

CONSTITUTION

*Adopted by the Founding Clubs and
Approved by the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, June 1993,
as amended by the Member Clubs through October 30, 2000*

1. NAME

This league will be named the *Massachusetts Premier League, Inc.*, hereafter referred to as *MAPLE*. *MAPLE* is a league affiliated with the MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION, with the UNITED STATES YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION and with FIFA.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of *MAPLE* is to provide a league for teams who want the highest level of competition available in Massachusetts in order to prepare for higher levels of competition. *MAPLE* is open to all teams wanting to compete for State, Regional and National Cups.

3. MEMBERSHIP

a. **Admission.** Membership shall be open to any and all clubs. A Club consists of one or more teams sharing a common name, organized in concert for the conduct of play. Membership shall become effective upon acceptance of the application on one or more of the club's teams by *MAPLE* or by other method certified by the Commission.

b. **Suspension.** Any member of *MAPLE* may be suspended or expelled by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the full Commission. The member involved shall be notified of the intended action and may make a statement to the Commission before the resolution is put to a vote. The decision of the Commission shall be binding pending any legally available appeal.

4. FINANCIAL POLICY

a. **Fiscal Year.** The *MAPLE* fiscal year shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following year.

b. **Budget.** A proposed budget for the forthcoming year shall be prepared by the Treasurer and approved by the Commission.

c. **Bank.** All monies shall promptly be deposited to the *MAPLE* account to be established at a federally insured Massachusetts bank. All monies not required for immediate operational use shall be held in an interest-bearing account at such bank.

d. **Sources and Uses of Funds.** *MAPLE* funds shall come from team entry fees, from fines and penalties, and from special assessments for program events. Fees for each program will be determined on a yearly basis by the Commission. These funds shall be used for facility, administrative and program costs, including referee fees. All debts will be paid when due. All funds shall be spent only in the interest of *MAPLE*. *MAPLE* shall have no authority to borrow funds or to incur indebtedness, except as may be occasioned by vendor purchases on normal commercial terms.

e. **Disposition of Funds.** Should *MAPLE* be dissolved, all funds in the *MAPLE* account will be donated to a recognized federally tax exempt soccer organization, qualifying under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, to be determined by the Commission.

5. PROGRAMS

MAPLE will sponsor and operate the following programs on an annual basis:

a. **DIVISION 1.** League play for Boys and Girls in all age groups for which Region 1 competition is offered. From Under 13 to Under 16, the Division is open to eight Massachusetts teams per age group, who have declared for State Cups, qualifying on the basis specified in this Constitution. For Under 17 and older, the Division is open to six

Massachusetts teams per age group, who have declared for State Cups, qualifying on the basis specified in this Constitution. Division Championship Cups will be awarded to the first place spring finisher in each age group.

b. **DIVISION 2** League play for Boys and Girls in all age groups for which Region 1 competition is offered. Division 2 play is open to eight teams, from member clubs, who have declared for State Cups, not qualifying for Division 1. Places in Division 2 shall be determined on the basis specified in this Constitution. Division Championship Cups will be awarded to the first place spring finisher in each age group. Division 2 will be open to non-Massachusetts teams *only* in the following circumstance: If fewer than eight Massachusetts teams apply to play in a given age group, non-Massachusetts teams will be accepted to make up to eight teams, provided that such acceptance shall not result in an age group having an odd number of teams. Acceptance does not entitle the non-Massachusetts team to participate in competition for Division 2 slots either the following season or the following year.

c. **DEVELOPMENT DIVISION.** Play for Under 11 and Under 12 Boys and Girls. Play will be developmental in nature; however, official standings will be kept. Non-Massachusetts teams will be accepted on the same basis as in Division 2. There will be a tournament at the conclusion of the spring season organized on the basis specified in this Constitution.

d. **MAPLE-D.** League play for Boys and Girls under 13 through under 19. During the fall season, MAPLE-D is open to any team wishing to apply. In the spring MAPLE-D for ages 13 and 14 will be restricted to eight teams per age group, qualifying as follows: The six top finishing MAPLE-D teams from the previous fall season; two other teams qualifying on the basis of a tournament organized and structured by the Commission. The purpose of *MAPLE-D* is to provide a playing forum for new and other teams wishing to develop their competitiveness in order to be able to play successfully in Divisions 1 and 2. Subject to the above restrictions, *MAPLE-D* is open to all teams from member clubs who have not qualified for Division 1 or 2.

