

# Competition & Training Handbook, 2023

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## 1. Rugby Illinois

This Handbook was created to provide up-to-date information on the policies and regulations that govern youth rugby training and competition in Illinois. Rugby Illinois is required to follow State of Illinois, World Rugby and USA Rugby Youth & High School regulations and guidelines, and where applicable has added/clarified areas based on our local needs.

The current version of this Handbook will be maintained in digital form on the Rugby Illinois website free of charge at all times.

It is the goal of Rugby Illinois that players, coaches, referees, administrators and parents will use this handbook as a resource to foster the continued development of children as players and as members of their communities through the Rugby Illinois ethos of Respect, Integrity & Community:

- **Respect** for all, regardless of differences
- **Integrity** in all interactions
- **Community** and cooperation to further the sport

The information contained in this document is derived from:

- State of Illinois statutes
- World Rugby guidelines and regulations
- USA Rugby and USA Youth and High School Rugby guidelines and regulations
- The By Laws of Rugby Illinois
- Guidelines and regulations created by the RIL Competition Committee and Executive Committee in accordance with the authorities defined in the by-laws of Rugby Illinois

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- Agreement with the CARFU Referee Society
- Input from the Member Coaches, Admins & Team Representatives

Throughout this document, abbreviations have been used for ease of reading. Some common ones are: WR World Rugby, USAYHR USA Youth & High School Rugby and RIL Rugby Illinois. Age bands such as U19 refers to age 18 and younger, U17 is age 16 and younger, etc.

Keep in mind that the many important links to further resources found throughout this document cannot work for you if this document is printed. Should you choose to create a “hard copy” however, the links have been included in their entirety for your reference.

## 1.1. World Rugby Governance

As an affiliate of World Rugby, Rugby Illinois and its members shall abide by all World Rugby guidelines, regulations, Laws of the Game as well as its Code of Conduct.

The World Rugby Code of Conduct may be viewed at

<https://www.world.rugby/organisation/governance/regulations/reg-18#APPENDIX1CODEOFCONDUCT>

Laws of the Game may be viewed at <https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/home>

## 1.2. USA Rugby / USA Youth & High School Rugby

As an affiliate of USA Rugby / USA Youth & High School Rugby, Rugby Illinois and its members shall abide by all USA Rugby and USA Youth & High School Rugby guidelines & regulations and USAR Code of Conduct.

USA Rugby resources are available here <https://usa.rugby>

USA Youth & High School resources are available here <https://usayhsrugby.org>

## 1.3. Rugby Illinois Diversity Statement

Rugby Illinois serves a diverse membership of players, coaches, admins, and referees as well as parents and fans and is committed to fostering and creating a rugby culture based on the Rugby Illinois ethos of Respect, Integrity and Community. Everyone has the right to inclusion and mutual respect, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religious beliefs, sex, age, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation.

**Rugby Illinois believes our differences make our community better and stronger, and will not tolerate discrimination, bullying or exclusion in any form.**

Rugby Illinois requires everyone involved in rugby including its leadership, coaches, admins, referees, teams/Clubs, players, parents and fans to personally demonstrate our values of Respect, Integrity and Community in all interactions. This derives from a culture of acceptance and support through each of our individual actions without prejudice to race, color, creed, national origin, religious beliefs, sex, age, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation.

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Our commitment to diversity and mutual respect is what makes the sport of rugby unique and will remain key to the growth of rugby in the USA, as it has been around the world.

## 1.3.1. Transgender Athletes

Acknowledging the challenge of policies being altered at the international level of the International Olympic Committee and World Rugby, Rugby Illinois will reinforce USA Rugby's efforts to support players, coaches, referees, administrators, and athletes regardless of gender identification or other affiliation.

Questions regarding USA Rugby's Transgender Athlete policy should be directed to the USA Rugby Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee at [diversity@usa.rugby](mailto:diversity@usa.rugby).

USA Rugby's transgender policy can be referenced here

<https://usa.rugby/transgender-policy>

## 1.4. Rugby Illinois Policies and Statements

In addition to policies outlined in the RIL By Laws, or published World Rugby, USA Rugby and/or USA Youth and High School Rugby policies, clubs are also bound by the Rugby Illinois policies outlined herein.

### 1.4.1. Kids are the Focus

Kids learning and enjoying the playing of the game of rugby is the reason that Rugby Illinois exists and all its Member Clubs and associated volunteers work so hard. With this in mind, all decisions, policies and interactions should reflect that this is a game, and all of us are here for the health, safety & enjoyment of the kids playing the game.

### 1.4.2. Resolution of Grievances

Under the Rugby Illinois by-laws, the Competition Committee will rule on member grievances related to competition or otherwise under Competition Committee jurisdiction through a hearing process established by the Chair of the Competition Committee. The decision of the Competition Committee will be binding unless appealed in compliance with RIL, USA Rugby, USA Youth and High School Rugby or World Rugby appeal procedures.

#### 1.4.2.1. Procedure for Situations Not Covered

An individual or Club may ask the Competition Committee for a hearing or ruling governing a situation related to competition or otherwise under Competition Committee jurisdiction by directing an email to the Committee Chair. The Competition Committee will then have a period of seven (7) days to complete the hearing or create a policy or it can be referred to the President and presented to the Executive Committee for resolution within fourteen (14) days.

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## 1.4.3. Rugby Illinois “Waiver” Policy

There may be situations where Rugby Illinois through the Competition Committee may elect to grant a temporary waiver to a player, Coach, Team or Club for a variance to a **Rugby Illinois policy or guideline only**.

Such temporary waivers will be deemed to expire at the end of a competitive season or on August 31 each year and it will be the responsibility of the Club, team, Coach or individual to request a new one, if necessary.

Rugby Illinois does not have the authority to provide waivers or variances for USA Rugby, USA Youth & High School Rugby or World Rugby policies; any such waiver has to come in writing from the respective governing body itself.

### 1.4.3.1. Procedure for Requesting a “Waiver”

An individual or Club may ask the Competition Committee for a waiver or variance by directing an email to the Committee Chair. The Competition Committee will then have a period of seven (7) days to respond to the request and another fourteen (14) days to issue its decision on the granting of the waiver or variance.

