

A.....OVERVIEW

- A.1 United is a postal soccer game in which each participant is the manager of a league club. The League has three divisions, each of ten clubs. Promotion and relegation are on a simple three-up / three-down basis.
- A.2 The playing season lasts for ten sessions (and the close season for a further two or three sessions). In a playing session clubs will normally play two league matches, and possibly one or more games in knock-out competitions. Clubs receive income in two forms; cash and Value Points (VPs) - VPs represent non-cash resources and are used to coach players to higher skill levels.
- A.3 There are eight sessions a year, so a full season plus close season lasts for about eighteen months in real time.
- A.4 For each session of play each manager gives instructions for all aspects of the club's play - coaching, team selection, transfers, etc. The instructions are sent to me in my role as GamesMaster (GM). I process the orders and produce a report, which is e-mailed to all managers.
- A.5 The rules are basically the same as those used in previous seasons; significant changes are highlighted in italics.

B.....PLAYERS

- B.1 There are five types of players - goalkeepers, sweepers, defenders, midfielders, and forwards. Each player's skill is represented by his level (or rating); players' levels can be improved by coaching but they also fall as the players become older (see Rule F.2, F.3). Few players rise higher than level 15 and fewer still beyond 20.
- B.2 The registered positions of all players are known to all managers, but it is perfectly legitimate to play men out of position (see Rule F.1).

C.....MAKEUP OF TEAMS

- C.1 Any team must have eleven players; one goalkeeper, at least two defenders, at least two midfielders, and at least two forwards (but see Rule E.3). If at least three defenders are being used then one of them may be a sweeper (see Rule E.1). Providing these restrictions are adhered to, a team may use any formation the manager wishes, e.g. 4-3-3, 4-4-2, etc.
- C.2 There are no injuries or substitutes in matches, so it is not essential for a club to have more than eleven players, though managers will normally find it useful to have a larger squad.
- TEAM BALANCE C.3.1 None of the areas GK/SW combined, DF (not including SW), MF, FW may have players whose total rating (see Rule C.3.2) is more than three times the total rating of any other of these areas; this restriction applies after modifications due to home advantage (Rule H.2), hard play (Rule H.3), and good performance points (Rule H.4). A team wishing to play particularly defensively may use a blanket defence (Rule E.3); in this case a modified balance rule applies.
- C.3.2 When considering the team balance, for the areas DF, MF, and FW the total rating is the sum of the levels of all the team's players operating in that area (plus home advantage points [Rule H.2], hardness [Rule H.3], and Good Performance Points [Rule H.4] used on the area). For the GK and the SW the rating is twice the level of the GK for each level up to 10, plus twice the level of the SW for each level up to 10, and four times for every level beyond 10. (This reflects is a notional value for normal players of £100,000 per level for DFs, MFs, and FWs; for GKs and SWs the base value is £200,000 per level. High level GKs and SWs are even more valuable. These values refer to players in their first season and will fall as players become older.)
- C.3.3 Managers should be careful not to allow themselves to get into a position where they break the balance rule for any reason.
- OVERALL TEAM STRENGTH C.4 No club may field a side whose total strength (after adjustments for hardness, GPP, home advantage) totals less than 60 levels. Each GK / SW level counts two (four for each level beyond 10) when working out the total strength.

D.....MATCHES

X					Y				
5					10				
3	6	5	4		7	7	1	2	
	7	3			5	8	3		
5	5	4	8		4	2	1		

- D.1 These are two teams which could be used in a match (neither side has a SW, whose role is explained in Rule E.1). Manager X has chosen a 4-2-4 line-up, while Y has used 4-3-3.
- D.2 To decide on the outcome of the match complementary areas are compared:

(a) If the total ratings of a team's FWs are greater than the total ratings of the opposing DFs it receives a number of shots (i.e. goal attempts) equal to the numerical difference - so team X, whose FWs total 22, wins 5 shots from its FWs because Y's DFs are worth only 17. Team Y, however, wins no shots at all from its FWs because they rate only 7 against X's DFs (who are worth 18).

