



REGULATIONS OF THE ALL- IRELAND LEAGUE AND BATEMAN CUP 2026/27

9.1 General:

- 9.1.1 Regulation 9 ("this regulation") inter alia governs the All-Ireland League and Bateman Cup for Season 2026/27
- 9.1.2 Each participating Club has indicated, by written acceptance, its wish to compete in the All-Ireland League and Bateman Cup and, thereby, to adhere to and be bound by this and any other regulations which govern the competitions (including for the avoidance of doubt the All-Ireland League Participation Criteria and the Player Points System, attached hereto as appendix 1).
- 9.1.3 The IRFU, through the Rugby Committee, reserve the right to amend or make changes to the season structure, format or regulations of any competition under their control, should it deem it necessary and appropriate, as a result of unforeseen circumstances, or, if in its absolute discretion, subject to approval of the IRFU Committee, it deems it is in the best interests of the game, the relevant competition, or the Union to do so.

9.2 Governing Provisions, Interpretation and Definitions:

- 9.2.1 The competition shall be called the All-Ireland League and Bateman Cup, hereafter for the purposes of this regulation referred to as "the League and Cup".
- 9.2.2 Defined terms in this regulation shall have the same meanings as in the laws and regulations of the Union except where the context otherwise requires.

9.3 Administration and Management of the League and Cup

- 9.3.1 The Union shall appoint a League Sub Committee ("The National Competitions Committee" herein after referred to as the NCC), comprising a Chairperson a representative from each of the four Branches of the Union, a representative of the Women's Sub Committee. The Rugby Competition Manager shall act as administrator of the Committee only (appointed by the Union) and is a nonvoting member.
- 9.3.2 The NCC may co-opt a person(s) to assist in the management and administration of the League and Cup.
- 9.3.3 The NCC shall administer and manage the League and Cup.

9.4 Powers of the NCC

- 9.4.1 The NCC shall:
 - (i) Have power to make decisions regarding the administration and management of the League and Cup;
 - (ii) Have power to hear complaints as provided for in this regulation and to impose such sanctions as may be permitted by this regulation;
 - (iii) Be entitled, at its discretion, to delegate to the Rugby Competition Manager (or in his absence such other person as may be nominated by the Union) or such one or more members of the NCC as it may determine, such of its functions as it may decide. Any decision of such person or persons so delegated shall be as valid and effective as if made by the NCC.

- 9.4.2 Where the functions of the NCC are delegated to the Rugby Competition Manager he may at his absolute discretion:
- (i) Make decisions himself; or
 - (ii) Refer the matter to the Chairperson of the NCC to make the decision; or
 - (iii) Refer the matter to the NCC (of which he is a member) to make the decision.
- 9.4.3 Decisions of the NCC shall be communicated to such Club(s) as may be directly affected as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 9.4.4 The Union or the NCC shall have no liability to any Club or person arising from any negligence or failure by the Union or the NCC to ensure compliance with this regulation or in relation to any other failure in the administration or management of the League and Cup.

9.5 Complaints

- 9.5.1 A Club may make a complaint in relation to an alleged breach of this regulation by any Club or in relation to any matter arising out of the administration or management of the League and Cup, which complaint shall be in writing and shall be received by the Union not later than fourteen days from midnight on the date of the event giving rise to the complaint.
- 9.5.2 The Rugby Competition Manager may make a complaint in relation to an alleged breach of this regulation by any Club or in relation to any matter arising out of the administration or management of the League and Cup, which complaint shall be in writing and shall be received by the Union not later than fourteen days from midnight on the date of the event giving rise to the complaint.
- 9.5.3 A Club may only make a complaint in relation to a matter that affects it directly and which causes it to suffer a disadvantage in the League and Cup.
- 9.5.4 Time shall be regarded as being of the essence in relation to the enforcement of the time limit under regulation 9.5.1.
- 9.5.5 For the avoidance of doubt, the fourteen day time period runs from the date of the actual event and not from the date of the Club becoming aware of the event giving rise to the complaint.
- 9.5.6 All complaints shall be in writing and signed by the Rugby Competition Manager or the Secretary of the Club, as applicable, and state the grounds of the complaint.
- 9.5.7 All complaints by Clubs in relation to this regulation shall be accompanied by a payment of €500.
- 9.5.8 The onus of proof shall be on the Club or Rugby Competition Manager making the complaint to establish the breach or infringement of this regulation. The standard of proof shall be on the balance of probability.
- 9.5.9 The Union shall cause a copy of any valid complaint to be sent to any Club, or person directly affected as soon as is practicable after it has received the complaint.

9.6 Adjudication of Complaints

- 9.6.1 The Chairperson of the NCC shall be entitled to determine any pre-adjudication procedural or evidential issues or disputes, including whether or not to hold a hearing, without recourse to the other members of the NCC.
- 9.6.2 The Chairperson of the NCC shall:
- (i) Adjudicate on the matter himself as Chairperson or,
 - (ii) Have the matter adjudicated on by the NCC (on which he shall act as Chairperson and have a casting vote).

