



2026 Summer Season Handbook

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# Summary of Changes

Revised as of: March 21, 2025

New and changed rules and regulations for the 2026 Summer Season are as follows:

- 3.3 - *Game Days*
- 3.5 - *Playoffs*
- 4.2 - *A and B Division schedules and modified season formats*
- 6. - *Standings & Fair Play Record*
- 7.1 - *Club Registration*
- 8.4 - *Ball Size*
- 8.7.5 - *Concussion Substitute*
- 15.1 - *No-show fines*
- 15.3 - *No show fines for out-of-region games*
- 17.1 - *Promotion and Relegation Policy for Senior Divisions*

Removed (the following will no longer apply to the NSSL):

- Displayed Goal Difference Caps

Revisions (as of March 21, 2025)

- 5.2.2.2 - *Rescheduling parameters*
- 5.2.2.3 - *Rescheduling process (NSSL Rescheduling Request Form)*
- 8.1 - *Game durations for U10 and U11 age divisions*
- 8.5 - *Removal of retreat line*
- 11.4 - *Sanction (point deductions) for no-shows of out-of-region games*

Revisions (as of January 30, 2026)

- 6.6 - Removal of scores and standings at U13 divisions (and below).
- 8.9 - clarity added to age restrictions on call-up players for senior divisions

Revisions (as of April 23, 2026)

- 8.9.2 - Player pools added for U12 & U13 for player movement clarity

Other Applicable Rules & Regulations:

- [Soccer Nova Scotia Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Soccer Nova Scotia Discipline Policy](#)
- [Soccer Nova Scotia Schedule of Penalties and Sanctions](#)
- Soccer Nova Scotia Grassroots Guidelines
- IFAB Laws of the Game
- [Soccer Nova Scotia Concussion Substitution Policy](#)



# 1. Game Laws

All NSSL games are to be played under the current “FIFA Laws of the Game” document. Adaptations to these laws are contained in this document.

# 2. Soccer Nova Scotia Policies & Procedures

All matters not included in these rules and regulations shall be dealt with in accordance with the Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Operational Procedures, or any other Soccer Nova Scotia documents that govern the sport of Soccer.

[Soccer Nova Scotia Policies & Procedures](#)

# 3. League Structure

**3.1 Start Date:** Varies by division, all important dates located in the current season Important Dates Document

**3.2 End Date:** Varies by division, all important dates located in the current season Important Dates Document

**3.3 Game Days:** Each division has two primary game days and one alternate game day, all scheduled games will be scheduled on those days of the week. In extreme or special circumstances, the NSSL may, at its discretion, schedule league games on other nights of the week.

**3.4 Game Times:** Games may be scheduled to start as early as 8:00AM and end as late as 11:00PM each day, teams should expect their games to be scheduled at any time between these times on the days of the week listed for their division. Discretion on game times will be used based on the age of the division.

**3.5 Playoffs:** NSSL Playoffs will only be held for select divisions in the summer. These divisions are determined by the Soccer Nova Scotia Provincial Championship format for said division. If the NSSL division receives 4 or more provincial championship berths, the division will not have playoffs and the top 4 teams from the regular season (as determined by section 6. Standings) will qualify for Soccer Nova Scotia Provincial Championships. If the NSSL division receives fewer than 4 provincial championship berths, NSSL Playoffs will be held and the top 4 teams (as determined by section 6. Standings) will qualify for NSSL Playoffs.



## 4. Schedules

4.1 Schedules for AA and AAA divisions will be posted in their entirety for all dates field contracts have been issued.

4.2 The NSSL will determine schedule formats for A and B divisions at its discretion to provide the best competition experience possible given the circumstances of the division. These formats may include seeding games, multiple league stages, posting the entirety of the schedule or a combination of these factors

4.2.1 Any modified league structures implemented by the NSSL must be accompanied by a description of the format in an Info section with the posted league schedule.

4.3 “Black-out dates” will be accepted prior to the date specified for the division in the current season important dates document.

