

Suburban Friendship League

Discussion Topics for Rule and Process Changes for the Fall 2021 Season (as of June 30, 2019)

OVERVIEW

We received several proposed changes this season to the rules, the Club and Coach Guide, and NFL operations. Based on these proposals, the NFL Commissioners reached consensus on each item and are able to provide a recommendation on all the proposals. Consistent with past practice, a final decision on all the proposed changes will be made at the Fall 2021 preseason meeting.

The proposals received affect the following:

- Substitutions
 - Game score differential
 - Uniform numbers for goalkeepers
 - Tournament changes
 - Retaining COVID guidelines
 - Expanding the SFL to cover the Under 9 and Under 10 age groups
 - Approach for the SFL recovering its fixed costs for the Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 seasons
 - Adopting a regional scheduling approach for regular season games

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES FOR THE LAWS OF THE GAME

Substitutions

Current Wording

III.D. Substitutions – Substitutions may be made under the following conditions:

1. After a goal.
 2. Prior to a goal kick.

- 1 3. Prior to the start of the second half.
- 2
- 3 4. Prior to a throw-in by the team in possession. The opposing team may only
- 4 substitute if the team in possession substitutes.
- 5
- 6 5. For an injury when the injured player is replaced. The opposing team may also
- 7 substitute a player at that time.
- 8
- 9 6. After a player caution, at the request of the player's coach. Only the cautioned
- 10 player may be replaced with a substitute at that time.
- 11
- 12 7. At water breaks, if stoppage for the break occurs during one of the above
- 13 substitution opportunities. Referees are encouraged to schedule water breaks
- 14 during substitution opportunities for both teams.

16 **Issue/Proposal** – The objective is to get every player playing at least 50 percent of the game.
17 Often players waiting to be substituted spend excessive time on the sideline waiting to get in
18 the game. If coaches abuse this with excessive substituting, it is done “at the permission of
19 the referee”. Recommend that rule be changed to allow substitutions of players from either
20 team to occur at ANY STOPPAGE of play AT THE PERMISSION OF THE REFEREE.

22 **Section III.D. Substitutions** – Substitutions may be made in accordance with the current
23 Laws of the Game as defined by US Soccer, US Youth Soccer, and VYSA. **Note:** US Youth
24 Soccer currently allows substitutions during any stoppage in play.

26 **Discussion**

28 This proposal was adopted in the Fall 2017 season’s rules. However, for the Spring 2018
29 season, a proposal was received and adopted, to change this to the current wording. The
30 rational used in making the change to the current wording was that substitutions at any
31 stoppage of play works for leagues where the player is not allowed to return either during the
32 half or the game. However, when this is combined with unlimited substitutions, as allowed
33 by the SFL, this rule can really kill any natural flow to the game and gives coaches the
34 opportunity to waste time legally, something which is not envisioned in the Laws of the
35 Game. Even the most time conscious referee could not possibly account for all the time
36 wasting in such situations. This is especially true during the SFL tournament where a
37 running clock is in effect.

39 The Spring 2018 Proposed Rule Change document noted that this concern appeared to be
40 valid. During the Fall 2017 season, the SFL received several complaints about how the
41 unlimited substitution rule was being implemented by some coaches from other coaches,
42 referees, and referee coordinators. One other potential concern that has been noted is that

1 many games are officiated by youth referees who may find it difficult to implement the “at
2 the permission of the game official” requirement when the coaches are adults.
3

4 **SFL Commissioners Recommendation** – The SFL Commissioners recommend that this
5 proposed change not be adopted.
6

7 **Mercy Rule**
8

9 **Current Wording**
10

11 Section X.A. Mercy Rule
12

- 13 1. When the goal differential between two teams has reached four(4), the winning team
14 is obligated to remove a player from the field.
15
- 16 a. For every goal that the losing team scores, the winning team may add one player.
17
- 18 b. At any point when the goal differential reaches four (4) or more, the losing coach
19 may terminate the game without penalty. The game is terminated when the coach
20 or team captain informs the referee. The score reports should include that the
21 game was terminated early because of the mercy rule.
22
- 23 c. The player removal/addition process continues for every goal that
24 increases/decreases the differential, until the goal differential reaches eight (8) for
25 teams playing the 11 v 11 format and seven (7) for teams playing the 9 v 9 format.
26 When the score differential reaches these levels, the game is automatically
27 terminated without a penalty being assessed to either team since the number of
28 allowed players on the field falls below the minimum number of players needed
29 for the team with the most goals. The following table shows the maximum
30 number of players allowed when the goal differential exceeds 3 goals.
31

Goal Differential	11 v 11 Format	9 v 9 Format
0 – 3	11 players allowed	9 players allowed
4	10 players allowed	8 players allowed
5	9 players allowed	7 players allowed
6	8 players allowed	6 players allowed
7	7 players allowed	Game Terminated
8	Game Terminated	

1 **Note:** The above number of players allowed assume that the maximum
2 number of field players are used. If a lesser number of field players are
3 present prior to the event, then one (1) player must be removed.
4

5 **Example A**
6

7 Assume that a game started with eleven (11) players and a player received a
8 red card. The team would have ten (10) field players. If the team then scored
9 a goal which caused the goal differential to be four (4) goals, then the team
10 must remove a player which would result in the team having nine (9) field
11 players.
12

13 **Example B**
14

15 Assume that a game started with Team A only playing 10 players because
16 Team B was only able the field eight (8) players, i.e., the number of players
17 Team A could field was limited by the play down rule. If Team A then scored
18 a goal which caused the goal differential to be four (4) goals, then Team A is
19 required to remove a player and Team A could only field nine (9) players.
20 This is computed as follows – Maximum Number of Players Allowed (10)
21 less the required removal of one player caused by the goal differential reaching
22 four (4).
23

