

**SIGNIFICANT NF RULE CHANGES FROM USSF LAWS**  
**(August 20, 2003)**  
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I wish to thank Dan C. Heldman (USSF National Instructor Trainer), whose February, 2003 memo formed the backbone of this work. However, I have listed significant alterations by NF Rule, seriatim, as I'm more of a "linear" thinker (with full cites, as I'm also a trial attorney <g>); next, I had a few "minor" quibbles with his memorandum (e.g., charging the GK in USSF – see ATR ¶ 12.23, last sentence); and finally, this memo also incorporates the 2003-04 NF rule changes (they were not available in Dan's latest update; and NF Rules were substantially rewritten and reorganized from the prior year). All errata are solely mine. If you have any questions on this material, please e-mail me at [Cotleur\\_md@hotmail.com](mailto:Cotleur_md@hotmail.com). All references are to the 2003-04 NF rules book; and where given, to the 2003/2004 USSF LOTG (i.e., Red cover), and 2001 ATR.

Please recall that USSF (FIFA) LOTG were developed for the professional athlete. They (p. 3) expressly permit modifications for certain players, with respect to field size; the ball; size of Goal; duration of periods of play; and substitutions. However, no youth soccer, even as modified, approximates the "normal" high school contest, where athletes, often some 5 years different in age, exhibit substantial variations in size, speed, and skills. Finally, soccer in high school is first and foremost a School activity. Although we referees may quibble with a number of differences, many are well-designed to promote the goals of a high school sport which permits (and usually experiences) significant gradations in player ages, size, et cetera.

The organization is to present those more significant NF variations, by NF Rule; then give the USSF approach (where one exists). There are MANY more variations than presented here – these are just the "ones that might kill you" if you mess them up.

**RULE 1:      FIELD OF PLAY**

1.4.2 (p. 12) **Nets are Mandatory.** In USSF, they are optional [Law 1, p. 7]

P.R. 1.4.1 (C) (p. 12): **NF now permits padded goalposts!** (According to Dennis Brumfield, long-time NF Rules Committee member from WV, this is strictly limited to pads designed expressly for that purpose by the same manufacturers of the school's goal posts. He noted [at the August 2003 Rules clinic] that few do so today, but many more are expected in the coming years.) There is no similar USSF/FIFA requirement. Indeed, IFAB 2 to Law 1 (p. 10) indicates this would be illegal

1.5.1 (p. 13) It is a **Mandatory Caution** to a Coach, player or bench personnel leaving the technical area. USSF has No similar mandatory caution stated. (See Law 3, IFAB # 2, p. 14; and p. 38, which notes that most games may not even have a TA.)

1.7.1 (p. 13) **Field conditions** are up to school officials until the opening whistle. USSF: Solely up to the assigned referee, from when we arrive at the field, until we leave (Law 5; IFAB # 1, p. 17)

**RULE 2:      THE BALL**

2.2.5 (p. 14) requires the ball to carry the **official NFHS Authenticating Mark** (if your host school does not provide them, you are supposed to write this up in your post-game report). USSF has No such requirement. Certain FIFA matches do require FIFA "ID" (Law 2, IFAB # 1, p. 12)