4.3.1 Each request for black-out date(s) will consist of no more than 5 consecutive days.

4.3.2 AAA & AA teams may request no more than 1 black-out date or date range

4.3.3 A and B teams may request no more than 2 black-out dates or date ranges

4.4 All games are to be played as scheduled. Rescheduling requests must follow the rescheduling rules set out in Section 5.

4.5 Games will be considered cancelled due to poor weather conditions if the facility where the game is being played closes due to poor weather conditions.

## 5. Rescheduling

5.1 Rescheduling a game to a different time or field on the same date.

5.1.1 The team looking to reschedule a game as noted in 5.1 must seek agreement from their opponent as well as the two teams scheduled in the slot they are looking to switch with. If received, confirmation from all 3 teams should be forwarded to the league manager.

5.2 Rescheduling a game to a different date or time outside of any other NSSL scheduled game

5.2.1 Teams looking to reschedule a game as noted in 5.2 may do so by submitting an NSSL reschedule request form no later than seven (7) days prior to the date of the game.



5.2.2 teams are responsible for securing a date, time, and location for the make-up game, this must be agreed upon by their opponent.

5.2.2.1 Rescheduling requests must be accompanied by the information noted in 5.2.2 or the game will not be rescheduled.

5.2.2.2 Rescheduling requests must be submitted by a club representative or registered member of the team staff with the approval of a club representative

5.2.2.3 Rescheduling requests must be submitted using the **NSSL rescheduling request form**

### 5.3 Rescheduling during play-offs

5.3.1 This is not permitted.

5.4 Any rescheduled game must be played, failure to complete the game will result in a fine to the team requesting to reschedule as well as the game being defaulted.

5.5 Games will be automatically rescheduled by the league in cases where;

- The game official does not appear for the match;
- The referee judges the field to be unfit for play;
- Weather factors such as an electrical storm which in the opinion of the referee, warrant not playing the game or its abandonment;
- Other unforeseen circumstances, such as an act of god.

5.5.1 The rescheduled date set by the NSSL will stand.



## 6. Standings

6.1 Point System: Three (3) Points awarded for a win, one (1) point awarded for a draw/tie, and zero (0) points awarded for a loss.

6.2 Determination of Standings: standings will be determined by the following criteria in the order listed:

6.2.1 - Most Points

6.2.2 - Head-to-Head Record (Not applicable in a 3 or more team tie)

6.2.2.1 - Match results between teams tied

6.2.2.2 - Goal Difference in games between teams tied (A max goal differential of 5 goals per match will be used)

6.2.3 - Goal Difference in all games (A max goal differential of 5 goals per match will be used)

6.2.4 - Fewest Goals Against in all games (A max goal differential of 5 goals per match will be used)

6.2.5 - Fair Play Record (the team with the better fair play point record as defined by 6.5)

6.2.6 - Coin Toss

6.3 In cases where more than 2 teams are tied, once a team is eliminated from the tie, the remaining teams shall restart the tie-breaking process beginning with 6.2.1

6.4 In cases where not all teams in the division have played an equal number of games, final standings will be calculated using Pts. % (total pts/games played)

6.4.1 In the event that a team changes divisions part way through the season, only games that took place within the division are considered in the determination of standings

6.5 Fair Play Record - teams will be deducted points from their fair play record based on misconduct committed during league play, this may result in negative fair play point totals.

6.5.1 Teams will be deducted one (1) point from their fair play record for each yellow card its players or team officials are shown

6.5.2 Teams will be deducted three (3) points from their fair play record for each red card it's players or team officials are shown



6.5.3 If a player or team official is dismissed as a result of being shown two yellow cards, three (3) points are deducted for the dismissal, none for the initial yellow card.

