

New Zealand Rugby

# Competition Regulations Handbook Under 85kg National Club Cup

## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Under 85kg National Club Cup ("the Competition") is a competition established by New Zealand Rugby (NZR) and shall be competed for by teams duly qualified according to these Competition Regulations during each winter club season.
- 1.2 The Competition shall be organised by NZR in accordance with its Constitution, Regulations and By-Laws, which shall apply to the competition. To the extent that there is any conflict between these Competition Regulations and NZR Statutes, Regulations and By-laws otherwise, these Competition Regulations shall apply.
- 1.3 NZR may delegate any of its powers, rights and responsibilities under these Competition Regulations to any Provincial Union. That Provincial Union shall then be responsible to carry out that power, right or responsibility in accordance with NZR Statutes, Regulations and By-laws, to the extent of that delegation.

## 2. COMPETITION NAME

- 2.1 The Competition shall be called the U85kg National Club Cup but may be marketed under an amended competition name subject to sponsorship.
- 2.2 NZR shall have the right to add to or change the Competition name to reflect the name of the sponsor if it so desires.

## 3. ENTRIES FOR THE COMPETITION

- 3.1 The holding of the Competition each year is at the discretion of NZR. The Competition shall be open to all clubs being members of Provincial Unions affiliated to NZR, and Heartland Provincial Union Representative teams (subject to NZR Approval) who will be knowns as Clubs from this point for the purposes of these regulations.
- 3.2 Eligible clubs may enter more than one team in the Competition, however, this is subject to teams being able to meet player eligibility requirements at clause 7.
- 3.3 NZR shall call for entries no later than 60 days prior to the commencement of the competition. Clubs wishing to have a team or teams compete in the Competition must register their interest on or before 5 pm on the last working day of March each year, using such process or documentation as required by NZR.

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3.4 Each club having registered its interest pursuant to clause 3.3 above must submit a formal entry, on a form specified by NZR, together with the designated entry fee of \$400.00 + GST per entered team no later than 5 pm, 15 working days prior to the commencement of the Competition. The entry shall also be accompanied by details of the team's proposed playing colours.

3.5 NZR may reject the entry of any team or teams at its discretion.

3.6 NZR shall have the power to disqualify any entered teams or any members of any entered team for any breach of the NZR Constitution, Regulations (including these Competition Regulations) and By-Laws.

#### 4. COMPETITION FORMAT

4.1 All teams that have had their entry accepted by NZR (Entered Teams as per clause 3.4) shall compete in the Competition on a knockout basis until the conclusion of a final match between the two previously unbeaten teams.

4.2 NZR shall set the Competition Calendar setting out the dates on which the successive rounds of the Competition will be held, or the days by which rounds must be completed. Matches must be played on the dates specified unless otherwise approved by NZR or its nominee. NZR will endeavour to ensure that teams play equal numbers of home and away fixtures (provided however this cannot be guaranteed).

4.3 The Competition shall comprise the following rounds:

Preliminary Rounds	if more than 128 teams
Round 1:	not more than 128 Teams
Round 2:	not more than 64 teams
Round 3:	not more than 32 teams
Round 4:	not more than 16 teams
Quarterfinals:	8 teams
Semifinals:	4 teams
Final:	2 teams

NZR may organise one or more Preliminary Rounds of matches prior to Round 1 in order to reduce the number of Entered Teams to 128 or less.

4.4 NZR may construct the draw for the Competition as either a bracketed

draw through to the final or randomly drawn following each Round.

NZR is to confirm the draw approach before entries for the Competition in any year have closed.

