



**2026 TOURNAMENT
RULES AND REGULATIONS**

FIFA LAWS OF THE GAME

All matches played during this tournament will be played in accordance with FIFA Laws of the Game including modifications as published below.

AGE GROUPS, MAXIMUM ROSTER SIZE & NUMBER OF GUEST PLAYERS

The age group structure as established by USYS will govern. All players (including guest players) must have been born on or after the specified date for their age classification. All age groups are allowed a maximum of six (6) Guest Players (Guest Players must be affiliated and in good standing with their State Association and/or US Club Soccer). Guest players may only play up at most one age division.

Under 8- January 1, 2018	Roster 14 (7v7)
Under 9- January 1, 2017	Roster 14 (7v7)
Under 10- January 1, 2016	Roster 14 (7v7)
Under 11- January 1, 2015	Roster 16 (9v9)
Under 12- January 1, 2014	Roster 16 (9v9)
Under 13- January 1, 2013	Roster 22 (11v11) *
Under 14- January 1, 2012	Roster 22 (11v11) *
Under 15- January 1, 2011	Roster 22 (11v11) *
Under 16- January 1, 2010	Roster 22 (11v11) *
Under 17- January 1, 2009	Roster 22 (11v11) *
Under 18/19- January 1, 2007	Roster 22 (11v11) *

*-Teams that use the 22-player roster **can only dress a total of 18 players per game**. All players over the 18 designated players must remain on the spectator side of the field during the games. Once a game has begun, the 18 players designated for that game may NOT change.

A PLAYER MAY ONLY BE LISTED ON ONE ROSTER AND PARTICIPATE FOR ONE TEAM DURING THE TOURNAMENT.

A team may “play-up” only one age division (unless approved by the tournament director). In combined age groups, follow all rules and formats for the older group (i.e. U10/11 will follow the U11 rules and format).

Tournament rosters freeze at kick-off of teams first game.

GAME LENGTH, BALL SIZE & REFEREES

Age Group	Game Length	Ball Size	Referees Preliminary	Referees Semi finals	Referees Championship game
U-8 thru U-10	2 X 25-minute half (50)	4	1	1	1
U-11 & U-12	2 X 25-minute half (50)	4	1	1	3
U-13 thru U-16	2 X 30-minute half (60)	5	3	3	3
U-17 thru U-19	2 X 30-minute half (60)	5	3	3	3

All games will have a five (5) minute halftime. No additional “stoppage time” will be added to any game.

The home team (listed first on the schedule) will be responsible for providing a properly inflated game ball.

FIELD DIMENSIONS (approximate)

U8-U10	47 yards x 30 yards
U11-U12	75 yards x 47 yards
U13+	112 yards x 75 yards

Field dimensions may vary slightly depending on conditions determined by turf management.

GOAL DIMENSIONS

U-8 - U-10	6.5 feet x 18.5 feet
U-11 & U-12	6.5 feet x 18.5 feet
U-13 & up	8 feet x 24 feet

POINTS & TIE BREAKING CRITERIA

Win= 3 points
Tie= 1 point
Loss= 0 points

- A. Head to head competition (only for ties between **two** teams)
- B. Highest goal differential (Maximum 5 goals per game)
- C. Fewest goals against
- D. Most wins
- E. Most shut outs
- F. Most goals scored
- G. Fewest red cards
- H. Fewest yellow cards
- I. Coin flip

When determining a tie breaker between more than two teams, start with “B” above and proceed through tie breaking procedures until a team is eliminated. Once a team is eliminated, **DO NOT** revert back to the first tie breaker with the remaining teams.

TIE GAMES

All Round Robin games ending in a tie will stand. **Semi-final games** that end in a tie will be decided by FIFA Penalty shoot-out. **Final championship games** that end in a tie will result in two (2) five-minute overtime periods (sudden death or “golden goal” will be in effect). Final games still tied after two overtime periods (5 minutes each) will be decided by FIFA Penalty shoot-out.

