



NMIFA Youth Football League

Rules for **GRASSROOTS (Non-Competitive)** Youth Leagues

Fall 2017

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LAWS OF THE GAME

All coaches, assistant coaches, team managers and team captains are to be familiar with current *FIFA Laws of the Game*. <http://www.theifab.com/#!/home>. All *FIFA Laws of the Game* will be enforced with the exception of the specific youth rules listed in these Laws.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

Age Division	Eligibility - Birth Year
Under 6 Co-Ed	2011, 2012
Under 8 Co-Ed	2009, 2010
Under 10 Co-Ed	2007, 2008
Under 12 Co-Ed	2005, 2006

1. Only eligible players may play in the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association (NMIFA) Youth League.
2. Eligibility is defined as a player who is properly registered with NMIFA through a NMIFA Member organization, team or school during the current playing season and without active NMIFA player discipline sanctions.
3. All teams have a 14-day grace period after the season has started to register all their players. After the grace period, all players must have a current year NMIFA player identification card to be presented during the referee inspection prior to the match. Eligible players must register to play for only one club during the season.
4. An alternate photo identification card, such as school ID, passport, or municipal ID, may be used if NMIFA player ID is not available, and player's name is on the match report. If no valid identification card is available, a valid person, such as opponent's players or coaches, or referee, may vouch for the player. If an NMIFA ID is lost, a replacement must be obtained within the succeeding week. And if an NMIFA ID is not available for inspection in a given week, that ID must be available for the succeeding weeks, otherwise, the club will be charged \$5 for every succeeding match that no NMIFA ID is presented.
5. New players may register with a club/team throughout the playing season.
6. A player may be dropped from a team roster before the end of the playing season. That player may not register to play for another team/club until the following playing season.
7. Player transfers between clubs during the playing season are not allowed.
8. Players may "play up" but not "play-down" an age division below their appropriate age group based on club and coach discretion and pursuant to the *Additional League Rules, II. Play-Up Rule* below. U12 players may only play in one division either competitive or non-competitive (i.e. competitive players may not concurrently "play-down" to the non-competitive age divisions and the non-competitive U12 players also may not concurrently play up to the U-12 competitive teams).
9. Players that "play-up" to any competitive age division are not eligible to play in any non-competitive age divisions. For example, a U12 competitive player could play up to U14. However, a U12 non-competitive player may "play-up" to U14, but will no longer be eligible to play in U12 non-competitive division.

LAW 1 - THE FIELD OF PLAY

1. **Pitch Dimensions:** A rectangular field shall be no more than:

Age Division	Minimum Pitch Size
Under 6 Co-ed	FIFA Grassroots Festival Format (Station Rotation) & small sided matches on 1/8 pitch size (20 yards x 12 yards)
Under 8 Co-ed	45 yards x 30 yards (1/4 pitch size)
Under 10 Co-ed	45 yards x 30 yards (1/4 pitch size)
Under 12 Co-ed	45 yards x 30 yards (1/4 pitch size)

2. **Goal size:** A rectangular goal measuring:

Age Division	Goal Size
Under 6 Co-ed	Mini size: 4 feet high by 9 feet wide
Under 8 Co-ed	Futsal size: 6 feet high by 12.5 feet wide
Under 10 Co-ed	Futsal size: 6 feet high by 12.5 feet wide
Under 12 Co-ed	Futsal size: 6 feet high by 12.5 feet wide

LAW 2 - THE BALL

A ball will be used for the matches as designated by age group. The match ball will be supplied by the *Home Team*. If the *Home Team's* game ball is not acceptable to the center referee, an adequate ball from another source may be used.

Age Division	Ball Size
Under 6 Co-ed	3
Under 8 Co-ed	4
Under 10 Co-ed	4
Under 12 Co-ed	4

LAW 3 - THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Age Division	Number of Players	Minimum to Start	Minimum Female Players on Pitch
Under 6 Co-ed	4 v 4	n/a	n/a
Under 8 Co-ed	5 v 5	5 players	1 female player
Under 10 Co-ed	5 v 5	5 players	1 female player
Under 12 Co-ed	5 v 5	5 players	1 female player

Note: For this section Law 3, U6 division will follow the FIFA Festival format with additional specific rules outlined on a separate 2017 Spring U6 Grassroots rules.

1. Substitutions

- a. Number of substitutions is unlimited and will be a running substitution made at any time, whether the ball is in play or not. To replace a player with a substitute, the following conditions must be observed:
 - i. The PLAYER leaves the pitch via his/her own team's substitution zone.
 - ii. The SUBSTITUTE only enters the pitch after the player being replaced has left and in his/her own team's substitution zone.
 - iii. All substitutes are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the referees, whether called upon to play or not.
 - iv. If a period is extended to allow a penalty kick, a kick from the second penalty mark or a direct free kick without a wall to be taken, only the goalkeeper of the defending team may be substituted.

