

Midlothian Soccer Association

SOCCKER GUIDELINES, RULES & REGULATIONS



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- 1 Introduction
 - 1.1 MSA Contact Information
- 2 Definitions
- 3 References
- 4 General Guidelines
 - 4.1 Seasons
 - 4.1.1 Fall Season
 - 4.1.2 Spring Season
 - 4.1.3 Games per Season
 - 4.2 Player Registration
 - 4.2.1 Geographical Requirements
 - 4.2.2 Age Eligibility
 - 4.2.3 Registration Costs
 - 4.2.4 Regular Registration
 - 4.2.5 Supplemental Registration (Wait List)
 - 4.2.6 Requesting Team Re-Assignment
 - 4.2.7 Special Requests for Registration
 - 4.2.8 Player Registration Restrictions
 - 4.3 Head Coach, Assistant Coach and Manager Registration
 - 4.3.1 Geographical Requirements
 - 4.3.2 Age Eligibility
 - 4.3.3 Background Checks
 - 4.3.4 Registration Costs
 - 4.3.5 Head Coach Registration Dates
 - 4.4 Season Schedule
 - 4.4.1 Schedule Format
 - 4.4.2 Schedule Conflict Policy
 - 4.4.3 Cancellations and Reschedule Policy
 - 4.4.4 Cancellation Reschedule Posting
 - 4.5 Practice Fields
 - 4.5.1 Practice Field Reservation
 - 4.5.2 Practice Areas
 - 4.5.3 Practice Field Conditions
 - 4.5.4 Practice Rules/Limitations
 - 4.6 Team Formation Procedures
 - 4.6.1 Draft Process
 - 4.7 Concussion Initiative
 - 4.8 NTSSA Tournaments
 - 4.9 Volunteer Registration
 - 4.10 MSA Soccer Board Meeting and Voting criteria
- 5 Rules & Regulations
 - 5.1 Adoption of the NTSSA Rule Book
 - 5.2 Playing rules
 - 5.2.1 Law 1 – Field of Play
 - 5.2.2 Law 2 – The Ball
 - 5.2.3 Law 3 – The Number of Players, Substitution and Playing Time
 - 5.2.4 Law 4 – Player’s Equipment
 - 5.2.5 Law 5 – The Referee
 - 5.2.6 Law 6 – The Assistant Referee
 - 5.2.7 Law 7 – The Duration of the Game
 - 5.2.8 Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play
 - 5.2.9 Law 9 – The Ball In And Out Of Play
 - 5.2.10 Law 11 – Offside
 - 5.2.11 Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct
 - 5.2.12 Law 13 – Free Kicks
 - 5.2.13 Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

- 5.2.14 Law 15 – The Throw-In
- 5.2.15 Law 16 – The Goal Kick
- 5.2.16 Law 17 – The Corner Kick
- 5.2.17 Additional Build Out Line Rules
- 5.3 Midlothian Soccer Association Modified Playing Rules
 - 5.3.1 Small Sided Games Field of Play
 - 5.3.2 Scoring Limitation and Outcome of match
- 5.4 Recreational Division
 - 5.4.1 Leagues
 - 5.4.2 Conferences
 - 5.4.3 Player Eligibility
 - 5.4.4 Sitting Out Seasons
 - 5.4.5 Team Structure
 - 5.4.6 Release and Transfer (Players and Teams)
 - 5.4.7 Coaches
 - 5.4.8 Spectators
 - 5.4.9 Foul Weather Procedure for Games
 - 5.4.10 Standings/Point System
 - 5.4.11 Awards
 - 5.4.12 NTSSA Tournament of Champions
 - 5.4.13 Discipline
- 5.5.14 Complaints against Coaches, Players, Spectators, etc
- 5.3.15 Protests, Appeals and Grievances
- 5.3.16 MSA Refund Policy
- 5.3.17 MSA Soccer Policies
- 5.3.18 Amendments to General and Playing Rules
- 5.5 Competitive Teams
- 5.6 Soccer Academies
- 6 Discipline (NTSSA RULE 3.11)
- 6.1 Spectator Game Day Policy
- 6.2 Coach/Team Official Game Day Policy
- 7 Code of Ethics/Conduct.
 - 7.1 NTSSA Code of Ethics for Coaches
 - 7.2 NTSSA Parent's Code of Conduct
 - 7.3 USSF/NTSSA Referee Code of Conduct
- 8 Coaches Information & Responsibilities
 - 8.1 Education
 - 8.2 ID Badges
 - 8.3 MSA Coaches Meeting
 - 8.4 Player and Team Management
 - 8.5 Game-day Roster
 - 8.6 Reporting Scores
- 9 Communications
 - 9.1 Suggestions, Concerns, Complaints and Escalations
 - 9.2 Game Protests (See NTSSA Rule 3.13)
 - 9.3 Appeals Process
- 10 Handling of Misconduct Reports
 - 10.1 Referees Report
 - 10.1.1 Time limit
 - 10.1.2 MSA Soccer Review
 - 10.2 Process
 - 10.3 Use of Tape Recorders, Etc
 - 10.4 Appeals to NTSSA

Version: Fall 2023/Spring 2024

1. Introduction

MSA Soccer welcomes all new and returning parents, coaches and players for another season of recreational soccer. Thank you for your participation and all of your efforts.

The primary goal of MSA Soccer is to promote a fun environment where kids can learn to love and play the game of soccer.. The development of ALL players should be your major focus. As such, your season will be considered a success if all players are encouraged to reach their own personal potential and at the same time are allowed to be children and enjoy the game of soccer.

MSA Soccer is a member of North Texas State Soccer Association (NTSSA) and is obligated to follow the NTSSA rules and by-laws to continue to be a member association in good standing.

NTSSA is associated with the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and Federation International de Football Association (FIFA). The referees on the field will be qualified FIFA Referees and will be following the FIFA "Laws of the Game".

***Please note that some of the rules are modified for small-sided games for the younger groups as documented herein.**

Due to annual changes in the FIFA "Laws of the Game", MSA Soccer will not attempt to annually restate the soccer rules, from which all games are based, including youth recreational soccer. MSA Soccer recommends that the readers obtain a copy of the FIFA "Laws of the Game" or refer to the section in question by reference to FIFA and NTSSA through the MSA website: www.midlothiansoccer.org.

Only modified rules for youth and any MSA specific rules will be shown in this document. Additionally, the USSF has concluded that for U12 and younger leagues, there is "too much emphasis placed on the result of the game and that the top priority should be the long term development of the players by developing their skills and abilities". To solve these issues, the USSF has mandated the implementation of a number of initiatives "aimed at developing players with more individual skill, intelligence, creativity and confidence." Furthermore, all of U.S. Soccer's membership (this includes NTSSA and MSA) is required to put these initiatives into place as of August 2017.

The new USSF initiatives are primarily aimed at U12 and younger, but some affect all leagues all the way up to U19. These new initiatives are: "birth year"-based registration, small-sided games, new max roster sizes, and concussion prevention. The effect of these initiatives on the rules is now reflected in this document and in the NTSSA rules document. We recommend you read your document thoroughly to familiarize yourself with these changes.

On some occasions it may appear that the referee or assistant referee (linesman) may not be calling the game as you feel it should be called. Certain decisions, such as when to play advantage, how deaf of an ear to turn to coaches/parents comments, how much contact is allowable when going for the ball, are decisions that will vary from one referee to the next. Please hold your judgment and, if required, please follow up with our Chairman of the Referee Committee.

The sections that follow may refer the reader to rules, regulations, or updates made available through the sources listed in the [References](#) section.

1.1 MSA Contact Information

Mailing Address: 661 E Main Street, Suite 200-128, Midlothian, TX 76065

Phone #: 972-727-9565

Email: Info@midlothiansoccer.org

Midlothian Soccer Association website: www.midlothiansoccer.org

2. Definitions

MSA

Midlothian Sports Association is the official governing body for NTSSA approved soccer in Midlothian, TX.

Draft (or “The Draft”)

The process through which ALL players are assigned to teams every season. See the Draft Process section.

FIFA

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA / 'fi:fə/; "International Federation of Association Football") is the international governing body of association football (Soccer), futsal, and beach soccer.

Laws of the Game

The official document from FIFA describing the governing rules for the game of soccer.

League

Recreational MSA Soccer is separated into different age levels, referred to as leagues.

League Director

An MSA volunteer whose responsibility is to oversee and manage a particular league(s).

New Player

A new player is defined as a player who has never participated in MSA Soccer.

NTSSA

North Texas State Soccer Association is the official governing body for USSF approved soccer in the North Texas region.

Player

A youth (boy or girl) registered to play soccer in MSA

Regular Registration

Regular registration is the normal period for players to register for the upcoming season. All players registering during this period are guaranteed placement on a team as long as a team is available.

Returning player

A returning player is defined as a player who registered and played in MSA Soccer in any previous season.

Soccer Coaching Clinic

A course through which coaches obtain training for coaching soccer.

Supplemental Registration (Wait List)

Supplemental Registration is an optional registration period, occurring after regular registration has ended, to allow registration to continue to fill leagues with player needs.

USSF

The United States Soccer Federation is the official governing body for FIFA approved soccer in USA.

3. References

- North Texas State Soccer Association (NTSSA)
<https://www.ntxsoccer.org/>
- Federation International de Football Association (FIFA)
<https://www.fifa.com/en>
- United States Soccer Federation (USSF)
<https://www.ussoccer.com/ourvision>

4. General Guidelines

4.1 Seasons

The MSA soccer year spans across calendar years, starting in the fall of the current calendar year (the Fall Soccer season) and ends after the spring of the next calendar year (the Spring Soccer season).

4.1.1 Fall Season

The Fall Soccer season starts between August and September. Please see the MSA website for exact dates.