### 1.4.3.2. Possible “Waiver” Situations

- Player Eligibility Issues
- Team Eligibility Issues
- Age Grade Banding Issues

## 1.5. Get Involved in Rugby Illinois

Rugby Illinois is a volunteer organization and encourages representatives from each Club or team to get involved and help Grow the Game. If you would like to more information about being a part of the fun, Officers and Committee Members may be contacted directly using the contact info on the Rugby Illinois website <https://rugbyillinois.org/board-committees-and-staff/>

RIL meetings throughout the year may be closed or open to the public depending on the topic or format; contact the appropriate Committee Chair or RIL President for more information.

# 2. Player Health & Safety

Rugby Illinois believes player welfare is paramount as we work to grow the game. Coaches must help their players look beyond the passion of the moment and make decisions based on long-term player welfare.

## 2.1. Playing Surfaces

A well-tended grass pitch or safe artificial surface is the expectation for all rugby practices and matches. Turf or artificial surfaces can be used if grass is not available, however, artificial surfaces should aspire to be certified as safe for rugby.

<https://www.world.rugby/the-game/facilities-equipment/surfaces/facility-advice>

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Any known concerns about a playing surface should be addressed with the host team when the match is scheduled, and ideally not on the day of the match, and should begin with a conversation between coaches.

## 2.2. Protecting Player's Heads & HIA

Under the World Rugby Laws of the Game, for Youth or High School Rugby, even for a suspected concussion a player must be immediately and permanently removed from a game or practice. While an athletic trainer may perform a Head Injury Assessment (HIA) pitchside the mere fact that the trainer decides to do so means that the player must be removed from the match or practice regardless of the outcome of the HIA.

Rugby Illinois places player welfare and safety at the very top of our priorities. This is especially true with concussions and head injuries. Our concussion policy follows World Rugby Regulation 10, and the "5 Rs" of concussion awareness.

### 2.2.1. The 5 Rs

USA Rugby's policy requires that ALL rugby players, staff, parents, referees, volunteers, and even fans follow these five basic steps when dealing with suspected concussions:

**RECOGNIZE** - Be aware when a player's head is impacted and an athlete might have suffered a suspected concussion or is showing symptoms of concussion.

**REMOVE** - If a player shows signs of a suspected concussion before, during or after a match or training, that player must be removed from play immediately, not to return - No Exceptions.

**REFER** - Once removed from play, the player needs to be evaluated by a medical physician who has training in concussion evaluation and management. A player must do this before returning to play rugby in any form.

**RECOVER** - Full recovery from the concussion is required before return to play is authorized. This includes being *symptom-free*. Rest and some specific treatment options are critical for the health of the injured participant.

**RETURN** - In order for safe return to play in rugby, the athlete must be symptom-free and cleared in writing by a qualified healthcare professional who is trained in evaluating and treating concussions. The athlete must also complete the GRTP (Graduated Return to Play) protocol.

Links to the current WR and USAYHR policies below may be updated from time to time so it is recommended that Coaches and Admins check the current policies before each season: USAR policy <https://usa.rugby/concussion>

World Rugby Policy

<https://www.world.rugby//the-game/player-welfare/medical/concussion/concussion-guidelines>

### 2.2.1. Zero Tolerance for Ignoring Player Safety

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Player safety always comes before any other consideration, and any Coach, Admin or other Team member who ignores, evades or otherwise contravenes the World Rugby, USA Rugby or Rugby Illinois policies on player welfare will be immediately suspended from all rugby activities until such time as the Disciplinary Committee has conducted an investigation and reported their findings to the Competition Committee, and any further sanctions warranted have been determined.

## 2.3. Player Nutrition

Rugby is a high-energy activity and places significant demands on player's bodies and metabolism. Coaches and Admins should encourage players to eat and drink appropriately before, during and after rugby activity, practices and matches.

World Rugby has resources to help Coaches and players understand the importance of proper nutrition and hydration including Guidelines for Energy Intake for pre-, during, and post-rugby activities as well as Recovery here

<https://passport.world.rugby/conditioning-for-rugby/advanced-conditioning-for-rugby-pre-level-2/player-profile/lifestyle-factors/nutrition/>

## 3. Info for Parents & Players

### 3.1. Player Registration

All players must complete registration with USA Rugby through the RugbyXplorer portal BEFORE participating in any rugby **training or matches**. Eighteen (18) year old players at the time of registration can complete and sign all the necessary documents. Players under eighteen (18) must have the signatures and approval of their legal guardian.

<https://rugbyillinois.org/register/>

All high school players will be eighteen (18) years of age or less on 1 September of the academic year in question.

Students in their fifth (5th) year of high school are not eligible to play for a Rugby Illinois Member club. Players must be within four (4) years of the moment the player first enrolled in ninth (9th) grade, regardless of when that player started playing rugby or had the ability to start playing rugby.

Further, the player in a high school division must be enrolled in high school at some point in time during the academic year of the season being considered. Youth players must be enrolled in their respective K-8 school and must compete only in an age-appropriate division (U15 or below).

Under USAYHR regulations, there are no exceptions to the above.

### 3.2. Basic Rugby Etiquette

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Rugby has a unique culture that underlines the values of honor and respect for opponents, teammates, coaches and referees. In rugby, the referee is respected, even if you do not agree with their decisions; opponents are fought with a passion but treated with respect; fans cheer good rugby and are respectful of the opposing team; coaches prepare the team as best they can, and then respect the players on-field decisions and let them play the game.

Everyone that is involved with youth rugby in Rugby Illinois is an ambassador of the game and is expected to honor the game's values and culture.

It is the responsibility of every Rugby Illinois Member Club to actively promote the core values of Rugby to its athletes and fans, and it is their duty to take immediate and decisive action if club members or supporters are not upholding these sacred values.

## **3.2.1. Respect for the Referee & Opposition**

Referees, Coaches and players should all be treated with the utmost respect at all times, regardless of match circumstances or any errors made. Yelling or shouting an opinion at any referee, coach or player is not acceptable. Rugby Illinois has a Zero Tolerance policy regarding disrespectful actions or abuse of any referee, player, Coach or supporter.

## **3.2.2. The Post-Match Social**

Players and their families should always make time for the post-match social which is an important part of the traditions and culture of rugby. It is the first step in a player's physical recovery and a way of paying respect to your on-field opponents, as well as the "Home" team who undertook quite a bit of work to manage all the details necessary to host a match. A basic post-match social to be provided by the host is the expectation after every match.

## **3.2.3. Respect for Grounds**

As a general rule, spectators should avoid walking on the pitch until after all matches are completed, and should make sure to leave the grounds undamaged and free from litter when they leave. Again, it is about respect.

