



HUNTER VALLEY GROUP 21 &
HUNTER JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE

**2026 COMBINED U18S
COMPETITION BY-LAWS**





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UNDER 18S COMPETITION INFORMATION

This handbook incorporates the rules and By-Laws for the combined Hunter Valley Group 21 and Hunter Junior Rugby League Combined Under 18s Competition. The Joint Competitions Committee will determine the team entry requirements for each competition.

This document will be a 'living' document. It will see additions and changes as the seasons pass, when new policies and procedures are introduced, or existing ones are amended. As such, it is recommended not to print and instead access when required online.

These By-Laws should be read in conjunction with the [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#), Hunter Junior Rugby League Competition By-Laws and Group 21 Competition By-Laws. In the event that this document is silent on any matter, reference should be made to the NSW Rugby League Policies and Procedures or the applicable Association's Competition By-Laws.

Note: All correspondence regarding this competition is to be directed through NSWRL staff.



COMPETITION BY-LAWS 2026

COMPETITIONS

1. Match Durations

- 1.1 Matches consist of two (2) x 30-minute halves
- 1.2 No time off applies during regular season matches.
- 1.3 If scores are level at full time, the match will be recorded as a Draw.

2. Competition Points

- 2.1 Competition points are awarded as follows:

2.1.1	Win	=	3 points
2.1.2	Draw	=	2 points
2.1.3	Loss	=	1 points
2.1.4	Bye	=	3 points
2.1.5	Forfeit (Receiving)	=	3 points
2.1.6	Forfeit (Giving)	=	0 points
2.1.7	Abandoned	=	2 points (foul play abandonment excluded)

3. Team Nominations

- 3.1 Teams must have a minimum of thirteen (13) registered players to nominate a team.
- 3.2 No cap applies to total squad registration numbers for the season.



ADMINISTRATION

4. Playing Higher Age Competitions

- 4.1 The standard requirement for a player to first participate in their natural age group match before playing in a higher age group will be removed for the Under 18s competition.
- 4.2 Finals Eligibility rules still apply regarding majority of participation requirements.
- 4.3 For Newcastle based clubs, where a club enters both a U18s and U19s team, the club must nominate a core squad of fifteen (15) players who will form the basis of the U19s team. The nominated squad must be submitted prior to the commencement of the competition and may include:
 - 4.3.1 Nineteen (19) year old players who are eligible to participate in the U19s competition and may be progressing toward Open Age football.
 - 4.3.2 Eighteen (18) year old players who are considered too advanced to participate in the U18s competition.
- 4.4 Players listed within the core U19s squad will be ineligible to participate within the U18s competition.
- 4.5 All players not included within the nominated U19s squad may participate in the U18s competition provided they meet the applicable age eligibility requirements. This includes players who are approved to Play Down an Age Group.
- 4.6 Clubs found with players not complying with any of the above rules set out above shall be deemed to have participated unqualified and may face fines and/or forfeit the match in line with the Fines and Fees outlined within the [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

5. Playing Lower Age Competitions

- 5.1 Players can request to play in a lower age group under three provisions:
 - 5.1.1 [NRL 18 Month Registration Window](#).
 - 5.1.2 NSWRL Weight and Age Guidelines (See [NSWRL Policies and Procedures](#) for details).
 - 5.1.3 Medical Exemption by application to the NSWRL CMO.
- 5.2 Any player approved to play down in the U18s competition will be ineligible to participate in the U19s or Open Age competitions.
- 5.3 A Playing Lower Age Consent can be revoked at any stage throughout the season if the player exhibits the ability to play at their natural age group.



6. Draws and Times

- 6.1 An annual season calendar, outlining dates of regular season and finals series rounds, will be distributed to all participating Clubs prior to the commencement of the season.
- 6.2 Draws will be created and managed by NSWRL.
- 6.3 NSWRL will allocate times in collaboration with the participating clubs and respective Referee's Association.
- 6.4 Requests for fixture changes must be submitted through the Club Secretary to NSWRL by 5:00pm on the Friday of the preceding week to be considered i.e. seven (7) days before the scheduled fixture.
- 6.5 Match time allocation will be completed by Tuesday 5pm prior to scheduled fixture. Any changes beyond this deadline will be communicated directly with the affected clubs.

