

# **NATIONAL CONFERENCE LEAGUE**

## **COMPETITION RULES – 2024**

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## **CR 1.0 Match Officials**

- CR 1.1** No person other than the appointed Match Officials, Club Secretary, or in his absence, an authorised representative may enter the Match Official's dressing room either for the period beginning 30 minutes prior to and 30 minutes after the game's conclusion. Unauthorised entry shall be deemed as misconduct and the persons concerned dealt with accordingly.
- CR 1.2** Where a Match Official has cause to submit report an alleged on/off field incident to include a brawl abuse from club officials or other offences for which a red card is not issued as a clear definition of action taken at the time, then the Match Official, for the avoidance of doubt and as clarification, is obliged to advise the offending parties concerned prior to leaving the ground that a full report of an alleged offence is to be submitted to the League.
- CR 1.3** The Home Club responsible for the actions of all spectators is also required to take all reasonable precautions necessary to avoid threats/abuse and/or assaults upon Match Officials before during or at the conclusion of games under the auspices of this League. Spectators must not (and each club must use its best endeavours to ensure that spectators do not) behave in an unruly/unlawful/disorderly fashion nor in any manner which in the opinion of the League's Management Committee is prejudicial to the game and amounts to improper misconduct.
- CR 1.4** Clubs must ensure that Match Officials are given the full name of any dismissed player (or other person/s alleged to have committed a misconduct offence). They must at all times assist the Match Official in identifying any person, Official or Spectator of whom the Match Official and /or League has cause to enquire.
- CR 1.5** A full report containing the details of any alleged misconduct (whether by a Player Club Official or other person) must be lodged by email with the Competition Administrator by the Match Official inside 48 hours of the game's conclusion. The Match Official is also obliged to record by hand on the Official Match Day Team Sheet the names of Players dismissed or temporarily dismissed from the field (sin bin) and the nature of the offence committed. It shall be the sole responsibility of the Competition Administrator to forward directly to the Offending Clubs concerned reports of on/off field alleged misconduct received from and by Match Officials and or if appropriate other independent/authoritative sources.
- CR 1.5.1** A club which does not receive such a report by 5pm on the third working day following the game date on which an alleged offence has been committed must contact the Competition Administrator immediately. The failure of a Match Official to submit directly to the Competition Administrator by email before 12noon on the third working day a full report of alleged misconduct against a player club official or other persons cited may result in a case being dismissed unless, because of unusual, unavoidable or previously unforeseen circumstances, the League's Discipline Chair or Competition Administrator, in close collaboration, should consider otherwise .
- CR 1.5.2** If cases of alleged misconduct require an additional time period beyond 31 days for a formal investigation to be concluded, then such cases will be adjourned and re-opened before the original time period lapses. A written Minute shall be recorded to confirm such administrative action taken by the League.
- CR 1.6** All hearings in relation to allegations requiring an extended investigation or referral directly to the Rugby Football League Legal and Compliance Department prior to any formal charge being issued shall be opened by the appropriate Discipline/Management Committee within a period of 31 days from the date of the Official Charge Notification being communicated by the League.

## **CR 2.0 Disciplinary Committee**

- CR 2.1** The League's Disciplinary Committee shall deal with all matters of misconduct as clearly set out in the National Conference League's Competition Rules.

**CR 2.2** The League's Management Committee shall, either in whole or part, act as a Disciplinary Committee whose role shall be to adjudicate upon clubs, players and officials or other persons reported to them by Match Officials for alleged misconduct.

**CR 2.3** The League's Disciplinary Committee shall act in accordance with and having adjudicated thoroughly all the evidence presented for scrutiny, apply on a case by case basis the enactments of the Community Game Sentencing Guidelines.

**CR 2.4** The League's Management Committee shall have the power to reprimand, fine expel or suspend any Club, Player, Official or other person found guilty of misconduct. In addition the Management Committee shall have the power to deduct Competition Points from any such club.

**CR 2.5** The Competition Administrator shall record under the Disciplinary Charter – a segment of the Minimum Standards Criteria – all offences where Clubs, Players Officials or other persons are found guilty of misconduct, the penalties of which to be reviewed periodically by the Management Committee.

