

# NorCal Premier Soccer League

## Match Rules 2025-26 Season

*Text highlighted in GREEN indicates changes for the 2025-26 season.*



***A US Club Soccer Sanctioned League***



## Match Rules Table

The following table defines the basic in-match rules of competition for all NorCal soccer matches, unless otherwise stated in the specific competition specific handbook or event information.

	U8-U10	U11	U12	U13	U14-U16	U17-U19
Field Size (yds)	55/65 L 35/45 W *	70/80 L 45/55 W*		100/120 L 50/80 W		
Penalty Area (yds)	12x24	14x36		18 x 44		
Goal Area (yards)	4x8	5x16		6 x 20		
Goal Size (ft)	6.5x18.5 - 7x21			8x24		
**Minimum # of Refs	1					3
Number of Players	7v7	9v9		11v11		
Game Day Roster Size	14	16		18		
Minimum # of Players	5	6		7		
Goalkeeper	Yes					
Playing Time	2x25	2x30		2x35	2x40	2x45
Half-Time	5 mins	10 mins				
Ball Size	4			5		
Deliberate Heading	No		Yes			
PDI (see below)	Yes	No				
Offside	Yes					
Substitutions	At Any Stoppage					
Free Kick clearance	8 yd			10 yd		
Penalty Kicks	Yes (mark at 10 yds)			Yes (mark at 12 yds)		
Build-Out Line	Yes	None				

\* Use of cones for lines allowed

\*\*Required **minimum** number of referees. Every attempt should be made to have 3 referees on all matches U11 and above. No NorCal match may be conducted using the dual system of control - "duals".

No NorCal matches will employ the 'Only the captain' guidelines.

## Rosters/ Participant Verification

Verification of match participants is covered in this [NorCal Guidance Document](#).

Please note that a coach holding a valid US Club passcard may coach ANY team in the club for which they hold the card. They are not required to be printed on the game card; however, if they are not listed, the referee must write the coach's full name and card number on the game card.

## Substitutions

Unlimited substitutions are allowed in all age groups and competitions (except ECNL-RL). However, teams may substitute only with the Referee's permission. Substitutes must wait at the halfway line (off of the field of play) until the field player has left the field of play and/or the Referee has indicated the substitute may enter the field of play.

*Substitutions by either team are allowed at any stoppage of play with the permission of the Referee. Referees will be instructed not to allow substitutions deemed "excessive" or of a "time-wasting" nature. Please respect the sanctity of the game and do not use the free substitution rules to disrupt the match.*

## Technical Area

The technical area is for players and team officials only. A maximum of 3 team officials are allowed in each team's technical area. Team officials must have a US Club pass to sit in the technical area. It is highly recommended that teams have several credentialed Coaches or managers with passes for the team just in case something happens to the Head Coach. A US Club pass makes a person eligible to Coach any team in the Club for which that Coach or manager is credentialed.