7. Forfeits

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of the Club Secretary to notify an intention to forfeit in writing to NSWRL at the earliest opportunity. This ensures notification is shared where matches occur across association or competition borders.
- 7.2 Forfeits must be notified by no later than 12pm of the Friday before the match.
 - 7.2.1 All forfeits will incur a \$350 forfeit fine, payable to the relevant Home Team association. In exceptional circumstances, a club may apply to the joint competitions committee for consideration of reducing or waiving the fine.
 - 7.2.2 Any forfeit after this point in time, the forfeiting Club Secretary will be responsible for notifying NSWRL or Group 21 Administrator, the opposition Club Secretary and relevant Referees Association.
 - 7.2.3 Any forfeit submitted after this deadline will result in an additional fine equal to the match official fees for that game.
- 7.3 The result of a forfeited match will be recorded as 30 – 0, with the forfeit receiving team receiving 3 competition points and the forfeiting team receiving 0 competition points.
- 7.4 All forfeits submitted will remain in effect if the match/round is later abandoned/washed out.
- 7.5 Any team that forfeits in the final three (3) rounds of the season and are final series contenders will need to show cause to the joint competitions committee as to why they should not be disqualified from the competition.
- 7.6 Any team that forfeits three (3) times throughout the regular season will need to show cause to the joint competitions committee as to why they should not be disqualified from the competition.
- 7.7 For finals eligibility purposes, all players listed on the Forfeit Receiving team list in MySideline will have the matches counted towards their participation. This team list must be submitted through MySideline Manager before the result of the match is finalised at 9am Monday.



- 7.8 See [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#) for conditions around forfeits and minimum player numbers.

8. Washout Policy

- 8.1 Every effort will be made to minimise the impact of wet weather on competitions. This may result in matches being moved to neutral venues in order to maximise game play.
- 8.2 No changes to match venues or times will occur after 12:00pm on Thursday.
- 8.3 If a match cannot proceed as scheduled, the match will be rescheduled at the earliest possible opportunity in consultation with the clubs involved.
- 8.3.1 If a match cannot be scheduled within a reasonable timeframe despite genuine attempts from both clubs to facilitate the match, the result will be recorded as 0-0 with two (2) competition points awarded to each team.
- 8.3.2 If a match cannot be scheduled within a reasonable timeframe due to one club being unable to facilitate the match, the result will be recorded as a forfeit by the non-complying club.
- 8.3.3 The determination of what constitutes genuine attempts to schedule the match will be made by the joint Competitions Committee.
- 8.4 All teams scheduled for a Bye during a washed-out round will receive three (3) competition points.
- 8.5 If a match is washed out and one of the participating teams is subsequently withdrawn from the competition, the result of the match will be recorded as a Forfeit win to the remaining team.
- 8.6 Any match deemed a Wash Out Draw will count towards Finals Series Qualifications, provided a team list has been submitted at the time the result is determined.
- 8.7 Any match deemed a Wash Out Draw will count as a game served for any suspended participant.
- 8.8 Under extreme circumstances, the joint competitions committee retains the right to extend the season when required. This will be done so in collaboration with all involved stakeholders.



9. Fines

- 9.1 Group 21, HJRL and NSWRL are the only entities permitted to issue fines for Rules and By-Law's breaches for clubs/teams playing in the U18s competition.
- 9.2 Payment is payable within seven (7) days of receiving the Fine Invoice. Non-payment will result in a forfeit by the offending team in the preceding competition match.
- 9.3 See [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#) in relation to fines schedule.

10. Appeals and Protests (Competition Related)

- 10.1 In relation to these Joint Competition rules, protests can be lodged when a club believes the rules and/or procedures have not been adhered to.
- 10.2 Only Clubs can lodge appeals, not individuals.
- 10.3 If a Club wishes to lodge a Protest, a \$500.00 fee applies (payable to NSWRL). If the Protest is upheld, the \$500.00 fee will be refunded to the club lodging the Protest.
- 10.4 All Protests should be in writing and addressed to the NSWRL via email by 4.00pm on the Tuesday following the match.
- 10.5 In all finals series matches, a Protest will only be accepted if "intention to protest" is marked on the Official Match Sheet within 15 minutes of the completion of the match in question. The name of the Club and Team Official protesting must be included. Clubs will then need to outline the terms of the protest.
- 10.6 The decision of a protest is final and binding and cannot be appealed against.



