

ARTICLE I . NEBRASKA STATE CUP EVENT POLICIES

Section 1 ESTABLISHMENT

- 1.1** Nebraska State Soccer establishes and shall organize, annually, Nebraska State Cup Competitions. This policy applies to those competitions.
- 1.2** There shall be individual, separately conducted Nebraska State Cup competitions for boys and girls in each of the age groups. The purpose of Nebraska State Cup is to determine the teams that will represent Nebraska State Soccer for each boys and girls age group at the National Championships.
- 1.3** Nebraska State Cup is an open competition for teams registered in the 13U – 18/19U age groups.

Section 2 ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1** The Nebraska State Cup competitions shall be managed by a Tournament Director appointed by Nebraska State Soccer. The Tournament Director will administer the tournament under the oversight of Nebraska Events Committee
- 2.2** There shall be a Nebraska Events Committee appointed as provided by the Nebraska State Soccer bylaws. The Committee is responsible for the entire administration of the State Cup competitions subject to the approval of the Board of Directors.
- 2.3** The Nebraska Events Committee, the State Office Staff and the Tournament Director will work together to determine the site for the competition.

Section 3 LEVELS OF COMPETITION

- 3.1** State Cup is the first level of competition for the US Youth Soccer National Championships. Winners from State Cup will advance to the National Championship event.
- 3.2** At the state association level only, Nebraska State Soccer shall determine the age group and gender divisions that it will conduct Nebraska State Cup competitions for and the format for the competitions at the State Association level to determine the team representing the State Association shall be a tournament format established by Nebraska State Soccer. League Competition may not be considered a tournament format.
- 3.3** Teams that qualify for a Regional or National event will be invoiced a \$2,000 bond. This bond will be applied to the event's entry fee. Payment of this bond acts as a team commitment to attend the Regional or National event. If a team withdraws later from the event, the bond will be forfeited. Teams will also be responsible for any fines accrued due to the team withdrawal.
- 3.4** State Cup Champions automatically advance to the next level of the event. When an advancing team withdraws from the subsequent event, the next highest finishing team shall be offered the chance to attend in their place. Once a team has accepted the invitation by (a.) paying the team bond or (b.) acknowledging the acceptance in writing, that team's club is responsible for any additional corresponding fines that

may be incurred by withdrawing from the event.

Section 4 MATTERS NOT PROVIDED

4.1 The Tournament Director and Events Committee shall determine any matter not provided for in the Nebraska State Cup policies and has the authority to modify any rules, protocols or guidelines as deemed necessary in order to ensure the safe and orderly progression, or betterment of the competition. Any such decision of the committee is final and not subject to appeal.

Section 5 TEAM APPLICATIONS

5.1 Teams may only enter State Cup in the age group of their oldest player, based on their roster at the time of entry. After entry, teams may not release players in order to qualify for a younger age group, nor can teams enter an age group that they do not have at least one (1) player rostered of that age at time of entry and at roster freeze.

5.2 All teams submitting an application agree to be available at all times on scheduled game dates, including dates published for Qualifying Games as needed. Any schedule requests to avoid certain game times should be provided in the team application to be considered. Schedule requests are not guaranteed.

5.3 Fees and deadlines

5.3.1 The entry fee and date range for the competition will be set annually by Nebraska State Soccer.

5.3.2 Not later than the final deadline for entry established by the Tournament Director, each team wishing to enter the competition shall submit to the state office an online entry form indicating the team's intention to compete and a non-refundable entry fee.

5.3.3 Any team wishing to enter the competition after the deadline, but no later than one week after the final deadline, may be accepted at the discretion of the Tournament Director. If the team is accepted, a late application fee will be applied.

5.3.4 Teams who have not paid the full State Cup team entry fee by the start of the event will be subject to a late fee of \$300.

5.4 Any team or club who withdraws from the competition after the application deadline and prior to the competition start will still be responsible for 50% of the entry fee. Withdrawal less than 48 hours before the event starts will result in an additional \$300 fine.

