Markham Soccer Club

Youth House League U8-U13
Outdoor Rules & Regulations

Internal Small-Sided House League – Development-Based Playing Rules

Effective Date: October 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	3
Scope and Controlling Rules	3
Philosophy of Play	3
Age Group Format Table	3
Player Registration and Eligibility	4
Player Equipment	4
Coaches, Teams and Spectators	4
Game Sheets and Reporting	5
Equal Play	5
Substitutions	5
Retreat Line	6
Restarts by Age Group	6
Minimum Players, Grace Period, One-Up Rule and Forfeits	7
Scores and Standings	7
Game Cancellations, Weather and Field Safety	7
Referee No-Show Procedure – Internal Youth Only	8
Take 5 Spectator Behaviour Procedure	8
Discipline, Misconduct and Referee Authority	9
Referee Quick Reference	9

OVERVIEW

SCOPE AND CONTROLLING RULES

These rules apply to Markham Soccer Club internal outdoor youth house league matches from U8 to U13. The FIFA Laws of the Game apply except where modified by Ontario Soccer, YRSA, or these Markham Soccer Club Rules.

The purpose of this rule set is to create a consistent, referee-friendly, coach-friendly and player-centered playing environment.

PHILOSOPHY OF PLAY

U8-U13 house league is a development program. Safety, participation, learning, confidence and enjoyment come before competition and winning.

Coaches, referees, parents and spectators must support a positive environment where players are encouraged to make decisions, try skills and learn from mistakes.

Scores, standings, goal-difference targets, trophies based on league position, and win-at-all-costs coaching are inconsistent with the purpose of this program.

All participants must respect match officials. Referees should explain and teach where age-appropriate, especially at U8 and U9.

AGE GROUP FORMAT TABLE

Age Group	Playing Format	Ideal / Maximum Roster	Duration	Ball	Offside	Restarts / Retreat Line	Standings
U9	5v5, including goalkeeper if used by the program	Ideal 6 Maximum 10	2 x 20 minutes	Size 4 light or size 4 as approved by MSC	No	Pass-in/dribble-in instead of throw-in. Retreat line at halfway. Take 5 applies.	No
U10-U11	7v7, including goalkeeper	Ideal 9 Maximum 12	2 x 25 minutes	Size 4 or size 5 light as approved by MSC	No	Pass-in/dribble-in instead of throw-in, unless MSC publishes a specific throw-in modification. Retreat line at final third or halfway, according to field markings. Take 5 applies.	No
U12-U13	9v9, including goalkeeper	Ideal 12 Maximum 16	2 x 35 minutes where field scheduling permits. 2 x 30 may be used as an MSC scheduling modification if approved and published before the season.	Size 4 or size 5 light as approved by MSC	Yes, where field markings and match official coverage support it	Throw-ins. Retreat line at final third on goal kicks and goalkeeper possession. Take 5 does not apply to 9v9.	No

PLAYER REGISTRATION AND ELIGIBILITY

A player must be registered with Markham Soccer Club before participating in any match.

A player may only play for the team/division to which the player is assigned, except where a call-up or playing-up procedure has been approved by the Club.

A player may play in an older age group only where the Club has approved the movement for development, registration, or team-balancing reasons and the parent/guardian agrees.

A player is not normally permitted to play in a younger age group unless the Board or authorized Club delegate approves the exception and the governing-body rules permit it.

No team may use an unregistered, ineligible, or improperly assigned player. Use of an ineligible player may result in forfeit and discipline.

PLAYER EQUIPMENT

Shin guards fully covered by socks are mandatory for all players in games and practices. A player without shin guards must leave the field until properly equipped.

Players must wear soccer boots or running shoes suitable for the playing surface.

Goalkeepers must wear a shirt or pinnie clearly distinguishable from both teams and the referee.

Jewelry, casts, braces, headgear, and protective equipment are governed by the Laws of the Game and Ontario Soccer interpretations. The referee decides whether equipment is safe. Wrist casts or similar protective aids should be wrapped in foam, cloth, or other safe covering.

When in doubt, the referee should prioritize player safety.

COACHES, TEAMS AND SPECTATORS

Both teams should be on the same touchline wherever field layout permits. Spectators should be on the opposite touchline.

No coach, player, or spectator may position themselves behind the goal line or coach from behind the goal.

Coaches and substitutes must remain in their team area and must not cross into the opponent's half while coaching.

