



National Championships and Presidents Cup

2025-2026 COMPETITION RULES

US Youth Soccer

Section 1: Definitions

Agreement: Refers to this Rules Document, including any amendments or appendices attached hereto.

Event: An organized activity, meeting, or gathering governed by these rules.

Participant: Any individual or entity attending or involved in the Event.

Organizer: The person or team responsible for planning and executing the Event.

Venue: The physical or virtual location where the Event takes place.

State Association: An official US Youth Soccer member association responsible for player registration, team eligibility, and administering State-level qualifying events.

State Cup: A State Association–administered qualifying competition used to determine the state's representatives for the National Championships or Presidents Cup.

National Qualifier (NQ): A Presidents Cup regional-level event where eligible teams compete to advance to the National Presidents Cup.

National Championships: The highest level of US Youth Soccer competition for players aged 13U–19U, which includes State-level qualification and a culminating national event.

National Presidents Cup: A national competition for teams aged 13U–19U that qualify through State level and National Qualifier events.

National Competition: Encompasses any USYS National Championships or Presidents Cup event at the State, Regional (NQ), or National level.

Team Roster: The official list of players (9–22) approved by a State Association for a National Competition, including primary, club pass, and guest players.

Primary Player: A player registered directly to the team for the seasonal year.

Club Pass Player: A player registered with the same club, age-eligible, who may be added to the team's roster per USYS rules.

Guest Player: A player from a different club, properly registered and approved, who may appear on a National Competition roster.

Roster Continuity: The requirement that at least 50% of players on the National Competition roster match the roster used to qualify at the State level.

Freeze Date: The deadline established for roster submission and finalization prior to entering a National Competition.

Team Official: Any coach, manager, administrator, or support staff associated with a team and listed on official credentials.

Competition Management Group: The USYS-appointed body responsible for administration, discipline, protests/appeals, and match operations of National Competitions.

Suspension: A mandatory period during which a player, coach, or official is prohibited from participating in matches due to disciplinary reasons.

Forfeit: The act of failing to play a scheduled match, resulting in sanctions such as match loss, fines, and possible disqualification.

Manipulation of Match Results: Any intentional act meant to alter competitive outcomes, standings, or advancements; grounds for immediate disqualification.

Health Care Professional (HCP): A licensed medical professional authorized to evaluate injuries, including concussion-related issues, during competitions.

Temporary Substitution: A concussion-evaluation substitution that does not count against a team's substitution quota, subject to return-to-play clearance.

Super Group: The 22 State Associations and 10 National League representatives competing for the National Championship.

Premier Group: The second group of teams, for the remaining 32 State Associations competing for the National Championships.

IFAB Laws of the Game: The global soccer rules, modified only where permitted by US Youth Soccer and this Agreement.

Section 2: Establishment

- 2 US Youth Soccer annually organizes the **National Championship** and **National Presidents Cup** competitions across the age groups of 13U to 19U. These competitions are specifically conducted for boys and girls, at both state and national levels, with regional qualifiers for Presidents Cup.
- 2 The dates for entry deadlines, entry fees, and locations for the following year's competitions are determined each year by US Youth Soccer Leadership. All State Associations will be notified in writing by January 1st, at least 365 days prior to the deadline. By the deadline, each State Association wishing to enter must submit a nonrefundable fee set by US Youth Soccer for each competition.

Section 3: Titles

The official titles for the competitions are **"US Youth Soccer National Championships"** and **"US Youth Soccer National Presidents Cup."** These cups are the property of US Youth Soccer and are competed for annually at designated dates and sites approved by the US Youth Soccer Director of Events and the CEO.

At the state level, competitions are titled as follows:

- For State Association events: *"US Youth Soccer [State Name] Championship"* or *"State Cup/Presidents Cup."*
- For Regional Qualifiers: *"US Youth Soccer [Region Name] National Qualifier."*

3 The US Youth Soccer logo is mandatory on all event merchandise and graphics, either integrated into artwork or as a standalone logo.

