

Suburban Friendship League
2416 Rosedown Drive
Reston, VA 20191-1620
July 16, 2011

Dear Club Representative:

First, thank you for all of your hard work in providing a safe, enjoyable soccer environment for our players. Remind everyone involved that this is a recreation league and no one gets a college scholarship or shoe contract based on these games. Play on!

This is the package that was discussed in our July 16, 2011, Email. The preseason meeting will be held at the North County Governmental Center in Reston on Friday, August 12, 2011, from 7 to 9 PM. Someone will be at the Center starting around 6:30 P.M. to answer any questions you may have on the electronic registration process or other SFL matters and we look forward to having another good meeting. We realize that much of the material we go over is normally repetitive, however, it is amazing how many times we are questioned during the season on material that is discussed at the meeting. However, this season we will be discussing some major process changes and significant rule changes relating to discipline. If you need directions, please give me a call or check our Web Site (www.sflsoccer.org/meetdir.htm).

Enclosed in your package are the following items along with this letter:

- Procedures and Processes – Rescheduling Regular Season Games
- Procedures and Processes – Team Registration
- Procedures and Processes – Tournament Scheduling
- proposed rules,
- team discipline sheet for coaches,
- listing of phone numbers for field conditions (see section V of the rules),
- proposed budget for the fall season, and
- financial statements for fiscal year 2011.

We have also adopted the following agenda for our meeting:

- Opening statement by SFL Commissioner
- Election of SFL Commissioners for the 2011–2012 fiscal year
- Approval of weekend game dates (September 10, 17, 24, October 1, 15, 22, 29, and November 5)
- Approval of tournament weekend (November 12/13)
- Establishment of registration and tournament fees
- Discussion of rules to be used for the fall season
- Acceptance of rules to be used for the fall season
- Approval of age group game times
- Other matters

COMMISSIONER'S POINTS OF INTEREST

In preparation for the Fall 2011 season, the Suburban Friendship League (SFL) Commissioners met to review issues raised during the Spring 2011 season. The issues discussed involved administrative processes and discipline issues. The vast majority of the clubs and their coaches are doing a great job providing a safe, quality soccer experience for the 550 teams that played in our league during the spring season. However, a few coaches, parents, and/or players did not get the message last season and still need to adjust their performance to ensure that we live up to our stated goal: "For the good of the Players". To better address the problems and issues we experienced, we have revised the proposed rules and process documents. The actual changes are discussed in more detail below. However, we would like all involved to focus on the following points of emphasis so that we can continue to provide a quality experience for our players:

- **Health and Safety** – We have attached a separate page dealing with minimizing the risk of injury.
- **Timeliness** – Please submit the requested team, player, and field information on time. We expect to schedule games for well over 500 teams each season and again for the end of season tournaments. Late or incorrect submissions create major headaches when creating schedules. It is not too early to begin contacting coaches and have them remind players to get registered. The SFL is not a small organization. We compared our team registrations to those for the three major travel leagues – NCSL, ODSL, and WAGS – for the age groups we covered during the Spring 2011 season and found that the SFL had (1) 309 boys teams compared to 280 teams in NCSL and 114 teams in ODSL and (2) 277 teams compared to 464 teams in WAGS and 157 teams in ODSL. It is important to remember that NCSL and WAGS include numerous teams from Maryland.
- **Fraudulent or Non-existent Rosters** – A small but significant and annoying number of coaches appear to be trying to gain competitive advantage by fielding teams with travel, over-age, or unregistered players. In addition, far too many coaches arrive at the field without a signed, official roster, or they have altered the roster. We will vigorously enforce our existing rules on these issues. No other league accepts such nonsense, and neither will we. The roster challenge process contained in our rules has been effective in detecting these problems so make sure that these procedures are used should any questions arise.
- **Parent/Coach Misbehavior** – A growing number of coaches and parents have become foul mouthed and verbally abusive toward officials and opposing team players and parents. Several have threatened physical violence. We have developed specific rules to hopefully address this problem although it may take a season for some to get the message. Please ask your referees to vigorously enforce the existing rules and eject and report to the SFL anyone involved in this type of stupidity. In the season package we will have the enclosed page on discipline that the coach can provide to the parents so that they understand the risks they are posing to the team by conducting these bad behaviors. However, it never hurts to remind your coaches and parents that too many team demerits will result in teams being barred from the tournament or tossed from the league.

