NorCal Premier Soccer League

Handbook
2022-2023 Season

(Updated May 2022)

Text highlighted in orange shows changes for the 2022-2023 season.

A US Club Soccer Sanctioned League

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NorCal Premier Mission

We elevate soccer by developing Players, Clubs, Coaches, and Referees.

NorCal Premier Core Values

Collaboration
We collaborate with our soccer community to make wise decisions.

Joy
We celebrate soccer and take fun seriously!

Impact
We make a meaningful difference.

Integrity
We strive to do the right thing.

Agility
We move quickly.

Competition
We believe that healthy competition is essential to progress.

Education
We are committed to learning and development.

Guided by our Mission and Core Values, NorCal Premier Soccer's ("NorCal's") purpose is to set the highest standards for soccer Clubs to develop Players to their fullest potential – physically, emotionally, and ethically.

Membership in NorCal is considered to be an automatic acceptance of our rules, policies, and procedures. Our competitions are governed by regulations approved by the League Office and written in this handbook. The League Office shall rule on all disputes and issues pertaining to NorCal competitions. The League Office may overrule stated rules, policies, or procedures in this handbook if it is determined to be for the good of the game. Additionally, all participants in NorCal events are members of US Club Soccer and therefore must adhere faithfully, both to the letter and the spirit, to its stated bylaws, rules, and policies.

When NorCal's rules and policies are in direct conflict with the rules of another league or governing body, NorCal may be restricted from implementing certain rules. However, our Code of Ethics must be adhered to at all times.

Definitions

As used herein, the following terms shall have the following definitions:

Adult: Any Coach, Director of Coaching, Trainer, Manager, Official, (Team) Parent, or other individual 18 years of age or older affiliated with a Club and having access to a Player, the Player's parents, or the Player's contact information that is not available publicly.

Club: Any entity (such as a Club or academy) admitted as a member of NorCal Premier.

Coach: Any individual engaged in Coaching or training Players on behalf of a Club, whether in a paid or voluntary, permanent, or temporary capacity.

Director of Coaching: Any individual employed by or volunteering for a Club as a Director of Coaching, Executive Director, Technical Director, General Manager, or as an assistant to any of the above-listed roles and all Adults filling similar roles regardless of title. A Director of Coaching is responsible for having oversight of each team in their Club and for each team's involvement in NorCal competitions.

Field or Facility: Any Facility or Field used by a Club to conduct tryouts, Training Sessions, or games (other than tournament games).

League Office: Any individual employed by or volunteering in any capacity for NorCal Premier Soccer, including, but not limited to the Board of Directors, employees, staff, and committees.

Player: Any Player holding a valid Player pass from US Club Soccer and currently playing for a NorCal Club.

Recruiting:

- Outside the NorCal Tryout Window: "Recruiting" refers to making any contact or communication with a Player who is registered with another NorCal Club, in which the Player is asked or allowed to join a Club, attend a tryout or Club training session, or play or guest play for another Club, without first receiving permission from the Director of Coaching of the Player's Club.
- Inside the NorCal Tryout Window: "Recruiting" refers to making an initial or first contact or communication with a Player who is registered with another NorCal Club, in which the Player is asked or allowed to join a Club, attend a tryout or Club training session, or guest play for another Club, without first receiving permission from the Director of Coaching of the Player's Club.

Referee: Any Referee licensed for the current year by the United States Soccer Federation.

Training Session: Any Club sanctioned or private training session or practice.

Code of Ethics

As a NorCal Premier Member, your adherence to the Code of Ethics signals your commitment to the basic laws of the organization, and thus basic moral standards of the soccer community at large.

For All Members

A. Know, respect, and follow the letter and spirit of the Laws of the Game.
B. Treat others with respect and courtesy.
C. Adhere to the rules and policies of NorCal Premier Soccer, US Club Soccer, and US Soccer.
D. Recognize the rights, dignity, and worth of all – regardless of gender, ability, cultural background, or religion.

For Clubs

A. Require sportsmanlike conduct at all times.
B. Address issues with other Clubs in a professional and timely manner.
C. Ensure that all Adults and Players in your Club are familiar with the rules and expectations of NorCal Premier Soccer.
D. Respect the Facilities used by other Clubs.
E. Actively uphold the Recruiting, Tryouts, and Player Transfer Policies (see Section 4)

For Coaches

A. Place your Player's physical, mental, and emotional development and well-being ahead of all else.
B. Continuously seek education on sound Coaching techniques.
C. Model and teach good sporting behavior.

For Players

A. Participate for your own enjoyment and development.
B. Take responsibility for your sportsmanship and conduct.

Section 1 - Club Policies and Administration

1.1 - Club Definition

In order for a Club to be considered a member of NorCal Premier, the following conditions must be satisfied:

1. All teams participating in NorCal events must belong to a single legal entity, with a single leadership structure, a single financial structure, and a single governance structure.
2. All teams participating in NorCal events must have a common Club name, logo, and uniform (which should be unique to their Club), and should practice/play games in the same geographical area of operation.
3. All teams participating in NorCal events must operate under a single technical structure/plan and report to a single Director of Coaching.
4. All Players participating in NorCal events must be registered under a single US Club Soccer sanctioned Club.

