



April 22, 2026

NFHS Soccer Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION 1: A defender on the black team outside the penalty area jumps up to intercept a ball played by their opponent and heads the ball, sending it further downfield to an opposing white attacker in an offside position.

The defender had time and distance to see the ball last played by the white player. The defender jumps and heads the ball in a deliberate play that

could have changed the direction of the ball to gain possession or to pass it to a teammate. The referee judges the act as a deliberate play on the ball and play continues. **RULING:** Correct Procedure **COMMENT:** Judgment needs to be applied by the referee to determine if this action was a deliberate play on the ball, or if it was a reflex action and a non-deliberate play. While the ball may not have gone in the intended direction, that is not a consideration. Things to consider when judging if a player deliberately plays the ball are included in 11-1-5a and b.

SITUATION 2: Team A is in the lead during the last five minutes of the game. Both teams have substitutes who have checked in and are ready to enter the game. The ball goes out of play, and Team B is awarded a throw-in. The referee delays the restart, signals to stop the clock, and allows both teams to substitute. **RULING:** Correct Procedure. **COMMENT:** Even though both teams are substituting, Team A is in the lead with less than five minutes remaining, so the clock shall be stopped per 7-4-3.

SITUATION 3: White team midfielder legally takes the ball from the black team player. The black team player tries to punch the white team player who stole the ball, and no contact occurred. The referee issues a direct free kick and ejects the black team player who took the swing.

RULING: Correct Procedure **COMMENT:** When a player takes an obvious swing at an opponent

DIAGRAM 20 – NOT OFFSIDE



Defender Making a Play on the Ball

Player A1 passes the ball and a defender (B1) heads the ball directly to Player A2, who is in an offside position. A2 is not penalized for being in an offside position, however, because this player received the ball directly from a defender who had time and space to make a controlled play on the ball.

this is an *attempt at brutality against an opponent* and would be considered violent conduct per the rules. Soccer merely requires the attempt of the act to be considered a foul: kicking or attempting to kick, tripping, or attempt to trip and striking or attempting to strike an opponent.
[12-1-6, 12-6-1i]