

# SOUTHWESTERN YOUTH ASSOCIATION (SYA) RECREATIONAL SOCCER

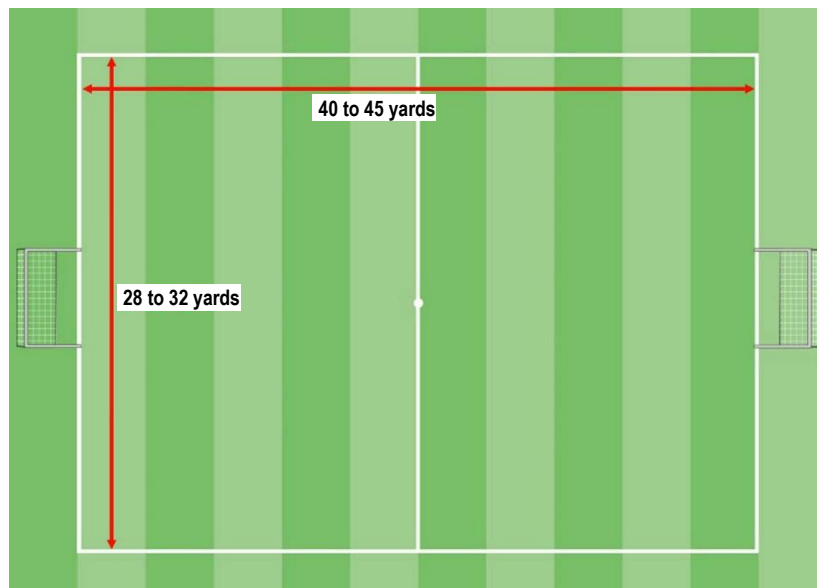
## RULE MODIFICATIONS TO THE IFAB 2026/27 LAWS OF THE GAME UNDER 7 (U7) AND UNDER 8 (U8) AGE GROUPS

Updated: September 1, 2026

SYA recreational soccer for the U7 and U8 age groups is played in accordance with the International Football Association Board (IFAB) 2026/27 [Laws of the Game](#) except as modified in this document to incorporate U.S. Soccer guidance and standards for small-sided games.

### LAW 1 – THE FIELD OF PLAY

1.1. Dimensions. SYA U7-U8 games are played on fields approximately 40-45 yards long and 28-32 yards wide.



1.2. Markings. The field shall be marked as follows.

- a. Distinctive boundary lines (touch lines and goal lines) not more than five (5) inches wide.
- b. A halfway line and center mark as defined in the Laws of the Game.
- c. The following markings are not required:
  - (1) Center circle. If marked, the center circle shall have a ten (10) foot radius from the center mark.
  - (2) Corner arcs. If marked, there shall be four (4) corner arcs with a one (1) yard radius.
  - (3) Corner flagposts. If used, corner flagposts must be checked for proper placement and safety. Coaches must not use traffic cones, pylons, broken flagposts, or other dangerous items to substitute for corner flagposts. Corner flagposts should be removed from the field when weather (e.g., high winds) causes them to become hazardous to players.

(4) Goal area. If marked, the goal area shall be marked by two lines perpendicular to the goal line, four (4) yards from the center of the goal (8 yards wide) and four (4) yards into the field of play, connected by a line parallel to the goal line.

(5) Penalty area. There shall be no penalty area, penalty mark, or penalty arc.

1.3. Goals no larger than four (4) feet high and six (6) feet wide.

- a. Goals must be inspected before every game to ensure they are properly secured, anchored, and/or counterweighted.
- b. No game shall be allowed to start or continue if the goal is or becomes unsafe.
- c. No one shall be allowed to hang on goal frames.

1.4. Spectator Areas. During the game, spectators must remain at least three (3) yards away from the field boundary lines. No spectators are permitted directly behind the goals. The Game Facilitator (see Law 5.2) may adjust these restrictions in the best interest of the game, based on weather, heat, sun, shade, field conditions, safety, or other mitigating factors.