1.2 - Required Club Contacts

Each Club's GotSport account must be kept up to date with the proper contact information (Instructions for updating contacts). Please keep in mind that this is the primary method by which NorCal communicates with your Club. Failing to have the proper contact information may result in your Club missing vital league communication. Each Club shall maintain the following Club contacts with a current email address:

1. Administrator
2. Coaching/Technical Director (previously called DOC) AND/OR Executive Director
3. Registrar
4. President
5. Referee Assignor (USSF Certified)

1.3 - Home Field

Clubs should have at least one game-quality Field (5-time slots) per eight teams. Teams may ask that they play all away games. In the event of a complaint about the quality of a Field, the League Office shall determine if a Field is game-quality.

1.4 - Club Pass Rule

Each US Club Soccer Player pass can be used for any age-appropriate team in the issuing Club. Thus, Players have the ability to move up and down within their Club, giving individual teams the ability to make changes game to game due to illness, injury, vacation, or other conflicts. Limitations apply in State Cup and NPL - leagues where Players cannot play on two teams in the same age/division. (See section 8)

It is considered unethical for teams to move Players to teams in a lower level division within the same Club for the purpose of creating a competitive advantage.

1.5 - Merger/Affiliation/Transfer Policy - **Read Full Policy**

Section 2 - Team Policies and Administration

2.1 - Team Management

In order to compete in NorCal events, each team must have at least one team manager whose duties may include but are not limited to: scheduling games, Referee payments, travel arrangements, reporting of scores, and communication with appropriate league officials. All team managers must have access to a current email address that is checked on a daily basis and a telephone number connected to a 24-hour answering system during the season.

2.2 - Communication

Communication between teams is vitally important for all NorCal events. Teams must have at least 2 different contacts listed on their GotSport page (Manager and Coach) and ensure that both contacts have a current email address and phone number listed. All team scheduling communication must be done through the GotSport chat system so that there is a proper record of the communication. Team contacts must respond to communication within 48 hours. Listing the wrong email or phone number will not be a valid excuse for not responding to communication and may result in a fine if a forfeit or no-show occurs.

If communication breaks down between teams, please reach out to the appropriate event coordinator for assistance.

2.3 - Match Scheduling

The NorCal League Office will provide dates for all matches along with scheduling deadlines. *Teams are expected to be available to play any time on the game dates provided with the following exceptions (which do NOT apply to NorCal-hosted events):*

- Please do not schedule games before 10 AM if a team is required to travel more than one hour.
- Please do not schedule games for older ages (U15 and up) before 3 pm on SAT/ACT test dates.
- Region 6 Remote Travel Policy

All games must be scheduled (time and location) by the deadline provided by the NorCal League Office. Teams unwilling or unable to attend games will forfeit the game. Any unplayed games will be documented by league officials and may result in a Club being removed from NorCal.

Please Note - If the NorCal Premier League Office feels that a Club is responsible for the game not being scheduled or communication from the away team is not responded to in a timely manner, teams may lose home-field advantage but still pay for Referees and Field costs.

There is a 15-minute grace period for kick-off if a team arrives late. NorCal encourages games to be completed, but the subsequent scheduled game(s) should not be impacted by a late-game start. If it is necessary for a game to be shortened due to a late start, both teams and the Referee shall agree on having two equal shortened halves.

2.4 - Rescheduling Games/Rainouts

Once a game has been agreed on in writing, both teams must agree on any scheduling change. After the scheduling deadline passes, a date must be set before any change is made to the schedule. *i.e If a team would like to reschedule a game following the scheduling deadline, a specific reschedule date must be set*

before the game can be changed.

In the event of a forced reschedule (i.e. rainout), it is the home team's responsibility to reschedule the match. All rainouts must be rescheduled within 1 week of the original match date.

2.5 - Cancellation/Forfeit Policy

Teams must give their opponent a 96-hour warning if forfeiting any match or they will be required to pay Field and Referee costs. Please remember that this is a Club competition and not an individual team competition.

1. **Forfeit** - A forfeit occurs when a team is unable to attend a scheduled game and the teams are unable to come to terms on a time to reschedule (after the scheduling deadline has passed). A forfeit will result in a 3-0 win for the team, not at fault. The forfeiting Club will be fined up to $400 to cover all Referee and Field costs if they inform the opponent less than 96 hours before the scheduled game time. A team unable to attend a scheduled game because of an accident or "Act of God" should immediately notify the opponent and the Event Coordinator. In these circumstances, the League Office will review and rule on the situation.
2. **No-Show** - A no-show occurs when a team willfully does not show up to a game agreed to by the teams. The penalty for a no-show shall be a forfeit to the opposing team with a 0-3 score as well as an up to $400 fine imposed on the Club. Any no-show from a team may result in the offending team being removed from the competition by the League Office.
    a. A no-show from the home team will result in the rescheduling of the game and the loss of the home Field.
    b. A no-show from the away team will result in the rescheduling of the game and the away team paying for the Field and Referees for the rescheduled game.
    c. A no-show at a NorCal-hosted event will result in a $400 fine.

