



2026 US Youth Soccer National Championship Series

PA WEST SOCCER STATE CUP

Ground Rules for Entry

The purpose of this competition is to determine the PA West Soccer representative for the respective age groups at the East Region Tournament of Champions. Should a team win the regional competition, that team will represent PA West Soccer and the East Region in the US Youth Soccer National Championships.

Please note: US Youth Soccer is the governing body for all of these competitions, and as such, we must also abide by their rules of competition found at: [National Championships - US Youth Soccer](#) as amended by the state association. It is further understood that teams entering this competition will be expected to pay all necessary fees, travel, and other expenses to meet their obligations for entry into this tournament.

A team entering the competition must play and complete all its scheduled games. Therefore, a team that withdraws from the tournament prior to the start of the first game of the competition shall default their games and forfeit the sum of the entry fee; if the tournament schedule has been posted then the team is subject to additional disciplinary action as set forth by the State Cup Disciplinary Committee. After the start of tournament play, any team that fails to complete or to play any game in the PA West Soccer State Cup Competition will invalidate all its results and will be fined a sum of \$500.00 in addition to losing its entry fee. A team failing to attend or to play all its games to completion at the regional or national competition shall be fined a maximum of \$3,000.00 or whatever amount is assessed by the regional or national governing bodies. They shall also pay any additional costs that may be incurred. It is understood that this competition shall be conducted in accordance with the East Region and US Youth Soccer National Championship Series Rules and that PA West Soccer does not have the right to waive or change any of those rules except in the following pages. It is further understood that all PA West Soccer State Cup Rules receive approval from the Regional Committee prior to the actual state competition.

This is a restricted tournament. To be eligible to play in the PA West Soccer State Cup and subsequent Regional and National Championship games, a team must play in a PA West Soccer-sanctioned League and be in good standing with said league. All U11, 12U, 13U, and 14U teams must play in both the fall and spring sessions of said PA West Soccer-sanctioned league to be eligible to compete in the PA West Soccer State Cup.

Pre-Tournament Rules

An entry form and an entry check in the amount of \$645.00 must be received by the State Office postmarked no later than **February ,14 2026**, or hand-delivered to the State Office by 4:00 PM on **Friday February 13, 2026**. All team entries must be accompanied by a club check (club checks may cover the entry fee for multiple teams). Any team entry received after 4:00 PM on **February 14 2026**, or that is not postmarked on February 14, or before and before the tournament draw will be subject to a \$1,000.00 late fee.

Once the tournament draw has been held the competition's field will be set.

Once a team's entry form and fees have been received, there will be NO refund for withdrawals.

It is understood that a team must enter to be eligible to participate in the tournament and advance to the **National tournament**. At no time is entry a guarantee of games.

Please note:

Rules require all teams intending to play during the spring playing session to declare their team by Feb 1, 2026.

There will be no exceptions.

Any club entering a 18/19U team must declare their team no later than **February 1, 2026**, by completing the PA West Soccer spring classic registration and paying the PA West Soccer registration fee per PA West Soccer Youth Division Rules.

1. All teams entered must complete the online credentials check. Information will be emailed to each team with instructions. Teams who fail to have their credentials checked by this date will be disqualified from the tournament, will forfeit all fees, and face possible disciplinary action from the State Cup Committee.
2. Scheduling variances forms must accompany the original application submitted. No other requests will be considered. PLEASE NOTE: SATs and High School graduations are the ONLY requests that will be considered.
3. Rosters for all teams in age **groups U-11/ u12-u17** will be frozen **at 4:00 PM on Feb 27th, 2026**. The U18/19 age group will be frozen at 4:00pm on **May 1st, 2026**.
4. If authorized by the State Cup Committee, off-site games can be deemed "on-site "games".
5. It shall be the responsibility of the Youth Board President in consultation with the Tournament Director to certify the eligibility of competing teams for the East Region Tournament.
6. Teams entering this competition are expected to pay all necessary fees, travel, and other expenses to meet its obligations for entry in this tournament including advancement to the national competition.

Tournament Rules Competition Format:

13U-19U 11 v 11 Competition

The tournament shall offer U11-U12 9v9 and 13U-18/19U 11 v 11 competitions for all eligible age groups

The tournament will be played using a single elimination format for ages 13U-18/19U.

In determining wildcard positions for those age groups with brackets with uneven numbers:

a) The team with the next best record from the bracket with the fewer number of teams shall be tied with the team with the next best record on the bracket with the higher number of teams

b) Tie between the teams shall be broken by adding points earned (3-win, 1-tie, 0-loss) and

Goals Differential divided by the number of games played. (Example: 0-1-1 record, 1 point; GD

$1 \dots 1 + -1 = 0 / 2 = 0$)

The top four teams in the 13U-19U age groups will be seeded provided they maintain roster continuity

(half plus one). The Champion will be seeded #1. The Finalist will be seeded #2. The semi-finalist losing to the Champion will be seeded #3. The semi-finalist losing to the Finalist will be seeded #4. All others will be placed in the competition field using a blind draw. The results of the prior year's State Cup will be used to determine the 13U-19U seeds. Therefore, U11 and U12 will not have seeding.