KEY DATES

In our registration Email we provided the club, team, and field information from the previous season for you to use as a starting point as discussed below. We have also included a spread sheet that shows the fields for your club where the **STREET ADDRESS IS UNKNOWN**. **Accordingly, if you do not see a field on the spread sheet, this means that we have the address and all you need to do is check the web site to make sure that it is correct (<http://www.sflsoccer.org/field.htm>) rather than provide the information again.** If you no longer have the field or use it for SFL games, it is okay to leave the address as unknown. If at all possible, please provide us the updated field information as soon as possible by Email (sfl@sflsoccer.org) and **DO NOT** wait until August 15. Waiting until the last minute does not allow any time to correct mistakes that may be made by your club or the SFL. Also, pay particular attention to a team's age group and division information. Each season we have several clubs make mistakes in this area. The division structure is discussed below. Please note the requirements to provide the Master Player Roster (without uniform numbers) for all your players by August 15. The following are the key dates for team registrations, scheduling, and rosters:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
August 1	Deadline to provide club contacts, field information, and team numbers (including age group and division) and fields that should be used by each team. Accurate team contact information is not required at this time. If a team is dropped after this date, then the club will be assessed the registration fee for this team.
August 12	Preseason meeting.
August 15	Master Player Roster that contains all registered players and team assignments for all the teams registered with the SFL (see discussion below).
August 25	Expected deadline for changes to team contact information. The SFL Club Representatives will be notified of the actual date as the actual date for the team contact information is better known. This is also the date when requests for using substitute roster forms must be received.
September 4	Game schedules finalized and package sent to the contractor for mailing.
September 9	Coaches provided approved rosters by SFL Club Representative.
September 10	First game weekend.
September 15	Initial Master Player Roster (with uniform numbers) sent to the SFL.
September 25	Last day to make changes to a team roster without approval of the applicable SFL Age Group Commissioner.
September 30	Final Master Player Roster sent to the SFL.

ELECTION OF SFL COMMISSIONERS

The SFL elects its commissioners in the fall for the fall and spring seasons. So far we have received the following nominations:

- SFL Commissioner – Jim Rodden
- SFL Under 12 Boys Commissioner – Jack Smit
- SFL Under 12 Girls Commissioner – John Paladino
- SFL Under 14 Boys Commissioner – Rick Reid
- SFL Under 14 Girls Commissioner – John Paladino
- SFL Under 16 Boys Commissioner – Jim Rodden
- SFL Under 16 Girls Commissioner – Frank Calcagno
- SFL Under 19 Boys Commissioner – Jeff Rae
- SFL Under 19 Girls Commissioner – Greg Giovanis

As can be seen above, two commissioners are serving dual roles – the SFL Under 12 Girls Commissioner and SFL Under 16 Boys Commissioner. If you would like to fill either of these positions or have any potential candidates, please let us know. If anyone would like to run for one of the other positions, please let us know as soon as possible.

PLAYER HEALTH AND SAFETY

As many of you know, on-field player sports injuries have been a hot topic in the news over the past few months. The National Football League, for example, has made a concerted effort to address their problems with head injuries and concussions. They have instructed referees to strictly enforce the rules on striking the opponent in the head and using the helmet as a striking implement. The National Hockey League has also adopted measures to address problems with concussions.

The National Federation of State High School Associations estimates that 9.3% of all high school soccer injuries are concussions. While we have received few reports of severe injury during SFL games, we should ensure that we are doing what we can to minimize the risk of injury to the players in our league. In addition, players, coaches, and parents are becoming more sensitive to this issue and will ‘be on the lookout’ for anything that might be serious or even appears to be serious. Any incident reported, whether real or imagined, results in an investigation and significant time devoted to its resolution, so it is in our best interests to stop ‘rough play’ before it begins. Not only are we protecting our children (which is our main concern), we are also minimizing any ‘nuisance complaints’.

We urge each Club to take the following steps to help ensure a safe playing environment for our players:

- **Coaches:** train your players in proper and legal technique. For example: go straight up for headers; cleats down on slide tackles; avoid tackles from behind. If a player is injured during a game, get them proper care and do not allow them to return to play if there is any doubt about their condition.

- **Referees:** make player safety a point of emphasis this season. Injuries are more severe when one or both players are permitted to go up for a head ball at an angle rather than straight up. Tackles with studs up, or from behind and through an opponent's legs increase the likelihood of injury. Be prepared to stop play quickly if a player appears to be injured.
- **Parents:** soccer is a contact sport. If your child is injured, you and your family doctor are the best judges of when it is safe for your child to return to the field. Our advice is **-WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT.**

PROCESS AND RULE CHANGES

Based on a review of the suggestions received and operations of last season, the SFL Commissioners are recommending a number of process and rule changes.

