

Tri-City United
Winter Classic Soccer Tournament



Tournament Rules

Updated: September 25, 2025

TOURNAMENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Tri-City United Soccer Clubs asks that you conduct yourselves in a manner outlined by the following guidelines:

- Focus on praise and encouragement rather than criticism and negative comments.
- Encourage fair play and good sportsmanship.
- Attempt to reduce the pressure of competition, not increase it. A child is easily affected by outside influences. Parents should remember this is a “learning experience” for players and support this experience.
- Be respectful to coaches and officials in all matches.
- Do not question the referee’s judgement. Please remember, many of these referees are young adults learning how to referee the game, so please treat them with respect. They are there to do a job which few others are willing to undertake.
- Parents/Spectators should never enter the field of play for any reason, unless summoned by referee or team official. Speak to your coach or club official at another time if you have a concern.
- Do not use offensive language toward any player during or after a game.
- Accept the results of the game. Encourage your child to be a good sport in victory and in defeat.
- Only sit in designated areas around the fields. The bench side is only for rostered players and coaches. This is for the safety of the teams playing as well as the safety of the spectators.
- Treat other fans, coaches, players and officials with respect.
- Alcoholic beverages, smoking, foul language, fighting and weapons of any type are not allowed on the premises.

Violations of the Code of Conduct are taken seriously, and Tri-City United Soccer Club reserves the right to remove any person from the facility as well as sanction any person found by the Tournament Director and/or Club Administration to have violated this code.

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1. ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION

The Tri-City United Winter Classic Soccer Tournament is an unrestricted competition open to all teams registered and in good standing with a FIFA-affiliated association. Priority placement may be given to clubs that enter four or more teams.

Applications must be submitted online at www.tricityunited.org. The registration deadline is posted on the tournament website. Please note that submitting an application does not guarantee acceptance. Teams will be notified of their acceptance within five (5) business days after the registration deadline.

After the deadline, teams may be placed on a waiting list and will be notified accordingly. No refunds will be issued for teams that withdraw after the registration deadline.

There will be separate divisions for the following levels of play. The Tournament Director may combine or separate age groups or competition levels at any time before the tournament.

- a. Black (Upper)
- b. White (Middle)
- c. Blue (Lower)

2. TOURNAMENT AUTHORITY

The Tournament Director shall have ultimate authority over all details of the competition including format, scheduling, team rosters, discipline, and other matters within the confines of the event. The interpretation of the rules and all decisions of the Tournament Director are final within the confines of the event and there shall be no protests or appeals of the Tournament Director's decisions.

3. COMPETITION FORMAT

The competition format will vary by age group depending on the number of participating teams in each competition level. The competition format for each division will be released prior to the start of the tournament. The Tournament Director:

- a. Reserves the right to determine the size of each competitive group, and the right to alter the groups and format to account for larger or uneven numbers of teams in each competitive division
- b. Shall determine the schedule and start times of all games and may alter the schedule where necessary.

4. ROSTER RULES

Any player registered with a FIFA affiliated organization and with a valid player pass is eligible to be placed on the official team roster.

- a. **Roster size:** Teams may roster up to 10 players
- b. **Guest players:** Teams may roster up to 3 guest players. Guest players may come from any FIFA or USSF affiliated association/team. If a team is playing as a US Club team, they are only allowed to have registered US Club players as guests. If a team is playing as a USYS team, they are only allowed to have registered USYS players as guests.
- c. **Dual Rostering:** Players may only play on one team. No dual rostering is allowed.
- d. Only carded players, coaches and managers listed on the official roster may sit on the team bench during the duration of the game. Referees and/or tournament officials will remove those not listed on the team's official roster.
- e. **Age group structure:**

U9 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2017
U10 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2016
U11 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2015
U12 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2014
U13 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2013
U14 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2012
U15 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2011
U16 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2010
U17 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2009
U18 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2008
U19 Boys and Girls	Born on or after 01/01/2007
- g. Any team found violating these rules will forfeit further participation in this tournament and will jeopardize acceptance in future Tri-City United Soccer Club tournaments.

