



U15AAA, U17AAA
Youth Performance League Handbook
2024



INTRODUCTION

The Soccer Nova Scotia Youth AAA League is the first step in moving towards a Canada Soccer Player Development Program (PDP) Division. A PDP is a 'Youth Performance Division' that is designed to form an important component of the Canada Soccer Player Pathway. The standards outlined for the PDP serve to create the optimal environment to prepare players for selection for High Performance programs and/or entry into the Excellence Stream.

The PDP makes up Stage 4 of the Long-Term Player Development pathway and, under the leadership of Canada Soccer, will join together with other PDP's creating a nationwide network of organizations striving to provide the best environments for player and coach development in Canada. The Canada Soccer Youth Performance Division National Competitions (start date TBC) will be held annually for the U15 and U17 age groups, providing players with exposure to National Team coaches, professional club academies as well as to University and College coaches.

The philosophy of the SNS Youth AAA League is based on improving the quality and volume of training and providing more meaningful competition for players in the 11-a-side environment. By improving the environment at the organizational level, the AAA league aims to produce a consistent stream of talented players who can then go on to achieve success in the game at higher levels of competition.

Canada Soccer has outlined the official standards required to be considered a fully operational PDP and will issue licenses to Provincial/Territorial divisions where standards are being met. This document serves to highlight the realities of youth soccer in Nova Scotia and show the incremental steps, increased standards, and key performance indicators that will see eventually the SNS YPL become a Canada Soccer sanctioned Youth Performance Division.

The SNS AAA League sees the removal of winter 7-a-side soccer from the U15/17AAA divisions. Instead the teams that would typically compete in these divisions will compete in an annual calendar that season that runs from January-September with all games being 11-a-side, including a 12 week pre-season. It is foreseeable that this could become an Atlantic Division, with regular participants from New Brunswick and PEI, and, on an event basis, teams from Newfoundland.

SEASON FORMAT

2023/24 LEAGUE CALENDAR

2023

- **Nov 10** - Final Team Declaration & Pre-Season Blackout weekends due
- **Nov 22** - Coaches Meeting, 7pm @BMO Soccer Centre

2024

- **Jan 1** - Rosters and coaching staff due in RAMP - minimum 14 players
- **Jan 13/14** - First weekend of pre-season games
- **March 23/24, 2024** - Last weekend of pre-season games
- **April 1, 2024** - minimum 17 players required on RAMP
- **April 13/14** - First weekend of regular season games
- **August 24/25** - League Play-offs

The pre-season component will occur indoor from January 13 - March 24, 2024. Each team will play a minimum of 4 x 11 a-side games. After these games have taken place, Soccer Nova Scotia and the NSSL reserves the right to remove teams who are not at a competitive level.

All league games will be 11 a-side. To maintain competitive integrity, all teams in all divisions will play a balanced schedule.

STANDARDS

League Admission

- Any existing Club is eligible to the League provided they are a hold the Canada Soccer Quality Soccer Provider license (minimum) by September 2023 plus submit the following documents for approval:
 - Technical Plan that includes the following
 - Program Descriptions
 - Program alignment to Long Term Player Development stage-appropriate best principles as outlined by Canada Soccer
 - Coach Recruitment, Retention, Development, Assessment, Advancement and Recognition Strategy

Coaching:

- Head Coach: C License Certified (minimum)
- Assistant Coach: Soccer for Life Trained (C License Trained is preferred)
- Goalkeeper Coach: C License Trained **or** recognized a Goalkeeping certification

All coaching staff **must** meet Canada Soccer's Coach Education Minimum Standards in order to appear on the bench.

Grassroots/Competitive Streams
Full Safe Sport Roster – Required Training
1. Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Screen
2. Stage-appropriate Canada Soccer Grassroots Coach Education – Theory Module (Active Start, Fundamentals, Learn to Train, Soccer for Life)
3. Stage-appropriate Canada Soccer Grassroots Coach Education – Practical Module (Active Start, Fundamentals, Learn to Train, Soccer for Life)
4. NCCP Make Ethical Decisions Module and/or Online Evaluation
5. Respect in Sport Activity Leader Program
6. NCCP Making Headway Module
7. NCCP Emergency Action Planning Module
8. NCCP Rule of Two Module

Training Volume: (minimum)

- Jan/Feb/March: 2 contacts per week
- April/May/June/July/Aug: 3 contacts per week

Contacts include self-scheduled exhibition games, training soccer sessions, gym futsal sessions, strength and conditioning sessions, video analysis sessions etc.

The number of contacts does not include league scheduled exhibition or regular season games.

LEAGUE PLAY-OFFS

At the end of the season, the top 4 NS based teams in the standings will compete in play-offs.

