



Rules of the
SENIOR CHALLENGE CUP

2023/24 Season

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If you have any queries regarding the interpretation of any of these Rules, then please do not hesitate to contact the Association directly during office hours (contact details below) for further guidance.

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1. Details of the Cup

- (a) The Cup is named 'The Staffordshire Football Association Senior Challenge Cup' but may be referred to as the 'Senior Cup' or any other name that the Competition may adopt from time to time.
- (b) The Cup is the property of the Staffordshire Football Association, which is referred to as 'the Association'.
- (c) The Association President (or his Deputy) shall present the Cup to the club winning the final tie. That club shall return it in good order and condition to the Association on or before 1st February in the following year.
- (d) Should the Cup be lost, destroyed or damaged by fire or any other cause whilst under the care or custody of the club, the club shall refund to the Association the amount of its current insured value or the cost of thorough repair, in addition to any other penalty which the Association may impose.

2. Medals

- (a) The Association shall present medals to the players, substitutes and Club Secretaries in the final tie.
- (b) If a player taking part in the final tie is ordered to leave the field of play for serious misconduct, the medal to which he may have been entitled may be withheld at the discretion of the members of the Committee who are present at the match.

3. Control of the Competition

- (a) This Competition takes precedence over all other competitions with the exception of the FA Challenge Cup, the FA Challenge Trophy and the FA Challenge Vase.
- (b) The ownership, organisation, control and management of the Competition is vested entirely and exclusively in the Association.
- (c) The Association's Regulatory Committee ("the Committee") have the power to make decisions on all matters concerning the organisation, control and management of the Competition. In addition to any other action or penalty, the Committee have the power to disqualify any competing club, or player or players of any competing club, which they determine to have breached the Rules of the Association or the Competition Rules. Such decisions are deemed to be decisions of the Association's Council and are binding on all participants in the Competition.
- (d) The Committee have the power to make, amend and delete rules for the organisation, control and management of the Competition as, from time to time, they consider expedient.
- (e) All clubs taking part in the Competition shall be bound by and comply with the Competition Rules.

4. Eligible Clubs and Entry Fee

- (a) The Competition is annual and is open to:
 - (i) all senior clubs in membership of the Association competing in the FA Premier League, English Football League or at Steps 1 to 6 of the National League System;
 - (ii) other senior clubs not affiliated to this Association, subject to the approval of the Committee.
- (b) The entry fee is £100.00.
- (c) Applications to enter the Competition and payment of the entry fee shall be made to the Association by 6th August annually.
- (d) If a club is removed from the League in which it is playing after it has been accepted into the Competition, the Committee have the power to remove the club from the Competition.

5. Organisation of the Competition

- (a) The Committee have discretionary power to grant exemption from earlier rounds of the Competition.
- (b) Matches in all rounds up to and including the semi finals shall be played on the home club's recognised mid-week playing day during the periods specified by the Association, unless otherwise mutually agreed between the competing clubs and approved by the Committee.
- (c) The names of the clubs entered for the Competition shall be drawn in pairs. These pairs shall compete and the winners shall be drawn and compete in the same manner, continuing until the final tie.
- (d) After each draw is made notice shall be given to each club of the name of its opponents and the date on which the match is to be played.
- (e) Not later than five days before the date of each match, the home club shall notify their opponents and the Match Officials, in writing or by means of electronic communication, of the address and location of their ground and the colours in which they intend to play. The Match Officials shall acknowledge receipt.
- (f) Using the prescribed form, the Secretaries of both clubs shall send notice of the result together with the names of the players competing, to the Association so that it is received within three days of the match (Sundays not included). Any club failing to comply with this rule shall be fined £20.00.
- (g) Referees shall order matches to start at the appointed time and shall report all late starts to the Association. The Committee have the power to impose a fine as they deem appropriate, not exceeding £20.00.
- (h) The Committee shall review all abandoned matches and, where it is to the advantage of the Competition and does no injustice to either club, have the power to order the score at the time of the abandonment to stand. In cases where the Committee are satisfied that a match was abandoned owing to the conduct of one team or its club members, they have the power to award the match to the opponents or take such action as they deem appropriate. In cases where a match is abandoned owing to the conduct of both teams or their club members, the Committee shall take such action as they deem appropriate.

- (i) The Association shall fix the ground for the final tie and have direct control of the arrangements for the match.

