

# VIRGINIA SAND SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIPS (VSSC)

## \* RULES - YEAR 2026 \*

### General

The Virginia Sand Soccer Championship (VSSC) and its Board of Directors, the Tournament Committee, or any sponsors of the tournament shall not be responsible for expenses incurred by a team or club if the tournament is canceled in whole or in part.

All decisions of the referee are final and binding. The Tournament Committee reserves the right to decide on all matters relative to the tournament and all decisions are final.

### NO PROTESTS ARE ALLOWED

In the event of inclement weather, the Tournament Committee may reschedule a game, change division structure, reduce game duration, or cancel a game.

### Registration

- All teams shall be allowed a maximum of 10 players on their roster, except the U08, U09 & U10 Boys and Girls, and U.S. Open Divisions. These divisions are allowed a maximum of 12 players on their roster.
- All Coed Division teams shall include a minimum of 3 female players on their roster, 2 of which should be on the field during play (see Laws of the Game section 4.1 for more information).
- Players must be listed on the roster at registration check-in to be eligible to play; no additions to the roster are permitted after the team has submitted the roster to VSSC.
- Females may play in male divisions, but males cannot play in female divisions.
- **Players cannot be dual rostered on two teams in VSSC.**
- Youth division age groups are based on USYSA 2025-26 seasonal year, as follows:

Born January 1 of the following years (or later):

U09 (2017)	U13 (2013)
U10 (2016)	U14 (2012)
U11 (2015)	HS Boys/Girls
U12 (2014)	AdultMen/Coed

Youth Only: Players may play UP in age group, but no team can include a player playing DOWN in age. Teams in all divisions must enter the division for the oldest player on their team.

- A player may compete on more than one team, but the Tournament Committee cannot give special scheduling consideration to such circumstances.
- Other division criteria: all team members must be:

High School-Boy/Girls	at least 14 years old by Friday, May 29, 2026 <b>and</b> be in High School during the 2025-2026 school year. You must be in HS or a graduating senior in June 2026.
Adult Coed/Men/Women	age 18 or <i>older</i> on Friday, May 29, 2026

### Start of Play

Coaches shall ensure that all players are on scene a minimum of 20 minutes before a scheduled game. A team that cannot field 3 players at the scheduled start time shall forfeit the game. The team forfeiting shall be declared the loser by a score of 4 goals to none (4 - 0).

If no referee is present within 5 minutes of the scheduled start time, the game will be rescheduled unless both teams agree to proceed. If the game proceeds, the score shall stand as played without protest.

The following requirements must be met for all High School divisions and below:

All teams in youth and High School divisions are required to have an adult (over 25), registered with the event, on their team sideline. A team that does not have an adult on their sideline at the scheduled start time shall forfeit the game. The team forfeiting shall be declared the loser by a score of 4 goals to no (4-0).

### **Tournament Standings**

Bracket standings to determine quarter-finalist, semi-finalists, and finalists will be based on the following:

**WIN - 3 PTS      TIE - 1 PT      LOSS - 0 PTS**

Total points ties will be resolved by the following tie-breakers, in order:

1. Head-to-Head of two teams tied (disregard if more than two teams tied).
2. Team with highest goal differential per game – total of the net score for each tournament game up to a maximum differential of 4 goals per game, with either positive or negative result (total goals scored minus total goals scored against in each game).
3. Least goals allowed.
4. Total goals scored (up to maximum of 8 per game).
5. If still tied, both teams will proceed to an available field at Tent Coordinator discretion and determine the winner by penalty kicks (see format below).

### Wildcard Procedures for Divisions of 12 Teams:

The Wildcard team is determined by the best record of the three 2nd Place teams in each Group, based on the above Tournament Standings criteria in order. (Starting with Total Points, then Goal Differential, Least Goals Allowed, etc. Head-to-Head does not apply since they don't play each other).

The Matchups for these Divisions are "1st A vs 1st B", and "1st C vs Wildcard". Except if W/C is from Group C, then the matchup is "1st A vs W/C" and "1st C vs 1st B".

### **Forfeits**

Any team found to have played with an ineligible player (not on roster, red carded player, etc.) or violating any registration criteria (e.g. player not within age parameter for division; no adult over age of 25 on roster and present on player sideline, etc.) shall have their games subject to forfeiture and not be eligible for any playoffs unless specifically authorized by the VSSC Director of Operations under unique circumstances. The team forfeiting shall be declared the loser by a score of 4 goals to none (4 - 0)

# VA SAND SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIPS

## LAWS OF THE GAME

(Adapted from the BSWW LOTG <https://beachsoccer.com/laws-of-the-game>)

### A. Objectives of the Game

The game is provided for leisure, team play, friendship, and healthy competition. Fair play is the essence of sand soccer.

