

Soccer Alliance of Arizona (SAAZ)

Handbook
2023-2024 Season



A US Club Soccer Sanctioned League



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Membership in SAAZ is considered to be an automatic acceptance of our rules, policies, and procedures. Our competitions are governed by regulations approved by the League Office and written in this handbook. The League Office shall rule on all disputes and issues pertaining to SAAZ competitions. The League Office may overrule stated rules, policies, or procedures in this handbook if it is determined to be for the good of the game. Additionally, all participants in SAAZ events are members of US Club Soccer and therefore must adhere faithfully, both to the letter and the spirit, to its stated bylaws, rules, and policies.

When SAAZ's rules and policies are in direct conflict with the rules of another league or governing body, SAAZ may be restricted from implementing certain rules.

Definitions

As used herein, the following terms shall have the following definitions:

Adult: Any Coach, Director of Coaching, Trainer, Manager, Official, (Team) Parent, or other individual 18 years of age or older affiliated with a Club and having access to a Player, the Player's parents, or the Player's contact information that is not available publicly.

Club: Any entity (such as a Club or academy) admitted as a member of SAAZ.

Coach: Any individual engaged in Coaching or training Players on behalf of a Club, whether in a paid, voluntary, permanent, or temporary capacity.

Director of Coaching: Any individual employed by or volunteering for a Club as a Director of Coaching, Executive Director, Technical Director, General Manager, or as an assistant to any of the above-listed roles and all Adults filling similar roles regardless of title. A Director of Coaching is responsible for having oversight of each team in their Club and for each team's involvement in SAAZ competitions.

Field or Facility: Any Facility or Field used by a Club to conduct tryouts, Training Sessions, or games (other than tournament games).

League Office: Any individual employed by or volunteering in any capacity for SAAZ, including, but not limited to the Board of Directors, employees, staff, and committees.

Player: Any Player holding a valid Player pass from US Club Soccer and currently playing for a SAAZ Club.

Referee: Any Referee licensed for the current year by the United States Soccer Federation.

Training Session: Any Club sanctioned or private training session or practice.

Section 1 - Club Policies and Administration

1.1 – Member Clubs

In order for a Club to be considered a member of Soccer Alliance of Arizona (SAAZ), the following conditions must be satisfied:

- All Players participating in SAAZ events must be registered under a single US Club Soccer sanctioned Club.

1.2 - Required Club Contacts

Each Club's GotSport account must be kept up to date with the proper contact information ([Instructions for updating contacts](#)). Please keep in mind that this is the primary method by which SAAZ communicates with your Club. Failing to have the proper contact information may result in your Club missing vital league communication. Each Club shall maintain the following Club contacts with a current email address:

1. Administrator
2. Coaching/Technical Director (previously called DOC) AND/OR Executive Director
3. Registrar
4. President
5. Referee Assignor (USSF Certified)

1.3 - Home Field

Clubs should have at least one game-quality Field (5-time slots) per eight teams. In the event of a complaint about the quality of a Field, the league office shall determine if a Field is game-quality. In addition, each club must have access to their own home fields on both Saturday and Sunday. New member clubs joining SAAZ must disclose their home fields to insure they are not impacting fields currently used by existing SAAZ members.

1.4 - Club Pass Rule

Each US Club Soccer Player pass can be used for any age-appropriate team in the issuing Club. Thus, Players have the ability to play up a level (age level or playing division) within their Club, giving individual teams the ability to make changes game-to-game due to illness, injury, vacation, or other conflicts.

A few limitations to the club pass rule:

- Players cannot club pass to a team in the same age/division (i.e. a player playing with a team in u14 girls (NPL division), cannot club pass to team B in u14 girls (NPL division).
- Players cannot club pass down a playing division within the same age group. (i.e. a player whom plays with team A with the u14 girls (NPL Champions division), cannot play down to team B whom is playing on a u14 girls (NPL 1 division)
- For the lowest level team in an age group, it may be difficult to add players to a team if they cannot add players from a higher division. These teams can add younger players from within the club. However, players moving from younger age groups, that are playing in higher divisions (i.e. U13 NPL player moving to u14 AZDL team), must be approved by the League Office and the opposing coach, as it is considered unethical for teams to move players in higher playing divisions to lower level divisions with the purpose of creating a competitive advantage. The club

player pass function should only be used in this circumstance to ensure the team has enough players to play the game.

- For example: should a u14 girls AZDL team be short players. This team is the lowest level team the club has in the u14 girls age group. The team does not have the ability to pull a player from a lower level u14 team. The team can get a player from a u13 girls age division. But the player needs to be approved by the league office and opposing coach.
- This communication must happen at least 48 hours prior to kick-off of the match and must be submitted by a Club Director.

1.5 - SAAZ Club Membership

For clubs to participate in SAAZ competitions, a club needs to be a member of US Club Soccer and be accepted through the SAAZ application process as a member club. SAAZ opens its application process to prospective clubs at the beginning of the calendar year (January-February) for clubs to be accepted into the league.

Once a club is a member of SAAZ, the member club will automatically be renewed as a member club of SAAZ for the following registration year, unless SAAZ terminates a member club's membership. Should an existing member club not want to return to SAAZ, the member club must notify the league in writing by April 1, of its clubs' intentions to not participate in the upcoming soccer registration season (August 1-July 31). Should a member club leave the league after April 1 without notifying the league in writing, the club must pay SAAZ twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) in addition to all legal fees.

SAAZ is a league for the top clubs in Arizona. The league and its member clubs expect ALL member clubs to adhere to a high standard and to be respectful of each other, as the league plans for the following registration season.

