



SUBURBAN YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NJ-SYFL

Agreement, Participation Guidelines, Regulations, & Game Rules

RULEBOOK

2026 Edition

Updated : 8/20/26

2026 Participating Programs

Basking Ridge	Berkeley Heights	Bloomfield
Boro *	Bridgewater	Central
Chatham	Clark	Cranford
Hanover Park	Hillsborough	Montgomery
Morristown	New Providence	North Hunterdon
Old Bridge	Perth Amboy **	Scotch Plains-Fanwood
Somerville-Branchburg	South Plainfield	Summit
Westfield	West Orange	

*Boro = Kenilworth, Roselle Park & Springfield
**Includes Woodbridge players

ORIGINAL AGREEMENT

This agreement was developed on December 8, 1972 and may be amended at regular meetings by league representatives of respective teams. The amendments can only be made with a majority vote with a quorum present. A quorum consists of nine (9) programs.

The purpose of this agreement is to develop an understanding and uniform approach among the communities with respect to the conditions under which the “NJ Suburban Youth Football League”, hereinafter referred to as SYFL, can be made part of each community’s grade school football program and how it will be administered, as a residency required league.

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General Conditions

Division of Participants

The participants are to be separated and placed into one of the following five (5) levels based primarily upon age and grade. Exceptions to the maximum age / grade may be granted by the Commissioner upon a majority vote of the league prior to the first game. A participant's age in years and months is calculated from their date of birth to September 1st of the year in which they are participating.

A Level – 7th and 8th Grades – Maximum Age 14 years 6 months

B Level – 6th and 7th Grades – Maximum Age 13 years 6 months

C Level – 5th and 6th Grades – Maximum Age 12 years 6 months

D Level – 4th and 5th Grades – Maximum Age 11 years 6 months

E Level – 4th Grade and down, Maximum Age 10 years 6 months

F Level – 3rd Grade and down, Maximum Age 9 years 6 months

There is no overall maximum weight limitation at any level, however, participants are restricted from running or handling the ball based upon maximum ball handler weight limits as listed below. Ball handlers are pre-qualified at the beginning of the season during an official weigh-in and must be weighed and qualify again prior to the start of any league sanction game.

A Level – Maximum weight for Ball Handlers – 160 pounds

B Level – Maximum weight for Ball Handlers – 135 pounds

C Level – Maximum weight for Ball Handlers – 120 pounds

D Level – Maximum weight for Ball Handlers – 105 pounds

E Level – Maximum weight for Ball Handlers – 95 pounds

F Level – Maximum weight for Ball Handlers – 90 pounds

Effective for 2013, all ERB qualified players (ball handlers) will wear a green sticker on the back of their helmet, A-F levels, so that the referees can determine if the offense has lined up in an illegal formation or not prior to the snap. The Penalty will be 5 yards, repeat the down. If an ERB player does not “make-weight” any Sunday after opening day, his green dot shall be covered over with white tape for that game. If that same player “makes-weight” the next Sunday, the white tape shall be removed to reveal the green sticker and permit that player to play as an ERB.

Program Participation

Since the number of participants in each level will vary from community to community, the number of types of teams for a program may vary. If a program has over 40 participants at one level, that program can have a second team at that level. The division of participants between the two teams is at the discretion of the program and could be uniform as to ability or based on any other criteria as long as the teams adhere to the basic limits for that level.

It is understood that teams of over 25 are almost impossible to administer from the standpoint of teaching fundamentals of football and that teams of approximately 15 are dangerous if considering participation in the SYFL because of illness, injury, or other outside commitments that would impact a programs ability to consistently field a team for each game.

It is the agreement of all organizations that any program that joins or wants to continue playing in the SYFL must commit to and produce at least **THREE TEAMS**. These teams can be comprised of any combination of teams at the A, B, C, or D level. An E or F Level team does constitute a valid team for meeting this rule. This is in agreement to provide an adequate schedule for all fairness to the other participating programs. All programs **MUST SUBMIT** their intended levels of team participation for the coming season by **AUGUST 1st** to the league secretary or scheduler, along with any special scheduling *requests* for consideration (field priorities, construction / renovation, special events, etc.). All programs must declare and commit to their final level of team participation for the coming season by the **WEDNESDAY PRIOR TO THE START OF LABOR DAY WEEKEND**. It is imperative that every program adhere to these dates so that adequate time is available for preparing all of the schedules for each level and ensuring that we obtain commitments from the officials for the required dates. If any program cannot fully participate with a minimum of three (3) teams they will be excluded for that season, exceptions considered on a case-by-case basis by the executive board.

The current cost of participation is \$1600 per season and is used to offset costs for administrative fees, awards, All-Star game jerseys, footballs, and to fund the scholarship program.

Restriction on Participants

The only tackle program restrictions as to participants are that they be in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 at the time of participation, and that no participant over 14 years and 6 months (as of September 1st of the current year) be permitted to play. Two age waiver exceptions are permitted at the “A” Level. Participating community residency is required for all tackle players.

