

The Massachusetts Soccer, Inc (MSI) Rules for Outdoor Adult Soccer Leagues are governed by FIFA Laws, modified for outdoor play. The following rules shall precede FIFA Laws if conflict with said rules should arise.

PRIOR TO THE START OF THE SEASON

Payment: All teams must pay a \$120.00 non-refundable deposit when registering to be considered in the league and work on their schedule. Any team missing the deadline for deposit will be removed from the league and the spot will be offered to a different team. If you are a team captain or manager, your team fee can be applied to your individual player fee registration. If a coach, you can be refunded once your team reaches 8 players.

In addition, to be scheduled for the upcoming session, you must have a minimum of 7 players registered and paid for your team. In an event where MSI needs to refund your players and team registration, reasons for a refund includes and are not limited to division placement disagreement, scheduling disagreement, or lack of a minimum of 8 players to fill a team.

Schedule Request: A team can place a schedule request before the deadline for each session. However, this request is not 100% guaranteed. Note that the deadline for deposit and schedule requests is the same and all schedule requests after the deadline will be discarded.

Divisions and Brackets: Every team can request the division or bracket which they consider fit best for their skill level. However, Divisions and brackets will be made based on the roster, past records (including behavior records) and recent standings. 3

ROSTERS

A new roster is required for each session for all adult leagues. A roster must be in before the season starts or the team will not be permitted to play. A roster generated by SPORTS NINJA will be the roster used for the games. See below a few considerations about rosters:

- A maximum of 15 players are permitted on the roster.
- In addition to the players a maximum of 1 additional adult (coach or otherwise) is permitted on the player's bench and no coaching is permitted from the opposite touchline.
- At least 7 players must be rostered for the first game.
- No individual will be allowed to participate in the league unless he has been properly registered in the roster. No guest players will be allowed.
- A registered player may play in more than one Adult League (Men's Open (18+), 30+, 40+, 50+, Coed). However, a player may not play on multiple teams in the same division or bracket.
- Check-in is required prior to every game, for every team and every player. Failing to check-in will automatically record the game as a forfeit for the team failing to do so even if the player is registered.

- When checking in, please provide your name and the name of your team to the field supervisor on site.
- The administration will freeze rosters at kickoff of the team's 3rd. match. No exceptions. Any team using an illegal player will at a minimum, forfeit the game the player participated in, and the team plays down one player for the duration of the game.
- Protests of illegal players should be made prior to the start of the game (to the referee or field Supervisor).
Illegal/Ineligible players include:
 - Player(s) not listed on the official roster or double rostered in the same division/bracket.
 - Player(s) not meeting the minimum age requirement of the program or not checked in.
 - Player(s) serving a RED CARD suspension.
- If a team is found using Illegal/Ineligible players, the team will forfeit the game automatically.

EQUIPMENT

Ball: Size 5 soccer ball required. Must be provided by the HOME TEAM for each game.

Footwear: Standard molded cleats, turf shoes and flats are the only acceptable footwear.

Shin Guards: Players MAY NOT participate WITHOUT shin guards.

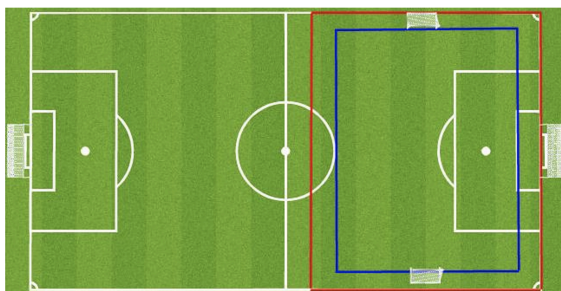
Uniforms: A team can use their own set of jerseys, but they must all wear the same color of jerseys and must have numbers on the back. Home team changes if there are conflicts

Jewelry: Except for wedding bands, no jewelry (necklaces, piercings, earrings, bracelets, soft wristbands, hair bands etc.) are permitted to be worn on the field. Disciplinary action shall be taken against all offenders.

Other: Braces, splints, soft casts etc. must be approved by the referee prior to the start of the game. The referee has final approval of all safety equipment worn during the game, provided it is not a danger to themselves or others.

