

Northern California Youth Hockey Association (NORCAL) Rules and Regulations: 2017-2019

1.0 General

1.1. Effective Date

These rules shall be effective immediately upon approval by the Northern California Junior Hockey Association (NORCAL) Board of Directors after the Annual Meeting. Subsequently, no change of rules shall be made by the Board during the next two seasons except by a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors in attendance at two consecutive regularly scheduled Board meetings.

1.2. Precedence

Nothing in these rules should be construed to contradict USA Hockey rules, CAHA rules, or NORCAL Bylaws. In the event of conflicts, the USA Hockey rules, CAHA rules, and NORCAL Bylaws shall take precedence over these rules and regulations.

1.3. NORCAL

NORCAL is recognized by the California Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) as the governing league in Northern California for ice hockey teams competing for state playoffs at "A," and "B."

1.4. Applicability of Rules to Teams

- 1.4.A. NORCAL member clubs agree that all teams competing toward a NORCAL and/or state championship, playing as a part of the NORCAL schedule, or playing non-NORCAL teams shall be subject to applicable NORCAL rules. Special teams and house teams as defined in NORCAL rule 3.3 are not governed by these rules, except as follows: NORCAL member clubs and associations are expected to comply with all applicable USA Hockey and CAHA rules with respect to ALL teams and participants.
- 1.4.B. Any NORCAL AA leagues or league-supported exhibition AA games will be governed by CAHA AA rules.
- 1.4.C. NORCAL may investigate, review, and act on any incident or penalty involving a NORCAL member club or any player, coach, team official, or other person registered with USA Hockey through a NORCAL member club.
- 1.4.D. In this and all NORCAL rules, each reference to a "coach" without further qualification shall refer to every rostered coach.

1.5. Responsibility for Rules

All players, coaches, parents, club board members, and NORCAL officials are responsible for knowing and following applicable rules. Every participant is responsible for his/her behavior and maintenance of his/her own eligibility. The head coach is responsible for his/her team's compliance with all rules and regulations. Under no circumstance does ignorance of these rules, CAHA rules, or USA Hockey rules excuse a player, coach, team, or club from responsibility to follow the rules or from sanction for violating a rule.

2.0 League Organization and Governance

2.1. NORCAL Governance

NORCAL is a nonprofit corporation governed by a Board of Directors consisting of the presidents of each member club and the elected and appointed officers of the corporation. Voting members of the Board of Directors include the club president or designated representative of each member club and the elected officers of the corporation, which are specified in its Bylaws. The affairs of NORCAL are conducted in accordance with its Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, and policies that may be adopted by the Board of Directors from time to time.

2.2. Board Meetings

The time and location of NORCAL Board of Directors meetings are posted on the NORCAL web site. Regular meetings of the Board of Directors are open to the public. Issues or questions involving the operation of the league should be brought to the Board through a club president or his/her proxy.

2.2.A. Board Meeting Attendance

Each member club shall be responsible for representation at NORCAL Board and other meetings and for the dissemination to its members of these Rules and Regulations as well as other NORCAL league information. Any club not sending an appropriately designated representative to two or more consecutive meetings of the NORCAL Board of Directors for any reason barring "acts of God," shall be fined \$500 and \$500 additional for each consecutive missed meeting thereafter.

2.3. Age Levels in NORCAL

Regular competitive teams are classified according to age and competitive levels. USA Hockey age levels are based on birth year and may be found in the USA Hockey Annual Guide. Girls playing on a youth team in the youth division must comply with the youth age requirements.

2.4. Competitive Levels in NORCAL

2.4.A. No joint teams are allowed in NORCAL A or B leagues.

2.4.B. **"A" Division** – Championships held at NORCAL and state levels; teams in all age divisions. NORCAL does not recognize A/B distinction at U8 level. Ordinarily, "A" divisions will be made up of no more than six teams.

2.4.C. **"B" Division** – Developmental level; championships held at NORCAL and state levels; teams in U10, U12, and U14 levels.

2.4.C.i. At the start of any season if the number of B division teams exceeds eight, the NORCAL General Manager and Placement Committee may divide the B division into two or more groups based on competitive level.

2.5. Member Clubs

Only teams fielded by NORCAL clubs in good standing may participate in the NORCAL game schedule or playoffs. "Good standing" definition: NORCAL member clubs may be either non-profit or for-profit organizations. New member organizations may be accepted in accordance with NORCAL Bylaws. All clubs and teams agree to abide by all NORCAL Rules and Regulations, NORCAL Bylaws, NORCAL Codes of Conduct and decisions of the Board and duly appointed committees; to keep their teams, players, and team officials informed of all NORCAL rules, policies, decisions, and other pertinent information pertaining to their participation in NORCAL sanctioned events and activities; to pay all assessments and fines; and to provide all necessary resources as established by standards, rules and regulations of USA Hockey, CAHA, and NORCAL for the conduct of their home games. Failure to comply with these conditions may result in loss of playoff eligibility, fines, or suspension of the club from NORCAL voting rights. Member Clubs for each season will be posted on the NORCAL web site after the Annual Meeting.

3.0 Team Registration

3.1. USA Hockey Team Registration

All teams must be registered with USA Hockey prior to participating in any NORCAL, CAHA, or USA Hockey activity.

3.2. Regular Season Teams

Any youth division team formed to play competitive games throughout the course of the regular fall and winter season at the Tier I, Tier II, A or B levels shall be classified a regular season team whether or not that team is playing within the NORCAL schedule. NORCAL shall assess each participating club annual dues for each team registered. Fees will be determined annually by the NORCAL Board. U8 teams, except for house teams, Tier I teams part of a NORCAL club, and Tier II teams part of a NORCAL club, are assessed at 50% of other regular season teams.

3.3. Tournament and House Teams

3.3.A. A "tournament team" is formed to compete in a single specific tournament or event and then disbands.

Tournament teams are not required to register with NORCAL, or pay a fee to NORCAL and shall not be governed by these rules except as specified in Rule 1.4. Upon playing in a second tournament or event, a tournament team becomes a regular season team subject to NORCAL rules applicable to regular season teams unless there is a minimum 25% change in roster or approval by the NORCAL Board of Directors. Any subsequent tournaments or events require prior NORCAL Board approval.

3.3.B. House teams are teams playing only within a single club. House teams are not required to register with NORCAL or pay NORCAL fees and shall not be governed by these rules except as specified in Rule 1.4 and 3.1.

