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Code of Conduct

The Board of Directors of Vermont Soccer Association and the leaders of the affiliated leagues are concerned about the conduct of all coaches and referees during games at all levels, from recreational to premier to ODP.

We want to insure that games are fair, positive and enjoyable experiences for all of the children and adults involved. A soccer game should be friendly and unifying - a spirited social and athletic occasion for players, coaches, referees and spectators.

To clarify expectations of coach conduct, we jointly expect all coaches to conform to this code of conduct.

- Before, during and after the game, be an example of dignity, patience and positive spirit.
- Before a game, introduce yourself to the opposing coach and to the referee.
- During the game, you are responsible for the sportsmanship of your players. If one of your players is disrespectful, irresponsible or overly aggressive, take the player out of the game at least long enough for him/her to calm down.
- During the game, you are also responsible for the conduct of the parents of your players. It is imperative to explain acceptable player and parent behavior in a preseason meeting.
- Encourage them to applaud and cheer for good plays by either team. Discourage them, and you may need to be forceful and direct, from yelling at players, referees, other coaches, and other spectators.
- During the game, you are also responsible for the conduct of spectators rooting for your team.
- During the game, do not address the referee at all. If you have a small issue, discuss it with the referee calmly and patiently after the game.
- If you have a major complaint, or if you think the referee was unfair, biased, unfit or incompetent, report your opinion to your league. Your reactions will be taken seriously if they are presented objectively and formally.
- After the game, thank the referee and ask your players to do the same.

We stress two points:

Referees, especially young and inexperienced ones, need time to develop. You play an important role in helping them to improve by letting them concentrate on the game. You can help by encouraging them, by accepting their inevitable, occasional mistakes and by offering constructive post-game comments.

Your example is powerful, for better or worse. If you insist on fair play, if you concentrate on your players' enjoyment of the game and their overall, long term development, and if you support the referee, your players and their parents will notice. If you encourage (or allow) your players to play outside the rules, if you're overly concerned about results, or if you criticize the referee harshly, your players and their parents will notice.

Think about what you're doing during a game! Uphold the Spirit of the Game! If you follow the expectations described above, the spirit of the game will be alive and well in Vermont and will grow, along with the enjoyment of all.

Coaches who don't follow the expectations described above could face discipline or removal.
VSA Zero Tolerance Policy

Vermont Soccer Association is committed to providing a safe environment for its members and participants, and to preventing abusive conduct in any form. Every member of this organization is responsible for protecting our participants and insuring their safety and well-being while involved in sponsored activities.

To this end, we have established the following guidelines of behavior and procedures for our staff, volunteers and participants. All members of this organization, as well as parents, spectators and other invitees are expected to observe and adhere to these guidelines.

1. Abuse of any kind is not permitted within our organization. This means we do not tolerate physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse, or misconduct from our players, coaches, referees, officials, volunteers, parents or spectators.

2. Physical and sexual abuse, including, but not limited to, striking, hitting, kicking, biting, indecent or wanton gesturing, lewd remarks, indecent exposure, unwanted physical contact, any form of sexual contact or inappropriate touching, are strictly prohibited within our organization.

3. Emotional abuse or verbal abuse is also prohibited. These include, but are not limited to such forms of abuse: yelling, insulting, threatening, mocking, demeaning behavior, or making abusive statements in regard to a person’s race, gender, religion, nationality/ethnicity, sex or age.

4. We are committed to providing a safe environment for our players, participants and staff. We do so by appointing all coaches, officials and volunteers – and anyone else affiliated with our organization – as protection advocates. Every member of this organization is responsible for reporting to the Club Risk Management Director any cases of questionable conduct or alleged mistreatment toward our members by any coach, referee, official, volunteer, player, parent, sibling or spectator. If a club has no Risk Management Director, then complaints should be reported directly to the Vermont Soccer Association Risk Management Coordinator.

5. Buddy System: We recommend that every activity sponsored by our program put a Buddy System in place. Each youth participant should be assigned a buddy during sponsored activities. No child should go anywhere – to the bathrooms, locker rooms or other location – without his or her buddy.

