

SYA Soccer Code of Conduct

Updated: September 2026

Southwestern Youth Association (SYA) values and promotes the highest standard of sportsmanship. This Code of Conduct defines expectations to ensure a positive experience for players, coaches, game officials, and all members of our soccer community.

Coaches

- Instruct players to play according to the International Football Association Board's Laws of the Game and encourage fair play without taking advantage of an opponent
- Do not dispute the ruling of a referee or other match officials while the game is in progress and instruct spectators to refrain from disputing or advocating for calls as well. Clarification of a ruling may take place only with the referee's approval during an official break or when the referee indicates it is appropriate.
- Coaching from the sidelines is permitted, provided:
 - Tone of voice is informative, is not disrespectful, and is of a tactical nature
 - It is done from the team's sideline, at least one yard behind the touch line, and from the designated team area, which is between the halfway line and the penalty area
 - It is done by a registered SYA coach
 - Is directed toward a coach's own team and not his opponent's team
- Do not enter the field of play unless approved to do so by the referee to tend to an injured player
- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players, assistant coaches, and spectators. If a spectator's conduct warrants the issuance of a yellow or red card, it may be issued directly to the coach. Coaches are also responsible for spectators abiding by this Code of Conduct, regardless of whether a card is issued by the referee.
- **If any red card is issued during a game, both coaches must report the incident and any details to their age group coordinator within 24 hours**

Spectators

- The use of noise-making or amplifying devices is prohibited
- Spectators may not involve themselves in the game by making any comments to the referee, other match officials, or opposing players

- Spectators may not instruct nor coach participants regarding tactics or strategy; only registered coaches may instruct players during play and it must be done from the team area
- All comments made to players must be of a positive nature

Players

- Must be respectful to opponents before, during, and after games, including in the hand-shake line that follows games
- May not dispute the referee or other match officials' calls or request for the referee or other match officials to call a penalty on an opposing player
- Shall go to the ground when injured and requiring assistance; when the referee stops play due to an injury, players on both teams shall kneel in place until the referee calls for play to resume

Referees

The referees are in complete charge of the field and adjacent areas from the time they arrive at the game site until they depart the field. The referee is empowered to:

- Rule on what equipment or accessories are considered dangerous
- Issue yellow or red cards during that entire period
- Terminate a game for coach, player, or spectator misconduct
- Refuse to allow the game to be played if, in the referee's judgment, the field is unplayable due to length of grass, inadequate lines, or other impediments
- Report red cards to the Referee Assignor for communication to the SYA Director of Operations and other members of the R&D Committee following the game

Referees may be supported in enforcing the SYA Soccer Code of Conduct by SYA staff, age group coordinators, the SYA Soccer Vice Commissioner, or the SYA Soccer Commissioner. Volunteer SYA coaches are expected to support the referee in enforcement of rules and the SYA Soccer Code of Conduct.

All Present at SYA Soccer Games

Physical violence, foul or abusive language, or harassment **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**. Such conduct will be reported and acted on even in situations where cards were not issued. Any incident which results in a player or coach being issued a red card for physical violence or assault directed against a referee or other match officials will result in a suspension. In addition, the incident will be reviewed by the Executive Board of the Virginia Youth Soccer Association and may result in a fine.

The possession or use of alcohol, tobacco, or any illegal or illicit drug, in any form, at SYA games or practices is prohibited. Smoking or vaping of any kind at an SYA event is also prohibited.

Rules and Disciplinary (R&D) Committee

The R&D Committee shall consist of SYA Soccer's Director of Operations, Vice Commissioner, and the age group coordinator for the team, coach, or player involved. A minimum of three members must review incidents requiring disciplinary action and concur with any disciplinary recommendation. Members of the disciplinary committee may not participate in disciplinary reviews if they have a family member on the team or staff of the team whose player or coach is involved in a disciplinary issue; in such cases or if any of the R&D Committee roles are vacant at the time of an incident review, an age group coordinator from another age group may be asked to participate in reviewing a disciplinary incident.

Sanctions

- A coach who receives a red card during a game must leave the game site and its vicinity at once and may not return to the field that day. If a coach receiving a red card does not immediately depart from the field, then his or her team will forfeit their game. Coaches receiving a red card may coach another team that day.
- If a coach is required to leave and there is no other responsible adult able to supervise the team, the game will be declared a forfeit in favor of the other team and entered in the standings as a 3-0 victory. A player receiving a red card may remain on the sideline under the supervision of his or her coach. **Red cards cannot be appealed.**
- A coach or player who receives a red card will receive a one game suspension and may not coach or participate in an SYA Soccer game until that one game suspension is served, even if it is a playoff game or the following season
- If a team walks off a field in protest, they forfeit their game; the coach will be cited for unsportsmanlike conduct and must meet with the SYA Soccer Commissioner, Vice Commissioner, appropriate Age Group Commissioner, and/or Director of Operations prior to the team playing its next game.
- Disciplinary action may be taken by the R & D Committee against any player, team official, team, or spectator who fails to abide by the Laws of the Game, the SYA Soccer Rules, or this Code of Conduct, regardless of whether a card is issued at a game. **Sanctions may range from verbal warnings, written censures, barred presence from attending SYA Soccer games, game forfeiture, suspensions of an individual for one or multiple games, or suspensions of an individual for one or multiple seasons.** Per the SYA bylaws, SYA Soccer may not impose permanent expulsions.

Carrying Out Suspensions

1. General requirements:

- a. The penalty for ejection from an SYA game is an automatic one-game suspension, i.e., a sit-out, regardless of whether a red card was issued. A player, coach, or other team official may be ejected before, during, or after a game; an ejection after a game carries the same sanction as an ejection during a game. The R&D Committee also has the authority to impose suspensions.
 - b. Multi-game suspensions must be served consecutively
 - c. Cautions and ejections assessed in terminated games (for bad weather or for other reasons) count as if the game had been completed
2. Sit-outs must be served in the next SYA game the team plays. Games cancelled by rain or won or lost by forfeit do not count as the "next SYA game the team plays." Sit-outs being served in a game terminated by weather will not count and sit-outs being served in a game terminated by actions on the field that are not weather related will be reviewed by the R & D Committee to determine whether or not the sit-out will count.
3. A player, coach or team official ejected in the last game of the season or owing a sit-out as a result of the last game must serve the sit-out in the next game in which the individual is eligible to play.
4. A player sitting out a game may attend the game but must not be in uniform and must not be on the sideline with the team during the game.
5. An official of the team with a player or coach serving a sit-out must notify the referee of the name of the individual sitting out and request the referee record the sit-out on the game report.
6. **A suspended coach may not appear at the game site** or its vicinity before, during, or after a game for which the coach has been suspended. If a coach appears at the game site during a suspension, his or her team shall forfeit the game in question by a 3-0 score.
7. If a suspended player plays or a coach is present at the game(s) for which they were suspended, their team shall forfeit the game by a 3-0 score.

Appeals

- Red cards and subsequent one game suspensions associated with a red card may not be appealed
- Disciplinary sanctions decided upon by the R&D Committee may be appealed.
 - Appeals must be made in writing, within 48 hours of communication of an R&D decision; there will be a \$50.00 fee for any appeal
 - Appeals will be reviewed by the SYA Soccer Commissioner and all available members of the SYA Soccer Board; a majority vote of present SYA Board members will be necessary to uphold an appeal and overturn an R&D Committee decision; in such cases the \$50.00 fee will be refunded to the appealing party

- Per SYA's bylaws, appeals may also be made to the SYA Executive Committee, who would in turn review them with the SYA Board