



NCF Masters Football

Rules of Competition 2026

NB: As of 2025 Masters Women age eligibility, will be gradually increased to match Masters Men by 2029

2025 – 31

2026 – 32

2027 – 33

2028 – 34

2029 – 35

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RULES OF COMPETITION

1. COMPETITION STRUCTURE

These rules are to be read in conjunction with NCF By-Law 7 Competition Rules and where these supplementary rules do not cover the requirements, the By-Law will be used.

NCF will arrange age restricted competitions for players as per the following:

Competition	Year of Birth qualification
Men's Masters	Players attaining the age of 35 years or older in registration year (calendar year)
Women's Masters	Players attaining the age as listed on the front page or older in registration year (calendar year)

Competition Winners

In all Competitions, the team finishing with the most points in each division at the conclusion of the "Home and Away" season will be declared Premiers. At the conclusion of the fixture season, the top four (4) placed teams in each division will participate in a Finals Series to determine the Grand Final Champions and Grand Finalists.

Competitions

NCF reserves the right to amend the size and structure of any competition.

2. RULES OF THE GAME

As per FIFA Rules, with the following variations:

1. Length of games - 2 x 40 minute halves, with a maximum of a 10 minute half-time break
2. No jewellery as per Law 4 with the exception of a flat wedding band that is not able to be removed, but it must be taped over.
3. Fingernails to be cut short or taped to the satisfaction of the referee. Soft black gloves can be used.
4. No Slide Tackles allowed (Goalkeepers excepted with their hands only)
 - a) A Slide Tackle occurs when two or more players are challenging for the ball and any of them "slide" for the ball, with or without contact
 - b) Any challenge not made on two feet is to be considered a Slide Tackle.
 - c) A player is considered to be challenging an opponent for the ball if the opponent is within a radius of one (1) metre of the player.
 - d) These rules apply to a goalkeeper who chooses to play or attempts to challenge for the ball with their feet.

e) They do NOT apply to a goalkeeper playing or attempting to play the ball with their hands.

f) Penalisation:

- Direct Free Kick (DFK), or a PENALTY if committed by a defender inside the penalty area.
- The offender/s are issued with a Yellow Card with a 10 minute exclusion without replacement for being guilty of being Reckless. If using Excessive Force the player/s are issued a Red Card

5. No tackling from behind

6. Cautionable / Send Off Offences will be dealt with as per the Laws of the Game.

7. All Cards issued in a Match will be noted on the Match Sheet/Squad

3. FIXTURES

Scheduling

NCF will arrange the dates, times and venues of all fixtures and whenever necessary, in consultation with the clubs/teams concerned. NCF reserves the right to schedule or re-schedule a fixture or fixtures on any day, time and place as it deems appropriate.

Points

In all fixtures, match points will be awarded as follows:

WIN	Three (3) Points
DRAW	One (1) Point
LOSS	Nil (0) Points
BYE	Nil (0) Points
NO RESULT	Nil (0) Points for either team

4. APPLICATION FOR ALTERATION TO FIXTURES

Any application for an alteration to scheduled fixtures shall be submitted to NCF at least seven (7) working days prior to the scheduled fixture.

Each request will be determined on its merits.

NCF's decision in regards to the rescheduling of fixtures will be final.

5. NON-PARTICIPATION IN A FIXTURE

In the event the home or visiting team is not ready to commence a fixture or finals match **within 15 minutes of the scheduled kick-off** time, the match will be recorded as a 3-0 win in favour of the opposing team, and the points will be awarded to the opposing team. Should any team claim such a forfeit they must notify NCF, noting the circumstances of the non-playing of the fixture via an incident report in squadi. Forfeits must be entered in squadi by the forfeiting team asap & post in the Presidents & Secretaries WhatsApp chat immediately.

If, for any reason, a team intends to forfeit a scheduled fixture match, the team is to provide two (2) clear working days written notice of the forfeit to the Competition Administrator. NCF shall then be responsible for notification to the opposition team and the Match Officials. The match will be recorded as a 3-0 win in favour of the opposing' team, and the points will be awarded to the opposing team.

