

AYSO Section 5 Games 2026  
Tournament Guidelines

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## PURPOSE OF THE AYSO SECTION 5 GAMES

The Section 5 Games shall offer an opportunity to bring together different Regions and Areas of Section 5 to share in the diverse soccer culture of the AYSO family. This occasion focuses on sportsmanship, team spirit and making new friends through the activities and events that are offered during this event. The tournament will be held June 18 – 21, 2026. The tournament should not be interpreted nor represented as any form of a Section 5 Championship.

## VISION STATEMENT

Our vision for the AYSO Section 5 tournament is to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for youth soccer players to showcase their skills, demonstrate good sportsmanship, and build positive relationships with peers and coaches from across the Section. Through this tournament, we aim to promote the values of AYSO, including fair play, teamwork, respect, and community involvement, and inspire a lifelong love of soccer and healthy competition.

## SCOPE

The Section 5 Games consists of teams formed by Regions and Areas in Section 5 consisting of eligible players from within a Region or Area as described below.

## TOURNAMENT AUTHORITY

This tournament is operated under the jurisdiction of the Section 5 Director, Section 5 Coach Administrator, Section 5 Referee Administrator, and Section 5 Tournament Director. Unless otherwise noted, the current AYSO National Rules and Regulations, the AYSO National Tournament Handbook, and IFAB Laws of the game will be used for this tournament. The IFAB Laws of the Game that are in effect on January 1, 2026, will be used for the tournament. The following rules are intended specifically for this tournament ONLY! Referee judgment calls are NOT subject to dispute or protest! Games will be played according to the AYSO National Rules and Regulations and IFAB Laws as interpreted by AYSO.

## FIRST AID / MEDICAL / SAFETY

At AYSO Section 5 Games, the safety and well-being of our players, coaches, and spectators are our highest priority. We are committed to creating a safe and enjoyable environment for everyone involved. To ensure a successful and safe tournament, we have implemented the following safety measures:

**Medical Support:** Trained medical personnel will be present on site throughout the duration of the tournament to provide immediate assistance in case of injuries or medical emergencies. Medical stations equipped with necessary supplies will be readily accessible.

**Emergency Action Plan:** A comprehensive emergency action plan has been developed to address various scenarios, including injuries, severe weather, or other emergencies. All staff, volunteers, and participants will be briefed on the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.

**Player Safety:** We prioritize the safety of our players by ensuring that playing fields are properly maintained and inspected for any hazards prior to matches. Additionally, referees

will enforce the rules of the game to minimize the risk of injuries due to foul play.

**Hydration and Nutrition:** Adequate hydration and nutrition are essential for peak performance and overall well-being. Hydration stations will be available throughout the venue.

**Spectator Safety:** Spectators are encouraged to enjoy the tournament responsibly and to be mindful of their surroundings. Seating areas will be designated.

**Communication:** Clear communication will be established to relay important safety information to participants, coaches, and spectators. Updates regarding any safety-related matters will be promptly communicated through announcements, signage, and digital platforms.

By adhering to these safety measures and working together, we can create an environment where everyone can enjoy the soccer tournament safely. We appreciate your cooperation in making this event a success while prioritizing the health and safety of all involved.

## Medical Treatment

If the on-site Trainer indicates that the injury should be assessed or treated by a medical professional. The player must submit a written statement from a Medical Doctor (MD) or Nurse Practitioner (NP) treating or assessing the injury indicating that the player may return to play. If a cast or splint is part of the treatment, the player will not be allowed to return to play.

The incident form will be available for the first aid response staff member or on-site trainer online in a fillable PDF form. Once the information is completed by the first aid response staff member or on-site trainer, it will be emailed directly to the tournament email address at **games@aysosection5.org**.

For possible concussion related injuries, a release from a medical doctor (MD) or Nurse practitioner (NP) will be required prior to returning to play.

Directions to the nearest hospital/urgent care center will be available at the First Aid station.

## PLAYER ELIGIBILITY POLICY

A player must fulfill both a registration requirement and a primary program participation requirement to participate in the Section Games. The rules aim to prevent participants from solely joining the organization for the purpose of participating in the Section Games and forming teams with such participants.

### Player Registration Requirement

Eligible players must be registered in AYSO's registration system of record for Membership Year 2025/2026.

## PLAYER PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENT

Players meeting the registration requirement above must also be verified by the Regional Commissioner as having actively participated in a defined AYSO primary (Core) program or qualifying secondary (United, Alliance, Extra) program during a fall season, spring season or split

season (program which begins in fall, closes for a while and continues in spring). *Secondary program play is only eligible if a secondary play bracket is formed unless they also established eligibility in a primary program.*

For purposes of this determination, the following definitions shall apply:

1. **Active Participation** - "Actively participated in" means playing in at least 50% of the scheduled games of any complete AYSO-approved program or qualified secondary program conducted during the 2025/2026 membership year.
  - i. Acceptable special circumstances that might prevent a registered player from completing a program would include, but are not limited to, an illness; a soccer-related injury; change of address (moved to a new Region); parental custodial rights; conflict with secondary or high school rules of state which prevent the registered player from COMPLETING the primary or qualified secondary program. If such a special circumstance arises, the Regional Commissioner must request approval, in writing, from the Area Director and/or Section Director prior to allowing the player to be rostered on a team participating in this tournament.
2. **Scheduled Games** – “Scheduled games” shall mean games that were scheduled for play at the beginning of the season and available for play (excludes games not available for play due to field closures or similar).
3. **Primary Program** - "Primary program" shall mean the entire set of scheduled games (including BOTH parts of split seasons) in a Region for which open registration is held, balanced teams are newly formed, and all registrants play. It is acknowledged that some Regions may have more than one primary program under this definition.
4. **Qualifying Secondary Program** – This would include United, Alliance, and Extra Select programs.

