CHERRY BLOSSOM TOURNAMENT RULES

Updated for 2027

RULES

FIFA rules, with modifications as published below.

FORMAT OF PLAY

- 3rd-4th Grade /U9-U10: 7v7 (5 players minimum to start the game)
- 5th-6th Grade /U11-U12: 9v9 (6 players minimum to start the game)
- 7th Grade /U13 and above: 11v11 (7 players minimum to start the game)

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. upon issuance of a yellow card (only players involved may be substituted. If so, the opposing team may substitute a like number)
5. on an injury – only players involved may be substituted; if so, opposing team may substitute a like number.

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.
Semi-finals (if needed) and final games that end in a tie will result in two 5-minute extra time periods (no sudden death). Semi-finals (if needed) and final games that remain tied after the two extra time periods will be decided by a FIFA penalty shootout (5 penalties, followed by sudden death rounds, if necessary).

ROSTERS

All players MUST be registered in MSI's registration system for the 2026-27 Classic League season, Fall 2026 Recreation season or Spring 2027 Recreation season. If not, you may add guest players, so long as they have been invited to join your Cherry Blossom team in PlayMetrics and have signed the applicable waivers.
Rosters do not need to be checked by referees prior to a game, but a copy of your roster must be available either on paper or electronically should a referee, field marshal, or opposition coach wish to see your roster. A player may only play for one team in the tournament.

Maximum roster sizes are:
U9-U10 /3rd-4th grade – 14 players
U11-U12 /5th-6th grade – 16 players
U13-U14 /7th-8th grade – 18 players
U15-U18 /9th-12th grade – 22 players

AGE GROUPS

U9 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2017 – July 31, 2018)
U10 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2016 – July 31, 2017)
U11 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016)
U12 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2014 – July 31, 2015)
U13 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2013 – July 31, 2014)
U14 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2012 – July 31, 2013)
U15 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2011 – July 31, 2012)
U16 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2010 – July 31, 2011)
Classic U18 Age Group (Players born August 1, 2008 – July 31, 2010)

DIVISION WINNERS

Standings will be determined on the basis of points awarded per game, as follows:

- 3 points for a win
- 1 point for a tie
- 0 points for a loss

In the event of a tie in standings points, division ranking will be decided as follows:

1. Head-to-head competition
2. Most wins
3. Most shut-outs
4. Fewest discipline points (1pt for yellow card, 2 pts for red card)
5. Most goals scored to a maximum of 5 per game
6. Least goals conceded to a maximum of 5 per game
7. FIFA penalty kick procedure – **to take place 15 minutes prior to first semi-final (if applicable) or final**

In the event that more than two teams are tied, the above tiebreakers will be applied until such time as one or more teams "fall out" of the tie. **At that point, the remaining "tied teams" will return to the first tiebreaker and have the process re-applied.** This process will occur until all ties have been broken.

ADVANCEMENT TO SEMIFINALS and/or FINALS

4-team Group: After all group games have been played, the 1st and 2nd place teams shall advance to the Final.

5-team Group: This will be run as a league with all teams playing every other team in the group. Winners will be decided based on the standings after all games are played. There will be no final game. All teams will play 4 games across the weekend, which may include 3 games in one day.

6-team Group: Teams will be divided into two groups of three teams each. Within each group, following the completion of two games for all teams, the teams shall be ranked 1-3. The 1st and 2nd place teams shall advance to semifinals to play vs the 2nd and 1st place teams in the opposite group. The two 3rd place teams shall advance to play in a Consolation game.

7-team Group: Teams will be split into a group of 4 teams and a group of 3 teams. Teams will play two intra-pool and cross-pool games. Based on standings after everyone has played 2 games, the top 4 teams will advance to semi-finals. The bottom 3 move into a Consolation Tier with the winner of 6th v 7th playing an additional game against the 5th placed team.

8-team Group: Teams will be divided into two groups of four teams each. After all group games have been played, the 1st place team from both groups shall advance to the Final.

9-team Group: Teams will be divided into three groups of three teams each. Within each group, following the completion of two games for all teams, the teams shall be ranked 1-3. The three "Group Winners", along with the best 2nd place team, shall advance to semifinals. The "1st Group Winner" shall play the "best 2nd place" team, while the "2nd Group Winner" shall play the "3rd Group Winner", unless the "1st Group Winner" and the "best 2nd place" team come from the same group (in which case, the "2nd Group Winner" shall play the "best 2nd place" team, and the "1st Group Winner" shall play the "3rd Group Winner". All other teams advance to Consolation games. Note: the losing team in semifinal #2 will advance to play a 4th game in "Consolation #3", to facilitate all teams getting to play at least 3 games. Ranking of teams shall follow the same Tiebreaking procedures indicated above, and any unresolvable ties shall be resolved by the tournament directors.

Semi-final and Final Games: These games must proceed until there is a "winner". As such, if the game is tied at the conclusion of regulation time, the game shall advance immediately to two 5-minute periods of extra time. There shall be no break between extra time periods, simply an immediate "switching of ends". If the game is tied at the conclusion of extra time, it shall be settled by FIFA penalty shootout (5 penalties, followed by sudden death rounds, if necessary).

FORFEITS

Any team that forfeits any game will automatically forfeit the result of all of its games and may not advance to a semi-final or final game. This includes games actually played as well as un-played, in order to be fair to all teams. Forfeits will be recorded as a 0-3 result.

REFEREES

All games will be assigned a US Soccer qualified referee. 11v11 games, and 9v9 finals will be assigned three referees.

PROTESTS

All decisions made by the referee and tournament directors are final and binding. No protests are allowed.

GENERAL CONDUCT

Players receiving a red card or a total of two yellow cards during the tournament will be ineligible for their team's next game. MSI reserves the right to suspend or expel any player, coach, or spectator from the tournament for unruly conduct.

No coaches, spectators, or substitutes are allowed 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.

REFEREE REPORT

The referee of each game will record their official written game report on the electronic game card, including the final score, the name and number of each coach, player, or person cautioned or sent off, and reason for any such disciplinary action.

HEADING

Heading the ball is prohibited in U11 games and younger. If U11 is combined with U12, heading will be prohibited in all games in that age group. In these age groups 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.

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Shin guards are mandatory for all players. The 'home' team must change to an alternate jersey in the event of a color conflict. The home teams is also responsible for providing a game ball.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If inclement weather forces cancellation after at least half of a regulation game has been played, the game shall be considered official and the score at the point of cancellation shall be recorded as the final score. The decision on whether a game will be "cancelled or recommenced" (if the referee agrees to resume play) will be made by the tournament directors, recognizing that there is limited time available to do so.
If a game must be stopped before halftime, and the scheduled time to play the game expires, the two teams will be asked to reconvene before the next game that either team plays, in order to conduct a penalty shootout to determine a winner from the cancelled game.

Regardless of weather conditions, it is the responsibility of all affected teams to monitor the status of their games and to appear with their team ready to play as scheduled by the tournament directors. The referee, tournament directors, or field marshal may postpone any game. Once the decision is made to cancel a game, that decision is final. In all cases, MSI reserves the right to abbreviate or shorten all games in order to adjust to weather or other complications that may occur.

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, 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 dropkicks 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 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.