DIVISION FLIGHTS AND FORMATS

4 team flights- Each team will play the other three teams in the bracket. The two teams with the most points will play a championship game.

5 team flights- Each team will play two random preliminary games to determine group standings. The 4th & 5th place teams will play a consolation game, the 2nd & 3rd place team will play a semi-final game. The winner of that game will play the first-place team in a championship match. (5 team play-off format)

6 team flights- Teams will play in one of two formats;

Crossover brackets- Teams will be divided into two brackets of three teams. Teams in bracket A will play each team in bracket B and vice-versa. The teams with the two highest point total of all six teams will play in a championship game (Wildcard 1 vs Wildcard 2).

Semi-final brackets- Teams will be divided into two brackets of three teams. Each team will play the other two teams in their bracket. The two teams with the most points in each bracket will play a semi-final match. Winners of the semi-final match will play a championship game. The third-place teams in each bracket will play a consolation game.

7 team flights- Each team will play two random preliminary games to determine group standings. The 6th & 7th place teams and 4th & 5th place teams will play a consolation game, the 2nd & 3rd place team will play a semi-final game. The winner of that game will play the first-place team in a championship match. (7 team play-off format)

8 team flights- Teams will be placed in two brackets with four teams in each. Each team will play the other three teams in their bracket. First place teams in each bracket will play a championship game.

10 team flights- Teams will be placed in two brackets with three teams in each and one bracket with four teams. Teams in the four-team bracket will play the other three teams in the bracket. The first-place team will advance to the championship game. Teams in the three-team bracket will play two round robin games. The bracket winners will play a semi-final match with the winner of that game advancing to the

championship match. The second and third place teams will play consolation matches.

Other flights and formats may be created or modifications made as the need arises.

PLAYOFFS & STANDINGS

Teams with the greatest amount of points after preliminary matches have ended will advance to the Semi-Finals or Finals of the tournament. Awards will be presented to all champions and runner-up/finalist in each flight.

FORFEITS

No team that forfeits a game will be eligible to play in a semi-final or championship match without the permission of the tournament director. If an apparent winner forfeits a game, the team with the next best record shall be named the winner. All forfeits in the preliminary round will be recorded as three (3) points for the win and the score will be recorded as 5-0 regardless of the current score of the game.

FAILURE TO SHOW

A team shall be allowed a five (5) minute grace period after the scheduled kick-off time before the match is awarded to their opponent (the game clock will start at the scheduled kick-off time). The minimum numbers of players that constitute a team are listed below. If the minimum number of players is present, the game will not be delayed:

- A. 11v11 - minimum of seven (7) players
- B. 9v9 - minimum of seven (7) players
- C. 7v7 - minimum of five (5) players

PLAYER, GUEST PLAYER & TEAM ELIGIBILITY

Participation in the Mid-Atlantic Cup is open to teams consisting of rosters no larger than those listed above and meeting the age limit of the specified division. Each team must be registered with a national soccer association affiliated with USYS/USSF and must present a **club and/or state roster. In the case of a Recreation team whose club does not issue official rosters, the team may use the roster template linked on the tournament website.** The only acceptable proof of age for non-recreational teams will be a valid USSF, State, or National registration card that includes photograph of the player. Players who do not present valid player passes will not play. **Any team fielding an ineligible player will be disqualified and its tournament fee will be forfeited.**

Recreation teams/players are not generally issued player passes. Therefore, a recreation team/player must provide proof-of- age for all players in the form of a copy of a birth certificate, Passport or State or Government issued ID card.

- A. **A player may compete for only one team participating in the tournament.**
- B. Under no circumstance may any recreational team use a travel player who is carded to a competitive team (unless the recreation team is playing in the competitive division in the tournament)
- C. Teams should be prepared to present the official tournament roster and player passes/proof-of-age at any time during the tournament.
- D. Teams and players must be in good standing with the USSF.
- E. Guest players may only play up at most one age division (unless approved by the tournament director).
- F. Permission to Travel Forms are not required (unless team is from outside of the East region).

