

# CMSA Grassroots League

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**CMSA**  
CALGARY MINOR  
SOCCER ASSOCIATION

# CMSA Grassroots League Handbook

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# Glossary of Terms

- **Calgary Minor Soccer Association (CMSA)** – Local governing body for soccer in the Calgary region
- **Canada Soccer Association (CSA)** – National governing body of soccer in Canada
- **Alberta Soccer Association (ASA)** – Provincial governing body of soccer in Alberta
- **Grassroots soccer** – all amateur soccer U12 and below
- **Long-Term Player Development (LTPD)** – Guiding principles designed by Sport Canada to help identify age and stage appropriate training for athletes
- **Designated Club Technical Lead** – The person identified by the club to be able to move groups or individual players between their club’s rosters during the Grassroots League Match Day
- **Member-Club or Club** – The organization attending the CMSA U7-U9 Grassroots League Match Days with their groups of players
- **Player** – the child participating in matches
- **Open Roster** – the ability to move children from one group to another without being on a fixed team roster
- **Coach** – the adult helping to facilitate the Match Day experience prioritizing enjoyment and fun
- **Grassroots League Quadrant Lead** – CMSA Staff are responsible for managing and assisting with logistics of the Grassroots League Match Days
- **Group(s)** – a collection of players put onto the same field to have a match
- **Meaningful Competition** – games that provide an adequate challenge for all players involved prioritizing enjoyment in these matches.

# The Why

By starting with answering the question, “**Why the changes to soccer in Calgary**”, we can understand the true purpose of these league modifications and the advantages that will be seen. Once we have examined research surrounding talent development, talent identification, and children’s sporting motivations we can see flaws in the traditional model of how soccer is delivered in Calgary. The *Canada Soccer Skill Centre and Dedicated Player Program Support Manual*<sup>1</sup> states that the traditional model of choosing a select number of players based on their performance levels at a specified time, organizing them into a team, and competing against other teams is flawed in the following ways:

- Does not accurately predict potential or future performance.
- Often turns away players who might have high potential but who are simply inexperienced at that moment relative to their peers.
- Early selection prior to physical maturation implies early exclusion of the majority and can discourage players who might otherwise become as good, or better, if given the time and chance to develop.
- Characteristics that define “talented” athletes in early age are not the characteristics that define elite athletes later in their career.

With this knowledge and awareness, the concept of open rosters, which is a feature of the CMSA Grassroots League, is a way to lessen the effects of these flaws. This concept allows for players to be grouped according to criteria other than current ability and removes a fixed roster system. This concept is introduced in Canada Soccer’s Club Licensing Program<sup>2</sup> and has an impact on leagues, and clubs. Within the licensing requirements is the introduction of the Skill Centre Program. Clubs in the Calgary region who have achieved a National Youth Club License are required to operate a Skill Centre within their club and adhere to open rosters.

## **A Skill Centre has the following goals<sup>1</sup>:**

1. To produce better players across Canada by increasing opportunity and access to better training and competition for more young players.
2. Produce clear training guidelines for clubs so that they can deliver the best possible environment for young players in their region.
3. Keep more young players involved in the game for longer by providing them with an enjoyable experience within the game.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.canadasoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Canada-Soccer-Skill-Centre-Program-Manual\\_EN-updated.pdf](https://www.canadasoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Canada-Soccer-Skill-Centre-Program-Manual_EN-updated.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.canadasoccer.com/play-landing/club-licensing-program/>

**The Skill Centre Program principles<sup>1</sup> that affect how CMSA’s league operates are the following:**

- Contact time with a ball will be high
- Training will resemble the game
- Training will be fun for everyone
- Programs will be accessible

The above principles and goals are being adopted in CMSA’s approach to grassroots soccer. CMSA is committed to having accessible, enjoyable, inclusive, and child-centered programming so children can participate in soccer safely and develop to their own potential.

## CMSA Match Day Locations

When we combine the above information with Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) and the developmental characteristics of children aged 6-11, we know that a modification in the way grassroots soccer is offered is overdue. Recognizing this, CMSA has modified the league offering for the U7-U9 players beginning Outdoor 2021. This league offering will consist of a Grassroots format offered throughout the available centers in the city for matches. We believe bringing the games closer to families will help retain players for longer by increasing the accessibility of our game. Below is a map of the facilities CMSA will be using for the Outdoor 2024 season. CMSA is committed to offering accessible soccer to all Calgary families and will operate in a culture of “Live Local, Play Local” with their grassroots soccer leagues.



