REGULATIONS GOVERNING GIRLS' YOUTH RUGBY 2026/27

1. INTRODUCTION

a) These regulations govern all Ulster Girls' Youth Rugby Competitions.

b) All Clubs competing in competitions shall be deemed to have accepted and to be bound by these regulations.

c) In these regulations:-

" **Branch**" means the Ulster Branch of the Union;

"**Branch Byelaws and Regulations"** means the Committee of the Branch provided for in Byelaw 7 of the Branch Byelaws and Regulations;

"Competition Organisers" means the W&G team, as provided for in Regulation 2 below;

"Game" means rugby football played in accordance with the Laws of the Game;

"IRFU Regulations" means the Regulations made by the Union;

"**Laws of the Game**" means the Laws of the Game as laid down by World Rugby;

"**Union**" means the Irish Rugby Football Union;

"**Cup Competition**" means the main competition and any subsidiary competition(s).

2. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GIRLS' YOUTH RUGBY COMPETITIONS

a) The W&G team (competition organisers) shall administer and manage Ulster Girls' Youth Rugby Competitions, performing the functions assigned to it under the provisions of these regulations.

b) The competition organisers shall decide:-

i. the dates on which matches, including replays, shall be played

ii. the venues of matches

iii. whether or not extra time, if necessary, shall be played

c) The competition organisers shall arrange to make the draws for all knock-out competitions

d) The competition organisers may at any time scrutinise team lists, reinstatements, referees' reports or other relevant material and apply competition regulations as appropriate**.**

e) The competition organisers may refer matters of conduct and responsibility, or of discipline, to the Honorary Secretary of the Ulster Branch

SECTION 1 – GENERAL REGULATIONS

1. FIXTURES

a) The Competition Organisers shall arrange the League fixtures and place them, together with dates for the Cup competition.

b) Dates provided for League and Cup fixtures are the deadline for that fixture (Sunday 1pm). Any club may seek the agreement of the opposing club to play a fixture on a date on or before the deadline. The home club shall notify the Competition Organisers of the change of date.

c) Any communications between clubs relating to the agreement or postponement/cancellation of any League, Cup or friendly fixture, must be sent in via email to **BOTH** fixtures@ulsterrugby.com and girlsyouth@ulsterrugby.com

2. DURATION OF GAMES

a) The duration of games shall be as follows:
   i. Under 14 level (Girls) – two 25-minute halves (plus time lost).
   ii. Under 16 level (Girls) – two 30-minute halves (plus time lost).
   iii. Under 18 level (Girls) – two 35-minute halves (plus time lost).

b) No extra time shall be played in any game

3. REFEREES

a) It is the responsibility of the home club to appoint an affiliate referee for all fixtures.
   i. Each team shall provide a touch judge, who must not be a replacement or substitute.
   ii. Yellow and red cards are applicable at U14, U16 and U18 levels where the game is being refereed by a Branch Referee.
   iii. A girl player who receives a yellow card: -
      1. at U14, and U16 levels, shall be temporarily suspended for 5 minutes; and
      2. at U18 level, shall be temporarily suspended for 7 minutes.

4. ENTRY TO COMPETITIONS

a) Entry Deadline – This will be communicated to Club Honorary Secretaries for both the league and cup. Failure to meet the entry deadline and requirements may result in clubs being unable to enter the competition(s). Sufficient playing numbers must be evident prior to the entry deadline by participation in Girls' Youth League Qualifier events. Entries to be emailed to girlsyouth@ulsterrugby.com ahead of the deadline, including any clubs who will be amalgamating for either competition.

b) Safeguarding Policy - The Irish Rugby Football Union Safeguarding Policy ("the Safeguarding Policy") sets out the ethos of the game insofar as Youth Rugby is concerned. All coaches within each Youth team must be correctly panelled on Rugby Connect and have appropriate vetting and safeguarding in place prior to the season commencing. Teams that do not fulfil this requirement will not be permitted entry into League or Cup Competitions.

c) At the discretion of the Competition Organisers, to participate in respective cup competition, a team must be deemed to have fulfilled 75% of the league fixtures leading up to the first round of the cup, and for the avoidance of doubt any rescheduled postponed games at the start of the competition will be assumed to be completed. However, exceptional circumstances for fixture cancellations will be taken into consideration.

