



2026 || **REFEREE HANDBOOK**

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## Introduction & League Contacts

The 2026 USL Referee Handbook denotes all rules and procedures that must be followed by referees and member clubs participating in the USL Academy during the 2026 League.

Compliance with these rules and procedures is paramount to the successful operation of the USL Academy League events and participating clubs. Failure to comply with the rules and procedures set forth in the Competition Manual will result in the application of discipline from the league. Please note that all fines and suspensions listed henceforth are minimums. The League has absolute discretion to render any disciplinary actions if deemed necessary, beyond those minimums upon review of the case-by-case circumstances.

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|---|--|
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**For game day issues, weather, field conditions, player eligibility, rules of play, standards, and emergencies, please contact the USL Academy Hotline (813-804-3256). An Academy staff member is always monitoring this phone.**

For MOD11 issues prior to game day, assignment issues, or game payment, please contact Chance Mannix or Chadwick Flanders.

For any issues on game day, please contact the league hotline.

## Definitions

“**FIFA**” shall mean Federation Internationale de Football Association, the entity governing professional soccer internationally, or its successors.

“**LEAGUE**” shall mean the USL Academy.

“**FINALS**” shall mean the USL Academy League Finals.

“**CLUB**” shall mean the organization that has been granted membership in the LEAGUE.

“**Minimum Standards**” shall mean the minimum standards that must be met by all member CLUBS.

“**Season**” shall mean the time period in any year during which official games are played in the LEAGUE.

“**Sponsors**” shall mean official LEAGUE sponsors as named by USL.

“**Facility**” shall mean the LEAGUE approved playing facility utilized by the CLUB during the season.

“**LEAGUE Marks**” shall mean the trade names of the LEAGUE and its program trademarks that may be amended or supplemented by LEAGUE from time to time.

“**LEAGUE Rules**” shall mean the playing and operational rules and policies of the LEAGUE.

“**USSF**” shall mean United States Soccer Federation (also known as U.S. Soccer), the governing entity for soccer in the United States.

“**CSA**” shall mean Canadian Soccer Association, the governing entity for soccer in Canada.

“**ITC**” shall mean International Clearance, the request and paperwork required for a player born outside of the United States to register with the LEAGUE.

# USL Policy on In-Game Discriminatory Behavior and Language

The following processes are meant to outline the procedures of the match officials, including direction to the match officials in handling claims of Offensive, Insulting, or abusive language and/or action(s), in match. Additionally, this document is meant to outline the procedures of all parties involved to bring these matters to resolution on game day. Please note that following the match the League will conduct a thorough investigation of these allegations.

## **Summary of Processes and Procedures for Match Officials/Club(s)/League:**

1. Once informed of an allegation, relay the information to all members of the officiating crew. The Referee will record all incident information in the MOD11 match report immediately following the match so that League staff can be made aware of the incident.
2. Ensure that the participant who is making the allegation is given time and space to fully explain what he/she is alleging. If the match official(s) is not familiar with the word or action used, ask for clarification. It is not up to the match official(s) to determine if the word or action is discriminatory in nature. If the player states that it is discriminatory, it must be treated as discriminatory behavior. It is extremely likely that he/she will be in an emotional state, and it may take time to fully make sense as to what the person is reporting. Be empathetic and supportive. Use a teammate/colleague of the reporting participant to facilitate communication, if necessary. A second match official should be present during this conversation for purposes of corroboration. Don't rush this step. Gain as much detail as possible from the person reporting the conduct, such as when and where it happened, who was responsible for the conduct, and what were the exact words used or behavior demonstrated. Make notes, if necessary, to aid recollection later.
3. Communicate with your officiating colleagues to establish whether they have witnessed the alleged conduct. If so, take appropriate action as per the Laws of the Game.
4. The Referee should speak with the alleged offender and make him/her aware of the allegation that is being made. A second match official should be present during this conversation for purposes of corroboration. Referees are encouraged to use the team captain, or another teammate of the alleged offender, to facilitate communication. If the alleged offender admits the alleged offense, the Referee should take the appropriate action as per the Laws of the Game. In any case, any responses made by that individual should be noted in writing for later reference.
5. The Referee should speak with both captains to explain the reason why there is a delay to the game. Speaking with both captains at the same time should be considered best practice, in the absence of any specific reason why the Referee does not feel this would be conducive to effective communication.
6. The Referee should speak with both head coaches to share the reason for the delay and the information which has been presented. No specific requests should be made by the Referee to the head coaches (e.g., regarding the need to substitute players, etc.). The role of the Referee is to share the information which has been presented to him/her, including the specific

word(s) or action(s) reported. Any decisions taken at that stage by the head coaches are matters for them and not for the officiating crew.

7. The game should only be re-started once the above steps have been taken. Ensure no other circumstances exist to warrant further delay.
8. On re-starting the game, the match officials should be aware of the impact the allegation will have had on the emotions of all participants, and the high likelihood that the game's temperature will have risen. The match officials should remain extremely vigilant throughout the remainder of the game and use their management skills to maintain firm control.
9. Post-game, the Referee should provide early notification of the incident to a USL representative by immediately calling the USL League hotline. This gives notice for League staff to review the incident in further detail.
10. The match official report on MOD 11 should include a detailed account of the full circumstances, including actual words used in the initial reporting of the incident to the Referee, and any responses from the alleged offender. During the reporting process, reference should be made to any notes taken at the time of the incident including the time of the incident in the match. Such notes should be retained, as production of these may be required at a later time.

**It is mandatory that any instances of DBL are reported to the league immediately. For issues on game-day please contact the [USL Academy Hotline \(813-804-3256\)](tel:813-804-3256). An Academy staff member is always monitoring this phone.**

## League Structure

### Playing Rules

All games under LEAGUE jurisdiction shall be played according to the rules and regulations recognized by the LEAGUE, which shall be the same rules set by FIFA/U.S. Soccer (USSF), except for those exceptions authorized by FIFA and the USSF.

### Point System

The USL Academy League will operate under the following competition standings point system:

| Result  | Points         |
|---------|----------------|
| Win     | 3              |
| Tie     | 1              |
| Loss    | 0              |
| Forfeit | 0 & (0-3 Loss) |

### Standings and Tiebreakers

USL ACADEMY is responsible for keeping the official LEAGUE standings. These are tabulated on a regular basis, displayed on the USL ACADEMY website, and/or distributed to all clubs. Final

LEAGUE standings will be displayed using points-per-game to dictate placement, with the following tiebreakers used as needed.

The following guidelines will be used to implement USL ACADEMY tiebreakers for all ties involving three or more teams:

1. The tiebreaker will determine the winner first.
2. The tiebreaker will continue within the same category to determine if other ties can be broken.

Breaking Ties in the LEAGUE and FINALS Standings – The breaking of ties in the final standings and League Finals is accomplished by applying the following criteria, in order of importance:

1. Total points in Head-to-Head record in LEAGUE/FINALS games. <sup>1 2</sup>
2. Goal difference in LEAGUE/FINALS games. If the number of games is unequal, the Game Average <sup>3</sup> will be used.
3. Total wins in LEAGUE/FINALS games. <sup>3</sup>
4. Goals scored in LEAGUE/FINALS games. <sup>3</sup>
5. Goals conceded in LEAGUE/FINALS games. <sup>3</sup>
6. FIFA Fair Play – Team with fewest disciplinary points in LEAGUE/FINALS games. (If the number of games is unequal, points will be divided by games played to arrive at a common basis for comparison.)
7. Lottery conducted by USL ACADEMY.

## FINALS

During FINALS, on the final day of the event, Playoff Bracket Placement games ending in a tie after regulation will play two 15-minute extra time periods. If the match remains tied after the extra time periods, FIFA kicks from the mark (penalty kicks) will determine the winner.

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<sup>1</sup> LEAGUE games refer solely to games that count towards the regular season standings. Open Cup specific games are not “LEAGUE games” when it comes to determining placement in the LEAGUE standings. (When using these criteria as tiebreakers for Open Cup groups, “LEAGUE games” should be interpreted as only games that count toward Open Cup group standings.)

<sup>2</sup> Should more than two (2) teams involved have played each other an unequal number of times, this tiebreaker will be skipped.

<sup>3</sup>Game Average = Tie Breaker / number of games played (i.e., goals scored / number of games played).

## **Substitutions**

Substitutions are allowed at any stoppage, but Clubs will have three “moments” to use their allotted substitutions. Injury substitutions will count as a moment if the injured player is unfit to return to the game. Substitutes made during the half time break do not count as a moment. Examples of moments, Concussion Substitutes, and Additional Substitutes may be found in the USL Pre-Professional Substitution Protocol document.

