



US YOUTH SOCCER NATIONAL LEAGUE CONFERENCE RULES

as of Aug. 17, 2021

SECTION 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.01 US Youth Soccer National Leagues Program and Administration

The US Youth Soccer National League is a program of, and administered by, US Youth Soccer (USYS) in accordance with the USYS Leagues Policy.

1.02 General

These USYS National League Rules shall include the rules for the National Tier of competition, known as the National League P.R.O., and the Conference Tier of competition, known as the National League Conferences.

The National League Management Group has final authority in all matters related to the National League Conferences not specifically provided for by the USYS Leagues Policy, or National League Rules.

NOTE: Sections 2-9 of the National League Rules apply to only the national tier of competition (NL P.R.O.). The full set of rules, including Sections 2-9, can be accessed on the National League Rules & Policies homepage.

SECTION 10. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES INTRODUCTION

10.01 USYS National League Administration

The Conference tier of the USYS National League is a program of, and administered by, USYS in accordance with the USYS Leagues Policy. This tier shall be known as the National League Conferences.

10.02 Rules

Participation in the Conferences is governed by the rules adopted by US Youth Soccer (USYS), the United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer), and the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) except where modified by those rules and these National League Conference rules. These Conference rules may be revised by the National League Management Group on a seasonal year basis and other times as may be necessary or appropriate.

10.03 Matters Not Provided For

The National League Management Group has final authority in all matters related to the National League Conferences not specifically provided for by the USYS Leagues Policy, or National League Rules.

10.04 Conferences

On an annual basis, the National League Management Group shall determine the number of Conferences to be operated during a seasonal year.

10.05 Conference League Managers

On an annual basis, the National League (NL) Commissioner shall appoint a Conference League Manager (also referred to as a League Manager) to oversee all administrative and operational aspects of an individual Conference. A Conference League Manager may be named to oversee more than one Conference during a seasonal year.

10.06 Conference Operating Procedures

Individual Conference Operating Procedures, as established by the Conference League Manager for each Conference that are approved by the NL Commissioner, shall be considered a part of these Rules.

SECTION 11. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES TEAM APPLICATION

11.01 Team Eligibility

Any team properly registered for the current seasonal soccer year with a USYS State Association may request entry to the Conference.

- a) **Returning Team Eligibility** will be contingent on retaining player continuity from their 2020-21 seasonal year club. At all times during the 2021-22 seasonal year, a Conference team must have on its Conference roster, to be eligible to play during the 2021-22 seasonal year, no less than 9 US Youth Soccer players that were on a roster of any US Youth Soccer registered team within such team's club during the 2020-21 seasonal year. If a Returning Team does not retain player continuity, the team shall be considered a "New Team", and will not retain the team's previous position in the Conference.
- b) **New Team Eligibility** will be determined by the team's affiliated US Youth Soccer State Association in accordance with Individual Conference Operating Procedures. Any team relegated out of their Conference will be subject to New Team Eligibility standards by their State Association.
- c) **COVID Waiver** – If a team was unable to compete during the 2020-2021 seasonal year, a waiver may be issued.

11.02 Transfer of Pre-Qualified Slot into Premier I or Premier II

Any movement of a team from one club to another during the course of the seasonal year, including but limited to the time period following acceptance into a Conference, may result in the team being dropped from the league at the sole discretion of the Conference League Manager.

In situations where players from a team transfer to another club in between seasonal years, the club from which the players transferred from shall have the right to retain the Conference slot subject to the Returning Team Eligibility requirements.

In unique situations where players from a team transfer to another club in between seasonal years, and the club from which the players transferred from cannot fulfill the Returning Team Eligibility requirements, the Conference League Manager, subject to oversight by the NL Commissioner, at his/her sole discretion shall review if the club to which the players transferred to shall have a right to the slot. In such cases, the Club Director must file with the Conference League Manager a written document outlining the reason for such movement to another club, and all circumstances surround the movement.