Process Changes

1. **Sunday start times** – It was agreed that Sunday start times for the tournament games and games automatically rescheduled by the SFL could be as early as 10:30 AM. Sunday start times for regular season games will remain at 12:30 PM or later. (Procedures and Processes – Rescheduling Regular Season Games (footnote 1 on page 5), July 10, 2011, Procedures and Processes – Tournament Scheduling (page 11), July 10, 2011, and Procedures and Processes – Team Registration (page 6), July 10, 2011)
2. **Coaches with two teams (Regular Season)** – It was agreed that clubs would be required to provide a regular season Sunday time slot for at least one of the teams associated with an individual who is coaching 2 teams with both teams assigned Sunday home games as the preferred option. The teams will be assigned alternate home/away schedules which makes the elimination of conflicts much easier and “automatic” when both teams are assigned Sunday home game time slots. If a club does not want to provide the slots or the coach does not want to play Sunday games, then no effort will be made to eliminate the conflicts and the club and team will have to find some other way to manage the teams when a conflict arises. (Procedures and Processes – Tournament Scheduling (page 11), July 10, 2011, and Procedures and Processes – Team Registration (page 6), July 10, 2011)
3. **Coaches with two teams (Tournament)** – It was agreed that clubs will be required to determine whether a coach with 2 teams has someone who can handle conflicting games. If the coach does not have someone, then the club will tell us which team should be dropped. The SFL will take very limited actions to eliminate schedule conflicts. (Procedures and Processes – Tournament Scheduling (page 11), July 10, 2011)
4. **Changes to game fields** – Clubs will be required to use a standard Email to submit game schedule request that includes the standard requirements, e.g., teams have been notified, both teams have agreed to the change were applicable, etc. In addition, clubs will be required to use a standard spread sheet to submit rescheduling requests. (Procedures and Processes – Team Registration (page 1), July 10, 2011)

5. **Sideline positioning** – The season letter will change the wording for sideline positioning to state that where conditions allow, (1) teams shall be placed on one side of the field and spectators shall be on the opposite side the field if the SFL Club Representatives approve this change. If the current position is maintained – it is up the club to decide the sideline positioning for their home games – then the season letter will maintain the current wording and state that the SFL recommends that the teams be placed on one side of the field while the spectators be placed on the other side of the field where possible.
6. **Last tournament game in a single elimination tournament division is cancelled before completion due to weather** – Modified the tournament cancellation policy to state that trophies will be awarded if a tournament game played in the single elimination division format (1) has started but is terminated due to weather, (2) would have directly resulted in the awarding of trophies, and (3) is tied when it is terminated.¹ The process makes adjustments when the teams may have played a different number of tournament games to ensure that the same number of tournament games are used when ranking the teams. (Procedures and Processes – Tournament Scheduling (pages 7 - 9), July 10, 2011)

Rule Changes

1. Current material in IV.J.1. Moved to a new section IV.K. This section discusses removing players from the field and holding down the game scores. Also, added section IV.K.1. which implements a “mercy rule”.
2. Section VIII.B.1. – Tournament ranking process changed to the following: (1) tournament game points, (2) head to head competition during the tournament, (3) tournament bonus points, (4) least goals allowed during the tournament, (5) whether the team received a regular season award (if applicable), (6) head to head competition during the regular season games if they have played each other, (7) least average goals allowed during the regular season, and (8) shoot out. A 3 or 4-way tie is broken in the following order: (1) tournament bonus points, (2) least goals allowed during the tournament, (3) whether the team received a regular season award (if applicable), (4) least average goals per game allowed during the regular season, (4) regular season game point percentage, and (5) coin flip. After one team is eliminated, then the remaining teams will be ranked by starting at the top of the appropriate tie breakers. Note: Normally head to head results are not used in breaking 3 or 4-way ties since one team will not have defeated all the other teams during the tournament. However, if one team has beaten all the other teams that are tied in the tournament, then that team will be placed ahead of all the other teams that it is tied with based on game points.

¹ The ranking factors are the same ranking factors as used for round robin divisions with the exception of tournament game points. Tournament game points are not used since both teams should have the same number of game points if this process is required.

3. Section IX – Discipline. This section has undergone significant changes and should be reviewed in its entirety. The following highlights these changes.
- The term “Team Red Card Points” has been changed to “Team Demerits” since this eliminates any confusion that a penalty is being assessed even when red cards are not shown. Although the term is being changed, the rules have retained the penalty that if a team averages one Team Demerit per regular season game, then that team is (1) suspended from all tournament games and (2) all remaining regular season games. For example, if the regular season is 8 games and a team accumulates eight Team Demerits in week 2, then it would be suspended from the remaining six regular season games and the tournament. On the other hand, if it accumulates the eight Team Demerits in week 8, it would be suspended from the tournament. In addition, as currently called for in the rules, that team would be placed on probation.
 - An automatic 2 game suspension is being implemented to any non player (coach or spectator) who is asked to leave the field by the official regardless of whether a red card is shown. Two Team Demerits will also be assessed to the team for each individual asked to leave. For example, if the coach and a spectator are asked to leave, then four Team Demerits will be awarded to the team.
 - Two Team Demerits are assessed to a team anytime a referee report includes a reference to the referee being harassed during or after the game by players, coaches or spectators. Examples include, verbal threats, being followed to the parking lot in an inappropriate manner, or other actions that would make a referee fear for his/her safety. This penalty would also apply to referee assault incidents, but additional disciplinary actions would also be required to be taken by the offending club in those cases.

RESOURCES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW THE SFL OPERATES AND ITS RULES

We have developed several documents that are designed to better explain the SFL processes and procedures and expect to develop additional documents in the future. In addition, we have developed several Frequently Asked Questions documents that are designed to help answer questions you, the coaches, and the club officials may have concerning various topics. The following process and procedures documents have been developed and posted to the web site under SFL Documents (www.sflsoccer.org/sfldocs.htm).

