



# RULES:

## 2019 ENPL Playoffs and Finals

*Updated: July 9, 2019*

### 1. ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION.

The Elite National Premier League (ENPL) is a restricted competition open to teams in good standing which hold valid US Club Soccer passcards and which participate in an NPL or Boys ECNL. Qualifiers for the ENPL Playoffs are determined through regular-season and play-off competition (where applicable) in individual NPLs and Boys ECNL Conferences across the country. Beyond the automatic qualifiers, US Club Soccer reserves the right to invite other teams from NPL clubs, Boys ECNL, or potentially from outside either if no reasonable alternative exists in certain age groups, to manage appropriate competition formats.

- a. Participants shall consist of 14U through 19U Boys. Age brackets may be adjusted by US Club Soccer at any time.
- b. US Club Soccer reserves the right to accept, reject, or review any team's eligibility.
- c. Qualifying teams unable to attend will be subject to financial penalties as well as potential removal from the qualifying league.

### 2. TOURNAMENT AUTHORITY.

The Competition Director shall have ultimate authority over all details of the competition, including without limitation format, scheduling, team rosters, discipline, and other matters within the confines of the event. The interpretation of the rules and all decisions of the Competition Director are final within the confines of the event, and there shall be no protests or appeals of the Competition Director's decisions. The Competition Director may be assisted by the Discipline Committee (if applicable).

A Discipline Committee shall be appointed by the US Club Soccer VP of Competition and will minimally consist of the Competition Director and any US Club Soccer Board of Directors member in attendance at the event.

In all matters of discipline within the event, with the exception of an alleged incident of misconduct towards a game official (where US Club Soccer has original jurisdiction), the Discipline Committee shall render a determination, and send a report to the US Club Soccer Discipline Committee pursuant to this section. Decisions of the Discipline Committee within the confines of the event are final and are neither appealable nor subject to a protest.

### 3. COMPETITION FORMAT.

The competition format will vary by age group depending on the number of participating teams. The number of participating teams may vary from year to year due to changes in or creation of new NPLs and or Boys ECNL Conferences across the country. The precise competition format for each age group will be determined by US Club Soccer.

**ENPL 14U Playoffs (32 teams):** Competition will consist of round-robin play (June 28<sup>th</sup>, June 29<sup>th</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup>) and ENPL Playoffs Knock out games (July 2<sup>nd</sup>) between the 8 group winners to determine who advances on to the ENPL finals. Four teams from the ENPL Playoffs will advance to the ENPL Finals. June 30<sup>th</sup> will be a rest day.

**ENPL 15U National Playoffs (52 teams):** Competition will consist of round-robin play (June 28<sup>th</sup>, June 29<sup>th</sup>,



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July 1<sup>st</sup>) and ENPL Playoffs Knock out games (July 2<sup>nd</sup>) between the 13 group winners and 3 wildcards (determined by tiebreakers). In a case where the group winner and a wildcard match up has already played, the wildcard spot will be switched with the next wildcard team. Eight teams from the ENPL Playoffs will advance to the ENPL Finals. June 30<sup>th</sup> will be a rest day.

**ENPL 16U National Playoffs (52 teams):** Competition will consist of round-robin play (June 28<sup>th</sup>, June 29<sup>th</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup>) and ENPL Playoffs Knock out games (July 2<sup>nd</sup>) between the 13 group winners and 3 wildcards (determined by tiebreakers). In a case where the group winner and a wildcard match up has already played, the wildcard spot will be switched with the next wildcard team. Eight teams from the ENPL Playoffs will advance to the ENPL Finals. June 30<sup>th</sup> will be a rest day.

**ENPL 17U National Playoffs (56 teams):** Competition will consist of round-robin play (June 28<sup>th</sup>, June 29<sup>th</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup>) and ENPL Playoffs Knock out games (July 2<sup>nd</sup>) between the 14 group winners and 2 wildcards (determined by tiebreakers). In a case where the group winner and a wildcard match up has already played, the wildcard spot will be switched with the next wildcard team. Eight teams from the ENPL Playoffs will advance to the ENPL Finals. June 30<sup>th</sup> will be a rest day.