5.5 Withdrawal fines may be appealed on the basis of reasons beyond the team's control. Appeals must be done in writing when notice of the withdrawal is given with a full explanation of reasons for withdrawal.

5.6 Refunds - Should all or a portion of the Nebraska State Cup be canceled due to just cause, or teams do not play three games, then refunds shall be issued as follows:
One game played – Refund at least 40%
Two games played – Refund at least 20%

Section 6 TEAM ELIGIBILITY

- 6.1** The team must be comprised of properly registered and rostered youth players (as defined by US Youth Soccer). All players must be registered with Nebraska State Soccer before the advertised roster freeze for the event.
- 6.2** The team and/or club of which the team is a member, must be in good standing with Nebraska State Soccer and must be in compliance with, and has not violated, any of the bylaws and policies of Nebraska State Soccer or US Youth Soccer.
- 6.3** Teams may not change clubs any time after the commencement of the National Championship state-level competition.
- 6.4** The team may compete in only one National Championship state level competition during the seasonal year.

Section 7 PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

- 7.1** A player must be properly registered and rostered in accordance with the rules of US Youth Soccer and Nebraska State Soccer.
- 7.2** A player may be rostered to only one team's National Championship Roster at each level of the National Championships competition.
- 7.3** A player who has been suspended may play after the player's term of suspension has expired.

Section 8 ROSTERS

- 8.1** Every team participating in the Nebraska State Cup shall have a Team Roster based on this policy
 - Event Roster: The team's Event Roster may have up to 22 youth players on the roster at any level of the National Championship competitions. There shall be a minimum of 9 players on the Event Roster.
 - Match rosters shall include only those players from the Event Roster who are participating in that match. Match rosters must include between 9 and 22 players, 22 players being the maximum number of players allowed to participate in each match.
- 8.2** Roster Freeze
 - 8.2.1** A roster freeze date will be set no more than 10 days prior to the start of competition. This date will be announced and posted by the Tournament Director prior to the entry deadline.
 - 8.2.2** After the roster freeze date all changes to the roster shall be limited in number and meet the following requirements:
 - i. Request for the change sent to the Tournament Director no less than 24 hours prior to the team's first State Cup match
 - ii. Request shall include the reasoning for the change and include all required check-in documents for the added players
 - iii. Shall not include the transferring of any previously rostered players or adding

of any player not registered with the club at the time of the roster freeze.

8.3 A team may issue a club pass to any player registered with that team's club when the team submits its State Cup Event Roster.

8.4 Nebraska State Soccer is not required to consider as a roster player a player on a school team if Nebraska State Soccer administers school programs.

8.5 It shall be the responsibility of the Nebraska State Soccer staff to certify the eligibility of competing teams and to provide the policy online for the teams to review

8.6 Team Check-in will be allowed by online check-in. Teams will be considered checked in once the following documents have been approved: 1. State Cup Event Roster 2. Proof of Age documents for all players.

Section 9 FORFEITS

9.1 At the discretion of the Board of Directors or its designee, any team proven guilty of violating this policy or of any other requirement of Nebraska State Soccer shall be subject to sanctions including, up to forfeiture of all games and the preceding competition and fines and suspensions.

9.2 Any team intending to forfeit must give notice of its intention to forfeit to the Nebraska State Cup Committee and must give notice twenty-four (24) hours prior to the scheduled game. The notice shall include the reason for the forfeit.

9.3 Forfeits and failure to compete by a team shall be a matter of review by the Board of Directors that shall have the authority to take action against the team or club that the Board considers appropriate.

9.4 Any team or club who forfeits any game in the State cup competition may be fined up to \$250 per game.

9.5 A minimum of seven players constitutes a team. A ten (10) minute grace period shall be extended beyond the scheduled kick off time if seven players are not available at the scheduled kick off time. A team of seven players must start the game as soon as seven players are at the field after the originally scheduled kick off time. If at the end of the ten (10) minute grace period the team does not have seven players, the referee shall suspend the game and report the failure of the team to appear to the Nebraska State Cup Committee. Failure to field a team for a scheduled match without the notice of forfeiture may result in a \$500 fine.

