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Suburban Friendship League
Discussion Topics for Rule and Process
Changes for the Spring 2022 Season
(as of December 14, 2021)

Note: Minor editorial changes are not shown.

OVERVIEW

We received a several proposed changes this season to the rules, the Club and Coach Guide, and SFL operations. Based on these proposals, the SFL Commissioners reached consensus on each item and are able to provide a recommendation on all the proposals. Consistent with past practice, a final decision on all the proposed changes will be made at the Spring 2022 preseason meeting.

The proposals received affect the following.

- Allowing teams to waive the mandatory game termination requirement
- Allowing more flexibility during the tournament to waive roster issues
- Game officials not available for games
- Penalties for using illegal players
- Allowing clubs to reschedule games without getting the opposing team's permission
- Replacing the tournament with special regular season games

This document is broken down into two sections. The first section summarizes the proposal received and whether the proposal is recommended for adoption. If the proposal is recommended for adoption, then it summarizes the proposed change. The second section describes each proposal in detail and provides the rational used when deciding the proposed course of action on a given proposal.

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Issue/Proposal	Summary of Recommended Change
Administrative Rules For The Laws of the Game	
The objective of the game should be to allow the players to play regardless of the score in order to maximize the playing time. The rule for mandatory game termination should be modified to allow the game to continue when both coaches agree and no forfeits be assessed for excessive game scores in such cases.	The SFL Commissioners are recommending that this proposal not be adopted.
During the tournament a number of players were not allowed to play because of minor player issues such as (1) birth dates off by several days even through the parent had a birth certificate proving the birth date on the SFL Team Roster was incorrect and (2) a player's uniform number did not agree with the SFL Team Roster but the player provided the correct name and birth date. The SFL's rules should facilitate letting players play rather than penalizing players for administrative mistakes. Accordingly, the SFL rules should allow minor player mistakes to be waived.	The SFL Commissioners are recommending that this proposal not be adopted.

Issue/Proposal	Summary of Recommended Change
<p>1 The rules allow the use of “team officials” 2 when at least a properly qualified independent 3 center official is not present and both coaches 4 agree. Otherwise the home team is assessed a 5 forfeit. We have been told that several travel 6 leagues have a policy that the teams should 7 play the game with “team officials” when 8 game officials are not present at games. The 9 basic position is that it is up to the two teams 10 to “make it work”. This seems to be a better 11 approach.</p>	<p>The SFL Commissioners are recommending that “team officials” not be allowed during SFL Under 16 Boys and Under 19 Boys games when a properly qualified independent center is not available regardless of whether both agree to play the game. Specifically, both teams must leave the field and the home team is assessed a forfeit. Should the teams scrimmage or take any other similar actions, then both teams will be assessed a forfeit. Experience has shown, especially at the older age groups, is that the lack of at least a qualified center game official can result in numerous complaints and undesirable game events that are impossible to adjudicate since there is no independent individual to provide their perspective.</p>
<p>12 The rules associated with using illegal players 13 have some unintended consequences that 14 cause innocent players to be penalized. 15 Specifically, the forfeits and Team Demerits 16 assessed to teams that contain illegal players 17 can result in the team being eliminated for 18 participating in the remainder of its regular 19 season games and excluded from the 20 tournament simply because of the actions of 21 others.</p>	<p>The SFL Commissioners are recommending the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The suspension for coaches knowingly using illegal players be increased from the current season to the current season and subsequent season. • Modify the computation of “problem team penalties” so that illegal player penalties are not included in these computations for regular season game terminations. However, the suspension from the tournament would be retained in most cases.

Issue/Proposal	Summary of Recommended Change
<p>1 Club and Coach Guide</p>	
<p>2 The SFL’s rules for rescheduling games for 3 the convenience of the club are unnecessarily 4 complex and burdensome. These rules do not 5 allow the clubs to move games to better fields 6 as they become available until the opposing 7 team agrees to the change. Trying to 8 coordinate all the changes is time consuming 9 and many require multiple Emails to even get 10 a coach to respond. The clubs should be 11 allowed to make any game schedule 12 adjustments that they consider beneficial, e.g., 13 the change would result in the game being 14 played on a better field or the change would 15 support their assignment of game officials.</p>	<p>The SFL Commissioners are recommending that this proposal not be adopted.</p>
<p>16 Clubs are facing increasing difficulties in 17 providing the necessary game field and game 18 official resources to support the Wayne 19 Gilbert Memorial Tournament. In order to 20 better align the available resources to the 21 tournament goal of having teams play other 22 teams of comparable abilities, the tournament 23 should be replaced with a Special Regular 24 Season game.</p>	<p>The SFL Commissioners are recommending that the Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament be replaced with a Special Regular Season Game that is structured so that teams of comparable abilities will be scheduled against each other for one game. This approach will (1) reduce the resource requirements for the clubs to about the same as those for the regular season games on a given weekend, (2) allow about half the teams to play the same number of games as if the tournament had been held, and (3) reduce the registration fees paid by the clubs.</p>

25
26 **ADMINISTRATIVE RULES FOR THE LAWS OF THE GAME**

27
28 **Game Termination**

29
30 **Current Wording**

31
32 Section X.A.1.c.

33
34 The player removal/addition process continues for every goal that increases/decreases the
35 differential, until the goal differential reaches eight (8) for teams playing the 11 v 11 format
36 and seven (7) for teams playing the 9 v 9 format. When the score differential reaches these

1 levels, the game is automatically terminated without a penalty being assessed to either team
2 since the number of allowed players on the field falls below the minimum number of players
3 needed for the team with the most goals.
4

5 **Issue/Proposal**

6

7 The objective of the game should be to allow the players to play regardless of the score in
8 order to maximize the playing time. The rule for mandatory termination should be modified
9 to allow the game to continue when both coaches agree and no forfeits be assessed for
10 excessive game scores in such cases.
11

12 **Discussion**

13

14 The implementation of this proposal seems difficult since the SFL has seen many cases of
15 game officials having difficulty in understanding the current rule. Also, it is unclear how to
16 resolve cases where one coach says “both coaches agreed to waive the game termination
17 requirement” and the other coach says “the other team told the official that the game should
18 continue and the official agreed without asking us and the other team should forfeit”. The
19 administrative efforts attempting to resolve such disputes would be excessive and it is unclear
20 whether the SFL could obtain all the necessary game reports, even if such administrative
21 efforts were considered acceptable, to resolve any disputes. During the Fall 2021 season,
22 clubs failed to provide game reports for about 14 percent of the games where the SFL
23 requested them to support red cards issued or individuals asked to leave the field. In
24 addition, during the Fall 2021 season we noted several examples where coaches attempted to
25 “play the forfeit card” because of excessive score differences or teams failing to remove
26 players as required by the current rules.
27

28 **SFL Commissioners’ Recommendation** – The SFL Commissioners recommend that this
29 proposed change not be adopted.
30

31 **Tournament Roster Checks**

32

33 **Current Wording**

34

35 Section III.B.2.a.

36
37 Player issues include but are not limited to (1) name/birth date provided by the player does
38 not agree with the SFL Team Roster, (2) uniform number worn does not agree with SFL
39 Team Roster, (3) SFL Team Roster shows player issues such as missing uniform numbers,
40 duplicate uniform numbers, etc.
41

1 Section III.B.2.c.
2

3 Players whose uniform numbers do not agree with the SFL Team Roster or where the SFL
4 Team Roster shows player issues are not allowed to play.
5

6 **Issue/Proposal**
7

8 During the tournament a number of players were not allowed to play because of minor player
9 issues such as (1) birth dates off by several days even through the parent had a birth
10 certificate proving the birth date on the SFL Team Roster was incorrect and (2) a player's
11 uniform number did not agree with the SFL Team Roster but the player provided the correct
12 name and birth date. During the regular season teams are allowed to (1) make up to three
13 uniform number changes on the SFL Team Roster without any penalties and (2) the opposing
14 coach is allowed to also waive any roster issues. The SFL's rules should facilitate letting
15 players play rather than penalizing players for administrative mistakes. Accordingly, the SFL
16 rules should allow minor player mistakes to be waived.
17

18 **Discussion**
19

20 During the tournament, the SFL received many calls asking for waivers that were not granted.
21 These included comments such as a parent who claimed that her child had worn the same
22 uniform number for the last four seasons and this had never been an issue before and another
23 parent complained the player's birth date had never been challenged before and the parent
24 had a copy of the birth certificate to prove that the player gave the correct date. In such cases,
25 the SFL notified the applicable club of the complaint and decision reached, i.e., the player
26 was not allowed to play for the reason cited. For those clubs that responded, they noted that
27 (1) they had checked their records and they found that the data contained on the SFL Team
28 Roster was consistent with that in their data base and (2) they had no record asking for a
29 change from the parent or the coach. Accordingly, the error did not appear to be made by
30 either the club or SFL. The SFL Commissioners considered the following factors when
31 reviewing this proposal.
32

- 33 • The Administrative Rules for the Laws of the Game has a requirement that is designed to
34 eliminate these problems. Specifically, section IV.A.2. states the following.
35

36 "Coaches are required to inform their SFL Club Representative, as soon as possible,
37 of any changes that are needed for their roster."
38

39 **"Suggestion:** Coaches can require their players to wear their jerseys to practice to
40 record/validate their uniform number. Additionally, the date of birth, correct
41 spelling of the name can be validated. Any changes should then be forward to the
42 SFL Club Representative for submission to the SFL."
43

1 Furthermore, teams and coaches are allowed to make changes to the information used to
2 generate the SFL Team Rosters until after the week 3 games are played. Accordingly, the
3 coaches have at least three weeks to ensure that the information on the SFL Team Roster
4 is correct and, if changes are needed, submit the changes so the SFL Team Roster used
5 for the tournament does not have the kinds of problems on them that are the cause of the
6 waivers being requested.

- 7
- 8 • Adopting proposal has some significant implementation issues, e.g., what is considered a
9 “minor” roster issue that warrants a waiver. The SFL has never waived birth date issues.
10 In addition, it is unclear how the SFL should define “minor”. For example, in the Spring
11 2021 season we received a call asking whether a goalkeeper could play since the player
12 only had their unnumbered goalkeeper jersey and a decision was made by the SFL that a
13 waiver should be granted since (1) the opposing coach was willing let the player
14 participate in the game and (2) goalkeepers were not specifically required to have a
15 goalkeeper jersey with a number that agreed with the SFL Team Roster, and (3) it is
16 common to have a goalkeeper jersey that may be used by more than one person.
17 However, we received a complaint from a Referee Coordinator that this should not have
18 been allowed since it caused confusion for the game officials and we were not following
19 the rules. In the Fall 2021 season a rule was added to to address the concern raised by the
20 Referee Coordinator – all players must have a field jersey that is consistent with that
21 shown on SFL Team Roster (Section IV.3.a.(3) of the Administrative Rules for the Laws
22 of the Game).
 - 23
 - 24 • A similar proposal was made for the Spring 2016 season. Based on the comments
25 received from the SFL Club Representatives, the SFL Commissioners recommended, and
26 the SFL Club Representatives formally agreed when the rules were adopted, that the
27 existing rules relating this matter should be retained. One problem noted when
28 considering this proposal for the Spring 2016 season was that allowing the opposing
29 coach to waive roster issues was that “[p]eer pressure and, in some cases, comments
30 made by the referee that the coach should disregard the problems and play the tournament
31 game puts the coach in the position of being the ‘bad guy’”.

32 **SFL Commissioners’ Recommendation**

33
34
35 The SFL Commissioners recommend that this proposed change not be adopted because (1)
36 the past complaints that caused the rule to be adopted in the first place would not be
37 eliminated, e.g., allegations of illegal players, coaches “forced” to accept roster discrepancies,
38 etc., (2) the inability to define what is meant by “minor”, and (3) the significant
39 administrative burden that is expected to result for processing the waiver requests and
40 address complaints relating to those waiver decisions.

1 **Game Officials Not Available for Games**

2
3 **Current Wording**

4
5 Section V.C.1.b.

6
7 **Option 2** – Play the game using team officials agreeable to both coaches. Should this option
8 be adopted, the game results are binding and neither team may request a forfeit.

9
10 (1) If the two coaches believe that a safe and effective match can be played, then they should
11 play as long as the safety and the rules of the sport are not sacrificed. If either coach
12 believes that the match cannot be safely and effectively played, then the coaches should
13 consider a rematch. However, the visiting coach does have the right to accept a forfeit.

14
15 (a) If a forfeit is accepted because either coach does not believe that a safe and effective
16 game can be played, then the teams should leave the field. In other words, the teams
17 should not use the game as a scrimmage. If the teams do decide the scrimmage, then
18 both teams are assessed a forfeit.

19
20 **Issue/Proposal**

21
22 The ability to clubs to provide officials for SFL games is becoming an increasing problem.
23 Clubs are reluctant to cancel games on Friday night as called for in the rules that do not have
24 assigned officials since they believe that officials can be found by game time by “moving
25 officials around” or other means. However, when the club is unable to support the game and
26 the visiting team shows up at the field, the visiting team may be placed under undue peer
27 pressure to “just play the game” using the above option. However, especially at the older age
28 groups, this can result in result in many problems. Accordingly, this option should no longer
29 be allowed.

30
31 **Discussion**

32
33 The issues being raised are valid concerns based on our experiences during the Fall 2021
34 season. We have been told that several travel leagues have a policy that the teams should
35 play the game with “team officials” when game officials are not present at games. The basic
36 position is that it is up to the two teams to “make it work”. The experiences, especially at the
37 older age groups, is that the lack of at least a qualified center game official can result in
38 numerous complaints and undesirable game events that are impossible to adjudicate since
39 there is no independent individual to provide their perspective. For example, assume that a
40 red card offense is committed and the “team official” does not issue a red card against the
41 offending player. The player would not be suspended from the next game. In addition, if the
42 player happened to be associated with team that provided the “team official”, then additional
43 questions may be raised.

1
2 **SFL Commissioners’ Recommendation**
3

4 The SFL Commissioners discussed and understand the difficulties and complexities
5 associated with this proposal. It was agreed that the best practice overall is to not play any
6 games when a properly qualified independent center official is not present. However, using
7 “team officials” has been shown, at least in the younger age groups, to work in many cases.
8 The SFL Commissioners believe that an acceptable balance is to modify Option 2 above to
9 state that this cannot be used for the Under 16 Boys and Under 19 Boys age groups since
10 those age groups have historically had the most problems associated with unacceptable player
11 issues. The following is the proposed change.
12

13 Section V.C.1.b.

14
15 **Option 2** – Except for the Under 16 Boys and Under 19 Boys, play the game using team
16 officials agreeable to both coaches. Should this option be adopted, the game results are
17 binding and neither team may request a forfeit.
18

19 (1) If the two coaches believe that a safe and effective match can be played, then they
20 should play as long as the safety and the rules of the sport are not sacrificed. If either
21 coach believes that the match cannot be safely and effectively played, then the
22 coaches should consider a rematch. However, the visiting coach does have the right
23 to accept a forfeit.
24

25 (a) If a forfeit is accepted because either coach does not believe that a safe and
26 effective game can be played, then the teams should leave the field. In other
27 words, the teams should not use the game as a scrimmage. If the teams do decide
28 the scrimmage, then both teams are assessed a forfeit.
29

30 (2) If a properly qualified center official is not present for an Under 16 Boys or Under 19
31 Boys game then the home team forfeits and both teams should leave the field, i.e., the
32 game should not used as a scrimmage. In addition, should the teams not leave the
33 field, e.g., use the game as scrimmage, both teams will be assessed a forfeit.
34

35 **Penalties for Using Illegal Players**

36 **Current Wording**

37
38
39 Section III.B.1.c.(2)

40
41 **Illegal players** include (1) travel players, regardless of whether they are shown on the SFL
42 Team Roster, (2) players shown on the SFL Team Roster but declared ineligible during a
43 player validation and later used in the game, and (3) players not shown on the SFL Team

1 Roster. The penalties for using illegal players include forfeits for the games where illegal
2 players are used and the team may be excluded from the SFL tournament.

3
4 Section XII.B.1.c.

5
6 Infractions incurred by players, coaches and others resulting in season suspensions and three
7 (3) Team Demerits.

8
9 (1) Head Coach – Illegal players used.

10
11 Section XII.B.2.a.

12
13 **Illegal players used** – One (1) Team Demerit per illegal player per game. Illegal players
14 include (1) travel players regardless of whether they are shown on the SFL Team Roster, (2)
15 players shown on the SFL Team Roster but declared ineligible during a roster check or roster
16 challenge, and (3) players not shown on the SFL Team Roster. As noted in Section III. a
17 team using illegal players will be assessed forfeits for the games where illegal players are
18 used and may be excluded from the SFL tournament.

19
20 Section XII.C.2.

21
22 **Team suspensions** – Two types of team suspensions may result from the accumulation of
23 Team Demerits (1) suspension from the tournament, and (2) suspension from regular season
24 and tournament games.

- 25
26 a. Suspension from the tournament – A team that averages one (1) Team Demerit per game
27 played when the tournament schedules are prepared will be excluded from the tournament
28 but will be allowed to continue playing regular season games until the maximum Team
29 Demerits allowed are reached. For example, if a team has played four (4) games when
30 the tournament scheduling process is started and has been assessed four (4) or more Team
31 Demerits, then that team will not be scheduled for the tournament although it may
32 continue playing its regular season games until the maximum Team Demerits allowed is
33 reached.
- 34
35 b. Suspension from regular season and tournament games – A team that accumulates Team
36 Demerits that equal or exceeds the maximum Team Demerits allowed will be (1)
37 suspended for any remaining regular season games, (2) excluded from the tournament if
38 scheduled for any tournament games, and (3) placed on probation for the following
39 season.
- 40

1 Section V.A. of the Club and Coach Guide

2
3 A. Travel Player Identification – In past seasons, travel players have been found on SFL
4 teams although the SFL rules clearly prohibit this practice. In most cases, the review
5 found that the coach and club did not know that the player in question was on a travel
6 team. When the player was questioned, the player normally stated something like they
7 did not know that they could not do both. In addition, the SFL has received questions on
8 when it is permissible for a SFL player to play as a guest player on a travel team and
9 some travel leagues are at least considering allowing recreational players to participate as
10 guest players on travel teams during the regular season. Accordingly, the SFL adopted
11 rules clarifying the use of SFL players on travel teams. Coaches and players should never
12 rely on someone’s assertion that “this is allowed by travel.”

- 13
14 1. Coaches should discuss with each player on their team the prohibition of playing on a
15 SFL team and a travel team and make sure that the players realize that the
16 identification of a travel player on that team will result in forfeiture of games and
17 elimination from the SFL tournament. The coach should clearly explain to all
18 members of the team what is allowed and what is not allowed.

19
20 Section XI.B.2.a.(1)(a) of the Club and Coach Guide

21
22 Teams that (1) have received two (2) or more forfeits/scheduling forfeits, (2) have not played
23 the required number of games, or (3) have not properly reported their disciplinary issues by
24 the time the tournament process begins are automatically eliminated from the tournament
25 without appeal.

26
27 **Issue/Proposal** – The rules associated with using illegal players have some unintended
28 consequences that cause innocent players to be penalized. Specifically, the forfeits and Team
29 Demerits assessed to teams that contain illegal players can result in the team being eliminated
30 for participating in the remainder of its regular season games and excluded from the
31 tournament simply because of the actions of others. This occurs because the accumulation of
32 these individual and team penalties can result invoking the penalties defined in the rules to
33 penalize problem teams (commonly referred to as “problem team penalties”). When teams
34 are eliminated from participating in the remaining regular season games, not only are legal
35 players on the team prevented from participating the remaining regular season and
36 tournament games, the players on the opposing teams are also denied an opportunity to play a
37 game. It is recommended that the penalties for using illegal players be eliminated when
38 determining the “problem team penalties” that result in teams being suspended from
39 continuing to play regular season and tournament games so that innocent players are not
40 unnecessarily penalized.

41
42 It is recognized that the rules uses a high standards determining that a coach knowingly uses
43 an illegal player. However, stronger penalties when a coach does knowingly use illegal

1 players would provide an even greater incentive to comply with the rules prohibiting illegal
2 players. Specifically, coaches that knowingly use illegal players should be prevented from
3 coaching (1) during the season where the illegal players are identified as currently required by
4 the rules and (2) during the subsequent season.

6 **Discussion**

7
8 The current rules are designed to detect illegal players early in the season and eliminate
9 penalties associated with administrative errors – coaches are required to (1) perform a roster
10 check to validate that the information contained on SFL Team Roster is accurate and (2)
11 discuss the prohibition against travel and illegal players. Implementation of this simple
12 proactive process prevents coaches and innocent players from being unnecessarily being
13 penalized. Specifically, when the requirement is followed teams and players are not
14 penalized for administrative mistakes, e.g., errors in uniform numbers and birth dates do not
15 affect players since changes can be made through the week 3 games without penalty.
16 Furthermore, this process is designed to identify and eliminate illegal players as soon as
17 possible which reduces the potential forfeits and other penalties that result in the “problem
18 team penalties” being invoked that result in the innocent players not being allowed to play
19 regular season and tournament games. Furthermore, the SFL Commissioners have waived
20 the impacts of the “problem team penalties” in cases where the coach did not know that
21 illegal players were used even though the coach did not comply with the requirement to
22 discuss with the players the prohibition of using illegal players.

23
24 The position that innocent players can be adversely impacted when regular season games are
25 terminated because of the “problem team penalties” is easy to understand. For example, the
26 opposing teams that loses a game when the “problem team penalties” result in the season
27 termination for a team, lose a game even though they had nothing to do or could detect the
28 illegal players. However, the same logic does not apply to the tournament games since the
29 opposing team is not losing a game since one was never scheduled against the offending
30 team.

31
32 The primary reason for the rule requiring the coach to perform a team roster check and
33 discussion of illegal players was to eliminate the adverse impacts associated with illegal
34 players and administrative errors on the innocent players. Accordingly, the major cause of
35 innocent players being penalized for actions of adults or administrative issues is that coaches
36 do not perform the required roster check and discussion of illegal players with team rather
37 than excessive penalties caused by problems “beyond the control of the team and its innocent
38 players”. Furthermore, while experience has shown that detecting travel players from other
39 clubs may be difficult for a club to detect, travel players associated with that team’s club
40 should be detected and eliminated by the club before they are assigned to a SFL Team.
41

1 **SFL Commissioners' Recommendation**

2
3 The SFL Commissioners are recommending the following changes.

4
5 Section XII.B.1.c.

6
7 Infractions incurred by players, coaches and others resulting in season suspensions and three
8 (3) Team Demerits.

9
10 (1) Head Coach – Illegal players used. In addition, the coach is suspended for the subsequent
11 season as well.

12
13 Section XII.C.2.b.(1)(a)

14
15 Team Demerits associated with the illegal player penalties shall be excluded from the
16 computation of the total Team Demerits warranting a suspension of regular season games.

17
18 **Example A**

19
20 Team A has eight (8) regular season games scheduled and has accumulated eight (8) Team
21 Demerits for reasons that include two (2) Team Demerits associated with illegal players. In
22 this case, the team would not be suspended from its remaining regular season games. On the
23 other hand, if the team had accumulated ten (10) Team Demerits and two (2) of those were
24 for illegal players, then the team would be suspended from the remaining regular season
25 games.

26
27 Section V.B. of the Club and Coach Guide

28
29 Clubs are required to implement processes that provide the club reasonable assurance that
30 travel players or other illegal players are present on SFL Teams. These include (1) ensuring
31 that travel players from their club are not present on SFL teams from their club and (2)
32 ensuring that adequate information, as required by VYSA, has been obtained to validate a
33 player's age. Failure of a club to implement reasonable processes to eliminate illegal players
34 from its SFL teams may warrant the club be placed on probation.

35
36 Section XI.B.2.a.(1)(a) of the Club and Coach Guide

37
38 Teams that (1) have received two (2) or more forfeits/scheduling forfeits, (2) have not played
39 the required number of games, or (3) have not properly reported their disciplinary issues by
40 the time the tournament process begins are automatically eliminated from the tournament
41 without appeal.
42

1 (i.) Forfeits associated with using illegal players may be eliminated from this computation at
2 the SFL Commissioner’s discretion after obtaining the applicable SFL Age Group
3 Commissioner’s views. No appeal of this decision is available.
4

5 **CLUB AND COACH GUIDE**

7 **Allowing Clubs to Reschedule Games Without Getting Opposing Team’s Permission**

9 **Current Wording**

10 Section VII.D.

11
12
13 Game Changes and Rescheduling Games – discusses the various requirements relating to
14 game rescheduling. For purposes of this discussion, the current rules allow the home team to
15 reschedule without obtaining the opposing teams permission when the only significant
16 change is the game field, i.e., the game date does not change and the same game time is used.
17

18 **Issue/Proposal**

19
20 The SFL’s rules for rescheduling games for the convenience of the club are unnecessarily
21 complex and burdensome. These rules do not allow the clubs to move games to better fields
22 as they become available until the opposing team agrees to the change. Trying to coordinate
23 all the changes is time consuming and many require multiple Emails to even get a coach to
24 respond. The clubs should be allowed to make any game schedule adjustments that they
25 consider beneficial, e.g., the change would result in the game being played on a better field or
26 the change would support their assignment of game officials and simply notify the teams of
27 their decision.
28

29 **Discussion**

30
31 The current rules already allow game schedule changes when the only change is the game
32 field which allows the games to be moved to better fields as they become available.
33 Experience has shown that several clubs routinely use this practice. For example, some clubs
34 reserve some turf fields for potential travel games and during the game week when they know
35 those fields will not be needed for the travel games, they simply change the game field for the
36 SFL game to the turf field without changing the game time or date since the original game
37 schedule envisioned that this change would probably be able to made so the original game
38 time and date was selected to facilitate this change without getting the opposing team’s
39 permission.
40

1 **SFL Commissioners’ Recommendation**
2

3 The SFL Commissioners recommend that this proposed change not be adopted because of the
4 following.

- 5
- 6 • The current rules allow changes to game fields when the game dates and times do not
7 change. Properly planning for these potential changes when the draft game schedule
8 is reviewed by the club eliminates, or at least minimizes, any requirement to obtain
9 the opposing team’s permission to make a change.

 - 10
 - 11 • The SFL spends considerable resources when the schedules are prepared to minimize
12 schedule conflicts for coaches with two SFL teams. Experience has shown that when
13 club make game changes, sometimes the clubs do not take this into consideration
14 when making their desired changes.

 - 15
 - 16 • Teams, especially at the older age groups, make their plans for non SFL purposes,
17 such as players attending work, based on the published schedule. Making unapproved
18 changes to the opposing team’s schedule can cause a hardship on these teams.

19

20 **Replacing the Tournament with Special Regular Season Games**
21

22 **Current Wording**
23

24 No changes are proposed to the process and procedures used for conducting the tournament
25 should one held.

26 **Issue/Proposal**
27

28

29 For many years, the SFL tournament was held on a weekend where travel games were
30 normally not scheduled or only a few travel games were expected which freed up fields and
31 game officials to support the SFL tournament. Increasingly, it seems that the various travel
32 leagues now use the SFL tournament weekend to extend their regular season and hold
33 tournaments. This significantly reduces the pool of available fields and game officials.
34 Issues experienced during the Fall 2021 season included the following.

- 35
- 36 • Three clubs, which had over 40 teams in the SFL, that were requested to provide the
37 game fields required by the current rules did not provide any tournament fields. The
38 only reason teams from these clubs were scheduled for the tournament was because
39 (1) 10 teams dropped out of the tournament, (2) a couple of clubs provided more
40 fields than required, and (3) many clubs provided fields with lights which allowed six
41 Saturday field slots which generates the equivalent of more game fields.

42

- The SFL found out that one club that “provided” fields about one week before the tournament schedules were going to be published to the web site did not actually have those fields. The club was not “up front” about its field issues, i.e., they did not tell the SFL about the issue and the SFL had to “figure it out”. It appears that club knew early on that the promised fields would not be available (a travel tournament was planned by the club for that weekend) and the club thought that they could work something out in the week between when they promised the fields and when the schedules were going to be posted to the web site – they were unsuccessful in their efforts. The SFL spent over 8 hours rescheduling the tournament divisions assigned to those fields so that the tournament divisions assigned to the club would not have to be cancelled. This was only possible because several clubs “stepped up” to provide the needed fields and officials. The current rules did not envision this kind of problem. Specifically, the rules call for eliminating teams from clubs that cannot fields. However, in this case, although the teams from the club causing the problem would have been penalized if the games were dropped, the real problem was that teams from clubs that did provide tournament fields as promised would have been eliminated from the tournament since it was too late to reschedule the entire tournament in one day.

Replacing the tournament with an extra regular season game using the following concepts should (1) reduce the resource requirements for the clubs to about the same as those for the regular season games on a given weekend, (2) allow about half the teams to play the same number of games as if the tournament had been held, and (3) reduce the registration fees paid by the clubs.

- No awards would be awarded for season performance or the special regular season game.
- Clubs would be offered the opportunity to host the special regular season games. This allows (1) a club to potentially have more of its teams play at home and (2) a club to devote its field and game official resources to non SFL purposes, e.g., travel games and tournaments, without automatically eliminating its teams from the special regular season game as called for in the current rules when a club cannot provide all the fields needed to support their SFL teams.
- Clubs would be compensated for the game officials used for the special regular season games since (1) potentially a club may be hosting more than its fair share of games and (2) this would encourage clubs to support more than its fair share of games which help offsets the games that would be lost because of clubs that are unable to provide the field and game official resources due to competing demands. More importantly, this hopefully would reduce the number of players being penalized because of actions taken by adults that decide to allocate club resources needed to support their SFL teams for other purposes.

- 1 • Team pairings that cannot be placed on a field would be eliminated, i.e., teams would
2 not be scheduled for a week 9 game. However, this would probably result from the
3 lack of field and game officials from both clubs rather than only one club.
4
- 5 • The special regular season game would be designed, where possible, to pair teams
6 with similar records that have not played or scheduled to play each other during
7 weeks 1 through 8.
8

9 **Discussion**

10
11 Conducting the Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament requires significant resources and
12 support from the member clubs. Throughout the SFL's history, the tournament approach has
13 evolved to better match the approach to scheduling tournament games to the resources that
14 the clubs can be expected to provide.¹ A key expectation of the current approach is that the
15 clubs representing a majority of the teams will be able to provide adequate fields and officials
16 to support the tournament. The current process has a means to address small resource
17 shortages – teams from the associated clubs that cannot provide the necessary resources are
18 not scheduled for the tournament. However, should a significant difference exist between the
19 resources needed and the resources provided, this process prevents the primary objective of
20 the tournament from being accomplished – having teams of comparable abilities play each
21 other.
22

23 When a significant shortage of resources to support the tournament exists, one option is to
24 simply cancel the tournament while another is to schedule the tournament using only the
25 teams from the clubs that can provide the necessary resources as called for in the current
26 process. Both of these options are considered undesirable since the teams lose at least one
27 game when the tournament is cancelled under the first option and the tournament divisions
28 will not have teams of comparable abilities play each other when a large number of teams are
29 dropped under the second option. A third option is to schedule an extra regular season game
30 that is designed to specifically pair teams of comparable abilities against each other in a final
31 regular season game. This option provides about 50 percent of the teams with the same
32 number of games they would have had if the tournament had been conducted while helping to
33 ensure that the game is between teams of comparable abilities. The drawback of this
34 approach is that no tournament awards are given to any team and about 50 percent of the
35 teams play one fewer game than if the tournament had been held.
36

37 The SFL has modified its processes over the years to optimize the tournament scheduling
38 efforts to better match the requirements to the available club resources. At this point, it does

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

1 not appear that any significant changes can be made to address the increasing resource
2 constraints while retaining the current tournament objectives and concepts.