- Game Reports – This document contains the procedures that relate to reporting game scores, cards, and roster problems.
- Rescheduling Regular Season Games – This document discusses how games are rescheduled and is included in this package since changes were made this season.
- Team Registration – This document discusses the team registration process and is included in this package since changes were made this season.

- Tournament Scheduling – This document discusses how the tournament is scheduled and is included in this package since changes were made this season.
- Process Used to Determine the Tournament Size and Teams Eligible to Be Considered for the Tournament. No substantial changes were made to this document this season.

A web page has been developed to contain the Frequently Asked Questions documents (www.sflsoccer.org/faq.htm). The following documents have been posted to this page.

- General SFL Operations
- Email Problems With Verizon Email Addresses – If you have a Verizon Email address, you should read this document so that you will be assured of receiving Email from the SFL.
- Guide to Referees – Highlights the unique SFL rules that apply to referees.
- Regular Season Scheduling – Discusses how the SFL develops its regular season schedules and how teams reschedule regular season games. Several topics in this document may be useful to your registration activities. This document will be undergoing revision.
- Reporting Game Results – Discusses issues relating to game reports and provides examples of how to submit game reports for a variety of situations.
- Rosters – Discusses issues relating to rosters, including the Master Player Roster, and provides examples for how to handle various roster issues that may arise on the field.
- Spread Sheet for Regular Season Field Availability – Discusses how to complete the spread sheet used to identify fields and field slots.
- Team Demerits – Discusses a number of discipline issues and how team demerits are assigned.
- Team Ranking – Discusses how the SFL ranks teams on the web site.
- Tournament – Discusses how the tournament is scheduled and conducted. This document will be undergoing revision.

While we attempt to the information consistent in these documents with the rules, sometimes through unintentional oversight, some inconsistencies may occur. In these cases, the rules are used to resolve any inconsistencies. We would like you to spend some time with these documents and let us know what other topics should be included and questions that you would like included on these or any other documents. We would also like your views on how to make these documents more useful.

ELECTRONIC CLUB AND TEAM REGISTRATION

As noted in the registration Email that was sent to the SFL Club Representatives, Field Coordinators with Email, and Referees Coordinators with Email, we are using an electronic process to obtain our registration information. Attached to that Email were four Excel spread sheets.

- The spread sheet named ___CLUB.XLS (e.g., LMCLUB.XLS) contains the information on the club, SFL Club Rep., Age Group Representatives., Referee Coordinator, Field Coordinator, and other individuals that you desire to receive the season package mailings but are not coaches. This spread sheet must be returned by the registration dead line and contain accurate club contact information. Failure to provide accurate information by the deadline subjects your club at best to a penalty. It may also result in none of your teams being registered.
- The spread sheet named ____TEAM.XLS (e.g., LMTEAM.XLS) contains the information on teams and team contacts for your teams. Only the teams contained on this list that are received by the registration dead line will be considered registered. Any additions made after this date will be put on a waiting list and (1) may not be scheduled or (2) scheduled with other teams on the waiting list which means that they may be playing with teams that are not in their geographical location. It is not important to have accurate team contact information by the registration dead line. Therefore, you may use the existing team contact information as a place holder for that team even if you know that a change will be made but have not yet identified the new contact. The team contact information can be changed at a later date as discussed elsewhere in this letter. The registration process document contained in this package includes more information on this process.
- The spread sheet named ____FIELD.XLS (e.g., LMFIELD.XLS) is used to provide the field information that should be used for scheduling your teams. This spread sheet must also contain accurate information by the registration deadline. This spread sheet is only used for the regular season scheduling efforts. The spread sheets that contain the field information for makeup games is not due until requested by the SFL which is well after the season starts.
- The spread sheet named ____FIELDADD.XLS (e.g., LMFIELDADD.XLS) is used to obtain the street address for each field. We would like this information by the start of the season. The only fields shown on this listing are those with missing addresses. If we have all the addresses for the fields used by your club, then we did not attach a spread sheet requesting this information.
- The spread sheet named ____TOURFLD.XLS (e.g., LMTOURFLD.XLS) is used to obtain tournament fields that can be supported by the club. This spread sheet is due on September 1.

The Master Player Roster should be download directly from the web site. It can be found on the SFL Forms page (www.sflsoccer.org/sflforms.htm). Please use this form rather than the form you used last season. We noticed that some of the forms used last season were versions used in past seasons and did not have the edits that the current form has in it.

We have included explanations on each of the spread sheets to help clarify the data that is needed and welcome any suggestions that would improve their usefulness to you. Although these sheets contain the

information from last season and you may change the data to reflect your changes. However, **PLEASE DO NOT CHANGE THE ORDER OF THE COLUMNS IN THESE SPREADSHEETS.**

If you would like a blank form, all 6 forms can be obtained from our web site under SFL Forms. The following contains specific information relating to these spread sheets.

