

# **Return to Play Guidelines**

## **Low Contact Games**

GUIDELINES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF COVID-19 SPREAD



*Keeping New Brunswickers Safer Together*

July 11, 2020 \*In effect until further notice



## Introduction

This document is intended as a guide allowing the various local leagues and clubs to set up directives to ensure the smooth running of games with Low Contact as part of the resumption of activities during COVID-19.

The reality of each club, each region, each league and each field is different. The directives in the next pages relate to the supervision of the match, particularly at the level of hygiene and sanitary measures.

## Game Protocols

The role of the Field Marshall is retained during games.

- his role is to ensure that players, coaches, referees and any other person on the field and on technical areas wash their hands when they arrive on the field.
- The host club Field Marshall must ensure that the referees' hands are washed and must ask the participation questions.
- Each team has a supervisor, who can be a coach, manager or parent.
- Each supervisor takes care of his own team, not the opponents.
- Each team is responsible for bringing its own disinfectant.
- Participation questions must be asked by the coach, or the supervisor if it's another person, to his own players.
- The team supervisor must be identified on the match sheet. A "hygiene supervisor" function.
- If a player, a referee or coaches answers "YES" to one of the participation questions, he cannot take part in the match and must return home.

### **Arrival to the game**

- Arrival procedures may vary depending on the league, age category, land layout, etc.
- If a match takes place before, it is important to avoid crossovers between the teams.
- The players must arrive dressed ready to start their warm-up.
- We recommend that parents settle around the field only at the start of the match.
- It is mandatory for parents to respect the standards of distancing enforced.

### **Before the match**

- The questionnaire is administered by the supervisor of each team, to their own players. If a breach in hand washing is observed by the official, the official must indicate this in his report at the end of the match.
- The referees must stand two meters apart during the entire pre-match (warm-up included).
- No protocol for the pre-match.
- A distance of 2 meters must be respected during game entry.
- The balls must be disinfected before the match, after having been checked by the referees.
- The receiving club is responsible for disinfecting the game balls.
- The balls can be disinfected with disinfectant wipes, a spray bottle, or directly with a Purell type liquid.
- No sharing of equipment for the referees (whistle, flag, pencils, etc.).
- No sharing of bottled water for players.
- For the bibs of the substitute players, a player cannot wear the bib of a teammate following a change.
- In the case of a match where there is no physiotherapist, each team must have in their possession an emergency kit with gloves and mask so that a responsible person registered on the match sheet can intervene with a player injured.

### **During the match**

- Spitting and group celebrations are not recommended.
- A player should not approach within 2 meters of a referee (with the exception of situations during play where a player could run alongside a referee).
- It is the referee's responsibility to ensure, with discernment, a gradual management of these behaviors.
- On the bench, as everywhere outside the field, the rules of physical distancing must be respected at all times. The mask is recommended, but not mandatory.
- The team supervisor is responsible for the application of these measures for his own team.
- The match balls are disinfected at half-time, by the receiving club.
- The receiving club is responsible for disinfecting the match balls at half-time.

### **After the game**

- No handshake at the end of the match.
- No feedback on the match with the players can be made on the field.

## **Laws of the Game Adjustments:**

Game Rules will follow the FIFA Laws of the Game except for those laws below which have been adjusted or added to reduce the duration, intensity and frequency of physical contact during training and games in order to reduce the risk of Covid-19 spread.

-Free Kicks: Except for Penalty Kicks, all free kicks are in-direct. Fouls that would normally result in a direct free kick that are committed by a defender in their penalty area will be punished by a penalty.

- Walls for Free Kicks: Defenders must be (two) 2 meters apart from one another when creating a wall. After the first verbal warning for failure to comply, a yellow card will be issued for unsportsmanlike behavior.

- Throw-ins: No throw-ins. The ball must be kicked into play. The ball must be placed outside the line. The ball is in play as soon as it enters the Field Of Play. The kick must remain below knee height or an indirect free kick will be awarded to the opponents at the spot of the throw-in. Opponents must be 10 yards from the taking of the kick. No offside on kick-ins.

- Corner kicks: All corner kicks must be kicked in below knee height level. Failure to comply will result in a goal kick to the defending team.

- Drop ball: The drop ball requirement has been removed to reduce handling of the ball and has been converted to an indirect free kick. If the drop ball is inside the penalty area after hitting the Referee, the ball automatically goes to the Goalkeeper. The Referee leaves the ball on the ground, and the Goalkeeper picks it up.

**An in-direct free kick is** awarded when a player intentionally commits any of the following offenses (penalty kick awarded when infringement takes place in penalty area):

- kicking or attempting to kick an opponent
- tripping an opponent
- jumping at an opponent
- charging an opponent in a violent or dangerous manner
- charging an opponent from behind
- striking, attempting to strike, or spitting at an opponent
- holding an opponent
- pushing an opponent

- charging an opponent with shoulder (i.e., shoulder charge)
- sliding at an opponent (i.e., slide tackle)
- No headers are allowed.

- Coin toss: No coin toss. The Home team chooses, every game, at every level.

## Discipline Adjustments:

- Automatic cautions for any players who are involved in face-to-face (but non-mass confrontation) confrontations. Jostling and 'fighting' for space will result in an automatic Yellow Card for Unsportsmanlike Behaviors.

- Physical altercations "away from the ball" will result in an automatic suspension from the match. \*eg. Two players come together and push each other \* A suspension from the match does not put a team down a player.

-Players should refrain from spitting on the field. If a player spits on the field, the referee will issue a verbal warning. If the player spits a second time it will also result in an automatic suspension from the match.

