

GUIDANCE NOTES ON THE RULES 2009-2010

These notes are intended to offer practical guidance on what needs to be done, but cannot replace the Rules themselves, particularly as they do not address some topics (eg transfers, abandoned games, re-arranged games) at all. Clubs must still be prepared to study the Rules, and to appreciate them in context. Ignorance of the Rules is no defence, and will neither justify failure to comply, nor relieve liability to penalties for breach.

1. Before the start of the league season, each club must check their details in the handbook, and notify the Divisional Secretary, Umpires Appointment Secretary and appropriate officers in other Clubs of any errors.

2. Before any game the home Club must:-
 - a) Confirm with the opposition not earlier than 14 days, but not later than 8 days, before the fixture by speaking on the phone. Text messages and emails may not be printed up and are therefore sent at the risk of the club concerned. If other clubs do not confirm your away fixtures, this should be reported to the Divisional Secretary, but it is not an excuse for failing to confirm details of your home games.
 - b) Confirm with both Umpires not earlier than 8 days, but not later than 6 days, before the fixture by speaking on the phone. Text messages and emails may not be printed up and are therefore sent at the risk of the club concerned.
 - c) Immediately notify both the opposition and the Umpires of any changes to the original arrangements by speaking on the phone. Text messages and emails may not be printed up and are therefore sent at the risk of the club concerned.
 - d) For 1st XI league matches (only) advise the Divisional Secretary in writing no later than the Tuesday before the game if the result is not going to be capable of being reported on time due to a late start ie 3.30pm or later
 - e) Ensure that the pitch and other facilities are satisfactory. This obligation applies even where the facilities may be outside the immediate control of the Club, whether because they are shared with another Club, rented from the local Council, or for any other reason.

3. At every game, both the home and away Clubs must:-
 - a) Complete their own team sheet (either as the home or away Club) before the start of the game. Both sides must then hand in their completed sheet to the Umpires before the game starts. The home Club will ultimately be responsible for returning both sheets to the Divisional Secretary after the game. Any alteration or amendment to the Team sheet after it has been handed in must be counter-signed by the opposing captain.
 - b) Complete the team sheets properly. In particular, the sheet must show the first and last name of every member of the squad in full. Reference to players by surnames only, surnames and initials or nicknames is not acceptable. By placing a name on the sheet, the Club confirms that the individual concerned is correctly identified, and that he is eligible to play for that team. Any Club fielding a player under a false name, or who is not eligible to play (whether because of suspension, failure to comply with the transfer rules, or for any other reason) must expect to be penalised very heavily indeed (usually by a deduction of points).

- c) Sign the sheet at the end of the game. This confirms your agreement with the facts recorded by the Umpires eg the score, details of cards issued etc
4. After every home game the home Club must
- a) In 1st XI League telephone Russells Newsagency (01162332200) immediately. This must be done no later than 4.30pm for Midlands Premier and Division I Clubs, and no later than 5.00pm for all the other Divisions (Note this obligation does not apply in 2nd XI League & below).
- b) In all leagues send the signed match/team sheets to their Divisional Secretary. This should be done as soon as possible, and on Monday at the very latest. Any envelope postmarked later than midnight Monday will incur a penalty. Clubs are now also required to take photocopies of both sheets so that a duplicate record will be available if, for some reason, the originals do not reach their Divisional Secretary.
5. During the season, every Club must notify their Divisional Secretary of any changes of Club officials or new addresses, 'phone numbers etc
6. Corporate/individual responsibility – Responsibility for complying with the Rules lies with the Club. This means it cannot be a defence for anyone to say “X should have done this, or Y should have done that.” Equally, if someone in a position of responsibility cannot do their job for any reason, it is for the Club to make sure that any replacement knows the Rules and complies with them.
7. Communication generally
- a) Any Club which cannot understand the Rules, or is not sure what to do in any given situation should seek clarification from the Divisional Secretary. This means that no Club should ever – under any circumstances – fail to tell their Divisional Secretary immediately if a game has not taken place or if there have been any problems. (If the Divisional Secretary is not available, then speak to one of his colleagues.)
- b) Clubs which leave messages on an answerphone, send text messages and/or emails but fail to speak directly by 'phone to the people concerned do so at their own risk do so at their own risk, as it cannot be guaranteed that they will be received in time.
8. Discipline – The primary responsibility for maintaining discipline (whether in respect of players, officials or supporters) rests with the Club. Clubs with disciplinary records significantly worse than others in the same Division are at risk of having sanctions imposed (including the loss of league points). In some cases, it is just two or three players who acquire a disproportionately high number of yellow and red cards. Clubs which continue to select such players must be prepared to accept the consequences.
9. Miscellaneous
- a) From time to time, the Committee needs to consider whether a Club has put out something other than its "normal" side in a match (particularly in 2nd, 3rd or Central League), particularly where it is suggested that a promotion/ relegation issue has been affected. It is fully recognised that teams can change over the course of a season with new players coming in, and that cover will be required for players who are unavailable, whether due to injury, suspension, holidays etc. At the same time,

Clubs must appreciate that they have a responsibility to the League to play their strongest side, and that turning out with (say) 8 or 9 players, or fielding a weak team, could be regarded as failing to honour a fixture.

b) Players must be brought up from their lower teams (but not down from the higher teams) to make up numbers. This means that a club should never cancel (say) a 3rd XI fixture and still play its 6th XI fixture. If necessary, lower fixture(s) should be cancelled if this is the only way to ensure that the higher level fixture(s) are played on the scheduled dates

c) Although it is discouraged by the league committee, it may be necessary on some occasions for a player to “double up” and play for more than one team in a club on the same day. This can however only be done with the consent of a Divisional Secretary and permission is still required even if the player concerned may be playing out of his normal position e.g. a proposal to play a goalkeeper as an outfield player.

d) The rules have now been revised to give the League Committee explicit power to impose penalties not only against clubs, but also against individual players. Penalties can either be implemented with immediate effect or carried over to the next season.

e) Clubs are expected to have read the Rules. If in doubt, ask your Divisional Secretary for a ruling at the earliest opportunity!