Rosters

A list of participants must be submitted on or before the official weigh-in prior to the start of the season. The list must be submitted using the standard league roster form only. (available on the league website www.spfpal-football.org or from a league officer) The Roster must be completely filled out including program name, team level, coach names and telephone numbers, participant name, jersey number, birth date, and grade. Any participant that is an approved age/grade(AG) waiver, or league sanctioned waiver(LS), must be indicated by an asterisk in the appropriate column on the official roster and a copy of the league approval must be attached. Weights will be determined and entered at the official weigh-in. If jerseys are not available to be placed on the Rosters by the date of the official weigh-in, it is the responsibility of the program with the incomplete Roster to provide an updated copy to each program and the Commissioner at least **7 days prior to the first game of the season**. After that, an Official Roster Change Form will be required for each participant and a copy of the change form will also need to be provided to each program and the Commissioner.

Any participant listed on an official roster may be moved using the Official Roster Change Form, however, participants may only be moved to a higher level roster and MAY NOT play down on a lower level roster. There will be no **“juggling”** of rosters, and once a participant is moved up, he may not be moved back down. Any moves must be made prior to the start of a game week and a participant may only play in one league sanctioned game per week, with the single exception of a make-up game for his level.

Any program that wishes to request an age/grade(AG) or league sanctioned(LS) waiver must present their request(s) in writing and the waiver must be **unanimously** approved by all league representatives present at the last league meeting prior to the start of the season. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

The Rosters used for the official weigh-in(s) must be accurate, legible, and clean with no cross outs or overwrites. The only changes permitted after the official weigh-in without the Commissioner’s approval include the following and must be made using the Official Roster Change Form. All other changes to a Roster must be approved by the Commissioner.

1. A change to a players jersey number
2. Crossing out a player no longer on the roster or who will not play
3. Making a notation of a player as a waiver

A copy of each Roster will be distributed by the Commissioner as soon as practical after completion of the official weigh-in(s). Any changes to these rosters must be supplied to the opposing program (league representative or coach) prior to the start of a game and must be in the form of an Official Roster Change Form, or the revised roster approved by the Commissioner and attached to a copy of the original Roster.

There will be **no additions to any roster after Opening Day** of said season. The only addition that may be allowed after that date is under the “Hardship Clause”.

NO PLAYER may participate who is not on an official league roster or roster change form.

Any individual who falsifies information on the roster will be permanently banned from league participation in any role and at all levels.

Hardship Clause – (Team Roster Size below 18)

This rule shall be used to help a program continue a season and **NOT USED** as a basis for fielding a team prior to the start of the season. Any team that becomes decimated by illnesses, injuries, or a complete loss of eligible ball handlers may apply to add on players in order to continue the season after the Opening Day cutoff date.

This rule is used for the continuance of a programs season, and does not supersede any other rule or regulation. Any player added under this clause must still adhere to the basic constraints of age, weight, grade, and waiver implications. **All ball handler rules still apply, and no player can run the ball the same day they are weighed in.**

The following steps must be taken:

1. A call must be placed to the Commissioner by the league representative for the affected team and expressing a desire to add to their roster.
2. A written request must also be submitted to the Commissioner identifying the specific nature of the hardship (e.g., number of players below 18) and a list identifying the additional players being requested, and assigned positions.
3. Upon approval, an Official Roster Change Form must be prepared for each approved player being added and they must be weighed at the next scheduled game.
4. The opposing team's LEAGUE REPRESENTATIVE must weigh each player and provide their initials and a plus sign (+) next to each player's weight. This league representative will be acting as a weigh team member and must place their name, team name, and date on the top of each roster change form so that every team can know who weighed them.

Border Agreement

Due to deficiencies in program enrollment at a certain level, identified in the pre-season period, the League maintains provisions for the shifting of players from one member community's program to another, when deemed necessary, in order to support safe levels of rostered players for a particular team. Typically, this is done between programs that share a common geographic border, thus named the BORDER AGREEMENT. However, this provision is not restricted to only member bordering communities. When deemed appropriate, member players are permitted to participate as non-residents of a program that is not a "geographically bordering" member community. These agreements are overseen by the League Board and are executed prior to the beginning of the season. No mid-season adjustments of this nature are permitted. Players that are rostered as non-residents, as part of a Border Agreement, are so indicated on the respective roster with an asterisk (*).

Insurance

It is recommended that each community secure and be responsible for its own adequate liability insurance. This insurance will cover themselves, their coaches, volunteers, and participants. The coverage should provide for home and away games respectively. Approximate limits might be as follows:

Bodily Injury Liability	\$500,000 / person \$1,000,000 / occurrence
Property Damage Liability	\$100,000 / occurrence

Weight Verification

Weigh Teams

A weigh team will be formed by each program hosting an official weigh-in prior to the start of the season. The weigh team must be comprised of at least two separate individuals and minimally must consist of the following persons that must be present for the entire weigh-in process of all teams;

1. Weigh Team Coordinator
2. League Representative from hosting program

Hosting sites will be chosen based upon geographic location as opposed to the assignment of divisions (American / National) in an effort to help minimize travel requirements and balance of participants to be weighed.

