



Rules of the  
**CHALLENGE CUP**

**2024/25 Season**

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**CHALLENGE CUP**

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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.

Competitions Officer

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## **1. Details of the Cup**

- (a) The Cup is named 'The Staffordshire Football Association Challenge Cup' but may be referred to as the 'Challenge 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 ("the Association").
- (c) The Association President (or their 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 18 medals to the playing staff and officials of both clubs in the Final.
- (b) If a player taking part in the final tie is ordered to leave the field of play for misconduct, the medal to which he may have been entitled may be withheld at the discretion of the Association's Regulatory Committee ('the Committee').

## **3 Control of the Competition**

- (a) The ownership, organisation, control and management of the Competition and any rights associated with it of any nature shall be vested in and exclusively in the Association.
- (b) The Association's Regulatory Committee ('the Committee') shall have the power to make, delete and amend regulations for the organisation, control and management of the competition as it, from time to time, deems expedient (the 'Competition Rules').
- (c) All clubs and players participating in any way in the competition shall be bound by and comply with the Competition Rules (and any rules or regulations issued pursuant to the Competition Rules).
- (d) The Committee shall have the power to make decisions on all matters arising out of or in relation to the organisation, control and management of the Competition (including as to eligibility and qualification) which shall be final and binding on all Participants in the Competition. In relation to these and any other matters in relation to the Competition but not specifically mentioned in the Competition Rules, the Committee shall have the power to take such action and make such decisions, orders, rulings and impose such penalties as it deems necessary and following such procedures as it considers appropriate and such shall, subject to Rule 13, be final and binding on all Participants. In considering such matters, the Committee shall not be bound by any enactment or Rule of Law relating to the admissibility of evidence in proceeding before a Court of Law.
- (e) The Committee may, at its sole discretion, appoint from time to time a sub-committee to take such action and make decisions, orders and rulings to impose penalties on its behalf which shall be deemed decisions of the Committee.

- (f) A Club participating in the Competition shall only have such rights in relation to the competition (and any match in the competition) as are expressly granted to the Club under the Competition Rules or by the Association in writing.
- (g) All participants taking part in the Competition shall be bound by and comply with the Competition Rules.
- (h) In addition to any other action or penalty, the Committee 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 Competition Rules (and any rules or regulations issued pursuant to the Competition Rules), and the decision of the Committee shall, subject to Rule 13, be final and binding.

#### **4. Eligible Clubs and Entry Fee**

- (a) The Competition is annual and is open to all affiliated clubs in membership of the Association competing at Step 7 of the National League System and those clubs playing in divisions in which the promoted clubs are promoted to Step 7 of the National League System.
- (b) The entry fee is £40.00.
- (c) Applications to enter the Competition and payment of the entry fee shall be made to the Association by 6<sup>th</sup> 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. Withdrawal from the Competition**

- (a) Any Club intending to withdraw from the Competition must notify its intention to do so to the Association and the opposing Club, not less than eight days before the date fixed for playing the match.
- (b) A Club failing to comply with this shall be reported to the Committee, who shall have power to compel such offending Club to pay the expenses incurred and to take such other action as the Committee considers appropriate.
- (c) If a Club decides to withdraw from the Competition after a postponed or abandoned match, notice must be given to the Association and its opponents at the end of the match or as soon as possible after the match has been postponed or abandoned.
- (d) A Club failing to give satisfactory reason for withdrawing from the Competition shall in addition to any other action considered appropriate not be allowed to enter the Competition in the following season and shall be liable to such fine as the Committee considers appropriate.
- (e) Where a Club fails to fulfil any fixture the Committee shall take such action as it deems appropriate.

#### **6. Organisation of the Competition**

- (a) The Committee have discretionary power to grant exemption from earlier rounds of the Competition.
- (b) (b) Matches in all rounds up to and including the semi finals shall be played on published conference dates, 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) Matches preceding the final tie shall kick off as follows:
 

First drawn clubs with floodlights:	3.00pm
First drawn clubs without floodlights:	(as follows)
August / September / October:	2.30pm
November / December / January:	2.00pm
February / March / April:	2.30pm
- (h) 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.
- (i) 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.
- (j) The Association shall fix the ground for the final tie and have direct control of the arrangements for the match.
- (k) When a Final match has been postponed it shall be played as directed by the Committee.
- (l) When a Final match has been abandoned after it has commenced but before it has been completed, the Committee shall deal with the matter as it sees fit in its absolute discretion.

## **7. Grounds for Matches**

- (a) Each match shall be played at the ground of the club drawn first. If that ground is not available on the conference date, other than due to adverse weather conditions, then the home club shall arrange an alternative ground or the match shall be played at the ground of their opponents. If neither ground is available, the match shall be played at the ground of the home club at the earliest opportunity prior to the next conference date. 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 4(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) In any event, the Committee shall have the power to order that any match be played on an alternative ground or date, if it is considered appropriate and necessary. For ties switched from the ground of the first Club drawn, the Committee shall determine the financial conditions in which the tie shall be played.
- (g) 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.
- (h) Except with the permission of the Committee, where a match is postponed in accordance with paragraph (g), it shall be played at the same ground fourteen days after the date of the original fixture.

