

COMPETITION RULES AND REGULATIONS (MALE LEAGUES)

SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO

FINNISH RUGBY FEDERATION

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INTRODUCTION

These rules and regulations have been written to be as comprehensible as possible, but with only a few years of collective experience in managing the sport of rugby within Finland, 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 existing rules and regulations as outlined below.

It is hoped that following these rules and 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 in the other.

1. REGULATIONS

1.1. GENERAL REGULATIONS

1.1.1. THE MATCH RULES

Official matches should follow the rules set forth in this document. If a club or individual does not adhere to these regulations – without expressed permission to deviate from them by the SRL or the National League and Competitions Manager – then they may be subject to penalty action by the SRL. An official match, or one sanctioned by the Rugby Federation, is defined as one played within one or more of the tournaments cited by this document.

1.1.2. MATCH FIXING

It is not permissible to attempt to fix the result of any game. Any player or club member caught in the act will be suspended from further competition at the discretion of the SRL (minimum 5 match suspension).

1.1.3. MANIPULATION OF EQUIPMENT

It is not permissible to manipulate match equipment so that it no longer conforms to the laws and regulations set forth by the International Rugby Board (IRB) or so that it is in contrast to the spirit of the game. Any player or club member caught in the act will be suspended from further competition at the discretion of the SRL (minimum 5 match suspension).

1.1.4. USE OF BANNED SUBSTANCES

By their participation in SRL sanctioned competition, all club members agree to follow the guidelines of the Finnish Anti-Doping Association, the EU anti-doping agreement, and the Nordic anti-doping agreement. Any player caught contravening these guidelines or attempting to otherwise gain an unfair advantage through consumption/intake of illegal substances will be suspended from further competition at the discretion of the SRL (minimum 5 match suspension). The SRL will be the sole judge of interpreting which substances, or level of intake of substances, constitute obtaining an unfair advantage.

1.1.5. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE LEAGUE

If a club chooses to withdraw from the league during the season when the club has matches left to play, they will immediately be removed from the calendar and the results of any previously scheduled matches will be erased.

1.1.6. MATCH STRUCTURE

Unless otherwise stated in these rules and regulations, every SRL sanctioned match is played XV-a-side and teams may name up to 22 players in their starting line-up. Unless otherwise stated, if a team has less than 12 players (registered to that club) then the match will be abandoned and the opposing team awarded a forfeit. If both teams have less than 12 players then the match will 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.

This has been 'otherwise stated' in the section pertaining to the Finnish Cup and the Northern Division of the Championship (see Section 2.1.2) but the above is how the Southern Division and the playoffs will be contested.

1.1.7. 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 external reasons (circumstances out of the control of either team) and 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 external reasons then the game will be ruled incomplete and a replay ordered on a date mutually agreed by both teams. If the teams can not agree on a date then one will be set by the National League and Competitions Manager.

If a game is abandoned due to reasons that either team should have been able to foresee and prevent (as adjudged by the National League and Competitions Manager), then the final outcome will be decided by the National League and Competitions Manager after consultation with both captains and the match referee.

1.1.8. FORFEITS

If a team forfeits a fixture then the official result will be recorded as a 70 – 0 win for their opponents.

1.1.9. COMPLAINTS TO THE SRL

A player or the club registered with the SRL may lodge a general complaint with the Federation. Such a complaint must be made in writing, including a detailed description of the grievance, to the SRL. The SRL will submit a written response to all complaints after a suitable investigation if one is required.

1.1.10. ADJUDICATION

In all matters pertaining to any SRL sanctioned match or league, the National League and Competitions Manager will be considered the sole adjudicator (so long as any ruling does not contravene any existing rule or regulation). The National League and Competitions Manager's word will be final, although individuals and member clubs will be permitted to submit formal complaints about any decision to the SRL.