6. ORGANIZATION OF PLAY

a. **League Play.** League play for Divisions 1 & 2 and *MAPLE-D* for the U-13 & U-14 age groups will consist of play in both the fall and spring. Final standings for State Cups qualification and seeding will be the result of spring play only; fall standings will be kept only as necessary for purposes of this Constitution and By-Laws. League play for Divisions 1 & 2 for the U-15, U-16, U-17, U-18, U-19 & U-20 age groups will be in the spring only. The length of seasons and the number of games played in each will be determined by the Commission.

League play for the Development Division will consist of play in both the fall and spring. Teams will be placed in sections for League play. The number of and distribution of teams among sections will be at the discretion of the Commission. During any given season, teams will play within their respective sections. In the fall for Under 11, allocation of teams among section may essentially be at random, provided that the Commission should avoid to the extent possible placement of two teams from the same club in the same section. In the spring for Under 11, and for both Under 12 seasons, teams will be realigned into new sections. In making this realignment, the Commission will be guided by previous results for the purpose of making sections as evenly competitive as possible, while again avoiding placement of two teams from the same club in the same section.

In all programs, teams will, to the extent possible, play each team in their section or division once, and, unless necessary to make the required number of games, will not play the same opponent twice during the same season. In all programs, the Commission may, in its sole discretion, combine age groups or schedule cross-over games for the purpose of meeting State, Regional or National requirements for league play or otherwise for the good of the game. In such cases, separate standings shall be kept for each age group so combined.

b. **Promotion & Relegation.** (Applicable to U14 and older only; for U13 qualification [*i.e.* from U12] see (d) below and By-Laws.) Promotion to and relegation from Divisions 1 and 2 for the next higher age group will be determined, at the conclusion of the State Cups and any additional play-offs required, for play during the following soccer year, on the following basis:

1. Division 1.

i. The two State Cup finalists will automatically qualify for Division 1.

- ii. Among Division 1 teams not already qualifying under subparagraph (i), the highest finishing teams from the previous spring League (four for ages U14 to U16, three for ages U17 and older) will also qualify for Division 1.
- iii. For ages U14 to U16, the previous spring's Division 2 League champion, if not already qualified, will qualify for Division 1.
- iii. For ages U14 to U17, the eighth place Division 1 team from the previous spring League, if not a State Cup finalist, will automatically be relegated to Division 2.
- iv. For ages U14 to U16, the final spot or spots will be filled on the basis of a playoff involving all remaining Division 1 teams not already qualified or relegated and the highest finishing Division 2 team from the previous spring League not already qualified. For ages U17 and older, the final spot will be filled on the basis of a playoff among the remaining Division 1 teams not already qualified or relegated and the first and second finishing Division 2 teams from the previous spring League, if not already qualified.

[SPECIAL RULE FOR REGIONAL LEAGUE PARTICIPANTS: Region I has established a regional premier league for ages U16 and 18. This league - called the Region I Directors' Premier League - is open to the previous year's Regional semi-finalists, and certain other teams selected on the basis of competitive application. A Massachusetts team participating in this League might not play in MAPLE, but would be eligible through Regional League play for the State Cups. The State Cups Commissioner has determined that a Massachusetts Regional League team would qualify automatically for the round robin. In its turn, the MAPLE Commission has determined that such a team would - if it chose to or had to return to MAPLE following an absence - qualify for Division 1 if it reached the State Cups semi-finals. In this case, the number of automatic qualifiers under item (ii) above would go from 4 to 3 or 3 to 2, depending on the age group involved.]

