

Hertfordshire FA



Guidance for Ending the 2019/20 Season

The Football Association announced recently that due to the COVID-19 pandemic all grassroots football is concluded for 2019/20. This raises an unprecedented situation in terms of how to draw the season to an end in a fair and transparent manner. We have created this guidance to help Leagues in deciding how to handle this matter.

What options are available to conclude Leagues?

1. Competitions are brought to an immediate end with results expunged

How does this impact on the championships or division titles?

If a Competition is brought to an immediate end with results expunged, the championships or division titles cannot be awarded. This also applies to medals and trophies.

How does this impact on promotion/relegation?

If results are expunged there cannot be automatic relegation or promotion between division. However, under SCOR/Y Rule 2(L) League members have the authority to decide or adjust the constitution of divisions at Annual or Special General Meetings.

We would recommend ensuring there is sufficient time is dedicated to this issue at a future Annual or Special General Meeting so teams can be aligned to divisions in the absence of automatic promotion and relegation.

This will be particularly important in youth football, so teams do not stay in divisions next season where they are well above or well below their abilities.

2. League positions are determined on a Points-per-Game basis

How does this impact on League rules?

As the early termination of a League season is not covered under SCOR/Y, the decision over how to terminate the season is classed as a “matter affecting the Competition” which permits the League Management Committee to proceed and make a decision on the status of the Competition. It will only be permitted for this season under these unique circumstances and it must be stressed that this would not normally be applicable.

As members of a Leagues, Clubs may take decisions affecting the Competition at an Annual or Special General Meeting called for that purpose, and therefore have the right to agree as a collective body to agree that PPG can be used to determine final standings.

Can Full Time help with calculating Points per Game?

Full Time is not currently able to assist with calculating. In the meantime, League tables can be exported from Full Time into an excel spreadsheet to work out the calculation using a formula to divide the number of points against the number of fixtures for that team.

How should we separate teams tied on Points per Game?

Existing League rules should offer guidance around how to resolve Teams tied on points at the end of the season (for example Goal Difference in Adult leagues), although Leagues could also agree to have the position tied.

Can Leagues choose to use an alternative option?

We are strongly advising against other options being used at this time. A season extension is not deemed feasible as we do not know when grassroots football will be able to recommence and as such will not be sanctioning any season extensions.

We would ask that leagues seriously consider expunging results in line with the NLS and women's pyramid to support consistency across the game. However, we also strongly recommend balancing this with your ability to place teams into the right league based on their capability, especially when it comes to youth football.

What options are available to conclude League and Standalone Cups?

There are three options available for League and Standalone Cup Competitions:

1. Declare the season null and void (see above);
2. Agree to "share" the trophy (if finalists are already determined);
3. Delay final stages to the beginning of the 2020/2021 season

How can the decision be made?

The decision over how to draw the season to a close can be made in one of two ways:

A. By League Management Committees

Under SCOR/Y 6(D) the Management Committee shall have powers to "apply, act upon and enforce these Rules and shall also have jurisdiction over all matters affecting the Competition." As the early termination of a League season is not covered under SCOR/Y, this falls under the definition of a "matter affecting the Competition" which would permit the League Management Committee to make a decision over how to end the season.

It will only be permitted for this season under the unique circumstances we are in and it must be stressed that this would not be applicable under normal circumstances.

B. By Special General Meeting

The second option is to call a Special General Meeting ("SGM") of member Clubs in accordance with SCOR/Y Rule 8. Calling an SGM in this situation brings the member clubs together and involves them in any deliberation and decision making by the League.

Due to the current restrictions regarding social distancing, this meeting could be conducted by either Video Conference or once the meeting has been called and the nature of business informed to the Clubs, the Clubs could provide any vote by way of email.

Due to the unprecedented nature of the current situation, this is permitted for the current season only and in all other circumstances physical attendance would be required.

Guidance around conducting a Special General Meeting (“SGM”)

Competitions should consider the following methods to facilitate SGMs:

Video Conference Meeting

There is wide variety of technology available to facilitate online virtual meetings. We are happy to help you arrange your meetings via Microsoft Teams or Webex as we have experience using this software. If a video conference SGM is held, Leagues must still provide Clubs with at least 7 days’ notice of the meeting and nature of the business.