3.3.B.i. House teams comprised of players from a single age group that play more than three games against any other club become regular season teams and are subject to NORCAL and CAHA rules for registration, and rules compliance.

- 3.3.B.ii. House teams comprised of players from multiple age groups that play in less than four games against other clubs shall submit a list of players, including USA Hockey numbers to the Roster Manager before such a game take place.

3.3.C. Member clubs are not permitted to form independent teams that solely participate outside of league play.

3.4. Girls'/Women's Teams

Girls'/Women's teams playing in the NORCAL playing schedule are governed by these rules.

3.5. High School Teams

Notwithstanding Rule 2.5, a team recognized by CAHA as eligible to compete for the USA Hockey High School Division I championship may be included in a NORCAL schedule. To be included in a NORCAL regular season schedule, High School teams must comply with the same requirements met by NORCAL regular season teams and be approved for participation before the start of the NORCAL regular season.

3.6. Preliminary Team and Ice Slot Declarations A and B Youth Teams

All clubs shall make a preliminary team declaration with a plan for ice slots to the NORCAL scheduler by a date determined by the Board. The declaration shall consist of a list of teams the club expects to form with the age division for the teams and a projection of the competitive levels for each team (A, or B). The plan for ice slots may be a full submission that meets the requirements under section 3.7.3 herein: it must at least specify the days and times planned to be submitted to meet the requirement.

- 3.6.A. **Failure to Maintain Required Ice Slots.** Any club that fails to provide and maintain the required number of home ice slots for its registered teams shall be fined five hundred dollars (\$500) per ice slot shorted. Upon recommendation of NORCAL General Manager, the NORCAL Board may disqualify one or more teams from league competition if sufficient ice slots are not provided.

3.7. Initial Team Registration Tier Teams

Tier teams do not submit ice slots, but, all clubs fielding Tier I or II teams shall submit an initial properly completed team roster to the Roster Manager and a check for one-half of the annual fee determined by the NORCAL Board to the NORCAL Treasurer by a date determined by the Board.

3.8. Initial Team Registration A and B Youth Teams

To be included within the NORCAL playing schedule, all club teams must be registered with NORCAL by a date determined by the Board. Initial team registration requires completion of all the following:

- 3.8.A. Submitting to the Roster Manager a properly completed USA Hockey 1-T Official team roster. Official rosters must be submitted prior to participation in any sanctioned game, scrimmage, practice, other on-ice event, or any team event. Credential documents (birth certificate or USAH defined equivalents) for all players who are new to travel hockey should be submitted to USAH and Roster Manager. Birth dates should be verified with USAH.
- 3.8.B. Submitting to the NORCAL Treasurer a deposit for one-half of the team registration fee determined by the NORCAL board for each team.
- 3.8.C. Submitting to the NORCAL Scheduler Twelve (12) game ice slots for each team. Ice slots must be identified by date, start and end times, rink and ice surface (for multi-surface rinks) and must be within the date and time scheduling guidelines established by NORCAL. Please see Section 5.3 for length requirements. All game slots must be for clean ice. Note that provisions in Section 5 affect requirements for submitted ice. Unused ice slots will be returned to the member club as the scheduler determines them unnecessary during October and November. A club with three or fewer teams must provide an additional eight game slots for Scheduler use. Any club with U16 and/or U18 teams affected by SAT blackouts must provide a minimum of two Friday or Sunday slots for each such team after the Thanksgiving break.

3.9. Final Team Registration

All teams initially registered as described above must complete final team registration with NORCAL or be formally dropped according to the procedure found in section 3.13. Final registration requires all of the following

- 3.9.A. Supplemental rosters accepted until December 31. No cuts or drops accepted after December 1.
- 3.9.B. Submitting to the NORCAL Treasurer the balance of the team's registration fee by a date determined by the Board.

3.10. Minimum Team size

To be included within the NORCAL schedule, a team must meet CAHA requirements for minimum team size.

3.11. Late Registration A and B Youth Teams

Teams intending to play within the NORCAL schedule that miss any deadline in the above sections are considered late. Late teams that complete the initial registration requirements by September 30 or other date determined by the Board will be fined two hundred dollars (\$200) and may have their schedule reduced by two games. Late teams that complete the initial registration requirements between October 1 and October 31 shall have their schedule reduced by four games and be fined three hundred dollars (\$300). Late teams that complete the initial or final registration requirements after October 31 but prior to CAHA deadlines shall have their schedule reduced by eight league games and be fined six hundred dollars (\$600). Opponents for reduced games shall be determined by a random draw of teams conducted by the NORCAL General Manager.

3.12. Addition and Deletion of Players after Initial Team Registration

No transaction adding or deleting a player from a team roster is official without written confirmation from the Roster Manager or the Roster Manager's designee. Players or coaches participating in any USAH sanctioned event without written confirmation from the Roster Manager that the transaction is complete are ineligible participants.

3.13. Dropping Teams

A club or association that drops a team registered to participate in the NORCAL schedule shall be assessed a penalty of three hundred dollars (\$300) for each team dropped after September 30 or other date determined by the Board. Written notice of dropping a team must be made to the NORCAL General Manager and to the NORCAL Scheduler. In addition, any applicable penalties for game forfeiture shall be imposed when the dropping of a team requires cancellation of scheduled games within seven days of the receipt of the drop by NORCAL.

4.0 Individual Registration, Tryouts, and Player Movement

4.1. Individual USA Hockey Registration

All Individual players, coaches, and managers must be registered for the current season with USA Hockey prior to participating in any USA Hockey activity.

4.2. Player NORCAL Registration

Each player must be properly included on a team roster approved by the Roster Manager before being permitted to play in any game.

4.3. In-House teams

Players registered on a USA Hockey roster may be simultaneously registered on an in-house team so long as such dual registration does not cause a player to be registered on two teams that compete directly against each other in the NORCAL schedule or in any other games leading toward a NORCAL or CAHA, or USA Hockey Championship.

4.4. Girls' Roster Questions

Girls' team rosters are governed by CAHA rules.

4.5. Coach NORCAL Registration

Each coach must be properly registered, screened, and have completed SafeSport training for the current season with USA Hockey before participating in any on-ice activity

All adult coaches and all other adult participants with routine contact with players must comply with USA Hockey and CAHA screening requirements before participating in any USA Hockey, CAHA, or NORCAL event. Non-compliance will result in a minimum one-year suspension for the non-complying person, a fine of \$250 to the club, and, in the event the unscreened person is a coach, forfeiture of all games played during the time in which the unscreened coach was active. Note that this rule intends to punish clubs and teams for unscreened coaches participating in practices.