11.03 Contested Pre-Qualified Slot

In unique situations where a Pre-Qualified Conference slot is contested by different clubs, due to the transfer of the majority of players from one team within a club to a team within another club, the Conference League Manager shall review the situation and determine which club, if any, retains the contested slot. The Conference League Manager subject to oversight by the NL Commissioner, may request additional supporting documentation in regards to the contested slot. The process shall include the following:

\$500 fee per team per club for the review of a contested slot

State Association Transfer Rules review

Reasoning for exception to Conference Returning Team Eligibility Requirement (11.01)

11.04 Club Mergers Affecting Pre-Qualified Slot

In situations where there is a mutual desire to merge or consolidate entire organizations/clubs, the Conference League Manager may review and determine whether such teams resulting in the merger or consolidations should be subject to the "Returning Team" or "New Team" eligibility requirements. In such situations, the Conference League Manager may request additional information in regards to this matter including but not limited to the rationale for the merger/consolidation, a guarantee on the number of returning Conference level players for the coming season and any other matter that the Conference League Manager deems pertinent in the review of this matter.

11.05 National Cup Competitions Requirement

Any team making application to a Conference must, subject to the provision herein, have competed in one of US Youth Soccer's National Cup competitions, beginning at the state level in either the State Cup or State Presidents Cup, during the past seasonal year and must also participate in a US Youth Soccer National Cup competition, beginning at the state level in either the State Cup or State Presidents Cup, during the current seasonal year. Currently, the National Cup Competitions include the National Championship Series and the National Presidents Cup.

11.05 (continued)

The requirement for competing in the National Cup Competitions during the past seasonal year and/or current seasonal year may be waived pending a request of waiver by a team in accordance with the individual Conference Operating Procedures. The Conference League Manager for the Conference in consultation with the respective State Association and NL Commissioner may grant or deny the waiver.

11.06 National League Showcase Series Requirement*

All 15U-18U teams competing in a top tier within their USYS National League Conference during the 2021-22 seasonal year must attend a minimum of one (1) USYS National League Showcase Series event to retain their position in the top tier of their 2021-2022 USYS National League Conference or any other 2021-2022 USYS National League Conference.

The requirement of attending a minimum of one (1) USYS National League Showcase Series event during the past seasonal year may be waived pending a request of waiver by a team in accordance with the individual Conference Operating Procedures. The Conference League Manager for the Conference in consultation with the NL Commissioner may grant or deny the waiver.

****Participation in National League P.R.O. satisfies your National League Showcase Series requirement.***

11.07 State Association Team and Player Registration

All teams must be properly registered teams that meet the requirements for participation provided by these rules with their respective US Youth Soccer member State Association. All players on a team must be properly registered with a member State Association.

11.08 Teams from a State Associations

The number of teams recommended by each State Association in each gender age group to the Conference for each season of play shall be in accordance with the individual Conference Operating Procedures.

11.09 Application Deadlines

All applications for participation in a Conference must be received by the deadline established by the Conference League Manager for each Conference.

11.10 Application Process

Team applications to participate in a Conference are to be submitted in a manner and form as determined on a seasonal year basis by the Conference League Manager in each Conference.

11.11 Acceptance of Teams

Teams approved to participate in the Conference by their State Association are not automatically accepted into the Conference. The Conference Team Selection Group, a group within a Conference as determined by the Conference League Manager and approved by the NL Commissioner will evaluate all State Association approved teams and determine final acceptance into the Conference based on the number of positions available and the configuration of teams in each tier and sub-division. It is understood that State Associations shall not unreasonably withhold approval for a team application if such team has earned a Premier I Division or Premier II Division team slot.

11.12 Acceptance of Leagues Policy, Conference Rules, Decisions and Fees

Any team applying to play in a Conference agrees to accept, abide by, and comply with all policies, rules, and decisions of the National League and further agrees to pay all fees that are due to the Conference for participation in the Conference by the applicable deadlines.

11.13 Fees and Other Expenses

Each team playing in a Conference will pay the fees established by the Conference. The Conference is not responsible for expenses incurred by teams through travel, housing, coaching, uniforms, and other related team operating costs. All entry fees are non-refundable subject to the Conference Operating Procedures.

11.14 Final Authority

The Conference League Manager of a Conference after consultation with State Associations shall have the final authority and right to refuse admittance of any team based upon the team's prior performance in the Conference or other competitions. These factors include, but are not limited to: failure to play Conference matches as scheduled; failure to comply with Conference rules; failure to pay Conference referees; and/or failure to pay assessed Conference fees or fines on time.

11.15 Additional State Association Entry Fees and Bonds

State Associations may require an additional fee or bond for participation in the Conference. Such fees and bonds are to be handled directly by the teams with their respective State Association. The Conference does not participate nor endorse such State Association requirements.

11.16 Contact Information and Communication

All teams in a Conference shall have contact information on file with the Conference, including, but not limited to:

- a) the Team Administrator's Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address;
- b) the Team Coach's Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address; and the Club's Technical Director's (Director of Coaching) Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address. E-mail will be the primary means of communication within the Conference. It is the responsibility of each team to ensure that accurate contact information is on file with the Conference.

