Suthurhan Thriend ship Tieague<br>Regional Concept for Regular Season Scheduling (June 29, 2021)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SFL Commissioners are recommending the continuation of the current geographically based scheduling approach that is designed to balance several competing scheduling demands. The adoption of a regional scheduling approach that focuses on travel distances has a number of significant limitations that include automatically eliminating registered teams, increasing the number of Sunday games, and eliminating the regular season divisions. The SFL Commissioners believe that adverse impacts of these limitations would far outweigh the benefits from a reduction in travel for the 30 percent of the games played by division 2 teams during the Fall 2019 season. While the clubs may conclude that the SFL should implement a Three Field Grid Region scheduling approach, or some other rigid regional scheduling approach, the clubs will also need to define the associated business rules to implement a given alternative. Attachment I contains some of the key questions that will need to be answered in order the properly define the business rules that will be used by a new approach.

The SFL has long employed a geographically based regular season scheduling system that is designed to balance several competing priorities that include (1) reducing travel time to games from different clubs, (2) eliminating teams from playing each other more than once during the regular season, (3) ensuring that the maximum number of games possible are played on the club's preferred game day (normally Saturday), and (4) having teams of comparable abilities play each other. During the Fall 2019 season, several clubs asked the SFL revise its process of registering teams and committing field slots for SFL games in order to allow the clubs to finalize the number of teams that would participate at a date much closer to the date of the first week's games. The clubs were presented with the results of the SFL's study of these issues and adopted the current approach during the Spring 2020 season meeting. ${ }^{1}$ Accordingly, no changes in these areas are contemplated in this study.

Recently several clubs have requested the SFL to revise its regular season scheduling approach to adopt a regional concept to reduce the travel time spent by teams going to games. No specific guidelines were offered with these requests. However, the implications were clear - adopt a regular season scheduling approach that places a team's regional assignment as the primary requirement used when scheduling regular season games with all other priorities being subservient to the goal of reducing travel. In order to evaluate a region based scheduling

1 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-alternatives20190922.pdf).
approach the SFL considered three different regional definitions using a concept commonly referred to as field grids ${ }^{2}$ and then applied those definitions to the teams registered for the Fall 2019 season since that was the last time the SFL had it normal complement of teams, i.e., the clubs and number of teams in the Fall 2019 season were fairly consistent with those participating in the SFL during the prior few years. During the Fall 2019 season, the SFL consisted of 521 teams. The options were also evaluated against the results of the current approach which was used to schedule the Fall 2019 teams. The current approach resulted in about 70 percent of the division 2 games being played within three field grids. As discussed elsewhere, the travel distances of the division 2 teams provides a more representative comparison to the regional scheduling options considered.

This analysis found the implications on the number of teams the SFL would support varied depending on other scheduling decisions that are the part of the scheduling equation. The following are two critical scheduling decisions that must be made to evaluate a given regional alternative.

- Acceptable number of teams - A key question would be 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.
- 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 9 or more teams which supports scheduling teams so that they do not play each other more than once during an eight game regular season. In some cases, this combination would be necessary to simply make the region viable even if a five team scheduling group were selected.

The following table summarizes the impact on the Fall 2019 teams of the three regional options considered and the impacts of these critical decision factors.

[^0]|  | Individual Age <br> Groups-5 or <br> Regional Option | Combined Age <br> Groups - 5 or <br> More Teams | Individual Age <br> Groups-9 or <br> More Teams | Combined Age <br> Groups-9 or <br> More Teams |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| One Field Grid | $191 / 36.7 \%$ | $326 / 62.6 \%$ | $31 / 6.0 \%$ | $99 / 19.0 \%$ |
| Two Field Grids | $437 / 83.9 \%$ | $485 / 93.1 \%$ | $216 / 41.5 \%$ | $342 / 65.6 \%$ |
| Three Field Grids | $485 / 93.1 \%$ | $498 / 95.6 \%$ | $430 / 82.5 \%$ | $464 / 89.1 \%$ |

As can be seen in the above table the impact associated with the decision on whether teams should play more than one game against a team in the same region is critical to determining whether a regional option is viable. Based on past comments received from the clubs, it does not appear that a majority of clubs would support the decision for the SFL to create schedules for groups of less than nine teams. This is especially true since the tournament could end up pairing teams that played against each other twice in the regular season for a third time in the tournament. If this is a valid assumption, then the one and two grid field region options are not considered viable approaches for scheduling SFL games. At best, they would only support 19 percent and 65.6 percent of the current teams when the age groups are combined. If the clubs decided they wanted to maintain separate age groups, then these options would only support 6 percent and 41.5 percent of the teams respectively. This does not mean that the clubs should not consider adopting such a structure for their teams, however, the SFL Commissioners believe that the SFL is not the organization that should be used to facilitate such an approach.

The Three Field Grid Region option appears more viable assuming that the clubs desire to automatically eliminate teams associated with regions that do not have a viable number of teams. For example, regions that have nine or more teams encompass about 82.5 percent of the teams using the current age group divisions and 89.1 percent of the teams using a combined age group approach. However, in addition to the automatic elimination of teams that fall within a region that does not contain a viable number of teams, the SFL Commissioners have identified some other scheduling factors that are critical to the clubs understanding the impacts of adopting this option. These include the following.

- Increasing the number of Sunday games or adopting an approach that eliminates the tournament - Odd team scheduling groups require some teams to play two games on a weekend and a bye during another weekend. Since teams should only play one regular season game per day per VYSA, the team that needs to play two games normally plays one game on Saturday and a home game on Sunday. These are commonly referred to as Sunday games. It has been the SFL's experience that most clubs would prefer not to have Sunday games. Accordingly, the SFL has developed an approach to minimize those where possible. Specifically, it pairs these two scheduling groups together which eliminates the need for any team to play Sunday games.

During the Fall 2019 season, eight (about 17 percent) of the scheduling groups, were paired to avoid Sunday games. This saved the clubs and teams from having to worry about 32 Sunday games. A review of the Three Field Grid Region approach showed that at least 12 of the expected scheduling groups, depending on option used for determining the teams for those regions, would have had an odd number of teams in scheduling groups that under the SFL's current approach would have been eliminated. This translates into at least 48 additional Sunday games. ${ }^{3}$ One option to eliminate the high number of Sunday games is to eliminate the tournament and use that weekend to play all the "Sunday" games. Assuming that the Three Field Grid Region option that requires nine teams and individual age groups is selected, placing these games on the final week of the season would represent about 22 percent of the normal games played on a weekend. This would also provide additional time for games that may have been cancelled during the season for some reason such as field closures.

- Eliminating divisions within the age groups - During the Fall 2019 season, the SFL supported divisions in all but one of the age groups expected to have divisions. The establishment of divisions helps to foster the goal of having comparable teams play against each other in the regular season. By its nature, the division 1 teams are spread out over the area covered by the SFL and these teams travel more than their division 2 counterparts. Assuming that a region and a division within that region must support at least nine teams, only one of the Fall 2019 division 1 age groups (Under 12 Boys consisting of nine teams) would have been retained under the Three Field Grid Region approach. During the Fall 2019 season, the SFL had 133 division 1 teams in the age groups that had divisions. These teams represented about 25.5 percent of the total teams. The benefits of breaking teams out into divisions can be seen in the season statistics. In the Fall 2019 season for the age groups having two divisions, (1) many of the regular season games had a goal differential of 3 goals or less and (2) the goal differential percentage between the divisions was similar. Overall, about two-thirds of the games had a goal score differential of three or fewer goals -68.9 percent for the division 1 teams and 66.3 percent for the division 2 teams. The Fall 2019 statistics were similar to those in previous seasons. The SFL Commissioners recognize that the current division approach is one reason that the current scheduling approach only achieves about 70 percent of the division 2 games being played within a three field grid matrix. However, the SFL Commissioners believe the benefits achieved - better competition and lower score differentials - outweigh the travel time increases.

3 Depending on the approach used to define the regions and teams participating, e.g., nine team minimum, combined age groups, etc., the percentage of the estimated scheduling groups would have an odd number of teams that could have been avoided using the current approach ranged from 17.4 percent to 27.9 percent.

## BACKGROUND

The regular season scheduling approach was reviewed in detail following the Fall 2019 season. ${ }^{4}$ As noted in this paper, the SFL's goal in developing the regular season schedules is to have teams play comparable teams in the same geographical area where possible to reduce the travel time to games between clubs. However, the ability to accomplish this goal is affected by several factors beyond the SFL's control. These include the following.

