



**MSI Classic Program Rules**  
**Fall 2023**

MSI Classic offers a competitive level of play for players in age groups U9 through U19. It is both a “select” program, in which players must try out and be selected for teams, and a “house league”, with all teams, players and coaches participating as “members” of the MSI organization. The Classic League embraces and promotes the same values and principles as other MSI programs – each child’s enjoyment, skill development, personal growth, passion for the game, team experience and sportsmanship. MSI Classic teams are deemed to be organized by and for the benefit of the youth players that make up each team.

Age Group	Format	Roster Maximum	Secondary Carded Maximum	Game Length
U9	7v7 + Build-out lines	13 players	3 players, 4 non-Classic Assessed players allowed	2×30"
U10	7v7 + Build-out lines	13 players	3 players, 4 non-Classic Assessed players allowed	2×30"
U11	9v9	16 players	4 players	2×30"
U12	9v9	16 players	4 players	2×30"
U13	11v11	18 players	5 players	2×35"
U14	11v11	18 players	5 players	2×35"
U15	11v11	21 players	5 players	2×40"
U16 +	11v11	26 players*	6 players	2×40"

*\*21 is the maximum number of players allowed to be included on a team’s game day roster.*

MSI Classic teams are required to have 2 adults as the team carded officials are allowed to have a maximum of three carded officials. The Head Coach and the Manager must be carded.

All MSI Classic teams must have a parent volunteer identified as the Team Manager or Parent Representative. This volunteer helps with communication between the league and the team and can then perform, or assign to others, the many administrative duties that are required to support a team such as registering the players, team finance, purchasing uniforms, obtaining a practice field, assisting with set up and take down of field equipment, applying to play in tournaments and social activities.

Each MSI Classic team with a paid coach and/or trainer must have a parent volunteer identified as the Team Treasurer. This may or may not be the same person as the Team Manager or Volunteer Head Coach. The Team Treasurer may not be related to any individual receiving compensation from the team.

## AGE REQUIREMENTS

Effective Fall 2018, US Soccer (our National Governing Body) adopted a new approach to describing age groups for youth soccer, basing those age groups on the year in which each child was born. MSI believes that it is

important to continue facilitating the organization of community-based teams so that most kids may play with their classmates at both the Classic League and Recreational League levels of play.

MSI Classic teams age groups are based upon the US Soccer guidelines, with an important caveat: MSI decided to allow a maximum 6-month birth date allowance to facilitate most “same-grade” players to continue playing with their classmates. We recognize that there will be some players who are even more than 6 months older than the designated age range, yet still in the “same grade”. However, the 6-month extended age allowance is the maximum that will be considered, as it already means that some players will be 18 months older than the youngest players in the age group, and any further exceptions simply lead to more requests for never-ending exceptions for kids who are just a little bit older.

## **RULES OF PLAY**

MSI games are governed by FIFA rules of play with certain modifications appropriate to youth play. The MSI MODIFICATIONS OF FIFA RULES are as follows:

**Home Team/Visiting Team:** Before a game starts, the home team provides the game ball and must change jersey in case of a color clash.

In addition to FIFA Law V(d), a referee can suspend or terminate a game because of derogatory remarks directed at the referee or opposing team by a player, coach or spectator. A coach or spectator receiving a red card must leave the field immediately and move at least to the parking lot. He or she may not return to the field at the end of the game or be on the sidelines at the following game. The jurisdiction of the referee begins upon his arrival at the parking area and continues until he leaves the parking area. The use of communications devices to instruct the coach's replacement is prohibited. Returning to the game field during or after any MSI games played that day will result in mandatory coaches' review and additional one game suspension. Failure to leave the field will result in mandatory coaches' review and termination of the game. S/he may coach another team at another field. If the coach is required to leave and there is no other responsible adult available to supervise the team, the game will be declared a forfeit in favor of the other team with a final score of 1 – 0.

**Substitutions:** May be made with the consent of the referee at the following times:

1. prior to a throw-in by either team only when team in possession chooses to substitute
2. prior to a kick-off
3. prior to a goal kick by either team
4. upon issuance of a yellow card (only players involved may be substituted. If so, the opposing team may substitute a like number)
5. on an injury – only players involved may be substituted; if so, opposing team may substitute a like number.