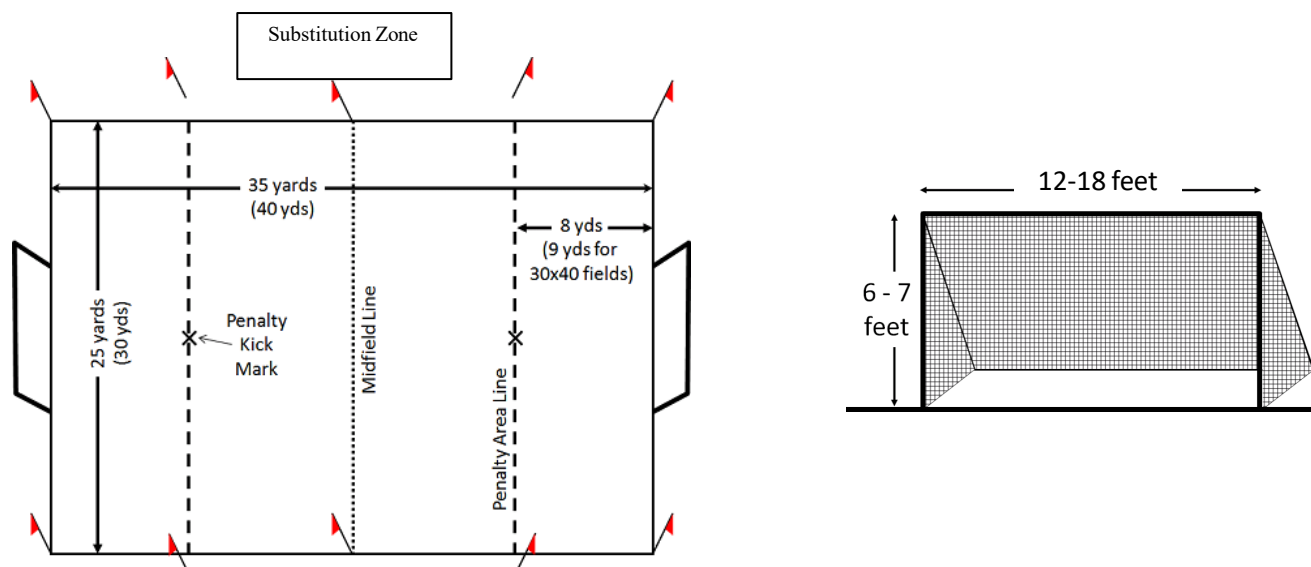
### B. Rules of the Game

#### Rule 1: The Pitch

**1.1 Dimensions of the fields:** Two field sizes will be in use - 25 x 35 yard for most divisions and 30 x 40 yards for certain adult divisions. Perimeters will be marked with field lines affixed to the sand. Substitutes, team delegates, and other spectators shall remain at least 6 feet from the touch lines.

**1.2 Penalty Area:** The Penalty Areas will be delineated by colored markers in the sand 8 yards (9 yards on 30 x 40-yard fields) from, and paralleling, the goal lines joining both touch lines at each end of the field. The position of a Penalty Kick mark shall be the center of this imaginary line.

**1.3 Corner Area and Center of the Field:** Corners will be marked with a standard corner flag. A 1-yard quadrant from the corner forms the Corner Area. A colored disc or flag will be placed on each touch line at midfield.



**1.4 Goals:** Goals vary in size by division from 6' x 12' to 7' x 18' based on appropriate age groups. Goals are aluminum construction and anchored to the sand at the baselines. The entire goal's framework (including the double crossbar goals) is considered active play provided that the ball has not gone out of play.

**1.5 Substitution Zone:** The substitution zone is 7m in length, extending 3.5m to each side of the intersection between the imaginary halfway line and the touchline, with 2.5 yards on either side of the point where the halfway line joins the touch line. The area in front of the timekeeper's table (U.S. Open only), 3.5m to either side of the imaginary halfway line, is kept clear.

## **Rule 2: The Ball**

All divisions and age groups shall play with a size 5 ball; inflation pressure is 7 lbs. The referee shall stop the game and the clock and replace any ball showing signs of deformity. After replacement, a Dropped Ball is performed according to the Dropped Ball procedures (8.3).

## **Rule 3: The Players**

**3.1 Number of Players:** The game is played by 2 teams consisting of a maximum of 5 players on each team (exceptions: Youth U8, U9, and U10 divisions will play with 6 players per side). One of the players on the field for each team shall be the goalkeeper. Both teams must have a minimum of 3 players on the field to start the game. All players on the roster may compete in each game unless sitting out due to a red card from the previous game.

All Coed Division teams shall have a minimum of three (3) female players included on each team roster, two (2) of whom shall be on the field at all times during the match. If only one female is available due to injury, the team must play down a player. If there are no females available, the team must play down two (2) players. All Coed Division teams shall have a maximum of 3 male players on the field at any time.

**3.2 Substitutions:** Substitutions are "on the fly" and unlimited. Substitutions may only occur within the substitution zone. The substitute must only enter the field after the player being substituted has left the field.

