



2025-26 US Youth Soccer Georgia State Cup Tournament Rules & Regulations

I. Tournament Sanction and Officials

The US Youth Soccer Georgia State Cup is a tournament sanctioned and conducted annually by Georgia Soccer. It is a part of and a qualifying event for the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series (NCS) sanctioned and conducted by US Youth Soccer. In addition to the Rules listed herein, all other applicable Georgia Soccer rules and US Youth Soccer National Championship rules are in force. Winners of the US Youth Soccer Georgia State Cup advance to the US Youth Soccer South Region Tournament. South Region winners advance to the US Youth Soccer National Championship. The US Youth Soccer Georgia State Cup is conducted under the direction of the State Cup Chair.

Any matters not provided for in this policy shall be decided by the Tournament Committee, and its decisions are final.

II. Eligibility of Teams and Players

A. Eligibility. State Cup competition is open to the teams of any member in good standing of Georgia Soccer. Teams and players must be properly registered with Georgia Soccer and US Youth Soccer for the current seasonal year. Teams must also meet the minimum eligibility standards set forth by the US Youth Soccer NCS Competition Protocols.

B. Team Roster Size and Continuity. A team may not have more than the maximum number of players allowed by US Youth Soccer. A team must demonstrate continuity of rosters between a Georgia Soccer sanctioned league and National Championships competitions by maintaining a minimum of eleven (11) players common to the rosters of both competitions. A team is limited to a maximum of five (5) previously rostered players during a seasonal year. A club may issue a club pass to any age eligible player who is registered to the club before rosters are named (frozen) as the Official Team Roster for State Cup.

C. Age Group Entered. A team must enter the competition in the age group corresponding to the age of its oldest player. Teams may not play up.

D. Team Rosters. Every team will have a State Cup Roster. A team will name (freeze) its State Cup Roster on the date set by the Tournament Committee. This roster will be stamped as the Official Team Roster for State Cup.

After the State Cup roster is named,

- (1) Rosters are frozen, no player changes are allowed.
- (2) A team and its players shall be considered to have competed in the State Cup competition for that seasonal year, whether the team or players actually play in a State Cup game.
- (3) If a team fails to name its roster on the date set by the Tournament Committee, the team will have until 4:00 pm of the following day to do so. The team must pay a late fee as determined by the Committee in order to complete the check-in process.



Players may play for only one team during the State Cup. Rosters of teams advancing to the Regional Tournament may be changed for the Regional Tournament.

E. Eligibility Rule Violations. Violations of player or team eligibility rules will result in the forfeiture of any game in which an ineligible team or player has participated. Any coach or team official found to have rostered an ineligible player is, together with the team, ineligible to compete further in State Cup competition in the current and the next seasonal year. The coach is ultimately responsible for verifying player eligibility.

III. *Competition Announcement, Applications, Deadlines and Withdrawals*

A. Application Form. The application form must be completed, in its entirety with payment, by the application due date. Applications submitted without the entry fee, as well as applications received after the deadlines will not be accepted.

B. Withdrawals. Notice of intent to withdraw must be made to the Tournament Director. A team that withdraws its application at any time will forfeit its entry fee. A team that withdraws or is declared ineligible will be subject to the following additional penalties:

1. After entries close, but before the seeding date: The team shall forfeit its entry fee and shall be fined an additional \$100.
2. After the seeding date, but before rosters are named: The team shall forfeit the entry fee and shall be fined an additional \$300.
3. After rosters are named and at any time during the competition: The team shall forfeit its entry fee and shall be fined an additional \$500.

C. Forfeits. A forfeit during the competition shall be considered a withdrawal and subject to the appropriate fines and penalties.

Should a team in round-robin competition forfeit any match, official game scores for all of that team's games shall be recorded as 4-0 losses. A team that forfeits a match will be considered to have withdrawn from the tournament.

IV. *Competition Format, the Draw and Seeding*

A. Competition Format and Advancement. Each seasonal year, Georgia Soccer will conduct a tournament to determine a State Cup winner in each age group.