REPORT A FORFEIT OR NO-SHOW

The following is a list of common excuses teams cite for wanting to reschedule or cancel a game. We recommend the following solutions to frequently posed problems:

1. Too many Players missing (sick, testing, etc.) - Remember that any Player from your Club is available to participate with your team as long as they are of the correct age. In league matches please use lower team Players or Players from younger teams within your Club to fill out your roster.
2. Missing Coach - Any Adult with a valid pass for your Club is able to Coach any team in that Club. If your Coach has several commitments then it is recommended that teams have an assistant Coach or another Adult from the Club available to cover games.
3. No Fields or Referees Available - It is expected that if your team is playing in NorCal, you have access to quality Fields and licensed Referees. This excuse will not be accepted for the cancellation of a match.
4. Tournaments/other games - NorCal understands that teams will possibly play in a tournament during the league. This will be an acceptable excuse to ask to reschedule a game, but it must be rescheduled by NorCal scheduling deadlines. Please plan your schedule well in advance so your schedule does not become so full that you are unable to fulfill your league commitment.

2.6 - Fines

The NorCal League Office may impose the following fines:

1. A team drops out of the league after final brackets are posted: $250
2. A team drops out of the league after 1st game is played: $100 per game missed
3. No-show/Forfeit within 96 hours to a scheduled game: $400
4. Failure to provide the minimum number of current year licensed Referees (see section 5.3): $150 per missing Referee
    a. The NorCal League Office reserves the right to class the game as a forfeit, and/or remove a team from NorCal Competitions for using unlicensed Referees
5. Any Club that does not complete payment within 60 days will be subject to a late fee of 15% (club payment only)

Aside from fines for forfeits (which go to the hosting Club, if appropriate), all fines will be added to the travel fund for teams qualifying for national events via NorCal competitions, after the deduction of admin costs.

2.7 - Play-Up Guidelines

For teams who wish to request to play up an age group, the NorCal League Office will use the following criteria to determine if a team needs to play up for their development:

1. The team is the current State Cup Champion or Finalist within their own age group, AND
2. The team has proven in previous seasons to be a very dominant team within their own age group, OR
3. The team does not have appropriate competition locally and needs to travel significantly in order to find competition within their own age group.

Play-up requests must be submitted to the League Office. The NorCal League Office has the final say on all play-up decisions.

2.8 - Teams Requesting to Play Outside their Region

For teams who wish to play outside of their region, the League Office will look at the availability of competitive divisions within the region to determine if a team needs to play in a different region.

Requests for a team to play outside of its region must be submitted to the League Office. The NorCal League Office has the final say on all decisions.

Section 3 - League Discipline

3.1 - Violation of League Rules

The NorCal Premier Protest, Appeals, and Discipline Committee ("PAD") and the NorCal League Office shall have the authority to suspend, fine, disqualify or otherwise impose sanctions on Players, team officials, or competing Clubs for violating NorCal Rules, Policies & Code of Ethics, or for any action or conduct not in the best interest of soccer or the NorCal Premier League.

3.2 - Red Cards

If a Red Card is shown, it will result in a minimum one (1) game suspension. This includes a Red Card as a result of two cautions. If a Player is sent off during the weekend, they may not play the remainder of the weekend, regardless of the event in which the Red Card was issued. Sitting out of a game or games in the same weekend the card was issued will count against the suspension, as long as the manager/Coach completes a Verification of Suspension form. Any Player used during a suspension will be considered an illegal Player and the team, Coach and Club will be punished accordingly.

3.3 - Reporting Process

1. Any breach of NorCal Rules outlined in this Handbook should be reported to the appropriate event coordinator, who will then refer it to the League Office. Any incidents or breaches of the NorCal Rules, Policies & Code of Ethics should be reported through the PAD Incident Report system. All reports of violations may only be reported by a Club's Director of Coaching or President.
2. In any game where a Red Card is issued, the Referee must complete a Send-Off Report within 24 hours. Failure to file a sendoff report within 48 hours may result in the club being fined $150.
3. The Player card can be returned to the team as long as the Referee Send-Off Report shows the infraction, the Player's name, and ID number.

3.4 - Suspensions

It is the team's and/or Club's responsibility to ensure their Red Carded Player/Coach serves the minimum 1 game suspension. It is also their responsibility to ensure that their Player/Coach serves any additional suspension determined by the NorCal PAD committee.