The procedure to suspend a player from the match is simply to identify the player and verbally advise that they are being removed from the match for an infraction of the adjusted rules. The player is not red carded and the suspension from the current match does not impact their ability to play in future matches.

## Process Adjustments:

- The Thunder and Lightning Policy will be adjusted to read that if the game is stopped for severe weather, then the game is over in order to avoid gathering of participants in confined areas.

- Match Officials must come dressed in appropriate gear for the game/training, as dressing rooms are closed during this stage.

- With modified games, a field marshall should be appointed to ensure compliance with social distancing rules and safety protocols. The field marshall should be a recognized authority within the soccer organization. This is not the role of Match Officials.

- When a player is injured, Match Officials may only observe and refer assistance to the applicable team bench. There is to be no Match Official contact with the player. Only team personnel, following proper health and safety protocols may assist the injured player.

- There will be no handshakes or high 5's between players, match officials, coaches before, during or after the game.

- Parents are not permitted to enter the playing field at the end of game or during training.

- When Match Officials are taking part in practical training sessions, they must follow the Soccer NB Return to Play Guide as well as the Province of NB health and safety guidelines.

- All cash/cheque payments to Match Officials at games must be in an envelope/sealed bag.

- Parents/Guardians of youth Match Officials are considered general spectators, therefore at any facility, they must adhere to social distancing rules and all other health and safety protocols. Parents of Match Officials are not permitted to enter the field of play at any time (before, during or after games).

- Match Official assessors and mentors need to respect social distancing guidelines. These activities should take place away from the spectator side of the field of play.

- No goal celebrations are permitted which incorporates physical touching. Verbal warnings will be issued.

-Players should retrieve out of play balls using only their feet. Teams must have a second game ball ready if a ball cannot be retrieved with the feet. It is the responsibility of the home team to ensure the balls are properly inflated. The other ball will be retrieved and disinfected, by the home team, before being used again.

- Postgame discussions between the officiating crew must respect social distancing rules.
- Where applicable, team physiotherapy should be set up at the end of the team benches towards the corner flags. This provides more space in the middle for the 4th Match Official and game announcer.
- It is recommended that Match Officials take the necessary safety precautions to limit the risk of infection for them. Use hand sanitizer upon arrival, when entering and leaving the field of play and before and after handling the game sheet.

## Safety Adjustments:

- Match Officials to regularly complete the COVID-19 Self-Assessment.
- \*If showing symptoms of Covid-19, contact Soccer NB and cancel your assignment and call 811.
- Match Officials to thoroughly wash equipment, towels, clothes, bags, water bottles, and other items after use.
- Individuals to bring a full personal use water bottle(s) and avoid touching or using public water fountains.
- Assistant Referees must provide their own flags.
- Do not share pens, cards, etc.
- Consider wearing a mask when you are not officiating.
- Wash hands prior to leaving for games; bring personal use hand sanitizer to the fields.
- It is recommended that gloves are worn to the field and individuals avoid touching gates, fences, benches, etc.
- After games and at half time, limit your distance to two (2) meters (6 feet) from others.
- No contact with others, such as hand shaking, fist bumps and high fives.
- Leave the field as soon as reasonably possible after training or games.
- No post training/game socializing.
- Match Officials have the right to abandon any game where the required COVID-19 protocols are not being followed. In these cases, it must be reported on the game sheet and to the Field Marshall.

## Officiating Adjustments:

- Pre-game meetings with Coaches and/or Assessors can take place, if done with physical distancing.
- Player inspections may still be completed, but must be at a distance of no less than two (2) meters (6 feet).
- Assistant Referees must stand a minimum of two (2) meters (6 feet) from the kicker during corner kicks.
- Match Officials are to avoid handling the ball (i.e. free kicks), by directing direct the player to retrieve the ball themselves and indicating the spot of the IFK from a safe distance.

## Referee Checklist

Use this checklist to help prepare for the pitch safely.

### Before you Leave Home

- DO NOT leave home if you are feeling unwell or showing signs of COVID-19 Symptoms (Fever, Cough, Shortness of Breath, Sore Throat or Runny Nose). You MUST contact your Soccer NB referee assignor with as much notice as possible in this case.
- Check for fields closures.
- Eat before you come as food is discouraged on premises.
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- Thoroughly wash water bottles with soap and warm water.
- Clean and sanitize your referee equipment (whistle, card wallet, pen/pencil)
- Use the washroom.
- Register your attendance for contact tracing (This takes place when you accept your assignment).
- Ensure that you have attended the Referee COVID webinar and have reviewed ALL related instructions.
- Ensure that you have submitted your signed waiver and declaration form to your referee assignor.

### Arrival at Field/Facility

- Respect physical distancing guidelines, including 'cohort' players, prior to game.
- Consider bringing personal hand sanitizer.
- Perform standard field/net check, maintaining/requesting physical distancing as needed. Check in particular for any items that may endanger health (e.g. discarded medical gloves, masks etc.)
- Assist coaches with checking of game sheet and player cards (Procedure in appendix 13)
- Oversee sanitizing of game ball and 2 spares. Then check and adjust ball pressure BEFORE it has been touched by any other person. Avoid touching the ball with your hands unnecessarily after this step.

### During activity at Field/Facility

- Practice respiratory etiquette (sneeze/cough into arm, no spitting, no clearing nasal passages)
- Where possible, do NOT blow your whistle within 12 feet of any player.
- Refrain from shaking hands, fist bumps, or high fives.
- Refrain from touching face, eyes, nose, mouth with hands; wash/sanitize hands regularly
- Maintain 2 meters distance when speaking to a player or showing a yellow or red card.
- Maintain 2 meters distance from any physical altercation.