



# **MSI Classic Program Manual**

## **Fall 2025**

MSI Classic offers a competitive level of play for players in age groups U9 through U19. It is both a “select” program, in which players must try out and be selected for teams, and a “house league”, with all teams, players and coaches participating as “members” of the MSI organization. The Classic League embraces and promotes the same values and principles as other MSI programs – each child’s enjoyment, skill development, personal growth, passion for the game, team experience, and sportsmanship. MSI Classic teams are deemed to be organized by and for the benefit of the youth players that make up each team.

Age Group	Format	Roster Maximum	Secondary Carded Maximum	Game Length
U9	7v7 + Build-out lines	13 players	3 players, 4 non-Classic Assessed players allowed	2×25"
U10	7v7 + Build-out lines	13 players	3 players, 4 non-Classic Assessed players allowed	2×30"
U11	9v9	16 players	4 players	2×30"
U12	9v9	16 players	4 players	2×30"
U13	11v11	18 players	5 players	2×35"
U14	11v11	18 players	5 players	2×35"
U15	11v11	21 players	5 players	2×40"
U16 +	11v11	26 players*	6 players	2×40"

*\*21 is the maximum number of players allowed to be included on a team’s game day roster.*

## TEAM ROLES

MSI Classic teams are required to have 2 adults as carded officials and are allowed to have a maximum of 3 carded officials. Each team must have a carded Head Coach, Team Manager and Team Sportsmanship Liaison (TSL). The additional carded slot is for an assistant coach and/or a secondary TSL designee. No more than 3 carded officials are allowed to stand on the player and coach side of the field and the team’s designated TSL must remain on the side of the field with the spectators.

Each team must have a Team Sportsmanship Liaison (TSL) who is not part of the coaching staff. Each TSL is required to have completed the Soccer Parenting Association course, “The Sideline Project” prior to the start of the season. MSI provides free registration to the Soccer Parenting Association for all members of MSI. The TSL’s role is to maintain a sporting and positive attitude from all spectators of their team and to liaise with the opposition TSL to dissipate any potential abuse or harassment of others at the game. The TSL should accompany the captain of the team to meet with the referee prior to the match. Each team’s TSL should collaborate prior to reporting any game issues to MSI.

Team coaches and managers must complete the MSYSA sanctioned training each year. Only officially carded staff that have completed all the MSYSA training each year are allowed to coach or manage the players. MSI requires Classic coaches to be of a suitable caliber for Classic level play. At a minimum, Classic coaches should have completed one in-person module of the US Soccer Grassroots Coaching License. Coaches will have a one-season grace period to acquire their license. MSI also encourages coaches to pursue more advanced licensing as their players’ skill level progresses. Information about these courses is available on the MSI website. MSI will also provide access to The Coaching Manual to offer session plans, activities and tips for coaching.

Each MSI Classic team with a paid coach and/or trainer must have a parent volunteer identified as the Team Treasurer. This may or may not be the same person as the Team Manager or Volunteer Head Coach. The Team Treasurer may not be related to any individual receiving compensation from the team.

## **AGE REQUIREMENTS**

Effective Fall 2018, US Soccer (our National Governing Body) adopted a new approach to describing age groups for youth soccer, basing those age groups on the year in which each child was born. MSI believes that it is important to continue facilitating the organization of community-based teams so that most kids may play with their classmates at both the Classic League and Recreational League levels of play.

MSI Classic teams age groups are based upon the US Soccer guidelines, with an important caveat: MSI decided to allow a maximum 6-month birth date allowance to facilitate most “same-grade” players to continue playing with their classmates. We recognize that there will be some players who are even more than 6 months older than the designated age range, yet still in the “same grade”. However, the 6-month extended age allowance is the maximum that will be considered, as it already means that some players will be 18 months older than the youngest players in the age group, and any further exceptions simply lead to more requests for never-ending exceptions for kids who are just a little bit older.

## **RULES OF PLAY**

MSI games are governed by FIFA rules of play with certain modifications appropriate to youth play. The MSI MODIFICATIONS OF FIFA RULES are as follows:

**Home Team/Visiting Team:** Before a game starts, the home team provides the game ball and must change jersey in case of a color clash.

