



# 2023 Interscholastic Unified Soccer Coaches' Resource Guide





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## ***Principle of Meaningful Involvement***

The most important of the “7 Criteria for the Success of a Special Olympics Unified Sports Program” is the **principle of meaningful involvement**. *Fundamentally, the principle of meaningful involvement ensures that every player is given an opportunity to contribute to the success of his or her team through their unique skills and qualities.* This means that every teammate: (a) demonstrates sufficient sport-specific skills and game understanding; (b) plays a valued role on the team that emphasizes his or her personal talents; and (c) has an opportunity to play without a heightened risk of injury.

All team members must be engaged and provide their own individual abilities and strengths. In doing so, athletes and partners may have different perspectives. The athletes on the team may not be accustomed to the experience of having their contributions accepted and respected. In addition, partners may need to be encouraged to play to their own personal bests while being a good teammate to others.

Consequently, when Unified Sports teams are created, it is extremely important that both athletes and partners are assessed as to their abilities and game play. The goal is that every teammate should play a meaningful role and have the opportunity to contribute his or her strengths to their Unified Sports team. There should be a quality of social interaction and communication among teammates that allows everyone to participate fully and enjoy a positive experience.

### **Indicators of Meaningful Involvement**

- Teammates have the ability and are given the opportunity to contribute to the success of the team.
- Teammates bring their unique talents and personal qualities to the team during training and competition.
- Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- Teammates participate according to the rules of competition.

### **Meaningful involvement is not achieved when certain team members ...**

- Display superior sports skills without involving their teammates.
- Serve predominantly as on-field coaches rather than teammates or mentors.
- Control most aspects of the game, especially during the most critical periods.
- Do not train or practice regularly and only show up on the day of competition.

Note: It is important that all coaches and program leaders understand the Principle of Meaningful Involvement prior to the selection of team members.



### **Overview of the Season:**

The Unified soccer season is a 10-week inclusive sports program in which each school will participate in 2 play-days and a Championship event. There will be two divisions: Red and Blue. This guidebook should be reviewed by each coach before the start of the season to ensure their program is able to meet all requirements.

### **Red Division:**

- Abraham Lincoln
- Northeast
- George Washington
- Swenson

### **Blue Division:**

- School of the Future
- Frankford
- Thomas Edison
- Samuel Fels

### **Season Timeline:** (locations and dates TBD)

- March 6<sup>th</sup>- Practices start
- Rosters & SOPA waivers are due one week before your first competition.
- Beginning of April: 1st Competition Day for both divisions
- Mid-End of April: 2nd Competition Day for both divisions
- May: UCS Soccer Championship

### **Coach Responsibilities:**

Each Unified soccer coach must complete the following trainings (Due by April 1<sup>st</sup>):

- NFHS Learn “Coaching Unified Sports”: [Click Here](#)
- NFHS Learn “Concussion in Sports”: [Click Here](#)
- New coaches attend an in-person Unified Soccer Coach training
- Pass a Coaching Unified Soccer quiz - [Unified Soccer Quiz](#)



## Team Rosters & Eligibility Reminders:

All official team rosters are to be submitted online **one week before your first competition date**. You will be given a unique link to an online roster by your SOPA liaison. That link will become inactive to use following the deadline date in order to lock in every school's roster.

1. Interscholastic Unified Soccer teams can have rosters ranging from 8 to a maximum of 12 participants.

- Each school can field a total of 2 teams
- Ideally, the team is split 50/50, but can be split 7 athletes/5 partners or 5 athletes/7 partners.
- PIAA athletes that compete in another Spring sport are ineligible
- If a participant plays soccer in the Fall, they will only be eligible to compete at the Player Development level

This is a co-ed program and students must be in grades 9th-12th. Students up to the age of 21 who are still receiving services from the school district also are eligible. For the 2022-23 school year ONLY, students who are age 22 and have opted in for an additional year of high school are eligible for participation.

2. On a roster, there needs to be a proportional number of students eligible to participate in Special Olympics (defined as having an intellectual disability, cognitive delay, or developmental disability including different types of autism) and students without intellectual disabilities (referred to as Unified partners).

- Students with other disabilities are welcome to participate as Unified partners. To foster a truly inclusive environment, however, the majority of Unified partners should not have a disability.
- **While the ideal goal is 50% of the team as Special Olympics athletes and 50% of the team as general education students, the allowable minimum is at least 40% and no more than 60% for either group.**

## Uniforms:

- Each coach and team captain are responsible for their teams' uniforms:
  - Special Olympics provides each team with jerseys and shin guards
- Every participant must be wearing a Unified Soccer jersey
- Every participant must be wearing shin guards and soccer socks
- Every participant must be wearing sneakers, running shoes, or soccer cleats
- Every participant must be wearing athletic gym shorts
  - Sweatpants or athletic pants are allowed
  - Jeans and cargo shorts are not allowed
- No jewelry allowed
- No hats or beanies allowed



**Equipment:**

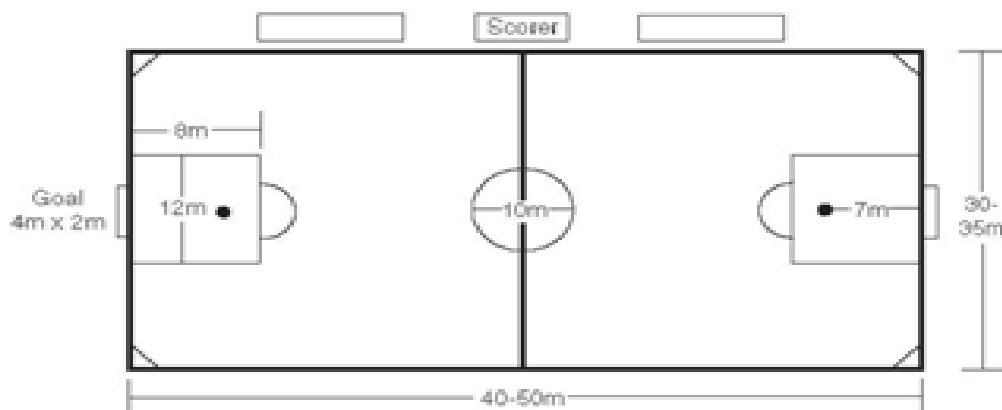
- **Special Olympics provides:**
  - 2 soccer goals
  - Bag of soccer balls- Size 5
  - Goalkeeper gloves
- **You must provide:**
  - Cones

**Which Model of Competition Best Fits Your Team?**

**2 Styles of Competition:** Choosing the correct model of competition that best matches the participant’s ability levels is critical to ensure your school’s Unified Soccer program is setup for success. Awards are given to both styles of competition, and both have their own Championship to play for. Each coach will label which model of competition their team will play in throughout the season on the team roster.

- 1) Competitive
  - Both athletes and partners have similar athletic ability level
  - Both athletes and partners can score
  - Both athletes and partners can play goalkeeper
- 2) Player Development
  - Partners have higher athletic ability levels than the athletes
  - Partners cannot score
  - Partners cannot purposely take the ball from an athlete
  - Partners cannot play goalkeeper

**The Field of Play:**





## Gameplay:

- **Players on the Field:**
  - Each team has 7 players on the field (6 field players and 1 goalkeeper).
  - 4 athletes and 3 partners on the field at all times.
  - In the Player Development model, the goalkeeper must be an athlete.
  
- **Duration of the Game:**
  - The duration of the game is two equal halves of ten minutes with a halftime interval of five minutes.
  - The referee is responsible for keeping the playing time.
  - During the regular season, a tie game is permitted.
  - During a Championship event, overtime is used to break a tie. It consists of two five-minute overtime periods. If the game is still tied, penalty kicks will be used.
  
- **Substitutions:**
  - Each team has an unlimited number of substitutions. To make a substitution, the coach must alert the referee while the ball is not in play. Substitutions can happen when:
    - the ball goes out of bounds
    - after a goal is scored
    - after a foul is committed
    - halftime
  - Coaches can also make substitutions while the ball is IN play:
    - Substitutions can only be made during play when the team subbing has possession of the ball.
    - Substitutes must enter and exit at the midfield line.
  
- **Prior to the Game:**
  - Referee will meet with both teams' captains.
  - Uniforms will be inspected.
  - Understanding of the rules of competition will be confirmed.
  - Coin toss will decide the side of field and starting possession.
  
- **General Rules:**
  - The ball must completely cross the sideline to be called out of bounds.
  - The ball must completely cross the goal line to be called a goal.
  - A field player cannot use their hand to play the ball.
  - If the participant's hand is down by their side when the ball hits, it's not a handball.
  - The goalkeeper cannot use their hands outside of the box.
  - A handball results in an indirect free kick from the spot of the handball.
  - There is no offsides.
  - A participant can be anywhere on the field, no matter where the ball is.



- **Start of Play:**
  - A ball must be kicked forward from the center spot before being touched by another player. A goal can be scored directly from a kickoff.
  - Ball in and out of play:
    - Ball over the sideline results in a kick in.
    - Ball over the end line results in a goal clearance or a corner kick.
    - The ball must be completely over the line to be considered out of play.
  
- **Goal Clearance**
  - When the ball passes over the goal line (not in the goal), having last been played by an attacking player, the goalkeeper, standing within their own penalty area, shall throw the ball back into play beyond their own penalty area, but not further than the halfway line (i.e., the ball must touch the ground or another player before crossing the halfway line).
  - The ball shall be deemed in play as soon as it passes outside the penalty area.
  - The above rules of goal clearance also apply when a goalkeeper gains possession, with his hands, of a ball that is still in play.
  - Infringement penalties:
    - If the ball thrown by the goalkeeper passes beyond the goalkeeper's half of the field without first having been touched by a player or without having touched the ground, the referee shall award an indirect free kick for the opposing team from any point on the halfway line.
  - From the goalkeeper's throw, if the ball is touched by any player inside the penalty area, the throw shall be retaken.
  
- **Fouls & Misconduct (no offsides):**
  - Tripping, pushing, handball or charging result in a direct free kick. Obstruction or dangerous play results in an indirect.
  - If a player is expelled from the game (receives two yellow cards or a red card), this player may not re-enter the game. Their team must play a player down for two minutes unless a goal is scored before the two minutes have elapsed. In this case, the following shall apply:
    - If there are seven players against six players and the team with the larger number scores a goal, the team with six players may add a seventh.
    - If there are seven players playing against less than five players and the team with the larger number scores a goal, the team with less than five players may be increased by one more player only.
    - If both teams are playing with the same number of players less than seven and a goal is scored, both teams may add one player.
    - If the team scoring the goal is the one with fewer players, the game shall continue without changing the number of players. Keeping check of the two minutes shall be the task of the Time or Fourth Official. The player who enters





the game as a substitute after two minutes may only do so with the consent of the referee and when the ball is out of bounds.

- **Free Kick:**
  - Opposing players must retire at least five meters from the ball for all free kicks. When an indirect free kick is awarded to the attacking team inside the penalty area, within five meters from the goal line, the referee must place the ball at five meters from the goal line.
  - Restart exception: Any free kick that is awarded to the defending team inside their own penalty area will be restarted with a throw from the goalkeeper.
  
- **Penalty Kick:**
  - A penalty kick is taken from the seven-meter mark or six-meter mark depending on size of goal
  
- **Kick In:**
  - When the entire ball passes over a sideline, it shall be kicked back into the game, from the place where it crossed the line (on the sideline), by a player from the opposing team to that of the player who last touched it.
  - The ball must be stationary before being kicked.
  - The ball cannot be played again by the kicker until it has been touched by another player.
  - The players from the opposing team must retire at least five meters from the spot where the kick is being taken.
  - A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick in.
  - A goalkeeper may not pick up a ball passed back to him/her from a kick in.
  - A goalkeeper may not pick up a ball passed back to him/her by their own player.
  
- **Infringement Penalties:**
  - If the player taking the kick in plays the ball for a second time before it has been touched by another player, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team from the point where the infringement occurred.
  
- **Corner-Kick:**
  - Awarded to the attacking team when a player from the defending team kicks the ball over his/her own end line.
  - Opposing players must retire at least five meters from the ball.
  
- **Coaching:**
  - A team bench area will be provided for each team.
  - Coaches and substitutes must always remain within the bench area. Failure to adhere to this may lead to the coach being sent from the field of play.



- Coaches are expected to restrict their coaching to simple verbal encouragement.
- Verbal abuse of players or officials, or excessive and explicit coaching from the sidelines, will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and may result in a warning from the Referee. If such behavior persists, the Referee may eject the offending coach from the field.
  
- **Overtime:**
  - In regular league play, ties are considered final.
  - In tournament play, overtime periods shall be five minutes each.
  
- **Overtime- Penalty Kick:** If the game is still tied after the overtime periods, penalty kicks shall be used to decide the game using the following procedure:
  - The referee chooses the goal at which the kicks will be taken. The referee tosses a coin and the team whose captain wins the toss decides whether to take the first or the second kick.
  - Each team is responsible for selecting five players from those on the field of play at the end of the match and the order in which they will take the kicks.
  - The kicks are taken alternately by the teams.
  - The highest score after five penalty kicks is declared the winner.
  - If, before both teams have taken five kicks, one has scored more goals than the other could possibly score, no more kicks are taken.
  - If, after both teams have taken five kicks, both have scored the same number of goals, or have not scored any goals, kicks continue to be taken in the same order until one team has scored one goal more than the other, from the same number of kicks.
  - A goalkeeper who is injured while kicks are being taken from the penalty mark and is unable to continue as goalkeeper may be replaced by a named substitute.
  - Except for the foregoing case, only players who are on the field of play at the end of the match, which includes extra time where appropriate, are eligible to take penalty kicks.
  - If at the end of the match one team has a greater number of players than its opponents, it must reduce its numbers to equate with that of its opponents.
  - Each kick is taken by a different player and all eligible players must take a kick before any player can take a second kick.
  - Once all eligible players have taken a penalty kick, the same sequence does not have to be followed as in the first round of kicks.
  - An eligible player may change places with the goalkeeper at any time when kicks from the penalty mark are being taken.
  - In Unified Sports penalty kicks, alternate kicks by athletes and partners must be taken, with the athlete taking the first penalty kick for each team.



### Managing Competitions:

#### Volunteers:

- Special Olympics will work alongside your school to designate volunteers that can be trained prior to the event.
- One PIAA referee must be the head official for each game
- There must be two line referees, and they will only make out of bounds calls.
- The referees and/or line referee will manage the time and score.

#### Hosting a Competition:

- The host school must have at least one full size soccer field
  - Approximately 120m long and 60m wide
  - 3 Unified Soccer fields can comfortably fit within one PIAA soccer field.
- The host school must have lines or cones placed for 3 Unified Soccer fields.
- The host school must have bathrooms accessible to all participants.

### Supplemental Resources:

- Special Olympics International Soccer Guide: detailed coaching resource that includes fundamentals that breakdown individual soccer skills, examples of practice sessions, playing formations, etc.: [Click Here](#)
- The women's soccer from the University of Southern Maine created a tutorial video that breaks down and demonstrates each individual skill set to support the Unified Soccer program for Special Olympics Maine: [Click Here](#)

### Staff Contact:

- **Shannon Burke- UCS Manager**
  - [sburke@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:sburke@specialolympicspa.org)
- **Chase Trimmer- Program Director of Philadelphia**
  - [ctrimmer@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:ctrimmer@specialolympicspa.org)





## Unified Soccer Team Roster

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Head Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list players in order from highest to lowest rating. Individual Skills athletes may not be listed on this roster.

- **Total Team Rating** (add all total scores, divide by number of players):
- **Team Make-Up (Circle One):**      Competitive      Player Development      Trainings

	<b>Player Name (Full name, no nicknames)</b>	Athlete (A) or Partner (P)	Ball Skills	Passing	Move- ment	Game Aware- ness	Shooting	Defense	Goal Keeping	<b>Total</b>
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
7.										
8.										
9.										
10.										
11.										
12.										