



US YOUTH SOCCER™
MISSISSIPPI
STATE CUP
2026

2026 U9-U12 Information, Rules, & Procedures

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. The U9-U12 USYS Mississippi State Cup provides MSA Member Club/Organization Teams with an annual opportunity to conclude their seasonal year by competing for a State Championship.
- 1.1.2. The U13-U19 USYS Mississippi State Cup is facilitated by the Mississippi Soccer Association (MSA) and serves as the first step in US Youth Soccer's (USYS) National Championships, the country's most prestigious national youth soccer tournament.

1.2. Eligibility

- 1.2.1. The USYS Mississippi State Cup is open to all U9-U12 MSA "Competitive" & "Rec Plus" Teams.

1.3. Registration

- 1.3.1. The team registration deadline(s) will be established by the MSA Office Staff and posted on the MSA Website.

1.4. Fees & Fines

- 1.4.1. The Qualification Weekend team entry fee will be established by the MSA Office Staff and posted on the MSA Website.

- 1.4.1.1. The Qualification Weekend team entry fee is non-refundable and required for each participating team.

- 1.4.2. The Finals Weekend team entry fee will be established by the MSA Office Staff and posted on the MSA Website.

- 1.4.2.1. The Finals Weekend team entry fee is non-refundable and required for each participating team.

- 1.4.3. If a team withdraws from Qualification Weekend and/or Finals Weekend after being accepted, a \$500 fine will be invoiced to the team's home organization. This fine must be paid prior to the team's home organization's participation in the current USYS Mississippi State Cup.

1.5. Team Rosters & Team Bench Credentials

- 1.5.1. 7v7 Game Format (U9-U10): All Team Rosters are limited to fourteen (14) players and up to four (4) club-specific credentialed team officials.

- 1.5.2. 9v9 Game Format (U11-U12): All Team Rosters are limited to eighteen (18) players and up to four (4) club-specific credentialed team officials.

- 1.5.3. All Team Rosters are frozen at least 14 days prior to the USYS Mississippi State Cup Tournament. No additional players may be added after the roster freeze date.

- 1.5.3.1. In the event that two (2) teams from the same club/organization are scheduled to compete against each other in a Consolation Game (3rd Place Game), rosters may be "unfrozen" with the intent to competitively balance the game. Team Officials from both teams must mutually agree to roster changes and communicate them to the assigned referee at the field before the kickoff of the Consolation Game.

- 1.5.4. All Official USYS Team Rosters and corresponding Team Bench Credentials will be printed by the MSA Office Staff and provided to each team at Team Check-In.

1.6. Team Check-In

- 1.6.1. Team Check-In will take place at Tournament Headquarters.

- 1.6.2. All teams must check-in at least one (1) hour prior to their respective first USYS Mississippi State Cup game.

- 1.6.3. All teams must review and approve their respective Official USYS Team Roster and Team Bench Credentials at Team Check-In.

1.7. Decorum

- 1.7.1. Coaches are responsible for the behavior of themselves, their coaching staff, parents/spectators, and their players.

- 1.7.2. Coaches and other team officials shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game.

- 1.7.3. When an offense is committed by a team official and the offender cannot be identified, the head coach will receive the disciplinary sanction.

- 1.7.4. Any other individuals who may be reasonably construed as being associated with a team, such as relatives and spectators, are also subject to the jurisdiction and authority of MSA, USYS, and the Tournament.

1.8. Committees

- 1.8.1. The Tournament Committee (TC) is responsible for the management of discipline and *Protests*.

- 1.8.2. Tournament Appeals Committee (TAC) is responsible for the management of all *Appeals* regarding Tournament Committee decisions.

2. TOURNAMENT FORMAT

2.1. Format

2.1.1. Qualification Weekend Format: Round Robin – Group(s) and game requirements will be established by the MSA State Office Staff and posted on the MSA Website.

2.1.2. Finals Weekend Format: Brackets will be established by the MSA State Office Staff and posted on the MSA Website.

2.2. Seeding and Scheduling of Games

2.2.1. The MSA Office Staff are responsible for the seeding and scheduling of all USYS Mississippi State Cup Games.

2.2.2. Qualification Weekend Schedules will be posted at least 5 days prior to Qualification Weekend.

2.2.3. Finals Weekend Schedules will be posted at least 5 days prior to Finals Weekend.

2.2.4. If a team withdraws from Qualification Weekend and/or Finals Weekend after being accepted, the team may not be replaced, and the scheduled opponent may automatically advance.

