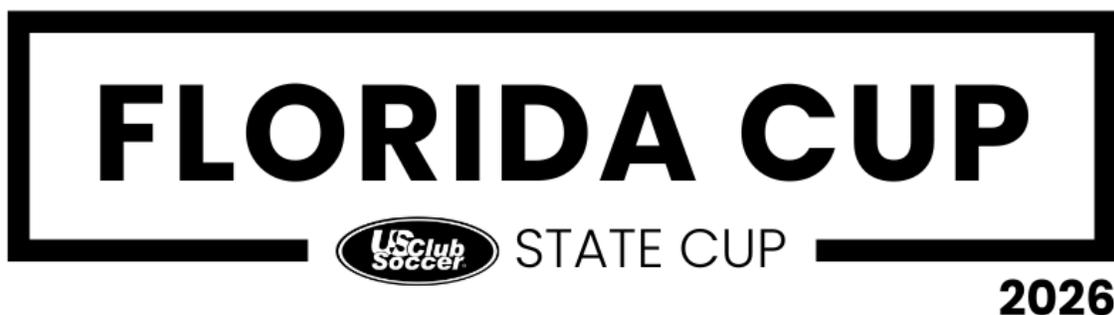


# 2025-2026 Florida Cup Rules and Regulations



## Section 1: Competition Rules

### 1.1 Playing Rules

All Florida Cup games shall be played according to the rules and regulations recognized by Florida Club Leagues (FCL) which shall be the same rules set by FIFA/USSF except for those exceptions authorized by FIFA or USSF.

### 1.2 Team Advancement

For age groups U9-U12, the Florida Cup begins with a group stage proceeded by a single elimination tournament. For the single elimination portion of the tournament, each match must have a winner. The winner of each game will advance to the next round.

For age groups U13-U18/19, the Florida Cup is a Single Elimination tournament, with each game needing a winner. The winner of each game will advance to the next round.

The team with the most goals after regulation time will be the winner. If the match is tied after regulation, two full-time 5-minute overtime periods will be played. If the game is still tied after two overtime periods, then penalty kicks from the mark per FIFA will determine the winner.

### 1.3 Game Details

	U9-U10	U11	U12	U12(11v11) & U13	U14-U16	U17-U19
<b>*Field Size (yds)</b>	55/65 L 35/45 W	70/80 L 45/55 W	70/80 L 45/55 W	100/120 L 50/80 W	100/120 L 50/80 W	100/120 L 55/80 W
<b>**Number of Referees</b>	1	3	3	3	3	3
<b>Number of Players</b>	7V7	9v9	9v9	11v11	11v11	11v11
<b>Maximum Players per game day Roster</b>	16	16	16	18	18	18
<b>Minimum # of Players</b>	5	6	6	7	7	7
<b>Goalkeeper</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Playing Time	2x25	2x30	2x30	2x35	2x40	2x45
Ball Size	4	4	4	U12 (11v11) – 4 U13 – 5	5	5
Goal Mouth Size (feet)	6.5x18.5 - 7x21	6.5x18.5 - 7x21	6.5x18.5 - 7x21	8x24	8x24	8x24
Offside	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Substitutions	Any Stoppage	Any Stoppage	Any Stoppage	Any Stoppage	Any Stoppage	Any Stoppage
Free Kick clearance	8 yd	8 yd	8 yd	10 yd	10 yd	10 yd
Throw-in	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
Penalty Kicks	Yes (mark at 10 yds)	Yes (mark at at 10 yds)	Yes (mark at at 10 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)	Yes (mark at 12 yds)
Penalty Area (yds)	12x24	14x36	14x36	18 x 44	18 x 44	18 x 44
Goal Area (yards)	4x8	5x16	5x16	6 x 20	6 x 20	6 x 20
Heading	None	None	Per Laws/Rules	per Laws/Rules	per Laws/Rules	per Laws/Rules

\*\*Recommended minimum number of referees

\*Use of cones for lines allowed

#### 1.4 Fields

The goal of each club shall be to provide an enjoyable experience for the fans, players, officials, and everyone involved with the staging of a soccer game. With that in mind, it is

expected that all club hosted fields be of the highest possible quality for the Florida Cup competition. The playing field used by each team must be lined according to FIFA standards with goals, nets, and flags. If you feel a field is not of proper quality, please play the match under protest and submit the protest to the Florida Club Leagues (view section on protests).