11. Code of Conduct and Judiciary Procedures

- 11.1 Clubs are responsible for the conduct of their players, parents or carers of players, coaches, officials and Club supporters.
- 11.2 All Judiciary, Code of Conduct and Appeal procedures are to be in line with [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#) and NRL Code of Conduct.
- 11.3 All U18's Competition's Code of Conduct and Judiciary incidents will be reviewed by the NSWRL Incident Review Committee.
- 11.4 The NSWRL Tough Love in League Policy will be implemented across all competitions. See the Tough Love in League Policy under the [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#).
- 11.5 Breaches of the NRL Code of Conduct and Tough Love in League Policy may result in penalties, including but not limited to:
 - 11.5.1 Suspension of a match.
 - 11.5.2 Termination of a match (including potential forfeiture of competition points).
 - 11.5.3 Monetary fines.
 - 11.5.4 Suspension of a participant on a temporary or permanent basis.
 - 11.5.5 Suspension of a Team or Club on a temporary or permanent basis.
- 11.6 The above penalties may be in addition to any penalty which may be imposed by a Judiciary Panel.
- 11.7 All Judiciary or Code of Conduct Hearings will be conducted online via platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom or any other technology as required.



GAME DAY RULES

12. Ground Managers

- 12.1 Home clubs are responsible for appointing Ground Managers to venues during matches.
- 12.2 Where necessary, a team may be required to provide a Ground Manager for Away matches in the event of disciplinary issues.
- 12.3 Ground Managers are responsible for:
 - 12.3.1 Ensuring sign on processes are adhered to.
 - 12.3.2 Results sheets are filled in correctly and in a timely manner after each match.
 - 12.3.3 General control of matches in accordance with NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual.
 - 12.3.4 Liaising with match officials.
 - 12.3.5 Enforcing correct trainer/manager/coach and spectator behaviour.
 - 12.3.6 Ensuring appropriate judiciary reports forms/sheets are available to the match officials and provided to all parties concerned in the event of an incident.
- 12.4 Ground Managers are required to be visible at all times during matches either at the officials table or on the sideline, wearing the NSWRL provided purple Ground Manager vest.
- 12.5 Ground Managers will be heavily involved in the enforcement of the NRL Code of Conduct for off-field concerns, in particular being aware of the Competition By-Laws and reporting of incidents.



13. Sign on Sheets / Results Sheets

- 13.1 All clubs must use the International Age Single Team Sheet as generated by the MySideline database.
- 13.2 Each team is required to supply their own Team Sheet for game day.
- 13.3 The Ground Manager will be responsible for ensuring sign on sheets have been completed and verified as correct in a timely manner.
- 13.4 Both teams are required to go through the same process when signing on (this isn't to be different between home and away teams).
- 13.5 A player may sign on at any time during a match.
- 13.6 If a player does not sign on, they will NOT be deemed to have played in that match for finals eligibility purposes.
- 13.7 A player who takes part in a different division or age group to their primary team is required to be written on the sign on sheet if they have not been assigned via MySideline Manager beforehand and printed on the provided Team List. This player MUST be assigned to the match by the Team Manager before it is Finalised.
- 13.8 Each team manager is responsible for ensuring all players that participated in the match have been assigned to the Team List within MySideline Manager. This should be completed before the match is finalised.
- 13.9 Each team manager is responsible for ensuring all team staff that participated in the match have been assigned to the Team List within MySideline Manager. This should be completed before the match is finalised.
- 13.10 Failure to accurately record player and team staff participation in a match may result in fines and/or forfeiture of the affected match.
- 13.11 All sin bins and send offs must be recorded on the team sheet and MySideline Manager.
- 13.12 The home team manager is responsible for ensuring final match results are entered via MySideline Manager.



14. Player / Team Staff Identification

- 14.1 A player or volunteer is NOT permitted to participate in a match without a digital player registration identification card being present. **NO CARD = NO PLAY.**
- 14.2 Digital Cards must be available and reviewed by the Ground Manager prior to the commencement of any competition match with all players/team staff to sign on accordingly.
- 14.3 Any issues with player/team staff identification must be submitted to NSWRL prior to 9am Monday following the match.
- 14.4 Teams found not complying with any of the above rules may be deemed to have participated unqualified and may face fines and/or forfeit the match in line with Fines and Fees of the [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#).
- 14.5 In the event Identification is unavailable due to exceptional circumstances, NSWRL should be contacted. If the circumstances were unforeseeable and it can be proven that registration on MySideline with an appropriate identification photo exists, no further action will be taken.

