H-TOWN SOCCER LEAGUE RULES

1. **Rules of Play:** The rules of play shall be the FIFA "Laws of the Game" except as modified by US Soccer, US Youth Soccer (USYS), and South Texas Youth Soccer Association (STYSA), unless modified by the following league rules, and in the case of conflict the league rules shall take precedence.
2. **Play Formats & Game Lengths**: All games will be played in a 5v5, 7v7, 9v9 or 11v11 format. For 5v5 and 7v7, there shall be no build-out line. There is no punting allowed for 5v5, and 7v7.
    a. U7 & U8: 5v5 (20 min halves)
    b. U8 & U10: 7v7 (25 min halves)
    c. U11 & U12: 9v9 (30 min halves)
    d. U13 to U14: 11v11 (35 min halves)
    e. U15 to U18: 11v11 (40 min halves)
    f. The half-time break for all age groups will be 10 minutes.
    g. A game will be deemed to be officially completed if at least the full first half has been played and league play is suspended for any reason. The score at the time of the stoppage will be the final score.
3. **Specifically for 5v5**:
    a. Field size: minimum (W)25 x (L)35 yards, maximum - (W)30 x (L)45 yards.
    b. Goal size: minimum 6x4 feet, maximum 8x6 feet
    c. Kick offs, free kicks, throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks are used to start or restart play. Opponents should be 10 feet away from the ball on all restarts. If there is an infraction of the FIFA throw-in rules, the player throwing the ball in shall receive one additional throw-in after a correcting instruction from referee. If the player violates the FIFA rule on his/her second attempt, then the opposing team shall be awarded a throw-in.
    d. Substitutions are unlimited and can occur at any stoppage.
    e. A goal may not be scored directly from your own half of the field (except for own goals)
    f. No offside
4. **Heading:** This rule shall apply to the U7-U11 age groups only. If in the opinion of the referee a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick shall be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If in the opinion of the referee a player does not deliberately head the ball, then play should continue.
5. **Registration:** For a team registration to be deemed complete and a team to be accepted to play in the league, the team must be registered with a STYSA local association, must have completed the H-TOWN SOCCER LEAGUE registration, AND full payment must have been received by the league organizers.

6. **Bracketing:** Whenever possible there will be more than one bracket of play for each age group and gender, and the placement of a team in a bracket will be based upon the team history and the bracket requested by the official club representative. Where necessary, the league organizers may place a team in a different bracket to the one requested (based on ranking and performance data, or if a bracket is full). If there are insufficient teams the league organizers may place all teams of an age group and gender in a single bracket or may combine age groups to form brackets.
7. **Schedule:** The league scheduler will try to minimize coaching conflicts but may not be able to avoid all conflicts (The name of a coach in GotSport must be IDENTICAL for all their teams, otherwise coaching conflicts will not be managed). Coaches assigned to three (3) or more teams should contact the league organizers to set priorities for their potential game conflicts.
8. **Scheduling Requests:** For all pre-season scheduling requests, coaches must submit the pre-season schedule request form before the deadline shown on the league website – these requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. After the league schedule is published, there shall be a $75 fee for the submission of any request to reschedule a game.
9. **Roster Limits:** Roster limits are set based on the format of play:
    a. 5v5 (U7 – U8): 12 players
    b. 7v7 (U8 - U10): 12 players
    c. 9v9 (U11 - U12): 16 players
    d. 11v11 (U13 to U18): Maximum 22 players.

    NOTE: A maximum of 18 players may be in uniform and participate in any game.
10. **Player Eligibility:** All players must be registered with US Youth Soccer (USYS), must have USYS player cards valid for the seasonal year, and must be listed on the official team roster. The USYS player cards (either virtual or printed and laminated) must be available for inspection by a referee or a league official at any time during a league game. A player may only be rostered on one (1) team throughout league play.
11. **Club Player Pass:** The H-Town Soccer League permits the use of Club Pass Players in accordance with the South Texas Youth Soccer Association (STYSA) Club Player Pass System, Rule 3.8 of the STYSA Registration Rules and Procedures.

