



2025 BOSTON UNITY CUP TOURNAMENT RULES

updated as of March 6th, 2025

Section 1 - TOURNAMENT PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

- Respect the referees, fans, players, volunteers, staff members and coaches.
- Promote and demonstrate good sportsmanship.
- Play a fair and respectful game.
- Watch and cheer in a respectful manner.
- No derogatory comments/chants towards opposing teams.
- The consumption or use of alcohol or drugs is prohibited.
- Physical or verbal assaults **will not be tolerated**.
- Represent your country and culture loud and proud.
- Be a driving factor in bringing our communities together.
- Use the sport of soccer to unite people and their cultures.
- Be a good example and role model for the youth, the community, and the city of Boston
- HAVE FUN!

Section 2 - ROSTERS

- Max roster size is 18 players. Roster freeze date is June 23, 2025. After that no players can be added or dropped.
- All 18 players named on the roster may dress for each game.
- All players on the roster must submit their number during their first appearance. After this, that player may not change their roster number.
- All players present must be listed on the Official Unity Cup roster with a photo in order to participate in that particular match.
- Un-rostered players cannot participate in the match as a player or coach.
- ***NEW IN 2025*** If an un-rostered player takes the field of play at any point during a match, the offending team will forfeit the match and receive a team red card towards the team's Fair Play Points.
 - This violation will hurt the team's good standing for future tournaments.

- Teams must field a minimum of 5 players (4+GK) to begin the game.
- Each team may only have a maximum of 3 coaches/managers on their sideline, and must wear an official Unity Cup coach jersey.

Section 3 - UNIFORMS

- All players must wear official **2025** Unity Cup jerseys to enter a game. (matching socks and shorts are recommended).
- Players who do not have their jerseys will not be allowed to enter the game.
- Teams will receive their team jerseys when checking in for the first game - jerseys are the team's to keep!
- All players are required to wear shin guards - **no exceptions**.
- No metal cleats are permitted.
- **Wristbands, necklaces, and earrings (etc) are prohibited.**
- Head coverings may only be worn by players on the field of play for religious and/ or cultural reasons, such as hijabs, turbans, or similar items

Section 4 - SUBSTITUTIONS

- Unlimited substitutions may be made with the referee's permission at any stoppage.
- Referees will use their judgment in allowing substitutions during times when opponents have the opportunity to restart play quickly.
- Before entering the field, substitutes must check-in for the game with the Unity Cup scorekeeper at the half-way line.

Section 5 - GAME PLAY & GENERAL INFORMATION

- The field dimensions will be 35 yards wide and 55 yards long
- The penalty box is 25 yards wide and 12 yards long
- Penalty/Spot kicks will be taken 8 yards away from the goal
- Slide tackling is allowed
- Goalkeepers can play the ball to any part of the field
- Offsides will not be enforced

Section 6 - GAME TIME

- All games are 2 – 25 minute halves in length with a 5 minute halftime break.
- There is no grace period. All games will start and end on time so the clock will start whether the team is ready or not.
- We recommend that teams are dressed and warmed up at least 15 minutes before the scheduled game time.
- There is no stoppage time. The clock will run during stoppages and player injuries.

- ***Updated for 2025*** If the referee is not present at the time of kick-off. Boston Unity Cup will begin the following procedure:
 - A 10-minute clock is started for the referee to arrive. This clock will not eat into game-time
 - The Boston Unity Cup commissioner will begin to check both team's players in, allowing both a swift start upon the referees arrival
 - If after 10 minutes the referee is not present, one representative party (captain, coach, or nominated player) will meet with the Tournament commissioner regarding the status of the game.
 - The following will be the options:
 - A) Play the game with a member of Boston Unity Cup Staff serving as acting referee
 - B) Postpone the match to an agreeable date & time so match can be played with a designated referee
 - C) End the match in a 0-0 tie
 - If Option A is selected and the referee arrives, they will resume responsibility of the match at half time