## **LAW 2 – THE BALL**

The game is played with a Size 3 ball.

## **LAW 3 – THE PLAYERS**

3.1. Number of Players. Each team shall have no more than five (5) players on the field. Each team should have at least three (3) players on the field to start or continue a game. The Game Facilitator can wait up to five (5) minutes after the scheduled kickoff time for sufficient players to be ready to play.

3.2. There are no goalkeepers. No player should act as a goalkeeper, nor remain in the vicinity of their own goal when the ball is in the other half of the field. Coaches should encourage players to remain actively involved in play at all times.

3.3. Substitutions. Unlimited substitutions may be made at any stoppage in play. The Game Facilitator shall give players permission to enter and leave the field.

3.4. Participation. Every player must play at least 50% of the game provided the player complies with Item 15 of the “Additional SYA Soccer Club Rules, Policies, and Procedures.” No player shall play the entire game unless each eligible player has played at least 75% of the total game time. Coaches, not the Game Facilitator, are responsible for enforcing participation rules.

3.5. Special-Needs Players. The Game Facilitator shall not prevent any special-needs player from participating in a game unless there is a safety issue (for any player, not just the special-needs player). Special-needs players are subject to the Laws of the Game and SYA Soccer rules and policies, although the Game Facilitator may provide special consideration if it is in the best interest of the game. There shall be no

protest by any coach as to whether a special-needs player can play. Any concerns will be referred to SYA Soccer after the game has been completed.

- 3.6. Team Captains. Teams are not required to designate a captain. If they choose to designate a captain, the captain is not required to wear an identifying armband.

## **LAW 4 – THE PLAYERS’ EQUIPMENT**

- 4.1. Uniforms. Players are expected to wear the approved SYA Soccer uniform (shirts, shorts, and socks). In the event of a color conflict, home team will change shirts or wear “pinnies.” Numbers are not required on uniform shirts. Uniform exceptions may be granted by the Game Facilitator. Any player with blood on the uniform is permitted to change into an alternate shirt (as well as shorts and/or socks) that is distinct from the opposing team’s shirt color.
- 4.2. Footwear. Players must wear shoes that are safe and provide sufficient protection for the player’s feet. Examples include: soccer shoes with or without soft/molded plastic or rubber cleats, fitness/running/walking shoes, or similar types of athletic shoes. Shoes with metal cleats are prohibited. Toe cleats near the front of the shoe are prohibited. Open-toe or open-heel shoes are prohibited.
- 4.3. Shinguards. All players must wear shinguards as prescribed by the Laws of the Game. Shinguards must be worn inside the socks, and the socks should completely cover the shinguards.
- 4.4. Accessories. Players cannot wear anything that is dangerous. Using any material to cover or conceal a dangerous item is not allowed. Allowed accessories must be safe, secure and/or covered. Allowed accessories include soft wrist and arm bands, medical alert bracelets taped flat to the skin, religious items without sharp or hard edges worn securely under the uniform, fitness tracking devices worn securely under the uniform (e.g., in a vest), and non-dangerous hair accessories (e.g., ribbons, hair bands, headbands, “pre-wrap,” hair clips, etc.). The Game Facilitator will determine what is safe/allowed and ensure players remove all dangerous items.
- 4.5. Other Equipment.
- a. Casts. A cast may be worn if it is wrapped in soft, protective material or other comparable types of covering (e.g., cushioning foam, plastic bubble wrap, etc.). The Game Facilitator shall determine whether any such covering is safe and provides sufficient protection against injury to any player. The Game Facilitator must ensure no player wearing a cast uses it in a manner that endangers the safety of any player.
  - b. Orthopedic or protective devices such as leg/ankle/knee braces or stabilizers, finger splints, and intraoral devices (mouth/teeth guards), are permitted provided they are deemed to be safe by the Game Facilitator.
  - c. Eyewear. Players may wear eyeglasses or goggles for vision correction. Eyewear should be secured by a strap around the head and have unbreakable lenses and frames. The Game Facilitator shall not disqualify a player wearing eyewear solely due to the lack of a strap and/or unbreakable lenses or

frames, provided the eyewear is otherwise deemed to be safe. Players are not permitted to wear sunglasses unless required for vision correction and prescribed by a medical professional.

