

**GRAND VALLEY SOCCER ASSOCIATION  
(GVSA)  
RULES AND REGULATIONS  
April 11, 2005**

**SECTION A                    PURPOSE AND GENERAL STRUCTURE**

The Association intends to provide a competitive experience for those players whose skills, playing abilities and interests qualify them to participate. The Association is viewed as an experience for continuing the development of highly skilled players. Secondly, the Association hopes to provide a framework for competitive soccer in the Grand Rapids and Northwestern region of the Lower Peninsula.

1. The Board of Directors is the primary governing body of the Soccer Association of West Michigan (hereafter referred to as **GVSA**). The Board consists of five (5) elected directors, and up to two (2) appointed directors, who are the voting members. The Board shall also appoint nonvoting members who will function as the coordinators of coaching, officiating and the League's Premier Teams. The GVSA shall sponsor fall and spring seasons.
2. The GVSA is affiliated with the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association (**MSYSA**) and complies with all rules and regulations of the United States Youth Soccer Association (**USYSA**) and the United States Soccer Federation (**USFF**). The GVSA, through its affiliation with the MSYSA, shall provide insurance as part of player registration.
3. The GVSA, upon request, will provide copies of the Association's Constitutions and Bylaws to all first time participants.
4. Clubs may enter teams in the GVSA according to the following criteria:
  - a. Any participating club that submits registrations for four (4) or more teams in a season, in any age groups, will automatically have all such teams entered, provided:
    - i. The club is good standing with the GVSA.
    - ii. All players and coaches are in good standing with the GVSA, and meet all league requirements for the group into which they are entered (age, sex, licensing requirements for coaches)
    - iii. All such teams are deemed to be competitive by the Board
    - iv. In the event that there are insufficient teams at a given age group to form a division, the Board may, at their discretion, return any such registrations, or register the team(s) involved in the next older available age group.
  - b. Clubs submitting registrations for less than four (4) teams in a season may apply to the Board for entry of such teams.
  - c. New clubs may apply for admission to GVSA subject to the following procedures
    - i. A letter of application must be submitted stating the club's name, how it is organized, goals and purpose.
    - ii. All applications must be received 90 days prior to tryouts being held
    - iii. The Board of Directors must approve all applications. However, approval may not be withheld on the grounds that there are existing clubs in the same area as the applicant's club.
    - iv. All new clubs will automatically be subject to the same procedures as other clubs, as listed in Sections A.4.a and A.4.b above.
5. The GVSA requires that open tryouts be held to select all member teams every year; all

players must have an opportunity to try out for a team:

- a. Players are urged to try out for clubs with which they have a natural affiliation (community or school related. Clubs may place restrictions (e.g. geographic area served) on who may try out for their teams, provided these are consistent with the purposes stated by the club when applying for admission into the GVSA. No player meeting a club's try out criteria may be excluded from trying out for that club's teams.
- b. Clubs may not actively solicit participation at their tryouts from players who played the previous season on a GVSA team for a different club, unless at least one of the following conditions is true:
  - i. The club in question has ceased to function, or no longer belongs to the GVSA.
  - ii. The player has moved, or no longer meets the criteria for membership in his club.
  - iii. The player's club has scheduled no tryouts for the player's age group.
  - iv. The player's club has never fielded a team in the player's age group.
  - v. The player has a signed waiver from his club. Such waivers may not limit a player's ability to try out for another club in any way, including his/her present club.
  - vi. The player was not chosen at his/her club's tryouts for his/her age group.

Note that any player may try out for any club, of his/her own volition. Publicly advertising a tryout is not "active solicitation".