5. COMPETITION PROVISIONS

a) The team winning a League match shall be awarded 3 points. In the case of a drawn League match each team shall receive 2 points. 1 point shall be awarded to a losing team fulfilling a fixture. Any team failing to fulfil a League fixture shall have 1 point deducted from its League points scored, and their opponents shall receive 3 points.

b) Where there is a margin of 40 or more points between the teams at any time during a League or Cup fixture, the following provisions shall apply:
   i. The referee shall end the match early and the fixture shall be awarded to the team that is leading at the time;
   ii. The team that is losing at the time shall not be subject to the deduction of 1 point under the provisions of a) above; and
   iii. Teams may play out, as a friendly, any playing time unplayed result of the early ending of the match, provided that:-
      1. The forwards from both teams are deployed as necessary between them to ensure that the scrums are equally matched at all times; and
      2. Such other deployments are made between the teams to ensure that both teams are otherwise as equally matched as possible.

c) Where there is a margin of 40 or more points between the teams at any time during a Cup final but the referee, after consultation with the Competition Organisers, nevertheless deems the match to be competitive the match shall continue until full-time or such earlier time as the referee shall deem the match to be no longer competitive.

d) The team that accumulates the most points in the League season shall be the League winners at that particular age level.
    i. Where required, the competition organisers, may amend the competition scoring system, with any such changes communicated in advance of the competition start date.
e) If, at the end of the League season, two or more teams have the same number of League points, the winner (or team progressing to the play off) shall be determined by applying the following criteria in the order set out below: -
    i. the most League points won in the fixtures between teams;
    ii. the difference in points scored for and against in the League fixtures between those teams;
    iii. the difference in points scored for and against in all League fixtures
f) In the event of two teams still being tied, with no play off, the League shall be shared between the two clubs
g) Where the League is determined by a play-off, the team finishing top of each pool shall qualify for the play-off final. The qualifying teams shall compete against each other, with the winner of that match being declared the League Winners. If the scores are level at the end of normal playing time, the winner shall be determined using the criteria set out in i) below.
h) In the event of a draw in any game in a round of the cup, plate or bowl, other than the final, the winner shall be determined by applying the following criteria in the order set out below:
    i. The most tries scored in the game;
    ii. The first try scored in the game;
    iii. The first score in the game.
    iv. If a match finishes 0-0 a toss of a coin shall determine the winner
i) In the event of a draw after full-time in the final of the cup, plate or bowl, or league play off final the trophy will be shared.

6. TEAMSHEETS

a) Before the start of a match both teams MUST:
    i. Complete E-Teamsheet via Rugby Connect for the specific fixture.
    ii. Both teams must have a printed copy of their rugby connect teamsheet to provide to both the opposition and the referee prior to KO.
b) Where a team: -
    i. Fails to provide a teamsheet in accordance with the provisions of (a)(i) above at the discretion of the Competition Organisers, it shall forfeit the fixture;
    ii. or Plays a player not named on their E-Teamsheet, such player shall be deemed to be unregistered and ineligible to play, it shall forfeit the fixture;
    iii. Any club which fails to return such E-Teamsheet by 5pm the following day of the fixture, will at the discretion of the Competition Organisers: in the case of a League game, result in the team being deducted 1 point (clubs will be given 1 warning); and in the case of a Cup game, may result in the team being eliminated from the Cup competition, and the game may be awarded to the opposing team.

7. MATCH RESULTS AND REPORTS

a) The home club shall, by 12.00 noon on the Monday following a match, notify the Competition Organisers of the result via a link that will be sent to all Clubs ahead of the season.
b) In the event of any matter of importance affecting a match, including red and yellow cards and serious injury, the referee shall submit a report about the incident on-line to the Branch within 24 hours of the end of the game, or by e-mail to **BOTH** fixtures@ulsterrugby.com and girlsyouth@ulsterrugby.com.
c) Where a team: -
    i. Fails to provide a match result/report in accordance with the provisions of (a) above at the discretion of the Competition Organisers, in the case of a League game, result in the team being deducted 1 point (clubs will be given 1 warning); and in the case of a Cup game, may result in the team being

eliminated from the Cup competition, and the game may be awarded to the opposing team.

