



NorCal Premier Soccer League

HANDBOOK

2026–27 Season

A US Club Soccer Sanctioned League

Text highlighted in **purple** indicates changes from the 2025–26 season.

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Mission & Core Values

Mission: We elevate soccer by developing Players, Clubs, Coaches, and Referees.

Core Values

- **Collaboration** – We collaborate with our soccer community to make wise decisions.
- **Joy** – We celebrate soccer and take fun seriously!
- **Impact** – We make a meaningful difference.
- **Integrity** – We strive to do the right thing.
- **Agility** – We move quickly.
- **Competition** – We believe healthy competition is essential to progress.
- **Education** – We are committed to learning and development.

Guided by its Mission and Core Values, NorCal Premier Soccer's ("NorCal's") purpose is to set the highest standards for soccer Clubs to develop Players to their fullest potential – physically, emotionally, socially, and ethically.

Membership in NorCal is automatic acceptance of all rules, policies, and procedures in this Handbook. The League Office shall rule on all disputes and issues pertaining to NorCal competitions and may overrule stated rules if it determines doing so is in the best interest of the game. All participants in NorCal events are also members of US Club Soccer and must adhere faithfully to both the letter and spirit of US Club Soccer's bylaws, rules, and policies.

This Handbook applies to all teams within all NorCal Member Clubs, regardless of the league in which they participate. Where NorCal rules directly conflict with those of another governing body, NorCal may be restricted from implementing certain rules. This Handbook supersedes all prior handbooks.

Definitions

As used in this Handbook, the following terms have the meanings set out below. Defined terms are capitalized throughout.

Adult: Any Coach, DOC, trainer, manager, official, team parent, or other individual 18 years of age or older affiliated with a Club who has access to a Player, the Player's parents, or the Player's contact information that is not publicly available; this includes NorCal representatives.

Club: A legal entity (such as a 501(c)3 organization) admitted as a member of NorCal Premier.

Coach: Any individual engaged in coaching or training Players on behalf of a Club, whether paid or voluntary, permanent or temporary.

Director of Coaching (DOC): Any individual employed by or volunteering for a Club as a Director of Coaching, Executive Director, Technical Director, General Manager, or assistant to any such role, and all Adults filling similar roles regardless of title. A DOC oversees each team in their Club and each team's involvement in NorCal competitions.

Field or Facility: Any facility or field used by a Club to conduct Tryouts, Training Sessions, or games (other than tournament games).

League Office: Any individual employed by or volunteering in any capacity for NorCal Premier Soccer, including the Board of Directors, employees, staff, and committees.

Member: Any person registered as a player, coach, or team manager in a NorCal Club, or any person holding a leadership position within a NorCal Club.

Player: Any individual holding a valid player pass from US Club Soccer and currently registered with a NorCal Club.

Primary Team: The team with which a Player is rostered as a “primary player” in NorCal competitions. Players may only be primarily rostered to one team. Player suspensions are served with the Primary Team.

RAC (Regional Advisory Committee): A regional body within NorCal that may adapt certain rules within parameters established by the NorCal Board of Directors.

Recruiting:

- **Outside the Tryout Window:** Any contact or communication with a Player registered with another NorCal Club in which the Player is asked or allowed to join a Club, attend a Tryout or Club training session, or play or guest play for another Club, without prior written permission from the DOC of the Player's Club.
- **Inside the Tryout Window:** An initial or first contact or communication with a Player registered with another NorCal Club in which the Player is asked or allowed to join a Club, attend a Tryout or Club training session, or guest play for another Club, without prior written permission from the DOC of the Player's Club.

Referee: Any referee licensed by USSF for the current year.

Technical Area: The designated area on the touchline for Players not in play and team officials during a match, as defined by the Laws of the Game. A maximum of three (3) credentialed team officials may occupy each team's Technical Area at any time.

Training Session: Any Club-sanctioned or private training session or practice.

Tryout Window: The period determined by the NorCal League Office during which any Player, regardless of Club affiliation, may try out with any NorCal Club without permission from their current Club DOC. The Tryout Window applies to all teams within all NorCal Member Clubs.

Code of Ethics

Membership in NorCal Premier requires adherence to the following Code of Ethics.

For All Members

- Know, respect, and follow the letter and spirit of the [Laws of the Game](#).
- Treat all individuals – including opponents, officials, and fellow Members – with respect and courtesy at all times, including on social media and in all digital communications.
- Treat all Referees with respect before, during, and after every match.
- Adhere to the rules and policies of NorCal Premier Soccer, [US Club Soccer](#), and [US Soccer](#).
- Recognize the rights, dignity, and worth of all individuals regardless of gender, ability, cultural background, or religion.

For Clubs

- Require sportsmanlike conduct at all times.
- Provide a safe playing environment.

- Address issues with other Clubs professionally and promptly.
- Ensure all Adults and Players in your Club are familiar with NorCal rules and expectations.
- Respect the facilities used by other Clubs.
- Actively uphold the Recruiting, Tryouts, and Player Transfer Policies (Section 4).
- Do not accept a Player from another Club if the Player has unpaid fees for services already rendered (excluding fees for unrendered services, scholarship reimbursements, or penalties).

For Coaches

- Place your Players' physical, mental, and emotional development and well-being ahead of all else.
- Continuously seek education on sound coaching techniques.
- Model and teach good sporting behavior.
- Ensure that your team's spectators behave appropriately at all times. Coaches are responsible for spectator conduct.

For Players

- Participate for your own enjoyment and development.
- Take responsibility for your sportsmanship and conduct.

Section 1 – Club Policies and Administration

1.1 – Club Membership Requirements

For a Club to remain in good standing, all of the following conditions must be satisfied:

- Single legal entity: All teams competing in NorCal events must operate under one legal entity with unified leadership, finances, and governance.
- Common identity and geography: All teams must share a single Club name, logo, and uniform (each unique to that Club) and must train and play within the same geographic area of operation.
- Unified technical structure: All teams must operate under one technical structure and report to a single DOC.
- Single registration: All Players competing in NorCal events must be registered under one US Club Soccer–sanctioned club.

1.2 – Required Club Contacts

Each Club's GotSport account must be kept current with accurate contact information ([Instructions](#)). This is the primary method NorCal uses to communicate with Clubs. Failure to maintain current contacts may result in Club sanctions. Each Club must maintain the following contacts:

- Coaching/Technical Director (DOC) and/or Executive Director
- Registrar
- President
- Referee Assignor (must be USSF Certified)
- Rec-Registrar (clubs with Super Rec teams)

1.3 – Home Field

Clubs may only use Fields or Facilities within their historical area of operation, and/or fields approved in their affiliation letter of NorCal membership. To add approved fields, [submit a request to the Executive Committee](#).

Clubs should have at least one game-quality Field (5 time slots) per 8 teams. Home fields should have access to restroom facilities. Teams may request to play all away games.

1.4 – Club Pass Rule

See also: [NorCal Guidance: Rosters and Team Formation](#).

Each US Club Soccer player pass may be used for any age-appropriate team in the issuing Club. Players may move up and down within their Club to address illness, injury, vacation, or other conflicts.

It is unethical to move Players to lower-division teams within the same Club to create a competitive advantage. If NorCal determines that a Club has moved Players into a lower division for competitive advantage and that this has impacted the integrity of competition, sanctions may be imposed against the team and/or Club, up to and including forfeiture of the match.

1.5 – Merger/Affiliation/Transfer Policy

[Read Full Policy](#).

Section 2 – Team Policies and Administration

2.1 – Team Management

Each team must have at least one team manager whose duties include scheduling games, arranging travel, reporting scores, and communicating with league officials. All team managers must maintain a current email address (checked daily) and a phone number with voicemail. See [MEMBER TOOLKIT](#)

2.2 – Communication

Teams must have at least two different contacts (Manager and Coach) listed on their GotSport page, each with a current email address and phone number. All match scheduling and communication must be conducted through the GotSport chat system to maintain a proper record. Team contacts must respond within 48 hours. Incorrect contact information is not a valid excuse for non-response.

If team communication breaks down, contact the [Event Coordinator](#) for assistance.

All digital communication between teams must be professional and respectful. Members found to have communicated disrespectfully may be referred to the PAD Committee.

2.3 – Match Scheduling

The League Office will provide dates for all matches and corresponding scheduling deadlines. *Teams must be available to play at any time on scheduled match dates within the scheduling guidelines below.* Any change to a NorCal provided match date requires written agreement from both teams (in GotSport Chat). This means that home teams DO NOT need mutual consent to schedule a match on the provided game date, but do need mutual consent if the game is going to be moved off the scheduled match date. Once a match has been scheduled by the home team, both teams must agree in writing (in GotSport Chat) to any change.

Clubs must follow the [NorCal Scheduling Guidelines](#) and applicable Remote Area Travel Policies:

- [Region 5 Remote Travel Policy](#)
- [Region 6 Remote Travel Policy](#)
- Do not schedule kick-offs before 10 AM or after 5 PM if the away team must travel more than 1 hour. Teams traveling three or more hours should not have kick-offs before noon.
- Do not schedule matches for U15 and above before 3 PM on SAT/ACT test dates.

All games must be scheduled (time and location) by the deadline provided by the League Office. Teams unwilling or unable to attend scheduled games will forfeit them.

If the League Office determines a Club is responsible for a game not being scheduled, or for failure to respond to communication, teams may lose home-field advantage but remain responsible for referee and field costs.

If a team arrives late, there is a 15-minute grace period. A late start should not affect subsequent matches. If a match is delayed for any reason, the referee may shorten it (two equally shortened halves) if both coaches are informed before the match begins. Shortened matches are automatically played under protest and may be protested via the NorCal Match Report Form.

2.4 – Rescheduling Games/Rainouts

Once a match is scheduled with a time and location in GotSport, both teams must agree to any changes to date, time, or location.

In the event of a forced reschedule (e.g., rainout), the home team must work with its opponent to find a mutually convenient date and reschedule the match. If no date can be agreed upon, the match will be recorded as a no-contest.

2.5 – Cancellation and Forfeit Policy

Teams must provide 96 hours' notice before forfeiting a match; otherwise, a fine applies. All NorCal competitions are Club competitions – any age-appropriate Club Player may be used to fill a roster (except in State Cup, where roster freeze rules apply).

Forfeit: A forfeit occurs when a team cannot attend a scheduled game, and the teams cannot agree on a reschedule after the scheduling deadline. A forfeit results in a 3-0 win for the team not at fault. A team unable to attend due to an accident or an Act of God should immediately notify its opponent and the Event Coordinator; the League Office will determine the match outcome.

No-Show: A no-show occurs when a team fails to attend a properly scheduled match without providing advance notice. The penalty is a 3-0 forfeit (unless the opponent agrees to reschedule) and a \$600 Club fine. Any team that fails to appear may be removed from the competition.

Teams receiving a forfeit or no-show should *not* enter a score, but rather submit a [NorCal Match Report Form](#). The League Office will issue a ruling, and competition staff will enter the official score.

The following are not valid reasons to reschedule or cancel after the scheduling deadline:

- Too many players absent – Any age-appropriate Club Player may play for any team in the Club.
- Missing Coach – Any Adult with a valid Club pass may coach any team in the Club.
- No fields or referees – NorCal participation requires access to quality fields and licensed referees.
- Conflicts with tournaments or other events – NorCal game dates are published before the season; plan accordingly.