In games where extra time is needed to decide a winner, substitutions made during the break between the end of regulation time and the beginning of extra time, as well as substitutions during half-time of extra time, do not count as a moment. Teams may make substitutions during this stoppage, provided they have not used all (7) of their allowed substitutes. Teams may use any leftover moments during Extra time that were not used during regulation time (Ex. Team has used [2] moments during the initial 90-minute regulation time. The team may make use of their final moment during the time between the kick-off of extra time and the conclusion of extra time.)

Substitutes shall report to the Fourth Official or Field Marshal at midfield and may not enter the field without permission of the referee. Teams may make a maximum of (7) substitutions per game with no re-entry across (3) moments.

### Goalkeeper Substitution

The goalkeeper may change places with a field player if the referee is informed of the change and the change is made during a stoppage in the match. Note: Delay or time wasting is not acceptable during the exchange process. The match should not be held up to allow for a complete change of equipment by either player.

### Head Injury Substitution

Following extensive consultation related to finding ways to improve the in-game management of possible neurological head injuries in football matches, the Board of Directors has taken careful note of the recommendations from meetings of both The IFAB Football and Technical Advisory Panels and the Concussion Expert Group (which consists of medical concussion experts, team doctors, players/coaches, and refereeing and legal/Laws of the Game experts).

Based on these recommendations, the Board of Directors strongly agrees that, where there is any suspicion about a player having been concussed, the player should be protected by being “permanently” removed from the match and, to facilitate this, the player's team should not suffer a numerical disadvantage as a result of prioritizing the player's welfare. USL Academy has taken the recommendations of the groups above to set standards for Head Injury Substitutions. This rule is subject to change during the season, pending updated recommendations based on the health and safety of the players. Updates will be communicated to CLUBs should they occur.

### Principles

- Each team is permitted to use a maximum of two “concussion substitutes” in a match.
- A “concussion substitution” may be made regardless of the number of substitutes or moments already used.
- Concussion substitutions are permanent – not temporary.
- In competitions in which the number of named substitutes is the same as the maximum

number of substitutes that can be used, the “concussion substitute” can be a player who has previously been substituted.

- A player that has previously been substituted may only re-enter the field if all other substitutes have been used.
  - Exception: If the only remaining substitutes who have not entered the field are Over-Age players and using them would violate the maximum of (3) Over-Age players on the field at one time, then the “concussion substitute” must be a youth player who has previously been substituted. The Head Injury Substitution rule shall not allow for more than (3) Over-Age Players on the field at once.
- When a “concussion substitute” is used, the opposing team then has the option of using an “additional” substitute.
    - The Additional Substitute may only be used if all other substitutes or moments have been exhausted, unless it is made concurrently with the “concussion substitution.”
    - The Additional Substitute may be a re-entering player only if all other substitutes have been used, or if the only available substitutes would violate the Over-age player rule, as mentioned above.
    - The Additional Substitute moment does not allow for “normal” substitutions to occur concurrently.
      - Ex. A team has used all (3) substitution moments and has used (5) out of (7) available substitutes. The team has an Additional Substitute available. When making the Additional Substitute, the team must send on one of the (2) players that have not played yet. The team cannot also send on their final player who has not played yet as a “normal” substitute.

### Procedure

The substitution procedure operates in accordance with Law 3 – The Players (except as outlined otherwise below).

- A “concussion substitution” may be made:
  - immediately after a concussion occurs or is suspected;
  - after an initial three-minute on-field assessment, and/or after an off-field assessment;  
or
  - at any other time when a concussion occurs or is suspected (including when a player has previously been assessed and has returned to the field of play).
- If a team decides to make a “concussion substitution,” the referee/fourth official is informed, ideally by using a substitution card/form of a different color. In the USL Academy, Head Injury Substitution Passes will be pink.
- The injured player is not permitted to take any further part in the match (including kicks from the penalty mark) and should, where possible, be accompanied to the changing room and/or a medical facility.
- The opposing team is informed by the referee/fourth official that it now has the option of using an “additional” substitute.
- This option may be used concurrently with the “concussion substitution” made by the

opposing team or at

- any time thereafter (except as outlined otherwise by the Laws of the Game). This substitute will not count towards the 3 moments, but it must be a player that has not previously been on the field. If all available substitutes have been on the field, the player may re-enter.
- If a team decides to make an “Additional substitution”, the referee/fourth official is informed, ideally by using a substitution pass of a different color. In the USL Academy, Additional Substitution passes will be blue.

#### Substitution opportunities

- Making a “concussion substitution” is separate from any limit on the number of “normal” substitution opportunities.
- However, if a team makes a “normal” substitution at the same time as a “concussion substitution”, this will count as one of its “normal” substitution opportunities and require a moment.

#### Substitution Passes

Each team is provided with USL ACADEMY substitution passes for use during league games. Seven (7) substitution passes, two (2) Head Injury substitution passes, two (2) Additional substitution passes, and five (5) Over-Age substitution passes will be provided to the home team and visiting team coaches. White substitution passes shall indicate normal substitution procedures. Pink substitution passes shall indicate a head injury sub. Blue substitution passes shall indicate an additional sub (opposing team during head injury substitution). Green substitution passes shall indicate an Over-Age Player is entering the field.

#### **Game Lengths**

Each USL Academy League Match will consist of two (2), forty-five (45) minute halves. Each half will be separated by fifteen (15) minute halftime. FINALS matches will consist of two (2), thirty-five (35) minute halves, separated by a fifteen (15) minute halftime.

If the game is tied at the end of regulation during the regular season and group play during FINALS, the final score will remain a tie. During FINALS, on the final day of the event, Playoff Bracket Placement games ending in a tie after regulation will play two 10-minute extra time periods. If the match still remains tied after the extra time periods, FIFA kicks from the mark (penalty kicks) will determine the winner.

#### Official Time

Official time will be kept on the field by the referee. The amount of stoppage time in each half will be conveyed by the Referee to the Fourth Official or Assistant Referee. The Fourth Official/Assistant Referee will then display the appropriate time left in the match.

#### **Eligibility**

All players and coaches must present their digital match roster to the referee prior to each game. If the individual’s picture or kit number is not on the digital match roster, the individual will not be eligible for the game. Passes from any other league are not accepted for USL Academy League games, no exceptions. Kit numbers must match the DMR.

## **Incomplete Games**

In the event a game cannot continue through full regulation time, the game will only count if one-half of the game was completed. If a game is suspended prior to the expiration of the first half due to inclement weather or extenuating circumstances, it will resume within 24 hours (or some other date/time agreed upon by the competing teams and the LEAGUE office) starting at the same minute that the game was originally suspended and with the same score.

## **Game Rescheduling**

CLUB requesting a change within the 10-day window due to exceptional circumstances, as defined in the published league procedures, **must pay referees within 7 days of the originally scheduled date.** If payment is not made to the referees, the club will forfeit the payment from its security bond. Clubs will have 7 days to submit payment to Referees. **Approval solely by e-mail (outside of MOD11) is not acceptable.** Clubs must consider the Play-to-Rest Ratio when attempting any reschedules.

## **Game Delays and Postponements**

In the event of a game delay, the Home Team shall immediately communicate the delay, via phone, to their LEAGUE Manager. The LEAGUE Manager shall distribute Emergency Game Day Contact Numbers to all teams prior to the start of the season. It is imperative that the rules and procedures of this section are explicitly followed in determining whether to delay, postpone, or cancel a game. If the kickoff is delayed because the visiting team arrives late, the visiting team shall be fined in accordance with league standards. The home team, in consultation with the LEAGUE Managers and referees, shall determine the start time for any delays in excess of twenty (20) minutes.

### Restart

Once a delay has ended, the match shall resume from the moment the referee stopped the match. Teams shall be given a chance to warm-up prior to restarting the match. The following are recommended warm-up times based on the length of the delay (coaches may agree to a different time, but this must be approved by the LEAGUE)

- A. 10-minute delay, 5-minute warm-up
- B. 10-to-30-minute delay, 10-minute warm-up
- C. 30-to-60-minute delay, 15-minute warm-up
- D. Over 60-minute delay, 20-minute warm-up

### Canceling/Postponing a Game Prior to Start

A game may be postponed no earlier than two hours prior to kickoff due to inclement weather, or situations considered Acts of God, unless agreed to by both teams and the LEAGUE. Exception: In a case where a third party (stadium/facility owner) closes a stadium, a game may be canceled more than two hours prior to kickoff, provided the LEAGUE and both teams are notified in writing by the stadium owner/managing authority.

