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ABYF PREMIER LEAGUE (Season 8)

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Match Rules

1) Match format and timings

1.1 Gameweeks

The league will be played over 8 gameweeks on the following dates at Claremont High School:

- **GW1:** 24 October 2026
- **GW2:** 31 October 2026
- **GW3:** 14 November 2026
- **GW4:** 28 November 2026
- **GW5:** 12 December 2026
- **GW6:** 9 January 2027
- **GW7:** 23 January 2027
- **GW8:** 30 January 2027 (Play-offs)

Any changes to the above dates will be communicated by the league coordinators in advance.

1.2 Match Day Schedule (Group Stage)

Time	Activity
6:55pm – 7:00pm	Arrival, warm-up & pitch setup
7:00pm – 7:15pm	Pressure Point Penalties
7:15pm – 7:20pm	Match kick-off preparation
7:20pm – 8:05pm	Match 1 (45 minutes)
8:05pm – 8:10pm	Break & pitch changes (5 minutes)
8:10pm – 8:55pm	Match 2 (45 minutes)

Matches must begin punctually at 7:20pm and 8:10pm. All teams are expected to be ready in advance of kick-off.

Each match will last 45 minutes, consisting of two halves of 20 minutes each, with a 2-minute half-time interval during which teams will switch ends. The referee may add up to 1–2 minutes (max) of additional time at the end of each half, at their discretion.

1.3 Match Day Schedule (Play-offs)

All qualifying teams will be required to come 6:15pm on GW8 (30th January 2027). League coordinators reserve the right to change this time. Failure to attend on time may result in forfeiting the play-off game.

1.4 Kick-Off

The referee will conduct a toss with both team captains prior to kick-off. The winning captain will choose to either take the kick-off or select the side of the pitch.

1.5 Late Arrivals

If a team arrives with fewer than 4 players, the opposing team will be awarded one goal every 5 minutes until the team fields at least 5 players. It is the responsibility of the team captain to ensure their team is ready for kick-off. League coordinators reserve the right to award the game points to the opposition at any given time with a scoreline decided by the league coordinators.

2) Substitutions

2.1 Rolling Substitutions

Teams may make an unlimited number of rolling substitutions. Substitutions may only take place during a free kick or kick-in. The referee must be informed before the substitution is made.

2.2 Substitution Area

Players entering the pitch must enter from their goal line. Players who are substituted must leave the pitch from the nearest sideline.

2.3 Bench

All players who are on the bench must remain out of the field and not stand next to the goal post. They must not enter the pitch at any time, unless they are substituted with another on-field player.

2.4 Time Wasting

Teams who are found guilty of time-wasting during substitutions, will be penalised.

3) Ball in and out of play

3.1 Ball Out of Play

When the ball crosses the red lines on either side of the pitch, a kick-in will be awarded. The ball cannot be played off the walls on either side of the pitch.

3.2 Kick-Ins

For a kick-in, the ball must be stationary on the ground and kicked into play. A kick-in is treated as an indirect free kick, with opposing players required to remain at least 3 yards (2.75m) away from the ball.

A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-in. If the ball enters the opposition's goal directly from a kick-in, the goal will be disallowed, and a goal kick will be awarded to the opposition. If the ball enters the player's own goal, the goal will be recorded as an own goal.

3.3 Back-Pass Rule

If a player deliberately passes the ball back to their own goalkeeper using their feet, the pass will be considered a back-pass. Hence, the goalkeeper cannot pick up the ball in their hands.

The goalkeeper may pick up the ball within their goalkeeper's semi-circle when it is received from a teammate via a header, chest, shoulder, or a pass that the referee considers accidental. Any infringement will result in imposing penalty charge. Any evidence of trickery would result in imposing the penalty charge for back-pass. An action may be deemed "trickery" if a player deliberately uses an unconventional method to bypass the back-pass rule. The ref will have the authority to conclude if a back-pass was conducted.

The penalty charge for conducting a back-pass will be a direct free kick to the opposition team. The distance will be 3 yards (2.75m) from the position the ball was picked up by the goalkeeper. If the goalkeeper picks up the ball outside of the semi-circle or leaves the semi-circle during the match, it will result in a penalty to the opposition team.

A pass to the goalkeeper directly from a kick-in will also be considered a back-pass.