8. REGISTRATION, ELIGIBILITY AND MOVEMENT OF PLAYERS

a) A player shall not be eligible to play for a club unless she is registered with that club in accordance with Regulation 6 of the IRFU Regulations and complies with the appropriate age threshold as set out in Regulation 9 below.

b) Youths who have not reached their 18th birthday are ineligible to participate in any form of adult contact (XV's or 7s) rugby.

c) A player who attains their 18th birthday during the season shall be eligible to play in adult competitions. If the player's own Club does not have an Adult Section they may apply as a "dual status" Youth/Adult player with another Club. The adult registration deadlines and reinstatement requirements do not apply to dual status Youth/Adult Players, and they may play in both grades of rugby for the remainder of the season.

d) A player may not play at two different age levels within a 48-hour period.

e) A Club may not select a player from a higher team to play in the semi-final or final of any cup unless the player has played in a previous round of the competition or in exceptional circumstances permission is granted by the Competition Organisers. For the purposes of this provision a player from a higher team shall be deemed to be a player who, during the current season, has played five or more matches for a higher team or teams in cup and league competitions.

9. AGE THRESHOLD

a) The Girls Youth Competitions shall be organized, in the case of girls' teams, at U14, U16 and U18 age levels.

b) The age threshold for the Girls Youth Competitions shall be the age of the player on 1 July of the season in which the competition is played, thus: -

- A girl player born between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2010 inclusive will be eligible to play at U18 level
- A girl player born between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2012 inclusive will be eligible to play at U16 level;
- A girl player born between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2014 inclusive will be eligible to play at U14 level.

c) The "Girls' Youth Playing-Up Protocols" will be communicated to clubs and must be adhered to throughout the season. **Under NO circumstances should a player be playing at a level outside of their age threshold, unless they have already been approved to, following the processes outlined in the "Girls' Youth Playing-Up Protocols".**

d) A player who is approved to play at a higher level pursuant to the provisions of the above, are not permitted to play at the lower level.

10. TIME GAP BETWEEN MATCHES

a) A player may not play at two different age levels within a 48-hour period.

b) A player may not play in more than two games at the same age level within a 48- hour period, and in one of those games the player may not play for more than one half.

c) The 48-hour period referred to in (a) and (b) above shall be deemed to commence when the player takes the field for the first time. This includes any school match or representative matches whether training or competitive.

11. NUMBER OF PLAYERS AND REPLACEMENT AND SUBSTITUTION OF PLAYERS

a) A team must comply with the Laws of the Game in respect of the nomination and replacement/substitution of players.

b) Subject to (a) above, the following provisions shall apply: -

i. All teams may nominate up to 23 players. Rolling substitutions shall be permitted for all teams in all fixtures

ii. U18 & U16 – 15 a side (minimum 12 a side for competitive fixtures)

iii. U14 – 13 or 15 a side (minimum of 10 a side for a competitive fixture)
    1. For U14 if both sides can field 15 a side, they must do so, ensuring each team has a minimum of 2 substitutes. (Example: both teams have 17 players, they must play 15-a-side with 2 substitutes rather than 13-a-side with 4 substitutes)
iv. Numbers of players on pitch at any time are equally matched to the team with fewer numbers.
v. The scrums are equally matched at all times.
vi. Where a team loses a player to injury and no substitute is available the other team shall withdraw a player to the intent that both teams continue to play with equal numbers.

