DC Soccer Club District Cup Tournament
Official Rules | 2026

I. **AGE AND ELIGIBILITY**

A. Participation in this DC Soccer Club event is open to accepted boys' and girls' teams composed of a maximum of:

1. Twelve (12) players for U9 and U10 age groups (playing 7v7)
    a) Up to 14 registered, 12 dressing per game
2. Sixteen (16) players for U11 and U12 age groups (playing 9v9)
    a) Up to 18 registered, 16 dressing per game
3. Twenty (20) players for U13 and U14 age groups (playing 11v11)
    a) Up to 22 registered, 20 dressing per game

B. Meeting the age limit of the specified division; Players must have been born during, or subsequent to, the divisional year, as defined by US Soccer Guidelines; Player registration cards duly authorized by State/Provincial or National Association will be required as proof of age for U9-U12 players.

1. Age groups:
    a) U14
    b) U13
    c) U12
    d) U11
    e) U10
    f) U9

(Respective of the new age group cut offs)

2. Combining of age groups will be done at the Tournament Director's discretion

C. Each team accepted must be registered with a National State Association affiliated with the USYS/USSF or national equivalent and must present a valid State or Provincial roster. Teams that are members of organizations of the United States Soccer Federation but not members of US Youth Soccer (such as AYSO, SAY or US Club Soccer) DO NOT have to have a US Youth Soccer Permission to Travel form (although that team's organization may require that the team have permission). Consideration will be given to academy style programs and clubs to participate which may consist of "house" all-star teams or the equivalent.

D. Guest player limit:
    1. U9/U10 Four (4) per team
    2. U11/U12 Five (5) per team
    3. U13/U14 Five (5) per team

E. A team using guest players must have no more than a maximum of fourteen (14) players for U9 and U10 age groups (playing 7v7), sixteen (16) players for U11 and U12 age groups (playing 9v9), and twenty (20) players for U13 and U14 age groups.
    1. Guest players must be current USYS/USSF or national equivalent players.

F. Guest players may be recreational players provided they obtain certification comparable to a player registration card and obtain this certification from the same state official that grants player registration cards.

G. Guest players are considered "any age-appropriate player not on your league approved roster". Guest players may be from your club's recreation league or from another travel team, but they must be registered players within your organization to ensure they are covered by insurance.

H. Guest players MAY NOT play for multiple teams registered in the tournament. Once a guest player is declared for a roster, they are ineligible to play for any other team, regardless of age group or division.

I. Guest players must be registered to a team's roster before the registration cutoff date.

II. **LAWS OF THE GAME**

A. All games shall be played in accordance with FIFA Laws, except as specifically modified by these rules.
    1. Heading. No heading for teams playing in the U11 age groups and younger.
    2. U9-U10 Build Out Line. Half-way between top of the goal box and midfield.
    3. Cones or an item that clearly identifies the build-out line need to be used. If the tournament does not have them available, the home team needs to supply the cone/item.

B. When the goalkeeper has the ball in hand or on goal kicks:
    1. Opposing team must move behind the line, until the ball is put in play.
    2. The SECOND touch by attacking team on goal kick
    3. Released by goalkeeper

C. Goalkeeper does not have to kick it until 6 seconds after the opposing team retreats behind the line before playing the ball

D. Distribution must be from rolling the ball, throwing the ball, or dropping it to their feet • No punting or dropkick

E. Indirect free kick to the opposing team if it occurs. Placement is on the edge of the box, closest to where the act occurred

F. Offside
    1. The buildout line, on the attacking half of the team with the ball, is the reference point, not midfield

