



**NORTH AMERICAN
ISMAILI GAMES**

FOOTBALL RULEBOOK

Introduction

The North American Ismaili Games (NAIG) is a premier regional sporting event that brings together athletes from across North America in a spirit of excellence, sportsmanship, and healthy competition, aligned with international standards.

Beyond competition, NAIG serves as a platform for unity, belonging, and shared growth—fostering meaningful connections and collective pride across regions. The Games are designed to be inclusive and accessible, enabling participation across age groups, skill levels, and regions.

NAIG also promotes lifelong active living and continuous improvement, while extending its impact through complementary programming such as development clinics, leadership forums, mentorship, and community engagement.

Click [here](#) for more information on the Laws of the Match from the official governing body (IFAB - [Laws of the Game 2020/21](#))

18+ Rules and Standards

Topic	Recommendation
Game Time (minutes)	2 x 35 minute halves
Substitutions	Unlimited for the half. A player who has been replaced cannot enter the game for the remainder of the half.
Coach	All teams are required to have a coach who is not a player on the team

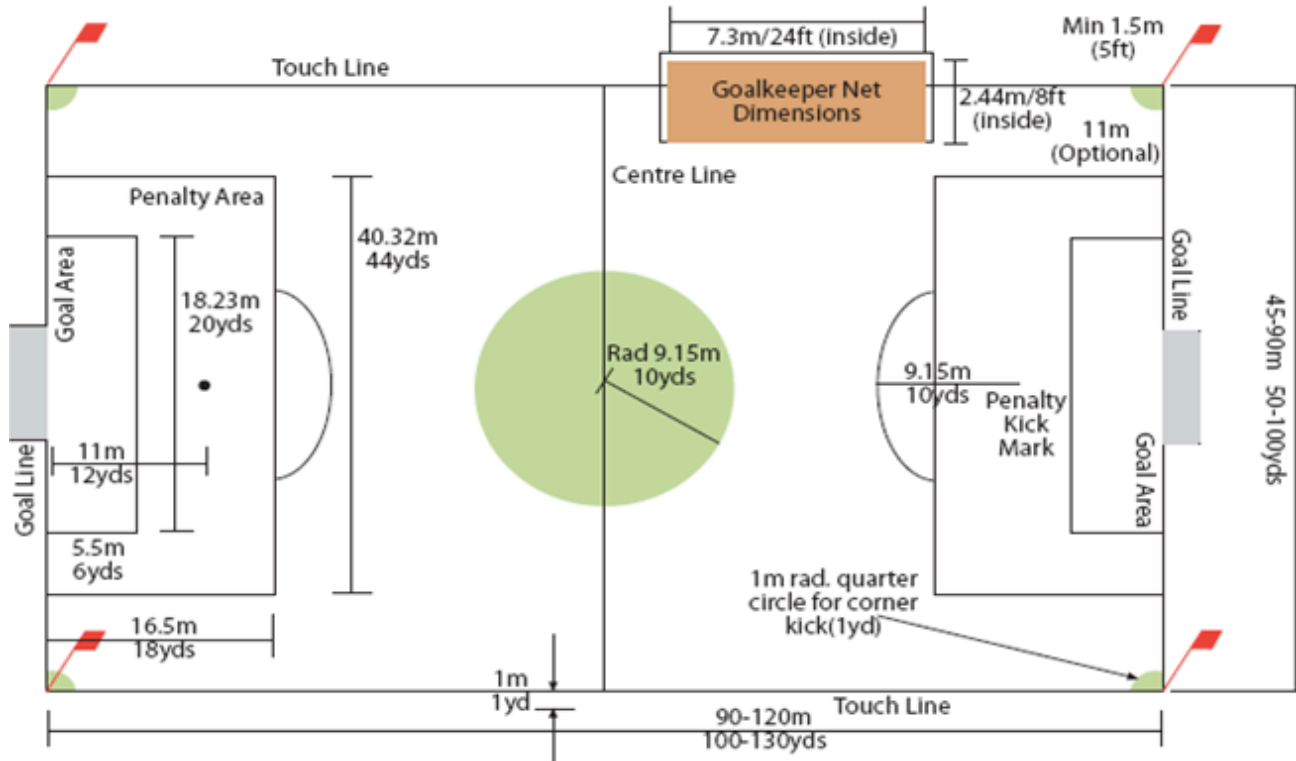
Highlights

- Matches are seventy (70) minutes in length, (thirty-five (35) minute halves), with a ten (10) minute break between halves.
- For semi-finals and finals the break between halves will be fifteen (15) minutes.
- A team must have a minimum of twelve (12) players and a maximum of eighteen (18) players.
- A match will consist of two (2) teams with eleven (11) players including a goalkeeper.

