

Suomen Rugbyliitto

2021 COMPETITION REGULATIONS



Foreword

These regulations have been written to be as comprehensive as possible, but it is inevitable that situations will arise that are not covered by the precise wording of this document. Where possible, solutions to these events should be inferred from the current regulations as outlined and/or by common practice. It is also important to remember that SRL is a member of external organisation's whose regulations may also apply to the governance of Finnish rugby.

It is hoped that following these regulations will give Finnish rugby the balance it needs between development and growth of rugby up and down the country on one hand, and the need for well-governed competition on the other.

Abbreviations

FRRA	Finland Rugby Referees Association
NLCM	National league and competitions manager
NT	National team
SRL	Suomen Rugbyliitto (Finnish Rugby Federation)
7s	Seven-a-side
XVs	Fifteen-a-side

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1 Administrative

1.1 Acts contrary to the spirit of the game

All parties involved in Finnish rugby will follow the spirit and values of the sport in their actions and behaviour, both on and off the rugby field and at any time where they may be construed as representing- or being associated with rugby in Finland. Any individual or organisation deemed to have breached this general code of conduct or who has been found to have brought the game into disrepute may be subject to sanction by the SRL Disciplinary committee.

1.2 Use of banned substances

By their participation in SRL-sanctioned competition, all club members agree to commit to follow both the Finnish Anti-Doping Code and World Rugby Anti-Doping Regulations. Participating clubs accept that the Finnish Anti-Doping Agency has full rights to perform doping tests in SRL-sanctioned competitions and that competition bans based on the guidelines of the aforementioned bodies may be imposed on those found to have breached these anti-doping codes.

1.3 Team eligibility

To enter an SRL competition, teams must be members of SRL, or otherwise have explicit permission from the SRL to enter the competition. Except where players are permitted to play for another team under the regulations on loan players set out later in these regulations, combined teams, consisting of representatives of one or more club, may only enter SRL competitions if they have explicit permission to do so from the NLCM. In such cases, the name of the team must be such that it is clearly differentiated from any single existing club.

1.4 Player eligibility

1.4.1 Licenses and insurance

All players fielded in any SRL competition must be fully licensed and insured for the match in question. By entering the field of play, a player acknowledges that they have a valid license and the required level of insurance. By naming a player on the team sheet, a club acknowledges that they have checked and validated this claim. Any player or club unclear of what constitutes a valid license or necessary level of insurance should contact the SRL technical director. The SRL, members of the SRL board, the NLCM or match officials cannot be held accountable for any legal or medical repercussions if a player and/or club disregard this regulation and/or for the consequences of participating in any rugby activities.

1.4.2 Representation of a club

Unless otherwise stated in these regulations, or explicit permission has been granted by the NLCM, a club may only field players licensed to them in SRL competition. If a player wishes to change their club after already purchasing a license, they may send a request to the NLCM to have their license transferred. Such requests will only be granted where a valid need for the transfer can be shown (i.e. a player has moved to a new city, as opposed to simply desiring to play for a new team, or a player wishes to transfer teams between seasons). In situations where a player holds two valid licenses, the license that was first purchased will be considered the sole valid license until its expiration.

Players that are registered to an SRL-registered club with no XV's team competing in competitions covered by these regulations, may also represent a XV's club to which they are not registered. Any player making use of this exemption will be considered registered to the first XV's club they play for during the season by default (a player wishing to be considered registered to a different XV's club should contact the NLCM) and may therefore not represent another XV's side unless permitted to do so under the relevant competition regulations outlined in this document.

1.4.3 Age restrictions

A player is considered adult on their 18th birthday. An adult may play senior rugby in all SRL competitions. Male players who have reached their 17th birthday may play with adults provided that they are considered competent to do so by their club, the relevant club coach has provided a written summary of the player that clearly highlights their ability to play senior rugby, and the club has obtained written permission from the player's parents or guardian for them to participate. Female players that have reached their 16th birthday may play with adults provided that they are considered competent to do so by their club, the relevant club coach has provided a written summary of the player that clearly highlights their ability to play senior rugby, and the club has obtained written permission from the player's parents or guardian for them to participate. Such written assessment and approval must be sent to the NLCM and the SRL.

A player who has not reached their 18th birthday (male or female) may not play or train in the front row of the scrum, regardless of any permissions granted.

No players of an age below those outlined above may play senior rugby, regardless of any other mitigating circumstances. In all cases where documentation is necessary it is the responsibility of the player's club to organise, collect, and archive such paperwork.

1.4.4 Investigation of eligibility

Any request that SRL check a player's eligibility may only be submitted by the opposition club or by a match official appointed to the game in question. This must be done via the club email (club name @finland.rugby). Such a request to investigate eligibility must be sent to the NLCM by 2359 of the day in which the match was played and must clearly be referring to a specific player(s). No sanctions will be imposed if this process has not been followed.

In addition to the above, SRL reserves the right to independently check, randomly or otherwise, the eligibility of all players involved in a game at any time and to impose the relevant sanctions after the fact if clubs or players are subsequently found to be in breach.

1.4.5 Result of fielding an ineligible player

In the event that a club is found to have fielded an ineligible player after-the-fact (provided that the procedure outlined above has been followed) then the non-offending team will be given the option of either accepting the result of the game as played or claiming a forfeit win (meaning a points score of 70 – 0 in favour of the non-offending team and a deduction of 1 league point from the offending team). Repeat or deliberate offenses may result in additional sanctions against the club at the discretion of the SRL disciplinary panel. An ineligible player that the SRL disciplinary panel considers knew, or should have known, that they were ineligible may also be subject to a personal sanction. The entry-level suspension for this form of offense is a one-week ban (see Appendix 2 for further details of the time period for bans).