4.6. Players and Teams Playing Within Age and Competitive Classification (excluding players playing exclusively in-house)

4.6.A. Players usually must play only at the lowest age level for which they qualify under USA Hockey rules with the following exceptions:

4.6.A.i. A player in an age group allowing body checking who by birth is in the last year of his age classification may skate up one age classification following submission of a properly completed NORCAL "Consent to Skate Out of Age Division" form.

4.6.A.ii. U8 players may not play up without approval of the full NORCAL Board.

4.6.B. Playing below the USA Hockey assigned age level is not permitted.

4.7. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Improperly Registered Player

Head coaches are required to know the status of their players and will be suspended for two games for each game played by an improperly registered player or a player on the roster of another club. Any game in which an unregistered or improperly registered player participates shall be forfeited by the offending team. Players rostered on a NORCAL team may practice with another NORCAL team with permission of both club presidents. Players at a youth classification not on a NORCAL team may not practice with a NORCAL youth team. Penalty for allowing a player not on a NORCAL youth, house, or girls roster to practice with a NORCAL team is a one-game suspension for each offense to the offending head coach.

4.8. Player Movement/Free Agency

NORCAL players are free agents from the end of CAHA Playoffs for "A" and "B" teams until joining a team for the following season.

4.9. Joining a Team

Either club or player may appeal to the NORCAL General Manager in case of a dispute as to whether or not a player has joined a club or team. Generally, a player has joined a team when that player or player's family has

- 4.9.A. Signed a contract, letter of intent, or any other written agreement with a club. (A waiver or release from liability or a medical consent-to-treat form are excluded from this restriction) or
- 4.9.B. Paid money other than a separate tryout fee to a club by virtue of which payment the player is assigned or may be assigned by that club to a specific team or
- 4.9.C. Played or participated in a NORCAL-scheduled preseason game, exhibition, or regular season game with a team or

4.10. Player Development Requirement

All NORCAL registered U10, U12, U14, U16, and U18 teams in A, and B divisions must roster a minimum 50% of its players from within its member club.

- 4.10.A. See CAHA Rules for definition of a player meeting PDR.
- 4.10.B. A team in violation of the PDR will be included in the NORCAL schedule and their games will count towards final standings but they will be ineligible for post-season playoffs including both NORCAL playoffs and CAHA playoffs.
 - 4.10.B.i. Any team that falls below the PDR requirement during the regular season must achieve the minimum level by December 31 and maintain that level for the remainder of the season to maintain their post-season eligibility.
- 4.10.C. A team may petition the NORCAL Board for an exception to the NORCAL PDR requirement to accommodate the following circumstances. No petition granted by the NORCAL Board creates an exception to CAHA PDR requirements:
 - 4.10.C.i. "A" or B players displaced from their previous club by that club not offering a team at age level
 - 4.10.C.ii. The previous club was officially merged with a new club and the new club is formally recognized by a vote of the NORCAL Board as a successor club
 - 4.10.C.iii. The previous club has ceased doing business
 - 4.10.C.iv. At the NORCAL Board of Directors' discretion

4.11. Tryouts

The tryout start dates for A and B teams for the next season will be set at the January NORCAL Board Meeting of the current season. Each club shall provide notice of tryout schedules and requirements to the NORCAL General Manager at its earliest opportunity so that information can be posted on the NORCAL web site.

4.12. Player Release

Players and their families undertake a serious obligation when they join a club. They must expect NORCAL and all other NORCAL clubs to recognize and honor the agreements they sign or otherwise enter into. After joining a team, a player wishing to change clubs must obtain a release from the club which he/she has joined (the "home club"). Nothing in these rules shall be construed to prevent a club from granting a release, but the home club ordinarily is under no obligation to approve a personal preference release.

- 4.12.A. Personal Preference Release: A release at the request of a player or family for any reason other than competitive advancement is a Personal Preference Release.
- 4.12.B. Process for Receiving A Personal Preference Release:

- 4.12.B.i. A player should request a Personal Preference Release from the home club. If a club and player agree to a Personal Preference release, notification by the club to NORCAL and removal from the releasing club's roster is sufficient to complete the release.
 - 4.12.B.ii. ONLY if the requested release is not granted, a player may apply for a Personal Preference Release to the NORCAL General Manager by completing the form available on the NORCAL web site and submitting a non-refundable application fee of fifty dollars (\$50).
 - 4.12.B.iii. If the home club fails to respond to an application for a contested Personal Preference Release within five days of being notified by the General Manager, the General Manager may grant or refuse the release without the home club's approval.
 - 4.12.B.iv. If the home club responds within five days by refusing to grant the release, the General Manager shall select and convene a review committee comprised of three persons: the General Manager, one disinterested club president, and one other member of the NORCAL Executive Board. The review committee shall issue its decision within ten days of the appeal. The decision of the review committee may be appealed by either the home club or the player to the full Board of Directors.
 - 4.12.B.v. A personal preference release granted by the NORCAL General Manager addresses only the roster status of the player. It has no effect on any financial relationship between the player and the home club.
- 4.12.C. Competitive Advancement Release. A player meeting the following conditions shall be granted a Competitive Advancement Release:
- 4.12.C.i. The released player moves directly to the roster of a receiving team at a higher competitive level not available at the home club.
 - 4.12.C.ii. The release does not put the home team in non-compliance with CAHA or NORCAL minimum roster size nor reduce the home team to less than one goaltender.
 - 4.12.C.iii. The player is in good financial standing with the home team. No NORCAL member club or association shall charge a player receiving a Competitive Advancement release any fees or dues exceeding reasonable charges for tryouts, ice time used, and merchandise purchased.
 - 4.12.C.iv. The coach and club president of the receiving team have signed the release application.
 - 4.12.C.v. The receiving team and the player recognize and confirm that the player must remain on the roster of the receiving team through the remainder to the NORCAL season and playoffs.
- 4.12.D. The following players are not eligible for a Competitive Advancement Release:
- 4.12.D.i. Players on a disbanded Tier team formed jointly between two or more clubs
 - 4.12.D.ii. PDR Players on a team relegated to a lower competitive level
 - 4.12.D.iii. Players playing above their USA Hockey age level or attempting to do so
 - 4.12.D.iv. U8 or U10 players.
- 4.12.E. Definition of Completed Release
- 4.12.E.i. The General Manager notifies the player, the home club, and the receiving club (if any) that a release is complete when all of the following conditions are met:
 - 4.12.E.ii. The appropriate release application is complete and the fee (if required) is paid.
 - 4.12.E.iii. The player has been legally and completely dropped from the home club roster.
 - 4.12.E.iv. The release is approved by the NORCAL General Manager
- 4.12.F. Penalties for Illegal Release
- 4.12.F.i. Any player who participates in a game or practice for a receiving team without a completed release in accordance with these rules is an ineligible player.
 - 4.12.F.ii. Head coaches are required to know the status of any player they allow to attend a practice or play in a game and are subject to suspension of up to two games for each game played or one game for each practice attended or by a player without a completed release.
 - 4.12.F.iii. Any club allowing a player to play in any game before that player has a completed release will forfeit all games in which that player participates.
 - 4.12.F.iv. A player who intentionally misrepresents his/her status to a receiving club will be suspended for no less than thirty days. Regardless of any misrepresentation by a player or family the receiving team is still subject to game forfeitures and head coach's suspensions for employing an ineligible player.