Section 4: Administration

- 4 The administration of these competitions is managed by the US Youth Soccer Competition Management Groups, the CEO, the Director of Events, and their designees. Any unresolved matters are finalized by the US Youth Soccer National Championship Leadership, whose decisions are final.
- 4 Match precedence is given to National Competition matches over all other US Youth Soccer matches. All notices and communications must be in writing and directed to the Director of Events.

Section 5: Organization

5.1 Each National Competition is conducted across the following levels:

- **For the National Championships:**
 - Qualifying Events
 - State Association Level
 - National League Events
 - National Level
- **For the Presidents Cup:**
 - State Association Level
 - Regional level (National Qualifier)
 - National level

5.2 Each State Association determines:

1. The age groups and genders for which it will conduct State-level competitions.
2. The teams that will represent it at the National level for each gender and age group.

- 5 The format at the State level will be referred to as the "State Cup" or "Presidents Cup". Other competition names will be considered if applicable. Teams qualifying directly for the National Championships through the National League Winter Events may be granted a waiver from participating in their State Cup by their State Association. Teams with such exemptions are required to submit a roster of no more than 22 players by the designated freeze date to establish roster continuity at the national level.
- 5 It is mandated that teams representing each state in all boys and girls age groups compete in the National Competitions to determine the champion, according to the format established by the US Youth Soccer National Championship Leadership.

Section 6: Team Eligibility

- 6 Teams eligible to compete in the National Competitions are registered with US Youth Soccer and approved by their State Association. They must demonstrate roster continuity, with at least 50% of the players matching those on the roster used to qualify at the State level.

A valid Team Roster must:

- Be approved by the relevant State Association.
 - Include between 9 and 22 USYS-registered players.
 - Consist of a combination of primary, club pass, and guest players, provided all are properly registered and approved.
 - Only include players who will compete for that team in the National Competition.
 - Not feature players participating on more than one team in the same National Competition.
- 6 The roster must be submitted at least 10 days before the start of the competition. Late updates may be permitted only in cases of administrative errors or exceptional circumstances as determined by the Competition Management Group.
 - 6 A team that participated in the US Youth Soccer National Championships at the State level is ineligible to compete in the Presidents Cup National Qualifiers or Presidents Cup unless the State level event used a combined format, where the winner advances to the Championships and the runner-up to the Presidents Cup. National League Teams and Premier 1 teams are not eligible to compete at Presidents Cup.

Section 7: Player Eligibility

Players must be properly registered and rostered according to US Youth Soccer and State Association rules. A youth player can only be on one team's roster within the club during the seasonal year until the team is eliminated at the state level.

In cases where a player's team has been eliminated at the state level, the player may receive a Club Pass and roster with another team within the same club. Teams can add up to five guest players from other clubs that have been eliminated at the state

level. As long as total roster size does not exceed 22 players and the 50% roster continuity rule is respected, players from the same club can be added at any time before the competition. No club changes are permitted after the start of the National Competitions.

Players registered as part of the National League and Premier 1 Leagues are ineligible to club pass to Presidents Cup rosters or be added as Guest Players. However, players that are primary rostered to a Presidents Cup team may Club Pass to a National League Conference or Premier 1 team without affecting their eligibility for other competitions, provided they adhere to the restrictions on the respective tournaments. 5

State Associations are responsible for verifying each player's eligibility for participation in the National Qualifiers and the National Competitions, ensuring compliance with all established policies and rules.