- 24 (1) It is the responsibility of the winning coach to notify the game officials of this
25 requirement should the game official not terminate the game when the score
26 reaches the appropriate level. If either score report shows that the automatic
27 game termination was not implemented as required, then the team with the
28 most goals will be assessed a forfeit.
29

30 **Issue/Proposal** – Two topics relating to this section were received.
31

- 32 • Clarification of when a forfeit is assessed for not properly terminating a game.
33
34 • Eliminating the requirement to remove players when the score differential reaches
35 four goals and replace it with adding players to the field.
36

37 **Assessing a forfeit for not properly terminating a game**
38

39 Some have been confused on whether a forfeit should be assessed once the score
40 differential reaches the maximum goal differential and the score report does not explicitly
41 state that the game was terminated, e.g., eight (8) goals when playing 11 v 11, or after it
42 exceeds the maximum goal differential. In order to reduce the potential confusion, the
43 following change is proposed for section Section X.A.1.c.(1).

(a) The NFL will assume the game was properly terminated and no forfeit will be assessed when the score report shows that the score differential did not exceed the maximum allowed, e.g., the game score report shows Team A (playing the 11 v 11 format) won by a score of 8 – 0. Accordingly, teams will be assessed an automatic forfeit if the goal score differential exceeds the maximum allowed. Continuing with above example, if the score report shows Team A won 9 – 0, then it would be assessed the forfeit since clearly the game was not terminated as required by the winning team when the score differential reached eight (8).

SFL Commissioners Recommendation – The SFL Commissioners are recommending that this proposed clarification be adopted.

Replacing the current requirement to remove players

The current policy should be replaced. Instead of removing players from the winning team, the losing team should be allowed to add more players onto the field. This league is about sportsmanship, and every player wants to play as much as possible, so having to take players off when your team is doing well is the exact opposite of what we want the kids to learn. Why should the winning team be punished for performing well on game day? It teaches the kids that if you are too good at something, you will be punished. Instead if the losing team were allowed to add more players, then that could make the game more fair, and you get more of the kids playing. Instead of a 4-0 game becoming 10v11, a better alternative is to make it 11v12, and if the goal differential keeps going up, then they can put on another one of their players. Should a team not have enough subs to continue putting on players, then at that point the winning team can start taking players off.

Example

Team A (15 players available) is beating Team B (13 players available), and they have just scored a goal to make the goal differential four (4). Team B would be allowed to put on another player so that they have 12 players on the field. At this point, the format would be 11 v 12. If Team A scores again so that the goal differential reaches five (5), then they can add another player so that the game is 11 v 13. If Team A scores again so the goal differential reaches six (6), since Team B has no more players they can put on the field, Team A would have to take a player off, making it 10 v 13. This would continue until the current eight (8) goal differential was reached.

Discussion

During informal discussions of this proposal it was noted by some that this approach is very similar to what many clubs do with the younger age groups playing within their clubs and that this has worked well. The example provided with the proposal also

1 illustrated clearly the concept that was proposed. In discussing whether this approach
2 should be adopted several key items were discussed that included the following.
3

- 4 • **Complexity of the rules necessary to implement the proposal** – It unclear the
5 amount of difficulty and effort necessary to define the appropriate rules and whether
6 the game officials would be conversant with those rules. The current mercy rule is
7 fairly straight forward. However, experience has shown that officials and coaches do
8 not consistently apply the rule. Examples include (1) some game officials and
9 coaches do not believe that players need to be removed once the goal differential
10 reaches four (4) goals which causes controversy at the field and (2) some individuals
11 do not believe in game termination so that “players can play”. While simple in
12 concept, experience has shown that without a well established set of rules, numerous
13 complaints and misunderstandings will arise. Examples of items that will need to be
14 defined include (1) the maximum number of players that may be added and (2)
15 whether the losing coach has an option to simply have the other team to reduce the
16 number of players the other team may use so that the losing team has some substitutes
17 available. A great deal of thought would have to go into the permutations associated
18 with this concept and which ones should be embraced by the rules.
19
- 20 • **Player safety** – At the older age groups the number of players on the field can have a
21 direct impact on the types of issues that may arise. For example, assume a team can
22 add up to four (4) players. This would result is 26 players on the field or about a 20
23 percent increase in the number of individuals on the field. Tensions may already be
24 high because of the score differential and it may be difficult for game officials to
25 observe misconduct that is happening away from the ball. Furthermore, the
26 increasing number of players will probably create many more two or three on one
27 circumstances that may not only increases frustrations but also the possibility of
28 injury. History has shown that one cause of violent behavior is excessive game score
29 differentials.
30

31 **SFL Commissioners Recommendation** – The SFL Commissioners are recommending
32 that this proposal not be adopted.
33

34 **CLUB AND COACH GUIDE** 35

36 **Jersey Numbers for Goalkeepers** 37

38 **Current Wording** 39

40 IV.B.3.a. Uniform Numbers – All players are required to have a unique uniform number
41 for that team that is consistent with the team’s SFL Team Roster.
42

1 **Issue/Proposal** – Goalkeepers may not have jersey number on their goalkeeper's jersey
2 or the number shown on the goalkeeper jersey may be different than the SFL Team Roster
3 for a variety of reasons, e.g., the coach keeps the goalkeeper's jersey and gives it to the
4 player playing the goalkeeper position, etc. During the regular season when the number
5 shown on a goalkeeper jersey is different than the one shown on the SFL Team Roster,
6 the coach can simply use one of the three allowed uniform number changes so the player
7 can play. However, during the tournament this is not allowed. In addition, the rules are
8 unclear on whether a player that has a field uniform with the correct number and can
9 show that uniform during a roster check meets the requirement for a uniform number that
10 matches the SFL Team Roster when the goalkeeper's jersey (1) has a different number
11 than the SFL Team Roster or (2) does not have a number on it.

