



YOUTH COMPETITION RULES

GOVERNANCE RULES

1. MANAGEMENT

- (a) The County Competitions shall be under the entire control and management of Bedfordshire FA via the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee.
- (b) The Youth County Competitions shall comprise of:
- Under 18 Floodlit Challenge Cup
 - Under 18 Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 16 Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 15 Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 14 Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 18 Saturday Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 16 Saturday Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 15 Saturday Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 14 Saturday Youth Challenge Cup
 - Under 18 Girls Challenge Cup
 - Under 16 Girls Challenge Cup
 - Under 15 Girls Challenge Cup
 - Under 14 Girls Challenge Cup

All competitions shall be subject to a minimum of 8 entrants unless exceptional circumstances prevail and the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee agree a reduction down to a minimum of 6.

- (c) The Cup can never become the absolute property of any Club. After the Final the winners of the Trophy shall give an undertaking to return the Trophy, in good order, by 1st September following their Final. Clubs failing to return the cup will be fined as per schedule of fines. If a cup is returned damaged, then the club will be responsible for the full cost of repair.
- (d) Entry criteria for all County Competitions shall be set by the County Cups Committee prior to each season and confirmed before draws are made.
- (e) The County Cups Committee shall determine the dates on which County Competition matches shall be played.
- (f) Failures by Clubs to comply with the Youth Competition Rules shall be referred to the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee and problems concerning referees shall be referred to the Referees Committee or Football Operations Committee.
- (g) If a match is declared void for any reason, the game shall be re-arranged as directed by the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee.
- (h) The County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee shall have power to alter, or add to, any of the Youth Competition Rules as they from time to time deem expedient.

- (i) The County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee shall have powers to apply, act upon and enforce these Rules and shall also have jurisdiction over all matters affecting the Competitions.

For all alleged breaches of a Rule a formal written charge shall be issued to the Club concerned. The Club charged shall be given 7 days from the date of notification of the charge to reply. In such reply a Club may:

- (1) Accept the charge and submit in writing a case of mitigation for consideration by the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee; or
- (2) Accept the charge and notify that it wishes to put its case of mitigation at a hearing before the County Cups Committee; or
- (3) Deny the charge and submit in writing supporting evidence for consideration by the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee; or
- (4) Deny the charge and notify that it wishes to put its case at a hearing before the County Cups Committee.

Where the Club charged fails to respond within 7 days, the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee shall determine the charge in such manner and upon such evidence as it considers appropriate.

Where required, hearings shall take place as soon as reasonably practicable following receipt of the reply of the Club. Having considered the reply of the Club (whether in writing or at a hearing), the County Cups Committee or Football Operations committee shall make its decision and, in the event that the charge is accepted or proven, decide on the appropriate penalty (with reference to the Fines Tariff where applicable).

When setting any fine, the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee must ensure that the penalty is proportional to the offence, taking into account any mitigating circumstances.

- (j) All decisions made by the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee shall be final and binding.

2. METHOD OF ENTRY AND REQUIREMENTS

- (a) All clubs affiliated to Bedfordshire FA are eligible to take part in one of the Youth County Competitions, provided one is suitable. Entries must reach the Association on or before the 31st July failure to comply will result in the club not being entered into any Youth County Competition, unless exceptional circumstances prevail.
- (b) Where a Club has more than one team at an age group it may be entitled to enter both or all teams, however no player may play for more than one team in the same youth county competition in any one season.
- (c) Shirts with different numbers must be worn by players (including substitutes).
- (d) In the event of the colours of the two competing Clubs being similar in any tie, the away team must change, except in a final when the second named team shall change.
- (e) In all Youth Competitions the Away team shall pay the Home team £15 towards the cost of the match expenses in all rounds up to and including the Quarter Finals.
- (f) The County Competitions shall take precedence over all League and other competitions except FA Competitions.
- (g) Clubs withdrawing or having been expelled mid-season from their domestic competition shall not be eligible to compete in the Youth Cup Competitions unless agreed otherwise.