Each Regional Commissioner and Area Director is responsible for ensuring that the spirit of the eligibility rules is honored. The AYSO Section 5 Games tournament committee reserves the right to determine and administer any discipline that they deem appropriate should they find that the participation of any team or player violates this intent. Disciplinary sanctions can include, but are not limited to, removing, or rejecting the offending team or player from participation in all or any part of the Section Games.

## COACH ELIGIBILITY

All AYSO coaches and assistant coaches (hereafter referred to collectively as coaches) who wish to coach in the AYSO Section 5 Games must, at a minimum:

- Be a registered volunteer in AYSO’S registration system of record for the current AYSO membership year.
- Have completed the following Safety trainings

- the AYSO's Safe Haven
  - Safesport certification
  - CDC concussion awareness training.
  - Cardiac arrest
- Have an eligible Background check status (Green or Orange)
  - Be trained per the National Coaching Program Guidelines at the age level of the team they wish to coach. Training must be completed and verified in AYSO'S registration system of record by May 31, 2026, roster submission deadline.

Following are the required certifications for each of the age levels:

DIVISION	COACH CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT
10U	10U Coach (Complete Course includes field session)
11U/12U	12U Coach
15U	Intermediate Coach(Advanced preferred)
19U	Advanced Coach

- Coaches (Head or Assistant) should only be rostered to one team for the tournament.
- 10U Coaches who have taken ONLY the online 10U course will **NOT BE ELIGIBLE** to coach. The field portion of that course must also be completed.
- Coaches are responsible for checking with their region to ensure that all completed courses have been properly credited prior to May 31, 2026.
- Each team may have no more than two coaches.
- Coaches must be 18 years of age or older.
- Approved coaches are the only people permitted to coach and to be in the coaching area on the fields.

Exception: The Team Manager may be present in the technical area if either or both coaches are not available. Team Managers must have at least 10U Coach Training, Safe Haven, Sudden Cardiac Arrest, CDC Concussion Awareness Training, SafeSport and be registered as a volunteer in Sports Connect MY 2025/2026.

- If a trainer is traveling with a team, they will not be permitted as a substitute coach for any reason and is not allowed in the coaching area.

## TEAM FORMATION POLICY

Each Region/Area shall determine the method it uses for team formation, provided that each team member is eligible following the rules listed in this document. All rostered team members must be eligible players as defined above.

A team roster may include up to two coaches, each of whom has met the Coaching Requirements described above. Only players and coaches listed on the approved roster may participate in Section Games.

### Everyone Plays Guidelines

- All players must play at least 50% of the game (2 quarters).
- ALL players must play 75% (3 quarters) before ANY player plays 100% (4 quarters).
- Violation of these player rules renders a team subject to forfeiture of the game and possible disqualification at the discretion of the Tournament Director.

### Team Roster Sizes and Player Numbers on the Field

- The maximum roster size allowed in 15U/19U will be 22 and teams will play 11 v 11
- The maximum roster size allowed in 12U will be 14 and teams will play 9 v 9
- The maximum roster size allowed in 10U will be 11 and teams will play 7 v 7

### Age Divisions

The following age divisions participate in Section 5 Games (DOBs for membership year 2025-2026 games):

- **Age Divisions**
  - 19U - January 1, 2007 – December 31, 2010
  - 15U - January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2013
  - 12U - January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2015
  - 10U - January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2017

Teams with a mixture of boys and girls will be considered boys' teams.

## Team Formation Limitations

Each team must be made up with eligible players from the Region(s) that are age-appropriate for the age division the team has been registered for in Section Games. “Age appropriate” shall be judged solely by a player’s birth date.

All eligible players from the Region that was offered a spot in the tournament MUST have the first opportunity to participate.

- **Exception 1 Guest Players:** If the selected Region is unable to form a complete team from age appropriate eligible players within the Region, the Region may, with permission from the Area Director, approach Regional Commissioners from other Regions in AYSO Section 5 to seek additional eligible players, which requires each Regional Commissioner involved to sign off on the player’s participation. Players that have played solely as United, Extra and Alliance players will not be eligible to participate in the Section 5 Games as guest players in the Core bracket.
- **Exception 2 Playing Up:** Team members will be allowed to be added to a team roster not in their age-appropriate division only under circumstances as described in the “Playing up” section below.

## Playing Up

“Playing up” a division by a team member into an older age bracket than his/her birth date indicated in Age Divisions section above, will be permitted only under one of the following circumstances:

- Permitted in all the age brackets (except 10U) provided that the player played up in a membership year 2025-2026 primary or qualifying secondary program. Age-appropriate team members should be given priority in the selection process, and it is the responsibility of the Regional Commissioner to verify the eligibility of the “younger” team member to be playing in an older age bracket during the Region’s primary program. Regional Commissioners must NOT play younger children up for the express or singular purpose of participating in the Section Games. Playing Up is only allowed if the player is playing up one age appropriate division.
  - 10U teams may not utilize players that are 8U players by birth year.
  - Players playing up in a 15U bracket must be eligible to head the ball.
- Children 10 and under are not allowed to head the ball
- To play up to 15U a player must already be 11
- “Playing Down” in a younger division than the player’s age is not permitted without approval from the tournament committee. Playing down is only considered when the player has played down during the season for reasons eligible under AYSO policies and procedures. (i.e. EPIC players playing on standard teams)

Regions must utilize their own Region’s age-appropriate registered players prior to asking for “exceptions”. All team members’ eligibility will be verified by the Regional Commissioner. Falsifying information pertaining to eligibility may result in expulsion of a team from the

tournament prior to its start, or if discovered after the tournament starts, forfeiture of games the ineligible team member(s) participated as players and/or substitutes and zeroing out/ nullifying of sportsmanship points for games in which ineligible team member(s) participated.