(b) The team with the stronger midfield wins half the number of shots that the difference indicates, so Y wins  $(16-10)/2 = 3$  shots from midfield.

(c) If a team's DFs outrate their opponents' FWs it receives one-quarter of the number of shots indicated by the difference, so X wins  $(18-7)/4 = 3$  shots from its DFs. (Both (b) and (c) are rounded up if necessary.)

D.3 To see how many goals are scored each shot is first checked to see whether it is on target or not; there is a 30% chance that a shot will go wide and so will not trouble the goalkeeper. Each shot which is on target is tested against the goalkeeper (see Appendix 1 for details) to see if a goal is scored. This match might be quite close, because although X have more shots they will find it harder to score than Y, whose shots have only to beat a level 5 GK.

D.4 The GM determines the actual goalscorers according to the nature of the side's shots, so if all the shots come from the FWs then all the goals will be credited to FWs, but should it have 6 FW shots and 2 from MF then the goalscorers are likely to be in approximately this proportion. Within a playing area the goals are most likely to be scored by the best players, though even low-level players have some chance of scoring.

D.5 In games in the SuperCup the number of shots won by each side will be disclosed.

## E.....TACTICAL OPTIONS:

THE SWEEPER E.1.1 Providing that a team is using at least two ordinary DFs it may also employ a sweeper. His function is twofold: he is included with the other DFs in deciding how many shots the opposition FWs get, and all on-target opposition attacks are played against him first; only if a shot beats him is it then played against the GK (see Appendix 1 for details).

E.1.2 The SW is not counted with the other DFs in seeing whether a team gets any shots from its defenders.

E.1.3 The SW is counted in with the GK (not the DFs) in the team balance rule (Rule C.3).

THE OFFSIDE TRAP E.2.1 A side which is not playing a sweeper may employ the offside trap. Doing so limits the opposition forwards to half the number of shots (rounded up if necessary) they would normally receive, but at the price of conceding twice the number of shots that the opposition midfield would otherwise win.

E.2.2 To play the offside trap a manager simply writes "offside trap" in the sweeper space for the relevant match(es) on the order sheet.

BLANKET DEFENCE E.3.1 A team may opt to play particularly defensively and:

(a) have a forward line only one-quarter as strong as all of the other playing areas (GK/SW, DF, MF), and/or

(b) use a forward line consisting of only a single player, providing the forward line is at least one-quarter as strong as all other areas.

## F.....PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

PLAYING OUT OF POSITION F.1.1 There is only a light penalty for choosing players to play in new positions. Furthermore, should a player operate in another permitted area six times in a single season he acclimatises to the new position and may from then on and for the rest of his career play in either area without loss of level. (A player who is qualified to play at full level in each of the positions DF, MF, FW is known as a utility player [UT].)

F.1.2 The regulations are:

Goalkeeper: only a specialist GK may ever play in goal, and no GK may ever play in another position.

Sweeper: a SW may play as a normal DF without losing a level. Any DF may play as a SW at one-third (to the nearest whole number) of his normal level; on acclimatising as sweeper he may play as a SW at 50% (rounded up) of his level as DF.

All other players/positions: any DF, MF, or FW may operate in any other of these areas at a loss of one level (though should he return to his normal position in a later match he performs at his full level again). Since any player can thus perform as a DF it is possible for any outfield player to operate as a sweeper.

F.1.3 It's helpful if managers draw the GM's attention to any players operating out of position by writing "oop" beside the player's name on their order sheets.)

COACHING F.2.1 For normal players 1VP (see Rule J.2) can be used to raise a DF, MF, or FW by one level; 2VPs are needed to raise a GK or SW by one level. A player of level 10 or above needs twice as many VPs for each coaching as would be needed if he were below level 10.

F.2.2 Unless special circumstances apply, no player may be coached more than once in a single session,

F.2.3 All coaching must be done before any matches are played in a session. Coaching takes effect immediately.

