

From GEJFA Rules

6.J. Substitution Rule:

(1) Upon the change of possession (i.e. fumble, loss of down, pass interception, or punt) a coach must empty his bench and replace all of his players on the field, if possible. Each of those players **must remain on the field for four consecutive legal plays**, unless the ball changes hands. **After a minimum of four plays, a coach may substitute freely.** But, when the ball changes hands, he must again empty his bench and replace all players on the field, if possible, for a minimum of four consecutive plays. **Should a team score a touchdown or kick a field goal, free substitution is allowed for both the extra point and kickoff. At the beginning of a scrimmage play following a kickoff, the substitution rule is re-instituted.** If a player is injured, a free substitution may be made for the injured player. Even following an injury substitution, when the ball changes hands, the coach must again empty his bench and replace all players on the field, if possible, for a minimum of four consecutive plays. Otherwise, the injured player may return to action, after sitting out a minimum of one play.

(2) At the Senior level, paragraph (1) also applies except that following a change of possession substitution, players need only remain on the field for two consecutive legal plays before free substitution is permitted.

(3) An injured player should remove his/her helmet and sit on or near the team bench. If the injured player is out for a prolonged period of time, he/she should remove his/her shoulder pads and helmet.

(4) It is the intent of the GEJFA council that all players play an equal amount of time. But in any event, all players must play at least twelve plays during the game period.

(5) Violations of the substitution rule can result in forfeiture of the game and the suspension or termination of the coach. Coaches violating even just the spirit of this rule may be subject to the disciplinary action of the GEJFA Council.

The following examples, certainly not all inclusive, should be helpful to those who have a problem understanding the rule as written:

Scenario A: BLUE is kicking to RED. The substitution rule does not apply to any kick-offs (keep in mind a punt is a scrimmage kick). Each team can put any 11 players on the field regardless who was on the field in whatever activity preceded. RED receives the ball and is on offense, BLUE is on defense. This begins scrimmage and each team may put any 11 players on the field. These 11 players shall stay on the field for a minimum of four legal plays, after which both teams may substitute freely. However, when the balls turns over for what ever the reason (on downs, fumble), then fullest possible exchange shall occur for both teams. If there are 11 or more players on the sideline, then substitution must be made for all 11 players on the field.

Four legal plays: A scrimmage play on which there is a foul for which the penalty is accepted is not a legal play and will not be counted. If the penalty is declined, then the play is counted.

Scenario B: RED is still in their first series of offensive downs. It is 4th and 5 yards to go. RED decides to punt. This is not a free substitution down. The 11 players on the field have yet to complete their minimum four plays. No substitution is allowed.

Scenario C: RED turns the ball over to BLUE either by fumble, punt, or downs. Before BLUE's first scrimmage play all players on the field for both teams shall be replaced if possible. If a team has 11 or more players on the sideline, then substitution will be made for all players on the field. If there are fewer than 11 players on the sideline, then all who are on the sideline shall enter the game allowing that some players already on the field may remain and go both ways.

Scenario D: BLUE completes four offensive downs (from their first scrimmage play) and has attained first down; BLUE is now in its second series of offensive downs. Both teams may substitute freely on each down thereafter until there is a change of possession. Assume BLUE has a "star player" on the sideline from their last defensive series who they would like to be in on offense. BLUE makes the substitution putting that "star player" in on offense. Two plays later, with the "star player" still on the field, the ball is fumble and recovered by RED, thus a change in possession. If there are 11 or more players on the sideline, then a substitution will be provided for all players on field including the "star player." There shall be at least four legal plays before any further substitution may be made, except if possession changes.

Scenario E: BLUE scores. On the point after try (PAT), free substitution is allowed. On the ensuing kick-off, free substitution is allowed. And at the first scrimmage play after the kick-off, each team may put on the field any 11 players who must then go a minimum of four legal scrimmage plays before any further substitution is allowed.

Scenario F: RED has the ball in their first series of offensive downs. During the 2nd down, either team has an injured player. The injured player must leave the field, for which a substitution is provided. The injured player may re-enter after being out one down; he could re-enter on the 4th down. The injured player does not re-enter on the 4th down and possession changes. If there are 11 or more players on the sideline, including the injured player (if he is now ready to play), then substitution shall be provided for all players on the field. Or if during the play that the injured player is sitting out ball possession changes, and there are 11 or more players on the sideline including the injured player (if he is now ready to play), then substitution shall be provided for all players on the field. If the injured player is to be out for some extended period, then his helmet and shoulder pads should be removed.