## Club Match Day Locations

Below is a list of where CMSA Member-clubs will participate at each location for the Outdoor 2024 season:

NE	NW	CENTRAL/SOUTH
CNEU	Airdrie	CalGlen
EMFC	Blizzard	Chinooks
Lions	Calgary City FC	Rangers
MAC	Calgary West	Foothills
PSA	CNS	Rangers
Spartans	NCFC	South Four
	New Frontier	SWU
	Rockies	Villains
	Royal West	West Hills United

There are some exceptions to the above table so please pay attention to the schedules for the correct location(s). CMSA has tried to keep players and families playing in locations as close to their homes as possible. There have been some modifications due to smaller registrations in certain areas and thus CMSA has combined some of these groups to allow for Match Days to occur.

# The CMSA Grassroots League Format

The Match Days will be located throughout the city all summer long. Players will arrive and will be placed into their groups by their club for Match Day. Each group will have a starting field where they will begin their Match Day and play against another group. After the match ends the players will rotate around the field allowing them to have new opponents and new challenges. The players will play numerous games during their time at the Match Day.

The match format the players will play is in alignment with Canada Soccer's Grassroots Standards. All formats and recommended group sizes can be found below:

Age Group	Locations	Match Day Format	Recommended Group Size
U7	ALL	3v3 (No GK)	5
U8	ALL	4v4 (No GK)	6
U9	ALL	5v5 (Including GK)	8

By expanding the match formats, we are logically building towards a large-sided game format (7v7, 9v9 or 11v11) while giving the players a match format that is developmentally appropriate for them. Smaller-sided games at these young ages will help players have more time on the ball, more 1v1 duels, and score more goals. This will lead to increased development and enjoyment.

With Match Days occurring regularly all spring and summer long, players will have the opportunity for weekly competition. Advanced communication is highly recommended from parents to the club so the club can be organized and have the players properly grouped before arriving for Match Day. Should the match format need to be changed to allow more players playing time, or based on player attendance, CMSA will modify it on the Match Day.

## Benefits of the Grassroots League Format

This change in league format will see the following benefits to grassroots soccer in Calgary:

- Consistent Match Days and times
- Centralized locations in quadrants to limit travel time for families
- Greater sense of community and culture around the game in Calgary
- Players have developmentally appropriate match environments and experience
- Allows for club technical leaders and coaches to be involved in all player's development
- Coach development to improve the delivery of soccer for our youngest players
- Collaboration amongst all soccer clubs in Calgary



Player groupings for the Match Days will vary based on the Grassroots. CMSA would encourage clubs to put groups together around the following criteria:

Match Day Date	Locations	Player Groupings
Spring Grassroots League		
May 4	ALL	Social Relationships
May 11	ALL	Social Relationships
May 25	ALL	Ability
June 1	ALL	Ability
June 8	ALL	Social Relationships
June 15	ALL	Social Relationships
June 22*	ALL	Ability

\*June 22 – Tim Hortons Spring Grassroots Rally

Applying research focused on mixed-ability groupings in academic settings to soccer has led us to these recommendations. Hornby’s research demonstrates that ability-based groupings do not lead to the improved academic performance of the overall group and often widen the gap in achievement (2014). With this knowledge, CMSA has asked clubs to predominately group their players based on social relationships and strive to make mixed-ability groups the priority within the CMSA Grassroots League. This is contrary to the traditional practice of grouping players by ability.

Further details on player groupings are outlined on pages 15 and 16.

## Registration into the League

- Clubs will follow normal CMSA registration and team entry protocols.
- U7-U9 players will be able to register into the program for their age/stage of development.
- Clubs register all players onto teams and rosters so CMSA can verify POAs (Proof of Age) and Waivers. The Match Day rosters are fluid and open, but “teams” need to be registered for CMSA’s back-end process.