F.2.4 There are several special categories of players for whom different coaching rules apply - see Appendix 2)

F.2.5 Whatever special characteristics coaches and players may possess there is always a minimum coaching cost of ½VP (1VP for a GK or SW).

F.2.6 When ordering, managers are advised always to draw the GM's attention to players and / or coaches with special coaching or playing characteristics.

AGEING F.3.1 As players get older their effectiveness declines, and at the end of his first season (i.e. his age I season) a player loses two levels. He loses four levels at the end of each of his age II, III and IV seasons, six levels at the end of his V and VI seasons, and eight levels every season thereafter, though of course part of these losses may be made up by subsequent coaching. All ageing takes place during the close season.

F.3.2 When a player's level falls to 0 he can be expected to retire.

APPRENTICES F.4.1 Managers may discover and sign apprentices at any time. An apprentice must play his first four games at level 0, but after he has played four games in a single position he immediately rises to level 2 in that position (this is an automatic rise and no VPs are needed) and may then be coached like other players.

F.4.2 An apprentice does not lose levels at the end of his apprentice season - in his next season he becomes an age I player and so does not start to lose levels until the end of that season.

F.4.3 An apprentice who does not complete his qualification should be released at the end of the season.

F.4.4 Currently a club may discover a maximum of five apprentices in a season. Apprentices signed from other clubs or via the auction (Rule G.6.1) are not currently included in this limitation.

SCHOOLBOYS F.5.1 A club may have one schoolboy at a time though this limit may be exceeded if a club is able to sign additional schoolboys through the auction (Rule G.6.1) or from other clubs.

F.5.2 A schoolboy needs to play six games in one position to qualify, and he may play no more than one game in a session until he is qualified. The qualifying games may be spread over two seasons. As soon as the six games have been played he immediately becomes a level 2 apprentice, qualified in that position, who may be coached once every session for the remainder of that season; this coaching requires only 1VP per level for a GK or SW, and ½VP for a DF, MF, or FW (coaching beyond level 10 requires 2VP per level for a GK or SW, and 1VP per level for other players).

F.5.3 Strengthening a schoolboy or current ex-schoolboy by hardness etc requires the full quota needed by non-schoolboys, i.e. 2 points per level for GK / SW and 1 point per level for other players; the values are doubled to 4 for GK/SW and 2 for other players above level 10

F.5.4 Once a schoolboy has played his sixth qualifying game the club may immediately sign and use a further schoolboy.

F.5.5 (It is possible that some aspects of the rules affecting schoolboys - e.g. coaching concessions above level 10 or perhaps below - may change in future seasons. Signing-on fees are another possibility)

## G.....TEAM DEVELOPMENT

COACHES G.1.1 Before the season begins a number of coaches able to offer special skills are auctioned.

G.1.2 Coaches are signed on a single season contract; at the end of the season the coach leaves, without recompense to the club. A coach may move to another club during a season, but will still leave at the end of the season.

G.1.3 No club may possess more than one coach at one time. Coaches who have left a club may not rejoin it during the same season.

G.1.4 Coaches and players are subject to a transfer deadline (Rule G.7).

G.1.5 Whatever special characteristics coaches and players may possess there is always a minimum coaching cost of ½VP (1VP for a GK or SW).

ROOKIE DRAFT G.2.1 At the end of the season the bottom three clubs in each Division may buy new players from the Rookie Draft. Currently, these players are age I players (i.e. age I in the following session) and cost £100k per level (£200k for GK / SW). Star rookies of higher levels and prices, may also be offered; currently, level 12 rookies cost £1.25m, level 14 cost £1.55m, level 16 £1.9m, level £2.5m. GK / SW rookies cost twice these amounts.

G.2.2 If the club has enough cash, more than one rookie may be bought, but although the first may be of any ability up to level 10 and even beyond, subsequent rookies may be no higher than level 8.

G.2.3 The exact details of the rookie draft - levels, prices, timing, etc. may vary slightly from season to season.

