

ISFA UNDER-11 SEVEN-A-SIDE TOURNAMENT

TOURNAMENT RULES

Changes for 2025-26 in bold italic

1. CONTROL: These Competitions shall be managed and controlled by the Executive Committee of the Independent Schools Football Association.

2. ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS: All Schools who are Members of the Independent Schools Football Association shall be eligible to apply for entry. However, ISFA reserves the right to refuse entry to any school if, in ISFA's opinion, that school's participation is not beneficial to the competition. No school may enter more than one regional competition. It is a condition of entry that competing schools agree to be bound by these rules.

3. QUALIFICATION OF PLAYERS: The competition is open to pupils born between ***1st September 2014 and 31st August 2016***. Any pupil in full time education at a competing school and of the appropriate age shall be eligible to play. However, no school may include in their Squad more than 3 players who are contracted to an Academy operating under the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP).

- Players in Year 5 (U9 – U10) may not play for more than 60 minutes in any one day in accordance with FA Rules.
- Players in Year 6 (U11) may not play for more than 90 minutes in any one day in accordance with FA Rules.
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4. SAFEGUARDING OF PLAYERS: In all inter-school football, including matches played in this tournament, the safeguarding of the children involved is the responsibility of the relevant school's governance. Safeguarding in school football is underpinned by the Department for Education 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2025.

5. ORGANISATION OF THE TOURNAMENT: Regional Tournaments will be arranged to determine regional champions. All Regional Champions will qualify for the National Finals. Regional Runners-Up may, at the discretion of ISFA, be invited to participate in the National Finals.

6. DIMENSIONS OF THE PITCH AND GOALS, THE SIZE OF BALL AND TECHNICAL AREAS:

- a) Pitches will be between 50 and 60 yards in length and between 30 and 40 yards in width
- b) Goals will be 16 feet in length and 7 feet in height, (***where available***)
- c) A size 4 ball will be used in all matches
- d) There will be a penalty area of 10 yds. x 18 yds.
- e) There will be a penalty spot 8 yards from the goal
- f) There will be a technical area for coaches and substitutes not less than two yards from the field of play.
- g) There will be a spectator area not less than three yards from the field of play and on the opposing side of the field to the technical area

7. MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PLAYERS: Each school is permitted a squad of no more than 10 players, only seven of whom may be on the pitch at any one time. However, it is not mandatory to bring 10 players and schools may bring less than 10 players if they wish.

8. SUBSTITUTIONS: Any player substituted during a match will become a substitute and may, in turn, replace another player at any time, subject to the substitution being carried out in accordance with Law 3 of the Laws of the Game.

9. LAWS OF THE GAME: Except where otherwise stated in this document, the normal Laws of the Game will apply. However,

- a) There will be no offside
- b) At all restarts players must be at least five yards from the ball.
- c) A goalkeeper may not kick the ball from out of his hands by means of punt or drop-kick. (NB A goalkeeper wishing to kick the ball may release the ball onto the ground in order to do so)

10. HEADING :

In line with the FA changes to heading, the following laws will be in place:

Deliberate Header Restart:

- Deliberately heading the ball is an offence punishable by an indirect free kick
- The indirect free kick is taken at the point where the ball was deliberately headed, except:
 - Where a player deliberately heads the ball within their own penalty area, the referee will stop the game and restart with an indirect free kick to the opposition from the nearest side line of the penalty area where the offence took place.

11. TOUCHLINE RE-STARTS

- ***Kick-ins and dribble-ins will be introduced instead of throw-ins to create more technical opportunities for players with the ball at their feet, allow for more effective playing time, and to help reduce the amount of time the ball is in the air during a match.***
- ***When the whole of the ball passes over the whole of the touchline, on the ground or in the air, instead of a throw-in, a pass-in / dribble-in is awarded***
- ***The kicker that takes the pass-in / dribble-in may touch the ball again before it is touched by another player***
- ***At the moment of delivering the ball:***
 - ***The ball must be stationary on the touchline at the point where it left the pitch; only the kicker may be off the pitch***
 - ***All opponents must stand at least 5 yards from the point on the touchline where the pass-in or /dribble-in is to be taken from***
 - ***A goal cannot be scored directly from a pass-in***
 - ***The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves***

12. FORMAT OF TOURNAMENTS – The format of each individual regional qualifying tournament and the national finals day will be at the discretion of the organisers depending on the number of entries (this includes the duration of matches). The organisers reserve the right to alter the duration of matches, if appropriate, at any individual tournament. The number of teams qualifying for the National Finals will vary from tournament to tournament based on the number of teams and varying other tournaments.

