



KEY 2020/21 CHALLENGE CUP RULES

The following is a summary of the rules for the 2020/21 Challenge Cup tournament:

1. LAWS OF THE GAME

The tournament will be played in accordance with World Rugby's Laws of the Game of Rugby Union (as amended from time to time), as varied or supplemented by EPCR.

2. NEW FORMAT

Preliminary Stage

2.1 Fourteen clubs – six from the TOP 14, four from the Gallagher Premiership and four from the Guinness PRO14 – will compete in a preliminary stage of four rounds of matches.

2.2 During this stage, each club will play two matches at home and two away.

2.3 In order to create the fixtures, the clubs are divided into two tiers based on their qualifying positions in their respective league tables, or on other qualification criteria, as follows:

TIER 1 (7 clubs)

TOP 14 clubs ranked 9th, 10th and 11th

Premiership clubs ranked 9th and 10th

PRO14 clubs ranked 9th and 10th

TIER 2 (7 clubs)

TOP 14 clubs ranked 12th, 13th and 14th

Premiership clubs ranked 11th and 12th

PRO14 clubs ranked 11th and 12th

2.4 The higher-ranked clubs in Tier 1 will only play against clubs in Tier 2.

2.5 Clubs in the same tier will **not** play against one another and clubs from the same league will **not** play against one another.

2.6 One Premiership club and one PRO14 club will play against TOP 14 opposition only.

2.7 Four points for a win, two points for a draw. A bonus point will be awarded to a club scoring four or more tries and to a club losing by seven points or fewer.

2.8 The eight highest-ranked clubs from the preliminary stage will qualify for the Round of 16 and if two or more clubs are equal on match points, the ranking will be decided as follows:

(i) the best aggregate points difference, or

(ii) if equal, the number of tries scored, or

(iii) if equal, the club with the fewest number of players suspended for disciplinary incidents, or

(iv) if equal, by drawing lots.

2.9 Eight clubs from the Heineken Champions Cup pool stage (clubs ranked 5 to 8 from Pool A and 5 to 8 from Pool B) will also qualify for the Round of 16

Knockout Stage - Round of 16

2.10 The ranking of the clubs which qualify for the Round of 16 will be as follows:

(i) the top four Challenge Cup clubs will be ranked 1 to 4

(ii) the eight Heineken Champions Cup clubs will be ranked 5 to 12 based on the usual criteria of match points, aggregate points difference, tries scored etc

(iii) the four remaining Challenge Cup clubs will be ranked 13 to 16

2.11 The four highest-ranked Challenge Cup qualifiers and the four highest-ranked Heineken Champions Cup qualifiers will have home advantage in the Round of 16 as follows:

CC 1 (ranked 1) v **HCC 8** (ranked 12)
CC 2 (ranked 2) v **HCC 7** (ranked 11)
CC 3 (ranked 3) v **HCC 6** (ranked 10)
CC 4 (ranked 4) v **HCC 5** (ranked 9)

HCC 4 (ranked 8) v **CC 5** (ranked 13)
HCC 3 (ranked 7) v **CC 6** (ranked 14)
HCC 2 (ranked 6) v **CC 7** (ranked 15)
HCC 1 (ranked 5) v **CC 8** (ranked 16)

Quarter-finals

2.12 The quarter-final matches, with home venue advantage awarded to the highest-ranked clubs, will be as follows:

QF 1: winner CC 1 / HCC 8 v winner HCC 4 / CC 5
QF 2: winner CC 3 / HCC 6 v winner HCC 2 / CC 7
QF 3: winner CC 2 / HCC 7 v winner HCC 3 / CC 6
QF 4: winner CC4 / HCC 5 v winner HCC 1 / CC 8

Semi-finals

2.13 The semi-final matches, with home venue advantage awarded to the highest-ranked clubs, will be as follows:

Semi-final 1: winner QF1 v winner QF2
Semi-final 2: winner QF3 v winner QF4

Final

2.14 The 2021 final will be played in Marseille.

NB *In the event of a tie at full-time in the Round of 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals or final, extra time of 10 minutes each way will be played. If the scores remain tied, the winner will be determined as follows:*

- (a) the club that scored the most tries in the match (including extra time) or*
- (b) if equal, by a place kick competition.*

3. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

3.1 Each club must nominate a squad, however, there is no limit on the number of players nominated at first registration of the season. A minimum of 12 of the players nominated by the club must be capable of playing in front row forward positions. The First Registration deadline is midday (GMT) on **Thursday 19 November 2020** and all players must be fully and properly registered with their club and Union.

3.2 A club must nominate a squad of between 19 and 23 players for each match.

3.3 A minimum of six front row players must be included in each match day squad such that on the first occasion that a replacement is required in each position, a replacement can be made. Where uncontested scrums are ordered due to the departure of a front row player and there is no suitable replacement, the player whose departure caused the uncontested scrums may not be replaced (i.e. the club will be required to play with 14 players).

3.4 Each club may register up to five Additional Players during the preliminary stage but none during the knockout stage, each to replace a player previously registered. A minimum of three Additional Players must be front row players, one Additional Player can be from any position and one Additional Player must be a medical replacement. Players must have a three-month contract with the club and must not have played for another club in the same tournament. Additional Player registrations must be submitted by 12 noon (GMT) on the Wednesday before the match. De-registered players may be re-registered (in place of the relevant Additional Players) during the preliminary stage.

3.5 For Second Registration, clubs can add up to three players to supplement their squads and one of the players must be a front row player. The deadline for Second Registration is midday (GMT) on 25 March 2021.

3.6 Each club is permitted an unlimited number of 'non-European players' in each match day squad for the 2020/21 season.

4. CLUB COLOURS

4.1 For preliminary stage matches, round of 16 matches, quarter-finals and semi-finals, if a club fails to wear the strip designated by EPCR and there is a colour clash, that club must change strip. For the final, in the event of a colour clash, the club to change strip will be at EPCR's discretion.

5. ANTI-DOPING PROGRAMME

5.1 Players will be subject to doping control as set out in EPCR's Anti-Doping Programme, which is based on and subject to Regulation 21 (Anti-Doping) of World Rugby's regulations.

6. ABANDONMENT

6.1 Where a match is abandoned after 60 minutes or more, the result will stand.

6.2 Where a match is abandoned after fewer than 60 minutes, (a) if both clubs and the EPCR Board agree, the result will stand, or (b) the match will be replayed in full no earlier than 48 hours after kick-off of the abandoned match (unless both clubs and EPCR agree otherwise), with both clubs entitled to select new match day squads.

7. MEDIA REGULATION – Match Day Squad announcements

7.1 Each club must announce its match day squad by midday (GMT) on the Thursday before a Friday match and by midday (GMT) on the Friday before a weekend match. The match day squad announced must not differ from the squad that plays save in exceptional circumstances. Breaches of match day squad regulations may result in fines being imposed by the Board of EPCR.