- d. Head and face coverings. Players may wear head and face coverings (e.g., hats, protective headgear, religious head coverings, molded face masks, etc.) that are permitted by the Laws of the Game and deemed to be safe by the Game Facilitator. Exceptions may be made for inclement weather (e.g., soft hats during cold weather).
- e. Body or facial make-up that taunts, demeans, incites, or degrades any person is prohibited.

## **LAW 5 – THE REFEREE**

5.1. U.S. Soccer certified referees are not required or assigned to U7 or U8 games. If used, the referee has all responsibilities and authorities under the Laws of the Game.

5.2. Game Facilitator. In lieu of a referee, a coach, team official, parent, or other person will serve as the “Game Facilitator” with the same duties and responsibilities as the referee. Only one Game Facilitator shall be on the field during the game. Coaches are generally not allowed on the field unless they are the Game Facilitator or have been beckoned on the field by the Game Facilitator (e.g., to attend to an injured player). The Game Facilitator’s responsibilities include:

- a. Act as the referee by enforcing the Laws of the Game.
- b. Ensure safety, fairness, and enjoyment of all players.
- c. Ensure proper behavior by coaches, team officials, and spectators before, during, and after the game. Sanction irresponsible behavior when necessary (see Law 5.3 and 5.4).
- d. Together with coaches, facilitate the players’ knowledge and participation in the game (e.g., by encouraging players to play by the rules, explaining rules and decisions, etc.).

5.3. Behavior of Coaches and Team Officials. The head coach is responsible for the sideline behavior of all players, team officials, and spectators before, during, and immediately after the game.

- a. The Game Facilitator shall not show yellow or red cards to any coach or team official.
- b. If the Game Facilitator determines the behavior of any coach or team official is inappropriate either by action or word or is detrimental to the orderly conduct of the game, the Game Facilitator has the authority to dismiss the offending individual from the game. A prior warning is not necessary.
- c. If a coach or team official is dismissed, the game shall not be restarted until the offending individual has left the vicinity of the field. In practice, this means the individual must be far enough from the field to be “out of sight and sound” and unable to influence or further disrupt the game.
- d. Coaches or team officials who are dismissed shall have no further contact with the team (players or other team officials), either directly or indirectly (including using cell phones or other electronic devices).

- e. Exception: If there is no other responsible adult available to remain with the team, a dismissed coach will be allowed to stay in the vicinity of the team. In such cases, the dismissed coach is not allowed to communicate with players, team officials, spectators, or any other persons, just as if the coach had been “out of sight and sound.” Failure to comply with these restrictions may result in the Game Facilitator terminating the game.
- f. The Game Facilitator has the authority to terminate any game where a dismissed coach or team official returns to the field before the game is finished.

#### 5.4. Behavior of Spectators.

- a. The Game Facilitator shall not show yellow or red cards to spectators but can warn or dismiss head coaches who fail to control inappropriate or irresponsible behavior by spectators.
- b. The Game Facilitator has the authority to dismiss any spectator from the vicinity of the field if their behavior is considered inappropriate either by action or word or is detrimental to the orderly conduct of the game.
- c. The head coach, not the Game Facilitator, is responsible for ensuring any dismissed spectator leaves the vicinity of the field in a timely manner. Spectators who are dismissed do not have to be “out of sight or sound” but must be sufficiently removed from the vicinity of the field and unable to cause further disruptions.
- d. The Game Facilitator has the authority to suspend a game if order needs to be restored, or terminate a game if order cannot be restored, to eliminate any safety concerns for the players, team officials, or match officials.
- e. The Game Facilitator has the authority to terminate any game where a dismissed spectator returns to the field before the game is finished.

