

Fall 2006 Tournament Scheduling and Awards Methodology  
(December 7, 2006)

## **PURPOSE**

This document discusses the guidelines used to develop the tournament scheduling process and resolve tournament awards when all tournament games cannot be completed as scheduled. It also provides information on some of the alternatives that were considered when before accepting a given solution. Furthermore, since regular season games played affect several of the processes that were ultimately selected, assigning game points to games and the approach for handling unscheduled games is also discussed.

## **SUMMARY**

The primary principles used in developing the tournament scheduling and awards methodology are as follows:

- The results of games actually played should be the primary method used to determine tournament schedules and awards whenever possible.
- A team should not be penalized for not playing a game because of the actions of another team or club. For example, a game is cancelled due to weather and Team A refuses to play Team B or Team A's club refuses to support a rescheduled game.
- Teams that play games and lose should get more game points than teams that do not even play the game since they made an effort to play a game.

These principles have guided the SFL in its decisions since its founding in 1990 and have been accepted by the SFL Club Representatives in numerous season meetings when the proposed rules were adopted. The following issues relating to tournament scheduling and awards have been identified and considered by the SFL Commissioners.

- Assigning game and bonus points to game results.
- Assessment of forfeits.
- Rescheduling regular season games.
- Deciding on when a tournament should be scheduled.
- Preparing the initial tournament schedules.
- Rescheduling tournament games when the tournament games cannot be played due to weather or some other reason.
- Determining tournament division standings when tournament games are played as expected.

- Determining tournament division standings when tournament games are not completed as expected.

Each of these areas are discussed below.

## **ASSIGNING GAME AND BONUS POINTS TO GAME RESULTS**

### **Summary**

Game points are awarded as follows: 4 points for a win, 2 points for a tie, 1 point for a loss, and 0 points for a forfeit. The game score for a forfeited game is 1 – 0 unless both teams are assessed a forfeit. When both teams are assessed a forfeit, then the game score is 0 – 0. Bonus points are also awarded based on the goal differential up to a maximum of 3 points per game. For example, a game score of 5 – 1 would result in 3 bonus points.

**Applicable Fall 2006 Rules:** Section VI.B.

The basic approach taken for awarding game and bonus points includes the following:

- **Assigning game points for wins, ties, and losses.** When the SFL was created in 1990, the traditional rules for assigning games points were 3 points for a win, 2 points for a tie, and 1 point for a loss. The SFL recognized that forfeits are not a problem in traditional soccer games, e.g., World Cup, Major League Soccer, etc. and adopted the rule that a team assessed a forfeit should not receive any game points. The elimination of game points for forfeits was based on the belief that a team playing a game and losing should be rewarded for at least making an attempt to play the game. When the traditional rules for awarding points were changed to 3 points for a win, 1 point for a tie, and 0 points for a loss, the SFL decided to maintain a system that awarded a team for simply playing the game while supporting the traditional soccer concept of providing more points for a win. Accordingly, it adopted 4 points for a win, 2 points for a tie, 1 point for a loss, and 0 points for a forfeit. While this approach requires only two ties to equal a win rather than the traditional approach of 3 ties to equal a win, the SFL decided that this difference was not material.
- **Limiting bonus points to a maximum of 3.** A common complaint received from clubs is that some teams will run up the score on another team which is against the spirit of the league and youth soccer in general. Accordingly, the SFL adopted a rule that a team could earn a maximum of 3 bonus points per game in order to reduce any incentive to run up the score.

### **Alternatives Considered**

- **Awarding game points using the same formula as traditional soccer rules.** When the traditional soccer rules were changed to provide no game points for a loss, the SFL realized that adopting the traditional rules would not provide benefits to teams that actually played games over those teams that simply forfeited a game. Since the traditional rules did not support the differentiation of game losses from forfeits, the traditional rules were not adopted.

- **Awarding unlimited bonus points.** The clubs have consistently raised the issue of teams running up the score. Allowing a team to earn unlimited bonus points only encourages this behavior.

## ASSESSMENT OF FORFEITS

### Summary

Forfeits may be assessed for a variety of reasons and fall into two broad areas – regular forfeits and scheduling forfeits. The reasons for regular forfeits are violations of rules and the penalty called for in the rules requires the team to forfeit the game. Examples of these infractions include using ineligible players and failing to properly report a red card. The rationale for adopting forfeits for rules violations is outside the scope of this document. The rationale for assessing scheduling forfeits is discussed elsewhere in the document.

**Applicable Fall 2006 Rules:** Section VII.E.1.b., VII.E.2.a, VII.E.2.b., VII.E.3.b.(4).b.

## RESCHEDULING REGULAR SEASON GAMES

### Summary

At the request of the clubs, an automatic game rescheduling process was developed for regular season games where (1) a game is played between teams from different clubs and (2) the game is not cancelled during the last two weeks of the regular season. The process adopted results in (1) the automatic scheduling process only being used when the two teams and home club cannot arrange an acceptable game date for all parties involved and (2) the resolution of any questions on which team or teams should receive a forfeit when a game cannot be rescheduled.

**Applicable Fall 2006 Rules:** Section VII.E.

The basic approach for taken for rescheduling regular season games includes the following:

- **The SFL should only be involved in rescheduling games between clubs.** If the club cannot arrange games between its teams, then the SFL cannot be expected to make these arrangements. Furthermore, the club is in the best position to determine whether a given team should be assessed a forfeit for not playing a game.
- **A scheduling forfeit should be assessed to the home team if the home team's club cannot support the automatic scheduling process.** Each club should support its fair share of games and that a visiting team should be held harmless for the actions taken by the home team's club. In other words, if the home team is unable (or unwilling) to support a rescheduled game, the visiting team should not be penalized for events that are outside its control.
- **Teams should be provided an opportunity to reschedule games before the SFL reschedules a game.** (The SFL rules allow the teams about one week to reschedule games

before the automatic rescheduling process takes effect.) The clubs requested that the process support an approach that allows the teams and clubs to reschedule games at times that convenient for the teams and clubs before the automatic rescheduling process is used. This request was based on the realization that the automatic rescheduling process may result in one (or both) the teams being forced to play at a time that is inconvenient for that team(s) when another alternative is acceptable to the teams and clubs. For example, both teams and the club may be willing to play two games on a weekday or willing to play two games on a Saturday.