There shall be two types of suspensions:

1. Minor Offenses – These include send-offs for normal soccer actions, 2nd yellow cards, etc. Minor offenses will be given suspensions for a number of games.
2. Major Offenses – These include send-offs for violent actions. Major offenses will incur suspensions for an amount of time.

Suspensions for both minor and major offenses, for both Players and Coaches, shall be served immediately in upcoming NorCal games, regardless of the NorCal competition. The Player/Coach shall serve the suspension with the team with whom the violation occurred. Players may not compete for another team in their Club in NorCal competitions until their suspension is served in full. However, Coaches may Coach another team in their Club during their suspension but must serve their suspension in full with the team with whom the violation occurred, only if the suspension is a fixed amount of games (as opposed to a period of time).

The NorCal League Office has the ability to postpone or re-allocate suspensions in the best interests of the game and the integrity of the competition. For the avoidance of doubt, Play Date games do count towards suspensions for both Players and Coaches but tournament games (in or out of state) do not. Forfeits do not count toward suspensions being served.

3.5 - Appeals

1. Coach and Player suspensions may be put on hold pending a correctly-filed appeal.
2. Appeals must be received before 10 am on Friday.
3. Appeals Process

3.6 - Clearing a Suspended Player or Coach

Teams must scan or photograph a completed Verification of Suspension form and send it to suspensions@norcalpremier.com confirming that suspensions have been served. Players and coaches do not need to be present at games used to serve a suspension. A separate form must be completed in full for each game served. Incomplete forms will not be accepted. Forms should be sent no later than 8:00 pm on Thursday for the Player or Coach to be cleared to play/coach for the upcoming weekend. For multiple game suspensions, all forms should be sent at one time (rather than after each game is served).

Section 4 - Recruiting, Tryouts, and Player Transfers

4.1 - Open Tryout Window

1. The period when any Player, regardless of Club affiliation, may try out with any NorCal Club, without requiring permission from their current Club DOC. The NorCal Tryout Window applies to all teams within all NorCal member Clubs.
2. The Open Tryout Window shall start on the day after the last NorCal Spring League game date in May for a specific age group, and remain open through the last weekend date of June. For example, if the last U9-U13 Spring league game date is May 9 and the last U14-U19 Spring league game date is May 16, then the U9-U13 Open Tryout Window would open May 10, and the U14-U19 Open Tryout Window would open on May 17.
3. Each RAC may further define its own window by adapting the dates within the Open Tryout Window. RACs may set tryout periods outside of the Open Tryout Window for Players currently registered with Clubs in their region ONLY if approved by the NorCal Board of Directors.

4.2 - Winter Recreational Tryout Window

1. Period for Clubs to hold open tryouts for the sole purpose of adding Players not currently registered with a competitive team in a NorCal Club (in any league). This is to ensure that Clubs can continue to provide a pathway from recreational soccer to competitive Club soccer, at the end of a Player's typical recreational season.
2. The Winter Recreational Tryout Window shall open on the first Monday of November, and remain open through the first weekend of February.
3. Competitive Players currently registered in other NorCal Clubs are not permitted to attend a tryout at this time. The only time that this is permitted is during the Open Tryout Window. All marketing of a Club's Winter Recreational Tryout should include language to reflect this.

4.3 - Spring Transfer Freeze

Any Player transferring between NorCal Clubs after April 1 will be ineligible to play in NorCal competitions for their new Club until the end of all games in the current Spring season.

4.4 - Recruiting

1. All NorCal rules pertaining to Recruiting shall be strictly observed by all Adults as well as all official and unofficial team representatives. Unofficial team representatives include all parents of Players.
2. Adults must never encourage Players or other Adults to violate NorCal recruitment, eligibility, or other rules and policies.
3. Adults shall not attempt to entice a team or Player to leave a Club to come to another Club.
4. It is unethical for a Team or groups of Players to be Recruited from one Club to another Club by an Adult working in the Team's present Club, an Adult from another Club, or any Adult or representative from inside or outside the Club.
5. Inviting a Player to guest play without first submitting the proper US Club Guest Player Form shall be considered Recruiting.