### **CR 3.0 Rights of Persons Alleged to Have Committed Misconduct**

**CR 3.1** Any Club, Player Official, or other person alleged to have committed misconduct may in their own defence or mitigation, send a letter, request a personal hearing, submit evidence and/or bring witnesses to the disciplinary hearing, provided that, in relation to personal hearings, they notify by e-mail the Competition Administrator and forward through the club's secretary the requisite personal appearance deposit for receipt within ten days of the alleged offence. In the case of a Club using the BACS "on line" system of payment, written notification indicating the reason for such payment and the reason for doing so, must be confirmed to the Competition Administrator inside ten days from the match date.

**CR 3.2** The submission by a player/club of a good quality DVD or on-line footage of an incident as evidence to support/refute/explain /challenge an allegation of misconduct by a match official must, clearly identify the alleged incident upon which the charge/allegation is based to assist the discipline panel making an adjudication.

**CR 3.2.1** If the footage presented is not of a suitable good quality to enable identification of the relevant aspects of a case brought before the panel, then the discipline panel reserves the right to declare the evidence as inadmissible and in such circumstances the charge of alleged misconduct shall be determined solely on the basis of verbal evidence supplied by the player and/or his representative who may or may not be attending the hearing.

**CR 3.3** The Match Officials may be requested to, attend any such discipline hearing in relation to any alleged misconduct they have reported. The Disciplinary Committee have the power to require the attendance of the reporting/appointed Match Officials at any hearing at which the Discipline Committee are attempting to establish the full facts.

#### **CR 3.4 Early Guilty Plea:**

An Early Guilty Plea may be submitted if a player having been charge/cited with a grade A-C offence and

- who has not been found guilty of any other charge of on field misconduct before the Tribunal, or by submitting a previous Early Guilty Plea, in the 12 months preceding the date of the Match in which the alleged Offence took place; and
- who has not been permanently sent from the field in a Match in the 12 months preceding the date of the Match (unless subsequently found not guilty of such an offence).

**CR 3.4.1** To activate this clause, a club on behalf of a player cited for alleged misconduct shall:

- Inform the Competition Administrator in writing of his intention to do so before 11.00 am on the Saturday prior to any scheduled hearing. By adopting this route the Discipline Panel shall for the Grade of offence set out apply the lower end of the suspension range.
- Forfeit the right to any hearing. For the avoidance of doubt the right to make an Early Guilty Plea only applies to initial hearings and not to any subsequent appeal hearing.
- For the avoidance of doubt if a Player has previously used an Early Guilty Plea the date from which the 12 month period starts will be the date on which the previous suspension started and not the date on which he entered the Early Guilty Plea.

## **CR 4.0 Sanctions**

**CR 4.1** A suspension imposed on a Player shall If the tariff is less than six matches:

- Commence on the Monday immediately following the disciplinary hearing, unless the Competition Administrator notifies the Club/Player otherwise.
- The Player shall be allowed to resume playing with his recognised Club in the event of an appeal against the original decision – subject to representation having been made at the initial hearing - being lodged to and received by an independent authority.

A suspension imposed on a Player shall If the tariff is six or more matches:

- Commence immediately on the date of imposition by the discipline panel
- The Player shall not be allowed to resume playing with his recognised Club in the event of an appeal against the original decision – subject to representation having been made at the initial hearing - being lodged to and received by an independent authority.

**CR 4.2** A suspended Player is not permitted to play in any game of rugby league nor become involved in any other Match Day activity until the suspension is served and written notification received from the Competition Administrator to that effect. Any Club deemed to have violated this rule will be fined accordingly and the Player shall be suspended for a further period of six matches.

**CR 4.3** A suspension from the game varying from between two and five years shall be imposed on any person found guilty of assaulting Match Official. A review by the full Management Committee shall not proceed until the second “Anniversary Date” upon which the original suspension has lapsed.

**CR 4.4** Serious offences carrying lengthy suspensions to a maximum of five years shall not be reviewed by the full Management Committee until the second “Anniversary Date” upon which the original sanction imposed has lapsed.