4.12.G. NORCAL will grant no player more than one release within a season.

4.13. Tampering

Tampering is the attempt to recruit a player to an "A," "B," team who is signed with or rostered on another "A," "B" team..

4.13.A. Upon receipt of a written complaint from a member club, the NORCAL President shall appoint a Review Committee comprised of presidents or designated representatives of three non-affected clubs. The Review Committee shall conduct a hearing to investigate the charges and determine whether or not in their judgment tampering has occurred. If they find tampering has occurred, they shall issue a penalty to the offending club and/or team. The penalty shall consist of payment by the offending club of a fine not to exceed the amount of dues and other reasonable fees lost for one season as a result of the tampering. Note that CAHA rules also provide for suspensions, fines, and/or other sanctions for individuals determined to have tampered.

4.13.B. Without express approval of the NORCAL Board, no team which was created initially as a Tier team or which held tryouts as a tier team shall be permitted to participate in NORCAL league play as an "A" or "B" team while retaining players from other NORCAL clubs who joined the club during the time the team intended to be a Tier team

4.14. Permitted Activities

4.14.A. Contacting a player who tried out for the current season but was not offered a roster spot who is playing for a team at a lower competitive level.

4.14.B. Transmitting material to persons who have requested them within the past six months or participated in a program during the most recent summer. Such transmissions may not include personalized notes or messages.

4.14.C. Inviting individuals to participate in tryouts or special activities (clinics, summer skates, tournament teams, or pickup) which do not occur between the first NORCAL pre-season game and the last CAHA State Championship game.

4.14.D. Advertising not otherwise prohibited by NORCAL, CAHA or USA Hockey.

4.15. Activities that indicate tampering

4.15.A. Offering to a prospective player any financial benefit not available to all players in the club.

4.15.B. Transmitting materials to the members of another club without prior consent from the club.

4.15.C. Initiating contact with players or family members from another club for the purpose of enticing a player to change clubs.

4.15.D. Advertising directed specifically at the membership of another member club. Allowing club members or employees, players, parents or any person acting in place of a player or parent to initiate or continue contact with a player or player's family when the purpose of the contact is to solicit or arrange for a position on a team other than from the player's current club.

4.15.E. Attending tryouts or practices of another club by a coach or club official without a specific permission from the club holding the tryout or practice.

4.16. Block Recruitment

Block recruitment is not allowed at "A," or "B" levels. Block recruitment has occurred when a team's roster contains four or more players who were rostered with another single NORCAL member club during the previous season.

4.16.A. A team or club in violation of the block recruitment rule will be included in the NORCAL schedule and their games will count towards final standings but they will be ineligible for post-season playoffs including both NORCAL playoffs and CAHA playoffs.

4.16.B. Exceptions, which must be approved by the NORCAL board, may be granted when the previous season's club does not offer a team at a particular age group, or in the case of a voluntary merger, or when a club is recognized by NORCAL as successor to a club that has ceased doing business, or at its discretion.

4.16.C. No coach, in his/her first year at a NORCAL club, may be an assistant or head coach of a AA, A, or B team with three or more players he/she coached at another NORCAL club the previous season, regardless of any block recruitment exception granted under rule 4.16.B of these rules.

4.17. Player Financial Standing

No later than April 15, NORCAL clubs may submit to the Roster Manager a list of players the club deems not in good financial standing. Clubs must notify each player on the list in writing before submitting the list to NORCAL. Lack of good financial standing shall be based on failure to pay dues and/or other costs associated with playing on a team in good

standing with NORCAL. Players not in good financial standing shall not participate in any NORCAL games, playoffs, tryouts, or other NORCAL events until they are determined to be in good financial standing.

- 4.17.A. No names will be accepted as not in good financial standing after April 15 of the season.
- 4.17.B. Any player who disputes a financial claim may appeal directly to the NORCAL General Manager who may allow the player to participate in tryouts and practices while the dispute is being resolved. A player so trying out may not be put on a NORCAL roster until he/she is in good financial standing
 - 4.17.B.i. Failure of a club to properly notify a player he/she is to be declared not in good financial standing is grounds for appeal by the player.
- 4.17.C. Only players in good financial standing may participate in the NORCAL Pre-Select Tryout Camp or in the NORCAL Playoffs. Players are considered in good financial standing unless the NORCAL General Manager is informed in writing seven days before the above listed events occur.

4.18. Player Movement within a Club

A player who has been properly rostered on a club's team may move to another team within that club no more than twice during a season provided all eligibility requirements and player movement requirements are met and the player is properly re-rostered.

- 4.18.A. A player may not play for more than one team within a club within a 48-hour period. A player violating this rule shall be considered an ineligible player for all games played with the second team during the 48-hour period in question. This 48-hour restriction does not apply to tournament rosters or dual rostered High School players.
- 4.18.B. During the regular season, clubs with more than one team competing for the same NORCAL championship must release any player before moving that player from one such team to another.

4.19. Player Movement Between Divisions

Player movement between divisions is governed by CAHA rules.

