

FIH, HNZ and CHA Rule Changes 2026

These updates should be understood alongside the overarching principles of the game:

- Ensuring player safety
- Maintaining fairness and integrity of play

1. Too Many Players on the Field (Rule 2.1)

Update:

Where a team has too many players on the field and this materially affects the match, a yellow card must be issued to the captain.

Implications:

- This replaces the previous ambiguity around “personal penalties.”
- The sanction is now clearly defined and more severe.

Guidance for Teams:

- Ensure substitutions are well managed and clearly communicated.
- Captains and managers must take responsibility for maintaining correct player numbers at all times.

2. Aerial Balls (Rule 9.10)

Update:

Defenders are now permitted to challenge for an aerial ball after the receiver’s first touch, rather than waiting for full control.

Implications:

- Allows for a more realistic and fair contest for possession.
- Maintains the requirement for an initial 5-metre safety distance.

Guidance for Players:

- The receiving player retains priority to the ball.
- Defenders may apply pressure earlier but must do so safely.
- If the initial receiver is unclear, the team that lifted the ball must allow the opposition to receive it.

Coaching Focus:

- Receiving skills under pressure.
- Defensive anticipation and timing.
- Continued emphasis on safety in aerial situations.

3. Ball Striking an Umpire (Rule 11.8)**Update:**

If the ball strikes an umpire and this results in an unfair advantage, play will be stopped and restarted with a bully.

Implications:

- Removes unintended advantages gained from accidental contact with an umpire.

Guidance for Players:

- Continue playing unless directed otherwise.
- Be aware that play may be brought back if an advantage occurs.

4. Penalty Corner Protective Equipment (Rule 13.3n)**Update:**

Defenders are permitted to pass the ball while wearing penalty corner protective equipment, but:

- They may not take a self-pass while wearing the equipment
- They may not pass to another player who is also wearing protective equipment
- Players cannot wear their masks outside the 23m area

Implications:

- Supports faster transitions from defence to attack.
- Maintains safety and fairness around restarts.

Guidance for Players:

- A quick pass is permitted immediately following a defensive free hit.
- Players must remove protective equipment as soon as reasonably possible.
- Normal play (including self-pass) may only resume once equipment is removed.

5. Management of Protective Equipment

Clarifications:

- Players may continue wearing protective equipment within the defensive 23m area if there is no immediate opportunity to remove it.
- All equipment must be removed before leaving the defensive 23m area.

Sanctions:

- Free hit awarded against the defence if:
 - A self-pass is taken while wearing protective equipment
 - A player leaves the defensive 23m area still wearing protective equipment
- Dangerous or negligent removal of equipment (e.g. throwing gear):
 - Mandatory yellow card if it hits an opponent or umpire on or above the knee

Guidance for Teams:

- Promote safe and controlled removal of equipment.
- Reinforce discipline and awareness in transition moments.

6. Goalkeeper Equipment Specifications

Update:

The maximum permitted length of the goalkeeper's hand protector has increased slightly for safety and compliance purposes.

Implications:

- No material impact on gameplay.
- Ensures alignment with updated safety standards