Competition stages, format, and advancement:

- 1st Qualifying Round - Single Elimination (if more than 14 teams enter)
- 2nd Qualifying Round - Single Elimination (if more than 8 teams enter)
- Elite 8 - Group Stage Round Robin (if more than 3 teams enter)
- Final Four – Semifinal Single Elimination Round (if more than 2 teams enter)
- Final Four – Final Round / Championship match (if more than 1 team enter)

B. Advancement. In single elimination games, the winning team will advance. Teams eliminated in single elimination games will receive a partial refund of their entry fee as determined by the Tournament Committee.



1. Winners of a round robin group will be determined by points:

Three (3) points for a win
One (1) point for a tie
Zero (0) points for a loss

Tie games will be allowed with no overtime played during the round-robin portion of the tournament.

In groups of 8 the winner and 2nd place team in each group will advance.

2. Tiebreakers

In the event teams are tied based on points, the following tiebreakers will be considered in order until the tie is broken:

- A. Winner of head-to-head competition. (This criterion is not used if more than two teams are tied.)
- B. Most wins.
- C. Team with greatest net goal difference (NGD) which is computed as 'goals for' minus 'goals against' with a maximum of 4 NGD per game.
- D. Team with least goals against (there is NO limit on the number of goals that will be counted to determine this tiebreaker);
- E. Team with most goals (maximum of 4 goals per game).
- F. Kicks from penalty spot per FIFA Laws of The Game

More than two teams are tied

- A. If more than two (2) teams are tied, the sequence will be followed until a team is eliminated. The remaining teams will then restart the sequence at 2B above, until the tie is broken.
- B. If three teams are still tied after computing the listed tiebreakers and FIFA Kicks have to be taken, there will be a draw by the tournament 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 FIFA Kicks. The winner of the first contest will then compete against the bye team in FIFA Kicks to determine the winner. The bye team will be the home team.
- C. If four teams are still tied after computing the listed tiebreakers and FIFA Kicks must be taken, there will be a draw conducted by the tournament committee. The first team drawn (home team) will compete against the 2nd team drawn (away team) in the first contest of FIFA Kicks. The third team drawn (home team) will compete against the fourth team (away team) in the second contest. The winners of these two contests will then compete to determine the winner. The winner of first/second draw will be the home team.

In semi- or final-round matches, tie games will not be permitted. Overtime and kicks from the penalty mark, if necessary, will be used to determine a winner in each match.



C. Seeding of Teams

Up to two (2) teams maximum per 13U-19U age group will be seeded.

To be seeded, a team must have competed in the National League the season preceding the competition in its age group, or be the Fall Champion in the highest Georgia League division.

Seeds #1 and #2 will be determined in the following order:

- Defending National Champions from GA
- The GA team that finished the highest in the National League
- Defending GA State Cup Champions
- The GA team that finished 2nd highest in the National League
- The GA team that finished 3rd highest in the National League
- The GA team that finished 4th highest in the National League
- The Champion of the highest Georgia League division

Seeding of Divisions for Draw:

Next seeding will be in terms of divisions ranked during the current year of competitions, and teams will be placed in pots as follows to be drawn later:

- Pot A (13U-19U): Teams in National League
- Pot N (19U Only): All other 19U teams
- Pot B (13U-18U): Teams in Georgia Premier League
- Pot C (13U-18U): Teams in Championship
- Pot D (13U-18U): All other teams

Draw:

Seeding placements of teams within the same pot (A,N,B,C, and D), will be determined by draw.

V. Club and Team Obligations

In the event of single elimination games, the designated home team will provide the field.

- A. Team Availability.** State Cup games take precedence over all other games. State Cup game dates will be published but may be subject to change. As a condition of acceptance into the competition, applicants must agree to play anywhere they are scheduled within the State of Georgia. Game sites are assigned by the Tournament Director, considering field availability, referee availability, travel distances, weather considerations, and scheduling efficiency.
- B. Payment Obligations.** Any amount owed by a team in connection with a State Cup competition is an obligation of the team's club. If any amount remains unpaid after notice, Georgia Soccer may place the club and all its teams in bad standing.



