



Essex County RFU Ltd.

COMPETITION RULES

U13 – U14

Waterfall Cup Competition

U15 – Colts

Youth League

and Knockout Cup competitions

Season 2025/26



**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:

1.Player Centred

2.Development Driven

3.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 repeated disciplinary cases relating to a single team, referee abuse, entering the field of play without permission, 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 Grade. ALL teams will remain in the competition through all cup rounds. The initial round will be drawn out of hat.

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 Grade. Winning teams only 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 as much as possible 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 member clubs within 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 clustered 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. This does not mean that those 5 players are able to move back and forth between teams all season. In exceptional circumstances more than 5 changes may be allowed but only following approval from the Age Grade Competition Manager. The competition squad for that team will be identified by the team sheet from that first game which must be supplied to the Competition Manager for that Age Grade.

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 (Reg 15.3 and 15.4) , and whole Age Grade teams can combine (Reg 15.2) but only in accordance with RFU Regulation, 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 Age Grade 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 39-0 win to the non-offending team. **The offending club may also face sanctions in accordance with Regulation 19.**

If approval is given to play out of Age Grade then the club should notify the opposing team at least 24 hours in advance of the game although an oppositions objection shall not prevent the player(s) from playing.

7 Player Identification, Team Sheets and Match Cards

Both teams are expected to provide some means to identify the players in the squad if requested by the other team. This could take the form of a printed team sheet and available player ID cards. or Electronic Match Card from GMS containing player photographs.

There is no requirement for clubs with a single team in an Age Grade to produce Team Sheets for each game, they may do so if they wish.

Teams that enter 2 teams into a competition however **MUST** produce a team sheet or Electronic Match Card each game and submit that to the Competition Manager

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 Club
- 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 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.** This applies to both league and cup games.

10 Fulfilling a fixture

Fixtures must be played on the dates listed in the calendar unless

1. The Pitch is unfit as per Rule 9
2. If a team knows in advance that they will not be able to play the fixture they give a minimum of 2 weeks notice to the opposition in order to find a suitable alternative date.

In the event that both teams mutually agree in advance as above 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.

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 39-0 victory to the other team.

A team must have sufficient players to fulfil a side for the match (U13 – 13 players U14 and above 15 players)

If a team has less than the minimum number of players then they will concede the game with the result registered as a 39-0 win for the purposes of the competition

However coaches are encouraged to play the fixture as a friendly with whatever players are available and play an adapted version of the game for the remaining available players in accordance with the RFU 'Game On' principles.

If a team has sufficient players to fulfil the game then during a game a team subsequently 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 we may determine the result to be void and no points will be awarded to either team and/or the team(s) may be removed from the competition. **There is no result after 60 minute rule.**

If a game needs to be replayed it 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.

11 Results

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

A game is brought to an end if the points difference reaches or exceeds 39 points after which point coaches are expected to **record the final score at that point.**

E.g If the game is 48-10 and a converted try is subsequently scored making it 55-10 the 39 points difference has been exceeded and the result at that point i.e. 55-10 will be recorded.

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: four points for a win and two 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.

For Colts Leagues only a Try Bonus Point is awarded for scoring more than 4 tries and a Losing Bonus point is awarded for losing by 7 or fewer points

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.