

## **Soccer Slam History and Development**

Soccer Slam was started as a competitive outlet of play for AYSO Region 1103. The unique rules were developed partly out of necessity, and partly out of design. First held in the summer of 2011, the tournament itself was patterned after both co-ed soccer tournaments in the southern part of the country, and after a modern 3v3 basketball tournament.

Because of the smaller size of the region, and the limited space available at any potential host location, it made sense to play the game short sided and co-ed. Three 10U fields could be squeezed into the main park at Middle Amana, and three more at the school across the street. The region had a few extra 10U Goals, so this became the field size. Given the field size, 6v6 seemed to be the most appropriate matchup, and a roster max of 8 was imposed to make sure every player got a maximum of playing time.

It quickly became evident that because of the space on the field, and the size of the field, things were faster paced and higher scoring than traditional soccer. The small number of reserves makes this a difficult tournament in terms of endurance, and it is often the case that a team coming out of pool play in the bottom of their bracket will end up being the overall champion.

Music is playing over the PA system all throughout the tournament, and a skills competition dominates the lunch hour on both days, with both bragging rights and cash prizes on the line. The tournament was designed with recreational players in mind. The sportsmanship trophies awarded to a team in each division dominate the awards table, though Champion through fourth place finishers receive trophy or medal recognition as well.

The history behind the Girls Goals counting as 2 points is a little more designed. Initially there was concern about making sure the girls were included on teams, or having all girls or all boys teams competing. This was solved with the gender requirements with respect to players on field. A more unique opportunity presented itself, however.

As a general rule, if we were to stereotype our players, especially the younger ones, we find that many of the boys would play with blinders on - trying to single handedly score every time. Many of the girls were less aggressive, and content to sit back playing defense. Many of our coaches had no incentive to try to break these patterns and in so doing, assist with the development of our players tactically. By putting the girls 2 point rule in place, we are giving coaches a tool to use. Those that take advantage of it are able to win matches even though they may have fewer actual goals. The boys are encouraged to be more field aware and willing to pass the ball. The girls are encouraged to move down the field and be involved in scoring opportunities, and both genders become much more aware of off ball movement and passing, and how it effects the game. This single rule in this tournament may have more to do with the tactical development of the kids in our region than any other single thing we have done.

An added bonus has been an effect similar to the three point line in basketball. No longer can you feel safe with a two goal lead, as one shot can tie it.