

1. THE COMPETITION

- 1.1 The Lancashire Junior Rugby Challenge is administered by the Junior Competitions Committee of the Lancashire County RFU and its Secretary through the Mini and Junior Committee (the Organisers).
- 1.2 The Junior Rugby Challenge is designed to encourage the maximum interest in the development of Rugby Union played in clubs throughout Lancashire. The aim is to encourage 'More People. More Teams and More Enjoyment' in rugby.
- 1.3 The competition structure is to be known as the Junior Rugby Challenge.
- 1.4 Every endeavour will be made by the Organisers to ensure that the competition structure, announcement of fixtures, reporting of matches and recording of results are referred to by the above name in all articles, publications, handbooks, journals and websites, together with whatever logo or other device the Organisers, in conjunction with any sponsors, shall deem it appropriate to use.
- 1.5 All participating clubs are expected to follow the same guidelines when referring to the Junior Rugby Challenge structure in their locality in newspapers, web sites or other publicity, fixture lists, advertising, match results and reports.

2. COMPETITION ELIGIBILITY

- 2.1 Entry to the Junior Rugby Challenge is open to Under-14s through to Under-16s for all clubs that are members of Lancashire County RFU.
- 2.2 All players taking part in the Junior Rugby Challenge must be under their respective age at 24.00hrs on 31 August of the relevant year.
- 2.3 **Every player MUST be both a signed up member of their club and also registered with the Lancashire County RFU through the Young Player Registration Scheme before taking part in any Challenge match.**
- 2.4 RFU Young Player Registration forms must be completed and entered on GMS by the clubs registration officer for every squad member.
- 2.5 Players **MUST NOT** play in more than one match on any challenge date.

- 2.6 Any player who takes part in any round of the competition for one Club and thereafter transfers to another club is prohibited from playing for his new club in any further Challenge matches.
- 2.7 A player may play up one age grade provided that dispensation has been granted by the Lancashire RFU as detailed in [RFU Regulation 15 – Age Grade Rugby](#). A copy of the completed dispensation form must be carried at all times by the player's coach/manager.

3. Challenge Organisation

- 3.1 The Junior Rugby Challenge shall consist of two stages: a Pool Stage followed by a Knock-out Stage
- 3.2 Pool Stage
- 3.2.1 Four Qualifying Pools (Q. Pools) are established at each of the three age groups (Under-14, Under-15, Under-16) into which all entrants are placed based on their performance in the previous season or by such other means as the Organisers consider appropriate. The method of seeding and the conduct of any draw will be at the discretion of the Organisers,
- 3.2.2 Clubs will play each other within each Q. Pool on a 'Home or Away basis as determined by the Organisers on specified days (see 4.1.1 below). If a Q Pool match is to be cancelled by the 'home club', the match will be played 'away' if circumstances allow it. If circumstances do not allow the transfer of venue both sides will gain the points for a 'No Result'.
- 3.2.3 Points will be awarded based on the results of Q. Pool matches as follows:
- (i) Win: 5 points
 - (ii) Draw: 3 points
 - (iii) Loss with a Bonus Point (for margin of 10 points or less): 2 points
 - (iv) Loss: 1 point
 - (v) Match not played: 2 points to both sides
 - (vi) Failure to play: 0 points.

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- 3.2.4 Penalties (Point Deductions) will be applied as follows:
- (i) Failure to supply RFU numbers on the Match Report Form: 0.25 points per player (max 2:pts)
 - (ii) Failure, by the Winning side or home drawing side, to return the completed, signed Match Report Form by email: 2 points
 - (iii) Publishing, or allowing to be Published, a match score with a margin of more than 30 points: up to 2 points at the discretion of the Organisers
- 3.2.5 The overall position in the Q. Pools will be determined by:
- (i) points accumulated based on the match result of each game (including bonus points gained or penalty points deducted), adjusted for any side not fulfilling their fixtures.
 - (ii) Scored points difference (points for less against) subject to 30-point margin, adjusted for a side not fulfilling fixtures,
 - (iii) If teams remained tied, the result between the two sides and finally, if the matter is still unresolved the total tries, then conversions, then drop goals, then penalties.
 - (iv) If still tied, the Organisers shall determine the respective positions by the way of a tossed coin.
- 3.2.6 The higher placed side will gain a home draw in the next stage of the tournament (Quarter Final) stage.
- 3.2.7 At the end of the Q. Pools stage twenty four teams having been seeded into pools will advance to the three competitions (see 3.3.2 below) depending on their pool and position in the pool. Any side trying to take an unfair advantage of their position to enter a different knock out competition may be disqualified from the whole competition.
- 3.3 Knock-out Stage
- 3.3.1 The Knock-out Stage shall consist of a Cup, Plate and Vase competition for each age group. Seeding of clubs into these competitions shall be at the discretion of the Organisers.
- 3.3.2 A Bowl competition will be run where there are sufficient teams (over the 24) in that age group.