4.1.2 Spring Season

The Spring Soccer season starts between February and March. Please see the MSA website for exact dates.

4.1.3 Games per Season

Each season is scheduled to have 10 games.

Please note that the schedule is subject to cancellations due to weather and other unforeseen events. See the Cancellations and Reschedule Policy section.

4.2 Player Registration

4.2.1 Geographical Requirements

The Midlothian Sports Association soccer boundaries are the MISD boundaries (including residents who live in the surrounding communities but whose children qualify to attend an MISD school). Players from these areas can register "In-City" at time of registration.

4.2.2 Age Eligibility

Players registering must turn 3 in the birth year on the North Texas State Soccer Association age requirement calendar

Players registering for Spring must be at least three (3) years of age before December 31st.

4.2.3 Registration Costs

Please visit the MSA website: www.midlothiansoccer.org.

4.2.4 Regular Registration

Regular registration is available on the MSA website: www.midlothiansoccer.org as follows:

Season	Registration Start	Registration End
Fall	July 1st	Varies
Spring	December 1st	Varies

The deadline for registration financial aid requests is 2 weeks prior to regular registration. Financial aid is limited, on an individual player basis, to one child per season.

For further registration information, please refer to NTSSA Rule 4, RULES FOR REGISTRATION OF

YOUTH PLAYERS.

4.2.5 Supplemental Registration (Wait List)

Supplemental registration is not always made available, but when it is available it generally takes place after all players registering during the regular registration period have been assigned to their teams. There are no specific dates for the start/end of the supplemental registration period. Players registering during this period will be placed on a team as long as a roster spot is available. Players will receive a full refund if a team is not available.

4.2.6 Requesting Team Re-Assignment

At the time of registration, recreational players have the option to request removal from their previous team and reassignment to another team through the Players' Pool in the draft.

4.2.7 Special Requests for Registration

Fulfillment of all registration requests is subject to several conditions, such as (but not limited to) space being available on existing teams after all returning players have been placed. As such, there is no guarantee that requests of any type will be fulfilled. Players, whose requests are not fulfilled, will be placed into the draft pool (see the [Draft Process](#) section). Please read this entire section and subsections thoroughly as there are various limitations regarding requests.

Parents and players are urged to carefully consider their options before completing the registration process.

Additionally:

- 1) Players making special requests are assigned, as possible, after returning player assignments and before all other players are assigned.
- 2) Players' requests to be placed on a team whose roster has already reached the maximum number of allowed rostered players will not be fulfilled.
- 3) All special requests are reviewed by the Draft Committee
- 4) Playing down is not permitted. See the [Player Eligibility](#) section.

4.2.7.1 Play up requests

Players eligible to play in the U4 and older age groups may elect to play up in age group. Players must meet the minimum age to play soccer for the soccer birthdates set by NTSSA, please see the [Player Eligibility](#) section.

4.2.7.2 Play with a sibling requests

All players may request to play with a sibling. Any request in which siblings are more than one age group apart will be independently reviewed by the MSA Board before the request is fulfilled.

4.2.8 Player Registration Restrictions

- 1) Players may only register and participate on one (1) NTSSA sanctioned soccer team per season.

2) Players U11 (Born in 2014) and older may NOT register for both recreational and competitive teams. If a player is found in violation, games in which the player participated will result in forfeiture, and the player may be suspended.

4.3 Head Coach, Assistant Coach and Manager Registration

4.3.1 Geographical Requirements

There are no geographical limitations for coaches, assistants or team managers.

4.3.2 Age Eligibility

All head coaches, assistant coaches and team managers must be 18 years or older.

4.3.3 Background Checks

All head coaches, assistant coaches and team managers must undergo a background check coordinated via MSA.

Background checks are mandatory for head coaches, assistant coaches and managers on a yearly basis. Aspiring coaches must register with Midlothian Sports Association (MSA) and complete a background check through the GotSport website and SafeSport training for North Texas State Soccer (NTSSA).

4.3.4 Registration Costs

The background check for the head coach is free.

4.3.5 Head Coach Registration Dates

MSA accepts coach registrations until September 29th for the Fall season, and until April 1st for the Spring season. Coach registrations are not accepted after those dates.

4.4 Season Schedule

The season game schedule is posted online on the MSA website no later than one (1) week before the season's regularly scheduled games. Coaches are responsible for distributing the schedule to all their players

4.4.1 Schedule Format

The Home team is listed first on the schedule.

4.4.2 Schedule Conflict Policy

The following guidelines will be used to handle requests to change the schedule of a game(s):

- 1) Only head coaches who coach multiple teams will have their schedule reviewed to prevent game overlap.
- 2) All requests for schedule changes must be made by given deadline to the first weekend of scheduled matches for the season.
- 3) The requesting team must be unable to field the minimum number of players.
- 4) The absence of a coach is not sufficient reason to reschedule a match.

4.4.3 Cancellations and Reschedule Policy

The following will apply to matches canceled, postponed, or abandoned because of weather (rainouts) or other events beyond MSA control (e.g. equipment/facility malfunction, etc). These are all generally referred to as, from here on, as “canceled games”.

- 1) Suspension of a match before the kick-off of the second half results in re-play of the entire match at a reschedule date.
- 2) Suspension after the second half kick-off qualifies as a completed game with current score standing. Exception: Championship games are re-played in their entirety at a reschedule date.
- 3) Cancellations will be rescheduled, if time permits.
- 4) Cancellations occurring within the last two weeks of the scheduled season will not be rescheduled.

4.4.4 Cancellation Reschedule Posting

- 1) Cancellations will be rescheduled and posted on the MSA website (www.midlothiansoccer.org) at least 72 hours prior to the rescheduled game time.
- 2) It is the coach’s responsibility to check for the reschedule (i.e. make-up) date.
- 3) Coaches must notify each player in their team of the new schedule for the rescheduled game.
- 4) There will be no refunds due to cancellations, regardless of the cause.
- 5) A team that fails to show up for a rescheduled game will receive a forfeit for that game.
- 6) All rescheduled games will be considered official games.
- 7) In the age groups where score is kept, rescheduled games will count towards the standings.

4.5 Practice Fields

4.5.1 Practice Field Reservation

Coaches will have the opportunity to reserve practice space during the pre-season coaches meeting.

4.5.2 Practice Areas

Only practices scheduled through MSA and approved by the city, may be held on a City of Midlothian soccer field such as those at Hawkins Spring Park.

4.5.3 Practice Field Conditions

Please check the Midlothian Soccer Association Facebook page, RainoutApp, or Midlothian Parks and Recreation Department Facebook page for field status.. Do not use the soccer fields when they are posted as closed.

4.5.4 Practice Rules/Limitations

A recreational team shall have no more than three (3) meetings per week, which include practices, scheduled and rescheduled games after the beginning of league play, except under unusual circumstances with the approval of the MSA Soccer Board.

Scheduled and rescheduled games have priority usage of the soccer fields over practices.

U8 and younger

Teams should limit practices to one (1) hour per session.

U9 & U10

Teams should limit practices to one and one half (1 1/2) hours per session.

U11 and older

Teams should limit practices to two (2) hours per session.

4.6 Team Formation Procedures

Please see **NTSSA Rule 4.7.6 RECREATIONAL TEAM FORMATION RULES** (only the areas that are different are discussed herein).

Teams are formed and players are assigned to teams every season via the draft. All decisions made by the draft committee are final.

Team assignments are final and will not be changed unless the assignment can be shown to be contrary to the parents/players wish during registration or after a successful appeal to the respective League Director and/or MSA Soccer Board.

Players may NOT be added after the season starts without approval of the Commissioner. Please note that players will NOT be added after MSA has submitted final reconciliation to NTSSA.

4.6.1 Draft Process

A Draft Committee (or the League Director), conduct the players' assignment into teams for the league. This assignment is known as "The draft". Players are assigned to teams only via the draft, no coach, player, parent, or other interested party may dictate otherwise.

The draft occurs every season, immediately after regular registration for that season has ended. If a supplemental registration becomes available, players are assigned to teams via a supplemental draft as described below.

4.6.1.1 Existing Team Assignment Priorities

The following priorities are followed for player assignment into existing teams (as long as the team does not exceed the maximum number of players) during the regular draft:

- 1) Returning players
- 2) Returning players who sat out one (1) season
- 3) Sibling
- 4) Player requests (see [Special Requests](#) section for limitations)

4.6.1.2 New Team Formation

Teams are formed only via the draft (or via the supplemental draft). No coach, player, parent, or other interested parties may dictate otherwise.

A new team may be formed when:

- a) There are no other teams able to assimilate the remaining undrafted players and the number of undrafted players meets the required minimum number of players needed to form a new team, as determined by the League Director.

4.6.1.3 Disbanding a Team

An existing team may be disbanded during the draft when there aren't enough returning players for that team, as required and documented in the Number of players section. Under such conditions,

disbanding of a team does not require approval from any team coach, team manager, parent or player. The decision in this situation is solely at the discretion of the respective League Director and/or Draft Committee.

4.6.1.4 Number of Teams in a League

The number of teams in each league is completely dependent on the number of registering players for that league, and the number of players per team shall not exceed the “maximum number of players per roster” as set forth by NTSSA and described herein (see the [Number of players](#) section).

Consequently, the number of players on each team is determined by the total number of players in the player pool for that league and the total number of teams/coaches for the league, as decided by the Draft Committee. No coach, parent, or other interested party may dictate otherwise.

Players who did NOT skip a season

Players returning from the previous immediate MSA Soccer season will be assigned first during the regular draft and are guaranteed placement back on the team as long as the following conditions are met:

- 1) Player must have played with the team during the previous immediate MSA Soccer season and be on the official MSA Soccer roster for that team in that season.
- 2) Player MUST register during the regular registration period.

