



**US YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUES PROGRAM RULES
as of July 8, 2019**

SECTION 1. GENERAL AND DEFINITIONS

1.01 US Youth Soccer National Leagues Program and Administration

The US Youth Soccer National Leagues is a program of, and administered by, US Youth Soccer in accordance with the US Youth Soccer Leagues Policy.

1.02 General

These US Youth Soccer Leagues Program Rules shall include the rules for the National Tier of competition, known as the National League, and the Multi-State Leagues Tier of competition, known as the Conferences.

NL Management Group has final authority in all matters related to the Leagues Program not specifically provided for by the Leagues Program Policy, or Rules.

1.03 Definitions

Except as otherwise provided, the following definitions apply to this policy:

- a) "Article" preceding a Roman numeral means a reference to a specific portion of the US Youth Soccer Bylaws.
- b) "Board of Directors" means the Board of Directors of US Youth Soccer established under Article XIII.
- c) "CEO" and "CEO of US Youth Soccer" means the Chief Executive Officer of US Youth Soccer established under Article XVIII.
- d) "NL" means the US Youth Soccer National League as established by this policy.
- e) "NL Commissioner" means the National League Commissioner provided by Rule 103, Section 3 of this policy.
- f) "NL Management Group" and "Management Group" means the National League Management Groups as established by Rule 103, Section 2 of this policy.
- g) "NL Managers" means the managers of the respective leagues at the multi-state level of this competition.
- h) "General Managers" means the four General Managers of the East, Midwest, South and West Regions of US Youth Soccer.
- i) "Multi-State Leagues" means the competition tier of leagues below the National tier. Previously, this tier of leagues was known as the Regional Leagues within US Youth Soccer.

SECTION 2. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE INTRODUCTION

2.01 US Youth Soccer National League Administration

The National Tier of the US Youth Soccer National Leagues Program is a program of, and administered by, US Youth Soccer in accordance with the US Youth Soccer Leagues Policy.

2.02 Rules

Participation in the NL is governed by the rules adopted by US Youth Soccer, the United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer), and the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) except where modified by those rules and these NL rules. These NL rules may be revised by the NL Management Group on a seasonal year basis and other times as may be necessary or appropriate.

2.03 Matters Not Provided For

The NL Management Group has final authority in all matters related to the National Tier of the program not specifically provided for by the Leagues Program Policy, or Rules.

SECTION 3. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE TEAM APPLICATION

3.01. Gender Age Groups

In accordance with the US Youth Soccer Leagues Policy, the NL Management Group shall determine the gender age groups of competition for each seasonal year.

3.02 Team Eligibility

Any team meeting herein may request entry to the NL subject to the specific team eligibility requirements established for each seasonal year by the NL Commissioner. For the 2019-2020 seasonal year, the Team eligibility requirements for the 14U, 15U, 16U, 17U, 18U, and 19U gender age groups include but may not be limited to:

- a) The team must have played in the **2018-2019 seasonal year** in one of the US Youth Soccer recognized National League Conferences, and participated in the 2018-2019 US Youth Soccer National Championship Series competitions; or
- b) The team must have participated in the NL during the 2018-2019 seasonal year and participated in the 2018-2019 US Youth Soccer National Championship Series competitions; or
- c) The team reached its respective 2019 Regional Cup competition as part of the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series. Additional eligibility requirements may be established by the NL Commissioner.

3.03 State Association Team and Player Registration

All teams must be properly registered competitive teams that meet the requirements for participation provided by these rules with their respective member State Association. All players on a team within the NL must also be properly registered with a member State Association.

3.04 Participation in National Championship Series Competition

In accordance with the US Youth Soccer Leagues Policy, in order to be eligible to advance to the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series finals, teams participating in the NL must also participate in their respective State Cup competition in the current seasonal year.

3.05 Applications Deadline

All applications for participation in the NL must be received by the deadline established by the NL Commissioner.

3.06 Application Process

Team applications to participate in the NL are to be submitted in a manner and form as determined on a seasonal year basis by the NL Commissioner.

3.07 Acceptance of NL Policies, Rules, Decisions and Fees

Any team applying to play in the NL agrees to accept, abide by, and comply with all policies, rules, and decisions of the NL and further agrees to pay all fees that are due to the NL for participation in the NL by the applicable deadlines.

3.08 Final Authority on Team Acceptance

The NL Management Group or designee of the NL Management Group shall have the final authority to accept teams into the NL.

3.09 Payment of Fees and Other Expenses

Each team playing in the NL will pay the fees and other expenses established by the NL Commissioner. The NL is not responsible for expenses incurred by teams through travel, housing, coaching, uniforms, and other related team operating costs.

SECTION 4. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE STRUCTURE

4.01 Number of Teams in Gender Age Groups

The NL Management Group shall determine the number of teams in each gender age group for each seasonal year.

4.02 Competition Format

The competition format shall be determined on an annual basis by the NL Management Group.

- a) For the 2019-2020 seasonal year, teams in the 14U, 15U, 16U, 17U and 18U gender age groups shall be placed into one of 4 divisions consisting of up to 8 teams in each division. All teams within a division shall be scheduled to play a round-robin against all other teams within their division for a total of 7 matches. The teams finishing in first place within the 4 divisions of the 14U, 15U 16U, 17U and 18U gender age groups will advance to the National Championships Finals.
- b) For the 2019-2020 seasonal year, teams in the 19U gender age groups shall be placed into one of 2 divisions consisting of up to 8 teams in each division. All teams within a division shall be scheduled to play a round-robin against all other teams within their division for a total of 7 matches. The teams finishing in first place and second place within the 2 divisions of the 19U gender age group will advance to the National Championships Finals
- c) If a team qualifies for the US Youth Soccer National Championships Finals through the National League, then that team shall attend the Finals as a National League representative, even if such team wins its respective Regional Championship.

4.03 Placement of Teams into Divisions

The NL Commissioner shall determine the placement of teams according to the competition format within each gender age group.

SECTION 5. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE ROSTERS AND PLAYER PASSES

5.01 Filing of Team Rosters

Each team must file with the NL a copy of the team's current official stamped State Association roster no later than September 1 of each seasonal year. Failure to file the roster may result in the expulsion of the team from the NL. Only those players listed on the team's current official approved State Association roster may play in any NL matches. During the course of the NL seasonal year, a team is required to re-file with the NL any revisions to the team's Official State Association roster.

5.02 Definition of a NL Team Roster

NL will accept either a State Association generated roster or a roster on a NL roster form (available from the NL Commissioner), provided that the form used is approved by an authorized State Association representative (Executive Director, State President, State Registrar are examples of State Association representatives—the NL Commissioner shall determine who is an authorized State Association representative). Teams are permitted to make changes (i.e. drops, adds) to their rosters during the course of the NL seasonal year provided that such changes are filed with the NL at the time of such change and approved with a revised approved roster from the team's State Association.

5.03 Maximum Roster Size and Pool of Players

The maximum number of players on a Team Roster shall be 22 although the pool of players eligible to participate for an individual team is 30. Such pool of players may include club pass players, as well as any players that may have been added to the Team Roster once the team's NL season has commenced.

5.04 Revising the Team Roster

A NL team roster may be changed throughout the NL seasonal year subject to these NL Rules; there is no freeze date of NL team rosters. For example, for teams that are not participating in club soccer this fall (2018), the team may opt to simply provide a team roster with a minimum number of players (i.e. 9) to comply with the September 1 deadline, and then resubmit a team roster with additional players prior to the team's first event (as long as the 9- returning player rule is met). Teams are permitted to update their team roster throughout the seasonal year. Also in situations of injuries, teams may desire to drop a player from its team roster and replace the player (as long as the 9-returning player rule is still met). At no time may the pool of players exceed 30 during the course of the NL season.

5.05 Appearing on Multiple Team Rosters

In situations where a club may have multiple teams participating in the NL, a player or players may be listed on multiple teams' rosters, subject to these NL rules, but at no time may a player play for more than one team on the same day, and not play on more than one team in the same gender age group. Under no circumstances may a player be listed on multiple team rosters if such teams are from different clubs.

