



Game Day Referee Protocol

3rd & 4th Grade Divisions

Games in the 3rd- and 4th-grade divisions are typically assigned one Center Referee. Because additional Assistant Referees may not be assigned to these games, we want coaches to know exactly what to do if the assigned referee does not arrive at game time.

Before the Game

Please arrive early enough to have your team ready to play at the scheduled start time.

If an assigned referee is present, the game should proceed normally under the referee's direction.

If Your Referee Has Not Arrived

1. Check with the opposing coach.

Confirm that neither coach has seen or spoken with the assigned referee. The referee may be finishing another game nearby or arriving from another field.

2. Allow a 10-minute grace period.

Please do not immediately assume the referee is a no-show. Give the assigned referee approximately 10 minutes after the scheduled start time to arrive while both teams remain ready to play.

Coaches should use this grace period to begin discussing a backup officiating plan so the game can begin promptly if the assigned referee does not arrive.

3. If the referee has still not arrived, proceed with a substitute official.

Our priority is to allow the kids to play whenever reasonably possible.

The two head coaches should mutually agree on an adult to officiate the game. This may be a coach, assistant coach, or willing parent who is comfortable serving in that role.

Whenever possible, using **one substitute official** for the game is preferred. A dual-referee system can be difficult to manage in soccer, particularly at this age, because possession and areas of responsibility change frequently.

If both head coaches prefer, they may also agree to share the responsibility by having one adult officiate the first half and another officiate the second half.

The substitute official should:

- Remain neutral and fair to both teams
- Make player safety the highest priority
- Enforce the basic Laws of the Game and applicable Mudsock division rules
- Focus on keeping the game moving rather than minor or highly technical infractions
- Have the cooperation and support of both coaching staffs

The goal is not to create a perfect officiating environment. The priority is to keep the kids safe, keep the game fair, and keep the game flowing.

Respect for Substitute Officials

Any adult who steps in to officiate is doing so voluntarily so the players can have their game.

The substitute official must be treated with the same respect expected for an assigned referee.

Abuse, intimidation, harassment, or inappropriate behavior toward a substitute official will not be tolerated and may be addressed under the same referee-abuse standards and policies applicable to assigned referees.

Coaches are responsible for helping set the tone for their players and spectators.

If the Coaches Cannot Agree on a Substitute

If the assigned referee has not arrived and the two head coaches cannot agree on an individual to officiate, the coaches should continue working together to identify a reasonable solution that allows the game to be played.

The expectation is that every reasonable effort will be made to play the game rather than cancel solely because an assigned referee is unavailable.

If the Assigned Referee Arrives Late

If a substitute official has already started the game and the assigned referee subsequently arrives, the assigned referee should take over the match at the next appropriate stoppage.

Score Reporting — Required After Every Game

After every game, one coach should email the final score to:

Brian Lindvahl

Referee Operations Coordinator

refs@mudsockyouthsoccer.org

Please include:

- Division
- Both team names
- Game date and scheduled time
- Final score

To avoid duplicate reporting, the two head coaches can simply confirm after the game which coach will submit the score.

Important

Please do not cancel a game or declare a forfeit simply because the assigned referee is not present.

After the 10-minute grace period, coaches should make every reasonable effort to use a substitute official and allow the players to have their game.

We know referee availability can occasionally create unexpected game-day situations. Having a consistent process helps us keep games running while giving coaches a clear plan and keeping the focus where it belongs: **player safety, sportsmanship, and giving the kids an opportunity to play.**