3. DRAW AND NOTIFICATION

- (a) The Draws shall be made by those designated by the County Cups Committee.
- (b) Draws may be made by hand or via Full-Time as determined by the County Cups Committee.
- (c) Once the draw has been made, no team will be added to a competition unless exceptional circumstances prevail.

- (d) In each round of all youth county competitions Bedfordshire FA shall notify all clubs the name of their opponents and the appointed match official(s) via Full-Time. All ties must be played on the day, and at the time, set by the County Cups Committee. If a team have a free week agreed by their league which clashes with a County Cup tie they must advise Bedfordshire FA immediately so that the game can be re-arranged.
- (e) The Home Club shall notify its opponents and match officials of usual match particulars at least 5 days prior to the match and when doing so shall give its Opponents, Match Officials and where appointed, Bedfordshire FA Council Representative details of the location of the ground. Failure to do so shall result in the Club being fined as per the schedule of fines. Both clubs shall fulfil the fixture as per rule 3(d).

4. FINAL TIES

- (a) The proceeds of the Final Ties shall be collected by Bedfordshire FA who shall be responsible for the payment of all the match expenses. Any excess Income over Expenditure shall be divided as determined by the Board.
- (b) At the conclusion of the Final Tie both clubs shall be presented with 20 mementoes and each Match Official shall be presented with a memento.

5. APPEALS AND PROTESTS

- (a) All appeals and protests must be made to Bedfordshire FA via email at least 7 days prior to the date of the next round to which the protest relates. Protests from clubs relating to player eligibility should be accompanied by clear photographic or video evidence of the player participating in the fixture. Other evidence may be considered (e.g. Team sheet, Social Media Posts) if they clearly indicate participation in the match.
- (b) Protests related to markings, measurements, goalposts etc, will not be entertained unless a protest has been lodged with the Referee before the match.

MATCH RELATED RULES

6. GROUNDS, FOOTBALLS

- (a) The dimensions of the field of play & goalposts for matches in the Youth County Competitions must comply with The FA Guide to Pitch and Goalpost Dimensions and be marked clearly, with corner flags and goal nets provided.
- (b) Home teams shall have the choice of ground, the final tie shall be played on such ground as the County Cups Committee may determine. If there is a clash of pitches then an alternative must be sourced or the game played on the away teams ground. If neither is available Bedfordshire FA will find a venue. Home clubs failing to advise of a pitch clash with more than 7 days notice face removal from the competition if an alternative ground is not available.
- (c) In all Youth County Competitions changing facilities for players and officials are highly recommended but not compulsory, Home Teams shall advise their opponents of what facilities are or aren't on offer when confirming the game.
- (d) Football Turf Pitches (3G) are allowed in the Adult County Competitions provided they meet the required performance standards and are listed on the FA's Register of Football Turf Pitches. The home Club is also responsible for advising Participants of footwear requirements when confirming match arrangements in accordance with Rule 3 (e).
- (e) In all County Cup Finals the playing pitch must have a railed or roped-off area at least five feet from the goal and touch lines.
- (f) If the ground of the Club having the choice of ground is considered unsuitable for a Cup -tie (excluding due to weather), the opposing Club may appeal to the County Cups Committee. The County Cups Committee may order the match to be played on the ground of the appealing Club or on a neutral ground, with the appealing club becoming responsible for all the match expenses. The County Cups Committee also has power to order a change of venue where the ground of the home team is temporarily unfit, if the venue is changed to the ground of the away team then they shall become responsible for all the match expenses.

- (g) If the Home drawn team requests the match to be switched to their opponents grounds (or a ground on which they do not normally play) then they shall remain responsible for all Match Expenses including Hire of the Ground & Floodlighting (where applicable) and Match Officials Fees & Expenses.
- (h) The appointed referee shall decide as to the fitness of a ground for all County Competition matches except where the match is Played on a:
 - (1) Ground rented from a Local Government Authority which, under the terms of letting, reserves to itself, or its delegated officials, the right to determine, whether or not the ground is fit for play.
 - (2) Ground rented from a Club (not competing in the fixture), for the playing of the fixture, who shall have the right to determine and say that its ground is unfit for play.