## **3.3. Rugby 101**

<https://usa.rugby/rugby101>

Rugby Union or Rugby Fifteens is played with 15 players on each side of the ball who compete for two halves with a short break between to advance the ball past their opponents' side of the pitch (field) and touch it to the ground for a try (score) worth 5 points. After each try, the scoring team is allowed an opportunity to kick the ball through the posts for a conversion, an additional 2 points. Certain penalties also earn the non-offending team a choice of a penalty kick through the posts, worth 3 points if made. At the conclusion of the match, the team with the most points wins.

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Participants may only pass the ball backwards or sideways with no blocking allowed. Play is continuous with immediate transitions from attacking to defense. Kicking or carrying the ball are the only ways to move the ball forward.

Rugby fifteens was an Olympic sport in the early 1900s where the U.S. men won gold medals in 1920 and 1924. The Rugby World Cup is now the main pinnacle event of the sport -- taking place every four years -- and also serves as the third-largest single-sporting event in the world.

Rugby Sevens is a current Olympic sport, making its first appearance in the Olympic Games Rio 2016. Sevens is played with 7 players on each side of the ball who compete for 14-minutes (two 7-minute halves) in tournaments with up to three matches per competition day. The first day typically consists of pool rounds after which a team's performance qualifies them for the Championship track or Challenge track. The Championship track typically awards the top finishes of the tournament including first, second and third place. The Challenge track consists of consolation rounds. Teams for either track must continue to play through the tournament to earn their final placing.

## COMMONLY USED RUGBY TERMS:

**TRY (5 points)** - The main objective of the game, to touch the ball down to the ground with pressure in the opponent's in-goal area (tryzone).

**CONVERSION (2 points)** - A kick offered to the scoring team immediately after a try is scored. Conversions must be kicked in line with where a try was scored. In rugby sevens, players may not place the ball on a tee and must kick the conversion using a drop-kick (kicking the ball as it bounces).

**PENALTY (3 points)** - A kick awarded to a non-offending team when their opposition commits an infraction.

**DROP GOAL (3 points)** - A kick taken by an attacking team during open play that goes through the uprights.

**SCRUM** - A means of restarting play after an infringement. Each team's eight forwards bind together and connect with an opposing team's forwards. The ball is thrown into the middle of the tunnel and both team's hookers use their feet to try and move the ball back while also pushing the other team backwards.

**RUCK** - A ruck is when the ball is on the ground and at least one player from each team closes around it while on their feet. The ball cannot be handled in the ruck, but most find its way out through a variety of techniques.

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**TACKLE** - A tackle occurs when the ball carrier is brought to the ground and held by one or more opponents. A ball carrier must release the ball immediately following the tackle and the tackler must release the ball carrier.

**TOUCHLINE** - When the ball moves outside the field of play

**50/22**- When the ball is kicked to touch during open play from inside a teams own half (50) and lands inside the opponents 22 before going into touch. The kicking team retains possession at the ensuing lineout.

**LINEOUT** - A means of restarting play after the ball falls out of the field of play.. Forwards assemble in a line on each side of the tunnel where one team throws the ball straight in the middle. Each team uses various formations to lift players up, retrieve the ball and put it back in play.

**MAUL** - When the ball carrier is held by one or more teammates and/or opponents who are on their feet.

**TRYLINE** - The goal line the separates the area where a try may be scored and the remaining field of play

**SIN BIN** - Where a player goes when receiving a yellow card and being removed from the playing area for 10 minutes (fifteens) or two minutes (sevens) for Foul Play or other serious infringements.

**FOUL PLAY** - Anything a player does within the Playing Enclosure that is deemed by the Referee to be against the Laws and not in the spirit of the game. A penalty may be awarded to the non-offending team and depending on the level of Foul Play, a player may be sanctioned with a Yellow or Red card. This determination is adjudicated by and is at the sole discretion of the Referee.

## 4. Info for Coaches & Admins

### 4.1. Coach & Admin Registration

All coaches, Club Administrators and any other adult that will be interacting with the youth players in any capacity must complete registration including SafeSport, a background check and Rugby's Safety Basics and all USA Rugby modules through the RugbyXplorer portal BEFORE participating in ANY rugby activity, training or matches. Also required for parents acting as adult drivers, overnight chaperones and Club medical trainers.

#### 4.1.1. Code of Conduct

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As part of the registration process, all Coaches, Admins and any other adults working with a RIL Member organization must sign the Code of Conduct when they register with USAYHR on an annual basis.

<https://rugbyillinois.org/code-of-conduct/>

## 4.1.2. SafeSport

As part of the registration process, all Coaches and Club Administrators must also complete all modules of the SafeSport program before their registrations will be considered complete.

## 4.1.3. Background Check

As part of the registration process, all Coaches, Admins and any other adults working with a RIL Member organization must be current on a biannual background check when they register with USAYHR on an annual basis.

## 4.1.4 Rugby Safety Basics

As part of the registration process, all Coaches must complete the Ruby's SAfety Basics module.

## 4.1.5 Parent Helpers or Volunteers at Official Club Events

Any parent or volunteer who are helping while in the presence of a USA Rugby registered Coach or Admin is encouraged to but not required to complete the USAYHR registration beforehand.

## 4.2. WR Level 1 Coach (Legacy USAR 200)

ALL persons wishing to participate as a coach or help with coaching at practice or at games beyond the Rookie Rugby level MUST obtain a WR Level 1 Coach Certification (USAR Legacy Level 200) without exception.

### 4.2.1 Required Items for Certification

- USA Rugby's Membership system requires that you are compliant with the US Center for SafeSport's requirements.
- You will only be qualified following your attendance at the course AND following the completion of the World Rugby Passport online education modules.
  - You will upload your completion certificates directly into the learning center by logging in through RugbyXplorer.
  - This is each participant's responsibility. Please know that your educator can not upload the certificates for you.
- Registering as a coach or referee will also trigger a background check.

### 4.2.2 WR Level 2 Coach (USAR Legacy 300)

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It is recommended by Rugby Illinois that each Club have at least 1 WR L2 certified coach as part of their coaching staff.

## 4.3. USAYHS Varsity Initiative

### 4.3.1. Varsity Initiative Purpose & Process

USA Youth and High School Rugby and USA Rugby have established a membership tier for single school programs that have adopted rugby as a school sponsored sport. This tier of membership is designed to make it easier and more effective for single school programs to add a rugby team(s) to their school's athletic department. Most importantly, this tier of membership allows for these teams to play traditional rugby club programs without conflict of insurance and liabilities.