    The following are key highlights of the STYSA Club Player Pass Rule:
    a. Players must be properly registered with STYSA and rostered to a primary team.
    b. Club Pass Players must be from the same club as the team utilizing the player.
    c. Players must meet STYSA requirements regarding age and level of competition.
    d. U13–U19 teams may use a maximum of four (4) Club Pass Players per game.
    e. A player may participate in no more than two (2) games in one day.
    f. Club Pass Players must be properly listed on the official game roster before participating in the match.
    g. Suspended or otherwise ineligible players may not use the Club Pass system to participate in a match.

    Important: The items above are only key highlights of the Club Player Pass requirements and are not intended to represent the entire policy. Clubs, coaches, and team administrators are responsible for reviewing and understanding the complete STYSA Club Player Pass policy before using a Club Pass Player. Please refer to the STYSA Registration Rules and Procedures, Rule 3.8 – Club Player Pass System for the complete policy and all eligibility and participation requirements.

The following are modified for H-TOWN from the STYSA Club Player Pass Rule:

a. U7 – U8 (5v5) teams may use a maximum of two (2) Club Pass Players per game.
b. U8 (7v7) – U10 teams may use a maximum of three (3) Club Pass Players per game.
c. U11–U12 teams may use a maximum of four (4) Club Pass Players per game.

12. **Illegal player:** A team that uses an illegal player, whether as a player on the field, or as a substitute in uniform on the bench, could be disqualified from the league and forfeit ALL games. The league director shall make the final determination in any investigation regarding the suspected use of an illegal player. Any player that is not on the official game roster for the league, or that is found to be impersonating a player, or that is found to be older than the age group of the team, is defined as an illegal player.
13. **Team Officials:** All team officials must be included on the team roster and must have a SYTSA adult participation pass (APP) to be allowed on the team side of the field. The APP must be shown to the referee upon request. A maximum of three (3) team officials may be on the team side of the field.
14. **Spectators**: There shall be a team side and a spectator side of the field. The team coach, or other designated team official, is responsible for making sure that the spectators of their team are on the correct side of the field, and for controlling their behavior. A referee may stop or abandon a game if the behavior of the spectators cannot be controlled, and the game may be awarded by forfeit to the opposing team.
15. **Water Breaks:** Water breaks may be mandated by the league director, depending upon weather conditions, or may also be agreed by coaches from teams and the referee prior to the start of a game. The referee shall manage any mandated or agreed water breaks, which shall be taken in both halves of the game, and shall be of about 2 minutes duration, during which time the game clock shall CONTINUE to run.
16. **Scoring:** The following scoring system will be used for the league:
    a. Three (3) points for a win
    b. One (1) point for a tie
    c. Zero (0) points for a loss
    d. A forfeit is scored as a 3-0 loss for the forfeiting team.
    e. The referee shall submit the official game report, signed by both teams, to a league official.
17. **Standings:** The points gained from the matches played shall be used for the league standings. If more than one team has the same number of points, then the following sequence of tie breakers shall be used to determine the standings:
    a. Result of head-to-head game - not used if more than two (2) teams are tied on points.
    b. Goal difference - total goals for, minus total goals against, with no limit on goals scored or conceded per game.
    c. Total goals against – with no limit on goals conceded per game.
    d. Coin flip
18. **Referees:** USSF referees shall be assigned to all games, with a three (3) referee crew being used for all 11v11 games. All other games will use a single center referee. All referee decisions are final: no protests are permitted. Referees are required to include on the official game report all disciplinary actions taken before, during, or after a game, and to record details of any player removed from play due to a suspected concussion.