In addition to FIFA Law V(d), a referee can suspend or terminate a game because of derogatory remarks directed at the referee or opposing team by a player, coach or spectator. A coach or spectator receiving a red card must leave the field immediately and move at least to the parking lot. He or she may not return to the field at the end of the game or be on the sidelines at the following game. The jurisdiction of the referee begins upon his arrival at the parking area and continues until he leaves the parking area. The use of communications devices to instruct the coach's replacement is prohibited. Returning to the game field during or after any MSI games played that day will result in mandatory coaches' review and additional one game suspension. Failure to leave the field will result in mandatory coaches' review and termination of the game. S/he may coach another team at another field. If the coach is required to leave and there is no other responsible adult available to supervise the team, the game will be declared a forfeit in favor of the other team with a final score of 1 – 0.

**Substitutions:** May be made with the consent of the referee 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.

**Red Cards (Automatic Suspension):** Receipt of a red card by a player, coach or spectator will result in immediate ejection from the field of play and a minimum one-game suspension from the next league game with **no** appeal. A coach or spectator receiving a red card must leave the field immediately and move at least to the parking lot. He or she may not return to the field at the end of the game or be on the sidelines at the following game. The jurisdiction of the referee begins upon his arrival at the parking area and continues until he leaves the parking area. If a red card is issued, the offending person is prohibited from attending the team's next game. **Suspensions will be tracked electronically and known by teams.** Failure to leave the field after receiving a red card will result in mandatory coaches' review and termination and forfeiture of the game. S/he may coach another team at another field. If the coach is required to leave and there is no other responsible adult available to supervise the team, the game will be declared a forfeit in favor of the other team with a final score of 1 – 0. Any ejection of a coach, player, or spectator constitutes a red card offense whether or not the card is shown. All associated penalties will still be served by the offending person.

**Yellow Cards:** Player must leave the game immediately and sit 5 minutes, after which the referee may allow for the return of the player in a normal substitution. The five-minute sit out period does not include halftime. Substitution is allowed during the sit out, enabling the team to play at full strength. (If there are no substitutes available, the team must play "short" during the sit out period.)

Slide tackles are allowed in the sole judgement of the referee that they are not dangerous. This is a subjective opinion, and the opinion of the referee is correct.

## HEADING

*Players aged 10 or younger MAY NOT HEAD THE BALL during either practices or games.* MSI and referees will enforce this restriction for Recreational level Kindergarten through Grade 5, Classic age groups U9 through U11,

and Travel age groups U9 through U11. In any instance where a player is deemed to have deliberately headed the ball during a game in these age groups, the referee shall award an Indirect Free Kick (IFK) to the opposing team from the spot of the header. If that spot is inside the Goal Area (6-yard box), the IFK shall be taken from the nearest point on the horizontal line defining the top of the Goal Area.

*Players between ages 11 and 13 MAY HEAD THE BALL during games but are limited to heading the ball in practice for a total of 30 minutes practice time each week, with no more than 15-20 headers allowed per player in total. MSI will enforce this restriction for Recreational Grade 6 through Grade 7, Classic age groups U12 through U13, and Travel age groups U12 and U13.*

Coaches should be aware of any circumstance where they may have a player who is “playing up” one or more age groups, and therefore may have greater restrictions for themselves as compared to the age group in which they compete. It is the age of the individual player that governs the restrictions they may have under these new guidelines. Coaches are responsible for ensuring compliance in these exceptions; referees will officiate on the basis of the age group designation for the game.

## **U9 AND U10 SPECIFIC RULES**

All potential U9 and U10 players are required to attend an MSI Player Assessment session to determine the most appropriate level of play for all players. Player assessments are also open to older players, especially potential new teams to determine if the Classic League is the right level for those players. Each U9 and U10 team may have up to four players on their roster that have not been assessed at the Classic level. At U11 and older, there are no requirements for players on the Classic team having attended a Player Assessment session. For those players, the Player Assessment is an opportunity for those that are unsure of their level of play to find out if the Classic League would be the right level.