Players who skipped one or more seasons

Please see the [Sitting Out Seasons](#) section for rules regarding sitting out.

Players who skipped one or more seasons, who request placement back on the team in which they last played, will be placed back on that team as long as all of the following conditions are met:

- 1) The player registers during the regular registration period
- 2) The maximum number of rostered players on that team has not been met already by players returning from the previous immediate season

The process for placement into their previous team is as follows:

- 1) A returning player from a season prior to the most recent MSA Soccer season will be allowed to take an unassigned spot back on the team after all returning players from the previous season have been placed.
- 2) If there are more than one returning players who did not play in the most recent MSA Soccer season, assignment for these players will be prioritized according to the last season assigned to the team, with the most recent player being assigned first.

Players who did not play on the most recent season who cannot be placed back on their previous team will be added to the player pool so they can be assigned to a different team by the Draft

Committee. If these players remain undrafted (not enough spots in remaining teams) they will be given refunds.

4.7 Concussion Initiative

NTSSA and its member associations, including MSA, have adopted USSF Concussion initiative. For more information, please see the NTSSA rules.

Per U.S. Soccer's Concussion Initiative, if a player is suspected to have a head injury the referee is instructed to stop play to allow for treatment/evaluation as needed. If the player leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made at that moment.

The player with the suspected head injury may not return to the game unless a Health Care Professional (HCP) or Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) has cleared the player in writing.

Any coach or parent insisting on returning the player to the game without approved clearance will result in the referee ending the game.

4.8 NTSSA Tournaments

Requests for signed team rosters must be made to MSA prior to playing in NTSSA approved soccer tournaments. The requests must be received by the MSA Registrar three (3) days BEFORE the tournament or the requests will not be fulfilled.

No team may participate in an NTSSA approved soccer tournament unless the official team roster has been previously validated by the home association registrar and signed by the MSA registrar.

4.9 Volunteer Registration

MSA is an all-volunteer organization. The organization would not be able to function without the tremendous amount of people that are willing to contribute time and effort. Please join us in the youth of Midlothian. Fill out a coach registration on our website (www.midlothiansoccer.org) and encourage others to join in the fun. The only limitation to improve the program at times is not having enough people. Help us improve by volunteering.

4.10 MSA Soccer Board Meeting and Voting criteria

Quorum: Half of the MSA Soccer Board will constitute a quorum in order to hold any MSA Soccer meeting.

Voting: A majority of the MSA Soccer Board present is needed to approve any voting item before the Board at which a quorum is present.

5. Rules & Regulations

For distinction between age groups within the rules, when all age groups are not specifically mentioned in the rule, the following classifications will apply:

- U4 , U5 & U6 will be referred to as U6
- U7 & U8 will be referred to as U8
- U9 & U10 will be referred to as U10
- U11 & U12 will be referred to as U12
- U13 and up follow the same even age pattern as above until U19

5.1 Adoption of the NTSSA Rule Book

Anything not discussed herein falls within the rules of the NTSSA Rule Book. MSA adopts the guidelines set forth in the NTSSA Rule Book in the event MSA does not specify a particular policy.

5.2 Playing rules

The FIFA Laws of the Game define 17 rules for the game of soccer. These 17 rules have been adapted for youth play by USSF and NTSSA. Those rules shall be followed with the changes described herein. Please also refer to FIFA “Laws of the Game”, and the NTSSA Rules of Competition for additional information.

5.2.1 Law 1 – Field of Play

The size of the field, penalty area and goals will be set by the Midlothian Parks and Recreation Department. The following are recommended goal sizes and NTSSA minimum field sizes:

League (min. in yards)	Width (min. in yards)	Length (H x W in feet)	Goal Size
U8 and younger	20	30	4 x 6
U9/U10	40	60	6.5x 18.5
U11/U12	50	80	6.5x18.5
U13/U14	70	112	8 x 24
U15/U16	70	112	8 x 24
U19	70	112	8 x 24

5.2.1.1 The Build-out Line

Will not be used at any level of play.

5.2.2 Law 2 – The Ball

The Home team provides the game ball.

The size of the ball is adapted for youth play as described below:

Age	Ball Size
U8 and younger	#3
U9 through U12	#4
U13 and older	#5

5.2.3 Law 3 – The Number of Players, Substitution and Playing Time

5.2.3.1 Number of players

The following table lists the number of players that can be playing on the field for each youth team. Please note that for U4 teams, the coaches are also allowed on the field, but only one (1) coach per team may be on the field at a time and the coaches are not allowed to play the ball.

League	Maximum # of Players On the Pitch At Once	Minimum # To Begin	Maximum Roster Size
U4	3 (No goalkeeper)	2	6
U5-U8	4 (No goalkeeper)	3	8
U9 & U10	7 (6 + a goalkeeper)	5	12
U11 & U12	9 (8 + a goalkeeper)	7	16
U13 & U14	11 (10 + a goalkeeper)	7	18
U15 & U19	11	7	22

5.2.3.2 Substitutions

All substitutes will enter the field at the halfway line, and **substitutions may only be made with the consent of the referee**. Please instruct your players to wait for the players to leave the field before they enter it.

Teams may **request** to substitute as follows:

All leagues:

- 1) The team in possession may request to substitute on a throw-in. The other team can request to substitute as well if the team in possession executes a substitution
- 2) Either team may request a substitution, at a goal kick
- 3) Either team may request a substitution, after a goal is scored
- 4) Either team may request a substitution, at half-time
- 5) Either team may request a substitution, at an injury (sub for injured player only and opponent may also substitute only one player) when the referee stops play
- 6) When a player is CAUTIONED (yellow card), the cautioned player may be substituted immediately
- 7) Any other time with the referee's approval

Additionally, for U6 and younger:

- 1) Either team, at quarter breaks

5.2.3.3 Playing Time

A violation of a recreational player's playing time rule will result in possible suspension of coach and review of the Soccer A&D for further sanctions and hearing.

Each child in a recreational team shall play a minimum of one half (50%) of each half of each game. This includes games for league play, playoffs, qualifying games and tournament play.

In cases where a player's time is to be reduced for medical or disciplinary reasons, the coach must notify the player, the parents of the player, the MSA Soccer Board and the opposing coach forty eight (48) hours prior to the beginning of the game in writing AND must also get approval from the MSA Soccer Board.

Non-attendance at practice and non-payment of fees may be cause for disciplinary action. Coaches seeking action due to non-attendance at practices need to contact the League Director for their age group. If the coach wants to pursue disciplinary action, the coach must follow the proper procedure with the League Director.

When a player is late in arriving to a game and that game is already in progress, the coach is required to play that child in only the last half of the game. However, if the player arrives after the start of the second half, the coach is not required to play that child during any part of the remainder of that game.

5.2.4 Law 4 – Player's Equipment

All player equipment rules specified in the FIFA Laws of the Game are to be followed along with any additions and changes specified below.

- 1) Uniforms with numbers permanently printed on the back of the jersey, and visible, are required for all players.
- 2) Shin guards must be worn under the socks, with the socks completely covering the shin guards. Please note, you may not put socks on, then the shin guards, and then flop the socks over the shin guards.
- 3) Jerseys must be tucked in.
- 4) Proper soccer shoes must be worn. No toe cleats are allowed. No metal cleats are allowed.
- 5) All jewelry must be removed. For example: earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. However, medical alert jewelry is allowed. No hard hair restraints or beads.
- 6) Tape numbers are not allowed to be worn on Jerseys.
- 7) Casts or Splints (this rule applies to any equipment used to protect or prevent an injury) may be worn during play only at the discretion of the referee. Hard casts should be completely covered in 1/2 inch of soft material such as bubble wrap or soft foam.
- 8) Goalkeepers must wear a different colored jersey to distinguish him/her as a goalkeeper. The jersey color must be noticeably different than the jersey color of the field players of both teams. A vest of a different color may be worn over the jersey to achieve a different color.
- 9) The home team is responsible to wear (or change into) an alternate jersey in case of jersey color conflict. The final decision on whether there is a jersey color conflict is up to the referee.
- 10) Cold Weather – Additional clothes may be worn, if worn safely. However, the uniform's jersey must be worn on the OUTSIDE so as to allow the player's jersey number to remain visible.

5.2.5 Law 5 – The Referee

1. The referee has jurisdiction from the time the referee arrives at the field of play. The referee's decisions on facts connected with the play shall be final.
2. The referee can stop the game for infringement of the rules and can suspend or terminate the game whenever the referee deems such stoppage necessary, for example, severe weather, and interference by spectators and/or coaches.
3. The referee can suspend from play any player guilty of violent conduct or repetitious infringement of playing rules.
4. The referee shall not allow any persons other than the players and linesmen to enter the field of play without the referee's permission.
5. The referee may stop the game if the referee believes a player has been injured and shall have the player removed as soon as possible from the field of play. All coaches should be consulted in case

of injured players.

6. In cases of in-game rule violations, where a whistle would be disadvantageous to the "fouled" team, the referee may signal "play on" and not stop play for the rule violation. This is called "PLAYING THE ADVANTAGE."

5.2.6 Law 6 – The Assistant Referee

Assistant referees will be supplied for regular season games. At the referee's request, each team shall supply a club/team assistant referee. The club/team assistant referee will assist the referee in determining ball in and out of play.

5.2.7 Law 7 – The Duration of the Game

The duration of the game is adjusted for youth play as described in the table below.

Please note that regular season games do not go into overtime. Overtime is only used for playoff, qualifiers and championships games which are tied at the end of regulation time.

League	Length of Halves/Quarters
U4	6-minute quarters
U5 & U6	8-minute quarters
U7	10-minute quarters
U8	12-minute quarters
U9 & U10	25-minute halves
U11 & U12	30-minute halves
U13 & U14	35-minute halves
U15 & U16	40-minute halves
U17 - U19	45-minute halves

5.2.8 Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

At the beginning of the game, choice of ends and kick-off shall be decided by the toss of a coin. The team winning the toss shall have the option of ends, or ball possession.

