

Greetings:

US Youth Soccer is proud to bring Tide into its growing family of sponsors. We salute and thank Tide for its involvement and commitment to youth soccer. We have a great deal of respect for their knowledge of the game and their desire to work with US Youth Soccer to improve our great game. We look forward to developing this relationship and to thereby bringing all of our members - 55 State Associations, thousands of leagues and clubs and over 3 million players exciting and valuable programs.

The Tide US Youth Soccer American Cup is one such program. This event will be a veritable "soccer festival" that celebrates the recreational player and encourages not only camaraderie and team spirit, but sportsmanship and fair play as well. We view the Tide American Cup as a tremendous benefit to our recreational players and their State Associations and want to encourage all of you to lend your hearts and hands to the tasks of making this event the premier recreational youth soccer festival in the world.

Sincerely,

*David Messersmith,
President, US Youth Soccer*





Purpose

The opportunity exists for the game of soccer to help mold a positive self image by encouraging individual and team self-esteem. The American Cup program was initiated and organized to enhance the accomplishments recreational players achieve by participating in state championship tournaments. The development of all players within US Youth Soccer is advanced when the player meets personal challenges. The American Cup is designed to encourage and honor the recreational player by allowing the player to compete for both team and personal goals. This tournament is structured so that, regardless of ability, all players within each state can realistically strive for the goal of being a state champion.

Philosophy

It is the American Cup philosophy that all players should receive equal opportunities and benefits within their level of play. Further, all players have the right to participate in competitions where they can be honored as winners.

Basic Guidelines

The American Cup is a unique tournament in that it is only open to recreational players. The tournament follows a set of guidelines that are administered at the league or state level, as follows:

1. Every recreational player shall have an equal opportunity to participate in every game.
2. The formation of recreational teams follows an open or controlled registration policy where every player is accepted and assigned to a roster regardless of ability.
3. A philosophy of player participation in a low-stress, fun-filled environment is promoted.

The Use of Small-Sided Games

Since the goal of this program is to encourage participation and player growth and development, then the use of small-sided games in that development becomes a natural step in the process. US Youth Soccer strongly recommends the adoption and use of the small-sided games format for players under the age of ten. The small-sided games format also allows flexibility in scheduling games in older age divisions where the number of players may be limited. Additionally, small-

sided games allow small associations or those that are newly formed the opportunity to compete against teams that have a similar player pool from which to draw.

A number of local associations are already using the small-sided games format. By requiring that all American Cup tournament play under the age of ten includes the small-sided format, associations or leagues that currently play this format are not at a disadvantage in tournament play. Teams playing full-sided games will have no problems participating in small-sided games, but it is difficult for teams which normally play small-sided games to be forced to play full-sided games.

Participation

Only recreational players registered with a US Youth Soccer member state association, through a state association affiliated recreational league, are eligible to participate in the American Cup. A league, club or association may decide which teams can enter the American Cup, however, they must be a regular season team. No all-star teams are allowed. Any league, club or association found to have substituted ineligible players on a roster will forfeit their games at this tournament and may be subject to further sanctions. Additionally, any team or player entered in or rostered for SNICKERS® State Cup play is not eligible.

The state association may reserve space in the tournament for its recreational leagues or associations before each season. The actual team names would be submitted at a later date, based on league standings at the end of the season, or some other suitable

method. If league standings are not kept, then leagues may want to have some sort of competition after the season is complete to determine which teams will compete.

Definition of a Recreational Player

The definition of a recreational player varies from state to state and is currently at the discretion of each state association.

Definition of a Recreational League

1. The use of tryouts, invitations, recruiting or any like process to roster players selectively to any team on the basis of talent or ability is prohibited; and,
2. the club administering the league accepts as participants in the league any and all eligible youths; and
3. a system of rostering players is employed for the purpose of creating a fair and balanced distribution of playing talent among all teams participating; and,
4. league rules require that each player play at least one-half (1/2) of each game except for reasons of injury, illness or "discipline."

Age Divisions

It is at the discretion of the state association to specify which age divisions will be included in their American Cup Tournaments, and whether or not the tournament includes boys, girls and co-ed categories.

Guest Players

The policy of including guest players in the tournament should be decided on a state by state basis. If guest players are included, they must meet all eligibility requirements as the state association determines.

Guest Participation Guidelines

The American Cup offers all registered US Youth Soccer players an opportunity to excel through participation. The goals of the program are to introduce and promote the sport of soccer to every boy and girl. The fun and enjoyment of playing soccer is the number one reason why boys and girls have elected to play recreational soccer. Every player shall play at least one-half (1/2) of every game. This would be in keeping with established league and association policies. It is also recommended that all players receive recognition of their participation, especially in the younger age groups.

Conduct of Coaches

The conduct of coaches on the playing field directly reflects upon US Youth Soccer. These coaches are entrusted with helping shape the public's perception of US Youth Soccer's players, coaches and parents. Parents who entrust their children to US Youth Soccer should feel confident that standards being taught and demonstrated are consistent with their own.

It is vital that coaches maintain and teach the highest standards of Fair Play. Every US Youth Soccer coach is expected to read and observe the following guidelines:

1. Players will be instructed to play according to the Laws of the Game and will be encouraged to play without taking unfair advantage of an opponent.
2. Coaches will not dispute the rulings of a referee and will instruct players, substitutes, and spectators to do the same, and in all cases will follow the directions of the referee. Clarification of the ruling may take place only with the referee's approval during an official break or when the official indicates it is appropriate.
3. Coaching from the sidelines is permitted provided that:
 - a. direction is informative and instructive and not haranguing
 - b. it is done in the bench area (between the two 18 yard lines), and
 - c. it is done from the correct sideline.
4. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players, parents and spectators. If a parent's or spectator's conduct warrants a cautioning or ejection by the referee, the caution or ejection can be issued directly to the spectator. If a referee believes that the coach has not attempted to control spectators, then the coach may be cautioned or ejected.