**CR 4.5** All fines imposed by the League on Clubs, Officials or Players for whatever reason shall be settled in full within 28 days from the date of imposition. Fines unpaid on 28 days from the date of imposition shall be doubled accordingly and should a further 14 days lapse without payment having been received in full then, in relation to a Club, its fixtures shall be suspended forthwith and, in relation to a Player or Official, they shall be suspended from participating until such a fine is paid.

**CR 4.6** All Disciplinary fines are to be paid to and collected by the Competition Administrator who acts for and on behalf of the League. In the case of a Club using the BACS “on line” system of payment, written notification indicating the reason for such payment and the reason for doing so, must be confirmed to the Competition Administrator inside ten days from the match date.

**CR 4.7** A Club failing without an explanation which satisfies the Management Committee a League, League Play Off or Grand Final Series play-off fixture as scheduled by the Competition Administrator and /or Management Committee shall, in addition to being relegated from its respective division at the conclusion of the playing season, be fined up to £500 and a loss of up to four points from the subsequent season’s League programme, the re-arranged fixture will be scheduled by the Competition Administrator and/or Management Committee whose decision will be final.

**CR 4.7.1** Pursuant of **CR Rule 4**.and/or **CR 4.9** the fine imposed shall be issued immediately for settlement in full, the arrangement of payment which must be agreed with the Competition Administrator and/or Management Committee and completed prior to commencement of the following season.

- CR 4.8** A Club occupying a Relegation position in its respective Division shall at the conclusion of the season be relegated, and if having failed without an explanation which satisfies the Management Committee a League Fixture as scheduled by the Competition Administrator and/or Management Committee shall be further relegated from that Division.
- CR 4.9** Pursuant of **CR Rule 4.7** The Management Committee shall impose upon that Club the deduction from its current playing record of two League points and in the case of a Club having failed a League fixture and failed completion of its League programme a further £500 shall apply.
- CR 4.10** Where the fixture failure applies to a club in the lowest division, that club, in addition to the penalties applied as enumerated in Rule 4.7 shall, at the sole discretion of the Management Committee and taking all contributory factors into consideration, either be expelled from membership or obliged to seek re-selection at the next Annual General Meeting.
- CR 4.11** To secure a mandate for re-selection the defaulting Club must within a specified period designated by the League's Management Committee be proposed and seconded in writing by two Member Clubs from the same division.
- CR 4.12** The issue of re-selection conducted in a closed ballot shall be determined by a simple majority of all Member Clubs present at the meeting and eligible to vote.
- CR 4.13** Where the failure impacts on the League Play Off or Grand Final series, the defaulting Club may, in addition, face a net loss from the subsequent season's League programme of up to four match points.
- CR 4.14** A Club found guilty of fielding within its match day squad an Ineligible Player will be fined as appropriate and at the conclusion of the season have two points deducted from its playing record.
- CR 4.15** In the event of a club winning a League game by fielding a player deemed to be ineligible, then the Championship Points accrued from the win shall be forfeited automatically with an additional two Championship Points being deducted from the Club's playing record on conclusion of the season, a defeated team fielding an ineligible player will lose two championship points on conclusion of the season.
- CR 4.16** A Club found guilty of fielding an un-registered player i.e. someone retained on the Club's official listing from the previous season as held by the League but having not confirmed his current registration via signature with that club on or before a specified Competition Date annually shall be fined as appropriate. In the event of that team winning the fixture then the Championship Points accrued from it shall be forfeited automatically.
- CR 4.17** Championship points shall not be awarded to Clubs unless directed by the Management Committee and all games including Play Off ties arranged by the Competition Administrator and /or Management Committee shall proceed as detailed/issued on the schedule distributed to Clubs.
- CR 4.17.1** In the event that a team fails to complete their league fixture programme and having played 60% of their fixtures then the results of the remaining fixtures will be awarded to the opposition on a season's average score-line for the offending club at the conclusion of that divisions fixtures.
- CR 4.17.2** In the event that a team fails to complete their league fixture programme and not having played 60% of their fixtures, shall result in all of their fixtures being expunged immediately.
- CR 4.18** The Competition Rules covering Grand Final Series or other Play Off matches under the League's strict jurisdiction shall be circulated by the Administrator to all the competing clubs at least 96 hours prior to the first scheduled tie.
- CR 4.19** Clubs on reaching a Play Off phase shall, without deviation or local agreement to the contrary, comply with the Competition Rules governing such Play Off games as issued by the Administrator

