



The WRU National Division Four Cup 2024-2025

COMPETITION RULES

1. **Description:** The Competition shall be called the WRU National Division Four Cup.

2. **Form:** The Competition shall be played on a knock-out basis.

3. **Competition Format**

The Competition will be for the Clubs in Division Four of the National Leagues.

There will be seventeen (17) ties in Round 1 with fifteen (15) byes.

Round 2 will have 32 ties, Round 3 have 16 ties before the Quarter Final, Semi Final and Final.

The first two rounds will be drawn on a geographical basis with an open draw for the subsequent rounds.

4. **Eligibility to Participate:**

- (I) **Clubs**
- (a) All Clubs in Division 4 of the National Leagues are eligible to participate in the Competition provided that a Club has not been excluded from the Competition by the WRU.
 - (b) All Clubs have the responsibility to field a minimum of twelve players at the commencement of any match.
- (II) **Players**
- (a) No player may represent a Club in the Competition unless:
 - i. He is a registered member of that Club, or registered with a Regional Academy and a permit has been granted by the respective Academy.
 - (b) It is mandatory that any player who has suffered concussion shall not participate in any match or training session for a minimum period of 21 days. All players should be reviewed by a medical practitioner and should not return to train or play until symptom free and having successfully completed the WRU graduated return to play programme. It is recommended that declarations of return to fitness to train and play be supported by a written medical practitioner's report. The WRU Concussion Guidance document is available online at wru.wales/medical -Please also follow the UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport - <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/9ced1e1a-5d3b-4871-9209-bff4b2575b46.pdf>
 - (c) Clubs are not limited the number of non-Welsh qualified players they are allowed to register in their respective squads however each team is only permitted to select a maximum of 2 overseas players in each match day team (such players must provide documentary evidence to prove they have a right to

reside in the UK and Clubs must confirm such players do not receive any material benefit from playing Rugby Union)

An overseas player is one who is not qualified to play for Wales at the date of registration and who cannot prove to the satisfaction of the WRU that he is entitled to the rights granted under Title III of the EC Treaty or under the EEA or other European Agreement (i.e., a person who has European workers rights).

- (d) Once a player represents any side in any Cup, they are then cup tied and ineligible to play for any other Club in any other Competition in any round
- (e) No player is eligible to play for a Club in the Competition if he transfers, or is registered, after 11:59pm on 31st January 2025, unless such player is:
 - (i) A player, registered with that Club's Youth team, who has attained the age of 18 and is subsequently registered as a senior player with that Club.
 - (ii) A Player who is subject to a permanent residential relocation from another area where extensive travel (in excess of 100 miles round trip) precludes the player continuing to play for his former Club. **Before such a player may play in the Competition the player's registration must be sanctioned by the WRU's Competitions Management Committee.**
 - (iii) A Player not previously registered with any other rugby Club or had been de-registered from his previous club before 11:59pm on 31st January 2025. **Before such a player may play in the Competition the player's registration must be sanctioned by the WRU's Competitions Management Committee.**
 - (iv) A player who is transferred prior to 11:59pm on 31st January 2025 will be eligible to play for his new Club in the Competition provided that the transfer and registration process is completed properly and confirmation has been received by the Club in accordance with the Player Registration and Transfer Regulations.

PLAYER PERMITS

The **player permit** scheme will operate as follows:

- (i) No permits are to be allowed in the Competition apart from Regional Academy players.
- (ii) In the case of **Regional Academy players** who may play on permit for a Club, the requisite permits may be granted only by the Manager of the Regional Academy, or another nominated representative. For this permit to be valid it must be lodged with the Union's Competitions Manager.

Permits may be obtained as follows:

Division	Clubs from where permits may be obtained
Division Four	Regional Academy (max 4) (OVERALL MAXIMUM OF 4 PERMIT PLAYERS PER MATCH)

	No permits are to be allowed during the Competition apart from Regional Academy players.
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- (i) Team sheets are to be submitted electronically to the match official prior to the start of a match and **must** identify Academy players on permit. The Team sheets must identify the tight head and loose head replacements.
- (ii) It is mandatory that team sheets are submitted electronically prior to kick off.

(k)

REPLACEMENTS

For the rounds prior to the Quarter Final stage, no more than 5 replacements may be named. If a Club does name 5 replacements, there is no requirement for 5 suitable trained front row players within the squad. Should an injury occur to a Front Row player and the team not have a suitable replacement, they will be required to go passive and will not be able to replace the injured player meaning having to continue with 14 players.