- **The SFL should only make one attempt to reschedule a game unless the rescheduled game is cancelled due to weather or some other reason beyond the control of the teams and club.** The effort necessary to automatically reschedule games is considerable for the SFL and its clubs. Furthermore, the approach already allows the teams and clubs to reschedule games that are convenient to all parties before the automatic rescheduling process is used to schedule games. The adopted approach also allows “certainty” for the club field and referee coordinators who must support SFL rescheduled games and games being played by other leagues (such as travel) and games between the club’s own teams.
- **Games rescheduled by the SFL should only be scheduled on Sundays (or Saturdays if neither team has a game scheduled on a given Saturday).** Since the games being rescheduled by the SFL are between clubs, the ability of teams to play weekday games is unknown. Furthermore, most SFL games are played on Saturday and the clubs did not want to force any team to play two regular season games on a Saturday (or Sunday) unless it is agreeable to both teams and the clubs. The approach already allows the teams and clubs to reschedule games at times that are convenient to all parties before the automatic rescheduling process is used to schedule games which allows teams that do not want to play Sunday games, to avoid Sunday games.
- **Games rescheduled by the SFL are normally at least one game week later than the game week when the automatic rescheduling process is performed.** Teams need adequate time to notify their players and the clubs need adequate time to support the game slot, e.g., assign officials, field duties, etc. Therefore, games automatically rescheduled by the SFL allow at least 5 days from the time that the rescheduling notice is sent to the teams and clubs until the game is scheduled to be played. For example, if a week 3 game is cancelled, then the automatic rescheduling process occurs during week 4. Since this process does not even begin until Wednesday, the first week that the game can be rescheduled is week 5.
- **Teams failing to play a game automatically rescheduled by the SFL are assessed a scheduling forfeit.** As noted elsewhere, the SFL will only make one attempt to reschedule a game unless that game is cancelled due to weather or other reasons beyond the control of the teams and clubs. However, if the teams and club can agree upon an alternate date, then the SFL allows the game to be played on this date. The team requesting the change is assessed a scheduling forfeit until the game is played. Once the game is played, then the scheduling forfeit is removed and actual game results are used. (Should both teams desire to schedule the game, then both teams are assessed a scheduling forfeit until the game is played.) This

process is used so that (1) the SFL knows that an attempt has already been made to reschedule the game and (2) the team agreeing to a change does not end up being penalized if the rescheduled game cannot be played. For example, a game between Team A and Team B is automatically rescheduled for Week 5. Team B requests the game to be moved to Week 8 and Team A agrees. However, weather forces the cancellation of all games on Week 8. Since Team B requested the change, Team A would not be penalized for the game not being played.

- **Clubs required to notify the SFL of game cancellations.** The automatic rescheduling process requires timely information on games that are not played. Since the SFL has about 30 clubs and these clubs cover numerous counties and cities in a wide geographic area, it is impossible for the SFL to know when games are cancelled without the clubs input. For example we have seen games cancelled in one location because of heavy rain, when other locations did not have rain. This information is also necessary to determine whether a score should have been reported for a given game.
- **Automatically assessing scheduling forfeits when scores are not promptly reported.** The SFL rules clearly state that scores must be reported by 6:00 PM on the Monday following the game by both teams. This information is also provided in the first page of the season page (commonly referred to as the “summary page”), season letter, and rules. If a game is not reported as being cancelled by the club because of weather, then the SFL considers that the game was played and that the only problem is that the score has not been reported. Accordingly, no efforts should be made to reschedule the game. Once the score is reported (or rescheduled by the teams and played at a later date), then the scheduling forfeits are removed and the actual game results are used. (Note: If the score is reported late, then a penalty is assessed for reporting the score late. The penalty, which is one game point, was adopted to provide an incentive to promptly report scores.)
- **Assessing scheduling forfeits when games are rescheduled late in the week prior to the game date.** Teams are free to reschedule games originally scheduled by the SFL during the regular season scheduling process when (1) both teams agree to reschedule the game, (2) the change is made prior to 6:00 PM on the Wednesday preceding the current scheduled date, (3) the home team's club is properly notified of the change in accordance with that club's guidelines, and (4) the SFL is notified by Email that the game will not be played prior to 6:00 PM on the Thursday preceding the scheduled game date. These rules were requested by the clubs to support the referee and field management efforts. For example, many clubs have assigned referees and fields weeks in advance of a given game. Accordingly, a late change in schedule may cause clubs to lose scheduled referees that could be used for other games on that date. It was generally agreed by the clubs that coaches should resolve any scheduling conflicts early in the season and should not wait until the Wednesday preceding the weekend's schedules. Should these games be played, then the scheduling forfeits are removed once the game is played. If both teams want to reschedule the game, then both teams are assessed a scheduling forfeit. If only one team is unable to play a scheduled game, then that team is assessed the scheduling forfeit.

## Alternatives Considered

The following alternatives were considered:

- **Allowing teams unlimited time to reschedule games.** This was the original approach used for a number of years. However, due to the problems associated with getting teams to agree to a rescheduled game and the SFL receiving a number of requests to assess forfeits to teams that would not agree to a new game date, the clubs asked the SFL to develop a quantitative process to resolve this problem.
- **Letting the teams or clubs to reject the games scheduled by the SFL without penalty.** The automatic rescheduling process is time consuming for both the SFL and clubs. The adopted process already allows the teams and clubs to reschedule games without SFL involvement before the automatic rescheduling process is used. In effect, the automatic rescheduling process is a process of “last resort”.
- **Letting clubs and teams modify the SFL rescheduled games without penalty.** Teams may revise the game automatically rescheduled by the SFL when both teams and the club agree. However, a means was needed to clearly show the games that are subject to the automatic rescheduling process. Once the game is played the penalty is removed. Therefore, the adopted process accomplishes this alternative.