5.5. The Game Facilitator, as well as both the home and away team coaches, must email a complete report of irresponsible behavior or dismissals from the field to the appropriate Age Group Coordinator no more than 24 hours after the game has ended. Details of any suspended or terminated games due to disorderly conduct must also be reported.

### **LAW 6 – THE OTHER MATCH OFFICIALS**

The other match officials (e.g., assistant referees) are not required. If used, the other match officials have all responsibilities and authorities under the Laws of the Game. “Club linesman” are not required but may be used if requested by the Game Facilitator or referee.

### **LAW 7 – THE DURATION OF THE MATCH**

7.1. U7 and U8 games are played with two equal halves of twenty (20) minutes, for a total game time of forty (40) minutes. The clock shall remain running during each period with no time added to any either half.

7.2. Halftime is five (5) minutes.

- 7.3. If the game begins after its scheduled kickoff time, the Game Facilitator will reduce the length of each period accordingly so there will be equal length periods and the game ends on time. This includes games delayed due to weather, field preparation issues, unsafe playing conditions, players not arriving on time, or any other reason.
- 7.4. The Game Facilitator, in consultation with both coaches, may shorten the length of each period for any reason (e.g., weather/adverse playing conditions, darkness, player safety, etc.).
- 7.5. The Game Facilitator may add a water/hydration or cooling break no longer than three (3) minutes to either half. The clock shall remain running during any such break and the time will not be added to either half. Throwing water/fluid containers to players on the field is prohibited.
- 7.6. Thunder and Lightning (30-Minute Rule).
- a. Any time thunder is heard or lightning is observed, the Game Facilitator shall immediately suspend the game and direct all people to leave the field and proceed with haste to the nearest shelter.
  - b. All people should remain in a sheltered location (e.g., cars, buildings, etc.) for thirty (30) minutes before resuming soccer activities.
  - c. The 30-minute waiting period begins each time thunder is heard or lightning is seen.
  - d. If field/weather conditions become safe (e.g., thunder and lightning are no longer present), the Game Facilitator should let coaches know if and when a game may be resumed.
  - e. Play should not be resumed after a weather-related suspension if doing so would cause the game to be finished after its scheduled time slot, unless resumption does not interfere with any subsequently scheduled game.

## **LAW 8 – THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY**

Opponents must be in their own half of the field and at least ten (10) feet from the ball for a kickoff.

## **LAW 9 – THE BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY**

No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game.

## **LAW 10 – DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF A MATCH**

No scores are kept nor winner is determined. Coaches should discourage players from keeping track of goals during the game, while reinforcing the principles of player development, safety, fairness, and enjoyment.

## **LAW 11 – OFFSIDE**

There is no offside.

## **LAW 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT**

- 12.1. The restart for all fouls and misconduct is an indirect free kick (see Law 13). The Game Facilitator may provide a brief explanation of any decision or offense.
- 12.2. No Heading the Ball. Players are not permitted to play the ball with their head.
- a. The Game Facilitator must stop play immediately whenever the ball hits a player in the head. The restart depends on whether the player intentionally played the ball with their head. If so, the restart is an indirect free kick to the opposing team in accordance with Law 13. If accidental or unintentional, the restart is a dropped ball (drop to goalkeeper if accidental heading occurs inside the penalty area).
  - b. Any player with a suspected head injury must be removed from the game (but only if it is safe to move the player) and shall not return to the game unless cleared to do so.
  - c. In the absence of a medical professional or certified athletic trainer, the Game Facilitator has the authority to deny the player's reentry into the game if there are any safety concerns.
  - d. If a coach, parent, or other individual insists on returning the player to the game despite these safety concerns, the Game Facilitator has the authority to terminate the game.
- 12.3. No Sliding. Players are not permitted to slide on the ground. Sliding occurs when a player intentionally leaves their feet to play the ball on the ground. This includes tackling the ball, preventing the ball from leaving the field, or simply attempting to gain possession or control of the ball. Stumbling or falling on the ground is not sliding. Players should be reminded to stay on their feet.
- 12.4. Any player may use their hands or arms for protection if the Game Facilitator decides they are shielding their face, head, neck, or chest from impact with the ball.
- 12.5. No yellow or red cards shall be shown to any player, coach, team official, or spectator. Coaches, team officials, or spectators that fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner may be dismissed by the Game Facilitator (see Law 5.3 and 5.4).