Section 2 - Team Policies and Administration

2.1 - Team Management

In order to compete in SAAZ events, each team must have at least one team manager whose duties may include but are not limited to: team schedule, Referee payments, travel arrangements, reporting of scores, and communication with appropriate league or game officials. All team managers must have access to a current email address that is checked on a daily basis and a telephone number connected to a 24-hour answering system during the season.

2.2 - Communication

Communication between teams is vitally important for all SAAZ events. Teams must have at least 2 different contacts listed on their GotSport page (Manager and Coach) and ensure that both contacts have a current email address and phone number listed. All team scheduling communication must be done through the GotSport chat system so that there is a proper record of the communication. Team contacts must respond to communication within 48 hours. Listing the wrong email or phone number will not be a valid excuse for not responding to communication and may result in a fine if a forfeit or no-show occurs.

If communication breaks down between teams, please reach out to your club director, who may reach out to the SAAZ League Office to assist.

2.3 - Match Scheduling

The SAAZ League Office will provide dates for all matches along with scheduling deadlines. *Teams are expected to be available to play any time on the game dates provided with the following exceptions (which do NOT apply to SAAZ-hosted events):*

- Please do not schedule games before 10 AM if a team is required to travel more than one hour.
- Please do not schedule games for older ages (U15 and up) before 3 pm on SAT/ACT test dates.

All games must be scheduled (time and location) by the deadline provided by the SAAZ League Office. Teams unwilling or unable to attend games will forfeit the game.

- In the case of a forfeit, the \$500.00 forfeit fine will apply.
- Any un-played games will be documented by league officials and may result in a Club being placed in bad standing or be removed from SAAZ.

Please Note - If the SAAZ League Office feels that a Club is responsible for the game not being scheduled or communication from the away team is not responded to in a timely manner, teams may lose home-field advantage but still pay for Referees and Field costs.

There is a 10-minute grace period for kick-off if a team arrives late. SAAZ encourages games to be completed, but the subsequent scheduled game(s) should not be impacted by a late-game start. If it is necessary for a game to be shortened due to a late start, both teams and the Referee shall agree on having two equal shortened halves.

2.4 - Rescheduling Games/Rainouts

After the scheduling deadline passes, no reschedules are allowed, unless there is a rainout, act of god, etc... In the event of a forced reschedule (i.e. rainout); it is the home team's responsibility to reschedule the match.

- All rainouts must be rescheduled within 1 week of the original match date.
- Should a game not be rescheduled within one (1) week of the original match date, the club will be fined a \$250.00 rescheduling fee and the league will reschedule the game.

2.5 - Cancellation/Forfeit Policy

Teams must give their opponent a 96-hour warning if forfeiting any match or they will be fined for a forfeit and the score will be posted as 3-0 in favor of the non-offending team.

1. **Forfeit** - A forfeit occurs when a team is unable to attend a scheduled game (after the scheduling deadline has passed). A forfeit will result in a 3-0 win for the team, not at fault. The forfeiting Club will be fined \$500.00 if they inform the opponent less than 96 hours before the scheduled game time. A team unable to attend a scheduled game because of an accident or "Act of God" should immediately notify the opponent and the SAAZ League Office. In these circumstances, the League Office will review and rule on the situation.
2. **No-Show** - A no-show occurs when a team willfully does not show up to a game agreed to by the teams. The penalty for a no-show shall be a forfeit to the opposing team with a 0-3 score and the forfeit fine of \$500 imposed on the Club. Since there was no proper notification of the no-show, the club will be fined an additional \$500 no-show fine (for a total of \$1,000 fine). Any no-show from a team may result in the offending team being removed from the competition by the League Office.

The following is a list of common excuses teams cite for wanting to reschedule or cancel a game. We recommend the following solutions to frequently posed problems:

1. Too many Players missing (sick, testing, etc.) – Please use club pass rule within your club to fill out the roster.
2. Missing Coach - Any Adult with a valid pass for your Club is able to Coach any team in that Club. If your Coach has several commitments, then it is recommended that teams have an assistant Coach or other registered team official to cover games.
3. No Fields or Referees Available - It is expected that if your team is playing in SAAZ, you have access to quality Fields and licensed Referees. This excuse will not be accepted for the cancellation of a match.

To clarify, none of the above listed reasons will be granted a reschedule after the initial draft schedule editing window. Any game not played due to the above reasons will be recorded as a forfeit and the \$500.00 forfeit fine will apply.

2.6 - Fines

The SAAZ League Office may impose the following fines:

1. A team drops out of the league between July 21, 2023- August 7, 2023: \$500.00
2. A team drops out of the league after the schedule is final (August 21, 2023): \$1,000.00
3. Forfeit within 96 hours to a scheduled game: \$500.00
4. No-show to a scheduled game: \$500.00 + the \$500.00 forfeit fine for a total of \$1,000.00

All league fines are in place to deter teams from changing their opponents schedule with either late or no notice. All fines collected by the league go towards:

- Any referee fees and field costs associated with the forfeited or cancelled game
- NPL Finals, National Cup and Regional Cup Registration and Travel Fees

2.7 - Play-Up Guidelines

The League will only consider teams playing up to participate in the top flight of that particular age group. For teams who wish to request to play up an age group, the SAAZ League Office will use the following criteria to determine if a team needs to play up for their development:

1. The team is the current State Cup Champion or Finalist within their own age group, AND
 2. The team has proven in previous seasons to be a very dominant team within their own age group.
- OR**
3. The team does not have appropriate competition locally and needs to travel significantly in order to find competition within their age group.

Play-up requests must be submitted to the SAAZ Director of Operations, whom will consult with the technical committee. The SAAZ league office has the final say on all play-up decisions.

