



October 7, 2026

NFHS Soccer Weekly Rule Interpretations

Substitutions

Rules References: Rule 3-3

This table shows a summary of NFHS Rule 3-3 and its articles that describe the legal substitution opportunities in high school soccer.

SUBSTITUTIONS			
STOPPAGE/SITUATION	TEAM	LIMIT	FROM
Halftime, Between Periods	Either Team	Unlimited Sub	Bench, Unbeckoned
After a Goal, Injuries or Temporary Suspensions	Either Team	Unlimited	Bench, then Check In
Goal Kicks, Cautions, Ejections, Improper Equipment, or Blood Concern	Either Team	Unlimited	Checked in Before the Stoppage
The Cautioned Player, The Player with Equipment Issues, The Player with Blood	Specific Team	Specific Individual	Bench, then Check In
Own Throw In, Corner Kick	Team in Possession	Unlimited	Checked In Before the Stoppage
Other Team's Throw In, Other Team's Corner Kick	Team Not in Possession	Unlimited	Checked In Before the Stoppage & The Other Team Has Subs

During halftime, either team may substitute an unlimited number of players from the bench, and those players do not have to be beckoned onto the field.

After a goal and before the kickoff, or during a stoppage for an injury or a temporary suspension of the match, either team may substitute an unlimited number of players from the bench provided they check in before being beckoned onto the field.

Before a goal kick, or during a stoppage for a yellow card, red card, or if a player has to be removed because of improper equipment or a blood concern, then either team may substitute an unlimited

number of players if they had previously checked in before the stoppage of play and are beckoned onto the field.

If a player is removed from the game because of improper or illegal equipment, receives a yellow card, or because of a blood concern, then that team may replace that specific, removed player with a substitute from the bench, provided they check in before being beckoned onto the field.

During a team's own throw-in or corner kick, the team in possession may substitute an unlimited number of players if they had previously checked in before the stoppage of play and are beckoned onto the field.

During a throw-in or corner kick for the other team, the team not in possession may only substitute if the team in possession is also substituting. In which case, both teams may substitute an unlimited number of players if they had previously checked in before the stoppage of play and are beckoned onto the field.

SITUATION 1: The goalkeeper goes down after making a save and remains on the ground for a few seconds, continuing to possess the ball. The official stops play and the clock to review the situation. The referee determines that play should continue. No appropriate health-care professionals are beckoned and play is restarted with a drop ball. **RULING:** Legal. **COMMENT:** Since no coach or medical personnel were beckoned on the field, the player may remain in the game. If an appropriate health-care professional had been beckoned on for the goalkeeper, the goalkeeper would have to come out of the game like any field player. (3-3-2)

SITUATION 2: Players A2 and B2 hit heads in attempting to head the ball and both are injured. The referee stops the clock, both players are dazed and the referee beckons for an appropriate health-care professional from both teams. Both players leave the field. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Neither player shall return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. (3-3-2)

SITUATION 3: 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 4: Player A4 leaves the field due to an injury and the team elects to play shorthanded. After the game has been restarted, (a) Player A12 replaces Player A4; (b) Player A4 re-enters the field. **RULING:** (a) Player A12 may enter the game only at the next legal substitution opportunity; (b) Player A4 may re-enter the field at the next stoppage of play. (3-3-8, 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)

SITUATION 6: Team A sends substitute A1 from their team area to check in. Later, the ball goes out of play, and the referee awards a goal kick to Team B. Upon noticing that A1 is the only substitute checked in, the referee delays the restart and permits A1 to enter. While the player being replaced by A1 is leaving the field, Team B sends substitute B8 to check in. The referee does not allow B8 to enter the game during this stoppage. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Because B8 had not previously checked in prior to the stoppage, they are not allowed to substitute during this goal kick and must wait until the next legal substitution opportunity for their team. (3-3-3)

SITUATION 7: Player A2 is cautioned and issued a yellow card for misconduct and makes a profane remark to the referee: (a) the substitute has not been beckoned onto the field; (b) the substitute has been beckoned onto the field. **RULING:** (a) A2 is issued a red card and the team plays short; (b) A2 is issued a red card and the substitute is allowed to participate. (3-3-3, 12-6)