



RUGBY LEAGUE IRELAND

COMPETITION RULES

For All Members, Clubs & Participants Adopted by the RLI
Board on Saturday 9th February 2024

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Definitions

Domestic Competitions Committee (DCC) – The committee tasked with running all RLI competitions on behalf of the NGB

Match Officials (MOs). Referees, Touch Judges, In goal Judges, Interchange, Reserve Referees, Reserve Touch Judges, Time Keeper and Match Commissioners.

National Governing Body (NGB) – The body in charge with administering the game of Rugby League on the Island of Ireland

Rugby League Ireland (RLI) – The NGB of the game of Rugby League on the Island of Ireland

Introduction

1. This document contains the match day protocols for all teams playing the game of Rugby League, under the jurisdiction of Rugby League Ireland.

Acceptance of Competition Operational Rules

2. All Clubs, teams and players who are registered with RLI shall accept, without equivocation, the operational rules laid down in this document and interpretations, as instructed each season by the NGB, via the DCC.

Competition Rules

Laws

3. All domestic teams playing under the NGB will play according to the International Laws of Rugby League.
4. On occasion the NGB will introduce RLI specific regulations for on-field play. All domestic clubs will be informed of any changes that are introduced.

League Structure

5. The Domestic Competitions Committee (DCC), upon knowing which teams declare an interest of expression to participate, will draw up leagues based on the following factors;
 - a. Standard of team
 - b. Historically entrance of team
 - c. Geographical location of team
 - d. Number of teams
6. The DCC will be afforded the ability to restructure leagues prior to a season commencing and with the understanding that an acceptable amount of notice to league structure and fixtures will be given to participating teams.
7. The DCC will, in the event of short notice additions/withdrawals of teams, attempt to, with haste, provide updated information on any relevant alterations to any fixtures list.

Points format

8. Points allocated for the league table will be as follows;
 - a. Win – 2 points
 - b. Draw – 1 point
 - c. Loss – 0 points

Positional ranking format

9. Each final league structure will be determined in the following manner
 - a. League Points
 - b. Scoring differential (For versus Against)
 - c. Head-to-Head record (if two teams finish exactly equal for League points and scoring differential)
 - d. Total points scored (the "For" column)
 - e. Total tries scored
 - f. Total league wins
 - g. Coin Toss
10. It is hoped that point (g) is never realised but if all prior points are exhausted then it will be the defining factor.
11. All leagues will be gender specific and age related.
 - a. Open age leagues shall be restricted to players who are 17 years old or over at the start of the current year (see point 38).

Knock out fixtures and finals

12. Any semi-final will be at the home ground of the highest placed teams after the league phase. Occasionally RLI may choose to make an event of a semifinal's day and host both games at a single ground. This may or may not be a neutral ground and it is the prerogative of RLI to take the approach they choose.
13. Any regional final will be at the home ground of the highest placed team in the final.
14. RLI will decide the Grand Final venue. It may or may not be a neutral venue to one or both teams involved.
15. In the event of a draw the match shall go into extra time of one continuous ten-minute period, with a coin toss between opposition captains to select end of field to defend.
16. In the event of a draw after extra time drop kicks for goal shall be used to decide the winner. Five drop goals shall be attempted by each team and each must be taken by different kickers, who shall be named prior to the drop-goal shootout being commenced.
17. Only players present on the field of play at the end of extra time shall be eligible to be part of the drop goal shootout. All other players and personal must remain off the pitch during this period.
18. All drop goals for the shoot-out will take place 20m directly in front of the posts
19. In the event of a tie after the five drop goal attempts have been taken, sudden death drop goal attempts will take place with each further player taking turns until one side wins by virtue of having the lead in number of successful drop goals at the end of each ensuing round.
20. Should all eligible players have taken their drop goal attempts and the scores be level the process of sudden death continues with the order of kicking reverted to the first kicker from each side and so on, until a team wins by virtue of more successful kicks at the end of a round.
21. If a team has had a player or players sanctioned and does not have 13 players on the pitch for the drop goal shootout then their opponents will

nominate a player or players to not be part of the drop goal shootout to allow for equity in numbers of participants.

Fixtures not being fulfilled/submission of team sheets for cancelled games

22. Any team failing to play a fixture on the scheduled day without trying to rearrange prior to match day shall be deemed to have conceded and a 50-0 score will be awarded to their opponents. Only in exceptional circumstances shall the playing panel rule otherwise.
23. If there are multiple non-fulfilments during the league stages the DCC shall refer the offending team to the disciplinary panel.
24. In the case of a team not fulfilling a semi-final or final the matter will be dealt with directly by the disciplinary panel.
25. If a cancellation is unavoidable and neither party is at fault, a 25-25 draw will be the result recorded.
26. Any team not at fault for a cancellation may submit their team sheet, up to one hour after the scheduled kick off and that team will be considered to have played.
 - a If said team hasn't submitted a team sheet up to one hour after the scheduled kick off, the 18-man squad which was submitted to DCC on the Thursday prior to the fixture will be considered as the team sheet to be accepted.
 - b If the team not at fault fails to provide either a team sheet or 18-man squad as per points 26 and 26a then the team not at fault may not supply a list of notional players to be considered as selected for the cancelled game.

League competition rules

Teams

Registration

26. All clubs must register their expression of interest to play in the league by the given date each season in order to be eligible to play within the RLI leagues
27. The NGB insists that teams provide an administrative structure to support the stability of their team.
28. The DCC has the right to place teams in the relevant league dependent upon not only their playing structure but also their support structure.
29. Teams must fully complete the Team Registration document found in **Appendix 1**.

Players

Registration

30. No player shall be registered to more than one club each season, unless they complete a transfer from one club to another and the transfer is authorised by the DCC.
31. No player may be transferred to a team in order to play in any finals' series, unless a valid mitigation, such as disbandment of current club, can be provided and only if agreed to by the DCC. The DCC's decision will be final in this matter.

32. Players may be, on match day, loaned between clubs if a club has not sufficient numbers to make up an 18-person squad.
 - a Any loaned player is deemed to have earned an appearance for his home club.
33. No team may deliberately loan players who are recognised as regular first teamers to another team effectively loading a weaker team against a team they are in direct competition with. Any team found to be doing so may be subject to disciplinary sanctions.
34. Any player playing for more than one club will be registered to their primary club and may not play for another team other than their primary club in any semi-final or final.
35. New players may be registered on match day, if not already registered via the team-sheet on the prior Thursday.
36. All players must play in at least two league games to be eligible to play in any semi-final or final
 - a For season-disrupting injuries or where club players are away playing representative fixtures, which may have seen them miss regular season league games, dispensation may be sought, through the DCC, to allow those players to be eligible for finals series.
 - i Supporting documentation may be required as proof of injury or absence.

Eligibility

37. Players under the age of 18 may only compete in the open age leagues only once they have obtained clearance and written permission from a parent or guardian and that written permission is on a form that clearly states that risks include serious injury.
38. No player aged 16 or under will be eligible for playing open age rugby league and there will be no exemption to this rule.
39. Any player currently contracted to a Rugby Football League club as a professional is not eligible to play in this competition.
40. Only three ex-professional players per team are allowed to participate. It should be noted that once two years have elapsed from the date of a players last professional appearance that he will no longer count as an ex-professional in any match played thereafter.
41. Clubs are responsible for ensuring their players register that they are ex-professionals during registration and that the player provides dates of contract to a professional club.

Dual Registration (Women)

42. With the women's game being in its infancy and to assist with the fulfilment of fixtures where teams have disproportionate numbers of players, teams will be allowed to dual register their players to aid in matches being played.
43. All players may register their primary club. Players who are deemed as development players may register for both their primary club and an alternative club.
44. Clubs should not seek to stack the dual registration process with players considered first team regulars, there should not be a drive to "load" teams in a

favourable manner to circumvent fair competition against rival teams. Any team identified as doing so will have their ability to dual register removed.

45. Those dual registered are being done so to allow for teams who may, from time to time, struggle with numbers and to give those who have dual registration the opportunity to play the sport of Rugby League and the NGB will support the growth of the women's game by use of this method.

Misconduct

46. Any team that fails to fulfil its obligations will be deemed to be guilty of bringing the game in to disrepute. The disciplinary panel appointed by the board of RLI will decide what penalty(s) will apply in each case.

Suspensions

47. A player's suspension will commence at the time the disciplinary sanction is issued. As per disciplinary rules a suspension will be continue, pending an appeal.
48. All league and representative games will count towards the serving of the suspension. Postponed, conceded or friendly games will not count towards serving the suspension. Abandoned games shall only count at the discretion of the DCC.
49. A suspended player is not allowed to play in any other game of Rugby League Football until their suspension is complete and any club or region found guilty of violating this rule shall forfeit the game and the offending player may be liable to further suspension. Furthermore, the club who violate the suspension may be liable to disciplinary proceedings. In such cases the DCC will ask determine if the violation warrants the disciplinary process to be instigated.
50. A suspended player is not allowed within the confines of the playing area 90 minutes prior to kick off until 30 minutes after the completion of the game. Should the game be a final or trophy presentation in the case of representative games, the completion will be deemed the presentation of the trophy.
51. A suspended coach is not allowed to coach the team on game day while under suspension. This includes giving team talks in areas not covered below. Suspension of a coach means he cannot enter the changing rooms or the confines of the playing area 90 minutes prior to kick off until 30 minutes after the completion of the game. Should the game be a final or trophy presentation in the case of representative games, the completion will be deemed the presentation of the trophy.
52. A player, player-coach or coach currently under suspension, found to be within the field of play during this time will be guilty of noncompliance of their sanction and will be reported to the disciplinary process.
53. A player-coach will serve their suspension as a coach even if he was suspended for actions as a player.
54. Any team found playing an ineligible player shall, at the discretion of the DCC, be fined a maximum of two competition points and forfeit

the match by standard score of 50-0. If the game is a semi-final or final game then the game will be awarded to the other team. If the game is a semi-final or final said team will start the following season with a 1-point deduction.

Team names

55. All member clubs are actively encouraged to create their own unique brand, though it must be done with forethought. All teams must seek permission to use their brand, via **APPENDIX A**.
56. Teams are encouraged to use alliterations and Americanisation's in their brandings (e.g., the Blanchardstown Blitz). Use of colours (the Blues, the Reds), of Animals (the Bulls, Sharks), of Meteorological instances (Storm, Thunder, Tornadoes) or any other style of name on these lines is actively encouraged.
57. Copyrighted or Trademarked names shall be prohibited at all times. All teams must investigate their selected name to ensure they do not make themselves or RLI liable to any copyright or trademark infringements. The RLI will carry out due diligence when a team submits a name request in **APPENDIX A** and if a name is found to infringe it will be refused usage.
58. Any team which has been refused a name who then proceed to use that name will be in breach of the NGB's directive on Team names and liable to disciplinary proceedings.

Team Uniforms

Registration

59. Prior to any season all teams must register their team uniform colours and provide graphics of the colours. Ideally to avoid any potential kit clashes every team should provide primary and alternative uniform details. Where kit clashes occur the **home** team will change its uniform to remove the clash.
60. Team should look to have primary and alternative kits that are very, very different from each other and should look to approach a "1 kit light coloured, 1 kit dark coloured approach" to ensure they have two very different uniforms.

Illegal uniforms

61. The following uniforms should not be purchased by any team;
 - a. Pink uniforms. The match officials use Pink as a primary colour and this colour should be avoided. **Exceptions will be considered, provided the Match Officials Committee has been consulted and agreement reached. For example, a pink shirt to promote a cancer charity or in tribute/celebration of a player passing/surviving cancer would be considered as a fair reason for a team adorning pink.**
 - b. National team designs. No team should use colours/design that mimic the national team uniform. This kit is sacrosanct to the game and should only be used by representative teams.
 - c. Vulgar/Offensive. No uniforms shall contain patterns that may bring the game into disrepute.

- d. Any team which has been refused a design/colour who then proceed to use that uniform will be in breach of the NGB's directive on Team Uniforms and liable to disciplinary proceedings.

Team Logos

- 62. Logos should be either original or sourced from royalty free sources Teams should investigate if logos or motifs they source have associated copyrights or intellectual property rights. If they are found to have copyright or IPR they should not be used.
- 63. Descriptions should be provided in line with the example submission, in **APPENDIX A**.

RLI Logo on shirt

- 64. All teams shall have the RLI logo on their shirt. Primary position for this logo is right breast. Teams may request, via written submission, to seek an alternate position but this position must remain highly prominent and the NGB may refuse the request to re-site the logo. Any decision made by the NGB is final.

