



**Soccer Association of Montgomery
Recreational Rules of Play
Maryland SoccerPlex Rules & Conduct Policy**

Spring 2024

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All SAM rules herein are final. Questions or concerns may be brought to the attention of the league commissioner by a team official (head coach, assistant coach or team manager). Parental concerns should be sent to the league through the team coach or manager.

All SAM participants shall practice good sportsmanship, fair play, safety and sound fundamentals at all practices and games.

The SAM TEAM reserves the right to remove any coach, player or team whose conduct is considered detrimental to the best interests of SAM and the teams within the league.

*SAM rules are based on FIFA Laws of the Game with modifications.
Modifications are specified below.*

Playing Time

All players are required to play a minimum of 50% of every game. It is recommended that no player play more than 50% of the game as a goalkeeper.

Equipment and Uniforms

All players must wear the SAM issued uniforms and also have shin guards under their soccer socks. Cleats are recommended, but not required. Metal cleats are not permitted. Players returning to the same team in the spring will wear the uniform issued to them in the fall. Unique numbers in the Recreational League are not a requirement.

The referee is the sole authority regarding whether uniforms, jewelry and equipment are acceptable. All jewelry, including pierced earrings, must be removed, (no rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.). Earrings need to be fully removed prior to the start of the game. Covering them with tape or a Band-Aid is not permitted.

Long hair may be tied back. Hard clips and accessories are not permitted.

Field Equipment

All equipment is to be left as it is set-up. Goals are not to be moved in any way. If you feel there is a problem with the positioning of a goal, please contact SAM Soccer at 301-528-1480 and someone will verify the positioning and move the goals if required.

Rosters

Players are not permitted to play on two (2) SAM teams within the same division in the same season. Players are not permitted to “play-up” more than one age group. (*Extenuating circumstances that would result in an exception to this rule may only occur with approval from the league administrator.*) Players are not permitted to “play down”.

Coaches are not to recruit players from other teams. They are also not to add/drop players from their team without permission of the league administrator. All rosters are created by SAM, not coaches.

Unattached players who are placed by SAM league management on a team that charges additional coaching or training fees will not be charged the additional fees for the first season. If the player remains on the team in subsequent seasons, the family can be charged the additional fees.

Minimum Number of Players

Teams must be ready to play at the scheduled kickoff time. The minimum number of players required to play is listed below. If teams do not have the minimum number of players, they will be granted a ten (10) minute grace period. If the minimum number of players is not present after the grace period, that team will forfeit the match. (Players must be ON THE FIELD and ready to play.) For Under 8, Under 9, and Under 10 age groups, the minimum number of players to start the game shall be five (5). For all other age groups, the minimum number of players shall be seven (7). EXCEPTION: Under 6 and Under 7 teams play two side by side 4v4 games so eight players will be playing at any given point in time.

Carded or Unregistered Players on Teams

Players possessing a current player card for playing in a travel league (MSYSA, US Club Soccer, MSI Classic, NCSL, EDP or SAM SELECT) are considered travel/select players and are not permitted to play on SAM recreational teams. Teams using a carded or unregistered player will forfeit all games in which that player participated and will be ineligible for post season awards. Additionally, carded players will be removed from the roster.

In addition to forfeiting the game, other sanctions for the use of carded or illegal players may be the deduction of standings points, suspensions of team officials or removal of the team from the league.

Sanctioning – Players

If a player receives a red card, he/she may not participate in the team's next game but MAY attend the next game as long as he/she is not in uniform or other team wear. At the conclusion of the sit out game, the team must complete the Red Card Sit Out Form (see Appendix A) and submit to the league within 48 hours of the completion of the game. Failure to do so may result in a minimum of one additional sit out for the player or his/her coach.

Red cards can not be appealed.

