# MSI WINTER LEAGUE RULES

Updated for 2026-27

**RULES**

FIFA rules, with modifications as published below.

**AGE GROUPS**

U9 - Players born between August 1, 2017 and July 31, 2018
U10 - Players born between August 1, 2016 and July 31, 2017
U11 - Players born between August 1, 2015 and July 31, 2016
U12 - Players born between August 1, 2014 and July 31, 2015
U13 - Players born between August 1, 2013 and July 31, 2014
U14 - Players born between August 1, 2012 and July 31, 2013
U15 - Players born between August 1, 2011 and July 31, 2012
U16 - Players born between August 1, 2010 and July 31, 2011
U18 - Players born between August 1, 2008 and July 31, 2010

**FORMAT OF PLAY**

- U9-U10: 7v7 (5 players minimum to start the game)
- U11-U12: 9v9 (6 players minimum to start the game)
- U13 and above: 11v11 (7 players minimum to start the game)

**GAME LENGTH**

U9 and U10 games will have 25-minute halves with a maximum of 5-minutes for half-time.
U11 and older will have 30-minute halves with a maximum of 5-minutes for half-time.

**GUEST PLAYERS**

Players may play for as many teams in the Winter League as they wish so long as;

1. they are of the correct age or younger for the age group of the game;
2. they are either registered in MSI's registration system for the fall season or have signed the MSI Tournament-League Waiver. Playing any player that is either not registered in MSI or who has not signed the waiver will result in $100 fine and potential to remove the team from the league for the rest of the season with no refund.

There is no maximum size of rosters for the Winter League.

**SUBSTITUTION**

Unlimited substitutions (with the referee's permission) will be allowed at the following times:

1. prior to a throw-in by either team, only when team in possession chooses to substitute
2. prior to a kick-off
3. prior to a goal kick by either team
4. prior to a free kick by either team, only when team in possession chooses to substitute
5. upon issuance of a yellow card (only players involved may be substituted. If so, the opposing team may substitute a like number)
6. on an injury.

**SCORES AND STANDINGS**
There will be no scores or standings kept for the Winter League.

**REFEREES**
All games will be assigned a US Soccer qualified referee. 11v11 games will be assigned three referees.
If a referee has not arrived by game time, please call 301-762-4674 and select the "game day emergency" option '5'. Teams should use parent volunteers to officiate games in which there is no referee, with each team choosing a half to provide a volunteer referee.

**PROTESTS**
All decisions made by the referee and league directors are final and binding. No protests are allowed.

**GENERAL CONDUCT**
Players receiving a red card or a total of two yellow cards during a game will be ineligible for their team's next game. MSI reserves the right to suspend or expel any player, coach, or spectator from the league for unruly conduct.
No coaches, spectators, or substitutes are allowed to stand between the penalty area and the goal line, or behind the goal line. Spectators and parents should set up on the opposite side of the field from coaches and players.
**Player Cautions:** Any player receiving a yellow card must leave the game immediately and sit out for 5 minutes, after which time the referee may allow for the return of the player in a normal substitution. The player being cautioned and leaving the field for 5 minutes may be substituted. The only exception is if the team does not have any substitutes, in which case the player is allowed to remain on the field.

**UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT**
Shin guards are mandatory for all players. Hats and gloves are encouraged to be worn in cold weather. Players may wear long sleeve layers under their jersey and may wear pants, so long as soccer socks are worn over the outside of the pants.
The 'home' team must change to an alternate jersey in the event of a color conflict. Pinnies are acceptable. The home team is also responsible for providing a game ball.

**POSTPONEMENTS AND FORFEITS**
Because there are no scores or standings, postponements are frowned upon by the league. You may bring in any players from another team, draft players for just that game (so long as they fulfil the guest players rules listed above), borrow players from the game prior or mix players between the two teams playing in order to play a game. The teams may agree to play with less players than the designated format of the age group.
IF a game must be rescheduled, a request to change a scheduled game must be received by the MSI office by 5pm on the Wednesday prior to the scheduled game. A team seeking to request a change should first reach out to their opponent to find suitable times that a game could be rescheduled. The team requesting the change should then reach out to other teams in

the league playing the same format, to enquire about swapping game times. Only after these avenues have been exhausted should a team reach out to MSI asking for a reschedule and should clearly state the dates and times that both teams are available to reschedule. Any team has the right to say no to rescheduling requests. **A coach being unavailable is not a reason to reschedule a game**. An assistant coach or a parent acting as coach should step in instead.

**INCLEMENT WEATHER**

If a referee terminates a game because of field or weather conditions, it will be considered a complete game if the first half has been completed. When thunder or lightning occurs, the game is immediately stopped, and the game clock is stopped. If there are 15 minutes or less remaining in the game, the game is terminated as a complete game. If more than 15 minutes remain in the game, participants must wait the appropriate time – 25 minutes without additional thunder or lightning – before continuing the game. If the game has not reached half-time, and the game cannot be restarted because of continuing inclement weather, the game will be rescheduled. If the game is stopped at half-time or with more than 15 minutes remaining, but the game cannot be restarted because of continuing inclement weather, the game will be recorded as completed. The clock will stop during a delay and will resume when play restarts.

**HEADING**

Heading the ball is prohibited in U11 games and younger. At age group divisions U11 and younger, whenever the ball strikes a player in the head, play is stopped. If deliberate, then the proper restart is an indirect free kick to the opposing team. If this occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If the play by the head is deemed inadvertent, then the proper restart is a dropped ball.

