



## **NATIONAL LEAGUE P.R.O. RULES & OPERATING PROCEDURES**

as of January 25, 2024

### **SECTION 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.01 US Youth Soccer National League Administration**

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

#### **1.02 General**

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

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

NOTE: These National League P.R.O. Rules and Operating Procedures apply to only the national tier of competition. The NL Conference Tier of competition rules can be found in a separate set of rules entitled the National League Conference Rules.

### **SECTION 2. NATIONAL TIER – INTRODUCTION**

#### **2.01 USYS National League Conference Playoffs and National League P.R.O. Administration**

The National Tier of the USYS National League is a program of, and administered by, USYS in accordance with the USYS Leagues Policy. This tier includes the National League Playoffs (Playoff) and National League P.R.O. (P.R.O.)

#### **2.02 Rules**

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

#### **2.03 Matters Not Provided For**

The National League Management Group has final authority in all matters related to the Playoff and P.R.O. not specifically provided for by the USYS Leagues Policy or Rules.

#### **2.04 Playoff Operating Procedures**

The Playoff Operating Procedures, as established by the NL Commissioner for each event or match that are approved by the National League Management Group, shall be considered a part of these Rules.

#### **2.05 National League P.R.O. Rules**

The P.R.O. Rules and Operating Procedures, as established by the NL Commissioner for each event or match that are approved by the National League Management Group, shall be considered a part of these national tier rules.

### **SECTION 3. NL P.R.O. – PARTICIPATION**

#### **3.01 Team and Player Eligibility**

To be eligible for a qualification slot into P.R.O., teams must compete and qualify from a Playoff during the same seasonal year.

### **3.02 Team and Player Registration**

All players and teams must be properly registered with USYS or USYS Member State Association.

### **3.03 Acceptance of Teams**

The National League Management Group shall determine the final acceptance of all teams into the P.R.O. Teams must qualify for P.R.O. through a Playoff event.

### **3.04 Event Registration**

Team registrations into the P.R.O. event in GotSport are submitted by NL Staff based on qualification from a team's respective Playoff event.

### **3.05 Acceptance of Leagues Policy, Playoff Rules, Decisions and Fees**

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

### **3.06 Fees and Other Expenses**

Each team playing in P.R.O. will pay the fees established by USYS. The P.R.O. event is not responsible for expenses incurred by teams through travel, housing, coaching, uniforms, and other related team operating costs. All entry fees are non-refundable subject to these rules. Fees for P.R.O. were included in the fees collected for the Playoff event.

### **3.07 Final Authority**

The NL Commissioner, after consultation with the National League Management Group, shall have the final authority and right to refuse admittance to any team based upon the team's prior performance in a Conference or other competitions. These factors include but are not limited to failure to play Conference, Showcase, Playoff or P.R.O. matches as scheduled; failure to comply with Conference, Showcase, Playoff or P.R.O. rules; failure to pay Conference referees; and/or failure to pay assessed Conference, Showcase, Playoff or P.R.O. fees or fines on time.

### **3.08 Contact Information and Communication**

All teams in P.R.O. shall have contact information on file with National League, including, but not limited to: the Team Administrator's Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address; the Team Coach's Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address; and the Club's Technical Director's (Director of Coaching) Name, Phone Numbers and valid e-mail address.

E-mail will be the primary means of communication within P.R.O. It is the responsibility of each team to ensure that accurate contact information is on file with P.R.O.

### **3.09 Club Mergers Affecting Qualified Slot**

In situations where there is a mutual desire to merge or consolidate entire organizations/clubs, National League may review and determine whether such teams resulting in the merger or consolidations should retain their qualifying position. In such situations, the NL Commissioner may request additional information regarding this matter including but not limited to the rationale for the merger/consolidation, a guarantee on the number of returning P.R.O. level players for the coming event and any other matter that National League deems pertinent in the review of this matter.