4.20. Hardship Goaltender Moves

If no rostered goaltender for a team is able to play in one or more games during the season as the result of an unforeseen emergency, the NORCAL General Manager may, upon written request, authorize the use of a substitute goaltender. The General Manager has final authority in determining if a substitution shall be permitted and has final authority in choice of the substitute. Failure by a club or team to make a good-faith effort to ameliorate the emergency is grounds for refusal to grant permission for an emergency goaltender.

- 4.20.A. All goaltender substitutions approved under this rule must be approved prior to the game in which the substitution is made. Such substitution should be noted on the score sheet submitted by the team to NORCAL. Copy of the authorization for use of a substitute goaltender must be kept in the team book with the copy of the score sheet.
- 4.20.B. Goaltender substitution by non-U8 players shall not be permitted for U8 teams.
- 4.20.C. Goaltender substitutions generally follow this sequence: Choice 1-- from same club at lower competitive level; Choice 2-- from same club lower age division; Choice 3--from other club lower competitive level; Choice 4--from other club lower age division

5.0 League Games and Schedule

5.1. NORCAL League Games

A NORCAL League game is a game arranged by the NORCAL Scheduler that is played in a club's provided ice slot, or extra ice slot required by NORCAL, between teams of two different NORCAL clubs or two teams from the same NORCAL club playing for the same NORCAL championship.

- 5.1.A. **Regular Season Games.** The NORCAL regular season shall consist of those games following the preseason and designated by the NORCAL Scheduler to be regular season games counting for playoffs.
- 5.1.B. **Preseason Games.** The NORCAL pre-season begins as determined by the NORCAL calendar and shall consist of exhibition games as scheduled for "A" and "B" teams by the league. The purpose of the pre-season is to provide a tune-up period for players and to allow league and club officials an opportunity to assess the competitive levels of the teams. Team declarations are regarded as recommendations during pre-season until final team placement by the NORCAL Placement Committee.
- 5.1.C. **Exhibition Games.** Occasionally, the NORCAL Scheduler may schedule exhibition games for the purpose of providing extra games in playing divisions with a short schedule or at the request of the involved clubs.

Exhibition games initiated by clubs must have ice slots provided outside the NORCAL required ice slots. Games designated in the schedule as exhibition games will not count towards final league standings.

5.1.D. **Completed Games.** No game shall count as a game unless at least two full periods of stop time are played or unless the game is forfeited under the playing rules.

5.1.E. **Forfeit Games.** The score of a forfeit game shall be recorded as 1-0.

5.2. Game Scheduling and Supervision

All games between teams competing as part of the NORCAL league schedule or which intend to compete as part of a NORCAL league schedule shall be scheduled by the NORCAL scheduler and be under the direction of the NORCAL General Manager and on-ice supervision of a certified and registered USA Hockey official. Teams that play most of their games outside the NORCAL schedule may request the Scheduler to designate a team official to schedule games with non-NORCAL teams directly.

5.2.A. No team registered by a NORCAL Club, except High School teams, made up predominantly of players rostered on NORCAL A or B teams will be allowed to participate in another organized league without formal approval of the full NORCAL Board before the team commits to participate in the other league. This restriction is intended to include tournament or special teams.

5.3. Standard League Game Conduct (X, P, G designated games)

In all NORCAL games, all teams shall comply with all USA Hockey, CAHA, and NORCAL rules. Under no circumstances will any rule be waived by consent of any participants, coaches, or game official. Failure to comply with all rules subjects teams to possible game forfeits and coaches to suspensions.

5.3.A. A ninety minute time slot for U12 and older (seventy-five minutes for U8 and U10) on clean ice shall be scheduled for games. No ice cuts are required between periods. (Note that a 75-minute slot may be used for U12 games at the scheduler's discretion.) No more than five minutes shall be placed on the clock prior to the first period for warm-ups. One minute shall be placed on the clock between each period. No more than one 30-second timeout per team per game will be allowed. Periods shall not be lengthened to take advantage of additional time that may be available.

5.3.B. For U12 and above, games shall be scheduled for three periods of 16 minutes stop time each.

5.3.B.i. For U10 games, the first two periods shall be sixteen minutes each. The third period shall be either sixteen minutes or half of the time remaining in the game slot, whichever is shorter.

5.3.C. At the beginning of the third period, if fewer than 30 minutes are left before the game curfew, the referee shall direct the timekeeper to place one-half of the remaining available minutes on the clock.

5.3.C.i. If at any time during the third period, the amount of time remaining prior to curfew is less than the time on the clock, following a stoppage of play the referee shall direct the timekeeper to place the number of minutes remaining for the slot on the clock and go to running time.

5.4. Score Sheets.

5.4.A. A score sheet shall be provided by the home team.

5.4.B. All coaches shall sign the score sheet under penalty of suspension and game forfeiture and provide their coaching level, card number, and effective date.

5.4.C. The score sheet shall list the NORCAL game number, team ID number, date, time, location, and curfew time.. The score sheet must list and account for all rostered players. FAILURE TO NOTE PERSONS SERVING A GAME SUSPENSION MAY RESULT IN FURTHER SUSPENSION FOR THAT PLAYER OR COACH IN ADDITION TO SUBJECTING THE TEAM TO PENALTIES FOR ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION OF A SUSPENDED PLAYER OR COACH.

5.4.C.i. Names of players absent or suspended should be lined out and noted as "injured," "absent," or "suspended" on all copies of the score sheet.

5.4.C.ii. The names of suspended coaches and numbers of suspended players should be written in the "notes" section of the score sheet.

5.4.D. After the game, the home team is responsible for posting the game score on the NORCAL web site within 24 hours of the game and for following the instructions of the NORCAL Score Sheet Auditor and General Manager for the data entry and/or disposition of the physical copy of the score sheet. Late, incomplete or improperly filled out score sheets may result in a \$25 fine assessed against the offending team and may not be accepted as game records.

5.4.E. Score sheets or data entry more than fourteen days late, in addition to any fine assessed, shall result in a warning to the president of the offending club. Late score sheets or data entry after a warning may not be

accepted. Only games for which a properly completed score sheet or data has been received and recorded by the Score Sheet Auditor or General Manager may be used for standings, to meet game requirements for team or individual playoff eligibility, or for statistical rankings.

- 5.4.F. "T" or "S" or Non-NORCAL Games: NORCAL teams playing non-NORCAL teams shall be responsible for submitting a properly completed score sheet to the Score Sheet Auditor and/or General Manager no later than the first Wednesday following the last game played for that trip.

