

MID-ULSTER FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

CHALLENGE CUP COMPETITION

RULES 2026

Name

1 The Cup shall be called “Mid-Ulster Football Association Challenge Cup.”

Annual Competition

2 The Competition shall be annual and open to all Senior Clubs affiliated to the Association and such guest clubs as the Mid Ulster FA Council may invite.

Entries Etc.

3 Entries must be made ~~on the Mid Ulster FA Portal~~ via **Comet FMS** not later than the **20th July** of each year, and must be accompanied by an entry fee decided annually by the Council.

The following must be clearly stated

- (i) Whether ground is shared and, if so, with whom and who has primacy
- (ii) Whether the ground is public or private
- (iii) Situation of ground
- (iv) Colours of Club shirts, shorts and socks
- (v) Name, Address and email address of Secretary

Qualification of Players

4

- a) Players will be eligible to play in the Mid Ulster Cup provided that on the date of the tie they are eligible to play for their own club in its League Competition.
- b) To be eligible to participate in the Mid Ulster Cup all players must be registered by their clubs, in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations.
- c) For the avoidance of any doubt to be eligible to play in this competition a player must also be eligible to participate for his club in the relevant league competition and must have been registered during one of the two professional game registration periods.
- d) Clubs who play in a purely amateur league competition and who are permitted to register players to participate in such purely amateur competition outside the above registration periods shall not be permitted to play any player so registered in this competition until the commencement of the subsequent registration period.
- e) No player who is registered by his club after the 2nd professional game registration period shall be eligible to participate in that same season.

Limitations of Qualifications

5 No individual shall be allowed to play for more than one competing team in the same season.

6 Notwithstanding anything in any Rule, if the Mid Ulster FA Council in the case of the Challenge Cup, have any doubt at any time, and whether arising out of a protest or otherwise, as to the qualification of any player taking part in the competition, they shall have power to call upon such player and / or Club to which he belongs, or for which he played, to prove that he is qualified according to the rules, and failing satisfactory proof, they shall disqualify such player and shall remove the Club from the Competition, and impose such other penalty as they may think fit.

Competition Format

7 In order to determine the additional clubs to join the Senior Clubs in the Competition, the Council may play a qualifying round or rounds of ties. In the event of the Council deciding to play a qualifying round or rounds of ties, it shall then determine which clubs shall be invited to participate. Ties shall be played on the ground of the first drawn club (subject to the conditions detailed in rule 10). ***

8 The Council shall determine the competition format.

Byes may be given

The Council may draw subsequent round or rounds before the winners of the previous rounds have been declared, and the winners according to such draw shall compete against each as in the previous round. The Council shall have power to exempt any number of Clubs from any number of rounds, and byes may be given so that the required number of additional clubs is obtained to play in the round where the Senior Clubs enter the Competition.

Draw after Bye

9 In the event of a club getting a bye in any of the drawings, the Council at the subsequent drawing, shall first draw a Club to play against it from the lot, the two shall again be put in the ballot-box and again drawn, and the club first out of the box shall have choice of ground (subject to the conditions detailed in rule 10) but the Council may so arrange that four clubs compete in the semi-finals.

Method of Drawing

10a) In principle the club that is first drawn in the ballot shall play at their registered home venue in all rounds prior to the semi-finals. ***

b) The first drawn club may forfeit home advantage with the agreement of their opponents and in such circumstances written confirmation of same must be notified to the **competition** Secretary by both clubs not later than 5 days following *** the relevant draw.

c) Each club entering the competition should play their home games on their registered home ground (unless otherwise directed in exceptional circumstances by the Council, Health and Safety authorities or the PSNI). Any match expenses incurred in staging a game at a neutral venue, in any round prior to the semi-finals and final, will be the responsibility of the club that was first drawn in the ballot.

d) Should a club having a registered home ground which, for whatever reason is unavailable (excluding inclement weather conditions) be drawn at home, rescheduling of such fixture will be dealt with by Council.

e) Immediately after each drawing, the Secretary shall intimate to each of the Clubs drawn, the name of the Club it is drawn against, and the time within which the tie is to be played.