### **3.10 Lodging Requirement – Permission to Host/Travel**

To ensure the quality of service provided at the P.R.O. event, Anthony Travel has been appointed the Official Housing Provider for the P.R.O. event. Teams located 100+ miles beyond the USYS designated field location of the event are required to book their hotel accommodations through Anthony Travel. Teams competing at the event must secure at least six rooms per team per night or pay a buyout that allows a team to book lodging outside of Anthony Travel. Any teams that do not comply with the National League housing requirements are at risk of penalty. Penalties may include but may not be limited to: a) removal from P.R.O., b) paying of a fine, c) forfeiture of game(s), and d) any other penalties deemed appropriate by the NL Management Group.

For P.R.O. competition, Permission to Host/Travel Forms are not required.

## **SECTION 4. NL P.R.O. – EVENT ROSTERS**

### **4.01 Team Event Rosters**

Teams must file with P.R.O., an event roster in GotSport. The P.R.O. event roster may include both primary and club pass players. All players must be properly registered with their club and USYS or respective USYS Member State Association. All players should be added to the event roster no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the team's P.R.O. event weekend.

#### **4.02 Player Eligibility**

All players must be current US Youth Soccer members and have member passes that have been approved by USYS or their respective USYS Member State Association. During a P.R.O. event, a player may be listed on one event roster in a gender age group. Players listed on an event roster may also be listed as a club pass player on another P.R.O. event roster within the same USYS affiliated club as approved by USYS or respective USYS State Association.

#### **4.03 Roster Size and Pool of Players**

The maximum number of players on a P.R.O. event roster shall be thirty (30), however only eighteen (18) of those players are eligible to compete in a particular event match. Such pool of players may include club pass players, as well as any players that may have been added to the event roster prior to the P.R.O. event.

Once a player is on a P.R.O. Event roster, such player is frozen on such team's pool of thirty (30) players for the remainder of the event.

#### **4.04 Player Limitations**

A player may play for only one P.R.O. team during any single day. Once a player is on the event roster of a team in a gender age group and such team has played one match in event competition, such player may not appear on another team's event roster in such gender age group during the remainder of the event.

In situations where a club may have multiple teams participating in P.R.O., a player or players may be listed on multiple team event rosters in different age groups, but at no time may a player play for more than one team on the same day, and not play on more than one team in the same gender age group. Under no circumstances may a player be listed on multiple team event rosters if such teams are from different clubs.

During an event, a Goalkeeper may be listed on up to two (2) team match day team lineups per day from the same club, with the written consent by NL Commissioner/Event Manager. A Goalkeeper may not play on more than one team in the same gender age group at the event and is subject to the same standards as club pass players.

#### **4.05 Playing of Ineligible Player**

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

Accusations from teams of an ineligible player must be extensively substantiated and it is incumbent on the accuser to provide concrete evidence of ineligibility.

## **SECTION 5. NL P.R.O. – EVENT SCHEDULING, MATCH MANAGEMENT & PROCEDURES**

### **5.01 Event Management**

The NL Commissioner may designate an Event Manager to oversee and have authority over the operation of assigned matches.

### **5.02 Structure**

The 2023-24 P.R.O. events will include the following Boys and Girls age groups:

- 14 and Under (14U) – for players born on January 1, 2010 or later
- 15 and Under (15U) – for players born on January 1, 2009 or later
- 16 and Under (16U) – for players born on January 1, 2008 or later
- 17 and Under (17U) – for players born on January 1, 2007 or later
- 19 and Under (19U) – for players born on January 1, 2005 or later

### **5.03 Number of Matches**

Each team will be scheduled to play a minimum of three (3) matches at a P.R.O. event.

### **5.04 Brackets/Pools**

Teams that qualified for a P.R.O. event through their respective Playoff shall be placed into an appropriate P.R.O. bracket/pool (Champions, Silver, Wildcard) based on their performance from their Playoff event. Each bracket/pool will include a qualification pathway to the USYS National Championships.

- **Champions Pool:** Includes the highest ranked qualified teams from each Playoff event and retains the highest volume (4) of qualification slots into the USYS National Championships.
- **Silver Pool:** Includes the middle-ranked qualified teams from each Playoff event and retains one (1) qualification slot into the USYS National Championships
- **Wildcard Pool:** Includes the lowest ranked qualified teams from each Playoff event and retains one (1) qualification slot into the USYS National Championship.

