



# SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO

## FINNISH RUGBY FEDERATION

Member of World Rugby  
Member of Rugby Europe  
Member of Finnish Olympic Committee (NOC)

### MINUTES

#### ***Suomen Rugbyliitto ry format & competition regulations meeting 2023***

Date: 28.1.2023  
Time: 14:00  
Place: online (link: <https://meet.google.com/www-emqy-rbv>)

#### **1. Opening of the meeting**

Meeting opened at 14.05

#### **2. Reviewing voting rights of the participants**

Eagles RFC	Marina Harjunpää (vote)
Espoo Rugby	Totti Karpela (vote)
Helsinki Rugby Club	Emmanuel Courbin (vote) Leonardo Fierro
Jyväskylä Rugby Club	Reetta Smith (vote)
Karjalan Rugby Joensuu	Olli Räsänen (vote) Salla Seppälä
Kuopio Rugby Club	Jukka Salmela (vote)
Linna Rugby Club	Emma Kokkonen (vote)
Oulu Rugby Club	Daryn Hiltunen (vote)
Pori Rugby	Jonathan Kyffin (vote) Lassi Kojola
Saimaa Sharks Rugby	John Poole (vote) Marko Valle
Seinäjoki Rugby	James McDade (vote)
Tallinn Kalev RFC	Paul Davidson (vote) Graham Smith



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Tampere Rugby Club      Luca Seale (vote)  
Hanna Visuri

Warriors Rugby Club      Timothy Gilbert (vote)  
Juliane Fuchs  
Heikki Harju

Muut osallistujat:

Jatta-Mari Harju (SRL)

Saara Ilmonen (SRL)

Anita Velinova (SRL)

Anssi Jukka (SRL)

Tarja Takala (SRL)

Bam Hennessy (WNT7s)

Thibaut Reuchet

### **3. Election of chairperson, secretary, two scrutinizers and two vote counters for the meeting**

Jatta-Mari Harju elected as chairperson, Saara Ilmonen elected as secretary, Tarja Takala and Emmanuel Courbin elected as both scrutinizers and vote counters.

### **4. The regularity and quorum of the meeting**

This is not an official federation meeting. Clubs are widely presented and the documentation necessary for voting rights has been submitted.

### **5. Agenda of the meeting**

Agenda and the included proposals to be discussed are grouped per topics and competitions. Any new proposals can be made at the subsequent related agenda points.



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Voting process has been shared via email. Each club has one vote. The opinion of the meeting will be the proposal supported by more than half of the votes cast. Voting with more than 2 options will have 2 rounds unless one of the proposals directly receives more than 50 % of the votes. In the second round, voting takes place between the two options that received the most votes in the first round.

It is possible to abstain from voting.

### 6. New volunteer positions

Proposal: to have five coordinators, one for each division, under the NLCM. The coordinators would assist the NLCM to organise the competition. A coordinator can handle more than one division. If there is no coordinator, the NLCM will cover the division.

Proposal: every club will name match commissioners who will be responsible of checking the match day requirements

Discussion: Match commissioner proposal supported by Pori, WRC, Eagles; Tampere raised concern about finding volunteers; WRC there should be opportunity to fix missing requirements if possible, Seinäjoki, Saimaa supported this. Match commissioners could help with this. Tarja Takala the aim is that all aspects related to match safety are checked prior to the match. Chair: The referee has a final responsibility for safety. Eagles raised a concern about adding new volunteers and layers of responsibility can issues in communication and reaching the NLCM when necessary.

Eagles proposed match diary in which the match commissioners would mark scorers and other key match events. The document would be signed after the match by both teams and referees. WRC pointed out that point scorers can be inputted directly to Clubee by teams. Seinäjoki added that the info could also be done live with Clubee.

Eagles proposed that TD would take over/assist in some of the NLCM tasks. TD already handles some aspects. Saimaa supported Eagles proposal that TD handles the NLCM tasks as the position is central to the competitions. TD as a paid position would be better positioned than a volunteer in the role. Chair: TD can be contacted on competition related matters but if all the NLCM responsibilities are transferred to TD, then some other tasks need to be redistributed.

Five minute break, meeting resumed at 14.56.

### 7. Schedule and related deadlines



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On votes on different proposals under this agenda item, the SRL proposal presented in point 7a was used as a baseline for voting. Other proposals were voted on as amendments to the SRL proposal.

a. Proposal: SRL's proposal

Chair represented the season schedule, and changes proposed to the relevant deadlines during the season. Currently, the preparations for season are slightly behind schedule but this can be handled. New deadlines related e.g. to informing SRL on kick off times and venues and last day to make changes to these.

