



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FA

County Cup Rules & Regulations 2025-26

Saturday Senior Challenge Cup



Nottinghamshire FA County Cup Rules & Regulations 2025-26

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1. The Cup Competitions

- a. The Cup Competition shall be called:
- b. Nottinghamshire FA Saturday Senior Challenge Cup
- c. A sponsor's name may be added to the title of the Cup Competition on an annual basis or as agreed.

2. Cup Management

- a. The ownership, organisation, control and management of the cup competitions and any rights associated with it of any nature shall be vested entirely in the Nottinghamshire FA (NFA)
- b. The control and management of the cup competitions shall be vested in the Nottinghamshire FA Cup Group (NFACG) on behalf of the NFA.
- c. The NFACG shall have the power to make decisions on all matters arising out of or in relation to the organisation, control and management of the cup competitions (including as to eligibility and qualification) which shall be final and binding on all participants in the cup competition. In relation to these and any other matters relating to the cup competitions, but not specifically mentioned in the cup competition rules, the NFACG shall have the power to take such action and make such decisions, orders, rulings and impose such penalties as it deems necessary following such procedures as it considers appropriate which shall, subject to Rule 23, be final and binding on all participants. In considering such matters, the NFACG shall not be bound by any enactment or Rule of Law relating to the admissibility of evidence in proceeding before a Court of Law.
- d. The NFACG may, at its sole discretion, appoint from time to time a committee to take such action and make such decisions, orders, rulings and impose penalties on its behalf which shall be deemed decisions of the NFA.
- e. In addition to any other action or penalty, the NFACG shall have the power to disqualify any competing Club, or Player for any competing Club(s), which it determines to have breached the Rules of The Association or the cup competition rules (and any rules or regulations issued pursuant to the cup competition rules), and the decision of the NFACG shall, subject to Rule 23, be final and binding.

3. Notice of Entry / Entry Fee

- a. Saturday Senior Challenge Cup up entry fee is £75.00 per team. The entry fee is to be paid either on affiliation or prior to final entry date.
- b. Deadline for entry into the cup competitions is 31st July via the Club Portal: clubs.thefa.com
- c. Entry requests submitted after the deadline will be considered by the NFACG and accepted at their discretion.
- d. The NFACG reserves the right to reject the entry of any team if they deem such a course of action desirable.





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4. Eligibility of Teams

- a. Only NFA affiliated clubs can enter teams into NFA cup competitions.
- b. Teams must be playing in a sanctioned league, unless agreed by NFACG.
- c. Saturday teams can only enter Saturday cups.
- d. Saturday Senior Challenge Cup entry requirements are as follows:
 - i. Saturday Senior Challenge Cup – it is mandatory entry for any team at Step 6 (FA National League System) or above to enter this cup. Clubs can only enter one team in the competition. The exception to this rule relates to professional clubs where entry is optional and is by invitation of the NFA.
 - ii. ~~Clubs outside the NLS but playing in the Premier Division of their Regional Feeder League may be invited to participate providing they comply to FA Ground Grading 6 <https://www.thefa.com/-/media/thefacom-new/files/gethttps://www.thefa.com/-/media/thefacom-new/files/get-involved/2022/tm0273-ground-grading-handbook-v18-lo-res.ashxinvolved/2022/tm0273-ground-grading-handbook-v18-lo-res.ashx>~~

5. The Draws

- a. The NFACG shall be responsible for making the cup draws for all the competitions through The FA Full Time software.
- b. The teams shall be drawn in pairs constituting the cup ties whereby the first-drawn team shall play at home.
- c. Should Mansfield Town FC, Nottingham Forest FC and/or Notts County FC be participants in the Saturday Senior Challenge Cup they will always be the away team in the tie, unless two of these sides are drawn together when they shall mutually agree a venue that meets competition requirement for the tie.
- d. The NFACG will reserve the right to provide byes in all competitions.
- e. All draws will be published on The NFA website www.nottinghamshirefa.com/cups and confirmation will be sent via email to the designated team contact in the FA Full Time software.
- f. Any team failing to play in any tie may be adjudged by the NFACG to be in breach of regulation 6F and may be removed from the competition and charged accordingly.