Special Note: If you are an AOL user, you will need to save your changes under a different file name before you send them back to us. In the past, for some reason, AOL does not pick up the revised file.

Club and Team Contact Information

We realize that if an individual is both a coach and a club official, that their name will appear on the club and team spreadsheets. We also recognize that the same individual may appear more than once on either one or both of these spreadsheets. This is okay. When the data base is loaded with this information, it eliminates the duplicates. However, it is critical, that the names be shown on both spreadsheets so that the data base knows of the duplicate roles that an individual may hold. The following are the rules that govern these “duplicates”:

- If a person is coaching more than one team in different age groups, then make sure that the same standard team name is used for both teams. For example, if a person in McLean is coaching an Under 14 Boys team and an Under 16 Girls team, then the standard team name for both teams should be the same, e.g., McLean 1. Please note that we have made some changes for coaches with two teams.
- If a person is coaching more than one team in the same age group, then make sure that you tell us this in an Email so we can make sure that we correctly process the information. Normally we have no more than one or two people that meet this condition.
- If a person holds more than one club role, then duplicate the name information for each role. For example, if the same individual is the SFL Club Representative and Under 12 Boys Club Representative, then the name information will be repeated for each role. If this person is also a coach, then the name information will be duplicated on the ___TEAM.XLS spreadsheet.

Each club is required to provide/confirm the name, address, and phone information for the Club, SFL Club Representative, Age Group Representative for each age group that is entered in the SFL. In addition, the Referee Coordinator, and Field Coordinator for the club must also be provided/confirmed. Only one name may be shown for each of these roles. If other individuals should also receive our normal mailings for these individuals, then they should be shown as “Other”. For example, some clubs have more than one person who handles field assignments. The primary person should be shown under the “Field” role and secondary person should be shown under “Other”. An easy way to ensure that all the field people get any Emails relating to fields, is to include their Email address with the one provided to the individual shown as the Field Coordinator (the same applies to the Referee Coordinator). SFL Club Representatives automatically get a copy of these Emails.

Field Spread Sheets

Three field spread sheets are provided. The primary field spread sheet, _____FIELD.XLS (e.g., LMFIELD.XLS), contains the information we use to schedule games on your fields. We realize that it is somewhat complicated. Hopefully, the following will make it a little easier to understand:

- Field Name – The name of the game field, e.g., Baron Cameron 1, Baron Cameron 2, etc.
- First Time Slot (Saturday) – The first game time available on that field when that field is normally used for Saturday games, e.g, 8:30, 1:00 PM, etc.. Games will not be scheduled before 8:30 AM and the first time slot should normally be 9:00 or later.
- Games Must End By (Saturday) – If the field is not available the entire day, then the time that the last game must end, e.g., 3:00 PM. If the game field is available the entire day, then enter 6:00 PM. (Do not worry, we will not schedule games after dark.)
- First Time Slot (Sunday) – The first game time available on that field when that field is normally used for Sunday games, e.g, 1:00 PM, etc.. Games will not be scheduled before 12:30 PM and the first time slot should normally be 1:00 PM or later. If the field is not normally used for Sunday games, i.e., only used for makeups, then use the defaults shown or leave the times blank. In other words, if your club normally plays its regular season home games on Saturday, then use the default values or make the fields blank. Another spread sheet is used to capture the Sunday makeup game slots and the makeup slot information is not due until requested by the SFL.
- Games Must End By (Sunday) – If the field is not available the entire day, then the time that the last game must end, e.g., 3:00 PM. If the game field is available the entire day, then enter 6:00 PM. (Do not worry, we will not schedule games after dark.)
- Time slot minutes – Under 14 and Below – The number of minutes that should be used for games played by the Under 14s and Below. (It is okay to make these consistent with the Under 16s and 19s.)
- Time slot minutes – Under 16 and Under 19 – The number of minutes that should be used for games played by the Under 16s and Under 19s. (It is okay to make these consistent with the Under 14s).
- Game Schedule Order – The order that should be used to schedule games on a field, e.g., Under 19 Boys, then Under 14 Boys, then Under 14 Girls, etc. A value should be entered even if a given age group does not play on the field. Leaving the default value is okay and will provide your desired results even if it is a lower number. For example, if a field is only used for Under 16 Boys and Under 19 Boys, using the default values is fine and will provide your desired result since the Under 16 Boys have a lower number than the other Under 19 Boys. On the other hand, if you want the Under 19 Boys scheduled first, simply swapping the default values will also ensure that the Under 19 Boys are scheduled before the Under 16 Boys even though other age groups with lower numbers are shown on the form.

The second spread sheet, ____FIELDADD.XLS (e.g., LMFIELDADD.XLS, is used to provide the street addresses for your fields where we do not have addresses. Fields with addresses are omitted from this spread sheet. If you want to check and make sure that we are using the correct address, then you may go to the web site and check the address on the fields page (www.sflsoccer.org/field.htm). We would like this spread sheet returned by the start of the season. **PLEASE DO NOT ADD THESE FIELDS BACK INTO THE SPREAD SHEET.**

Finally, the tournament spread sheet, ____TOURFLD.XLS (e.g., LMTOURFLD.XLS, is used to capture the tournament fields that can be supported by your club. The Process Used to Determine the Tournament Size and Teams Eligible to Be Considered for the Tournament document provides additional information concerning this spread sheet and can be obtained from the web site. This spread sheet is due on September 1.