FIELD DIMENSIONS

The Adult Soccer League follows FIFA rules as modified for small-sided play. All field sizes are within regulation boundaries put forth by US Soccer (Diagram below and Field size may vary).



DURING THE GAME

Number of players required on the field per program:

Men's Open (18+), Men's 30+ : 7v7 format.

- Maximum: 6 field players + 1 goalkeeper
- Minimum: 5 players must begin, continue, and conclude each match

Men's 40+, Men's 50+, Coed Over 40+ : 8v8 format.

- Maximum: 7 field players + 1 goalkeeper
- Minimum: 6 players must begin, continue, and conclude each match
- Women can be 35 years old to play Coed 40+

Coed Open (18+), Coed Over 30+ : 7v7 format.

- Maximum: 6 field players + 1 goalkeeper
- Minimum: 5 players must begin, continue, and conclude a match. **A minimum of 2 females (excluding goalkeeper) on the field at all times. A team may begin, continue, and conclude a match with 1 male or female but the team must play with 4 field players + 1 goalkeeper.**
- Women can be 25 years old to play Coed 30+

Team Benches: Only rostered players and 1 coach per team are allowed on the benches. No spectators are allowed on the team's benches. If a team is failing to keep their benches as advised, the following protocol will apply:

1. First time infraction: Team captain will serve a 1 game suspension.
2. Second time infraction: Team will forfeit the game.
3. Third time infraction: Team will forfeit the game + Won't be eligible for playoffs.

Duration of Play: There are two 25-minute halves with a 2-minute halftime. (No stoppage or time added to regulation games). The official will start the game clock as scheduled, but if either team has fewer than the minimum number of players a **five (5) minute grace period** will be allowed to produce the minimum required. (The clock runs during the grace period and time is not added to the end of the game.) If a team does not have the minimum number of players required after the grace period, a forfeit shall be awarded to the opposing team, with the resulting score registered as a 3-0 result.

Terminated Games: If the official must terminate a game due to weather or other necessary circumstances, the following rules shall apply:

- If the game is terminated after the first half has been completed, the game will be considered a complete game and the score at the time the game is terminated will stand.
- If the game is terminated prior to the first half ending, the game will be rescheduled by the MSI staff later and the score will revert to 0-0.

Inclement Weather Protocol: The purpose of this is to protect patrons using the facility when under the threat of dangerous storms. Onsite staff and referees will make safety decisions. When a lightning strike occurs within ten (10) miles of the facility, the following protocol will apply:

1. When there has been no lightning strike within ten (10) miles for a continuous 15-minute period, we can resume play.

2. You may return to the field after the director onsite allows it.

Forfeited Games: Forfeited games will be recorded as 3-0 scores and 3 points in the standings for the non-forfeiting team. A team that does not show up to a game or does not have the minimum number of players after the 5-minute grace period forfeits the game. In addition, any team walking off the field before the end of either half to protest a referee's decision or MSI policies will forfeit the game.

- If a team is not able to play a scheduled game, the team captain or manager must send a written notification to the administration before 1 pm on the game's date. Failing to do so and not show up to the game, will record the game as a 3-0 loss for the forfeiting team, in addition to 1 point loss in the standings and the team **may not be eligible for playoffs**.
 - a. In the case a team reaches enough points to qualify for playoffs during the regular season phase but is ineligible due to forfeiting without notification or walking off the field to protest a referee's decision, the immediate next team with 7 most points in the standings will take its place in the playoffs.
However, all teams will be guaranteed 8 games as agreed.
- If a team is not able to play a scheduled game and notify the administration before 1 pm on the game's date, the game will be recorded as a 3-0 loss for the forfeiting team, but the mentioned team may be eligible for playoffs and no additional points will be deducted in the standings.
- If a team notifies about a forfeiture, the administration will notify the opposing team about the status of the game, and the opposing team won't be required to show up to the field. However, the opposing team still can use the field space for training.