In the event that fewer than the necessary number of teams qualify for Division 1 pursuant to this process, then teams who were in the playoff will qualify based on results of the playoff. If additional spots still remain or if playoff results are inconclusive, then otherwise non-qualifying Division 1 teams in the order of their finish, then Division 2 teams in the order of their finish, then new teams shall be placed in Division 1 until all places are filled. If, in circumstances where new teams can enter Division 1, more new teams are entered than there are places available, the Commission shall provide for selection among the new entrants by preseason competition or such other method as it deems appropriate.

All teams qualifying for Division 1 play for the next highest age group must declare their intention to play in Division 1 by no later than August 1. A \$250 fee for each team must also be submitted. The fee will be applied towards the League fees. If a qualified team declines to play in Division 1 the Commission will invite the next qualifying team based on these rules and the team will have 7 days to accept and pay the declaration fee.

2. **Division 2.**

- i. Any team or teams relegated from Division 1 will automatically qualify for Division 2.
- ii. (a) **U14-U16 and U18 and older:** If *MAPLE-D* had four or more teams in the relevant age group the previous spring, then:
 - (i) The highest finishing team from *MAPLE-D*, based on spring League play only, will automatically qualify for Division 2, replacing the 8th place Division 2 team. The latter team will automatically be relegated to *MAPLE-D*; and
 - (ii) An additional Division 2 place will go to the winner of a two-game playoff between the 7th place Division 2 team and the second highest finishing *MAPLE-D* team in the relevant age group. The loser of this playoff will be relegated to or remain in *MAPLE-D* as appropriate.

Otherwise, a single Division 2 place will go to the winner of a two-game playoff between the 8th place Division 2 team and the highest finishing *MAPLE-D* team in the relevant age group. The loser of this playoff will be relegated to or remain in *MAPLE-D* as appropriate.

The remaining Division 2 teams from the previous spring, not already qualified or relegated, will qualify for Division 2 for the following year.

(b) **U17:** All Division 2 teams from the previous spring finishing 4th or higher and not getting promoted to Division 1 will automatically qualify for Division 2. The 7th and 8th place Division 2 teams from the previous spring will be relegated to *MAPLE-D*. The 5th and 6th Division 2 and 1st and 2nd *MAPLE-D* teams from the previous spring will play a round robin for the last two Division 2 places.

(c) In the event that fewer than eight qualifying teams enter Division 2 pursuant to either of the previous paragraphs, then the playoff loser or losers will qualify, and if additional spots still remain then otherwise non-qualifying Division 2 teams in the order of their finish, then *MAPLE-D* teams in the order of their finish, then new teams shall be placed in Division 2 until all eight places are filled. If, in the circumstances where this rule applies, more new teams are entered than there are places available, the Commission shall provide for selection among the new entrants by preseason competition or such other method as it deems appropriate.

All teams qualifying for Division 2 play for the next highest age group must declare their intention to play in Division 2 by no later than August 1. A \$250 fee for each team must also be submitted. The fee will be applied towards the League fees. If a qualified team declines to play in Division 2 the Commission will invite the next qualifying team based on these rules and the team will have 7 days to accept and pay the declaration fee. In ages U15 and older, an existing *MAPLE-D* team will be considered for a Division 2 opening only if it has, before August 1, submitted a declaration of its intention to play in the following spring season, together with a deposit of \$100. This deposit is refundable if the team notifies the League before December 1 of its intention not to play the following spring. If the deposit is not so refunded, it will be applied against the team's spring registration fee.