Sanctioning – Coaches and/or Spectators

Coaches are responsible for their players and parents/spectators and may be issued a red or yellow card in the event the team's spectator behavior is unacceptable and can't be controlled in the eyes of the referee. Referees warn coaches by using a yellow card for the first warning and issue a red card if the warning is not adhered to. For egregious behavior, a referee can issue a red card without having issued a yellow card first. Failure to follow the referee's direction may result in forfeiture of the game and potential disciplinary action from SAM Soccer. If a coach receives a red card, they will be ejected from the game and will not be permitted to attend the next scheduled game at a minimum. Coaches who receive a red card must immediately leave the field and sit in their car and/or leave the complex and may not return to the field after the completion of the game.

Spectators might be shown red or yellow cards. In instances when they are asked to leave the field by a referee, it constitutes a red card offense regardless of whether one is actually shown. If a spectator is removed from the game, they must immediately leave the field and sit in their car and/or leave the complex and may not return to the field after the completion of the game. If a spectator receives a red card, they may not attend the team's next game.

If a coach or spectator receives a red card, he/she may not attend the team's next game. After the sit out game, the team must complete the Red Card Sit Out Form (see Appendix A) and submit to the league within 48 hours of the completion of the game. Failure to do so may result in a minimum of one additional sit out for the player or his/her coach. Sit Out Forms must be completed for coaches, players, or spectators if an ejection has occurred.

Red Cards can not be appealed.

Other than commending them for a play well done or congratulating them after a game, adults may not directly address players from the opposing team.

Coaches may not terminate a game by removing their players from the field prior to the end of the match **for any reason**. Doing so results in an automatic forfeit loss for the team that refuses to finish the game. Teams that refuse to finish a game are also ineligible for post season awards for that season of play and may be subject to further sanctions, possibly including banishment from the league.

Referees

Referees are scheduled for every game U8 and above. If the referee does not arrive at the scheduled start time, the game may be played with volunteer referees agreed upon by the coaches. If both teams agree to play with a volunteer referee, the result of the game will stand. Referee "no shows" must be reported to the SAM Soccer League Manager by the team coaches so appropriate action can be taken with the referee assigning association.

SAM Soccer fully endorses a zero-tolerance policy for referee abuse. Coaches will not dispute the ruling of a referee or assistant referee while the game is in progress and will instruct their team and spectators to refrain from doing so. In all cases, they will follow the directions of the referee. Clarification of a ruling may take place only with the referee's approval during an official break in play or when the referee indicates it is appropriate. Most U8 games and some U9 games are officiated by young referee candidates usually with an adult mentor observing close by. Coaches, players and spectators must show these young people the respect that they deserve.

In soccer, as in many other sports, referees are given discretionary leeway to make judgment calls. Players, coaches and spectators alike often misunderstand this liberty. Players and spectators sometimes question a referee's calls, particularly in a closely contested game, and feel strongly enough to lodge a complaint with SAM against the referee. The vast majority of these complaints involve judgment calls, in which the referee's opinion or judgment prevails. **Therefore, judgment calls may not be appealed.** Some examples of judgment calls include the following situations: whether a ball is in play or out-of-bounds; whether a foul occurred; whether or not a player was offside. On-field criticism does not set a good example for players. It also discourages and demoralizes referees. On the other hand, please notify the SAM office about those situations in which a referee's behavior is inappropriate during play. Inappropriate behavior may include the use of abusive language, over-familiarity with players or inappropriate physical contact with players. An appeal of a referee's ruling may be made only when the situation involves the misapplication of a rule.

Games & Practices

Teams cannot play their games or hold a practice unless a "SAM-approved" coach or assistant coach is present. "SAM-approved" coaches, assistant coaches and volunteers **MUST** have completed a background check, concussion protocol, and Safe Sport certification by the no later than two weeks prior to opening weekend. All team activities must be supervised by at least two adults.

Benches & Spectators

Only players/coaches may occupy the provided benches.

No coaches or spectators are allowed on the field or behind the goal line during the game with the exception of when injuries occur and the referee has given permission. Coaches must remain between the top of the penalty areas while on the sidelines. Coaches and spectators must stay on their team's half of the field until the completion of the game. Coaches cannot cross the half line to coach their team even when the teams have switched sides.

