

2026 Competition Rules & Regulations

SINGLE TABLE:

There are sixteen (16) Teams competing in the 2026 League season:

Angel City FC
Bay FC
Boston Legacy FC
Chicago Stars FC
Denver Summit FC
Gotham FC
Houston Dash
Kansas City Current
North Carolina Courage
Orlando Pride
Portland Thorns FC
Racing Louisville FC
San Diego Wave FC
Seattle Reign FC
Utah Royals FC
Washington Spirit

REGULAR SEASON:

Each Team plays a thirty (30) Game Regular Season schedule, consisting of fifteen (15) home and fifteen (15) away Games.

NWSL PLAYOFFS:

Single-Elimination Format

WHO QUALIFIES:

At the conclusion of the Regular Season the top eight teams will qualify for the playoffs, with all playoff teams playing in the opening round. See below for full details on seeding and the playoff bracket:

In both the quarterfinal and semi-final rounds the higher seeded team will host, unless venue availability does not permit in which the lower seed may host. In the first round (quarterfinals), the Teams will compete as follows: 1 v 8 seed; 2 v 7 seed; 3 v 6 seed; and 4 v 5 seed. After the conclusion of the first round, the teams will compete in the second round (semifinals) as follows: the winner of the 1 v 8 seed game will play the winner of 4 v 5 seed game, and the winner of the 2 v 7 seed game will play the winner of the 3 v 6 seed match. The winners of each semi-final game will compete in a Championship game to decide the winner of the 2026 NWSL Championship.

If the score is tied after 90 minutes of play in any playoff game, two 15-minute extra time periods will be played in their entirety, followed by a penalty shoot-out, if necessary.

TEAM-STANDINGS TIE-BREAKING PROCEDURES:

The Team awarded the highest position in the standings will be the Team with the greatest number of points. In the event that two or more Teams finish the Regular Season with an equal number of points, the following system will be used to break the tie:

1. Goal differential
2. Most total wins
3. Most goals scored
4. Head-to-head results (total points accumulated)
5. Head-to-head most goals scored
6. Least Disciplinary Points Accumulated
 - a. Yellow card: 1 point
 - b. Indirect red card (as a result of two (2) yellow cards): 3 points
 - c. Direct red card: 4 points
 - d. Yellow card and direct red card: 5 points
 - i. Only one of the above point totals shall be applied to a Player in a single Game.
7. Coin Flip (2 teams)/Drawing of lots (3+ teams)

NOTE: Each step in the tiebreaker process will fully determine standings (assuming no ties). For example, if Teams A, B, C, and D tie on points, and Team A has a goal differential of +5, Team B is +3, Team C is +3 and Team D is +1, the standings will be 1st Team A and 4th Team D. With Teams B and C still tied, they would move to the next Tiebreaker (most wins), which would settle which of B and C is ranked 2nd and 3rd.

POINT SYSTEM:

Teams will receive three points for a win, one point for a tie and zero points for a loss.

OFFICIALS:

All officials for all NWSL games will be trained, assigned and evaluated by PRO (Professional Referee Organization).

GAME CLOCK:

Time will be kept per the International Football Association Board Laws of the Game. The official game time for all Games will be managed on the field by the Referee. Allowance is made in either period (first half, second half, and if applicable, first extra time period and second extra time period during Playoff Games) for all lost time through substitutions, assessment and/or removal of injured Players, wasting time, disciplinary sanctions, VAR reviews, medical stoppages permitted by competition rules (e.g., 'hydration' breaks), or any other cause, including any significant delay to a restart. Allowance for time lost is at the discretion of the Referee. The fourth official indicates the minimum additional time decided by the Referee at the end of the final minute of each half. The additional time may be increased by the Referee but not reduced.

Each stadium must have a permanent, electronic scoreboard that displays Home Team and Visiting Team scores, period, and a game clock. The stadium clock will display the time in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the 2026 NWSL Operations Manual.