CONDUCT

A. Players, coaches, and spectators are expected to conduct themselves within the spirit of the Law as well as the letter of the Law. Displays of temper or dissent are cause for ejection from the game and surrounding field area. Repeated violations may result in the suspension of the team from the tournament as decided by the Tournament Director.

B. Team officials are responsible for the behavior of the spectators. Team officials **can** be disciplined by the referee for failure to control their spectators. The competition authority has the ability to ban a spectator, forfeit a match, or expel a team from the competition for violations or abuse of a referee or the referee crew.

C. Players, coaches and team officials ejected from a game by the referee shall be ineligible for the next scheduled game.

D. Any player, coach, or team official ejected from a game for violent conduct (physical contact) shall result in suspension of the player, coach or team official for the remainder of the tournament as decided by the game official. Any player, coach, team official or parent exhibiting or threatening violence to anyone (player, coach, referee, spectator or tournament official) will call for immediate expulsion from the tournament.

E. Any player who accumulates two yellow cards during the tournament must sit out the very next game that his/her team is to play in the tournament. For example, if a player receives a yellow card in game #1 and then another card in game #3, the player will have to “sit out” game #4, regardless of whether game #4 is a semi-final or Final.

F. In accordance with the USYS Tournament Hosting Agreement, all red cards and other matters involving team conduct will be reported to the home club and State/Provincial Association of the team involved as well as the US Youth Soccer National Office.

G. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ARE NOT PERMITTED IN THE PARK AND/OR FIELD COMPLEX

H. MECHANICAL NOISE MAKERS ARE PROHIBITED

I. PETS ARE NOT PERMITTED AT THE SOCCERPLEX

J. SMOKING IS PROHIBITED AT THE MD SOCCERPLEX AND SURROUNDING PARK

K. No drone photography/videography is permitted.

No protests will be entertained.

GAME & SCORE REPORTING

The referee of each game will forward to the appropriate field manager his/her official written match report which includes the final score, the name and number of each coach, player, or person sanctioned at the field, and reason for the caution/ejection. The field manager, **provided by the home team for each game**, will ensure that the score sheet for each game is delivered to Tournament Headquarters or any designated score reporting location in a timely manner for score posting. Any changes to the game and score reporting procedures will be communicated to all accepted teams prior to the tournament.

HEADERS

Heading the ball is prohibited in U-11 and younger age divisions. At age group divisions U-11 and younger, whenever the ball strikes a player in the head, play is stopped. If deliberate, then the proper restart is an indirect free kick to the opposing team. If this occurs within the penalty box, the indirect free kick should be taken on the penalty box line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If the play by the head is deemed inadvertent, then the proper restart is a dropped ball.

OFFSIDE

Offside will be called for ALL age divisions. For age groups U-8, U-9 & U-10, see item “D” below to determine where offside offenses occur.

Build Out Lines

These lines allow for goalkeepers to pass, throw or roll the ball out from the defensive third of the field to his/her teammate in a less pressured setting.

- A. When the goalkeeper has possession of the ball, either during play or for a goal kick, the opposing team must move and remain behind the build out line until the ball is put in play.
- B. The goalkeeper is not required to wait until the opposing team is behind the line to put the ball in play. The goalkeeper can pass, throw, or roll the ball into play. **PUNTING AND DROP KICKS ARE NOT ALLOWED.** If the goalkeeper punts or drop kicks the ball, restart is an indirect free kick on the penalty area line parallel to the goal at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.
- C. The ball is considered in play as soon as it leaves the goalkeepers possession, at which time play resumes as normal. For goal kicks, the ball is considered in play once it is kicked and moves.
- D. The buildout line will also be used to denote where offside offenses can be called. Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build out line. Players can only be penalized for offside offenses between the build out line and the goal line.

