

# ESSEX MERIT TABLE RULES

1. The full title of the competition shall be the ESSEX MERIT TABLE COMPETITION.
2. All matches in the competition shall be played under the Laws of the Rugby Football Union and shall comply with the byelaws, resolutions and regulations of the RFU, except the variations cited below.
3. The management of the competition shall be vested through the Essex CB Competitions committee, and ideally made up of the following -
  - (i) Chairman
  - (ii) Division Coordinator
  - (iii) One representative from each club in membership, irrespective of the number of sides that club has in the competition.
4. Only clubs affiliated to the Essex County Rugby Football Union shall be eligible to join the committee but sides outside Essex affiliation may be permitted to join divisions with committee approval.
5. The number of teams in each division shall be limited to ten (10), save that the committee shall be empowered to adjust the numbers of the highest division and the two lowest divisions if numbers should warrant it. The number of teams in a division should not be less than five (5).

6. The positions of teams in all divisions shall be determined by the normal RFU points system;

WIN – 4 POINTS

DRAW – 2 POINTS

LOSS – 0 POINTS

Bonus 1 POINT for playing away

Bonus 1 POINT for losing by 7 points or less

If points are equal between 2 or more teams the higher placed team will be determined by firstly points difference, secondly by points scored.

7. Any team crying off a fixture will automatically concede a 39-0 loss with try bonus point also awarded to non offending side (5 points). If the away team cries off then the fixture will be reversed and the corresponding game will be deemed an away fixture, if the reverse is still to be played.

8. Any team crying off must notify **opposition and league secretary** by **NO LATER** than 10pm on the Thursday prior to the game. Along with a 39-0 loss the offending side will receive a 1 point deduction.

Crying off a game after this time the offending side will receive a 39-0 loss and a **5 point deduction**. This deduction can only be applied if competition management is informed of the requirement.

9. Each team must play both home and away against every other team in its division. The Committee will determine the dates of each game and report back to each fixture secretary. Competition games may be played as double headers, e.g. where teams are due to meet in a game in another competition that game may also be counted as the competition fixture.

10. Where a competition match is not played or is abandoned before no result (i.e. less than 60 minutes), it must be re-arranged and the new date notified to the Committee (usually next free weekend) by both clubs

by Monday midday following the original fixture date. Failure for doing so will result in a 0 – 0 defeat recorded against both sides.

11. Where a competition match is not played or postponed due to inclement weather or unplayable pitches, it must be re-arranged and the new date notified to the Committee (usually next free weekend) by both clubs by Monday midday following the original fixture date. Failure for doing so will result in a 0 – 0 defeat recorded against both sides.

12. Where a competition match is re-scheduled with opposition for whatever reason a date must be agreed at time of re-arrangement (usually next free weekend), and the new date notified to the Committee (usually next free weekend) by both clubs by Monday midday following the original fixture date. Failure for doing so will result in a 0 – 0 defeat recorded against both sides.

13. The referee shall be of the normal standard provided for the home team's games. Where an appointed referee fails to arrive or to complete the match another may officiate with the agreement of both captains. Each team shall provide a touch judge.

14. Two teams from each division shall be promoted and relegated. No club shall have two teams in the same division. If any club team qualifies to be promoted into a division where there is already a team from that club, such promotion shall not be made and the next highest team may be promoted instead. The original winners however shall be entitled to receive such prize as is awarded for winning the division. If any team qualifies for relegation into a division where there is already a team from the same club then the lower team shall also be relegated into the next lower division and the team otherwise due for relegation shall remain

15.1 The highest placed 1<sup>st</sup> XV in the Merit Leagues will be offered promotion back into Essex Counties Structure. This may be extended to other 1<sup>st</sup> XV's in the Merit Leagues to ensure a balance in team numbers across all Essex and Essex Merit Leagues., but sides cannot assume they can just join the RFU leagues. The integrity of the league competitions mean numbers of sides must make for an appropriate season.

16. Any club, which is affiliated to the Essex County RFU shall be entitled to apply to enter the competition, but may only join at the beginning of a season. Application must be made in writing to the Committee by the deadline date announced each year. If accepted any club or team new to the competition shall be placed in the lowest division, although the committee shall be empowered to place teams in a higher division. Clubs may enter as many teams as they wish, but the senior team of the club shall always be the team in the highest division.

17. Having nominated a team the club shall ensure that such team shall consist of players who would normally be expected to play for that team. If, in the opinion of the committee, any club fields an unrepresentative team in a competition match, the points in that match will be awarded to the opposition, with a nominal score of 39-0. If the opposition won the game anyway, that result will stand but the offending club will have 2 competition points deducted.

18. Competition results **MUST** be completed by both teams and the BOTH sides are to email this to Competition secretary by no later than Midday on the Monday following the fixture. For ease and speed clubs are advised to enter their results directly into GMS via the electronic match card system.

19. If a club resigns from the competition before it completes all its fixtures for the current season, then all its matches shall be considered void and all points scored and conceded shall be cancelled.

20. In the event of new teams joining or teams resigning the committee shall be empowered to adjust the numbers of promotions and relegations to restore the division's balance.