# The Role of the Club

- Game Day Rosters – clubs organize their Match Day groups based on the theme identified for teams.
  - CMSA will need to be notified by the Wednesday before the Match Day if there are absences of entire groups.
- Club Registrars and Administrator's Roles
  - Team entry – once per Grassroots League
  - Roster Registration – once per Grassroots League
- Technical lead on-site and in communication with CMSA and parents to ensure everyone is aware of where to go, etc.
- Organizing players in Match Day groups
  - This is a key factor in allowing for efficiency on the Match Day. Please have the groups made up ahead of time and be prepared to organize the groups quickly on Match Day.
  - Clubs must have a parent volunteer or club staff at their designated meeting area directing any late players to their Match Day group. That volunteer must have a list of the players and their groups and can help direct your club's members to the appropriate place.
- Modifying groups on Match Day
  - Having open rosters allows technical leads and coaches to modify their club's groups during the Match Day to provide the players with the most meaningful competition on the day.
  - Coaches and club technical leads can move entire groups between fields or can move players between their club's groups.
  - These activities will demonstrate commitment to providing development-oriented Match Day experiences & collaboration between clubs to put the development of every child first.
- Communicating to parents about any changes to the Match Days
- Supplying a minimum of 1 designated club technical lead for each Match Day location they have groups participating
- Ensuring the necessary coaches for the mini-matches
  - 1 coach for every 2 Match Day groups. These coaches are to be facilitators of the matches and manage substitutions allowing for equal playing time for all players. By having to oversee 2 matches at the same time, there will be less opportunity to instruct players, and more time to observe and evaluate the effects of the training environment.

- Providing 1 volunteer for every 80 kids to help on Match Day with logistics and flow
- Monitoring coach behaviour in the mini-matches and enforcing proper coaching behaviours.
  - It is the responsibility of the club's technical leader to reinforce and monitor their coaches' behaviour throughout. Appropriate coaching behaviours includes:
    - Ensuring all children have equal playing time regardless of performance.
    - Ensuring a psychologically safe environment is present for each child to express themselves and feel comfortable making mistakes and taking risks.
    - Modelling positive sportspersonship.
    - Working cooperatively with the opposing team's coach to facilitate the game for the children.
  - Should the Club's Technical Lead be unable to remind their coaches of the above appropriate coaching behaviours, CMSA staff will reinforce this messaging.

# The Role of CMSA

## Prior to Match Day

- **Determine what quadrant clubs have their games in**
  - This will not change for the duration of the CMSA Grassroots League season. All clubs' games will take place at their designated Grassroots location. This decision will be made by CMSA after analyzing where the majority of that club's registration base is located and will aim to have families travel a maximum of 20 minutes each way to the match-day venues.
- **Field Bookings**
  - Done through the CMSA League Coordinator before the CMSA Grassroots League season.
- **Schedule Creation**
  - Ensuring the groups of players have meaningful games for their development every Match Day.
  - The schedule created is a starting point. Open rosters allow for groups to be moved or modified to find meaningful competition on Match Day. The schedule does not need to be followed 100% of the time. The goal of the schedule is to provide some organization to the event but will be modified as needed on Match Day.

## On Match Day

- Logistics and timing of matches.
- Setup and takedown of all fields and goals.
- Managing the flow of people and aiding in directing all groups to their designated fields.
- Attend to any emergency and activate an Emergency Action Plan (EAP).
- First Aid kit provided onsite.
- Ball pump onsite.

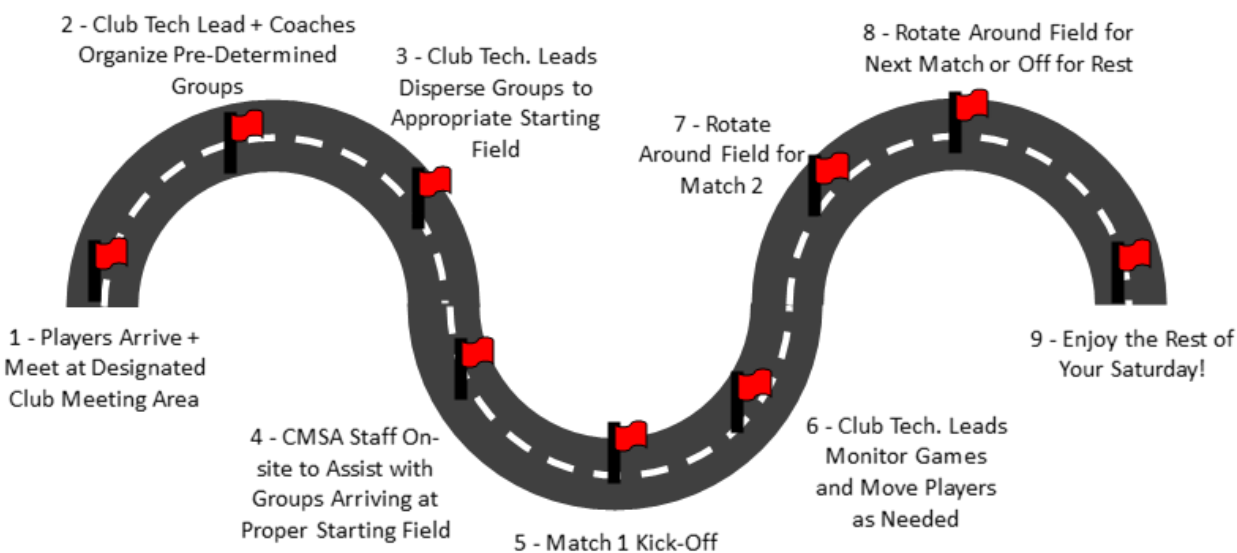
# CMSA Grassroots League Day Match Logistics