5.5. Off-ice Officials

The home team shall provide qualified minor officials including scorekeeper, timekeeper, penalty box attendants and shot counters.

5.6. Insufficient Players to Begin Play

Games not played for lack of players to begin the game shall be referred to the NORCAL General Manager as a possible forfeit.

5.7. Teams Require Adult Coach

All NORCAL games require a minimum of one qualified coach on each team's bench.

5.8. League Standings

League standing shall be based on points earned by play or forfeit (2 points for wins, 1 point for ties, 0 points for losses) during regular season games which will normally include an equal number of games played among all teams in a playing division. In the event that there have not been an equal number of games played by each team, standing shall be determined by each team's percentage of possible points earned (total points earned divided by two points for each game played or forfeited).

5.9. Considerations for Scheduling Pre-Season and Regular Season Games

- 5.9.A. Games shall normally be scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays. Weekday games may be scheduled subject to the agreement of the affected club presidents or representatives.
- 5.9.B. "P" and "G" Games shall not be scheduled to start before 7 a.m. or after 11:30 p.m. U8 and U10 "P" and "G" games shall not be scheduled to start after 8:30 p.m.
- 5.9.C. Whenever possible, younger teams shall be scheduled for earlier time slots and older teams for later time slots.
- 5.9.D. Although ice slots submitted by a club will normally be used for that club's teams, slots submitted to NORCAL may be used by the Scheduler for any teams as necessary, subject to the approval of the designated home team club and the club whose ice slot is used. Home games may be played at rinks other than the home rink. An equal number of home and away games is not a scheduling requirement, but will be achieved whenever feasible.
- 5.9.E. If two games are scheduled for the same day, there must be at least four hours separation and there must not be more than one hour normal driving time between the rinks at which the games are scheduled.
- 5.9.F. **Blackouts:** No games may be scheduled after 2 p.m. on Halloween for U8, U10, or U12, or at any time on Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas/New Years break, Martin Luther King weekend, Presidents' Day weekend, or after Noon on Super Bowl Sunday.
- 5.9.G. No U18 or U16 games may be scheduled on designated SAT Saturdays prior to 5:00 p.m. or on the preceding Friday evenings.
- 5.9.H. No U14 A, U16A, or U18A, or High School games may be scheduled during NORCAL or CAHA Select Team Tryouts.
- 5.9.I. No games shall be scheduled to create a playing conflict for players participating in a NORCAL sponsored special tournament team.
- 5.9.J. Consideration should be given to scheduling at least two games (e.g., Saturday afternoon or evening and Sunday morning) when travel distances necessitate an overnight stay.
- 5.9.K. No schedule change shall be made in regular season games without the approval of the NORCAL General Manager.
- 5.9.L. No scheduling consideration shall be made for any NORCAL team or individual player for participation in any non-NORCAL league or event not already described in this rule.
- 5.9.M. Teams playing in NORCAL league schedules but not competing for NORCAL Championships will normally play each team in their division twice: home and home. Clubs fielding such teams are responsible for providing sufficient ice allocations.

5.10. Protective Equipment

Each player must properly wear as intended by the manufacturer USA Hockey approved protective equipment as specified by all applicable rules for the duration of each game while on the ice, players' bench, or penalty box. Referees will check out every player prior to each game. Players reporting to their team after the referee's checkout may not go on the ice until a supplemental check has been completed.

5.11. Team Book

Each team shall be responsible for having an accurate and complete team book available at every USAH or NORCAL sanctioned event. The contents and organization of the team book shall be governed by CAHA rules.

5.11.A.i. Tab V: Additional NORCAL Required Materials to be removed before CAHA playoffs.

5.11.A.i.a. Other documents that from time to time may be required by the General Manager or Roster Manager

5.11.B. Access to Team Book. The NORCAL President, NORCAL General Manager, or Roster Manager may inspect team books at any game, practice, or on request. During pre- and regular season, deficiencies must be corrected or a written plan of correction approved by the Roster Manager, within seven days of notification. Uncorrected deficiencies will result in forfeiture of games played with a non-compliant team book. Teams will not be allowed to participate in NORCAL Playoffs with team books determined to be deficient by the Roster Manager and General Manager.

5.11.B.i. Teams are advised to carry a copy of the team book to games and to maintain the originals to be used only for credentials check prior to tournaments or playoffs.

5.12. Game Forfeit for No Show/ Refusing to Play

All teams are required to be present for all regularly scheduled NORCAL games (including exhibition games). Games not played may result in forfeiture by the team(s) responsible for canceling. Teams that incur forfeits must

5.12.A. Pay ice costs for the full ice slot and allow non-offending team to occupy the ice (if available)

5.12.B. Pay for actual referee costs, including travel expenses

5.12.C. Pay a \$200 penalty assessed by NORCAL

5.12.D. If a team's absence was unavoidable as determined by the General Manager, the NORCAL fine in rule 5.12.C shall not apply and the game may be rescheduled.

5.12.E. Any team that refuses to start play or to continue play will be subject to the same penalties as a No Show, in addition to penalties provided by playing rules. Disagreement with on-ice or off-ice officials is never a valid reason for refusal to continue play.

5.13. Non-NORCAL Game Notices

At least seven days before a game is played against a non-NORCAL team, the NORCAL team should file a Non-NORCAL Game Notice with the General Manager. An online form is available on the NORCAL web site. All information on the form must be completed. The Non-NORCAL Game Notice must also be submitted by a NORCAL team hosting a game or tournament including non-NORCAL teams. Failure to comply with this rule may result in a \$100 fine.

5.13.A. NORCAL Game numbers must be acquired from the NORCAL scheduler for all games with non-NORCAL teams. Non-NORCAL games without assigned NORCAL game numbers cannot be used to establish team or player eligibility for NORCAL playoffs.

5.13.B. CAHA Travel Permit. Before a NORCAL team may travel outside the United States to play games or a tournament, the team must comply with all applicable CAHA and USA Hockey rules.

6.0 Penalties, Suspensions, Appeals, Protests

6.1. Minor, Major, Misconduct Penalties

Penalties called by on-ice officials are not subject to further review.

