

A soccer player in a maroon jersey with the number 2 is running on a grass field. He is wearing a black long-sleeved shirt under the jersey, black shorts, and pink and yellow cleats. He has a black brace on his right knee. In the background, other players in maroon and white jerseys are visible, along with a black fence and trees. The text "Soccer" is written in a stylized orange font at the top.

Soccer

Coaches

2025

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For additional information related to sports medicine issues concerning athletic participation, please click the “Sports Medicine” tab on the opening page of our website.

WEST VIRGINIA SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES COMMISSION



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BULLETIN

TO: Soccer Coaches
FROM: Dan Comer, Assistant Executive Director
DATE: July 2025
SUBJECT: 2025 Soccer

The 2024-2025 season dates are:

High School	Season Starts	Week 5	August 4, 2025
	Date of First Contest	Week 7	August 20, 2025
	Season Ends	Week 18	November 8, 2025
Middle School	Season Starts	Week 6	August 11, 2025
	Date of First Contest	Week 9	September 1, 2025
	Season Ends	Week 17	October 28, 2025

1. Be sure that your principal or athletic director has completed the schedule online. Schedules will only be accepted online. Make changes to your schedule online and keep up to date. If you have questions, please call our office.
2. Please be advised that the required Coaches'/ Officials' Rules Clinics will be held at various locations (see enclosed sheet). **It is mandatory for all head coaches to attend one of the state sponsored rules clinics. If you school is not represented at said clinic, there will be a \$50.00 fine assessed. The WVSSAC Board of Directors has adopted a regulation that sport programs will be suspended if the head coach fails to attend the State Rules Clinic and the \$50.00 assessed fine is not paid.**
3. **Coaches will not evaluate officials this year. Coaches will do a special report to report issues or inconsistencies.**
4. The WVSSAC will assign officials for the state matches.
5. Please make note of [Rule 127-3-25.5](#) concerning soccer scrimmages.
6. The WVSSAC is actively involved in promoting good sportsmanship in all our sport programs. We encourage you to promote good sportsmanship by informing parents and athletes of the importance of supporting this concept and to review the sportsmanship rules located in the [WVSSAC Rules & Regulations Handbook](#). Lead by example.

7. **NFHS Sports Medicine Regulations** –

- 1) Insulin Pumps with Shunt must be padded and a physician's letter indicating the need for the athlete to wear the pump during the participation must be given to the officials prior to the start of the contest.
- 2) Inhalers – A physician's letter indicating the need for the athlete to use the inhaler during participation must be given to the official prior to the start of the game.

8. **Mouth Guard Policy for Soccer** – The use of mouth guards is recommended for all practices and matches.

9. **Head and Neck Trauma Guidelines** – Head and Neck Trauma Guidelines – Refer to the approved Return to Play/ Concussion Protocol. RTP refers to return to play and return to practice. The appropriate health care professional will determine when a concussed athlete may return to participation.

10. **Use of Performance Enhancing Substances by Athletes** – It is the philosophy of the National Federation and the WVSSAC that students be encouraged and supported in their efforts to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. In promotion of safety and healthy lifestyles, the WVSSAC Sports Medicine Committee requests that coaches assume the responsibility of informing athletes that the uses of such substances should be discontinued especially during the times when dehydration may occur due to potential life-threatening consequences. The committee further encourages all athletic trainers to support coaches in promoting healthy lifestyles.

11. **Injury/ Participation Procedure at WVSSAC Championship Events** – Medical personnel (athletic trainers) will have the jurisdiction concerning the return of a player to competition after an injury. If a parent refuses to follow the determination of the authorized person, a release form must be signed. Athletic trainers will receive additional information at Rules Clinics.

12. **Suspended Game Rule** – As per Rule 7-1-3, a game suspended after completion of one complete half or more shall be an official game. If less than one-half of the game has been played, the game shall be restarted from the suspension of play.

13. Coaches are responsible for discussing the Bench Clearing Rule 127-4-3.7.7 with all other coaches and players prior to participation.

Rule 127-4-3.8 Code for Interscholastic Athletes - Coaches are hereby notified to carefully review this rule with their athletes.

14. Officials will issue red and yellow cards. Issuance of a red card and/ or red/ yellow together will require a Special Report to be sent to the WVSSAC.