**3.2a Substitute Infringement:** If a substitute enters the field before the player has left the field, the substitute must leave the field of play and receive a caution (yellow card) and then may complete a proper substitution. If the referee stops play for an improper substitution, play is restarted with a free kick to the opposing team, to be taken from one of the following:

- From the position of the ball at the time of the stoppage (Clear Zone Cone), if the ball was in the half of the team against which the offense was committed.
- From the center of the field (Clear Zone Cone) if the ball was in the half of the team that committed the offense

**3.3 Minimum Number of Players:** The minimum number of players on the field is 3. The team that has less than 3 eligible players shall forfeit that game, regardless of the score at the time that the game was stopped. In this case, the score of the game, for goal average effect, shall be 4-0 for the winning team.

**3.4 Goalkeeper Change:** A **substitute** may change places with the goalkeeper at any time. A **field player** may change places with the goalkeeper only after informing the referee and must only occur during stoppages in play or between periods. The field player and keeper must change shirts. If an infringement occurs, the referee shall allow play to continue until the next stoppage in play and then caution both players.

**3.5 Timeout for Goalkeeper Change (U.S. Open only)** - A player or team official can ask the referee to stop the clock to substitute the goalkeeper if the ball is out of play and the restart is a goal clearance or a kick-in/throw-in to be taken by the team requesting the substitution from inside their own penalty area. If the referees have already started the four-second count, they continue from where they stopped counting when the substitution was requested, informing the player who is taking the restart of how many seconds are remaining.

## **Rule 4: The Players' Equipment**

**4.1 Footwear:** Authorized footwear includes bare feet, cotton socks taped to ankles, elastic ankle and/or footwraps, and commercially manufactured sand socks. Vincere will be the single sock retailed at the beach during VSSC. Other

commercial beach socks with soft soles are authorized. The referees shall require removal of any footwear which is deemed unsafe for competition. (The critical safety issue is the stiffness of the soles which may harm the opponent's legs and feet.)

**4.2 Uniforms:** Uniforms consist of shirts and shorts. Playing vests shall be supplied to one team if required with the exception of the U. S. Open (Pro) Divisions. Goalkeepers shall wear a uniform of contrasting color with other players and the referee. Use of plastic goggles for eye protection is allowed. U. S. Open uniforms shall consist of shirts and shorts of the same design and color, with clearly visible identification numbers on the shirts.

#### **Rule 5: The Referees**

**1.1.** The game shall be officiated by a referee whose decisions are final. The referee will serve as timekeeper and scorekeeper, including controlling the 2-minute or 10-minute player-down penalty for a red-carded player. The Tournament Committee shall determine, before the game or during play, if conditions are suitable for safe play. Certain Adult or High School divisions and knockout matches may employ 2 referees on the field.

**1.2. Advantage:** Unlike 11-a-side soccer, whenever a foul occurs, the referee shall blow the whistle and stop the game unless there is a clear goal-scoring opportunity (the ball going into the goal, or an attacker has the ball with no defenders between them and the goal).

#### **Rule 6: The Other Match Official**

Additional Match Officials if required.

#### **Rule 7: The Duration of the Match**

All matches shall employ three (3) 11-minute periods, (exception: U. S. Open (Pro) Divisions shall employ three (3) 12-minute periods), separated by a 2-minute intermission to exchange ends. A referee's whistle ends each period. After the second period, the referee shall conduct a coin toss with the same options as for 8.2 Kick-off Procedure. The referee shall add extra time at the end of a period to allow a Penalty Kick or Direct Free Kick to be taken. The referee may add extra time at the end of a period for serious injury or if a team is wasting time.

#### **Rule 8: The Start and Restart of Play**

**8.1.** A kick-off starts each period of a match, including extra time, and restarts play after a goal has been scored. Direct Free Kicks, Penalty Kicks, kick-ins/throw-ins, Goal Clearances, and corner kicks are other restarts. A dropped ball is the restart when the referees stop play and the Law does not require one of the above restarts.

**8.2. Kick-off Procedure:** The team that wins the toss of a coin decides which goal to attack in the first period or to take the kick-off. In the third period, the team that wins the toss of a coin decides which goal to attack or to take the kick-off. If extra time is played, the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals; the team that decided which goal to attack in the third period takes the kick-off. Same procedures as grass soccer with the following exceptions:

- Opponents must be at least 5 yards *from* the ball until it is in play.
- A goal CAN NOT be scored directly from the kick-off.
- A sand mound may be built with the feet or the ball.
- Each team must have and maintain a minimum of 3 players.

**8.3. Dropped ball Procedure:** Same procedures as grass soccer with the following exception:

All other players (of both teams) must remain at least 2 yards from the ball until it is in play when it touches the pitch.

- Dropped Ball situations include Injury, Outside Interference, Defective Goal or Defective Ball Restart.
- If the game is stopped for any of previously mentioned reasons while the ball was out of play, the restart will be the applicable restart for how the ball went out of play, i.e. corner kick, goal clearance, etc.

