



MV UNITED

Island League

Handbook

— November 2025

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League Overview

MV United Island League (ISL) is a competitive youth soccer program on Martha's Vineyard, designed for players in grades 5 through 8.

The ISL aims to provide a fun, challenging environment where players can develop strong foundational skills while building on their existing knowledge of the game. Our goal is to elevate each player's technique and overall understanding of soccer.

Through the ISL, MV United is working to strengthen its competitive travel and tournament teams. We're committed to fostering unity, promoting consistency in training, and most importantly—instilling a lifelong love of the game in our players.

The league is divided into two divisions for both boys and girls:

Division I Girls (7th & 8th grade)

Division II Girls (5th & 6th grade)

Division I Boys (7th & 8th grade)

Division II Boys (5th & 6th grade)

Important Dates:

May 15: Registration opens

August 1: Registration closes

Registration Fee: \$175.00

The season begins the last week of August and runs through the first week in November.

About Us

Martha's Vineyard United Soccer is a volunteer-run, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing children and young adults with the opportunity to enjoy the game of soccer in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Our programs focus on fun, teamwork, and sportsmanship, offering training at all levels to meet each player where they are and help them grow—both on and off the field.

Mission

To provide every player with the opportunity to enjoy soccer in a supportive, inclusive, and rewarding environment—one that emphasizes skill development, fun, and personal growth at a level that matches their interest and ability.

We strive to create a challenging pathway for those who aspire to compete at higher levels, while fostering character and integrity through teamwork, respect, and fair play.

Resources to Help You

For any questions regarding the information outlined in this document, please contact:

Island League Co-Director:

Angie Francis
afrancis@mvunited.org

Island League Co-Director:

Jon Hartzband
jhartzband@mvunited.org

Game Format & Rules

Format

The number of teams in each division, number of players on each team, and format of the round-robin season is determined by the number of players registered and the number of volunteer coaches available. The format of play may vary from season-to-season.

7 versus 7, 9 versus 9

Teams play with an equal number of field players and one goalkeeper. If a team is short players, the opposing team will play down with the same number of players.

A minimum of 6 of your rostered players need to be present to play a game. Otherwise, the team with under the minimum number of players for a game must forfeit. A scrimmage game can still be played during the game slot, and teams can distribute players so that an even match can be played.

Goal Differential

To promote sportsmanship and balanced competition, our league follows a **five-goal differential limit**. Once a team leads by more than five goals, coaches are expected to take steps to even out play—such as adjusting player positions, encouraging more passing, or rotating stronger players to defense. This guideline helps ensure that all players stay engaged, respected, and motivated, keeping the focus on fun and development rather than lopsided scores.

For Quick Reference

01 ▲

Scheduling & Cancellations

- Will be communicated by the League Director and/or Coach.
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02 ▲

Field Locations

- West Tisbury School
 - West Tisbury Town Field
 - Oak Bluffs School
-

03 ▲

Safety Guidelines

- Jewelry is prohibited.
 - Shin guards are required.
 - Any head injury will result in immediate removal and evaluation.
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04 ▲

Sportsmanship

- Referees decisions are final.
 - Set a tone of positivity, kindness, patience, and encouragement.
 - Spectators are to remain in the designated area, opposite team benches.
 - No coaching will be allowed by parents from the sidelines.
 - The League has zero tolerance for abusive language or behavior.
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Rules

All FIFA rules of play apply.

Ball Size

- Division I 7th & 8th grade = Size 5
- Division II 5th & 6th grade - Size 4

Game Length

- 25 minute halves
- 5 minute half time

Substitutions at the half line during stoppages.

Offside rules apply.

A ball that is punted or drop-kicked by the goalkeeper must not cross the midfield line in the air.

- If it does, the opposing team will be awarded an indirect free kick from the spot where the ball first touches the ground.

Playing time:

- Playing time for all players should be balanced throughout the game.
- Provided the team has extra players for substitutions, all players should be subbed at least once.
- Highly skilled players should have time off the field.
- The goalkeeping position should be rotated, so that all players get experience on the field, and no one player is always playing goalkeeper.

Season Rankings are determined as follows:

- Win = 3 points
- Tie = 1 point
- Loss = 0 points
- In the event of a tie, goal differential will be used as a tiebreaker (calculated by subtracting the number of goals a team has conceded from the number of goals it has scored)

Playoff Tiebreaker:

- Play-off games that end in a tie at the end of regular time, go immediately to a shootout.
- Each team will select five players to kick - only players on the field at the end of the game may be selected.
- Teams will alternate attempts, a coin toss by the referee will determine which team shoots first
- If the score remains tied after five kicks, the shootout proceeds to one-for-one rounds, from the remaining players on the field, until a winner is determined.
- No player may shoot more than once until all eligible players have taken a kick.
- Keepers may be changed after any shot from the list of participating players for the shootout kicks.

Referees:

- Our aspirational goal is to have a center referee and two assistant referees for every game.
- Referees do not have to be certified to referee Island League games, so MVU uses ISL as a training ground to mentor younger players interested in becoming referees.
- Referee decisions are final.



Frequently Asked Questions

How are teams determined?

Players will be evaluated at Parity Scrimmages held at the beginning of the season. ISL Co-Directors and volunteer coaches work together to build rosters that are balanced for competitive play. Please understand the roster building process is inherently imperfect and that there is a subjective element to the process. Evaluators must make difficult decisions weighing many factors in the process. The Board has created what it believes to be a reasonable process that relies on good, thoughtful, and fair people doing the best they can.

The League does not place players on teams based on special requests.

If you have a question about your child's placement, please contact the League Director.

What is the commitment?

Joining an ISL team is making a commitment to 2 practices and 1 Saturday game per week. Coaches will establish an attendance policy (more game time, or you get to start, if you show up to both weekly practices) to reinforce the importance of and encourage better attendance.

Who coaches the teams?

MVU is an entirely volunteer-led organization and we rely heavily on parent and community volunteers to coach our ISL teams. All coaches must be registered with MVU and complete CORI, SafeSport, & Concussion Training. The League provides training opportunities and other available coaching resources throughout the year.

Is financial assistance available?

MVU is committed to ensuring that children seeking to play soccer will not be prevented from doing so by financial hardship.

In order to request a fee reduction, please complete a confidential application on our website at www.mvunited.org. Applications must be received by the registration deadline. Any remaining fee due after an approved reduction must be paid within one week of notification. If you have questions, please contact Laurie at treasurer@mvunited.org.

What equipment do I need to provide?

All players will receive a kit that includes socks, a jersey, and a pair of shorts. The uniform kits will be distributed during the first week of practice. You must provide shin guards and cleats. Players should have a water bottle for every practice & game.



How can I support the team?

It's best to ask coaches how to contribute. Bringing cold healthy drinks and fruit, team tents, cold wash cloths, etc. are usually appreciated.

There are many volunteer opportunities for parents that are interested in being more involved with the program. Please reach out to the League Director if you want to learn more!

How much playing time will my child have?

Playing time depends on several factors, but at ISL, we strive to provide balanced opportunities for all players. For more details, we encourage you to speak directly with your child's coaches about their approach and philosophy.

