



2019-2020 NFHS Soccer Points of Emphasis

1. **Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Injury Prevention:** Injuries to the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) are devastating to athletes at all levels of competition. An ACL tear requires surgery and results in 6 to 12 months of rehabilitation before return to sports. It also increases the risk of future knee osteoarthritis. The majority of ACL tears are noncontact injuries, occurring while cutting, pivoting, or landing from a jump. The remainder of the injuries result from a direct blow to the knee or leg.

ACL injuries are more common in girls' soccer than any other high school sport. In soccer, girls are 3 times more likely to tear their ACL than boys. Boys' soccer has the highest rate of ACL injuries of all non-collision boys' sports.

Given the significant short-term and long-term consequences of ACL injuries, a great deal of research has focused on strategies for injury prevention. Protective bracing does not minimize the risk of injury. In fact, we have no studies showing that "contact" ACL injuries can be prevented. However, we do know that noncontact injuries, the ones that result from cutting, pivoting, or jumping, can be minimized through the use of specific neuromuscular training programs.

The goal of such training programs is to teach athletes proper body mechanics in jumping, landing, and running. Through a series of warm-up drills, athletes can improve physical skills and decrease the risk of a noncontact ACL injury. The NFHS is now offering a free online course on "ACL Injury Prevention" on NFHSLearn at <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/61163/acl-injury-prevention>. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) strongly supports the implementation of this course in high school and middle school soccer programs in effort to decrease the risk of serious knee injuries.

2. **Pre-game communication between the school administration and game officials:** An authorized representative of the host school shall greet the officials upon their arrival. The host school principal, principal's designee or game administrator must indicate to the head official or center referee his/her location should a situation develop where his/her assistance is needed during a contest. The contest coaches should not serve as the principal's designee or game administrator. The expectation is that the principal's designee or game administrator will take positive action to maintain an atmosphere of good sportsmanship within the spectator seating area.
3. **Official's communicating misconduct with coaches:** NFHS Rule 5-3 states that game officials shall communicate the nature of misconduct to coaches, the scorer and other officials when a yellow/red card has been issued. This communication is a notification and not an explanation. It is not intended to be an opportunity for the coach to discuss or dissent the call. It is, however, an educational opportunity for the coach to address and/or correct the behavior of the carded individual. It is important to note that interscholastic athletics are an extension of the classroom and the behavior of all involved should reflect as such. Coaches and officials are expected to model good sportsmanship and to uphold the honor and dignity of their profession. This includes all interactions with student-athletes, other coaches and officials, school administration and spectators.