

NORTH WEST MEN'S LEAGUE - COMPETITION RULES 2025

1. APPLICABLE OPERATIONAL RULES

- 1.1 The "North West Men's League" (NWML) sits within tier five of the RFL competition structure. All teams participating in the NWML are bound by the [RFL Operational Rules](#) for Tiers Four, Five and Six (Operational Rules).

2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 Membership of the NWML is open to all clubs playing rugby league within the North West Region who are capable of meeting an Annual Entry Criteria as specified by the NWML Management Group.
- 2.2 Applications from new clubs must be submitted in writing to the Competition Officer by the date specified by the Competition Officer each season. Membership shall be granted to a club for one season only and all clubs must reapply for membership each year.
- 2.3 The annual subscription for membership of the league shall be £60 per first team and £40 for any additional team from the same club. Entry Division and Merit Division teams will also be subject to a £40 fee.
- 2.4 Subscription for membership of the League shall be reviewed annually and paid by 31st March each season. Any team not having paid its annual subscription by 31st March will not be allocated competitive fixtures for the remainder of the season until such fees are paid.
- 2.5 In addition to the league fee, certain clubs will be required to pay a bond at the start of the season. This will be held by the RFL until the end of the season and will be returned subject to clubs fulfilling specified criteria which will be agreed by the NWML Management Group and communicated by the Competition Officer at the start of each season. Failure to meet the specified criteria will result in the full bond amount being forfeited.
- 2.6 The bond tariff for all divisions (excluding the Merit & Entry Divisions) will be £200. The NWML Management Group have the discretion to apply additional tariffs as it sees fit.
- 2.7 Each club will be required to ensure that the Volunteers listed below are appropriately qualified (where applicable) and registered on GameDay:
- Coaches
 - Club Welfare Officer
 - First Aiders
 - Game Day Manager
 - Club Secretary
 - Club Chair

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3. START AND END DATE OF THE COMPETITION

- 3.1 The NWML Management Group shall determine the commencement date of its competition and the date upon which it shall cease.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE COMPETITION

- 4.1 The RFL, in conjunction with the NWML Management Group, will determine the structure of the competition including its format and size, any play-off structure and matters relating to promotion and relegation.
- 4.2 Promotion and relegation shall normally be on the basis of two up and two down in between all divisions. However, as per rule 4.1, the RFL in conjunction with the NWML Management Group will determine the makeup of each division.
- 4.3 If two or more clubs finish level on points at the end of a season the application of competition rule 4.9.2 will decide which team finishes above the other.
- 4.4 If a team withdraws from the League having played at least one fixture, then the points from the teams remaining fixtures shall be awarded to their opponents in line with competition rule 4.9.3, until they have completed one fixture against all teams within their division. If a team completes more than one fixture against another team within their division, the same method will apply until they have completed the same number of fixtures against all teams within their division.
- 4.5 If a club is expelled or suspended, its record will be expunged, irrespective of how many games that club has played.
- 4.6 The play-off format for the Premier Division through to Division 3 will be as follows: 1st v 4th and 2nd v 3rd with the highest placed team having home advantage in the semi-final. There will be no play-offs in any other division.
- 4.7 Only players who have played 3 or more League fixtures for their respective team are eligible to participate in the play-off stages of the competition. The NWML Management group have the discretion to allow players eligibility who have not met the 3 match criteria upon reasons presented by clubs.
- 4.8 Teams who have forfeited 2 or more games over the course of the season shall not be eligible to participate in the play-off stages of the competition. In this event, the next qualifying team will be entered into the play-off stages.

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4.9 League Tables

4.9.1 The League competition tables shall be compiled by the RFL, the positions in which shall be determined by the number of points gained with points being awarded as follows: two points for each Match won; and one point for each Match drawn.

4.9.2 The League placings will be determined and calculated as follows:

- The club with the highest number of points shall be at the top of the league table and the club with the lowest shall be at the bottom.
- Where clubs have an equal number of points then relative positions shall be determined by the head-to-head record in League matches only. Where their head-to-head record is even then the aggregate score of all head-to-head league fixtures will decide the team on top (head-to-head placings will not be displayed on the league table but will be communicated by the Competition Officer if necessary).
- Where clubs have an equal number of points, head-to-head results, and aggregate score, their relative positions shall be determined by points difference so that the club having the greater points difference is placed above the club with the lesser points difference.
- If the positions are still equal, positions will be determined by the toss of a coin which shall be conducted at such time and place as the RFL shall direct and those clubs concerned shall be entitled to witness the toss.