12

13 **Proposed Change**

14

15 Section IV.B.3.a.(3) added to state the following

16

17 (3) Goalkeepers must have a uniform number that is consistent with the number shown
18 on the SFL Team Roster unless (1) the uniform number shown on the goalkeeper
19 jersey is shown as an allowed uniform number change (regular season games only) or
20 (2) the goalkeeper can provide a field jersey with the uniform number shown on the
21 SFL Team Roster when the goalkeeper's jersey does not have a number on it. If the
22 goalkeeper jersey does not have a number on it, then the goalkeeper must be able to
23 present the appropriate field jersey should a roster check be required.

24

25 **Example A**

26

27 A roster check is being performed prior to a tournament game as required and the
28 goalkeeper is wearing a goalkeeper's jersey with the number 34 on it. The SFL Team
29 Roster shows that the player's uniform number is 20. The coach (or the goalkeeper)
30 shows the game official a field jersey for the player with the number 20 on it. In this
31 case, the player **IS NOT ALLOWED** to play since the number on the goalkeeper's
32 jersey does not agree with the SFL Team Roster. Specifically, uniform number
33 changes are not allowed for tournament games. On the other hand, if this were a
34 regular season game, the SFL Team Roster should show that the goalkeeper's number
35 was 34 as one of the three allowed changes which would allow the goalkeeper to play
36 with that number.

37

38 **Example B**

39

40 A roster check is being performed prior to a tournament game as required and the
41 goalkeeper is wearing a goalkeeper's jersey without a number on it. The SFL Team
42 Roster shows that the player's uniform number is 20. The coach or the goalkeeper
43 shows the game official a field jersey for the player with the number 20 on it. In this

case, the player is allowed to play. However, if the player or coach is unable to provide a field jersey with the number 20 on it, the player would not be allowed to play. On the other hand, in a regular season game, the opposing coach may waive the requirement for the goalkeeper to have a jersey number on the goalkeeper jersey if the coach (or player) does not have a field jersey with the proper uniform number on it.

SFL Commissioners Recommendation – The SFL Commissioners are recommending that this proposal be adopted.

Tournament Changes

Issue/Proposal – Each season a number of teams drop out of the tournament after the scheduling has been completed or show up for games without rosters. In some cases, the teams do not even notify the SFL or the other team that they are not planning on participating so the other team, which may have to travel significant distances, and game officials show up at the field only to find that they do not have a game. This causes unnecessary disruption and for the participating teams and clubs. Furthermore, the clubs associated with the dropped teams suffer significant final financial penalties. Over the years the SFL has attempted to reduce the adverse impacts associated with these game cancellations. These include assessing significant financial penalties to the clubs for teams that cancel after the tournament scheduling process has begun. However, each season a number of teams still do not participate in their games. For example, during the Spring 2021 season over 2 percent of the total teams originally scheduled for the tournament were dropped or did not participate in their scheduled tournament game. This included three of the 12 teams scheduled for the Under 13 Girls age group. The following proposals have been received relating to this issue.

- Eliminating the tournament
- Eliminating teams that drop out after the tournament scheduling process has begun or show up at games without rosters from participating in the following season's tournament.
- Increasing the financial penalties to the clubs.

Each of these are discussed below.

Eliminating the Tournament

The SFL tournament is has been with the SFL since it was created and is considered one of the SFL's best features since the tournament groups are designed to have teams of comparable abilities play each other in a given tournament group. Eliminating the tournament has been discussed several times over the years and each time the clubs and

1 SFL Commissioners have voted to retain it since almost everyone believes the benefits
2 outweigh the disadvantages by a significant margin.
3
4

5 **Eliminating the Teams From
6 Subsequent Season's Tournament**

7 Under this approach, a team that dropped out during the tournament scheduling process
8 or is eliminated because of roster issues would not be allowed to participate in the
9 subsequent season's tournament. In concept this would penalize the team in the
10 subsequent season. The SFL Commissioners realize that implementing this concept has
11 several issues including defining what is considered a returning team, e.g., is it the coach,
12 majority of players on a given team, etc. The concept of this approach is simple,
13 however, the implementation of has several issues since history has shown that the causes
14 of teams dropping out after the tournament schedules are posted and not showing up with
15 proper rosters are varied. Regardless, the SFL Commissioners believe that penalties
16 should be imposed on the team to discourage such behavior. As discussed below,
17 financial penalties are already imposed on the clubs for these situations. However, it is
18 the clubs rather than the teams that "pay the price". Accordingly, the SFL
19 Commissioners are proposing that any team that drops out of the tournament after the
20 schedules are published, fails to show up for a tournament game, or is assessed a
21 scheduling forfeit for roster issues is not allowed to participate in the subsequent season's
22 tournament.

23
24 **Increasing Fees for Dropped Teams**
25

26 During the consolidation of the SFL rules, process, and procedures documents into the
27 current Administrative Rules for the Laws of the Game and the Club and Coach Guide,
28 the following section relating to penalties was inadvertently deleted.
29

30 Each season the SFL experiences problems with teams being dropped during the
31 tournament scheduling process and after the schedules are published. In addition,
32 some teams do not show up for their assigned tournament games. In the Spring 2014
33 season, the SFL spent over \$1,000 to reimburse clubs for officials that were scheduled
34 for games not played. Furthermore, some clubs make extensive changes to the game
35 fields after the schedules are developed which causes additional problems. The SFL
36 has developed the following fee schedule for these types of events:
37

- 38 • Dropping a team during the schedule generation process – \$125
39
40 • Dropping a team after schedules are posted or teams not showing up for their
41 assigned games – \$250
42
43 • Game field changes after the schedules are finalized – \$20 per game

1 These charges will be deducted from the applicable club's referee reimbursement or
2 added to the next season's assessment.

