



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# **FAIR PLAY**

**THE RULES THAT GOVERN  
YMCA COMPETITIVE SPORTS**  
YMCA of the USA

# INTRODUCTION

Everyone deserves an equal opportunity to compete and a fair chance to win. Rules are needed to specify conditions that must be met by all players, coaches, volunteers, and YMCA administrators to create such opportunities.

The YMCA movement looks to the integrity of each player, coach, volunteer and YMCA administrator to follow the spirit of the rules developed for healthy competitive sports with a focus on service to youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.

The following rules provide definitions and procedures for holding "Closed- YMCA Competition" as defined herein. When a YMCA athlete or team enters "Open Competition" the eligibility requirements of the governing body of that sport shall apply.

YMCA of the USA also provides best practices documents for the specific YMCA sports, but the Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports stipulate the rules that must be followed for athlete participation, coach participation, and YMCA participation.

## Fair Play

Interpretation of The Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports ("Rules That Govern") is based on the "fair play" concept. The YMCA believes that fair play is the very essence of competition. Sports and competition should be marked by a spirit of truth and honesty, with strict observance of all rules, whether written or unwritten. Fair play implies respect for oneself, one's opponent, and others involved in conducting the competition. Players, coaches, officials, and spectators share a responsibility for fair play: fair play sets the game above the prize.

Competition provides an excellent means of developing a predisposition toward fairness, dignity and integrity. As these virtues develop, they influence behavior in everyday life. It is for the development of such virtues, as well as the opportunity for participants to learn about time management, team work, commitment and other important life skills, that the YMCA promotes competitive sports.

## Character Development in YMCA Sports

Values are basic beliefs about what is good, or ought to be, that serve as guidelines for decision making and action. Character development is the process of helping people cultivate ethical and decision making skills.

**The YMCA believes that character development, focusing on the values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, is an essential element of its sports program.**

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Caring:</b>  | <b>To love others and be sensitive to the well-being of others involved in the sports program</b>           |
| <b>Honesty:</b> | <b>To have integrity, making sure that one's actions match one's values through participation in sports</b> |
| <b>Respect:</b> | <b>To value the worth of every person, including oneself, one's teammates, opponents, and officials</b>     |

**Responsibility: To be accountable for one's behavior and obligations**

YMCAs have a responsibility to train staff, volunteers, and participants to model and promote appropriate values through sport, and to create an environment conducive to character development and safety.

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## **RULE 1: DEFINITIONS**

### **Amateur**

An Amateur is one who engages in sports solely for the pleasure of competition and physical, mental, and social benefits derived from participation. For YMCA competition purposes, an amateur is also considered to be an individual who has not represented a post-high school institution in closed or open competition and who has not accepted pay or compensation for competing in his or her sport.

### **Association**

An Association is a corporate Young Men's Christian Association, which has been recognized for membership pursuant to Section 2 of Article II of the YMCA Constitution. More specifically, an Association is certified by the Board of Directors of the National Council of YMCAs ("National Board"), holds an Association branch, or unit number, and is eligible for separate listing in the YMCA Directory. For purposes of competition only, an Association branch, department, or center of a Metropolitan Association shall be considered an Association.

### **Competition Classes**

#### **Closed Competition**

Closed competition occurs exclusively among individuals and members of a single YMCA, or two or more YMCAs within an organization or group (e.g. 'league') formed for the specific purpose of such competition or series of competitions that are open only to members of that group or organization.

#### **Open Competition**

Open competition is an event in which any organization or individual may enter.

#### **Formal Competition**

Formal competition consists of closed or open events in which teams or individuals are officially designated by a local YMCA to represent that YMCA in competition with other YMCAs or organizations, and for which entry fees may be charged, awards presented, results and records recorded and championships contested. Competition shall be conducted under the rules and auspices of the National Advisory Committee, and administered by Officials Certified by the YMCA of the USA.