Section 7 - FOULS & MISCONDUCT

- A foul occurs if a player:
 - Holds an opponent
 - Handles the ball during play
 - Plays in a dangerous manner (e.g. attempting to kick the ball while held by goalkeeper)
 - Prevents the goalie from releasing the ball from his hands AND when a player commits the following in a manner that the ref considers careless, serious, reckless, or involving excessive force:
 - Kicks or trips an opponent
 - Pushes, jumps at, charges at, strikes, or elbows an opponent, teammate, referee or staff member
- All major fouls shall be penalized by awarding a Direct Free Kick. A defensive player(s) must stand 5 yards away from all kicks.
- Should a player intentionally commit one of these offenses within their own penalty area, it will result in a Penalty Kick. All Penalty Kicks shall be 8 yards from the goal.

Section 8 - RED & YELLOW CARDS

- Yellow cards accumulate through group play. Upon receiving a second yellow card during group play, the player will receive a one (1) game suspension. Yellow cards will reset at the conclusion of group play.

- Yellow cards accumulate through the knockout round. Upon receiving a second yellow card during the knockout round, the player will receive a one (1) game suspension.
- If a player receives a red card at any time, the player will leave that game immediately and will also serve a minimum one (1) game suspension.
 - Red cards do not reset at any point during the tournament.
- Cards and minimum suspensions due to cards **are not appealable**
 - Even with clear and conclusive video evidence, cards and minimum suspensions are not appealable and a review process will not be conducted

Section 9 - GROUP STAGE GAMES

- There will be a max goal differential of 6 goals for all group stage games (i.e. a score of 9-1 will result in a goal differential of 6 goals rather than 8 goals)
- If teams are tied at the end of regulation, each team is awarded a tie and 1 point in the group standings.
- In the event a game is called for poor-sportsmanship the following will occur:
 - If both teams are guilty of the behavior, each team will receive **0 Points**
 - If one team is guilty of the behavior, their opponent will receive **3 Points and a 2-0 Goal Differential**

Section 10 - GROUP STANDINGS

- There will be a max goal differential of 6 goals for all group stage games (i.e. a score of 9-1 will result in a goal differential of 6 goals rather than 8 goals).
- The following point values will determine standings for group stage games:
 - WIN = three (3) points
 - TIE = one (1) point
 - LOSS = zero (0) points
- The following criteria is used for standings purposes:
 1. Greatest number of points in all group-stage matches
 2. Head-to-head group play outcome
 3. Fair Play Points
 4. Least number of goals allowed in group stage matches
 5. Goal difference in group stage matches
 6. Coin toss

Section 11 - FAIR PLAY POINT TIEBREAKER

If two teams are tied after group stage points and head-to-head outcome, then we will employ FIFA's Fair Play system which would work in the following way:

- Yellow Card: +1 Fair Play Point
- Red Card: +3 Fair Play Points

In the event the tie-breaker is enacted, the team with fewer Fair Play points will be higher in the standings.

Sample Group Stage Table

	W	L	D	GF	GA	GD	FP	YC	RC
Team 1	2	0	1	10	3	+7	2	2	0
Team 2	1	1	1	6	6	0	4	1	1
Team 3	1	1	1	7	4	+3	5	5	0
Team 4	0	2	1	0	10	-10	10	4	2

Section 12 - KNOCK OUT STAGES

- In the Women's bracket, all 8 teams will advance to the knock-out stage, in the following format
 - Group A 1st v Group B 4th
 - Group A 2nd v Group B 3rd
 - Group A 3rd v Group B 2nd
 - Group A 4th v Group B 1st
- In the Men's bracket the top 2 teams in each group will advance automatically to the knockout stage.
- The following is the format for the first round of knock-out games:
 - Winner A v. Runner-up B
 - Winner B v. Runner-up A
 - Winner C v. Runner-up D
 - Winner D v. Runner-up C
 - Winner E v. Runner-up F
 - Winner F v. Runner-up E
 - Winner G v. Runner-up H
 - Winner H v. Runner-up G
- In the event of a tie in either the women's or men's bracket, the following will be used to determine the higher seed
 1. Head-to-Head matchup winner
 2. Least number fair play points
 3. Least number of goals allowed in group-stage matches
 4. Goal difference in group-stage matches