Section 3 - League Discipline

3.1 - Violation of League Rules

The SAAZ League Office shall have the authority to suspend, fine, disqualify or otherwise impose sanctions on Players, team officials, or competing Clubs for violating SAAZ Rules, Policies & Code of Ethics, or for any action or conduct not in the best interest of soccer or the Soccer Alliance of Arizona.

3.2 - Red Cards

If a Red Card is shown, it will result in a minimum one (1) game suspension. This includes a Red Card as a result of two cautions (2 yellow cards). If a Player is sent off during the weekend, they may not play the following game on the same weekend, regardless of the event in which the Red Card was issued. Sitting out of a game or games in the same weekend the card was issued will count against the suspension, as long as the manager/Coach completes a [Verification of Suspension form](#). Any Player used during a suspension will be considered an illegal Player and the team, Coach and Club will be punished accordingly. This includes the forfeiture of any SAAZ games played with the illegal player.

3.3 - Reporting Process

1. Any breach of SAAZ Rules outlined in this Handbook should be reported to the League Office. All reports of violations may only be reported by a Club's Director of Coaching or President.
2. In any game where a Red Card is issued, the Referee must complete a [U.S. Soccer Referee Report](#) and submit it to gamecards@soccerallianceaz.com within 24 hours of the games end.
3. In any game where a Red Card was issued or a send-off occurs, the team that received the red card must self report by sending a clear and legible photo or scan of the match card and indicate the player or team official that received the card in the email to gamecards@soccerallianceaz.com.

3.4 - Suspensions

It is the team's and/or Club's responsibility to ensure their Red Carded Player/Coach serves the minimum 1 game suspension. It is also their responsibility to ensure that their Player/Coach serves any additional suspension determined by the SAAZ League Office and/or US Club Soccer.

There shall be two types of suspensions:

1. Minor Offenses
2. Major Offenses

Suspensions for both minor and major offenses, for both Players and Coaches, shall be served immediately in upcoming SAAZ league games. The Player/Coach shall serve the suspension with the team with whom the violation occurred. Players may not play for another team in their Club in SAAZ competitions until their suspension is served in full with the team the offense occurred with. Coaches do not have to serve red card with other teams he/she coaches, unless the coach committed abuse or assault of a referee (which the coach would have to sit out ALL coaching duties until a hearing was held with US Club Soccer). The league office reserves the right to add/edit suspensions by game length of time.

Note: All referee abuse or assault will be passed onto US Club Soccer for a hearing of the individual.

The SAAZ League Office has the ability to postpone or re-allocate suspensions in the best interests of the game and the integrity of the competition. For the avoidance of doubt, all SAAZ events/games do count

towards suspensions for both Players and Coaches, but tournament games (in or out of state) do not. Forfeits or un-played rescheduled games do not count towards suspensions being served.

Note: In general, the suspension to a player/adult will only be served within the competition they receive the suspension. Meaning a player receiving a suspension in a SAAZ event/game must be served in a SAAZ event/game. The suspension does not apply to games outside of SAAZ (i.e. tournaments or other league competitions), unless the suspension was severe (i.e. abuse/assault) where the governing body (US Club Soccer) may impose suspensions across all USSF competitions.

PLAYER SUSPENSION TABLE

Name/Description of Misconduct	Suspension Length	Considerations	Commentary/ Examples
Serious Foul Play	Two games		Plays on or around the ball that occur within the flow of the game such as slide tackling from behind with disregard for safety of the opposing player and high tackles
Violent Conduct	Two game minimum		Violent Conduct often takes place away from the ball or when the game is stopped
Striking or trying to strike an opponent in the face or above the shoulder area	Three games		For example, elbowing a Player in the face
Severity of the injuries that the sent off player caused to the opponent	Three games		Fouls with such excessive force that a bone is clearly broken
Spitting at an opponent or any other person	Three games		
Denying Obvious Goal-Scoring Opportunity to Opponent Moving Towards Goal by Offense Punishable with Free Kick or Penalty Kick	One game		
Denying Obvious Goal-Scoring Opportunity by Deliberately Handling Ball	One game		
Using Offensive, Insulting or Abusive Language towards oneself or as an outburst	One game		Cussing at oneself for making a mistake
Using Offensive, Insulting or Abusive Language towards an opponent or any other person	Three games		Directing offensive, insulting or abusive language (cussing, but not a racial slur) towards any other person (teammate, opponent, Referee, Coach or spectator)
Using Offensive, Insulting or Abusive Language towards an opponent or any other person after being dismissed	Three games		
Using a racial slur towards an opponent or any other person	Three games (minimum) + Discipline committee review		Directing a racial slur at any other person (teammate, opponent, Referee, Coach or spectator)

Using racial slur language towards an opponent or any other person after being dismissed	Three games (minimum) + Discipline committee review		
Approaching the referee crew after the conclusion of the match to insult the referees	Three games		
Approaching the referee in an aggressive manner	Three games		
Receiving Second Caution in Same Match	One game		

COACH/MANAGER SUSPENSION TABLE

Name/Description of Misconduct	Suspension Length	Considerations	Commentary/Examples
Excessive disrespect towards the referee crew by using Offensive, Insulting or Abusive Language	Three games (minimum) + discipline committee to review)		
Failure to control the behavior of players	Two games		For example, failing to act to prevent a mass confrontation or fight, failing to stop repeated offenses by the same player

Failure to control the behavior of the spectators	Two games		Asked to assist by a match official and failing to assist that official in controlling a team's spectators
Entering the field without the permission of the referee	Two games		For example, entering the field to argue a call or participate in a physical confrontation
Prior red cards within the previous 12 months	One to two games	Factors considered include: the length of time from previous send-offs, the severity of the previous and current send-off, the total number of send-offs a Coach has accumulated	
Coaching and instructing players after the dismissal	Two games		This includes providing instruction to the replacement coach by phone or text as well as sitting with spectators and coaching from that location

Coaches and Managers (and other US Club Soccer carded staff members) will serve red card suspension with the team they received the red card. Coaches do not have to serve red card with other teams he/she coaches, unless the coach committed abuse or assault of a referee (which the coach would have to sit out ALL coaching duties until a hearing was held with US Club Soccer). Due to a time discrepancy of when a red card is reported and the Soccer Alliance of Arizona being able to cross the coach off the roster, the coach may have to self-police himself/herself (i.e. if coach gets a red card on Saturday and has game on Sunday).