6. Match Dates

- a. The NFACG shall determine the date or dates upon which the matches shall be played on or by.
- b. The home team must advise their opponents and the match official(s) of the exact location of their ground (including post-code) and kit colours at least seven days prior to the date of the match. These details must then be acknowledged by both parties.





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- c. If the ground of the first-drawn team is unavailable it will be their responsibility to provide an alternative venue so the tie can be played on the date as advised; this is to include the opposition facility if available. The alternative venue must be accepted by the NFACG.
- d. All Saturday Senior Challenge Cup ties up to the final should be played in the mid-week (where possible). The day/date on which the mid-week tie is to be played must be mutually agreed by both teams and the NFACG must be notified by email at cupcompetitions@nottinghamshirefa.com
- e. Exceptionally, there may be occasions where teams are unable to fulfil a fixture in accordance with the terms of Rule 6c above. This will usually be where a team has a commitment to participate in a more senior competition. (See also Rule 21). On such occasions the NFACG has no objection to teams mutually agreeing a prior date as soon as they are notified of the fixture. Teams agreeing a date after the scheduled draw are required to take note of the date of the next round of the competition. If mutual agreement cannot be reached, the NFACG will determine a date which will then become final and binding on both parties. The first-drawn team has the option to play the fixture on their normal mid-week fixture night if all parties agree.
- f. No game may be postponed for more than two weeks from the original set date due to an unfit pitch – in these circumstances the tie will be switched to the away team's ground unless this also proves unplayable. In the situation where both teams' pitches are unplayable, the first-drawn team will be required to provide an alternative venue. Failure to do so may result in a fine and their expulsion from the competition. The alternative venue must be deemed acceptable by the NFACG.
- g. When a match has been postponed or abandoned with neither team being at fault, it must be played on the ground of the first-drawn team within seven days following the original fixture date, unless otherwise decided by the NFACG.
- h. Where a match is abandoned due to proven misconduct by one of the competing teams or its supporters, that team will be removed from the competition, may be liable to further sanctions and its opponents awarded the tie. If both teams are found proven responsible for the abandonment of the fixture, the result of the game will be expunged with both teams being removed from the competition and liable to further sanctions. This is applicable to all stages of the competition including the final.
- i. Where a match is postponed due to a late kick-off caused by one of the teams, the match will be replayed on a ground chosen by the team deemed to be the innocent party. Should both teams be deemed equally responsible for the late kick-off, then the tie must be played on the ground of the first-named team within seven days. Any alternative venue must be deemed acceptable by the NFACG.
- j. Where agreement cannot be reached as to who is responsible for an abandonment / postponement, an emergency meeting of the NFACG will be arranged at the earliest opportunity to resolve the outcome.



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- k. Matches, including Final ties, may be played on a 3G pitch providing it meets the required performance standards and are listed on the FA's Register of Football Turf Pitches.

7. Match Time, Duration, Extra Time and Penalties

- a. Kick off times will be set by The NFACG and cannot be changed without the permission of the NFACG. Any club wishing to change a kick off time must apply in writing to cupcompetitions@nottinghamshirefa.com at least 14 days prior to the date of the match. Such requests must have approval from all opposition and match officials. If a match takes place at a rescheduled time without the NFACG approval then the club(s) may be subject to sanction.
- b. The duration of each match shall be 90 minutes. The match official shall allow for time wasted or lost through accident or other cause. The match official is the sole judge of allowance of time whether lost through accident or other cause and his decision on this matter is not subject to appeal.
- c. In all cup competitions the half time interval shall not exceed 15 minutes, which may be altered only with consent of the match official.
- d. If the scores are level on the completion of the second half, **a result shall be obtained by the taking of penalties** in accordance with IFAB Laws of the Game. The exception to this rule will be Final ties where **extra time** and penalties, if needed, will decide the winner of the tie.

8. The Field of Play

- a. Dimensions of the field of play shall be in accordance with The IFAB Laws of The Game.
- b. Goal nets and corner posts must be used in all matches. Teams failing to comply with either element of this rule shall be subject to a fine as determined by the NFACG.
- c. Saturday Senior Challenge Cup grounds must have obtained FA Ground Grading Category 6.