Weigh-In Regulations

The requirements for which participants must be weighed at an official weigh-in prior to the start of the season vary depending upon the level of the team they participate on. The following participants must be weighed at an official weigh-in prior to the start of the season or they must be classified as a “League Sanction Waiver” (LS) and will not be allowed to run the ball or play a ball handler position for the duration of the season – regardless of any game day weigh-in.

Each player to be weighed should be in his game jersey and shorts, shoes are optional. A weigh team official will record the weight of each player on the official Roster. Any player that is under the maximum allowable weight for “ball handlers” will be listed as an eligible running back (ERB) on the official roster. Upon completion, the coach of the team being weighed, their respective league representative, and the weigh team league representative will sign and date the Roster and any addendums.

Any player that is intended to play an ERB position must be officially weighed and that weight must be recorded on the roster on OPENING DAY of the season. ERB intended players, that are absent and **not weighed on Opening Day**, may be weighed at the weigh-in for Week 2 games, but are **not eligible to play an ERB position until the Week 3 Games**. All players, that qualify as ERBs on Opening Day, must “weigh-in” and “make weight” in order to play any ERB position, prior to each game after opening day. An ERB qualified player that does not “make weight” for any particular game, after Opening Day, may still play in that game, but not at an ERB position. Qualified ERB players may still weigh-in and play in a later season game as an ERB, if they “make-weight”, even after **NOT** “making weight” for any earlier season game.

Official Season Weigh-In

Season weigh-in(s) will be conducted the first game day of the season. All programs shall follow the guidelines set forth under the sections for Weigh Teams and Weigh-In Regulations. A player must be weighed on opening day at their respective game site. Additionally, in order to be eligible for any game day weigh-in during the season, the player must meet the weight requirement for ball handlers at their respective level at the opening day weigh-in. If a player fails to meet the initial requirement they will not be eligible for game day weigh-ins and will be restricted to non ball handler positions for the duration of that season, however, they will have the opportunity to move up to the next level if desired.

Each program will be provided a copy of the completed official weigh-in forms as soon as possible after the conclusion of final weigh-in process, starting for the 2009 season, will be opening day.

If a player is added to the Roster after the official pre-season weigh-in and prior to first game of season, they must be classified as a “League Sanction Waiver” (LS) and will not be allowed to run the ball or play a ball handler position for the duration of the season – regardless of any game day weigh-in.

The only exception allowed to this rule must be approved by a majority vote of league representatives and only for the purpose of applying the same guidelines of the “Hardship Clause” to a situation prior to October 1st. A request for a special vote must be submitted to the Commissioner along with a valid reason and supporting details for the request.

Game Day Weigh-In

All eligible ball handlers must be re-verified and weighed on game day. Any player that exceeds the prescribed ball-handler limit on game day, or that does not weigh-in on game day may not play in a ball handler position for that game.

Game day weigh-ins are to be conducted in accordance with the game rules which governs when the weigh-in shall take place, scale guidelines, authorized persons, procedures, and consequences.

A copy of any special waiver approvals (see following sections for information on AG and LS waivers), must be provided to the opposing program at the game day weigh-in.

Disputes related to game day weigh-ins shall be governed by the Disciplinary Board.

NOTE – Refer to Section 6 for specific “Ball Handler Rule” and weight limits

Getting Started

Equipment

Participants must be adequately equipped as established by the regulations of their community. It is ***strongly suggested***, but not mandated, that each program take appropriate steps to safeguard not only their participants, but also their program with respect to liability issues regarding helmets, padding, mouth protection, and protective cups.

Shoes with attached molded rubber cleats are approved for use at all levels. Shoes with screw on cleats are approved for use only at the A Level. Detachable cleats must have the post attached to the individual cleat and **NOT** the shoe so that if the cleat becomes detached during play there will be no posts sticking out from the shoe. Additionally, only hard rubber detachable cleats will be permitted, the use of hard plastic cleats or any other hard material is prohibited.

Jerseys without numbers are permitted for special situations. For situations where a player needs to wear a jersey without a number, some other form of designation, such as a decal, tape, or other marking on the helmet must be made to indicate an eligible ball carrier. This must be approved by both teams at the game day weigh in and notification to the game day officials must be made to ensure they have the ability to make a proper determination of eligibility, and also for situations where there is a downfield violation during a pass play.

Helmets should be properly fastened with secure chinstraps and mouthpieces firmly in place. It is recommended that all players wear their helmets on the sideline during the game to reduce the possibility of accidental injuries.

Protective Pads must be worn at all times during game play. The minimum requirements include shoulder pads, hip/tail pads, thigh pads, and knee pads covering the knee caps. A player missing any component of the minimum required pads will not be allowed to participate in game play. All other padding is optional.

Mouthpieces must be worn at all times during game play. A player without a mouthpiece will not be allowed to participate in game play.

Protective Cups should be worn at all times by male participants at any level. .

Football size for league sanction games is regulated for all A, B, C and D level games. The size of the football used for the instructional E & F level games is not regulated. The list of approved footballs for each level can be found in Appendix E.

Plastic Face Shields must be clear plastic, no tinted plastic permitted, unless prescribed for a medical reason by a player's physician/eye doctor. Documentation of the "tinted shield" prescription must be brought to each game and shared with the referee crew prior to that player's game.