**ENPL 19U National Championship:** Competition will consist of round-robin play, semi-finals and finals. One game per day on the first three days, with semi-finals and finals on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> day respectively.

A 19U Second Division championship will take place at the same location and dates. Format will be determined based on number of teams. June 30<sup>th</sup> will be a rest day.

**ENPL 14U National Finals:** 4 teams will advance to the ENPL National Finals. Teams will play semi-finals (Day 1) and finals/consolation (Day 2) games to determine ENPL National Champions on July 12-13, 2019.

**ENPL 15U-17U National Finals:** 8 teams will advance to the ENPL National Finals. Teams will play 3 round robin games, with the two group of 4 winners playing in the final game. Teams will take 1 day off after the first 2 round robin games (Day 3).

The competition format shall be provided to all participating teams prior to the event. The Competition Director:

- a. Reserves the right to determine the size of each competitive group, and the right to alter the groups and format to account for larger or uneven numbers of teams in a given competitive division.
- b. Shall determine the schedule and start times of all games and may alter the schedule of one game per day where necessary.

#### 4. ROSTER RULES.

Any player registered with and issued a passcard for a participating club, who is a member of the designated age group or younger, is eligible to be placed on the tournament roster. No players may be added to a tournament roster other than pursuant to these rules unless an emergency situation arises and permission is obtained in writing from the Competition Director.

- a. **Maximum Tournament Roster Size:** Up to 26 players. *Please note the roster freeze date in section 4(d) below.* Individual players may be added up to the roster freeze date. Only 18 players may dress for each game.



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- b. **Playing on more than one team:** A player may play on only one team at the ENPL Playoffs and/or ENPL Finals (team-tied for duration of event).
- c. **Roster Changes for ENPL Playoffs / ENPL Finals:** For teams that qualify for the ENPL Playoffs, or ENPL Finals, players may be dropped or added to the event roster without limitation up to the maximum roster size, as long as any new players to be added were registered with the member club during the season or prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>. If the club has had tryouts since the end of the current season, the qualifying team may add up to three new players who have committed to and are registered with the club for the next registration year. Any other roster emergency requests shall be determined by the Competition Director on a case-by-case basis. For **ENPL Finals**, advancing teams may add up to three new players from the club registered prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- d. **Roster freeze for ENPL Playoffs ENPL Finals:** The event roster is “frozen” at check-in of the ENPL Playoffs or ENPL Finals. (Rosters must be presented during Team Check-in – See Attachment A). Players within the club on age group teams in the ENPL Playoffs that did not advance to the ENPL Finals may play in the ENPL Finals at a different age group (up to 3 new players for each ENPL Finals team under 4c restrictions).
- e. **Game roster size:** Up to 18 players, selected from the tournament roster of up to 26 players. Only 18 players may dress for the game.
- f. **Substitutions: 14U – 19U.** Once a player is substituted in one half of any ENPL Playoffs and Finals Competition, the player may not re-enter the game for the duration of the half. Once a player is substituted in overtime, the player may not reenter the game. There shall be a maximum of seven (7) substitutions in any half or in overtime of any competition. In case of a suspected head injury or serious injury, an additional substitution may be granted by the referee.
- g. **Age group structure:** The ENPL Playoffs and ENPL Finals age group structure is below. Note that this may allow or require adjustment of rosters for teams that played the NPL or Boys ECNL regular season with a different age group cut-off.
- **14U:** Players born on or after January 1, 2005
  - **15U:** Players born on or after January 1, 2004
  - **16U:** Players born on or after January 1, 2003
  - **17U:** Players born on or after January 1, 2002
  - **19U:** Players born on or after January 1, 2000

### 5. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS.

- a. Valid US Club Soccer player passcards and a US Club Soccer official roster.
- b. Valid US Club Soccer staff passcards will be required for all coaches and the team manager.
- c. See *Attachment A: Team Check-In Procedures* for more information.