The format will be as follows:

- Semi-Final: 1v4, 2v3
- Final: winners of each semi final

Play-off games will follow the regular season format

- U15 - 2x 40minute half, straight to PK's
- U17 - 2x 45minute half, straight to PK's

The Play-Off winner will be named the Provincial Champion and receive a berth in the Nationals Showdown game. There will be no bronze medal game.

The dates for play-offs will be August 24/25 weekend.

NS CUP COMPETITION

The NS Cup will operate at the U15 and U17 age groups, and open to any AAA team who declares. If the competition is less than 8 teams, it will be open to any AA Club that does not have a AAA team in the competition. If there are still less than 8 teams, it will be opened to any remaining AA teams.

The competition dates and formats will be as follows:

June TBD: AA Play in games (if applicable)

July 13-17: Cup Quarter Finals

July 27-30: Cup Semi-Finals

August 9: U15 Cup Final

August 16: U17 Cup Finals

The winner of the NS Cup will be named the NS Cup Winners and receive a berth in the Nationals Showdown game.

Cup games will follow the regular season format

- U15 - 2x 40minute half, straight to PK's
- U17 - 2x 45minute half, straight to PK's

NATIONALS SHOWDOWN GAME

Where the winner of the League Play-Offs and NS Cup are different teams, the NS representative for Club National will be determined through a Showdown Game between the winners of each competition during Labour Day Weekend.

The Showdown game format will be as follows:

- U15 - 2x 40minute half, straight to PK's
- U17 - 2x 45minute half, straight to PK's

In the event the same team wins both competitions, no Showdown Game will be played and that team will automatically be the NS Representative at Club Nationals.

RULES & REGULATIONS

1. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

All matters not included in these rules and regulations shall be dealt with in accordance with Soccer Nova Scotia Policies and Operational Procedures, or any other Soccer Nova Scotia documents that govern the sport of soccer.

2. PERFORMANCE DIVISION COMMITTEE

The YPL Committee will consist of one representative from each Club in the YPL, preferably the Technical Director.

The committee will oversee, and provide input when required, on issues such as (but not restricted to): competition format, call up process, abuse of division rules, transfer rules etc.

3. TEAM REGISTRATION

Teams must apply to be in the Performance Division using the official Form hosted online. The application Form will request the following information of the team that is applying:

- i. Coaches name and contact information
- ii. Assistant coaches names and contact information

4. PLAYER REGISTRATION

Teams shall register players in accordance with rules set forth by Soccer Nova Scotia. The deadlines for player registration shall be designated by Soccer Nova Scotia.

League rules:

In order to ensure that Clubs have the ability to field teams, allow for movement of players coming from AA/A programs, as well as, late registrations from multi-sport athletes, there has been an amendment to the requirements for player registration as well as deadlines:

- Teams must have a minimum of 14 players registered and assigned to a team in RAMP by January 1
- Team must have a minimum of 17 players registered and assigned to a team in RAMP by April 1
- The maximum roster size for a AAA team is 22 players

5. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

In addition to Soccer Nova Scotia policies regarding player eligibility, all players must observe a mandatory rest period from organized soccer prior to participating in any team activities for the Performance Division.

The rest period this year is December 18, 2023 to January 2, 2024.

To prevent circumvention of the rules and have players playing at the AA level

- i. Any player who plays winter soccer (at AA, A or Senior Level) must observe a 21 day period before joining with their AAA team
- ii. Any player who does not observe the blackout period is subject to disciplinary action
 - i. The player is subject to a 21 day suspension from organized soccer.
- iii. Any coach who allows a player to participate during their mandated break is subject to disciplinary action
 - i. The coach is subject to a 3 game sideline suspension without appeal
- iv. If the Director of Performance deems that a club is bringing the division, or other divisions, into disrepute (Eg. 25% of AAA roster playing AA winter soccer) sanctions will be imposed

Call ups:

See NSSL Rules and Regulations section 8.10 for info:

While call-ups are permitted and may be in the best interest of the individual, there is also the potential that it may be abused in order to strengthen a team at a lower level. In order to maintain the integrity at all levels, if there is a suspected abuse of the call up rule (eg. Registering a player down a level to strengthen that team, but calling the player up for every AAA game) the Director of Performance will be called to hear the details and make a ruling.

6. PLAYER MOVEMENT

Within the Youth Performance Divisions, district boundaries do not apply, meaning that players are not required to play for a Club in the district in which they reside.

Within each division, Clubs are permitted to name a maximum of 3 transfer players on their roster(s).