## DECIDING ON WHETHER A TOURNAMENT SHOULD BE SCHEDULED

### Summary

The SFL will only schedule a tournament when 80 percent of the regular season games expected to be played when the season started have been played before the normal tournament scheduling process is expected to begin. If weather or other circumstances do not allow this number of games to be played by the time that the tournament scheduling process normally begins, the tournament will not be scheduled and the tournament weekend will be used to make up games.

### Applicable Fall 2006 Rules: Section VIII.B.

The SFL was requested to develop a formalized process that should be used for determining whether the tournament should be scheduled when a number of regular season games are canceled due to weather or other reasons. The formalized process was requested to clarify what actions should be taken when large numbers of games are cancelled before the tournament is scheduled since (1) the tournament’s goal is to have teams of comparable ability to play each other and (2) the regular season games are used to determine teams with comparable abilities. Accordingly, when a large number of games are cancelled early in the season, concerns were raised by the clubs on whether the tournament divisions were properly balanced and whether the tournament weekend should be used to simply make up games. The basic approach used for determining whether the tournament should be scheduled includes the following:

- **Quantitative criteria used to decide whether to schedule the tournament.** In order to ensure that the tournament divisions consist of teams of comparable ability, a minimum number of games need to be played. The SFL will only schedule the tournament if 80 percent of the games originally scheduled at the beginning of the season and expected to have been completed by the time the tournament scheduling process is scheduled to start have been completed. For example, if 1,350 games are expected to have been played by the end of week 6, then 1,080 of these games must be played by the end of week 6 (1,350 games X 80 percent). This is commonly referred to as the “80 percent” rule and was adopted for the following reasons:
  - ▶ Most teams will have played at least 4 games before deciding their tournament division placement. Therefore, the teams will have played a broader cross section of teams which means that their ranking will be more reflective of their abilities.
  - ▶ Even if a game week is rained out and cannot be made up before the tournament scheduling process is expected to begin, the tournament can still be held. For example, if the tournament scheduling process is expected to begin after week 5, all games on week 4 or week 5 can be cancelled and still the required 4 weeks of games can still be played.
  - ▶ If games in weeks 1 through 3 are cancelled, the automatic scheduling process discussed elsewhere in this paper should ensure that at least some of those games will be played prior to the decision on whether the tournament should be scheduled is made. In effect, this helps ensure that it will take more than one week of game cancellations to cancel the tournament.
  - ▶ The SFL Commissioners are allowed to eliminate the 80 percent requirement if they believe that adequate games have been played. In other words, the SFL Commissioners may decide that since 75 percent of the games have been played that the tournament should be scheduled.
- **Games considered played for deciding whether the tournament should be scheduled should only represent games actually played.** As noted elsewhere teams can be assessed scheduling forfeits when games cannot be rescheduled in accordance with the automatic rescheduling process or for other reasons such as not properly reporting scores. While these forfeits impact the standings, they are not used for determining whether games have been played since they provide no indication on a team’s ability. Accordingly, these games do not support the goal of having a team play other teams of comparable abilities. On the other hand, forfeits assessed that related to games actually played are considered as games played. For example, Team A and Team B played a game and Team A was assessed a forfeit for using a red carded player. This game is considered since the results can be used to indicate the potential strength of a team.

## Alternatives Considered

The following alternative was considered:

- **Scheduling the tournament regardless of the number of game played.** This alternative was rejected since the primary purpose of the tournament is to have teams with comparable abilities play each other for a trophy. The rationale for adopting the “80 percent” rule is discussed above. Should the tournament be cancelled, then the tournament weekend can be used for makeup games which increases the number of games a team plays in a given season.

## PREPARING THE INITIAL TOURNAMENT SCHEDULES

### Summary

The tournament scheduling process begins after the completion of regular season game week 5 or 6 assuming that enough regular season games have been played to schedule the tournament. Teams are ranked using a process that is designed to place teams with comparable records in the same tournament divisions. The top teams in each age group are scheduled using a round robin format while the majority of teams are scheduled using a single elimination format. Adjustments to team placements are made when a team has not played a sufficient number of games to determine the team’s competitive abilities and teams may be eliminated that have not played a sufficient number of games.

**Applicable Fall 2006 Rules:** Section VIII.D. (primary) and Section II.C.a. for moving teams between divisions for age group problems.

The basic process for preparing the initial tournament schedules includes the following:

- **Beginning the tournament scheduling process after game week 5 or 6.** The normal season schedule calls for the tournament scheduling process to begin after the completion of game week 5 or 6. This lead time is needed to complete the numerous actions needed to schedule the tournament. The following is a time line of the tournament scheduling process
  - ▶ By the Tuesday following the conclusion of the selected game week (game week 5 or 6) the teams are ranked using the process discussed elsewhere in this document, broken into proposed tournament divisions, and sent to the applicable SFL Commissioner for review. The Tuesday date is used since a number of scores are not received until Monday. Over the seasons, the number of Emails received on Monday have remained fairly consistent and range between 100 and 150. The number of teams participating in the tournament have also remained fairly consistent and range between 425 and 450 teams. This translates into about 100 different tournament divisions.
  - ▶ Each proposed tournament division is initially assigned to a tournament site and field on that site. We normally have about 20 tournament sites that use between 55 and 60 fields. Once the SFL Commissioners have approved the proposed tournament divisions, the necessary adjustments are made and the tournament division assignments are finalized and checked. This is normally completed by Saturday. The following basic rules govern the assignment of divisions to fields:



- ◆ The tournament division must have one or more teams associated with the club supporting the site. For example, if a 4 team tournament division has teams from Chantilly, Fairfax, Reston, and Springfield, then that tournament division will be placed on a field from one of those clubs.
- ◆ Tournament divisions that contain coaches having 2 SFL teams are given priority in scheduling to reduce the travel time for those coaches when possible. Past experience has shown that normally coaches with 2 SFL teams can be placed at fields that are close together. However, it has also shown that this is not always possible for a variety of reasons.
- ▶ Once the assignment of tournament divisions to fields has been checked, the tournament schedules are drafted and provided to the clubs hosting the games to ensure that the draft schedule complies with the information provided to the SFL when the fields were allocated for SFL use. This draft schedule is normally provided to the clubs on the Sunday. In other words, the draft schedules are normally prepared 5 days after the initial tournament divisions are developed.
- ▶ Clubs provide any changes necessary to support the tournament by the following Wednesday or Thursday and the SFL posts the tournament schedule to the web site. The tournament package is also prepared and taken to the printer for distribution. This is normally just before the last weekend of regular season. This allows the clubs about one week to arrange the officials for the tournament games and perform other actions such as arranging for field maintenance.
- ▶ On the last regular season game weekend, approximately 200 boxes of trophies are delivered to the SFL. These trophies are labeled by tournament division and sorted by individual assigned to pick up the trophies. The individuals assigned to pick up the trophies (normally a SFL Club Rep.) for a site picks up the trophies during the week before the tournament. These trophies are then delivered to the applicable tournament division commissioner.
- **Ranking teams for placement in tournament divisions.** The following process is used to determine a team's ranking:
  - ▶ As noted elsewhere teams can be assessed scheduling forfeits when games cannot be rescheduled in accordance with the automatic rescheduling process or for other reasons such as not properly reporting scores. While these forfeits impact the standings, they are not used for determining a team's ranking since they provide no indication on a team's ability. Accordingly, these games do not support the goal of having a team play other teams of comparable abilities. On the other hand, forfeits assessed that related to games actually played are considered as games played. For example, Team A and Team B played a game and Team A was assessed a forfeit for using a red carded player. This game is considered since the results can be used to indicate the potential strength of a team.

- ▶ Once the necessary adjustments have been made to game results, the teams are ranked based on game point percentage. The game point percentage is computed using the following formula (game points earned / (games played X 4)). For example, if a team has played 6 games and earned 12 game points, then its game point percentage is 50 percent. (The points earned by wins, ties, losses, and forfeits are discussed elsewhere in this paper.) The game point percentage is used to determine the comparable ability of teams that play a different number of games. For example, if Team A plays 5 games with 10 game points, it will ranked the same as Team B which plays 6 games with 12 game points since both teams have a game point percentage of 50 percent.
- ▶ **Quantitative data.** History has shown that the adopted process produces competitive games. For example, over the last 6 seasons, over 50 percent of the tournament games have been settled by 1 goal or end up in a tie and over 70 percent of the games were settled by 2 goals or less.
- **Adjusting a team's placement when a team has not played a sufficient number of games to determine the team's competitive ability.** The following situations can result in a modification of the process discussed above on placing teams in tournament divisions.
  - ▶ **Teams eligible to participate in the tournament.** Teams that have played an adequate number of games and desire to play in the tournament will be scheduled for tournament games when the criteria for scheduling a tournament is met. A team will be considered to have played an adequate number of games, if that team has played at least 40 percent of the games originally expected to played at the start of the season by the tournament scheduling date. For example, if the tournament schedules are being prepared after 5 regular season game weeks have passed, then a team must play in at least 2 games to be considered eligible for tournament play. On the other hand, if the tournament schedules are being prepared after 6 regular season game weeks have passed, then a team must have played in at least 3 games to be considered eligible for tournament play. This approach was adopted since history has shown that teams that have not played a large number of their scheduled games are more likely to drop out of the tournament after the schedules are prepared. This is very disruptive for every one. Furthermore, only playing a few game does not give sufficient information to determine the competitive ability of the team. Scheduling forfeits do not count as games played since, as noted elsewhere, they do not provide an indication of a team's competitive abilities.
  - ▶ **Eliminating teams receiving a large number of forfeits.** A team which has been assessed 2 or more forfeits for any non scheduling reason may be excluded from the tournament. Examples of forfeits that can result in a team being declared ineligible for tournament play include (1) not providing a roster and (2) using red carded players in a game. Since non scheduling forfeits are normally assigned for failure to follow the rules, the SFL has decided that such teams are at a high risk of causing problems during the tournament. Accordingly, such teams can be eliminated from the tournament.
  - ▶ **Placement of teams in the top and lowest tournament divisions.** A team will be considered for tournament division placement purposes to have played a majority of

games if that team has played at least 70 percent of the games originally scheduled rounded up to the next highest game at the time the tournament schedule is created. For example, if the tournament schedules are being prepared after 5 regular season game weeks have passed, then a team must have played at least 4 of those games to be considered eligible for top or bottom divisions. On the other hand, if the tournament schedules are being prepared after 6 regular season game weeks have passed, then a team must have played at least 5 of those games to be considered eligible for the top or bottom tournament divisions. This approach was adopted to help ensure that teams with comparable abilities are only placed in the top and bottom divisions. The SFL Age Group Commissioners have the ability to leave the teams were they are ranked if they believe that the results are representative of that team's abilities.

