



Adult Male Future Competitions Structure from season 2022/23

RFU Council voted on 27 November 2020 and 16 April 2021 to pass the following resolutions for a new competition structure in the adult male game from Level 3 and below.

The recommendations were proposed by the Future Competitions Structure Working Group following an 18-month review into the current competition structure, which has included extensive consultation sessions with Council Members, Constituent Bodies, Club administrators, competition organisers, match officials, coaches and players, in addition to webinars, a national survey and detailed analysis of available data.

Measures to be introduced from the 2022/23 season - English Clubs Championship at Level 3 and below

1. A rapid review of competition structures will take place every three years
2. At all levels there will be a protected two-week break over the Christmas period and protected weekend breaks (at points to be determined through the season)
3. League Rugby

All teams at a given level will be grouped together geographically to reduce travel times and distance. The league season will be shortened to address concerns shared by players around the intensity of the current league structure.

The size of leagues at Levels 5 and below to be capped at 12 teams, and at Levels 3 & 4 to be capped at 14 teams.

From season 2022/23, the English Clubs Championship at Level 3 and below will consist of:

- a. One league at Level 3
- b. Three leagues at Level 4
- c. Six leagues at Level 5
- d. Twelve leagues at Level 6
- e. Approximately sixteen leagues at Level 7*
- f. Approximately 20 leagues at Level 8*
- g. At Level 9 and below will be determined by the relevant organising committee*

*Exact number of leagues to be determined by final size of leagues, number of team entries and local need.

At Level 4 to 6 this will be implemented on a regional basis, whereas at Level 7 and below this will be implemented broadly on Constituent Body (CB) boundaries (retaining some flexibility where it makes sense for clubs on CB borders to play in different CBs).

4. Cup Rugby – Level 5 and below

A cup competition with mid-season, optional, entry will be introduced per level from Level 5 and below to provide a varied diet of rugby with final league position determining the competition entered (e.g. Cup, Plate, or Bowl at respective levels).

Cup competitions will take place upon completion of the league season to avoid fixture clashes. The cup competition provides an opportunity for additional home games to compensate for lost home fixtures from the reduction in the league size.

The competition format will be determined such that pools will operate at Level 5 and top tier of Level 6, and with regional knockout waterfall competitions at the bottom tier of Level 6 and for Level 7 and below, all culminating in 'Community Game Finals' to celebrate community rugby at prestigious locations.

5. Lower XV teams

From season 2022/23, Lower XV teams will be able to play in the English Clubs Championship up to and including Level 7, (no longer capped at Level 8), subject to specific criteria to be set out in the RFU Regulations.



The addition of Lower XV teams aims to offer appropriate competition opportunities for appropriate Lower XV teams, and to increase the number of teams in leagues at certain levels, which should decrease travel time for clubs and players.

For example, by grouping on a regional basis, a 2nd or 3rd XV team in Level 7 could be of similar standard to a 1st or 2nd XV team in League 8 and they will now be able to compete against each other if they wish. This is voluntary. Clubs can sign up and will only be admitted if they fulfil the criteria, the detail of which will be confirmed in the implementation phase, but which is likely to offer some sensitivity to local needs.