6.2. Game Misconduct Penalties

Game misconduct penalties called by on-ice officials are not subject to review except for procedural errors. The affected team's club president may make a request for review by the NORCAL General Manager. The request for review must include the specific procedural error alleged. The club president must provide a copy of the game score sheet containing the game misconduct penalty in question. Request for review must be made within 24 hours of the end of the game in question. The General Manager will decide if the game misconduct penalty stands or not. No other game result will be affected. The General Manager's decision in the review of game misconduct penalties is final.

6.3. Serving Suspensions

USA Hockey requires a player or coach receiving a game misconduct penalty to serve a suspension during the next game already scheduled. NORCAL suspensions may not be served in games between teams from the same club unless both teams are playing toward the same NORCAL, CAHA, or USA Hockey championship and the game was scheduled before the suspension was incurred.

- 6.3.A. Players, coaches, or teams receiving suspensions in the last game of the season may be subject and may subject the club to further sanctions through Supplementary Discipline. Any unserved suspensions shall be served by that player or coach during the first league game(s) (pre-season or regular season) of the following season, even if that person changes teams or clubs. A player or coach receiving a game misconduct penalty during a regular season game while playing or coaching for a team to which he/she is not normally assigned shall serve the suspension during the next regular season game of the team on which he/she is a member.
- 6.3.B. A player or coach serving a suspension must comply with the game sheet requirements specified in Rule 5.3.e above. A player or coach serving a game misconduct may, but is not required to, attend the game as a spectator. A coach or player serving a game misconduct may not be on or near the players' bench, may not serve as a minor official, and may not in any way give direction to his team from the stands or through a third party. Violation of this rule may result in supplementary discipline.
- 6.3.C. Any coach found to have the wrong player or coach serve a suspension will be subject to supplementary discipline, game forfeiture, and a minimum 3-game suspension.
- 6.3.D. If a player plays in a game for which he/she was suspended, that game shall be forfeited by the offending player's team. Additional games played following the game in which the imposed suspension was not served may also be forfeited following a hearing conducted under NORCAL procedures. Whether or not the additional played games are forfeited by the team, no games participated in improperly by the player owing the suspension may count toward that player's post-season eligibility.
- 6.3.E. In the event that any coach participates in a game while suspended, the NORCAL General Manager shall suspend the offending coach for the next two scheduled games following discovery of the illegal participation. (If the team does not have additional scheduled games, the General Manager shall designate the additional games to be served.) The games in which the suspended coach participated may be ruled a forfeit. The General Manager shall investigate the violation and may consider Supplementary Discipline.

6.4. Match Penalties

Match penalties shall be reported to the NORCAL General Manager within 48 hours of the end of the game. The head coach of the team that incurs a match penalty is responsible for making the required reports to NORCAL and any other entity required.

6.5. Exceeding Three Game Misconducts in a Season

If the number of accumulated game misconduct penalties and match penalties for a player or coach exceeds three within one season on any NORCAL team or teams, the player or coach shall be automatically subject to Supplementary Discipline.

6.6. Penalty Review Committee

The NORCAL Penalty Review Committee has jurisdiction over all players in all NORCAL clubs. The NORCAL Penalty Review Committee shall consist of a Chair appointed by the President (normally the NORCAL Vice President), the NORCAL General Manager, and at least two other members appointed by the President or the Committee Chair for a specific meeting. One of the other members must be president of a club not directly affected by the business of the Committee.

6.6.A. Conduct of Penalty Reviews

- 6.6.A.i. The Committee shall meet as needed at a time and place to be set by the Chair. Any penalties or discipline pending review shall be held prior to NORCAL or CAHA Playoffs.
- 6.6.A.ii. The hearings are closed and informal.
- 6.6.A.iii. Persons appearing before the Committee may be accompanied by parents/guardians, one coach, club president or representative, and one other person.
- 6.6.A.iv. Persons appearing before the Committee may submit written material and request witnesses in their support to submit written materials.
- 6.6.A.v. At the discretion of the Chair, video evidence may be submitted in advance of the hearing for review and, with prior approval of the Chair, may be shown at the hearing. The person requesting the video is responsible for providing viewing equipment.

- 6.6.A.vi. The Committee shall provide the person under review with a clear statement of the specific behavior being reviewed, the rule under which the behavior is being reviewed, and the possible outcomes of the hearing.
- 6.6.A.vii. The Committee shall issue a written decision within five days of the hearing and shall send a copy of that written decision using email addresses provided by the recipients to the following persons: the person under review, the club president of the person under review, and the parents/guardian of a player under review. After sending such email notice all players, coaches, clubs, or other persons involved in the decision are considered notified and the terms of the decision are immediately in effect. If the person under review does not provide a valid email address at or before the hearing, notification of the hearing result sent to the club president will be considered formal notification. Nothing in this rule alters in any way club responsibility for communication with its membership set out in rule 2.7.
- 6.6.A.viii. In the event a properly notified player or coach fails to attend a scheduled review, the Committee may conduct its review and issue a decision in his/her absence.

6.7. Game Protests

Game protests must be presented to the General Manager by Monday 9 p.m. for games played during the immediately preceding seven-day period (Monday through Sunday). A non-refundable fee of \$150 (one hundred and fifty dollars) must accompany a protest. Only protests for games that count toward final standings will be considered. Protests based on disagreement with a referee's judgment will not be accepted. All protests must be made by a club president or designated NORCAL representative if club president is not available.

- 6.7.A. Upon due consideration, the General Manager's decision shall be either "the game stands as played" or "the game will be replayed in its entirety or from the point of protest if practicable."

6.8. Supplementary Discipline

In addition to the suspension imposed under these rules, the NORCAL General Manager may, at his/her discretion, investigate any incident that occurs in connection with any game and may assess additional suspensions for any offense committed before, during the course of a game, or any aftermath thereof by a player, team official, or spectator whether or not such offense was penalized by the referee. Supplementary Discipline that is not the result of a Penalty Review Committee hearing must be initiated within fourteen days of the incident.

6.9. NORCAL Right of Appeal

- 6.9.A. USA Hockey members (players and immediate families, coaches, team and league officials) have recourse to the NORCAL, CAHA, and USA Hockey dispute resolution procedures. The full dispute resolution procedures are set out in the NORCAL Bylaws, CAHA rules, and Bylaw 10 of the USA Hockey Annual Guide.
- 6.9.B. Suspension or sanction issued by the NORCAL General Manager (except for suspensions for violations of playing rules or other specific areas designated under USA Hockey rules) or by the Penalty Review Committee may be appealed to the NORCAL Board as the first step of that dispute resolution procedure. An appeal must be filed within ten days of receipt of the Penalty Review Committee decision. The appeal must include the specific part of the decision disputed, and an applicable rule supporting the appeal. The appeal must be based on information used by the Penalty Review Committee and on facts in evidence at the original hearing.