### Authority to Delay or Postpone a Game

Once in process, a USL Academy game may only be delayed or postponed due to:

- A. A lack of preparedness of one or both teams to begin playing a game OR

- B. Unfavorable weather or other adverse conditions beyond the control of the participating teams, which would make the playing of the game impractical or dangerous. Only USL League Office staff have the authority to delay or postpone a scheduled USL Academy match.

#### Grace Period before Abandoning a Game

Unless both teams, the Referee, and USL ACADEMY agree to an alternate plan, teams must wait a minimum of one (1) hour before abandoning a game that has been delayed regardless of circumstances. This is not an aggregate time for multiple delays but rather one (1) hour from the time of the most recent delay. The Home Team, in the presence of the Referee, must immediately notify the LEAGUE Manager via phone of any postponement issues. The hour grace period may be extended, up to a maximum of three (3) hours from the time the match is delayed if there is a likelihood of resuming the match that day. Given the difficulty and cost of rescheduling, every attempt should be made to continue the game. The LEAGUE Manager has the final say on the length of the extended grace period due to weather. **A match may not be abandoned before the LEAGUE Manager is contacted. If the LEAGUE Manager or another USL ACADEMY official is unavailable, the Referee must leave a voicemail on the Academy Hotline. If the Referee is unable to reach a LEAGUE representative within 60 minutes, the Referee shall be the final authority.** If the first game of a doubleheader has been delayed, the feasibility of completing the second game will be considered when determining an extended grace period. In the event a delay lasts longer than three continuous hours or would resume play after 12:00 AM local time, the LEAGUE has final say on the length of the extended grace period due to weather.

#### Game Cancellation/Postponement Criteria

Unless otherwise approved by the USL Academy, game cancellations/postponements should occur only in the most serious circumstances; however, the personal safety of participants, personnel, and the spectators must always be highest priority. Factors that the referee and USL Academy shall consider include but are not limited to difficulty in rescheduling the game, current and forecasted weather conditions, travel conditions and the current whereabouts and availability of teams and officials.

#### Advanced Preparation (Lightning)

Teams must take the following steps prior to season to prepare for severe weather. The Advanced Preparation plan must include the facility's radius in which the field of play is deemed unsafe to play. Also, it will need to include the length of time that is required to wait after the most recent lightning strike.

#### USL Pre Professional Standard Air Quality Policy:

In the event the air quality is poor leading up to a match, please contact the League office to determine if the match will be played. In these instances, we will defer to US Soccer guidelines in making an appropriate decision. If the AQI is 100-150, one hydration break per half must be added at the 30th and 75th minute. If the AQI is 150-180 both teams must agree to play and water breaks must be added at 15', 30', 60' and 75'. If the AQI is 150-180 consideration for postponing and rescheduling the match with on ground assessment with the athletic trainers or a move to an indoor facility will be determined with the League.

The following information is guidance from US Soccer (USSF) surrounding Air Quality guidelines and monitoring of the Air Quality index (AQI). Clubs should take these guidelines into account for both training and match play and should be followed for the safety of all people involved (Players, Fans, etc.) If teams are aware of a potential air quality issue in their home market in advance of hosting a match, they must notify the league as soon as they become aware of the issue. Teams are to use [www.AIRNOW.gov](http://www.AIRNOW.gov) to determine AQI in the local market.

AQI: 100-150

- Add one hydration break per half to be taken at the 30' and 75' or at a natural break close to the times.
- Players with underlying health conditions should use caution and communication with team staff as well as a Certified Athletic Trainer to make decisions in the best interest of the player.

AQI: >150

- Four hydration breaks will be taken at the 15', 30', 60' and 75' or at a natural break close to the times
- Oxygen behind the benches MUST be supplied by teams with at least 2 canisters available ([example canister](#))
- Certified Athletic Trainers should start communicating regarding any at-risk players and how to best continue forward for the health of the players

AQI: 180-200

- Consideration for postponing or cancelling with on-the-ground assessment with the medical team.
- Should coordinate with local public health officials and be in line with local and/or regional restrictions, if in place – this should take both players and spectators into consideration.

AQI: Over 200

- Cancel or postpone

#### Before Officials Arrive at Venue

In the event a match is to be terminated less than 12 hours prior to kick off due to unforeseen problems, the home team shall immediately contact its LEAGUE Manager to expedite the communication process to assigned referees. The USL ACADEMY Operations Department will then directly notify the referees of the change. It is imperative that all contact numbers for referees be available on the National Federation's assignment platform ([Ref Insight](#)) for such situations. Please contact the USL Academy Hotline before departing for the match if uncertain of the match's status and if there is reason to believe there may be a postponement due to inclement weather.

#### Referee "No Show"

In the event the assigned referee crew does not arrive at least one (1) hour before the scheduled kickoff time, the Home Team should immediately contact their LEAGUE Manager. Should none of the assigned referees be present at the official kickoff time, the teams must wait a minimum of one (1) hour before the possibility of postponement is considered. Again, no game may be abandoned or postponed due to lack of referees until at least one (1) hour has passed since kickoff. After one (1) hour from the original kickoff time has elapsed, the LEAGUE Manager will decide as to whether the match should be postponed and rescheduled, or further time should be allowed (only in the event of

referees on their way to the venue). Active and certified Federation referees must be used as replacements for the match to be deemed official. Prior to sending replacements, USL ACADEMY and the respective Federation will determine on a case-by-case basis whether the substitute referees are of sufficient experience and ability to handle the match. Under no circumstances will the replacement referees have less than Regional certification.

### Incomplete Game

In the event a game cannot be completed, the game counts if the entire 1st half was completed. If any match is suspended prior to the completion of the 1st half due to inclement weather or extenuating circumstances, it will resume at a date/time agreed to by the competing teams in consultation with USL ACADEMY and will start at the same minute in which the match was suspended. Every effort must be made to resume the match within the next twenty-four (24) hours. If the game is resumed after the 24-hour period has passed, either team may have a maximum of three (3) changes to their Official Match Day Roster sheet. Any changes to the lineup on the field, after any of the three (3) changes to the Official Match Day Roster sheet are made, count towards the substitution allotment. USL ACADEMY reserves the right to declare a full replay at its discretion to protect the integrity of the competition.

### Termination Procedures for FINALS Placement Matches

If the match is tied, the first half is completed, the one hour waiting period is fulfilled and there must be a winner to advance, then the following will occur:

- Regulation: If terminated during regulation, the match will be resumed at the next possible opportunity and played to completion beginning from when the play was stopped in the second half and will conclude at either ninety (90) minutes or within extra time, followed by FIFA Kicks from the Mark if necessary.
- Extra time: If terminated during extra time, the match will resume at the minute that the match was terminated, followed by FIFA Kicks from the Mark if necessary.
- Back-to-back: If the teams are scheduled to play the following day, then the match will resume the next morning, starting with the overtime period, followed by Kicks from the Mark, if necessary.

\*USL, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to continue any playoff match starting immediately with extra time and FIFA Kicks from the Mark, considering travel and field circumstances as well as any other pertinent information. Every attempt will be made to decide the result on the field of play.

### Rescheduling a Postponed Game

Any postponed game must be rescheduled within seventy-two (72) hours of the original date of the game and must be replayed no later than the second to last weekend of the regular season (Spring, Summer, Fall).

### Rescheduling Considerations

USL ACADEMY shall have the authority to review all the facts (including fault on the part of either team, unavoidable conditions, expense for both teams, and requests by a team to take a particular action in the best interests of USL ACADEMY and its teams), in determining whether and when a game shall be rescheduled, who should bear the financial burden as a result of cancellation or

rescheduling, whether the game should be forfeited or cancelled permanently, and whether other fines should be levied. The integrity of the LEAGUE and the Home Team schedule shall be given considerable weight in the resolution of these matters. Unless the sanction or remedy is set forth specifically in any USL ACADEMY rules or regulations, USL ACADEMY shall decide what action to take, and its decision shall be final.

#### Written Explanation of Postponement

Whenever a game is postponed or canceled, the LEAGUE must receive a written notice, within 48 hours of postponement or cancellation of why the game was not completed or played. This should be included in the Match Report.

#### Venues Clearances are Final

Once a team has approved its individual schedule and the LEAGUE Schedules are officially released, the LEAGUE will not automatically accept a postponement or cancellation of a game because a Venue is no longer available. It is the Home Team's responsibility to find a league-acceptable alternate venue, if necessary, on the originally scheduled date.