3.5 Appeals

1. Competition (League & Cups)
 - 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 decisions or game result.
2. Suspensions
 - a. Suspensions resulting in two (2) or more games can be appealed to the SAAZ board of directors for a fee of \$1,000. If the appeal is won, the \$1,000 fee will be reimbursed. Should an appeal involve a member of the board of directors club, that board member will need to remove themselves from the incident.
 - b. The SAAZ board of director's decision can be appealed to SAAZ's governing body, US Club Soccer. Here is a [link](#) to the appeal process for US Club Soccer.

3.6 - Clearing a Suspended Player or Coach

Teams must scan or photograph a completed [Verification of Suspension form](#) and send it to the SAAZ league office confirming that suspension has been served. Players and coaches do not need to be present at games used to serve a suspension. A separate form must be completed in full for each game served. Incomplete forms will not be accepted. Forms should be sent no later than 48 hours prior to

game time for the Player or Coach to be cleared to play/coach for the upcoming game. For multiple game suspensions, all forms should be sent at one time (rather than after each game is served).

Section 4 – Tryouts and Player Transfers

4.1 - Open Tryout Window

1. The period when any Player, regardless of Club affiliation, may try out with any SAAZ Club, without requiring permission from their current Club DOC. The SAAZ Tryout Window applies to all SAAZ teams within all SAAZ member Clubs. The tryout window does not apply to teams outside of SAAZ, as SAAZ does not have jurisdiction over those teams. However, clubs outside of SAAZ, looking to join the SAAZ organization, should follow these rules (as the League will use this as criteria when accepting new clubs).
2. A player from a club that is NOT a member of SAAZ can try out for A SAAZ member at any time.

4.2 – Player Transfers

1. If a player moves from one SAAZ club to another SAAZ club after the first league game has been played by the team or September 1st (whichever is earlier) the following must apply:
 - a. The player must be paid in full with the club the player is leaving.
 - b. The player will have to sit out the remainder of the current SAAZ league season.
 - i. The exception to the rule above, is if the releasing DOC approves the player transfer. The player will be allowed to participate in SAAZ competitions (league & state cup).
 - a. Club Directors must contact the league office directly, to approve player participation after the transfer deadline.
2. SAAZ only has jurisdiction over the competitions it operates, so a player could participate in club tournaments outside of SAAZ jurisdiction.

Section 5 - General Competition Rules

5.1 - Playing Rules

All games under league jurisdiction shall be played according to the rules and regulations recognized by the SAAZ which shall be the same rules set by FIFA/U.S. Soccer (USSF) except for those exceptions authorized by FIFA or USSF.

5.2 - Equipment

1. Player Uniforms

Opponents must wear colors that distinguish them from each other, and also the Referee and the assistant Referees. It is mandatory that the home team wears light uniforms while the away team wears dark uniforms. Each goalkeeper must wear colors that distinguish them from the other Players, the Referee, and the assistant Referees. All Players on a team except the goalkeeper shall wear identical uniforms (shirts, shorts, and socks).

- a. If there is a conflict in the uniform color, the home team shall change uniforms.
- b. Player numbers must be affixed to the back of the uniform shirt. Each Player on a team shall wear a unique number.
- c. If undershirts or shorts are worn they must match the main color of the jersey or shorts.

2. Safety

A Player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to themselves or another Player.

- a. **Casts** - No orthopedic (hard) casts, air splints, or metal splints may be worn. Players will be allowed to play in a soft cast at the discretion of the Referee.
- b. **Jewelry** - Absolutely no jewelry, including rings, chains, watches, jewelry, hair clips, bobby pins, earrings, bracelets, rubber bracelets, or excessively long fingernails may be worn while participating in any SAAZ games. Only Medical Alert Warning Bracelets may be worn and shall be taped to secure them to the Player's body. Earrings and other piercings cannot be taped and must be removed.
- c. **Shin Guards** - All Players are required to use shin guards at all times. They must be worn properly and be professionally manufactured and unaltered. Socks must completely cover shin guards.
- d. **Braces** (e.g. knee, elbow) - It is strongly recommended for the safety of the Player, that a Player does not wear a brace during SAAZ games. Braces are allowed as long as the Referee decides that the brace will not or cannot hurt the Player wearing the brace or any other Player. All metal, metal-like, or plastic brace supports are to be properly covered for the duration of the match. Elastic-type supports without any metal, carbon fiber, hard plastic, or like devices are permitted provided the Referee does not deem the support to be potentially harmful to other Players.
- e. **Eyeglasses** - Players who must wear eyeglasses are encouraged to wear sports goggles. Lenses must be unbreakable and frames must be unbreakable plastic or sturdy metal.