## TEAM ROSTERS

Regions will only be accepted via electronic submission via the AYSO Affinity Sports platform.

Each team will complete an online application by May 31, 2026. The application process will be the responsibility of each RC regarding their teams. Visit [www.aysosection5.org](http://www.aysosection5.org) website for more information. This process will include any guest player forms if applicable to be submitted through the link in the footer of aysosection5.org.

Applications will be accepted provisionally on a first-come basis. Final acceptance will be determined by the Tournament committee after entries are assessed to ensure a fair representation of Regions who submit the forms and fees in category 2A and in accordance with the limits of the resources of the tournament venue. Final acceptance will be determined, and teams will be notified by email. Any team that is not accepted into the tournament will be offered the opportunity to be placed on the waiting list. Waitlisted teams will be moved to active registration when all registration and paperwork is complete. Teams must designate a Team Contact (preferably the Head Coach) on their application who has email and internet access. Team Contact must have phone access during the tournament.

Rosters will be frozen on June 5, 2026, and no further changes will be permitted.

## STANDARDS FOR UNIFORMS AND PLAYER EQUIPMENT

Players will be required to follow the AYSO Uniform Specifications for the 2025 - 2026 membership year. The specifications may be found at [https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/Marketing#UNIFORM\\_SPECIFICATIONS](https://wiki.ayso.org/wiki/Marketing#UNIFORM_SPECIFICATIONS)

All players must wear the approved AYSO uniform only, and all players on the same team must wear matching uniform shirts/jersey (goalkeeper excepted). Each player must wear shin guards under their socks.

All uniforms shall be properly marked with the AYSO logo on the left front of the jersey and must otherwise conform to National Rules and Regulations section VI. The uniform (jersey or shorts) may not bear the player's name or team name by any application of lettering, silk screening, etc.

Each player's uniform must be marked with a permanently affixed number that matches the uniform number on the Game Card. A player may not exchange numbered jerseys with any other player during the game including the goalkeeper. Each player on a team should have a unique number (no players with the same number) to assist the referee with identifying players. Should a team need to come with dual numbers the Tournament Director MUST be notified ahead of time.

If the team only has one jersey, the coach must bring an acceptable overlay, such as pinnies or scrimmage vests in material that allows for the player jersey numbers to be seen or are individually numbered. If there is a color conflict, the home team is responsible for wearing the pinnies.

If the team has two jerseys, the Home teams will wear dark color uniforms and Visitor teams will wear light color uniforms. If using soccer.com red/blue kit the Home team will wear blue and the visiting team will wear red.

A team with members who are not in conformance with AYSO uniform standards may be assessed a team sportsmanship point penalty of up to 2 points per game at the discretion of the tournament director.

Garments may be worn under the uniform (i.e. long sleeves, etc.) during inclement weather; however the match referee will be the judge of what should be allowed or not. Bicycle shorts that are the same primary color as the uniform shorts will be permitted.

Casts, splints, jewelry of any kind, or anything a referee may view as a hazard to player safety will not be permitted.

Players observed wearing a cast or splint either before or after play will not be allowed to play any further games in the tournament and if found to have hidden the cast or splint from tournament officials may cost the team's eligibility for semi-final or final rounds or forfeiture of awards. If a coach or Referee is unsure whether the brace is eligible to play, the player with the brace should be brought to the tournament committee to ensure they will be able to play ahead of time.

### Additional Uniform and Equipment Information

- Jewelry or adornment of any kind is not allowed. Jewelry or adornment includes: earrings, any hard replacement stud or other piercings worn in any visible body part; friendship, rubber sport, braided and other similar bracelets. Taping of these items is not permitted and does not make them permissible to wear.
- Hair Beads and Clips

Hair control devices and other adornments, such as beads, worn in the hair must meet the following criteria:

- a) Be securely fastened to the head.
  - b) Do not present an increased risk to the player, teammates, or opponents.
  - c) Flat clips less than two inches in length may be used to hold the hair in place close to the head so long as their placement on the head does not present an increased risk to the player, teammates or opponents.
  - d) Hair charms are still considered jewelry and are not permitted.
- Soft, "scrunchy-type" or elastic hair control items are permitted.
  - Medical alert bracelets are allowed. They should be secured to the player with tape, a cloth wristband or the equivalent taking care to leave the information visible and easily recognizable in case of emergency.
  - AYSO will not prohibit the use of knee braces by players provided that, in the judgment of the referee, the brace is adequately covered and padded so as to eliminate the possibility of its causing injury to the other players on the field of play.
  - The acceptable length and shape or adornment of fingernails is up to the judgment of the referee. In general, long, or fake fingernails are not to be considered dangerous by themselves. However, the use of such a deterrent should be sanctioned according to the

severity of use. Knit gloves may be used by a player to cover nails judged to be dangerous. Primary focus should be on player safety.

- Goalkeepers may wear a soft brimmed hat or cap. In addition, the brim must also be made of a soft material and must be approved by the referee. Baseball-style caps with hard brims are not acceptable even if worn backwards. These items should be a neutral color free of inappropriate design, logo or meaning. They must not constitute a danger to the player or to other players and must be approved by the referee.
- Other uniform and equipment issues will be resolved in accordance with the *AYSO National Rules and Regulations* and the *Laws of the Game* for the current year. Questions should be asked prior to attendance at the Games so that any modifications or changes can be worked out in advance.

## TEAM CHECK-IN

Team check-ins will be conducted on June 18, 2026. The exact times and location will be published to the tournament website ([www.aysosection5.org](http://www.aysosection5.org)) and discussed at the coach and referee online meeting before the tournament.