If any of the previous year's State Cup semi-finalists are not seeded for any number of reasons in this year's State Cup, no other team will be seeded. The remaining teams will be placed in a blind draw. The Blind Draw date will be announced via the web page but will be completed by February 27, 2026.

In age groups with odd numbers of entries and/or pairings, the competition will incorporate byes as needed in the opening rounds dependent upon the total number of teams participating.

First and Second Round Games- The first and second round games will be played as self-scheduled matches outside the normal event structure. With the home team securing an acceptable field. In the second round of games, the team that had a bye in the first round will be the home team in the second round of games.

The team drawn into the home slot in the draw will host the first-round game. Game field for these games - all match locations must be communicated to the cup committee in advance and approved by the committee. The State cup committee recommendation is that clubs hosting on turf to improve the conditions of the matches to avoid cancellations/rescheduling due to rain and field closures.

The teams will agree to the date and time. If an agreement cannot be made between the two teams, then the State cup committee will determine the date and time.

First-round play: Games are to be played beginning on March 16, 2026, and must be completed by April 10, 2026.

Second-round play: Games are to be played beginning on April 10, 2026, and must be completed by May 8, 2026.

If there are NO FIRST-ROUND GAMES, the second-round window will be March 16-May 8, 2026.

Tie Breakers for all games: 13U, and 14U age groups, the overtime period will be 2–10-minute halves.

For older age groups (15U and above), the overtime period will be 2–15-minute halves.

2. If a game is still tied after the end of overtime play, FIFA “Kicks from the Penalty Mark” rules will apply to determine the winner.

The result must be reported by the winning team to the State Cup designee within 24 hours.

U11-12U 9v9 Competition

The tournament shall offer a 9 v 9 Competition for the 11-12U age group player: roster size max. 16 players.

The 11-12U age group shall play using a round-robin format.

The 11-12U Competition shall have no seeded entries with the field being blind drawn into groups of four (4). If entries don't equal 4, 8, 12, or 16 play groups of three (3) shall be acceptable.

11-12U Round Robin Each age group, both boys and girls, will be divided into four sub-groups. The teams in each sub-group will play one another in a round-robin. Advancement to the semi-final bracket of each age group, both boys and girls, is determined by the round-robin results.

a. One Group of Four Teams: Teams are placed 1, 2, 3, 4, and #1 will play #4, and #2 will play #3.

The winners of those two games will play in the final.

b. Two Sub-Groups of Four Teams: SF#1: Group A Winner vs. Group B Runner-up. SF#2: Group B Winner vs. Group A Runner-up.

c. Three Sub-Groups: SF#1: Group A Winner vs. the Wildcard. SF#2: Group B Winner vs. Group C Winner. If the wildcard comes from Group A, then the Group B Winner plays the wildcard in SF #2 and the Group A Winner plays the Group C Winner in SF#1.

d. Four Sub-Groups: SF#1: Group A Winner vs. Group D Winner. SF#2: Group Winner B vs. Group Winner C.

e. One Group of Three teams: The winner will be determined by round-robin play with #1 playing #2 in the final.

f. One Group of Two teams: Two games aggregate goals.

g. Tie Breakers for semifinal and finals for 12U, the overtime period will be 2–10-minute halves

h. If a game is still tied after the end of overtime play, FIFA “Kicks from the Penalty Mark” rules will apply to determine the winner.

Point System for Pool Play Points: Win = 3 points Tie = 1 point Loss = 0 points

The winning teams shall be awarded bonus points for a goal differential up to a maximum of four points per game. (Thus, a team winning 6 -2 or 7 - 0 would receive a maximum of four (4) bonus points).

At the end of Pool play, the bracket winner shall be the team with the most points (bonus points shall be used only as tiebreakers) in their bracket. In case of a tie within a bracket, the following criteria shall be used to determine the winner:

a) Head-to-head competition. (In the event of a tie among three or more teams, this criterion will not be considered). Then,

b) Most wins, then

c) Most bonus points (see the section on forfeited games in scoring forfeits for tie-breaking purposes)

d) Goals against, and finally

e) FIFA penalty kick thirty minutes prior to the scheduled play-off round game.

g. Tie Breakers for semifinal and finals for 12U, the overtime period will be 2–10-minute halves.

h. If a game is still tied after the end of overtime play, FIFA “Kicks from the Penalty Mark” rules will apply to determine the winner.

The State Cup Committee shall determine the nature and site(s) for all semifinal and final games and approve all first and second-round game sites.

2025 State Cup Rosters

- Teams for U13 and older will be seeded based on the 2025 state cup results. Up to 4 seeds per age/gender group.

- To be seeded you must have been a semi-finalist, finalist, or champion in the 2025 state cup and your 2025 state cup roster must have at least HALF PLUS ONE of its players from the 2025 state cup roster.

- o Example- If your 2026 state cup roster has 18 players on it, at least 10 of those players had to be on your 2025 state cup roster to maintain your seed.

- U13 through U19 teams must maintain a roster continuity of nine (9) continuous players throughout the State, and National levels of the National Championship competitions. For regions that host competitions in the 11- 12U age group, 11-12U teams must maintain a roster continuity of eight (8) continuous players throughout the State and National competitions.