- c. Age group tryouts are to be performed in a fair and equitable manner.
- d. Players who are not chosen should be informed of the reasons for their not being selected. Clubs must notify players promptly as to whether they have been accepted for a team or not. In the event that such notification is not made within fourteen (14) days from the end of the club's tryouts for an age group, the player may consider that he/she has not been selected.
- e. No summer tryout shall be held before the last regularly scheduled game of the spring season, unless the age group(s) in question is not currently playing in the Spring Season. No fall tryout shall be held before the last regularly scheduled game of the fall Season, unless the age group(s) in question is not currently playing in the fall season. All tryouts are subject to MSYSA rules, which do not allow tryouts prior to June 15.
- f. Tryouts should include assessments of individual skills and performance in game simulations.
- g. The GVSA will recommend tryout dates for GVSA club teams.
- h. A Premier Club as defined as a club that will enter teams into the MSPSL on a regular basis, starting at the U13 age group. These teams will then continue to play in the MSPSL, or may progress to playing the Midwest Regional League. GVSA recognizes the need to form teams at a higher level than individual community clubs can adequately do. For this purpose GVSA may designate clubs as Premier Clubs, subject to the following regulations:
  - i. All Premier Coaches (defined as Head Coaches actively coaching MSPSL teams) must have a USSF National Coaching License ("C or higher) or its equivalent by the Fall 2007 season. To prevent abuses a coach may not be listed as a Head or Assistant Coach for more than two teams.
  - ii. Any Premier Club must be in good standing with the MSPSL, meet any additional MSPSL requirements, and are responsible for any fees and fines set by the MSPSL.
  - iii. No player or Team Official in bad standing with GVSA may participate in the Club's Activities, including serving on the Club's Board of Directors or as an employee of the club.

- iv. All Premier Teams shall enter the MSYSA State Cup.
- v. All Premier Clubs shall endeavor to form a team for play in all MSPSL age groups (i.e. they must appoint a Coach and have a published tryout) from U13 through U18. A Premier Club may be formed for the purpose of Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, or both.
- vi. All Premier teams sponsored by GVSA must consist of least 51% of players who either played for the Premier Club the prior year, or who played in GVSA the prior year. This not only ensures that Premier Clubs are for GVSA players, it prevents teams from moving to other clubs *en masse*.
- vii. All Premier Clubs shall respect GVSA's rules regarding player solicitation, even for teams that are playing in other USSF leagues (e.g. MCL and SYL).
- viii. All Premier Clubs shall have participated in GVSA for a minimum of two years prior to being considered, and shall field teams that could participate in at least 80% of the MSPSL's available age groups the following year. It is expected that the Premier Clubs shall enter all younger (U12 and below) teams for play in GVSA.
- ix. GVSC will be "grandfathered" in, but is expected to meet these standards within two years (2006/2007 Season).
- x. The West Michigan Fire and/or Alliance FC shall be recognized as Premier Clubs, as long as any new teams they organize be sponsored by GVSA. In addition any existing teams shall be sponsored by GVSA if it does not jeopardize their placement within the MSPSL. Both clubs shall also have two years to meet these standards.
- xi. The GVSA Board of Directors may revoke a Premier Club's status, place it on a probationary status, or set conditions to be met for violation of these rules and standards. A Premier Club may apply for an extension or waiver of any of these standards provided it shows a plan for remediation of the shortcoming(s).
- xii. MSPSL teams shall only be formed by publicly advertised, open tryouts. Any player may participate in any such tryout. Member clubs are encouraged to ask their better players to attend,
- xiii. Clubs belonging to the GVSA are urged not to schedule tryouts which conflict with the GVSC Premier Team tryouts.
- xiv. Any GVSA team that advanced to the Quarter Final stage or beyond in the previous year's State Cup will be sponsored for play into the MSPSL directly by GVSA, upon request from the Team's Club.