**The team Head Coach, Assistant coach or Team Manager is required to check in on June 18, 2026, at the designated time. Failure to check in during the check in window will result in a 10 point deduction from points total.**

They will also be asked to attend a webinar/Zoom meeting before the 2026 Section 5 Games. The meeting location and times for check-in and coaches meeting will be emailed out after registration is concluded.

Coaches must bring the following to check-in their team:

- An official team photo roster (from the Affinity platform), which has been signed by the applicable Regional Commissioner(s) and/or Area director(s).
- One set of the player's uniform (primary/alternate jersey, short, socks) the team will be wearing throughout the tournament.
- Coaches will be given a wristband that **MUST** be worn at all times throughout the tournament.

All uniforms, including alternate jerseys or overlays, will be checked for compliance with the AYSO Uniform Specification. For any improper uniforms found during check-in, teams will be expected to make the necessary corrections before they will be allowed to participate. Failure to do so will result in sportsmanship points deductions.

Players **DO NOT** need to be present at the team check-in.

Further details and requirements will be shared in a welcome email and mandatory coaches meeting.

## FIELD MARSHALS

If volunteers are available, a tournament Field Marshal will be assigned for each field or a group of fields, reporting to the Tournament Site Director. If not, the duties outlined in this section will be assigned to the match referees and other tournament officials.

Field Marshals will be invited to attend a Virtual Meeting prior to the tournament.

Field Marshal duties will include:

- Check in teams prior to each game
- May be asked to monitor substitutions

The Field Marshal will be in contact with the rest of the tournament staff and notify them of any incidents or injuries.

Tournament participants are encouraged to report any concerns immediately to the Field Marshal, and to respectfully follow any instructions given by the Field Marshal.

## SOCCERFEST PARTICIPATION

The Soccerfest event creates an atmosphere for Good Sportsmanship, Camaraderie and Stewardship for the Games and is a great kick-off event prior to the start of the Games. Soccerfest is a fundamental and integral part of the spirit and experience of the Section 5 Games. Every player is enriched by interacting with players from other teams across the

country, making new friends thereby adding to the excitement for everyone. All players and coaches are encouraged to participate in Soccerfest.

Section Games teams (rostered players and coaches) may register for Soccerfest at no additional cost.

### Sportsmanship Points Awarded for Soccerfest

- A team coach may request that a rostered player or coach be excused from Soccerfest due to unusual or special circumstances. This request must be made to the Section Games Committee not later than the team's check-in time.
- Each team will be awarded ten (10) points in sportsmanship standings for participation of its officially rostered players and coaches in both Soccerfest games (except for those players and coaches excused as noted above), provided that at least one coach and the entire team participates.
- Each team will be awarded five (5) points in sportsmanship standings for participation of its officially rostered players and coaches in both Soccerfest games (except for those players and coaches excused as noted above), provided that at least one coach and at least 50% of the team participates.
- Partial credit will not be awarded.

## SPORTSMANSHIP

AYSO strives to create a positive environment based on mutual respect rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our programs are designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

Sportsmanship is how we play the game – how we follow the Laws and show respect for teammates, opponents, and officials. This is evidenced in applauding opponents' good performances, encouraging teammates and courtesy toward the referees.

We expect our coaches, referees, team administrators, parents, and spectators to be our Stewards of the Game by modeling good sportsmanship, fair play and age-appropriate cheering during the games. Building character, confidence, self-esteem, and enjoyment in all aspects of a player's experience in AYSO are primary goals.

Because of the value that AYSO places on sportsmanship, sporting behavior and sportsmanship points are used to break ties in the standings, and Sportsmanship Awards are the highest honor of the Section Games tournament for all teams, including the Section 5 Malcolm Sportsmanship Cup, which is awarded to one team that demonstrates the highest level of sportsmanship out of all the teams participating in the Games.

### Sportsmanship Monitoring Process

Sportsmanship points will be awarded based upon the Sportsmanship Form in Exhibit "A" of this document. The referee team will score the Sportsmanship Form at the conclusion of each game based on their observation of coaches, players and supporters conduct before, during and immediately after the game.

As a tiebreaker for the Section 5 Malcolm Sportsmanship Cup, the Section 5 Games Committee will offer additional observations of player, coach and spectator conduct and behavior reported throughout the Games and determine a winner.

The team that earns the highest point total over their pool play games will be honored for outstanding sportsmanship and all team members and coaches of that team will receive medals. In the event of a tie, scores for each individual Sportsmanship attribute will be compared until the tie is broken.

Teams proceeding into the medal rounds will have the opportunity to continue to demonstrate excellent sportsmanship, based on the same criteria used in pool play games. However, no additional Sportsmanship medals will be awarded for these games.

## GAME FORMAT

### Pool Play tournament

The structure of the pool will be determined by the number of teams entered in each division.

Each age division will be bracketed into playing pools. Each team will play a minimum of 3 preliminary play games within their respective pools. Where there are sufficient teams, divisions will also be separated into multiple competition flights. The make-up of each pool will be

determined by a random draw, and the teams will be assigned as much inter-Area/Region play as possible.

- Games will include a combination of pool play.
- Teams will play no more than two per day.

Teams will advance from qualifying pools based on pool play standings points. The number of teams advancing per pool will be determined by the number of pools in each division. Pool winners (and in some cases wildcard teams) will advance to medal round play. Teams will play semi-final and/or championship final matches, depending on the number of teams in each pool and the format of play for that flight.

All medal round matches ending in a tie will have two full overtime periods (no golden goal) with teams changing field direction after the first period. The overtime periods will be 5 minutes each. In these matches, if still tied after overtime play, the game shall be decided by penalty kicks using the IFAB procedures.

Medals will be presented at the conclusion of the tournament on Sunday, to coaches and players from the first place through the second-place teams in each age division.

