

WRU Athletic Conference Rules & Regulations 2024-2025

1. Description

The competition will be called the “WRU Athletic Conference”

2. Interpretation

For the purposes of this competition the following terms have the meaning assigned to them:

- The Union means the Welsh Rugby Union Ltd.
- The Competitions Management Committee means the Committee appointed by the Board of Directors in accordance with the provisions contained in the Articles of Association of the Welsh Rugby Union Limited.
- Club means a WRU Club that has a team entered the WRU Conference
- League means the WRU Conference

All other defined terms must be interpreted in accordance with the Memorandum and the Articles of Association of the Welsh Rugby Union Ltd.

3. Form

The format will see two Divisions based on Geography named East and Central with each team playing each other on a home and away basis.

The winners of each respective group will be declared their respective Conference Champions.

4. Eligibility to Participate

a. Clubs

The competition will be open to entry for any 2nd XV or 3rd XV Team of a Member WRU Club.

b. Players

No player may represent a Club in the League unless he is:

- i. Registered with that Club, or
- ii. A permit has been granted for him to play for that Club. No more than 2 players may play on permit for a Club in the League in any one match. There will be no limit on the number of occasions that a player may play on permit for a Club in the League. The process of permit will be as set out in the Union’s regulations on permit players, and
- iii. Named on team sheet on less than 10 occasions for his club’s 1st or 2nd XV in any National League fixture, or
- iv. A full-time student studying outside his club’s Region and wishes to permit to the club he was previously registered with

All players representing a Club in a League fixture must be named in the submitted team sheet.

5. **Entry Conditions**

All teams participating in the League shall conform with:

- a. The rules contained herein.
- b. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Union, the Regulations and Resolutions of the Board of the Union.
- c. The Bye Laws, Resolutions and Regulations relating to the International Rugby Board and.
- d. The Laws of the Game.

6. **Responsibility to Organise**

The Union will be responsible for the organisation and administration of the League. All matches in the League will be under the contract of the Union. The Union will appoint a League Secretary to deal with the affairs of the League on a day-to-day basis.

In the case of dispute, the League Secretary will refer that dispute to the Union's Competitions Management Committee.

That Committee will deal with disputes in accordance with the Union's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Regulations and Resolutions of the Board of the Union.

7. **General Rules**

- a. All fixtures must be played for the League season to be completed.
- b. In the event this does not happen and fixtures remain unfulfilled at the end of the season, clause 11 will be applied.
- c. The fixtures should be played on the dates set by the Union except in the case of ground or weather conditions causing a postponement or the Clubs involved in a fixture agreeing mutually to postpone a match provided that this postponement is agreed no later than 48 hours prior to the due date and with the approval of the Union.

Should the home side have the ability to utilise an artificial surface for a National League fixture then provided it is has a valid certificate issued from World Rugby, the Union expects that fixture to be played on the scheduled date unless a rearrangement is mutually agreed. Should the away side opt to not play, the fixture would be classed as unfulfilled and the respective side would likely face a sanction from the Union's Competitions Management Committee.

Please note the link to check the compliance of each surface within Wales - <https://www.world.rugby/the-game/facilities-equipment/surfaces/compliant-fields>

- d. Matches that are postponed must be rearranged within 28 days and the new date notified to the Union. The Union will set dates for matches not rearranged in this timeframe.

- e. If a match is abandoned before full time for whatever reason the match will be replayed unless the Clubs mutually agree that the result at the time of the abandonment will stand and that agreement is formally endorsed by the Union.

However, should the difference in score be 30 or more points then the result of the fixture shall stand and be submitted including try count and there will be no requirement for a rearrangement. This is regardless of whether both teams agree or not. The WRU has the ability to determine results in the interest of integrity of the Competition.

- f. If a Club fails to play a fixture for reasons other than ground, weather or by mutual agreement it will be required to appear before the Union's Competitions Management Committee. If that Committee finds that the Club has failed to play for no good reason it may be penalised by the deduction of League points. If a Club fails to play a match on two occasions for no good reason there is the possibility the Club forfeiting its place in the League subject to a Competitions Management Committee decision. If a Club leaves the League its record in the season will be expunged.
- g. Clubs in the League may have up to ten replacements for all matches in the League.
- h. All fixtures are to be played on the scheduled fixture date unless both teams mutually agree to rearrange and inform the League Secretary no later than 24 hours before.
- i. The Game On option will be recommended and strongly advised if one team is unable to put out 15-a-side however both teams must be in agreement with the result still standing at the final whistle.

