



Niagara Falls FC: Rules, Standards, and Expectations



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Niagara Falls Soccer Club

Introduction

Welcome to **Niagara Falls FC**! We are thrilled to have you and your family as part of our soccer community. At Niagara Falls FC, our mission is to develop well-rounded players who excel not only on the field but also in life. We believe in fostering a culture of respect, discipline, and continuous improvement, where every player has the opportunity to grow technically, tactically, physically, socially, and emotionally.

This document outlines the **rules, standards, and expectations** for players, parents, and coaches within our club. These guidelines are designed to create a positive, competitive, and development-focused environment for everyone involved. By adhering to these principles, we can ensure that our players receive the best possible experience and are prepared for the next steps in their soccer journey—whether that's at the collegiate, professional, or recreational level.

We appreciate your commitment to supporting our club's vision and helping us raise the standards of soccer development in our community. Together, we can create a program that not only produces skilled players but also nurtures confident, respectful, and resilient individuals.

Thank you for being part of the Niagara Falls FC family. Let's work together to make this season a success!



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Our Philosophy

- Our primary focus is on **individual development within a team environment**.
- Winning is not the measurement of success. Instead, we measure success by the **progress and improvement shown from game to game**.
- We aim to improve players **technically, tactically, physically, socially, and emotionally** to prepare them for the next stage of their soccer journey.
- Our goal is for players to leave the program at a higher level than when they joined, equipped with the skills and mindset to succeed both on and off the field.

Training Attendance

- Players who miss training during the week will not start in the following game.
- If multiple players miss training, the coach will decide who starts based on team needs.
- Regular absences may result in reduced playing time or being replaced by a call-up player from the age group below. This is especially critical for goalkeepers, as consistent absences may lead to being temporarily replaced by a call-up goalkeeper.

Training and Game Attire

- Players must wear **shin pads and official team training gear** to all sessions. Failure to comply may result in reduced playing time.
- On game days, players must arrive in **official team attire** (tracksuits or polos, depending on weather).

Respect and Greetings

- Players are expected to greet staff with a **handshake or fist bump** upon arrival and departure.
- This applies to all coaches and staff members, even if they are engaged in conversation with others.
- If a coach is speaking with someone, players must also greet that person with a handshake or fist bump.
- This practice demonstrates respect, builds good habits for future professional interactions, and fosters a culture of inclusivity and courtesy.

Sideline Conduct

- Spectators are asked to **cheer and encourage players** but avoid giving on-field instructions (e.g., "pass," "shoot," "kick," "run").
- Giving direction from the sidelines undermines the learning process. Players need to make their own decisions, even if they result in mistakes. This is how they develop **game intelligence and problem-solving skills**.
- Coaches provide specific instructions, challenges, and focuses for players during games. Spectators are not always aware of these, and sideline instructions can create confusion and mixed messages.
- If a player is observed following sideline instructions, they may be substituted to maintain the integrity of the coaching process.
- Remember, mistakes are part of development—whether they stem from poor decisions or poor technique, they are opportunities for growth.

Call-Up Players

Call-ups will be used for two primary purposes:

1. To **challenge younger players** and aid their development by exposing them to a higher level of play.
2. To **replace players** who miss training regularly or are unavailable for games.
 - Call-up players are selected based on **performance, attitude, and team needs**. Coaches and technical staff evaluate players' technical skills, tactical understanding, work ethic, and ability to contribute to the team.
 - Players may be called up from the age group below or within the club's player pool, depending on the situation.
 - Call-up players are treated as part of the team and may start over regular players at the coach's discretion.
 - No player is guaranteed a specific number of minutes, except as per OPDL guidelines.
 - These decisions are made by the **technical staff and the player's coach**. Call-up opportunities will be communicated directly to the player and their parents by the coach or team manager. Parents and players should not request call-up opportunities.

Call-Ups in Training

- Call-ups to training sessions are used to **reward strong performance** and challenge players in a more demanding environment.
- These decisions are made by the technical staff in consultation with the player's coach.
- Parents and players should not request call-up opportunities.

Parent Interaction with Coaches

- The "**Rule of 2**" applies to all conversations between parents and coaches. A manager or technical staff member will be present during discussions.
- **Serious Matters:** Parents must wait **48 hours** before requesting a meeting with the coach. This cooling-off period ensures that conversations are productive and focused on solutions.
- **Non-Urgent Matters:** All non-urgent questions or concerns should be directed to the **team manager**, who will consult with the coach if necessary.
- This process ensures that communication is clear, respectful, and efficient.

Player Ownership (U16 and U17)

- Older players are expected to take **ownership of their communication**.
- This includes updating their availability in the **SportsEngine app** and ensuring their parents are informed.
- Players who fail to update their attendance promptly will complete **fitness training** for the first 30 minutes of the session.

Tournament Expectations

- **U13-U14 Teams:** Expected to participate in at least **one USA and one Canadian tournament**. These events provide exposure to higher competition and opportunities for team bonding.
- **U15 and Older Teams:** Required to attend **two USA and two Canadian tournaments**. These tournaments are critical for player development, scouting opportunities, and preparing for future pathways.
- Additional tournaments will be decided by the team.
- These opportunities expose players to different pathways, including **scholarship opportunities** in Canada and the USA.

Letter of Commitment

- Players offered a commitment must **accept and sign** by the specified deadline.
- Failure to do so will result in the spot being offered to another player.

Raising Standards

- We aim to raise the standards of both the **OPDL level and the club as a whole**.
- While we understand that life can present challenges, we must uphold high standards to ensure the program's success and provide the best opportunities for player development.

Conclusion

At **Niagara Falls FC OPDL Program**, we are committed to creating a competitive, respectful, and development-focused environment for all players. Our goal is to prepare athletes for the next stage of their soccer journey, whether that's at the collegiate, professional, or elite level. By adhering to these rules, standards, and expectations, we can ensure that our players develop not only as athletes but also as confident, resilient, and respectful individuals.

Together, we are building a program that sets the standard for excellence in soccer development. Thank you for being part of the Niagara Falls FC family. Let's work together to help our players achieve their full potential and make this season a success!



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