

Rules of Competition for the New England Over the Hill Soccer League Effective July 2015



1. General

- A. Rules of Play Current FIFA and USSF rules of play shall be in effect except as specifically stated otherwise in these Rules. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- US National Cup Rules
 - USASA Bylaws
 - FIFA Laws of the Game
- B. Seasons The Spring and Fall playing seasons will begin on the dates specified by the Board of Directors.
- C. Official records The league website shall be the official repository of all scores, maps, rosters, and standings.

2. Age Requirements

- A. Age groups
1. In the Over-30 ("O30") league all players must be at least thirty (30) years of age on December 31 of the current year.
 2. In the Over-40 ("O40") league all players must be at least forty (40) years of age on December 31 of the current year.
 3. In the Over-50 ("O50") league all players must be at least fifty (50) years of age on December 31 of the current year.
 4. In the over-56 ("O56") league all players must be at least fifty-six (56) years of age on December 31 of the current year.
 5. In the Over-63 ("O63") league all players must be at least sixty-three (63) years of age on December 31 of the current year.

3. Registration

- A. New Team Applications**
1. New teams desiring to join the league must submit the following to the league registrar:
 - Manager's name
 - \$50 non-refundable deposit
 2. New teams will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which their applications are received and will be added to the league on a space available basis.
- B. Requirements for Registration**
1. All teams must submit registration fee for the entire year , both spring and fall, by January 15. This should include all fines and bonds, their home field location, all field sharing constraints, and start time. Teams that drop out between spring and fall seasons will be given an appropriate refund as long as they inform the registrar by July 1st. Teams joining between spring and fall seasons will pay ½ the annual fee. Start times must be between 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM. Start times outside this range must be approved by the Board of Directors.
 2. The Board of Directors shall be the final authority on all matters concerning the eligibility of teams which fail to meet the registration requirements.
- C. Registration Grace Period**
1. Teams which fail to submit the required materials by the due dates shall be assessed a one hundred dollar (\$100.00) fine.
 2. Any team with late registration shall be given a 10 day grace period during which all required registration material and the one hundred dollar (\$100.00) fine must be submitted.
 3. If incomplete registration is received, the registration material shall be returned to the team and must be resubmitted within the grace period. No exceptions will be allowed. The postmark of the letter, the email delivery date, or the timestamp of the league website will be used as the final proof.
- D. Placement of Teams**
1. All new teams will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and placed in the appropriate Division and Region.
 2. In case of team(s) dropping out, the Board of Directors will readjust the affected division(s) and region(s).

4. Rosters

- A. Official Rosters**
1. All teams must maintain their rosters online using the website designated by the league.

2. Players must be on the roster in order to play. Handwritten entries are not allowed except as described in Rule 5.B.1.
3. Each player must be assigned a unique uniform number on the roster.
4. Game rosters must be printed from the designated website (see exception in Rule 8).

B. Roster Freeze Dates

1. The normal roster freeze date will be midnight of the Saturday prior to the second scheduled game of the season.
2. Once the normal roster freeze date has passed, no person may play for more than one team in the league in a season except as detailed in subsection 3. Each player's "one team" is the first team for which he has been checked in by the referee following the normal roster freeze date. "One team" means one team regardless of Age Group, Division, Region or Flight.
3. Provided there is available roster space, any team may add new players to their rosters through midnight of the Saturday before the eighth scheduled game of the season. "New" players are those who have not played for another league team after the normal roster freeze date.

C. Ineligible Players

1. Managers are responsible for verifying that their players are eligible. Managers who fail to exercise due diligence in doing so may be sanctioned by the Player Conduct Committee.
2. Teams using ineligible players will forfeit any game that an ineligible player was checked in for. An ineligible player is one who is:
 - Suspended due to a red card or excessive yellows;
 - Too young;
 - On the list of suspended players on the League's website;
 - Not on the official roster.
3. Any team using an ineligible player will be fined \$100.00 per ineligible player.
4. Ineligible players may be subject to additional sanctions by the Player Conduct Committee.

