

WNSL March Madness Tournament Rules

(Revised Feb 23, 2026)

Section 1 -- Special Rules and Other Items of Importance (All Divisions)

WNSL Responsibilities

1. The Tournament will provide referees, a designated clock operator, and a regulation game basketball.
2. The Tournament will oversee the operation of games. Any Special Rules contained in this document will be in effect. Anything not covered by special league rules will be in accordance with the National Federation of High School Rules.

Team Responsibilities—All Age Groups and Divisions

1. Each team must provide one parent or other responsible adult to keep their team's scorebook at the official scorer's table. This person should keep the scorebook as if they were the only book being kept (in other words—both teams). The scorekeepers should compare books and with the clock operator as needed to make sure everything is correct. If there is a discrepancy that cannot be resolved, the game officials will use the Home Team book as the official book.
2. The home team is listed second on the schedule, wears light-colored jerseys, and sits to the left of the scorer's table (if facing it). Teams will warm-up opposite their benches and shoot on that basket for the first half.
3. Two warm-up balls for your team, always kept securely in an enclosed bag other than pre-game and half-time warm-up.
4. Each team must provide the line-up for the scorebooks immediately when warm-up begins, or at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the game, whichever is closer to the start of the game.
5. All teams should conduct themselves (including coaches and spectators) appropriately and show good sportsmanship win or lose. Spectators will not be allowed to harass players from the opposing team or officials. Players and coaches are expected to always show good sportsmanship. Unsportsmanlike conduct will result in expulsion of those at fault and will not be tolerated.
6. Each team **MUST** have an adult (21 years or older) on the bench and responsible for the teams and their actions at all times. Teams without an adult coach will be forfeited out of the tournament.

The Game

1. A game consists of two halves as shown below with a continuous running clock, stopping only when the referee stops play for injuries, a granted time out by either team, or any other delay deemed necessary by the officials (problem with game equipment, etc.) until the last two minutes of each half (at which time National Federation rules for clock stoppage will apply---every whistle). Halftime shall last 2 minutes.
 - **K and LOWER 1st-grade games are 2 halves of 16 minutes.**
 - *The clock will stop at 16-, 12-, 8- and 4-minute marks for substitutions and defensive match ups. This is not a timeout and ball should be placed in play quickly.*
 - **UPPER 1ST GRADE-12TH GRADE- games are 2 halves of 20 minutes.**
2. Each team is entitled to two timeouts per half, with un-used timeouts not carrying over to the second half. Each team will be given one time-out for all overtime periods. All time outs are one minute in length.
3. A team must start the game with 5 players. Game time is forfeit time (Note to Officials & Gym Monitors – be sure to use the slowest watch before ruling a forfeit). In the event that a forfeit is inevitable, coaches are asked to shift players or pick up a player of mutual agreement in order to play. Officials will work these games.

Specific Equipment, Dimensions and other Special Rules are indicated in the appropriate section below

Section 2--Additional Rules and Information for Kindergarten Boys and Girls and LOWER DIVISION GRADE 1 Boys and Girls

Size of Ball: 27.0” or 27.5” (Junior Ball)

Height of Goal: 8 feet

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw—8 feet (no crossing the line).

Designated Defensive Area—Front Court Area. Only person-to-person defense is allowed UNTIL THE PAINT. The defense must allow the offense to cross the half-court line freely. The offense in turn must cross into the defensive area within a normal time frame. No stalling allowed!

In the kindergarten division, Coaches will be allowed to be on the side of the court to instruct their players but will not be inside the 3 point area or under the basket. 1st grade- coaches are in the coach box.