5.06 Player Continuity Requirement

All teams that are accepted for play in the NL for the 2019-2020 seasonal year must show player continuity from their 2018-2019 seasonal year team or club. At all times during the 2019-2020 seasonal year, a NL team must have on its National League roster, to be eligible to play during the 2019-2020 seasonal year, no less than 9 US Youth Soccer players that were on a roster of any properly registered US Youth Soccer team within such team's club during the 2018-2019 seasonal year. Since NL teams must compete in State Cup competitions in order to be eligible to apply, it will be incumbent upon, and the obligation of, State Associations to determine that teams have complied with this requirement since they alone have the documentation to verify compliance with minimum of this 9-returning players rule. Any movement of a team from one club to another during the course of the seasonal year, including but limited to the time period following acceptance into the National League, may result in the team being dropped from the league at the sole discretion of the NL Commissioner. In such cases, the team's Coach must file with the NL Commissioner a written document outlining the reason for such movement to another club, and all circumstances surround the movement. The NL Commissioner, at his sole discretion, may request additional supporting documentation regarding the movement of the team from one club to another.

5.07 Player Eligibility

A player may play for only one NL team during any single day. Once a player is on the roster of a team in the NL in a gender age group and such team has played one match in NL competition, such player may not appear on another team's roster in such gender age group during the remainder of the NL season.

5.08 Player Passes/Rosters/Match Line Up Cards

Prior to each match in accordance with Match Management Procedures in Rule 6.07, a team must make available and present to a NL official, as designated by the NL Commissioner, the following: (a) a properly completed NL Match Line Up Card; (b) laminated and pictured US Youth Soccer member passes for each player and team officials that shall be participating in the match; and (c) any other documentation as required by the NL Commissioner. The NL official is authorized to retain all documents for further inspection except for US Youth Soccer member passes that are to be returned to the team for the match. The NL Match Line Up Card shall be prepared by the team and submitted to the referee at the time set by the NL. The Match Line Up Card shall list a maximum of 18 players that are eligible to play in such match. Every player listed on the Match Line Up Card must be included on the team roster to be eligible to participate with the team. Any player on the team roster but not listed as being selected to play in the match, but who desires to sit on the team bench, must also be listed on the Game Line Up Card on the appropriate list. All players and team bench persons that appear on the Game Line Up Card are subject to the authority of the referees. Any individual that is sent off and/or asked to leave the team bench area by the referees shall be suspended for the team's next NL match. An additional suspension may be assessed following review by the NL Commissioner.

5.09 Member Passes Presented to Referee

Valid US Youth Soccer member passes for the current seasonal year shall be presented to the referee for players upon entering the field of play. Passes will be returned to the team at the end of the half. Players will present passes upon entering the match during the second half. All passes will be returned to the team at the end of the match.

5.10 Inspection of Team Rosters by Opposing Team

Upon request to the NL Commissioner, a NL team may request a copy of an opposing team's filed roster subject to the following: (a) the request must be made in writing; (b) the NL Commissioner shall have 3 days to produce a copy; and (c) the NL Commissioner at his/her discretion may redact out any information on the roster that may include but not be limited to player address, phone number, or email address.

5.11 Playing of Ineligible Player

A team that plays an ineligible player shall be subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to: (a) forfeiture of the match; (b) suspension of the team's coach from NL competition; (c) expulsion of the team from the NL; and/or (d) any further action(s) as determined by the NL Commissioner.

5.12 Questions Regarding Player Eligibility

A team may request an interpretation on the eligibility of a player on an opposing team to the NL Commissioner subject to the following: (a) the request must be made in writing; and (b) the NL Commissioner shall have up to 24 hours after first receiving and reviewing the request to make a ruling.

5.13 Additional Player Information

The NL at its discretion may require participating teams to provide additional information on players for use in promoting the NL and/or its teams and players. Teams are required to submit information as requested in procedures established by the NL.

SECTION 6. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE SCHEDULING AND MATCH MANAGEMENT

6.01 Scheduling NL Matches

NL matches and match sites shall be scheduled by the NL Commissioner. Locations and dates are subject to change. All teams are required to coordinate hotel stays through the designated hotel provider as designated by the NL Commissioner.

6.02 Matches Per Day

It is the intent to limit teams to one match per day.

6.03 Inclement Weather and Unplayable Field Conditions Prior to Match

The NL Commissioner or his/her designee shall have the sole authority to postpone a match due to inclement weather and/or unplayable field conditions prior to the kick-off of a match.

6.04 Referee Jurisdiction

Once the referee has jurisdiction of a match, the match may be stopped, suspended, or terminated as provided in the "IFAB Laws of the Game."

6.05 Emergency Rescheduling

In the event that multiple NL matches are scheduled at a site during a day or consecutive days and weather and/or field conditions may cause the postponing of matches, the NL Commissioner has the emergency authority to reschedule matches on such days. Such rescheduling shall be accepted by NL teams and may include the scheduling of more than one match per day. In extreme cases, the NL Commissioner may also authorize the reduction of match length provided that the notification of the reduction of match length is done prior to the match kick-off.

6.06 Permission to Host or Travel Not Required

For the purpose of NL competition, Permission to Host or Travel Forms are not required.

6.07 Match Management Procedures

The NL Commissioner or his/her designee has the authority to make the final decision on all aspects related to a match outside of the jurisdiction of the referees. Match Management Procedures include but are not limited to:

- a) Teams should expect the referees to check player passes and collect the Match Line Up Card from the team around 15 minutes prior to the scheduled kick off time.
- b) Match balls are provided by the NL.
- c) The videotaping of matches by team representatives and non-official US Youth Soccer representatives from the team bench side is prohibited unless written permission is granted in writing from the NL Commissioner.

6.08 Additional Match Management Procedures

On an emergency basis, the NL Commissioner may impose additional Match Management Procedures. These additional procedures shall be limited to those items that are necessary, in the sole opinion of the NL Commissioner, in order for a match to be played.

6.09 Responsibility of Teams

The officials of a team at a match (as provided by Rule 9.10), are responsible for the behavior, conduct and control of team players, support staff, supporters including but not limited to family and friends, and team management staff. Failure to abide by this rule may result in Disciplinary Action as determined by the NL Commissioner.

SECTION 7. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE STANDINGS

7.01 Earning Points in Matches

The standings of teams within a competition format will be based upon the number of points earned from each match. Teams earn points as follows: 3 points for a win; 1 point for a tie; and no points for a loss.

7.02 Forfeits

A team forfeiting any match shall be dropped from the NL at the discretion of the NL Commissioner following a review of the incident resulting in any Forfeits. In situations where a team is dropped from the NL, all scores for that team in the seasonal year schedule shall be recorded as a 1-0 win for the opponent (forfeit one match and the team forfeits all matches).

7.03 Uneven Number of Matches

In the event that the teams in a competitions format do not play the same number of matches due to unforeseen circumstances, excluding matches that teams forfeit, the NL Commissioner shall determine the Final Standings utilizing any tie-breaking procedures of Rule 5.04 that may need to be applied.

7.04 Tiebreakers

The following tiebreaker criteria apply to the NL competition. (added 12/14/18—see amendment to tiebreakers—page 24)

Tiebreakers—2 Teams are Tied

- a) If 2 teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final ranking of the teams will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria.
- b) Winner of head-to-head competition.
- c) Winner of most matches (all matches).
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all matches.
- e) Most goals for.
- f) Coin Toss except if the teams that are tied are at the same location on the final match day, kicks from the penalty spot will determine the higher ranked team.

Tiebreakers—3 Teams That Are Tied

If 3 teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the 3-way tie is broken leaving 2 teams tied, then the tiebreaker for 2 teams applies to those 2 teams.

- a) Points earned in head-to-head competition among the teams.
- b) Winner of most matches (all matches).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in matches among the tied teams.
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all matches.
- e) Most goals for in matches among the tied teams.
- f) Most goals for in all matches.
- g) Drawing of lots.

Tiebreakers—4 Teams That Are Tied

If 4 teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the 4-way tie is broken leaving 2 or 3 teams tied, then the tiebreaker for 2 teams or 3 teams applies, as the case may be.

- a) Points earned in head-to-head competition among the tied teams.
- b) Winner of most matches (all matches).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in matches among the tied teams.
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all matches.
- e) Most goals for in matches among the tied teams.
- f) Most goals for in all matches.
- g) Drawing of lots.

Tiebreakers—5 Teams That Are Tied

If 5 teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the 5-way tie is broken leaving 2, 3, or 4 teams tied, then the tiebreaker for 2 teams, 3 teams, or 4 teams applies, as the case may be.

- a) Points earned in head-to-head competition among the tied teams.
- b) Winner of most matches (all matches).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in matches among the tied teams.
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all matches.
- e) Most goals for in matches among the tied teams.
- f) Most goals for in all matches.
- g) Drawing of lots.

