

# NHSM Soccer Rules



The following rules relate to all league play within New Hampshire Sports Management soccer leagues. Anything not found in the following pages default to the IFAB Laws of the Game [FOUND HERE](#).

We are always open to suggestions, changes, additions, omissions, or requests, and will consider any communications on the rules so long as it's consistent with our core values and the Laws of the Game.

## Players, Coaches, and Substitutes

- A. **9v9 Games:** A team will field not more than nine players at a time (eight field players and one goalkeeper).
- B. **11v11 Games:** A team will field not more than 11 players at a time (ten field players and one goalkeeper).
- C. **6v6 Games:** A team will field not more than six players at a time (five field players and one goalkeeper).
- D. Teams must have a **minimum of four players** to start or continue a game for all 6v6 games, **minimum of six players** to start or continue a game for all 9v9 matches and a **minimum of seven players** to start or continue a game for all 11v11 matches. Failure to do so will result in a forfeiture, with a 4-0 score.
  - a. A team may continue to play a game if they fail to show up with the minimum number of players or by dropping below the minimum number of players required.
    - i. The two teams may agree to a forfeit and a “friendly” match will be played.
    - ii. The two teams may agree to play “down” against each other for a complete match (6v6 for example) that will be recorded.
      - 1. The opposing team is not required to agree to this option.
- E. In divisions labelled as **Coed** each team must always have a minimum two female players on the field for **6v6 matches**, and a minimum of three female players on the field always for **9v9 & 11v11 matches**. A team unable to fulfill this requirement will play short a player for each missing female.
  - a. A team that starts a game with less than six players may start with one female in 6v6, or two females for 9v9 and 11v11 games.
  - b. EXCEPTION: Divisions that are “male” with “female” teams participating or vice versa, this is not a requirement.
  - c. EXCEPTION: Youth U12 and below are allowed all male, all female, or any mix of players.
- F. **Substitutions** for players in all positions are unlimited and are made at ANY natural stoppage. Either team may substitute regardless of who has possession.
  - a. Substitutes must be at the halfway line to be allowed entry into the field of play.
  - b. EXCEPTION: All adult leagues may substitute “on-the-fly”, as long at the substitution is made in front of the team’s bench area (no coming off the endline to sub out while someone comes on).
- G. Each team’s **roster will be limited to 18 players for 6v6 and 9v9 teams and 22 players for 11v11 teams**. Players are allowed to be rostered on multiple teams, so long as the following guidelines are met:
  - a. A player does not play on two teams in the same game.
  - b. A player chooses a “primary” team in each age group. This will be the **ONLY** team the player will be allowed to compete on in a playoff scenario (semifinal or final).
    - i. Players may **NEVER** play for a team if they are not rostered.
- H. **Allowed Bench Personnel:** The following persons are allowed on the “player” side of the field during a match:
  - a. Any/all players that are rostered on the team.
  - b. A maximum of **three** rostered coaches and/or managers.
    - i. It is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** that any adult coach and/or manager possess an approved background check and SafeSport Certification or equivalent to be on the player’s side of the field.

- ii. At least one coach must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
  - iii. Only **ONE** designated coach is allowed to communicate onto the field to the players.
  - iv. No “coach” or “responsible party” is allowed on the player side of the field unless they are on the roster.
- I. It shall be the **coaches’ responsibility** to ensure that all players are properly dressed and equipped, to control the actions of all players on and off the field, and to assist the official in always controlling the match.
    - a. Coaches, or anyone representing a team as the “responsible party” are assumed to have read and agree to the NHSM “coach code of conduct” by virtue of stepping on the field and will be held accountable for those expectations.
  - J. **Any coach, player, or manager who is reported to be verbally or physically abusive anywhere on the property** shall immediately receive an indefinite suspension from the league. Re-instatement will only be considered upon a written request to NHSM management, and a possible in-person meeting to discuss the incident.
    - a. Incidents may be forwarded to the state association, national center for Safesport, or local authorities for further review and possible disciplinary action.
      - i. **Persistent arguing of calls will be considered verbal misconduct and are grounds for removal.**
      - ii. **Communication perceived as negative towards your players or opposing players will be considered grounds for removal.**

