



FOS Fall 2026 Coaches Meeting

Important Dates

Wednesday, August 12 th	Lower Division Coaches Meeting - 6:00pm – 7:00pm @ South Carroll Senior Center
	Upper Division Coaches Meeting - 7:30pm – 8:30pm @ South Carroll Senior Center
Friday, August 14 th	Shooting Stars Session #1
Saturday, August 15 th	Practice Schedules Sent (<i>if not sooner</i>)
Saturday, August 15 th	Field Setup – 8:00am – (Eldersburg Elementary)
Saturday, August 15 th	Cleat Exchange – 11:00am-1:00pm (Eldersburg Elementary)
Sunday, August 16 th	Field Setup (RAIN DATE) – 8:00am (Eldersburg Elementary)
Monday, August 17 th	PRACTICES CAN BEGIN THIS WEEK
Thursday, August 20 th	Maryland Soccer Coaches Training – 6:30pm – 8:45pm (Starts at Optimist Hall Upstairs, ends at Freedom Park)
Friday, August 21 st	Shooting Stars Session #2
Saturday, August 22 rd	Referee Training - 1:00pm – 4:00pm (Optimist Hall downstairs)
Sunday, August 23 rd	Referee Training - 3:00pm – 6:00pm (Optimist Hall Upstairs)
TBD	Uniform Pickup – TBD - (Freedom Optimist Hall Upstairs)
Friday, August 28 th	Shooting Stars Session #3
Saturday, August 29 th	Referee Training - 1:00pm – 4:00pm (Optimist Hall upstairs)
Saturday, August 29 th	Cleat Exchange – 11:00am-1:00pm (Eldersburg Elementary)
Friday, September 18 th	Shooting Stars Session #4
Saturday, September 12th	OPENING DAY (league play)
Saturday, September 19 th	1 st Picture Day at ORMS (<i>tentative</i>)
Saturday, September 26 th	2 nd Picture Day at ORMS (<i>tentative</i>)
Saturday, October 3 rd	3 rd Picture Day at ORMS (<i>tentative</i>)
TBD	Medals available for pick-up for younger division players only (Eldersburg Shack)
Saturday, November 14th	Upper Divisions – Championship Games
	Lower Divisions – Last Week of Games
	Field Tear Down at Eldersburg Elementary
Sunday, November 15 th	Upper Division All-Star Games and Senior Game
	Field Tear Down at Practice Fields and Freedom Park

Background Checks

- All Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches and Team Parents are required to complete the background check. No exceptions. If you do not have a valid background check completed by the time of your first practice you are not allowed on the field with the players.
- All parents that “help out” on consecutive weeks must register as an assistant coach and complete the background check. The county will allow helpers to participate only once; anymore and they need to register.
- Go to our website at www.freedomOptSoccer.com and click the tab at the top “For Coaches”. You will find a link to the background check here.
- Badges must be displayed when you are on the field with the players.

Recruiting Assistant Coaches/Team Parents

- Assistant Coaches and Team Parents often step forward after the beginning of the season. They play very important roles on the team and will help tremendously.

- If a parent steps forward and starts helping out, tell them to register. Registration for volunteers will remain open for those volunteering during the season.
- Your team parent usually takes care of all team communication, first aid needs, uniform handout, email reminders, and end of the season party/medal pick-up.