Special Rules

1. Wristbands—All players will wear a colored wristband. Best over-all player/best ball handler-Red; Next best player-Orange; Third best Yellow; 4th best-Purple; 5th best-Green. Defense is only person-to-person within the designated defensive area (halfcourt) and the defensive player must guard the opponent wearing the same color wristband. Players will line up at beginning of each period & after substitutions to see what player they are guarding (same color wristband).
2. Substitutions— The clock will stop at the 12, 8, and 4-minute marks for substitutions. Substitutions are not allowed at other times unless a player is injured and must leave the game. Wristbands may be switched at the above marks, as well as at the start of a new period. “Sand bagging” on wristband assignments is a serious violation and will not be tolerated.
3. Help Defense and Switching—Players may switch-off during normal defensive play, but must begin each time down the court matched on his/her colored wristband. In the paint, “help defense” that results in a double/triple team is allowed. One player cannot be designated as the regular “help defender” and/or camp out in the lane unless his/her defensive man is nearby. During a fast-break situation, a player down-court may guard any player or players, regardless of wristband color. No double teaming in a fast break situation though.
4. Penalty for Illegal Defense—Officials will usually issue one warning to a team for player guarding outside the designated defensive area. Subsequent violations will then result in a one-shot technical foul, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption.
5. Pressing—In the final one minute of the game, provided the point difference is 5 points or less, both teams may play full court, man to man defense. Double-team in backcourt is not allowed. Teams will have up to 15 seconds to get the ball across mid-court.
6. Screens and Picks—“On the ball” screens or picks and screens “away” from the ball are legal, if properly executed.
7. Traveling and Double Dribbling—Officials, depending on skill level of the players, may use discretion if a player travels while starting or stopping his/her dribble. However, if a player gains an advantage by traveling or double dribbling, play will be stopped for the violation, and the opposing team will be awarded the ball out-of-bounds.
8. Fouling Out—To prevent rough play, players will foul out on their fifth foul.
9. 3-point shots—All field goals are two points.
10. Isolation Plays—Clearing out to allow one player to go one-on-one is a violation, resulting in a turnover. The same is true for players forming a wall for the ball handler to come around.
11. Coaches are not allowed on the Floor.
12. Coaches Box—Other than the coach listed above, coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
13. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner.

Section 3-- Additional Rules and Information for UPPER GRADE 1 and All Divisions Grade 2 Boys and Girls

Size of Ball—27.0” or 27.5”

Height of Goal—8 feet

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw-10 feet.

Designated Defensive Area—**Half Court.**

Special Rules

1. Penalty for Illegal Defense--(see Designated Defensive Area above)—Officials will usually issue one warning/half to a team for player guarding outside the designated defensive area. Subsequent violations will then result in a one-shot technical foul, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption.
2. Backcourt Guarding Exception—In the final one minute of the game, provided the point difference is 5 points or less, both teams may play full court defense.
3. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
4. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner.

Section 4--Additional Rules and Information for Grades 3 Boys and Girls

Size of Ball: 28.5"

Height of Goal: 9 feet

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw: 12 feet.

Designated Defensive Area:

3rd Grade BOYS: HALF COURT- FIRST HALF. FULL COURT IN 2ND HALF UNLESS HOLDING A 15 POINT LEAD.

3rd Grade GIRLS: HALF COURT- ENTIRE GAME

Special Rules

1. Penalty for Illegal Defense (see Designated Defensive Area above)—First offense/half will be a warning. Thereafter, a technical foul will be called (one free throw, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption).
2. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
3. Backcourt Guarding Exception for Girls—In the final one minute of the game, provided the point difference is 5 points or less, both teams may play full court defense.
4. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner.

Section 5--Additional Rules and Information for Grades 4 Boys & Girls (All Divisions)

Size of Ball: 28.5"

Height of Goal:

Boys- 10 feet

Girls- 9 feet (a team may opt for 10 feet. One team may play on 10 feet goal and one on 9 feet)

Distance (from backboard) for Free Throw: 12 feet.

Designated Defensive Area:

4th Grade BOYS: FULL COURT ENTIRE GAME

**4th Grade GIRLS: HALF COURT- FIRST HALF. FULL COURT IN 2ND HALF
UNLESS HOLDING A 15 POINT LEAD.**

Special Rules

1. Backcourt Guarding— Backcourt guarding is not allowed for teams holding a 15 or more-point lead.
2. Penalty for Illegal Defense -- First offense/half for guarding in the backcourt with a 15 or more-point lead will be a warning. Thereafter, a technical foul will be called (one free throw, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption).
3. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
4. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner.

Section 6--Additional Rules and Information for Grade 5th-12th Boys and Girls (All Divisions)

Size of Ball:

Girls (All Grades) and Boys (5th): 28.5”

Boys (6th-12th):29.5”

Special Rules

1. Backcourt Guarding—Backcourt guarding is not allowed for teams holding a 15 or more-point lead.
2. Penalty for Illegal Defense—First offense/half for guarding in the backcourt with a 15 or more-point lead will be a warning. Thereafter, a technical foul will be called (one free throw, plus possession of the ball at the point of interruption).
3. Coaches Box—Coaches must remain in the Coaches Box, an area immediately in front of the bench. Only the head coach may stand while the clock is running.
4. Overtime Periods—If the score is tied at the end of regulation, one additional period of 1-minute will be played. (clock stops on all whistles). If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, a second overtime is played, with the first team to score declared the winner.
5. **All teams MUST always have an adult (21 or older) on the bench and responsible for the actions of the team. Students may coach alongside an adult, but not be the sole coach for the team. Teams who do not have an adult with the team will be forfeited.**