21. The number of substitutes shall be limited to five unless by prior arrangement agreed by the two captains and communicated to the referee before the game. The number of interchanges shall be no more than ten. Nominally rolling substitutes to be used but if agreed prior to the match and with the match official then this may be static subs, i.e. no interchanges.

22. Merit League Cup and Plate Competitions Divisions. At the end of the season a Merit League Finals competition shall take place with a Cup and a Plate competition held for each division. Those teams finishing 1-4 in each league will play for the Cup whilst those finishing 5-8 in each league will play for the plate. Dates of semi-finals and finals will be notified to all clubs before season begins.

23. The competition may allow a secondary format for split geographically ie Merit League Cup, Plate, Bowl and Shield Competitions Division East & West. At the end of the season a Merit League Finals competition could take place with a Cup, Plate, Bowl and Shield competition;

**\*\* Please note that the committee reserves the right to alter how Merit League East & West is structured including playoffs before or even during the season depending on number on entrants for these leagues.**

24. In the spirit of fair play all clubs should try and fulfill the highest matches; i.e. if a club has entered three sides in the competition but on any particular day can only fulfill two matches then the seconds and thirds should play and the fourths concede.

**\*\* It is noted that the difference in standard between some sides/divisions may prohibit this and we ask clubs to use common sense.**

Any side in this situation who perceive the opposition has not operated in a fair manner may appeal in writing to the secretary, to be received within 2 weeks of the fixture date. After due consideration of any reply or explanation, the secretary may raise the issue at the next committee meeting. Full sanction may include reversal of the score.

25. Failure to inform opposition, that a higher placed side within that club has had their **scheduled** league or cup fixture cancelled / postponed, by 5pm on the Friday, before the game on the Saturday will result in a 1 point deduction – notified via email cc in league secretary. This **includes** those 1st XV's that play outside the merit leagues. **This is for scheduled games only.**

26. The aim of the merit league is to play at all costs not win at all costs. If a team is short of players then inform the opposition as soon as possible to enable them to seek extra players. It is recommended that teams 'balance' the sides so if one team has 16 players and the other only 11 then play 14 v 13.

27. If any team is short of a front row then they must inform the opposition as soon as possible so that they may acquire a replacement on their behalf– failing this, the match will commence with uncontested scrums and result stands - notified via email cc in league secretary. There will be no penalty for a team turning up without front row if prior notification has been made. **ANY GAMES UNCONTESTED MUST BE CLEARLY NOTIFIED TO REFEREE PRIOR TO KICK OFF AS TO WHY IN CASE CHALLENGE OR REPORT IS FORTHCOMING.**

28. Teams who turn up with no front row/unwilling to have contested scrums, and who have not made contact with opposition prior - notified via email cc in league secretary, and have had front row players

offered to them by the opposition, but refused them, resulting in uncontested scrums anyway, will forfeit the result for League purposes and will be awarded a 39-0 defeat. Where an accord cannot be reached by the sides on this matter, the challenge process should be used. **ANY GAMES UNCONTESTED MUST BE CLEARLY NOTIFIED TO REFEREE PRIOR TO KICK OFF AS TO WHY IN CASE CHALLENGE OR REPORT IS FORTHCOMING.**

29. Any side who start with contested scrums but suffer injury to front row and do not have an adequate replacement will ONLY be penalised should they be unwilling to accept a front row replacement from opposition. The remainder of the match will be played uncontested if opposition do not offer assistance and final result will stand. Should the side who are unable to contest refuse assistance from opposition will forfeit the game and result will be recorded as a 39-0 defeat for the offending side.

30. **FOLLOWING RULING IS FOR LEAGUES WITH SCRUM BONUS POINT SYSTEM IN PLACE.** To earn a scrum bonus point contested scrums must remain in play for **ALL** of the First half and at least 1 scrum in the second half. (Currently n/a)

31. Any side fulfilling all fixtures in a season home and away will receive a **5 point bonus** added at end of season.

32. In the event of any dispute, the decision of the committee is final.

33. We endorse the RFU Game On initiative and our rules allow flexibility within this framework already. If teams agree to play further under the Game On rules, with both sides agreement, then we are happy to allow the result to stand.

## ESSEX MERIT FINALS DAY RULES

1. All Merit Cups will be played under Essex RFU Cup competition rules for 2<sup>nd</sup> XV's and below other than the following additions / alterations.
  - (a) – Any club that have any Merit League Cup / Plate / Bowl / Shield SEMI FINAL cancelled or awarded a walk over (if you have more than 1 side in a Semi Final, and it relates to a higher placed team in the leagues, and your lower placed team are still due to play) must inform their remaining opposition as soon as cancellation is confirmed via email and cc in League Secretary. Any side not doing so could possibly leave themselves open to disqualification should an appeal arise.
  - (b) – In the Finals should the scores be level at Full Time there will be a period of extra time played, of 5 minutes each way with the first score from either side (Golden Score) whether it be try, penalty or drop goal will determine the WINNER. Should no score be recorded during extra time then the winners will be determined by a drop goal competition as per Essex RFU Cup regulations.
  - (c) Matches to be set at a standard 30 mins each way