



Referee Procedure Manual

2026 Season

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REFEREE TIMING GUIDE..... 1-2

Pre-match communication

Arrival at venue

Field/Venue inspection

Pre-kickoff duties

Post-match duties

MATCH RULES AND PROTOCOLS..... 3-4

Match Timing Rules

Roster and Substitution Rules

Safety Protocols

Match Discipline

MINIMUM STANDARDS..... 5-6

Field/Venue

Locker Rooms

Benches/Technical Area

Match Day Rosters

Designated Certified Trainer

Match Balls/Ball Kids



The League
for Clubs

Referee Procedure Manual

Congratulations on being chosen to work in The League for Clubs (TLfC) for the 2026 season. You were chosen as a result of your professionalism, abilities and commitment to the game.

The League for Clubs is a national amateur adult soccer league designed to provide an opportunity for elite men's players to play and develop, as well as a vehicle to promote men's soccer at the highest amateur level. TLfC is sanctioned by the United States Adult Soccer Association (USASA) as an affiliate of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and FIFA.

Our goal for the 2026 season is to assist officials in their growth and development as soccer officials. We hope that the tools and resources we have put in place allow you to continue to grow and have sustained success in your role as an elite soccer official.

The content included in this manual will provide you with the information necessary for you to continue to provide outstanding service to The League for Clubs and their member clubs.

I am looking forward to working with you in 2026 and in the future.

Karen H. Swanner
TLfC Director of Match Officials



Referee Procedure Manual

Referee Timing Guide

48 HOURS BEFORE MATCH

- Match referee is required to check in with home team no later than 48 hours before match kick time. The check in should include match time, field location, parking and locker room availability

UPON ARRIVING

- Be professionally dressed (dress shorts/slacks and polo)
- Match liaison from the home club should be made available should you have any questions before, during or after the match

60+ MINUTES BEFORE MATCH - Field/Venue Inspection

- Complete pre-match minimum standards inspection of field/venue
 - See Page 5 (Sections 1-3) for minimum standards requirements

45-60 MINUTES BEFORE MATCH - Rosters/Trainer/Match Balls/Ball Kids

- ROSTERS
 - No later than 60 minutes before the match, rosters will be entered by both clubs through the Praxis Sports website.
 - A club coach/manager (can be from either club) will provide their phone for the roster check-in process.
- DESIGNATED CERTIFIED ATHLETIC TRAINER
 - A designated certified athletic trainer must be provided by home club and should be on-site at start of the warm-up session
 - **No match shall be allowed to start without a certified athletic trainer on-site!**
 - If a designated certified athletic trainer is not on-site or en route, please contact your regional sub-assignor and/or TLfC Director of Match Officials Karen Swanner immediately (kswanner@wpslsoccer.com)
- MATCH BALLS/BALL KIDS
 - Home club should provide at least eight (8) official TLfC match balls that are clean and in good condition
 - Home club should provide at least six (6) ball kids or employ a disc cone system with balls placed around the pitch to avoid delays



Referee Procedure Manual

Referee Timing Guide (cont.)

45 MINUTES BEFORE MATCH

- WARM UP SESSION BEGINS

POST MATCH

- REPORT
 - Within 24 hours, please submit your match report in Assignr
 - Within 24 hours, please fill out the minimum standards survey located within the Assignr
 - If there are issues reporting the match on Assignr, please email your match report to your sub-assignor **AND** TLfC Director of Match Officials Karen Swanner (kswanner@wpslsoccer.com)



Referee Procedure Manual

Match Rules and Protocols

MATCH TIMING

- Two 45-minute halves with stoppage time added at the end of each half at the referee's discretion
- Halftime is 15 minutes from whistle to whistle

SUBSTITUTIONS

- Each team is allowed to dress 20 players (11 starters and 9 substitutes)
- Each team is allowed seven (7) substitutions
 - Substitutions can be used at any time of the match (examples - all at the same time or all in the first half)
 - Players subbed off are not allowed to re-enter under any circumstances
 - If a player jersey number changes due to an outfield player going in goal, vice versa, or a jersey malfunction, please denote on the match report.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS

- BLEEDING PLAYER
 - Bleeding player must leave the pitch until bleeding is stopped, blood is cleaned from player and jersey
 - Player can re-enter after checked and cleared by fourth official
- HEAD INJURIES
 - Any player that suffers a possible head injury must leave the field of play and be inspected for a concussion
 - Player can re-enter after checked and cleared for concussion by designated certified athletic trainer
- HYDRATION BREAKS
 - Designated match trainer is tasked with determining if hydration breaks are necessary (wet bulb temperature of 86 degrees or higher)
 - Breaks will take place at or around the 25th and 70th minutes and when the ball is out of play
 - Breaks will last at least three (3) minutes and be added to stoppage time
- FASTING BREAKS
 - If a player on the pitch is fasting due to religious reasons (i.e. Ramadan), a fasting break will be honored to allow the player(s) to receive nutrition (must be communicated to referees before the match)

Referee Procedure Manual

Match Rules and Protocols (cont.)