Dropped Ball restarts are as follows:

- The ball is dropped for the defending team's goalkeeper in their penalty area if, when play was stopped:
  - The ball was in the penalty area; or
  - The last touch of the ball was in the penalty area.
- In all other cases, one of the referees drops the ball for one player of the team that last touched the ball and at the position where it last touched a player, an outside agent, or a match official.

## **Rule 9: The Ball In and Out of Play**

### **9.1. Ball is out of play:**

- When it has wholly passed over the goal line or touchline on the ground or in the air.
- Play has been stopped by the referees.
- When it touches a match official, remains on the pitch, and if:
  - A team starts a promising attack OR
  - The ball goes directly into the goal OR
  - The team in possession of the ball changes.

In these three cases involving the ball touching a match official, play is restarted with a dropped ball. (8.3. Dropped ball Procedure)

**9.2.** Ball is in play at all other times when it touches a match official, as well as when it rebounds off a goalpost, the crossbar or a corner flag post and remains on the pitch.

## **Rule 10: Determining the Outcome of a Match**

**10.1 Tournament Overtime:** Ties in preliminary games will remain a tie. For quarter-final, semi-final, and final games, ties will be resolved in the following manner:

**10.1.a One 3-minute "golden goal" overtime period.** The winner shall be the first team to score a goal. If the score is tied at the end of the period, the teams will go to a penalty shootout.

**10.1.b Penalty Shootout.** The first round consists of 5 players from each team. Any eligible player on the team roster may participate. A minimum of 2 female players must kick in the first round of all Coed divisions. If tied after the first round, kicks shall be taken one for one. Players cannot repeat until all eligible players have kicked. A team with a greater number of players than their opponent will 'reduce to equate' in order to use the same number of eligible kickers.

**10.2 Forfeits:** Any team found to have played with an ineligible player (not on roster, red carded player, etc.) or violating any registration criteria shall have their games subject to forfeiture and not be eligible for any playoffs unless specifically authorized by the VSSC Tournament Committee under unique circumstances. The team forfeiting shall be declared the loser by a score of 4 goals to none (4-0).

## **Rule 11: Offside**

**11.1** There is no offside in Sand Soccer

## **Rule 12: Fouls and Misconduct**

### **12.1 Direct Free Kicks from the spot of the foul:**

- If a player is fouled in their own half, a free kick is awarded with a clear zone (cone) established from the point of the offense to each of the opponent's corner flags.
- If a player is fouled in the opponent's half, a free kick is awarded with a clear zone (no cone) and players from both teams must be positioned at least 5 yards away and be behind or even with the ball until it is put into play.
- If a player is fouled in the opponent's penalty area a penalty kick is awarded.

A Direct Free Kick is taken at the appropriate location described above if any of the offenses listed below are committed in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent.
- Tackles or attempts to tackle an opponent.
- Jumps at an opponent.
- Charges an opponent.
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent.
- Pushes an opponent.
- Slides AT an opponent (See ADDENDUM B)
- Holds an opponent.
- Spits at an opponent.
- Handles the ball, i.e. deliberately carries, propels, or throws it with a hand or arm (except for the goalkeeper in their own penalty area).

### **12.2 Direct Free Kicks from the center of midfield:**

A Direct Free Kick is taken at the center of midfield with a clear zone (cone) established from the center point of midfield to each of the opponent's corner flags if a player or team commits any of the following offenses in their OWN half.

- Team possesses the ball, while it is in play, in its own penalty area for more than 4-seconds.
- Goalkeeper possesses the ball in their own penalty area for more than 4-seconds.
- **(US OPEN DIVISIONS ONLY)** If a goalkeeper controls the ball with the hands, arms or feet in their own half for more than 4-seconds.
- Goalkeeper plays the ball with hand/arm inside their penalty area after receiving it from a teammate, then deliberately touches it again with the hand/arm after receiving a second pass from a teammate, without the ball touching an opponent between the two passes.
- Goalkeeper deliberately touches the ball with the hand/arm inside their penalty area after releasing it and before it has touched another player.
- Goalkeeper punts the ball.
- Goalkeeper after playing the ball outside their penalty area, returns to their penalty area and, before it has touched another player, touches or plays the ball with any part of their body.

Team or goalkeeper in possession of the ball in their OWN half commits any of the following offenses:

- Plays in a dangerous manner.
- Impedes the progress of an opponent without any contact being made.
- Attempts to deceive the referees, e.g. by feigning injury or pretending to have been fouled (simulation).
- As guilty of dissent, using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or action(s) or other verbal offenses.
- Any other offense not mentioned in the Laws of the Game for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player.

### **12.3 Direct Free Kicks from spot of the offense**

Direct Free kick with a clear zone (cone) established from the spot of the offense to each of the opponent's corner flags. If a player commits any of the following offenses in the **opponent's** half.

- Plays in a dangerous manner.
- Impedes the progress of an opponent without any contact being made.
- Attempts to deceive the referees, e.g. by feigning injury or pretending to have been fouled (simulation).
- Is guilty of dissent, using offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/or action(s) or other verbal offenses.
- Any other offense not mentioned in the Laws of the Game for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player.
- Any other offense for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player.

