

**AYSO AREA 2-A Silicon Valley**  
*Serving Northern Santa Clara and Southern San Mateo Counties*

**Playing Rules, Guidelines, and Policies**  
Governing Inter-regional Play

**General**

The purpose of these rules is to provide a set of unified rules for Area 2-A when matches are played between teams from different regions within the Area. This includes inter-regional regular season play and Area tournaments.

These rules also apply to matches between Area 2-A teams and other teams from outside the area in the U16 and U19 divisions. Such matches are coordinated and scheduled by the Area Inter-Region Play Coordinator. This Coordinator is designated the acting authority regarding U16/U19 league play by the Area 2-A Director.

Post-season tournaments are under the authority of the age/gender Tournament Directors as approved by the Area 2-A Director.

The current FIFA Laws of the Game and AYSO National Rules and Regulations in effect are applicable and take priority. Generally, new FIFA rules take effect July 1<sup>st</sup> and new AYSO rules on August 1<sup>st</sup>; so coaches, players, and referees are urged to become familiar with changes that may be new and in effect. This document covers allowed deviations or refinements of these overriding laws and rules. Some rules from these documents are simply restated for emphasis. Small-Sided Game guidelines, as detailed in the AYSO Guidance for Referees and Coaches current edition, shall apply as rules for U12 play.

Soccer is governed by the concepts of common law and the Spirit of the Game; and so shall Area play. Issues not explicitly covered here or in the previously mentioned rulebooks shall be decided by the match referee or deferred to the league authority overseeing the match. When not otherwise stated, the Area Director is the final league authority on all inter-region matches.

**I. Player Rosters**

1. The Regional Commissioner must authorize the roster of each team playing outside the region before the team is allowed to participate. Per National rules, team rosters in U16 and U19 play are limited to 18 players of a particular age. Team rosters in U14 are limited to 15 players. U12 team rosters are limited to 12 players. Larger rosters can be approved in advance and by exception in writing by the Area Director.

Rosters should include the date of approval, player names, head coach name, head coach contact information, assistant coach or additional responsible team parent, team name, team uniform color, and age/gender division of the team.

*No play-down requests are permitted unless overridden in writing by the Area Director. Coaches should be aware that age and roster size exceptions allowed in the Area may not*

*be allowed in the Section tournament.*

2. Each team must have at least one adult (age 21 or over) responsible for the team and Coach Safe Haven certified. Coaches may be less than 21 years old but at least one adult must be designated a coach and attend all official team functions and matches. The responsible adult must be identified as the head coach on the team roster at match time.
3. As required by Safe Haven, coaches must have a signed AYSO registration form in their possession for every team player at all team practices and matches. No exceptions. AYSO referees may request to examine the forms at any match and may exclude any player(s) from participating in a match if the referee is not satisfied with the players' eligibility.
4. Proposed changes to team rosters will be considered only for replacement of injured players or teams demonstrating an inability to field at least 11 players in matches (9 players for U12 matches). For the fall season, changes to rosters may be allowed after October 12<sup>th</sup> if formally proposed to and approved by the Area Director. No changes to rosters will be allowed after November 1<sup>st</sup> for any reason. Fall regular season rosters are to be used for tournament play. Players must be on a Fall "open registration" roster to be eligible to play in a secondary program (e.g. Spring Select Season) with any region.
5. Regional Commissioners are responsible to ensure the eligibility of all players on the authorized roster from their Region. If a player's eligibility is questioned, the Area Director may require written proof of eligibility from the player's Regional Commissioner before allowing the player to participate further.
6. A player may play for only one AYSO team per season as required by AYSO National Rules and Regulations. A player may be registered and playing for a different soccer organization simultaneous with the AYSO season.
7. Teams must provide a properly completed lineup card to the referee prior to the start of the match.

