

# Merck Soccer League (MSL) Rules & Regulations

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# Merck Soccer League (MSL) Rules & Regulations

## 1. Rules of Play

- a. Games will be played according to standard FIFA rules, except as noted elsewhere in these rules.
- b. All players must play the ball at all times and not the body. Players shall attempt to avoid situations which could cause potential bodily injury. The referees will call games by the rule of the law. It is the responsibility of the captains to make sure each player is aware and understands the rules of the league.
- c. Slide tackling an opponent is not permitted in this league. It is at the referees' discretion whether the tackle constitutes an accidental or intentional challenge, as described below. Offenses will result in the following actions by the referee:
  - i. Any "accidental" slide tackle will result in the issuance of a yellow card to the player performing the tackle. Yellow cards may be reviewed by the league, especially in cases of accumulation (see Rule 8)
  - ii. Any "intentional" slide tackle, as well as any "from behind" slide tackle, will result in an issuance of a red card to the player performing the tackle. All red cards will be reviewed by the league representatives to determine if further discipline is warranted (see Rule 8).
- d. Players are allowed to slide when there is no opponent making a play on the ball. Examples of permissible slides include:
  - i. Saving a ball from going out of bounds when an opponent is not near
  - ii. Saving a ball from crossing the goal line
  - iii. Sliding to play a pass or shot when in the clear
  - iv. Sliding kick saves by a goalkeeper in the penalty box
- e. Foul or abusive language directed at any other player or referee can result in an automatic red card for the player. All red cards will be reviewed by the league representatives to determine if further discipline is warranted (see Rule 8). Incidental foul language, if heard by the referee, may result in a yellow card to the offender.
- f. Goal keepers must adhere to normal FIFA rules, including going to the ground within their penalty box (sliding is allowed). Hands allowed inside the box; punts, drop-kicks and throws are permitted; hands are not allowed on obvious passes from other players on their own team via feet or throw-ins; 6 second ball holding maximum.
- g. Requirements for fielding a team:
  - i. Eleven (11) players field a team. **At least one (1) female player must be fielded at all times.** If a team cannot field at least one (1) female player, then the team must play one (1) player down.
  - ii. This league is a recreational coed work league. **All players on the roster must be allotted equal playing time. Discrimination in this league will not be tolerated.**
  - iii. A team may play with a minimum of eight (8) players before forfeiting. If a team cannot field 8 players 15 minutes after the scheduled game time, then they will forfeit. (Reference Rules 6E)
- h. Unlimited substitutions (players and goalkeepers) may be made by both teams at the following times, but ONLY after the referee has given permission ("on the fly" substitutions are not permitted):
  - i. A goal kick
  - ii. After a goal is scored and prior to play resuming
  - iii. On any team's throw-in
  - iv. On an injury

## 2. Fighting and Violent Behavior

- a. Any player involved in a fight or other violent behavior, including shoving another player or an intentional malicious tackle will receive a red card. This includes any intentional contact above the shoulders on an opponent (i.e. grabbing, holding, or blunt force).

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- b. Any player involved in violent behavior deemed particularly offensive will, at the sole discretion of the league representatives, be expelled from the league.
- c. Any play viewed as an “Intent to Injure” will result in a red card for the player or players executing the play and will be reviewed by the league.

## 3. Players & Teams

- a. All players must carry health insurance on their own (or through their company).
- b. All players must sign the waiver required by Merck Soccer League (this is performed during registration).
- c. All players must be registered with the league and be enrolled on team rosters.
- d. Players from other MSL teams may play “on loan” for other teams if a captain needs players for a non-playoff league match. In the spirit and the integrity of the league, we request captains use loan players only when necessary and when less than three substitutes from their own team are available. It is to the discretion of the captain whether to use loaned players or not. **Team players will get preferential playing time over on-loan players.**
- e. A team may, however, use a “guest player” from outside the league if ALL of the following circumstances are met:
  - i. **A waiver form must be signed by the guest player prior to playing the match** and must be scanned and sent to the President ([james\\_elliott@merck.com](mailto:james_elliott@merck.com)).
  - ii. **A fee of \$10 is paid by the guest player to cover league fees.**
    - a. Captains are responsible for ensuring guest players have signed the waiver and paid the \$10 fee.
  - iii. Captains may use their “guest players” at their discretion with each player capped at three appearances in one season.
  - iv. The guest player can only participate in a non-playoff league match.
- f. If any players are suspended, see Rule 8, they will not be allowed to participate in the match.