7.0 Player and Spectator Decorum

7.1. Pre- and Post-Game Incidents

It is the responsibility of the home team to ensure the safety of the players, coaches, spectators, and officials before, during, and after games. Incidents occurring from the time the On-ice officials signal the players to begin pre-game warm-ups until the score sheet has been signed by the On-ice officials are governed by the USA Hockey Playing Rules. Altercations outside those boundaries may also be penalized by this rule.

- 7.1.A. Such incidents include but are not necessarily limited to: confrontations (verbal or physical) involving coaches, players, and/or spectators of opposing teams; confrontations (verbal or physical) involving coaches, players, and/or spectators with on-ice or off-ice officials
- 7.1.B. Any pre or post game altercation or disturbance, on or off the ice, shall be investigated, at the direction of the NORCAL General Manager, by the involved Clubs' Presidents and a written report shall be submitted to the NORCAL President and General Manager within 48 hours of the incident. This report shall include the names of all persons, players, coaches, and spectators involved or in the immediate area of the incident and steps taken by the Clubs to prevent recurrence of such incidents.
- 7.1.C. A police report will be made on any spectator who physically interferes with a player, coach, team or league official on or off the ice.
- 7.1.D. Penalties for Pre and Post Game Incidents

- 7.1.D.i. Anyone determined by the NORCAL General Manager to be an instigator in addition to any applicable USA Hockey sanctions will be suspended from all NORCAL activities (including games and practices) for 5 (five) games;
- 7.1.D.ii. The Head Coach of any team found to be involved will be suspended for two NORCAL games in addition to any applicable USA Hockey sanction. (Coaches may be sanctioned as a participant or instigator as well);
- 7.1.D.iii. All other participants will be suspended for three NORCAL games.
- 7.1.D.iv. Involved teams may be put on probation by the NORCAL General Manager. Any team on such probation, if found to be involved in a subsequent pre- or post-game incident, will be suspended from participation in the NORCAL schedule for the remainder of the season and not eligible for any playoffs or NORCAL sponsored tournament.

7.2. Leaving Penalty Bench or Players' Bench

Any player penalized under playing rule 625(a) (Leaving bench to join altercation) is automatically subject to supplementary discipline.

7.3. Spectator Decorum

Any spectator ejected from a NORCAL game by an on-ice, NORCAL team, or rink official must leave the rink immediately. With the aid of the score keeper, coaches of both teams, and managers of both teams, who all shall be required to cooperate with the referee, the referee shall note the incident, time and ejected person's identity on the score sheet and submit a report on the incident after the game. In addition to any supplementary discipline, any person so ejected will be suspended from all NORCAL games until a penalty review hearing is held or until thirty days have elapsed, whichever comes first. The Penalty Review Committee may impose additional suspension and/or a fine up to \$250 levied against the club associated with the ejected person. This rule will be enforced against NORCAL spectators ejected by other leagues when such ejection is similarly recorded on the game score sheet and reported to NORCAL.

7.4. Noisemakers

No spectator may use a noisemaker of any sort at any NORCAL game. Repeated offense during a game will result in the offender being asked to leave the game.

8.0 NORCAL Playoffs

8.1. NORCAL Playoffs

"A," and "B" playoffs shall be conducted to determine the first and second place teams from among the four qualifying teams at the U10, U12, U14, U16 ("A" only), and U18 ("A" only) levels at the end of regular season play. The General Manager shall issue rules governing playoff team qualification, each playoff format, and the playoff schedule of games.

8.2. Team Eligibility for Playoffs

From among all duly registered "A," and "B" teams having played at least ten NORCAL regular season games and twenty games overall as evidenced by the proper submission of completed score sheets, the top four ranked teams in each division shall advance to the playoffs. Team rankings shall be determined as specified in rule 5.8

- 8.2.A. If two or more teams are tied for end of season standings, ties will be broken in accordance with the newest USA Hockey District and National Championship Tournament Guidebook, with the further provision that in cases involving unbalanced schedules, winning percentage will be used rather than total points.
- 8.2.B. Teams registered to a club not in good standing or any team not eligible to participate in CAHA playoffs will not participate in NORCAL Playoffs. However, a team based outside California but participating in a NORCAL regular season division and with USA Hockey registration and in good standing shall NOT be excluded from NORCAL playoffs solely by reason of non-membership in CAHA.
- 8.2.C. In the case of ineligible teams for NORCAL or CAHA playoffs, the eligible team with the next best record will advance.
- 8.2.D. In the case of a B division with two groups, the General Manager may determine a cross-over format to allow one or more teams in both of the B divisions to compete for places in the NORCAL B Playoffs.

8.3. Player Eligibility for Playoffs

A player must have participated in at least six regular season ("G") games with the team with whom they are attempting to qualify and be in good financial standing to be eligible to participate in NORCAL playoffs.

8.3.A. Any player who is ineligible for participation in CAHA playoffs following his team's first three games of the NORCAL playoffs shall also be ineligible for participation in NORCAL playoffs.

8.4. Obligation to Participate in Playoffs

All teams selected to participate in NORCAL and CAHA playoffs are required to participate in all playoff games. Failure of a team to participate in playoffs may result in disciplinary action against the offending club and/or its members including barring the offending club's teams from participation in future playoffs.

8.5. CAHA Championships

State playoffs are conducted by CAHA and are governed by separate rules.

9.0 NORCAL Competitive Governance

9.1. NORCAL Team Placement

At a date determined by the NORCAL Board, the General Manager will present the final team placements to the full NORCAL Board. There shall be no late registration penalty for a team re-registering as a result of final team placement.

9.2. Placement Committee

The NORCAL Placement Committee is made up of the General Manager (chair), Coaching Director, Executive Committee Member at Large, and two other persons elected by the Board one of whom may not be either a club president or a head coach in either NORCAL travel or tier leagues during the season for which the placement is being made. The Placement Committee shall be responsible for assisting the General Manager in making all final placement decisions, including relegation, of teams into AA (at the direction of CAHA), A, or B leagues. Criteria for placement should include team declaration, performance of team in pre-season games, and league competitive balance.