

Mercer County Amateur Masters Soccer League (MCAMSL) Rules, Regulations, and Code of Conduct for the League

The rules, regulations, and code of conduct for the league may be reviewed periodically and modified as agreed by the Board Members.

1. Player eligibility

- a. Divisions are organized by age. For purposes of eligibility, a player's age is the age he or she has attained on December 31st of the current calendar year. Therefore players must reach the minimum age requirement by the end of this year to be eligible to play.
 1. The **OVER-19 Division** will be open to any individual born on or before December 31, 1992.
 2. The **OVER-30 Division** is really an over-28 division and will be open to any individual born on or before December 31, 1983. An exception on age is allowed for goalkeepers only; however, even keepers must be at least 19 years old by year end.
 3. The **OVER-40 Division** is really an over-38 division and will be open to any individual born on or before December 31, 1973. An exception on age is allowed for goalkeepers only; however, even keepers must be at least 30 years old by year end.
- b. Players who have not filled out a Player Registration Form and signed the Hold Harmless Agreement will not be eligible to play under any conditions.
- c. To be eligible for playoff participation on any given team in a division, a player must be currently on that team's roster, and have played in at least two regular season games for that team.
- d. The League reserves the right to inspect, at any time, any player's photo id to confirm a player's identity, age, and other information in order to validate his or her eligibility to play. The League President has final authority to determine a player's eligibility at any time.
- e. Teams that recruit players, especially at the last minute, who have not fully met these fundamental eligibility requirements, will be penalized and possibly banned from the League.

2. Code of Conduct

- a. All participants will abide by the rules of the league and act with honor, respect, and safety with regard to the game, the players, the officiating team, league officers, spectators, and the field and facilities. Respect is understood to be the collective responsibility of everyone involved to create a fair, safe and enjoyable environment in which the game can take place.
- b. Participants and their guests will NOT smoke or consume alcohol or engage in any behavior that reflects poorly on the League at any time while on property where matches and practices are scheduled.
- c. Participants will abide by the rules and regulations governing the use of fields and facilities made available to the League and are also expected to leave such property as clean as or cleaner than when they arrived.
- d. Players who exhibit a pattern of misconduct by receiving multiple cautions within a season, or who are sanctioned for serious foul play, violent conduct, spitting, or insulting, offensive, or abusive language and/or gestures will be deemed to have violated the Code of Conduct and be subject to additional penalties.

- e. The Board reserves the right to educate and penalize both individuals and teams as they see fit for both individual and collective breaches of the code of conduct, including the right to ban participants (players, managers, coaches, officials, and teams) from the league temporarily or permanently based on their conduct or the conduct of their guests.

3. Player and Team Registration

- a. The League requires every player to fill out a Player Registration Form and sign the Hold Harmless Agreement. The combined forms are available on the League web site. Returning players must submit a new Player Registration Form and Hold Harmless Agreement annually. The information must be submitted to the League office, typically through the Team Manager, before the individual is eligible to play.
 - 1. The player registration form must clearly indicate name, birth date and place, contact information (mailing address, email, phone), and emergency contact information.
 - 2. The Hold Harmless Agreement must be understood and signed by each player in the presence of a witness, who must countersign the form.
- b. Players may only be on the roster of one team at a time. The rosters submitted to the League by each team manager will be used to resolve any disputes. Rosters will be locked before playoff games begin. If a team wishes to "borrow" an eligible player from another team for a given regular season game, they must request the approval of the opposing team manager, who is under no obligation to grant the request. However, the sharing of keepers is encouraged, as is sharing a few reasonably skilled players in order to field a full side of 11 players and up to 2 substitutes.
- c. Team managers must bring to every game a current roster of players and assist the referee in reporting any red card violations. The league will no longer require team managers to maintain and bring to every game an individual, signed pass for each player.
- d. During the course of the season, teams are allowed to add additional players, but may only remove players with the consent of the League. Roster size may not exceed a maximum of 25 players. Managers are encouraged to forward prospective player names to other teams to keep the league competitive.
- e. A team will be registered in the League once they have fulfilled the following requirements:
 - 1. Provided the League President with a roster of at least 15 players and no more than 25 players who fulfill the eligibility requirements.
 - 2. Provided the League President with completed Player Registration Forms and Hold Harmless Agreements for each player assigned to their team, as well as the contact information for a team manager and one alternate team manager.
 - 3. Paid in full the Team Registration Fee. The fee covers expenses related to soccer field rentals, officiating fees, liability insurance, web site maintenance, and other items approved by the officers of the League.
- f. Teams must provide an initial deposit of at least 20%, or the minimum set by the League President, before the first week of play, and must be completely registered (all forms and fees in full) by the third game of the season. Teams unable to meet the deadline will be assessed an additional late fee of \$50 for each week beyond the deadline.