## **II. Substitution and Playing Time**

### **Free Substitution in U16/U19 play**

1. Free substitution of players will be allowed in the fourth quarter of U16 and U19 matches. The intent of free substitution is to provide more playing time to players. The rule is NOT intended to allow manipulation of lineups to favor certain players. This is against the AYSO philosophy.
2. Free substitution will be implemented as follows:
  - a. (note: although Soccer does not have quarters, sometimes it is easier to talk of the time periods between substitution opportunities in AYSO as quarters.) All team players who have satisfied the AYSO's two-quarter play rule during the first three quarters of the match may participate in free substitution during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.
  - b. Before the start of play for the fourth quarter, the team coach or team captain is obligated to identify team players who are NOT eligible for free substitution to the match referee. Any player who has not participated in the minimum two full quarters of play by the end of the third quarter of the match must remain in the match and must

not be substituted, except for injury replacement.

- c. Free substitution will be allowed only in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. A substitution is made only after obtaining permission from the referee. The referee will grant permission to substitute at the requesting team's own throw-in, any goal kick, or at any kick-off. Any injured player that leaves the field may be replaced by a substitute before play restarts. Players may exit the field at the nearest touch or goal line to minimize time lost. Incoming players must enter at the half-way line. (Incoming players wait for the referee to signal approval of their entry onto the field.)
3. Each team is eligible to use free substitutions independently of the other team. It is recognized that a larger team may not be able to exercise free substitutions as often as a smaller team in the same match.
4. Players who intend to leave the match early and no longer participate must report this situation to the referee prior to the start of the match or their first quarter of play. Substitution of players leaving early who have not completed their two quarters of play is not allowed. Players who must leave early must either complete the two quarters of play before being substituted or the team must play short. Violation of the National two-quarter rule is grounds for forfeiture by the offending team.
5. Free substitution cannot be abused as a time wasting tactic as the referee is expected to add time lost due to substitution.

### **Normal Substitutions and Playing Time**

6. Other than free substitution allowed in the last "quarter", substitutions shall be as defined in the AYSO National Rules and Regulations for all divisions and games (tournaments included). For shorter bracket play games, coaches are reminded to keep these breaks minimal; and definitely less than thirty seconds.
7. Players must play for half of every game they are present for. Regions are encouraged to require that every player sit out one quarter in a match before any player sit out a second. Players should have as even a playing time as possible (percentage of time they are on the field versus available to play) across all regular season play, and across any individual tournament day. Any absences from the roster at a match must be fully explained and may require verification by the tournament director or league authority. Coaches may not pressure players to be absent from play. Highly skilled players never sitting out and less skilled ones only playing the minimum half of the game is not in the spirit of the AYSO five tenets and considered in violation of this requirement.

### **III. Officiating**

1. The home team in a regular season or hosting region of a tournament provides a sufficient number of referees to cover the scheduled match(es). The Regional Commissioner or Regional Referee Administrator shall send a list of recommended referees in their Region to the Area Referee Scheduler for assignment in U16 and U19 matches.
2. The region must utilize referees who have sufficient officiating skill to ensure match control appropriate for the level of play at matches they are assigned. Beside experience,

this means a referee should be trained and certified for the level of play they will be officiating. This is nominally Intermediate for U12, Advanced for U14 and National for U16 and U19. Regions not able to meet this requirement should consult the area referee staff to seek qualified referees from outside their region.

3. The diagonal system of control (one center referee and two assistant referees) will be used at all times. In the absence of three qualified referees, club linesmen are to be recruited and used to maintain the diagonal system of control. A match cannot be held or completed without a qualified referee
4. If no assigned referees arrive to officiate the match, the coaches may decide to play the match with other available officials as long as those officials are AYSO trained and certified.