A goal may be scored directly from a kick off for U9 and older. At U8 and younger, all restarts are indirect.

During a kick-off, the opposing players shall remain on the defending half of the field and also outside the center circle until the ball is played.

5.2.9 Law 9 – The Ball In And Out Of Play

The whole of the ball must cross the goal or touch line before it is out of play. Likewise, the whole of the ball must cross the goal line for a goal to be scored.

ADVICE TO PLAYERS

This means that if the ball rolls along one of the lines, it is still in play. So, for this rule particularly, "play to the whistle" and not to the flag from the assistant referee. An assistant referee's flag signal is only intended for the referee, and the latter is the only person empowered to give final decisions in a game.

5.2.10 Law 11 – Offside

Offside is enforced as follows:

U8 and younger - Not enforced at all.

U9 and older - Enforced with no changes.

5.2.11 **Law 12** – Fouls and Misconduct

- 1) Charging the goalkeeper in possession of the ball is **NOT ALLOWED** in any youth play. Possession is defined as: “One or two hands on the ball, holding it, bouncing it, tossing it up and then catching it, or patting it along the ground.”
- 2) It is not considered an intentional “hand-ball” offense for any player to attempt to protect the vital areas of his or her body (chest, crotch, face) by placing hands or arms across them to protect them from being struck at close range by the ball. The match referee shall be the sole judge of whether the hands or arms were used to deliberately propel the ball or to protect the vital areas as described above.
- 3) Coaches and assistant coaches are subject to the same game disciplinary procedures by the referee as are the players, i.e., cautions and/or ejections. If a player or coach exhibits unsportsmanlike behavior and is cautioned verbally by the referee but continues to act in a manner deemed inappropriate, a yellow card may be issued. Earning a second yellow card is equal to a red card or ejection, and the offender will be sent off.
- 4) Slide tackling is not allowed for U8 and younger.
- 5) Deliberately heading the ball is not allowed for U12 and younger. If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick shall 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 shall be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.

ADVICE TO PLAYERS

The following points may help you stay within the spirit of the game as well as within the Laws of the Game:

- 1) Never retaliate when fouled.
- 2) There is no such thing as accidental jumping at an opponent.
- 3) Do not accuse the opponent of using their “hands”. If you claim you were fouled and the referee considered the offense accidental, you may put yourself and your team at a disadvantage.
- 4) Keep your temper.
- 5) It is no disgrace to be bowled over by a fair charge. Let your own charging be fair and honest. If an opponent intentionally obstructs you, you have no right to charge the opponent in a way that may cause injury.
- 6) Accept the referee's decision without question. It is an offense to show dissent by word or action.
- 7) Remember that no player may attempt to kick the ball when it is held by the goalkeeper. If this is considered by the referee to be dangerous play, an indirect free kick will result.

ADVICE TO COACHES

Prior to game start, approach the center referee and ask him to explain how he will enforce and interpret this rule, and remember that the center referee has the last word on the field.

5.2.12	Law 13 – Free Kicks This rule is enforced as follows:
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U8 and younger

All free kicks are to be indirect.

U9 and older

No change.

5.2.13	Law 14 – The Penalty Kick This rule is enforced as follows:
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U8 and younger

No penalty kicks shall be awarded.

U9 and older
No change.

5.2.14	Law 15 – The Throw-In This rule is enforced as follows:
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U6 and younger

Throw-in is replaced by a Kick-in (see Kick-in procedure described below).

U7 and older

No change.

5.2.14.1 Kick-in Procedure

- 1) The ball is kicked from the point on the touch-line where it left the field of play.
- 2) Opponents remain at least three (3) yards from the ball until it is played.
- 3) The ball is considered in play when it is kicked and it moves.
- 4) The kicker does not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player.

5.2.15 Law 16 – The Goal Kick

This rule is enforced as follows:

U8 and younger - No change.

U9 & U10 - The opposing team must move behind the build out line during a goal kick until the ball is put into play.

U11 and older - No change.

5.2.16 Law 17 – The Corner Kick

No change.

5.3 Midlothian Soccer Association Modified Playing Rules

5.3.1 Small Sided Games Field of Play

To encourage players to participate in all aspects of the game, the following rules are to be observed:

1. A Goal box spanning 3yds x 5yds will be placed on all fields playing in the 4v4 playing format.
2. When the ball is on the offensive side of the field, no player is to be standing inside the goal box on their defensive side of the field.
3. When the ball is on the defensive side of the field, there is no limitation as to where the player can and cannot stand or play the ball from.

5.3.2 Scoring Limitations and Outcome of a match

To encourage fair play and a fun playing experience for all players, the following rules are applied to all games played in age group U9-U12:

1. A minimum of one half of play must be played.
2. When a goal differential of 10 goals has been reached between two opponents, the game will be declared final and officials will leave the field.

5.4 Recreational Division

5.4.1 Leagues

Recreational MSA Soccer shall be separated into different age levels, referred to as **leagues**. Eligibility to play in a team on a particular league will be based upon players meeting the player age requirements outlined in the [Player Eligibility](#) section.

MSA Soccer shall provide separate boys and girls leagues for each age group, unless prohibited or otherwise undesirable, based upon the number of available players. Coeducational leagues may be formed at the discretion of the MSA Soccer Board, and with approval of the MSA Soccer Board. Coeducational teams shall not play in a girl's league. Other recreational coeducational teams or leagues may be formed in keeping with NTSSA procedures.

The U8 and younger leagues are completely non-competitive, for the players' development and enjoyment only. As such, scores and standings are not kept on these leagues.

5.4.2 Conferences

Each league may be further separated into conferences, but only if the number of teams in a league becomes so large as to prohibit the effective administration by a single League Director, or if desired in order to provide for multiple conferences according to teams' skill-levels.

5.4.3 Player Eligibility

A player's eligibility for play in a league is primarily determined by their age. MSA abides by the NTSSA/USSF rules for youth placement into teams based on birth year. Players may request to play up one (1) age group but playing down is NOT permitted.

Additionally:

1. The playing of any youth outside the age limits of the team, as defined above, shall result in the forfeiture of all games in which said player participated.
2. Teams found to be guilty of playing an ineligible player in the regular season, playoffs, qualifying games, or which may have engaged in general and/or persistent misconduct may be disqualified from playoffs, qualifying games and/or tournament competition.
3. Youth players may only be registered with one NTSSA sanctioned team at any given time during the soccer year.
4. No team shall play in a league game without first having turned in to the MSA the association fee, the player's registration, and all pertinent information forty-eight (48) hours prior to the league game.
5. No player may be added after the season starts without approval of the Commissioner and submittal of the necessary information to the MSA office. If records are not turned in, this will result in the forfeiture of all games in which said player participated and suspension of the coach for one (1) season.
6. No player or coach registered with MSA Soccer may participate in unregistered/non sanctioned play, as stated in the NTSSA Administrative Rule Book. Registration with MSA will be suspended once a player or coach participates in such play.

****Unsanctioned play shall include, but not be limited to:**

- a. Outdoor/indoor league not sanctioned by NTSSA or another USSF affiliate.
 - b. Outdoor/indoor tournament not sanctioned by NTSSA or another USSF affiliate.
 - c. Any game (friendly or scrimmage) with a non-USSF affiliate.
7. For the purpose of league play, the transfer or addition of new players must be accomplished forty-eight (48) hours prior to the first scheduled game through the Add and Delete form once the team roster is validated. Any team found in violation of this rule is subject to forfeiting all the games in which the violation occurred.

5.4.4 Sitting Out Seasons

5.4.4.1 Players Sitting Out

For the purposes of being able to be placed back on a previous team, a player may:

- a) 'sit out' (for any reason) a maximum of two (2) seasons as long as the player is not a registered NTSSA outdoor player during any of those seasons.
- b) 'sit out' up to two (2) seasons if the reason is family relocation

If the above conditions are not met, a returning player who sat out one or more seasons may not be able to return to the previous team.

5.4.4.2 Teams Sitting Out

- 1. Any team sitting out one season will be allowed to return as a team the following season.
- 2. Any team sitting out more than one season will be required to disband and its players shall individually enter the draft's player pool upon returning to the MSA Soccer league.
- 3. Any former players who played on other teams during the one season a team sat out will be allowed to return to the team that sat out without going through the draft process if space is available.

5.4.5 Team Structure

- 1. A team (coaches and players) formed by MSA Soccer, and playing in MSA Soccer the previous season, may remain as a unit provided there are enough players in draft
If there are not enough players to place on the team, then team will be folded (disbanded) and players will be added into the draft's player pool.
 - 1. Competitive players returning to a recreational league must be reassigned through the Players' Pool in the draft. During the Spring season, a player from a Competitive Division team must honor the valid 1-year contract for that team, should one exist, unless the player has been duly released from that team.
 - 2. New recreational teams and returning recreational teams needing additional players will obtain players as described in the [Draft Process](#) section.
 - 3. Coaches must not violate any USYSA, NTSSA, or MSA recruiting rules.
 - 4. A team which was formed outside of MSA Soccer, and which requests to participate in the MSA Soccer recreational league, must be approved by the MSA Soccer Board, and must meet NTSSA Team Formation guidelines.
 - 5. Minimum requirements for a team requesting to play in MSA Soccer's recreational leagues are:
 - a. The team must join MSA Soccer and be subject to all rules governing MSA Soccer and pay all costs set forth by MSA for that season.
 - b. Furnish a complete list of players who were on the team, signed by an official of the previous organization, including players' names, addresses, telephone numbers, birth dates and schools.
 - c. The players meet the age requirements for the league in which they wish to play.
 - 6. Furthermore, the MSA Soccer board and/or Draft Committee is not required to obtain a coach's permission before exceeding the minimum number of players for the team roster. However, the maximum number of players shall not be exceeded.
- No team may participate in an MSA Soccer tournament or regular season game until the official team

roster has been previously validated by the home association registrar and signed by the MSA registrar.