- 4.5 The draw for Preliminary Rounds and Rounds 1 and 2 will involve matches primarily between teams from the same Provincial Union or Super Rugby region, in order to minimise travel costs.
- 4.6 NZR may designate Preliminary Rounds and Rounds 1 and 2 to be played on a home and away basis amongst drawn teams within the same Provincial Union or Super Rugby region, in order to create a prolonged competition for teams where U85 grades are yet to emerge.
- 4.7 The winner of a round game played on a home and away basis will be determined by the team with the highest aggregate score.
- 4.8 In the event of a round concluding with home and away matches between two teams having equal aggregate scores, the winner will be determined by the team that scored the most away points.
- 4.9 If the two teams have scored equal aggregate scores and equal away points after home and away matches, the process at clause 12 is to be applied with the second match between the two teams being used as the basis to determine a winner.
- 4.10 The draw for the rounds involving 32 and 16 teams (Rounds 3 and 4) shall so far as is practicable match teams from within the same region. For clarity the practical application of this regulation means that teams from within the Blues and Chiefs Super Rugby region could be drawn against each other, as could teams from the Crusaders and Highlanders Super Rugby region. Teams from the Hurricanes Super Rugby region may also be considered for cross boundary matches subject to the practicalities of the draw.
- 4.11 The Competition, unless already confirmed as a bracketed draw (see clause 4.4), will become a random draw from the Quarterfinal stage with teams being drawn in pairs, the first team drawn being the home team, and the second team the away team. Away teams may be required to travel, at their own cost, throughout New Zealand to participate in the final three rounds of matches. NZR, subject to the availability of competition funding and sponsorship, may be able to support teams in meeting these travel costs and the extent of this will be communicated when NZR calls for team entries each year.

- 4.12 All entrants are to be available to participate in matches from the Preliminary Rounds.
- 4.13 NZR shall be responsible for the draw for all matches. NZR shall, after the draw for each round is made, advise the clubs of the entered teams and the respective Provincial Unions of the details of the games to be played. The Provincial Union of the home team shall be known as the host Provincial Union.
- 4.14 All clubs, teams, and team members participating in the Competition, and any host Provincial Union, shall observe the rules of the Competition and any directions given by NZR concerning the promotion and conduct of matches.
- 4.15 NZR may at its discretion determine that certain teams do not enter the Competition until later rounds.

## 5. CUP AND MEDALS

- 5.1 The Competition Trophy is the property of NZR and shall be insured by NZR. The holders are responsible for the loss of and any damage done to the trophy. The holder shall return the trophy in good order to NZR by the commencement of the following season's Competition or a date specified by NZR. NZR reserves the right to request the use of the Competition Trophy for promotional purposes prior to this date.
- 5.2 In addition to the Competition Trophy, NZR shall present thirty (30) medals to members of each of the teams in the Final, plus four (4) medals to the match officials of the day.

## 6. PLAYING OF FIXTURES AND MATCH VENUES

- 6.1 The Competition Calendar will be determined by NZR each year in consultation with Provincial Unions and communicated by no later than the first working day of February. The Competition will be conducted over the course of the winter season, concluding with a Final in September.
- 6.2 For all rounds up to and including the Quarterfinals of the competition, the team drawn first shall be deemed to be the home team. The match shall be played on the date range specified in the Competition

Calendar, with a preferred kick-off time of 2pm, subject to the availability of the match venue. The host Provincial Union may vary the kick-off time if the match venue is unavailable. The host Provincial Union shall confirm the match date and kick-off time within 5 working days of the draw being published, subject to the approval of NZR as appropriate and with due consideration of the travel requirements for the away team.

6.3 Subject to clause 6.3.1, the host Provincial Union shall determine the match venue in all rounds up to and including Round 4.

6.3.1 NZR retains the right to determine the location of any match to ensure fairness and equity in terms of travel.

6.4 NZR reserves the right in the case of Quarter and Semifinals to determine the match venue, match date, and kick-off time.

6.5 Pursuant to clause 6.3 and 6.4, the match venue will normally be the home ground of the home team.

6.6 NZR will determine the match venue for the Final.

6.7 In the event of inclement weather, participating clubs shall be obliged to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that scheduled fixtures proceed. The host Provincial Unions must ensure that the scheduling of other fixtures at the match venue are managed to ensure that the playing of the Competition fixture is not compromised.

6.8 All participating clubs are to ensure that their grounds are clearly marked in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

6.9 No unauthorised markings including any commercial marks shall appear at any ground unless otherwise approved by the host Provincial Union or by NZR in relation to Quarterfinal, Semifinal and Final matches.