8. Scrummaging & Playing Numbers

- Should a team be unable to field a front row at the start of a match, 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 the maximum number of replacements available.
- 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"):
 - a) 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.
 - b) 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.
 - c) 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.

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

NB: In uncontested scrums there must always be 8 players in the scrum and the No.8 from either side cannot pick up.

CHANGES ARE ALSO IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATION 5.7 OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE RULES

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. 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.

To avoid confusion and to make everyone aware of the rules relating to the number of substitutes that can be used, please see the following examples, relating to World Rugby Law 3 (Number of Players) and these National League Rules.

- (a) If Team A has only fifteen players (or less) available and it has three suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums. Team A will also be entitled to up to five replacements.
- (b) If Team A has fifteen players (or less) and does not have three suitably trained players to play in the front row, then the match will start with uncontested scrums. Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to have five replacements (providing they have 19 available players for selection at the start of the match).
- (c) If Team A has only three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has four suitably trained front row forwards, then the match will start with contested scrums. Both Team A and Team B will be entitled to up to five replacements.
- (d) If Team A has less than three suitably trained front row forwards and Team B has five suitably trained front row forwards, either on the field or as replacements, then Team A will begin with only 14 players but will be entitled to five replacements (providing they have 19 available players for selection at the start of the match) and Team B will also be entitled to the full complement of replacements (providing they have 20 available players for selection at the start of the match.) The match will start with uncontested scrums.

All suitably trained front row players must be highlighted on the official team sheet prior to the match.

If a match goes to uncontested scrums the relevant details are to be forwarded by the Match Official to the Union's Fixture Manager (see Rule 8b below).

In relation to uncontested scrums, the Number 8 from both teams are not allowed to pick up from the base of the scrum

Should neither team be able to fulfil their scrummaging duties then it is strongly recommended to apply the GAME ON method

9. Rolling Substitutions

Teams will be permitted to use rolling substitutions from the Championship and below 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 another Player replaces that 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.

10. Declaration of Winners

The winners of a match in the group phase will be the Club that has scored the greater number of points at the end of the match.

League points will be awarded as follows:

Win - 4 points

Draw - 2 points

A Bonus point will be awarded if a Club scores 4 tries or more in a match.

A Club that loses a match by seven points or fewer will be awarded a Bonus point.

Winners of the matches in each knockout stage in 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

11. League Placings

WRU Conference placings will be decided on the basis of League points gained during the season. Where teams have gained equal numbers of League points, the team with the most wins shall be given preference. If the number of wins is equal, then the Club having recorded the fewest losses shall be given preference. If the number of losses is equal, then the team who have scored the most tries in the

Season shall be given preference. If the number of tries is equal the points 'for' shall be divided by the points 'against' and the team with the highest factor shall be declared to have the better record.

12. Match Officials

Match Officials shall be appointed by the Union's National Referee Manager for all matches.

13. Match Results

The match official will be responsible to submit the score and try count via the electronic app no later than 30 minutes after the final whistle. Team sheets are to be submitted electronically via MyWRU.

14. Protests and Disputes

Protests and disputes arising from fixtures in the League or the operation of the League must be made in writing to the League Secretary. The Competitions Management Committee will be convened to consider such protest or dispute.

15. Penalties and Sanctions

The Competitions Management Committee shall in cases where it finds a Club in default of the rules herein have authority to impose sanctions on the Club. The range of available sanctions shall be:

- i. The deduction of League points, the norm being 4 points
- ii. The imposition of a fine
- iii. The suspension of a Club from the League
- iv. Expunging a Club's League record
- v. Expelling a Club from the League.

16. Finances

The Away Side will receive £3 per mile by way of travel expenses incurred for a round journey in excess of 60 miles using a coach or mini bus.

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.

The Competitions Management Committee has the absolute discretion to suspend any sanction contained within these League rules should they deem it necessary and appropriate.