In the Quarter Final, Semi Final and Final of the Competition, up to 8 replacements may be named provided that of the 23 named players and replacements, there must be sufficient front row players to play at hooker, tight-head prop and loose-head prop who are suitably trained and experienced to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement is required in each front row position, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

If they are available, a team must have three (3) front row players in the front row at all times in an uncontested scrum, only when there is no available front row replacement or substitute is any other player permitted to play in the front row Law 3.6.e applies

A Club may play without any named replacements. If that Club names 12 players only there is no need to name more than 3 suitably trained and experienced front row players.

If they are available, a team must have three (3) front row players in the front row at all times in an uncontested scrum, only when there is no available front row replacement or substitute is any other player permitted to play in the front row Law 3.6.e applies

If a front row player is issued with a red or yellow card and as a result uncontested scrums are requested, then there is no need to further reduce the playing numbers.

During rounds when squads of up to 23 are allowed, a player whose departure has caused the referee to order uncontested scrums cannot be replaced, even if a team decided to start the game with less than a 23-man squad,

Should a team be unable to field a front row at the start of a match when squads of 20 are required, the match will begin with uncontested scrums. In such a scenario, the offending team will have to start the match with 14 players (it is the decision of the offending club which player they choose to remove, save that each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum). The offending club will be entitled to five replacements for the match.

Should a fixture start with contested scrums but, during the course of the match, a front row forward is unable to continue (the "Injured Forward"):

Where there is a front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be replaced by the front row forward replacement. In such a scenario, the offending team may elect to move to uncontested scrums. However, should the offending team elect to do so, they must remove another player of their choice from their team (i.e., they will continue the match with 14 players). Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.

If a team starts a fixture with contested scrummaging but has to go to uncontested scrummaging they will still be allowed to use the named replacements for the remainder of the match but continue with 14 players.

Where there is no front row forward replacement on the bench, the Injured Forward shall be removed but not replaced. In such a scenario, the match will proceed with uncontested scrums. Each team will be required to have 8 players in each uncontested scrum.

If a team is notified by their opponents prior to a scheduled fixture that scrums will be going uncontested, the team not electing to go uncontested will be recommended to name five front row forwards in order to name a squad of 20 in line with National League Regulations.

The replacement of a front row forward **must** come from suitably trained and experienced players who **started** the match or from the nominated replacements.

If after a front row player has been sent off or during the time a front row player is temporarily suspended, and there are no further front row players available from the nominated team, then uncontested scrums will be ordered and the team electing to go uncontested will be unable to replace the offending player.

NB: In uncontested scrums there must always be 8 players in the scrum and the No8 from either side cannot pick up.

It is not the responsibility of the match official to determine the suitability of trained front row replacements nor their availability, as this is a team responsibility.

Rolling Substitutions

Teams will be permitted to use rolling substitutions with the following provisions in place

In a match where consent has been given prior to the Season and subject to Regulations each team shall be permitted to use rolling substitutions of not more than the maximum number of the Player interchanges ("Player Interchanges") set out in the table below:

Number of Replacements - Player Interchanges

Up to 3	8
4	9
5	10
6 or more	12

- After the Player Interchanges have been made no other replacements, substitutions or Player Interchanges will be permitted for any reason (including temporary or permanent injuries, sending offs and suspensions) and in the event that a Player is injured, sent off or suspended from the field the team will play with one less Player and with uncontested scrums in the event that this involves a front row Player and the game cannot continue safely with contested scrums.
- For the avoidance of doubt, Player Interchanges replace the “blood bin” which means that if a Player has uncontrolled active bleeding and thus has to leave the field, this will not be classified as a Player Interchange if that Player is replaced by another Player. If a team has used all of its Player Interchanges, that Player may be replaced and the team shall continue. The Player is permitted to return once the wound has been treated and the bleeding stopped.
- Not more than three Player Interchanges per team may occur at any one time and may only occur during a stoppage in play and in all cases with the permission of the Referee.
- A Player must enter the field of play on the halfway line.
- A Player who is a replacement shall not be entitled to take a kick at goal until a passage of play has taken place since that Player took to the field of play.
- A Player who is previously injured in the match shall not return to play as a Player Interchange.
- In addition to the powers set out in the Laws of the Game, Referees are entitled in their sole opinion to prohibit or postpone a Player Interchange if they believe either that the Player Interchange would prevent the opposition from restarting the game quickly or where the replacement Player is not fit to continue playing in the match.
- Any player leaving the field of play with suspected concussion is not allowed to return to the field of play.
- Under dispensation provided to Unions by World Rugby, where these rolling substitutions Regulations conflict with the Laws of the Game these Regulations shall take precedence.