6. It is unethical for a Player to be recruited from any outside program including but not limited to PDP, IDP, ODP, High School or the US Soccer Training Center, either by a Coach working for such program or any other Adult, Player, parent, or Official present at said event.
7. No Club will hire an Adult from another Club and within one (1) year allow this individual to work with any Players he or she Coached in his/her previous Club in the previous year without the written permission of their former Club. A Club's lack of knowledge regarding an Adult's previous association with another Club is not an excuse from sanction for violating this provision. Notwithstanding the foregoing, serving as a Director of Coaching, Age Group Coordinator or another similar role shall not constitute Coaching for the purpose of this rule.
8. It is inappropriate to Recruit Player(s) unless the Director of Coaching of the Player's current Club provides written permission in advance of the initial approach to the Player. If a Player or parent of a Player initiates contact with any Adults of another Club expressing intent to move to that Adult's Club, it is the responsibility of that Adult or the Adult's Director of Coaching to inform the Director of Coaching of the Player's current Club.
9. When discussing the advantages of his/her Club with a Player or a Player's parent, the Adult has an obligation to be forthright and refrain from making derogatory remarks regarding other Adults, Teams, and Clubs.
10. It is unethical for any Adult to make a statement to a prospective Player which cannot be fulfilled; illegal to promise any kind of compensation or inducement for play; and immoral to deliver the same.
11. It is unethical for Adults to attend Tryouts for other Clubs for the purpose of promotion or recruitment unless invited by the Club conducting the Tryout in writing or to have Players attend Tryouts at other Clubs to Recruit Players from the Club conducting the Tryout.
12. Clubs will not accept any Player from any other Club if that Player has outstanding fees with another Club. Unpaid fees shall include fees for services already rendered and shall not include by way of illustration, fees for services not rendered, reimbursement for scholarships given, or penalties.
13. In accordance with US Club Soccer policy, Clubs will release Players who request their release from the Club.

Section 5 - General Competition Rules

5.1 - Playing Rules

All games under league jurisdiction shall be played according to the rules and regulations recognized by the NorCal Premier League which shall be the same rules set by FIFA/U.S. Soccer (USSF) except for those exceptions authorized by FIFA or USSF.

5.2 - Equipment

1. **Player Uniforms**
   Opponents must wear colors that distinguish them from each other, and also the Referee and the assistant Referees. It is recommended that the home team wears dark uniforms while the away team wears light uniforms. Each goalkeeper must wear colors that distinguish them from the other Players, the Referee, and the assistant Referees. All Players on a team except the goalkeeper shall wear identical uniforms (shirts, shorts, and socks).
   a. If there is a conflict in the uniform color, the home team shall change uniforms.
   b. Player numbers must be affixed to the back of the uniform shirt. Each Player on a team shall wear a unique number.
   c. If undershirts or shorts are worn they must match the main color of the jersey or shorts. If tape or other material is applied externally to the socks it must be the same color as the part of the sock to which it is applied.

2. **Safety**
   A Player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to themselves or another Player.
   a. **Casts** - No orthopedic (hard) casts, air splints, or metal splints may be worn. Players will be allowed to play in a soft cast at the discretion of the Referee.
   b. **Jewelry** - Absolutely no jewelry, including rings, chains, watches, jewelry, hair clips, bobby pins, earrings, bracelets, rubber bracelets, or excessively long fingernails may be worn while participating in any NorCal games. Only Medical Alert Warning Bracelets may be worn and shall be taped to secure them to the Player's body. Earrings and other piercings cannot be taped and must be removed.
   c. **Shin Guards** - All Players are required to use shin guards at all times. They must be worn properly and be professionally manufactured and unaltered. Socks must completely cover shin guards.
   d. **Braces** (e.g. knee, elbow) - It is strongly recommended for the safety of the Player, that a Player does not wear a brace during NorCal games. Braces are allowed as long as the Referee decides that the brace will not or cannot hurt the Player wearing the brace or any other Player. All metal, metal-like, or plastic brace supports are to be properly covered for the duration of the match. Elastic-type supports without any metal, carbon fiber, hard plastic, or like devices are permitted provided the Referee does not deem the support to be potentially harmful to other Players.
   e. **Eyeglasses** - Players who must wear eyeglasses are encouraged to wear sports goggles. Lenses must be unbreakable and frames must be unbreakable plastic or sturdy metal.

5.3 - Game Details

	U8 (4v4)**	U8-U10	U11	U12	U13	U14-U16	U17-U19
Field Size (yds)	25/35 L 15/25 W*	55/65 L 35/45 W*	70/80 L 45/55 W*	70/80 L 45/55 W*	100/120 L 50/80 W	100/120 L 50/80 W	100/120 L 55/80 W
***Number of Refs**	None	1	1	1	1	1	3
Number of Players	4v4	7V7	9v9	9v9	11v11	11v11	11v11
Minimum # of Players	4	5	6	6	7	7	7
Goalkeeper	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Playing Time	4x10	2x25	2x30	2x30	2x35	2x40	2x45
Half-Time	n/a	5 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins
Ball Size	3	4	4	4	5	5	5
Goal Size (ft)	4x6	6.5x18.5-7x21	6.5x18.5-7x21	6.5x18.5-7x21	8x24	8x24	8x24
Offside	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Substitutions	At Any Stoppage						
Fouls (free kicks)	Indirect	Indirect & Direct Free Kicks					
Free Kick clearance	10 ft	8 yd	8 yd	8 yd	10 yd	10 yd	10 yd
Throw-in	1 Re-throw	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
Penalty Kicks	None	Yes (mark at *10 yds*)	Yes (mark at *10 yds*)	Yes (mark at *10 yds*)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)
Penalty Area (yds)	None	12x24	14x36	14x36	18 x 44	18 x 44	18 x 44
Goal Area (yards)	3x8	4x8	5x16	5x16	6 x 20	6 x 20	6 x 20
Heading	No Heading			As per the Laws of the Game			
Build-Out Line	None	Yes	None				

*Use of cones for lines allowed

**Each RAC decides on a seasonal basis the format for U8 Regional competition - 4v4 or 7v7

***Recommended minimum number of Referees (for 2022/23 due to low numbers of certified referees); NPL games require 3 current-year licensed officials in all age groups (U14-U19).

