1. **APPLICABLE OPERATIONAL RULES**

1.1 The **“North East Men’s League” (NEML)** sits within tier five of the RFL competition structure. All teams participating in the **NEML** are bound by the RFL Operational Rules for Tiers Four, Five and Six (Operational Rules).

1.2 In relation to Covid-19 regulations the Operational Rules should be read in conjunction with the relevant Covid Protocol which will take precedence. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the possibility of their being an effect on the season the RFL reserves the right to amend these Competition Rules to reflect the ever-changing position. Any such changes will be communicated with Clubs.

1. **TABLES AND FIXTURES**

2.1 The League competition tables shall be compiled by the RFL, the positions in which shall be determined by the number of completion points gained with points being awarded as follows: two points for each Match won; and one point for each Match drawn.

2.2 The Club with the highest number of points shall be at the top of the league table and the Club with the lowest shall be at the bottom. Where Clubs have an equal number of points their relative positions shall be determined by the result of their ‘head to head’ results so that the Club having the better results is placed above the Club with the worse results. If that still leads to a tie, then the Club with the greater points’ percentage during the Season will be placed in the higher position. The points’ percentage is calculated by dividing the number of points scored by a Club by the number of points it concedes and multiplying by 100. If the positions are still equal, positions will be determined by the toss of a coin which shall be carried out at such time and place as the RFL shall direct and those Clubs concerned shall be entitled to witness the toss.

2.3 **The notional scores in forfeited games shall be 24-0 and a 1-point deduction.** The League and Clubs will work to ensure, where possible games are played. 24-0 will only be used as a last resort.

1. **STRUCTURE OF THE COMPETITION**
   1. The RFL, in conjunction with the Management Group, will determine the structure of the competition including its format and size, any play-off structure and matters relating to relegation.
   2. The RFL reserves the right to amend the competition structure, Fixture List and play off formats should there be an impact from the Covid 19 pandemic.
   3. There will be no promotion and relegation in season 2023
   4. If two or more clubs finish level on points at the end of a season the application of competition rule 2.2 will decide which team finishes above the other.

3.5 If a club withdraws from the League having failed to complete 50% of its scheduled games, the club’s record shall be expunged. For the remaining scheduled games, the points will be awarded with a notional score taken from average points scored and the average points conceded.

3.6 If a club is expelled or suspended, its record will be expunged, irrespective of how many games that club has played.

3.7 When the play-off phase occurs NEMB will release further fixtures to determine League winners and runners up, and Shield winners and runners up.

3.8 Only players who have registered to the team at least 15 days prior to the play offs starting are eligible to participate in the play-off stages of the competition.

3.9 Should a club have a player who has been unable to play two fixtures due to injury, the NEMG will give consideration to dispensation for the play-offs provided that the injury has been recorded within GameDay

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3.10 Teams who have forfeited two or more games during the season shall not be eligible to participate in the play-off stages.

3.11 If a team fails to play its first match in the play-offs, then they will forfeit the match and be ineligible for further participation in the play-off matches

4. **MEMBERSHIP**

4.1 Membership of the **NEML** is open to all clubs playing rugby league within the North East Region and surrounding areas who are capable of meeting any Annual Entry Criteria as specified by the Management Group.

4.2 Any team or club which has forfeited two games in the previous season, will be only be allowed fixtures for the coming season at the discretion of the Management Group.

4.3 Any team or club who has unpaid fines, or insurance from the previous season will be considered to be in ‘Special Measures’ and will only be allowed fixtures at the discretion of the Management Group.

4.4Applications from new clubs must be submitted in writing to Alan Smith by the **date agreed.** Membership shall be granted to a club for one season only and all clubs must reapply for membership each year.

4.5 The annual subscription for membership of the league and cup shall be £50 per first team and free for any additional teams from the same club.

4.6 Subscription for membership of the League shall be reviewed annually and paid by **30th April** each season. Any team not having paid its annual subscription by **30th April** will not be allocated competitive fixtures for the remainder of the season until such fees are paid.

4.7 Each Club will be required to ensure that the Volunteers listed below are appropriately qualified (where applicable) and registered on GameDay:

* Coaches
* Club Welfare Officer
* Club COVID Officer
* First Aiders
* Club Secretary
* Club Chairman
* Game Day Manager

5. **START AND END DATE OF THE COMPETITION**

5.1 The **NEML** Management Group shall determine the commencement date of its competition and the date upon which it shall cease. These dates will fit between the 1st March and 30th November in any year.