3 4 **SFL Commissioners' Recommendation**

5
6 After a great deal of thought and discussion, the SFL Commissioners have decided the
7 recommend to the clubs that (1) the Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament no longer be part
8 of the SFL program and (2) a special regular season should be added to the program as a
9 replacement. The SFL Commissioners reviewed a paper that discussed the conceptual
10 framework for replacing the tournament with a special regular season game – Approach for
11 Replacing Tournament Games With an Extra Regular Season Game (October 25, 2021).²
12 Based on this review and lengthy discussions, the following is a proposed addition to the
13 Club and Coach Guide.

14 15 Section XII.

16 17 **Special Regular Season Games**

18
19 A. **Overview** – The SFL may decide that the Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament cannot
20 be scheduled using the processes described elsewhere for reasons that include a shortage
21 of the required resources or adequate number of regular season games have not been
22 played. In such cases, the SFL may create Special Regular Season Games that are
23 designed to specifically pair teams of comparable abilities against each other. The
24 Special Regular Season Games are expected to be scheduled for play the week after the
25 last game generated during the regular season scheduling process.

26
27 **Note:** When Special Regular Season Games are scheduled, these games should provide
28 about 50 percent of the teams with the same number of games they would have
29 had if the Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament had been conducted using the
30 processes discussed elsewhere.

31
32 B. **Pairing Teams for Special Regular Season Games** – The basic process for pairing
33 teams for regular season games is same regardless of whether the age group and division
34 has an even number or odd number of teams. However, when an age group division
35 contains an odd number of teams that are expected to be scheduled, then some additional
36 actions are required.

- 37
38 1. A key step in scheduling the Special Regular Season Games is the approach used for
39 pairing the teams for this game. Two competing requirements apply to this process –

² This paper can be found on the Historical Documents page of the web site
(www.sflsoccer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/replacing-tournament-games-20211025.pdf).

1 teams should have comparable records and teams should not be playing each other for
2 a second time where possible. The following steps are used to pair teams in an
3 attempt to balance these competing requirements.
4

- 5 a. Teams are ranked using the existing process for determining the tournament
6 scheduling groups, i.e., actual game results are used after eliminating the effects of
7 forfeits and late score reporting penalties. Teams that would have been dropped
8 from the tournament because the team could not play or for other reasons outlined
9 elsewhere would be dropped from this ranking process. For example, assume that
10 Team 1 did not play enough games to qualify for the tournament or had been
11 assessed two or more forfeits. Team 1 would not be ranked and scheduled for a
12 Special Regular Season Game.
13
- 14 b. Once the teams are ranked, they are broken down into potential “scheduling
15 groups” much like the process used for developing the tournament scheduling
16 groups. This is done to help identify groups of teams that have comparable
17 records. A “scheduling group” for the Special Regular Season Games generally
18 consists of an even number of teams – 2, 4, or 6 teams – so that the teams in a
19 given group can be paired for a Special Regular Season Game.
20
- 21 c. A review of the possible pairing combinations within a group of comparable
22 teams is made to determine whether a combination exists that eliminates teams
23 from having to play another team twice during the regular season. For example,
24 assume a logical “scheduling group” consists of six (6) teams. The following table
25 shows how this can work.
26

27 **Example**
28

29

Team (In Rank Order)	Teams Played (Weeks 1 – 8)	Week 9 Opponent
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

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37 As can be seen in this example, the Special Regular Season Game opponent for a
38 given team may or may not be the closest to it by rank to avoid teams from
39 playing each other twice during the regular season. However, this is not

1 considered significant since all the teams in this “scheduling group” were
2 considered having comparable records.

- 3
4 d. When a “scheduling group” requires one or more teams to play another team that
5 they have already played, then a review is conducted to determine (1) whether the
6 game was actually played and (2) which combination produces the longest time
7 between the two games. The following table shows how this can work.
8

9 **Example**

10

11 Team (In Rank Order)	12 Teams Played (Weeks 1 – 8)	13 Week 9 Opponent
14 Team 1	15 Team 2 (week 3), Team 4 (week 1)	16 Team 4
17 Team 2	18 Team 1 (week 3), Team 4 (week 2)	19 Team 3
20 Team 3	21	22 Team 2
23 Team 4	24 Team 1 (week 1), Team 2 (week 2)	25 Team 1

26 As can be seen in this example, a combination does not exist that allows all the
27 teams to play another team in the scheduling group that they have not played
28 during the regular season. Accordingly, a Special Regular Season Game between
29 Team 1 and Team 4 provides the greatest time distance between teams that must
30 play each other twice during the same season.