#### IV. Forfeiture and Disciplinary Action

1. Grounds for forfeiting a match include:
  - a. Failure of a team coach to provide an official team roster or player registration forms for review, upon request, by the match referee, for the purpose of verifying player eligibility.
  - b. Failure of a team to be ready at kick-off time with 7 players shall constitute a forfeiture. "Kick-off time" is interpreted on the field as the scheduled game time, or later if the games are running late. ***ADVICE TO REFEREES: We are not here to forfeit games, this will happen in the unfortunate event that a team fails to show up for a game.*** (all age groups)
  - c. Failure to have an adult coach (over 21 years old), whose name appears on the official team roster, at the field and ready by kick-off time. An authorized and responsible adult must remain in attendance during the entire match.
  - d. Ineligible Players: All players taking the field for a match must be listed on the official team roster authorized by the Regional Commissioner. Offending teams shall forfeit any match in which ineligible players participate. Both the player(s) and the team coach may be suspended from any remaining season play or coaching in the Area or Section tournaments.
  - e. Playing Time: Eligible players must play no less than two full quarters each match except for players arriving late or injured per National Rules and Regulations.

A team forfeiting shall lose by a score of 1-0.

2. Coaches found violating fairness rules will not be allowed to participate in Area or Section competitions for one year following the violation. A letter of reprimand will be sent by the Area Director to the home region of the suspended coach. The Area staff's decision on such matters is final.
3. Concerns of matches must be made, in writing or confirmed email, to the Area Director, delivered within 24 hours of an alleged violation. They must fully describe the nature of the concern. Protests are not allowed.

4. A valid concern during regular season play will be reviewed by the Area Council, which is comprised of the Area Director, Area Inter-Region Play Coordinator, Area Referee Administrator and Area Coach Administrator. Concerns about judgment calls by officials are not allowed. There can be no protest of any call by an official during or after a match. Coaches are encouraged to submit a referee evaluation form after every match to the league authority. The form should be given to coaches by the referee team before every U16 and U19 match and is available on the area website.

**V. Match Cancellation Policy**

1. All matches will be played as scheduled. The host Regional Commissioner or their official designate may cancel a match if a field owner or regional rules require (e.g. rain). As a courtesy, when matches are canceled, the host region should try and notify the teams and officials for the match. Matches that are canceled may not necessarily be rescheduled.
2. A match may be suspended, abandoned or terminated by the match referee as conditions at the match site require. The referee should notify the assignor of such actions in their match report.
3. A coach may not cancel a match. If a team does not appear for a scheduled match, the match is forfeited. Subsequent failures to appear may result in suspension of the team or coach, at the discretion of the area council. Be considerate of teams traveling from far away. As a courtesy, if a coach knows in advance that they cannot field enough players for a scheduled match, the coach should call the other team’s coach and the referee scheduler as soon as this is known.

**VI. Duration of the Match**

1. Regular Season Play

Division	Length of Half
U19	45 min
U16	40 min
U14	35 min
U12	30 min

*If a younger division team plays an older division team, the match rules will follow those that apply to the younger division.*

2. A half-time must be taken following the first half of no less than five minutes but not to exceed ten minutes as decided by the referee.
3. A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eleven (11) players, one of whom is the goalkeeper. A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than seven (7) players. U12 division matches have two teams of only nine (9) players each, one of whom is a goalkeeper.

**VII. Conduct on the Field**

1. Players, coaches and spectators are required to conform to the Laws of Soccer, AYSO

National Rules and Regulations, and these Area Rules from the time they enter the area of play until they leave, including the period of time the match is in progress. The laws will be enforced by the match referee, whose authority starts from the time he or she arrives until the time he or she leaves the area.

2. Good conduct is expected of players at all times. Coaches are expected to support, exemplify and enforce high standards of behavior for team players, families, and spectators at all times.
3. For U16 and U19 play, both coaches shall report the score of the match to the Area Coordinator. For all matches, any misconduct (yellow or red cards) must be reported to the league authority by the coaches. If no report is made, the referee's report alone is taken as the final facts of the match.