5. COMPETITION RULES

All games shall be played pursuant to [FIFA Laws of the Game](#), except for the variations listed below.

1. **The field of play:**

- a. Tri-City United Indoor Facility - 2761 12th Ave S. Fargo, ND 58103 (Artificial field turf)
- b. Rustad Center - 601 26th Ave E, West Fargo, ND 58078 (Artificial field turf)
- c. Fargo Parks Sports Center – 6100 38th St S, Fargo, ND 58104 (Artificial field turf)

2. **The ball:** FIFA approved size outdoor ball will be used for each match. Game balls will be distributed to the referee prior to the game. Referee will retain possession of the ball at the conclusion of the match. All balls will be turned into a tournament official at the end of the day.

3. **The player:** All games are played 5v5 (4 field players + a goalkeeper). Each team may substitute freely during the run of play; players will enter from the half line. The substitute only enters the field after the player being replaced has left the field of play at the halfway line. Failure to comply will result in a warning, then yellow card.

Each team will have a designated goalkeeper; the goalkeeper may substitute at any natural stoppage with the permission of the referee. The goalkeeper must wear an alternate jersey with colors that do not match home and away colors for the match.

4. **Player equipment:** The home team for each game is the second team listed on the game schedule or otherwise identified as the “home team” in the tournament software. In the event of a jersey color conflict, it is the responsibility of the home team to change jerseys. Cleats **ARE** allowed.

5. **The referee:** Each game will be controlled by a referee. The decision of the referee regarding the match and interpretation of the laws of the game is final. There will be no disputes of the referee’s decisions regarding any match.

6. **Assistant (second) referee:** A second referee may be added to championship matches or any match where it is deemed necessary.

7. **The match:** All games are 36-minutes long with two 18-minute halves and a 2-minute halftime. The clock will run continuously, with no stoppages for balls out of play or other restarts. Time will be kept on the scoreboard at each facility or by the referee if one is not available.

Time can only be extended to allow the taking of a penalty kick if one has been awarded prior to time expiring but has not been taken when time expires. There

will be no rebounds from such an incident. Once the penalty kick is scored or saved, the game is over.

- Semi-final matches that end in a draw will proceed to overtime to determine a winner for the match.

8. **Overtime:** will only be used in the championship rounds of play (semi-finals and finals) and do not apply to consolation games.

- Each team will begin overtime with the number of players on the field they finished regular time with minus one player.
- Kick off decided by coin toss
- If no goal scored after 2 minutes of play each team will remove a player AT THE NEXT DEAD BALL.
- If no goal scored after 4 minutes of play each team will remove another player AT THE NEXT DEAD BALL.
- If no goal scored after 6 minutes of play the use of a penalty kick shoot-out will be used to determine winner.
- No substitutions are allowed in golden goal overtime except for injury.
- Accumulated Fouls are set to 3 fouls per team at the start of overtime. A penalty kick will be awarded to the non-offending team after the offending team's third foul of overtime.
- The minimum number of players on the field is 2 players (including the keeper). If a team gets down to having 2 players on the field during overtime (due to injury), then the opponents will keep the same numerical advantage they had when the team was reduced to 2 players.

9. **Kicks from the mark:**

- Referee flips a coin to decide which goal to be used.
- Winner of the second coin toss decides to kick first or second.
- All players are eligible to participate.
- Eligible players will be selected by each team and sent to the referee. Each kick is taken by a different player and all eligible players must take a kick before a player can take a second kick.
- If after 3 kickers, the match has not been decided and still stands at a draw, kicks will be taken by the remaining eligible players on a sudden death basis.

10. **Start and restart of play:** Teams must be in attendance and ready to play 15 minutes prior to the start of the match. Failure to be present can result in forfeiture of the match.

- Away team kicks off first half and home team kick off second half.

Ball in and out of play: The ball is out of play when it has wholly crossed the goal line, touch line, the ball hits an overhead obstacle or play has been stopped by the referee. Play will be restarted with a kick-in when it goes out of play across the touchline. When the ball strikes an overhead obstacle, play is restarted with a kick-in from a spot on the touchline nearest to where the ball hit the obstacle.