1.2. DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

1.2.1 DISCIPLINARY PENALTIES

Any individual that receives a red card in an SRL sanctioned fixture will receive an automatic one-match suspension (unless in the event of a successful appeal). Any individual that receives three yellow cards over the course of a season will receive an automatic one-match suspension (unless in the event of a successful appeal). The collection of individual penalty points is not in any way dependent on whether the player in question was playing for their 'home' club or whether they were on loan to a second team. No individual penalty points will carry across seasons, but previous history of offenses may be taken into consideration in the event of future disciplinary hearings.

1.2.2. SUSPENSION

Unless explicitly dictated by the SRL, suspension must be served immediately although a ban is only applicable in the competition in which it was obtained; so a player that received suspension following a match in the Finnish Championship may play in the Finnish Cup and vice-versa.

If a player receives three yellow cards spread over more than one league then the automatic suspension will be enforced within the league in which the third card was received.

a) Club Membership

If the suspended player is registered to a club belonging to the SRL, then an 'X-number of match' suspension refers to the fixtures of the club to which the player is registered (regardless of whether the suspension was received whilst representing another team). A player so suspended may not play for any other team within the same competition until their ban has been served.

If the suspended player is not registered to a club belonging to the SRL, then an 'X-number of match' suspension refers to the fixtures of the club for which they were playing when the ban was received. A player so suspended may not play for any other team within the same competition until their ban has been served.

A ban defined in terms of 'X-number of weeks' is not dependant on the fixtures of any club.

b) Cancelled Fixtures

If a fixture is cancelled then this serves toward an individual's period of suspension if it would have otherwise done so (on the condition that a forfeit is registered). A postponed match does not count toward an individual's suspension period.

1.2.3. REFERRING DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS

In some circumstances, the match referee or team in opposition may refer incidents that potential require disciplinary action to the SRL for consideration. There are three areas of referral that will be permitted:

a) Increasing the Length of Automatic Suspension

Following the award of a red card, the opposing team or match referee may notify the SRL that it is their belief that the automatic one-match suspension is of insufficient length given the seriousness of the incident. Such claims must be made in writing, including a detailed description of the incident, to the National Competitions Manager who will hear the case (in conjunction with the SRL). Note: only the match referee and the board of the *team in opposition* to the player in question that may make such a request (i.e. no third parties may do so).

b) Incidents not Otherwise Considered

If an incident worthy of disciplinary action occurs that the match referee does not or a club feels that the match referee has taken insufficient action following the incident (i.e. failed to suitably penalise the action) then the club may notify the SRL of this. Such claims must be made in writing, including a detailed description of the incident, to the National League and Competitions Manager who will hear the case (in conjunction with the SRL). Note: only the match referee and the board of the *team in opposition* to the player in question that may make such a request (i.e. no third parties may do so).

c) Non-Player Suspension

A club or match referee may notify the SRL that it is their belief that a non-player should be suspended from attending SRL fixtures due to unwelcome behaviour. Such claims must be made in writing, including a detailed description of the incident, to the National League and Competitions Manager who will hear the case (in conjunction with the SRL). Note: only the match referee and the board of the *team in opposition* to the player in question that may make such a request (i.e. no third parties may do so).

1.2.4. APPEALS

A player, or the club to which the player is registered, may appeal against a player suspension (automatic or otherwise). Such an appeal must be made in writing, including a detailed description of the reasoning behind the appeal, to the National League and Competitions Manager no later than five days after the fact with evidence to support the appeal where possible.

1.2.5. DISCIPLINARY PANEL

All disciplinary matters will be chaired by the National League and Competitions Manager who will work in conjunction with the SRL. Where applicable, the appointed panel will be expected to deliver a conclusion in reasonable time (the definition of this term being dependant on the amount number of days before the next scheduled fixture of the player or club in question). During the course of the investigation, the disciplinary panel may request that some or all of the parties involved attend a disciplinary hearing but this is not mandatory. The panel, among other points, may consider the following:

- The detailed description of the incident submitted by the party making the appeal
- Visual or audio evidence of the incident

- Written or verbal testimonies from the parties involved and the match referee (if appropriate)

Once the panel has made its decision known, the SRL will not hear a second appeal for the same incident (unless exceptional new evidence is brought to light) although a further appeal may be made to *Urheilun Oikeusturvalautakunnalta* under the rules of that association.

