

## COUNTY & DISTRICT LEAGUES – RULE RECOMMENDATIONS

County and District Leagues are a popular form of adult and junior team competition across Great Britain and as a result, are an important part of the competition structure. There are over 400 leagues with an estimated 100,000 players competing each year. Events are run for juniors, adults, and seniors and cater for varying levels of playing standards. County & District Leagues generate income for County & Island Associations, with circa £500k generated from entry fees alone. 70% of leagues currently use League Planner, which is a tool within the LTA competition management system, to administer their leagues, which we anticipate will increase further following the introduction of LTA Approved League status.

County & District Leagues are governed and operated by Associations; this includes setting the league rules. To help league committees and league organisers, and to provide a greater level of consistency for players, with the support of the DTAG Competition workstream, we have recently completed an extensive review of over fifty County & District league rules from a cross section of age groups and counties. Based on the findings, please find below some information on the most common rules used, as well as guidance on what rules we would recommend for County & District Leagues to adopt. Where we do not distinguish between the most common rule and the LTA recommendation, this is because the most common rule used is also the same as what the LTA recommends. This is by no means an exhaustive list but covers the main areas within a standard set of league rules. In the future there will be consideration as to how to further standardise league rules to ensure a consistent and optimal experience for players.

AREA	MOST COMMON	LTA RECOMMENDATION
<b>Eligibility</b>		
<b>Age Categories</b>	<p>Most junior leagues align with the LTA Competition Age Groups.</p> <p>For adult leagues, there are several leagues that require a minimum age. Several leagues have the view that for junior players some doubles matches can make a valuable contribution to the development of their game, therefore each league must be clear on what their ruling is regarding juniors competing in adult teams.</p>	<p>Minimum and/or maximum ages should be included within the rules for each event.</p> <p>You can view the LTA Competition Age Groups <a href="#">here</a> which we strongly recommend all leagues align to.</p> <p>It is important that each adult league has a clear ruling regarding juniors competing. We would recommend setting a minimum age of 14 years old.</p>
<b>Player Eligibility</b>	<p>All players must be an <u>LTA Advantage Member</u> and be linked via their LTA profile to the venue they are competing for. Players can link themselves to their venue via their LTA profile, view this <a href="#">video</a> to see how this can be done. Players must only represent one venue within a league season. Players can play up a league level once, without loss of eligibility for the lower league team. Once they represent a higher team on more than one occasion, from that point onwards, they are then ineligible for the lower-level team.</p>	
<b>Venue Requirements</b>	<p>Leagues only allow LTA Registered Venues to enter their league.</p>	<p>All leagues must only allow LTA Registered Venues to take part and should also become an <u>LTA Approved League</u> by completing the <u>LTA League Application Form</u>.</p>

<b>League Structure</b>		
<b>Dates</b>	Dates to be set by the league organiser in advance, via a fixtures meeting or agreed between the two team captains.	Start and end dates for the league season, including the entry closing date, must be clearly defined. Play on or play by dates for each league fixture are strongly recommended.
<b>Draw Format</b>	Round robin format, division sizes ranging from 6-9 teams, with teams playing each other once during the season either on a home or away basis. Elimination and cup style draws are also used for some leagues.	Round Robin draw format with an equal amount of home and away fixtures scheduled for each team. The optimal number of teams per division would be between 5-8 teams.
<b>Entry fees</b>	Range was between £5 - £25 per team.	The entry fee would be dependent on the league duration and team sizes. We would recommend £12-£16 for 2 player team leagues and £20-£25 for 4 player teams.
<b>League Contacts</b>	All leagues clearly displayed the names and contact details of league organisers and any other key personnel.	Names and contact details of league organisers, divisional secretaries, club match secretaries and team captains must be easily accessible and kept updated.
<b>League Format</b>	League format with promotion & relegation in place between the leagues, based on a two up and two down basis. Some leagues also run a finals weekend, depending on the league format.	
<b>League Standings</b>	Highest number of match points, followed by the highest number of rubber points. This aligns with the LTA Round Robin Rules.	
<b>Season Duration</b>	In most cases leagues run from April-July in the summer and/or September-December in the winter	Summer - April-July Winter – September - March leagues are preferred to encourage year-round play
<b>Match Arrangements</b>		
<b>Court Requirements</b>	In most cases two – four courts are used per fixture.	All courts used for a fixture should be of the same surface. Where this is not possible, and more than one court surface is used, the away team shall have the choice of court allocation.
<b>Hospitality</b>	Post match refreshments and hospitality is encouraged for all leagues. Any agreements regarding what will be provided should be discussed between the team captains at the time of arranging the fixture and communicated accordingly.	
<b>Match Format</b>	There is a large range of singles, doubles, single gender, and mixed gender formats. The most common format is 4 x doubles rubbers (2 pairs per fixture).	Match format may vary depending on the league set up, but whatever match format is chosen gender equality should be ensured throughout, meaning there should be equal opportunities for women and girls. We would also recommend a format that supports maximising the number of players who can represent their venue team.
<b>Match Scoring Format</b>	2 tiebreak sets and a match tiebreak 3rd set (to 10 points)	You can view alternative approved scoring formats <a href="#">here</a> . We would recommend the use of fast4 as an abbreviated scoring option particularly for junior leagues, or 2