## 1.5 Heading Game Rule

This rule is set up to follow the guideline set up by U.S. Soccer and U.S. Club Soccer. This rule shall apply to the age groups of U11 and below. Players who are playing up will play according to the rules of the age group in which they are playing. For a player that is U11 (refer to age group) and below, when a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If a player does not deliberately head the ball, then play should continue.

It is the team's responsibility to understand the effects of this rule on players playing up.

Please reference the U.S. Soccer and U.S. Club Soccer Initiative for Concussions and Head injuries [HERE](#).

## 1.6 Substitutions

1.6.1 Substitutes are to enter the game at the centerline on the bench side of the field.

1.6.2 Age Groups U9 through U12:

- Unlimited substitutions shall be allowed.

*Referees will be instructed not to allow substitutions that are deemed "excessive" or of a "time-wasting" nature. Please be respectful of the integrity of the game and do not use the free substitution rules as a means to disrupt the match.*

1.6.3 Age Groups U13 through U18/19:

- Teams are allowed a maximum of three (3) substitution moments per half, per team - with water breaks not considered a substitution moment. Players who are substituted may re-enter the game at any time, provided they are substituted off during a stoppage in play.

1.6.4 Injury Substitutions:

- If your team has available substitution moments, an injury substitution will count as one of those moments, and additional substitutions can be made during the same stoppage.
- If your team does not have any remaining substitution moments, an injured player may leave the field, but no substitute may enter in their place. To clarify, the team with the injured player would play a player-down in this situation, until substitution moments are reset.

1.6.5 Head Injury Substitution Procedure:

- A player who is suspected to have suffered a head injury may be substituted while being evaluated by a medical professional. The substitution for the evaluation of

the concussion/head injury will not count against the team's total number of substitutions moments (temporary substitution).

- If the player is deemed by a medical professional to not have suffered a concussion, and can return to play, the player may re-enter the match at any stoppage of play and must replace the temporary substitute; this head injury evaluation substitution will not count as a substitution moment. Furthermore, the temporary substitute will be able to re-enter the match at a later time if not previously substituted out earlier in the match for a non-head related substitution.
- If the player is deemed by the medical professional to have suffered a possible concussion and is not cleared to return to play, the temporary substitute will be considered a permanent substitute.
- If another player is substituted during the head injury, this will count as a moment.

Policy Principles:

- A “concussion substitution” may be made regardless of the number of substitutes moments already used.

Substitutions may occur at any stoppage. However, the referee shall have discretion over all substitutions, and may refuse to allow any substitution if, in his/her opinion, the purpose is to disrupt the game.

## **1.7 Head Injury Protocol**

In accordance with the U.S. Soccer return to play guidelines, any player removed from the field for a suspected head injury will not be allowed to return to the field of play unless cleared by an on-site Healthcare Professional.

A healthcare professional is defined as “a licensed healthcare professional such as an athletic trainer certified (ATC), or a physician (MD/DO), with a skill set in emergency care and sports medicine injuries and with knowledge and experience related to concussion evaluation and management.” It will be up to each club to decide whether they will provide a healthcare professional at their matches and to ensure that this individual has the correct certification to be evaluating players for head trauma. If a club plans to use a healthcare professional to evaluate suspected head injuries during a FCL match, the healthcare professional must be presented to the referee prior to the start of the match. Referees will not allow the re-entry of players removed from the field of play for suspected head injuries unless they are informed of the presence of, and meet with, a healthcare professional prior to the start of the match.

## **1.8 Incomplete Games**

1.8.1 Games Considered Official: If one-half (50%) or more of the scheduled game time has been completed, the game shall be considered official and the score at the time of suspension will stand as the final result.

1.8.2 Games Stopped Before One-Half: If a match is suspended prior to the completion of one-half of the scheduled time, the game shall be replayed in its entirety at a time

agreed upon by the competing teams in consultation with the Florida Cup Staff. The replayed game will begin at 0–0, regardless of the score at the time of suspension.