- 9.6** Any team that forfeits a game or fails to field a team for a scheduled match, will not be allowed to advance out of their group to the semi-finals or championship game. In the event of a forfeit, the games that the forfeiting team played in will not be counted in the points for any of the teams they play. Teams in their bracket will only count the points from the games against the other teams in their bracket or crossed over against.
- 9.7** A team shall automatically forfeit each game of the team in which – a. An unregistered player was with the team at the game in a uniform, or b. A player was improperly entered on the team's roster, or c. The team no longer has a recognized and approved team official in their technical area

Section 10 DISCIPLINE

10.1 Ejections & Send-Offs

- 10.1.1** Players ejected or team officials sent-off from a match shall be automatically suspended for the next Nebraska State Cup match. No substitution shall be permitted for a player who has been ejected from a match. The Nebraska State Cup committee will review all such dismissals and may impose additional penalties, suspensions or other punishment depending on the circumstances and severity of the infraction
- 10.1.2** Players ejected from a match may continue to sit in the technical area unless removed by the referee for inappropriate behavior after they have been ejected.
- 10.1.3** Players who are serving a disciplinary suspension may sit on the team bench while dressed in street clothes and will be held responsible for their actions the same as any other participant. If additional disciplinary situations occur in which a suspended player is involved, the Nebraska State Cup Committee will impose additional penalties, suspensions or other punishments to be served.
- 10.1.4** Any team official sent-off from a match must leave the vicinity of the field before the match will be restarted. The team official may not have any contact with the team until the referees have left the field after the match.
- 10.1.5** Team officials serving a disciplinary suspension may not attend matches. A dismissed team official that is rostered to more than one team in the competition will serve the suspension at the next scheduled match for the team with which the send-off occurred.
- 10.1.6** A player who is ejected from their teams' final Nebraska State Cup game for that seasonal year is at least prohibited from participating in the next National Championships game for which the player is rostered. A team official who is sent-off from a team's final Nebraska State Cup game, will have their suspension carry over to the team's next National Championships scheduled game, including a game in the following season if necessary.

- 10.2** It is the responsibility of the Tournament Director to investigate a properly protested violation immediately following its receipt. Failure to cooperate with that investigation shall result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension.
- 10.3** Any team found guilty of using an ineligible player is not eligible to compete further in the Nebraska State Cup competition in the current seasonal year. Any coach, manager, or official found guilty of knowingly using an ineligible player is not eligible to compete further in the Nebraska State Cup competitions in the current and subsequent seasonal year. A player found guilty of submitting falsified birth information is prohibited from competing further in Nebraska State Cup competitions in the current and subsequent seasonal year.
- 10.4** Coaches and other team officials shall be subject to all rules pertaining to misconduct contained in this policy, including cautions, ejections, and standard suspension. Suspension lengths will be communicated to the coach by the Tournament Director following the game.
- 10.5** Any other individuals who may be reasonably construed as being associated with a team, such as relatives and spectators, are also subject to the jurisdiction and authority of Nebraska State Soccer. Any coach or team official shall be held responsible for the actions of any individual at any game that, in the opinion of the referee, is a supporter of that team. Nebraska State Cup, Nebraska State Soccer and the Tournament Director have the authority and responsibility to remove any person(s) from the tournament for abusive or unsportsmanlike behavior.
- 10.6** Coaches, officials and individuals associated with the team – including spectators – are subject to misconduct rules. Any misconduct, abusive behavior, or violent conduct reported by referees must be addressed with disciplinary action taken as per Nebraska State Soccer policies and US Soccer Referee Abuse Prevention Policy (531-9).