III. III. PLAYING FORMAT, DIVISIONS and FLIGHTS

A. Playing Format

1. U9 & U10 | 7v7
2. U11 & U12 | 9v9
3. U13 & U14 | 11v11

B. Divisions: The District Cup will make available multiple flights in each age group and gender. The flights will distinguish themselves between teams and their developmental stages.
   1. 4-team division – Each team plays a round robin.
      a) Top 2 teams based on points will play in the final.
   2. ~~5-team division – Each team plays a round robin.~~
      a) ~~First and second place determined on points. No playoff for the championship game.~~ See Amendment II at top.
   3. 6-team division – Two flights of 3 teams. Each team will play the other 2 teams in their same flight. Top team in each flight will play the 2nd placed team in the other flight in the semi-finals. Winners advance to the finals. The two third place teams in each bracket play a consolation game.
   4. 7-team division – Flight B will have four teams. Flight A will have three teams. Each flight will play two games.
      a) The teams in each flight will then be ranked from first to last based on tie-breaking procedures. Top two teams in each flight advance to the semi-finals. First place of flight A will play second place of flight B in the semi-finals. First place of Flight B will play second place of Flight A in the other semi-final. Winners advance to the final. Consolation matches: Third place of Flight A will play third place of Flight B. The winner will play for fourth place in Flight B.
   5. 8-team division – Two flights of 4 teams. Each team plays a round robin within their flight. The winners of each flight (based on points) advance to the final.
   6. 9-team division – Three flights of 3 teams. The winner of each flight plus a wild card (best second place based on pts, then tie breakers) advance to the semi-finals.
   7. Consolation matches feature 2nd best 2nd place vs 3rd best 2nd place. 3rd Place flight B plays 3rd place Flight C. The winner of this match (Winner Consolation A) plays 3rd place Flight A.

IV. **DURATION OF GAMES**

A. The duration of U9 and U10 games will be 50 minutes.
   1. 25-minute halves

B. The duration of U11 and U12 games will be 50 minutes
   1. 25-minute halves

C. The duration of U13 and U14 games will be 60 minutes
   1. 30-minute halves

D. Halftimes will consist of 5-minute breaks

E. All games will be played with a running clock. The referee may only stop the clock for serious injuries or other serious incidents. Absent these extraordinary circumstances, the referee will terminate each half at the expiration of the allotted time with the sole exception that if a penalty kick is awarded during the allotted time, the penalty kick may be taken. The referee is the official timekeeper and therefore all decisions regarding game duration are solely at the referee's discretion and shall not be protested. Stoppage time will not be added. Under no circumstance will the game end after 75 minutes from when the scheduled start time is listed.

The referee may, at their discretion, give water breaks at the midpoint of each half if heat related issues are a concern.

V. FIELD AND GAME EQUIPMENT

A. Players must wear numbers visible on the back of their uniforms and these numbers shall coincide with those listed on the team's Official Team Roster.
B. Players shall wear shin guards in accordance with FIFA laws.
C. No metal cleats will be allowed, and no jewelry will be allowed.
D. Hard casts must be covered and wrapped; soft casts are permitted. All casts (hard & soft) must be approved by the referee prior to the games start.
E. Home team will wear light or white colors. Away will wear dark or black colors.
F. Where the opposing team's uniform colors are similar, the designated home team will change colors. The designated home team is listed first on the schedule. Managers may contact the opposing team manager in advance of the game to deconflict uniform colors.
G. The District Cup will provide game balls at each field. If no game ball is present the designated home team must provide the game ball. The designated home team is responsible for supplying a game ball acceptable to the referee.
    1. A size 4 ball is used for U9 through U12 play
    2. A size 5 ball is used for U13 and U14 play
H. Players and coaches of both teams will take the same side of the field. All other supporters will take the opposite side. Only three team officials are permitted on the sidelines with their players.

VI. **REGISTRATION/CHECK-IN: FORMS and DOCUMENTATION**

A. Teams must check-in online for all District Cup events
    1. Online check-in is due by the Friday prior to the weekend of the event.
    2. Event specific emails are provided on the home page with the contact person who needs to be sent the documents
B. Teams may make changes or updates up to the Wednesday prior to the weekend of the event
C. Teams will receive confirmation by the Wednesday prior to the weekend event
D. Required Documents
    1. Official league, state, club, or event roster
        a) Players' shirt numbers MUST match the number on the team roster approved by the District Cup staff. If the numbers are not the same, the player is not allowed to play until the numbers match (i.e., change jersey).
        b) Players' numbers MUST be listed on the team roster or similar league team roster and approved by the District Cup staff.
    2. Player cards or guest pass for every player
    3. Signed portion of Team Roster stating that a team contact has completed medical forms for every player
    4. Medical forms for each player do NOT need to be sent in during check-in

VII. TEAM AND SPECTATOR FIELD POSITIONING

A. Players and Coaches will occupy one side of the field. The home team will have a choice of their bench area. Teams may have up to 3 team officials in their technical area. Coaches will remain in their technical area and be restricted to the area, 5 yards from the center line to the top of the penalty area on their side of the field. Coaches may enter the field of play only upon

approval of the referee.

B. Spectators will occupy the side of the field opposite the player's bench area. Home and visiting spectators shall occupy areas opposite their team benches. Spectators shall remain in the area between the 18-yard lines (penalty areas).

