

# NSL Rules & Regulations

Change Summary · v6.2 → v7.0

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This document highlights the substantive differences between NSL Rules & Regulations **v6.2** (March 2026) and **v7.0** (May 2026). It is intended as a quick reference for team captains, players, referees, and tournament organizers preparing for the transition to the new ruleset. Where wording was tightened but intent remained the same, those edits are noted only briefly. Where the rule itself changed — particularly around the new penalty system — the changes are explained in detail.

**Important.** This is an unofficial summary. In any case of conflict, the official NSL v7.0 rulebook is the authoritative source.

<b>Previous version</b>	v6.2 (dated 03.06)
<b>Current version</b>	v7.0 (dated 05.2026)
<b>Scope</b>	5v5 official, 3v3, equipment, penalties, VAR, scoring
<b>Audience</b>	Players, captains, referees, partners

# 1. Executive overview

*What changed at a glance*

v7.0 is the most significant rules revision since the introduction of the VAR system. While the core game format (5 vs 5, three tries per round, point zones, flag hangs, buzzers) is unchanged, the way fouls are punished has been completely re-engineered around a numeric **Penalty Balance** economy, a new **NSL Values** framework explicitly governs interpretation of the rules, and several new categories of foul have been formally codified.

## The headline changes

- **NSL Values & Spirit of the Game** — a new Section 2 establishes core values (Sportsmanship, Integrity, Fair Competition, Respect, Community) that explicitly supersede technical rule interpretation.
- **Penalty system rebuilt** — penalties now carry a numeric cost (-1, -3, -6, -12) deducted from a Team Penalty Balance, with strict rules on how teams must pay the balance back. The old 1st/2nd/3rd-degree + administrative structure has been replaced.
- **New "Pulls" tier** — the lowest level of intervention, with no team or player cost (e.g. hose no-call, breakout positioning issues).
- **Penalty Stacking caps** — 3 stackable penalties = sit out remainder + next match; 7th = player suspended for the tournament; 21st team penalty = team suspended.
- **Roster minimums lifted** — 6 players minimum for 5v5, 4 for 3v3 (was 5 / no min).
- **Hot vs. lethal gun** distinction — over 1.20 J is now a Major (lethal); 1.11–1.20 J is a separate 1st-Degree (hot).
- **VAR scope expanded** — VAR now also reviews 2nd-Degree penalties and is no longer hard-capped at 2 minutes; integrity takes precedence.
- **Mercy / no-show** — no-show now scores 5–0 (was 35–0).
- **Magazine limits** — explicit per-try caps of 4 mags (rifle) and 3 mags (pistol).
- **Trigger discipline codified** — explicit prohibition on binary fire forced by trigger adjustment or technique; thumb-around-grip mandated.
- **Hot zone PPE** — masks/goggles required when entering hot zone (new safety rule).
- **Game-altering catalogue** — explicit lists of fouls that are *always*, *never*, or *situationally* game-altering.

*If you only read one section, read Section 3 (the penalty system overhaul). Almost every player- and team-facing decision now flows through the new Penalty Balance mechanic, and getting it wrong will cost matches.*

## 2. NSL Values & Spirit of the Game (NEW)

*Entirely new Section 2 in v7.0*

v7.0 introduces a formal values framework absent in v6.2. The new section asserts that rules cannot anticipate every situation and that the **NSL Values supersede technical interpretations** of the rulebook. This is a meaningful shift: it explicitly empowers the organization to issue rulings based on the spirit of competition even where the literal text would suggest a different outcome.

### The five core values

<b>Sportsmanship</b>	Compete with intensity, but always with respect for opponents, referees, teammates, and the game.
<b>Integrity</b>	Act in good faith; exploiting loopholes or technicalities to undermine fair competition is contrary to the spirit of the league, even when not explicitly prohibited.
<b>Fair Competition</b>	Outcomes should be determined by skill, teamwork, preparation, and performance — not manipulation.
<b>Respect &amp; Professionalism</b>	Players represent themselves, their team, the league, sponsors, and the wider community.
<b>Community &amp; Growth</b>	Contribute positively to the community and welcome new participants.

