



Referee Handbook
Rules of Competition
Game Day Procedures
2021-22 Season

MLS Next Referee Game Day Protocol 2021-22

Season August 2021 thru June 2022 update Jan 2-2022

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Section 1: Introduction

The MLS NEXT established in 2020, all Male age groups U13-U19 Youth Soccer League comprised of 130 clubs over 550 teams competing across the United States and Canada.

The MLS NEXT is sanctioned by MLS as an affiliate of the United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer).

Competition is organized in four distinct Conferences:

East Conference (2 Divisions: Mid-Atlantic and Northeast)

South Conference (2 Divisions: Southeast and Florida)

Central Conference (2 Divisions: Mid-America and Frontier)

West Conference (2 Divisions: Southwest and Northwest)

The MLS NEXT aspires to provide the highest level of soccer and strives to continuously raise the overall standard of play in all age groups.

Officiating game assignments are made through a network of National and selected local Assignors in coordination with Officials Management Group and the MLS NEXT League Operations.

Section 2: MLS NEXT Primary Game Day Contacts

- 1) **Jason Brooks**.....(404) 919-5972
Competition Coordinator,
jason.brooks@MLSsoccer.com
➤ **Primary game day contact**
(player eligibility, game day issues weather, field conditions, teams, emergencies, Rules of Competition, Return To Play Policies)
- 2) **Chris Schuler**.....(630) 854-8004
Chris.Schuler@MLSsoccer.com
Competition Senior Coordinator, Player Development
➤ **Second game day contact**
(player eligibility, game day issues weather, field conditions, teams, emergencies, Rules of Competition, Return To Play Policies)
- 3) **TBD**.....(TBD)
➤ **Third game day contact**
(TBD)
- 4) **Ryan Miller**.....(224) 659-9069
MOD11 Digital Match Form Management
rmiller@modular11.com
➤ **Primary MOD11 Contact**
(MOD11 issues, not working, rosters not available, player pictures, player eligibility, game information, game report issues/questions)
- 5) **Dick Triche**.....(832) 295-9601 ext 101
Official Management Group
National Assignor
mlsnextref@officialsmgtgroup.com
(game pay, waivers, W9, gameofficials)
- 6) **Mike Mekelburg**.....(832) 295-9601 ext 104
MLS NEXT Group Administrator
National Assignor
m.mekelburg@officialsmgtgroup.com
(schedule updates/management, gameofficials)

Section 3: Memo to Game Officials

To: All Game Officials Selected for MLS NEXT game assignments in 2021-22 Season.

From: Officials Management Group

Welcome and Congratulations on having been selected to officiate in the MLS NEXT Soccer League!

It is our distinct pleasure to coordinate and direct officiating services for MLS NEXT and in doing so work directly with MLS NEXT Operations and a system of over 40 National and Local Assignors.

It is the goal of OMG to provide you with the necessary information and support to enable you to perform the duties of your assignment in a most professional manner.

Please use this Referee Handbook as a guide to your pre-game preparation and post-match duties and responsibilities as you work MLS NEXT games this season.

By following the procedure, outlined in this manual you will avoid emails or phone calls requesting additional information.

Feel free to contact OMG by e-mail (mlsnextref@officialsmgtgroup.com) or by phone -----

MLS NEXT league endeavors to provide opportunities for a match official to develop in quality game experience, management skills, professionalism, through developing relationships with the coaches and players. Too often, coaches and players are ignored when there is conflict. Ignoring frustration then leads to aggression.

Additionally, when referees show arrogance, it leads to trouble. Instead, it is recommended that referees use command presence and personality to communicate with players and coaches.

Actively use reflective listening so that they know they have been heard. They don't expect you to agree with them, they just want to be heard.

Show respect and you will receive respect in return.

On behalf of the MLS NEXT, I wish you all the very best in the achievement of your officiating goals and objectives as we work together.

Section 4: MLS NEXT Pre-Game Assignments

All **MLS NEXT Referee Assignments** will be made by National Assignors and Local Assignors as Directed through **MLS NEXT Gameofficials Group 1755** <http://gameofficials.net>.

- Assignments are recommended to be made 2-4 weeks in advance if possible and should be checked and accepted or declined in a timely manner.
- Officials need to be cognizant of the possibility of back-to-back assignments (consecutive home, road or chronological dates or assignments with the same team) if conflicts exist notify their assignor and avoid acceptance of games with possible conflicts.
- Officials should keep their availability up to date on the gameofficials assignment web page.

