



NEWS RELEASE

Player Equipment, Penalty Corners Focus of High School Field Hockey Rules Changes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 6, 2026) — Changes to mouthguard recommendations and penalty corner rules were among three revisions recommended by the NFHS Field Hockey Rules Committee at its January 12-14 in Indianapolis. All recommended changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors and take effect with the 2026 high school field hockey season.

"These rule changes reflect the committee's continued commitment to player safety, fair play, and consistent officiating," said Monica Maxwell, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Field Hockey Rules Committee. "Clarifying equipment standards for mouth protectors helps ensure they serve their intended protective purpose without creating unnecessary risk. The adjustments to penalty corner substitutions and procedures reinforce the importance of consistency, accountability, and game flow during critical moments of play."

In Rule 1-6-1 regarding equipment, subsections now include that mouth protectors should "not include any attachment(s) that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth and "not include anything on it that is a health or risk issues and can pose a danger to themselves or other players."

Changes were also made to the playing rules regarding exceptions for substitutions prior to a penalty corner. According to Rule 4-4-3, substitution is only permitted for an ill, injured, suspended or disqualification of the defending goalkeeper. That goalkeeper must be replaced by

a properly equipped substitute goalkeeper. If the goalkeeper is suspended, the offending team plays with one fewer player.”

The rules committee noted that the new language “ensures a properly equipped goalkeeper is in place and at the same time preserves the integrity and continuity of the penalty corner procedure.”

Also for penalty corners, under changes to Rule 10-3-3, which deals with criteria for completion, the rules now state that if an attacker enters the circle before the ball is played, the inserter shall be required to go beyond the center line. Previously, the offending player was required to go beyond the center line.

The rules committee explained that by requiring the inserter to go beyond the center line when an attacker enters the circle, it provides a clear, consistent and easily administered penalty.

“This approach simplifies enforcement by removing uncertainty about which player must be sent back and promotes consistent positioning prior to the penalty corner. It also reinforces proper timing and discipline by the attacking team during the penalty corner setup.”

A complete listing of the field hockey rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Field Hockey” and then “Rules.” The print version of the 2026 Field Hockey Rules Book will be available for purchase in late April at www.NFHS.com, and the digital version will be available in April via NFHS Digital at www.NFHS.org.

According to the 2024-25 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, a total of 50,764 girls participated in field hockey at 1,768 schools nationwide.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 18 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,800 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 8.2 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online

publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Bruce Howard, 317-972-6900
Director of Publications and Communications
National Federation of State High School Associations
bhoward@nfhs.org

Chris Boone, 317-972-6900
Assistant Director of Publications and Communications
National Federation of State High School Associations
cboone@nfhs.org

Jordan Morey, 317-972-6900
Manager of Communications and Media Relations
National Federation of State High School Association
jmorey@nfhs.org