INV3NTIVE XMAS FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT 2026

OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT RULES & REGULATIONS

ORGANISER	Inv3ntive Football Academy C.I.C.
VENUE	Islip Manor Sports Centre
SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER 2026	U7, U9, U11, U13, U15
SUNDAY 27 DECEMBER 2026	U8, U10, U12, U14
PLAYING FORMATS	5v5 for U7-U8 | 6v6 for U9-U15
MATCH DURATION	ALL MATCHES: 10 MINUTES
COMPETITION	Cup & Trophy (U8-U15); U7 Development Festival

1. General Rules

1.1. All participating teams must comply with the tournament rules and regulations issued by Inv3ntive Football Academy.

1.2. The tournament will operate in accordance with applicable FA regulations and any conditions imposed by the sanctioning County FA.

1.3. All matches will be officiated by referees appointed by the tournament organisers.

1.4. Referees' decisions relating to match incidents and the Laws of the Game are final.

1.5. Any administrative disputes will be reviewed by the Inv3ntive Tournament Organising Committee.

1.6. Teams must follow the published fixture schedule and instructions issued by tournament officials.

2. Player Registration

2.1. All teams must complete their online player registration before the tournament.

2.2. Player names and dates of birth must be provided accurately.

2.3. All players must meet the age eligibility requirements for the 2026/27 football season.

2.4. Each player must be eligible to participate under applicable County FA and tournament regulations.

2.5. Players may represent only one team within the same age-group competition.

2.6. Players cannot transfer between teams during the tournament.

2.7. Academy-signed players are not permitted to participate.

2.8. Organisers may request proof of age or identity at any stage.

2.9. Teams must check in at least 30 minutes before their first scheduled match.

2.10. Incorrect player information or ineligible players may result in team disqualification.

3. Squad Regulations

3.1. Maximum registered squad size: 10 players per team.

3.2. U7-U8 play 5v5; U9-U15 play 6v6. These numbers include the goalkeeper.

3.3. Rolling substitutions are permitted throughout matches.

3.4. Substitutions must take place with the referee's permission.

3.5. Players must leave the pitch before their replacements enter.

3.6. Teams entering multiple squads in the same age group must register separate player lists.

3.7. Players are not permitted to move between those squads.

3.8. Breaches of player registration or squad rules may result in forfeiture or disqualification.

4. Match Setup

The first-named team will:

• Provide a suitable match ball when requested.

• Take the kick-off.

• Change kit or wear bibs if colours clash.

The second-named team will:

• Select which end to attack.

All players must wear suitable footwear, shin pads and appropriate football kit.

Ball sizes for the 2026/27 season: U7-U11: Size 3; U12-U13: Size 4; U14-U15: Size 5.

5. Match Duration

5.1. All matches are 10 minutes long, including group-stage, knockout, semi-final and final matches, subject to applicable age-group playing-time limits.

5.2. Matches will be played as one continuous 10-minute period without a half-time break, where approved.

5.3. No extra time will be played.

5.4. Knockout matches ending in a draw will be decided by a penalty shootout.

5.5. The referee may allow additional time for serious injuries or exceptional stoppages.

5.6. Teams must be ready to play at their scheduled kick-off time.

6. Gameplay Rules

6.1. No offside rule will apply, subject to the sanctioned competition rules.

6.2. Touchline restarts will follow the approved rules for the relevant age group.

6.3. Kick-ins, pass-ins or dribble-ins will be used where permitted by the relevant FA regulations.

6.4. Goals cannot be scored directly from a pass-in or kick-in. Applicable dribble-in provisions will follow FA rules.

6.5. Corner kicks will be taken in accordance with the relevant Laws of the Game.

6.6. Free kicks and penalties will be awarded according to the applicable age-group rules. Indirect free kicks will apply where required.

6.7. Deliberate heading is prohibited for U7-U11 players.

6.8. A deliberate heading offence will result in an indirect free kick, taken in accordance with FA guidance.

6.9. Goalkeeper distribution, retreat-line requirements and back-pass restrictions will follow the approved rules for each age group.

6.10. Dangerous play, excessive physical contact and unsporting behaviour are prohibited.

7. Points System

Group-stage points: Win = 3 points | Draw = 1 point | Loss = 0 points.

The points system applies only to age groups permitted to participate in competitive trophy events.