Reschedule Request: If a team can't play a scheduled game, they can ask for a reschedule. These requests must be notified to the administration by email only 5 business days prior to the game. Every rescheduling request within less than 5 business days will be discarded. In the event a reschedule request is successfully placed the following protocol will apply:

1. A notification email from the administration to both team captains with available dates and hours of the potentially rescheduled game.
2. Confirmation email from both team captains in which they agree to a new date and hour offered by the administration. **(This step must be completed in no less than 24 hours since confirmation. Otherwise, the reschedule request will be discarded).**
3. A notification email from the administration to both team captains confirming the game has been rescheduled and system updated.

Even if the rescheduling request has been placed correctly, there's not a 100% guarantee of the rescheduling taking place. This may vary depending on fields, referees and field supervisor availability.

Kickoff: The ball may be played in any direction on the first touch. A goal can be scored on the first touch.

Substitutions: Unlimited “on the fly” substitutions. Must occur at the halfway line and must not interfere with the flow of play. An indirect free kick shall be awarded for any improper substitution. Improper substitutions may result in a YELLOW CARD.

Offsides: There is NO offside in our outdoor league.

Slide Tackling: Slide tackling an opponent is not permitted under any circumstance. (See rule for goalkeepers.) The minimum penalty will be a direct free kick awarded to the opposing team. Additional disciplinary action (including but not limited to a RED CARD and game suspension) may result in intentional, repeated, or violent slide tackling.

Restart Rules:

- The “6 Second Rule”: A restart must occur within 6 seconds of placing the ball for a free kick, corner kick, throw-in, or goal kick. Failure to do so will result in a caution and an indirect free kick for the opposing team at the spot, or if the spot inside the penalty area, immediately outside the penalty area.
- The “5 Yard Rule”: Opposing players must give five yards on all direct kicks, indirect kicks, and corner kicks. Failure to do so may result in a re- kick. **A YELLOW CARD** may be awarded upon Referee’s discretion.

Specific Rules for Goalkeepers:

- Punts and drop kicks are **not permitted**. The ball must be distributed by a throw, normal place kick or kick from a dribble.
- Goalkeepers must release the ball within 6 seconds after gaining possession and returning to their feet.
- Goalkeeper may NOT use his/her hands if the ball is intentionally passed (with their feet) to him by his own teammate.
- Failure to abide by the above mentioned rules will result in an indirect free kick immediately outside the penalty area.
- Keepers may use unlimited steps to bring the ball to the boundary of the penalty area.
- Keepers are permitted to make a sliding save or slide tackle within the penalty area.

Injuries: Any player who is bleeding must leave the field of play immediately. Time will not be stopped for injuries. However, the game will be stopped to allow the injured player to leave the playing field safely while time moves on. Use common sense to determine the gravity of an injury, notify our onsite staff about the injury to provide any assistance possible. In case an injured player is unconscious or not breathing, please call 911 as soon as possible and notify our onsite staff to provide any assistance needed.

Ball out of play: If the WHOLE ball has crossed the goal line or touchline, whether in the air or on the ground, the restart is a goal kick, corner kick or throw- in.

Penalty Kicks: Players taking penalty kicks are limited to the players on the field as time expires. The kicker is not limited to a one-step approach but must wait for the referee to blow the whistle to approach the kick.

POINTS SYSTEM AND PLAYOFFS

Points System: Three (3) points for a win, One (1) point for a tie, and Zero (0) points for a loss. There is no overtime in any MSI adult soccer games. Games tied at the end of regular time are recorded as ties, except for playoffs.

League formats and Playoffs: The Adult Soccer League has multiple league formats and playoffs formats based on the number of teams on each bracket/division. See below the different formats offered that could determine the championship winner of each division:

- **Most points format:** On this format the 1st team listed in the standings with most points at the conclusion of the 8th game will be the championship winner.
- **5 regular season + 1 playoffs format:** On this format the 4 top teams in the standings with most points at the conclusion of the 6th game, will play the playoffs (Semifinals and Final). All the rest of the teams will play 2 consolation games.

Note that all teams will play seven (7) games guaranteed.