### Practical effect

- Where written rules are **incomplete**, where a rule produces an outcome contrary to fair competition, or where a technical interpretation conflicts with the values, NSL may make immediate clarifications, adjustments or rulings.
- Conduct deemed harmful to the integrity, reputation, fairness, or spirit of the competition may be penalized **even when not explicitly described elsewhere** in the rulebook.
- Participation in the league now implies acceptance of both the written rules and the principles behind them.
- Several existing penalties (e.g. unsportsmanlike behavior, verbal abuse) are now explicitly tied back to the Values.

## 3. The penalty system overhaul

*The single biggest mechanical change in v7.0*

v6.2 used five penalty categories — Major, 1st Degree, 2nd Degree, 3rd Degree, and Administrative — each tied to a fixed number of tries played short-handed. v7.0 replaces this with a numeric **cost-and-balance** system: penalties deduct points from a team's Penalty Balance, and teams must pay the balance back to zero by playing tries with one or two players short.

### Old structure (v6.2) vs. new structure (v7.0)

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
<b>Five categories:</b> Major / 1st / 2nd / 3rd Degree / Administrative.	<b>Five categories:</b> Pull / Minor / 2nd Degree / 1st Degree / Major.
Each penalty defined by tries-out for the player and a separate description for the team's short-handed obligation.	Each penalty has a numeric <b>cost</b> (Pull 0, Minor -1, 2nd -3, 1st -6, Major -12) deducted from the Team Penalty Balance.
A 2nd-Degree penalty meant the player missed the next try and the team played one try with a player less.	A 2nd-Degree now means the player misses 2 tries; the team plays 1 try at -2 and 1 try at -1, totalling 3 cost-points back to the balance.
Administrative penalties were team-only (no player named); 3 tries with one less.	Administrative as a separate category is removed. Equivalent fouls are now redistributed across Pull / Minor / 2nd / 1st Degree.
Stacking: 3 stackable (1st + Major) penalties → out for remainder + next match. Counting was simply 1 + 1 + 1 regardless of severity.	Stacking still triggers at 3 stackable (2nd / 1st / Major) penalties → out for remainder + next match, then stack resets but penalties stay on record. New thresholds: 7th stackable = player tournament suspension; 21st team stackable = team tournament suspension (with 5 match-points awarded to opponents).
If a team couldn't field at least one player due to penalties, the round was auto-won by opponents.	If a team's penalties drop them below the breakout minimum (3 in 5v5 / 2 in 3v3), the match auto-forfeits, the offender's match points are voided, and the opponent is awarded 5 match points on top of what they had.
Penalties had to be served in the box.	Players with active penalties no longer have to physically sit in the box (carried over from v6.2 — unchanged in spirit, restated).

### The Penalty Balance — how it works in practice

Each team begins at **0**. Every penalty deducts its cost from the balance. Teams must restore the balance to zero **as quickly as possible** by playing short-handed tries:

- A try played with **2 players short** adds **+2** back to the balance.
- A try played with **1 player short** adds **+1** back to the balance.
- Penalties stack accumulatively: e.g. one 1st-Degree (-6) + one 2nd-Degree (-3) = -9, which takes 4 tries at -2 followed by 1 try at -1 to clear.
- Teams **cannot** elect to play -1 instead of -2 to drag out the obligation; the balance must be paid down at maximum rate.
- In 5v5 the breakout minimum is 3, so the maximum a team can sit per try is 2.

