

**Middle School Soccer Association (MSSA)**  
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**Association Rules - Spring, 2017**

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Association is to provide middle school aged players the opportunity to continue to play the game, on a recreational level. The objective is to have fun. Anyone exhibiting behavior to the contrary may be asked to discontinue their participation. *The Sponsoring League for teams playing in MSSA are responsible for adherence to the Purpose and Rules of the Association.*

**Sanctioning Body**

Games are played as "friendlies", among teams affiliated with the Ohio South Youth Soccer Association (OSYSA). All teams must register through a league affiliated with the Ohio South Youth Soccer Association.

**Ohio Return to Play Law**

1. All participating Leagues are responsible for the implementation of the Law for their League Sponsored Teams.
2. All participating Leagues are responsible for making sure their Coaches, Parents, Players, Other League Officials and Referees are aware of the Law take the matter seriously. We have no choice in this. IT IS THE LAW.
3. If a player is identified with the possible symptoms of a concussion by a Referee, the Coach of the player's team, or Other League Official; that player must be removed from the field and may not return to the field that day, nor participate in any future team practices or games, until being cleared, in writing, by one of the following:
  - a. a physician. (M.D., or D.O.)
  - b. an athletic trainer whose work is supervised by a physician.
  - c. a physician's assistant.
  - d. a nurse practitioner.
4. No Coach, Substitute Coach, Referee, or Club Assistant Referee shall be required to demonstrate or prove to any other coach, substitute coach, referee, club assistant referee, player, or parent that they are in compliance with the requirements of Ohio's Return to Play Law.
5. Coaches will have no standing to make an "official determination" as to whether **a player on another team** is exhibiting possible symptoms of a concussion.

**Team Formation**

All players who register to play, must be placed on a team; provided a sufficient number of players register to form a team and a coach can be secured for the team. Teams may not be formed on the basis of a tryout.

**Team Declarations and Division Placement**

Team Declarations and subsequent Division Placement is the responsibility of the respective, Sponsoring League's MSSA Coordinator. The MSSA Administrator has the authority to override the League Coordinator's decisions in this regard, if the Administrator has reason to believe an error in placement may have occurred. The MSSA Administrator will discuss the matter with the respective, League Coordinator before a final placement decision is made.

MSSA League Coordinators should review the Association's document titled, "Team Placement Guidelines" before making placement decisions.

**Player Eligibility**

The Sponsoring League is responsible for assuring that ONLY eligible players are playing in MSSA. If any dispute arises regarding player eligibility, the Sponsoring League is responsible for documenting their players' eligibility.

**Per recent OSYSA Rules changes, U-11 players can play up to U-12, but may NOT play up**

**with U-13 players. Ergo, U11 players may NOT play in MSSA, regardless of their grade level.**

Players who have reached the age of 15 prior to August 1st of the current soccer year, or players in the 9th grade, or higher, are NOT eligible to play in the Association.

*Exception: An exception may be made for a U-14 aged player that is now enrolled in high school. The exception must be requested, in writing, by the League MSSA Coordinator of the sponsoring league.*

When a community has enough players to form a Girls Team, but not enough boys to form a Co-Rec Team, some of the girls can play on both teams so that the boys can play, PROVIDED THAT, both the Girls Team and the Co-Rec Team have enough players to play their Saturday games without having to re-schedule either game. It should be noted that the opposite

situation is not allowed. That is, when a community has enough players to form a Co-Rec team, but not enough girls to form a Girls Team, some of the boys are NOT allowed to play on both teams.

Team members may play on recreational teams outside of the MSSA. Players may not play on a Select, or Club Team; or a School Sponsored Team that is a member of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) at the same time they are playing on an MSSA team.

Players must be listed on the team roster issued by the respective League Office to be considered legal players.

If it is documented that a team is in violation of these player eligibility rules; all of the games played while in violation of these rules will be declared a forfeit and the team may be dropped from the Association.

### **Playing Time**

As a recreational association, all players SHOULD play at least half of each game. If a violation of this rule is documented, that game MAY be declared a forfeit. League Coordinators and Coaches are responsible for implementation of this guideline.

### **Laws of the Game**

USSF Laws of the Game for U-15 play will be followed, except as noted in these rules. Per USSF Laws of the Game, SLIDE TACKLES ARE ALLOWED.

