

Official Tournament Rules & Regulations

Frankfurt, Germany – 2026





1. GOVERNANCE & APPLICABLE LAWS

The 2026 Transplant Football Cup shall be governed by:

- The principles of The FA Small-Sided Football Laws found in the FA Handbook 2024 – 2026 (<https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/lawsandrules/fa-handbook>)
- The official Tournament Committee rulings
- Decisions of appointed referees (final and binding)

The Tournament Committee reserves the right to amend the format due to weather, medical considerations, pitch availability, or other operational requirements.

2. TOURNAMENT PHILOSOPHY

The Transplant Football Cup promotes:

- Fair play and respect
- Inclusion (all genders welcome)
- Safety of transplant recipients
- Medical awareness and solidarity
- Competitive but supportive spirit

All participants are expected to uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship.

3. ELIGIBILITY & TEAM COMPOSITION

3.1 Squad Size

- Minimum: 10 players
- Recommended: 12 players
- Maximum: 16 players

3.2 Player Eligibility

- Entry is open to all recipients of life-supporting allografts (heart, intestine, kidney, liver, lung, pancreas) from other individuals, and hematopoietic cell (bone marrow) transplants, which may require or have required the use of immunosuppressive drug therapies. Bone Marrow transplants include both allogenic (from other individuals or species) and autologous (from the same individual) transplants. Minimum age: 16
- Mixed-gender teams are permitted.



3.3 Team Officials

Each team may register:

- 1 Team Manager
- No limit to coaches – however, only 2 Coaches are allowed on the field during matches
- 1 Medical Representative (recommended)

4. EQUIPMENT & KIT REQUIREMENTS

- Two full sets of shirts:
 - o One light (preferably white)
 - o One dark
- Shirt numbers required (minimum 20 cm / 8 inches high)
- Shin guards are mandatory.
- Jewellery must be removed or securely taped (subject to referee approval).
- Protective medical gear is permitted and encouraged where necessary.

Goalkeepers must wear a shirt clearly distinguishable from all other players and referees.

5. FIELD OF PLAY

- Pitch Size: 50m x 35m
- Goal Size: 6m x 2m
- Marked penalty area
- No offside rule

6. MATCH FORMAT

- 7-a-side
- Two halves of 20 minutes (running clock)
- 10-minute halftime
- Unlimited substitutions
- "Roll-on / Roll-off" substitutions permitted when ball is out of play

The referee's timekeeping is final.

7. START & RESTART OF PLAY

- Kick-off from the centre mark
- Opponents must remain 2 metres from the ball on restarts
- All free kicks are indirect
- Ball must be stationary before restart



8. FREE KICKS & SET PIECES

- All free kicks are indirect
- Taken from spot of infringement
- Defensive players must be 2 meters away
- No defensive “walls” directly blocking the ball at close range
- Corner kicks taken with the foot
- Throw-ins must be overhead with both feet on ground

9. GOALKEEPER REGULATIONS

The goalkeeper:

- May handle the ball anywhere inside the penalty area
- Must follow the back-pass rule
- May leave the penalty area but cannot handle outside it
- May distribute only by:
 - o Rolling
 - o Throwing
 - o Playing from the ground

Drop kicks and kicks directly from the hands are NOT permitted.

Goal kicks:

- Must be taken from inside the penalty area
- Ball must be played from the ground

10. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

10.1 General Principle

The competition uses a **progressive disciplinary system** designed to promote fair play and deal consistently with repeated misconduct.

A player who commits repeated cautionable offences in the same match will progress through the following sanctions:

1. **First cautionable offence** ➡ Blue Card + 2-minute sin bin
2. **Second cautionable offence** ➡ Yellow Card
3. **Third cautionable offence, or serious misconduct** ➡ Red Card



10.2 Blue Card (First Cautionable Offence)

For a player's **first cautionable offence** in a match, the referee will issue a **Blue Card**.

This means:

- The player is **temporarily dismissed for 2 minutes**
- The player's team must continue with **one fewer player** during this period
- If play is stopped for an injury during the sin bin period, the **2-minute countdown is paused** and resumes when play restarts
- At the end of the 2 minutes, the player may return to the field only with the referee's permission

10.3 Yellow Card (Second Cautionable Offence)

For a player's **second cautionable offence** in the same match, the referee will issue a **Yellow Card**.

A player who receives a **Yellow Card** remains at risk of further disciplinary action if another cautionable offence is committed.