A transfer player is defined as:

- A. A player who for the upcoming season is registered with a different Nova Scotia Club from which they were registered to in the preceding season, **and**
- B. Was either selected to play AAA for the Club they are moving from for the upcoming season, **or**, showed no intent to play AAA for the Club they are moving from for the upcoming season (Ex. Attended try-outs elsewhere without attending try-outs for their previous team).

If a Club has more than 1 team in a division, the Club may name a maximum of 3 Category I players across the number of teams within that division.

Players not selected at AAA in their Club, or do not have a AAA program to play on will not be considered a transfer player. There is no limit to the number of transfer players on any roster(s).

TRANSFER PROCESS

Clubs must submit the names of ALL new players named to a U15 or U17AAA roster using the Player Movement google form. Within 72hrs, the person who completed the form with receiving an email confirming whether these players are considered Category I transfers.

Exemptions and Appeals

If a Club wishes to name more than 3 Category I transfer players, they may do so by writing to the Soccer NS Director of Performance requesting an exemption. A committee will be struck to hear the circumstances of appeal. Any Club reserves the right to appeal a decision on the status of a transfer player or request an exemption to the Rule in accordance with Soccer NS policies.

Rural Club Exemption

There are often instances where rural-based Clubs cannot field teams, so players are forced to seek an alternative soccer experience. This can lead to a host of players leaving the Club to play at AAA elsewhere.

To support the growth of rural-based Clubs AAA programming, any player moving to an established rural-based AAA programs (Valley United, South Shore United, Cape Breton FC) will not be considered a Category I player.

7. COMPETITION RULES

7.1. GAME DURATIONS

- U15: 2 x 40mins
- U17: 2 x 45mins

7.2. BALL SIZE

- All games will use a size 5

7.3. SUBSTITUTIONS

- Each team is permitted 7 (seven) substitutions during the game, plus an unlimited amount at half-time.
- Re-entry of players is permitted
- Sub-slips must be used for the 7 during the game. Subs at half time do not require slips.

7.4. DELAYED KICK-OFF

All games must kick-off within 15 minutes of designated kick-off time. If this is not possible due to one team not being present, it will result in a forfeit. If it is not possible due to unforeseen circumstances (weather, medical emergency etc) the referee, along with the 2 head coaches will agree upon a solution.

7.5.FORFEITS/DEFAULTS

- Any team forfeiting or defaulting any game for any reason will be termed the losing team; the score will be recorded as 3-0; and three (3) points will be awarded to the winning team. The forfeiting club will be subject to a \$500 fine.
- Any team forfeiting 2 games in a season will be expelled from the division for the remainder of the season.
 - In the event a team is expelled, any points from games involving that team shall be removed for all teams
- Forfeiting the Battle of Nova Scotia will result in a \$2000 fine for the Club(s) and the Club(s) will not be eligible to compete in the Nova Scotia Cup for that age group for the following season

7.6. STANDINGS

- Standings will be calculated points, awarded as follows: 3 points awarded for a win, 1 point awarded for a tie and 0 points awarded for a loss.
- Ties in points in the standings will be broken as follows:
 - 7.6.1.1. Points gained in matches between teams tied on points
 - 7.6.1.2. Goal difference in matches between affected teams.
 - 7.6.1.3. Goals scored in matches between affected teams
 - 7.6.1.4. Overall goal-difference for entire league season
 - 7.6.1.5. In cases where more than 2 teams are tied on points, once a team is eliminated from the tie, the remaining teams shall restart the tie breaking process beginning with 8.6.1.1

7.7.RESCHEDULES & BLACKOUTS

- Each team is permitted one blackout period totalling a maximum of 7 days. This period must be submitted to the Division no later than March 1 (annually)
 - No games will be scheduled during a requested black-out date
- Black-outs cannot happen during pre-determined Cup dates.
- Any reschedules must be requested a minimum of 7 days prior to the scheduled game date
- Teams are permitted a total of 2 reschedules during the season.
 - Any rescheduled game counts as 1 reschedule for both teams
 - If the same fixture is rescheduled twice, it constitutes the 2 reschedules
- Reschedules must be agreed by both teams and must include an alternative time, date and location for the game and must be reported to the division
- Any fees associated with the reschedule of a game will be the responsibility of both teams (including field fees, referee fees etc.)

7.8.GAME REPORTING

- Both teams are required to submit their own statistics through the division website within 48 hours
- Both teams participating in a scheduled game will bring to the game a game sheet.

7.9.UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Each team participating in the division must declare their primary and alternate colours when submitting their team registration

- When the colours of competing teams are similar, Away teams shall use alternate colours.
- Goalkeepers shall wear colours which plainly distinguish them from all other players and game officials
- All jerseys must be clearly numbered.
- The number of the player's jersey must corresponded to the number listed with the player's name on the game sheet
- Shin guards must be worn at all games