Tiebreakers—6 Teams That Are Tied

If 6 teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the 6-way tie is broken leaving 2 teams, 3 teams, 4 teams, or 5 teams tied, then the tiebreaker for 2 teams, 3 teams, 4 teams, or 5 teams applies, as the case may be.

- a) Points earned in head-to-head competition among the tied teams.
- b) Winner of most matches (all matches).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in matches among the tied teams.
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all matches.
- e) Most goals for in matches among the tied teams.
- f) Most goals for in all matches.
- g) Drawing of Lots.

Tiebreakers—Not Covered

For any situation not covered within these rules, the NL Management Group will determine any tie-breaking procedures that may need to be applied.

SECTION 8. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

8.01 Qualifying for National Championships Finals

For the National Championships Finals, the top 4 teams in each of the gender age groups represent the National League in the National Championships Finals. If any of those teams is also a Regional Cup championship team, that team will represent the National League in the Finals and not represent its region in the Finals. If any National League team qualifying for the Finals in a gender age group is determined to be ineligible to compete in the Finals, the next eligible National League team in that gender age group will represent the National League in the Finals in place of the ineligible team. These teams must be in compliance with Rule 3.02 in order to be eligible for the National Championships.

SECTION 9. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES OF PLAY

9.01 Applicable Rules and Laws of the Game

Matches will be played under the applicable policies and rules of US Youth Soccer. Teams are responsible for obtaining and abiding by the IFAB Laws of the Game as they govern play subject to the modifications noted in these rules.

9.02 Substitutions

- a) Matches in the 15U, 16U, 17U, 18U and 19U age groups will operate under the FIFA-7 players “per half” substitution system. Once replaced, players cannot re-enter the game during that half of play.
- b) To be consistent with the National Championships Policy, matches in the 14U age group will operate with unlimited substitutions. Substitutions may be made at any stoppage of play with the approval of the referee.
- c) Substitutions may be made at any stoppage of play with the approval of the referee.
- d) Entry or reentry shall be at a normal substitution point (with approval of the referee) or at any point during the game if the referee signals for the player’s reentry.
- e) During a match is that is part of a NL event using neutral Health Care Professionals (HCP) or neutral Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC) to monitor the fields, if a player is suspected of suffering a head injury, such player may be substituted for evaluation. The substitution for the evaluation of a concussion/head injury will not count towards the team’s total allowed substitutions in a half. However, the team must have at least one substitution available to implement this temporary substitution.
 - 1) If the player is deemed by the neutral HCP or neutral ATC to not have been diagnosed as having a possible concussion, the player may re-enter the game at any stoppage of play and must replace the original substitute. This head injury evaluation substitution will not count as a used substitution in the half. Furthermore, the temporary substitute will be able to re-enter the game in that half at a later time.
 - 2) If the player is not cleared to return to play by the HCP or ATC, the replacement player will no longer be considered a temporary substitute and the team will be charged a substitution.
 - 3) Any discipline issued to the temporary substitute will count for the remainder of the game.

9.03 Match Length

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Length of Each Half</u>
17U, 18U and 19U	45 minutes
15U and 16U	40 minutes
14U	35 minutes

9.04 Field Size

Fields for all age groups must meet the US Soccer/FIFA requirements for field size.

9.05 Forfeit Due to Failure to Appear for Match

Failure to appear or failure to timely appear for a scheduled match will result in a forfeit. A team must be present and ready to play within 10 minutes of scheduled match time.

9.06 Anchored Goals

The coaches and match referee should inspect the integrity of the goals to ensure they are secure and suitable for play. Matches shall not begin until both goals have been firmly secured.

9.07 Team Uniforms

Team and individual player Uniforms for NL matches must conform as follows:

- a) Each player (except a goalkeeper) shall have a number on the player’s jersey. The number shall be affixed to the back of the jersey and be clearly visible. Each player on a team must wear a number different from the number of every other player on the team. Numbered jerseys on goalkeepers are optional. Numbers should be affixed to the jersey and no taped numbers are permitted
- b) All teams are required to attend each match with 2 sets of jerseys and socks for all of its players; one set of light colored jerseys and socks, and a second set of dark colored jerseys and socks.
- c) It is expected that that the first team listed on the match schedule is to wear light/white color jerseys and socks. When there is a conflict in uniform color, the team listed second on the NL schedule must change its jerseys and socks, except in situations where the team listed first is wearing dark colored jerseys and/or socks, then the team listed first must change to light/white color jerseys and socks. The Referee shall define what constitutes light and dark color jerseys and socks.
- d) The NL Commissioner of each Conference shall have the option to assign jersey colors to teams for matches, should the NL Commissioner deem that such procedure is appropriate.
- e) In the event of color conflict with referees, the referees shall change jersey colors.

- f) Teams playing in the Conference are permitted to have the following limited items on their game uniforms:
1. US Youth Soccer logo or directly related US Youth Soccer logoed patches
 2. Their individual club and/or team logo and team sponsor logo
 3. Manufacturer of uniform logo
 4. Name and number of player
 5. No other patches or logos are permitted unless written permission is granted by the NL Commissioner.

9.08 Coaching from Sidelines

Limited coaching is permitted only from one touch line from the team's respective technical area (if marked) or from the center-line to no more than 5 yards from the end of the team bench closest to the goal line (if no technical area is marked). Team bench persons may not enter the field without permission from the referee.

9.09 Official Match

If less than one half is completed and the match is terminated because of weather or other unplayable conditions, the entire match must be replayed, subject to review by the NL Commissioner. If the first full half of a match is played, and the second half of the match is not played because of weather or unplayable field conditions, the match is official and the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated. If a match is terminated during the second half of play due to inclement weather or unplayable field conditions as determined by the referee in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game, the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated.

9.10 Team Bench Area and Supervision

No more than 4 team bench persons (being only team coaches, team administrators, and team medical staff) shall be permitted at the team bench area during a match. Also, those players listed on the match lineup card are permitted at the team bench area during a match. A suspended team bench person is not permitted at the Team Bench Area. The team bench area must at all times be supervised by a team bench person or a non-team individual designated by the NL Commissioner. If a team does not have a team coach, team administrator, team medical staff or individual designated by the NL Commissioner to supervise the team during a game, then the game shall be forfeited.

9.11 Team Coaches – Coaching Education Requirement

On an annual basis, the NL Management Group shall determine the minimum levels of coaching education needed by each coach in order to supervise a team in the NL. Coaching education levels from U.S. Soccer, United Soccer Coaches and foreign national associations may be considered in meeting such standards.

9.12 Unforeseen Circumstances

In the event that matches are unable to be played due to unforeseen circumstances due to travel issues (i.e. airline flight cancellation, weather conditions, etc.), the NL Commissioner may waive Rule 9.05. Such a request for waiver must be made in writing with NL Commissioner within 5 days after the day of the scheduled match and include all details in regards to the situation. Full disclosure of information, including but not limited to copies of all emails before, during and after the occurrence of a travel issue, logs of telephone calls to travel agencies, airlines, players, coaches etc. must be provided to the NL. The NL Commissioner may also require additional supporting information from the affected team. The NL Commissioner shall review such occurrence and rule on whether the rescheduling of matches shall occur.

SECTION 10. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE REFEREES

10.01 Officiating System

Matches must be officiated using the 3-person FIFA/USSF Referee System, although a 4-person system (using a fourth official) is preferred. In the event the assigned referee fails to appear (within 10 minutes of the match time); a certified referee must be found by the NL Commissioner or his/her designee to officiate the match. The referee, in conjunction with the NL Official on site, may appoint replacements for assistant referees who fail to show up by the match time. In the event certified USSF officials are not available, the referee in conjunction with the NL Commissioner may appoint club assistant referees. Club assistant referees shall be limited to decisions only on touchlines and possession as specified by FIFA/USSF Referee Guidelines.

10.02 Referee Assignor

Match officials will be assigned under the authority of the NL Commissioner.

10.03 Payment of Referees

Referees, assistant referees, and fourth officials (if used) shall be compensated by the NL in manner as determined by the NL Commissioner. Teams do not pay referee fees at the fields.

10.04 Filing of Referee Match Report

The referee shall file a Match Report with the NL immediately following the match in accordance with directives from the NL Commissioner.