## **LAW 13 – FREE KICKS**

- 13.1. All free kicks are indirect free kicks.
- 13.2. Free Kicks Taken in the Kicking Team's Half of the Field.
- a. Opposing team players must move behind the halfway line.
  - b. Opposing team players may not cross the halfway line until the ball is kicked and touched by a second player on the kicking team. The kick shall be retaken if opponents commit an offense.
- 13.3. Free Kicks Taken in the Defending Team's Half of the Field.
- a. Opposing team players must be at least ten (10) feet from the position of the kick (unless they are on their own goal line and between the goal posts).

- b. The kick shall be retaken if opponents move closer than ten (10) feet before the ball is kicked, unless the kicking team maintains possession of the ball and advantage favors the kicking team.

13.4. Exception to the Minimum Required Distance on a Free Kick. The kicking team may take a “quick kick” before opposing players move the required distance specified in Laws 13.2 and 13.3. The free kick shall not be retaken even if the opposing team gains possession of the ball, since the kicking team chose to kick/play the ball quickly.

## **LAW 14 – THE PENALTY KICK**

There are no penalty kicks.

## **LAW 15 – THE THROW-IN**

15.1. Players may use a throw-in, kick-in, or dribble-in to restart play.

- a. Opposing team players must be at least ten (10) feet from the position of the throw-in regardless of the method used to restart play.
- b. If a throw-in or kick-in is used, the ball cannot be touched again by the thrower or kicker until it has touched another player.
- c. If a dribble-in is used, there are no restrictions on the number of touches on the ball. Opposing team players can challenge for the ball as soon as the ball is dribbled into the field of play.

15.2. Players should be given fair opportunity to perform a throw-in. The Game Facilitator should allow players to “try again” when a throw-in is done incorrectly.

15.3. Play shall continue even if a throw-in is done incorrectly. The team taking the throw-in shall never lose possession of the ball solely based on an “illegal” throw-in.

## **LAW 16 – THE GOAL KICK**

16.1. If there is no goal area marked on the field, a goal kick shall be taken 3-4 yards from the kicking team’s goal.

16.2. Players may either kick or dribble the ball to restart play. If a dribble is used, there are no restrictions on the number of touches on the ball.

16.3. Opposing team players must move behind the halfway line.

16.4. Opposing team players may not cross the halfway line until the ball is kicked or dribbled by the kicking team.

16.5. Kicking team players should not try to kick the ball over the halfway line without the ball being touched or played by a teammate. Coaches should remind players of the importance of ball possession and “building play from the back.”

## **LAW 17 – THE CORNER KICK**

- 17.1. If there are no corner arcs marked on the field, a corner kick shall be taken approximately one (1) yard from the corner.
- 17.2. Players may either kick or dribble the ball to restart play. If a dribble is used, there are no restrictions on the number of touches on the ball.
- 17.3. Opposing team players must be at least ten (10) feet from the ball before the corner kick is taken.