**12.4 Yellow Cards:** A player is cautioned (shown a yellow card) if they commit any of the following offenses:

- Unsporting behavior.
- Shows dissent by word or action.
- Persistently infringes the Laws of the Game.
- Delays the restart of play.
- Fails to respect the required distance during a kick-off, corner kick, ball inbound, or Direct Free Kick.
- Enters or re-enters the field without the referees' permission or infringes the substitution procedure.
- Deliberately leaves the field without the referees' permission.

A substitute is cautioned if they commit any of the following offenses:

- Is guilty of unsporting behavior.
- Shows dissent by word or action.
- Delays the restart of play.
- Entering the field NOT in accordance with the substitution procedure.

**12.5 Red Cards:** A player, substitute, coach, or team delegate is sent off (shown a red card) if they commit any of the following offenses:

- Is guilty of serious foul play.
- Is guilty of violent conduct.
- Deliberately throws sand at anyone in a violent manner.
- Spits at an opponent or anyone else.
- Denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (except for the goalkeeper in their own penalty area).
- Denies an opponent moving towards the player's goal an obvious goal scoring opportunity by committing an offense punishable by a Direct Free Kick or a Penalty Kick.
- Uses offensive, insulting, or abusive language or gestures.
- Receives a second caution (yellow card) in the same game.
- Enters the field of play without referee's permission.

The individual issued the red card must leave the vicinity of the field (sight and sound) and if a player, shall also be denied participation in that team's subsequent game, including the final round of competition (quarters-, semis-, or finals). The Referee will file an Incident Report with the Tournament Committee for possible additional sanctions including, but not limited to, loss of team points from standings, participation in knockout rounds, and participation in current or future VSSC events.

Red Card Sanctions (for Amateur Divisions only):

A team must play down a player for one of the following time penalties:

- 2-minutes if a player receives a red card that is a result of receiving their second yellow card or the result of foul and abusive/insulting language, serious foul play, or denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO).
- 10-minutes if a player receives any red card for violent conduct (including spitting and throwing sand).

The 2-minute and 10-minute red card time penalty may extend into the next period, including into extra time.

- A substitute may replace a sent-off player after the appropriate time penalty has elapsed, upon referee approval.

If a goal is scored before the time penalty has elapsed, the following conditions apply:

- If there are five players against four and the team with the greater number of players scores a goal, the team with only four players may be completed with a fifth player.
- If both teams are playing with three or four players and a goal is scored, both teams remain with the same number of players.

- If there are five players against three, or four against three, and the team with the greater number of players scores a goal, the team with three players may be increased by one player only.
- If the team that scores the goal is the one with fewer players, the game continues without changing the number of players.

**12.6 Unsportsmanlike Behavior off the Field:** If a player, substitute, coach, or team delegate commits serious aggression, or offends any spectator or participant of the game (i.e., the referee, players, or members of the Tournament staff) the referee shall display a red card and send them out of the competition area. The individual's name and reason for suspension will be reported to the Tournament Committee for possible additional sanctions including but not limited to loss of team points from standings, participation in knockout rounds, and participation in current or future VSSC events. When play is stopped for unsportsmanlike behavior off the field, the opposing team will be awarded a Direct Free Kick from the center of the pitch. A goal CAN be scored directly from this restart.

**12.7 Misconduct Without a Foul:** The opposing team will be awarded a Direct Free Kick from the center of midfield with a clear zone (cone) established between the ball and each of the opponent's corner flags. A goal CAN be scored directly from this restart.

### **Rule 13: Free Kicks**

**13.1 GENERAL:** Free kicks may be taken by any player who was on the pitch when the offense was committed.

- The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves. The kicker may not touch the ball again until the ball has touched another player.
- For free kicks taken in a team's own penalty area – the ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves. All opponents must remain outside the Penalty Area until the ball is in play.
- When taking a Direct Free Kick, Corner Kick, or Kick-in, a player may make a small sand mound to elevate the ball's position using a foot or ball. Once the ball is set and the referee whistles to start the kick, the kicker has 4 seconds to take the kick.

**NOTE: The defensive team may NOT form a wall.**

### **13.2 Positioning of Players During Free Kicks:**

For all Free Kicks, one of two types of "CLEAR ZONES" are required:

1. Clear Zone (cone) (Fig. A) is a clear zone established between the ball and each of the opponent's corner flags.
  - When a player is taking a free kick from their own half.
  - When a player is taking a free kick from the center of midfield.
2. Clear Zone (no cone) (Fig. B) is a clear zone established when players from both teams are positioned at least 5 yards away, and behind or even with the ball until it is put into play.
  - When a player is taking a free kick from the opponent's own half.
  - When a player is fouled in the opponent's penalty area and a penalty kick is awarded.

Players must remain outside of the Clear Zone until the ball is put into play. No player from either team may touch the ball until one of the following occurs:

- The defending goalkeeper touches the ball.
- The ball leaves the Clear Zone.
- The ball touches the sand.
- The ball touches the crossbar or goal posts.