3
4 These penalties are substantial and increasing them would not seem to provide an
5 incentive to reduce the problems associated with the dropped teams since it is the club
6 rather than the team that pays these costs.
7

8 **SFL Commissioners Recommendation** – The SFL Commissioners were unable to arrive
9 at a viable solution to the problem of teams dropping out of the tournament after the
10 tournament scheduling process has begun or showing up at tournament games with roster
11 issues that prevent the tournament game from being played other than eliminate the
12 tournament. However, because many believe that the tournament benefits far outweigh
13 the problems caused by these teams, eliminating the tournament did not appear to be a
14 viable option. Regardless, it is recommended that (1) teams dropping out of the
15 tournament after the schedules are posted, being assessed scheduling forfeits for roster
16 issues, failing to show up for tournament games be penalized in the subsequent season
17 and (2) the material inadvertently deleted when the new documents were created be added
18 back to the Club and Coach Guide. The following is the recommended additions to
19 section XI. of the Club and Coach Guide.
20

21 D. **Tournament Penalties** – Each season the SFL experiences problems with teams
22 being dropped during the tournament scheduling process and after the schedules
23 are published. In addition, some teams do not show up for their assigned
24 tournament games or show up with roster issues that prevent the game from being
25 played. Furthermore, some clubs make extensive changes to the game fields after
26 the schedules are developed which causes additional problems. The penalties
27 associated with these events fall into two categories – club penalties and team
28 penalties.
29

- 30 1. **Club Penalties** – Financial penalties are assessed to the clubs for teams being
31 dropped from the tournament, excessive tournament field changes, and teams
32 not showing up for tournament games or being assessed a scheduling forfeit
33 because of roster issues. The following fee schedule for these types of events:
34
35 a. Dropping a team during the schedule generation process – \$125
36
37 b. Dropping a team after schedules are posted or teams not showing up for
38 their assigned games – \$250
39
40 c. Excessive game field changes after the schedules are finalized – \$20 per
41 game
42

1 **Note:** These charges will be deducted from the applicable club's referee
2 reimbursement or added to the next season's assessment.

- 3
- 4 2. **Team Penalties** – Teams that drop out of the tournament after the schedules
5 have been published, fail to show up for a tournament game, or assessed a
6 scheduling forfeit for roster issues will be considered ineligible to participate in
7 the subsequent season's tournament, i.e., they will automatically dropped from
8 the tournament scheduling process. Teams that fall into this category are
9 commonly referred to as "returning teams".
10
- 11 a. Returning teams subject to this penalty are defined as teams that have a
12 high percentage (at least 51 percent or more) of returning players, as
13 defined by the SFL Commissioner.

14

15 **Discussion**

16

17 It is recognized that the team penalty may end up penalizing players for the
18 actions of adults, e.g., a coach failing to provide a roster, a coach failing to
19 address roster issues early in the season, parents failing to notify the coach of
20 player availability, etc. It is also recognized that new coaches or players added
21 to the team will suffer for the actions of the prior coaches or team members.
22

23 **OTHER PROPOSALS AND ISSUES**

24

25 **Retaining COVID Guidelines**

26

27 **Issue/Proposal** – During the Spring 2021 season, the SFL issued special COVID
28 Guidelines. The following are the proposed changes to these guidelines.
29

30 **Existing Section I.A.**

31

32 Club Requirements – Each club must provide the SFL its COVID related protocols for its
33 home games prior to March 1. Failure to provide this information will automatically
34 result in the club's teams being dropped from the SFL. These guidelines will be
35 published in the season package and web site on the Club COVID Rules and Protocols
36 page which can be found on the SFL Documents page or directly at
37 <https://www.sflsoccer.org/club-covid-rules/>.
38

39 **Proposed Section I.A.** – Change requirement to state that club must provide a web
40 link to its COVID protocols so that the SFL does not have to maintain document
41 control.
42

43 Club Requirements – Each club must provide the SFL a web link to its COVID related

1 protocols for its home games prior to August 1. Failure to provide this information will
2 automatically result in the club's teams being dropped from the SFL. These web links
3 will be published on the SFL website on the Club COVID Rules and Protocols page
4 which can be found on the SFL Documents page or directly at
5 <https://www.sflsoccer.org/club-covid-rules/>.

6

7 **Existing Section III.B.**

8

9 Rescheduling Games

- 10
- 11 1. The teams and clubs must make a good faith effort to reschedule the games canceled
12 for COVID or any other reason, e.g., weather, in accordance with the existing rules.
- 13
- 14 2. The automatic game rescheduling process discussed elsewhere in the rules will not be
15 required or used. Accordingly, no scheduling forfeits will be assessed if unscheduled
16 games are not played, i.e., the games will remain unscheduled.
- 17
- 18 a. The requirement in the current rules relating to how many games must be played
19 in order to have the tournament and how many games a team must play to be
20 eligible for the tournament will remain in effect.
- 21

22 **Proposed Section III.B.2.** – Change requirement to state that automatic game
23 rescheduling will be required and used in case of game cancellations caused by
24 weather.

