

*Suburban Friendship League*  
**Approach for Replacing Tournament  
Games With An Extra Regular Season Game**  
(October 25, 2021)

**SUMMARY**

Conducting the Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament requires significant resources and support from the member clubs. Throughout the SFL's history, the tournament approach has evolved to better match the approach to scheduling tournament games to the resources that the clubs can be expected to provide.<sup>1</sup> The key expectation of the current approach is that the clubs representing a majority of the teams will be able to provide adequate fields and officials to support the tournament. The current process has a means to address small resource shortages – teams from the associated clubs that cannot provide the necessary resources are not scheduled for the tournament. However, should a significant difference exist between the resources needed and the resources provided, this process prevents the primary objective of the tournament from being accomplished – having teams of comparable abilities play each other.

When a significant shortage of resources to support the tournament exists, one option is to simply cancel the tournament while another is to schedule the tournament using only the teams from the clubs that can provide the necessary resources as called for in the current process. Both of these options are considered undesirable since the teams lose at least one game when the tournament is cancelled under the first option and the tournament divisions will not have teams of comparable abilities play each other when a large number of teams are dropped under the second option. A third option is to schedule an extra regular season game that is designed to specifically pair teams of comparable abilities against each other in a final regular season game. This option provides about 50 percent of the teams with the same number of games they would have had if the tournament had been conducted while helping to ensure that the game is between teams of comparable abilities. The drawback of this approach is that no tournament awards are given to any team and about 50 percent of the teams play one fewer game than if the tournament had been held.

The following is the conceptual framework for the option to schedule an extra regular season game.

- Teams are ranked using the normal tournament process and broken into logical 2, 4 or 6 team “scheduling groups” designed to pair teams with comparable records.

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<sup>1</sup> The current approach was adopted during the Spring 2018 season. The web site's Historical Documents page ([www.sflsoccer.org/historical-documents-2/](http://www.sflsoccer.org/historical-documents-2/)) contains documents showing the evolution of the tournament scheduling approaches used.

- A review is made of each “scheduling group” to determine whether the teams within that “scheduling group” have played or are scheduled to play any other team in that “scheduling group” during the regular season. Where possible, teams within a “scheduling group” will be scheduled against each other to create a ninth regular season game against an opponent with a similar record that they have not played or scheduled to play during weeks 1 through 8.
- The home team in this pairing is determined with the teams from the clubs that have provided the field and game official resources for the week 9 games given the highest priority. For example, if a team from Club A is paired with a team from Club B and Club A did not provide a commitment for week 9 field and game officials, then Club B would be considered the home team and assigned to a Club B field where possible. When a team pairing consists of teams where neither club provided week 9 field and game resources or the number of games that would be assigned to a club exceed the available resources, then the assignment of the home team will be made at the discretion of the League Administrator.
- A club will be able to review the proposed games for its fields and if a club cannot support those games, then the games will simply be dropped or, if possible, moved to the opponent’s field, i.e., the home and visiting team designations will be switched.

While simple in concept, operationally this option has some issues that need to be addressed. These include age group divisions where the number of teams are not easily divisible into logical 2, 4, or 6 team divisions, i.e., the age group division has an odd number of teams. These issues and other implementation strategies are discussed below in the following sections.

- Pairing teams for an extra regular season game – even team age group divisions.
- Pairing teams for an extra regular season game – odd team age group divisions.
- Determining the home team in a given game.
- Other issues including reimbursement to the clubs for week 9 games and tournament awards.

## **BACKGROUND**

Tournament fields and officials have always been a problem. Several years ago the SFL attempted to address this problem by requiring clubs to provide field and referee commitments for the tournament at the start of the season. This was a total failure. Most clubs simply do not comply and they have stated that we need to wait until closer to the time of need. Accordingly, the SFL waits until the week 6 games are played before requiring the clubs to provide (1) their final field and game official commitments and (2) the final notification of the teams that will not

participate in the tournament. While beneficial to the clubs, this does not give the SFL any time for further delays since the tournament game schedules must be developed about a week after the game week 6 games are played.

When adequate tournament resources are not available, the rules cover this situation by stating that clubs that do not provide the required tournament resources or provide inadequate tournament resources to support their teams will not have their teams scheduled for the tournament. In reality, this rule was adopted assuming that the SFL would not have a significant problem and that only one or maybe two clubs without a lot of teams would be the ones that could not provide the required resources. When a significant shortage of tournament resources exists, dropping the associated teams does not produce a very good tournament schedule because of the difficulties associated with creating tournament divisions consisting of teams with comparable records.

### **PAIRING TEAMS FOR EXTRA REGULAR SEASON GAME – EVEN TEAM AGE GROUP DIVISIONS**

A key step in scheduling extra regular season games is the approach used for pairing the teams for the extra game. Two competing requirements apply to this process – teams should have comparable records and teams should not be playing each other for a second time where possible. The following steps are used to pair teams in an attempt to balance these competing requirements.

- Teams are ranked using the existing process for determining tournament divisions, i.e., actual game results are used after eliminating the effects of forfeits and late score reporting penalties. Teams that would have been dropped from the tournament because the team could not play or for other reasons outlined in the current process would be dropped from this ranking process. For example, assume that Team 1 did not play enough games to qualify for the tournament or had been assessed two or more forfeits. Team 1 would not be ranked and scheduled for a week 9 game.
- Once the teams are ranked, they are broken down into potential “scheduling groups” much like the process used for developing tournament divisions. This is done to help identify groups of teams that have comparable records. A “scheduling group” for the week 9 games consists of an even number of teams – 2, 4, or 6 teams – so that the teams in a given group can be paired for a week 9 game.
- A review of the possible pairing combinations within a group of comparable teams is made to determine whether a combination exists that eliminates teams from having to play another team twice during the regular season. For example, assume a logical scheduling group consists of six (6) teams. The following table shows how this can work.

**Example**

<b>Team (In Rank Order)</b>	<b>Teams Played (Weeks 1 – 8)</b>	<b>Week 9 Opponent</b>
Team 1	Team 2, Team 4, Team 6	Team 3
Team 2	Team 1, Team 3, Team 6	Team 4
Team 3	Team 2, Team 4, Team 5	Team 1
Team 4	Team 1, Team 5, Team 6	Team 2
Team 5	Team 4	Team 6
Team 6	Team 1, Team 2, Team 4	Team 5

As can be seen in this example, the week 9 opponent for a given team may or may not be the closest to it by rank to avoid teams from playing each other twice during the regular season. However, this is not considered significant since all the teams in this “scheduling group” were considered having comparable records.

- When a scheduling group requires one or more teams to play another team that they have already played, then a review is conducted to determine (1) whether the game was actually played and (2) which combination produces the longest time between the two games. The following table shows how this can work.

**Example**

<b>Team (In Rank Order)</b>	<b>Teams Played (Weeks 1 – 8)</b>	<b>Week 9 Opponent</b>
Team 1	Team 2 (week 3), Team 4 (week 1)	Team 4
Team 2	Team 1 (week 3), Team 4 (week 2)	Team 3
Team 3		Team 2
Team 4	Team 1(week 1), Team 2 (week 2)	Team 1

As can be seen in this example, a combination does not exist that allows all the teams to play another team in the scheduling group that they have not played during the regular season. Accordingly, a week 9 game between Team 1 and Team 4 provides the greatest time distance between teams that must play each other twice during the same season.

**Note:** The League Administrator may make a determination that a different combination may produce better results. Continuing with above example, assume that the game between Team 1 and Team 2 ended in a tie, a better approach may be to have those two teams play each other a second time.

**PAIRING TEAMS FOR EXTRA  
REGULAR SEASON GAME – ODD  
TEAM AGE GROUP DIVISIONS**

Age group divisions that have an odd number of teams that are eligible or plan on participating in the week 9 games need to use a different approach to scheduling the week 9 games. Specifically, one “scheduling group” will need a team to play two games so that all teams can play at least one game. The odd team “scheduling group” will consist of 3, 5, or 7 teams based on what is needed to create a “scheduling group” of comparable teams. Much like with the even team “scheduling groups” discussed elsewhere, the pairings will be made to reduce the games where teams are playing their opponent a second time during the season. However, the League Administrator will select one team to play two games so that an even number of games are played in the scheduling group, i.e., all teams will play at least one game. When this occurs, then the team playing two games will have one game on Saturday and the second game on Sunday. The following illustrates how this may work.

**Example**

<b>Team (In Rank Order)</b>	<b>Saturday Opponent</b>	<b>Sunday Opponent</b>
Team 1	Team 2	Team 5
Team 2	Team 1	
Team 3	Team 4	
Team 4	Team 3	
Team 5		Team 1

**Note:** For simplicity it is assumed that all teams within this scheduling group did not play each other during weeks 1 through 8

As can be seen in this example, Team 1 will play two games while all the other teams play one game. The League Administrator selects the team playing the two games.

## **DETERMINING THE HOME TEAM AND GAME FIELD**

Once the teams have been paired for the week 9 games, a determination needs to be made on which team is considered the home team since this will determine the club responsible for hosting the game. The following are the business rules that are used for determining the home team.

- The teams associated with clubs that provide week 9 resources will be given preference for home games. When (1) both teams are associated with clubs that provided week 9 game resources or (2) the number of games associated with a club exceeds the tournament resources available, then the home team assignment will be at the discretion of the League Administrator.
- When a team pairing consists of teams where neither club provided week 9 resources then the assignment of the home team will be made at the discretion of the League Administrator and that club will be offered an opportunity to host the game. Should the club decline, then the game will be dropped since neither club is considered willing to support the week 9 game.

**Note:** Other situations may arise, e.g., games associated with coaches with two teams, that may result in the League Administrator deciding that the above business rules should not be strictly followed.

Once the home team has been determined, the game will need to be assigned to a game field associated with a home team. The game field assignment is basically at the discretion of the League Administrator using the following business rules.

- The game fields specified by a club as available for tournament games will be the game fields used for that club's week 9 home games.
- The game fields for home teams associated with clubs that did not provide tournament resources will be the game field where the team normally plays its home games.

### **Example**

Club A provided Field 1 and Field 2 to support its week 9 game requirements. The SFL would use these two fields for the week 9 games assigned to Club A even if the teams from Club A normally play their home games on Field 6, Field 7, and Field 9. On the other hand, Club B did not provide any tournament resources. The week 9 games assigned to Club B would be assigned to the game field normally used by the given team from Club B. For example, if Team 1 normally used Field 21 for its home games, then the week 9 game would be assigned to Field 21.

**Note:** Discretion may be used by the League Administrator in assigning the game fields.

Once the week 9 game schedule has been drafted, the clubs will have an opportunity to review the week 9 game schedule for their club and to make the necessary adjustments to fit their resource availability. If a club cannot support a given game, e.g., no field is available or game officials cannot be provided, then the SFL must be notified immediately and the game will be dropped or moved to another location that can support the game.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

The traditional tournament involves (1) reimbursing the clubs hosting the tournament for the game officials based on a standard rate determined at the preseason meeting, (2) providing tournament awards to the first and second place teams in a given tournament division, and (3) special rules requiring roster checks and uniform number issues. The costs for tournament game officials and tournament awards are built into the team registration fees that are also approved at the preseason meeting. When the traditional tournament is cancelled and replaced with week 9 games, some adjustments are needed for these three items.

### **Reimbursing Clubs for the Game Officials Supporting the Week 9 Games**

Much like the tournament, clubs need to be reimbursed using the standard rates approved at the preseason meeting for the game officials used to support the week 9 games since a club may incur more than its fair share of these costs. Accordingly, the SFL will reimburse the clubs hosting the week 9 games in the same manner it does for tournament games. However, since the number of week 9 games will be less than the number of expected tournament games currently used to determine the registration fees, a means is needed to adjust those fees. Accordingly, the SFL will reduce its registration fees to reflect these reduced costs.

### **Tournament Awards**

The traditional tournament provides tournament awards to the first and second place teams in each tournament division or group. When the tournament is replaced with week 9 games, no tournament awards or regular season awards will be given to the teams. Since the current registration fees include the costs for the tournament awards, the SFL will reduce its registration fees to reflect these savings.

### **Impact on Special Tournament Rules**

The tournament has several rules that are different from those used for regular season games. These include roster checks, changes to the SFL Team Rosters, game times, and whether games can end in ties. Since the week 9 games are replacing the tournament games, some confusion

may exist on which set of rules apply to the week 9 games. The following discusses some items that may cause confusion.

- **Roster Checks** – The tournament rules require roster checks before each tournament game. Roster checks are not required before each week 9 game. Specifically, the rules relating to roster checks to regular season games apply to the week 9 games. In addition, since roster checks are not applicable to the week 9 games, late arriving players do not have to wait until halftime to be checked in by a game official.
- **Uniform Number Changes** – The tournament rules do not allow a coach to make any changes to the SFL Team Roster, e.g., changing the uniform number for a player to the actual number worn by the player while a coach can change up to three (3) uniform numbers on the SFL Team Roster for week 2 through 8 regular season games. The week 9 games use the regular season rules for uniform numbers, i.e., a coach can make up to three (3) uniform number changes on the SFL Team Rosters to address (1) missing uniform numbers and (2) cases where the uniform number on a player's jersey does not agree with the SFL Team Roster.
- **Game Times** – The regular season game time applicable to a given age group are used for the week 9 games. Specifically, the U11/12 games have two 30 minute halves, U13/14 games have two 35 minute halves, U16 games have two 40 minute halves, and U19 games have two 40/45 minute halves if time allows and both coaches agree.
- **Game Ending In Ties** – All week 9 games can end in a tie. During the tournament, most games go to penalty kicks if they end in a tie.