

MIDWEST SUPER LEAGUE

Competition Rules & Regulations

2026-27 Season

Effective: August 1, 2026

Last Updated: June 2026

Approved by MSL Board of Directors

Section 1: League Overview & Structure

1.1 Purpose

The Midwest Super League (MSL) is a regional youth soccer competition for U13+ boys and girls. The league provides meaningful, high-quality competition for small-to-midsize clubs across seven states: Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

1.2 Governance

The MSL operates under a one-club, one-vote governance model. Each member club has equal representation in league decisions regardless of club size. The MSL Board of Directors oversees league operations and is composed of elected representatives from member clubs.

1.3 Geographic Pods

Teams are organized into five (5) geographic pods to minimize travel:

- Metro Pod: Twin Cities, Minnesota
- Dakotas Pod: North Dakota and South Dakota
- Plains Pod: Nebraska and Missouri
- Heartland Pod: Iowa
- Lakeshore Pod: Wisconsin

Pod assignments are determined by the MSL Board based on club location and may be adjusted to balance competition.

1.4 Age Groups

The MSL offers competition for the following age groups: U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, and U19. Age groups are determined by birth year in accordance with US Soccer Federation guidelines. Both boys and girls divisions are offered at each age group, subject to sufficient enrollment.

Section 2: Club Membership

2.1 Eligibility

Any youth soccer club located within the seven-state footprint (MN, ND, SD, NE, MO, IA, WI) is eligible to apply for MSL membership. Clubs must be registered with their respective state association and in good standing.

2.2 Application Process

Clubs wishing to join the MSL must submit a membership application to the Board of Directors. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. The Board will evaluate applications based on geographic fit, competitive level, and club organizational structure.

2.3 Membership Obligations

Member clubs are expected to:

- Fulfill all scheduled fixtures during the season
- Provide qualified and licensed coaches for all teams
- Maintain proper player registration and insurance
- Attend league meetings or designate a representative
- Adhere to all MSL rules, policies, and codes of conduct
- Pay all league fees by published deadlines

2.4 Withdrawal

Clubs wishing to withdraw from the MSL must provide written notice to the Board at least sixty (60) days prior to the start of the next season. Clubs that withdraw mid-season may be subject to sanctions, including forfeiture of results and financial penalties.

Section 3: Team & Player Registration

3.1 Team Registration

Each member club may register one (1) team per age group per gender division. Teams must be registered with the MSL by the published deadline for each season. Late registrations may be accepted at the Board's discretion.

3.2 Player Registration

All players must be properly registered with their club and state association prior to participating in any MSL match. Player passes or digital IDs must be available for verification at every match.

3.3 Roster Size

Team rosters must include a minimum of eleven (11) players and a maximum of twenty-two (22) players. Roster changes may be made during designated windows as published by the league office.

3.4 Guest Players

Guest players are not permitted in MSL league play. All players on the match-day roster must be registered members of the competing club. Exceptions may be granted by the league office in extraordinary circumstances.

3.5 Player Eligibility

Players may only be registered with one MSL club at a time. Players who transfer between member clubs during the season must complete the league transfer process and observe any applicable waiting period before becoming eligible for their new club.

Section 4: Competition Format

4.1 Season Structure

The MSL season consists of two phases:

- Regular Season: Intra-pod league play with home-and-away fixtures against all teams in the pod.
- Cross-Pod Play: 2-3 matchday weekends per season where teams from different pods compete.

4.2 Match Format

All matches are played in accordance with FIFA Laws of the Game, with modifications for youth play:

- U13-U14: Two halves of 35 minutes each
- U15-U16: Two halves of 40 minutes each
- U17-U19: Two halves of 45 minutes each

A minimum of seven (7) players per team is required to start and continue a match.

4.3 Substitutions

Unlimited substitutions are permitted at any stoppage in play with the referee's permission. Re-entry is allowed. Substitutions may be made by either team at any stoppage, not only by the team in possession of the throw-in.

4.4 Points System

- Win: 3 points
- Draw: 1 point
- Loss: 0 points

4.5 Tiebreakers

If teams are tied on points, the following tiebreakers apply in order:

- 1. Head-to-head record between tied teams
- 2. Goal difference in head-to-head matches
- 3. Overall goal difference
- 4. Goals scored
- 5. Disciplinary record (fewer points = higher rank)
- 6. Coin toss or draw conducted by the league office

Section 5: Match Day Operations

5.1 Scheduling

All matches are scheduled by the MSL league office. Fixtures are published prior to the start of each season. Matches are scheduled on weekends only (Saturday and Sunday). No midweek matches will be scheduled.

