

## Spring Season Updates March 26

OK, I've got a bunch of updates. One upfront item if you didn't notice on the front page is that Dep Zamora has simply stopped showing up for games, meaning they likely went over to play in one of the other leagues, so those games will be forfeits for the remainder of the season.

The spring fee goes to \$45 for the remainder of the season on Monday March 30. Transfers end this Saturday, March 28.

Also, we'll be delivering trophies and shirts to the winning teams and trophies to the second place teams so we can take pictures for the web site and you can actually get your awards when here's time to celebrate. I attended the US Youth Soccer workshop a few weeks ago and found some new ideas for individual awards that we'll look to implement next year.

I've set up a Twitter account for ASL under the name aslsoc. The only two reasons I can think of to tweet you is to let you know the office won't be open and for bad weather. I assume you're probably not interested in what I'm having for lunch or watching on TV. Which means it's safe to sign up as a follower since I won't be bombarding you with messages. I did not intend to use it to solicit scores since I get a decent response on e-mail and I'm not convinced that someone who doesn't respond to the e-mail will respond to tweet.

NM Youth Soccer Association is hosting some regional league games Sunday at the complex. Generally, it doesn't impact us other than needing referees on a day that we don't have enough already. If your team has a referee, please ask them to get busy this weekend and help out.

### Makeup games

I've got about 9 makeup games from the fall still pending. I've got suggestions out for the two premier and one first division game and waiting to hear back from the teams involved. For the four coed games, I'm proposing to play those on Sunday May 3. To the extent games have been postponed in the spring, I'll add those to May 3 unless you've got multiple games in which I'll figure out what Plan B is.

### Men's First, Second, and Third Division Standings

We added teams to the open spots in first and second division for the spring season. In the fall, I arranged friendly games between the first and second teams with open spots each week so they could get a game in. Some teams opted to just take a week off. Hence, those friendly games did not count in the standings. Counting the real games in the spring would punish the teams who by luck of the draw played the team that filled the open spot in the spring instead of the fall, so what I'm doing is entering the score and points for the two new teams (Catamount in first and Club A-1 Azul in second) but not giving any points to the opponent. Therefore, all the teams that played fall and spring will show 16 scores over 17 weeks and Catamount and Club A-1 Azul will show their

actual points (3 for win, 1 for draw) to demonstrate relative strength. Neither team can gain enough points to win the division and there isn't relegation between third and second, so that issue is moot in Second. I'll figure out movement between first and second at the end, as we often end up with second division teams that don't want to move up to first.

In third division, I actually arranged a game between the third division open teams each week and those games counted in the standings, so the games with new teams count as well.

### Online Registration

Two reference points.

So far as the fall/spring registration, Michele and I are close to getting all 2500 of you into the database. When that's finished, we'll open the database and assign each team rep a password and pin and there will be a "league admin login" tab on the front page of the web site where you can sign in and manage your team roster. We've done the heavy work for you and actually entered all the data.

Here's the link for a league in Florida that uses this system and can give you an idea as to what you will be doing. FYI, the USASA admin login is for me and Michele to access the web site and the registration. No one else gets that access.

<http://www.basl.com/>

Simply put, once you load a player's picture, which is real easy, that's a permanent record and we'll stop using registration forms. We will continue to require signed waivers.

Second reference point is that we'll use this system for the summer soccer season. The existing coed teams are pretty well set up in the data base and need pictures except for Strange Brew and Spam!. Going forward, in short order we'll have a tab on the front page for a team application. You open that, submit your team rep information and have a drop down menu giving you the option of applying for any of the 4 nights of coed soccer, over-30 or 5 a side. You submit that, we open your roster site and issue you a password and pin. You're ready to roll and it's a pretty easy system. Well, at least it seems easy to me. On the bright side, you'll have access to all your player information and can add players currently in the database to your roster. If they are truly new to the league, you enter the information we used to collect on registration form. You tell us when the registration is complete and we print the passcard and laminate it and it's available at the office to pick up. As you can see from the BASL site, you can pay by credit card as well.