- ◆ **Placement of teams that have not played a majority of their regular season games.** All teams eligible for tournament play but not playing a majority of games, as defined above, when the tournament schedules are prepared, will be placed together in a separate tournament division(s) if practicable. If it is not practicable to create a special division(s) for the teams that have not played a majority of games, then teams with a game point percentage of about 50 percent or less will be placed with teams that have a game percentage point ranking of about 50 percent. All other teams that have not played a majority of games will be placed with teams that are in the division after the top tournament division.
- ▶ **Moving teams to different age groups for tournament play.** After a team has been scheduled for regular season play, the SFL has later found out that the players on that team may not meet the applicable age guidelines. For example, Under 14 division 2 teams normally have players meeting the Under 13 age rules. If the error is found before the team is scheduled for tournament play, then the appropriate SFL Age Group Commissioner may instruct the Administrator to (1) eliminate the team from tournament play or (2) place the team in a higher tournament division. It does not matter whether the incorrect team assignment was either intentional or inadvertent. This rule was adopted since (1) normally when the error is detected it is impossible to revise the regular season schedule and (2) the concept that teams should be placed in the proper age group whenever possible.
- **Round robin tournament divisions.** The top tournament divisions are scheduled using a round robin format. These tournament divisions are normally designed as follows:
  - ▶ **Four team divisions** – Each team plays 3 games. This ensures that each team plays all the other teams in the tournament division.
  - ▶ **Five team divisions** – Each team plays 2 games on the first tournament day. The teams are then ranked with the lowest team being eliminated from play on Sunday. The remaining 4 teams play a predetermined schedule on Sunday and are ranked using the results of all three games. The decision to eliminate one team was primarily based on the number of field slots available on day 2. Specifically, the number of field slots available on day 2 normally does not allow each team to play 2 additional games on day 2.

- ▶ **Six team divisions** – The 6 teams are broken into 2 mini groups of 3 teams each. Each mini group will play 2 games on day 1 with the top team in each group playing each other for first and second place on day 2. The second place teams play each other for third place on day 2. This approach ensures that the top teams scheduled to play each other for first, second, and third place have played the other teams in their group. Furthermore, inadequate field slots are available to support a scheduling approach that would ensure the top teams play each other. In other words, simply scheduling 3 games for each team in a 6 team division can result in two teams winning all their tournament games with no means to have a game to decide which of the two teams should be first place. This has actually occurred prior to the adoption of this approach.
- **Single elimination divisions** – Most tournament divisions will play a single elimination format due to the limited number of field slots that are available. These tournament divisions are normally designed as follows:
  - ▶ **Four team divisions** – The four teams are scheduled for one game each on day 1. The winner of these two games play on day 2 for first and second place trophies.
  - ▶ **Five team divisions** – The bottom two teams of the division play a game with the loser being eliminated. The remaining 4 teams play one game each with the winners of the two games playing on day 2 for first and second place trophies. (Note: One team will have played two games on day 1.)
  - ▶ **Six team divisions** – The bottom four teams of the division play a game with the loser being eliminated. The remaining 4 teams play one game each with the winners of the two games playing on day 2 for first and second place trophies and the losers playing on day 2 for third place trophies if adequate field slots are available. (Note: Two teams will have played two games on day 1.)
  - ▶ **Seven team divisions** – In rare situations, a 7 team division may be needed. In this case, the bottom 6 teams play each other with the losers being eliminated. The remaining 4 teams play one game each with the winners of the two games playing on day 2 for first and second place trophies and the losers playing on day 2 for third place trophies if adequate field slots are available. (Note: Three teams will have played two games on day 1.)
  - ▶ **Quantitative data.** History has shown that the teams playing a second game on day 1 against a team that only plays 1 game are not at a significant disadvantage. For example, in the Fall 2006 season, 56 single elimination divisions were scheduled using the 5 or 6 team format. About 43 percent of the teams scheduled to play two games advanced to play for the first and second place trophies. In other words, almost half of the teams playing their second game of the day defeated the teams that were only playing their first game of the day.

## Alternatives Considered

The following alternatives were considered:

- **Waiting until more regular season games have been played.** The time line discussed above uses results before the final two weeks of the regular season games have been played. Waiting until later would allow more game results to be used in determining the team results. This alternative was not adopted since the time line adopted only allows the clubs about one week to identify and schedule the officials that are needed to cover the tournament games. Furthermore, the time line adopted already only allows about one week to develop the tournament schedules for about 100 tournament divisions consisting of between 425 and 450 teams.
- **Using another method, such as game points, to determine division groups.** Using game points earned does not adequately address the problems that can be caused when all teams have not played the same number of games. For example, if Team A plays 4 games without loss, while Teams B, C, D, and E play 5 games with one team (Team E) having one loss and 4 wins while the remaining teams have all wins. If game points were used, the Teams B through E would be placed in the top tournament division while Team A would be placed in a lower tournament division since these 4 teams had more game points than Team A. Using game point percentage places all 4 unbeaten teams in the top tournament divisions which helps achieve the goal of having teams with comparable abilities play each other. Furthermore, when all teams have played the same number of games, the use of game point percentage provides the same ranking as game points.

## RESCHEDULING TOURNAMENT GAMES

### Summary

After the tournament is scheduled, the tournament may not be able to be completed as scheduled due to weather or other reasons. In such cases, a decision is made on whether the tournament can be rescheduled during the tournament weekend. In reality, this means that one or more tournament sites cannot play one or more Saturday games while Sunday games are expected to be played. When tournament games can be rescheduled, normally only the original time slots on Sunday are available due to referee and field availability. Therefore, a compressed tournament schedule is developed which provides the top teams in each tournament division the opportunity to play for first and second place trophies (6 team divisions will normally also play a game for third place trophies).

**Applicable Fall 2006 Rules:** Section VIII.F.

The approach used to determine the Sunday games essentially follows the following process:

- If a team is eliminated during the tournament games played, then that team is not considered during the tournament rescheduling process. For example, Team A plays Team B on Saturday morning in a single elimination game with Team A winning. If the remaining games on Saturday are cancelled, then Team B will not be considered during the

rescheduling process since Team B would not be playing in any more tournament games even if the tournament was played as scheduled.