- 3.3.3 A Development Cup will be run for teams knocked out at QF Stages. The Organisers will make a draw for the Development Cup, Plate and Vase matches depending on the number of teams going forward into the Development competition.
- 3.3.4 In the event of a draw at full time, no extra time may be played in any match. The result shall be decided:
- (i) by the team scoring the most tries, or
 - (ii) if still equal. the team scoring the most conversions will progress, or
 - (iii) if still equal, the team scoring the most penalties will progress. or
 - (iv) if still equal, the visiting team shall be declared the winner.
 - (v) In any Final, in the event of a draw at full-time after applying i, ii and iii above, the trophy will be shared jointly.
- 3.3.5 The venue and date for the Finals Day of the Challenge Cup and County Plate and County Vase Competitions will be agreed by the Organisers and notified to clubs during the season.
- 3.3.6 Quarter and Semi Final matches must be played on the dates specified by the Organisers unless re-arranged to a later date by the Organisers because of bad weather (see 4.1.1 below). Where it is necessary to re-arrange a match it may be reversed by the Organisers to the 'Away' ground, with the original Home team still being recognised as the Home team in all respects.
- 3.3.7 Except in exceptional circumstances, any team failing to fulfil a scheduled knockout stage fixture may be removed from the Challenge and the opposing team will be judged to have won that round of the Challenge and progress to the next round.

4. Conduct of Competition Matches

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 Competition matches must be played on the dates specified at the beginning of the season in the Lancashire Structured Season and the fixture list, with no alternative dates being allowed, subject to very exceptional circumstances. Where a club feels that such exceptional circumstances apply, application should be made to the Organisers for specific authority to re-arrange the fixture.

- 4.1.2 If the Organisers determine that any side deliberately fails to play, or fails to continue to play, a fixture for whatever reason, all points from that match shall be forfeited.
- 4.1.3 In the event of adverse weather conditions on the day of the match, the referee's decision as to the starting of the match or its continuation shall be final.
- 4.1.4 All matches, other than the Final, will cease after reaching a **30 point margin**, and reformed development games are encouraged. A development game will involve both teams making sure that fringe players are more prominent wherever possible, mixing and evening the teams up, players playing out of position, etc, recognising that the front row rules must still be observed.
- 4.2 Player Identification
- 4.2.1 All players or their coaches must be in possession of a valid RFU Registration card issued under the RFU Young Player Registration Scheme, incorporating a photograph of the player, the players club, and the date of birth along with the players RFU Number.
- 4.2.2 Team managers, coaches or administrators are required as part of the pre-match routine to carefully inspect the registration cards of their opponents. A challenge on a player must be made at the time of the match and not afterwards.
- 4.2.3 Notwithstanding the provisions in 4.2.2 above, during or immediately after a competition match all registration cards should be made available for inspection by opposing coaches, managers or administrators and the Organisers or other County officials.
- 4.2.4 Except in exceptional circumstances, a team failing to produce a correct, valid registration card (or sheet containing multiple cards) for each player before a match may forfeit the match and any other further participation or that season.
- 4.2.5 In the case of player injury or unavailability, Challenge matches may be played using 'uncontested scrums' should at any time a side be unable to field an experienced or trained front row. The match referee **MUST** be informed before kick-off of a player shortage and the match report form noted accordingly.

4.3 Match Reporting

- 4.3.1 Match Report Forms must be fully completed on the day of the game.
- 4.3.2 The following details should be completed before the start of the match:
- (i) Home Team, Away Team, Age Group, Match Number (by reference to published fixtures list) and the breakdown of the full match result.
 - (ii) The full squad, both starting and replacements, with the RFU registration number (last 4 digits will suffice). All front row players (see 4.6.4 below) shall be identified as such and noted on the Match Report Form prior to kick-off.
 - (iii) The names of both Coaches or managers responsible for completion.
 - (iv) The details of the match official in charge of the game.
- 4.3.3 Following the match the analysis of the score shall be added for both teams against each player, with red and yellow cards indicated.
- 4.3.4 The result should be emailed to the address given on the Match Report Form by 6pm Monday following the match. The Match Report Form(s) must be attached to this e-mail in PDF format.
- 4.3.5 Both managers/Coaches of each team are responsible for texting the result to the number specified on the Match Report Form no later than 6pm on the day of the match.
- 4.3.6 Failure to report a result as described in 4.3.4 and 4.3.5 above will incur a penalty. During the Pool Stage the penalty will be 2 points. During the Knock-out Stage the penalty may be forfeiture of the match at the discretion of the Organisers.

4.4 Playing Strip - Colours

- 4.4.1 In the event of a clash 'The Home Team' will change their playing strip.