- 1.8.3 Team Misconduct Leading to Termination: If a game is terminated due to the actions of one team—including but not limited to poor sportsmanship, misconduct, or abusive behavior toward referees, opponents, or spectators—that team shall forfeit the match. The forfeiting team may also be subject to additional sanctions as determined by the FCL Board of Directors and the FCL Protest, Discipline, and Ethics Committee.
- 1.8.4 Neutral Suspensions (Weather/Unforeseen Events): If a match is suspended for reasons outside the control of the teams (e.g., weather, field conditions, injury delay, unforeseen circumstances), the rules regarding “Inclement Weather” Procedure” below and the “Games Considered Official” and “Games Stopped Before One-Half” will apply.
- 1.8.5 Inclement Weather Procedure: When inclement weather approaches, the following steps shall be taken for the safety of all players, coaches, referees, support staff, and spectators:
- Play must be suspended immediately when a detection system/mobile app confirms a strike within ten (10) miles of the facility. All participants must vacate the field and seek safe shelter.
  - A thirty (30) minute rule shall apply. Once play is suspended, a thirty (30) minute countdown begins from the last lightning strike. Any new strike resets the thirty (30) minute clock. Play may not resume until the full thirty (30) minutes have passed without a new strike.
  - Facilities equipped with Thor Guard or similar systems must follow their set protocols for suspension and resumption of play. If the system has not activated but verified lightning is detected within ten (10) miles, play must still be suspended.
  - A maximum sixty (60) minute delay period shall apply as a bright-line rule:
    - a) If a match has not yet started, it must begin within sixty (60) minutes of the original scheduled kickoff time, or it will be rescheduled.
    - b) If a match has already started, play may only be delayed for up to sixty (60) minutes from the time play was stopped. If play cannot safely resume within that window, follow the procedures under section 1.8.1 or 1.8.2 depending on when the match was suspended.
    - c) The sixty (60) minute limit may be extended only if both teams mutually agree to continue waiting. In such cases, the League recommends that extensions beyond sixty (60) minutes be limited to reasonable circumstances (e.g., weather clearing shortly thereafter).
  - Teams are required to remain at the facility until either the sixty (60) minute maximum delay period has expired (or any mutually agreed extension) or the referees officially abandon the match. If a team departs prior to the expiration of the delay period and play is later deemed safe to resume within that period, that team shall be deemed to have forfeited the match (recorded as a 3–0 loss).
  - If a match is suspended before the completion of the first half and cannot be resumed within the sixty (60) minute maximum delay period (or any mutually

agreed extension), it must be rescheduled in consultation with the League. If abandonment occurs under subsection (e), the opposing team shall be awarded a 3–0 forfeit win.

1.8.6 Authority for Final Decisions: In all cases, the final determination regarding incomplete games, rescheduling, forfeits, or sanctions rests with the Florida Cup Committee and FCL Staff.

## 1.9 Referee's authority

The referee's decision in all matters related to the field and the game itself shall be final. There shall be no protests of any referee's decision or game result.

# Section 2: Rosters

## 2.1 Player Registration

All players must be registered according to US Club Soccer rules.

## 2.2 Florida Cup Official Team Roster

2.2.1 Each team must create their official Florida Cup Roster on their team's GotSport online account.

2.2.2 Age Groups U9-U12: rosters will be capped at 26 players, and once frozen, teams may only use players off this 26-player roster.

2.2.3 Age Groups U12(11v11) and U13-U18/19: rosters will be capped at 26 players, and once frozen, teams may only use players off this 26-player roster.

2.2.4 Rosters: The Rosters will be frozen twice during the competition. Once prior to the start of the tournament on September 24, 2025, at 11:59 PM EST (5 days prior to the first day of competition) and will remain locked until the completion of the single elimination rounds. Rosters will reopen from April 27, 2026, until May 4, 2026, at 11:59 PM EST prior to Finals Weekend (May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026).

## 2.3 Game Day Roster

Only players who are listed on the official GotSport match report will be eligible to play in Florida Cup matches. Player's names may not be handwritten on the Florida Cup match reports from GotSport. If any player is not listed on the Florida Cup match report, he/she must be added electronically to the match report before the player is eligible to play. Any players not appearing in the match must be stricken from the match report.

For clarification purposes:

Age Groups U9-U12: up to 26 players may be listed on the official Florida Cup event roster but only 16 players for U9-U12 may be used in any match. No player shall appear on more than one game match report for the entirety of the event.

Age Groups U13-U18/19: up to 26 players may be listed on the official Florida Cup event roster but only 18 players for U12(11v11) and U13-U19 may be used in any match. No player shall appear on more than one game match report for the entirety of the event.

