

2026 Spring Season Soccer Statewide Coaches Call

Special Olympics
Washington



Welcome



Meeting Goals

- Align on key 2026 Updates for Soccer (Football)
- Clarify rules, divisioning, and event-day procedures
- Outline responsibilities and where to get help

Region Leadership Contacts



East Region: Webpage: click [HERE](#)

Grant Opland – gopland@sowa.org (Sports & Competition)

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Northwest Region: Webpage: click [HERE](#)

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Registration Updates and Reminders



March 30th: Competition roster due for those with events on 4/18-19

- Due dates will be included in your Welcome email
- Competition Rosters will be due in waves based on competition event dates.
- Programs will receive their competition rosters no later than the Wednesday before they are due.

Competition Roster Due	Competition Dates
March 30th	April 18 / 19
April 6th	April 25 / 26
April 13th	May 2 / 3
April 20th	May 9 / 10

May 11th: State Registration Due (more information to follow)

2026 Sports & Competition Updates



New Age Category:

- Addition of 30+ age group to foster more competitive opportunities.
- Age groups may still be combined if participation numbers are too low.

Athlete Hospitality Update:

- As a continuation of Winter 2026 Events, **full meals will not be provided at events.**
- Athletes should bring their own meals.
- Light snacks such as power bars, chips, fruit, and drinks will be available

General Reminders & Updates



GENERAL REMINDERS / UPDATES

Multi Sport Athlete Policy

✓ Individual + Team Sport: Allowed

Example: Swimming & Soccer
If both qualify for State → Team sport takes priority (impacts a roster).

✗ Two Team Sports: Not Allowed

Example: Basketball and Cheer(including Unified & Community teams)
Impacts rosters if both teams qualify; athlete must choose one.

✓ Two Individual Sports: Allowed

Example: Athletics & Swimming
If both qualify for State → Athlete must choose one to advance in.
Note: Relays count as 'Team' events.

✓ Recreational Sports: No Limits

Athletes may join multiple recreational opportunities.
However, official sports take precedence over recreational events.

Athletes and Unified Partners should not compete in both Unified Champion Schools teams and Community Teams during the same season.



Program Readiness: Building the Foundation

Family & Athlete Engagement

Host a Preseason Team Meeting

- Introduce your coaching staff and program philosophy.
- Review **Code of Conduct**: sportsmanship, respect, communication.
- Outline expectations for **attendance, transportation, and behavior**.
- Provide a “What to Bring” checklist:
 - Proper shoes, water bottle, reversible jersey, mouthguard (if required).
 - Positive attitude, readiness to learn.

Communication & Transparency

- Establish clear communication channels (GroupMe, TeamSnap, email lists).
- Share your practice and competition calendar early.
- Clarify who to contact for: schedule questions, athlete absences, behavior concerns.

Inclusion & Belonging

- Encourage families to cheer positively for all athletes.
- Reinforce the *Team* mindset — same standards for respect across all ability levels.
- Create “Family Captains” to help coordinate snacks, travel, or volunteer sign-ups.

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Code of Conduct

Athlete, Coaches, and Spectators Code of Conduct has been included in the Winter Season Coaches Packet, SOWA Website, and can be found here:

[Athlete & Unified Partner Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Family Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Coaches Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Spectator Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Code of Conduct Violation Report \(Link\)](#)



Code of Conduct & Team Culture

- Exhibit good sportsmanship on and off the field of play
- Physical and verbal abuse, profanity and other inappropriate behavior is strictly prohibited.
- There is a **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy for use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and controlled substances. (No smoking/tobacco use in restricted areas.)
- Refrain from illegal activities (felonies and misdemeanors), including the possession of harmful weapons.

All policies below are strictly enforced for the safety of everyone on site:

- **Smoking Policy:** Smoking is not allowed at ANY Special Olympics Washington event or competition area. There is absolutely NO smoking at the opening ceremony, or the Victory Dinner/Dance.
- **Service Animal Policy:** Only service animals are allowed at Special Olympics Washington practices, competitions and/or special events for safety reasons.
- **Drugs & Alcohol:** No use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and controlled substances.