### **Players:**

4. Any player who is sent off for misconduct (normally shown a red card) must be suspended from the match immediately. The team of the offending player must play short for the remainder of the match as outlined in the Laws of the Game. The player must not be substituted, even if the team has fewer than the required seven players. In such case, a game is terminated as the team can no longer field the minimum number of players. A player sent off is ineligible to play in the next match the team plays (i.e. serves a one game suspension).
5. Any player who is formerly cautioned three times (i.e. booked, e.g. shown a yellow card) during the course of the regular season or cautioned three times during a tournament is ineligible to play in the next team match following the third caution that is issued. (The third caution is equivalent to receiving a send-off.) Note that the showing of cards is not expected nor required at all times the referee may book a player for misconduct.
6. Any player who is sent off twice (e.g. shown the red card) or receives five cautions in the regular season or at a tournament is suspended from any further Area and Section play until he/she appears before the AYSO Area Council and a decision on reinstatement is made.
7. Excellent sportsmanship is expected of all AYSO coaches and players at all times. A strong team is expected to adjust play to balance the match when a significant advantage is attained. Failure to sustain a sporting attitude, whether winning or losing, will be brought to the attention of the appropriate Regional Commissioner or Area Director for disciplinary action. Blow-outs where score differentials are 6 or more are not congruent with AYSO philosophies. Repeated blow-outs will result in a review by the Area Council and likely lead to sanctions such as a suspension from post season play or the tournament overall.
8. For U14 and older, if one team has fewer than 11 players and the other team has 11 or more players, the decision as to whether or not to play with fewer players shall be at the sole discretion of the coach who has more players. That is, a team does not have to "reduce to equate" the number of players on the field but may choose to do so. For U12, teams must have an equal number of players on the field to start the match.

### **Coaches and Spectators:**

9. Coaches are expected to exemplify good sportsmanship and may be penalized for misconduct. Like players, coaches are suspended from the following team match when dismissed from a match by the referee. For formal warnings and dismissals to a coach, the same discipline applies per the misconduct discipline explained for players earlier. A dismissal or formal warning to a coach never involves the showing of a red or yellow card.
10. Coaches must remain within ten yards of the half-way line during the match play, whether or not a technical area is marked. Substitutes and coaches must remain at least one yard off the field, out of the way of the assistant referees, and not in a position so as to confuse the opposite touch line assistant referee from determining who is a field player. Spectators must be no closer than three yards to the playing field, not behind the goal lines or goals, nor closer to the goal line than the out most edge of the penalty area. Coaches are expected to cooperate with the referee in maintaining proper spectator decorum and to support the referee's need to control the match from disruptive behavior of spectators.
11. Opposing teams are expected to position players, coaches and spectators together on opposite sides of the playing field. The home team has preference for side. The home team may select the side they prefer to watch from in case of a conflict as long as they arrive at least 30 minutes before the official starting time of the match. This arrangement minimizes potential conflict between teams during the match and helps the referee with match control. The coaches and match referee can mutually agree to alternate arrangements; especially in younger divisions and as dictated by the field setup.
12. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their team and spectators at all times during AYSO functions. This includes litter removal after a match. Remember: coaches, referees, and spectators form a team working to set a positive example for the players.
13. Spectators who disrupt matches may be asked to leave the area. Coaches and other spectators are expected to assist the referee in enforcing any such request by the match referee

## **VIII. Equipment**

1. Field equipment should be in good condition so as not to pose a safety hazard to participants and spectators of the match. Goals must be securely anchored. Corner flags must be of the proper height. A match will NOT begin if the goals, other field equipment, or the environment pose a safety risk to the players.
2. Players are required to wear regulation equipment and team-issued uniforms (including shin guards, shoes, shirts, shorts and socks). The home team shall change jerseys or wear pinnies when a color conflict arises. The first team listed on the schedule (normally the region providing the field during regular season play) is the designated home team.
3. Each player on the team shall wear a jersey with a different number and may not exchange it with another player for the duration of the match (and tournament if applicable).
4. No other equipment may be worn that may pose either a safety hazard to the player or other players (such as jewelry or wristbands) or distract players or officials (such as hats and bandannas, a similar colored uniform to that of the opposing team, or a completely distinctive marking that would set the "star" player apart). The match referee is the final

authority on what is to be allowed during a match; the coach the authority during a practice.

