

2026 7v7 Carolina Cup

Official Rules

The Ball

The ball is size 4 for U9 to U12 and size 5 for U13 and above.

Team Size

- A. Seven (7) players constitute a full team.
- B. Teams may start and finish the game with five (5) players.

Equipment

- A. Players must wear close-toed, athletic type shoes at all times. No metal cleats allowed, rubber cleats can be worn.
- B. Players must wear athletic clothing such as shorts or sweatpants. Jeans or dress pants are not permitted.
- C. Pinnies will be provided and must be worn unless a team has matching jerseys with legible numbers and the officials can differentiate between the teams. Players must wear a t-shirt underneath their pinnies. A player cannot just wear a pinnie.
- D. Any equipment that, in the Official's judgement, would be injurious to the participants, would aid the individual who is wearing it, or is not within the spirit of the rules is illegal.
- E. No hats, jewelry, or watches may be worn during a game.

Time and Substitutions

- A. Games shall consist of two 20-minute halves with a 3-minute halftime.
- B. There are no time-outs. The clock will stop only at the official's discretion.
- C. Teams may substitute on the fly. Each team may substitute players freely; provided that, during play, players must substitute off the field of play before the substitute enters the field of play.
- D. Substitutions must take place within 10 yards of the mid field line.
- E. All goalie substitutions must be reported to a field official.

The Referee

The decisions of the Referee regarding facts connected with play and interpretations of the Rules are final.

Basic Rules

- A. The winner of the pre-game coin toss shall have the first choice of two options: choice of ends of the field or the kickoff.
- B. The ball shall be considered in play unless the referee sounds the whistle or the ball has completely crossed the plane of the goal line.
- C. There will be no off-sides except during the kick-off.
- D. The following yellow / red card system will be used:

1. A player receiving a yellow card for misconduct must sit out for two minutes of playing time. The entire two minutes of playing time must be served regardless of the developments on the field. The player serving the penalty period cannot be substituted, therefore their team will play short-handed. The official/scorekeeper will note the time of the infraction and release the penalized player when the penalty period has expired.
2. A second yellow card issued to an individual during a single game results in an ejection from the game and a minimum one game suspension. An incident report will be completed. The exact suspension length will be determined during a required meeting between the offending player and the Director or Coordinator of Club Sports and Intramurals. Two successive games in which a single player receives yellow cards will also disqualify that player from the next game.
3. A red card will be given to a player by the official or supervisor for severe misconduct (fighting, verbal or physical abuse of an official or supervisor) and results in an immediate ejection and the player's suspension from at least the team's next game. An incident report will be completed. The length of the suspension will be determined during a required meeting between the offending player and the Director or Coordinator of Club Sports and Intramurals.
4. Teams will have to play down a player (i.e. short-handed) for any players that are ejected during a game.
5. If a player receives a total of three yellow cards or one red card and two yellows or two red cards throughout the tournament, that player will be disqualified for the rest of the tournament.
- F. Any foul committed by the defense inside the goal box will result in a penalty kick unless the severity of the foul demands a stiffer penalty as determined by the judgment of the official.
- G. Penalty shots are unobstructed direct free kicks taken from the penalty spot, 10 yards from the goal. All players other than the designated kicker must be behind the shooter. A missed penalty shot will be a dead ball and play is restarted with a GOAL KICK for the opposing team.
- H. All handballs outside the goal crease result in direct kicks at the spot of the foul. Handball inside the goal crease will result in a penalty kick.
- I. The ball must be put into play within 5 seconds for all indirect and direct kicks, and kick-offs. The first violation of this rule will result in a warning, subsequent violations will result in a change of possession with an indirect kick from midfield.
- J. If a substitute touches the ball while it is in play, the opposing team will receive a penalty kick.
- K. Home team wears white/light color jersey. Away team wears dark color jersey.

Goalie Rules

- A. The goalie will have 5 seconds to play the ball once it is in their possession. After a warning the opposing team will take an indirect kick from midfield.
- B. The goalie may not pick up a ball sent from a teammate's foot or from a throw-in. Opposing team will receive an indirect kick from midfield.