For statistical purposes, the minutes for goals, substitutions, yellow cards, etc., will be listed from the first minute until the 90th minute. A goal scored at 15 minutes 10 seconds will be listed as having been scored in the 16th minute. Events occurring during stoppage time are indicated with a “+” sign and the extra minutes in a superscript. For example, a goal scored in the third minute of first half stoppage time is identified as happening at “45+³” (not 48+).

GAME DAY ROSTERS AND SUBSTITUTIONS:

Eighteen (18) to twenty (20) Eligible Players from the Team’s official Roster must be selected for the Team’s Game Roster. The NWSL will consider exceptions to this requirement in cases where a player is injured or otherwise becomes unavailable within forty-eight (48) hours of a scheduled match.

Teams are allowed a maximum of five Normal Substitutions per game to be used over the course of three opportunities, excluding half-time and match delays, but including hydration breaks.

The NWSL will continue to implement the IFAB “additional permanent concussion substitutions protocol” in the 2026 season. This protocol permits teams to make one concussion substitution during a match to replace a player with a concussion or suspected concussion, regardless of the number of normal substitutions already used. If a team elects to use a concussion substitution, its opponent will receive an additional substitution and opportunity.

CAUTIONS AND SUSPENSIONS:

A Player will be suspended for one Regular Season Game upon receiving their fifth yellow card in a Regular Season Game, regardless of the nature of the infraction which resulted in them being awarded the yellow card. A second suspension of one Regular Season Game would result after the awarding of an additional three cards. See below for full Yellow Card accumulation suspension totals:

- Player accrues five (5) yellow cards: suspension from their next Regular Season Game.
- Player accrues additional three (3) yellow cards after having been fined and suspended for five (5) cards: suspension from their next Regular Season Game.
- Player accrues additional three (3) yellow cards after having been fined and suspended for a second Game: suspension from their next Regular Season Game.
- Player accrues additional two (2) yellow cards after having been fined and suspended for a third Game: suspension from their next Regular Season Game.
- For each two (2) yellow cards thereafter suspended from their next Regular Season Game.

Suspensions and fines will be levied against Team Staff for yellow card accumulations during the Regular Season as follows:

- Team Staff accrues three (3) yellow cards: Fine and suspension from their next Regular Season Game.
- For each two (2) yellow cards thereafter, Club Staff will be fined and suspended from their next Regular Season Game.

Notes on Yellow Card Accumulation and Suspensions:

Players who are sent-off, having been issued a second caution, are deemed to have been issued a red card. Neither yellow card will count towards the Player's yellow card accumulation.

Red card and yellow card accumulation suspensions collected in Regular Season Games will be served in a Player's or Team Staff's next Regular Season Game. Any Suspensions for yellow card accumulation earned in a Player's or Team Staff's last Regular Season Game or Challenge Cup Game will not carry over into Playoff Games; however, the applicable fine will be collected in the current season.

Any Player or Team Staff member who is awarded a red card in their last Game (Regular Season Game or Playoff Game) will serve the one (1) Game Suspension during their next Game (whether it's during a Playoff Game, NWSL Championship, or in the next Regular Season Game of the following season).

GOOD BEHAVIOR INCENTIVES:

Players and Technical Staff members have the opportunity to decrease their yellow card accumulation total through "Good Behavior Incentives." Players and Technical Staff members will each have a separate process in order to have a yellow card deducted from their season total.

Players:

- Players will have 1 Yellow Card deducted from their accumulation total every 5 games they appear consecutively without getting a Yellow Card/RC or Supplemental Discipline
- Yellow Cards may be deducted no more than 3x per season
- Players must play at least 10:00 minutes of gametime exclusive of stoppage time (enter prior to 80:00 and play 10:00+ minutes or start and play 10:00+ mins) for a game to count towards their consecutive Yellow Card/RC deduction streak
- Yellow Card total cannot drop below 0 (consecutive games count begins once player has picked up their first yellow card)

Technical Staff:

- Coaches will have 1 Yellow Card deducted from their accumulation total every 10 games they appear consecutively without getting a Yellow Card/RC or Supplemental Discipline
- Yellow Card may be deducted no more than 2x per season
- Yellow Card total cannot drop below 0
- Count will not start until first Yellow Card is received (consecutive games count begins once coach/staff member has picked up their first yellow card)

RED CARD APPEALS

Teams that submit a bond prior to the start of the regular season are eligible to make up to two unsuccessful Red Cards appeals during the course of the 2026 League Season. Players must provide written consent for any Team's Red Card appeal to advance to the Independent Review Panel (IRP).