AGE GROUP DIVISIONS

Last season the assignment of teams to divisions worked better. However, some confusion still existed. The following is the guidance that should be used in assigning teams to divisions. If you have questions, then contact the applicable SFL Age Group Commissioner. The names, phone numbers, and Email addresses are in the draft rules that are attached to this letter. **A special requirement pertains to assigning teams to division 2 in the Under 12 and Under 14 age groups.**

Under 12 Game Format

Please remember that all Under 12 teams will be playing 8 v 8 regardless of division.

Divisions for Under 12s and Under 14s

Using the information for the Spring 2009 season, we have automatically moved the division 1 teams to the next age group, (i.e., Under 12s to Under 14s and Under 14s to Under 16s) and division 2 teams to division 1 since this is what happens to the majority of the teams. You are free to adjust these divisions and age groups based on the actual content of the teams. For example, a Spring Under 14 division 1 team maybe returning in the fall as an Under 14 division 1 team because the coach did not move up and all the players meet the age requirements for Under 14.

Division 1 is for the better teams who meet the division 2 age criteria and those with players at the top end of the age group (Under 12 or Under 14). Therefore, if you have a younger team (Under 11 or Under 13) which is very good, then you should move them to division 1 rather than place/leave them in division 2. **(SKILL LEVEL DOES NOT AFFECT THE PLACEMENT OF TEAMS WITH PLAYERS THAT MEET THE DIVISION 1 AGE CRITERIA.)** The goal of the SFL is to have competitive soccer rather than to see who can win by the biggest margin and a number of clubs follow the practice of moving a team up a division. Division 2 is for teams whose players are at the bottom end of the age group (Under 11 or Under 13). If you have any questions on what division applies to a given player, then the necessary information is contained on our Web Site under Age Group Calculator (<http://www.sflsoccer.org/agegrp.htm>). We also have an Age Group Calculator on that web page that you can use to determine the age group for a given player. You may ask the appropriate SFL

Age Group Commissioner for a waiver from these age requirements **BEFORE** the season begins. Any waiver requests should be submitted soon as possible. However, do not assume that a waiver will be granted.

The following are the guidelines that have been used in prior seasons by the SFL Age Group Commissioners:

- Players must play in the age group dictated by their birthday unless medical reasons dictate otherwise. For example, a player meeting the Under 14 age criteria cannot play in the Under 12 age group even if that person missed the Under 12 birth date cutoff by one day. If you believe that person should be placed in a younger age group because of medical reasons, then you need to review the rules very carefully since they outline the procedures that will be used to evaluate such requests. These include having a statement from a doctor and a formal club board recommendation that such a waiver should be granted.
- Players meeting the division 1 age criteria are generally not allowed to play on division 2 teams for a given age group. The SFL Age Group Commissioners have made exceptions when it makes sense and should not affect the team's competitive abilities. For example, in the Under 12s, the SFL Age Group Commissioners have allowed one or two players who meet the division 1 age criteria to play on division 2 teams. However, if a team has 4 or 5 such players, then the team is moved to division 1. Please remember that a number of division 1 teams contain a mixture of Under 11s/12s or Under 13s/14s. **Any players meeting the division 1 age criteria that the club desires to be placed on a division 2 team must (1) be approved by August 15 by the appropriate SFL Age Group Commissioner and (2) must appear on the proper team's initial division 2 roster that is required to be filed by the team registration by those dates.**

Under 16 and Under 19 Age Groups

The divisions for Under 16 Boys, Under 16 Girls, and Under 19 Boys are based on skill level with the better teams placed in division 1. Using the results of the spring season, we are proposing the divisions that should be used for the rising teams. The following is the approach we used for the teams that are expected to play in the Under 16 and 19 age group.

- The top teams in the Under 14s that are moving up should be placed in division 1 of the Under 16s. We have gone ahead and shown these teams on the spread sheet as division 1 teams in the Under 16s.
- We have also made adjustments to the divisions for the Fall Under 16 and Under 19 teams based on their performance in the Spring season. In most cases we did not know (1) which Under 16 teams would be moving up and (2) which teams would not be returning. Therefore, in most cases, we did not change the age groups for most of the Under 16 and 19 teams and left all the teams registered in the spring on your spread sheet. However, we did review the teams' performance and adjusted the division assignments based on the spring results. These divisions should be used for any teams moving up. For example, an Under 16 team shown on the spread

sheet as a division 1 team that moves up to the Under 19s should be considered as an Under 19 division 1 team. Our goal is to have about 50 percent of the Under 16s and Under 19 Boys play in division 1. The SFL Club Representative is free to make changes to these division assignments. However, if we do not have enough division 1 teams, then all teams will play in the same division. In the spring, the Under 16 Boys, Under 16 Girls, and Under 19 Boys SFL Age Group Commissioners review the results from the fall season and made adjustments based on how a team did in the fall. We do not have a sufficient number of teams to break the Under 19 Girls into divisions.

