

MVLA Soccer Club

Field Manual

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Section 5: Field Rules and Procedures – General

The MVLA Board of Directors has instituted rules and procedures common and applicable to all fields and all members to keep things running smoothly. These include rules for sensible use, adherence to our field closure and good neighbor policies, and procedure for installing flags, nets and/or goals before the first game and storing/locking them after the last game of the day.

Team Duties:

All teams are held responsible for their assigned duties. Importantly, we all share ownership for the condition of all MVLA fields, whether or not you have actually been allocated to the field, and whether or not your field use is at your regularly scheduled time. This philosophy of “shared accountability” applies to team officials, players, and their families, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The scope of responsibility includes, but is not limited to, taking ownership to PREVENT any of the following at any time:

- littering, pet messes, messy trash bins and restrooms
- overly loud noisemaking, improper parking, speeding on local streets
- use of any field or field section when it is worn out or bare of grass
- unscheduled use (poaching)
- use of goal areas for training
- allowing paint-lined fields to go blank by not fulfilling lining duties and/or by not reporting fading lines
- allowing grass to grow shaggy in and around goal nets
- being guilty of ignoring or violating any field-specific rules as described in this MVLA Field Manual and any MVLA Field Notices.

Teams guilty of any of the above shall be subject to fines or loss of privileges at the Board's discretion. If any MVLA member sees any of the above violations by an unknown party, they are to report such activity promptly to the Field Coordinator at his/her cell phone and also to file an email incident report with the Field Coordinator for formal follow up.

Our field owners tell us that LITTER is our biggest fault! All fields must be kept clean!

All members of MVLA also share responsibility for making sure our fields are maintained at the highest quality possible. While field owners (cities and schools) have ultimate responsibility for field maintenance, their budget shortfalls require us to step up and volunteer for many field maintenance tasks, including trimming grass around goals, filling holes and ruts, replacing divots (which should be a team ritual!), pulling weeds, and alerting the MVLA Field Coordinator to any problems, issues, or anomalies.

All MVLA teams share in field lining duties. See section below titled, “Zen and the Art of Field Lining,” for guidelines on this critical task. A schedule will be set every season to tell your team when they have lining duty.

Never tamper with sprinkler valves or timers at fields. If you see a problem, please notify the Field Coordinator.

All teams are expected to inspect their goals and nets for conformance to safety and functional guidelines. Goals must be staked or chained to the ground to prevent tipping. Certain fields require daily setup and teardown of nets and/or goals. Never assume the next team will put away goals. If you do not hand off the field directly to another MVLA team, put away the goals and lock them. Some fields have nets and goals that are set up for the duration of the season. Know the various field rules! Coaches/managers will find it helpful to carry some zip-ties, ground stakes, and a soft mallet in your gear bag to secure nets. If you notice excessive grass growth around the goals, please trim it!

Many fields have lockable storage boxes, tubes, or “garbage cans” to store field equipment such as flags, nets, goal weights and stakes, etc. Some fields allow storage of assembled goals or rebounders as long as specific procedures are followed. Most MVLA lockable storage containers share the same lock combinations. Coaches and Managers will be given lock combinations and are expected to safeguard them and not to share them with players and others.

After-School Sports at School Fields:

Due to after-school programs, MVLA’s field access may be limited to start at 5pm or even later. Often, permits will be granted to allow use as early as 3:30 or 4pm. Sometimes, a school will have a special function requiring us to vacate the field for a day, week, or longer, despite our permits. Each Coach/Manager will be given specific permit instructions for their field in a given season. However, in general, be aware that we must defer use of the field to the school any time they ask. If you are assigned practice at a school field, be sure to stay in touch with the school website for any upcoming athletic or school events that may conflict with your practice. The MVLA Field Coordinator will not guarantee a replacement field assignment for you; however, every effort will be made to assign you a backup field if you give proper notice.