VI. *National Obligations*

Teams representing Georgia Soccer at the Regional and National competitions must observe all US Youth Soccer rules and guidelines for those events. This includes, but is not limited to, the requirement that all Georgia teams are required to house their players in the designated hotels as announced by the Cup Chair. If it is determined that a team or its players have violated these rules and guidelines, a fine of up to \$2000 may be imposed by Georgia Soccer and that team's club or association may not be eligible to enter teams in the next year's State Cup.

VII. *Referees*

- A. Three (3) certified officials shall be assigned for each State Cup match by the appointed Certified Referee Assignor.
- B. If an assigned official fails to appear for a round robin match, the Venue Manager designated by the Cup Chair/Tournament Director will provide a substitute official.
- C. If an assigned official fails to appear for a single elimination game within 15 minutes of the scheduled kick-off time, and the coaches agree to a substitute, the game may be played. If the game is played, the results shall be official, and no protest will be allowed regarding the use of a substitute official.

VIII. *Rules of Play*

Except as modified herein, the FIFA Laws of the Game with Georgia Soccer modifications shall govern all State Cup play.

A. *General Rules of Play*

Teams and a maximum of four (4) properly registered and credentialed team officials shall be allowed on the bench. Non game-day rostered players may sit on the bench. Clothing distinct from the game day uniform must be worn by non game-day rostered players.

Spectators shall take the other side of the field. The Venue Manager or the referee if no Venue Manager is present shall choose which side the teams will take. The Venue Manager shall decide upon other arrangements if required by site contingencies.

The home team shall provide the game ball.

Spectators may not use air horns or whistles; all other artificial noise makers are allowed.

Each field player shall wear a numbered jersey. The number shall be affixed to the back of the jersey and shall be clearly visible. Each player must wear a different number. Numbered jerseys for goalkeepers are optional in State Cup competition.



Home Team/Away Team:

The home team will wear light colored jerseys and socks. The visiting team will wear dark colored jerseys and socks. The team in the incorrect color will have to change.

At every level of the National Championships competitions, each player, team and team official may only have on his/her/their apparel the name, logo, or other identifying mark of US Youth soccer or a member directly or indirectly of US Youth Soccer.

A name, logo, or other identifying mark of any youth soccer organization other than US Youth Soccer or its member must be removed, replaced, or covered before a player, team or team official may enter or remain at a field complex.

There is no obligatory player participation rule in effect for this competition.

B. Pre-Game Procedures

Prior to each game, both teams must present to the referee:

- A copy of their approved Tournament Roster
- US Youth Soccer Player passes for each player and
- A completed Tournament Game Card.

The referee or his/her official designee must check the US Youth Soccer Player and Coach Passes against (1) the players/coaches, (2) the committee approved Roster, and (3) the Game Card to verify each player's identity and to verify consistency of the documents. Checking passes, players and rosters may not be waived by the referee or the coaches. The referee may prohibit the participation of a player whose identity cannot be verified or whose documents are inconsistent or improper.

Each team must have in its possession at the game site, and must make available on request of the referee, or a State Cup official, its original, current, committee approved State Cup Roster and a US Youth Soccer Player Pass for each player.

C. Grace Period

A fifteen (15) minute grace period is given to each team to present its official Tournament roster and US Youth Soccer player passes to the referee for inspection.

Any team not ready to play at the scheduled start time shall be granted a fifteen (15) minute grace period. Any team not ready to play after this grace period has expired shall be reported to the Tournament Chair by the referee. The Tournament Chair shall decide when a forfeit is declared. A minimum of seven (7) players constitutes a legal team.

D. Game Duration, Overtime, and Ball Requirements

Games shall consist of two halves of equal duration in accordance with the Age Group Specifications appearing below.



