

Scheduling 101

Have you ever looked at the schedule and thought to yourself “Why are we playing Them again/There again?”, or “Why haven’t we played Them this year/There this year”? Read on....

Every Premier League/La Liga/Serie A team has its exclusive ground and can set exclusive dates, but a typical BCMSL Winter Season Division looks just like this hypothetical one...

#	Team (50's)	Field	Field Sharing	Shared With	Week 1	Week 2	Week3	Week 4
1	Abbotsford 50	One	Same Division	Aldergrove 50	Home	Away	Home
2	Aldergrove 50	One	Same Division	Abbotsford 50	Away	Home	Away
3	Burnaby 50	Two	Other Division	Burnaby 40	Home	Away	Home
4	Coquitlam 50	Three	Other Division	Coquitlam 60	Away	Home	Away
5	Port Moody 50	Four	Other League	Doesn't Matter	Home	Away	Home
6	Surrey 50	Five	Other League	Doesn't Matter	Home	Away	Home
7	Vancouver 50	Six	Not Shared	Nobody	Away	Home	Away

There are lots of things to notice about this Division, which is typical of what we have in the BCMSL.

1. We need an equal number of home and away games each week, every week, by definition.
2. There is a mixture of types of field sharing, some of which are not intra-BCMSL.
3. There is an odd number of teams, so there is a Bye Team every week – solved only by an interlock game, if one is available (we need another Bye Team in another Division of a similar age).
4. From a scheduling perspective, Teams 1 and 2 are great, because they can be swapped between home and away from week to week, as they are in the same Division AND the number of home game stays the same; I do this all the time, always trying to make sure everything balances out at the end of the season (equal home and away games). Why? See below...
5. Team 7 is pretty good for the same reason, as I can switch their home and away dates. Why? See below...
6. Teams 5 and 6 (who share with another League's teams) have the same home dates, so they will never play each other. I cannot move such a team's home dates. So the only way around this is to force one of them to be an away team, which normally means one gets 3 home games in a row and the other gets 3 away games in a row.
7. Similarly, Teams 1 and 5 would never play each other – unless I force an Away game on one of them. This is why I swap Same Division and Not Shared teams around field wise. Again, always trying to balance them out.
8. Team 3 and Team 6 cannot play each other unless I change one to an Away game (or vice versa); I can do this with team 3 by swapping with the team in another Division that they share the field with. BUT the change in the other Division must not disrupt the number of home and away games in that division, which must match. So in practice this means that this type of change nearly always necessitates TWO changes in each Division, which may not be possible. And it induces a cascade of changes at times throughout every Division.

Besides that, it's plain sailing..... The Summer Season is somewhat easier because teams play on different nights.

How many teams fall into the categories described above?

In the Winter Season 2019-2020 we had:

Number of Divisions: 7

Number Of Teams: 82

- Total Not Sharing Fields: 6
- Total Sharing Fields In The Same Division: 10
- Total Sharing Fields In Another Division: 53
- Total Sharing Fields In Another League: 13

So there were 16 teams which made life easy for the scheduler and 66 which didn't! And that was before it snowed....

So I hope this explains why you don't always get alternate home and away games, or you don't play every team (believe me I try) or why you may get a sequence of 3 home or away games (very rare)....

Here are the core principles I strive to achieve in scheduling (bearing in mind that scheduled games and games played are two different things...):

Everybody should play everybody else in their Division

There should be an equal number of Home and Away games for each team

Home and Away games should alternate as much as possible

Repeat games (i.e. same opponent) should be minimised

One final point – I don't schedule too far ahead during the Winter Season, so as to take into account cancellations, for whatever reason they occur. Typically, I do 3 months out.