5. Shin guards are required equipment for all players during all matches and practices. Shin guards must be worn UNDER the player's socks.
6. Thermoplastic pants ("bicycle shorts" or "sliding shorts") may be worn in a match if they match the color of the team uniform shorts, they do not extend to the knee, and they are not padded in any way. Uniform shorts may not extend beyond the top of knee or be raised (e.g. waistband rolled) to the crotch.
7. Accessories such as jewelry (earrings, necklaces, metal bracelets) are not permitted in any match. Non-metal bracelets completely wrapped in tape may be allowed only with the consent of the match referee. Medic alert bracelets may also be worn, but must be taped. Any item worn by a player that is considered dangerous in the opinion of the match referee must be removed prior to the start of the match or whenever ordered by the referee. The player may not participate further in the match until the condition is corrected. The match referee has the final authority in such matters.
8. Medically-approved and adequately-padded knee braces will generally be allowed by the match referee. So will recognized or pre-inspected medical or religious required clothing or equipment. For example, small insulin pumps strapped to the waist or long pants and sleeves to cover bare skin. A requirement to cover skin due to medical or religious reasons with long trousers, sleeves or a head covering should be justified to the match referee with a signed league waiver indicating the players name. But the referee is the final authority on what is safe even if a variance is pre-approved.
9. Hats and head coverings are not allowed except possibly religious garb that has been verified safe by the match referee. Hair clips and bands must be of a soft material to prevent potential injury. Sweatbands may be disallowed by the match referee. Only prescription glasses are allowed to be worn by players; whether sun shades or not.

#### **IX. Regular Season Standings:**

1. In U16 and U19 regular season play, team standings shall be maintained for each division according to the total points received during the season. Points are accrued by the following system :
  - a. Two points for a win,
  - b. one point for a tie,
  - c. zero points for a loss or forfeit

All matches count except those clearly identified in the schedule as a scrimmage. If teams play an unequal number of games, then the total of each and every team is divided by the number of games played by that team to get an average points per game. This average is then used in place of the total points for each team.

2. In U16 and U19 regular season play, the seeding in the Area tournament (if any) will rely on regular season standings. If no area tournament is held, the regular season standings will be used to determine the advance to the Section tournament. Only games against



teams competing for the same spots in the Section tournament are used to calculate the regular season standings for Section tournament determination. That is, if teams from outside the Area participate in regular season play, but use their own area membership to determine advancement to the Section tournament, then games against those teams are not included in the regular season play standings.

3. In case of a tie in total points, the following tie breakers will be used, in order:
  - a. The team record in head-to-head competition
  - b. Largest Total Goal differential (maximum difference of three goals per match, plus if more goals or minus if less goals than opponent)
  - c. Most Total Wins
  - d. Least number of goals allowed
  - e. Most total goals scored
  - f. Fewest red cards
  - g. Fewest yellow cards
  - h. Coin toss
  
4. In U12 and U14, it is up to each region to determine its own system for ranking its teams and determining which of its teams will attend the Area tournament. Matches against teams outside the region during the regular season can be considered or not by the region in doing its ranking.

## **X. Addendum for Area Tournament Play:**

All regular season rules apply unless otherwise indicated.

The purpose of this addendum is to provide a consistent set of rules that govern area tournament play. Tournament directors should seek the advice and consent of the Area director before modifying these rules or instituting additional rules that may conflict with these rules.