- If a team would be playing on Sunday based on the Saturday results, then that team will be scheduled for Sunday play. For example, Team A plays Team B on Saturday morning in a single elimination game with Team A winning. If the tournament had been played as expected, Team A would be playing the winner of the game between Team C and Team D on Sunday. If the remaining games on Saturday are cancelled, then Team A will be scheduled against Team C or Team D using the process described below. On the other hand, if it is not clear whether Team A would be playing on Sunday, then using the process described below, a determination would be made on whether Team A would be scheduled for a Sunday game. For example, Team A plays Team B with the winner (in this example Team A) playing Team C to determine who plays on Sunday. However, only the game between Team A and Team B is played with the remaining games being canceled. Since it is not clear whether Team A would be playing on Sunday, the ranking process discussed below would be used to determine the teams playing on Sunday.
- Once the teams eligible for rescheduling consideration are determined, the teams are ranked by using all games (regular season and tournament) played. The following process is used to rank teams:
  - ▶ If all teams in a given tournament division have played the same number of games, then the teams are ranked using the process described below. If the teams have not played the same number of games the following is done to ensure that the same number of games is used to rank teams:
    - ◆ The average game points, bonus points, and goals allowed are determined for each team.
    - ◆ The team(s) with the fewer games is given “credit” for the missing games. For example, if Team A has played 9 games while Team B has played 8 games, then the average game points, bonus points, and goals allowed for Team B is computed and added to Team B’s season results for this one game difference. Assuming Team B had 24 game points, 8 bonus points, and 8 goals allowed, this calculation would result in Team B having 27 game points (24 actual game points + the 3 game point average for the missing game), 9 bonus points, and 9 goals allowed. If Team A had played 10 games, then the calculation would result in 30 game points (24 game points actually earned and 6 game points for the two missing games), 10 bonus points, and 10 goals allowed.
  - ▶ Teams are then ranked using the ranking process for round robin tournament divisions for the current season with the exception that all results are used rather than just the tournament results where applicable. For example, using the rules for the Fall 2006 season, teams would be ranked in the following order: (1) total game points, (2) head to head competition (including regular season games if they have played each other), (3) total bonus points, (4) least goals allowed during the season, (5) whether the team received a regular season award (if applicable), and coin flip. A 3 or 4-way tie is broken

in the following order: (1) total bonus points, (2) least goals allowed during the season, (3) whether the team received a regular season award if applicable), (4) regular season game point percentage, and (5) coin flip.<sup>1</sup> (**Note:** The Fall 2006 rules contained an error. In a prior season the tournament ranking order was changed for how regular season awards are handled. This change was not picked up in the Fall 2006 rules.)

- Once the teams are ranked, then the number of teams that can be supported are selected. The following is the process used for the normal tournament divisions:
  - ▶ Four or 5 team single elimination divisions – Normally only two teams receive trophies, therefore, only the top two teams will be scheduled for a Sunday game to determine first and second place.
  - ▶ Six or 7 team single elimination divisions – The top two teams will play for first and second place while the third and fourth place teams will play for third place trophies. These divisions normally play 2 games on Sunday with one game deciding the first and second place trophies while the second game determines the winner of the third place trophies. However, if a third place game was not originally scheduled, then only one game will normally be scheduled for first and second place trophies.
  - ▶ Four team round robin divisions – Normally 2 games are played on Sunday. Therefore, these two games will be played as scheduled with the results being added to the regular season results. These four teams will then be ranked using the ranking process discussed above to determine the first and second place trophies.
  - ▶ Five team round robin divisions – Normally 2 games are played on Sunday. Therefore, one team will be eliminated using the ranking process discussed above and the two games originally scheduled (using the team eliminated as the guide) will be played as scheduled with the results being added to the regular season results. These four teams will then be ranked using the ranking process discussed above to determine the first and second place trophies.
  - ▶ Six team round robin divisions – Normally 2 games are played on Sunday. Therefore, two teams will be eliminated using the ranking process discussed above. The top two teams will play for first and second place while the remaining two teams will play for third place. This is consistent with how the six team round robin division works when all tournament games are played as scheduled.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Fall 2006 season, the rules stated that when "the tournament schedule is played as expected and teams within a tournament division are scheduled using the round robin format, they will be ranked in the following order (1) game points, (2) head to head competition (including regular season games if they have played each other), (3) tournament bonus points, (4) least goals allowed during the tournament, (5) whether the team received a regular season award (if applicable), (6) least goals allowed during the regular season, and (7) 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 goals allowed during the regular season, (4) regular season game point percentage, and (5) coin flip."

## Alternatives Considered

The following alternatives were considered:

- **Using goals scored in ranking teams.** This alternative was not adopted since bonus points accomplishes the same purpose and limits the incentive to run up the score on another team. For example, if Team A wins a game by 5 – 2, Team A receives 3 bonus points and no incentive is provided for the team to score goals that would result in more than a 3 goal differential.
- **Using tournament results to rank teams rather than adding the tournament results to the regular season results .** This alternative was not adopted since the approach actually used only uses regular season results if the tournament results do not clearly provide the team that should play on Sunday. For example, in a 4 team single elimination division, if two of the teams play a game while the other 2 teams cannot play, then the team that wins the tournament game played is automatically scheduled for a tournament game while the regular season results are used to determine which of the other teams should be scheduled for Sunday. Furthermore, simply using tournament results would add complexity and some means would be needed to adjust the tournament results when all teams did not play the same number of games. Using a 5 team single elimination game when only the first game is played as an example, the only item that is clear is that the team losing the first game should not be considered for Sunday games. Even when the first 2 games are played several questions would need to be addressed including the following:
  - ▶ Should the team which won the first game (assuming only one game was played) be declared as one of the teams playing on Sunday since it has more game points than any of the other teams in the tournament division even though it would have normally had to win another game before being able to play in the game that determined the trophies? If the answer to this question is yes, how should the other team be selected since the remaining 3 teams have identical tournament records?
  - ▶ Assuming the first 2 games are played, should these two teams be scheduled for the Sunday game since they would have more game points than the team which had not played a game? (The teams that lost in these 2 games would be automatically eliminated since they are not eligible for a Sunday game.) If yes, while it is clear that the team winning the second game should be scheduled for a Sunday game since the tournament results can be used to clearly show that this team should be advanced, what basis should be used to justify the elimination of a team that has not yet played a game? If no, what process should be used to determine whether the winner of the first game or the team not yet playing a game should be scheduled for the other Sunday game?