2.2.5. Within the limits imposed by these rules and guidelines and by uncontrollable external conditions, the schedule will be developed objectively with no favoritism shown to specific teams.

2.2.6. Seeding will be determined by a blind draw.

2.3. Advancement

2.3.1. Qualification Weekend: The team(s) earning the most points upon the conclusion of round-robin play will progress to Finals Weekend.

2.3.1.1. Qualification Weekend Round-Robin Points Method:

2.3.1.1.1. Three (3) Points for a Win.

2.3.1.1.2. Zero (0) Points for a Loss.

2.3.1.2. Qualification Weekend Round-Robin Points Tiebreaker Method:

2.3.1.2.1. First: Winner of head-to-head competition (not used if more than two teams are tied).

2.3.1.2.2. Second: Goal differential (goals scored minus goals against) with a max of five (5) goals per game.

2.3.1.2.3. Third: Fewest goals allowed.

2.3.1.2.4. Fourth and Final: Kicks from penalty spot per FIFA Laws of the Game.

2.3.2. Finals Weekend: Team advancement is in accordance with the brackets established by the MSA State Office Staff.

2.3.3. A team that forfeits any USYS Mississippi State Cup game will be considered to have withdrawn from the tournament.

2.3.3.1. A fine will be assessed by the TC to the forfeiting team in cases where the forfeit was deemed avoidable.

2.3.3.2. The scheduled opponents of the forfeiting team on Qualification Weekend will be declared the winner and awarded three (3) points for the win, three (3) goals for, and zero (0) goals against.

2.3.3.3. The scheduled opponent of the forfeiting team on Finals Weekend will be declared the winner.

2.3.4. Manipulating match results will result in forfeiture and disqualification at all levels of the competition. Match Manipulation fines may also be assessed.

3. **LAWS OF THE GAME** - Except as otherwise provided herein, the [MSA Small-Sided Games Rules](#) and FIFA Laws of the Game shall apply.
 - 3.1. Law 1: The Field of Play
 - 3.1.1. Team and Spectator Location
 - 3.1.1.1. The teams will sit on the opposite side of the field from the spectators. This may be adjusted as needed by MSA.
 - 3.1.1.2. Spectators are to remain on the half of the pitch across from their own team's bench. No encroachment to an opposing side is allowed by any spectator or team official.
 - 3.1.2. Team Bench and Sidelines
 - 3.1.2.1. Rostered players and up to four (4) club-specific credentialed team officials may be on the bench. The Team Bench Credentials will be issued at Team Check-In.
 - 3.2. Law 2: The Ball
 - 3.2.1. Each team shall be able to provide a game ball at each game that meets [MSA Small-Sided Games Rules](#) requirements. The decision on which ball will be used is the responsibility of the referee. Once the game begins, a protest cannot be lodged because of an illegal ball.
 - 3.3. Law 3: The Players
 - 3.3.1. Number of Substitutions
 - 3.3.1.1. The number of substitutions shall be unlimited for the U9-U12 age groups.
 - 3.3.1.2. Substitutions may be made with the consent of the referee, at the following times:
 - 3.3.1.2.1. Prior to a throw-in in your favor.
 - 3.3.1.2.2. Prior to a goal kick by either team.
 - 3.3.1.2.3. After a goal by either team.
 - 3.3.1.2.4. After an injury by either team when the referee stops play.
 - 3.3.1.2.5. At half time.
 - 3.3.1.2.6. When the referee stops play to caution a player, only the cautioned player may be substituted prior to the restart of the game.
 - 3.3.2. Substitution Procedure
 - 3.3.2.1. Team Roster Review
 - 3.3.2.1.1. The referee will review each team's USYS Team Roster prior to the beginning of the game to confirm Player, Coach, and Team Official eligibility.
 - 3.3.2.1.1.1. 7v7 Game Format (U9-U10): A game may not start if there are less than five (5) players on a team.
 - 3.3.2.1.1.2. 9v9 Game Format (U11-U12): A game may not start if there are less than six (6) players on a team.
 - 3.3.2.1.2. In the event that two (2) teams from the same club/organization are scheduled to compete against each other in a Consolation Game (3rd Place Game), rosters may be "unfrozen" with the intent to competitively balance the game. Team Officials from both teams must mutually agree to roster changes and communicate them to the assigned referee at the field before the kickoff of the Consolation Game.
 - 3.3.2.1.3. While on the bench, Coaches/Team Officials must always have their Team Bench Credential visible around their neck.
 - 3.3.2.1.4. If a teams' USYS Team Roster cannot be produced at the start of a game, the TC will determine appropriate action.
 - 3.4. Law 4: The Players' Equipment
 - 3.4.1. All players must wear commercially manufactured shin guards. The referee is the sole judge of allowed player equipment as prescribed by the FIFA Laws of the Game.
 - 3.4.2. Uniforms
 - 3.4.2.1. Each player must wear an official uniform with a number on the back of the jersey.
 - 3.4.2.2. Numbers are not required on goalkeeper jerseys.
 - 3.4.2.3. Goalkeepers must wear colors that distinguish them from other players and game officials.
 - 3.4.2.4. Duplicate numbers or tape on uniforms is not permitted.
 - 3.4.2.5. Each team must have two (2) complete uniform kits onsite, including socks (one light, one dark).