9.6.3 Where a hearing is being held, the persons referred to in Regulation 9.6.2 shall be referred to as the “Hearing Committee” for the purposes of this Regulation 9.6 and shall adjudicate upon the complaint in accordance with the following procedures:

- (i) The Chairperson shall arrange for a hearing of such complaint with all convenient speed at such time and place as he may determine provided that any Club or person directly affected shall be given reasonable notice either in writing or orally to be confirmed in writing, of the time and place of such hearing.
- (ii) No person may be a member of the Hearing Committee who has made, or acted on any committee that has made, a decision that is the subject matter of the complaint or who is (or was) a member of a Club that is directly affected by the complaint.
- (iii) The NCC Chairperson shall act as Chairperson of any Hearing Committee. A quorum for the Hearing Committee shall be the Chairperson and two other members. In the absence of the Chairperson, a member of the NCC shall be delegated to act as Chairperson.
- (iv) A Club or person appearing at a hearing before the Hearing Committee shall be entitled to be represented by not more than two persons (one of whom may be a legal representative provided that legal representation at the hearing shall not be permitted unless reasonable prior notice of such legal representation shall be given to the Hearing Committee and any Club or person directly affected by the complaint).
- (v) The Hearing Committee shall permit any Club or person directly affected by a complaint to submit evidence, call witnesses and make representations at the hearing.
- (vi) Subject to the requirements of natural justice the procedures to be adopted at the hearing shall be entirely at the discretion of the Hearing Committee. The Hearing Committee shall be entitled to seek such advice as it may require, including specialist or legal advice. The costs of same shall be the costs of the proceedings.
- (vii) The Hearing Committee shall also be entitled to require a Club to submit, in advance, written submissions to the Hearing Committee, which shall set out the points and submissions that the Club will be seeking to rely on at the hearing. Any such submissions may at the discretion of the Hearing Committee be distributed to the other Club(s) participating at the hearing.
- (viii) The decision of the Hearing Committee shall be notified to all parties directly affected as soon as reasonably practicable and where appropriate confirmed in writing.
- (ix) All hearings shall be held in private, unless otherwise ordered by the Hearing Committee.
- (x) The Hearing Committee shall be entitled, where the circumstances warrant, to adjourn or postpone a hearing as it thinks fit.
- (xi) A quorum for the NCC shall be the Chairperson and two other members. In the absence of the Chairperson a member of the NCC shall be delegated to act as Chairperson.

9.7 Appeals

9.7.1 An appeal shall lie from any decision of the NCC to the Committee of Appeal pursuant to Regulation 5.

9.7.2 Where a decision is made pursuant to this regulation by the NCC which affects the League or Cup position of any Club, it shall not be permissible for any Club which was not involved in or did not participate in the match in respect of which the decision was made, to lodge an appeal against any such decision.

9.8 Provision of Information

Where the NCC, the Chairperson of the NCC or the Committee of Appeal requests a Club or person to provide information in relation to any matter, a reasonable time limit may be imposed and notified for the provision of such information and in the event that such time limit is not complied with, the NCC or the Chairperson of the NCC or the Committee of Appeal Committee (as may be appropriate) may deal with the matter in the absence of such information.

9.9 Sanctions

9.9.1 The NCC shall be entitled in its absolute discretion to impose all or any of the following sanctions or penalties on an offending Club:

- (i) A caution, a warning as to future conduct, or a reprimand;
- (ii) A fine;
- (iii) The requirement to replay a match at such time and at such venue as is thought fit;
- (iv) The forfeiture of, and/or the granting to another club or clubs, of the league points for a match which may include a bonus point;
- (v) The deduction of league points;
- (vi) A score line of 28-0 may be applied to the match in the favour of the non offending club.
- (vii) The suspension or expulsion of the Branch, Club, player or person for such period as may be deemed appropriate;
- (viii) Such other penalty or sanction as may be deemed appropriate;
- (ix) Make a payment of costs.

9.10 Structure of League and Cup

9.10.1 There shall be Two Divisions of the League.

9.10.2 Division 1 shall be split into two sections, each of 10 teams, known as 1A and 1B. Division 2 shall be split into three sections, each of 10 teams, known as 2A, 2B and 2C.

9.10.3 The position of a Club in a division shall be established by awarding four League points for a win and two League points for a draw.

9.10.4 One bonus point shall be awarded to a Club scoring four or more tries in a match and one bonus point shall be awarded to a Club losing by 7 points or less.

9.10.5 In the event of Clubs at the top or bottom of a division being equal in League points gained, winning a division or section, promotion and relegation shall be decided on the basis of match points scored, the Club or Clubs at the top with the larger differences between "points for" and "points against" winning the division or gaining promotion, and the Club or Clubs at the bottom having the larger difference between "points against" and "points for" being relegated. In the event of two or more Clubs having the same number of League points and the same match points difference, then the Club or Clubs scoring the larger number of wins shall be preferred followed by the most draws and then the most tries. Thereafter, if two or more clubs are still tied, then the club that earned the most league points in the matches between the clubs shall be preferred. Then, and only then, if there is no difference, shall play-offs be arranged. Any position in the final League standings is determined by the same criteria as for promotion and relegation.

9.10.6 The Cup shall comprise of the 4 Provincial Senior Cup Holders with the semi-finals being a six year cycle draw.

9.11 Promotion and Relegation at the end of the season:

Please refer to Appendix 2 at the end of this regulation.