### **Heading the ball**

1. U-12 and U-13 players may head the ball in games but heading in practices are limited. As recommended and established by USSF, U-12 and U13 players are prohibited from deliberately striking a soccer ball with any portion of their head, (a.k.a. heading), during any practice session...

- a. for more than an accumulated, maximum total of 30 minutes during any 7 day period
- b. AND for an accumulated, maximum of 15 to 20 head to ball contacts during any 7 day period.

2. There are no limits or restrictions on heading in practice or in games for players U-14 and older.

3. All coaches of U-12 and older teams are to instruct, teach and emphasize the importance of proper technique for the heading of soccer balls.

4. Coaches and parents are responsible for adherence to these restrictions.

### **Religious Clothing**

According to Law 4, The Players' Equipment:

A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player. The basic compulsory equipment of a player is a jersey or shirt, shorts, stockings, shin guards, and footwear. There is no provision for a player to wear a skirt or similar clothing.

However, in an analogous situation, in respect of certain religions that require members to wear

head coverings, the Secretary General of the United States Soccer Federation has given permission to those bound by religious law to wear such head coverings, usually a turban or yarmulke, provided the referee finds that the headgear does not pose a danger to the player wearing it, or to the other players. This principle could be extended to other clothing required of members by their religion.

### **Substitution Rule.**

Substitutions are normally made during the following stoppages of play.

1. After a goal is scored for either team.
2. Prior to a goal kick by either team.
3. Prior to the kick off of the second half.
4. Prior to a throw-in that is in the favor of the team that will be substituting a player.

### Substitution Rule Modification: Throw-ins

If a player for the opposing team is at the mid-field flag waiting to be a substitute when the team that is awarded a throw-in has a substitute to enter the game, the substitute for the opposing team may also enter the game. If the team that has been awarded a throw-in, does not have a substitute, then neither team may substitute a player.

### **PLEASE TAKE PARTICULAR NOTE of the rule regarding thunder and/or lightning.**

If anyone hears thunder or sees lightning the game must be suspended and everyone must go to their cars. The game will be suspended for 30 minutes. Each occurrence of either thunder or lightning becomes the new baseline for a 30 minute delay. If the referee does not suspend play, coaches should remove their players from the field and go to their cars.

### **Length of Games**

Regular Season games will consist of two (2), thirty (30) minute halves; with a running clock, except for serious injuries. In which case, the Head Referee may add time to the game in order for the injured player to be attended. Preliminary round, tournament games will be shortened to two (2) twenty five (25) minute halves. Tournament, Championship games will be the same as Regular Season Games.

The start of the game may be delayed up to fifteen (15) minutes from the scheduled start time, to allow for the arrival of both teams, before a forfeit is ruled. A minimum of 7 players is required to start and continue a game. Games SHOULD NOT BE STARTED without both teams' coaches being present. If a coach is not present, a parent from that team may assume the coaching responsibilities.

### **Field and Goal Requirements**

Each participating League and/or Team must provide a field for their home games. The minimum field size is 55 yards by 100 yards. Fields must be safe for play and properly lined and equipped, per USSF guidelines. Goal dimensions must be 8' x 24', with nets, and they must be securely anchored. The senior referee is responsible for adherence to these requirements.

### **Referees**

The HOME team will schedule and pay for the referees. Certified, USSF referees must be used for all matches. A two person or three person system of control may be used. If a two person system of control is used, at least one referee must be an adult. It is preferable that both referees be adults. If a three person system is used, the Center Referee must be an adult.

- A. Youth Referees should be at least TWO years older than the players on the field.
- B. If adults referees are not available for the game, both coaches must agree, at least 48 hours prior to the day of the scheduled game, to play the game with youth referees.
- C. Using either adult, or youth, referees who have a child or sibling on the field is STRONGLY DISCOURAGED. In the event this situation is unavoidable, both

Coaches must agree to play the game under this circumstance, at least 48 hours prior to the day of the scheduled game.

If only one referee is available for a game, two "Club, Assistant Referees" may be used, preferably one from each team. If only one referee is available, it must be an adult referee. If Club, Assistant Referees are used, they may only indicate when the ball has left the field of play.

### **Team and Spectator Locations**

Both team benches must be on one side of the field and all spectators on the opposite side of the field. A maximum of three (3) coaches are allowed on the bench.

