England Rugby

COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS

COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP REGULATIONS 2023-24

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Definitions

The following definitions apply to these regulations. Any terms not defined in these Regulations shall have the meanings set out in RFU Regulation 1 or in the RFU Rules (as applicable):

Dual Registered Player: As defined in RFU Regulation 1;

Effectively Registered: A Player registered with a Club in accordance with and pursuant to RFU Regulation 14.3;

Eligible Club: For these competitions:
Bill Beaumont Division 1 – a Club at Level 3 (National League 1) or below;
Bill Beaumont Divisions 2 & 3 (where applicable) – a Club at Level 5 (Regional 1) or below;
Gill Burns Division 1 – a Club at Level 2 (Championship 1) or below;
Gill Burns Divisions 2 & 3 (where applicable) – a Club at Level 3 (Championship 2) or below;
Jason Leonard Men's National U20 Competition – a Club at Level 3 (National 1) or below;

England Academy Players or EAP: As defined in RFU Regulation 1;

Residence: Means where the Player is actually residing within the County concerned when the Player first plays for that County, provided that the Player has resided therein continuously for a period of three calendar months immediately preceding the date of playing - the Player shall be held to be actually residing in a County only if the Player's own home or ordinary place of residence, which comprises premises which the player ordinarily and regularly uses as the Player's home and in which the player ordinarily and regularly uses as a sleeping apartment, be within the boundaries of the County concerned, or having no other home or ordinary place of residence of the Player's own, the Player's parents' or guardians' ordinary place of residence is situated within the boundaries of the County concerned, or being a member of the Services the player is stationed in the County, the Player's station counts as residence. For a full-time bona fide student whilst attending a recognised educational establishment Residence means either the Player's permanent home address or the Player's (for the time being) student accommodation address;

Part 1 – Format, Structure and Eligibility

Bill Beaumont Men's County Championship

Format of The Competition

(1) The Bill Beaumont Men's County Championship comprising the number of divisions as set out below and the number of pools as determined by the County Championship Management Group (the '**CCMG**') and based on the entries received:

a. Bill Beaumont Division 1;
b. Bill Beaumont Division 2;
c. Bill Beaumont Division 3,

or such other name or names incorporating the name of a sponsor as the RFU shall determine.

(2) Bill Beaumont Division 1 will be contested between Counties wishing to select Players drawn from National League Clubs and below. Depending on the number of Counties who wish to play in Division 1, a competition format will be developed by the CCMG.

(3) Bill Beaumont Division 2 (if required) will be contested between Counties wishing to select Players drawn from Regional 1 Clubs 1st XV and below. Depending on the number of Counties who wish to

play in Division 2, a competition format will be developed by the CCMG.

(4) Bill Beaumont Division 3 (if required) will be contested between Counties wishing to select Players drawn from Regional 1 Clubs 1st XV and below. Depending on the number of Counties who wish to play in Division 3, a competition format will be developed by the CCMG.

(5) There is no promotion or relegation between the Divisions.

Eligibility

(6) All Players must be a minimum of 18 years of age unless otherwise permitted to play adult rugby in accordance with RFU Regulation 15.6.

(7) For the Bill Beaumont Men's County Championship, a Player must be Effectively Registered for an Eligible Club at the date of the Transfer Deadline. For Division 1, a Player must be Effectively Registered with a Club at National 1 and below. For Divisions 2 and 3 (if applicable) a Player must be Effectively Registered with a Club at Regional 1 and below.

(8) For the Bill Beaumont Men's County Championship the following Players are not eligible to play in the competition:

a. Any Player who during the 2023-24 season is or has been an England Academy Player as defined in RFU Regulation 1;

b. Any Player who during the 2023-24 season has played in or been selected as a replacement in the Premiership Rugby Cup competition on three or more occasions;

c. Any Player who during the 2023-24 season is or has been Effectively Registered for a Club in the Premiership or Championship;

d. Any Player who during the 2023-24 season is or has been selected for:

i. an England national representative match day squad (including England Senior XV, England Next Senior Representative Team (as set out in the World Rugby NSRT list), England Sevens, England U20 XV, England U18 XV such other England national representative squad) except for England Students, England Colleges XV, England Counties U20 and England Counties XV (senior); or

ii. such other comparable squad or group for another Tier 1 or Tier 2 union.

