

*Suburban Friendship League*  
**Proposed Rule and Process Changes for the Fall 2106 Season**  
(July 15, 2016)

**Note: Minor editorial changes are not shown.**

## **COMBINING TEAMS**

**Issue/Proposal** – The current rules allow teams to combine rosters during the regular season when approved in advance by the SFL. When approved, the combined teams cannot exceed 11 players for U11/12s and 14 players for U13s and above. The rules also allow the teams to create a tournament roster(s) using the existing players on the regular season rosters. Some clubs may simply drop one of the teams for the tournament and then use all the players on both teams on the tournament roster for the team playing in the tournament. This creates an unfair advantage against other teams in the tournament. The SFL should limit the tournament roster for such combined teams to those used during the regular season, i.e., 11 for the U11/12s and 14 for the U13s and above. In addition, the term “combining teams” is confusing.

**Comments** – During the Spring 2016 season, the situation described above occurred. One club had two teams in the 12 age group. They were given permission to combine teams in the regular season. The club decided to drop one of the teams in the tournament since it was unsure whether either team would have enough players and requested that the tournament roster for the team playing list all the players from both teams. In this case, the tournament roster consisted of 25 players.<sup>1</sup> The primary reason for doing this was to reduce the administrative burden on the club and SFL to (1) identify the players that would actually be available to play in the tournament and (2) generate a roster that properly reflected the players able to play.

The rules also state that each team must have at least 11 players in the Under 11/12 age groups and 14 players in the Under 13 and older age groups before the SFL will consider a request to combine teams. This rule was adopted to help provide reasonable assurance that on a given game day, both teams would have enough players without having to depend on players from the other teams since the SFL does not make any special scheduling arrangements for the teams that are allowed to combine players.

**Proposed Change** – It was agreed that the term “combining teams” for regular season games is confusing and the proposed rules have been changed to use the term “sharing players”. The term “combining teams” only applies to tournament games. The following three options appear

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<sup>1</sup> When scheduling a “combined team” for the tournament, the highest ranked team is used for tournament placement. In this case, the “combined team” scheduled was placed in tournament division 1 while the team dropped would have been placed in around the middle of the division 2 tournament teams.

available

- **Option 1 – Status quo** – No changes to the existing rules and processes would be made.
- **Option 2 – Eliminate the ability to share players or combine teams for tournament play** – Over the years, the “combined teams” rule has been changed based on comments from the clubs and the experiences of the SFL Commissioners. This season provides good examples of the issues of eliminating the ability to share players and combine teams. In the case of the team that ended up with a large tournament roster, the club had 25 players in the U12 age group. Clearly, this is too many players for one team, yet too few to ensure that enough players are available to support 2 teams. On the other hand, another club with five U12 teams requested and was approved during the season to basically combine the players on all these teams. These teams had a total of 60 players. In this case, rather than combining teams, a better approach may have been to only have 4 teams.
- **Option 3** – Maintain the majority of the current rules that govern sharing players and combining teams, e.g., minimum team size, maximum regular season roster size, etc. However, the tournament roster should be limited to (1) the players on the regular season roster or (2) no more than 11 for U11/12 teams and 14 for U13s and above. The later is consistent with the maximum size of a combined team for regular season games.

The SFL Commissioners are recommending that Option 1 be approved.

**Issue/Proposal** – Section IX of the rules involving suspension penalties underwent a significant change for the Spring 2016 season. A number of penalties were defined including additional penalties for a team receiving more than one suspension offense during the season. Based on the experiences gained, it seems that (1) the list of penalties can be streamlined by combining some of the penalties and (2) the list of offenses could be better defined to eliminates the need to add additional penalties when a team is assessed more than one suspension infraction.

**Comments** – Overall the changes made to Section IX. of the rules and the system developed to implement those rules seemed to work well. About 15 percent of the teams participating in the Spring 2016 had at least one suspension infraction and the system easily identified cases where red card suspensions were not served because of game cancellations so that new notices could be sent. However, some cases existed where (1) the actual infraction as described in the referee report appeared to warrant an additional game suspension although the “infraction code” that would warrant this additional suspension did not adequately define this situation and (2) it was not clear whether the additional team demerits for multiple suspension offenses should be applied because they were related to the same incident.

**Proposed Change** –It is recommended that Section IX.C.1. of the rules be changed to (1) add individual and team misconduct codes that consolidate some of the previous items into a single

item and allow for an addition game suspension when warranted by a referee report and (2) eliminate the additional team demerits for multiple suspension offenses. The following is the proposed Section IX.C.1.