- Skill level of teams - The SFL attempts to place teams associated with a given age group into two divisions so that the better teams play each other. This division assignment is based on the recommendation of the team's clubs. While the SFL makes recommendations on division placement, the ultimate decision is made by the clubs as discussed in Section II.D. of the SFL's Club and Coach Guide for the Spring 2021 Season. As noted in the guide, the goal is to have 40 to 50 percent of the teams play in each division. However, during the Fall 2019 season this was not case. As shown below, the clubs were only willing to place about one-third of the teams into division 1.

| Age Group | Division 1 | Division 2 | Total Teams | Division 1 Percentage |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Under 12 Boys | 12 | 33 | 45 | 26.7 percent |
| Under 12 Girls | 32 | 0 | 32 | No Divisions |
| Under 13 Boys | 16 | 34 | 50 | 32.0 percent |
| Under 13 Girls | 11 | 22 | 33 | 33.3 percent |
| Under 14 Boys | 17 | 35 | 52 | 32.7 percent |
| Under 14 Girls | 13 | 29 | 42 | 31.0 percent |
| Under 16 Boys | 20 | 54 | 74 | 27.0 percent |
| Under 16 Girls | 16 | 34 | 50 | 32.0 percent |
| Under 19 Boys | 15 | 38 | 53 | 28.3 percent |
| Under 19 Girls | 13 | 28 | 41 | 31.7 percent |

4 The Alternatives Considered for Regular Season Scheduling - Spring 2020 Season paper discusses the results of this analysis in detail and can be found on the SFL's web site on the historical documents page (www.sflsoccer.org/historical-documents-2/). This document discusses in detail the such items as maximizing field slot utilization, reducing game conflicts for coaches with 2 teams, and ensuring that games are scheduled to eliminate "scheduling gaps".

Note: As discussed in the SFL's Club and Coach Guide for the Spring 2021 Season, all Under 11 teams are assigned to the same division in the fall season. In addition, the clubs did not identify enough division 1 teams for the Under 12 Girls to have two divisions.

- Sunday games - Most clubs have expressed a desire to play SFL games on Saturday. However, when a scheduling group has an odd number of teams, one or more teams must play a Sunday game. Odd team scheduling groups can be caused by two situations. First, the age group division has an odd number of teams. In this situation, the SFL has no choice but schedule Sunday games for four regular season games. In other cases, the SFL attempts to place teams in a scheduling group based on the geographical location of the teams can cause an odd number of teams, e.g., the age group has 24 teams in it but 13 teams fit one geographical area while 11 teams fall into another geographical area. Rather than have each of these groups play Sunday games, the scheduling groups are "paired" so that an even number of teams are used for scheduling purposes which avoids the requirement for teams to play Sunday games because of an odd team scheduling group while maximizing the games a team plays in its geographical area. This topic is discussed in Section X. of the SFL's Club and Coach Guide for the Spring 2021 Season. This approach eliminates eight Sunday games that would be created if a strict geographical scheduling group was used.
- Duplicate regular season games - The clubs have expressed a desire that during the regular season that teams do not play more than one game against another team. Accordingly, during an eight game regular season, a scheduling group (or combination of scheduling groups) must contain at least nine teams. Much like the approach taken with odd team scheduling groups to reduce the number of Sunday games, when a scheduling group is created for geographical reasons but contains less than nine teams, it is normally "paired" with another scheduling group so that no team plays another team twice during the regular season. This approach maximizes the games a team plays in its geographical area while accomplishing the goal of having no team play another team twice during the regular season.

The current scheduling approach was designed to balance these contradictory requirements or trade offs in scheduling games, i.e., the SFL attempts to balance the competing requirements when developing a given schedule rather than simply focusing on the travel distances to games. This approach was taken since by its very nature, the SFL has clubs and teams over a wide geographical area, i.e., a large number of teams are not present in a very small area that would allow the satisfaction of many of the above requirements without compromise.

## Approach Used to Determine Geographic Scheduling Groups

The SFL covers a wide geographic area and needed a standardized means to identify the potential travel distance a team may travel in order to facilitate the goal of grouping teams into geographic areas for scheduling purposes. The approach adopted was to (1) define the potential area that would be needed to encompass the fields used by the SFL clubs, (2) break that area down into 100 standard field grids, and (3) assign each field to a field grid. The SFL uses the GPS coordinates provided by Google Maps based on the field addresses to accomplish this task. A field grid using the Google Maps GPS coordinates, is about 10 miles east to west and about 5 miles North South "as the crow flies".

The field grid system allows the SFL to evaluate the success of scheduling teams to play teams in the same geographic areas by measuring the number of field grids a team must travel to play its games. The optimum is for teams from different clubs to play their games in the same field grid. However, this is unrealistic since, although some field grids have teams from two or more clubs associated with them, these teams are insufficient for viable scheduling groups because the number of teams associated with a given age group and division is very small. When developing a scheduling group, the SFL attempts to group teams so that they do not have to travel more than three field grids with two field grids considered optimal. Since teams from two different clubs can be associated with same field grid, the team's home field is assigned as the first field grid for the number of field grids a team must travel. The following illustrates how a two field grid matrix would look.

| Field Grid 14 | Field Grid 15 |
| :---: | :---: |
| Field Grid 24 | Field Grid 25 |

As can be seen above, a team would have to travel no more than two field grids to go to another field, i.e., the field grid of its game field and the field grid assigned to the opposing team's game field. For example, assume that a team's home field was in Field Grid 14 above. Only teams in field grids 15,24 , and 25 would be considered in the same field grid matrix since those teams would have to travel more than two field grids to play teams in the other field grids that may border Field Grid 14.

A three field grid matrix consists of nine field grids as shown below.

| Field Grid 4 | Field Grid 5 | Field Grid 6 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Field Grid 14 | Field Grid 15 | Field Grid 16 |
| Field Grid 24 | Field Grid 25 | Field Grid 26 |

As can be seen above, no team would have to travel more than three field grids to go to another field using the same logic used for the two field grid matrix, e.g., although a team in Field Grid 3 would be within three field grids of a team in Field Grid 4, teams in Field Grids 6, 16, and 26 would need to travel four field grids to play the same team in Field Grid 3.

Assigning fields to field grids makes it easier to understand relative field placement. However, it is difficult to understand the actual travel distances involved between fields. Although the number of field grids has a relationship to the distance a team has to travel, the more field grids traversed does not necessarily mean a longer distance traveled. The following highlight some of these differences.

- A team traveling two field grids may only go 2.4 miles while team traveling within the same field grid may have to travel 8.6 miles.
- A team traveling four field grids may go 19.2 miles while team traveling three field grids may travel 24.3 miles.

These examples were taken from the following table that provides additional examples of the travel distances associated with various field grid combinations.

| Number of <br> Field Grids | Field 1 | Field 2 | Lowest Miles |
| :---: | :--- | :--- | :---: |
| 2 | Chantilly High School - <br> Chantilly (Field Grid 55) | Arrowhead Park - Herndon <br> (Field Grid 56) | 2.4 miles |
| 2 | Westfield High School - <br> Chantilly (Field Grid 55) | EC Lawrence - Southwestern <br> (Field Grid 56) | 2.8 miles |
| 1 | Hutchinson Park- Herndon <br> (Field Grid 54) | Ray Muth Park - Loudoun <br> (Field Grid 54) | 8.6 miles |
| 2 | Ossian Hall Turf - Annandale <br> (Field Grid 76) | Manchester Lakes - Lee-Mt. <br> Vernon (Field Grid 77) | 9.4 miles |
| 2 | Hellwig Park - Northern <br> Virginia (Field Grid 58) | Tyrell Park - Prince William <br> (Field Grid 68) | 14.4 miles |
| 4 | Athey - Fauqier/ Warrenton <br> (Field Grid 17) | Patriot High School - <br> Haymarket (Field Grid 47) | 16.5 miles |
| 3 | Chantilly High School - <br> Chantilly (Field Grid 55) | Langley High School - <br> McLean (Field Grid 75) | 18.8 miles |
| 4 | Athey - Fauqier/ Warrenton <br> (Field Grid 17) | Valley View - Northern <br> Virginia (Field Grid 47) | 19.2 miles |
|  |  |  |  |


| Number of <br> Field Grids | Field 1 | Field 2 | Lowest Miles |
| :---: | :--- | :--- | :---: |
| 3 | Valley View Park - Northern <br> Virginia (Field Grid 47) | Tyrell Park - Prince William <br> (Field Grid 68) | 21.4 miles |
| 3 | Langley High School - <br> McLean (Field Grid 75) | South County High School - <br> Springfield (Field Grid 77) | 23.3 miles |
| 4 | Phil Bolen Park - Loudoun <br> (Field Grid 43) | Spring Hill Rec. - McLean <br> (Field Grid 75 | 24.8 miles |
| 5 | Athey - Fauqier/ Warrenton <br> (Field Grid 17) | EC Lawrence - Southwestern <br> (Field Grid 56) | 27 miles |
| 4 | Phil Bolen Park - Loudoun <br> (Field Grid 43) | Langley High School - <br> McLean (Field Grid 75) | 28.8 miles |
| 5 | Athey - Fauqier/ Warrenton <br> (Field Grid 17) | Chantilly High School - <br> Chantilly (Field Grid 55) | 29.3 miles |
| 4 | Ida Lee Park - Loudoun <br> (Field Grid 43) | Langley High School - <br> McLean (Field Grid 75) | 30.7 miles |

Note: Google Maps was used to determine the travel distances. When Google Maps provided more than one route between fields, the route with the lowest number of miles was used.

