

Hertfordshire FA



Conclusion of Hertfordshire FA County Cups 2019/20

I am writing as Chairman and on behalf of the Board and Council of Hertfordshire Football Association following the decision to declare the Hertfordshire FA County Cups 2019/20 as null and void.

When Laurence Jones, Head of the National League System wrote explaining the FA's decision to end the 2019-20 Season at Non-League and Grassroots Level on 9th April, he stated that,

“Our primary concern will always be for the safety and welfare of Clubs, Players, Staff, Officials, Volunteers and Supporters”

We as a County FA can only echo and follow his comments and we tasked our Competitions Committee to consider how we will administer the completion of our own County Cup Competitions.

When meeting they had to consider some of Competitions were at the stage where Finalists were known and others were still at Quarter and Semi-Final stage, therefore a vast number of games remaining outstanding and required to be played.

There were three options available for the Committee, as instructed by the FA:

- Conclude the County Cup Competitions for 2019/20 with immediate effect and declare null and void.
- Where Finalists are known the Cup be awarded to the Teams as “joint winners” but, no medals will be awarded. All other Competitions that have other Rounds outstanding to be completed before finalists are known should be expunged.
- Where the Finalists are known, these Finals to be staged at the start of the new season at The County Ground with trophies and medals being awarded as normal. All others to be declared null and void.

COVID-19 has had a drastic impact on all of us not only football and has left us to come to terms with the loss of the ability to enjoy family and leisure activities we all took for granted and are now having to adjust to a different lifestyle choices, albeit for the right reasons.

Teams have not been able to train during lockdown so there will need to be a period of reintegration with the Players. It is uncertain whether those Teams involved will re-affiliate next Season or retain their Players to be able to be competitive.

Government and Public Health England are updating on a daily basis the developments of the virus and we are all too aware of their message 'Stay Home, Save Lives and Protect the NHS.'

There are still many uncertainties which have even developed during the lockdown and no indication when the ongoing and necessary social distancing measures can be removed to the point where football can safely resume.

Whilst there was a genuine desire to do everything we could to find a way of playing these Competitions the true reality of the situation was that there were too many unknowns to make this a viable option and we felt that the County Cups were not the primary consideration for participants at the moment.

After much discussion the Committee decided to recommend that the County Cup Competitions would be declared null and void for the 2019/20 season and that the Competitions where finalists had been known would be awarded as "joint winners".

This would reflect the respective Clubs' achievement in reaching the Finals and no medals would be awarded. This decision was subsequently ratified by both Council and the Board of the Association.

When coming to any decision we realise that it is impossible to that will please everybody and sympathise with the teams that will miss out on the chance of playing in a Final at Hertfordshire FA. However, it should be realised that the decision was not taken lightly and was made in the best interests of everyone involved in football.

I hope you and your families are staying safe and we look forward to seeing you all playing and participating in football as and when it is safe to do so.

Graham Phillips
Chairman Hertfordshire FA

5th May 2020

Hertfordshire FA



Statement from Acting Chairman of Competitions Committee

Dear Club Secretary,

RE: Hertfordshire FA County Cups 2019/20 declared null and void

I am writing in relation to the e-mail sent to you by Lauren Halsey, Football Services Manager, dated 23rd April 2020, advising you of the Competitions' Committee's decision to null and void all the County Cup Competitions at their meeting dated 21st April 2020. I would like to set out the reasons behind the decision so you have a full understanding of what the committee considered and concluded in arriving at the decision.

The FA decided that the final decision on how to complete County Cup Competitions would be left to the individual County FA's and there were three options

1. Declare the Competitions null and void
2. Share the Competition between finalists known
3. Delay until the start of the new 2020/21 season

Hertfordshire FA runs 22 County Cup competitions ranging from the Senior Cup, which has Watford FC and Stevenage FC as entrants, down to the Girls and Boys Under 12 Youth Cups. Apart from the Veterans Cup final played on 8th March, all other Cup Finals were yet to be fully completed at the time of the Coronavirus Lockdown and cessation of grass roots football. Of the 21 remaining cup competitions, 12 have known finalists and 9 were at different stages and had at least semi-final matches outstanding.

The Competitions' Committee was charged with making a recommendation as to how to deal with the 2019/20 cup competitions. Among the considerations were to stage those finals where the finalists were known and void all other competitions, or play all outstanding rounds at the start of the 2020/21 season and then stage the remaining 21 cup finals over the course of three or four weeks with three matches played on the same day when football is able to resume.

The Committee were of the opinion that only playing those finals where the finalists were known and voiding the others was unequitable on those clubs that had not played their outstanding rounds, and as such, either all or none should be staged.

The question of playing at the start of the season was raised. This also has its own potential problems, as no one could be certain as to when the new season would start, would all be re-affiliating and be able to take part, would the players currently registered be registered for the same teams next season. As a high number of the cup finals are Youth football, there was also consideration as to when would children return to school and would they be potentially ready and willing to participate in a Final in early September, when football would ordinarily resume.

Also, there would also have to be risk assessments factored into the equation when holding any fixtures. Currently the Cup Finals are staged at the County FA headquarters with members of the Office and Council running them. Many of the volunteers across the County FA are possibly considered as vulnerable and the Committee felt they would not be able to provide the same level of service for a Cup Final as they deem appropriate and sufficient with the current restrictions in place, furthermore, some parents and families may not wish for their children to participate so quickly after the virus.

The recommendation of the Competitions' Committee was considered at the Hertfordshire FA Council meeting held on Monday 27th April, following a short discussion the decision was passed by a large majority by Council Members. The Council's decision was considered at the Hertfordshire FA Board Meeting on Monday 4th May for final ratification.

It was felt appropriate to delay releasing the statement until a final decision had been ratified and in conjunction with the statement from the Chairman of the Association.

Whilst the decision reached and ratified may not be one that you had hoped or necessary had arrived at, we believe it to be reasonable and with the thoughts of football and the participants at the forefront of our minds. Whilst not agreeing with the decision it is hoped you have an understanding of the considerations. This is a decision that a number of other County FA's have made, and I have seen correspondence from a number of clubs in reply to the initial notification, and felt that you deserved a detailed response, a number of replies have been supportive of the decision.

The finalists, where known will be recorded to be "joint winners" so that the achievement of reaching the final would be recorded.

I hope that you all are keeping well and staying safe during this very challenging time and when it is safe to do so we all look forward to commencing football again.

Tony Butler
Acting Chairman Competitions Committee

5th May 2020