D. Retention of Records

Official roster related transactions, including website transactions, will be kept on file by the league for a period of at least twenty-four (24) months.

E. Using Players from Suspended Teams

No active team shall have more than four (4) players from any combination of the final rosters of teams suspended or expelled within the past two years. This restriction will not apply if the suspended or expelled team has been reinstated.

- F. Roster Limits** The maximum number of rostered players per team shall be thirty (30).
- G. Challenging Player IDs**
1. Managers may challenge the validity of the player ID for any player on an opposing team by filing a written challenge. Challenges should be mailed or emailed to the Division Director.
 2. Challenges require payment of a fifty dollar (\$50.00) fee that must be received before the challenge will be investigated. The fee will be refunded if the challenge is successful.
 3. When the validity of an ID is challenged, the player involved will be required to provide a government-issued photo ID to the Division Director or their designee within ten (10) days of being asked for same.
 4. If an invalid ID is found, the player involved will be deemed ineligible, and the rules for the use of ineligible players and the use of false identification will be applied.
 5. Division Directors shall have the authority to question the identity and age of any player in their division and suspend from play any player whose identity or age is in question until the next Board of Directors Meeting or until the Division Director has ascertained the true age and identity of the player.

5. Uniforms and Equipment

- A. Basic Uniform** Each player's uniform shall consist of a shirt with a clearly legible and unique number, shorts, socks, shin guards, and shoes. Keeper jerseys do not need a number. Players may wear spandex or other non-dangerous supporting material during league games.
- B. Uniform Numbers**
1. Each player's uniform number must match their number on the team roster. Any exceptions must be recorded manually on both rosters by the manager prior to submitting them to the referee.
 2. A team which does not comply with this rule shall be fined one hundred dollars (\$100.00).
- C. Keeper Playing on the Field** A keeper playing as a field player must wear a uniquely numbered uniform shirt.
- D. Similar Uniform Colors** In the event of similar uniform colors, the home team must use alternate shirts or pinnies. In such cases, numbers are not required.

- E. **Game Ball** A regulation #5 ball must be provided by the home team.
- F. **Field Equipment** The home team is responsible for ensuring that the field is properly lined, and for supplying goals and corner flags. If the referee deems the field or the equipment unsafe, and the problems cannot be rectified to his satisfaction, the Division Director may award a forfeit to the visiting team or order the game rescheduled.

6. Officials

- A. **Referee Assignment** Referees will be assigned under the supervision of the league's Referee Coordinator.
- B. **Missing Referee**
 1. If the referee does not show up, and the teams cannot agree on a substitute, then the game shall be rescheduled.
 2. If the teams agree to use a substitute referee, then the game results as well as all referee decisions shall be official. In addition, the opposing manager may choose to check in the players on the other team.
- C. **Time-keeper** The referee shall be the official time-keeper.
- D. **Referee Assessment** The league shall provide a referee assessment process to allow managers to provide feedback on the work of the referees.

7. Number of Players

- A. **Minimum Number of Players**
 1. A minimum of seven (7) players must be on the field at the start of the game to constitute a legal game. A team which goes below the minimum will forfeit the game.
 2. If both teams fall below seven (7) players simultaneously, the Division Director will record the result as a double forfeit.
 3. If a team is losing by more than two (2) goals when it drops below seven (7) players, the score at that point will be recorded as official.

8. Preliminary to Games

- A. **Roster Verification**
 1. Prior to each game, the referee will confirm that each player is on the official roster. A player not on the official roster is ineligible to play.
 2. Verification must be via a Massachusetts State Soccer ID. Temporary cards are allowed; expired cards are not.

- B. Supplying Rosters**
1. All team managers are required to hand the referee and the opposing coach an official roster prior to the start of each game.
 2. Failure to submit an official roster prior to the game will result in a \$25 fine. In addition, the manager must provide a handwritten roster, the referee must check the players in against the handwritten roster, and the listed players must be verified by the Division Director. If there are any ineligible players on the handwritten roster, that team will forfeit the game.
 3. Despite the provisions of subparagraph 2, the Division Director may declare a forfeit against any team that fails to provide an official roster more than once in any block of three (3) consecutive seasons.
- C. Referee Fees**
- Prior to the start of each game, and after the referee has checked his team in against the roster, each manager shall pay the referee one half (1/2) of the referee fee established by the Board of Directors.