1.3. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

1.3.1. PLAYER LICENSES

In order to be considered eligible to play in any SRL sanctioned match a player must have a valid player license. Any player registered to a club belonging to the Finnish Rugby Federation caught playing without a valid license will be suspended from further competition at the discretion of the SRL (minimum 5 match suspension). Any player not registered to a club belonging to the Finnish Rugby Federation playing without a valid license will be suspended from further competition at the discretion of the SRL (minimum 7 week suspension).

If a valid reason is provided (e.g. a player has only recently arrived in Finland or only intends to play one game) then that player or the club for which they intend to play may request that the license fee be waived. To do so they must contact the National League and Competitions Manager and receive confirmation in writing before the player may be fielded.

1.3.2. INSURANCE

All players involved in any SRL sanctioned match must have adequate insurance to do so. By entering the field of play, each player acknowledges that they have the necessary level of insurance to do so and, by entering their name on the match report card, the club fielding them acknowledges that they have checked this claim. If a player is not sure what constitutes a necessary level of insurance then they should immediately consult their club or the SRL. It is not the responsibility of the SRL or appointed referee to ensure that players have such insurance and neither party can be held legally accountable if this regulation is disregarded.

1.3.3. DUAL REPRESENTATION/MEMBERSHIP OF A CLUB

Unless otherwise stated in these rules and regulations, a club may only field players registered to them in an SRL sanctioned match.

This is otherwise stated in the sections pertaining to the Finnish Cup and the Northern division of the Championship (see section 2.1.2). All clubs competing in the Championship South and in the playoffs may only play players registered to them.

1.3.4. AGE RESTRICTIONS FOR THE ADULT GAME

A player is considered adult on their eighteenth birthday. An adult may play senior rugby without restriction from the SRL. Players who have reached their 17th birthday may play with adults provided that they are considered competent to do so by their club and the club has obtained expressed written permission from the player's parents or guardian for them to participate. Players aged 17 may not however play or train in the front row of the scrum.

In line with the guidelines provided by the IRB, players 16 years of age or below may not play senior rugby, regardless of whether parental consent has been obtained.

1.3.5. PENALTIES

In the event that a club is found to have fielded a non-eligible player after-the-fact then the final score will be nullified if the offending team won or drew the match and the result will be recorded as a 70 – 0 win for the non-offending team. If the non-offending team won the match then the final score will stand.

The SRL/National National League and Competitions Manager will only begin an investigation into the issue of non-eligibility up to seven days following the match in question (unless in exceptional circumstances), and only in response to an official request for such an investigation from the non-offending team directed to the SRL or National League and Competitions Manager.

1.4. CLUB ELIGIBILITY

In order to be considered eligible to play any SRL sanctioned fixture a club must be a recognized member of the SRL. In the event that a club is found to have played in an SRL fixture without such membership then the final score will be nullified if the offending team won or drew the match and the result will be recorded as a 70 – 0 win for the non-offending team. If the non-offending team won the match then the final score will stand.

1.5. CLUB RESPONSIBILITY

1.5.1. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HOME TEAM

a) The Pitch

The home club is responsible for reserving a pitch that adheres to the standards set in the IRB Law Book or one that has either been previously accepted by the SRL or is acceptable to the opposing team. Any disputes should be settled by the match referee, if appointed by the SRL, or by the National League and Competitions Manager. If the pitch does not meet these requirements then the home team will forfeit the match.

b) Informing the Visitors

The home club is responsible for informing the visiting team and the match referee of the time and place of the match at least three days prior to the day of the match. If such a declaration is not made and the visiting team is unable to contact their hosts after reasonable efforts to do so, then the visiting team will be entitled to contact the National League and Competitions Manager who may award a forfeit.

c) Match Referee

In the event that the SRL has not appointed a match referee to a fixture then it is the home clubs responsibility to find a referee (as long as they have been advised of the lack of appointment at least 48 hours before kick-off by the National League and Competitions Manager). In this instance, it is not necessary that the referee have any formal training. The referee may be a member of either club. If the home team is unable to appoint a referee then they will be considered to have forfeited the match.

