



Essex County RFU Ltd.

COMPETITION RULES

U13 – U14

Waterfall Cup Competition

U15 – Colts

Youth League

and Knockout Cup competitions

Season 2024/25



**England
Rugby**



A note regarding participation and discipline

Essex County RFU provides the competitions to support the development of the game in Essex and to support the philosophy of Age Grade Rugby, that is Player Centred, Development Driven and Competition Supported.

Teams enter the competition to support those aims and not be driven totally by the competition results.

We have seen in recent seasons an increase in poor touchline behaviour from coaches and parents and in the worse of cases examples resulting in Police involvement.

Clubs are responsible for their players, coaches and parents behaviours - competitions are in place to support the long term development of players and not to create a win at all costs mindset that drives some of the behaviour we have seen.

With that in mind any player, coach, parent or club member acting in a manor that is detrimental to the aims of Age Grade Rugby may result in the **team** being disqualified from the competition.

Examples would include reported referee abuse, aggressive touchline behaviour, attempts to manipulate rules and/or rearrange games to gain competitive advantage, evidence of clubs enticing players away from existing clubs and failure to comply with the competition rules below.

1. Format of the U15 to Colts - League Competitions

The competition shall be organised by Age Grade, in leagues where each team plays each other. The Age Grade Competition Manager for each Age Grade shall specify the number of teams per league and the number of leagues according to the number of teams entered.

Leagues are reset and refreshed for each Age Grade each season. There is no relegation or promotion.

Fixtures, results and league tables will be published on the Fixtures and Results page on Englandrugby.com.

2. Format of the U13 – U14 Waterfall Cup Competitions

The Competition shall be organised by Age Group. All teams will remain in the competition through all cup rounds according to a competition matrix. The initial round will be drawn out of hat.

The Age Grade Competition Manager can modify the competition matrix only in exceptional circumstances, for example if a number of teams withdraw resulting in a high number of byes.

Fixtures and results will be published on the Fixtures and Results page on Englandrugby.com

3. Format of the U15 to Colts Knockout Cup Competition

The Competition shall be organised by Age Group. Winning teams will remain in the competition and progress to the next round. All rounds will be drawn out of hat.

The Age Grade Competition Manager can modify the initial competition rounds in order to facilitate the correct number of teams in subsequent rounds.

Fixtures and results will be published on the Fixtures and Results page on Englandrugby.com

4. Competition Dates

The Competition Management Group shall determine the dates upon which the games are to be played, based on the RFU Age Grade Calendar, and shall publish the schedule of matches as soon as practicable. Dates are designed not to clash with Player Development Group Pathway (PDG) fixtures or county fixtures and other dates through the year, typically school holidays.

The Age Grade Competition Manager can modify the dates on which games are played in exceptional circumstances.

5. Entry to the League and Waterfall/Knockout Cup Competitions

The competition shall be open to all clubs allocated to the Essex County RFU, and that are operating a youth section. To participate in the competition, clubs are required to complete an online entry form. The entry form must be lodged with The Competition Manager by the closing date specified. The Competition Manager may refuse entry to clubs who have had teams disqualified from the competition in previous seasons.

If a club Age Grade team has insufficient players for an age group to field a team, then they may cluster with players of the same age group from another club, to enable them to field a team. All clustered teams must be approved by the Competition Manager, and no registered player in a clustered team may switch and register with the other team in the merge during a season.

Clubs may enter more than one team in a single age grade into the competition. For those clubs entering 2 teams in a cup or League competition once a squad has played the first round of the competition the players must remain in that squad for the duration of the competition with the exception that up to 5 changes to that squad are permitted over the course of the season. The competition squad for that team will be identified by the team sheet from that first game.

To allow the team to be correctly allocated to fixtures the club must create a second team in GMS and provide the name of that team to the Competition Manager once created

6. Player Eligibility – Playing out of Age Grade

Before participating in any competition match, all players (whether as participants or replacements) must, for the current season be a paid-up member of the club they represent and be registered on the RFU Game Management System (GMS). Players must play within the correct Age Grade as determined by RFU Regulation 15.