15. First Aid / Sports Trainers

- 15.1 All trainers are required to comply with the [NRL On Field Policy](#), including the performance of duties specific to their designated role, such as the provision of water to players and the management of on-field injuries.
- 15.2 As a minimum, a League Safe accreditation is required for any Team Staff to enter the field of play.
- 15.3 Each team must ensure that they have meet the minimum Sports Trainer requirements as per the NRL On Field Policy, being one (1) Level 1 Sports Trainer or higher per team.
- 15.4 If a team does not meet the minimum requirements as per the NRL On Field Policy, then the match **MUST NOT** commence.
- 15.5 Coaches and players cannot act as a trainer in any match.
- 15.6 Trainers must comply with any direction or instruction from the match officials or ground manager.
- 15.7 Trainers must not make argumentative, disparaging, derogatory or offensive comments to any Match Official or Ground Manager.
- 15.8 All trainers who enter the field of play must possess proof of accreditation (e.g. MySideline Digital Card) and have it available to the Ground Manager.
- 15.9 Trainers must not enter the field of play in the line of sight of a player or interfere with an opposition player.



16. Head Injury and Concussion Management

- 16.1 See [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#), the [NRL Concussion Policy and Management Guidelines](#), and the [NRL On-Field Policy](#).
- 16.2 All players suspected of suffering a concussion must complete a [Medical Clearance Form](#) before being allowed to return to full contact training or match play.
- 16.3 Additional information and resources can be found on the [Play Rugby League Concussion Hub](#).

17. Time Off and Scheduled Time Delays

- 17.1 No time off will be allowed during regular season competition matches.
- 17.2 Matches abandoned with less than one full half of a game being completed will be replayed when able. Participating clubs will be consulted regarding the rescheduling of the affected fixture.
- 17.3 Matches unable to commence for any unforeseeable reason, injury or extraordinary event, will be replayed when able.
- 17.4 If a match cannot be played within two (2) rounds, the result will be recorded as 0-0 with two (2) competition points awarded to each team.
- 17.5 If a match cannot be played due to one team being unable to facilitate a match, the result will be recorded as a forfeit by the non-complying club.
- 17.6 The determination of the above will be made by the joint competitions committee.
- 17.7 The result of matches abandoned after half time shall be recorded as the final score at the point of abandonment.
- 17.8 A team shall be allowed a maximum of 15-minutes after a match's scheduled starting time to take the field without any prior confirmation of delay. The match clock will however commence at the scheduled time. After 15 minutes the match will be deemed a forfeit.
- 17.9 See [NSWRL Community Rugby League Policies and Procedures Manual](#) for more information.



18. Sideline Area / Bench Locations

- 18.1 Both the home and away team benches must be on the same side of the field.
- 18.2 Under no circumstances is “barracking” or abuse from the bench permitted. This also refers to advice or assistance to the match officials in relation to their performance or how they should carry out their duties.
- 18.3 Personnel on the bench may comprise only those people directly related to the conduct of the match itself e.g. coaches, reserve players, trainers and team manager with a requirement to be clearly identified with a vest or shirt and have official identification.
- 18.4 A maximum of five (5) team staff are permitted on the bench, inclusive of the Team Manager who may be seated at the score table.
- 18.5 Under no circumstances is a suspended player permitted inside the playing area or on the bench.
- 18.6 The Ground Manager may request any person on the bench to leave at any time.
- 18.7 Players and Team Staff on the bench must at all times remain at the bench allocated to their team (except for warm-ups).
- 18.8 No one besides the Ground Manager can approach the match officials.
- 18.9 Whilst Team Staff are not expected to sit during the entire match, they must not leave the immediate area surrounding their allocated bench or approach the field of play under any circumstances. Team Staff should be seated whilst not in an active role i.e. making an interchange.
- 18.10 No members of the general public are permitted within the playing area.

19. Interchange

- 19.1 Up to a maximum of nineteen (19) players are allowed to participate in each match. This includes the starting thirteen (13) and up to six (6) reserves.
- 19.2 Unlimited interchange will apply for all competitions.
- 19.3 Teams may only have the maximum number of players allowed to participate in each match, as outlined above, dressed for a match (i.e. where the maximum number of players is 19, a team cannot dress 20 players for a match).