Clubs, Note the above please!!

d) The Match Report Card and Reporting the Score

The home club will be responsible for ensuring that a completed match report card is sent to the National League and Competitions Manager no later than two days after a match. This should include sections completed by both teams and the match referee and the home club should make sure that the relevant sections are signed by these parties. If for some reason a club representative or

match referee does not complete the relevant section assigned to them then a reason for this should be attached to the report card.

Clubs, note the above also. The home team will now be responsible and not the referee and many referees last season weren't official and therefore didn't know they had to do it. By doing it this way we make sure that everybody knows!

The home club is also responsible for notifying the National League and Competitions Manager of the final score immediately following the match.

1.5.2. RESPONSIBILITY OF BOTH TEAMS

Cancellation/Postponement/Delay

If a team is unable to fulfill a fixture then they must notify their opposition as soon as possible. If a team does not turn up for a scheduled match or does not notify their opponents of cancelling within six hours of kick-off, then said club will be responsible for incurring the costs of the opposing team. Such costs include, but are not limited too, pitch reservation and travelling.

If a team is unable to arrive in time for the scheduled kick-off due to factors outside of their control (as adjudged by the National League and Competitions Manager) 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 teams arrival otherwise a reply will be organised on a date mutually agreed by both teams. If the teams can not agree on a date then one will be set by the National League and Competitions Manager.

2. COMPETITION STRUCTURE

There are two leagues sanctioned by the SRL: the Finnish Championship and the Finnish Cup. These leagues are considered separate from each other and so competing teams will not be subject to automatic relegation and promotion.

2.1. THE FINNISH CHAMPIONSHIP

2.1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Finnish Championship will be split into two divisions: the Northern Division and the Southern Division. Teams in each division will play a round-robin system amongst themselves with each team playing every other team twice (home and away). Once all the divisional fixtures have been played, the two higher ranked teams from each division will enter the playoffs wherein the winners of each division will play against the runners-up of the other division in a one-off fixture. Home advantage is awarded to the two divisional winners. The winners of these semi-final fixtures will qualify for the Finnish Championship Final, a one-off fixture to be held at a predetermined venue.

2.1.2. THE NORTHERN DIVISION (FINNISH CHAMPIONSHIP NORTH; FCN)

a) Structure

The FCS 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.

If both opposing team captains agree then any basic aspect of a match that does not potentially relate to player safety (such as decreasing the length of a match, playing less than 15-a-side, etc) may be altered without the need to consult the League and Competitions Manager. This is to allow more flexibility in the FCN to encourage and enable more teams and players to participate.

b) Fielding Players Registered to another Club

A club may field a player not registered to them provided that they obtain the expressed agreement of the opposing team(s) captain. It is the responsibility of the team fielding the borrowed player(s) to make the loan known to the opposing team's captain. Such consent must be sought before the start of every match in which the borrowed player is fielded.

c) Scoring the Division

Teams will receive 2 points for a win, 1 point for a draw, and 0 points for a loss. If two teams are tied on divisional points during the season then the rankings will be decided as follows:

1. The number of wins between the two teams throughout the season.
2. The number of points scored against the opposing team in question throughout the season.
3. The number of wins throughout the season.
4. The number of tries scored throughout the season.
5. The number of points scored throughout the season.
6. The number of points conceded throughout the season.
7. The number of red cards received throughout the season.
8. The number of yellow cards received throughout the season.
9. A coin toss supervised by the League and Competitions Manager.