19. **Awards:** First and second place teams in the top bracket of each **age group** will receive awards. All U7 players will receive a participation award.
20. **Uniforms:** All outfield players must wear team uniforms of the same color, clearly distinguishable from the opposing team and the referee. The **home team is expected to wear light-colored jerseys**, while the **away team should wear dark-colored jerseys**. Each team must also have an alternate jersey color available. In the event of a color conflict, the **home team will be required to change**, as directed by the referee. Each player must have an assigned jersey number that should match the official roster, with no duplicate numbers permitted within a team. Jerseys must display the player's number on the back and be clearly visible. At the referee's discretion, an alternate number or duplicate may be approved for a player if necessary.
21. **Player Equipment:** A referee, or a league official, may inspect a player prior to a game, or at any time when there is concern for the safety of the player. The player must meet the following requirements:
    a. All players must wear suitable shin guards.
    b. All players must wear suitable cleats.
    c. No hard cast or hard splints allowed unless padded and approved by the Referee.
    d. No jewelry of any kind may be worn.
22. **Players Required to Play:** Games may only start, or continue, if the minimum requirement for players is met. The required players for each play format are as follows:
    a. 5v5, U7-U8: minimum 3 players
    b. 7v7, U9-U10: minimum 5 players
    c. 9v9, U11-U12: minimum 6 players
    d. 11v11, U13-U19: minimum 7 players
23. **Scheduled Game:** Teams should arrive at their assigned field and be ready for inspection by a referee or league official at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time. All games start at the time shown on the schedule. A FORFEIT may be awarded by the referee if at least one (1) team is not ready to play at the scheduled time.
24. **Home Team:** The team designated as the home team shall supply the game ball and shall choose which half of the field to use for the start of the game.
25. **Substitutions**: Unlimited substitutions are allowed, but all substitutions require the permission of the referee. Substitutions are allowed.
    a. Prior to a throw-in, by team in possession (if team in possession substitutes, opposing team can also substitute)
    b. Prior to a goal kick, by either team
    c. After a goal is scored, by either team.
    d. After a stoppage due to an injury (only injured player can be substituted)
    e. After a player is cautioned (only cautioned player can be substituted)
    f. At half time, by either team
    g. During water breaks, by either team
26. **Yellow and Red Cards:** Any player or coach that receives a red card (a direct red or a second yellow card) is suspended for at least the next game. If a direct red card is issued for violent conduct or abusive language, then the player or coach is suspended for at least two (2) games and may be subject to further disciplinary action by the league organizers. All cases of serious misconduct may be reported to the appropriate governing soccer association. A player who accumulates four (4) yellow cards during the season is suspended for the next game.

27. **Player Recruitment:** Improper player recruitment is prohibited by H-TOWN SOCCER LEAGUE, which includes any effort or activity whatsoever (by any coach, club official, or team parent) that could reasonably be construed as attempting to encourage, induce, entice or solicit a player registered with one club or team to transfer to another club or team (by any form of communication or action, whether written or verbal). If a parent is found to have improperly recruited a player from another club or team, his or her conduct will be attributed to the club or team for whom they were recruiting. Penalties may be imposed for improper player recruitment which may include, but not be limited to, the suspension of coaches (or other club officials), the ejection of a team from the league, and/or fines levied against the team or club involved.
28. **Concussion Protocol:** If in the opinion of the referee (or assistant referee), a player has suffered a head injury or possible concussion, the match must be stopped IMMEDIATELY. If able to leave the field on their own, the injured player must be escorted to their coach/trainer, who must be told that the player cannot return for the duration of the game. If a coach/trainer is brought onto the field because the player is incapacitated, the referee must still notify the coach/trainer that the player cannot return to the game. It is the responsibility of the coach/trainer and the player's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to seek medical attention. The player with the suspected concussion will be suspended from play until league officials receive written clearance from a licensed physician stating that the player can return to play. The referee crew must ensure, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES or due to appeals from team officials, that the impacted player is NOT allowed to return to the game. The only other responsibility of the referee is to note the suspected concussion in the game report, identifying the impacted player.
29. **Inclement Weather:** The league director, or the onsite league coordinator, shall make all decisions related to playability of the fields, stoppages in play due to the proximity of lightning, restarting play, canceling play for the day, canceling the games, or any other issue related to the operation of the league games. All inclement weather announcements will be updated on the SCHEDULE web page of the league.
30. **Rainouts:** A notice will be posted on the league schedule page in GotSport if games are cancelled due to being "rained out", or if the fields have been closed for any other reason. Games will typically be rescheduled to be played on the first available Sunday following the rainout but, if necessary, an additional Saturday may be added to the schedule.
31. **Refunds:** A team withdrawing from the league after being accepted and bracketed shall forfeit its entry fee.
32. **Not Covered:** The league director shall decide all matters not explicitly covered by the rules that need to be addressed during the season. The judgement of the league director is final.