2.6 – Fines

The NorCal League Office may impose the following fines:

Offense	Fine
Team drops out after final brackets posted	\$250 + application fee
Team drops out after first game played	\$100/game missed
No-show	\$600
Forfeit within 96 hours of scheduled kickoff	\$400
Failure to file required referee report within 48 hours	\$150 (home club)
Illegal player or coach	\$500
Use of each unlicensed referee	\$500
Use of dual-referee system (duals) where prohibited	\$200

Fines for forfeits may be used to reimburse the hosting club's field and referee costs. All other fines are added to the travel fund for teams qualifying for national events via NorCal competitions, after deducting administrative costs.

2.7 – Play-Up Guidelines

The League Office uses the following criteria when determining whether a team should play up:

- The team is the current State Cup Champion or Finalist in their age group, **AND**
- The team has been demonstrably dominant in previous seasons, **OR**
- The team lacks suitable local competition and must travel extensively.

Teams approved to play up will be placed in a division no more than one level below their current division in the older age group. Play-up requests must be submitted by the published deadline. The League Office has final say.

2.8 – Playing Outside the Region

The League Office will assess the availability of competitive divisions when teams request to play outside their region. Approved teams may be required to play all away matches. Requests must be submitted to the appropriate [League Coordinator](#) by the published deadline. The League Office has final say.

Section 3 – League Discipline

3.1 – Violation of League Rules

The NorCal Premier Protest, Appeals, and Discipline Committee ("PAD Committee") and the League Office have authority to suspend, fine, disqualify, or otherwise sanction Players, team officials, or Clubs for violating NorCal rules, policies, or the Code of Ethics, or for any conduct not in the best interest of soccer. Sanctions may be increased for repeat offenses.

3.2 – Red Cards

A Red Card – including one resulting from two cautions – results in a minimum one (1) game suspension. A Player sent off during a match weekend is ineligible for any NorCal competition for the rest of that weekend, regardless of whether a Send-Off Report has been submitted. Games served on the same weekend count toward the suspension.

If a Red Card is shown to a Player, that Player must leave the match immediately and may not take any further part, but may remain in the Technical Area or on the bench. Players and Coaches sent off should not participate in post-match handshakes with the opposing team or Referees.

If a Red Card is shown to a Coach, the Coach must immediately leave the Technical Area and the entire area surrounding the field (out of sight and hearing as determined by the referee) for the remainder of the match. The Coach may not communicate with their team by any means – including by phone, text, or other electronic communication – from one hour before kick-off until the match is completed. Any Coach who continues to coach after receiving a Red Card, whether from the spectator side or by electronic means, may face additional sanctions, including forfeiture of the match.

The PAD Committee does not normally impose additional suspensions for in-match events handled by the Referee, but may act in extreme cases involving egregious offenses (e.g., violent conduct, spitting, discriminatory language, referee abuse).

Any Player or Coach used during a suspension is considered illegal. The team, Coach, and Club may be sanctioned per [Appendix E – Disciplinary Matrix](#).

3.3 – Suspensions

It is the responsibility of the team and the Club to ensure that suspended Players and Coaches serve their full suspensions. For timelines and processes, visit the [NorCal PAD Website](#).

Players: Suspensions are served immediately in upcoming NorCal games. Players serve with their Primary Team regardless of which team they received the red card with. A Player may not compete for any other team until the suspension is fully served. Play Date games count toward suspensions; tournament games and forfeits do not.

Coaches – game-based suspension: Must be served with the team with whom the violation occurred (or a team assigned by the PAD Committee). The Coach may coach other Club teams during this period, but remains redlined on all rosters. The Coach may not have any contact with the suspended team from one hour before kick-off until after the match is completed.

Coaches – time-based suspension: The Coach may not coach any team for the duration of the suspension period.

[PAD Disciplinary Matrix](#) – See Appendix E of this Handbook.

3.4 – Pending Legal Action

For any matter with an open criminal investigation or pending civil lawsuit, the PAD Committee will stay its ruling until resolution. NorCal retains the right to suspend an individual indefinitely if the PAD Committee or Board of Directors determines it is in the best interests of the game or participant safety.

3.5 – Use of Video in Disciplinary Proceedings

The standard for video evidence in PAD proceedings is clear and convincing. The entire recording must be submitted with time marks for the incident.

Section 4 – Recruiting, Tryouts, and Player Transfers

4.1 – Open Tryout Window

- The Open Tryout Window shall occur within a period determined by the League Office. Details can be found [HERE](#).
- Each RAC may further define its window within the Open Tryout Window. RACs may set tryout periods outside the window for Players registered with Clubs in their region only with the approval of the NorCal Board of Directors.

4.2 – Winter Recreational Tryout Window

- Clubs may hold open tryouts to add players **not currently registered with a competitive team in any NorCal Club**. This window provides a pathway from recreational soccer to competitive Club soccer at the end of the typical recreational season.
- The Window opens on the first Monday of November and remains open through the first weekend of February.
- Competitive Players currently registered with other NorCal Clubs may not attend tryouts during this window. All Club marketing for this window must include language to reflect this restriction.

4.3 – Spring Transfer Freeze

Any Player transferring between NorCal Clubs after April 1 is ineligible to play in NorCal competitions for their new Club until the end of all games in the current Spring season.

4.4 – Recruiting Rules

NorCal Recruiting rules must be strictly observed by all Adults and all official and unofficial team representatives, including Players' parents.

- Adults may not encourage Players or other Adults to violate NorCal recruiting, eligibility, or other rules and policies.
- Adults may not attempt to entice a team or Player to leave a Club for another Club.
- It is unethical for a team or group of Players to be Recruited from one Club to another by any Adult, whether within the current Club or from another Club.
- Initial contact with a Player registered with another Club requires **prior written permission** from the Player's current Club DOC. If a Player or their parent initiates contact with an Adult from another

Club regarding a transfer, that Adult (or their Club's DOC) must notify the Player's current Club's DOC.

- Inviting a Player to guest play without submitting the proper US Club Guest Player Form **and obtaining written permission from the Player's Club DOC** constitutes Recruiting.
- Recruiting a Player from any outside program (including PDP, ODP, High School, or US Soccer Training Center) is prohibited unless conducted in accordance with these rules.
- No Club may allow an Adult to coach a team, including Players that Adult coached at a previous Club within the previous year, without written permission from the former Club. Lack of knowledge of such prior association is not an excuse. (Exception: DOC/Age Group Coordinator roles do not constitute coaching for this purpose.)
- Adults discussing their Club with prospective Players or parents must be truthful and may not make derogatory remarks about other Adults, teams, or Clubs.
- Adults may not attend tryouts at other clubs for promotion or recruitment purposes **unless invited in writing** by the host club. Bringing Players to another club's tryout for recruiting purposes is also prohibited.
- In accordance with US Club Soccer policy, Clubs must release Players who request their release.

Section 5 – General Competition Rules

Each Club and team is responsible for knowing and conforming to all applicable competition rules.

5.1 – Playing Rules

All NorCal games are played in accordance with the [Laws of the Game](#), except where modifications are authorized by FIFA or USSF. See [Match Rules](#) for full details.

5.2 – Equipment

Player Uniforms

- Opponents must wear colors that distinguish them from each other, the Referee, and the assistant Referees. Home teams wear dark; away teams wear light.
- Each goalkeeper must wear colors distinguishing them from all other Players and Referees.
- All outfield Players on a team must wear identical uniforms (shirts, shorts, and socks).
- If there is a uniform color conflict, the home team must change.
- Player numbers must be affixed to the back of the jersey. Each Player must wear a unique number.
- Undershirts or undershorts must match the primary color of the jersey or shorts. Tape applied to socks must match the sock color.
- Captains are not required to wear armbands.

Safety

The [NorCal Player Health and Safety Page](#) contains health and safety resources. Safety is a shared responsibility: Referees have primary responsibility for all participants' safety, and Coaches are primarily responsible for the safety of their own Players.

5.3 – Game Details

	U8-U10	U11	U12	U13	U14-U16	U17-U19
Field Size (yds)	55-65 L / 35-45 W *	70-80 L / 45-55 W*		100-120 L / 50-80 W		
Penalty Area (yds)	12x24	14x36		18 x 44		
Goal Area (yards)	4x8	5x16		6 x 20		
Goal Size (ft)	6.5x18.5 - 7x21			8x24		
**Minimum # of Refs	1			3		
Number of Players	7v7	9v9		11v11		
Game Day Roster Size	14	16		18		
Minimum # of Players	5	6		7		
Goalkeeper	Yes					
Playing Time	2x25	2x30		2x35	2x40	2x45
Half-Time	5 mins	10 mins				
Ball Size	4			5		
Deliberate Heading	No		Yes			
PDI (see below)	Yes	No				
Offside	Yes					
Substitutions	At Any Stoppage					
Free Kick clearance	8 yd			10 yd		
Penalty Kicks	Yes (mark at 10 yds)			Yes (mark at 12 yds)		
Build-Out Line	Yes	None				

* Cones may be used in place of lines for U8–U10.

See [Match Rules](#) for full details.

5.4 – Referees

Referees must be current-year USSF-licensed Referees. The standard crew is the Referee and two assistant Referees.

- 7v7 and 9v9 may be played with one Referee.
- U13–U19: All matches should have three Referees. Matches played with fewer may be played under automatic protest, but may proceed with one Referee and two club linesmen, or one Referee, one AR, and one club linesman.

If no referees are present, NorCal encourages both teams to play a friendly (not an official match). The away team should submit a NorCal Match Report to receive an official ruling. Use of an unlicensed Referee results in a forfeit for the home team.

In emergencies, any licensed Referee, including relatives of any of the players, may officiate the match if they are the only licensed Referee available. The relationship must be declared before kick-off; both coaches must agree. Failure to disclose this relationship may result in sanctions against the home club.

Club Linesmen may be used in place of assistant Referees only when insufficient licensed Referees are present. Club Linesmen may only signal when the ball has left the field of play; they may not call offside or fouls. The dual referee system should not be used if assistant Referees are missing.

No Coach, Manager, Player, or spectator may approach game officials before, during, at half-time, or after a match to discuss calls, criticize performance, or lobby for decisions. No one may request a Referee's name, USSF ID, or personal information. Referee feedback should go to the match assignor or via NorCal-prescribed methods.

5.5 – Assignment of Referees

Referees are assigned and paid by the home Club. Each Club must have a current-year USSF-certified Referee Assignor who is actively assigning Referees for all NorCal games and is listed in their GotSport account. Failure to maintain a certified Assignor may result in Club sanctions, including review of Club membership. Family members or team officials may not be assigned to any match in which their team is playing. The club responsible for assigning referees is also responsible for their conduct and performance.

Referee Assignors are also responsible for communicating and coordinating with the NorCal PAD Committee and Referee Department. Assignors must respond to PAD Committee and Referee Program requests within 48 hours and are expected to ensure that all referee communications from NorCal reach all of their referees. Failure to do so may result in sanctions against the Club.

5.6 – Protests

Protests must be submitted via the [NorCal Match Report Form](#). On-field Referee decisions cannot be protested. No match-condition protests are allowed at NorCal-hosted events.

5.7 – Point System

All NorCal Premier Leagues award 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw, and 0 points for a loss.

5.8 – League Standings

The League Office tabulates official standings displayed on the NorCal website and App.

5.9 – Ties

Unless noted as a match needing a winner, a NorCal match tied after regulation stands and is recorded as a draw.

5.10 – Tiebreakers (Standings)

Unless it is otherwise stated in the rules of a specific competition, if two or more teams are tied on points, the following tiebreakers apply in order:

- Head-to-head points (win/draw/loss) among tied teams
- Overall goal differential (capped at ± 6 per game)
- Goals for (capped at 6 per game)
- Goals against (capped at 6 per game)
- Most points against the highest-ranked non-tied team in the group
- Best goal differential against the highest-ranked non-tied team in the group
- Most shutouts
- Fewest red cards
- Coin toss

If more than two teams are tied, this process continues until a winner is determined. The procedure does not revert to a previous criterion once one team is eliminated.

If a season or group cannot be completed due to exceptional circumstances or teams have played an unequal number of games, NorCal may use Points Per Game (PPG) to determine standings.

5.11 – Incomplete Games

If a game cannot be completed due to events outside either team's control, it stands if at least half was played.

If a match is abandoned before the expiration of one half, it shall be replayed in full at a time agreed upon by both teams in consultation with the League Office.

Any team directly responsible for the termination of a match – regardless of how much time remains – due to poor sportsmanship toward a Referee, opposing spectators, or opposing Players, must forfeit the match and may face additional sanctions.

Both teams must submit a [NorCal Match Report Form](#) for any incomplete game. Referees must also submit a [Referee Match Report](#) for all matches that end early. The League Office will rule on the result.

5.12 – No Re-Entry Protocol (Head Injury and SCA)

In accordance with US Club Soccer return-to-play guidelines and California law, any Player removed from the field for a suspected head injury or sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) may not return on the same day and must be cleared by a Licensed Healthcare Provider before any future participation.

If a Licensed Healthcare Provider (as defined in CA Health and Safety Code Section 124235(b)(2)) is present at the match for evaluation and management of concussion or cardiac conditions – and is identified to the Referee before the match begins – they may clear a Player to return during the same match if they no longer suspect a concussion or SCA.

A Licensed Healthcare Provider is defined by CA law AB-379 as an individual "who is trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and is acting within the scope of the provider's practice for evaluation and management of concussions or other head injuries" and/or "who is trained in the evaluation and management of cardiac conditions and is acting within the scope of that provider's practice for evaluation and management of sudden cardiac arrest, fainting, and shortness of breath."

5.13 – Substitutions

Unlimited substitutions are allowed in all age groups and competitions except ECNL-RL (see Appendix B). Teams may only substitute with the Referee's permission. Substitutes must wait at the halfway line until the field Player has exited and/or the Referee has indicated the substitute may enter.

Substitutions by either team are permitted at any stoppage with the Referee's permission. *Referees should not allow substitutions deemed excessive or time-wasting. Do not use substitution rules to disrupt the match.*

Section 6 – Rosters

6.1 – Player Registration

Players must be registered through GotSport in accordance with US Club Soccer rules.

6.2 – US Club Soccer Player Pass

All Players and Coaches must present their US Club Soccer passes within the [NorCal App](#) to the Referee before the match. If the App is unavailable due to a lack of service, physical passes may be used as a backup.

See also: [Guidance on Team Participant Verification](#).

6.3 – Match Day Roster

Each team must create a match day roster in the NorCal App. Only Players who are listed on a team's source roster will be eligible to be selected for the match-day roster. Players not on the match day roster may not participate in the match.

Maximum match day roster per match:

- U13-U19: 18
- U11-U12: 16
- U8-U10: 14

Players may not play for two teams in the same division of play (*same age group and level, sharing the same standings*).

A Coach with a valid US Club passcard may coach any team in the Club and does not need to be added to the match day roster.

6.4 – Guest Players

No guest Players (Players with a US Club Soccer pass from a different Club) may play in NorCal Premier League competitions.

6.5 – Ineligible and Illegal Players

Any player who is improperly rostered and does not appear on the match day roster within the NorCal App is ineligible. Any team using or attempting to use an ineligible player may be required to replay the match.

Players who do not have a valid US Club Soccer player pass issued by the same Club at the time of the match, or are suspended from NorCal competitions at the time of the match, or are overage shall be considered illegal Players. Any team using or attempting to use an illegal player shall forfeit the game, the coach may be suspended up to one year, and the Club may incur a \$500 fine.

Section 7 – Game Day Procedures

See Appendices A–D for additional instructions specific to State Cup, ECNL-RL, National 1, and Super Rec competitions.

7.1 – Pre-Game (All Competitions)

Home Team Responsibilities

- Schedule and post game time and location in GotSport.
- Provide a quality field equipped with goals, nets, flags, and proper lines.
- Assign qualified current-year licensed Referees.
- Provide the referee with the match day roster and digital player cards in the NorCal App.
- Set the team's starting line-up in the NorCal App.
- Change jersey colors if there is a color conflict (home teams wear dark; away teams wear light).
- Provide game balls.

Visiting Team Responsibilities

- Respond to all home team scheduling communications within 48 hours.
- Provide the referee with the match day roster and digital player cards in the NorCal App.
- Set the team's starting line-up in the NorCal App.

7.2 – Post-Game (All Competitions)

Following the match, a representative from each team and the Referee should gather to review and report the game information (checking scores and misconduct).

Home Team Responsibilities

- Produce QR code in NorCal App for Referee to report score and misconduct

Visiting Team Responsibilities

- Submit a [NorCal Match Report Form](#) for any protest or incident.

7.3 – Field Setup

The home Club determines whether both team benches are on the same side or opposite sides of the field. This must be communicated to the away Club before the match. It is not the Referee's responsibility to inform or enforce this. The away Club must adhere to the setup communicated by the home Club.

7.4 – Field of Play

Spectators may not enter the field of play without the Referee's permission. Entering the field – regardless of reason – may result in team and Club-level sanctions, including additional suspension of the head coach and removal of the team from NorCal competitions.

7.5 – Technical Area

The Technical Area is for Players and team officials only. A maximum of three (3) credentialed team officials are allowed in each team's Technical Area at any time. All officials in the Technical Area must hold a valid US Club Soccer pass.

The referee may require any uncredentialed Adult to leave the technical area.

See Match Rules for full details.

7.6 – Prohibited Substances

The use or consumption of alcohol, drugs, or vaping products is strictly prohibited at all NorCal matches.

Section 8 – Competition Appendices

The following Appendices contain rules modifications for specific NorCal competitions. Where an Appendix is silent on a topic, the rules in Sections 1–7 apply. Where an Appendix expressly supersedes a provision of this Handbook, the Appendix governs.

- Appendix A – State Cup Rule Modifications
- Appendix B – ECNL RL Rule Modifications
- Appendix C – National 1 (N1) Rule Modifications
- Appendix D – Super Rec Rule Modifications
- Appendix E – Disciplinary Matrix

Appendix A – State Cup Rule Modifications

These rules modify or supplement the Main Handbook for NorCal State Cup competition only. All provisions of the Main Handbook apply except where this Appendix expressly supersedes them.

A.1 – Rankings and Draw | Group Stage

Once teams are placed in their respective divisions, they are ranked according to their results in the fall league, state cup, and spring league from the previous year. Team placement for the upcoming fall season is also considered. U9–U10 and U11–U12 divisions are placed in groups of 4 geographically. U13–U19 divisions are placed in Regions (North, South, East, West) and Pots (based on prior season results). Teams are randomly drawn by region to create groups of four for the Group Stage.

A.2 – Ties in Group Stage

If a State Cup Group Stage match (U11–U19) or First/Second Round match (U9–U10) is tied after regulation, the tie stands.

A.3 – State Cup Tiebreakers

If two or more teams are tied on points within a group, the same tiebreaker sequence as [Section 5.10](#) applies. If a group cannot be completed due to exceptional circumstances, NorCal may use Points Per Game (PPG) to determine standings.

A.4 – Matches Requiring a Winner

For matches that must produce a winner: if tied after regulation, two full 5-minute extra periods are played. If still tied, FIFA Penalty Shootout rules determine the winner.

Know before your match whether it can end in a draw or must produce a winner.

A.5 – State Cup Championships

Only the "NorCal State Division" Champion in each age group is designated the State Champion. All other championship teams must prepend their divisional category to their title (e.g., "2026 Gold Cup Champions").

A.6 – State Cup Rosters

All State Cup teams must create an official State Cup Roster in GotSport. Maximum 26 Players before the Roster Freeze date. After the Freeze, only Players on the official State Cup Roster may participate. Game day caps: U9–U10 = 14; U11–U12 = 16; U13–U19 = 18.

A.7 – State Cup Roster Open Window

Following completion of the Group Stage, State Cup teams may add or remove Players from their official State Cup Roster. For U9–U12 ages teams must use the [State Cup Player Add Form](#), whereas U13–U19 teams will have an open roster period to add players. All teams must follow the Cup-Tied Rule for any player adds.

A.8 – Cup-Tied Rule

Players may only compete for one team per age group in the NorCal State Cup. A Club may place Players on more than one 26-player roster, but Players may not play for two different teams in the same age group (exception: Players may transfer State Cup rosters from a lower division whose cup has concluded to a higher division). A Player may play up in an older age group while competing in their actual age group. Once a Player plays for a team in a specific age group, that Player is Cup Tied to that team for the remainder of that age group's State Cup.

A.9 – Emergency Player Rule

Teams may request emergency player additions under the following conditions:

- Roster below minimum: Teams below 12 Players (U13–U19), 10 (U11–U12), or 8 (U9–U10) may request adds. Additions will bring the roster to 1 substitute above the minimum only.
- Emergency GK Add: Teams without a goalkeeper due to injury or illness may request an emergency GK add.

Requests must be submitted via the [Emergency Player Add Form](#). Only Players registered with the Club before the roster freeze date but not on the State Cup roster are eligible.

A.10 – No-Shows and Forfeits in State Cup

The League Office handles all forfeit situations in State Cup to ensure that points gained or lost by forfeit do not improperly move teams across divisional boundaries in a way that harms the event.

Appendix B – ECNL RL Rule Modifications

Purpose. This Appendix is the complete set of competition rules for the NorCal ECNL Regional League (“ECNL-RL”) and replaces the prior standalone NorCal ECNL-RL Handbook. It adopts the provisions of the [ECNL Competition Rules](#) relevant to ECNL-RL play as NorCal’s own rules and adds NorCal’s competition-specific requirements. Where this Appendix is silent, the ECNL Competition Rules govern, and then the Main Handbook (Sections 1–7).

B.1 – Scope and Governing Authority

NorCal operates the ECNL Regional League – NorCal under license from the ECNL. The national *ECNL Competition Rules* remain the overarching framework. All ECNL Competitions are played under the FIFA Laws of the Game except as modified by this Appendix.

