Alternative System for Playing SAPL Interclub Competition

(To be used when there are 17-20 Teams)

Morning Session

Teams are divided into **two pools** – A and B.
Pools are balanced with respect to seedings (final positions from previous round).

All teams play three qualifying games. Match-ups are specified according to seed position (see Appendix A for details).

Teams are then ranked within pools, based on wins and points
(to give A1, A2, A3… and B1, B2… etc).

Afternoon Session

All teams play two playoff games, in groups of four.

Game 4:
Top Group: A1 plays B2, and B1 plays A2;
2nd Group: A3 plays B4, and B3 plays A4;
3rd Group: A5 plays B6, and B5 plays A6;
etc.

Game 5:
Within each group of four, winners play winners and losers play losers.

Final Rankings

As usual, winners of afternoon games are rewarded; losers of afternoon games are penalized. Hence…

The Top Group	play off for positions: 1, 2, 4 & 7;
The Second Group	play off for positions: 3, 5, 8 & 11;
The Third Group	play off for positions: 6, 9, 12 & 14;
The Fourth Group	play off for positions: 10, 13, 16 & 18*;
The Last Group	play off for positions: 15, 17*, 19* & 20*.

* Teams ranked 17 or lower may be relegated to Div II,
if the subsequent round has two divisions.

Appendix A - Prelim. Game Match-Ups

In all cases, teams are identified by their seed position…

17 Teams

Pool A	Play vs …			Pool B	Play vs …		
Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3
1	17	11	9	**2**	16	14	7
4	15	13	5	**3**	8	Bye	6
5	13	15	4	**6**	14	12	3
9	11	17	1	**7**	Bye	10	2
11	9	1	17	**8**	3	16	12
13	5	4	15	**10**	12	7	16
15	4	5	13	**12**	10	6	8
17	1	9	11	**14**	6	2	Bye
				16	2	8	10

18 Teams

Pool A	Play vs …			Pool B	Play vs …		
Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3	Team	Game 1	Game 2	Game 3
1	15	13	8	**2**	11	18	7
4	10	17	5	**3**	16	14	6
5	13	16	4	**6**	18	12	3
8	17	11	1	**7**	14	9	2
10	4	15	9	**9**	12	7	10
11	2	8	15	**12**	9	6	16
13	5	1	17	**14**	7	3	18
15	1	10	11	**16**	3	5	12
17	8	4	13	**18**	6	2	14

19 or 20 Teams

Pool A	Play vs …			Pool B	Play vs …		
Team	**Game 1**	**Game 2**	**Game 3**	**Team**	**Game 1**	**Game 2**	**Game 3**
2	19	9	8	**1**	13	18	7
4	17	15	5	**3**	16	20*	6
5	12	19	4	**6**	18	14	3
8	11	17	2	**7**	20*	10	1
9	15	2	11	**10**	14	7	13
11	8	12	9	**13**	1	16	10
12	5	11	15	**14**	10	6	16
15	9	4	12	**16**	3	13	14
17	4	8	19	**18**	6	1	20*
19	2	5	17	**20***	7	3	18

* With 19 teams, 'Team 20' becomes a Bye.

(For the sake of comparison…)

The match-ups for the standard 16-team format are as follows:

16 Teams

	Play vs …				Play vs …		
Team	**Game 1**	**Game 2**	**Game 3**	**Team**	**Game 1**	**Game 2**	**Game 3**
1	16	9	8	**2**	15	10	7
8	9	16	1	**7**	10	15	2
9	8	1	16	**10**	7	2	15
16	1	8	9	**15**	2	7	10
4	13	12	5	**3**	14	11	6
5	12	13	4	**6**	11	14	3
12	5	4	13	**11**	6	3	14
13	4	5	12	**14**	3	6	11

Appendix B - Derivation and Rationale

The team match-up schedules presented above were designed with the aid of computer programs that tried and evaluated virtually every possible combination.

The intention is to derive something as close as possible to the standard 4 X 4 pool format that we normally use with a 16-team Division I. The key features are:

a). High-seeded teams are rewarded with a draw involving lower-seeded teams – there is a steady progression in 'average difficulty of opponent' as you go down the rankings.

b). The draw is fair and balanced, in that any two teams with *similar* seed positions face a similar 'average difficulty of opponent'.

c). The top seeds do not face each other. If the top-ranked teams come out on top in the preliminaries, which in theory is the most likely outcome, then they shouldn't meet until the finals.

With these odd numbers of teams (17-20), there is no perfect solution. However, my experiments and analyses have shown me just how often you get significant inequities with a draw that's purely random – much more frequently than I expected. Within the proposed schedules there are a few minor anomalies, but they are trivial by comparison.

To quantify the result achieved…
Out of about *50,000* random draws, you would theoretically expect only *one* (on average) to be as well balanced as those proposed above!

In practice, of course, seed position (i.e. position achieved in the previous round) is a far from perfect predictor of ability. So there is still plenty of 'luck of the draw' to mix things up and keep it interesting. Nevertheless, by adopting the proposed schedules, we make things as fair and balanced as we possibly can, within the constraints of the seeding system.

Something to consider for the future, perhaps, is to have seedings based on an ongoing points system which accumulates throughout the season. This would be less sensitive to the vagaries that can occur on a single day of competition.

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