As can be seen in this table, although there is a relationship between the number of field grids a team must travel to the distance the team must travel, the greater the number of field grids does not necessarily translate into a greater travel distance than that incurred if the team traveled fewer field grids.

## REGIONAL SCHEDULE GROUPING ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Several clubs requested the SFL to consider going to a region based scheduling system to reduce travel time and effort for the clubs. It is important to remember that adoption of a region based scheduling approach implies that a team's region assignment is the key factor that should be used to determine how games should be scheduled and that other requirements, e.g., reducing Sunday games, having teams play teams of comparable abilities, only playing a team once during the regular season, etc., are subservient to the goal of only having teams play games within a
preestablished region. The SFL Commissioners developed three regional options and reviewed the data associated with the Fall 2019 season ${ }^{5}$ to evaluate each option.

## Potential Regional Options

The following potential regional options were considered.

- $\quad$ Single Field Grid Region - Under this option only teams playing in a given field grid would be scheduled against each other. This would ensure that teams do not have to travel more than one field grid to play their games. Based on the anecdotal examples used elsewhere, the travel distance between fields within the field grid should be less than 10 miles.
- Two Field Grid Region - Under this option teams would be assigned to a two field grid matrix and only play teams within that field grid matrix. This would ensure that teams do not have to travel more than two field grids to play their games. Based on the anecdotal examples used elsewhere, the travel distance between fields within a two field grid should be less than 20 miles.
- Three Field Grid Region - Under this option teams would be assigned to a three field grid matrix and only play teams within that field grid matrix. This would ensure that teams do not have to travel more than three field grids to play their games. The current scheduling approach attempts to limit travel to three field grids. Based on the anecdotal examples used elsewhere, the travel distance between fields within a three field grid matrix should be less than 30 miles for most teams. The three field grid option is compatible with the goal of the current scheduling approach which considers teams playing within three field grids of each other to be geographically located.


## Criteria Used to Evaluate Regional Alternatives

Adopting a regional scheduling approach implies that a team's region assignment is the key factor that should be used to determine how games should be scheduled. Accordingly, other requirements are subservient to the goal of only having teams play games with a preestablished region. The following criteria were used to evaluate a given alternative.

- At least five teams from an age group would need to be associated within a given region to be considered viable. A five team scheduling group results in each team playing the other teams in the scheduling group twice during an eight game regular season.

[^1]- Age groups without the required number of teams in a given region would consolidate their teams into less defined age groups to determine whether a sufficient number of teams exist to support a given region. Specifically, the Under 11 and Under 12 teams would be combined and considered as Under 12s and the Under 13 and Under 14 teams would be combined and considered as Under 14 teams.

As discussed in Attachment II, several different approaches can be used to assign field grids to a region. The methodology adopted for the two and three field grid regions is commonly referred to as the Flexible Age Group Field Grid approach. This methodology optimizes the region definitions to teams present in the various field grids while supporting changes that may occur in those field grids. Specifically, the regional definitions were designed to maximize the number of teams assigned to a given region from the Under 11 and Under 12 age groups, Under 13 and Under 14 age groups, and Under 16 and Under 19 age groups, i.e., the field grids used to define a given region for Under 11 and Under 12 teams may be different than those used to define a similar region for the Under 13 and Under 14 teams which may differ from those used fo the Under 16 and Under 19 age groups. These three region definitions were used since (1) the Under 11 and 12 age groups and the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups may need to be combined as discussed elsewhere to create a viable region and (2) clubs that have Under 16 teams also normally have Under 19 teams.

## Evaluation of Regional Alternatives

The number of Fall 2019 teams in each of the three broad age groups associated with each field grid were identified and used to define the regions that would best serve a given group of teams. In the case of the Single Field Grid Region, these team represented the teams available for that region. In the case of the two and three field grid regions, these teams were used to define the logical regions for each of the broad age groups as discussed elsewhere. Once the regions were determined, two broad analyses were performed. The first determined the number of teams applicable to a given region while the next one determined the number of teams applicable to a given region if the Under 11s and 12 s were combined and if the Under 13s and Under 14s were combined. Within each of these, an analysis was made to determine whether the number of teams would support game schedules that either (1) required the teams to play one or more games against the same team in the regular season or (2) supported a game schedule where a team would only play another team once during the regular season. The below table summarizes these analyses. Attachment III shows the Two Field Grid Regions for each of the three broad age groups and the number of teams in those age groups for each region. Attachment IV shows similar information for the Three Field Grid Region approach.

| Age Group | Fall 2019 Teams | Single Grid Region 5 to 8 Teams | Single Grid Region - 9 or More Teams | Two Grid Region 5 to 8 Teams | Two Grid Region - 9 or More Teams | Three Grid Region 5 to 8 Teams | Three Grid Region - 9 or More Teams |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Under 11 Boys | 30 | $10 / 33.3 \%$ | 0/0.0\% | 15 / 50.0\% | 11/36.7\% | 0/0.0\% | $29 / 96.7 \%$ |
| Under 11 Girls | 19 | 0 / 0.0\% | 0/0.0\% | $7 / 36.8 \%$ | 0 / 0.0\% | 6/31.6\% | $11 / 57.9 \%$ |
| Under 12 Boys | 45 | $32 / 71.1 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | 5/11.1\% | $37 / 82.2 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $42 / 93.3 \%$ |
| Under 12 Girls | 32 | 8/25.0\% | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | 12/37.5\% | $12 / 37.5 \%$ | 0/0.0\% | $28 / 87.5 \%$ |
| Under 13 Boys | 50 | $17 / 34.0 \%$ | 11/22.0\% | $25 / 50.0 \%$ | $23 / 46.0 \%$ | 8/16.0\% | 40 / 80.0\% |
| Under 13 Girls | 33 | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $22 / 66.7 \%$ | 0 / 0.0\% | $5 / 15.2 \%$ | $22 / 66.7 \%$ |
| Under 14 Boys | 52 | 10 / 19.2\% | $11 / 21.2 \%$ | $16 / 30.8 \%$ | $24 / 46.2 \%$ | 0/0.0\% | 48/92.3\% |
| Under 14 Girls | 42 | $11 / 26.2 \%$ | 0 / 0.0\% | 20/47.6\% | 13 / 31.0\% | 12/28.6\% | $28 / 66.7 \%$ |
| Under 16 Boys | 74 | $27 / 36.5 \%$ | 9/12.2\% | $22 / 29.7 \%$ | $49 / 66.2 \%$ | $5 / 6.8 \%$ | 66 / 89.2\% |
| Under 16 Girls | 50 | $22 / 44.0 \%$ | 0/0.0\% | $25 / 50.0 \%$ | 18/36.0\% | 0 / 0.0\% | 46/92.0\% |
| Under 19 Boys | 53 | 11 / 20.8\% | 0/0.0\% | $28 / 52.8 \%$ | 20/37.7\% | 14 / 26.4\% | $38 / 71.7 \%$ |
| Under 19 Girls | 41 | 12 / 29.3\% | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | 24 / 58.5\% | 9/22.0\% | 5/12.2\% | $32 / 78.0 \%$ |
| Total | 521 | 160 / 30.7\% | $31 / 6.0 \%$ | 221/42.4\% | 216 / 41.5\% | 55/10.6\% | 430 / 82.5\% |