Supplemental documentation will be published on the P.R.O. event webpage that outlines the bracket/pool placement, format and USYS National Championships qualification for each age group.

#### **5.05 Match Schedule and Rest Periods**

It is the intent of the National League to play only one (1) match per day; however, when circumstances dictate, no more than two (2) matches a day may be scheduled. Every effort will be made to provide a minimum of three (3) hours rest between matches.

#### **5.06 Team Match Day Game Card**

The GotSport generated Game Card shall be the official Team Line Up Card. The Game Card will include the eighteen (18) eligible players (including both primary and club pass players) a team will use in a match. Should more than eighteen (18) players appear on the card, the Referee must manually strike through the players that will not participate (during game check-in by the referee) for a maximum of eighteen (18) eligible players.

#### **5.07 Team/Player Check-In**

Prior to each match, the NL Staff will provide the referee with a Game Card from GotSport. which will serve as the Official Match Report following the completion of the game. The Referee will use the Game Card to check-in the players from both teams.

Following the completion of each match, a coach from each team must provide a signature on the completed Match Report to acknowledge the accuracy of all scores, goal scorers, and cards issued onto the Match Report. Each team is required to take a picture of the final Match Report for their own records. The Referee will then submit the Match Report to the on-site Event Manager.

#### **5.08 Responsibility of Teams**

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

#### **5.09 Inclement Weather and Unplayable Field Conditions Prior to Match**

The NL Commissioner/Event Manager is responsible for notifying the teams as soon as possible if games on scheduled fields are unable to be played due to field closings or inclement weather.

#### **5.10 Referee Jurisdiction**

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

#### **5.11 Four Person System**

Matches should be officiated by the four-person FIFA/USSF Referee System, but some may be officiated by a three-person FIFA/USSF Referee System. In the event the assigned officials fail to appear, an attempt to secure certified officials should be made to officiate the match. In the event certified USSF officials are not available, the Referee may appoint Club Assistant Referees. Club Assistant Referees shall be limited to decisions only on touchlines and possession as specified by FIFA/USSF Referee Guidelines.

#### **5.12 Match Officials / Referee Assignor**

Match officials will be assigned under the authority of the National League by a certified USSF Referee Assignor, designated by USYS.

#### **5.13 Payment of Referees**

Referee and Assistant Referees are paid for event matches in a process determined by USYS.

#### **5.14 Filing of Referee Match Report**

Prior to each P.R.O. match, the referee will be provided with a GotSport "Game Card," which shall serve as the Official Match Line-Up Card prior to the game and the official Match Report following the completion of the game. The Referee shall use the Game Card to check-in the players from both teams.

After each P.R.O. match, the Referee shall accurately report all scores, goal scorers, and cards issued onto the Match Report. Once the match data is completed on the Match Report, it should be presented to both coaches for their signature. Each team must take a picture of the final Match Report for their own records. The Referee shall then submit the Match Report to the on-site Event Manager.

If a player is sent off for Violent Conduct, Spitting, or Abusive Language, a US Soccer Supplemental Report must be filled out and submitted to the on-site Event Manager with the Match Report. Additionally, a US Soccer Supplemental Report must be filled out and submitted to the on-site Event Manager for situations involving Referee Abuse or Referee Assault. The on-site Event Manager shall submit all Match Reports and US Soccer Supplemental Reports to the NL Commissioner.

#### **5.15 Reporting of Scores**

The Event Manager or their designee will input scores into GotSport after collecting the Match Reports.

#### **5.16 Protests**

To be valid and eligible for consideration, a protest must be written on the Game Card and orally lodged by a team official with the match referee and the opposing coach at the game site before leaving the field of play. All protests must be submitted in writing and filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching of the Club that the team is a member with the appropriate fee to the NL Commissioner/Event Manager. The protest must be submitted no later than three (3) hours after match completion in accordance with the Filing Procedures listed in the applicable section in these rules.