All new teams entering an age group U-13 or older will be placed in *MAPLE-D*, unless a Division 2 or 1 spot becomes available pursuant to the above rules. Teams may enter Division 2, *MAPLE-D* or the Development Division for the spring season; however, the Commission has the right in its sole discretion to use fall records for placement or tie-break purposes, without regard to absent teams. For scheduling convenience or otherwise as it sees fit, the Commission may, for the fall season only, move teams from Division 2 to Division 1 or from *MAPLE-D* to Division 2 to accommodate the absence of spring declared teams. Teams so moved do not acquire any rights thereby.

c. **Play-off Format.** Playoff games and any necessary tie-break events will be scheduled by the Commission. All games and necessary tie breaks must be played by no later than the third day following the last day of State Cup play. In general, the format will be as follows:

i. **Two teams.** If a play-off involving only two teams is necessary to determine qualification for Division 1 or 2, the play-off will be a two-game play off. All teams will be given an opportunity when registering for the spring season to decide if they would like to count their qualification game at State Cups as the first promotion/relegation game if the team is in that position at the end of the spring season. If both teams involved have checked "yes" and played each other in a State Cups qualification game, then only one additional game will be played. If each team wins one game then total aggregate goals will decide the winner. If aggregate goals does not decide the winner, then sudden death overtime to a maximum of two regulation overtime periods will be played immediately after the second game. If these fail to produce a winner, then FIFA "kicks from the Penalty Mark" will decide the winner.

ii. **Three teams.** If three teams are involved in the playoff each team will play each other once. If no winner is determined on the basis on wins and losses, then FIFA "kicks from the Penalty Mark" will decide the winner.

iii. **Four teams.** If four teams are involved in the playoff for a U13 to U16 spot, a four team/three game round robin format will be used. The same system as used in the three-team format will be used to determine the winner or winners. If four teams are involved in the playoff for a U17 and older spot, a semi-final/final game format will be used.

d. **Development Division.** Play for the U-11 and U-12 age groups will take place in both the fall and spring according to the procedures set out in subparagraph (a) above.

Under 11 and Under 12 Tournaments. An Under 11 Tournament and an Under 12 Tournament shall be organized and scheduled by the Commission for a time after the end of the spring League season. Twelve teams will qualify for the Tournament in each of these age groups.

Championship Cup. The four Under 11 teams with the best overall Tournament record will play for the U-11 Championship. The Under 12 Tournament will produce a Massachusetts State Champion according to a format to be determined by the National Cups Commissioner in consultation with the Commissioner.

Under 13 Divisions 1 and 2. Qualification for Divisions 1 and 2 in the U-13 age group for the following year will be as determined by the Commission based on League and Tournament results.

e. **Discretionary Exceptions.** On application of any member club, the Commission will consider alterations to the divisional or sectional placement system in specific circumstances for a single season. If, after consideration and giving all potentially affected parties an opportunity to be heard, the Commission finds by a two-thirds majority that the strict application of this system would be manifestly unjust, the Commission may alter it in those specific circumstances to correct such injustice.

7. GOVERNING BODY

a. **MAPLE** will be governed by a body to be called the **Premier League Commission** ("Commission") composed of eleven members, ten of whom are to be elected by the membership as follows:

i. **Executive Officers.** The Executive Officers shall be the Commissioner, the Treasurer and the Secretary, elected as follows:

Commissioner, for a three-year term, commencing with the 1999 Annual General Meeting;

Treasurer, for the term commencing at the 1999 Annual General Meeting for a two-year term, and thereafter for a three-year term; and

Secretary, for the term commencing at the 1999 Annual General Meeting for a one-year term, and thereafter for a three-year term;

ii. **Commissioners -at-Large.** There shall be seven Commissioners-at-Large, divided into two classes and elected as follows:

Class 1, composed of four Commissioners to be elected for a two-year term commencing with the 1999 Annual General Meeting; and

Class 2, composed of three Commissioners to be elected for a one-year term commencing with the 1999 Annual General Meeting, and thereafter for a two-year term.