There are three potential outcomes for any Red Card that is appealed by a Team to the IRP:

- 1) Successful Appeal □ Discipline Rescinded

- 2) Unsuccessful Appeal, Not Frivolous □ Discipline Unchanged, Loss of 1 Appeal
- 3) Unsuccessful Appeal, Deemed Frivolous □ Discipline Doubles, Loss of All Appeals for this season and next season

ONLY THE CAPTAIN

The NWSL will continue to participate in the trial of the “Only the Captain” protocol that has been implemented by the IFAB. The objective of the protocol is to promote cooperation between the captains and the referee, increase respect between teams and officials and prevent mobbing or crowding around officials.

This protocol is a tool for referees to utilize in specific situations within games. The referee will initiate the “Only the Captain” protocol by making an “X” with their arms above their head and then stepping back 4 meters from the surrounding players. At this point, only the captain from each team may approach the referee to get an explanation of a major decision within the game.

In the event a team captain is a goalkeeper, a vice captain may be nominated during pregame to fill this role. Otherwise, non-captains that enter this 4-meter area will receive a yellow card for dissent by action. If more than one player from a team enters the captain-only zone, at least one player must be issued a yellow card.

[More information on The IFAB’s Only the Captain Protocol is available here at TheIFAB.com](https://www.theifab.com/only-the-captain-protocol)

TEAM PROTOCOL DURING IN-GAME GOALKEEPER INJURIES

In the event of an injury by a Goalkeeper during any NWSL Match, players from both teams are not permitted to approach their team's respective technical area. Players must either remain in the area they were located when play was stopped, or may congregate on their team's side of the midfield center circle. In the event of a team's players approaching the technical area during a stoppage for a Goalkeeper injury, the respective Team and/or its Head Coach may be subject to League discipline.

Players may approach their team’s respective technical area (for tactical instruction or otherwise) if the injured Goalkeeper is substituted from the Game prior to the restart of play.

GAME DELAYS, POSTPONEMENT, AND CANCELLATION

PROTOCOL TO DELAY, POSTPONE OR CANCEL A GAME

NWSL recognizes that emergencies may arise which make the start or progression of a Game inadvisable or dangerous for participants and spectators. Certain event categories automatically trigger the League Office into an evaluation of whether delay or postponement is necessary, including, but not limited to: 1) the failure of one or both Teams to arrive, (2) a lack of preparedness of one or both Teams to begin or continue playing a Game, (3) serious incident, injury or fatality to a Player, Coach, Official, Team representative or spectator or other medical concern, or (4) unfavorable weather and/or other adverse conditions beyond the control of the

participating Teams which would make playing the Game impractical or dangerous for the Players, other participants, or spectators.

POSTPONEMENTS

“Postponement” means not starting a game, or stopping a game's ongoing progression, in order to reschedule the game to be completed on a subsequent date after its originally scheduled date. No Game shall be postponed without the permission of the commissioner or a League-designated representative, unless such postponement is mandated by law enforcement.

TEAM WARM-UP PERIOD FOLLOWING GAME DELAY

Following a Game delay Teams and Players will be permitted a warm-up period. The duration of the warm-up period will be determined by the length of the Game delay:

- A five (5) minute warm-up will be permitted following a game delay of up to ten (10) minutes.
- A ten (10) minute warm-up will be permitted following a game delay between eleven (11) and thirty (30) minutes.
- A fifteen (15) minute warm-up will be permitted following a game delay between thirty-one (31) and sixty (60) minutes.
- A twenty (20) minute warm-up will be permitted following a game delay of greater than sixty (60) minutes

These guidelines set forth a maximum duration for warm-ups. The Referee, with the mutual approval of the Head Coach from each competing Team, may designate a warm-up period shorter than the above guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR RESUMING A GAME

When resuming a Game that has been delayed or postponed, play will continue at the exact time at which it was stopped and the Referee will utilize the appropriate restart. If the Game is stopped at a dead-ball situation, it will resume by allowing the appropriate Team to take the restart they were awarded before play was suspended (e.g., throw-in, goal kick, etc.). If the Game is stopped during the run of play, it will resume with a dropped ball at the location on the field where the ball was positioned when the game was suspended.