9. The Match Ball

- a. A size 5 football is used in all cup competitions.
- b. Each team must provide at least two appropriate match standard balls with the match official deciding on which ball to use throughout the match.

10. Colours of Competing Teams

- a. When the colours (shirts, shorts **and** socks) of competing teams are similar the visiting team must change. These arrangements may be amended by mutual agreement. Goalkeepers must wear colours which distinguish them from the other players and match official(s). Goalkeepers should also wear opposing colours to one another where possible.





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- b. Teams are not permitted to play in black or very dark shirts, unless that team has liaised with the appointed match official(s) who may have alternative official clothing available which does not clash with either team. The final decision on the suitability of kits rests solely with the appointed match official. Any team causing a fixture to be unfulfilled for this reason may be expelled from the competition.
- c. All shirts of competing teams must be numbered and clearly highlighted on the team sheet before the game.

11. Match Officials

- a. The NFA shall appoint the match officials.
- b. The match official, as part of their duty of care, shall have the power to decide as to the fitness of the ground unless it has already been declared unfit by the owners or the Local Authority.
- c. The fees are shown below:
 - i. Match Official - £65 all-inclusive fee (no expenses)
 - ii. Assistant Match Official(s) - £45 all-inclusive fee (no expenses). Match official fees are to be offered in full by the home team prior to kick-off.
 - iii. There are no fees to pay in the Final. Appointed match officials will receive limited edition NFA kit and a memento.
- d. Match officials are required to notify The NFA of any breach of cup regulations to cupcompetitions@nottinghamshirefa.com
- e. In the event of match being cancelled/postponed at short notice or a match not being played to a conclusion with the appointed match official(s) being present at the venue, then the match official(s) is/are entitled to half the match fee.
- f. Match official(s) shall acknowledge acceptance of their appointment within three working days of the notice being sent out by The FA Full Time system to cupcompetitions@nottinghamshirefa.com

12. Qualification of Players

- a. To be eligible a player must have been registered by the Club with their league by 12 noon on the day immediately prior to the original agreed match date, (postponements included) - this is for all rounds except for Semi-Finals and the Final (please see 12b).
- b. For semi-final and final ties, the player must have been registered by 12 noon the day before the original date of the previous round, i.e. a player must be registered by 12 noon the day prior to the original date of the quarter-final to be eligible for the semi-final, and registered by 12 noon the day prior to the original date of the semi-final to be eligible for the final.
- c. A player may also qualify for the semi-final if they have played a minimum of three completed, competitive fixtures (friendlies, postponed and abandoned fixtures do not count) for the competing team, but were not registered by 12 noon the day





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prior to the original quarter-final tie. The same applies to the final, in that if a player was not registered by 12 noon the day prior to the original semi-final tie, they may be eligible if they have played three completed, competitive fixtures for the competing team.

- d. To be eligible to play in a re-arranged tie (owing to postponement / abandonment) the player must have been eligible to have played on the original match date. The only exception to this is if a club requires dispensation to play a replacement goalkeeper who although a registered player was not registered before the original match date. Any such request must be made to the NFACG by email to cupcompetitions@nottinghamshirefa.com together with evidence substantiating the reasons for the request and be received no later than 24 hours before the re-arranged match date. Dispensation is not guaranteed and will be at the complete discretion of the NFACG.
- e. No player shall play for more than one team in the same cup competition during the same season. It is the clubs' responsibility to check that players have not played for another team in any cup competition and are not cup-tied.
- f. In the Men's cups, a player may be permitted to play in a more senior cup competition in the same season but having done so, will not then be eligible to play in any lower cup competition.
- g. Contracted and Scholarship players, as defined by The Football Association Rules, shall only be permitted to play in the Saturday Senior Challenge Cup.
- h. A player who has been suspended for a match may play in the same match if it is rescheduled / re-arranged for an alternative date (due to the original match being postponed / cancelled), if the term of their suspension has been served.
- i. A named substitute who does not play is not cup-tied.
- j. Where a player who is found to be ineligible under rule plays for a team in a cup match, the NFACG may remove the team from that cup competition and may also impose additional penalties against the team's club. However, where the club satisfies the NFACG that the team did not know and could not reasonably have known, even had it made every reasonable enquiry that the player was ineligible, the club may not be removed from the cup competition but may still be subject to any other penalty (e.g. fine, ordered to replay the match)
- k. The NFACG reserves the right to disqualify any competing team or player proven guilty of any breaches of the cup competition rules and/or Rules of the Association.

