



Free
Subscription

enter your email

Subscribe

[unsubscribe]

New Member Links

LINKS

[World of Soccer](#)

[ITSportsNet](#)

[Major League Soccer](#)

[Canadian Soccer
Association](#)

[Inside Soccer Magazine](#)

[FIFA](#)

[Soccer Solutions](#)

[The Football
Association](#)

[American Youth Soccer
Organization \(AYSO\)](#)

[Soccer Association for
Youth](#)

[United States Soccer
Federation](#)

[United States Youth
Soccer Association](#)

[Internet Soccer](#)

[Soccer America](#)

[National Soccer
Coaches Association of
Canada](#)

[English Football
Association Coaches
Association](#)

[Women's United Soccer
League](#)

[National Soccer
Coaches Association of
America](#)

[A-League and United](#)

Club/League Management



Double Trouble of Double-Elimination Tournaments.

by: John Byl
byl@redeemer.on.ca

The double-elimination tournament format is often selected as a tournament of choice for two good reasons: it guarantees everyone a minimum of two games, and two, it permits a team to have a bad game and still make it to the championship rounds - one needs to lose twice before being eliminated. However, the double-elimination format has at least two major difficulties, and there are other formats that deal with the concern over guarantees of two games and the possibility of succeeding in a tournament despite one bad game.

Permit a quick case example to highlight the double trouble of double-elimination tournaments. Let's use a case of eight teams playing on four fields using a double-elimination schedule. The draw would look like the one shown on Figure 1, and the playing schedule like the one shown on Figure 2.