1. The Area board is responsible for determining:
  - (a) The weekend for all Area tournaments,
  - (b) Which age and gender divisions to support (generally U12 B & G; U14 B & G),
  - (c) Which region is to host each division,
  - (d) The number of teams in each division (nominally 16), and
  - (e) The allocation of teams from each region to the division tournament
2. The host region of a tournament is meant to:
  - (a) Appoint a tournament director who serves at the approval of the Area Director,
  - (b) Provide adequate fields and related equipment to support the tournament, and
  - (c) Organize the games, referees, and other items necessary to provide a fun, safe, and fair tournament for all to enjoy
3. The area will cover the costs of and generally arrange for the awards and participation gift. Host regions are encouraged to enhance this with token gifts for referee volunteers as well. Host regions are expected to cover other costs they may incur.
4. A region may choose its representative team(s) to the area tournament by any reasonable means consistent with AYSO rules and philosophies. However, each team must consist only of their regular season players. No players may be added or dropped and no teams may be formed specifically for the tournament unless approved in writing by the Area Director.
5. The Tournament Director shall have jurisdiction over all games played in the tournament. All disputes will be resolved immediately by the Tournament Director or as soon as possible thereafter.
6. Rosters should be provided as soon as feasible to the tournament director but not later than 6 days before the tournament. Rosters previously approved and stored in a region management system accessible to the tournament director can simply be referred to if certified by the regional commissioner as accurate. Tournament directors should try to get schedules out to the teams no later than five (5) days before the tournament but preferably at least ten (10) days before.
7. Play on the first tournament date will consist of pool play. The winners of pool play will advance to play on the second date. Whenever possible, the first date will be a Saturday and the second date will be the next day. All teams that advance to play on the second date should play the same number of games. Tournament directors should distribute teams with better records among the pools as best as may be known.

Pools are created by dividing the teams up into reasonably and similar size groups; nominally 4 pools of 4 teams each. Each team in a pool plays every other team in a pool (i.e. round-robin play). Points are awarded for each game result and the winner in points determines the winner of the pool. Ties are allowed in pool play games.

8. Pool play scoring is as follows:
  - a. Six (6) points for a win,
  - b. three (3) points for a tie,
  - c. one (1) point for each goal up to a maximum of three points.
  - d. Minus one (-1) for each send-off (i.e. red card) or coach dismissal,
  - e. One (1) point bonus for a defensive shutout.

Maximum point total for any game is ten (10). A 0-0 tie does not count as a defensive shutout for either team as the emphasis is on scoring goals. A forfeit is scored as 1-0 and the appropriate points calculated for each team. Pool play scoring is different than regular season scoring as we are trying to enhance point differences over the fewer games.

9. Tiebreakers: If two or more teams have a tie in points at the end of pool play, one team shall be eliminated by going through the criteria set below, and will continue until all other teams are eliminated.
  - a. Team record in Head to Head competition
  - b. Least number of goals allowed
  - c. Most Goals Scored
  - d. Fewest Red Cards
  - e. Coin Flip by Tournament Director
10. The recommended format for the second date (pool play winners) is a single elimination bracket. The winner of each pool will play a semi-final against the winner of one of the other pools. The winner of each semi-final will play a final championship game. The losers of each semifinal will play a consolation game. Tie games in bracket play are not allowed. FIFA rules for determining the winner of a match are to be followed using two equal halves of 5 minutes each. If still tied, then Kicks from the Penalty Mark are used until the tie is broken.
11. No team should play more than three games in a day. Successive games for a team should have a break between them.
12. Duration of games may be shortened from regular season matches but should be no shorter than 25 minutes per half for U14 and above and 20 minutes per half for U12.
13. Disruptions in the schedule due to weather or other unavoidable influences are at the discretion of the tournament director to handle.
14. Host regions should be ready to provide game balls and team pinnies at every field in case they are needed.
15. Line-up cards should be verified by the tournament staff at the beginning of the day's play. Verified cards should be marked so the referee knows the team has checked in and the line-up card has been verified as matching the roster.

16. Teams failing to show for a game to give their opponent an advantage in points will cause the region and coach to be sanctioned; possibly in the following season. Similarly, teams not playing to their full potential to bias the point score will be sanctioned by the tournament director for unsporting play.
17. The tournament director has the final authority to make any decision not covered by the rules. The Tournament Director may disqualify any team, at any point in the Tournament, if that team refuses to abide by the Rules and Regulations of the Tournament or their decision. The area director has the authority to remove a tournament director or simply point out discrepancies with standard written policy and rules.