1.5 Club responsibility

1.5.1 Responsibility of the home team

1.5.1.1 The pitch

The home club is responsible for reserving a pitch that conforms as close as possible to the standards set by World Rugby. A pitch below this standard may also be used if they have either been accepted by SRL or is accepted by the match referee (provided it is safe to play on). Any disputes on match day should be settled by the match referee. If the pitch is below the standard required to play on, then the home team will forfeit the match. Disputes in advance of match day should be mediated by the NLCM. Clubs should also conform to the matchday requirements for games set out at Appendix 1 (pitch flags, goalposts, technical zones, scoreboards, and benches for substitutes).

1.5.1.2 Informing the visitors

The home club is responsible for informing the visiting team and the match referee and the FRRA of the time and place of the match at least **five** days prior to the day of the match. If the information is not provided as required above and the visiting team is unable

to contact their hosts after reasonable efforts to do so, then the visiting team will be entitled to request in writing (via e-mail) that the NLCM award a forfeit.

1.5.1.3 Non-appointed match officials

In the event that no match referee has been appointed by FRRA:

- it is the responsibility of both clubs to provide a suitable alternative. Such a referee may be a member of either club. In the event that more than one match official is nominated, and teams cannot agree on which should officiate, the dispute should be settled by the NLCM, a senior FRRA representative, or suitable alternative. If no match official is provided, then teams will be given the opportunity to postpone the game to a mutually agreed date. If no date can be found, the match will be marked as a draw.
- the home team will be responsible for collecting the team sheets from both clubs and forwarding them to teamsheets@finland.rugby within two hours of the final whistle.

1.5.2 Responsibility of both teams

1.5.2.1 Cancellation/postponement/delay

If a team is unable to fulfil a fixture then they must notify their opposition, all appointed match officials and teamsheets@finland.rugby as soon as possible. If a team does not turn up for a scheduled match or does not notify their opponents of cancellation at least five days prior to kick-off, then said club will be responsible for reimbursing the costs of the opposing team related to the cancellation. Such costs include, but are not limited to, pitch reservation and travel.

A team which cancels a scheduled match without an agreement from the opposing team to postpone the scheduled match to an alternative date, will forfeit such match and the penalties set out in Section 2.1.4 shall be applied.

If a team is unable to arrive in time for the scheduled kick-off due to factors outside of their control (as agreed by the NLCM) then there is no forfeit provided that they contact the opposing team once the delay is realised, give the reason for the delay, and keep them informed of their estimated time of arrival. If possible, the game should be played after the delayed team's arrival, otherwise a replay will be organised on a date mutually agreed by both teams. If no new date can be found, the result will be recorded as a draw.

In addition, any side that cancels or reschedules a XV-a-side match after the date set and notified by the NLCM to all clubs will be liable to pay a forfeit fee to FRRRA. The fee per cancelled/rescheduled match is €250.

1.5.2.2 Team sheets

Each club will ensure completion of their team sheet in full (names and license numbers for all players and pitch-side personnel) and deliver it to the match referee at least 15 minutes before kick-off. Failure to do so will result in the kick-off being delayed and, when kick-off does occur, the non-offending team will be awarded a penalty on the halfway mark. If non-submission of the team sheet delays the scheduled kick-off by more than fifteen minutes, then the non-offending team will be entitled to claim a forfeit win if they choose to do so. Team sheets must also be sent to teamsheets@finland.rugby before the game begins for the purpose of administration and any potential disciplinary matters.

Teams must also have clearly noted their front-row and front-row replacement players, and, if player(s) have been borrowed from other clubs (where permissible), these must be clearly indicated. Clubs should take special note of and comply with the different regulations regarding the use of loan players in each division.

By naming a player on the team sheet, the club acknowledge that the information provided is accurate, that all players are fully SRL-licensed, have health-insurance that covers them in the event of possible injury during the game, and are eligible to be fielded in the match and competition under the current version of these regulations.

1.6 Disciplinary matters

World Rugby Regulation 17 provides the foundation for the SRL's disciplinary regulations.

The purpose of this regulation is to set out the procedures for the handling of the following disciplinary matters:

1. When a player is sent off ("red card");
2. When a player is cited for an act or acts of foul play;
3. Where a player has been cautioned and suspended ("yellow card") three times in the same season
4. Other disciplinary issues referred to the panel by SRL administration (for example, see regulation 1.1.)

All red cards, citing requests and accumulated yellow cards will be automatically referred to the disciplinary panel.

1.6.1 General obligations

Participating clubs are responsible and accountable for the conduct of their players, team members and other persons in attendance in any official capacity during SRL competitions and must ensure that their conduct is of the highest standard in accordance with the World Rugby code of conduct (which can be found in Appendix 1 at https://www.passport.worldrugby.org/pdfs/World_Rugby_Regulation_20_EN.pdf) and that matches are played in accordance with disciplined and sporting behaviour.

Each participating club and team member agree to be bound by and comply with the provisions and requirements of the SRL disciplinary regulations and any decisions made.

1.6.2 Disciplinary panel

The panel will consist of the disciplinary officer, and two other members who are either:

1. Minimum qualified level 2 match officials or equivalent, with at least three years of experience in SRL competition
2. A Rugby Europe qualified match commissioner

It is the responsibility and right of the disciplinary officer to form the panel. No member of the disciplinary panel shall have taken any official part in the match where the citing took place, nor have any conflict of interest. If the disciplinary officer played any official part in the game in question or has a conflict of interest, then they must recuse themselves and appoint a suitable alternative.

1.6.2.1 Use of video

When reviewing video evidence against the specific player(s), the disciplinary panel may only consider evidence from one minute before the incident and only until the incident and any immediate reaction to it has finished. Any additional players found to have committed foul play during this period may be cited by the disciplinary panel. If the disciplinary panel elects to make any additional citing(s), proceedings against those additional player(s) will begin, and clubs will be given two days from the notification of citing to submit any evidence that they wish the disciplinary panel to consider when hearing that case.

1.6.2.2 Publication of reports

The disciplinary panel will write a report on all incidents referred to it, clearly outlining the basis behind the decision and the length of suspension awarded. This report will be made public for the purpose of transparency in decision making. All disciplinary panel reports are available at finland.rugby/discipline. The publication of reports allows for SRL compliance with World Rugby regulation 17.4.7.

