

Highland Soccer League Handbook - Summer 2026

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1. Game Laws

All HSL games are to be played under the current “FIFA Laws of the Game” document. Adaptations to these laws are contained in this document.

2. Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures

All matters not included in these rules and regulations shall be dealt with in accordance with the Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Operational Procedures, or any other Soccer Nova Scotia documents that govern the sport of Soccer.

3. League Structure

Start Date: Varies by division, all important dates located in the current season ‘Important Dates’ appendix.

End Date: Varies by division, all important dates located in the current season ‘Important Dates’ appendix.

Game Days: Game days will be those set by each Club when submitting teams for play in the HSL. The HSL may need to move games to alternate days to complete a schedule for any division, but all games will occur during the week (Monday to Friday)

Exception: where games need to be rescheduled, and both teams agree, such games may be played on the weekend.

Game Times: Games will normally begin at 6:30 PM on weeknights (unless a rescheduled weekend date/time as agreed to by both teams).

Playoffs: Playoffs will be held for U13 and higher divisions. See the section “18. Playoffs” section for more details.

4. Schedules

Teams must submit their game day and field 3 weeks prior to the anticipated league start date. This may include ‘no play days’ during the week and up to one tournament weekend (scheduling will try to avoid Friday or Monday games for such weekends).

If enough week’s permit, an “off week” will be created for all divisions in the first week of August (around the August holiday)

Schedules will be posted for the entire season at least one week prior to the start of league play. The only changes to these schedules prior to the start of play will be resolve errors, omissions, or field conflicts.

Games will normally not be cancelled due to poor weather unless an extreme storm warning is issued, or field are closed by authorities. Where a game needs to be cancelled due to poor weather conditions The

league must be contacted at least 4 hours prior to game time and the game shall be considered a rain-out for rescheduling.

5. Rescheduling by Teams

All requests to reschedule a game must first get approval from their CLUB to reschedule. The League will not accept, in fact will ignore any rescheduling requests that come from a TEAM – all requests need to come from the CLUB.

Once club approval is given, the club or team must contact the League to notify them of the rescheduling request. This request must be received by the League no later than seven (7) days prior to the date of the game.

Any schedule change requests from the Club requires payment of an administrative 'rescheduling fee' of \$10, payable to the League. This fee will be calculated annually and billed to each Club at the end of the season.

Once League notification is given the game will be flagged as a 'rain delay' in the schedule and will be subject to one of the following:

1. Played in original schedules date and time (no change).
2. Be successfully rescheduled by reaching an agreed to date, time, and location with the opposing team.
3. Be forfeited by the requesting team for not reaching an agreed to date, time, and location with the opposing team before the original game date.

Rescheduling Procedures

If Club approval to reschedule is given to reschedule, the requesting team must follow these steps to reschedule:

- Step 1. Contact the opposing team coach and receive agreement from the opposing team coach to reschedule the game. The opposing team has the right to decline rescheduling; if the request is declined the game shall either be played as originally scheduled or the game shall be declared a 3-0 and the rescheduling process ends. If the opposing team agrees to rescheduling, the reschedule process shall continue.
- Step 2. The requesting team must reach agreement with the opposing team on a new game date, time, and location with the opposing team coach. If agreement cannot be reached before the original game date the game shall be recorded as a 3-0 forfeit loss by the requesting team.
- Step 3. The requesting team shall notify the League with the rescheduling results (new date, time, location if successful OR notice that they were unable to reschedule the game).

The League will then either reschedule the game or wait until the game date passes and record the game as a forfeit loss.

This notice must occur ON OR BEFORE the originally scheduled game time - failure to agree on a new date, time, and location by this date will result in forfeit loss by the team requesting the reschedule.

Failure to reach agreement with the opposing coach on any of the above items shall result in the game being declared a 3-0 forfeit win for the opposing team, unless the League Coordinator deems:

- (a) The reason for a reschedule request is legitimate and should be permitted or
- (b) It is necessary to play the game due to the importance of the results in league standings.

In such cases, the League Coordinator shall intercede in the rescheduling.

Rescheduling during play-offs is not permitted.

6. Rescheduling by League

Games will be automatically scheduled by the league in cases where:

- The game official does not appear for the match.
- The referee judges the field to be unfit for play.
- Weather factors such as an electrical storm which in the opinion of the referee, warrant not playing the game or its abandonment.
- Other unforeseen circumstances, such as an act of God.

Any reschedules set by the HSL will stand.

7. League Standings

NEW for 2026

Soccer NS has adopted a policy where scores and standings for both U13 divisions will no longer be maintained. Any information in this section only applies to any older divisions (if they exist).

Standings will be calculated points, awarded as follows: 3 points awarded for a win, 1 point awarded for a tie and 0 points awarded for a loss.

Ties in the standings will be broken as follows:

- Step 1. Previous match results between teams tied (not applicable in a "3 or more" team tie)
- Step 2. Goal difference of games between affected teams. A max goal differential of 5 goals per match will be used.
- Step 3. Least goals against based on matches between teams tied. A max goal differential of 5 goals per match will be used.
- Step 4. Penalty kicks (as per FIFA laws of the game)

In cases where more than 2 teams are tied, once a team is eliminated from the tie, the remaining teams shall restart the tie breaking process beginning with Step 2.

