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FALMOUTH YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

“The FYSA Way”

A Guide to the
Policies and Procedures
of the Organization

Founded in 1995, Falmouth Youth Soccer Association (FYSA) has become one of the largest youth soccer clubs in Maine, with more than 300 players across all age groups participating each year. In addition, FYSA hosts the Falmouth Fall Classic, a tournament that brings together 150+ teams from across the state in early October.

In other words, despite being governed only by a board of directors comprised of volunteers, FYSA is a sizable organization that impacts hundreds of families in Falmouth and neighboring communities each year.

Therefore, the FYSA Board of Directors has assembled this document to provide as much clarity as possible about each aspect of the FYSA experience for everyone involved in it – from current and future board members to coaches and families.

In doing so, we seek to provide guidelines that can be used as reference points in decision-making as well as conflict-avoidance or -resolution. We welcome feedback and suggestions related to anything contained herein.

Mission Statement

Falmouth Youth Soccer Association (FYSA) is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to providing kids ages 8-14 with opportunities to learn and enjoy the game of soccer through participation in a competitive travel league affiliated with SoccerMaine. Through its teams and other events, FYSA seeks to foster a sense of community among players, coaches, and parents that is intended to help each child grow as an athlete and a person.

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Organization

The following is from FYSA's by-laws:

The purposes of the Corporation shall be to provide amateur competition for boys and girls residing in Falmouth, Maine as well as to promote good sportsmanship and an appreciation and understanding of the game of soccer. The organization is organized exclusively for purposes described in Section 17 and 501 © (3) of the Internal Revenue Code and shall have no purpose and exercise no power which would disqualify the organization from tax-exempt charitable status under Section 170 and 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Tax Code and shall not carry on any activity which is prohibited by Section 170 or 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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Board of Directors

The FYSA Board of Directors is comprised entirely of volunteers, many of whom have been recruited by current or former members. Anyone interested in joining the board can make their interest known to a current member or via email (president@falmouthsoccer.com) and attend a subsequent meeting. If that person confirms an interest in joining, they are approved by a vote of the board prior to the next meeting.

Although its primary purpose is to ensure the smooth functioning of the organization, the FYSA Board also seeks to be a source of fun – a social outlet for members that gives them a chance to get to know other members of the Falmouth community.

Expectations of Board Members

The FYSA Board meets monthly from February through November, typically on the second Tuesday. When possible, these meetings occur in person at the Mason Motz Activity Center; otherwise, they occur via Zoom. **It is expected that members will make every effort to attend monthly meetings**, since this is the primary opportunity for discussion and board-wide decision-making.

Additionally, **each person joining the board is expected to assume one of several defined roles**. Some roles require a modest time commitment (e.g., equipment, secretary), others require more (e.g., president, registrar, referee assignor). A few roles associated with the Falmouth Fall Classic require a significant time commitment and, therefore, receive a stipend. Most positions on the board can be found [here](#).

Each board member is expected to assume one of these roles, based on their area of interest or the amount of time they're able to volunteer. For this reason, **members are asked to join for a minimum of three years** – one spent shadowing the member in their desired role and two spent in that role, including mentoring a successor.

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Finances

FYSA is a non-profit organization that receives most of its funding from the registration fees it charges for players to participate on a team (see below for details). Additionally, since 1996, FYSA has hosted the Falmouth Fall Classic tournament in early October, which also serves as a source of revenue.

All funds that are received by FYSA are intended to be used to either directly or indirectly benefit the organization and its participants. FYSA's primary financial objective is to ensure that the cost of participation is not a barrier for any child or family.

In addition to the fees charged by SoccerMaine for FYSA to participate in the Fall Classic League, annual expenditures include team equipment (balls,

etc.), field equipment (goals, etc.), and referee fees. When funds are available, other appropriate expenditures include upgrades to Falmouth Community Park, the site of most practices and games, and scholarships given annually to graduating seniors of Falmouth High School.