## 4. Equipment

- a. All players **must wear shin guards**. Any player not wearing shin guards will be told to leave the field and cannot return until they have put them on.
- b. All team captains are responsible for ensuring their players are wearing the jerseys or a shirt matching the team color.
- c. No player will be allowed on the field while wearing any clothing, jewelry or accessories that has the potential to injure themselves or another player. Examples of clothing, jewelry or accessories which will not be allowed include hooded jackets or shirts, eyeglasses, watches, necklaces, bracelets, loop earrings, etc. Exceptions to this rule area are as follows:
  - i. Smart watch that is **covered by a sweatband**.
  - ii. Jewelry covered by tape (e.g., small earrings, rough diamond rings).
  - iii. Sports glasses/goggles (a warning will be issued for the wearing of non-sport eyeglasses).
- d. League equipment (such as corner flags, nets, etc.) used during the season will be returned to its original position or secured place of storage at the end of the week and brought out at the start of the following week

## 5. Reporting of Scores and Cards

- a. The home team Captain must report the following items by 10:00 am on the following day after the game via email and CC the visiting team Captain. The visiting team Captain can email the score if no email is received before 12:00 pm on the following day.
  - i. Final score (full score and adjusted score if 5 Goal rule is used – see Rule 5C)

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- ii. Yellow cards (Player's name, number, and reason for issuance)
- iii. Red cards (Player's name, number, and reason for issuance)
- b. The Referee will keep a list of the names of players receiving cards during the game. If a captain is unclear as to who received a card or why the card was issued, they should consult with the referee at the end of the game.
- c. The 5 Goal differential rule. After completion of the first half, if a team is leading by 5 goals or more, the losing team forfeits the game. At this point, the teams are encouraged to exchange select players to create a more competitive match and play a friendly for the second half. The official score will be documented as the score at the completion of the first half with a maximum difference of 5 goals. If the match continues into the 2<sup>nd</sup> half and a larger goal differential than 5 goals is recorded, then the losing team's score is kept, while the winning team's score is reduced to a maximum of a 5 goal difference (e.g. 8-0 → 5-0, 9-1 → 6-1, and 12-2 → 7-2). Both the actual and adjusted scores will be provided in the captain's email. The adjusted score will be used to record the match in the standings and the actual score will be noted with the match.
- d. Forfeits due to lack of players will be scored as 3-0. Teams can agree to play a friendly with less players (Rule 6G). Efforts should be made to cancel the referee before 4:00 pm on the day of the match to avoid paying the referee fee.
- e. In the unlikely occurrence that both teams do not have enough players, contact the president ([james\\_elliott@merck.com](mailto:james_elliott@merck.com)) to discuss rescheduling the match. Moving the match date is not guaranteed. Cancelling the match may result in one less match being played for both teams. Efforts should be made to cancel the referee before 4:00 pm on the day of the match to avoid paying the referee fee.