- b. When changing the goalkeeper, the following rules will apply:
 - i. Any of the substitutes may change places with the goalkeeper without informing the referees or waiting for a stoppage in the match.
 - ii. Any player may change places with the goalkeeper and must do so during a stoppage in the match and inform the referees before the change is made.
 - iii. A player or substitute replacing the goalkeeper must wear a goalkeeper's jersey with his number on the back or training vest/pinnie different from that of his/her team and opposing team.

2. Number of Players (This section does not apply to U6 age division)

- a. A match is played by two (2) teams, each consisting of not more than the number of players based on age division (refer to *number of players chart* above), and except for U6, one of whom is the goalkeeper.
- b. Unlimited players per team roster are allowed.
- c. Every effort should be made to avoid a forfeit.
- d. A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than the minimum number of players based on age division (refer to *number of players chart* above). Match can begin when enough players show up to make the minimum required players, subject to this Section 2.e through 2.i.
- e. One team can field the minimum players while the opposing team is allowed to play the maximum number of players.
- f. Each non-competitive team must field a minimum of 1 female player and a maximum of 4 male players per team on the pitch at all times. If this requirement is not met, the team short of female players may play with less than 5 players and borrow a female player from the other team (or other bonafide NMIFA female player if coaches agree) for the duration of the match or until the team meets the minimum number of female players. This requirement is being included for purposes of women's football development at the grassroots age and in line with the mission and goals of the AFC Women's Assistance Program strategic plan.
- g. For teams short of players, players can be added on to play upon arrival up to the maximum number of players and by permission of the referee. A (5) five-minute grace period will be allowed, to start match with minimum number of players.
- h. If a team fails to field the minimum players by the end of the grace period, the referee will note a forfeit for the team that lacked of minimum players on the match report. A team can then loan some of their players to the team short of players in order to begin match play.

- i. It will be re-evaluated by the coaches and referee at second half if the team short of players can start second half with the minimum number of players and to transfer back “borrowed/loaned” players.
- j. Procedure for when a team knowingly is not able to field the minimum number of players for any scheduled match: Coach of the team short of players should contact opposing team coach with a written notice to NMIFA and the 2 club team’s General Secretary at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled match to advise of team being short of players and to seek a mutually agreeable rescheduling date. Within 7 days after the originally scheduled match, the coaches must agree on a reschedule date and inform NMIFA and the home club General Secretary so that the field and referee(s) can be confirmed. If this is rescheduled immediately prior to, on or after the last scheduled match of the season, the game will be cancelled due to festival or cup play immediately following the league.
- k. If a team makes it a habit of lacking the necessary minimum number of players to start games, as determined by the Youth Committee, the club or team will be subject to a \$20.00 fine on the second forfeit with \$10 incremental increase for each subsequent forfeit (e.g. \$30 for third forfeit, \$40 on fourth forfeit, etc)..
- l. The referee shall call for periodic water breaks when a game begins below the number of players or based on weather conditions. To stay on schedule, breaks will be part of the total game playing time.

LAW 4 - THE PLAYERS’ EQUIPMENT

1. Uniforms

- a. All members of the same team will play in jerseys of identical color. Teams should endeavor to have full uniform kits (jersey, shorts, and socks) of identical color.
- b. Jerseys may be numbered.
- c. Goalkeeper will use a different color jersey or training vest/pinnie from that of his team and opposing team.
- d. Shirt tails of all players must be tucked into the shorts before opening and halftime kickoffs.

2. Other Player Equipment

- a. Shinguards are mandatory and must be worn inside socks.
- b. Headbands and bandanas may be worn for hair control. The headband must be of a continuous band with no knots or ties in the front. No metal or plastic hairclips (bobby pins, barrettes).
- c. Baseball caps may only be worn by goalkeepers.
- d. Jewelry is not allowed (except for Medical alert necklaces/bracelets taped to the skin).
- e. The length of a player’s fingernails should not extend past the tip of the finger.
- f. Players will not be allowed to participate in the match if he/she is wearing a hard (unyielding) cast or splint, even if covered with padding.

LAW 5 - THE REFEREE

1. Matches are controlled by a referee or co-referees who has/have full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game as supplemented by these rules, in connection with the match to which he/she has/have been scheduled.
2. NMIFA is responsible for providing and scheduling referees for non-competitive matches.
3. One referee will be scheduled.
4. If for any reason the referee is not at the match five (5) minutes after the scheduled starting time, the NMIFA will schedule a substitute referee. If there is no available NMIFA referee, opposing coaches shall agree on a substitute to referee the match. The substitute shall receive the referee's match fee.
5. Referees, at their discretion, may call periodic water breaks. It is advisable for referee and coaches to discuss this prior to the beginning of match play.
6. The Referee will be the official timekeeper.
7. The referee should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and encourage proper play and sporting behavior. As with all games, every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from stoppages for doubtful infractions. Let them play and enjoy.