- A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than seven (7) players.
- Six (6) substitutions may be used in any match. A player who has been replaced takes no further part in the match.
- If a player receives two (2) yellow cards in two (2) different games from the beginning of the preliminary round until the end of the quarter-final matches, they will automatically be given a one (1) match suspension.
- The ball will be made of leather or other suitable material of a circumference not more than seventy (70) cm and not less than sixty-eight (68) cm, weighing between four-hundred-ten (410) g to four-hundred-fifty (450) g, having air pressure between 8.5 lbs/sq in to 15.6 lbs/sq in, and be a standard size five (5).
- Shin-guards are mandatory for all players.
- ALL items of jewelry are strictly forbidden (including, but not limited to: necklaces, bracelets, smart watches, earrings).
- Injury time or added time due to delay will only be added at the referee's discretion.

Football Field

The Diagram below is an illustration of a football field:



Equipment

- Shin-guards are mandatory for all participants.
- A player who is sent off by the referee because of defective, dangerous or missing equipment may not re-enter the match until the referee is satisfied with the player's equipment.
- Each goalkeeper shall wear colors that distinguish them from the other players, the referee, and the assistant referee(s).
- Metal cleats for footwear are not allowed. Wearing metal cleats is grounds for disqualification for the whole team.

Official Rules

Start of Play

A coin is tossed and the team that wins the toss decides which goal it will attack in the first (1st) half of the match. The other team takes the kick-off to start the match.

The team that wins the toss takes the kick-off to start the second (2nd) half of the match. In the second (2nd) half of the match, the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals.

Both teams will be entitled to a half-time interval break of ten (10) minutes.

Goalkeepers

Any of the other players may change places with the goalkeeper, provided that the referee is informed before the change is made and the change is made during a stoppage in the match.

Each goalkeeper has to wear colors that distinguish them from the other players, the referee and the assistant referees.

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside their own penalty area, commits any of the following four (4) offenses:

- Takes more than six (6) seconds while controlling the ball with their hands before releasing it from their possession
- Touches the ball again with their hands after it has been released from their possession and has not touched any other player
- Touches the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a teammate
- Touches the ball with their hands after they have received it directly from a throw-in taken by a teammate

If the goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball outside the goalkeeper's penalty area, a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred. They will be treated as a regular player and subject to the same laws of the match respecting cautionable offenses, that is, red and yellow cards.

Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is out of play when:

- It is wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air.
- The match has been stopped by the Referee.

The ball is in play, at all other times, including when:

- It rebounds into play from a goal post or crossbar
- It rebounds from the Referee or assistant Referee(s) when he/she is within the playing area
- It rebounds from corner flags

Substitutions

Six (6) substitutions shall be allowed during a stoppage in the match and with the referee's permission. Player(s) shall be within one (1) meter of leaving the playing surface at the halfway line before a substitute may enter.

To replace a player by a substitute, the following conditions must be observed:

- The referee is informed before any proposed substitution is made
- A substitute only enters the field of play after the player being replaced has left and after receiving a signal from the referee
- A substitute only enters the field of play at the halfway line and during a stoppage in the match
- A substitution is completed when a substitute enters the field of play
- From that moment, the substitute becomes a player and the player they have replaced ceases to be a player
- A player who has been replaced can take no further part in the match

The referee will immediately issue a caution to any player who delays the start of the play.

Substitutes are required to wear a penny or some other color to distinguish they are not players on the field of play.

Offside Position

It is not an offense in itself to be in an offside position

- One (1) example is when an attacker in an offside position does not interfere with or challenge the opponent, and does not touch the ball cannot be penalized because they did not touch the ball
- A second (2nd) example is when an attacker in an offside position runs

towards the ball, and a teammate in an onside position also runs towards the ball and plays it, cannot be penalized because they did not touch the ball

A player is in an offside position if they are nearer to their opponent's goal line than both the ball and the second (2nd) last opponent.

A player is not in an offside position if:

- They are in their own half of the field of play
- They are level with the last two (2) opponents

A player in an offside position is only penalized if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one (1) of their teammates, they are, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play by:

- Interfering with play
- Interfering with an opponent
- Gaining an advantage by being in that position

For any offside offense, the referee awards an indirect free kick to the opposing team to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred

Indirect Free Kick

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, inside their own penalty area, commits any of the following four (4) offenses:

- Takes more than six (6) seconds while controlling the ball with their hands before releasing it from their possession
- Touches the ball again with their hands after it has been released from their possession and has not touched any other player
- Touches the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately kicked to them by a teammate
- Touches the ball with their hands after they have received it directly from a throw-in taken by a teammate

An indirect free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee:

- Plays in a dangerous manner
- Impedes the progress of an opponent
- Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from their hands
- Commits any other offense, not previously mentioned for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player

The indirect free kick is taken from where the offense occurred

Direct Free Kick

A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following seven (7) offenses in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent
- Tackles an opponent

A direct free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following three (3) offenses:

- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within their own penalty area)

A direct kick is taken from where the offense occurred.

Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded if any of the above ten (10) offenses is committed by a player inside their own penalty area, irrespective of the position of the ball, provided it is in play

Post-Match Penalty Shoot-Out in Playoffs

The referee chooses the goal at which the kicks will be taken by tossing a coin and the team whose captain wins the toss decides whether to take the first (1st) or the second (2nd) kick. The referee keeps a record of the kicks being taken. Subject to the conditions explained below, both teams take five (5) kicks which are taken alternately by the teams.

Position of the ball and the players:

- The ball is placed on the penalty mark
- The player taking the penalty kick is properly identified
- The defending goalkeeper remains on their goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts until the ball has been kicked

The referee:

- Does not signal for a penalty kick to be taken until the players have taken up position in accordance with the law
- Decides when a penalty kick has been completed
- Ensures the player taking the penalty kicks the ball forward
- And that they do not play the ball a second (2nd) time until it has touched another player (this only applies to penalty kicks taken during the normal course of time or extended time)
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward

With the exception of the foregoing case, only players who are on the field of play at the end of the match, which includes extra time where appropriate, are allowed to take kicks from the penalty mark.

Each kick is taken by a different player and all eligible players must take a kick before any player can take a second kick.

An eligible player may change places with the goalkeeper at any time when kicks from the penalty mark are being taken.

Only the eligible players and match officials are permitted to remain on the field of play when kicks from the penalty mark are being taken.

All players, except the player taking the kick and the two (2) goalkeepers, must remain within the center circle.

The goalkeeper who is the teammate of the kicker must remain on the field of play,

outside the penalty area in which the kicks are being taken, on the goal line where it meets the penalty area boundary line.

If, before both teams have taken five (5) kicks, one (1) has scored more goals than the other could score, even if it were to complete its five (5) kicks, no more kicks are taken.

If, after both teams have taken five (5) kicks, both have scored the same number of goals, or have not scored any goals, sudden death rounds of one (1) kick each are used until one (1) side scores and the other does not.

Once all eligible players have taken a kick from the penalty mark, the same sequence does not have to be followed as in the first (1st) round of kicks.

A referee shall not stop the match if a team remains with less than seven (7) players during the taking of kicks from the penalty mark.

When a team finishes the match with a greater number of players than their opponents, they shall reduce their numbers to equate with that of their opponents and inform the referee of the name and number of each player excluded.

If a player is injured or sent off during the taking of penalty kicks from the penalty marks and the team has one (1) player less, the referee should not reduce the number of players taking kicks for the other team. An equal number of players from each team is required only at the start of the taking of kicks from the penalty mark.

Yellow Card

A player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if they commit any of the following seven (7) offenses:

- Unsporting behavior
- Dissent by word or action
- Persistent infringement of the Laws of the Match
- Delaying the restart of play
- Failure to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick or throw-in
- Entering or reentering the field of play without the referee's permission
- Deliberately leaving the field of play without the referee's permission

A substitute or substituted player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if they commit any of the following offenses:

- Unsporting behavior
- Dissent by word or action
- Delaying the restart of play

If a player receives two (2) yellow cards in two (2) different games from the beginning of the preliminary round until the end of the quarter-final matches, they will automatically be given a one (1) match suspension, including the quarter- finals.

At the end of the quarter-final matches, all single yellow cards accumulated thus far will be negated.

If a player receives two (2) yellow cards in the same match, a red card will be issued and will result in a two (2) match suspension (match in which the card is issued and the next subsequent match).

Red Card

A player, substitute or substituted player is sent off and shown the red card if they commit any of the following seven (7) offenses:

- Serious foul play
- Violent conduct
- Spitting at an opponent or any other person
- Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball
- Denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick
- Using offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- Receiving a second (2nd) caution in the same match

A player, substitute or substituted player who has been sent off and shown the red card must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area

A red card in any match will result in a two (2) match suspension (match in which the card is issued and the next subsequent match), including the playoffs

Red cards are also subject to review after the game and can result in longer suspensions depending on the severity of the offense at the discretion of the tournament organizers

Goal Kick

A goal kick is awarded when the whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the attacking team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, but a goal is not scored due to an infringement of the "Laws of the Match"

A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick, but only against the opposing team

Corner Kick

A corner kick is awarded when the whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the defending team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, and a goal is not scored due to an infringement of the "Laws of the Match"

A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick, but only against the opposing team

Allowance for Time Lost

Allowance will be made in either period for all time lost through:

- Substitutions
- Assessment of injury to players
- Removal of injured players from the field of play for treatment
- Wasting time
- Any other cause

The allowance for time lost will be at the discretion of the referee

Warm-up

Prior to the match, teams are entitled to a five (5) minute warm-up period on the field

Coaching

Coaching is considered to be communication, advice or instruction of any kind to a player

Coaching can be provided to the player(s) during the half-time interval break of ten (10) minutes and prior to commencement of overtime period in the playoffs

In the above regulation breaks during a match, the coach must return to their team bench area as soon as the referee announces that the interval break is over

Throughout the match, the coach conducts the play of their team from outside the playing surface within the technical area. They select the starting line-ups, and the substitutes. In these functions their contacting official is the assistant referee/fourth (4th) official

The coach or captain records or checks the names and numbers of their players on the score sheet and then signs it

During the match, the coach sits on the team bench area but may leave it, and give instructions to the players on the surface as long as they are within the technical area.

The coach may give these instructions while standing or walking within the designated technical area.

The coach may go to the scorer's table during the match to obtain statistical information only when the ball is out of play and during the half-time interval break or prior to commencement of overtime in the playoffs

Where a head coach is not present or available, an assistant coach, team manager, or team captain may assume the role of a coach

Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball has crossed over the goal line between the goals posts and the cross bar, provided it has not been thrown, carried or intentionally propelled by hand or arm by a player of the attacking team

The referee shall be the sole judge as to whether a goal has been scored

During the course of the match, should an outside agent assist the ball into the goal, or prevent the ball from entering the goal, play shall be stopped. The referee shall restart the match by dropping the ball.

Tie Matches

Round play: in the event of a tie match after regulation in preliminary round play, the match will end as a draw.

Playoffs: during the playoffs, matches tied at the end of regulation time will proceed to two (2) periods of extra time of fifteen (15) minutes. Teams will receive a ten (10) minute break before proceeding to extra time. If the match is still tied after extra time a five (5) player penalty shootout will take place followed by a sudden-death shootout if necessary.

Illness, Injury and Bleeding

Illness

- A player who suffers an illness that involves neither an injury nor bleeding must either continue to play immediately, or the team may use the one (1) thirty (30) second time-out allowed during a set or substitute the player who is ill.
- This includes conditions such as a cramp, nausea, breathlessness and asthma.
- A team is declared incomplete if it has fewer than seven (7) players on the field ready to play and shall forfeit the match. If the team to which the match is

awarded is ahead by a goal difference of greater than three (3), the score shall stand as at the time the match was stopped. If the team to which the match is awarded is not ahead, the score shall be recorded as three (3) to zero (0) in its favor (forfeiting team loses with a score of 0-3).

Injury

- Should a serious accident occur while the ball is in play, the referee shall stop the set immediately and permit medical assistance to enter the court. The rally will then be replayed.
- If the referee is not satisfied that the injury is genuine, s/he must advise the captain/coach to decide whether to resume play immediately, substitute the player or use the one (1) thirty (30) second time-out allowed during a set for recovery
- If the referee deems the injury to be genuine and the injured/ill player cannot be substituted legally or exceptionally, the player shall be given a three (3) minute recovery time, but not more than once for the same player in the match.
- After the three (3) minute recovery time, if the player does not recover, the team may request a legal time-out during the match of thirty (30) seconds. If the player still has not recovered, the team is then declared incomplete.
- A team is declared incomplete if it has fewer than seven (7) players on the field ready to play and shall forfeit the match. If the team to which the match is awarded is ahead by a goal difference of greater than three (3), the score shall stand as at the time the match was stopped. If the team to which the match is awarded is not ahead, the score shall be recorded as three (3) to zero (0) in its favor (forfeiting team loses with a score of 0-3).

Bleeding

- Whenever bleeding occurs, the bleeding must be stopped before the player can continue.
- Play shall be suspended immediately lasting not more than three (3) minutes and the player shall receive medical treatment.
- Play shall not resume until all traces of blood have been removed from the playing surface.
- If immediate medical treatment does not rectify the injury, the player must be substituted or replaced until the bleeding is stopped and the blood is removed from his/her uniform.
- After the three (3) minute recovery time, if the player does not recover and the player cannot be substituted legally or exceptionally, the team is declared incomplete.
- A team is declared incomplete if it has fewer than seven (7) players on the field ready to play and shall forfeit the match. If the team to which the match is awarded is ahead by a goal difference of greater than three (3), the score shall

stand as at the time the match was stopped. If the team to which the match is awarded is not ahead, the score shall be recorded as three (3) to zero (0) in its favor (forfeiting team loses with a score of 0-3).

- Bloodstained clothing must be replaced

For all other issues not addressed in these Laws of the Match, please refer to the International Festival Games General Rules and Regulations.