### **Build-out Lines**

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

Rules during open play:

1. 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.
2. The six-second count for the goalkeeper does not begin until players have retreated behind the build-out line.
3. 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).
4. 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.
5. If the ball crosses the build-out line before being touched by a second player, play continues normally.
6. 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.
7. 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.

8. If a goalkeeper punts or dropkicks the ball over the build-out line, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. Referees 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.
9. 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:

1. 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).
2. 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.
3. The opposing team may cross the build-out line once a second member of the team in possession has touched the ball.
4. 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.

### **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.

### **Playing Time**

MSI requires that every player on the roster who is present for the entirety of a game must play at least one half of the game. Violations of this rule may lead to forfeiture of the game(s) and / or additional sanctions. Important note: This does not mean that everyone plays an equal amount of time; it means that everyone must play at least fifty percent of every game.

## **GAME START AND FORFEITS**

To field a team, each side is required to have the following minimum number of players:

7 v 7	5 players
9 v 9	6 players
11 v 11	7 players

The start of the game may be delayed by the referee for up to 15 minutes to allow a team to obtain the minimum number of players. When both teams have at least the minimum number of players, the game must start, even if one side has fewer players on the field. Late players may not enter play until they receive permission from the referee.

### **Postponements and Forfeits**

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 request received after this time will be regarded as a forfeit win for the opponent. 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 their age group or the adjacent age group 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 and can instead take a forfeit win. In the event that either team does not have enough players, or a rescheduling request was made too late, the two teams may agree to forfeit the result of the game, yet still play an "official exhibition". In this event, the teams may share players, as long as all participating players are registered players with an MSI team during the current season. Two forfeits by a single team in one season will result in a meeting at the MSI office with the team coach and manager and could lead to the team's suspension from playing in the MSI Classic League for the following season..

If a referee has not arrived by game time, please call (301)762-4674 and select the "game day emergency" option (5). MSI encourages all teams to use parent volunteers to officiate games in which there is no referee, understanding that this decision is irreversible once play has begun, and scores may not be contested.

### **PLAYER PASSES**

Each Classic team **must** have a printed copy of its player passes at every game. All teams should write the player's jersey number on the player passes. Prior to the start of each game, the center or assistant referee is required to check player passes against each player. Team managers should have players and passes ready to show referees 15 minutes prior to game time. This requirement is not optional and a referee's refusal to check players' passes/roster shall be immediately reported to the MSI Office following the game.

MSI/MWRSAs referees will allow a MSI Classic game to begin on time when there is a team (or a player) without player passes at the field, and that team (or player) has until halftime to produce the passes. If the team is not able to have the player passes at the field by halftime, the game will continue, but the game will be recorded as 1-0 in favor of the opposing team with player passes. Referees assigned to the game will referee this game in its entirety.

The player passes must remain at the field until the successful completion of the match. Players arriving late to games after player passes have been checked cannot enter the field until the referee has checked their player pass.

### **LEAGUE-WIDE WEATHER CANCELLATION**

In the event of inclement weather, MSI posts an announcement on its web site ([www.msissoccer.org](http://www.msissoccer.org)) concerning the status of league games. It is the coach's or manager's responsibility to monitor the MSI website and contact individual team players and families. On game days, MSI does not recognize the Montgomery County text alert

system for field closures. Field status is also posted to Rainoutline, and MSI may close fields even if the county leaves them open. The information provided on the MSI website will be the final determinant of the status of games. Once MSI has canceled games for the entire day league wide, it is impossible to reverse the decision for games later in the day. When games are canceled, referees and families make alternative plans. Sudden warmth and sunshine do not mean fields are playable. Your patience concerning cancellations is appreciated. If you are not notified concerning cancellation of your game, assume that the game will be played as scheduled.

### **Thunder and Lightning**

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 with the game score reported as an official completed game. If more than 15 minutes remain in the game, participants must wait the appropriate time – typically 25-30 minutes without additional thunder or lightning – before continuing the game. If the game has not reached the half-time, and the game cannot be restarted because of continuing inclement weather, the game is NOT an official game. If the game is stopped during the 2nd half with more than 15 minutes remaining, but the game cannot be restarted because of continuing inclement weather, the game is an official game.