The **MYSA National Cups Commissioner** shall serve, *ex-officio*, as the eleventh member of the Commission

For purposes of electing the Commission, each Club in the League shall have a number of votes equal to the total number of teams it has in **MAPLE** Divisions 1 and 2 and the Development Division [*i.e.* Under 11 and Under 12] at the time of the election, or, in the case of any election between the end of the State Cups and August 1, had the previous season. No more than two members of the same Club may be members of the Commission at any one time. The Commissioner, in

consultation with the Commission, may appoint other persons to sit in advisory, non-voting capacities as he or she deems appropriate.

Nominating Committee. In each year, the Commissioner shall appoint, on or before February 1, a Nominating Committee for the purpose of submitting nominations for those positions on the Commission whose terms expire at the next Annual General Meeting. The Nominating Committee shall be composed of five members, not more than three of whom may be then current members of the Commission. The Nominating Committee shall submit its report to the Commission on or before June 1 each year, and the report of the Nominating Committee shall be included in the Notice of Annual Meeting.

b. The Commission will be responsible for all League policy, and in furtherance thereof may, subject to the provisions of this Constitution, enact such by-laws and regulations as may be necessary to ensure the implementation of those policies. The Commission shall be responsible for all communication with MYSA and its constituent entities, with other affiliated Leagues and with other State organizations.

c. The Commission will elect a Deputy Commissioner from among its members. The Commissioner will be invested with the Commission's executive authority between meetings, and he or she shall ensure compliance with this Constitution, and by-laws and regulations enacted pursuant hereto. The Commissioner will chair all meetings of the Commission or membership. The Commissioner will vote only to break ties at *MAPLE* meetings. In the absence or unavailability of the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner shall perform his or her functions.

d. The Secretary will notify all MYSA affiliates of *MAPLE* and its objectives, fees and entry deadlines. He or she will be responsible for maintaining and certifying *MAPLE* membership, for keeping its records, and for noticing and setting the agenda for meetings of the Commission and the membership. The Treasurer will prepare the annual budget, authorize all expenses for *MAPLE*, and maintain records of and report periodically on its finances to the Commission and the membership.

e. The Commissioner, Treasurer and Secretary shall serve respectively as President, Treasurer and Clerk of the corporation for purposes of M.G.L. c. 180. The Commission shall serve as the Board of Directors of the corporation for these purposes.

f. Commissioners other than an *ex officio* member shall serve from the General Meeting of their election until the next General Meeting, as will all officers. Officers and Commissioners may be re-elected.

g. A quorum for the transaction of Commission business shall consist of a majority of the members thereof, provided that such majority includes either the Commissioner or the Deputy Commissioner.

h. Unless otherwise stated herein, or in the by-laws or regulations, all decisions of the Commission shall be by an affirmative vote of at least four members of the Commission.

i. **Protest Officer.** A Protest Officer shall be appointed by the Commissioner. The Protest Officer shall not be a member of the Commission or associated with the clubs or teams involved in *MAPLE*. The referee involved in the situation (if applicable) and one representative of each club or team involved shall be invited to attend any hearing called by the Protest Officer. The purpose of the Protest Officer shall be to settle any disputes that arise in the actual playing of games, in the suspension of participants or in any other areas that may be specified by the Commission. The Protest Officer may, in consultation with the Commissioner, appoint two other similarly non-associated persons to sit *ad hoc* with him or her in consideration of any particular matter brought before him or her. The Commissioner and the League's General Counsel may attend any protest procedure *ex officio* in a consultative capacity. Appeals from a decision of the Protest Officer or an *ad hoc* Protest Committee appointed pursuant to this paragraph shall be to the MYSA Appeals Committee, in accordance with its rules and procedures.

j. The Commission, to the extent and in the event that a situation or situations arise not controlled or covered by this Constitution or the By-Laws, may take any and all action or actions that the Commission deems appropriate in the interest of *MAPLE*, to promote and enhance the game of soccer, and, in general, for the Good of the Game.

