



US YOUTH SOCCER POLICY

ON

PLAYERS AND PLAYING RULES

As of July 11, 2020

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**POLICY
ON
PLAYERS AND PLAYING RULES**

PART I—GENERAL

Rule 101. DEFINITIONS

Section 1. The definitions of Bylaw Article III of USYSA apply to this policy. Those definitions include the following:

- (1) **“Federation”** means the United States Soccer Federation, Inc.
- (2) **“FIFA”** means the Federation Internationale de Football Association of which the Federation is the national association member for the United States.
- (3) **“IFAB”** means the International Football Association Board.
- (4) **“region”** means one of those regions established under Bylaw Article VIII.
- (5) **“National Council”** means the National Council of USYSA as provided under Bylaw Article XI.
- (6) **“Organization Member”** means an organization that is classified as such a member of USYSA as provided by Bylaw Article IV.
- (7) **“State Association”** means the administrative body within a territory determined by the National Council to carry out USYSA's programs for youth players.
- (8) **“team”** means a group of soccer players playing on the same side in soccer games.
- (9) **“USYSA”** means the United States Youth Soccer Association, Inc.
- (10) **“youth player”** means an individual who is an amateur player and who has not reached 20 years of age prior to December 31 for the current seasonal year.

Section 2. The following definitions also apply to this policy:

- (1) **“add”** means the addition of a player to a team's roster.
- (2) **“eligibility to play”** means registered and not under suspension.
- (3) **“game roster”** means the list of players who will participate in a particular competition.
- (4) **“involuntary release”** means the removal of a player from a team's roster at the request of team authorities.
- (5) **“registration”** means the execution of an intent to play the sport of soccer and the paying of fees to become a member of USYSA.
- (6) **“rostering”** means assignment of a registered player to a team.
- (7) **“select team”** means the official select or all-star team of —
 - (A) USYSA;
 - (B) a region;
 - (C) a State Association;
 - (D) a district or geographical subdivision of a State Association; or
 - (E) any league.
- (8) **“suspension”** means the temporary withdrawal of rights and privilege, such as the right to play, coach, or otherwise administer or participate (directly or indirectly) in soccer, and the suspension is for the entire term of the suspension with all rights and privileges withdrawn unless specifically stated otherwise by the suspending authority.
- (9) **“team roster”** means a list of registered players eligible to play for a team.
- (10) **“uniform”** means a jersey or shirt, shorts, thermal undershorts, stockings, shin guards, footwear, warmup jacket, pants, or suit, and other similar items of wear.
- (11) **“voluntary release”** means the removal of a player from a team's roster at the request of the player.

Section 3. The following definitions are suggested for use by State Associations to facilitate communication and understanding among them:

- (1) “**classic league**” means an interclub league in which—
- (A) the use of tryouts, invitations, recruiting, or any similar process to roster players selectively to any team on the basis of talent or ability, is permitted; and
 - (B) one or more league rules restrict the manner in which players may be rostered to participating teams.
- (2) “**classic team**” means a team that participates in a classic league.
- (3) “**club**”—
- (A) means an organization that is a member (directly or indirectly) of a State Association that has an identifiable membership of youth soccer players on whose behalf the organization conducts or engages in youth soccer activities; and
 - (B) sometimes referred to as a “league” or “local association”, is the basic administrative unit of USYSA.
- (4) “**district**” means a geographical subdivision of the territory of a State Association.
- (5) “**guest player**” means a registered player participating in a competition for a team to which the player is not rostered for purposes of league play.
- (6) “**interclub tournament team**” means a tournament team whose roster includes players who are members of more than one club.
- (7) “**interclub transfer**” means the removal of a player from a team’s roster at the request of the player and the contemporaneous addition of the player to the roster of another team
- (8) “**intraclub tournament team**” means a tournament team whose roster includes players who are members of only one club.
- (9) “**intraclub transfer**” means the removal of a player from a team’s roster at the request of the player and the contemporaneous addition of the player to the roster of another team from the same club.
- (10) “**league**”—
- (A) means a structured group of 4 or more teams joined for the purpose inter-team play under a common set of administrative and competition rules; and
 - (B) is differentiated from another league by the rules that govern the rostering of players to each league’s teams, and the different terms used to describe each league do not necessarily reflect the level of ability or talent of teams participating in the league.
- (11) “**league team**” means a team that participates in regularly scheduled league play.
- (12) “**player**” means a youth player registered in accordance with USYSA and State Association rules.
- (13) “**premier league**” means an interclub league in which no rule restricts the manner in which players may be rostered to participating teams, except for rules that—
- (A) define and prohibit unethical recruiting behavior; or
 - (B) limit the participation of players previously rostered to another team.
- (14) “**premier team**” means a team that participates in a premier league.
- (15) “**recreational all-star team**” means an intraclub tournament team whose roster only includes players selected from teams that participate in the same recreational league or recreation plus league.
- (16) “**recreational league**” means an intraclub league in which—
- (A) the use of tryouts, invitations, recruiting, or any similar process to roster players to any team on the basis of talent or ability is prohibited;
 - (B) the club administering the league accepts as participants in the league any eligible youths (subject to reasonable terms on registration);
 - (C) a system or rostering players is used to establish a fair or balanced distribution of playing talent among all teams participating; and
 - (D) league rules require that each player must play at least one-half of each game except for reasons of injury, illness, or discipline.
- (17) “**recreational plus league**” means an interclub or intraclub league in which—
- (A) the use of tryouts, invitations, recruiting or any similar process to roster players selectively to any team on the basis of talent or ability is prohibited;
 - (B) the club or clubs administering the league accept as participants in the league any and all eligible youths (subject to reasonable terms of registration); and
 - (C) the league does not otherwise meet the definition of a recreational league.
- (18) “**recreational plus team**” means a team that participates in a recreational plus league.
- (19) “**recreational team**” means a team that participates in a recreational league.

- (20) “**tournament team**” means a team that includes guest players and is put together for the sole purpose of playing in a tournament or other approved non-league competition.
- (21) “**transfer**” means the removal of a player from a team’s roster on the request of the player, and the contemporaneous addition of the player to the roster of another team.

Rule 102. APPLICABILITY OF POLICY

This policy only applies to State Associations and youth players registered through State Associations, unless specifically stated otherwise.

Rule 103. GENDER OF TEAMS

USYSA recognizes 2 types of team genders:

- (1) Teams with females only are girls’ teams.
- (2) All other teams are boys’ teams.

Rule 104. AGE GROUPS

Except as otherwise provided by Rule 105, age groups shall be comprised of youth players who are of age on or before the last day of December of the current year-

- (1) 19 years of age and under.
- (2) 18 years of age and under.
- (3) 17 years of age and under.
- (4) 16 years of age and under.
- (5) 15 years of age and under.
- (6) 14 years of age and under.
- (7) 13 years of age and under.
- (8) 12 years of age and under.
- (9) 11 years of age and under.
- (10) 10 years of age and under.
- (11) 8 years of age and under.
- (12) 6 years of age and under.

Rule 105. STATE VARIANCES

A State Association may permit variances in Rules 104 and 205 of this policy in the best interest of developing the sport within the jurisdiction of the State Association. Those variances do not apply to the state level of US Youth Soccer National Championship, National Presidents Cup or Regional or National League competitions.

Rule 106. GAME PLAY WITH NON-MEMBERS

Section 1. The USYSA Board of Directors or its designee may grant temporary permission to a regional or USYSA team to participate in games with a team of an organization that is not a member of the Federation or FIFA. In granting that permission, the Board or its designee shall ensure that all USYSA requirements have been met, including insurance requirements.

Section 2. A State Association may grant temporary permission to a State Association team, or to a team of a member of the State Association, to participate in games with a team of an organization that is not a member of the Federation or FIFA. In granting that permission, the State Association shall ensure that all USYSA and State Association requirements have been met, including State Association insurance requirements.

Section 3. Temporary permission under this rule may not be given for more than a period of one seasonal year. Permission may be renewed.