SECTION 12. NL CONFERENCE TIER – LEAGUE STRUCTURE

12.01 Structure

The Conference Operating Procedures shall outline the gender age groups to be offered during a seasonal year, the tiers of competition (to be called Premier I, Premier II, First Division etc.) during a seasonal year, the number of teams and sub- divisions within each tier of competition, and the format of the competition within the Conference. The Conference Operating Procedures shall also include the club versus club formats (if applicable) and promotion and relegations procedures from season to season and tier to tier.

12.02 Team Selection, Tier Placement, and Division Placement including Promotion and Relegation

The Conference League Manager, with the approval of the NL Commissioner, shall be responsible for the process that determines the selection of the placement of teams into tiers, and the placement of teams into sub-divisions within each tier for each Boys and Girls Age Group. The process of determining the placement of teams into tiers will utilize the accepted concept of Promotion and Relegation of teams between tiers based on the finish of teams in the previous year's Conference standings. At a minimum, if applicable, at least one team from each higher tier level shall automatically be relegated to the next lower tier. At a minimum, at least one team from each lower tier level shall automatically be promoted to the next higher tier level. The number of teams relegated and promoted between tiers will be reviewed and determined on a seasonal basis by the Conference League Manager as well as on an age group-by-age group basis and a tier-by-tier basis.

12.03 Premier I Division or Premier II Division Team—Failure to Return to Conference

In situations whereby a team does not apply for participation for a season where such team had previously earned placement as a Premier I Division or Premier II Division team, such slot may be filled at the discretion of the Conference Team Selection Group in accordance with the Conference Operating Procedures.

SECTION 13. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES TEAM ROSTERS

13.01 Team Rosters

Teams must file with the Conference, in a process outlined in the Conference Operating Procedures, its State Association approved Team Roster and State Association approved Club Pass Player Roster. Additions to the Team Roster or the Club Pass Player Roster must be filed with the Conference no later than 24 hours prior to a game's kick off in order for players listed on the roster(s) to be eligible to play. An authorized official from the Team's respective home State Association must authorize the validity of all rostered players in order for players to be eligible for Conference play.

13.02 Player Eligibility

All players must be current US Youth Soccer members and have member passes that have been approved by their respective State Association. During a Conference season, a player may be listed on one Team Roster. Players listed on a Team Roster may also be listed on a Club Pass Roster(s) on team(s) within the same US Youth Soccer affiliated club as approved by the team's State Association, in accordance with Conference Operating Procedures. A player that is rostered to a team outside of the Conference but within the same US Youth Soccer affiliated club as approved by the team's State Association, may also be listed on the Club Pass Roster(s) on team(s) within the same US Youth Soccer affiliated club. In situations where a player may be listed as a Primary or Secondary player, such player may only be on a Team Roster or Club Pass Roster for a team within the player's Primary Club.

13.03 Maximum Roster Size and Pool of Players

The maximum number of players on a Team Roster shall be 22 although the pool of players eligible to participate for an individual team is 30. Such pool of players may include club pass players, as well as any players that may have been added to the Team Roster once the team's Conference season has commenced. Procedures for submitting approved rosters for Conference play are within each of the Conference Operating Procedures.

13.04 Player Limitations

A primary rostered player may only play for one team in a Conference Division in which their primary team is participating. In situations where a club has multiple teams participating in the same Conference Division, at no time may such primary players appear on both Conference Division rosters. Under no circumstances may a player be listed on multiple team rosters if such teams are from different clubs.

During the Conference season, a Goalkeeper may be listed on up to two (2) Conference team match day team lineups per day from the same club, with the written consent by the Conference League Manager. A Goalkeeper may not play on more than one team in the same gender age group of a Conference Division, and is subject to the same standards as club pass players.

13.05 Team Match Day Team Line Ups

The Conference Operating Procedures shall outline the procedures for creating and using Team Match Day Line Ups for each Conference Match.

13.06 Member Passes Presented to Referee

Valid US Youth Soccer member passes for the current seasonal year shall be presented to the referee for the match in accordance with the Conference Operating Procedures.

13.07 Playing of Ineligible Player

A team that plays an ineligible player shall be subject to disciplinary action that could include, but not be limited to: (a) forfeiture of the match; and (b) suspension of the team's coach from Conference competition. Additional disciplinary action could include (a) expulsion of the team from the Conference; and/or (b) any further action(s) as determined by the Conference League Manager.