### 6. COMPETITION RULES.



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- a. All games shall be played pursuant to FIFA Laws of the Game, unless stated otherwise in these rules.
- b. Length of Games:  

13U/14U/15U/16U:	40-minute halves
17U/19U:	45-minute halves

All halftimes should last 10 minutes.
- c. In excessive heat conditions, water breaks can be allowed by the referee at his/her discretion, after prior consultation with the Competition Director. In addition, if deemed by medical staff, the substitution rules may be adjusted.
- d. In the group stage, games ending in a tie will be recorded as a tie, with each team receiving one point.
- e. Overtime (if needed): In case of a tie during ENPL Playoffs Advancement matches, as well as ENPL Finals championship matches, overtime will be needed. When an overtime period is required, it shall consist of two 10-minute halves (five minutes between halves) and then, if necessary, penalty kicks from the mark. There is no "golden goal."
- f. Ball size: Size 5 for 14U and up.
- g. All players must wear shin guards. All other equipment rules shall be pursuant to FIFA Laws of the Game.
- h. Home team should wear light uniforms / away team should wear dark uniforms. In case of uniform color conflicts, the designated away team shall change uniforms.
- i. No hard casts will be allowed to be worn by players. All other casts will be up to the discretion of the referee and/or medical staff.

### 7. ENPL PLAYOFFS - STANDINGS AND TIEBREAKERS.

- a. Game Points: 3 points awarded for a win; 1 point for a tie; zero (0) points for a loss. A forfeit shall be recorded as a 1 – 0 win, with one goal being credited. Note: In the event a game is in progress and is forfeited during play for any reason, the team getting the forfeit win will be credited with either the forfeit score or the score at the time play concluded, whichever is in their benefit.
- b. Tiebreakers: For teams tied in points at the end of a round-robin or during group stage competition, tiebreaker criteria shall be: 1) head to head competitions (but not in the case of a three-way tie); 2) goal differential (no max); 3) total goals (no max); 4) fewest goals allowed; and 5) penalty kicks from the mark.
  - Determining Wildcards in Playoffs: Wildcards will be determined following this criteria: Head to head if applicable; goal differential (no max); total goals scored (no max); fewest goals allowed;; regular league season finish; FIFA fair play points (yellow -1, second yellow -3, direct red -4, yellow and direct red -5 points); if after all tie breakers, the number of teams tied is 2, penalty kicks from the mark. Otherwise, the final decision will be based on a coin flip. In a case where the wildcard and the group winner have already played, the wildcard spots will be switched with the next wildcard team.



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- When applicable, if three teams are tied in points, but one team has defeated the other teams tied in points, the winner of the two games will advance.
  - In addition, once a tiebreaker is used to eliminate one team (i.e. head-to-head, goal differential, etc.), the next tiebreaker in line will be used to determine the winner or team that advances.
- c. Uneven number of games: If a tiebreaker calculation between two or more teams would be based on a different number of games, total goals and fewest goals allowed will be converted into a percentage per game.

### 8. GAME AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE.

- a. The referee's decision in all matters related to the field and the game itself shall be final. There shall be no protests of any referee's decision or game result. Referee Evaluation Forms (to be completed by a coach only) are available inside the team registration packet. No other forms will be provided. Red cards awarded to players during a game, or dismissals of team officials, shall result in that player or team official being suspended for the next game. Red card suspensions, except for violent conduct or misconduct towards a game official, issued in the final game of an NPL or Boys ECNL regular season or ENPL playoff game, shall not carry over to the ENPL Finals, but will be served in the next regular-season game in the following season.
- b. There shall be no yellow card accumulations. Note that FIFA Circulars #866 and #821 require that a sendoff for a red card or a sendoff after two yellow cards in a game be treated the same. Thus, in both cases, the player must sit out the remainder of that game and the next tournament game.
- c. If, in the opinion of the referee, it is necessary to terminate a game due to the misconduct of a team or others associated with that team, the game shall be forfeited to the opposing team and the matter shall be referred to the Discipline Committee, which may, among other penalties, suspend the team for the remainder of the tournament or undertake other disciplinary action. If, in the opinion of the referee, the termination is the result of substantially equivalent misconduct by both teams or by persons associated with both teams, the matter will be resolved by the Discipline Committee.
- d. The team official shall serve his/her suspension in a game involving the same team when the dismissal occurred, unless the team has no more such games remaining. In this case, the club official shall serve the suspension on the next available game. The Tournament Rules and Discipline Committee shall have the authority to take further disciplinary action should it be deemed necessary.
- e. Except for violent conduct or misconduct towards a game official, suspensions for normal red cards and staff ejections shall not extend beyond the ENPL Playoffs or ENPL Finals. Any suspension beyond the postseason shall be at the discretion of the Competition Director or US Club Soccer.
- f. For serious discipline matters with the potential to incur penalties beyond the issuance of a red card or staff ejection, a *Competition Incident Report* and a referee's report shall be completed and sent to US Club Soccer. Also, the referee shall give the delinquent players or staff passcards to US Club Soccer.
- g. At all times, all coaches shall have complete responsibility and control for the conduct of their players, bench area, parents, family and friends. Failure to do so may result in game stoppage.
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- h. At the end of each game, the referee's game report shall be submitted to the Competition Director.
- i. In the event a red card is issued, the referee shall obtain the delinquent player's/staff member's passcard and take it to the US Club Soccer headquarters tent. After the suspension is served, the coach may pick up the passcard, unless there is the allegation of referee abuse or the Competition Director/referee feels that additional action is warranted.