In the event that a local organization requests funding from FYSA for its cause, a sub-committee comprised of at least three members of the Board of Directors will be formed to determine if the request would constitute proper use of funds.

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League

FYSA teams participate in the Fall Classic League, which falls under the auspices of SoccerMaine. The season begins each year in late August and ends in late October or early November, depending upon age group.

While the Fall Classic League is a travel league, SoccerMaine considers teams in the U9-U11 age groups to be “non-competitive” – meaning, standings are not kept and the season ends with a festival, not playoffs. It is also required that teams in these age groups be balanced for ability.

U12 is considered a transition year, in which teams are still required to be balanced, but playoffs do occur at the end of the season.

U13-U14 age groups are considered competitive, with standings, playoffs, and no requirement for balancing of teams by skill level.

The full Fall Classic League Handbook can be found [here](#).

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Registration & Fees

Because FYSA is such a big soccer club and so much work goes into the forming of teams – and because the season is preceded by summer, when communication with families is more difficult – the registration period for the fall season opens on April 1st and closes on April 30th.

Currently, the registration fee for each player is \$160. For those families for whom this amount poses a hardship – particularly those with multiple children in the program – FYSA actively encourages requests for the reduction or waiving of the fee. As an organization, we believe that all children who want to play soccer should be able to, regardless of their family’s ability to meet the financial obligation.

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Age Divisions & Player Development

As an organization, FYSA recognizes the tremendous amount of growth that occurs in kids from the age of eight (U9) to 14 (U14) – physiologically, emotionally, and as a soccer player. Our goal is to ensure that FYSA is providing an age-appropriate experience for them each successive season.

Therefore, we divide our teams into three categories, each of which has its own set of policies and expectations:

Foundational (U9-U10)

Teams in these age groups play 7v7 games on a small field with correspondingly small goals. For players in these age groups, FYSA places a priority on helping them gain the foundational skills and knowledge they need to progress as soccer players, while also providing them with a positive social experience.

In consultation with local coaching experts, FYSA has identified those skills and provides support to all coaches to ensure that there is consistent emphasis on the skills, regardless of which team players are on. Playing time at this age group is expected to be equally distributed across players regardless of ability (although playing time may be altered based on player behavior at the coaches’ discretion).

In keeping with SoccerMaine’s position, these age groups are not competitive – scores are not recorded, standings are not kept, and there is a “festival” (no playoffs) at the end of the season. In short, the priority is on having fun and learning the game, and it is important that coaches and parents keep this priority in mind at all times.

Transitional (U11-U12)

Teams in these age groups move to 9v9 games on a field significantly larger than 7v7, but not yet the full size on which U13/U14 play; goals are larger than U9/U10, but not yet full-sized. As the name of the category suggests, these age groups represent a transition between foundational play and competitive play.

In fact, there is an important difference between U11 and U12. U11 remains non-competitive (scores not recorded, no standings, end-of-season festival). U12, on the other hand, marks the beginning of competitive play: scores are recorded and playoffs occur at the end of the season, but teams are expected to be “balanced” for talent and are not placed into divisions.

For these players, FYSA places a priority on introducing level-appropriate skills and a deeper understanding of the game of soccer, including the rules (e.g., offsides is enforced starting at U11), game strategy, and positional awareness. At the same time, the emphasis remains on participation and fun, but now with an expectation of increased commitment to individual growth and being part of a team.

Competitive (U13-U14)

As a program, FYSA seeks to provide a clear progression in skill and team development, beginning in U9, that culminates in the competitive experience players will have in the U13/U14 category.

These teams play 11v11 games on a full-sized field with full-sized goals. The most competitive teams in the state play in Division 1; less-competitive teams play in Division 2. In both divisions, there are regional groupings of teams, scores are recorded, standings are maintained, and the seasons end with multi-round playoffs.