2.1.3. THE SOUTHERN DIVISION (FINNISH CHAMPIONSHIP SOUTH; FCS)

a) Structure

The FCS 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.

b) Scoring the Division

Teams will receive 2 points for a win, 1 point for a draw, and 0 points for a loss. If two teams are tied on divisional points during the season then the rankings will be decided as follows:

1. The number of wins between the two teams throughout the season.
2. The number of points scored against the opposing team in question throughout the season.
3. The number of wins throughout the season.
4. The number of tries scored throughout the season.

5. The number of points scored throughout the season.
6. The number of points conceded throughout the season.
7. The number of red cards received throughout the season.
8. The number of yellow cards received throughout the season.
9. A coin toss supervised by the League and Competitions Manager.

2.1.4. THE PLAYOFFS

a) Structure

As already stated, once both the FCN and FCS have been completed, the top two teams from each division will enter a playoff system wherein the winners of each division will play against the runners-up of the other division in a one-off fixture. Home advantage is awarded to the two divisional winners. The winners of these semi-final fixtures will qualify for the Finnish Championship Final, a one-off fixture to be held at a venue predetermined by the SRL.

b) Tied 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 series. If the scores are still tied then an additional 10 minutes of sudden-death extra-time (plus any additional stoppage-time incurred during this period) will be played with the first team to score being the winner. If neither team is able to score during this period then the winner of the series will be determined by a drop-kick competition – the details of which shall be determined and enforced by the match referee.

The team that wins the final series will be the winners of the Finnish Championship.

2.2. THE FINNISH CUP

2.2.1. STRUCTURE

The Finnish Cup will follow a tournament-style format where the aggregate ranking will decide the final divisional standings. The option to host a tournament will be available to every club participating in the Finnish Cup, but is not mandatory.

If both opposing team captains agree then any basic aspect of a match that does not potentially relate to player safety (such as decreasing the length of a match, playing less than 15-a-side, etc) may be altered without the need to consult the League and Competitions Manager. This is to allow more flexibility in the Finnish Cup to encourage and enable more teams and players to participate.

The host team will be responsible for deciding, in advance, the order of play.

2.2.2. FIELDING PLAYERS REGISTERED TO ANOTHER CLUB

A club may field a player not registered to them provided that they obtain the expressed agreement of the opposing team(s) captain. It is the responsibility of the team fielding the borrowed player(s) to make the loan known to the opposing team's captain. Such consent must be sought before the start of every match in which the borrowed player is fielded.

Regardless of consent from the opposing team captain, a team must field a team where at least ten of the players representing them are registered to the club or the match will be forfeited.

2.2.3. SCORING ON THE DAY (WITHIN AN INDIVIDUAL TOURNAMENT)

Teams will be awarded 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw, and 0 points for a loss. If two teams are tied on points once all the matches have been played then the final tournament results will be decided as follows:

1. The result between the two teams that day.
2. The number of wins during the tournament.
3. The number of tries scored during the tournament.
4. The number of points scored during the tournament.
5. The number of points conceded during the tournament.
6. The number of red cards received during the tournament.
7. The number of yellow cards received during the tournament.
8. A drop-kick competition – the details of which shall be determined and enforced by a mutually agreed-upon referee.

2.2.4. SCORING THE LEAGUE RANKINGS

Teams will receive 3 points for a tournament win, 2 points for second place, 1 point for third place, and 0 for finishing fourth or below. If two teams are tied on divisional points during the season then the rankings will be decided as follows:

1. The number of wins between the two teams throughout the season.
2. The number of points scored against the opposing team in question throughout the season.
3. The number of wins throughout the season.
4. The number of tries scored throughout the season.
5. The number of points scored throughout the season.
6. The number of points conceded throughout the season.
7. The number of red cards received throughout the season.
8. The number of yellow cards received throughout the season.
9. A coin toss supervised by the National League and Competitions Manager.

The team that accumulates the most points throughout the course of the season will be the winners of the Finnish Cup.