9. Game Time and Place

- A. Game Time**
- Games shall be played on Sunday morning as indicated in the schedule unless both teams agree to change the time of the game.
- B. Arrival of Players**
1. Teams must be present on the field of play fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff.
 2. Any team that does not show for a game will forfeit the game (2-0 score and 2 card points). If both teams fail to show, they will both be charged with forfeits (2-0 scores and 2 card points each).
- C. Unplayable Field**
1. It is the responsibility of the home team to provide a playable field at game time. If the scheduled field will be unplayable at kickoff, the home team must notify the away team and the Division Director at least two (2) hours in advance or it will forfeit the game.
 2. If the home team has an alternate field available, it may change the field as long as it provides at least two (2) hours notice to the away team and the Division Director. It may also change the time of the game with the consent of the away team.

3. If the home team cannot provide a playable field, and the away team can, the location will be switched to the away field. If the home team refuses, it will forfeit the game. The time of the game may also be changed, but only with the consent of the home team.
 4. If the field is declared unplayable by the referee, the venue for the replay (if any) shall be switched to the visitor's field.
- D. **Changing the Place or Time of a Game**
1. Any request to change the place or time of a game with less than 72 hours notice may be rejected by the opposing team, the Division Director, or the referee coordinator.
 2. If a field is not available when and where scheduled, the Division Director may direct that a make-up game be played at the place and time of his choosing, including the visitor's home field.

10. Playing Periods

- A. **Length of Playing Periods** Normal playing periods will consist of two forty five (45) minute halves.
- B. **Overtime** No overtime will be played in a regular season game.
- C. **Abandoned Games** All games shall be completed except that in the event a game is abandoned because of inclement weather or other non-disciplinary circumstances (e.g., a broken crossbar), the game will:
1. Be replayed in its entirety if at least 45 minutes remain to be played.
 2. If there remains 15 minutes or more to be played, the amount of time remaining will be played as an addendum to the next game between the two teams involved. If this is the last scheduled game between the two teams, the result shall stand.
 3. If less than 15 minutes remains, the result of the game at abandonment shall stand.
- D. **Terminated Games** If a game is terminated by the referee for disciplinary or crowd control reasons, the Division Director shall determine the outcome.

11. Substitutions

- A. **When Allowed** Unlimited substitutions are allowed with the consent of the referee at the following times:
- At a goal kick.
 - After a goal has been scored.

- At half-time.
- When the ball is stopped for injury and the injured player is substituted.
- By the throwing team on throw-ins, or by both teams if the throwing team substitutes.

B. Extreme Heat On days when the ambient temperature is over 90°F, substitution rules may be modified (e.g., to allow substitutions by either team at any stoppage) by mutual agreement of the managers and with the consent of the referee.

12. Cautions and Ejections

A. Cards Official When Shown All cards are official when shown regardless of when or if they are recorded on the League website. Managers are responsible for knowing which players are suspended. Referees may not grant exemptions.

B. Ejections

1. A player ejected from a game cannot play in the next game played. A player ejected from two (2) games in the same season cannot play in the two games following the second suspension and is subject to further action by the Player Conduct Committee. A player ejected from three (3) games in the same season is automatically suspended for the rest of the season and is subject to further action by the Player Conduct Committee.
2. Suspended players may not attend the game they are suspended from either in- or out-of-uniform.
3. Suspensions will always be served in the next game(s) played:
 - If a player is ejected in the last game of the season, his suspension shall be served in the playoffs or in the following season.
 - If a player is ejected in the playoffs, his suspension shall be served in the next playoff game or in the following season.
4. Changing teams will not void any suspension.
5. The referee may eject coaches, fans, spectators, and any other non-players.

C. Response to Ejection

1. Ejected persons shall remove themselves to a distance of at least 200 yards from any part of the field.
2. If an ejected person fails to remove themselves as directed by the referee, the referee may terminate the game.
3. If an ejected player fails to remove himself as required, he may be subject to additional disciplinary action by the Player Conduct Committee.

- D. Multiple Cautions** If a player receives a single yellow card in three different games in one season, he will be suspended from participating in the next played game. This suspension shall count as one ejection for purposes of determining additional penalties as described in Rule 12B.
- E. Team Penalties for Excessive Cards**
1. Card points will be assessed as follows:
 - One yellow card = one card point
 - One red card = two card points
 - Two yellow cards in one game leading to a red card = two card points
 - One yellow card and a red card for other than a second caution in the same game = three card points
 2. A team which receives a total of ten (10) card points within one season shall be penalized two (2) points in the standings. A team with fifteen (15) card points will be penalized an additional two (2) points in the standings and shall be subject to disciplinary action by the Board of Directors.
 3. A team which receives a total of 15 or more card points (exclusive of card points from forfeited games) during a season shall be ineligible for that season's playoffs.
- F. Suspension for Violent Acts**
1. A Division Director shall have the authority to suspend until the next Board meeting any player(s) involved in any physical or violent acts.
 2. Physical or violent acts can occur without the issuance of a red card by the referee.
 3. Repeat offenders may be sanctioned by the Player Conduct Committee.
- G. Impact of Forfeit on Suspension** If a player has been suspended for a specific number of games, only games actually played by his team to completion will count when determining if the suspension has been served (i.e., a forfeit will not count as a game played).
- H. Disciplinary Action for Excessive Cards** Any team which accumulates 15 card points, including the playoffs but not including forfeits, will be reviewed by the Board and may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

13. Results and Standings

- A. Standings** For the purpose of determining standings:
- Three (3) points shall be awarded for a win or a win by forfeit.
 - One (1) point shall be awarded for a tie.
 - Zero (0) points for a loss or a loss by forfeit.

- B. Forfeits** Forfeits will be recorded as a two-nil (2-0) loss, and the team that forfeits will also be penalized two (2) card points. If the forfeit was the result of failure to appear, the team that forfeits shall pay the full referee fee.
- C. Game Results** Game scores and cards shall be entered in to the league website or called-in to the Division Director by the home team no later than twenty-four (24) hours after the game.
- D. Tie-Breakers**
1. Tie-breakers may be used for promotion, relegation, or to determine playoff teams.
 2. If two teams are tied on total points (match results less deductions for excessive cards), the following tests shall be applied in order until there is a winner:
 - Head-to-head points.
 - Head-to-head goal difference.
 - Head-to-head away goals.
 - Fewest average goals allowed per game played within the division, region, or flight where the tie occurred.
 - Fewest card points, not counting forfeits.
 - A coin flip conducted by the President.
 3. If three or more teams are tied on total points, the tests above shall be applied until at least one team is eliminated. If more than one team remains, the tests will be applied again starting from the top with the remaining teams.
- E. Promotion and Relegation** In order to ensure competitive soccer, the Board will establish procedures for promotion of the top team or teams in each region and relegation for the bottom team or teams.
- F. Multiple Forfeits** A team that forfeits three (3) or more games in a season is subject to disciplinary action the Board of Directors, up to and including expulsion from the league.
- G. Mid season Departures** If a team is drops out or is expelled midseason:
- The results of all of their games shall be expunged from the record for the purposes of determining standings and evaluating tie-breakers in their division, region or flight.
 - Cards from any games played shall stand.

14. Postponed Games

- A. Dates for Rescheduling Games**
1. All postponed games shall be played on the second Wednesday following the Sunday scheduled game in the Spring season or the second Saturday following the Sunday scheduled game in the Fall season or by mutual agreement of the teams unless otherwise ordered by the Division Director for good cause.