Coaches must share these policies with their programs, including Athletes, Coaches, Chaperones, and Parents / Spectators

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Culture Is Part of your Job as a Coach
Culture Sets Behavior Before Rules Ever Do

The highest number of conduct issues we've seen

It's about unclear expectations + inconsistent environments

Most behavior issues are:

- Predictable
- Preventable
- Environmental

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Tool 1: Pre-Correction & Modeling behavior

Pre-Correction (Set Expectations Early)

“Before we start—here’s what today should look like”

Define: Effort, Respect, Focus

Remind before transitions (practice, drills, meets)

Modeling (They Mirror You)

Your tone = team tone

Stay calm, clear, consistent

Show the behavior you expect: Respect, Patience, Control

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Tool 2: Praise in Public, Coach in Private

- Correction - quietly, 1:1
- Praise - loudly, publicly

How do you Coach in Private during a busy practice - “The Walk”

- When athlete escalates, needs coaching: Remove audience, Reduce stimulus, Lower pressure

Script: Hey, walk with me for a second

Don't Lecture, Ask . . .

- “What's going on?”
- “What do you need right now?”

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Tool 3: “Structure Eliminates Chaos”

Most behavior issues happen during:

- Transitions
- Downtime
- Confusion

Fix = Always have:

- Next drill ready
- Clear instructions
- No dead time

Rules & Competition Updates



Ejections and Warnings

Card System

- **1 Yellow Card** = Warning
- **2 Yellow Cards** = Ejection (equivalent to a Red Card)
- **1 Red Card** = Automatic Ejection

Immediate Consequences of Ejection

- The athlete is **removed from the current game immediately**
- The athlete **must leave the field of play and competition area**
- The athlete **remains under the supervision of their coach**
- The athlete is **not permitted to participate in the next full game**
 - Incidents must be reported to Special Olympics Washington Staff immediately
 - Depending on the escalation of the conduct, SOWA Staff and event organizers reserve the right to increase the length of suspension or adjust consequences.
- The Team may continue playing, but **must play a player down for two minutes.**

Post-Incident Requirements

The incident will be reviewed under **Code of Conduct procedures**

The **coach is responsible** for:

- Completing and submitting a Code of Conduct Violation Report
- Notifying the Venue Manager as soon as possible

Escalation Protocol

If behavior is **unsafe, aggressive, or escalates beyond standard gameplay conduct:**

- Notify the Venue Manager immediately
- If unavailable, contact your designated sports manager for your region.

Spring Season Registration



FINAL REGISTRATION / COMPETITION ROSTER FORM:

Check your region webpage or contact Program/Sports Manager to **confirm FINAL REGISTRATION / COMPETITION ROSTER DUE DATE.**

Complete **pecially generated FINAL REGISTRATION form** to submit in Registration Portal. Includes **participants / team names / scores.** ALL participants must be included – there will be an audit period to adjust “sport specific” information (Scores – Team Name – Everyone in correct event).

Advancement

- Athletes must compete at each subsequent level of competition in order to advance (Regional → State Games)
- No Need to resubmit scores or register again.

Team Names

- All team entries must be identified by a team name. A team name shall only be used once.
 - **IDENTIFIER (Location) + NAME**
 - Example: **Goldendale Timberwolves**

Rules & Competition Updates



Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Soccer govern all competitions. Based on *FIFA* rules, with Specific adaptations to ensure inclusivity and fair play for athletes with IDD. Governing Body rules apply unless in conflict with Special Olympics rules.

- Special Olympics Athletics Resource Page: [Soccer Resource Page](#)
- FIFA Rules: <https://www.fifa.com/en>
- US Soccer: <https://www.ussoccer.com/>
- Special Olympics Athletics Rules: [2018 Soccer Rules](#)
- Special Olympics Article 1: [Sports Rules Article 1](#)

Sport Specific Registration



Soccer Events

Soccer Individual Skill Competition

5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (8-15)

5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (16-21)

5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (22+)

5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (30+)

5-a side Unified Team Competition Elementary- (8-13)

5-a side Unified Team Competition Middle School- (14-15)

5-a side Unified Team Competition – Interscholastic - (16-21)

5-a side Unified Team Competition- SO College (22+)

5-a side Unified Team Competition - Community (22+)

5-a side Unified Team Competition - Community (30+)

Winter Season Registration



Required Registration Paperwork

Team Competition

- [Soccer BSAT – Individual Assessment](#)
- [Soccer BSAT – Team Entry Form](#) (Please Attach this to your Final Registration)

Individual Skills Competition

- [Soccer – Individual Skills Scoresheet](#)
- [Leading Soccer Skills – A Crash Course](#)