**Red Cards (Automatic Suspension):** Receipt of a red card by a player, coach or spectator will result in immediate ejection from the field of play and a minimum one-game suspension from the next league game with **no** appeal. A coach or spectator receiving a red card must leave the field immediately and move at least to the parking lot. He or she may not return to the field at the end of the game, or be on the sidelines at the following game. The jurisdiction of the referee begins upon his arrival at the parking area and continues until he leaves the parking area. If a red card is issued, the offending person is prohibited from attending the team's next game. **A sit out form indicating that the person was not at the next game must be completed and submitted to MSI within 48**

**hours of the game completion.** Failure to leave the field after receiving a red card will result in mandatory coaches' review and termination and forfeiture of the game. S/he may coach another team at another field. If the coach is required to leave and there is no other responsible adult available to supervise the team, the game will be declared a forfeit in favor of the other team with a final score of 1 – 0.

Any ejection of a coach, player, or spectator constitutes a red card offense whether or not the card is shown. All associated penalties will still be served by the offending person.

**Yellow Cards:** Player must leave the game immediately and sit 5 minutes, after which the referee may allow for the return of the player in a normal substitution. The five minute sit out period does not include halftime.

Substitution is allowed during the sit out, enabling the team to play at full strength. (If there are no substitutes available, the team must play "short" during the sit out period.)

Slide tackles are allowed in the sole judgement of the referee that they are not dangerous. This is a subjective opinion, and the opinion of the referee is correct.

## **U9 AND U10 SPECIFIC RULES**

All potential U9 and U10 players are required to attend an MSI Player Assessment session to determine the best level of play for all players. Player assessments are also open to older players, especially potential new teams to determine if the Classic League is the right level for those players. Each U9 and U10 team may have up to four players on their roster that have not been assessed at the Classic level. At U11 and older, there are no requirements for players on the Classic team having attended a Player Assessment session. For those players, the Player Assessment is an opportunity for those that are unsure of their level of play to find out if the Classic League would be the right level.

### **Build-out Lines**

Build-out lines are indicated by cones placed halfway between the goal line and the halfway line.

Rules during open play:

- When the goalkeeper gains possession of the ball, players from the opposing team must retreat behind the build-out line. The referee and opposing team's coach should give reminders.
- The six-second count for the goalkeeper does not begin until players have retreated behind the build-out line.
- The referee may issue an indirect free-kick for the team in possession if the opponent is persistent in refusing to retreat behind the build-out line. Continued infractions can be considered misconduct (yellow card).
- Once the goalkeeper releases the ball and it is touched by a second player, opponents may cross the build-out line, and play continues normally.
- If the ball crosses the build-out line before being touched by a second player, play continues normally.
- The goalkeeper is NOT required to wait for opponents to retreat. If the goalkeeper decides to play the ball earlier, it is in play and all players may continue normally.
- The goalkeeper may NOT punt or drop-kick the ball over the build-out line. Play is resumed with a roll, throw, or normal play with the feet. All such actions put the ball into play.
- If a goalkeeper punts or dropkicks the ball, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. Referee's can have the discretion to give a team a warning and stop play to

return the ball to a goalkeeper after a punt and allow them to restart the game with a pass or roll the ball into play.

- If the punt or dropkick occurs within the goal area (not penalty area), the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.

Rules during goal kicks:

1. When a goal kick is awarded, all members of the opposing team must retreat behind the build-out line. The referee and opposing team's coach should give reminders. Persistent refusal to retreat behind the build-out line can be considered misconduct (yellow card).
2. The team in possession has no restrictions on their positioning. They may be on either side of the build-out line as well as in their own penalty area. The ball does not have to leave the penalty area before it is touched.
3. The opposing team may cross the build-out line once a second member of the team in possession has touched the ball.
4. If the goal kick travels beyond the build-out line without being touched by a second player, play resumes normally.

*Offside:* In 7v7 soccer, a player is not considered offside until they are beyond the build-out line and in an offside position.

*Miscellaneous:* The build-out line is not applied to any other restarts (throw-ins, free kicks) aside from goal kicks.

### **Goalkeeping**

Goalkeepers may only play one half of each game in goal.

Goalkeepers may not punt the ball from their hands. After one warning, an offending punt will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team from the spot of the offense.