The clock will stop during a delay and will resume when play restarts. Exception: In the event of a thunder/lightning delay with less than 15 minutes left in the game, the game is ended, and the score will stand as of the time of termination.

### **High Winds**

MSI will use the National Weather Service guidelines.

*High Wind Advisory:* Fields are open but subject to closure. – MSI programs will be allowed. However, specific locations may be closed, and a decision to close all fields may be made late or when practices and games occur—sustained winds and gusts. Issuance is usually site-specific. Please ensure all goals are secured with sandbags when you arrive to your match.

*High Wind Warning:* ALL ACTIVITIES CANCELLED. This status is issued by the National Weather Service when high wind speeds may pose a hazard or is life-threatening. The criterion for this warning varies from state to state.

### **Extreme Heat Policy**

If the heat index exceeds 90°F, mandatory hydration breaks will be implemented every 15 minutes. If the index exceeds 100°F, games will be canceled or rescheduled. Coaches are responsible for monitoring weather conditions and ensuring player safety.

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. The score will be final as it stands at the time the game is terminated. If the game is terminated prior to or during the first half, the score will revert to 0 - 0, and the game will be played at a later date. If some games in a division are unable to be re-scheduled, special “average points per game” may be used to determine final standings.

## **TROPHIES**



For age groups U11 and above, individual trophies are awarded to the members of teams with the highest number of points in their division. Division standings are based on points from every game. In cases where all games were not able to be played in a division (i.e. certain games were rained out and unable to be rescheduled) an “average points per team” would be used.

If there is a tie for first place, the deciding tiebreakers are as follows:

- Head-to-head result
- Most wins during the season
- Least goals allowed during the season
- Coin flip

Second place trophies are awarded for divisions of 7 or more teams. The same tiebreakers as above are used for determining the second placed team. Second place trophies will be awarded in a 6-team division if there is more than one division at that age group, and the division of 6 teams is the top division – so the team finishing second is the second placed team for the entire age group.

### **Position Rounds**

For divisions with 8 teams, MSI uses a position round pairing for the final games. Team standings will be strictly determined by the points gained in each match played through the 7th game to determine the pairings for the final games--or position rounds. Points continue to accumulate **only** within the pairing themselves to determine the final position. A team can never finish any higher or lower than in their pairing. There are no overtimes, no tiebreakers, no penalty kicks in any MSI Classic games — regular games or position rounds.

## **COACHES' CONDUCT**

The conduct of MSI coaches on both the practice and game field establishes how players, parents, and the public perceive MSI. Parents who entrust their children to MSI should feel confident that standards being taught are consistent with their own. Therefore, it is vital that coaches demonstrate and teach the highest standards of sportsmanship. Every MSI coach **must** read and follow these guidelines:

1. Players are instructed to play according to the Laws of the Game and are encouraged to play to win without taking unfair advantage of an opponent.
2. Coaches will **not** dispute the ruling of a referee or assistant referee while the game is in progress and will instruct their team and spectators to refrain from doing so. In all cases, they will follow the directions of the referee. Clarification of a ruling may take place only with the referee's approval during an official break in play or when the referee indicates it is appropriate.
3. Coaching from the sidelines is permitted by one person at a time only under the following conditions:
  - a. the tone and language are instructive.
  - b. it occurs behind the touchline between the penalty areas.
  - c. it is directed from the assigned team's area.
  - d. MSI rules do not permit coaches to provide players with a constant flow of directions during play.Violation of this rule is considered unsportsmanlike conduct.
4. **Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players, officials, and spectators** through the designated Team Sportsmanship Liaison (TSL). If a spectator's conduct warrants the issuance of a yellow or red card, it

may be issued directly to the spectator. If the referee cannot identify the spectator or believes the TSL or coach has not attempted to control the spectators, the card may be awarded to the coach.