Equipment set-up and take-down will be the responsibility of CMSA with some assistance from clubs if needed. CMSA will do everything in their power to have enough staff at each location to set up all fields before any players arriving. If some help is needed, CMSA will reach out to the clubs in that quadrant to each provide a volunteer.

Understanding the CMSA Grassroots League logistics is vital to having a positive experience every Match Day. Considerations along with timelines for a successful match-day for all have been provided on the following pages. Schedules are a starting point for the day. They do not need to be followed exactly as published. Open rosters are available to modify and manage the Match Day to ensure players can have meaningful competition and a positive experience.

For all age groups and location schedules please [CLICK HERE](#). Please then click on the applicable age group/gender identity/location to find your schedule.

The below road map is an outline of how a typical Grassroots League Match Day would unfold from start to finish:



## Details Step-by-step

### 1. Players Arrive and Meet at Designated Club Meeting Area

- Each club will have their own designated meeting space where all players and coaches will get together prior to the beginning of the Match Day. This

designated space will be identified by a sign or flag in the group and will serve as an area for the club to get organized for the Match Day.

- Club’s will have the full Match Day schedule with the field locations for their groups to begin playing on.

**2. Club Technical Lead and Coaches Organize Pre-Determined Groups**

- The club should have organized the groups of players in alignment with the recommended group sizes for the Match Day PRIOR to arrival. The criteria below outlines how groups will be made for the match-days

Match Day Date	Locations	Player Groupings
Spring Grassroots League		
May 4	ALL	Social Relationships
May 11	ALL	Social Relationships
May 25	ALL	Ability
June 1	ALL	Ability
June 8	ALL	Social Relationships
June 15	ALL	Social Relationships
June 22*	ALL	Ability

**Social Relationships** are defined as having friends play with friends. Who the players normally associate with before, during, and after training should be considered for how these Match Day groups are made. Please consider grouping those who go to school together, live on the same street, go to the same church, etc. together for the applicable Match Day dates.

**Ability** is defined by having “like-with-like” groups made in an effort for “like-with-like” matches. These groups are made by subjective (or objective) assessments of where a child’s soccer development is currently in relation to their peer group.

**3. Club Technical Leads Disperse Groups to Appropriate Starting Field**

- According to the schedule provided by CMSA, please send the groups of players off with their coaches to their starting fields and begin light activity as we prepare for the Kick-Off.
- Clubs must have a parent volunteer or club staff at their designated meeting area directing any late players to their Match Day group. That volunteer must have a list of the rosters and can direct players and parents to where they need to be.

#### **4. CMSA Staff On-Site to Assist with Groups Arriving at Proper Starting Field**

- CMSA staff will be present at every field and a central location denoted on the field maps in this package (see pages 22/23) to assist in ensuring all players, coaches, and parents get to their correct field.

#### **5. Match 1 Kick-Off**

- A “2-minute warning” will sound to prepare players and coaches for the beginning of the matches. Please take this time to round up any stray equipment and to get players on the field and ready for kick-off.
- A centralized timer will then sound a buzzer or airhorn to begin the first matches.
- Matches will be 15-minute games (no half-time) with the sound of a buzzer or airhorn to signify full-time.

#### **6. Club Technical Leads Monitor Games and Move Players as Needed**

- During the matches, club technical leads are expected to monitor games and oversee their coaches. They are to look for players or groups who may not be having meaningful competitions or a positive match-day experience. Should these players need to be moved to a different group (within their club) or a different field (to join another of their club’s groups) then they are free to do so at any moment. It is HIGHLY recommended that you wait until the match has finished to move the player or group. You may want to communicate this change with the parent/guardian of the player prior to moving them so they can be prepared to move as well.
- CMSA will do their best to arrange match-day schedules to alleviate the need to be moving players or groups constantly.