FINALS SERIES

20. Finals Series Structure

- 20.1 The format of Competition Finals Series will be a four (4) team format played over three (3) consecutive weekends.
- 4 Team 3 Week
- Week 1 – Association of Highest Ranking Team to allocate venue.
- Game 1 (Qualifying Final) – 1st v 2nd
Game 2 (Elimination Final) – 3rd v 4th
- Week 2 – Association of Loser Game 1 to allocate venue
- Game 3 (Semi Final) – Loser Game 1 v Winner Game 2
- Week 3 – Association of Winner Game 1 to allocate venue
- Game 4 (Grand Final) – Winner Game 1 v Winner Game 3
- 20.2 At all Finals matches, each participating Club must provide a Ground Manager to assist on game day.
- 20.3 If teams are on equal points at the end of the competition regular season, For and Against points will determine final standings for all positions. If equal, most points For will determine placings followed by least points Against. If the same, then individual results of both teams playing each other will be taken into account.
- 20.4 Any team breaching Competition By-Laws in any final's series match, regardless of their position, may be disqualified from the Competition.
- 20.5 If a team withdraws from any competition or is disqualified from any final's series match, any subsequent matches will be deemed a forfeit. No adjustment for previous matches will occur.



21. Finals Eligibility

- 21.1 The eligibility of a player to participate in any final series match will be determined based on the participants playing record on the completion of the regular rounds of competition.
- 21.2 The minimum number of matches required to qualify for a final's series will be three (3) with that specific team.
- 21.3 A player will qualify for finals in the team where they have played the majority of their matches during the regular season.
 - 21.3.1 Where a player has participated in the majority of matches in a higher division, they cannot play in a lower division. This is to include players who have participated in Under 19s and/or any Open Age competition.
 - 21.3.2 Where a player has participated in the majority of matches in a lower division, that player remains eligible to participate in a higher-grade competition within the same club.
 - 21.3.3 If matches played across competitions are even at the end of the regular season, the player will be eligible for both the higher and lower division.
- 21.4 In the case of a player not being able to play the required three matches due to injury sustained during the season, such player may be permitted to take part in a play-off, semi-final, final or grand final provided:
 - 21.4.1 A doctor's certificate must be available covering the time the player was unable to play.
 - 21.4.2 The certificate must be received by the NSWRL no later than 5:00pm on the Wednesday prior to the last competition match.
- 21.5 If the player was registered late and there were limited matches available, then application can be made to the joint competition committee for review.
 - 21.5.1 If there were sufficient available rounds remaining for a player to qualify, then an application on limited available rounds will be denied.
 - 21.5.2 Applications must be received by the NSWRL no later than 5:00pm on the Wednesday prior to the last competition match.
- 21.6 Team Managers are expected to make themselves aware of player eligibility prior to the finals.



22. Loss of Time and Time Off (Finals)

- 22.1 In Semi-finals, Finals and Grand Finals, time off rules apply for the final five (5) minutes of the second half.
- 22.2 A maximum of 15 minutes will be allowed before the game is abandoned with the result at the current time to stand.
- 22.3 In the event a Semi Final match is abandoned with less than one full half of a game being completed (foul play abandonments excluded), the match will be replayed mid-week. The Joint Competition Committee will determine venue, date and feasibility. If the match cannot be replayed before the next scheduled final, the highest-ranking team will progress through.
- 22.4 A Grand Final match will not be abandoned (foul play excluded) unless absolutely necessary to do so. In the event a Grand Final match is suspended with less than one full half of a game being completed, the match will be replayed at a later date as determined by the Joint Competitions Committee.

23. Drawn Matches and Extra Time (Finals)

- 23.1 In semi-final, preliminary final and Grand Final matches, if scores are equal at the conclusion of normal time, then a period of golden point extra time will follow in the form of one 5-minute period.
- 23.2 If a team scores a try or kicks a goal/field goal at any stage within this extra time period, the referee will terminate the game with the team scoring the points declared the winner.
- 23.3 If no points are scored at the conclusion of this 5-minute period, the competing team will change directions of play and the second period will continue until the deadlock is broken.



SITUATIONS NOT COVERED

24. Determinations

- 24.1 Should any situation arise that is not covered under these rules, the determination of the Joint Competitions Committee will be final. This includes adjusting these rules where applicable.