Section 8: Team and Player Breaches of Rules

- 8 Any team found using an ineligible player will be disqualified from further participation during the current seasonal year. Coaches or officials knowingly involved in such violations are also prohibited from participating in subsequent seasons. Players guilty of submitting falsified birth information are similarly barred from future participation in National Competitions. Match results from any game the disqualified team participated in will result in a 5-0 scoreline in favor of the disqualified team's opponent.
- 8 Players receiving a red card or sent off during a match are prohibited from participating in at least the next match for their Primary rostered team and may not play any other matches until the ban is served, across both State and National levels. They may face additional suspension based upon severity. The Competition Management Group shall determine any length of suspension beyond one match. This decision cannot be appealed. Any player sent off must leave the field of play but may remain in the Team Bench Area under the supervision of a Team Official. If the sent off player cannot be controlled by a Team Official, the Referee may require the removal of the player from the entire field area. If such a player is removed from the field area, a Team Official or parent must supervise the player away from the field area.
- 8 Coaches, officials, and individuals associated with the team—including spectators—are subject to misconduct rules. Any misconduct, abusive behavior, or violent conduct reported by referees must be addressed in writing, with disciplinary action taken as per US Youth Soccer policies and US Soccer Referee Abuse Prevention Policy (531-9).
- 8 Any Team Official dismissed from a match must leave the field area and retreat to the parking area of the complex or an area designated by the Competition Management team. Any team official who is dismissed is prohibited from communicating with his/her team during a match, including but not limited to cell phone use, texting, or other means of communication.

Section 9: Forfeits

Teams must notify in writing of their intention to forfeit a match at the National Championships by the deadline set prior to the competition. Failing to do so may result in sanctions against the team, club, and coach. Violations of policies or misconduct related to game results may lead to forfeiture, fines, suspensions, and disqualification from the entire competition. 6

Manipulating match results will result in forfeiture and disqualification at all levels of the competition. Match Manipulation fines may also be assessed.

Section 10: Protests and Appeals

10.1 Protests and appeals are formal procedures used to address violations of policies, rules, or procedures related to specific matches or decisions.

- 1 A **Protest** is a written objection to a match result, filed by a Team Official, Club Director, Director of Coaching of the team involved. Only the teams involved in the match may file a protest, and protests must be based on violations of published USYS rules, national policies, or IFAB Laws of the Game. Referee decisions on matters of fact and judgment are final and cannot be protested.
- 1 An **Appeal** is a request to transfer a decision from one jurisdiction to another for re-examination, filed by the original involved parties impacted by the decision. Only the Club Director or Director of Coaching can file an appeal.

10.4 Lodging a Protest:

- Must be orally lodged with the match referee and opposing coach before leaving the field.
- Noted on the match card.
- Orally lodged with the Competition Management Group within two hours of match completion, with written follow-up and a \$500 (cash, certified check, or e-payment) filing fee within three hours.

10.5 Lodging an Appeal:

- Must be filed in writing within one hour of the decision being communicated.
- The written appeal must be submitted within three hours, following formal procedures.

10.6 Filing Procedures:

- Must include details, violated policies, desired resolution, relevant documents, and a \$500 fee (cash, certified check, or e-payment).
- The Competition Management Group reviews the submission, and their decision is final. If upheld, the fee is refunded; otherwise, it is non-refundable.

Section 11: Rosters, Passes, Uniforms, Lodging

Each player and team official participating at State, Regional (National Qualifier), or National levels must carry a current US Youth Soccer member pass, which must include a recent photograph. Passes can be electronic or laminated cards issued by the State Association. Match day rosters must include between 9-22 players, with 22 players being the maximum number of players allowed to participate. 7

Roster verification is mandatory at each competition level. All roster information must be verified and signed by the appropriate State Association official. Rosters must list jersey numbers, which must be visible and unique within the team. Goalkeepers may wear optional numbered jerseys but must wear colors that distinguish them from other players and officials.

At every level, apparel bearing the US Youth Soccer logo or other approved marks is permitted. Additional markings must be approved by the governing body for the event.

11.4 USYS partners with On Location (Anthony Travel) for team lodging accommodations (except in which a complex contract exists). Any team located 100+ miles from the host facility must use On Location to book their lodging accommodations (8 room per night minimum) or pay a buyout fee (\$2500/team). Payment of buyout fees will be coordinated by On Location and according to their policies/procedures. Any team located 100+ miles from the host facility that is not in compliance with this lodging requirement may be removed from the Competition and/or will be ineligible to participate in future USYS National Competitions or The National League.