6. To further protect our youth participants, as well as our coaches and volunteers, we strongly advise that no adult person allow him/herself to be alone with a child (other than their own) or with any group of children during sponsored activities. In particular, we recommend that coaches or other adult members of this organization:
   a. Do not drive alone with a child participant in the car.
   b. Do not take a child alone to the locker room, bathrooms or any other private room.
   c. Provide one-on-one training or individual coaching with the assistance of another
adult or the child’s Buddy.

d. If you must have a private conversation with a youth participant, do it within view of others, in the gym or on the field, instead of in a private office.

c. Coaches and other adult members of this organization should not socialize individually with the participants outside of sponsored activities.

7. When traveling overnight with youth participants, children should be paired up with other children of same gender and similar age group or with their own parents, with chaperones in separate, but nearby rooms.

8. Supervision/Chaperone ratio: We recommend that for any sponsored activity, the ratio of adults to youth participants be 1:8 – one (or more) adults for every eight children, with a minimum of two adults for every activity.

9. We want to empower our children to trust their feelings and let them know that their concerns, fears and hopes are important by listening to them. Open communication between children and parents, or between children and other adults in the organization, may help early warning signs of abuse to surface.

10. We encourage parents to be present at sponsored activities, games, practices and other events. The more the parents are involved, the less likely it is for abusive situations to develop.

11. We will respond quickly to any and all allegations of abuse within this organization. This information will be communicated to the authorities for investigation and will be reviewed by the organization’s Risk Management Director and/or President. The alleged offender will be notified of such allegations promptly. Vermont Soccer Association will be copied on all correspondence.

12. Any person accused of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse may be asked to resign voluntarily or may be suspended by the board until the matter is resolved. Regardless of criminal or civil guilt in the alleged abuse, the continued presence of the person could be detrimental to the reputation of the organization and could be harmful to the participants. A person who is accused but later cleared of charges, may apply to be reinstated within the organization. Reinstatement is not a right, and no guarantee is made that he or she will be reinstated to his/her former position.

13. We promote good sportsmanship throughout the organization and encourage qualities of mutual respect, courtesy and tolerance in all participants, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators. We advocate building strong self-images among the youth participants. Children with a strong self-image may be less likely targets for abuse; similarly, they may be less likely to abuse or bully others around them.
COACHING REQUIREMENTS

Through your coach account, coaches must complete two components to be assigned to their team, including the background check and concussion training. Not yet tied to the coach account is SafeSport training, which is now available to all coaches.

BACKGROUND CHECK
1) Log into www.gotsoccer.com
2) In the upper right corner, click on Log In
3) Click on Log In under Teams and Team Officials
4) Using the Individual Coach log in section, type your COACH username and password.
   If you forgot your coach login, please click the search button for a reminder or check with your club administrator
5) On your coach page, click on Background Checks in the Black tool bar at the top of the page. You will see when your last check was submitted and expired. Scroll to the middle of the page (under Concussion Awareness-Prevention and Care) and click Submit New Report (Blue Button)
   Before submitting report, please verify that all personal information is correct, including filling in the box of Previous Residences if you address was different within the last five years
   If you answer YES to any of the three background check questions, please be sure to write an explanation in the box.
6) Read the Background Check Agreement, then click I Agree. Clicking I Agree constitutes a digital signature

CDC HEADS UP CONCUSSION TEST
1) While in your Coach Account, right next to the Background Checks tab is the Concussion Center. Click the Concussion Center tab
2) The SECOND ITEM on the page is HEADS UP Concussion, Center for Disease Control (CDC) Heads Up Concussion Test. Click on “Go to Courses Page”
3) This page will indicate your Status as Taken or Not Taken. If not taken, click on Blue Start Course button. Watch the video and take the test at the end

Once both of these items have been completed, your coach account will be automatically updated and your club will be able to assign you to your team.

Please feel free to contact the VSA office (802) 857-5703 with questions or concerns.
SAFE SPORT TRAINING

SafeSport Training is now tied to your coach account. There are three modules and one refresher module. Please complete all modules. The VSA will be able to view your completion in your coach account, so you no longer have to share the “SafeSport Trained” certificate.

For information on the new Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017, click HERE.