5.4 - Match Officials

Match officials must be current year USSF licensed Referees. The match officials shall consist of the Referee and two assistant Referees, except 7v7 and 9v9 formats of play may be played with one Referee. Clubs may elect to use Club linesmen for 7v7 and 9v9 formats of play. No match officials, other than Club linesmen, may have family members in the game they are working. Club linesmen may only signal when the ball has left the Field of play, they may not call offsides or fouls.

5.5 - Assignment of Match Officials

Match officials shall be assigned and paid by the home Club for each match. Each Club is required to have a current year certified USSF Referee Assignor active in the assignment of Referees for all NorCal games in their Club and listed in their GotSport account. Failure to do so will result in Club sanctions from NorCal, including a review of a Club's membership.

5.6 - Protests

Protests regarding the match conditions (i.e. Field condition, etc.) must be made prior to the start of the match and be clearly written on the official game card. Protests regarding the use of illegal Players may be made prior to or following the match, and be clearly written on the game card. Specific Referee decisions cannot be protested. No match condition protests will be allowed at NorCal hosted events. All protested games should be sent to the appropriate Event Coordinator, who will forward it to the League Office for a ruling.

5.7 - Point System

All NorCal Premier Leagues shall operate under a point system. The point system shall award three points for a win, one point for a tie, and no points for a loss.

5.8 - League Standings

Official standings of teams, the keeping of which is the responsibility of the League Office, are tabulated on a regular basis and displayed on each competition page of the NorCal website.

5.9 - Ties

If a league game is tied after regulation, the tie stands and will be posted as a tie.

5.10 - Tie Breakers

In case of a tie on points in the standings within a league, the following will be used as tiebreakers:

1. "Head to head" points (win/lose/draw) between teams
2. Overall Goal Differential (up to 4)
3. Goals for (up to 4)
4. Goals against (up to 4)
5. Most points against the highest non-tied team in the group
6. Best goal differential against the highest non-tied team in the group
7. Most shutouts
8. Fewest red cards
9. Coin toss

If more than two teams are tied, the tie-breaking process will be used until a winner is determined. The tie-breaking procedure does not revert to previous criteria if one team is eliminated.

In a situation where a season/group can not be completed due to exceptional circumstances, and teams have played an unequal number of games, NorCal may use Points Per Game (PPG) to decide standings.

5.11 - Playoffs for League

For matches that need a winner, the team with the most goals after regulation time will be the winner. If the match is tied after regulation for U9-U19 teams, two 5-minute periods will be played. Teams will have a 5-minute break before the first overtime. After 5 minutes, teams will change sides, with no break, and play the remaining 5 minutes. If the game is still tied after the two overtime periods, then kicks from the Penalty Mark per FIFA rules will determine the winner.
Please make sure you arrive for your game knowing if the game can end in a draw or if a winning team is required.

5.12 - Incomplete games

In the event that a game cannot be completed, the game will stand if at least half of the game was played; provided, however, that if any team is directly responsible for the termination of the game, no matter how much of the match remains, due to poor sportsmanship towards a Referee, opposing fans, or opposing Players, the team will be required to forfeit the match. This could also lead to other sanctions set forth by the NorCal League Office or NorCal PAD Committee. If there is no result, and the match is suspended prior to the expiration of one half, the game shall be replayed at a time agreed upon by the competing teams in consultation with the NorCal League Office. *Referees are required to submit an incident report for all matches that end early.*

5.13 - Heading Game Rule

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.

5.14 - No Re-Entry Protocol (for Head Injury and SCA)

In accordance with the US Club Soccer return to play guidelines, any Player removed from the Field for a suspected head injury or SCA (sudden cardiac arrest) will not be allowed to return to the Field of play unless cleared by a Licensed Healthcare Provider, defined by CA law AB-379 as an individual who is trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and is acting within the scope of the provider's practice for evaluation and management of concussions or other head injuries and/or an individual who is trained in the evaluation and management of cardiac conditions and is acting within the scope of that provider's practice for evaluation and management of sudden cardiac arrest, fainting, and shortness of breath.

5.15 - Substitutions

As per FIFA guidelines, unlimited substitutions are allowed in all age groups (except for NPL - see Section 8.2). 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 that are deemed "excessive" or of a "time-wasting" nature. Please be respectful of the integrity of the game and do not use the free substitution rules as a means to disrupt the match.