*See Figures on the following page.*

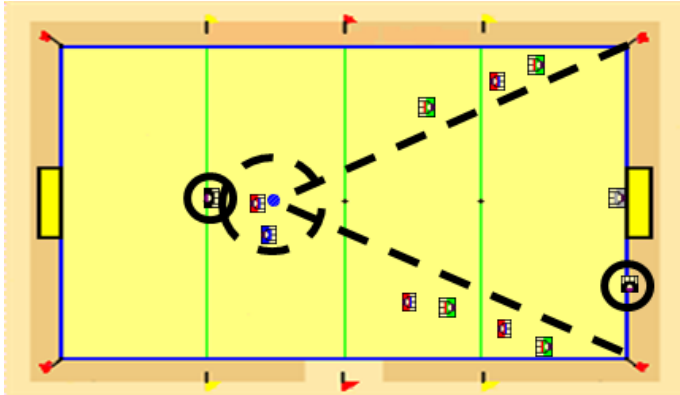


Diagram A: Defensive Half and Direct Free Kicks taken from the center of the pitch.

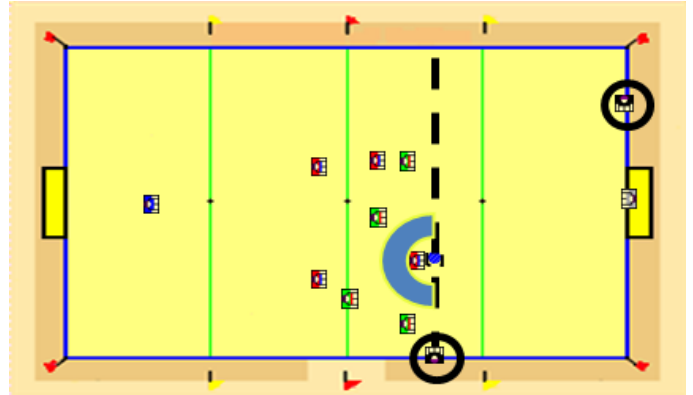


Diagram B: Direct Free Kick taken from the

### **13.3 Clear Zone Violation During Free Kicks:**

- Violation by KICKING team
  - If touch occurs in the kicking team's own half, a free kick is awarded to the opponent at the center of midfield with a Clear Zone (cone).
  - If touch occurs in the defending team's own half a free kick with a Clear Zone (cone) is awarded to the opponent where the ball was touched.
- Violation by DEFENDING team
  - If the touch was in the opponent's half, a free kick is awarded with a Clear Zone (cone) where the ball was touched.
  - If touch was in the defending team's half, a Free Kick with a Clear Zone (no cone) is awarded where the ball was touched.
  - If touch was in the defender's penalty area a Penalty Kick is awarded.

**13.4:** If an infringement is committed by the defending team and a goal is scored, the goal is allowed, and the restart is a Kick-off.

**13.4 b:** If an infringement is committed by both teams, the Direct Free Kick shall be retaken.

**13.5 Free Kick violation by the kicker:** If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again (except with hands) before it has touched another player:

- Referee stops play and awards a free kick to the opposing team, to be taken from where the offense was committed, provided this was in the half of the pitch of the team defending the free kick, or from the center of the pitch if the offense was committed in the team's own half of the pitch. A goal CAN be scored directly from this restart.

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball again (with hands) before it has touched another player:

- Referee stops play and awards a free kick to the opposing team, to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred. A goal CAN be scored directly from this restart.

## **Rule 14 The Penalty Kick**

**14.1 Penalty Kick:** Same procedures as grass soccer with the following exceptions:

- All players except the keeper must be outside the penalty area and at least 5 yards from the imaginary penalty spot.
- The kicker may make a small mound of sand using their feet or the ball in order to raise the position of the ball.

The player who was fouled must take the kick except:

- If they are injured and must leave the field, their substitute will kick for them.
  - If the offense was not a foul on a particular player (e.g. handball) the penalty kick may be taken by any player or substitute of the team.

#### **14.2. Infringements During Penalty Kicks:**

**14.2a: The Kicker or Teammate of the Kicker Infringes:** The referee allows the kick to be taken. If the ball enters the goal, the Penalty Kick will be retaken. If the ball does not enter the goal, the referee will stop play and award the opposing team a Direct Free Kick with Clear Zone (cone) from where the infringement occurred.

**14.2b: The Goalkeeper or Teammate of the Goalkeeper Infringes:** The referee allows the kick to be taken. If the ball enters the goal, a goal is awarded. If the ball does not enter the goal, the Penalty Kick will be retaken.

**14.2c: Players of both Teams Infringe:** The Penalty Kick will be retaken.

**14.2d: A Player Other Than the Designated Kicker Takes the Penalty Kick:** Referees stop play, caution them for unsporting behavior and award a Direct Free Kick from the center of the pitch.