SafeSport Training is valid for two years.
Recruiting Policy

Recruitment of player(s) actively playing for another team is prohibited, except as specifically provided in this rule. A player is actively playing for another team if the player appears on an official team roster certified by an authorized representative of Vermont Soccer Association for the current Soccer Year, OR has signed a contract OR paid a deposit for the upcoming seasonal Soccer Year. In addition, the Player’s name must appear on a Club’s official registration form for the season associated with the current roster. This Club document must contain the Player’s name, be dated, and signed by the Parent(s) or legal guardians of the player. The current Soccer Year begins September 1 of each calendar year (the “Soccer Year”). Recruitment will be allowed between July 1 and October 1 of each year. These dates will adjust each year according to the Region I Championship finals.

Club Tryouts cannot be held before July 1, 2019. Clubs found in violation of this tryout date will be fined a minimum of $3,000.00

This policy refers to all Divisions in leagues throughout Vermont. In addition, this rule is not intended to eliminate Dual Rostering, if leagues allow dual rostering. However, the VSA Player Recruitment Policy applies to those Clubs interested in approaching players about dual rostering.

No adult registered with Vermont Soccer Association as a volunteer (administrator, coach, trainer or booster) shall recruit players already actively playing for another team for participation in their program during the Soccer Year.

No person may encourage players within their program to recruit players actively playing for another team during the Soccer Year.

This rule does not prohibit the publication of open tryouts. For example, a club may place ads in newspapers or announce tryouts on their website or Facebook page.

Recruitment includes, but is not limited to, the following activity:

1. Communicating with a player or parent on the subject of that player’s participation in a club or a team.
2. Inducing, soliciting, or otherwise using current players, or their parents, to persuade players from another team to transfer.
3. Providing incentives to players such as reductions in fees, trips, uniforms, and other equipment, other than financial aid with respect to Club fees in cases of financial need or hardship.
4. Using a position of authority to persuade a player to transfer from one team to another. This shall include adults involved with the State ODP program, adults involved with clinics and soccer camps, and adults involved with High School programs or other programs such as indoor soccer.

**SPECIAL RULES APPLICABLE TO COACHES**

1. All Vermont Soccer Association rules pertaining to recruiting shall be strictly observed by coach, manager, and all team representatives. Compliance with these rules shall be the responsibility of the coach. Violations of this rule may be regarded as violations of the Coaches Code of Conduct and subject sanctions by the Vermont Soccer Association Discipline Committee.

2. Any direct contact with a player or parent with the intent to recruit must begin with an inquiry as to the player’s current status, with any other team.

3. Continuing any contact with a player or parent after learning that the player is actively playing for another team is prohibited.

4. Discussing a club or program with a player from another team (after being contacted first) without notifying the player’s parents is prohibited.

5. At all times when discussing the advantages of his/her Club, program or organization, the coach has an obligation to be truthful, forthright and refrain from making derogatory remarks regarding other coaches, teams and organizations.

6. No coach may make a statement, at any time, to a prospective athlete which cannot be verified as true or promise any kind of compensation or inducement for play.

7. Once an authorized direct contact with a player has been made, no further contact with that player may be made without the express consent of the player’s parent or legal guardian.

**PENALTIES**

Any person found in violation of the VSA Policy on Player Recruitment shall be subjected to a minimum suspension of three months from all club, VSA, and US Youth Soccer activities. Further sanctions may be imposed by the Vermont Soccer Association Discipline Committee.

Any club found in violation of the VSA Policy on tryout dates will be fined a minimum of $3000 for the first offense. Further financial sanctions may be imposed by the Vermont Soccer Association Discipline Committee.
Rosters & Player Passes

In order to participate in any VSL match all teams U8 and up must have an approved Roster issued by the VSA and all players and coaches must have valid USYSA Player Passes, which must be shown to the Referee at each match.

COACHES: All teams must have a coach or assistant coach with a valid USYSA Coach pass present on the sidelines of the field for the duration of the game. In order to obtain a Coach Pass, the individual must have a valid background check, passed annually. If a team does not have a coach or assistant coach with a Coach Pass present for the duration of the game, the referee may declare a forfeit by the offending team with a minus 3 goal differential posted.

