



## 8 v 8 Men's Soccer Rules

### (Open Division & Men's Over 40)

**Revised April 2026**

NJ Coed Sports / NJ Men's Soccer leagues generally follow **FIFA/NCAA rules** with the specific modifications below.

#### **Game Format**

- **Teams:** 8 v 8 (7 field players + 1 goalkeeper)
- **Minimum to Start:** 5 players. Fewer than 5 = **forfeit**.
- **Game Length:** Two **28-minute halves** with a **2-minute halftime**.
- **No Offside**

Teams must have **at least 11 players** on their roster at the start of the season.

#### **Men's Over 40 Specific Rules:**

For **40+ Men's League** — all players must be **40 or older**

- Goalkeepers may be 21+
- Teams may use up to two (2) players aged 38+ if needed to fill roster
- Guest players must be 40+ (no exceptions)
- League reserves the right to check IDs at any time
- Any ineligible player = automatic forfeit
- Players should have ID available at all games

## The Mirror Rule

\*\*"Mirror Rule" Exception:\*\* Teams with fewer than 5 players may still participate in a "legal" game only if the opposing team faces the same situation. For example, if both teams have 4 players, they can play as long as the opposing team also has 4 players. Additionally, a team is not allowed to remove players from the field to "mirror" the opposing team in order to spare their opponent from a forfeit.

## Player Equipment

- All players must wear their **assigned team jersey**.
- Goalkeepers must wear colors that **distinguish them** from all other players and referees.
- **Shin guards:** Optional but recommended.
- **Footwear:** Turf shoes recommended. **No sneakers.** Cleats made for grass are **strongly discouraged**.

## Start & Restart of Play

- Kickoff is taken from the center spot.
- All players must be in their own half; opponents must be at least **5 yards** from the ball.
- After a goal, the **team that was scored on** takes the kickoff.
- Teams **switch sides at halftime**; the other team takes the second-half kickoff.
- Players sub in from sidelines only
- **All free kicks, including kickoffs, are indirect**, except for penalty kicks and corner kicks.

## Sliding, Contact & Safety

To reduce injuries:

- **Slide tackling is not allowed** anywhere on the field unless player is ALONE at the play.
- Any purposeful **sliding or going to ground while challenging for the ball** will be called a foul.
- Using your **hands or arms to grab, push, or hold** an opponent to gain an advantage is not allowed.

## Substitutions, Guest & Borrowed Players

### Definitions

#### Sub/Guest Player:

- A person **21+** who is **not** a registered player in that league.
- A person who is 40 years of age or older for the Men's O-40 League.
- **Borrowed Player:** A person who is **already rostered** on another team **in the same league playing for another team.**

### Regular Season

- Subs/guest players **are allowed** in the regular season.
- All subs/guests must:
  - **Sign a waiver via QR**
  - Pay an **\$20 fee**
  - Be checked in by an NJCS organizer **before** stepping on the field
- If a captain allows a sub/guest to play **without a signed waiver and check-in**, the game is an **automatic forfeit** for that team.
- A single player may sub in a maximum of **3 games** per season.
- A team may **borrow up to 2 players** from other teams **only to avoid a forfeit.**
- Borrowed players may **only be used to reach 8 total players**, not to exceed that.
- A team may bring guest players only to **replace** missing roster players and may **not exceed** its roster size.

- A team must always have a **majority of roster players**.
  - If a team uses **more subs/borrowed players than roster players**, the game is a **forfeit**.

### **Playoffs & Finals**

- **No subs, guest players, or borrowed players** are allowed in playoffs or finals.

### **No-Show & Forfeits**

Teams are expected to communicate cancellations.

- Teams must notify NJ Coed Sports at [jay@njcoedsports.com](mailto:jay@njcoedsports.com) at least **12 hours before game time** if they cannot play.
- A team that **does not show up** and **does not provide 12-hour notice** will:
  - Enter the playoffs as the **#4 seed** at best (if they qualify).
  - If they win the finals, they **forfeit their team bar tab**.
  - The captain will **likely be barred from entering another team as captain for the following season**, but may still play as a regular player in future leagues.

### **Referees**

- The referee is in **full control** of the game.
- All decisions by the referee regarding play and discipline are **final**.
- **Dissent or disrespect** toward referees will not be tolerated and may result in cards, ejection, or suspension.