G.2.4 A rookie may not be transferred or sold till the playing season has been completed.

PLAYER LIMIT G.3 No club may have a total of more than 27 player registrations (apprentices and schoolboys are included in this quota) during a season. This limitation applies not just on individual occasions but to all players, however brief their stay, at any time during the season.

TRANSFERS G.4.1 Managers may negotiate privately to buy and sell players. Managers are expected to inform each other fully of the age, level, and coaching record of all players involved in deals, and it is best to itemise these details when informing the GM of any transfer. No deal is ratified unless effectively identical instructions are received in the relevant session from both managers. All players signed in such deals are available immediately, and may thus play for their new clubs in the same session as they sign.

G.4.2 No player (or coach) may leave a club and return to it during the same season.

G.4.3 Deals which involve credit, implementation in stages, or deferred or subsequent settlement are not allowed. Informal 'understandings' about future deals between managers may be negotiated, but it is not part of the GM's role to facilitate, enforce, or even know about these.

G.4.4 Players and coaches are subject to a transfer deadline (Rule G.8).

NON-LEAGUE SALES G.5.1 Should a player become surplus to a manager's needs the GM will arrange for an immediate transfer to a non-league side, which may pay around 80% of his nominal value for an apprentice, 60% for an age I player, 40% for age II, 20% for age III, 10% for age IV, and 5% for age V and older. Lower prices may be paid for a player with disadvantageous characteristics, or who has only a limited playing expectancy. (The amounts paid by non-league clubs may be reviewed in future seasons.)

G.5.2 No club may dispose of more than eight (possibly fewer in future seasons) players via the auction (see Rule G.6) and/or the non-league clubs in a single season.

AUCTION G.6.1 Managers may suggest new players to be offered in an auction; auctions are held in each session up to the transfer deadline. Some of these players may have special characteristics (e.g. there might be a player who ages more slowly than normal).

G.6.2 Managers whose orders arrive by the early deadline (see Rule K.1.2) may bid for any of these and each player signs for the club which bids most for him. Each player is given a reference number and they are auctioned in sequence; conditional bids may be made, although no bid may be dependent on the outcome players yet to be auctioned. Bids must be in complete thousands of £s and a name must be submitted for any un-named player for whom a bid is made (failure to do so may result in the bid being disqualified). Such players are not available until the next session of play.

G.6.3 Managers may offer players from their clubs for the auction, though if any are unlikely to attract any worthwhile bids the GM will decline the request and sell them to the non-league (Rule G.5) All the money paid by the buying club goes to the selling club.

G.6.4 Once a player has been included upon the list he may not be withdrawn for private sale.

G.6.5 Auction players may not play for either the selling or the buying club in the session in which they are sold.

G.6.6 No club may dispose of more than eight (possibly fewer in future seasons) players via the auction and/or the non-league clubs in a single season.

G.6.7 Selling managers do not have the right to put a reserve price upon a player.

G.6.8 Managers who sign players (or coaches) with special coaching or playing characteristics are advised always to draw them to the GM's attention when ordering.

AGENT G.7.1 A players' agent will arrange for the signing of one player each session. His services will be secured by the club which pays him the biggest fee.

G.7.2 The successful club can buy one player whose level, position, and age they specify.

G.7.3 Only players of age I are currently available; the cost is £100k per level up to and including level 10. Level 12 cost £1.25m, level 14 cost £1.55m, level 16 £1.9m, level £2.5m. GK and SW cost twice these amounts.

G.7.4 The agent operates after the auction has been held, so managers may make agent bids conditional upon the results of the auction but not the other way around. Like the auction, the agent will operate on deadline A, and the player he secures will not be available for games until the following session.

G.7.5 Agents do not retain fees offered by unsuccessful clubs.

G.7.6 Players signed by the agent are effectively rookies; they are age I with no special characteristics, and may not be sold till the following season.