HRC raised concerns with the fee for late changes as sometimes changes result from unforeseen circumstances or need to juggle multiple team schedules. Seinäjoki agreed and added that less strict rules could apply in lower divisions.

Seinäjoki proposed clarification that in the deadline table 1 day before the match to be replaced by 24 hours and also on Clubee, and proposed that adding point scorers 1 day after match would be compulsory.

Vote: SRL proposal approved unanimously

b. Proposal: JRC's proposal on moving the loan player deadline

JRC proposed that the deadline would be moved forward by one month to 15 August. HRC proposed that there would not be a deadline at all but instead a rule that the loan player should have played in 2 regular season games to avoid recruiting just for the playoff stage. JRC withdraws their proposal and supports HRC.

Vote: HRC proposal on removing loan player DL with conditions outlined above and with other rules regarding loan players remaining unchanged approved unanimously.

c. Proposal: Oulu's proposal on force majeure situations when matches are forfeited

HRC pointed out it would depend on whether costs are already incurred to the other team or the referee. Oulu clarifies that proposal is because sometimes pitches are unavailable last minute due to e.g. weather and that the club should not be punished in such circumstances. WRC proposed amendment to SRL proposal for such situations but possible cost to the visiting team to be considered. Kalev proposed that fines paid to SRL could be used to cover possible costs. HRC supports WRC proposal and added

that in general penalties should be limited to the minimum, supported by Saimaa, Seinäjoki and Eagles.



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Vote: Proposal on exception to general deadline for forfeits or rescheduling in force majeure situations and on costs incurred in such situations to be covered by fines paid to SRL was approved unanimously.

- d. Proposal: FRRA's proposal on the referee not showing up if they have not gotten info on the match  
In the discussion it was raised that the clubs already inform the SRL on the match details according to the regulations and the information is already provided on Clubee, there should be no need to confirm the details separately to the referees.

Vote: FRRA proposal rejected

- e. Proposal: Notifying the opponent, NLCM and FRRA of the match venue and kick off time

Eagles made a proposal during the meeting to modify and to add to who has to be informed on the match details according to the regulations. Eagles proposed that notifying the referee to be replaced by notifying FRRA and the NLCM was added to the list. So the kick off and venue should be confirmed to opposing team, NLCM and FRRA with no fee 14 days prior to the match.

Vote: Proposal approved unanimously

*5 minute break, meeting resumed at 16.05*

### 8. Women's competition formats

- a. Proposal: SRL's proposal  
No change in format, same than in 2022
- b. Proposal: TRC's proposal on championship format  
The championship would be played in round robin format with a shorter season. TRC said that the proposal stemmed from low player numbers for upcoming season. WRC opposed having significantly less games. Instead of less games, regulations could be amended to allow for games to be played

with fewer players e.g. 14v14 or 13v13. JRC agrees with WRC and so does Eagles who proposed that possible changes would be discussed for season 2024 to allow for more time for discussion.

Oulu underlined that there is a need for improvement for cooperation between clubs at championship and division 1 level to better use loan players which would also give opportunity for more division 1 players to play higher level rugby





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WRC suggested that a separate meeting to discuss the format would be good to allow for wider discussion with player involvement but understands that there is time pressure coming from needing to have the season schedule ready. Saimaa and HRC supported the idea of a separate meeting.

Seinäjäki added that all clubs should be involved in the discussion, not just Championship.

- c. Proposal: WNT7's proposal on championship format  
Bam Hennessy/WNT7s clarified that the proposal circulated did not reflect the proposed idea. The point is not to play less rugby but to play competitive rugby also outside the Championship. The format proposed by TRC with a cup competition would allow for more competitive rugby but would lessen the pressure on teams struggling with numbers.

Next steps: Because following the discussion there was no consensus on championship format and more discussion was needed, the chair proposed to have a discussion via email with all clubs involved before voting on the issue. Bam Hennessy/WNT7s offered to coordinate a meeting to discuss the issue. It was decided to move the discussion to another forum.

## 9. Men's competition formats

- a. Proposal: SRL's proposal

Per SRL proposal, there would be Championship and Division 1 with 6 teams whereas Division 2 would be with a more flexible format and varying number of teams. In division 1, there would be no semifinal and when the final is played depends on if there is promotion/relegation game.