#### **7. Rotate Around Field for Match 2**

- Upon conclusion of the first match, please grab all your equipment and have the players grab their water bottle and rotate to the next field for your next match. Listen for the sound of the buzzer or airhorn for the next Kick-Off.

#### **8. Rotate Around Field for Next Match or Off for Rest**

- Groups will play back-to-back-to-back matches and then their Match Day will be done for the day. Total time including rotation time is one (1) hour.
- U7/U8 Groups will play three (3) matches each Match Day.
- U9 Groups will play two (2) matches each Match Day.
- U10 Groups will play one (1) match each Match Day.

#### **9. Enjoy the Rest of Your Saturday**

- Once the final match for the group is played, please make sure the players are accounted for and leave with their parents/guardians.

## Field Marshalls

Will be either CMSA staff or Club volunteers and will be equipped with a schedule for the day to assist parents and players in finding their match fields.

## Quadrant Locations and Schedules

Below is the full schedule of all CMSA Grassroots League Match Days with the location of each Match Day.

To view the entire schedule online, [click here](#).

### Northwest

Match Day Date	Quadrant	Location Name	Address
May 4	NW	Dalhousie Community Center	5432 Dalhart Rd NW, Calgary, AB T3A 1V6
May 11	NW	Dalhousie Community Center	5432 Dalhart Rd NW, Calgary, AB T3A 1V6
May 25	NW	Dalhousie Community Center	5432 Dalhart Rd NW, Calgary, AB T3A 1V6
June 1	NW	Dalhousie Community Center	5432 Dalhart Rd NW, Calgary, AB T3A 1V6
June 8	NW	Dalhousie Community Center	5432 Dalhart Rd NW, Calgary, AB T3A 1V6
June 15	NW	Dalhousie Community Center	5432 Dalhart Rd NW, Calgary, AB T3A 1V6
June 22*	NW	TBD	TBD



## Central/South

Match Day Date	Quadrant	Location Name	Address
May 4	Central/South	Flames Community Arena	2390 47 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 5W5
May 11	Central/South	Flames Community Arena	2390 47 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 5W5
May 25	Central/South	Flames Community Arena	2390 47 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 5W5
June 1	Central/South	Flames Community Arena	2390 47 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 5W5
June 8	Central/South	Flames Community Arena	2390 47 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 5W5
June 15	Central/South	Flames Community Arena	2390 47 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 5W5
June 22*	NW	TBD	TBD

## Northeast

Match Day Date	Quadrant	Location Name	Address
May 4	NE	Our Lady of Fatima	6320 Taralea Park NE Calgary, AB T3J 5C4
May 11	NE	Our Lady of Fatima	6320 Taralea Park NE Calgary, AB T3J 5C4
May 25	NE	Our Lady of Fatima	6320 Taralea Park NE Calgary, AB T3J 5C4
June 1	NE	Our Lady of Fatima	6320 Taralea Park NE Calgary, AB T3J 5C4
June 8	NE	Our Lady of Fatima	6320 Taralea Park NE Calgary, AB T3J 5C4
June 15	NE	Our Lady of Fatima	6320 Taralea Park NE Calgary, AB T3J 5C4
June 22*	NW	TBD	TBD

# CMSA Grassroots League Field Maps

## NW – Dalhousie Community Fields – U7 and U8



## NW – Dalhousie Community Association – U9



**NE – Our Lady of Fatima - U7 and U8**



**NE – Our Lady of Fatima – U9**



**CENTRAL / South – Flames Community Arena – U7, U8 and U9**



# CMSA Grassroots League Modified Laws of the Game U7/U8/U9

## LAW 1 - FIELD OF PLAY

- Dimensions
  - U7/U8: 20 meters long x 15 meters wide
  - U9: 30 meters long x 20 meters wide
  - The field shall be rectangular in shape.
- Field Markings: Lines may be marked, or cones will be used every 5 meters. Each field will be marked with different coloured cones than the one next to it.
- Penalty Area: A penalty area will not apply and therefore will not be marked.
- Goals: Goals will be supplied by CMSA. Pop-up goals may be used as well.
  - U7/U8: 4 feet tall x 6 feet wide
  - U9: 6 feet tall x 10 feet wide

## LAW 2 - THE BALL

- The ball will be Size three (3) for U7 and U8. The ball will be Size four (4) for U9 and U10.
- The game ball will be provided by clubs at the CMSA Grassroots League Match Day. All coaches are to have two balls available for the games.