15. **Preseason Meetings:** It is required that head coaches conduct preseason meetings for their players and parents. In addition to their own rules and regulations, coaches must address players on taunting, conduct and sportsmanship rules before the first regular season match. Coaches are also required share information referencing sudden cardiac arrest, AED's, concussions, and return to play protocol.

16. Coaches, players and spectators must note that officials will be asked to strictly enforce all taunting, conduct, and sportsmanship rules.
17. HeadandNeckTraumaGuidelines-RefertotheapprovedReturntoPlay/ConcussionProtocol. RTP refers to return to play and return to practice. The appropriate healthcare professional will determine when a concussed athlete may return to participation
18. All coaches are now required by law to complete the Sudden Cardiac Arrest online course ANNUALLY as well as the Concussion Course ANNUALLY. The Heat Illness Prevention must be taken once for new coaches. links to the courses may be found on the WVSSAC Website.
19. Coaches must be trained in AED/ CPR .An AED must be available for all practices and contests.

2025-2026
SOCCER RULES CLINICS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>COORDINATOR</u>
July 27	Interpreters Clinic WVSSAC Office	9:00 am	Dan Comer
July 30	John Marshall HS	6:00 pm	Roger Simmons
July 31	Huntington HS	6:00 pm	Bruce Senior
Aug 4	Woodrow Wilson HS	6:00 pm	Andrew Pinnick
Aug 5	Herbert Hoover HS	6:00 pm	Richard Parsons
Aug 7	East Fairmont HS	6:00 pm	James Beckman
Aug 8	Spring Mills HS	6:00 pm	Glenn Simpson
Aug 9	Frankfort HS	9:00 am	Jay Hesse
Aug 11	*WVSSAC Office	5:00 pm	Dan Comer
	*Make-up Clinic		

SCHOOLS: The **Head Coach** shall be **required** to attend any sports rules clinics which are sponsored by this Commission in his/her coaching assignment. Schools failing to have a head coaching position filled at the time of the clinic will be required to have a school representative present at the rules clinic. An individual can only represent one school unless he/she is head coach at both schools. In a 9-12 school, both the varsity and 9th grade coach are required to attend. Failure to have a representative at one of the above clinics will result in a \$50.00 fine.

The clinic attendance requirement will not be granted if the coach or representative is late in excess of 10 minutes.

§127-3-25. Soccer (Boys and

Girls).

251 Rules: Soccer rules published by the National Federation of State High School Associations are the official rules for all interscholastic competition unless otherwise provided by Commission modifications.

252 Organized Team Practice: Organized team practice will begin on Monday of Week 5 and the first contest may be played on Wednesday of Week 7.

253 Length of Season: The soccer season will end for each team by WVSSAC tournament elimination.

254 Maximum Team Contests: A soccer team will be permitted to play no more than 20 matches exclusive of sectional, regional, and state tournaments.

25.4.1. The maximum number of halves for a student in one season will be 50, exclusive of sectional, regional, and state tournaments.

25.4.2. A student shall not be permitted to participate in more than three halves during any one day. Any part of a half counts as one half. In an overtime game, the overtime shall be considered an extension of the second half

255 A high school soccer team is permitted to participate in a soccer-o-rama and one (1) preseason scrimmage or two (2) preseason scrimmages. See Glossary.

256 Individual students of a team must have practiced on 12 SEPARATE days, exclusive of the day of a contest, before participating in an interscholastic contest.

257 A student may not play or practice on a non-school soccer team while a member of the school team.

258 A student may accept awards only in WVSSAC sanctioned events during the season of that sport. These awards must be consistent with the items specified in the Awards Rule. Students may accept only this same type of award in non-sanctioned events outside the sport season.

259 *Middle School-* The above will apply for Middle School with the following adaptations:

25.9.1. Middle school teams may play 14 matches including tournaments sanctioned by the WVSSAC.

25.9.2. Organized team practice will begin on Monday of Week 6 and the first contest may be played on Monday of Week 9.

25.9.3. Middle school season will be completed by Saturday of Week 17.

25.9.4. The maximum number of halves for a student in one season will be 28.

25.9.5. Middle school teams are permitted one (1) scrimmage. See Glossary.

State Tournament Program Information

Goal: *To provide a quality program for all championship events*

What: *SoccerState Championship Program*

Deadline: *Immediately after sectional play but no later than Noon, October 31, 2025*

Required Online Submission Only - (School Information-Roster-Schedule)

- + Go to www.wvssac.org click on Admin Login in the upper left corner of homepage
- + Type in your Username and Password as the school Administrator in the appropriate sections and click on Login
- + Click on Submit Rosters. Under Program select Senior and select **Soccer**
- + Complete the School Information and head coaches' information. Click Update/ Continue
- + Click the Sync button and enter the information requested, then save by clicking the Update/ Save Roster button. Always view your roster for accuracy.
- + If you don't find a student, go to the Eligibility Certificate Form and add the name and return to the Roster and click Sync button. **Note:** The Sync button feature has been added to update all names on the active Eligibility Certificate Form. Check for accuracy. Save all changes to your eligibility certificate and roster.