- 25
- 26 2. The automatic game rescheduling process discussed elsewhere in the rules will be
27 required and used should any games be cancelled for weather related reason and
28 scheduling forfeits will be assessed if unscheduled games caused by weather are not
29 played.
- 30
- 31 a. The requirement in the current rules relating to how many games must be played
32 in order to have the tournament and how many games a team must play to be
33 eligible for the tournament will remain in effect.
- 34

35 **Game Slot Times**

36

37 During the Spring 2021 season it was agreed that we would use two hour time slots for
38 the Under 13 and older age groups and one hour and forty-five minutes for the Under 11
39 and Under 12 age groups to provide additional time for the teams to avoid contact with
40 the teams playing before and after a scheduled game. This significantly reduced the time
41 slots available on a given field. This limitation was partially offset by the reduced
42 number of teams. However, if we have an increase in the number of teams associated
43 with a given club, then this will place a hardship on the clubs. This requirement also

1 placed limitations on the tournament. Rather than use one hour and forty-five minute
2 time slots, two hour time slots were used which reduced the number of field slots
3 available on most tournament fields from six to five slots which reduces tournament
4 scheduling options and required more tournament fields.
5

6 **Proposed Section IV.**

7 **Game Spacing**
8

9
10 A. The minimum game time spacing is 90 minutes with 105 minutes preferred for the
11 Under 16 and Under 19 age groups which is consistent with processes used before
12 COVID.

- 13
14 1. This spacing must be consistent with a club's COVID protocols. Specifically, if a
15 club's COVID protocols requires two hour time slots between games, then the
16 SFL should be instructed to use two hour time slots for that club's games. It is up
17 to the applicable SFL Club Representative to ensure that the time slots used by the
18 SFL are consistent with that club's COVID protocols.
19

20 **Expanding the SFL to By Including**
21 **Under 9 and Under 10 Age Groups**
22

23 **Issue/Proposal** – A proposal was received for the SFL to accept teams at the Under 9 and
24 Under 10 age groups starting in the Fall 2022 season. The proposal recognized that it was
25 too late to make this change for the Fall 2021 season and that such changes need to be
26 implemented during a fall season. It was also recognized that adding the Under 9 and
27 Under 10 age groups would bring in some unique challenges that may not be experienced
28 with the older age groups. For example, clubs may be not be willing to have their teams
29 travel the distances that the older teams travel. The following is the basic framework that
30 the SFL could use to determining club interest in adding these age groups and any special
31 business rules that should apply to these age groups if sufficient interest exists.
32

- 33
34 • The SFL should prepare a discussion paper that would explain how it would
35 operate with the Under 9 and Under 10 age groups. This paper should discuss any
36 special business rules envisioned, e.g., teams would not be expected to travel
more than 10 miles from their home field, etc.
37
38 • The SFL should survey the member clubs to determine interests so that a decision
39 can be made during the Spring 2022 season that would apply to the Fall 2022
40 team registrations.
41

42 **SFL Commissioners Recommendation** – The SFL Commissioners do not have a
43 position on this proposal since it is a club decision. However, the clubs do need to decide

1 whether they believe sufficient interests exists and commit the resources needed to
2 determine the feasibility.

3

4 **Approach for the SFL Recovering Its**
5 **Fixed Costs for the Spring 2020,**
6 **Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 Seasons**

7

8 **Issue/Proposal** – The SFL incurred substantial costs (over \$23,000) when the Spring
9 2020 and Fall 2020 seasons were cancelled due to COVID issues. These costs are
10 commonly referred to as recoverable costs. Each time a season was cancelled the SFL
11 Commissioners decided to defer the collection of the recoverable costs until the SFL
12 resumed normal operations in order to reduce the financial burden on the clubs. When
13 this policy was adopted, the SFL Commissioners expected that all the clubs with
14 significant teams would return during the next season the SFL resumed operations.
15 However, when the SFL resumed operations for the Spring 2021 season, several clubs
16 with significant teams did not participate. Accordingly, the SFL Commissioners decided
17 to once again defer collection of the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 costs until the Fall 2021
18 season since the clubs that did not return for the Spring 2021 season expected to return
19 for the Fall 2021 season.

20

21 The SFL has long maintained the principle that equity should be maintained between the
22 clubs and has accomplished this by allocating the costs based on the teams registered by a
23 club. For example, if Club A had 20 teams registered and Club B had 10 teams
24 registered, then Club A would bear twice as much of the operating costs as Club B.
25 Accordingly, the approach used for determining the recoverable costs for the Spring 2020
26 and Fall 2020 seasons was fair and equitable. However, since all the clubs did not return
27 for the Spring 2021 season, another approach is needed for allocating those costs.

28

29 The costs associated with the Spring 2021 season can be broken down into two major
30 categories – costs that would have been incurred even if the SFL had not resumed
31 operations (commonly referred to as fixed costs) and costs associated with the teams
32 actually participating (commonly referred to as variable costs). Examples of fixed costs
33 include server fees, insurance, corporate fees, tax return fees, etc. Examples of variable
34 costs include scheduling fees, tournament costs, mailing costs, etc. In order to maintain
35 equity between the clubs, a means is needed to (1) allocated the Spring 2021 fixed costs
36 to all clubs expected to participate in the Fall 2021 season rather than just those that
37 participated in the Spring 2021 season and (2) provide reasonable assurance that the
38 variable costs incurred during the Spring 2021 season are borne by the clubs participating
39 in the SFL during the Spring 2021 season.

40

41 In order to properly allocated and recover the costs associated with the costs associated
42 with the Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 seasons by all members, the SFL
43 Commissioners have directed the SFL Administrator to develop an appropriate

1 methodology that can be used to (1) determine the recoverable costs for the Spring 2020,
2 Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 seasons that should be assessed to all clubs expected to
3 participate in the Fall 2021 season, (2) allocate those costs to the member clubs using the
4 Spring 2020 season team registrations, and (3) compensate the clubs that participated in
5 the Spring 2021 for any costs that they have already paid. The SFL Administrator was
6 directed to use the following guidelines in developing this methodology.

- 7
- 8 • The Spring 2020 teams associated with a given club should be used to determine
9 the costs applicable to a given club for the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 costs and
10 the Spring 2021 fixed costs. For example, if Club A registered 25 teams in the
11 Spring 2020 season and these teams represented five percent of the teams
12 registered, then Club A would bear five percent of all costs incurred during the
13 Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 seasons and five percent of the Spring 2021 fixed
14 costs.