## Player Equipment

- A. Head bands with metal or plastic, unyielding braces, or anything deemed unsafe for players and their opponents shall be disallowed,
- B. Casts are permitted if they are fully covered with soft padding and deemed safe by the officials.
- C. Watches may only be kept on if they are covered with a protective wrist band and the watch is fully covered, pending referee approval.
- D. All members of the same team should be wearing the same uniform color except for the goalkeeper who is required to be wearing an easily distinguished different uniform/color.
- E. Numbers are recommended to be on the backs of uniform shirts in all divisions to match what is on your roster. Players with discipline will be asked for name verification and cross reference on the roster. Players not listed could lead to forfeits and/or fines.
- F. In the event opposing teams clash in color, it will be the **home team’s responsibility** to change colors. If neither team can change colors, pinnies will be provided upon request.
- G. Shin guards are mandatory at every level.
- H. No jewelry is allowed, although medical tags are acceptable.
- I. Outdoor cleats, indoor shoes (“flats”), turf shoes, and sneakers are permitted. Baseball cleats and any shoe with metal studs are not allowed on the turf.

## Start of Play

- A. The guest team (listed second on the schedule) will take the opening kick-off. The home team (listed first on the schedule) will take second half kickoff.
  - a. The team who did not kick off in the first half will kick off in the second half.
- B. At the **beginning of the game**, the referee will signal for the game to start, and one player will take the kickoff. The kicker shall not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player. The penalty shall be an indirect free kick from the point of infraction. The ball may travel forward or backward at the start of a play.

## Duration of Regular Season Game

- A. A full game will consist of two 25-minute periods, with a running clock. To remain on time, the clock will not stop for any reason.

- B. Half time will be 2-3 minutes in length, as determined by the referee, guided by the need to end, and start games on time.
- C. Games will start at the scheduled times. **COACHES AND PLAYERS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE FACILITIES UNTIL 15 MINUTES PRIOR TO THEIR SCHEDULED KICKOFF TIME. PARENTS, SPECTATORS AND NON-TEAM PERSONS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE FACILITY UNTIL 5 MINUTES PRIOR TO KICKOFF.** Teams failing to show, or teams who are late for a scheduled match (beyond the grace period of 5 minutes [clock will start at scheduled time even if teams are not ready to play]), will receive a forfeiture of the game with a 4-0 score. In this case, teams may intermix rostered players from the same league and use the referee, if desired, for a “friendly” match.

## Ball in and Out of Play

- A. The ball is out of play when the ball has fully crossed outside of the touchline or endline. **For balls out of bounds on the sides**, it will be a throw in. **For balls out of bounds on the end line**, it will be a corner kick on the appropriate side or a goal kick, where the ball may be placed anywhere on the goal box line.
  - a. **GOAL KICKS:** the defending team may not enter the penalty area until the ball is played. The attacking team may receive a pass in the penalty area.
    - i. For YOUTH 6v6 games (u8 & u10), the defending team must retreat to the midfield line and may not enter the opponents defensive end until the first pass is made.
- B. Re-starts for all goalie violations will be on the nearest spot at the top of the penalty area and will be indirect, (or direct Penalty Kick when warranted).
- C. The kicker shall not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player. The result is an indirect free kick for the opponent.
- D. Play stops when the ball hits off the referee unless, at the discretion of the referee, there is an advantage to the team in possession. Restart will be a drop ball for the team in possession at the spot of the contact without opposition from the other team.

## Methods of Scoring

- A. A goal is scored when the entire ball has crossed the goal line prior to the final whistle.
- B. A goal cannot be scored directly from kickoff.

