



## 2026 State Cup Invitational Championship

### 11u and 12u 9v9 Competition Rules

The Maryland State Youth Soccer Association, in support from the US Youth National Office, will be holding a State Cup Invitational Event for champions or designated teams from their state association competition for 11u and 12u 9v9 tournament to support the development of the small sided game. The invitational 11u and 12u and under Small Sided Competition is defined as 9-v-9 competition.

The 11u and 12u Small Sided Competition will be conducted under the existing 2025-2026 NCS and Presidents Cup competition rules with the following modifications:

1. 11u and 12u 9v9 competition is played with eight (8) field players and a goalkeeper for each team. It is recommended that all 11u and 12u 9v9 competitions be played on a field that has the field dimension recommended by US Youth Soccer.
  - a. 9 v 9 field of play: 70 – 80 yards length, 45 – 55
  - b. goals should be no larger than 7 feet in height and 21 feet in width with a minimum of 6.5 feet in height and 18.5 feet in width.
2. All 11u and 12u 9v9 teams must be registered with their State Association.
3. Teams advancing to this event should be their 11u or 12u State Association champion or designated team.
4. An 11u and 12u 9v9 team may have a maximum of up to 16 players on its roster. Teams must have at least 50% of their State Cup roster on this event roster but can add club pass players and five players from other clubs as long as that player's team has been eliminated at the state level. The State Association is responsible for approving the event roster. No player shall play for more than one team during the event. Roster freeze date is Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>.
5. A game may not start with fewer than six properly uniformed players on each team. Once started, games may not continue with fewer than six players per team. If a game cannot start or is stopped because a team has fewer than six players, that team shall forfeit the game. A team shall have a 10-minute grace period from the scheduled starting time before a forfeit is declared.
6. Heading: Players in 11u age group are not permitted to head the ball in any match. Whenever the ball strikes a player in the head, play is stopped. If deliberate, then the proper restart is an indirect free kick to the opposing team. If this occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If the play by the head is deemed inadvertent, then the proper restart is a dropped ball.
7. Each player and team official participating in the event must carry a current US Youth Soccer member pass, which must include a recent photograph and signature. Passes can be either electronic or laminated cards issued by the State Association.

8. Match duration will be Two 30-minute halves. Knockout round matches (Semi-Finals and Finals) will proceed directly to Penalty Kicks, if tied, with no extra time played.
9. Substitutions: Unlimited substitutions over three moments per half plus halftime.
10. The HOME team (listed first on the schedule) will wear their light-colored jersey and socks. The VISITING team will wear their darker colored jersey and socks. If there is a conflict, the home team will change.
11. All games will use a #4 ball. The home team will supply the match ball.
12. The winning team will turn in the match report to the headquarters tent at the conclusion of the match (home team if the result is a tie).
13. Each team shall be awarded three points for a win and one point for a tie in the preliminary matches. The division winner shall be the team with the most points. In the event that two or more teams are tied, the tie-breaking rules are as follows:
  - Head-to-head competition (does not apply if more than two teams are involved)
  - Most wins
  - Bonus points – bonus points will be awarded for the difference between goals for and goals against up to a maximum of four (4) per game
  - Fewest goals against
  - Penalty kicks – the F.I.F.A. penalty kick procedure will be used to determine a winner.