c) Ensuring that teams have started a match with competitive numbers (11.bi-iii above), where, during the course of a game, a team is reduced to below the minimum starting numbers (as per 11b above), the match may continue as a competitive fixture as long as the provisions (iv), (v), and (vi) above are followed. If playing numbers drop to below 7 v 7 this fixture no longer remains competitive and will be played out as a friendly.
d) Where a girls team in a League fixture has less than the minimum permitted players set out in (b) above, the fixture may be played as a friendly, subject to provisions (iv) to (v) therein.
e) In the circumstances set out in (c) above: -
    i. where one team has the permitted number of players that team shall receive 3 points, and the team with less than the minimum permitted players shall receive 1 point; where both teams have less than the minimum permitted players both teams shall receive 2 points;
    ii. In the Cup competition:
        1. Where a team does not have the minimum numbers for a competitive fixture, and concedes the fixtures without playing out as a friendly, the team with permitted numbers are deemed the "winners" and progress to the next Round. The team with less than permitted numbers (and not playing out as a friendly) will forfeit the match and will not be eligible to drop down into other subsidiary competitions.
        2. Where a team does not have the minimum numbers for a competitive fixture, but continues to play out the fixture as a friendly, the team that has the permitted numbers will progress into the next Round as the "winners" and the team without the permitted numbers (but who play out as a friendly) will drop down into the appropriate subsidiary competition, where the competition allows.
f) Teams will only be granted one game's grace following the circumstances set out in (ii.2) above.
g) Where, during the course of a League or Cup game, uncontested scrums are ordered because no suitably trained front row cover is available, the remaining time unplayed will be played out and still remain as a competitive fixture

12. CLOSED DATES

a) There are no closed dates for league/cup matches but where a team has 4 or more players from one team involved in Inter Provincial/National representation, they may seek permission from the Competition Organisers to reschedule any fixtures they have scheduled over this time.

13. STARTING TIME OF MATCHES

a) Kick-off times for matches, whether League, Cup or friendly will be 1pm on a Sunday but can be brought forward with the agreement of both Clubs and the Competition Organisers.
b) Over the course of the season, each team must accommodate a minimum of one non-traditional kick-off time for any one of their home fixtures (e.g. Friday evening, midweek fixture, etc.)

14. CHANGE OF DATES

a) When the date and time of any match has been approved by the Competition Organisers the

same shall not be changed without the prior permission of the Competition Organisers, other than under the provisions of Regulation 19, and any Club or Clubs contravening this regulation shall be deemed to have lost the match unless the Competition Organisers rules otherwise.

b) Any postponed league game must be rearranged, and notification sent to the Branch by the Home Club, within 7 days of the original date, in default of which the game will be re-arranged by the Competition Organisers. In exceptional circumstances the competition organisers may, within this 7-day period, set a date for the replay in order that competition deadlines are met.

15. REFUSAL TO PLAY

a) League and Cup matches must be completed by the date specified by the Competition Organisers

b) In the event of a Club failing to play a match or replay on the stipulated date approved by the Competition Organisers having control of the competition, it shall be adjudged to have lost the match unless the Competition Organisers consider there was a reasonable and proper cause for the refusal.

16. NOTICE OF POSTPONEMENT OR CANCELLATION OF MATCHES

a) Any Club postponing a match (with the permission of the Competition Organisers in accordance with Regulation 14 above), or cancelling a match, for any reason, must immediately notify:-

   i. The Girls Youth Representative of the opposing club.
   ii. The Competition Organiser via a link which will be sent out to Clubs ahead of the new season.
   iii. The referee.

b) Any club failing to comply with the provisions of (a) above may, at the discretion of the Competition Organisers be held liable to pay the travelling expenses of the visiting club and referee.

c) In the case of a postponement, clubs should follow the details outlined in Regulation 14 above.

d) Any decision to postpone or cancel due to adverse weather MUST take into account the Adverse Weather Match Day Protocol.

17. PROTESTS

a) A Club wishing to make an official protest or appeal to the Girls' Youth Competition Organisers in relation to a fixture must do so in writing on Club note paper or by email on electronic Club letterhead signed by the Honorary Secretary or President of the Club to reach the Competition Organisers within 96 hours after the end of the match to which it relates. Protests must be sent to: girlsyouth@ulsterrugby.com.

18. APPEALS AGAINST DECISIONS OF THE COMPETITION ORGANISERS

a) A Club seeking to dispute a decision of the Girls' Youth Competition Organisers may appeal such decision direct to the Branch Committee in writing on Club notepaper or by e-mail on electronic Club letterhead signed by the Honorary Secretary or President of the Club and addressed to the Honorary Secretary of the Branch. Any such appeal must be lodged within 96 hours of the Club receiving official notification of the Competition organisers decision and must be accompanied by a sum of £250 which may, at the discretion of the Branch Committee be refunded in whole or in part.

