

## **DE-REGULATION FOR DORSET & WILTS RFU LEAGUES (COUNTIES 2 AND 3 DW SOUTH/CENTRAL/NORTH) FOR THE SEASON 2023-24**

The RFU, through the South West Regional Organising Committee (SWROC), has delegated to constituent bodies the organisation of the Counties 2 leagues (formerly Level 8) and below. Dorset & Wilts RFU, subject to the approval of SWROC and the RFU, may de-regulate those leagues. The de-regulation that will be applied in Dorset & Wilts Leagues is summarised in this Appendix. Clubs should refer to their appointed League Secretary for guidance who will administer in accordance with RFU Regulation 6 and the administrative instructions issued by the SWROC and the de-regulation set out in this Appendix.

1. Principles of Promotion. RFU Regulation governs the promotion of teams. The composition of leagues in the Dorset & Wilts Leagues will be recommended by Dorset & Wilts RFU and submitted for SW approval before each season. Dorset & Wilts RFU may nominate eligible teams for promotion taking into account the principles promulgated by the RFU. It is expected that only 2 teams will be permitted promotion to Counties 1 leagues (Formerly Level 7). RFU performance criteria will be used to place the three Counties 2 league winners in order. The first placed team will be promoted and the other two will play off unless one declines or is ineligible or circumstances enable all 3 to be promoted. If more than 3 promotions are possible then eligible runners up will be graded using RFU performance criteria. At Counties 3 (formerly Level 9) an eligible league winner should expect promotion but thereafter structural and travel considerations as well as RFU performance criteria will be taken into account by Dorset & Wilts RFU.

2. Application to be exempt promotion. RFU Regulation requires notice to be given by **31<sup>st</sup> January** to express a preference not to be promoted. Dorset & Wilts RFU's recommendations to the SW have to consider the merits of the case against the imbalances that might result in the structure. If promotion is declined and agreed then the following season promotion must be accepted if it is achieved as per para 1.

3. Relegation. The number of teams in a league, whose number may change in accordance with the structure of the leagues for a future season, the locations of those teams, and relegations into Counties 1 and Counties 2 consequent on Regional changes will govern relegation within the Dorset & Wilts Leagues using league table outcomes and comparative performance at Counties 2. The recommendations on relegation to be made to the SWROC will take into account fixtures and travel in the next season. Teams may request relegation, by **31<sup>st</sup> January**, giving grounds for it but in general at least the bottom team in a Counties 2 league should expect to be relegated but may find they are not. Teams may also request by 31<sup>st</sup> January that they should not be relegated. All applications to Dorset & Wilts RFU in respect of promotion and relegation will be taken into account before a recommended structure is submitted to the SWROC. Due to possible impacts from the cascade of teams higher up the league structure it is possible that more than 1 team may be relegated at each level. The playing record for the season will be taken into account in determining which team/teams are relegated.

4. Referees. RFU Regulations cover the appointment of match officials. In the Dorset & Wilts Leagues the host club cannot rely upon the referee society to appoint a match official. Where one is not appointed, or becomes unavailable, the onus will be on the host club to arrange a referee, consulting the opposition team as to whether they can assist and keeping the league secretary informed of their progress in solving the problem. Where this is not done, and where the League Secretary deems the host club has not made the necessary effort to appoint a referee, then a league fixture will be deemed to be forfeited and will not be postponed to a later date if that is the only reason for postponement.

5. Eligibility & Registration - Players. All players in the Leagues are to be registered in accordance with RFU Regulation. (See Reg 6 para 14 and Reg 14.) **This means all players playing in the leagues will need to be registered with the club. However, in Counties 3 we will be happy for the players to be affiliated to the**

club, if not registered.

6. Eligibility – Teams. Eligibility is summarized in Reg 6 para 15-18 but in the Dorset & Wilts Leagues in order to enable players to play a game on a regular basis then any two or more clubs may nominate a joint (composite) team for entry in the Dorset & Wilts Leagues. This team may contain players affiliated to one or the other. The composite team will not be able to play in the same league as either parent club or at the same or higher level and one club must take responsibility for administration and discipline. A composite team is usually to be declared and entered prior to the start of a season but in the event that a team is expunged or withdraws during a season then, with the agreement of the League Secretary, the players may then join with another club's players and form a composite team to fulfil fixtures in the Dorset & Wilts Leagues.

7. Team Composition. In the event that a significant number of players who play at a higher level play for a lower XV then the League Secretary may request an explanation and award a sanction if they are not satisfied with the answer.