5.3 – Game Details

	U8 (4v4)**	U8-U10	U11	U12	U13	U14-U16	U17-U19
Field Size (yds)	25/35 L 15/25 W*	55/65 L 35/45 W*	70/80 L 45/55 W*	70/80 L 45/55 W*	100/120 L 50/80 W	100/120 L 50/80 W	100/120 L 55/80 W
***Number of Refs	Not required (but recommend)	1	1	1	3	3	3
Number of Players	4v4	7V7	9v9	9v9	11v11	11v11	11v11
Minimum # of Players	4	5	6	6	7	7	7
Goalkeeper	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Playing Time	2x20 or 4x10	2x25	2x30	2x30	2x35	2x40	2x45
Half-Time	n/a	5 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins
Ball Size	3	4	4	4	5	5	5
Goal Size (ft)	4x6	No larger than 6.5x18.5- 7x21	6.5x18.5- 7x21	6.5x18.5- 7x21	8x24	8x24	8x24
Offside	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Substitutions	At Any Stoppage						
Fouls (free kicks)	Indirect	Indirect & Direct Free Kicks					
Free Kick clearance	10 ft	8 yd	8 yd	8 yd	10 yd	10 yd	10 yd
Throw-in	1 Re-throw	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
Penalty Kicks	None	Yes (mark at 10 yds)	Yes (mark at 10 yds)	Yes (mark at 10 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)
Penalty Area (yds)	None	12x24	14x36	14x36	18 x 44	18 x 44	18 x 44
Goal Area (yards)	3x8	4x8	5x16	5x16	6 x 20	6 x 20	6 x 20
Heading	No Heading			As per the Laws of the Game			

****Each Club decides on a seasonal basis the format for U8 competition**

*****Recommended minimum number of Referees (for the 2023/2024 season due to low numbers of certified referees).**

See 5.4. ALL NPL GAMES REQUIRE 3 LICENSED REFEREES' IN ALL AGE GROUPS (U13-U19)

5.4 - Match Officials

Match officials must be current year USSF licensed Referees. The match officials shall consist of the Referee and two assistant Referees, except 7v7 and 9v9 formats of play may be played with one Referee. Clubs may elect to use Club linesmen for 7v7 and 9v9 formats of play. No match officials, other than Club linesmen, may have family members in the game they are working.

5.5 - Assignment of Match Officials (AZDL)

Match officials shall be assigned and paid by the home Club for each match. Each Club is required to have a current year certified USSF Referee Assignor active in the GotSport account. Failure to do so will result in Club sanctions from SAAZ, including a review of a Club's membership. Clubs need to give 96-hour notice to an opponent if a match is unable to take place due to a referee shortage.

5.6 - Protests

Protests regarding the match conditions (i.e. Field condition, etc.) must be made prior to the start of the match and be clearly written on the official game card. Protests regarding the use of illegal Players may be made prior to or following the match, and be clearly written on the game card. Specific Referee decisions cannot be protested. No match condition protests will be allowed at SAAZ hosted events. All protested games should be sent to the SAAZ Director of Operation, who will forward it to the League Office for a ruling.

5.7 - Point System

All SAAZ Leagues shall operate under a point system. The point system shall award three points for a win, one point for a tie, and no points for a loss.

5.8 - League Standings

Official standings of teams, the keeping of which is the responsibility of the League Office, are tabulated on a regular basis and displayed on each competition page of the SAAZ website.

5.9 - Ties

If a league game is tied after regulation, the tie stands and will be posted as a tie.

5.10 - Tie Breakers

In case of a tie on points in the standings within a league, the following will be used as tiebreakers:

1. "Head to head" points (win/lose/draw) between teams
2. Overall Goal Differential (up to 4)
3. Goals for (up to 4)
4. Goals against (up to 4)
5. Most points against the highest non-tied team in the group
6. Best goal differential against the highest non-tied team in the group
7. Most shutouts
8. Fewest red cards
9. Coin toss

If more than two teams are tied, the tie-breaking process will be used until a winner is determined. The tie-breaking procedure does not revert to previous criteria if one team is eliminated.

In a situation where a season/group cannot be completed due to exceptional circumstances, and teams have played an unequal number of games, SAAZ may use Points Per Game (PPG) to decide standings.

5.11 - Playoffs for League

For matches that need a winner, the team with the most goals after regulation time will be the winner. If the match is tied after regulation for U9-U19 teams, two 5-minute periods will be played. Teams will have a 5-minute break before the first overtime. After 5 minutes, teams will change sides, with no break, and play the remaining 5 minutes. If the game is still tied after the two overtime periods, then kicks from the Penalty Mark per FIFA rules will determine the winner.

Please make sure you arrive for your game knowing if the game can end in a draw or if a winning team is required.

5.12- Incomplete games

In the event that a game cannot be completed, the game will stand if at least half of the game was played (i.e. result of weather, act of god, or the referee termination of a game). The score will stand, as when the game was terminated.

1. However, that if any team is directly responsible for the termination of the game, no matter how much of the match remains, due to poor sportsmanship towards a Referee, opposing fans, or opposing Players, the team will be required to forfeit the match. This could also lead to other sanctions set forth by the SAAZ League Office.
2. If a game is terminated due to weather or an act of god prior to the first half being completed, the entire game shall be replayed at a time agreed upon by the competing teams in consultation with the SAAZ League Office. *Referees are required to submit an incident report for all matches that end early.*

5.13 - Heading Game Rule

For U11 and below, when a Player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. *This rule shall apply to the age groups of U11 and below. Players who are playing up will play according to the rules of the age group in which they are playing.* It is the Club's responsibility to understand the effects of this rule on Players playing up.

