

Midlands Region Administrative Instructions (MRAI) for 2024-2025

The RFU Regulations and MRAI are published on the RFU and Midlands Region Organising Committee's (MROC) Websites.

www.englandrugby.com/governance/regulations/

and

www.rfumidlands.com

Changes from 2023-24:

- There have been considerable changes to the majority of the MRAI for this season. Clubs are recommended to read the document in its entirety to avoid misunderstanding.

Changes from Issue 1.

- Major change to section 3 on registration (text deleted) to align with the revised process.
- Addition of text on delayed L9 and below match card submission to 10.1.

The MROC has invoked the freedom of providing local regulation variation for the benefit of the game as allowed by RFU Regulation 6 item 55 and incorporated these variations in the MRAI.

By applying to and participating in competitions organised by the MROC on behalf of the RFU clubs accept to be bound by the MRAI in their entirety.

N.B. Please note that any formal correspondence between a Club and the MROC should be made by email by two senior club officers (e.g. Chair and Secretary) as verifiable by GMS. This can be two separate emails or an email from one officer to another with the latter's confirmation added. All emails should be cc'd into the CB's representative on MROC.

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1. Applications to join the RFU Leagues

- 1.1 An application from a club XV (1st or lower) wishing to join the RFU Leagues (English Clubs Rugby Union Championship; ECRUC) should be made by email by two senior club officers (e.g. Chair and Secretary) as verifiable by GMS. This can be two separate emails or an email from one officer to another with the latter's confirmation added. A further email from the Chair of the Club's Constituent Body (CB) supporting the application should also be supplied. The application should be forwarded to the relevant MROC CB representative before December 1st of the season preceding the one when the XV wishes to join the leagues.

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- 1.2 The club will need to be able to prove that it can fulfil a full league programme of games, by supplying its fixtures list and results of the season preceding the season in which it would like to join the leagues, and that the club has the organisation in place to make sure that all the RFU Regulations and MRAI are followed implicitly, and by supplying the full contact details of the Club Chair, Secretary and Treasurer for the season in which the Club wishes to join the leagues.

2. Applications to join the Midlands Region RFU Leagues from another Region

- 2.1 An application from a club already in the RFU leagues that wishes to transfer into the Midlands Region at the same level as it holds in another Region must be made as in 1.1 above, with a deadline date being 12 months earlier than the one in 1.1.
- 2.2 Clubs already included in the Midlands Leagues as a result of Level Transfer will be more readily accepted on a permanent basis if they apply as in 1.1 above.
- 2.3 Clubs joining at the bottom level will be able to follow the procedure outlined in 1.1 and 1.2 above.

3. Computer Print-Outs and Player Registration

- 3.1 Player registration can be done online via the Game Management System (GMS) accessed from englandrugby.com.
- 3.2 Every club must appoint an officer and a deputy to be responsible for all registration matters. These officers must be fully aware of the RFU Registration of Players, Regulations and Operating Procedures. These are published annually and sent to Club Secretaries.
- 3.3 All players playing at Level 8 or above must be RFU registered for that club and may not play for any other club in an RFU organised competition.
- 3.4 All players playing at Level 9 and below may be club registered to two clubs and play for either. Once such a player RFU registers for a club their club registrations will lapse and they will no longer be eligible to play for those clubs in an RFU organised competition.
- 3.5 Clubs playing at Level 9 and below will be able to play up to two unregistered (i.e. currently club registered to less than two clubs and not RFU registered to another club) players in a match, provided these players are subsequently club registered by the following Tuesday.

4. Ground and Match Management

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of the home club at all levels to ensure that spectators do not encroach on the playing enclosure. Suitable barriers should be erected to ensure compliance with this. Where a club Committee at Level 5 or below is satisfied that it is impractical or unnecessary for barriers to be erected this requirement may be waived. However, if the Home club's Referees Society insists on the use of barriers, then the Home club must comply. Technical areas should also be marked out in accordance with Regulation 6 item 26. Regulation 6 items 28 to 30 regarding personnel allowed in the technical area should also be adhered to and it is the responsibility of the home club to manage this.

5. Postponed Games

- 5.1 No ECRUC League game may be postponed from the advertised date without first having the consent of the League Secretary (or other MROC Officer if the League Secretary is uncontactable). Games may only be postponed due to weather or exceptional circumstances (note that club tours, weddings, etc will not be deemed exceptional circumstances). If a game is likely to be postponed then the Home club must inform the League Secretary of the possibility as soon as possible and before they contact their opposition. If the League Secretary agrees to the postponement, they will confirm this to the Results Agency. A lack of communication by the Home club on this matter will result in the club being sanctioned as MRAI 15.2. Once the League Secretary has agreed the

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postponement then the Home club must telephone their opposition and their Referees Society to let them know.

- 5.2 When a game is awarded as AWO, HWO, postponed or abandoned the home club should not submit the EMC. This must be done by the League Secretary or Results Agency.
- 5.3 Breaches of items 5.1 or 5.2 will be deemed finable misdemeanours.
- 5.4 The result of an unplayed League Match due to an unjustified cry-off will be a win for the non-offending Club with a 0 points difference and the award of a single bonus point as per RFU Regulation 6 item 46. The offending club will be deducted 5 Championship points as allowed by RFU Regulation 6 appendix 3, unless the process in MRAI 6.1 has been invoked.
- 5.5 Postponed league games must be played on the next available weekend. The League Secretary will advise the clubs of the new date within 48 hours of being informed of the postponement and will give the clubs at least 6 days' notice of the date of the rearranged game.
- 5.6 Rearranged league games take precedence over all other competitions except RFU KO Competitions.
- 5.7 A club may not postpone a League game because of lack of availability of its ground. In such circumstances in the first half of the season the fixture may be reversed with the corresponding fixture in the second half of the season. In the second half of the season an attempt to seek an alternative venue should be made and if unsuccessful, a ruling will be made by the League Secretary. Any swapping of the original venues must be done through the League Secretary. If there is no agreement between the clubs to a swapping of venues then the default will be the original venues published.
- 5.8 A club whose home ground is considered by them to be unfit to play on should arrange for an inspection of the pitch preferably on the morning of the game. The inspection should be carried out at least 3 hours ahead of the scheduled kick off time with the travel time of the opposition being taken into consideration. The inspection should be carried out with a Club Officer in attendance and preferably with a local member of the Home side's Referees Society also present. Photographs of the problem areas should be taken so that the League Secretary has evidence to refer to. The League Secretary will then make the decision to postpone or not.
- 5.9 A club whose home ground is at risk of being unplayable in the week ahead of a league fixture should proactively take steps to secure an alternative facility, including investigating the option of playing the match at the ground of their opposition. If this match is in the first half of the season the fixture may be reversed with the corresponding fixture in the second half of the season.

6. Notional wins

At Level 5 and below, if on the first occasion a team is required to replace a front row player with a replacement front row player and it cannot do so, then uncontested scrums will be ordered and the non-offending team will be deemed to have won the match by 4 tries (0-0) i.e., 4 Championship points plus a bonus point. The offending team may, in addition to losing the match, be deducted 5 Championship points.

Exception: In Counties 3 and below league matches teams will be able to start a league match with only three front row players available in the squad. If on the first occasion a team is required to replace a front row player and it cannot do so, then uncontested scrums will be ordered and the game will continue. There will be no further sanction and the result at the end of the game will stand.

- 6.1 When a club at Level 7 or below is unable to select a team from its list of registered players they should first offer to play the game under Game-On principles, or failing that as a friendly, with a minimum of 10 players using unregistered or borrowed players or with uncontested scrums. The offending team must inform the League Secretary and their opponents of their offer to play a friendly at the earliest opportunity and save for exceptional circumstances by no later than 20:00 on the Thursday prior to the match. The non-offending team prepared to play a friendly must respond by 12 noon Friday. This option will be available to a team a maximum of three times during the season.

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The non-offending team should accept the offer to play such a match in which event they will be awarded a 5-point walkover. Should the non-offending team decline to play or fail to honour the fixture once accepted they will not be awarded any league points. Failure to give these options of playing the game under Game-On or as a friendly by the offending club or failing to honour a friendly once accepted will mean that the failure to play will be considered an “unjust” cancellation and will result in the deduction of 5 Championship points from the offending club’s record, the awarding of a 5-point walkover to the non-offending team and, in the event of the fixture being in the first half of the season, will result in the corresponding fixture in the second half of the season having the home venue reversed as per RFU Regulation 6 item 48.

NOTE: For the avoidance of doubt, any match played under Game-On will **NOT** be deemed a Notional Win, and as such the result will stand and any bonus points gained will be awarded as though the match had been played under full regulations. An Electronic Match Card should be submitted for such matches.

- 6.2 In the event that the appointed referee withdraws from the friendly fixture then it will be the responsibility of the offending team to supply a referee who must be in addition to the minimum of 10 players.
- 6.3 An Electronic Match Card cannot be used to record matches played under this arrangement. The details (including number of players per side) must be communicated to the Results Service via phone or text.
- 6.4 At all other Levels clubs are expected to be of a standard that should not require the use of non-registered or borrowed players. A fixture cancellation through lack of players will be considered “unjust” and MRAI 5.4 will be applied. Repeated offences may result in further disciplinary action.
- 6.5 Any club which gives away three of its league games as notional wins to its opposition during the season will receive an immediate warning. Any club which then gives away further notional wins may be sanctioned by the MROC, as per RFU Regulation 6 item 47 with potential disciplinary action taken including but not limited to being relegated by one or more leagues, being expelled from the leagues or the Club’s record being reported to the RFU.
- 6.6 Clubs at level 7 (Counties 1) and below are encouraged to utilise the “Game On” principles to allow matches to take place when teams have insufficient squad numbers or front row players as allowed by RFU Regulation 6 item 53.

7. League free weekend

- 7.1 Due to the revised structured season, there is no longer the opportunity for clubs to apply for “free weekends”.

8. RFU KO Competitions

- 8.1 The RFU KO Competitions are administered by the RFU.

9. Kick-off Times for League Matches and Requirements for Floodlight Use

- 9.1 The default kick-off times for RFU League matches will be 2:15 pm. in November, December, January and February and 3:00 pm. at all other times. The kick off time may be varied by mutual agreement between the clubs, otherwise the default time will apply as provided in RFU Regulation 6 item 41.
- 9.2 Any club wishing to play all home League matches at the same kick off time all season (e.g. 15:00) must submit a request for this to their League Secretary before the start of the season. The League Secretary will consider this request, and if it is granted, the League Secretary and the club will inform all other clubs in the League of this decision.
- 9.3 Any club playing a competitive RFU match under floodlights at any time in the season must be able to provide on request either;

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- A copy of a Lux certificate dated no more than three years old in order to confirm the performance criteria outlined below.
 - Men's Championship to National 2 League (formerly Levels 2 – 4) and Women's Level 2: Minimum Average Maintained Illuminance - 200 lux, Uniformity 0.6
 - Men's Regional 1 and below (formerly Level 5 and below) and Women's Level 3-6: Minimum Average Maintained Illuminance - 100 lux, Uniformity 0.5
- A risk assessment signed off by at least two officials of the club stating that the lighting has been assessed and deemed suitable for competitive matches.

A copy of a template for the risk assessment can be found here;

[Acceptable floodlighting levels and risk assessment template](#)

- 9.4 Any club that plays an RFU league or KO match under floodlights that do not have approval as per MRAI 9.3 may find themselves subject to sanction and that their RFU insurance is invalid for any such matches.

10. Electronic Match Result Cards

Please note that all clubs at all Levels will be using the RFU's Electronic Match Results Card (EMC) system. The completion of these EMCs is a compulsory requirement and failure to do so will lead to a sanction determined by the MROC.

Team line-ups must be in "Confirmed" status at least 15 minutes before the scheduled kick-off time. Any necessary alterations to the team line-ups on the EMC after this time must be done via the League Secretary or other authorised MROC official (changes as per MRAI 3.5 excepted). Clubs are not permitted to make the changes themselves and any changes so made will be considered a sanctionable offence.

- 10.1 The EMC must be submitted to the League Secretary within 24 hours of the game being played or by 5:00 pm on a Sunday afternoon if the game is played on the Saturday afternoon for Level 8 and above. Clubs at Level 9 and below must submit their match cards by 12:00 on the Tuesday following the game. However, if they intend to submit beyond the 5:00pm Sunday deadline they should inform their League Secretary of this before the deadline and note the reason for the delay in the notes section on the EMC. If these timescales are not adhered to the club causing the delay will be liable to sanction as MRAI 15.2.
- 10.2 Clubs wishing to query any "missing" bonus points in the published League Table need to do so to their League Secretary within 14 days of the match. Bonus points awarded incorrectly will be deducted as soon as the error is brought to the League Secretary's attention with the affected club having 14 days in which to request a review of the decision. At the end of the season the notification period will be reduced to 7 days.
- 10.3 A club shall be deducted a minimum of 5 Championship points when an unregistered or an ineligible player appears on the EMC. The sanction will be applied whether it is a single or multiple player default on the same EMC.
- 10.4 A club shall be deducted 20 Championship points on each occasion that deliberate false information has been provided on the EMC. This will be in addition to any points which may be deducted if the players in the squad were ineligible to play. Under this Instruction 5 Championship points will also be deducted for each unregistered/ineligible player a club has on its EMC.
- 10.5 When any ECRUC game finishes earlier than the stipulated full 80 minutes of play timed by the referee then the game is deemed to be abandoned and RFU Regulation 6 items 71 to 77 apply. In this case it is the responsibility of both clubs to report this to the League Secretary by phone or email (preferred) as soon as possible after the abandonment. In addition, the home club should send a written account stating the exact time of abandonment, the match score at the time and the reason for the abandonment to the League Secretary within four hours of the abandonment as per RFU

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Regulation 6 items 76 and 77. In the event of a match being abandoned the home club should not submit the EMC.

- 10.6 When any ECRUC League game contains uncontested scrums then this should be noted on the EMC. Both clubs must contact the League Secretary to inform them of this and the reason as per RFU Regulation 6 items 66.
- 10.7 If a club has teams at different levels playing league matches on the same or consecutive days it is acceptable to select the same players for both matches. However, for player welfare it is expected that no player shall play more than 100 minutes over the two matches. This will be monitored by correct completion of the replacements section on both match cards by the club.
- 10.8 A club with more than one team competing in the ECRUC must always honour its highest fixture. If a higher team unjustifiably defaults (including requesting a match to be played under Game-On or as a friendly) and the lower team(s) play on the same weekend, then the lower team(s) shall be deemed to have lost, a notional 0–0 score shall be recorded and the opposition will be awarded 5 championship points. There will be no further sanction against the club defaulting the higher-level fixture.
- 10.9 Further to 10.7, if a higher team fixture does not take place for reasons beyond their control or the higher team does not have a fixture, then any lower XV(s) should be selected as though the higher XV(s) were playing. The League Secretary of the lower team(s) may review the result and match squads of such matches if it is suspected that lower team(s) have fielded a significant number of players from higher-level teams. If this is the case the League Secretary has the power to record a notional 0-0 win to the opposing team(s) and award them 5 championship points and warn the club fielding the higher-level players. However, there will be no further sanction against the team fielding the higher-level players, unless the League Secretary deems that this is a recurring offence, in which case MRAI 15.1 may be invoked.

Guidelines on player eligibility for RFU competition matches (to be applied after the Transfer Deadline [where applicable, i.e. Counties 2 and above], 7th Feb 2025), note that the League Secretary may request the playing and/or availability record for any player who appears to breach these guidelines.

- Any player (apart from a nominated front row player) who has represented the 1st XV in more than four or 50% of its competitive matches (whichever is greater), or who represented the 1st XV in their previous league match will not be eligible to represent the 2nd XV, unless (a) they are only playing for the higher team to replace an injured higher team player; (b) they are returning from a period of injury, which needs to be more than four (4) playing weekends; or (c) the committee exceptionally agrees otherwise. A similar guideline will apply on player movement between 2nd and 3rd XVs where applicable.
 - Any player (apart from a nominated front row player) who has represented the 1st XV in a competitive match will not be eligible to represent the 3rd XV.
- 10.10 It is expected that the above principles will also apply to support league structures and local merit tables.

11. “Rolling” Substitutions (Replacements) at Levels 5 and below

- 11.1 At Levels 5 to 8 up to a maximum of 3 players may be named as replacements and players will be allowed to “roll on and roll off” to the maximum of 8 interchanges allowed by RFU Regulation 6 item 61.
- 11.2 At Levels 9 and below up to a maximum of 5 players may be named as replacements and players will be allowed to “roll on and roll off” to the maximum of 10 interchanges allowed by RFU Regulation 6 item 61 and locally varied by item 55.

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12. Front Row Replacements

- 12.1 All teams selected must contain at least four players suitably trained and experienced to play in the front row. These must be noted as such on the EMC.
- 12.2 Clubs playing in Counties 3 and below leagues have an alleviation in that they only need to name three front row players in their matchday squad. Clubs playing in other leagues may nominate only three front row players if Game-On principles have been agreed for that match.
- 12.3 Clubs must be able to replace a front row player at the first time of asking. Any club that is unable to do this (other than as exempted by MRAI 12.2) will face sanctions.
- 12.4 If at any time during a match a team is unable to field a suitably trained and experienced front row so that uncontested scrums are needed the team will not be allowed to replace the player that caused this so will play a player down (“player-off” regulation) for as long as uncontested scrums are needed as per RFU Regulation 6 item 61.
- 12.5 Clubs may mutually agree pre-match to apply “Game On” principles to allow matches to take place without contested scrums or associated sanctions as allowed by RFU Regulation 6 item 53.

13. Notification of Results

- 13.1 Club Secretaries are responsible for their Club’s compliance with the rules regarding notification of results to the League Secretary and Results Agency.
- 13.2 Home clubs must notify The Midlands Rugby Results Service (Tel: 0121 663 6631; text: 07908 683303) or update the GMS, with the score (points for and against) before the 5:30 pm deadline on a Saturday. As soon as possible after the game, but before 5.00 pm on the Sunday, clubs must make sure that the post-match details (tries tallies) are completed before finally submitting the match card.
- 13.3 A “Dummy’s Guide” to completing the EMC can be found on the MROC website.
- 13.4 When a match is played at any time other than a Saturday afternoon the result must be reported, or the GMS updated as above, within 30 minutes of the end of the game. If an injury or extra time is likely to delay the result being reported on time, then a telephone call to notify The Results Service before the deadline will help to prepare them for a late result.
- 13.5 Failure by the Home club to notify the results or supply correct, required information within the time limits specified will incur a sanction. Information not reaching the League Secretary within the time scales notified in MRAI 10.1 will be deemed not to have been sent. The EMC will still need to be submitted by the Home club following notification of non-arrival.
- 13.6 Offending clubs will be notified by the MROC Secretary of any sanctions imposed as a result of any of the above.

14. End of season “dead rubbers”

- 14.1 All scheduled league matches must be honoured unless they fall in the cup window due to rearrangement. If appropriate these may be deemed “dead rubbers”.
- 14.2 The League Secretary has the sole responsibility and discretion to decide if any match may be considered a “dead rubber”. Clubs cannot make this decision unilaterally.