13. Substitutes

- a. Five substitutes may be named; these names must be submitted along with the team sheet prior to kick off. Where a team is unable to name five substitutes at the time of kick-off no additional names can be added after this time. Five substitutes can be used but there is no roll on roll off procedure in this competition.
- b. There is no restriction on the number of substitutions being made at any one time.
- c. No substitutions are permitted after the completion of the full period of extra-time, i.e. before the taking of any necessary penalty kicks.





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- d. Squad players not named on the team sheet will not be permitted to take part.

14. Team Benches

- a. In all Rounds of the Competition, the number of Clubs' players and Officials seated on the team benches in the designated technical is limited to a maximum of 8 (5 x substitutes, 1 x manager, 1 x coach and 1 x physio/medic). No spectators are permitted in the technical area. No persons under the age of 18 (unless a substitute in an Open-Age Competition) are permitted in the technical area.
- b. Only one person has the authority to convey tactical instructions to the players during the match. They are allowed to move to the edge of the technical area to issue instructions to their team.
- c. All Team Officials and substitutes seated on the bench shall be listed on the Official Team Sheet when it is submitted to the Match Officials. Only those persons listed on the Official Team Sheet shall be permitted in the technical area.
- d. The occupants of the technical area must behave in a responsible manner at all times. Misconduct by occupants of this area will be reported by the Referee to The County Football Association, who shall have the power to impose sanctions as deemed fit.

15. Reporting Match Results

- a. The result and match official marks form shall be completed by both teams and must be received by the NFA either by e-mail to cupcompetitions@nottinghamshirefa.com, by post or as otherwise instructed by NFA, within 72 hours of the match being played. Teams failing to comply with this rule or submitting incomplete, incorrect or inaccurate details may be subject to a fine.

16. Semi-Finals

- a. The NFA reserve the right to organise the semi-final at a neutral venue. The costs of the ground hire and match official fees will be paid for by the NFA and the NFA will make an admission charge and retain the gate receipts.

17. Finals

- a. In all final ties the NFACG will be responsible for setting the dates, venue, admission charges and retention of all gate receipts.
- b. Both participating clubs will receive 20 team passes and 10 complimentary guest tickets.
- c. All match balls to be used at the finals will be provided by the NFA.
- d. The hire of the venue will be organised and paid for by the NFA. This is inclusive of the beverages and food available after the final where arranged.
- e. Match officials shall receive a memento as well as limited edition referee clothing.



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- f. No alcoholic beverages are permitted to be taken in to or consumed at any respective venue in all cup competitions. Clubs wishing to bring champagne (or other similar beverages) for post-match celebrations must advise the NFA of their intention to do so prior to the game. Where venues are suitably licensed, alcoholic beverages can be purchased and consumed but the licensing laws of that venue must be observed. Persons appearing to be inebriated or otherwise intoxicated on arrival at the ground **WILL** be denied entry.
- g. No fireworks, flares or other similar pyrotechnic devices are to be brought into the grounds, including any adjacent car parking areas etc. Any contravention of this rule is liable to result in strict sanctions, including forfeiture of any game currently in progress and denial of entry to the same or any other NFA approved competition in the following season(s).

18. Cup and Medals

- a. The Association shall present a cup to the winning team and medals to all playing staff and officials in the final tie (a total of 20 per team).
- b. Clubs may purchase additional medals at the discretion of the NFACG.
- c. If a player taking part in the final is ordered to leave the field of play for serious misconduct, the medal to which they may be entitled may be withheld at the discretion of the NFACG.
- d. The cup is the property of the NFA. When the winning club has been ascertained, the NFA shall loan the cup to this club on production of appropriate insurance cover provided by the club. They will be responsible for its return to the NFA on or before 1st February in the following year in excellent order and condition. Late return of the cup/trophy will result in a fine. The NFA reserves the right to request the return of the cup at any time by giving seven days' notice. Should the cup be lost, destroyed or damaged by any cause whilst in the care or custody of the club they shall refund the NFA the amount of its current insured value or the cost of thorough repair, in addition to any other penalty which the NFA may impose.
- e. The winning club may return the cup immediately to the NFA should it not wish to keep it until 1st February the following year.
- f. The winning club will acknowledge receipt of the cup by signing the appropriate agreement provided by the NFACG.
- g. In the event of a club folding the cup must be returned to the NFA within 14 days of the clubs notice of folding.