Pre-Game Contact:

Contacts must be made between all officials days prior to the game. Whether by e-mail or by phone; the following items must be discussed:

- **arrival time (1 hour prior to the match)**, attire (dress warmups and polo, no warm ups or shorts) and time and place of the pre-game meeting.

Dress Code and Appearance:

- Referees are always expected to exhibit a professional demeanor, including dress and appearance.
- You may arrive in game day attire/uniform,
- Official Referee Uniform is Officials Sports

Game Day Necessities The following officiating necessities must be brought to the game by the officials: Current IFAB Laws of the Game book, MLS NEXT Referee Handbook, each official will bring AR flags (electronic is ok), Official Sports Uniforms of various colors, current US Soccer Officiating publications. Hydration each official will bring his/her own water or sport drink, whistles, cards, writing utensil (pen, marker, pencil, game cards, index card paper to record game information)

- **Radio Communication Devices** are not permitted by US Soccer Directive for youth matches that include Grassroot officials in the Referee Crew.
- **Vanishing spray is not authorized** for use in any MLS NEXT Match

Home Team Responsibility for Game Day:

- **Verify with Home Team** location of the **Qualified Medical Personnel ATC** (Certified Athletic Trainer) or **HCP** (Health Care Professional)
 - **ATC or HCP must be on site minimum 60 minutes prior to kickoff.**
 - **If ATC or HCP is not present the game will not start until he/she arrives**
 - **If both teams arrive at the field and home team does not provide Qualified Medical Personnel (QMP), the match will not be played, the home team will receive a forfeit and the home team will be fined.**
 - **Referee Must Notify League Contact and this must be noted in the MOD11 Game Report Notes.**

- **Technical Area** must have adequate seating for both teams Players and Coaches.
- **Spectators are not allowed to enter the Field of Play or the Technical Area at any time.**

Hydration: Home club must provide adequate hydration for both teams consistent with COVID protocols.

Game Day Timeline:

MLS NEXT Game Day Timeline	U-13	U-14 & U-15	U-16, U-17 & U-19
Teams and Referees arrive at Field	-60:00	-60:00	-60:00
Referee receives Game Day Roster thru MOD 11	-36:00	-36:00	-36:00
Referee Checks-in Players and Coaches	-35:00	-35:00	-35:00
Teams Warm Up	-30:00	-30:00	-30:00
Teams and Referees take the Field	-1:00	-1:00	-1:00
First Half Begins	0:00	0:00	0:00
First Half Ends	+35:00*	+40:00	+45:00
	10 Minute Half Time	15 Minute Half Time	15 Minute Half Time
Halftime Ends and Second Half Kickoff	+45:00	+55:00	+60:00
Game Ends	+80:00	+95:00	+105:00

Referee Arrival:

- Referee crew is expected to arrive on site minimum of 60 minutes prior to scheduled kick-off.
- Referees are expected to comply with all applicable Return to Play Protocols (RTPP)

“US Soccer Recognize to Recover Environmental Conditions”

The above is in reference to environmental related issues that do affect the game, players, coaches, spectators, and officials. Related issues may include temperatures (including heat and cold), as they apply to Hydration breaks, weather related stoppages, field conditions.

For additional information visit: **Recognize to Recover- Lightning and Severe Weather**
(<http://www.recognizetorecover.org/environmental/>)

If you have any questions or concerns, you must contact MLS NEXT League Office Game Day Contacts for guidance. Questions concerning water breaks should be determined prior to the kickoff. **Safety First**

Player Check-in:

Game Day MOD11 Digital Match Form (Rosters and Game Report)

MOD11 Digital Match Form is the officials Game Report for all MLSNEXT Scheduled Matches.

Each team will/shall have uploaded a Gameday Roster to MOD11 Digital Match Form and will/shall be available to the officials a minimum of 60-minutes prior to kick off.