## Costs and consequences side-by-side

Tier	Cost	Player misses...	Team obligation	Stackable?
<b>Pull</b>	0	Nothing — pulled and back in.	None.	No
<b>Minor</b>	-1	Next try.	1 additional try with -1 player.	No
<b>2nd Degree</b>	-3	Next 2 tries.	1 try at -2 players + 1 try at -1.	Yes
<b>1st Degree</b>	-6	Next 3 tries.	3 tries at -2 players.	Yes
<b>Major</b>	-12	Next 6 tries.	6 tries at -2 players.	Yes

***Why this matters.** Under v6.2 a team with three 1st-Degree penalties on different players could sometimes end up serving them concurrently — the cost was "3 tries with 2 players short." Under v7.0 the cost is explicit ( $3 \times -6 = -18$ ) and must be paid down try-by-try, with no double-counting. Penalties are now fundamentally an economic resource that teams need to manage, not just a fixed number of bad tries.*

## 4. Specific penalty changes

*What's new, what's reclassified, what's gone*

### 4.1 New penalties added in v7.0

**Lethal Gun (Major).** Shooting over 1.20 J after a match. Carved out from the previous "hot gun" Major. The hot/lethal split is new.

**Hot Gun (1st Degree).** 1.11–1.20 J after a match. Was already a 1st-Degree exception in v6.2; v7.0 promotes it to a named penalty.

**No-call Upper body — stationary (1st).** Splits the old generic "no-call" into body region + movement state.

**No-call Upper body — movement (1st).** New explicit category.

**No-call Arms — stationary (1st).** New explicit category.

**No-call Arms — movement (2nd).** New explicit category.

**No-call Lower body — stationary (1st).** New explicit category.

**No-call Lower body — movement (2nd).** New explicit category.

**Unsportsmanlike — Overshooting (1st).** Quantified for the first time: 1–3 BBs valid, 4–7 BBs "legal overshooting" (no penalty), **over 7 BBs = 1st Degree.**

**Unsportsmanlike — Verbal (1st).** Explicitly named: harmful or demeaning names, derogatory or pejorative language.

**Faking a hit (1st Degree).** A player signalling they are hit but continuing play. Always game-altering.

**Force trade (1st Degree).** A player continuing to engage after being hit and eliminating an opponent or significantly affecting the try outcome. Always game-altering.

**Dead player interference (1st).** Eliminated players obstructing movement, blocking objectives, or interfering while exiting. Always game-altering.

**Early buzzer (2nd Degree).** Was Administrative under v6.2; now a named 2nd-Degree and always game-altering.

**Field disruption (2nd).** Re-tiered down from 1st (v6.2) to 2nd in v7.0.

**Taking the flag off the field (2nd).** Was Administrative; now 2nd-Degree, always game-altering.

**Intentional teamkill trades (2nd).** Was Administrative; now 2nd-Degree, always game-altering.

**Teamkills to lower player count (2nd).** Was Administrative; now 2nd-Degree.

**Gun drop (2nd Degree).** Was 2nd-Degree in v6.2 too; reclassified within the new tier system.

**Flag pick-up (2nd Degree). New:** a player picking up the flag after they had it earlier in the same try and dropped it. Game-altering if it leads to a score or hang.

**Slow walk (Minor).** Was 2nd-Degree in v6.2; downgraded to Minor.

**Middle exit (Minor).** Was 2nd-Degree in v6.2; downgraded to Minor.

**Flag throw (Minor).** Was 2nd-Degree in v6.2; downgraded to Minor.

**Late flag drop (Minor).** Was Administrative in v6.2; now a Minor.

**Unauthorized unboxing (Minor).** Was 2nd-Degree in v6.2; downgraded to Minor.

**Breakout fouls — split.** v7.0 splits breakout fouls between Minor (more players than allowed, active-penalty player at breakout, early breakout, wrong weapon class) and Pull (feet/barrel positioning, all players within 2 m at start).

**Fake Snatch or Hang (Minor).** Re-tiered. Still always game-altering when the opposing team has at least one player alive at try end.

**No-call Hose (Pull). New:** not calling a hit on an exposed air hose / hose assembly is now a no-cost Pull, not a no-call.