13.08 Additional Player Information

The Conference at its discretion may require participating teams to provide additional information on players for use in promoting the Conference and/or its teams and players. Teams are required to submit information as requested in procedures established by the Conference.

SECTION 14. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES SCHEDULING AND MATCH MANAGEMENT

14.01 Number of Games

Each team will be scheduled to play a minimum of four (4) games in a season. The scheduled number of games shall be determined by the Conference League Manager based on the number of teams in a division

14.02 Scheduling of Conference Games

The Conference League Manager for each Conference shall determine the manner to schedule matches as per the Conference Operating Procedures.

14.03 Match Schedule and Rest Periods

It is the intent of the league to play only one match per day; however, when circumstances dictate, no more than two matches a day may be scheduled. Every effort will be made to provide for a minimum of three hours rest between matches.

14.04 Inclement Weather and Unplayable Field Conditions Prior to Match

The Host is responsible for notifying the Conference League Manager as soon as possible if games on scheduled fields are unable to be played due to field closings or inclement weather. Rescheduling of games is done in accordance with Conference Scheduling Policy.

14.05 Referee Jurisdiction

Once the referee has jurisdiction of a match, the match may be stopped, suspended, or terminated as provided in the "IFAB Laws of the Game."

14.06 Travel/Hosting

For the purpose of Conference competition, Permission to Host/Travel Forms are not required. Permission to host/travel is granted when a team's respective State Association approves the team's application into the Conference.

- a) At the discretion of the Conference League Manager, the Conference may require out-of-town teams to use specific hotels in order to participate in a Conference hosted event. Such requirements are to be listed by the Conference at the time a location is offered to teams for scheduling and may include disciplinary action for any violation(s). All teams are required to coordinate hotel stays through the designated hotel provider as designated by the Conference.

14.07 Match Management Procedures

The Conference League Manager has the authority to make the final decision on all aspects related to a match outside of the jurisdiction of the referees. Conference Match Management Procedures are listed within the Conference Operating Procedures.

14.08 Additional Match Management Procedures

On an emergency basis, the Conference League Manager may impose additional Match Management Procedures. These additional procedures shall be limited to those items that are necessary, in the sole opinion of the Conference League Manager, in order for a match to be played.

14.09 Responsibility of Teams

The officials of a team at a match (as provided by Rule 18.01), are responsible for the behavior, conduct and control of team players, support staff, supporters including but not limited to family and friends, and team management staff. Failure to abide by this rule may result in Disciplinary Action as determined by the Conference League Manager.

SECTION 15. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES STANDINGS

15.01 Earning Points in Matches

The standings of teams within a competition format will be based upon the number of points earned from each match. Teams earn points as follows: 3 points for a win; 1 point for a tie; and no points for a loss.

15.02 Forfeits

A forfeited match will be scored as a 1-0 win for the opponent. A team forfeiting any match shall be dropped from the Conference at the discretion of the Conference League Manager following a review of the incident resulting in any Forfeits. Should a team be dropped, all scores for that team in the seasonal year schedule shall be recorded as a 1-0 win for the opponent. In addition, a team that forfeits one of more matches may be subject to further sanctioning including but not limited to a fine, become ineligible to advance to Regionals, become ineligible to advance to National League P.R.O., or be suspended from the National League. The Conference League Manager of the Conference, after consultation with the NL Commissioner shall determine any additional sanctioning.

15.03 Uneven Number of Matches

In the event that the teams in a competitions format do not play the same number of matches due to unforeseen circumstances, excluding matches that teams forfeit, the Conference League Manager of a Conference shall determine the Final Standings utilizing any tie-breaking procedures of Rule 15.04 that may need to be applied or by using the percentage of points earned versus the maximum points the team could have earned as the tiebreaker.

15.04 Tiebreakers

The following tiebreaker criteria apply to the competitions within each Conference.

