

ASL Summer 09 Update

Here are various soccer news update items for your information. Let's start with the fall registration process and changes to that.

Fall Registration

We moved registration to the new electronic process for the summer competitions. When all the dust settled, we had about 140 teams between ASL and AWSL and except for Peter Mambo, everything eventually went fairly smooth. As we encouraged you the last 8 months, taking pictures of your players would save a lot of time and we actually had about 3 teams who had done that. We've found a couple of disconnects in the program that we've passed on to the vendor and hopefully will get those fixed. We'll have the fall team application process open later this week. So everyone is clear, this is the process we'll use going forward. For everyone whose record is already in the program, it's simply a matter of adding that player to your roster. For those who did not play during the summer, you'll need to get a record set up. We're working on setting up to allow individual players to pay by credit card. We're also allowing the option to pay separately for fall and spring for individual players. Essentially that means we're opening ourselves up to (1) revenue erosion from the people who used to pay to play fall and spring and drop out, which meant you had to add players to your roster and (2) repeating the entire registration process in February. Hence, you can pay \$110 in the fall for the fall and spring or pay \$65 in the fall and \$55 in the spring. You are correct that 65+55 does not equal 110. We know that.

For those who claim they can't possibly do this electronically, we'll have a \$50 fee to rent the office staff to meet with your team (once) and take their pictures and enter their information.

We'll have all the details posted this week in the fall registration folder.

Fall Soccer Other than Registration

Men's Divisions

Hampton Roads has indicated that they do not want to advance to premier division, having finished in second place in first division. Therefore, to provide open opportunity to all concerned, we'll hold a playoff for any interested team that was registered in ASL in spring 2009 to take that slot. The rules are pretty simple:

- Your team has to be registered for the fall 2009 season
- Your players are not allowed to change to another team if you don't win the playoff
- New teams don't get to participate

In that area, we are going to further expand the entry level choices for men's teams this fall and enable anyone to enter directly into first, second or third division. The only limit on your choice is that you get to stay there for the fall and spring. Previously we had allowed teams to select second division to enter and have generally discovered that people have not made crazy decisions. We will still require a team to finish at the top of first division in order to qualify for premier division.

By popular demand, and because we really don't have a handle on the number of teams who will enter any men's division, we'll add playoffs for the top teams in each of first, second and third division at the end of the spring season. From there, we're looking at adding an additional playoff competition that would involve the top two premier teams.

Coed Divisions

A couple of changes. First, as I'll expand elsewhere, we have a lot of flexibility with the soccer complex starting this fall. High school has apparently determined that they will not use the complex. Concurrently, we have added lights to 6 more fields. Therefore, on weeknights we can play up to 8 games each night.

When we added fall and spring coed soccer, it was with the warning that everything would be played on Sunday and therefore you shouldn't count on us coordinating your men's/women's games with your coed games. Of course, that advice was roundly ignored, which is one of the reasons why it takes 4 days to get the schedule completed. Therefore, we are proposing to move the Coed A division to either Wednesday or Thursday nights, as that is the division with the largest number of players that are playing on two teams each Sunday. Let's be clear that means they're playing on a coed team and either a men's or women's team, as it's against the rules to play on two men's teams, two coed teams, or two women's team in the fall and spring.

In order to play the Coed A division on a weeknight, we need to cover the cost of the lights. We're negotiating with the complex right now, but think that we can do a season under the lights for an extra \$20 per player. In addition to letting you get two competitions in without wearing yourselves out on a Sunday, it will present the possibility of additional teams entering if they realize that the risk is gone of not being able to make both games. For the first weeknight we're considering, the idea is to play high level competitive soccer. Yes, we're aware that some of you play indoor soccer. We looked at their websites and they don't appear to schedule the advanced coed divisions on Wednesday nights. And since the indoor arenas are operating with one field each, they can rearrange things more easily than we can, so at least they'll have plenty of notice.

Based on our numbers, we're looking at breaking the coed into 4 divisions for the fall. Further, based on the sandbaggers from the previous year, new teams won't enter the lowest division unless they meet with a member of the executive committee and we review your roster and the soccer history of each of your players. Otherwise, new teams can start in the top 3 divisions. The bottom division will start out with the ten teams that

finished as the bottom of last year's Coed C division. And yes, please feel free to send us your e-mail about the fact that although your team finished in the top half of Coed C (or B) last year, your team is really not very good and should be in a lower division. Those are always a joy to read.

The field situation

As I updated back in March, APS is completing construction of the 4 turf-field lighted complex by Volcano Vista High School and is apparently making other arrangements to move high school play out of the complex. With our additional lights, we've got the flexibility to add a lot of play during every season except winter. In addition to the coed A division concept above, we've had some suggestions about offering a serious men's division that would entail concepts of real soccer like limited substitution. We still have to do some negotiating with our youth counterparts to see how we can best divide up the available time slots and will offer up some proposals.

For the fall season we've had requests to add Lynnwood Park as a field for ASL play. We'll check with the city and see if that's possible, since it's fairly large and easily accessible.

Insurance

Based on our feedback from those playing in other soccer leagues, apparently some people are discovering that they aren't insured like they were when they played in ASL. Unfortunately, they're discovering this after they've been seriously injured and required surgery, which is generally not a good time to try to purchase insurance. On asking the person running the league, they then find out that the league carries no insurance on the players. If you wonder why they charge less, that's one of the reasons why. There is no free lunch.

The player accident insurance we carry through US Adult Soccer comes through our affiliation with the New Mexico State Soccer Association and USSF. That costs some additional money and generally insurance is a gamble in which you win by losing: you only collect under circumstances in which you wish you hadn't, either requiring substantial medical attention or having your car get smashed.

We've done some additional research on the accident coverage insurance and discover for about \$3.50 per player, we can double your maximum coverage from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Now, let's be clear what that does and does not mean. You can visit the player insurance folder on the web page and see what the coverage is. In certain categories, there is a specific dollar limit, such as \$25 per session for up to 15 sessions of physical therapy. That would not change. However, in the three categories of expenses related to the surgeons and the anesthesiologist, the payment is a percentage based on the usual and customary fee for the area. The reimbursement for those expenses could be increased such that the total payment for an injury could be increased as high as \$10,000 rather than \$5,000. For \$3.50, that's a significant change. Without getting into the debate on

universal health care to deeply, one thing we know is it's not here and a lot of people are uninsured or underinsured. Therefore, we're going to look at purchasing the additional coverage for one year for ASL only. Each NMSSA league can elect this option and they can do what they want. Based on some reduced costs for registration and our reserve balance, we can cover it for one year and determine next year whether it is of adequate value to incorporate it into our base costs.

Tournaments

We're working with a sponsor to recharge the first weekend of May tournament that used to be State Cup to instead offer a Cinco de Mayo tournament. Based on our membership in the soccer complex, we're entitled to that weekend for a tournament and have not been able to generate interest in the last couple of years as other leagues scheduled games across that weekend. We'll keep you posted on the progress there to see if we can't offer up a quality event.