6.5.4 If a player or team official is dismissed having received a yellow card and a direct red card, points are deducted from their fair play record for both (1 + 3)

6.6 There will be no scores and standings kept for U13 divisions and below.

## **7. Registration**

### **7.1 Club Registration**

7.1.1 In order for clubs to register teams and players in the NSSL they must:

7.1.1.1 be registered and in good standing with Soccer Nova Scotia and their respective district association

7.1.1.2 meet the club licensing requirements as defined by Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures, Section 4.4

### **7.2 Team Registration**

Teams must be registered by the declaration date as noted in the current season's important dates document. On this date, the club's declaration form must be filled in and synced to the NSSL season structure within the Soccer Nova Scotia Registration System. A minimum of 3 team contacts must be provided and registered at this time including their full contact information (Phone number(s) and e-mail address).

### **7.3 Player Registration**

7.3.1 Teams must have their rosters set in the Soccer Nova Scotia Registration System by the roster deadline specified in the Important Dates calendar.

7.3.2 No player shall be deemed registered for participation nor shall a player compete in the NSSL unless they are registered with Soccer Nova Scotia and confirmation of their registration has been forwarded to the league within 24 hours prior to play.

7.3.3 Rosters shall become locked on July 31st. After this time no players may be added to the team's roster.

7.3.3.1 This does not apply to Skill Centre divisions.



7.3.4 To be eligible to play in the Senior AAA division the player must have turned 18 on or before December 31st of the current season.

## 7.3 Roster Sizes

7.4.1 Roster sizes for the Summer Season must fall within the min and max set out in section 18 of the [Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures](#).

7.4.2 All teams must have the minimum number of players registered to their roster no later than the date specified in the current season's important dates document.

7.4.4 Skill Center divisions must have the following roster sizes:

7.4.4.1 Skill Center roster rules can be found in the Soccer Nova Scotia Grassroots Standards

7.4.4.2 U10 & U11 Teams – minimum 10 players

7.4.4.3 U8 & U9 Teams – minimum 8 players

## 7.5 Coach and Manager Registration

7.5.1 All team coaches and managers participating in the league shall register with Soccer Nova Scotia and shall be subject to all rules and disciplinary procedures of Soccer Nova Scotia.

7.5.2 In any AAA division, a coach cannot be registered to more than one club within a division.

7.5.3 All team coaches and managers must be CPIC cleared (where applicable). No coach or manager shall sit on the bench during a game without CPIC clearance.



## 8. Competition Rules

### 8.1 Game Durations

U8*	25 Minutes
U9*	25 Minutes
U10	2 x 25 Minute Halves
U11	2 x 25 Minute Halves
U12AA	2 x 35 Minute Halves
U12A/B	2 x 25 Minute Halves
U13	2 x 35 Minute Halves
U15	2 x 40 Minute Halves
U17	2 x 45 Minute Halves
U18	2 x 45 Minute Halves
Senior	2 x 45 Minute Halves

Halftime shall be ten (10) minutes in AAA divisions and five (5) minutes in all other divisions.

*\*Denotes a Skill Centre age group, these groups play 2 games on the same day at the durations specified above.*

### 8.2 Delayed Kick-Off

All games must begin no later than 15 minutes after the scheduled kick-off time.

### 8.3 Extra Time

8.3.1 There shall be no extra time in regular season play.

8.3.2 Regular season games ending in a tie will remain tied.

8.3.1 Play-off games that end in a tie will be decided by penalty kicks from the mark, 5 kickers as per .

### 8.4 Ball Size

Ball Size	Applicable Divisions
Size 4	U8 / U9 / U10 / U11 / U12
Size 5	U13 / U15 / U17 / U18 / SR

## 8.5 Retreat Line

8.5.1 There shall be no retreat line for divisions U12 and older

## 8.6 Power Play

Power play may be used for all divisions U12 and below. If one team goes four goals ahead, the other team may field an optional, additional player until the deficit has been reduced to three (3) goals

## 8.7 Substitutions

8.7.1 Senior AAA/AA – 5 substitutions are allowed during the game plus an unlimited number of subs at halftime.

8.7.2 Youth AAA/AA – 7 substitutions are allowed during the game plus an unlimited number of subs at half time.

8.7.2.1 - U12 AA U13 AA divisions may use unlimited substitutions at any stoppage of play

8.7.3 All AA and AAA teams must use sub slips.

8.7.3.1 - Use of sub slips are not required in U12AA or U13AA divisions

8.7.3 Youth A, B divisions may have unlimited substitutions, however a maximum of three (3) players may be substituted at the same time (per team).