TRANSFER DEADLINE G.8 A transfer deadline comes into force at the end of session VIII: players may play for their clubs in this session and be sold (e.g. to the non-league) immediately afterwards, but once session VIII is over no further players may be bought or sold. The transfer deadline also applies to coaches.

## H.....IMPROVING TEAM PERFORMANCE

USING A SWEEPER, PLAYING BLANKET DEFENCE, OFFSIDE TRAP H.1 see Rule E.

HOME ADVANTAGE H.2 The team playing at home is given six extra levels: these are distributed among the three areas DF, MF, FW - they are not allocated to individual players. As the season progresses the strength of teams will increase and to allow for this the home advantage bonus increases as the season develops (see the Master Schedule).

HARD AND DIRTY PLAY H.3.1 By playing hard a team can add to its effectiveness, though by doing so it runs the risk of losing the game through penalty kicks (and, although there are no sendings-off, clubs with poor disciplinary records face players being suspended). In any match a manager may ask his team to play either normally or at one of five grades of hardness, I to V. Grade I hardness gives the manager two extra levels which can be distributed how he wishes between the areas GK, SW, DF, MF, FW, though as usual it needs two points to raise either the GK or the SW by one level (four points per level above level 10). Playing at hardness II, III, IV, V brings 6, 8, 12, and 15 hardness points.

H.3.2 The five grades of hardness also concede penalties (0, 1, 1, 2, 2 respectively) and accumulate disciplinary points (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively), and whenever a team gains twelve disciplinary points it loses its highest level outfield player through suspension for the whole of the next session of play.

H.3.3 Suspensions and disciplinary records are not carried over into the following season.

H.3.4 There is basically a 100% chance that a goal will be scored from a penalty, but this chance is reduced by 4% for each level of the GK facing the kick (e.g. a GK operating at level 8 has a 32% chance of saving a penalty).

H.3.5 As the season progresses the strength of teams will increase and to allow for this the benefits of playing hard increase as the season develops (see the Master Schedule).

GOOD PERFORMANCES H.4.1 On occasion any club can expect to play above its normal form, and this is reflected in the use of good performance points. These can be used whenever the manager wishes, in a single game or spread over several, in league matches or Cup/Bowl games.

H.4.2 GPPs are purchased before the season begins and must be made to last for the whole season (although the GM may from time to time put batches of GPPs into the auction).

H.4.3 GPPs must be bought in multiples of eight; the costs are currently £0k for 8GPP, £50k for 16GPP, £120k for 24GPP, £210k for 32GPP, £320k for 40GPP, £425k for 48GPP. (These costs may change slightly from season to season.)

H.4.4 When used, GPPs are applied to playing areas and not individual players (except for the GK / SW positions). As usual, it requires 2GPPs to raise either GK or SW by one level. To strengthen either GK or SW beyond level 10 costs twice these amounts.

SCOUTING H.5.1 For £50k a manager may send a scout to watch all games played by a named side in any session. (This fee may be reviewed during the coming season.)

H.5.2 Scouting cannot be used on matches due to be played in subsequent sessions.

H.5.3 Scouting information reveals the total effective levels used by the nominated team, and thus includes hard play, home advantage, and good performance points. The scouting report will also show whether a side is employing the offside trap (Rule E.2), blanket defence (Rule E.3), and / or sufficient hardness to concede penalties.

H.5.4 Managers may scout by phone or e-mail.

## J.....REWARDS: FINANCES AND VPs

CASH J.1.1 At the very end of each playing session of play every club receives £100,000 All this money is deemed to be profit after all expenses have been met and is thus available for transfer deals.

J.1.2 Recently managers have been offered a cash incentive to submit their orders particularly early. Typically, 50k is paid for orders which the GM by the Monday before the normal early-order deadline. Conditions for this incentive may be varied at short notice.

J.1.3 Clubs may build up an overdraft of not more than £1m, no interest is charged on any overdraft. Managers should take care not to build up an overdraft - even momentarily - of more than £1m; the GM wishes this rule to be strictly observed and reserves the right to seize and sell off, without warning, players of his own choice from any offending club to reduce such a deficit.