6. Grounds for Matches

- (a) Each match shall be played at the ground of the club drawn first, unless otherwise mutually agreed, and the consent of the Committee obtained, or as otherwise decided by Committee. No monetary or other considerations shall be asked for, offered or paid with negotiations for a change of ground.
- (b) The dimensions of the field of play for all matches shall be in accordance with the Laws of the Game. The playing area shall be enclosed and goal nets shall be used.
- (c) Artificial football turf pitches are allowed in this Competition providing that they meet the required performance standards and are listed on the FA's Register of Football Turf Pitches. To meet the criteria a football turf pitch shall pass a test every three years as defined in the FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf. The home club is also responsible for advising participants of the footwear requirements when confirming the match arrangements in accordance with Competition Rule 5(e).
- (d) Separate dressing and washing accommodation shall be provided for each team and the Match Officials. Qualified first aid personnel and suitable equipment shall be available at all grounds used for matches.
- (e) If the home club's ground is considered unsuitable for a match in this Competition, their opponents may appeal to the Committee. Such appeal shall be made within seven days of the draw, and be accompanied by a fee of £75.00, which may be forfeited if the appeal is not sustained. The Committee may order the match to be played at the appealing club's ground, or at a neutral ground. The payment of expenses incidental to the appeal shall be at the Committee's discretion.
- (f) Each club shall take every precaution to keep its ground in playing condition. If necessary, either club may request the Match Referee, or some other qualified referee, to examine the ground and decide as to its fitness for play in sufficient time to save expenses of unnecessary journeys being incurred by clubs. Subject to this rule, the Match Referee has the power to decide as to the fitness of the ground.

7. Expenses and Proceeds of Matches

- (a) In all matches prior to the final tie, the home club shall pay the expenses of staging the match and retain any gate proceeds.
- (b) In replayed matches in consequence of a breach of rule, the gate proceeds shall be dealt with as the Committee may determine.
- (c) In all matches the clubs shall be responsible for payment of their own travelling expenses.
- (d) In the final tie the Association shall take the gate, and if the proceeds are insufficient to cover the entire expenses of the tie, shall stand the loss.

8. Duration of Matches

- (a) The duration of each match shall be ninety minutes played in two halves of forty-five minutes. The Referee shall allow for time wasted or lost through accident or other cause. The Referee 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.
- (b) The half time interval shall be fifteen minutes, and this may only be altered with the Referee's consent.
- (c) When a match has resulted in a draw it shall be decided by the taking of kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the procedure adopted by the International Football Association Board.

9. Provisions Concerning Players

- (a) Each team participating in a match shall represent the full available strength of their club. Clubs competing in the FA Premier League and English Football League shall be represented by teams of at least reserve team strength. If in the opinion of the Committee and the spirit of this rule has been broken they have the discretion to impose a fine and dismiss the club from the Competition.
- (b) A player shall be a registered player of his club to be eligible to play in this Competition.
- (c)
 - (i) A registered player is one who has either, in the case of a player under written contract registered with The Football Association, or in the case of a player without a written contract, registered with a league in which his club competes in the current season. Any such registration must have been received and accepted by The Football Association or league not later than 12 noon on the day prior to the date of the match, and the registration must be continuous through to the date of the match.
 - (ii) An International Transfer Certificate for players coming from overseas Associations (including Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) takes precedence over a player's registration. Therefore, this is also required not later than 12 noon on the day prior to the date of the match for the player's registration to be valid.
 - (iii) A player on a temporary (loan) transfer is ineligible to compete unless permission is given by the lending club in writing and a copy is submitted to the Association not later than 12 noon on the day prior to the date of the match. A registered Trainee or a player on a Scholarship may only play for another club subject to written permission being given by the club with whom he is registered, to be received by the Association not later than 12 noon on the day prior to the date of the match. The Association will not give permission for players on loan to play against the lending club.