9.12 League Fixtures

- 9.12.1 Matches shall be played on dates decided by the NCC.
- 9.12.2 The NCC shall arrange the fixture list for each season. Matches shall normally be played on Saturdays but the NCC shall have full power and at their absolute discretion to arrange matches on other days and to alter previously fixed dates and venues should circumstances arise to warrant such alteration.
- 9.12.3 Matches shall kick off at 2.30pm (unless otherwise determined by the NCC) with the exception of those fixed for weekday nights which shall kick off at 8.00pm. However, if two Clubs mutually agree to an alternative date or kick off time, both Clubs must apply in writing to the Rugby Competition Manager at least 21 days prior to the date of the match in question and obtain consent in writing from the Rugby Competition Manager prior to the match.
- 9.12.4 Clubs shall play in their respective Divisions on a Home and Away basis.
- 9.12.5 In the event a club fails to fulfil a fixture the NCC shall impose a sanction of the deduction of five (5) league points and the awarding of a score line of 28-0 which includes four tries in favour of the non-offending club together with any other additional sanctions the NCC shall see fit. These sanctions are contained in, but not limited to the sanctions listed in 9.9.
- 9.12.6 Should a club seek to request a change in date or kick off time in a league or Cup match, they must first make contact with the opposition club as well as Rugby Competition Manager. If both clubs are in agreement with the requested change, then the club seeking the change must send the Rugby Competition Manager full details of the request with agreement from the opposition. Should the opposition club decline the request, and the club seeking the change still feels the request falls under an exceptional circumstance situation, then they may apply to the Committee for a decision. Both teams will be allowed to make submissions stating their cases. Any request for rescheduling a fixture must be received by the Rugby Competition Manager at least 21 days prior to the date of the fixture. Unforeseen circumstances which occur less than the 21 days, may be considered at the discretion of the Committee.

9.13 Postponements, Re-Arrangements, Fitness of Ground

- 9.13.1 Only in very exceptional circumstances shall a League or Cup match be postponed and then only with the approval of the NCC or its nominee. When a League match is postponed or abandoned, it shall be played or replayed later in the season at the earliest appropriate date, such date to be decided by the NCC or its nominee. When a Cup match is postponed twice the venue will be reversed for that round.
- 9.13.2 The NCC shall provide a list of nominated persons to act on the Ground Fitness Panel, as set out in the regulations, who shall be available for consultation when the fitness of a ground is to be considered. A Club which has doubt about the fitness of its ground shall contact the Rugby Competitions Manager who shall discuss the situation with the Club and if necessary, arrange an inspection of the ground. Where there is doubt about the fitness of a ground and there is a reasonable prospect that with improved weather conditions the ground could be playable by kick off time, a decision on whether or not the pitch is playable shall be postponed until close to the kick off time. Matches may not be postponed on grounds that the safety of the players might be prejudiced unless with the additional approval of the match referee.
- 9.13.3 The determination of the fitness of the ground shall be the responsibility of the NCC whose decision shall be final.

- 9.13.4 In the event of a match having to be postponed, it shall be the responsibility of the home Club to inform (a) their opponents, (b) the referee and his assistants (c) the Union, as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in the home Club being liable for all or part of the expenses of their opponents and match officials.
- 9.13.5 Subject to the provisions of regulation 9.13.2 above where doubt exists as to the fitness of a ground, the home Club must endeavour to find an alternative venue and shall make early contact with the visiting Club as to its travel arrangements etc., in order that contact can be made prior to a Club commencing its journey. Clubs must show they have made a genuine effort in obtaining another venue, even if this is a distance from their own club. The emphasis must be on getting the match played and all reasonable endeavours must be demonstrated in doing so, to the satisfaction of the NCC.
- 9.13.6 Where it is known at least seven days prior to a League or Cup match that a pitch is unlikely to be playable, the home Club must find a suitable alternative venue and advise same.

9.14 Player Eligibility and Registration

9.14.1 Eligibility of Players

9.14.1.1 The following players, who once are registered, are eligible to play in the All-Ireland League and Cup:

- (i) A Player who qualifies to play for Ireland under World Rugby Regulations
- (ii) A player who holds a European Union **or** British **or** European Economic Area or Swiss passport. This player must take up and remain in residence and be properly registered prior to midnight on the Tuesday immediately prior to the commencement of the League or Cup.
- (iii) Any player not qualifying under (i) and (ii) above visiting Ireland or Northern Ireland on a minimum one-year visa. This player must take up and remain in residence and be properly registered prior to midnight on the Tuesday immediately prior to the commencement of the League or Cup. For the purposes of interpretation, this player is classified as an **overseas player** and shall be nominated as such to the Rugby Competition Manager. In the AIL, a club is permitted one overseas player.
- (iv) In the case of (iii) a player who has been legally residing for a minimum of one year in Ireland or Northern Ireland, they may then apply to the Rugby Competition manager to be considered a Non-Overseas player.

9.14.1.2 In exceptional circumstances the Chairperson of the NCC may in their absolute discretion, on application in writing by a player supported by the consent in writing of both Clubs, agree to the player changing Clubs notwithstanding that the cut off date of midnight on the Tuesday prior to the commencement of the League or Bateman cup has elapsed even if that player has already played in the competition. Such application must be submitted prior to midnight on the Tuesday before Round 10 of any given season after the commencement of the competition. Time shall be of the essence in respect of this particular clause.

9.14.1.3

- (i) Subject to compliance with the provisions of this regulation 9.14.2, clubs in Division 1A and 1B may select a maximum of six Contracted Players (excluding Development and Academy players) in its panel of players for an All Ireland League or Cup match, only three of whom may be a forward.