- a. Physical violence, foul or abusive language, or harassment of players and referees is NOT TOLERATED and could result in permanent suspension, depending on the severity or frequency of incidents. Any coach or spectator found by MSI to have abused or harassed players, referees or opposition spectators, will receive a one-game suspension and be required to pay the \$35 registration fee and complete the Soccer Parenting Association course "Return to Good Standing."
  - b. Coaches **and spectators** may not coach or criticize players from the opposing team. Such conduct reported to MSI officials is reviewed even in situations where cards are not issued.
  - c. Any incident of assault or physical violence directed against a referee or assistant referee by coaches, spectators, or players results in immediate referral to the MWSRA and US Youth Soccer or MSYSA. In addition, MSI's internal Disciplinary Committee automatically reviews the incident..
5. When a team walks off a field in protest, they forfeit the game, and the coach may be called by the MSI Disciplinary Committee to answer for their actions.

Offensive or vulgar language by adults or children is unacceptable. MSI events including games and practices should be family-oriented events. Adults should model good communication skills. Language that is denigrating in nature, content, or tone or refers to one's gender, race, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or religion is not acceptable. Insults and demeaning nicknames directed at players are not permitted. Inappropriate language or threatening language used toward an official, coach, player, or parent may be grounds for removal from a game or the premises or both and may incur additional sanctions.

### **Violations**

Violations will be handled by the MSI Disciplinary Committee and sanctions relayed to the team manager, coach and TSL. In accordance with USYS procedures, complaints of referee abuse will be referred directly to MSYSA and will be dealt with by the proper disciplinary process. Sanctions can include counseling, probation, fines or suspensions from all MSI or from all US Youth Soccer activities. Anonymous complaints cannot be addressed by MSI. If the circumstances of the complaint indicate a probability of criminal behavior, MSI will report the matter to the appropriate legal authorities. Any person witnessing a violation of these guidelines should report the incident to the MSI office in writing.

## **GAME EVALUATIONS**

Within 72 hours after each game, **one** carded staff representative of each team is required to complete the Game Evaluation Form, to give a rating on the referee, field, opposition and their team. The Game Evaluation Form is the appropriate avenue for reporting any issues that occurred in relation to the game. Should there be any issues regarding sideline behavior, the team's TSL should be the person completing the Game Evaluation Form. MSI will use the data provided in the form as the basis of sportsmanship points for teams and for sharing with the referee's association to evaluate their referees. We appreciate prompt, and accurate completion of the form by each team for each game they play.

## **FEES AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF MSI CLASSIC TEAMS**

\$300 deposit required to post tryout notices. MSI charges a team fee to enter the Classic League. The team fee covers the team's portion of league expenses which includes the following items and services: game day fields, referees, reduced fees and access to training fields, trophies, field equipment, league administrative fees, coaches education and training, state and national affiliation fees to cover the team's player registration forms, insurance and player cards. The fee is generally set by the MSI Board of Directors prior to registration for each season and must be paid in full prior to the upcoming season.

### **Individual Player Fees**

Each Classic team may assess players additional fees to cover the following expenses: uniforms, coaching fees, practice field permits, tournament costs, additional team equipment and supplies, and training clinics. Each team determines its own fees and **MUST** provide an accounting of team expenditures to parents.

### **Financial Management of MSI Classic Teams**

MSI believes that 100% transparency of Classic team budgets is critical because it maintains a shared understanding across the team of fees and expectations, as well as improves accountability. We strongly encourage that the following rules apply to the financial management of MSI Classic teams. However, at a minimum, the team budget must include what families are paying and what they are getting in return for those payments.