The MSA Soccer Board reserves the right to review and approve or disapprove any decisions made under this policy provided the right is executed prior to the start of the season of play.

Any team affected by this policy has the right to appeal the decision made under this policy directly to the Commissioner. The team can then submit a protest directly to the Disciplinary and Protest Committee as allowed under MSA Soccer Recreational General Rules, with the right of appeal a decision made under this policy and shall provide MSA Soccer with sufficient time to execute a fair and equitable appeal hearing.

MSA Soccer shall not force a team to play outside of MSA Soccer for the simple reason that a league does not exist. Every effort shall be made to accommodate such a team, provided it does not force an unnecessary burden on the other teams affected.

5.4.6 Release and Transfer (Players and Teams)

NTSSA Rule.3.10.8

Recreational Player releases:

Once a player has registered with a Member Association and been rostered to a recreational team, they are bound to that team for the entire seasonal year unless the player is granted a release.

1. A recreational player may be released by a member association to join a competitive team between December 1 and March 15, per rule 3.10.7.
2. A request for a recreational player to be released to another member association for recreational play shall be submitted to and approved by the NTSSA Youth Commissioner in writing on the form provided, stating the reason for the request on the release. Releases to transfer to another member association will be allowed from December 1 up until they are registered and rostered to a team for the Spring season. Releases outside of those dates will be considered only as an exception.
3. The decision of the Youth Commissioner may be appealed to the NTSSA Board of Directors.

Competitive Player Releases

Any player rostered to a competitive team is bound to that team for the entire seasonal year unless the player requests a release or is released involuntarily. A player release shall be submitted to and approved by the NTSSA Youth Commissioner in writing on the form provided, stating the reason for the request on the release. Approval of a player release from a competitive team by NTSSA does not constitute a release of financial liability, if applicable to the team

5.4.7 Coaches

MSA assigns volunteer coaches to the teams. As such, coaching positions are usually filled by family members of a player in the team, on a "first come, first served" basis but must be approved by MSA. Returning coaches and teams in good standing are permitted and welcomed.

When a new team is created, the parents are given the opportunity to volunteer for the Head Coach role first. If no one volunteers, then MSA will search and select a volunteer Head Coach from outside the team member families

In the event that an established team loses its Head Coach, MSA Soccer will first offer control of the team to the assistant coach(s) and/or to the parents of the team. In the event that these parties do not show interest to assume control of team, MSA will have the right to search and select a volunteer Head Coach from outside the team member families.

Teams must have a badged adult at all games, so if the search for a new coach fails, the team may be disbanded. This is at the discretion of the MSA Soccer board.

5.4.7.1 Head Coach Privileges

- 1) The Head Coach shall have the privilege of having his or her child assigned to their team's roster, provided the player meets the age requirements of the league.
- 2) The Head Coach shall have the privilege to choose the assistant coach and team manager.
- 3) The Head Coach shall have the privilege to choose the practice location.
- 4) The Head Coach shall have the privilege to choose the practice date(s) and time(s).
- 5) The Head Coach shall have the privilege to choose the team name.
- 6) The Head Coach shall have the privilege to choose the team uniform.
- 7) The Head Coach shall have the privilege to assign the jersey numbers.

5.4.7.2 Head Coach & Badged Adults Responsibilities

Coaches and Badged adults are subject to the jurisdiction of MSA Soccer, its League Directors, the MSA Soccer Board, and all of MSA's rules and policies.

There may be other responsibilities for the coaches described in other sections of this document.

Coaches are responsible for becoming familiar with those by reading this document in its entirety.

Primary responsibilities:

- 1) The Head Coach and Assistant Coach are responsible for reading and becoming familiar with this document in its entirety.
- 2) The Head Coach and Assistant Coach of record are to be active coaches for the team and not in name only.
- 3) The Head Coach is responsible for finding a suitable practice location for the team.
- 4) The Head Coach is responsible for communicating the game schedule to the players.
- 5) The Head Coach is responsible to report the score per the rules/process described herein.
- 6) The Head Coach is responsible to keep up to date with communication from MSA and MSA Soccer Board members.
- 7) Coaches are responsible for abiding by the league's substitution policy.
- 8) Coaches are responsible for abiding by the individual player's playing time rules.
- 9) Coaches are responsible for the eligibility of their players.
- 10) Coaches are responsible for welcoming ALL players to the team. Any coach refusing a player or discouraging a player to play on their team will be addressed by the MSA Soccer A&D Chair**

11) Coaches are responsible for checking the MSA website to learn the rescheduled date/time for canceled games. No games will be rescheduled due to a coach not checking the website for updates.

12) Coaches may not dispute or question any decisions made by the referee.

13) Coaches and team managers must NOT use foul and/or abusive language/actions at games, practices, team events or team communication. FOUL AND/OR ABUSIVE LANGUAGE OR ACTIONS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!

14) Any coach or team official who has been removed from a game via red card by a match official or after accumulation of 3 yellow cards during one season, the offending party is required to complete the online Grassroots Referee Course Module and First Time Grassroots Referee Quiz before being allowed to resume activities with any team.

15) Head Coaches will be held responsible for any misbehavior on the part of the team's assistant coaches, spectators, parents, and players. This includes any foul and abusive language and any comments directed toward the referees, opposing players, and coaches. Offenders may be cautioned (including issuing of cards) or ejected from the field by the referee or league representative.

16) If a coach is expelled (sent off) from the field, he/she must leave the complex and will not be allowed to attend the next scheduled match.

17) Coaches and/or teams receiving written complaints from anyone, with regards to the coach, team member or spectators, will be sent to the Soccer A&D Chair and Commissioner. Further complaints could result in temporary suspension of coaching privileges while the offender is notified of an A&D hearing. The coach/team or spectator whom the complaint was filed against will be required go before the A&D Committee for judgment or determination of fitness to continue participation in the league. These complaints must be made on separate occasions (games, practices, etc) during the season, and may include written complaints from referees, other coaches, and spectators. All complaints must be written, and not anonymous.

18) The MSA Soccer Commissioner has the right to suspend a coach pending a hearing.

Game day responsibilities:

- 1) The home team's coach provides a properly inflated game ball
- 2) Coaches are responsible to provide the official roster form to the referee.
- 3) Coaches are responsible for the actions and behavior of your players and spectators, whether on your side of the field or on the spectator side.
- 4) Coaches may not coach at the end line behind or near the goals.
- 5) Coaches remind parents where to sit .
- 6) Coaches may not enter the field without the referee's permission.
- 7) The Head Coach, assistant coach, and team manager Must be registered, completed the background check, safesport.

5.4.8 Spectators

- 1) You shall remain on a sideline, at least five (5) feet back (outside) from the touch line, between the top of the penalty area and midline opposite the AR.
- 2) You may NOT enter the field of play without the referee's permission.
- 3) You may NOT coach.
- 4) You may NOT stand or sit at the end line behind or near the goal.
- 5) You may NOT dispute or question the decisions of the referee.

6) You may NOT use foul and/or abusive language/actions.

7) Noise makers /Megaphones are not permitted at any games in Midlothian.

FOUL AND/OR ABUSIVE LANGUAGE OR ACTIONS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!

8) Any spectator who has been removed from a game by a match official due to their actions will be required to complete the U.S. Soccer Safe Sport Training module before being allowed to return to team activities.

5.4.9 Foul Weather Procedure for Games

Unless officially notified by MSA, in a manner determined by MSA, teams must report to the playing fields for their assigned games. Only a referee or a League Official can cancel the games at any field, should it be so warranted.

Any games scheduled and not played, due to field or weather conditions, will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

In the event a team refuses to play because of questionable field or weather conditions, the coach shall protest the situation to the Referee and any subsequent decision will be decided by MSA subject to the approval of the MSA Soccer Board. A coach can further protest or appeal the decision by filing a protest to the Actions & Disciplinary (A&D) Committee.

In the event Midlothian Parks and Recreation and/or MSA have closed a field for game usage, that field is also closed for practice usage.

5.4.10 Standings/Point System

U8 and younger - Standings are not kept at these leagues.

U9 and older - Standings are kept according to the rules described herein.

5.4.10.1 Standings

For the leagues in which standings are kept, the standings are determined by accumulated points. MSA Soccer uses the "NTSSA Win-Loss-Tie (3-1-0)" system for points accumulation. In this system, teams earn points per game as follows:

- 3 points for a win
- 1 point for a tie
- 0 points for a loss

5.4.10.2 Forfeits

Failure to show up (no show) or failure to have the minimum number of players constitutes a forfeit. Appeals are NOT allowed for no shows.

All forfeits shall be considered to be a "played" game, with a score of 3-0 in favor of the team showing up. As such, a forfeit result in the accumulation of points just like a played game.

Teams may also forfeit ahead of time by notifying the League Director. In cases where forfeit notification is received ahead of time, the forfeit is immediate and the other team is no longer

required to show up to the game, but that team will still be giving the 3-0 win.

The following constitutes a game forfeiture:

- 1) Fielding an ineligible player or a player under suspension;
- 2) A suspended coach appearing at a game to coach the game;
- 3) Failure to field a team with at least the minimum number of players within fifteen (15) minutes of the scheduled starting time according to the Referee's watch;
- 4) Violation of the minimum playing requirement for any player as outlined in the Playing Rules;
- 5) If a team intentionally forfeits a game, that team (coaches, manager, and/or other responsible parties) will be required to appear before the divisional Disciplinary and Protest Committee to present its reasons for the forfeit.
- 6) A team found intentionally forfeiting a game may be under review by the soccer A&D Committee.