In all single elimination, semi-final and final games, if a game is tied at the end of regulation time, following a five (5) minute rest period, the teams shall play 2 complete overtime periods. The duration of the overtime will be in accordance with the Age Group Specifications appearing below. The teams will change ends between halves. No rest period is allowed between overtime halves.

If a game is tied at the end of overtime, the tie shall be resolved by penalty kicks from the mark in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game.

Round robin games may end in a tie with no overtime to be played.

Age Group	Length of Regulation 1/2	Length of Overtime 1/2
U-19	45 minutes	15 minutes
U-18	45 minutes	15 minutes
U-17	45 minutes	15 minutes
U-16	40 minutes	15 minutes
U-15	40 minutes	15 minutes
U-14	35 minutes	10 minutes
U-13	35 minutes	10 minutes

E. Substitutions

- for the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups, unlimited substitutions are allowed.
- for all other age groups, a maximum of 7 substitutions for each team shall be allowed in each game during each half of play and during overtime play. After leaving the game during a half of play, the substituted player may not re-enter the game during that same half of play. After leaving the game during overtime play, the substituted player may not re-enter the game.

Substitutions may occur at any allowable stoppage of play per FIFA substitution rules.

F. Ejections

Any coach or player ejection is to be recorded on the Game Report and filed by the referee.

Ejected players are permitted to sit on the bench for the remainder of the game. If the referee determines the player is causing any issues, the coach/manager will be required to escort the player to another area. A coach that is ejected must leave and be out of sight and sound of the match.

Players or coaches ejected from a State Cup game are prohibited from participation in the next following US Youth Soccer National Championship Series game, whether it is the next Georgia State Cup match, the first match of Regional competition, or the first Georgia State Cup match of the following seasonal year. State Cup suspensions are served only in



connection with US Youth Soccer National Championship Series games and have no bearing on league play.

Note: Since some coaches coach more than one team, game suspension(s) will apply to the team for which the coach received the ejection. If, by the time the suspension is served, the coach no longer coaches the team with which he/she received the suspension, he/she will serve the suspension at their next State Cup game, regardless of team affiliation.

H. Terminated Games

Games terminated due to inclement weather, darkness, or for other reasons (assuming neither team is at fault), any time after the first half of play is finished will be considered a completed match.

I. Protests

- A. All protests that relate to the qualification of competitors or interpretation of the playing rules shall be referred to the Tournament Chair. Tournament format, seeding, schedules and venue selections may not be protested. Decisions of the Committee concerning protests may be appealed to the appropriate Georgia Soccer Committee.
- B. (A) To be valid and eligible for consideration, each protest -
 - 1. Must be orally lodged by a team official listed on the team roster involved in the game 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 subsection (B) of this section, and
 - 2. Must be filed with the State Cup Director, or their designee, within 2 hours after the completion of the game being protested, accompanied by:
 - a) a fee in the amount of \$300.00.
 - b) 5 written copies of the protest, which must include full particulars of the grounds on which the protest is lodged, and
 - c) 5 written copies of any information to be presented by witnesses.
 - 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.
 - 4. The State Cup Director, or their designee, 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.
 - 5. A plea of ignorance to the rules and regulations of this competition is not sufficient grounds for appeals or protest.
 - 6. US Youth Soccer stipulates that all decisions at all levels of the appeal process shall stand and be in full force and effect until changed by a higher authority.



J. Post-Game Procedures

The Game Report will be completed by the referee including cautions and ejections, if any. Ejections should also be noted and initialed on the team's tournament approved roster. The completed report must be signed by the referee and assistant referees. After single elimination games, the completed Game Report is given to the winning team. After round robin, semi, and final matches the game report is given to the venue manager.

If a game is played at an off-site location, the winning team shall notify the Tournament Director of game results within four (4) hours including score, overtime or penalty kicks, if any, and cautions and ejections, if any.

IX. STATE CUP:

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

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TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE

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