- 31 (1) The League Administrator may make a determination that a different
32 combination may produce better results. Continuing with above example,
33 assume that the game between Team 1 and Team 2 ended in a tie, a better
34 approach may be to have those two teams play each other a second time. The
35 League Administrator’s decision cannot be protested or appealed.
36
- 37 2. Pairing Teams for Odd Team Age Group Divisions – Age group divisions that have
an odd number of teams that are eligible and plan on participating in the Special
Regular Season Games need an additional step. 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 process
described for pairing 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

1 team to play two games so that all teams will play at least one game. When this
2 occurs, then the team playing two games will have one game on Saturday and the
3 second game on Sunday. The following illustrates how this may work.
4

5 **Example**
6

7 Team (In Rank Order)	Saturday Opponent	Sunday Opponent
8 Team 1	Team 2	Team 5
9 Team 2	Team 1	
10 Team 3	Team 4	
11 Team 4	Team 3	
12 Team 5		Team 1

13
14 **Note:** For simplicity it is assumed that all teams within this “scheduling group” did
15 not play each other during weeks 1 through 8
16

17 As can be seen in this example, Team 1 will play two games while all the other teams
18 play one game. The League Administrator selects the team playing the two games
19 and this decision is considered final and cannot be protested or appealed.
20

21 **C. Determining the Home Team and Game Field** – Once the teams have been paired for
22 the Special Regular Season Games, a determination needs to be made on which team is
23 considered the home team since this will determine the club responsible for hosting the
24 game. The following are the business rules that are used for determining the home team.
25

- 26 1. The teams associated with clubs that provide the Special Regular Season Game
27 resources will be given preference for home games. When (1) both teams are
28 associated with clubs that provide Special Regular Season Game resources or (2) the
29 number of games associated with a club exceeds the tournament resources available,
30 then the home team assignment will be at the discretion of the League Administrator
31 and may not be protested or appealed.
32
- 33 2. When a team pairing consists of teams where neither club provided Special Regular
34 Season Game resources then the game will be dropped since neither club is
35 considered willing to support the Special Regular Season Games.
36
- 37 3. Once the Special Regular Season Game schedule has been drafted, the clubs will
38 have an opportunity to review the draft schedules for their club and to make the
39 necessary adjustments to fit their resource availability. If a club cannot support a
40 given game, e.g., no field is available or game officials cannot be provided, then the

1 SFL must be notified immediately and the game will be dropped or moved to another
2 location that can support the game. This decision will be made by the League
3 Administrator and cannot be protested or appealed.
4

5 **Note:** Other situations may arise, e.g., games associated with coaches with two
6 teams, that may result in the League Administrator deciding that the above
7 business rules should not be strictly followed.
8

9 **D. Other Issues** – The Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament involves (1) reimbursing the
10 clubs hosting the tournament for the game officials based on a standard rate determined at
11 the preseason meeting, (2) providing tournament awards to the first and second place
12 teams in a given tournament division, and (3) special rules requiring roster checks and
13 how uniform number issues are addressed. The costs for tournament game officials and
14 tournament awards are built into the team registration fees that are also approved at the
15 preseason meeting. When the Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament is replaced with
16 Special Regular Season Games, some adjustments are needed for these three items.
17

18 **1. Reimbursing Clubs for the Game Officials Supporting the Special Regular**
19 **Season Games** – Clubs need to be reimbursed using the standard rates approved at
20 the preseason meeting for the game officials used to support the Special Regular
21 Season Games since a club may incur more than its fair share of these costs.
22 Accordingly, the SFL will reimburse the clubs hosting the Special Regular Season
23 Games in the same manner it does for tournament games.
24

25 **Note:** Since the number of Special Regular Season Games will be less than the
26 number of expected tournament games if a tournament is held, the team
27 registration fees are expected to be less when the Special Regular Season
28 Games approach is used because of the reduced costs.
29

30 **2. Tournament Awards** – The Wayne Gilbert Memorial Tournament normally provides
31 tournament awards to the first and second place teams in each tournament division or
32 group. When the tournament is replaced with Special Regular Season Games, no
33 tournament awards or regular season awards will be given to the teams. Accordingly,
34 the team registration fees are not expected include any amounts to cover these costs.
35

36 **3. Impact on Special Tournament Rules** – As noted elsewhere, the Wayne Gilbert
37 Memorial Tournament has several rules that are different from those used for regular
38 season games. These include roster checks, changes to the SFL Team Rosters, game
39 times, and whether games can end in ties. Since the Special Regular Season Games
40 are replacing the tournament games, some confusion may exist on which set of rules
41 apply to the Special Regular Season Games. As shown below, the rules used for the
42 for Special Regular Season Games are the same as those used for the regular season
43 games.

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- a. **Roster Checks** – The tournament rules require roster checks before each tournament game. Roster checks are not required before Special Regular Season Games. Specifically, the rules relating to roster checks to regular season games apply to the Special Regular Season Games. In addition, since roster checks are not applicable to the Special Regular Season Games, late arriving players do not have to wait until halftime to be checked in by a game official.
- b. **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 Special Regular Season 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.
- c. **Game Times** – The regular season game time applicable to a given age group are used for the Special Regular Season 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.
- d. **Game Ending In Ties** – All Special Regular Season Games can end in a tie. During the tournament, most games go to penalty kicks if they end in a tie.