- 3.4.2.5.1. HOME Teams wear LIGHT colored jersey and socks.
- 3.4.2.5.2. AWAY Teams wear DARK colored jersey and socks.
- 3.4.2.5.3. If there is a conflict, the team in the incorrect color will be required to change.
- 3.4.2.5.4. If the teams are wearing the correct color uniform (home-light, away-dark) but the referee determines there is a color conflict between the home and visiting team's uniform - the home team must change.
- 3.4.2.6. At every level of the USYS NCS, each player, team and team official may only have on his/her/their apparel the name, logo, or other identifying mark of USYS or a member directly or indirectly of USYS.
 - 3.4.2.6.1. A name, logo, or other identifying mark of any youth soccer organization other than USYS or its member must be removed, replaced, or covered before a player, team or team official may enter or remain at a field complex where the competition is being held.
 - 3.4.2.6.2. After an initial warning, the name, logo, or other identifying mark of any youth soccer organization other than USYS or its member must be removed before the player, team or team official may enter or continue in the competition.
 - 3.4.2.6.3. The referee's decision is final.
- 3.5. Law 7: The Duration of the Match
 - 3.5.1. Periods of Play
 - 3.5.1.1. 7v7 Game Format (U9-U10): 25-minute halves (5-minute half-time interval)
 - 3.5.1.2. 9v9 Game Format (U11-U12): 30-minute halves (5-minute half-time interval)
 - 3.5.2. Unfinished Games
 - 3.5.2.1. Unfinished games due to any cause shall be replayed, provided neither team is at fault and play has not begun in the second half. If play is stopped after completion of the first half and cannot be resumed as determined by the Referee/ TC, and provided neither team is at fault, the TC may deem the game complete. Should play be stopped at any time due to one of the teams being adjudged at fault, it shall be at the discretion of the TC as to whether the game is to be replayed, stand as is, or declared a forfeit.
 - 3.5.3. Terminated/Suspended Games
 - 3.5.3.1. Once play has begun, games may only be terminated/suspended by the TC.
- 3.6. Law 8: The Start and Restart of Play
 - 3.6.1. Grace Period: Any team not ready to play at the assigned game field and time, shall be granted a fifteen (15)-minute grace period. Any team not ready to play after this grace period has expired shall be reported to the TC by the referee. The TC shall decide when a forfeit is declared.
 - 3.6.1.1. 7v7 Game Format (U9-U10): A game may not start (or continue) if there are less than five (5) players on a team.
 - 3.6.1.2. 9v9 Game Format (U11-U12): A game may not start (or continue) if there are less than six (6) players on a team.
- 3.7. Law 10: Determining the Outcome of a Match
 - 3.7.1. All games must have a winner and a loser. There are no ties.
 - 3.7.1.1. If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, the game result shall be determined by the taking of kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game.
 - 3.7.2. Game Cards
 - 3.7.2.1. The Game Card is the official record for each USYS Mississippi State Cup Game. They are to be signed by both team officials and the referee at the field upon completion of a respective game. This is submitted at tournament headquarters to the TC.
- 3.8. Law 12: Fouls & Misconduct
 - 3.8.1. Ejections
 - 3.8.1.1. A Player Ejection:
 - Players receiving a red card or sent off during a match are prohibited from participating in at least the next match for their Primary rostered team and may not play any other matches until the ban is served, across both State and National levels. They may face additional suspension based upon severity.