There may also be other violations which may result in a game forfeiture, as stated in other sections herein or in the NTSSA rules. Coaches must familiarize themselves with these rules.

5.4.10.3 Tie Breakers

In cases where a tie needs to be broken, the league uses the following criteria (in the order listed) as the tie breaker:

- 1) Head to Head (Please note that this criteria is not used for cases involving ties between 3 or more teams)
- 2) Goal Differential
- 3) Goals Against
- 4) Most Shutouts

5.4.10.4 Adjusting standings for games not rescheduled.

For leagues which at the end of the season have games that were not rescheduled, the points for all teams in the league will be calculated based on the team with the fewest number of played games. In other words, if at the end of the season there are games which were canceled but which were not rescheduled, then the standings for the league will be analyzed to determine the team which played the fewest number of games in that league. After making that determination the number of games played by that team will be the number of games which all other teams will be allowed to use to accumulate points in the standings for that league.

For example:

A league is scheduled to have each team play ten (10) games. Team X has 2 of its games canceled due to rain and none of them were rescheduled. Additionally, team X also forfeited a game.

Using the above criteria, the total number of games that team X will be considered to have "played" will be eight (8).

Then, assume that Teams Y and Z, who are in the same league as Team X, only had one (1) of their games canceled and not rescheduled, and both teams showed up to all their other games.

Using the above criteria, teams Y and Z will be considered to have "played" 9 games.

Lastly assume that all the other teams in the league besides Team X, Y and Z played all their games ten (10) games.

In this example the result is that Team X played less number of games than everyone else because team X only played eight (8) games. Therefore, only the points earned for the first 8 "played" games for each team in the league would be used to calculate each team's season standings.

5.4.11 Awards

U8 and younger - All teams participating in the MSA Soccer program will receive participation awards.

U9 and Older - Teams placing 1st, 2nd and 3rd in their division will receive awards.

5.4.12 NTSSA Tournament of Champions

North Texas Tournament of Champions (TOC) is an invitational tournament. MSA Board members review and consider extending an invitation to represent Midlothian Soccer Association for their respective age group. Only one team per age group is permitted and there is no obligation to send a team from any age group. The invitation is at the sole discretion of the board.

This tournament is traditionally played the first weekend in December Friday-Sunday.

MSA will pay for half of the team entry fee. The selected team must pay \$250 to MSA office via credit card, check or cash by date sent out to the teams. This date is based on time to enter teams into the NTSSA event. This fee is non-refundable. This date will be published on MSA Important dates once received from NTSSA on the tournament deadlines

In the event a team forfeits game during the TOC, or decides not to attend. The team will be responsible for the full tournament fee and team will not be invited next year to participate in the TOC , and may be subject to a hearing at NTSSA Soccer Association.

5.4.13 Discipline

Discipline will be handled as set forth in NTSSA Rule 3.11, please refer directly to NTSSA Rule 3.11.

In addition, the following apply to members of MSA:

- 1) Recreational players may be withheld from a game for disciplinary reasons, by the coach, when it has been reported to MSA (and acknowledged by the respective League Director), and the child's parents, at least forty eight (48) hours prior to the game.
- 2) Each disciplinary action taken by the coach serves as a written complaint of misconduct towards the player. A player reaching three (3) disciplinary actions during the season shall be reviewed by the A&D Committee.

5.4.14 Complaints against Coaches, Players, Spectators, etc.

1) Coaches, players, and/or spectators receiving a complaint shall be required to be reviewed by the MSA A&D Committee. These complaints may come from referees, other coaches, or spectators. These complaints must come from separate occasions. Only signed complaints will be considered.

2) It will be the prerogative of the A&D Committee to take whatever action they deem appropriate – probation, suspension, etc.

5.4.15 Protests, Appeals and Grievances

MSA Soccer shall operate a system for filing protests, appeals, grievances, and the like. The Appeals and Disciplinary (A&D) committee shall hear and review all game related protests and grievances.

The MSA Soccer Board is the first level of appeal for appeals from the A&D Committee. In addition, the MSA Soccer Board shall provide the first level of appeal for any other organization under the

jurisdiction of MSA.

These committees, at their discretion and when requested in writing to do so, may waive the time limit for filing matters before them, but in no case shall grant an extension of more than ten (10) days. A request for an extension is not a valid reason for not meeting the original requirement for filing matters to these committees.

All protests, appeals, grievances, and the like shall be submitted in writing to the appropriate League Director or other official of MSA within forty-eight (48) hours of the matter concerned. The written document must have either PROTEST, GRIEVANCE, or APPEAL boldly written or typed across the top. Protests and appeals shall be accompanied by a \$100 fee (money order or cashier's check).

If the protest or appeal is upheld by the committee, the fee shall be returned, if it is denied, the fee shall be forfeited to MSA. Once a fee has been forfeited to MSA it shall not be returned.

MSA shall refuse to hear any protest, grievance, appeal or the like where legal action is threatened or has been initiated. Recording devices, stenographers, and attorneys representing either party will not be permitted at hearings. The minutes of the hearing may be recorded, by the secretary of the committee, for purposes of accuracy of the minutes only.

In no event shall any person or organization, under the jurisdiction of MSA resort to the courts, at any government level, until all appeal procedures have been exhausted. For violations of this rule, the offending party shall be subject to the sanction of suspensions and fines as set forth by MSA, NTSSA, USYSA, USSF, and FIFA and shall be liable for all expenses incurred by this organizations in defending related court action, including but not limited to court costs, attorney fees, compensation for persons defending such allegations, travel expenses, and expenses for holding meetings related to the court action.

The MSA Soccer Board may bring any protest, appeal, grievance, or the like directly before that body for a hearing when that body feels it is necessary in order to render a decision and to speed the normal process for matters of the utmost importance.

Protests, grievances, and the like against the performance or conduct of referees must be filed with the Referee committee and are not heard by the MSA Soccer Board. It is the responsibility of that committee to determine the validity of such actions and to handle this within that committee. Persons filing such charges should direct them to the Referee Association through their League Director who shall forward them to the Referee Association through the MSA Soccer Board and the referee representative on the MSA Soccer Board.

5.4.15.1 Protests

U8 and younger

No protests permitted.

U9 and older

All protests of game matters shall be submitted in writing to the Commissioner (or next higher level, in his/her absence) within forty-eight (48) hours of the game, accompanied by the \$50 fee.

The Commissioner shall review the protest with the protester to determine the situation and validity.

A game may be protested only if any or all of the following apply:

1) There has been an obvious error made in the application of the Laws of the Game that directly affects the outcome of the match (and the referee admits it).

****Note:** The Laws of the Game are the FIFA Laws of the Game as modified herein, and in accordance with NTSSA, for youth players.

2) A team has played an ineligible or suspended player.

3) A team's suspended coach was present and coaching the team

4) There has been a violation of the minimum playing time requirements for any player, as outlined in herein.

If the protest is judged valid for hearing, the League Director shall accept the protest and a \$50 fee and will notify the MSA Soccer Commissioner, and forward the protest to the Chairperson of the Actions and Disciplinary (A&D) Committee within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving it.

The A&D Committee shall receive protests and grievances through its Chairperson and shall meet to consider these protests and grievances within seven (7) days of their receipt. All involved parties, coaches, and players shall be notified of the hearing and shall be requested to be present. Failure to attend after being requested to do so, may cause default of the protest or require other action to be taken.

The A&D Committee shall not assume that a game result's protest should be upheld strictly on the basis of a protest being valid because a Law of the Game has been broken or for any other valid reason. Game protests should be upheld on the basis of the merits of the protest and the entire circumstances surrounding the game, including the determination that said outcome of the game was or was not affected by the protested events of the game.

5.4.15.2 Appeals

1) Decisions from the division Actions and Disciplinary Committee, and other organizations under the jurisdiction of MSA may be appealed to the MSA Soccer Board with the President receiving the appeal directly. The appeal must be received by the President within forty-eight (48) hours of the decision. The MSA Soccer Board shall be the only level of appeal prior to the Appeals and Disciplinary (A&D) Committee of NTSSA.

2) The procedure for filing an appeal is the same as for protests. All involved parties, coaches, and players shall be notified of the hearing and shall be requested to be present. Failure to attend after being requested to do so, may cause default of the appeal or require other action to be taken.

3) Decisions of the MSA Soccer Board may be appealed to the NTSSA Appeals and Disciplinary Committee through the State Office and, then, to their Executive Committee and on to the USYSA/USSF and FIFA through their appeals and protest policies and procedures, upon payment of such fees and filing of such forms as are required through these organizations and as are in effect at that time.

5.4.15.3 Grievances

Grievances shall be handled in the same manner as protests with the MSA Registrar or League Official accepting the grievance. A fee is not required. Grievances automatically must be considered by the Actions and Disciplinary (A&D) Committee, which shall determine whether a formal hearing should be called, at which time a fee is required.

Note: A grievance is defined as a wrong, real or fancied, considered as grounds for complaint against an unjust act.

5.4.16 MSA REFUND POLICY

1) A \$10 Administration fee will be applied to ALL refunds.

2) A full refund will be given if a player requests to be dropped before draft, and /or when the association cannot provide a league to play in or there are not enough players to field a team.

3) A refund of 50% will be given if a player drops after team formation has occurred and no games have been played or a player that obtains a medical disability that will not allow him to play before the games begin.

4) No refunds will be given if a player drops after the season begins regardless of the explanation. There are no refunds given to academy player registrations.

5) Refund Requests will not be processed until after the season officially begins.

5.4.17 MSA Soccer Policies

All MSA policies, duly approved by the MSA Board automatically become part of the General Rules of MSA Soccer. Policy information is available through the MSA office.