**U7 AND U8 RECREATIONAL SOCCER RULE MODIFICATIONS TO THE IFAB 2026/27 LAWS OF THE GAME  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2026**

|        |                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Law 1  | The Field of Play                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Field Dimensions: 40-45 yards long by 28-32 yards wide</li> <li>– Center Circle: Not required; if marked, 10-foot radius</li> <li>– Goal Area: Not required; if marked, 4 x 8 yards</li> <li>– No Penalty Area, Penalty Mark, or Penalty Arc</li> <li>– Corner Arc: Not required; if marked, 1-yard radius</li> <li>– Corner flags are not mandatory; substitute items must be safe if used</li> <li>– Goals: 4 x 6 feet</li> </ul>                                                  |
| Law 2  | The Ball                           | Size 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Law 3  | The Players                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 5 v 5 – no goalkeepers</li> <li>– Minimum of 3 players to start/continue game</li> <li>– No team captains are required on the field of play nor any player wear a qualifying armband</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|        | Grace Period                       | 5 minutes after scheduled kickoff time to field a minimum of 3 players                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|        | Substitutions                      | Unlimited at any stoppage in play (with Game Facilitator's permission)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|        | Participation Rule                 | Every player must play at least 50% of game                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Law 4  | The Players' Equipment             | Uniform numbers are not required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Law 5  | The Referee                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Not required; use Game Facilitator (when there is no referee)</li> <li>– Game Facilitator (or referee) has all responsibilities and authorities under the Laws of the Game</li> <li>– Head coach is responsible for behavior of all players, team officials, and spectators</li> <li>– No yellow/red cards shown to players, coaches, team officials, or spectators</li> </ul>                                                                                                       |
| Law 6  | The Other Match Officials          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– None. If used, other match officials have all responsibilities and authorities under Laws of the Game</li> <li>– No "club linesman" unless requested by the Game Facilitator (or referee)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Law 7  | The Duration of the Match          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 2 x 20-minute halves (no added time) (total game time = 40 minutes)</li> <li>– 5-minute halftime</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Law 8  | The Start and Restart of Play      | Opponents must be at least 10 feet from ball on kickoff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Law 9  | The Ball In and Out of Play        | No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Law 10 | Determining the Outcome of a Match | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No scores are kept</li> <li>– No penalty shoot-out to determine a winner</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Law 11 | Offside                            | No offside                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Law 12 | Fouls and Misconduct               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Restart for all fouls and misconduct is indirect free kick</li> <li>– Any player may use their hands or arms to protect their head, face, or neck from impact with the ball (at the Game Facilitator or referee's discretion)</li> <li>– No yellow/red cards shown to players, coaches, team officials, or spectators</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     |
|        | No Heading Rule                    | Players cannot play the ball with their head<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If action is intentional, restart is an indirect free kick to opponent</li> <li>– If action is unintentional or accidental, restart is a dropped ball</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|        | No Sliding Rule                    | Field players cannot slide on the ground (intentionally leave their feet) for any reason                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Law 13 | The Free Kick                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All free kicks are indirect</li> <li>– <u>Kicks Taken in Kicking Team's Half of Field</u>: Opponents must move behind halfway line</li> <li>– <u>Kicks Taken in Defending Team's Half of Field</u>: Opponents must be at least 10 feet from position of kick (unless standing on own goal line and between goal posts)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                    |
| Law 14 | The Penalty Kick                   | No penalty kicks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Law 15 | The Throw-In                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Players can throw-in, kick-in, or dribble-in ball to restart play on a throw-in</li> <li>– Opponents must be at least 10 feet away from position of throw-in</li> <li>– Players cannot throw-in or kick-in ball to themselves (another player must touch ball)</li> <li>– Kick-in is an indirect free kick—goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-in (another player must touch ball)</li> <li>– Team taking throw-in does not lose possession for "illegal" throw-in</li> </ul> |
| Law 16 | The Goal Kick                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Taken 3-4 yards from goal</li> <li>– Opponents must move behind halfway line</li> <li>– Players can kick-in or dribble-in ball on a goal kick</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Law 17 | The Corner Kick                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Taken 1-2 yards from corner of field</li> <li>– Opponents must be at least 10 feet away</li> <li>– Players can kick-in or dribble-in ball on a corner kick</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |