



Approved EFHL Tiering Policy

Introduction

The current EFHL tiering framework, rooted in a goal differential threshold of +/- 6.00 per game, was introduced to guide fair competition and parity across divisions. While the principle is sound, application has been inconsistent—particularly in distinguishing relevant team movement, handling of subjective inputs, and decision-making transparency.

This proposal recommends a refined, data-forward—but not data-exclusive—approach, designed to:

- Improve consistency and transparency
- Incorporate strength of schedule as a contextual metric
- Establish standardized voting criteria
- Enable swift and unbiased decision-making under real-world time constraints

Key Issues with the Current Policy

1. Inconsistent Enforcement of Goal Differential Threshold

The tiering policy aims to create parity and ensure fair competition by establishing a +/- 6 goal differential per game threshold to guide tiering decisions. Teams falling within this threshold should generally remain in their tier, with movement limited to exceptional circumstances. However, analysis of recent tiering data shows that teams are often granted movement despite falling within the established threshold. Conversely, teams are often outside the established thresholds yet are allowed to stay in their current tier. While it is recognized that there is often valid contextual reasoning for allowing exceptions, the current process raises concerns about the consistency and transparency of the decision-making process and its alignment with the policy's intended objectives. The inconsistency in applying the tiering policy's goal differential threshold, coupled with the unclear application of discretionary authority by the Tiering Committee, suggests a reliance on subjective judgment rather than objective data, potentially leading to biased tiering decisions.

2. Tiering Meeting Subjectivity

The current meeting process for movement requests allows for subjective opinions and perceptions of team strength, potentially introducing bias and inconsistency. It has become customary for representatives to share personal opinions, or relay opinions of their members, on the strength of a team. This is a perceived notion, and not factual. Therefore, it cannot be determined to be fair for all teams. The lack of standardized procedures and transparency in this process can create an uneven playing field for different MHAs. Therefore, personal opinions of teams should be excluded from the initial tiering process, and it would be suggested that they could be incorporated in the appeal process.

Initial tiering decisions need to be strictly based on objective data. Like we have seen previously in communication, the objective data can be presented to an MHA with enforced tiering adjustments based on a more comprehensive dataset. These decisions can then be communicated to the MHA for the purpose of acceptance or appeal.

3. Unclear Voting Procedures



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The current voting procedures lack clear definitions, potentially causing confusion and inconsistencies in decision-making. Moreover, the absence of anonymity in the voting process can introduce bias and undue influence, compromising the fairness and objectivity of the tiering decisions.

Proposed Amendments to Current Policy

1. Incorporate Strength of Schedule (SoS) as a Calculated Supporting Metric

Rationale

Raw goal differential is often misleading without opponent context. A team posting +6.00 differential against weak competition may not belong in a higher tier. Likewise, a -6.00 differential against the strongest opponents in the division might not indicate the team should be moved down.

Why Strength of Schedule Matters

By integrating SoS, the EFHL can:

- Prevent teams from moving up solely due to blowouts vs. weak opponents
- Prevent teams from being dropped due to tough losses to the strongest competition
- Ensure all teams are evaluated through the lens of contextualized performance

How the Model Works

Each team's **goal differential per game** is evaluated against a **scalable threshold** based on their Strength of Schedule. Each team's strength of schedule is determined based on an average of the win% of their opponents within the tiering round:

- Teams with an **average SoS (0.500)** are reviewed against the standard threshold of **+6.00/-6.00 per game**.
- Teams facing **weaker opponents** must exceed a **higher threshold** to justify upward movement and a **lower threshold** to move down.
- Teams facing **stronger opponents** would need a **lower threshold** to require upward movement and a **higher threshold** to move down.

This model applies a **dynamic sliding scale**, so each team is judged **relative to the quality of competition faced**.

Example:

A team with a +6-goal differential but a weak SoS of 0.330 would not meet the adjusted movement threshold. Meanwhile, a team with -6.0 differential with a 0.670 SoS would be within acceptable range and not trigger a move down.

⚠ Note: SoS is most valuable when schedules are unbalanced (e.g., divisions with partial round robins). In fully balanced schedules, its utility diminishes.

2. Establish Objective Initial Tiering Placement & Formalized Review of Considerations

The current request for consideration process suffers from several issues:



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- **Subjectivity:** It relies on subjective context and opinions rather than objective data.
- **Lack of Notice:** Requests can be brought forth by other MHAs without notice, creating an uneven playing field.
- **Open Forum:** Requests are made in an open forum, introducing emotion and potential bias.

The proposed process addresses these issues by:

- **Prioritizing Objective Metrics:** Requests must be based on objective metrics, minimizing subjectivity.
- **Standardized Process:** A standardized form ensures transparency and equal access to information.
- **Anonymity:** Discussions on exceptions and voting should be anonymous, reducing potential bias.
- **Eliminating "If, Then" Scenarios:** Each request is considered in isolation, preventing subjective "if, then" arguments.

To ensure objectivity and minimize potential bias, initial tiering placement should be based solely on objective metrics, such as the above-described goal differential and strength of schedule metrics. This process eliminates subjective opinions and perceptions of team strength, promoting a more equitable evaluation.

Timeline for Requests for Consideration:

- **Initial Tiering Placement:** The EFHL will conduct an initial tiering placement through automated recommendation based on objective metrics and communicate these placements to MHAs.
- **Submission of Requests:** MHAs will have a clear timeframe of 24-48 hours following the initial tiering placement communication to submit any requests for consideration to the EFHL Administration via a standardized form (e.g., Google Form).
- **Committee Review:** The EFHL Tiering Committee will review and discuss all submitted requests, rendering final placement decisions.

This structured timeline ensures transparency, provides a structured timeframe for discussions, and promotes a more efficient and informed tiering meeting process.

Tiering Committee Structure:

- A separate and dedicated **Tiering Committee** per age division (U9, U11, U13, U15, U18)
- 5 voting members per group, all from non-conflicted MHA Reps (e.g. U15 directors vote on U11)
- With 25 available committee positions, each association would have a voice on a committee, but only 1

Data Presentation:

Team identities and MHAs are anonymized. Committee is only presented:

- Division/Tier
- Win/Loss Record
- Win%
- Goal Differential
- Strength of Schedule Rating
- Submitted Consideration Requests

Voting Procedure:

- **Held within 48 hours** of initial tiering placement



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- **Contextualized review:** Near-threshold teams and those with consideration submissions
- **Anonymous** voting (easy to accomplish through zoom in small committee)
- **Stricter adherence** to objective data-driven decision making

Fair but Efficient Appeal Process

- Appeals to be filed within **24 hours** of tiering round conclusion
- Appeal review by committee within **48 hours** of tiering round conclusion
- Anonymous committee votes immediately following review
- Appellant is provided with reasoning behind the committee decision via email.

3. Restrict Post-Tiering Movement for Playoffs

Problem:

Post-tiering movement — particularly requests to return to a lower tier for playoffs — can compromise the integrity of competition. When teams opt to play in a higher tier during the regular season (often resulting in exposure to higher levels of competition), then return to their original tier for playoffs, it may provide an unfair advantage over teams that remained in that tier throughout the season. This strategic movement undermines the spirit of parity the tiering process seeks to establish.

Recommendation:

- Teams may request upward movement following the tiering round to align with provincial competition goals.
- Teams that voluntarily move up for league play are not eligible to request a return to their original tier for playoffs.
- Any movement decisions must be supported by objective performance metrics.
- The EFHL should establish clear timelines and criteria for approving upward movement, while eliminating downward playoff movement requests after tiering is complete.

Conclusion

This refined proposal enhances EFHL's tiering process by merging objective performance analysis with clear, fair, and transparent decision-making protocols. It balances the need for data integrity with the realities of scheduling, timelines, and communication between stakeholders. By introducing scalable metrics such as Strength of Schedule, formalizing voting procedures, and structuring appeals and movement requests, the EFHL can reinforce competitive balance across all divisions while improving trust in the process.

These changes are designed to:

- Eliminate ambiguity and subjectivity from tiering decisions
- Promote fairness across all MHAs regardless of size or influence
- Empower the EFHL Tiering Committee to act decisively, efficiently, and equitably
- Ensure competitive integrity throughout both the regular season and playoffs

By adopting this revised model, the EFHL would be taking a step toward a more transparent, objective, consistent, and data-informed approach to tiering—one that reflects its core values of fair competition and opportunity, while removing some of



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the adverse subjectivity inherent in the current process, while still maintaining the efficiency of decision making required for quick scheduling turnarounds.