1.6.3 Red cards

A player being shown a red card must leave the playing area (including the technical area). All red cards received during a match will automatically be referred to the disciplinary panel.

By 2359 of the second day after the game (i.e. Monday night if the game was played on Saturday) the team to which the player belongs must have submitted all the evidence they wish the disciplinary panel to consider to the disciplinary officer via email to discipline@finland.rugby. The email must originate from the club's assigned @finland.rugby address. If a video of the match was taken by a club (or club member, or affiliated individual) then an **unedited** version of the video must be submitted by this deadline. Clubs that do not submit such video in their possession may be subject to separate sanction unless a valid reason for its delay is provided.

Once the deadline for submission of material has passed and any video evidence has been received, the disciplinary panel will be formed.

Any player that receives a red card in a 7s tournament will be suspended from the next two games in that tournament. If there is only one game left in such tournament, the player receiving the red card will be prevented from plying in the next game in the next 7s tournament they participate in. Any player who receives a direct red card, may also be subject to subsequent disciplinary procedures based on the red card report submitted by the officiating match official.

1.6.4 Yellow cards

All yellow cards received during a match or 7s tournament will automatically be referred to the disciplinary officer for record-keeping purposes. The purpose of this is to track all disciplinary matters and to create a record of player disciplinary history. Should a citing take place in relation to a yellow card, the usual citing procedure shall be followed.

1.6.5 Citation

Citing requests will only be accepted from either of the two clubs on the field when the incident occurred. There are two relevant deadlines that clubs must be aware of: announcing the intention to cite and submitting the citation. Both steps must be followed by the club submitting the citation for it to be considered by the disciplinary officer.

1.6.5.1 *Intention to cite*

Any club wishing to initiate a citing must send an intention to cite to the disciplinary officer by 2359 of the day of the match. The formal @finland.rugby email address of the club to whom the player being cited is registered must be copied (CC'd). The email must originate from the club's formal @finland.rugby address. This email must include:

1. Details about the game in which the incident occurred
2. The identity of the player(s) being cited
3. Specific reason for requesting disciplinary action be taken against the player being cited referencing the applicable law¹
4. A receipt demonstrating a successful deposit of €200 to the SRL account (amount to be refunded should the citing complaint be upheld)

If the above details are not provided, then the citation will be immediately dismissed by the disciplinary officer. The deposit shall be forfeited to the SRL.

1.6.5.2 *The citation*

By 2359 of the second day after the game (i.e. Monday night if the game was played on Saturday) both the team requesting the citation and the team of the cited player must have submitted all evidence that they wish the disciplinary panel to consider. This typically consists of player statements and video/photographic evidence. If a video of the match was taken by a club (or club member, or affiliated individual) then an **unedited** version of the video must be submitted by this deadline. A €50 fine may be imposed for every day the video is not submitted (subject to a maximum of €250, payable to the SRL) without a valid reason for the delay in the video being submitted. If the club that sent the initial citation request does not meet this deadline then the citing procedure will be terminated.

Once the deadline for submission of material has passed, the disciplinary officer will form a disciplinary panel.

¹ Sanctions in Appendix 2 to these regulations may be of assistance in determining relevant offence

1.6.6 Incidents occurring outside of SRL-run competition

In the event that a red/ yellow card or grounds for a citing occur outside of an SRL-run competition, the disciplinary panel may also convene provided that the incident in question occurred in Finland. In such cases, the regulations with regard to timings and other fixed procedures will be applied with more flexibility in the reasonable discretion of the disciplinary officer, but all parties will be expected to act in a timely manner.

In the event that a player is found guilty of the alleged offence, a ban will only be imposed if the severity of the offence is deemed to be high-end or if the type of offence is sensitive in nature.

1.6.7 Lengths and type of suspension

Imposed lengths of suspension where red cards are upheld or awarded retrospectively will be determined by using the World Rugby model modified to Finland (given that the Finnish season is typically much shorter than average). These guidelines are viewable as Appendix 2.

Any player receiving 3 yellow cards in the season (including play-off games) will receive an automatic 1-week ban (carried over to the following season where appropriate).

All suspensions will be given in weeks and will bar the player under suspension from competing in any competition during this time. The suspension period will begin the day before the next game any team of the player's club is due to play for which the player would be eligible. A player waiting for a suspension period to start may not represent any other club in competition during this time. The relevant dates will be included in the report of the disciplinary panel. Suspensions may carry across seasons if necessary.

With respect to cancelled or postponed games, the following application of playing suspensions shall be applied:

Match schedule unknown/unclear on date of suspension – e.g. league suspended and return to play date not yet known	Judicial Panel should express the sanction in weeks (e.g. a 3 week suspension), note that the schedule is unknown and require an update from the player/his club/Union and tournament organiser once matches scheduled	Sanction: Sanction applies as normal when play resumes (e.g. the first 3 matches on return to play)
Match schedule known on date of suspension but matches subsequently postponed/cancelled	Judicial Panel should express the sanction as clearly as possible (i.e. set out the scheduled matches) but noting that where any of the scheduled matches are cancelled/ postponed, the Panel must be notified and the sanction will be adjusted accordingly.	Sanction: Match postponed: sanction adjusted to apply to the matches that are played next in time rather than to the postponed matches. Match cancelled and points awarded: match was scheduled to take place at time of sanction and for the purposes of the tournament in question, has “taken place” in that points were awarded. The match can therefore count towards the player’s suspension. Match cancelled but no points awarded (e.g. standalone warm-up match): match was scheduled to take place at time of sanction but has not “taken place” for the purposes of the team, tournament or otherwise so cannot count towards player’s suspension.

The disciplinary panel has the authority and autonomy to evaluate how suspensions should be managed in exceptional circumstances. These include but are not limited to suspensions carrying across seasons, and suspensions incurred in XV's competitions affecting 7s and vice versa.

Suspensions incurred within SRL competition also apply to international fixtures.

1.6.8 Right of appeal

The disciplinary panel will not accept new evidence or re-hear the same incident unless exceptional new evidence is brought to light with a clear reason why it was not provided

by the deadline. Barring the introduction of such evidence, the disciplinary panel's decision is final although further appeals may be made to the governing body of sport in Finland and be heard under the rules of that association.

1.7 Appealing regulatory decisions

Only clubs registered to the SRL, FRRA and SRL board members may lodge a complaint about these regulations. The complaint must be submitted in writing to the NLCM using official @finland.rugby email addresses. In all matters, the NLCM will be the sole adjudicator.

2 XV Competitions

The competitions referred to in this section are separate and distinct from each other.

2.1 Administration

2.1.1 Match structure

Unless otherwise stated, every match shall be played XV-a-side and teams may name up to 23 players in their matchday squad provided that World Rugby law 3.8 (team) (<https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/law/3>) is adhered to. Teams with a full 23-person squad may use all eight replacements. If a team has 11 or less eligible players available for a XV-a-side match, then the opposing team will be given the option to declare a win by forfeit without the match being played (this option must be enforced before kick-off). If both teams have 11 or less players, then the match may be abandoned, and the score will be recorded as a 0 – 0 draw if the teams are unable to arrange a mutually agreed date for the game to be played.

2.1.2 Withdrawal from a league

If a team chooses to withdraw from a competition during the season, they may apply for permission to do from the NLCM. If granted, they will immediately be removed from the calendar and the results of any previously scheduled matches will be erased. If this would have significant bearings on a league table toward the end of the regular season, an alternative scenario may be enforced by the NLCM. In such situations, players of that withdrawn team will be eligible to be play for other clubs, but such players will be considered registered to the first club that they represent for the remainder of the season. Any team which withdraws from any competition during a season will not be entitled to a refund of any fees previously paid (e.g FRRA fees).

2.1.3 Abandoning a match in progress

If a game is abandoned while in progress, then the outcome is dependent on when and why it was abandoned. If play is halted due to circumstances out of the control of either

team or the first half has already ended, then the score at the time of stoppage will stand as the final result. If play is halted during the first half due to circumstances out of the control of either team, then the game will be ruled incomplete and a replay ordered on a date mutually agreed by both teams. If the teams cannot agree on a date, then the NLCM will consult with both teams to achieve a reasonable solution but in the event of disagreement, will make a final and binding decision.

If a game is abandoned due to reasons that either team should have been able to foresee and prevent (as adjudged by the NLCM), then the final outcome will be decided by the NLCM based on the merits of the incident.

2.1.4 Forfeits

If a team forfeits a fixture, then the official result will be recorded as a 70 – 0 win in favour of non-forfeiting team and the team that forfeited will be deducted one league point and charged a €250 fee. No bonus points will be awarded for a forfeit win.

2.1.5 League points

Teams will receive 4 points for a win, 2 points for a draw, and 0 points for a loss. Teams will also score a bonus point for scoring four or more tries in a match or by losing a game by seven points or less. A losing team may earn two bonus points from one match. If two or more teams are tied on league points and points difference at the end of the regular season (i.e. before any play-off matches are to be played), then the rankings will be decided as follows:

1. The results in matches played between the tied teams during the season
2. The number of tries scored by each of the tied teams throughout the season
3. The number of red cards received throughout the season
4. The number of yellow cards received throughout the season
5. A coin toss (or other random method supervised by the NLCM)

2.1.6 Drawn matches

If a playoff match finishes in a draw then a mandatory 10 minutes of extra-time will be played (i.e. all 10 minutes must be played, plus any additional stoppage-time incurred during this period). Whichever team scores the most points during this period will be declared the winner of the game. If the scores are still tied, then an additional 10 minutes of sudden death extra-time will be played with the first team to score being the winner. If neither team scores during this period then the winner of the game will be determined by a drop goal competition, the details of which shall be enforced by the match referee using the FRRRA model.

2.1.7 Finals Day

All finals will be played in a predetermined venue on 'Finals Day'. Where one team finished higher than the other during the regular season (applicable only in competitions in which teams were scheduled to play against each other) then they will be considered as the home side. The one exception to the principle however is that the higher-ranked side will also be awarded the benefit of first choice of match-day colours should both teams wear similar colours.

2.1.8 Promotion and relegation

All divisions in the men's competition will be subject to promotion and relegation.

Promotion and relegation for the Championship is decided by a playoff game between the team finishing bottom of the Championship and the team finishing top of Division 1. However, if the team winning the Division 1 final does not want to be promoted to the Championship, then either (a) the team which lost the Division 1 final will be offered the chance to contest the playoff game and be promoted in the place of the team which won the Division 1 final or (ii) if the team which lost the Division 1 final confirms it is not willing to replace the team which won the Division 1 final, the playoff game will be cancelled.

Promotion and relegation between Division 1 and Division 2 will be automatic and, unless they decline promotion, the team finishing top of Division 2 will replace the team finishing bottom of Division 1.

A club which would be entitled to promotion must confirm to the NLCM via e-mail within 2 months of the end of the season that it will take its place in the higher division the following season. If a club declines promotion, its place in the higher division may be offered to a club in the same division which would be willing to be promoted and, in the reasonable opinion of the NLCM, has the player numbers and performance to compete in the higher division.

Teams are eligible for promotion unless:

1. The team is a 2nd XV and promotion would result in the team being placed in the same division as their 1st XV
2. The team has forfeited a match at any point during the season.

If a club has cancelled 2 or more matches in a season or they request that 3 matches or more are played with less than 15 players such club will be automatically relegated to the division below for the next season irrespective of such club's final league position and the promoted club will replace that club rather than the club that finished bottom.

2.2 Finnish Championship (male)

2.2.1 *Format*

The Championship will follow a round-robin league-style format where each team will play every other team in the division twice: once home and once away. At the end of the regular season, the top three teams will advance to the playoffs.