19. FITNESS OF GROUND

a) Where a society referee has been appointed, once the Referee arrives he/she shall be the sole judge on the fitness of the ground for the playing of a League or Cup match. Any such decision by a referee should be made as soon as possible and prior to the scheduled kick off time. Prior to the arrival of the referee or where a society referee is not appointed, the Home Club shall judge the fitness of the ground; and, in the case of a public ground, the decision shall lie with the grounds person in charge.

b) Once a match starts the referee is the sole judge of the fitness of the ground.

20. TROPHY OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

a) The Trustees of the Branch for the time being shall be for all intents and purposes the legal owners of all cups and shields in trust for the Branch.
b) Cups and shields shall be presented to the winning clubs at the final, or conclusion, of the competition where practicable.
c) Clubs winning silverware on any kind shall, when the presentation has taken place, give to the Honorary Secretary of the Branch, a written guarantee for its safe custody and return when directed by the Branch.
d) It is the Clubs responsibility to engrave any silverware before it is returned to Ulster Rugby.

21. EXTRA PROVISIONS

a) Subject to the approval of the Women and Girls' Committee, the Competition organisers may adjudicate on matters not provided for within the regulations.

SECTION 2 - INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

1. Introduction

This Part provides information and guidance for the benefit of clubs in relation to Youth Rugby. It is an addendum to, and not part of, the Regulations in Part 1 and, in the case of any inconsistency between the provisions of Part 2 and the Regulations, the Regulations shall prevail.

2. Player Eligibility

It is the responsibility of a club to ensure that a player is eligible to play in compliance with the Regulations in every respect.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Youth Section of a Rugby Club

3. Pre-Match

a) Clubs should liaise with their opponents at least two days before match date to ensure that games are still on and teams are travelling
b) Where possible Youth Conveners should communicate any likely reduced numbers scenario to the opposition prior to the day of the game.
c) Clubs should ensure that the ground is available, fit for play, and correctly marked and flagged for kick-off. The kick-off time is determined when the fixture arrangement and will take account of the distance travelled by the visiting team and the number of pitches available.
d) Any change of venue should be confirmed with the Youth Reps, the opposition, and the referee at the earliest possible time.
e) Once a referee has been appointed to a game he or she can only be re-assigned, or replaced, in accordance with official procedures.
f) Teams should arrive in good time, be properly equipped for the game in accordance with the provisions of Laws of the Laws of the Game and should have a touch-judge. Two touch-judges must be appointed before the start of the match. Unless these have been appointed by the USRFR it is the responsibility of each team to provide a touch-judge.
g) The opposition and referee should be met by an official of the home team and shown to the changing accommodation.
h) Teams must complete E-team sheet via Rugby Connect prior to Kick off, and provide a paper copy for both referee and opposition.

4. **During the Match**
   a) Players and coaches must behave within the spirit of the game and must accept all decisions of the referee without dissent of any kind.
   b) Clubs should ensure that their coaches, parents and spectators respect the match officials, and the players of both sides, in accordance with the provisions of the Safeguarding Policy.
   c) Coaches are reminded that they are not permitted to enter the playing area unless authorised by the referee in accordance with the provisions of Law 6 of the Laws of the Game.

5. **After the Match**
   a) Club are asked to take account of vicious or unfair play, whether detected by the referee or not, in selecting future teams.
   b) Clubs should encourage players and members to mix with the opposition after the match, and the home coach should ensure that the referee is thanked and is being looked after.

6. **Results of Matches**
   a) The home club is responsible for notifying the Competition Organisers of the result via a link that will be sent to all Clubs ahead of the season. This important assignment should be delegated to one particular member of the club on a permanent basis.

7. **Eligibility Checks**
   a) Whilst under the provisions of Regulations 8 & 9 above, the Competition Organisers may check the eligibility of players at any time, such checks will be made as a matter of course for the quarter- final, and subsequent rounds of the Cup

8. **Disciplinary Committee**
   a) The Disciplinary Committee set up, in accordance with the provisions of the IRFU Regulations, will hear disciplinary cases relating to sendings-off and off field discipline cases in Youth Rugby.