## **DETERMINING TOURNAMENT DIVISION STANDINGS WHEN TOURNAMENT GAMES ARE PLAYED AS EXPECTED**

### **Summary**

When the tournament schedule is played as expected and teams within a tournament division are scheduled using the round robin format, they will be ranked in the following order: (1) tournament game points, (2) head to head competition (including regular season games if they have played each other), (3) tournament bonus points, (4) least goals allowed during the tournament, (5) whether the team received a regular season award (if applicable), (6) least goals allowed during the regular season, and (7) 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 goals allowed during the regular season, (4) regular season game point percentage, and (5) coin flip. In the case of single elimination divisions, it is very clear where a team should be ranked since all games result in one team being declared the winner.

### **Applicable Fall 2006 Rules:** Section VIII.A.

The following factors were considered in adopting this process:

- **The first, second, and third place (if applicable) awards are primarily based on the tournament results.** In the case of round robin divisions, teams playing in 4 or 6 team divisions that win all of their games will end up with first place trophies. Although it is possible that a two teams in a 5 team round robin division can end up undefeated after 3 games, history has shown that after Saturday's results are known, this is an unlikely possibility. In the rare cases where this possibility exists, the Sunday game schedule has been manually adjusted to ensure these two team play each other.
- **Using regular season goals allowed and regular season game point percentage as tie breakers.** In the past, the SFL did not use any regular season results as tie breakers, however, it was realized that it may be possible for two teams to actually need to conduct a shoot out or have a coin flip to decide which team should be eliminated. Since the way that the tournament is scheduled, it may not be easy to conduct a shoot out and the SFL was asked if something else could be used to break ties before adopting the coin flip. For example, a 4 team round robin division may have the Sunday games that are scheduled on different fields at different times due to field constraints. However, the results of both Sunday games cause two teams not playing each other on Sunday to be tied. Since it is not easy to determine immediately after the games that a shoot out should occur or even which field should be used for the shoot out, the clubs asked for an additional tie breaker that could be used.
- **Using regular season head to head results as a tie breaker.** The end of season tournament is not a traditional tournament at all. Rather, it is an opportunity to play games against teams with similar records. Since the tournament is really an extension of the regular season, it has been a long standing policy that if teams in a tournament division played each other during the regular season, then those results should be also be used as a tie breaker. As noted

earlier, if a team wins all its tournament games, it is unlikely that this tie breaker will be used.

- **Tie breakers adopted are based on traditional tournament tie breakers.** Based on the experience of the SFL Commissioners and SFL Club Representatives, the primary tie breakers (game points, head to head results, bonus points, and goals allowed) are the same tie breakers used in youth tournaments.

### Alternatives Considered

- **Only using tournament results to determine standings.** As discussed earlier, the SFL was asked by the clubs to include other tie breakers. Furthermore, history has shown that regular season tie breakers (with the exception of head to head results) are very rarely used.
- **Using unlimited bonus points and goals scored as tie breakers.** This alternative was not adopted since bonus points accomplishes the same purpose and limits the incentive to run up the score on another team. For example, if Team A wins a game by 5 – 2, Team A receives 3 bonus points and no incentive is provided for the team to score goals that would result in more than a 3 goal differential.

## DETERMINING TOURNAMENT DIVISION STANDINGS WHEN TOURNAMENT GAMES ARE NOT COMPLETED AS EXPECTED

### Summary

After the tournament is scheduled, the tournament may not be able to be completed as scheduled due to weather or other reasons. In some cases it is realized that even though some of the original games may have been played, no additional games can be played. Accordingly, the teams need to be ranked so that trophies can be awarded. In reality, this means that at best, some tournament games were played on Saturday and that one or more tournament sites cannot play the regularly scheduled Sunday games. A process was developed that (1) that combines the regular season results with any tournament results for the teams eligible for trophy consideration, (2) adjusts these combined results to ensure the same number of games are used to calculate game points, bonus points, and goals allowed, and (3) using these combined results, rank the eligible teams using tie breakers that are similar to those used for round robin divisions.

**Applicable Fall 2006 Rules:** Section VIII.F.

The approach used to determine the trophy awards uses the following process.

- **Any teams eliminated from trophy consideration based on tournament results are eliminated from trophy consideration.** These teams are eliminated since they would not have received trophies if the tournament games had been played. For example, in a 4 team single elimination division if one game is played, then the loser of that game would not have been eligible to play any other games for trophies if the tournament had been played as scheduled. Accordingly, only the 3 remaining teams are considered eligible for trophies.

- **If the tournament results can be used to clearly identify a trophy award, then those results are used to determine the trophy award.** In some cases, it may be possible to determine the winner of the first place trophy based on the tournament results. For example, in a 3 team round robin division, one team normally plays two games on Saturday. If that team wins both of its games on Saturday and Sunday's game is cancelled, then the first place trophies would be awarded to the team winning both of its Saturday games since that team would have received the first place trophies regardless of the outcome of the Sunday game. On the other hand, if the team playing two games on Saturday did not win both games, then it is impossible to determine which of the 3 teams should be awarded first place trophies.
  
- **If the tournament division is a six team single elimination division and eligible for third place trophies, then the tournament division is broken into two groups – Group A is used to determine first and second place while Group B is used to determine third place.** This is consistent with what would have happened if the tournament games had been played as scheduled. If the tournament results can be used to determine these two groups, then only tournament results will be used to determine the teams eligible for a given group. For example, if all of Saturday's games are played, then the tournament results can be used to determine the teams that would have been eligible for first and second place trophies and the teams eligible for third place trophies. On the other hand, if only the first two games are played, then it is only clear which two teams are eliminated and which of the remaining 4 teams should be considered for first and second place trophies is uncertain.
  