### 9. GAME START TIMES AND RESCHEDULING.

- a. All games shall start at the designated time. A forfeit shall be declared if a team cannot field a minimum of seven (7) players at the start time of the game. However, the Competition Director shall have the authority to adjust the schedule in cases where a team's arrival has been delayed due to unforeseen travel or weather conditions, or other circumstances beyond the control of the team.
- b. The Competition Director will make reasonable efforts to complete every game as long as the safety of the participants and spectators is not jeopardized. Should a game not be able to be started or should a suspension of play be required due to safety concerns or unplayable conditions, the referee, coaches, Competition Director shall consult, but the referee shall have the ultimate authority to either suspend or terminate the game.
- c. If it is not possible to complete a game that has been stopped for the reasons set forth in this section, the Competition Director may require that the game be continued at a different time, or if the first half is completed, may determine that the results shall stand. If the first half is not completed, the Competition Director shall determine whether the game shall be rescheduled and continued, or whether another resolution of the matter shall be implemented based on his or her best judgment. The schedule of remaining games or any impacts on group winners shall be a factor in any determination. Any decisions by the Competition Director under this section are final, and there shall be no protests or appeals.
- d. In all cases, the Competition Director has the ultimate authority and sole discretion to adjust the schedule of any or all remaining games, including shortening the length of games, to arrive at an equitable result and in consideration of the overall integrity of the competition.



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### ATTACHMENT A: TEAM CHECK-IN PROCEDURES

#### **Tournament Check-In Procedures:**

1. The check-in times and locations shall be determined by the Competition Director (Often the night before the first day of competition).
2. At check-in, teams shall present the following:
  - Official team roster (up to 26 players) downloaded and printed from the team's US Club Soccer online account.
  - US Club Soccer passcards for all players, coaches and managers on the roster.
  - Player medical treatment authorization forms.
3. Passcards shall be checked against the official roster and stamped accordingly.
4. A player may only be rostered to one team for the ENPL Playoffs / ENPL Finals.

#### **Pre-Game Check-In Procedures:**

1. Twenty (20) minutes prior to the start of each game, the coach shall present his/her team (up to 18 players) to the referee for check-in. The referee shall check player passcards against the individual players, and assure the cards have been properly stamped.
2. It is not necessary to present a copy of the team's official roster to the referee. However, the coach should have extra copies of the roster available should any questions arise.
3. Passcards shall be held by the referee or his/her designee and returned to the coach at the end of the game, except for any red cards, which shall be kept together with the game report. Red cards shall be turned in to the scorer's tent, and held until the player has sat out the required game.
4. In the case of other disciplinary matters, the player's passcard shall be held by the Competition Director until the matter is adjudicated by the Tournament Rules and Discipline Committee or US Club Soccer.
5. All cards shall be returned to the coach at the end of the tournament, unless a questionable card has been confiscated by the Competition Director or his/her designee, an allegation of misconduct against a game official has been filed or in the event of violent conduct or other behavior that warrants a Competition Incident Report to be filed.