Rule 107. RECOGNITION OF RISK MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Section 1. A disqualification or other disciplinary action for violation of Risk Management policies imposed by a State Association against a person participating or seeking membership in a program of USYSA program, a State Association, or a program of a member of a State Association shall be recognized by all member State Associations within USYSA.

Section 2. A Risk Management disqualification imposed by a State Association upon a prospective member who has been convicted of, or is a defendant in litigation alleging that the person has committed a felony, a crime of violence, or a criminal offense against a child shall be recognized by all State Associations upon proper notification to and by USYSA.

Section 3. A State Association's Board of Directors or its designee shall conduct a review or hearing before allowing membership within their State Association to any individual who has been disqualified or otherwise disciplined by another State Association for violation of its Risk Management policies. The review or hearing shall be limited to whether the conduct giving rise to the Risk Management action taken by the other State Association constitutes a violation of the prospective State Association's Risk Management policies. Nothing herein shall prevent a State Association from disqualifying other prospective members in accordance with its own Risk Management policies.

PART II—PLAYER AND ROSTERING REQUIREMENTS

Rule 201. PLAYER REGISTRATION

Section 1. A youth player must register each seasonal year in the State Association in which he or she resides with his or her parent or parents or guardian or guardians, or, for a student in residence at a boarding school, college, or university, the player may register in the state in which the boarding school, college, university, or division of the college or university is located. Any other questions of residency may be determined by the State Association in which the player is registered to vote or holds a current driver's license.

Section 2. (a) Any youth player wishing to play on a team of a member of a State Association other than the State Association where the player is registered, will receive a written release from the State Association where the player is registered.

(b) A State Association may waive the provisions to register a player as provided by Section 1 of this rule and release a player as provided by clause (a) of this section by providing notice of waiver to another State Association.

(c) The State Association where the youth player is registered must promptly grant the youth player a release or a waiver for no additional fee.

(d) A release or a waiver must be obtained each seasonal year.

Section 3. A youth player is registered for a seasonal year from the moment the player or the player's representative executes the registration form and pays the appropriate fees.

Rule 202. PLAYER REGISTRATION FEE

The USYSA player registration fee shall be \$2.25 per player for each seasonal year beginning September 1, 2019. These player registration fees paid to a State Association must be paid to USYSA on the last day of each month of the seasonal year for which the fees were paid.

Rule 203. OLYMPIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PLAYER TRYOUTS

Section 1. A player wishing to try out for the Olympic Development Program may only try out and be selected for the Program through the State Association in which the player may be registered under Rule 201 of this policy.

Section 2. (a) Any youth player wishing to try out for and be selected for the Program through a State Association other than the State Association where the player is registered must receive written permission from—
(1) the State Association where the player is registered; and
(2) the other State Association of the team on which the player wishes to play.
(b) Permission must be obtained each seasonal year.

Section 3. A player may only try out for the Olympic Development Program in one State Association. A player is responsible for all Olympic Development Program fees of the State Association in which the player tries out.

Rule 204. PROOF OF AGE

Proof of age shall consist of a birth certificate, a Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card (DD Form 1173) issued by the uniformed services of the United States, a birth registration issued by an appropriate government agency or board of health records, a passport, an alien registration card issued by the United States Government, a certificate issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service attesting to age, a current driver's license, an unexpired federal, state, or local government identification card (if documentation of date of birth is required), or a certification of a United States citizen born abroad issued by the appropriate government agency. Hospital, baptismal, or religious certificates will not be accepted.

Rule 205. ROSTER LIMITATIONS

Section 1. Except as otherwise provided by Rule 105, every team shall have a team roster and will present a game roster for every match or competition.

Section 2. The team roster shall be approved by the State Association where the team is registered. The team roster may have up to 22 youth players on the team roster at any given time during the seasonal year. Every team roster shall have a minimum of 7 players on the roster at all times.

Section 3. The game roster shall be prepared by the team and submitted to the competition authority at a time designated by that authority. The game roster shall have a maximum of 18 players and a minimum of 7 players. Every player listed on the game roster must be included on the team roster to be eligible to participate with the team except for tournament competitions that may accept guest players.