- **Once the teams that are eligible for trophies are determined, any tournament results are combined with the regular season results and the teams are ranked.** The end of season tournament is not a traditional tournament at all. Rather, it is an opportunity to play games against teams with similar records. Accordingly, it is really an extension of the regular season and the tournament results are already added to the regular season results to determine a team's season standings. The following process is used to rank teams:
  - ▶ If all teams in a given tournament division have played the same number of games, then the teams are ranked using the process described below. If the teams have not played the same number of games the following is done to ensure that the same number games is used to rank teams:
    - ◆ The average game points, bonus points, and goals allowed are determined for each team.
    - ◆ The team(s) with the fewer games is given "credit" for the missing games. For example, if Team A has played 9 games while Team B has played 8 games, then the average game points, bonus points, and goals allowed for Team B is computed and added to Team B's season results for this one game difference. Assuming Team B had 24 game points, 8 bonus points, and 8 goals allowed, this calculation would result in Team B having 27 game points (24 actual game points + the 3 game point average for the missing game), 9 bonus points, and 9 goals allowed. If Team A had played 10 games, then the calculation would result in 30 game points (24 game points actually

earned and 6 game points for the two missing games), 10 bonus points, and 10 goals allowed.

- ▶ Teams are then ranked using the ranking process for round robin tournament divisions for the current season with the exception that all results are used rather than just the tournament results where applicable. For example, using the rules for the Fall 2006 season, teams would be ranked in the following order: (1) total game points, (2) head to head competition (including regular season games if they have played each other), (3) total bonus points, (4) least goals allowed during the season, (5) whether the team received a regular season award (if applicable), and coin flip. A 3 or 4-way tie is broken in the following order: (1) total bonus points, (2) least goals allowed during the season, (3) whether the team received a regular season award if applicable), (4) regular season game point percentage, and (5) coin flip.<sup>2</sup>
- **Quantitative data.** In the Fall 2006 season the majority of Saturday games were played while the majority of the Sunday games were cancelled. This process resulted in the following for the tournament divisions where the ranking process rather than actual tournament results was used:
  - ▶ First place trophies were awarded in 60 divisions based on the total number of actual game points earned regardless of whether the game results were adjusted to ensure that the same number of games were played. For example, Team A played 8 games and earned 24 game points while Team B played 9 games and earned 22 game points. Accordingly, even if Team A's results had not been adjusted for the game differential, then it would still have won first place trophies.
  - ▶ Game point adjustments were made in 56 tournament divisions where the ranking process was used since the teams eligible for trophies did not play the same number of games. However, these adjustments were only used in 11 divisions since the first place trophies were awarded based on the adjusted game points. For example, Team A played 8 games and earned 24 game points while Team B played 9 games and earned 25 game points. However, after Team A's game points were adjusted for the 1 game difference, Team A was in first place, since it had 27 adjusted game points (24 actual game points + 3 points average game points it earned over the 8 games).
  - ▶ First place trophies were awarded in 9 divisions based on the bonus points. It did not matter in these cases, whether the teams played the same number of games.

---

<sup>2</sup> In the Fall 2006 season, the rules stated that when "the tournament schedule is played as expected and teams within a tournament division are scheduled using the round robin format, they will be ranked in the following order (1) game points, (2) head to head competition (including regular season games if they have played each other), (3) tournament bonus points, (4) least goals allowed during the tournament, (5) whether the team received a regular season award (if applicable), (6) least goals allowed during the regular season, and (7) 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 goals allowed during the regular season, (4) regular season game point percentage, and (5) coin flip."

- ▶ First place trophies were awarded in 5 divisions based on goals allowed. It did not matter in these cases, whether the teams played the same number of games.
- ▶ First place trophies were awarded in 3 divisions based on something other than game points, e.g., bonus points, goals allowed, etc. For example, head to head results or one team in a three team division won both of its Saturday games.

## Alternatives Considered

- **Using goals scored in ranking teams.** This alternative was not adopted since bonus points accomplishes the same purpose and limits the incentive to run up the score on another team. For example, if Team A wins a game by 5 – 2, Team A receives 3 bonus points and no incentive is provided for the team to score goals that would result in more than a 3 goal differential.
- **Using tournament results to rank teams rather than adding the tournament results to the regular season results .** This alternative was not adopted since the adopted approach only uses regular season results if the tournament results do not clearly provide the team that should be awarded a trophy. For example, in a 4 team single elimination division, if two of the teams play a game while the other 2 teams cannot play, then the team that wins the tournament game played is automatically considered for a first place trophy along with the two teams that could not play a tournament game. Furthermore, simply using tournament results would add complexity and some means would be needed to adjust the tournament results when all teams did not play the same number of games. Using a 5 team single elimination game when only the first game is played as an example, the only item that is clear is that the team losing the first game should not be considered for a trophy. Even when the first 2 games are played several questions would need to be addressed including the following:
  - ▶ Should the team which won the first game (assuming only one game was played) be declared as the first place winner since it has more game points than any of the other teams in the tournament division even though it would have normally had to win another game before being able to play in the game that determined the trophies? If the answer to this question is yes, how should the other team be selected since the remaining 3 teams have identical tournament records?
  - ▶ Assuming the first 2 games are played, should these two teams be awarded first and second place trophies since they would have more game points than the team which had not played a game? (The teams that lost in these 2 games would be automatically eliminated since they are not eligible for a trophy.) If yes, while it is clear that the team winning the second game should be considered for a trophy since the tournament results can be used to clearly show that this team should be considered for a trophy, what basis should be used to justify the elimination of a team that has not yet played a game? If no, what process should be used to determine which teams should be awarded first and second place trophies?