

2026 Girls Lacrosse Rules Points of Emphasis

Communication and Rules Alignment

Officials emphasized that coaches should ask questions, not make comments, with communication routed through only the designated head coach. Rules knowledge is essential, as rules vary across leagues, and coaches should educate parents to avoid difficult situations.

Sideline Behavior and Game Administration

Coaches' tone is crucial, as it influences sideline behavior. All communication must happen during dead balls or timeouts, not live play. Jewelry is strictly prohibited and will be heavily enforced; covering piercings with tape is not allowed for safety reasons.

Rules Clarifications and Fouls

Officials clarified key differences, including the elimination of the one-completed-pass rule in GNL 12U and the updated 10U draw rule. The horizontal stick rule remains heavily enforced across all levels and will be an area of emphasis this season.

Details

Effective Communication Guidelines

Officials encourage coaches to be approachable by asking questions rather than making comments. Coaches should come prepared with a solid understanding of the rules, and both head coaches should be present for pregame and halftime discussions to avoid any perception of favoritism. Officials prefer to communicate with only one designated head coach, with assistant coaches routing communication through them.

Importance of Rules Knowledge and Education

Rules can vary between seasons, tournaments, and leagues such as Mizlax and GNL, making it important for coaches to stay informed. Coaches are encouraged to educate parents as well, since misunderstandings can create challenges for officials. The shared goal is a partnership that ensures a safe, fair, and positive environment focused on teaching the game.

Sideline Behavior and Communication Timing

A coach's tone directly impacts player and parent behavior. Communication with officials should focus on clarification rather than confrontation and should occur during appropriate stoppages in play—not during live action. Officials will communicate the reason for cardable offenses to help maintain transparency and rapport.

Administrative and Game Expectations

Proper field setup and markings are essential, particularly for 8U and 10U games. Jewelry is not allowed, and taping over piercings is not permitted due to safety concerns. Table and clock personnel should include one representative from each team and function as part of the officiating crew, with awareness of timing and penalty procedures.

Cards at 10U and Parent Conduct

Yellow cards will be used at the 10U level due to increased physicality. Coaches are responsible for addressing parent behavior if concerns are raised. Officials will not engage directly with parents and will instead work through coaches or site staff if intervention is needed.

Official Assignments and Feedback

Assignments are based on experience, certification, competitiveness, division level, availability, and location. Professional sideline behavior and respectful communication help ensure quality officiating crews. Constructive feedback is encouraged through appropriate channels, including GNL staff and assigners.

Rules on Jewelry and Heat Acclimation

Jewelry is not permitted; however, permanent items may be taped down to the body if necessary to reduce injury risk. Heat-related game adjustments are managed by tournament directors using weather guidelines and communicated through official channels.

10U Draw Rule and Ball Supply

The 10U draw rule has been updated so that all non-draw players line up on the goal line extended and are released on the whistle, increasing game flow and participation. The home team is responsible for providing game balls, though teams should bring their own for warm-ups.

Stick-to-Stick Contact at 10U

Not all stick-to-stick contact is considered a foul at the 10U level. It becomes a foul

when the defender initiates contact to check the ball. Contact created by the offense during passing is not a check. Physical contact, including “riding the hip,” is not allowed.

Defensive Rules and Fouls

Players should focus on playing strong defense without body contact. Defenders should avoid crowding in front of the goal to prevent 3-second violations. Using the body or hips to displace an opponent on ground balls is a foul at all levels. At 14U, both man-to-man and zone defenses are allowed.

Defense in the CSA and Passing Rules

At 8U and 10U, defenders must play one-on-one in the midfield, though help defense is allowed in the critical scoring area. The 3-second rule applies when defenders are not actively marking within a stick’s length. The previous 12U rule requiring a completed pass before a shot has been removed in GNL.

Clarification of Shooting Space

Shooting space is determined by the triangle between the shooter and the goal. Defenders must actively mark their player within a stick’s length to avoid fouls and should lead with their stick rather than their body. Offensive players may not intentionally create shooting space violations.

Pass in Offensive Zone and Mercy Rules

For a pass to count in the offensive zone, both players must be below the midfield line. Mercy rules apply at 10U and 12U when a team is down by eight or more goals, requiring three completed passes before shooting, including one in the offensive zone. At 8U, no score is kept, but one attempted pass is required before a shot.

Horizontal Stick Enforcement

The horizontal stick rule (stick held between 10 and 2 o’clock) will be strictly enforced at all levels, including during picks. Officials noted an increase in violations, making this a key focus area. High school rules also prohibit the horizontal stick.