The referee is the final authority on the field of play. All decisions of the referees with respect to matters of fact, including judgment matters, are final and may not be protested.

#### **5.17 Match Management Procedures**

The NL Commissioner, in consultation with the NL Management Group, has the authority to make the final decision on all aspects related to a match outside of the jurisdiction of the referees.

#### **5.18 Additional Match Management Procedures**

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

#### **5.19 Final Authority**

The NL Commissioner/Event Manager shall have final authority to act in the best interest of P.R.O. which may include but not limited to adjusting Match Day Procedures for specific matches or making decisions to address situations not covered in the P.R.O. Rules.

### **SECTION 6. NL P.R.O – USYS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

#### **6.01 Qualification Requirements**

On an annual basis, the NL Management Group shall determine the structure of the 14U, 15U, 16U, 17U, and 19U Playoff and determine the format by which teams earn qualification into P.R.O. The NL Management Group shall also determine the format and structure of P.R.O. to qualify up to twelve (12) positions in the USYS National Championships designated for 14U, 15U, 16U, 17U, and 19U National League teams.

A team that achieves a qualification slot from P.R.O. into the USYS National Championships is expected to honor the commitment to participate in the National Championships competition. Failure to field a team in such National competition may result in fines as determined by the NL Commissioner.

To be eligible for qualification into the USYS National Championships from P.R.O., a team must have participated in their State Association's State Cup competition within the same seasonal year. Teams may apply for a State Cup participation waiver (with their State Association) in accordance with the National Championship Series (NCS) Policy.

## 6.02 Advancement to USYS National Championships

P.R.O. matches, the result of which qualify a team into the USYS National Championships, will be identified in the P.R.O. schedule. Supplemental documents, which outline the qualification pathway for each age group, may be published on the respective P.R.O. event webpage.

## SECTION 7. NL P.R.O. – RULES OF PLAY

### 7.01 Applicable Rules and Laws of the Game

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

### 7.02 Official Match

If less than one half is completed and the match is terminated because of weather or other unplayable conditions, the entire match must be replayed, subject to review by the NL Commissioner/Event Manager. If the first full half of a match is played, and the second half of the match is not played because of weather or unplayable conditions, the match is official, and the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated. If a match is terminated during the second half of play due to inclement weather or unplayable conditions as determined by the referee in accordance with the IFAB Laws of the Game, the final score will be the score at the time the match is terminated. In cases of a terminated match because of unplayable conditions due to spectator behavior or an unsafe playing environment, the final score shall be subject to review by the NL Commissioner/Event Manager.

### 7.03 Substitutions

- a) Matches in the 14U age group, unlimited substitution will be allowed.
- b) Matches in the 15U, 16U, 17U, and 19U age groups will operate under the FIFA-7 players “per half” substitution system. Once replaced, players cannot re-enter the game during that half of play.
- c) Unlimited vs Limited substitution policies shall be aligned with the National Championship Series Policy.
- d) Substitutions may be made at any stoppage of play with the approval of the referee.
- e) Reentry shall be at a normal substitution point (with approval of the referee) or at any point during the game if the referee signals for the player’s reentry.
- f) During a match is that is part of a P.R.O. event using neutral Health Care Professionals (HCP) or neutral Athletic Trainer Certified (ATC) to monitor the fields, if a player is suspected of suffering a head injury, such player may be substituted for evaluation. The substitution for the evaluation of a concussion/head injury will not count towards the team’s total allowed substitutions in a half. However, the team must have at least one substitution available to implement this temporary substitution.
  - 1) If the player is deemed by the neutral HCP or neutral ATC to not have been diagnosed as having a possible concussion, the player may re-enter the game at any stoppage of play and must replace the original substitute. This head injury evaluation substitution will not count as a used substitution in the half. Furthermore, the temporary substitute will be able to re-enter the game in that half at a later time.
  - 2) If the player is not cleared to return to play by the HCP or ATC, the replacement player will no longer be considered a temporary substitute and the team will be charged a substitution.
  - 3) Any discipline issued to the temporary substitute will count for the remainder of the game.