## Deliberate Heading (U11 and below)

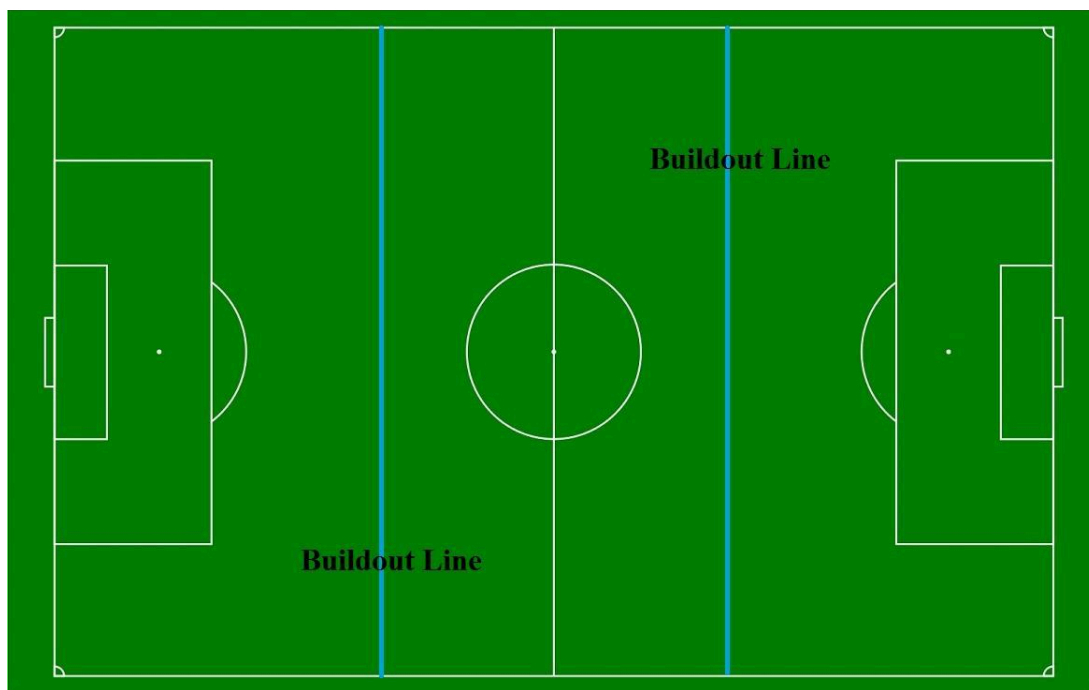
For U11 and below, when a Player **deliberately** heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. Exceptions: a) if the deliberate header is committed by a Player within their own goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred, b) if the deliberate header is committed by a Player within the opponents' goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken from anywhere in that goal area. This rule shall apply to the age groups of U11 and below. Players who are playing up will play according to the rules of the age group in which they are playing. It is the Club's responsibility to understand the effects of this rule on Players playing up.

Accidental contact between the ball and the head is not deliberate heading and is therefore not an offense; play should continue.

## PDI - Player Development Initiatives (U8-U10)

This section describes how the US Soccer Player Development Initiatives (PDI) should be implemented during play / on the field for all NorCal 7v7 (U8-U10) small-sides matches. It does not address the Concussion Initiative part of PDI, nor other parts of PDI related to organization and non-match areas. Specifically, this document covers the build-out line, goal kicks, goalkeeper possession, and offside.

### Build Out Line



Key to these particular US Soccer-approved modifications to The Laws of the Game, the build out line is a line perpendicular to the two touchlines, equidistant between the penalty area line and the halfway line. The position of the build out line may be implemented by placing a cone just behind (off the field) the touchline at the point where the build out line should intersect it.

### Goal Kicks

When a goal kick is to be taken, opponents must back up across the build out line so they are between that line and their own goal line until the ball is in play (kicked and clearly moves.) It is not necessary for opponents to be out of the defensive area between the build out line and the kicking team's goal line when the kick is taken, but the kicking team does so, accepting the positions of the opponents at that moment and the potential consequences.

### Goalkeeper Possession

When the goalkeeper has the ball and needs to release it from their hands, the opponents must back up across the build out line so they are between that line and their own goal line until the goalkeeper has released the ball. It is not necessary for opponents to be out of the defensive area between the build out line and the goalkeeper's goal line, when the ball is released, but the goalkeeper does so, accepting the positions of the opponents at that moment and the potential consequences.

Goalkeepers with possession of the ball must not punt or drop kick the ball – they must pass, drop, throw or roll the ball on release. It is an offense for a goalkeeper with possession of the ball to punt or drop kick the ball. If they do so, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opponents where the offense occurred (observing the usual modification to free kick restart position if the offense occurred within the goal area.) A drop kick is any kick that is taken after release while the ball is still bouncing.

The eight-second goalkeeper possession limit (Law 12) is applied to matches utilizing a build out line. However, the referee's eight-second count should not start until all attackers have retreated beyond the build-out line (unless there are no attackers between the build-out line and the goal line, in which case the count starts when the goalkeeper has possession.)

## Offside



A player will not be deemed to be in an offside position until they cross the build out line on their attacking half of the field to place themselves between that line and the goal line. In other words, the offside position requirements move from the halfway line to the build out line.