- C. The goalie may collect the ball, dribble back into the goal box, and then pick up the ball (provided that the goalie did not collect the ball off a pass from their teammate's foot or from a throw-in.)
- D. The goalie may not pick up a ball that he/she had previously held in their hands and placed onto the ground.

Free Kicks/Throw-Ins

- A. On all free kicks, the kicker's opponent must remain at least 7 yards from the ball until it is put into play. Any motion towards the ball by a defender before the offense puts the ball into play is considered encroachment. Failure to heed an official's warning will result in a yellow card for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- B. When a player is taking a goal kick, a direct free kick or an indirect free kick while in their penalty box, all opponents must remain outside the penalty box until the ball has left the box. The ball must travel beyond the box before another player may touch it.
- C. Direct Free Kicks and Corner Kicks indicate that a goal may be scored directly (played by only one player).
- D. Indirect free kicks, goal kicks, and kick-offs necessitate that a goal may be scored only after the ball has touched two players of either team.

Overtime – For Semi-finals and Finals

- A. If a game ends in a tie, a single 3-minute running clock sudden death period shall be played. A coin toss will determine possession for the overtime kick-off.
- B. If the game remains tied after the sudden victory period, 1 player for each team will be removed from the field every 1 minute until a goal is scored which would be the winner.

The Ball In And Out Of Play

When the ball goes out of bounds on the side lines, there will be a throw in. Balls that go over the end line will result in a goal kick or a corner. A player will have 5 seconds to get the ball back into play once they are set to throw it in or take the corner kick. The purpose is to play quickly and keep the game flowing. If a player takes longer than the 5 seconds, it is automatically turned over to the opposing team.

Heading – U12 and younger

No player in U12 or younger age groups is allowed to head the ball. If the ball is headed by a player, then an indirect free kick will be awarded in the spot of the header for the opposing team.

Scoring

A team scores a goal when the whole of the ball legally passes over the Goal Line. You may not score directly off a kickoff or indirect free kick. Goalkeepers cannot score by throwing, punting, or drop-kicking it in the opposing teams goal.

Tie Breaker's

If there are more than two teams tied #1 is thrown out, the tiebreaker will return to number 1 only after a team has been eliminated from the tie, proceed #2-5.

- 1 – Result head to head competition
- 2 – Goal Differential (up to 5 per game)
- 3 – Least Goals Allowed
- 4 – Most shutouts (includes 0-0 ties)
- 5 – FIFA penalty kicks

Fouls and Other Violations

All fouls are the same as FIFA outdoor soccer rules. Differences are listed below:

(a) Goalkeeper may only hold the ball in their hands for 5 seconds – if longer, the referee may reward an indirect free kick for the opposing team.

Pass back to goalkeeper is not allowed, just as outdoor rules. This results in an indirect free kick for opposing team.

When a free kick is awarded, the opposing team is to respect the distance needed for the ball to be played.

****Cautionable Offenses:** The Referee issues a Yellow Card for reckless Fouls and for:

- (a) Unsporting Behavior by any non-player personnel;
- (b) Provoking Altercation: Making physical contact with an opponent (e.g., pushing or poking), short of fighting, or using the ball in so doing.
- (c) Continuous fouling
- (d) Foul language
- (e) Not Respecting the Distance on Free Kick or Delaying a restart
- (f) Spitting on the field

****Ejectionable Offenses:** A person receives a Red Card for Fouls, which the Referee considers violent or committed with excessive force, and for:

- (a) Second Yellow;
- (b) Elbowing: Intentionally elbowing an opponent above the shoulder;
- (c) Vicious Slide Tackling: A tackle from the side or from behind directly into one or both legs of an opponent, seriously endangering him;
- (d) Fighting;
- (e) Leaving Team Bench or Penalty Area to engage in a fracas or confrontation with the opposition or a Game Official;
- (f) Extreme Unsporting Behavior