**No-call Headband straps (Pull). New:** explicit Pull rather than treating loose straps as a 2nd-degree no-call as in v6.2.

**Game start disruption (Pull). New:** not all players within 2 m of the breakout wall at try start.

**Off-field Communication (1st).** Was Administrative in v6.2; now a 1st-Degree, always game-altering, and triggers a team/crew ban from the spectator area for the rest of the event.

## 4.2 Penalties removed or restructured

- **3rd-Degree category** as a tier no longer exists. The fouls under it (false-start type breakouts, fake snatch/hang) are now redistributed across Minor and Pull.
- **Administrative penalties** as a category are gone. The fouls within it have been promoted, demoted, or reclassified — generally upward in severity (e.g. Off-field Communication, Early Buzzer).
- **"Leaving unnecessarily (pre or post-game)"** from v6.2 is no longer listed.
- **"Equipment Violation as automatic DQ"** from v6.2's disqualification list is removed; equipment fouls are now handled via the regular tiered penalty system (Major / 1st-Degree / Minor) plus the existing aggressive-conduct DQ pathway.
- **"Arguing with referees during games"** as a standalone DQ trigger is removed from the disqualification list (still penalizable via discussion-of-calls / unsportsmanlike rules).

## 4.3 Wording / clarification updates

- **Headshot No-call (Major)** — language preserved; loose headband straps now an explicit Pull rather than a 2nd-degree no-call.
- **Major equipment violation** — wording sharpened from "full auto, burst, ramping, binary" to specifically "shooting full auto, when the replica fires more than 1 BB per single pull/hold or hold and wiggle of the trigger".
- **Blind fire (1st)** — must now be confirmed by VAR or a referee.
- **Discussing referee calls** — explicitly extended to during a VAR check.
- **Cold gun** — split into "cold gun before" (replace within time/gun restrictions, no penalty) and "cold gun after" (1st Degree). v6.2 had this as a 2nd-Degree.
- **Minor equipment violation** — list expanded to include "leaving the field because the replica malfunctions or all magazines have depleted (without being hit)" and "starting a try without a working tracer".
- **Dead Player Communication** — wording unchanged in spirit; remains 1st-Degree.

## 5. Game-altering play

*Always / never / situational lists are now explicit*

v6.2 stated that "any foul can be classed as game-altering, judged per individual case," with a short list of examples. v7.0 keeps the per-case judgment for many fouls but introduces explicit **always-game-altering** and **never-game-altering** lists, removing ambiguity for both teams and referees.

### Always game-altering (v7.0)

- Minor equipment violation (mag limit, mag cap violation, no working tracer)
- Off-field Communication
- Intentional self-callout (suicide)
- Early buzzer
- Teamkills to lower player count
- Intentional teamkill trades
- Faking a hit
- Taking the flag off the field
- Flag throw
- Force trade
- Dead player interference
- Breakout foul — starting with more players than allowed
- Fake Snatch or Hang (provided the opposing team has at least one player alive at try end)

### Never game-altering (v7.0)

- Lethal gun after a game
- Major equipment violation
- Hot gun after a game
- Unsportsmanlike Behaviour — Overshooting
- Unsportsmanlike Behaviour — Verbal
- Referee influencing
- Unauthorized unboxing
- Middle exit
- Game start disruption

### Last 30 seconds of a match

v6.2: *any* penalty in the last 30 seconds was treated as game-altering. v7.0 narrows this: every penalty in the last 30 seconds is treated as game-altering **except** the explicit "never game-altering" list above. The first-committed penalty is enforced when both sides commit one. The clock-reset and no-buzzer rules are unchanged.