All Fields with Standing Goals:

Several club fields, including Hillview, Grant, Graham AWT, etc., have dedicated soccer fields with goals installed at the beginning of the season and they remain throughout the season. MVLA instructs its coaches and managers to refrain from using the goal areas during practices at such fields. The Goal Area is one of the highest use areas on the field and field quality is often judged by the state of the Goal Area. In no case shall teams or coaches use the goal area for striker/goalie training. If using flat rebounders or portable goals, place them outside the penalty area at a different location each day, play cross-wise, etc. If MVLA teams cannot take responsibility for the preservation of MVLA game fields, then we will no longer assign teams to practice on game fields.

All Lighted Fields:

A few fields, including Crittenden, Callahan, McKelvey, etc., have lights for evening play. When MVLA gets permits to these fields, only teams assigned to that field for the given period will be given keys to the lights and control rooms (one key per team). Each key is property of the respective City, is numbered and tracked, and MVLA will be charged a fine if we lose the key. These keys cannot be copied. NEVER LEND YOUR KEY, even to another MVLA coach. Please be extremely diligent about turning all lights off and locking all rooms and gates with provided keys.

Goal Anchoring Systems:

It is an absolute requirement that full sized goals be anchored to the ground to prevent tipping for any MVLA match. Referees will be the final judges as to whether an anchoring method is sufficient to meet safety requirements. MVLA deploys a variety of anchoring methods, including pipe-in-ground-sleeve goals, portable (movable) goals anchored with either heavy duty stakes that must be hammered into the ground, in-ground peg-and-chain-based anchoring systems, or sand-bag weights (on artificial surfaces).

Be sure to know which fields have “standing goals”, which means the goals are left there permanently throughout the season, and which fields have “match-day goals”, which means the goals (and sometimes goal nets) have to be put out for the first game and returned to storage after the last game of the day.

It is the club’s objective to install a very reliable in-ground peg-and-chain-based anchoring system on all fields deploying “match-day goals”. This system is comprised of two (or more) ground pegs, permanently set in the ground at each side of where the goal frame will rest. Each peg has two to three links of heavy-duty chain attached. Each goal frame has two (or more) short lengths of chain attached. Each length of chain ends in a carabiner clip that attaches to its respective ground peg on the field. This system reliably prevents the goals from tipping. This ground-peg based system does not secure the goal from theft (the carabiners we use are typically not locking); therefore, it is imperative that match-day goals be returned to their locked positions after the last game of the day.

Storage of Flat-Style Kickbacks, Rebounders, and Other Equipment:

Be sure to read the rules in Section 7 for your assigned field for any other equipment such as rebounders. Some fields allow storage of club-owned or team-owned equipment and some do not. Please ask the Field Coordinator if you may store personal or team-owned equipment at any particular field if not otherwise specified in this Manual. In all cases, please follow the rules and procedures for using, storing and locking such equipment.

Special note for MVLA-owned flat rebounders: When our use of a certain field is high, MVLA may store rebounders at the field for your use. We encourage use of the rebounders instead of goals for practices since they are easily moved to avoid grass and turf overuse. Rebounders will be locked vertically against a nearby chain-link or wooden fence with two chains and two locks. If multiple rebounders are stored at a site, please “stack” the rebounders so that minimal fence area is taken up by our equipment. If rebounders of multiple sizes are stored at a site, then separate chains/locks will be assigned to each size. The combination for club-owned rebounder locks is found in Section 7. If any rebounder lock does not work with this combo, it is because this equipment is privately owned and you are not authorized to use it. Please keep the chains and padlocks LOCKED to the fence while you use the rebounders. Make sure the chains are pulled tight when you lock the rebounders to the fence. Slightly spike the shoes of the rebounders into the dirt or ground to help anchor them to the fence.

Almost all MVLA fields have additional requirements for use, equipment storage, or access. These are listed in the section titled, “Specific Rules for Specific Fields”. Please follow all these rules and use good judgment or your team risks fines and loss of their privilege to the field.