Referee will receive this via MOD11 to their personal Phone, Pad and/or Laptop. It will be available to all members of the Referee Crew. (This is not an App)

- Game Day Roster maximum if 18 players, minimum of 14 players listed
- Coaches will have indicate starting 11 players
- Referees will check in all players and Staff on the MOD11 Digital Match Form Gameday Roster
- Roster must include Player Jersey Number, must match the players Jersey
 - ❖ if not indicated correctly Referee should ask the coach to update the Digital Match Form
- If a player is on the roster and not present indicate as required by MOD11 Digital Form
 - ❖ **ANY PLAYER(S) arriving late must be verified on the MOD11 Digital roster before they are allowed to play**
 - ❖ **If a player is present at check-in and not listed on the Game Day Roster he cannot play (NO SHOW - NO GO), (the player may only be added after verification of eligibility from the League)**
- **Only rostered players allowed to sit in the technical area during the match**
- Non-starters must wear penny color other than game day jersey color
- Player(s) dismissed from the game may continue to sit in the technical area unless asked to be removed by the referee crew
- All coaches and/or administrators removed from the game are not permitted in the technical area for the remainder of the day. This includes split fixtures and games taking place the following day.
- **Maximum of 5 staff members permitted in technical area. (Not including medical personnel, videographer/analyst, or Club Sporting Director/General Manager).**

Player Uniforms

MLS Next clubs/teams are expected to execute uniform regulations as set by MLS Next and as governed by The Laws of the Game, Law 4, as part of standard practice in the league. If disputes occur, the clubs should contact the MLS Next League Representative.

- **Home team is required to change if there is a conflict between teams**
- **Home** team wears the **light** uniforms and **Away** team wears **dark** for all single fixtures or first game of double fixture.
- All uniforms must be numbered with an MLS Next Logo patch on the right sleeve
- In second day (Sunday) of a double fixture, the home team wears dark and away team wears light so teams traveling do not need to worry about laundry during the trip.
- It is the referee's responsibility to ensure strict compliance with the Laws of the Game, **not to resolve uniform disputes between the clubs.**
- For a review of Law 4, The Players' Equipment, go here <http://www.theifab.com/laws> pg. 58 subpar 3.

Game Balls

Adidas is the Official Game Ball must be used for all games

Minimum of 3 game balls size 5 supplied by the Home Team will be verified by the officials

- Balls should be inflated to 13 psi for games.
- If a team does not provide MLS Next Academy Adidas game ball, play the game. Referee will report this in the Notes Section of the MOD11 Digital Match Form.

Team pregame Warm-up

- Each team is allowed minimum of 30-minute warm-up prior to kick off

SECTION 5: The MLS NEXT Game

FIFA Laws of the Game 21-22 will apply except as noted in this document.

MLS NEXT Game Ages: U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19

Game Duration:

- **U13** = 2 x 35-minute halves plus 10-minute half time interval (80-minute match length)
 - ❖ *Minimum for completed Game 55 minutes (half + 20-minutes)*
- **U14-U15** = 2 x 40-minute halves plus 15-minute half time interval (95-minute match length)
 - ❖ *Minimum for completed Game 60-minutes (half + 20-minutes)*
- **U16-U19** = 2 x 45-minute halves plus 15-minute half time interval (105-minute match length)
 - ❖ *Minimum for completed Game 75-minutes (half + 20-minutes)*
- Added time in the game is at the referee's discretion

➤ If both clubs agree, any U13 or U14 game can be played using a 3x30 minute format (they must submit the request in writing to MLS NEXT League Office at least two weeks prior to game).

Overtime:

During regular season play there is no provision for overtime. If the score is tied at the end of regulation time the game is ended.

Substitutions:

- **U13 & U14** = Unlimited over 3 moments per half, plus HT. No re-entry per half/period. **(In matches using the 3x30 minute periods the teams are allowed unlimited substitutions over 3 moments in each period).**
- **U15 and above** = Unlimited over 3 moments per game, plus HT. No re-entry.

Substitution Moment: is any stoppage of play which the Referee at his/her discretion allows a player substitution, may include but not limited to the following: Throw-in (either team), Goal Kick, Corner Kick, after a Goal, stoppage for player/coach Misconduct, stoppage for injury.

Halftime interval is not a substitution moment

Age Divisions U-15 and older ONLY

- **Teams are responsible for supplying substitution passes and recording all information**
- It is the referee's responsibility to confirm all information is correct

Teams are able, to make their allotted substitutions within a maximum of THREE (3) moments per game.