5. Coin toss

Section 13 - KNOCKOUT STAGES - OVERTIME RULES **Clarified for 2025**

- During the knockout stages of the tournament, ties are not allowed. In the event that a match finishes regulation time with both teams tied, an overtime period will be played.
- The overtime rules are:
 - 1 x 5-minute period of continuous play (no stoppage time)
 - Golden goal, first team to score wins
 - All yellow and red cards carry over into the overtime period
 - If a player receives their second yellow card of the match, they are unavailable for the remainder of the overtime period, shootout, and the next match if their team advances
 - If a team received a red card during regulation, their team continues to play down a player(s) for the respective red cards
- If teams are still tied at the end of overtime, a 3-round penalty shootout will determine the tie-breaker:
 - All penalty takers and goalkeepers must be **on-field** at the end of the 5-minute overtime period. Players on the bench at the conclusion of overtime **cannot** take penalties or play goalkeeper.
 - Players & coaches on the bench at the end of overtime **must stay** on the bench until the penalty shoot-out has concluded.
 - The referee will conduct a coin toss to determine the team who shoots first
 - 3 penalty-takers for each team.
 - After 3 rounds of shots, the winner is decided.
 - If teams are still tied after 3 rounds, sudden death rounds begin. 1 penalty taken per team until 1 team scores and the other misses in the same round.
 - If teams remain tied after all players and goalkeepers have taken a penalty, the order of penalty takers restarts. Sudden death rule still applies.

Section 14 - FORFEITS - **Updated for 2025**

- Teams must be able to field 5 players (4 field players and 1 goalkeeper)
- Teams are provided with a 10-minute grace period to field the minimum number of players.
- This grace period is tracked by the match referee or acting BUC Staff referee (in the event referee is not present) and acts as running time
- When/If the game can be played, play will start immediately in the corresponding minute of the referee's running time.
- If a team is unable to field the minimum number of players, by the end of the running time, they will automatically forfeit the match 2-0

- The team who forfeits will be awarded 0 points in the standings and their opponent will receive 3 points in the standings and a +2 goal differential.
- Forfeits affect the good standing of a team and potential future invitations to play in tournaments.

Section 15A - TEAM BENCH BEHAVIOR

- Coaches are responsible for all persons on their bench
- There should be no more than 18 players and 3 coaches on the bench at any time
- Players must always be in game jersey, even if injured
- There should be no persons on the bench who are non-players or non-coaches, including children. In the event this occurs, the head coach will receive an automatic yellow card. This yellow card will count towards fair play point calculations.
- In the event of a player or coach leaving the bench and entering the playing area to escalate or engage in an altercation, the referee and Tournament Commissioner reserve the right to warn, eject, or suspend any involved parties.
- In the event a player is red carded, they will be ineligible to play the remainder of the game. The offending team will play down a player the remainder of the game.
- In the event of excessive individual, group, or team celebration, parties are susceptible to warnings, cards, or ejections from the game, to the discretion of the referee. These excessive celebrations can include, but are not limited to, entering the field of play to celebrate, taking off your shirt, and/or taunting an opposing player/fan".

Section 15B - Technical Areas: **New in 2025**

- Each team bench will have a technical area outlined by cones.
- All coaches and bench players must remain within the technical area throughout the game.
- A maximum of 3 warnings will be given to each team for technical area infractions. Any subsequent infractions will result in a yellow card being applied to the team's Fair Play Points.
- Players and Coaches may leave the technical area for the following:
 - Players can warm-up behind the team bench.
 - Substitutes can leave the technical area to check-in for the game with a Unity Cup scorekeeper at the midfield line.
 - After play has been stopped, Coaches may address an on-field injury or medical emergency pertaining to their player.

Section 16 - FANS + SPECTATORS **New in 2025**

- Spectators are not permitted to be on the field during games.

- Team captains are responsible for discussing appropriate behavior with their fans.