15

 - 16 • The season fees to the clubs normally include a \$40 per team fee for the system
17 development fund. The SFL Commissioners agreed to waive this fee for the
18 Spring 2020 season. It was decided that this fee should also be waived for the Fall
19 2020 season and resumed for the and Spring 2021 season, i.e., the fee would be
20 \$40 per Spring 2020 team for the Spring 2021 season. However, the clubs
21 participating in the Spring 2021 were already assessed \$40 per team for this item.
22 Accordingly, these payments should be credited to those clubs. For example,
23 assume Club A had 25 teams in the Spring 2020 season and 20 teams in the
24 Spring 2021 season. The system development fees included for Club A's costs
25 would total \$1,000 (\$40 per Spring 2020 team). However, since Club A paid
26 \$800 in its Spring 2021 registration fees, the net fees included in Club A's costs
27 would be \$200.

28

 - 29 • The SFL Commissioners expect that the total revenue for the Spring 2021 season
30 to exceed the actual costs because of operating efficiencies and the collection of
31 funds for the system development fund although the exact amount will not be
32 known until the end of the season's financial statements are prepared. Normally,
33 any surpluses are added to the system development fund which benefits all clubs.
34 However, since all clubs did not participate in the Spring 2021 season, the Spring
35 2021 surplus should be used to reduce the costs expected to be recovered for the
36 Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 fixed costs for those clubs that
37 participated in the Spring 2021 season.

38

39 **Example**

40

41 Club A had 25 Spring 2020 teams used for the cost recovery calculation and the
42 expected costs that needed to be recovered were \$100 per team or \$2,500.
43 Assume that based on the net income of the Spring 2021 season, each team is

1 expected to receive a credit of \$60 per Spring 2021 team. Since Club A had 20
2 teams that participated in the Spring 2020 season, it would receive credits
3 totaling \$2,000 (\$40 per team for the system development fund that were paid
4 during the Spring 2021 season and \$60 per team for Spring 2021 operating
5 surpluses). Accordingly, Club A would owe \$500 in the Fall 2021 season for the
6 Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 costs that need to be recovered. On the
7 other hand, assume that Club B also had 25 teams registered in the Spring 2020
8 season but did not participate in the Spring 2021 season. Club B would owe
9 \$2,500 for the Spring 2020, Fall 2021, and Spring 2021 costs that need to be
10 recovered.

- 11
- 12 • The costs that should be recovered for the Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring
13 2021 seasons should be the actual costs (rounded to \$5 per team) incurred or \$125
14 per Spring registered 2020 team whichever is lower in order to reduce the
15 financial burden on the clubs.
 - 16 • After the SFL Administrator develops the expected per team cost recovery amount
17 and per team credits that should apply to the Fall 2021 team registrations, this
18 should be submitted to the SFL Commissioner for final approval.

21 **SFL Commissioners Recommendation** – The SFL Commissioners recommend
22 acceptance of this approach since it maintains equity between the contributions of the
23 various clubs toward the SFL's operations.

25

Regional Scheduling Approach

27 **Issue/Proposal** – Recently several clubs have requested the SFL to revise its regular
28 season scheduling approach to adopt a regional concept to reduce the travel time spent by
29 teams going to their away games. No specific guidelines were offered with these
30 requests. However, the implications were clear – adopt a regular season scheduling
31 approach that places a team's regional assignment as the primary requirement used when
32 scheduling regular season games with all other priorities being subservient to the goal of
33 reducing travel.

35

Discussion

37 In order to evaluate this proposal, the SFL conducted two studies. The first study was a
38 comprehensive evaluation of a region based scheduling approach that compared the
39 current approach to the three different regional definitions using a concept commonly
40 referred to as field grids¹ and then applied those definitions to the teams registered for the

¹ The SFL uses a field grid system to determine the potential travel distances between game fields. Each field is assigned to a grid based on the Global Positioning System

1 Fall 2019 season since that was the last time the SFL had its normal complement of teams,
2 i.e., the clubs and number of teams in the Fall 2019 season were fairly consistent with
3 those in the prior few years. The results of this analysis is discussed in the Regional
4 Concept for Regular Season Scheduling paper that was approved by the SFL
5 Commissioners on June 29, 2021. The second study developed the estimated travel
6 distances for the away teams between their home field and the standard fields used for
7 their away games during the Fall 2019 season. Both studies resulted in similar
8 conclusions.

9

10 **Regional Scheduling Concept Paper**

11

12 The SFL has long employed a regional based regular season scheduling system that is
13 designed to balance several competing priorities that include (1) reducing travel time to
14 games from different clubs, (2) eliminating teams from playing each other more than once
15 during the regular season, (3) ensuring that the maximum number of games possible are
16 played on the club's preferred game day (normally Saturday), and (4) having teams of
17 comparable abilities play each other. During the Fall 2019 season, several clubs asked
18 the SFL revise its process of registering teams and committing field slots for SFL games
19 in order to allow the clubs to finalize the number of teams that would participate at a date
20 much closer to the date of the first week's games. The clubs were presented with the
21 results of the SFL's study of these issues and adopted the current approach during the
22 Spring 2020 season meeting.² Accordingly, no changes in these areas were contemplated
23 in the Regional Concept for Regular Season Scheduling paper that was accepted by the
24 SFL Commissioners on June 29, 2021.

25

26 The Regional Concept for Regular Season Scheduling paper considered three different
27 regional scheduling options and then compared those options against the approach used to
28 schedule the Fall 2019 teams. The goal of the current approach is to have teams play
29 most of their games in a three field grid region. The key findings of the study included
30 the following.