6. The GVSA may sponsor other Premier teams affiliated with non-Premier clubs, subject to the following criteria:

- i. Any such team must be sponsored by a GVSA member club, who shall be responsible for any fees and fines set by the MSPSL. In addition, teams may not switch sponsoring clubs without the consent of both clubs and the GVSA Board of Directors. If the sponsoring clubs ceases to exist a team may switch sponsorship with the approval of the GVSA Board of Directors.
- ii. All Head Coaches must have a USSF "D" Coaching License. To prevent abuses a coach may not be listed as a Head or Assistant Coach for more than two teams. Staring at the U15 age the Head Coach must have a USSF "C" License or its equivalent.
- iii. Any Premier Teams must be in good standing with the MSPSL, and is responsible for following their Rules and Procedures. The Sponsoring Club shall be responsible for registering the team with the MSPSL, and providing GVSA with a copy of the team's roster.
- iv. No player or team official in bad standing with GVSA may participate.
- v. The team shall enter the State Cup competition.
- vi. Clubs wishing to have teams sponsored by GVSA must submit a letter of application to GVSA by February 1 of the year preceding the first year of play. In the inaugural year this deadline shall be May 1, 2005.

- vii. After preliminary approval, teams must hold their tryouts in accordance with MSPSL rules. All tryouts must be open and advertised to all GVSA players.
  - viii. The GVSA Board of Directors will approve or reject all such applications at its discretion. It may appoint a committee to review such applications and recommend their approval or denial. It is anticipated that no more than two teams per gender will be approved for play in the U13 and U14 age groups, and no teams will be approved for older age group play if they have to start at age U15 or older. Teams will be considered on their merits, which are not necessarily its win/loss record the prior season.
  - ix. Approval may be withdrawn if the team fails to sign at least 51% of its players from the prior year (this is to ensure the teams we approve actually have the players they did when granted approval)
  - x. While sponsorship in succeeding years primarily depends on these standards being met, a team may have its sponsorship withdrawn for poor play (inability to advance from the lowest Division).
  - xi. All Premier teams sponsored by GVSA must consist of least 2/3 of players who either played for the team the prior year, or who played in GVSA the prior year.
  - xii. All Premier Teams shall respect GVSA's rules regarding player solicitation, even for teams that are playing in other USSF leagues (e.g. MCL and SYL).
  - xiii. All sponsoring Clubs shall have participated in GVSA for a minimum of two years prior to having teams considered.
  - xiv. The GVSA Board of Directors may revoke a Premier Team's status, place it on a probationary status, or set conditions to be met for violation of these rules and standards. A Premier Team may apply for an extension or waiver of any of these standards provided it shows a plan for remediation of the shortcoming(s).
7. The GVSA will organize the Leagues into appropriate age and gender groups. In as much as possible, they will follow USSF age groupings whenever possible. However, the GVSA may choose to organize the age divisions differently in order to group them more efficiently for league play. In particular, one year age groupings (e.g. Under 10, Under 11, Under 12, etc.) will be utilized whenever it is feasible to do so. When there are more than 8 teams in an age group, the League may divide the teams into two different divisions. Teams may apply for one division or the other. The League will assign each team to a division based upon:
- a. The team's previous year's record.
  - b. The team's player roster.
  - c. The club's performance history.
8. When feasible, a minimum of eight (8) games will be scheduled for teams in the Spring and Fall League.
9. All member clubs are responsible for the identification of playing sites in their communities where GVSA games will be played. Maps and directions for these sites should be forwarded to the Association's Administrator. The Association will then prepare a master list of all playing fields and publish this on the league's website.

## **SECTION B COACHES, REFEREES AND MANAGERS**

1. Member clubs will be responsible for selecting coaches for their own teams. It is the intent of the GVSA that all head coaches will be required to possess a minimum of a USSF "E" License or its equivalent. Coaches who have not yet received an "E" License are expected to complete their certification by the end of the first season in which they coach, in order to continue to participate as head coaches for GVSA teams. Exceptions to this must be approved by the GVSA Board.