2.2.2 *Eligibility and loan players*

Teams may field players registered to their club without restriction.

In addition:

1. any club (note: **club**, not separate teams within a club) may name up to five players from another club or clubs that do not play in the same division to be designated loan players available to the specific other club to which they are registered as loan players. Such loan players will be notified by the club to which they will be loaned as early as possible in the season but by no later than 23.59 on July 15th in each season, after which time no additional loan players can be made. Notification must be made to both the technical director and the NLCM by e-mail from the clubs @finland.rugby email.
2. A maximum of three of these named loan players may be used by the team to which they are loaned but not licensed in any game however, if a team agrees to any opposing team fielding more than the maximum 3 loan players to avoid a game being cancelled, then clubs may agree to waive this maximum in relation to any specific game and the rules on forfeiting a game will not apply. In such circumstances the relevant clubs should notify the NCLM accordingly confirming the number and identity of all loan players it has been agreed in the relevant game.

However, there is no obligation on any team to agree to the use of extra loan players by the opposing team in any specific game.

3. Any club wishing to field a loan player must inform both the technical director and NLCM at least 3 days prior to the game in which such loan player will play.
4. Loan players cannot play for another club in the same division on any occasion unless written consent from the NLCM has been obtained in advance in exceptional circumstances.
5. Clubs are expected to use the loan players system in the spirit of the game and with the intention of all clubs fulfilling fixtures and playing as much rugby as possible to further the development of rugby in Finland.
6. Any issues or disputes are to be referred to and resolved by the NCLM.

A team that fields a non-eligible player or that names such a player on their match sheet will be subject to penalty.

2.2.3 Playoffs

The playoffs will be contested between the top three teams of the regular season. The first-ranked team will advance directly to the final and the second-ranked side will host the third-ranked side in a single-leg semi-final. The winner of the semi-final will then play in the final.

2.3 Division 1 (male)

2.3.1 Foreword

Division 1 follow the same regulations as the Championship.

2.3.2 Format

Division 1 will follow a round-robin league-style format where each team will play every other team in the division twice: once home and once away. At the end of the regular season, the top three teams will advance to the playoffs.

2.3.3 Fielding Championship team players

Division 1 teams that are the only male team representing their club in an SRL XV competition may field players licensed to them without restriction.

Division 1 clubs that also field a men's championship team may field players licensed to them subject to the following restrictions.

No player can play 2 games on the same day for either the same or 2 different clubs. The exception to this restriction is that provided a replacement in any Championship game has not played more than a half (40 minutes) in a Championship game, the same player can then play in a Division 1 game on the same day provided that it is encouraged that players should not play more than a half (40 minutes) of the Division 1 game if possible.

No player which has played for any national team in the previous 2 seasons can play in a game in division 1 if they usually play in the Championship team for their club. There is no restriction on players who have played for national teams playing in a game in the division above the division in which they customarily play, however. Exceptions to the national team ruling will only be granted if it can be proven that they are currently not of a Championship standard, such as returning from long injury. If this exception is applied, the team fielding the player must note this on the match report card and obtain the opposing captain's signature to show that the opponents have been notified.

Any disagreements on a player's eligibility under this exception should be mediated by the match referee or the NLCM prior to kick off. If no agreement can be reached before kick-off, the player will not be considered eligible to play.

2.3.4 Fielding loan players

In addition:

1. any club (note: **club**, not separate teams within a club) may name up to five players from another club or clubs that do not play in the same division to be designated loan players available to the specific other club to which they are registered as loan players. Such loan players will be notified by the club to which they will be loaned as early as possible in the season but by no later than 23.59 on July 15th in each season, after which time no additional loan player nominations can be made. Notification must be made to both the technical director and the NLCM by e-mail from the club's official @finland.rugby account.
2. A maximum of three of these named loan players may be fielded by the team to which they are loaned but not licensed in any game however, if a team is fine with any opposing team requesting it be allowed to field more than the maximum 3 loan players to avoid a game being cancelled then clubs may agree to waive this maximum in relation to any specific game. In such circumstances the relevant clubs should notify the NCLM accordingly confirming the number and identity of all loan players it has been agreed in the relevant game. However, there is no obligation on any team to agree to the use of extra loan players by the opposing team in any specific game.
3. Any club wishing to field a loan player must inform both the technical director and NLCM at least 3 days prior to the game in which such loan player will play.
4. Loan players cannot play for another club in the same division on any occasion unless written consent from the NCLM has been obtained in advance in exceptional circumstances.
5. Clubs are expected to use the loan players system in the spirit of the game and with the intention of all clubs fulfilling fixtures and playing as much rugby as possible to further the development of rugby in Finland.

6. Any issues or disputes to be referred to and resolved by the NCLM.

A team that fields a non-eligible player or that fails to mark such loaned players on their match sheet will be subject to penalty.

2.3.5 Playoffs

The playoffs will be contested between the top three teams of the regular season. The first-ranked team will advance directly to the final and the second-ranked side will host the third-ranked side in a single-leg semi-final. The winner of the semi-final will then play in the final.

2.4 Division 2 (male)

2.4.1 *Format*

2.4.2 Division 2 will follow a round-robin league-style format where each team will play every other team in the division twice: once home and once away. At the end of the regular season, the top three teams will advance to the playoffs.

2.4.3 *Eligibility and loan players*

2.4.4 Teams may field players registered to their club provided that a player which has played in the preceding Championship game for the club, they will not be eligible to play for the club's Division 2 team in the following game (subject to the regulations permitting Championship team substitutes also playing for lower division teams on the same match day).

2.4.5 In addition:

2.4.5.1 any club (note: **club**, not separate teams within a club) may name up to five players from another club or clubs that do not play in the same division to be designated loan players available to the specific other club to which they are registered as loan players. Such loan players will be notified by the club to which they will be loaned as early as possible in the season but by no later than 23.59 on July 15th in each season, after which time no additional loan players can be made. Notification must be made to both the technical director and the NLCM by e-mail from the clubs @finland.rugby email.