5.4.18 Amendments to General and Playing Rules

Amendments to the General and Playing Rules may be proposed at any meeting of the MSA Soccer Board and voted on by the MSA Soccer Board at the end of each season.

All rule changes must be approved by the MSA Soccer Board.

Proposed changes may be made from the floor at any general membership meeting as long as they are in writing, presented by an authorized voting member and are seconded by an authorized voting member.

The MSA Board members are authorized to make any necessary changes to the MSA Soccer Playing and General Rules if such changes are dictated by NTSSA, based upon changes in the Laws of the Game, USSF/USYSA Rules or NTSSA Rules and Regulations. Any such changes shall be made by a majority vote of the MSA Soccer Board.

MSA Soccer Board and General Membership are not authorized to make any changes in the MSA Playing and General Rules that are contrary or not allowed by the Laws of the Game, USSF/USYSA Rules, or NTSSA Rules and Regulations.

5.5 Competitive Teams

While we want to support those players who wish to participate in competitive soccer and still be affiliated with the City of Midlothian and MSA as their 'Home Association', our focus is and will remain youth recreational soccer.

Competitive teams wishing to call MSA their 'Home Association' will need to complete an MSA Registration Form and pay the fees set by MSA.

5.6 Soccer Academies

A "Soccer Academy" is a group of U7 through U10 registered NTSSA recreational players who desire to participate with other players without following the recreational team formation rules. Therefore, soccer academies participate in an Academy League.

Players who wish to join an NTSSA soccer academy must register with their home association and may or may not need to also be on a recreational team. This is up to the discretion of the player's home association.

Academies are to be governed by NTSSA Youth Associations, and NTSSA Youth Associations may host as many Soccer Academies as they deem desirable. Academy teams are governed by the league in which they participate. (If more than one association is involved in an academy league an A&D committee should be in place).

Coaches, trainers, administrators, etc., of soccer academies must have satisfactorily passed the criminal background check and information sent to NTSSA.

Soccer academy play is additional to recreational play. Players may join any soccer academy of their choosing within their age group, and are NOT required to obtain a release from their NTSSA recreational team to participate on an academy team.

Players must present a form of proof of registration signed by their home association registrar each time they participate with an academy. Players may join as many soccer academies as they like as long as the soccer academy is recognized by a NTSSA member youth association.

No formal contract or written commitment may be signed by or on behalf of the player to commit a player to an academy team. The academies may charge a fee to cover expenses in addition to the player's recreational soccer registration fees. Academy players may participate in only one academy tournament at a time. Violations of this rule shall result in sanctions against the offending party

6 Discipline (NTSSA RULE 3.11)

All Member Associations are directed to distribute this rule to every youth and senior player, every coach, assistant coach, team manager, league administer and referee. It is intended that the player and/or coach will make known the contents to his or her parents and spectators.

Due to recent changes in this rule, we encourage readers to contact NTSSA or review the referenced rule available for view at the NTSSA website www.ntxsoccer.org. Due to length, MSA will not reprint it for the purpose of our MSA Guidelines, Rules, and Regulations.

6.1 Spectator Game Day Policy

1. To encourage and maintain good sportsmanship for all players, coaches, match officials and spectators.
2. Any spectator who has been removed from a game by a match official due to their actions will be required to complete the U.S. Soccer Safe Sport Training module before being allowed to return to team activities.

6.2 Coach/Team Official Game Day Policy

1. To encourage and maintain good sportsmanship for all players, coaches, match officials and spectators.
2. Any coach or team official who has been removed from a game via red card by a match official or after accumulation of 3 yellow cards during one season, the offending party is required to complete the online Grassroots Referee Course Module and First Time Grassroots Referee Quiz before being allowed to resume activities with any team.

7. Code of Ethics/Conduct

7.1 NTSSA Code of Ethics for Coaches

This code of ethics has been developed to clarify and distinguish approved and accepted professional, ethical, and moral behavior from that which is detrimental to the development of the sport of soccer.

Article 1 - Responsibilities to Players

A. The coach must never place the value of winning over the safety and welfare of players.

Winning should be the result of preparation and discipline with emphasis placed on the highest ideals and character traits.

B. Coaches shall instruct players to play within the written laws of the game and within the spirit of the game at all times.

C. Coaches shall not seek unfair advantage by teaching deliberate unsportsmanlike behavior to players.

D. Coaches should not tolerate inappropriate behavior from players regardless of the situation.

E. Demands on players' time should never be so extensive as to interfere with academic goals and progress. Motivation for excellence should include academics as well as athletics.

F. Coaches must never encourage players to violate NTSSA, recruitment, eligibility, or guest player rules and policies.

G. Under no circumstance should coaches authorize or encourage the use of medicinal or performance enhancing drugs. Players should be directed to seek proper medical attention for injuries and to follow the physician's instructions regarding treatment and recovery. At no time should a player be put at risk by returning from injury prematurely or by being forced to play while injured.

Article 2 - Responsibility to NTSSA and Member Associations

A. Adherence to all NTSSA and Member Association rules and policies, especially those regarding eligibility, team formation, recruiting, and guest players are mandatory and should NEVER be violated. It is the responsibility of every coach to know and understand these rules.

B. Player development and the growth of the player through participation are essential to the growth of the sport. Additionally, the coach must behave in such a manner that the principles, integrity, and dignity of the sport are maintained.

C. Any problems that cannot be resolved between coaches should be referred to the appropriate NTSSA Commissioner, Member Association, or League Commissioner immediately.

Article 3 - Responsibility to the Laws of the Game

A. Coaches should be thoroughly acquainted with and demonstrate a working knowledge of the laws of the game of soccer. Coaches are also responsible to ensure that their players understand the intent as well as the application of the laws.

B. Coaches must adhere to the letter and spirit of the laws of the game. Those coaches who circumvent the rules to gain advantage have no place in soccer.

C. Coaches are responsible for their players' actions on the field and must not permit them to perform with the intent of causing injury to opposing players.

D. If coaches permit, encourage, or condone performance, which is not in the letter or spirit of the laws, they are derelict in their responsibility to players, Member Associations,

NTSSA and the sport worldwide. The coach must strive constantly to teach good sporting behavior.

Article 4 - Responsibility to Officials

A. Officials must have the support of coaches, players, and spectators. Criticism of officials undermines their purpose in the game. Coaches must always refrain from criticizing officials in the presence of players.

B. Coaches should strive to develop a line of communication with officials, giving each an opportunity to better understand the problems relating to their specific area. This section shall not be taken as an encouragement to debate referee decisions during the match.

C. On game day, officials should be treated with respect before, during, and after the game. Officials should be addressed as "Referee" or "Mr./Ms. Referee" and not by name.

Professional respect should be mutual and there should be no demeaning dialogue or gesture between official, coach, or player. Coaches must not incite players or spectators or attempt to disrupt the flow of play.

D. Comments regarding an official should be made in writing to the appropriate organization assigning the official.

Article 5 - Responsibilities Regarding Scouting and Recruiting

A. It is unethical to scout any team, by any means whatsoever, except in regularly scheduled games.

B. The use of videotape or motion picture equipment to scout an opponent's regularly scheduled games for the purpose of recruiting is unethical.

C. All NTSSA rules pertaining to recruiting shall be strictly observed by the coach, manager, parent, or any team representative.

D. It is unethical to recruit player(s) actively playing for another team.

E. It is unethical for a player to be recruited or enticed from the Olympic Development Program (ODP) setting, either by his ODP coach or any other coach, manager, parent or team representative.

F. When discussing the advantages of his/her organization, the coach has an ethical obligation to be forthright and refrain from making derogatory remarks regarding other coaches, teams, and organizations.

G. It is unethical for any coach to make a statement to a prospective athlete which cannot be fulfilled; illegal to promise any kind of compensation or inducement for play; and immoral to deliver the same.

H. Allegations of illegal or unethical recruiting are very serious and should be based on concrete facts rather than hearsay and innuendo. While documentation of recruiting violations is essential, the use of videotape and other electronic equipment is discouraged.

Article 6 - Responsibility of Public Relations

A. Coaches have a responsibility to promote the game of soccer to the public. Comments and critiques of governing bodies, teams, coaches, players, parents, or the media should be positive and constructive, never prejudicial or inflammatory.

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B. When asked to give a recommendation concerning team, camp, coach or organization, it is in the best interest of all concerned if no less than three referrals are given in order to provide a professional unbiased source of information.

C. Coaches have the responsibility to assist their players in conducting themselves properly when in public while representing their team, Member Association, and NTSSA

D. Publicly predicting a win is folly and serves no useful place in a coach's public image.

E. Comments stressing injuries, team, personnel conflicts, or disciplinary problems as an

excuse for a loss or unsuccessful endeavor are detrimental and should be avoided.

F. It is unethical for a coach to solicit alumni, parents, booster club, or managers to pressure organizations. Member Associations or NTSSA to alter established rules. The coach must not attempt to influence these organizations in political or financial dealings outside the framework of their own rules and bylaws.

G. The media should be allowed access to the players for comment. Players should be instructed in how to conduct themselves during an interview.

Article 7 - Game Day and Other Responsibilities

A. A coach's behavior must be such as to bring credit to himself, his organization, and the sport of soccer. This is never more evident than on the day of the contest.

B. Rival coaches should meet prior to the game and exchange friendly or professional greetings. While the concept of rivalry is wholly embraced, it cannot take precedence over exemplary professional conduct.

C. During play, coaches have a responsibility to be as inconspicuous as possible. Coaches shall exhibit a respectful attitude towards players. The coach must confine him/herself to the coaching area. The attitude of the coach towards officials, spectators, opposing players and coaches should be controlled and undemonstrative.

D. It shall be unethical for a coach to have any verbal altercation with an opposing coach or bench during the game. Hostile physical contact with a player is considered highly unethical.