All spectators must stand/sit completely off the field and, on natural grass fields, in the taller grass to limit damage to the fields. For full-sided games and small sided games on synthetic fields, spectators are to be on opposite side of the field from the players/coaches. For small-sided games on natural grass fields, spectators must sit behind the teams.

Throw-Ins

U6/U7 teams should not make throw-ins and should restart play by kicking the ball in,. In U8 and above age groups, throw-ins will be used. The referee will make the determination if the throw-in is legal. Both feet must be on the ground and the ball must be thrown from behind the head with both hands.

Goal Kicks and Build Out Lines (U8-U10)

For U6 and U7 games, there are no goal kicks. For U8, U9 and U10 games, all players must stand behind the build out line when goalkeeper distributes the ball. The build out lines allow for goalkeepers to pass, throw or roll the ball out from the defensive third of the field to his/her teammate. **NO PUNTING OR DROP KICKS ARE ALLOWED.** The opponent must retreat back behind the build out line. Once the ball leaves the goalkeepers hands, the opponent may then pressure the ball once again. Play resumes as normal. Build out lines will be used for the U8, U9, and U10 divisions.

PLAYERS CANNOT BE PENALIZED FOR AN OFFSIDE OFFENSE BETWEEN THE HALFWAY LINE AND THE BUILD OUT LINE, PLAYERS CAN BE PENALIZED FOR AN OFFSIDE OFFENSE BETWEEN THE BUILD OUT LINE AND THE GOAL LINE

Heading

Heading is not allowed for players playing in the 11U and below age groups. In adherence to the new US Soccer requirements, referees have been instructed by U.S. Soccer of the following:

When a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick (IFK) should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. In instances when age groups are combined, the prevailing rules will be the rules of the older age group.

Lopsided Rule

When a team reaches a five goal (5) lead the losing team may add an extra player if the coach chooses to do so. When the lead drops below five goals (5), the losing team must remove the extra player. When asking to add a player, the losing coach must direct the request to the referee.

Injuries

On all game dates, an athletic trainer is on site and available. Please call the athletic trainer directly to help assist with any injuries. The number is 240-801-2006

Noise Makers

Noise makers are not allowed at games.

Lightning Detection and How It Works

The Maryland SoccerPlex is equipped with a lightning detection system. The purpose of this system is to protect patrons using the facility when dangerous storms pass through.

Sensors have been installed on the roof of the Adventist HealthCare Fieldhouse, Splash Park and the Mini Golf building. When dangerous conditions exist, the following steps will take place:

- Horns on the roof will sound for 15 seconds
- The 15-second blast indicates ALL patrons must immediately go to their cars
- This 15-second horn will blast when dangerous conditions have been identified, even if you do not see lightning, do not ignore this signal
- When dangerous conditions no longer exist, the horns will blast three (3) shorter blasts.

What to do When the Lightning Alarm Sounds

- Immediately leave the field and go to the nearest shelter.
- DO NOT LEAVE THE COMPLEX
- Wait for the all clear signal (3 blasts of the horn)
- Once the all clear signal sounds, go back to the field and resume the match where you left off

The Maryland SoccerPlex Operations staff continually stays up to date with weather forecasts and radar information. If it appears that the weather will not clear and games cannot resume, the facility will close. Closure information will be posted on the SAM homepage, www.samsoccer.org and the SoccerPlex Weather Hotline, 301-528-1497.

Lightning Delay Policy

The following will apply to SAM Soccer games in the event of a lightning delay.

If the game has reached halftime at the time of the delay:

- If a lightning delay occurs with 15 minutes or less remaining in the game, the game is terminated and the score at the time of termination will be the final score.
- If a delay or a combination of multiple delays reaches 30 minutes of total delay time, the game is terminated.