- (iv) A player recalled, at any time prior to the date of the match, to his original club from temporary (loan) transfer, in accordance with the terms of the loan agreement, may represent his original club. Such player may only play in postponed or replayed matches if he had been recalled in time for the first match.
- (d) Only players who have played (including having played as a nominated substitute) in an earlier round of the Competition are eligible to play in the final tie.
- (e) To play in this Competition a player must have reached the age of 16 years on 31st August of the current season.
- (f) A player shall not in the same season play for more than one competing team in this Competition.
- (g) A player who has been suspended may play in postponed, abandoned, drawn or replayed matches after the term of his suspension has expired.
- (h) A club may nominate a maximum of five substitutes and may at their discretion use three at any time in a match in this Competition, except to replace a player who has been suspended from the match by the Referee. The substitution can only be made when play is stopped for any reason and the Referee has given permission. A substitute who is not used is entitled to play for another club in the same season, subject to paragraph (b).
- (i) Using the prescribed form, both clubs shall complete a team sheet stating the names of all of their players and nominated substitutes, and hand a copy of the sheet to the Referee and a representative of their opponents at least forty-five minutes before the advertised kick off time. Any club failing to carry out these provisions shall be fined £20.00.
- (j) If the Committee have any doubt as to the qualification of any player taking part in this Competition, they have the power to call upon such player, or the club to which he belongs, or for which he played, to prove that he is qualified according to the rules, and failing satisfactory explanation the Committee have the power to disqualify such player and remove the club from the Competition, and impose such other penalty as they think fit.

10. Club Colours

- (a) All players shall wear distinguishable colours. The home club shall inform their opponents of the colours in which they intend to play, in accordance with Rule 5(e). Where the colours of the two competing clubs are the same or similar, the visiting team shall change.
- (b) Any objection to the colours shall be lodged before the match commences with the Referee, who has the power to order any necessary change.
- (c) In the final tie the Association may order both clubs to change unless a mutual agreement is reached by the clubs.

11. Match Officials

- (a) In all matches the Committee shall appoint the Match Officials, including a Reserve Official for the final tie. The Match Officials shall report to the ground at least one hour before the kick off time. Their duties are as defined in the Laws of Association Football.
- (b) The fees and expenses of the Match Officials shall be paid by the home club unless otherwise instructed by the Committee. The fees to be paid in all rounds up to and including the semi finals are as follows:
 - Referee: £45.00
 - Assistant Referee: £30.00
- (c) In all matches up to the final tie, the Match Officials shall be paid travelling expenses of 40p per mile in respect of private car use.
- (d) In the final tie, the Match Officials shall receive the match fee and a medal.
- (e) In the event of a match not being played the Match Officials shall be paid:
 - (i) half the fee plus travelling expenses to be shared equally by both clubs, if the Referee decides the ground is unfit for play;
 - (ii) the full fee plus travelling expenses if they travel to the ground and find one club has defaulted; the defaulting club shall pay the fees and travelling expenses;
 - (iii) in the event of a match being started and abandoned, the full fee and travelling expenses paid by the home club.

12. Protests

- (a) All questions relating to the qualification of players, interpretation of the Rules, or any dispute or protest whatever shall be referred to the Committee, whose decision shall be final and binding on both clubs.
- (b) A protest shall be made in writing and shall contain the particulars of the grounds upon which it is founded. Two copies of the protest shall be lodged with the Association accompanied by a fee of £75.00 within two days of the match to which it relates (Sundays not included). The fee shall be forfeited to the Association if the protest is not sustained.
- (c) The Committee may order any club engaged in a dispute or protest to pay such sum as they consider necessary towards defraying the expenses incurred.
- (d) Any protest relating to the ground, goalposts or bars or other appurtenances of the game shall not be entertained by the Committee unless an objection has been lodged with the Referee before the start of the match. The Referee shall require the responsible club to correct the cause of objection, if this is practicable, without unduly delaying the progress of the match.
- (e) When an objection has been lodged with the Referee, a protest shall be made to the Association and neither objection nor protest shall be withdrawn, except by leave of the Committee.
- (f) The Association shall send a copy of the protest and particulars to a club protested against.

- (g) A member of the Committee who is in any way involved with a club concerned in a dispute or protest shall not be present at any meeting of the Committee while the dispute or protest is being considered.
- (h) A club summoned to attend a hearing or a dispute or protest may be represented by one or more of its members. Each club may support its case by witnesses.

13. Appeals

- (a) A club that is expelled from the Competition may within seven days of receipt of written notification of the decision appeal against such decision by lodging the particulars in duplicate, accompanied by a fee of £75.00 which shall be forfeited if the appeal is not upheld. Any such appeal shall be addressed to the Association for the adjudication of a Board of Appeal, whose decision shall be final and binding on all parties.
- (b) A club may not appeal against any penalty imposed on it other than expulsion from the Competition.
- (c) The Board of Appeal have the power to compel any party to the appeal to pay such expenses as they deem fit.

14. General

The Laws and Rules of the Association apply to this Competition, and the Committee have the power to deal with anything not provided for in these Rules, including dismissal from the Competition.