LIGHTNING AND SEVERE WEATHER:

Given the likelihood of lightning during the League season, and the potential for personal injury and structural damage, each Home Team must have a detailed weather delay plan. These plans must be developed in coordination with the venue. The established plans must include the following:

1. Specific persons in charge of decision-making (one management level person from the stadium, one person from the Home Team, one person from law enforcement).
2. Direct contact with the U.S. Weather Bureau and/or Doppler radar.
3. A minimum distance threshold for a storm in order to delay and re-start the Game.
4. A severe weather tracking system to utilize.

5. Formation of a weather delay committee with pre-designated meeting location (and back- up location) that includes the Referee, Team representatives and the stadium staff to meet to discuss the weather delay.
6. Immediate and consistent contact with the League's Game Notice designee
7. Prepared statements that can be used as updates to spectators and media via PA announcement (and video if available)
8. Designation of shelter locations or evacuation plans for those in the venue in the event of severe weather.
9. Teams whose areas run the risk of receiving snow during the season must develop a snow removal plan, including sufficient staff to manage snow removal in a timely manner.
10. Submission of the venue curfew.
11. "Standing Orders" (procedures) published and posted to accomplish the above.

When lightning has caused a delay, there must be a thirty minute (30:00) waiting period from the last lightning strike within the League or venue prescribed threshold (whichever is of greater distance), until activities may be resumed.

INCOMPLETE GAME

In the event a game cannot be completed, the game counts if seventy-five minutes (75:00) (excluding stoppage time) were played. If any Game is suspended prior to the completion of seventy-five minutes (75:00) (excluding stoppage time), due to inclement weather or extenuating circumstances, it will resume at a date/time agreed to by the competing Teams in consultation with the NWSL and will start in the same minute in which the game was postponed.

Every effort must be made to resume the game within the next twenty-four (24) hours following cessation of play. If the game is resumed after the 24-hour period has passed, both Teams may have a maximum of three (3) changes to their official Game Roster. Any changes to the lineup on the field, after any of the three (3) changes to the official Game Roster are made, count towards the substitution allotment.

The NWSL reserves the right to declare a full replay at its discretion in order to protect the integrity of the competition.

NWSL GAME DAY HEAT SAFETY POLICY

The NWSL Game Day Heat Safety Policy establishes required procedures for assessing environmental heat risk and determining appropriate actions (including hydration / cooling breaks and match delays) to protect the health and safety of players, officials, and other match personnel. In addition, per the mandated Emergency Action Plan, a cooling tub or similar cold immersion method must be set up in an accessible location prior to every game.

All Teams must designate one senior member of their gameday staff (the "Heat Policy Contact") as the primary point of contact for coordinating with NWSL. The Heat Policy Contact shall be responsible for coordinating any necessary communications between the Team and the designated NWSL official named on the Game Notice (the "NWSL Representative") and/or the

Officials, as each is required herein.

A. WBGT. The Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (“WBGT”) is a measure of heat stress felt while in direct sunlight, which considers air temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover (solar radiation). This Policy relies on the accurate and timely measurements of WBGT on game days.

1. *Approved Devices.* The following devices are approved for measuring WBGT for the purposes of this Policy. Teams wishing to use a device not listed must contact the NWSL for approval prior to use for applying this Policy.

- a. Kestrel 5400 Heat Stress Tracker
- b. Extech HT30 Heat Stress WBGT Meter
- c. QUESTemp^o34.

2. *Procedure for Measuring WBGT.* The following procedures must be followed for measurements required by this Policy.