Each Club must take every precaution to keep its ground in playing condition. If necessary, the home club may request that the referee or his nominated deputy examine the ground and decide its fitness for play in sufficient time to save expenses of unnecessary journeys being incurred by the Clubs.
- (i) All games must be played within the County boundary or up to a maximum of 5 miles by road outside of this, except with the permission of the County Cups Committee. No Club shall mutually agree to change the venue without the permission of the County Cups Committee.
- (j) **Footballs** - Size 5 balls will be used in the Under 18, Under 16 & Under 15 sections
Size 4 balls will be used in the Under 14 section

7. DURATION OF MATCHES

- (a) The duration of play in County Youth Competitions shall be as follows:
 - U18 section - 90 Minutes (2 x 45 Minutes Halves)
 - U16 & U15 sections - 80 Minutes (2 x 40 Minutes Halves)
 - U14 section - 70 Minutes (2 x 35 minutes Halves)

By arrangement between the Managers of the opposing Clubs. the duration of each match, except in the semi-final and final ties may be reduced by up to a period of 10 minutes each half, such arrangements must be notified to the Referee prior to the commencement of the match.
- (b) All matches must be completed at the first meeting, If at the end of Normal Time the scores are equal no extra time will be played and kicks from the penalty mark shall decide the result according to the procedure laid down in the Laws of Association Football. If unforeseen circumstances prevent the completion of kicks from the penalty mark, the game shall be re-played the following weekend at the ground of the Away Team.
- (c) The half-time interval shall be of 10 minutes duration.
- (d) The Kick Off time shall be determined by the County Cups Committee and notified to all clubs via Full-Time, any Club failing to start at the appointed time shall be fined as per the schedule of fines unless exceptional circumstances prevail.
- (e) In cases when the start is delayed, no Club shall leave the ground until at least 30 minutes after the scheduled Kick Off time and after they have attempted to contact their opponents and Bedfordshire FA to try to ascertain the reasons for the late arrival.
- (f) In the event of a match being abandoned, the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee may order the match to be replayed, allow the result at the time of the abandonment to stand or remove both teams from the competition, as they consider appropriate.
- (g) In the event of a match being postponed it shall be re-arranged for the following Weekend (or if scheduled for Mid-Week then during the following week) unless clubs are otherwise informed.

After 1 postponement the away team may request, within 48 hours, that the match be switched to their home ground, after 2 consecutive postponements at the same venue the county may insist on a switch of venue. In all instances of a postponement occurring from the following week both teams should make their ground available (where possible) to enable a late switch should there be another postponement to get the game played as soon as possible.

On the second, and subsequent, weeks of a fixture being due to be played the game should not be postponed before the away club has been consulted regarding a possible switch, failure to adhere to this may result in the home team being removed from the competition. Kick Off times may be delayed by upto 45 minutes to enable last minute switches on the day of a game.

In all circumstances the team playing at home, or on a pitch arranged by their league, will be responsible for the match expenses. Where a neutral venue is sourced by the county then all the match expenses shall be shared equally between the 2 teams.

- (h) In the event of a match being declared void and ordered to be replayed, the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee shall decide on how the match expenses are split and inform both clubs and the match officials.

8. ELIGIBILITY OF PLAYERS & TEAMSHEETS

- (a) The qualifying date for players in all competitions shall be 31st August. A player in the Under 14 age group must not play, and shall not be permitted or encouraged to play, in a match where any other player is older or younger by 2 years or more than that person.

The eligibility is summarised as follows (This relates to both Boys & Girls Cups):

Under 18 Cups - Players at least 15 and not yet 18 on or before 31st August

Under 16 Cups - Players at least 14 and not yet 16 on or before 31st August

Under 15 Cups - Players at least 13 and not yet 15 on or before 31st August

Under 14 Cups - Players at least 12 and not yet 14 on or before 31st August

Players who have been granted dispensation to play in a team outside of their usual age group will be eligible to play for that team in the county cup except for a player granted dispensation to play up at U13 who will not be eligible to play for that team in an U14 Cup.

