

Suburban Friendship League
703 Brethour Court
Sterling, VA 20164
December 30, 2007

Dear SFL Club Representatives and others,

We hope you are having a nice holiday season. Last season a number of issues were raised concerning SFL operations. Some of these were internally generated while others were raised by the clubs and coaches. The key concerns involved (1) the team registration process, (2) player rosters, and (3) tournament scheduling. On December 8, 2007, the SFL Commissioners held a meeting to discuss these issues and decided that changes were needed in the SFL operations. In the case of the team registration process and player rosters, the SFL Commissioners have developed a revised process to address these problem areas. In the case of the tournament, the SFL Commissioners have developed two alternatives for consideration.

The SFL Commissioners recognized that the proposed changes in these 3 areas will probably require changes in the club operations and that the clubs would need time to implement them before the start of the Spring 2008 season. Accordingly, a special meeting has been scheduled for Friday, January 11, 2008, at the North County Governmental Center in Reston from 7 to 9 to help explain the changes and obtain club input on their implementation. The agenda for this meeting are as follows:

- Revised team registration process
- Revised roster requirements
- Tournament alternatives
- Other rule changes
- Other issues

Attached are the following documents which provide additional information on these topics.

- Revised team registration process.
- Summary of proposed rule changes for the Spring 2008 season
- Proposed rules for the Spring 2008 season (the roster changes and other rule changes are contained in this document as noted in the summary of proposed rule changes for the 2008 season)

- Tournament alternatives

The following summarizes these key areas.

REVISED TEAM REGISTRATION PROCESS

Prior to the Spring 2005 season, the team registration process caused unnecessary difficulty for the SFL to schedule the games. On December 11, 2004, the SFL Commissioners adopted a revised process. Subsequent to the adoption of the revised process, significant improvements were initially realized. However, during the last couple of seasons, major problems have once again been experienced and the leeway allowed by the revised process and the SFL's willingness to "go the extra mile" has been abused by some clubs. Accordingly, a revised process was adopted by the SFL Commissioners. Key parts of the registration process remain unchanged. The following are examples of items that remained consistent.

- The registration dates are still March 1 for the Spring season and August 1 for the Fall season.
- Field commitments are still required on March 1 for the Spring season and August 1 for the Fall season.
- Late fees still apply for late club, field, and team information.

The significant changes from the prior process include the following.

- Submission of a "Master Player Roster" on March 15 for the Spring season and August 15 for the Fall season that lists all registered players. This replaces the requirement to provide copies of team rosters for the Under 12 and Under 14 Division 2 teams.
- Revised process for how odd team scheduling groups are handled.

Both of these changes may have significant impacts on your club.

REVISED ROSTER REQUIREMENTS

The SFL is now requiring a Master Player Roster that contains all the club's players that are playing in the SFL to be submitted to it rather than the individual team rosters used in the past. Individual team rosters will still be required to be provided to the coaches so that they can be exchanged before each game. The SFL Forms page (www.sflsoccer.org/sflforms.htm) contains copies of the new forms. These forms also have an instruction page and some edits in them to help identify potential errors, e.g., putting Under 12 and 14 division 1 aged players on division 2 teams.

A key change to the team roster is that uniform numbers are required to be included on the roster and that no handwritten information is allowed except the SFL Club Representative's (or other club official authorized to prepare the roster) signature and date. In other words, coaches are no longer allowed to place the uniform number of the roster. Furthermore, each player is required to have a unique number on the jersey and use that number for the entire season. While coaches may still hand out jerseys to players, they must ensure that the player receives the jersey with the number shown on the roster.

TOURNAMENT ALTERNATIVES

The SFL Commissioners realize that one of the great benefits of the SFL is the tournament. It gives an opportunity for teams with comparable abilities to play games against each other. While some may view the top divisions as the ones that really benefit from the tournament, we also get a number of compliments from the divisions composed of teams that have less than a stellar season.

As the SFL has grown larger, the logistics associated with the tournament have become much greater and more taxing on everyone involved. Each season the tournament becomes more and more difficult to schedule. In the Fall 2007 tournament, all of the field slots available and then some were used to schedule the tournament. A couple of clubs provided more fields that required to support their teams. If this had not happened, then we would have dropped teams. Even with these additional fields and officials, several clubs were threatened with that penalty prior to providing fields and officials. The club names do not matter since this is a constant problem, i.e., the problem remains the same, only the names change. At least 3 issues cause the problems we have with the initial tournament scheduling efforts – field availability, referee availability, and competing club demands.

Three alternatives were discussed by the SFL Commissioners during the December 2007 meeting and two alternatives were adopted – eliminating the tournament and requiring the clubs to commit tournament fields and referees at the start of the season. A third option – reducing the time for each tournament game so that more slots become available for a given field – was considered but rejected as an option that should be presented for consideration. In the past, when the SFL was much smaller, the SFL used this approach to maintain the round robin tournament format. Specifically, we used 1 hour game slots (20 minute halves) to generate 8 Saturday game slots in the spring and 7 slots in the fall. However, we received a number of complaints on this format from the teams and clubs and it was abandoned.

The attached document discussing these tournament alternatives provides (1) how the alternative would work, (2) other items relating to the alternative, (3) advantages associated with a given alternative or approach, and (4) disadvantages to a given alternative or approach. We welcome additional proposals or refinements to the alternatives provided. Please take the time to carefully review the tournament alternatives document. The alternative that requires clubs to commit fields and referees at the start of the season contains significant financial and team penalties if a

club (1) is unable to make the necessary commitments or (2) fails to live up to the commitments made on April 1 for the spring season and September 1 for the fall season.

In summary, the actions relating to team registration and the tournament are directly related to a club's ability and desire to provide the needed support for its recreational teams. For example, the SFL tournament dates are known seasons in advance and all a club has to do to when assigning fields is to reserve the Saturday and Sunday slots needed for that one weekend at the time the permits are received. Clubs that have taken this approach have not had a problem in providing the necessary tournament fields to support their teams. We understand that having adequate tournament referees always has and probably always will be a challenge. However, we have found that clubs generally have a fairly good idea of what referee support that provide at the start of the season.

We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you at the meeting on Friday night, January 11, 2008. If you have any questions on the material in this package, please send us an Email at sfl@sflsoccer.org or call me at 703-406-8550. Thank you for your assistance.

Wayne Gilbert
Commissioner