Section 6 - Rosters

6.1 - Player Registration
Players shall be registered through GotSport according to US Club Soccer rules.

6.2 - US Club Soccer Player Pass
All Players and Coaches must present their US Club Soccer pass to the Referee prior to the match. If the individual picture is not on the ID card and the card is not laminated, the individual will not be eligible for the match.

6.3 - Forgotten US Club Player Credentials
If a team forgets their US Club Player passes for a NorCal Premier League game, the game should be played under protest. Any Players that wish to play must have a picture taken prior to the game by the protesting team, and submitted to the Event Coordinator to verify that the Players were eligible to participate. If this is a continuous issue with a team or Club, the League Office may remove the team from the league.

6.4 - Game Roster
Each team must create an official NorCal roster in their GotSport account. Only Players who are listed on the official Game Card will be eligible to play in NorCal Premier League matches. If any Player is not listed on the NorCal Game Card, he/she must be added electronically to the roster before the Player is eligible to play. Names from an electronic Game Card may be handwritten by the Referee. Team rosters may contain up to 26 Players, and there is no limit to the number of changes that can be made to the roster, provided the Players are active in the team's Club and are not on another Club's US Club Roster. No matter how many Players are listed on a team's roster, only 18 Players for U13 and up, 16 Players for U11-U12, and 14 Players for U8-U10 may be used for NorCal Premier League matches.

Players may not play for 2 teams in the same division of play (a division of play is a combination of age group and level, ie: two teams from the same Club may not share Players if they're playing in the same set of division standings).

A coach holding a valid US Club passcard may coach ANY team in the club for which they hold the card. It is not required that they be printed on the game card.

6.5 - Guest Players
No guest Players (Players with a Player pass from another Club) are allowed to play in NorCal Premier League competitions.

6.6 - Illegal Players
Any Player who does not appear on the official NorCal Game Card or have a valid US Club Soccer Player Pass issued by the same Club at the time of the match shall be considered an illegal Player. Any team using, or attempting to use, an illegal Player shall forfeit the game, the Coach of the team using the illegal Player will be suspended from all NorCal competitions for one year, and the Club will incur a $500 fine.

Section 7 - Game Day Procedures

*see additional instructions for Pre-NPL, NPL, State Cup & Super Rec in Section 8

7.1 - Pre-Game (ALL Comps)

Home Team Responsibilities:

1. Schedule and post-game time/location on the website
2. Provide quality Field equipped with goals, nets, flags, and proper lines
3. Assign qualified current year licensed Referees
4. Provide a copy of the Game Card to the center Referee
5. Provide a US Club Soccer Player pass for each Player and nonPlayer in the technical area
6. Change jersey colors if there is a color conflict (NorCal encourages home teams to wear their dark colors, while away teams wear light colors)
7. Provide game balls

Visiting Team Responsibilities:

1. Respond to any communication requests from the home team in regards to match scheduling within 24 hours
2. Have a copy of the Game Card in case it is needed
3. Provide a US Club Soccer Player pass for each Player and nonPlayer in the technical area

7.2 - Post-Game (ALL Comps)

Home team Responsibilities:

1. Coach or manager sign the Game Card following the game
2. Post score within 24 hours (away team may also report score)

Visiting team responsibilities:

1. Coach or manager must sign the Game Card following the game

7.3 - Field Set-Up

Personnel on the Bench

A maximum of 3 team officials are allowed in each team's technical area. Team officials must have a US Club pass in order 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.

Technical Area

NorCal encourages both team benches to be on the same side of the Field (up to the discretion of the home Club).

Section 8 - Additional Competition Instructions (for Pre-NPL, NPL, State Cups)*

8.1 - Pre-NPL

1. Benches for both teams
2. Easy-up or bench cover set up for both home and away team

8.2 - NPL

Pre-Game

Approximately five minutes prior to each NPL match, it is recommended that teams conduct an International "Walkout." Following the walkout, the teams shall shake hands with the Referees and the opposing Players. It is our hope to foster camaraderie and respect between the teams and Referees prior to the start of the match. In case of a highly impacted game schedule, the walkout can be waived in order to help games start on time. In that case, teams shall still shake hands with the opposing Players and the Referees.

Each game should have the following (provided by the home team):

1. Benches for both teams
2. Easy-up or bench cover set up for both home and away team

Post-Game

Home Team

1. Post score within 24 hours (failure to post scores within 24 hours may result in a fine)
2. Report goals and assists for home team scorers
3. Coach or DOC fills out the NorCal NPL Online Game Report

Visiting Team

1. If the home team does not post the score within 24 hours, the away team should post the score and inform the NPL Coordinator
2. Report goals and assists for visiting team scorers
3. Fill out NorCal NPL Online Game Report

Tie Breakers

In case of a tie on points in the standings within a league, the following will be used as tiebreakers:

1. "Head to head" points (win/lose/ draw) between teams
2. Overall Goal Differential
3. Goals for
4. Goals against
5. Most points against the highest non-tied team in the group
6. Best goal differential against the highest non-tied team in the group
7. Most shutouts
8. Least red cards
9. Coin toss

Substitutions

1. A substitution can take place at any stoppage with the Referee's permission.
2. Substitutions are permitted as follows:
    a. First Half - No Re-Entry
    b. Second Half – One (1) Re-Entry
3. There will be 1 re-entry per half for an injured GK (no Field Player re-entry).
4. In accordance with the new USSF Head Injury guidelines, a substitution for a suspected head injury will not count against re-entry rules.