2. The GVSA asks its member clubs, when selecting a coach, to give attention to four broad areas of coaching qualifications. These are: soccer background; formal soccer coach training; suitability to work with the age group; and communications/teaching ability. All clubs should annually evaluate their coaches.
3. Coaches are responsible for their team's conduct at practices and games. Coaches who do not adhere to the GVSA Code of Conduct may be suspended by the Board after investigation by the Disciplinary Council. Coaches dismissed by the Association may not serve in any official capacity with any team in the Association or in any other capacity with the Association until the term of the suspension is completed. If the dismissal is permanent, the individual is permanently banned from participation in the Association. Coaches are also expected to help the referees discipline unruly fans: Parents and others are not allowed to coach or make derogatory remarks to players or referees.
4. Member clubs must have one USSF registered referee for each team they sign up.
5. Every team will have an official Team Manager who is responsible for scheduling, field preparation (home games), communications, equipment and other tasks assigned by the coach. Names, addresses and phone numbers of Team Managers will be provided to the League Registrar at the time of team registration.
6. The Team Manager should collect all GVSA and team fees and pay referees at home games.
7. The Team Manager is responsible for submitting to their Club Representative the final team rosters, birth certificates (of first time players), a current 1x1.5 inch color photo of each player, and all fees.

**SECTION C PLAYERS, REGISTRATION, TRAVEL**

1. All Association players must register with the MSYSA (USYSA). Registration information must be submitted to the GVSA registrar. The deadlines for registration are dictated by the Association and the MSYSA. These are:

|        | Tryouts<br>(On or after) | Commitment<br>Fee | 1st 13<br>Players | Final<br>Players               |
|--------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Fall   | 6-15                     | 7-14              | 7-28              | Last game of the Fall Season   |
| Spring | 6-15                     | 1-14              | 1-28              | Last game of the Spring Season |

The deadline for the commitment fee is important for a timely game schedule. The Commitment Fee shall be:

|                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| U9 and U10 Teams    | \$150 per year |
| U11 and U12 Teams   | \$175 per year |
| U13 and older Teams | \$200 per year |

The fee shall be the same regardless of whether a team plays in the Fall, Spring or Both seasons. The fee includes the cost of registering all players with the MSYSA.

2. All players, upon registering for the first time with the GVSA, must furnish the Association with a birth certificate (copy) to be retained by the Association Registrar. All players must also fill out a GVSA registration form, every year they register. All players will get a USYSA identification card that is kept by the coach or team manager.
3. Age is defined by a player's age on July 31 (e.g. a player who is under 14 years of age on July 31 may play on a U-14 team that fall and the following spring). Players in the U7 and younger age groups may not register for any team in GVSA.
4. ID cards will be checked by the referee before every League game. Unregistered players

may not play. Players with a missing pass card may play, subject to USYSA Rules and Regulations.

5. If an ineligible player plays, or if a coach knowingly permits an ineligible player to participate in a GVSA sanctioned game, the player and/or coach will be suspended for a period to be determined by the Board. Players are ineligible if they were sent off in the previous game, if they are not registered, or if they were illegally registered (age or gender violation).
6. Players may be on only one GVSA roster; but players are permitted and encouraged to play in other developmental soccer programs and teams in their communities.
7. Players who are selected due to their ability and skills may perform with a team in an older age group. Players may not under any circumstances, play for teams in younger age groups, with the following exception:
  - a. In the Fall Season only, a U14 Boys team may roster up to two (2) U15 players, subject to the following conditions:
    - i. The players are in 8<sup>th</sup> grade or below or have no High School soccer team available (e.g. school has no soccer program, or player is home-schooled
    - ii. The club rostering the player provides documentation of this
    - iii. The player will automatically be removed from the U14 team upon conclusion of the Fall season, and is free to move to any age eligible team within GVSA for the Spring season without penalty.
  - b. In the Spring season only, a U14 Girls team may roster up to two (2) U15 players, subject to the same conditions as in Section C.7.a
8. Players who wish to play for a GVSA team and a MSPSL team must submit the MSYSA form requesting dual participation. The form must be signed by both coaches. Players must name the MSPSL team as their team of first priority. As dual participation is intended to provide a transition to a premier team, players may not apply for dual participation two years in a row.