5. Entry Condition

All Clubs participating in the Competition shall be subject to and shall comply with these Rules.

If a Club is expelled or withdraw from the National Division Four Cup, the Competitions Management Committee have the discretion to apply criteria to the Club prior to accepting its re-entry into the National Knockout Competitions in future seasons.

6. **Responsibility for Organisation**

- (a) All matches up to Quarter Final matches in the competition - Home club
- (b) Semi Finals and Final of the Competition - WRU
- (c) The Final will take place on the date and at the venue specified by the WRU

7. **Match Officials**

- (a) Referees will be appointed by the WRU for all matches in the Competition.
- (b) Assistant Referees will be appointed by the WRU from the Semi Final stage of the Competition subject to availability of the required officials and on the premise all fixtures are treated equitably.

8. **Duration of Play**

80 minutes each match (40 minutes each half) plus any time permitted for delays. At half time, an interval of not more than 10 minutes is allowed.

The Referee is to be the sole judge of the amount of time played.

9. **Venue**

Except by mutual agreement, which should be provided in writing by both clubs, of the competing Clubs, all ties up to and including the Quarter Final matches will be played on the ground of the Home Club.

The Semi-Finals will be played at the ground(s) selected by the WRU

The Final will be played at the ground selected by the WRU.

10. **Dates for Rounds**

All matches must be played on the scheduled dates except in the case of postponement because of adverse ground or weather conditions and/or requests from the appointed Broadcaster.

Round 1	- October 5 th , 2024
Round 2	- October 26 th , 2024
Round 3 -	- December 7th, 2024
Quarter Final	- January 18 th , 2025
Semi Final	- TBC
Final	- TBC

Should the game not be played due to anything other than adverse ground or weather conditions then the team unable to fulfil the fixture will forfeit the game and their opponents progress to the next round in the Competition

11. **Declaration of Winners**

Winners of the matches in each tie of the Competition will be:-

- (a) The Club which has scored the greatest number of points at the end of the match.
- (b) In the event of an equal number of points being scored by each Club at the end of the match, winners will be declared in the following priority:-
 - (i) The Club which has scored the greater number of tries.

- (ii) The Club which has scored the greater number of converted tries.
 - (iii) If after (i) and (ii) have been applied there is no clear winner, extra time of 20 minutes (ten minutes each way) will be played and the winners declared in accordance with (a) or (b), (i) and (ii).
 - (iv) If the result is still a tie the Club playing away from home will be declared the winner, except in the case of the Semi Finals where a replay will take place, such replay to be played within 14 days. If the result is still a tie then the winners will be decided on the toss of a coin. In the Final, following the application of the above priorities, the result shall be declared a draw and the Cup held by each Club for six months
- (c) **If a Club elects to take uncontested scrums** in a tie the matter will be reported by the appointed Referee to the Competitions Management Committee. The Competitions Management Committee will hold an inquiry into why uncontested scrums had taken place during the match. If after this inquiry the Competitions Management Committee deems it appropriate it may apply any of the sanctions upon the offending club set out in Rule 16.

12. Notification of Winners

The appointed Referee will electronically notify the WRU of the result of each match up to and including the Semi-Finals within 1 hour of the match taking place. The appointed Match Official must submit team lists, which must be completed by Officials of each Club and submitted electronically to the Match Official prior to the kick-off.

13. Postponed or Abandoned Matches

(a) **Postponed Matches:**

Postponed matches must be played the following Saturday taking precedence over any National League fixture. The match will be played either at the original venue or at a venue and time acceptable to both clubs. Should both teams be in agreement to rearrange to another time and date no later than seven days prior to the next round then this will be acceptable

- (b) **Abandoned Matches:** All matches must be played to full time. The Referee is to be the sole judge of the amount of time played. If a match is abandoned before full time and the difference in score be 30 or more points then the result of the tie shall stand and be submitted with the team leading progressing to the next round. This is regardless of whether both teams agree or not.

If the difference in score is 29 points or less it must be replayed the following Saturday at the original venue and time determined by the Home Club unless both Clubs agree the score, at the time of the abandonment, should stand. The WRU has the discretion to make decisions in relation to the result of each respective tie in the interest and integrity of the Competition.