Example U13-U14 unlimited

- 32' Stoppage 1 (1 substitution 3 players) 2 moments remaining
- 34' Injury Stoppage 2 (1 substitution 1 player) 1 moment remains

Halftime (1 substitution 2 players)

- 65' Stoppage 1 (1 substitution 1 player) (2 moments remaining in the period/2nd half)

Example U15-U19 Unlimited

- 32' Stoppage 1 (1 substitution 1 player) **2 moments remaining**
- 34' Injury Stoppage 2 (1 substitution 1 player) **1 moment remaining**

Halftime (1 substitution 2 players) **1 moment remaining**

- 65' Stoppage 3 (1 substitution 2 players) **No moments remaining**

****Even though the team may have players that have not entered the game they have no more substitution moments left, the team may not make another substitution because all 3 moments have been used. (With exception to the Head Injury Substitution as indicated above).*

****If the team only has 14 players on the game day roster they are limited by substitutions moments and by no reentry and no more available substitutes.****

The MLS Next Academy substitution protocol has been amended to allow a temporary substitute to replace the injured player while the player is being evaluated.

This amendment is only applicable for head injuries: all other injuries must follow the standard substitution protocol.

NEW Head Injury Substitution Policy:

Team can temporarily substitute new player while suspected concussion is evaluated by (QMP) Qualified Medical Personnel (ATC or HCP).

- ❖ If player cannot return, substitution will be permanent regardless of available substitutions/moments.
- ❖ No re-entry for players at U15 and above even if replacing a player with a head injury.

Further clarification on Head Injury substitution

Age Divisions U15 and Above:

If a player suffers a head injury and there are no remaining substitutes, then the team will play a man down while the player is being evaluated and if he cannot re-enter the match based on sole discretion of QMP.

If a team has used all of their moments, but still have remaining substitutes, then they can replace the player being evaluated with one of their substitutes. (In other words, we will NOT permit re-entry at these age groups for a suspected head injury.)

Age Divisions U13 and U14:

If a player suffers a head injury, then the team can temporarily (and permanently) replace the injured player with a player who already subbed out in the half of the suspected head injury.

(In other words, we will permit re-entry within the half at these age groups for a suspected head injury.)

Teams that make substitutions using more than three moments will be subject to forfeit. This will be noted on the MOD11 Digital Match Form Notes Section.

Head Injury Substitution Post-game reporting

- Do not add substitution times for the temporary sub unless he is added as a permanent sub.
- Record any goals or misconduct for the temporary substitute in the Notes Section MOD11 Digital Match Form. If you have a concern/issue, Contact Ryan Miller for clarification how to enter this.

Section 6: Authority to Delay or Postpone a Match

The MLS NEXT League Office is the only Authority to Delay, Cancel or Postpone a scheduled match.

If a situation arises that you as an official need to request to cancel, delay a match you must first get that approval from the MLS NEXT League Office Game Day Contact.

Do Not Postpone a Game or Depart from a venue before contacting the MLS NEXT Representative.

Game Day Emergencies:

Emergencies Missing Crew member on Game Day: Officials that are delayed if able should contact their other crew members, their respective assignor, and the **MLS NEXT Game Day Contact**.

If a Crew member is missing from the crew and has not contacted any one on the crew, the referee or senior AR should contact their respective assignor and then **MLS NEXT Game Day Contact**.

Emergencies that involve Weather: game delays due to weather those delays must be reported by the Referee who is responsible for contacting the **MLS NEXT League Game Day Contact**.

Emergencies involving injured player(s): injuries that occur during the match that involve player or players should be left to the QMP to manage and if need be contact further emergencies services as required.

Emergencies that involve Spectators or outside interference: game delays due to spectators or outside interference, those delays must be reported by the Referee who is responsible for contacting the **MLS NEXT League Game Day Contact**.

If a personal safety is warranted the Officials should contact 911.

IMPROPER GAME FIELD CONDITIONS:

There can be **NO CONES** used in place of any lines during a MLS Next game, under any circumstance (unless it was approved by the **MLS NEXT Game Day Contact**).

If you are at a facility during the pregame routines and notice any cones being used in place of lines (even if it's just a partial use on one area of the field), please take the following steps:

1. Speak to the Home Club head coach/director/facility manager and inform them that the game will not be played unless/until they can fully line the field.
2.
 - If they can get the field fully lined- or move the game to a different fully lined field at the same complex – in a reasonable amount of time (defined as kicking off the game within 15 minutes of the original KO time), then the game(s) can be played as scheduled.
3. If the Home Club informs you that they cannot get a fully lined field, you should call the **MLS NEXT Game Day Contact** to inform him of the issue, and a member of the MLS NEXT staff will inform you immediately how to proceed.
4. At that time, the Representative will tell the coaches and the referee(s) that the Referee Crew is being dismissed for the day and the game will not be played due to the Home Club not securing a venue that meets **MLS Next Academy Standards**.
5. The referee(s) can then leave the fields and should leave the Game Report blank and fill out a separate Incident Report explaining the situation.