Individual players are permitted to play up or down an Age Grade, and whole age groups can merge, but only in accordance with RFU Regulation 15, and only with permission from Essex RFU. Teams that are found to have played players out of Age Grade without permission will be referred to Essex RFU Discipline Secretary and could face sanctions as a result.

If an ineligible player is found to have participated in any competition match, the result is void it will be recorded as a walkover and the non-offending team shall be awarded the win. **The offending club may also face sanctions in accordance with Regulation 19.**

7 Player ID Cards

To confirm if players are playing in the correct Age Grade each club side will complete a player manual or hold player identification cards **that must be made available at each match or following the match if requested by the competition manager.** This manual will consist of the printout of the RFU Game Management System (GMS) registration document and must include the names of the players in the squad, the player's date of birth, a photograph of the player and their RFU registration number. Alternatively, the RFU GMS player registration system can produce a player identification card that includes the player's name, date of birth, RFU registration number, and a photograph of the player

Failure to produce either a player manual, or player identification cards at the match or when requested by the Competition Manager, or if an unregistered player has been found to have played may result in the match being forfeit and a walkover victory registered to the non-offending team.

8 Responsibilities of the HOME team

The home team shall be responsible for all organisational matters relating to League and Waterfall/Knockout Cup matches, including:

- Supply of a referee that has completed a minimum "Introduction to Refereeing" course - Referees may be from the Home team
- Confirmation of match and initiation of communication with visiting team (as soon as practicable before the match)
- Confirmation and initiation of communication of the number of available players (confirmation of players is the responsibility of both teams).
- Condition of the pitch
- Change of colours in the event that both teams are similar.
- Supply of the match ball
- Notify the Competition Manager of any significant changes to arrangements of the match.
- To update the RFU GMS system with the result of the match within three days. **Failure to do this may result in the home team forfeiting the game or being docked a league point**

9 In the event of bad weather or unplayable pitches

In the event that pitches are unfit due to adverse weather conditions, the home team must immediately notify the opposition and the Referee. The respective team managers must, within 3 days, agree new arrangements for the game to be played. If the team managers are unable to agree, and in the event of the match being a cup match the game shall be played on the next available Sunday that is not a PDG or county date and any pre arranged friendlies will have to be moved to accommodate the competition. In the event that the game is a league game then the rearranged fixture must take place before the end of the season

In the event that both teams mutually agree to alter the date, or venue, or kick-off time of a league or waterfall/knockout cup match, they must seek the permission of the Competition Manager. The Competition Manager may refuse permission if, in his/her opinion, the proposed date is unsuitable or contrary to the spirit of the competition. All rearranged games must be played by the end of April.

If no acceptable date can be found, the side that cannot meet the original date will forfeit the game and it will be recorded as a walkover victory to the other team.

10 Fulfilling a fixture

If a team fails to fulfil a fixture for any reason other than bad weather or unfit pitches, the coach must notify the Competition Manager and give the reasons. The respective team managers must, within 3 days, agree new arrangements for the game to be played. If the team managers are unable to agree, and in the event of the match being a cup match the

game shall be played on the next available Sunday that is not a PDG or county date and any pre arranged friendlies will have to be moved to accommodate the competition. In the event that the game is a league game then the rearranged fixture must take place before the end of the season

If no acceptable date can be found, the side that cannot meet the original date will forfeit the game and it will be recorded as a walkover victory to the other team.

If a team concedes a game prior to the game being played due to insufficient players' coaches are encouraged to keep the fixture and play an adapted version of the game for the remaining available players in accordance with the RFU 'Game On' principles.

If during a game a team suffers a number of injuries that result in an insufficient number of players to make a whole team then the opposition **must** match the player numbers either by removing a player or lending the other team players if available. If a team is reduced in numbers due to a yellow or red card, then subsequently suffer an injury, players will be matched less the numbers due to red or yellow cards.

10 Abandoning a fixture

Abandoning a game of Rugby should always be a last resort, there are several reasons where a game may be forced to be abandoned.

Weather - If the weather conditions pose a risk to the safety and wellbeing of players, officials or spectators, a match may be abandoned at any time. If the game is abandoned before half time then the game should be replayed. If the game is abandoned during the second half then the score at half time will stand.