## 6. Games

- a. Games will be played at the fields as specified on the Game Schedule.
- b. The league will provide one (1) official to officiate each regular season match.
- c. If possible, the league will provide two (2) officials to officiate each playoff match.
- d. Games will consist of two (2) 40-minute halves with a 5-10 minute halftime. In case of excessive heat, the captains can work with the referee to plan additional 5-minute breaks to ensure player safety.
- e. No overtime will be played for regular season matches. No other tiebreaking methods (such as penalty kicks) will be played.
- f. Overtime and tiebreaking methods can be used for playing playoff matches (such as extra time and penalty kicks).
- a. The following tiebreakers will be used, in order, if TWO (2) teams are tied at the end of a playoff match:
  - i. If light and field availability are permitting, one 10-minute overtime can be played with golden goal. If teams are still tied after the 10-minute overtime, move to PKs.
  - ii. If light and/or field availability are not permitting overtime play, then the teams can move straight to PKs.
- g. In the event of inclement weather or an unplanned event, the league cannot guarantee that a cancelled game will be rescheduled. However, every effort will be made to do so. The decision to cancel a match shall be made before 4:00 pm, so the players and referee have sufficient notice to adjust their schedules.
  - i. Cancelled games will be rescheduled according to field and schedule availability.
  - ii. Captains will be notified via e-mail or text message when games are cancelled. The league will notify referees by 4:00 pm when games are cancelled.
  - iii. If a game is called in the first half, the match will be replayed, if possible. If a game is called in the second half, the game is official.

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## 7. Team Standings

- b. The League Champion will be determined by the team that wins the playoffs. Playoff positions are determined by the team with the most points at the end of the season. Team standings will be determined by the following point system:
  - i. 3 points for a win
  - ii. 1 point for a tie
  - iii. 0 points for a loss or forfeit
- c. The following tiebreakers will be used, in order, if TWO (2) teams are tied at the end of the season:
  - iii. Lowest goals allowed
  - iv. Greatest goal differential
  - v. Record vs each other
  - vi. Most goals scored
  - vii. A single coin toss
- d. The following tiebreakers will be used, in order, if THREE OR MORE (3) teams are tied at the end of the season:
  - i. Lowest goals allowed
  - ii. Greatest goal differential
  - iii. Best winning percentage between the teams involved
  - iv. Most Goals Scored
  - v. A single coin toss
- e. The standings and game results will be posted on the website.

## 8. Review of Cards & Gameplay Implications

- a. Any player receiving a yellow card, must sit out 5 minutes. A player receiving a yellow card can be replaced with a substitution by another player. Any player receiving two (2) yellow cards during a game will be given a red card (see rules for red card below),
- b. Any player issued a red card during a game will be immediately ejected from the game and will be suspended for the next game. If a player is ejected from the game, then the player cannot be replaced with a substitution. The team will play with one less player for the remainder of the game.
- c. All red cards will require the referees and team captains to provide an official account of the situation. This information will be reviewed by the league representatives to determine the best path forward. The league representatives may request information regarding any issuance of cards to determine if further penalty is required. The requested information needs to be provided within 48 hours. If the league representatives feel the scenario warrants a major infraction of league rules, the player may face an additional suspension, such as additional games or removal from the league.
  - i. Any player receiving four (4) yellow cards, or two (2) red cards will likely be expelled from the League, pending review by the league representatives. If a player is "guest playing" on another side, the cards will count toward that player's official tally. If they get a red, they will be ineligible for the next game on THEIR OFFICIAL TEAM and be barred from guest playing for at least the next two game weeks.
  - ii. Even before reaching the aforementioned totals, the league representatives reserve the right to suspend or expel players from the league if they do not meet the standard etiquette of the league.

## 9. Disputes

- a. In the event of an issue with a referee, teams are encouraged to reach out to the league. However, a game result will not be overturned due to a referee's decision.

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- b. A captain (captain only) may initially inquire why a referee has made a call. No one may further challenge the decision by the referee and the captain may pass the inquiry on to the league.
- c. If a team has a serious dispute, please have the captain contact the League President ([james\\_elliott@merck.com](mailto:james_elliott@merck.com)) in writing with a description of the event. Please be respectful and show good sportsmanship.
- d. A grievance committee will review all cases where a player has received enough cards to be expelled from the league. The committee will consist of team captains and league officials.