4.9.3 The notional scores in forfeited games shall be 24-0 and a points deduction of 1 point. The League and clubs will work together to ensure, where possible, games are played, and all alternative options should be discussed before a rearrangement/postponement/forfeit is considered.

4.10 Cup Fixtures

4.10.1 In accordance with Operational Rule B3:2:2 Cup ties will take precedence over League Matches.

4.10.2 Only players who have played 1 or more Cup fixtures for their respective team in the current season are eligible to participate in the final of any NWML Cup competition. The NWML Management group have the discretion to allow players eligibility who have not met the 1 match criteria upon reasons presented by clubs.

5. FIXTURES

5.1 All fixtures should be played as per the fixture list unless an alternative date mutually agreeable by both teams and the Competition Officer can be sought. Any club wishing to rearrange a fixture must consult their opponents in the first instance to discuss any changes. Should an agreement be reached, a fixture amendment form should be completed and returned to the Competition Officer. As per rule 5.13.1 teams must accept a postponement

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request providing they are given at least one months' notice and there is a suitable alternative weekend date available.

- 5.2 Where programmed into the fixture programme, backlog dates should not be considered as a free weekend, and teams should be prepared to be allocated fixtures on these dates.
- 5.3 No friendly fixtures shall be arranged on a League fixture date without prior approval of the Competition Officer. The details of any friendly fixtures that are arranged, after approval, must be confirmed with the Competition Officer.
- 5.4 Clubs must accept fixtures given at seven days' notice by the Competition Officer.
- 5.5 Any club failing to play a fixture on a scheduled date will be made to play the reverse fixture, if it has not already been played or forfeited, on their opponents' ground.
- 5.6 Clubs failing to fulfil League fixtures will be sanctioned as per the following scale;
1st offence - £40 fine (This tariff would also apply to Cup fixtures)
2nd offence - £80 fine
3rd offence - Withdrawn from their respective division and placed in the Merit Division (subject to NWML Management Group discretion, who will also determine if there will be any additional sanctions).
- 5.7 Subject to NWML Management Group discretion any clubs failing to fulfil a fixture in the Premier Division, more than one fixture in Divisions One and Two, or more than two in any other division, may be relegated irrespective of League placing, unless that club was due for promotion, in which case it will remain in the same division the following season. The next highest placed club will be promoted.
- 5.8 Any club failing to fulfil a fixture must pay reasonable expenses to the non-offending club, as determined by the NWML Management Group. This may include the referee's full fee and expenses. The non-offending team should contact the Competition Officer to notify them of their intention to claim.
- 5.9 In addition to the sanctions imposed as outlined in rule 5.6, any club failing to fulfil the corresponding away league fixture after their opposition has travelled to them may be asked to compensate their opposition up to a maximum of £100. This is to offset the cost of travel incurred from the first fixture, and loss of match day revenue from the second fixture. The non-offending team should contact the Competition Officer to notify them of their intention to claim.
- 5.10 Any club which fails to notify their opponents of its inability to raise a team 60 minutes before the scheduled kick-off, shall also be liable to pay any expenses, up to a maximum of £50, which their opponents may incur, including kit washing, or medical costs such as strapping.

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The non-offending team should contact the Competition Officer to notify them of their intention to claim.

- 5.11 In the case of a home club failing to fulfil a fixture, a visiting club that has travelled, may claim up to a maximum of £100 towards transport costs. The non-offending team should contact the Competition Officer to notify them of their intention to claim.
- 5.12 Any club with more than one team at home, in any competition, must provide an alternative pitch in case of a clash of fixtures. If an alternative pitch cannot be found, and no other mutual agreement can be reached, the game should be moved to the ground of the opposition team, providing this is available.

5.13 Postponements

- 5.13.1 Teams must accept a request for postponement providing a minimum of one months' notice is given by their opposition, and there is a suitable alternative weekend date available. Suitable alternative weekend dates are considered to be either of the two backlog dates. Postponement requests made with less than one months' notice will not be considered because of injuries, or any other matter not considered exceptional, unless mutually agreed.
- 5.13.2 If the home club suspects that its ground may be unfit for play due to adverse weather or other causes, it must immediately contact a Match Official from the RFL approved list to conduct a ground inspection.

If the Match Official deems the ground unfit for play and determines that it is unlikely to become playable before the scheduled kick-off, this decision must be communicated immediately to:

- The visiting club,
- The appointed Match Official, and
- The Competition Officer.