8.7.4 Substitutions during the game are permitted during a stoppage of play at the referee's deaccession.

8.7.4 Re-entry is permitted

8.7.5 The use of a concussion substitute is permitted in accordance with the Soccer Nova Scotia Concussion Substitution Policy

8.7.5.1 Any players removed from a game via a concussion substitute is subject to the Return to Play Protocol as defined by the Soccer Nova Scotia Concussion Substitute Policy



## 8.8 Rosters

8.8.1 Team rosters must be finalized prior to the date specified in the current season's important dates document.

8.8.2 Teams may dress up to a total of three (3) more players than the number registered on their roster, up to the maximum roster size.

8.8.3 Only players listed on the team's game sheet are permitted to participate in a game

8.8.4 Only team staff (coaches and managers) listed on the team's game sheet are permitted on the bench during a game.

8.8.5 Teams that do not have the minimum number of players listed on their roster as of the roster deadline will be removed from the schedule.

8.8.6 A player may only appear on one roster.



## 8.9 Player Movement

### 8.9.1 Playing Up

8.9.1.1 Call-up players may be used by any team as set out in section 12 of the Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures.

8.9.1.2 Call-Up Chart

Division	Can Call Up From
<b>U12</b>	U12 Player Pools / Skill Centre
<b>U13</b>	U13 Player Pools / U12 Player Pools
<b>U15 B</b>	U13 B
<b>U15 A</b>	U15 B / U13 A / U13 B
<b>U15 AA</b>	U15 A / U15 B / U13 AA / U13 A / U13 B
<b>U15 AAA</b>	U15 AA / U15 A / U15 B / U13AA / U13 A / U13 B
<b>U17 AAA</b>	U18 AA* / U18 A* / U15 AAA / U15 AA / U15 A / U15 B
<b>U18 B</b>	U15 B
<b>U18 A</b>	U18 B / U15 A / U15 B
<b>U18 AA</b>	U18 A / U18 B / U15 AA / U15 A / U15 B
<b>SR. AA</b>	U18 AA / U18 A / U18 B / U17 AAA**
<b>SR. AAA</b>	SR. AA / U18 AA / U18 A / U18 B / U17 AAA**

\*The player being called up must meet the age requirements of the division to which they are being called up.

\*\* Players 15 years of age and younger are not permitted to be called up to the senior age division. Players aged 16 years at the date of the game, can be called up to senior, with the permission of the technical director of the club the team and player are registered with.

8.9.1.3 Playing up is not permitted in any NSSL playoff competition.

8.9.1.4 Players being called up need to follow proper registration procedures through the designated NSSL online platform prior to the competition.

## 8.9.2 Playing Across

8.1.2.1 Playing across teams at the same age and competition level is not permitted in the NSSL. With the exception of divisions utilizing player pools.

8.1.2.2 Guest players for U15 and above are not permitted in the NSSL.

8.1.2.3 Guest players are allowed for age groups U13 and younger.

## 9. Team Responsibilities

9.1 The home team is required to provide 2 quality match game balls to the game official.

9.2 Both teams are required to check off all players and team staff present during the game in the GameSheet App.

9.2.1 This should be completed prior to the game. If it is not completed by the start of play in the second half play will not resume until this has been completed by both teams. Time in the second half will begin on schedule.

9.3 In games played on Grass the home team is responsible for providing mesh for the nets. Should mesh not be available the game shall still be played as a regular game.

## 10. Game Reporting

10.1 Game reporting will be completed by the game official.

10.2 Any disputes of game reporting accuracy must be reported to the league via the verification function of the digital game sheet.

10.2.1 Any unresolved disputes over 7 days old must be reported to the league operations manager and include the game number of the affected game.

10.2.2 Any disputes must be submitted within 30 days of the affected game.

## 11. Defaults

11.1 Any team forfeiting or defaulting for any reason will be termed the losing team; the score will be recorded as 3-0; and a win will be awarded to the winning team.