- (b) Each player must be a registered member of the team they wish to represent, such registration having been approved by the league in line with their normal league registration rule with the exception of players not able to be signed on later than 2 hours before kick off. For matches played after the date fixed for any round the initial registration deadline remains and is not extended. This includes games mutually re-arranged, abandoned or postponed for any reason.

- (c) No player will be allowed to play in more than one team in the same competition.

- (d) In the case of Postponed, Abandoned or Replayed matches, only those players who were eligible on the day fixed for the completion of the round in which the match was originally played shall be allowed to play, except that a player under suspension on the date of the original fixture shall be deemed eligible at the time of replayed or rearranged game, providing their period of suspension has expired before the date of the replayed or rearranged game.

- (e) Players involved in Semi Finals & Finals must have played at least four times in the current season for the team they wish to represent (League, League Cup, County Cup and FA Competition matches only apply).

This rule will be relaxed where Bedfordshire FA deem that either the leagues in which teams play do not generate sufficient fixtures or where the semi finals are held at a point in the season when a significant part of the season is still to play or a combination of both. This will be entirely at the discretion of Bedfordshire FA with teams in affected competitions advised of any amendment. If no amendment is received, then the above rule will stand.

- (f) If there is any doubt as to the qualification of any player taking part in the youth county competitions, the County Cups Committee shall have the power to call upon such player, or the Club to which they belong, or for which they played, to prove that they are qualified according to the rules and failing satisfactory proof the Association may disqualify such player and remove the Club from the competition and/or impose such other penalty as they think fit.

If a Club is found guilty of playing an ineligible player in a County Competition match, or causing the match to be abandoned, it shall be removed from the Competition, unless exceptional circumstances as decided by the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee prevail, and suffer such other penalties as deemed appropriate. A Club found guilty of playing an ineligible player will be subject to a fine as per schedule of fines.

- (g) In all competitions a Club may, at its discretion, use up to a maximum of five substitutes players at any time in a match, except to replace a player who has been suspended from the game by the Referee after play has commenced. The substitution can only be made when play is stopped for any reason and the Referee has given permission. A maximum of five substitutes may be nominated to the referee before the match. Substitutes not so named shall not take part in the game.

In accordance with the preceding paragraph repeated substitutions are permissible as follows:

A player who has been substituted during a match becomes a substitute and may, in turn, replace another player at any time subject to the substitution being carried out in accordance with Law 3 of the Laws of Association Football.

The eligibility of a substitute to play in any other County cup-tie shall not be impaired unless they have entered the field of play to participate in the match.

9. REFEREES AND ASSISTANT REFEREES

- (a) Bedfordshire FA shall appoint referees to all cup ties but competing Clubs shall appoint their own Club Assistant Referees, except when Assistant Referees are appointed (all Rounds of the U18 Floodlit Challenge Cup, the Final Ties in the Girls Competitions and Semi Final & Final Ties in all other competitions where availability of referees allow). Such Referees shall be entitled to charge fees as follows (inclusive of travel):

Competition	Referee	Assistant Referee	Fourth Official
Youth / Girls (U18)	£40	£30	£30
Youth / Girls (U16 & U15)	£35	£25	£25
Youth / Girls (U14)	£30	£20	£20