### 4.3.2. Varsity Initiative Application Process

Teams interested in the Program should contact the RIL President via email and complete the USAYHS form available here <https://www.usayhs.rugby/high-school-rugby>

USAY&HS will process the application and approve teams for the program.

## 4.4. Minimum Standards for New Clubs

New Clubs should submit their application for Membership to the EC via email for review, evaluation and response no less than 10 weeks before any expected participation in competition.

Rugby Illinois recognizes that there is not a one-size fits all approach to forming a new Club, and will work closely with the Club to assist in any way possible, however the following minimum requirements must be met:

- Membership in good standing as defined in RIL bylaws
- Registered roster of at least 15 players, Coach & Administrator
- Secured field space, either dedicated or rentable

## 4.5. Separation of Age Grades & Genders

USAYHS mandates a complete separation of certain Age Grades & Genders at practices, training and matches. Concurrent training sessions or matches involving different Age Grades & Genders may need to be separated geographically with unused space between groups for safety. Failing to do so where required voids the CIPP and liability protection of ALL PLAYERS, ADMINS AND COACHES present, and will open the Admins, Coaches and Club or Team organization up to personal and organizational liability issues should an injury occur.

### 4.5.1. Rookie Rugby Players

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Rookie Rugby or youth flag, tag or touch players of any gender aged 10 and under may practice and compete together; however, they are not to train with or compete against Youth, High School or adult club players under any circumstances.

### 4.5.2. Youth Tackle Players

Youth tackle players aged 11 and 12, or 13 and 14, and 10 or 12, respectively, with a waiver, of any gender may practice and compete together in their appropriate age band; however, they are not to train with or compete against other players in other youth age bands, high school or adult club players under any circumstances.

### 4.5.3. High School Players

High school players aged 15 through 18 may only practice and compete against their specified team gender designation. Once a player chooses to play for either gender specific team, that choice will be maintained for their entire high school playing career and may not be changed. High school players are not to train with or compete against rookie, or adult club players under any circumstances.

### 4.5.4. Matriculating to Club Rugby

High school players who turn 19 years of age may elect to play adult club rugby *instead* of high school rugby; once they do so, they may not return to high school rugby and are prohibited from practices, training with or competing against high school players under any circumstances. High School players under 19, except with a very rare exception, may not play adult rugby.

High school players wishing to matriculate to club rugby need to first contact the Compliance Officer and have their USAYHR registration transferred to the adult club team of their choice. This transfer must be completed before engaging in any practice, training or competitions against adult club players and for 19 year olds could take up to ten days to complete, and 18 year olds considerably longer, so plan accordingly.

### 4.5.5. Organizations with Adult Club Teams

Organizations with Adult Club teams have a responsibility to only allow their HS players to train with, practice and compete in their appropriate age grades. Any Organization that allows HS players to practice, train with or compete against Adult Club players will:

- Void the CIPP & liability protection of all players, admins and coaches present
- Be immediately suspended from all rugby activities until such time as the Disciplinary Committee has conducted an investigation and reported their findings to the Competition Committee, and sanctions have been determined

## 4.6. “Good Standing” Within RIL

Clubs are required to maintain “Good Standing” as defined in Section 3.3 of the RIL Bylaws and compete in rugby programming within the Rugby Illinois community.

## 4.7. Referee Assignments

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All matches between RIL Member clubs will be managed and adjudicated by an assigned USA Rugby certified referee. All league (non-friendly) matches must be officiated by a referee assigned by a USA Rugby member local rugby organization such as CARFU Referee Society. The designated "Home" team will be responsible for supplying the referee and/or assigning body with the correct date, time, location, team names, jersey colors and any approved Division variations for the match, and will compensate the referee.

## 4.8. Trainer Assignments

All matches between RIL Member clubs will be managed by an assigned accredited & licensed athletic trainer. The designated "Home" team will be responsible for supplying the trainer and/or assigning body with the correct date, time and location for the match, as well as any ice or supplies the medical trainer may have requested in advance and will compensate the trainer at the rate agreed upon when scheduling the game.

Recognizing that some Clubs or teams may wish to make arrangements with other certified medical professionals within their community to provide medical coverage for their games, the following medical professionals may be used, provided they have current Illinois certification which includes a) a background check for working with children or b) have completed the USAR Coach or Admin registration process including the background check:

- Medical doctor
- Chiropractor
- Registered nurse
- Emergency Medical Technician

### 4.8.1. Chiropractor Limitations

Under Illinois State Statute a Licensed Chiropractor may not clear a player from a suspected head injury and return them to play.

## 4.9. Hosting Responsibilities

Recognizing that both teams invest quite a bit when they commit to play a match, the visiting team can expect the host team will make all the necessary preparations as per WR & USAYHR guidelines, and as outlined above by RIL prior to the agreed and scheduled match time. Home teams will also host a basic post-match social to strengthen the rugby community.

Failure of the home team to provide a referee, trainer and safe and properly lined and roped field with a technical zone and spectators on the opposite side of the field from players may result in the match being unable to be completed on account of the Host team, therefore an Unplayed Forfeit for the Host in the standings.

### 4.9.1. Technical Zones

Hosting teams are expected to follow World Rugby Law 1 for setting up the playing area.

<https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/law/1>

## 4.10. Advertising & Sponsors

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## 4.10.1. Age-Restricted Items

As a youth rugby organization, no member club, team or individual will be permitted to advertise or promote age-restricted items including but not limited to alcohol, firearms, tobacco, cannabis or other adult material by posting a name or logo on Club/team or Coach garments, uniforms, balls, printed material or electronic media that includes any reference to the above including but not limited to such terms as:

- Bar
- Tavern
- Pub
- Dispensary
- Firearms
- Gun Ranges

## 4.10.2. Youth Teams Associated with Adult Clubs

A youth Club/team associated with an adult Club is governed by the RIL Advertising policy, however the associated adult Club may promote an age-restricted sponsor on their website landing page only. Youth players will not be permitted to play in adult Club kit or uniforms promoting age-restricted items.

## 5. Rugby Illinois Programming Overview

### 5.0.1. Rookie Rugby (Developmental)

Rookie Rugby programming will be scheduled at every Spring and Fall Youth festival as well as the State Championship festival.

