

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION



NATIONAL LEAGUE RUGBY ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

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1 GENERAL

1.1 INTRODUCTION

RFU National League Rugby (“NLR”) has delegated authority from the Rugby Football Union (“RFU”) to act as the organising committee for the National Leagues which comprise National 1, National 2 North, National 2 East and National 2 West and the National League Rugby Secretary is the designated League Secretary for all four Leagues.

All rugby must be played under the Laws of the Game (“the Laws”) issued by World Rugby. The RFU governs the game in England and issues wide-ranging regulations to achieve this (“RFU Regulations”). National League Rugby issues further instructions to enable it to administer the National Leagues efficiently and equitably (“National League Rugby Administrative Instructions”).

Where there are any anomalies or contradictions between the Laws and the RFU Regulations and/or the National League Rugby Administrative instructions, the Laws are the definitive statement. Likewise, the RFU Regulations take precedence over the National League Rugby administrative instructions.

The RFU regulations can be viewed at

<https://www.englandrugby.com/governance/rules-and-regulations/regulations>

and World Rugby regulations at

[Laws of the Game | World Rugby Laws](#)

The object of these administrative instructions is to provide clubs with more information and guidance on how the RFU regulations are applied to our leagues,

By accepting a place in any of the National Leagues, Clubs agree implicitly to be bound by these instructions.

Clubs are advised to study and understand these instructions, the appropriate RFU regulations and World Rugby Laws as ignorance of these will not be accepted as a defence in the event of a Club breaching these instructions, regulations or laws.

1.2 PROMOTION AND RELEGATION

At the end of season 25/26

- The winner of National 1 will be promoted to the Champ provided that they meet the Champ minimum operating standard (“MOS”). If the winner does not meet the standards, the highest place club who do will be promoted
- The bottom club in the Champ will be relegated into National 1
- The bottom three clubs in National 1 will be relegated to National 2
- The top teams in each of the three National 2 leagues will be promoted to National 1
- The winners of each of the six regional leagues will be promoted to National 2
- The bottom two clubs in each of the three National 2 leagues will be relegated to the regional leagues

In addition, there will be play offs to determine further promotion and relegation as follows

- The clubs second and third best in National 1 who meet the MOS will play each other and the winner will play the club finishing in thirteen position in the Champ. The winner of this game will play in the Champ in the following season and the loser will play in National 1
- The club finishing in eleventh position in National 1 and the clubs finishing in second place in the three National 2 leagues will play a knock out. The National 1 club will play the National 2 club with the poorest league record and the other two National 2 clubs will play each other. The winners of these games will play each other and the winner will play in National 1 and the rest in National 2 the following season
- The clubs finishing second and third in the Regional 1 Midlands and Regional 1 South West leagues will play each other in a knock out and the winner will play the club finishing twelfth in National 2 West. The winner of this game will play in National 2 and the loser in Regional 1 in the following season
- The clubs finishing second and third in the Regional 1 North East and Regional 2 North West leagues will play each other in a knock out and the winner will play the club finishing twelfth in National 2 North. The winner of this game will play in National 2 and the loser in Regional 1 in the following season
- The clubs finishing second and third in the Regional 1 South East and Regional 1 South Central leagues will play each other in a knock out and the winner will play the club finishing twelfth in National 2 East. The winner of this game will play in National 2 and the loser in Regional 1 in the following season
- In all play off games the game will be played on the ground of the club at the highest league level. If both clubs are at the same league level, the game will be played on the ground of the club with the best playing record in the season just completed.

The regulations governing play off matches are in [RFU-Regulation-6---Appendix-6---25-26.pdf](#)

Clubs involved in play off games are advised to study this regulation as inter alia it contains details of

- Game regulations to be used when Champ and National League clubs are involved
- Restriction on England Academy Players
- Determining result of games when scores are tie at the final whistle
- Match expenses
- Squad sizes and number of interchanges

Additional guidance on calculating match expenses is contained in Appendix D

1.3 REGISTRATION

Registration of National League players is handled by the RFU and registration communications should be sent to mensplayerregistration@rfu.com

For a National League match, a Club may only play or select as a replacement or substitute players who hold Effective Registration for that Club in accordance with the Adult Player Registration Regulations set out in [RFU Regulation 14](#). The only conclusive evidence of Effective Registration is the computerised record held by the RFU as at the kick-off time of the match in which such players are selected to play or be a replacement as listed on the match card. Each Club is responsible for ensuring its strict compliance with this Regulation and must take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance.

1.4 TRANSFER DEADLINE

For season 2025 26 the transfer deadline date for National League Clubs is 12 noon on 27th February 2026. No new registrations or loans can be made after this date with two exceptions

- temporary dispensation to enable a team to have 5 front row players in its match squad.
- a 17 year old reaching his 18th birthday after the deadline

After the Transfer Deadline, only those England Academy Players who have already played or been selected as a replacement or substitute in a League or Cup Match for the Club's first XV prior to the Transfer Deadline will be permitted to be selected in a League or Cup Match for the Club's first XV, unless otherwise approved by the RFU Head of Discipline.

1.5 MATERIAL BENEFITS

Clubs are reminded that any player who receives material benefit is considered to be a contracted player and must have an appropriate written contract which must be declared to the Registrar. Giving material benefits directly or indirectly to non-contracted players is considered by the RFU to be a serious breach of regulations and they can impose serious penalties. Registered players who do not have contracts, must be declared as amateur players to the RFU.

The definition of material benefits and allowable expenses is covered in [RFU regulation 7](#).

HRMC considers any players receiving material benefits to be professional players and any such benefits are subject to appropriate taxes and regulations. Clubs are responsible for maintaining appropriate records and for ensuring that appropriate taxes are deducted and remitted to HRMC who can impose significant penalties where this is not done correctly.

At the end of the season, all clubs are required to submit a return to the RFU detailing the material benefits made to players. Clubs exceeding defined limits on these material benefits (salary caps) will lose various RFU grants and benefits for the following season. Full details can be found in RFU regulation 7.

1.6 AGENTS

Clubs and players must only use agents who are registered with the RFU. RFU regulation 8 covers this and instructions on the use of agents and the list of registered agents can be found on the RFU web site

<https://www.englandrugby.com/governance/player-agents>

There are significant RFU penalties on players and Clubs who use unregistered agents.

When a Player enters into an agreement with a Club and an Agent has been acting for either the Player or the Club, all parties including the Player, the Club and the Agent must complete and sign the RFU agent's declaration form and send this to the RFU.

1.7 MATCH SQUADS

Teams are allowed to have up to 20 players in their match squads.

In National 1, in addition to up to three loan players, clubs may also have no more than six England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2024 in their match squads.

In National 2 Clubs may have up to four players from another Club of which no more than three shall be Loan Players and the others (up to the maximum of four) must be England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2024.

To minimise the risk of uncontested scrums, each team must have in their match squad at least 2 players competent to play hooker and 4 competent to play prop.

1.8 PITCHES

It is the responsibility of the home Club to ensure the availability of a suitable pitch for a League match and to mark out this pitch correctly and clearly.

All pitches used for National League games must conform to the standards defined in the World Rugby Laws section 1. These Laws do not define a minimum size for a pitch. However, at the National League Rugby AGM on 5th June 2016 the Clubs agreed that the following minimum sizes should apply

- o Try line to try line – 90 metres
- o Touch line to touch line – 65 metres
- o Try line to dead ball line – 5 metres

Artificial pitches can be used. However, these must comply with World Rugby Regulation 22 and have the appropriate and current certificates.

At least 30 days before the start of the season, Clubs should inform the National League Rugby Secretary what is their designated primary match pitch for League fixtures and confirm that it meets the above standards. At his discretion, the National League Rugby Secretary may allow a Club to designate a non-conformant pitch as its primary match pitch. A Club's primary pitch must be used for all League fixtures unless this pitch is declared unplayable by an authorised RFU match official or both Clubs and the Match Referee agree to use another pitch

Clubs should also declare any other pitches which they could use if their primary pitch is unplayable and confirm that these meet the above standards or could easily be made to conform. Details of Clubs' primary pitches and other conformant pitches will be available from the National League Rugby web site

If a Club's main pitch is declared unfit by the inspecting RFU match official, he should be asked to inspect the other declared pitches in the Club's order of preference. If any of these pitches are playable, the game will proceed subject to any decision taken by the Match Referee.

Even though a pitch has been declared playable, if both captains and the Match Referee all agree, the game may be moved to another playable pitch.

A home Club may ask the away Club to agree to play their game on another conformant pitch and the away Club is expected to agree to a reasonable request. Any disputes should be referred to the National League Rugby Secretary for resolution and his decision is binding on both Clubs

1.9 FLOODLIGHTS

The RFU have removed the requirement for clubs with floodlights to provide the National League with lux certificates. Clubs are now required to perform their own risk assessments. Details are given in the documents below

[RFU guide to floodlighting](#)

[Risk assessment guide](#)

1.10 CHANGING ROOMS

Clubs must make available suitable and secure changing accommodation for the sole use of the visitor's match squad of 20 players and up to 10 support staff. They must also provide a separate and suitable changing room for the Match Officials and a suitably equipped medical room. In addition, clubs need to provide appropriate changing, toilet and showering facilities for female match officials.

Clubs are reminded that they are liable to receive unannounced visits from the RFU drug testing team who can arrive very close to kick off time. When this happens, a changing room must be made available for the drug testers' exclusive use.

1.11 FIXTURES

About the end of the season, the National League Rugby Secretary will circulate Clubs asking for any specific fixture related requests. National League Rugby will produce a fixture list which accommodates as many of these requests as possible. This list will be circulated to Clubs and loaded onto the National League Rugby web site.

Once issued, fixtures can only be changed with the express permission of the National League Rugby Secretary.

All matches must be played on the Saturday of a scheduled weekend unless another date is specified by the National League Rugby Secretary or agreed by both Clubs and approved by the National League Rugby Secretary.

Clubs are obliged to fulfil their scheduled fixtures. Failure to do so can result in serious sanctions.

1.12 KICK OFF TIMES

All matches originally scheduled to be played on the last full League Saturday of the season shall only be played on that Saturday and all games will kick off at 15.00. Any postponed games played after that date shall all have a kick off time of not later than 15.00. These times can only be changed with the express permission of the National League Rugby Secretary.

Subject to the above, the home Club shall fix the time of kick off of all its home League matches and inform

the National League Rugby Secretary of these within 28 days of receiving the final fixture list. These kick off times must be between

- 14.00 and 15.00 on weekends and public holidays; and
- 19.00 and 20.00 on weekdays.

The two Clubs concerned may agree an earlier or later kick off time. However, any such agreement must be submitted to the National League Rugby Secretary for his approval no later than three days prior to the date of the match.

In any event, the National League Rugby Secretary retains the power to specify any kick off time. He may, if he wishes, permit written representations from the two Clubs concerned in this regard.

Where cancelled games are rescheduled, the kick off time will be that of the original game provided that it meets the conditions above. If not, the home Club will select a kick off time which meets the above conditions and this will apply unless a different time is agreed by both Clubs and approved by the National League Rugby Secretary.

Once defined and posted to the National League Rugby web site, fixture dates and kick off times cannot be changed unless approved by the National League Rugby Secretary.

1.13 POSTPONEMENT OF FIXTURES

Clubs are not permitted to decide to postpone a scheduled league fixture. A decision to postpone a game because a pitch is unplayable must be taken by an accredited RFU match official. Postponing a fixture for any other reason must be approved beforehand by the National League Rugby Secretary.

A Club is not permitted to postpone a match because it has player(s) being required to play in a representative match involving England or other national unions on the date specified for a League match.

Unless there are extreme conditions which make it obvious that the game cannot be played, the earliest time when a game can be called off due to pitch conditions is the day before the match was due to be played.

Where a National League home Club is concerned, or has any cause to doubt, the suitability of the pitch or weather conditions making the match potentially unplayable, the following procedures must be followed:

- The RFU referees team maintains a list of persons who are accredited to inspect pitches and to decide whether these are playable. Clubs must use one of these accredited official to inspect pitches in doubt. Clubs are advised to contact the referee manager early in the season to obtain contact details of local accredited officials who can be asked to do a pitch inspect when required. If none of these are available, the home Club must contact the RFU Referee Department as early as possible and in any event before 5.00pm on the day preceding the match to request a pitch inspection
- The home Club should determine from their visitors when they plan to start their journey and obtain at least two mobile telephone numbers of officials whom they can contact on the morning of the game if there are any doubts about the fitness of the pitch. If any of this information changes, it is incumbent on the away team to inform the home Club. The home Club should make the same arrangements with the Match Officials

- The home Club should also inform the away Club and the National League Rugby Secretary that the match is in doubt due to the pitch being unplayable as a result of poor weather conditions or the forecast of poor weather conditions as soon as reasonably practicable
- A suitably accredited RFU Match Official (not a person, whether a referee or not, who regularly acts as a Club's 4th official or who is a member of the home Club) must confirm the postponement after an inspection of the match pitch. The pitch inspection must take place before the time the away Club intend to travel to fulfil the fixture
- Where a Club has indicated that it has other pitches suitable for League rugby, the inspecting Match Official should rule on whether these are playable
- If the inspecting Match Official decides all compliant pitches are unplayable and/or likely to be unplayable, the home Club must immediately inform the National League Rugby Secretary and the Match Officials as well as the away Club. If the inspecting accredited RFU Match Official deems a pitch playable and/or likely to be playable, the home Club must act on that judgement and notify the away Club accordingly
- When a late decision (i.e., within 3 hours of kick-off) as to the fitness of the pitch for playing a match is necessary, the decision shall be made by the accredited RFU Match Official in accordance with the National League Rugby pitch inspection protocol see (Appendix B).

If this procedure is not followed correctly by the home club and the fixture is postponed because the Match Referee considers the pitch is unfit after the visiting team have travelled to fulfil the fixture, the home Club will be responsible for the costs of travel and accommodation incurred by the visiting team. Such costs will be payable by the home Club within 30 days from receipt of a relevant invoice and supporting copy invoices from the visiting team. In this instance, the costs claimed should be the actual cost of the coach used only. If no coach was used, the costs claimed should be no greater than those which would have been incurred if a coach was used. Where applicable, accommodation should be the actual cost of bed and breakfast up to a maximum of 26 people.

Other than adverse pitch conditions and a decision from the Match Referee, games cannot be called off without the National League Rugby Secretary's express permission. Clubs who do so will have sanctions imposed on them by the National League Rugby Secretary. These sanctions are likely to include deduction of League points.

1.14 ABANDONED MATCHES

Where the Match Referee has cause to abandon a match, the following procedure should be followed.

If weather conditions (which shall be deemed to include bad light in the sole opinion of the Referee) solely prevent a match being played or result in a match being abandoned then

- if less than sixty minutes have been played, the match will be replayed unless the National League Rugby Secretary exceptionally and in his absolute discretion agrees or specifies otherwise
- when sixty or more minutes have been played, then the score at the moment of abandonment shall stand and be deemed to be the final score in the match
- the Match Referee's decision as to the necessity for abandonment and the number of minutes played at the moment of abandonment shall be final

For the avoidance of doubt, failure of match floodlights is not considered to be weather conditions.

If the Referee finds it necessary to abandon a match for any reason other than weather conditions, then, irrespective of the number of minutes played, the following shall apply:

- if it is possible for the match to be reconvened on another pitch at the hosting venue and that pitch is compliant with the applicable World Rugby Regulations and National League Rugby instructions, the match must be reconvened on such pitch unless the Referee deems (in his or her absolute discretion) that these are unsuitable or that it is inappropriate to reconvene the match.
- if it is not possible to reconvene the match on another pitch, the result of that match shall be reviewed and determined by the National League Rugby Secretary who may order the match to be replayed and/or impose such other sanction as he deems appropriate.

When a match is abandoned for any reason, the home Club must notify the National League Rugby Secretary of the reason for the non-playing or non-completion of the match as soon as possible but in any event within 24 hours of the event.

In all instances, the electronic match card needs to be completed and confirmed. This must include the number of minutes played, the score and the Match Referee's statement of the reason for the abandonment.

1.15 RE-SCHEDULING OR RE-ARRANGING MATCHES

A postponed league match shall be replayed on the next available reserve weekend where neither side has a League fixture, unless some other date is specified by the National League Rugby Secretary. League matches (including rearranged matches) take precedence over all other matches other than RFU Cup Competitions.