Failure to follow this procedure may result in the home club being found guilty of **Misconduct**. In addition to any sanctions, the home club will be responsible for reimbursing reasonable travel expenses incurred by any Match Official or club that was not notified in accordance with this rule.

- 5.13.3 When a game is unable to go ahead as scheduled, **BOTH** teams should notify the Competition Officer via email to confirm if the game is being postponed until a later date or conceded and the points claimed by the opposing side. As per rule 4.9.3 all alternative options should be discussed before a rearrangement/postponement/forfeit is considered.
- 5.13.4 In the case of both a no-fault or mutually agreed postponement, if clubs cannot agree a new date within 14 days of the original postponement, then the Competition Officer will issue a

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new date for the fixture. This will be on the next available Saturday, or if there are no Saturday dates available the fixture will be set for a midweek evening. If the new fixture is not played as instructed by the Competition Officer, the points will be awarded to the non-offending team.

6. PLAYER REGISTRATIONS

- 6.1 All players shall annually register to the club using the RFL GameDay system. The League will circulate a link to the registration portal to the clubs to commence the registration process. During this process, a Player must become an Our League Active member.
- 6.2 There is no restriction on the maximum number of players allowed to register per team in the NWML, however 20 is the minimum number per team and scheduled fixtures will be refused until 20 players are registered.
- 6.3 New Players can be signed 'on the day' using the GameDay system. Clubs must make every effort to confirm that players are free to register in this manner. Clubs are responsible for ensuring that a player is eligible to play for them before allowing the player to play. A Competition Officer can be contacted on match day to check a player's eligibility.
- 6.4 The RFL may introduce, from time to time, new registration processes.

6.5 Professional Players

- 6.5.1 The NWML shall allow professional players to play within the Competition in accordance with the Operational Rules and any regulations that are in place relating to the dual registration of players. This seasons dual-registration regulations can be viewed [HERE](#).

6.6 Transfers

- 6.6.1 Clubs may register or transfer players from other clubs, using GameDay. It is the responsibility of the new club to initiate the transfer. The club the player is moving from will need to approve any outgoing transfer requests on GameDay. Clubs will have 7 days to notify the Competition Officer of any objections to a transfer being approved. After this point, if no objections are raised the Competition Officer will approve the transfer on the club's behalf. The player has final sign off of the transfer. The process must be completed in full, including player sign off, before a player plays. The club shall follow any other policies issued by the RFL in relation to the registration of players.
- 6.6.2 All players must fulfil any financial obligations to their current club before any transfer to another club, including professional clubs, will be permitted. This would exclude a players OLA membership fee for those clubs that have opted to pay for their players. This also applies to a player wishing to sign for a different club in future seasons.

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- 6.6.3 The deadline date for transferring of players shall be the 31st of August each year subject to NWML Management Group discretion.

7. MATCH DAY OPERATIONS

- 7.1 All games shall, unless there is mutual agreement between competing clubs to the contrary, be organised and staged on Saturday afternoons with a kick off time scheduled for 2.30pm. Fixtures may be played midweek/Sunday or with a different kick off time on a Saturday. Any changes to the date or time of the fixture must be agreed by both clubs and the Competition Officer must be notified in good time prior to the scheduled fixture.

- 7.2 To maintain the continuity of the playing programme the Competition Officer shall be empowered, if necessary, to bring forward to an earlier date a fixture scheduled for later in the season.

7.3 Team Sizes

- 7.3.1 A maximum of 17 players may be named for each side taking part in a fixture including league and cup fixtures, play-off games and finals. The maximum number of players can be increased to 20 subject to the agreement of the opposition. This must be agreed prior to kick off. If agreement is not sought or permitted with opponents, then a maximum of 17 players may be named.

- 7.3.2 Clubs are encouraged (not required) to match team sizes with their opposition to increase the likelihood of games taking place. For example, if a team only travels with 12 players, the opposing team also starts with 12 players on the pitch. Team sizes should be discussed and agreed between opposing teams in advance of the game.

7.4 Contacting Opponents and Kit Obligations

- 7.4.1 In accordance with the Operational Rules it is the responsibility of the home club, during the week preceding a game, to contact both its opponents and the relevant Match Officials regarding team colours and ground directions by no later than 8pm on the Thursday before the following Saturday's fixture. Away clubs should acknowledge any correspondence received and confirm their intention to travel, no later than 24 hours before the scheduled kick off time.

- 7.4.2 In the event there is a clash of colours the away team must wear an alternative strip.