Eligibility

Players may only play for one Club, their Club, during any NPL match. All Players from a Club are eligible to participate in NPL matches within the age eligibility limits. No Players may play for more than one team within a level of play in the NPL (a division of play is a combination of age group and level).

Only 18 Players may be dressed for a match. The 18 Players must be on the official Game Card given to the match official and opposing team before the start of the game. Any Players listed on the roster that will not play must have a line through their names on the Game Card.

In Season Transfers

Players may only play for one Club during a NorCal NPL season unless the NorCal League Office grants a transfer. The NPL Season is defined as the start of the fall season through the final NPL weekend in the spring. If a transfer request is granted, a transferred Player must sit out five (5) NPL games before being eligible to play for his/her new Club. Any Player not sitting out will be considered an illegal Player. The NorCal League Office has the final say on all transfers.

Additional Fines/Penalties

1. Team drops from the league after NPL acceptance - $350 per team
2. Forfeits, no-shows, or cancellations with less than 96 hours notice - $400 (used for Field and Referees)
3. Forfeits, no-shows or cancellations with 96 hours notice - $100 per game
4. Playing illegal Players - $500 per instance
5. Failure to schedule matches by the league scheduled deadline - $50 per game
6. Failure to reschedule a canceled match within 48 hours - $50 per game
7. The home team failed to report score within 24 hours - $20 per game (each Club will receive a warning before being fined for score reporting)
8. Failure to provide the appropriate number of current year licensed Referees (see section 5.3) - $150 per missing Referee
    - The NorCal League Office reserves the right to class the game as a forfeit, and/or remove a team from NorCal Competitions for using unlicensed Referees
9. Failure to provide shade/tents for both teams - $50 per occurrence
10. Failure to provide water for both teams - $50 per occurrence
11. Failure to provide benches for both teams - $50 per occurrence
12. Accumulation of 2 no-shows for a Club in NPL shall result in the Club's removal from NPL.

8.3 - State Cup

Ties in Group Round

If a NorCal State Cup Group Stage match in (U14-U19), (U11-U13) and First/Second Round (U9-U10) is tied after regulation, the tie stands and will be posted as a tie.

Matches Needing a Winner

For matches that need a winner, the team with the most goals after regulation time will be the winner. If the match is tied after regulation, two full-time 5-minute overtime periods will be played. If the game is still tied after two overtime periods, then kicks from the Penalty Mark per FIFA will determine the winner.

Make sure you arrive for your game knowing if the game can end in a draw or if a winning team is required.

State Cup Championships

Only the "NorCal State Division" Champion will be considered State Champion in each age group. All other Championship teams must affix the divisional category in front of their Championship (i.e. 2019 Gold Cup Champions).

State Cup Rosters

Each team must create their official NorCal State Cup Roster on their team's GotSport online account. Rosters will be capped at 26 Players, and once frozen, teams may only use Players off this 26-Player roster. Only 18 Players for U13-U19, 16 Players for U11-U12, and 14 Players for U9-U10 may be used for NorCal Premier State Cup matches. Roster freeze dates will be posted on the NorCal State Cup Calendar. After the first group stage, there will be a short window during which non-cup-tied Players will be allowed to be added for the remainder of the competition. These dates will be adjusted due to the scheduling of games so please check the State Cup website for exact dates.

"Cup Tied"

Players may only compete for one team per age group in the NorCal State Cup. A Club may place Players on more than one 26-Player team roster but Players may not play on two different teams in the same age group. A Player may play up in an older age group while competing in their true age group. Once a Player plays for a team in a specific age group that Player is "Cup Tied" to that team in that age group. The Player may not play for any other team in that age group for the remainder of the NorCal State Cup.

Emergency Player Rule

Teams that drop below 12 Players for U13 and up, 10 Players for U11-U12, and 8 Players for U9-U10 may request, from the NorCal League Office, the ability to add Players that were registered with their Club prior to the roster freeze date, but were not on the State Cup roster. This rule may also be used to add a goalkeeper.

Note about No-Shows/Forfeits in State Cup

Until the quarterfinals, all forfeit situations in the Younger Cup are handled by the League Office to make sure that the gaining or losing of points by forfeit does not elevate or lower teams into divisions that will have a harmful impact on the event.

8.4 - Super Rec Handbook