The following indicates best practices of financial management and should be performed by the Team Treasurer who is not related to, or working for or with, any individual receiving compensation from the team:

1. A team budget prepared in advance of the start of every seasonal year (defined as the period beginning on July 1 and concluding on June 30). The budget should be available for review by the parents of team players for the upcoming seasonal year. This budget should provide reasonable detail as to the type and amount of expenses anticipated, with separate line items provided for each.
2. The team budget should highlight the exact nature of any intent to compensate any individual(s) for trainer services. This highlight must include the services (and frequency) to be provided and the compensation associated with those services. As an example, a budget may indicate that a trainer is being hired for the Fall season to conduct 2 practices per week for 10 weeks (20 practices), and to coach 8 league games and 4 tournament games. The total (or itemized) compensation for those itemized services is to be reflected.
3. All collection of player fees and any other monies is to be conducted by the team treasurer.
4. All deposits of player fees and any other monies is to be conducted by the team treasurer.
5. At the conclusion of each season, the budget is to be updated to provide a full accounting of team finances. The original budget figures should be presented alongside the actual income/expense figures, with an indication of any funds remaining. This financial update is to be made available to all team parents.

### **Financial Aid**

MSI offers Classic players financial aid to teams that provide a copy of the Montgomery County Public Schools' Free and Reduced Meals form (FARM), for the appropriate player. Parents, coaches or managers should contact MSI for more information.

## **PLAYER REGISTRATION**

The process of registering individual players to play in a competitive league is administered by MSI and is often referred to as “carding.” Registration ensures team membership for the entire seasonal year, which begins July 1 and ends June 30 of the following calendar year. All players must register in the MSI Classic player registration system and must be reflected on the team roster. The parent of the player will upload a passport style photo and proof of age as part of the registration process. The deadline dates will be posted on the MSI website each season. Players can be carded and added to a team roster during the course of a seasonal year, if properly carded and registered by **9:00 pm the Wednesday** before participating in a Saturday or Sunday league game. In addition, no players may be added to a roster after the 5<sup>th</sup> game of a season has been played.

With few exceptions, players cannot be released from a Classic team before the end of the seasonal year (June 30) unless they wish to be released. A player may request a transfer to another team. This request must be initiated by the player in writing on the appropriate form and then approved before the player may join the new team. The transfer must be initiated **between** playing seasons. No team transfers will be approved once the playing season has begun. **A coach may not refuse to release a player.** If the original coach is not willing to sign the transfer form and release the player pass to the new coach, the Head Registrar can approve the transfer.

If there is an outstanding financial obligation from a player on your team or wishing to depart your team, please contact MSI. If the outstanding obligation cannot be resolved, MSI will report the obligation to MSYSA for appropriate action, including but not limited to, banning the player from playing soccer in any carded league in Maryland.

**No players carded to Classic or Travel teams may be registered in the MSI Recreational program.**

## **PLAYER SAFETY**

Safety of all participants in practices and games is a paramount concern for MSI. MSI will not knowingly allow any person convicted of a crime of violence, physical abuse, sale of illegal substances, or any other offense that would indicate a pattern of behavior that would have a detrimental effect on children to be placed in a position that would involve direct contact with children.

MSI is affiliated with the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA) and U.S. Youth Soccer. MSI Classic affiliated players and coaches are provided insurance coverage under an umbrella policy of MSYSA. This includes liability coverage for “carded” volunteers and coaches. In order to minimize your risk exposure, MSI requires that all coaches and assistant coaches should:

1. Become fully familiar with all MSI, MSYSA, US Youth Soccer, and FIFA rules, policies, and requirements, particularly those concerning sportsmanship, conduct of coaches, and safety.
2. Enroll in mandated US Soccer coaching courses and continue your training and education.
3. Learn proper first aid and CPR procedures.
4. Complete all MSYSA required trainings prior to the season starting.
5. Do not allow any unregistered players to practice or play games with your team.
6. Do not allow players to practice or play unless they are properly equipped, including shoes and shin guards.

## **Team Policies and Requirements**

All team parents are permitted to attend or observe any MSI practice. Parental involvement is the best way to ensure a good experience for the children. All teams are required to have a first aid kit, and coaches are required to review the first aid information given to them. It is always safest to have a cell phone at the playing field and contact numbers for every player's family in the event of an emergency.

## **Protection of Players**

The registered coach or a registered assistant coach should attend all team functions. If neither is attending, the coach must appoint another adult to act as supervising coach. Players must wear shin guards at all times, whether playing or practicing. Coaches and parents should make sure players drink plenty of water during practices and games. Do not play or practice if dangerous conditions exist. These include: thunderstorms in the immediate area, fields ordered closed by county authorities, standing water on the fields, or extremely hot weather.