Tiebreakers—Two Teams are Tied

If two teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the team's placement will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria:

- a) Winner of head to head competition
- b) Winner of most games (all games)
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games
- d) Fewest goals allowed
- e) Coin Toss

Tiebreakers—Three Teams That Are Tied

If three teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the three-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied resorts to the two team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games)
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all game.
- g) Drawing of lots

Tiebreakers—Four Teams That Are Tied

If four teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the four-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied (either two or three teams) resorts to the two or three team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the tied teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games)
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all games
- g) Drawing of lots

Tiebreakers—Five Teams That Are Tied

If five teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the five-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied (two, three or four teams) resorts to the two, three or four team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the tied teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games)
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all games
- g) Drawing of lots

Tiebreakers—Six Teams That Are Tied

If five teams are tied on the basis of points earned, the final rankings will be determined in accordance with the following sequential criteria. If a criterion creates a situation where the six-way tie is broken, then the tiebreaker for the teams that are tied (two, three, four or five teams) resorts to the two, three, four or five team tiebreaker specifically for those teams.

- a) Points earned in head to head competition among the tied teams
- b) Winner of most games (all games)
- c) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in games among the tied teams
- d) Best Goal spread (goals scored minus goals against) in all games
- e) Fewest goals allowed in games among the tied teams
- f) Fewest goals allowed in all games
- g) Drawing of lots

Tiebreakers—Not Covered

For any situation not covered within these rules, the Conference League Manager will also determine any tie-breaking procedures that may need to be applied.

SECTION 16. NL CONFERENCE TIER– CONFERENCES REGIONAL COMPETITIONS

16.01 Qualification to USYS Regional Competitions

On an annual basis, the Conference shall publish based on the structure of the Premier I and top Club based tier of play within each Conference, the process for determining qualification to the Regional Competition of the National Championships Series. Such process will be outlined in the Conference Operating Procedures.

16.02 Failure to Accept Qualification Slot to Regionals

A team that achieves a qualification slot from the Conference is expected to honor the commitment to participate in the Regional Competition. As stated in Rule 16.01, the Conference shall publish the process for determining qualification to the Regional Competition of the National Championships Series. Failure to field a team in such Regional Competition may result in fines as determined by the Conference League Manager.

SECTION 17. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES RULES OF PLAY

17.01 Applicable Rules and Laws of the Game

Matches will be played under the applicable policies and rules of USYS. Teams are responsible for obtaining and abiding by the IFAB Laws of the Game as they govern play subject to the modifications noted in these rules.

17.02 Substitutions

- a) Matches in the 15U, 16U, 17U, 18U and 19U age groups will operate under the FIFA-7 players “per half” substitution system. Once replaced, players cannot re-enter the game during that half of play.
- b) Unlimited vs Limited substitution policies shall be aligned with the National Championship Series Policy and shall be outlined in the Individual Conference Operating Procedures.
- c) Substitutions may be made at any stoppage of play with the approval of the referee.
- d) Reentry shall be at a normal substitution point (with approval of the referee) or at any point during the game if the referee signals for the player’s reentry.
- e) During a match is that is part of a Conference event using neutral Health Care Professionals (HCP) or neutral Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC) to monitor the fields, if a player is suspected of suffering a head injury, such player may be substituted for evaluation. The substitution for the evaluation of a concussion/head injury will not count towards the team’s total allowed substitutions in a half. However, the team must have at least one substitution available to implement this temporary substitution.
 - 1) If the player is deemed by the neutral HCP or neutral ATC to not have been diagnosed as having a possible concussion, the player may re-enter the game at any stoppage of play and must replace the original substitute. This head injury evaluation substitution will not count as a used substitution in the half. Furthermore, the temporary substitute will be able to re-enter the game in that half at a later time.
 - 2) If the player is not cleared to return to play by the HCP or ATC, the replacement player will no longer be considered a temporary substitute and the team will be charged a substitution.
 - 3) Any discipline issued to the temporary substitute will count for the remainder of the game.

17.03 Match Length

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Length of Each Half</u>
17U, 18U and 19U	45 minutes
15U and 16U	40 minutes
13U and 14U	35 minutes
12U	30 minutes

17.04 Field Size

Fields for all age groups must meet the U.S. Soccer/FIFA requirements for field size.

17.05 Forfeit Due to Failure to Appear for Match

Failure to appear for a scheduled match will result in a forfeit. A team must be present and ready to play (7-player minimum) within 10 minutes of scheduled match time.

17.06 Anchored Goals

The coaches and match referee should inspect the integrity of the goals to ensure they are secure and suitable for play.

