

NORTHERN ILLINOIS SOCCER LEAGUE

COMPETITION RULES

Section 1. Equipment

1.1 Safety

A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to themselves or another player (including all jewelry).

1.2 Casts

Orthopedic (hard) casts, air splints or metal splints may be worn, players will be allowed to play in a cast at the discretion of the Referee.

1.3 Jewelry

Absolutely no jewelry, including rings, chains, watches, jewelry, hair clips, bobby pins, earrings, bracelets, rubber bracelets, or abnormally long fingernails may be worn while participating in any NISL games. Only Medical Alert Warning Bracelets may be worn and shall be taped to secure them to the player's body. Earrings and other piercings cannot be taped and must be removed.

1.4 Shinguards

All players are required to always use shin guards. They must be worn properly and be professionally manufactured and unaltered. Socks must completely cover shin guards.

1.5 Braces Medical

It is strongly recommended for the safety of the player, that a player does not wear a brace during NISL games. Braces are allowed as long as the Referee decides that the brace will not or cannot hurt the player wearing the brace or any other player. All metal, metal-like, or plastic brace supports are to be properly covered for the duration of the match. Elastic-type supports without any metal, carbon fiber, hard plastic or like devices are permitted provided the Referee does not deem the support to be potentially harmful to other players.

1.6 Eyeglasses

Players who must wear eyeglasses are encouraged to wear sports goggles. Lenses must be unbreakable and frames must be unbreakable plastic or sturdy metal.

1.7 Home Team Kits

Teams are expected to wear home kits. In the event of a conflict, assuming the Home team is wearing the appropriate Home Kit as published, the Away team must change.

1.8 Player Numbers

Player numbers must be affixed to the back of the uniform shirt. Each field player shall wear a unique number. It is NISL's preference that the goalkeeper also have a number affixed to the back of the jersey, but this is not mandatory

1.9 Game Balls

The home team will furnish at least three (3) game balls (preferably of the same brand and quality) inflated to proper pressure.

1.10 Technical Area

NISL encourages both team benches to be on the same side of the field.

Section 2. Rosters

2.1 Player Registration

Players shall be registered according to NISL/ [US Club Soccer](#) rules.

2.2 Game Roster

Each team must create an official NISL roster (“Game Card”) in their GotSport account for each competition. Teams must bring an official, printed, Game Card to each match. Only players approved with US Club Soccer will be able to be added to the Game Card and therefore, only players who are listed on the official Game Card will be eligible to play in NISL matches. If any player is not listed on the Game Card, he/she must be added electronically to the roster before the player is eligible to play. Team rosters may contain up to 26 players, and there is no limit to the number of changes that can be made to the roster, provided the players are active in the team’s Club and are not on another Club’s US Club Roster.

2.3 Dressed Players

Only 18 players for U13 and up, 16 players for U11-U12 and 14 players for U9-U10 may dress for NISL matches.

2.4 Adult/Staff Credentials

Each adult/staff must present either a digital or laminated US Club Soccer pass in order to be present on the team’s bench for any match.

2.5 Guest Players

No guest players are allowed in NISL league play. For purposes of clarity, guest players from another club that are not registered with your club may not participate in NISL league play.

2.6 Ineligible Players

Any player who does not appear on the official NISL Game Card or has a valid US Club Soccer Player Pass issued by the same Club at the time of the match **or** an ECNL or GAL player as outlined in 5.1 **or** an ineligible player per NISL Administrative Rule 1.5 shall be considered an ineligible player.

Any team fielding an ineligible player will forfeit the match with a 0-3 score.

Disciplinary action may be found in NISL Administrative Rule 4.3.

2.7 Gender of Teams

NISL recognizes two types of teams:

- 1) Teams with females only are classified as “Girls” teams.
- 2) All other teams are classified as “Boys” teams.

Regarding transgender players participating on teams in which the player identifies, see [U.S. Soccer Policy 601-5](#) (“Inclusion Policy”). All members of U.S. Soccer, such as NISL through its membership of US Club Soccer, must abide by this policy.

(A) To clarify the Bylaws, membership of the Federation is open to all soccer organizations and all soccer players, coaches, trainers, managers, administrators and officials without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or national origin.