Unlike the foundational and transitional categories, this category aims to give players the experience of being on a team in which a major focus is winning games. As with every FYSA age group, fun remains a priority, but now it is the fun that comes from taking a sport seriously and working hard with teammates toward a shared goal. As such, players are expected to develop a firm understanding of the rules of soccer, positional responsibility, strategy, and what it takes to win as a team.

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Teams

Players are divided into age groups based on age and school grade. According to SoccerMaine, the player's age prior to August 1st determines their age group (e.g., players who are 8 prior to August 1st play U-9; players who are 9 prior to August 1st play U-10).

In FYSA, we allow players to “play up” (with an older age group) **only** to play with one's grade in school (e.g., a player who is 8 prior to August 1st may play U-10 if that means they can play with their classmates). Occasionally, players may be asked to *voluntarily* play with an older age group to fill out a roster (e.g., if the team does not have enough players to form a team). In the event that a player “plays up” one season, they will return to their age-appropriate cohort the following season.

According to SoccerMaine rules, no player can “play down” (e.g., a player who is 10 prior to August 1st may not play U-10 even if it means playing with their classmates).

Teams in U9-U12 are typically formed by coaches for a given age group conducting a “draft,” with final rosters approved and potentially adjusted by the Coaching Director. Priorities in team creation shift across the three team categories. In the Foundational and Transitional years, coaches provide player evaluations at the end of the season and help the Coaching Director create teams in the spring that are balanced in terms of skill and commitment. During the Foundational years, parents' preferences (in terms of carpooling and coach preferences) can be taken into account.

SoccerMaine sets the roster limit at 14 for U9-U10, 18 at U11-U12, and 22 at U13-14. To ensure maximum playing time for all players, FYSA prioritizes smaller teams when possible. However, we set the minimum roster size at 9 for U9-10, 11 for U11-U12, and 15 for U13-14.

In the Competitive age group (U13-U14), if there are more than 22 players registered for an age group, FYSA conducts evaluations to create competitive teams. In these cases, FYSA will work with the coaches to determine which of three options makes the most sense under the circumstances:

1. *A and B teams.* If 30 players or more register, an A and B team will be created. This can include younger players who choose to play up (who can then be considered for either the A or B team) or players from other towns who are not rostered on a team.
2. *Waiver.* In certain cases, FYSA can request a roster-limit adjustment from SoccerMaine.
3. *Training players.* If fewer than 30 players register for an age group and evaluations are held, players who do not make the roster can participate in practices, scrimmages, and certain tournaments, but cannot participate in league play. Teams with training players are encouraged to schedule additional scrimmages and prioritize training-player playing time in non-league games.

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Coaching

Selection

Parents and community members volunteer to coach during registration in April. Once the number of teams for each age group is determined, the Coaching Director invites potential coaches to form coaching teams and select a head coach.

In the event of negative feedback from parents, referees, or coaches, the Coaching Director can decline to invite a potential coach to participate in an upcoming season. A maximum of three coaches is allowed per team. If more than three adults volunteer per team, the Coaching Director will select coaches from the potential volunteers.

For U13-U14, coach selection is unofficially made before the evaluations (so they can participate in evaluations), with the understanding that it will not influence the evaluation of their children.

Requirements

SoccerMaine requires that all coaches complete a background check, SafeSport training, and concussion-awareness training. In addition, all

coaches must have a current coach-education license (through SoccerMaine). These requirements are due by the end of July.

The Town of Falmouth has three additional requirements: NAYS membership (reimbursed by FYSA), a general training on coaching youth sports, and a soccer-specific youth sports training. All of these requirements must be met before the start of the soccer season.

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Uniforms & Numbers

Each player on a FYSA team is required to have a “full kit” – home jersey, away jersey, shorts (1 pair), and matching socks. Uniform manufacturers tend to change available styles every three years, so the FYSA kit usually follows the same cadence. FYSA seeks to keep the cost of uniforms affordable, including exploring opportunities for local sponsorship, while also keeping up with the latest styles.