Section 17 - USE OF TECHNOLOGY **New in 2025**

- Boston Unity Cup defines technology in this setting as the following:
 - Phones, camera, or devices that take photography, videography, audio, and/or record games for the use of a party, and the usage of said captured media
- Players, Coaches, Teams, and Fans are permitted to use technology to record or photograph the game for their **personal or professional usage**.
- **This is an amateur tournament, TECHNOLOGY CANNOT AND WILL NOT** be used to overturn on-field decisions whether in the moment or retroactively. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Goal vs No Goal Decisions
 - Yellow or Red Cards
 - Penalty Vs Non-Penalty Calls
 - Fouls
- Individuals or groups using technology must abide to outlined rules for their respective roles
 - **Fans:**
 - Must remain behind outlined areas. They are not permitted on the bench, sidelines, behind the goal lines at any point
 - **Coaches & Players:**
 - If players and coaches use technology, this must be done within the confines of their team's technical area.
 - Parties may not leave technical area while using technology
 - **Harnessable technology**
 - Harnessable technology defines technology in this setting such as, but not limited to, body cameras, clip-on microphones, go-pros.
 - Harnessable technology is only permitted to be worn within the confines of a teams technical area
 - Players are not allowed to enter the playing area while actively wearing a form of harnessable technology
 - **Unmanned Game Recording Devices:**
 - Devices that are used to record entire games may be used if used in one of three approved places
 1. In team's technical area, safely away from the sideline
 2. At the mid-field line, safely away from the sideline
 3. In a designated fan area
 - Once a device has been set and starts recording, it may not be moved unless asked to do so by the referee or tournament staff

- The use of unmanned drones are prohibited while Tournament activities are in place, unless specifically approved by tournament staff
 - Failure to comply with any of the outlined rules will result in repercussions for the offending team(s). These repercussions include but are not limited to:
 - Yellow or Red cards being assessed to teams & coaches
 - Inability to use technology for remainder of game(s) or tournament
 - Good standing with the tournament
 - Future tournament participation
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Section 18 - INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event that a portion of the game schedule is suspended due to weather (or for any other reason), the following rules will apply:

- Inclement weather is defined by lightning in the area, torrential rains, and heat index monitoring. Decisions to play, pause, or cancel are at the discretion of Tournament Officials in consultation with the City of Boston health officials.
- ****Updated for 2025**** We follow the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Associations policy on resuming play following lightning. This policy is as follows
 - **If lightning is within five miles**, with or without hearing thunder, the game(s) should be suspended and shelter sought.
 - Mass Youth Soccer recommends that participants seek immediate shelter in their automobiles or a designated severe weather shelter, if there is one nearby.
 - **Games should not be restarted for at least 30 minutes after the last lightning strike is seen or a roll of thunder is heard.**
- In the event of a stoppage, games that have completed a half, or are in the second half, will be deemed completed and the score at the time of the stoppage will stand.
- In the event of a stoppage, the Tournament Committee and the Referee Director will determine when it is safe to restart play. Games will resume on the original schedule with the next scheduled time slot due to play. (i.e. if it is safe to play at 3:45 PM, games will recommence with those teams regularly scheduled for 4:00 PM.)
- If a game starts late due to weather, the referee will manage game time retroactively (i.e. if a 3:00 PM game begins at 3:15 PM, the teams will play the final 10 minutes of the first half then break for halftime and resume a full 25 minute second half)
- Games stopped during the first half and unable to resume, or games not played due to stoppage, will be decided by the following:
 - If the winning team is leading by 3 or more goals, the match will be assumed as completed. The teams will be awarded the respective points and goal differential

- If the teams are tied, or the leading team is ahead by 2 goals or less, teams will be awarded the opportunity to have a best of 3 penalty shootout to determine the match winner
 - The winning team will be awarded 3 points
 - The score line of the penalty shootout will determine the goal differential for the table standing
 - Same rules apply as outlined in [Section 13](#)
 - If teams cannot agree to a shootout, the match winner will be determined by a coin flip.
 - Coin flips will be done by the team captain/manager and overseen by both the game referee and Tournament Commissioner
 - The team leading will have the right to call heads or tails
 - The winning team of the coin flip will assume 3 points and 2-0 goal differential
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Section 19A - CODE OF CONDUCT + ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

The Boston Unity Cup requires proper conduct by all players, coaches, fans, and volunteers. We have **zero tolerance** for any of the unruly behaviors listed below and will remove a team from tournament play for any/all behaviors deemed harmful to the mission of the tournament.