19. Gate Receipts

- a. In all Cup Competitions an admission charge may be levied which is set at a maximum of £10.00 (the home club may set concessions). However, an entry fee in excess of this may be charged if agreed by both clubs. If the admission charge is more than the club's normal entry fee for league fixtures, this must be agreed with



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the NFACG and the request must be sent to cupcompetitions@nottinghamshirefa.com

- b. A maximum of 20 players and team officials from the away team must be allowed entry to the home ground without payment. A further 10 complimentary tickets should then be provided for away club officials. It is at the discretion of the home club should they wish to allocate more.

20. Media Coverage

- a. All clubs are encouraged to raise the profile of their cup ties across their media channels.
- b. NFA reserve the right to exclusively livestream chosen cup ties through suitable provider/s.
- c. Clubs may livestream cup ties through alternative platforms providing permission is sought from NFA at least 7 days prior to the tie and notwithstanding 20(b).
- d. NFA will inform competing clubs of additional media coverage on ties when this is required. NFA approved media partner(s) will be permitted free entry to the ground.

21. Precedence

- a. Football Association competitions take precedence over those organised by the NFA.
- b. All NFA cup competitions shall take precedence over league or league cup matches of competitions sanctioned by the NFA.
- c. In the event of a club having more than one team drawn at home on the same date, the team playing in the more senior competition shall take precedence (see also rule 6c).

22. Provisions Concerning Protests

- a. All issues relating to the interpretation of the cup competition rules, shall be referred to the NFACG, whose decision shall, subject to Rule 23, be final and binding. The NFACG shall consider any such matter as it considers appropriate. The NFACG shall not be bound by any enactment or Rule of Law relating to the admissibility of evidence in proceeding before a Court of Law.
- b. Where a Club wishes to protest that there has been a breach of the cup competition rules, such protest must be made in writing and must contain the particulars of the grounds upon which it is made. The protest must be received by the NFA, accompanied by a fee of £50.00, within two working days of the match to which it relates. The fee may be forfeited to The NFA in the event of the protest not being upheld.





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- c. The NFACG may make such orders as it considers appropriate in relation to any issue or protest referred to it. The NFACG may make such orders as it considers appropriate as to the costs incurred by the parties or the NFA.
- d. Any protest relating to the ground, goal frame or other appurtenances of the game shall not be considered by the NFACG unless an objection was lodged with the match official and the home club prior to kick off.
- e. The NFA shall send a copy of any protest to the club protested against, which shall lodge a defence to the protest with particulars within two working days of receipt of the protest.
- f. Members of the NFACG connected with a club concerned in a protest shall not have any involvement in the consideration of the matter.
- g. A club, or player or any person connected with the management of the club may be summoned to attend at a hearing of a protest. A club may be represented by one or more persons. A Barrister or Solicitor may represent a club only with the prior written consent of the NFACG. Any person summoned to attend a hearing of a protest must attend personally and shall not be legally represented except with the prior written consent of the NFACG. Hearings may be held “on-line” where appropriate.

23. Provisions Concerning Appeals

- a. A club that is expelled from a cup competition may appeal against that decision to an appeal board in accordance with the procedures for FA appeals.





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Appendix 1 Fines Tariff

Rule Number	Description	Maximum Fine
5 (f)	Failure to fulfil a fixture	£250.00
6 (b)	Failure to communicate fixture details	£50
6 (f)	Failure to provide an alternative venue	£150.00
7 (a)	Failure to notify change of kick-off time	£50
8 (b)	Failure to provide, goal nets, corner flags	£50.00
12 (j)	Playing an ineligible player(s)	£150.00
15 (a)	Failure to submit a match result and/or incomplete match report	£20.00
18 (h)	Failure to return cup	£35,000