11.2 A fine per section 15 will be applied to the forfeiting/defaulting team and must be paid prior to the team's next game.

11.3 Teams must have 7 players ready and available to play within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time.



11.4 Subject to 11.1 where a team fails to show up for a game outside of their district/region, the defaulting team shall be sanctioned with a point deduction of three (3) points.

11.4.1 For the purposes of 11.4, Halifax, Harbour East and Suburban Districts shall be considered the same district/region.

## 12. Uniforms and Equipment

12.1 Each team participating in the league must declare their primary and alternate colours 3 days prior to the first week of the season.

12.2 Teams who do not have an alternate stripe must bring a numbered set of pinnies to all games.

12.3 At the discretion of the game official; When colours of competing teams are similar, the away team shall wear their alternate colours or numbered pinnies.

12.4 Goalkeepers shall wear colours which plainly distinguish them from all other players and game officials.

12.5 All Jerseys must be clearly numbered. The number of the player's jersey must correspond to the number listed with the player's name on the game sheet and the NSSL league website.

12.6 Shin guards must be worn by all players at all games.

12.7 Team uniforms must be consistent with the club the team is registered with.

## 13. Discipline

13.1 The league manager shall be responsible for all league discipline matters and will administer discipline according to the Discipline Policy of Soccer Nova Scotia. Soccer Nova Scotia Discipline Policy can be found in the Soccer [Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures](#)

## 14. Appeals & Protests

14.1 The NSSL's Discipline Committee (ad hoc) shall deal with all protests and appeals. Each hearing held by the league shall be conducted in accordance with Soccer Nova Scotia's Rules and Regulations, [found here](#). All protests shall be submitted in writing to the NSSL league manager no later than twenty-four (24) hours following the conclusion of the match.

14.2 all protests and/or appeals must be accompanied by a \$150.00 deposit to be received no later than forty-eight (48) hours following the conclusion of the match.

14.3 If the protest is successful the \$150.00 deposit will be returned in full.



14.4 All protests and/or appeals will be ruled on within seven (7) business days.

14.5 Appeals involving exemptions to Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures are the jurisdiction of the Soccer Nova Scotia Discipline and Appeals Committee

## **15. Fines**

The following fines shall apply to all NSSL games.

15.1 Failure to show up for a game shall result in the following fines;

15.1.1 \$250.00 for the first occurrence

15.1.2 \$250.00 for the second occurrence

15.1.3 \$500.00 plus automatic removal of the team from the league for the third occurrence.

15.2 Failure to complete game sheets requirements per section 9.2 will result in a \$25.00 fine per occurrence and may result in game forfeit.

15.3 Subject to 15.1 where a team is removed from the league, all games played up to the date of the removal will be erased from league standings.

15.4 Subject to 15.1 where a team fails to show up for a game outside of their district/region, the applicable fine(s) shall be doubled.

15.4.1 For the purposes of 15.4, Halifax, Harbour East and Suburban Districts shall be considered the same district/region.

15.5 Clubs who remove a team after the declaration date shall be subject to a fine of \$250.00 per team removed.

15.6 Clubs who remove a team after the first game in the schedule has been posted shall be subject to a fine of \$500.00 plus any additional turf time that may be required as a result of the team being removed.

15.6 All surplus fines will be donated to Nova Scotia – Kidsport

## **16. League Expulsion**

Where a team is expelled from the league for any reason OR if a team drops out of the league at such a point where the schedule cannot be balanced, all games played up to the date of removal will be erased from the standings.



## 17. Additional Rules for Senior Competition

### 17.1 Promotion and Relegation Policy for Senior Divisions

*(this policy will not apply to the senior women's division(s) for the 2025 summer season)*

17.1.1 The NSSL senior divisions shall operate with a promotion and relegation system between two connected divisions: AAA and AA. The following provisions outline the promotion and relegation rules:

- A maximum of one team will be promoted from AA to AAA each season.
- A maximum of one team will be relegated from AAA to AA each season.