Weather Policy

- Check the Freedom Area Rec Council Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Freedomarearec> to check on field availability. On weekdays the message is updated by 4pm, on weekends by 7am.
- At the first sound of Thunder OR the first sight of Lightning — All outdoor recreation council activities are to be stopped and the participants *must clear the fields to a protected area* and wait 30 minutes before activities can resume. Any additional occurrence restarts the 30-minute count until activities can resume.
- Heat: Approx. 30 minutes prior to the start of the activity, temp and heat index reading should be taken from www.weather.com or a comparable source. The following are to be followed:
 - Heat Index: 80-89 – **Yellow** / Elevated heat. Use caution. Encourage hydration, take breaks.
 - Heat Index: 90-99 – **Orange** / High heat. Adjust workouts, hydrate consistently, take regular breaks in shade. Actively monitor participants for symptoms.
 - Heat Index: 100+ – **Red** / Extreme heat. Practice shortened, low intensity and limited conditioning. Ensure hydration and cooling breaks in shade.
 - Heat Index: 130 & above-No practices or games. Activities should be rescheduled
- EXTREME COLD TEMPERATURES: Department sponsored youth activities:
 - Temperatures above 32 degrees: no restrictions
 - Temperatures between 13 – 31 degrees: Indoor breaks every 20-30 minutes
 - Temperature or wind chill is below 13 degrees: No outdoor activities; Wind chill may be calculated by entering temperature and wind speed at www.weather.gov/epz/wxcalc_windchill
- AIR QUALITY (AQI Color), AirNow, Department sponsored activities:
 - **GREEN**: Good, values of index, 0-50. Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution possess little or no risk.
 - **YELLOW**: Moderate, values of index 51-100. Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
 - **ORANGE**: Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, values of index 101-150. Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected. For practices, take more breaks and do fewer intensive activities. Watch for symptoms and take action as needed.
 - **RED**: Unhealthy, values of index 151-200. Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects. Take longer breaks or move activities inside. Watch for symptoms and take action as needed.
 - **PURPLE**: Very Unhealthy, values of index 201-300. Health alert. The risk of health effects is increased for everyone. Move indoors or reschedule outdoor activities.
 - **MAROON**: Hazardous, values of index 301 and higher. Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected. Move indoors or reschedule outdoor activities.
- Hydration Breaks
 - Hydration breaks will be permitted at the discretion of the referees, based on the Heat Index during gametime.
 - Details and rules about hydration breaks can be found at <https://www.freedomoptsoccer.com/game-related-faqs>.

Games rescheduled due to inclement weather

- Games will be automatically rescheduled. The rain dates available are 9/20, 10/4, and 10/25.
- FOS cannot cancel games until the day of the game. Even if it rained for 4 days straight and flooding has occurred, we have to wait to the day of to make the announcement.
- If fields are closed, we will post it on Facebook, the website, and send an email to the entire league.

Parking at Eldersburg Elementary

- Do not park on the grass by the school.
- Do not park by the doors in the fenced in area of the school.
- Do not park on the grass by the playground or by the soccer shack. That area needs to be left open for emergency personnel and is reserved for board members.

- Do not park along Johnsville Road.
- We would like to avoid parking on the side streets across from Eldersburg Elementary as the residents have not been happy with people parking on their lawn and blocking their driveways as well as their mailboxes.

Parking at Springfield

- Park in the gravel parking lot.

Parking at Freedom Park

- Do not park on any of the grass, anywhere. Additional parking is available past Field 3 in the back paved lot.
- Do not park on the grass by the shacks. This area is reserved for emergency personnel and board members.

Parking at Faith Lutheran

- Do not park along Bonnie Brae Road as it blocks traffic. Park in the church lot. They have graciously provided tables and chairs for parents and families to use.

Eldersburg Elementary Snack Shack Helpers

- There will be a Snack Shack hosted by Scout Troup 733.

Freedom Snack Shack

- There will be a Snack Shack hosted by the Freedom District Lions Club.

Practice field use

- We are compiling no use dates for practices using school fields (e.g. Back to school nights). You will have to cancel practices if you use one of the affected fields.
- If you practice at a game field (e.g. EES and Freedom Park), please utilize all parts of the field to limit field damage due to overuse. Repeated use of goal box and center field areas during practices causes long-term harm and hampers our ability to rejuvenate the fields.

Field Clean-up

- Please inform your team to clean up after themselves at the end of your games. Walk the field and pick up any trash or items left behind. Lost and found items can be dropped off at the soccer shack.

Referees

- Referees have the final say on the field, period.
- Do not yell at, argue with their calls or make any comments to referees. Tell your parents to not argue calls, make comments to referees, ask them to explain calls, etc.
- If you have an issue with a referee, please email Adam Maisano, the Referee Coordinator at refereecoordinator@freedomoptsoccer.com.
- You cannot and should not address the referees on the field if you do not agree with a call. Do not ask for a meeting to discuss. If you have any immediate safety concern at the field, go find a Board member at the field. If it's not an immediate safety issue, find a Board member after the game. Board members will be at the fields wearing **red** shirts.
- Remember referees are humans and typically children. They can and will make mistakes. It's part of the game, even the World Cup.