### 5.0.2. Spring Youth 15s (Tackle)

Youth teams compete each Spring in six Festivals hosted by Clubs and will be held each Sunday during the last two weeks in April and first four of May (except for Mother's Day which will be held on the Saturday) culminating in a Championship Festival held in conjunction with the HS Boys and Girls Championships.

The first Festival each year will be used as a Team Seeding mechanism to help the following festivals remain safe & competitive.

### 5.0.3. Spring HS Girls & Boys 15s

The High School Spring Fifteens season will be played each March through May and culminate in a State Championship Festival at a date and location determined by the Competition Committee and announced by the Winter AGM.

HS Clubs will self-select which Division they wish to compete in for Spring 15s and may enter more than one Division based on player numbers.

### 5.0.4. Youth & HS 7s

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The Rugby Illinois State Youth & HS 7s Championships competition will be played in July. Teams meeting the criteria of the Competition Committee will be eligible to compete in the State Championships at a date and location determined by the Competition Committee and announced by March 1.

## 5.0.5. Fall Rugby Festivals

Player, Coach, Club and Referee development as well as community values education will be the focus of Rugby Illinois programming each Fall and Winter.

Five Fall Festivals will be organized by the Competition Committee and held the last two weekends of September and the first three of October:

- Motley or Single team play
- Youth and HS Girls & Boys HS Brackets
- Any registered player can play
  - HS U17 and varsity brackets
- High emphasis on Developmental Goals - no scores or standings
- Social with POM after each match

## 5.1. Spring 15s Youth & Rookie Divisions

### 5.1.1. Youth U15 Division 1

- The top-performing teams in the pre-season Seeding Festival.
- Participation is Co-ed unless there is an organized and separate Girls U15 Seniors Division(s)

### 5.1.2. Youth U15 Division 2

- The lower-performing teams in the pre-season Seeding Festival.
- Participation is Co-ed unless there is an organized and separate Girls U15 Seniors Division(s)
- A Girls U15 Seniors competition may be assembled with teams comprised of female players only
- If no Girls U15 Division is coordinated, then Girls may participate in Co-ed Seniors U15 rugby as described above with requisite compliance requirements met.

### 5.1.3. Youth U13 Division 1

- The top-performing teams in the pre-season Seeding Festival.
- Participation is Co-ed

### 5.1.4. Youth U13 Division 2

- The lower-performing teams in the pre-season Seeding Festival.
- Participation is Co-ed

### 5.1.5. Rookie Rugby (Flag, Touch or Tag)

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- Open to all Rookie and Youth players U15 and below
- All participation is Co-ed

## 5.2. Spring 15s Competitive HS Divisions

Clubs will compete in one of the following Divisions based on their program's ability to fulfill the obligations of the Division. Clubs may enter teams in multiple divisions as long as they fulfill all the obligations of each division.

Boys' Coaches of Spring 15s Competitive HS Divisions will attend a meeting first Sunday in November each year to discuss and suggest modifications for the upcoming season to the CC.

### 5.2.1. HS Division 3

Division 3 will consist of a Frosh/Soph Division and Small Clubs Division.

#### 5.2.1.1. BOYS HS VARSITY D3 (Small Clubs Division)

- For teams that are unable to fulfill the obligations of D1 or D2.
- Combined teams are allowed see 5.2.4 for requirements.
- Teams with 15 or more eligible players to start the match. (See 5.4.1 for law variation for less than 15 players)
- D3 Small Clubs competition structure decided by number and size of team.
- If 4 or more D3 small clubs teams, Coaches and D3 Coordinator will decide structure of competition and playoffs (if desired) at Divisional Meeting following Winter AGM no later than January 15th - see below
- Any Divisional decisions in terms of structure of competition, playoffs, and game management must be documented, submitted to the CC, and shared with all Small Clubs coaches.
- Max D3 Small Clubs playoffs structure will be 8 teams, seeded by pre-season agreement.
- Less than 4 teams will play for development only, no playoffs or championship.
- Player Development Rule: When a point differential of 29 points or more is reached, the match is considered completed and teams mixed for friendly Developmental play.

#### 5.2.1.2. D3 Frosh/Soph Division

- Recommended that teams have 20 registered players
- Combined teams are allowed see 5.2.4 for requirements.
- Teams with 15 or more eligible players to start the match. (See 5.4.1 for law variation for less than 15 players)
- Teams dropping below 13 eligible players at any point prior to or in a match will trigger a Played Forfeit (see 5.2.7)
- D3 FS competition structure is decided by the number and size of teams

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- If 4 or more D3 FS teams, Coaches and D3 Coordinator will decide structure of competition and playoffs at Divisional Meeting following Winter AGM no later than Jan 15th - see below
  - Any Divisional decisions in terms of structure of competition, playoffs, and game management must be documented, submitted to the CC, and shared with all Frosh/Soph coaches.
  - Schedule will be set by Jan 31st.
  - Max D3 FS playoffs structure will be 8 teams, seeded by pre-season agreement.
  - Less than 4 teams will play for development only, no playoffs or championship
- **Developmental Festival**
    - If enough Coaches ask for it, there could also be developmental festivals and/or a 10s competition for Frosh Soph players or JV players from teams with low numbers.

### 5.2.2. BOYS HS Varsity Division 2

- Well established clubs
- Recommended minimum 25 registered players
- Though not intended for underclassmen, eligible underclassmen are not prohibited from playing D2. However, if a player is a Freshmen they are only eligible with a waiver signed by Coach and Parents and approved by the CC.
- Combined teams are allowed see 5.2.4 for requirements
- Conferences will be divided into 4-6 teams ideally
- Everyone plays their Conference opponents once with potential crossover conference matches, max 6 league matches.
- All Divisions will follow Match Points structure for league matches and playoffs found in Section 5.2.6
- Coaches and D2 Coordinator will decide the structure of competition and playoffs at the Divisional Meeting following the Winter AGM no later than January 15th.
- Any Divisional decisions in terms of structure of competition, playoffs, and game management must be documented, submitted to the CC, and shared with all D2 coaches.
- The default playoff structure will consist of quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals, unless the Division Coordinators and coach representatives agree upon an alternate format at their Divisional Meeting following the Winter AGM and notify the CC in writing.
- Division schedule will be set by January 31st.
- D2 will be required to use the RX Competition Module throughout the season.
- Players who are D2 starters (1st XV) are prohibited from playing in a lower division match in the same competition week. A competition week runs Monday through Sunday. However, D2 reserves are eligible to play in a lower division match as long as a player does not exceed 90 minutes of play in a day. A designated coach will be responsible for managing time played for eligible players.