Section 19B - UNRULY PLAYER + TEAM BEHAVIOR INCLUDES:

- Deliberately striking or kicking or attempting to kick, throwing a soccer ball at, or spitting on an opponent, volunteer, staff member, referee, or fan
- Fighting (engaging in combat with an opponent, colleague or spectators by means of mutual exchange of blows delivered by hand, head, foot or other portions of the body)
- Obscene gestures towards an opponent, volunteer, staff member, referee, or fan
- Abusive and/or threatening language towards an opponent, volunteer, staff member, referee, or fan
- Abusive and/or threatening behavior towards an opponent, volunteer, staff member, referee, or fan
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages and/or use of illegal substances in the vicinity of the playing field before, during or after the game

Section 19C - UNRULY TEAM FAN + VOLUNTEER BEHAVIOR

- All behaviors listed above apply to fans, spectators, and team volunteers
- Teams are responsible for the conduct of their players, fans, and volunteers

- In extreme cases, unruly behavior may penalize the team
 - At the referee's discretion, he/she may suspend and/or forfeit a match in the case of unruly fan behavior
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Section 20A - CONSEQUENCES FOR UNRULY BEHAVIOR

Section 20B - Suspensions for misconduct towards game officials:

- Any assault on a game official will carry a five (5) year suspension from all Unity Cup activities
- Deliberately striking or kicking or attempting to kick, throwing a soccer ball at, or spitting on a referee or assistant referee will carry a suspension for the rest of the tournament plus suspension from the subsequent year's tournament.
- Gesturing or signaling obscenely at a referee or assistant referee will carry a one (1) game suspension
- Abusive language towards a referee or assistant referee will carry a one (1) game suspension
- Dissent, whether physical or verbal, expressing of differing opinion will carry a one (1) game suspension
- The above suspensions are to be considered minimum. The Unity Cup Sportsmanship Committee reserves the right to increase the suspension based on the severity of the violation. Situations not listed will be reviewed by the Unity Cup Sportsmanship Committee.

Section 20C - Suspensions for misconduct towards an opponent, volunteer, staff member, colleague or spectator:

- Fighting (engaging in combat with an opponent, volunteer, teammate, staff member, or spectator by means of mutual exchange of blows delivered by hand, head, foot or other portions of the body) will carry a suspension through the rest of the tournament plus suspension from the subsequent year's tournament
- Deliberately attempting to strike or kick an opponent, volunteer, teammate, staff member, or spectator will carry a two (2) game suspension
- The verbal threat of bodily harm or to property, gesturing or signaling obscenely, the throwing of objects at an opponent, volunteer, teammate, staff member, or spectator will carry a two (2) game suspension
- The above suspensions are to be considered minimum. The Unity Cup Sportsmanship Committee reserves the right to increase the suspension based on the severity of the

violation. Situations not listed will be reviewed by the Unity Cup Sportsmanship Committee.

Section 20D - Suspensions for serious foul play and persistent misconduct:

- Serious foul play shall be understood to be play characterized by fouls of an aggravated nature committed with such fervor as to threaten an opponent with serious physical harm and will carry a minimum one (1) game suspension with subsequent review
- Suspension for abusive language directed at an opponent, volunteer, teammate, staff member, or spectator will carry a one (1) game suspension
- Persistent misconduct will carry a one (1) game suspension
- The above suspensions are to be considered minimum. The Unity Cup Sportsmanship Committee reserves the right to increase the suspension based on the severity of the violation. Situations not listed will be reviewed by the Unity Cup Sportsmanship Committee.