



2026 ARMED FORCES SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP

1. **COMPETITION RULES**. Current Federation International De Football Association (FIFA)/International Football Association Board (IFAB) Laws of the Game, as amended by the Armed Forces Sports Council (AFSC).
2. **GAME BALL**. IAW with current FIFA official match ball. Hosting Service shall publish the most current ball-type within the Letter of Instruction (LOI) at least 60 days prior to the championship.
3. **TOURNAMENT FORMAT**. Single Round Robin with top two teams advancing to the championship match. Third and fourth place teams compete in the consolation match. All matches must result in a winner.
 - a. Round Robin matches which end in a tie at the conclusion of regulation will be decided by two overtime periods of 15 minutes each with implementation of the "Golden Goal" (first goal scored ends the match). If the tie remains, kicks from the mark in accordance with the Laws of the Game shall determine the winner.
 - b. Championship and Consolation Matches which end in a tie at the conclusion of regulation will be decided by two full overtime periods of 15 minutes each. If the tie remains, kicks from the mark in accordance with the Laws of the Game shall determine the winner.
4. **DRAW**: As determined by established annual draw.
5. **FINAL TEAM STANDINGS**. Based on results of championship and consolation matches.
6. **TIE-BREAKER POLICY**. The following procedures, in order, will be used to break any ties at the conclusion of round-robin play:
 - a. Greatest number of points obtained in all round-robin matches.
 - b. Goal difference in all round-robin matches.
 - c. Greatest number of goals scored in all round-robin matches.
7. **SUBSTITUTIONS**. FIFA substitution rules will apply:
 - a. The number of substitutes, up to a maximum of five, which may be used
 - b. Maximum of three substitution opportunities. Substitutions at half-time do not count as one of the three opportunities.
 - c. Extra Time substitution rules will apply:
 - 1) If a team has not used the maximum number of substitutes and/or substitution opportunities, any unused substitutes and substitution opportunities may be used in extra time

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2) Teams have one additional substitute and one additional substitution opportunity in extra time.

3) Substitutions may also be made in the period between full-time and the start of extra time, and at half-time in extra time – these do not count as used substitution opportunities

d. Return substitutions are not permitted.

8. FOULS AND MISCONDUCT.

a. Two “Yellow Cards” (accumulative for all round-robin matches) – Individual is suspended for the next scheduled match after the second yellow card. “Yellow Cards” reset to zero for the Championship and Consolation Matches, except for the following:

1) When two “Yellow Cards” are issued to a player for unsporting behavior – “commits in a reckless manner a direct free kick offense” or “shows a lack of respect for the game;” the player is out for the next scheduled match to include the championship/consolation match.

b. Two “Yellow Cards” accumulative in the same match – Individual is sent off during the match being played and is automatically suspended for the next scheduled match.

c. One “Red Card” – Individual is sent off during the match being played and is automatically suspended for the next scheduled match.

d. “Red Card” issued for “serious foul play” is sent off during the match being played and is automatically suspended for the next scheduled match. The Service Representatives on-site and the head referee shall review the offense to determine additional match suspensions.

e. “Red Card” issued for “violent conduct” shall result in suspension from the remainder of the tournament and may result in additional sanctions as determined by the Armed Forces Sports Working Group.

f. Players sent off, and suspended players are not permitted in the team bench area and are not permitted to engage referees or other players from within the spectator area. Players engaging with referees after suspension may result in additional sanctions as determined by the Service Representatives on-site and/or by the Armed Forces Sports Working Group.

9. UNIFORMS.

a. The two teams must wear colors that distinguish them from each other and the match officials. Each goalkeeper must wear colors that are distinguishable from the other players and the match officials. If the two goalkeepers’ jerseys are the same color and neither have another jersey, the referee allows the match to be played. Team uniforms must have player numbers.

b. All players’ and substitutes’ jersey numbers must remain the same throughout the tournament.

c. Home teams shall have priority declaring uniform colors. Both teams shall declare their uniform colors at the organizational meeting.

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d. Uniforms for the Championship and Consolation Matches will be determined by the higher seeded team from the round-robin having priority.

10. TEAM CAPTAINS (Players). Service teams will designate only one (1) team captain, who will wear a captain's band while on the playing field. If the team captain is substituted, then they will transfer the captain's band to another player.

11. MEDICAL SITUATION. The treatment of injuries will be in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game.

12. INCLEMENT WEATHER/MATCH STOPPAGE. In the event of match stoppage (e.g. inclement weather), the match shall resume where it last left off. Ball position, players, time, and penalties shall be noted and carried over to the re-start of the match.