#### 17.1.2 AAA Competition Format

17.1.2.1 Division Size: The AAA division shall consist of no more than 7 teams at any given time.

17.1.2.2 Regular Season Format: The regular season will operate as a double round robin, with each team playing every other team twice (1 home match and 1 away match).

17.1.2.3 Playoff Format: The top 4 teams from the regular season will qualify for the playoffs. Playoffs will operate in accordance with section **3.5 Playoffs**

17.1.2.4 Challenge Game for Relegation: The team finishing in 7th place at the end of the regular season will be required to play a challenge game against an eligible team from the AA division for promotion/relegation. The winner of this match will be granted rights to enter the AAA division for the following season.

#### 17.1.3 AA Competition Format

17.1.3.1 Divisions Size: There shall be no defined limit to the total number of teams that may enter the AA division. Any club that meets the applicable registration requirements (Section 7 Registration) may enter a team into the AA division.

17.1.3.2 Regular Season: The AA division regular season format shall be determined by the NSSL to accommodate the number of teams registered.

17.1.3.3 Playoff Format: The top 4 teams from the regular season will qualify for the playoffs. Playoffs will operate in accordance with section **3.5 Playoffs**

17.1.3.4 Challenge Game for Promotion: If the winner of the AA playoff final is eligible for promotion, they will play a challenge game against the 7th place team from the AAA division. The winner of this match will be granted rights to enter the AAA division for the following season.



17.1.4 Promotion/Relegation Challenge Match: shall be played between the 7th place team in the AAA division and the winner of the AA playoff final, assuming that the AA team is eligible for promotion.

17.1.4.1 Promotion eligibility: a AA team shall be eligible to participate in the challenge game for promotion if:

- The team wins the AA playoff final
- The team's club does not already have a AAA team

17.1.4.2 Outcome: the winner of the Promotion/Relegation Challenge Match will be granted rights to enter the AAA division for the following season and the losing team will not be eligible to enter the AAA division the following season.

17.1.4.3 If there is no eligible AA team for the Promotion/Relegation Challenge Match, the match will not take place and the 7th place team from the AAA division will retain the right to enter the AAA division the following season.

#### 17.1.5 AAA Entry Rights

17.1.5.1 The top 6 teams from the AAA regular season, along with the winner of the promotion/relegation challenge match (or, if no AA team is eligible for promotion, the 7th place team from the AAA regular season), shall have the right to compete in the AAA division for the following season.

17.1.5.2 If a club that has the right to enter a team into the AAA division fails to enter a team in a given year, the AAA division will operate in a modified, 6-team format for that season. In this modified format, the 6th place team from the regular season will be subject to the promotion/relegation challenge game, rather than the 7th place team. The club that fails to enter a team will retain the right to enter a team the following year.

17.1.5.3 If a club with the right to enter a team into the AAA division does not do so for two consecutive years, that club will forfeit its right to enter a team into the AAA division until such time as the club's team wins promotion from the AA division. In a season where a club forfeits its right to enter, two teams will have the opportunity to earn promotion from AA to AAA. The format for determining the second promoted team from AA will be determined by the NSSL and communicated prior to the start of the regular season.



17.1.5.4 The clubs with entry rights to the 2025 Summer AAA division are:

<b>2026 AAA Men's Rights Holders</b>	<b>2025 AAA Women's Rights Holders</b>
Dunbrack Soccer Club	<i>Not applicable for 2026</i>
Halifax City Soccer Club	
Halifax County United Soccer Club	
Halifax Hotspurs Soccer Club	
Suburban Football Club	
United Dartmouth Football Club	
Valley United Soccer Club	

#### 17.1.6 AA Entry Rights

17.1.6.1 Any club that meets the applicable registration requirements may enter teams into the AA division

17.1.6.2 A club shall enter a maximum of two teams into the AA division for a given season

17.2 Clubs are limited to only one Senior AAA team in the Men's and Women's divisions.

## **18. Amendments to the Rules**

The rules may be amended from time to time upon a simple majority of votes cast by the NSSL Advisory Committee.