E. The coaches foremost post game responsibility is his/her team.

F. Coaches should use their influence on unfriendly spectators that demonstrate intimidating behavior towards officials and opposing teams.

7.2 NTSSA Parent's Code of Conduct

- 1) Children have more need for example than for criticism.
- 2) Attempt to relieve the pressure of the competition, not increase it. A child is easily affected by outside influences.
- 3) Be kind to your child's coach and officials. The coach is a volunteer, giving of personal time and money to provide a recreational activity for your child.
- 4) The opponents are necessary friends. Without them your child could not participate.
- 5) Applaud good plays by your team and by members of the opposing team.
- 6) Do not openly question an official's judgment and honesty. Officials are symbols of fair play, integrity, and sportsmanship.
- 7) Accept the results of each game. Encourage your child to be gracious in victory, and to turn defeat into victory by working towards improvement.
- 8) Remember your child is involved in organized sports for their enjoyment, NOT YOURS!
- 9) Encourage your child to always play by the rules.
- 10) Teach your child that honest effort is as important as victory so that the result of each game is accepted without undue disappointment.

7.3 USSF/NTSSA Referee Code of Conduct

As a registered USSF/NTSSA referee:

- 1) I pledge that I will faithfully enforce the Laws of the Game and any special Rule of the Competition of the League(s) I am officiating for without prejudice or favoritism to any player, team or coach.
- 2) I recognize that it is my professional duty to constantly keep abreast of any changes in the

Laws or Rules of Play and to keep myself physically fit and my training refreshed. I will constantly strive to improve my own refereeing techniques and always accept sincere, constructive criticism from fellow referees or official assessors without malice.

3) I pledge that I will make myself available, whenever possible, for game assignments for which I am qualified.

4) If I am a State or National USSF referee, I acknowledge that my first responsibility is to State or USSF - assigned games and that I will make myself available for these assignments regardless of conflicts with local playing associations or with leagues that I may be active in as a player or a coach.

5) I do hereby acknowledge my fellow referees' total authority over any matches over which they are duly assigned to officiate, and I pledge that I will never interfere with the carrying out of their prescribed duties, before, during, or after a match.

6) I understand that any criticism of fellow referees should be limited to constructive criticism in quiet, private referee-to-referee discussions, and then never within hearing distance of players, coaches, or spectators.

7) As a registered USSF/NTSSA referee, I will always strive to conduct myself in the highest professional manner possible, including refraining from indulging in arguments or name calling with coaches and/or spectators.

8) I also acknowledge that if I am also a coach, player, or spectator, that my conduct towards, and my respect for, my fellow referee doing my game is more closely noticed by all concerned. I will, therefore, strive to set a very high standard of personal conduct under these circumstances to serve as an example to all.

9) I understand that I should wear only the approved USSF referee uniform with the current badge of the highest grade I am qualified for, and that my uniform be clean, neat, and in a good state of repair. I also understand that if I am a coach that I am not to wear my uniform while coaching my team.

10) I further understand that I should not partake of any type of alcoholic beverage before any game assignment, and that I should never smoke, eat, or drink while actually officiating.

11) I hereby pledge that I will always faithfully carry out my duties and obligations as a USSF referee registered with the North Texas State Soccer Association; and that I do hereby acknowledge and accept the jurisdiction of the local NTSSA - affiliated playing association I may be refereeing for, NTSSA and USSF, and their respective Referee Committees, where applicable, over my actions, conduct, and performance as a registered USSF referee.

12) I furthermore understand that I may be disciplined, to include being placed on probation, suspended, or refused referee registration for significant or repetitive breaches of this Code of Conduct or any of its articles or provisions.

8. Coaches Information & Responsibilities

8.1 Education

Educational coaching clinics are recommended for all head coaches and recommended for assistant coaches and managers within two seasons.

Clinic location information can be obtained from your League Director or from the North Texas Soccer website: www.ntxsoccer.org.

8.2 MSA Coaches Meeting

The head coach and/or a representative from each team is **required** to attend the coaches meeting **every** season.

8.3 Player and Team Management

The head coach can manage the team via the facilities provided through the MSA website: www.midlothiansoccer.org

8.4 Game-day Roster

All teams are required to provide an official game-day roster form, with all players listed in alphabetic order and completely filled out, to the referee prior to each game. This form is available from the team management page, see the [Player and Team Management](#) section.

In cases where a misconduct occurred, the referee will not return the game-day roster to the coach and will instead turn it into MSA office. See the [Handling of Misconduct Reports](#) section.

It is recommended that coaches keep a copy of the game-day roster showing the written score until the score has been posted.

8.5 Reporting Scores

It is the Head Coach's responsibility to report the score as described below.

U8 and younger

Score shall not be kept.

U9 and older teams

The team that WINS shall report the game score online immediately following the conclusion of the match. If a tie occurs, the home team team is responsible for entering the score. Failure to report the score in a timely manner shall result in a 0-0 score being recorded permanently for the game.

Please note that at his/her discretion, a League Director may modify the above procedure. In such cases, the League Director shall communicate, in writing or email, the procedure to all teams in the respective league. For example, a League Director may require that all teams (winner or not) always report the score within the 48 hour period. League Directors may also request a copy of the game roster/report from both teams in order to settle disputes between teams with regards to the correct score.

9. Communications

9.1 Suggestions, Concerns, Complaints and Escalations

The size of the MSA Soccer program continues to grow and due to the growth, methods and procedures that worked last season may or may not work this season. Your help is needed to speak up and let the respective League Director or Commissioner know if there is a problem.

All parental suggestions, complaints and concerns need to be sent to the MSA office in written form and addressed to the respective league director and/or MSA Commissioner. Suggestions, complaints and concerns received any other way will not be considered.

In order to ensure all players have a fun and successful soccer experience, MSA urges coaches and parents to voice any concerns they may have. Regardless of the issue, we need to hear about it before we can address it.

Your first contact should be your respective League Director. If for some reason you feel your concerns are falling on deaf ears, contact a respective person on the MSA Soccer Board.

Contact information for all League Directors and members of the MSA Soccer Board may be found in the MSA Soccer website (www.midlothiansoccer.org).

9.2 Game Protests (See NTSSA Rule 3.13)

There are only two acceptable causes for the protesting of a game after it has been played. These are:

- a) A team knowingly plays an unregistered, ineligible, or suspended player.
- b) There has been an obvious error made in the application of the Laws of the Game that directly affects the outcome of the match, and the referee admits it.

No protests will be entertained if they are based on judgment decisions made by the referee during play. A game cannot be protested because one coach or both for that matter, thinks the referee was incompetent.

Any protests relating to the grounds, goal posts, cross bars, or other appurtenances of the match shall not be entertained unless an objection was lodged with the match referee prior to the start of the game.

9.3 Appeals Process

Players/Coaches may appeal a card by filing a written appeal with the MSA Soccer Commissioner. The Commissioner will organize an A&D hearing within 7 days.

Players/Coaches also have the right to appeal the A&D decision in writing within 48 hours of the hearing to the MSA President. The MSA President will then organize an A&D hearing within 7 days.

Lastly, players/coaches may appeal MSA's final decision to NTSSA. Please refer to NTSSA Rule 3.11.9 for that appeal procedure

10. Handling of Misconduct Reports

10.1 Referees Report

10.1.1 Time limit

The Referees Association shall submit a legal NTSSA Misconduct Report to the Commissioner of MSA Soccer within forty-eight (48) hours of said incident.

10.1.2 MSA Soccer Review

The incident report shall be reviewed by the MSA Soccer Commissioner and MSA Soccer Board and a decision will be made regarding the points (per NTSSA Discipline Rules) to be assessed.

10.2 Process

- 1) The Player, Coach, Assistant Coach, Team manager will be notified in writing the points assessed to the player and or team within seven (7) days of the decision.
- 2) Any misconduct report received indicating a Player, Coach, Assistant Coach, or Team manager has been issued a red card or ejection will automatically warrant an A&D Committee hearing.
- 3) The Player, Coach, Assistant Coach, or Spectator has the right to request an A&D Hearing (with the right to attend) by the MSA Soccer A&D Committee. All hearing request must be made to the Commissioner of MSA Soccer within seven (7) days of receipt of the decision.
- 4) The A&D Committee will notify in writing within five (5) days of receipt of request for hearing the date, time and location of the hearing.
- 5) The Player, Coach, Assistant Coach, or Spectator has the right to appeal this decision to the MSA Soccer Boards A&D Committee.
- 6) The method of notifying the A&D Committee of appeals will be as follows: The appellant shall notify in writing the Commissioner of MSA Soccer of their decision to appeal the A&D Committees decision. This must be done within five (5) days of the A&D Committee's decision.
- 7) The Commissioner will notify the MSA Soccer Board A&D Committee of the request. The Executive A&D Committee will notify in writing within five (5) days of notice, the Player, Coach, Assistant Coach, or Spectator of hearing date, time and location.
- 8) Fees as specified will be in cash, certified check or money order and will accompany the written notice. Fees will be:
 - All player appeals \$50
(\$50.00 paid by player;\$50 by coach)
 - All coach & referee appeals \$100
 - All team appeals \$100
- 9) Filing fees for appeals will, under no circumstances, be waived. Fees will be refunded to the appealing party only if the previous decision is overruled.

10.3 Use of Tape Recorders, Etc.

The use of tape recorders, court reporters and the presence of attorneys will not be allowed at MSA A&D Committee hearings unless requested by MSA Soccer. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

10.4 Appeals to NTSSA

If after the decision of the MSA Soccer Appeals Committee, the Player, Coach, Assistant Coach or Spectator is still unsatisfied with the decision he/she may be referred to the NTSSA A&D Committee. All procedures as outlined in the official NTSSA Rules will be applied.