Rule 206. MULTIPLE ROSTERING

A State Association may allow a player to be rostered on more than one youth team each seasonal year.

Rule 207. INTERNATIONAL CLEARANCES

The U.S. Soccer Federation and FIFA have international clearance requirements and procedures for players coming to the United States to play soccer. All US Youth Soccer members will comply with the US Soccer requirements for each player prior to being registered.

Rule 208. ADULT GAMES

Section 1. A youth player may play an unlimited number of adult games without losing his or her youth eligibility. The youth player must notify his or her youth coach or other authorized team official of the player's intention to play adult games. The youth player shall request, in writing, (1) eligibility clearance from the Youth State Association through which the player is registered, and (2) permission from the appropriate Adult State Association. When the clearance and permission have been granted, the Adult State Association has sole discretion in permitting a youth player to play adult games and will be responsible for establishing the procedures under which the youth player will be allowed to play. In the event of a conflict between an adult game and a youth game, the youth game shall take precedence. A youth player who is required to sign an adult form shall retain youth eligibility.

Section 2. (a) A youth team with the written permission and mutual consent of both the Youth and Adult State Associations may play in an adult-approved league and not lose its youth eligibility to compete in the US Youth Soccer National Championships competitions. If the youth team’s players are required to sign an adult form, the team shall retain its youth eligibility.

(b) The youth team will be required to play under the rules of the Youth State Association concerning registration, roster rules, transfer rules, and any additional qualifications that are required to be eligible for the US Youth Soccer National Championships competitions. Whether participation in any adult league shall qualify a youth team for the US Youth Soccer National Championships competitions play shall be determined by each Youth State Association.

Rule 209. USE OF INELIGIBLE PLAYERS

A team shall forfeit each game of the team in which—

- (1) an unregistered player was with the team at the game in a uniform; or
- (2) a player was improperly entered on the team’s roster.

PART III—GAME PLAY

Rule 301. RULES OF PLAY

Section 1. Except as provided by USYSA or its State Associations, the FIFA “Laws of the Game” apply to all competitions sponsored by USYSA. Players 10 years of age and under may play soccer in accordance with the rules of USYSA’s Development Player Program—Modified Playing Rules for 10 years of age and under, 8 years of age and under, and 6 years of age and under.

Section 2. State Associations may not approve games involving teams 10 years of age and under, unless those games are conducted with not more than 8 players on each side.

Rule 302. SUBSTITUTIONS

Section 1. Except as provided by USYSA or its State Associations, substitutions shall be unlimited except where specified otherwise in the rules and regulations for a special competition.

Section 2. Substitutions may be made, with the consent of the referee, at any stoppage in play.

Rule 303. LENGTH OF GAMES, OVERTIME PERIODS, AND BALL SPECIFICATIONS

Section 1. (a) Except as provided by USYSA and its State Associations, the length of games, overtime periods, ball size, ball circumference, and ball weight for each age group is as follows:

| Age Group | Game Length | Overtime Periods | Size | Circumference | Weight | Number of Players |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------|---------------|------------|---|
| 19 years of age and under | Two 45' halves | Two 15' halves | #5 | 27-28 in. | 14-16 ozs. | |
| 18 years of age and under | Two 45' halves | Two 15' halves | #5 | 27-28 in. | 14-16 ozs. | |
| 17 years of age and under | Two 45' halves | Two 15' halves | #5 | 27-28 in. | 14-16 ozs. | |
| 16 years of age and under | Two 40' halves | Two 15' halves | #5 | 27-28 in. | 14-16 ozs. | |
| 15 years of age and under | Two 40' halves | Two 15' halves | #5 | 27-28 in. | 14-16 ozs. | |
| 14 years of age and under | Two 35' halves | Two 10' halves | #5 | 27-28 in. | 14-16 ozs. | |
| 13 years of age and under | Two 35' halves | Two 10' halves | #5 | 27-28 in. | 14-16 ozs. | |
| 12 years of age and under | Two 30' halves | Two 10' halves | #4 | 25-26 in. | 11-13 ozs. | No more than 11, 8 strongly recommended |
| 11 years of age and under | Two 30' halves | Two 10' halves | #4 | 25-26 in. | 11-13 ozs. | No more than 11, 8 strongly recommended |
| 10 years of age and under | Two 25' halves | NONE | #4 | 25-26 in. | 11-13 ozs. | No more than 7, 6 strongly recommended |
| 8 years of age and under | 4 -12' quarters | NONE | #3 | 23-24 in. | 11-12 ozs. | No more than 5, 4 strongly recommended |
| 6 years of age and under | 4 – 6' quarters | NONE | #3 | 23-24 in. | 11-12 ozs. | No more than 4, 3 strongly recommended |