17.07 Team Uniforms

Team and individual player Uniforms for Conference matches must conform as follows:

- a) Each player (except a goalkeeper) shall have a number on the player's jersey. The number shall be affixed to the back of the jersey and be clearly visible. Each player on a team must wear a number different from the number of every other player on the team. Numbered jerseys on goalkeepers are optional. Numbers should be affixed to the jersey and no taped numbers are permitted
- b) All teams are required to attend each match with two (2) sets of jerseys and socks for all of its players; one set of light colored jerseys and socks, and a second set of dark colored jerseys and socks.
- c) It is expected that the first team listed on the match schedule is to wear light/white color jerseys and socks. When there is a conflict in uniform color, the team listed second on the Conference schedule must change its jerseys and socks, except in situations where the team listed first is wearing dark colored jerseys and/or socks, then the team listed first must change to light/white color jerseys and socks. The Referee shall define what constitutes light and dark color jerseys and socks.
- d) The Conference League Manager of each Conference shall have the option to assign jersey colors to teams for matches, should the Conference League Manager deem that such procedure is appropriate.
- e) In the event of color conflict with referees, the referees shall change jersey colors.
- f) Teams playing in the Conference are permitted to have the following limited items on their game uniforms:
 - 1) USYS logo or directly related USYS logoed patches
 - 2) Their individual club and/or team logo and team sponsor logo
 - 3) Manufacturer of uniform logo
 - 4) Name and number of player
 - 5) No other patches or logos are permitted unless written permission is granted by the Conference League Manager
 - 6) All patches or logos not permitted must either be covered up or removed

17.08 Coaching from Sidelines

Limited coaching is permitted only from one touch line from the team's respective technical area (if marked) or from the center-line to no more than 5 yards from the end of the team bench closest to the goal line (if no technical area is marked). Team bench persons may not enter the field without permission from the referee.

17.09 Official Match

If less than one half is completed and the match is terminated because of weather or other unplayable conditions, the entire match must be replayed, subject to review by the Conference League Manager for the Conference. If the first full half of a match is played, and the second half of the match is not played because of weather or unplayable field conditions, the match is official and the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated. If a match is terminated during the second half of play due to inclement weather or unplayable field conditions as determined by the referee in accordance with the IFAB Laws of the Game, the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated.

17.10 Team Bench Area and Supervision

No more than four (4) team bench persons (being only team coaches, team administrators, and team medical staff) shall be permitted at the team bench area during a match. Also, those players listed on the match lineup card are permitted at the team bench area during a match. A suspended team bench person is not permitted at the Team Bench Area. A coach, manager or team official must supervise a Conference team at all times at the Team Bench Area. Coaches, managers and team officials are required to provide the Referee with a pass, as provided by their host State Association, certifying that the coach, manager or team official is currently rostered with the team/club. If by send off or emergency, a team does not have a coach, manager or team official to supervise the Conference team during a Conference game, then the game shall be forfeited.

17.11 Team Coaches – Coaching Education Requirement

On an annual basis, the National League Management Group shall determine the minimum levels of coaching education needed by each coach in order to supervise a team in individual Conference Competition. Minimum levels of coaching education shall be outlined in the individual Conference Operating Procedures. Coaching education levels from U.S. Soccer, United Soccer Coaches and foreign national associations may be considered in meeting such standards.

SECTION 18. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES REFEREES

18.01 Three Person System

Matches should be officiated by the three-person FIFA/USSF Referee System. In the event the assigned officials fail to appear; an attempt to secure certified officials should be done to officiate the match. In the event certified USSF officials are not available, the Referee may appoint Club Assistant Referees. Club Assistant Referees shall be limited to decisions only on touchlines and possession as specified by FIFA/USSF Referee Guidelines. Additional procedures may be listed within the Conference Operating Procedures.

18.02 Game Officials

Game officials will be assigned under the authority of the Conference working with the hosting USYS State Association.

18.03 Referee Assignor

Match officials will be assigned under the authority of the Conference League Manager of the Conference.

18.04 Payment of Referees

Referee and Assistant Referees are paid in accordance with the Conference Operating Procedures.

18.05 Filing of Referee Match Report

The filing of the Referee Match Report shall follow the procedures as outlined in the Conference Operating Procedures.

SECTION 19. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES SEND OFFS AND DISCIPLINE

19.01 Protocol for Send Offs and Dismissals

Any player sent off from a match must leave the field area and retreat to the parking area of the complex or an area designated by the Conference League Manager. Any team bench person dismissed from participating in a match must leave the field area and retreat to the parking area of the complex or an area designated by the Conference League Manager. Any player sent off or dismissed team bench person is prohibited from communicating with his/her team while the team is at the field for its match, including but not limited to cell phone use, texting, tweeting, or other means of communication. Violation of this rule may result in further disciplinary action against the individual and/or team. The match officials on site are authorized to prohibit the use of any communication devices at the team bench areas.