Should a division end up with an uneven number of games scheduled for each team, pts % will be used to calculate final standings.

8. Registration

8.1. Team Registration

Teams must be registered by the declaration date as noted in the current season “important dates” appendix.

On this date the club’s declaration form must be filled in and synced to the HSL season structure within the Soccer Nova Scotia Registration System.

A minimum of 1 team contact must be provided and registered at this time including their full contact information (Phone number(s) and e-mail address).

8.2. Player Registration

Teams must have their rosters set in the Soccer Nova Scotia Registration System before the start of league play.

No player shall be deemed registered for participation, nor shall a player compete in the HSL unless they are registered with Soccer Nova Scotia and confirmation of their registration has been forwarded to the league within 24 hours prior to play.

Rosters shall become locked on July 31st. After this time no players may be added to the team’s roster. This does not apply to U9 and U11 Skill Centre divisions.

8.3. Roster Sizes

Roster sizes for the Summer Season must fall within the min and max set out in section 18 of the Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures.

All teams must have the minimum number of players registered to their roster prior to the start of league play.

- U11 Teams – minimum 10 players
- U13 Teams – minimum 14 players

8.4. Coach and Manager Registration

All team coaches and managers participating in the league shall register with Soccer Nova Scotia and shall be subject to all rules and disciplinary procedures of Soccer Nova Scotia.

All team coaches and managers must be CPIC cleared (where applicable). No coach or manager shall sit on the bench during a game without CPIC clearance.

9. Competition Rules

With the exceptions listed below that FIFA Standard Rules of Soccer shall apply to all competitions.

NOTE: The HSL has a separate set of Rule for U11 SC divisions and U9 Jamborees. Where other rules are found in those documents, they take precedence over these competition rules.

9.1. Game Durations

The following game durations shall be followed in any HSL divisions offered:

- U11 – 2 x 35 minutes
- U13 – 2 x 35 minutes
- U15 – 2 x 40 minutes
- U18 – 2 x 45 minutes
- Senior – 2 x 45 minutes

All divisions half time will be five (5) minutes.

9.2. Delayed Kick-off

All games must begin no later than 15 minutes after the scheduled kick-off time.

9.3. Extra Time

There shall be no extra time in regular season play. Regular season games ending in a tie will remain tied.

Play-off games that end in a tie will be decided by penalty kicks from the mark, with 5 kickers, following CSA standards for a shoot-out.

9.4. Ball Size

- U11 – Size 4
- U13 – Size 4
- U15 – Size 5
- U17 – Size 5
- U18 – Size 5
- Senior – Size 5

9.5. Field Dimensions

For age groups U15 and older, field dimensions shall meet be CSA/FIFA minimum and maximum sizes.

U11 Field dimensions shall be between 30-36 metres wide x 40-55 metres long. The goal area should extend 5 metres beyond each goal and extend ten 10 metres into the field of play.

U13 Field dimensions shall be between 42-55 metres wide x 60-75 metres long. The goal area should extend 5 metres beyond each goal and extend ten 10 metres into the field of play.

9.6. Retreat Line

The retreat line will be used for the U11 division, following the rules outlined in the Soccer Nova Scotia Retreat Line Coaching Tool and outlined in the 'HSL Rules and Regulations'.

- The Retreat line shall be marked a distance of one third (1/3) of the field length from the goals line. For U11 and U13 standard field this distance is nineteen (19) metres.

9.7. Match Format

For age groups U15 and older, match format shall be 11 v 11.

For U13 the match format shall be 9 v 9.

For U11 the match format shall be 7 v 7.

For U9 the match format shall be 5 v 5.

9.8. Power Play

Power play may be used for all divisions U11 and below. If one team goes four goals ahead, the other team may field an optional, additional player until the deficit has been reduced to three (3) goals.

9.9. Goal Difference Caps

Teams are to always show respect for their opponents. There will be a goal differential cap for scores posted on the website of 5 in all divisions.

9.10. Substitutions

Youth A/B and Senior A divisions may have unlimited substitutions; however, a maximum of three (3) players may be substituted at the same time (per team).

Substitutions during the game are permitted during a stoppage of play at the referee's discretion.

Re-entry of any prior substituted player is permitted.

9.11. Rosters

Initial team rosters must be finalized prior to the first league game; Changes to team rosters must be finalized by July 31.

Teams may dress up to a total of three (3) more players than the number registered on their roster, up to the maximum roster size.

Only players listed on the game sheet are permitted to participate in a game.

- Teams may use the RAMP 'AP' feature to add call-ups to a team for any game. RAMP automatically enforces any call-up policies that must be followed/

Only team staff (coaches and managers) listed on the game sheet are permitted on the bench during a game.

A player may only appear on one official roster.

9.12. Call-ups

Call-up players may be used by any team as set out in section 12 of the Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Procedures.