General Information

9. **Cup Draw**
   a) The competition organisers shall arrange to make the draws for all knock-out competitions. The club drawn out first in each pairing shall have home advantage.
   b) The order in which the pairings are drawn will determine the pairings for the subsequent rounds of the competition. The Competition Organisers will look at the home/away ratio in the preceding rounds, and if a fixture would produce a third away game for a team with the opposition having their third home game, the venue will be reversed. The venues for the subsequent fixture will remain as determined by the draw.
   c) The venue of the Girls' Youth Cup Finals Day is Affidea Stadium, and the date will be communicated at the earliest convenience.
      i. Subsidiary Finals will be held at a neutral venue, with the team drawn first being awarded home advantage, as per (a) above.
   d) Where a cup final is a draw, and the trophy shared, the team designated as the 'away' team shall be presented with its medals first, and the team designated as the 'home' team shall have possession of the trophy for the first 5 month before handing it over to the opposition for the next 5 months.

10. **Substances and Substance Abuse**
    a) Clubs are subject to the provisions relating to substances and substance abuse contained in the Safeguarding Policy, and the provisions of Regulation 8 of the IRFU Regulations in relation to anti-doping.

11. Matches against Teams from Other Unions

a) Clubs are subject to the provisions relating to matches against teams from other Unions contained in the Safeguarding Policy, and the provisions of Regulation 2 of the IRFU Regulations.

12. Movement of individuals between Unions

a) It is not envisaged that this should be an issue with Youth Rugby but, if it should arise, the player involved is subject to the provisions contained in Regulation 4 of the IRFU Regulations.

13. Laws of the Game – Variations

a) The Laws of the Game, together with any variations to the Laws promulgated by the Irish Rugby Football Union, or by the Branch, apply to all age-grade rugby. There are a number of promulgated variations to the Laws specifically for age-grade rugby. These are mainly aimed at the safety of the players, and it is particularly important, therefore, that these variations are applied and enforced. The Competition Organisers will provide further information and clarification if requested to do so. Attention is drawn in particular to the "Standard set of variations appropriate to the Under 19 Game", appended to the Laws of the Game. From time to time there can also be interpretations of the Laws promulgated by the Irish Rugby Football Union, and the Youth Committee will make every effort to disseminate these promulgations to clubs as they appear.

b) Whilst reference should always be made to the text of the actual provisions, the following is a brief synopsis of the variations appropriate to age-grade rugby:

- **Line-out**
  - U18/U16/U14 level full line out lift allowed (U14s, see below)
  - At U14 level teams not capable of lifting on their own ball there will be no lifting in lineout, however opposition can contest. If teams are capable, lifting is allowed on their own ball, if opposition are not competing.
  - For U16 after Christmas all Clubs will be expected to contest in the line out and U18s full contest from start of season.
- **Conversions**
  - At U14 & U16 level may be brought int o the 15M Line. At U18 level full regulations will apply.
- **Scrum**
  - U14 level - Uncontested scrums, strike allowed by receiving team only. Clubs are encouraged to contest in the scrum if players in both teams are capable of doing so and have a suitably trained front row.
  - U16 level – All Clubs are encouraged to contest in the scrum if players are capable of doing so. After Christmas all Clubs will be expected to contest in the scrum.
  - U18 – expected to contest in the scrum from the start of the season.
  - At all times each team must have the same number of players in the scrum.
    - Maximum in scrum – 8, Minimum – 5.
    - Formation in full 8-man scrum – 3/4/1.
    - Formation in 7-man scrum – 3/4 (no number 8).
    - Formation in 6-man scrum – 3/2/1 (no flankers).
    - Formation in 5-man scrum – 3/2 (front row and locks only).
  - If a suitably trained front row player is not available, then the referee must order uncontested scrums.
  - Scrum engagement – Crouch / Bind / Set
  - No intentional wheel allowed.
  - No wheel of more than 45 degrees where wheel is unintentional
  - Maximum push is 1.5 metres
  - The ball must not be held at the base of the scrum.
  - The number 8 can pick up the ball at all age levels.