

Berkshire County Masters Soccer

League Handbook

May 2026

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a community of soccer players and fans. Through competition, sportsmanship, and general good will, we play to experience the joy of the beautiful game, the diversity it attracts and the collegiality it engenders throughout Berkshire County.

Age eligibility

Male players must be 40 or over. Women must be 25 or over, except when exceptions are made by vote of the Committee. When an exception to the age rule is made, the underage player(s) must be named by the team's management prior to the start of the season. The date of eligibility for players entering the league is August 1st. A male player is eligible to play the entire season if he turns 40 on or before August 1st. A female player is eligible to play the entire season if she turns 25 on or before August 1st.

Team managers are responsible for confirming the age eligibility of all players on their roster, including any underage players approved by the Committee. All players should be prepared to provide documentation of their age if requested by their team manager, the Commissioner, or a member of the League Management Committee.

At the beginning of each new season, the last-place team from the previous regular season is allowed to add one 38-year-old and one 39-year-old, and the second-to-last-place team from the previous regular season is allowed to add one 39-year-old. These underage player(s) must be named by the team's management prior to the start of the season.

No underage player may participate in any regular season or tournament match unless that player has been approved in advance under the rules of the League. If a team plays an unauthorized underage player, the following penalties will apply:

1. The team will receive a 10-point deduction in the regular season standings in the season in which the violation is discovered.
2. The team will be ineligible to be represented in the tournament that season.
3. The team will receive no allowances for approved underage players for the following season.
4. The unauthorized underage player will be suspended from League play until reaching the age of 42, if male, or 27, if female.

For purposes of this section, an “unauthorized underage player” means any player who does not meet the League’s standard age eligibility requirements and who has not been specifically approved by the Committee prior to participating in a League match.

Regular season and tournament

The season usually runs from the last week of May/early June until the end of July/early August. The final two weeks are a knock-out tournament, unless it is cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances. There is a regular season winner and a tournament winner.

Games are two 40-minute halves. If play reaches half-time, the game is official.

If a team is unable to play a scheduled game, both teams are expected to make their best reasonable efforts to reschedule the game. If, after such efforts, the game cannot be rescheduled or one team is unable or unwilling to play, the game may be recorded as a forfeit. If a team forfeits a game, the official scoreline will be 3-0 against the team that forfeited the match. In the event of a forfeit, the forfeiting team is responsible for communicating the forfeit to the Assigner as early as possible so that the Assigner can contact the referees. If the forfeiting team fails to notify the Assigner in a timely manner and referee fees are incurred, the forfeiting team will be responsible for paying the full amount of those fees.

For purposes of regular season standings, any game with a final scoreline difference of more than five goals will be entered in the standings’ goals for/goals against fields as a five-goal differential. The actual game score may still be recorded for informational purposes, but the standings calculation will reflect a maximum goal differential of five.

Season standings tiebreakers: In the event two or more teams end the regular season with the same point total, the tiebreakers are, in descending order:

1. Goal differential
2. Head-to-head
3. Head-to-head goal differential
4. Coin toss

Tourney: The top two seeds from the regular season get a bye, with the lower seeds playing a first round, then winners play at 1 and 2 in the semis. Winners of the semifinal play at the higher seed’s field. Tie-breakers: One 10-minute sudden-death overtime, then a second 10-minute sudden-death overtime, then PKs the usual way.

To be eligible to play for a team in the end-of-season tournament, a player must have played for that team prior to the team’s second-to-last game of the regular season. No player may be added to a team’s tournament roster after that point.

Substitution

Teams can substitute on either team’s goal kick, goal, or caution plus on their own corner kick or throw-in. If the team with the corner kick or throw-in substitutes, the opposing team is allowed to substitute as well. If a player on one team is substituted due to injury, the other team is allowed a substitute as well.

Cards

If a player receives a red card he is out, the team plays the rest of the game down a man, and the player must miss the next game. A player who has received a red card may be asked by the ref to leave the field. This is completely at the ref's discretion, and it is incumbent upon the player and player's manager(s) to ensure the direction is followed expeditiously.

If a player receives a yellow card the player must leave the field immediately for no less than five minutes before he/she can return to play.

Two yellow cards in one game equals a red. A third yellow card across separate games (including tournament) equals a one game suspension, with the player missing the following game. After 3 yellow cards and the mandatory suspension, each additional yellow card results in a single game suspension. A second red card by a player in the same season results in a suspension for the rest of that season (including tournament); a punishment that can be appealed to the League Management Committee.