Relationship to the Main Handbook. Main Handbook provisions apply to ECNL-RL except where this Appendix expressly supersedes them. This Appendix supersedes Section 3.2 (Red Cards), Section 5.3 (Game Details/Length), Section 5.10 (Tiebreakers), Section 5.13 (Substitutions), and Section 6 (Rosters) for ECNL-RL competition. General provisions already stated in the Main Handbook — playing rules, equipment and uniforms, field setup, technical area, and prohibited substances — are not repeated here and apply as written.

Jurisdiction. NorCal administers ECNL-RL registration, scheduling, conference discipline, transfers within the NorCal conference, the Roster Integrity over-cap approval (B.8), and regular-season standings. ECNL retains authority over the national competition framework, movement between the ECNL and ECNL-RL, and all postseason qualification, seeding, and eligibility.

Season. The ECNL Season runs August 1 through July 31, inclusive of the regular season and postseason.

B.2 – Defined Terms (ECNL-RL)

The following terms are used in this Appendix in addition to the Main Handbook Definitions:

- **ECNL Registered Player** – a player on an ECNL Team’s roster, registered with US Club Soccer.
- **Initial Roster** – the roster of the first team on which a player is registered for the season; used for roster-maximum counts and movement restrictions.
- **Game Day Roster** – the players (maximum 18) eligible to appear in a given match, as listed on the ECNL Match Report.
- **ECNL Match Report** – the official match report required for every match.
- **Fixture** – the ECNL-RL matches between two clubs scheduled together, whether on one day or split across days.
- **Primary ECNL Player** – a player on the Initial Roster of an ECNL Club Competition team (relevant to the Roster Integrity limit, B.8).
- **Discovery Player** – a player not considered a full-time participant in the club’s training environment

B.3 – Registration and Eligibility

All players on an ECNL-RL roster must be ECNL-registered and registered with US Club Soccer. A player may play for their own age group or an older age group, and may play in any age group within the club they are carded to, provided they are age-eligible and meet all other requirements.

Age groups. ECNL-RL fields age groups U13–U19 as set by NorCal each season, following the US Club Soccer age matrix (August 1–July 31 formation date).

Collegiate players. A player who appears on a college roster or plays a college match in the fall is ineligible for any ECNL Competition. A player who competes in fall/winter and then plays a spring college season may return to ECNL Competition after the collegiate season, provided they return to the same club.

B.4 – Rosters

Minimum 15 ECNL-registered players (initial roster due by the date the ECNL designates); maximum 30. A player added to a roster counts against the maximum even if later released or transferred, absent an ECNL Commissioner exception for unique and exceptional circumstances.

Game Day Roster. A maximum of 18 players are eligible for any match. If more than 18 appear on the roster, active players must be identified and inactive players struck through on the Match Report. A player appearing on a Game Day Roster is deemed to have played and is fixture-tied unless struck through.

Game limits and fixture ties. A player may play on only one ECNL team and in only one ECNL Competition per day, and may play only one game in any fixture. Exception: a U13 or U14 player may play in both a U13/U14 match and one older-age-group match within the same fixture, provided they play only one ECNL Competition per day; a player may play only one of the U13 or U14 games within a fixture regardless of the days on which they are scheduled.

Roster drops. No player may be dropped from a roster during the season except by transfer or release.

B.5 – Roster Additions and Freeze Date

New ECNL-registered players may be added through March 1. After March 1 and until the ECNL-designated Roster Freeze Date, a club may add (i) an unlimited number of players not previously ECNL-rostered that season, and (ii) a maximum of two previously-ECNL-rostered (transferred) players per age group whose transfer has been approved. Players added under (ii) are restricted to the age group to which they were added for the remainder of the season. All additions require roster space and count against the maximum.

High-school graduates. Players graduating from high school and not continuing the following season may be added only at U18/U19, with Commissioner approval.

Transfer club integrity. Players added after March 1 who then do not participate with that club the following season may trigger club sanctions at the Commissioner's discretion, including transfer bans, point deductions, or postseason disqualification.

B.6 – Discovery Players

Discovery Players are not allowed in the ECNL RL - NorCal

B.7 – Club Loyalty

Once registered, an ECNL Registered Player may participate in US Soccer-sanctioned 11v11 outdoor competition only with their ECNL club for the duration of the season, unless released under the transfer/release rules. If a player appears for another club in a sanctioned 11v11 competition ("multiple-club rostering"), the Commissioner will review eligibility and may declare the player ineligible for the season, declare forfeits for matches in which the player appeared, and/or recommend membership action against the club.

Exceptions. This rule does not apply to participation with NWSL, MLS NEXT Pro, USL (Super League, W-League, Championship, League One, League Two, or Academy), WPSL, UPSL, or NPSL; nor to guest-player

participation in a tournament or to all-star/identification events. No ECNL Registered Player may guest in a tournament with a different ECNL club without approval.

B.8 – Roster Integrity (Primary ECNL Player Limit)

For clubs that field teams in both the ECNL and ECNL-RL in the same season, no ECNL-RL Game Day Roster may include more than the Designated Maximum Number of Primary ECNL Players without advance written approval from the NorCal ECNL RL Coordinator. The Designated Maximum Number is:

Age Group	Designated Maximum Number
U13	3
U14	3
U15	3
U16	3
U17	3
U18	4

On an over-cap request, the NorCal ECNL RL Coordinator may: (i) allow the over-cap use with no sanction; (ii) allow it but declare the match a forfeit in favor of the opponent; or (iii) decline it. A roster at or under the Designated Maximum Number is within safe harbor and is not subject to review. Repeated over-cap requests across age groups may result in a recommendation of non-renewal or postseason ineligibility. This policy applies per match, does not limit how many Primary ECNL Players may appear across the season, and does not apply to the postseason.

B.9 – Player Transfers

A player may play for only one club during an ECNL season (fall opening through the final spring ECNL-RL weekend) unless the NorCal League Office grants a transfer. A transferred player must sit out five (5) ECNL-RL games before becoming eligible for the new club; a player who plays before serving the sit-out is an illegal player. The NorCal League Office has final say on transfers within the NorCal conference.

ECNL-level movement. Movement involving the ECNL competition itself remains subject to ECNL Commissioner consent, which considers geographic moves, games already played, the timing of the request, and the positions of the clubs involved. The Commissioner may refuse a transfer, grant it with a suspension or condition, or grant it without sanction.

Multiple-program clubs. A club with multiple programs or teams in ECNL-RL may not transfer a player between its programs except under the player-development exemption: two players per age group may move between programs, provided the move is completed before that team’s fifth game of the season; a player so moved may not transfer again within the club.

B.10 – Trapped Players

Trapped U18/U19. A player in 11th grade who is age-appropriate for U18/U19 may play at U17 ECNL regular-season events and in the ECNL Club postseason (except Champions League). Trapped U18/U19 players are not eligible for the ECNL-RL postseason. There is no limit on the number who may play in a single game where eligible.

Trapped U15. A player in 8th grade who is age-appropriate for U15 may play U14 ECNL Competition during their high-school soccer season, and may also play up at U15–U18/U19 in the same fixture, provided they play only one ECNL Competition per day. No more than two Trapped U15 players may play in any single U14 match.

B.11 – Substitutions

Superseding Section 5.13, Substitution rules vary based upon the age and type of ECNL Competition, as outlined below:

U15 – U18 ECNL: Once an ECNL Registered Player is substituted in one half, such ECNL Registered Player may not re-enter the game for the duration of the half. There shall be a maximum of seven (7) substitutions in any half. This substitution rule shall also apply to the U15 – U18 ECNL Conference League Playoffs and ECNL Conference League Finals.

U13 – U14 ECNL: Clubs have unlimited player substitutions within three “Substitution Moments” in each half and at halftime. A “Substitution Moment” is a stoppage in play when the coach of an ECNL Team is allowed by the referee to substitute players. If both teams substitute players in the same Substitution Moment, the Substitution Moment counts as one of the three allowed Substitution Moments for both ECNL Teams. Any eligible ECNL Registered Player may be substituted in each Substitution Moment. A substitution of a player under Rule 3.9.4 “Head Injury” will not count as a Substitution Moment, provided only the player with the potential head injury is substituted. This substitution rule shall also apply to the U13-U14 ECNL Conference League Playoffs and ECNL Conference League Finals.

B.12 – Game Length

Superseding Section 5.3, ECNL-RL matches are played at the following lengths, each with a 10-minute half-time:

Age Group	Game Length
U13	2 × 35 minutes
U14	2 × 40 minutes
U15	2 × 40 minutes
U16	2 × 40 minutes
U17	2 × 45 minutes
U19	2 × 45 minutes

B.13 – Points and Standings

Three points for a win, one for a tie, zero for a loss. A forfeit is recorded as a 3–0 loss for the forfeiting team and a 3–0 win for the opponent; only the ECNL Commissioner or the NorCal League Office may declare a forfeit, based on review of the facts. The NorCal League Office determines ECNL-RL regular-season standings; ECNL sets postseason qualification and seeding from those standings (see B.23).

B.14 – Tiebreakers

Superseding Section 5.10, regular-season ties are resolved in order: head-to-head points (does not apply if more than two teams are tied), goal difference, goals for, goals against, coin toss. There is no cap on goal difference in any ECNL Competition.

B.15 – Scheduling

ECNL-RL game dates are set and provided by the NorCal League Office, and ECNL-RL matches are the club's priority. All scheduling communication runs through the AthleteOne Game Change Request System; both manager and coach contacts must be current, and contacts must respond within 48 hours. Teams must be available to play at any time on the provided game dates, subject to the home-team travel-time windows below (which do not apply to NorCal-hosted events):

- 1 hour of travel: no earlier than 9 AM, no later than 5 PM.
- 2 hours of travel: no earlier than 10 AM, no later than 4 PM.
- 3 or more hours of travel: kickoff recommended between 11 AM and 3 PM.
- Do not schedule U15–U19 matches before 3 PM on SAT/ACT dates.

All matches must be scheduled (time and location) by the NorCal deadline, after which schedules lock and may be changed through the game change request system. All game change requests must be approved by both clubs' DOCs and the NorCal League Office. All matches must be completed and scores submitted by the NorCal deadline.

B.16 – Rescheduling and Cancellations

No change may be made within 72 hours of kickoff except for bad weather or as permitted for exceptional circumstances outside the clubs' control. If a match is canceled or postponed in compliance with these rules, the clubs must identify a new date, time, and venue within 14 days (the match need not be played within 14 days, but must be scheduled within that window). If the clubs do not, the League may set the date, declare a non-played game with no points, or declare a forfeit for one or both teams.

A match canceled before kickoff or before half-time is a non-played game with no points; a match reaching half-time is a completed game. A late team has a 15-minute grace period; a late start must not delay subsequent matches, and a referee may shorten a delayed match into two equal halves if both coaches are informed before kickoff (shortened matches are automatically under protest and noted on the Match Report). All matches must be completed by the NorCal deadline (and, under the ECNL Competition Rules, by the first Sunday in June absent a Commissioner extension).

B.17 – Game Day Requirements and Procedures

For all ECNL-RL matches, the home team provides:

- Benches for both teams;
- Tent or bench cover for both teams;
- ECNL match balls;
- Video recording, uploaded to the league exchange platform within 48 hours;
- Three referees

Procedures. About five minutes before kickoff, teams are encouraged to conduct an international walkout, followed by handshakes with the referees and opposing players; the walkout may be waived on impacted schedules, but handshakes remain. Both teams must submit the official ECNL Match Report, completed in full within 24 hours of the match.