- (ii) To be eligible for a Club's final four matches in the regular season of the League competition those selected Contracted Players shall have made a minimum of three appearances in All Ireland League matches in that League season.
 - (iii) To be eligible for the League play-off matches between clubs in Division 1A and 1B those selected Contracted Players shall have made minimum of four appearances in the All Ireland League matches during that season.
 - (iv) Contracted Players are not permitted to play in the League play-off matches between clubs in Division 1B and 2A.
 - (v) IRFU Nationally Contracted Players may only play in rounds 1 to 14 of Division 1A and 1B of the League in exceptional circumstances and then only with the approval of the NCC.
 - (vi) In the event of an IRFU Nationally Contracted Player being granted permission to play in a League or Cup match then only five Provincially Contracted Players may play for that club.
 - (vii) IRFU Foreign Contracted Players may not play in the All-Ireland League.
 - (viii) Players deemed as Development Players by the IRFU may only play in Divisions 1A-2A of the League. They cannot play in Division 2BN or 2BS.
 - (ix) No more than two such Development players can be listed in any ALL match day squad in Division 2A.
 - (x) Once a development player has made either 6 starts or 10 appearances (including starts) for their provincial team in a season, they will no longer be eligible to play for a Division 2A club in that season.
 - (xi) No Development player may play in the promotion/relegation matches between clubs in Division 2A and 2BN/2BS.
 - (xii) Academy contracted players may play in the League and Cup without restriction.
 - (xiii) Nationally or provincially contracted players may not play in the Bateman Cup if a Division 1 club is drawn against a Division 2 club.
 - (xiv) The release of any Contracted Players is at the discretion of each Branch Provincial Director of Coaching.
- 9.14.1.4 An application can be made for exceptions to Regulations 9.14.1.3 by a Province to the NCC for its determination, subject to a maximum approval of one contracted player per club, for a player returning from a protracted injury or other unforeseen circumstances to be allowed to play in the League.

9.14.2 Registration of Eligible Players

- 9.14.2.1 All eligible players under 9.14.1.1 must be registered on or before midnight on the Tuesday immediately preceding the first League or Cup game in each season. Each Club playing in the League and Cup shall submit to the Union a list of its eligible playing members who are registered with the appropriate Branch, complete with registration numbers. A person shall be registered as a playing member with one Club only.
- 9.14.2.2 From the end of the season, and up until midnight on 15th June, with the exception of school leavers who shall have up until midnight on 1st August players may transfer to another club without restriction. However, players transferring before 15th June must notify their current club, in writing, of their intention to transfer giving five days' notice (midnight 10th June). This notification may also be made by the new club. The club that the player is joining must ensure that the player's previous club has been duly notified. Failure to comply with these requirements may invalidate a transfer. Whatsapp, Snapchat, text message, Instagram etc are not acceptable methods of communication.

- 9.14.2.3 School age players who are leaving school and have not yet played adult rugby, shall not be bound to remain with a club they were registered with for Mini rugby only.
- 9.14.2.4 From 16th June to midnight on the Tuesday immediately prior to the League commencing, any transfer request must be approved by both clubs.
- 9.14.2.5 Any player who was eligible for their U20 team in the season just finished who transfers from a club to an AIL club between the end of their club's season and 1st October, and who then changes their mind and wishes to return to their original club, may do so by completing the Change of Mind form and submitting it to their Provincial Branch. A school leaver, who is not a member of a club, and who transfers to an AIL club between the end of the season and 1st October and who then changes their mind will be allowed to nominate a non-AIL club on the transfer form. They will be able to transfer to the non-AIL club by completing and submitting the Change of Mind form. Any Change of Mind form must be submitted by 30th November of the year of joining the AIL club.
- 9.14.2.6 Any player who is registered as a club member prior to 1st October and who attains the age of 18 during the season shall be eligible to play after he has attained his 18th birthday, except for school or club underage players who are still involved in their school or club underage competition. They only become eligible once their school or club competition concludes. If a player participating in their provincial U18/U18.5 competition seeks to play AIL when they turn 18, it must first be notified in writing to the IRFU Rugby Competitions Manager that the AIL club is satisfied the player has the experience to compete at AIL level.

9.15 Dual Status Players

- 9.15.1 The term "dual status" refers to a player who although a bona fide registered playing member of a non-League Club in Ireland may play for a Club in the League and/or Cup provided the following regulations are observed. A League Club shall be limited to selecting or playing not more than three such players in one season and each player may make a maximum of 6 appearances in a match day squad during a season. Selection shall include players who are selected as replacements / substitutes for League and or Cup matches.
- 9.15.2 A League Club wishing to use the dual status principle shall follow the procedures set out below.
 - 9.15.2.1 A request using the AIL Dual Status request form shall be made to the Secretary of the Non-League Club on a match by match basis. When permission is obtained, an application shall be made in writing to the IRFU Rugby Competition Manager, outlining in detail the exceptional circumstances that has led to the request for the use of a Dual Status player, at least forty-eight hours prior to the match, enclosing the written permission of the non-League Club. Acceptance as a Dual Status player shall not in any way impact the players' status or eligibility to play for the non-league club.
 - 9.15.2.2 The name/s of dual status player/s shall be indicated on the League or Cup team sheet (D/S).

9.15.2.3 Dual status players shall not play in the Play-Off match between the winner of the All-Ireland Provincial League Championship and the club finishing second bottom in Division 2B or in the All-Ireland Provincial League semifinals and final.

9.15.2.4 In Play-Off matches between AIL clubs no Dual Status player shall play except in very special circumstances approved by the NCC.

9.15.3 Dual status players shall satisfy regulation 9.14 relating to player eligibility. An overseas player, as defined in regulation 9.14.1.1, may not play as a dual status player for a Club which has already registered an overseas player for that season.

9.15.4 A player shall only be a dual status member of one AIL Club in the same AIL season. Any player who transfers to a Junior Club after 1st October in the same season may only play as a Dual Status Player for the club from whom he transferred for the remainder of that season.

9.16 Referees and Touch Judges

9.16.1 The Union's Referee Selection panel, together with the Provincial Branches Referee Society/Association, shall select referees and touch judges for League and Cup Matches.

9.16.1 One of the touch judges shall have been nominated as senior touch judge. In League and Cup matches Law 6.27 of the Laws of the Game regarding "flagging" by touch judges, shall apply.

9.16.2 In the event of the referee failing to turn up for a League or Cup match or being unable to continue to referee a match, the senior touch judge shall replace the referee and the home Club shall appoint a suitable replacement touch judge, who should in any event be there to act as 4th official. In the event of only one Touch Judge turning up then the Home Club shall appoint a suitable person to act as Touch Judge. In the event of no Touch Judges being appointed by the Branch then each club shall appoint a suitable person to act as Touch Judge. In the event of one or more touch judges not being available then "flagging" by touch judges shall cease to operate.

9.16.3 The referee after each match shall submit to the Rugby Competition Manager the detailed result of the match, the replacements sheet and the team lists for both Clubs. The name or names of players or replacements deemed to be "dual status" players shall be indicated as such on the team list.

9.17 Players Sent Off the Field of Play or Cited

Players sent off or cautioned under this regulation or cited in League or Cup matches shall be dealt with under Regulation 5 of the IRFU Regulations. <https://www.irishrugby.ie/irfu-regulations>

9.18 Conduct and Responsibility

9.18.1 Clubs participating in the League and Cup are responsible and accountable for the conduct of their players, officials, members and supporters in attendance at League and Cup matches.

9.18.2 Clubs, players, officials and members shall ensure that:

9.18.2.1 Matches are played in accordance with disciplined and sporting behaviour.

9.18.2.2 None of the persons referred to in 9.18.1 engage in an act or acts of misconduct.

For the purposes of the League and Cup misconduct shall mean conduct, behaviour or practices on or off the playing enclosure which may bring the game of rugby or the Union into disrepute or may be detrimental to the best interests of the Union or of the game in accordance with Regulation 5.

- 9.18.3 Breaches of Regulation 9.18.1 and 9.18.2 shall be dealt with under the Union's Regulation 5.
- 9.18.4 For the avoidance of doubt a Club or player may be sanctioned for misconduct even if a referee has already penalised one or more of its players for his or their conduct during a match.
- 9.18.5 Each participating Club shall be represented by registered members of the Club who are eligible pursuant to this regulation. Each Club shall play at full available strength in all matches unless some satisfactory reason is given.
- 9.18.6 No player may participate in the League or Cup while serving a disciplinary sanction imposed by the Union, by a Branch of the Union or by his Club.

9.19 Medical Provisions

It is the responsibility of the home club to have a medical officer and qualified first aid persons in attendance at matches. It is strongly recommended that the medical officer is a qualified medical doctor working within their scope of practice. However, in cases where a medical doctor is not available to act as the medical officer on match day, a qualified first aid person may be nominated to act in this role. The qualified first-aid person may be: a registered physiotherapist, a registered nurse, a paramedic or advanced paramedic. It is recommended that designated personnel should be SAFE Rugby trained and present during all club rugby activities.

9.20 League Sponsor

Clubs participating in the League are responsible to ensure that the League Sponsor's Logo is worn on the right sleeve of the Club jersey when participating in any League and Cup match save and except where circumstances have arisen which precludes same, such circumstances to be approved by the Competitions Committee. Clubs shall also comply with IRFU guidelines around sponsorship signage.

9.21 Replacements and Substitutes

Clubs must tog out five additional players, who may act as substitutes or replacements, subject to Law 3 of the Laws of the Game. For Division 1A and 1B only, six replacements may be permitted. A team shall have five players who can play in front row positions, two of whom can play hooker and three of whom can play prop. For Semi-Finals and Finals of the League and Cup the number of additional players may be up to eight. Should a team choose to have eight replacements, six squad players must be designated as front row forwards, four being props.

For guidance, the following table indicates the numbers of suitably trained and experienced players for the front row when nominating different numbers of players:

Number of Players	Number of suitably trained & experienced players
15 or less	3 players who can play in the front row
16, 17 or 18	4 players who can play in the front row
19, 20, 21 or 22	5 players who can play in the front row
23	6 players who can play in the front row

- Scrums will become uncontested if either team cannot field a suitably trained front row or if the referee so orders.
- A front row player whose departure has caused uncontested scrums **cannot be replaced** – Law 3.17.
- Exception: If the front row players departure was caused by foul play against them, they have left the field under Recognise and Remove (suspected concussion), a blood injury, or to enable contested scrums to continue, then that player *may* be replaced.

12 rolling substitutions shall be permitted in the League and Cup. Clubs shall be furnished with this regulation or a link prior to the commencement of each season.

9.22 Clash of Colours

In the event of a clash of colours, of which the referee is the sole judge, it shall be the responsibility of the Home Club to change into a playing strip which is significantly different in colours from the normal playing strip.