Number of Fall 2019 Teams Using One, Two, and Three Field Grid Regions - Combining U11/12 and U13/14 Age Groups

| Age Group | Fall 2019 <br> Teams | Single Grid <br> Region- <br> 5 to 8 Teams | Single Grid <br> Region-9 or <br> More Teams | Two Grid <br> Region-5 to 8 <br> Teams | Two Grid <br> Region-9 or <br> More Teams | Three Grid <br> Region-5 to 8 8 <br> Teams | Three Grid <br> Region-9 or <br> More Teams |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Under 11/12 Boys | 75 | $32 / 42.7 \%$ | $39 / 52.0 \%$ | $8 / 10.7 \%$ | $63 / 84.0 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $71 / 94.7 \%$ |
| Under 11/12 Girls | 51 | $38 / 74.5 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $13 / 25.5 \%$ | $37 / 72.5 \%$ | $5 / 9.8 \%$ | $45 / 88.2 \%$ |
| Under 13/14 Boys | 102 | $43 / 42.2 \%$ | $42 / 41.2 \%$ | $10 / 9.8 \%$ | $91 / 89.2 \%$ | $5 / 4.9 \%$ | $96 / 94.1 \%$ |
| Under 13/14 Girls | 75 | $42 / 56.0 \%$ | $9 / 12.0 \%$ | $13 / 17.3 \%$ | $55 / 73.3 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $70 / 93.3 \%$ |
| Under 16 Boys | 74 | $27 / 36.5 \%$ | $9 / 12.2 \%$ | $22 / 29.7 \%$ | $49 / 66.2 \%$ | $5 / 6.8 \%$ | $66 / 89.2 \%$ |
| Under 16 Girls | 50 | $22 / 44.0 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $25 / 50.0 \%$ | $18 / 36.0 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $46 / 92.0 \%$ |
| Under 19 Boys | 53 | $11 / 20.8 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $28 / 52.8 \%$ | $20 / 37.7 \%$ | $14 / 26.4 \%$ | $38 / 71.7 \%$ |
| Under 19 Girls | 41 | $12 / 29.3 \%$ | $0 / 0.0 \%$ | $24 / 58.5 \%$ | $9 / 22.0 \%$ | $5 / 12.2 \%$ | $32 / 78.0 \%$ |
| Total | $\mathbf{5 2 1}$ | $\mathbf{2 2 1} / \mathbf{4 2 . 4 \%}$ | $\mathbf{1 7 5 / 3 3 . 6 \%}$ | $\mathbf{1 4 2} / \mathbf{2 7 . 3 \%}$ | $\mathbf{3 4 2} / \mathbf{6 5 . 6 \%}$ | $\mathbf{3 4 / 6 . 5 \%}$ | $\mathbf{4 6 4 / \mathbf { 8 9 . 1 \% }} \mathbf{}$ |

## Key Observations - Single Field Grid Option

The Single Field Grid Region approach has the advantage of greatly reduced travel distances between fields. However, it has several significant disadvantages that include the following.

- The number of teams the SFL could support would be greatly reduced to 191 teams or about 37 percent of the 521 teams serviced during the Fall 2019 season using the existing age groups. Even combining the Under 11 and Under 12 and the Under 13 and 14 age groups would only result in a total of 326 or less than about 62.6 percent of the Fall 2019 season teams being supported.
- Almost all the field grids would be playing at least more than one game against the same team during the regular season. Only 31 teams would be assigned to regions where 9 or more teams were present and combining the Under 11 and Under 12 and the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups would only improve this to 99 teams or about 19 percent of the Fall 2019 teams.

Because of the significant reduction in teams serviced and the high number of games where teams would be playing the same team more than once during the regular season. The single field grid option was not considered viable for the SFL.

## Key Observations - Two Field Grid Region Option

The Two Field Grid Region approach has the advantage of reduced travel distances between fields. However, it has several significant disadvantages that include the following.

- The number of teams the SFL could support would be reduced to 437 - about 84 percent of the 521 teams serviced during the Fall 2019 season using the existing age groups. Combining the Under 11 and Under 12 and the Under 13 and 14 age groups would increase this slightly to 485 teams or about 93 percent of the Fall 2019 season teams being supported.
- About 221 teams would be playing more than one game against the same team during the regular season and while 216 teams would have the traditional SFL schedule where a team only played another team once during the regular season. Combining the Under 11 and Under 12 age groups and the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups would improve this. The number of teams that would have to play another team more than once during the regular season would fall to about 143 teams and the number of teams playing a traditional SFL schedule would increase to 342 teams.

Although the Two Field Grid Region approach is a significant improvement over the Single Field Grid Region approach, it is not considered a viable option for the SFL since (1) about 16 percent of the Fall 2019 season teams would be eliminated, (2) even combining age groups only about 93 percent of the Fall 2019 teams would be serviced, and (3) a large number of teams (143 or about 27.4 percent) would still end up playing another team twice during the regular season even if the Under 11 and Under 12 and Under 13 and Under 14 age groups were combined. Another way of looking at this option is that only about 41.5 percent of the Fall 2019 teams would be playing games that do not require the teams to play
at least one other team twice during the regular season using the traditional age groups. This percentage would improve to about 66 percent if the age groups were combined.

## Key Observations - Three Field Grid Region Option

The Three Field Grid Region approach closely resembles the current approach of attempting to have teams travel no more than three field grids. The key benefit of this approach is that 100 percent of the teams assigned to a given region will play no more than three field grids from their home field while under the current approach this goal is accomplished 70 percent of the time for the division 2 teams. Achieving this improvement results in the elimination of teams from the SFL. ${ }^{6}$ The number of teams being eliminated depends on the approach used to define age groups and whether teams should be scheduled to play more than once against each other during the regular season when a region has less than nine teams as shown below.

- Combining age groups - About 23 teams would be eliminated if the Under 11 and Under 12 age groups and Under 13 and Under 14 age groups are combined. This number increases to 36 teams if the current age groups are retained. This also assumes that the clubs would support the regional teams playing another team more than once during the regular season in regions where fewer than nine teams are present. These represented about 6.5 percent and 10.6 percent respectively of the Fall 2019 teams.
- Playing duplicate regular season games - If the clubs only want to support age groups in regions that contain nine or more teams, then the number of teams dropped increases to 57 teams if the age groups are combined and 91 if the existing age groups are retained. These represent about 11 percent and 17 percent respectively of the Fall 2019 teams.

Although this option would ensure that teams remaining in the SFL would not have to travel more than three field grids, the focus solely on travel distances negates several other advantages that the current approach offers as discussed elsewhere. Accordingly, the SFL Commissioners recommend against adopting this approach. However, if the clubs desire this approach then they will also need to decide the business rules that should be applied by the SFL. Attachment I contains some the key business rules that would have to be defined by the clubs if the Three Field Grid Region approach is adopted.

## COMPARISON OF THE CURRENT SCHEDULING APPROACH TO A REGIONAL APPROACH

The primary difference between the current scheduling approach and a regional scheduling approach is that the current approach attempts to balance a number of competing scheduling requirements rather than focus on a team's regional assignment. As discussed elsewhere, the SFL Commissioners did not believe

[^2]that any of the three regional scheduling alternatives reviewed should be adopted since focusing on travel as the sole criteria for scheduling eliminated several benefits associated with the current approach.

In order to better measure the benefits of the current approach to a regional scheduling approach, the SFL Commissioners reviewed an analysis of the effectiveness of the current approach in achieving its goal of having teams play their games within a three field grid matrix and then reviewed the factors used by the current approach to balance competing schedule requirements to the Three Field Grid Region approach. The SFL Commissioners concluded that the advantages for the current approach outweigh the advantages of adopting a regional approach where a team's region assignment is the key factor that should be used to determine how games should be scheduled and that other requirements are subservient to the goal of only having teams play games within a preestablished region, i.e., although the current approach does not accomplish its geographic scheduling goal, its ability to satisfy the competing scheduling requirements offset the results that 30 percent of the Fall 2019 division 2 teams had to travel more than three field grids to play their regular season games. The factors in this analysis included the following.

- Effectiveness in reducing travel times.
- Division structure
- Preventing duplicate regular season games
- Reducing the number of Sunday games
- Reducing the SFL's coverage area

The SFL Commissioners believe that the benefits of the second, third, and fourth items more than offset the disadvantage of the current approach's ability to achieve a 70 percent effectiveness rate of having the division 2 teams play their games in a three field grid area. The primary purpose of this discussion is to simply provide the data than can be used by the clubs to make an informed decision rather than depend on subjective opinions and assumptions. Whether the SFL should reduce its coverage area, eliminate divisions, or take other actions to reduce the number of games where teams travel more than three field grids that is being experienced using the current approach while overcoming some of the limitations associated with a regional approach is a matter that must be decided by the clubs and the SFL Commissioners are not expressing an opinion on any specific option. However, analysis of the effects reducing the SFL's coverage area by eliminating the teams that would have been eliminated under the Three Field Grid Region approach showed that team location was not the primary reason for the number of games involving travel distances that exceeded three field grids. The analysis of each of these topics is discussed below.