Uniform numbers are assigned by FYSA in a manner intended to avoid two players within the same age/gender group with the same number.

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Season

Games

For all age groups, SoccerMaine’s Fall Classic season consists of six league games (three home, three away), plus an end-of-season festival (U9-U11) or playoffs (U12-U14). Unless mutually agreed upon by both teams and approved by SoccerMaine, all league games occur on Sundays.

When SoccerMaine announces the season schedule, the FYSA registrar contacts the head coach of each team to select the preferred time for the three home games.

Most years, the first league game for U12-U14 occurs the Sunday prior to Labor Day weekend; the first league game for U9-U11 occurs the first Sunday after Labor Day. Festivals typically occur the final weekend of October or first weekend of November. Playoffs begin the weekend after the

holiday weekend in October and conclude on the first weekend of November.

Practices

All FYSA teams, regardless of age group, practice twice a week. Once coaches have been named and teams formed, FYSA works with coaches in the selection of the days of the week, times, and fields on which those practices will occur. Because available daylight diminishes over the course of the season, most practices are 90 minutes and take place within the 4:30-7:00pm window.

All U9-U10 practices occur on the front fields at Falmouth Community Park. Most U11-U12 practices occur on the back fields; some years, teams also practice on the middle fields. U13-U14 teams practice either on the middle fields at Community Park or the Superintendent's Fields across from the school campus.

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Playing Time

U9/U10

Because growth as a soccer player at this age occurs most when on the field, coaches are expected to ensure that players get even playing time.

U11/U12

While, depending upon roster numbers and other factors, some players may get more playing time than others, SoccerMaine and FYSA expect that every player on a team will be on the field for at least 50% of each game.

U13/U14

Because these age groups fall into the "competitive" category, a heavier emphasis is placed on winning than is the case in the younger age categories. Still, FYSA wants each player selected for a team in these age groups to feel involved in each game, so the expectation is that coaches will make every effort to ensure each player sees time on the field every game. In extremely large teams with 6+ subs, coaches have the option of rotating

players at games (to ensure that every player that comes dressed for a game gets to play).

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Behavior Policy

As members of FYSA, we represent more than just ourselves—we represent our town, our club, and our greater community. Because of this, we are committed to holding ourselves to the highest standards of conduct both on and off the field. This applies to coaches, players, fans, and anyone involved with our program.

Players are expected to show good sportsmanship at all times, regardless of the outcome of the game. This includes respecting opponents, referees, coaches, teammates, and spectators. Players should listen to and follow the guidance of coaches and team leaders, take responsibility for their actions and attitude, and avoid any form of trash talk or unsportsmanlike behavior. Celebrations should be humble, and losses should be handled with grace.

Coaches are role models and must lead by example. They are expected to treat all players fairly and with respect, communicate calmly and constructively with referees, and promote a team culture based on effort, integrity, and improvement. Coaches should encourage positive reinforcement and maintain focus on player development—not just winning. As a coach, your job is to ensure your players feel prepared, know the expectations, and feel you believe in them. If you are able to do this for your team as a coach, the winning takes care of itself.

Fans and family members play an important role in creating a supportive atmosphere. Positive cheering is encouraged, but negative comments directed at referees, players, or coaches will not be tolerated. Spectators should avoid coaching from the sidelines and instead allow coaches to do their job and players to play without distraction. Above all, fans should conduct themselves with class and sportsmanship before, during, and after every game.

Referees and officials are to be treated with respect at all times. Mistakes may happen, but they are part of the game, and respectful silence is the appropriate response. Only coaches may speak to officials, and even then, it must be done calmly and respectfully. Any harassment or mistreatment of

referees by players, coaches, or fans is unacceptable and may result in removal from the game or field. Please remember that it is difficult to be a referee and many of them are high-school students who are newly trained.

By following these expectations, we help build a program that values respect, teamwork, and pride in representing something bigger than ourselves.