

Rules of Inter-Club Competitions 2024



Spirit of the Game

If all teams and players act in accordance with the true spirit of the game then tennis is the winner. We all benefit as space for any sense of injustice over results is eliminated and we can all enjoy playing against a background where the emphasis is wholly on fair competition and camaraderie and a shared love of the game. At the end of every season there are divisional winners, promotions and relegations but it's important these are the outcomes of a tennis campaign played by everyone in the right spirit.

To put this in a practical context, if an issue is referred to the League Sub-committee which in their view is clearly covered by the existing rules they will make a decision based on the relevant rule. However, it will also be possible for team captains or club secretaries to raise an issue pertaining to any perceived breach of the spirit of the game to the League Sub-committee. Should they consider that a matter is out with the spirit then they will be able to impose such penalty as they deem appropriate. They will be able to ask for evidence where appropriate so for example if a question of eligibility is raised the club involved can be asked to provide written evidence of membership including payment of fees. Where there is a lack of evidence but the League Sub-committee feels sufficiently convinced that an action or behaviour is out with the spirit they will be able to impose an appropriate sanction varying from a warning to a penalty. In situations where there is no express rule or the meaning of any particular rule is in doubt considerations of whether a team/player has acted against the spirit of the game will always come first. As with the operation of the rules generally their decision is final.)

1. Qualification

- 1.1. The leagues and competitions shall be open to all Clubs affiliated to Tennis Ayrshire for the current season.
- 1.2. A club wishing to compete shall give notice in writing to the Hon. League Secretary on or before the entry date notified to clubs.
- 1.3. The qualification to play for a Club shall be full paying membership of such Club. No individual Member shall be allowed to play for more than one competing club in the Tennis Ayrshire leagues (senior, junior or masters) during the same season, but the composition of each representative team may be changed from time to time. This rule does not apply to the National Club League.

2. Representation

- 2.1. Any club failing to have a representative at more than **TWO** Tennis Ayrshire meetings in any calendar year, including the AGM, may have its men's and ladies' first teams demoted by one division in the subsequent year's league competitions. The relevant club will have a right of appeal to the Tennis Ayrshire committee in the event of exceptional circumstances applying. The 'exceptional circumstances' must be fully explained in a written submission to Tennis Ayrshire along with a commitment regarding future participation in Tennis Ayrshire meetings. Any such appeal must be submitted within 28 days of that year's AGM. The outcome of any appeal, including the application of any lesser sanction, will be entirely at the discretion of Tennis Ayrshire whose decision will be final.

3. Arbitration

- 3.1. All questions of eligibility, qualification of competitors or interpretation of Rules shall be referred to the Committee, whose decision shall be final.
- 3.2. Any Club whose team fails to appear on the courts at the time previously arranged, if the match has not been previously cancelled, shall be relegated immediately and have all fixtures voided *subject to appeal in exceptional circumstances*.
- 3.3. Any dispute arising in these Competitions must be referred within 4 days of the match to the Hon. League Secretary for arbitration by the League Sub-Committee. The decision of the League Sub-Committee shall be final and binding and may range from a warning with forfeiture to a ban, subject to the right of appeal to Tennis Ayrshire. Should a Club involved in any such dispute have a member on the League Sub-Committee, this member shall not be eligible to consider the dispute.
- 3.4. The Committee shall have power to alter or add to these rules, as they may from time to time deem expedient.
- 3.5. All Tennis Ayrshire clubs have unanimously acknowledged that the spirit of the game is far more important than any set of rules and have agreed that this principle should be embodied as a prime consideration in the rule's framework.
- 3.6. Any request to the league sub-committee must be presented from either the **Team Captain or Club Secretary** Requests from any other person/persons will be ignored.

4. Arrangement of Fixtures, Postponements and Cancellations

- 4.1. The Club whose home match it is shall provide three ITF approved balls per court and hospitality, but if the match is played on neutral ground such expenses shall be borne by the club whose home match it should be unless otherwise arranged.
- 4.2. The date for all matches must be fixed prior to the first round of any competition.
- 4.3. All matches must be played on the date fixed unless the weather renders play impossible. In exceptional cases, however, application may be made to Tennis Ayrshire to have the date altered. Such application must be by email and addressed to the Hon. League Secretary and must state the grounds for the desired change. The Hon. League Secretary, before coming to a decision, shall consult the League Sub-Committee.
- 4.4. In the case of inclement weather, the Match Secretary of the home team shall contact the Match Secretary of the visiting team at least one hour (consideration must be given to visitors travel time) before the match is due to start and arrange either to postpone or play the match. Failing such arrangement, the teams must appear on the courts. It is entirely the home team's decision whether to postpone or play.
- 4.5. In the case of matches postponed because of the weather, such matches shall be played as soon as possible thereafter. In the event of the Clubs concerned not mutually agreeing upon another date, the Match Secretary of the home Club must send notification of this fact to the Hon. League Secretary, when a date will be fixed by the League Sub-Committee.
- 4.6. Should the match not be completed due to bad light or inclement weather, the match shall be continued from the point at which it was stopped, on the same courts and by the same players as soon thereafter as possible. If it is impossible for all the same players to play on the continuation, up to two substitutes shall be allowed in the same position as the players for whom they are substituting so that the team plays in the same order as the original selection. This rule only operates in the absence of mutual agreement between the clubs, i.e. they may agree to replay the whole match in which case different teams may be selected.
- 4.7. Any Club intending to scratch shall give notice of their intention to do so to the Match Secretary of the opposing Club at least 3 hours before the match is due to start and to the Hon. League Secretary of Tennis Ayrshire before the time agreed upon for playing – the Club scratching to forfeit to their opponents all points, rubbers, sets and games in respect of that match.
- 4.8. Where a Club withdraws a team from a League, it shall be the duty of that Club to inform all other teams in the same Division of such withdrawal and to inform the Hon. League Secretary.

5. Recording Match Scores

- 5.1. In all league and cup competitions, the winning team (or home team in the result of a draw) captain must record player details for both teams and the individual set scores for all rubbers played **within 48 hours of the match being completed**. Each team captain will be issued with a login and password to provide online access.

- 5.2. Walkovers must **NOT** be entered online but the details e-mailed to the Hon. League Secretary. The opposing team captain must be copied into any correspondence or the claim will be disregarded. If a walkover is awarded by the Hon. League Secretary, then the Hon. League Secretary will record online and award the appropriate penalty points to the team forfeiting the match.
- 5.3. If an 'unknown player' is selected, a comment **MUST** be added to the online match scorecard to provide the player's name and Advantage [formerly British Tennis] membership number or World Tennis Number if known. If a player cannot be 'found', it is most likely that the player's advantage membership is not linked to his or her club. It is the responsibility of the player's club to sort this, as a matter of urgency, otherwise the player is not eligible to represent the club. **If this rule is not met, then the sets/rubbers would be awarded to the opposition.**
- 5.4. It is the responsibility of the losing team (or away team in the result of a draw) captain to check the inputted result and notify the Hon. League Secretary by e-mail if there is a related query. Score sheets for league matches should not be sent to the Hon. League Secretary.
- 5.5. A match will be forfeited if an 'incorrect player' is selected when submitting a match score online unless the Hon. League Secretary is notified of an error **within 24 hours.**
- 5.6. Team captains should be made aware that data cannot be edited after being submitted and confirmed.
- 5.7. Final dates for the online submission of match scores will be published online. Once final league standings have been published by the Hon. League Secretary, no amendments will be made to the standings unless an error has been made by the Hon. League Secretary.
- 5.8. Team Captains are advised to check leagues and report problems to the Hon. League Secretary, either by e-mail or by comment on the tournament software web site, throughout the period of competition. Once final leagues have been published, unreported results are deemed unplayed.

6. Rules of Play

- 6.1. All ties shall be played under the Tournament Rules of the LTA and Code of Conduct, so far as these are applicable and not inconsistent with these rules.
- 6.2. **TEAMS AND PAIRS WITHIN TEAMS SHALL BE PLAYED IN ORDER OF PLAYING STRENGTH** and captains shall provide written copies of their teams in order of pairing prior to going on court – the Match Result Card may be used for this purpose.
- 6.3. **If a player is 20 minutes late, the partnership shall concede the first set of their rubber, if 40 minutes late, the first two sets shall be conceded; if one hour late, the entire rubber shall be conceded.**
- 6.4. The Winning team captain shall send notice of the result via the "**LTA Tournament Software**" website together with the names of players in both team within **48 hours** of the match being played.
- 6.5. A player who has already represented one team in one round of the league fixtures may not represent another team in the same round of fixtures.

7. Men's And Ladies' Inter Club Leagues

- 7.1. The general league rules operate wherever applicable or where not superseded by the following:
- 7.2. **Entry Deadline for Team Entry 15/03/2024**
- 7.3. 1st Division matches will be scheduled on Wednesday for the ladies' and Thursday for the men's only. Wherever possible, any other league matches will be scheduled on Wednesday for the ladies' and Thursday for the men. If the home club has insufficient court facilities to host all scheduled matches, then an alternative evening may be arranged, but this must be fixed and agreed with the Hon. League Secretary by at least one week before the scheduled start of the first round of matches in the league.
- 7.4. Matches must start by 7pm unless clubs mutually agree otherwise. However, clubs with courts that do not have floodlights are permitted to start at **6:30pm in the month of April**
- 7.5. Teams shall consist of 6 ladies or 6 men and each pair shall play 3 sets against the opposing corresponding pair. The lowest division to consist of teams of 4 players.

- 7.6. No club must field a team of less than the full complement of players unless in exceptional circumstances or if it is the lowest ranked team at the club in question. Any *exceptional circumstances must be emailed to Hon. League Secretary for further investigation, the opposing team captain must also be copied into the email.*
- 7.7. A team gaining an entire match concession will be credited with: 3 rubber Match - 9 sets and 54 games; 2 rubber match - 6 sets and 36 games. If a team defaults an entire match more than once in a season, all matches played by that team will be declared void, with consequent demotion.
- 7.8. In the ladies' 1st and men's 1st division, clubs must provide a list of 6 nominated players, or 12 if the club has 2 teams in the division. For each match, each pairing shall be ranked according to its ranking total. Where the total is the same, the pairing with the highest-ranking player shall be nominated as the higher pair. A player playing up from a lower team will have a ranking of 7 if playing for a club's 1st team where the named squad are numbered 1 to 6, or 13 if playing for a club's 2nd team where the named squad are numbered 7 to 12.
Examples – i) a pair at positions 2 & 5 will play ahead of a pair at 3 & 6 and below a pair at 1 & 4; ii) a pair at positions 2 & 6 will play ahead of a pair at 3 & 5; iii) a player at position 1 partnering a player from the 2nd team (1+7) would play below a pair at positions 2 and 4 and above a pair at positions 3 and 5.
Note - It is anticipated that some players may join a 1st division team late in a season and hence not have been named in the ranking system at the start of a season. By default, such players are treated as per rules of players playing up from lower teams and allocated a ranking of 7 or 13. Should such a player be of a stronger standard than this ranking indicates, teams have the option of adding them to their named ranked players list (thus having 7 named players who cannot play for a lower team) after consultation with the League Secretary. All players deemed to be of a lower standard than this player will have their ranking incremented by 1 (e.g. if player X joins team and is deemed to be 3rd in the ranking system, the player currently ranked at 3 will move to 4, 4 will move to 5, 5 will move to 6 and 6 will move to 7). Players playing up from a lower team will have their ranking incremented by 1 also (i.e. to 8 or 14).
- 7.9. A club whose 1st team is not in the 1st division shall nominate 4 1st team players to the Hon. League Secretary before any matches are played. These players will be eligible only to play for the 1st team during that season. Clubs failing to nominate 4 players will automatically be regarded as fielding their nominated players in the first 2 couples of the first match.
- 7.10. After the nomination deadline (31/03) and up to the **end of week 5 (May 26th)**, one additional player may be added to any team's list of nominations so long as the number of players in that pool does not exceed 12. In the Men's and Women's 1st Division, a club must apply by email to add a player to the team nomination list at least 3 days before the player is due to play. The club must state in that email that the player is a bona fide member of the club and meets the membership criteria for the club, and that the player is eligible to represent the club in that competition. Before playing any match for the club, the club must ensure that the player is an LTA Advantage Member with membership linked to the club. The Hon. League secretary will decide the position of such a player in that team's ranking order. If no decision has been made by the League Manager prior to the match being played, the player is ineligible to play.
- 7.11. Once an order of pairs in a team has been established, this order cannot be reversed.
Example - If Players A and B play together at second pair above Players C and D who play together at third pair then C+D as a pair can never in a future match that season play above A+B as a pair. C or D could partner another player and play above A+B as a pair. Similarly, A or B could partner another player and play below C+D as a pair.
- 7.12. Any two players, playing up from a lower team and paired together, must be placed in order below any other pair containing a player nominated for the higher team.
- 7.13. A player who is playing up from a lower team, and partnering a nominated player of the higher team, can play at any position in the higher team, providing ranking order applying to the 1st division is maintained.
- 7.14. **A player having played 4 times for higher-ranking team/teams may not then represent a lower team.** Players are able to play for a higher ranked team at any time.