## **Fields and Goals**

Never allow your players to climb on or hang from goals. Coaches and parents should be aware that some playing fields in the county have large but movable goals. While we have been assured that these goals are safe, additional caution is warranted. Check the goals and field before each practice or game for hazards, holes, sharp objects, etc. If it is necessary to move goals, always use great care and always have enough adults to move goals safely. If it is your responsibility to set up the field, make sure you have enough adults to move the goals to the proper position, if necessary. Children should not help move goals under any circumstances. Do not use a goal that is damaged, weakened, or otherwise in disrepair. Please report any such problems to MSI.

At a minimum, Classic coaches should have completed one in-person module of the US Soccer Grassroots Coaching License. Coaches will have a one-season grace period to acquire their license. MSI also encourages coaches to pursue more advanced licensing as their players' skill level progresses. Information about these courses is available on the MSI website. MSI will also provide access to The Coaching Manual to offer session plans, activities and tips for coaching.

## **FIELDS AND THEIR USE**

MSI competes with many other county and private organizations for access to fields. MSI uses more than 100 fields each season, and the competition increases each playing season. Fields are crucial to soccer, and it's extremely important to cooperate in full with the CUPF, the Montgomery County Recreation Department, the City of Rockville, City of Gaithersburg, the Maryland Soccerplex, and the Maryland Park and Planning Commission, who issue field permits. Everyone associated with MSI can help in keeping the assigned fields playable by following these rules:

1. **Do not practice on wet fields.** Any activity on a wet or soggy field, especially with cleats, will tear up the sod and could make the field unplayable for many weeks.
2. **Pick up any trash or debris** on the field after your team has played.
3. **Do not park or drive on grassy areas adjacent to fields,** or on the blacktop playground area under any conditions.
4. **Do not drive onto the field to deliver equipment, or for any other reason.**

5. **Promptly report any acts of vandalism to the MSI Office** at (301) 762-4674.
6. **In instances of inclement weather and/or saturated fields**, check the county-wide Rainout app or website to find out the status of the field.

### **Practice Fields**

Coaches must acquire permits for their practice fields each season. MSI has access to both school fields and park fields in Montgomery County. The coach, subject to permit approval, determines practice days and times. Practice sessions should be scheduled for the convenience of a majority of players, as well as the coach. Goalposts are not a necessity for practice. Cones or other simulated goals may be used.

Prior to the beginning of each season (generally during July and March), MSI teams will be able to submit a practice request directly to MSI for two weeknights of practice during the season. Applications received during the submission window will be treated equally based on the choices provided on the application. Applications received after the close of the submission window will be processed on a first-come first-serve basis after the applications received during the window have been processed. Historical use precedent will not apply when issuing practice permits.

### **Field Set-Up and Equipment**

On Local Park and School fields, teams designated as home team for the first game of each playing day may be scheduled to set up the goal nets and corner flags. Some fields may have portable goals that require setup at the beginning of each day. They are occasionally padlocked together and, in these instances, will require coaches to move them to the endlines and place sandbags to anchor them in position. Padlock combinations will be provided to the appropriate coaches. If the locks cannot be opened, please call the MSI office at (301) 762-4674.

On the occasion that your team has set up, bring a stepladder or stool to stand on. Roll the top of the net over the top of the cross bar. Attach the metal snap-link back under the bar, through the net, and up over the top of the bar back onto itself. Use the same wrap around technique to attach the net to the posts. Use the attached stakes to secure the net to the ground. If the nets do not fit properly, please contact MSI.