## **CR 5.0 Appeals**

- CR 5.1** Every Club, Player, Official or other persons found guilty of misconduct shall have the right to appeal the decision of the League's Discipline Committee to an Independent Appeals Panel provided that, the Club, Player, Official or other persons made representations either personally, or by a representative or in writing at the original hearing.
- CR 5.2** Every Club, Player, Officials or other persons wishing to appeal against decisions by the Disciplinary Committee must do so in writing to the Competition Administrator for receipt within ten days from the decision date and include the appropriate appeal/administration fee.
- CR 5.2** Clubs must, in addition to applying Rule CR5.2 and for the purpose of consistency with procedure, notify the Competition Administrator whether, in giving formal notice of the appeal, such notice is based on the:
- Finding of Guilt
  - Severity of Sentence Imposed.

## **CR 6.0 Playing – Ex Professionals**

- CR 6.1** A Professional Player other than a Community Game Dual Registered Player is not allowed to register with the National Conference League until all contractual arrangements are completed or otherwise terminated by written mutual consent of both the player and Professional Club, full details of which must be confirmed in writing with this League at the time of registration.
- CR 6.2** A Contracted Professional is defined as a Player who has signed a contractual agreement and is on the register of a Professional club.
- CR 6.3** Once two calendar years have elapsed from the confirmed date of a Player's registration with the National Conference League then the Players shall not count as an ex-professional.

## **CR 7.0 Registrations**

- CR 7.1** All players must register annually to the Club they wish to play for using the RFL LeagueNet system. Clubs can monitor those players registering and re-registering to the Club. In the event that a Club does not wish to accept a registration then the Competition Administrator must be contacted.
- CR 7.2** Any Player wishing to transfers must lodged with the Competition Administrator at least 24 hours prior to any player participating in a fixture. An agreed deadline date of the 31<sup>st</sup> August is fixed for the transfer or registration of Players - save for amateurs not registered for any club that season nor ex-professionals having been out of contract for twelve months and not having participated in games at any level of competition during the intervening period. Players are allowed to participate in the Professional Game on amateur terms only and shall not receive payment for playing in this League.
- CR 7.3** A deadline date for the inward transfer of Community Game players having participated with another club during the season or otherwise players no longer tied to contractual arrangements with a professional club but seeking a return to the Community game is fixed for mid-night of 31<sup>st</sup> August annually.
- CR 7.4** The National Conference League shall, after the transfer deadline has lapsed, continue to accept from clubs the registration of new players to include those holding an existing dormant record i.e. having not previously played for another club during the current season.
- CR7.5** Players whose contractual arrangements with a Professional club during the current season have been terminated by mutual consent shall not after the 31<sup>st</sup> August annually be allowed to register in the National Conference League.

**CR 7.6** For the avoidance of doubt regarding contractual arrangements of a player seeking a return to the National Conference League, clubs wishing to register them are, in the first instance obliged to seek in writing with the Competition Administrator confirmation of their current status. The details of all transactions must be notified to and approved/confirmed by the Competition Administrator not later than 12noon on the preceding Friday prior to these players participating in the NCL otherwise their eligibility for selection shall be deemed invalid.

**CR 7.7** The failure of clubs to observe / comply with **Rule 7.6** may lead to the taking of disciplinary action.

## **CR 8.0 Expenses**

**CR 8.1** The League's Management Committee will sanction the payment of legitimate expenses incurred by Players participating for their Club.

**CR 8.2** Clubs must at all times, make their accounts available for inspection by the League's Management Committee or, in any case, at the conclusion of each playing season. Any club refusing or failing to do so whatsoever may be expelled from the League or face the imposition of other disciplinary sanctions.