SAFETY PROTOCOLS (cont.)

- Unsafe conditions/weather safety
 - The referee can postpone or abandon the match if safety of anyone in the venue is at risk
 - Lightning
 - A lightning strike within eight (8) miles of the stadium triggers an immediate suspension of play
 - Designated match trainer is tasked with monitoring lightning strikes and alerting officials if a strike occurs that triggers a delay
 - 30 minutes must pass without a lightning strike in an 8-mile radius before play can resume
 - Delay less than 15 min - no warmup required
 - Delay 15-60 min - 5-minute warmup period
 - Delay over 60 min - 20-minute warmup period
 - Match must restart at the exact time of match it was delayed
 - If stopped during open play, match must restart with a dropped ball

DISCIPLINE

- SENDING OFF OFFENSES (7)
 - Serious foul play
 - Violent misconduct
 - Spitting at or on another person
 - DOGSO (denying a goal scoring opportunity) by deliberately handling the ball (does not apply to goalkeeper in the penalty area)
 - DOGSO by committing an offense punishable by free kick or penalty kick (unless as outlined below)
 - Where a player commits an offense against an opponent within their own penalty area which denies an opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, the offender is only cautioned if the offense was an attempt to play the ball or a challenge for the ball.
 - Using insulting, offensive, racial or abusive language and/or hand gestures
 - Receiving a second yellow card caution within the same match
- Players that are sent off must leave the bench/technical area and remain in the dressing room for the remainder of the match and during post-match handshake.

Referee Procedure Manual

Minimum Standards

SECTION 1 - PLAYING FIELD/VENUE

- Playing field must meet minimum size requirements of 110'x60'
 - waiver can be granted by TLfC
- On-field lines should be properly marked
- Corner flags should be in good condition
- Goals should be properly anchored and in good condition
- A working scoreboard should be in place to display both the match time and match score
- An American flag should be displayed
- Ample restroom facilities should be available for fans

SECTION 2 - LOCKER ROOMS

- Both clubs should have a locker/dressing room with
 - benches or chairs to accommodate at least 20 people
 - ample drinking water
 - restroom and shower facilities
- The referee locker/dressing room(s) should be capable of accommodating four (4) people and include
 - ample drinking water
 - restroom and shower facilities

SECTION 3 - BENCHES AND TECHNICAL AREA

- Each bench area should
 - accommodate at least 16 people
 - have the same amenities for both teams
 - have ample ice, water and cups that are available to both clubs and referees
- Technical area should be properly marked off
- Fourth official should be provided an area (preferably with a table) between the two benches
- Only players and technical staff are allowed in the bench area
 - **ALL individuals in the technical area during the match must be registered and checked in.**



Referee Procedure Manual

Minimum Standards (cont.)

SECTION 4 - MATCH DAY ROSTERS

- Must have roster entered into Praxis at least 60 minutes before the match.
- Clubs are allowed to dress 20 players, but only allowed seven (7) substitutions.

SECTION 5 - DESIGNATED CERTIFIED ATHLETIC TRAINER

- The home club must provide a designated certified athletic trainer.
- Designated match trainer should be on site at the beginning of warm-up period and until the end of the match.
- **No match is allowed to begin without a certified athletic trainer on site!**
- If a trainer is not on-site, the match can be delayed up to one hour.
- Clubs ARE NOT ALLOWED to agree to start the match without a trainer under any circumstances.

SECTION 6 - MATCH BALLS AND BALL KIDS

- Eight (8) match balls are to be presented to the referee for inspection before the match.
- Match balls are required to be official TLfC match balls in good condition, clean, and properly inflated.
- Each club shall have a minimum of six (6) ball kids around the pitch.
- Clubs can opt to use at least two (2) people to employ a system using disc cones to place balls around the field to avoid delays.