13. GROUP MATCHES: In Group matches, 3 points will be awarded for a win, 1 point will be awarded for a draw. In the event of two or more schools being level on points, teams will be separated as follows:

- i) goal difference
- ii) number of goals scored
- iii) if only two schools are involved, by the result of the match between those two schools
- iv) if none of the above are decisive, the positions will be decided by a sudden death penalty shootout between the teams involved.

14. KNOCK-OUT MATCHES: In knock-out matches, in the event of a draw, no extra-time will be played. Each team will take three penalty kicks in the first instance, with further kicks to be taken by different players if required. Only players on the field of play at the end of the game are eligible to take penalty kicks.

15. LATE OF NON-ARRIVAL AT A MATCH: A team failing to arrive for its match will be liable to forfeit the match by a score of 2-0, subject to the approval of the Tournament Referee

16. MATCH OFFICIALS:

- a) ISFA will be responsible for appointing Match Referees
- b) Competing schools may be asked by the referee to provide an assistant referees (linesman). The role of any such assistant will be at the discretion of the match referee.

17. PLAYING COLOURS AND EQUIPMENT:

- a) All players must wear a uniform playing strip
- b) Players must wear shin guards
- c) Goalkeepers must wear a shirt of distinguishing colour.
- b) All schools must bring a change of shirts. In the event of a clash of colours, the team named second must change unless competing schools agree a mutual alternative. The use of bibs should be avoided.

18. DISCIPLINE:

Whenever possible, it is hoped to play this tournament without recourse to official disciplinary sanctions by referees and that, when appropriate, coaches will take responsibility for substituting players before such sanctions become necessary. However, in extreme cases, the referee must have the power to resort to official action. Therefore, in the unlikely event of a player receiving a red card, they will be suspended from his school's next match(es), the number of games to be determined by the Tournament Referee. The tournament referee will have sole discretion to determine the length of any sanction.

19. SPECTATORS:

Each school is responsible for the conduct of its supporters. ISFA reserves the right to require a spectator (or spectators) to leave the premises if, in ISFA's opinion, his/her behaviour is inappropriate.

20. CANCELLATION OF A TOURNAMENT: In the event of a tournament being cancelled, for reasons of weather or for any other reason, an attempt may be made to reschedule on a different date; however, this cannot be guaranteed. If the tournament does not take place, no school will qualify for the national finals but each school will receive a refund of their tournament entry fee. The decision on whether or not it is possible to play any tournament will be a matter solely for ISFA, in consultation with the host school.

If the tournament gets postponed after play has started, the following rules will apply

- If the tournament is yet to reach the knockout stages of the competition, the highest point scorers in the group stages will qualify for the national final.
- If the tournament has entered the knockout stages and cannot continue, only those teams still in the competition will be involved. Group stage points will be used to determine who the top team/s are who will progress to the national final.
- If teams have played a different number of games within the group stages, points per game will be applied
- If the above results in a draw, teams will be separated in accordance to rule 13.

21. TROPHY OWNERSHIP: Regional tournaments may be retained permanently by the winning school. The trophy for the National Competition shall be the property of the Independent Schools Football Association. The school winning the tournament shall be responsible for the safe keeping of the trophy whilst under the care and custody of that school and shall be responsible for its return to the Independent School Football Association by 1st February in the year following their victory. The trophy should be returned in the same condition as that in which it was received.

22. I.S.F.A. reserves the right to deal with any matters not specifically provided for in the Rules of the Competition and to take whatever action they deem to be appropriate.