2. If the game affects the playoffs or relegation, it shall be played no later than the day before the first playoff game, unless otherwise ordered by the Division Director for good cause.

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| B. Rescheduling Games for Convenience | Except for unplayable fields, no team may postpone a game without consenting agreement from the opposing team and the division director. It is the responsibility of the home team to provide notice. |
| C. Rescheduling Games, Special Circumstances | If the home field is unplayable or unavailable and the away team has an available field, the venue will be switched. If the original home team refuses, it will forfeit the game (2-0 score and 2 card points) as per rule 9.C |
| D. No-Shows at Rescheduled Games | All postponed games must be played. Any team not showing for the rescheduled game will forfeit the game (2-0 score and 2 card points). If both teams fail to show, they will both be charged with forfeits (2-0 scores and 2 card points each). |
| E. Required Notice for Rescheduling Games | Division Directors may refuse to honor any request to schedule a makeup game that is not received at least seven (7) days before the proposed makeup date. |

15. Playoffs

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| A. Structure | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The playoffs shall consist of two semi-finals and one finals for each division. 2. The winners of the two semi-finals shall meet in the finals. 3. In the finals, the team with the best record will be the home team. Tie-breaker rules will be applied when needed. |
| B. Determining Playoff Teams | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When a division has two regions, the first place team in one region shall play the second place team in the other region and vice versa in the semi-finals. The team with the highest standing in its region will be the home team in the semi-finals. 2. When a division has three regions or flights, the three first place teams will play in the playoffs along with the second place team with the best record. The two first place teams with the best records will be the home teams in the semi-finals. The second place team will not play the first place team from its region in the semi-finals. 3. When a division has four regions or flights, the four first place teams will play in the playoffs. The two first place teams with the best records will be the home teams in the semi-finals. |

4. If any playoff team is unable to field a team for the playoffs, the remaining teams in the region shall replace them according to their overall season record including tiebreakers.
- C. **Determining Playoff Winners**
1. If a semi-final match is tied at the end of regulation, the teams will play two (2) fifteen (15) minute periods of extra time to completion (no golden goal).
 2. If a semi-final match is tied at the end of extra time, the winner will be determined by kicks from the penalty mark.
 3. If a finals match is tied at the end of regulation, the winner will be determined by kicks from the penalty mark.
- D. **Referee Fees**
- Referee fees paid for semi-final and final matches will be credited toward the team's registration fee for the following season.
- E. **Cancellations**
1. If any semi-final game is canceled due to adverse weather conditions and cannot be rescheduled amicably between the two teams, the President of the league will reschedule the game for the date, time, and place of his choosing. If the President has a conflict of interest with either team, he will appoint a neutral party to reschedule the game. If a team is unable to play, or declines to play at the designated date, time, and place, they shall forfeit the game. If the rescheduled game cannot be played due to weather or other adverse conditions, the team with the best record advances to the final.
 2. If any playoff final is canceled due to adverse weather conditions and cannot be rescheduled amicably between the two teams prior to the start of the next season, the two finalists shall be named co-champions.
- F. **No-shows**
- Any team that fails to appear in a playoff game without giving its Division Director at least five (5) days notice may be fined \$250 and may be denied promotion.

16. Protests and Appeals

- A. **Protest and Appeals Committee Composition**
1. The Vice-President of the league will be the chairman of the Protest and Appeals committee. The committee will consist of the Vice-President and up to fifteen (15) at large members appointed by the Board of Directors.
 2. When a valid protest or appeal is received, the Vice-President will choose four (4) members of the committee at random to hear each protest. Except as provided for below, the Vice-President will chair all hearings.

3. Any committee member with a real or potential conflict of interest will recuse themselves. If the Vice-President has a real or potential conflict of interest, he will recuse himself and will appoint a committee member to chair the protest hearing in his absence.
4. If recusals or lack of availability result in fewer than five (5) members being available to hear a protest, the President may appoint additional members on a temporary basis.
5. The chair of a hearing will only vote in the event of a tie.