15. Sanctions & Fines

- 15.1 The MROC is delegated to sanction any club that does not comply with or adhere to the RFU Regulations and/or the MRAI. Where the Committee finds there has been a breach of RFU Regulations it may impose such sanction as it deems appropriate, in accordance with the Sanctions Guidelines set out in Regulation 6 Appendices 3 and 4, unless a fixed sanction is stipulated.

A list of the sanctions available to the MROC may be found under RFU Regulation 6 items 95 to 98.

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- 15.2 The RFU recommends that clubs are sanctioned for misdemeanours, to include but not be limited to the following:
- Failure by either team to inform the League Secretary in a timely manner of their inability to fulfil a fixture at the agreed time and date.
 - Failure by either team to identify front row and replacement front row player(s) on the match card.
 - Failure by either team to confirm their team line up at least 15 minutes before kick-off or amendment of it after this time (necessary amendments needed after this deadline should be communicated to the League Secretary and/or CB representative who will make the changes on the club's behalf), with the exception of clubs retrospectively registering players as per MRAI 3.5.
 - Failure by the Home team to supply the correct score by 5:30 pm on a Saturday (or within 30 minutes of the end of the game on any other day).
 - Failure by the Home team to enter the number of tries scored by each team, via the post-match tab on the match card.
 - Failure by the Home team to submit the match card by the published deadline).
 - Lack of communication with the administrators of the Leagues (MRAI 5.1).
 - Failure by either team to notify the League Secretary of a game being abandoned for any reason or a game going to uncontested scrums at any time (MRAI 10.5 and 10.6).
 - Failure of the home club to comply with RFU Regulation 12 regarding the appointment and timely confirmation of match officials.
- 15.3 Failure to pay fines within 28 days may result in the fine being increased and may also result in the offending club also having 5 Championship points deducted (RFU Regulation 6 item 96).
- 15.4 A club with any fines outstanding at the end of the season will be reported to the RFU with a recommendation that the club be suspended or expelled from the League for the following season.

16. Reviews

- 16.1 Any club wishing to seek a review of a decision made by a League Secretary must do so to the Chair of the MROC in the first instance, and if still not satisfied with the review decision, appeal to the RFU in the second. Any request for a review to MROC can be made by email or letter from the Club Secretary or Chair and one other Officer of the Club. This can be two separate emails or an email from one officer to another with the latter's confirmation added. If by letter it should be sent as an attachment to an email. All emails should be copied to the CB's representative on MROC. A request for a review by other persons or means will not be considered. The request should state the grounds on which the review is sought. A request for a review should be made within 14 days of the receipt of the decision made or will be deemed to be timed out.
- 16.2 The review request should be accompanied by the review fee, in the form of a BACS transfer for £50. The fee will be refunded if the review changes the original decision. Reviews will be carried out virtually by a quorum of MROC members who do not have a conflict of interest in the request. Clubs may request a personal hearing but may be liable for the expenses incurred in holding that hearing, in addition to the review fee.

17. Recording of Matches

- 17.1 If a match is played on private land, then the home club have the right to refuse to allow the away club to record the match, unless the home club are recording it, in which case the away club will also be allowed to record it. If a match is played on public land, then both clubs have the right to record it within the legal provisions of GDPR. If a club intends to record a match, then they should advise the

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opposition and match officials of their intent before the match and provide a copy of the recording within 96 hours of completion of the match if so requested.

18. Recording of Concussions

18.1 Clubs are required by RFU Regulation 9 item 9 to record any serious injuries which result in an overnight hospital stay. Clubs are also reminded that concussions should be recorded in order to invoke the correct return to play protocol. It is recommended that this is done by use of the section provided on the match card.

19. Appendices

19.1 Cross Reference Between League and RFU Men's Level.

RFU Men's Level	League Name
5	Regional 1
6	Regional 2
7	Counties 1
8	Counties 2
9	Counties 3
10	Counties 4