

NLD RFU Men's Merit Tables 2022 – 23

Additional Information

To ensure that clubs are fully informed of the changes to the men's merit level offer we are providing a range of support for clubs, including:

1. An online, webinar for team captains/managers to attend, where we'll go through key points like how to enter results, and the opportunity to ask questions (Date/time to follow).
2. WhatsApp Group for each individual table to help to connect key people i.e. team captains (links to follow)
3. A list of FAQs (below)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are you changing the Nottinghamshire Pennant Leagues?

NLD RFU are committed in trying to provide appropriate competitions and playing opportunities which support the growth and sustainability of our member clubs, while maintaining a positive player experience.

The implementation of the Future Competition Structure (FCS) for the 2022 – 23 season allows for 2nd and 3rd teams were permitted to apply to enter the RFU leagues, we felt it was the right time to review the current offer to try and mitigate any impact of this change on our local competitive offer.

We were also mindful of post pandemic changes in player behaviours and a decrease in the number of Pennant games being played during the 2021 – 22 season, so hope a change in the offer may help clubs overcome some of these challenges.

2. What's changed and why?

In consultation with representatives from the partner unions and feedback from players who play, or have recently lapsed in playing, merit level/social rugby, the following changes are being implemented for the 2022 – 23 season:

Rebranding/Renaming

The 'NLD RFU Merit Tables' will take the place of the Nottinghamshire Pennant and Lincolnshire Merit Table. The aim is for a fresh identity to connect the clubs and players across NLD and partner unions.

Groupings

These will be based on geography in the first instance, to try and keep travel times as low as possible.

225 players completed the online NLD player survey in May. We asked players to rank in order 5 aspects of a local competition in order of importance. 57% ranked teams of a similar standard as most important and 40% ranked travel time as second most important (the other aspects were guaranteed at least half a game, flexible and varying kick off times, and flexible rules and laws).

Being able to group clubs by competitive level, without creating unreasonable travel distances was problematic. Low game completion rates in some of the Pennant Leagues equally made assessing levels of competitiveness difficult. Therefore, the second most important aspect of travel time has been used to initially shape the groups.

'Rules'

The *NLD RFU Merit Tables Guidance Document* will be the 'rules' of the competition. We have simplified these to make them more user friendly.

49% of the responses to the NLD Player Survey ranked flexible rules/laws as least important, however with ongoing challenges some clubs face around player numbers and availability, removal/relaxation of some 'rules' aims to allowing clubs to agree a suitable option to keep their game on.

There will be no fines or walkovers, and clubs are encouraged to be as flexible as possible by utilising the Game On framework. Applying Game On principles to avoid cancelling means your fixture would still constitute a fixture, and count towards your performance in the NLD RFU Merit Tables.

3. What is Game On?

The aim of Game On is to help ensuring more games are played and reducing the number of cancellations, the Game On principles allow teams to be more flexible with the laws to allow the match to go ahead.

Pending Governance approval, the Game On framework will be updated for the 2022 – 23 season and will allow teams to adapt the numbers on pitch down to 10 aside and the dimensions of a pitch so to meet the needs of the game and the number of players. Match length can be between 40 – 80 mins, as well as scrum and lineout options that ensures front row players still play important role in games, where scrums are adapted.

Historically, clubs have already been using such principles, working well together to keep games on for their players.

4. Do we still play on Saturdays?

Games are still scheduled for Saturdays and clubs can mutually agree to move a fixture to a date and time that suits them.

5. Is there still going to be a 'league table' and table winners?

Yes. Points and bonus points will be awarded.

There are also points deductions built into the scoring system for when non weather related cancellations are declared. This is to encourage early communication, allowing teams enough time to find alternative fixtures.

6. How do I enter results?

The home team will enter via the Game Management System (GMS). This will scores only via the Electronic Match Card (EMC), team line ups are not being used for this competition. *(Help guide will be provided)*

7. Will the new NLD RFU Merit Tables be monitored and reviewed?

Yes. The merit table fixtures will be uploaded to the Game Management System (GMS) and we will use this to track if games are going ahead and how competitive the fixtures are. It is important clubs keep results and date changes as up to date as possible to help us with this.

We will also seek feedback from clubs via their partner union forums and players expressed and interest in being spoken to further, via the NLD Player Survey.

A snapshot of how the merit tables are performing will be taken mid to end of November which will allow us to assess if any changes need to implemented for the rest of the season. A review will also be performed at the end of the 2022 – 23 season to inform the 2023 – 24 merit offer.