The score at the time of the termination will be the final score. NO GAME CAN BE PLAYED BEYOND THE SCHEDULED START TIME OF THE FOLLOWING GAME. THE REFEREE WILL STOP THE GAME AT THAT TIME AND THE SCORE AT THAT TIME WILL BE RECORDED AS THE FINAL SCORE. The referee, in collaboration with team management, will determine the length of lightning delays.

If the game has not yet reached halftime at the time of the delay:

- The delay or combination of delays has not reached 30 minutes; the game will continue. Teams must wait until the “all clear” horn (three short blasts) has sounded to resume play. The game will continue to completion assuming no further delays are sounded. NO GAME CAN BE PLAYED BEYOND THE SCHEDULED START TIME OF THE FOLLOWING GAME. THE REFEREE WILL STOP THE GAME AT THAT TIME AND THE SCORE AT THAT TIME WILL BE RECORDED AS THE FINAL SCORE. The referee, in collaboration with team management, will determine the length of lightning delays.

- If a delay or a combination of multiple delays reaches 30 minutes of total delay time, the game is terminated. Any game terminated prior to halftime will be rescheduled to a later date.

Program Summary By Age Group

NOTE: Where age divisions are combined, the rules of the older age division will be applied. (For example, a combined U11/12 age division will follow the U12 rules.)

U6 & U7: Play at this level is very instructional. Emphasis is placed on developing basic skills including running, balance, positioning, rules, and ball control. Ball control skills include dribbling, passing and shooting with an emphasis on using both feet. The reduced number of players will allow for better instruction. Scores and standings are not kept and participation awards are given to all players.

- Two side by side games will be played with each team putting 4 players on each of the two fields.
- The number of players on the field per team is four (4). (Adjustments can be made if a team is short players.)
- Roster maximum is twelve (12) players.
- Games consist of eight (8) minute quarters with three (3) minute breaks between quarters and a five (5) minute break at half time.
- There are no slide tackles; off sides and direct kicks.
- Substitutions are “on-the-fly” and are not to disrupt the flow of the game (no time outs).
- Ball size #3.
- No Heading
- U6/U7 games will use the “new ball” method of restarts. For information, please [CLICK HERE](#).

U8, U9 & U10: Play at this level continues to be developmental with the addition of referees in preparation for the next level. Comfort using all parts of both feet will be developed. Additional skills of shielding, turning, attacking, and play formation will also be taught. As appropriate, more advanced skills can be introduced. Scores and standings are maintained AND only champions will receive trophies. U8 players receive participation medals only.

- The number of players on the field per team is seven (7). Minimum number of players to start game is five (5).
- Roster maximum is twelve (12) for U8 and U9 and thirteen (13) for U10.
- Game consists of two (2) twenty-five (25) minute halves and a ten (10) minute break at half time.
- The offside rule is enforced.
- Substitutions are following FIFA guidelines; enter at middle of field at stop of play.
- There will be build out lines.

- There are **no slide tackles**.
- A penal or major foul results in a direct kick (or penalty kick if foul is committed within the penalty box).
- The winning team coach/manager (listed first on the schedule) must report scores to SAM Soccer by emailing scores@samsoccer.org or updating the score from their League Apps dashboard. **Scores must be reported by noon on the Monday following the game (U9 and U10 only).**
- NO U8 SCORES ARE KEPT.
- Ball size: #4.
- No Heading

U11 & U12: Play at this level continues to be instructional, and it prepares players for the full game. Comfort using all parts of both feet will be developed. Additional skills of shielding, turning, attacking, and play formation will also be taught. As appropriate, more advanced skills can be introduced. Scores and standings *are* maintained and awards are given to division champions only.