31

(GPS) coordinates provided by Google Maps. Each grid is about 10 miles
east to west and about 5 miles North South "as the crow flies". Based on some
anecdotal examples, the travel distance between fields within the field grid should be
less than 10 miles, within two field grids 15 miles, and within three field grids 25
miles.

² The SFL study was completed on September 22, 2019. It recommended an approach that was adopted by the clubs prior to the Spring 2020 season. This paper is available on the SFL web site on the historical documents page under the SFL documents page (www.sflsoccer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/regular-season-scheduling-alternatives-20190922.pdf).

- During the Fall 2019 season, about 70 percent of the division 2 games were being played in a three field grid region.
- Adopting a rigid regional scheduling approach would have significant implications on the number of teams the SFL could support. The actual number of teams that would be eliminated varied depending on the regional concept adopted.
- Adopting a rigid regional scheduling approach would increase the number of odd team scheduling groups which would increase the number of Sunday games that must be supported by the clubs.
- Adopting a rigid regional scheduling approach would eliminate the current practice of creating divisions that is designed to better pair teams of comparable abilities together.

The study also identified the following critical scheduling decisions that must be made in defining a given regional concept.

- **Acceptable number of teams** – A key business rule that would need to be defined is whether the SFL should schedule regions having between five and eight teams since regions of this size require all of the teams to play one or more teams twice during an eight game regular season with the five team divisions playing the other teams twice. Historically, clubs have stated that they do not want the SFL to develop schedules where the teams play each other more than once during the regular season. Adopting smaller scheduling groups also raises questions on whether the SFL should retain the tournament since teams could end up playing each other three times during a season.
- **Combining age groups** – The SFL has 12 distinct age groups. Combining the Under 11 and Under 12 age groups and the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups would result in more regions having team sizes of nine or more teams which supports scheduling teams so that they do not play each other more than once during an eight game regular season. It also allows regions that support less than the desired number of teams in the individual age groups to have enough teams so that teams do not need to be dropped. For example, assume a region has four Under 11 teams and five Under 12 teams. Combining these age groups would allow a scheduling group of nine teams that (1) allows a scheduling group where the teams only play the other teams once during the regular season and (2) allows all the teams to participate in the SFL. However, several key business rules would need to be defined. These include the following.
 - ▶ The organization that should make the decision, i.e., the SFL or the

1 affected clubs. For example, continuing with the above example, should
2 the business rule state that the SFL will automatically combine the age
3 groups or should the affected clubs be given a choice?
4

- 5 ▶ If one region combines age groups, should all regions be required to
6 combine age groups? Depending on the business rule adopted, a decision
7 would need to be reached on how to handle these age groups during the
8 tournament scheduling process.
9

- 10 • **Maintaining divisions within age groups** – During the Fall 2019 season, the
11 SFL supported divisions in all but one of the age groups expected to have
12 divisions. The establishment of divisions helps to foster the goal of having
13 comparable teams play against each other in the regular season. By its nature, the
14 division 1 teams are spread out over the area covered by the SFL and these teams
15 travel further distances than their division 2 counterparts. Assuming that a region
16 and a division within that region must support at least nine teams, only one of the
17 Fall 2019 division 1 age groups (Under 12 Boys) contained nine teams and would
18 have been retained under the Three Field Grid region approach. If the clubs desire
19 to maintain a division structure, then an exemption would be needed to allow
20 these teams to be scheduled in a manner that does not support a rigid regional
21 structure, i.e., the current approach would be maintained for those teams. During
22 the Fall 2019 season, the SFL had 133 division 1 teams which represented about
23 25 percent of the teams.
24

25 The Regional Concept for Regular Season Scheduling paper discusses these issues in
26 greater detail.
27

28 **Actual Fall 2019 Estimated Travel Distances** 29

30 The SFL also developed an estimate of the Fall 2019 travel distances experienced by the
31 teams for their away games by comparing the distances between their standard home field
32 and the standard field used for the home team.³ Over 2,000 games were included in this
33 analysis. Attachment I shows the travel distances broken down into five mile categories
34 for each age group and Attachment II shows the travel distances for each club also broken
35 down into five mile increments. The following are the key results from this analysis.
36

- 37 • Division 1 teams travel farther distances than division 2 teams. For many clubs,
38 the division 1 games represented the majority of the games where their club's

³ The estimated travel distances between a given field combination was obtained by using Google Maps. When more than one route was provided, the one with the shortest distance was used even if the estimated travel time, at the time the data was obtained, was longer.

1 teams had to travel over 20 miles for an away game.
2

- 3 • About 40 percent of the away games for division 2 teams require the team to
4 travel less than 10 miles from its home field and almost 80 percent of the games
5 are played within 20 miles of the team's home field.
6
- 7 • The burden of traveling more than 20 miles from a team's home field primarily
8 falls on the clubs that are on the boundaries of the SFL operational area
9 (commonly referred to as "outlying clubs") and the division 1 teams.

10 A review of the data used in this analysis also provided similar results to that discussed in
11 the Regional Concept for Regular Season Scheduling paper. These include the following.
12

- 13 • Adopting a rigid regional scheduling approach based on mileage would have
14 significant implications on the number of teams the SFL could support. The
15 actual number of teams that would be eliminated varied depending on the regional
16 concept adopted, e.g., travel distances of no more than 10 miles, etc.
17
- 18 • Adopting a rigid regional scheduling approach would increase the number of odd
19 team scheduling groups which would increase the number of Sunday games that
20 must be supported by the clubs.
21

22 Furthermore the same key business rules discussed in the Regional Concept for Regular
23 Season Scheduling paper would also need to be defined.
24