**RULE 3: THE PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 3.1.1 (p. 14) **Team Captain**, with duties listed (no such authority in USSF; see ATR ¶ 19.4)
- 3.1.2 (p. 15) Cannot play with < 7 players (contra, USSF ATR, ¶ 3.17, permits you to continue the game with less than 7; but both NF and USSF presume the referee has determined that the reason for this is quickly resolvable.
- P.R. 3.1.3 (B) (p. 15) **Players can be added to the roster!** In USSF, players not named before the start of the game cannot play (Law 3, “All Matches,” p. 13; see also ATR ¶ 3.1).
- 3.2.1 (p.16) **Winner of coin toss has options!** In USSF, winner Must choose which goal to attack (Law 8, “Preliminaries,” p. 20); loser gets ball/kickoff.
- 3.3.1 (p. 16) **Substitutions:** Unlimited, both teams, when injured player treated on field; USSF has no such provision; and local playing rules, which usually address this anyway, ordinarily limit it to “1 for 1”) Next, No Coaching instructions at this time! USSF assumes the injured player is quickly moved off the field for treatment, so it’s somewhat a moot point. Finally, If you determine **injured player lost consciousness**, he cannot return to play w/o written OK from doctor; no such thing in USSF.
- 3.3.1 (d)(4), (e)(4), (f)(2) If a **player is substituted at a PK** for injury, Caution, or Soft Red, his **sub cannot take the kick**. No such USSF requirement.
- 3.3.1 (e)(1) (p. 16) **Cautioned player MUST leave**. USSF put out Position Paper in 2002 making such requirement Illegal in USSF-sanctioned matches.
- 3.3.2 (b) (p. 17) **Team with CK may** sub at that time, if subs already checked in (again, FIFA/USSF doesn’t address the elements of “unlimited subs,” but generally, local playing rules do NOT permit subs on CKs).
- 3.3.3 (p. 17) **Both teams, with players previously checked in, may sub on one team’s T-I!** (not usually permitted in USSF-sanctioned youth matches).
- 3.3.4 (p. 17) **IMPORTANT! A substitute becomes a player when beckoned on to the field!** In USSF, the player Must first come off the field, before the sub is permitted by the referee to enter; so there should Never be more than 11 players from one team on the FOP, at any time (Law 3, “Substitution Procedure,” p. 13); see also ATR ¶ 3.4!).
- P.R. 3.3.5 (A) (p. 19) **TRICKY! Player sent off for equipment repair cannot return until the re’s a stoppage**. In USSF, s/he may return during play (see ATR, ¶¶ 3.18 and 5.8).
- 3.4.1 (a & b) (p. 19) **IMPORTANT – SUBSTITUTION PROCEDURE!** Although all subs must first check in with nearest official, **NF permits subs to enter w/o referee approval** (indeed, often, w/o awareness!) after a score, or at the start of a new period. No One Enters in USSF, unless the referee first signals (ATR ¶ 3.4). By the way, USSF procedure also requires the player to have “checked in with the nearest official” in advance of the sub opportunity – see esp. ATR ¶¶ 3.4 and 3.5, last sentence of each!
- 3.5.1 (p. 20) **IMPORTANT! If GK and field player switch** w/o referee approval, ref **Warns both** at next stoppage. **In USSF, Mandatory Caution** to both (Law 3, “Infringements/Sanctions,” p. 14).

**RULE 4: PLAYER EQUIPMENT**

- 4.1.1 (p. 22) **Shinguards** may not be altered, and must start no more than 2” above the ankles. USSF merely requires that they “provide a reasonable degree of protection” (Law 4, p. 15).
- 4.1.1 (a) (1 & 2) (p. 22) Home team required to wear **light (visitors, dark) jerseys**; and home is to change, if color conflict. No Such Requirement in USSF.
- 4.1.1 (a)(3) (p. 22) Both **socks** same color, and one dominant color (no such USSF requirement).
- 4.1.1 (b) (1) (p. 22) **Jerseys must have numbers (Big Numbers!)** No such USSF requirement.
- 4.2.1 (c) (p. 24) **Casts** must be **padded**; and accompanied by **written OK from doctor**. USSF has no such requirement; see ATR ¶ 4.2, for our standard.
- 4.2.1 (g) (p. 24) **Knee Braces must have exposed hinges covered**. Not required in USSF; further, referee discretion as to whether a brace is dangerous (see ATR ¶4.2)
- 4.2.3 (p. 25) **Sweatbands** , both head and wrist, OK. USSF has no similar provision

**RULE 5: THE OFFICIALS**

- 5.1.1 (p. 27) NF may use **Dual or 3-whistle system**; both Verboten in USSF!
- 5.1.3 (p. 28) Referees may wear a **black cap**. USSF bans hats; ATR 5.1. USSF garb is described in Instructional Materials for Entry-level classes (USSF web site, in re Law 5 (c)).
- 5.2.2 (d & f) (pp. 28-29) **Prior to game, referee must ask both coaches** if their teams are properly equipped; and must address both teams on “Good Sportsmanship.” No similar USSF requirement; see USSF “Guide To Procedures (FRARAFO)” manual for pregame duties.
- 5.2.3.1 (b) (p. 29) Referees are required to **use approved NF signals (pp. 92-93)**. USSF has no such signals for fouls or infractions, or clock management; and opposes the use of these NF (or other highly visible) signals (see ATR ¶ 5.4).
- 5.2.3.1 (f) (p. 29) **IMPORTANT! For “Soft Reds”** (discussed infra), referee **MUST simultaneously display both cards (Yellow and Red)**, telling the coach he may bring in a sub! In USSF, there is no such animal; anyone given a Red, his team plays short (unless it was shown to a player or named sub Prior to opening kickoff; see ATR ¶ 3.14); **AND** the cards are displayed in sequence (ATR ¶ 12.30).
- 5.3.1 (e & f) (p. 29) **IMPORTANT!** Referee must **notify both coaches of all cards** issued; no such requirement in USSF.