## Goalkeeper Restrictions

- A. Goalie throws may be thrown at any distance. A goalie throwing directly into the opponents’ goal without touching another player will be restarted as a goal kick.
- B. The goalie may not dropkick or punt the ball. After playing the ball with his/her hands in the box, the goalie may immediately play the ball with his/her feet only after the ball is no longer bouncing.
- C. The goalie will have a maximum of 6 seconds to place the ball on the floor or distribute the ball after having it in his/her hands.
- D. The goalie may not play the ball with his/her hands when intentionally passed back by a teammate’s foot. The result will be an indirect free kick to the opposing team at the top of the penalty box, closest to where the goalkeeper picked up the ball.
- E. The goalie may dribble the ball into the box from outside the penalty area, and then pick the ball up.

## Fouls and Misconduct

- A. All fouls and misconduct will follow standard practices concurrent with the IFAB Laws of the Game, unless otherwise stated among these rules.
- B. Intentionally heading the ball shall only be allowed in age groups U-12 and older. For age groups younger than U-12, a “foul” will be assessed to a player who has intentional contact with the ball with any part of the head. The restart will be an indirect free kick awarded to the non-offending team.

- a. In our U12 age groups, we understand there are some U11 teams who have heading restrictions in their outdoor seasons. You may continue to follow those practices, but a “foul” will not be called for a deliberate contact with the head.
- Ⓒ. **Yellow Cards:** are given according to the IFAB Laws of the Game.
  - a. **SPITTING on the field is a yellow card offense. CHEWING GUM is a yellow card offense. If a player at any level is given a yellow card for spitting or chewing gum, that player must exit the field and the offending team will play “down” a player until the next natural stoppage of play when the player (or substitute) may re-enter to bring the team back to “full strength”.**
    - i. These will be the two occasions where a team will need to play “down” a player for a yellow card issued moving forward.
    - ii. Goalies must serve their own penalties.
  - ⓑ. A yellow card may also be issued to a coach.
- D. **PLAYER’S MAY NOT GO TO THE GROUND AT ANY TIME. SLIDING/SLIDE TACKLING IS NOT ALLOWED. A YELLOW CARD WILL BE ISSUED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE REFEREE.**
  - a. EXCEPTION: A goalkeeper may slide out hands first while in the box to make a save.
- E. **Red Cards:** are given according to the IFAB Laws of the Game. Anyone receiving a red card will result in the offending player’s team playing a “man down” for the remainder of the half in which the red card was issued. **Player receiving the red card may not re-enter the match at any point for the remainder of play.** The team may play back to “full strength” upon the start of the second half only if the red card was issued in the first half.
  - a. A red card may also be issued to the coach.
    - i. **The coach will need to leave the facility and will be suspended automatically, at a minimum, for the remainder of the session.**
      - 1. If the team has a coach ejected and no additional bench personnel are present or can be shown on a roster, the game will end and result in a 4-0 forfeit for the offending team.
    - ii. Any player receiving two (2) red cards in one session will be suspended from participation in any league the player is playing in for the remainder of the session at a minimum.
    - iii. Any red card received in the game immediately prior to the start of playoffs will result in that player being ineligible for any playoff games in any division that the player is participating in.
    - iv. Players who are issued a red card must leave the playing area immediately. They will be permitted to remain within the facility only if their actions and behavior are no longer disruptive or inappropriate as determined by NHSM officials and staff.
  - Ⓢ. All red cards are subject to further suspensions (a minimum of 1 game, which applies to all leagues, age groups and divisions in which a red-carded player participates) and may face investigation with the NHSA Disciplinary Committee.
- F. Any coach, player, or spectator who enters the field during an altercation on the field will **automatically be ejected, removed from the facility**, and will be suspended for the remainder of the session for all teams they are a part of.
- G. A person guilty of fighting will be suspended for a minimum of the remainder of the season.
- H. Any team intentionally providing inaccurate information about the carded player’s name will face additional disciplinary action by NHSM.
- I. **The referee will log each card in the scorebook and will inform the manager on duty about any red cards prior to leaving the building.**
- J. New Hampshire Sports Management reserves the right to expel/dismiss teams from participation. This decision will be based upon individual issues and circumstances. Coaches will be informed when their team is on a probationary status. This may be done by letter, telephone call, email, and/or a meeting with the coach or coaches. It shall be the coach’s responsibility to convey all information relevant to the probation to the players’ parents and anyone else who may be associated with the team.
  - a. Refunds of the league fee, whether complete or partial, will not be given to the team or to individual players in the event of the expulsion/dismissal from league play.