- 3.8.1.2. A player who is sent off from the field must remain in the team bench area until the conclusion of the match. A team official is responsible for the behavior of their players at all times. If the sent off player cannot be controlled by a Team Official, the Referee may require the removal of the player from the entire field area. If such a player is removed from the field area, a Team Official or parent must supervise the player away from the field area.
- 3.8.1.3. Coach or Credentialed Team Representative Ejection:
Coaches, officials, and individuals associated with the team—including spectators—are subject to misconduct rules. Any misconduct, abusive behavior, or violent conduct reported by referees must be addressed in writing, with disciplinary action taken as per US Youth Soccer policies and US Soccer Referee Abuse Prevention Policy (531-9).
- 3.8.1.4. Player and Coach Suspension:
Any player, coach or bench personnel who have been suspended may appeal the decision to the TC in the event this is a misapplication of the rules. This appeal must be made within two hours of notification of the suspension.

4. PROTESTS

- 4.1. All questions relating to the qualifications of the competitors or interpretation of the rules, or any dispute or protest shall be referred to the Tournament Committee (TC).
- 4.2. Validity
 - 4.2.1. To be valid and eligible for consideration:
 - 4.2.1.1. All protests relating to the ground, goal posts, bars or other appurtenances of the games shall be entertained only if a written objection has been lodged with the referee and the opposing coach prior to the start of the game.
 - 4.2.1.2. All protests must be filed in writing with the TC within two (2) hours of the completion of the game in protest and must include:
 - 4.2.1.2.1. A fee in the amount of \$300. This fee may be in cash, cashier's check or money order. Personal checks will not be accepted. Cashier's checks or money orders must be made payable to MSA.
 - 4.2.1.2.2. Full particulars of the grounds on which the protest is lodged.
- 4.3. Ignorance
 - 4.3.1. A plea of ignorance to the rules and policies of the USYS Mississippi State Cup, National Championships and/or the USYS National Presidents Cup is not sufficient grounds for protests or appeals.
- 4.4. Judgment
 - 4.4.1. Judgment decisions of the referee are not subject to protest or appeal.
- 4.5. Timing
 - 4.5.1. Notification of protest must be received by the TC within two (2) hours of completion of the game being protested.
- 4.6. Procedures
 - 4.6.1. The TC shall, immediately upon the receipt of a protest, notify the team against which the protest is made and shall give a copy of the protest and all particulars to that team, which will then have the right to defend its case, with or without witnesses. A written response must be made within two (2) hours of notification.
 - 4.6.2. The TC shall compile the necessary information to hear the protest from all available sources before the protest is heard. This shall include, but not be limited to, coaches, field marshals, referees, assessors, witnesses if necessary, etc. All materials will be treated with confidentiality.
 - 4.6.3. After compiling the necessary information, the TC will meet to conduct the protest hearing. The decisions of the TC shall be binding on all parties.
 - 4.6.4. The TC will notify the parties of the TC's decision.

5. APPEALS

5.1. The decisions of the TC may be appealed to the Tournament Appeals Committee (TAC). The appellant shall bear the burden of showing that the decision being appealed is clearly erroneous. No new evidence may be presented to the TAC unless circumstances have materially changed, or new facts are discovered that were unavailable at the time of the original hearing.

5.1.1. An appeal must be filed in writing to the TAC within two (2) hours of notification of the TC'S decision and include:

5.1.1.1. A fee in the amount of \$300. This fee may be in cash, cashier's check or money order. Personal checks will not be accepted. Cashier's checks and money orders must be payable to MSA.

5.1.2. Ignorance

5.1.2.1. A plea of ignorance to the rules of the competition is not sufficient grounds for appeals or protests.

5.1.3. Judgment

5.1.3.1. Judgment decisions of the referees are not subject to appeal or protest.

*Matters Not Provided For

- Any matters not expressly addressed in these rules shall be determined at the sole discretion of the Tournament Committee (TC), the MSA Council, the Director of Events, and/or the Executive Director. Their decisions shall be final and binding.