B.18 – Referees

Three referees are required for all ECNL-RL matches. The home club assigns and pays referees for its home matches; at neutral sites, referee costs are split 50/50 absent another agreement. If only two certified referees are present, the clubs should appoint a club linesman to complete the crew; if only one is present, the clubs must contact the league before kickoff to determine whether the match may proceed. A match played with fewer than three licensed referees is played under automatic protest.

B.19 – Discipline

Players. Superseding Section 3.2, a player sent off is suspended for the remainder of that level of ECNL Competition that day and for the next day that level is played for any age group. The NorCal League Office may impose additional sanctions as outlined in the NorCal Disciplinary Matrix.

Coaches. A coach sent off is suspended for the remainder of that competition, all other ECNL Competitions that day, and the next competition at that age-group level. The NorCal League Office may impose additional sanctions as outlined in the NorCal Disciplinary Matrix.

Carryover and accumulation. Red-card suspensions carry over between seasons where the card is received in the final competition of the season or where the suspension length requires it. There is no yellow-card accumulation policy.

Protests and appeals. There are no protests or appeals of decisions made in ECNL Competition or of Commissioner suspensions of five games or fewer. A suspension of more than five games approved by a Disciplinary Committee may be appealed to US Club Soccer and then to US Soccer. Referee assault and abuse matters are the direct jurisdiction of US Club Soccer.

* Red card suspensions within the ECNL RL - NorCal division do not carry over to other NorCal competitions and vice versa. Meaning that a suspension for a red card in an ECNL RL match can not be served in a State Cup match, and a red card suspension from a State Cup match can not be served in an ECNL RL match.

B.20 – Forfeits, No-Shows, and Fines

A team unable or unwilling to play forfeits; the NorCal ECNL-RL Coordinator documents unplayed games and may remove a team or club from the league. The following fine schedule applies:

Offense	Fine
Failure to claim an auto-acceptance spot by the deadline	\$200/ team
Team drops out after acceptance	\$350 + application fee
Team drops out after final brackets posted	\$450 + application fee
Team drops out after first game played	\$100/game missed
No-show (two no-shows result in removal from the league)	\$600
Forfeit within 96 hours of scheduled kickoff	\$400
Forfeit with 96 hours notice	\$100
Failure to schedule by the league deadline	\$50/ game
Failure to provide the required licensed referees	\$150/ referee

Offense	Fine
Failure to claim an auto-acceptance spot by the deadline	\$200/ team
Team drops out after acceptance	\$350 + application fee
Team drops out after final brackets posted	\$450 + application fee
Team drops out after first game played	\$100/game missed
No-show (two no-shows result in removal from the league)	\$600
Forfeit within 96 hours of scheduled kickoff	\$400
Forfeit with 96 hours notice	\$100
Failure to schedule by the league deadline	\$50/ game
Failure to provide shade/ tents, benchers or match balls	\$50/ occurrence
Failure to upload video within 48 hours	\$50

B.21 – Showcases

NorCal Showcase events. U16 and U17 teams must attend both the fall and spring NorCal Showcase events. U19 teams must attend the fall showcase and may opt out of the spring. Showcase dates are published with league game dates, and Fall and Spring Showcase costs are built into the league fees.

ECNL Showcase events. ECNL-RL clubs have access to ECNL-managed Showcase events; teams wishing to attend apply and inquire directly with ECNL.

B.22 – Promotion and Relegation

The NorCal ECNL-RL is a combined club- and team-based competition with promotion and relegation for wildcard teams. The NorCal League Office publishes promotion and relegation plans for each age group and division before Game Date #1.

B.23 – Postseason

All ECNL teams must participate in the ECNL postseason if they qualify; failure to participate may result in removal from the league. ECNL governs, and may adjust at its sole discretion, postseason qualification, seeding, and eligibility — including in response to cancellations, refusals to play, or other factors it deems relevant. NorCal determines regular-season standings and publishes showcase and event information annually; NorCal does not control ECNL-RL postseason eligibility.

Dual-pathway declaration. A team competing in both ECNL-RL and N1 must declare in writing its chosen postseason pathway to NorCal and the N1 Commissioner before its first scheduled match of the season; failure to declare may result in ineligibility for any pathway in which it participates.

B.24 – Code of Conduct and Reporting

ECNL-RL participants are bound by the ECNL Code of Conduct and by all US Club Soccer bylaws and policies, including US Club Soccer Policy Section 13 (Athlete and Participant Safety) and the Prohibited Conduct

Policy. Suspected abuse or misconduct should be reported to US Club Soccer through its online reporting mechanism. Code of Conduct incidents during ECNL Competition should be reported in writing to the ECNL Commissioner within seven days; referee assault and abuse matters are referred directly to US Club Soccer.

Appendix C – National 1 (N1) Rule Modifications

National 1 (N1) replaces the NPL for the 2026–27 season. N1 is a US Club Soccer and US Youth Soccer competition operated through a network of approved Operators. NorCal Premier Soccer (“NorCal”) is the authorized N1 Operator for its District and administers N1 competition in alignment with the [N1 Handbook](#) and the Rules of US Club Soccer.

The National 1 Handbook & Rules of Competition governs all N1 competition. This Appendix states only the points at which N1 differs from, or adds to, the NorCal Main Handbook (Sections 1–7). For N1 competition, where any conflict exists the order of precedence is: (1) the bylaws, policies, and rules of US Club Soccer and US Soccer, and the N1 Handbook; (2) this Appendix C, as NorCal Operator policy; and (3) the NorCal Main Handbook. Where this Appendix is silent, the Main Handbook applies.

C.1 – Club and Team Eligibility

N1 participation requires annual approval by the NorCal League Office as Operator, and clubs and teams must meet the N1 Club Standards and any additional NorCal Operator requirements. The N1 age groups are U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, and U18/19.

C.2 – Coach Education

NorCal license requirements apply to all N1 teams. Every coach assigned to an N1 team must hold a minimum USSF “D” license (or foreign equivalent).

In addition, every N1 Coach must complete five (5) hours of annual development and upload proof with registration (same process as SafeSport), through one of the following:

- The ECNL/US Club Soccer Coaches Voice platform, completed before August 1 of the competition year; or
- A USSF Continuing Education (CEU) course.

Exemption: a coach who earned a USSF “D” license or higher within the past five (5) years is exempt from the five-hour annual development requirement, but must provide proof of that license when registering as a coach.

A waiver of the development requirement may be granted for a coach on the coaching-education pathway; it must be co-signed by the Club Director and the state technical lead, state the coach’s development plan with timelines, and be verified by the NorCal League Office. The annual development requirement applies only to N1 participation.

C.3 – Registration and Rosters

These rules supplement and, where indicated, supersede Section 6 for N1 teams.

- **Roster minimum:** a minimum of 15 primary rostered players must be registered by the published district deadline and maintained throughout the Seasonal Year.
- **Roster maximum:** a maximum of 30 primary players per N1 team (per age group). Once added, a player counts against the maximum for the Seasonal Year even if later released, transferred, or dropped, unless the N1 Commissioner grants an exception. Club-pass players (C.4) do not count against the 30.
- **Roster freeze:** NorCal will publish the N1 roster-freeze date(s) for the District.
- **Player limitations:** a primary player may play for only one team in a District Division. Where a club has multiple teams in the same District Division, a primary player may not appear on both rosters. A player may never be listed on rosters of two different clubs.
- **One team per day:** during the N1 season a player may play for only one District team per day. Exception – a Goalkeeper may be listed on up to two N1 game cards per day from the same club with NorCal’s written consent, must play as Goalkeeper in both, and may not appear on more than one team in the same gender age group of a District Division.
- **Trapped U15 player:** an 8th-grade player who is age-appropriate for U15 may participate in U14 N1 competition played during the player’s sanctioned high-school season. No more than two Trapped U15 players may participate in any individual U14 N1 match.

C.4 – Club Pass and Cross-Competition Eligibility

Any US Club Soccer–registered player within a club or team participating in N1 (or an approved affiliate) may be added to an N1 game-day roster under the procedure NorCal publishes. The following limits apply, and any player found violating the rules below will be treated as an illegal player:

- **ECNL ineligibility:** a player rostered to, or who has participated in, an official ECNL competition (or equivalent) in the current year is ineligible to participate in any official N1 match for the same club. Eligibility may be regained only by transferring to a new club under the transfer rules.
- **ECNL-RL cap:** a maximum of four (4) players rostered to, or who have participated in, an official ECNL Regional League competition in the current year may participate in any single N1 match.

C.5 – Transfers and Recruiting

These rules supplement Section 4 for N1 teams.

- **In-season transfer between N1 teams:** a player rostered to an N1 club is ineligible to transfer to another N1 team in the same Seasonal Year unless all of the following are met — (1) the player has moved to a different District; (2) the new location is beyond a reasonable travel distance from the current club; and (3) both Directors agree to the transfer.
- **Right to choose:** a player may transfer clubs mid-season once all obligations are met, but is not eligible to participate with the new club in N1 for the remainder of the Seasonal Year unless approved by the Commissioner in consultation with NorCal.

- **No reset on re-registration:** registering with a new N1-participating team after release from a previous N1 team does not make the player eligible to transfer to a subsequent N1 team within the Seasonal Year.
- **Recruiting:** once a player is registered as an N1 player for the subsequent season, that player may not be contacted or recruited by other N1 clubs. NorCal will publish the District tryout date; before that date, clubs may not train, tryout, or guest another club's registered N1 player absent release or written approval.

C.6 – Substitutions

N1 NorCal substitutions are unlimited - consistent with Section 5.13. This overrides the N1 National Handbook.

C.7 – Game Length

Superseding Section 5.3, N1 matches are played at the following lengths, each with a 10-minute half-time:

Age Group	Game Length
U13	2 × 35 minutes
U14	2 × 35 minutes
U15	2 × 40 minutes
U16	2 × 40 minutes
U17	2 × 45 minutes
U19	2 × 45 minutes

C.8 – Standings and Tiebreakers

League standings determine postseason qualification. For N1 competition, the tiebreakers below supersede Section 5.10.

Two teams tied

- Head-to-head points in competition
- Most matches won (all divisional matches)
- Goal difference (all divisional matches, no cap)
- Fewest goals allowed (all divisional matches, no cap)
- Total goals for (all divisional matches, no cap)
- Coin toss

Three or more teams tied

- Head-to-head results among the tied teams

- Goal difference among the tied teams (no cap)
- Goal difference, all divisional matches (no cap)
- Fewest goals allowed among the tied teams (no cap)
- Fewest goals allowed, all divisional matches (no cap)
- Total goals for among the tied teams (no cap)
- Total goals for, all divisional matches (no cap)
- Coin toss

The procedure does not revert to a previous criterion once a team is eliminated. If a season or group cannot be completed and teams have played an unequal number of matches, NorCal may use Points Per Game (PPG) or equivalent results to determine final standings.

Note: N1 applies no goal cap, whereas Section 5.10 caps goal differential and goals at ± 6 per game. Because the N1 Handbook governs N1 competition, the no-cap N1 tiebreakers control.