SECTION 11. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE SEND OFFS, DISMISSALS, AND SUSPENSIONS

11.01 Protocol for Send offs and Dismissals

Any player sent off from a match must leave the field area and retreat to the parking area of the complex or an area designated by the NL Commissioner. Any team bench person dismissed from participating in a match must leave the field area and retreat to the parking area of the complex or an area designated by the NL Commissioner. Any player sent off or dismissed team bench person is prohibited from communicating with his/her team while the team is at the field for its match, including but not limited to cell phone use, texting, tweeting, or other means of communication. Violation of this rule may result in further disciplinary action against the individual and/or team. The match officials and/or NL supervisors on site are authorized to prohibit the use of any communication devices at the team bench areas.

11.02 Send Offs and Dismissals – Automatic Suspension

Any player sent off or non-player dismissed under Rule 11.01 will automatically be suspended for the team's next NL match. For a second send off or dismissal during a seasonal year and any send off or dismissal thereafter, the player or non-player will automatically be suspended for the team's next 2 NL matches. Any player sent off or dismissed non-player must comply with the location and communication provisions of Rule 11.01.

11.03 Send Offs and Dismissals – Review by NL Commissioner

All send offs and dismissals are to be reviewed by the NL Commissioner who may determine at his/her sole discretion that an additional suspension shall be assessed.

11.04 Reporting Send Offs to States

The NL may distribute information on all send offs to the respective State Associations. The home State Association may have the authority to impose additional sanctions with regard to any matters arising from send off in the NL.

11.05 Suspensions Incurred at Last Match of Seasonal Year

If a player or non-player is sent off during the last match of the NL seasonal year, the suspension shall be served at the team's next NL match. The NL Commissioner has the right to impose additional sanctions with regard to any matters arising from participation in the NL as the result of the sending off. The home State Association of the player or non-player may have the authority to impose additional sanctions with regard to any matters arising from such send off in the NL.

SECTION 12. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE DISCIPLINE

12.01 Violation of Rules

Any violation of these rules will be subject to disciplinary action as determined by the NL Management Group.

12.02 Disciplinary Actions

All disciplinary measures imposed by these rules and/or the NL Management Group shall be limited to an individual or team's participation in the NL except as outlined in Rules 10.04 and 10.05.

12.03 Termination of Matches

Once the referee has jurisdiction of a match, the match may be stopped, suspended, or terminated as provided in the "IFAB Laws of the Game." The referee will report the termination of any match to the NL Commissioner. The NL Commissioner shall ascertain the facts and recommend any action, including appropriate disciplinary action, against any individual or team associated with the NL to the NL Management Group for review and decision.

12.04 Termination

If a match is terminated at any time due to one of the teams (by action of players, coaches, team management, administrators, spectators) adjudged to be at fault as determined by the NL Commissioner, it shall be at the discretion of the NL Management Group as to whether the match is to be replayed or declared a forfeit.

12.05 Forfeits-Loss of NL Eligibility

Any team that forfeits a match may automatically become ineligible to participate in the NL for the following seasonal year and shall not be permitted to represent the NL at the National Championships as provided by Rule 6.01.

12.06 Match Manipulation

Match manipulation is when a team or teams fail to compete in the spirit of the competition or are involved in the manipulation of a game result. Reports of suspected match manipulation must be extensively substantiated in writing and be filed in writing with the NL Commissioner no later than 2 hours following the completion of the match in question. Reports of suspected match manipulation in a Referee Report may be filed with the NL Commissioner in accordance with NL Match Operating Procedures. The NL Commissioner will investigate and adjudicate all allegations of match manipulation and will impose appropriate sanctions. Verified instances of match manipulation shall be subject to sanctioning at the discretion of the NL Commissioner. Such sanctions against the team and club found guilty of match manipulation may include but may not be limited to: (1) a minimum \$10,000 fine; (2) forfeiture of all NL matches; (3) suspension of the team coach(es) and club Director of Coaching; and/or (4) suspension from NL play for the following seasonal year.

SECTION 13. NATIONAL TIER—NATIONAL LEAGUE PROTESTS AND APPEALS

13.01 Definition of a Protest

A Protest is a formal written objection of any violation of established policies, rules, or procedures related to a specific match and can only be filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. Only those teams involved are permitted to protest a match result. Third parties, i.e., coaches from other teams, state administrators, cannot file protests on a specific match. Protests must be based upon a violation of the published rules of the US Youth Soccer, U.S. Soccer, the NL competition, or IFAB Laws of the Game.

13.02 Protests of Match Played

To be valid and eligible for consideration, each protest must be orally lodged by a team official listed on the NL Match Lineup Card with the referee and the opposing coach at the game site before entering the field of play or leaving the game site. All protests must be submitted in writing and filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member, with the appropriate fee to the NL Commissioner. The formal written protest must be postmarked no later than 3 business days after match completion in accordance with the Filing Procedures listed in Rule 13.06. The referee is the final authority on the field of play. All decisions of the referees with respect to matters of fact, including judgment matters, are final.

13.03 Hearing of Protest

The NL Management Group, excluding the CEO, shall hear all protests by no later than seven (7) days following the receipt of the protest fee.

13.04 Definition of an Appeal

An Appeal is a request to transfer the matter from one jurisdiction to another for re-examination of the decision made by the lower body. Appeals arise as the result of an adverse decision from an administrative action or disciplinary action at a lower level. Only those parties to the original action, who are adversely impacted by such decisions, shall be allowed to appeal. An Appeal may only be filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. An appeal must be filed in accordance with Section 13.06 within five (5) days after a decision is rendered by the NL.

13.05 Appeals Committee

The NL shall have a NL Appeals Committee. The NL Appeals Committee shall have jurisdiction of appeals as provided in the rules of this Section 13. The US Youth Soccer Chief Executive Officer (CEO) shall appoint members to the Committee for each appeal that is filed. Members of the NL Appeals Committee shall have no conflict of interest in the matters being appealed and shall not be associated with any of the principals involved. The NL Appeals Committee shall be chaired by one of the members designated by the US Youth Soccer CEO. The Appeals Committee shall be composed of no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 members. Decisions of the NL Appeals Committee shall be final.

13.06 Filing Procedures

A protest or appeal must be filed in writing and must include:

- a) The nature and specifics of the complaint.
- b) A listing of the policies, rules, and/or procedures that have been violated.
- c) A statement of the desired resolution.
- d) Copies of all documents relevant to the protest or appeal.
- e) The filing fee for a protest or appeal is \$500 (certified check or money order – made payable to US Youth Soccer).

All protests and appeals must be filed with the NL Commissioner. The original document of the protest or appeal, along with all supporting documents, must be sent by Registered or Certified U. S. Mail – Return Receipt Requested, or by a
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reputable overnight courier service.

13.07 Hearing of Appeal

An appeal of a NL Commissioner decision shall be heard by the NL Management Group. An appeal of a NL Management Group decision shall be heard by the NL Appeals Committee. The US Youth Soccer Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in consultation with the NL Commissioner, may determine that an appeal of a NL Commissioner's decision may be heard directly by the NL Appeals Committee.

13.08 Notification of Parties

The NL Commissioner shall notify all parties involved, no later than three (3) business days after receipt of an appeal or protest, that an appeal or protest has been filed.

13.09 Disputes, Discipline & Appeals

The NL Commissioner is authorized to settle disputes which arise in the course of NL competition. The NL Commissioner, in accordance with the disciplinary policies and procedures of US Youth Soccer and US Soccer, will investigate and adjudicate all allegations of misconduct by teams, coaches, players, or others involved in NL operations and will impose an appropriate sanction for any violation found. When an appeal of a NL Commissioner's decision is authorized under this section 13, the appeal will be heard in accordance with Rule 13.07.

13.10 NL Appeals Committee Decisions

Appeals shall be considered and determined by the NL Appeals Committee in person or by telephone conference call at the Chairman of the NL Appeals Committee's direction. Consideration and determination of an appeal shall be closed to the public and the parties. The NL Appeals Committee will render a decision no later than fourteen (14) business days after receipt of the appeal. Decisions shall be reduced to written form and shall be sent to the principal parties no later than two (2) business days after the conclusion of deliberations (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and holidays).

13.11 Return of Filing Fee

In the event that a Protest or Appeal is fully upheld then the filing fee shall be returned to the entity filing the Protest or Appeal; otherwise the filing fee is non-refundable.