6. **PLAYER REGISTRATIONS**

6.1 All players shall annually register to the Club using the RFL GameDay system. The League will circulate a link to the registration portal to the Clubs to commence the registration process. During this process a Player must become an Our League Active Member.

6.1.1 There is no restriction on the maximum number of players allowed to register per team in the **NEML** however thirteen is the minimum number per team.

* + 1. New Players can be signed on ‘on the day’ using the GameDay system. Clubs must make every effort to confirm that players are free to register in this manner. Clubs are responsible for ensuring that a player is eligible to play for them before allowing the player to play. A Competition Administrator can be contacted on match day to check a player’s eligibility.

6.1.3 The RFL may introduce, from time to time, new registration processes.

6.2 **Professional Players**

6.2.1 A player registered with the RFL as a contracted professional may not register or play in the NEML Competition unless he is in possession of dual registration. If in doubt, check with **Alan Smith**

6.3 **Transfers**

6.3.1 Clubs may register or transfer players from other clubs using GameDay It is the responsibility of the Club the player wishes to join to initiate the transfer. The player has final sign off of the transfer. The process must be completed in full, including player sign off, before a player plays.

6.3.2 All players must fulfil all financial obligations to their current club before any transfer to another club, including professional clubs will be permitted. This also applies to a player wishing to sign for a different club in future seasons. In order to facilitate this, there will be 72 hours between receipt of application for transfer and approval or refusal.

6.3.3 The deadline date for transferring of players shall be the**29th July** each year

**7 FIXTURES**

7.1 Any club wishing to postpone or rearrange a league fixture or other organised game shall consult their opponents, agree a new date and complete the Fixture Amendment Form not later than 9pm on Tuesday preceding the fixture. (This is done electronically). If it fails to do so, then the club shall be fined **£15** and forfeit the 2 points to the opposing team with a score of 24-0 against. The completed fixture amendment form must be forwarded to the **Fixture Organiser Alan Smith** for its approval. If clubs cannot agree a new date within 14 days of the original postponement, then **Alan Smith** will issue a new date for the fixture. If the fixture is not played as instructed by **Alan Smith,** the points will be awarded to the non-offending club and the offending club will be fined **£15**.

7.2 All games must be played as per the fixture list, or the points for such games forfeited, unless an alternative date mutually agreeable by both teams and **Alan Smith** can be sought.

7.3 Where programmed into the fixture programme, backlog dates should not be considered as a free weekend and the team should be prepared to be allocated fixtures on these days.

7.4 Postponements will not be considered because of injuries, or any other matter not considered exceptional.

7.5 Any club desiring to arrange a friendly must seek permission from **Alan Smith**. No friendly fixtures shall be arranged on a League fixture date without prior approval of **Alan Smith**

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7.6 Clubs must accept fixtures given at seven days’ notice by **Alan Smith**.

7.7 If a club fails to fulfil a fixture, the Club Secretary must inform **Alan Smith** that they are conceding the points.

7.8 Any club failing to play a fixture on a scheduled date will be made to play the reverse fixture, if it has not already been played or forfeited, on their opponents’ ground. **Clubs failing to fulfil fixtures will be fined £30 and deducted competition points as per competition rule 2.3**

7.9 Any fixture postponed after 1pm the day prior to an afternoon kick off or after 9pm, the day prior to an evening kick off will be classed as a late postponement and the offending club may lose part of their bond. When postponing fixtures please refer to point 7.1 to agree a new date for the fixture

7.10 Any club which fails to notify their opponents of its inability to raise a team 3 hours before the scheduled kick-off, shall also be liable to pay any expenses, up to a maximum of **£40,** which their opponents may incur, including kit washing, or medical costs such as strapping.

7.11 In the case of a home club failing to fulfil a fixture, a visiting club that has travelled, may claim up to a maximum of **£50** towards transport costs.

7.12 If a club running two or more teams is unable to raise a team on any particular day, then the highest ranked team fixture must be played.

7.13 Any club with more than one team at home, in any competition, all kick off timings must be confirmed with the opposition and the Match Officials by the preceding Thursday

7.14 **Postponements**

7.14.1 In the event of the home Club suspecting that its ground will not be fit for play owing to adverse weather conditions or other cause, the home Club must immediately call a Match Official on the approved list recognised by the RFL to carry out a ground inspection. If the Match Official states the ground is not fit for play, and in their opinion, there is no chance of it being so before the scheduled kick off, then that decision must be communicated immediately to the visiting Club, appointed Match Official and the Competition Administrator. Any Club failing to fulfil this instruction may be guilty of Misconduct and in addition to any sanction will be responsible for the reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses incurred by any Match Official or Club not so notified.