- (b) The Home Club shall be liable for the Referees Fee up to and including the Quarter Finals. In the Semi Finals, if Assistant Referees are appointed, the Fees of all 3 Match Officials shall be shared equally between the competing clubs. In all cases up to and including the Semi Finals it shall be the responsibility of the Home Club to ensure that payment is made to the Match Officials.
- (c) A Club may apply in writing for the appointment of assistant referees in Youth Competition games, other than as set out above, and if such Assistant Referees are available, the Club making the application shall be responsible for the payment of their fees.
- (d) In the event of the non-appearance of the appointed Referee, the senior Assistant Referee shall referee the game. They shall receive the Referee's fee and the Clubs must agree to provide an Assistant Referee to take his place. In the event of the non-appearance of the appointed Referee at a game, for which there are no officially appointed Assistant Referees, the Clubs must agree upon a person to referee the game. Failure to do so may result in one or both clubs being removed from the Competition. In all cases where an officially appointed Referee or Assistant Referee fails to appear, or is late for the kick-off, the matter must be reported by the home club.
- (e) In the event of a match not being played because of circumstances over which the Clubs have no control (ie the weather), the match officials (if present) shall be entitled to claim a fee of £10. Where a match is not played owing to one club being in default, that Club (if present) shall pay the officials their full fee within 15 minutes of the decision being made. When the defaulting team is not present Bedfordshire FA shall pay the officials their full fee and recover the money from the defaulting team.
- (f) Match officials are required to report to the ground at least 45 minutes (1 Hour for Semi Finals & Finals) before the Kick Off.
- (g) Referees will submit details of rule breaches or any other matter that they consider should be reported to Bedfordshire FA.

10. NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

- (a) Both clubs will receive an automatic SMS from Full-Time which must be replied to by the Home Club to report the result within one hour of the match ending. If you do not receive the automatic message, then you must email support@bedfordshirefa.com with the result. Any Club failing to comply with this rule shall be fined as per schedule of fines.
- (b) In the event of the ground being declared unfit, the Home Club shall inform Bedfordshire FA immediately. Any Club failing to comply with this rule shall be fined as per schedule of fines.
- (c) Both Clubs shall complete their teamsheet on Full-Time by 10am on a Wednesday following a weekend game or within 3 days following a midweek game. Any Club failing to comply with this rule shall be subject to a fine as per schedule of fines.

- (d) Clubs in matches that started but were not completed for any reason must still complete their teamsheet on Full-Time as detailed in Rule 10(c). Clubs in matches that didn't take place for any reason do not need to complete the teamsheet on Full-Time.

11. NON FULFILMENT OF CUP TIES

- (a) Any Club not intending to fulfil a Cup Tie must give information of their intention to do so to the Secretary of the opposing Club and to Bedfordshire FA at the earliest opportunity, if this is within 7 days of the game the County Cups Committee shall have the power to compel them to pay the expenses incurred by their opponents, or of taking such action as they may deem expedient. Clubs failing to fulfil a Cup tie shall be fined as per schedule of fines.
- (b) Any Club failing to play on the date fixed for a tie, unless a change of date has specifically been agreed, shall forfeit the match.
- (c) A Club withdrawing in a Semi Final or Final of a County Competition shall be deemed guilty of serious misconduct and dealt with in such a manner that the County Cups Committee or Football Operations Committee see fit.

SCHEDULE OF FINES (YOUTH)

		OFFENCES		
		1st	2nd	3rd (& subsequent)
3(e)	Late or No Notification of Match Details (Match Official(s), Opponents and/or Beds FA Rep.)	£10	£20	£30
10	Notification of Results (a+b) No/Late Result (c+d) No/Late teamsheet submitted on Full-Time (c+d) Incomplete/Incorrect teamsheet submitted on Full-Time	£10	£20	£30

The above offences are all linked so by getting charged for 1 offence you will then incur the next stage of fine for another offence in any of the sections.

		FINE
7(d)	Late Kick Off (up to 15 mins / over 15 mins)	£15 / £25
8(f)	Ineligible Player (each offence)	£25
9(a)	No Club Assistant Referee	£20
11(a)	Non Fulfilment of Cup Tie (prior to the day of the match)	£75*
11(a)	Non Fulfilment of Cup Tie (on the day of the Match)	£100*
1(c)	Failure to return Cup / Returning a Damaged Cup	£50 [#]

* This is the minimum fine. Dependent on costs apportioned.

[#] If a cup is returned damaged then the club will be charged the full cost of repair