## LAW 3 - THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS

- The game will be played by two teams, each consisting of the appropriate number based on the match format. Should a group be short a player or two, the opponent may “loan” a player for the match or adjust their number of players on the field to equal their opponent.
  - U7: 3v3 – no goalkeeper
  - U8: 4v4 – no goalkeeper
  - U9: 5v5 – including goalkeeper
- All U7/U8/U9 teams have the option to use the “4 Up 1 Up”, “Swap GKs”, and “Mix ‘Em Up” during any game.
  - 4 Up 1 Up – When a team is losing by four (4) or more goals, that team can add an extra player onto the field.
  - Swap GKs – Swap goalkeepers if the run of play is not allowing for goalkeepers to develop.
  - Mix ‘Em Up – Mix all players together from both teams if mismatched and the game is becoming lopsided.

## **LAW 4 - THE PLAYER'S EQUIPMENT**

- Players must wear shin guards to prevent injury.
- Players will all wear the same jersey colour as the rest of their club.

## **LAW 5 - THE REFEREE / OFFICIAL**

- One coach from each team will act as the game leader on the field for U7/U8/U9. Their task is to stop the play, correct and educate the players on the infringements of the laws of the game, and restart play appropriately.
- Timekeeping of the CMSA Grassroots League Match Days will be kept by CMSA for U7/U8/U9.

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

- U7/U8: 3 x 20-minute games (no halftime)
  - 5-minute rotation time between games. Should the teams be organized and ready to play earlier, play should begin.
- U9: 2 x 25-minute games (no halftime)
  - 5-minute rotation time between games

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

- A kick-off will be taken from the centre of the field for:
  - At the start of the game
  - Teams will not switch sides
- Players of the opposing team must be five (5) meters away.
- A goal may not be scored directly from any kick-off.
- Kick-off may be taken as a pass-in or dribble-in.
- U7/U8: After a goal is scored, the team that scored runs back and celebrates at their goal (touch their net), and the team that conceded can get the ball out of their net and play. No kick-off is needed.
- U9: After a goal is scored, kick-off at the halfway point on the field is to be taken by the team who conceded.

## **LAW 11 – OFFSIDE**

- There is no offside.

## **LAW 12 - FOULS AND MISCONDUCT**

- An indirect free kick is awarded, and the player is educated as to what foul occurred.
- Players of the opposing team must be five (5) meters away for play to be restarted.
- Restarts from fouls can be taken as a dribble-in or pass-in once the ball has been stopped and returned to the spot of the infraction.

## **LAW 13 – FREE KICKS**

- All free kicks can be taken as a dribble-in or pass-in once the ball has been stopped and returned to the spot of the infraction. Opponents must be five (5) yards from the ball until the ball is touched and put into play. This included kicks for penal fouls, a corner kick, or kick-offs.

## **LAW 14 - PENALTY KICK**

- There are NO penalty kicks.

## **LAW 15 – THE THROW-IN**

- No throw-in. Restarts from when the ball fully crosses the sideline will be taken as a dribble-in or pass-in from where the ball exited the field of play.

## **LAW 16 – THE GOAL KICK**

- A goal kick is awarded when the ball fully crosses the end line and was last touched by a member of the attacking team.
- Goal kicks can be taken as a dribble-in or pass-in.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a goal kick.
- Players of the opposing team must be a minimum of five (5) meters from the ball.

## **LAW 17 – THE CORNER KICK**

- A corner kick is awarded when the ball fully crosses the end line and was last touched by a member of the defending player.
- The ball is to be placed within one (1) meter of the corner marking of the field (either cone or where the sideline and end line connect).
- Player taking the corner kick may dribble-in or pass-in to restart the game.
- Goals can be scored straight from a corner kick.



## **SUBSTITUTIONS**

- It is recommended that changes occur during any stoppage, but changes during gameplay (on the fly) are also permitted.
- Equal playing time for ALL players is highly encouraged regardless of current or perceived ability. Rotating substitutions is a good strategy to maintain equal playing time.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- There are no player or coach ID cards necessary on Match Day but all participants (players and coaches) must be registered with CMSA.
- There are no scores or standings recorded.
- Rosters are fluid and able to be changed during Match Day and between Match Days. This is the open roster concept.
- Clubs must have one (1) Technical Lead present for each CMSA Grassroots League Match Day they have groups participating in. This Technical Lead is not to be actively coaching groups, but rather overseeing all their clubs' groups to ensure all players have meaningful competition and coaches/parents exhibit positive sporting behaviours.

