



## UNITY CUP 2026

### OFFICIAL 5v5 SOCCER RULES

**(FIFA rules apply if not modified within)**

**1. Roster:** There is a maximum of 8 rostered players per team. **ALL** players must be on the roster. Rosters are frozen at the time of check in. The use of an improperly registered player will result in a forfeit of the game and may result in the ejection of the team from the tournament. Players **MAY** play and be rostered on more than 1 team, **HOWEVER**, they may **ONLY** play on 1 team per AGE GROUP/AGE DIVISION within the tournament.

**2. ELIGIBILITY/AGE CLASSIFICATION:** Unity Cup 5v5 uses a players' Birth Year to categorize and build Age Divisions. Players may always play "up" in age, however may not play "down" in age. Girls may play on boys teams, however Boys may **NOT** play on Girls teams. In the event a team has 1 boy, that team is considered a Boy's team and must be registered as such.

**3. Equipment:** Shin guards must be worn at all times. Players may wear a cast on the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, upper arm or shoulder if it is covered and padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than ½-inch thick. The covering must be approved by the referee **OR** the Tournament Director. Tournament Director has final say on approval. Jewelry is not to be worn at any time during play. All field players must wear the same color shirt (numbers are **NOT** required). If two teams have similar colored shirts, the **HOME** team must change to a different color. Goalkeepers must wear a shirt of a different color from both teams.

**4. Home VS Away/Visitor:** The Home team will be the team listed first on the schedule.

**5. Match Start and Duration:** Teams must be ready to kick off at game-time or forfeit the game. Minimum # of players to start is 3. Games will start when the minimum # of players has been met, failure to do so or delay, will result in a forfeit. Teams will be given a 5-minute grace period, **HOWEVER**, the game duration may be shortened in order to stay on schedule. Duration of play will be two-fifteen minute halves with 1-minute halftime – **OR** the game shall end when a team reaches a 10-goal differential. The game is over when the time expires, irrespective of the flight of the ball or if an attack on the goal is in progress. Time may only be extended for the taking of a penalty kick. The goal will count only if it's across the goal line before the whistle is blown. There will be no coin toss prior to the game. The Home team will Kick Off to Start the match. The Away/Visitor team will determine which end of the field to defend first. Game length may be adjusted to maintain the schedule or to compensate for bad weather. Games may be played earlier or later to accommodate needed schedule changes. Teams switch ends at half time.

**6. Offside Rules:** There is no Offside in 5v5 Soccer.

**7. Heading:** With the exception of any sanctioned USYS or US Club events, Heading is allowed in ALL ages.

**8. Slide Tackling:** There is NO Slide Tackling by Field players in Unity Cup 5v5. Field players may however slide to save a ball from going out of bounds or to block or save a shot, however no contact may be made with an opposing player at any time. In other words, sliding where no opponent is present is allowed. A slide tackle infraction results in a Direct Free Kick. Inside the Goalkeeper arc becomes a penalty kick. A second infraction (same player) will result in a Yellow Card, and a third infraction will result in a Red Card.

**9. Direct Restarts:** A Corner Kick and Kickoff are Direct Kicks. The kick-off may go in any direction.

**10. Touchline (Sideline) Restarts:** In place of throw-ins will be kick-ins OR a dribble in with the ball placed stationary on the touchline. A player may not directly kick a ball into the goal from its stationary restart position. A player may also dribble the ball into play and after the ball makes a full rotation may then be kicked into the goal.

**11. Penalty Kick:** PKs will be taken from the top of the arch or 7 yards from the goal. Physical fouls will result in direct free kicks, all others are indirect. Players on the defending team must remain a minimum of 5 yards from the kick.

**12. Goal Kick:** Any time a Goal Kick is required, the goalkeeper will execute a Goal Clearance (ball must leave the Penalty Arc). The goalkeeper will start with the ball in their hands and may either (1) Throw the ball, (2) Put the ball down and pass/kick, (3) put the ball down and dribble out of the Penalty Arc. Once the ball has been put down, the ball is effectively "live". The Goalkeeper has 4 seconds to execute the goal clearance. Failure to execute the Goal Clearance within 4 seconds will result in an Indirect kick at the top of the arc for the opposition. A goal may not be scored directly from a goal clearance. Once the ball is OUTSIDE the Penalty Arc, a goal may be scored from anywhere on the field. The ball may not be punted or drop-kicked.

**13. Goalkeeping:** During the run of play when the ball is in the hands of the goalkeeper, it may be thrown anywhere or dropped and dribbled inside or outside the penalty area but cannot be drop-kicked or punted. The ball must leave the goalkeeper's penalty arc within four seconds or it's an indirect free kick from the top of the arc. A Goalkeeper may not Throw the ball directly into an opponent's goal. Players may not initiate contact with the goalkeeper at any time while they are in the Penalty Arc. Infractions will result in a yellow card. A goalkeeper outside of the Penalty Arc is to be treated as a field player.

**14. Substitutions:** Subs for either team may be made with the referees acknowledgement after any dead ball, including direct and indirect kicks. Repeated substitutions in an attempt to waste time may not be approved by the referee and may result in cards.

**15. Conduct:** Coaches are to lead by example and are therefore responsible for the conduct of BOTH the players and parents of their teams. The Referee, The Referee Assignor, Event/Facility Host will not tolerate unruly behavior and reserve the right to remove any Coach, Player, or Parent from the premises.

**16. Cards:** Cautions(Yellow Card) are accumulative throughout the tournament. A player receiving 2 Yellow cards in a single match results in a Red Card and carry those sanctions. A player receiving 3 yellow cards in a day, will result in them being ineligible for their next match. Once the 3 card suspension match is served, the player may return if the team has more games that day. \*Cards DO NOT However accumulate for players that may be playing on multiple teams\*

Ejection (Red card) players may not play in the remainder of the current game. The team of a sent-off player may however substitute for the sent-off player. Players sent off in two games in one tournament will be ejected from the tournament.

**17. Schedules:** Round Robin formatting is used as often as possible in 1 day events. There is NO overtime in pool play or Round Robin play.

**18. Scoring:** In Pool Play or Round Robin Formatting, 3 points for a win; 1 point for a tie and 0 points for a loss.

**19. Tiebreakers:** To determine pool play advancement OR Round Robin Final Results ties will be broken by:

1) Head to head result between tied teams, 2) Goal difference in pool play, 3) Fewest goals against in pool play, 4) Most goals scored in pool play, 5) Team shootout (5 players).

**20. Playoff Game Tiebreakers:** Tied Finals or Semifinals will, after a one-minute break, go directly to a 3-minute golden goal period. If the score is still tied at the end of this period, the winner will be decided by a shootout with the 5 players on the field at the end of the golden goal period. There will be NO OVERTIME, GOLDEN GOAL, OR SHOOTOUT in Pool Play or Round Robin games.

**21. Forfeits:** In the unlikely and or unfortunate event of a forfeit, the score will be reflected as 3-0.

**22. Protests:** The Unity Cup 5v5 does not allow any protests. Officials' decisions are to be respected regarding the interpretation of facts, judgements or rules within the game. In the event of a misinterpretation of a rule, the onsite Tournament Director will have Final Say.