C.9 – Promotion and Relegation

There is no relegation from N1. The upward pathway is into the ECNL Regional League (ECNL-RL): teams that win their spring Premier division are eligible for promotion into ECNL-RL as wildcard teams. NorCal publishes wildcard eligibility and any available slots by age group annually.

C.10 – Referees

Three referees are required for all N1 matches, in every N1 age group. A licensed center referee must be present for a match to count as an official N1 result; club assistant referees may be used only in the unique circumstances permitted by the N1 Handbook.

C.11 – Fines

The following fines apply to N1 teams in addition to the fines in Section 2.6 of the Main Handbook.

Offense	Fine
Team drops after acceptance	\$350 + application fee
Team drops after final brackets posted	\$450 + application fee
Team drops after first game played	\$100/ game missed
Failure to schedule matches by league deadline	\$50 per game
Forfeit or cancellation with 96+ hours' notice	\$100 per game
Failure to provide the required licensed referees	\$150 per missing referee
Failure to provide shade/ tents or benches for both teams	\$50 per occurrence

C.12 – Postseason

A team is eligible for only one league-based postseason pathway. A team competing in both ECNL-RL and N1 must declare its chosen pathway in writing to NorCal and the N1 Commissioner before its first scheduled match of the season; failure to declare may result in ineligibility for any pathway in which it participates. Once a team qualifies for postseason, N1 rules govern player movement and rosters, and the ECNL Postseason Roster Tie date applies at check-in of the first ECNL Postseason stage in which the team appears.

Appendix D – Super Rec Rule Modifications

NorCal Super Rec is a recreational competition for Players holding US Club Soccer recreational passes. This Appendix states only the points at which Super Rec differs from, or adds to, the NorCal Main Handbook (Sections 1–7). Super Rec membership criteria are published on the [NorCal Club Membership Page](#).

For Super Rec competition, where any conflict exists the order of precedence is: (1) the bylaws, policies, and rules of US Club Soccer and US Soccer; (2) this Appendix D, as Super Rec competition policy; and (3) the NorCal Main Handbook. Where this Appendix is silent, the Main Handbook applies.

Covered by the Main Handbook. League discipline (Section 3), recruiting, tryouts, and transfers (Section 4), playing rules and equipment (Sections 5.1–5.2), the point system and standings (Sections 5.7–5.9), incomplete games (Section 5.11), the head-injury/SCA no-re-entry protocol (Section 5.12), substitutions (Section 5.13), and personnel-on-the-bench limits (Section 7.5) apply to Super Rec as written in the Main Handbook and are not restated here.

D.1 – Player Eligibility (Recreational Passes Only)

Super Rec is limited to Players holding a US Club Soccer recreational pass. Players holding a US Club Soccer competitive player pass are ineligible to participate in Super Rec, regardless of age or division. This supersedes the general Club Pass rule in Section 1.4 for Super Rec competition; the Section 1.4 prohibition on moving Players into lower divisions to gain a competitive advantage continues to apply.

D.2 – Match Scheduling

In addition to the scheduling method in Section 2.3, a Super Rec Club may either schedule its own home matches or provide the League Office with a list of available fields, dates, and times for the League Office to build the schedule. Clubs requesting League Office scheduling must submit their field availability in writing to the Event Coordinator before the close of team registration. All other scheduling provisions of Section 2.3 (deadlines, the 15-minute grace period, and shortened-match procedures) apply.

D.3 – Cancellation, Forfeit, and No-Show

Section 2.5 applies, with the following Super Rec modifications. A team must provide its opponent at least 96 hours' notice before forfeiting a match, consistent with the Main Handbook; failure to do so incurs the fine in D.4. A no-show (failure to attend a properly scheduled match without advance notice) results in a 3-0 forfeit to the opponent and the fine in D.4, and a team that fails to appear may be removed from the competition by the League Office.

D.4 – Fines

The Super Rec fine amounts below supersede the corresponding amounts in Main Handbook Section 2.6.

Offense	Super Rec	Main Handbook §2.6
No-show	\$400	\$600
Forfeit within 96 hours of scheduled kickoff	\$200	\$400
Use of each unlicensed referee	\$200	\$500

D.5 – Game Details and Format

The Super Rec format and game details below supersede Section 5.3. Super Rec uses 9v9 at U12 and 11v11 at U14 and older.

	U12	U14	U16	U19
Format	9v9	11v11	11v11	11v11
Field Size (yds)	70/80 L · 45/55 W *	100/120 L · 50/80 W	100/120 L · 50/80 W	100/120 L · 50/80 W
Penalty Area (yds)	14×36	18×44	18×44	18×44
Goal Area (yds)	5×16	6×20	6×20	6×20
Goal Size (ft)	6.5×18.5 – 7×21	8×24	8×24	8×24
Min. # of Refs	1	1	1	3
Min. # of Players	6	7	7	7
Playing Time	2×30	2×35	2×40	2×45
Half-Time	10 min	10 min	10 min	10 min
Ball Size	4	5	5	5
Free Kick Clearance	8 yd	10 yd	10 yd	10 yd
Penalty Kick Mark	10 yds	12 yds	12 yds	12 yds

* Cones may be used in place of lines at U12.

D.6 – Match Officials

Match officials must be current-year USSF-licensed Referees. Super Rec matches require one Referee at all age groups except U19, which requires one Referee and two assistant Referees (three officials), as shown in D.5. Where insufficient licensed Referees are present, a match may proceed with one Referee and up to two Club Linesmen, who may signal only when the ball has left the field of play and may not call offside or fouls. The dual-referee system may not be used when assistant Referees are missing. Use of an unlicensed Referee results in a forfeit for the home team. Section 5.5 (assignment of Referees) applies.

D.7 – Tiebreakers (Standings)

Section 5.10 applies, except that the goal-based tiebreakers (goal differential, goals for, and goals against) are each capped at ± 4 per match for Super Rec, rather than the ± 6 cap in Section 5.10. The tiebreaker sequence and PPG provision are otherwise unchanged.

D.8 – Excessive Goal Differential

A team may win by no more than a six-goal margin. A team that wins by an excessive margin is subject to escalating sanctions:

- First instance: warning, and no standings point is awarded for the match.
- Continued instances: coach suspension.
- Repeated instances: removal of the team from the competition and review of the Club for future participation.

D.9 – Minimum Playing Time

Each Player on the match-day roster must play at least 33% of each match.

D.10 – Player Passes and Game-Day Reporting

Super Rec uses physical or electronic US Club Soccer passes and signed game cards rather than the NorCal App workflow in Sections 6.2, 7.1, and 7.2. Pass-presentation requirements vary by region:

- Region 6 (Sacramento): Each team must create a match day roster in the NorCal App. Only Players who are listed on a team's source roster will be eligible to be selected for the match-day roster. Players not on the match day roster may not participate in the match. The NorCal App replaces both physical player passes, as well as the game card.
- Regions 2–5 (South Bay, Bay Area, Sonoma County): all Coaches present their US Club Soccer Coaches pass and a game card to the Referee before the match.

After the match, a representative from each team and the Referee review and sign the game card, and each representative photographs the signed card. The home team posts the score in GotSport within 24 hours, reports goals and red cards from both teams as recorded on the card, and uploads a copy of the signed card. If the home team does not post within 24 hours, the away team posts the score and uploads the card. Protests, incidents, and forfeit/no-show reports are submitted via the NorCal Match Report Form with a photo of the signed game card attached.

For 2026-27, Super Rec remains on the region-based pass and game-card system described above and does not use the NorCal App workflow set out in Sections 6.2, 7.1, and 7.2.

D.11 – Game-Day Roster Limit

Up to 22 Players may dress and participate in each Super Rec match. This supersedes the match-day roster maximums in Section 6.3.

D.12 – Player Registration

In addition to Section 6.1, Super Rec recreational Players (R2) are registered through the GotSport [recreational membership bulk-upload method](#).

D.13 – Field Setup

By default, the home team’s bench and spectators occupy one side of the field and the away team’s bench and spectators occupy the opposite side. This modifies Section 7.3, under which the home Club otherwise determines the bench configuration. Where a venue cannot accommodate this format, the League Office may approve a modification and will communicate it to the affected Clubs and teams.

Appendix E – Disciplinary Matrix

This Appendix is incorporated by reference into the NorCal Premier Soccer Handbook. It governs suspension and sanction ranges for specific offenses by Players, Coaches, Clubs, and Adult Members in all NorCal competitions. It should be read alongside — not instead of — the relevant Handbook sections, particularly Section 3 (League Discipline).

Capitalized terms used in this Appendix have the meanings given in the Handbook Definitions section. Additional terms specific to this Appendix are defined in Part 8 below.

Part 1 – Cross-References to Handbook

The following Handbook sections govern the operation of this Appendix. They are not repeated here; consult the Handbook directly.

§3.1 — PAD Committee authority and scope of sanctions

§3.2 — Red card minimum suspension (1 game) and weekend ineligibility

§3.4 — Suspension service rules — players (Primary Team, forfeits, tournament games)

§3.4 — Suspension service rules — coaches (game-based vs. time-based)

§3.5 — Suspension appeals process and deadlines

§3.6 — Clearing a player suspension (automatic via GotSport)

§3.7 — Clearing a coach suspension (Suspension Verification Form)

§3.8 — Pending legal action — PAD stay of proceedings

§3.9 — Use of video evidence in PAD proceedings

Handbook Definitions — Definitions of Coach, Player, Club, Adult, Primary Team

§2 (Code of Ethics) — Code of Ethics (including digital communications)

§2.6 — Standard fine schedule

§6.5 — Ineligible vs. Illegal Player definitions and match-level consequences

§7.5 — Technical Area occupancy rules

§2 (Code of Ethics) + §7.4 — Coach and player responsibilities for spectator conduct

§7.6 — Prohibited substances at NorCal matches

§5.5 — Referee Assignor obligations and 48-hour response requirement

Appendix C — N1 competition red card and suspension rules (supersede §3.2 for N1 matches)

Appendix B — ECNL-RL suspension cross-competition service (open review item)

Universal aggravating and mitigating factors apply to all offense rows:

Aggravating factors (may increase penalty above stated minimum):

- Offense directed at a referee who is a minor (under 18): minimum additional +1 game on any offense; for RAP offenses, the US Soccer minor multiplier applies (see Part 3).
- Continuation of misconduct after being sent off.
- Return to confront referee following dismissal.
- Offense committed outside of match (parking lot, post-game): higher minimum applies where noted; minimum +1 game in all other cases.
- Strike above the shoulder or serious injury resulting from assault.
- Prior red cards within 12 months: see Tier 3 add-on row in Part 2.
- Deliberate or premeditated nature of offense.
- Vulnerability of victim (e.g., youth player, youth referee).

Mitigating factors (may reduce toward stated minimum):

- Clearly acting in self-defense with no provocation.
- Immediate remorse and cooperation with match officials.
- No prior disciplinary history.
- Provocation by opposing party (does not excuse misconduct; may reduce sanction).

Part 2 – Offense Tiers: Players and Coaches

The table below lists specific offenses grouped by severity tier. Where an offense applies only to players or coaches, "N/A" appears in the other column. For all offenses directed at a referee, see Part 3 (RAP Policy) in addition to the relevant row below.