Uniforms

- Coaches' shirts and uniforms for the entire team need to be picked up by a single designated person (Coach, Asst. Coach, Team Parent, or another designated person). Please DO NOT instruct your team to meet you at the Hall during pick-up to get their own uniform.
- Some Coaches' shirts will be available at the coaches meeting for those without a shirt.
- Coaches' shirts are only ordered for registered Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches. If a parent steps up and offers to coach after you begin practice, they must register as an Assistant Coach and an email will be sent to order a coaches' shirt if requested. A maximum of 3 coaches are allowed on the sideline during games.
- Players must wear their jersey on the outside of hoodies or jackets during inclement weather. Socks must be worn on the outside of leggings and match their uniform color.
- No jewelry is allowed. Necklaces, bracelets, and earrings must be removed prior to game or practice. Exception only for medical or religious bracelets or necklaces that must be taped.
- All players must have shin guards, worn underneath their socks, not strapped overtop of the socks.
- Cleats are optional. All cleats worn on the field must be soccer cleats. No center toe spike on cleats is allowed. They must be cut off in order for the player to participate. Cleat cutters will be available at the soccer shack.

- Additional socks will be available for purchase at the soccer shack for \$5.00.

Adaptive Soccer Programs

- **Shooting Stars – Clinic program** (<https://www.freedomoptsoccer.com/shootingstars>)
 - The Freedom Optimist Shooting Stars program offers children with physical, intellectual, and/or emotional disabilities an opportunity to enjoy the game of soccer in a safe and supportive community environment.
 - 4 weeks in fall and 4 in spring
- **Unified Soccer** – Team under Maryland Special Olympics (new program)

Player Safety

- Players cannot be left unattended after practice or games. A coach or Team Parent must stay at the fields until every player has left.
- If a player was hurt then an accident/Injury report needs to be filled out. Please visit <https://www.freedomoptsoccer.com/accident-report> to fill out the report. The report needs to be submitted within 24 hours of any accident.
- The Concussion protocol was included during the registration. If you need a copy, please visit <https://www.carrollcountymd.gov/media/15091/concussion-information.pdf> for a copy.
- First aid kit supplies are available at the soccer shacks during game days. Every team will also have a small first aid kit provided with their equipment bags.
- AEDs are available at the soccer shacks during game days.

Coaching Overview

- Referees need to be made aware of any medical conditions a player may have prior to the start of the game. If a player is an extreme asthmatic and you may need to sub that player immediately if an event is noticed, then let the refs know ASAP.
- **DO NOT RUN UP THE SCORE.** If you are ahead by **4 or more**, pull a player, let the other team have an additional player, don't shoot without passing X times, instruct the kid who scored 4 times in 5 minutes to demonstrate passing, etc. We should not demoralize the other team and hurt kids' spirit and self-esteem. As coaches, volunteers, and parents we must strive to make sure that every child on the field enjoys the game, not just our own team.
- FOS uses SportsEngine. Do not instruct your team to download a different app to use instead.
- Every player should get **equal playing time**, including playoffs (all games).
- Teams will be released after the Coaches meeting. If your team does not show up on the mobile SportsEngine app you will may need to delete the app entirely and reinstall it.
- Make sure you email your team as soon as possible to introduce yourself and let them know the dates for the season. As soon as games schedules are released it will automatically be populated to the SportsEngine app.

Practices

- The last weekday field update from FARC comes at 4:00pm. If it starts storming after that, it is up to the coach to cancel practice and notify their team.
- Each team is assigned ½ of a field for practice. It's up to the coach to decide what time practice will start, but it's traditional to start at 6pm. You may not start earlier than 5:30pm and all players, parents, and coaches need to be off the fields by dark. At EES, this means practices will be shorter, or cancelled as we move into November.
- Practices for younger divisions (3/4 and younger) teams can go up to 1 hour. Practices for the older divisions (5/6 and older) cannot be longer than 90 minutes, and cannot go past their allotted time because the lighted fields because those fields are shared with other teams.
- Coaches can choose to cancel one practice night after games begin. Please let your division coordinator know what night you are canceling so we can make that field available to other teams/leagues. You may not switch practice nights.
- It is up to the Head Coach if/when to go down to 1 practice night a week, and if/when to cancel practices all together.
- Do NOT hold practice if it is actively raining. We need to preserve the fields as much as possible.
- Try to practice "sideways", from touch line to touch line and uses cones to create goals. When using ½ the field this simulates width, and also help limit damage to the fields, the same fields we use for games.