		tie break sets and a match tie break 3 <sup>rd</sup> set (to 10 points). Scoring formats should be adhered to consistently throughout the league and communicated clearly.
<b>Match Start Times</b>	During weekends for junior leagues or midweek for adult leagues with a 6.30pm start.	Consideration to be given to travel times, sunset times, and any venue floodlight restrictions plus junior leagues allowing for a sensible match completion time.
<b>Match Winner</b>	Based on the number of rubbers won. If rubbers are level either a tiebreak shootout to be played, or the team with the highest number of sets and then games won is the winning team for a fixture.	A team to be awarded 2 points for each rubber won, the team with the highest number of rubbers is the match winner. If drawn, we would suggest a tie-break shootout (to 10 points) to be played to determine the winner.
<b>Result Submission</b>	Results should be submitted between 48 hours - 7 days post the match via the LTA competition management system by the winning team captain. Leagues should use the <u>League Planner</u> software to administer their league (LTA Approved Leagues only), which is a 'free' benefit for Leagues.	
<b>Team Composition</b>	Four players per team is the most common. For any mixed teams there must be an equal number of male and female players as part of the team i.e. 2 men and 2 women per team. We believe team competition is a great way to retain players within the game and we strongly recommend venues encourage as many players as possible to represent their venue in team competition by entering more teams into local leagues.	
<b>Team Nomination Order</b>	Club discretion is currently the most common way to determine playing order for doubles only leagues.	<u>ITF World Tennis Number</u> to be used for playing order for singles and doubles team order.
<b>Travelling to Fixtures</b>	Please read the <u>LTA Safeguarding Guidance</u> for league matches. All teams must ensure a responsible team captain over the age of 18 is present at all fixtures.	
<b>Issue Resolution</b>		
<b>Complaints &amp; Disputes</b>	All league rules should include contact details of where any complaints or disputes should be sent to (within 48 hours of any dispute). All leagues should include a rule that states that the league decision is final on all matters. All players are subject to the <u>LTA Code of Conduct</u> .	
<b>Completion of Matches</b>	If play is suspended after a match has started, then the match shall resume at the point of suspension. If a match cannot be started due to rain or rain stops play before any rubbers have been completed, then the match may be rearranged, as agreed with the league organiser. In the case of no rubbers being completed, new player nominations may be submitted, and the match can be restarted. Where one or more rubbers have been completed, then the winner of the match shall be the team winning the greatest number of completed rubbers	
<b>Incomplete Teams</b>	If a venue is unable to field a complete team for the whole fixture, then they shall first forfeit the lowest rubber, followed by the next lowest rubber and so on.	
<b>Late Arrival</b>	Loss of set(s) is commonly used for any players that are more than 15-30 minutes late to a fixture.	If any nominated player is not ready to play within 15-30 minutes of a rubber due on court, then the opposing team shall be awarded a walkover for this rubber. If the entire away team is going to be late for extenuating circumstances (e.g., motorway closure etc) and has contacted the home

		team in good time, a reasonable degree of flexibility on start time should be shown by the home team.
<b>Playing out of order / Ineligible Players</b>	If players play out of order, then the rubbers involving those players shall be forfeited. Any completed matches may stand for the purposes of ITF World Tennis Number and the match score must remain in place, however, the overall team score for that match will be awarded to the opposing team.	
<b>Player Retirement</b>	If a player retires during a rubber, the opponent shall be deemed to have won all the remaining games and sets necessary to win the rubber.	
<b>Team Walkovers</b>	In most leagues, if a team gives a walkover they are withdrawn from the league and automatically relegated. Other leagues have a rule that penalises teams for their first walkover (e.g., deduction of the points for that fixture from their total and the points going to the opposition who were ready to play), if the same team withdraws on the second occasion they are then withdrawn from the league and automatically relegated.	A team giving a walkover shall take no further part in the competition. All results against this team should be declared null and void for the purposes of determining the final placing in its group. If agreed with the league organiser, the withdrawn team may compete in their remaining fixtures, however, as above their team points will be null and void.