#### **Informal Competition**

Informal competition occurs when recreation, fellowship or practice are the principle objectives. These events are typically characterized by no entry fees, and no recording of individual or team scores.

#### **District/State/Regional Competition**

District/State/Regional YMCA competition consists of the closed competitions authorized by YMCAs within those groupings. These competitions may have specific eligibility requirements as long as they do not conflict with these "**Rules That Govern.**"

#### **National YMCA Competition**

National YMCA competition consists of national championship activities authorized, supervised and conducted under the authority of the National Advisory Committee for that sport, as authorized by YMCA of the USA.

### **Competing Teams**

Competing teams are YMCA entities consisting of one or more individuals that can compete against one another in closed or open competition. Teams within the following organizations are examples of competing teams: YMCA, USA Swimming, USA Diving, USA Gymnastics, YWCA, AAU, Boys and Girls Clubs.

### **Current Season**

Current Season is the time frame defined by each sport's National Advisory Committee for purposes of qualifying for that sport's championship activities.

### **Disqualified/Ineligible Association**

A Disqualified/Ineligible Association is one that has been removed by the District/Regional/State or National Event Committee responsible for the competitive activity in which the Association was involved. The Association is ineligible to compete in a sports competition in one or more sports at the District/State/Regional or National level because of violations or negligence in sports administration.

### **Dual Representation**

Dual representation is when an athlete represents more than one team during the current season in a particular sport. High School teams are exempt.

### **Eligibility of an Association**

Only certified Associations that are in good standing with YMCA of the USA, are eligible to compete in events involving other Associations.

### **Event Committee**

An Event Committee is the body that is charged by a National Advisory Committee to organize and conduct a competition under the rules and procedures of that National Advisory Committee.

### **National Advisory Committee**

A YMCA of the USA authorized committee responsible for the oversight of a YMCA competitive sports program and the conduct of that program's regional and national championship events.

### **Terminated Association**

A terminated Association is one that has failed to meet the standards established by the National Board, and no longer meets the qualifications for membership as a YMCA.

### **YMCA Member**

A YMCA member is a person, who, after due application, is enrolled by a YMCA Association ("Association"), and is entitled to full privileges, activities, and services of that Association. In Metropolitan YMCAs where association wide memberships entitle the individual to full privileges, activities, and services of more than one unit, the person must compete for the unit in which he/she enrolls for the membership or designates at the time of enrollment the unit for which he/she will be competing.

### **YMCA of the USA**

YMCA of the USA is the informal name for the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States of America.

## **RULE II: ELIGIBILITY OF ASSOCIATIONS**

An Association that fulfills the following conditions shall be deemed an eligible Association for formal competition:

- a. Meets the qualification for membership as outlined in the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of the United States of America Constitution and Bylaws.
- b. Is in good standing with its own State/District/Regional Committee/Individual administering the YMCA sports program.
- c. Confines its formal YMCA competition to Associations that are certified and comply with the provisions set forth in this document.
- d. States that the team is representing their Association in good standing with other required documentation for State/District/Regional/National competitions including a current "Certificate of Insurance".

## **RULE III: ELIGIBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS**

### **Section 1: Eligibility Conditions**

**In order for an individual to participate, he/she must represent an Association that is in good standing and is considered eligible. In YMCA Competition, the athlete must represent a YMCA. YMCA Competitive Sports does not recognize unattached athletes.**

An individual who fulfills the following conditions shall be eligible to represent his/her Association in formal closed competition:

- a. A YMCA member in good standing 30 days prior to the competition (90 days for State, District, Regional, and National Championships as outlined in Rule IV, Section 3).
- b. An amateur athlete in the competitive season in the sport in which the individual desires to represent the YMCA.
- c. Meets all the qualifying requirements for a specific event.
- d. Eligible under the Dual Representation Rule as outlined in Rule II, Section 3 of this document
- e. Certified by the CEO or the Branch Executive Director of the Association as meeting the above conditions.
- f. Should a protest of eligibility arise in any competition, the Event Committee shall rule on the athlete's eligibility and that decision shall be final.