5.14 - No Re-Entry Protocol (for Head Injury and SCA)

In accordance with the US Club Soccer return to play guidelines, any Player removed from the Field for a suspected head injury or SCA (sudden cardiac arrest) will not be allowed to return to the Field of play unless cleared by a Licensed Healthcare Provider, as an individual who is trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and is acting within the scope of the provider's practice for evaluation and management of concussions or other head injuries and/or an individual who is trained in the evaluation and management of cardiac conditions and is acting within the scope of that provider's practice for evaluation and management of sudden cardiac arrest, fainting, and shortness of breath.

5.15 - Substitutions

As per FIFA guidelines, unlimited substitutions are allowed in all age groups (except for NPL - see Section 8.2). However, teams may substitute only with the Referee's permission. Substitutes must wait at the halfway line (off of the Field of play) until the Field Player has left the Field of play and/or the Referee

has indicated the substitute may enter the Field of play.

Substitutions by either team are allowed at any stoppage of play with the permission of the Referee.

Referees will be instructed not to allow substitutions that are deemed “excessive” or of a “time-wasting” nature. Please be respectful of the integrity of the game and do not use the free substitution rules as a means to disrupt the match.

5.16 - Team Placement

The league office in conjunction with the technical committee and seeding committee will place teams in appropriate brackets based on age and level of play. The committee will use the following criteria:

1. The top three (3) placed teams in any SAAZ sanctioned league division (NPL and AZDL) will be considered “safe” and are guaranteed their league division spot for the following season, provided they meet the roster requirements listed below.
 1. Roster Requirements: For a team to retain their “safe” league spot for the following season, their roster must maintain a 75% roster continuity.
2. The 1st place team in each division will be promoted to the next highest division (except for the NPL Champions)
 1. For teams being promoted to the NPL from AZDL, the top AZDL team will playoff versus the top team from PCJSL to determine promotion to the NPL.
 1. For the AZDL/PCJSL playoff, teams can ONLY use players from their league season roster and may not add any players to the roster.
 2. PCJSL Clubs must be a member of SAAZ to participate in SAAZ and the playoff game vs AZDL. If the first-place team is not a member of SAAZ, the second-place team in PCJSL will have the ability to participate in the playoff game versus the AZDL team. If the second-place team is not a member of SAAZ, then PCJSL will not have a team in the playoff versus AZDL.
3. The last place team in each division will be relegated to the next lower division (except for the lowest level division in AZDL)
4. The league office, technical committee, and seeding committee will place the remaining teams in each bracket based on results from league games and tournaments.
5. Should there be disputes on placement of teams, the technical committee has the authority to make the final decision. Technical committee members must remove themselves from a vote, should a member from their club be involved in a dispute.

5.17 - Registration Calendar

1. New Member Club Application - February 1, 2023- April 1, 2023
2. New Member Club Acceptance - May 1, 2023
3. Registration Opens - June 1, 2023
4. Registration Closes - July 17, 2023
5. Last day to drop and receive full refund - July 18, 2023
6. Last day to drop without penalty- July 21, 2023
 - a. Any drop between July 21, 2023- August 7, 2023 will result in a \$500 fine to the club
 - b. Any drop after August 7, 2023 will result in a \$1,000 fine
7. Draft Schedule to clubs- August 7, 2023
8. Final Schedule released to public- August 21, 2023

SAAZ will provide a draft schedule to the clubs participating in SAAZ by August 7, 2023. The clubs will need to review the draft schedule for all their teams participating in SAAZ. Should any changes to the draft schedule need to be made, the clubs must submit these changes to the league office by August 21, 2023. After August 21, 2023 the schedules will be locked. When changes are being made to the draft schedule, the clubs can communicate club to club to find an alternate date/time/location. Once a change is agreed upon by both clubs, the clubs need to notify the league about the change, so the schedule can be updated. If clubs cannot come to an agreement on a date/time to change a game to during the draft scheduling period, the original date of the game that the league assigned will stand. Should any game change requests be needed after the schedules have been finalized (August 21, 2023), the requests will need to go through the SAAZ league office. The SAAZ league office has the right to deny the request and implement a fine of \$500 for any changes to the schedule.

5.18 – AZDL Playing Season (Fall, Winter, Spring)

1. U10-U14

Teams participating in the U10-U14 AZDL will get a minimum of 9 games played between the Fall and Winter/Spring season. Teams signing up for the league, MUST participate for the entire season (Fall & Winter/Spring season). The U10 age group will only have one division of play and the format will be 9v9.

a. Fall Season

i. The Fall Season will take place from September 9, 2023 to December 2, 2023

1. Mandatory Playdates

- a. September 9, 2023
- b. September 23, 2023
- c. September 30, 2023
- d. October 14, 2023
- e. October 21, 2023
- f. November 11, 2023
- g. December 2, 2023 (make up/rainout)

- ii. Each playing division in the AZDL will strive to have six (6) team in a bracket. There are always circumstances (i.e. not enough teams in a bracket, team drops, etc...) that could lead to a different number than six (6) teams in a bracket, but six (6) teams is the goal for the league.
- iii. Each team will play each team in their bracket one (1) time for a total of 5 games.
- iv. Clubs will assign fields to games to that the league has scheduled on published play dates and submit any reschedule requests during the draft schedule period.

After the conclusion of the Fall season, there will be a rebracketing of teams for the Winter/Spring season. Teams could also be added at this time to participate in the Winter/Spring season. However, teams may not drop. Should a team drop between seasons, there will be a \$500 fine.

b. Winter/Spring Season

i. The Winter/Spring Season will take place from December 16, 2023 to March 30, 2024

1. Mandatory playdates

- a. December 16, 2023
- b. January 20, 2024

- c. February 3, 2024
- d. February 10, 2024
- e. March 2, 2024
- f. March 23, 2024 (bracket of 7 game/makeup/rainout)
- g. March 30, 2024 (makeup/rainout)
- ii. Due to a rebracketing of teams, the number of teams in a division could vary.
- iii. Each team will play each team in their bracket one (1) time.
- iv. If there are rainouts or an act of god, please refer to section 2.4.