## **2.4 US Club Soccer Player Pass**

All players and coaches must present their US Club Soccer Player Identification Card to the referee prior to the match. Physical or digital player passes accepted.

## **2.5 Guest Players**

No Guest Players will be allowed.

## **2.6 Illegal Players**

Any player who does not appear on the official Florida Cup match report from GotSport and/or does not have a valid US Club Soccer Player Pass issued by the same club shall be considered an illegal player. Any team using or attempting to use an illegal player shall forfeit the game, the coach of the team using the illegal player will be suspended from the Florida Cup and other Florida Club Leagues sanctioned events for one year, and the club attempting to use an illegal player will incur a \$500 fine.

## **2.7 “Cup Tied”**

2.7.1 Definition: A player is considered “Cup Tied” once they participate in a Florida Cup match for a specific team within a specific age group. Once Cup Tied, the player may not compete for any other team in that same age group for the remainder of the competition.

2.7.2 Playing Up an Age Group: A player may compete in an older age group only after the team to which they were originally rostered has been eliminated from the Florida Cup. Example: If a player participates with a U16 team and that team is eliminated, the player may be rostered onto a U17 or older team (provided the roster is open and not frozen). The player may not transfer to another U16 team still in the competition.

2.7.3 Club Restriction: Players are also Cup Tied to their Club. A player who competes for one club in the Florida Cup may not later play for another club during the same competition. Example: A player who appears in any Florida Cup match for Club ABC and later transfers to Club XYZ remains ineligible to play for Club XYZ for the duration of the Florida Cup, as they are Cup Tied to Club ABC.

## **2.8 Emergency Player Rule**

### **2.8.1 Eligibility to Request:**

- If a team’s active roster falls below the minimum number of players, the team may request to add additional players. The minimum thresholds are:
  - U13 and older: 12 players
  - U11–U12: 10 players
  - U9–U10: 8 players

### 2.8.2 Player Requirements:

- Eligible emergency players must:
- Have been registered with the same club **prior to the roster freeze date**; and
- Not have been previously listed on a Florida Cup roster.
- This rule also permits the addition of a goalkeeper even if the club has above the minimum threshold of players.

### 2.8.3 Request Procedure:

- All emergency player requests must be submitted in writing via email by the Club Director of Coaching or a Club Administrator to the Florida Cup staff.

## **Section 3: Game Day Procedures for Self-Scheduling**

### **3.1 Pre-Game Procedures**

#### 3.1.1 Home Team Responsibilities:

- Communicating all match details (date, time, location, etc.) to Florida Cup staff.
- Scheduling referees and ensuring they are current-year licensed USSF referees.
- Providing a properly prepared field, including:
  - Clearly lined field of play
  - Properly sized goals
  - Corner flags
  - Benches for both teams
- Paying all referee fees.
- Providing the official Florida Cup Game Card (including both team rosters) to the center referee.
- Providing the center referee with current-year US Club Soccer player passes for each player and team official. Physical or digital player passes accepted

#### 3.1.2 Visiting Team Responsibilities:

- Providing the center referee with current-year US Club Soccer player passes for each player and team official. Physical or digital player passes accepted.
- Having a copy of the official Florida Cup Game Card available if requested by the center referee.

#### 3.1.3 Neutral Site Matches:

- A neutral site match may be scheduled if the teams are located more than four (4) hours apart (one way).
- Neutral site games should be arranged directly between the teams, with Florida Cup staff available to assist in facilitating if needed.
- Referee fees shall be shared equally (50/50) by both teams.
- Any site rental or referee assigning fees shall also be shared equally (50/50) by both teams.

### **3.2 Referee Fees**

The home team is responsible for paying all referee fees. In the event a neutral site is used, the referee fees will be split evenly between the two teams. Below is the referee fees per age group.

Age Group	Center	Assistant Referee	Total
U9/U10	\$50	N/A	\$50
U11/U12	\$60	\$40	\$140
U-12 (11v11) & U13	\$80	\$60	\$200
U14/U15/U16	\$85	\$60	\$205
U17/U19	\$100	\$75	\$250

### 3.3 Game Day Procedures

Each team manager is required to have the following materials present at every Florida Cup match:

1. The official Florida Cup Game Card from GotSport.
2. The official US Club Soccer roster for their team.
3. Current-year US Club Soccer player passes for all players and team officials. Physical or digital player passes accepted.