1.16 CLUBS UNABLE TO FULFIL FIXTURES

A Club must fulfil its matches in League Competitions in compliance with the RFU Regulations.

If the National League Rugby Secretary considers that a Club has unjustifiably failed to fulfil a match, the National League Rugby Secretary may deduct League points from that Club and/or order the match to be replayed, provided he has regard to promotion and relegation issues in any relevant League, including the effect on other Clubs and to the commitments of the Clubs concerned. When the first fixture is defaulted by the 'away' team, the return fixture shall be reversed and take place at the ground of the non-offending Club. For the avoidance of doubt, lack of players or insufficient front row players with effective registration whether through injury, illness or work or other commitments shall not be deemed to be a justifiable reason for not playing or seeking a postponement of a League match.

1.17 COSTS AND REVENUES

Gross gate receipts of League matches are retained by the home Clubs who are responsible for all their expenses incurred in staging the game including the provision of appropriate post match meals for the Match Officials (including their coaches and match observers) and the opposition players and team officials. The visiting Club is responsible for its own travelling costs.

The RFU make a fixed charge for Match Officials for League matches and this is invoiced to clubs.

Clubs who do not comply with the Payment of Players regulations in the previous season will have to bear the full cost of match officials.

2 MATCH MANAGEMENT

2.1 TEAM SELECTION

Every Club must play its strongest possible first XV in all League matches unless agreed otherwise by the National League Rugby Secretary.

2.2 JERSEYS

Clubs are required to inform the National League Rugby Secretary of the colours and designs of their main and replacement kits with photographs or illustrations before the start of the season. These will be displayed on the NLR web site to make it easier to identify any colour clashes. They should also inform the National League Rugby Secretary of any significant changes made during the season.

The home team can decide which jerseys it will use. The away Club shall be responsible for checking for a potential colour clash at least one week prior to a match and shall notify the colours its team will wear to the home Club in time for programme printing. In the event of Clubs having similar or clashing colours, the **away** Club shall be responsible for changing its colours for the match where a clash of colours would otherwise occur.

The Match Referee has the definitive word on colour clashes and can dictate the strip to be worn by the away team. If the away team has concerns about a potential colour clash with both of their strips, they should consult the Match Referee before the day of the match and act on his guidance.

In the event of the away Club failing to comply with this instruction, the home Club should report this to the National League Rugby Secretary who can impose sanctions. These will generally be a financial penalty of £50 on the first occasion in a season and £100 for each occasion thereafter during that season

Away teams are recommended to take two different strips to away games to minimise the risk of colour clashes and to allow the Referee to ask for shirts to be changed in adverse conditions.

The jerseys should all be numbered in accordance with World Rugby requirements in order to ensure the correct identification of all players and replacements during a match.

2.3 TOSS

The toss to decide who will kick-off or choose ends and the decision as to which end each team will have in the first half of the match must be taken no later than 15 minutes before kick-off.

2.4 DELAY TO KICK OFF

Any delay from the specified or agreed kick-off time should be reported by the non-offending Club and the Referee to the National League Rugby Secretary and may lead to sanctions being imposed.

2.5 HALF TIME

All matches shall be of 80 minutes duration, divided into two halves of 40 minutes each. The interval between each of the two halves shall be 15 minutes unless both teams agree to a shorter period. The interval shall not be less than five minutes or more than 15 minutes. Teams may leave the playing enclosure during the interval.

2.6 MATCH OFFICIALS

2.6.1 Appointments

The RFU will appoint referees and assistant referees to all National League matches and the RFU Referee Department will inform the home Clubs of the appointed officials generally on the Monday before the game is due to be played. If the home Club has not received notification by three days before the game, they should contact the Referees Department.

Contacts at the Referees Department are

Secretary Olivia Hunt email; OliviaHunt@RFU.com

Manager Gareth Thomas Mobile 07764 699644 email; gareththomas@rfu.com

The home Club is responsible for contacting each appointed match official at least 3 days before the game to confirm their attendance. Leaving a message is not sufficient

The home Club is responsible for ensuring that a suitably trained and kitted out person is available at each home match to take over as an assistant referee should one of the appointed officials have to be replaced for any reason. His duties will be determined by the Match Referee but will not normally extend beyond indicating when the ball or a player carrying the ball is in touch and indicating a successful or unsuccessful kick at goal.

2.6.2 Replacement referees

If the Referee appointed has not arrived at the agreed kick-off time or if the Referee is unable to officiate for the whole of the match for any reason, an Assistant Referee where appointed may referee the match.

In the event both Assistant Referee are unable to continue to officiate for the whole of the match in question then another suitable replacement referee who is agreed by both team captains (or such other official or manager of the Club nominated by the Club) will take charge. Any agreement reached between team captains in relation to replacement referees shall thereafter be binding upon the Clubs.

If no other suitable replacement referee is available to commence or continue the match or if both team captains (or such other official or manager of the Club nominated by the Club) do not agree to him, the match shall be abandoned.

In all matches, any decision taken by the appointed Match Officials or their replacements shall be final and binding as far as the Laws of the Game are concerned.

2.6.3 Approaches to Match Officials

No person (other than the Match Officials team or Match Officials coach) shall approach the Match Officials at any time during the half-time interval and up to 30 minutes after the match to discuss any issue arising from the match nor shall they enter the referee's changing room unless invited to do so by the referee.

2.7 MATCH DISCIPLINE

Disciplinary issues initiated by the Match Officials including sendings off and inappropriate behaviour towards the Match Officials are handled by the RFU Disciplinary department. The primary contact is

Rebecca Morgan-Scott Tel; 020 8850 0210 email; rebeccamorgan@RFU.com

Clubs should note that players ordered off are provisionally suspended pending the hearing of their case; such suspension should be taken into consideration when sanctioning.

Clubs are entitled to cite a member of the opposing team for foul play. Citings should be made directly to the RFU Disciplinary department who will advise on the procedure to follow. The National League Rugby Secretary should be informed by the citing Club that a citing has been made. Detail of the process can be found in [RFU-Regulation-19---Appendix-4---Adult-Rugby-Citing-Procedures.pdf](#)

Clubs may appeal against the awarding of a yellow card for foul play. These can only be made where the appellant alleges that there was mistaken identity or that no act of foul play took place. Written details of the grounds for the appeal plus any relevant video evidence need to be sent to the RFU disciplinary secretary within 7 days of the match. Any appeal that is lodged after the 7-day period will not be valid and shall not be considered by the Disciplinary Panel. There is no charge for this. The Disciplinary department puts these appeals on file. They are only looked at if the player concerned accumulates three yellow cards in a season and is charged with this.

2.8 4TH OFFICIAL

Each home Club must provide a nominated 4th official whose responsibilities are as follows.

- Meeting with the appointed Match Officials before the game to be made aware of any particular requirements which they may have
- Ensuring that both teams have adequate supplies of substitution cards and establishing who from each Club will be notifying him of replacements
- Being readily available at the pitch side to the Match Officials and both Clubs' officials
- Managing all substitutions. In particular, ensuring that a team does not replace more than two players at a time and does not exceed 10 interchanges
- Logging full details of all match events including scores and scorers, substitutions, red and yellow cards issued and kicking records
- Ensuring in conjunction with the Referee and an official of the visiting team that the match result sheet is completed and signed off correctly. This should be done within one hour of the end of the game
- Monitoring the time penalty for any player sent to the sinbin, ensuring that suspended player remains in the technical area until the time penalty is complete and notifying the Referee via the near side assistant referee when the player can rejoin the game
- Ensuring that replacements warm up at the correct ends of the pitch
- Maintaining good order in the technical area. Any issues should be reported to the referee.

- Assisting the Match Officials as requested and appropriate

2.9 REPLACEMENTS AND SUBSTITUTES

In National League matches, each team is allowed up to 5 replacements. These must be listed on the match report sheet at least 15 minutes before the kick off. After this time, changes to replacements can only be made with the permission of the Match Referee.

In addition, each team must have and nominated in advance at least five suitably trained and experienced front row players in their match squad, all at least eighteen years old (unless otherwise permitted pursuant to RFU Regulation 15).

Rolling substitutions will be utilised in all National League matches and each Club is permitted to use a maximum of 10 interchanges. The following regulations apply to their use

- After all the permitted 10 player interchanges have been made, no other replacements, substitutions or player interchanges will be permitted for any reason (including temporary or permanent injuries, sending offs and suspensions) and in the event that a player is injured, sent off or suspended from the field the team will play with one less player and with uncontested scrums in the event that this involves a front row player and the game cannot continue safely with contested scrums.
- For the avoidance of doubt, player interchanges replace the “blood bin” which means that, if a player has an open wound and has to leave the field, this will be classified as a player interchange if that player is replaced by another player. If a team has used all its player Interchanges, that player may not be replaced and the team shall continue with one less player than was on the pitch prior to the “blood bin.” The player is permitted to return once the wound has been treated and the bleeding stopped.
- If a player has a head injury and is removed from the pitch for assessment and is replaced by another player, this counts as one interchange .If the player is declared fit to continue and replaces another player, this counts as one interchange.
- If a front row player receives a yellow card and his team is required to remove a player and replace him with another front row player to avoid uncontested scrums, this counts as one interchange. If, when his temporary suspension is up, the suspended player does not return to the pitch and is replaced by another player, this counts as one interchange. If the suspended player returns to the pitch and his team wish to take off the front row player brought on to replace him with another player, this counts as one interchange
- If a team has used up all its 10 interchanges, it is not allowed to make any further interchanges. The only exception to this is where a player has to leave the pitch injured and the referee rules that the injury was caused by foul play by the opposition or that the injury is a head injury, when the referee may allow that player to be replaced.
- Not more than two player Interchanges per team may occur at any one time and may only occur during a stoppage in play and with the knowledge of the Referee who is entitled in his sole opinion to refuse to allow or postpone a player Interchange if he believes either that
 - the player Interchange would prevent the opposition from restarting the game quickly
 - the replacement player is not fit to continue playing in the match
- Replacement players, entry onto the playing area is controlled by the 4th officials who will only allow this to happen when authorised by the referee

- A player who is a replacement shall not be entitled to take a kick at goal until a passage of play has taken place since that player took to the field of play.
- A player who suffers two injuries in a match which has necessitated that player being replaced on each occasion is not permitted to act as a replacement following the second injury.
- Under dispensation provided to Unions by World Rugby, where these rolling substitutions regulations conflict with the Laws of the Game, these regulations shall take precedence.
- Substitution cards will be used for the management of substitutions on and off the pitch. These can be downloaded from the National League Rugby web site.

The following procedure will be used during a match.

- Each team's nominated person will be situated during the match in the technical area and will have at his disposal as many replacement cards as he/she requires.
- When it is decided that a player must be replaced, the appropriate nominated person completes the details on the card, giving all the requested details (names, numbers, reasons, times etc.).
- Once this card is completed, it is handed to the 4th Official instructing him to make the replacement at the next opportunity.
- The 4th Official liaises with the near side assistant referee to get the Referee's permission to make the change
- The home Club should retain the substitution cards until the end of the season in case they need to be referred to in the case of a dispute

2.10 FRONT ROW REPLACEMENTS

Specific regulations apply to replacement of front row forwards as follows

- Unless they have specific approval from the RFU, no player under the age of 18 can play in the front row in contested or uncontested scrums
- The replacement of a front row player must come from the suitably trained and experienced players who started the match or from nominated replacements. A player other than a nominated front row player is permitted to play in the front row only when uncontested scrums are being played and there are no available front row replacements.
- In their match squads, sides must have at least two players capable of playing hooker and three players capable of playing prop such that on the first occasion a replacement hooker is required and on the first occasion a replacement prop is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

2.11 UNCONTESTED SCRUMS

The Match Referee shall order uncontested scrums when either:

- a front row Player is required to be replaced if, having made enquiry of and having confirmed with the captain of the team (or such other person nominated by the Club as the manager or other person responsible for the team), there is no suitably trained and experienced front row replacement who started the match or from the nominated replacements

- the Referee deems it unsafe for any other reason to start or continue the match with contested scrums.

In National League matches if, on any occasion uncontested scrum(s) are ordered by the Referee, in accordance with the above paragraph, due to injury (including a temporary blood injury) or consequent to a Player being temporarily suspended or ordered off or for any other reason, the team concerned shall not be entitled to replace the Player whose departure caused the uncontested scrum. On the return to the field of a front row Player who has been temporarily excluded the Match shall continue with contested scrums provided it is safe to do so.

Where uncontested scrums occur, the Referee should record details of this on the match report sheet. The National League Rugby Secretary will investigate these reports and, where appropriate, impose sanctions. If requested clubs must provide the National League Rugby Secretary with a signed report within 7 days of the match from the club's senior medical official giving the reasons for the player(s) being unable to continue

On the first instance where a hooker has to be replaced and the first instance where a prop has to be replaced, the side concerned must provide a capable replacement so that the game can continue with contested scrums. If they do not do so, the following apply

- The game continues with uncontested scrums until the end of the match or, if the need for replacement is caused by an injury or yellow card, the player returns
- The offending Club will forfeit the match and their opponents will be deemed to have won the match by four tries. For League purposes points scored by both teams will be disregarded as will any bonus points for the offending side
- Additional sanctions can be imposed by National League Rugby on the offending side
- The player leaving the pitch cannot be replaced. If the need for replacement is caused by an injury or yellow card, the player can only return if he resumes his position such that scrums can be contested

In the above situation, if the player is a tight head prop and his team decline to replace him because the available replacements are all loose heads and not capable of safely playing tight head, the team will be considered to be in breach of the regulations and the consequences above will apply. The same applies if the player to be replaced is a loose head and his team declare all the available replacements to be tight heads

On the second occasion a hooker and on the second occasion a prop has to be replaced and the side concerned does not have a capable replacement, the following apply:

- The game continues with uncontested scrums until the end of the match or the injured or yellow carded player returns
- The result stands
- The player leaving the pitch cannot be replaced. If the need for replacement is caused by an injury or yellow card, the player can only return if he resumes his position such that scrums can be contested
- No sanctions will be applied by National League Rugby

The responsibility for ensuring that replacement props and hookers are competent lies with their Clubs.

2.12 RESULT REPORTING

An electronic process has been implemented to provide quick updating of match results on the National League Rugby web site.

Prior to the start of the season, Clubs are required to submit the names and email addresses of at least two officials who have smart phones. These officials will be given access to an app which allows them to enter the match scores and number of tries for each team. This needs to be done by the home team and obviously only one official needs to do this.

Clubs should endeavour to submit the information as soon as possible and within 30 minutes of the end of the game. Clubs who do not submit their scores in time are liable to a fine of £50 for the first offence in a season and £100 for subsequent offences in that season.

2.13 MATCH REPORT SHEETS

Clubs are required to make use of the electronic match system to record details of all League matches.

Details of the players in the match squad can be entered in advance and need not be done at the ground where the game takes place. Clubs are recommended to enter their match squads by noon on the day before the match to allow them to contact the RFU registrations team if there are issues with players. It is each clubs responsibility to ensure that the correct players are entered onto the match card and that the numbers on their jerseys correspond to those on the match card. A team's squad may be changed up to 15 minutes before the scheduled kick off. Changes after this can only be made if approved by the Match Referee.

The system automatically checks that players are correctly registered. It also highlights where a player is on loan or dual registered. Clubs need to check manually to ensure that they conform that their match squad has

- No suspended players
- National 1: no more than three Loan Players and no more than six England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1st September of the current season
- National 2: four players from another Club of which no more than three shall be Loan Players and the others (up to the maximum of four) must be England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September of the current season

Failure to conform to the above will make the offending Club liable to sanctions which are likely to involve points deduction.

After the match, the home team needs to input details of the match events and confirm these. Confirmation posts the details to the RFU Game Management System. This process should be completed within one hour of the end of the game. Clubs who fail to do so within the allotted time may be fined £50 for the first offence and £100 for subsequent offences. If a Club has an issue which is likely to delay completion, they should inform the National League Rugby Secretary as soon as they realise this.

The home team should endeavour to get the Match Referee and the away team to complete their portion of the report before they leave the ground although, if necessary, they can do this later. If the Match Referee is an exchange referee from outside England, the home team should contact the National League Rugby Secretary for guidance.

The system can generate a match report sheet which Clubs can circulate for their own purposes. Clubs who have technical reasons affecting their ability to use the electronic match card during a particular match e.g., power cuts or loss of internet should inform the National League Rugby Secretary as soon as possible and are permitted to use the manual match result sheet.

Clubs should note that, where the manual form is used, it is their responsibility to ensure that all players entered on the form are correctly registered and eligible to play.

If any Club is found to have been guilty of fielding an ineligible player, points deductions will be applied for the match or matches concerned. The National League Rugby Secretary will inform the Club concerned. The Club has the right of appeal. Sanctions will not be applied until any appeals are concluded.

Clubs who make false or misleading or incorrect entries on the match report, manual or computer, can have sanctions imposed by the National League Rugby Secretary.

2.14 MATCH VIDEOS

The home Club is responsible for producing a match video which should include the Referee's commentary. Clubs can obtain the communications equipment from any source. The main distributor for the Sennheiser equipment which is commonly used is

Canford Audio PLC

www.canford.co.uk

sales@canford.co.uk

0914 181000

The home Club is also responsible loading an unedited copy of this video onto the RFU Elite Hub. This need to be completed no later than 12:00 on the Monday after the game. Fuller details are in Appendix A.

The failure of the home Club to comply with the above renders them liable to a financial penalty. On the first occasion this will be £50 and then £100 for each occasion thereafter. Persistent offenders can have their access rights to the Hub suspended.

3 ADMINISTRATION

3.1 APPEALS

Any appeal by a Club against any sanction imposed by the National League Rugby Secretary (e.g., points deduction, the imposition of fines or the application of any other sanction) needs to follow the procedure below:

- The National League Rugby Secretary will formally notify the offending Club of any sanctions by email or in writing.
- If the Club wishes to appeal against the National League Rugby Secretary's decision, the Club will have fourteen days in which to lodge a written appeal to the National League Rugby Disciplinary Officer. Before the appeal is considered, the Club must remit a deposit of £100 to the National League Rugby Treasurer who will advise on how this should be done. This deposit will be forfeited in the event of an unsuccessful appeal.
- If the Club wishes to appeal against the National League Rugby Disciplinary Officer's decision, it will have fourteen days or whatever period the RFU have in force at the time, in which to lodge an appeal directly to the RFU in writing. The RFU Appeals Panel decision will be final.
- No sanctions will be applied until the appeals procedure has ended.

- Clubs must be aware that the imposed sanction(s) may be increased as well as decreased on appeal. This may also apply to an appeal which is deemed to be frivolous. All costs (including travel, hire of ancillary equipment etc.) of an appeal regardless of the outcome can be charged to the Clubs at the discretion of the National League Rugby Disciplinary Officer hearing the appeal. Costs will not be invoiced until the appeals process has ended.
- Appeals not lodged within the prescribed period will be adjudged to be 'out of time.'

3.2 WEBSITE

Each member Club of the National League Rugby which has a website is required to place a conspicuous link on their website to the National League Rugby website

[National League Rugby – The official website of National League Rugby.](#)

3.3 CLUB ACCOUNTS

Clubs in National 1 are required by the RFU to have their financial year ending on 30th June.

National League Rugby has been delegated by the RFU to collect audited annual accounts every year from all its member Clubs. Each Club must submit its audited accounts to the National League Rugby Treasurer by the 1st of December. In the event of a Club failing to comply with this requirement for whatever reason, a financial penalty of £100 and/or a deduction of five League points will be made. The RFU may impose other sanctions.

In addition, around the start of the season, Clubs will be asked to complete a short financial questionnaire.

3.4 VALUE ADDED TAX

National League Rugby is registered for VAT and VAT at the standard rate will be added to any invoice issued under these regulations other than fines which are outside the scope of VAT.

3.5 MANAGEMENT FEE

Each Club participating in the National Leagues shall pay an annual management fee to the National League Rugby to cover the administrative and operating expenses of the National Leagues. Such sum will be determined at the Annual General Meeting of the National League Rugby.

3.6 INSURANCE

The RFU funds an insurance policy which provides some insurance cover for its member Clubs. This is provided free of charge to Clubs.

Details can be obtained from the insurance section of the RFU web site using the link below.

<http://englandrugbyinsurance.co.uk/>

Clubs are advised that, if they are expecting more than 1,000 visitors (or more than 2,000 people at a rugby festival) it is essential that insurers sign-off their plans before the event. Clubs need to

contact the RFU brokers (rfu@howdengroup.com) before the event with a copy of their risk assessments.

APPENDICES

A ELITE HUB

INTRODUCTION

The Elite Hub is an RFU funded site for sharing match videos. For all National League matches, the home club is required to load an unedited copy of the match video onto the hub no later than 12.00 noon on the Monday after the match.

1. ACCESS

Each National League club can nominate up to three persons who can view videos on the hub and upload their club's videos. Access is conditional on abiding by the Hub's terms and conditions. Failure to do so, could lead to access rights being removed. The National League Secretary will contact clubs prior to the start of the season to collect details of their nominated persons

Requests to add or change access rights should be made to National League Secretary.

2. FILES

Only one file per game can be uploaded to the hub and this must contain both halves. The file must not be edited and must run continuously from the start to finish of each half.

The referee commentary must be included which requires the use of an appropriate communications transmitter on the referee with a receiver on the camera. Clubs must supply this equipment. The communications kit used by the match officials is not suitable for linking to a video camera and cannot be used.

MP4 and .MOV files can be loaded. The size of the file needs to be sufficient to give good clarity without taking up too much space on the Hub. Around the 3gb mark is a good guideline.

3. CAMERA POSITIONS

Games need to be filmed from an elevated side on position as near to the half way as practical. The camera should have an unobstructed view of the whole pitch.

