



**CELTIC  
CHALLENGE**



IRFU



SCOTTISH  
RUGBY



WRU



**CELTIC CHALLENGE**

**REGULATIONS**

**SEASON 2025 — 2026**

**RELEASE 2**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CELTIC CHALLENGE

The Competition will be called 'Celtic Challenge' or such other name as is approved by CCMG, which may include the name of the sponsor and will be played between the Teams authorised by CCMG. The Competition will be the highest domestic Women's Club Competition within the participating Unions.

All matches in the Competition will be played under the Laws of the Game published by World Rugby and World Rugby Regulations (including any variations and trials that may be adopted by the Unions) and comply with these Laws and Regulations.

### 1.1. Definitions

In this handbook and all following and arising rules, regulations, and Minimum Operating Standards:

<b>"Assistant Referee"</b>	means a person appointed to act as an Assistant Referee in a Match.
<b>"Anti-Doping Regulations"</b>	means regulations or policies published from time to time by World Rugby.
<b>"Appeals Panel"</b>	means such independent body person or persons as will be appointed by the members of the CCMG to review or adjudge upon any matter referred to it under these regulations or in connection with the Competition.
<b>"Broadcasting"</b>	means the televising transmission and/or recording and/or storage of coverage of or reproduction of any Match in any medium and in any use or exploitation of the same by any means in any electronic media and whether live or deferred.
<b>"CCMG"</b>	Celtic Challenge Management Group; means the committee appointed by the WRU, SRU, IRFU, and World Rugby to lead and manage this competition, comprising not less than five persons; one person nominated by IRFU, one person nominated by SRU, one person nominated by WRU, one person nominated by World Rugby and the Competition's General Manager.
<b>"Contracted Player"</b>	means any Player in receipt of and currently under a contract with either the SRU, IRFU, or WRU.
<b>"Team"</b>	means a domestic Club team which is participating in the Competition.
<b>"Citing Gatekeeper"</b>	means a person appointed by one of the participating Unions to act as an adjudicator in relation to a Match Citing.
<b>"Club"</b>	means a domestic Club whose Team is participating in the Competition.
<b>"Competition"</b>	means the Celtic Challenge to which these Regulations apply.
<b>"Competition Manager"</b>	means such person as the CCMG appoint to be responsible for the management, organisation, and operation of the Competition in accordance with these Regulations and Minimum Operating Standards.

<b>“Competition Points”</b>	has the meaning given in Regulation <a href="#">2.2</a> .
<b>“Disciplinary Panel”</b>	means any disciplinary panel or judicial officer appointed by the WRU, SRU, and IRFU.
<b>“Disciplinary Regulations”</b>	means those disciplinary rules, regulations and procedures adopted by the WRU, SRU, and IRFU accordingly.
<b>“Draw”</b>	means the Competition fixtures referred to in these regulations and produced by the CCMG.
<b>“Fixture List”</b>	means the list of Competition fixtures referred to in Regulation 2.3 as prepared by CCMG for the purpose of the Competition;
<b>“Foreign Player”</b>	means a player who cannot be selected to represent the WRU, SRU, or IRFU Senior National Team.
<b>“Foreign Player Allowance”</b>	means the percentage of Foreign Players who can be selected to represent a Team participating in the Competition as set out in Appendix 4.
<b>“Home Team”</b>	in relation to a Match, means the Team on whose ground such Match is played or is to be played or (where such Match is not played) should have been played.
<b>“IRFU”</b>	means Irish Rugby Football Union.
<b>“Laws of the Game”</b>	means the laws as set out from time to time by World Rugby according to which the game of rugby football union is played throughout the world (including such law variations and trials that may be adopted by the CCMG).
<b>“Match”</b>	means a match played in the Competition to which these Regulations will apply.
<b>“Match Day”</b>	means the Saturdays and/or Sundays set by the CCMG on which the Match is to be played.
<b>“Match Manager”</b>	means such person as appointed by CCMG to be responsible for the management and regulatory compliance of the Match in question in accordance with these Regulations and Minimum Operating Standards.
<b>“Match Official”</b>	means any person appointed by the relevant authority to officiate upon a match including a referee, assistant referee, timekeeper, and where appointed, a television match official, a fourth official and any others appointed to assist with the management of a Match.
<b>“Medical Facilities”</b>	as contained in the Competition Minimum Operating Standards and reviewed annually by the CCMG.
<b>“Minimum Operating Standards”</b>	means the standards agreed by the CCMG, which set out the essential

and desirable requirements for the Teams participation in the Competition.