### **Fouls, Cards & Discipline**

Standard soccer fouls (kicking, tripping, charging, pushing, holding, deliberate handball, etc.) are enforced.

## Yellow Cards

A player may receive a yellow card for:

- Unsporting behavior
- Dissent by word or action
- Persistent infringement of the rules
- Delaying restart of play
- Failing to respect the required distance at free kicks/corner kicks

## Yellow Card Penalty

- Player must leave the field for **2 minutes**.
- Team must **play down one player** for that full 2 minutes (no replacement).
- Restart is an **indirect free kick** to the opposing team.

## Red Cards

A player may be sent off for:

- Serious foul play
- Violent conduct or fighting
- Spitting on a player or any person
- Denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberate handball or foul
- Offensive or abusive language/gestures
- Receiving a **second yellow card** in the same match

## Red Card Penalties

- **2 Yellow Cards in one game = Red Card.**
- **1 Red Card:** Ejection from the game + **minimum 1-game suspension** (more if warranted).

- **2 Red Cards in one season:** Ejection from the **league**, no refund.
- **Fighting, or responding to a fight violently**, will almost always result in **ejection from the league with no refund**.

## **Sportsmanship**

We are an **adult recreational league**. NJ Coed Sports expects all participants to:

- Show **respect** toward teammates, opponents, referees, and staff.
- Avoid abusive language, taunting, or intimidation.

Serious unsportsmanlike behavior may result in:

- **Ejection from the game**
- **Suspension** from current and/or future NJCS leagues or events

Any player who is ejected must **leave the premises immediately**. Refusal to leave may result in a **team forfeit** and/or additional suspension.

## **Free Kicks**

- **All free kicks are indirect** (a goal must touch another player before entering the goal).
- Opponents must be at least **5 yards** from the ball.

## **Penalty Kicks**

- The kicker may take only one step to kick. Plant and shoot.
- Awarded for fouls inside a team's own penalty area that would normally result in a direct free kick.
- Taken from the **penalty mark** with only the **kicker and goalkeeper** inside the penalty area.
- All other players must remain **outside the penalty area** and at least **5 yards** from the ball until it is kicked.

### **Kick-Ins (Throw-Ins)**

- **Small-sided** soccer uses **kick-ins instead of throw-ins**.
- When the ball wholly crosses the touchline, the opposing team of the last toucher restarts with a **kick-in** from the spot where it went out.
- A goal **cannot be scored directly** from a kick-in.

### **Corner Kicks**

- Taken from the **corner** on the side where the ball went out. **A Goal scored from a corner kick COUNTS!**

### **Goalkeeper Restrictions**

- No Punting or throwing over half on a goal kick.
- The goalkeeper may **not** handle a **deliberate back pass** from a teammate's foot or receive the ball directly from a teammate's kick-in with their hands.
- Violations result in an **indirect free kick** to the opposing team from the spot of the infraction.
- Time-wasting by the goalkeeper may also result in an **indirect free kick**.

### **Playoffs & Tiebreakers**

Playoff formats (Top 4, Top 6, or Top 8) depend on the number of teams and are **single-elimination**. Games may be **shortened** on playoff nights due to multiple matches.

### **Standings Tiebreakers (Regular Season)**

If two or more teams are tied on points, tiebreakers are applied in this order:

1. **Goal Differential** (goals scored – goals conceded)
2. **Head-to-Head Result(s)** between tied teams
3. **Most Wins**

4. **Most Goals Scored** over the season
5. **Fewest Forfeit Losses**
6. **Coin Flip** (if still tied)

For multi-team ties, the same criteria are applied across all tied teams until the tie is broken.

### **Playoff / Finals – Penalty Kicks**

If a **playoff or finals** match is tied at the end of regulation:

1. Teams go **directly to penalty kicks**.
2. Each team selects **5 players** to take alternating kicks.
3. The team with the **most goals after 5 kicks each** wins.
4. If still tied, teams go to **sudden-death penalty kicks**: The **same 5 kickers** must be used in the **same order**.
5. One team scores and the other misses in the same round = game decided.

All other playoff situations will be handled **case-by-case** by the NJCS Manager on site. The NJCS Manager has the **final say** on any disputes and will act in the fairest and most logical way.

### **Rule Updates & Contact**

Rules are **subject to review and change** by NJ Coed Sports directors following incidents or for safety concerns as needed.

For questions or clarifications, please contact:

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