- a. All WBGT measurements must be administered by the Officials. The Home Team is responsible for ensuring that the measurements are conducted on a timely basis and in accordance with this Policy, including aiding in informing the Officials whether and when measurements are required.
- b. All WBGT measurements must be taken at the center mark (except for the Fourth Measurement), provided that if sprinklers are in use that may impede an accurate measurement, efforts must be made to take the measurement in an area that has the same conditions as the center mark (*e.g.*, both in the sun) but that is unimpeded by the sprinklers.
- c. With the exception of the Fourth Measurement (*see* Section B.3.d), the WBGT device must be placed at the center mark and permitted to equilibrate for at least fifteen (15) minutes before each measurement. For the Fourth Measurement, the WBGT must be placed at midfield near the Fourth Official’s table and permitted to equilibrate for at least fifteen (15) minutes before the Fourth Measurement.
- d. The official WBGT measurement (which should be recorded by the Home Team) is the average WBGT over a five (5) minute span. If the WBGT device is unable to provide an average measurement over the five (5) minute span, the official WBGT measurement is the average of five (5) readings taken every minute for five consecutive minutes (the Home Team is responsible for aiding the Officials in calculating this measurement).

3. *Maintenance and Calibration.* All Teams are responsible for proper maintenance of their WBGT device, including regular calibration consistent with manufacturer

recommendations.

B. Game Day Measurements. Teams are expected to conform with the following heat monitoring and measurement procedures. Teams must rehearse taking the WBGT measurements in the home stadium contained in B.3 at least once prior to recording them during a game.

1. *Game Day Monitoring.* Teams must monitor the hourly temperatures local time throughout the day on gameday. If ambient air temperatures are forecasted to be 72.0°F / 22.2°C or higher at any point during the period beginning two (2) hours before the game and ending two (2) hours after the probable game end time, WBGT measurements must be taken in accordance with Section B.3 below (and all procedures followed).
 - a. To monitor the daily temperature, Teams should access the National Weather Service website (weather.gov), enter the stadium's zip code and select "Hourly Weather Forecast."
2. *Heat Warning / Watch / Advisory.* Teams must also monitor the National Weather Service website and local weather services at 9 a.m. local time on gameday for any Extreme Heat Warnings / Watches or Heat Advisories. If the National Weather Service or any local weather services have issued an Extreme Heat Warning / Watch or Heat Advisory, WBGT measurements must be taken in accordance with Section B.3 below (and all procedures followed). In the event of any Extreme Heat Warnings / Watches or Heat Advisories, all WBGT measurements taken by the Team must be reported by the Heat Policy Contact to the NWSL Representative immediately upon recording (even if below the reporting threshold set forth in Section B.3).
 - a. To monitor for advisories from the National Weather Service, Teams should access the National Weather Service website (weather.gov). Teams should also monitor local weather services for relevant advisories.
3. *Measurements.* If WBGT measurements are required pursuant to Sections B.1 or B.2, they shall be recorded consistent with the following. Upon recommendation of the Officials, the NWSL may require additional measurements to be taken. Consistent with Section 14 of this Manual, only the NWSL shall have the authority to delay, postpone, suspend, or abandon a game.
 - a. First Measurement.
 - i. Timing: 60 minutes before game start.
 - ii. Location: Center mark.
 - iii. Actions: If measurement is greater than or equal to 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative

immediately upon recording.

b. Second Measurement.

- i. Timing: 45 minutes before game start.
- ii. Location: Center mark.
- iii. Actions:
 1. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording, and the game shall officially enter a delay.
 2. If the measurement is less than 92.1°F / 33.4°C, warm-ups may continue in the ordinary course, subject to the following:
 - a. If the measurement is greater than 91.1°F / 32.8°C but less than 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording. After consulting with the Home and Visiting Teams and the Officials, the NWSL may delay warm-ups if WBGT measurements are expected to exceed 92.1°F / 33.4°C or may increase the frequency of subsequent WBGT measurements if warranted based on current forecasts.

c. Third Measurement.