Tier	Offense	Player Min.	Coach Min.	US Club Referral	Key Notes
Tier 1 Standard Misconduct	Second Caution (2 yellows = red)	1 game	1 game	No	Automatic one-game suspension. No additional PAD action unless aggravating factors apply.
	Denial of Obvious Goal-Scoring Opportunity (DOGSO)	1 game	N/A	No	Includes handball DOGSO and foul DOGSO.

Tier 2 Serious Misconduct	Serious Foul Play	2 games	N/A	No	In-flow-of-game reckless or dangerous challenges (e.g., slide tackle from behind, high boot with no attempt to play ball).
	Verbal Abuse — Minor (non-referee, non-protected characteristics)	1 game	3 games	No	Foul, abusive, profane, derogatory, or insulting language toward any player, coach, or spectator, not directed at a referee and not based on a protected characteristic. Coach minimum is higher to reflect duty-of-care obligation. See Part 3 for verbal abuse directed at referees (RAP Policy).
	Verbal Abuse — Major (protected characteristics, non-referee)	2 games	6 games	No	Abusive language toward any person (other than a referee) based on a protected characteristic: age, religion, sex, gender identity/expression, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, ancestry, marital status, veteran status, or citizenship. For race-based abuse, see Tier 5. For protected-characteristic abuse directed at a referee, see RAP NP Level 4 in Part 3.

	Irresponsible Behavior / Failure to Cooperate with Referee	N/A	2 games	No	Persistent dissent, refusal to sign game card, repeated questioning of decisions. See also RAP Part 3 for referee-directed conduct. Handbook §3.2.
	Coaching After Being Sent Off (same day, same venue)	N/A	2 games	No	Includes phone/text instruction, coaching from spectator area, or participating in halftime talk from the tunnel. If coaching while formally suspended, see Tier 4.
Tier 3 Aggravated Misconduct	Physical Assault — Minor (non-referee)	1 game (2 games if outside match)	6 games	No	Pushing; physical intimidation (e.g., nose-to-nose); spitting at (not on) a person; spewing beverage on property; instigating mass confrontation. Outside-of-match minimum: 2 games (player). For physical conduct directed at a referee, see RAP Physical Levels in Part 3.
	Coaching or Instructing Players to Injure Opponents	N/A	3 games	No	"Break his leg," "hit them harder," "take them out."
	Failure to Control Players	N/A	2 games	No	Failing to take reasonable steps to prevent or stop a confrontation; ignoring repeated misconduct by the same player during the match.

	Prior Red Cards (within 12 months) — Add-On	+1–2 games	+1–2 games	No	Added on top of the primary offense suspension. Factors: time since prior red card(s), severity of current and prior offense(s), total number of red cards accumulated.
Tier 4 Severe Misconduct	Physical Assault — Major / Violent Conduct (non-referee)	3 games (5 games if outside match)	6 games	Reported to US Club Soccer	Hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, headbutt, throwing object, damaging property, or bodily running into a person. Player suspension increases to 5 games if committed outside the match. For violent conduct directed at a referee, see RAP Physical Levels 2–3 in Part 3.
	Coaching While Under Suspension	N/A	2 games (up to 1 year if intentional)	No	Any contact with suspended team from 1 hour before kick-off until match completion, including phone/text, spectator area coaching, or warm-up participation. The match in which the coach coached does not count toward suspension service. See §3.7.

	Playing or Attempting to Play an Illegal Player	N/A	2 games (up to 1 year if intentional)	No	Also triggers \$500 Club fine (§2.6). Suspended pending PAD review if determined intentional. See §6.5 for definitions of illegal vs. ineligible player.
	Providing False Information to Match Officials	1 game	1 game	No	Providing a false name or ID to the referee; encouraging players to do the same.
Tier 5 Most Severe (Referral)	Racial Abuse	3 months	6 months	Suspended pending US Club hearing	Abusive or bigoted language or physical gestures based on race. Suspension served immediately pending US Club Soccer hearing. For race-based abuse directed at a referee, see RAP NP Level 4 in Part 3.
	Spectator / Unidentified Participant: Racial Abuse (held against coach)	N/A	3 games	No	Senior coach sanctioned when spectator or unidentified team participant commits racial abuse in or around the technical area or spectator zone. See Spectator Conduct table in Part 5 for full spectator framework.

Part 3 – Referee Abuse & Assault (US Soccer RAP Policy)

All referee-related misconduct is processed under US Soccer Policy 531-9 (Referee Abuse Prevention Policy, "RAP Policy"), effective March 2025 (updated May 2026). The full policy is available at ussoccer.com/rap. This table summarizes the seven RAP offense categories, NorCal's jurisdictional role, and the applicable minimum penalties.

Jurisdiction:

- NorCal PAD handles: Non-Physical Levels 1–2 (NP-1, NP-2) and Physical Level 1 (P-1).
- US Club Soccer handles: Non-Physical Levels 3–4 (NP-3, NP-4) and Physical Levels 2–3 (P-2, P-3). These cases are automatically referred; the individual is suspended pending the US Club hearing outcome.
- SafeSport: Any RAP case that also meets the definition of emotional or physical misconduct as defined by the U.S. Center for SafeSport is referred to SafeSport pursuant to mandatory reporting requirements.

Key RAP Penalty Factors (per US Soccer Policy 531-9):

- Single offenses carry at minimum the prescribed game or time penalty.
- Second-time offenders receive double the minimum penalty.
- Third-time offenders receive a lifetime ban.
- More than one offense at the same time: minimum penalty is at least the most serious offense.
- Adult on minor referee: automatically subject to minor multiplier — 2x for NP Yellow (NP-1) and NP Orange (NP-2); 3x for NP Red (NP-3, NP-4) and all Physical offenses.
- Minor on minor: same minimum game penalty as adult on adult referee.
- Minor multiplier does not apply to offenses committed by minors.
- Game consequences are inclusive of the 1-game penalty for any red card already served.

RAP Level	Category	Definition & Examples	Jurisdiction	Min. Penalty (Adult on Adult)	Min. Penalty (Adult on Minor)	Notes
Non Physical	NP-1 Verbal Taunting	Insulting, Belittling, Insinuating or Taunting Behavior Undermining Referee Authority. Examples: "Do you even know the rules?" / "You suck." / Mocking appearance or competence.	NorCal PAD	1 game	2 games	NorCal handles this level. Games are inclusive of any red card game already served.
	NP-2 Harassment / Intimidation	Harassment, Intimidation, Retaliation, Abusive, or Threatening	NorCal PAD	4 games	8 games	NorCal handles this level. Automatic suspension pending review upon verified allegation.

		(Non-Physical) Language. Examples: Expletives directed at ref / personal attacks / getting in the referee's face.				
	NP-3 Threats / Derogatory Language	Aggression, Attacking, Derogatory, Cyberbullying, Doxing, or Threatening (Physical/Violence) Language. Examples: "You're gonna pay for that!" / social media posts attacking referee.	Referred to US Club Soccer	6 games or 3–12 months	18 games or 3–12 months	Referred to US Club Soccer. Automatic suspension pending US Club hearing.
	NP-4 Offensive or Discriminatory Act	Discriminatory or derogatory words or actions based on race, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, sexual orientation, language, or religion. Examples: Racial/ethnic slurs, homophobic language, offensive gestures.	Referred to US Club Soccer	10 games or 12–24 months	30 games or 12–24 months	Referred to US Club Soccer. Automatic suspension pending US Club hearing.
Physical	P-1 Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching	Minor or slight deliberate touching of the referee. Examples: Tapping shoulder to get attention / touching chest	NorCal PAD	3 games or 1–6 months	9 games or 1–6 months	NorCal handles this level. Automatic suspension pending review.

		with finger / grabbing jersey / lightly bumping into referee.				
	P-2 Intentional Confrontation	Pushing, Grabbing, Pulling, Squeezing, Pinching, Lightly Slapping, Use of Object in Non-Striking Manner, or Physical Property Damage. Examples: Shoving the referee / forcefully grabbing arm / aggressively grabbing jersey / following referee to parking lot / dumping referee's bag.	Referred to US Club Soccer	10 games or 6–24 months	30 games or 6–24 months	Referred to US Club Soccer. Automatic suspension pending US Club hearing.
	P-3 Violent Contact	Hitting, Punching, Elbowing, Kicking, Biting, Spitting, Choking, Tackling, Throwing or Use of Object or Any Part of Body in a Striking Manner. Examples: Kicking referee's shin / throwing a punch / choking / throwing water bottle with intent to hit.	Referred to US Club Soccer	12 months– Lifetime	12 months– Lifetime	Referred to US Club Soccer. Lifetime ban possible. Automatic suspension pending US Club hearing.

Part 4 – Fight & Mass Confrontation

A fight is a physical altercation between two or more players. A mass confrontation involves three or more players, or a situation where three or more players of the same team engage a referee collectively in an

intimidating or aggressive manner. Penalties below are in addition to applicable individual offense penalties from Parts 2 and 3.

Situation	Minimum Penalties (individual offense rows above also apply)	Hearing Required?
Fight between 2 players; no additional players; no spectators enter field.	Each fighter: Physical Assault (Major) minimum — Tier 4. Possible 1-game reduction if one party was clearly only defending themselves.	Not usually required
Mass confrontation (3+ players involved, or team approaches referee collectively); no spectators enter field.	All fighters: Physical Assault (Major) minimum — Tier 4. Players joining from bench who strike: +1 game. Players actively and only separating others: PAD discretion.	Not usually required
Players or coaches enter field from technical area to join fight or confront referee.	Coach: +2 games (in addition to other applicable sanctions). Individual players/coaches: applicable tier minimum applies.	Possible
Spectator(s) enter field; no contact with participants or other spectators.	All individual penalties above apply. Head coach: 2 games (Entering the Field — No Contact, §Spectator Table).	Possible
Spectator(s) enter field AND make contact with any participant.	All individual penalties above apply. Head coach: minimum 4 games. Club: possible team removal from competition(s).	Required
Spectator(s) enter field AND engage in physical altercation with other spectators or participants.	All individual penalties above apply. Club: possible team removal and/or club probation. EC disciplinary tools (Part 7) should be considered.	Required — EC referral recommended

Part 5 – Spectator Conduct

Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their team's spectators at all NorCal matches (see §2 Code of Ethics and §7.4). Disciplinary action for spectator misconduct is imposed on the head coach of the team whose spectator committed the offense. Spectators themselves may be separately banned from NorCal venues, and clubs may face sanctions under Part 6 or Part 7.

Where the spectator's misconduct constitutes a RAP Policy violation (NP-1 through P-3), the applicable RAP level governs the minimum penalty — applied to the coach — and NorCal's jurisdictional role (NorCal PAD vs. US Club Soccer referral) applies as described in Part 3. The head coach suspension minimums in the table below are calibrated to the RAP framework.