Sponsors

- 65. All clubs are supported by the NGB in seeking sponsors. Clubs must be careful in choosing sponsors that do not bring them or the NGB into disrepute. All sponsors shall be declared, including graphics, when declaring Team Uniform on **APPENDIX A**.
- 66. Any sponsors badge found unbecoming may be refused. The NGB will ensure decision making on this is fair minded and will provide detailed information and an alternative approach if a sponsor logo is going to be a potential issue.

Grounds

- 67. Prior to the commencement of each season each team must declare their home ground and provide the DCC with the location of the ground (including Eircode or Postcode).
 - a Any change to the above must be reported to the DCC and Match Officials secretary to ensure locations are known to all visiting teams and match officials.

Changing facilities

- 68. Each ground must have changing rooms and showering facilities for both teams and also for match officials. The match officials must have changing facilities that are not shared with either team.

Pitch Markings

- 69. Each pitch should be marked for Rugby League as found in the International Laws of the game, where possible. If not possible that each pitch should be marked for Rugby Union.

70. Pitches should not be marked by use of cones in lieu of line markings. It will be within the discretion of the referee to consider whether or not to allow for a fixture to be played if cones are used, in the absence of line markings. Whatever decision the referee makes both teams must abide by this decision.

Safety of pitch and surrounding area

71. Whilst each MO will carry out a pitch safety review prior to any match commencing it is the responsibility of the home team to ensure safety for both teams, the MO, supporting staff and any spectators. For Neutral venues it is the responsibility of the NGB to ensure safety of all attending.
72. In the above cases the Home Team and NGB will be considered the Responsible Party.
73. Should the MO denote something that would be considered unsafe then the responsible party must remediate the issue to the MO's satisfaction before any fixture may commence.

Technical areas

74. Each pitch, where possible, should have a technical area for both teams and a further technical area between both teams, for the Match Official(s). Only those allowed in these areas should be present and they should include only the following;
- a. Team coach
 - b. Assistant coach
 - c. Physio
 - d. Water Carriers x2
 - e. Interchange players x5 (max)
75. None of the above persons, during live play, with the exception of the physio attending an injured player, shall move outside the technical area. Any that do so and are instructed by the MO to return to the area must so without delay. A Match Official is duty bound to report repeated infringements of persons exiting the technical area.
76. Departure from the technical area in the normal manner of play (interchanges, water breaks etc.) is permitted but must not be abused.
77. A Match Official may, if deemed that a person or team are in constant infringement, banish one or all from the technical area to beyond the field of play. This should not be considered as a dismissal sanction but must be reported as a technical breach to the Disciplinary committee.
78. All other persons shall be required to beyond the field of play

Cordoning of pitch

79. All teams shall seek to cordon off the field of play to allow spectators a comfortable area to spectate from, which does not encroach on the field of play. Any person not named in the Technical Areas section may advance beyond the cordon.
80. If infringements of the cordon are made by those beyond the cordon it is the responsibility of the Responsible Party to ensure the breaches are dealt with.

Should the MO note that it is an away team/away team's spectators breaching then the Responsible Party will become the away team for these breaches.

Neutral venues

81. From time-to-time RLI may organise blitz events, tournaments or finals to which have a neutral venue for most, if not all, the teams attending.

"The Home Team"

82. For any event at a Neutral venue there may be a requirement to declare one team the home team and the other team the away team (finals etc). For issue of clarity the NGB will have sole rights on declaring who is the Home Team in such circumstances and will weigh this, where possible, on current or final league position.

Financial Matters

83. All clubs shall ensure that they are not in breach of any payments for ground hires.
84. Any Club or Player who has an outstanding financial sanction (fine) against them, shall pay said fine or be ineligible for participation, unless agreement with the NGB to participate has been sought and accepted.

Broadcasting

85. All teams are encouraged to broadcast their fixtures. Finals fixtures, under the lead of the NGB will be the responsibility of the NGB to deliver broadcasting.
86. Every team should ensure that good behaviour from their team, their coaches and their followers is foremost whilst broadcasting their games. Every club has a duty to uphold the image of themselves and of RLI on domestic, national and international platforms.

Challenge cup entry

87. The winners of the All-Ireland Grand Final are de facto entrants to the Rugby League Challenge Cup competition of the following year. They may choose to forego this award and if they do so then the runners up shall be offered the opportunity to take their place.
88. Any other team wishing to enter the Challenge Cup must request permission from the NGB to seek participation from the RFL.

Pre-Matchday and Matchday Operations

The Team-sheet

89. The 18-man squad list must be submitted by midnight on the preceding Thursday to the fixture by all teams playing that weekend, and sent to the DCC contact, as advised at the start of the season
90. The DCC shall be able to sanction any team that fails to hand in the 18-man squad list on time, without mitigation. The sanctions available are;
- a. A warning
 - b. One league point deduction – suspended

- c. One league point deduction
 - d. Refer to the Disciplinary panel
91. Any points deduction issued will be immediately applied.
92. Any team receiving two sanctions for non-registration of team in a season will be automatically issued a warning for the following season and will be sanctionable to only options 2, 3 and 4 for the ensuing season.
93. Teams are entitled to appeal to the DCC on any sanction. Any issued sanction that is appeal will be held in place until the DCC have met and discussed.
94. All names listed on the team sheet must correspond to the number the player will wear on the day. If there is a change it must be notified to the match official at least 30 minutes prior to kick-off.
95. Each club is responsible for presenting the referee with a team sheet as well as any other documentation the referee may require. It is the responsibility of the referee to send the score and team sheet to the MO Secretary.
96. As per point 26, in the event of a cancelled game, it is each individual club's responsibility to provide the MO secretary with their notional team sheet.

Communications between parties

87. Both the match official and visiting team should contact the home team prior to setting off to confirm the fixture is still on.
96. The kick-off time for all scheduled Saturday games shall be 1.00pm unless agreed by both teams. The DCC and MO secretary must be informed, in a timely manner, preferably 24 hours prior to the game.
97. The home team must provide directions to their ground to their opponents and the MO Secretary at least 48 hours prior to kick-off. This should also include kit colours so as to avoid a clash.
- a In the event of a late change of location the home team must contact both their opponents, MO secretary and DCC (and referee if contact number has been provided) to inform of the switch of venue.

Delays and Cancellations

98. Any team causing kick-off to be delayed by 30 minutes or more without exceptional circumstances and contacting their opponent they will, at the referee's discretion, be deemed to have forfeited the game and a score of 50-0 will be awarded to their opponents. Referee's must report all teams guilty of delaying kick-off.
99. Any team failing to attend an arranged fixture and failing to inform the opposition and match official of their non-attendance will be deemed to have forfeited the fixture and a score of 50-0 will be awarded to their opponents. Furthermore, the offending team will be deducted one league point from their current tally.
100. On the day cancellations must have a valid reason for sanctions not to be applied.

Rescheduling

101. Clubs may reschedule matches, as long as both teams agree to new date and the RLI playing Panel and MO Secretary have been notified no less than 48 hours prior to the originally scheduled fixture.

Person in Charge

102. The home team must provide an on the day point of contact for the Match Officials and the Away team. This person will be known as the Person in Charge.
103. The Person in Charge will be responsible for ensuring smooth running of the match day for all participants. This includes ensuring changing facilities are available, that a post-match reception is available (if provided) and the Person in Charge will hold the authority of the NGB for the event.
104. If the Person in Charge requires to sanction a person or team then they will draw up a report for the disciplinary committee to investigate and take further if warranted.
105. The Person in Charge may prohibit entry or request a person or persons leave if their behaviour warrants.
106. The Person in Charge must not abuse the power entrusted in them.

The Field of Play and match timings

107. The home team must ensure that the playing area is marked, and the playing area must be correctly enclosed or roped off so as to keep spectators from the field of play.
108. The match will be played in accordance to the timings denoted for the age group involved. Open Age will play 80 minutes, split into two halves of 40 minutes (with additional time for drawn knock-out finals games), with a break of 10 minutes for half time.
109. If circumstances prevent full duration of the playing time, then the clubs may agree to a shorter playing time. This must be confirmed with the referee prior to kick-off.

Identification of non-playing staff

110. The manager, coach, physiotherapist and water carrier must be identified to the referee before the game starts. The physiotherapist and the water carrier are the only people allowed on the pitch to attend to players while the match is on. They must wear specific-coloured t-shirts and have the word, "PHYSIO" or the word "WATER"/ "WATER CARRIER" on the T-shirt. The physio should seek to wear an orange t-shirt and the water carriers a blue t-shirt.
111. It is the duty of each club to give maximum publicity of the game to their local media ensuring that subsequent match previews and reports are issued.

Identification of players and interchange players

112. All clubs must ensure that jerseys worn in the competition are numbered.
113. All players on the side line must wear an article of clothing to cover their jersey to distinguish them from players on the field.

114. No team shall field a squad of more than 17 players in anyone game. Unlimited rolling substitutes are permitted for domestic club games.
115. Occasionally and if both teams are in agreement an 18th player may be added to play in the match day squad but this is only if both teams have 18 players and if the referee is in agreement.
116. For all finals games only 17 players will be accepted for the match day squad and there will be no exemption to this regulation.

Less than nine players

117. No team shall commence a game with less than 9 players.
118. Should a team, during a game drop on-field numbers below 9 players and not have any replacements to bolster the number back up to at least 9 players then the referee shall abandon the game and the game will be awarded to the non-offending team as a 50-0 victory.

Kit (uniform) clashes

119. Each team must register its colours with Rugby League Ireland. Where kit clashes occur the home team must change their uniform.

Good Behaviour

120. Each team is responsible for the behaviour of its players, committee and spectators. Notices should be displayed warning everyone regarding the use of foul and abusive language and/or abusive behaviour.

Match officials

Appointments

121. All appointments for all fixtures will be done by the RLI MO Secretary. All correspondence will be through this person.
122. The RLI MO Secretary will strive to appoint a team of three for league games, where possible. All semi-finals and finals games will have a team of three.

Game legislation adaptations

123. When a game has only a referee then no 20/40 or 40/20 kicks will be allowed to be judged. When a team of three MOs officiate a game then it is at the referee's discretion if 20/40 and 40/20 kicks are allowed to be used.
124. Club officials may only be used as touch judges and may only give touch or kicks at goal to assist the referee. The referee may choose not to use club touch judges for kicks at goal.
125. If the referee believes a club touch judge is acting in a partisan/biased manner the referee may choose not to continue the use of club touch judges and may choose to officiate by themselves.

Reporting of scores

126. All match officials must, upon completion of their fixture including abandoned matches, immediately contact the RLI MO Secretary to declare the score of the fixture they have officiated. This may be through voice, text, WhatsApp or email but there must be confirmation from the RLI MO Secretary to confirm the result has been received and if none is forthcoming it is the responsibility of the officiating match official to seek an alternative method of contact to the method they have tried.
- a The score provided by the referee will be the legitimate score of the game.

Capturing accurate scores

127. It is important, given the method for deciding final league positions, that the match official provides accurate details of the game they have officiated. If a score has been given and it is erroneous the MO must at the earliest possible time contact the RLI MO Secretary to correct the error.
128. The MO must also capture the total tries in each game as they too are a method for deciding league position. Where possible it is highly encouraged that the MO captures the number of the try scorers and goal scorers, in order to help with preservation of historical accuracy to all fixtures.

Reporting of disciplinary

129. All dismissals must be reported as per the disciplinary process laid down in **RLI Disciplinary and Complaints Document 2021 Final**

Anti-Doping

130. All clubs are liable for drug testing and must be compliant upon notification of attendance of Anti-Doping officers. Any club found in breach of compliance will be liable for disciplinary proceedings.

Safeguarding




131. All clubs must adhere to the NGB safeguarding policies

List of APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – TEAM REGISTRATION

APPENDIX 1

TEAM REGISTRATION

Team Name	Blanchardstown Bulldogs			
Primary Uniform colours	Red shirt with White Chevron white shorts white socks			
Alternative Uniform colours	Blue and Yellow hooped shirt blue shorts blue socks			
Team Logo	A royalty free bulldog, sourced from https://imgbin.com/download/tTxFrvCR			
Kit sponsors	McDonalds Mr Tyres Moyes removals Oddbins Easons	Front Centre Rear above number Rear below number Right arm Left arm	Badges can be included here	
Primary Contact	Name	Phone number(s)	Email addresses	
Secondary Contact	Name	Phone number(s)	Email addresses	
Home ground address (including Eircode/Postcode)				