### **Playing Time**

MSI requires that every player on the roster who is present for the entirety of a game must play at least one half of the game. Violations of this rule may lead to forfeiture of the game(s) and / or additional sanctions. Important note: This does not mean that everyone plays an equal amount of time; it means that everyone must play at least fifty percent of every game.

## **HEADING**

*Players aged 10 or younger MAY NOT HEAD THE BALL during either practices or games.* MSI and referees will enforce this restriction for Recreational KG through Grade 5, Classic age groups U10 through U11, and Premier age groups U09 through U11. In any instance where a player is deemed to have deliberately headed the ball during a game in these age groups, the referee shall award an Indirect Free Kick (IFK) to the opposing team from the spot of the header. If that spot is inside the Goal Area (6-yard box), the IFK shall be taken from the nearest point on the horizontal line defining the top of the Goal Area.

*Players between ages 11 and 13 MAY HEAD THE BALL during games, but are limited to heading the ball in practice for a total of 30 minutes practice time each week, with no more than 15-20 headers allowed per player in total.* MSI will enforce this restriction for Recreational Grade 6 through Grade 7, Classic age groups U12 through U13, and Premier age groups U12 and U13.

Coaches should be aware of any circumstance where they may have a player who is “playing up” one or more age groups, and therefore may have greater restrictions for themselves as compared to the age group in which they compete. It is the age of the individual player that governs the restrictions they may have under these new guidelines. Coaches are responsible for ensuring compliance in these exceptions; referees will officiate on the basis of the age group designation for the game.

## GAME START AND FORFEITS

To field a team, each side is required to have the following minimum number of players:

7 v 7	5 players
9 v 9	6 players
11 v 11	7 players

The start of the game may be delayed by the referee for up to 15 minutes to allow a team to obtain the minimum number of players. When both teams have at least the minimum number of players, the game must start, even if one side has fewer players on the field. Late players may not enter play until they receive permission from the referee.

In the event that either team does not have enough players, the coach with insufficient numbers of players may agree to forfeit the result of the game, yet still play an "official exhibition". In this event, the teams may share players, as long as all participating players are registered players with an MSI team during the current season.

If a referee has not arrived by game time, please call 301.762.4674 and select the “game day emergency” option (5). MSI encourages all teams to use parent volunteers to officiate games in which there is no referee, understanding that this decision is irreversible once play has begun, and scores may not be contested.

## PLAYER PASSES

Each Classic team **must** have a printed copy of its player passes at every game. All teams should write the player’s jersey number on the player passes. Prior to the start of each game, the center or assistant referee is required to check player passes against each player. Team managers should have players and passes ready to show referees 15 minutes prior to game time. This requirement is not optional and a referee’s refusal to check players’ passes/roster shall be immediately reported to the MSI Office following the game.

MSI/MWRSAs referees will allow a MSI Classic game to begin on time when there is a team (or a player) without player passes at the field, and that team (or player) has until halftime to produce the passes. If the team is not able to have the player passes at the field by halftime, the game will continue, but the game will be recorded as 1-0 in favor of the opposing team with player passes. Referees assigned to the game will referee this game in its entirety.

The player passes must remain at the field until the successful completion of the match. Players arriving late to games after player passes have been checked cannot enter the field until the referee has checked their player pass.

## **LEAGUE-WIDE WEATHER CANCELLATION**

In the event of inclement weather, MSI posts an announcement on its web site ([www.msisoccer.org](http://www.msisoccer.org)) concerning the status of league games. It is the coach's or manager's responsibility to monitor the MSI website and contact individual team players and families. On game days, MSI does not recognize the Montgomery County text alert system for field closures. The information provided on the MSI website will be the final determinant of the status of games. Once MSI has canceled games for the entire day league wide, it is impossible to reverse the decision for games later in the day. When games are canceled, referees and families make alternative plans. Sudden warmth and sunshine do not mean fields are playable. Your patience concerning cancellations is appreciated. If you are not notified concerning cancellation of your game, assume that the game will be played as scheduled.

### **Thunder and Lightning**

When thunder or lightning occurs, the game is immediately stopped, and the game clock is stopped. If there are 15 minutes or less remaining in the game, the game is terminated with the game score reported as an official completed game. If more than 15 minutes remain in the game, participants must wait the appropriate time – typically 25-30 minutes without additional thunder or lightning – before continuing the game. If the game has not reached the half-time, and the game cannot be restarted because of continuing inclement weather, the game is NOT an official game. If the game is stopped during the 2nd half with more than 15 minutes remaining, but the game cannot be restarted because of continuing inclement weather, the game is an official game.