### **Disqualifications**

Disqualifications must be reported to the CESA Office after the game. The Head Referee of the match **MUST SUBMIT A WRITTEN REPORT** to the League Coordinator of the Home Team. The player's (coach's) name and number, as well as the circumstances should be reported. The League Coordinator will then forward this report to the MSSA League Coordinator.

A player, coach, other bench personnel, or spectator that has been disqualified from a contest, shall be barred from participating in the next contest. Additional game suspensions may be invoked after review by the MSSA Office and the League offices of the two teams involved.

Coaches will be held responsible for the behavior of their players and parents and may be asked by the referee to correct any undesirable behaviors. Coaches may be disqualified from a match due to the behavior of their parents or players.

### **Season-Ending Tournament**

The Tournament Rules state: *"If a team forfeits one tournament game, they must forfeit all of their tournament games."* In other words, if a team cannot play ALL of their tournament games, they cannot play in the tournament. **If a team cannot play in the tournament, but DOES NOT notify MSSA PRIOR TO MSSA STARTING THE COMPILATION of the Tournament Schedules; that Team, or the League through which that team is registered, will be fined \$250. If that team, or the League through which they are registered, does not pay the fine, they will NOT BE ALLOWED to play in MSSA in subsequent seasons until the fine is paid.**

### **Reporting Concerns and/or Complaints**

If any Association Participant (Coach, Player, Parent, Referee, etc.) wishes to raise an issue regarding any matter related to the Association, they should first forward that issue to their respective MSSA League Coordinator for resolution. After review, the League Coordinator may choose to forward the issue onto the MSSA Administrator. The MSSA Administrator will review the matter with the League Coordinator and, together, they will determine the appropriate action to be taken.

If the issue involves another League or Team, the MSSA Administrator will forward the matter onto that League's MSSA Coordinator. Together, the MSSA Administrator and the League MSSA Coordinator will review the matter and, together, determine the appropriate action to be taken. The MSSA Administrator will communicate what action has been taken to the League MSSA Coordinator that reported the issue.

### **Schedules**

MSSA will schedule all games. The participating Leagues/Teams will schedule and pay for fields and referees for their home games.

### **Game Days**

Games will be scheduled to be played on Wednesdays evenings for the Girls Division, Thursday evenings for the Co-Rec Division, and Saturdays (preferably mornings) for both Divisions. Due to field and referee availability, some teams may need to play on different days. Teams are allowed to change the days for only their home games. We hope such changes are minimal.

We also ask that they be consistently different. For example, instead of Thursday evenings, "All of team A's home games will be played on Wednesday evenings." **When the need does arise, we ask for everyone's understanding and cooperation.**

### **Game Times**

Game times will be determined by the Home Team, based on field and referee availability. The recommended start time for weeknight games is 6:00 pm. The recommended start time for Saturday games is 9:00 am or later. For a variety of reasons, Saturday morning start times are preferred. We ask that the Home Team take into account the travel time of the Visiting Team when determining start times. We appreciate your consideration of the Visiting Team's start time request whenever possible. Visiting Teams also need to consider the limitations of field and referee availability when making requests for different start times.

### **Scheduling Communication**

CESA, the Association Administrator, schedules ONLY the games - the date and the home and visiting teams. The Home Team, through their League's MSSA Coordinator, schedules the fields, times and referees for their HOME games.

The HOME TEAM COACH must contact the Visiting Team Coach to advise as to the field location/number and the time of the game. These contacts should be made as soon as possible at the beginning of the season, rather than on a week-by-week basis.

### **Make-up Games/Re-Scheduling Games**

Make-up games may be scheduled with agreement of both coaches AND WITH THE APPROVAL of the MSSA League Coordinator of the HOME TEAM. In the event an agreeable date cannot be reached, the team that could not make the originally scheduled date will forfeit the game.

We all understand that the need may arise to re-schedule a game due to a variety of factors. However, over the past couple of seasons, it seems to have reached epidemic proportions! The "standard" game days are Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday. Other leagues, coaches, and **especially parents** expect that games will be played on these days. Parents schedule other family activities with the expectation that their child will be playing on these days. Then they find out - usually at the last minute - that this game will be played on Monday, this game will be played on Sunday, that game will be played on Friday, etc, etc, etc..