1. Penalties for Misconduct – The SFL has three types of penalties relating to misconduct – game suspensions, Individual Demerits, and Team Demerits. Game suspensions and Individual Demerits apply to an individual based on the infraction while Team Demerits apply to a team. Although in many cases the number of Individual Demerits assigned to the individual and the team may be the same, this is not always the case as shown below. The following shows the game suspensions, Individual Demerits, and Team Demerits assigned for given types of misconduct. **(Unchanged)**

a. Player infractions resulting in one (1) game suspension, one (1) Individual Demerit, and one (1) Team Demerit. **(Unchanged)**

(1) Denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick. **(Unchanged)**

(2) Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area). **(Unchanged)**

(3) Receiving a second caution in the same match. **(Unchanged)**

**Note:** If a player receives a red card after receiving a second caution a decision is made on whether the red card was received based on the player committing a red card offense or receiving a second caution. For example, assume that a player receives a caution for dissent and then receives a red card for using offensive/insulting/abusive language/ gestures. This is treated as a red card for using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures rather than a second yellow card for dissent. **(New/Modified)**

(4) Serious foul play. **(Unchanged)**

(5) Using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures. **(Unchanged)**

(6) Individual Conduct Detrimental to the League – Conduct that warrants a one game suspension that is not specifically covered by other suspension offenses. Examples include failing to serve a game suspension by a player. When an individual does not properly serve suspension period, this penalty is in addition to the original penalty. For example, assume a player is suspended for one game and does not serve the one game suspension. The player would be suspended for one additional

game. **(New/Modified)**

- b. Infractions incurred by players, coaches, and others resulting in two (2) game suspensions, two (2) Individual Demerits, and two (2) Team Demerits. **(Unchanged)**
  - (1) Violent conduct and fighting as defined by the SFL regardless of whether a red card is shown. Conduct which will be treated as fighting, regardless of whether a red card is shown, includes but is not limited to (1) fighting in the opinion of the referee, (2) shoving another player or any other aggressive action after the whistle has blown to stop play, (3) kicking/striking or attempting to kick/strike a player, or spitting. A player "defending himself/herself " is not exempt from this penalty. **(Unchanged)**
  - (2) Individual Conduct Detrimental to the League – Conduct that warrants a two game suspension rather than the standard one game suspension or not specifically covered by other infractions. Examples, include racial slurs, non players (such as coaching staff or spectators) being asked to leave the field or showed a red card, inappropriate behavior towards a game official, etc. Inappropriate conduct towards a game official includes persistent inappropriate comments, 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. **(New/Modified)**
- c. Infractions incurred by players, coaches, and others resulting in season suspensions and three (3) Team Demerits. **(Unchanged)**
  - (1) Head Coach – Illegal players used. **(Unchanged)**
  - (2) Individual Conduct Detrimental to the League – Offenses that warrant a three game suspension rather than the standard one or two game suspension. Offenses that would normally warrant this type of suspension include referee assault incidents or other behavior that should be referred to VYSA for review. **(New/Modified)**
- d. Administrative penalties assessed to individuals and teams. **(Unchanged)**
  - (1) Illegal players used – One (1) Team Demerit per illegal player per game. Illegal players include (1) travel players regardless of whether they are shown on the SFL Team Roster, (2) players shown on the SFL Team Roster but declared ineligible during a roster check or roster challenge, and (3) players not shown on the SFL Team Roster. As noted elsewhere, a team using illegal players will be assessed forfeits for the games where illegal players are used and may be excluded from the SFL tournament. **(Unchanged)**

**Note:** If the coach is assessed a penalty for using illegal players, then this penalty

is not assessed unless more than three (3) illegal players are used.  
**(New/Modified)**

- (2) Team Conduct Detrimental to the League – One Team Demerit. Conduct by members of the team or its supporters that is not specifically covered by other suspension or team offenses and warrants one Team Demerit. Examples include failing to ensure a suspended player does not play (this is in addition to the penalty assessed to the individual), etc. **(New/Modified)**
- (3) Team Conduct Detrimental to the League – Two Team Demerits. Conduct by members of the team or its supporters that is not specifically covered by other suspension or team offenses and warrants two Team Demerits. Examples include actions that cause a game to be terminated early and failing to properly report red cards or individuals (including the Head Coach) being asked to leave the field. When suspension offenses are not properly reported, the team is also assessed additional Team Demerits and game forfeits until the information is properly received. **(New/Modified)**
- (4) Team Conduct Detrimental to the League – Three Team Demerits. Conduct by members of the team or its supporters that are not specifically covered by other suspension or team offenses and warrant three Team Demerits. Examples include actions that warrant review by VYSA. **(New/Modified)**

**Issue/Proposal** – Sections IX.C.2.b. and c. are confusing. For example, does the 8 Team Demerit limit apply if the regular season is only 7 games and it is unclear how tournament games impact the calculations of whether a team should be placed on probation. Furthermore, the penalties for teams on probation need to be better defined.