# Key Contacts & Communication Process

For any questions regarding how the Grassroots League was built, the rationale, registration, etc. please refer to the table below.

CMSA			
Name	Role	Contact about	Email
Jordan Stewart	Technical Leader (CMSA)	Anything Grassroots League related. Rationale, modifications, parent/club feedback	<a href="mailto:jestewart@calgaryminorsoccer.com">jestewart@calgaryminorsoccer.com</a>
Savanna Collison	Tournaments and Events Coordinator	Grassroots League Logistics, Staffing, Match Day Coordination	<a href="mailto:scollison@calgaryminorsoccer.com">scollison@calgaryminorsoccer.com</a>
Kim Kerr	League Coordinator	Registering for Grassroots League/ Schedule for Grassroots League	<a href="mailto:kkerr@calgaryminorsoccer.com">kkerr@calgaryminorsoccer.com</a>

## Supporting Documentation

### Parent Education Support and Plan

CMSA will be holding online presentations for interested parents throughout the year with dates available on the CMSA website and shared through social channels and email. CMSA will also deliver a club-specific presentation for their parents upon request. These parent-focused presentations are highly encouraged as they show the connection between the Club and CMSA. CMSA is also able to reinforce the great work our clubs are doing and address any questions or issues.

Occasionally during the CMSA Grassroots League Match Days, CMSA Technical Leader, Jordan Stewart will be on location speaking to parents and answering any questions that might arise. Parents play a vital role in their child’s development and activity within soccer so treating them as a valued ally goes a long way.

If your club staff have questions about key messages to provide to parents, please contact:

- CMSA’s Technical Leader ([jestewart@calgaryminorsoccer.com](mailto:jestewart@calgaryminorsoccer.com))

## Coach Education Plan

Prior to the launch of the CMSA Grassroots League each season, CMSA will try to host a coach education day. This day is intended to work through the Match Day processes and logistics before the first Match Day. Key club staff should be in attendance for this day. This would include the Grassroots Lead, applicable age group coaches, club-designated Match Day Technical Lead, and Technical Director. This day will consist of a pre-brief, full CMSA Grassroots League Match Day run-through, and a de-brief session. We expect the duration of this education to be 5 hours. A full breakdown of the timing for that day is below:

Event	Time
Pre-Brief	60 minutes
Setup	20 minutes
Grassroots League Match Day Simulation	90 minutes
Cleanup	20 minutes
Debrief	60 minutes

Regular check-ins with club staff and coaches will help to ensure any questions and concerns are addressed by CMSA promptly. **CMSA will not be able to have a coach education day in Outdoor 2024 but will have a webinar to work through questions and concerns.**

## Language and Terminology

Language determines the culture we operate in, and if we want to change the culture in this city, an emphasis on using the appropriate language is key. We all play a role in ensuring we promote a consistent message to parents about the benefits of this competition model. When speaking to parents and other stakeholders use words such as:

- Accessible
- Convenient
- Family-friendly
- Fun
- Safe
- Developmentally appropriate
- Best practice or research based.

Speaking with these words will have a positive impact on the mentality of parents and children when attending the CMSA Grassroots League Match Days. We want to prioritize fun, safe, accessible, and child centric as the main reasons to move towards this method of gameplay.

Below is a table of words or phrases to **avoid** and their appropriate substitutes to have a clear and consistent message to parents and children:

Avoid using words or phrases such as	Use these words or phrases instead
Competitive	Meaningful matches
Top-Level	More developed currently
Elite	More developed currently
Best-with-best	Similarly developed
Team(s)	Group(s)

Avoid making assurances or guarantees to parents about having “competitive matches” and having “the best kids with the best kids” without consultation with CMSA first. This will help lead to a more positive environment for soccer to develop in.

# FAQ and CMSA Grassroots League Myths

## **BREAKING TEAMS UP WILL HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON KIDS**

CMSA is not breaking teams up with these modifications. Soccer is an individual game played in a team environment. Research suggests that forming groups of players for matches based on mixed ability raises the standard of all players and reduces achievement gaps (Ability Grouping in New Zealand High Schools: Are Practices Evidence-Based? – Hornby and Witte 2014). Combining this with social relationships being the primary grouping criteria will lead to positive effects on retention and enjoyment.

## **KIDS CAN'T CREATE TEAM COHESION AND TEAMS CAN'T WORK ON TACTICAL WORK**

Tactical work should not be the priority of coaching in these foundational age groups. Love of the game, technique, skill, and teaching principles of the game need to take priority over tactics. This model of play will allow kids to play with different players from time to time, but it will allow for a large group of players to develop a bond in a club environment. This will help develop a club culture and identity and will reduce the negative long-term effects of tiering players early and placing them on teams.