**CR 8.3** It shall be conditional upon the Player to give a written receipt in respect of all expenses claimed and paid, with his Club retaining a written record for production and inspection, if required, by the League's Management Committee.

## **CR9.0 Substitutes**

**CR 9.1** Each team may nominate a maximum of (4) four replacements whose names must be communicated to the Match Official prior to the game. Unlimited interchanges will be permitted from (17) seventeen named players. Substitutes will be sanctioned either by the Match Official alone or an official designated to oversee the interchange process.

## **CR 10.0 Promotion/Relegation**

**CR10.1** Promotion and relegation issues throughout the divisional structure will be determined annually by the League's Management Committee at the pre-season meeting with the bottom two teams in the lowest division being obliged to seek re-election.

## **CR 11.0 Local Cup Competitions**

**CR 11.1** Clubs in membership of this League will be allowed to participate in their respective cup co competitions, however as a consequence of such games being arranged, fixtures falling under the auspices of the National Conference League will neither be suspended nor become subordinate as a result.

## **CR 12.0 Representative Games**

**CR 12.1** A Club obliged to fulfilling a National Conference fixture and having three or more players playing in a Representative Match, recognised by the National Conference League may seek a postponement. Such applications in writing for consideration by the Management Committee must be forwarded directly to the Competition Administrator for receipt within 72 hours of the fixture and copied to the Club's match day opponents.

## **CR13.0 Match Day Duties**

**CR13.1** In the event of a colour clash involving two competing clubs it is the responsibility of the visiting team to provide and wear a suitable alternative strip, to thereby enable the home team to maximise any shirt/sponsorship opportunity.

**CR13.2** Appoint from the recognised club structure:

A "Game Day Manager" whose duties on match days shall incorporate and extend to, if needed, acting as touchline steward in support of the Match Officials whilst play is in progress. Match Officials should receive the same level of hospitality as the



Visiting clubs. To avoid abuse or other unacceptable behaviour, Match Officials appointed by the RFL must be assisted to and from the dressing rooms, onto and off the field of play by a club official appointed to that role

**CR13.3** Clubs must confer with each other and the Match Official to reach agreement prior to the result being communicated.

**CR13.4** Clubs must within 15 minutes of the game's conclusion, enter their score onto the LeagueNet system.

**CR13.5** Premier Division Clubs must enter their full match details onto the LeagueNet system, no later than 2 hours after the conclusion of the match. The completed paper team sheet must also be sent to the Competition Administrator as per Appendix 2.1. An automated report will be sent to the designated press contacts.

**CR 13.5.1** All other Clubs must submit their completed paper team sheets to the Competition Administrator. Full match details to the designated press contact no less than 2 hours after the conclusion of the match. In the case of evening matches such reports must be lodged with the Press Officer inside two hours of the final whistle having been blown by the Match Official. All clubs will be required to enter their match details onto the LeagueNet system within 48 hours on completion of the match.

**CR13.6** Clubs in default on either count will be fined appropriately. The League's Management Committee may from time to time direct other requirements.

## **CR14.0 Fixtures**

**CR14.1** The Competition Administrator is permitted to introduce any backlog of fixtures as deemed appropriate. In exceptional circumstances, fixtures may be brought forward.

**CR14.2** However, if that/those fixtures are not played on the scheduled date they will return to the original date(s) as programmed by the League.

**CR14.3** All scheduled games shall kick off at 2 30pm unless an alternative commencement time is given. In such circumstances, it is the sole responsibility of the Home Club to notify the appointed Match Officials.

**CR14.4** Visiting teams must arrive at the ground of their opponents at least thirty minutes prior to the scheduled kick off time. Any team responsible for a delayed start will be fined in respect of the period having elapsed from that originally scheduled to the revised kick off. Unscheduled delays for whatever reason must, on occurrence be communicated directly to the Competition Administrator by the Visiting team.