**U9 AND U10 SPECIFIC RULES**

**Build-out Lines**

Build-out lines are indicated by cones placed halfway between the goal line and the halfway line.

Rules during open play:

- When the goalkeeper gains possession of the ball, players from the opposing team must retreat behind the build-out line. The referee and opposing team's coach should give reminders.
- The eight-second count for the goalkeeper does not begin until players have retreated behind the build-out line.
- The referee may issue an indirect free-kick for the team in possession if the opponent is persistent in refusing to retreat behind the build-out line. Continued infractions can be considered misconduct (yellow card).
- Once the goalkeeper releases the ball and it is touched by a second player or the goalkeeper has a second touch of the ball, opponents may cross the build-out line, and play continues normally.
- If the ball crosses the build-out line before being touched by a second player, play continues normally.

- The goalkeeper is NOT required to wait for opponents to retreat. If the goalkeeper decides to play the ball earlier, it is in play and all players may continue normally.
- The goalkeeper may NOT punt or drop-kick the ball over the build-out line. Play is resumed with a roll, throw, or normal play with the feet. All such actions put the ball into play.
- If a goalkeeper punts or drop-kicks the ball, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. Referee's can have the discretion to give a team a warning and stop play to return the ball to a goalkeeper after a punt and allow them to restart the game with a pass or roll the ball into play.
- If the punt or dropkick occurs within the goal area (not penalty area), the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.

Rules during goal kicks:

- When a goal kick is awarded, all members of the opposing team must retreat behind the build-out line. The referee and opposing team's coach should give reminders. Persistent refusal to retreat behind the build-out line can be considered misconduct (yellow card).
- The team in possession has no restrictions on their positioning. They may be on either side of the build-out line as well as in their own penalty area. The ball does not have to leave the penalty area before it is touched.
- The opposing team may cross the build-out line once a second member of the team in possession has touched the ball.
- If the goal kick travels beyond the build-out line without being touched by a second player, play resumes normally.

*Offside*: In 7v7 soccer, a player is not considered offside until they are beyond the build-out line and in an offside position.
*Miscellaneous*: The build-out line is not applied to any other restarts (throw-ins, free kicks) aside from goal kicks.

**U9/U10 Goalkeeping**
Goalkeepers may only play one half of each game in goal.
Goalkeepers may not punt or drop kick the ball from their hands. After one warning, an offending punt will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team from the spot of the offense.

**SPORTSMANSHIP POLICY**

**Purpose**

Montgomery Soccer, Incorporated (MSI) recognizes that recreational and youth sports play a vital role in promoting the physical, social, and emotional development of children. We also recognize the need to provide a fun and safe playing environment for all. Therefore, all coaches, players, parents, and guests must abide by our Sportsmanship Policy.

**Policy Statement**

All those involved with youth sports will:

- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and demand it of others.
- Treat all others with respect regardless of race, sex, creed, gender, sexual orientation, or ability.

There is zero tolerance for:

- Aggressive behavior
- Bullying
- Violence
- Profanity
- The use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol at any youth sporting event.

The Sportsmanship Policy applies to all MSI programs and activities, including, but not limited to, the playing area, parking lot of games and practices, and also through social media, or any online presence.

**Responsibilities**

*Parents/Guardians*:

1. Remember that children participate to have fun and that the game is for youth, not adults.
2. Teach your child to play by the rules and to resolve conflict without resorting to hostility or violence.
3. Emphasize that doing one's best is more important than winning.
4. Praise your child for competing fairly, trying hard, being a good teammate, and make your child feel like a winner every time.
5. Promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes ahead of any personal desire you may have for your child to win.
6. Be a positive role model and encourage good sportsmanship by showing respect, being courteous, and demonstrating positive support for everyone at games and practices.
7. Do not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with anyone, such as booing and taunting, refusing to congratulate at the end of the game, or using profane language or gestures.
8. In the event of a disagreement, do not question, discuss, or confront coaches at the field; instead, take time to speak with them at an agreed-upon time and place.
9. Refrain from coaching your child or other players during games and practices unless you are one of their coaches.

10. Allow the referee to learn and make mistakes. Praise and support the referee for being there, do not argue any decision. The referee's calls did NOT mean your child's team did not win. Respect the officials and their authority.

*Coaches*:

1. Understand that coaching is a privilege, not a right.
2. Place the emotional and physical well-being of your players ahead of any personal desires to win.
3. Treat each player as an individual, remembering that there is a large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
4. Organize practices that are fun and challenging for all players.
5. Lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship.
6. Do not cheat or engage in any form of unethical behavior that violates MSI rules, policies or principles.
7. Be knowledgeable in the rules of soccer generally and your age group specifically.
8. Review and practice basic first aid principles needed to treat injuries of your players.
9. Remember that you are a youth sports coach, and that the game is for the children, not the adults.

*Players*:

1. Have fun and learn the rules of the game.
2. Do your very best to listen and learn from your coaches, and in doing so, expect to receive fair playing time.
3. Be a good sport (win or lose), be honest, fair, and always show good sportsmanship.
4. Learn the value of commitment to the team and inform your coach when you cannot participate.
5. Put personal goals aside for the betterment of the team.

**Enforcement and Disciplinary Actions:**

Failure to abide by the Good Sportsmanship Policy/Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to:

- Verbal or written warning
- Ejection from a current event
- Suspension for future events
- Suspension for a sports season
- Participation and completion of soccer parenting courses before being allowed to attend future games