The clock will stop during a delay and will resume when play restarts. Exception: In the event of a thunder/lightning delay with less than 15 minutes left in the game, the game is ended and the score will stand as of the time of termination.

### **High Winds**

MSI will use the National Weather Service guidelines.

*High Wind Advisory:* Fields are open but subject to closure. – MSI programs will be allowed. However, specific locations may be closed, and a decision to close all fields may be made late or when practices and games occur—sustained winds and gusts. Issuance is usually site-specific. Please ensure all goals are secured with sandbags when you arrive to your match.

*High Wind Warning:* ALL ACTIVITIES CANCELLED. This status is issued by the National Weather Service when high wind speeds may pose a hazard or is life-threatening. The criterion for this warning varies from state to state.

If a referee terminates a game because of field or weather conditions, it will be considered a complete game if the first half has been completed. The score will be final as it stands at the time the game is terminated. If the game is terminated prior to or during the first half, the score will revert to 0 - 0, and the game will be played at a later date. If some games in a division are unable to be re-scheduled, special "average points per game" may be used to determine final standings.

## **TROPHIES**

For age groups U11 and above, individual trophies are awarded to the members of teams with the highest number of points in their division. Division standings are based on points from every game. In cases where all

games were not able to be played in a division (i.e. certain games were rained out and unable to be rescheduled) an “average points per team” would be used.

If there is a tie for first place, the deciding tiebreakers are as follows:

- Head-to-head result
- Most sportsmanship points
- Most wins during the season
- Least goals allowed during the season
- Coin flip

Second place trophies are awarded for divisions of 7 or more teams. The same tiebreakers as above are used for determining the second placed team.

### **Position Rounds**

For divisions with 8 teams, MSI uses a position round pairing for the final games. Team standings will be strictly determined by the points gained in each match played through the 7th game to determine the pairings for the final games--or position rounds. Points continue to accumulate **only** within the pairing themselves to determine the final position. A team can never finish any higher or lower than in their pairing. There are no overtimes, no tiebreakers, no penalty kicks in any MSI Classic games — regular games or position rounds.

## **COACHES' CONDUCT**

The conduct of MSI coaches on both the practice and game field establishes how players, parents, and the public perceive MSI. Parents who entrust their children to MSI should feel confident that standards being taught are consistent with their own. Therefore, it is vital that coaches demonstrate and teach the highest standards of sportsmanship. Every MSI coach **must** read and follow these guidelines:

1. Players are instructed to play according to the Laws of the Game and are encouraged to play to win without taking unfair advantage of an opponent.
2. Coaches will **not** dispute the ruling of a referee or assistant referee while the game is in progress and will instruct their team and spectators to refrain from doing so. In all cases, they will follow the directions of the referee. Clarification of a ruling may take place only with the referee's approval during an official break in play or when the referee indicates it is appropriate.
3. Coaching from the sidelines is permitted by one person at a time only under the following conditions:
  - a. the tone and language are instructive
  - b. it occurs behind the touchline between the penalty areas
  - c. it is directed from the assigned team's area.
  - d. MSI rules do not permit coaches to provide players with a constant flow of directions during play. Violation of this rule is considered unsportsmanlike conduct.
4. **Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players, officials, and spectators.** If a spectator's conduct warrants the issuance of a yellow or red card, it may be issued directly to the spectator. If the referee cannot identify the spectator or believes the coach has not attempted to control his spectators, the card may be awarded to the coach.



- a. Physical violence, foul or abusive language, or harassment of players and referees is NOT TOLERATED and could result in permanent suspension. Coaches may not coach or criticize players from the opposing team. Such conduct reported to MSI officials is reviewed even in situations where cards are not issued.
  - b. Any incident of assault or physical violence directed against a referee or assistant referee by coaches, spectators, or players results in immediate referral to the MWSRA and US Youth Soccer or MSYSA. In addition, the Policy, Rules and Discipline Committee of MSI (PRDC) automatically reviews the incident.
5. When a team walks off a field in protest, they forfeit the game, and the coach may be called before the PRDC and may face sanctions.