Players, coaches, and spectators must remain at least two metres from the touchline unless entering or leaving with the referee's permission.

The team official is responsible for helping manage the behaviour of players, substitutes, parents, and spectators connected to the team.

GAME SHEETS AND REPORTING

The home team must provide the approved game sheet unless the Club uses a digital system or assigns this responsibility differently.

The game sheet must be completed legibly before kick-off and must include all required player, coach, and team information.

The referee must record absent players, call-ups, misconduct, injury reports, forfeits, abandonments, and any Take 5 phase used.

The referee is responsible for submitting the game sheet and any required report to the Club within 24 hours, unless the Club publishes a different procedure.

If a match proceeds with a coach/designate because the assigned referee is absent, the winning team, or the home team in a tie, is responsible for ensuring the game sheet reaches the Club within 24 hours.

EQUAL PLAY

Every player must play an equal amount of each game to the greatest degree possible. Equal play also applies across the season.

Coaches should rotate starting positions, substitute fairly, and avoid repeatedly giving the same players extra time.

Equal play applies to regular season games, playoffs, finals, and overtime if used.

The goalkeeper is subject to equal play. Coaches should rotate goalkeeping opportunities unless a player safety, parent request, or player comfort issue requires otherwise.

Late arrivals, early departures, injury, illness, accepted parent requests for reduced play, or cooling-off a player for safety/behaviour do not create a requirement to take playing time away from players who were ready to play.

Referees are not expected to track every player's minutes. If an equal-play issue is raised during the match, the referee may delay the restart briefly to allow the coach to correct the issue and must record the concern/resolution on the game sheet.

SUBSTITUTIONS

Substitutions are unlimited and must occur with the referee's permission. Substitutions must be safe and should not interfere with play.

U9 substitutions may be made on the fly if the Club has assigned a game leader format that permits it.

For U10-U13, substitutions should normally occur at any stoppage with the referee's permission, provided the substitution does not delay the game.

The referee may allow immediate substitution for injury, illness, goalkeeper change, or safety concern.

Substitutes should enter and leave from the team bench side near halfway unless the referee authorizes another safe location.

RETREAT LINE

The retreat line applies on goal kicks and goalkeeper possession in the applicable U8-U13 formats.

When the defending team has a goal kick or goalkeeper possession, opponents must retreat behind the applicable retreat line. The team in possession may restart quickly and does not have to wait for all opponents to retreat if the referee judges the restart to be safe and fair.

Opponents may engage once the ball is touched by another player for the team in possession or once the ball crosses the retreat line, whichever occurs first.

If an opponent deliberately refuses to retreat, interferes with the restart, or gains an unfair advantage, the referee should stop play, manage the behaviour, and restart appropriately.

U9 retreat line: Halfway line.

U11 retreat line: Halfway or final third, depending on field markings approved by the Club.

U13 retreat line: Final third line.

RESTARTS BY AGE GROUP

Restart	U9	U11	U13
Ball over touchline	Pass-in or dribble-in. Opponents 5 metres away.	Pass-in or dribble-in, unless the Club publishes throw-ins for the division. Opponents 5 metres away.	Throw-in. Opponents 5 metres away where the local rules require.
Goal kick	From the penalty/goal area. Opponents retreat to halfway until ball is in play.	From the penalty/goal area. Opponents retreat behind retreat line until ball is in play.	From the penalty area. Opponents retreat behind final-third retreat line until ball is in play.
Corner kick	Corner kick or modified corner restart as approved by MSC. Opponents 5 metres away.	Corner kick. Opponents 5 metres away.	Corner kick. Opponents 5 metres away.
Free kicks	Indirect free kicks only. No penalty kicks.	Indirect free kicks for most offences. Penalty kick may be awarded for deliberate/serious offences in penalty area marking.	Direct/indirect free kicks and penalty kicks as modified by youth rules and the Laws of the Game.
Kick-off	Ball may be kicked in any direction. Opponents retreat at required distance.	Ball may be kicked in any direction. Opponents retreat at required distance.	Ball may be kicked in any direction. Opponents retreat at required distance.