(9) Subject to the other provisions of these regulations and in accordance with RFU Regulation 15, a player may only play in the County Championship Competitions for a County in which:

a. The Player was born; or

b. The Player has completed not less than three months Residence within the County concerned in the preceding 12 months; or

c. The Player has played or been selected in a match-day squad for the County in a previous County Championship Competition or National U20 Championship Competition; or

d. The Player is an Effectively Registered player of a Club within the County on the date of the match.

Gill Burns Women's County Championship

Format of The Competition

(10) The Gill Burns Women's County Championship will comprise the number of divisions as set out below and the number and the number of pools as determined by the CCMG and based on the entries received:

a. Gill Burns Division 1;
b. Gill Burns Division 2;
c. Gill Burns Division 3,

or such other name or names incorporating the name of a sponsor as the RFU shall determine.

(11) Gill Burns Division 1 will be contested between Counties wishing to select Players drawn from Championship 1 and below. Depending on the number of Counties who wish to play in Division 1, a competition format will be developed by the CCMG.

(12) Gill Burns Division 2 (if required) will be contested between Counties wishing to select Players drawn from Championship 2 Clubs 1st XV and below. Depending on the number of Counties who wish to play in Division 2, a competition format will be developed by the CCMG.

(13) Gill Burns Division 3 (if required) will be contested between Counties wishing to select Players drawn from Championship 2 Clubs 1st XV and below. Depending on the number of Counties who wish to play in Division 3, a competition format will be developed by the CCMG.

(14) There is no promotion or relegation between the Divisions.

(15) The CCMG will in its absolute discretion determine the structure of these Divisions and will notify the applicants once agreed. The CCMG may alter the pools and/or the Division in which a County plays if the CCMG believes it to be in the interests of the competition to do so.

Eligibility

(16) All Players must be a minimum of 18 years of age unless otherwise permitted to play adult rugby in accordance with RFU Regulation 15.6

(17) For the Gill Burns Women's County Championship, a Player must be Effectively Registered for an Eligible Club as at the date of the Transfer Deadline or registered to play Rugby Union at a recognised educational establishment.

(18) The following Players are not eligible to play in the Gill Burns Women's County Championship competition:

a. Any Player who has been part of an international senior squad in the past two seasons, for a Union who qualified for the 2021 women's Rugby World Cup;

b. Any Player who has been part of an international sevens match day squad in the last two Sevens World Series;

c. Any Player whose only club registration is with an Allianz Premiership Women's Rugby squad;

d. Any Dual Registered Player who has appeared on an Electronic Match Card for an Allianz Premiership Women's Rugby **League** match.

(19) For teams participating in the Gill Burns Women's County Championship (Division 1) only, a maximum of two Dual Registered players can be selected in a match day squad who have appeared on an Electronic Match Card for an Allianz Premiership Women's Rugby **Cup** match in the current season.

(20) Subject to the other provisions of these regulations and in accordance with RFU Regulation 15, a Player may only play in the Gill Burns Women's County Championship competition for a County in which:

a. The player was born; or

b. The player has completed not less than three months Residence within the County concerned in the preceding 12 months; or

c. The player has played or been selected in a match-day squad for the County in a previous County Competition; or

d. The Player is Effectively Registered at a Club within the County on the date of the match; or

e. The Player has been selected in a County U18s girls match-day squad and who was qualified to play for that County under the regulations then in effect. Any such Player shall remain eligible to play for that County until such time as the Player qualifies for and plays for another County in any of the County Championship Competitions.

Jason Leonard Men's National U20s Competition

Format of The Competition

(21) The competition will be called the Jason Leonard Men's National U20s Competition or such other name or names incorporating the name of a sponsor as the RFU shall determine.