- Coaches cannot leave players at field unsupervised. A coach must stay at field until **ALL** players have a safe/approved ride home.

Communications

- If you have questions or issues start with your division coordinator. These questions may include practice and game schedules, team questions, game schedules, clarification on rules, etc. Contact information is below.
- If you have a referee related question or concern, contact our referee coordinator. This also includes **positive** feedback.
- If you have a last-minute conflict and cannot make a practice or game (or running late), reach out ASAP. We can't have teams at the fields with no coaches.
- If you have a question or issue that your division coordinator can not resolve, email the commissioner (commissioner@freedomoptsoccer.com).
- Remember we are **all volunteers**; we will get back to you.

Fall 2026 – Division Coordinators			
Clinic 3/4	Austin Pritchard - apritchard@freedomoptsoccer.com	PreK/K	Wade Forbes - wforbes@freedomoptsoccer.com
Boys Grade 1	Jack Beasley - jbeasley@freedomoptsoccer.com	Girls Grade 1	Jack Beasley - jbeasley@freedomoptsoccer.com
Boys Grade 2	Craig Hohlbein - CHohlbein@FreedomOptSoccer.com	Girls Grade 2	Craig Hohlbein - CHohlbein@FreedomOptSoccer.com
Boys Grades 3&4	Chris Schwartz - cschwartz@freedomoptsoccer.com	Girls Grades 3&4	Chris Schwartz - cschwartz@freedomoptsoccer.com
Boys Grades 5&6	Jason Farrell - jfarrell@freedomoptsoccer.com	Girls Grades 5&6	Jason Farrell - jfarrell@freedomoptsoccer.com
Boys Grades 7&8	Paul Chen - pchen@freedomoptsoccer.com	Girls Grades 7&8	Paul Chen - pchen@freedomoptsoccer.com
Coed High School	Matt Kowalewski - mailto:mkowalewski@freedomoptsoccer.com		
Shooting Stars & Unified Soccer	Rachel Matthews - rmatthews@freedomoptsoccer.com		
Referee Coordinator	Adam Maisano - refereecoordinator@freedomoptsoccer.com		
FOS Commissioner	Scott Walthour – commissioner@freedomoptsoccer.com		

Player Evaluations

- For Divisions starting at Grade 1 we send player evaluations to be filled out towards the end of the season. Please fill them out and send them to your division coordinator by the end of the season. These evaluations help aid us in forming teams for the next season.

New Rules (<https://www.freedomoptsoccer.com/recent-game-rule-updates>)

- Throw-ins and goal kicks** - 5 seconds allowed, ball must be available for play. Refs must verbalize the countdown and signal with their arm. US Soccer implemented this to prevent time-wasting and keep the game moving. Referees will use good judgement on when to apply this based on age level. Exceeding the 5 sec results in change of possession for a throw-in, and a corner kick if goal kick is not taken in time.
- Build Out Line:** In 7v7 games (1st and 2nd grade in FOS), a “build-out” line is a line placed halfway between the top of the Penalty Box and the Halfway line. Opposing teams must move behind this line when a goalkeeper has possession of the ball or on a Goal Kick.
- No jewelry is allowed. Necklaces, bracelets, and earrings must be removed prior to game or practice. Exception only for medical or religious bracelets or necklaces that must be taped.
- Yellow and red cards issued carry into the playoffs.
- Players receiving a yellow card must sit out **5 minutes** before returning.
- US Soccer Harassment and Referee Abuse Policy, “Respect the Call”. <https://www.ussoccer.com/rap>

Have a great soccer season and thank you for volunteering! This league would not be possible without you! We appreciate all that you do for the kids!