Semi-finals and Final

11 In the semi-finals the grounds shall be chosen by the Council, and shall be neutral unless otherwise determined by the Council who may *** permit the match or matches to be played at the registered home venue of either of the participating teams. The final tie shall be played at a neutral venue unless otherwise determined by the Council.

Clubs failing to play

12 Any club refusing or failing to play the club against which it has been drawn on the date fixed by the Council and without sufficient reasons for doing so, shall be adjudged to have lost the match, and otherwise dealt with as the Council may determine.

When postponed games must be played

In the event of a tie being postponed the clubs must meet on a date, time, and venue to be determined by the Council. In the case of such a postponed tie should only one of the clubs concerned have floodlights available at its registered home venue the rearranged tie shall be played at the venue with floodlights. In case of protested ties the Council shall decide the dates, times, and venues. Should either club refuse to compete, the club shall be removed from the competition and otherwise dealt with as the Council may determine.

Players must wear Registered Colours

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a) The players in each competing team must wear the registered colours of the Club for which they are playing except when opposing teams have similar colours, in which case the Club on whose ground the match is played shall change.

- b) In all other cases the Council shall decide which team shall change. The colours of the Club shall be taken to be the colours of the shirt, shorts and socks as registered with the Association. A goalkeeper must wear shirt, shorts and socks of different colour, provided that said shirt, shorts and socks is of a colour distinctive from that of his opponents. In a tie played on a neutral ground, where opposing teams have similar colours, both teams shall change unless they are agreed that only one do so.
- c) Referees shall have power to instruct a player to change shirt, shorts and socks if he considers the colour not quite distinctive from that of his opponents, and the Referee shall have power to deal with any player refusing to comply with his instruction.

Completion of Team Line Up

14

- a) Each club shall complete their official team line up by including the names of players and Team officials and their functions taking part in each match (including the name of the nominated substitutes) and confirm the line up via Comet FMS **75** minutes prior to kick-off.
- b) Players' names must correspond with the numbers assigned on the official team line up. The Club Comet user shall be considered to verify the accuracy of the information provided on the team line up via Comet FMS.
- c) Any club failing to provide such documentation by the stipulated deadlines will be fined in the sum of £25 for each offence.
- d) The match Referee will not permit the match to commence until both teams have confirmed their line ups and will report any such offence to the Competition Secretary.
- e) Once confirmed, line ups cannot be amended/alterd unless permission is granted by the Match Referee. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action being taken against Club(s) concerned. Any change made to the players indicated on the match sheet as forming the starting 11 after the team line ups have been confirmed without providing evidence of an unexpected physical incapacity is considered as a substitution, and the number of substitutions available to the team during the match is reduced accordingly. The replaced player may take no further part in the match
- f) Teams who cause a kick-off to be delayed by late confirmation of line-ups will be fined an additional £20.
- g) In the event that a Club official is deemed guilty of falsifying a team line up on the Comet **Games Football** Management system, the Council shall have powers to deal with such a matter as they deem appropriate.
- h) Should the **Games Football** Management system be unavailable on match days, The Referee will require teams to complete Match cards, subject to confirmation from the Competition Secretary.

15) – Replacement of Players on the Team Line Up due to Unexpected Physical Capacity

After the team line ups have been completed and submitted, and if the match has not yet kicked off, the following shall apply:

- a) If any of the first eleven players named on the team line up are not able to start the match due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced only by any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the confirmed team line up. The substitute(s) in question can then be replaced by a player(s) not named on the initial team line up, so that the quota of

substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team line up and not be available for selection for this fixture.

- b) If any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the team line up are not able to be fielded due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced by any player not named on the confirmed team line up, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team line up and not be available for selection for this fixture.
- c) Any amendments to the team sheet in accordance with points a) and b) above must be communicated to the opposing team manager by one of the Match Officials as soon as possible prior to the commencement of the match.