#### **SECTION D TEAM & ROSTER LIMITS**

1. Team rosters will consist of a maximum of eighteen (18) players (fourteen (14) for U-11 and U-12 teams, eleven (11) for U-9 and U-10 teams) and no fewer than thirteen (13) (ten (10) for U-11 and U-12 teams, eight (8) for U-9 and U-10 teams) players. If the permanent roster size of a team falls below the player minimum, the team will be required to bring the roster size up to the minimum by adding qualified players. Any team losing a player for the season for any reason must notify the League Registrar as soon as possible. The minimum roster size is exclusive of any players registered for Dual Participation: they do not count towards the minimum roster size. Additionally, no GVSA team may have more than two (2) players on their roster at any time, that are registered for Dual Participation.
2. Players may be registered for tournament play after the spring season (see Section C). These players can only play in tournaments.

#### **SECTION E RULES, GAME PROCEDURES**

1. All GVSA games will be played according to the FIFA "Laws of the Game", as modified by the USSF for youth players. USSF referees and (to all but the youngest divisions) linesmen will be assigned, using the diagonal system of control. The dual system is not permitted.
2. Before every game, both coaches will provide the referee with a team roster and ID cards for all players and coaches. The home team coach will also provide a stamped envelope addressed to the GVSA statistician. Players without ID cards may play, subject to USYSA rules. Referees will return the cards of all players to the coach or team manager after check and prior to the start of the game; they will send the game report to the league statistician.

A maximum of three (3) coaches and assistant coaches may be on the team side of the field during a game. All must possess valid pass cards.

3. Referees and linesmen must be by the home team, before the start of the game, according to the fee schedule set by the Association.
4. All players are entitled to a minimum amount of playing time for each regularly scheduled GVSA, as follows:
  - i. U9 and U10 aged players are entitled to play a minimum of one-half (1/2) of each game
  - ii. U11 and U12 players are entitled to play one-third (1/3) of each game
  - iii. The only exceptions to this rule are for players serving league suspensions, injuries and players subject to reasonable team discipline, which the coach shall note on the game report prior to the start of the game. Reasonable team discipline included missed practices.
  - iv. Coaches may not shorten a player's playing time in one game, and make it up in another.
  - v. This policy applies to all players, including goal keepers.
  - vi. It is not the job of the Referee or GVSA to enforce this rule. Breaches of the rule shall be addressed initially to the player's club. Trifling breaches of the rules are not cause for complaint, unless they occur on a regular basis.

#### **SECTION F DISCIPLINE (CAUTIONS AND SEND-OFFS)**

The GVSA expects its players and coaches to conduct themselves within the rules of the Association, the principles of fair play, and good sportsmanship. In accordance with the MSYSA Rules and Regulations:

1. Players, coaches or managers being sent off (red card) in a USSF sanctioned game will be suspended for his/her team's next scheduled game, if the red card was for two cautions or denying an obvious scoring opportunity by handling the ball; for serious foul play, violent conduct or abusive/foul language, the suspension is for two games. Violent conduct before or after the game (no red card shown) will also result in a two game suspension.
2. Players threatening, by word or sign, another player, coach, spectator, referee, team or league official shall be suspended for one game. The penalty for coaches is a two game suspension; repeat offenders are suspended for at least four games and must appear before the GVSA Board.
3. Players pushing or striking a coach or manager shall be suspended a minimum of one year. The penalty for coaches, managers and other team officials is a minimum suspension of one year and an appearance before the GVSA Board. All abuse and assault of referees shall be turned over to the Michigan Referee Committee for disciplinary action.
4. Fans and others, who may reasonably be construed to be associated with a team, shall also be subject to the jurisdiction of the GVSA. Coaches and team officials are responsible for those who, in the opinion of the disciplinary authority, are team supporters.
5. Players, coaches, managers or team officials who alter a roster, falsify a birth date or affix a wrong photo to an ID card shall receive a seven year suspension.
6. Players, coaches, managers or team officials receiving three cautions during a playing season shall be suspended for one game. Anyone sent off twice during a season must appear before the GVSA Disciplinary Committee before he/she can play again. The hearing must be requested by the offender.

