



Hair Adornments Permitted In High School Soccer

Hair adornments, including beads, may be worn by high school soccer players beginning next fall, provided they are secured in a bun and do not present a safety hazard to the player, teammates or opponents.

This change to Rule 4-2-2 of the NFHS Soccer Rules Book was recommended by the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee at its February 6-8 meeting in Indianapolis. This change and five other rules revisions were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The allowance of hair adornments and specifically beads is an attempt to be more inclusive of participants' cultural and religious beliefs.

"The Soccer Rules Committee wants to support diversity and ensure that all competitors are welcomed in the sport of soccer while maintaining safety in the sport," said Julie Cochran, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee. "The committee felt it was important to create rules language that supported diversity of hair trends while minimizing the risk of injury to the athlete, teammates and opponents."

A revision to Rule 12-2 further defines the arm when determining handling offenses. A player is penalized for handling when carrying, striking or propelling the ball with a hand or arm, which is now further defined by the upper boundary of the arm in line with the armpit.

"The rules committee has received several inquiries regarding handling," said Stan Latta, chair of the NFHS Soccer Rules Committee. "In an effort to define what parts of the arm/hand are considered in determining handling, wording was approved to describe the specific areas of the arm/hand that should be considered when determining a handling violation."

Rule 14-1 Penalty describes the process for a penalty kick and was amended to add clarification that the kick must be kicked forward, toward the goal. If a penalty kick is not kicked forward, an indirect free kick is awarded to the defending team.

Other rules changes include:

- Rule 7-1-3 now states that a suspended game should be considered an official game if one complete half or more has been played unless otherwise set forth by state association adoption.
- Rule 10 was revised to state that a goal cannot be scored directly from a goalkeeper's throw into the opponent's goal.

- Regarding corner kicks, Rule 17-1-2 clarifies that the defending team shall be 10 yards from the corner arc until the ball is kicked and the corner kick shall be kicked from the ground within the corner arc.

A complete listing of the soccer 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 “Soccer.”

According to the most recent NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, soccer is the fifth most popular high school sport for boys with 459,077 participants in 12,552 schools nationwide. Soccer is the fourth most popular sport for girls with 394,105 participants in 12,107 schools.