(22) The Jason Leonard Men's National U20's Competition will consist of one competition for Counties involving Players from Regional 1 and below.

(23) The Jason Leonard Men's National U20s Competition will be contested on the basis of four Divisional competitions (North, Midlands, London & South-East, South-West) and pools which will be determined by the CCMG depending upon the number of entries.

(24) Where a Divisional competition is formed of two geographic pools each team will play the other teams in its pool once only either at home or away.

(25) Where a Divisional competition is split into two geographic pools, the winners from each pool will contest the Divisional final (the national quarter-final) at a venue determined by the CCMG in collaboration with each team to produce a Divisional winner.

(26) Where a Divisional competition is run as one pool, each team will play the other teams in its pool once only, either at home or away, to produce a Divisional winner.

(27) The Divisional winners or the four quarter-final winners will contest the semi-finals. The semi-final draw will be organised by the CCMG and played at an appropriate venue determined by the CCMG.

(28) The winners of the semi-finals will contest the final.

Eligibility

(29) To play in the Jason Leonard Men's National U20s Competition;

a. The Player must be under 20 years of age at midnight on 31st of August 2023;

b. The player must be a minimum of 18 years of age unless otherwise permitted to play adult rugby in accordance with RFU Regulation 15.6.

(30) The following are not eligible to play in the competition;

a. Any Player who during the 2023-24 season is or has been selected in a match day squad in a league above Regional 1, as specified on the relevant Electronic Match Card;

b. Any England Academy Player (EAP) who is or has been involved since reaching their 18th birthday.

c. Any Player who has participated in the Premier Tier of the BUCS competitions (BUCS Super Rugby, Premier North 1, Premier South 1, Premier North 2 or Premier South 2) in the current season.

(31) Subject to the other provisions of these regulations and in accordance with RFU Regulation 15, a player may only play in the County Championship Competitions for a County in which:

a. The Player has completed not less than six months Residence within the County concerned in the preceding 12 months; or

b. The Player (including Student Players) must be Effectively Registered for an Eligible Club at National 1 or below within the County and have been selected in a match day squad for a team at Regional 1 and below within such club (as recorded on the Electronic Match Card) on at least 3 occasions in the current season prior to the date of the match; or

c. The Player is attending full-time a School or a Further or Higher education establishment within the boundaries of the County i.e. actually be attending full time at the start of the Competition. This does not preclude Players if an educational vacation coincides with the dates of the Competition.

Part 2 – General Rules (Applicable to All Competitions)

General Rules

(32) The competitions will be organised by the CCMG with oversight of the Adult Competition Management Subcommittee. The CCMG shall have the power to delegate any or all of its powers, duties or obligations under these regulations to such person or persons it may decide.

(33) The CCMG will determine the format of the competitions including the eligibility criteria, composition or changes to the composition of all the pools, the fixture schedule, the draws and venues for all the finals as it sees fit.

(34) Each season a Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) will be established by the RFU to deal with any breaches of these competition regulations or to review any matters referred to it under Regulation 15 of the competition.

(35) The Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) shall have discretion to decide on matters (including those not provided for in these regulations) relating to the competitions. Any person affected by the decision of the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) on matters not provided for in the regulations shall have a right of appeal against such decision in accordance with Regulation 15 below.

(36) If a player is eligible for more than one County in a season, the player may select which County to represent but once opted for a County for a particular season and selected in a matchday squad in the competition for that County the player cannot change to play for another County in the same season.

(37) No player may receive any Material Benefit from any source for participating in the Competitions.

(38) A County may not play or select as a replacement or substitute more than three non-England Qualifies Players (EQP's) in any Competition match.

Sanction: If a Player is ruled ineligible after they have been selected in a pool stage match-day squad the County will be deducted two competition points in addition to any other competition points earned during the match. In other matches the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) will determine what sanction will apply.

