

NLD RFU Merit Leagues – Guidance, Rules and Regulations 2023 - 24

This document has been prepared to provide assistance, guidance and clarity to clubs playing within the Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Derbyshire Rugby Football Union (NLD RFU) Merit Leagues and should be read in conjunction with the general Regulations of the RFU.

The NLD RFU Competitions Committee will oversee the organisation and management of the NLD RFU Merit Leagues. In the event of any confusion or conflict these must be communicated to the NLD Competitions Committee Secretary using the competitions@nldrfs.co.uk email address.

Ultimately the aim of the NLD RFU Competitions Committee is to be as flexible as possible to ensure games get played using its mantra of ‘...in the interest of rugby!’

i. Objective

The objective of the NLD RFU Merit Leagues is to create local competitive playing opportunities which allow clubs to grow and develop their teams and individual players throughout the season.

The key focus is the player, their development and access to a positive playing experience.

ii. Club Eligibility

Participating clubs must be a member of NLD RFU or of another Constituent Body of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) with approval from their Constituent Body of the RFU to participate in the NLD Merit Leagues.

Following best practice, participating clubs must have a completed first aid risk assessment in line with RFU Regulation 9.

iii. Structure

The NLD RFU Merit Tables will be made up of two divisions – East and West – with 2 Tiers in the East Division and 3 Tiers in the West Division. The Leagues have been established permitting the best geographical fit, mindful of travel distances, and the perceived ability of the Team to perform within their allocated League.

Clubs may enter more than one Team if player availability supports this though they will be allocated to different Leagues.

The NLD RFU Competitions Committee will perform a mid-season review by the end of December for the 2023–24 season, with a view to making adjustments to the structure and / or format if required to ensure the NLD RFU Merit Tables remain appropriate for competing clubs and their players.

A further review will be also performed at the end of the season to inform the 2024 – 25 season. Player and Club feedback, fixture scores and game completion rates will be used as part of said review.

iv. Format

All matches will be played in accordance with the World Rugby Laws of the Game. In line with RFU Regulation 6.55 & 6.56, ‘Game On’ principles may be applied in non-RFU Competitions (including Merit League fixtures

and friendlies), therefore wherever possible, Teams should utilise the ‘Game On’ framework to ensure their fixture is played.

The ‘Player Off’ principle will not be applicable as this is incompatible with utilisation of the ‘Game On’ principles Regulation 6.66.

Teams will play everyone in their League home and away. All games must be played guided by the spirit of England Rugby’s [core values](#).

The following form the Rules of the NLD Merit Leagues.

1.	Player Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All players should be affiliated to the RFU through their club via the Game Management System (GMS) system. b) Players do not have to be ‘effectively registered’ to take part in the NLD RFU Merit Tables; except should such player be subject to disciplinary procedures they must be registered on GMS in accordance with Regulation 19.1.4.a. c) A player from a higher level may take part only when mutually agreed by both teams regarding their appropriate and safe inclusion. This is to help to maintain the right playing experience. d) Regulation 15.6 Playing Adult Rugby must be adhered to all times.
2.	Squad Sizes & Front Row Replacements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) There are no limits on squad sizes; cf Regulation 6.58 b) When there is a shortage of players it is advised games commence applying relevant aspects of the ‘Game On’ framework. c) If a team has a large squad, the use of the half game rule is encouraged (a ‘Game On’ principle), as is lending players to the opposition and other teams to give players time on the pitch. d) It is not compulsory to have a front row replacement and, if necessary due to lack of experienced front row players, part or all of a match may be played with un-contested scrums with no detrimental effect to the result; i.e. the ‘Player Off’ principle is not applied – cf Regulation 6.64
3.	Player Borrowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Player borrowing is permitted where it means the fixture is played. b) In the first instance the priority should be borrowing from your opposition on the day. c) Should players be borrowed from teams outside of your fixture, these players must be agreed in advance of the fixture by the opposition.
4.	Substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Rolling substitutions are permitted, the number of changes is unlimited; cf Regulations 6.56 & 6.64 b) Teams are encouraged to ensure all players get appropriate pitch time. i.e. the half a game principle.
5.	Match Dates & Kick Off Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Matches will be scheduled to be played on Saturdays. b) Teams may mutually agree to move a fixture to a different day/date. The home team must ensure they confer and agree changes with the NLD RFU Competitions Committee Fixture Secretary (to ensure GMS is updated accordingly) and that the NLD RFU Referee Society are informed once a change of venue, date and / or time has been agreed and accepted. c) Kick off times can be mutually agreed. Where teams cannot agree matches shall kick off at 3 pm except for those matches played in November, December, January, and February, which shall kick off at 2:00 pm or 2:15 pm; cf Regulation 6.44 & 6.45. d) Matches played other than on Saturday or Sunday will kick off at 7:00 pm; cf Regulation 6.46.