4. Rules of the Game

All games shall be played under the "Laws of the Game" approved by the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and recognized by the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and this Association with the following modifications and specifications:

- a. On game day, the team managers will bring a hard copy of their team's roster, which will indicate which players are present and eligible to play that day. We recommend team managers keep several copies of their roster and simply check-off exactly who is present on game day. A sample roster is available on the League web site.
- b. The referee, opposing team manager, or a League officer may request a roster from a team manager at any time. Additionally, he may request proof of identity and age of any player.
- c. Opposing team managers, referees or League officers may challenge a player's eligibility before, during, or after a game. If the player and his team manager cannot confirm his identity, age, and eligibility, then he may not play unless the opposing team manager agrees to allow his participation or a League officer decides he is eligible. For games that have already been played, the team fielding the ineligible player may be charged with a forfeit (see rules of the game for more on forfeits) at the discretion of the League President.
- d. Games are played on regulation size soccer fields and will consist of 2 halves of 40 minutes each separated by a 5 minute halftime. Only significant injury time or delay of game will be taken into account at the end of regulation play at the discretion of the referee. Teams are allowed unlimited substitutions during any stoppage in play when recognized by the referee.
- e. The games must be started within 15 minutes from the scheduled start time. If one of the teams causes further delay, it will be considered a forfeit. If both teams are at fault, both of them will be charged with a forfeit. The referees or League may choose to further postpone the start time due to unplayable field conditions, weather or unusual circumstances, but no more than 30 minutes unless both captains agree. Referees have final decision on whether a match can start or proceed safely.
- f. Every team shall identify to the referee a team captain who may be identified during the game by means of an armband. Only the teams' captains are authorized to approach the referee, in a respectful manner, without questioning the integrity of his decision. The referee has no obligation to engage the captain or any player in a conversation. The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final and may not be changed once play has stopped and restarted.
- g. **Slide tackles in OVER-19 and OVER-30 Division are allowed.** Properly executed slide tackles are characterized by contact that is "laces on the ball" using minimal sweeping force from an angle visible to the other player with the legs down and only one leg extended. Poorly executed slide tackles may be treated as playing in a dangerous manner or as a direct kick foul and possibly misconduct at the referee's discretion.

Slide tackles in OVER-40 Division are NOT allowed, except by goalkeepers inside their own penalty area. Properly executed slide tackles, other than by the goalkeeper, are to be treated as "playing in a dangerous manner" resulting in an indirect free kick to the opponent. Sliding by field players is OK when no one else is near, for instance to keep a ball in-play, or to block a ball moving toward a goal.

- h. **Players receiving a yellow card, except goalkeeper, must leave the field for 5 minutes or until end of period, whichever is shorter.** If the team at fault does not have an eligible substitute, then the team will play shorthanded during that time. A player sanctioned with a yellow card cannot be replaced by another player who is himself purging a 5-minute caution. Yellow cards will be reported by the referee on the official game report and will be added to the team's misconduct tally for the season. Players who receive multiple yellow cards during a season may be subject to additional sanctions after review by League officers.
- i. **League Sanctions for Sending-Off Offenses (aka red card violations):** Players who are guilty of a sending-off offense must be clearly identified and reported by both the referee and the captain to the League within 24 hours of the end of the match. Points will be added to the

team's misconduct tally for the season.

A player, substitute or coach who is sent off as a result of receiving a second caution in a match or denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity receives no additional league sanctions for the first offense. All other sending-off offenses are considered a violation of the League's code of conduct and are subject to the minimum sanctions that follow, and depending on the severity of the incident, may result in significantly greater sanctions. Anyone who receives a second send-off within a 12-month period or a third send-off within a 24-month period, for any reason, will receive at least double the minimum sanctions, and perhaps more as determined by the League officers.