## Effectiveness of Current Approach In Reducing Travel Times

In order to evaluate how effective the SFL's current scheduling approach places teams in geographical proximity to each other, an analysis was conducted to determine the number of regular season games during the Fall 2019 season that were played in the same field grid, two field grid matrixes, three field
grid matrixes, and games where the teams had to travel more than 3 field grids. As shown in the table below, almost all of the age groups played two-thirds of their games within a three field grid matrix and over 50 percent of the games played within a two field grid matrix. This is well below the goal of having most games played within a three field grid matrix or adopting the Three Field Grid Region scheduling approach discussed elsewhere.

## Regular Season Games - Fall 2019

| Age Group | Total Games | One to Three <br> Grids | Percent | Four or More <br> Grids | Percent |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Under 11 Boys | 120 | 97 | $80.8 \%$ | 23 | $19.2 \%$ |
| Under 11 Girls | 76 | 45 | $59.2 \%$ | 31 | $40.8 \%$ |
| Under 12 Boys | $48 / 132$ | $35 / 85$ | $72.9 \% / 64.4 \%$ | $13 / 47$ | $27.1 \% / 35.6 \%$ |
| Under 12 Girls | 128 | 88 | $68.8 \%$ | 40 | $31.3 \%$ |
| Under 13 Boys | $64 / 132$ | $33 / 87$ | $51.6 \% / 65.9 \%$ | $31 / 45$ | $48.4 \% / 34.1 \%$ |
| Under 13 Girls | $44 / 88$ | $16 / 48$ | $36.4 \% / 54.5 \%$ | $28 / 40$ | $63.6 \% / 45.5 \%$ |
| Under 14 Boys | $68 / 140$ | $36 / 96$ | $52.9 \% / 68.6 \%$ | $32 / 44$ | $47.1 \% / 31.4 \%$ |
| Under 14 Girls | $52 / 116$ | $33 / 81$ | $63.5 \% / 69.8 \%$ | $19 / 35$ | $36.5 \% / 30.2 \%$ |
| Under 16 Boys | $80 / 216$ | $29 / 159$ | $36.3 \% / 73.6 \%$ | $51 / 57$ | $63.8 \% / 26.4 \%$ |
| Under 16 Girls | $64 / 136$ | $35 / 102$ | $54.7 \% / 75.0 \%$ | $29 / 34$ | $45.3 \% / 25.0 \%$ |
| Under 19 Boys | $54 / 152$ | $33 / 115$ | $61.1 \% / 75.7 \%$ | $21 / 37$ | $38.9 \% / 24.3 \%$ |
| Under 19 Girls | $52 / 112$ | $21 / 81$ | $40.4 \% / 72.3 \%$ | $31 / 31$ | $59.6 \% / 27.7 \%$ |
| Total | $\mathbf{8 5 0} / \mathbf{1 , 2 2 4}$ | $\mathbf{5 0 1 / 8 5 4}$ | $\mathbf{5 8 . 9 \% / \mathbf { 6 9 . 8 \% }} \mathbf{~ / ~ 3 4 9 / 3 7 0}$ | $\mathbf{4 1 . 1 \% / \mathbf { 3 0 . 2 \% }}$ |  |

Note: When an age group has two divisions, each division is broken out separately with the division 1 teams shown first.

A review of the tournament games showed that the travel distance also exceeded the three field grid goal and was very close to the travel experience of the division 1 regular season teams in the age groups that had two divisions. This is not surprising since the goal of the tournament, much like the division 1 teams, is to pair teams with similar abilities together. The following shows the travel distances for the Fall 2019 tournament games.

| Age Group | Total <br> Games | One to Three <br> Grids | Percent | Four or More <br> Grids | Percent |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Under 11 Boys | 24 | 20 | $83.3 \%$ | 4 | $16.7 \%$ |
| Under 11 Girls | 15 | 8 | $53.3 \%$ | 7 | $46.7 \%$ |
| Under 12 Boys | 35 | 22 | $62.9 \%$ | 13 | $37.1 \%$ |
| Under 12 Girls | 24 | 12 | $50.0 \%$ | 12 | $50.0 \%$ |
| Under 13 Boys | 36 | 23 | $63.9 \%$ | 13 | $36.1 \%$ |
| Under 13 Girls | 26 | 13 | $50.0 \%$ | 13 | $50.0 \%$ |
| Under 14 Boys | 38 | 18 | $47.4 \%$ | 20 | $52.6 \%$ |
| Under 14 Girls | 32 | 18 | $56.3 \%$ | 14 | $43.8 \%$ |
| Under 16 Boys | 53 | 25 | $47.2 \%$ | 28 | $52.8 \%$ |
| Under 16 Girls | 36 | 18 | $50.0 \%$ | 18 | $50.0 \%$ |
| Under 19 Boys | 37 | 18 | $48.6 \%$ | 19 | $51.4 \%$ |
| Under 19 Girls | 33 | 23 | $69.7 \%$ | 10 | $30.3 \%$ |
| Total | $\mathbf{3 8 9}$ | $\mathbf{2 1 8}$ | $\mathbf{5 6 . 0 \%}$ | $\mathbf{1 7 1}$ | $\mathbf{4 4 . 0 \%}$ |

## Division Structure

One SFL scheduling goal that competes with a regional scheduling approach is to schedule teams of comparable abilities to play each other during the regular season. This goal is designed to improve the competition between teams and reduce the number of games with excessive score differentials. The approach used to accomplish this goal by the SFL is to request the clubs to place their better teams into a separate division. These are considered division 1 teams with the club's remaining teams placed in division 2. Each season the SFL distributes to its clubs a summary of the goal score differential for the regular season and tournament games broken out by age group. As shown below, for the age groups having two divisions, (1) many of the regular season games had a goal differential of three goals or less and (2) the goal differential percentage between the divisions was similar. Overall, about two-thirds of the games had a goal score differential of three or fewer goals.

| Age Group | Division 1 <br> Games | Games with Goal <br> Differential of 3 <br> Goals or Less | Division 2 <br> Games | Games with Goal <br> Differential of 3 <br> Goals or Less |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Under 12 Boys | 48 | $26 / 54.2 \%$ | 129 | $81 / 62.8 \%$ |
| Under 13 Boys | 64 | $32 / 50.0 \%$ | 127 | $84 / 66.1 \%$ |
| Under 13 Girls | 44 | $40 / 90.9 \%$ | 87 | $60 / 69.0 \%$ |
| Under 14 Boys | 66 | $43 / 65.2 \%$ | 135 | $90 / 66.7 \%$ |
| Under 14 Girls | 51 | $41 / 80.4 \%$ | 113 | $78 / 69.0 \%$ |
| Under 16 Boys | 76 | $48 / 63.2 \%$ | 210 | $121 / 57.6 \%$ |
| Under 16 Girls | 63 | $51 / 81 \%$ | 129 | $88 / 68.2 \%$ |
| Under 19 Boys | 49 | $33 / 67.3 \%$ | 147 | $106 / 72.1 \%$ |
| Under 19 Girls | 50 | $38 / 76.0 \%$ | 107 | $71 / 66.4 \%$ |
| Total | $\mathbf{5 1 1}$ | $\mathbf{3 5 2} / \mathbf{6 8 . 9 \%}$ | $\mathbf{1 , 4 9 7}$ | $\mathbf{9 9 3} / \mathbf{6 6 . 3 \%}$ |

A review of the Fall 2019 SFL teams showed that the division 1 teams would have been spread out among the various regions as defined in the Three Field Grid Region option discussed elsewhere and only about 36 percent or 48 of the 133 Fall 2019 division 1 teams could be placed in a separate division, assuming (1) the region had enough division 2 teams to form two divisions and (2) the division size was five teams or more. If the division size needed to be nine teams or more in order to keep teams from playing the same game twice, then less than seven percent of the division 1 teams could have remained in division 1 as shown in the table below.

| Age Group | Fall 2019 <br> Division <br> 1 Teams | Teams in 3 Field Grid Regions with 5 or More Division 1 Teams | Percent of <br> Fall 2019 <br> Division 1 <br> Teams | Teams in 3 Field Grid Regions with 9 or More Division 1 Teams | Percent of <br> Fall 2019 <br> Division 1 <br> Teams |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Under 12 Boys | 12 | 9 | 75.0\% | 9 | 75.0\% |
| Under 13 Boys | 16 | 5 | 31.3\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Under 13 Girls | 11 | 0 | 0.0\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Under 14 Boys | 17 | 7 | 41.2\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Under 14 Girls | 13 | 7 | 53.8\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Under 16 Boys | 20 | 8 | 40.0\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Under 16 Girls | 16 | 6 | 37.5\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Under 19 Boys | 15 | 6 | 40.0\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Under 19 Girls | 13 | 0 | 0.0\% | 0 | 0.0\% |
| Total | 133 | 48 | 36.1\% | 9 | 6.8\% |

Note: In the fall seasons no attempt is made to separate the Under 11s into division since this is the first season that they play in the SFL and the clubs believe it is impracticable to reliability identify the better teams. The clubs did not identify enough division 1 teams for the Under 12 Girls so it only had one division.