(b) In tournament play, if the game is still tied after overtime periods, FIFA “Kicks from the Penalty Mark” rules apply to determine the winner.

Section 2. (a) Except as provided by USYSA and its State Associations, the length of games, ball size, ball circumference, and ball weight for each age group shall be as follows:

| <u>Age Group</u> | <u>Game Length</u> | <u>Size</u> | <u>Circumference</u> | <u>Weight</u> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 10 years of age and under | As Modified Rules specify | #4 | 25-26 in. | 11–13 ozs. |
| 8 years of age and under | As Modified Rules specify | #3 | 23-24 in. | 11–12 ozs. |
| 6 years of age and under | As Modified Rules specify | #3 | 23-24 in. | 11–12 ozs. |

(b) For the 10 years of age and under, 8 years of age and under, and 6 years of age and under competitions, ties will stand.

Rule 304. UNIFORMS

Section 1. In this rule, “team member” means a player, coach, assistant coach, or other official of a team.

Section 2. A team member is not prohibited by USYSA from having a mark or name, or both, on any part of the team member’s uniform being worn at a game, if the mark or name is related to an item or service that is appropriate for youth. The Organization Member with which the team member is registered shall determine the appropriateness. An Organization Member, or its member, may be more restrictive on uniform marks or names than allowed under this rule. Any inappropriate mark or name on the team member’s uniform must be removed, replace, or covered before the team member may continue to participate in the game.

Rule 305. HEADING

Section 1. This rule is mandatory for all US Youth Soccer conducted events, including Regional and National competitions for the National Championship Series, and National Presidents Cup series. This rule is also mandatory for the US Youth Soccer National League, US Youth Soccer Regional Leagues, and the US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program.

Section 2. Although not mandatory for US Youth Soccer State Associations, State Associations are strongly encouraged to adopt this Rule for state and local play.

Section 3. All Players age 10 years of age and under shall not head the ball directly from the air in any match or competition, nor shall these players practice heading the ball in any organized team setting. If a player age 10 or younger deliberately heads the ball in a match, the referee shall award an indirect free kick to the opposing team at the spot of the infraction. If the heading occurs within the penalty area, the referee shall move the ball outside the penalty area and award an indirect free kick to the opposing team.

Players age 11 and age 12 shall be permitted to head the ball in any match or competition. These players may practice heading the ball in an organized team practice or skill session, but coaches shall monitor this practice so that no single player heads the ball more than 25 times per week, regardless of setting.

Players age 13 and older shall be permitted to head the ball in any match or competition and these players may practice heading the ball in an organized team practice or skill session.

PART IV—PERMISSION TO TRAVEL AND HOST

Rule 401. PERMISSION TO TRAVEL AND HOST TOURNAMENTS AND GAMES

Permission to travel and to host tournaments and games is as provided by the USYSA Travel and Tournament Policy.

PART V—AMENDMENT OF POLICY

Rule 501. AMENDMENT OF POLICY

Except in an emergency, the Board of Directors may adopt an amendment to this policy only after providing State Associations, at least 30 days prior to the Board's consideration of the proposed amendment, written notice and the text of each proposed amendment. State Associations shall have until 10 days before the Board's consideration an opportunity to submit to the Board written comments about the proposed amendment.