Seinäjäki supported the SRL proposal, without promotion/relegation. Saimaa argued that the SRL proposal does not ensure enough game time in lower divisions. According to HRC, there are currently too many matches. Saimaa's proposal with round robin format would have an impact on the number of matches.

In SRL proposal, there would be 10 games in regular season + semifinal and final. In comparison, in Saimaa's proposal there is a maximum of 10 games per team.

Eagles proposed to continue with the same formats as in 2022 and continue the discussion on formats for season 2024. Linna supports this idea.

Discussion on whether Rugby World Cup is going to have an impact on players being available on games. Kalev argued that it will be individual



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players attending the RWC so it is unlikely that it would have a significant impact on games. Oulu, JRC, Kuopio agreed.

b. Proposal: Saimaa's proposal

Only two divisions - championship with 9 teams and development league with rest of teams

Tampere supported idea of expanding championship but to have a promotion/relegation game if the team in lower division fulfils requirements Kalev supports the proposal.

Kuopio questioned whether it is possible to vote on this proposal because it is unclear if we have enough teams to play in the expanded championship

c. Proposal: TRC's proposal on championship format

Proposal was to have a round robin system if necessary due to low player numbers.

d. Proposal: Pori's proposal on a tournament format for division 2

e. Proposal: Pori's proposal on a round robin format for division 2

f. Proposal: Pori's proposal on removing division 1 semifinal

After the discussion, the chair proposed two separate votes; first on the division formats where the vote will be between the SRL proposal and Saimaa proposal; and second on whether there will be a promotion and relegation game or an automatic promotion and relegation.

Vote - SRL proposal vs Saimaa proposal: In vote between SRL proposal and Saimaa proposal, SRL proposal was supported Seinäjoki, Eagles, WRC, Linna, Oulu, JRC, KRJ, Pori and Kuopio; and Saimaa proposal was supported by HRC, Saimaa, Kalev and Tampere. SRL proposal approved with 9 votes with the Saimaa proposal getting 4 votes.

Vote - promotion/relegation game (SRL proposal) vs automatic promotion/relegation: In vote on promotion and relegation, SRL proposal was supported by Kalev, Eagles, KRJ, JRC, Linna, Oulu, Kuopio and Tampere; and automatic promotion/relegation by Seinäjoki. HRC, Saimaa, WRC abstained from voting. SRL proposal approved.

The approval of SRL proposal also applied to division 2 and thus addressed the proposals to the format of division 2 made by Pori.

*5 minute break, meeting resumes at 17.43*



### 10. Match day requirements

- a. Proposal: SRL's proposal
- b. Proposal: JRC's proposal on making the commentator not compulsory
- c. Proposal: WNT7's proposal on medical personnel
- d. Proposal: WRC's proposal on making the cafeteria not compulsory
- e. Proposal: Oulu's proposal
- f. Proposal: KRJ's proposal on changing minus league points to monetary fines
- g. Discussion by FRRA's proposal on pitch lines
- h. Proposal: Eagles' proposal to divide match day requirements into two categories

There was a general discussion on match day requirements instead of going through each proposal separately. A new proposal by Eagles was added on dividing match day requirements into two categories. Category 1 would include game and player safety related items (goal posts, post protection, flags, technical zone, bench) and Category 2 others (score board, commentator, cafe etc.). For Category 1 requirements, sanction is minus points and for Category 2 requirements sanction is a monetary fine.

KRJ argued that minus points are not the best incentive for fulfilling match requirements, a fine would be a better option. HRC supported Eagles' proposal. Medical personnel would be good to have but it is expensive. The pitch markings are handled by the city and there's often no way to influence them. Kalev also supported Eagles' proposal.

WNT added that medical personnel could be as simple as someone with first aid training. WRC agreed that it would be good to have a first aid trained person on the sidelines. They also added that the proposed match commissioners should be aiming to fix things. Saimaa also agreed with Eagles' proposal. If there will be match commissioners, there needs to be training by the SRL. The problem last season with the match day requirements was the communication.

Eagles amended their proposal so that category 1 is mandatory and category 2 is voluntary. There would be no sanction on category 2. It was pointed out that if the SRL proposal was amended so that scoreboard and commentator are voluntary, the proposals are the same.

WRC added that the competition should not be decided from minus points which is why monetary fine is a better option. Eagles agreed.





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With adjustment to the mandatory items it is less likely that there will be sanctions in any case. Valid medical personnel should have at least First Aid Level 1 training. However, there will be no vote on medical personnel as a match day requirement as there was no proposal to add it as a mandatory requirement.