As shown above, adopting a regional approach does not support the traditional divisional structure the SFL strives to achieve. In addition, one of the potential Under 13 Boys regions which had enough teams to form a division 1 group, did not have enough teams to support a division 2 group. Accordingly, this region would need to combine the two divisions. Furthermore, the splitting the region into divisions would cause 9 of the 14 possible regions that could support divisions have less than 9 teams in a division which means that the teams would need to play at least one other team twice during the regular season. On the other hand, none of the teams in these seven regions would have to play each other more than once in the regular season if they did not use divisions.

It is recognized that the SFL tournament is designed to have teams of comparable abilities play each other and some may believe that this eliminates the need for divisions. It is unclear how an analysis could be performed to validate this belief. However, the SFL tournament assigns teams to the tournament divisions based on their regular season division, i.e., the division 1 regular season teams normally play each other in the tournament. The Fall 2019 tournament statistics showed that about 74 percent of the games had a score differential of two goals or less which was significantly higher than the almost 51 percent experienced during the regular season. While this shows that the SFL tournament
approach appears to pair teams of comparable abilities for the tournament, it is unclear the same balance would have occurred if the divisions had been eliminated.

The SFL Commissioners recognize that the current division approach is one reason that the current scheduling approach only achieves about two-thirds of the games within the three field grid matrix goal. However, the SFL Commissioners believe the benefits achieved - better competition and lower score differentials - outweigh the travel time increases.

## Duplicate Regular Season Games

The SFL breaks down an age group and division into scheduling groups based on the number of teams that are geographically located together. The SFL also has adopted a scheduling requirement that mandates that no team should play another team twice during the regular season. Accordingly, each scheduling group must contain at least nine teams. In some cases, the logical geographic based grouping of teams results in less than nine teams. In these cases the SFL combines the scheduling group with another scheduling group that consists of teams of the same age group and division to (1) maximize the number of games each scheduling group plays against teams in its geographical area and (2) ensuring that no team plays another team twice during the regular season. This approach is normally preferable to putting all the teams in the same scheduling group for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, the adverse side effect is that one or more teams in the two groups will probably have to travel more that three field grids. During the Fall 2019 season, 47 scheduling groups were used to schedule the 521 teams. Of these, eight or about 17 percent were paired to ensure that teams would not play duplicate games during the regular season. In many cases, these really only resulted in one or at most two games outside of the scheduling group or the planned geographical region for those teams that were paired. The SFL Commissioners believe that this is an acceptable trade off to the regional approach. As noted elsewhere, 55 or 10.6 percent of the 485 Fall 2019 teams that would be scheduled under the Three Field Grid Region approach would play one or more regular season games against the same team twice using the Fall 2019 age groups. Even if the age groups were combined, which would allow more teams to be scheduled, 34 or 6.5 percent of the 498 teams would still play duplicate regular season games.

## Sunday Games

Odd team scheduling groups require some teams to play two games on a weekend and a bye during another weekend. Since teams should only play one regular season game per day per VYSA, the team that needs to play two games normally plays one game on Saturday and a home game on Sunday. These are commonly referred to a Sunday games. Most clubs would prefer not to have Sunday games so the SFL has developed an approach to minimize those where possible. During the Fall 2019 season eight of the scheduling groups had an odd number of teams in them since the teams in a given scheduling group made the best sense from a geographical perspective to have an odd number of teams. For example, assume that one scheduling group had teams from four clubs with a total of 11 teams and another scheduling group had 11 teams representing 5 clubs. The SFL has three options for scheduling these two groups. One option is to have each scheduling group play four Sunday games or eight Sunday games total. Another option is to schedule these two scheduling groups to play eight games against each other. This way none of the teams need to play a Sunday game. The other option - move a team from its geographical area to the other scheduling group's geographical area - is not considered desirable at all. During the Fall 2019 season, eight or about 17 percent of the scheduling groups were paired to avoid

Sunday games. This saved the clubs and teams from having to worry about 32 Sunday games. A review of the Three Field Grid Region approach showed that 12 of the scheduling groups would have had an odd number of teams that would have dictated 48 Sunday games that under the SFL's current approach could have been avoided by using the pairing process discussed earlier.

As with the process to eliminate duplicate regular season games discussed elsewhere, this approach can lead to teams having to travel more than three field grids. The SFL Commissioners believe that this is an acceptable trade off to a regional approach.

## Travel Distances

As noted elsewhere, the current scheduling approach attempts to balance several competing priorities and these competing priorities are the reason that about 30 percent of the division 2 teams have to travel more than the desired three field grids. It is difficult to quantitatively understand how much a given factor may contribute to the amount of travel exceeding the three field grid goal. However, one possible reason that may be cited is the SFL allowing teams in outlying areas to participate which means that teams have to travel excessive distances to support those games. This thesis can be tested by (1) determining the teams that would be eliminated if the SFL adopted a Three Field Grid Region concept and (2) determining the number of Fall 2019 regular season games involving these teams that resulted in teams traveling more than three field grids to play games. The below table shows a comparison by age group and division of the number of Fall 2019 regular season games that (1) actually resulted in teams having to travel more than three field grids and (2) the number of games that would have resulted if the games associated with the teams that would be eliminated under the Three Field Grid Region approach were not played.

|  | Fall 2019 Actual Games |  |  | Fall 2019 Games With Three Field <br> Grid Region Teams Eliminated |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Age Group | Total Games - 4 or <br> More Field Grids | Percent | Total Games - 4 or <br> More Field Grids | Percent |
| Under 11 Boys | 23 | $19.2 \%$ | 15 | $13.3 \%$ |
| Under 11 Girls | 31 | $40.8 \%$ | 16 | $25.8 \%$ |
| Under 12 Boys | $13 / 47$ | $27.1 \% / 35.6 \%$ | $13 / 26$ | $26.5 \% / 23.2 \%$ |
| Under 12 Girls | 40 | $31.3 \%$ | 20 | $19.4 \%$ |
| Under 13 Boys | $31 / 45$ | $48.4 \% / 34.1 \%$ | $31 / 31$ | $47.7 \% / 26.1 \%$ |
| Under 13 Girls | $28 / 40$ | $63.6 \% / 45.5 \%$ | $15 / 22$ | $50.0 \% / 34.9 \%$ |
| Under 14 Boys | $32 / 44$ | $47.1 \% / 31.4 \%$ | $32 / 19$ | $46.4 \% / 16.8 \%$ |
| Under 14 Girls | $19 / 35$ | $36.5 \% / 30.2 \%$ | $19 / 22$ | $35.8 \% / 21.4 \%$ |
| Under 16 Boys | $51 / 57$ | $63.8 \% / 26.4 \%$ | $35 / 49$ | $53.8 \% / 23.3 \%$ |
| Under 16 Girls | $29 / 34$ | $45.3 \% / 25.0 \%$ | $16 / 30$ | $32.0 \% / 24.4 \%$ |
| Under 19 Boys | $21 / 37$ | $38.9 \% / 24.3 \%$ | $21 / 30$ | $38.2 \% / 20.5 \%$ |
| Under 19 Girls | $31 / 31$ | $59.6 \% / 27.7 \%$ | $31 / 15$ | $58.5 \% / 17.6 \%$ |
| Total | $\mathbf{3 4 9} / \mathbf{3 7 0}$ | $\mathbf{4 1 . 1 \% / \mathbf { 3 0 . 2 \% }}$ | $\mathbf{2 6 4 / 2 4 4}$ | $\mathbf{3 4 . 4 \% / 2 2 . 7 \%}$ |

As shown above, overall eliminating the teams that would be eliminated under the Three Field Grid Region approach would only reduce the percentage of games where division 2 teams had to travel more than three field grids from about 30 percent to about 23 percent. Accordingly, other factors, such as

1
eliminating teams from playing each other more than twice during the regular season and reducing the number of Sunday games appear to have a far greater impact on the reason that teams need to travel more than the desired three field grids to play regular season games.

