



NFHS Girls Lacrosse Rules Blast

This Week's Focus: Shooting Space

Officials, this week's rules focus is **Shooting Space**. This is one of the most important safety calls in NFHS Girls Lacrosse. It requires us to read more than the defender's location. We must know whether the attacker has a real opportunity to shoot, whether the defender is illegally occupying the free space to goal, and whether that defender is legally marking another player.

The Big Picture

Shooting Space exists to protect players from being encouraged or forced to shoot at a defender. A defender may not use any part of her body to guard the goal from outside the goal circle in a way that obstructs the free space to goal. But remember: **not every defender in the lane creates Shooting Space**.

Before You Make the Call

1. Is the ball carrier within the critical scoring area, within 12 meters of goal?
2. Does the ball carrier have the opportunity to shoot safely?
3. Is the defender's body in the free space to goal?
4. Is the defender legally marking another attacker within a stick's length?
5. Did the defender move through the space quickly, or did she stop, hesitate, or turn to play the ball carrier?

Key Reminder

The ball carrier must have an opportunity to shoot. If the attacker is too far out, too tightly marked, below goal line extended with no shooting opportunity, looking to pass, or otherwise unable to execute a shot safely, we should not manufacture a Shooting Space call. Read the play. See the attacker's options. Then decide.

No Call Situations

- Ball carrier is outside the critical scoring area or does not have a realistic opportunity to shoot.
- Defender is legally marking another attacker within a stick's length.
- An attacker cuts across the lane and brings her defender through the free space to goal.
- Defender moves through the free space quickly and does not stop, hesitate, or turn to play the ball carrier.
- Defender leads with her stick and keeps her body out of the free space.
- Ball carrier is below goal line extended and does not have a safe shooting opportunity.

Call Situations

- Defender's body is in the free space to goal and the ball carrier has the opportunity to shoot.
- A low defender is standing in or moving into the lane without legally marking an attacker.
- Ball carrier beats her defender and another defender moves directly toward her without getting out of Shooting Space.
- Goalkeeper leaves the goal circle and positions herself in the free space to goal.
- Defender stops marking, turns to play the ball carrier, and remains in the free space.
- In a zone, defenders behind the pressure player step into the shooting lane without legally marking.

Zone Defense Reminder

When teams play zone defense, officials must be especially aware of the defenders behind the pressure player. The defender on ball may be legal, but the next layer of defenders can create Shooting Space if they are standing in or moving into the free space to goal without legally marking an attacker.

Do not ball-watch. Widen your vision and identify the defender who is creating the unsafe lane.

Mechanics Reminder

- Visually identify the illegal defender.
- Confirm that the ball carrier is within the critical scoring area.
- Confirm that the ball carrier has an opportunity to shoot.
- Stop play before the shot is taken.
- Signal Shooting Space.
- Communicate the offending player's number to your partner.
- Set the free position correctly and restart with a whistle.

This Week's Focus

Be patient, but decisive. Do not guess Shooting Space just because a defender is near the lane. At the same time, when the attacker has a clear opportunity to shoot and a defender's body is illegally in the free space to goal, we need an immediate whistle.

On-Field Cue

See the lane. Read the shooter. Protect the players.

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