7.5 Technical Areas

- 7.5.1 All non-playing personnel and interchanges must remain in the designated technical area throughout the Match. They are not permitted to station themselves around the field, other than when managing a player, who has been removed from play, or when time management

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principles have been implemented (other than tracking physios) and are subject at all times to the control of the Match Officials.

7.6 Medical Requirements

- 7.6.1 It is the requirement of each home club to ensure that a first aider attends each game. The first aider should make themselves known to the Match Official before the start of any Match and shall remain for a minimum of 15 minutes after the end of the Game and shall speak directly with a designated Official from both clubs, if necessary, to ensure that the correct reporting paperwork is completed. In the event that there is no first aider then the Match Official will not permit a game to take place.
- 7.6.2 First aiders should be listed on the team sheet and are required to register on the GameDay system as a volunteer.
- 7.6.3 In the event a player sustains an injury to the head or displays signs or symptoms of concussion, the Match Official will stop the game and ask for the first aider to attend to them. If the first aider suspects concussion the player MUST be removed from the field of play and remain off the field of play. If the player refuses to follow the first aider's advice, then the Match Officials can hold up play until the player follows the instruction of the first aider. Advice for managing concussion can be found [HERE](#). The RFL is supportive of and follows the SRA concussion guidance – please read through the guidance in full [HERE](#) and ensure they are applied to matches and training at all times.

7.7 Reporting Injuries and Concussion

- 7.7.1 In the event there is a serious injury or concussion at a Match this must be reported using the GameDay system. Reports are added in the post-game section which is the same area as where results are added. It is imperative that any head injuries are reported on the system as this information must be provided to the insurers.

7.8 Post Match Arrangements

- 7.8.1 The home club shall be responsible for supplying all the competing players, club officials and appointed Match Officials with a suitable post-match meal (up to a maximum of 25 people per team). The visiting club is obligated to accept such hospitality.
- 7.8.2 In the case of away clubs failing to fulfil a fixture the home club, providing they have not been notified at least 48 hours in advance, may also claim up to a maximum of £60 towards refreshment costs. Any club which will not be requiring refreshments should notify its opponents in advance of the game, otherwise the club will be liable to pay £60 compensation to the home club. The non-offending team should contact the Competition Officer to notify them of their intention to claim.

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7.9 Team Sheet and Reporting Results

- 7.9.1 Teams will be required to enter their team sheet online, on GameDay, no later than 30 minutes before the scheduled KO time, this should include shirt numbers and positions. Failure to do so will result in an £10 administration fine. Any changes after that point must be reported to the Match Official on the day.
- 7.9.2 The home club, in consultation with the Match Official and designated officer from the opposition, must agree the result immediately on completion of the game and enter the result on to GameDay within 60 minutes. Failure to comply will result in a £10 administration fine.
- 7.9.3 Each club is responsible for ensuring their points scoring information is updated within the player stats area on the GameDay system within 48 hours following the completion of the game. Failure to do so will result in an £10 administration fine.

7.10 Abandonment of Games

- 7.10.1 If a game is abandoned with more than three-quarters of the playing time elapsed, the result shall stand unless otherwise determined by the NWML Management Group. If less than three-quarters of the playing time has elapsed the NWML Management Group, at its sole discretion, may order a game to be re-played.

7.11 Requests for Postponement due to Representative Rugby League

- 7.11.1 A club with two or more players selected to participate in a RFL recognised representative fixture (as determined by the Operational Rules) may apply to postpone its fixture scheduled that weekend.
- 7.11.2 Such club applications should be submitted in writing and lodged with the Competition Officer and copied to the clubs' opponents for receipt within 96 hours of the scheduled representative match.

8. DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSIONS AND FINES

- 8.1 A NWML discipline panel is in place to deal with all discipline matters arising, in accordance with section D of the Operational Rules. The disciplinary panel shall have the full power to expel, suspend and/or fine any club, player, official or other person, subject to the Operational Rules, found guilty of misconduct and/or breach of these rules and/or breach of the Operational Rules and to order them to meet any costs incurred.
- 8.2 A written report of a Match Official on the misconduct of any club, player or official must be sent via email to the Competition Officer with a copy to the offending club for receipt inside 48 hours from the conclusion of the game.