5.2 Home Team Responsibilities

The home team is responsible for:

- Providing a suitable, lined, and properly sized field
- Providing corner flags and properly anchored goals with nets
- Providing game balls (size appropriate for age group)
- Assigning a field marshal or club representative to be present
- Reporting match results within 24 hours of the final whistle

5.3 Referee Assignment

Referees are assigned by the home club's local referee assignor unless otherwise arranged. A three-referee system is required for all MSL matches. If three officials are not available, a two-referee or single-referee system may be used with prior notification.

5.4 Match Postponements

Matches may be postponed due to severe weather, unsafe field conditions, or other circumstances beyond control. Postponed matches must be rescheduled within fourteen (14) days in coordination with the league office.

5.5 Forfeits

A team that fails to appear or cannot field the minimum number of players within fifteen (15) minutes of kickoff will forfeit the match. A forfeited match is recorded as a 3-0 win for the opposing team. Clubs with repeated forfeits may face additional sanctions.

Section 6: Discipline & Conduct

6.1 Code of Conduct

All players, coaches, team officials, and spectators are expected to conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner. The MSL has zero tolerance for abusive language, violent conduct, discrimination, or harassment of any kind.

6.2 Yellow Cards

Yellow cards are tracked cumulatively. A player who accumulates three (3) yellow cards serves an automatic one-match suspension. Each subsequent third yellow card results in an additional one-match suspension.

6.3 Red Cards

A player or coach who receives a red card is automatically suspended for the next MSL match. The Discipline Committee may impose additional sanctions, including extended suspensions or expulsion from the league.

6.4 Coach & Spectator Ejections

A coach ejected from a match is automatically suspended for the next match. Repeated ejections may result in extended suspensions or removal. Spectators who are ejected may be banned from future MSL matches.

6.5 Appeals

Appeals must be submitted in writing within forty-eight (48) hours of notification. Appeals will be reviewed within seven (7) business days. The decision of the Discipline Committee is final.

Section 7: Travel & Logistics

7.1 Travel Philosophy

The MSL is committed to keeping travel manageable for families. Regular season play is contained within geographic pods, with most drives under two (2) hours. Cross-pod play is limited to 2-3 pre-scheduled weekends per season.

7.2 Cross-Pod Weekends

Cross-pod matchday weekends are scheduled at the beginning of each season and published in advance. Host locations are rotated among pods to distribute travel equitably.

7.3 Venue Standards

All venues must meet minimum standards:

- Properly sized and lined field for the age group
- Goal posts with nets, properly anchored
- Corner flags
- Adequate parking and spectator access
- Restroom facilities available on-site or nearby

Section 8: Fees & Financial Policies

8.1 League Fees

Annual league fees are set by the Board and communicated to member clubs prior to each season's registration deadline. Fees are per team and cover league administration, scheduling, and operations.

8.2 Payment Schedule

Fees are due in full by the published deadline, unless an installment plan has been approved. Teams with outstanding balances will not be scheduled for matches until payment is received.

8.3 Refund Policy

Clubs that withdraw before the season schedule is published will receive a full refund minus an administrative fee. No refunds are issued after the schedule has been published, except in extraordinary circumstances.

Section 9: Communications & Reporting

9.1 Match Reporting

Home teams must report match results (final score, goal scorers, cautions, and ejections) to the league office within twenty-four (24) hours. Results should be submitted through the designated league platform.

9.2 League Communications

Official communications are distributed via email and the MSL website. Club contacts are responsible for disseminating information to coaches, parents, and players. Clubs must maintain current contact information with the league office.

9.3 Protests & Grievances

Protests related to player eligibility or rule violations must be submitted in writing within forty-eight (48) hours. Protests regarding referee decisions on the field are not permitted. A protest fee may apply, refundable if upheld.

Section 10: Amendments & Final Provisions

10.1 Rule Amendments

These rules may be amended by a majority vote of member clubs at any official league meeting, or by the Board in urgent situations. Proposed amendments must be submitted at least fourteen (14) days before a vote.

10.2 Authority

In all matters not covered by these rules, the MSL Board of Directors has final authority. The Board may issue supplementary policies as needed.

10.3 Acceptance

By registering a team in the Midwest Super League, each member club acknowledges that it has read, understood, and agrees to abide by these Competition Rules and Regulations in their entirety.