- i. Timing: Immediately after pre-match warm-ups conclude.
- ii. Location: Center mark.
- iii. Actions:
 1. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording, and the game shall officially enter a delay.
 2. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 82.3°F / 28°C and less than 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording, and a mandatory hydration / cooling break at or around the 30th minute (at the Official's discretion and during a natural break in play) shall be implemented:

a. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 87.1°F / 30.6°C, the break shall last 5 minutes.

b. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 82.3°F / 28°C and less than 87.1°F / 30.6°C, the break shall last 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

3. If the measurement is less than 82.3°F / 28°C, the Official may still authorize a hydration / cooling break (not to exceed 60 seconds) if the Official deems that it is appropriate. Such decision must be communicated to the NWSL, and each Team's Head Coach and Head Athletic Trainer.

d. Fourth Measurement.

i. Timing: Immediately at the end of the first half.

ii. Location: Midfield at the Fourth Official's table. If the position for the WBGT device is in the shade and the center mark is in the sun a fifth measurement must be taken (see below).

iii. Actions:

1. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording, and the game shall officially enter a delay.

2. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 82.3°F / 28°C and less than 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording, and a mandatory hydration / cooling break at or around the 75th minute (at the Official's discretion and during a natural break in play) shall be implemented:

a. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 87.1°F / 30.6°C, the break shall last 5 minutes.

b. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 82.3°F / 28°C and less than 87.1°F / 30.6°C, the break shall last 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

3. If the measurement is less than 82.3°F / 28°C, the Official may still authorize a hydration / cooling break (not to exceed 60 seconds) if the Official deems that it is appropriate. Such decision must be communicated to the NWSL, and each Team's Head Coach and

Head Athletic Trainer.

- e. Fifth Measurement. A fifth WBGT measurement is required only if the fourth measurement was taken in shade caused by the stadium walls or seating and the center mark is in the sun (or if mandated by the NWSL in response to an earlier WBGT measurement).
- i. Timing: End of half-time.
 - ii. Location: Center mark.
 - iii. Actions:
 1. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording, and the game shall officially enter a delay.
 2. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 82.3°F / 28°C and less than 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the Heat Policy Contact shall report the reading to the NWSL Representative immediately upon the recording, and a mandatory hydration / cooling break at or around the 75th minute (at the Official's discretion and during a natural break in play) shall be implemented:
 - a. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 87.1°F / 30.6°C, the break shall last 5 minutes.
 - b. If the measurement is greater than or equal to 82.3°F / 28°C and less than 87.1°F / 30.6°C, the break shall last 2 minutes and 30 seconds.
 3. If the measurement is less than 82.3°F / 28°C, the Official may still authorize a hydration / cooling break (not to exceed 60 seconds) if the Official deems that it is appropriate. Such decision must be communicated to the NWSL, and each Team's Head Coach and Head Athletic Trainer.

C. Delay Procedures.

1. If the game enters a delay due to a qualifying WBGT reading, subsequent measurements shall be taken every 15 minutes. After consulting with the Home and Visiting Teams and the Officials, the NWSL may lengthen the period between subsequent WBGT measurements if warranted based on current forecasts.
2. All WBGT measurements should continue to be taken from the center mark consistent

with the procedures set forth in Section A.2, unless the NWSL or the Officials determine that good reason exists to take measurements elsewhere.

3. If the WBGT measurements continue to be equal to or greater than or 92.1°F / 33.4°C during the subsequent WBGT measurements, the game shall continue to be delayed.
4. If the WBGT measurement is less than 92.1°F / 33.4°C, the warmups may start. The appropriate length of warmups shall be determined by the Officials after consultation with both Teams and the NWSL.
5. The NWSL may (after consultation with both Teams and the Officials), in its discretion and consistent with Section 14 of this Manual, have the authority to postpone, suspend, or abandon a game if it deems it appropriate based on the duration of the delay and current WBGT forecasts.

D. Hydration / Cooling Breaks. The Official shall be responsible for the implementation and management of hydration / cooling breaks. Hydration / cooling breaks shall not be commenced until the ball is out of play or there is another natural break in play in the Official's judgment. During a hydration / cooling break, the clock will continue to run and the time allotted to the break will be added to stoppage time. In addition, players must remain on the field of play, coaches should not leave their respective technical areas, and bench personnel (except for medical personnel or other personnel responsible for distributing fluids or other medical necessities) should not enter the field of play.

E. Discipline. Failure to comply with any of the provisions in this policy, including proper maintenance of WBGT devices and compliance with measurement protocol, may subject Teams to disciplinary action or sanctions.

SERIOUS INJURY OF A PLAYER, COACH, OFFICIAL OR TEAM REPRESENTATIVE

The policy contained in this section shall govern the Teams' actions and the course of the game in the event that a Player, Coach, Official, or other non-playing bench personnel suffers a Serious Injury during an NWSL match. A "Serious Injury" shall mean any health incident that significantly incapacitates or otherwise poses an immediate and significant health risk to the individual, such as a heart attack or cardiac arrest, a seizure episode, or a severe and traumatic physical injury (e.g., open compound fracture or spine injury with potential paralysis).

A. Notice.

- a. All Teams must designate one senior member of their gameday staff (the "Medical Emergency Contact") as the primary point of contact for coordinating with NWSL. In the event the Medical Emergency Contact is unavailable to complete any of their duties contained herein, another member of the Home

Team's senior staff shall conduct their duties.

- b. In the event that a Serious Injury occurs during an NWSL match, a member of the Home Team's medical staff, who is aware of the ongoing care of the injured individual, must provide timely and consistent updates regarding the management and treatment of the Serious Injury to the Medical Emergency Contact.
- c. The Medical Emergency Contact must immediately notify the designated NWSL official named on the Game Notice (the "NWSL Representative") of the Serious Injury event and must thereafter provide the NWSL timely and consistent updates regarding the Serious Injury.

B. Injury Management.

- a. In the event of a Serious Injury, the game shall be paused in order to conduct medical treatment consistent with best medical practices, including requesting emergency medical services if appropriate and necessary.
- b. When medically appropriate and safe, the injured individual should be removed from the field or bench area to continue receiving medical attention and treatment.
- c. When feasible and medically appropriate, the Medical Emergency Contact and a member of the medical staff uninvolved (but aware of) the ongoing care of the injured individual should consult with the NWSL (including NWSL's medical staff) regarding the injured individual's treatment.
- d. Consistent with ordinary practice, the Officials shall be responsible for managing the remaining staff (e.g., Players, technical staff and bench personnel) during any delay due to injury.

C. Game Delay / Continuation. The game shall immediately be paused in the event a Player, Coach, Official, or other non-playing bench personnel suffers a Serious Injury. Consistent with Section 14.4, the NWSL, after consulting with the competing Teams (and subject to local, state, and federal laws and regulations), shall determine whether and when the game shall be continued.

- a. **Considerations.** The NWSL's highest priority in making such a determination shall be the Player, staff, and fan well-being. Further, provided it is consistent with maintaining the well-being of Players, staff, and fans, every effort should be made to play the game to completion if the injured individual is able to be safely removed from the playing field and transported to receive medical treatment (either in the stadium or hospital).

Each Serious Injury shall be considered on a case-by-case basis. Consistent with

the foregoing, the NWSL's judgment with respect to continuing, delaying, or postponing the game shall include consideration of the following:

- i. Whether life-saving measures are taken, such as use of CPR and/or a defibrillator.
 1. In the event life-saving measures are taken, the presumption is that NWSL will postpone and reschedule, declare the game final (if 75 minutes have been played) or cancel the game (in the NWSL's discretion). Notwithstanding the above, the Commissioner has the right to continue the game if compelling circumstances exist.
- ii. The length of time it takes to stabilize and remove the injured individual from the field.
- iii. The injured individual's ongoing medical status (*e.g.*, whether their condition is considered stable).
- iv. Any other relevant factor or information, in the discretion of NWSL in consultation with the Teams, medical staffs, and other relevant stakeholders.

b. **Grace Period.** In the event a game is continued after a Serious Injury, the Teams shall receive a ten (10) minute grace period prior to resumption.

D. Post-Match Review. In the event of a Serious Injury, the NWSL may require either or both Teams to participate in a meeting with the NWSL to discuss the procedure, timeline, actions taken, and other relevant information.