

Laws of the Game Updates – 2026/2027

The ECNL and N1 League (South District 2) will adopt all of the new FIFA law changes with one exception. The league will NOT adopt the law regarding players covering their mouth with their hand to disguise potentially discriminatory behavior or communication. Since this was an optional law change the league is choosing not to adopt this law and it should not be enforced. Of course, the league does not tolerate discriminatory behavior or communication, so if a referee observes or sees this behavior directly, please address with appropriate sanctions and reporting.

Additionally, the league will NOT adopt the "Only the Captain" protocol for the 2026-27 season before it becomes mandatory in the 2027-28 season and this rule will not apply. This continues our stance from last season as the law remains optional at this point.

- Time Wasting Penalties
 - **5-second restart:** Referees start a visible 5-second countdown if a player delays a throw-in or goal kick. Delaying a throw-in flips possession; delaying a goal kick gives the opponent a corner kick.
 - **8-second restart:** Goalkeepers holding the ball with hands/arms inside the box are limited to 8 seconds; exceeding it now awards the opponent a corner kick
 - **Foul Throw in:** A throw in must be taken from the exact point where the ball crossed the touchline. If a player takes it significantly away from the correct spot to gain an unfair advantage or deceive opponents, it is treated as a foul throw. Possession immediately switches to the opposing team. Referees do not grant a "do over" for taking a throw in from the wrong place.

2. ECNL Competition Rules Updates

Starting in the 2026-27 ECNL regular season U13 and U14 Boys and Girls regular season matches will have unlimited substitutions and move to a "substitution moment" system.

- 3 Substitution moments per half
- Unlimited substitutions within that moment
- If a team piggy-backs on a moment that the other team made, it counts toward a use of both teams moments
- Halftime does not count as a moment, but can be used for unlimited substitutions.
- If there is a suspected head injury and a temporary substitute enters the field for the injured player to be evaluated this does not count as a moment unless other substitutes also enter during the stoppage

3.9.2 U13 – U14 ECNL Regular Season Competition in Conference Play. Clubs have unlimited player substitutions within three "Substitution Moments" in each half and at halftime. A "Substitution Moment" is a stoppage in play when the coach of an ECNL Team is allowed by the referee to substitute players. If both teams substitute players in the same Substitution Moment, the Substitution Moment counts as one of the three allowed Substitution Moments for both ECNL Teams. Any eligible ECNL Registered Player may be substituted in each Substitution Moment. A substitution of a player under Rule 3.9.4 "Head Injury" will not count as a Substitution Moment, provided only the player with the potential head injury is substituted.

Laws of the Game:

<https://downloads.theifab.com/downloads/laws-of-the-game-202627-double-pages?l=en>

For complete rostering details, see ECNL competition rules on the **ECNL Resource Center website**.

https://theecn1.com/sports/2024/9/24/GEN_0924244515.aspx

For complete rostering details, see N1 competition rules on the **N1 Resource Center website**.

<https://national1league.org/resources/>