

Goaltending and Basket Interference Addressed in 2025-26 Basketball Rules Changes

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A trio of changes to address when goaltending and basket interference are called are among the changes to high school basketball rules for the 2025-26 season.

These revisions to the NFHS Basketball Rules Book are among the six changes recommended by the Basketball Rules Committee during its April 28-30 meeting in Indianapolis – all of which were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Rule 4-22-3 has been added to indicate that a ball is considered to be on its downward flight once it contacts the backboard on a legitimate shot attempt. Therefore, it is goaltending if a defensive player touches the ball after it contacts the backboard. Prior to this change, an official determined if a shot attempt was still ascending and out of the cylinder before goaltending could be called.

“By establishing that a ball is considered to be on its downward flight upon contacting the backboard, this rule change introduces a clear and objective standard,” said Monica Maxwell, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Basketball Rules Committee. “It significantly reduces the need for officials to make subjective judgments regarding the trajectory of a shot, thereby enhancing consistency and accuracy in goaltending calls.”

Rules 4-22-1 and 4-22-2 were amended to indicate that only a defensive player can commit goaltending, eliminating the possibility of an offensive goaltending violation. The change removes the need to determine whether a ball in flight is a field-goal attempt or a pass. Any alteration of a shot attempt with contact to the basket or backboard by an offensive player would be considered basket interference.

Additionally, the act of intentionally slapping or striking the backboard during a shot attempt will now result in basket interference and not a technical foul. This addition of new Rule 4-6-2 and corresponding removal of Rule 10-4-4b from the “Player Technical” section aims to standardize officiating and remove intent from the decision.

Similarly, it is a violation for a player to purposely or deceitfully delay a return to the court after being out of bounds and be the first to touch the ball in new language added in Rules 9-2-12 and 9-3-4. This change removes the act from Rule 10-4-2, which called for a technical foul and lessens the penalty to a violation.

In a change to Rule 4-34-1, all players in the game will be considered bench personnel once an official signals for a time-out. This change ensures consistent enforcement of penalties for unsporting conduct by allowing officials to issue technical fouls to bench personnel during time-outs. Prior to this change, if a

player warranted a penalty for unsporting conduct during a time-out, an official was required to determine if the player had been in the game or on the bench.

“One of the points of emphasis this year will be bench decorum,” said Billy Strickland, executive director of the Alaska School Activities Association and chair of the NFHS Basketball Rules Committee. “How can we help coaches and officials know that communication is a two-way street? It just needs to be done a proper manner.”

The determination of the location for a throw-in after a stoppage of play was adjusted in Rule 7-5-4 using the three-point line. If a violation occurs on or within the three-point line, the designated spot will be on the end line. A throw-in will be on the sideline if the violation occurs outside the three-point line. This rule change eliminates the use of the imaginary line to determine a throw-in spot.

According to the most recent NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, basketball is the third-most popular sport for boys with 536,668 participants in 18,587 schools, and the fourth-most popular sport for girls with 367,284 participants at 18,090 schools.