13.12 US Youth Soccer Bylaw Section 4 of Article XVII

Section 4 of Article XVII of the US Youth Soccer bylaws provides the following:

- A. No member of USYSA, official league, club, team, player, coach, administrator or referee may invoke the aid of the courts of the United States or of a state without first exhausting all available remedies with the appropriate soccer organization, and as provided by USYSA.
- B. For a violation of this bylaw, the offending party shall be subject to suspension and fines, and shall be liable to USYSA for all expenses incurred by USYSA and its officers and members of the board of directors in defending each court action, including the following:
 1. court costs;
 2. attorney's fee;
 3. reasonable compensation for time spent by USYSA officials and employees in responding to and defending allegations in the action, including responses to discovery and court appearances;
 4. travel expenses; and
 5. expenses for holding special National Council meetings necessitated by court action.

SECTION 14. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES INTRODUCTION

14.01 US Youth Soccer National League Administration

The Multi-State Tier of the US Youth Soccer National Leagues Program is a program of, and administered by, US Youth Soccer in accordance with the US Youth Soccer Leagues Policy. This tier shall be known as the Conferences.

14.02 Rules

Participation in the Conferences is governed by the rules adopted by US Youth Soccer, the United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer), and the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) except where modified by those rules and these NL rules. These Conferences rules may be revised by the NL Management Group on a seasonal year basis and other times as may be necessary or appropriate.

14.03 Matters Not Provided For

The NL Management Group has final authority in all matters related to the Multi-State Tier of the program not specifically provided for by the Leagues Program Policy, or Rules.

14.04 Conferences

On an annual basis, the NL Management Group shall determine the number of Conferences to be operated during a seasonal year.

14.05 Conference League Managers

On an annual basis, the NL shall appoint a Conference League Manager (also referred to as a League Manager) to oversee all administrative and operational aspects of an individual Conference. A Conference League Manager may be named to oversee more than one Conference during a seasonal year.

14.06 Conference Operating Procedures

Individual Conference Operating Procedures, as established by the Conference League Manager for each Conference that are approved by the NL Commissioner, shall be considered a part of these Rules.

SECTION 15. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES TEAM APPLICATION

15.01 Team Eligibility

Any team properly registered for the current seasonal soccer year with a US Youth Soccer State Association may request entry to the Conference.

- a) **Returning Team Eligibility** will be contingent on retaining player continuity from their 2018-19 seasonal year club. At all times during the 2019-2020 seasonal year, a Conference team must have on its Conference roster, to be eligible to play during the 2019-2020 seasonal year, no less than 9 US Youth Soccer players that were on a roster of any US Youth Soccer registered team within such team's club during the 2018-2019 seasonal year. If a Returning Team does not retain player continuity, the team shall be considered a "New Team", and will not retain the team's previous position in the Conference.
- b) **New Team Eligibility** will be determined by the team's affiliated US Youth Soccer State Association in accordance with Individual Conference Operating Procedures. Any team relegated out of their Conference will be subject to New Team Eligibility standards by their State Association.

15.02 Transfer of Pre-Qualified Slot into Premier I or Premier II

Any movement of a team from one club to another during the course of the seasonal year, including but limited to the time period following acceptance into a Conference, may result in the team being dropped from the league at the sole discretion of the Conference League Manager.

In situations where players from a team transfer to another club in between seasonal years, the club from which the players transferred from shall have the right to retain the Conference slot subject to the Returning Team Eligibility requirements.

In unique situations where players from a team transfer to another club in between seasonal years, and the club from which the players transferred from cannot fulfill the Returning Team Eligibility requirements, the Conference League Manager, subject to oversight by the NL Commissioner, at his/her sole discretion shall review if the club to which the players transferred to shall have a right to the slot. In such cases, the Club Director must file with the Conference League Manager a written document outlining the reason for such movement to another club, and all circumstances surround the movement.

15.03 Contested Pre-Qualified Slot

In unique situations where a Pre-Qualified Conference slot is contested by different clubs, due to the transfer of the majority of players from one team within a club to a team within another club, the Conference League Manager shall review the situation and determine which club, if any, retains the contested slot. The Conference League Manager subject to oversight by the NL Commissioner, may request additional supporting documentation in regards to the contested slot. The process shall include the following:

- a) \$500 fee per team per club for the review of a contested slot
- b) State Association Transfer Rules review
- c) Reasoning for exception to Conference Returning Team Eligibility Requirement (15.01)

15.04 Club Mergers Affecting Pre-Qualified Slot

In situations where there is a mutual desire to merge or consolidate entire organizations/clubs, the Conference League Manager may review and determine whether such teams resulting in the merger or consolidations should be subject to the "Returning Team" or "New Team" eligibility requirements. In such situations, the Conference League Manager may request additional information in regards to this matter including but not limited to the rationale for the merger/consolidation, a guarantee on the number of returning Conference level players for the coming season and any other matter that the Conference League Manager deems pertinent in the review of this matter.

15.05 National Cup Competitions Requirement

Any team making application to a Conference must, subject to the provision herein, have competed in one of US Youth Soccer's National Cup competitions, beginning at the state level in either the State Cup or State Presidents Cup, during the past seasonal year and must also participate in a US Youth Soccer National Cup competition, beginning at the state level in either the State Cup or State Presidents Cup, during the current seasonal year. Currently, the National Cup Competitions include the National Championship Series and the National Presidents Cup.

The requirement for competing in the National Cup Competitions during the past seasonal year may be waived pending a request of waiver by a team in accordance with the individual Conference Operating Procedures. The Conference League Manager for the Conference in consultation with the respective State Association and NL Commissioner may grant or deny the waiver.

15.06 State Association Team and Player Registration

All teams must be properly registered teams that meet the requirements for participation provided by these rules with their respective US Youth Soccer member State Association. All players on a team must be properly registered with a member State Association.

15.07 Teams from a State Associations

The number of teams recommended by each State Association in each gender age group to the Conference for each season of play shall be in accordance to the individual Conference Operating Procedures.

15.08 Application Deadlines

All applications for participation in a Conference must be received by the deadline established by the Conference League Manager for each Conference.

15.09 Application Process

Team applications to participate in a Conference are to be submitted in a manner and form as determined on a seasonal year basis by the Conference League Manager in each Conference.

15.10 Acceptance of Teams

Teams approved to participate in the Conference by their State Association are not automatically accepted into the Conference. The Conference Team Selection Committee, a committee within a Conference as determined by the Conference League Manager and approved by the NL Commissioner, will evaluate all State Association approved teams and determine final acceptance into the Conference based on the number of positions available and the configuration of teams in each tier and sub-division. It is understood that State Associations shall not unreasonably withhold approval for a team application if such team has earned a Premier I Division or Premier II Division team slot.

15.11 Acceptance of Leagues Policy, Conference Rules, Decisions and Fees

Any team applying to play in a Conference agrees to accept, abide by, and comply with all policies, rules, and decisions of the Leagues Program and further agrees to pay all fees that are due to the Conference for participation in the Conference by the applicable deadlines.

15.12 Fees and Other Expenses

Each team playing in a Conference will pay the fees established by the Conference. The Conference is not responsible for expenses incurred by teams through travel, housing, coaching, uniforms, and other related team operating costs. All entry fees are non-refundable subject to the Conference Operating Procedures.

15.13 Final Authority

The Conference League Manager of a Conference after consultation with State Associations shall have the final authority and right to refuse admittance of any team based upon the team's prior performance in the Conference or other competitions. These factors include, but are not limited to: failure to play Conference matches as scheduled; failure to comply with Conference rules; failure to pay Conference referees; and/or failure to pay assessed Conference fees or fines on time.

15.14 Additional State Association Entry Fees and Bonds

State Associations may require an additional fee or bond for participation in the Conference. Such fees and bonds are to be handled directly by the teams with their respective State Association. The Conference does not participate nor endorse such State Association requirements.

15.15 Contact Information and Communication

All member teams of the Conference shall have contact information on file with the Conference, including, but not limited to:

- a) the Team Administrator's Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address;
- b) the Team Coach's Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address; and
- c) the Club's Technical Director's (Director of Coaching) Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address.

E-mail will be the primary means of communication within the Conference. It is the responsibility of each team to ensure that accurate contact information is on file with the Conference.

SECTION 16. MULTI-STATE TIER – LEAGUE STRUCTURE

16.01 Structure

The Conference Operating Procedures shall outline the gender age groups to be offered during a seasonal year, the tiers of competition (to be called Premier I, Premier II, First Division etc.) during a seasonal year, the number of teams and sub-divisions within each tier of competition, and the format of the competition within the Conference. The Conference Operating Procedures shall also include the club versus club formats (if applicable) and promotion and relegations procedures from season to season and tier to tier.