#### **Forfeits**

Should any team associated with the CLUB fail to appear at a scheduled USL Academy game, the CLUB shall incur a forfeit fine per incident. Other penalties for forfeits are as follows:

- A. A 3-0 win to the opposing team.
- B. The team that forfeits may be precluded from participating in any future USL Academy League events, per LEAGUE review and at the LEAGUE's discretion.
- C. The CLUB must send full fees to each referee assigned to the game within seven (7) business days.
- D. The LEAGUE will have the discretion to remove any teams for not complying with the LEAGUE schedule.

A team unable to attend a scheduled game because of an accident or weather should immediately notify the opponent, the LEAGUE office, and the referees via telephone or E-Mail. Each situation will be reviewed by the LEAGUE office, which shall render a decision that may be appealed through LEAGUE RAD procedures (refer to Review, Appeals & Discipline section of the manual).

#### **Liability**

CLUBs within the LEAGUE assume all risks, responsibilities, and liabilities for loss, damage, injury or death while using property and facilities during games in the LEAGUE, whether such loss, damage, injury or death be occasioned by the team or by the LEAGUE, its officers, agents or otherwise.

#### **Referees**

##### Assignment

Match Officials will be assigned in cooperation and coordination with the United States Soccer Federation's Referee Department, or any other respective national and local assignors as applicable. Academy League Games shall have a Referee, AR1, AR2, and Fourth official. If a Fourth Official cannot be assigned, the game shall proceed without.

## Payment

In LEAGUE matches, referee fees will be paid via direct deposit in Ref Insight. Payments will be processed every two weeks during the season. Teams must submit required referee fees at least two weeks prior to the start of the season. The pay scale for referees is listed below:

| Position | Total |
|----------|-------|
| Referee  | \$120 |
| AR1      | \$85  |
| AR2      | \$85  |
| 4th      | \$60  |

In FINALS matches, referees will be paid by the LEAGUE. Teams are not required to provide payment to referees during FINALS.

### **Payment of Referees**

The fees for officiating matches are set by USL Academy and subject to regular review. Referees are eligible to be compensated for services if they:

- Arrive at the venue 90 minutes before kickoff and perform assigned services.
- Complete relevant forms including the MOD11 Match Report and [Minimum Standards Survey](#).
- Arrive at the proper time, but for some reason the match has already been postponed, without the referees being properly notified in advance, due to an error by the league or teams.
- Arrive at the proper time and one or both competing clubs fail to appear for the match.
- Perform assigned services, but for some reason, the match is not completed.
- Travel to the field, but the match is not played.
- Please refer to “Before Official Arrives at Venue” under the “Match Cancellations” section of this Manual for a list of the steps taken in the cancellation/postponement process.

**Referees must complete all Ref Insight-related onboarding processes to receive payment. Referees cannot claim payment until their account information has been verified via email.**

- Game fees will be paid through Ref Insight every two weeks.

### Expense Reports

USL Academy does not offer referees reimbursement for travel expenses.

### Non-payment of Referee Fees (Rescheduled Matches)

All teams, professional and amateur, are under a strict requirement to pay officials within seven days following a match for matches changed within the 7-day window. Officials must notify the appropriate LEAGUE Manager in the event of non-payment and/or any payment(s) that are returned from a bank.

If a referee has not received payment for a rescheduled match within the 7-day window, they should reach out to Chance Mannix (chance.mannix@uslsoccer.com) or Chadwick Flanders

(chadwick.flanders@uslsoccer.com).

### Technology

The use of technology (Ex. Communication Headsets) is only permitted if the referee crew are all qualified to use it. However, league-approved referees will be provided with technology in certain league-approved matches, such as during FINALS. LEAGUE will discuss the use of technology with the referee crew prior to team check-in, should LEAGUE decide to allow the use of technology during that specific match.

## **Discipline and Conduct**

### **Disciplinary Authority**

USL follows the USSF Referee Abuse Prevention Policy. The USL Academy shall have the authority to suspend, fine, or disqualify players, team officials, or competing clubs for violating LEAGUE rules or for any action or conduct not in the best interest of soccer or the USL Academy. The USL Academy hands down any final decision on a breach of rules. CLUB and its players must abide by all decisions of Match Officials during games. Once the USL Academy Disciplinary Committee has conducted its review of disciplinary matters, all announcements of the Committee's decisions shall be coordinated through the USL Academy.

A sending off will result in a minimum of a one (1) game suspension. The Disciplinary Committee at the LEAGUE office will determine if further punishment is required. The LEAGUE will only act in contravention of a referee's ruling on the field when a play, or the consequences of a play, are of an egregious or exceptional nature OR in circumstances where the referee did not see the play in question and the LEAGUE has sufficient and convincing evidence that a serious infraction occurred. CLUB can appeal against any additional suspension levied by the LEAGUE.

### **USL Academy Disciplinary Committee**

A panel of individuals from the LEAGUE office shall conduct the review of disciplinary issues. Such a panel will consist of at least three (3) people on the USL staff, one of which includes the senior LEAGUE Director.

The USL ACADEMY Disciplinary Committee is charged with the responsibility of enforcing the playing rules and allowing for a competitive, but fair, environment for all teams to compete against each other. To ensure that this element is provided to our participants, USL ACADEMY examines Player and Coach behavior and monitors referee performance to make certain that the on-field product of USL ACADEMY competition is of the most entertaining and attractive possible. A panel of at least three USL ACADEMY staff members, consisting of the pertinent senior LEAGUE Manager, Technical Director, and Referee Operations Manager, shall conduct the review of critical disciplinary issues. An alternate LEAGUE Manager may be utilized in the event any of the three members above are unable to participate.

## Disciplinary Process

USL ACADEMY disciplinary issues (including all send-offs) reported by the Referee shall be reviewed by the three-person USL ACADEMY Disciplinary Panel (a panel of at least three members of USL ACADEMY LEAGUE Management) via match videos, official reports, individual accounts, and other pertinent information. Depending on the timeliness of the reports and match videos, the Panel will make every effort to rule on all cases from the preceding week and issue these rulings by Wednesday of each week.

Every disciplinary incident (send-offs) shall be reviewed individually to ensure that players are not over-penalized, either by the number of matches served or fines. USL ACADEMY has the authority and reserves the right to levy additional suspensions or fines (above the minimum for that type of infraction) if a review of the incident warrants such action.

The USL ACADEMY Disciplinary Panel shall only act in contravention of a referee's ruling on the field when a play, or the consequences of a play, are of an egregious or exceptional nature OR in circumstances where the referee did not see the play in question and USL ACADEMY has sufficient and convincing evidence that a serious infraction occurred.

## **Serving Suspensions During Regional/National USL Academy Events**

Any player and/or coach sent off/dismissed during a USL Academy League game will be suspended from the next USL Academy League game. Any player or coach serving a suspension must not be listed on the 20-man Match Day Roster. If a player receives a red card in the final game of a regional or national event, the suspension will carry over to the following season. The USL Academy Disciplinary Committee reserves the right to assess further or limit penalties depending on the severity of the incident. The infractions below will result in the following minimum suspension lengths and fines:

- Violent Conduct – Two (2) Games Minimum
- Spitting – Four (4) Games Minimum,
- Biting – Five (5) Games Minimum,
- Fighting – Six (6) Games Minimum
- Referee Abuse – Three (3) Games Minimum,
- Referee Assault – Three (3) Months Minimum,
- Zero-Tolerance Policy Violation - Five (5) Games Minimum,
  - Violations of this policy should be reported to USL Safeguarding - <https://www.uslsoccer.com/safespace>

Any player who is suspended from a match in any USL ACADEMY event will serve their suspension in accordance with the LEAGUE in which the suspension occurred. USL Academy competitions are treated under the same LEAGUE. Should the player be loaned or transferred between LEAGUES within the USL ACADEMY, the suspension will become the amount of time that must elapse until the player is once again eligible to play in the LEAGUE in which the suspension was received.

## Examples

- Player X, suspended for one USL Academy League match, is loaned to a USL Professional club. Player X is not permitted to play for either team until the day following the date of the match that they are suspended for in USL Academy League.
- Player Y is suspended in the final match of the USL Academy Cup. Player Y is to serve the suspension at the next available USL Academy competition in which they are registered and rostered for. If they are playing in USL Academy League, it will be the first League match they are approved for. If they do not play in USL Academy competitions until the following USL Academy Cup, they will be suspended for the first match of that Cup.
- Player Z is on loan to USL Academy from the USL Professional club and is sent off. The loan expires and they return to their original club without serving a USL Academy suspension. Player Z will not be permitted to play in a USL Professional match until the day following the date of the match that they are suspended from the USL Academy. Fines will be assessed according to the LEAGUE in which you were sent off, not LEAGUE in which the player is registered.