10.4 Red Card (Third Offence or Serious Misconduct)

A Red Card will be shown when:

- A player commits a **third cautionable offence** in the same match, or
- A player commits an act of **serious misconduct**

A player receiving a Red Card will:

- Be **immediately dismissed** from the match
- Take **no further part** in that match
- Receive an **automatic suspension for at least the next match**
- Be subject to **further disciplinary action** by the Tournament Committee if required

In cases of serious or repeated misconduct, the Tournament Committee may also impose:

- Additional match suspensions
- Other disciplinary sanctions
- Points deductions for the team, where appropriate

10.5 Cautionable Offences

The following actions are considered **cautionable offences** and may result in a Blue Card or Yellow Card, depending on whether it is a first or second offence by that player in the match:

- **Sliding tackles**
- **Dangerous or reckless play**
- **Elbow or arm contact** to an opponent's chest or upper body



- **Abusive, offensive, or insulting language**
- Any other conduct the referee considers **unsporting or unsafe**

10.6 Serious Misconduct

The following may result in an **immediate Red Card**, without prior warning:

- Violent conduct
- Serious foul play
- Deliberate striking or aggressive physical contact
- Spitting
- Threatening, discriminatory, or highly abusive language or behaviour
- Any conduct that endangers the safety of another player, official, or participant

This progressive disciplinary system is intended to support fair play, player safety, and consistent officiating throughout the competition.

11. PENALTY KICKS

Penalties follow the **one-step rule**:

- The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line until the penalty kick is taken
- Shooter may take one continuous step to strike ball

12. POINT ALLOCATIONS & MATCH TIES

Point Allocation

- Win: 3 points
- Draw: 1 point
- Loss: 0 points

Knockout Stage

If tied:

- Immediate penalty shootout
- Each team: 3 penalty kicks
- Sudden death thereafter

Please note that where a penalty shootout is required, the shootout result is used solely to determine which team advances.



13. GROUP RANKINGS (Order of Priority)

1. Total points
2. Goal difference
3. Goals scored
4. Head-to-head result
5. Head-to-head goal difference
6. Head-to-head goals scored
7. Fair play record
8. Drawing of lots

14. Medical & Safety Protocol

Given the transplant nature of participants:

- Teams must ensure medical clearance for all players.
- Players are responsible for medication management.
- Hydration breaks may be implemented.
- Referees may stop play for medical concerns at any time.
- Emergency medical staff will be present on-site.

Player safety overrides competitive considerations.

15. DISCIPLINE & PROTEST PROCEDURE

- Referee decisions during play are final.
- Formal protests must be submitted in writing within 15 minutes of match end. Forms will be supplied to all Team Managers
- The Tournament Committee decision is final.



16. CODE OF CONDUCT – Sportsmanlike behaviour

Purpose

This Code of Conduct set out in these rules sets the expected standards of behaviour for all participants in the Transplant Football World Cup. It protects player welfare, promotes respect, and ensures the tournament reflects the values of the global transplant community.

1. Respect for Opponents and Officials

- Treat all opponents with dignity, regardless of ability, gender, nationality, or medical history.
- Accept all referee decisions without argument, dissent, or intimidation.
- Refrain from gestures, comments, or behaviours that could be interpreted as disrespectful or confrontational.
- Shake hands (or offer an equivalent respectful gesture) with opponents and officials at the conclusion of each match.

2. Commitment to Safe Play

- Prioritise safety over competitive advantage at all times.
- Avoid reckless challenges, excessive force, or actions that endanger another player.
- Immediately stop play when instructed by the referee for medical reasons.
- Report any concerns about unsafe behaviour to team officials or tournament staff.

3. Positive Communication

- Use calm, constructive, and respectful language at all times.
- Avoid abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or gestures.
- Support teammates with encouragement rather than criticism or blame.
- Raise concerns through the appropriate channels rather than during active play.

4. Integrity and Fair Play

- Compete honestly and within the spirit of the game.
- Do not attempt to deceive referees (e.g., simulation, exaggeration of contact).
- Respect the rules, including substitution procedures, equipment requirements, and disciplinary processes.
- Accept disciplinary decisions with professionalism.

5. Responsibility as Transplant Ambassadors

- Represent the transplant community with pride, humility, and gratitude.
- Promote organ donation awareness through positive behaviour on and off the pitch.
- Support fellow athletes who may be managing fatigue, medical needs, or recovery challenges.
- Demonstrate leadership by modelling calm, inclusive, and respectful conduct.



6. Zero Tolerance for Abuse

The following behaviours will result in disciplinary action, including potential suspension or removal from the tournament:

- Verbal or physical abuse of players, officials, volunteers, or spectators
- Discriminatory language or behaviour
- Threatening conduct
- Persistent dissent or harassment
- Any action that undermines the safety or dignity of another participant

7. Accountability

- Players, coaches, and team officials are responsible for their own conduct and the conduct of their team.
- Team Managers must reinforce this Code of Conduct before each match.
- The Tournament Committee may impose sanctions for breaches, including warnings, suspensions, match bans, or removal from the event.

17. OFFICIAL HOST CITY

Frankfurt, Germany 

Host City – 2026 Transplant Football Cup



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