What I'm setting up now is a web conferencing account so that we can do a series of one hour tutorial sessions that you can attend on your computer and watch how it works. That means Christie Wente doesn't have to hire a babysitter and can learn how to do this at home. Since we've found a generally cheap web conference setup, which is limited to

100 computers participating at a time, I'll probably set up 4 per month in April and May to get people up to speed for summer, then do the same going forward through the summer.

From this, you can print your roster to take to a game that will list the people to whom we have issued a passcard. So far, what I'm seeing is a roster that includes the player's address. THAT I don't like. I don't ask the referee to provide you his or her address, and I don't expect that information to go the other way, so I've got to determine how we eliminate that part, as the idea is to make this your one stop shop and make your life as easy as can be.

One other thing that I'm looking at with this is to take the team rep information out of public circulation. For those of you who were contacted by El Semanario newspaper to play in their winter league (at the complex which is closed in the winter) or hear from Juan Rubio or anyone else, they get your phone number off our web site. That's where they phish for teams since we're the only ones in town that actually publicly tell people what we're doing and who our teams are. I'm going to see if we can't restrict that and set up a private e-mail system within the Demosphere system so team reps can communicate with each other using Demosphere mailboxes.

So, what's all that mean? It means you need to take digital pictures and either send them to Michele or me or load them up yourselves when I open it up. Part of the tutorial will show you how to use the Resize function on photo editing software and the size needed for the picture. If a guy my age can figure it out, anyone can and it doesn't mean you need to spring \$400 for Adobe Photoshop.

### Summer Soccer

With the exception of the online registration, most everything will be the same as last year. I'll be contacting the over-30 teams with some options. I've requested these fields from the City:

Heritage Hills (2)  
Jackson MS  
Hoover MS  
Montgomery West  
McKinley MS  
Academy Hills  
Lynwood  
Lippett  
Grisham

Note that Bullhead isn't on here. Our contribution last year was a waste of money and I'm not inclined to squander any more money on that project. Everything looks great in August, YAFL rips it up in the fall, and then the people running profit-making enterprises disguised as soccer leagues finish the destruction in the winter. So we're just poring

money in a sinkhole, which the Parks Maintenance head that comes to the Blue Ribbon Sports Committee meeting acknowledged. I'll be looking at a couple of other fields as well as proposing some usage of the complex if people are interested.

Which brings me to.....

### Soccer Fields

Several items here. I got a call from city parks staff on March 13 to see if I could come to a press conference in 30 minutes on "the new soccer complex." I checked with the airlines and discovered I couldn't fly from Orlando to Albuquerque in 30 minutes and then asked "what new soccer complex?"

I've eventually discovered that apparently SunCal, who bought the Atrisco Land Grant property from Westland Corp, has (and maybe "had") offered the city property at Paseo del Vulcan and I-40 for a "world class" soccer complex with 8 fields. OK by me. I'd settle for an 8 field complex that is only North American class instead of world class. The mayor and the city council are apparently having some degree of disagreement over the timing of the funding which apparently could impact the timing and willingness of SunCal's land contribution. The upshot is God bless all of them, we can always use more soccer fields especially for my suffering friends who have children in the Westside soccer leagues. Since I work at a utility, I'm aware of how long it can take to build large construction projects and that's what this is. So hopefully we can get the funding and donation resolved and move forward, but I would suspect it would take several years to get this built once all the current disagreements are resolved. As you may have noticed SunCal lost their bid to get a TIDD from the legislature, which may dim their commercial interests in developing the property they bought. Whether that impacts the property donation I don't know. We had a blue Ribbon Sports Committee meeting this afternoon and had no further clarification there either.

I told you that story to tell you this one. APS is apparently planning to have a new soccer complex with 4 lighted field-turf fields online for the fall high school season near this same location. That project is probably doable, because it takes very little time from when you plant "field turf seeds" until the field turf actually sprouts. Like about as much time as it takes to roll out the field turf. So it's likely that can be ready for fall games and will also, apparently, be located at Vista Valcano High School, which is not far from Paseo del Vulcan. Much like our complex, you go where empty land is and as people in Rio Rancho would note about our complex, anyplace you build soccer fields is close to someone. ADO is close to me, so I consider that an ideal situation, but will acknowledge that a reasonable person who lives near I-40 and Paseo del Vulcan would consider a complex there a good idea as well.

