

SYSA 2023 City Tournament

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the City Tournament?

The Seattle Youth Soccer Association's annual City Tournament is a recreational tournament exclusively for teams U11 through U19 that participated in SYSA's fall recreational league. It is meant as a fun, competitive way for recreational league teams and players to conclude the season.

The tournament is run as a modified double elimination tournament. All teams are in competition until they lose two games, with one exception as further explained below. The City Tournament is an open style contest, meaning any team that played in the fall recreational league may enter, regardless of their level of play during the season. All teams enter a pool and are placed in the bracket through a random draw.

More equal competition! Beginning in 2017, we have allowed two divisions at U11 through U14 (depending on the number of teams that register within the age group). We try to pair like with like within the two divisions, generally with Gold and top Silver fall teams grouped together in Division 1, and lower Silver and Bronze teams in Division 2. At all age groups, at least three teams must enter the tournament for a bracket to be formed.

Should my team play in the City Tournament?

YES!! Playing in the tournament is an opportunity to create memories for your players that will last a lifetime. There's a feel to the tournament that you can't get during the regular season. Kids loving playing games at night, under the lights, on synthetic fields. As the tournament progresses, each game gets more and more exciting and the tension builds. Some games are tied at full time and go on to penalty kick shootouts (Kicks From The Mark). It's fun to track your team's progress against the other teams in the bracket. And you'll get the privilege and honor of participating in a 54-year-old and still running event, one of the longest running tournaments in the country! Some of the strongest, fondest memories that the SYSA Board and Staff members have is from watching their kids play in SYSA's City Tournament. It's an event that's not to be missed!

When does it start and end?

By SYSA Rules, the tournament begins the Monday after Thanksgiving, which is November 27 this year. Games are played during the week and on the weekends for the following 20 days, concluding on a Saturday with the City Tournament Championships that match the remaining two teams for each age/gender bracket and division. In 2023, the City Tournament Championships will be held on Saturday, December 16th.

How many games will my team play?

All teams play at least two games. The total number of games any team plays is determined by how long they continue without losing two games, how many teams are in their bracket, and whether and how early they lose a game and drop to the one-game loss bracket. A team in a large bracket with many other teams that loses a game early could end up playing as many as 6, 7, or 8 games if they continue to win. Most teams average 3 to 4 games played.

When will the bracket schedule be published?

Schedules for each age/gender bracket will be published during Thanksgiving week, as early in the week as possible. Some years, the schedule is tougher to put together but it always comes out before Thanksgiving.

What if my players can't make a game? Can I reschedule?

No. Rescheduling games is not permitted nor is it really possible in the City Tournament. There are many teams and many games, a limited number of fields (especially lighted fields on weeknights), and games depend on the outcomes of other games. In other words, the entire tournament is scheduled very tightly so games cannot be delayed or rescheduled. Teams are urged to get as many players as they can to attend games and play the game, even if shorthanded, rather than forfeit because of not appearing.

Can I add new players to my roster for the City Tournament?

Yes. Teams will be allowed to add guest players to their roster for the tournament. All players who are currently registered with an SYSA rec team for the current (2023) season are eligible to guest play, but only if their own team is not participating in the City Tournament. This will enable teams that may not have a deep enough roster for the tournament to add enough players to allow the team to join the tournament.

There are rules and guidelines for these guest players so that coaches can't stack teams, and players can't switch teams. We want to help teams that might miss out on the tournament because some of their players are unable to participate (we realize it is a busy time of the year for families). This will also allow a player whose team is not in the tournament to participate by playing on another team.

Players can be added to a team as a guest player under the following rules:

- All new players must have been registered with their SYSA club before October 31. No registration is allowed after that date. *Note: remember that no select players can register with an SYSA team after September 30 each year.*
- The player cannot switch to a different team if their fall team is already playing in the tournament.
- A team must have at least a minimum number of players on the roster before it can begin adding players (meaning the team should be mostly intact before signing up for the tournament).
- A team cannot add guest players if they already have a maximum number of players (meaning a team cannot bulk up with additional players just to make the team stronger).
- All guest players added to a team will be approved by a committee of SYSA staff and board to ensure fairness.
- All tournament team rosters must be final by Monday, November 13 (to give SYSA staff time to finalize rosters and issue player cards).

What does "modified double elimination" mean?

A double elimination tournament means that teams play until they lose two games, after which they are out. The modification for City Tournament is that the final championship game matches the remaining two teams that haven't been eliminated. The final matches the team that advances out of the winner's bracket (the team with no losses) against the team that advances out of the loser's bracket (the team with one loss). The winner of this game wins the City Tournament.

Because of the challenges of scheduling fields and the referee crews and all the other aspects of putting together a championship event, SYSA decided many years ago to go with a format that provided for one final match that would be final, regardless of whether a team lost twice or not.

When and where are the games played?

City Tournament games are played in Seattle and Shoreline on both Saturdays and Sundays during the day, and on weeknights wherever lighted, synthetic fields are available. In fact, part of the fun of City Tournament is playing night games on lighted fields. All the match venues are scheduled ahead of time so the referee crews can be assigned to appropriately aged games, so while there are “home teams”, the home teams don’t necessarily play on their league-season “home fields”. Teams should be prepared to travel to fields anywhere in Seattle and Shoreline, regardless of where the team is located. U11 and U12 games are restricted to the fields where SYSA can set up appropriately sized fields.

Is the City Tournament only for the most competitive teams?

No! The tournament is open to all recreational teams, and they are encouraged to participate. It is a great way to wrap up the season, regardless of how far into the tournament a team goes. While quality of play is important in the tournament, there are other factors that determine how well a team does, including player participation (getting players to come to the games), weather, player enthusiasm, and to some degree, luck.

Where can my team practice in between games?

Unfortunately, there are no practice fields available during the tournament. In November, most grass fields are closed to use, and nearly all synthetic fields are being used for tournament games. There are usually some open field times during the Thanksgiving weekend for teams that want to do some drop in training before the tournament. SYSA will post any fields available for drop in practice on the City Tournament web site page.

What if a game ends in a tie?

All City Tournament games must end with a winner and loser. Games that are tied at the end of regulation go immediately to Kicks From The Mark (a.k.a., “penalty kicks” or a “shootout”). The rules for KFTM are the same as established by FIFA. Only players who are on the field at the end of the regulation period may participate in KFTM. Each team designates five players who take kicks, in alternating fashion. If one team is ahead after five kicks (or as soon as the other team has been mathematically eliminated even though all five have not been taken) then that team is the winner. If tied after five kicks, the remaining players take alternating kicks until one scores and the corresponding opponent doesn’t. (The unofficial record is a game decided on the twenty-first kick.)