Winter Season Registration



Identifier (City Name)

Team Name

Required Registration Paperwork

Special Olympics Washington Competition Roster	Program Information			
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 2px;">Program Name:</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Atlantic City Super Stars</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 2px;">Sport:</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Soccer</td> </tr> </table>	Program Name:	Atlantic City Super Stars	Sport:
Program Name:	Atlantic City Super Stars			
Sport:	Soccer			

- Notes:**
- Only participants who are clear for their role through 5/31/26 are on this roster
 - You may not add, edit, or remove names on this roster.
 - Submit Support Requests to <https://bit.ly/SOWA-PortalSupport>

- Notes:**
- If someone is no longer participating, please put "Not Participating" in the Notes Column
 - If someone is participating but not competing, please put "Not Competing" in the Notes Column

Person Type	First Name	Last Name	Preferred Name	DoB	Gender	Team/ Partner Group Name- Event 1	Event 1	Qualifying Score #1	Notes
Athlete	Shania	Twain		8/28/1965		Atlantic City Ardvarks	Soccer 5 A Side Team	13	
Athlete	Drew	Barrymore		2/22/1975			Soccer Individual Skills	75	

BSAT Score

Individual Skills Score

Rules & Competition Updates



Teams:

- All teams will consist of a maximum of 5 players on the field and a total roster size of no more than 10 persons.
- Unified has 3 athletes and 2 partners. The ratio of athletes to partners must be 1 to 1 or higher.

Length of Game: (Determined by style of competition)

Round Robin (seeding): Game length, time outs, half-time and tie guidelines may varyand are set by the competition manager. Can have a tie.

Bracket Play (medal round):

Games consist of two equal halves of 15 minutes and includes a five-minute half time

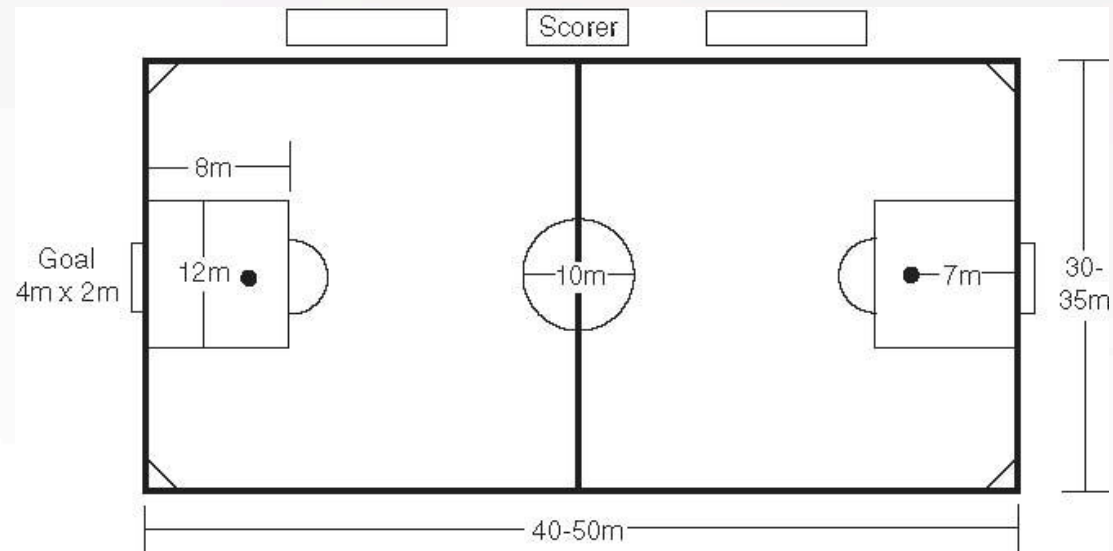
- If the match is tied at the end of regulation, one five-minute “golden Goal” overtime period will be played. If the game is still tied, penalty kicks will be used.

Rules & Competition Updates



Field of Play

- 5-a-side field will be a maximum of 50 meters by 35 meters, and a minimum of 40 meters by 30 Meters
- Families and Spectators must sit on the opposite side of the field from where the team is located.