Required Items for a Team Page:

School Information, Head Coach Information, Roster Information. Update/Complete Online - Printer will use this for the Program Page.

Team Picture

Individual Head Coaches' Picture

Page Sponsor - Please contact a business or the boosters club concerning sponsoring this page. Ad is about the size of a business card which often is used.

Team Page Cost - \$125 - Make checks payable to WVSSAC. Indicate sport & school in memo section of check.

When emailing the team/coach pictures and page sponsor, please enter the school name (No Abbreviations, please) and sport in the subject line of the email.

Questions Contact:

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My Username & Password! How Do I Get It?

1. Go to www.wvssac.org
2. Click on Admin Login (Located in the upper left-hand corner of the homepage)
3. In the Username **and** Password sections type: WV coach
4. Click on Log In
5. On the Create New Coach Account page:
 - a. Select your school from the drop-down box
 - b. Enter your First Name and Last Name
 - c. Enter your Email Address
 - d. Select your Sport from the drop-down box
 - e. Click on Create Coach Account button
6. A page will display your Username & Password (**Note:** Username & Password are the same and are case sensitive) Keep your Username & Password in a safe place

I've Got My Username & Password How Do I Login?

1. Go to www.wvssac.org
2. Click on Admin Login (Located in the upper left-hand corner of the homepage)
3. Enter in your Username & Password in the Username **and** Password sections
4. Click on Log In
5. You are now on the Coach's Management Page



COACHING REMINDERS



Practice: Team members must have 12 practices on 12 separate days - 5 days sports specific if participating in another sport during the same sports season. A student must have 5 days of practice if coming from one sports season into the next sports season without interruption of school days. Only students enrolled in the specific member school and a member of team is allowed to practice. Rule 127-2-13.

Sunday Contests: Contests or practice on Sunday is prohibited. Practice refers to any group or individual meeting to view films or activity associated with the activity of that sports season. Rule 127-3-14.

Physical Exam: Team members must have Athletic Participation/ Parental Consent / Physician's Certificate form completed and on file before beginning practice. Rule 127-3-3. (Must be on or after May 1st)

All-Star Competition: Any student completing athletic eligibility at the end of current school year because of age or competition of semesters of eligibility may play in one (1) all-star game upon conclusion of the season without loss of eligibility for balance of year. Rule 127-3-4.

Awards: Team members can accept awards from school sponsoring a sanctioned event or the school. Wearing apparel, championship rings, equipment, athletic goods that exceed \$100.00 are prohibited from any source. Rule 127-3-5.

Out of Season Coaching: Coaches may not promote, initiate, organize, supervise, or participate in out-of-season events involving students of the same sport as the grade level coaching assignment and preceding grade level except as specified in Rules 127-3-7.2 and 127-3-7.3. Rule 127-3-7.7.

Amateur: Any team member competing for money, receiving any award or prize of monetary value that has not been approved by the WVSSAC, capitalizing on athletic fame, or signing a professional playing contract in that sport is prohibited. Rule 127-2-11.

Participation as Ineligible: Any student who participates as ineligible may forfeit eligibility for up to 365 days. Rule 127-2-12.

Non-School Participation: Participation is limited to school teams only with a few exceptions in individual sports provided the school principal approves and no school contests/ activities are missed. Participation includes but is not limited to, practice, fund raising, team pictures, tryouts, etc. Rule 127-2-10.

Sanctioning and Travel: A member school shall not enter a contest, tournament, or competition which requires sanctioning until it is approved 30 days prior to the event. Rule 127-3-16.

For complete details regarding the above regulations and those governing team memberships, scholarship, undue influence, age, semester, etc. refer to the **Rules & Regulations Handbook** or at www.wvssac.org.
This is not a comprehensive list.

§127-2-13. Practice.