Section 11 PROTESTS AND APPEALS

- 11.1** All questions relating to the qualifications of competitors, to interpretation of the rules, or any dispute or protest concerning the Nebraska State Cup competition, shall be referred to the Nebraska State Cup Committee regarding games at the state level.
- 11.2** To be valid and eligible for consideration, each protest — i. Must be orally lodged with the referee and with the opposing coach at the game site before entering the field of play or leaving the game site, except as provided in this section; and ii. Must be filed with the Nebraska State Cup Committee within 2 hours after the completion of the game being protested, accompanied by – a. A fee of \$100.00; b. Written explanation of the protest, which must include full particulars of the grounds on which the protest is lodged; and c. Written information to be presented by witnesses.
- 11.3** Any protest relating to the grounds, goal posts, bars, or other appurtenances of the game shall be entertained only if a written objection has been lodged with the referee and the opposing coach prior to the start of the game.
- 11.4** Any protest relating to a judgment call of a referee or assistant referee will not be

considered. This includes yellow cards and red cards.

- 11.5** A plea of ignorance to the rules and regulations of the Cup competitions is not sufficient grounds for a protest or appeal.
- 11.6** The Chairperson of the committee with which the protest is properly lodged shall immediately on receipt of the protest notify the team against which the protest is made and shall send a copy of the protest and all particulars to that team, which will then have the right to defend its case, with or without witnesses.
- 11.7** Decisions made on protests and appeals by the Nebraska State Cup Committee are binding and allow that competition to proceed.

ARTICLE II . NEBRASKA STATE CUP GAME PLAY

Section 1 PLAYING RULES

- 1.1** The playing rules of the Nebraska State Cup competition shall conform to the FIFA “Laws of the Game” except as provided by this rule.
- 1.2** Game Length and Overtime- Except as otherwise provided in this section, the length of games, overtime play periods, ball size, ball circumference, and ball weight for each age group shall be as follows:

Age Group	Game Length	Overtime	Ball Size
17U-19U	Two 45' Halves	Two 15' Halves	Size 5
15U-16U	Two 40' Halves	Two 15' Halves	Size 5
13U-14U	Two 35' Halves	Two 10' Halves	Size 5

- 1.4** Tie games at the end of regulation playing time will stand except for each semi or final game in each age group.
- 1.5** If a game is tied at the end of regulation play and overtime periods are to be played to determine a winner, two complete overtime periods as provided in subsection (a) of this section will be played after the end of regulation play. If the game is still tied after the end of the two overtime periods, FIFA “Kicks from the Penalty Mark” rules will apply in order to determine the winner.
- 1.6** Substitutions
- 1.6.1** For 13U & 14U age groups: Unlimited substitutions over three moments per half, plus halftime.
- 1.6.2** For 15U-18/19U age groups: Unlimited substitutions over four moments per match plus halftime.
- 1.6.3** Substitution may occur on any stoppage of play with the approval of the referee.
- 1.6.4** Concussion Substitution: If a player is suspected of suffering a head injury, they may be substituted for evaluation without the substitution counting toward the team’s normal substitution limits. If the player with the suspected head injury has received clearance from the event health care professional, the player may re-enter at any stoppage of play. The evaluated player must replace the original substitute. If the player is not cleared, the change becomes a concussion substitution. In that case both teams receive one additional substitution, and the opponent can make an additional substitution of one, singular player.

1.7 At the Nebraska State Cup competition unfinished games due to any cause shall be replayed if neither team is at fault and play has not begun in the second half. If play is stopped during the second half and play cannot be resumed and if neither team is at fault, the Nebraska State Cup Committee may deem the game complete. However, if play is stopped at any time due to one of the teams being judged to be at fault, it shall be at the discretion of the Nebraska State Cup Committee whether the game is to be replayed or declared a forfeit.

1.8 Irrelevant Matches: Unplayed games of which the outcome of the match does not impact a bracket's scoring or a quarter/semi/final seeding, may be determined by the Nebraska State Cup committee and/or Tournament Director to not be played. Generally, the cancellation of unplayed and unnecessary games shall be done only in the interest of fairness in uneven brackets, or to prevent unnecessary duplicate match ups.

1.9 Scoring Method and Bracket Winners - Bracket winners will be determined by the following point system: Maximum points per game are 3 (three).

Win----- 3 (three) points

Tie----- 1 (one) point

Loss ----- 0 (zero) points

1.10 Tie-breakers - If at the conclusion of bracket play, two or more teams have the same point total, advancement to the semi-finals or championship will be determined using the following tiebreakers in the order listed until a team is eliminated. Once a team is eliminated, advancement among the remaining teams shall again be determined by the tiebreakers in the order listed starting with head-to-head competition.