### **Field Take-Down**

On the occasion that your team has take-down, generally after the last game of the day, your team is responsible for removing the goal nets and corner flags, and either storing them for set up at the field the following week or returning them to MSI. When rainouts occur in the middle of a game day, the coaches on the field must take responsibility for the equipment, take the equipment down and/or make every effort to contact the coach responsible for takedown that day. **Nets or corner flags left at the field when your team is designated to be the team responsible for taking down the equipment, will result in a \$75 fine which will be added to your account.**

## **UNIFORMS**

All Classic teams are required to purchase their own uniforms in accordance with MSI Classic rules:

- MSI recommends using Rockville Soccer (301)309-6902 as the preferred uniform vendor and to take advantage of the deeply discounted prices negotiated for the benefit of MSI teams and to support and to assure the timely delivery of the uniforms.

- Teams must have two sets of jerseys of distinctly different colors, in order to facilitate a change in case of a clash of colors between teams. The home team is responsible for changing jersey color in case of a clash. All jerseys must display an eight-inch number on the back. Names of players are not allowed on the jerseys. A common pair of shorts and socks may be worn, without regard to color. All jerseys must be screened with the official MSI Classic logo on the right sleeve.
- Team names and sponsors are allowed on jerseys pending MSI Classic verification
- An MSYSA recognized travel club may wear existing club jerseys with the addition of the MSI logo on the right sleeve. MSI reserves the right to deny the wearing of a travel club uniform in the Classic League because of sponsorship on the jersey.

If an organization is interested in providing sponsorship support of MSI programs in general, please contact MSI.

## LEAGUE STRUCTURE

Most often, teams are placed in single age conference. In instances when it is necessary and appropriate to do so, MSI may combine conferences with the next older or younger age group for league play. Age groups are typically subdivided with 5 -12 teams in each division. Placement in divisions will be based primarily upon performance of the team during the previous season. In age groups where there is more than one division, for placement the next season, MSI will take into account the team's record from the previous season as well as additional factors. Division structure is at the discretion of MSI in order to provide a competitive playing environment.

Teams are expected to play Fall and Spring seasons. If a team withdraws and later applies for re-entry into the Classic Program, that team may be considered a new team and may be placed in the most appropriate age group and division as determined by MSI. If there is no space available to place a new team in the appropriate age group, MSI may offer the team the opportunity to play in the next higher age group, provided there is room. Teams must register and pay by the Classic registration deadline in order to be considered for the current season. If the applicant is not accepted, the check will be returned before the season begins.

## Schedules

The MSI Classic League plays an eight-game schedule with an additional weekend for any weather-related make-up games. Schedules are determined approximately two weeks prior to the start of the season and are posted on the MSI Website. Teams should be prepared to play games on both Saturdays and Sundays and may have some double-header weekends, especially if there are weather-related cancellations early in the season.

**Late Game Forfeits:** Teams that forfeit a game with less than 24 hours' notice will be fined \$100. This policy is in place to discourage last-minute cancellations and ensure league scheduling fairness.

**Reschedule Limit:** Each team is allowed a maximum of 3 reschedule requests per season. Requests beyond this limit will not be accepted unless due to extraordinary circumstances and subject to MSI approval.

## COMMUNICATION

MSI office hours for in-person contact are 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday. Any equipment should be picked up and returned during these hours. Email correspondence should be directed to [classic@msisoccer.org](mailto:classic@msisoccer.org).

### **Volunteer Support**

In addition to full-time MSI staff, several volunteers assist the running of the Classic League. **Registrars** are the go-to contact for anything player registration related. They will be the ones that will check that every invited player has uploaded appropriate documents and photos and will then activate your team – allowing you to print your official team roster from the system. Should they find something needing correction, they will be in contact with the team manager or coach to request corrections. Registrars do not make decisions regarding roster sizes, age groups, or other policy related questions. Questions on those matters should be sent to the MSI Classic Program Manager. All other player related questions – additions, removals (with the appropriate form), and transfers are handled by the Registrars. The appropriate Registrar to contact per age group, is listed on the MSI website.

**Classic Liaisons** are experienced, Classic coaches or managers with good administrative, technological, communication and problem-solving skills. MSI selects liaisons to serve as the first point of contact for coaches, managers and TSLs who have questions about the Classic League or about something that took place during a Classic League game. They are proactive about resolving issues.

If you are interested in volunteering as a Liaison or a Registrar, please reach out to the MSI Classic Program Manager.