Absence of Rosters/ Passes: If the team does not have their Player Passes or Roster, it will be reported by the Referee and declared as a forfeit by the offending team with a minus 3 goal differential posted. If both teams don’t have their Player Passes or Rosters, both teams will forfeit this match and will receive the minus 3 goal differential. There will be no refund of Referee fees and fine may apply.

No player without a valid Player Pass, regardless of appearing on the roster, will be allowed to play. Players with a valid Player Pass who do not appear on the roster can only participate under the Club Pass guidelines.

Roster & Player Pass Review: Fifteen minutes prior to the start of the match, players line up in front of their bench on the sideline with Player Pass in hand. The Coach will present a copy of the VSA official roster to the referee. The referee will hold the game roster and player passes until the end of the game. A player receiving a red card will be reported in the GotSoccer system via referee report and will appear as ineligible on subsequent game cards until the suspension has been served.
Game Policies

Schedule Changes:

- Once the final schedule is posted and sent to the clubs, team are expected to adhere to the schedule, and to participate in all scheduled games unless for acceptable reasons deemed by league guidelines or it falls within their change allowance. The acceptable reasons for cancelling and rescheduling a game are: ‘unplayable’ field conditions, State Cup game conflicts (see below), or absence of a referee if both coaches don’t agree to an acceptable referee substitute. (NOTE: unacceptable reasons for cancellation include: dances, school events, homework, exams, cold weather, vacations, past performance of schedule opponent, ‘long’ travel times, unavailability of coaches, etc.)
- Teams may not just switch schedules and/or re-schedule games with another team on their own. Club coordinators must contact the VSL Office to schedule officials for the rescheduled match.
- State Cup exception: Reschedules due to conflicts with State Cup games will be allowed. If a team reaches the finals of State Cup and it creates a schedule conflict, that Club is responsible for notifying the opposing Club at least seven (7) days in advance to the schedule game to determine a reschedule date, location, and time. The HOME Club Coordinator must contact the VSA Office to schedule officials for the rescheduled match, which must be rescheduled within one week after the close of the season.

Forfeits:

In the event that a club must forfeit a match, the forfeiting team’s club coordinator must confirm contact with the opposing club coordinator, VSL referee assignor, and the VSL scheduling officials. Forfeit fees apply to any forfeiture, for any reason/ the forfeiting club will also be responsible for all referee fees incurred for the forfeited match, in addition to applicable VSL forfeiture fee.

- The team responsible for causing the forfeit shall have the match declared a forfeit and the offending team will have a minus 3 goal differential posted. As well the team responsible for the forfeit shall be subject to a penalty of $50 payable to the Vermont Soccer League.
- If the team responsible for the forfeit does not contact the opposing club at least 24 hours before the scheduled game, the forfeit penalty may be increased to $100. For clubs that repeatedly fail to adhere to these requirements, additional penalties, sanctions or fines may be imposed at the discretion of the VSA Board.
- Note: Teams that are forced to forfeit a game may choose to schedule a ‘friendly’ game. However, this will not be a VSL sanctioned game, will not have referees scheduled through the VSL, and will not be reflected in VSL records of game results.

Rescheduling:

To reschedule a match for reasons deemed acceptable by VSL by-laws, the initiating club coordinator must:

1. Confirm that the match to be re-scheduled met VSL criteria to be re-scheduled as a league match through the VSA Office; and
2. Confirm that a reschedule date, time and location has been mutually agreed upon by both teams; and
3. Provide VSA Office with the rescheduled date, time, and location of the match, with advance notice of at least five (5) days.
In cases where matches are cancelled due to weather by an official prior to the game or in the first half, the home team club coordinator should immediately:

1. Establish a rescheduled game date, time, and location with the opposing team, and
2. Contact VSA Office within seven (7) days with the date, time, and location of the rescheduled match, including advance notice of at least five (5) days.

