

NEW JERSEY STATE INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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Soccer Rules Modifications - 2026

The NJSIAA Soccer Rules Interpreter:
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Modifications of the National Federation Soccer Rules

Rule 1-6 - The Field of Play

Section 6:

- The NJSIAA is requiring perimeter fencing or roping twenty-five (25) feet from the official side and end lines for VARSITY games. The obvious intent is to separate unauthorized people from teams, coaches, and official scorers. Where field configuration may prohibit full adherence (twenty-five (25) feet) or use of public parks or elementary school fields make fencing unmanageable, large rubber cones or other temporary markings are acceptable provided the spectator separation is accomplished. Adult supervision may be needed in these cases.
- If officials feel these conditions are not fulfilled, they are to play the game, but report the infraction to the administration of the home team and the NJSIAA Central Office.

Section 8: Other field equipment – behind the scorers table:

- Any recording devices (ie: Veo systems) MUST be as far away from the boundary line as the height of the camera stand and properly anchored to the ground.
Rationale: For Player safety, all recording devices must be far enough from the field of play that if they fall over, it will not injure anyone on the field.

Rule 4-2-2 Other Equipment

- ***AS PROVIDED BY NFHS RULES, hair-control devices and other adornments in the hair that are securely fastened to the head and do not present a risk of injury to the player, teammates or opponents are allowed. Officials must address this with the head coach NOT the players.***

Rule 4-2-8 - Player Equipment

- A protective face mask may be worn by a player with a facial injury. The mask may be made of hard material but must be molded to the face with no protrusions. The Danmar Warrior facemask model 1200 without earflaps is an approved NFHS/NJSIAA substitute for a custom mask that may be worn during interscholastic competition. (Photo Attached)
A medical release for the Player's use of any face mask signed by a physician (MD/DO) shall be available at the game site. (Approval notes signed by the school athletic trainer ARE NOT acceptable).

Rule 5 - The Referee, and Assistant Referees - Section 1 - General

- Article 1: Note: The (3) person diagonal officiating system may only be used for any of the following contests:
 - Scrimmages
 - Night games
 - Weekend games
 - Local Tournaments
 - NJSIAA Sectional Semifinal & Final, Semifinal & Group Finals

NOTE: For afternoon regular season games, schools may request their league assignors to assign 3 officials up to three times per season per gender.

Rule 6:2:3 - Timer

- If there is a designated paid or unpaid clock operator the stadium clock will be official and will be run down to :00. The on-field officials will hold the official time at all times and may ask the clock operator to correct the stadium clock during a stoppage during the game. If there is no designated clock operator the stadium clock is not to be used for time; it may be used to keep score only.

Rule 7 - Duration of Game, Length of Periods - Section 1 - Length of Periods

- Article 1:
 - The duration of Varsity games shall be two (2) equal halves of forty (40) minutes each. Junior Varsity (JV) and freshmen may play forty (40) minute halves upon adoption by individual conferences.
- Article 3:
 - During the regular season, if less than one half (1/2) of a game has been played, the game will be rescheduled from the start. Any red card DQ which carries a 2 game suspension given at any time will count regardless of when the stoppage was.
 - State Tournament games suspended because of conditions which make it impossible to continue play, should be played to completion from the point of interruption. If the losing team at the point of interruption, does not want to return to complete the game, the game will be complete.

Section 3 - Tie Games - All Varsity games tied at the end of regulation time, MUST use the following procedure:

- Article 1:
 - Up to two (2) "sudden victory" overtime periods of ten (10) minutes each will be played. The first team to score shall be declared the winner. If the score is still even, at the completion of the 2nd overtime period, the game shall be recorded as a tie. In State Tournament games, if the score remains tied after the completion of the overtime periods, kicks from the penalty mark will be taken to determine the winner.
 - Teams that do not play overtime, other than for reasons of the elements or conditions, will both forfeit the game. No contest shall exceed 100 minutes of playing time.

During the **regular season**, when a game ends in a tie after overtime, it shall be recorded as a tie and the teams will split the PowerPoints.

For all **regular season** County, Conference, or league tournaments that require a team to advance, the advancing team shall be recorded as the winner regardless of the overtime procedure used. The advancing team shall receive all the PowerPoints. When entering the results in njschoolsports, the final score should reflect one (1) additional point for the advancing team.

***** ADOPTED AS OF 2025 SEASON- The NJSIAA has adopted a “Mercy Rule” for both boys and girls soccer for all VARSITY interscholastic contests excluding the state championship final game. *****

The game will end at the 20-minute mark of the second half if the goal differential is six (6) or more goals. After the 20-minute mark of the second

half, the game will end once the goal differential becomes six (6) or more goals.