### **Suspension Parameters & Restrictions**

Any player, coach, medical staff, or bench personnel are prohibited from assuming any official duty at or near the team bench while serving a suspension. Any athletic trainer sent off during a match may only return to the field at the request of the Referee in the event of an emergency.

Coaches serving suspensions are allowed to communicate with players pre-game and postgame only. Suspended coaches may NOT communicate with the team at half-time. Suspended coaches must NOT be on the field during warm-ups and may NOT stand or in any way be in close proximity to the field of play. Following a game, a coach serving a suspension may communicate with their team but must NOT be in or around the field of play. Any infringement of this rule may result in the forfeiture of the game and will include discipline for each infraction.

### **Extending a Suspension**

In any case the USL Academy reserves the right to impose suspensions beyond any of these parameters for offenses deemed to be particularly violent and against the spirit of the game. This can be imposed regardless of whether a dismissal occurred.

### **League Disciplinary Point System**

USL ACADEMY has the authority to discipline players, coaches, and/or team personnel based upon the USL ACADEMY disciplinary regulations in accordance with FIFA and the respective National Federation.

#### Penalty Points

All cautions/yellow cards will account for one (1) point and send-offs/red cards will account for two (2) points. Any player receiving two cautions in one match, which results in a send-off, will receive one (1) point for the first caution and one (1) point for the resulting send-off for a total of two (2) points. Any player receiving one caution and one red card in a match, which results in a send-off, will receive one (1) point for the caution and two (2) points for the send-off for a total of three (3) points. Send-offs/red card suspensions must be served the following game in which the team participates.

## **Caution and Send-Off Accumulation**

### Player Caution Accumulation

For logistical and administrative purposes, players exceeding the caution accumulation penalty point plateau(s) will serve their suspension immediately. USL ACADEMY also reserves the right to re-evaluate player accumulation plateaus for player eligibility rulings, including FINALS, with the reserved power to postpone suspensions to the following season.

Players receiving two cautions in the same match will only have one caution count toward their season accumulation.

Players accumulating the following number of caution/yellow cards throughout the LEAGUE will be sanctioned as follows:

#### USL ACADEMY

- 6 cautions - one (1) game suspension
- 9 total cautions - two (2) game suspension

### Coach/Staff Send-Off Accumulation

Any coach accumulating the following number of ejections will be suspended and fined as following:

- 1st Sendoff, coach will serve a one (1) game suspension
- 2nd Sendoff, coach will serve a one (1) game suspension
- 3rd Sendoff, coach will serve a two (2) game suspension

### Accumulation during FINALS

Send-Offs: A player and/or coach that is sent off during the FINALS will be suspended from the team's next FINALS game, unless the season is over, in which case the suspension will be served in the team's first USL Academy competition the following season. A player and/or coach may miss the Championship match due to being sent off.

## **Major Game Misconduct**

In addition to those penalties set forth above, major fines or suspensions, at the sole and absolute discretion of the USL Academy Disciplinary Committee, shall be levied against players (whether or not they were awarded a card by the Referee), coaches or other team staff for conduct including but not limited to: fighting, provoking a fight, criticizing Match Officials with words or gestures, entering the Match Officials changing area or tent, physical contact with Match Officials separate from Referee Assault, using excessive force, deliberate attempts to injure, spitting, provoking crowd disorders, profane language that can be heard by the crowd, obscene gestures, throwing items in the technical area, racist, homophobic, or derogatory comments, improper conduct during the national anthem, taunting, abuse of spectators and others, failure to leave the field when instructed by the Referee to do so, improper conduct following the award of a card, excessive delay tactics, excessive and obvious feigning of injuries, or other unsportsmanlike conduct detrimental to the USL Academy and the sport of Soccer in general.

## **Match Officials Assault or Abuse**

USL follows the [USSF Referee Abuse Prevention Policy](#). In addition to enforcing the mandatory

sanctions from USSF Policy 531-9, the USL Academy may impose additional fines and/or suspensions.

- A. Referee Assault – Referee assault is defined as any player, coach, or team staff member committing an intentional act of physical violence on a member of the referee crew. For the purposes of this rule, the guidelines outlined by USSF Policy 531-9 Section 3.3 will be followed. Referee Assault shall include, but is not limited to spitting, striking, kicking, choking, grabbing, bodily running into, kicking or throwing an object at an official, or damaging the referee’s uniform or personal property.
- B. Referee Abuse – Referee abuse is defined as any player, coach, or team staff member threatening a member of the referee crew through a physical act or verbal statement, either explicitly or implicitly. For the purposes of this rule, the guidelines outlined by USSF Policy 531-9 Section 3.4 will be followed. Referee abuse shall include but is not limited to verbal and nonverbal communications that contain foul or abusive language implying or directly threatening physical harm or spitting a beverage on or at a referee crew member or a referee crew member’s personal property.

### **Player/Coach Behavior Before or After Caution or Sending-Off**

Players and coaches are advised that both encouragement of a caution, send-off and/or dismissal as well as dispute and protest or mass confrontation, including but not limited to charging/surrounding the Referee to complain, causing unnecessary delay in the restart of the game, such as delay in leaving the field or field perimeter, and excessive shouting or verbal or physical dissent is deemed to be a serious offense worthy of a fine/suspension on its own. Referees have been advised to report such behavior to the LEAGUE.

### **The USL Academy’s Discretionary Power on Suspensions**

The USL Academy may, at its discretion, rule a specific game shall not count toward the completion of a suspension, if satisfied the game has been purposely arranged by the club with a view toward enabling the player in question to complete his suspension at a specific time in order to qualify him to play in another specific game.

### **USSF Fine for Serious Incidents**

The U.S. Soccer Federation has the power to impose discipline for any incident bringing the game into disrepute within the LEAGUE.

### **Zero-Tolerance Policy**

The United Soccer League has a zero-tolerance policy related to any form of harassment or discrimination on or off the field. Such actions are against the values of the USL, and the league has the absolute authority to institute punitive measures for any language, actions, or demonstrations deemed to be in violation of this policy. This policy includes, but is not limited to, language, actions, or demonstrations based on an individual or group:

- Race
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- National Origin
- Gender
- Political Views

- Disability
- Age

After a violation of this policy, the Referee must immediately contact the league office at the **USL Academy Hotline (813-804-3256)**. Any violation of this policy should be reported to the USL Compliance Department ([compliance@uslsoccer.com](mailto:compliance@uslsoccer.com)).

### **Disparaging Comments**

Players, coaches, and team officials may not disparage referees, referee decisions, league disciplinary decisions or the league in the team press releases in quotes provided to the media. Fines will be levied accordingly based on the nature, severity, and context of the comments made. Suspension could also be levied for very serious comments.

### **SafeSport Reporting**

All adults participating in the USL are obligated to report any instance or allegation of child abuse or sexual misconduct. This includes any employee, board member, registered player, coaches, referee or administrators, or anyone authorized by a member to have regular contact with minors. Participants are required to report any instance or allegation “as soon as possible,” defined as, “within a 24-hour period,” to the Center for SafeSport and to Law Enforcement if the allegation is of child abuse. An allegation means any “good faith claims or assertion” that a potential violation has occurred.

In addition to the two entities above, participants should report all SafeSport issues to both the USL League Office and to the Federation. Note that clubs must notify the Center for SafeSport and Law Enforcement to satisfy SafeSport reporting requirements.

### **How to Report**

The U.S. Center for SafeSport (includes ability to make an anonymous report):  
<http://uscenterforsafesport.org/report-a-concern/> or by calling (833) 587-7233  
U.S Soccer: <https://ussoccer.i-sight.com/portal> or by calling (312) 528-7004  
USL Safeguarding: [uslsafeguarding@uslsoccer.com](mailto:uslsafeguarding@uslsoccer.com)

For additional background, the U.S. Center for SafeSport defines child abuse as any “physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a child.” Further, sexual misconduct is defined as “(a) any sexual or gender-related harassment, (b) any non-consensual sexual contact or attempt at non-consensual sexual contact, or (c) sexual exploitation, including but not limited to unauthorized recording or photography and the unauthorized dissemination of images or recordings of private sexual activity.”