## 7. ELIGIBILITY OF PLAYERS

7.1 Male players that meet the following criteria are eligible to play in the Competition:

- 7.1.1 Registered as a rugby player with the affiliated club or Provincial Union in accordance with the NZR Registration Regulations and Protocols on the day of the Competition match. The status of registered players in accordance with Clause 10.3 also applies to the composition of the team selection for any match.
  - 7.1.2 Are 18 years of age or older on their first time named in the Start List in the Competition.
  - 7.1.3 Are 16 years of age or older on their first time named in the Start List in the Competition and are approved to play Senior Rugby in accordance with the National Rugby Policy relating to Age to Play Senior Rugby.
  - 7.1.4 Are less than 85kgs at the prescribed time of weigh-in, not including playing uniform or equipment, for any appearance in the Competition.
  - 7.1.5 Are not a party to a New Zealand Rugby Contract, Provincial Union Playing Contract or Provincial Union Development Contract on the day of the Competition match.
- 7.2 To be eligible to play for a team in the Quarter Finals onwards, in addition to the eligibility criteria at 7.1.1 -7.1.5, the player must have also played at least one match for that team in the Preliminary Rounds or Round 1 – Round 4 of that year's competition, unless they have been approved by NZR as an injury replacement in accordance with Clause 10.2 or satisfy the Clause at 10.4 regarding players aged 21 or younger.
- 7.3 A player shall not in the same season be nominated to play for more than one competing team in the Competition. A player that is nominated to play in the Competition for one team from a club entering multiple teams is effectively 'cup tied' to that team and may not represent any other team from that club or any other club in subsequent rounds of the Competition in that year, unless approved by NZR to do so.
- 7.4 If NZR has any doubt as to the eligibility of any player taking part in the Competition, it shall notify the relevant Provincial Union, who will be responsible for determining the eligibility of players, and failing satisfactory proof, NZR may disqualify such player from further participation in the Competition in that year, and/or may disqualify his team from further participation in the Competition in that year, or impose such other penalty as it may deem fit. Where a team that won its most recent match in the

Competition is disqualified, the team it defeated in that match will take its place in the draw for the subsequent round.

#### 8. WITHDRAWAL, PENALTY FOR FAILING TO PLAY

8.1 Any team that defaults on its obligations after the publication of a draw shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500.00) and its club may be suspended from entering teams in the Competition in the following year.

8.2 Teams must take all reasonable steps to arrive at a match on time. If they fail to do so they may be fined an amount not exceeding five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

#### 9. MATCHES PLAYED IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAWS OF THE GAME

9.1 All matches shall be played in accordance with the World Rugby Laws of the Game and NZR Domestic Safety Law Variations.

9.2 The Competition is deemed to be a Premier Designated Competition and is not subject to the Game On Domestic Safety Law Variation.

9.3 For the purposes of safety, teams playing in the Preliminary Round and Round 1, may request Uncontested Scrums for the duration of the match due to a lack of qualified front rowers. This is to be communicated to the referee and the opposing team management as soon as practicable. Teams participating from Round 2 onwards must nominate the required number of qualified front rowers in accordance with NZR Domestic Safety Law Variations.

#### 10. TEAM SELECTION

10.1 Clubs may select up to twenty eight (28) players, with their consent, to represent each entered team in the Competition in any given year. A selected player is one that has been named in the Start List for a match in the Competition in that year, irrespective of whether they took the field or not.

10.2 Clubs may apply to NZR through their Provincial Unions, in the case of justifiable unavailability of their selected players due to injury or any other reason, to nominate additional players for a team. This application is to be



made no later than five (5) working days prior to the scheduled match in which the player is proposed to be available for selection.

10.3 Players that are selected to participate for a team in the Competition in that year, are however, 'cup tied' and ineligible to play for any other team or club in the Competition in that year, unless approved by NZR. A minimum of 15 players in any matchday squad must have a registration status of 'Active' with the affiliated club on the day of the competition match. This requirement does not apply to a Heartland Provincial Union Representative Team who is deemed to be operating as a club under these Regulations or Heartland Provincial Union Teams.

10.4 Except where approved as an injury replacement in accordance with clause 10.2, Players must have played a minimum of 3 games in any grade for a participating club in the 2025 regular season.

10.5 The addition of players aged 21 years old (on the first appearance) or younger, following the cup tying of the first 28 players to the squad is permitted at any point in the competition format without the requirement to seek approval from PUs or NZR.

## 11. START LIST

11.1 Each team is responsible for providing to the match referee a start list (as supplied by NZR) setting out the names of their starting XV (by position) plus up to 7 substitutes with the required number of qualified front rowers, no later than 60 minutes prior to the commencement of the match. This start list is to be drawn from the team's list of nominated players. All players named on the start list must have weighed in to qualify for future rounds.

