



RFU COMMUNITY GAME UPDATE

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Club Chairmen

Club Honorary Secretaries

Club Honorary Treasurers

University & College Club Honorary Secretaries

Referee Society & Federation Honorary Secretaries

Divisional Organising Committees

League Organisers

6th February 2015 - Supplement

For Information

Adult Competition Review – Update

An Implementation Group was set up to develop detailed plans covering all 21 recommendations of the Adult Competition Review. The membership of this group has been drawn from across the game and also includes RFU staff to provide professional support. It reports back to the Community Game Board at each of its meetings, and to RFU Council.

The Implementation Group is working to a strict timescale and following the previous update in November, this note is intended to ensure that you know what progress is being made, what will be happening and when.

Arrangements for putting the new league and cup structures in place, together with the necessary transition arrangements, are well advanced. To confirm, the changes to the league structure will be implemented at the start of season **2016-17**, with all clubs being advised of the final details of the changes before the start of season 2015-16. This means that everyone will have a full season's notice and know the implications of promotion/relegation in all leagues.

More than ever rugby faces competition from other sports and leisure activities. A challenging and viable competition structure across the country is one key part of ensuring the future health of clubs and club rugby and in growing the male 15-a-side game.

The principles of the new competition structure arising from the extensive research and consultation, which took account of the views of club administrators, coaches, referees and, most importantly players, are:

- a varied diet of rugby;
- less travel for players to improve their quality of experience and to aid retention;
- reduced financial burden on clubs;
- time set aside in the season for rest and recovery, and
- a structure that works from the bottom up as well as from the top down.

The new structure is designed to benefit the whole game, providing opportunities not only for ambitious clubs, but also a variety in competition for all and the financial means to support it.

League Rugby – from 2016/17

League structures for Levels 3, 4 and 5 will be as previously announced. Work on structures for Level 6 and below is underway by the four DOCs to reflect regional and local needs.

In the current structure, clubs at Level 5 and below in 14 club leagues have 13 guaranteed home matches. In the new structure there will be a guaranteed minimum of 12 home matches with the potential for more, depending on progress in the cup competitions.

Cup Competitions – from 2016/17

Cup competitions will comprise cup, bowl and shield structures, as set out in the review. They will be based on pools that will provide certainty of fixtures for clubs up to the knockout stage, so they can be built into the club fixture list before the start of the season. These cup matches will provide the opportunity for a number of additional home fixtures.

There will be financial support for clubs taking part in the cup competitions, which will include travel costs and rewards for participation and success. Details of these will be published as soon as possible after the end of this season.

Level 5:

- Pools of 3 with teams from other leagues, so providing different opposition from the league programme.
- The pool cup fixtures will be in the club fixture list before the season starts.
- Pool winners go to Cup knockout stages, 2nd and 3rd to Bowl and Shield.
- Final of Cup at Twickenham.
- Bowl and Shield finals at major grounds, giving them a high profile.

Level 6 and below:

- Format and entry criteria determined by DOC – either the same as L5 to provide certainty of fixtures, or straight knockout.
- Final of Cup at Twickenham.
- Bowl and Shield finals at major grounds, giving them a high profile.

In addition to the financial support outlined above, there will be strong RFU marketing and practical support to help clubs make the most of the opportunities that the new cup competitions will offer.

Second and Lower XVs

One third of the recommendations from the Review were about second and lower XV competitions, where the bulk of rugby is played. Further meetings and consultations with league organisers are now taking place throughout the country to map the way ahead. This is a significant and detailed piece of work, and a separate update will be provided later this season.

Regulations

New Regulations are being drafted and will be communicated in good time for the start of next season.

It is intended that the final detail of the new league and cup competitions, including the financial support for clubs and new regulations where needed, will be put before the RFU Council in April.

We will continue to provide further updates over the coming weeks as the implementation progresses.