J.1.4 Cash or players may not be loaned between clubs.

J.1.5 The GM reserves the right to subject clubs with high credit balances to tax in the close season. While no taxes have been levied for some time, the tax position is always under review.

VPs J.2.1 After each playing session a manager will have the chance to coach some of his players - such chances are known as VPs (value points). Every club receives 1VP after each playing session plus a further 1VP for each win and ½VP for each draw in the previous session (knockout games may bring different quotas).

J.2.2 One extra VP is normally claimable by any manager whose orders reach the GM by deadline A (see Rule K.1.2). Instructions for the use of this VP should be included with the orders.

J.2.3 VPs may be carried over from session to session, but no more than ½VP from one season to another.

J.2.4 VPs may not be sold or bartered.

## K.....ORDERS AND REPORTS

DEADLINES K.1.1 The deadline is a rigid one, and managers are advised not to risk their orders arriving even a couple of hours late.

K.1.2 Managers whose orders arrive by deadline 'A' (a week in advance of the normal deadline in Rule K.1.1) receive an additional VP ('the early VP') and are allowed to make bids for players in the auction (Rule G.6).

K.1.3 A cash bonus for ultra-early orders is currently operating (see Rule J.1.2).

ORDER MEDIA K.2.1 Managers are encouraged to make copies of the master order form or use formats which are effectively identical.

K.2.2 Orders may be sent by post or e-mail. The file size for e-mailed orders should be well under 100kb.

K.2.3 e-mail may also be used for such situations as scouting enquiries, queries about rule interpretations and / or adjudications, GM errors, GM errors, GM errors, GM errors, ....

MISSING ORDERS K.3.1 Should no orders be received from any manager ("NMR"= No Moves Received):

(a) any deals made by him in that session are void,

(b) the club forfeits all VPs,

(c) the GM will choose the side for all matches, which will - probably - be similar, playing with zero hardness and GPP, to that used in the previous session,

(d) if (c) means that players operate out of position, or apprentices / schoolboys play then no credit is given for these appearances,

(e) any orders not received for a Cup or Shield game, or the second leg of a SuperCup game, are likely to cause the team to be ejected from the competition; their opponents will receive a walkover, plus any normal VP benefits, plus credit for o.o.p. and apprentice/schoolboy appearances. The opponents may reclaim any GPPs / hardness points in the following session.

(f): a team which NMRs in the first leg of the SuperCup will not be immediately ejected. If the team was at home the match will be deemed a 0-0 draw; if away, they will lose 0-3.

K.3.2 If a manager knows in advance that he is not going to be able to submit orders for a session the GM will be pleased - provided he is informed in good time - to act as assistant manager for that session.

REPORTS K.4.1 The GM will send out reports by e-mail, probably as Word documents.

K.4.2 The very small number of managers without e-mail can receive printed reports. With each set of orders these managers will need to send the GM an SSAE for the printed report.

## L.....MANAGERS

L.1 No manager may control more than one club at one time.

L.2 Managers are not expected to pay a gamefee or subscription, though the GM may occasionally ask for a small contribution to cover any printing costs.

L.3 A new manager taking over a neglected side may be allowed some - though not much - generosity, but this will be at the GM's discretion.

L.4 The process of renaming clubs and players is not encouraged. If, however, a new manager wishes to do any name-changing this must be done in the close season (no renaming is allowed during the playing season) and a licence fee of £1m for the club and £50k for each renamed player will be charged. (Any manager showing signs of finding these licence fees economically viable is liable to find them raised - substantially and retrospectively.)

## M.....GM DECISIONS

M.1 While managers are welcome to explore the rules of the game they should always bear their spirit in mind, and if any manager plans a particularly noteworthy coup it is probably best to contact the GM in advance.

M.2 The GM's rulings may be queried, but in the final analysis he reserves the right to insist that his decisions are absolute, irrevocable, and totally infallible.