A team that forfeits a match will be responsible for all Match Fees. The team that forfeits on the day of the game, will be fined and must cover all referee and assistant referee costs in relation to the match. A team which persistently forfeits matches, may, at the discretion of NCF, be withdrawn from that competition.

6. FINALS SERIES

Scheduling

NCF will arrange dates, times and venues of all Finals Series matches. NCF reserves the right to schedule or reschedule matches on any day, time and place as it deems appropriate.

Duration

All finals matches will be played over 2 halves of 40 minutes each (a total of 80 minutes). The match official has the right to abandon any match if, in their opinion, playing conditions compromise player safety.

Half Time Interval

The half-time interval must be a minimum of five (5) minutes and a maximum of ten (10) minutes.

Format - All Competitions

The Semi-Finals will be contested between the 1st and 4th placed teams, and the 2nd and 3rd placed teams. The winners will go directly to the Grand Final.

For all finals matches, should the scores be equal after normal time, then 2 x 10 minute periods of extra time shall be played. Should the scores still be equal after extra time, a penalty shoot-out in accordance with FIFA regulations will be taken to determine the winner.

7. INTERCHANGE OF PLAYERS & TECHNICAL AREA

In all Competitions, unlimited interchange will be permitted, with no more than seven (7) substitutes permitted to be named on the team sheet. Only player's names that appear on the team sheet are permitted to take part in the match. A player who has been interchanged may return to the field for another player. All interchanges can only occur at a break in play with the approval of the Match Official and must take place at or near the halfway line.

All substitutes (along with team officials) will be situated in the Technical Area as defined in 15.1 in By law 7 and abide by the requirements.

Substitutes are permitted to warm up outside of the technical or team area, provided they are wearing bibs. When warming up, substitutes are requested to do so in the designated warm up area (if applicable i.e. on some playing surfaces as the Main Stadium, do not permit warm ups on them from time to time) choose an area furthest from the opposing team.

8. PLAYER REGISTRATION

Players are permitted to be registered at any time up until the 30th of June.

Unless cancelled earlier, registration is effective from date of registration until 31 December of that year.

All requests for refund of registration fees for players who have not taken part in a competitive match must be processed by their Club before the 30 June each year.

9. ELIGIBILITY/NON-ELIGIBILITY OF PLAYERS

Eligible Players

A player is eligible to take part in a NCF Masters competition match, provided they have been registered with Play Football, and made Active by their Club and they are not under suspension.

Multiple Club teams in the same Division

In the event of a Club nominating two or more teams in a division, players can only play in one of the teams. Any player being named on the match sheet cannot be played in another team in the same division for that season.

Ineligible Players

Any player not registered as per NCF guidelines for the current season is considered ineligible and is not permitted to participate in any NCF Masters competitions.

Any player under suspension will be deemed ineligible and is not permitted to participate in any fixture until that suspension is served. This includes automatic suspensions for yellow and red cards along with penalties determined by the Disciplinary Committee.

NCF reserves the right to investigate the eligibility of any player who participates in any of its competitions.

Player Eligibility - Fixtures & Finals Series

Finals Series

A player is eligible to take part in an NCF finals match provided their name has been listed on the team sheet in at least a third of the teams normal season matches.

Protest - Playing Ineligible Player

Any team or Club is permitted to lodge a letter of protest regarding the alleged fielding of an ineligible player. The protest must be in writing and be forwarded to NCF within 48 hr of the match. Such protests will be accepted from team or Club officials ONLY - any protests from persons other than team or Club officials will be disregarded. An investigation of the circumstances surrounding the incident will be undertaken immediately.

In the event that the protest is upheld, the Penalties and Outcomes as stated below will apply. In the event that the protest is dismissed, then the match result will stand.

Penalties and Outcomes

If it is established that a player competing in any NCF competition fixture was not legitimately registered or was ineligible to play, then the following will apply:

- the team found guilty shall forfeit any goals scored and points gained in that match and the points and match will be awarded to the opposing team.
- the game will be recorded as a 3-0 win in favour of the opposing team, unless the final result was of a greater margin in favour of the opposing team.
- NCF may impose a fine, suspend, expel or take whatever disciplinary action it deems necessary against the offending team or player.