## **THIS METHOD OF COMPETITION “WATER’S DOWN” THE QUALITY OF AGE GROUPS BECAUSE ALL THE WEAK PLAYERS ARE MIXED WITH THE STRONG PLAYERS**

Previously, “weaker” players may not have been given the time to develop, or train in the best environment possible. Often when a coach or club labels a player “weak” from an early age, that label sticks with them for many years and thus creates a bias. Research shows that by streaming or tiering kids from an early age increases the achievement gap and this gap becomes incredibly difficult to narrow as time goes on. The other consideration is that if we are going to operate in an environment where “as many as possible, for as long as possible, in the best environment as possible” takes place, we need to keep the player pool deep and large to have viable and competitive leagues by U13 and onwards.

## **COMPETITION IS THE “CORNERSTONE” OF DEVELOPMENT AND BY ELIMINATING COMPETITION OUR KIDS WON’T DEVELOP OR LEARN HOW TO WIN OR LOSE**

Children compete, adults compare. Children naturally compete and balance teams when there is no adult interference in sport. In addition, there is no evidence that shows competition is the key factor in development. When do people need to learn how to win and lose? LTPD suggests that Stage 4: Training to Train (U11-15 Female and U12-16 Male) is when this should become a part of the “Mental” corner of development<sup>3</sup>.

## **THESE MODIFICATIONS ARE A WASTE OF TIME FOR TALENTED PLAYERS. WHERE IS THE VALUE FOR COMPETITIVE U9 PLAYERS?**

All players will flourish in these game formats. “Competitive” and “talented” are not words to be used when describing children. These are adult words from an adult model forced upon children.

## **WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THESE MODIFICATIONS ON THE PLAYERS?**

Through these modifications, CMSA has been able to give children an age and stage appropriate playing environment that allows expression, creativity, and development to flourish. We are also allowing clubs to be flexible in how they develop players and encouraging them to put the needs of each child first.

## **IN THIS MODEL THE BEST KIDS IN THE AGE GROUP DON’T GET BETTER.**

This model allows for players of all abilities to be challenged to a level that they want. If a player is more developmentally advanced than their peers, they can be moved into an older age group, across gender, or into another group of players from the same club. If there are players who are not as developmentally advanced, this model allows for them to move to a younger age group or find groups of players who may be at their relative level. This is often best done in consultation with the players’ parents and explaining the benefits of these initiatives to long-term development and enjoyment of soccer. There are many benefits to the mental, physical,

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<sup>3</sup> Wellness to World Cup – Long-Term Player Development – Canadian Soccer Association

social, emotional, technical, and tactical development when a child is left in their own age group whether they are developmentally advanced or developmentally behind.

All the research around talent identification suggests it is nearly impossible to predict future elite performance before puberty. If we believe that the best seven-year-old will become a professional or international player because they are the best seven-year-old then this suggests some fundamental problems with our environment, system, and culture. We will be turning away many players who, if given the time to develop, could become as good or better than the current best seven-year-old.

## **YOU WOULDN'T PUT A AAA HOCKEY PLAYER WITH A HOUSE LEAGUE HOCKEY PLAYER.**

CMSA is not going to put players in matches or environments that are potentially going to harm a child physically, mentally, emotionally, or socially. For this reason, we have open rosters where club staff can move individual players, or entire groups of players in their club to a new group or field to ensure the players have meaningful competition for them.

# Age Exemptions in the CMSA Grassroots League

“Bio-banding is the process of grouping athletes based on attributes associated with growth and maturation rather than chronological age. Children of the same age vary considerably in biological maturation with some individuals maturing in advance or delay of their peers<sup>4</sup>”. CMSA will be applying the principle of bio-banding through their Age Exemption initiative that is outlined further in the CMSA Rules and Regulations.

The application for this process for CMSA can be found by [CLICKING HERE](#). CMSA will allow U10 players to play in the CMSA U9 Grassroots League under the bio-banding process. We will also allow bio-banding to occur within the CMSA U7-U9 Grassroots League to ensure players are matched appropriately and have meaningful competition as often as possible.

## CMSA Grassroots League Emergency Action Plans (EAP)

The CMSA Emergency Action Plan will be sent directly to Member Clubs, technical leads, and coaches along with this document.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://sportforlife.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/biobanding.pdf>