## **Section 2: Transfer by Consent**

An individual wishing to transfer from one YMCA unit to another is eligible to represent the new YMCA immediately upon the written consent of the YMCA unit he/she previously represented. This includes transfer from one metropolitan branch to another. The membership transfer must be completed before the individual competes for the new Association. (See attached documents)

## **Section 3: Dual Representation**

YMCA Competitive Sports are a membership based, team structured program through which local YMCAs develop youth, promote healthy living and encourage social responsibility.

As a program focused on providing a supportive community, a YMCA competitive team is characterized by a personal, social and sustained commitment to the team in regard to practice, competition and authentic relationships between athletes, coaches and families.

In order to promote this objective, an athlete shall represent only one competitive team in a given sport for a period of 90 days prior to participating in a YMCA championship competition. The one exception is for an athlete who represents his/her High School in scholastic competition during the High School competitive season. In the case of exceptional circumstances, an athlete may seek a waiver of this rule. The championship Event Committee will make a final determination on the eligibility of the athlete in this case.

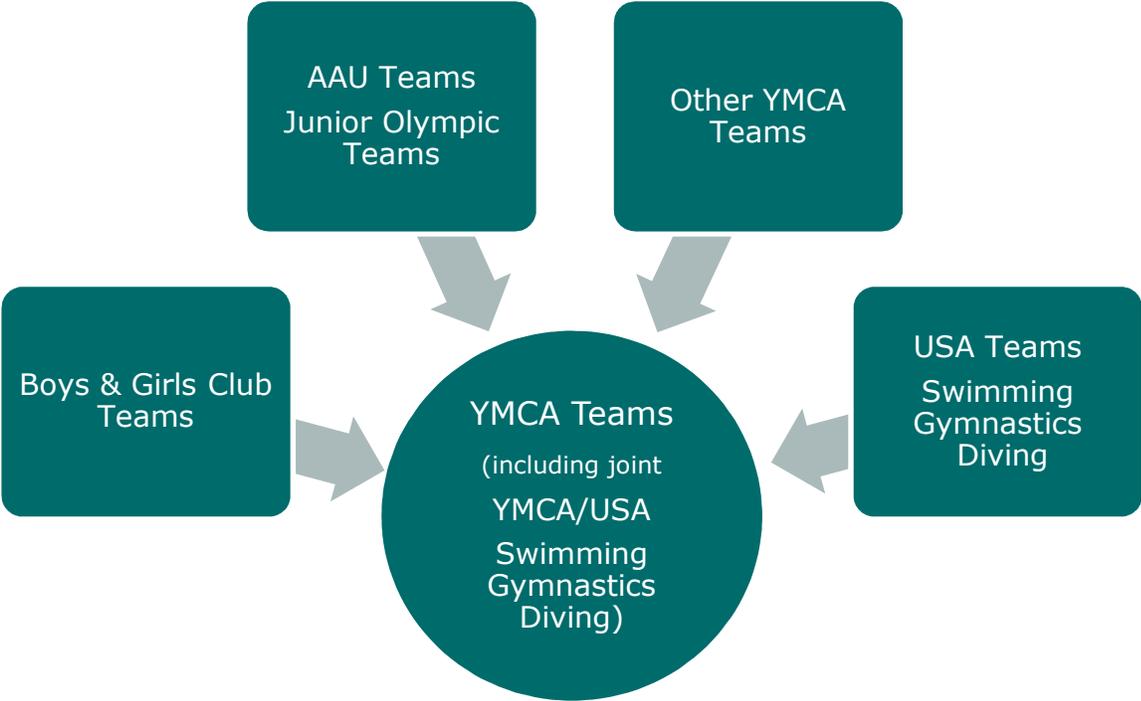
An athlete who represents a YMCA team that is also registered with the designated National Governing Body (NGB) for that sport is in compliance with this rule.

