

WOMEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE - COMPETITION RULES 2025

1. **APPLICABLE RULES**

- 1.1 The "Women's Rugby League" (WRL) sits within Tier Five of the RFL competition structure. All teams participating in the WRL are bound by the [RFL Operational Rules](#) for Tiers Four, Five and Six (Operational Rules).

2 **MEMBERSHIP**

- 2.1 Membership of the WRL is open to all clubs who are capable of meeting any Annual Entry Criteria as specified by the RFL.
- 2.2 Applications from clubs must be submitted in writing to the Competition Administrator by the December of each year. 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 £30 for any additional teams from the same Club. This should be paid by 30th April.
- 2.4 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

3. **START AND END DATE OF THE COMPETITION**

- 3.1 The RFL shall determine the commencement date of its competition and the date upon which it shall cease. These dates will fit between the 1st March and 31st October in any year.

4. **STRUCTURE OF THE COMPETITION**

- 4.1 The RFL, in conjunction with the Management Group, will determine the structure of the competition including its format and size, any play-off structure and matters relating to relegation.
- 4.2 Promotion and relegation issues throughout the divisional structure will be determined annually by the League's Management Committee. The Grand Final winners for each league will be granted promotion. In the Championship, the Grand Final winners will have the opportunity to play off against the bottom team in the WSL for the position.
- 4.3 The WRL will operate a Championship, League 1, League 2 and a Merit League Competition.
- 4.4 The Management Group shall have the final decision on the composition of the divisions prior to the season commencing.

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- 4.5 If two or more clubs finish level on points at the end of a season the application of competition rule 4.12.2 will decide which team finishes above the other.
- 4.6 If a club withdraws from the League having failed to complete 50% of its scheduled games, then the club's record shall be expunged. If a club completes 50% or more of its scheduled games, the points will be awarded to the opponents in line with competition rule 4.12.3.
- 4.7 If a club is expelled or suspended, its record will be expunged, irrespective of how many games that club has played.
- 4.8 The intention is that the Championship, League 1 and League 2 competitions will have top four Play-Offs to decide the champion. The Semi Finals should be hosted by the highest placed finishers in the respective leagues. The Championship Grand Final should be hosted by the highest ranked finalist. The League 1 and League 2 Grand Finals will be hosted centrally by the RFL.
- 4.9 Only players who have played in at least one league fixture are eligible for the Play-Offs.
- 4.10 The play-off format will see the top 4 teams contest the national play offs.
- SEMI FINALS**
1v4
2v3
- 4.11 For the Championship, teams who have forfeited one or more games through 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. For League 1 and League 2, teams who have forfeited two or more games shall not be eligible.
- 4.12 **League Tables**
- 4.12.1 The League competition tables shall be compiled by the RFL. The position shall be determined by the number of completed matches with points being awarded as follows: two points for each Match won; and one point for each Match drawn.
- 4.12.2 The League placings will be determined 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 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.
 - Where Clubs have an equal number of points, and their points difference is equal 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.

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- If the positions are still equal, positions will be determined by the toss of a coin which shall be carried out at such time and place as the RFL shall direct and those Clubs concerned shall be entitled to witness the toss.

4.12.3 The notional scores in forfeited games shall be 48-0 and a points deduction of 1 point. However, this shall only be used as last resort.

5 FIXTURES

5.1 **Rearrangements** – We ask that all teams let the RFL know of any dates that they are unable to play a fixture prior to the commencement of the season.

5.2 Postponements

5.2.1 Teams must contact their opponent at least 14 days prior to the scheduled fixture to request a postponement or rearrangement. Providing their opponents agree and there is a suitable alternative weekend, teams must complete a fixture amendment form which should be forwarded to the Competition Administrator for their approval. If a club does not agree to a fixture re-arrangement request, then the fixture will be referred to the League Management where both clubs can submit their justification. The Management will then decide the outcome of the fixture.

5.2.2 Any teams contacting their opponents to postpone a fixture within 14 days of the scheduled fixture will be at risk of being given a fine, 48-0 loss and a point deduction. Postponement requests made with less than 14 days' notice will not be considered because of injuries, or any other matter not considered exceptional. The Management Group will consider reasoning for the late postponement, before deciding the outcome.

5.2.3 Any Championship teams will be ineligible to participate in playoffs or be promoted to Super League if they have postponed a fixture during the season.

5.3 Late postponement fines will be of different values depending on the league the team is involved in:

- Championship = £500
- League One = £250
- League Two = £100
- Merit League = No fine

5.4 Where programmed into the fixture programme, backlog dates should not be considered as a free weekend. Teams should be prepared to be allocated fixtures on these days subject to rule 5.2.1.

5.5 Any club desiring to arrange a friendly must seek permission from the Competition Administrator. No friendly fixtures shall be arranged on a League fixture date without prior approval of the Competition Administrator.

5.6 Clubs must accept fixtures given at seven days' notice by the Competition Administrator.

5.7 Any club failing to fulfil a fixture must pay reasonable expenses to the non-offending club, as determined by the RFL. This may include the referee's full fee and expenses. For the

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avoidance of doubt, if a game is called off after 5pm on a Friday for a weekend fixture, or 5pm the day before a midweek fixture, then this rule will come into force.

- 5.8 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 £100, which their opponents may incur, including kit washing, or medical costs such as strapping.
- 5.9 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 £250 towards transport costs.
- 5.10 48 – 0 will be used as a last resort, every effort must be made between the clubs to get the game played.
- 5.11 **Postponements due to weather**
- 5.11.1 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.

- 5.11.2 All postponements made in accordance with 5.11.1 must be notified to the Competition Administrator within 1 hour of the decision being made.
- 5.11.3 Where a Match does not take place because the away Club fails to turn up then in addition to such Club being found guilty of misconduct it shall also be liable to pay £50 compensation towards refreshment costs.

6. **PLAYER REGISTRATIONS**

- 6.1.1 All players should 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.
- 6.1.2 There is no restriction on the maximum number of players allowed to register per team in the WRL, however fifteen is the minimum number per team and scheduled fixtures will be refused until 15 players are registered.
- 6.1.3 The RFL may introduce, from time to time, new registration processes.

6.2 **Transfers**

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- 6.2.1 Clubs may register or transfer players from other clubs using GameDay. It is the responsibility of the Club the player is moving to initiate the transfer. 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.
- 6.2.2 All players must fulfil all financial obligations to their current club before any transfer to another club. This also applies to a player wishing to sign for a different club in future seasons.
- 6.2.3 The deadline date for transferring of players shall be the **31st of August**. For the avoidance of doubt after this date, players must play for the Club who holds their primary registration, unless an application for dual registration has already been processed by the Competition Administrator.

6.3 Dual Registration with the Women's Super League Clubs

- 6.3.1 Clubs can register players that are currently registered to a Women's Super League Club (WSL) provided that the following regulations are adhered to:
- (a) A Players primary registration must be with the WSL Club.
 - (b) Talent Transfer Players may dual register with any Championship, League 1, League 2 Club of their choice.
- 6.3.2 A maximum of three Super League players can play for a team in any Championship, League 1, League 2, or Merit League match. In exceptional circumstances the Management Group will have the means to allow discretion to the total number of players.

6.3.3 WSL Under 19s Programme:

WSL clubs will hold the primary registration of the player. Players will be, where possible, dual registered with the Community Club they have played (unless they don't have a team for that player to be part of U18/Open Age). WSL clubs will be responsible for managing the player workload appropriately.

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 Sunday afternoons with a kick off time scheduled for 2.00pm. If fixtures need to be played mid-week, then the Competition Administrator must be notified at least one week prior to the scheduled fixture.
- 7.2 To maintain the continuity of the playing programme the Competition Administrator shall be empowered, if necessary, to bring forward to an earlier date fixture scheduled for later in the season.
- ### **7.3 Contacting Opponents and Kit Obligations**
- 7.3.1 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.

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

7.4 Team Sizes

7.4.1 A maximum of 20 players may be named for each side taking part in a fixture including cup fixtures, play-off games and finals. For the Championship, the maximum should be 17 players named for each side taking part in a fixture.

7.5 Technical Areas

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 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 is in attendance at 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 has to 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. 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 may also claim up to a maximum of £50 towards refreshment costs. Any club which will not be requiring

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refreshments should notify its opponents in advance of the game, otherwise the club will be liable to pay £50 compensation to the home club.

7.9 Team Sheets 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 £20 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 £20 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 £20 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 RFL. If less than three-quarters of the playing time has elapsed the RFL (via the League Management), at its sole discretion, may order a game to be re-played.

8 DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSIONS AND FINES

8.1 A WRL discipline panel is in place to deal with all discipline matters arising. 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 from the Match Official on the misconduct of any club, player or official must be sent via email to the Competition Administrator with a copy to the offending club for receipt inside 48 hours from the conclusion of the game.

8.3 Reports of brawling – defined as three or more players involved - should be sent by the Match Official, for receipt within 48 hours of a game's conclusion, via email to the Competition Administrator. Separate copies of the report must be lodged by the Match Official with the clubs concerned.

8.4 Any club which does not receive from the Match Official within 48 hours a report outlining a dismissal or brawl having occurred should contact the Competition Administrator 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 Administrator 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 Administrator within seven days of the alleged offence and send a

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deposit of £20.00 which must be paid to the RFL by bank transfer. The deposit shall be refunded after the hearing, provided that the appellant or their designated representative attends in person and they are found not guilty.

- 8.6 Unedited DVD 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 Club secretaries or their deputies, pursuant to the hearing, having not received a verdict after five days, should contact the Competition Administrator regarding the result.
- 8.8 Should a case of alleged assault by a player, club official or spectator be lodged it will be reported to the Competition Administrator by a Match Official. The Match Official will then be instructed to make himself 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.
- 8.9 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 8.11.
 - 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.

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

- 8.10 All organised competition games, (including University and College RL 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. It will be down to the RFL's discretion on how many friendlies during the pre-season are included in the total of suspended games.
- 8.11 All fines, payable to the RFL must be settled within 28 days and must be forwarded to the Competition Administrator. 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.

9 APPEALS

- 9.1 All appeals against disciplinary sanctions imposed by the WRL are to be dealt with by an independent RFL appointed panel.

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- 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 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.