- 2.4.5.2 A maximum of three of these named loan players may be used by the team to which they are loaned but not licensed in any game however, if a team agrees to any opposing team fielding more than the maximum 3 loan players to avoid a game being cancelled, then clubs may agree to waive this maximum in relation to any specific game and the rules on forfeiting a game will not apply. In such circumstances the relevant clubs should notify the NCLM accordingly confirming the number and identity of all loan players it has been agreed in the relevant game. It should be noted that in relation to Division 2, the NLCM will be more accommodating in the use of loan players than for the higher divisions in order to maximise the number of Divisions 2 games which can be played. However, there is no obligation on any team to agree to the use of extra loan players by the opposing team in any specific game.
- 2.4.5.3 Any club wishing to field a loan player must inform both the technical director and NLCM at least 3 days prior to the game in which such loan player will play.
- 2.4.6 Loan players cannot play for another club in the same division on any occasion unless written consent from the NLCM has been obtained in advance in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.4.7 Clubs are expected to use the loan players system in the spirit of the game and with the intention of all clubs fulfilling fixtures and playing as much rugby as possible to further the development of rugby in Finland.
- 2.4.8 Any issues or disputes are to be referred to and resolved by the NCLM.
- 2.4.9 A team that fields a non-eligible player or that names such a player on their match sheet will be subject to penalty.

2.5 Women's Championship

2.5.1 Foreword

The Women's Championship is not bound to these regulations as strictly as the men's Championship. If both teams in any game are happy for any part of these regulations to be waived, then sides may be permitted to do so, provided it does not create a safety risk.

Additionally, common practice may take precedent over these regulations at the discretion of the NLCM.

2.5.2 Format

The Women's Championship will follow a round-robin league-style format where each team will play every other team in the division twice: once home and once away. At the end of the regular season, the top three teams will advance to the playoffs.

2.5.3 Fielding players licensed to another club

Championship teams may field players licensed to their club without restriction.

In addition:

1. any club (note: **club**, not separate teams within a club) may name up to five players from another club or clubs that do not play in the same division to be designated loan players available to the specific other club to which they are registered as loan players. Such loan players will be notified by the club to which they will be loaned as early as possible in the season but by no later than 23.59 on July 15th in each season, after which time no additional loan player nominations can be made. Notification must be made to both the technical director and the NLCM by e-mail from the club's official @finland.rugby account.
2. A maximum of three of these named loan players may be fielded by the team to which they are loaned but not licensed in any game however, if a team is fine with any opposing team requesting it be allowed to field more than the maximum 3 loan players to avoid a game being cancelled then clubs may agree to waive this maximum in relation to any specific game. In such circumstances the relevant clubs should notify the NCLM accordingly confirming the number and identity of all loan players it has been agreed in the relevant game. However, there is no obligation on any team to agree to the use of extra loan players by the opposing team in any specific game.
3. Any club wishing to field a loan player must inform both the technical director and NLCM at least 3 days prior to the game in which such loan player will play.

4. Loan players cannot play for another club in the same division on any occasion unless written consent from the SRL has been obtained in advance in exceptional circumstances.

5. Clubs are expected to use the loan players system in the spirit of the game and with the intention of all clubs fulfilling fixtures and playing as much rugby as possible to further the development of rugby in Finland.

6. Any issues or disputes to be referred to and resolved by the NCLM.

A team that fields a non-eligible player or that fails to mark such loaned players on their match sheet will be subject to penalty.

2.5.4 Playoffs

The playoffs will be contested between the top three teams of the regular season. The first-ranked team will automatically progress to the final, whereas the second-ranked side will host the third-ranked side in a single-leg semi-final. The winner of the semi-final will then play the final against the first-ranked team.

3 7s competitions

This section pertains to both men's and women's SRL 7s.

3.1 Administrative

3.1.1 Format

The number and location of tournaments within the 7s series will be decided in advance of the season. There is no minimum or maximum number of tournaments that teams must compete in to be included in the series. Teams will collect competition points based on their rankings at each tournament and the team with the most cumulative points over the series will win the SRL 7s.

3.1.2 Organisation

The men's or women's rugby coordinator will be responsible for deciding the number of pools and the draw for each tournament. The host club will be responsible for determining the order of play.

3.1.3 Withdrawal/non-attendance

A team is not obligated to attend all tournaments within a series. There is no penalty for non-attendance of any tournament.

Teams that are due to compete at a tournament but withdraw within five days of the event (i.e. after 2359 on Monday if the tournament is to be played on Saturday), will be liable to pay their share of tournament fees where applicable.

3.1.4 Abandoning a match or tournament in progress

Tournament organisers will be responsible for assessing the outcome of abandonment, as the time constraints placed on tournament events require flexibility.

3.1.5 Forfeits

If a team forfeits, the non-forfeiting team will be awarded a 21 – 0 win. No financial penalty will be imposed, and no competition point will be deducted. A team that forfeits a match may continue to play in the rest of the tournament.

3.1.6 Fielding players licensed to another club

In principle, teams may only field players licensed to them. Exceptions to this principle will only be made when a team has incurred injuries on the day that would jeopardise their ability to field a competitive team (this may extend beyond the starting XII), provided that they have permission from the captain of the opposition. This is meant so that teams struggling for numbers can still field a side, not to help clubs put out a stronger team. It is hoped that teams respect this aim.

3.1.7 Representing multiple teams at a single event

Once a player has taken the field for a given team in a tournament, they may not represent any other team during the same event. The only exception relates to a player that is loaned under the above regulation. In such instances, a loaned player will not be permitted to return to their original team for the rest of the tournament.

3.1.8 Fielding more than one side and scratch teams

Clubs may field up to two teams in each tournament. One of these teams may be a scratch team (such as a regional or collaborative squad), but not both. In this manner, scratch teams may be a registered team of more than one club. If two teams are entered, these will be considered distinct and separate from each other throughout the 7s series.