Further, the city and APS have a deal on a new 3 lighted field facility at CNM (2 fields lit right now) and APS gets to use it half the time. However, there may be parking issue, but it's their issue not ours. In any case, there's more resources for APS games.

So what? Here's what. APS has, from day 1, played a majority of their games at the complex at Santa Ana. During about 9 weeks in the fall, they play 18 games every Tuesday through Friday night and use four fields on Saturdays. It's real easy to see how to move the four fields on Saturday, but we can replace the revenue from that since it's always easy to add Saturday play. That just requires referees, which I'll get to later. What isn't easy to replace is the revenue associated with 4 p.m. weekday games since no one other than high school is going to get away with THAT schedule. Obviously you can't squeeze 18 games onto 7 fields every night (4 at Vista Volcano and 3 at CNM). If you play at 4 and 6, you can squeeze 14 in and I suspect APS won't be real popular scheduling weeknight games at 8 p.m. But that's based on my view of popularity. Maybe they will. The important point is that APS is good for somewhere between \$70-90 thousand of revenue every year. Some high schools balk at going all the way to the complex to play and ant to play at their school fields. If I'm at Manzano or Rio Grande, I can understand that as well. So playing at high school fields could further reduce complex usage or completely eliminate it for APS.

The ultimate upshot is that APS is going to pay less to use the complex and the decreased revenues are not necessarily matched to decreased expenses. The youth leagues and we need those fields, so we've got some problems to resolve and I don't have any brilliant answers yet.

One thing that will help is that we're using up our previously awarded state capital money to add lights on 6 more fields. Those should be in place by late April or early May and will let us begin offering weeknight soccer divisions and we've got some ideas there. To the extent people can't play on weekends or we want to add age group play, we'll have a better set of options to do that.

### Referee Recruitment

Following off the previous subject, one of our restrictions on how much soccer we can offer is the number of warm bodies we have willing to spend their time being referees. Obviously pay is something of a motivating factor, since when I ask people who complain about them how much I have to raise the pay for them to sign up to be one. We've tried no shortage of marketing plans, generally directed at the soccer community since that might be the logical place to find people who would be interested. A fallacy in that approach is that it assumes you necessarily need to start someone out who at least claims to be familiar with the game. That may not necessarily be the case across the board. Obviously, for older youth games, high school games, and adult games I want someone in the center who knows the ball is round and the field is a rectangle. Also, our approach has been somewhat passive in that we put information out and let people respond to it or pass rules requiring members to effectively participate in recruiting by mandating the sacrifice of a warm body to be trained. We lose about 80 of every 100 warm bodies we train because they find that working the drive up window at least gives you the option of turning off the noise coming out of the speaker, an option not available with soccer players and parents.

What I've discussed with Bill Nordin at Duke City Soccer League and will also address with New Mexico Activities Association is to establish several "job fairs" that we publicize and present the details of the sport, the process to become a referee and the various risks and rewards you get from doing this to get spare income. Getting back to the subject of wanting experienced people, that's a noble goal, but frankly someone who has no clue can learn to ref Under-8 games (except Under-8 World Cup games, of course) and know just as much as most of the other participants. That warm body contributes by relieving the burden on the warm bodies who are doing ten games a week, particularly if numerous of those are older children and adults.

Obviously some of this is based on the number of job fairs around town as economic conditions have deteriorated and people have more need to find new sources of income. There is no shortage of opportunities so long as we're not getting three people on a game. Also, while practice fields are packed on weeknights, there is actually a lot of opportunity to expand soccer play and the real constraint to that is our inventory referees, not fields. The early agreement from the 70s was that the youth would play on Saturdays and the adults on Sunday. That's pretty much been kept in place for 30 plus years. In the 70s it was out of necessity because of limited fields. Now it's limited officials.

So that's a relatively new approach where we will try to get actual face time in English and Spanish with people and see if we can't get our information into the hands of the various government levels of staff at the city, county, and state who assist people looking for income opportunities.