16.02 Team Selection, Tier Placement, and Division Placement including Promotion and Relegation

The Conference League Manager, with the approval of the NL Commissioner, shall be responsible for the process that determines the selection of the placement of teams into tiers, and the placement of teams into sub-divisions within each tier for each Boys and Girls Age Group. The process of determining the placement of teams into tiers will utilize the accepted concept of Promotion and Relegation of teams between tiers based on the finish of teams in the previous year's Conference standings. At a minimum, if applicable, at least one team from each higher tier level shall automatically be relegated to the next lower tier. At a minimum, at least one team from each lower tier level shall automatically be promoted to the next higher tier level. The number of teams relegated and promoted between tiers will be reviewed and determined on a seasonal basis by the Conference League Manager as well as on an age group-by-age group basis and a tier-by-tier basis.

16.03 Premier I Division or Premier II Division Team—Failure to Return to Conference

In situations whereby a team does not apply for participation for a season where such team had previously earned placement as a Premier I Division or Premier II Division team, such slot may be filled at the discretion of the Conference Team Selection Committee in accordance with the Conference Operating Procedures.

SECTION 17. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES TEAM ROSTERS

17.01 Team Rosters

Teams must file with the Conference, in a process outlined in the Conference Operating Procedures, its State Association approved Team Roster and State Association approved Club Pass Player Roster. Additions to the Team Roster or the Club Pass Player Roster must be filed with the Conference no later than 24 hours prior to a game's kick off in order for players listed on the roster(s) to be eligible to play. An authorized official from the Team's respective home State Association must authorize the validity of all rostered players in order for players to be eligible for Conference play.

17.02 Player Eligibility

All players must be current US Youth Soccer members and have member passes that have been approved by their respective State Association. During a season (Fall or Spring) a player may be listed on one Team Roster. Players listed on a Team Roster may also be listed on a Club Pass Roster(s) on team(s) within the same US Youth Soccer affiliated club as approved by the team's State Association, in accordance with Conference Operating Procedures. A player that is rostered to a team outside of the Conference but within the same US Youth Soccer affiliated club as approved by the team's State Association, may also be listed on the Club Pass Roster(s) on team(s) within the same US Youth Soccer affiliated club. In situations where a player may be listed as a Primary or Secondary player, such player may only be on a Team Roster or Club Pass Roster for a team within the player's Primary Club

17.03 Maximum Roster Size and Pool of Players

The maximum number of players on a Team Roster shall be 22 although the pool of players eligible to participate for an individual team is 30. Such pool of players may include club pass players, as well as any players that may have been added to the Team Roster once the team's Conference season has commenced. Procedures for submitting approved rosters for Conference play are within each of the Conference Operating Procedures.

17.04 Player Limitations

A player may play for only one Conference team during any single day. Once a player is on the roster of a team in the Conference in a gender age group and such team has played one match in Conference competition, such player may not appear on another team's roster in such gender age group during the remainder of the Conference season.

In situations where a club may have multiple teams participating in the Conference, a player or players may be listed on multiple teams rosters in different age groups, but at no time may a player play for more than one team on the same day, and not play on more than one team in the same gender age group. Under no circumstances may a player be listed on multiple team rosters if such teams are from different clubs.

During the Conference season, a Goalkeeper may be listed on up to 2 Conference team match day team lineups per day from the same club, with the written consent by the Conference League Manager. A Goalkeeper may not play on more than one team in the same gender age group, and is subject to the same standards as club pass players.

17.05 Team Match Day Team Line Ups

The Conference Operating Procedures shall outline the procedures for creating and using Team Match Day Line Ups for each Conference Match.

17.06 Member Passes Presented to Referee

Valid US Youth Soccer member passes for the current seasonal year shall be presented to the referee for the match in accordance with the Conference Operating Procedures.

17.07 Playing of Ineligible Player

A team that plays an ineligible player shall be subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to: (a) forfeiture of the match; and (b) suspension of the team's coach from Conference competition. Additional disciplinary action could include (a) expulsion of the team from the Conference; and/or (b) any further action(s) as determined by the Conference League Manager.

17.08 Additional Player Information

The Conference at its discretion may require participating teams to provide additional information on players for use in promoting the Conference and/or its teams and players. Teams are required to submit information as requested in procedures established by the Conference.

SECTION 18. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES MATCHES SCHEDULING AND MATCH MANAGEMENT

18.01 Number of Games

Each team will be scheduled to play a minimum of four (4) games in a season. The scheduled number of games shall be determined by the Conference League Manager based on the number of teams in a division

18.02 Scheduling of Conference Games

The Conference League Manager for each Conference shall determine the manner to schedule matches as per the Conference Operating Procedures.

18.03 Match Schedule and Rest Periods

It is the intent of the league to play only one match per day; however, when circumstances dictate, no more than two matches a day may be scheduled. Every effort will be made to provide for a minimum of three hours rest between matches.

18.04 Inclement Weather and Unplayable Field Conditions Prior to Match

The Host is responsible for notifying the Conference League Manager as soon as possible if games on scheduled fields are unable to be played due to field closings or inclement weather. Rescheduling of games is done in accordance with Conference Scheduling Policy.

18.05 Referee Jurisdiction

Once the referee has jurisdiction of a match, the match may be stopped, suspended, or terminated as provided in the "IFAB Laws of the Game."

18.06 Travel/Hosting

For the purpose of Conference competition, Permission to Host/Travel Forms are not required. Permission to host/travel is granted when a team's respective State Association approves the team's application into the Conference.

- a) At the discretion of the Conference League Manager, the Conference may require out-of-town teams to use specific hotels in order to participate in a Conference hosted event. Such requirements are to be listed by the Conference at the time a location is offered to teams for scheduling and may include disciplinary action for any violation(s). All teams are required to coordinate hotel stays through the designated hotel provider as designated by the Conference.

18.07 Match Management Procedures

The Conference League Manager has the authority to make the final decision on all aspects related to a match outside of the jurisdiction of the referees. Conference Match Management Procedures are listed within the Conference Operating Procedures.

18.08 Additional Match Management Procedures

On an emergency basis, the Conference League Manager may impose additional Match Management Procedures. These additional procedures shall be limited to those items that are necessary, in the sole opinion of the League Manager, in order for a match to be played.

18.09 Responsibility of Teams

The officials of a team at a match (as provided by Rule 21.10), are responsible for the behavior, conduct and control of team players, support staff, supporters including but not limited to family and friends, and team management staff. Failure to abide by this rule may result in Disciplinary Action as determined by the Conference League Manager.

SECTION 19. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES STANDINGS

19.01 Earning Points in Matches

The standings of teams within a competition format will be based upon the number of points earned from each match. Teams earn points as follows: 3 points for a win; 1 point for a tie; and no points for a loss.

19.02 Forfeits

A forfeited match will be scored as a 1-0 win for the opponent. A team forfeiting any match shall be dropped from the Conference at the discretion of the Conference League Manager following a review of the incident resulting in any Forfeits. Should a team be dropped, all scores for that team in the seasonal year schedule shall be recorded as a 1-0 win for the opponent. In addition, a team that forfeits one of more matches may be subject to further sanctioning including but not limited to a fine, become ineligible to advance to Regionals, become ineligible to advance to the National Tier of the National League, or be suspended from the Leagues Program. The Conference League Manager of the Conference, after consultation of the NL Management Group, shall determine any additional sanctioning.

19.03 Uneven Number of Matches

In the event that the teams in a competitions format do not play the same number of matches due to unforeseen circumstances, excluding matches that teams forfeit, the Conference League Manager of a Conference shall determine the Final Standings utilizing any tie-breaking procedures of Rule 19.04 that may need to be applied or by using the percentage of points earned versus the maximum points the team could have earned as the tiebreaker

19.04 Tiebreakers

The following tiebreaker criteria apply to the competitions within each Conference.

Tiebreakers—Two Teams are Tied

If two teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the team's placement will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria:

- b) Winner of head to head competition
- c) Winner of most games (all games).
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games.
- e) Fewest goals allowed.
- f) Coin Toss

Tiebreakers—Three Teams That Are Tied

If three teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the three-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied resorts to the two team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams.
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games .
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all games.
- g) Drawing of lots.

Tiebreakers—Four Teams That Are Tied

If four teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the four-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied (either two or three teams) resorts to the two or three team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the tied teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games.
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all games.
- g) Drawing of lots.