LAW 7 - DURATION OF THE MATCH

Age Division	Playing Periods	Half time
Under 6 Co-ed	Two 10 minute periods (20 minutes total)	3 minutes halves
Under 8 Co-ed	Two 15 minute periods (30 minutes total)	5 minute halves
Under 10 Co-ed	Two 20 minute periods (40 minutes total)	5 minute halves
Under 12 Co-ed	Two 25 minute periods (50 minutes total)	5 minute halves

1. The match will consist of two playing periods based on age division (refer to *playing periods* chart above) unless otherwise agreed between the referee and the two opposing team coaches. If a game starts late and/or light is a factor, the referee will play the entire first half and then shorten the second half to coincide with the schedule.
2. Half time/quarter time period breaks will be based on age division (refer to chart above), or if light or other unsafe circumstances are a factor to finishing the game, a shorter half time is acceptable at the discretion of the referee.
3. Teams are expected to start on time. Should a game be delayed, the time will be deducted from the overall game time/second half to stay on schedule.
4. Coaches should give consideration for all players to have at least 20 minutes of playing time.

LAW 11: OFFSIDE (Excludes U6 age division)

Offside rule does not apply to non-competitive age divisions under the format 5 v 5 or smaller.

LAW 12: FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

All players, coaches, managers, parents and spectators should respect the referee calls. For the Good of the Game, always observe the FIFA canons of Fairplay. Players, coaches, managers and non-players in

the Technical Area are accountable to these rules. A separate NMIFA Parent Code of Conduct implemented in Fall 2014 must also be abided by parents/guardians at all times.

1. The following actions will not be tolerated:

- a. Derogatory language directed towards opponents or teammates during a match will be considered as foul or abusive language.
- b. Vulgar, obscene or foul language will not be tolerated on the pitch or technical area.
- c. While in the technical area, no player, coach, or non-player may show dissent to, or verbally abuse, an opponent, coach, spectator, or referee. Dissension includes any complaints or derogatory comments made directly, or indirectly.
- d. Direct or indirect fouls will be called based on these rules and at the referee’s discretion.
- e. Violators of the above rules: Players will be asked to sit out the remainder of the game. Coaches or spectators will be asked to leave the field.

2. Slide-tackling and Handballs

- a. Slide-tackling is PROHIBITED. Pushing, shoving, tripping, pulling or shouting is also not allowed.
- b. Intentional handballs are not allowed.

A 2nd repeat warning for rule 2.a or 2.b to the same player will result in the player sitting out for the remainder of the game.

3. Corner Kicks, Free Kicks and Penalty Kicks

Non- Competitive Age Division	Corner Kicks Players distance from corner arc	Free Kicks Players distance from ball	Penalty Kicks Players distance from penalty mark
U6 Co-ed	3 yards	3 yards	3 yards
U8 Co-ed	5 yards	5 yards	5 yards
U10 Co-ed	6 yards	6 yards	6 yards
U12 Co-ed	6 yards	6 yards	6 yards

LAW 15: THE KICK-IN

A “Throw-in” will be replaced by a “Kick-In” with the new youth program format launched in Spring of 2016 and is a method of restarting play. For the “kick-in,” the ball **must be on the line or outside the line and must be stationary before kicking**. Non-competitive age division players will be allowed more than one chance to perfect a “kick-in.”

Age Division	Kick-in
U6 & U8 Co-ed	Three (3) kick-in chances. Referee will call illegal kick-in and demonstrate correct kick-in after first and second attempts. If violation is repeated after the 3 rd attempt, opposing team gains possession.
U10 Co-ed	Two (2) kick-in chances. Referee will call illegal kick-in and demonstrate correct kick-in after first attempt. If violation is repeated after the 2 nd attempt, opposing team gains possession.
U12 Co-ed	Two (2) kick-in chances. Referee will call illegal kick-in and demonstrate correct

kick-in after first attempt. If violation is repeated, opposing team gains possession.
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ADDITIONAL LEAGUE RULES – NON-COMPETITIVE AGE DIVISIONS

LOTHER RULES FOR NON-COMPETITIVE LEAGUES

1. These age groups are for playing in a grassroots, non-competitive league. The concept of these age groups is to develop skills, build self-esteem and learn, practice good sportsmanship and have fun.
2. Emphasis at this age should be on learning and playing the game and not wins/losses.
3. Game results will not be recorded and standings will not be recorded.
4. Games may end in a tie/draw. No overtime or penalty kicks are to be used to break a tie.
5. There will be no official scores or standings in these age divisions.