**The message is clear: if you suspect child abuse, report it to law enforcement immediately.**

## **Conduct of Teams**

For issues on game-day please contact the **USL Academy Hotline (813-804-3256)**. An Academy staff member is always monitoring this phone.

### **Intentional Throwing of Games**

Agreeing or promising to lose a game is a strict violation of LEAGUE rules. Any CLUB or personnel associated with a CLUB who agrees to lose, attempts to lose, or otherwise adversely affects the outcome of any game with which he/she is or may be in any way associated, or who shall solicit or attempt to induce any player or other person associated with a member CLUB to lose, attempt to lose, or otherwise adversely affect the outcome of any soccer game, will be immediately declared ineligible and may be subject to expulsion from the LEAGUE.

Likewise, any person from a member CLUB that is solicited to commit or has knowledge of any of the foregoing acts and fails to inform the LEAGUE office immediately of all facts and circumstances connected with the solicitation shall be declared by the LEAGUE to be permanently ineligible and may be subject to suspension and expulsion from the LEAGUE.

Additionally, any player who, in the opinion of the referee and/or the LEAGUE office, attempts to purposefully lose a game by intentionally scoring an own goal as a field player, or intentionally allowing an own goal to occur while playing as a goalkeeper, will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Illegal Incentives for Winning a Game**

#### Officials

Any person connected with a member CLUB who shall give or offer to give any gifts or reward to a referee or assistant referee for services rendered or supposed to be rendered in defeating or attempting to defeat a competing CLUB, or otherwise adversely affect the outcome of any part of a game shall be declared by the LEAGUE office to be permanently ineligible.

Likewise, any referee or assistant referee who shall render, or promise or agree to render, any such decision otherwise than on its merits, or who shall solicit or accept such a gift or reward for any such service or decision, shall be declared permanently ineligible by the LEAGUE. Any referee or assistant referee who, having been offered any such gift or reward, or having been solicited to make any such decision otherwise than on its merits, shall be obligated to inform the LEAGUE immediately of such an offer or solicitation and all facts and circumstances connected therewith. Failure to report such solicitation shall be cause for the LEAGUE office to declare the official permanently ineligible to work LEAGUE games and will recommend a USSF / CSA suspension from all games.

#### Club Members

Any person connected with a member club who shall offer or give any gift or reward to a player or other person connected with another member club for services rendered, supposed to be rendered, or to have rendered in defeating or attempting to defeat a competing team or otherwise adversely affect the outcome of any game, shall be declared by USL ACADEMY to be banned for a period of not less than three (3) years.

Likewise, any person with knowledge of such an incident, who shall fail to inform USL ACADEMY immediately of such an offer and of all facts and circumstances connected therewith, shall be declared by USL ACADEMY to be ineligible for a period of not less than three (3) years.

### **Betting on Games**

Betting on LEAGUE games by any insider, manager, coach, referee, assistant referee, owner, employee, LEAGUE officer, or LEAGUE official is strictly prohibited. Any person associated with the LEAGUE or individual CLUB who bets any sum on any USL affiliated LEAGUE shall be declared persona non-gratis by the LEAGUE and permanently banned from all LEAGUE activities.

### **Scandalous Conduct**

The LEAGUE office may suspend for an indefinite period and/or impose a fine on any officer, director, player, or employee of a member CLUB guilty of gross misbehavior in public, including intoxication, drug use, fighting, quarreling, indecency, or other scandalous conduct whether on or off the playing field when such conduct is, in the LEAGUE's opinion, prejudicial to the best interests of the sport of soccer or the LEAGUE.

### **Moral Turpitude**

Any employee, player, or official of any member CLUB or the LEAGUE who shall be convicted of a felony or who shall have been found by the LEAGUE office to have conducted themselves in a manner detrimental to the best interests of soccer or the LEAGUE may be declared by the LEAGUE office to be suspended for such period of time as the LEAGUE shall deem to be appropriate.

### **Tampering**

During any USL Academy League event, no manager, officer, or representative of a CLUB shall approach a registered player, coach, or staff member of another CLUB regarding employment, unless that contracted party's employing CLUB gives written permission to the requesting CLUB to make such contact. Violations of this rule shall subject the offending party to disciplinary action from the LEAGUE office.

### **Vandalism/Destruction of Property**

No player, manager, officer, or representative of a CLUB shall intentionally damage or destroy the physical property of another CLUB or LEAGUE partner, including partner hotels. This prohibition shall extend to the damage and destruction of locker rooms or other area of a leased or owned stadium or facility.

### **Approaching Match Officials**

No player, coach, or team staff member shall threaten Match Officials either verbally or physically nor make contact in any manner either before, during, or after the match. Coaches and team staff shall not approach Match Officials prior to the game, at the end of the half, on the way to or from the locker room to lobby for a certain call, discuss the approach to the game, or to criticize a game official's performance. No one may enter the referees' dressing room without permission. It is strongly recommended that someone stand at the officials' dressing room door as security. The Referee shall report all such incidents in the Referee Game Report, and offending individuals shall be subject to a LEAGUE fine and/or suspension.

### **Other Misconduct**

Nothing contained in this rule shall be construed as exclusively defining or otherwise limiting conduct, acts, transactions, or practices that are not in the best interests of the sport of soccer or of

the LEAGUE. Any and all other conduct, acts, transactions, or practices which are not in the best interests of soccer or the LEAGUE are prohibited and shall be subject to such penalties imposed by the LEAGUE office such as permanent ineligibility, ineligibility for a period of time, suspension of voting rights, suspension from playing, or suspension of an individual from sitting on committee or advisory board, as the facts in any particular case may warrant.

## Game Day Procedures

### Kit and Colors

All USL Academy teams must have two league-approved uniforms for all matches of the USL Academy League, unless specified otherwise in these regulations. USL may also designate the specific kit each team will wear in each match of the competition.

Each team shall inform USL Academy of two different and contrasting colors (one predominantly light and one predominantly dark) for its home and away kits (shirt, shorts, and socks). In addition, each team shall select two contrasting colors for the goalkeeper kits. These two goalkeeper kits must be different and contrasting from each other as well as from the home and away team kits. This information shall be submitted to the League Office by the stipulated deadline. Only these colors may be worn during matches, unless authorized by USL.

**Teams Designated as the Home Team for the match will wear their predominately light-colored kits, while those designated as the Visiting team will wear their predominately dark-colored kit. In the case of a conflict in the opinion of the Referees, who have the final say, the Visiting Team is required to change colors.**

### Game Ball

USL ACADEMY will provide special pricing for the official LEAGUE game balls to be used for all regular season and playoff matches. No other ball is to be used by member clubs. A minimum of eight (8) official game balls must be available for each game.

### Game Day Video

All home teams are required to film each game from a high-angled camera with audio positioned at midfield on the opposite side of the technical area so that team benches, field boards, and the Fourth Official can be seen visibly. If the sun is angled so that the match footage will not be visible from that angle, the camera may be positioned at midfield on the side of the field with the technical areas. The League recommends a Veo camera, although other equipment can be utilized given it meets the standards outlined below. The home team must upload the game video to their MOD11 game report within forty-eight (48) hours after the completion of the game. If the home team does not produce the video to the USL ACADEMY within this time frame the following sanctions are applicable:

1. Expectations
  - Standard Definition (SD): 720 x 480
  - High Definition (HD): 1920 x 1080 or 1440 x 1080 or 1240 x 720
  - Full Game (Kick Off to Final Whistle, including extra time and penalty kicks), Games that are

- not uploaded in their entirety will be counted as NOT UPLOADED and will constitute a fine.
- Must be uploaded to the league digital platform (MOD11). Acceptable file formats: .mp4, .mov, .webm, .ogg, .mxf, Veo Video Share Link

After each half, a wide-angle shot should be used to follow the Match Officials (and all players if also possible) off the playing field until they are no longer visible to the camera. Only at this point, and not before, should the camera go to the scoreboard for the final score. In the event of any altercation, the camera should follow the incident until its conclusion with a wide-angle shot. Filming should occur from the midfield position. After all goals, the post-goal celebration should be followed using a wide-angle shot. There is no need to show the scoreboard at any time other than the conclusion of each half after the players/officials have left the field. A running clock counter should be displayable at the bottom of the screen indicating the amount of time elapsed since the first half kick-off. This aids in quickly identifying any goals, altercations, or other significant incidents that may take place during a match.

## 2. Duration

Begin recording three (3) minutes before the game until Match Officials and both teams have completely departed the field. At no time should the camera be stopped and restarted.