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- 8.3 Reports of brawling – defined as three or more players involved - should be sent via email by the Match Official, for receipt within 48 hours of a game's conclusion, to the Competition Officer. Separate copies of the report will then be forwarded to the clubs concerned.
- 8.4 Any club which does not receive, within 48 hours, a report outlining a dismissal or brawl having occurred should contact the Competition Officer immediately. The failure of a club to receive a written report will not prevent action being dealt by the relevant discipline committee.
- 8.5 A reported club, player, official or any other person may, to defend an allegation of misconduct, send a letter for receipt by the Competition Officer within seven days of the date of the match. The club or such persons may in their own defence request a personal appearance and/or bring witnesses and/or submit written mitigation, to the hearing, if they notify the Competition Officer within seven days of the alleged offence. A £20 administrative fee will be charged for any personal hearings or written submissions that result in a guilty verdict. This will be added afterwards to any fines that are issued or waived provided that the appellant or their designated representative attends in person and are found not guilty.
- 8.6 Unedited video evidence shall be an accepted method through which to defend or confirm the alleged actions that have been reported to the committee by a Match Official.
- 8.7 Should a case of alleged assault by a player, club official or spectator be lodged it will be reported to the Competition Officer by a Match Official. The Match Official will then be instructed to make themselves available to the disciplinary committee, for the purposes of interview, due notice of which shall be given in writing. A Match Official shall in such circumstances be entitled to claim reasonable travel expenses.
- 8.8 A suspension will commence with immediate effect and a suspended player is prohibited from participating in any Rugby League game until the following conditions are met:
- Any imposed fines are fully paid as per rule 8.10.
 - The suspension is served in full.
 - The Notification of Games Served Form is completed, submitted to, and approved by the Competition Officer.

Failure to comply with this rule will result in a minimum fine of £100 for the player or club. Additionally, the offending player may face further suspension and will remain ineligible to play until all fines are paid.

If a club fields a suspended player and wins the game, any competition points gained will be automatically forfeited.

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The NWML Management Group reserves the right to impose further sanctions if deemed appropriate. These may include suspending or expelling the offending club from the competition.

- 8.9 All organised competition games, (including SRL fixtures, and RFL representative games) provided that they were arranged prior to the player's offence may be counted towards the list of suspended games.
- 8.10 All fines, payable to the RFL must be settled within 28 days and must be forwarded to the Competition Officer. Failure to meet this obligation shall result in the fine being doubled automatically. If a further seven days elapse without receipt of payment, then the club's fixtures will be suspended.
- 8.11 The RFL will refer to its own internal policy in relation to citation, when dealing with any requests to review incidents of alleged misconduct that were not addressed by the Match Official during the game.

9. APPEALS

- 9.1 All appeals against disciplinary sanctions imposed by the NWML are to be dealt with by an independent RFL appointed panel.
- 9.2 If a player wishes to appeal against a decision they shall not be permitted to play in any Match until their appeal has been heard.
- 9.3 Clubs wishing to appeal a decision must do so within 7 days of the decision being issued. The appeal must include:
- A £40.00 fee, payable to the "RFL"; and
 - A written letter explaining the grounds for the appeal.

Both the fee and the letter must be submitted to the Competition Officer within the specified time frame.

- 9.4 The only grounds for appeal are that the original Disciplinary Panel:
- i) came to a decision to which no reasonable body could have come; or
 - ii) failed to act fairly in a procedural sense; or
 - iii) the sanction imposed was so excessive or lenient as to be unreasonable.
- 9.5 The Notice of Appeal must include any fresh evidence the Appellant wishes to introduce. The Appellant must also provide reasons why this evidence is relevant, credible, and was unavailable at the original hearing. Fresh evidence will only be admitted with the permission

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of the Disciplinary Appeals Panel. Permission will generally only be granted if the evidence meets the outlined criteria and is submitted alongside the Notice of Appeal.

- 9.6 An appeal shall be heard by way of review and shall not be a de novo hearing.
- 9.7 The Disciplinary Appeals Panel shall have all the same powers as the Disciplinary Panel in relation to evidence, experts, witnesses and conduct of proceedings, as well as the power to:
- (a) dismiss the appeal.
 - (b) quash a sanction or finding.
 - (c) remit the matter for rehearing.
 - (d) substitute an alternative finding or sanction.
 - (e) reduce or increase the original sanction; or
 - (f) make such orders as it considers appropriate

Fresh evidence may only be presented to the Disciplinary Appeals Panel with its permission.

- 9.8 No member of the Discipline Panel is actively involved in a decision taken at the initial hearing other than the Competition Officer - who has no voting rights - shall be permitted to adjudicate on matters that will be the subject of appeal.