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- After each League match, it will be the responsibility of each Coach to send a match report within 24 hours to the Competition Committee to determine the eligibility for and awarding of Match Points <https://rugbyillinois.org/match-reports/>

## 5.2.3. BOYS HS Varsity Division 1

### • Boys HS U19 Division 1 Varsity

- Well established and highly competitive clubs
- Recommended minimum of 35 upperclassmen
- Though not intended for underclassmen, eligible underclassmen are not prohibited from playing Varsity. However, Freshmen are only eligible with a waiver signed by Coach and Parents and approved by the CC.
- Clubs must field a Junior Varsity (JV) side each week
- Clubs may petition the Competition Committee (CC) for a waiver to compete in D1 without a JV side
- D1 Varsity matches shall be played with a maximum 23 player roster and 8 substitutions per World Rugby U19 Law Variations
- Conferences will be divided into 4-6 teams ideally
- Everyone plays their Conference opponents once with potential crossover conference matches, max 6 league matches
- All Divisions will follow Match Points structure for league matches and playoffs found in Section 5.2.6
- Coaches and D1 Coordinator will decide the structure of competition and playoffs at the Divisional Meeting following the Winter AGM and no later than January 15th and Division schedule will be set by January 31st
- Any Divisional decisions in terms of structure of competition, playoffs, and game management must be documented, submitted to the CC, and shared with all D1 coaches.
- The default playoff structure will consist of quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals, unless the Division Coordinators and coach representatives agree upon an alternate format at their Divisional Meeting following the Winter AGM and notify the CC in writing.

### • Boys U19 Division 1 Junior Varsity

- Second side for D1 clubs.
- Though not intended for underclassmen, eligible underclassmen are not prohibited from playing Junior Varsity. However, if a player is a Freshman they are only eligible with a waiver signed by Coach and Parents and approved by the CC.
- Follows the same competition and playoff structure of D1 Varsity.

- Clubs must have WR Level 1 certified Coaches. RIL would recommend having at least 1 WR L2 Certified Coach.
- D1 and D1 JV will be required to use the RX Competition Module throughout the season.

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- Players who are D1 Varsity starters (1st XV) are prohibited from playing in a lower division match in the same competition week. A competition week runs Monday through Sunday. However, D1 Varsity reserves are eligible to play in a lower division match as long as a player does not exceed 90 minutes of play in a day. A designated coach will be responsible for managing time played for eligible players.
- After each League match, it will be the responsibility of each Coach to send a match report within 24 hours to the Competition Committee to determine the eligibility for and awarding of Match Points
  - <https://rugbyillinois.org/match-reports/>

### 5.2.4 Combined Teams

Combined teams will follow the guidelines of USAR/USAYHS. As of 12/15/23, the current guidance provided by said organizations and their competition module recommend the smaller club's players register with the larger club. The CC would also request that the smaller club's coach register with the larger club. See: <https://help.xplorer.rugby/s/article/Combined-teams> and <https://help.xplorer.rugby/s/article/Competitions-with-combined-teams>

Combined teams need to be established before schedule completion on January 31. Division coordinators should be notified of combined teams as soon as possible for ease of scheduling. One week prior to the beginning of divisional play, no new team combinations will be allowed.

### 5.2.5 HS Gender Parity

Recognizing that Girls HS rugby faces different challenges and is growing at a different rate than Boys rugby for many reasons, Boys and Girls HS Divisions are not required to use the same structure.

The Girls Coaches and Girls Division Coordinator may at their discretion formulate a different competitive structure and submit it to the Competition Committee for discussion and approval a minimum of one week before the AGM each year.

### 5.2.6 Youth & HS Summer 7s

The 7s Competition will consist of four Festivals on four weekends in July as organized by the Competition Committee.

Girls HS, Boys HS, Youth and Rookie-non contact brackets will be available.

### 5.2.7. HS Match Points System

1. No extra time shall be played during the regular season.
2. Standings points will be awarded at the completion of each League match and posted on the RIL website.
3. The total points at the end of pool play for Div 1 and League Matches for Div 2 are used to determine playoff seeding and the Plate or Cup winners, respectively.
4. An **Unplayed Forfeit** is defined as not showing up with 13 players fit and ready to compete or otherwise contesting any official league match through a minimum of 5

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minutes into the second half with a minimum of 13 players, as scheduled by the Coordinator; unless a Played Forfeit. An Unplayed Forfeit during league play will result in disqualification from the Playoffs or Plate/Cup Competition. An Unplayed Forfeit during the Playoffs will result in a minimum of disqualification from the Playoffs the following year and possible further sanctions.

5. A **Played Forfeit** is defined as some other version of Rugby Union played with fewer than 13 players or with other modified rules for player development as agreed by team officials and submitted to the Competition Committee via joint email. Deciding to play with less than 13 players can occur either before the match or sometime during the match if either Coach believes it to be in the best interest of their player safety and development. The team initiating the request will concede the match as a loss to their opponent, but it will not result in disqualification from the Playoffs.
6. There will need to be extraordinary circumstances to deny a reasonable request to modify a match and create a Played Forfeit for the development and safety of the players. The division coordinator and Competition Committee will review any perceived gamesmanship where this provision is misused in an attempt to game the system. If concerns are found, the matter will be passed to the Discipline Committee who will consider the issue and issue sanctions, if warranted, including but not limited to, loss of standing points and disqualification from the playoffs.
7. A **No Contest** is a match that is unplayable and cannot be rescheduled as adjudicated by the Competition Committee. The match will be dropped from the schedule for both teams and their standings points prorated. Acceptable reasons would be:
  - a. Weather or other Act of God
  - b. Lack of a certified ref, trainer or playing surface through no fault of the host

### Standings points are determined as follows:

Win	4 league points
Draw	2 league points
Loss	0 league points
4 or more Tries	1 league point
Lose by 7 or fewer points	1 league point
Win by Unplayed Forfeit	5 league points
Spirit of the Game violation / Code of Conduct Compliance violation	-1 league point (deduction)
Win by Played Forfeit	5 league points
Loss (Concession) by Played Forfeit	0 league points, No bonuses awarded

## 5.3. Player Movement Between Divisions & Rosters

### 5.3.1. Player Movement

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Where a club fields sides in different playing Divisions, players that are starters (1st XV) for a club's higher Division playing side are prohibited from playing down on a lower Division playing side.