2. AZDL U15-U19

a. Fall Season

- i. The Fall Season will take place from September 9, 2023 to November 11, 2023

1. Mandatory Playdates

- a. September 9, 2023
- b. September 16, 2023
- c. September 23, 2023
- d. September 30, 2023
- e. October 14, 2023
- f. October 21, 2023
- g. November 11, 2023 Centralized (AZDL Finals)
 - i. Mandatory Attendance for all teams on November 11, 2023. If a team does not attend, the forfeit fines will apply.
- i. Each playing division in the AZDL will strive to have six (6) team in a bracket. There are always circumstances (i.e. not enough teams in a bracket, team drops, etc...) that could lead to a different number than six (6) teams in a bracket, but six (6) teams is the goal for the league.
- ii. Each team will play each team in their bracket one (1) time for a total of 5 games. Clubs will assign fields to games to that the league has scheduled on published play dates and submit any reschedule requests during the draft schedule period.
- iii. All teams in the U15-U19 AZDL will play in a playoff at the end of the year to determine the champion, 3rd place and 5th place winners for the league. This playoff will be played at a centralized location hosted by SAAZ.
 - a. Teams will be match up by their regular season standing and where the team finished in the table.
 - i. The 1st vs 2nd place team in the standings will play for the championship.
 - ii. The 3rd vs 4th place team in the standings will play for 3rd place.
 - iii. The 5th vs 6th place team in the standings will play for 5th place.
 - 1. With brackets where there are not 6 teams, there will only be a playoff for the 1st and 3rd place games.

2. If the playoff date is canceled due to rain or another act of God, the playoff date will not be rescheduled. The league standings will determine the final results without a playoff game).

5.19 - NPL Playing Season

1. U11-U12 Pre-NPL & U13-U14 NPL

Teams participating in the U11-U12 Pre-NPL & U13-U14 NPL will get a minimum of 9 games played between the Fall and Winter/Spring season. Teams signing up for the Pre-NPL & NPL, MUST participate for the entire season (Fall & Winter/Spring season). NPL games will take place at centralized locations.

a. Fall Season

- i. The Fall Season will take place from September 9, 2023 to November 12, 2023

1. Mandatory Playdates

- a. September 8-10, 2023
- b. September 15-17, 2023
- c. September 22-24, 2023
- d. September 29-1, 2023
- e. October 13-15, 2023
- f. October 20-22, 2023
- g. November 10-12, 2023

- ii. Each playing division in the Pre-NPL & NPL will strive to have six (6) team in a bracket. There are always circumstances (i.e. not enough teams in a bracket, team drops, etc...) that could lead to a different number than six (6) teams in a bracket, but six (6) teams is the goal for the league.
- iii. Each team will play each team in their bracket one (1) time for a total of 5 games.

After the conclusion of the Fall season, there will be a rebracketing of teams for the Winter/Spring season. Teams could also be added at this time to participate in the Winter/Spring season. However, teams may not drop. Should a team drop between seasons, there will be a \$500 fine.

b. Winter/Spring Season

- ii. The Winter/Spring Season will take place from December 15, 2023 to March 30, 2024

1. Mandatory playdates

- a. December 15-16, 2023
- b. January 19-21, 2024
- c. February 2-4, 2024
- d. February 9-11, 2024
- e. March 1-3, 2024
- f. March 23, 2024 (makeup/rainout)

- iii. Due to a rebracketing of teams, the number of teams in a division could vary.
- iv. Each team will play each team in their bracket one (1) time.
- v. If there are rainouts or an act of god, please refer to section 2.4.
- vi. The winner of the U13-U14 NPL Champions Division from the Winter/Spring Season will represent SAAZ in US Club Soccer's NPL Finals.

2. NPL U15-U19

b. Fall Season/Spring Season

- i. The Fall Season will take place from September 8, 2023 to March 17, 2024. NPL games will take place at centralized locations.

1. Mandatory Playdates

- a. September 8-10, 2023
- b. September 15-17, 2023
- c. September 22-24, 2023
- d. September 29-1, 2023
- e. October 13-15, 2023
- f. October 20-22, 2023
- g. November 10-12, 2023
- h. March 15-17, 2024- SAAZ NPL Finals (2 games)
 - i. Mandatory Attendance for all teams to attend March 15-17, 2024. If a team does not attend, the forfeit fines will apply to each game not attended.

- ii. Possible for clubs to reschedule games for mid-week games during the initial draft schedule (August 7, 2023) period to the final schedules being locked (August 21, 2021)

- iii. If rainout occur, we ask the clubs to try to reschedule for the fall (i.e. play an additional game on a weekend or midweek), but if teams cannot reschedule the rainout game for the fall, the makeup games will be moved to March 2024, after the high school season.

- 1. March 1-3, 2024
- 2. March 8-10, 2024
- 3. March 30, 2024
- 4. April 5-7, 2024- rainout for NPL Finals (March 15-17)

- a. Teams can also play midweek in March.

- iv. It is the clubs and teams responsibility to play all games by April 7, 2024. Should any games not be completed it will be a double forfeit and both clubs will be invoiced the forfeit fine of \$500 per game not played.

- iv. Each playing division in the NPL will strive to have six (6) team in a bracket. There are always circumstances (i.e. not enough teams in a bracket, team drops, etc...) that could lead to a different number than six (6) teams in a bracket, but six (6) teams is the goal for the league.