### Game Duration

Game durations will be as follows, unless the Section 5 Games Committee reduces the length of the halves due to playing conditions:

<b>DIVISION</b>	<b>GAME DURATIONS (Round Robin Pool Games)</b>
10U	Two – 20 Minute Halves
12U	Two – 25 Minute Halves
15U	Two – 35 Minute Halves
19U	Two – 40 Minute Halves

<b>DIVISION</b>	<b>GAME DURATIONS (Quarter Finals, Semi-Finals, Finals)</b>
10U	Two – 25 Minute Halves
12U	Two – 30 Minute Halves
15U	Two – 40 Minute Halves

19U	Two – 45 Minute Halves
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## Pool Play Points

### Points Per Game

Points during pool play will be awarded using the following criteria per game:(Nine-Point maximum system)

- a) Win = Six points
- b) Tie = Three points (to each team)
- c) Loss = Zero points
- d) Goals = One point to each team for each goal scored (up to 3)
- e) Forfeit = Nine points (scored as a 3-0 win)
- f) Send off = Minus Three points deducted for each player, substitute, coach, or spectator sent off.
- g) In the event a team receives no points for a game in which a sendoff has occurred, negative points shall be posted for that team for that game.

If Wildcard teams are part of the division competition brackets, Wildcard teams will be the team(s) with the highest standing in points from all teams in the division who are not automatically advancing.

Standings will be updated regularly on the Tournament website. The deadline to challenge the posted results will be 60 minutes after the posting of results or the conclusion of each day's play whichever is later.

## PRE-GAME CHECK-IN

Teams shall report to their assigned field at least twenty (20) minutes prior to the scheduled game start time. The referees will check the team photo rosters and check uniforms and equipment before each game.

Pre-printed game cards will be provided to the referees by the Section 5 Games staff. Handwritten additions to the pre-printed game card are not allowed unless done and initialed by a member of the Section Games committee.

The "home" team will be the first team or top team listed on the game schedule and will be responsible for providing the game balls (3). The teams will both be on their designated side of the field within the technical area. ***Spectators must be on the opposite side of the field from players between the 18 and midfield line on the half of the field directly across from their team's bench.***

The home team will change jerseys or don pennies in the event of a color conflict with the visitor team. If there are any questions, the referee will determine whether this is necessary.

Warm up time is not guaranteed for a team. If a game is in progress on the scheduled field, a team must warm up off the field. As soon as the previous game has ended, teams must clear the field and the teams for the next game must take their places.

The referee, and/or the Tournament Director, has the authority to delay the start of play, to suspend play, or cancel the match due to weather conditions, which, in the opinion of the referee, endangers the safety of the players. The Tournament Director will endeavor to reschedule or resume games that are incomplete due to weather related reasons. However, due to situations that cannot be predicted in advance, it may not be possible to finish incomplete games. In this case, if play was halted in the second half of play, the score at that time will be taken as the final score. The Tournament Director will also decide on accounting for the games that could not be started or rescheduled due to adverse weather conditions.

Matches canceled due to weather or other natural causes may not be feasible to reschedule. All efforts will be made in order to have all games played. If weather conditions require adjustments, matches may be shortened or move directly to penalty shootouts—or use another approved format—to determine a winner. All questions regarding rescheduling, including decisions on forfeits will be at the discretion of the Tournament Committee, whose decision shall be final.

**SUSPENDED GAMES:** The Tournament Committee may determine to end matches early if field schedule is behind due to game delays, interference, or if weather conditions provide unsafe conditions; and may distribute awards according to games played and points accrued. The Tournament Committee will determine the outcome of any single game which is terminated prematurely.

A horn will be sounded (or other means of notification) when the fields are required to be cleared for safety.

The decision to suspend play due to weather or other issues shall be judged based on maintaining a safe game. Thunder and lightning within 6 miles of the field, will be cause to suspend the games for a minimum of 30 minutes.

At the conclusion of the game, each Head Coach must meet with the match referees and verify the final game results and sign the game card before it is submitted to the tournament scoring staff. Failure to comply will result in the team receiving a score of zero sportsmanship points.

## **SUBSTITUTIONS AND PLAYING TIME**

Except as described in this section, the AYSO substitution rules found in the National Rules and Regulations and reproduced as an appendix to this document shall be used in all age divisions.

Every player must play at least half of each game. All coaches must give every player the opportunity to play three quarters before any player plays four quarters.

Injury and illness will be considered but must be verified and annotated on the game card by the referee.

For divisions 10U through 12U, substitution will be allowed as specified in the AYSO National Rules and Regulations. Substitutes will be recorded on the game cards by the referee.

For divisions 15U through 19U, monitored substitutions will be used if substitution monitors are available. Each team is encouraged to provide volunteers to assist with monitored substitutions. If substitution monitors are not available, each half will be divided into thirds, with two substitution breaks per half. These breaks do not include halftime. All play time requirements will continue to be followed.

## FORFEITS

Teams must check in at the field 20 minutes prior to the start of the game. There will be a five-minute grace period at the start of the game for a team to take the field before a forfeit is declared. The score for a forfeit match will be 3-0 for the remaining team (See STANDINGS under category 15 for the points to be awarded). Should a team decide for any reason to forfeit a game a Forfeit fee of \$500 per game will be assessed.

For 10U division teams, there is a minimum of 5 players on the field to start/continue a game. For 12U the minimum number is 6 players. For all other divisions, there must be a minimum of 7 players to start/continue a game. If a team cannot field the minimum number of players, the game will be abandoned, and a forfeit will be declared. The Tournament Director or designee will decide if a game is to be forfeited.

## DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

All conduct issues and serious incidents will be reported to tournament staff and a copy of the incident report will be forwarded to the respective Regional Commissioner as well as Area, Section and AYSO National Office.

