

SUBURBAN FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

Guide to Referees

SFL Guide to Referees

Contents

SFL MODIFICATIONS TO FIFA LAWS	3
• Law 3 – The Number of Players SFL Play-Down Rule Substitution Opportunities	3
Law 4 – The Players’ Equipment	4
Law 7 – The Duration of the Game	4
TEAM ROSTER REQUIREMENTS	5
SFL Rules Regarding Team Rosters How to Conduct Roster Challenges Possible Outcomes from a Roster Challenge	
TOURNAMENT FORMAT INFORMATION	6
Round Robin Format Single Elimination Format Special Considerations Regarding Game Duration	
PLAYER INJURIES	7
COACH OR SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS	7
REFEREE GAME REPORTS	7

SFL MODIFICATIONS TO FIFA LAWS

All games will be played in accordance with “FIFA Laws of the Game” as modified by the USSF for youth play and as clarified in these instructions. Nothing in these rules precludes individual clubs from imposing more stringent rules on their own teams.

Law 3 – The Number of Players

The maximum number of players allowed for the respective age groups is shown in the table below along with the minimum number required to start or continue a game.

Age Group	Minimum Number	Maximum Number
U12 Boys & Girls	5	8
U14 Boys & Girls	7	11
U16 Boys & Girls	7	11
U19 Boys & Girls	7	11

SFL Play-Down Rule

1. When one team fields less than the maximum number of players, the opposing team may not play with more than two players over the number fielded by the other team. The table below shows the maximum number of players one team is allowed to use when another team fields less than the maximum number allowed.

Age Group	Players for Team A	Maximum Players Allowed for Team B
U12 Boys & Girls	5	7
U12 Boys & Girls	6 or 7	8
U14 – U19 Boys & Girls	7	9
U14 – U19 Boys & Girls	8	10
U14 – U19 Boys & Girls	9 or 10	11

2. The above play-down rules also apply when players from the team with the lesser number of players leave a game due to injury or illness. In these circumstances, the opposing team should not continue play with more than two players over the number that the other team has on the field of play.
3. Red carded players on the short sided team do not cause the team with more players to be required to play down. For example if Team A has 11 players and Team B has 9 players and Team B receives a red card, Team A is not required to play down to 10 players.
4. Coaches are strongly encouraged to reduce the number of players on the field once a team has scored 5 goals more than the other team. For example, if a team is winning the game 5 – 1 and scores another goal, they should reduce the number of players on the field by at least one player. A game score of 10 – 0 provides no more benefits than a game score of 3 – 0 since goals scored is not used in any of the team ranking factors.
5. While referees cannot require or enforce the removal of a player based on score they are permitted, and even encouraged, to remind coaches of this provision of the SFL rules. The referee must be informed by the team when removing a player.
6. In the event that a team is losing by six goals or more the coach of the losing team can ask the referee to terminate the game and the players for both teams will leave the field.

This mercy rule is new for the Fall 2011 season and the implementation of the rule is solely at the discretion of the losing team coach (not the referee).

Substitution Opportunities

Substitutions may be made with the consent of the referee, at the following times:

1. Prior to a throw-in when the ball is in possession of the team substituting. The opposing team may substitute as well if the team in possession is making a substitution.
2. Goal kick by either team.
3. After a goal by either team and prior to the succeeding kick-off.
4. During the half-time interval.
5. After an injury (the injured player may be replaced and the opposing team may also substitute one player).
6. When a coach requests to substitute a player who has just been cautioned (yellow card).

Law 4 – The Players’ Equipment

Shin-guards are mandatory and each player must wear FIFA acceptable sport shoes or sneakers. Metal cleats shall not be worn. No jewelry shall be worn on any exposed part of the body, with the exception of medical alert bracelets which may need to be taped down or covered with a wrist band in order to be safe. Casts on arms must be covered in a cushioning material in order to prevent injury to other players. The decision as to whether a cast is not dangerous or used in a dangerous manner solely belongs to the referee.

Teams must have matching colored jerseys with a unique number assigned to each player. The only exception is for cases when the SFL has provided approval for a club to assign players to two teams and that results in duplicate numbers on one of the teams. In that case a duplicate number may be ignored, or tape can be used on the back of the jersey to create a unique number.

Coaches are required to contact each other during the week to discuss team colors so that conflicts can be avoided. If a color conflict exists between two teams at a game, it is the responsibility of the home team to change colors by using an alternate colored jersey. Alternate jerseys are not required to have numbers.

Law 7 – The Duration of the Game

Game times for the respective age groups are shown in the table below.

Age Group	Regular Season Games	Tournament Games²
U12 Boys & Girls	30 minute halves	30 minute halves
U14 Boys & Girls	35 minute halves	35 minute halves
U16 Boys & Girls	40 or 45 minute halves ¹	35 minute halves
U19 Boys & Girls	40 or 45 minute halves ¹	35 minute halves

1. When both coaches agree and enough time has been allotted in the game slots, U16 and U19 teams may play 45 minute halves. Referees must discuss this option with both coaches prior to the match.
2. These times are subject to change depending on the tournament format that is selected for a given site.

TEAM ROSTER REQUIREMENTS

Coaches are required to exchange team rosters prior to the start of each game. Any discrepancies that are identified with a team roster will be discussed by the coaches, and the referee will be informed of the outcome when necessary.

It is expected that all players at the field will be listed on the team roster and have uniform numbers that match what is shown on the team roster. In addition, a proper team roster meets the following requirements:

1. The roster is provided on SFL Form SFL-2E or an SFL-approved substitute form.
2. The roster contains a handwritten signature from the SFL Club Rep or Club Registrar.
3. The roster does not contain handwritten player names, birth dates, or uniform numbers.
4. The roster includes, as an attachment, any waivers provided to the team by the SFL.