### 7.04 Match Length

Age Group	Length of Each Half	Halftime*
17U, 18U, and 19U	45 minutes	10 minutes
15U and 16U	40 minutes	10 minutes
14U	35 minutes	10 minutes

\*Halftime – subject to change

### 7.05 Match Results

Most games at P.R.O. events must identify a winner. Any game that must identify a winner but ends in a tie (at the end of regulation time) shall proceed directly to Kicks from the Mark to determine the winner (no overtime periods). Kicks from the Mark will be governed by the IFAB Laws of the Game. Any of eighteen (18) eligible players listed for that game are eligible to kick and do not need to be on the field at the end of regulation time.

Games played in a Group Play / Round-Robin format can end in a tie.

### 7.06 Field Size

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

### **7.07 Anchored Goals**

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

### **7.08 Team Uniforms**

Each player (except a goalkeeper) shall have a number on the player's jersey. The number shall be affixed to the back of the jersey and be clearly visible. Each player on a team should wear a number different from the number of every other player on the team. Numbered jerseys on goalkeepers are optional.

All teams are required to attend each match with two (2) sets of jerseys and socks for all its players; one set of light-colored jerseys and socks, and a second set of dark colored jerseys and socks. It is expected that the first team listed on the match schedule is to wear light/white color jerseys and socks. If, in the opinion of the referee, there is a conflict in uniform color, the team listed second on the event schedule should change its jerseys and socks. The NL Commissioner/Event Manager shall have the option to assign jersey colors to teams for matches, should such procedure be deemed appropriate.

### **7.09 Uniform Logos and Patches**

Teams playing in P.R.O. are permitted to have the following limited items on their game uniforms:

- a) USYS logo or directly related USYS logoed patches
- b) Their individual club and/or team logo and team sponsor logo
- c) USYS partner logos
- d) Manufacturer of uniform logo
- e) Name and number of player

No other patches or logos are permitted unless written permission is granted by USYS. All patches or logos not permitted must either be covered up or removed.

### **7.10 Coaching from Sidelines**

Limited coaching is permitted only from one touch line from the team's respective technical area (if marked) or from the centerline to no more than five (5) yards from the end of the team bench closest to the goal line (if no technical area is marked). Team bench persons may not enter the field without permission from the referee. Only one coach per team may stand and give instruction at a time.

### **7.11 Team Bench Area and Supervision**

No more than four (4) team bench persons (being only team coaches, team administrators, team medical staff, and team video personnel) shall be permitted at the team bench area during a match. Any team video personnel on the team sideline must have proper credentials issued by USYS or their USYS Member State Association. Players listed on the match lineup card are permitted at the team bench area during a match. Players on event roster but who are not participating in a P.R.O. match are allowed in the team bench area but must not be in uniform.

A suspended team bench person is not permitted at the Team Bench Area. A coach, manager or team official must always supervise their team at the Team Bench Area. Coaches, managers and team officials must show the Referee a pass, as provided by USYS or their USYS Member State Association, certifying that the coach, manager or team official is currently rostered with the team/club.

### **7.12 Spectator Areas**

Spectators are to only occupy the opposite side of the field from the teams on the same end of the field as their team bench area. Coaches/Managers are required to maintain control of their players and their team's fans on the sideline.

### **7.13 Team Coaches – Coaching Education Requirement**

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

### **7.14 Forfeit Due to Failure to Appear for Match**

Failure to appear for a scheduled match will result in a forfeit. A team must be present and ready to play (7-player minimum) within ten (10) minutes of scheduled match time unless otherwise approved by the NL Commissioner/Event Manager.

## SECTION 8. NL P.R.O. – STANDINGS/RESULTS

### 8.01 Bracket vs Group Play

The P.R.O. event primarily follows a bracket/knockout structure whereby a team must win a set number of matches to earn qualification into the USYS National Championships. Teams progress through the P.R.O. competition based on the results from the previous day's matches.

