

ADULT COMPETITIONS – HAMPSHIRE DOMESTIC LEAGUES

NOTE

Counties 1, 2, 3 & 4 Hampshire Counties Leagues are subject to RFU regulations and directives.

In addition for Counties 4 applies a local variation, which is squads are limited to 5 replacements to include 1 front row replacement and rolling unlimited substitutions.

Please note that Counties Hampshire 5 and 6 operate under “Game On” regulations, to be decided by the teams involved PRIOR to each game to maximise participation.

Counties 5 operates on a reduced version of “Game On”, where squads must include 1 front row replacement and 23-man squads.

1. The Leagues under the control of Hampshire Rugby Union shall consist of Hampshire Counties 5 consisting of 10 teams and Hampshire Counties 6 consisting of 9 teams.

2. The aims of these Competitions are:

- (a) To produce winners of the Leagues Counties 5 and 6
- (b) To provide a stable platform for the movement of teams from the Domestic Leagues into the Hampshire County Leagues within the National RFU League framework.

3. Competition Regulations

- (a) All matches shall be played under the laws of Rugby Football and comply with the Rules and Regulations of the Rugby Football Union, where appropriate but subject also to amendments approved by the Competitions Committee as set out below in Paragraphs 4(c), 4(d), 4(e) and 8.
- (b) The Regulations detailed below shall apply for season 2026-27 and will be further revised by the Competitions Committee for the following seasons.

4. Organising Committee

- (a) Adult Competitions comprising the Hampshire Domestic Leagues shall be organised by the Competitions Committee, which may issue administrative instructions in amplification of this Regulation.
- (b) All communications from Clubs relating to Competitions are to be addressed to the appropriate League Secretary.
- (c) Each Club must nominate a Club Official for each Competition who shall be responsible for communication with the appropriate League Secretary. The name and contact details of this official must be sent to the League Secretary before the beginning of September each year. Communications to Clubs will normally be made only to the Clubs nominated Official. It is the responsibility of Clubs to ensure these communications are properly actioned.
- (d) Except where otherwise stated, the decision of the Competitions Committee shall be binding and final on any matter not provided for in and on the interpretation of this regulation.

(e) Questions from Clubs on any matters not obviously covered in these regulations shall initially be considered by the relevant League Secretary and, if necessary, then referred to the Competitions Committee for a final decision.

5. Eligibility of Clubs and Seeding

(a) A Club may enter in a Domestic League any of their male adult XV's not participating in the RFU Leagues.

(b) Not more than one XV of a Club shall be placed in any one Domestic League.

(c) Promotion decisions will be made by the competitions committee, and they will place teams in the appropriate league.

New Entrants - Applications from paid-up Associate Clubs from neighbouring counties to join the Domestic Leagues will be considered by the Competitions Committee providing this is of benefit to Hampshire's Clubs.

6. Eligibility of Players

(a) A Club may not be represented in a match by a player who has not reached the minimum age set by the RFU for registration for the English Club Championship.

(b) A Club may not be represented in the front row of the scrum, by a player who has not reached the age of 18.

(c) In the spirit of these competitions if more "senior" teams in a Club are not playing then a Domestic League team should be selected only after a "notional selection" of the senior team(s) has taken place. The Team Manager/Captain of such a team must advise the opposition Team Manager/Captain before the match if his Club has used players from a more "senior" team and must confirm with his opposite number whether or not he has any objection to the match being classified as "played" for the purposes of the competition. If there is an objection the result of the match shall be declared void and the League Secretary shall decide whether competition points are to be awarded to the "non-offending" team.

(d) In Counties 5 and 6 Hampshire under "Game on" principles, games in these leagues may start with a minimum of ten a side in an attempt to maximize the number of players taking part and to minimize the number of cancellations due to lack of players. Clubs are required to assist each other to maximize the number of players per side and the referee should be informed before kick-off of the number of participating players when less than fifteen.

(e) In Counties 5 a game must be started with a front row replacement available. In Counties 6 Hampshire a game may be played throughout with uncontested scrums if there are no suitable front row players available. If a game is played at any point however, with uncontested scrums the result shall stand. It is hoped, however, that wherever possible a match will be played with contested scrums so that all the players may gain satisfaction from the game.

(f) In Counties 5 and 6 Hampshire no team shall have more players on the field than their opponents, at any stage of the game other than during yellow or red card suspensions.

7. Domestic Leagues – Match Programmes and Points

(a) Competition points will be awarded as follows: For a win: four points; For a draw: two points; Match abandoned = zero points. For a loss: zero point; For losing by less than 7 points; one point.

Bonus points: Scoring four tries; one point.