Team penalties for card accumulation

Yellow = 1 point

Red based on two yellows = 2 points

Straight red = 3 points

- a. After a team accumulates 7 card points, each additional card point will result in a one-point deduction from the team's regular season standings total.
- b. Any team that accumulates 10 card points or more is ineligible for the tournament.
- c. Card points are reset at the start of the tournament.
- d. During the tournament, any team that accumulates more than 6 card points prior to the final is ineligible to progress in the tournament. If this occurs in the semi-finals, the team that lost to the team that accumulated more than 6 card points progresses.

At the end of the season, the team(s) that have received the fewest number of team penalty points will be honored with that year's Fair Play Award.

Special card bonus

Any team that accumulates 2 card points or less in combined regular season and tournament play, will be awarded the following season with the option to add a 39-year-old male player to the roster. This player is in addition to other underage players a team might be awarded based on season standings (as described above in Age Eligibility). The player must be added to the roster before the end of the new season, and the award cannot be carried over if a team has not designated a player by that time.

Sportsmanship

Everyone on both teams will meet at midfield before each game, for a quick handshake and a reminder about sportsmanlike play: that we are doing this for fun, and that we all have to go to work the next morning, preferably without a limp.

Since children, spouses and other spectators attend most games, profanity and other rude language/gestures are strongly discouraged. We are all playing in this league for love of the game and as such strive to create an open, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all. In this spirit of respect and sportsmanship, we expect all players, officials, and spectators to feel safe and welcome at all events and be free from discrimination based on gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, or any other defining characteristic. Referees can give cards for swearing and any other unsportsmanlike behavior at their discretion.

Referees

Refs are encouraged to call contact and to give yellow cards for aggression and mouthing off to players or refs. Refs will book a carded player's name and send each occurrence to the Commissioner for tracking game to game. No player other than the captain should speak to the refs about a call either before or after the call; no lobbying, no dissent. Refs can issue cards if they feel they are warranted.

Tackling and physical play

No slide tackles. Refs will call each slide tackle as a foul, even if mild or unintentional, with a free direct kick from the spot. If one player is sliding repeatedly, the refs are free to issue a card, given the severity, like any other dangerous play. Goalies can slide, but cleats must be down; if not the refs can call a dangerous play or issue a card, as in any other situation. Avoid late hits, body checks or wild kicks. If you accidentally kick or bang into someone, apologize, then hold yourself back next time. If you feel an opposing player has been overly aggressive, don't retaliate. Point it out to them or their coach. If another player asks you to lay off, don't argue; acknowledge the request and lay off.

Coaches: If one of your players is being overly aggressive, or otherwise demonstrating unsportsmanlike behavior, sit him/her down for a while. If needed, a coach can issue a complaint to another coach about an opposing player's aggressive play or unsportsmanlike behavior, which the player's coach would communicate to the offending player. A copy should go to the Commissioner. If a player or coach is the subject of repeated complaints, the League Management Committee should discuss sanctioning that player.

Concussion protocol

Refs must suspend play immediately if a player:

1. sustains a significant blow to the head or body,
2. complains about or is exhibiting symptoms consistent with having suffered a concussion,
or
3. is otherwise suspected of having sustained a concussion.

The player should then leave/be assisted off the field of play and seek appropriate medical attention.

Game suspension/termination

If a match is terminated early by an official due to the behavior of a player or coach, the Commissioner and Committee of team managers may implement additional punishment for individual(s) and team punishment, including forfeiting of the match and appropriate adjustment of team points in the overall standings.

Alcohol consumption

Consider having a beer with the opposing team after the game. Invite the refs, too. Some teams prefer to go to their “clubhouse,” and we should also understand that certain players may feel they can’t be around alcohol. Also, if you’re the away team and the home team asks you not to have alcohol on school or private property, please respect that.

Notifications to players

Each coach should send this Handbook to all players before each season, making particular note to new players.

League leadership and management

The league is overseen by a League Management Committee composed of a Commissioner and team Manager(s). Each team’s managers, which may number between 1 and 3, are appointed by vote of their respective teams. The Commissioner is appointed by vote of the team Managers.

Appeal process

Players may make appeals through their team managers to the League Management Committee. Sensitive issues may be made directly to the Commissioner as a matter of last resort.

2026 LEAGUE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Commissioner

Laurie Lane-Zucker, 413-822-2483, laurie.lanezucker@gmail.com

Team managers

Lee

Grace Canfield
Megan Negrini
Pablo Orellana

Lenox

Brendan Heck
Tim O'Connor

Pittsfield Barcelona

Carlos Calvo
Robert Salinovici

Pittsfield Green

Jeff Lynch
Nick Marshall
Marco Zambrano

Pittsfield Sideline

Tom Hocker
John McCarthy
Tim Smith

South County

Tom Haskins-Vaughan
Simon Shaw

Williamstown

Steve Nafzinger
Mary Summers