A YMCA athlete may represent a non-YMCA team in the same sport, provided that the non-YMCA team could not compete against the athlete's YMCA team in open competition. Interscholastic teams do not directly compete against YMCA teams and therefore participation on a same sport interscholastic team does not constitute dual representation. (See the Permissible Dual Representation example below).

Examples of situations contrary to the spirit of this rule would be athletes who join a YMCA team from another team in the same sport in order to participate in a championship meet or to garner individual or team recognition. YMCA coaches are expected to demonstrate the integrity and ethics to recognize such potential situations and avoid them.

If an athlete wishes to participate in open competition offered by the sport's National Governing Body ("NGB"), but his or her YMCA is not a member of, and does not participate in the NGB's events, then the athlete may participate in accordance with the NGB's rules.

**PROHIBITED Dual Representation**



**PERMISSABLE Dual Representation**



## **RULE IV: CHAMPIONSHIPS**

### **Section 1: State/District and Regional Formal Competitions**

State/District/Regional and National Championships must be conducted as closed, formal competitions.

### **Section 2: Authority of State/District and Regional Committees**

Event Committees that operate State/District/Regional/National Championships shall have the authority to establish administrative procedures, including eligibility rules, governing such sports competition so long as the rules do not conflict with these Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports. With exception to Gymnastics, any changes to these rules and regulations that are initiated by an Event Committee shall be made known to the authorized National Advisory Committee for that sport at least 90 days prior to the start date of the competition subject to the application of the new rules. In the event of a conflict between the new rules and the Rules that Govern YMCA Competitive Sports, then these Rules That Govern shall prevail.

### **Section 3: Non Sponsored Competitors**

For State/District/Regional or National YMCA Championships, each competitor shall have represented his/her Association in formal competition during the current season in the same sport and shall have been a YMCA member in good standing for a period of at least 90 days prior to the date of the competition that the competitor is applying to enter. In instances where an Association does not sponsor representative teams in formal competition in a certain sport, an athlete representing that Association may be permitted to enter State/District/Regional or National competition in that sport provided the entry is approved by the Event Committee administering that State/District/Regional/National competition and the CEO or the Branch Executive Director of the YMCA that the athlete is representing.

## **RULE V: VIOLATIONS**

### **Section 1: Violations Which May Lead To Disqualification and Ineligibility of an Association**

The District/Regional/State/National Event Committee responsible for any competitive activity in which an Association is participating may disqualify that Association for:

- a. Failure to enforce and maintain the Rules That Govern.
- b. Being a party to or condoning violations which disqualify an amateur under the Rules That Govern.
- c. Being suspended by the National Board for failure to meet requirements for recognition as a member Association.
- d. Significant misconduct or poor sportsmanship by athletes, coaches, or other local Association officials preceding, during, or after the competition.
- e. Acknowledgement that the YMCA team is representing their Association, and is not in good standing as outlined in these Rules that Govern YMCA Competitive Sports and local

Best Practices for program management.

## **Section 2: Violations That May Disqualify an Athlete from Representing a YMCA in Sports Competition**

- a. Exhibiting serious unsportsmanlike conduct
- b. Competing under an assumed name
- c. Misrepresenting facts regarding eligibility or performance
- d. Illegal Dual Representation, as defined herein
- e. Involvement in substance abuse
- f. Failing to meet the conditions stated in Rule III of the Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports

## **RULE VI: PROTESTS**

### **Section 1**

Protests affecting the eligibility of any individual or Association must be made in writing and **must** be made within 30 days of the conclusion of the event. Whenever possible, issues that may lead to protests should be discussed and resolved prior to competition.

### **Section 2**

Protests shall be considered by the Event Committee in charge of the competition.