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5. When a team walks off a field in protest, they forfeit the game and the coach will be summoned by the Fair Play Committee for unsportsmanlike conduct and possible disciplinary action.

Team Fair Play Program

The Team Fair Play Rules are designed to instill a fair play attitude within all players at all levels of play. Some simple Fair Play guidelines to instill in players are as follows:

- Cheer your teammates
- Respect opponents
- Listen to the referee
- Try your best
- Have a blast!

Fair Play Committee

A Fair Play Committee should be appointed for the American Cup Tournament. This committee's responsibilities would include:

1. reviewing all game cards and recording Fair Play ratings, yellow and red cards;
2. making counseling calls to all coaches having poor ratings;
3. collecting and reviewing all referee game reports; and
4. setting the standard for Fair Play recognition, and

recognizing these teams with awards at a public awards ceremony.

Tournament Formats

The American Cup should be tailored to meet the needs of each state association, and to maximize the participation of recreational players. The following options are three of the most commonly used formats. All have been successful.

Option One -

Local District Qualifying Competitions

Preliminary games commence at the local league, association or district level and move into a state championship tournament. This format is designed to ensure participation from local leagues, associations or districts, and to promote more local involvement in the entire process. Depending upon the registration volume within a state or a region in the state, a combination of approaches may be most beneficial. For example, Under 16 through Under 19 age divisions might be better served through an open competition model, while the Under 10 through Under 14 age divisions might have sufficient enrollments to justify a district or regional approach.

The district qualifying tournament is particularly effective if there is a need to accommodate a large number of applicants in each age division. In districts where the number of participants is

low, the district could automatically qualify a team for the state tournament if there is no feasible competitor.

The success of this program will depend largely on each local entity's willingness to support the American Cup concept and the district qualifying tournament format. To encourage participation, the state association might even solicit bids to host local preliminary rounds from the local leagues, associations or districts.

Basic Steps

Step 1 – Appoint an American Cup Chairperson. The American Cup program should not be grouped with the other Cup competitions hosted by the state. The organizational structure of this program should have its own focus and chairperson whose duties are separate from the SNICKERS® State Cup.

Step 2 – Appoint a district committee member to organize each of the preliminary competitions.

Step 3 – Combine the above appointed individuals to form an American Cup Committee to oversee the entire program.

Step 4 – Organize the state tournament so that winners from each of the district play-offs meet for the championship round of the American Cup on a different weekend from the preliminary competitions.

Option Two -

League Champion Format

Each club, league or association submits their league champion in each age division to the state finals. The organizational format of the state association is one of the deciding factors in how American Cup entries are submitted and accepted. Since each state association's pool of teams and players consists mostly

of recreational players, this is one method to allow a large number of entries. Utilizing this approach, the state can also split teams into separate divisions or classifications based on an established policy. For example, divisions could be based on league or association size, playing experience or past records of member teams.

Basic Steps

Step 1 – Appoint an American Cup Chairperson.

Step 2 – Before the season starts, verify initial rosters submitted to the state association as being those of recreational teams. This allows comparison at a later date when league champion rosters are submitted.

Step 3 – Set up a tournament format where all league champions are submitted for entry into the American Cup Tournament of Champions.

Step 4 – If necessary, arrange different divisions for varying levels of play. For example, Division 1 would be for the largest, most experienced local leagues or associations, and Division 2 would be for newer, smaller, less experienced leagues or associations.

Option Three -

Open Entry Format

The state association offers an open entry policy for teams wishing to compete for the state recreational championship. This type of tournament is similar in structure and format to most of the other tournaments that are organized across the country. The basic premise is that the tournament would be open to any and all registered recreational teams within the state association.



Success with this format will be contingent upon local and state promotion since coaches, players and parents may not be familiar with the tournament's purpose.

Basic Steps

Step 1 – Appoint an American Cup Chairperson.

Step 2 – Select a tournament committee which will organize and oversee the tournament, and will solicit, recruit and inform recreational teams about the tournament.

Step 3 – Begin tournament play as soon as the season's schedule is complete as recreational teams tend to disband shortly after the season's end.

Benefits Supplied Directly from US Youth Soccer

Tide American Cup Tournament patches are supplied free of charge to each state association. If a state association holds more than one Tide American Cup event annually, US Youth Soccer will supply additional patches to the state at a cost of \$0.65 per patch. Additionally, Tide will supply 16 banners and 8 pop up tents to be used at their discretion. After the tournament has been completed, all on-site elements will be sent on to the next Tide American Cup. Also provided will be the Tide Soccer Challenge, an inflatable obstacle course run by Tide personnel, where prizes and Tide product will be distributed.

Recreational Player Development Plan

The incorporation of the American Cup program should be used as part of the state association's overall recreational player development plan. It is usually through the local recreation programs in our state associations that children are first introduced to the sport of soccer. The state association's recreational program should be designed to provide service and opportunities for boys and girls to enjoy themselves in and out of league play, and help them develop not only their skills, but also their love of the sport.

By including the American Cup program on the list of recreational programs offered by the state association, the benefits, services and fun opportunities for these players are enhanced. This, obviously, makes the state association more attractive to parents and coaches as well.

The programs and formats described in this guide are just a few ways to develop an American Cup program, or foster new interest in and expansion of your current program. The American Cup program gives state associations another tool with which to increase membership and better serve current members.

When we incorporate programs that create a fun and healthy developmental environment for players, while recognizing their participation and excellence, we are investing in a quality future...the future of youth soccer and the child!

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