Spectator Behavior	Examples	Coach Min. Suspension	Club Sanctions Possible	Notes
General Inappropriate Behavior	Persistent verbal negativity; yelling at players (either team); abusive language not directed at a referee; conduct contrary to the Code of Ethics (see §2 Handbook) that does not meet a higher category.	Warning; then 1 game for repeated or escalating behavior	Up to \$500 fine	Coach is responsible for spectator conduct (§2 Code of Ethics, §7.4). Referee may ask coach to remove spectator from area.
Entering the Field (No Contact with Participants)	Spectator enters field without referee permission to dispute a call, celebrate a goal, or for any other reason — without making physical contact with any participant.	2 games (head coach)	Possible \$500 fine	Handbook §7.4. Coach should be warned first if spectator entry was not aggressive.
Entering the Field (Contact with Participants)	Spectator enters field and makes physical contact with a player, coach, or referee — including unintentional contact in the flow of a confrontation.	4 games (head coach)	Possible team removal from competition	Contact need not be intentional or injurious to trigger this category. EC Disciplinary Tools available for severe or repeated incidents (Part 7).
Entering the Field (Confrontation or Contact with Other Spectators)	Spectator enters field and engages in altercation with opposing spectators, whether verbal or physical. Includes situations escalating from sideline disputes.	4–6 games (head coach)	Possible team removal; possible club probation	PAD Hearing required. If physical altercation results in injury, EC tools (Part 7) should be considered.
Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) Violation — NP Level 1 Verbal Taunting (spectator directed at referee)	Spectator insulting, belittling, or taunting a referee; mocking referee's appearance or competence; dismissive or contemptuous language directed at referee.	1 game (head coach) Suspected spectator: banned from NorCal sidelines	Possible fine	NorCal PAD handles NP-1 violations. Spectator subject to separate ban by NorCal.

Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) Violation — NP Level 2 Harassment / Intimidation (spectator directed at referee)	Spectator using expletives toward referee; persistent personal attacks; getting in referee's face or intimidating manner; abusive/threatening language.	3 games (head coach) Suspected spectator: banned from NorCal sidelines	Possible fine up to \$500	NorCal PAD handles NP-2 violations. Spectator subject to separate ban by NorCal.
Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) Violation — NP Level 3 Threats / Derogatory Language (spectator directed at referee)	Spectator making physical threats toward referee; posting attacks on social media; cyberbullying, doxing, or threatening language.	6 games (head coach) Suspected spectator: referred to US Club Soccer	Possible team removal	Referred to US Club Soccer. PAD Hearing required. EC tools available.
Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) Violation — NP Level 4 Offensive or Discriminatory Act (spectator directed at referee)	Spectator using racial/ethnic slurs, homophobic language, or offensive gestures against a referee based on race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristic.	10 games (head coach) Suspected spectator: referred to US Club Soccer	Possible team removal; club probation	Referred to US Club Soccer. PAD Hearing required. EC tools strongly recommended.
Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) Violation — Physical Level 1 Minor or Slight Deliberate Touching (spectator on referee)	Spectator makes deliberate minor physical contact with a referee: tapping shoulder, touching arm, grabbing jersey.	6 games (head coach) Suspected spectator: referred to US Club Soccer	Possible team removal	NorCal PAD handles P-1 violations. Automatic hearing required. Spectator subject to direct suspension by NorCal.
Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) Violation — Physical Level 2 Intentional Confrontation (spectator on referee)	Spectator pushes, grabs, shoves, forcefully pulls, or causes property damage to referee or referee's equipment.	10 games (head coach) Suspected spectator: referred to US Club Soccer	Team removal; club probation	Referred to US Club Soccer. Automatic suspension pending US Club hearing. EC tools required.
Referee Abuse Policy (RAP) Violation — Physical Level 3 Violent Contact (spectator on referee)	Spectator hits, punches, kicks, bites, spits on, chokes, headbutts, or throws object at referee.	12 months (head coach) Suspected spectator: referred to US Club Soccer	Team removal; club probation or expulsion	Referred to US Club Soccer. Automatic suspension pending US Club hearing. Law enforcement contact recommended. EC tools required.

Confrontation Off the Field (after the match or away from venue)	Spectator approaches or confronts referee or opposing participants in the parking lot, at a subsequent venue, or via online channels in a threatening manner related to a NorCal match.	4–12 games (head coach) depending on severity; RAP levels apply if referee involved	Possible team removal; fines	Post-match/off-field incidents remain within NorCal jurisdiction. If referee targeted, applicable RAP level governs minimum suspension. SafeSport referral if conduct meets definition of abuse.
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Part 6 – Administrative & Club Conduct

The offenses below arise from administrative failures or club-level conduct rather than in-match send-offs. Items flagged "TBD" require a PAD Committee decision before this Appendix is published.

Offense	Minimum Sanction	Who Is Sanctioned	Notes / Handbook Reference
Illegal Player (no valid pass, suspended, or overage)	Forfeit; coach suspension up to 1 year; \$500 Club fine	Coach + Club	Fine per §2.6. Intentional use may result in 1-year coach suspension. See §6.5 for definition.
Ineligible Player (not on match-day roster)	Match replay; home Club pays field and referee costs	Club	Distinct from illegal player — no coach suspension triggered. See §6.5.
Club Pass Abuse / Intentional Player Movement for Competitive Advantage	Forfeit; additional Club sanctions	Club (+ Coach)	Must be determined intentional and to have impacted competition integrity. See §1.4.
Recruiting Violation	PAD Committee discretion	Adult + Club	No fixed minimum — severity varies by scope and harm. See §4.4.
Prohibited Substances (alcohol, drugs, or vaping at NorCal match)	PAD Committee discretion	Individual + Club	Prohibited per §7.6. Fixed minimum penalty schedule to be established by PAD Committee.
Spectator Entering Field (non-confrontation context)	Coach suspension; possible team removal	Coach + Club	See Spectator Conduct table — Part 5. Head coach responsible per §7.4 and Code of Ethics.
Disrespectful Electronic or Social Media Communication	PAD Committee discretion	Individual + Club	Per §2.2. Conduct must be connected to NorCal activities.

Failure to Maintain Certified Referee Assignor	Club sanctions up to membership review	Club	Failure to assign or failure to respond to PAD/Referee Program within 48 hours. See §5.5.
Failure to Disclose Referee Relationship (emergency referee scenario)	Forfeit of match, possible club fine	Club	Per §5.4.
No-Show	\$600 fine; 3-0 forfeit; possible removal from competition	Club	Per §2.5.
Forfeit Within 96 Hours of Scheduled Kickoff	\$400 fine; 3-0 forfeit	Club	Per §2.5.

Part 7 – Executive Committee Disciplinary Tools

The following tools may be imposed by the NorCal Executive Committee (EC) or Board of Directors for any offense that has required, or would require, a PAD Committee hearing. They are not available to the PAD Committee acting alone and cannot be imposed without EC or Board approval. They may be used individually or in combination with any other sanction in this Appendix.

These tools are remedial and prospective — they are designed to protect competition integrity and the welfare of participants, not solely to punish. The EC should consider proportionality, the club's prior history, and the risk of recurrence when determining which tools to apply. Additionally, this list is not exhaustive. The Executive Committee reserves the right, at its discretion, to impose additional sanctions as circumstances warrant in order to preserve competitive integrity and serve the best interests of the game.

Disciplinary Tool	Definition	Examples of When Applied
Removal of Team from Competition	Immediate or prospective removal of the team from one or more NorCal competitions in the current or subsequent season.	• Repeated spectator violence. • Continued non-compliance after lesser sanctions.
Point Deduction	Deduction of league points from the current or subsequent season standings.	• Pattern of unresolved forfeits or conduct violations. • Failure to comply with PAD directives.
Fines (Club Level)	Monetary fine imposed on the Club, in addition to or instead of any fine in the standard fine schedule (§2.6).	• Serious or repeated violations where standard fines are insufficient deterrent. • Fine levels set by EC at time of determination.

Removal of Home Match Rights	Club required to play designated home matches at neutral or away venues for a defined period.	• Repeated field conditions violations. • Repeated spectator conduct incidents at Club's home fields.
Requirement to Film All Matches	Club must arrange for all matches (home and/or away) to be recorded and submitted to NorCal upon request for a defined period.	• Pattern of disputed match incidents. • Serious misconduct where evidence gathering is compromised.
Requirement for DOC or Club President to Attend All Matches	Named Club official required to physically attend all matches involving designated team(s) for a defined period.	• Repeated spectator or coach conduct incidents. • Club has failed to self-regulate.
NorCal to Take Over Referee Assignment for Club	NorCal assumes direct control of referee assignments for the Club's matches for a defined period. Club remains responsible for referee fees.	• Repeated referee abuse by Club's teams or spectators. • Failure to maintain a certified assignor.
Requirement for All Referees to Undergo Education	All USSF-licensed referees assigned to Club's matches must complete specified training before assignment.	• Systemic issues with referee communication or conduct in Club's matches.
Mandated Parent / Spectator Education	Club required to ensure all registered parents and/or spectators for designated team(s) complete a NorCal-approved spectator conduct course before attending matches.	• Repeated spectator misconduct. • Any RAP NP-3 or higher, or Physical Level 1 or higher, involving spectator.

Part 8 – Additional Definitions

The following terms are not defined in the Handbook Definitions and are used in this Appendix. All other capitalized terms have the meanings given in the Handbook Definitions.

Game-Based Suspension: A suspension measured in games rather than calendar time. Served with the specific team on which the violation occurred unless otherwise directed by the PAD Committee. Forfeits and tournament games do not count toward service. See §3.4.

Illegal Player: A player with no valid US Club Soccer pass from the same Club at the time of the match, who is currently suspended, or who is overage. See §6.5.

Ineligible Player: A player not listed on the match-day roster. Carries a different consequence from an illegal player. See §6.5.

Minor Referee: Any USSF-licensed referee under 18 years of age at the time of the offense. Offenses directed at a minor referee carry the minor multiplier under the RAP Policy and a minimum +1 game under NorCal's own aggravating factors.

Physical Assault — Major / Violent Conduct: Any intentional or attempted act of physical violence: hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting on, headbutting, throwing objects, damaging property, or bodily running into a person. Directed at a referee, this constitutes a RAP Physical offense (see Part 3).

Physical Assault — Minor: Pushing; physical intimidation (e.g., nose-to-nose); spitting at (not on) a person; spewing beverage on property; instigating mass confrontation. Directed at a referee, this may constitute RAP Physical Level 1 or Level 2 depending on the nature of the contact (see Part 3).

Protected Party (RAP Policy): As defined in US Soccer Policy 531-9: any person with a close personal relationship with a referee, including family members, whose safety or well-being may be threatened in connection with a referee's officiating activities.

Racial Abuse: Abusive or bigoted language or physical gestures based on race. Distinct from Verbal Abuse — Major and from RAP NP-4; carries independent Tier 5 penalties when directed at non-referee persons. When directed at a referee, RAP NP-4 governs.

RAP Policy: US Soccer Policy 531-9 (Referee Abuse Prevention Policy), effective March 2025 (updated May 2026). Available in full at ussoccer.com/rap.

Time-Based Suspension: A suspension measured in calendar time (months). The coach or player may not participate in any NorCal activity during this period. See §3.4.

Verbal Abuse — Major: Abusive, profane, or insulting language directed at any person (other than a referee) based on a protected characteristic: age, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, ancestry, marital status, veteran status, or citizenship. Directed at a referee based on a protected characteristic, this constitutes RAP NP-4.

Verbal Abuse — Minor: Foul, abusive, profane, or insulting language not based on protected characteristics and not directed at a referee. Directed at a referee, this constitutes RAP NP-1 or NP-2 depending on severity.