Yes, there will be legitimate reasons to re-schedule games. However, we implore everyone to make sure the reasons are legitimate! The fact that your best players will not be able to play this game or that game IS NOT a legitimate reason to re-schedule. The fact that you will only have 5 players available to play on a particular day is a legitimate reason. The fact that you will only have 11 players to play a particular game IS NOT a legitimate reason. Play the game with the players that can be there - within reason, of course. Advise the other team's coach of the situation. Hopefully, they will be as understanding as you would be and not play 11 players against your 10 players, or 9 players, or whatever.

Finally, if you do have to re-schedule a game, PLEASE do so with as much advance notification as possible. Check your team's schedule NOW. Check with your parents NOW to see if there is going to be a scheduling problem at some point in the season. It will make everyone's life a lot less stressful! Your understanding and consideration will be appreciated!!!!

### **Team Uniforms**

Respective team's jersey colors should be confirmed by both coaches. If there is a color conflict, the HOME TEAM must change colors or wear pinneys. All jerseys should be numbered.

### **Reporting Game Scores**

Tournament pairings are based on the results of regular season games. In the absence of game scores, a team may be penalized when tournament pairings are established.

Game Scores should be reported to the CESA OFFICE by the HOME TEAM on the day the

game is played. Scores may be reported by phone or email. When reporting scores, the following information should be included.

1. Scheduled date of game. (Which may or may not be the date it was played.)
2. Home Team Name, Team Number, and goals scored.
3. Visiting Team Name, Team Number, and goals scored.

### **Mercy Rule**

If one team gains an advantage of 4 goals, the losing team may place an additional player on the field. If the advantage goes below 4 goals, the losing team must remove the additional player from the field.

The purpose of the rule is twofold.

1. It is an attempt to provide a modicum of comparability to the game. We all know, at least we say we know, that neither team benefits from a game in which the scoring gets out of control. The rule is an attempt to help reduce the problem.
2. It should serve as a reminder to coaches when it is time "to call off the hounds!". Remember, the purpose of the Association is to have fun and let the kids learn the game. As coaches, we are responsible for taking measures that contribute to that end.

The rule is not intended to punish the players of the winning team by limiting their playing time. On the other hand, **that is what will happen** if the coach doesn't take steps to control the score of the game. There are numerous options available to a team, should the need arise. Moving your defenders to the front is usually not a good one. Why? This typically only serves to make the situation worse as defenders now get the chance to score. Unfortunately, it will be at the expense of the opposing team. And really, what does that accomplish? If you want your defenders to have the opportunity to score a goal, then start the game with them up front and see how that works.

Better tactics would be things like requiring the ball to be passed back to a defender on each possession. Or, perhaps, require that each defender touch the ball before it can be brought forward. Requiring a certain number of passes before a shot can be taken sometimes works as well. I'm sure you can each think of many other restrictions that can be invoked.

Tactics such as these not only slow down the proliferation of goals, but also provide players on the winning team the opportunity to improve their game by being forced to operate under pressure, which was probably not happening without the coach invoking the restriction. Your players will be better for it and the opposing team's players won't be hurt by it.

### **Number of Players on The Field**

While not required, coaches are encouraged to take into the account the number of players present for the opposing team, for a given game. USSF Rules require 7 players on the field to play a match. If one team is short handed on a given day, the other coach is encouraged to play down to the number of players present for the other team. If the team that was short players gains an advantage, the other team can always place more players on the field.

As with the Mercy Rule, the intent of this suggestion is not to punish the players of the team that has an abundance of players at the game by limiting their playing time. Perhaps that coach can simply substitute more frequently. On the other hand, how fair is it for the team that has only 10 players, to play the entire game without a substitution?

### **Sportsmanship and Fairplay**

As indicated above, the purpose of the Association is to have fun. Behavior to the contrary only creates an unpleasant experience for everyone else. It should not be tolerated by participating leagues/teams. While everyone wants to win the game, that should not be the primary reason for playing it. As adults, it is our responsibility to instill a spirit of sportsmanship and fairplay in our players and parents. That goal cannot be achieved if we

allow players, spectators, ourselves, or our assistant coaches to behave in a manner contrary to that. So, let's be diligent in our efforts to create an atmosphere in which everyone can have fun and an enjoy the game.