For practical purposes, RIL recognizes that players may be moved between sides from time to time based on merit of performance, internal disciplinary action, or may need to return to play from an injury via a lower Division side, or some such other reasonable criteria and these are exceptions to this policy. The prohibition on playing down is intended to prevent clubs from "stacking" lower Division sides to gain a competitive advantage which is contrary to the ethos of rugby with respect to fairness and equity and such actions are expressly prohibited.

### 5.3.2. Division Matches & Playoff Rosters

All Divisions will use the RX Competition Module to provide official and complete rosters of players for every match, including playoffs. Each club is responsible for maintaining a record of all its match day rosters until 30 days after the end of each season.

Players who are starters (1st XV) for a club's higher division are prohibited from playing in a lower division match in the same competition week. A competition week runs Monday through Sunday.

## 5.4. Law Variations

Links to current WR & USAYHS Law Variations for each age grade below may change or be updated from time to time, it is recommended that Coaches & Admins check the current Laws and Variations before each season:

WR U19 Law Variations <https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/variations/3/u19/>

WR "Game On" Law Variations <https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/variations/3/game-on>

World Rugby Laws <https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/home>

### 5.4.1. Minimum Number of HS Players to Compete

A high school team must have a minimum of 13 players in order to start a League game. If a team drops below 13 players during the course of League play for any reason, the match will result in a Played Forfeit to prevent unsafe playing conditions; teams are encouraged to lend players to create balanced teams of 15 and continue playing the remaining time as a friendly for player development.

### 5.4.2. Girls HS Age Grade Variation

Girls HS teams are permitted to play freshmen through seniors on Varsity as long as there are no JV or F/S divisions available.

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## 5.4.3. Rolling Replacements

For HS Boys D2 and D3, and HS Girls Divisions, under WR “Game On” Law Variations Section 3.34, Division Coordinators “may implement ‘rolling substitutions’ whereby players are able to return to the field of play as long as they are not injured. There are no limits on the number of interchanges.”

## 5.4.4. Requesting a Division Specific Law Variation

A Division Coordinator may request a specific seasonal Law Variation addressing a local developmental community issue be sanctioned for their upcoming competitive season. Such a request will be submitted via email to the CC for discussion & approval or amendment by the following dates:

- Feb 15 for the Spring season
- May 15 for the 7s season

CC will contact the Referee Society to work out any logistics. Once approved by email from the CC, the seasonal Law Variation will be transmitted to all teams and Coaches affected through the Division Coordinator.

Such seasonal Law Variations will be deemed to expire at the conclusion of that competitive season and it will be the responsibility of the Division Coordinator to make the request for a subsequent season, if necessary.

## 5.4.5. Additional Youth Rules Variations

- **Ball Size** -The U15 division uses size 4 rugby balls but may use size 5 rugby balls if both teams agree before the match. The U13 division uses size 4 rugby balls.
- **Pitch Size** - The U15 division plays on a full size pitch. The U13 division follows USA rugby recommendation where possible, which is a 70x35M pitch. Matches may be played inside a full-sized pitch marked with lines or cones, or they may be played sideways across a full sized pitch with the 40m and scrum 5m lines used as the sidelines and the regular lineout 5m lines used as the try-lines, with the regular sidelines as the dead ball lines.
- **Match Duration** - Youth matches are two 25-minute halves.
- **Conversions** - In the U13 division, the kicker may center the ball to kick from in front of the posts on conversion attempts.
- **Scrum** - The U15 division scrums may be contested if both sides agree prior to the match (head coaches meet with the referee). If both teams agree to contested scrums, they may only move back to uncontested scrums if there is a safety concern (i.e. a team can't ask for uncontested scrums just because they are losing possession on their own put in). The drive is limited to the front row going over the original referee's mark. The Juniors division scrums are always uncontested. Either head coach, the referee, or Rugby Illinois official may declare scrums unsafe and make the call to revert to uncontested scrums.

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- **Line Outs** - In the U15 division, teams must make the declaration to lift or not prior to the match in a pregame meeting with the head coaches and referee. If either team elects not to lift, then there is no lifting at all by that team and the throws may be contested. If a team does opt to lift on their lineouts, the lineout is uncontested, meaning that the defensive side may not also lift to contest the throw, nor may a defensive player intentionally contest the throw by jumping on his/her own or otherwise intentionally prevent the attacking side from executing a lift and catch. The throwing team may not throw quick or intentionally not throw to the lifted jumper. On a miss-throw or overthrow - play on. It will be at the referee's discretion to determine a "miss throw" vs. the defense contesting. Examples follow:  
**Example 1:** If the attacking side thrower, throws the ball directly into the chest of the 1st player in the defensive line - that player has not intentionally preventing the throwing side from executing the lift and catch and referee should allow play to continue on the basis of the attacking side having miss-thrown the ball  
**Example 2:** If the attacking side thrower makes a legal straight throw in toward the jumper and any player in the defensive line raises his/her hands (with or without jumping on his/her own) to catch the ball and thus prevents the execution of a lift and catch then the referee should warn that player and award a re-throw to the attacking side.

On subsequent violations, the referee may award a penalty kick. The defensive team may not engage the lifters or jumper until the jumper is back on the ground. Even though the lineout is not contested, the attacking side is not required to win possession (due to miss-throw) and the referee shall also enforce "not straight". Teams may not flip back and forth between lifting/not lifting during the match. A team may only switch back to no-lifting if there is a safety issue. Either head coach, the referee, or Rugby Illinois official may declare line out lifting unsafe and make the call to cease lifting by either or both teams.

In the U13 division, line-outs are contested, but there is no lifting permitted. No quick lineouts. Note that on a not-straight call to Team A on a lineout, Team B does not have the option to select scrum or line out if the scrums are uncontested. Team B must take the lineout, and in the event Team B's subsequent throw is not straight, then Team A is awarded a scrum.

## 5.5. Playoff Structure

### 5.5.1. Playoff Structure & Eligibility

The default playoff structure for any Division using a playoff structure will consist of quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals, unless the Division Coordinators and coach representatives agree upon an alternate format at the Division meeting and notify the CC in writing.

To qualify for the playoffs, a team must meet the following criteria:

- Must be in good standing with RIL
- Must have a minimum of 15 eligible players

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- Must not have an unregistered Coach or have played an unregistered player at any time within the current registration cycle
- Must not have an Unplayed Forfeit during the season

## 5.5.2. Standings Determinations & Tie-Breakers

Final standings and seedings will be determined in the following order, going down the list in the event two or more clubs have the same number of standings points at the end of the league season.