In the event that it is established that both teams competing in any NCF competition fixture fielded players who were not legitimately registered or were ineligible to play, then the following will apply:

- the match will be deemed as a double forfeit, whereby, no points will be awarded.
- NCF may impose a fine, suspend, expel or take whatever disciplinary action it deems necessary against the offending team or players.

10. TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Facilities/Ground Arrangements

NCF will ensure through Coffs Harbour City Council that all matches scheduled at Coffs Coast Sport and Leisure Park have fields and facilities in appropriate order. Should a match be scheduled at another ground, the following responsibilities are to be in place:

Home teams should ensure:

- the ground is correctly marked, including the technical area;
- it provides suitable goal nets, safely fastened or pegged to the ground and corner flags;
- it provides toilet facilities and dressing room facilities (where possible) that are hygienic and clean;
- it provides a safe environment for players, officials and spectators;
- it provides a Referee's Room where referees can rest and leave their belongings while officiating.

Any team whose facilities do not meet the requirements specified may have its home fixtures played away.

Player Identification

Each team should ensure that players listed on the *official* team sheet have in their possession some legitimate form of photographic identification which should be produced at the request of the Referee or opposing Team Manager. Legitimate forms of photographic identification may include but are not limited to a Driver's License, or passport.

If the player is unable to produce photographic identification, the player is still permitted to participate in the match. The referee should note this fact in squadi (providing details). The opposing team should then submit a protest to the Competition Administrator within 48 hours of the scheduled match time.

Team Sheets

On match day, both teams are required to complete the NCF squadi procedure for team sheets prior to the commencement of any match.

It is each team's responsibility to ensure:

- it has minimum number of seven (7) players to commence the match;
- that it does not list more than 18 players on the team sheet;
- all players taking the field are eligible to play;
- all players taking the field of play are correctly listed on the team sheet;

- all players are ready to commence the fixture at the scheduled kick-off time.

Alcohol Consumption

Participants - Players are not permitted to consume alcohol prior to or during a game. Referees have a "duty of care" to all players & will refuse to allow a player to continue to participate in a game if alcohol consumption is evident. This clause will also apply to match officials, and coaches/managers.

Facilities - alcohol is only to be consumed in defined licensed areas at any club / facility. NCF maintains a policy of no consumption of alcohol outside of licensed areas. Team officials are responsible for ensuring persons comply with this rule.

Should persons be seen to be in breach of this rule, the home team official must advise such person to conform to the rules immediately. Should such person refuse to adhere to this request, the home team official shall be at liberty to liaise with the match referee to have the game stopped until the situation is resolved. Should this still not resolve the situation, the home team official shall be at liberty to contact the police to have such person removed.

NB No one is permitted to bring alcohol into Licensed venues or Local Council designated Alcohol Free Zones.

Match Balls

The home club shall provide the appointed match referee at least two (2) Match Balls (Size 5), at least 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the scheduled fixture. All balls shall be of the same brand and must be of 'match ball' quality.

Playing Strips

All clubs must nominate a "Home" and have available an "Alternate" strip. The alternative strip (shirts, shorts & socks) should not clash with the nominated "Home" strip. All playing strips must have numbers on the back of the jerseys.

All first named clubs will be deemed the "Home" team and will play in their nominated colours. In the event there is a clash of colours, it will be the responsibility of the visiting team to change into an alternative strip. Visiting teams should take their away strip (shirts, shorts and socks) to every match. Team managers should check the strip worn by their opponents on a weekly basis to avoid the likelihood of a clash. Goalkeepers can wear any colour provided it does not clash with either team or referees.

Results of Fixtures

NCF has responsibility for recording the results of fixtures within the competition management system as soon as possible after each game.

11. DISCIPLINARY

See the current FFA and NCF Disciplinary policy documentation.

12. CODE OF CONDUCT

This code applies to the conduct and behaviour of all players and team officials currently under the direct control of NCF, and should be read in conjunction with FIFA Fair Play Code. The Code of Conduct is part of the Online Player Registration within Play Football.

A breach of this Code of Conduct could be seen as bringing the game into disrepute and could result in disciplinary action by NCF.

13. SPECTATOR CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

This code applies to the conduct and behaviour of all spectators at matches under the direct control of NCF. The Spectator Code of Behaviour is available on the FFA website.