k. **Appeals Officer.** An Appeals Officer shall be appointed by the Commissioner. The Appeals Officer shall not be a member of the Commission or associated with the clubs or teams involved in *MAPLE*. The purpose of the Appeals Officer shall be to provide a means of redress for a member club which feels that it has been harmed by an action of the Commission itself. An appeal may be taken by written submission to the Appeals Officer stating the nature of the claim, the redress sought, and including such supporting documentation as may be appropriate. A \$200 appeals fee, refundable if the appeal is upheld, shall accompany the submission. The Appeals Officer shall forward a copy of the appeal to the Commission and afford it an appropriate opportunity to respond. The Appeals Officer may appoint two other similarly non-associated persons to sit *ad hoc* with him or her in consideration of any particular matter brought before him or her. The Officer or Committee may hold such hearings as he, she or it deems appropriate, provided all concerned parties are given adequate notice and an opportunity to be heard. The Officer or Committee shall render a written decision, stating the reasons therefor, and forward a copy to the Commission and the appellant. In making his, her or its decisions, the Appeals Officer or Committee shall be guided by this Constitution and By-Laws and by applicable rules and laws of state, regional, national and international organizations with which the League is affiliated. Appeals from a decision of the Appeals Officer or an *ad hoc* Appeals Committee appointed pursuant to this paragraph shall be to the MYSA Appeals Committee, in accordance with its rules and procedures.

8. ADMINISTRATION

a. **Organization and Operation.** Responsibility for the *MAPLE* shall be vested in the Commission. The Commission shall elect from its members such officers as may be necessary to the discharge of its responsibilities. The Commission shall be fully responsible for scheduling, referees, publications and other written communication, application, qualification, registration and rostering of players and teams, play and all other matters incident to the implementation of programs. To this end the Commission may enact and promulgate regulations for its programs.

b. **Executive Director.** The Commission shall appoint an Executive Director who shall perform and coordinate the regular operational functions of *MAPLE*. The Executive Director, who need not be an elected member of Commission, will consult with and be guided by the decisions of the State Registrar in matters concerning rostering and player qualification.

9. MEETINGS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

a. **Annual Meeting.** The members shall meet annually in the month of July at a time and place to be determined by the Commission. The meeting shall elect the members of the Commission for the following soccer year, consider and make recommendations to the Commission concerning the Treasurer's report and the budget for the following year, review and approve or amend by-laws and regulations, and act upon such other matters as may be brought before the meeting by a member, a member of the Commission, or the MYSA Board of Directors.

b. **Special Meetings.** A special meeting may be called by the Commission or by any four member clubs to consider such matters as may be included in a written notice to the Secretary requesting such meeting.

c. **Voting.** Each member club shall be entitled to a number of votes equal to the number of teams it has in *MAPLE* Divisions 1 and 2 and the Development Division at the time of the meeting, or, in the case of any meeting between the end of the State Cups and August 1, had the previous season. Each vote must be cast by a different individual, accredited in writing to the meeting by a member club. Members of the Commission, to the extent not accredited by a club, are each entitled to one vote upon accreditation of the Secretary. Members of the Commission accredited to the meeting by a member club shall only be entitled to cast his or her club's vote. Proxies are not allowed. Unless otherwise specified herein, all votes shall be by a simple majority of those present and voting.

d. **Quorum.** Forty (40) accredited votes shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of all business.

e. **Notice.** The Secretary shall give 30 days written notice of all meetings, setting out the agenda therefor and including all relevant reports and other material, to all member clubs and the Commission.

10. **AMENDMENT**

This Constitution may be amended, altered or repealed by a two-thirds majority of a duly called meeting of the membership. If amendments to Article 5(d) or 6(b)(2)(ii) are brought before a meeting of the membership, then, for purposes of voting on these provisions only, member clubs shall have an additional vote for each team which they have, by application of the time rules in Article 9(c), in *MAPLE-D*. In this case, the amendment shall only pass if the required two-thirds majority includes a simple majority of *MAPLE-D* delegates present and voting.