Practices

No contact practice shall take place prior to the **10th day of August unless otherwise specified**. To allow each participating program to be ready for the first game of the season and to assure that each program will not be handicapped because of any inability to start practices as early as another program, all teams will be limited to a total of thirty six **(36) hours** of practice prior to the first game. Conditioning practices may occur the week prior to the 8/15 start of practices.

There will be no restriction on the hours per week practiced prior to the first game. However, after the first scheduled league sanction game, the time utilized for practice must **not exceed 6 hours per week** per team.

This time is to exclude the game time and warm up periods prior to the game. Only the total practice time per week is regulated, with a maximum of 2 hours per session, per day. It is requested that prior to the first game of the season, practices be limited to 1.5 hours per day, with a minimum of two days off, per week, for rest.

Game Schedules

All league sanction games to be played as part of the SYFL will be scheduled to take place starting after the second week of practices and concluding before Thanksgiving Day. This is intended to include all make up games, playoff games, All-Star games, and Super Bowl games.

Games will be scheduled on Saturdays or Sundays with a maximum of one regularly scheduled game per level, per week. The only exception permitted to allow a program to play more than one SYFL game at the same level in the same week will be for the purpose of making up a prior postponed game (inclement weather, field availability issues, etc.).

Rescheduling of postponed games is the responsibility of the original home team and will not automatically be done by the SYFL. It is also the responsibility of the home team to reschedule and secure officials for the new date. In attempting to select the new date, the intent should be to offer the visiting team a reasonable date, time, and location. If an appropriate date is set and the visiting team refuses to play, the game will be registered as a forfeit for the refusing team and a win awarded to the hosting team. The respective league representatives will notify the Commissioner of the situation and the Commissioner will make a determination regarding the forfeit. The Commissioner has the final say and no appeals will be heard.

Penalties

Except where superseded by any SYFL Game Rules, all New Jersey High School football rules and penalties will apply to all league sanctioned games.

If a game is being played on a shortened field, such as 80 yards, any 15 yard penalty must be reduced to a 10 yard penalty at all levels.

Warnings – a penalty will be assessed for failure to have a mouthpiece or chinstrap in place after one warning has been given to a team for an infraction.

Officials

Officials for all scheduled league sanctioned games will be provided through the SYFL unless otherwise requested and provided by the home team program. Officials supplied through the SYFL will be paid by the home team program in accordance with the rate set by the Coordinator of Officials and approved by the participating members.

The amount paid to each official and total amount payable by the home team program on each game day will vary depending upon the number of officials present and the number of games being played on a given day. A breakdown of the specific amounts can be found in the rate table in Appendix H. Please note these amounts may change from season to season.

Three officials will be scheduled for each league sanctioned game at the A, B, C and D levels by the Coordinator of Officials or League Scheduler. E and F level games will utilize 2 officials. A-D Playoff and championship games will utilize 4 officials and a clock management official.

Value Driven

Role Models for Success

It is the intent of the SYFL to create an environment for the youth of each participating community, through a well structured and organized sports program, that helps to foster not only the building of good athletes, but also of strong character and good values. The SYFL is committed to ensuring that all participating organizations operate with an emphasis on skill development, personal growth, and enjoyment. We encourage academic excellence, respect for others, discipline, teamwork, and good sportsmanship. Our goal is to provide the largest number of pre-high school aged youth with a positive experience in the game of football.

We are committed to maintaining quality individuals to assist in the development of these young players and place as much emphasis on the character and values of the coaches and assistants as we do on the development of the young athletes themselves. Our expectation is that every coach and assistant will act not only as a teacher of athletic and sport skills, but also as a role model for respect, discipline, and good sportsmanship and that they fully accept this responsibility when they taken on their role.

There will be limited tolerance for any individual that can not meet this responsibility and that does not strive to improve the quality of the SYFL programs for the youth of our communities. Specific rules exist to address safety related violations (section 5) and similar guidelines and actions will be followed in any situations where an official complaint is submitted against a coach or assistant regarding their conduct.

We require every coach and assistant to complete the USA Football Coach Certification course.

School and Grades

The SYFL understands that participation in any youth sport activity places an added burden of time commitment that is new and often unfamiliar to the young athlete. However, we've learned that with support and guidance in this area, our young athletes often perform better during the sport season, especially in cases where they have a strong desire to participate and are presented with the challenge of maintaining good grades and work ethic in order to participate. While we have no specific rules or regulations in this area we do encourage each program to develop their own guidelines for helping to achieve academic success, maintaining good grades, and having the student athlete be a good representative of the SYFL in their school systems.

Community Service

While the primary focus of the SYFL is on helping the youth of our communities, it is this underlying concept of helping others that works towards developing a better place for everyone to live, work, and play. Helping our young athletes to grasp and understand this concept is a challenge in and of itself, and to this end we encourage each program to consider having the teams participate in some form of community activity where they can both give something back to the community that supports and help our youth understand how helping others can be such an important part of what we all do, on and off the field.

Playing by the Rules

Game Rules

It is expected that each program in the interest of safety, fairness, and good sportsmanship will abide by all of the rules and regulations set forth in the body of this rule book. A quick reference can be found in Appendix A. The rules set forth are intended to apply to all levels of play (A through E), and every effort has been made to identify exceptions to these rules based upon the respective levels. Coaches for the introductory levels (E & F) are expected to use good and reasonable judgment with respect to rule interpretations in the absence of specific exceptions for these levels of play.

Any violation of these rules without the approval of the Commissioner or by mutual agreement of both league representatives on game day will be sufficient cause for imposing a penalty against the offending program.

Safety Related Violations - If the nature of the violation places the safety or well being of any player at serious risk, the penalty imposed will be the same as a violation of weight violations as follows, otherwise the penalty imposed will be at the discretion of the Commissioner.

First violation - The Commissioner removes the coach or coaches of the offending team from the program, and all games prior to the violation are forfeited

Second violation - The offending team is removed from the league for the duration of the season and all games are forfeited.

Any additional violations will be cause for a vote of league representatives to permanently remove the entire program from participation in the SYFL.

Coaches Agreements

The rules of the SYFL have been formulated with great care and effort and exist for the purpose of maintaining an environment of safety, fairness, and good sportsmanship for everyone involved; players, coaches, game officials, league officers, parents, spectators, etc. Any deviation from these rules would only serve to undermine the goal of maintaining this environment.

Coaches Challenge

Some common misconceptions often arise with coaches and assistants that have had more exposure to professional or college level rules. The officials engaged by the SYFL to referee scheduled games have all been certified and are well versed in NJSHS rules and are the on-field authority. Any ruling that the referee's make on game day shall stand.

SYFL coaches and assistants are expected to be respectful of the referees at all times. In the event that a coach feels that a specific SYFL rule is not being properly administered or that a NJSHS rule was used when SYFL rules exist to supersede such a ruling, the coach shall have the right to **“challenge”** an on-field ruling, but only for the purpose of SYFL rule interpretation. A “challenge” may not be used for the purpose of disputing a penalty, down ruling, ball placement, score, or missed call. In support of this effort, and primarily for the continued information and fostering of stronger relationships with the officials, coaches and/or league representatives are encouraged to have a copy of both sets of rules available on game day to share with the officials during any challenge. This may serve to help avoid any potential misunderstandings with the referees and the interpretation and application of SYFL specific rules. Again, the officials are the only on-field authority and their decision with respect to the challenge will be final.

A challenge may be invoked only by the head coach and will be initiated by notifying the closest official that a rule challenge is being made. An official's time out is then to be called, however, should the challenge be over ruled by the officials, the team submitting the challenge shall be charge a time out. In the event that no time outs remain and the challenge is over ruled, the team submitting the challenge shall be accessed a 5 yard penalty.

The number of challenges that a coach may make per game will be limited to one per half. If additional challenges are made and cause a stoppage of play, no ruling is to be made on the challenge, the origin ruling on the field will stand, and team submitting the challenge will be assessed a time out. In the event that no time outs remain, the team submitting the “invalid” challenge shall be accessed a 5 yard penalty.

Game Day Disputes

The officials are not versed in the particulars of league rules and are also not engaged to resolve disputes other than those pertaining to the enforcement of penalties and following High School Football Rules. If there is a dispute on game day, the following resolution sequence is proscribed.

1. League representatives should attempt to resolve the dispute.
 - a. If both league representatives for the teams are present, they should attempt to resolve the disagreement. If they cannot reach mutual agreement and resolve the dispute they should proceed to step 2.
 - b. If only one league representative is present, he shall have the authority to **unilaterally resolve the dispute**.
2. If no league representatives are available, the League Commissioner should be called. His game day phone number is on the Roster. Coaches are encouraged to have access to a cell phone on game day.
3. If the Commissioner is not available, the League Secretary should be called. His game day phone number is on the Roster.
4. If none of the above remedies are available, the game is still to be played and the home team coach makes the final ruling regarding the dispute on game day. The opposing coach has the option of submitting a formal protest to the league through his league representative.

Official Protests

An official protest can be made regarding the violation or enforcement of any rule or regulation contained in this rulebook and the Commissioner shall have the authority to make the final ruling on these protests. The Commissioner, at his/her discretion, may submit the protest to the league representatives for consideration and a ruling based upon a majority consensus. Any protest of an issue not covered in this rulebook should be handled by raising the issue at a meeting of the league representatives and called for a majority vote to resolve the dispute and make an amendment to the rulebook for future issues.

All official protests are to be submitted in writing to the league through the league representative. The program against which the protest is being submitted, shall be notified by the league upon receipt of the protest and will be given an opportunity to submit a rebuttal before a ruling is issued. As with the protest, any formal rebuttal must also be in writing and submitted only through the program's respective league representative.

The nature of the protest may obviously vary in significant degrees. A protest may take the form of addressing items missing or not clearly defined in the rules, coaches conduct, problems with officials, player weight or waiver issues, etc. The degree of the nature of the protest shall have a direct correlation to the severity of the final ruling. Specifically, should a protest be upheld, and the nature of the protest was found to have provided the other team with a competitive advantage the league shall have the authority to reverse a game outcome, place coaches and/or programs on probation, suspend and/or remove coaches, and impose forfeits for prior games as appropriate. However, **no latitude** will be given for any safety related protest, and if upheld, the penalty for violation will be considered **mandatory** and imposed as set forth in the "Game Rules" section for "Safety Related Violations".

“Turn No Player Away”

The “Waiver Rule”

In an effort to provide an opportunity to as many youths as possible, the SYFL has endeavored to formulate rules and guidelines that minimize the restrictions on participation while at the same time fostering an environment of safety, fairness, and good sportsmanship. One of the most unique characteristics that distinguishes the SYFL from many other youth football organizations, and opens the door to many participants that would otherwise be excluded from participation in other programs, is the “Waiver Rule”.

Often participants are turned away from programs that have strict weight limits or they are asked to move up to play at a level with older and more physically mature players. This may place certain players at a greater risk for injury to themselves or possibly other players. These situations typically involve a participant who is heavy for his age, not very aggressive, and who would run the risk of injury if he was required to play at a higher level. Some programs may not even provide an option to play at a higher level even if the participant might be physically ready.

The SYFL “Waiver Rule” exists to allow any youth, regardless of size or weight, and that has a desire to play organized football, to participate at an appropriate level. No participant will be turned away on the basis of their weight. Additionally, the safety of all SYFL participants is of paramount importance, hence the “Waiver Rule” was crafted to also protect the players. To understand how these two seemingly conflicting goals can be simultaneously achieved, please read through the following sections which describe how the “Waiver Rule” is implemented.

What is a Waiver?

A player will be classified as a “waiver” when they exceed specific computed values for their intended level of play (A through F). The computed values are based upon a combination of age ranges and weight ranges. Participants classified as “waivers” are afforded the same opportunities for game play, however, in the interest of player safety they are restricted to certain positions. Additionally, in the interest of fairness to other teams that may not have any participants in this situation, certain restrictions exist to limit the number of waivers that can be utilized and which might also provide for an unfair competitive advantage.

Types of Waivers

Two types of waivers exist, “AG” and “LS” to server a similar purpose in providing opportunities for players and programs and well as protecting the safety of all participants. However, both of these types of waivers **require league approval** before a player can be classified and placed on an official roster.

The “**Age / Grade Waiver**”, designated as “**AG**”, is based upon a participant’s age and grade as of September 1 of the current year. If a participant exceeds the limits set forth in the age/grade qualification chart (Appendix C), a request may be submitted to the league through the league representative for classification as an “AG” waiver for the participant to play at the same level. Optionally, the participant may move up to the level where he does not exceed the age/grade limits. This type of waiver may be necessitated in conjunction with the League Sanctioned Waiver in situations where the Hardship Rule must be invoked to help programs field a complete team at a specific level. Since 2012, any age/grade waiver requests to move a player down a level will be generally restricted to Defense Only. Exceptions for Hardshipped Roster situations will be taken into consideration by the league board.

The “**League Sanctioned Waiver**”, designated as “**LS**”, is intended to cover special cases where the enforcement of waiver regulations (refer to following sections) would impact the ability of a program to field a complete team at a specific level or would otherwise jeopardize either a program or player. For every LS waiver there will be a specific and documented set of terms under which the player may participate. In no way is an LS waiver to be used to gain a competitive advantage, and any deviation from the documented set of terms will be cause for revoking the waiver status and will also be cause for imposing game forfeitures.

Waiver Regulations

GENERAL – Applicable to all levels (A through E):

1. All waivers (AG, and LS) must be identified on the official roster and must display **one (1)** distinctive strip of tape **running front to back** on the helmet. Light color helmets should use black electrical tape or some alternative dark material. Dark color helmets should use white first aid tape or some alternative light material.
2. All waivers must come out with the team captains at the time of the coin toss. This will allow the referees and opposing coaches as necessary, to ensure that all waivers are clearly and properly marked.
3. If an opposing coach feels that a waiver is a dominant player, the coach should request that their respective league representative submit a formal notification to the league Commissioner after the game. If two different programs submit a formal notification through their league representatives about the same player, that player must be moved up one level.

A LEVEL:

- Maximum number of waivers allowed on roster is two (2)
- Only one waiver may participate in a game at one time

B, C & D LEVELS:

- Maximum number of waivers allowed on roster is ten (10)

E & F LEVELS:

- Maximum number of waivers allowed on roster is twelve (12)

Waiver Determination

(AG) Age/Grade Waivers – any player that exceeds either the maximum grade or maximum age for their respective level of play must be classified as an AG waiver to play at that level or must be moved to a level where they do not exceed either limit. In order to be classified as an AG waiver the league representative must submit a formal request and obtain approval from the league before the player can be placed on the roster at that level.

A Level – Maximum Grade 8 – Maximum Age 14 years 6 months

B Level – Maximum Grade 7 – Maximum Age 13 years 6 months

C Level – Maximum Grade 6 – Maximum Age 12 years 6 months

D Level – Maximum Grade 5 – Maximum Age 11 years 6 months

E Level – Maximum Grade 4 – Maximum Age 10 years 6 months

F Level – Maximum Grade 3 – Maximum Age 9 years 6 months

(LS) League Sanctioned Waivers – any program that wishes to obtain an exception to any standard waiver must document the specific circumstances that they feel necessitate the exception and submit a formal request for approval to the league. If an approval is granted by the league for an LS waiver, the exact limits of the exception will be documented and made available to all other participating programs before the player can be placed on an official roster. For example, a program might request that a non-dominant, undersized AG waiver be reclassified as an LS waiver, specifically to allow the player to not be required to play in a tackle to tackle position. In this case the exact limits of the exception might be specified as “defense only – any position”.

Special SYFL Regulations

The “Ball Handler Rule”

In order for a participant to **line up** at any of the four (4) running back positions or two (2) eligible offensive receiver positions, they must meet the weight requirements set forth in the Ball Handler Qualification Chart (Appendix D) for their respective level of participation. Any player that exceeds these weight requirements may not line up in any offensive backfield or end position even if there is no intention of giving him the ball. In other words, there will be no allowance for any type of “blocking only” designation for positions such as fullback or tight end and a player must still meet the weight requirements to line up in any potential “ball handler” position.

Advancing a Fumble or Interception

Any player, offensive or defensive, and regardless of position, age, or weight **MAY** advance the football by manner of an interception, fumble recovery, or blocked kick if they are the initial player to handle the ball. To clarify, a recovered football **MAY NOT** be passed by means of a lateral or handoff to a player that has not been designated as an eligible game-day ball handler. (i.e. no “hook and ladder” style plays to non ball-handlers for competitive advantage)

The “Bull Rush Rule”

Specifically in the interest of player safety, the SYFL expressly prohibits the use of a “Bull Rush”. In situations where the offensive center has a need to play with his head down, and specifically when snapping for punts and extra point attempts, the defense **MAY NOT** line up a player **directly over the center**, either on the line or in a shallow linebacker position. In these situations, only the gaps adjacent to the center may be used for a defensive rush.

Tailgating Prohibited

No tailgating is permitted by parents, players or coaches while present at the site of a hosting facility at any scrimmage, regular season, playoff, championship or All-Star Game, no exceptions. Violation of this rule will lead to game forfeitures. League Representatives are responsible for communicating this rule to all parents and coaches prior to opening day of each season.

USA Football – Coach Certification

Effective for the 2012 season the NJ-SYFL has committed to affiliation with the USA Football organization (www.usafootball.com). In so doing, all coaches will be required to undergo online certification training prior to the beginning of the 2012 season. Certification will be monitored at the league and league rep levels. Coaches certified in the 2012 season, are required to refresh their certification each year thereafter by taking the 30 minute recertification course provided on the USA Football website, indicated above.

Playoff Site Determination

Effective for the beginning of the 2012 season and forward, hosting of playoff games will be prioritized, giving priority to programs that have multiple teams qualified for the playoffs after the final regular season game.

F Level Player Stance

Effective starting for the 2026 season, only players at F Level must assume a 2-point stance prior to the snap for Offense and Defense.

Running up the Scores

It is expected that each program will embody the values of fairness and good sportsmanship and with this in mind the SYFL encourages all coaches at all levels of play to refrain from “running up the score”. To break the spirit of young opposing athletes once a game is easily in hand serves no purpose or goal proscribed by the SYFL and only serves to undermine the foundation and values set forth by this league. Each youth coach and assistant in this league is expected not only to perform the duties of teaching fundamental football skills, but also to act as a role model in the highest degree. Any formal protests submitted with respect to this issue will be taken most seriously and shall be considered sufficient grounds for disciplinary action by the league.

In the spirit of nurturing all NJ-SYFL youth football players, effective for 2012, “points allowed” will no longer be used as a means to break a tie in regular season standings for the purpose of determining a team’s playoff qualifications. This change was made so that a team that is leading a game by a wide margin, can relax and play their non-starting players and permit points to be scored against them, without concern for any effect on their regular season standings and playoff considerations. This in turn would permit a team that is losing a game by a wide margin in the later half, to possibly score some points and mitigate the negative effects on youth players of shutouts by wide margins, by a far stronger opponent.

Coaches on the Field for E & F level

The introductory level of play found at the E level, along with the relative immaturity and young age of the players has benefited by having some level of coaching (and supervision) present on the field during game play. For this reason the SYFL has had the policy of allowing coaches directly on the field during games at this level as opposed to restricting them to the sidelines. However, in order to facilitate a more realistic game situation as opposed to a practice or scrimmage environment, the actual number of coaches permitted on the field at one time shall be **limited to two (2) per team for offense, one (2) for defense.**

Minimum Play Rules TDB....

Effective for the 2026 Season, the following structure has been established regarding the playing time for each player at each level. It will be the responsibility of each coach to ensure that all players participate in each game played during the season, and a form will be used to monitor the number plays in which a player participates. This form will be filed and retained by each league representative and presented to the League Commissioner in the event that a protest is filed by any opponent.

For E & F Levels: **All players will participate in half of each game (new for 2025).**

For A-D Levels:

- No matter the roster size, **all players will be subject to the MPR limit of 5 plays (new for 2026).**

The form required is attached in Appendix "I" of the 2026 Rule Book Appendix.

Division of Programs

In an effort to provide competitive level of play for all programs, while at the same time trying to ensure that programs having a similar number of participants and also attempt to match levels of play, it is necessary to provide a schedule that is fair and balanced. With this in mind the league has made an attempt to divide participating programs into two divisions, American and National, based upon the NJSIAA group classification of their respective high schools. As programs are added, every effort is made to align the program to the division containing the most similar high school program size.

Alignment of programs for 2020 has been split into two Conferences: American and National. Programs will be assigned to each conference utilizing a coefficient combining equal parts enrollment size of the representative high schools covering each program and the programs' applicable winning percentage (2 years of results for upcoming A and B teams and 1 year of results for upcoming C teams). In year 1, limits will be imposed such that no team currently in the American Conference will be placed in the National Conference and vice versa.

The programs with the eight highest coefficients will be assigned to the American Conference. The next eight highest coefficient programs will be assigned to the National Conference.

Within each Conference, teams will be ranked based on program winning percentage and HS enrollment as indicated by NJSIAA rankings. Scheduling will take this ranking into account when developing the matchups. The primary goal of scheduling will be that all eight teams within each conference play head to head during the regular season.

Conference Alignment 2026:

American Conference

Bridgewater
Central YFB
Hillsborough
Morristown
Old Bridge
Scotch Plains-Fanwood
South Plainfield
West Orange

Central Conference

Basking Ridge
Chatham
Cranford
Hanover Park
North Hunterdon
Summit
Westfield

National Conference

Berkeley Heights
Bloomfield
Boro (KW/RP/SPR)
Clark
Montgomery
New Providence
Perth Amboy/Woodbridge
Somerville-Branchburg

Scores and Recordkeeping

The F level of play is considered introductory and instructional, while the other five levels A, B, C, D & E represent varying levels of ability and competitive play. The expectation for these competitive levels is that accurate records will be maintained to provide for fair and honest selection of teams to participate in post season play. With this in mind, the League Secretary has been designated as the official keeper of scores and win/loss/tie records for each program.

Each program must report scores for all A, B, C, D & E level games, regardless of whether they were the winning or losing team. Scores from all teams should be submitted as a single report for all levels in order to minimize the number of reports. Individual coaches should not be submitting single game results. A report must be submitted by both programs no later than 12:00 noon of the day following the day on which the game was played – **NO EXCEPTIONS**. Failure to report scores by the deadline will result in **loss of “playoff points” for that game**. Results should be submitted via e-mail to the league secretary whenever possible as this provides a verifiable date/time of reporting. In the event results cannot be e-mailed they should be submitted via telephone/voice mail to the league secretary.

Information and Communication

In an effort to facilitate open communication about scores, records, and standings; the information will be posted on the league website www.njsyfl.org as soon as reasonably possible after receipt of all scores.

Game Day contact information for the Commissioner and League Secretary can be found in this rule book as well as the website and the Official Rosters.

Contact information for league officials and representatives will be distributed via email and will be periodically modified and shared with the SYFL league representatives at their scheduled meetings.

Any questions and concerns about the SYFL or participation in the program can be submitted directly to the Commissioner. Questions, requests, or protests from within currently participating programs should be submitted through the SYFL league representative.

Post Season Play

There will be a “Super Bowl” game for the A, B, C, D & E

levels. The **top four teams** in each division will participate in playoff games. Determination of place of finish will be based upon the total number of “playoff points” awarded to each team. Points are awarded as follows for each game played;

Win – 2 points

Tie – 1 point

Loss – 0 points

Tie-break determination: Will be based upon head-to-head records, games won, and strength of schedule as follows:

Two-Way Tie

1. Head-to-head record between the teams tied with total points
2. Number of games won
3. Total playoff points earned by the opponents beaten, by the tied teams
4. Play-In game or coin flip

Three-Way Tie

1. Head-to-head record against other two teams
 2. Number of games won
 3. Total playoff points earned by all the opponents beaten, by the tied team
 4. Play-In game or coin flip
- (once one of the three is eliminated revert to Two-Way Tie Breaker Rules.

Playoff Seeding Rules: (Effective 2014)

The top four teams will qualify for the playoffs. The seeding will be 1 v. 4, 2 v. 3.

Two Super Bowls will be played to determine the Champion for each Conference, for A-D levels..

2026 NJ-SYFL PLAYOFF GAME OVERTIME PROCEDURE:

OVERTIME PERIODS WILL BE PLAYED TO RESOLVE TIED GAMES AT THE END OF REGULATION PLAYING TIME. OVERTIME PERIODS WILL BE CONDUCTED ACCORDING TO NJSIAA HS RULES WITH ONE ADJUSTMENT...AFTER ONE POSSESSION CYCLE WITHOUT RESOLUTION FROM THE 15, THE BALL WILL THEN BE PLACED AT THE 10 YARD LINE, THIRD CYCLE, THE 5 YARD LINE. AFTER THE INITIAL EXTRA POINT ATTEMPTS, TEAMS MUST "GO FOR TWO". THIS INCLUDES RUNNING/PASSING FOR “2 POINTS” FROM THE 5 YARD LINE (A-D LEVELS), OR KICKING FOR 2 POINTS (A-B LEVELS) FROM THE 2.5 YARD LINE.