11.5 Each team is required to attend each match with two (2) sets of jerseys and socks (kits): a light-colored kit and a dark colored kit. The team listed home team is to wear their light kit and the visiting team on the schedule (usually listed second) is to wear their dark kit. The Referee shall define what constitutes light vs dark color. If, in the opinion of the referee, there is a conflict in uniform color, the offending team causing the conflict should change into their other kit.

Section 12: Match Rules

Match rules follow the **IFAB Laws of the Game** unless specifically modified by US Youth Soccer policies.

12.2 Match durations are as follows:

Age Group	Game Length
18/19U	Two 45-minute halves
17U	Two 45-minute halves
16U	Two 40-minute halves
15U	Two 40-minute halves

Age Group

14U

13U

Game Length

Two 35-minute halves

Two 35-minute halves

12.3 Standard Size 5 Match balls will be used and must meet IFAB standards.

12.4

Points are awarded as follows: 3 for a win, 1 for a tie, 0 for a loss. When goal difference is used as a tie-breaker, a maximum of +5 goals will be counted per match (e.g., a 7-0 win counts as +5 goal difference). 8

12.6 At Presidents Cup, advancement shall be determined as follows:

For age groups with eight teams, the two group winners shall advance to the next round.

For age groups with four, five, six, or seven teams, the two teams with the highest point totals shall advance.

At National Championships*, each group winner shall advance to the knockout rounds.

*Individual group advancement may vary based on group size

Section 13: Match Officials

- 1 Officials for National Competitions and Presidents Cup Qualifiers are assigned by the US Youth Soccer National Referee Administrator or designee. Referees assigned to these matches cannot be members of the competing teams. Compensation is set by the appropriate governing body (State Association or US Youth Soccer).
 - 1 Match officials are responsible for properly executing their duties as set forth in the IFAB Laws of the Game, including any applicable and allowable modifications as outlined by USYS/US Soccer.
 - 1 Match officials must complete and submit an official match report upon conclusion of each contest. Additional written reporting of any misconduct and / or mistreatment by any participant towards any other participant, including but limited to abuse, assault, threatening language, discriminatory acts, inappropriate / irresponsible / unacceptable behavior, is further required. This includes incidents and/or occurrences where a red card wasn't and/or couldn't be issued. Match officials should also expect formal follow up communication exchanges from USYS representatives to ensure that all applicable policies and procedures can be properly executed and enforced.
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Section 14: Substitutions

14.1 Presidents Cup National Qualifiers and National Presidents Cup **unlimited substitutions** are permitted. 9

14.2 For the US Youth Soccer National Championships:

- **13U & 14U: Unlimited** substitutions over **three moments** per half plus halftime.
- **15U–18/19U: Unlimited** substitutions over **four moments** per match plus halftime.

14.3 Substitutions can occur at any stoppage with the referee's approval. Re-entry is permitted at designated substitution points or at any time during play if the referee permits.

14.4 Concussion/Head Injury Substitution Policy:

If a player is suspected of having a concussion, they may be temporarily replaced so they can be evaluated by a qualified health professional. The temporary substitute does not count toward the team's normal substitution limits.

If the player is cleared, they may return to the match, and the temporary substitute player must come off. No substitution is charged to the team.

If the player is not cleared and permanently removed, the change becomes a concussion substitution. In that case, both teams receive one additional substitution and the opponent can make one additional substitution of one, singular player.

Section 15: Tiebreakers

15.1 Two (2) Team Tiebreaker Sequence

If two (2) teams are tied based on points earned, the team's placement will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria:

- Winner of head-to-head (Only applies if all teams in group play each other)
- Winner of most matches
- Goal difference (Max Goals of +5)
- Fewest goals allowed
- Fair Play (fewest total player/coach dismissals)
- Penalty Kicks
 - If both teams are not present, the Competition Management Team may replace the Penalty Kicks tiebreaker with a coin toss to break the tie.