Delay of game: Once the ball is stationary, teams have 5 seconds to get the ball in play on any restart. Failure to do so will result in the opposing team gaining possession of the restart.

Kick-ins: All kick-ins are indirect.

Required distance: Opposing players must remain at least 3 yards back from the spot of all restarts. Players are expected to move back on the referee's command. If players refuse to back up the defined distance for the kick or actively moves towards the ball to stop the restart, the referee reserves the right to caution the player for delay of game.

Corner kick: When the ball wholly crosses the goal line other than between the two goal posts and under the cross bar, play is restarted by a goalkeeper throw in or corner kick, depending on which team last touched the ball. Corner kicks are considered a direct kick and can be scored directly without touching another player.

Goal clearance: In place of a goal kick, the goalkeeper throws the ball into play, taken from inside the penalty area. The ball is not in play until it has passed outside of the penalty area. The throw in must be taken within 5 seconds.

- U14 and below – The goal clearance must touch the floor outside the penalty area of goalkeeper's own side of field or another player before passing over the half line. Violation will result in an indirect free kick from the spot crossing the half line.
- U15 and above – The goal clearance has no limitations. Ball may be thrown over the half line with no violation. Ball may not be thrown directly into the goal.

Penalty kicks: A penalty kick is awarded against a team for any offense occurring inside the penalty area for which a direct kick is awarded. The ball is placed at the top of the penalty arc; the goalkeeper must have one foot on the

goal line until the ball is kicked and the remaining players must be outside the penalty area and at least three (3) yards from the spot of the kick and behind the ball. If the goalkeeper encroaches the penalty kick, the kick may be retaken if a goal is not scored from the penalty kick.

11. **Offside:** There will be no offside offense.

12. **Fouls and Misconduct:**

Direct Free Kick: A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following fouls:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent
- Attempts to slide tackle an opponent
 - Sliding for the ball (i.e. to save it from going out of bounds) is allowed as long as in the opinion of the referee, there is no opponent near

Indirect Free Kick: An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the player or goalkeeper:

- Possess the ball more than five (5) seconds with their hands. An indirect kick is awarded because of the infraction from the spot on the penalty arc closest to where the infraction was committed.
- Prior to the free kick, the ball must be stationary. Once stationary, the ball must be kicked within five (5) seconds. If the kick is not taken within the five (5) seconds, the opposing team will be rewarded with an indirect free kick from where the ball is placed.

Sending Off Offenses: Behaviors warranting Red Card sanctions include, but are not limited to:

- a) serious foul play;
- b) violent conduct;
- c) spitting at another player or the referee;
- d) denying the opposing team an obvious goal scoring opportunity by an offense for which a direct kick or penalty kick would be awarded
- e) denying the opposing team an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (not applicable to defending goalkeeper);
- f) using offensive, insulting, or abusive language; or

- g) receiving a second caution (yellow card) in the same game.
- a. If a player is sent off for offense (f) above, play is restarted with an indirect kick by the opposing team taken from the place where the infraction occurred. If the infraction occurred within the penalty area, the indirect kick is taken from the spot on the penalty arc closest to the location where the infraction was committed. For the sending off offenses (a) through (e) above, play is restarted with a direct kick, unless the infraction occurred within the penalty area, in which case a penalty kick is awarded. When a player is sent off, the player may not reenter the game and must leave the building. A replacement player may not enter on to the field. The team with a player who has been sent off will continue to play down a player for the remainder of the game. Players receiving red cards will also be suspended for the following game and not be allowed into the team area. Coaches who are asked to leave will be removed from the playing area and a substitute (non-playing) coach or manager from the same club who is listed on that team's official roster will be required in order to continue the game. If one is not provided in a timely manner the game will be forfeited. The coach will also be suspended for the following game and not be allowed into the team area.

Accumulated fouls:

- Accumulated fouls refer only to the direct kick fouls mentioned in Law 12.
- Once a team has accumulated 5 fouls during a half, starting with the 6th foul, a penalty kick will be awarded for each subsequent foul, (refer to law 8 for penalty kick procedure). The foul count will reset to 0 at the beginning of each half.