### **Section 3**

A team or individual against whom a protest is lodged shall be permitted to compete under protest. No results or scores shall be reported, or considered final, until the protest has been resolved by the Event Committee.

### **Section 4**

The Event Committee shall have power to reject any entry if, within the sole discretion of the Event Committee, there are reasonable grounds to do so.

### **Section 5**

Upon receipt of protests alleging violations by an Association or an individual representing that Association, the Event Committee responsible for the competition shall, as soon as practical convene for the purpose of gathering factual evidence and consideration of the protest.

### **Section 6**

The Event Committee responsible for the competition in which the individual or Association was participating, shall render judgment regarding further eligibility at that competitive level in that sport. For example, a District Event Committee cannot render eligibility decisions that impact events at other competitive levels, such as at the Regional or National level. However, when an individual or Association is ruled ineligible, this decision shall be reported to Event Committees at other levels. It is within the sole discretion of the Event Committees as to whether they will recognize other eligibility rulings submitted to the Event Committee for consideration.

### **Section 7**

Awards or trophies acquired by individuals or Associations under conditions for which they are subsequently disqualified shall be returned to the awarding committee.

### **Section 8**

Results of the decisions of any Event Committee concerning any protest may be appealed to the National Advisory Committee of that particular sport. Appeals to the National Advisory Committee must be submitted in writing within thirty(30) minutes following notification of an Event Committee's decision. The decision of an appeal submitted to a National Advisory Committee shall be final and binding on all parties.

## **RULE VII: REINSTATEMENTS**

### **Section 1: Reinstatement of Associations**

- a. Any Association which has been disqualified may apply for reinstatement by writing to the Event Committee issuing the sanction, stating the reason for such application.
- b. Reinstatement of an Association that violates Rule V, Section 1c of the Rules That Govern, may be made by the Event Committee issuing the sanctions when requirements for recognition as a member Association of the National Board of YMCA of the USA have been met.

### **Section 2: Reinstatement of Individuals**

- a. Applications for reinstatement must be approved and signed by the Chairperson of the Event Committee and the Executive Director of the Association of which the applicant is a member in good standing.
- b. The Event Committee issuing the sanctions shall pass upon all applications for reinstatement of individuals.
- c. An athlete shall be ineligible to compete while his/her application for reinstatement is pending.
- d. An individual whose application for reinstatement has been rejected initially may apply again for reinstatement, subject to the policy developed by the Event Committee issuing the sanctions.

# **RULE VIII: RULES FOR DISTRICT, STATE, REGIONAL, NATIONAL COMMITTEES CONDUCTING INTER ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONSHIPS**

## **Section 1: Rules**

All Inter-Association Championship Events must be conducted in accordance with these Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports and the applicable recognized rules for the particular sport in question.

## **Section 2: New National Championships**

A request to create any new National YMCA Championship event must be formally requested by the National Advisory Committee for that sport and approved by YMCA of the USA.

## **Section 3: Management of Funds**

All funds accumulated for the purpose of administering the championships must be maintained in custodial accounts of local YMCAs, or in the case of the Advisory Committees, in custodial accounts of YMCA of the USA. Advisory Committees will be self-supporting.

## **Section 4: Hosting Regional Championships**

Where there is an interest by representatives of a particular sport at the district or state level to establish a new Inter-Association championship event, a district or state level committee should be appointed to make a recommendation to the National Advisory Committee for the particular sport. This includes the following:

- a. All districts or states desiring to participate in the championships shall be represented on the committee.
- b. All representatives to the district or state level committee shall be appointed by either the district level organization program directors or by Executive Directors.
- c. Term limits shall be adhered to as set forth in the by-laws for that particular sport.
- d. The chairpersons of the committees must be approved by a YMCA of the USA Sports & Recreation Specialist who services the designated area.
- e. All events shall adhere to the national rules set forth by YMCA of the USA or the designated committee.
- f. All Inter-Association Championships should be hosted by a local YMCA or local YMCA associations designated by YMCA of the USA. District and state level committees should not assume responsibility for conducting the championships themselves. Issues involving eligibility of individuals and local YMCA Associations shall be resolved by the Event Committee responsible for the event in accordance with the Rules That Govern.