In some age groups at P.R.O., the number of qualified teams in P.R.O. may require the use of Group Play / Round-Robin in the Silver Pool to determine qualification into the USYS National Championships. In such cases, final standings will be determined by an accumulation of points and use of tie-breakers as described in the "[Conference Playoff Rules](#)" Section 9.

### 8.02 Forfeits

A forfeited match will be scored as a 1-0 win for the opponent. In addition, a team that forfeits one or more matches may be subject to further sanctioning including but not limited to a fine, becoming ineligible to advance to Nationals, or being suspended from the National League. The NL Commissioner/Event Manager, after consultation with the NL Management Group, shall determine any additional sanctioning.

The NL Commissioner, with consultation of the NL Management Group, will review forfeitures on a case-by-case basis. If it is determined that, based on the circumstances surrounding a team's forfeiture of a match, dropping that team from P.R.O. will best maintain the integrity of the competition, that action may be taken. Should a team be dropped, all scores for that team in the event schedule shall be recorded as a 1-0 win for the opponent.

## SECTION 9. NL P.R.O. – DISCIPLINE

### 9.01 Protocol for Send Offs and Dismissals

Any player or team bench personnel dismissed from participating in an event match must leave the field area and retreat to an area designated by the NL Commissioner/Event Manager. All personnel dismissed by the match official are prohibited from communicating with the team for the duration of the game. Communication may include but is not limited to cell phone use, texting, or other means of communication. Violation of this rule may result in further disciplinary action against the individual and/or team. The match officials on site are authorized to prohibit the use of any communication devices at the team bench areas.

### 9.02 Send Offs and Dismissals – Automatic Suspension

Any player sent off or non-player dismissed will be automatically suspended for the next day of the event competition and for the team's next event match (suspensions served concurrently). For a second send off or dismissal during a seasonal year and any send off or dismissal thereafter, the player or non-player will automatically be suspended for the next day of event competition and the team's next two (2) event matches (served concurrently).

All send-offs and dismissals are to be reviewed by the NL Commissioner who, in consultation with the NL Management Group, may determine that an additional suspension shall be assessed.

### 9.03 Racial / Spitting / Discriminatory Incident – Automatic Suspension

Any official reports from a referee or league/event official involving a racial, spitting, or discriminatory incident will be subject to a minimum suspension as follows: at least a five (5) game suspension for making racist or discriminatory remarks at or about any person; at least a five (5) game suspension for spitting at a person. Such suspension will carry over to both National League events and leagues.

All official reports of racial or discriminatory behavior shall be subject to review by the NL Management Group who may impose additional sanctions.

### 9.04 Playing of a Suspended Player

A team that plays suspended player may be subject to disciplinary action which could include, but not be limited to: (a) forfeiture of the match, and (b) suspension of the team's coach from P.R.O. competition. Additional disciplinary action could include (a) expulsion of the team from P.R.O.; and/or (b) any further action(s) not limited to fines as determined by the NL Commissioner.

### 9.05 Reporting Send Offs to States

The NL Commissioner/Event Manager may distribute information on all send-offs to the respective State Associations.



### **9.06 Termination of Matches**

Referees may terminate matches for lack of crowd control, poor team behavior or other unsportsmanlike circumstances. Each coach is responsible for the behavior and conduct of his/her players. Upon request by the Referees, coaches are responsible for assisting in the control of parents, fans, and spectators. The Referee will immediately report the termination of any match to the NL Commissioner/Event Manager. The NL Commission/Event Manager shall ascertain the facts and determine appropriate disciplinary action. The NL Management Group shall determine any additional sanctioning.

### **9.07 Suspensions Incurred at Last Event Match**

If a player or non-player is sent off or dismissed during the last match of the Playoff, and such team has qualified for the P.R.O. event, the suspension shall be served at P.R.O. If a player or non-player is sent off or dismissed during the last match of P.R.O., the suspension shall be served at the team's next National League match. The NL Commissioner has the right to impose additional sanctions regarding any matters arising from participation in the Playoff or P.R.O. event as the result of the sending off or dismissal.

