

GRFU Development League Regulations 2023/24

1. Administration

- a. County Youth Competitions shall be held annually for clubs that have teams within the age groups designated by the sub-committee.
- b. Each Competition and the format of the competition shall be under the control of the Competitions Sub-Committee appointed by the Gloucestershire RFU Management Board. Its decisions concerning any matter relating to the competitions shall be final and binding on the participating clubs.
- c. The Competitions Committee shall have the power to amend these regulations during the season for the benefit of a fair competition.
- d. Subject to the discretion of the Competitions Sub-Committee, any infringement of these rules may debar an offending club from further participation in the competition.
- e. Inclusion in to this or any other competition is not automatic and will be at the discretion of the Competitions Sub-Committee.
- f. A copy of these regulations MUST be available at the HOME club should clarification need to be sought by the match officials or team managers.

2. Ethos

- a. All clubs are expected to agree fully and sign up to the ethos statement made by the league (see appendix 1). These are a set of binding guidelines that must be adhered to in every match within the development league of associated competitions.
- b. Any clubs found to be in breach of the competition ethos will face the following sanctions:
 - a. The first offence shall be punished by a formal warning and a point's deduction of 10 points. This will act as a final warning towards the sanctioned club.
 - b. The second offence shall result in the immediate expulsion of the sanctioned club from all Development League Competitions with all future planned fixtures being awarded as walkovers to the expelled club's opponents.
- c. Clubs shall not be allowed to take part in any Development League or associated cup competition fixture unless they have fully agreed and signed up to the ethos of the league.
- d. A copy of the ethos document must be available at all competition fixtures. This is the HOME club's responsibility.

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3. Club Eligibility

- a. The competition is open to all GRFU member clubs ("Eligible Clubs").
- b. Any other clubs or teams may enter only with the express permission of the Competitions Committee.
- c. All clubs confirming entry into the U18's Development League must pay the sum of £60.00 per team. (Payable by cheque to the GRFU or Bacs).

4. Behaviour

Clubs are responsible for the behaviour of their players, coaches and spectators at all times. Incidents involving bad behaviour and/or referee abuse are at variance from the core values of our game. Any breach of this may be referred to the appropriate GRFU Body.

5. Player Eligibility

- a. All players must, at the start of any competition, be bona fide members of the clubs, which they represent. No player may represent more than one club in any competition under these rules, during the same season, and anyone belonging to more than one club must elect the one for the relevant competition prior to its commencement. The ONLY exceptions to this regulation are when two or more clubs come together to form a BARBARIAN side due to lack of numbers at each club or a club has folded.
- b. All players in the competitions must be under the relevant age on 1st September in the related season. *Unless a dispensation has been granted by the GRFU a copy of which must be sent to the Co-Ordinator prior to the commencement of the competition and a copy retained by the club which must be e-mailed to the opposition at least 48 hours prior to kick off with confirmation from the opposition that they have received forms.*
- c. All players in the competitions must be registered under the RFU Registration Scheme. Before the start of the Competitions a squad list must be supplied to the League Co-Ordinator, this must include name (as per GMS), date of birth, RFU Registration Number and indicate if the player is a member of an Academy. Names may be added to this list and must be submitted in writing to the Age Group Co-Ordinator for the approval of the Cup Committee before being eligible to play.
- d. If there should be any doubt as to a player's eligibility, the matter must be referred to the League Co-Ordinator, in writing, prior to the date of the related match.
- e. No U19 player is permitted to play in the U18 league (which could have a combination of U18s and U17s) unless the club has approval from the GRFU for that player to play down one age grade; the application process and conditions are set out on the [POOAG page](#) of the GRFU website. Once cleared the League Co-Ordinator must be informed of the player's name and his RFU number. In addition, then the club must tell the opposition at least 24 hours before the match that they have an U19 playing. If such approval is given that player must play age grade rugby for the whole of that season and cannot play for one of the club's adult teams.