**Comments** – It agreed that a better definition of how the accumulation of Team Demerits affect its continued participation in the SFL and whether a team should be placed on probation is needed. In addition, the penalties for teams on probation was inadvertently dropped from the the previous season’s rules and need to be added back to the rules

**Proposed Change** –It is recommended that sections IX.C.2.b. and c. of the rules be changed to better define (1) the regular season and tournament suspensions applicable to a team, (2) the calculations used to place a team on probation, and (3) the penalties that may be imposed on teams placed on probation by reincorporating the penalties inadvertently omitted from last season’s rules. The following is the proposed section IX.C.2.b. and c.

- b. **Team suspensions** – Two types of team suspensions may result from the accumulation of Team Demerits – suspension from the tournament scheduling process and suspension from regular season and tournament games.

- (1) **Suspension from the tournament scheduling process** – A team that averages one (1) Team Demerit per game played when the tournament schedules are prepared will be excluded from the tournament but will be allowed to continue playing regular season games until the Maximum Team Demerits Allowed limit is reached. For example, if a team has played four (4) games when the tournament scheduling process is started and has been assessed four (4) or more Team Demerits, then that team will not be scheduled for the tournament although it may continue playing its regular season games until the Maximum Team Demerits Allowed limit is reached.
- (2) **Suspension from regular season and tournament games** – A team that accumulates Team Demerits that equals or exceeds the Maximum Team Demerits Allowed will be (1) suspended for any remaining regular season games, (2) excluded from the tournament if scheduled for any tournament games, and (3) placed on probation for the following season.
  - (a) **Maximum Team Demerits Allowed** – the lesser of (1) the number of regular season games scheduled or (2) the actual games played.

### **Example**

Team A is originally scheduled for 8 regular season games. However, a team drops out and one of Team A's games is cancelled. In addition, the last game of the season is also cancelled and cannot be rescheduled. Team A plays all 6 remaining games. The Maximum Team Demerits Allowed for Team A is six since (1) its regular season game schedule was reduced to 7 games when the team dropped out even though other teams may have played eight regular season games and (2) one game was not played for other reasons.

- (i.) **Games Played** – A game where a team is assessed a forfeit for any reason is not considered as a game played. In addition, if the game is unscheduled and neither team has been assessed a forfeit, then that game is also not considered as a game played. For example, Team A is scheduled for eight (8) regular season games and the web site shows that all eight (8) games are considered played. However, Team A is assessed a forfeit for some reason for one game. Team A is considered to have played seven (7) games.
- c. **Team Probations** – Teams are placed on probation when the number of Team Demerits received in a season equal or exceed the number of games played that season. For example, if a team plays seven (7) regular season and two (2) tournament games, then the team would be placed on probation if its Team

Demerits for the season equal or exceed nine (9) Team Demerits.

- (1) The SFL Club Representative is responsible for ensuring that a team is notified that it is considered on probation and aware of the rules that can affect their continued participation in the SFL.
  - (a) If a team on probation has any of the following conditions, the remainder of its regular season games shall be forfeited and team considered ineligible for tournament play:
    - (i.) Accumulation of four (4) team demerits.
    - (ii.) A game terminated because of the team's conduct.
    - (iii.) Any other disciplinary reason that the SFL Age Group Commissioner deems significant to warrant suspension from the SFL.
- (2) Any team on probation that is suspended is considered ineligible to return to the SFL for at least two (2) seasons.
  - (a) The applicable SFL Age Group Commissioner is responsible for determining whether the members associated with a team constitute the team ineligible to participate.
    - (i.) It is up to the SFL Club Representative to notify the appropriate SFL Age Group Commissioner when any members of the suspended team or coaches associated with the suspended team are placed on team(s) that will be registered. The SFL Age Group Commissioner must approve of each of these player(s) or coach(es) returning to the SFL before the 2 (two) season suspension is served.