- (c) **Rearranged Matches:** Participating Clubs are entitled to rearrange matches that are either postponed or abandoned. However, if after two attempts both Clubs are unable to rearrange the match, the Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to determine the venue at which the rearranged match will be staged.

14. Protests and Disputes

Save for matters which fall to be determined in accordance with the WRU's Disciplinary Regulations, the WRU's Competitions Management Committee shall be responsible for and have discretion in dealing with any protest or dispute arising out of the Competition or these Rules. Any such protest or dispute must be made by a Club in writing to the WRU's Competitions & Regulatory Manager no later than 48 hours after the day of the match and accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be refunded. No protest or dispute relating to matches played in the Competition will be considered if made more than 48 hours after the match in question has taken place. The WRU's Competitions Management Committee shall have discretion to investigate any breach of these Rules at any time and to take such action as it shall deem appropriate.

- (i) Any Club that wishes to appeal a decision of the Competitions Management Committee made pursuant to these Rules may do so to an appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors of the WRU, which may include the appointment of a legally qualified independent Chair, provided that the Club's appeal is lodged in writing, with the WRU's Competitions Manager within 48 hours of the Competitions Management Committee's decision being notified to it, accompanied by a fee of £100 which may or may not be returned. If the decision is given orally, the period of 48 hours shall run from the date of the oral decision but otherwise shall run from the date of receipt of the decision in writing by the Honorary Secretary of the Club. Please note that there is no obligation of the WRU or Competitions Management Committee to appoint a legally qualified independent Chair.
- (ii) In carrying out their functions pursuant to these Rules, the WRU's Competitions Management Committee and any appeal body appointed by the Board of Directors of the WRU pursuant to Rule 15(i) shall make recommendations to the Community Game Board for further decision and action

A member of the Competitions Management Committee will be entitled to attend any appeal to provide the rationale for the original decision taken. The representative of the Competitions Management Committee will not be a voting member at the appeal.

Clubs will also be notified when an appeal lodged against them has been accepted to be heard.

15. Sanctions

- a. The WRU's Competitions Management Committee may apply any appropriate sanction it deems fit to any Club without limitation, found to be in default, or failing to comply with these Rules.
- b. Where any Club has been found to have included an ineligible player(s), that is a player who is not registered with a Club or a player whose name does not appear on the team sheet submitted by the Club in a match in the Competition, the WRU's Competitions Management Committee shall have the power to penalise the offending Club further by disqualifying the Club from the Competition. Should a Club withdraw its participation prior to the start of the Competition, or fail to complete a match in the Competition, that Club may have £250 forfeited from the Club's core grant in the relevant Season.
- c. Should any Club withdraw from the Competition for two consecutive seasons, they may be withdrawn from the Competition for future seasons, the period of which will be determined by the Competitions Management Committee.
- d. The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to suspend any sanction contained within these National rules should they deem it necessary and appropriate.

16. Accounting Issues

a. Timescales

Invoices for team buses along with proof of purchase are to be produced as follows:-

Final – not later than April 30th, 2025

b. Financial Distributions

Matches up to and including the Quarter Final, receipts are to be kept by the home club.

Knockout Stages Prior to Semi Finals

The WRU will make payment of £3 per mile after a round trip of 60 miles.

There will also be an added allowance of £750 on top of the above mileage contribution for Clubs who are drawn away in consecutive knockout fixtures of 175 miles.

For clarity, if Team A is drawn away in the first knockout stage and the distance is over 175 miles then they would receive £3 per mile after 60 miles as per all matches.

However, if Team A is drawn away in the next round and the distance is again over 175 miles then they would receive £750 plus £3 per mile after 60 miles.

Semi-Finals

The host venue will pay a fee to the Union to host their respective Semi Final which will be determined by the WRU however will keep all income throughout the day.

The WRU will make a payment to participating teams of £3 per mile after a round trip of 60 miles.

There will also be an additional allowance of £200 for teams travelling over a 100-mile round trip.

Final

Gate receipts, after deduction of expenses incurred by the Union in staging the match and where appropriate, travelling expenses of Clubs participating, will be attributed to the Competition's Reserve Fund.

Admission Charges

Admission charges for ties played in the Semi Finals and Final in the Competition shall be determined by the WRU

17. Competitions Management Committee of the WRU

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to adapt any area contained within these regulations to ensure the integrity of the Competition is maintained and the Competition is concluded in a clear, fair and equitable manner.