



12 Rules Changes Approved Ahead Of 2026 High School Boys Lacrosse Season

Among the changes for the 2026 high school boys lacrosse season, no defensive player other than a properly equipped goalkeeper can enter the team's own crease with the perceived intent of blocking a shot or acting as a goalkeeper, or a personal foul for illegal equipment will be called as a non-releasable foul.

This topic highlighted 12 rules changes recommended by the NFHS Boys Lacrosse Rules Committee during its annual meeting June 8-10 at The Alexander in Indianapolis. All proposed changes were subsequently accepted by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The changes to Rules 4-18-4 PENALTY, 5-6-2 (NEW), 5-10 and 6-6-4 minimize risk of injury by discouraging players who are not properly equipped from acting as a goalkeeper by making the penalty more severe.

Relatedly, goalkeepers will no longer be given a maximum of five seconds to re-enter the crease on any restart. The change to Rule 4-22-1c aligns the treatment of the goalkeeper with that of a field player when it comes to injury or equipment issues while outside the crease, and it also eliminates the need for an official to judge whether a goalkeeper has left the crease to attempt to delay the game or for a legitimate purpose.

Additional changes were made to Rules 6-3-2 and 6-5-2y with risk minimization as the focus. Hooking, lifting or pinning an opponent's body with the crosse has been added to better describe holding penalties, and the loss of a helmet will be a technical foul for illegal procedure to encourage players to properly wear helmets and chin straps to ensure they stay on during play.

"Through rules changes and discussion, the committee spent a significant amount of time addressing risk minimization and the personal equipment that supports athlete safety," said Lindsey Atkinson, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Boys Lacrosse Rules Committee. "Additionally, the committee spent time addressing minor rules and editorial changes that support easier understanding and adjudication of the rules for officials."

The committee rewrote Rule 3-5-1 (Interruption of Games) to provide a procedure for an interrupted game to assist the host institution's game management, while allowing state associations to develop modifications to game-ending procedures. Now, if an interrupted game cannot be resumed on the same day and the score is not tied, it is considered legal and complete if 75 percent of playing time has elapsed. In addition, an interrupted game may be modified (reduced or running time) or terminated and considered complete by mutual agreement of the opposing teams.

In Rule 4-3-3e regarding faceoffs, language was added stating that if a faceoff player must be repeatedly adjusted, a delay-of-game penalty can be called by an official.

On-field equipment and game administration rule changes were also written, with cones now required at the corners of the team areas (Rule 1-2-9) and a working horn required at the table on the sideline (Rule 1-12) to allow a coach to call for a double horn from the field.

Rule 1-9-1b, 4 and 5, regarding player equipment, was also modified to align with other NFHS rules codes on tooth and mouth protectors. Also, for player uniforms, numbers on the back of the jersey must now be at least 8 inches tall (1-9-1h[3]) instead of 12.

Rule 7-3 regarding resuming play after a penalty was simplified. Now, all restarts after penalties will be administered laterally outside the goal area, regardless of conditions, making it more consistent for officials and players learning the game.

A complete listing of the boys lacrosse rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on "Activities & Sports" at the top of the home page and select "Lacrosse – Boys."

According to the NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey for the 2023-24 academic year, 115,001 boys participated in lacrosse at 3,278 high schools across the country.