All tournament participants, players, coaches, and spectators are expected to set a positive example for the team and will be held responsible for their actions.

Any player, coach, or spectator that is ejected due to violent behavior in the opinion of the Tournament Committee will result in being barred from the remainder of the tournament and possible future tournaments.

At the conclusion of each match, the referees will indicate on the reverse of the game cards incidences of poor sportsmanship. Points deductions for poor sportsmanship will be used as tiebreakers should that become necessary.

### Team Members

Any team member who is sent off must leave the field of play and the immediate area before play is restarted and must be accompanied by a parent or Safe Haven trained adult. The qualified adult must follow Safe Haven protocol and not be isolated with the minor athlete. The team may not substitute for that player for the remainder of the game. If there is no parent or qualified adult to accompany the team member, he/she will remain silent on the sideline and may not participate in the hand shake at the end of the game. The referee shall complete a Game Misconduct Report at the referee administrative location at the conclusion of the match.

Any team member who is sent off before, during or after a game, will be ineligible to participate in the team's next scheduled game. Depending on the severity of the action that resulted in the sendoff, the Section 5 Games Committee may review the circumstances and issue greater sanctions against the offending team member.

Any team member receiving two send offs during the Games shall have the offenses reviewed by the Section 5 Games Committee and may be denied further participation in the Games.

If it is determined that an ineligible player has participated in a game, the team will forfeit all games in which that player participated illegally. Furthermore, if it is determined that the coach knowingly played an ineligible player, that coach will be barred from further participation in the tournament and possible future tournaments pending due process.

## Coaches

Coaches are expected to set the example for their team in exhibiting proper AYSO behavior and Kid Zone behavior.

Coaches are expected to remain in the technical area during games and only enter the field of play as requested by the referee.

A coach who is expelled by the referee must leave the field of play and the immediate area for the remainder of the current game and for the next scheduled game. Depending on the severity of the action that resulted in the sendoff, the Section 5 Games Committee may review the circumstances and issue greater sanctions against the offending coach. A forfeit win may be awarded to the opposing (non-offending) team by the Tournament Committee. The referee shall complete a Game Misconduct Report at the referee administrative location at the conclusion of the match.

Player Registration Forms must be in the possession of the remaining registered coach. If the coach refuses to leave, or there is no remaining coach or assistant coach, the referee may terminate the game. When the game is terminated, the Tournament Committee will decide the outcome of the game. Any coach expelled from more than one game will be suspended for the balance of the tournament.

It is mandatory to play a scheduled game. If it is determined that a coach willfully fails to have his team participate in a scheduled game, the coach will be dismissed from the tournament and the incident will be reported to the respective Regional Commissioner and Area Director. A fee will be assessed to the respective region in the amount of \$500.00, due to Section 5 within 30 days of completion of the tournament, at the discretion of the Tournament Committee. Acceptance in future tournaments may be disallowed because of this willful non-participation.

## Spectators

Spectators or other guests who are asked to leave the field by the referee, assigned field monitor or other Games official must do so immediately. If a spectator or guest refuses to leave, the referee may suspend or terminate the game. The Tournament Committee will be responsible for determining the outcome of the match. A forfeit win may be awarded to the opposing team.

## Points Deducted in Standings

Three points will be deducted from the team's pool play standings for each coach, player, or spectator sent off and in addition sportsmanship points will be adversely affected.

## Additional Sanctions

All send offs, expulsions and cautions will be reviewed by the Tournament Committee, which may decide to issue additional sanctions.

# REFEREES

## Overview

Referees will be expected to uphold the tournament rules, AYSO guidelines and IFAB Laws of the Game and to fully participate in the sportsmanship evaluations. Any failure of the referee to uphold these rules may be cause for dismissal from the tournament and could place the team's referee fee in jeopardy. Remember: the quality of officiating is largely dependent upon the experience and abilities of the referees you provide.

The tournament cannot be played without our great volunteer referees. You don't have to be associated with a team to volunteer to referee. To ensure that the tournament has enough volunteer referees, there will be a referee fee charged at registration.

Each team in the tournament will provide a referee crew consisting of a minimum of three (3) members, of which at least one (1) is qualified to be a center referee and Two (2) trained assistant referee unless otherwise approved by the Tournament Committee at the time of application is submitted to the Tournament director. Each referee may only represent one (1) team in the tournament. If your Team is unable to bring a Referee team please contact the Section 5 Referee Administrator E-mail [ref\\_admin@aysosection5.org](mailto:ref_admin@aysosection5.org). Your Region will still be responsible for the Referee fee of \$150.

Each referee will be asked to officiate a minimum of 3 matches. The referees assigned to each team should be capable of officiating matches at or above the division of the level they represent. If all assignments are completed, the entire referee Fee of \$150 will be refunded within 30 days of the completion of the tournament. Should a team's referees fail to appear for their assigned game, and no replacement referees can be found, then the entire team's referee Fee may be forfeited regardless of how many other assignments the referee crew may have completed.

If a team has more than 3 referees the total number of games required remains 9. The Tournament Referee Administrator may modify the minimum number of games based on the number of referees available for the tournament and the schedule availability of those provided.

## Referee Information

The AYSO 2025 Section Games Referee Team Information Form must be submitted to Section Referee Administrator, By Region Referee Administrator, by May 31, 2025. Only AYSO referees that have been cleared by the tournament's Referee Administration Team are permitted to participate at the tournament.

All referees must be:

- a) registered as a volunteer in MY 2025-2026 and registered on sports connect.
- b) Proper Background check status
- c) SAFE-Haven and SafeSport certified
- d) Certified at least a Regional Referee.
- e) CDC Concussion Awareness Training for the 2025-2026 soccer year (annual requirement).