A player who has played for one such team may therefore not play for their club's other 7s side without being governed by the above rules on fielding players licensed to another club and playing for multiple teams during a single event.

3.1.9 Squad size

Clubs may name a tournament squad of 12.

3.1.10 Drawn matches

If a playoff match finishes in a draw then a maximum of two, five-minute periods of sudden-death extra-time will be played. If the scores are still tied, then the winner of the game will be determined by a drop-kick competition, the details of which shall be enforced by the match referee using the FRRRA model.

3.2 Scoring

3.2.1 Scoring within an individual tournament (i.e. pools)

Teams will receive four points for a win, two points for a draw, and zero points for a loss. There will be no bonus point system. If two teams are tied on points at the end of a tournament then the rankings will be decided as follows:

1. The points difference throughout the tournament
2. The results in matches played between the tied teams during the tournament
3. The number of tries scored by each of the tied teams throughout the tournament
4. The number of red cards received throughout the tournament
5. A coin toss (or other random method)

If more than two teams are tied, then the above criteria are used until one team is 'the winner'. The criterion then starts again from #1 for the remaining teams.

3.2.2 Scoring the series

Teams will score ten points for a tournament win, eight points for coming second, six points for coming third, four points for coming fourth, three points for coming fifth, two points for coming sixth, one point for coming seventh, and zero points for finishing eighth

and lower. Where an insufficient number of playoff matches are held to make these distinctions, teams may be tied for a place and be awarded the corresponding points (i.e. both losing semi-finalists may be awarded six points if there is no playoff game between them).

If two teams are tied on series points during the season, then the rankings will be decided as follows:

1. The results in matches played between the tied teams during the series
2. The number of tries scored by each of the tied teams throughout the series
3. The number of red cards received throughout the tournament
4. A coin toss (or other random method supervised by the league and competitions manager)

If more than two teams are tied, then the above criteria are used until one team is 'the winner'. The criterion then starts again from #1 for the remaining teams.

4 Contacts

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Tampere@		Warriors@	Vaasa@		

Appendix 1: MATCHDAY REQUIREMENTS

League improvements in Suomen Rugbyliitto competitions for 2021

As we try to market ourselves to potential sponsors and partners along with a view to getting some or all of our leagues sponsored then it goes hand in hand that we need to up our game and levels of responsibility so that we look more attractive to potentials and not just a Sunday morning kick around with jumpers for goal posts.

Efforts were made to create a Match day guide

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VJLaqrseB0HaRj7hDxERcE4gip9vFoAw/view?usp=sharing>)

Whether this document, also available in Finnish,

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13hKehoieKGkCCPEGIZD79dLqw9SFIANB/view?usp=sharing>)

has been read by clubs or used as a guideline is unknown. Some situations would prove not.

All teams / clubs participating in the SM and Division 1 series must have the following items

- Proper posts – stable. And not football goal posts with extensions
- Proper goal post protection
- 14 pitch flags
- Scoreboard – of some sort – analogue or digital
- Benches - for substitutes
- Technical Zone – where only those on the team sheet are allowed

These, besides 2 teams, are the minimum we need to have a game proceed.

What happens if there is a club / team that doesn't comply?

A monetary sanction would be normal in most other unions. But this can prove a poor choice as many clubs, as well as the SRL, struggle financially.

The preferred option is the use of a points system. Each lack of required criteria incurs a point. Once a certain limit of points has accrued the team loses a league point.

- The purpose is not to penalise the clubs or find ways to make it difficult but to find ways to improve the standard of our leagues, but with no penalty, many / some / all won't take necessary steps to ensure the correct equipment is in use.

With the addition of technical zones, pitch side on game day will also be managed in the same protocols as per National Team games – only those on the team sheet allowed in the 'technical zone'. Several games have had this applied already this season and clubs have welcomed it and complied.

All players (almost 100% completed in 2020) and ALL management staff will have license numbers input into the team sheet.

As part of the referee's pre-game procedures, they would note whether the home team has fulfilled the requirements – by way of checkboxes on the match report card. This is then registered on the data sheet and seen by those responsible for leagues and competitions.

If a team has a valid reason for not complying, - and of all the above the only issue would be goal posts that are not seated on the try line, such as Porvoo who have proper goal posts and post protectors, but they are on the dead ball line. Stipulated by the city so the posts

don't interfere with football games - The club that runs into this issue would have a documentation from the city to confirm that goal posts are not on the try line because of x, y or z.

Goal Posts.

These are of the correct variety and dimensions – which many now have – and should be inserted into the ground on the try line. With no risk of them falling over. Should a club have to use feet to keep upright posts (currently Espoo, Pori and Turku) then the above-mentioned stipulation is required – reason from the city as to why they cannot be inserted into the ground and then the feet must be sufficiently covered, a thin layer of Astro turf is no longer sufficient.

Post protectors.

Of the approved variety and securely wrapped to the post. Mattresses wrapped around and other stop gaps are not acceptable.

Pitch marking flags.

Will be of the correct variety – as in safe to be placed in the correct position with no risk of metal bases causing injury. The pitch flags do not need to have padded posts or hinged shafts but there must be 14 (dead ball, try line, 22, halfway, 22, try line, dead ball) and approved as safe.

To allow this to happen for all clubs, as there are some that struggle, the SRL, in conjunction with Pohjola Vakuutus have supplied 14 flags per venue, the poles are orange and have white flags printed with the Pohjola Vakuutus logo. These flag poles must be used at all games.

Scoreboard.

Some form of scoreboard that allows spectators and players to see the score. Analogue or digital. Something that can be updated as the match progresses.

Benches.

Enough seating area for the team substitutes, these can be the little substitute boxes or a bench. Should no benches be available then all substitutes are required to sit in the stands.

Technical Zone.

A 10m wide by 3m deep box, marked in pitch paint or by cones should be situated 2m from the pitch and in between the halfway and 10m line. This area is where all those on the team sheet should reside.