13. Specific age group rules rules:

- **Build out line for U9/U10:** Shall be marked by the halfway line. When the goalkeeper has the ball, either after a save or with a goal throw, the opposing team must retreat behind the build out line. The opposing team can advance beyond the build out line when the ball is put "in play." The ball is considered "in play" when the ball is touched by another player after the ball is released from the goalkeeper's possession. If an opposing player advances beyond the build out line before the ball is touched, the team in possession is awarded an indirect free kick from the spot where the player crossed the build out line.
- **Heading for U9-U11:** Deliberate heading is not allowed in U9-U11 games. If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the

offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal area at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.

- **U9/U10 games will have no penalty kicks.** All free kicks at U9/U10 will be indirect free kicks. If a foul occurs inside the penalty area, the ball will be moved to the spot on the top of the penalty area closest to where the foul occurred.

6. STANDINGS AND TIEBREAKERS

- a. After each game, the referee will fill out the official game card provided to them and submit the final score to the Tournament Committee. **The winning and losing coach or manager must verify the final scores on the game card after each game. Once coaches or team manager have signed off on the game, the result is considered final.**
- b. U9-U10 teams play a jamboree style format where scores and results are not recorded, and champions are not declared. All players will receive participation awards
- c. **Point system:** Points and results will be recorded for the U11-U19 age groups. The following 3-point system is used to rank teams:

Win/opponent forfeit	3 points
Tie	1 points
Loss	0 points
- d. **Forfeits:** A team must forfeit if they don't have at least 4 players or a coach ready to play at the scheduled start time. A forfeit will be recorded as a 4 to 0 game and 3 points will be awarded to the non-forfeiting team.
- e. **Tiebreakers:** For teams tied in points at the end of pool play, the following criteria will be used to determine advancement to the knockout round:
 - Winner of head-to-head competition
 - The greater goal differential (maximum of +4 per game)
 - The least goals allowed
 - The most goals scored
 - The least amount of red cards
 - Penalty kicks from the mark

7. GAME AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE

- a. The referee's decision in all matters related to the field and the game itself shall be final. There shall be no protests of any referee's decision or game result.
- b. Red cards awarded to players during a game, or dismissals of team officials, shall result in that player or team official receiving a suspension for the next game. In the event that a player receives a red card, the referee will keep their player pass and turn it into the Tournament Director along with a description of the incident. After the player has served their suspension, the coach can pick up the player's pass, unless the Tournament Director feels that additional action is warranted.
- c. If, in the opinion of the referee, it is necessary to terminate a game due to the misconduct of a team or others associated with that team, the game shall be forfeited and scored as 1-0 to the opposing team. The matter shall be referred to the Tournament Director, who may, among other penalties, suspend the team for the remainder of the tournament.
- d. Referee abuse will not be tolerated during the tournament. Referee abuse by the player, coach, or fan will be reported to their Home State Association within 48 hours of the end of the games. The player, coach or fan will be removed from the facility and will not be allowed to return.
- e. At all times, coaches shall have complete responsibility and control for the conduct of their players, bench area, parents, family, and friends.

8. GAME START TIMES AND RESCHEDULING

- a. All games and halves will be started with a siren or horn signaled by the Tournament staff. Games will be played on a running clock to make sure that they start on time. A forfeit will be declared if a team does not field the minimum required number of players (must have at least 4 players to play) at the designated kickoff time.
- b. No one else other than the scheduled teams are allowed on the field before the game or during halftime.
- c. Every effort will be made to provide 3 games for each team. However, the Tournament Committee will not be responsible for any expenses incurred by any team if the tournament is cancelled in whole or part. A prorated refund may be made, depending on when the game/s or tournament had to be cancelled.
- d. If games are suspended the tournament website and social media will be

updated. Suspensions do not equal cancellations.

- e. In all cases, the Tournament Director has the ultimate authority and sole discretion to adjust the schedule of any or all remaining games, including shortening the length of games, to arrive at an equitable result and in consideration of the overall integrity of the competition.