## 3. Recording – Testing / Confirmation

Teams are responsible for testing their video recording system in advance. Poor video quality, bad camera angles, excessive camera movement, and DVDs with unnecessary voice commentary as well as DVDs sent blank will be considered a failure to meet the minimum standard.

## 4. Video Sharing – Post Game

Club shall upload/share their game footage for visiting club analysis via MOD11 platform. This must be submitted with 48 hours of completion of the match.

## **Game Day Contact with Visiting Team and Officials**

The home team must establish contact with visitors at least two hours before game time. The home team must report to the Venue at least one hour before game time.

## **Arrival to Venue**

The home team and visiting team must arrive at the Venue at least 60 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff. CLUBs will be subject to additional fines if Players/Staff arrive less than sixty (60) minutes prior to the scheduled. Each member of the referee crew must arrive at the Venue at least 60 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff.

## **Game Day Timeline**

Home team must give the visiting team and referee crew a copy of the Game Day Timeline immediately upon their arrivals to the Venue. A copy of the Game Day Timeline must also be displayed in the visiting team and referee dressing rooms. The Game Day Timeline provides a detailed minute-by-minute breakdown of game day, specifically including the sixty (60) minutes preceding kick-off, how and where to line up for introductions, pre-game ceremonies and additional instructions that assist all parties in the game day operation. This timeline shall be strictly adhered to

unless previous arrangements have been made with the home team.

### **Minimum Standards Survey**

The home team is responsible for providing the referee crew with a printout of the [Minimum Standards Survey](#). The referee crew will be responsible for completing the form and submitting the information online via the QR code. Referees should make every effort to communicate with both clubs regarding the amenities provided for them.

### **Field Evaluation**

The Team Administrator must meet with the Referee at least sixty (60) minutes prior to the kickoff to assure the field is properly marked, the goals are in place and secure, the nets are properly fastened, the corner and midfield flags are proper and in place, and the balls are properly inflated. Anything deemed insufficient by the referee must be immediately corrected by the home team.

### **Scorekeeper/Fourth Official's Table**

The home teams must provide a table at midfield with chairs for the scorekeeper and the Fourth Official.

### **Benches**

The home team must provide benches / seating to accommodate no more than twelve (12) persons. Each bench should be covered by a USL Academy Branded Tent (10x10 Required).

A maximum of five (5) non-playing personnel are allowed on each CLUB bench. These persons can be coaches, medical staff, or CLUB management. Everyone on the bench must be registered with the LEAGUE, have performed a background check, appear on the MOD11 DMR with a headshot photo, and have a valid SafeSport certificate. A maximum of 12 individuals are permitted in the bench area, limited to substitutes, coaches, athletic trainers or physicians.

### **Ice and Water**

The home team must provide ice and water in clean coolers and cups at both benches, in both changing rooms and in the referee changing room. Water should be replenished on request and at half-time.

### **Captains' Meeting**

The captains' meeting will take place forty-five (45) min prior to the kickoff of the match. The match officials, captains of both teams and an administrative or technical staff member of the home and away team will meet. During this meeting teams will conduct the following tasks:

- Show Colors; (Home and Away Field and Goalkeeper jersey, shorts and socks) by showing Jersey Colors
  - In the event of a conflict, the Visiting Team is required to change colors.

Referees must take a moment to speak to the leaders of each club before the match takes place regarding relevant topics that are pertinent to the match, such as below.

IFAB has implemented a protocol called the "[Captain-Only Zone](#)." When activated by the referee—using the agreed signal (see below)—only the team captain (wearing a captain's armband) is

permitted to approach the referee. To prevent mobbing and physical advances towards referees, a 4-meter radius must be adhered to by all other players. Any non-captain who enters this zone will be cautioned for dissent.

Referees are expected to enforce this consistently and include all violations, and their minutes, in their match report. Coaches should reinforce this behavior to promote a more respectful match environment. **Prior to the match, referees should inform both team captains and coaches of the protocol and emphasize that captains are responsible for ensuring teammates remain outside the zone.** Despite this, clubs will have been made aware of this new law by the LEAGUE.

- The referee can initiate the 'only the captain' protocol at any stage, but it is most likely to be used following major decisions and to prevent major confrontations
- The referee will blow the whistle and initiate the 'only the captain' protocol by using the following new signal:
  - Raising both arms above their head and crossing them at the wrists
  - Uncrossing their arms and moving them in front of their body with their palms open in a forward pushing motion to indicate that the players must not approach



### Match Day Roster

The Match Day Roster must be completed in MOD11 no later than fifty-five (55) prior to kick-off. Clubs must follow the guidelines as specified in Rule 603 regarding the number and statuses of players included in the Match Day Roster. Once the Official Match Day Roster sheets of both teams have been submitted to the referees via MOD11, they may only be changed in the event that a player is subsequently deemed “unable to compete.” Should this occur, the unfit player must be completely removed from the DMR and may not be listed as a substitute. The player may be replaced either with one of the seven listed substitutes or by another Eligible Player from the Master Roster that is not already on the DMR without this counting as one of the team’s seven player substitutions. If the unfit player is replaced by one of the seven listed substitutes, a new Eligible Player from the Master Roster may not be added to the DMR to bring the Match Day Roster back to 20 players. Any adjustments to the Official Match Day Roster made after the time they were originally submitted to the referees must be communicated to and approved by the center referee and must be immediately communicated to the opponent’s head coach.

All clubs must have at least one (1) registered coach in the technical area during the entirety of the match. Coaches who are also registered as players must be determined on the Match Day Roster as either a coach or a player – they may not be listed as both. This also applies to Certified Athletic Trainers—they may not be listed as both a coach and Athletic Trainer. A coach can only qualify as their team’s Athletic trainer if both of the following criteria are met. There must be a second coach both present at the game and on the Match Day Roster, and the coach has the proper ATC certification (such as, but not limited to, Board of Certification for the Athletic Trainer). No other medical professionals can be accepted for this role. In this event, that coach will act solely as the Athletic Trainer (once their certification has been confirmed), and not as a Coach. This allows the Certified Athletic Trainer to focus solely on their medical duties.

Clubs are allowed five (5) Over-Age players (2005 or older) on the Match Day Roster. Clubs should

utilize the Over-Age Substitution Passes when an Over-Age player is entering the field.

### **Game Check-in Process**

Each team will be required to upload their Match Day Roster to MOD11 no later than one hour prior to kick-off. The Digital Match Roster will list the game details and include the roster for each team. Referees will check the rosters listed on the Digital Match Roster (DMR). All jersey numbers must match what is submitted to the league and listed on the Game Reports.

Referees MUST ensure that both clubs have properly completed their DMRs. Under NO circumstances should a match start without two complete DMRs. There may be instances where a club may formally submit a DMR that is not complete. This may include, but is not limited to:

- failing to select the Starting Lineup and placing all players in Reserve.
- selecting less than 11 players in their starting lineup.
- a player is listed on the DMR but does not have a photo. They will not be permitted to play in the game.
- failing to properly input all kit numbers,

At no point should any official ever accept an incomplete Digital Match Roster. Clubs experiencing technical problems with their rosters should contact their league's hotline. Should a match be played with incomplete DMRs, and the officials are found to have not done their due diligence, then payment cannot be made until this is rectified.

**For issues on game-day please contact the [USL Academy Hotline \(813-804-3256\)](tel:813-804-3256). An Academy staff member is always monitoring this phone.**

### **Team Warm-Up Period**

Each team shall be entitled to a concurrent warm-up period of twenty (20) minutes which shall end pursuant to the Game Day Timeline. Following the pre-game warm-up period, the Operations Manager shall order the players and coaching staff to the locker rooms/benches.

### **Coaches and Reserve Players Entry**

Prior to the team and referee introductions, the coaches and reserve players shall enter the field and walk along the sidelines to their team benches. Reserve players should wear identical equipment that distinguishes them from starting players.

### **Team and Referee Procession**

The home team, visiting team, and referees must proceed into the start of the match in an international style fashion. Each starting player shall be dressed in their designated team jersey, shorts, and socks for procession into the match.

### **Minimum Number of Players**

CLUB must dress a minimum of fourteen (14) eligible players for each game. The game may continue if a team does not dress the minimum number of players, however fines will be assessed by the LEAGUE depending on the total number of dressed players missing. Referees should make note of this in their match report.

### **Halftime Activities**

Halftime shall officially begin as soon as the referee blows the whistle signifying the end of the first half. The duration of halftime for all games shall be fifteen (15) minutes unless otherwise authorized by the USL.