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- f. Normally, no U19 player can play in an U17s team, unless that player has permission from GRFU and the RFU to play down 2 age groups. Any such application would require significant medical evidence for approval to be given.
- a. Any U16 player whose development would benefit from playing up as in an U17 or U18 team may only do so after the application has been approved by the GRFU; again, the application process and conditions are set out on the [POOAG page](#) of the GRFU website. Once an application has been approved that player cannot play in the club's U16 teams for the remainder of the season. If playing in the U17s league this U16 can play in the front row. If playing in the U18s league this U16 cannot play in the front row.
- b. If a club coach has an U16 playing up and is advised that the opposition has an U19 playing down, then the U16 and U19 cannot be on the pitch at the same time. Both coaches must use the Half Game regulation so that both players have the same time on the pitch, but never are on the pitch together.
- c. No player who has played on more than 2 occasions at Divisional or International level may play in this competition without the agreement of the clubs' coaches at the match as they will not be regarded as development players. Should agreement be reached to play these players then a text must be sent to the League Co-Ordinator from both team's coaches prior to the match KO.
- d. An U17 team may not comprise of more than 50% of U18's on the field at any one time if playing in a U17 League
- e. A player who has been in an adult squad on a total of FIVE or more occasions at COUNTIES 4 and above may not play in the development league without the consent of the opposition coach. This agreement must be texted to the League Co-Ordinator by BOTH coaches at least 30 minutes before the game.
- f. Academy players must have permission from the relevant Academy to participate in any league games. Failure to do so will be seen as the relevant club fielding an ineligible player and will forfeit the game.
- g. All players in the squad on game day are required to have a minimum of half a game play time.
- h. Team sheets for each game must be submitted to the League Co-Ordinator within 48 hours of the game taking place.

6. Structure and Fixtures

- a. The number of leagues and the size of each will be determined by the Committee and depend on the number of teams participating.
- b. The League Co-Ordinator shall draw up the fixtures for the season.

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- c. Upon receipt of the fixture lists participating clubs may rearrange the fixture dates if necessary and must notify the Competition Co-Ordinator of any postponements before the original fixture and the agreed new date as soon as it is known.
- d. All games can be played earlier than the fixture date, but no later than the original fixture date.
- e. Any matches unavoidably cancelled or un-played for whatever reason shall be played on the next available date as per by the League Co-Ordinator.
- f. Any matches cancelled within 24 hours of the start time will be awarded to the opposition. Unless it is due to the weather. (See also Regulation 12 b)
- g. The season will be between 1st September 2023 and 30 April 2023. With provisional dates in April 2023 for any play offs, should there be one.

7. Match Organisation

- a. The home side shall use its best endeavours to secure the services of a referee supplied from the Gloucester & District Referees Society ("G&DRS"), the Bristol Referee Society ("BRS") or the Somerset Referees Society ("SRS").
- b. In the event of the G&DRS/BRS/SRS being unable to appoint a referee the home side shall be responsible for providing the referee.
- c. The home side shall be responsible for informing the referee of these regulations.
- d. If in the opinion of the referee there is a colour clash the home side shall change its shirts.
- e. Matches shall be played on Sunday afternoons unless mutually agreed between the participating clubs concerned.
- f. All other match arrangements shall be made as for usual club fixtures.
- g. Where there is a possibility that any game could be postponed or cancelled for any reason the Club seeking such postponement must keep the Club against which the match was to be played fully informed through its Nominated League Contact of the proposed potential postponement and any action taken and decision made. Where in the opinion of the League Co-Ordinator a Club has not complied with this rule and the other Club has suffered a resultant loss or cost that could have been avoided the League Co-Ordinator may at its discretion require that the Club which has failed to comply with this rule should compensate the other Club to the extent of its cost or loss.
- h. **Late Cancellations.** If an away team calls off after 12 noon on the day before the game, the club away team agrees to pay a fine of £50 to GRFU, which will be re-funded to the non-offending club to offset potential financial losses because of the late "cry-off". The League Co-Ordinator will implement this regulation.

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8. Replacements & Competition Rules

- a. An open number of replacements can be agreed by both captains and referee before the commencement of the game with an unlimited number of substitutes on the bench.
- b. If a team has less than 15 players, every effort must be made to even up the numbers before the game starts, which may include loaning players to the opposition. Initially a team may not have more than a one-man advantage, any extra players being available as reserves. Subsequently a team may only increase its numbers with the agreement of the opposition.
- c. All games in all Leagues must start with a minimum of TEN men per side.
- d. The game MUST be played with each team having even numbers throughout, even if as few as 20 players are available between the two teams. In such cases, the duration of the game may be shortened to a minimum of 20 minutes each way. The only time a side may have more players than the other side is if red or yellow cards have been issued.
- e. Should there at any time be insufficient suitably trained and experienced front row players on the field, the match shall continue with uncontested scrums. (See also Regulation 9 b). If necessary, a match may be played throughout with uncontested scrums. Where possible the opposition should be notified well in advance.
- f. Any of the RFU "Game on Principles" may be adopted providing that both sides agree and inform the referee before kick-off

9. Determination of Result

- a. If the referee abandons a game, for whatever reason, before three-quarters of the time has been played, then the game result shall determine by the League Co-Ordinator which may be to replay the game. Otherwise, the result shall stand as though the game had been completed normally.
- b. In the event of uncontested scrums for all or part of the game the result will stand as though contested scrums had taken place throughout.

10. Notification of Result

- a. Both sides will be responsible for sending in results. Scores must be checked with the referee and submitted to the appropriate League Co-Ordinator with n 48 hours of the match take place or by Midday Tuesday if played on a Sunday.
- b. If a club regularly fails to report results, they will be warned, and if it continues, the Committee will take action, possible penalties including loss of points and/or expulsion from the league.

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11. Un-played Matches

- a. Where a club declines or refuses to fulfil a fixture for reasons unacceptable to the League Co-Ordinator it will (subject to its right to appeal) have competition points deducted or other penalty or sanction as is deemed appropriate.
- b. In the event that the Committee become aware that a member club has materially misled or deceived them to gain an advantage. The Committee reserves the right to impose such disciplinary action as they deem fit including expulsion from the league.

12. Determination of Winner of League

- a. 4 points shall be awarded for a win. 2 points for a draw and 1 point for a loss. 1 bonus point will be awarded for four tries scored and 1 bonus point shall be awarded for losing by 15 or less points.
- b. In the event of any team failing to fulfil any fixture they shall forfeit the game. The none offending side shall receive 5 points.
- c. The winner of each League shall be the team with the highest number of points. Depending on the club's final position in the league they will then enter the league play offs to decide the overall league winner.
- d. In the event of two clubs having the same number of points the club that has fulfilled the most games shall go through if still a tie the club having scored the most points during their head-to-head games shall take the higher position. If there is still a tie, the club having scored the greatest number of points against common opponents shall be the higher. If there is still a tie, the organising committee shall draw lots.
- e. If a club plays less than half its scheduled fixtures, the Competitions Committee may, at its discretion, discount all that team's matches in determining the winner of the League.

13. Disputes

There is a three-stage process for resolving disputes (timescales for club action in brackets):

- a) Formal statement of the details emailed to the Co-Ordinator, who will try to resolve the issue. There is no fee for this. (On Day of Match).
- b) If that is not possible or not acceptable. A club may send a formal Protest to the Competitions Section Lead It involves a fee of £50 drawn on a club cheque, which may be refunded if appropriate. (72 Hours from date of match).
- c) If the matter is still not resolved, the final stage is a formal Appeal to the GRFU, the supervising constituent body. It involves a fee of £100, which may be refunded if appropriate. (1 week from protest decision).

All disputes and appeals must be dealt with in accordance with Appendix 8 and 9 of the GRFU Operating Procedures. (Attached).

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GRFU Operating procedure Appendix 8

Breaches of Competitions Rules

The procedure for dealing with breaches of competitions rules shall be dealt with following the principles of natural justice. (See Appendix 9). To that end all procedural and technical considerations must take second place to the paramount object of being as just and fair to all parties as is consistent with a duty to the Game. The Competitions Committee is delegated the authority by the GRFU Council to deal with such matters.

If a club has been deemed to have breached the Competitions Rules the following procedures should be adopted:

- The Competitions Secretary shall inform the club of the breach and that a hearing will take place.
- The club shall be informed of the arrangements for the hearing, shall be provided with all the relevant information and be invited to attend.
- The Panel shall consist of the Chairman and two other members of the Competitions Committee who, through their own club affiliation, do not have an interest in the outcome of the case other than to see that the decision is fair and just.
- The Competitions Committee shall state the case to be answered.
- The Club shall state their position.
- The Panel shall retire to consider their decision.
- The decision and the rationale behind it shall be conveyed to the Club and subsequently put in writing to them normally within 7 days of the hearing.

The written judgment should include:

- Details of the Panel.
- Details of those attending.
- Details of the case to be answered.
- A list of any documentary evidence received.
- A summary of the evidence presented at the hearing.
- An analysis of that evidence that leads to the findings of the Panel.
- A statement of the findings.
- Details of the Right of Appeal.
- In the event that the Club is not satisfied with the decision taken by the Panel they have the right to appeal to the GRFU See Appendix 9

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GRFU Operating procedure Appendix 9

Appeals Process and Procedures

Appeals against the GRFU or its Committees & Sub Committees

Appeals against the GRFU or its Committee or Sub Committee shall be dealt with by the Appeals, Awards and Advisory Panel which is appointed as stated in A5.1. In the case of a decision by a committee or Sub Committee, the Appeal must be lodged by the Club Secretary within 72 hours of being informed of the decision taken by the Committee or Sub Committee. The Panel will comprise members who have no declared involvement in the case or the appellant parties. The Panel will be chaired by the President, an Officer or a senior member of the GRFU. An administration fee for the Appeal of £100 is to be paid by the appellant at the time of lodging the Appeal. Failure to meet the requirements for submitting an Appeal will render the Appeal void. The principles of natural justice will be followed. The appellant shall be notified of the arrangements for the Appeal meeting and invited to attend, with a representative if required and provide, in advance of the meeting, such submissions in support of the Appeal as may be considered relevant. The GRFU, the Committee or Sub Committee shall provide all relevant documentation and be invited to attend to present their case. The Panel will inform the appellant of the result of the Appeal and also in writing through the County Co-Ordinator and the rationale behind the decision. The written judgment is normally to be sent to the appellant within 7 days of the hearing. If the Appeal is upheld then the administration fee will be refunded. In the event that the appellant is not satisfied with the decision taken by the GRFU Appeals, Awards and Advisory Panel, the appellant has the right to make a final Appeal to the RFU as set out in the RFU Handbook. (Currently as of August 2016 stated in Regulation 13.10.10).

Natural Justice and Fairness

The overriding consideration in the conduct of appeals and hearings is that they should be just and fair. The panel must at all times observe the rules of natural justice relating to the conduct of the hearing process.

The panel must be:

1. Impartial, that is free of prejudice or bias and not have an interest in the outcome other than to see that the decision is fair.
2. Careful and thorough in their consideration of the procedures and evidence.

All decisions together with the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing

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Appendix 1

ETHOS OF THE GRFU U18 DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE

1. Purpose

- a. The purpose of the GRFU Under 18 Development League (here on known as “the competition”) is to bridge the gap between youth and adult rugby.
- b. The purpose of the competition is to encourage players of all abilities to stay in the game and successfully manage the transition to adult rugby.
- c. The purpose of the competition is to provide regular, competitive rugby in a safe environment encouraging players to develop their skill set with a focus on DEVELOPMENT and PERFORMANCE NOT WINNING.

2. Coaches

- a. All coaches must approach games in an open and honest manner.
- b. A representative of each side is expected to make contact with each other no later than 48 hours before kickoff in order to discuss the forthcoming fixture and any player issues they wish to discuss.
- c. A representative from each side MUST send an electronic copy of their team sheet complete with RFU registration numbers and player notes to the opposition representative no later than 24 hours before kickoff. **(IF UNREGISTERED PLAYERS ARE PLAYED IT INVALIDATES ANY PLAYING INSURANCE).**
- d. A representative from each side must meet no later than 40 minutes before kickoff to confirm the team sheets, and inform the opposition side of any changes made.
- e. During the game coaches are expected to ensure the game remains competitive. If any game becomes non-competitive then coaches must ensure that they take all actions possible to even the sides up within reason.
- f. During the game coaches MUST model good sportsmanship. They MUST treat the referee with the upmost respect and not engage in any negative language towards the referee regardless of how the coach feels about the referee's decision.
- g. Coaches MUST manage the 70 minutes of game time in a 72 hour period for their players. If a player has played senior or school rugby within the last 72hrs then they cannot play that player unless they have some game time unused. This is to protect the player from over playing. If the players are 18 years old this rule does not apply.

3. Supporters

- a. Clubs are fully responsible for the conduct of their parents before, during and after the game.
- b. Should any complaint be made against the conduct of supporters of a team during any game then the team will face the sanctions detailed under Regulation 4b.
- c. Clubs are expected to provide hospitality for all players and coaches of the opposition team.