In the spring, we normally have several clubs request that the rankings based on the fall not be used for their teams and that most, if not all, of their teams should be placed in division 2. In most cases, these are denied since almost all the teams that are “moved up” do not want to move up and those that are moved down are happy. Granting all these requests, would leave us with too few teams for division 1.

What some clubs do is take a proactive approach and tell us in the fall that a team should be placed in division 1 since it has a number of good players on it even if that “team” is shown as a division 2 team based on our information from the previous season or it is a new team moving up to the Under 16/19 age group. They also tell us that they expect that in the Spring, the team will have a significant change of players (e.g., many players will play other sports or play on high school teams) and they expect that this team should be considered as a division 2 team in the spring. In these cases, we normally allow the change of division in the spring. Clubs that do not take this proactive approach, place all the new teams as division 2 even though one or more should probably be a division 1 team. Accordingly, in the spring it moved up to division 1 with a new set of players when it should be a division 2 team. The next fall, it is moved back to division 2 with the good players returning so the cycle continues.

MASTER PLAYER ROSTER

As noted in the registration process document, **the SFL Club Representative must submit a preliminary Master Player Roster (SFL Form 4E) to the SFL (sfl@sflsoccer.org) August 15. This roster is not required to contain the uniform numbers of the players.** The purpose of this requirement is to help ensure that (1) an adequate number of players have been registered to support the teams registered by the SFL and (2) the teams are scheduled in the proper age groups and, in the case of the Under 12s and 14s, division. In the past, clubs have “guessed” on the breakout of their teams and then found that they did not have enough players to support the teams registered to the Under 12 and Under 14 teams that were registered as division 2 teams. Roster data may no longer be submitted to the SFL using SFL Form 2e or substitute roster forms, though these forms are still used for the individual team rosters provided to coaches. More importantly, the Master Player roster simplifies the roster submission process since it is submitted to the SFL (sfl@sflsoccer.org) on three dates – August 15, September 15, and September 30 if any changes were made after September 15. This eliminates any requirement to provide team rosters to the applicable SFL Age Group Commissioners directly or providing them (or the SFL) updated rosters anytime a change is made. The Master Player Roster can be downloaded from the SFL Forms page (www.sflsoccer.org/sflforms.htm).

Notes: We made some changes to the form used last season to improve the data integrity features. Please use the new form. If you want to use the information contained in last season’s form,

then you can cut and paste the values from the old form to the new form. **IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ON HOW TO ONLY PASTE THE VALUES, THEN LET US KNOW.**

If you see red cells in your completed form, then an error has been made. These errors must be corrected before the form is submitted to the SFL. If you have any questions on why an error is being shown, then send us an Email.

The Master Player Roster requires the following information for each player – age group, division, team name, uniform number, name, and birth date. The SFL recognizes during the team registration process, reliable information is not normally available for (1) the player’s uniform number and (2) the actual team assignment for a given player. Therefore, (1) **uniform numbers are not required on the August 15 submissions** and (2) clubs may use “artificial” team assignments for the Master Rosters provided on August 15. For example, assume a club has 45 Under 14 Boys players and wants to register two (2) division 1 teams and one (1) division 2 team. The club may list the players eligible for the division 2 team as those assigned to the division 2 team and then split the remaining players between the division 1 teams by simply listing the names in alphabetical or some other order. It is recognized that these team assignments may not reflect the actual team assignments, e.g., some of the players shown on the division 2 team in the example above may be actually assigned to a division 1 team and players shown on one division 1 team may be actually assigned to the other division 1 team.

Although uniform numbers are not required on the Master Player Rosters provided on August 15, uniform numbers are required for subsequent roster submissions after August 31 for the spring season. Please remember that if a club does not provide the Master Player Roster by August 15, then the teams registered prior to that date will not be scheduled and will be considered dropped for registration fee purposes. Furthermore, if the number of players shown on the Master Player Roster is considered by the SFL Administrator to be inadequate to support the number of registered teams, then the SFL Administrator will work with the applicable SFL Age Group Commissioners to determine the number of teams that can be supported, and the remaining teams will be moved to the waiting list. The registration process document contained in this package has additional information about this subject including the fees associated with failing to follow these requirements.

SUBSTITUTE ROSTERS

All requests for approval of substitute roster forms must be received by the SFL prior to August 25. All substitute rosters must (1) be signed by the SFL Club Representative or Club Registrar, (2) contain all certifications on the standard SFL Team Roster forms (SFL-2E), and (3) contain a statement that the substitute form has been approved by the SFL. Approvals of substitute forms are only good for one season, i.e., clubs must submit a request each season even if the form has not changed and the SFL approved the form the previous season. You may use your fall season roster as an example for this submission.