## **CR 15.0 Grounds Unfit for Play**

**CR15.1** In the event of the Home Club suspecting that the ground will not be fit for play owing to frost or other cause, the Home club must immediately call a local Referee on the approved list recognised by the RFL to carry out a ground inspection. If the local Referee states the ground is unfit for play and in his opinion there is no chance of it being so prior to the scheduled kick off then that decision must be communicated immediately to the Visiting club, appointed Match Official and Competition Administrator. At that point the match shall be deemed postponed and subject to re-arrangement by the Competition Administrator and / or Management Committee whose decision will be final.

**CR15.2** If having made such an inspection the local referee states there is doubt as to the fitness of the ground but not certain that at the scheduled kick off time it will remain unfit, then the Home Club must immediately advise the Visiting Club and Competition Administrator of the position. A further inspection by that local Referee or colleague connected with a Referee Society but holding no affiliation to the club shall be carried out prior to the Visiting team embarking upon their journey. The decision to play or otherwise shall be final. The Home Club shall on being advised by the local Referee that a match is postponed must immediately advise the Visiting team, appointed Match Official and Competition Administrator.



**CR15.3** In the event of a sudden or late deterioration in conditions with both teams present at the ground, then the appointed Match Official alone shall have the power to decide whether the game should be played or not. The competing teams shall not place the Match Official under any undue or adverse pressure in the making of his decision which shall be binding upon all parties.

**CR15.4** Unless it has received or been notified by telephone/text message of cancellation by the Home Club, as enumerated under Rule CR 15.1 and CR 15.2 then the Visiting team if having made the journey when the local Referee declares the pitch to be unplayable, shall be entitled to claim full travel expenses from the Home club.

**CR15.5** It shall be the duty of the Match Official appointed by the RFL to games under the auspices of the National Conference League to ensure that under these Rules and the Laws of the Game, grounds and pitches are fit for play. If a ground is not fit, however, and both teams by mutual agreement are happy for a game to take place then the Match Official may, to ensure play proceeds, order the making of such alterations as he thinks fit. A Match Official may as a statutory Duty of Care refuse to allow the staging of a match if he considers that the ground conditions may potentially compromise the safety and welfare of all players participating in that activity.

**CR15.5.1** In the event of no mutual agreement between both clubs, then the Match Official's decision to allow the game to proceed or otherwise shall be final.

**CR15.6** The League shall accept without question a decision of a Local Authority to order the closure of its facility which in any event over-rides the need for an inspection by a Match Official.

**CR15.7** If less than 65 minutes playing time has elapsed, the League's Management Committee may, at its sole discretion, order the game to be replayed on a subsequent occasion.

## **CR16.0 Trophies**

**CR16.1** Member Clubs winning trophies shall, within 28 days from the date of presentation by the League, and using a standard template provided for that purpose, give to the Competition Administrator a written guarantee for their safe and clean return, to the Administrator on or before 1st October each year. Costs arising from the cleaning or repair of trophies, no matter how caused, or replacement should such damage be deemed beyond repair, shall be levied upon the current cup holders.

## **CR17.0 Racially Discriminatory Practices**

**CR17.1** The RFL and National Conference League jointly are committed to eradicating all forms of racial discrimination a commitment, which will enhance equality of opportunity in all aspects of the game. Racial language and the behaviour of a minority to support it have no part to play in the game and as a result, will not be tolerated. Anyone engaging in and found guilty of racist behaviour will be dealt with promptly through the relevant procedures. We must be wholly responsible for tackling racism and by doing so ensuring that everyone can enjoy the sport of rugby league football.

## **CR 18.0 Breach of the Rules**

**CR18.1** Clubs admitted to the National Conference League shall, as a condition of their admission and participation in the Competition, agree to be bound by:

- These Competition Rules
- The Playing & Tier 4 Operational Rules
- The Appendices
- The Disciplinary Code
- Other Rules, Standards or Regulations adopted periodically by the NCL Management, which are notified to all clubs.

**CR18.2** The failure to comply with any and all of these Rules may result in the expulsion or non-admission of a Club from the NCL Competition or such other penalty as deemed appropriate by the NCL Management in its discretion. The exercise of such discretion shall be proportionate to the seriousness of non-compliance by that Club.

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