7.14.2 All postponements made in accordance with 7.15.1 must be notified to the Competition Administrator within 1 hour of the decision being made.

7.14.3 Where a Match does not take place because the away Club fails to turn up then in addition to such Club being found guilty of misconduct it shall also be liable to pay £50 compensation towards refreshment costs.

**8 MATCH DAY OPERATIONS**

8.1 All games shall, unless there is mutual agreement between competing clubs to the contrary, be organised and staged on **Saturday** afternoons with a kick off time scheduled for **2.30pm.** If fixtures need to be played mid-week then Alan Smith must be notified at least one week prior to the scheduled fixture.

8.2 To maintain the continuity of the playing programme Alan Smith shall be empowered, if necessary, to bring forward to an earlier date fixtures scheduled for later in the season.

8.3 **Contacting Opponents and Kit Obligations**

8.3.1 In accordance with the Operational Rules it is the responsibility of the home Club, during the week preceding a game, to contact both its opponents and the relevant Match Officials regarding team colours and ground directions.

8.3.2 In the event there is a clash of colours the away team must wear an alternative strip.

8.4 **Team Sizes and Loaning of Players**

8.4.1 A maximum of **20** players may be named for each side taking part in a fixture including cup fixtures, play-off games and finals.

8.4.2 Clubs are not compelled to ‘loan’ players. It is their discretion whether they do so or not.

8.4.3 ‘Loaned’ players are to be clearly shown on the Official Team Sheet - as “**LOAN”**

8.4.4 Whether or not ‘loaning’ occurs, the game remains an official fixture. The score-line and result of the actual match stands officially. In other words, if team ‘A’ loans players to team ‘B’ to make up a side, and then team ‘B’ wins the game 10-0, the result stands as a 10-0 victory to team ‘B’. This fact needs to be borne in mind by any club considering ‘loaning’ players on match day.

8.5 **Technical Areas**

All non-playing personnel and interchanges must remain in the designated technical area throughout the Match. They are not permitted to station themselves around the field, other than when managing a player, who has been removed from play, or when time management principles have been implemented (other than tracking physios) and are subject at all times to the control of the Match Officials.

8.6 **Medical Requirements**

8.6.1 It is the requirement of each Home Club to ensure that a First Aider is in attendance at each game. The first aider should make themselves known to the Match Official before the start of any Match and shall remain for a minimum of 15 minutes after the end of the Game and shall speak directly with a designated Official from both Clubs, if necessary, to ensure that the correct reporting paperwork is completed. In the event that there is no first aider then the match official will not permit a game to take place.

8.6.2 First aiders should be listed on the team sheet and are required to register on the GameDay system as a volunteer.

8.6.3 In the event a player sustains an injury to the head the match official they will stop the game and ask for the first aider to come on to see them.  If the first aider suspects concussion the player should be removed from the field of play. If the player refuses to follow the first aider’s advice, then the match officials can hold up play until the player follows the instruction of the first aider.  Advice for managing concussion can be find here. <https://www.rugby-league.com/the_rfl/concussion>

8.7 **Reporting Injuries and Concussion**

8.7.1 In the event there is a serious injury or concussion at a Match this must be reported using the GameDay system. Reports are added in the post-game section which is the same area as where results are added. It is imperative that any head injuries are reported on the system as this information has to be provided to the insurers.

8.6 **Post Match Arrangements**

8.6.1 The home club shall be responsible for supplying all the competing players, club officials and appointed Match Officials with a suitable post-match meal. The visiting club is obligated to accept such hospitality.

8.6.2 In the case of away clubs failing to fulfil a fixture the home club may also claim up to a maximum of **£50** towards refreshment costs. Any club which will not be requiring refreshments should notify its opponents in advance of the game, otherwise the club will be liable to pay **£50** compensation to the home club.

8.7 **Team Sheet and Reporting Results**

8.7.1 Official team sheets must be completed correctly before the commencement of matches and shall be signed by a recognised official from each club and the Match Official. GameDay is to be used to complete team-sheets.

8.7.2 Completed team sheets should include the full forename and surname (no initials), of all participants and must be sent by the home club official to **Alan Smith**. Details of the man of the match from both the participating clubs must also be included. The failure of a club to complete and return team sheets correctly will incur a mandatory fine of **£10** .

8.7.3 It is the responsibility of the both clubs to ensure that the team sheet information is entered on the GameDay system within 24 hours following the completion of the game. This includes the players who scored points. Failure to do so will result in an **£10** administration fine.

8.7.5 Every team playing in the League must have a named qualified Game Day Manager to accompany them and be named on the team sheet. Failure to do so, will result in a **£10** fine.