Scoring System and Pool Positions

(39) The position of a County in each Divisional pool shall be established by awarding four competition points for a win and two competition points for a draw. In addition, one bonus competition point will be awarded to a team:

a) On each occasion it scores four or more tries in a match; and

b) On each occasion it loses a match by 7 points or fewer

(40) Pool positions will be determined as follows:

a) The winner of the pool will be the County with the most competition points after all matches in the pool have been played.

b) In the case of equal competition points, positions in the pool shall be determined firstly by the number of wins and then draws achieved in the Competition and then on the basis of match points differential in the Competition.

i. A County with a larger number of wins shall be placed higher than a County with the same number of competition points but fewer wins.

ii. In the case of an equal number of wins, a County with a larger number of draws shall be placed ahead of a County with a lesser number of draws.

c) If Counties have equal competition points and equal numbers of wins and draws, then a County with a larger difference between match points ‘for’ and match points ‘against’ will be placed higher in the Pool than a County with a smaller difference between match points ‘for’ and match points ‘against’.

d) Should two Counties have the same number of competition points, the same number of wins and draws and the same match points difference, the County having scored more

match points 'for' will be placed higher in the pool than the County having the lesser number of match points 'for'.

e) If this still does not establish the positions, then the positions of the Counties involved will be determined by the toss of a coin.

(41) If a pool contains two Counties and the match ends in a draw, Regulation 6.5 below will apply.

(42) All matches shall be played in accordance with World Rugby Laws and Regulations (including any such law trials or variations to which the RFU may agree) and RFU Rules and Regulations insofar as they are applicable, save where such RFU Regulations are in conflict with these County Championship Competitions Regulations, in which event these County Championship Competitions Regulations will prevail.

(43) In the event of a draw in the quarter-final or semi-final stages there will be no extra time and the winner will be decided based on the team scoring the most tries, or if that fails to produce a winner the team scoring the most conversions. If this fails to produce a winner, or in the event of a draw in the final, then the winner of the match will be determined by a Place-Kicking Competition, the procedure and conduct for which is set out in Appendix 1.

Replacement, Substitutions and Front Row Requirements

(44) The number of replacements and substitutes shall not be more than seven with five players in the match squad being able to play front row to ensure that:

a) On the first occasion that a replacement hooker is required the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums; and

b) On the first occasion that a replacement prop is required the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

(45) Rolling substitutions are permitted in the Competitions and the specific regulations for replacements and substitutions in relation to Cup competitions are set out in RFU Regulation 6, from 6.60 onwards, including the relevant provisions around rolling substitutions, uncontested scrums and front row.

Kit

(46) Counties need to know their opponent's colours before traveling. If the teams have matching or very similar colours, the visiting team must change their colours, but it must be approved by the referee or their representative.

Match Management

(47) For the Bill Beaumont Men's County Championship matches will be played on the Saturday of the allocated weekend, or where both teams and the CCMG agree, on the Sunday of the allocated weekend, or on another date prior to the weekend of the following scheduled match. If no agreement is reached, the match will be played on the Saturday of the allocated weekend unless the CCMG determine otherwise.

(48) For the Gill Burns Women's County Championship and Jason Leonard Men's National U20s Competition matches will be played on any day of the allocated weekend, or another date prior to the weekend of the following scheduled. If no agreement is reached, the match will be played on the Sunday of the allocated weekend unless the CCMG determine otherwise.

(49) CB Chairs, Secretaries, or Team Managers must sign the Match Result Sheet. By signing, they

confirm that all their players are eligible and that they understand that if an ineligible player is included in the squad, even if they don't play but are on the bench, the County may be subject to sanctions imposed by the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) at its discretion.

(50) In every match, both teams must fill out and sign the RFU's Match Results Sheet. The home team should send this form to the RFU or follow its instructions within 90 minutes of the game ending. If the RFU instructs them to do so, the home team should also promptly call the designated person with the result after the match ends.

Venues

(51) In the pool stage, the County with the home advantage chooses the match venue, but they should consider the opposing team's travel needs. If there's a disagreement over the venue, it goes to the CCMG for a decision. For the quarter-final, semi-final, and final matches, the CCMG decides the date, kick-off time, and venue.

(52) The home County must ensure its pitch is well-marked, and except for a few specific individuals, everyone, including spectators, substitutes, coaches, and officials, should stay behind a permanent or semi-permanent barrier a reasonable distance from the field. They should also designate two areas, one for each team, not larger than ten square meters, between the touchline and any fencing or barrier for medical staff and water carriers who are not performing their duties during the match.

(53) Participating Counties in a match must ensure that team replacements and coaches are behind any perimeter or pitch-side fencing or other barriers during all periods of playing the match.

(54) A decision about whether the ground is suitable for a match should be made as early as possible, taking into account the visiting County's travel and commitments. If a County wants to cancel a match due to ground conditions the day before it's scheduled, they should contact the Referees Department at Twickenham for a pitch inspection. If a last-minute decision is needed (within three hours of kick-off), the respective team captains will decide, but if they can't agree, the game will be postponed as per RFU Regulation 6.21.

Un-played/Abandoned Matches

(55) If conditions prevent any match (except any of the finals) being played or a match is abandoned because of such conditions before full time the referee will indicate on the Match Result Sheet the score at the time and reason for abandonment and the number of minutes played. The Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) shall determine whether the match is to be played or replayed or such other sanction (including whether any score shall stand) and its decision will be final and binding. Each County must submit in writing to the RFU Competitions Manager (Development) within forty-eight hours of the end of the match, any representations they wish the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) to consider in making its decision. The RFU Head of Discipline may at any time refer any breach or suspected breach to the Disputes Committee.

(56) If conditions prevent the Finals of the Competitions being played the CCMG will determine whether or not the same will be played and if so upon what date and at which venue and such decision will be final and binding.

(57) The referee's decision as to the necessity for abandonment and the number of minutes played at the moment of abandonment will be final.

Finance

(58) The CCMG will notify the relevant Counties of its decision regarding funding and distribute monies

in its absolute discretion as it considers appropriate.

(59) Payments to Counties will be made before the competition begins. The amounts and process for making the payments will be communicated to Counties by the CCMG as soon as practicable.

Jurisdiction and Breaches of Regulations

(60) These regulations are supplemental to the RFU Regulations which, for the avoidance of doubt, will have full force and effect save that in the event of conflict between these regulations and the RFU Regulations, the RFU Regulations (to the extent that they affect the Clubs) are deemed varied by these regulations.

(61) In respect of any matters alleged to be in breach of these regulations and/or RFU Regulations, such matters shall be referred immediately to the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) c/o the RFU Player Experience Department in writing or by telephone, if necessary, within twenty-four hours following the conclusion of a match. In any event, written confirmation must be sent to the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) within forty-eight hours of the conclusion of the match setting out the grounds of the complaint/breach in full.

(62) The RFU Head of Discipline will have the ability to refer any alleged breach of these regulations and/or RFU Regulations to the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) c/o the RFU Player Experience Department at any time after the conclusion of a match.

(63) Subject to a right of appeal in accordance with Regulation 15.5 below the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) will have the power to discipline and sanction in its absolute discretion any party for breach of any of these regulations and/or any RFU Regulations, which may include imposing a financial sanction of £1,500 and, in a pool match, a five competition points deduction for any failure to play a match. Ignorance of these regulations will not be deemed an excuse in the event of breach.

(64) Should that party wish to appeal a decision of the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) that party will have a right of appeal in accordance with RFU Regulation 19.

Discipline

(65) Should that party wish to appeal a decision of the Disputes Committee (Community Competitions) that party will have a right of appeal in accordance with RFU Regulation 19.

APPENDIX 1

Place-kicking Competition

1. All players and match officials will remain on the playing area. The Referee will call the captains of the two teams to the centre circle and will conduct two coin tosses. The first toss of the coin will decide which team selects the end at which all place-kicks must be taken; the second toss of the coin will decide which team selects whether it wishes to kick first or second. For the avoidance of doubt, it may be that the same team wins both tosses in which case it may select the end at which all place kicks must be taken and whether it wishes to kick first or second in sequence.