13. FACILITY AND PERSONNEL.

a. IAW current FIFA Laws of the Game.

b. Only rostered personnel are authorized in the team bench and training areas.

c. Reserve Players

1) Reserve players are only eligible to play should a member of the 12-player roster become injured.

2) Should a player become injured the player may be replaced from the approved reserve player pool, provided the injury is certified by the team's medical staff.

3) Injured players that are replaced by reserve players are not eligible to return to competition in the event their condition improves.

4) Reserve players are not permitted in the team bench area unless they are also officially designated as a staff member on official roster. Staff members include Head coach, Assistant Coach, OIC, and Ad libitum. Medical personnel cannot be designated as reserve players.

5) All reserve players are required to have a uniform with a unique number not duplicated by any other athlete.

d. If a player is ejected from the tournament, that player is ineligible for the remaining matches of the championship and the overall roster is reduced by one. This player is now a non-participant, cannot remain on the sidelines, and will not be considered for the All-Tournament Team.

e. Media personnel are not authorized in the field of play unless directed by the Armed Forces Sports staff during approved breaks.

14. PROTESTS. Protests on rules or eligibility are handled by the protest committee. The protest committee consisting of Service representatives and Chief of Referees will only accept protests when they are submitted in accordance with the Laws of the Game. Protests must be submitted in writing using the "Protest Form" by 9:00am local time to the Armed Forces Sports

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representative onsite the following morning of the match in question and must be resolved before the next scheduled match.

15. OFFICIATING PROBLEMS. Incidents or issues related to an official at an event will be addressed with the head official immediately. If not addressed immediately, Services should inform the AFSCS about problems occurred with official(s) within 30 days after the conclusion of the championship.

16. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS. The Host installation will determine game times. Established times must be consistent each day and must be set to draw maximum fan participation.

- a. Day One
 - Teams Arrive
 - Team Practice Sessions
 - Organizational Meeting
 - Ice- Breaker Social
- b. Day Two
 - Team Photos
 - Opening Ceremony (Optional) - However, all Service flags to include the Space Force and Coast Guard flags shall be displayed or posted with colors. If all Service flags are not available, then only the American flag and host Service flag shall be displayed.
- Round Robin Match 1: Army* vs USMC
- Round Robin Match 2: USAF* vs Navy **
- * Note: Home teams are listed on the left
- **Note: Second match each day will start 30 minutes after the conclusion of the first match.
- c. Day three Rest day
- d. Day Four
 - Round Robin Match 3: Navy vs Army
 - Round Robin Match 4: USMC vs USAF
- e. Day Five Rest Day
- f. Day Six
 - Round Robin Match 5: Navy vs USMC
 - Round Robin Match 6: Army vs USAF
- g. Day Seven Rest Day
Selection Meeting (Time) – Or as determined at organization meeting.
- h. Day Eight CONSOLATION MATCH: Seed 3 vs Seed 4
CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH: Seed 1 vs Seed 2

Awards Ceremony - (Immediately following the final game) Service teams will wear Service warm-ups or competitive uniforms at the awards ceremony. Individual athletes who do not comply will not receive awards or be selected to the Armed Forces team. If the Awards ceremony is conducted as a separate function in conjunction with the Ice Breaker

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Social, then all Service Members must with Ice-Breaker Dress Policy. Footwear shall be at the discretion of the attending Service Representatives.

i. Day Nine Teams Depart

17. ADVERSE WEATHER SCHEDULE. Service representatives shall determine alternative solutions and schedules during adverse weather conditions. Resumption of play shall be in accordance with paragraph (12).

18. AWARDS.

- a. Individual: Each member of the winning and runner-up teams (to include the coaches, team trainer and OIC) receive individual awards.
- b. Team: No team trophy is presented.
- c. All-Tournament Team.

1. The All-tournament team is announced prior to the announcement of the players selected to advance to higher-level competition. The Host Project Officer will select and purchase a special "All-Tournament" memento.

2. See selection process in paragraph (20) for All-Tournament Team selection procedures.

3. An 11-player "All-Tournament" team is selected for the tournament. A minimum of 2 forwards, 2 midfielders, 2 defensemen, and 1 goalie must be selected. The remaining players will be decided on best players.

19. TEAM COMPOSITION - ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONSHIP.

Roster not to exceed 27 individuals:

18 Players
2 Reserve Players
1 Coach
2 Asst Coach
2 Certified Athletic Trainer/Physician/Medical Provider*
1 ad libitum
1 OIC
TOTAL: 27

* Medical personnel listed on roster must be trained medical providers and properly certified/licensed. Teams are not authorized to substitute for this position with an additional coach, statistician, or reserve player. Personnel failing to provide appropriate credentials (if challenged) shall be deemed unauthorized and removed from the bench.