Figure 1: Eight entry double-elimination draw

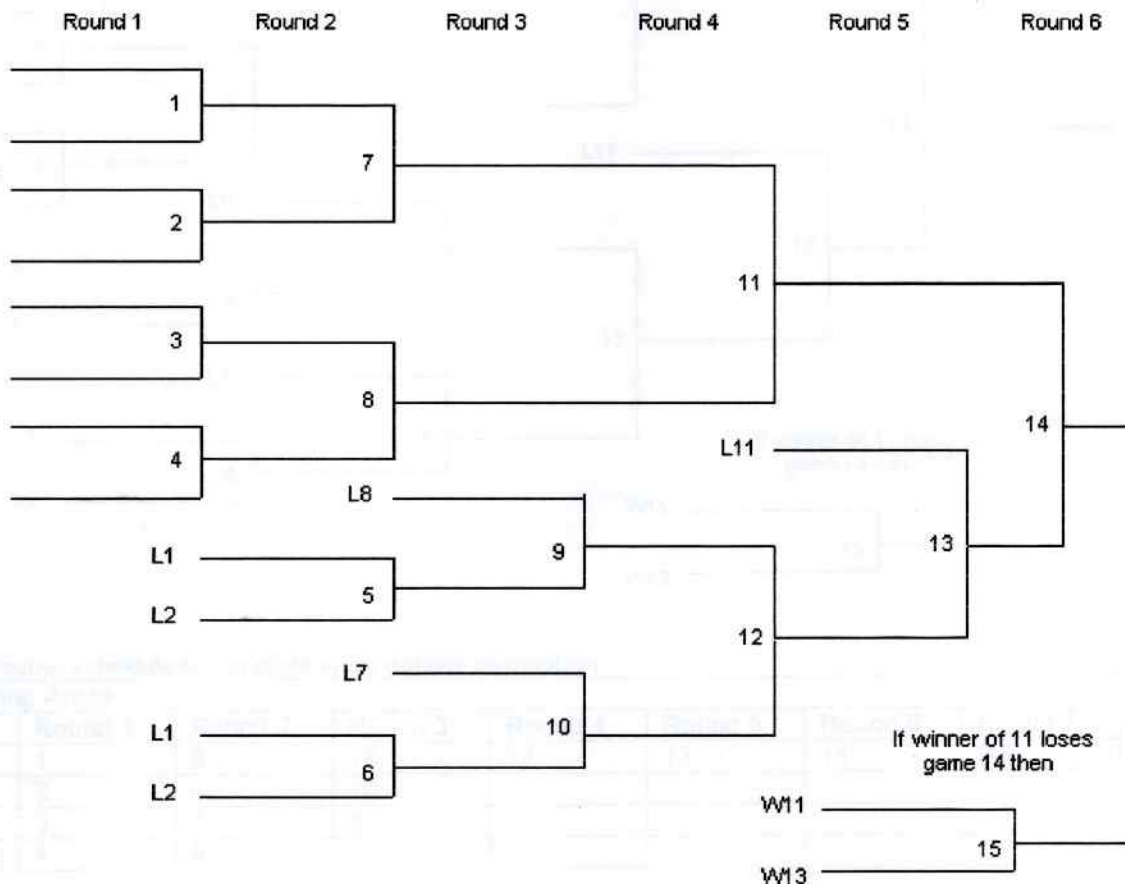


Figure 2: Playing schedule for an eight entry double-elimination
Four Playing Areas

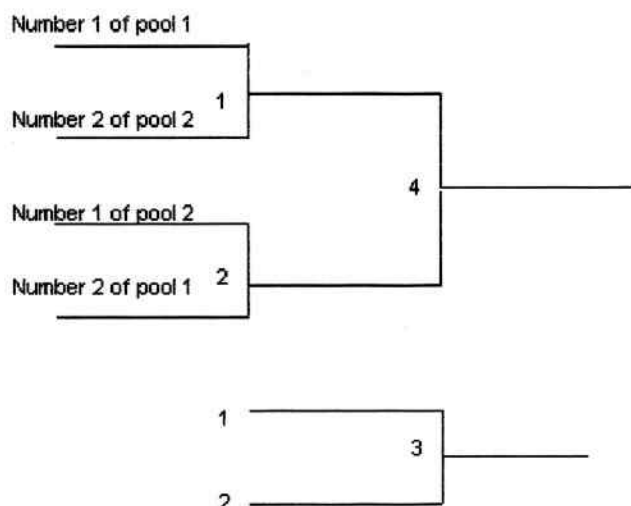
The second sign of trouble is located more deeply in the playing schedule. On the positive side everyone plays at least two games, but take a look at what happens with the second seed. The second seed plays in game 4, then in game 8, before losing in game 11. The second seed then plays in game 13, then game 14, and then game 15 if the team wins game 14 (both teams will have lost only once if the second seed wins that game). Four teams will play only their guaranteed two games, but the second seed will play a total of at least five and possibly six games - the last several games they play back-to-back-to-back.... From a perspective of equitable number of games and from a perspective of not playing continuously, this second trouble is troublesome.

It is one thing to criticize but what is a positive alternative? I would suggest placing the eight teams in two pools of four. The playing schedule is as shown in Figure 3. The top two teams from each pool then play in a single-elimination play-off as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 3: Playing schedule for eight entries in two pools

Four Playing Areas							
Pool 1				Pool 2			
PAI		PAII		PAIII		PAIV	
1	A-C	2	B-D	3	A-C	4	B-D
5	A-D	6	B-C	7	A-D	8	B-C
9	C-D	10	A-B	11	C-D	12	A-B

Figure 4: Playoff draw for a round-robin double-split tournament



In terms of addressing the first trouble of double-elimination the round-robin pool play uses all four fields for the first three rounds and then half the fields for the next two rounds; this format uses fields more effectively. The double-elimination requires 6-7 rounds to complete the tournament while the round-robin format requires only 5—the tournament gets done a lot sooner.

In terms of the second trouble of double-elimination the round-robin format guarantees everyone at least three games for the bottom four teams (one more than double-elimination does). The most games that anyone plays is five for the top four teams (compared to the five or six games that only the second seed gets to play using double-elimination).

Avoid the double trouble of double-elimination by replacing it with round-robin pool play. The results will include a better use of fields, a more equitable distribution of games, and a tournament that is done earlier.

Note: Figures used come from John Byl (1998). "Organizing Successful Tournaments". Champaign: Human Kinetics.

Dr. John Byl is a Professor of Physical Education and Intramural Director at Redeemer University College, author of

<http://www.down-the-line.com/index.php?newsLetterID=1&issueID=6&departmentID=3&art...> 2/14/02