## **RULE IX: REQUESTS FOR WAIVERS/APPEALS**

Requests for waivers or appeals for relief from specific provisions of the Rules That Govern in specific circumstances must be addressed to the appropriate National Advisory Committee for that sport, or its designated representative charged with responsibility for a particular event, normally the applicable Event Committee and its Meet Director.

All requests must be in writing from the appropriate coach and must set forth the relief requested and the reasons for such request. Such requests must be received at least one week in advance of the event, barring unusual circumstances. Failure of a particular coach or athlete to take the appropriate steps to qualify for and enter a competition shall not be grounds for an appeal.

The applicable Committee shall consider each request for waiver in light of the nature and circumstances leading to such request. The applicable Committee shall rule on such requests in an expeditious manner. Decisions of Event Committees may be appealed to the National Advisory Committee. However, any decisions of a National Advisory Committee shall be final and binding.

## **RULE X: USE OF THE YMCA TRADEMARKS**

### **Section 1: Authorized Use by Third Parties**

An Association may authorize a third party (including vendors, sponsors and donors) the right to use the YMCA name and YMCA Trademarks for the purpose of providing services, sponsorships or publicizing the relationship between the Association or an event hosted by the Association.

### **Section 2: Compliance Requirements**

The authority of an Association to grant a sub-license is restricted. Associations cannot grant permission to use the YMCA Trademarks on internet sites and/or marketing materials (including but not limited to t-shirts, banners, and marketing materials) that would reach outside of the granting Associations service area, without permission from YMCA of the USA). When granting permission to use the YMCA name or Trademark within the service area, Associations are required to use a written sub-license agreement provided by YMCA of the USA, and establish practices to ensure that third parties do not violate the terms of the YMCA of the USA brand standards and compliance policy.

## **RULE XI: AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS**

### **Section 1: Amendments**

Any proposed amendment to these Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports must be submitted to YMCA of the USA for consideration.

### **Section 2: Revisions**

YMCA of the USA authorizes the National Advisory Committees to review and submit recommendations regarding The Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports during an Advisory Committee meeting. Approvals of the revisions are subject to approval by YMCA of the USA or an authorized committee of the National Board.

## **RULE XII: INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION**

The Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act, approved by Congress in 1978, designates the United States Olympic Committee as the official coordinating body for amateur sports in the United States.

The Sports Act further provides that each sport included in the Pan American and Olympic Games be controlled by a National Sports Governing Body with authority to sanction international competition in that sport.

YMCAs either sending teams abroad or hosting foreign teams in sports competition (whether involving YMCA or non-YMCA teams from abroad) shall comply with the sanction procedure of the appropriate National Governing Body for the particular sport.

Questions about sanction procedures should be addressed to the National Advisory Committee representing the specific sport on behalf of YMCA of the USA.

Revised: 8-20-12



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## YMCA Sports Transfer by Consent

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as the Executive Director or  
CEO, release \_\_\_\_\_  
from his/her membership in the \_\_\_\_\_ YMCA  
and its competitive \_\_\_\_\_ team, effective \_\_\_\_\_.

He/she has no outstanding financial or other obligations to this YMCA that would prevent  
him/her from transferring to another YMCA and YMCA competitive team.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
YMCA Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone or E-Mail

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as the Executive Director, CEO  
or designated representative officially accept the transfer of \_\_\_\_\_  
to the \_\_\_\_\_ YMCA  
and its competitive \_\_\_\_\_ team, effective  
\_\_\_\_\_. I understand that he/she has no outstanding financial or other  
obligations to the \_\_\_\_\_ YMCA.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
YMCA Position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone or E-Mail