3.4 Challenging the Goalkeeper

Players are permitted to challenge the opposition goalkeeper for the ball within the goalkeeper's semi-circle, provided the ball is in play. No offence must be conducted during the challenge.

4) Goal Scoring Rules

4.1 Goal kicks

A goal kick that results in a goal without touching any player will be disallowed.

4.2 Volleys & Headers

A goal may be scored from inside the goalkeeper's semi-circle by a volley or header.

The player who initially lifts, passes or sets the ball into the goalkeeper's semi-circle cannot be the player who scores the goal. The player setting up the ball must be outside the goalkeeper's semi-circle. Any infringement will result in a free kick to the opposition.

4.3 Volley Types

The following list expands on the volley types allowed and not allowed.

1. Full Volley: The player strikes the ball in the air. The goal will stand provided the ball does not touch the ground.
2. Side Volley: The player leans to one side and strikes the ball horizontally mid-air. The goal will stand provided the ball does not touch the ground.
3. Scissor/ Bicycle Kick: The player jumps and throws their body backwards whilst striking the ball mid-air. The goal will stand provided the ball does not touch the ground.
4. Chest-and-volley: The player controls the ball on their chest or other part of the body, excluding hands, and strikes the ball on the second touch. The goal will stand provided the total number of touches does not exceed 2.
5. Half Volley: The player strikes the ball as soon as it bounces back from the ground. This type of volley is not allowed because the ball touches the ground.

4.4 Attacker in the Goalkeeper's Semi-Circle

If an attacking player is in control of the ball inside the goalkeeper's semi-circle, they must take the ball outside the goalkeeper's semi-circle before attempting a shot. Alternatively, the attacking player may pass to another team player who is outside the semi-circle. Any infringement will result in a free kick to the opposition.

4.5 Deflected Own Goals

If an attacking player passes or shoots the ball from inside the goalkeeper's semi-circle and a defender subsequently touches the ball and it enters their own goal while the defender is inside the goalkeeper's semi-circle, the goal will be disallowed. A corner kick will be awarded to the attacking team.

If the attacker is outside the goalkeeper's semi-circle and the ball deflects from an opposition player and it enters their own goal, the goal will be allowed as an own goal.

4.6 Goals from Restarts & Goalkeeper Actions

The following rules apply to goals scored directly from restarts or goalkeeper actions:

- **Kick-Off**: A goal may be scored directly from kick-off. Opposition team must defend 3 yards from the centre.
- **Corner Kick**: A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.
- **Goal Kick**: A goal scored because of a goal-kick will be disallowed. A goalkeeper may score by kicking the ball directly when it is in play.
- **Back-Pass**: If a player passes the ball back towards their own goalkeeper and the ball enters their own goal, it will be recorded as an own goal.
- **Goalkeeper Throw**: A goalkeeper cannot score directly by throwing the ball into the opposition's goal. If the ball enters the opposition's goal directly from a goalkeeper's throw, a goal kick will be awarded to the opposition. If a goalkeeper throws the ball directly into their own goal, a corner kick will be awarded to the opposition.

4.7 Restart After a Goal

Following a goal, play will restart from the centre with a kick-off.

5) Goalkeeper Rules

5.1 Goalkeeper Positioning

Goalkeepers must remain within their goalkeeper's semi-circle at all times. If a goalkeeper leaves their semi-circle, a penalty kick will be awarded to the opposing team.

5.2 Goalkeeper Time Limit

Goalkeepers must take goal kicks within 10 seconds. A first offence will result in a warning. A second offence will result in a penalty being awarded to the opposing team. Further offences may result in additional penalties at the referee's and league coordinator's discretion.

Time limit will be applicable when the ball is in play and in the hands of the goalkeeper. If an opposition player can challenge the goalkeeper, the goalkeeper will not have any time limits, subject to not picking up the ball after. The final decision will be at the discretion of the referee.

The referee may or may not start a counter to indicate amount of time left to take the goal kick or release the ball. Similar time limit will apply to other instances where time could be wasted.

6) Free kick and penalties

6.1 Slide Tackling

Slide tackling an opposing player is not permitted, regardless of whether the player makes contact with the ball first. A direct free kick will be awarded to the opposing team. Other forms of sliding, where no slide tackle is made, are permitted i.e. sliding to keep the ball in play, if the opposition player is not close to the ball.

6.2 Safe Distance

When a free kick, corner kick, kick-in, and kick-off is taken, all opposing players must remain at least 3 yards (2.75m) away from where the ball is placed until the kick is taken.