## **8. 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.

## **9. 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. 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.

## **10. Players**

- (a) Each team participating in a match shall represent the full available strength of their club. 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 7 days 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 players registration. Therefore, this is also required not later than 7 days 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 7 days 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 seven days 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) A player who during the current season has played in a match in the Association's Senior Cup or Senior Vase shall not be eligible to play in this Competition.
- (e) In order to be eligible to play in the Final, the players must have been correctly registered and eligible for the Semi Final.
- (f) All players shall be qualified as players according to the Rules of the Association.
- (g) A player shall not in the same season play for more than one competing team in this Competition.
- (h) A player who has been suspended may play in postponed, abandoned, drawn or replayed matches after the term of his suspension has expired.
- (i) A club may at its discretion and in accordance with the Laws of the Game use 5 substitute players who may be selected from 5 nominated players, 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 player who has been substituted himself becomes a substitute and may replace a player at any time. A substitute who is not used is entitled to play for another club in the same season, subject to paragraph (b).
- (j) 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 thirty minutes before the advertised kick off time. Any club failing to carry out these provisions shall be fined £20.00.
- (k) 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.

## **11. 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 6(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.

## **12. Match Officials**

- (a) Match Officials shall be appointed by the Association in accordance with its appointing procedures.

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 of the Match Officials shall be shared equally by both clubs 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: £42.00  
Assistant Referee: £30.00

- (c) In the final tie, the Match Officials shall receive the match fee and a medal.  
(d) In the event of a match not being played the Match Officials shall be paid:  
(i) half the fee to be shared equally by both clubs, if the Referee decides the ground is unfit for play;  
(ii) the full fee if they travel to the ground and find one club has defaulted; the defaulting club shall pay the full fees;  
(iii) in the event of a match being started and abandoned, the full fee shared equally by both clubs.

### **13. 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. The Referee shall record the lodging of any protest made under this Rule in the match report.  
(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.

### **14. 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 an Appeal Board, 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 Appeal Board have the power to compel any party to the appeal to pay such expenses as they deem fit.

## **15. Notices**

All notices required to be given to the Association by any of these Competition Rules shall be addressed to the Competitions Officer, at the offices of the Association.

## **16. 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.

## **17. Appendix**

- (a) Where a Club intends to lodge an appeal against a decision of the Committee (or a Sub-Committee) to remove the Club from the Competition pursuant to Rule 14, it must:
  - (i) notify the Association in writing by 5.00pm on the seventh business day following receipt of the decision; and
  - (ii) provide the Association with an appeal fee of £50.00 and copies of all submissions, evidence and any other relevant material upon which they intend to rely.
- (b) The grounds of appeal available to the Club shall be that the Committee (or sub-committee):
  - (i) failed to give the Club a fair hearing; and/or
  - (ii) misinterpreted or failed to comply with the rules of the Competition relevant to its decision; and/or
  - (iii) came to a decision to which no reasonable such body could have come; and/or
  - (iv) the removal of the Club from the Competition was excessive.
- (c) An appeal board of three persons shall be appointed to determine the appeal. The members shall be appointed by the Association (or their nominee) and shall be comprised of members of the Discipline Commission Panel or its appointees.
  
- (d) An appeal shall be by way of a review of documents and oral submissions only and shall not involve a rehearing of the evidence considered by the Committee (or subcommittee). The Association shall ensure that all

documents relating to the original decision are provided to the Appeal Board. If the Club does not wish to be present or represented in person, the Appeal Board may conduct the hearing on the basis of a review of the documents only.

- (e) The Association shall notify the Club of the outcome of the appeal immediately following the decision.
- (f) New evidence may only be permitted with the permission of the Chair of the Appeal Board. An application for leave to present new evidence must be made when providing submissions. Such application must set out the nature of relevance of the new evidence and why it was not presented at the original hearing. Save in exceptional circumstances, the Appeal Board shall not grant leave to present new evidence unless satisfied with the reason given as to why it was not, or could not have been, presented to the Committee (or sub-committee) and that such evidence is relevant. Where leave to present new evidence has been granted, in all cases the other party shall be given an opportunity to respond. The decision of the Chair of the Appeal Board shall be final.
- (g) The Appeal Board shall hear the appeal at the earliest available opportunity and, in any event, before the next round of the Competition. The Appeal Board shall determine the procedures to be followed at any personal hearing.
- (h) A decision of the Appeal Board shall be final and binding and there shall be no right of further challenge.
- (i) The Appeal Board shall have the power to allow or dismiss the appeal and to make such further or other order as it considers appropriate.
- (j) The costs of bringing an appeal shall be borne by the Club.