## Penalty Kicks

- A. A penalty kick issued by the referee must be taken even if time has expired.
- B. All penalty kick rules are consistent with the IFAB Laws of the Game.

## Playoffs

PLEASE NOTE THERE ARE NO PLAYOFFS IN THE YOUTH 6v6 DIVISIONS (U8 & U10)

- A. Unless otherwise communicated by the league, the final week of a session will consist of a full championship game between the #1 and #2 seeded teams. All other teams in the division will play a consolation game in their final game of the session, in succession of standings (#3 vs. #4, #5 vs. #6, etc).
- B. If the score is tied at the end of regulation in a knockout game (Final or Semifinal where stated), the result will go straight to kicks from the spot (shootout). A shootout will break the tie.
  - a. **Shoot-out:** Teams must declare to the referee and clearly define who will be the THREE penalty takers for each team.
    - i. Players do not need to be on the field at the end of regulation to be eligible to take a kick.
    - ii. The higher seeded team will choose to shoot first or second.
    - iii. The official will be given an ordered list of the shooters by each team, which will include both the shooters' names and jersey numbers.
    - iv. Shooters will gather at mid-field; goalies will wait near the corners away from sightlines of the shooter.
    - v. Teams will alternate kickers only until such time as a win is clearly defined. (Note that all kickers might not need to kick, depending on previous results.)
    - vi. **If the score is still tied at the conclusion of 3 kicks per team, a sudden death shootout begins.**
    - vii. The 4th person from each team are the first 2 shooters in the sudden death shootout. If the score is still tied, this is repeated until such time as a winner can be declared or until at least one bench is emptied.
    - viii. If every player from one team has shot and the other team still has players on the bench, it is that team's choice as to whether all the remaining players will be exhausted before players shoot a 2nd time. A team may elect to have every player shoot.
  - b. Consolation games that end in a tie will be recorded as a tie.

## Additional "House" Rules

- A. Parents, players, coaches, and spectators are not allowed to yell at the referee, players, or opposing coaches/players for any reason.
  - a. One coach on the sideline may provide positive instruction to their team. Communication with the opposing players or coaches may result in a card (see "league culture" section below).
- B. THERE ARE NO OFFSIDES IN ADULT LEAGUE PLAY OR YOUTH 6v6 MATCHES (U8 & U10).
  - a. EXCEPTION: Offside will be called in youth 9v9 games (U12-U19) according to the Laws of the Game.
  - b. EXCEPTION: Adult leagues see "G" below.
- C. Teams may not enter the facility until 15 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff. Parents will not be allowed onto the field until 5 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff (please note if games are behind, times may change).
- D. If a team goes up by 5 goals, the team that is trailing is permitted to add an additional player onto the pitch. If the team that is trailing scores a goal to go back to -4, that team must take off the extra player.
- E. 11v11 matches, players must be 10 yards away from an opponent for all free kicks. For all 9v9 and 6v6 matches, players must be five yards away from an opponent for all free kicks (walls).