9.23 Team Sheets and List

9.23.1 Prior to the kick off, each Club shall be required to submit to the referee and the opponent Club its list of starting players and replacements / substitutes, correctly numbered. This list shall include each player's registration number and shall be an electronic team sheet. A player shall wear the jersey whose number corresponds to his number on the team list. The name/s of dual status players and/or replacements / substitutes and players who can play in the front row positions shall be indicated by a TH and LH as appropriate for Prop and Hooker. Failure to comply with this regulation may be the subject of a complaint by the opposing team or the NCC and shall be dealt with accordingly. Both teams in a League or Cup fixture shall ensure to forward its nominated Team and Replacements, numbered 1-20, (or 21 for Div 1 clubs) to the opposing Club and Irish Rugby by 12 noon on the Friday preceding the match.

9.23.2 Changes to team sheets which occur after the initial submission must be communicated to Irish Rugby in a timely manner, and must be amended by midday Monday following the match

9.23.3 To facilitate an All-Ireland League Media Service, details of the match must be communicated to Irish Rugby, or a designated agent of Irish Rugby within 15 minutes of full-time. These details must include: half-time and full-time score, details of all point scorers in the game, and any changes to the previously submitted team-sheet.

9.23.4 The methods of communication for 9.23.1, 9.23.2 and 9.23.3 will be agreed and outlined with a designated contact in each participating club before the start of the season.

9.24 Playing Enclosure and Technical Zones

9.24.1 The playing enclosure shall be defined preferably by a fence, if not by ropes.

9.24.2 If there is a stand, seats shall be made available for replacements. Two technical zones shall be designated, both on the same side of the pitch, clearly marked in white paint, each nine metres long and three metres wide and not less than two metres from the touchline, one on either side of the halfway line, in which benches shall be placed and a zone shall be allocated to each team. The attendants and replacements shall remain seated within their zone. The referee has the authority to order them out of the playing enclosure if they fail to adhere to this requirement.

9.24.3 Ball boys and a limited number of press photographers may also be permitted inside the enclosure.

9.24.4 Prior to kick-off both sets of replacements must be introduced and identified to the 4th Official. In the event that a club has more than 5 replacements toggled out for the pre-match warm-up, those that are not in the match-day squad are not permitted to have any contact with the Technical Zone Area without the express permission of the 4th Official. Replacements and substitutes shall enter the field of play from the technical zones and be

introduced by the replacement touch-judge.

- 9.24.5 Each team shall nominate to the referee its medical officer, team attendant/physiotherapist and coach. A maximum of four people are permitted in the technical zone in addition to the nominated replacements. The coach cannot act as team attendant who is the only person permitted on the field during the match, and only to attend to an injured player with the exception of 9.24.6 below. Players requiring water or drinks shall come to the touch line. One of the three TZ personnel who is a nominated medical/physio attendant is permitted to roam along the opposite side line to the Technical Zone but must not interfere with play.
- 9.24.6 The four nominated personnel in the Technical Zone shall wear identifying bibs as supplied by the IRFU. The TZ manager shall wear a different colour bib and may not enter the field of play.
- 9.24.7 Each team shall nominate its medical officer who is permitted to attend an injured player when required.
- 9.24.8 Coaches are precluded from entering the playing enclosure (excluding the technical zone) during the course of a match except at half time when the coach may come on to the field to speak to his team.
- 9.24.9 Kicking tees may be used by individual kickers.
- 9.24.10 The home club shall supply touch judge flags.

9.25 Match Balls

The 'Gilbert Barbarian' ball shall be the official match ball to be used in All Ireland League & Cup matches.

9.26 Finance

- 9.26.1 The Union shall provide financial assistance to Clubs participating in the League and Cup. The amount of such financial assistance shall be determined annually by the Union at its sole discretion.
- 9.26.2 Gate receipts shall belong to the home Club.
- 9.26.3 The away Club shall be responsible for its own travel and accommodation arrangements and expenses.
- 9.26.4 The home Club shall be responsible for all match expenses.

9.27 Trophies

- 9.27.1 Division 1A and 1B winners: Trophy and 30 medals.
- 9.27.2 Division 2A, 2B and 2C winners: Trophy and 30 medals.
- 9.27.3 All Ireland Provincial League Championship winners: Pennant and 30 medals.
- 9.27.4 Bateman Cup: Cup and 30 medals.

9.27.5 Junior All Ireland Cup: Cup and 30 medals.

9.28 Applicable Law

This regulation shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the Laws of the Republic of Ireland.

9.29 Unforeseen Circumstances

9.29.1 The NCC shall be entitled to make decisions on all matters not provided for in this regulation.

9.29.2 No proceedings pursuant to this regulation shall be quashed or held invalid by reason only of any defect, irregularity, omission or other technicality, provided there has been no miscarriage of justice.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEMI-FINALS (see also Appendix 2)

(1) Division 1A Top Four

Weekend of 17th April 2027

Semi-Finals: Club placed 1st v Club placed 4th
Club Placed 2nd v Club placed 3rd

Final: Sunday 25th April 2027

(2) Division 1B Semi-finals - Weekend of 17th April 2027

Div 1A club placed 9th v Div 1B club placed 4th

Div 1B club placed 2nd v Div 1B club placed 3rd

Final: 24th April 2027

(3) Division 2A Semi-finals - Weekend of 17th April 2027

Div 1B club placed 9th v Div 2A club placed 4th

Div 2A club placed 2nd v Div 2A club placed 3rd

Final: 24th April 2027

(4) Division 2BN/2BS -

Weekend of 17th April 2027 - Play off between the two first placed teams in 2BN and 2BS