### 3.4 Post-Game Procedure

#### 3.4.1 Home Team Responsibilities:

- Ensuring the Coach or Team Manager signs the official Game Sheet immediately following the match.
- If no red cards are issued:
  - Retaining the match report until the end of the season; and
  - Uploading a picture of the match report and final score into the GotSport score reporting system.
- If a red card is issued:
  - Sending a copy of the match report and the referee's supplemental report to [redcard@floridaclubleagues.com](mailto:redcard@floridaclubleagues.com).
  - This requires immediate action by both the center referee and the Team Manager.
- Posting all scores and match reports within 24 hours of the match.

#### 3.4.2 Visiting Team Responsibilities:

- Ensuring the Coach or Team Manager signs the official Game Sheet immediately following the match.

### 3.5 Personnel on the bench

A maximum of three (3) team officials are permitted in each team's technical area during a match. All officials must hold a valid US Club Soccer pass in order to be present in the

technical area. Teams are encouraged to have multiple credentialed coaches or managers available in case the Head Coach is unable to fulfill their duties. A valid US Club Soccer pass qualifies a coach or manager to serve in the technical area for any team within their club.

### **3.6 Score reports**

The Home Team must report the final score in the GotSport system within 24 hours of the match. The Home Team is also responsible for uploading the official game card to GotSport and retaining the original game card for possible future reference.

### **3.7 Game Card**

Both teams must have a copy of the official Florida Cup Game Card. The Home Team is responsible for providing the Game Card to the match officials before the match, while the Visiting Team should have a copy available as a backup. After the match, the officials and each coach must sign the Game Card. The Home Team is responsible for retaining the signed Game Card for future reference.

### **3.8 Spectator and Sideline Behavior**

All spectators are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes a positive playing environment. The following apply:

Respect for Officials and Participants: Spectators must not use abusive, threatening, or confrontational language or gestures toward referees, players, coaches, or other spectators.

Sideline Location: Spectators must remain on the opposite side of the field from the team benches unless the facility layout requires otherwise.

Referee Authority: Referees have ultimate authority to address spectator or sideline misconduct. Referees may stop play, remove individuals, or terminate the match if they determine spectator behavior is disruptive, unsafe, or abusive.

Coach Responsibility: Each team's coach is responsible for the conduct of their spectators. Failure to control sideline behavior may result in the referee suspending play, terminating the match, or reporting misconduct to Florida Cup Staff.

Sanctions: Teams whose spectators engage in misconduct may be subject to sanctions, including warnings, forfeiture of the match, removal from the competition, or fines at the discretion of Florida Cup Staff.

### **3.9 Jersey Conflict**

It is recommended that the Home Team wear light or white jerseys and the Away Team wear dark jerseys. In the event of a jersey color conflict, the Away Team is responsible for changing uniforms. To avoid issues, Home Teams are encouraged to notify their opponents of their chosen jersey color by Thursday at 5:00 p.m. prior to the match weekend.

## **Section 4: Applications, Deadlines & Withdraws Competition Announcements**

### **4.1 Application**

All applications must be completed in GotSport in their entirety, including full payment, by the published application deadline. Teams that fail to submit payment by the deadline may be removed from the tournament.

### **4.2 Withdrawals & Fines**

#### **4.2.1 Withdrawal of Application:**

- Notice of intent to withdraw from the tournament must be made directly to the Tournament Director.
- A team that withdraws its application at any time will forfeit its entry fee.
- A team that withdraws after acceptance or is declared ineligible will also be subject to the following additional fines:
  - After entries close but before the **drawing date**: Forfeit of entry fee **plus \$100 fine**.

#### **4.2.2 Cancellations of Scheduled Matches:**

- Once the match schedule has been published, cancellations are considered forfeits and subject to the following fines:
- Cancellation with less than 7 days' notice: \$250 fine.
- Cancellation with less than 72 hours' notice: \$500 fine.
- Cancellation with less than 48 hours' notice: \$750 fine.
- Cancellation with less than 24 hours' notice: \$1,500 fine.

#### **4.2.3 Referee Requirements:**

- Teams must provide three (3) current-year licensed referees.
- A fine of \$150 per missing referee will apply.
- Use of unlicensed referees may result in the game being declared a forfeit and/or removal from Florida Cup competitions.