- 7.15. All team captains are responsible for submitting correct information about their team players.
- 7.16. The rubber shall be three tiebreak sets. If both captains agree, before the start of the match, when bad light/weather conditions might otherwise prevent the match being finished, the third set may be played as a match tiebreak, first to ten points (two clear points). This scores as 1 game and 1 set on the result scorecard.
- 7.17. In the case of matches postponed because of weather, such matches shall be played as soon as possible thereafter. The home team must, **within 48 hours**, inform the league secretary of the postponement and offer the opponents at least three alternative dates for the rearranged match. The dates must not all be on the same day of the week, nor all in the same week, and not include dates which the opponents already have a match arranged for the proposed date. The League Secretary must be notified of the new date by the Home team.
- 7.18. The scores for each League shall be computed as follows: 1 point per set won, 9 points in all available in a 9-set match. Should the points be equal, the set 'percentage' shall decide. Should the set 'percentage' be equal, the games 'percentage' shall decide. In the event of these being equal, the Clubs shall play off.
- 7.19. At the end of the Competition, the Club scoring the highest number of points shall be declared The Champion Club of its League. The Champions and 2nd place of division 2 Men's shall be promoted. The bottom two teams with the fewest points in division 1 Men shall be demoted. In all other divisions the Champions will be promoted and 2nd place will play off against 2nd bottom of the league above. The bottom team from every division will be relegated.
- 7.20. For leagues of 6 teams or less, playoff matches will be played between the second bottom team of each league and the second top team from the division below. This will allow a secondary route of promotion/relegation and may encourage all captains to complete all matches. Players selected for a playoff match **must have played at least twice for that team in the preceding league matches**. If a playoff match results in a draw, the participating teams will remain in their respective divisions. 4th Division playoff: the 5th division team is allowed to bring in 2 players who haven't played for any other team during the season to make the playoff 6v6. **Playoff Dates are as follows: Ladies 12th August, Men 13th August.**
- 7.21. In leagues with 7 teams and more, teams in each division or section will play each season against each other team in that particular division or section. There will be two stages in the competition. In Stage 1, teams will play once against each other team in their division with each team's final standing determining its position in either the Championship or Relegation Stage 2 playoff league. **To be eligible to play in stage 2 all players must have played in at least 2 matches for their club in stage 1. (This also counts for playing for another team in the players club before Round 8 of matches** All matches shall be played under the tournament rules of the LTA, so far as these are applicable to and not inconsistent with the rules of this league.
- 7.22. The safety of players is the responsibility of the home venue and current government guidelines must be adhered to for the duration of the competition. Any club which does not follow such guidelines will be asked to withdraw all its teams if no appropriate steps are taken to comply with these guidelines. Matches can be played indoors but only if guidelines permit at the time of the. A club may not participate if toilet facilities are not available for all players. The safety of players is the responsibility of the home venue.
- 7.23. **The competition is limited to Male & Female players over 12 Years Old. Players must reach the qualifying age by 31st December in the year of the competition.**

8. Mixed Doubles

- 8.1. The general league rules operate wherever applicable or where not superseded by the following:
- 8.2. **Entry Deadline for Mixed Doubles: 15/03/2024**
- 8.3. The competition shall be played throughout on the knock-out system.
- 8.4. The seeding for each team will be based on the results from the previous year's competition. Unseeded teams will be drawn at random. Where possible, different teams from the same club will be placed in opposing halves of the draw.

- 8.5. The team at the top of the draw will be the home team.
- 8.6. Matches shall start at 7pm unless clubs mutually agree otherwise.
- 8.7. Each team shall consist of three Mixed Couples who will play against the opposing corresponding pair.
- 8.8. Matches must be completed on the dates fixed by the committee. If bad weather causes postponement, matches must be played before the date of the next round.
- 8.9. Matches shall be best of 3 tiebreak sets. If both captains agree, before the start of the match, should a match be 1 set all, the third set may be played as a match tiebreak, first to ten points (two clear points).
- 8.10. A player whose team has been knocked out of the competition may play for a higher ranked team. At no time may a player who has played for a higher team play for a lower team.

9. Masters Leagues

- 9.1. The general league rules operate wherever applicable or where not superseded by the following:
- 9.2. Teams shall consist of 2 mixed pairs played in order of playing strength. A lady may substitute for a man, but not vice versa.
- 9.3. The competition is limited to men & ladies over 45. Players must reach the qualifying age by 31st December in the year of the competition.
- 9.4. Matches shall start at 2pm unless clubs mutually agreed otherwise.
- 9.5. Each pair will play 3 sets to 6 with a tiebreak at 6 all. If the score reaches deuce, a sudden death point shall be played, the man serving to the opposing man, the lady to the lady.
- 9.6. Match scoring shall be 1 point for each set won, a total of 6 points available for each match.