### **Second Half Preparation**

Five (5) minutes before the start of the second half, each team shall be notified by the team liaison. No later than three (3) minutes before the start of the second half, each team shall exit the locker rooms for the field. The Team Liaisons shall ensure teams are notified of the three-minute warning.

### **Ejected Players & Coaches Removal Policy**

If the venue has locker rooms provided for each team, players and coaches sent off from the field of play shall be met at the sideline at midfield by home team security and escorted to the locker room and are not permitted to watch the game. They must remain in the locker room for the remainder of the match. Additionally, coaches are not permitted to communicate with their team staff or players during the remainder of the game and are not allowed to remain in the locker room during half time. The type of communication prohibited would include cellular, 2-way radios, electronic / digital, written or verbal. Ejected players or coaches returning to the field of play or stands during or directly following the match are subject to additional sanctions.

If the venue does not have locker rooms provided for teams (ex. USL Academy Cup group play), players sent off from the field of play shall be allowed to remain in the technical area, provided they do not disrupt the game. If the player that has been sent off causes a disruption, they must be escorted out of the venue by a coaching staff or adult member of the respective club and will not be permitted to watch the game. Coaches sent off must leave the venue if they do not have a locker room provided for them.

**\*\*Note:** Security personnel should only enter the field at the Referee's request or when actions on the field present an immediate security risk.

### **End of Game**

Two (2) minutes before the end of the game, Team Administrator shall position themselves between the field perimeter and the locker rooms. All spectators shall always remain outside of the locker rooms/technical areas. Scorekeepers should confirm match details with the referees.

### **Serious Incident Protocol**

The Home Team shall educate key Game Day staff, both Venue and team, regarding emergency procedures, EMS vehicles, Venue evacuation, and emergency plans. In the case of a serious incident on Game Day or at other times, it is vital that the LEAGUE Office is informed at the earliest possible time. Team staff shall use their best judgment on whether an incident is (or potentially is) of such magnitude. When in doubt, staff shall err on the side of caution by informing the LEAGUE.

Examples of serious incidents include a death or life-threatening injury to a player, staff, or spectator; severe weather (lightning storm); a serious altercation on the field (field invasion) or elsewhere at the Venue; a terrorist or unspecified threat to the safety of the event; the arrest of a player or staff member; an automobile accident or other accident; a calamity at the Venue (earthquake, fire, etc.); or a power failure at the Venue. The protocol shall be as follows:

1. Immediately ensure the appropriate emergency procedures have been implemented. Ensure names and phone numbers of those involved and witnesses as warranted. This information shall be detailed in the Venue Incident Report form.
2. While the situation is emerging, call the LEAGUE Manager or LEAGUE Representative
3. No statements shall be made to the media or others (other than law enforcement authorities) until the situation is discussed with the LEAGUE. All participants shall be made aware of this policy. USL ACADEMY and Team Media / Public Relations Directors shall be kept informed of the current situation.
4. The LEAGUE Manager and the USL ACADEMY Communications Department are authorized to speak on the LEAGUE's behalf, and no other individuals shall be permitted to discuss the situation with the media until USL ACADEMY notification is given. As a rule, the team General Manager and / or PR representative should be limited to releasing comments to the media. Prior to making any public statements, the situation should be discussed with the LEAGUE Office so that consistent and non-conflicting information is released.

**For issues on game-day please contact the [USL Academy Hotline \(813-804-3256\)](tel:813-804-3256). An Academy staff member is always monitoring this phone.**

### **Post-Game Reporting**

Match Reports are compulsory for all referee crews. The Match Report in MOD11 must be completed by the referee crew immediately following the game, no later than midnight of the day of the match. Referees must accurately input goals, substitutions, and misconduct. Please enter shots, saves, and fouls if they are provided by the clubs. Incident Reports/Supplemental Reports should be entered in the MOD11 Match Report Notes Section and should be filled out for any serious incidents below:

- Ejections (Player and Staff) (**Check the box for “Disciplinary Issues”**)
- Serious Injuries
- Head Injuries (regardless of whether they return to play)
- Issues with Spectators (**Check the box for “Disciplinary Issues”**)
- Game Delays and Postponements
- Issues with Field Conditions
- Other events Officials deem noteworthy

Referees do not need to submit a match report in the assigning platform, nor do they need to submit a USSF Supplemental Report, provided all of the information is written in the Notes section.

Referees are also required to complete the Minimum Standards form by scanning the QR code at the top of the form.

## **Code of Conduct**

### **FIFA Code of Conduct**

The LEAGUE will follow FIFA's Code of Conduct. It is just as important for parents and fans to know the Code of Conduct as it is the players and coaches. It is important that every player on the field

understands this Code of Conduct before competing in their first match.

FIFA's Code of Conduct encapsulates all the sporting, moral and ethical principles for which FIFA has always stood for and which it will continue to fight for in the future regardless of the influences and pressures that may be brought to bear. The ten rules below not only serve as a credo for FIFA as the world football governing body, but they also reinforce the sense of fraternity and cooperation among the members of the worldwide football family.

1. Play to Win

Winning is the object of playing any game. Never set out to lose. If you do not play to win, you are cheating your opponents, deceiving those who are watching, and also fooling yourself. Never give up against stronger opponents but never relent against weaker ones. It is an insult to any opponent to play at less than full strength. Play to win, until the final whistle.

2. Play Fair

Winning is without value if victory has been achieved unfairly or dishonestly. Cheating is easy but brings no pleasure. Playing fair requires courage and character. It is also more satisfying. Fair Play always has its reward, even when the game is lost. Playing fair earns your respect, while cheaters are detested. Remember: It's only a game. Games are pointless unless played fairly.

3. Observe the Laws of the Game

All games need rules to guide them. Without rules, there would be chaos. The rules of football are simple and easy to learn. Make an effort to learn them so that you understand the game better. This makes you a better player or coach. It is just as important to understand the spirit of the rules. They are designed to make the game fun to play and fun to watch. By sticking to the rules, you will enjoy the game more.

4. Respect Opponents, Teammates, Referees, Officials and Spectators

Fair Play means respect. Without opponents there can be no game. They have the same rights as you have, including the right to be respected. Your teammates are your colleagues. You form a team in which all members are equal. Referees are there to maintain discipline and Fair Play. Always accept their decisions without arguing and help them to help you enjoy the game more. Officials are also part of the game and must be respected accordingly. Spectators give the game atmosphere. They want to see the game played fairly but must also behave fairly themselves.

5. Accept Defeat with Dignity

Nobody wins all the time. You win some, you lose some. Learn to lose graciously. Don't seek excuses for defeat. Genuine reasons will always be self-evident. Congratulate the winners with good grace. Don't blame the referee or anyone else. Determine to do better next time. Good losers earn more respect than bad winners.

6. Promote the Interests of Football

Football is the world's greatest game. But it always needs your help to keep it as Number One.

Think of football's interests before your own. Think how your actions may affect the image of the game. Talk about the positive things in the game. Encourage other people to watch it or play it fairly. Help others to get as much fun from football as you do. Be an ambassador for the game.

7. Reject Corruption, Drugs, Racism, Violence and other dangers to our sport.

Football's huge popularity sometimes makes it vulnerable to negative outside interests. Watch out for attempts to tempt you into cheating or using drugs. Drugs have no place in football or in our society. Say no to drugs. Help kick racism out of football. Treat all players and everyone else equally, regardless of their skin color or origin. Show that football does not want violence, even from your own fans. Football is sport, and sport is peace.

8. Help Others to Resist Corruptive Pressures

You may hear that teammates or other people you know are being tempted to cheat in some way. They need your help. Don't hesitate to stand by them. Give them the strength to resist. Remind them of their commitment to their teammates and to the game itself. Form a block of solidarity like a solid defense on the field of play.

9. Denounce those who Attempt to Discredit our Sport

Don't be ashamed to show up anybody who you are sure is trying to make others cheat. It's better to expose them and have them removed before they can do any damage. It often takes more courage to denounce what is wrong than to go along with a dishonest plan. Your honesty will be admired but your complicity will not. Don't just say no. Denounce the culprits who are trying to spoil our sport before they can persuade somebody else to say yes.

10. Honor those who Defend Football's Good Reputation

The good name of football has survived because the vast majority of people who love the game are honest and fair. Sometimes somebody does something exceptional that deserves our special recognition. They should be honored, and their fine example made public. This encourages others to act in the same way. Help promote football's image by publicizing its good deed