Pitch Conditions – if in the opinion of the referee or officials from either side it is considered that the pitch conditions are unsafe then every effort should be made to move the match to a satisfactory pitch to play the match. If this is not possible and the game is abandoned before half time then the game should be replayed. If the game is abandoned during the second half then the score at half time will stand.

Serious Injury - If a serious injury prevents the player being moved and the match restarting, every effort should be made to relocate to another pitch to complete the match. If this is not possible and the game is abandoned before half time then the game should be replayed. If the match is abandoned during the second half then the score at half time will stand.

Disciplinary issues - If serious disciplinary issues arise and the referee or any club official deems it unsafe to complete the game, it may be forced to be abandoned. In this instance the game will not be replayed - the result will be void and no points will be awarded to either team.

11 Team Sheets/Match Cards and Results

Both teams are required to produce a team sheet or Electronic Match Card for each game - recording the players in the squad, RFU ID and the game result. The team sheets if used should be signed by coaches from both teams and the game referee.

Please ensure that the result on each team sheet is the same and a copy is retained by both sets of team managers for potential inspection by the Competition Manager should an issue arise. **The Home Team is responsible for updating the RFU GMS system**

with the result of league and cup matches within three days, the results are not required to be sent to the Competition Manager unless there are technical issues.

Failure to notify the result in the timescale may result in the home team forfeiting the game or being docked a league point.

All league and cup competition fixtures will be uploaded to the RFU GMS system by the Competition Manager, including next round cup fixtures.

12 Squad Players and the Half Game Rule

For both Cup and League competitions up to seven substitutions are allowed, and in accordance with the Half Game Rule, all squad players must play at least half a game. **Failing to comply with the Half Game rule will result in sanctions according to Regulation 19.**

The competition allows for rolling substitutions.

13 Rules of Play

The rules of play shall be those in accordance with the relevant RFU Age Grade Regulation 15

14 In the event of a one-sided game - Maximum score line

Should the point's difference reach 39 points or more then the game shall be stopped. The result shall go to the winning team at that point.

There shall be NO OPTION to continue the game to an even higher score line. At this point coaches should then consider using the remaining time to play a more developmental game modifying the rules to make the game more competitive

Ideas on how to vary the rules are given later in this document.

15 Drawn Cup Games

In the event of a draw at the end of a Cup game the team that scored the most tries shall be awarded the win. If this is also a draw the team with the most conversions will win and if this is a draw, then the team that scored first via try or penalty will win.

16 League points and positions

League positions shall be determined on a point's basis: two points for a win and one point for a draw. In the event of tied league points, positions shall be decided on the following basis:

1. Greater match points difference between the clubs;
2. Greater match points scored.

If the above does not separate winners and runners up of a league competition, the teams concerned shall be declared joint winners.

17 First Aid

It is the responsibility of all teams to carry an adequate first aid kit, and have somebody qualified, and present at the match.

18 Child Safeguarding

All clubs participating in the Essex RFU Competition should comply with current safeguarding best practice. Any examples contrary to such safeguarding practices shall be reported to the Essex Rugby Safeguarding Manager and could result in the team or the whole club being withdrawn from competitions.

19 Suggestions to create a more competitive, developmental environment once game "won" by more than 39 points.

- **Team Challenges:**

- Mix the teams.
- Swap positions of dominant players or units (forwards/backs).
- Must make at least "x" number of passes before scoring.
- The losing team may ask for a specific player to be substituted or set their challenges.
- Allow an offside player for the losing team.
- Create different scoring zones, e.g. dominant team must score between the posts without using the dead ball area as a run in.
- The winning side must kick on the last phase of play before scoring.
- In defence the stronger team may not contest possession.
- In attack the stronger team may only have 1 or 2 players in a breakdown, encouraging offloads.
- The stronger team after "x" number of rucks, the ball must be box kicked away.
- Any line breaks by the stronger team must have a x number of passes before a player may score.
- For the stronger team restrict where line breaks may be made.

- **Player Challenges:**

- Swap player positions.
- Player x may only hold the ball for 5 seconds.
- Swap individual player positions.

- Dominant player may be touch tackled.