2. Each team must nominate three players to take part in the competition. Only players on the playing area at the final whistle may be nominated. No substituted players or players who have been shown a red card may take part at any time. For clarification purposes, any player who has received a yellow card and who remains in the sin bin at the time of the final whistle may not take part in the place kick competition. The order in which the nominated players will kick does not have to be predetermined.

3. The match officials and the six nominated players (three from each team) will assemble on the halfway line. Team management and players not nominated must remain behind the halfway line in the side of the playing area not used. No one other than the match officials and the participating players is allowed in the part of the playing area being used for the competition (including around the playing area, behind the posts, etc).

4. The Referee starts the competition by calling the first player selected from the team kicking first to the first kicking point. Once the player has taken the kick, the Referee calls a player from the opposing team to kick from exactly the same spot.

5. Each kicker will take 2 kicks in the following order:-

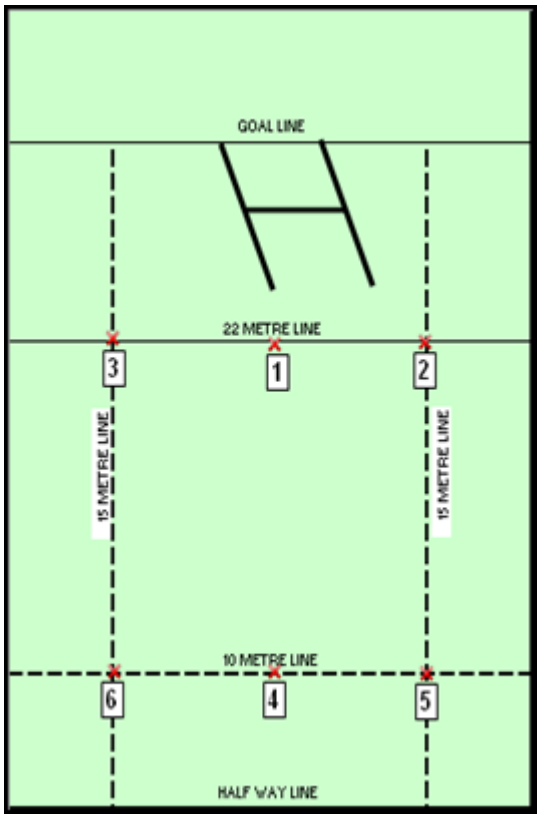
    - Kicker 1 from team A and Kicker 1 from team B will each take a kick from position 1.
    - Kicker 2 from team A and Kicker 2 from team B will each take a kick from position 2.
    - Kicker 3 from team A and Kicker 3 from team B will each take a kick from position 3.
    - Kicker 1 from team A and Kicker 1 from team B will each take a kick from position 4.
    - Kicker 2 from team A and Kicker 2 from team B will each take a kick from position 5.
    - Kicker 3 from team A and Kicker 3 from team B will each take a kick from position 6.

6. If the teams are level at the end of the 6 kick competition there will be a 'sudden death competition'. All kicks will take place from position 4 and kicks will be taken in the following order:-

    - First to kick will be Kicker 1 from each team.
    - Second to kick will be Kicker 2 from each team.
    - Third to kick will be Kicker 3 from each team.
    - Kicks will continue in this order until a point is reached where each team has taken the same number of sudden death kicks but one team has scored one more than the other team. When this point is reached the team that has scored more successful kicks will be declared the winner.

7. For the avoidance of doubt the Referee is the sole judge of whether a kick has been successful. In reaching this decision the Referee may rely on assistance from his Assistant Referees. The Referee's decision shall be final and binding.

8. Throughout the place kick competition:

(a) Once a player has positioned the ball on the kicking tee, he must take the kick within one minute. Should he take longer, the Referee shall declare the kick void.

(b) After each kick, the referee records the number of the player and whether or not the attempt was successful.