19.02 Send Offs and Dismissals – Automatic Suspension

Any player sent off or non-player dismissed under Rule 19.01 will be automatically suspended for the next day of Conference competition and for the team's next Conference match (suspensions served concurrently). For a second send off or dismissal during a seasonal year and any send off or dismissal thereafter, the player or non-player will automatically be suspended for the next day of Conference competition and the team's next two (2) Conference matches (served concurrently). Any player sent off or dismissed non-player must comply with the location and communication provisions of Rule 19.01.

19.03 Send Offs and Dismissals – Review by Conference League Manager of a Conference

All send offs and dismissals are to be reviewed by the Conference League Manager of the Conference who may determine at his/her sole discretion that an additional suspension shall be assessed.

19.04 Playing of a Suspended Player

A team that plays an ineligible, suspended player shall be subject to disciplinary action which could include, but not be limited to: (a) forfeiture of the match, and (b) suspension of the team's coach from Conference competition. Additional disciplinary action could include (a) expulsion of the team from the Conference; and/or (b) any further action(s) not limited to fines as determined by the Conference League Manager.

19.05 Reporting Send Offs to States

The Conference League Manager may distribute information on all send offs to the respective State Associations.

19.06 Suspensions Incurred at Last Match of Seasonal Year

If a player or non-player is sent off during the last match of the Conference seasonal year, the suspension shall be served at the team's next Conference match. The Conference League Manager of the Conference has the right to impose additional sanctions with regard to any matters arising from participation in the Conference as the result of the sending off.

19.07 Termination of Matches

Referees may terminate matches for lack of crowd control, poor team behavior or other unsportsmanlike circumstances. Each coach is responsible for the behavior and conduct of his/her players. Upon request by the Game Officials, coaches are responsible to assist in the control of parents, fans, and spectators. The Referee will report the termination of any match to the Conference League Manager or their designee within 24 hours. The Conference League Manager shall ascertain the facts and determine appropriate disciplinary action that may include:

- a) Reprimand,
- b) Forfeiture of game as appropriate;
- c) Suspension from future Conference matches or
- d) Recommendation to the National League Management Group of a more severe penalty.

If play is stopped at any time due to one of the teams (by action of players, coaches, administrators, spectators) adjudged to be at fault, it shall be at the discretion of the Conference League Manager whether the game is to be replayed or declared a forfeit.

19.08 Match Manipulation

Match manipulation is when a team or teams fail to compete in the spirit of the competition or are involved in the manipulation of a game result. Reports of suspected match manipulation must be extensively substantiated in writing and be filed in writing with the Conference League Manager no later than 2 hours following the completion of the match in question. Reports of suspected match manipulation in a Referee Report may be filed with the Conference League Manager in accordance with the individual Conference Operating Procedures. The Conference League Manager will investigate and adjudicate all allegations of match manipulation and will impose appropriate sanctions.

Verified instances of match manipulation shall be subject to sanctioning at the discretion of the Conference League Manager. Such sanctions against the team and club found guilty of match manipulation may include but may not be limited to: (1) a minimum \$10,000 fine; (2) forfeiture of all Conference matches; (3) suspension of the team coach(es) and club Director of Coaching; and/or (4) suspension from Conference play for following seasonal year.

19.09 Violation of Rules or Conference Operating Procedures

Any violation of the rules herein or Conference Operating Procedures not specifically address in these rules will be subject to disciplinary action by the Conference League Manager of the Conference.

SECTION 20. NL CONFERENCE TIER – CONFERENCES PROTESTS AND APPEALS

20.01 Definition of a Protest

A protest is a formal written objection of any violation of established policies, rules, or procedures related to a specific match and can only be filed by the Club Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. Only those teams involved are permitted to protest a match result. Third parties, i.e., coaches from other teams, state administrators, cannot file protests on a specific match. Protests must be based upon a violation of the published rules of the USYS, U.S. Soccer, the Conference competition, or IFAB Laws of the Game.

20.02 Protests of Match Played

To be valid and eligible for consideration, a protest must be orally lodged by a team official with the match referee and the opposing coach at the game site before leaving the field of play. All protests must be submitted in writing and filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching of the Club that the team is a member with the appropriate fee to the Conference League Manager. The formal written protest must be postmarked no later than three (3) business days after match completion in accordance with the Filing Procedures listed in Rule 20.06. The referee is the final authority on the field of play. All decisions of the referees with respect to matters of fact, including judgment matters, are final.