Cancellations/ Delay Due to Weather/ Field Conditions:

- Up to 24 hours ahead of time, club coordinators can cancel games due to weather/ field conditions.
  - If the field is deemed unplayable (flooded/dangerous) the DAY BEFORE the match, the HOME club coordinator must have confirmed contact with the visiting coach and the visiting club coordinator. They must contact the VSA Office as well.
- Game Day: ONLY the officials can cancel or delay the game due to weather or field conditions (Safety First - no exceptions)
  - At the first sign of lightning or thunder, officials will delay the game for 30 minutes, and then make the determination to either cancel the game or continue to play. Games called in the second half will be official games. Games may be rescheduled only if the game is called either before the game has started or during the first half. Games called in the second half will be considered official games.
  - Officials receive an appearance fee if they come to the field and the game is cancelled during either half or by not following the procedures. For games cancelled in the first half, both clubs will be responsible for splitting payment of the appearance/rescheduling fees.

Game Cancellations:

Every effort should be made to avoid cancellation of league games.

- If a match will not be played due to the unavailability of one or both teams, the team responsible for causing the forfeit must have confirmed contact with the opposing team and the VSL referee assignor at least 24 hours ahead of the scheduled match (e.g. sending an email with no response is inadequate). This will avoid officials having to travel to the field, and to allow officials to be reassigned to other matches.

Referee No Shows: Team officials should contact their club administrator who needs to report the no-show to the VSA office within 48 hours of the scheduled game.

Late Arrival: Referees and the teams should be present at the field at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start. A forfeit must be claimed if a team arrives more than 15 minutes after the scheduled start.
Lightning Policy

Lightning is a fact of life. It may be associated with rain, particularly in the spring and summer. However, it may also occur as part of a dry thunderstorm during the late summer and fall months. In no event can there ever be thunder without lightning. However, in the rare instance, lightning can occur without thunder. Lightning is a consistent and significant weather hazard that can impact Vermont Soccer Association activities. The National Severe Storms Laboratory estimates that 100 fatalities and 400-500 injuries requiring medical treatment occur from lightning strikes each year. In the event of lightning, the below guidelines will be followed during games, tournaments, practices, clinics and any other Vermont Soccer Association sanctioned events:

Suspension and resumption of activity

- Outdoor activity must be suspended when lightning is a maximum of six miles away. This is because lightning can strike up to six miles from the base of thunderstorms.
- The “30/30 Rule” should be followed when evaluating lightning danger:
  - If lightning is 30 seconds away, it is too close, and do not resume play for 30 minutes from the last seen flash or last heard thunder.

Suspension

- For suspension, follow the **30 second “flash-to-bang rules”**:
  - The “flash-to-bang” method is the easiest and most convenient means for determining distance to the lightning flash, which is integral to assessing the need to postpone or suspend an activity.
  - To use the flash-to-bang method, the observer begins counting when a lightning flash is sighted. Counting stops when the associated thunder is heard. Divide this by 5 to determine the distance to the lightning flash (in miles).
    - Example: A count of 30 seconds equates to 6 miles.
  - By the time the flash to bang approaches 30 seconds, all individuals should be inside or should be immediately seeking a safe structure location.
- **Be proactive** with the flash-to-bang rule. Indecisiveness creates a life-threatening situation.
- Lightning should be monitored with the first flash of lightning or clap of thunder, no matter how far away the storm is. It is critical to monitor how far away the lightning is occurring and how fast the storm is approaching, relative to the distance of a safe shelter.
- In the event that play is suspended, all individuals, including athletes, coaches, referees, and spectators, should immediately go indoors or to their cars to wait for the storm to pass.
- If no safe structure or location is within a reasonable distance, find a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or a dry ditch.
• A person who feels his or her hair stand on end or his or her skin tingle should immediately crouch down with only the balls of their feet toughing the ground. Minimize contact with the ground because lightning current can enter a victim through the ground rather than by a direct overhead strike. **Do not lie flat.**
• Avoid using landline telephones during a storm.

**Resumption**
• For resumption, follow the **30-minute rule:**
  o Play should not be resumed until 30 minutes have passed since the last flash of lightning or clap of thunder.
• All games will resume at the point of stoppage. However, in the event that a game cannot resume after one hour, Vermont State Cup Rule G.8 applies:
  o A game will be considered a completed game if it was suspended in the second half. If the game was suspended any earlier, it must be replayed.