Weekend of 24th April 2027 - Semifinals between club placed 9th in 2A, losing first placed club and the two 2nd placed clubs

1st May 2027 - Final

Extra time regulations for all play offs, semifinals and finals and cups

- (i) If clubs are tied at full time, extra time of 10 minutes each way shall be played.
- (ii) If still tied, the Club who has scored most tries shall be the winner
- (iii) If still tied, the team who scored the 1st try shall be the winner.
- (iv) If no tries have been scored, the team that scored the first points in the match shall be the winner.
- (v) If the playoff or final is scoreless, penalty kicks shall be taken to decide the winner.

ALL IRELAND PROVINCIAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

3 rd April 2027	Semi Finals
10 th April 2027	Final
24 th April 2027	Play-off - loser of 2BN/2BS relegation playoff match Div 2BN/2BS v loser of provincial league final.

- In this Championship, extra time if needed will be the same as any AIL finals.
- The winner shall be promoted to Division 2BN/S.
- The losing finalist in this Championship shall play off against the loser of the relegation playoff match between the two 10th places teams in 2BN/2BS This match will be played at the Division 2BN/2BS club.
- The semi-finals will be an open draw with semi-finals and final played at a neutral venue.

ALL IRELAND BATEMAN CUP

The draw for the All-Ireland Bateman Cup is as follows:

- Leinster v Ulster
- Connacht v Munster

Semi-Finals – weekend of 14th November 2026

Cup Final – Sunday 3rd January 2027

- (i) If clubs are tied at full time, extra time of 10 minutes each way shall be played.
- (ii) If still tied, the Club who has scored most tries shall be the winner
- (iii) If still tied, the team who scored the 1st try shall be the winner.
- (iv) If no tries have been scored, the team that scored the first points in the match shall be the winner.
- (v) If the match is scoreless, penalty kicks shall be taken to decide the winner.

A match day squad of 23 is permitted

ALL IRELAND JUNIOR CUP

The dates for each round of the All-Ireland Junior Cup shall be:

- 24th October 2026
- 14th November 2026
- 12th December 2026
- 23rd January 2027

The Regulations set out above in respect of the Senior Cup shall apply to the Junior Cup.

Eligibility for All Ireland Junior Cup

For a player to be eligible for the All-Ireland Junior Cup, they must be correctly registered with that club according to their respective Branch regulations no later than midnight on the Tuesday immediately preceding the first round of the Cup.

- (i) If clubs are tied at full time, extra time of 10 minutes each way shall be played.
- (ii) If still tied, the Club who has scored most tries shall be the winner
- (iii) If still tied, the team who scored the 1st try shall be the winner.
- (iv) If no tries have been scored, the team that scored the first points in the match shall be the winner.
- (v) If the match is scoreless, penalty kicks shall be taken to decide the winner.

FRASER McMULLEN CUP

Eligibility for Fraser McMullen Cup

To be eligible for the Fraser McMullen Cup, a player must have appeared in at least four (4) matches in the Leinster JP Fanagan or McCorry Cup and three (3) in the Munster Donal Walsh league and Cup. Appearances in that club's "B" team in these competitions can also count.

- (i) If clubs are tied at full time, extra time of 10 minutes each way shall be played.
- (ii) If still tied, the Club who has scored most tries shall be the winner
- (iii) If still tied, the team who scored the 1st try shall be the winner.
- (iv) If no tries have been scored, the team that scored the first points in the match shall be the winner.
- (v) If the match is scoreless, penalty kicks shall be taken to decide the winner.

A match day squad of 23 is permitted

Appendix 1 Player Points System (“PPS”)

1. Definitions used in the PPS:

- **‘Home Club’:** the club with which a player commenced playing at Mini/youth level. A player may leave the club to attend a school or 3rd Level Club but must return directly to their original club following secondary school and/or college to retain their point status of one (1). *Note: this status is retained even if the player achieves National and/or Provincial U18/19 representation and remains with the home club.*
- **‘Profile Player’:** a player who has been named on a National and/or Interprovincial U18/19 match day squad (i.e. named on the Team Sheet).
- **Dual-Status Player:** a ‘positional specific’ player who is registered with a Junior Club, and with the prior permission of the National Competitions Committee participates in the League on a match by match basis.
- **Club:** No differentiation between senior or junior clubs occurs within the PPS. Taking into consideration the player panel analysis, the PPS will apply equally across all clubs (including 3rd Level Clubs).

○ 2. Implementation of the PPS

- The PPS only applies to the All Ireland League.
- For the 2026/27 season the combined value of the AIL Squad must not exceed 100 points (i.e. sum of the 45 players or more must not exceed 100 points). *During the 2026/27 season the PPS will be monitored and may be reduced or increased in future years.*
- All members of the a clubs AIL panel must be registered via the IRFU RugbyConnect system by no later than the date as outlined in the League Regulations.
- Each Club must nominate a minimum of 45 players, with no maximum number of players as long as the 100 point cap is not exceeded.
- Clubs will be required to submit their AIL playing panel a minimum of 7 days before the commencement of their respective league. The submission will occur using a pro forma indicating the player name, Registration Number, player history and point allocation. All Club Submissions will be available for reviewing on the IRFU Website. Appropriate sanctions will be applied for providing incorrect or misleading information.
- The Player points matrix outlined (overleaf) indicates the point value allocated due to a transfer.
- Any player after having been registered with the same club for 4 consecutive years (including the current season) reverts to a ‘one (1) point’ classification.