8. Higher Level Team Not Fielded. In the event that a lower team is fielded in the Dorset & Wilts Leagues and wins its match when a higher XV of that club does not have a fixture, or that fixture does not take place, then there will be grounds for appeal to the League Secretary to review the result if it is suspected that a significant number of players from a higher level team have been fielded. In particular if a team defaults in the league and the club has a lower team in a league that plays and wins on the same day then that lower team may be deemed by the League Secretary to have played and lost, a Nil Nil score being returned. The circumstances of each such concession will be examined by the League Secretary.

9. Replacements. RFU Regulation restricts sides to three replacements at Level 5 and below and for a team to have at least one Front Row nominated reserve in the squad. However in the Dorset & Wilts Leagues up to 5 replacements will be permitted at Counties 2 and an unlimited number at Counties 3. No additional Front Row players are required. Rolling replacements are permitted as per Reg 6 para 63 but the number of interchanges depend on the number of replacements: 8 interchanges is the limit with 3 replacements, 9 for 4, 10 for 5 or 6, and 12 for 7 or more. Replacement after 12 interchanges is not permitted under World Rugby rules, even where further injury or blood incidents occur.

10. Additional De-Regulation for Level 9. The following additional de-regulation is authorised for teams in Counties 3 of the Dorset & Wilts Leagues. They include some but not all aspects of Game On. However as laid down in RFU Regulation 55-56 if both teams agree to adopt additional Game On principles then the outcome of the match can be submitted as a valid result. It is to be noted that the RFU guidance states that both teams must agree which of the Game On principles will apply to the match and notify the referee at least 30 minutes prior to kick off by completing a Game On Match card. If both teams cannot agree which principles to apply the match will proceed without the application of the Game On principles. This will mean in accordance with this de-regulation.

10.1. Player Numbers - Concessions and Point Deductions. Points are not deducted if a team plays a friendly. Under SW Administrative Instructions a friendly must be played with at least 10 players of its own. However they can borrow players and play a valid match but teams are to be of equal numbers. This will apply in Counties 2 and Counties 3 of the Dorset & Wilts leagues if a team enables any kind of friendly to take place – in most cases by travelling with some of their players - then no league points will be deducted as long as a game takes place. If a team is short of players the opposition is strongly encouraged to loan players to the team that is short of numbers. If the opposition do not loan players (or have no replacements to loan) then the match will be played with sides of equal numbers based on the lowest number fielded by one of the sides. The minimum number for a valid match will be 10 in a team. If a team playing in Counties 3 refuses to loan players - or its members refuse to be loaned - or declines to play a friendly when the

offer has been made then, at the discretion of the League Secretary, neither team will be awarded points and the match will be void. Please ensure you keep the league secretary in the loop when there are issues around playing numbers/ playing a game- they should be the first point of contact BEFORE any decision to call off the game is made. Points deductions that are incurred after the transfer deadline will be carried over to the following season. However, at Counties 2 & 3 in the D&W leagues the league secretary will have the discretion to apply the sanction in the season incurred but the club will need to fully explain the circumstances to the league secretary who must then be happy with the explanation.

10.2. Front Row and Uncontested Scrums. At Counties 3 for a match to be valid a team must start with a front row capable of playing the fixture but if no suitably trained and experienced player is available to substitute in the event of injury, temporary suspension or dismissal (and the opposition are unable to assist with a suitable replacement) then the match will continue with uncontested scrums for the period necessary and the result will stand. Any additional 'Man Off Rule' will not apply. In the event that a team has caused matches to be played with uncontested scrums continuing up to the final whistle and has gained more than two wins in such circumstances then the League Secretary can decide not to award any further points for that team as a consequence of winning subsequent matches played with uncontested scrums.

10.3. Maximum score. In Counties 3 leagues when the scoring differential reaches 60 points the result will be recorded as at that time in the game. If mutually agreed, the match may continue to full time but further scores will not be recorded or reported.

10.4. Duration of Game. At Counties 3 the length of a game may be abbreviated to 60 minutes by mutual agreement of both sides and the referee. This can be agreed prior to or during the game. The score at the time the game ends shall be deemed the result unless the maximum scoring differential has already been reached

**Note:**

*Any issue that arises over whether a league match can or cannot be played – such as ground condition or lack of players or lack of a referee – must be discussed prior to the scheduled kick off with the League Secretary before any decision is made. Only the League Secretary can cancel a game and teams must seek authorisation of a postponement. Clubs should make every effort to play a game whenever possible.*