8.9 **Abandonment of Games**

8.9.1If a game is abandoned with more than three-quarters of the playing time elapsed, the result shall stand unless otherwise determined by the **NEML** Management Group. If less than three-quarters of the playing time has elapsed the **NEML** Management Group, at its sole discretion, may order a game to be re-played.

**9 DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSIONS AND FINES**

9.1 A **NEML** discipline panel is in place to deal with all discipline matters arising. The disciplinary panel shall have the full power to expel, suspend and/or fine any club, player, official or other person, subject to the Operational Rules, found guilty of misconduct and/or breach of these rules and/or breach of the Operational Rules and to order them to meet any costs incurred.

9.2 A written report of a Match Official on the misconduct of any club, player or official must be sent via email to **Alan Smith** with a copy to the offending club for receipt inside 48 hours from the conclusion of the game.

9.3 NEMG will not tolerate abuse of Match Officials. Anyone found to have abused a Match Official (whether player, coach or spectator) may be required to attend an ‘Awareness Course’ in addition to any other sanction which is applied.

9.4 Reports of brawling – defined as three or more players involved - should via email be sent by the Match Official, for receipt within 48 hours of a game’s conclusion, to **Alan Smith**. Separate copies of the report must be lodged by the Match Official with the clubs concerned.

9.5 Any club which does not receive from the Match Official within 48 hours a report outlining a dismissal or brawl having occurred should contact **Alan Smith** immediately. The failure of a club to receive a written report will not prevent action being dealt by the relevant discipline committee.

9.6 A reported club, player, official or any other person may, to defend an allegation of misconduct, send a letter for receiptby **Alan Smith** within five working days of the date of the match. The club or such persons may in their own defence request a personal appearance and/or bring witnesses and/or submit written mitigation to the hearing, provided that they notify **Alan Smith** within five days of the alleged offence and send with it a deposit of £20.00 which must be paid to the RFL by bank transfer. The deposit shall be refunded at the hearing, provided that the appellant or their designated representative attends in person and they are found not guilty.

9.7 Unedited DVD/video evidence shall be an accepted method through which to defend or confirm the alleged actions that have been reported to the committee by a Match Official.

9.8 Club secretaries or their deputies, pursuant to the hearing having not received a verdict after 24 hours, should contact **Alan Smith** regarding the result.

9.9 Should a case of alleged assault by a player, club official or spectator be lodged it will be reported to **Alan Smith** by a Match Official. The Match Official will then be instructed to make himself available to the disciplinary committee, for the purposes of interview, due notice of which shall be given in writing. A Match Official shall in such circumstances be entitled to claim reasonable travel expenses.

9.10A player’s suspension shall commence on the Saturday following the meeting at which the suspension was imposed, with the exception of any suspension of six matches or more which shall take immediate effect.

9.11 All organised competition games, (including University & Colleges Rugby League fixtures and RFL representative games) provided that they were arranged prior to the player’s offence may be counted towards his list of suspended games.

9.12 A suspended player is not permitted to play in any other game of Rugby League until any fines are paid and his suspension is served and the completed Notification Of Games Served Form has been completed and received and approved by **Alan Smith**. Any player or club violating this rule will be fined not less than £50 and the offending player shall be suspended for a further six matches and will not be able to play until such time as the fine is paid. In the event of a game having been won by a club fielding a player under suspension then the competition points gained shall be forfeited automatically. The Management Group, should it deem appropriate, reserves the right to apply other sanctions which may include a club’s suspension or expulsion from the competition.

9.13 All fines, must be settled within 28 days and must be forwarded as instructed on the notification of outcome sheet. Failure to meet this obligation shall result in the fine being doubled automatically. If a further seven days elapse without receipt of payment, then the club’s fixtures will be suspended.

10 **APPEALS**

10.1 All appeals against disciplinary sanctions imposed by the NERL are to be dealt with by an independent RFL appointed panel.

10.2 Clubs who have the right to appeal may do so within 14 days of a decision made. A £40.00 fee, payable to the “RFL”, should be submitted together with an accompanying letter outlining the reason why the appeal is sought. This must be forwarded to the Competition Officer.

10.3 An appeal by a club may be based solely on the following grounds: a) the finding of guilt or b) the severity of sentence imposed.

10.4 No member of the Discipline Panel actively involved in a decision taken at the initial hearing shall be permitted to adjudicate on matters which will be the subject of appeal.

10.5 Adjudication by the Appeals Panel precludes the right of individual players or their clubs towards seeking a further representation.