Email Vote

Under SCOR/Y Rule 6(L) “the business of the Competition as determined by the Management Committee may be transacted by electronic mail or facsimile.”

Therefore, Management Committees can request a simple vote on options by email. If Leagues choose to use email votes by members, we would recommend there is independent oversight of the voting, and again we are happy to help facilitate this process.

Agendas

Leagues must send Clubs the agenda for an SGM at least 7 days’ before the meeting. No other business can be transacted beyond what is included on the Meeting.

A recommended SGM Agenda would include:

1. Roll Call
2. Discussion and vote the options for the current season:
 - 2.1 Competitions are brought to an immediate end with results expunged.
 - 2.2 League positions and promotions and relegation are resolved on a points-per-game calculation.
3. Discussion and vote on the status of League Cups:
 - 3.1 Season declared null and void.
 - 3.2 Trophies are shared between finalists.

3.3 Finals delayed to the start of the 2020/2021 season.

Further support and guidance

Although football activity may currently be suspended until further notice, please be assured that we as your County FA are here to offer advice and guidance to all of our leagues and clubs during this difficult time.

Our offices may be closed but we are still working remotely and available by email or phone during normal office hours as before. Please do get in touch with us if you need help. You can find contact details for our staff on our website.

<http://www.hertfordshirefa.com/about/board-and-staff>

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Appendix - General FAQs

Does this need to be a blanket decision across all age groups/divisions or can we decide between the two options on a case by case basis? What about where one division has completed its fixtures or a team has already mathematically won?

For consistency the League should adopt the same method throughout all its divisions, so they need to consider this when deciding which option to use. If a Competition is brought to an immediate end with results expunged (i.e. without promotion or relegation occurring) then there are no winners and thus no medals/trophies can be awarded.

Can we provide mementos/gifts (not trophies or medals) to those teams that had won their respective division (or couldn't be caught) to try and lessen the impact of them not technically winning the League?

That would be down to the individual League but a League would have to be mindful that it is the member club's money that they are spending and if a Competition is brought to an immediate end with results expunged (i.e. without promotion or relegation occurring) then there are no winners and thus no medals/trophies can be awarded.

Isn't there a third option that is missing? (0-0 for remaining fixtures)

This is an option for leagues to use but not one The FA are recommending. The FA are trying to limit the number of options so it is less confusing for participants.

Can leagues play the final stages of a cup as a pre-season competition?

There is greater flexibility around cup competitions with options including, but not limited to, simply cancelling the Competition, trophy sharing (if finalists already determined), or concluding them at the start of the 20/21 season. This could also include quarter-finals and semi-finals provided they were played in consecutive weeks.

Any advice for Leagues looking to play cup finals in the 2020/21 preseason when considering age bands? Which format should be used where this changes?

The pragmatic solution would be to use the format required for the 20/21 season as per all other pre-season games. This is most likely to occur in the current Under 12s moving from 9v9 to 11v11 when they move up to Under 13s.

Leagues would need to decide if they were using the 2019/20 registered players or the 2020/21 registered players in conjunction with Hertfordshire FA.

Should League fees be refunded if season void?

In principle we do not believe there is a need to offer refunds in respect to the season being cut short. This is on the basis that this was not a choice that was made voluntarily but rather a necessity driven by factors beyond our control.

However, we respect the autonomy of the Leagues themselves to have local decision-making rights in this regard based on their particular circumstances.

If Competitions are brought to an immediate end with results expunged, does that mean that any disciplinary offences recorded from matches in these competitions are also expunged? all fines will get expunged refunds given?

No. Just because it was not possible to complete the season does not mean that these matches or offences did not happen. Discipline charges and cases will not be expunged as the offences have been committed. These will remain recorded in their entirety.

What will happen with suspensions? Will these just carry over?

The short answer is yes, just the same as any other season. This is covered by paragraphs 66-68 of the Disciplinary Regulations:

66 Subject to paragraph 67 below, any period of suspension or part thereof arising from this Section Three or as a result of a Charge which remains outstanding at the end of playing season must be served at the commencement of the following playing season.

67 Any period of suspension or part thereof arising from an accumulation of cautions in relation to the FA Cup or FA Vase which remains outstanding at the end of the playing season will be repealed and need not be served at the commencement of the following playing season.

68 Affiliated Associations will impose split suspension periods where suspensions have to be carried over to the following playing season.