Rules & Competition Updates



Uniform Guidelines

- Shirts must be numbered
- Shin Guards are required for all players
- No Metal Studs or Baseball Shoes (Rubber Stud at Front of Shoe)

Equipment

- The Ball; Ages 8-12 will be permitted to use a Size 4 (63.5-66 cm) Ball, while all other regulation games will be played with a Size 5 (68-70 cm) Soccer Ball.
- The Goal; 2 Meters x 4 Meters
- Example: [Powernet 6ft x 12ft Pop Up Soccer Goal](#)

Rules & Competition Updates



Safety & Non-Negotiables

- No slide tackling – HEADERS are allowed (may be penalized if determined "aggressive")
- No jewelry (except medical)
- No billed hats
- Shin guards REQUIRED (covered by socks)

Substitutions

- Unlimited substitutions
- ONLY during stoppages
- Coach must signal referee (Player enters ONLY after referee approval)

On field play

- No offsides

Rules & Competition Updates



Restart Rules (Kick-ins + Free Kicks)

Kick In's

- No throw-in's for Special Olympic Soccer
- Ball must be placed on the sideline at the spot where it went out of bounds and will be kicked-in.

Goal Keeper Throw Ins

- Goalkeeper must **THROW** the ball
- No punting or drop-kicks
- Ball must leave the penalty area to be in play
- Cannot cross midfield in the air (If it does → Indirect Free Kick for opponent)

Rules & Competition Updates



Restart Rules (Kick-ins + Free Kicks)

Universal Rules – All Kick-ins and Free Kicks

- **Ball must be stationary;** No rolling starts, Must be clearly set before play
- **No second touch;** Kicker cannot touch again until another player does; Violation = turnover (indirect free kick)
- **Give 5 meters;** Defense MUST back up; Ref will enforce it

Types of Free Kicks

Kick In (Sideline Start)	Goalkeeper Throw	Free Kick (Foul Restart)
Ball goes out over the sideline, kicked back in from that spot	Ball goes over end line (last touched by offense) OR goalkeeper gains possession	Given after a foul or rule violation
Indirect Free Kick	Indirect Free Kick	Direct (or) Indirect

Rules & Competition Updates



Restart Rules (Kick-ins + Free Kicks) **Indirect (IFK) vs. Direct Free Kicks (DFK)**

Indirect Free Kicks	Direct Free Kicks
Must touch another player before a goal	You CAN score Directly
Dangerous Play Obstruction Technical Violations Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Double Touch• Illegal GK Throw / Play	Tripping Pushing Handball Charging



Rules & Competition Updates

Individual Skills Competition

Individual Skills Resources

- ▶ [Soccer – Individual Skills Scoresheet](#)
- ▶ [Leading Soccer Skills – A Crash Course](#)

Individual Skills as Progression and Purpose

Our 2025 Emphasis: Progression with Purpose

- In 2025, we observed many athletes **remaining in Skills despite high performance.**
- When an athlete **consistently approaches or reaches maximum scores,** they are ready to **advance to team competition.**
- Advancement supports confidence, inclusion, and a fuller competitive experience.
- Coaches play a key role in identifying athletes ready for this next step.

Rules & Competition Updates



Individual Skills Competition

Individual Skills Overview

- Athletes rotate through **3 core skill stations**: Dribbling, Shooting, Run & Kick

Key Reminders / Notes:

- **Dribbling:** Athletes should be in control of the ball throughout the drill.
- **Shooting:** The athlete can choose to line all the balls up on the shooting line, or a volunteer can be lining them up for them.
- **Run & Kick:** The Athlete begins at the Starting line/circle in the middle of the drill. Order does not matter, and the athlete does NOT have to return to the standing line/circle before kicking each ball

General Policies



Incident Report

To be covered, the injury must occur while: (a) participating in activities that are authorized, organized and supervised by Special Olympics; or (b) traveling to, during, or after such activities as a member of a group in transportation furnished or arranged by Special Olympics. Covered Event is defined as any scheduled activity authorized, organized and supervised by Special Olympics. With respect to competition activities, this includes pre-competition activities and practice sessions.

- Complete Incident Report Form
- Once complete, the form must be signed by all applicable parties, including any witnesses and Special Olympics Washington Staff, if applicable. The Program Coordinator should send this to their Regional Program Manager.
- Once fully completed and signed, the Incident Report will then be filed in by Special Olympics Washington Staff.
- Once a medical bill is received by the injured party (after they have submitted through their own insurance. This would be any costs after the fact.), submit the completed incident report form and the medical bill to Special Olympics Washington Staff

Thank you



Questions?