- f) Each referee will be required to attend a zoom meeting before the tournament right before the tournament. Information will be emailed about meetings.
- g) Coaches may referee in the tournament, however not in the division in which you are coaching.
- h) Parents cannot referee their own player's game, and it is recommended that they do not act as the referee in the division their players are playing in.

## Referee Game Format

The diagonal system of control, utilizing a referee and two assistant referees will be employed on all matches, if possible. Every effort will be made to avoid assigning a referee to a game involving one or both teams from the referee's own Region or Area. In the event there are not a sufficient number of referees at each grade, referees will be assigned based upon their capabilities.

If there are insufficient referees for a match, club linesperson(s) shall be used according to the National Rules and Regulations.

### Championship matches:

The Tournament referee administrator will assign qualified neutral referees to all championship matches by the following grades:

- Referees for 19U games - Experienced Advanced level or above
- Referees for 15U games - Experienced Intermediate level or above
- Referees for 10U & 12U games – Regional or above

## Youth Referees

Section Games is a great place for Youth Referees to gain experience in a competitive environment. Youth Referees (center referees) must be at least 2 years older than the age group they are officiating unless approved by the Tournament Committee. Youth referees who are also players in the tournament will not be allowed to participate in more than three games per day as a player and a referee (two as a player, one as a referee; one as a player, two as a referee). Players should play no more than 2 games per day.

Youth referees must be registered in Sports Connect as a MY 2025-2026 volunteer.

## Referee Uniform

For purposes of the tournament, a full uniform shall consist of black shorts, referee socks, referee shirt, Section 5 Games referee patch (to be distributed at the check in station), and flags as needed. All referees must be in full uniform as defined by AYSO, including the Section 5 Games Referee Badge (to be distributed at the check-in station).

It is realized that not all referees have all the colors of referee shirts approved by USSF and/or AYSO. The local regional referee shirt shall be accepted. It is recommended that a referee have a yellow shirt and one alternate color, preferably green. Referees not in full uniform will be considered club linespersons.

Yellow is the main uniform color for the tournament. If a crew all has another color the crew can make the choice to wear an alternate color.

## Check-In and Assignments

Referees are expected to check in at the Referee Station at least 45 minutes prior to their first game of the day. Failure to appear on time may result in a replacement referee crew being assigned to the field. Once a replacement crew has been assigned, they will have priority and the original crew must report to the Referee Station for alternate assignment and their team's referee fee may be subject to forfeiture

In the case a referee is also a coach or assistant coach in the tournament, the tournament will not guarantee to avoid schedule conflicts. If conflicts occur, the Referee assignment absolutely takes priority over anything else. A coach will not referee in the division that he coaches. Therefore, when one of the team coaches is a referee for the tournament, that team is required to have a second qualified assistant coach, as defined in Category 7, to replace the coach-referee in the event of a conflict.

Tournament Referee Administrator will be available and will make assignment adjustments as necessary. All referee game assignments will be posted. Referee teams shall report to their assigned fields at least twenty (20) minutes prior to the game start time.

The match scores and Sportsmanship ratings as recorded on the game cards shall be the official result of the game. Referees shall submit all game cards as instructed at the end of each game. The game cards will be available for completing any paperwork or reports at the tournament headquarters.

No protests of games, official rulings or judgment calls shall be allowed. The Tournament Rules Committee shall have the final say in any complaint or issue that arises. All decisions are final.

## PROTESTS

Referee judgment calls are FINAL and are not grounds for or subject to protest or dispute!

Protests will be considered only for the following reasons:

- An ineligible player has played.
- One or more registered player(s), present and in uniform, have not played the required length of time in the game (except for illness or injury as recorded by the game referee).

All protests must be verbally submitted to the Tournament Headquarters within 1 hour after the completion of the match by the **team coach**. Video evidence is not acceptable to protest a match or score.

All protests will be heard by the Tournament Director or Section Director who will discuss with the tournament committee for a final decision. In all cases, the members of the Committee will be unrelated to either team involved in the protest.

**ALL PROTEST DECISIONS ARE FINAL!**

In the event that an ineligible player is determined to have played or there has been a violation of the player participation rule, the game shall be recorded as a forfeit against the teams determined to have violated the rules.

The consequence of all other protests shall be in the judgment and discretion of the Committee.

## DISPOSITION OF ABANDONED OR TERMINATED GAMES

If any pool play games cannot be played due to circumstances beyond the control of the tournament, the final standings of the pool will be determined by applying the following winning percentage (WP) formula.

$(\text{Total Pool Play Points} + \text{SoccerFest Points}) / (\text{Number of Pool Games Played})$

The Tournament Rules Committee will decide on accounting for the games which could not start or be rescheduled due to adverse weather conditions or other circumstances. They will endeavor to reschedule or resume games that are incomplete due to weather related reasons. However, due to situations that cannot be predicted in advance, it may not be possible to finish incomplete games. All questions regarding rescheduling, including decisions on forfeits, will be at the discretion of the Tournament Rules Committee whose decision shall be final.

## AWARDS

Medals shall be presented to the First and Second place teams in all divisions and brackets.

The AYSO Section 5 Malcolm Sportsmanship Cup and Sportsmanship medals will be awarded as outlined in the Sportsmanship section of this document.

## TOURNAMENT FEES

The registration fee for the Section 5 Games is as follows:

Division	Early Bird Through Apr 19, 2026	Standard Fee April May 15, 2026	Late Registration May May 31, 2026
10U	\$330	\$380	\$430
12U	\$420	\$470	\$520
15U	\$660	\$710	\$760
19U	\$660	\$710	\$760

\*\*\*Each team is also responsible for a refundable \$150 referee fee. See referee section for details.