4.5 Referees and Discipline

- 4.5.1 The Organisers recognise that there may not be sufficient Society Referees to officiate at all fixtures throughout the Q. Pool stages. It is good practice to seek Society Referees for the Quarter Final and Semi Final stages in all ages although due to the shortage of referees this cannot be made an absolute rule. Home teams should seek help from away teams if they are having difficulty in finding Society referees for Quarter Finals and Semi Finals. Where no Society referee is available a referee holding the Entry Level Referee Certificate will be acceptable.
- 4.5.2 The responsibility for arranging the referee for all matches lies with the home club. If it is not possible for the home club to appoint a Society Referee or an accredited Foundation Referee the opposition must be notified at least 24 hours in advance of the game and given opportunity to supply a referee.
- 4.5.3 The obligation to provide a suitable alternative official remains with the home club.
- 4.5.4 A player sent off during a game by a match official must be notified on the Match Report Form and will be subject to any punishment imposed by the player's club.
- 4.5.5 The Organisers may request from a non-society match official, whose contact details must be added to the MATCH Report Form, a report of any sending off, the responsibility for this contact being ultimately with the home club.
- 4.5.6 Clubs are expected to provide a responsible person to act as touch judge or assistant referee (TJ) in all matches and to assist the referee in matters affecting the touchline only. Referees are requested to take the advice of a club TJ only on decisions relating to the touch line or the kicking of a conversion or penalty at posts.

4.6 Playing Regulations

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- 4.6.1 Teams will be of 15-a-side with up to 7 replacements, to be used in accordance with the Laws of the Game (Law 3: Number of Players) as published by the IRB and the Age Grade Regulations as published by the RFU. All players named in the squad on the Match Report Form must play at least some part in the game except on occasions when a player is taken ill just before the game or injured in the warm up.
- 4.6.2 On the grounds of safety, player development and fairness, if a team is unable to field a full team 15 players, the opposition will be restricted to that number (**minimum of 10**). The squad from which replacements may be drawn remains at 22.
- 4.6.3 All matches will allow the use of 'rolling substitutes' (the replacement of players during the match) providing permission has been sought from the Referee and the replacement takes place during a stoppage in play.
- 4.6.4 Every team must include on the pitch, at all times, players who are recognised and have trained as front row players, and are used to playing Loose Head, Hooker and Tight Head to enable the formation of a front row.
- 4.6.5 If a team names 20 or more players, it must have at least 6 players who can play in the front row to allow adequate cover. If not, it is the responsibility of the coach to advise the referee of the situation.
- 4.6.6 Where, through injury or otherwise, a side is unable to continue with recognised and trained front rows it is the responsibility of the coach to inform the referee. The match will continue with 'uncontested scrums'.
- 4.6.7 Match times and ball sizes are as follows:
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|-----------|---------------------|-------------|
| Under 14s | 25 minutes each way | Ball size 4 |
| Under 15s | 30 minutes each way | Ball size 5 |
| Under 16s | 35 minutes each way | Ball size 5 |
- 4.6.8 Following the spirit of age grade rugby, the maximum points difference to be recorded and reported by a club to the Organisers or any other party regarding any Competition fixture, other than the Final, shall be 30 points in accordance with rule 4.1.4 above.

5. General Conduct

- 5.1 The County and the Organisers take the gravest view of inappropriate conduct by players or spectators. It is the responsibility of each Club to control the behaviour of its players, coaches, managers, administrators and spectators and all clubs must be aware of, and uphold, the RFU's 'Fair Play' Codes of Conduct.
- 5.2 In the event of a report being received of a failure to observe acceptable conduct the Organisers shall take, on behalf of the County, any such action against the offending team as it considers appropriate including, but not limited to, ordering the re-playing of the match, awarding the match to the other side, or excluding the team from the remainder of the competition.
- 5.3 **NB. The County has the power to suspend or disband Mini and Junior sections.**

6. Interpretation of the Rules

- 6.1 Any appeal or dispute must be notified in writing to the Organisers within 48 hours of the conclusion of the match. Such notification must be given by the Mini and Junior Chairman as identified on the club's application to take part in the challenge.
- 6.2 The Organisers shall be the sole arbiters in cases of dispute, and from its decision there shall be no appeal at law or otherwise, other than in exceptional circumstances to the Rugby Football Union.
- 6.3 The decision of the Junior Rugby Challenge Committee shall be final and binding on all participants. All competition entrants accept this provision and accept that there shall be no further appeal, other than as stated in paragraph 6.4 below
- 6.4 In the event that a matter cannot be resolved to a club's satisfaction, the Cup Competition Committee Secretary may require both clubs to state their respective positions in writing within such period as he deems reasonable, and following consultation with the Organisers will determine the outcome of the dispute.
- 6.5 No member of the Cup Competitions Committee, or if appropriate the Mini and Junior Committee, should rule on a matter where they are a member of either club involved.