**Chain of Command**
• Utilize the chain of command listed below to determine who monitors threatening weather and who makes the decision to remove a team, or individuals (participants and spectators) from a Vermont Soccer Association site or event.
• If lightning occurs during a **game,** the game officials are responsible for monitoring weather conditions. The center referee shall decide whether play will start or continue, and when play resumes. The assistance referees shall help monitor the storm and will make sure that the center referee is made aware of its intensification or proximity. Any coach who becomes concerned about weather conditions should advise the nearest assistant referee. The team coaches are responsible for ensuring that their players are safe during the storm.
• If lightning occurs during a Vermont Soccer Association tournament, the VSA tournament staff has the right to suspend play should they deem necessary. The VSA staff will be responsible for communicating that play is suspended and for clearing the fields.
## VSL Age Specific Rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U8</th>
<th>U9 - U10</th>
<th>U11 - U12</th>
<th>U13 - U14</th>
<th>U15 - U16</th>
<th>U17 - U19</th>
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<tr>
<td>Field Players</td>
<td>4v4, NO GK</td>
<td>7v7</td>
<td>9v9</td>
<td>11v11</td>
<td>11v11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game Length</td>
<td>2 x20’</td>
<td>2 x 25’</td>
<td>2 x 30’</td>
<td>2 x 35’</td>
<td>2 x 40’</td>
<td>2 x 45’</td>
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<td>Field Size (in yards)</td>
<td>Length 25-35 Width 15-25</td>
<td>Length 55-65 Width 35-45</td>
<td>Length 70-80 Width 50-100</td>
<td>Length 100-135 Width 50-100</td>
<td>Length 100-135 Width 50-100</td>
<td>Length 100-135 Width 50-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max Goal Size (feet)</td>
<td>Height 4 Width 6</td>
<td>Height 6.5 Width 18.5</td>
<td>Height 7 Width 21</td>
<td>8x24</td>
<td>8x24</td>
<td>8x24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Circle (radius)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>8 yds</td>
<td>8 yds</td>
<td>FIFA</td>
<td>FIFA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal Area (in yards)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>8x4</td>
<td>12x5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>None</td>
<td>24x12</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Uniforms</td>
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<td>#’d, tucked (FIFA)</td>
<td>#’d, tucked (FIFA)</td>
<td>#’d, tucked (FIFA)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Time</td>
<td>&gt;= 50% of game</td>
<td>&gt;= 50% of game</td>
<td>Per Coach</td>
<td>Per Coach</td>
<td>Per Coach</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throw-in Retakes</td>
<td>Per Ref</td>
<td>Per Ref</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Sliding Tackles</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct/Indirect Kicks</td>
<td>Only IFKs</td>
<td>FIFA</td>
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<td>Offsides</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subs</td>
<td>VSL Rules</td>
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**HEADING THE BALL:** U.S. Soccer is recommending that heading the ball be prohibited for children 10 and under, and to limit the activity to practice *only* for children ages 11 to 13.
# Birth Year and Season Matrix

When determining the age group for a season, the year the season ends should be used for determining the birth year. Also note that the format “U followed by age” really means that age and younger. For example, U8 should be read as 8 and younger. For more age-group information please reference [U.S. Soccer's Player Development Initiatives](#).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth Year</td>
<td></td>
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GotSoccer Access

Looking to go to a tournament or access your team roster?

Simply access your team account at

GotSoccer.com

Click to login to the Team & Team Officials Area

Enter the team account username and password. If you do not have this information, you can get it from your Club Administrator.

You can use this username and password to register for tournaments and it transfers all of your rosters and team data to the tournament.
K & K Insurance

FOR INJURED PLAYERS OR COACHES

All players and coaches registered with the VSA have secondary medical coverage. If during the course of practice, game, or VSA sanctioned tournament, a player or coach is injured, that person can submit a claim to assist with medical expenses incurred as the result of that injury.

CLAIMS ARE INITIATED THROUGH:

https://usys-assets.ae-admin.com/assets/980/15/Insurance.pdf

Claims are then processed through:

Vermont Soccer Association Office

Please contact the VSA Office at (802) 857-5703 if you have any questions.