Substitutes

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- a) A club may at its discretion, use five substitute players at any time in any tie, except to replace a player who has been expelled from the game by the referee. The substitutions can only be made when play has stopped for any reason and the referee has given permission.
- b) Clubs may nominate a maximum of seven substitute players, from which five substitutions shall be permitted.
- c) Exceptionally, a sixth substitute may take part exclusively during extra time in any match.
- d) Substitutions may only be made on at most three occasions during the game (excluding half time).
- e) Substitutions made during half-time, between the end of normal playing time and extra time, and at half-time during extra time do not reduce the number of stoppages in play that can be used.
- f) A player who has been substituted may take no further part in the match.

Duration of Match / Extra Time

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- a) The duration of each match shall be 90 minutes. The match must be started at the time appointed by the Committee, but no protest will be upheld of late starting, unless the Committee is satisfied that the result of the match was affected by such delay.
- b) The referee shall have power to allow additional time for stoppages, their decision thereon to be final.
- c) If a match has been stopped by the referee, before the completion of the time specified, for any reason stated in Law 5 of the Laws of the Game, the Committee shall have power to deal with the matter as they may determine.
- d) **Kicks from the Penalty Mark**
In the event of any match resulting in a draw, the match shall be decided by the taking of kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the conditions approved by the International FA Board.

Referee and Assistant Referees

18 The Council shall appoint the Referee and Assistant Referees. The Council may also appoint a 4th Official if deemed necessary. Referees fees shall be fixed annually by the Council.

If no referee is appointed, or arrives to officiate at a match the practice of the two teams tossing for the referee should not occur and the match should not take place.

Protests

19 (a) Protests must be received by the Secretary of the Association per special delivery bearing post mark within two days after the cause of protest accompanied by a deposit of £100.

Copies must be sent to the Club protested against

19 (b) A copy of the protest must also be sent by special delivery to the Club protested against. The certificate of posting of such special delivery must bear date stamp within two days after the cause of the protest and shall be sole proof of date of posting.

Objection to Ground

20 Any objection to ground, goal-posts or ball must be lodged in writing by the Captain for the day with the Referee before the game has started, and the Referee shall have power to have such objections made right before the game starts.

Referee to inspect Ground

21 In case of unfavourable weather conditions the Referee, to be appointed by the Association, shall inspect the ground not less than three hours previous to the scheduled time of kick-off or earlier if requested by the home club, and shall immediately give his decision as to the fitness of ground for play.

No game shall be postponed without an inspection by a referee appointed by the Association, who shall take due cognizance of local advice and the travelling supporters.

In the event of a Referee not arriving at the ground by the time of kick off the match shall be postponed and rearranged in accordance with rule 12.

Agreement for Cup

22 When the winning Club shall have been declared, the Secretary of the Association shall hand the Cup to its representatives on receiving a document to the following effect, and subscribed by three persons whose names shall be previously submitted to, and approved of by the Council of the Association: – We, A.B., Chairman of the X.Y.Z. Club, and C.D. and E.F., members of and representing the said Club, which has now been declared to have won the Mid-Ulster Football Association Challenge Cup, and the said Cup having been delivered to us by J.K., Secretary of said Association, do hereby, on behalf of said Club, and individually and collectively engage to return the same to the said J.K., Secretary of the Association for the time being one month before the final in like good order and condition No party, other than the Secretary of the Association, is authorised to have engraving or similar works undertaken on the trophy.

Division of Receipts

23 (a) In all Competition matches, with the exception of the Semi-final and Final Ties, the receipts (including Stands), after payment of the costs pertaining to match officials, shall be equally divided between the two competing clubs.

Division of Receipts: Semi-Finals and Final

(b) In each Semi-Final and the Final the Competing clubs and the Council shall equally share gate receipts after deduction of match expenses.

Medals or Badges

24 The Association will present medals or other mementoes to the winners and runners - up in the competition each season.

Powers of Council / Alterations to Rules

- a) The Council shall have power to deal with any other matter not provided for in these rules.
- (b) In all cases under these Rules Sunday shall not be taken into account in computing the time required in any matter arising out of these Rules.
- (c) These rules shall not be altered, annulled, or added to, until after the Final Tie has been played.