- A player registered in a club, who is in full-time third level education (i.e. register for full-time 3rd level education) who transfers to University/College Rugby Club of that institution will carry a points transfer value of 2 points in that first season. (and revert to 1 point for subsequent seasons).
- To accommodate injury and school leavers being promoted to the 1st Team Panel, an 'update window' will occur at the half way point of the All Ireland League. Clubs will be allowed to promote up to five (5) players (and drop up to 5 players) from their panel as long as the point value does not exceed 100 points and the minimum panel does not reduce below 45 players. All players must be registered with the club in line with the regulations.
- A club can apply to the National Competitions Committee (NCC) to reduce the points allocation of a player who is required to relocate more than 100 km for employment or any other valid reason. For the 2026/27 season, the point reduction will be two (2) points, and will revert to 1 point for future seasons with that club. Clubs will be required to provide appropriate evidence (including evidence of residence and employment).
- A club can apply for inclusion of school leavers (of that calendar year) into the panel prior to 1st November on the basis of education requirements, as long as the 100 points cap is not exceeded. Clubs will be required to provide appropriate evidence.
- Contract, Development and Academy players will be treated the same as players transferring between clubs. A player returning to their 'Home Club' will be allocated 1 point. However, there may be exceptional cases where the IRFU and/or Branch allocates players, including Academy players to specific clubs (i.e. a Club is demoted from Div 1); in this circumstance the AIL Committee will liaise with the relevant IRFU/Branch Representative and at its discretion may decrease the transfer point value.
- The IRFU acknowledges the role of the AIL in being a platform for the development of players for the provincial and national teams. Where a club loses a Non-Contracted player to a Full Professional Contract that club may make application to the NCC for a points concession for a replacement player who is transferred into the club to fill the vacancy in the AIL Panel. *(Note: for the avoidance of doubt a contracted player is either a full or academy player, or a player determined by the IRFU as a Development player)*
- Dual-Status players can only be used by a club in exceptional circumstances and on a match by match basis by prior approval of the NCC. Clubs will be required to indicate which first choice player they are replacing, and the dual status player comes into the panel at the same value as the player they are replacing (i.e. if they are replacing a player at 3 points then regardless of the playing history of the Dual Status Player they will also be classified at 3 points). The player substituted will be ineligible to participate in any other matches on that weekend.

3. Player Points Matrix

Note: the points only apply to the year in which they first appear in the AIL Panel.

	Registered with current club before 1 st Jan 2023 2023/24 Season	Registered with current club after 1 st Jan 2024 2024/25 Season	Registered with current club after 1 st Jan 2025 2025/26 season	Registered with current club after 1 st Jan 2026 2026/27 Season
Continuous registration with Club (i.e. no registration with any other club before 1 st Jan 2022)	1	1	1	1
School/College player returning to 'Home Club' "Home Club" player – i.e. Registered Underage player, including 'profile player' to their original Club post - Secondary School/College	1	1	1	1
School to Club Transfer A player with no previous affiliation with Club, (including 3 rd Level Clubs)	1	1	1	2
School to Club Transfer of a profile player (Profile Player with no previous registration to Club)	1	1	2	3
Club to Club Transfer (the player moving to a club which is not their 'home club')	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2 – Promotion and Relegation at the end of the season

1. In Division 1A the top four clubs shall qualify for play-offs to determine the League Championship as per the Play-Off arrangements listed in this document. The bottom club shall be relegated and the 2nd last club shall enter a Play-Off with the clubs placed 2-4 in Division 1B as per the Play-Off arrangements listed in this document.
2. In Division 1B the top club shall be promoted and the clubs placed 2-4 shall Play-off along with the 9th placed club in Division 1A for the final place in Division 1A as per the Play-Off arrangements listed in this document. The bottom club shall be relegated, and the 2nd last club shall enter a Play-Off with the clubs placed 2 - 4 in Division 2A as per the Play-Off arrangements listed in this document.
3. In Division 2A the top club shall be promoted and clubs placed 2-4 shall Play-off along with the 9th placed club in Division 1B for the final place in Division 1B as per the Play-Off arrangements listed in this document. The bottom club shall be relegated, and the 2nd last club shall enter a Play-Off with the clubs placed 1st and 2nd in each of the two 2B Divisions. Nationally or provincially contracted players may not play in these Play-Offs.
4. For Division 2BN and 2BS, the two 1st placed teams shall play off with the winner replacing the 10th placed team in 2A. The loser of this match and the two 2nd placed clubs shall play-off along with the 9th placed club in Division 2A for the final place in Division 2A as per the Play-Off arrangements listed in this document. The bottom clubs in 2BN and 2BS shall play off with the loser of this match relegated and the winner shall play off against the runner up of the Provincial league Championship
5. The four Provincial Qualifying League winners shall qualify to play in the All-Ireland Provincial League Championship provided they meet the AIL Participation Criteria. The winner shall be promoted to the AIL.
6. Player eligibility for this Championship shall be in accordance with the eligibility conditions of the respective provincial leagues.
8. Where play-offs take place, the venue shall be that of the higher ranked team.