## 6. VAR (Video Assisted Referee) updates

*Wider scope, flexible timing*

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
VAR only checks <b>Major or 1st-Degree</b> penalties.	VAR checks <b>Major, 1st Degree, and 2nd Degree</b> penalties.
Hard cap of <b>2 minutes</b> . If the situation cannot be resolved within 2 minutes, the original on-field call stands.	<b>Intended</b> to complete in 2 minutes, but the referee team and VAR operator may extend the review at their discretion. <b>Integrity of the game and correct decision-making take precedence over time constraints.</b>
Only the head ref may speak with the VAR operator (other refs not involved).	Same — but v7.0 also explicitly states <b>any referee may request a VAR check</b> on a situation or decision.
The team captain of the challenging team is the only player allowed near the VAR; violation = non-negotiable 1st-Degree Referee Influencing.	Unchanged.
Outcome announced by the host via microphone.	Unchanged.
Each team starts with 3 challenges; positive challenge returns it; lost on bad challenge.	Unchanged.

## 7. Field, safety & equipment changes

*PPE, replicas, magazines, triggers*

### 7.1 Field & safety

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
No specific PPE requirement for non-play areas beyond the playing area itself.	<b>New:</b> players entering the "hot zone" must wear safety goggles or a mask.
Liability waiver covers a season; combinable with the consent waiver (see Section 9.1 in v6.2).	Identical, but cross-references update to Section 12.1.

### 7.2 Replicas & triggers — significantly expanded

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
Max 3 rifles on field for a 5v5 team; players with active personal penalties count as "on the field".	Max 3 rifles on field for 5v5, max 2 for 3v3. <b>If the team has any active player or team penalties, the rifle maximum is reduced by 1.</b>
"No ramping, burst, binary or any advantageous programming of FCU." Generic "no double/extended triggers."	Same plus an extensive new section: trigger may not be adjusted or used in a way that forces binary fire; one trigger touch–move–release may fire a maximum of one BB; the operating angle is irrelevant; <b>the player's thumb must remain wrapped around or positioned behind the grip at all times;</b> thumb alongside / on top of / detached from the grip is not permitted.
If a replica malfunctions during a try, no specific rule about leaving the field.	<b>New:</b> a player whose replica malfunctions during a try is <b>not allowed to leave the field without being hit.</b> Leaving without a hit becomes a Minor equipment violation.

### 7.3 Magazines — explicit per-try caps

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
Rifles: mid caps only (200 rounds max per mag). Pistols: extended mags / mag adapters allowed (200-round mid caps). <b>No limit on the total number of magazines/shells.</b>	Same per-mag rules <b>plus:</b> each <b>rifle</b> player allowed a max of <b>4 mags per try</b> (1 in replica, 3 on belt). Each <b>pistol</b> player allowed a max of <b>3 mags per try</b> (1 in replica, 2 on belt).
No explicit rule on dropping or passing mags between players.	<b>New:</b> dropping (partially) full magazines for another player to pick up is not allowed; throwing/sliding/passing a magazine to another player is not allowed; leaving the field with empty mags (without being hit) is not allowed.

## 8. Game format, roster & misc.

*5v5 / 3v3, scoring, mercy, eliminations, hand signals*

### 8.1 Roster sizes

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
Minimum roster of <b>5 players</b> ; up to 12 allowed during an event/season; cannot split into multiple 5-player teams. No 3v3 minimum stated.	Minimum roster of <b>6 players</b> for 5v5, <b>4 players</b> for 3v3. Up to 12 (5v5) or 7 (3v3) per event/season. New <b>breakout-minimum</b> rules: 3 in 5v5, 2 in 3v3 — fall below this and the match auto-forfeits with -5 to your match-points swing.

### 8.2 Mercy rule / no-show

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
Mercy at +34 point difference. <b>No-show: 35–0</b> for the other team.	Mercy at +34 point difference (unchanged). <b>No-show: 5–0</b> for the other team.

### 8.3 Eliminations & player-side hit calling

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
Hit player rushes off the field; cannot exit through middle. Cannot verbally call "Hit".	Same plus an explicit hand-signal rule: <b>players may signal their hit by placing a hand on their head or raising their replica above shoulder height</b> , with the caveat that doing so incorrectly risks being pulled. Wording on flag-drop and ref-repositioning is unchanged.