11.2 Any changes post submission of the start list but prior to kick off (eg due to injury in warm up) must be advised immediately to the match referee and recorded on an updated version of the start list (including stating the reason for the change), and at the same time communicated to the opposition team manager.

11.3 The process for confirming weights for player eligibility is as follows:

11.3.1 Up to Round 4, weigh-in of players is to occur in the presence

of both teams' representatives using PU sanctioned scales at the match venue at an agreed time but never less than 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the match. Players who are 85kgs or over, not including playing uniform or equipment, at this point are ineligible to participate in the match.

11.3.2 From Quarterfinals onwards, weigh-in of players is to occur in the presence of both teams' representatives plus a PU or NZR representative using PU sanctioned scales at the match venue. The timing of this weigh-in may occur at any time as agreed by team representatives but no later than 30 minutes prior to commencement of the match.. Players who are 85kgs or over at this point are ineligible to participate in the match.

11.3.3 NZR shall at its discretion, with regard to situations where teams are travelling significant distance and at significant cost, direct that weigh-in is to occur at an earlier time in each home Provincial Unions under the supervision of PU representatives. In these situations, weigh-ins of both teams is to occur at the same time and be notified with sufficient notice by NZR to enable teams to make suitable arrangements.

## 12. DETERMINING THE WINNER IN EVENT OF DRAWN MATCH AT THE END OF 80 MINUTES

12.1 Subject to clause 12.2, in the event that teams are tied at the end of a match, the winner will be determined by the following criteria, which shall be applied in the order in which they appear until a result is determined:

12.1.1 The first team to score during golden point which shall be up to a further five (5) minutes of extra time each way. At the end of 80 minutes, the two teams swap ends, and whichever team kicked off in the first half of the match shall also kick off;

12.1.2 Team scoring most tries in the match;

12.1.3 Team scoring most converted tries in the match;

12.1.4 Team scoring first try in the match (including a penalty try);

12.1.5 Team scoring first penalty or dropped goal in the match;

12.1.6 Awarded to the away team.

12.2 In the event of a drawn result in the Final and the result cannot be determined by clauses 12.1.1 to 12.1.5, then the title shall be shared between the two competing teams. However, NZR may, in its sole and absolute discretion, amend the criteria in clause 12.1.1 for the Final such that it is the team with the greatest score at the end of a further five (5) minutes of extra time each way that will determine the winner.

12.3 Teams subject to clause 4.6 in the Preliminary Rounds, Round 1 or Round 2 shall use provisions at clause 4.7-4.9 before applying the criteria set out in clause 12.

### 13. TEAM COLOURS

13.1 Where the colours of two competing teams are similar, the home team must change. The referee's decision as to whether colours are similar shall be final.

13.2 It will be the responsibility of the home team to confirm that there is no clash of colours with the visiting team.

### 14. POSTPONED, ABANDONED AND RESCHEDULED MATCHES

14.1 The decision to postpone or abandon a Competition match for;

14.1.1 All rounds up to and including Round 4 will be made by the host Provincial Union following consultation with the Match Officials and the teams, and;

14.1.2 The Quarterfinals, Semifinals and Final will be made by NZR in its sole and absolute discretion following consultation with the Match Officials, teams and if applicable, the host Provincial Union.

14.2 If one team is unable to commence a match within 30 minutes of the scheduled kick-off time, the referee shall declare the match as abandoned and the result will be awarded to the opposing team unless the referee has been advised of the reason for the delay and accepts that it is beyond the reasonable control of the team, and the kick-off time can be delayed without unreasonably impacting on the playing of the match or on the away teams return travel arrangements, in which case the referee may, in his or her discretion, agree to the match commencing at a later time. The referee will

submit a match report outlining the reasons for the abandonment or delay of the match to the host Provincial Union.

14.3 If a team is unable to complete the weigh-in process with a minimum of 15 eligible players, including three trained front rowers, who are less than 85kg, the referee shall declare the match as abandoned and the match will be awarded to the opposing team. The referee is to submit a match report outlining the reasons for the abandonment to the host Provincial Union.

