



September 30, 2026

NFHS Soccer Weekly Rule Interpretations

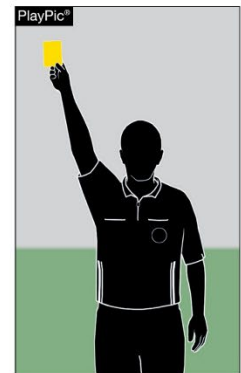
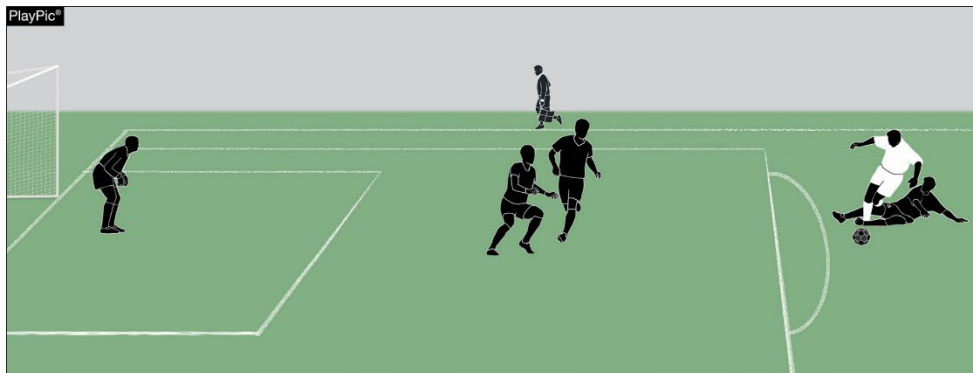
Stopping a Promising Attack (SPA)

Rules References: 12-7

A promising attack is moving quickly toward the opposing team's goal with the promise or potential to become a clear goal-scoring opportunity for the attacking team. This can occur anywhere on the field. When determining if an attack is promising, the following considerations would include but are not limited to:

- distance between the offense and the goal;
- general direction of the play;
- likelihood of keeping or gaining control of the ball;
- location and number of defenders;
- attacking team is moving forward with pace (speed);
- open space in front of the player with the ball or the presence of other attackers
- who could receive the ball;
- player has the option to take on defender or pass to teammate;
- the attacker has assistance from teammates.

NOTE: When a player commits an offense against an opponent within their own penalty area which stops a promising attack and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offender is not cautioned if the offense was an attempt to play the ball; in all other circumstances (e.g., holding, pulling, pushing, no possibility to play the ball, etc.) the offending player shall be cautioned.



SITUATION 1: In the PlayPic above, attacker A4 is dribbling the ball outside Team B's penalty area. Defender B12 carelessly trips A4, stopping a promising attack. **RULING:** Player B12 is cautioned and shown the yellow card for unsporting conduct because their foul stopped a promising attack. [12-5-1g(6)]

SITUATION 2: Trailing by one goal, Player B10 gains possession of the ball on Team B's side of the field with open space to advance. B10 initiates a counterattack with a supporting number of teammates marked by an equal number of Team A's defenders. Opposing Player A9 pulls B10's jersey to slow B10's forward progress near the halfway line. **RULING:** Player A9 is cautioned for unsporting conduct because they stopped a promising attack. Team B is awarded a direct free kick from where the foul occurred. **COMMENT:** A promising attack can develop anywhere on the field. This is not DOGSO because of the number of defenders present. Therefore, it is missing one of the four required DOGSO considerations, yet the presence of other considerations helps identify this as a promising attack. (12-7-1)

SITUATION 3: Attacker A7 is dribbling the ball inside Team B's penalty area and is moving toward the goal with a promising attack. Multiple defenders are between A7 and the goal. The referee awards a penalty kick after defender B2 (a) pulls A7's jersey so Team B's goalkeeper can collect the ball; (b) carelessly pushes A7 off the ball; (c) while attempting to play the ball carelessly trips A7.

RULING: In (a) and (b), B2 is cautioned for unsporting conduct because they stopped a promising attack. Although a penalty kick was awarded, a caution is still issued because there was not an attempt to play the ball. In (c), B2 is not cautioned because there was an attempt to play the ball. (12-7-3)

SITUATION 4: Attacker A7 is dribbling the ball inside Team B's penalty area and is moving toward the goal with a promising attack. Multiple defenders are between A7 and the goal. The referee awards a penalty kick after defender B2 recklessly tackles A7 from the side while attempting to play the ball. The referee cautions B2 and shows the yellow card. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** While this is similar to part (c) in the situation above B2 is cautioned for unsporting conduct because of reckless play regardless of interrupting A7's promising attack. (12-7-3)

SITUATION 5: Attacker A7 is dribbling the ball inside Team B's penalty area and is moving toward the goal with a promising attack. Multiple defenders are between A7 and the goal. The referee awards a penalty kick after defender B2 tackles A7 from behind using excessive force while attempting to play the ball. The referee ejects B2 and shows the red card. **RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** Regardless of the tactical implications of the foul or the attempt to play the ball, B2 has committed serious foul play and is ejected. (12-6-1d)