



January 14, 2026

NFHS Weekly Basketball Rule Interpretation

Rule 4-22-3 (NEW): Goaltending

Purpose:

The adoption of Rule 4-22-3 clarifies that once the ball contacts the backboard, it is considered to be on its downward flight. If any part of the ball is above the ring level and is then touched by a defensive player and still has the possibility of entering the basket, it is goaltending.

The purpose of this rule change is threefold:

1. Protect legitimate shot attempts by ensuring that players do not interfere with a try after it has contacted the backboard.
2. Reduce rough rebounding situations by discouraging premature player contact with the ball once it contacts the backboard.
3. Addresses a common misconception among coaches, players, and fans because of differences with other rules codes (e.g. NCAA) by providing officials with a clear and enforceable standard.

This change promotes consistency in officiating by removing ambiguity and ensures that offensive attempts are not interfered with once the ball has contacted the backboard.

Interpretation:

- Under the new rule, when the ball contacts the backboard, it immediately signifies the ball is on its downward flight.
- If the ball has the possibility of entering the basket, any defensive touch is considered goaltending.
- Points are awarded accordingly: two points (or three, if the try is attempted from beyond the arc) are scored for the shooter's team.
- This differs from basket interference, which involves touching the ball any part of the ball while it is within the cylinder.

Officials must understand that when the ball contacts the backboard, they no longer need to determine "if the ball is on its downward flight?" - Touching the ball after it contacts the backboard is goaltending if the ball has a chance to enter the basket.

Situation 1:

A1 drives to the basket and attempts a layup. The ball contacts the backboard on its upward flight when B2 jumps and makes contact with the ball.

RULING: Goaltending. By rule (4-22-3), once the ball contacted the backboard, it was considered to be on its downward flight. Since the ball still had a chance to enter the basket, two points are awarded to Team A.

Situation 2

A1 attempts a try that is offline and has no chance to enter the basket. The ball contacts the backboard when B2 jumps and makes contact with the ball.

RULING: Legal Play. Since the ball still had no chance to enter the basket, this is legal and play should be allowed to continue.

Conclusion:

Rule 4-22-3 provides officials with a clear standard for adjudicating goaltending on plays that involve touching the ball after it contacts the backboard. By eliminating guesswork about whether the ball, after striking the backboard, is on its upward or downward flight the officials can apply the rule with consistency and accuracy. This rule protects offensive players' scoring opportunities, reduces confusion for coaches and fans, and strengthens game integrity.

Goaltending Chart

Category	Goaltending
Definition (4-22-1)	Illegal touching of a live ball, by a <u>defensive</u> player, while it is on its downward flight toward the basket, entirely above ring level, and has the possibility of entering the basket.
Key 2025 Rules Change (4-22-3)	Ball contacting the backboard = automatically considered on its downward flight (Rule 4-22-3).
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Defensive player touching ball on its downward flight outside cylinder with a chance to enter the basket.- Touching the ball after it hits the backboard.
Penalty	2 or 3 points awarded depending on where the try originates. Ball awarded to opponent for throw-in.