What happens if a club doesn't have the above on game day?

When the referee inspects the pitch – as they all do before a game – the referee will mark down if any of the above are missing, these will be noted on the match report card. Each item² missing incurs 1 point. When a club accumulates a total of 3 points, they will then lose 1 league point.

² Items does not mean if a club has only 10 flags then each flag missing equals 1 point. But rather as a whole the club is marked 1 point for flags missing – but there is no reason for some flags to be missing.

The 2021 season is planned to start in mid-May, (there are alternative plans should the Covid-19 issue affect this) there is more than sufficient time for clubs to ensure they have the correct and required equipment and also enough time to contact the city regarding any difficulties with placement of goal posts.

The above does not apply to 7's tournaments as these do not happen at venues where rugby is usually played.

Item	Correct or not	Date
Goal posts		
Post Protectors		
Pitch flags		
Scoreboard		
Benches		
Technical Zone		
TOTAL		

Appendix 2: DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

Note: Any act of foul play which results in contact with the head and/or the neck shall result in at least a mid-range sanction³

In respect of offences not referred to in Appendix 2 below, appropriate sanctions may be imposed at the discretion of the relevant Judicial Officer, Disciplinary Committee, Appeal Officer and/or Appeal Committee (as the case may be).

Notwithstanding the Sanctions in Appendix 2 and/or the provisions of World Rugby Regulation 17.19 in cases where the player's actions constitute mid-range or top end offending for any type of offence which had the potential to result and, in fact, did result in serious/gross consequences to the health of the victim, the Judicial Officers and/or Disciplinary Committees may impose any period of suspension including a suspension for life.

³ The note does not apply to the following Laws whose low-end entry points already take into account head contact being a potential feature or consequence of such breach reaching the red-card threshold: 9.11, 9.12 (biting, contact with eye(s)/eye area, striking with head and tripping), 9.18 and 9.27 (hair pulling).

Law	Description	LOW	MID	HIGH	MAX
9.11	Players must not do anything that is reckless or dangerous to others	1	2	38	52
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: BITING	4	6	8	208
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: INTENTIONAL CONTACT WITH EYE(S)	4	6	8	208
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: RECKLESS CONTACT WITH EYE(S)	2	4	6	208
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: CONTACT WITH EYE AREA	1	3	4	52
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: PUNCHING OR STRIKING WITH HAND OR ARM (INCL. STIFF ARM TACKLE)	1	2	3	52
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: STRIKING WITH THE ELBOW	1	2	3	52
9.12	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: STRIKING WITH THE SHOULDER	1	2	3	52
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: STRIKING WITH HEAD	2	3	5	104
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: STRIKING WITH KNEE	1	3	4	52
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: STAMPING OR TRAMPLING	1	2	4	52
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: TRIPPING	1	1	3	52
	A player must not physically abuse anyone. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to: KICKING	1	3	4	52
	A player must not verbally abuse anyone. Verbal abuse includes, but is not limited to, abuse based on: religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation.	2	4	6	52
9.13	A player must not tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously. Dangerous tackling includes, but is not limited to, tackling or attempting to tackle an opponent above the line of the shoulders even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders.	1	2	3	52
9.14	A player must not tackle an opponent who is not in possession of the ball.	1	2	3	52
9.15	Except in a scrum, ruck or maul, a player who is not in possession of the ball must not hold, push, charge or obstruct an opponent not in possession of the ball.	1	1	2	52
9.16	A player must not charge or knock down an opponent carrying the ball without attempting to grasp that player.	1	2	3	52
9.17	A player must not tackle, charge, pull, push or grasp an opponent whose feet are off the ground.	1	3	4	52
9.18	A player must not lift an opponent off the ground and drop or drive that player so that their head and/or upper body make contact with the ground.	2	3	5	52
	Dangerous play in a scrum. The front row of a scrum must not form at a distance from its opponents and rush against them.	1	1	3	52
9.19	Dangerous play in a scrum. A front-row player must not pull an opponent.	1	1	3	52
	Dangerous play in a scrum. A front-row player must not intentionally lift an opponent off their feet or force the opponent upwards out of the scrum.	1	1	3	52
	Dangerous play in a scrum. A front-row player must not intentionally collapse a scrum.	1	1	3	52
	Dangerous play in a ruck or maul. A player must not charge into a ruck or maul. Charging includes any contact made without binding onto another player in the ruck or maul.	1	2	3	52
9.20	Dangerous play in a ruck or maul. A player must not make contact with an opponent above the line of the shoulders.	1	1	3	52
	Dangerous play in a ruck or maul. A player must not intentionally collapse a ruck or a maul.	1	1	3	52
9.25	A player must not intentionally charge or obstruct an opponent who has just kicked the ball.	1	2	3	52
	A player must not do anything that is against the spirit of good sportsmanship including but not limited to: HAIR PULLING OR GRABBING	1	1	2	52
	A player must not do anything that is against the spirit of good sportsmanship including but not limited to: SPITTING AT ANYONE	1	3	4	52
9.27	A player must not do anything that is against the spirit of good sportsmanship including but not limited to: GRABBING, TWISTING OR SQUEEZING THE GENITALS (AND/OR BREASTS IN THE CASE OF FEMALE PLAYERS)	4	6	8	208
	A player must not do anything that is against the spirit of good sportsmanship including but not limited to: OTHER	1	3	4	52
	A player must not disrespect the authority of a Match Official.	1	1	2	52
9.28	A player must not verbally abuse a Match Official. Verbal abuse includes, but is not limited to, abuse based on: religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation.	2	4	6	52
	A player must not make physical contact with Match Officials.	2	4	6	52
	A player must not use threatening actions or words towards Match Officials	4	8	16	260
	A player must not physically abuse Match Officials	8	16	32	Life

⁴ The “eye” involves all tissues including the eye lids within and covering the orbital cavity and the “eye area” is anywhere in close proximity to the eye.