

*Suburban Friendship League*  
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July 29, 2020

**Fall 2020 Season Decision**

The SFL has received several requests asking whether the SFL plans on supporting games for the Fall 2020 season. The SFL Commissioners have considered a myriad of information and opinions as to what should or should not be done concerning the Fall 2020 SFL Season. The information reviewed included guidance issued by Virginia along with decisions reached by school systems, the NCAA, and the Virginia High School League. Based on this information, along with the uncertainties that remain and probably will not be resolved for some time, the SFL Commissioners have decided that the SFL will make no further attempts to schedule games for the Fall 2020 season. The information used in formulating this decision includes the following.

- The health community is pretty much in agreement that social distancing along with wearing a face mask is the best preventive measure to prevent the infection of COVID 19. Phase 3 of the Commonwealth of Virginia guidelines, Safer at Home: Phase Three, Guidelines for all Business Sectors, requires participants to maintain ten feet of distance where exercise activities are being conducted. (Page 1 opening paragraph, and page 22, the third bullet). Local jurisdictions may also require the wearing of face masks if a person is outside or in a public building.
- As part of its Phase 3 Guidance, Virginia issued a Frequently Asked Questions document (<https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/forwardvirginia/faq/>) regarding “Can my kid play sports?”. The response to this question follows.

“Indoor and outdoor recreational sports may occur if 10 feet of physical distancing can be maintained by instructors, participants, and spectators, where practicable. Sports where 10 feet of physical distancing cannot be sustained cannot take place unless the sport can be modified to allow physical distancing. This applies during instruction, practice, and during competitive events. Competition that involves close contact with other athletes must be avoided.”

The SFL was unable to identify any rule changes which would allow players to maintain 10 feet of social distancing while on the field and still play the game as intended.

- On 17 July, the NCAA classified soccer as a high contact sport. Their news release stated that the decision to recommend discontinuing or delaying certain activities “. . . include: an inability, for a variety of reasons, to perform symptomatic, surveillance and pre-competition testing when warranted; an inability to carry out adequate contact tracing;

and local officials declaring an inability for the hospital infrastructure to accommodate a surge in hospitalizations related to COVID-19.”

- Several major college conferences decided to cancel all fall sports while others, at the current time, are only going to play conference games. These decisions are being made to try to control and/or contain the spread of COVID 19.
- At least two major local school systems have gone to distance learning only and rejected other options, such as splitting a class, so that half go on two days and the other half goes on the other two days since they do not consider them safe alternatives. If it is not safe for the players to go to school, then it is unclear how it can be safe for the players to play SFL games.
- The Virginia High School League announced on 21 July that it agreed with the NCAA and now also considered soccer a high contact sport. On 27 July, the Virginia High School League announced that no high school sports would be played prior to December. If it is not safe to play high school sports, including soccer this fall, then it is unclear how it is safe to play SFL games.

Based on the medical data available, announcements by at least two Northern Virginia school systems, and the Virginia government, it did not appear likely that Northern Virginia would be allowed to enter Phase 4 prior to September 1 much less August 22 which was the revised deadline for registering teams and beginning the scheduling efforts. Accordingly, we have no option but to conclude that we are not in any better position now than we were in the spring to play games. Hopefully, by the Spring 2021 season, the means will be in place so that the games can continue.

John Paladino  
SFL Commissioner