**RULE 6: BALL HOLDERS, TIMER AND SCORER**

- 6.1.1 (p. 31) Must have **two ball holders** to start the game (no such USSF requirement).
- 6.2.2 (p. 32) Must have **a visible timing device** (no such USSF requirement).

**RULE 7: DURATION OF GAME; LENGTH OF PERIODS**

- 7.1.1 (p. 33) Either **two halves or four quarters, total of 80 minutes**. USSF/FIFA is 90 minutes; youth games have “sliding scales” of lengths based on age.
- 7.1.3. (p. 33) **Game is official if half is completed** In USSF, abandoned matches are replayed, unless competition authorities decide otherwise (Law 7, “Abandoned Match,” p. 19).
- 7.1.5 (p. 33) State Assn. may establish a **“goal differential”** by which a game is cut short (I know of none around here, MD). No such thing in USSF.
- 7.2.1 (p. 34) **Halftime Interval is only 10 minutes**, unless coaches mutually agree; in USSF/FIFA, 15 minutes (may be down to 5 minutes in some local youth leagues).
- 7.3.1 (p. 34) State Assn. may allow **overtime, but not to exceed 20 minutes** maximum. Not addressed by FIFA/USSF; up to competition authorities (see Law 7, “Periods of Play,” p. 19)
- 7.4.1 (p. 34) **Clock must be stopped** for: PK; all Cards; after goal scored; and “encroachment” (not sure why this is here, since it is by definition a Card anyway). In USSF, we do not “stop” time, we ADD it (see ATR 7.2)

**RULE 8: START OF PLAY (no differences with USSF)****RULE 9: BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY**

- 9.1.2 (c) (p. 35) **IMPORTANT! Play stops after the referee whistles**. This is a subtle, but sometimes critical, difference with USSF, where it is stated that play stops “when the referee decides to stop, not when he blows the whistle” (see ATR ¶ 9.1) For example, assume a defender fouls an attacker in his PA, and the referee signals for a PK; however, the referee then observes his AR’s flag for Offside, before the restart. In that scenario, in NF, the restart is PK; in USSF, it is IFK “coming out” (for the Offside) (See also ATR ¶12.32).
- 9.1.3 (p. 36) **IMPORTANT! A second (restart) whistle is Mandatory** for: PK; after sub; after misconduct, injury, encroachment. For USSF, a signal (not necessarily a whistle) is “required” only for KO, restarting for PK, and after stopping the restart in order to set a “ceremonial wall” for a FK (see, e.g., ATR ¶ 5.4).
- 9.2.1 (a & d) (p. 36) **A Drop Ball** is used to restart **after simultaneous** touches (ball into touch) or fouls. In USSF, this is Not permitted (see ATR ¶ 9.3)
- 9.2.3 (p. 37) **There must be two opposing players at a drop ball**. In USSF, there is no requirement for Any player to be present (ATR ¶ 8.5)
- 9.3.1 (p. 37) If, when a referee stops play for injury or “unusual situation,” and one team is in **“clear possession,” they restart with IFK**. No such USSF provision.

**RULE 10 (SCORING) - Nothing significantly different, for referee purposes****RULE 11 (OFFSIDE) – Nothing significantly different, for referee purposes**

**RULE 12 FOULS AND MISCONDUCT**

P.R. 12.2.1 (C) (p. 50) Player moving hand to protect themselves from a ball, **“deliberately handled.”**  
In USSF, this action is NOT enough in itself for a foul (see ATR ¶ 12.9).

P.R. 12.3.1 (A) (b) (p. 51) **IMPORTANT! (“Location of Foul!”)** A GK inside his PA, who reaches out to grab an opponent legitimately off the field in the normal run of play, commits a “foul,” which is then a PK (see also P.R. 12.8.1 (A), p. 56). In USSF, this can never be a foul – contact was off the field (see, e.g., ATR ¶¶ 12.1 and 12.6 (b).)

12.6.1 (p. 52). **“Dangerous Play”** includes being dangerous to oneself or a teammate. In USSF, there are three required elements: dangerous to someone; opponent nearby; and (big difference!) opponent disadvantaged from playing by it (see ATR ¶ 12.13).

12.7.4 (p. 53) **IMPORTANT!** If a player commits **trickery on a passback**, it is treated no differently than if s/he merely kicked the ball back, and the GK used his hands: i.e., no Card, and IFK from spot of handling (if no handling, no infraction!). In USSF, the player committing the trickery is automatically Cautioned; the restart is at the spot of the trickery; and it is irrelevant whether the GK ever handles the ball (see ATR ¶ 12.28.1, bottom of page).