Winner of Head-to-Head (these criteria not used if more than two teams tied)

Winner of Most Games in your bracket

Goal Spread with a maximum of five goals per game. (Example: Game score of 7-1 would be scored as 6-1 for Goal Spread)

Fewest goals allowed

Fairplay (fewest total player and/or coach dismissals)

Kicks from the penalty mark

1.11 If Kicks from the Penalty Mark are to be taken by three (3) teams, there will be a draw by the State Cup Committee. The first team drawn will receive the bye. The next team drawn will be the home team against the remaining team in the first contest of penalty kicks. The winner of the first contest will then compete against the bye team in Kicks from the Penalty Mark to determine the winner. The bye team in the second contest of penalty kicks will be the home team. This process is only used when three (3) teams remain tied after going through the Tie Breakers.

1.12 In a tie-breaker situation where both teams have earned a spot in the next round and a tie-breaker is needed only for seeding in the next round, seeding may be decided by a coin flip.

Section 2 PASSES, ROSTERS & UNIFORMS

- 2.1** Every player and team official on a Nebraska State Roster must be properly registered with Nebraska State Soccer, including registration requirements and event check-in requirements. Players and team officials must be shown on the event roster with correct information and a current photograph of the player or team official.
- 2.2** Each player on the team's game roster shall have a unique number affixed to their jersey. Players with duplicate numbers shall not be allowed on the game roster.
- 2.3** Generally, the home team shall wear a light jersey, and the away team shall wear a dark jersey. The team listed first in all rounds shall be the home team. If the referee determines the home team's light jersey and away team's dark jersey is a conflict, the home team shall be responsible for wearing an alternate jersey.
- 2.4** Goalkeepers' jersey numbers are optional, but must wear colors that distinguish them from other players and officials in the game

Section 3 EVENT FORMAT

3.1 Seeding Procedure

- 3.1.1** The top 4 seeds in each age group will be seeded based on the previous year's State Cup results in that age group: 1 seed: Previous year's champion 2 seed: Previous years finalist 3 seed: Previous year's semi-finalist high point 4 seed: Previous year's semi-finalist 2nd high point
 - 3.1.1.1** Semi-finalist points decided by results through bracket play and tie breakers as listed in this policy to determine the semi-finalist high point and 2nd high point. If teams remain tied after all tie breakers, a double-blind draw will be used to determine the semi-finalist seeding. .

- 3.1.2 In order to be seeded based on previous year's results, teams must maintain a continuity of roster of at least 50% players from the previous year's state cup roster.
- 3.1.2.1 Teams who do not meet the minimum continuity will forfeit their automatic seeding and be placed in the remaining seeds draw.
- 3.1.3 All remaining seeds will be determined by a double-blind draw.
- 3.1.4 Once seeding order is determined, brackets will be created using a snake order.
- 3.1.5 If a team is added, or withdrawn, from the event after the seeding blind draw, a redraw will take place to determine the new brackets.
- 3.1.6 If an age group does not have a previous year results, or no team from the previous year semi or final participates, the current year seedings will all be done by a double-blind draw.

3.2 Brackets

- 3.2.1 1-Team Bracket: Team is declared the winner.
- 3.2.2 2-Team Bracket: The two teams will play in the Championship match.
- 3.2.3 3-Team Bracket: Each team will play round robin games with each of the other teams in the bracket. The two high point teams will advance to the championship game. High point team will be the home team for the Championship.
- 3.2.4 4-Team Bracket (one four-team bracket): Bracket play is round robin games with each of the other teams in the bracket. The two high point teams advance to the Championship match. The championship game will be a re-match, and a semifinal or consolation game will not be played. High point team will be the home team for the Championship.
- 3.2.5 5-Team Brackets (one five-team bracket): Teams will play 4 round robin games. Top two high point teams will advance to the Championship.
- 3.2.6 6-Team Brackets (two three-team brackets): Bracket play is round robin games with each of the other teams in the bracket. The semifinal will match the high point teams in each bracket versus second high team in other bracket. A consolation match may be scheduled for the remaining teams.
- 3.2.7 7-Team Brackets (one three-team bracket and one four-team bracket) Teams will play round robin against the other teams in their bracket (teams in bracket A will have a bye round). Top two high point teams will advance to the semifinal round. The semifinal will match the high point teams in each bracket versus second high team in other bracket.
- 3.2.8 8-Team Brackets (two four-team brackets): Bracket play is round robin games with each of the other teams in the bracket. The semifinal will match the high point teams in each bracket versus second high team in other bracket.
- 3.2.9 9-Team Brackets (three three-team brackets): Bracket play is round robin games with each of the other teams in the bracket. High point teams in each bracket plus one overall wild card will advance to semi-final games. The semifinal will match 1st