25 **SFL Commissioners Recommendation** – The SFL Commissioners believe that a rigid
26 regional scheduling approach that places a team's regional assignment as the primary
27 requirement used when scheduling regular season games with all other priorities being
28 subservient to the goal of reducing travel is not in the best interests of the league and its
29 clubs. Specifically, the current approach that attempts to balance several competing
30 priorities that include (1) reducing travel time to games from different clubs, (2)
31 eliminating teams from playing each other more than once during the regular season, (3)
32 ensuring that the maximum number of games possible are played on the club's preferred
33 game day (normally Saturday), and (4) having teams of comparable abilities play each
34 other should be retained.
35

Away Game Travel Distances By Age Group - Fall 2019 Season
(June 18, 2021)

Age Group	Total Games	0 to 5 Miles	Over 5 to 10 Miles	Over 10 to 15 Miles	Over 15 to 20 Miles	Over 20 to 25 Miles	Over 25 to 30 Miles	Over 30 Miles
Under 11 Boys	120	40	24	48	0	0	2	6
Under 11 Girls	76	16	11	14	8	0	11	16
Under 12 Boys	48 / 132	8 / 32	9 / 14	13 / 41	8 / 14	3 / 7	4 / 8	3 / 16
Under 12 Girls	128	31	38	21	14	4	7	13
Under 13 Boys	64 / 132	6 / 25	12 / 31	7 / 26	11 / 23	4 / 7	14 / 12	10 / 8
Under 13 Girls	44 / 88	5 / 8	2 / 16	9 / 11	3 / 24	5 / 12	4 / 3	16 / 14
Under 14 Boys	68 / 140	5 / 28	8 / 39	4 / 25	16 / 19	10 / 7	14 / 8	11 / 14
Under 14 Girls	52 / 116	5 / 28	5 / 18	13 / 26	8 / 17	12 / 5	5 / 11	4 / 11
Under 16 Boys	80 / 216	12 / 46	5 / 52	10 / 43	9 / 44	12 / 22	14 / 5	18 / 4
Under 16 Girls	64 / 136	4 / 29	5 / 27	14 / 17	10 / 31	8 / 22	12 / 4	11 / 6
Under 19 Boys	54 / 152	9 / 31	7 / 29	9 / 27	2 / 32	10 / 16	8 / 9	9 / 8
Under 19 Girls	52 / 112	2 / 22	7 / 19	2 / 33	11 / 18	9 / 14	13 / 4	8 / 2
Total Division 1 Games	850	143	133	164	100	77	108	125
Cummmulative Percent	41.0%	16.8%	32.5%	51.8%	63.5%	72.6%	85.3%	100.0%
Total Division 2 Games	1,224	249	245	249	222	112	64	83
Cummmulative Percent	59.0%	20.3%	40.4%	60.7%	78.8%	88.0%	93.2%	100.0%

Away Game Travel Distances By Club - Fall 2019 Season
(June 18, 2021)

Club Name	Division 1 Games	Division 2 Games	0 to 5 Miles	Over 5 to 10 Miles	Over 10 to 15 Miles	Over 15 to 20 Miles	Over 20 to 25 Miles	Over 25 to 30 Miles	Over 30 Miles
Alexandria	25	40	4 / 7	5 / 19	2 / 5	4 / 9	1 / 0	6 / 0	3 / 0
Annandale	89	102	14 / 29	18 / 28	21 / 31	11 / 8	12 / 3	9 / 0	4 / 3
Braddock Road	0	34	0 / 11	0 / 14	0 / 5	0 / 3	0 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 0
Burke Athletic	8	37	2 / 8	0 / 6	2 / 12	0 / 1	4 / 9	0 / 1	0 / 0
Chantilly	68	92	13 / 21	16 / 17	15 / 10	7 / 30	1 / 5	13 / 6	3 / 3
Clarke	12	8	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	12 / 8
Cougars	4	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Fairfax	52	52	7 / 5	4 / 28	24 / 5	12 / 8	4 / 2	0 / 4	1 / 0
Falls Church	4	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1
Fauquier	28	36	5 / 4	0 / 0	0 / 0	2 / 12	0 / 0	7 / 8	14 / 12
GF-Reston	84	56	21 / 11	23 / 23	9 / 6	6 / 3	3 / 3	5 / 2	17 / 8
Gunston	80	43	13 / 9	13 / 4	19 / 11	12 / 6	4 / 10	8 / 1	11 / 2
Haymarket	11	88	0 / 18	0 / 10	0 / 12	2 / 18	1 / 18	4 / 8	4 / 4
Herndon	103	48	33 / 11	16 / 13	10 / 12	5 / 4	10 / 3	13 / 2	16 / 3
Lee-Mt. Vernon	12	32	1 / 16	2 / 5	5 / 3	0 / 4	1 / 1	0 / 1	3 / 2
Loudoun	15	56	0 / 7	0 / 8	3 / 10	2 / 19	3 / 5	4 / 5	3 / 2
McLean	12	124	2 / 22	4 / 23	1 / 35	3 / 31	2 / 13	0 / 0	0 / 0
Northern VA	59	100	4 / 15	9 / 20	5 / 30	3 / 10	9 / 9	24 / 13	5 / 3
Prince William	36	100	3 / 28	0 / 0	7 / 27	8 / 10	10 / 15	1 / 5	7 / 15
Soccer OTH	36	28	2 / 2	0 / 0	15 / 12	7 / 9	1 / 1	4 / 2	7 / 2
Southwestern	4	20	1 / 3	1 / 4	0 / 2	1 / 7	1 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 4
Springfield	64	48	8 / 12	11 / 7	17 / 7	10 / 10	9 / 11	5 / 0	4 / 1
Sterling	32	56	5 / 6	8 / 14	7 / 14	4 / 14	0 / 3	2 / 1	6 / 4
Team America	4	4	3 / 1	0 / 2	1 / 0	0 / 1	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
Warrenton	8	20	2 / 3	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 5	0 / 0	2 / 5	4 / 7
Total	850	1,224							