13.1 Only students enrolled and eligible to be listed on the eligibility certificate for that sport in the specific member school are allowed to participate in that school's practices. Exceptions - Rules 127-2-3.2, 127-2-3.5 and 127-2-13.6.

13.2 The frequency and length of practice is at the discretion of each member school.

13.3 Member schools of the WVSSAC may practice on any day of the year with the exception of Sunday practice. Rule 127-3-14.2 further clarifies Sunday practice.

13.4 Individual players of a team must have practiced

13.4.a on 5 SEPARATE days before participating in an interscholastic scrimmage.

13.4.b on 12 SEPARATE days, exclusive of the day of a contest, before participating in an interscholastic contest. The following sport(s) is exempted from the provisions of this rule: golf.

13.4.c A student athlete who is absent from practice with their team for non-medical reasons, not under a doctor care, for more than fourteen (14) consecutive days must have the required full twelve (12) practice days before resuming participation in a contest. Students participating in football must follow the practice progression as set forth in Rule 127-3-23.

13.5 A student shall not be permitted to engage in interscholastic practice until that student has filed with the principal a completed Athletic Participation/Parental Consent/Physician's Certificate Form. Rule 127-3-3 further explains this required form.

13.6 A student academically ineligible may begin practicing 15 school days immediately prior to the date of regaining full eligibility. (All other ineligible students may not practice.)

13.7 If a student has established eligibility in a sport requiring 12 separate days of practice and is continuing to participate in that sport or no school days have lapsed from one sport to another sport in a same season, the student may participate in another sport of the season after completing five separate days of sport specific practice in the second sport.

13.8 Students participating in a sport(s) in one season must have practiced 12 separate days, exclusive of the day of a contest, to be eligible to participate in a sport in the next season with the following exception: the student has continued to practice or participate in tournament play without an interruption of school days. The student must complete five separate days of sport specific practice in the second sport.

127-4-3 Code for Interscholastic Athletics

3.7. *Statement of Policy.* Insofar as unsportsmanlike actions by students, school administrators, officials, coaches, faculty members, and spectators are concerned, the identical items under the Sportsmanship Rule along with the following guides will be referred to by the WVSSAC:

3.7.a. The school whose coach behaves in a manner likely to have adverse influence on the attitudes of students or spectators may be provided with the choice of taking disciplinary action against that coach or having the entire school disciplined by the WVSSAC.

3.7.b. Any student who in protest lays hands or attempts to lay hands upon an official may be declared ineligible by the principal or by the WVSSAC for up to one year. Any student who strikes an opponent, coach, or a spectator during or following an athletic event may be declared ineligible by the principal or the WVSSAC for a specified period of time up to one year, depending on the seriousness of the act.

3.7.c. Any coach, student, or bench personnel ejected by an official will be suspended for the remainder of the game, match, meet or contest. The coach, student, or bench personnel ejected by an official will also be suspended in additional contest(s): the suspension will be assessed based upon ten (10) percent of the allowed regular season contests or post season progression in a playoff tournament for each sport. Any tenth of a percentage from .1 to .4 will be a suspension equal to the whole number of the percent. Any tenth from .5 to .9 will be an additional contest added to the whole number. The suspension will include the number of indicated contests in that sport and at that level and all other sport contests in the interim at any level. A second ejection will result in the doubling of the suspension assessed for the first ejection. If an individual is ejected for a third time during the same sport season, the individual will be suspended from participating or coaching for 365 calendar days from the date of ejection. In accordance with rule 127-3-15.3, an individual ejected by an official may not appeal that ejection, or any subsequent suspension that is a consequence of the ejection by an official.

3.7.c.1. Any coach, player or bench personnel who has been ejected shall not be permitted to attend any contest(s) during said suspension. He/she shall not be affiliated with the team in any capacity. This would include but not be limited to transportation to or from the contest, meeting with the team before, during or after said contest. He/she is not permitted to be in sight or sound of said contest venue. Regular practice or team meetings not affiliated with a contest are permitted.

3.7.c.2. If suspensions are imposed to a student or bench personnel at the end of the sport season and no contest remains, the suspension is carried over to that particular sport until the next school year. In the case of a senior student, the penalty will continue to the next WVSSAC sponsored sport.

3.7.c.3. Any coach suspension that cannot be enforced during the sport season in which the ejection occurs will be enforced at the beginning of the next season of that same sport.