14.4 If due to an event beyond the control of either teams the Competition match is postponed prior to kick off or abandoned prior to the end of the first half, the match must be;

14.4.1 For rounds up to and including Round 4, rescheduled by the host Provincial Union, to a day and time determined by the host Provincial Union, provided that the rescheduled match is played at least seven (7) days prior to the next round; and

14.4.2 For the Quarter, Semifinals, and Final, rescheduled to a day, time and venue determined by NZR in its sole discretion.

14.5 Where a Competition match (that is not played over a home and away basis) has been postponed or abandoned prior to kick off or abandoned prior to the end of the first half and is unable to be rescheduled in accordance with clause 14.4, the away team will be declared as the winner.

14.6 If due to an event beyond the control of either team the Competition match is abandoned after completion of the first half, unless exceptional circumstances apply (such exceptional circumstances as determined by NZR in its sole discretion);

14.6.1 The score at the time of abandonment will be declared as the final result; or

Where at the time of the Competition match being abandoned the scores are level, the result of the match shall be determined in accordance with the regulations at clause 12.1.2 onwards.

14.7 Where a Competition round between two teams that is played over a home and away basis has one of its matches abandoned prior to kick off or prior to the end of the first half and is unable to be rescheduled, then the result of

the played match will be used to determine which team has been declared as the winner of the Competition round. In the event of both matches being abandoned with no result, then the winner of the round will be determined by a coin toss undertaken by NZR.

## 15. REFEREES AND ASSISTANT REFEREES

15.1 NZR shall be responsible for the appointment of the Referees and Assistant Referees for all matches in the competition from the Quarterfinals onwards.

15.2 In the earlier rounds of the competition the host Provincial Union shall appoint the Referee and Assistants Referee. Where no appointment of Assistant Referees is made, each competing team shall appoint a touch judge.

## 16. MATCH BALLS

16.1 The home team will supply match quality regulation balls for matches up to and including Round 4.

16.2 Only balls as supplied by NZR will be used from the Quarterfinals onwards.

## 17. DRUG TESTING

17.1 All members of participating teams (including coaches and management) will be subject to NZR's Anti-Doping Regulations. Participating players may be subject to drug testing by Drug Free Sport NZ. For the sake of clarity, this shall comprise in-competition and out of competition testing for club players.

17.2 Drug testing is specifically covered by NZR's Anti-Doping Regulations and New Zealand Sports Anti-Doping Rules. It is the responsibility of each club to ensure they are conversant with the appropriate regulations.

## 18. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

18.1 All sponsorship rights in the Competition and in Competition matches belong to NZR.

18.2 In all rounds up to and including the Semifinals, the home team shall meet all match expenses and retain the full gate receipts (subject to any arrangements with their Provincial Union, for instance where the match venue is not controlled by the home team's club).

18.3 In the Final, all gate receipts and other commercial revenue shall be

retained by NZR who shall be responsible for all reasonable expenses related to the Final, including travel costs of participating teams and venue hire (if applicable).

18.4 The referees and assistant referees appointed by NZR for the Quarterfinals, Semifinals and Final shall have travel and accommodation expenses reimbursed by NZR.

18.5 NZR will, subject to there being available funds in the Competition budget, pay a subsidy to teams required to travel more than 300 kms (return) to play in matches from Round 4 onwards. The travel distance will be calculated as the distance between the home venue of each club. All subsidy claims must be lodged with NZR no later than 10 business days following the match in which the expense was incurred.

## 19. MATCH RESULTS

19.1 The team management shall, in consultation with the referee, enter the confirmed result within 30 minutes of the final whistle into the NZR MyRugby App.

## 20. DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

20.1 Disciplinary matters relating to matches in the Competition are to be dealt with in accordance with the NZR Disciplinary Rules.

20.2 Disciplinary matters relating to Matches up to Round 4 are to be under the jurisdiction of the host Provincial Union.

20.3 Disciplinary matters relating to matches from Quarterfinals are to be under the jurisdiction of NZR.

## 21. DISPUTES AND INTERPRETATIONS

21.1 Subject to Rule 10 of the NZRU Constitution, any dispute as to:

21.1.1 The meaning or interpretation of these Regulations; or

21.1.2 As to any matter or questions relating to matches played as part of the Competition but not provided for in these Regulations will be determined by the NZR.