

Decision of PRL Panel regarding the appropriate points allocation following the cancellation of the Gallagher Premiership Rugby Match between London Irish and Bath Rugby.

Date: Friday 7th January 2022

Panel:

- Martyn Phillips (PRL Chairman)
- Phil Winstanley (PRL Rugby Director)

Summary of Panel's Decision

1. As a result of the cancellation, due to Covid-19, of the Round 12 Gallagher Premiership match between London Irish and Bath Rugby, London Irish shall be awarded the win and 4 league points and Bath Rugby shall be deemed to have lost the match but awarded 2 league points. The match score shall be recorded as 0–0.

Background to the match cancellation

2. On Wednesday 29th December 2021, a decision was taken to cancel the Premiership Rugby Cup Match between Bath Rugby and Exeter Chiefs. This was due insufficient front row forwards at Bath Rugby caused by a combination of Covid-19 related player absences and existing injuries. This was an important home fixture for the Club, particularly from a commercial perspective. At this stage, Bath Rugby had sufficient players to fulfil its Round 12 Gallagher Premiership match against London Irish on 3rd January 2022.
3. On Saturday 1st January 2022, Bath Rugby contacted Premiership Rugby with an update in respect of player availability ahead of its Round 12 Gallagher Premiership match against London Irish which included further positive Covid-19 tests from results received on 30th December 2021, bringing the total of COVID absences to 18.
4. Bath Rugby confirmed that despite the Club having 18 Covid-19 cases amongst the player group they had sufficient players within the squad to fulfil the fixture, save for hooker.
5. Bath Rugby have 5 hookers contracted and Effectively Registered to the Club.
6. The injury/Covid-19 status of these 5 hookers was confirmed by the production of an "injury certificate" certified by the Club's doctor, Dr. Guy Evans, which were presented to the Panel.
7. The Panel is satisfied that up until the receipt of the test results on 30th December 2021, the club had sufficient hookers to fulfil the fixture. Once the Club got the additional positive Covid-19 test result the Director of Rugby, Stuart Hooper,

undertook an immediate search to bring in a replacement hooker into the squad to enable the club to have 2 fit hookers.

8. This search involved speaking with Clubs from the Welsh Regions, the Championship and a number of the major rugby player agencies (including CSM and Esportif).
9. The panel requested additional information to support the medical position and loan possibilities into the hooker situation, all of which Bath Rugby were able to supply. Details of the above search were also presented to the Panel for review. The Panel identified that it would not have been possible to get the replacement Effectively Registered, if one had been obtained. Although this was not identified by Bath Rugby.
10. Premiership Regulation 3.4(b) requires a Club to have at least two Players in each hooker, tight head prop and loose head prop who are suitably trained and experienced (totalling six front row players). The Regulation does not allow the match to be played in the event that a Club is unable to field those six players.
11. Due to the Club's inability to have to 2 hookers, the Round 12 Gallagher Premiership match between London Irish and Bath Rugby shall be cancelled.

Decision of the Panel

12. Premiership Regulation 3.4 (b) states that in the interests of safety each team playing in the Premiership must have at least six (6) fit and able Players in the squad who can play at hooker, tight head prop and loose head prop who are suitably trained and experienced to ensure that on the first occasion that a replacement in any front row position is required (whether due to injury or consequent to a Player(s) being temporarily suspended or ordered off) the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums. In the event that a Club is unable to field those six players, the Match shall be cancelled. *PRL shall determine whether this is the direct result of Covid-19* [emphasis added] and:
 - (i) if it is as a direct result of Covid-19, then Schedule 5 shall apply; or
 - (ii) if it not as a direct result of Covid-19, then Regulation 3.4(c) and Regulation 4.4(j) shall apply.
13. The Panel is satisfied that Bath Rugby's inability to fulfil its fixture obligations was as a direct result of Covid-19 and therefore the provisions in Schedule 5 shall apply.
14. Pursuant to the Covid-19 regulations set out in Schedule 5 of the Premiership Regulations a PRL Panel has been convened to determine the result and points allocation as follows: -

*"In the event that the PRL Panel decide that a Referred Match in the League Season is cancelled, or any governmental authority recommends or requires that a Match in the Premiership League Season is cancelled (in either case, a **"Cancelled League Season Match"**), then (without prejudice to any action*

which may be taken under or relating to any Covid Minimum Operating Standards):

- *the result of that Cancelled League Season Match shall be deemed to be 0-0; and*
- *four league points shall be allocated to Club who was able to play the Cancelled League Season Match and two league points shall be allocated to the other Club."*

15. In respect of the points result and the points allocation, the Panel has concluded that due to Bath Rugby's inability to fulfil the fixture due to Covid-19, London Irish shall be awarded the win and 4 league points and Bath Rugby shall be deemed to have lost the match but awarded 2 league points. The match score shall be recorded as 0–0.

Appeal

16. The decision of the PRL Panel as to whether it is one or both clubs who have been unable to fulfil the match, and the decision as to the allocation of points shall be subject to appeal under RFU Regulation 19.12.6 (and for the purposes of that Regulation, the PRL Panel shall be deemed to be a Constituent Body Disciplinary Panel).

Martyn Phillips

Phil Winstanley

7th January 2022