. The ball goes out of play for a goal kick to the home team. Before the restart, the home team's athletic trainer enters the field without being beckoned to attend to the injured away player. **RULING:** Illegal, a coach or appropriate health-care professional may only enter the field with permission from the referee. (1-5-3, 12-5-1a) **COMMENT:** If the referee observes the player to be injured to such a degree that the referee would have beckoned on a coach or athletic trainer, then the player must leave the field of play as if the athletic trainer had been beckoned. In which case, the referee should also remind the athletic trainer to wait for the proper signal before entering the field. If the referee determines that the athletic trainer entered the field as a ploy or a gamesmanship tactic to force the away team player to leave the field, then the player should not be required to leave the field, and the referee should warn or caution the athletic trainer for their misconduct. [3-3-2]

SITUATION 5: Before restarting play with a free kick, the referee temporarily suspends the game for a 2-minute water break. During the break, the home team sends a substitute to check-in. The referee beckons on the substitute. **RULING:** Legal. **COMMENT:** Although substitutions are not normally allowed during a free kick, either team may substitute an unlimited number of players from the bench while the game is temporarily suspended, provided the substitutes properly report and are

beckoned onto the field. [3-3-2]