Note: Rosters must be submitted NLT four days prior to championship report date. Only the above personnel (not including reserve players) are authorized in the designated bench areas.

20. SELECTION PROCESS - HIGHER LEVEL AND ALL-TOURNAMENT.

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a. Athlete Selection Process.

1) The AFSWG members, or designated Service representatives, at the site of the Armed Forces Championship are responsible for the selection of the All-Tournament Team and the U.S. Armed Forces Team for higher-level competition.

a) The All-Tournament team shall consist of eleven (11) players. The following positions are required at a minimum for the All-Tournament Team: Two (2) forwards, two (2) midfielders, two (2) defensemen, and one (1) goalie. The remaining players will be decided on best players.

b) The following positions are required at a minimum for the U.S. Armed Forces Team advancing to higher level competition: Four (4) forwards, four (4) midfielders, four (4) defensemen, and two (2) goalies. The remaining roster of forwards, midfielders, defensemen, and goalies shall be determined based on roster of players and coaching formation/styles.

2) The host Service shall ensure all Higher Advancement forms (appendix c) have been completed and signed electronically to the Armed Forces Sports Office at the conclusion of the organization meeting. The host Service will provide Service representatives with a list of participants unavailable to advance to higher-level competition.

3) Service representatives and coaches are required to assess all athletes regardless of Service affiliation and select the most qualified athletes for the All-Tournament and U.S. Armed Forces Teams. Service representatives must ensure that all appropriate player positions are selected.

4) Service representatives are required to submit the All-Tournament Team and U.S. Armed Forces Team ballots electronically to the Armed Forces Sports representative on site (appendix E) the evening prior to the selection meeting, or as determined by the Armed Forces Sports representative.

5) Service Representatives, coaches, and any designated voting delegates may not vote for athletes from the Service they represent when submitting All-Tournament or Armed Forces Team ballots. Ballots containing votes for athletes from the voter's own Service will be considered invalid and returned for correction.

6) Athletes selected to the All-Tournament Team shall automatically be selected to the Armed Forces Team unless unavailable. The most competent athletes, regardless of Service affiliation, shall be selected to complete the final Armed Forces Team roster. Applicable exception is addressed in paragraph 8.d.(4).

7) The Armed Forces Sports Representative shall chair the selection meeting. If the Armed Forces Sports Representative is not in attendance, then the host Service shall chair the selection meeting.

8) The Armed Forces Sports Representative will compile the results of the ballots and present the results to the Service representatives at the start of the selection meeting. In the event of ties, the Armed Forces Sports Representative shall lead the Service representatives through objective discussions and conduct two re-votes on the tied individuals. The Armed Forces Sports Representative shall break the remaining tie(s).

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9) Selection meeting attendance is limited to the Service Representative and the Service Head Coach. Each Service authorizes one spokesperson during the meeting.

10) All discussions within the meeting shall remain confidential. Selections of athletes shall be released at the designated awards ceremony.

11) When higher-level team sports competition does not immediately follow the Armed Forces championship and athletes withdraw from higher competition, the head coach may nominate replacement players of the specific positions vacated with AFSWG concurrence. Replacement players must have played at the Armed Forces Championship, have completed the Higher Advancement Form (appendix C), have necessary training completed for country/theater clearance, and have the required travel documents (passport/visa when applicable).

b. Coach Selection Policy: The Head Coach for the Armed Forces Team shall be the winning Head Coach of the Armed Forces Championship (subject to review by the Service Representatives at the Championship). This coach shall select his/her Assistant Coach from the pool of coaches that participated in the championship (subject to review by the Service Representatives at the championship). If the winning Head Coach is not available, then the second-place team Head Coach shall be the Head Coach of the Armed Forces team. This individual shall also select his/her Assistant Coach from the pool of coaches who participated in their respective Armed Forces Championship (subject to review by the Service Representatives at the Championship). If neither the winning nor the second place Head Coaches are available to advance to higher level competition, the AFSWG shall vote to select a Head Coach from the remaining pool of available coaches who participated in the championship. Priority shall be given to Head Coaches. If replacement coaches cannot be identified within 24 hours preceding the announcement of the team delegation, then the Armed Forces team shall not advance to higher level competition.

c. During the Athlete Selection Process, Service representatives shall reserve the right to not select top quality candidates based on behavior, grooming standards, or disciplinary reasons. The host Service will not make any additions or deletions to the selected Armed Forces Team without coordination and concurrence of the Working Group Members of the other three Services.