#### **Rule 15: The Kick-In/Throw-In**

##### **15.1 Kick-In:**

- A goal CAN NOT be scored directly from a kick-in/throw-in.
- The kicker must:
  - Have part of each foot on the touchline or on the ground outside the touchline
  - The ball must be stationary either on the touchline at the point where it left the pitch, or from the ground outside the pitch near the touchline.
- If the kick-in is not taken on the touchline, the ball is in play as soon as it enters the pitch.
- If the ball does not enter the pitch, a kick-in/throw-in restart is awarded to the opposing team.
- If the kick-in is taken on the touchline, the ball is in play as soon as it clearly moves.
- The goalkeeper may receive the ball from a kick-in, from either team, with their hands/arms while in their own penalty area.

**15.2 Throw-In:** Same procedures as grass soccer, with the following exceptions:

- If the ball does not enter the pitch from a throw-in, a kick-in/throw-in restart is awarded to the opposing team.
- The goalkeeper may accept the ball from throw-in, from either team, with their hands/arms while in their own penalty area.

#### **Rule 16: The Goal Clearance and Goalkeeper Save**

**16.1.** The ball must be thrown or released from any point within the penalty area by the keeper within four seconds.

- If the goalkeeper takes the goal clearance using their feet, the referee will warn the goalkeeper and the goal clearance will be retaken with their hands.
- The four-second count continues from the point where it was stopped and once the keeper is ready to retake the goal clearance.
  - A violation results in Direct Free Kick from the center of midfield.

**16.2.** The ball is in play when it is thrown/released and clearly moves.

- The ball does NOT have to leave the penalty area upon the keeper's release but, if it doesn't, and if the defending team is still in possession, a new four-second count is required until the ball leaves the penalty area.
  - A violation results in a Direct Free Kick from the center of midfield.

- The goalkeeper may not touch the ball a second time if they didn't throw or release it out of the penalty area.
  - A violation results in a Direct Free Kick from the center of midfield.
- If the ball is thrown/released directly into the goalkeeper's own goal
  - A violation is a corner kick for the opponent.
- If ball is thrown/released directly into opponent's goal
  - A violation is a goal clearance for the opponent.
- If ball is thrown/released, and after touching a teammate, enters the goalkeeper's own goal
  - The goal is allowed and restart is a kickoff.
- At a Goal Clearance, the goalkeeper is permitted to use their hands/arms to receive the ball from a teammate without an opponent touching the ball. However, they are not permitted to use their hand/arms a second time to receive the ball from a teammate until an opponent has touched the ball.
  - A violation results in a Direct Free Kick from the center of midfield.

**16.3. Opponents must be outside the penalty area until the ball is in play.**

- If the opponent didn't have time to leave the penalty area and the keeper chooses to take the clearance, the referee allows play to continue.

**16.4 Goalkeeper Scoring from a Save when the Ball is in Play:** When the goalkeeper makes a save or otherwise receives the ball from an in-play situation, they can distribute the ball by use of the feet or by rolling the ball underhand, side armed, or overhand. A goalkeeper cannot score directly from throwing the ball with their hand/arm directly into the goal of the opposing team. The opposing team is awarded a Goal Clearance restart. The goalkeeper can score directly if they put the ball on the ground and control it with their feet during the normal course of play (but not during a Goal Clearance restart, as stated in Rule 16.1). The goalkeeper has 4 seconds to distribute the ball from the moment they stand and have control of the ball with their hands. If the goalkeeper exceeds 4 seconds, the opposing team will be awarded a Direct Free Kick from the center of the pitch. A goal can be scored directly from this restart.

**16.5 The Pass Back Rule:** The goalkeeper shall not touch the ball with their hands or arms when the ball is returned to them twice consecutively by a teammate without touching an opponent. This includes heading the ball to the goalkeeper or playing the ball from an inbounds pass to the goalkeeper without the ball having touched an opponent. An infringement of the Pass-Back Rule results in the opposing team being awarded a Direct Free Kick from the center of midfield. A goal can be scored directly from this restart. The same restart applies if the goalkeeper:

- Re-handles the ball after having released it from their hands.
- Kicks the ball before touching the sand (i.e. No Punting).
- After playing the ball outside their penalty area, returns to their penalty area and touches or plays the ball with any part of their body.

**Rule 17: The Corner Kick**

**17.1 :** A Corner Kick is awarded when the ball wholly crosses the goal line whether on the ground or in the air, last touched by a player of the defensive team, and a goal is not scored in accordance with Rule 9.1. The Corner Kick shall be taken from within 1 yard of the corner nearest to where the ball left the field. All opposing players shall remain at least 5 yards from the corner arc. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves in any direction. A goal CAN be scored directly from a Corner Kick. The player taking the Corner Kick has 4 seconds to do so after positioning the ball for the Corner Kick. If the player exceeds 4 seconds, the opposing goalkeeper shall restart play with a Goal Clearance.

