



***SUBURBAN FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE***

***Guide for Game Officials  
Spring 2023 Season***

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## **Prologue**

This document is designed for game officials and is an extract of the information contained in the Administrative Rules for The Laws of the Game that is considered directly applicable to game officials. If this guide does not specifically reference a Law of the Game, then the SFL did not consider that any of the SFL's administrative requirements were applicable to the game officials. The entire document can be found on the SFL Documents page ([www.sflsoccer.org/sfl-documents/](http://www.sflsoccer.org/sfl-documents/)). Appendix I contains of two page summary of key items for regular season and tournament games. Questions or comments can be made sending an Email to [sfl@sflsoccer.org](mailto:sfl@sflsoccer.org). Questions that may arise during the tournament may addressed by calling 703-476-6611.

## SFL Guide for Game Officials

### III. Law 3 – The Players

A. SFL Team Roster Presentation – Each coach is expected to provide a paper copy of the SFL Team Roster to the opposing coach (and referee if requested) before the start of each game.

1. If a team is unable to provide a paper copy of the SFL Team Roster to the opposing team, the opposing team may declare a forfeit (forfeits are mandatory during the tournament). Electronic copies of SFL Team Rosters are not acceptable substitutes.

#### B. Player eligibility

2. Player validations are conducted through the official present using that team’s SFL Team Roster. In some cases, e.g., regular season games, the player validation process may only be needed for a specific player or players while in the tournament all players on a team are validated. The player(s) line up by uniform number and each player is validated by stating their name and birth date when the game official calls their uniform number.
  - a. Player issues include but are not limited to (1) name/birth date provided by the player does not agree with the SFL Team Roster, (2) uniform number worn does not agree with SFL Team Roster, (3) SFL Team Roster shows player issues such as missing uniform numbers, duplicate uniform numbers, etc.
  - b. Player issues shown on the SFL Team Roster or detected during the player validation process are considered ineligible to play in that game unless (1) the opposing coach waives the suspension (regular season games only) or (2) a SFL official waives the suspension.
  - c. Players may be required to spell their name or sign their name on a blank piece of paper if required by the official.

**Note:** Common nicknames are exempt from the matching name requirement while uncommon nicknames are not. For example, a player that goes by the nickname name of “Dusty” should be shown on the roster if the name on the roster shows “Sam” since this is not a common nickname. Examples of common nicknames include Charlie for Charles, Sue for Susan, Ted for Theodor, Sam for Samantha, etc. Accordingly, if the SFL Team Roster shows the player name Samantha Jones but the player says Sam Jones, then this is not considered as a roster name issue.

- d. Coaches should ensure that their players understand the information that will be requested by the official conducting the player validation. However, the coach may not tell a player how to answer the questions, e.g., the coach may not tell the player the birth date that should be provided. Any instructions provided by the coach to the team concerning how the process works should be made in the presence of the official conducting the review.

1 e. When a player validation is performed during a regular season game, a report on the  
2 results must be submitted to the SFL by both coaches. The report will include (1) team  
3 making the request and reason for the request, (2) game reference number, (3) game  
4 date, (4) game field, (5) result of the validation, and (6) the details associated any  
5 discrepancies. If no discrepancies were noted, then this should also be reported. Based  
6 on the reports received, the SFL Age Group Commissioner will make a decision on the  
7 appropriate penalties that should be applied should a discrepancy be noted.  
8

9 3. Tournament player validation is required for all tournament games.

10  
11 a. When player validations are being performed for tournament games, a team  
12 representative from each team must be present during the player validation process.  
13 This representative does not have to be the coach.  
14

15 **Suggestion**

16  
17 Team representatives and game officials are encouraged to clearly annotate on the  
18 applicable SFL Team Rosters to show the players that have undergone validation  
19 process. For example, assume that the SFL Team Roster shows 18 players and 15  
20 players have been validated. Placing a check mark next to these 15 names makes it easy  
21 to determine whether a uniform number on the field has been properly validated.  
22

23 b. Player validations are performed as follows.

24  
25 (1) Initial player validation – required to be performed before the start of each  
26 tournament game. Game officials may not be requested to perform a player  
27 validation on arriving players after the initial validation until the second half.  
28

29 (2) Second half – Any late arriving players after the initial validation are validated  
30 before the start of the second half. Players missing the second half validation are  
31 not eligible to play in the game.  
32

33 (3) Validation for suspected ineligible and illegal players during the game.  
34 Specifically, a team may request the game official to confirm that a player the team  
35 believes has not been validated has participated in the game.  
36

37 c. Players whose uniform numbers do not agree with the SFL Team Roster or where the  
38 SFL Team Roster shows player issues are not allowed to play.  
39

40 d. Players that have not been validated must leave the “team area” on the field or take  
41 other actions, such as replacing their uniform jersey with some other form of clothing,  
42 so that there is no confusion on the players that have undergone a validation and are  
43 allowed to play.  
44

1 D. Substitutions – Substitutions may be made under the following conditions:  
2

- 3 1. After a goal.  
4  
5 2. Prior to a goal kick.  
6  
7 3. Prior to the start of the second half.  
8  
9 4. Prior to a throw-in by the team in possession. The opposing team may only substitute if  
10 the team in possession substitutes.  
11  
12 5. For an injury when the injured player is replaced. The opposing team may also substitute a  
13 player at that time.  
14  
15 6. After a player caution, at the request of the player’s coach. Only the cautioned player may  
16 be replaced with a substitute at that time.  
17  
18 7. At water breaks, if stoppage for the break occurs during one of the above substitution  
19 opportunities. Referees are encouraged to schedule water breaks during substitution  
20 opportunities for both teams.  
21

22 E. Team Size

- 23 2. Minimum  
24 a. 11 v 11 format – 7 players  
25  
26 b. 9 v 9 format – 6 players  
27  
28  
29

30 F. Play Down Rule

- 31  
32 1. If the number of field players that appear for a game is equal to the minimum required for a  
33 legal team and not more than the maximum field players allowed, all players must play.  
34 **No players may be designated as substitutes.**  
35  
36 2. The team with the higher number of field eligible players may play no more than two (2)  
37 players above the opposing team’s field eligible players.  
38  
39 a. The above rule also applies when players from the team with the lesser number of  
40 players leave a game due to injury or illness.  
41  
42 b. Red carded players on the team with the lesser number of players, does not cause the  
43 team with more players to play down.  
44

- 1 3. The maximum number of field players will be equal to the maximum number of field  
2 players allowed minus (1) removal of red carded players and (2) the number of players  
3 allowed due to the Mercy Rule being enforced.  
4

5 **Example**  
6

7 Team A starts the game with eight (8) players and two (2) additional players arrive later. A  
8 player on Team A is required to leave the field because of a red card or a mandatory  
9 reduction caused by the mercy rule. Team A may now play nine (9) players. This is  
10 computed as follows: Original players (8) plus late arriving eligible players (2) less  
11 mandatory player reduction (1).  
12

13 **IV. Law 4 – The Players Equipment**  
14

15 B. Jersey Issues – It does not matter what jersey color is worn by a team as long as no color clash  
16 exist and uniform numbers are consistent with SFL Team Roster. Teams are encouraged to  
17 only wear the primary uniform color as shown on the SFL web site to prevent unanticipated  
18 color clashes on game day.  
19

- 20 1. Color Clashes – Color clashes requiring the home team to resolve the color clash can only  
21 exist when the primary color shown on the SFL web site is the same for both teams. The  
22 home team is responsible for resolving such color clashes.  
23

24 a. Color clashes when the primary color shown on the web site for both teams is the same  
25 the following may be used to resolve the conflict.  
26

27 (1) One team wearing an alternate jersey color that has uniform numbers consistent  
28 with the SFL Team Roster.  
29

30 (a) The SFL does not require clubs to provide players with an alternate color  
31 jersey that is consistent with the official club jersey or pennies. The alternate  
32 color jerseys can be as simple as a consistent color T-Shirt (such as white) that  
33 has the player's proper uniform number on the back made with a permanent  
34 marker.  
35

36 (2) Pennies of a different color may be used by either team with the opposing coach's  
37 consent.  
38

39 b. When game day color clashes results from one or both teams not wearing their primary  
40 uniform colors, then the team(s) not wearing the primary color shown on the web site  
41 for that team must change into the uniform color shown the web site. It is possible for  
42 both teams to have to change uniforms, e.g., both teams are wearing white when white  
43 is not the primary color shown on the web site for either team.  
44

1 **V. Law 5 – The Referee**

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- A. All referees must be USSF certified.
- B. Referees are encouraged to visit [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees) for additional information.
- C. Clubs are expected to provide adequate officials for the games. If adequate officials cannot be provided, then (1) the visiting team should be notified by Friday night that the game cannot be played and (2) a forfeit will be assessed to the home team.

D. Rules of Competition

- 1. From the US Soccer web site:  
<http://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2014/03/17/11/16/may-2008-archive-ii-of-ii>  
“As to local rules of competition, the intelligent referee will always obtain a copy of these rules before accepting any assignments. That way he or she knows what lies ahead and he or she can determine whether or not to accept assignments/appointments to those games.”
- 2. Referees are encouraged to visit the SFL web site and under SFL Documents, download “SFL Guide to Referees (Regular Season & Tournament).”
  - a. Should a game official have a question regarding the SFL requirements relating to a game, they may call the SFL at 703-476-6611. During the regular season the SFL does not guarantee that someone will be available.
- 3. Reporting misconduct – Referees are required to automatically report serious misconduct to the SFL through their club’s reporting process. These required reports include red cards issued, racial slurs (regardless of whether a red card is issued), individuals asked to leave the immediate game area, i.e., within 100 yards of the game field, (regardless of whether a red card is issued), pervasive inappropriate actions toward a game official regardless of whether the individual is ask to the immediate game area, etc.
  - a. A referee may request from the coach, player, or other team official the name of any coach, player, or team official that the referee needs to perform their reporting responsibilities. If this information is not provided or incorrect information is provided to the referee, the team will be assessed two (2) Team Demerits in addition to any other Team Demerits that may be assessed during the game.

E. Age Requirements

- 1. The center referee will be at least two (2) years older than the age group they are officiating except as noted below.
  - a. The referee is at least the age of the game they are officiating, and at least one adult of 21 years or older is serving as an assistant referee.



1 2. Referees should not be immediate family members to team officials except in an  
2 emergency.

3  
4 **F. Quality of Officials**

5  
6 2. As noted by FIFA, the decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play,  
7 including if a goal is scored and the result of the match, are final. Accordingly, (1) game  
8 results will not be changed because of referee errors and (2) teams will not be compensated  
9 for referee errors. The mechanism available to address such matters is to notify the club  
10 providing the officials of the errors so that they can consider such cases when evaluating  
11 their referees' performance and guidance that may be needed on how to implement a given  
12 rule or set of rules so that these errors do not happen in future games.

13  
14 **G. Other**

15  
16 1. Game officials may determine that the game conditions are unsafe to play or continue  
17 playing a game. This is a decision made by the referee and may not be protested.

18  
19 2. In order to keep the tournament games on schedule, the referee will normally keep a  
20 running clock, i.e., the clock is not stopped for injuries, substitutions, etc. However, the  
21 referee may decide to stop the clock if the referee believes that it will not adversely affect  
22 the overall tournament game schedule. This is a decision made by the referee and may not  
23 be protested.

24  
25 3. The referee is allowed to use their discretion on when it is too dark to play safely.  
26 Therefore, the last games of the day may be shortened because of darkness. This is a  
27 decision made by the referee and may not be protested.

28  
29 **VI. Law 6 – The Other Match Officials**

30  
31 A. All match officials must be USSF certified.

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33 B. Referees are encouraged to visit [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees) for additional information.

34  
35 C. All match officials should be familiar with LAW 5 – THE REFEREE above.

36  
37 **VII. Law 7 – The Duration of the Match**

38  
39 A. Game Times – The following governs the game times for regular season and tournament  
40 games.

Age Group(s)	Regular Season Games	Tournament Games
12 and Under	30 minute halves	30 minute halves
14 and Under	35 minute halves	35 minute halves
16 and Under	40 minute halves	35 minute halves
19 and Under	40/45 minute halves if time allows and both coaches agree	35 minute halves

**X. Law 10 – Determining the Outcome of A Match**

**A. Mercy Rule**

1. When the goal differential between two teams has reached four (4), the winning team is obligated to remove a player from the field. This continues for each additional goal scored until the minimum number of players needed to play the game is reached, i.e., seven (7) players for games playing the 11 v 11 format and six (6) players for games playing the 9 v 9 format.

**Example**

Team A is playing Team B using the 11 v 11 format. However, Team B only has eight (8) players present. Accordingly, as noted elsewhere, Team A may only play ten (10) players. When the score differential reaches four (4) with Team A winning, Team A is required to remove a player and this would continue each time the score differential increases until Team A only has seven players on the field.

- a. For every goal that the losing team scores, the winning team may add one player.
  - b. No forfeit may be awarded should a team not follow this rule. As noted elsewhere, the losing coach may terminate the game without penalty when the game score reaches four (4) or more goals for any reason.
2. When the score differential reaches four (4) goals, the losing coach is allowed to terminate the game without penalty, i.e., the losing team will not be assessed a forfeit and the game score at the time the team decides to terminate the game is used.
  3. When the minimum number of players is reached for the winning team, the winning coach is also allowed to terminate the game without penalty. If the game is not terminated and both coaches agree to continue the game, and the score differential continues to increase either coach may inform the referee and opposing coach that the game is being terminated at any time without penalty to either team.

- 1 4. When the score differential results in the winning team having the minimum number of  
2 players on the field, assuming both teams desire to continue the game, no more players are  
3 removed from the field if the winning team's score differential increases.  
4  
5 a. If the minimum number of players are present and the winning team receives a red card,  
6 then the game is automatically terminated, without penalty to either team, because the  
7 winning team would no longer have a sufficient number of players on the field.  
8

9 **Example A**

10 Team A is playing a game using the 11 v 11 format. Based on the score differential,  
11 Team A has seven (7) players on the field. Both teams desire to continue playing the  
12 game. Team A scores an additional goal. Assuming that both teams desire to continue  
13 playing, then Team A does not have to remove another player, i.e., Team A can still  
14 field seven (7) players.  
15  
16

17 **Example B**

18 Team A is playing a game using the 11 v 11 format. Based on the score differential,  
19 Team A has eight (8) players on the field. A player from Team A receives a red card.  
20 Assuming that both teams desire to continue playing the game, the game is continued  
21 with Team A having seven (7) players on the field. On the other hand, if Team A had  
22 seven (7) players on the field prior to a player receiving a red card, then the game would  
23 be terminated without a penalty to either team since Team A no longer had the  
24 minimum number of required players, i.e., Team A is not allowed to substitute for the  
25 red carded player.  
26  
27  
28

## SFL Summary Guide for Game Officials

This guide is intended to serve as a summary guide to game officials on the key aspects of officiating the SFL regular season/tournament games and highlight differences between SFL games and games that may be played by other leagues. If you have questions during the tournament, please call 703-476-6611. The SFL welcomes comments on how this document can be improved.

Topic	Comments
<b>Game times</b>	<p><b>Regular Season Games</b> – Game times for U11/12 games – two 30 minute halves, U13/14 games – two 35 minute halves, U16s – two 40 minute halves. Under 19 games may consist of two 40 minute halves due to field limitations although 45 minute halves are permitted when both coaches agree.</p> <p><b>Tournament Games</b> – Game times for U11/12 games are two 30 minute halves. All other age groups have two 35 minute halves.</p>
<b>Substitutions</b>	<p>Substitutions may be made under the following conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After a goal.</li> <li>• Prior to a goal kick.</li> <li>• Prior to the start of the second half,</li> <li>• Prior to a throw-in by the team in possession (the opposing team may only substitute if the team in possession substitutes).</li> <li>• For an injury when the injured player is replaced (the opposing team may also substitute a player at that time).</li> <li>• After a player caution, at the request of the player’s coach (only the cautioned player may be replaced with a substitute at that time).</li> <li>• At water breaks, if stoppage for the break occurs during one of the above substitution opportunities. Game officials are encouraged to schedule water breaks during substitution opportunities for both teams.</li> </ul>
<b>SFL Team Rosters – General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches are required to exchange paper copies of the SFL Team Roster prior to the start of each game. The game officials may also request each coach to provide a paper copy of the SFL Team Roster. The only acceptable roster form is the SFL Team Roster generated by the SFL.</li> <li>• Only the players shown on the SFL Team Roster are allowed to play.</li> <li>• The SFL Team Roster shows all waivers that have been granted to the team. These include medical waivers that allow a player to “play down”. It also shows players on the roster that have been assigned to the team that are not allowed to play because they have not received the necessary waiver and any limitations on the waiver provided, e.g., players that do not meet the age requirements for their teams are not normally allowed to play.</li> <li>• The rosters also show roster problems that may prevent a player from playing. These include the following codes shown on the SFL Team Roster – DPPMNP, DUNMBC, IBDMNP, No Number, and WRPMNP . <b>Tape is not allowed to be used to address uniform number issues.</b></li> </ul>
<b>SFL Team Rosters – Regular Season Games</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opposing coach is allowed to waive roster issues shown on the SFL Team Roster.</li> <li>• The only changes allowed on the SFL Team Roster are uniform number changes. It is expected that all players at the field will be listed on the SFL Team Roster and have uniform numbers that match what is shown on the team roster. The following are the limitation on uniform number changes unless the opposing coach agrees to waive these requirements – Week 1 – Unlimited, remaining weeks – no more than 3 changes.</li> <li>• Failure to provide a proper SFL Team Roster at the game is grounds for the game to be forfeited. Forfeits due to missing rosters are not mandatory for regular season games. A coach may also request a player validation after the game has started when circumstances warrant such a request, e.g., a number of players for the opposing team show up after the game has started and missed the initial roster check.</li> </ul>

Topic	Comments
<b>SFL Team Rosters – Tournament Games</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players may not participate in a tournament game until validated by the game official. Player validations must occur prior to the game start. The only other time players may be validated is during the halftime break. Any players arriving after this validation, may not participate in the game. It is suggested that the SFL Team Roster be annotated with the players that have been validated should questions arise during the game about whether the players participating in the game have been validated, e.g, late arriving players being used by a coach prior to the second half validation has been performed.</li> <li>• Each coach must provide the game official a paper copy of their roster. If a coach does not provide a paper copy of the roster that team forfeits the game and the game is abandoned. If neither coach has a roster, then both teams forfeit.</li> <li>• Players stand up in uniform number order and provide the game official with their uniform number, name, and date of birth. <b>Tape may not be used for uniform numbers unless specifically authorized by the SFL.</b></li> <li>• Players whose uniform number, name, and/or birth date do not agree with the roster are not allowed to play. <b>The opposing coach may not waive these issues.</b> If a color clash between two teams exists, it is the responsibility of the home team shown on the tournament schedule to change colors by using an alternate colored jersey or use pennies. Uniform numbers of alternate color uniforms must agree with SFL Team Roster.</li> </ul>
<b>Play down rule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A team is permitted to play with a maximum of two (2) additional players on the field than the opposing team when the opponent does not have the maximum players allowed. This does not apply if the shortage is due to player(s) being sent off because the player(s) received a red card. (Law III.)</li> <li>• When the goal differential reaches 4 goals, the team with the most goals is required to (1) take a player off the field and (2) take another player off for each additional goal scored until the minimum number of players is reached (six (6) for 9 v 9 games and seven (7) for 11 v 11 games). Games are only terminated early because of excessive scores at the request of the winning or losing coach. (Law X.)</li> </ul>
<b>Player Injuries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Player injuries that result in concussions are a point of emphasis by VYSA and the SFL. While the SFL has received few reports of severe injury during SFL games, all parties should ensure that actions are taken to minimize the risk of injury to the players in our league. Game officials can assist by making player safety a point of emphasis during the season. Be prepared to stop play quickly if a player appears to be injured.</li> </ul>
<b>Coach or Spectator Behavior</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The SFL has received an increasing number of reports of coaches and spectators that are foul mouthed and verbally abusive toward officials and opposing team players and parents. Several have threatened physical violence. Game officials should vigorously enforce the existing rules by ejecting anyone displaying this type of behavior and reporting them after the game. If a coach or spectator refuses to leave the field, then the game must be suspended until the offender complies and leaves the field. Complete details of the incident must be included in the game report as soon as possible after the game (include the names of the offenders if possible). The club should also make a decision on whether the offense warrants submission to VYSA’s Adjudication Committee for additional sanctions.</li> </ul>
<b>Ending games early</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Games may be ended early when (1) weather conditions, such as lighting, dictate or (2) insufficient daylight exists to safely play the game. This is a game official decision and the game results at the time of termination are used regardless of when the game is terminated.</li> </ul>
<b>Can tournament games end in ties?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most tournament games use the single elimination tournament format which means that tournament games cannot end in a tie. The coaches should know whether the game can end in a tie. The web site shows whether a game can end in a tie on the Tournament Schedule page. This is obtained by going to <a href="http://www.sflsoccer.org/age-group-information">www.sflsoccer.org/age-group-information</a> and clicking on the age group. Games that cannot end in a tie immediately go into penalty kicks if tied at the end of regulation time. The FIFA Procedures to Determine the Winner of A Match – Kicks from the Penalty Mark will apply, in accordance with applicable USSF guidance, unless otherwise instructed by the SFL.</li> </ul>