C. No spectators will be to sit/stand in the immediate areas behind the goal lines with the exception of official event photographers.

VIII. PROTESTS & DISPUTES

A. There will be no protests allowed.

B. All disputes for non-referee decisions are submitted thru the Site Coordinator in writing to the District Cup Committee (consisting of the District Cup Director, and other District Cup staff) at the field registration tent for approval by the end of the day that the dispute occurred. All decisions by the District Cup Committee are final and may not be appealed.

C. No protests & disputes for referee decisions are allowed; decisions by referees may not be appealed.

IX. SUBSTITUTIONS

A. Substitution Times:

1. Unlimited substitutions may be made at any dead ball at the full discretion of the referee. Players must be at midfield prior to the ball going out of play. In the case of injuries or yellow cards, teams may go one for one substitution with players not already at the center line.

X. GAME AND SCORE REPORTING

A. Team managers from both teams must provide a printed game card to the referee prior to the game. Game cards can be found on your GotSoccer team account. Instructions link.

B. Referees and Field Marshals will also provide complete and accurate information on the teams' players/officials receiving yellow/red cards during the game including their full name and shirt number, if applicable.

C. Referees will report game scores online following the procedures provided to them by the District Cup Referee Assignor. Game scores should be reported as promptly as possible. Online reporting applies to game scores only.

XI. **CONDUCT**

A. Players, coaches, and spectators are expected to conduct themselves within the spirit of the LAW as well as the letter of the LAW. Displays of temper or dissent are cause for ejection from the game and the surrounding field area. Repeated violations may result in the suspension of the team from the tournament as decided by the District Cup Director of Tournaments.

1. Team officials are responsible for the behavior of the spectators. Team officials can be disciplined by the referee for failure to control their spectators. The competition authority has the ability to ban a spectator, forfeit a match, or expel a team from the competition for violations or abuse of a referee or the referee crew.
2. The competition authority has the ability to ban a spectator or expel a team from the competition for abuse or harassment of a tournament official, DCSC employee, or person(s) acting on the behalf of the competition authority executing administrative or operational tasks in support of the District Cup to include but not limited to; tournament volunteers, field marshals, operations team members, and administrators.

B. Players, coaches, fans, and team officials ejected from a game by the referee shall be

ineligible for the next scheduled game.

C. A coach or authorized team official who commits a cautionable or sending-off offense under Law 12 shall be shown a yellow or red card, as appropriate, by the referee.
D. Accumulated yellow cards, over multiple games, resulting in player suspension is not in effect for District Cup events
E. Artificial noise making devices are prohibited.
F. Smoking, alcoholic beverages, and verbal abuse of anyone are not permitted at any of the field sites.

XII. **SEMI-FINAL AND CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES**

A. All age groups will have group stage games with teams advancing to a playoff format with a championship game
B. Tie Breaker (in order, between two teams)
    1. Head-to-head competition
    2. Most wins
    3. Goals against (least goals allowed)
    4. Goal differential (Max of 5 counted per game)
    5. Most shutouts
    6. Coin Flip (recorded or in person with both teams)
    7. 2 team coin flip. Each team is designated with either 'heads or 'tails'. Team advancing is the team whose 'heads' or 'tails' lands facing up.
C. Tie Breaker (in order, between three teams)
    1. Most wins
    2. Goals against (least goals allowed)
    3. Goal differential (max 5 per game)
    4. Most shutouts
    5. Coin Flip (recorded or in person with both teams)
    6. 3 team coin flip. Each team flips once. Advancing team is 'odd' team. For example (Team A = Heads, Team B = heads, Team C = tails) Team C advances. Reflip if all teams land on the same side.
D. If a second team is needed for advancement, we move immediately to 2 team coin flip with the remaining two teams. Each team is designated with either 'heads or 'tails'. Team advancing is the team whose 'heads' or 'tails' lands facing up.
E. Overtime (Playoff and Championship Only)
    1. If tied after regulation
        a) FIFA penalty kicks from the mark
        b) Referee chooses the goal
        c) Coin toss decides who will take the first kick
        d) Best of 5, if still tied, continue with sudden victory
        e) All players are eligible to shoot
        f) All eligible players must shoot before a player may take a second shot
        g) Teams must match the number of eligible players for the team with the fewest eligible players

XIII. **FAILURE TO SHOW AND FORFEITS**

A. A team shall be allowed a ten (10) minute grace period after the scheduled kickoff time before the match is considered a “no show” and that team forfeits its game. A minimum of

number of players is required to start the game and avoid a forfeit:

1. Six (6) players constitute a team at the U9 and U10 age group
2. Seven (7) players constitute a team at the U11 and U12 age group
3. Eight (8) players constitute a team at the U13 and U14 age group

B. The District Cup site coordinator must get final approval from the District Cup Director or a representative at the Command Center before marking a team as forfeiting due to tardiness. Exceptions to this rule are at the discretion of the District Cup Director.