- The number of players on the field per team is nine (9). The minimum number to start the game is seven (7).
- Roster maximum is fourteen (14) players.
- Game consists of two (2) thirty (30) minute halves and a ten (10) minute break at half time.
- The offside rule is enforced.
- Substitutions are following FIFA guidelines; enter at middle of field at stop of play.
- No heading at U11.
- There are **no slide tackles**.
- A penal or major foul results in a direct kick (or penalty kick if foul is committed within the penalty box).
- The HOME team coach/manager (listed first on the schedule) must report scores to SAM Soccer by emailing scores@samsoccer.org or updating the score from their League Apps dashboard.. **Scores must be reported by noon on the Monday following the game.**
- Ball size: #4.

U13 & U14: Play at this level is more competitive, 11 v 11 and is governed by FIFA rules with SAM modifications. Scores and standings *are* maintained and awards are given to the first-place team.

- The number of players on the field per team is eleven (11).
- The minimum number of players to start a match is seven (7).
- Roster maximum is eighteen (18).
- Substitutions follow FIFA guidelines (enter at middle of field when summoned by referee at stoppage of play.)
- Slide tackling is allowed.
- Game length is thirty five (35) minute halves and a ten (10) minute break at halftime.
- Ball size: #5
- Scores and standings *are* maintained and awards are given to the first-place team.
- The HOME team coach (listed first on the schedule) must report scores to SAM Soccer by emailing scores@samsoccer.org or updating the score from their League Apps dashboard.. **Scores must be reported by noon on the Monday following the game.**

U15 & HS: Play at this level is at the highest competitive level governed by FIFA rules with SAM modifications. Scores and standings *are* maintained and awards are given to the first-place team.

- The number of players on the field is eleven (11).
- The minimum number of players to start a match is seven (7).
- Roster maximum is twenty two (22).
- Substitutions are following FIFA guidelines; enter at middle of field at stop of play.
- Slide tackling is allowed.
- Games consist of two forty (40) minute halves with a ten (10) minute halftime.
- Ball size: #5

- Players who are 19 years old, or older, as of July 31 of the current seasonal year are ineligible. ***Players who are not in high school are ineligible.***
- The HOME team coach (listed first on the schedule) must report scores to SAM Soccer by emailing scores@samsoccer.org or updating the score from their League Apps dashboard.. **Scores must be reported by noon on the Monday following the game.**

End of Season Awards

Winners of divisions 9U and older win championship trophies or medals. All 7U and 8U players win participation awards.

Division Champions and Playoffs

Depending on the number of teams in the divisions, champions are determined in three different ways:

- Your team wins the league with the most standings points after playing 8 games. See below for tiebreaker information. (This is for divisions of five, nine, ten, eleven or twelve teams.)
- Your team wins the league via seed 1 vs seed 2. (Points are not a factor once this seeded game occurs), The winner of the final game is the champion regardless of accumulated points. This game must end with a winning team. See below for overtime and tiebreaker information. (This is for divisions of six or eight teams.)
- Your team wins the final game between semifinal winners. (This is for 7 team divisions only.)

Standard Playoff Instructions:

Championship and final games cannot end in a tie. If game ends in tie, the following format will be used to break the tie:

1. Teams shall play one (1), five (5) minute overtime with Golden Goal IN effect.
2. If the score is still tied after five (5) minutes, a second, five (5) minute overtime will be played with Golden Goal IN effect.
3. Teams shall have a two (2) minute break between periods. If still tied after the second overtime period, Penalty Kicks will be taken.
4. Each team shall take five (5) Penalty Kicks (teams will alternate kickers).
5. If after five (5) kicks the score is still tied, teams will continue with Golden Goal Penalty Kicks until a winner is decided.

Tie-Breaking Criteria (Used to determine winners of divisions not playing championship games or finals. This also determines the seeding for playoff games.

1. Head to head competition (only used for ties between two teams)
2. Most wins
3. Bonus points earned (Bonus points are awarded to winning teams, up to a maximum of three (3), based on goal differential and used only for the purposes of breaking ties. (A team winning 3-0 or 6-2 would receive three (3) points. A team winning 3-1 would receive two (2) bonus points. No bonus points are earned for a tie or loss.)
4. Least goals allowed
5. Most shutout wins
6. Flip of a coin (only if tie cannot be broken using above steps)

In the event of a tie among more than two (2) teams, once a tie is broken by the above system, and if ties among remaining teams still exist, those ties are broken by starting again at the top of the tie-breaking system (start at step 1 if two teams are still tied. Start at Step 2 if more than two teams are still tied).

Maryland SoccerPlex Rules & Conduct Policy

The Maryland SoccerPlex & Adventist HealthCare Fieldhouse is a state-of-the art multi-sport athletic facility and we expect all players, coaches and visitors to treat it with respect. **This is your home as much as ours.** Any person(s) found defacing, destroying or damaging Maryland SoccerPlex & Adventist HealthCare Fieldhouse property will be asked to leave immediately. They will be suspended from further play if circumstances warrant, without a refund. The Maryland SoccerPlex, Adventist HealthCare Fieldhouse and SAM Soccer also reserve the right to require any player, coach, team, or visitor who engages in violent, abusive, threatening or offensive conduct to leave the premises. They will be suspended from further play if circumstances warrant, without refund. This type of behavior will NOT be tolerated.

For Natural Grass Fields:

1. No warming up in the goal area.
2. No warming up or playing on closed fields.
3. Park only in designated spaces.
4. Deposit all trash in garbage cans provided (and recycling in the blue recycling cans).
5. **NO PETS** allowed.
6. All tobacco products prohibited.
7. No alcohol.

For Synthetic Turf Fields:

1. No spitting on fields.
2. No warming up or playing on closed fields.
3. All food is prohibited.
4. Park only in designated spaces.
5. Deposit all trash in garbage cans provided.
6. No gum chewing.
7. All tobacco products prohibited.
8. No alcohol.
9. **NO PETS** allowed.
10. No tents with spikes.

SAM Soccer Code of Conduct

SAM Soccer is an enjoyable experience for all members of the community. We as an organization want you and others to follow our guidelines and procedures.

1. I will remember that children participate to have fun.
2. I will remember the game is for my child/children and not for me.
3. I will learn the rules of the game and the policies of the league.
4. I (and my guests) will be role model (s) for my child and show sportsmanship.
5. I promise to encourage my child and others in a positive manner.
6. I will show respect to the referees, the other team and parents before, during and after the game.
7. I will not use bad or inappropriate language, including racial slurs and/or abusive language.
8. I will teach my child to play by the rules and not engage in any unsportsmanlike conduct.
9. I will teach my child that doing his/her best is more important than winning.

10. I will praise my child for effort and not ridicule or yell from the sideline or in the car on the way home.
11. I will refrain from coaching my child (or others) from the sidelines unless as a designated coach.
12. I understand that, if a game is terminated as the result of misbehavior on a team, that game will be deemed a forfeit loss.

Finally, I also agree by participating in SAM that if I fail to abide by these aforementioned rules and guidelines, I will be subject to disciplinary action that will be decided upon by the SAM management team.

Appendix A



SAM Soccer Sit Out Form

For each sit out required of a player or coach, the team coach or manager must print this form, fill in the information requested, present it to the opposing coach or manager for his/her signature at the following game, and mail, email, fax or deliver it to the SAM office within 48 hours of the completion of the game. Failure to submit a sit-out form on time may result in referral to the SAM League for possible further action.

This is to certify the following sit-out:

Red-Carded Player/Coach/Spectator Name _____

Team _____

Rec or Select (circle)

Age Group _____

Jersey Number (player) _____

Date sit-out served _____

This sit-out is in response to: (circle one only)

1. Red Card Ejection on _____ (date) at _____ (field)

2. League Rules & Discipline Action

Signature of Sit Out Team Coach/Manager

Printed Name

Signature of Opposing Team Coach/Manager

Printed Name

Note: Do not give this form to the referee. Please retain a copy and return to SAM within 48 hours of the sit-out. Form can be emailed to msfforms@mdsoccerplex.org or faxed to 301.528.1480.