NLD RFU Cup Competition – Guidance, Rules and Regulations 2026 - 27

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) Cup Competitions and should be read in conjunction with the general Rules and Regulations of the RFU.

The NLD RFU Competitions Committee will oversee the organisation and management of the NLD's annual cup competitions for Senior Men, Senior and Junior XV, Senior Women and Colts. In the event of any confusion or conflict these must be communicated to the NLD Competitions Committee Secretary using the competitions@nldrfu.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 Cup Competitions is to create local competitive playing opportunities for grassroots rugby upwards which allow clubs to grow and develop their teams and individual players.

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 to participate in the NLD Competitions.

Please note that this is not Tournament Rugby so all participating clubs must have a completed a Club Aid Risk Assessment and Emergency Medical Action Plan in line with RFU Regulation 9; this must be made available to visiting opposition Clubs / Team upon request,

All Clubs / Teams must have suitably trained and qualified Club First Aid personnel at each fixture including the Finals Day.

Failure to meet the Player Welfare requirements of Regulation may result in a Club / Team being removed from all NLD Cup Competitions and them being reported to NLD Governance.

All NLD Clubs will be permitted to enter eligible teams for the appropriate Competition.

Men's Adult teams playing in RFU League, Counties 3 Leagues and above, will play within the NLD's Senior XV Competition.

Men's Adult teams playing in Merit Leagues, Counties 4 Leagues and below, Social Rugby or other non-RFU Leagues will play within the NLD's Junior XV Competition.

Women's Adult teams who played the season within RFU Women's competitions or the Inner Warrior Series (IWS) option will play within the NLD's Women's Competition.

Non-NLD teams playing alongside NLD Clubs within MROC Leagues will be eligible to apply to enter the NLD Competitions however acceptance will be based upon availability of places within the NLD Senior XV Competition.

Non-NLD Clubs playing Merit level rugby, particularly those playing in NLD Merit Leagues, will be eligible to apply to enter the NLD Competition however acceptance will be based on availability of places within the NLD Junior XV Competition.

All teams must be listed against their respective Club in GMS as all fixtures and results will be managed on GMS including the use of Electronic Match Cards.

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iii. Competition Structure

Men's Senior XV Competition

All entered and accepted teams will be seeded according to their RFU Level; Regional 1 & 2, Counties 1, Counties 2, Counties 3.

A maximum of 4 tiers will exist within the competition, Senior Cup, Senior Shield, Senior Plate and Senior Bowl, with a maximum of 16 teams per tier except for the Senior Bowl which will have 32 Team places.

The competition will be run on a knockout basis.

The Competitions will be organised to run during the regular season using a combination of non-League weekends, the weekends allocated for CB competitions by the RFU where possible with and 'play on or before dates' to complete. The Finals Day will be post-season.

Men's Junior XV Competition

All Counties 4 Teams entered and accepted will compete in the Junior XV Cup on a knockout basis.

All Merit and other Teams entered and accepted will compete in the Junior XV Shield at Round 1

The winners will remain in the Junior XV Shield with the losers moving to the Junior XV Plate.

Thereafter the competition will be run on a knockout basis.

The Competitions will be organised to run during the regular season using a combination of non-League weekends, the weekends allocated for CB competitions by the RFU where possible with and 'play by dates' to complete. The Finals Day will be post-season.

Women's XV Competition

All entered and accepted teams will be seeded according to their RFU Level and then, if necessary, by performance at the time of the draw.

The Women's Cup will be played as a simple knockout competition starting this season at the Quarter Finals stage.

The Women's Shield will be played as a simple knockout competition starting this season at the Quarter Finals stage.

The Women's Plate, open to IWS teams only, will be played as a simple knockout competition starting this season at the Quarter Finals stage.

The Competitions will be organised to run during the regular season using a combination of non-League weekends and 'play by dates' to complete. The Finals Day will be post-season.

Colts XV Competition

Details will be issued separately by the Colts Lead of the NLD Competitions Committee as required.

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iv. Competitions Format

For all Competitions matches will be played in accordance with the World Rugby Laws of the Game, the RFU Regulation 6 and applicable Organising Committees Rules and Regulations unless stated below.