20.03 Hearing of Protest

The National League Management Group shall hear all protests by no later than seven US Youth Soccer business (7) days following the receipt of the protest fee. The NL Commissioner, as a member of the National League Management Group, will not be a part of the protest hearing.

20.04 Definition of an Appeal

An Appeal is a request to transfer the matter from one jurisdiction to another for re-examination of the decision made by the lower body. Appeals arise as the result of an adverse decision from an administrative action or disciplinary action at a lower level. Only those parties to the original action, who are adversely impacted by such decisions, shall be allowed to appeal. An Appeal may only be filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. An appeal must be filed in accordance with Section 20.06 within five (5) days after a decision is rendered by the National League Management Group.

20.05 Appeals Committee

The Conference shall have a National League Appeals Committee. The National League Appeals Committee shall have jurisdiction of appeals as provided in the rules of this Section 20. The NL Commissioner shall appoint members to the Committee for each appeal that is filed. Members of the National League Appeals Committee shall have no conflict of interest in the matters being appealed and shall not be associated with any of the principals involved. The National League Appeals Committee shall be chaired by one of the members designated by the NL Commissioner. The Appeals Committee shall be composed of no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 members.

Decisions of the National League Appeals Committee shall be final.

20.06 Filing Procedures

A protest or appeal must be filed in writing and must include:

- a) The nature and specifics of the complaint.
- b) A listing of the policies, rules, and/or procedures that have been violated.
- c) A statement of the desired resolution.
- d) Copies of all documents relevant to the protest or appeal.
- e) The filing fee for a protest or appeal is \$500 (certified check or money order – made payable to US Youth Soccer).

All protests and appeals must be filed with the Conference League Manager. The original document of the protest or appeal, along with all supporting documents, must be sent by Registered or Certified U. S. Mail – Return Receipt Requested, or by a reputable overnight courier service.

20.07 Hearing of Appeal

An appeal of a Conference League Manager decision shall be heard by the National League Management Group. An appeal of a National League Management Group decision shall be heard by the National League Appeals Committee. The USYS CEO in consultation with the NL Commissioner, may determine that an appeal of a Conference League Manager decision may be heard directly by the National League Appeals Committee.

20.08 Notification of Parties

The Conference League Manager shall notify all parties involved, no later than three (3) business days after receipt of an appeal or protest, that an appeal or protest has been filed.

20.09 Disputes, Discipline & Appeals

The Conference League Manager is authorized to settle disputes which arise in the course of Conference competition. The Conference League Manager, in accordance with the disciplinary policies and procedures of USYS and US Soccer, will investigate and adjudicate all allegations of misconduct by teams, coaches, players, or others involved in National League operations and will impose an appropriate sanction for any violation found.

When an appeal of a Conference League Manager's decision is authorized under this section 20, the appeal will be heard in accordance with Rule 20.07.

20.10 National League Appeals Committee Decisions

Appeals shall be considered and determined by the National League Appeals Committee in person or by telephone conference call at the Chairman of the National League Appeals Committee's direction. Consideration and determination of an appeal shall be closed to the public and the parties. The National League Appeals Committee will render a decision no later than fourteen (14) business days after receipt of the appeal. Decisions shall be reduced to written form and shall be sent to the principal parties no later than two (2) business days after the conclusion of deliberations (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and holidays).

20.11 Return of Filing Fee

In the event that a Protest or Appeal is fully upheld then the filing fee shall be returned to the entity filing the Protest or Appeal; otherwise the filing fee is non-refundable.

20.12 US Youth Soccer Bylaw Section 4 of Article XVII

Section 4 of Article XVII of the USYS bylaws provides the following:

- a) No member of USYSA, official league, club, team, player, coach, administrator or referee may invoke the aid of the courts of the United States or of a state without first exhausting all available remedies with the appropriate soccer organization, and as provided by USYSA.
- b) For a violation of this bylaw, the offending party shall be subject to suspension and fines, and shall be liable to USYSA for all expenses incurred by USYSA and its officers and members of the board of directors in defending each court action, including the following:
 - 1) court costs;
 - 2) attorney's fee;
 - 3) reasonable compensation for time spent by USYSA officials and employees in responding to and defending allegations in the action, including responses to discovery and court appearances;
 - 4) travel expenses; and
 - 5) expenses for holding special National Council meetings necessitated by court action.