- F. Every ball over the touchline (sideline) will be a throw in.
- G. Goal kicks played directly into the opposing team's box will be considered an "offside" offense. The result will be an indirect freekick at the midfield line for the opposing team.
  - a. RATIONALE: there are no offsides on a goal kick in the outdoor game. This rule will prevent "long balls" from being continuously dumped into the opposing team's box, resulting in goalie collisions/possible injury.
- H. Size four balls will be used for U12 divisions and below. Size five balls will be used for all divisions above U12.
  - a. Upon request, a size 3 ball may be used for U8 games if the facility cannot provide.
- I. No gum chewing is allowed in the facilities, and players caught chewing gum could receive a yellow card.
- J. NO FOOD OR DRINKS are allowed in the facilities except for water and sports drinks.
- K. Spectators bringing chairs must bring a blanket to place under your chair or use one of the mats provided by the facility.
- L. No vaping, smoking, chewing tobacco, or like products are permitted on the premises.
- M. No pets allowed inside on the turf surfaces.
- N. Official time will be kept by the referee... no stoppage time will be added.
- O. If teams are not ready to kick off at the start of the scheduled time, the referee will announce that the game is starting and will start the clock.
- P. If the ball hits the ceiling above the plane where it is still considered "in-play", the result will be an indirect free kick directly below the location where the ball struck the ceiling.
- Q. Tiebreakers for playoff seeding:
  - a. Points (3 points for a win, 1 for a tie, zero for a loss)
  - b. Head-to-head (three teams or more, this will not apply)
  - c. Goal differential (maximum of four per game)
  - d. Fewest goals allowed
  - e. Most shutouts
  - f. Fewest cards issued
  - g. Coin Flip

## **Weather Alerts / Cancelled Games / Inclement Weather**

Unless otherwise stated, games will be played in the NH SportsDome facilities. All games will be expected to be played. If the facility chooses to close, NHSM staff and administration will notify all teams of the facility closure. In these circumstances, every effort will be made to make up games but are not guaranteed.

Teams choosing not to show up for NON-WEATHER-related reasons must notify the opposing team's coach and must email NHSM at [director@nhsportsmanagement.com](mailto:director@nhsportsmanagement.com). NHSM are not responsible for notifying the opposing team but will assist in communicating where we can. Failure to show up for non-weather-related reasons will result in a 4-0 forfeit.

Teams choosing not to show up for WEATHER related reasons must notify the opposing team's coach, email NHSM at [director@nhsportsmanagement.com](mailto:director@nhsportsmanagement.com), AND POST TO THE WEATHER BLOG PROVIDED ON THE WEBSITE. Games not played due to weather will be deemed a cancellation with no-makeup.

If a team notifies an opponent the team will not be attending a scheduled match, the receiving team may still use the space for team training, etc. THESE GAMES WILL NOT BE MADE UP.

ALL CANCELLATIONS MUST BE POSTED ON THE WEATHER BLOG NO SOONER THAN 4 HOURS BEFORE THE SCHEDULED KICKOFF OR A FORFEIT WILL BE CONSIDERED. BLOG CAN BE FOUND AT [www.nhsportsmangement.com](http://www.nhsportsmangement.com).

## NHSM League Culture

The following rules apply to all league games in all offered sports, at all ages. They are simple to follow:

- A. Spectators are not allowed to talk to anyone on the playing field in any capacity.
  - a. Exception: cheering is okay, and encouraged
    - i. Facility management reserves the right to dismiss any/all spectators who are deemed excessive, rude, vulgar, or any other perception of negativity not in line with the league standard. In most cases, an individual will be addressed. If the behavior does not change, that person may be asked to leave and serve additional sanctions by the league and/or facility.
- B. Coaches are not allowed to argue with officials, speak to opposing players, argue with opposing coaches, or scream at their players, period.
  - a. In general, referees are responsible for the sideline behavior on the team side while the facility management team will assist in sideline behavior on the parent side of the field. However, especially in cases with youth referees, at the discretion of facility management, intervention procedures can/may occur.
- C. Players are not allowed to argue with the referees.

Anyone not willing to adhere to these simple rules will be asked to leave by the NHSM or NH SportsDome staff.

Requested referee diffusion procedures to coaches and players only:

1. Please remind the player or coach of the league rules and expectations
2. Issue a yellow card
3. Issue a dismissal if needed

Please note, at the discretion of the referee – cards can be issued immediately, especially with youth referees afraid to confront an adult coach.

What to expect from the NHSM or NHSD staff if you are an unruly spectator:

1. A request to remain quiet and reminder of the league rules
2. A request to leave the facility

Please note that – at the discretion of the league staff – a spectator may be asked to leave without warning. We are actively working on changing the culture of youth sports. Please be helpful in supporting this environment.