

## Application of Competition Rules

***In games played under the auspices of the Sydney Junior Rugby Union (SJRU), the match day competition rules are administered by the teams rather than by the referee.***

### Background

Sydney West RRA members are appointed to matches in a variety of competitions including Sydney JRU, GPS, CAS, ISA and NSW Suburban (Subbies), among others. While all matches are conducted according to the "Laws of the Game", each competition organiser has their own set of "Competition Rules", some of which impact upon the execution of games.

Unfortunately the rules that apply in the various competitions are inconsistent. This makes it difficult for referees who move between competitions and even between age groups in the same competition to remember each competition's specific rules and when to apply them.

Competition rules cover many of the administrative aspects of Rugby and typically include a number of on-field matters, such as:-

- **Minimum Player Numbers:** Minimum number of players below which a team forfeits the match.
- **Time to Form:** The time after scheduled kickoff by which a team must field the minimum number of players to contest the match otherwise they forfeit.
- **Substitutions:** Allowance for "rolling substitutions". Limits upon the number of substitutes. Limits upon when substitutions may take place during a game.
- **Uncontested Scrums:** Some competition rules require a team that calls for uncontested scrums to play with one less player than otherwise entitled to.
- **Mercy Rule:** Game may conclude when a specified score difference is reached. The leading Team may be required to drop a player when a specified score difference is reached.
- **Injury Time:** Most competitions do not allow time off for injury while some make provision for this or provision to a maximum limit or provision in exceptional circumstances (e.g. match delay due to a major injury requiring an ambulance).

There are sure to be other on-field matters that I've overlooked, which is the core issue here. Given their overriding requirement to apply the Laws of the Game, match referees often struggle to remember the multitude of competition rules that may or may not apply and within which competition or age group they have effect.

SJRU Administrators have acknowledged this issue and have agreed that for their matches, the teams involved in a match will now be responsible for administering the "SJRU Competition Rules" (**not** the match referee). The teams will determine when substitutes may enter the game and in what numbers. They will determine if or when a player must come off should uncontested scrums be called. They will determine if or when a mercy rule should be applied.

**NOTE:** In accordance with the Laws of the Game, the movement of players on or off the field must only take place at a stoppage in play when the ball is dead and then with the

prior agreement of the match referee. This law requirement stands separate to — and takes precedence over — the competition rules.

With SJRU team officials taking responsibility for the practical application of the SJRU Competition Rules on match days, referees will now simply apply the agreed decision of the teams. In the rare situation that the teams are unable to reach agreement, the referee will apply the competition rule interpretation put forward by the Home Team.

If necessary, teams may refer any competition rules dispute they have to the SJRU for resolution post-match. That's another of their competition rules.

### **Please do not impose your interpretation of the competition rules.**

As noted above, competition rules vary between competitions and between age groups within competitions. They often change year to year. It may well be that your understanding of a particular competition rule has been superseded or is no longer correct. That being so, referees are asked to **not** impose their understanding or interpretation of the competition rules.

If the teams seek your opinion as match referee, point out politely that it's their competition, their competition rules and their decision. There are eight team officials present at every SJRU match (2 x coaches, 2 x managers, 2 x assistant referees and 2 x ground marshals). Between them they have more than enough knowledge and experience to successfully resolve a matter associated with their competition rules!

The team officials will have the most up to date understanding of the competition rules as they apply to their age group. As match referee, you simply need to have them tell you what **they** have decided so that you can put **their** decision into effect.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE: The arrangements above apply to SJRU matches only.**

We have not encountered significant problems within the other competitions and, as such, have not sought similar agreements with their organisers.

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