(b) Failure to participate in a League fixture without a sufficiently acceptable reason, as determined by the Domestic League Secretary, shall result in a penalty of 5 points being deducted from the offending team. The non-offending Club shall be awarded 5 points. The fixture will also be reversed on the return date.

(c) The position of a Club in a Domestic League will be decided on the competition points for the matches played or awarded.

(d) If one or more Domestic League Clubs have the same total of League points then the position will be decided in the following descending order; -Games Won -Head-to-Head - Games played.

8. Domestic Leagues – Match Dates

(a) A Club wishing to initiate a change of match date must firstly obtain approval from the League Secretary. Once approved the date may then be changed subject to the agreement of the opposition. The initiating Club must then inform the League Secretary, Hampshire Rugby Referees (HRR), Week-End Re-Appointer, and the Webmaster of the new date.

(b) Domestic League matches shall normally be played on the same day as a First XV league fixture or, in the case of a Third XV match, on the same day as a Second XV Competition match. When possible Domestic League fixtures shall mirror Hampshire or London League fixtures, especially for clubs visiting the Isle of Wight and providing always that sufficient pitches are available at the home club.

Clubs may not cancel matches for reasons other than bad weather and ground conditions and, on the same day, field a team at lower level without first seeking the agreement of the League Secretary.

(c) In the event that a lower team is fielded in the Domestic Leagues and wins its match when a higher XV of that Club does not have a fixture, or that fixture does not take place, then there may be grounds for appeal to the League Secretary to review the result if it is suspected that a significant number of players from a higher level team have been fielded.

(d) If a team defaults in a league match and the Club has a lower team in a league that plays and wins on that same day then the lower team may be deemed by the League Secretary to have played and lost, with a Nil – Nil score possibly recorded. The circumstances of each such decision may be reviewed by the Competitions Committee.

(e) Failure to comply with this requirement will mean that any league points gained by the team at lower level shall be disallowed and 5 points will be deducted from the offending team.

(f) If a Club wishes to change the League match date from a Saturday to a Friday or a Sunday, or vice versa then it must discuss this with its opponents and the League Secretary, who shall discuss the request with the Hampshire Rugby Referees (HRR) Appointments Secretary. This is particularly important and any procedural errors could be very costly, either in League points or financially, when a Channel Island / IOW club is involved. The lack of availability of an appropriately qualified referee may cause the League Secretary to refuse such a change.

(g) If the agreement of all parties is obtained the home Club must inform the Hampshire Rugby Referees (HRR) Secretary and the Webmaster as soon as the change of date is agreed and not later than five days before the original or revised date whichever is the earlier. Without agreement being reached the match shall take place on the day nominated.

9. Colours

(a) In the event of a clash of colours the away team shall change subject to the satisfaction of the referee.

(b) The jerseys of teams should be numbered to ensure correct identification of players and replacements during a match; however, no team shall be penalized for not wearing numbered shirts.

10. Replacements/Substitutes

(a) Counties Hampshire 5 and 6 operate under “Game On” regulations, to be decided by the teams involved PRIOR to each game to maximise participation.

(b) Counties 5 operates on a reduced version of “Game On”, where squads must include 1 front row replacement and 23-man squads utilising unlimited rolling subs.

(c) Counties 6 Hampshire squads will comprise of any number of players and may be included in a matchday squad utilising unlimited rolling subs.

11. Kick-off Time

(a) The Kick-off Time shall be the “Recommended Kick-off Time” as posted on the RFU London and South East website within the admin section.

<https://www.rfulondon.com/forms/admin2026.pdf>

In the event of either side seeking an adjustment of kick off time through travel or other issues there must be an agreement between the two teams and the referee or the original kick off time shall stand. The Kick-off Time of any match involving a Channel Islands Club must be adjusted if necessary to accommodate travel arrangements.

(b) Any change to the Kick-off time must be notified by the home Club to the League Secretary and to the match referee HRR as soon as the change is agreed by both Clubs, and not later than five days before the match date.

12. Venues and Grounds

(a) Clubs may agree to change the match venue.

- (b) Any change of venue must be notified by the original home Club to the League Secretary, the Hampshire Rugby Referees Secretary, the match Referee and the PRO as soon as the change is agreed by both Clubs, and not later than three days before the date of the match.
- (c) The Home Club is responsible for correctly and clearly marking its pitch including technical areas and it must make proper provision for safety. Technical area should be no larger than 10 metres and at least 1 metre from the touch line.
- (d) If a late decision (i.e. a decision made or to be made within three hours of the scheduled kick-off time) as to the fitness of the pitch is necessary, it shall be made by the captains of the teams concerned. If they are unable to agree the appointed referee shall take into consideration the safety of the players before making the decision.
- (e) At all times there should be easily accessible entry for an ambulance to the pitch and ready access to a telephone (ideally a mobile telephone at pitch side). Home Clubs are strongly recommended to ensure that a trained first aider, doctor or other medically qualified person is present throughout the match. Team Managers must be aware of the ground post code to assist the emergency services.
- (f) Home Clubs are to confirm arrangements with the away Club by 2000 on the Wednesday before the fixture.

