

New Referee Uniforms: 2023

To All Maine Soccer Officials,

In early December, MASO met for our Annual Meeting to discuss several major issues. One of which was an update to the required uniforms moving forward across the State. For as long as I can remember, we have been using the old NISOA grid jerseys as our standard uniform. The uniform supplier, Official Sports International, has informed us that the old NISOA grid is no longer being produced and will no longer be available once stock has run out. This has forced MASO into making a decision into a new standard uniform for the State of Maine. We have anticipated since the 'new' NISOA shirt has been introduced, that the old style would eventually be dropped. Now that the decision has been made, we have decided to move forward with the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) gold jersey as our standard uniform. The USSF pink uniform will be the alternate.

We came to this conclusion based on a few factors. There is a lot of uncertainty on which uniforms will be available for the medium and long term. With the NCAA mandating one specific officials' uniform, which is yet to be announced, and the old NISOA grid being discontinued, we were left with little option. Since we do not know what uniform the NCAA will mandate, the 'new' NISOA shirt becomes obsolete along with other brands currently available. So we are left with the USSF uniforms as the best possible solution to this issue.

We also feel that aligning our uniform with the USSF creates as little impact financially on officials as possible. Many officials already have the uniforms so the cost will be zero, and new high school officials coming from the USSF officials pool will also have no impact.

MASO is implementing this new uniform rollout over TWO years. For the 2023 high school soccer season, the USSF gold and pink uniforms will be mandatory for State and Regional Finals ONLY! Regular season games and local board assigned playoff games will remain status quo. For the 2024 soccer season, the USSF gold and pink uniforms will be considered the standard and alternate shirts for ALL high school soccer games. IF OFFICIALS WANT TO WEAR ANOTHER UNIFORM BESIDES THE USSF ONES, THEY CAN SO LONG AS THE WHOLE CREW MATCHES! The obvious exception to that is State and Regional Final games. Beginning in 2024, it is expected that all officials at the high school level have at LEAST the USSF gold uniform.

So what does this mean for Maine high school soccer officials? For incoming officials, they need to purchase the USSF gold and pink shirts. For existing officials, it is highly recommended to purchase the

USSF gold uniform immediately to avoid a clash in uniform with new referees in the 2023 season. It is incredibly important, and expected, that officials wear the same style uniform in all varsity level games beginning in 2024. MASO fully understands that for the 2023 season, there may be a small number of games where officials might not have the same style jersey. That is why it will be mandatory for ALL officials to purchase the USSF gold jersey for the 2024 season. Socks, shorts, shoes, and hat requirements remain unchanged.

Because we are in transition, a point of emphasis for all Maine soccer referees and ANY level: Referee crews are highly encouraged to make contact with their partner(s) at least 24 hours before game time to confirm jersey design and colors to be worn.

We appreciate everyone's input and feedback on this issue from all corners of the State. It's never easy to make large scale changes and we feel that this will benefit high school soccer officials in the long term. Below are the links to the uniforms for everyone to check out. If you have any questions about the rollout, feel free to contact me.

Alex Pleau

President, Maine Association of Soccer Officials