## Attachment I

## Key Decisions Needed When Implementing A Regional Scheduling Approach

As noted elsewhere, the SFL Commissioners are recommending the continuation of current scheduling approach that attempts to balance competing scheduling requirements. However, the clubs may elect to adopt a regional scheduling approach that places a team's regional assignment as the primary requirement used when scheduling regular season games with all other priorities being subservient to the goal of reducing travel. Adoption of a region based system is key decision. However, it is only the first step. More importantly, the business rules that are adopted to support that decision must be clearly defined. Key business rule decisions that must be made regardless of the regional scheduling approach adopted include the following.

- When should the region definitions be defined, i.e., when the initial team registrations are due (March 1/August 1) or the final date for notifying the SFL of team additions or deletions (March 10/August 10)?
- When should clubs be notified that registered teams will not be scheduled by the SFL? If the final date for defining the regions is March 10/August 10, then the notification to the clubs would have to be around this time.
- Should regions that contain between five and nine teams be scheduled since they will end up playing at least one opponent twice and possibility every opponent twice during an eight game regular season?
- Should the Under 11 and Under 12 age groups and the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups be automatically combined to make a viable regional age group of teams or should the teams be dropped? Furthermore, who makes this decision, i.e., the affected clubs or the SFL?


## Example A

Assume that a decision is made that only age groups of nine teams or more will be considered viable for region and the region has four Under 13 Boys teams and six Under 14 Boys teams. If a decision is made that combined age groups will be enforced when less than nine teams are present in a region, then the SFL will mandate, using this example, that all 10 teams will be considered as Under 14 Boys teams. In the tournament these 10 teams be considered Under 14 Boys teams even though other regions may have Under 13 Boys teams.

## Example B

Assume that a decision is made that age groups of five teams or more will be considered viable for region and the region has four Under 13 Boys teams and six Under 14 Boys teams. Two questions arise in this situation. First, should the teams be required to be combined in the Under 14 Boys age group so that all 10 teams can play? If the answer is no, then who decides what

## Attachment I

Attachment I
happens to the Under 13 Boys teams, e.g., can a club elect for them to play as Under 14s or does the SFL automatically drop the Under 13 Boys teams since they are not considered viable?

## Example C

Assume that a decision is made that age groups of five teams or more will be considered viable for region and the region has four Under 13 Boys teams and four Under 14 Boys teams. Two questions arise in this situation. First, should the teams be required to be combined in the Under 14 Boys age group so that all eight teams can play? If the answer is no, then who decides what happens to the Under 13 Boys teams, e.g., can a club elect for them to play as Under 14s or does the SFL automatically drop all the teams since neither group has the minimum number of teams to be considered viable (five teams)?

- If a region is forced to combine age groups to make a given group of teams viable for that region, should all other regions be forced to combine those same age groups? For example, assume that the Under 13 and Under 14 age groups have eight regions and three of the regions only have enough teams if the Under 13 and Under 14 Boys teams are combined. Should all regions be forced to combine their Under 13 and Under 14 Boys teams or only the three regions that do not have enough teams to form viable divisions unless the two age groups are combined?
- Should game week 9 be used for a tournament or for "Sunday" games that are caused by the expected increase in odd team scheduling groups? As noted elsewhere, a rigid regional scheduling structure will result in more Sunday games based on the Fall 2019 team registrations. If the clubs desire to reduce those Sunday games, then the tournament can be eliminated and those games played in the ninth week of the season. This may be a desirable option especially if the clubs decide to allow a regional scheduling group to contain fewer than nine teams since many of the teams would have already played some teams twice. Accordingly, the clubs will need to decide if Sunday games should be played during the traditional regular season or eliminate the tournament and play the Sunday games during the last week of the regular season.


## Process Used to Determine Regions

Using rigid regions to drive game scheduling, i.e., teams do not play games against teams that are not in their region, requires specific field grid assignments to a given region as discussed elsewhere. Two key decisions are needed to assign the field grids to a region - (1) the field grid matrix which determines the potential travel distances for the teams assigned to a given region and (2) the approach that should be used to assign field grids to a given region. The potential travel distances associated with a given field grid matrix is discussed elsewhere. Two broad approaches can be used to assigning field grids to regions - static and flexible. As discussed below, determining static regions is fairly straight forward since all field grids in a given area are allocated to a region in straightforward manner. Flexible field grid regions are more complex and have several variations.

## Comparing Static and Flexible Field Grid Options

Two broad approaches can be used to assign field grids to a given region - static and flexible. The static approach simply takes the available field grids for field assignments and then starting with field grid 1 , assigning the proper number of field grids to accomplish the desired field grid matrix for a region. For example, assume that a two field grid matrix is desired for each region, the static approach would assign field grids, $1,2,11$, and 12 to Region 1 even if only field grid 12 had teams assigned to it. This approach is commonly referred to as the Static Field Grid Region approach. The flexible field grid approach still maintains the desired field grid matrix but starts the region on a field grid that optimizes the teams assigned to a given region. Continuing the above example, the flexible field grid approach would start the Region 1 field grid definition with field grid 12 and include field grids 13, 22, and $23 .{ }^{7}$ This approach is commonly referred to as the Flexible Field Grid approach. A review of teams assigned to the field grids showed that a Flexible Field Grid approach should be used to define regions.

A further refinement to the Flexible Field Grid approach is to tailor the regions to the age group demographics associated with the field grids. This is commonly referred to as Flexible Age Group Field Grid approach. The following illustrates the difference between the Flexible Field Grid and Flexible Age Group Field Grid approaches using the Fall 2019 Under 11 Boys and Under 14 Boys teams.

## Standard Regions Using A Flexible Field Grid Approach for Region Definitions - 3 Field Grid Matrix

| Region | Field Grids | Under 11 Boys Teams | Under 14 Boys Teams |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Region 1 | $2-4,12-14,22-24$ | No Teams | 1 Team |
| Region 2 | $17-19,27-29,37-39$ | 1 Team | 3 Teams |

7 For this example, it is assumed that field grid 21 also does not have any teams assigned to it.

Attachment II

| Region | Field Grids | Under 11 Boys Teams | Under 14 Boys Teams |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Region 3 | $42-44,52-54,62-64$ | 11 Teams | 9 Teams |
| Region 4 | $45-47,55-57,65-67$ | 8 Teams | 11 Teams |
| Region 5 | $48-50,58-60,68-70$ | No Teams | 9 Teams |
| Region 6 | $75-77,85-87,95-97$ | 10 Teams | 19 Teams |

Regions Using A Flexible Age Group Field Grid Approach for Region Definitions - 3 Field Grid
Matrix

| Region | Under 11 Boys Field Grids | Under 14 Boys Field Grids | Teams |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Region 1 | Region Not Used | $2-4,12-13,22-24$ | $0 / 1 \mathrm{Teams}$ |
| Region 2 | $17-19,27-29,37-39$ | Same | $1 / 3 \mathrm{Teams}$ |
| Region 3 | $43-45,53-55,63-65$ | $42-44,52-54,62-64$ | $19 / 9 \mathrm{Teams}$ |
| Region 4 | Region Not Used | $45-47,55-57,65-67$ | $0 / 11 \mathrm{Teams}$ |
| Region 5 | Region Not Used | $48-50,58-60,68-70$ | $0 / 9 \mathrm{Teams}$ |
| Region 6 | $75-77,85-87,95-97$ | $75-77,85-87,95-97$ | $12 / 19 \mathrm{Teams}$ |

As can be seen in these two tables, the Flexible Age Group Field Grid Approach allows a better grouping of teams since more teams can be placed in a given region. Specifically, although flexible regions were used, when the same field grids are used to define the regions for all age groups, the Under 11 Boys are found in 4 regions while defining flexible regions based on the age group allows the Under 11 Boys to be concentrated in 3 regions.

## Approaches for Developing Flexible Age Group Field Grid Regions

As illustrated above, the Flexible Age Group Field Grid Approach allows a better grouping of teams since more teams can be placed in a given region. The key for implementing the approach is to determine the variation that best meets the needs of the organization. Several variations are available and that include the following.