15.2 Three (3) Team Tiebreaker Sequence

If three (3) teams are tied based on 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 completely broken, then that determines the final order of

finish between those three (3) teams. If a criterion separates just one (1) team, then the two (2) teams that are still tied based on that criterion will resort to the two-team tiebreaker to determine the order of finish between those two (2) teams.

- Points earned in head-to-head competition among the tied teams (Only applies if all teams in group play each other)
- Winner of most matches (all matches) 10
- Goal difference in matches among the tied teams
- Goal difference in all matches
- Fewest goals allowed in matches among the tied teams
- Fewest goals allowed in all matches
- Fair Play (fewest total player/coach dismissals)
- Penalty kicks (see two team tiebreaker)

15.3 Four (4) Team Tiebreaker Sequence

If four (4) teams are tied based on points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the 3-Team tiebreaker sequence. If a criterion creates a situation where the four-way tie is completely broken, then that determines the final order of finish between those four (4) teams. If a criterion breaks a portion of the tied teams, then the tiebreaker shall move to the tiebreaker that coincides with the number of teams that remain tied.

Section 16: Schedule of Fines

<u>Offense</u>	<u>Fine</u>
Withdrawal after acceptance into Competition	No refund of entry fee
Withdrawal after schedule release	\$1,000 (& no refund of entry fee)
Forfeit of Competition match	\$500
Official reports of match manipulation	\$10,000
Failure to field a team for a scheduled match	\$1,000
Failure to adhere to lodging requirements	\$2,500

Section 17: Wildcards

- 1 Wildcard spots for Presidents Cup National Qualifiers will be determined through a blind draw. Each National Qualifier will have its own blind draw to determine Wildcard order.
- 1 Wildcard spots for National Championships will be first offered to State Associations. If no State Association fills a Wildcard spot, the spot will be offered to teams that competed in the National League.
- 1 To determine the Wildcard allocation for National Championships, the 3-year rolling data used to determine group placement (Super or Premier) will be the order in which Wildcard spots are offered.

- 17.4 Wildcard spots for National Presidents Cup will be first offered to the finalist from said National Qualifier. If the finalist cannot attend, other National Qualifier finalists that wish to attend will be entered into a random draw to determine the Wildcard.

Section 18: Other Matters

18.1 Coaches and other bench personnel may not communicate via electronic device with any team representative or spectator during a match 11

18.2 Artificial noisemakers are not allowed during matches

National Championships Advancement

- **12 teams**
 - 3 groups of 4
 - **QFs:** Top 2 from each group + 2 best 3rd-place teams
- **14 teams**
 - 2 groups of 4 + 1 group of 6
 - **QFs:** Top 2 from each group + 2 best 3rd-place teams
- **16 teams**
 - 4 groups of 4
 - **QFs:** Top 2 from each group
- **18 teams**
 - 3 groups of 6
 - **QFs:** Top 2 from each group + 2 best 3rd-place teams
- **20 teams**
 - 5 groups of 4
 - **QFs:** 5 group winners + 3 best 2nd-place teams
- **22 teams**
 - 4 groups of 4 + 1 group of 6
 - 5 group winners + 2nd place from the group of 6 + 2 best 2nd-place team from the groups of 4
- **24 teams**
 - 6 groups of 4
 - **QFs:** 6 group winners + 2 best 2nd-place teams
- **26 teams**
 - 5 groups of 4 + 1 group of 6
 - **QFs:** 6 group winners + 2nd place from the group of 6 + 1 best 2nd-place team from the groups of 4
- **28 teams**
 - 7 groups of 4
 - **QFs:** 7 group winners + 1 best 2nd-place team
- **32 teams**
 - 8 groups of 4
 - **QFs:** 8 group winners

*Quarterfinal matches cannot be a rematch of teams who played in group play

**Matters Not Provided For*

- *Any matters not expressly addressed in these rules shall be determined at the sole discretion of Competition Management Group, the US Youth Soccer Board of Directors, the Director of Events, and/or the CEO. Their decisions shall be final and binding.*