II. PLAY-UP RULE

OBJECTIVE

One of NMIFA’s primary objectives is to promote the development of football and to compete at the highest international level. To meet this end, during NMIFA’s initial 10-year development period from its August 2005 inception, NMIFA must focus on youth development to build an adequate pool of players and be flexible and reasonable in its development approach given the limited number of players and skill level as a new sport in the CNMI. This year of 2016 mark’s NMIFA’s 11th year for its youth program and NMIFA’s Technical Director has suggested a new development plan with a more “player-active” approach at the grassroots level. First and foremost, it is the responsibility of our clubs and youth coaches to develop their players and assess and monitor the needs of players who excel in their age group and would be mentally and physically able to “play-up.” Play-up will be considered on an exceptional basis by the youth committee in consultation with the technical director..

of Players

UNLIMITED: During each youth league season, each ***non-competitive*** youth league team will be allowed to have a limited number of players “play-up” an appropriate age level on a youth league team. It will be the responsibility of the clubs and their coaches to be prudent in this determination and manage their teams of both “age-appropriate” and “play-up” players in line with the above objective.

Eligibility of Players

Clubs and their team coaches will be responsible to identify which players will be allowed to “play-up” after taking into consideration safety, physical and mental readiness and skill and tactical abilities of the player. An example of a “play-up” candidate may be those players who have been previously selected and competed on a NMIFA national team at the international level or an elite football academy or who are exceptionally skilled or significantly larger or stronger in physique than his/her peer age group.

Player requirements

A youth player is only allowed to “play up” with the same club that he/she is from. A youth player approved by his/her club to “play up” may also consider playing in the appropriate age division that he/she is eligible, however if there are match conflicts between the two age divisions, the Youth Committee will not accept requests by the clubs to reschedule any matches. This rule will apply to all players and teams in the ***non-competitive*** age-groups of the NMIFA Youth League. Additional “play-up” players can be added to the team at anytime during the season subject to proper procedures below.

Procedures

The following procedures must be adhered to in order for players to be allowed to play-up:

(a)Registration: Clubs must register their “Play-Up” players in the same procedure as standard team and player roster registrations within the NMIFA designated timeframes. Clubs must clearly identify all “play-up” players on the team rosters and/or club age division registration lists, whichever applies.

(b)Supplemental waiver form: An age division “play-up” liability and authorization form is suggested and to be maintained at the clubs for each player who plays up with a copy submitted to NMIFA.

III. TECHNICAL AREA (Excludes U6 Age Division)

1. Only 3 non-players are allowed in the technical area during the game.
2. Names of the officials/non-players (Team Manager, Coach, Assistant Coach) must be registered with NMIFA.
3. Coaches should remain within 20 feet of their team’s designated side of the centerline and behind the touchlines at least 10 feet. Coaches should remain in the designated technical area for the duration of the game and not approach the pitch unless authorized by a referee.
4. Spectators are not to sit in technical area or on or behind the goal line. Spectators should be positioned on the opposite side of player’s bench (technical area) whenever possible and at least 10 feet from the touchline. Spectators can be redirected by the referee or league commissioner to the proper areas.
5. Spectators are not allowed to coach the team or any individual players from the sidelines.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE

Member Clubs will be responsible for the following:

1. Drafting complete rosters for all players, including players who might play one or two games anytime during the season. The rosters are to be signed by the coach and team manager and will be due to NMIFA one month after the first season kickoff with specific dates announced by NMIFA’s General Secretary. Any new players registered during the season should be officially registered by the club with NMIFA prior to the new player joining a match. *Any late submissions by clubs will be assessed a \$1.00 per day fine.*
2. Ensuring that all players are duly registered with NMIFA and have a valid player ID card for the applicable year.
3. In the absence of a League Commissioner, controlling and disciplining to their best of their ability non-player members and parent/family spectators at the matches who exhibit any form of coaching, poor sportsmanship, unnecessary roughness, violence or threats to any player or non-player at their respective matches, either home or away.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RULES AND SEASON SCHEDULES

Club officers, coaches, team manager, and/or captains or co-captains will be required to attend a pre-season meeting to go over the rules and acknowledge receipt and understanding of these rules to be conducted at least one week prior to season kick-off. **The pre-season meeting was conducted at Koblerville Elementary School on Friday, August 25, 2017.**

As an authorized representative of and on behalf of _____
(club name), I confirm that the above rules for the **NMIFA Grassroots Youth League, Fall 2017 edition**, have been received and reviewed by our club. We understand and accept these rules on the date set forth below and will endeavor to have all club youth coaches and players be familiar with and abide by these rules.

CLUB NAME: _____

By: _____ By: _____
Club General Secretary Technical Director/Coach

Name: _____ Name: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

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**Northern Mariana Islands Football Association**

Affirmed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth Committee Chairperson

Affirmed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Technical Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
General Secretary

Date: \_\_\_\_\_