8. Group-Stage Tie-Breakers

Where two or more teams finish level on points, positions will be decided in this order:

1. Goal difference

2. Head-to-head result, where applicable

3. Goals scored

4. Sudden-death penalty shootout or another approved deciding procedure

Where a multi-team tie cannot be resolved using these criteria, the Tournament Committee will determine a fair and consistent deciding procedure.

9. Cup & Trophy Competition

9.1. Eligible age groups will compete in an initial group stage.

9.2. Following the group stage, teams progress into the Cup Competition or Trophy Competition according to their finishing positions.

9.3. The number of advancing teams depends on registrations and the published tournament format.

9.4. Each competition may include semi-finals and a final.

9.5. Exact qualification criteria will be confirmed before the first fixture.

9.6. U7 will operate as a development festival without competitive trophies, league tables or published results.

10. Knockout Matches & Penalties

10.1. Knockout matches ending in a draw proceed directly to a penalty shootout.

10.2. No extra time will be played.

10.3. Penalty shootouts will use an approved sudden-death or other designated format communicated before knockout matches.

10.4. Only eligible players may participate in the shootout.

10.5. The referee will supervise the shootout and determine the winning team.

11. Discipline

Yellow Card

11.1. Under the proposed tournament disciplinary rules, a yellow-carded player will take no further part in that match, subject to approval through the sanctioning process.

11.2. The player may not be replaced during that match under this proposed rule.

Red Card / Second Yellow Card

11.3. A player receiving a red card or second yellow card will be dismissed from the match.

11.4. A dismissed player may not be replaced during that match.

11.5. The player may be excluded from the remainder of the tournament, subject to applicable FA disciplinary requirements.

11.6. Serious misconduct may be reported to the relevant County FA.

12. Coaches & Team Officials

12.1. Only authorised coaches, team officials and registered players may enter designated playing areas.

12.2. Coaches are responsible for ensuring their players follow tournament rules.

12.3. All coaches must comply with the FA Respect Codes of Conduct.

12.4. Abuse, intimidation, threatening language or aggressive conduct towards referees, officials, players or spectators will not be tolerated.

12.5. Tournament officials may require an individual to leave the playing area or venue following misconduct.

13. Spectator Regulations

13.1. Spectators must remain within designated spectator areas.

13.2. Entry into the playing areas is strictly prohibited unless authorised.

13.3. Parents and spectators must respect referees, players, coaches and tournament officials.

13.4. Abusive language, threatening behaviour and discriminatory conduct are prohibited.

13.5. Children must remain under appropriate adult supervision when not participating in matches.

13.6. Anyone failing to comply may be removed from the venue.

Spectator Admission: Adults £5 per person | Children free entry.

Valid spectator admission must be presented where required by tournament staff.

14. Safeguarding & Player Welfare

14.1. All participating clubs must comply with their safeguarding obligations.

14.2. Team officials remain responsible for supervision and welfare of their players.

14.3. Safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately to the designated tournament safeguarding officer.

14.4. Injuries must be reported promptly to the referee and organisers.

14.5. Emergency procedures and first-aid arrangements will be communicated at the venue.

14.6. Photography and filming must comply with safeguarding requirements and applicable permissions or restrictions.

15. Late Arrival & Forfeited Matches

15.1. Teams must be ready at their scheduled kick-off times.

15.2. Teams arriving late must report immediately to tournament officials.

15.3. The Committee may award a forfeited match where a team fails to attend or cannot field an eligible side.

15.4. Any forfeited-match score used for standings will be communicated consistently to participating teams.

15.5. Delays caused by exceptional circumstances will be considered by organisers.

16. Tournament Authority

Inv3ntive Football Academy reserves the right, subject to applicable FA rules, to:

• Adjust fixture schedules where necessary.

• Decide administrative disputes.

• Disqualify teams for serious misconduct or breaches.

• Remove individuals displaying unacceptable behaviour.

• Amend arrangements in response to safety or weather conditions.

• Report disciplinary or safeguarding incidents to appropriate authorities.

Tournament Committee decisions on administrative matters are final, subject to any rights of appeal required by FA regulations.

17. Acceptance of Rules

By registering for the Inv3ntive XMAS Football Tournament 2026, participating clubs confirm that they have read and agree to the published Tournament Rules & Regulations.

All coaches, players, parents and spectators are expected to uphold Respect, Fair Play, Sportsmanship and Enjoyment.

INV3NTIVE FOOTBALL ACADEMY C.I.C.

Developing Players. Inspiring Futures.

We wish every participating team an enjoyable, competitive and memorable football experience.