7. Any team receiving 3 red cards in one game, or 5 red cards in a season, or 5 cards (red or yellow) in one game, or 10 cards (red or yellow) in a season, must appear before the GVSA Disciplinary Committee. Until the hearing, the team shall play under probation.
8. Any coach allowing a suspended player to play, shall be suspended for two games. The team using the suspended player shall forfeit the game.

#### **SECTION G GAME PROTESTS**

Protests must be submitted to the Vice President within 24 hours of the conclusion of a game. Only factual errors may be protested, not judgment calls.

#### **SECTION H UNIFORMS**

1. All players must be in full uniform: shirt, shorts, socks, shin guards and shoes. The home team must wear white or some other light colored jersey and light colored socks. The visiting team must wear dark colored jerseys and dark colored socks. Goalkeepers shall wear colors that distinguish them from all other players and referees.
2. Numerals, at least six inches in height, must be worn on the back of each player's jersey. Numbers on goalkeepers' uniforms are optional on either the front or back or both. Captains should wear arm bands.

#### **SECTION I HOME TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The home team is responsible for securing the playing field and for assuring that it is playable and meets minimum playing dimensions (50 x 100 yards; 40 x 70 yards for U-11 and U-12; 35x60 yards for U-9 and U-10). If a field is not playable, the referee must issue a report to the league administrator, who then has the authority to rule if the game will be forfeited.
2. The home team must provide a ball that satisfies the laws of the game, pay the referees before the game commences.
3. The winning team, or the home team in the event of a tie, must report the score to the GVSA statistician via the GVSA voice mail, or via e-mail within 24 hours of the conclusion of the game.
4. The home team must have a first aid kit, or certified trainer, at the game site.

#### **SECTION J SCHEDULES, CANCELLATIONS & FORFEITS**

1. Whenever feasible, the Administrator will schedule eight games each in the Fall and Spring. For acceptable reasons and with permission of the Administrator, a game may be rescheduled: both teams must agree on the date and time and the coach initiating the change must inform the referee coordinator. A game cannot be cancelled unless it has been rescheduled.
2. The GVSA requires that when lightning is observed by the referee during any game, the game must be suspended until the danger has passed or terminated. If a game is terminated because of weather and one half of the game has been completed, the game will be considered complete and the score at the time of the suspension will be recorded as the final result. If a one half of the game has not been completed and the game is terminated, the game will be rescheduled and replayed. The home team must notify the Administrator of the new date, time and site.
3. If a team forfeits a scheduled game because it does not want to play the opposing team, it

must post a \$250 performance bond at the beginning of the next season. If the team refuses to play again during that season, it will forfeit the bond. Otherwise, the bond will be paid back.

4. In the event a game is forfeited, the team's club shall be fined \$50. In the event that a game is unplayed for any other reason both clubs shall be fined \$50.
4. Teams should not play without a certified referee. In emergencies, others may referee, if both teams agree.

#### **SECTION K PRACTICE AND SCRIMMAGE FREQUENCIES**

Teams may practice as frequently as they wish. Teams may have as many inter-squad scrimmages as they wish. A scrimmage is defined as a game like situation for which there are no sanctioned referees and where the final score is not recorded.

#### **SECTION L STANDINGS AND CHAMPIONSHIPS**

1. A point system will be used to determine the standings of teams in each age division. A win is 3 points, a tie 1 point, a loss 0 points.
2. At the conclusion of the GVSA season, the team which has accumulated the most points in each Division shall be declared the champion of its division. If two or more teams are tied on the basis of points earned the tie breakers will be as follows: head to head teams involved in the tie, goal differential (up a maximum of four goals per game), goals against, then goals for; if the teams are still tied they are co champions.
3. The GVSA will not award commemorative trophies or patches; however, individual teams may purchase awards for their players.

#### **SECTION M DUE PROCESS**

Disciplinary action taken by the Vice President may be appealed to the Board within 7 days of the notification of the action taken.

In case of trouble with another team or club, a team may contact the Board and describe the problem. The Board will communicate its decisions via the club representatives and/or the individual coaches concerned. If the Board reprimands a team and if the problem is not corrected, the offending team may be removed from the GVSA.