3.7.d. In case of spectators physically molesting an official, administrator, coach, or student, the school may be given one of two options: 1) file charges against the offender (s) or 2) accept discipline from the WVSSAC. Any person found guilty of W.Va. Code §61-2-15(a) Assault, Battery on Athletic Officials, while these individuals are working or as a result of working an athletic contest, shall be banned from all WVSSAC athletic events for a minimum of 365 days from the date of being found guilty. The school filing charges shall notify the WVSSAC of the incident and outcome of any legal action.

3.7.e. The school that does not lend complete cooperation in the host school's effort to promote the spirit of good sportsmanship may be disciplined by the WVSSAC.

3.7.f. A coach may be considered as committing unsportsmanlike conduct if they make degrading remarks about officials during or after a game either on the field of play, from the bench, or through any public news media, argues with officials, or goes through motions indicating dislike for a decision, protests the decision and actions of officials pertaining to the game during and after the contest, or detains the official on the field of play following a game to request a ruling or explanation of some phase of the game. If a coach feels he/she has a legitimate criticism of a penalty call or request for a rule interpretation, such criticism or request should be made in the privacy of the coach's office or the official's quarters and should be made in a courteous manner.

3.7.g. A student or team attendant shall not leave the bench area, team box area, or their designated off-field area during a game or contest other than during that time permitted by game or contest rules. A coach shall not leave the bench area, team box area, or the designated off-field area during a game or contest other than during that time permitted by game or contest rules unless a student altercation is taking place and the official requests assistance. Violation of this rule shall cause the coach, student, or team attendant to be immediately ejected from the contest, team penalized according to game or contest rules and that coach, student, or team attendant will not be eligible to participate in the next contest as outlined in §127-4-2.3.

3.8. *Procedure.* Unsportsmanship action must be reported in detail to the WVSSAC. A copy of the complaint must also be filed with the principal of the school involved. Each principal involved shall report such information or answers to the report as they deem appropriate. Upon receipt of all reports, the Executive Director and/or the Board of Directors of the WVSSAC shall investigate and adjudicate such reports in accordance with the powers afforded in §127-1-8.6 and 8.7 and §127-1-12.2 and 12.3 of the Constitution. Penalties up to and including suspension of member schools may be made in accordance with §127-4.

3.9. The following defines the different types of disciplinary action which may be assessed for violation of any WVSSAC rule by a member school, administrator, coach, athlete or contest official:

3.9.a. *Warning.* A warning may be given by the Executive Director or Assistant Executive Director. It is official notice that an inexcusable, unethical, or unsportsmanship action has occurred, is a matter of record, and that such an occurrence must not be repeated.

3.9.b. *Probation.* Probation is a much more severe type of warning and may be expressed two ways: 1) a school, coach, student, or team attendant on probation is told that further violations will lead to a fine or suspension; and/or 2) a school on probation is on conditional WVSSAC membership but may engage in its regular schedule, sanctioned events, and all WVSSAC tournament play, providing a program is filed with the Executive Director of the WVSSAC indicating measures to be taken to alleviate this problem which caused the school to be placed on probation.

3.9.c. *Suspension.* A school/coach suspended from the WVSSAC may not meet in interscholastic competition of any kind with a WVSSAC member school or a school that is a member of another state associated with the National Federation of State High School Associations.

3.9.d. *Fine.* A fine may be levied by the Executive Director.

3.9.e. Each of these sanctions (Warning, Probation, suspension and Fine) may be imposed or levied separately, or in a combination of one or more sanctions.

3.10. *Appeals.* All cases involving disciplinary action against member schools, coaches, students, team attendants, or officials may be protested in accordance with §127-6. However, disciplinary action imposed by an official, including disciplinary action that is a consequence of a decision by an official, such as a suspension for an additional game or games as a consequence of an ejection, is governed by rule 127-3-15.3 and is not subject to appeal.

3.11. *Review of Ejections.* Disciplinary action imposed by a contest official, including disciplinary action that results in a suspension for an additional game or games as a consequence of an ejection, is not subject to appeal pursuant to Rule §127-6. However, if the individual ejected believes the ejection was improper, he/she may request a review of the ejection by his/her principal. If the principal believes there is merit in the requested review, the principal shall complete and submit the WVSSAC Ejection Review Form within 24 hours or the next business day of the ejection to the Executive Director of the WVSSAC. If a review is properly requested, the WVSSAC will review the officials' special report, the WVSSAC Ejection Review Form, and such other information as the WVSSAC deems appropriate. Upon review, the WVSSAC Executive Director or the designated Assistant Director will either sustain the ejection and any consequent suspension(s), or will determine the ejection was improper and void any consequent suspension(s). A decision by the WVSSAC upon reviewing an ejection is not subject to appeal pursuant to Rule §127-6.