Build out lines will only be used for the **U-8, U-9 & U-10** divisions.

SUBSTITUTIONS

Unlimited substitutions can be made at any stoppage of play with the permission of the referee.

SLIDE TACKLES

Slide tackles are permitted at all age divisions.

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

- A. No metal cleats may be worn.
- B. No jewelry may be worn. Tape or band-aids covering jewelry IS NOT acceptable.
- C. Hard hair accessories such as clips are prohibited. Use soft “scrunchies” or rubber bands.
- D. All players are required to wear shin guards in accordance with FIFA Laws of the Game.
- E. Players requiring prescription lenses should wear sports goggles. Regular metal/wire framed glasses may be worn with the referee’s permission.
- E. Players must wear numbers on the back of their jerseys that correspond with the team’s official roster. Duplicate jersey numbers are not allowed.
- F. To avoid uniform color conflicts, home teams should wear their dark or colored jersey and away teams should wear their light or white jerseys.
- G. Where uniform colors are similar, the home team must change to an alternate jersey. The home team is listed first on the schedule. The referee will make all determinations on color conflicts.

TEAM BENCHES AND SPECTATORS

- A. Both teams will take the same side of the field.
- B. In 11v11 matches all other supporters will take the opposite side.
- C. In small-sided matches, (grass fields) teams and spectators take the same side of the field; however, team officials and spectators must stay on their team’s half of the field until the completion of the game (**NO team officials, players or spectators are permitted in the middle of grass fields**). (Artificial turf fields) Teams and spectators shall take opposite sides of the fields (players and team officials shall occupy space between adjacent fields).
- D. Team officials may not go beyond the penalty box lines.
- E. No team officials or spectators are allowed on the field or behind the goal line during the game except for injuries. Referee discretion may be used for spectators behind the goals due to space limitations. Spectators shall be an acceptable distance back from the goal line, as determined by the referee, and shall act in a respectful manner.
- F. Team officials are responsible for the behavior of the spectators. Team officials **can** be disciplined by the referee for failure to control their spectators. The competition authority has the ability to ban a spectator, forfeit a match, or expel a team from the competition for violations or abuse of a referee or the referee crew.
- G. A maximum of three (3) properly credentialed team officials are permitted on the sidelines with their players.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of inclement weather, the Tournament Committee will have the authority to change games as follows:

- A. Relocate or reschedule any game(s)
- B. Change the duration of any game(s)
- C. Cancel any game(s)
- D. Preliminary games terminated after one half of play, because of weather, will be considered complete and the score will stand.

Regardless of weather conditions, it is the responsibility of all affected teams to monitor the status of their games and to appear with their team ready to play as scheduled by the Tournament Director if and when games are restarted. Once a decision is made to suspend or cancel a game, that decision is final. Teams that continue to play may be suspended from the tournament.

LIGHTNING DETECTION AT THE SOCCERPLEX

The Maryland SoccerPlex has a lightning detection system on-site. The purpose of the system is to protect patrons using the facility when dangerous storms pass through. When dangerous conditions exist, the following steps will take place:

- A. Homs will sound for 15 seconds.
- B. The 15-second blast indicates ALL patrons must immediately go to their cars.
- C. The 15-second horn will blast when dangerous conditions have been identified, even if you do not see lightning, you must go to your car.
- D. When dangerous conditions no longer exist, the horns will blast 3 shorter bursts.
- E. You may return to the field after the 3 shorter blasts have sounded.

GENERAL

- A. Under no circumstances will the Tournament Committee, the Maryland SoccerPlex or MSYSA be responsible for any expenses (including tournament entry fee) incurred by any team. This includes a situation where the Tournament or any game(s) is cancelled in whole or part.
- B. The Tournament Committee's interpretation of these rules shall be final.
- C. The Tournament Committee reserves the right to decide on all matters pertaining to this Tournament.
- D. Any team that disregards any decision made by the tournament committee will be removed from the tournament and forfeit all of its games.