**“Regulations”**

means these Regulations and any future variation as provided thereof.

**“Reserve Referee”**

means the person appointed to act as the reserve referee in a Match.

**“SRU”**

means Scottish Rugby Union.

**“Squad Declaration”**

has the meaning given in Regulation 2.4.1.1.

**“Transitional Player”**

means a player who sits outside of a Teams playing squad, but has been identified as a future talent which could benefit from participating in training and matches from time to time. This player will not be eligible for any form of remuneration apart from reasonable expenses.

**“Unions”**

will mean the IRFU, SRU, and WRU and “Union” will mean any one of those Unions.

**“Visiting Team”**

in relation to a Match, means the Team which plays or is to play or (where such Match is not played) should have played such Match at the ground of a Home Team, but is not the Home Team for such Match.

**“World Rugby”**

means the world governing body for the time being of the game of rugby football union played in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

**“Welsh Rugby Union”**

means Welsh Rugby Union.

## 1.2. Celtic Challenge Management Group

The Competition will be organised by the CCMG:

- 1.2.1. The CCMG will be the principal decision-making body with respect to all matters associated with the Competition and have the power to delegate any or all of its powers, duties, or obligations under these Regulations to identified subgroups or parties.
- 1.2.2. The CCMG will pass any decision by way of simple majority, with a quorum of the Competition's General Manager, 1 World Rugby representative and 1 Union representative from each of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Each member is to hold 1 vote.
- 1.2.3. The decision of the CCMG will be binding and final on any matter not provided for in and on the interpretation of these Regulations.
- 1.2.4. The CCMG commit to annually reviewing what constitutes appropriate strategic and operational governance as the Competition evolves, and as such, the structure and makeup of the CCMG may change and be amended.

## 1.3. Variations to these Regulations and Minimum Operating Standards

- 1.3.1. These Regulations and associated Minimum Operating Standards may be varied from time to time (whether by way of alteration, addition, deletion or otherwise) with the approval of the CCMG. No changes may be proposed by a Union or World Rugby unless it will have first consulted with the CCMG.
- 1.3.2. CCMG will give not less than thirty days' notice to each Team of any changes to these Regulations or Minimum Operating Standards before they are effective unless exceptional circumstances apply and in which case as much notice as is reasonably practicable will be given.
- 1.3.3. The CCMG will have the discretion to decide on matters not provided for in these Regulations or associated Minimum Operating Standards and the CCMG's decision(s) in respect of those matters will be final and binding save for any right of appeal to review as may be specifically reserved under these Regulations.

## 2. COMPETITION REGULATIONS

### 2.1. The Competition Format and Structure

The Competition will include 6 Teams, two from each member Union.

The Competition will be played in two Stages; during Stage One, each Team shall play each other Team on a home and away basis (the "**League**"). At the conclusion of Stage One, the top four Teams will enter the Knock Out Stage (the "**Play offs**").

The Knock Out Stage shall be:

- (a) the Competition semi-finals comprising of the top four Clubs from Stage One, who shall play each other as follows:
  - a. Semi-final 1 – The Teams in first and fourth place at the end of Stage One shall play each other once at the home venue of the first placed Team.
  - b. Semi-final 2 – The Teams in second and third place at the end of Stage One shall play each other once at the home venue of the second-placed Team.

on the dates and at the times selected or agreed by CCMG.



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The Competition final (which shall comprise the two winning Teams from the Competition Semi-Finals) will be played over one Match at a venue and on a date and time in the Season selected by CCMG.

At the end of the Play Offs, the team which finishes in First place will be named the Competition Winner for that season, unless notified otherwise by CCMG.