6.	Unplayed, postponed and / or Abandoned Matches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Where possible teams should utilise the 'Game On' framework to ensure that fixture take place. Both teams must agree which of the 'Game On' principles will apply to the match and notify the referee at least 30 minutes prior to kick off. b) In the event of a host venue pitch being unplayable due to weather, it is recommended that the fixture is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. switched to away team venue – informing the NLD RFU Referee Society b. moved to an alternative venue – informing the NLD RFU Referee Society c. postponed and new date agreed in agreement with the NLD RFU Competitions Committee Fixture Secretary c) If a game is abandoned after 40 minutes of play, the result will stand. d) Where there is a genuine need to cancel or a postpone a fixture, the club requesting a postponement are asked to communicate it to their opposition, the NLD RFU Referee Society and the NLD RFU Competitions Committee Fixture Secretary at the earliest opportunity and in any case within 24 hours. e) Where a match abandoned for reasons other than those permitted above – i.e. weather or fitness of the pitch – the Referee will submit a formal report to the CB Disciplinary Secretary.
7.	Score Reporting and Match Day Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The first named team on a fixture – the home team - is responsible for entering match details and the result onto the Game Management System (GMS) using the electronic match card (EMC) facility; cf Regulation 6.81 b) Each team / club must have a nominated responsible person with the correct GMS access. (The individual, who must be notified to the NLD RFU Competitions Committee prior to the Club's first fixture, will need to have the 'Match Card Administrator' GMS role). c) Inputting team line ups on the EMC is not compulsory for the NLD RFU Merit Tables. d) The result, as reported by the officiating Referee, must be entered within 24 hours of the kick off time of the fixture as recorded in GMS; this is to include final scores and the number of tries scored; cf Regulation 6.84 e) Where a 'Walk Over' is recorded as the result in GMS the reason must be selected from the available drop down; failure to do so may delay the awarding of table points for the fixture.
8.	Referee Appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The home team is responsible for confirming whether the NLD RFU Referee Society have appointed a Society Referee; cf Regulation 6.37. b) If the NLD RFU Referee Society have been unable to appoint a Society Referee then a suitably qualified Club Referee must be used. c) The Home team must notify the Referee, in advance, of any changes to team kit – i.e. who is changing when colours clash – to ensure that the Referee doesn't clash with either team. d) Teams must notify the appointed Referee at least 30 minutes prior to kick-off of any 'Game On' principles being applied to the fixture.
9.	Fulfilment of Fixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teams are encouraged to fulfil <u>all</u> their fixtures. b) Completion of fixtures will be routinely monitored by the NLD RFU Competitions Committee and a team's continued engagement within the NLD Merit Leagues will be reviewed as necessary. c) All League fixtures should be played before end of April '24.
10.	Points System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fixture points will be awarded to teams as follows:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 points for a win • 2 points for a draw • 0 points for a loss <p>b) Bonus points will be awarded to teams for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoring of 4 or more tries • A loss within 7 points <p>c) Points will be deducted for non-weather-related cancellations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 point deduction for the cancellation of a fixture after 23:59, 2 days before the match day and before 23:59 1 day prior; i.e. playing on a Saturday, notification of a cancellation after 23:59 on the Thursday and before 23:59 on the Friday. • 4 points deduction for the cancellation of a fixture after 23:59, 1 days before the match day; i.e. playing on a Saturday, notification of a cancellation after 23:59 on the Friday. • It is the responsibility of the club cancelling the game to be able to evidence the agreed kick off times in the case and any cancellation, or dispute regarding a cancellation. Where evidence is not able to be supplied, the above points deduction will be applied. <p>f) A maximum 50 score points differential is advised. If this occurs, teams are encouraged to mix teams up playing the remaining game time as a friendly under the 'Game On' principles; the score will be recorded as the score when the 50 points differential was reached.</p>
11.	Table Positions	<p>a) Should more than one team have the equal points the following criteria will be used to determine table rankings at the end of the season:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. League Points II. Score Points difference III. Score Points for <p>b) If Rule 10f has been applied during the season by either of the teams on equal points table rankings will be determined as below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. League Points II. Away wins III. Home wins
12.	Communications	<p>a) Each team should have a minimum of 2 representatives on their respective NLD Merit League WhatsApp group; these must be notified to the NLD RFU Competitions Committee Secretary a minimum of 2 weeks before their respective league starts play.</p>
13.	Disputes	<p>a) Any Club wishing to raise a post-match matter – i.e. dispute - shall do so in writing within 24 hours of the match being played; such communications should be sent to the NLD RFU Competitions Committee Secretary using the competitions@nldrfu.co.uk.</p> <p>b) The NLD RFU Competitions Committee will be the sole arbitrator of all disputes and the decision of this committee will be final.</p>
14.	Other	<p>a) The NLD RFU Competitions Committee reserve the right to make amendments to the NLD RFU Merit Tables and / or Guidance Documents.</p>