If a person is guilty of offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures, there is an automatic **1-game suspension**. If the red card is issued for violent conduct, serious foul play, or spitting, there is an automatic **2-game suspension**. Officers of the league will consider the severity of the incident, including its physical nature and the degree of pre-meditation in order to determine whether more severe sanctions are warranted, which could include a permanent ban from the league.

Captains will be held accountable for players who return to play after violating the code of conduct and who are subsequently sent off for violating the code of conduct within the next 5 games they play. If the subsequent offense is foul language, the captain will be suspended for at least 1 game. If the subsequent offense is violent conduct, serious foul play or spitting, the captain will be suspended for at least 2 games. If a player is caught playing while under suspension, the captain of the team will be suspended for 2 games, and the player's suspension will be doubled.

- j. **Forfeits:** A team failing to show for a scheduled game with at least 7 players will lose the game by forfeit and its opponent will be awarded a win by a score of 5-0 with the points granted for a win. If a team forfeits 3 times during the same season, it will be ejected for the remainder of the season and might not be granted permission to play in subsequent seasons.
- k. **Canceled and Terminated Matches:** There is no guarantee that matches canceled in advance or terminated after kickoff will be rescheduled. If a game must be terminated (e.g. for dangerous weather or field conditions), the score will stand if the first half has been completed. If a game is abandoned for misconduct, the League president will decide how the match will be recorded or whether it will be replayed. There are no refunds for canceled, terminated, or abandoned matches.
- l. **Awarding of points:** the League will be played according to a championship format with each team playing each of the other teams at least once. A win will be granted 4 points, a tie will be granted 2 points, a loss on the field will be granted 1 point whereas a loss by forfeit will be granted no points.
- m. **Tie-breaking rules:** in case two teams or more have the same number of points, they will be separated by the criteria below ranked by order of priority:
 - 1. Overall goal differential (goals scored minus goals given up). Larger differential ranks higher.
 - 2. Misconduct tally (number of yellow and red cards issued): A yellow card gives the team 1 bad point; a red card gives 3 bad points. Fewer points rank higher.
 - 3. Best attack (number of goals scored): Larger number of goals ranks higher.
 - 4. Head-to-head points (for win/draw/loss): Greater number of points accumulated from head-to-head contests.
 - 5. FIFA Kicks from the penalty mark.
- n. **Game report card:** At the end of the game, the referee will write down the following information on the game report card:
 - 1. Final score and score at half-time.

2. Number of yellow cards and red cards issued during the game for each team.
3. Identity of the players who received a red card.

The report cards will be submitted to the League President. In turn the President will publish the results and standings on the League web site.

5. Matters Not Covered

In the event of matters not covered in the rules and regulations of the league, the Constitution or the Bylaws, the League President shall have power to provide for it and such rulings shall be standing and binding until approved, rescinded or varied by a vote at the next Board of Directors meeting.

6. League format

The envisioned format will be a series of matches that may span seasons followed by some kind of play-off format at least annually. The definite schedule and format will be defined and shared with the team managers once the exact number of teams is known for any given season.

7. Notice to Team Managers

We have a gentleman's league with a history of fair-play and very few serious incidents. The League has noticed that some incidents are triggered by players who are unaware of league or FIFA rules and consequently think they have been unfairly treated by either the referee or their opponent.

The League expects team captains and managers to brief their teammates on applicable rules AND either provide them with a copy of these rules OR direct them to the league website where these rules are posted.

Every year, the slide tackle rule is put under scrutiny. In recent years, the slide tackle has been used sparingly and in general appropriately in our over-19 and over-30 divisions. Our referees will continue to apply their seasoned judgment in applying FIFA rules for safe and proper tackling. Careless slide tackling will be whistled, reckless slide tackling will be cautioned, and if considered violent, the player will be ejected.

8. Referees

Referees are assigned and paid by the league administration. Referees must hold a current USSF, NFHS, or NISOA certification. While the League follows FIFA/USSF rules with a few alterations, we recognize that our referees officiate in leagues governed by other rules, such as NFHS and NCAA and may occasionally apply a rule from another association. Such mistakes are to be expected and accepted, but will be brought to the attention of the referees subsequent to the game as appropriate. For reference, see a comparison of the rules at our web site.

9. For more information

visit www.mercermensoccer.net
email [info @ mercermensoccer.net](mailto:info@mercermensoccer.net)

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