### **9.08 Match Manipulation**

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

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

### **9.09 Violation of Rules**

Any violation of the rules herein not specifically addressed in these rules will be subject to disciplinary action by the NL Commissioner.

## **SECTION 10. NL P.R.O. – PROTESTS AND APPEALS**

### **10.01 Definition of a Protest**

A protest is a formal written objection of any violation of established policies, rules, or procedures related to a specific match and can only be filed by the Club Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. Only those teams involved are permitted to protest a match result based on information/situations not involving referring decision. Third parties, i.e., coaches from other teams, state administrators, cannot file protests on a specific match.

### **10.02 Protests of Match Played**

All referee related decisions are final and exempt from protest. The referee is the final authority on the field of play. All decisions of the referees with respect to matters of fact, including judgment matters, are final.

Should a team head coach deem a situation outside of the referee jurisdiction to be subject to protest, the protest must be recorded as follows.

A protest must be recorded on the Game Card, and orally lodged by a team official with the match referee and the opposing coach at the game site before leaving the field of play. All protests must be submitted in writing and filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching of the Club that the team is a member with the appropriate fee to the NL Commissioner/Event Manager. The formal written protest must be logged no later than three (3) hours after match completion in accordance with the Filing Procedures listed in section 10.06 of this document.

### **10.03 Hearing of Protest**

The National League Management Group shall hear all protests by no later than seven (7) business days following the receipt of the protest fee.

### **10.04 Definition of an Appeal**

An Appeal is a request to transfer the matter from one jurisdiction to another for re-examination of the decision made by

the lower body. Appeals arise as the result of an adverse decision from an administrative action or disciplinary action at a lower level. Only those parties to the original action, who are adversely impacted by such decisions, shall be allowed to appeal. An Appeal may only be filed by the Director of the Club or the Director of Coaching for the Club that the team is a member. An appeal must be filed in accordance with Section 10.06 within five (5) days after a decision is rendered by the National League Management Group.

#### **10.05 Appeals Committee**

The National League shall have a National League Appeals Committee. The National League Appeals Committee shall have jurisdiction of appeals as provided in the rules of this Section 10. The NL Commissioner shall appoint members to the Committee for each appeal that is filed. Members of the National League Appeals Committee shall have no conflict of interest in the matters being appealed and shall not be associated with any of the principals involved. The National League Appeals Committee shall be chaired by one of the members designated by the NL Commissioner. The Appeals Committee shall be composed of no fewer than three (3) and no more than five (5) members.

Decisions of the National League Appeals Committee shall be final.

#### **10.06 Filing Procedures**

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

The nature and specifics of the complaint.

A listing of the policies, rules, and/or procedures that have been violated.

A statement of the desired resolution.

Copies of all documents relevant to the protest or appeal.

The filing fee for a protest or appeal is \$500 (certified check or money order – made payable to US Youth Soccer).

All protests and appeals that involve a team's participation while attending a P.R.O. game must be filed with the NL Commissioner or Event Manager while on-site. The original document of the protest or appeal, along with all supporting documents, must be sent by Registered or Certified U.S. Mail – Return Receipt Requested, or by a reputable overnight courier service, to:

US Youth Soccer  
Attn: National League  
9220 World Cup Way  
Frisco, TX 75033

#### **10.07 Hearing of Appeal**

An appeal of a P.R.O. decision shall be heard by the National League Management Group. An appeal of a National League Management Group decision shall be heard by the National League Appeals Committee.

#### **10.08 Notification of Parties**

The NL Commissioner/Event Manager when dealing with appeals arising from P.R.O. games shall notify all parties involved, no later than three (3) hours after receipt of an appeal or protest, that an appeal or protest has been filed.

#### **10.09 Disputes, Discipline & Appeals**

The NL Commissioner/Event Manager is authorized to settle disputes which arise during the P.R.O. event. The NL Commissioner/Event Manager, in accordance with the disciplinary policies and procedures of USYS and US Soccer, will investigate and adjudicate all allegations of misconduct by teams, coaches, players, or others involved in National League operations and will impose an appropriate sanction for any violation found that is subject to the approval of the NL Commissioner.