

## *Shepherd Neame Kent Merit Leagues Playing Regulations for Season 2025/26*

1 The objective of the Shepherd Neame Kent Merit Leagues is to retain players in amateur rugby, by providing a structured arena to play fixtures.

2 The Shepherd Neame Kent Merit Leagues (also referred to as SNKML) will consist of:

Kent Metropolitan Leagues with teams drawn from within a defined geographic area of suburban London and as listed in the County Handbook (for guidance, inside the M25 Motorway), or from Kent Rural clubs as otherwise agreed.

Kent Rural Leagues with teams drawn from non-suburban Kent clubs and as listed in the County Handbook (for guidance, outside the M25 Motorway), or Kent Metropolitan Clubs as otherwise agreed.

Metropolitan and Kent Rural Leagues may also accept teams from adjacent RFU Constituent Bodies if deemed appropriate and they affiliate to Kent County RFU.

3. Each League will be run by the League Committee of not less than three people, all of whom are to be elected by the relevant member clubs,

4. A Member club is one which has at least one team entered into the League and has paid the relevant annual stipulated fee.

4.1 An annual stipulated fee of £35.00 (thirty five pounds only) is to be paid by member clubs for each team entered in the Shepherd Neame Merit League Competitions.

5. League fixtures are to be played on a home and away basis in each season unless special circumstances apply. A League structured playing season detailing fixtures and playing dates will be provided to each member club before the commencement of each season, including requested and agreed changes. When finalised, the structured season will also be posted on the Kent and RFU websites.

5.1 All League fixtures must be completed by the last official Saturday of the regular RFU Counties programme, subject to those postponed by weather or other unavoidable delays. In any case, all matches must be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> April each year.

6 If fixtures cannot be played on the scheduled date, the teams are obliged to explore alternative dates to reschedule the fixture. Rescheduled fixtures need not be confined to Saturday afternoon.

6.1 Dates for playing any postponed fixtures shall be agreed by the clubs in conjunction with the League.

6.2 Any fixtures not played on the original date, or successfully rearranged, will be deemed forfeit.

7. A team that finds itself needing to cancel a fixture must contact the opposition before 10.00 am on the day before the fixture. Cancellation must be made by making contact with an official representative of the club by telephone or, if needs must, via exchange of a voice message, email or text (or other such technical method). Contact is not considered to have been made until it has been acknowledged by the recipient. The teams are reminded of their obligation under rule 6 to find an alternative and mutually agreeable date to reschedule the fixture.

7.1 Any team that withdraws or is withdrawn from the league will have all records of results declared void and deleted from the respective league table to provide a fair and level competition for the remaining teams in that table.

7.2 Any team that gets close to forfeiting 25% of their league fixtures will be given written notification of this and warned of the consequences including disqualification from the league.

8 It is recommended that the basis for the use of Replacements is;

8.1 Replacements will be a maximum of four (4)

8.1.1 Rolling subs may be used. Law 3.14a is amended as follows; there is no limit to the number of substitutions that may be performed from the nominated replacements defined in Rule 8.1 or otherwise agreed in accordance with Rule 8.2.

8.2 In circumstances where either team or both teams have more than the maximum of four (4) replacements available, and in the spirit of the SNKML to field the available players, the respective captains and the appointed referee may agree to play the match with the one/or both team(s) using more than the usual maximum recommended number of replacements (as stated in Rule 8.1 above). This agreement must be

secured by the captains and the referee at least 30 minutes before the match and reported when confirming the result.

8.3 If one team has less than 15 players and the opposing team has replacements, the replacements are to be encouraged to play for the opposition.

8.3.1 No replacements are permitted to take to the field if the opposition has less than 15 players available. This rule is not intended to be applied if the reason for reduced numbers is due to injury or the supplication of red or yellow cards by the referee.

8.4 Law 3.5 is amended so that the minimum number of nominated front row players is always 3 for SNKML matches. The effect of this change on recording results is as follows: Where a match starts with both teams having a qualified front row, the score will stand and a win claimed in the usual way, even if the match has to go to uncontested scrums during play due to a lack of a qualified replacement. In the event a match has to start with uncontested scrums, due to the absence of a qualified front row in one team, that team cannot go on to claim the league points for a win. If that is the outcome of the match, the match will be recorded as having been drawn.

8.5 In the event of a match being played with uncontested scrums, it is not necessary for either team to reduce the number of players on the pitch as a result of Law 3.6, unless as a result of suspension.

9. The scoring system will be four (4) points for a win, three (3) points for a draw, one (1) point for playing and nil (0) points for a default (i.e. walk over).

9.1 One (1) bonus point will be awarded to a losing team if the final score line is within seven (7) points or less.

9.2 Regardless of the final score in any league match the widest points differential that will be entered for league table purposes is forty (40) points.

9.3 Subject to Rule 7 above; any member club that calls off a league match without being able to successfully rearrange the match, renders the opposing team forty (40) score points and a win four (4) points and scores no points themselves.

9.4 A side that forfeits an away fixture before the date of the return match will not be able to record a win for their home match. If that match is won it will be recorded as a draw.

9.5 Both clubs must report results to their respective league committee by 7.00 p.m. on the Monday immediately following the match either by telephone, email or other agreed procedure.

9.6 The League results and tables will be regularly updated, forwarded to league contacts and posted on the Kent and RFU websites.

10 Presentation of trophies will be made to the winning clubs at the end of each season. Plaques for the winners and runners-up in each league would be paid for and provided by the Kent County Rugby Football Union.

11. Promotion and relegation may apply between the Leagues where considered practicable by the Competitions Committee.

12 If a club forfeits a more senior fixture but continues to honour lower league fixtures on the same day, and that leads to a complaint from any team losing a merit table fixture with this reason being cited, the league coordinator may invoke rule 13.1 or allow the result to stand as is appropriate for the specific circumstances where a complaint is received. Disciplinary sanctions may be invoked by the League Committee.

13 All grievances are to be notified in the first instance by letter or email to the relevant league committee within 7 days following the fixture.

13.1 If, and in the opinion of the appropriate league committee, any member club, through its representatives or teams, has acted in direct infringement or disregard of the spirit and ethos of the SNKML competition, The League committee may impose sanctions and/or adjust recorded results or competition points, evenly and fairly.

14. Appeals against decisions made by the relevant league committee may be referred in writing to the Chairman of the KCRFU Competitions Sub-committee. All such appeals must be made /received within 14 days of receiving a decision from the appropriate league /committee.

15. Even if at least one team is short of players it is expected that every effort is made to play a match. If a 15 a-side or similar event cannot be agreed on, a match under the RFU's Game On regulations should be played if at all possible, especially when there are at least 10 players available on each side.

These regulations are sent to all clubs involved in the Shepherd Neame Junior Leagues.