Failure to provide a proper 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, but they are mandatory for tournament games. In the event that a roster discrepancy cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the coaches prior to a game, a coach may request that the referee conduct a roster challenge to ascertain the eligibility of any players in question. The coach must state which players he would like the referee to check. The coach may also dispute a player that arrives **AFTER** the game has started or when that coach has a valid reason to question a player already on the field. However, this challenge should be made at half time and must be made before the second half starts unless the player arrives after the second half begins.

When a roster challenge is conducted, the following outcomes are possible:

1. The referee can abandon the match if either coach is unable to provide a copy of his/her team roster to the referee. If the game is abandoned, both teams must leave the field and may not use the field for a scrimmage game.
2. The referee can declare one or more players as ineligible and the game will be played with those players excluded. The referee shall provide a complete report.
3. The referee will determine that all players are eligible and the game will be played with no players excluded.

Unless otherwise directed by an SFL official, the game will not be abandoned for cases in which both coaches have rosters but discrepancies are noted. The game will be played in its entirety and the SFL will make a decision later on whether a forfeit or other penalty will be assessed.

SFL players are not issued player identification cards as travel players are, so a roster challenge is conducted in the following manner:

1. Each coach shall provide a copy of his/her team roster and the referee will review the rosters to be sure they meet the definition of proper rosters as described above.
2. Each player being challenged will be required to write or state his/her name, birth date and uniform number. If any information provided does not match what is shown on the team roster, the player is considered ineligible to play in that game unless the other coach waives that requirement or an SFL official directs otherwise.

- a. A 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.
- b. The uniform number on the Team Roster must agree with the number shown on the player's uniform unless the opposing coach has agreed to waive the requirement for consistent uniform numbers.
- c. If a coach is found guilty of using players not on the Team Roster provided to the official, then (1) the SFL Club Representative will be notified with a recommendation of censure and (2) the game will be forfeited by the offending team if any portion of a game has been played.

The SFL must be notified by the coaches in their game reports any time that a roster challenge has occurred. This information should include the name of the coach making the challenge, the game number, game date, game field, and the result of the challenge.

TOURNAMENT FORMAT INFORMATION

The SFL schedules games for tournament groups in two different formats:

Round Robin – Teams will play three games during the tournament and any game is allowed to end in a tie. Winners in each group will be determined based on the outcome of all games played and tie-breaking rules will be applied when necessary. Penalty kicks will only be used for determining the winner of a tournament group when all other tie-breakers fail to determine a winner.

Single Elimination – Teams will advance when they win games and be eliminated when they lose a game. Therefore, all games for a tournament group must have a clear winner defined. In the event that a game ends in a tie at the end of regulation play, Kicks from the Penalty Mark will be used to determine a winner. Referees should conduct the kicks in a manner that minimizes wasted time so that subsequent games will not be significantly delayed. Referees should review the Kicks from the Penalty Mark procedure prior to the tournament to be sure they will know how to properly conduct Kicks when required.

Referees should ensure that they know the tournament format that is being used prior to the start of each game. Normally one format is used for all games on a single field, but there can be cases when there are games on a field that could be in either format. If a referee has not been informed by his referee assignor of the format prior to the game, he should ask the coaches of the teams that are playing.

Note: If either coach is unable to provide a team roster to the opposing coach a forfeit is automatically assessed and no attempt should be made to play the tournament game.

All tournament games will be played in accordance with "FIFA Laws of the Game" as modified by the USSF for youth play and as noted in the SFL modifications shown at the beginning of this document. Referees should normally keep a running clock during a game, however the clock may be stopped for injuries if that will not adversely affect the overall tournament game schedule. Referees are not allowed to shorten the duration of tournament games in order to allow subsequent games to start on time. The only exception is in the case of impending

darkness, and for the safety of the players the referee may decide to have shorter halves for the last game of the day. When there is excessive heat during a spring tournament, referees may allow a short hydration break in the middle of each half if requested by the coaches.

PLAYER INJURIES

Player injuries that result in concussions have been receiving increased attention lately. While the SFL has received few reports of severe injury during SFL games, we should ensure that we are doing what we can to minimize the risk of injury to the players in our league. Referees can assist by making player safety a point of emphasis during the season. Injuries are more severe when one or both players are permitted to go up for a head ball at an angle rather than straight up. Tackles with cleats up, or from behind and through an opponent's legs increase the likelihood of injury. Be prepared to stop play quickly if a player appears to be injured.

COACH OR SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

In recent seasons the SFL has received an increasing number of reports of coaches and parents who behave poorly at games. They become foul mouthed and verbally abusive toward officials and opposing team players and parents. Several have threatened physical violence. Referees 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).

REFEREE GAME REPORTS

The SFL requires home team clubs to provide game reports whenever red cards are issued to players or coaches/spectators are ejected from games. Referees should promptly submit a complete game report to their assignor whenever they have games that involve ejections of players or non-players. While most red cards will result in a single game suspension for a player, violent conduct ejections that involve fighting will result in a 2-game suspension. Therefore, it is important to provide sufficient details in the game report so that the SFL can adequately determine if the conduct involves fighting (note: the SFL has a broad definition of what constitutes fighting). Similarly, coaches who are ejected from games will be suspended for the two subsequent games, so referees should be sure to issue at least one warning before ejecting a coach unless the behavior is so extreme that an immediate ejection is warranted.