Rule 12 - Fouls and Misconduct Section 6 - Misconduct

- Article 1:

Clarification for Subsection a through I – A player has always been defined in the Rules as one of the 22 players actually playing in the game. Those team members on the roster who are not in the game are substitutes, not “players”.

A team does not play short if a coach or substitute is sent off the field.

- Subsections a through I – the NJSIAA emphasizes that a player, coach, or bench personnel guilty of violent conduct (verbal or physical), taunting, serious foul play, spitting, using insulting, offensive, or abusive language or gesture, leaving the team area to participate in a fight or altercation is committing a disqualifying offense (DQ report shall be filed). The first such offense will result in a red card disqualification and a two (2) game disqualification. A previous caution need not have been issued to the perpetrator. ***For each player sent off (not coach or bench substitute),*** the team must play short one person for the rest of the game. The official issuing the send-off shall display a red card in one hand.
- Subsection a – as an exception to above reference to subsections a through i, a player sent off for receiving a second yellow card shall be ejected from that game only and will not have to suffer the additional two game disqualification. No DQ report is required. Instead, a Game Ejection report shall be filed. ***For each player ejected (not coach or bench substitute),*** the team must play short one person for the rest of the game. The official issuing the second yellow card shall first display the yellow card in one hand, then lower that hand, and then shall display the red card in the same hand.
- Subsection b – as an exception to above reference to subsections a through i, a player who deliberately handles the ball attempting to prevent a goal and the goal is not scored (other than a goalkeeper within his/her own penalty area) shall be ejected from that game only, and will not have to suffer the additional two game disqualification. No DQ report is required. Instead, a Game Ejection report shall be filed. ***For each player (not coach or bench substitute) ejected,*** the team must play short one person for the rest of the game. The official issuing the send-off shall display a red card in one hand.

Subsection d – as an exception to above reference to subsections a through i, a player who commits a foul in a non-flagrant manner outside the penalty area when attempting to deny an obvious goal-scoring opportunity, and the goal is not scored shall be ejected from that game only, and will not have to suffer the additional two game disqualification. No DQ report is required. Instead, a Game Ejection report shall be filed. ***For each player ejected (not coach or bench substitute),*** the team must play short one person for the rest of the game. The official issuing the send-off shall display a red card in one hand.

- Clarification for coaches being disqualified during a game:
 - Coaches-
 - The coach will be given cards for all misconduct in the team area.

- **Any coach who is removed from the field by an official is NOT permitted to return to the field until the officials have left the game venue.**

NOTE: Should the foul that denies the obvious goal scoring opportunity be violent conduct under subsection i, or use disproportionate and unnecessary force under subsection f, anywhere on the field including the penalty area whether a goal is scored or not, the player will receive the additional two game suspension and a DQ report is required. ***For each player sent off (not coach or bench substitute)***, the team must play short one person for the rest of the game. The official issuing the sendoff shall display a red card in one hand.

A referee reporting a disqualification to NJSIAA must specify the facts and section under which the disqualification occurred.

The NJSIAA Concussion Policy is aligned with the New Jersey State Law as it applies to suspected concussed athletes.

NJSIAA Tournament Tie-Game Procedure:

All tournament games including the state finals will follow the following tie-game procedure. If a tournament game ends in a tie, the overtime procedure will be as follows:

- There shall be up to two (2) ten (10) -minute “sudden victory” overtime periods.
 - Coin toss shall be held as in Rule 5-2-2(E).
 - Teams shall change ends if a second overtime period is required.
 - There shall be a two (2)-minute interval between periods.
- If the score remains tied:
 - The head referee shall choose the goal at which all of the kicks from the penalty mark shall be taken.
 - Each coach will select five (5) players, on or off the field (except those who have been disqualified), to take the kicks.
 - A coin toss shall be held as in Rule 5-2-2(d). The team winning the toss shall have the choice of kicking first or second.
 - Teams will alternate kickers. There is no follow-up on the kick.
 - The defending team may change the goalkeeper prior to each kick.
 - Following five (5) kicks for each team, the team scoring on the greatest number of these kicks shall advance. The kicks shall end at the point where the advancing team has been determined.
- If the score remains tied after each team has taken five (5) kicks:
 - Each coach will select any five (5) players, whether or not a player participated in the initial five (5) kicks, to take another set of five (5) kicks in the same team order in a sudden victory situation, wherein if one team scores and the other team does not score, the game is ended without more kicks being taken.
- If the score remains tied after the second set of five kicks, the process will continue to repeat until a winner is determined.



DANMAR WARRIOR face mask
Model 1200 - approved for NJ.
by NFHS
cannot have ear flaps