For the Men's Junior XV Competitions in line with RFU Regulation 6.53 & 6.54, 'Game On' principles will be applied.

For the Women's Cup Competitions all games will be in accordance with RFU Regulation 6 including the application of the Under 19 clauses as provide by World Rugby as noted, for Women's Level 6 and below, in Regulation 6.52 unless otherwise explicitly stated in these Rules and Regulations.

For the NLD Women's Plate Competition in line with RFU Regulation 6.53 & 6.54, 'Game On' principles will be applied.

Where fixtures are played under the Game On! Principles the 'Player Off' principle will not be applicable as this is incompatible with utilisation of the 'Game On' principles Regulation 6.66.

Additionally in the Men's Junior XV Competition all games will be played in accordance with the NLD RFU Merit Tables 2024-25 Regulations v2.

For all Competitions a 50-score point variance limit is to be maintained. Should the score point variance exceed 50 points then the game should be temporarily halted, the score at that point recorded as the fixture result and the game restarted and completed using Game On! Principles.

During the Knockout stages of any competition should the result, at normal full time, be a draw then an additional 10 minutes each way will be played. Should the match remain drawn at this point, the winner of the match will be the team that has scored the most tries. If this does not produce a winner, the team that has scored the most conversions from tries will be declared winners. If this still does not produce a winner or the score is 0-0, the away team shall proceed to the next round. If it not possible or the Match Official considers it unsafe to continue play the extra time option will be omitted and proceed to the next deciding option; i.e. most tries etc. All games will be concluded on the day of the fixture.

During the Finals should the result at normal full time be a draw the winner of the match will be decided using the RFU's Adult Male Cup Competition Regulations 2025-26 Appendix 1 Place Kick Competition Regulations.; found here.

All fixtures will be entered on GMS and the use of Electronic Match Cards is obligatory.

For the sake of clarity if there is a conflict between fixture and player availability the higher-level fixture has priority – e.g. Senior fixtures will take priority over Junior fixtures also NLD Competitions fixture will take priority over Partner Union fixtures which it has been agreed will be scheduled for mid-week.

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v. Player Eligibility

For Men's Senior XV Cup Competitions, players will only be eligible to play in teams as governed by the Rules and Regulations permitted for that level of game as issued by their respective League and Organising Committee; e.g. for Counties 1 level those issued by MROC.

For Men's Junior XV Competitions, players will only be eligible to play in teams as governed by the NLD RFU Merit Tables 2023-24 Regulations or MROC Counties 4 Rules and Regulations as applicable; specifically Rule 1.a – 1.f. However, this said if you play in the Junior Cup then play in the Senior Cup you may not return to play in the Junior Cup at a later stage.

For the Women's Senior Competitions, no player who has played more than 3 times during the season in a team which played in National Challenge 1 or above may play in a Shield or Plate Team fixture.

No player may play for more than one team or Club in any of the Competitions during any one season. For the avoidance of doubt this shall include Loan Players and Student or Services Pass Players. Players who are permitted to Dual Register in accordance with RFU Regulation 13 may only play for one Club in the Competition during any one season.

If any Club / Team is unsure whether a player is eligible for selection to a match day squad they must consult the Competition Secretary in advance for clarification and approval.

For Colts Competitions the applicable selection criteria for weekly Colts fixtures will remain in force.

The fielding of ineligible player may result in formal disciplinary action being taken against the offending Club and forfeiture of the fixture.

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vi. Disputes

a) Any Club wishing to raise a post-match matter – e.g. a 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 competitions@ndlrfu.co.uk.

b) The compliant must be submitted on Club headed notepaper, signed by the lead complainant and counter-signed by the Chair and/ or Secretary of the Club.

c) The NLD RFU Competitions Committee will be the sole arbitrator of all disputes and the decision of this committee will be final.

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vii. Other

a) The NLD RFU Competitions Committee reserve the right to make amendments to the NLD RFU Cup Competitions Rules and Regulation and / or Guidance Documents.

b) All communications must be addressed to the NLD Competitions Secretary – competitions@nldrfu.co.uk