### **Rule 18: 4-Second Count**

- No count for Kick-offs or Penalty Kicks.
- The 4-Second Count applies for the following:
  - Goal Clearance  
The ball does NOT have to leave the penalty area upon the keeper's release, but if it doesn't, and if the defending team is still in possession, a new 4-second count is required until the ball leaves the penalty area.  
Violation is a free kick for opponent with clear zone (cone) at midfield.
  - Team is in possession of the ball at any time in their own penalty area.  
Violation is a free kick for opponent with clear zone (cone) at midfield.
  - Keeper is in possession of the ball at any time in their own penalty area.  
Violation is a free kick for opponent with clear zone (cone) at midfield.
  - During Free kicks
    - 4-second count begins after the required whistle.  
Violation is a free kick for opponent, with clear zone (cone), either at midfield or behind midfield at the spot of the offense.
    - If a free kick taken by defending team inside its own penalty area is not kicked directly out of this area, the kick is retaken, but the 4-second count is not reset and continues once the player is ready to retake it.  
Violation is a free kick for opponent with clear zone (cone) at midfield.
  - Kick-in/Throw-in  
4-second count begins once the player is ready to take it.  
Violation is a kick-in/throw in for opponent.
  - Corner kick  
Count begins once the player is ready to take it.  
Violation is a goal clearance for opponent.
  - If a restart is delayed for tactical reasons (time wasting) the referee blows the whistle and visibly starts the 4-second count, whether the player taking the restart is ready or not.
  - The player taking **any** kick may make a small mound of sand with their feet, or the ball (NO hands) to raise the position of the ball. The 4-second count begins after the mound is built.

### **\*\*\*\*2026 Addendums\*\*\*\***

#### **A. Heading**

**A.1 Heading:** Heading is allowed at ALL AGES. There are NO RESTRICTIONS.

#### **B. Sliding**

**B.1 Sliding:** Players may slide to block a pass, shot, etc. as long as the slide/action is IN FRONT of the ball. Sliding AT the ball or AT the attacker will result in a Direct Free Kick (see Rule 13.1).

**C. Scissors or Bicycle Kick**

**C.1 Scissors or Bicycle Kick:** Scissors or bicycle kicks are permitted, provided that no opponent is struck in the process. If a player interferes with an opponent attempting a scissors or bicycle kick that has been set up by the kicker (kicker has possession of the ball), they shall be punished with a Direct Free Kick from where the infringement occurred. If a player preventing the scissors or bicycle kick is struck in the process, the infringement is deemed to have been committed by the defender.

**D. U.S. Open Division Addendum**

**D.1 Red Cards:** When awarded during an incident to the U.S. Open Finals shall carry over into the following year's competition. Specifically, the requirement to sit out the next game shall be enforced on the player(s) in the subsequent year's VSSC initial game, regardless of team name/membership. VSSC reserves the right to ban player(s) from further VSSC participation based on the nature of misconduct.

See "**Changes to the 2026 Virginia Sand Soccer Rules**" next page.

## Changes and highlights for the 2026 Virginia Sand Soccer Rules Summary

Type	Section	Change or amendment
Rules	Registration	Updated youth age divisions based on birth year per USYSA; modification of youth division descriptions; updated adult age division criteria.
Rules	Start of Play	All teams in youth and High School divisions are required to have an adult (over 25) rostered with the team and on their team sideline for the duration of the match.
Rules	Tournament Standings	Goal differential maximum applies only to amateur divisions. No maximum is applied to U.S. Open divisions.
Rules	Substitution Zone 1.5	The substitution zone is 7m in length, extending 3.5m to each side of the intersection between the imaginary halfway line and the touchline. The area in front of the timekeeper's table (U.S. Open only), 3.5m to either side of the imaginary halfway line, is kept clear.
Rules	Goalkeeper Change 3.5	Additional time must be allowed for a free kick to be taken at the end of each period (including extra time); in such situations, the referees allow the defending goalkeeper to be replaced by an outfield player or an eligible substitute, although in the latter case, the substitution procedure must be followed.
Rules	Laws of the Game 12.5	In the case of a red card, the referee will fill out a Referee Incident Report reporting the reason why the individual was sent off to the Tournament Committee for possible additional sanctions including but not limited to loss of team points from standings, participation in knockout rounds, and participation in current or future VSSC events.
Rules	Laws of the Game 12.5	<p>Red Card Sanctions (for Amateur Divisions only):            A team must play down a player for one of the following time penalties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2-minutes if a player receives a red card that is a result of receiving their second yellow card or the result of foul and abusive/insulting language, serious foul play, or denying and obvious goal-scoring opportunity (DOGSO).</li> </ul> <p><i>-continued next page-</i></p>

	<i>-continued from above-</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10-minutes if a player receives any red card for violent conduct (including spitting and throwing sand).</li> </ul> <p>The 2-minute and 10-minute red card time penalty may extend into the next period, including into extra time.</p>
Rules	Laws of the Game 12.6	The individual's name and reason for suspension will be reported to the Tournament Committee for possible additional sanctions including but not limited to loss of team points from standings and/or participation in current or future VSSC events.
Rules	Laws of the Game 13	Free Kick procedures updated (2026)