Tiebreaker: Ties for Playoff position and for Playoff participation will be broken down utilizing the criteria set forth below:

1. Head-to-Head result
2. Least amount of goals against in the season
3. Most amount of goals scored in the season
4. Lowest number of forfeits

No ties during Playoffs: Playoff games must result in a winner. In the event of a tie at the end of regular time in playoffs, there is NO OVERTIME. Teams go directly to penalty kicks. Three kickers from each team will be chosen from the players on the field at the end of regulation time. If still tied after 3 kicks, sudden death penalty kicks will commence. If there is still a tie and no more time to play, a representative from both teams can agree to a coin-flip to be conducted by the referee or a MSI staff to break the tie.

CONDUCT POLICY

Sportsmanship: Individuals are expected to play under control and within the rules of the game, and to the best of their ability will avoid causing injury to themselves and others using the facility.

Cards: All cards given by referees are final and are not subject to protest.

Yellow Card: Any player receiving a YELLOW CARD must return to their bench with a replacement for 2 minutes. A yellow card can be issued to those players on the field or those players on the bench.

Red Card: A RED CARD will result in the ejection of the player for the duration of the match without replacement.

This means the team receiving the red card will play with 1 player down the rest of the game. A RED CARD can be issued to those on the field and those on the bench. Additionally:

- The player receiving the RED CARD **must leave the playing area** and go to the parking lot, accompanied by a team representative when possible.
- Failure to leave the playing area and go to the parking lot may result in the forfeiture of the match for the player's team, suspension of the coach or team representative, or any other disciplinary action.

- In the event of a coach or bench players receiving a RED CARD, the team will play a man down for the remainder of the match and the coach/bench player will be asked to leave the playing area and go to the parking lot.
- If a team has only four (4) or fewer players total for all divisions, and five (5) total for Men's 40+ and 50+ divisions, the game will be forfeited, and the game will be recorded as a 3-0 loss for the forfeiting team. However, both team captains can agree to continue playing until completing the time of the regular game a friendly match.

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

THE MSI HAS A “ZERO TOLERANCE” POLICY TOWARDS FIGHTING, OTHER VIOLENT PHYSICAL CONDUCT INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO SPITTING, PUSHING, STRIKING, KICKING, AND WRESTLING (“VIOLENT PHYSICAL CONDUCT). ADDITIONALLY, WE HAVE A “ZERO” TOLERANCE POLICY TOWARDS ABUSIVE OR THREATENING LANGUAGE, INCLUDING RACIAL SLURS, TO OTHER PLAYERS, COACHES, REFEREES AND SPECTATORS. ANY PLAYER FOUND ENGAGING IN VIOLENT PHYSICAL CONDUCT OR ABUSIVE /THREATENING LANGUAGE (AND, IN CERTAIN CASES, THE PLAYER’S TEAM) WILL BE DISCIPLINED PURSUANT TO THE RULES BELOW AND MAY FACE CIVIL OR CRIMINAL CHARGES.

COACH/TEAM REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of each player and the coach/team representative to control the conduct of the players on their team and to be aware of the status of their player's infractions. Failure to comply may result in further disciplinary measures that may include suspension of the team or the coach/team representative and forfeiture of games played in. This includes the use of illegal players – those not registered properly on the team roster or not current with facility registration fees.

In addition, any Coach/Team representatives are responsible for any player leaving the bench area and entering the field of play during a fight.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

The MSI will review incidents requiring possible disciplinary action within 5 business days of the incident and issue any of the following disciplinary measures in its sole and absolute discretion:

- Player suspension for a minimum of 1 or more games.
- Player suspension from other MSI activities.
- Player suspension for 1 or more years from MSI soccer activities and/or other MSI activities.
- Player's team forfeit 1 or more games.
- The player's team excluded from Playoffs.
- The player's team is suspended for the remainder of the season and excluded from additional seasons, without refund.

- Player or Player's team is permanently excluded from MSI soccer activities and/or other MSI activities, without refund.
- The MSI will review and consider, in its sole and absolute discretion, any written statement in the form of a letter or email from the manager, coach or representative of the offending player's team, if received within 24 hours of the incident giving rise to the possible disciplinary action and if accompanied with a \$50 non-refundable check made out to the MSI. Only Reviews regarding violations of the laws of the game or these rules will be permitted.