The chair proposed two different votes related to match day requirements. First vote was between the original SRL proposal and the SRL proposal amended so that scoreboard and commentator are voluntary. The amended SRL proposal was approved unanimously.

The second vote was on sanction for not fulfilling the match day requirements. The vote was between SRL proposal (minus points) and monetary fine. Pori, HRC, JRC, Saimaa and Kalev voted for the SRL proposal, and WRC, Tampere, Eagles, KRJ and Kuopio for a monetary fine. Oulu and Seinäjoki abstained. SRL proposal was approved as the proposed amendment did not receive more than 50% of the vote.

### 1. Other competition regulation changes

- a. Proposal: HRC's proposal on 8 tactical substitutions in men's championship and Pori's similar proposal to men's division 1

HRC: The proposal would help with player safety especially in those cases where less than maximum amount of substitute available. Pori supports WRC suggest to vote separately on different divisions

#### Vote:

Division 1: Proposal approved. HRC, WRC, Kalev, Seinäjoki, Tampere abstained.

Men's Championship: Proposal approved. Pori, WRC, Oulu, JRC, Seinäjoki, Kalev abstained.

Women's Championship: Proposal approved. WRC, Seinäjoki, Oulu, KRJ. Kuopio abstained.

- b. Proposal: Oulu's proposal on situations where FRRA cannot allocate referees to a match

Issue was discussed at FRRA AGM. FRRA wishes to stay with the current regulations.

Oulu demanded that the issue needs to be addressed as it is a recurring problem. Saimaa argued that there should be no fines for FRRA. They are also volunteer-based and this would not make the situation any better. T



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However, the referee fees should somehow reflect the value the teams are getting in return. KRJ underlined that clubs are paying for referees and there are continuing issues especially for teams further away.

Proposal was made to FRRA AGM that club fees would be based on the number of referees they receive.

HRC agrees with not fining FRRA as there is a need to cooperate with them. Maybe all clubs should pay a bit more to cover the travel costs for further away games if this would ensure that there are referees for all games.

KRJ raised the point that the information to the home team about non-availability of the referee is given with a short notice. There should be more support to clubs in coming up with a solution in such situations.

Next steps: The issue will be raised again with FRRA and followed up if necessary regularly.

c. Proposal: SRL's proposal on forfeit score

Proposal approved.

d. Proposal: SRL's proposal on NT players at women's division 1

Oulu proposes to keep the number of national team games at 3 or more. Turku: the restriction on national team players is necessary as they have a significant impact on the game. WRC agrees

Voting:

Saimaa, Tampere, Seinäjoki, Kalev abstain

Proposal approved.

e. Proposal: SRL's proposal maximum playing time per weekend

WRC supported the proposal. Some clubs raised concerns on how to keep track of how many minutes a player plays during the weekend. It was highlighted that it is unsafe to play too many minutes per weekend and it is the coaches' responsibility to ensure the player welfare.

Vote: Vote was taken on if the maximum playing time (80 minutes) should be included in the regulations or not. Seinäjoki, Tampere, Kalev, KRJ and Oulu voted for inclusion. Saimaa, Pori and WRC voted against the inclusion. JRC, Eagles and HRC abstained. SRL proposal on maximum playing time approved.

f. Proposal: SRL's proposal on abandoning a match



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Proposal approved

- g. Proposal: SRL's refinement on eligibility for promotion

Proposal approved

- h. Proposal: Eagles' proposal to have the competition regulations also in Finnish

SRL is working on translating the regulations into Finnish. There are some issues related to updates required annually.

Seinäjoki supported Finnish version of the regulations.

No vote required on the proposal.

## 1. Any other business (NO VOTE)

Turku: SRL has to keep the SRL's webpage updated with kick-off times and venues for games in all series. The standings on SRL webpage should be updated and correct by Monday morning after a weekend with matches

Discussion: It was mentioned that if the clubs keep Clubee updated then the information on the website is up to date. However, there have been some issues with syncing information between Clubee and the website. There are some issues with SRL having the correct information relating to kick off times and venues. SRL can support clubs in using Clubee and its different aspects.

## 2. Closing of the meeting

Meeting closed at 19.59.



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Chairperson of the meeting

Saara Ilmonen  
Secretary of the meeting

Emmanuel Courbin  
Scrutinizer of the meeting

Tarja Takala  
Scrutinizer of the meeting