B. Protests

1. Managers may protest the application of League rules by filing a written protest within seventy-two (72) hours of the result or decision being protested.
2. Protests will be addressed to the Vice-President and a copy shall be sent to the Division Director and to the manager of any other teams affected.
3. Protests require payment of a one hundred dollar (\$100.00) fee that must also be received within the seventy-two (72) hour window.

C. Appeals

1. Individuals may appeal a decision of the Player Conduct Committee by filing a written appeal within ten (10) business days of the decision being protested.
2. Appeals should be mailed to the Vice-President and a copy should be mailed to the player's Division Director.
3. Appeals require payment of a one hundred dollar (\$100.00) fee that must accompany the appeal.

D. Expedited Hearing

1. If the team or teams affected by a protest agree, they may request an expedited hearing.
2. An individual filing an appeal may request an expedited hearing.
3. Expedited hearings will be held by the Vice-President acting as a committee-of-one. Expedited hearings may be held in person or via teleconference.
4. The decision of an expedited hearing may not be appealed.

E. Refunding Fees

If a protest or appeal is upheld in total, the fee shall be refunded. If a protest or appeal is upheld in part, the hearing panel may return the fee or retain it at its discretion.

17. Conduct

A. Behavior

1. All members of all teams are expected to conduct themselves in a manner befitting the league and the adults who play in it. It is the manager's responsibility to control his players and spectators.

2. When the Board has cause to believe that a team is not behaving in an appropriate manner, it may require that team to pay for two (2) assistant referees for one or more games.
- B. Treatment of Referees** Any player verbally or physically abusing the referee and/or his property will be dealt with severely, up to and including ejection for life from the league.
- C. Alcoholic Beverages** No alcoholic beverages are permitted before or during the game.
- D. Use of False Identification** Any player found using false identification to make himself eligible to play in any of the league divisions will be suspended indefinitely from the league, and his name will be sent to MASS Soccer and USSF. Any team manager that allows or in any way aids an ineligible player to play will be suspended indefinitely from the league.
- E. Verification of Identification**
1. The Board of Directors may require additional documentation of age from any player or any manager at any time.
 2. If the requested identification is not presented to the league Secretary within seventy-two (72) hours of a written request for same, the individual will be suspended for the remainder of the season and will only be able to play in subsequent seasons after the requested identification has been presented.

Document Control		
Date Approved	Rules Affected	Summary of changes
2012 and prior		Removed from this list for space reasons
03-25-2013	4.C.1	Formalized manager's responsibility to verify accuracy of roster information.
03-25-2013	4.G	New rule to allow managers to challenge player IDs.
03-25-2013	12.F	Formalized fact that "physical or violent acts" can occur without a red card.
03-25-2013	13.F	Expanded the Board's discretion in dealing with teams with multiple forfeits.
03-25-2013	17.A.2	Made explicit the Board's authority to discipline teams that fail to meet the League's behavioral expectations.
03-27-2013	16.D	Added provision for appeals to be handled through the expedited hearing process.
04-29-2013	2.A	Added provision for O65 Age Group and lowered age limit for Veterans from 58 to 57.
03-31-2014	4.A	Clarified language to better communicate intent
03-31-2014	5.B	Clarified language to better communicate intent
03-31-2014	12.B	Made explicit custom that a suspended player is not allowed to attend a match they were suspended from.
03-31-2014	15.B	Made rules for determining winners of semi-finals and finals explicit.
03-31-2014	13.G	Clarified rule for mid-season departures.
08-18-2014	3.B	replaced per AGM vote
11-24-2014	8.A.2	amended per BoD vote on April 28, 2014

11-24-2014	3D, 4B, 13D, 13E, 13G, 15B	clarified the structure as leagues, divisions, regions and flights per BoD vote November 2014
11-24-2014	12.C.2	terminology -- a referee terminates a game
11-24-2014	15.F	amended per BoD vote November 2014
11-24-2014	2.A	ages amended per BoD vote November 2014
8-20-2015	8.A.1 8.A.3 14.B	reworded Moved to 4.G.5 Reworded