### 8.4 Attacking team — flag handling

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
A player who loses flag possession (intentionally or unintentionally) is not allowed to re-pick up the flag. <b>Re-picking results in a pull without a penalty.</b>	Same prohibition, but consequence escalates: re-picking is now <b>Flag pick-up (2nd Degree)</b> , and is <b>game-altering if it leads to a score or hang</b> .

### 8.5 Buzzer & spirit-of-the-game

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
Buzzer becomes active 30 s after try start. Self-callouts to force the buzzer not allowed; teamkills to lower player count not allowed.	Identical mechanics. The associated penalties are reclassified (see Section 4) and every buzzer press within 15 s of a teamkill remains automatically game-altering.

### 8.6 Disqualifications — narrowed list

v6.2 — Previous	v7.0 — Current
DQ for: aggressive behavior to refs; aggressive behavior to players; <b>arguing with refs during games; Equipment Violation (auto-DQ)</b> .	DQ for: aggressive behavior to refs; aggressive behavior to players. The arguing and equipment-violation DQ triggers are removed (handled by the tiered penalty system instead).

## 9. Other notable edits

*Smaller textual changes worth knowing*

**Section numbering.** v7.0 inserts the new NSL Values as Section 2, pushing all subsequent sections down by one. Cross-references throughout the rulebook are updated accordingly (e.g. eliminations is now Section 8, equipment Section 9).

**Section 1.1 wording.** v7.0 adds an explicit reference: "This is reflected in our values, which are described in Section 2 of this rulebook."

**Final / 3rd-place duration.** Both versions specify 15 minutes. v7.0 adds a footnote that duration may also vary by league system / event format (already true for ordinary matches in v6.2).

**Penalty-while-out-of-match weapon assumption.** v6.2 said: "If a penalty is applied to a player outside of an ongoing match, the player's weapon class will always be judged as a rifle, to avoid any room for abuse." This sentence is removed in v7.0 (no longer needed under the new cost-based model).

**Flag covered intentionally.** v6.2 said the offending team is awarded an automatic snatch in favour of the opposing team. v7.0 keeps the same outcome but rewords slightly.

**Snatch in scoring zone (zone-points award).** v6.2 simply awarded the zone points. v7.0 specifies that the points go to the attacking **player and/or team that brought the flag to that zone**.

**3v3 rule adjustment — 1st Degree.** v6.2 already specified that 1st-Degree in 3v3 means the player sits out 3 tries and cannot return for the rest of the match. v7.0 keeps this and slightly cleans up the wording (replacing "he" with "the player" for inclusivity).

**Filming & photography.** Section content essentially unchanged; renumbered to Section 12.

### Quick before/after reference

Topic	v6.2	v7.0
Penalty tiers	Major / 1st / 2nd / 3rd / Administrative	Major / 1st / 2nd / Minor / Pull
Penalty cost	Tries-out only	Numeric (-12, -6, -3, -1, 0)
Stacking trigger	3 stackable → out remainder + next match	3 stackable → out + reset; 7 → tournament suspension
Team max stackable	None defined	21 → team tournament suspension
Min roster (5v5)	5	6
Min roster (3v3)	Not specified	4
Breakout minimum (5v5)	Not explicitly defined	3 players
No-show score	35–0	5–0
Lethal vs hot gun	Combined under Hot/Major	Lethal (>1.20 J) Major; Hot (1.11–1.20 J) 1st-Degree
Overshooting threshold	Not quantified	1–3 valid; 4–7 legal; >7 1st-Degree
Mag limit per try (rifle)	No limit	4 mags
Mag limit per try (pistol)	No limit	3 mags
VAR scope	Major + 1st-Degree	Major + 1st + 2nd-Degree
VAR time limit	Hard 2 min	~2 min target; extendable
Hot zone PPE	Not specified	Goggles or mask required