Minimum Disciplinary Procedure: The MSI has established minimum disciplinary actions related to the following offenses. Nothing shall prevent the MSI from increasing the minimum disciplinary actions in their sole and absolute discretion.

- **Red Card:** Any player receiving a RED CARD shall be suspended for a minimum of 1 game plus suspended from all other MSI activities (including games in other leagues) until that 1 game suspension has been served.
- **3 Yellow Cards:** Any player receiving 3 YELLOW CARDS in different games of a session will be suspended for a minimum of 1 game. Once the suspension has been served, the YELLOW CARD count for that player resets to 0.
- **Two Suspensions:** Any player that receives a second suspension in any session, or separate sessions during the year, (i.e. 2 RED CARDS, 1 RED CARD + 3 YELLOW CARDS, etc.) may be suspended from all MSI activities for 1 session or more.

Violent Physical Conduct: Any player that engages in Violent Physical Conduct will be suspended at a minimum from all MSI adult soccer activities for 1 session or more from the date of the incident. In addition, any team that accrues a second incident of Violent Physical Conduct during a session will be suspended at a minimum from the current session without refund and may also face exclusion from future sessions.

Any incident that involves Violent Physical Conduct from more than 1 player on a team (i.e. player leaving the bench area to join a fight on the field, will result in the team receiving a suspension from MSI adult soccer activities for a minimum of 1 year from the date of incident, without refund.

Threatening other participants: Any player, manager, or coach who verbally threatens another player, coach, official, spectator, or MSI staff will be suspended from all MSI activities (including soccer) for a minimum of 1 year from the date of incident.

Verbal Abuse of an official: Any player, manager, or coach who approaches an official or other MSI staff with abusive language, or a harsh or threatening tone before, during or after the conclusion of a league game, shall be suspended for a minimum of 1 game.

Improperly Entering the field of Play: If any player, manager, coach, or spectator enters the field of play during a game (except when substituting or when expressly permitted by the official), the official may terminate the game and/or declare a forfeit against the offending team.

Spitting: Any player, manager, coach, or spectator who spits on an opponent, teammate, official, and/or a member of the MSI staff will be ejected from the game, asked to leave the playing area and go to the parking lot, and will receive a 1 year suspension from any MSI activities.

The Adult Soccer League has adopted the 531-9 policy for referee abuse prevention, effective March 2025.



PENALTY OVERVIEW

The Penalties Matrix defines consequences associated with physical and non-physical offenses against Referees.

NON-PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

NON-PHYSICAL*	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Insulting, Belittling, Insinuating or Taunting Behavior Undermining Referee Authority	2	
Harassment, Intimidation, Retaliation, Abusive, or Threatening (Non Physical) Language	4	
Aggression, Attacking, Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing or Threatening (Physical / Violence) Language	6	6 - 24 Months
Offensive or Discriminatory Act	10	12 - 24 Months

PHYSICAL OFFENSES of gross misconduct, abuse, and / or assault

PHYSICAL*	MIN. GAMES	TIME
Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching	3	1 - 6 Months
Pushing, Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage	10	6 - 24 Months
Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spiting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing or Use of Object or Any Part of Body (Forearm, Knee, Head) in a Striking Manner		12 Months - Lifetime

KEY PENALTY FACTORS

- Single offenses are at **minimum the prescribed game penalty or time penalty** for non red zone offenses
- Penalties can be **both game and time depending on severity** / circumstances
- Second time offenders receive **double punishment**
- Third time offenders receive a **lifetime ban**
- More than one offense at the same time is **at least the punishment for the most serious offense**
- Offenses against minors are automatically subject to a **“minor multiplier” resulting in triple punishment**
- **One offense warning per league** to be managed by states and leagues collaboratively
- Game consequences are **inclusive of 1 game penalty for any red cards given**
- Optionality for **50% penalty for first offense from a minor**

Please follow your current reporting structure – updated reporting procedure will be a part of Phase 3.

(*) *Disclaimer: These are only a few examples of abuse – other actions or statements may also fall into this category.*