4. LOADING FILES

Loading files is straight forward and intuitive. The match video needs to be correctly formatted and accessible from the device being used to access the Hub. The appropriate fixture needs to be accessed from the fixtures tab. Clicking the files button displays a red box with the message "send this video to us." Selecting this displays a screen asking where the file is. Select "browse" and find your file and select it. The file will then automatically load to the hub

Once it is loaded to the Hub, it then automatically goes through a decoding process to enable it to be streamed. The time taken for this depends on the number of files currently being processed.

5. TIMESCALES

The deadline for loading files is 12 noon on the Monday following the game. However, clubs are encouraged to load the files as soon as possible. Clubs failing to meet this deadline without good reason are liable to fines of £50 for the first offence and £100 for further failures that season

B PITCH INSPECTION PROTOCOL

The following protocol is designed to assist both match officials and teams in determining whether the ground is fit to play. All officials must ensure they follow this protocol diligently.

PROTOCOL

- Immediately following their arrival at a ground, the match referee (or the appointed alternate in cases where an early assessment is required) will decide whether any part of the ground is unfit for play. If appropriate, the home team may be asked to carry out work on the pitch to attempt to make it fit to play. The assessment shall be made without consulting either team. If the view is that the pitch is unfit, the referee will immediately inform the PGMOT National Panel management team.
- If either team raises objections about the condition of the ground, they **MUST** identify these to the referee before the match starts. This should be done as early as possible and no later than 30 minutes before the scheduled kick off time.
- Any discussions with the match referee about the condition of the ground will be undertaken by a single member of the team's staff. That person will represent their club in all discussions with the match referee with regard to any part of the ground being unfit for play.
- The teams should specifically identify any issues they have with the condition of the ground.
- In the first instance, the referee will attempt to resolve any issues raised by a team. If, however, a team still has objections about the ground, they must make it clear to the match referee that they believe that the ground is unfit for play.
- If concerns are raised by either club, the match referee and their team of officials will then carry out a further pitch inspection when no club officials will be present. The match referee, in discussion with the team of officials, will then decide whether the game can start.
- The match officials will then ask to meet with the single representative from both each team and the referee will inform the teams of the decision.
- If the referee believes that the pitch is unfit but both clubs indicate that they are prepared to play, the referee may reconsider his decision.
- If the match referee believes that a ground is fit to play and a team refuses to start the match, the referee will abandon the match at that point.
- If the game is called off, the referee will immediately contact a member of the PGMOT National Panel management team who in turn will inform RFU / National League Rugby of the outcome of the deliberations.
- Once a game is abandoned the match officials will make no comments to any individual or individuals.

SANCTIONS

- If the game is called off by the match referee and the home team did not have the pitch inspected by an accredited RFU match official before the away team set off, the home club are liable to pay the visiting team's travelling expenses. If the pitch was inspected, the away team may make a claim against the RFU duplicate travel fund.
- If either team declines to play after the referee has decided the pitch is playable, the referee should call the game off. Unless decided otherwise by the National League Rugby Secretary, the game will be replayed.

- If both teams decline to play after the referee has declared the pitch playable, each team will be deducted 5 league points and the away team will not be able to make a claim against the duplicate travel fund.
- If only one team declines to play after the referee has declared the pitch playable, the following sanctions apply to that club:
 - A deduction of 5 league points.
 - If it is the home team, they must pay the away team's travelling expenses.
 - If it is the away team, they cannot make a claim against the duplicate travel fund.

C GUIDELINES FOR EXPENSE CLAIMS IN PLAY OFF GAMES

The regulation for play off games states that home teams have to meet the traveling costs of the away team or fifty percent of the gate receipts whichever is the greater. Definitions of gate receipts and traveling expenses are as follows

Gate receipts are the sum of the following less value added tax where appropriate

- Receipts from sale of match programmes less cost of printing
- Receipts from persons purchasing tickets in advance and paying on the day
- For spectators admitted free of charge e.g. season tickets holders, sponsors and guests, the amount that they would have paid if they had paid
- Charges will be no less than those which the club uses for league fixtures and discount for various categories such as pensioners and children will be those which the home club uses for league matches

Allowable travel expenses are as follows

- The travel expenses of the away club are restricted to the cost of the team coach from their home ground and return. The coach would be of the same type and size as they normally use for away games
- If for any reason a coach is not used, this should be referred to the National League Secretary who will decide what traveling expenses can be claimed. His decision is binding on both clubs
- If the journey from the away team's ground is between 450 and 699 miles, hotel accommodation for one night can be claimed. If over 700, two nights. Distances are calculated from Google Maps on the morning of the game and the distance from club to club for the quickest journey
- Amount claimed for hotel accommodation is for a maximum of 30 people for bed and breakfast utilising twin rooms for a Travelodge or similar
- Travel cost is restricted to the cost of one coach
- Away team needs to provide copies of the coach company and the hotel invoices

Process

- By the Monday after the teams involved in a tie have been determined, the National League Secretary will inform both clubs involved if the tie qualifies for one or two nights hotel accommodation
- Within seven days of the match,
 - the away team will email their claim to the home team and the National League Secretary with supporting invoices attached

- the home team will prepare a detailed statement of showing how the gate receipts are made up and email this to away team and the National League Secretary with supporting invoices attached
- If there are any disputes, the National League Secretary will arbitrate
- The home team should settle the claim within 30 days of the match

Off shore clubs

- If any off shore clubs are involved in play offs, these guidelines will need to be varied. The National League Secretary will contact both clubs and explain what will happen.