SOCCER RULE CHANGES

- **1**

Soccer Rules Changes - 2025-26

March 05, 2025

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

2025-26 Points of Emphasis

1. Education Based High School Athletics
2. Courage, Character and Consistency
3. Team Areas and Bench Decorum
4. Player Uniform Equipment and Safety

RECRUITING REGULATIONS

If a coach is contacted by a student, his/ her parents, or anyone else regarding a student athlete transferring to his/ her district, the coach shall refer the individual(s) to a school administrator in the district immediately. A coach cannot discuss the matter with the student or anyone else for that matter and should not even listen when the subject is brought up concerning students transferring to his/ her school. School coaches working or coaching in outside school leagues and camps should be warned that a potential problem exists if a student later enrolls at the school where the coach is employed. The school administrator, after being notified by the coach that a prospective student athlete has approached the coach about possibly playing for his/ her school team, should contact the WVSSAC office immediately. Seriously or jokingly telling a student that you would like for that athlete to play for you, or your team shall be considered recruiting. Rules regarding individuals who engage in recruiting shall not be restricted specifically to school personnel.

Approved by the Board of Appeals October
1998

GUIDELINES FOR SUSPENDED COACH/ PLAYER

A coach or player who is ejected from a contest shall be suspended for the remainder of the game, match, meet or contest. An ejected coach shall exit the playing arena (out of sight and sound of the venue) as well as the team and bench areas. If there is not another person hired by the board of education to coach that sport or a professional from that school present to take his/ her place, the contest shall be forfeited. Because of supervision and liability, an ejected athlete shall sit on the bench and shall not cause nor participate in any further problems. Furthermore, a coach or player shall not be permitted to attend subsequent contests of the suspension. He/ she shall not be formally affiliated with the team in any capacity. This would include but not be limited to transportation to or from the contest, meeting with the team before, during or after the contest, wearing a uniform, or sitting in the bench or team area. Regular practice or team meetings not affiliated with a contest will not fall under this policy.



**PLAY.
PERFORM.
COMPETE.**
TOGETHER.

Soccer Points of Emphasis - 2025-26

BY NFHS ON June 3, 2025 | RULES, SOCCER

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 (Shin guards)

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 shin guards, which are essential for protecting athletes during competition. Given that high school players are still in their developmental stages, shin guards must be age- and size-appropriate, meeting NOCSAE safety standards. Each shin guard 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 shin guards 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.



SPECTATOR SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR TOURNAMENTS

The following sport support information is provided for each specified sport. ONLY those items marked with “Yes” are allowed during tournament play (sectional, regional, and state). It is recommended that schools follow these regulations during regular season play.

Vocal cheering and support from team bench areas are encouraged, however, the items indicated on this page are for use by spectators. Schools must stress GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP when allowing any item to be used. All items must be for support of your team and not directed against the opponent.

Legend: BSK Basketball CC Cross Country SB Softball TE Tennis WR Wrestling
BB Baseball FB Football SC Soccer TR Track & Field
CH Cheer GO Golf SW Swimming VB Volleyball

SPORT	BSK	BB	CH	CC	FB	GO	SB	SC	SW	TE	TR	VB	WR
Apparel Required Upper/Lower Body Garments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Balloons	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Banners on wall/Stadium	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Cheer & Band Member “Human” Tunnels	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Permanent Signage/Advertisement Senior Pictures	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Confetti/Paper Debris	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Hand-held Signs (one holder)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Inflatable Tunnels	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Laser Pointer	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Miniature sports Balls thrown to crowd	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Noise makers (Horns, cow bells, bells, buzzers, clickers, etc.	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Opening Prayer / Invocation	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Paper banners for team to run through	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pom poms Sprit Towels	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recorded/taped. music over amplifying system (only pregame or halftime)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School Band, Pep Band	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Pressurized Air Horn Electronic Bull Horn	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Megaphones (as intended)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cannons & Muskets	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
50-50 Drawing	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Reserve Seating State Only	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