21. TEAM COMPOSITION - CISM.

As follows, or as dictated by host country invitation:

21 Players

1 Coach

1 Asst Coach

2 Certified Athletic Trainer/Medical Provider*

1 Team Captain

1 Chief of Mission

1 FIFA Referee

1 FIFA Assistant Referee

TOTALS: 29

* *Medical personnel listed on roster must be trained medical providers and properly certified/licensed. Teams are not authorized to substitute for this position with an additional coach, statistician, or reserve player.*

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22. FORMS AND ROSTERS.

- a. All final rosters and code of conduct forms shall be submitted in accordance with the deadlines established in the LOI for each respective sport and shall be submitted electronically to the Armed Forces Sports representative. Failure to provide rosters will result in the Service disqualified from participating in the Armed Forces Championship.
- b. All athletes and coaches shall complete and sign the Armed Forces Sports Higher Advancement Form (appendix C) electronically for consideration of selection to the Armed Forces Team. All Higher Advancement Forms must be submitted by the Officer in Charge of the respective Service at or before the organizational meeting at the Armed Forces Championship. Teams advancing to higher-level competitions shall not exceed the number of allocations specified for each sport per appendix (B). Failure to do so shall disqualify athletes from advancing to higher level competition.
- c. All athletes, coaches and staff from each Service must sign the Armed Forces Sports Participant Code of Conduct (appendix D) in order to participate at the Armed Forces Championship, higher level competition, and CISM events. The Code of Conduct shall be submitted at the start of the Organizational Meeting, or electronically prior to the Organizational Meeting. If a training camp to higher level competition is conducted without the conduct of an Armed Forces Championship, then Team Captains shall have all participants sign the Code of Conduct immediately upon arrival and prior to any official activity. If an Armed Forces Championship or training camp is not conducted prior to, the Team Captain shall collect the Code of Conduct forms electronically prior to the delegation's departure to higher level competition. Failure to do so shall disqualify athletes from competing at the Armed Forces Championship and advancing to higher level competition.
- d. Team Captains, Coaches and Chiefs of Mission shall sign their respective LOI (appendix G/I).
- e. Athletes advancing to higher level competition must sign the anti-doping declaration form (appendix L), if applicable.
- f. All eligible participants advancing to higher-level competition must complete country/theater clearance trainings per the Foreign Clearance Guide, with Service representative submitting the completed spreadsheet to AFSCS prior to the start of the organization meeting.
- g. All forms are available on the Armed Forces Sports Website at:
www.armedforcessports.defense.gov

23. ALCOHOL POLICY. There will be no alcohol consumption at the sports venue by personnel involved in the Armed Forces Sports competition, higher level competition and CISM competition, including sports staff, until all competition for the day has been completed to include the award ceremony on the final day if the awards banquet immediately follows the event. The venue is defined as the playing area, venue parking lot, and the assigned eating/spectator area. This policy will not apply if the awards banquet or ceremony is conducted as a separate event. However, more restrictive installation policies regarding alcohol will take precedence. Violation of this policy shall result in immediate suspension from the remaining championship/event, disqualification from higher-level competition and selection to the All-Tournament Team and shall be subject to further administrative actions by the AFSWG.

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24. **TOBACCO POLICY.** All competitors and staff shall refrain from the use of tobacco related products, including cigarettes, vaping, chewing tobacco, and other smokeless forms at the competition site. Use of these products shall comply with local installation policies and shall only occur in designated areas.

25. **ICEBREAKER SOCIAL.**

a. Ice-breaker social shall be conducted at all Armed Forces Championships. Food/beverages are optional depending on the availability of funding/authorizations. If the event is conducted outside of a military installation, then the ice-breaker social shall be optional.

b. Authorized team members must attend the event in their Service polo or logo shirt, coordinated slacks, and appropriate footwear (exceptions may be made dependent on host site letter of instruction). Guests may attend with pre-coordination with the host site and Service representative. Final decision will be based on availability. Guests will assume costs associated with attending the ice breaker.

c. The Ice-Breaker Social is an official function and shall be conducted in accordance with local installation policies and all participants are expected to conduct themselves in the highest professional manner. Informal activities such as skits, hazing and other activities that include offensive language/behavior are not authorized.

26. **HANDLING OF RULE VIOLATIONS.** If there is a violation of the SOP, code of conduct or specific sport rules, the AFS Representative or in their absence, the project officer, will address the respective Service Representative to resolve the issue. Service Representative will resolve the violation before the Service competes in the next game. All code of conduct violations shall be handled according to the Armed Forces SOP (Paragraph 8.b.(4)(f)).

27. **SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.**

a. All Armed Forces Sports shall comply with the safety procedures prescribed by U.S. Soccer Federation. Service Branches are encouraged to bring their own medical personnel with them to the competition.

b. When hosted by a Service branch, an ambulance is required on-site during competition due to the risk of injury.