(B) For the purposes of registration on gender-based amateur teams, a player may register with the gender team with which the player identifies, and confirmation sufficient for guaranteeing access shall be satisfied by documentation or evidence that shows the stated gender is sincerely held, and part of a person's core identity. Documentation satisfying the herein stated standard includes, but is not limited to, government-issued documentation or documentation prepared by a health care provider, counselor, or other qualified professional not related to the player.

(C) This policy shall not apply to the Federation's National Teams programs, but application of this or a similar policy shall be re-evaluated at such time as FIFA addresses the issue.

(D) This policy shall not apply to Professional Leagues.

Section 3. Competition Rules for NISL

3.1 Playing Rules

All games under league jurisdiction shall be played according to the rules and regulations recognized by NISL which shall be the same rules set by FIFA/U.S.S.F except for those exceptions authorized by FIFA or U.S.S.F. and provided in these rules.

	8U NISL Fives	9U/10U	11U	12U	13U/14U	15U/16U	17U-19U
Field Size (yds)	30/40 L 25/35 W	50/65 L 35/45 W	70/80 L 45/55 W		100/120 L 60/80 W		
Number of Referees	1	1	1*		3		
Number of Players	5v5	7v7	9v9		11v11		
Minimum # of Players	4	5	6		7		
Goalkeeper	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		
Playing Time	2x25	2x30	2x35		2x40	2x40	2x45
Ball Size	3	4			5		
Goal Size (feet)	4.5 x 9	6.5x18.5 – 7x21			8x24		
Offside	No	Yes (All Ages) **9U/10U - only in effect between build out line and end line					
Substitutions	On the Fly	On the fly		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own throw-in • Opposing team throw-in (if team in possession is substituting) • Goal kick • After a goal • Halftime • Injury (for injured player only, or opposing team if team whose player is injured chooses to substitute) 			
Fouls (type of kick)	All Direct	Per Laws					
Free Kick clearance	6 yd	8 yd			10 yd		
Penalty Kicks	NO	Yes (mark at 10 yds)			Yes (mark at 12 yds)		
Penalty Area (yds)	8x18	12x24	14x36		18x44		
Punting	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Goal Area (yards)	N/A	4x8	5x16		6x 20		
Heading	None	None	None	per Laws	per Laws	per Laws	per Laws
Build-Out Line**	Yes <i>Use midfield?</i>	Yes	None		None		

3.2 U.S. Soccer Mandates

NISL follows all U.S. Soccer mandates, with no further modification. [Information is here.](#)

3.3 Game Details

*May use one Referee, if needed.

**Use of cones for lines permitted.

3.4 Fields

The playing field (see 3.1) used by each team must be lined according to U.S.S.F. standards with anchored goals (games can be played as long as both goals are the same size), nets and flags. The goal of each Club shall be to provide an enjoyable experience for the fans, players, officials, and everyone involved with the staging of a soccer game.

3.5 Heading

For U11 and below, when a **PLAYER DELIBERATLY** heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If a player does not deliberately head the ball, then play should continue.

This rule shall apply to the age groups of U11 and below. Players who are playing up will play according to the rules of the age group in which they are playing. It is the Club's responsibility to understand the effects of this rule on players playing up.

3.6 Substitutions

Substitutions shall be unlimited in all NISL matches, with the possible exception of NPL matches, which would be clarified in the NPL Rules. Teams may substitute only with the Referee's permission and for 13U+ matches, and only in defined moments per Rule 3.3.

Substitutions for 9U-12U age groups may occur on the fly.

3.7 Head injuries

Any player suspected of suffering a head injury must be evaluated by a licensed medical professional prior to returning to play. In the absence of a medical professional, the league asks that all coaches follow the Heads Up Certification training process to remove the player from the field and have the player evaluated by a medical professional at a later date.

3.8 Ties in League Play

If a league game is tied after regulation, the tie stands and will be posted as a tie.

3.9 Ties in Playoffs and/or Cup Matches – Not applicable at the moment

3.10 Incomplete Games Due to Weather or Other Reasons

In the event that a game cannot be completed due to weather or other reasons, the game will stand if half or more of the game was played; provided, however that if any team is directly responsible for the termination of the game, no matter how much of the match remains, due to poor sportsmanship towards a Referee, opposing fans, or opposing players, the team will be required to forfeit the match. This could also lead to other sanctions set forth by the NISL League Office. If there is no result, and the match is suspended prior to the expiration of one half, the game shall be replayed at a time agreed upon by the competing teams and submitted to NISL per Administrative Rule 2.4.