#### **4.2.4 Multiple Cancellations:**

- Any team with more than one cancellation during the tournament will be immediately removed from the remainder of the competition.

#### **4.2.5 Fines Distribution:**

- In the event of a cancellation within 72 hours or less, the non-offending club will be entitled to a portion of the fines levied on the canceling club.

#### **4.2.6 Late Payments:**

- Any team failing to complete payment within 30 days will be subject to a 15% late fee.

### **4.3 Forfeits**

#### **4.3.1 Definition and Penalties:**

- A forfeit during the competition shall be treated as a withdrawal and will be subject to the applicable fines and penalties outlined in Section 4.2.
- 4.3.2 Score Reporting:
- A forfeited match will be recorded as a 3–0 win for the opposing team.
- 4.3.3 Abandoned Matches:
- If a game is abandoned after it has begun, the opposing team will be awarded either a 3–0 win or the actual score at the time of abandonment, whichever is more favorable to them.

## **Section 5: Competition Format, the Draw**

### **5.1 Competition Format and Advancement**

Each seasonal year, Florida Club Leagues will conduct a tournament to determine a State Cup champion in each age group. This competition is an Open Cup.

The format of play in each age group may vary slightly depending on the number of participating teams. As a general rule:

- U9–U12 Age Groups: Teams will compete in a group stage, followed by a single-elimination tournament.
- U13–U18/19 Age Groups: Teams will compete in a single-elimination tournament only.

All brackets and rounds will be determined by the total number of teams entered in each age group, with random drawings conducted at the start of the event.

### **5.2 Random Draw**

The draw shall be conducted as a completely random draw.

Where necessary, byes in the knockout stage will be randomly awarded, with the order of preference for byes as follows:

1. ECNL
2. ECNL-RL
3. NPL
4. Local premier or other leagues

This order reflects the league's preference in the random draw. If byes are available, they will first be randomly drawn from the highest league tier (ECNL). If additional byes remain, they will then be drawn from the next tier, and so on.

If a bye is available due to the number of teams entered, the returning Florida Cup Champion in that gender/age group shall automatically receive the bye.

If two teams from the same club are drawn into the same bracket and such placement can reasonably be avoided, the second team will be returned to the draw and another team selected.

### **5.3 Home and Away Policy**

Home and away designations for the opening round will be determined by random draw. Beginning with subsequent rounds, designations will alternate for advancing teams so that a team playing at home in one round will be away in the following round. If two teams who were both home or both away in the prior round meet, the home team will be determined by a random draw conducted by competition staff. This system ensures fairness and transparency throughout the tournament.

### **5.4 Group Stage Format**

5.4.1 Game Points: 3 points awarded for a win; 1 point for a tie; zero (0) points for a loss.

5.4.2 Tiebreakers: For teams tied in points at the end of a the group stage competition, tiebreaker criteria shall be:

- 1) head-to-head competitions (but not in the case of a three-way tie);
- 2) goal differential (max of 4 per game);
- 3) total goals (max of 4 per game);
- 4) fewest goals allowed; and
- 5) flip of a coin.

5.4.3 In a case where three teams are tied in points, but one team has defeated the other teams tied in points, the winner of the two games will advance.

5.4.4 In addition, once a tiebreaker is used to eliminate one team (i.e. head-to-head, goal differential, etc.), the next tiebreaker in line will be used to determine the winner or team that advances.

5.4.5 Uneven number of games: If a tiebreaker calculation between two or more teams would be based on a different number of games, points, total goals and fewest goals allowed will be converted into a percentage per game.

### **5.5 National Obligation**

Teams winning the Florida Cup are expected to attend the National Cup in July of 2026. Those not attending will be responsible for the entry fee of the event.

Aside from fines for forfeits (which go to the hosting club, if appropriate), all fines will be added to the travel fund for teams qualifying for national events via FCL competitions, after the deduction of admin costs.

### **5.6 Authority of Florida Cup Staff**

All decisions made by Florida Cup Staff regarding the interpretation and application of these Rules and Regulations are final and binding. In the event of any ambiguity, omission, or dispute arising under these Rules, Florida Cup Staff reserve the authority to make

rulings as they deem appropriate, and such rulings shall stand as the final decision in all matters.