6.3 Fouls & Impeding

A direct free kick will be awarded when a player is fouled or illegally impeded by an opposing player.

6.4 Penalty Kicks

If an opposing player fouls an attacking player or conducts a handball inside the semi-circle, a penalty will be awarded to the attacking team. The penalty taker is permitted to take only one step towards the ball when taking a penalty. Penalties that are disallowed due to multiple steps will not be allowed for re-take.

6.5 Handball

A handball will be given when the ball strikes a player's hand or arm that is considered to be in an unnatural or unorthodox position. The decision will be at the referee's discretion.

7) Restarts & Referee Whistle

7.1 Stationary Ball

The ball must be completely stationary before being played for a kick-in, kick-off, free kick, goal kick or corner kick. If the player restarts a kick-in or free kick whilst the ball is moving, the opposition team will be awarded the ball control in the same position. In the event of a goal kick, corner kick, or kick-off, the opposition team will be awarded a goal kick.

7.2 Referee's Whistle

Players must continue playing until the referee's whistle is blown to stop play. The referee will use the whistle to signal the following:

- Kick-off at the start of each half.
- Stop play after a foul or other infringement has taken place.
- Take a free kick.
- Take a penalty kick.
- Make a substitution.

Players must wait for the referee's whistle where required before taking a restart. A kick-in, goal kick, and corner kick can be taken without waiting for the Referee's whistle. The referee will stop play, if required.

8) Pressure Point Penalties

8.1 Competition Format

Pressure Point Penalties will take place from GW2 till GW7. GW2 will be swapped with GW1, if the kits do not arrive for the first gameweek.

All eight teams will be eligible to participate in each designated gameweek. A guest goalkeeper will be appointed for the challenge, so no team will be required to sit out or serve as the goalkeeper team.

Each team must nominate one eligible outfield player to participate in the challenge each week. A player may represent their team only once during the six-week Pressure Point competition. Each team must therefore nominate six different players over the course of the competition.

8.2 Attendance and Eligibility

The challenge will begin promptly at 7:03pm, ahead of the scheduled football session at 7:20pm.

Teams must have 5 players by 7:00pm to be considered eligible for the Pressure Point Penalty challenge. Each team must meet the league's agreed minimum squad attendance requirement by 7:00pm.

The nominated penalty taker must be present and ready at the scheduled start time. A team that fails to meet the attendance requirement or whose nominated player is absent will be ineligible to compete for that week's additional league point. Replacement penalty taker will not be allowed.

8.3 Penalty Format

The competition will be conducted as an elimination-based penalty challenge.

Each participating player will start from the designated starting position, dribble the ball towards the goal and take a shot before reaching the goalkeeper's semi-circle.

Players must take their turns in the designated order. The order is determined by the league table, with first week order to be chosen based on alphabetical order. Players who score will progress to the next round, while players who fail to score will be eliminated. Each player will have 10 seconds to take the penalty. If the player takes longer than 10 seconds, they will be disqualified from the pressure point penalty.

8.4 Increasing Difficulty

After each round, the starting position will be moved further back from the goalkeeper's semi-circle, increasing the difficulty of subsequent rounds.

8.5 Time Limit and Tiebreaker

The challenge will operate within a maximum allocated time of 10 minutes to ensure that the scheduled football session can begin on time.

If one player remains when the main competition ends, that player will be declared the winner.

If two or more players remain, they will compete in a standard one-step sudden-death penalty shootout to determine the winner. The shootout will continue until one player scores, and another fails to score.

If all players are eliminated in the first round, the additional point will not be awarded.

A final cutoff will be enforced to ensure that the football session starts on time. If the main competition cannot be completed within the allocated time, the organiser will use the remaining time for the shortest possible tiebreaker.

8.6 Additional League Point

The team represented by the winning player will receive one additional league point for that gameweek.

8.7 Fair Play and Administration

All teams are responsible for ensuring they meet the attendance requirement.

The organiser's attendance check and decisions will be final. All players must follow the designated shooting order, respect the goalkeeper and comply with the time limit.

The challenge must be concluded by 7:15pm.

Disclaimer:

ABYF accepts no liability for any injuries sustained during the season, whether during competitive or casual play. All players who participate in the league do so at their own risk and cannot hold ABYF or any of its members liable for any financial or legal claims. ABYF reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions at any point.