12.8.1 (p. 54) **IMPORTANT!** NF requires us to issue **cards to coaches and “bench personnel”** In USSF, Cards may be shown only to players and named substitutes (see ATR ¶ 3.14).

12.8.1 (d) (p. 55) NF permits issuing a **Caution for “Incidental use of vulgar or profane language.”** No such critter in USSF: it’s either OIAL, and therefore Red – or nothing (see ATR ¶ 12.31) - unless it’s also Dissent!

12.8.1 (f) (p. 55) Bans use of **tobacco** at the game site while the refs have jurisdiction. In USSF, we can deal with players smoking (ATR ¶ 12.28.1, top of next page), but not other refs! However, note that most of our (USFF) venues have “local rules” banning tobacco.

12.8.1 (p. 55) **IMPORTANT! If play is stopped to Caution, the restart is where the ball was!** In USSF, it is at the spot of the Misconduct (see ATR ¶ 12.25) for players, or where the ball was for non-players (Law 8, “Procedure,” p. 20).

12.8.2 (p. 55) **IMPORTANT! SOFT RED** for taunting; excessive celebration, or second Caution (meaning, the disqualified player can be replaced). In USSF, all “ejections” mean the team plays short. Further, USSF has no such Misconduct as **“Taunting”** or **“excessive celebration;”** either could be USB or OAIL – referee discretion

12.8.3 (p. 55) **IMPORTANT!** NF permits (requires!) us to issue **Red Cards** as well **to coaches and “bench personnel** (see 12.8.1, supra); cannot do this in USSF/FIFA..

12.8.3 (d)(2) (p. 56) **IMPORTANT! NF HAS NO RED CARD FOR DOGSO-H.** In other words, in NF if a player denies a Goal through handling, he is ejected; if he merely denies the opportunity, it is not a Red card. See USSF Law 12, “Sending-Off Offense” # 4, and ATR ¶ 12.36 et seq.

P.R. 12.8.3 (E) (p. 58) A player Fouling (non-handling) to **“DOGS Opportunity” must be sent off**, even if a goal is scored. In USSF, if the goal is “scored directly” the player Cannot be sent off (see ATR 12.39!)

12.8.4 (p. 56) **IMPORTANT – AND NEW! A coach may be disqualified for team or bench Misconduct.** To the contrary, the ATR states coaches may not be issued cards, and are to be disciplined for their own actions (§ 5.10).

### **RULE 13: FREE KICK**

**13.2.1 (f) (p. 60) BONUS TO LOYAL READERS!** This is an obvious error, and should be deleted from NF rules (see page 71).

13.2.2 (l) (p. 60) There's that **"clear possession"** IFK again! No such thing in USSF.

### **RULE 14: PENALTY KICKS**

14.1.3 (p. 62) **IMPORTANT! If teammate of kicker encroaches, and the ball rebounds into play, IFK to defenders.** In USSF, we only stop play and award the IFK if the encroacher Touches the ball (see Law 14, "Infringements/Sanctions" (Col. 1), p. 31; and ATR § 14.12).

P.R.14.1.3 (A) (p. 63) Such **encroachment is a "Mandatory" Caution.** In USSF, only the second offense is Cautioned (ATR § 14.12).

14.1.4 (p. 62) Once a player starts **movement to take a PK**, s/he may not stop. In USSF, "deceptive maneuvers" are now permissible (see ATR 14.9, NOTE at end).

### **RULE 15: THROW-IN**

15.1.5 (p. 64) If a **Throw-in never enters the field, give it to the opposing team!** In FIFA/USSF, hogwash: bad throws are retaken; and only illegal throws go to the opposing team.

**RULE 16: GOAL KICK (no difference)**

**RULE 17: CORNER KICK (no difference)**

### **KFTPM PROCEDURES**

In NF, any rostered, non-disqualified player may be selected to participate (whether or not on the field at the end of play!), in any order as long as the first five do not kick until all others have had a kick. After the first 5, it's "semi-sudden victory," in that it goes one more kick for each team at a time, until one scores when the other doesn't. If the score remains tied after 10 kicks, the coach may select any five to start Round 3 (see "Tie Game Procedure," p. 72).

In USSF, only players on the field at the end of the game may participate (ATR § 19.1). If a team is short-handed due to injury or disqualification, the other team must "reduce to equate" before the start of the kicks (ATR § 19.2; N.B. this is also the sole mention of a team captain's functions). Further, effective this year for the first time, FIFA/USSF now allows the winner of the coin toss to choose to kick first or second ("KFTPM Procedure," p. 36), as is done in NF. Finally, all players except the kicker and both GKs must remain in the center circle the entire time. (id.)

**[end!]**