Scenario G: Both team RED and BLUE have more than 22 players. RED is moving the ball, has attained a first down and now after 5 plays from having taken possession they have a 3rd down and 5 on their 40 yard line. BLUE substitutes their QB (believed to be one of their best players) at LB to stop RED (planning to take him out on 4th down). RED quick kicks on 3rd down and possession changes to BLUE. On this change of possession, substitution must be made for all 11 players on the field for both teams (both have more than 11 on the sideline). BLUE is now without their starting QB on offense and must wait 4 legal downs without their QB before he can be substituted into the game.

Scenario H: The RED team belongs to a System with a policy that if a player misses 1 practice without excuse he will sit one quarter of the game that week; if a player misses 2 practices, he will sit two quarters. One player misses 1 practice and another player misses 2 practices. Both players, with the acknowledgement of the System, are disciplined in that week's game. All discipline must start at the beginning of the game and run simultaneously; that is, both players will sit the first quarter and one will sit also the second quarter. This discipline must be made known to the other team during weigh-in and indicated on the exchanged roster. During their discipline, these players should remove their helmet and shoulder pads.

Substitution Rule violations:

Scenario A: BLUE is kicking to RED. The substitution rule does not apply to any kick-offs (keep in mind a punt is a scrimmage kick). Each team can put any 11 players on the field regardless who was on the field in whatever activity preceded. RED receives the ball and is on offense, BLUE is on defense. RED is still in their first series of offensive downs. It is 4th and 5 yards to go. RED decides to punt and attempts to put in a special team. This is a substitution rule violation; those on the field through the third down have not played 4 legal downs.

Scenario B: RED turns the ball over to BLUE either by fumble, punt, or downs.

(1) RED has a total of 21 players on its roster, thus there are only 10 on the sideline during play. At the change of possession, one or more of the players on the sideline for RED are not entering the game for RED on defense. This is a violation. Obviously all 10 players on the sideline must enter on defense at this change of possession.

(2) BLUE has 23 players on the roster, thus there are 12 players on the sideline during play. At the change of possession, one or more players on the field for BLUE's defense stay on the field for BLUE's offense. This is a violation. With 11 or more players on the sideline, all players on the field are to be replaced on the change of possession.

Scenario C: BLUE has 22 or more players on its roster. BLUE completes four offensive downs (from their first scrimmage play) and has attained first down. BLUE is now in its second series of offensive downs. BLUE may substitute freely on each down thereafter until there is a change of possession. BLUE has a "star player" on the sideline from their last defensive series who they would like to put in on offense. BLUE makes the substitution putting that "star player" in on offense. Two plays later, with the "star player" still on the field, the ball is fumble and recovered by RED, thus a change in possession. BLUE puts in 10 players from the sideline in to join the "star player" on defense. This is a violation. Since there are 11 or more players on the sideline at this change of possession, all 11 players previously on the field for offense must be replaced.

Scenario D: RED has 24 players on its roster. RED has the ball in their first series of offensive downs. During the 2nd down, RED has an injured player who must leave the field and a substitution is provided. The substitute is a first string running back. On the next play, RED fumbles and BLUE recovers. This is a change of possession for which substitution must be provided for all players on the field, however, the first string running back is not remove from the field. This is a violation. Even if the injured player is not yet ready to return to play, there are more than 11 players on the sideline who can come into the game. Full substitution is required.

Scenario E: Both team RED and BLUE have more than 22 players. RED is moving the ball, has attained a first down and now after 5 plays from having taken possession they have a 3rd down and 5 on their 40 yard line. BLUE substitutes their QB (believed to be one of their best players) at LB to stop RED (planning to take him out on 4th down). RED quick kicks on 3rd down and possession changes to BLUE. On this change of possession, substitutions are provided on BLUE for all but the QB who was entered as a substitute on defense. This is a violation. Because there are 11 or more players on the sideline, the QB must come out the game until 4 legal plays have occurred or there is another change of possession.

Scenario F: The RED team belongs to a System with a policy that if a player misses 1 practice without excuse he will sit one quarter of the game that week; if a player misses 2 practices, he will sit two quarters. One player misses 1 practice and another player misses 2 practices. Both players, with the acknowledgement of the System, are disciplined in that week's game. The first player who missed one practice is held out for the first quarter. The second player who missed two practices is not held out until the second half. This is a violation. All discipline must start at the beginning of the game and run simultaneously.