- Using specific age groups - Under this approach the best field grid configuration for each age group, e.g., Under 11 Girls, Under 11 Boys, Under 12 Girls, etc., is used to determine each region. This is the approach illustrated above.
- Using general age groups - Under this approach the best field grid configuration for each broad age group, e.g., Under 11s, Under 12s, etc., is used to determine each region. This approach


## Attachment II

Attachment II
addresses a potential limitation with specific age group approach since a given age group, e.g., Under 11 Girls may not have teams in a region but will in future seasons since it is logical that if a region has Under 11 Boys teams, Under 11 Girls teams may come later.

- Using potential scheduling age groups - Under this approach, the best field grid configuration for a given potential age group combination, Under 11s and Under 12s, Under 13s and Under 14 s , etc., is used to determine each region. As noted elsewhere, when a region has less than five teams in a given age group, age groups may be combined to achieve the desired team count. This approach provides reasonable assurance that the same regions used to determine whether enough teams can support a region in a given age group are the same regions used to determine whether combining the age groups will provide the necessary teams. A review of the Under 16 and 19 teams showed that they were generally assigned the same field grids. Accordingly, these age groups could use the same regions although they probably would not be combined for scheduling purposes.

Because of the flexibility provided by the defining regions based on the potential scheduling age groups, this is the alternative used to define the regions used for the analysis of the impacts of regional scheduling alternatives.




| 1 | R1-Grid 2 | R1-Grid 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\begin{aligned} & \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{~B}(1) \\ & \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{G}(1) \end{aligned}$ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 | R1-Grid 12 | R1-Grid 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | $\begin{gathered} \text { R2 - Grid } 17 \\ \text { U13/14B(5) } \\ \text { U13/14G(4) } \end{gathered}$ | R2-Grid 18 | 19 | 20 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | R2-Grid 27 | R2 - Grid 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | R3-Grid 37 | R3-Grid 38 | 39 | 40 |
| 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | R3-Grid 47 | R3-Grid 48 | 49 | 50 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{~B}(10) \\ & \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{G}(6) \end{aligned}$ |  |  |  |
| 51 | 52 | $\begin{array}{\|c} \hline \text { R4 - Grid } 53 \\ \text { U13/14B(4) } \\ \text { U13/14G(2) } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | $\begin{array}{\|c} \hline \text { R4 - Grid } 54 \\ \text { U13/14B(10) } \\ \text { U13/14G(6) } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | R5-Grid 55 | $\begin{array}{\|c} \hline \text { R5 - Grid } 56 \\ \text { U13/14B(6) } \\ \text { U13/14G(6) } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | R6-Grid 57 | $\begin{array}{\|c\|} \hline \text { R6 - Grid } 58 \\ \text { U13/14B }(7) \\ \text { U13/14G(6) } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | R7-Grid 59 | R7-Grid 60 |
| 61 | 62 | R4-Grid 63 | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { R4 - Grid } 64 \\ \text { U13/14B(3) } \\ \text { U13/14G(2) } \end{gathered}$ | R5-Grid 65 <br> U13/14G(4) | $\begin{array}{\|c} \hline \text { R5 - Grid } 66 \\ \text { U13/14B } 7 \text { ( }) \\ \text { U13/14G(2) } \end{array}$ | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { R6 - Grid } 67 \\ \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{G}(6) \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { R6 - Grid } 68 \\ \text { U13/14B }(6) \\ \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{G}(2) \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { R7- Grid 69 } \\ \text { U13/14B(5) } \\ \text { U13/14G(2) } \end{gathered}$ | R7-Grid 70 |
| 71 | 72 | 73 | R8 - Grid 74 | R8 - Grid 75 | R9 - Grid 76 | R9-Grid 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
|  |  |  |  | $\begin{aligned} & \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{~B}(7) \\ & \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{G}(5) \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{gathered} \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{~B}(22) \\ \mathrm{U} 13 / 14 \mathrm{G}(7) \end{gathered}$ |  |  |  |  |
| 81 | 82 | 83 | R8-Grid 84 | R8-Grid 85 | R9-Grid 86 | R9-Grid 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 |
|  |  |  |  | U13/14B(2) <br> U13/14G(2) | U13/14B(3) <br> U13/14G(3) | U13/14B(4) <br> U13/14G(9) |  |  |  |
| 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |







| 1 | $\text { R1 - Grid } 2$ | R1-Grid 3 | R1-Grid 4 | 5 | R2-Grid 6 | R2-Grid 7 | R2-Grid 8 | 9 | 10 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 11 | R1-Grid 12 | R1-Grid 13 | R1-Grid 14 | 15 | R2-Grid 16 | R2-Grid 17 | R2-Grid 18 | 19 | 20 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | U16B(2) U19B(1) <br> U16G(2) U19G(1) |  |  |  |
| 21 | R1-Grid 22 | R1-Grid 23 | R1-Grid 24 | 25 | R2-Grid 26 | R2-Grid 27 | R2-Grid 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | R3-Grid 37 | R3-Grid 38 | R3-Grid 39 | 40 |
| R4-Grid 41 | R4-Grid 42 | R4 - Grid 43 <br> U16B(2) U19B(4) <br> U19G(2) | R5-Grid 44 | R5-Grid 45 <br> U16B(2) U16G(1) <br> U19G(1) | R5-Grid 46 | R3-Grid 47 <br> U16B(7) U19B(4) <br> U16G(7) U19G(6) | R3-Grid 48 | R3-Grid 49 | 50 |
| R4-Grid 51 | R4-Grid 52 | R4-Grid 53 <br> U16B(3) U19B(2) U16G(2) U19G(1) | R5-Grid 54 <br> U16B(9) U19B(4) <br> U16G(5) U19G(2) | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { R5 - Grid } 55 \\ \text { U16B(1) U19B(1) } \\ \text { U19G(4) } \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { R5 - Grid } 56 \\ \mathrm{U} 16 \mathrm{~B}(4) \mathrm{U} 19 \mathrm{~B}(2) \\ \mathrm{U} 16 \mathrm{G}(5) \end{gathered}$ | R3-Grid 57 | R3-Grid 58 <br> U16B(3) U19B(4) U16G(2) U19G(3) | R3-Grid 59 | 60 |
| R4-Grid 61 | R4-Grid 62 | R4-Grid 63 | R5-Grid 64 <br> U16B(3) U19B(2) <br> U16G(3) U19G(1) | $\begin{array}{\|l\|} \hline \text { R5-Grid } 65 \\ \text { U16B(2) U19B(2) } \\ \text { U16G(1) U19G(1) } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | $\begin{array}{\|l\|} \hline \text { R5 - Grid } 66 \\ \text { U16B(3) U19B(2) } \\ \text { U16G(1) U19G(2) } \\ \hline \end{array}$ | $\begin{gathered} \hline \text { R6 - Grid 67 } \\ \text { U16B(5) U19B(2) } \\ \text { U16G(5) } \end{gathered}$ | $\text { R6 - Grid } 68$ <br> U16B(7) U19G(4) | $\text { R6 - Grid } 69$ <br> U19B(5) U16G(3) | 70 |
| 71 | 72 | 73 | R7-Grid 74 | R7-Grid 75 | R7-Grid 76 | R6-Grid 77 | R6-Grid 78 | R6-Grid 79 | 80 |
|  |  |  |  | U16B(4) U19B(3) U16G(3) U19G(4) | U16B(8) U19B(6) U16G(3) U19G(6) |  |  |  |  |
| 81 | 82 | 83 | R7-Grid 84 | $\begin{aligned} & \hline \text { R7-Grid } 85 \\ & \text { U19B(1) U16G(2) } \end{aligned}$ | $\begin{array}{\|l\|} \hline \text { R7 - Grid } 86 \\ \text { U16B(4) U19B(4) } \\ \text { U16G(1) U19G(2) } \end{array}$ | R6 - Grid 87 <br> U16B(4) U19B(4) <br> U16G(4) U19G(1) | R6-Grid 88 | R6-Grid 89 | 90 |
| 91 | 92 | 93 | R7-Grid 94 | R7-Grid 95 | R7-Grid 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |


[^0]:    2 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 (GPS) coordinates provided by Google Maps for that field. Each grid is about is about 10 miles east to west and about 5 miles North South "as the crow flies".

[^1]:    5 The Fall 2019 season was the last season where the SFL had its normal club and team participation based on club and team registrations over the past few years.

[^2]:    ${ }^{6}$ The number of teams being eliminated would total 36 teams from seven different clubs for the traditional age groups supported by the SFL and 23 teams from five different clubs for the combined age groups. The actual club names associated with a given age group are not being disclosed to reduce potential bias in evaluating the proposal.