- 1) Standings Points
- 2) Number of Wins
- 3) Head to Head Record
- 4) Points Differential
- 5) Tries Differential
- 6) Points For
- 7) Tries For
- 8) Disciplinary Record
- 9) Coin Flip

## 5.5.3. Playoff Seeding

Playoff seeding will be determined by the Competition Committee based on the following:

- Met all requirements of 5.5.1 and 5.5.2
- Team Culture will also be a factor
  - Disciplinary or Competition issues for any Coach or player will be considered
  - Positive Referee Reports are the expectation.
  - Club or Team outreach activities within their community will be considered
- Matches against a suspended, sanctioned or otherwise unavailable team will be considered on a case by case basis

## 5.5.4. Overtime Protocol for Knock-out Matches

Pursuant to World Rugby Laws “after a total of 70 minutes playing time, the referee must not allow extra time to be played in the case of a drawn match in a knock-out competition.”

Therefore, if tied at full-time during the playoffs, kicks for post will decide the final outcome as follows:

- Team and kicking order selection:
  - a. The team representative (either captain or coach) will select five players who were on the field of play at the end of that match
  - b. The referee will flip a coin – the captain of the higher seeded team will call the coin
  - c. Winner of the coin flip to receive choice of goal OR order of kicks; loser of the coin flip decides the other option
- Kicking Protocol:
  - a. The five selected players will take turns to kick at goal
  - b. The order of kicking will alternate by team: Team A Kicker 1, Team B Kicker 1, Team A Kicker 2, Team B Kicker 2, etc.

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- c. All kicks will be taken at the same set of posts
- d. Kicks to be taken from any mark (left/center/right) at or behind the 22m line (i.e., kicks may not be taken from 0-22m from the end goal)
- e. Kicks may be taken from a kicking tee or as a drop-kick
- f. Each kicker will be allowed attempt one (1) kick
- g. Each kicker will receive one (1) minute to attempt a kick
- h. In the event of an injury, a player initially nominated to kick, may be replaced however his replacement must be a player who was on the field of play at the end of that match
- Scoring
  - a. The referee will record three (3) points for each successful kick.
  - b. If a kicker exceeds one minute to strike the ball, the referee will not record points for a successful kick.
  - c. If a kicker is found to be a player who was not on the field at full time, the referee will not record points for a successful kick.
- Tie-breaker Protocol
  - a. If still a tie after the set of five (5) kicks, “Sudden Victory” kicks will be taken.
  - b. The order of kicking will not change – Team A, Team B, etc.
  - c. Additional kicks will be taken alternately by each team until one team has an advantage for the same number of kicks taken, thereby winning the match.
  - d. Kicks again to be taken from any mark (left/center/right) at or behind the 22m line (i.e., kicks may not be taken from 0-22m from the end goal).
  - e. Each team (either captain or coach) may choose any of the players on the official roster for the match to kick. If official rosters were not submitted to the referee or a designated official record-keeper for the match, then each team (either captain or coach) may choose any of the players on the club’s USA Rugby (a.k.a., CIPP) age-grade roster that were dressed for the match.
  - f. Kickers may repeat (e.g., one of the original five (5) kickers may return and take all remaining kicks).
- Foul Play during penalty kicks
  - a. Players on and off the pitch are expected to engage in sportsmanlike conduct at all times during a match, including while penalty kicks are being performed.
  - b. If any player is observed by match officials to be engaged in unsportsmanlike conduct, which may include attempting to interfere with the kicker, the referee may choose to sanction, which may include a warning or a send-off (yellow or red card) and awarding an additional penalty kick to the non-offending team, pursuant to the Laws of the Game, specifically Law 10, Foul Play.
  - c. If a kicker is sent off by the referee, that kicker may not be replaced
  - d. If match officials observe further infringements after a warning, the referee may decide to award an additional penalty kick to the non-offending team for each subsequent infringement.
- The referee is the final arbiter of all disputes.
  - a. Pursuant to Law 10.4(s), all players must respect the authority of the referee. They must not dispute the referee’s decisions. Sanction: Penalty kick

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## 5.5.5 Withdrawing from Playoffs

Each team must declare its desire to be exempted from participating in the playoffs no later than two weeks (14 days) prior to the last day of the regular season as determined by the Division Coordinator. Failure to withdraw by the deadline is assumed to be a willingness to participate. Any team that fails to show for a scheduled playoff match will forfeit the match and will also be prohibited from participation in the playoffs the following season.

If a team enters the playoffs in good faith but subsequently must forfeit a playoff match due to special circumstances (such as roster depletion due to injuries), five days' notice is required. This is the only case in which an appeal may be made to the division coordinator to maintain playoff eligibility the next season, and the Competition Committee will make a ruling on a case by case basis.

If a team withdraws from the playoffs after the playoff pairings are announced, that team's first match will be declared a forfeit, and no substitute team will be entered in their place. If a team withdraws at any point before the playoff pairings are announced, even if after the 14 day deadline, the seeding will be determined based on the remaining eligible teams by applying the normal seeding and tiebreaker rules.

## 6.0 Contributors

### Handbook Recommendation Committee, Fall 2022

Janet Kean  
Aaron Sweeney  
Brigid Murphy  
Rocky Dellamano  
Steve Wascher

# Competition & Training Handbook, 2023

Clayton Miller  
Oscar Andrino  
Anh Gallagher  
Theo Gilbert, Chair

## **Competition Committee, 2022/23**

Amy McCormick  
Karen Kalicki  
Kassandra Lepe  
Eric Bangeman  
John McGurk  
Pascal O'Reilly  
Craig Air  
Tim Walsh  
Theo Gilbert, Chair

## **Competition Committee, 2023/24**

Kassandra Lepe  
Karen Kalicki  
Sal Carfagno  
Craig Air  
Douw OKelly  
Tim Walsh  
Theo Gilbert, Chair

## **Executive Committee, 2023/24**

Sean Bracken, President  
Jennifer Kelliher, Secretary  
Mike Kanzler, Treasurer  
Charles Thorndyke, VP Development  
Theo Gilbert, VP Competitions  
Tim Walsh, VP Compliance  
Dave Campos, VP Marketing

**Plus So Many Coaches, Fall 2023**

**THANK YOU ALL!!!**