13. Referees and Assistant Referees (Touch Judges)

- (a) The Competitions Committee shall notify all Domestic League fixtures to the Hampshire Rugby Referees (HRR) Secretary before 30 June.
- (b) The HRR shall endeavour to appoint a referee to all matches.
- (c) The normal charge for referees and appointed touch judges shall be levied on the home Club.
- (d) Having confirmed the match arrangements with the visiting Club, the home Club shall confirm venue, date and kick-off time with the referee appointed by the HRR directly by telephone (not by leaving a message on an answer-machine, and not by e-mail as there is no guarantee that the referee will receive either message) by 2100 on the Thursday before the scheduled fixture.

The home Club shall also confirm venue, date and kick-off time, when appropriate, with any touch judges appointed by the HRR. Clubs are advised that match officials are unlikely to attend if they have not had verbal confirmation.

- (e) If the appointed referee has not arrived by the agreed kick-off time, or if the referee is unable to officiate for the whole of the match, and a replacement referee is available, the Team Managers or Captains of the two teams concerned may agree that a replacement referee may officiate. Such agreement shall be binding on the Clubs, and the match result shall stand. In a Domestic League match if the Team Managers/Captains are unable to agree and the match cannot be rescheduled or replayed then the match shall be declared void.

14. Abandoned Matches

Sixty-Minute Rule

- (a) If a match is abandoned when 60 or more minutes have been played then the score at the moment of abandonment shall stand.
- (b) The referee's decision as to the necessity for abandonment and the number of minutes played at the time of abandonment shall be final.
- (c) If agreement on a date change has not been reached, and if the reason for not playing is outside a Club's control, then the League Secretary shall consider what action to take. It is the responsibility of the relevant Team Manager to inform by telephone the League Secretary, the referee and the opposition if a match is to be cancelled.
- (d) In the event of the unavoidable cancellation of a match because of weather conditions, or if a match is abandoned because of such conditions or because of any other safety or disciplinary reasons before sixty minutes have been played, and the match cannot be re-scheduled it shall be void and no competition points awarded.
- (e) If any other reason for not playing a match is acceptable to the League Secretary, and the match cannot be rescheduled, the match shall be void and no competition points awarded.
- (f) If the reason for not playing a match is not acceptable to the League Secretary, the non-offending Club will be awarded five points. The match shall be recorded as "not played" against the offending Club and four match points may be deducted. The League Secretary will determine any points deduction. No match points will be calculated. If the final position of another Club could be affected by such an award, then the match points of a game which actually took place involving the offending Club and the affected Club may be discounted at the sole discretion of the League Secretary.

15. Late Cancellations

- (a) Regardless of the fact that it may be possible to re-arrange a match, late cancellations cause unnecessary expenses and aggravation not only to the aggrieved Club but also to HRR. If a Club is responsible for a late cancellation, providing this is communicated by telephone directly to the League Secretary, the opposition and the appointed referee before 2100 on the Thursday evening, the match shall be void and no competition points awarded.
- (b) A Club withdrawing from a Competition match after 2100 on a Thursday shall be responsible for all reasonable and irrecoverable expenses incurred and invoiced by the non-offending Club. Details of timing of cancellation and costs incurred by the non-offending Club are to be passed to the League Secretary for approval and sending to the offending Club. The offending Club is expected to pay the costs within one month of receipt.
- (c) If the reason for any withdrawal is not acceptable to the Committee the Club may be excluded from the relevant Competition in the following season or seasons and may be required to pay a bond before any subsequent entry is accepted.
- (d) A Club which withdraws from a match and subsequently plays its team in another fixture on the scheduled date shall be fined on the first occasion and a double fine on any subsequent occasion.

(e) These fines and the amount of any bond shall be set annually by the Committee and published in the Information section of the Handbook.

16. Match Results

(a) In Counties 5 and 6 Hampshire: The Home Club shall inform the League Secretary by the league WhatsApp group of the result and scores of the match or of the fact that the match has not been played as soon as possible and certainly no later than 2000 on the day of the match

(b) The League Secretary shall provide the results of matches and the latest tables to the Webmaster for publication on the Hampshire Rugby and the RFU Fixtures and Results web site

17. Other Matters that may arise:

Questions from Clubs on any matters not obviously covered in the Regulations above shall initially be considered by the Competitions Committee and, if necessary, then referred to the Game Development Committee for a final decision.