- v. Each team will play each team in their bracket two (2) times.

- vi. The winner of the U15-U19 NPL Champions Division will represent SAAZ in US Club Soccer's NPL Finals.

Section 6 - Rosters

6.1 - Player Registration

Players shall be registered through GotSport according to [US Club Soccer](#) rules.

6.2 - US Club Soccer Player Pass

All Players and Coaches must present their US Club Soccer pass to the Referee prior to the match. If the individual picture is not on the ID card and the card is not laminated, the individual will not be eligible for the match.

6.3 - Forgotten US Club Player Credentials

If a team forgets their US Club Player passes for a SAAZ League game, the game should be played under protest. Any Players that wish to play must have a picture taken prior to the game by the protesting team, and submitted to the SAAZ Director of Operations to verify that the Players were eligible to participate. If this is a continuous issue with a team or Club, the League Office may remove the team from the league.

6.4 - Game Roster

Each team must create an official SAAZ roster in their GotSport account. Only Players who are listed on the official Game Card will be eligible to play in SAAZ League matches. If any Player is not listed on the SAAZ Game Card, he/she must be added electronically to the roster before the Player is eligible to play. Team rosters may contain up to 26 Players, and there is no limit to the number of changes that can be made to the roster, provided the Players are active in the team's Club and are not on another Club's US Club Roster. No matter how many Players are listed on a team's roster, only 18 Players for U13 and up, 16 Players for U11-U12, and 14 Players for U8-U10 may be eligible for SAAZ League matches. All players not participating on the roster, should be crossed out.

Players may not play for 2 teams in the same division of play (a division of play is a combination of age group and level, i.e.: two teams from the same Club may not share Players if they're playing in the same set of division standings). See section 1.4 for further details on club pass rules.

A coach holding a valid US Club pass card may coach ANY team in the club for which they hold the card. It is not required that they be printed on the game card, but they should be handwritten in, if not printed on game card.

6.5 - Guest Players

No guest Players (Players with a Player pass from another Club) are allowed to play in SAAZ League competitions.

6.6 - Illegal Players

Any Player who does not appear on the official SAAZ Game Card or have a valid US Club Soccer Player Pass issued by the same Club at the time of the match shall be considered an illegal Player. Any team using, or attempting to use, an illegal Player shall forfeit the game, the Coach of the team using the illegal Player will be suspended from all SAAZ competitions for one year, and the Club will incur a \$500 fine.

Section 7 - Game Day Procedures

*see additional instructions for Pre-NPL, NPL, & State Cup

7.1 - Pre-Game (ALL Comps)

Home Team Responsibilities:

1. Provide quality Field equipped with goals, nets, flags, and proper lines
2. Confirm that referees have been assigned to the game
3. Bring 3 copies of the game card. Provide all three (3) copies of the Game Card to the center referee. Following the game, the referee will keep one copy of the game card and give one game card to each the home and away team
4. Provide a US Club Soccer Player pass for each Player and Adult in the technical area
5. Change jersey colors if there is a color conflict (home teams should wear their light colors, while away teams wear their dark colors)
6. Provide game balls

Visiting Team Responsibilities:

1. Respond to any communication requests from the home team in regards to match scheduling within 24 hours
2. Have a copy of the Game Card in case it is needed
3. Provide a US Club Soccer Player pass for each Player and Adult in the technical area

7.2 - Post-Game (ALL Comps)

Home team Responsibilities:

1. Coach or manager sign the Game Card following the game and keep or take a photo for records.
2. [Post score within 24 hours](#) (away team may also report score)

Visiting team responsibilities:

1. Coach or manager must sign the Game Card following the game and keep for records.

7.3 - Field Set-Up

Personnel on the Bench

A maximum of 4 team officials are allowed in each team's technical area. Team officials must have a US Club pass in order to sit in the technical area. It is highly recommended that teams have several credentialed Coaches or managers with passes for the team just in case something happens to the head Coach. A US Club pass makes a person eligible to Coach any team in the Club for which that Coach or manager is credentialed. Teams should sit on the same side of the half as the Assistant Referee with their parents on the other half of the same sideline.

Spectator Seating

All spectators will sit on the same side of the field as their team. Spectators may only sit on their team's side of the field. Spectators should sit on the opposite side of the half to the Assistant Referee. Coaches are responsible for the spectators on their team.

Click [here](#) for a visual aid on proper team and spectator seating.

Section 8 - Additional Competition Instructions (for Pre-NPL, NPL, State Cups)*

8.1 - Pre-NPL & NPL

Game Day Roster

- U11-U12 = 16 PLAYERS
- U13-U14 = 18 PLAYERS
- U15-U19 = 20 PLAYERS

Tie Breakers

In case of a tie on points in the standings within a league, the following will be used as tiebreakers:

1. "Head to head" points (win/lose/ draw) between teams
2. Overall Goal Differential
3. Goals for
4. Goals against
5. Most points against the highest non-tied team in the group
6. Best goal differential against the highest non-tied team in the group
7. Most shutouts
8. Least red cards
9. Coin toss

Substitutions

1. Age Groups U11-U14 will have unlimited substitutions.
2. Age Groups U15-U19 will have unlimited substitutions at a maximum of 3 moments per half.
 - a. Halftime does not count as a moment.
 - b. Substitution for a possible head injury/concussion does not count as a moment. A team may have used all 3 moments in a match but a potential head injury that may be substituted with a temporary player that does not count as a moment. If the player is cleared to participate in the same half, they may return to play and substitute for the temporary player only.

8.2 - Assignment of Match Officials (NPL)

Match officials shall be assigned and paid by SAAZ for each match.