Tiebreakers—Five Teams That Are Tied

If five teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the five-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied (two, three or four teams) resorts to the two, three or four team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the tied teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams.
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games.
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all games.
- g) Drawing of lots.

Tiebreakers—Six Teams That Are Tied

If five teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the six-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied (two, three, four or five teams) resorts to the two, three, four or five team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the tied teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games).
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams.
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games.
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all games.
- g) Drawing of lots.

Tiebreakers—Not Covered

For any situation not covered within these rules, the Conference League Manager will also determine any tie- breaking procedures that may need to be applied.

SECTION 20. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES NATIONAL/REGIONAL COMPETITIONS

20.01 Qualification to US Youth Soccer Regional Competitions

On an annual basis, the Conference shall publish based on the structure of the Premier I tier of play within each Conference, the process for determining qualification to the Regional Competition of the National Championships Series. Such process will be outlined in the Conference Operating Procedures.

20.02 Failure to Accept Qualification Slot to Regionals

A team that achieves an automatic qualification slot from the conference is expected to honor the commitment to participate in the Regional Competition. As stated in Rule 20.01, the Conference shall publish the process for determining qualification to the Regional Competition of the National Championships Series. Failure to field a team in such Regional Competition may result in fines as determined by the Conference League Manager.

SECTION 21. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES RULES OF PLAY

21.01 Applicable Rules and Laws of the Game

Matches will be played under the applicable policies and rules of US Youth Soccer. Teams are responsible for obtaining and abiding by the FIFA Laws of the Game as they govern play subject to the modifications noted in these rules.

21.02 Substitutions

- a) Matches in the 15U, 16U, 17U, 18U and 19U age groups will operate under the FIFA-7 players “per half” substitution system. Once replaced, players cannot re-enter the game during that half of play.
- b) Unlimited vs Limited substitution policies shall be aligned with the National Championship Series Policy and shall be outlined in the Individual Conference Operating Procedures.
- c) Substitutions may be made at any stoppage of play with the approval of the referee.
- d) Reentry shall be at a normal substitution point (with approval of the referee) or at any point during the game if the referee signals for the player’s reentry.
- e) During a match is that is part of a Conference event using neutral Health Care Professionals (HCP) or neutral Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC) to monitor the fields, if a player is suspected of suffering a head injury, such player may be substituted for evaluation. The substitution for the evaluation of a concussion/head injury will not count towards the team’s total allowed substitutions in a half. However, the team must have at least one substitution available to implement this temporary substitution.
 - 1) If the player is deemed by the neutral HCP or neutral ATC to not have been diagnosed as having a possible concussion, the player may re-enter the game at any stoppage of play and must replace the original substitute. This head injury evaluation substitution will not count as a used substitution in the half. Furthermore, the temporary substitute will be able to re-enter the game in that half at a later time.
 - 2) If the player is not cleared to return to play by the HCP or ATC, the replacement player will no longer be considered a temporary substitute and the team will be charged a substitution.
 - 3) Any discipline issued to the temporary substitute will count for the remainder of the game.

21.03 Match Length

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Length of Each Half</u>
17U, 18U and 19U	45 minutes
15U and 16U	40 minutes
13U and 14U	35 minutes
12U	30 minutes

21.04 Field Size

Fields for all age groups must meet the U.S. Soccer/FIFA requirements for field size.

21.05 Forfeit Due to Failure to Appear for Match

Failure to appear or failure to timely appear for a scheduled match will result in a forfeit. A team must be present and ready to play within 10 minutes of scheduled match time.

21.06 Anchored Goals

The coaches and match referee should inspect the integrity of the goals to ensure they are secure and suitable for play.

21.07 Team Uniforms

Team and individual player Uniforms for NL matches must conform as follows:

- a) Each player (except a goalkeeper) shall have a number on the player's jersey. The number shall be affixed to the back of the jersey and be clearly visible. Each player on a team must wear a number different from the number of every other player on the team. Numbered jerseys on goalkeepers are optional. Numbers should be affixed to the jersey and no taped numbers are permitted
- b) All teams are required to attend each match with 2 sets of jerseys and socks for all of its players; one set of light colored jerseys and socks, and a second set of dark colored jerseys and socks.
- c) It is expected that the first team listed on the match schedule is to wear light/white color jerseys and socks. When there is a conflict in uniform color, the team listed second on the NL schedule must change its jerseys and socks, except in situations where the team listed first is wearing dark colored jerseys and/or socks, then the team listed first must change to light/white color jerseys and socks. The Referee shall define what constitutes light and dark color jerseys and socks.
- d) The Conference League Manager of each Conference shall have the option to assign jersey colors to teams for matches, should the Conference League Manager deem that such procedure is appropriate.
- e) In the event of color conflict with referees, the referees shall change jersey colors.
- f) Teams playing in the Conference are permitted to have the following limited items on their game uniforms:
 1. US Youth Soccer logo or directly related US Youth Soccer logoed patches
 2. Their individual club and/or team logo and team sponsor logo
 3. Manufacturer of uniform logo
 4. Name and number of player
 5. No other patches or logos are permitted unless written permission is granted by the Conference League Manager.

21.08 Coaching from Sidelines

Limited coaching is permitted only from one touch line from the team's respective technical area (if marked) or from the center-line to no more than 5 yards from the end of the team bench closest to the goal line (if no technical area is marked). Team bench persons may not enter the field without permission from the referee.

21.09 Official Match

If less than one half is completed and the match is terminated because of weather or other unplayable conditions, the entire match must be replayed, subject to review by the Conference League Manager for the Conference. If the first full half of a match is played, and the second half of the match is not played because of weather or unplayable field conditions, the match is official and the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated. If a match is terminated during the second half of play due to inclement weather or unplayable field conditions as determined by the referee in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game, the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated.

21.10 Team Bench Area and Supervision

No more than 4 team bench persons (being only team coaches, team administrators, and team medical staff) shall be permitted at the team bench area during a match. Also, those players listed on the match lineup card are permitted at the team bench area during a match. A suspended team bench person is not permitted at the Team Bench Area. A coach, manager or team official must supervise a Conference team at all times at the Team Bench Area. Coaches, managers and team officials are required to provide the Referee with a pass, as provided by their host State Association, certifying that the coach, manager or team official is currently rostered with the team/club. If by send off or emergency, a team does not have a coach, manager or team official to supervise the Conference team during a Conference game, then the game shall be forfeited.

21.11 Team Coaches – Coaching Education Requirement

On an annual basis, the NL Management Group shall determine the minimum levels of coaching education needed by each coach in order to supervise a team in individual Conference Competition. Minimum levels of coaching education shall be outlined in the individual Conference Operating Procedures. Coaching education levels from U.S. Soccer, United Soccer Coaches and foreign national associations may be considered in meeting such standards.

SECTION 22. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES REFEREES

22.01 Three Person System

Matches should be officiated by the three-person FIFA/USSF Referee System. In the event the assigned officials fail to appear; an attempt to secure certified officials should be done to officiate the match. In the event certified USSF officials are not available, the Referee may appoint Club Assistant Referees. Club Assistant Referees shall be limited to decisions only on touchlines and possession as specified by FIFA/USSF Referee Guidelines. Additional procedures may be listed within the Conference Operating Procedures.

22.02 Game Officials

Game officials will be assigned under the authority of the Conference working with the hosting US Youth Soccer State Association.

22.03 Referee Assignor

Match officials will be assigned under the authority of the Conference League Manager of the Conference.

22.04 Payment of Referees

Referee and Assistant Referees are paid in accordance with the Conference Operating Procedures.

22.05 Filing of Referee Match Report

The filing of the Referee Match Report shall follow the procedures as outlined in the Conference Operating Procedures.

SECTION 23. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES SEND OFFS AND DISCIPLINE

23.01 Protocol for Send Offs and Dismissals

Any player sent off from a match must leave the field area and retreat to the parking area of the complex or an area designated by the Conference League Manager. Any team bench person dismissed from participating in a match must leave the field area and retreat to the parking area of the complex or an area designated by the Conference League Manager. Any player sent off or dismissed team bench person is prohibited from communicating with his/her team while the team is at the field for its match, including but not limited to cell phone use, texting, tweeting, or other means of communication. Violation of this rule may result in further disciplinary action against the individual and/or team. The match officials on site are authorized to prohibit the use of any communication devices at the team bench areas.