10. Team Game Responsibilities

The HOME team is required to provide 2 quality match game balls to the game official.

The HOME team is required to provide the printed game sheet to the game official. The AWAY team must also bring a copy of the printed game sheet in the event the home team does not. **If neither team can provide the game official with a game sheet the game will be considered abandoned and both teams subject to default and may be subject to a fine.**

The HOME team is responsible to provide mesh for the nets. Should mesh not be available the game shall still be played as a regular game.

11. Game Reporting – Home Team

The HOME team is responsible for submitting the full game results through their team login in the Online System.

to the league website within 24 hours of the completion of the game. This includes but is not limited to:

- Final Score
- Players checked in/out (players checked in are the players on the bench for the game that day)
- Goal scorers
- Discipline cards

Exception: U11 Divisions shall only report a score of 0-0, players, and discipline cards (no goal scorers, no actual score)

As part of the game result submission the home team must upload an image of the game sheet in the game results section of the website at the time of entering the results.

Failure to comply with the above game reporting requirements will result in a \$50 fine which must be paid prior to the team's next match.

12. Defaults

Teams must have 7 players ready and available to play within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time or shall forfeit the game. Exception: U11 teams must have minimum of 5 players

Any team forfeiting or defaulting for any reason will be termed the losing team; the score will be recorded as 3-0; and a win will be awarded to the winning team.

A fine will be applied to the forfeiting/defaulting team and must be paid prior to the team's next game.

13. Uniforms and Equipment

Each team participating in the league must declare their primary prior to the first week of the season.

At the discretion of the game official when colors of competing teams are similar, the HOME team shall wear an alternate colour or pinnies.

Goalkeepers shall wear colours which plainly distinguish them from all other players and game officials.

All Jerseys must be clearly numbered. The number of the player's jersey must correspond to the number listed with the player's name on the game sheet and the HSL league website.

Shin guards must be worn by all players at all games.

14. Discipline

The League shall be responsible for all league discipline matters and will administer discipline according to Soccer Nova Scotia guidelines.

Teams shall be responsible for tracking cards received by all team members during a match and entering them into the league management system. Failure to do so will result in a fine.

Teams shall be responsible for tracking the type/number of cards received by a player and sitting such players when required. Failure to do so will result in a fine.

15. Appeals & Protests

The HSL's Discipline committee (ad hoc) shall deal with all protests and appeals. Each hearing held by the league shall be conducted in accordance with Soccer Nova Scotia's Rules and Regulations. All protests shall be submitted in writing to the HSL league no later than twenty-four (24) hours following the conclusion of the match.

All protests and/or appeals must be accompanied by a \$100.00 deposit to be received no later than forty-eight (48) hours following the conclusion of the match. If the protest is successful, the \$100.00 deposit will be returned in full.

All protests and/or appeals will be ruled on within seven (7) business days.

16. Fines

The following fines shall apply to all HSL indoor season games.

- Failure to show up for a game shall result in the following fines:
 - \$50.00 for the first occurrence
 - \$100.00 for the second occurrence
 - \$150.00 plus automatic removal of the team from the league for the third occurrence.
- Where a team is removed from the league, all games played up to the date of the removal will be erased from league standings.
- Failure to submit game result information and game sheets will result in a \$50.00 fine per occurrence.
- Clubs who remove a team after the declaration date shall be subject to a fine of \$150.00 per team removed.
- Clubs who remove a team after the first game in the schedule has been posted shall be subject to a fine of \$250.00.

All surplus fines will be donated to Nova Scotia – KidSport.

17. League Expulsion

Where a team is expelled from the league for any reason OR if a team drops out of the league at such a point where the schedule cannot be balanced, all games played up to the date of removal will be erased from the standings.

18. Playoffs

The League will organize a playoff schedule at the end of the season to determine a team to attend Soccer Nova Scotia Provincials as a Highland region representative. Playoffs will only occur for U13 divisions and higher.

Where possible all playoff games will be held in the week following the end of regular season play. Team should expect to play any night and at any location during the week of playoffs. Given the limited game slots available there will be no rescheduling of playoff games once the schedules are posted.

Where a team not participating in the league but exists within the Highland region, they may challenge for a playoff position, playing the last place team in league standings to a single game hosted by the last place team. The winner of that game will assume that seeding position in the playoffs.

Any division with at least 4 teams will be given an automatic berth in Provincials. If a division has less than 4 teams the playoff winner will participate in a challenge game format established by Soccer Nova Scotia to identify the Provincials representative.

All League teams will participate in playoffs.

- For any division that tracks standings throughout the regular season (U15 and up), those standings will be used to seed teams for the established playoffs, with the playoffs following a single knockout format, and the higher seeded teams awarded home fields throughout the playoffs.
- For any division where standings are not tracked (U13), the League will create a round robin format playoff schedule where standings will be tracked, and the team with the highest standing will be declared the provincial representative.

Home teams will be responsible for payment of game officials.

19. Amendments to the Rules

The rules may be amended from time to time upon a simple majority of votes cast by the HSL Board and will come effect at a time determined by the Board.