MINIMUM PLAYERS, GRACE PERIOD, ONE-UP RULE AND FORFEITS

Format	Minimum to Start/Continue	Grace Period	One-Up Rule	Forfeit Result
5v5	4 players	10 minutes after scheduled kick-off	Yes. Opponents may play one more player than the short team, up to full strength.	1-0 loss for forfeiting team
7v7	5 players	10 minutes after scheduled kick-off	Yes. Opponents may play one more player than the short team, up to full strength.	1-0 loss for forfeiting team
9v9	6 players	10 minutes after scheduled kick-off	Yes. Opponents may play one more player than the short team, up to full strength.	1-0 loss for forfeiting team

The game should start as soon as both teams have the minimum number of players. The grace period is available only where a team has fewer than the minimum number of players.

If a team falls below the minimum after kick-off, the referee must stop the match and record the forfeit unless the Club director/convenor has authorized a development scrimmage procedure.

After a forfeit, the field time may be used for a friendly scrimmage or practice, but the official match is over.

SCORES AND STANDINGS

Scores and standings will not be published for U8-U13 house league.

Coaches must not run up scores, coach to maximize goal differential, or use tactics that undermine the development purpose of the league.

Where a game becomes one-sided, coaches should adjust positions, encourage passing/build-up play, or use other development-focused strategies to keep the game positive.

GAME CANCELLATIONS, WEATHER AND FIELD SAFETY

Teams must attend the field unless the City of Markham, the Club, the league convenor, or authorized field authority has cancelled the game before arrival.

Once teams are at the field, the referee is the sole authority on field safety and playability.

Games may proceed in rain but must not proceed where lightning, thunder, unsafe field conditions, darkness, or other hazards make play unsafe.

If thunder is heard or lightning is seen, the referee must stop the play and direct participants to safety. Under the house league scheduling model, the game will normally be cancelled rather than resumed after a long delay.

If at least 10 minutes of the second half have been completed before abandonment, the result may stand if the division records results. For U8-U13, the Club may record the game as played for administrative purposes only.

REFEREE NO-SHOW PROCEDURE – INTERNAL YOUTH ONLY

If the assigned referee is late or absent, the two coaches must make reasonable efforts to proceed with the game.

The coaches may agree on a substitute referee or agree that one designate from each team will referee one half. The agreement must be written on the game sheet and signed by both coaches before the game begins.

The game remains an official internal MSC house league game when this procedure is followed.

If the assigned referee arrives late, the assigned referee must take charge for the balance of the game.

This rule applies only to Markham Soccer Club internal house league games. It must not be applied to YRSA interlocking or external competition games unless the external rules permit it.

"TAKE 5" SPECTATOR BEHAVIOUR PROCEDURE

Take 5 applies to MSC 5v5 and 7v7 grassroots matches where Ontario Soccer requires or permits the initiative.

Take 5 is used for spectator behaviour. It is not intended to manage team officials; team officials are managed under the Laws of the Game and discipline rules.

Phase 1 – Warning: When spectator behaviour first crosses the acceptable threshold, the referee pauses the game and instructs the team official to manage the spectator behaviour. No additional time is added.

Phase 2 – Five-Minute Timeout: If negative spectators' behaviour continues, the referee pauses the game for a five-minute timeout. No field activity is permitted during the timeout. No additional time is added.

Phase 3 – Abandonment: If the behaviour persists, or if the referee determines the environment is unsafe, the referee abandons the match and submits the required documentation.

The referee must report any use of Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 to the Club Head Referee and the Club office immediately after the match.

DISCIPLINE, MISCONDUCT AND REFEREE AUTHORITY

The referee has authority to manage misconduct, irresponsible behaviour, unsafe play, and spectator/team official conduct according to the Laws of the Game, Ontario Soccer discipline policies, and these rules.

For U8-U13, referees should use age-appropriate teaching and preventive communication where appropriate. Serious misconduct must still be dealt with firmly and reported.

Threats, discriminatory comments, attempts to intimidate a match official, or behaviour that makes the game unsafe may result in dismissal, abandonment, discipline, and/or further Club action.

All discipline, abandonment, injury, and Take 5 reports must be submitted within the Club's required timeline.

REFEREE QUICK REFERENCE

Topic	Rule
Development priority	Equal play, safety, learning, and enjoyment come before winning.
No standings	No published scores or standings for U8-U13.
Retreat line	Required on goal kicks and goalkeeper possession.
Take 5	Applies to 5v5 and 7v7 spectator behaviour.
Grace period	10 minutes for internal youth house league.
No-show referee	Coaches/designates may proceed only for internal MSC house league.
Reports	Game sheet and any incident reports submitted within 24 hours.