23.02 Send Offs and Dismissals – Automatic Suspension

Any player sent off or non-player dismissed under Rule 23.01 will be automatically suspended for the next day of Conference competition and for the team's next Conference match (suspensions served concurrently). For a second send off or dismissal during a seasonal year and any send off or dismissal thereafter, the player or non-player will automatically be suspended for the next day of Conference competition and the team's next 2 Conference matches (served concurrently). Any player sent off or dismissed non-player must comply with the location and communication provisions of Rule 23.01.

23.03 Send Offs and Dismissals – Review by Conference League Manager of a Conference

All send offs and dismissals are to be reviewed by the Conference League Manager of the Conference who may determine at his/her sole discretion that an additional suspension shall be assessed.

23.04 Playing of a Suspended Player

A team that plays an ineligible, suspended player shall be subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to: (a) forfeiture of the match, and (b) suspension of the team's coach from Conference competition. Additional disciplinary action could include (a) expulsion of the team from the Conference; and/or (b) any further action(s) not limited to fines as determined by the Conference League Manager.

23.05 Reporting Send Offs to States

The Conference League Manager may distribute information on all send offs to the respective State Associations.

23.06 Suspensions Incurred at Last Match of Seasonal Year

If a player or non-player is sent off during the last match of the Conference seasonal year, the suspension shall be served at the team's next Conference match. The Conference League Manager of the Conference has the right to impose additional sanctions with regard to any matters arising from participation in the Conference as the result of the sending off.

23.07 Termination of Matches

Referees may terminate matches for lack of crowd control, poor team behavior or other unsportsmanlike circumstances. Each coach is responsible for the behavior and conduct of his/her players. Upon request by the Game Officials, coaches are responsible to assist in the control of parents, fans, and spectators. The Referee will report the termination of any match to the Conference League Manager or their designee within 24 hours. The Conference League Manager shall ascertain the facts and determine appropriate disciplinary action that may include:

- a) Reprimand,
- b) Forfeiture of game as appropriate;
- c) Suspension from future Conference matches or
- d) Recommendation to the US Youth Soccer National League Management Group of a more severe penalty.

If play is stopped at any time due to one of the teams (by action of players, coaches, administrators, spectators) adjudged to be at fault, it shall be at the discretion of the Conference League Manager whether the game is to be replayed or declared a forfeit.

23.08 Match Manipulation

Match manipulation is when a team or teams fail to compete in the spirit of the competition or are involved in the manipulation of a game result. Reports of suspected match manipulation must be extensively substantiated in writing and be filed in writing with the Conference League Manager no later than 2 hours following the completion of the match in question. Reports of suspected match manipulation in a Referee Report may be filed with the Conference League Manager in accordance with the individual Conference Operating Procedures. The Conference League Manager will investigate and adjudicate all allegations of match manipulation and will impose appropriate sanctions. Verified instances of match manipulation shall be subject to sanctioning at the discretion of the Conference League Manager. Such sanctions against the team and club found guilty of match manipulation may include but may not be limited to: (1) a minimum \$10,000 fine; (2) forfeiture of all Conference matches; (3) suspension of the team coach(es) and club Director of Coaching; and/or (4) suspension from Conference play for following seasonal year.

23.09 Violation of Rules or Conference Operating Procedures

Any violation of the rules herein or Conference Operating Procedures not specifically address in these rules will be subject to disciplinary action by the League Manager of the Conference.

SECTION 24. MULTI-STATE TIER – CONFERENCES PROTESTS AND APPEALS

24.01 Definition of a Protest

A protest is a formal written objection of any violation of established policies, rules, or procedures related to a specific match and can only be filed by the Club Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. Only those teams involved are permitted to protest a match result. Third parties, i.e., coaches from other teams, state administrators, cannot file protests on a specific match. Protests must be based upon a violation of the published rules of the US Youth Soccer, U.S. Soccer, the Conference competition, or IFAB Laws of the Game.

24.02 Protests of Match Played

To be valid and eligible for consideration, a protest must be orally lodged by a team official with the match referee and the opposing coach at the game site before leaving the field of play. All protests must be submitted in writing and filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching of the Club that the team is a member with the appropriate fee to the Conference League Manager. The formal written protest must be postmarked no later than three (3) business days after match completion in accordance with the Filing Procedures listed in Rule 24.06. The referee is the final authority on the field of play. All decisions of the referees with respect to matters of fact, including judgment matters, are final.

24.03 Hearing of Protest

The NL Management Group shall hear all protests by no later than seven US Youth Soccer business (7) days following the receipt of the protest fee.

24.04 Definition of an Appeal

An Appeal is a request to transfer the matter from one jurisdiction to another for re-examination of the decision made by the lower body. Appeals arise as the result of an adverse decision from an administrative action or disciplinary action at a lower level. Only those parties to the original action, who are adversely impacted by such decisions, shall be allowed to appeal. An Appeal may only be filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. An appeal must be filed in accordance with Section 24.06 within five (5) days after a decision is rendered by the NL.

24.05 Appeals Committee

The Conference shall have a NL Appeals Committee. The NL Appeals Committee shall have jurisdiction of appeals as provided in the rules of this Section 24. The US Youth Soccer Chief Executive Officer (CEO) shall appoint members to the Committee for each appeal that is filed. Members of the NL Appeals Committee shall have no conflict of interest in the matters being appealed and shall not be associated with any of the principals involved. The NL Appeals Committee shall be chaired by one of the members designated by the US Youth Soccer CEO. The Appeals Committee shall be composed of no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 members.

Decisions of the NL Appeals Committee shall be final.

24.06 Filing Procedures

A protest or appeal must be filed in writing and must include:

- b) The nature and specifics of the complaint.
- c) A listing of the policies, rules, and/or procedures that have been violated.
- d) A statement of the desired resolution.
- e) Copies of all documents relevant to the protest or appeal.
- f) The filing fee for a protest or appeal is \$500 (certified check or money order – made payable to US Youth Soccer).

All protests and appeals must be filed with the Conference League Manager. The original document of the protest or appeal, along with all supporting documents, must be sent by Registered or Certified U. S. Mail – Return Receipt Requested, or by a reputable overnight courier service.

24.07 Hearing of Appeal

An appeal of a Conference League Manager decision shall be heard by the NL Management Group. An appeal of a NL Management Group decision shall be heard by the NL Appeals Committee. The US Youth Soccer Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in consultation with the NL Commissioner, may determine that an appeal of a NL Commissioner's decision may be heard directly by the NL Appeals Committee.

24.08 Notification of Parties

The Conference League Manager shall notify all parties involved, no later than three (3) business days after receipt of an appeal or protest, that an appeal or protest has been filed.

24.09 Disputes, Discipline & Appeals

The Conference League Manager is authorized to settle disputes which arise in the course of Conference competition. The Conference League Manager, in accordance with the disciplinary policies and procedures of US Youth Soccer and US Soccer, will investigate and adjudicate all allegations of misconduct by teams, coaches, players, or others involved in NL operations and will impose an appropriate sanction for any violation found. When an appeal of a Conference League Manager's decision is authorized under this section 24, the appeal will be heard in accordance with Rule 24.07.

24.10 NL Appeals Committee Decisions

Appeals shall be considered and determined by the NL Appeals Committee in person or by telephone conference call at the Chairman of the NL Appeals Committee's direction. Consideration and determination of an appeal shall be closed to the public and the parties. The NL Appeals Committee will render a decision no later than 14 business days after receipt of the appeal. Decisions shall be reduced to written form and shall be sent to the principal parties no later than 2 business days after the conclusion of deliberations (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and holidays).

24.11 Return of Filing Fee

In the event that a Protest or Appeal is fully upheld then the filing fee shall be returned to the entity filing the Protest or Appeal; otherwise the filing fee is non-refundable.

24.12 US Youth Soccer Bylaw Section 4 of Article XVII

Section 4 of Article XVII of the US Youth Soccer bylaws provides the following:

- A. No member of USYSA, official league, club, team, player, coach, administrator or referee may invoke the aid of the courts of the United States or of a state without first exhausting all available remedies with the appropriate soccer organization, and as provided by USYSA.
- B. For a violation of this bylaw, the offending party shall be subject to suspension and fines, and shall be liable to USYSA for all expenses incurred by USYSA and its officers and members of the board of directors in defending each court action, including the following:
 1. court costs;
 2. attorney's fee;
 3. reasonable compensation for time spent by USYSA officials and employees in responding to and defending allegations in the action, including responses to discovery and court appearances;
 4. travel expenses; and
 5. expenses for holding special National Council meetings necessitated by court action.