high point team verses wildcard and 2nd high point team verses 3rd high point team. There cannot be a re-match in the semifinal, if that happens, 2nd high point team will play the wild card.

- 3.2.10 10-Team Brackets (four-team bracket and two three-team brackets): The four-team bracket will play round robin games with each of the other teams in the bracket. Teams in the three-team bracket will play crossover games with all teams in the other three-team bracket. The high point team from each bracket and one overall wildcard will advance to the semifinal round. The semifinal will match 1st high point team verses wildcard and 2nd high point team verses 3rd high point team. There cannot be a re-match in the semifinal, if that happens, 2nd high point team will play the wildcard.
- 3.2.11 Bracket formats with over 10 teams will be determined by the Tournament Director. In the case of a odd number of teams, qualifying games may be scheduled to get to an even number of teams.

Section 4 GAME OFFICIALS

- 4.1** For Nebraska State Cup competition, the Nebraska State Cup Committee shall contract with a State Game Assignor.
- 4.2** Game Assignment - a. Any referee appointed to officiate in any Nebraska State Cup competition game may not be a past or present member of either of the competing teams. b. Any player or coach that is participating in the Nebraska State Cup will not be allowed to referee during the State Cup. c. Assignors and referees must recognize that when officiating, familiarity or family relationships must be avoided. Assignors should limit the number of games a referee officiates for any team or club.
- 4.3** In the event the referee appointed fails to appear the Referee Assignor will determine who will replace the referee. The same procedure will apply in the event of a referee becoming ill during the process of a game. In both cases, if the Referee Assignor has no one to replace the referee the crew will use a club lineperson that will be recruited by the Referee Assignor.
- 4.4** The referee must forward to the Nebraska State Cup Committee or its designee on the official game card, the results of the game and all issues related to the game.

Section 5 SPECTATORS

- 5.1** Any individuals who may be reasonably construed as being associated with a team, such as relatives and spectators, are also subject to the jurisdiction and authority of Nebraska State Soccer and shall be subject to all rules pertaining to misconduct contained in this policy, including ejections. Any coach or team official shall be held responsible for the actions of any individual at any game that, in the opinion of the referee, is a supporter of that team.
- 5.2** All cameras and tripods must be properly secured according to the manufacturer's specifications for the field and weather conditions. All cameras must be placed on the spectator sidelines at least 6 feet behind the sideline to avoid any obstruction with the AR. Any cameras not set up in accordance with this rule will be required to be taken down or the match will be discontinued.
- 5.3** Each team's spectator area is located on the opposite side of the field directly across from their team's technical/bench area, and at least 3 yards beyond the touchline. Spectators must remain in this area, in the half of the field directly across from their team's bench, subject to the following exception.
- 5.3.1** It is expected that respect for the game and players will prevail if a limited number of spectators wish to quietly observe the match at the far end of the opposing spectator section (for example, the Goalkeeper's family). In the event of disruptive behavior by these spectators, a competition official may require them to return to the designated spectator area and restrict any further sideline movement of spectators.
- 5.4** Whistles, air horns, megaphones, artificial noisemakers and/or similar devices are prohibited at all State Cup competitions. Air horns are for use solely by competition officials to signal when fields must be cleared due to inclement or dangerous weather conditions.