C. Failure to produce approved rosters at requested times results in a forfeit.

D. Forfeited games will result in a 5-0 score-line.

E. The team forfeiting will not be eligible to advance to the playoff rounds.

F. Playing a "red-carded player" (a player receiving either a red card or two yellow cards in one game) in the game following the receipt of a red card is grounds for team dismissal.

XIV. **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

A. In the event of inclement weather, the District Cup Director or official representative(s) will have the authority to:

1. Relocate or reschedule any game(s);
2. Change the duration of any game(s);
3. Cancel any game(s);
4. Consider any game terminated by District Cup officials after one half of play official at of the time of termination

XV. **GENERAL**

A. The District Cup will do its best to schedule three (3) games for each team. However, at the District Cup Director's discretion, the number of games may be reduced in which case the District Cup is not liable for any expenses and no refunds for the District Cup application fees will be given.

B. Under no circumstances whatsoever will the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association, DC Soccer Club, the Tournament Committee, or any of their official representatives be responsible for any expenses (including the tournament registration fee) incurred by any team. This includes a situation whereby the event or any game(s) is canceled in whole or part.

XVI. REFEREES

A. For U9-U11 all games will have at least one (1) referee assigned for each game B. For U12-U14 games, our goal is to provide three (3) referees for each game C. For U11 - U14 playoff games, our goal is to provide three (3) referees for each game

B. The tournament referee assignor will be in charge of placing referees in appropriate environments.

XVII. **FIELD MARSHAL'S**

A. A. An event Field Marshall will be present at each field location.

XVIII. **TEAMS WITHDRAWING AND REFUND POLICY**

A. Once a team is accepted and if the team later withdraws, the entry fee is forfeited.

XIX. **CANCELLATION POLICY**

A. If the tournament is canceled due to weather related issues out of the tournament committee's control, a partial refund may be given but is not guaranteed. If the tournament is insured with event cancellation insurance, The cost of the insurance will be deducted from a team's entry fee refund. Refunds for canceled events which are

B. insured are subject to approval of the insurance claim by the insurance underwriters and is not guaranteed.

XX. **EASTERN REGION POLICY REGARDING APPLICATION TO HOST A TOURNAMENT**

A. Region I has established the following policy concerning permission to travel when attending US Youth Soccer sanctioned tournaments in Region I. The purpose of this policy is to make it as simple as possible for the US Youth Soccer Region I teams to travel to tournaments within Region I. The new policy states that any US Youth Soccer State Association teams within Region I that are accepted into a tournament in Region I, do not need permission to travel papers. Permission to Travel is not required in friendly games within Region I.

"Team officials are responsible for the behavior of the spectators. Team officials can be disciplined by the referee for failure to control their spectators. The competition authority has the ability to ban a spectator, forfeit a match, or expel a team from the competition for violations or abuse of a referee or the referee crew."

Amendment 11/30/2025 - **6-Team Division Format (Revised for 2026 District Cup)**
3. 6-team division – One flight. Top 2 teams after everyone plays 3 games will play in a final.

Amendment 11/30/2025 **3-Team Division Format (2025 District Cup)**
X. 3-team division – All three teams will play each other in a round-robin format on Day 1 (two games per team). Day 2 will determine placement as follows:

a) The **1st place team** after Day 1 earns a **bye to the Final**.
b) The **2nd place team** plays the **3rd place team** in a **Semi-Final**.
c) The **winner of the Semi-Final** advances to play the **1st place team** in the **Final**

AMENDMENT I 10/30/2024 - Increase in allowable registered players - Increased team and player registration limits in Section IA1-3. Teams may register additional players to their tournament roster and must adhere to the limits on dressing players per each game.

AMENDMENT II 11/15/2024 - 5-Team Format - Standardized 5-Team format to a 2 group game, knockout playoffs to guarantee three games, reduce intra-club matches, and increase number of trophy eligible teams.