SFL TOURNAMENT

The goal of the SFL is to have each team play 8 to 9 games and to play competitive matches. However, we only have 8 or 9 weekends. Another problem is that we do not know the strength of a given team

which makes ensuring competitive games difficult. Because of these two problems, we adopted an end of season tournament. History has shown that the tournament scheduling process we have adopted works very well in matching teams with comparable abilities.

The end of season tournament is not a traditional tournament at all. Rather, it is an opportunity to play at least 1, and in some cases 3, game(s) against teams with similar records. (At least 50 percent of the teams play at least 2 games.) It also accomplishes our goal of having each team scheduled to play 8 or 9 games this season. The way its works is that we schedule 7 or 8 regular season games depending on the season and use the results of the first 5 or 6 games to determine how the tournament games are scheduled. In other words, if a team loses its first 5 games, it will play in the tournament against other teams that have either lost all of their games or at most won 1 game during the same time period. History has shown that the division groupings are usually very competitive. You may want to check out our web site for the results of last season's tournament games.

In order to ensure that a given club does not incur an unreasonable expense in hosting a tournament site for officials, we reimburse the club for the officials provided based on the number of games covered and the age group. These rates are also set at the preseason meeting and come from the registration fees.

A club that hosts about one tournament game for each team registered will receive a reimbursement for officials that is about equal to the amount of the registration fee that will be used to pay tournament officials. In effect, it is a wash and, based on this season's estimate, the club would receive all but \$85 to \$90 for each team back from the amount of the payment it made to the SFL. The math is somewhat complicated since we have round robin and single elimination tournament divisions. However, we can provide this upon request.

The reason that we collect the fees up front is because very rarely does a club provide the exact number of officials to cover its share of the referee expenses due to a variety of issues. For example, the actual mix of teams on a given club's fields may not be consistent with the number of teams registered and some clubs may provide more fields and officials than they are required to by the formula. The Process Used to Determine the Tournament Size and Teams Eligible to Be Considered for the Tournament, is included in this package and provides additional information on how we determine what teams are allowed to play in the tournament. Please remember the September 1 deadline for providing your tournament field and referee commitment information.

The proposed per game tournament reimbursement rates for the current season are as follows:

- Under 12 (8 v 8) – \$40
- Under 14 – \$95
- Under 16/19 – \$125

These are the same fees that were paid last season. We want to establish rates that fairly compensate the officials for their time and attract the quality and number of officials that we need. If these rates are

inadequate to reimburse your club for their officiating costs, please let us know the amounts that are adequate to cover your costs.

PROPOSED BUDGET

The SFL designs its budget to recover its costs and this season the SFL has maintained the registration fee structure that was adopted last season ago. Based on the actual expenses incurred for the Fall 2010 season, the SFL Commissioners have decided refund \$30 per team registered in the Spring season. The SFL Commissioners will continue to monitor the revenues and costs and ensure that the fees assessed to the clubs are fair to the clubs and the SFL.

MAILING PROCESS

We perform three mailings each season – preseason mailing (this package), season package, and a tournament package. Two of these mailings (preseason and tournament) lend themselves to standard packages which can be totally handled by our contractor. Although the regular season mailing contains a number of standard items, several items are unique to each recipient, e.g., team schedules for coaches and confirmation cards. Therefore, we have adopted the approach of using the contractor to print and mail the standard items for the season package and we will mail the unique items to each recipient. Basically, each person will receive a short letter from us explaining the dual mailing process and their confirmation card. Coaches will also receive their game schedule along with the field directions for their games. Our web site (www.sflsoccer.org) also presents individual team schedules with field directions. These web pages are similar to the schedule that will be mailed to the coaches.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

We have posted a privacy statement on our web site (<http://www.sflsoccer.org/privacy.htm>). We would suggest that you review this statement and welcome any comments on how it can be improved.

FIELD DIRECTIONS

Field directions for all fields have been posted to the web site (www.sflsoccer.org/field.htm). Please review the field directions on the web site and make sure that they are still current and the phone numbers for game cancellations (www.sflsoccer.org/weather.htm) are correct. For example, sometimes stop lights have been added or exit numbers changed. As you will note, some of these fields were not used last season, however, we leave them in our data base since fields change from season to season and sometimes makeup games are scheduled on these fields. Therefore, when the Web Site is updated, the current field directions are available to be posted. In addition, if the field that you will be using this season is not on this list, then you will need to provide field directions. The phone numbers for field closings are also posted on the web site (<http://www.sflsoccer.org/weather.htm>) and should also be reviewed.

The SFL is expecting over 525 teams this season. We appreciate the confidence in our program and look forward to working with you this season. In developing the registration procedures, we attempted to maximize the flexibility in the registration and scheduling process that we have enjoyed in past seasons while reducing the impact of late additions and deletions.

If you have any questions or comments, you may call either Chris Martin (703-476-6611) or myself (703-354-1823). You may also Email us at sfl@sflsoccer.org.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope to see you at the meeting.

Jim Rodden
Commissioner