This is a reprint of a GoffonRugby Column published on RUGBYMag.com January 10, 2011. We repost it now because we think it's relevant. - AG

One of the driving tenets of how rugby should be operated in the United States is driven by the idea that we play rugby because it's fun.

We don't play as a job. Many would like to win a national championship, but that's not necessarily why we play. We play because we want to play.

That might sound simplistic bit it is an ideal that should be at the heart of any decisions made by committees, officers, and unions.

So I was very pleased to see USA Rugby South and USA Rugby's Competitions Committee figure out what to do about the South DI club competition. The league had just started last fall with four clubs, when two dropped out. With teams mandated to have at least six league games leading to the postseason, a two-team league would be hard-pressed to get the job done.

But USA Rugby South kept working at it. Charlotte, newly out of the Super League, looked like they wanted to be back in South DI, and so from there a plan was put together that allowed three teams to play each other twice, and incorporate games with Life University and Raleigh into the season.

The Competitions Committee saw the plan for what it was – lemonade out of lemons … perhaps not the sweetest lemonade, but a serviceable drink nonetheless. The Committee, chaired by Alan Sharpley, understood that this plan allowed the players who wanted to play DI to do that. Two of the three teams will have to go on the road four out of their six games. That's too bad, but in the end the plan didn't force players to sit idle because of action from an unrelated club.

Now I understand Boca Raton isn't happy because of a seeding plan that penalizes the South for a playoff no-show in 2009. Fine, feel free to complain about that. But this decision gives me the opportunity to say:

When we create competitions, we need to find ways to allow players and teams to compete. That's why we're here.

This is why I am in favor of liberal rules for Super League players who want to play DI. Tighter restrictions on such players only serve to keep bubble players (those who get sub time in the RSL) from playing more rugby.

We have rules for how a season should be – a minimum number of games played in a regular season. But those rules are set forth to stop a DI team from being the only game in town in a region, and not having to beat anyone to make the playoffs.

The rule is NOT designed to keep teams on the sidelines. It was applied, and adjusted, correctly here.

So congrats to the Competitions Committee for doing the right thing. And I would like to see other bodies think along the same lines: teams behind in their dues might need some help or advice, rather than a benching (might); players who appear in four Super League games, all as a late-game sub, shouldn't be prevented from playing DI; and top players in age-grade and college, should be allowed to play club in their offseason.

We exist, remember, to encourage the playing of rugby.

Or, to quote Santana: *Let the children play*.