## REFUND POLICY

In the very unlikely event that the Section 5 Games are canceled, all registered teams will receive a full refund of their team registration fee. If the tournament cannot be held due to weather or other conditions beyond the control of the tournament hosts, then a refund will be sent to all teams, less the cost of any pre-ordered items and fixed expenses. Memorabilia that is pre-ordered and paid for by teams will be distributed.

Should the tournament be rained out on the original date, there will NOT be a rescheduled date.

If the tournament is canceled due to weather after the start of games and games cannot be rescheduled to be completed, refunds will be made to teams on a prorated basis, based on the number (percentage of the games played by the team versus the minimum of 3 games specified for the tournament) of actual games played and the uncommitted monies available for refund.

Teams withdrawing 2 weeks or more before the tournament will be issued a full refund. Teams withdrawing less than 2 weeks before the start of the tournament will only be issued a refund if a replacement team can be found. Tournament Staff assumes no duty or responsibility to find a replacement entry for a Late Withdrawal.

If a previously wait-listed team that has accepted a spot in the tournament withdraws less than 4 weeks before the start of the tournament, a refund will not be issued.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR COACHES AND SPECTATORS

All fields will be set up and taken down by the tournament and Section staff or the Host Region/Area volunteers. If your team would like to have a tent/bench, please bring them for your team.

Trash cans will be provided at each field. Teams will be expected to clean up all trash in their area before leaving. If a team does not clean up their area before leaving the field of play, 2 Sportsmanship points will be deducted. The coaches of the next game will report to the Referee if any garbage is left from the previous game.

Please observe the following Facility Use Rules while attending the tournament:

- All fields are Kid Zone areas.
- No pets of any kind will be allowed.
- No alcohol or tobacco products are allowed at any tournament site including e-cigarettes or vaping.
- No firearms are permitted unless the individual is legally authorized to carry firearms and in this capacity is acting on behalf of AYSO.
- Parking in designated parking spots

## **RULES INTERPRETATION**

The Section 5 Games Committee will decide any situations or subjects not covered by the aforementioned rules.

Questions about these Rules should be addressed to [games@aysosection5.org](mailto:games@aysosection5.org)

## **REFEREE SPORTSMANSHIP REPORT/RATING CRITERIA**

Referee's Sportsmanship report will be printed on the back of the match game cards.

<i>Instructions: Check the appropriate that corresponds to the sporting behaviors observed during the games as described below. Use your best judgment to determine what weight, if any, to give to misconduct when evaluating each of the categories.</i>		Always or Almost Always	Most of the Time	Some-Times	Rarely or Not at All
<b>Players</b>	<b>Respect for Teammates and Coaches</b> - On time and properly equipped. Cooperates with teammates and coaches (No arguing, negative comments). Concentrates on best efforts, team play and encouraging teammates				
	<b>Respect for Opponents</b> - Acknowledges good plays and sporting gestures, before, during and after game. Plays with skill and not force. Wins with humility and grace/accepts defeat with dignity				
	<b>Respect for Officials</b> - Respects referee calls and decisions. Thanks referee/field monitors at end of game				
	<b>Respect for the Game</b> - Knows and plays by the Laws of the Game (No free kick infringement, time wasting, etc.)				
<b>Coaches</b>	<b>Respect for Officials</b> - Respects referee calls and decisions and encourages spectators to do the same. Remains in team area unless asked onto the field by the referee. Cooperates with National Games officials				
	<b>Respect for Opponents</b> - Acknowledges good plays. Maintains and encourages sporting behavior of self, supporters and players through words and actions. Wins with humility and grace/accepts defeat with dignity. Congratulates / thanks opposing team and coaches at game end.				
	<b>Respect for Players</b> – ONLY positive, instructional, and encouraging comments. Allows players to play and think for themselves.				
	<b>Respect for the Game</b> - Knows and encourages playing by the Laws of the Game. Players are organized and ready to play. Substitutions are organized and take < 30 seconds. Encourages self-control and fair play of players.				
<b>Spectators &amp; Supporters</b>	<b>Respect for Players and Coaches</b> - Cheers positively for efforts of both teams. Encourages teamwork and fair play at all times. Supports coach decisions with silence or positive comments. (No coaching of players – lets coach do the coaching).				
	<b>Respect for Officials</b> – Respects referee calls and decisions. Cooperates with National Games officials. Remain in designated spectator areas.				
	<b>Respect for the Game</b> - Maintains self-control and decorum at all times. Acknowledges that soccer is a GAME and that best efforts of all are to be applauded. Shows by actions and words that the purpose of the National Games is understood /supported. Cleans area of debris and garbage.				

## BUILD OUT LINE RULES

The build out line promotes playing the ball out of the back in a less pressured setting

- When the goalkeeper has the ball in his or her hands during play from the opponent, the opposing team must move behind the build out line until the ball is put into play
- Once the opposing team is behind the build out line, the goalkeeper can pass, throw or roll the ball into play (punts and drop kicks are not allowed)
- After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the build out line and play resumes as normal
- The opposing team must also move behind the build out line during a goal kick until the ball is put into play
- If a goalkeeper punts or drop kicks the ball, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense
- If the punt or drop kick occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred
- The build out line will also be used to denote where offside offenses can be called Tournament Rules Matches will be played in accordance with FIFA Laws of the Game, except as modified.
- Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build out line
- Players can be penalized for an offside offense between the build out line and goal line
- To support the intent of the development rule, coaches and referees should be mindful of any intentional delay being caused by opponents not retreating in a timely manner or encroaching over the build out line prior to the ball being put into play
- Coaches are responsible for addressing these types of issues with their players
- Referees can manage the situation with misconduct if deemed appropriate
- Referees should be flexible when enforcing the 8 second rule and counting the time of possession should only begin when all opponents have moved behind the build out line