3.11 No Show's

A no-show occurs when a team willfully does not show up to a game agreed to by the teams. The penalty for a no-show shall be a forfeit to the opposing team with a 0-3 score as well as a \$300 fine imposed on the Club. Two no-shows in a single season shall result in the offending team's removal from the competition.

3.12 Both Teams Must Appear

Unless communication exists otherwise, regardless of whether and/or field conditions, Coaches and their teams must appear at the match site, ready to play at the scheduled time of the match or forfeit the match. Once teams have arrived to the field, the Referee is the only person authorized to cancel the match. If weather and/or field conditions are questionable for playing the match and the Referee fails to appear, the decision to play or cancel is granted to the home team.

3.13 Forfeits

A forfeit occurs when a team is unable to attend a scheduled game, and the teams are unable to come to terms on a time to reschedule (after the scheduling deadline has passed). A forfeit will result in a 3-0 win to the team not at fault. A team unable to attend a scheduled game because of an accident, or “Act of God” should immediately notify the opponent and the League Office. In these circumstances, the League Office will review and rule on the situation.

In situations not involving an “Act of God” and a team forfeits a match, the club will be fined \$200-\$500, depending on the reason for the forfeit. The NISL Office will rule in such situations.

3.14 League Standings Point System

All NISL leagues shall operate under a point system. The point system shall award three points for a win, one point for a tie and no points for a loss.

3.15 League Standings Tie Breakers

In case of a tie on points in the standings within a league, the following will be used as tiebreakers:

- “Head-to-head” points (win/lose/draw) between teams (not used to resolve ties involving 3 or more teams);
- Goal Differential (max of 3 goals per game);
- Fewest goals allowed.
- Most goals overall (max of 3 goals per game);
- Number of shutouts.
- Coin toss

In a situation where a season cannot be completed due to exceptional circumstances, and teams have played an unequal number of games, NISL may use Points Per Game (“PPG”) to decide league standings.

Section 4. Competition Rules for NISL NPL

4.1 NISL NPL RULES

Section 5. Severe Weather Policy

5.1 Lightning Policy

The safety of the players, coaches, management and spectators are of primary concern during any weather event that occurs during a match. The Referee has final say over delaying a game due to weather (except for NISL-sponsored tournament events, where tournament administrators own this responsibility). Waiting to stop playing and clearing the area may result in a serious injury or loss of life. Act responsibly when dealing with such events during all games.

For all NISL league matches that are scheduled by the home club, who is also responsible for assigning referees to the match, any visible lightning should result in an immediate suspension of the match with all players, coaches, spectators, and referees seeking shelter immediately. The match may not resume until 30 minutes has elapsed since the last lightning strike.

For all NISL-administered tournaments, any lightning that is tracked via an approved application within eight (8) miles of the facility will result in an immediate suspension of the match with all players, coaches, spectators, and referees seeking shelter immediately. The match(es) may not resume until 30 minutes has elapsed since the last lightning strike.

5.3 Hot Weather/Heat Index

Teams and Referees should reference the heat index as reported by [OSHA](#).

- Up to 89 degrees: normal play.
- 90-99 degrees: two-minute water breaks (running time); each half shortened by five minutes.
- 100-105 degrees: two-minute water breaks (running time); each half shortened by 10 minutes.
- 106 degrees and above: play suspended

5.4 Cold Weather

Additional layers are permitted to be worn in the event of adversely cold weather.

- “Feels like” temperatures of 40 degrees and higher: normal play.
- “Feels like” temperatures of between 33 degrees and 39 degrees: each half shortened by 5 minutes.
- “Feel like” temperatures of 32 degrees or below: play suspended

5.5 Air Quality

Air quality is rated by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) with an air quality index (AQI) ranging from 0-500 that reflects the five major air pollutants: ground-level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide. The EPA has established national air quality standards for each pollutant to protect our health.

Any athlete or team personnel who develops cough, chest tightness, wheezing, or shortness of breath should not exercise outside when the air quality is bad.

NISL matches are to be postponed if the AQI reaches **greater than 200**.

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects