

EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS WOMEN'S SOCCER LEAGUE, INC.

LEAGUE RULES

I. AUTHORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.01. Authority. The rules contained herein (the "**League Rules**") shall govern members of Eastern Massachusetts Women's Soccer League, Inc. ("**EMWSL**") in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with EMWSL Constitution and Bylaws, or the rules, policies and procedures of the Massachusetts State Soccer Association ("**MassSoccer**"), the United States Adult Soccer Association ("**USASA**") and United States Soccer Federation ("**USSF**"). All EMWSL competitions shall be governed by the rules stated herein unless the rules of a specific competition determine otherwise.

1.02. Responsibility. Each team (member) shall be responsible for the conduct of its players, coaches, managers, team assistants and others affiliated with the team (e.g., spectators), and it is the responsibility of each member to ensure that its actions, and those of affiliated individuals, on or off the field, do not bring EMWSL into disrepute.

1.03. Director Expectations. Each director (a "**Director**") serving on EMWSL Board of Directors (the "**Board**") plays a vital role in developing and promoting the goals and objectives of EMWSL. A Director is expected to: attend all meetings of the Board and its various committees and task forces on which they may serve; contribute knowledge and skill in at least one area essential to Board governance by serving on Board committees or task forces and/or accepting assignments from the President; attend EMWSL events and functions as requested by the President; help to develop new initiatives, a strategic vision and set long-term priorities for the growth of EMWSL; actively engage in relevant professional development opportunities; and celebrate the successes of EMWSL.

II. TEAM, PLAYER REGISTRATION RULES

2.01. Calendars. Prior to the summer special meeting of EMWSL general membership, the Board will determine and publish the registration dates and calendars for all seasons (currently, spring, summer and fall) comprising the next following seasonal year, which shall be voted upon and approved by EMWSL members during the summer special meeting of the general membership. Each season shall include an open registration period that will begin prior to the season and continue into the season, ending on such date as is determined by the Board. The foregoing notwithstanding, the Board may adjust the approved calendar as it determines to be reasonably necessary. The "seasonal year" is January 1 to December 31.

2.02. New/Additional Teams. New team registrations may be accepted during an open registration period.

2.03. Tournaments. A special registration period for any EMWSL tournament may be established by the Board.

2.04. Affiliation. Each team must ensure that its players, coaches, managers, and team assistants are registered with, and maintain affiliation in good standing with EMWSL, MassSoccer, USASA and USSF, including payment of all annual registration fees. A schedule of these fees shall be published by EMWSL from time to time.

2.05. Team Bond. In addition, each new or reinstated team shall post a \$100 bond that may be held in EMWSL general funds and applied towards any charges that may accrue against such team (e.g., fines). The team shall replenish the bond amount promptly after any portion thereof is so applied by EMWSL.

2.06. Registered Status. A team must comply with and satisfy in full all registration procedures to be considered registered for that season and eligible to participate in EMWSL play. A team is registered when it has submitted all required team and roster information, completed all required USSF, USASA and/or MassSoccer forms, paid the required seasonal fees and satisfied all outstanding fines or other amounts due. Required registration information includes:

(A) Team name, team manager and alternate manager names, and phone numbers and email addresses designated to receive EMWSL information. Each team is responsible for updating its team contact information on the EMWSL website or other registration system as designated by the Board from time to time;

(B) Team colors;

(C) Home field information; and

(D) Roster of all players for the current season.

2.07. Rosters, Player ID's. A valid roster must have a minimum of eleven (11) eligible players. No more than thirty (30) players may be registered with a team for any season. In addition, the respective Divisional competition committees, working with the President and Vice President, may develop reserve-player guidelines to permit up to 15 additional reserve players per team. Each team must provide the referee with a copy of its official roster prior to the start of each match. Each player should have a valid and recognizable picture identification (e.g., driver's license) with them at each match for the referee to cross-reference with the team's official roster. No player may participate unless they have a picture identification (which may be the roster photo) and are on the team's official roster.

2.08. Age Restrictions. Players registering in Division I must be at least 17 years of age by the earlier of the first match in which they play or the end of open registration. For teams registering to play in all other Divisions, they may roster no more than three (3) players age 17 or 18. All other players must be at least 19 years of age by the earlier of the first match in which they play or the end of open registration.

2.09. No Dual Rostering. A player may not play on more than one EMWSL team in the same season. The foregoing limitation shall not apply to simultaneous rostering on an EMWSL team and a state select or league all-star team.

2.10. Youth Players. Youth players wishing to play in EMWSL may do so only if they provide EMWSL with written consent from a parent or legal guardian and, if required, a waiver from the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association or other applicable state youth soccer governing body having jurisdiction.

2.11. Professionals. Players registered as professionals shall not be eligible to play in EMWSL.

2.12. Ineligible Players. Any team which uses an ineligible player, including a player not then properly rostered and registered with that team, shall forfeit any game in which that player played, regardless of whether the referee or the opposing team agreed to permit the ineligible player to play, and shall pay a fine in the amount of \$100.00 for each match in which the unregistered or improperly registered player participates. Any player who is found to be an unregistered or improperly registered player two times or more will be subject to suspension or expulsion by ruling of the Disciplinary/Protest Committee (“*D/PC*”). Protests involving a player’s eligibility may be submitted in writing to the Vice President, as chairperson of the D/PC as provided in Rule IX.

III. CHANGING TEAMS

3.01. Changing Teams. A player may change teams within the same Division during a season only during the open registration period.

IV. TEAM MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

Each team’s manager shall be responsible for:

Ensuring that their team’s contact information is current and accurate on EMWSL website;

Their team’s players’ eligibility;

The submission of all necessary rosters, timely payment of fees and fines, and other deliverables;

Representing their team at all meetings and communicating the business conducted to their teammates. If the designated manager is unable to attend a membership meeting, they shall identify a team member to attend as that team’s representative;

Ensuring that their teammates and others affiliated with their team are familiar with and abide by these League Rules and International Football Association Board (“*IFAB*”) Laws of the Game (“*Laws*”);

Notifying their team of the date, time, and location of each match;

Presenting a valid official team roster and valid player cards (if required) or other forms of player identification for all rostered players to the referee prior to the start of each match;

Maintaining order and respect for the authority of the referee during matches; and

Communicating or posting scores after each match as instructed by their Division director.

V. FIELDS

5.01. Fields. Each team will be responsible for providing a lined field for its home matches in reasonable playing condition within regulation size limits, with corner posts (or other suitable markers) and nets and otherwise complying with USSF and EMWSL playability standards, for hosting its home matches. Fields must be located within the radius around Boston as determined by the Board from time to time. The determination of whether a field meets acceptable playability standards is reserved to the Board; *provided*, nothing herein shall limit the discretion of a referee to abandon any match due to unsafe field conditions. Any team which fails for any match to provide a field meeting acceptable playability standards, other than caused by weather or local restrictions, shall forfeit that match.

5.02. Use of Fields. A player may use a field under EMWSL jurisdiction only at times scheduled through the appropriate authority.

5.03. Rainouts. In the event of a rainout, players may not use the affected fields. Any player or team violating this Rule 5.03 shall be sanctioned, including up to suspension of such player or team for the remainder of the season, and each offending team shall be fined an amount equal to \$100.00.

5.04. Forfeits. In the event of a forfeit, players may play a friendly (scrimmage) on the field during the time allotted for their scheduled match. The referee shall not be expected to stay and officiate for any friendly.

VI. DIVISIONAL PLACEMENTS; PROMOTION/RELEGATION; STANDINGS

6.01. Placements. Teams shall be placed in relatively competitive Divisions each season, to ensure a positive experience for all players. Actual placements shall be determined and made seasonally by the Board, through its various Divisional competition committees. Geographic factors may be considered, to minimize undue travel burdens for players, coaches, and managers.

6.02. Division 1 Summer. First Division placements for the summer season shall be determined in advance of the start of the summer season by the Division director in collaboration with the President and the affected team managers.

6.03. Submission of Scores. Both teams are responsible for submitting match scores to the person designated by the President as soon as possible after the completion of a match.

6.04. Promotion, Relegation. At the end of each spring and fall season, the Board, acting through its various Divisional competition committees, shall have discretion in relegating and promoting teams and, without limiting such discretion, may consider geography.

6.05. Standings. Standings will be determined each season, utilizing a point system of 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw, and 0 points for a loss. Forfeits will carry a one-point penalty (reduction) for standings purposes and, unless otherwise specifically provided in these League

Rules, will be reported as a 0-3 loss for the forfeiting team and a 3-0 win for the non-forfeiting team.

6.06. Tie Breakers. When two teams in the same Division have an equal number of points, final standings will be determined as follows:

(A) Most points in head-to-head play;

(B) Aggregate goal differential in head-to-head play;

(C) Goal differential for the season. Goal differential is computed by subtracting all goals scored against the team from all goals scored by the team, with a maximum goal differential of 5 goals included for each of match. Only scores against teams in the same Division are considered and no more than five goals scored or allowed are considered;

(D) Most wins;

(E) Most shutouts; and

(F) Fewest goals allowed.

These guidelines shall be used to the extent possible in determining standings for competitions occurring when only partial season standings are available.

6.07. Post-Season Playoffs. Qualifying teams will participate in post-season playoffs following completion of the regular summer season. The format and qualifying standards for these summer season playoffs will be determined for each Division by the respective Division directors in collaboration with the President, Vice President, and the affected teams' managers.

VII. PLAYING RULES

The playing rules shall be those promulgated by the IFAB, with the following exceptions:

7.01. Roster Limits. Team rosters are limited as provided in Rule 2.07.

7.02. Minimum Number of Players. A match may kick off if both teams have at least seven (7) eligible players. The referee may abandon the match if, 15 minutes after the designated start time, either team has fewer than seven (7) players. Once kicked off, a match shall be abandoned by the referee if either team has fewer than seven (7) players able to play.

7.03. Leaving the Field. Players may leave the field (for substitution or otherwise) at the closest boundary point, upon the referee's approval.

7.04. Uniform Numbering. Uniform jerseys must have permanent, readily visible numbers affixed to the back of the jersey. Additional numbers of a different size may be added to the front or to the shorts and must match the number on the back of the jersey. Permanent markers or tape are not considered a legitimate number. A uniform jersey may have any length sleeve or be sleeveless, *provided*, that the torso of all players' jerseys is uniform.

7.05. Uniform Conflicts. In the event of a uniform color conflict, the home team shall change uniforms, which may include wearing pinnies. If after the season's schedule is published, a team changes its uniform colors, that team is responsible for avoiding color conflicts, regardless of whether it is the home team.

7.06. Knee Braces. Players wearing knee braces shall cover them so that no metal surfaces are exposed.

7.07. Regulation Time; Overtime. Regulation matches shall consist of two 45-minute halves, unless otherwise agreed upon by both team managers and the referee before the start of the match. There will be no overtime period except in championship or knock-out tournament matches.

7.08. Start of Matches. Summer matches shall kick off (a) at non-lighted fields generally at 6:30 p.m. or such later time as may be established by the appropriate Divisional competition committee; and (b) at lighted fields, no later than two (2) hours prior to the lights going off. Fall matches shall kick off (a) at non-lighted fields, no later than 3:00 p.m., and (b) at lighted fields, no later than two (2) hours prior to the lights going off.

7.09. Substitutions. Substitutions will follow IFAB rules, except that a player may be substituted and then may return to the match any number of times.

7.10. Slide Tackles. For all play below Division 1, slide tackles (defined as a tackle in which a player deliberately leaves their feet to slide along the ground in an attempt take the ball away from an opposing player) may be prohibited by determination of the appropriate Divisional competition committee. In the event of a prohibited slide tackle, the match will be restarted with a direct free kick by the opposing team from the point of the infraction.

7.11. Abandoned Match. If a match is abandoned by the referee prior to completion of one full half, then the match will be considered cancelled under Rule 8.03 and rescheduled as provided therein. If a match is abandoned by the referee after completion of one full half, then the score at that time shall stand as the final score.

7.12. No Protest for Officiating Concerns. It shall not be a basis to protest a match outcome to assert a failure by the referee to properly interpret the Laws regardless whether, if true, the outcome of the match thereby was, or may have been materially affected.

7.13. EMWSL Tournaments. In the event EMWSL organizes and holds a tournament, the rules of eligibility and play for such tournament rules will be determined by the Board, acting through a tournament committee appointed for that purpose, and provided to all teams taking part in that tournament,

VIII. PLAYING THE SCHEDULE; POSTPONEMENTS; FORFEITURES

8.01. Official Schedule. The EMWSL website is the official posting of the regular season and playoff matches schedules (including field assignments and maps). This official schedule is subject to change without prior notice to any team and each team is responsible for checking the schedule in advance of each match for changes, and failure to do so will not be an excuse.

8.02. Playing the Schedule. All regular season matches must be played on the scheduled day/time and at the scheduled field, unless postponed as provided below.

(A) In order to postpone a match voluntarily, the initiating (postponing) team's manager or their designated representative must send an email of the postponement at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the scheduled match to the opposing team manager, the Division director and the assigned referee, including a reasonably detailed description of the reasons for such postponement. The postponing team's manager remains responsible for following up and ensuring the notification was so received by all involved.

(B) A match so postponed shall be rescheduled by the teams' managers, in consultation with the Division director and referee assignor, and played on a date prior to the close of the current season; no match may be made up after the season ends. Each affected team shall use all reasonable efforts so to reschedule and play such postponed match. If such postponed match is not so rescheduled and played, it will be considered a forfeit by the team which initiated the postponement. The opposing team, if it fails to exercise reasonable effort to accommodate such rescheduling, may be assigned a forfeit for such failure, as determined by the Division director. If, despite both team's efforts, the match is not rescheduled and played prior to the end of the season, it will be recorded as a double forfeit.

(C) If the postponing team's manager, or designated representative, fails so to notify the opposing team captain, the Division director and the assigned referee within the timeframe in Rule 8.02(A), then the postponing team shall forfeit the match.

8.03. Weather-Related Cancellations. Weather-related cancellations shall be made by the assigned referee at the field at the time of the affected match's kickoff. In extreme situations, the Division director, in their discretion, may prospectively cancel matches due to weather-related or other extreme conditions, and will notify each affected team's manager of such cancellation. Matches cancelled or abandoned for weather-related reasons will be considered as jointly postponed by the affected teams under Rule 8.02 and cooperatively rescheduled by the affected teams' managers, in consultation with the Division director and referee assignor; *provided*, if the league schedule includes a prospective rainout date, the match will be rescheduled for that date. No refunds will be made because of any rainouts or other weather-related cancellations that are not rescheduled. Any team failing to show for a regular season match due to weather-related or other conditions not covered by this paragraph shall forfeit the match. For clarity: If at the time the match is cancelled by the referee, either team has fewer than the minimum number of players to start a match, such team shall be assessed a forfeit under Rule 8.04.

8.04. Too-Few Players Before Kickoff. If a team has fielded fewer than seven (7) players ready to play at the time scheduled for a match kickoff, the referee will allow up to fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled start time for the team to field the minimum number of players (7). In allowing such additional time, the referee may, in their discretion, shorten both halves equally as needed to end the match at the appointed time. If at the end of such additional time, a team has fielded fewer than seven (7) players ready to play, then such team shall forfeit the match and, in lieu of the forfeiture fine provided in Rule 8.09(A), shall be fined an amount equal to the total payment due to referee(s) assigned to the match.

8.05. Too-Few Players After Kickoff. If neither team has fielded seven (7) players ready to play at the time scheduled for a match kickoff, the referee will allow up to fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled start time for both teams to field the minimum number of players (7). In allowing such additional time, the referee may, in their discretion, shorten both halves proportionally and equally as needed to end the match at the appointed time. If at the end of such additional time, one team has fielded at least seven (7) players ready to play but the other team has not, then such other team shall forfeit the match and, in addition to the forfeiture fine provided in Rule 8.09(A), shall be fined an additional amount equal to the total payment due to referee(s) assigned to the match. If, however, at the end of such additional time, neither team has fielded seven (7) players ready to play, the match will be recorded as a double-forfeit and, in addition to the forfeiture fine provided in Rule 8.09(A), each team shall be fined an amount equal to one-half of the total payment due to referee(s) assigned to the match.

8.06. Referee No-Show. If the assigned referee is not present at the time scheduled for a match kickoff, both teams may agree upon a substitute referee, if one qualified is available. If no qualified replacement referee is available, or if both teams cannot agree upon a replacement referee, the teams shall wait up to 15 minutes for the assigned referee. If the assigned referee has not appeared within the stated time, both team managers shall so notify the Division director and the referee assignor, and the match shall be rescheduled in consultation with the Division director and the referee assignor. For clarity: In the event that the situations described in Rule 8.04 or 8.05 above occur simultaneously with the situation described in this Rule 8.06, then this Rule 8.06 takes precedence.

8.07. Rescheduling Priorities. Due to limited field and referee availability and to control costs, rained-out matches will take rescheduling precedence over other, voluntarily postponed matches. The Board may consider these factors in granting waivers of any otherwise applicable fines for failing to reschedule postponed matches.

8.08. Playoff Participation. Any team that fails to field a minimum roster for, and participate in a playoff match, or that withdraws during the playoffs, shall forfeit the affected match and may be subject to further penalties as may be imposed at the discretion of the Board. The foregoing notwithstanding, any team participating in a summer season in which there are scheduled playoffs may opt-out of participating in the playoffs by written notice from the team manager given to the President and the Division director not later than July 15th of that season; and in such event, no fine or other penalty will be assessed to such team.

8.09. Forfeiture Sanctions.

(A) The match score for any forfeit assessed under these League Rules will be recorded as a 3-0 win for the non-forfeiting team and the forfeiting team will lose one point in the standings. For clarity, for any match where a double forfeit is assessed, the match score will be recorded as a 3-0 loss for both teams and each team will lose one point in the standings. In addition, and unless otherwise expressly provided herein, the forfeiting team(s) shall be fined an amount equal to \$50.00.

(B) In addition, any team that requests the cancellation of, or otherwise forfeits two (2) matches in a season (for reasons other than play in a sanctioned tournament) is subject to

sanctions determined by the President in consultation with the Division director, including disqualification from all or a portion of the remainder of the season, with no refund of registration fees. Any team so disqualified shall be considered in Bad Standing. The decision of disqualification may be appealed to the D/PC within five (5) days after rendering and only upon a showing of good cause.

IX. PROTESTS, GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

9.01. Purpose. The purposes of the EMWSL Protest, Grievance and Appeals Procedures are (i) to promote and ensure uniformity and consistency in the application of the rules and procedures of EMWSL, MassSoccer, USASA, USSF and FIFA/IFAB; and (ii) to control and mitigate unacceptable, unsporting and unfair behavior on the part of players, coaches, managers, team officials, administrators, fans and supporters; all in order to better promote the sport of soccer. All questions relating to the qualification of competitors, interpretation of the rules, and disputes, protests or grievances shall be referred to the D/PC. The decisions of the D/PC shall be binding on all parties unless appealed to and overturned by a higher authority.

9.02. Definitions.

(A) An ***“Appeal”*** arises because of an adverse decision from a Protest or Grievance hearing, administrative action, disciplinary hearing, or lower level appeal. Only those parties to the original action, who are adversely impacted by such decisions, shall be allowed to appeal.

(B) A ***“Disciplinary Hearing”*** results from allegations of misconduct. Such misconduct must be a violation of a published rule, regulation or procedure, or match related violent behavior and misconduct.

(C) A ***“Disciplinary Action”*** may be rendered by the D/PC from a Preliminary Decision or upon the completion of a Disciplinary Hearing. This action may include censure; fines as adopted by EMWSL, MassSoccer or its affiliates; suspensions; institution of probation stipulations; prohibition of participation in specific EMWSL or MassSoccer sanctioned activities; and removal from office or official position.

(D) A ***“Grievance”*** is any complaint, which is not a Protest or an Appeal, involving actions, omissions or circumstances that (in the opinion of the complainant) comprise a violation of one or more provisions of the constitutions, bylaws, or rules and/or procedures of EMWSL, MassSoccer, USASA or USSF. A Grievance may not allege violations of IFAB Laws of the Game or matters of referee judgment.

(E) A ***“Preliminary Decision”*** is taken by the D/PC after its receipt of a properly submitted Protest or Grievance; or upon any other matter the D/PC deems appropriate, including its rendering of a decision in an administrative or disciplinary action. If a Preliminary Decision is reached, the party defending the action shall have the right to request a Disciplinary Hearing. After receipt of a written request for a Disciplinary Hearing, the chair of the D/PC shall promptly schedule the hearing. If the chair receives no request for a Disciplinary Hearing within ten (10) days after the defending party’s receipt of the Preliminary Decision, then the Preliminary

Decision is final. All notifications and requests for Disciplinary Hearings must be made in accordance with EMWSL's notification requirements.

(F) A ***“Protest”*** is related to a specific match and is filed by the manager (or designee) of the affected team. For clarity: Only those teams involved in a match are permitted to protest a match result; third parties cannot file protests on a specific match.

9.03. Lines of Jurisdiction.

(A) The lines of jurisdiction on Protests, Grievances and Appeals, except in the instance of assault or abuse of a referee or as modified in playoff competition, shall be as follows:

- (1) EMWSL D/PC;
- (2) MassSoccer; and
- (3) USSF Appeals Committee.

(B) The line of jurisdiction on Assault of Referee shall be as follows:

- (1) MassSoccer; and
- (2) USSF Appeals Committee.

(C) The line of jurisdiction on Abuse of Referee shall be as follows:

- (1) EMWSL D/PC or MassSoccer;
- (2) MassSoccer; and
- (3) USSF Appeals Committee.

(D) A request for reinstatement following a suspension of a player or coach shall be as follows:

- (1) MassSoccer, unless referred to the D/PC;
- (2) MassSoccer, if referred to D/PC; and
- (3) USSF Appeals Committee.

(E) All decisions at all levels of the Protest, Grievance and Appeal processes shall stand and be in full force and effect until changed by a higher authority and communicated to all the affected parties in writing.

(F) All lower levels of Protest, Grievance and Appeal processes must be exhausted before a higher level will hear the matter.

(G) At all levels of the Protest, Grievance and Appeal processes, if a decision is not reached within thirty (30) days following receipt of the aggrieved party's Protest, Grievance and Appeal, the aggrieved party may submit the Protest, Grievance and Appeal to the next higher level with no additional fee.

(H) No player, coach, team official, referee, fan or supporter, or their representative may invoke the aid of the courts of any State or of the United States without first exhausting all available remedies within the appropriate soccer organizations as set forth under the lines of authority herein. Any person or group action through the court system without exhausting the administrative remedies listed herein or in the MassSoccer, USASA or USSF rules is subject to the following:

(1) Each person or group is automatically suspended from all soccer activities and forfeit any Protest, Grievance and Appeal rights. The party may petition MassSoccer for reinstatement upon conclusion of the action.

(2) Each person or group is liable to MassSoccer for all expenses incurred by MassSoccer and those of its officers, directors, or administrators, in defending the action, including:

- (a) Court costs;
- (b) Attorneys' fees;
- (c) Cost of litigation, including depositions, expert witness fees, etc.;
- (d) Reasonable compensation for time spent by MassSoccer administrators and employees in responding to and defending against allegations in the action, including responses to discovery and court appearances;
- (e) Travel expenses; and
- (f) Expenses for holding special MassSoccer meetings necessitated by the court action.

9.04. Fees for Protests, Hearings, Grievances and Appeals.

(A) The Protest, Grievance and Appeal fees to the D/PC shall be \$25.00.

(B) When any hearing is requested of EMWSL for any other matter not specified herein, a non-refundable fee of \$25.00 shall be paid to EMWSL and provided to the D/PC chair.

(C) All fees must be submitted in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, or money order made payable to EMWSL.

(D) If a Protest, Grievance or Appeal is completely successful, then the fee submitted will be returned only after the time for additional Appeal has passed.

9.05. Notification Requirements.

(A) Notice involving any matter relating to a Protest, Grievance or Appeal must be in writing addressed (i) to the D/PC at the committee's notice address published, and (ii) to any other party, to the record address for such party, in each case as may be published and in effect from time to time on the EMWSL website (or to such other address that the receiving party may designate from time to time in accordance with this paragraph). Notices shall be made by personal delivery, nationally recognized overnight courier (with all fees prepaid), facsimile or email (with confirmation of transmission), or certified or registered mail (in each case, return receipt requested, postage prepaid). A notice is effective only upon receipt by the receiving party and if the party giving the notice has complied with the requirements of this paragraph.

9.06. Protest Procedures.

(A) There is only one acceptable cause for protesting a match: A team plays the match using an unregistered, ineligible, suspended, or expelled player.

(B) The Division director will investigate the circumstances of the protested match and make an initial determination to either uphold or deny the protest. Such decision may be appealed to the D/PC.

(C) To be valid and eligible for consideration, a Protest filed with the D/PC must satisfy the following requirements:

(1) A Protest notice must be sent the D/PC (with a copy, not constituting a notice, to the Division director) as provided in Section 9.05(A) within forty-eight (48) hours of the completion of the match being protested.

(2) The applicable Protest fee must be paid with the Protest notice; and

(3) Two (2) written copies describing the grounds upon which the Protest is lodged must be submitted with the Protest notice, clearly stating the following:

(a) Name, address, phone number and team affiliation of the complainant;

(b) The date, time, and field location of the match;

(c) The rule or rules that are alleged to have been violated and a description the alleged violation;

(d) The final match score;

(e) The name of the opposing team, and coach or manager present;

(f) Names of, and descriptions of any information to be provided by witnesses; and

(g) The name(s) of the referee(s).

9.07. Grievance Procedure. To be valid and eligible for consideration, Grievance filed with the D/PC must include the following:

(A) The Grievance fee; and

(B) Two (2) written copies describing the grounds upon which the Grievance is lodged clearly stating the following:

(1) Name, address, phone number and team affiliation of the complainant;

(2) The rule or rules that are alleged to have been violated and a description of the alleged violation;

(3) The team, player, coach, team official or other individual(s) alleged to have violated the rule(s);

(4) Names of, and descriptions of any information to be provided by witnesses; and

(5) All other pertinent facts.

9.08. Hearing Procedures.

(A) General.

(1) No Conflict of Interest. Members of any committee hearing a Protest, Grievance, Appeal, or other disciplinary hearing, including the D/PD (the "**Hearing Committee**") shall be composed of persons having no conflict of interest in the matters being heard and having no association with the principal parties in the matters. No person may adjudicate a matter at more than one level.

(2) Record of Hearing. The chair of the Hearing Committee shall appoint one committee member to make a record (minutes) of the proceedings.

(3) Types of Hearings:

(a) Open Hearings. Open hearings shall be held with the principal parties, witnesses for both sides, and all necessary evidence, appearing before the members of the Hearing Committee. Testimony from witnesses need not be taken in the presence of other witnesses, but the principal parties shall be present for all proceedings except the deliberations of the Hearing Committee.

(b) Closed Hearings. Closed hearings require that all testimony and evidence (including the rules) be submitted in writing. The committee members on an individual basis may consider testimony and evidence, with a decision by mail or conference call.

(c) Preliminary Decision. Both an open hearing and a closed hearing may be preceded by a Preliminary Decision. A Preliminary Decision is not a separate hearing but is a preliminary step for a hearing. A Preliminary Decision may be rendered upon a review of any information received and any preliminary investigation the chairman deems necessary. If a Preliminary Decision is reached, the party defending the action shall have the right to request a Disciplinary Hearing. After the Chairman receives receipt of a written request for a hearing, the Preliminary Decision is rescinded, and the chair of the Hearing Committee shall promptly schedule a hearing. If the chair receives no request for a Disciplinary Hearing within ten (10) days after the defending party's receipt of the Preliminary Decision, then the Preliminary Decision becomes final and cannot be appealed.

(B) Notification of Hearing. Proper notification of a hearing will be given whenever an open hearing is scheduled.

(1) All parties must receive notification at least seven (7) days prior to the hearing. An individual may waive their right to prior notice in writing prior to the start of any hearing; attendance at the hearing constitutes waiver of any right to prior notice.

(2) Proper notification will be in writing, include all pertinent information relating to the purpose of the hearing, and be sent in compliance with EMWSL notification requirements.

(C) Procedures for Open Hearing. Procedures for conducting open hearings, for creating and preserving a hearing record, and for communicating a decision shall generally follow the relevant guidelines issued from time to time by MassSoccer and USSF (see, e.g., USSF Bylaw 701 and associated guidance).

9.09. Appeal Procedures.

(A) All suspensions, decisions on Protests or Grievances upheld or overruled, or rulings by the D/PC are subject to appeal to the next higher authority. Levels of appeal shall follow the requirements and mandates, including filing deadlines, procedures, and payment of any required Appeal fee, from MassSoccer and USSF (currently, D/PC; then MassSoccer Board of Directors; then USSF National Appeals Committee).

(B) No Preliminary Decision of the D/PC shall be appealable. Instead, the party disputing the Preliminary Decision shall first request a hearing before the D/PC. Only a final decision of the D/PC after a hearing shall be appealable.

X. CAUTIONS, SEND OFFS, AND EXPULSIONS

10.01. Cautions.

(A) Cautions (yellow cards) may be issued by the referee for any reason provided therefor in the Laws.

10.02. Sending Off.

(A) Sending off (red cards) may be issued by the referee for any reason provided therefor in the Laws.

(B) Any player, coach or manager sent off from a match (red-carded) must immediately leave the field area and not stay near the field the remainder of the match. In addition, such player, coach, or manager shall be suspended for the team's next following match. Any player, coach or manager sent off from a match who refuses to leave the field area shall be subject to additional fines or punishment as determined by the D/PC.

(C) Any player, coach or manager sent off from two (2) matches in a seasonal year will be fined \$100.00 and suspended until the player or their manager has appeared before the D/PC to justify that player's further participation.

10.03. Appeal of Sending Off.

(A) Appealing of a sending off must be submitted in writing by the player, coach or manager to the Vice President (as chair of the D/PC), along with a \$25.00 appeal fee, and received within seventy-two (72) hours of the match date during the fall and spring seasons, and within forty-eight (48) hours of the match date during the summer season. Such appeal shall describe in writing the reasons for the appeal in reasonable detail. The D/PC may also consider materials submitted by the referee, the opposing team, other involved players and any other person, which materials shall be timely shared with the appellant.

(B) The D/PC will promptly consider the appeal and will inform the affected parties of its decision; if the D/PC determines to deny the appeal and uphold the sending off, it will ask whether the sent-off player, coach or manager desires a hearing or whether she will accept the decision of the D/PC without a hearing. If they choose a hearing, such hearing shall be conducted as timely as possible. The decision of the D/PC shall be final.

(C) If a sending-off is successfully appealed, the appeal fee shall be refunded and, in the case of appealing a second sending-off, the D/PC may consider imposing no fine at all or a lesser fine than \$25.00. If an appeal is found to be frivolous and denied, then EMWSL shall retain the appeal fee.

(D) During the pendency of an appeal of a sending-off, the player, coach or manager may continue participate in league play, after serving the one-match suspension described in Rule 10.02(A).

10.04. Additional Punishments. Upon receipt of a referee or other report showing that a player, coach or manager has been guilty of misconduct described in this Rule 10.04, the D/PC shall decide whether to impose only the minimum punishment set forth herein or whether a greater punishment is warranted, which may include further match forfeitures, prohibition from attending future EMWSL matches and activities, and/or additional fines. The D/PC may consider materials

submitted by the referee, the opposing team, involved players and any other person. If the D/PC determines that greater punishment should be imposed, the involved player(s) will be notified of that decision and given the option to accept the decision without a hearing. If the involved player(s) chooses a hearing, such hearing shall be conducted as timely as possible. The decision to allow the player to play in any league matches after serving the mandated minimum match suspension, pending the hearing is left to the D/PC whose decision is final and non-appealable. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing:

(A) Conduct found to manifest a clear intent to injure shall carry a minimum suspension of three (3) matches. A second incident of conduct found to manifest a clear intent to injure shall carry a minimum suspension of fifteen (15) matches. A third sending-off for conduct found to manifest a clear intent to injure shall carry a lifetime expulsion from EMWSL;

(B) Flagrant verbal harassment or foul and abusive language shall carry a minimum suspension of one match. A second or subsequent incident of flagrant verbal harassment or foul, offensive, insulting, or abusive language or gestures shall carry a minimum suspension of five (5) matches each; and

(C) Assault of a match official shall carry a mandatory \$100.00 fine and a lifetime expulsion from EMWSL. Assault includes, but is not limited to, hitting, kicking, punching, choking, spitting at or on, grabbing or bodily running into a match official, or attempting any of the foregoing; the act of kicking or throwing any object at the official that could cause injury; or damaging the official's uniform or personal property. The \$100.00 fine will be assessed to the involved team and must be paid prior to the next scheduled EMWSL match to play.

Determinations of the D/PC under this Rule 10.04 involving suspensions or expulsions are appealable only as provided in Rule 9.03.

XI. RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

From time to time, the EMWSL match schedule conflicts with the observance of a religious holiday. It has been and remains EMWSL policy to allow any team manager (or their designee) the option of postponing a match where such a religious conflict may exist.

All EMWSL members and team managers are expected to cooperate in assuring that players, coaches, team officials and their families can choose freely, and without pressure, between religious observances and participation in EMWSL activities.

It is expected that a player, coach, or team official who chooses to observe a religious holiday in lieu of playing soccer will not jeopardize their playing time or position on the team in future matches because of such choice.

In requesting a postponement, the opposing team manager and Division Director must be notified as soon as possible before the scheduled match date. Referee schedulers and town field schedulers (where applicable) should also be notified where necessary and appropriate.

The process and time frames for rescheduling and playing the postponed match are as set out in League Rule VIII [Playing the Schedule].

XII. GENDER IDENTITY

EMWSL is a not-for-profit adult sports organization, created to promote women's participation in soccer in a safe environment of friendly competition, free of discrimination based on age, race, creed, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity/expression.

EMWSL has no specific policy for transgender athletes and welcomes any player who self-identifies as female to join our community of teams.

XIII. DRONES

13.01. Commitment. It is the policy of EMWSL to provide an enjoyable and safe environment for its soccer players. Therefore, the use of unmanned aircrafts is prohibited at EMWSL matches, activities or events.

13.02. Definitions.

“Unmanned Aircraft Systems” (UAS) means an aircraft that is intended to operate and its associated elements that are operated with no pilot on board, or that can fly autonomously based on pre-programmed flight plans or more complex dynamic automation systems.

“Event” means any match, event, meeting, or other activity sponsored, organized, or sanctioned by EMWSL.

13.03. Prohibitions.

(A) The use of any non-approved UAS at any Event is strictly prohibited.

(B) The use of a UAS at an Event may be approved by EMWSL for a specified promotional activity at the Event. Such approval shall extend only to a designated area or areas that are away from players, officials, and spectators and over any field of play or practice.

13.04. Enforcement. Any person violating this Rule XIII shall be immediately removed from the Event by the EMWSL authority managing the Event.

13.05. Modification and Delegation. The Board may amend and waive provisions of this Rule XIII as appropriate on a case-by-case basis and may delegate its authority.

XIV. CONCUSSION / RETURN TO PLAY [UNDER CONSTRUCTION...]

XV. INTERPRETATION

For purposes of these League Rules, (a) the words “include,” “includes” and “including” are deemed to be followed by the words “without limitation”; (b) the word “or” is not exclusive; and (c) the words “herein,” “hereof,” “hereby,” “hereto” and “hereunder” refer to this Agreement as a whole. Unless the context otherwise requires, references herein to sections, schedules, and exhibits mean the sections of, and schedules and exhibits attached to, these League Rules. All references to “\$” or “dollars” mean the lawful currency of the United States of America. Whenever

the singular is used in this Agreement, the same shall include the plural, and whenever the plural is used herein, the same shall include the singular, where appropriate.