Section 7: Referee Team Post Game Duties and Responsibilities

Game Reporting

It is the assigned Referees responsibility to complete and ensure the game report is submitted in a timely manner. It is the Referee Crews Responsibility to ensure the Game Report is Correct, score, cautions, sendoffs, injuries, weather, and any important added game information that requires League Admin Attention.

- If you have any issues with MOD11 Digital Match Form including delay in submitting the Report you must contact Ryan Miller or MLS NEXT Game Day Contact.
- It is required / recommended that the Referee Crew review the finalized game report before it is submitted for accuracy. The entire crew has access to the MOD11 Digital Match Form.
- **MOD11 Digital Match Form is the official Game Reporting platform for all MLS NEXT Matches.**
- **NOTE: Yellow Cards (cautions) are tracked players receiving a 5th yellow card must sit out the next match**
- MOD11 Digital Match Form **MUST BE SUBMITTED** as soon as possible following the match and no later than **11:59pm midnight on game day.**
- Games starting in the evening after 6pm MOD11 DIGITAL MATCH FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED as soon as possible following the game and **No Later Than 10am the following morning.**
- Incident Reports/Supplemental is included in the MOD11 Digital Match Form in the Notes Section
- Additional information that amplifies or clarifies IAW the Laws of the Game, Sendoff Red Card, Second Cautions Yellow Card or other or other significant issues that impact the game and **shall be included** in the **Note Section of the MOD11 Digital Match Form.**
- **The Incident Report that includes Red Card Sendoff must be submitted by the End of the Game Day.**
- **All injuries should be included in the Note Section** regardless of the player returned to play or note. It does not have to be detailed player #, time of injury, player was evaluated/treated and returned or substituted and time.

Incidents that require an Incident Report/Supplemental:

- All Red Cards and Coaches Dismissals
- Any Serious Injury
- All Head Injuries, even if the player is cleared to return to play
- Any Issues with Spectators
- Game Delays and Postponements
- Issues regarding field conditions (markings, goals, technical area)
- Other noteworthy events

PLEASE NOTE:

Match Reports should be submitted immediately after the match and are REQUIRED to be fully submitted the same day. Failure to complete the Match Report in a timely manner compromises MLS NEXT competition integrity. If you are proven to not submit Match Reports in a timely manner, you MAY be limited to AR1 & AR2 assignments within MLS NEXT. Additionally, Match Reporting is included in referee evaluations and will be a factor in future opportunities.

Please see “MLS NEXT - MODULAR11 - Match Day Operations Guide”

THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT TO SUBMIT A GAME REPORT OR INCIDENT REPORT IN MLS NEXT GAMEOFFICIALS

Section 8: Officials Fees and Travel Policy:

MLS Next will be processing Referee fees through gameofficials product, available for you to review and manage using your current access to the website.

The GOPay system will allow faster, more efficient game fee payments with enhanced reporting and tracking feature.

With GOPay, you have the following payment options:

- Receive game fee payment directly to your bank account via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) at no charge.
- **Receive paper checks (\$8.00 processing fee will be deducted by gameofficials from each paper check administered)**
- Ability to choose when to be paid, either weekly or at your discretion.

ALL MLS Next officials must set up a payment method/GOPay account on MLS Youth Academy - Assigning: Player Development LLC (MLS Youth Academy) [Group 1755] to receive payment.

All game fees will be processed using GOPay.

You must submit a Tax Payer Identification Form (W-9) to mlsnextref@officialsmgtgroup.com to receive payments for services.

Fees for U15-U19 Matches

Referee game fee per match assigned.....\$100.00

Assistant Referee game fee per match assigned.....\$60.00

Fees for U13-U14 Matches

Referee game fee per match assigned.....\$75.00

Assistant Referee game fee per match assigned.....\$50.00

Referee Travel:

Will be managed on game-by-game basis and will only be approved when requested advance.

- Reasons for travel Neutral site game locations to accommodate teams to play and **no local officials are available at the game site location within a reasonable distance.**
- Local officials are **not available** for specific home team locations and or time and travel would be required by referee(s) to cover the match(s) as scheduled
- Travel for multiple officials will be **“carpool”** of referee crew if more than one official has to travel. The driver would only be approved for payment of travel stipend.

Travel payments will be included in the Go Pay when they have been approved and will be noted in the gameofficials game notes section.