## 2.2. Competition Points

**2.2.1.** The following points will be awarded based on the results of each Match in the regular season (such points to be referred to elsewhere in these Regulations as "Competition Points" to distinguish them from points scored on the field of play (points)):

- (a) The Team that wins the Match will be awarded four Competition Points or (if it scores four tries or more in the process) five Competition Points.
- (b) The Team that loses the Match will be awarded no Competition Points or (if it scores four tries or more in the process or loses by a margin of seven points or less) one Competition Point or (if it scores four tries or more in the process and loses by a margin of seven points or less) two Competition Points.
- (c) Teams that draw a Match will each be awarded two Competition Points and any of them that scores four tries or more in the process will also be awarded a further one Competition Point.

**2.2.2.** At the end of the League, the Teams will be ranked in accordance with the following criteria and in the following order:

- (a) Competition Points; or
- (b) where the Competition Points are equal between two or more Teams, the Team(s) that has achieved the greater number of wins; or
- (c) where these are equal, the aggregate points difference from all Matches for each of the Teams that have an equal number of Competition wins and Competition Points;
- (d) or where these are equal, the Team that has scored the greatest number of points; or
- (e) where these are equal, the Team that has the better result(s) from the Match(es) between the Teams; or
- (f) where these are equal, the greater number of tries scored in the Match(es) between the Teams will determine the rankings; or
- (g) where the tries scored are equal, the aggregate points difference in the Matches between the Teams will determine the rankings; or
- (h) where the aggregate points difference is equal the fewest number of players shown a red card will determine the rankings; or
- (i) where the number of red cards are equal, the fewest number of players shown a yellow card will determine the rankings; or



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- (j) where the number of yellow cards are equal, the fewest number of Citing Commissioner warnings will determine the rankings; or
- (k) where the number of Citing Commissioner warnings are equal, by the toss of a coin.

## 2.3. Dates of Rounds, Fixtures and Kick Off Time

### 2.3.1. Arrangement of Fixtures

- 2.3.1.1. All Matches will be played on a Saturday or Sunday, on the Weekend of the dates scheduled in the Fixture List, unless otherwise agreed by CCMG.
- 2.3.1.2. Matches will kick off between 12:00hrs and 17:00hrs and must be agreed by the Competition Manager, unless otherwise agreed by CCMG.
- 2.3.1.3. Notwithstanding Regulation 2.3.1.1, 2.3.1.2 or any other provisions of these Regulations the CCMG has the absolute right to select or alter the proposed kick-off time, date and venue of any Match having given not less than seven days' notice to both teams, save where, in the CCMG's opinion, there is a case of an emergency when an alteration may take place at any time up to the date of the kick-off of the Match.

### 2.3.2. Duration of Matches

- 2.3.2.1. All Matches will be played in accordance with the Laws of the Game and will be of 80 minutes duration, divided into two halves of 40 minutes each with a 15-minute half-time period.

### 2.3.3. Fulfilling Matches

Each Match must be played on the date and at the time and venue allocated in accordance with Clause 2.3, unless:

- 2.3.3.1. the Match is postponed in accordance with 2.3.4 of these Regulations, in which case the Match will be played the next day, unless ruled by the Competition Manager to not be reasonably practicable, in which case the CCMG will select a rearranged date (and, where necessary, an alternative venue) for the postponed Match to be played. The Teams involved will comply with the directions of CCMG as to the arrangements for playing the rearranged Match, including staying in the locality if requested to do so by the CCMG in order to facilitate the playing of the rearranged Match; or
- 2.3.3.2. the Competition Manager or CCMG exercises its power pursuant to clause 2.3.4, below, to change the venue of the Match as a result of adverse venue or weather conditions at the original venue.

### 2.3.4. Abandoned Matches

- 2.3.4.1. Each Team will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that any Match for which it is the Home Team does not have to be postponed or abandoned due to the condition of the pitch or other facilities not being suitable to commence a Match whether due to adverse weather conditions or otherwise. The Competition Manager or CCMG may require a Team to take specified steps if it is not satisfied that its pitch is being maintained to an adequate standard. In the event that despite using every endeavour to ensure that its facilities are





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suitable for the staging of a Match, its facilities are deemed unsuitable by the CCMG, the Home Team will arrange for suitable alternative facilities to be available at another venue. The alternative venue must be agreed by the Competition Manager prior to the Match and must have pitch and facilities that are not affected by the adverse weather conditions. In the event that any Match is not played due to the unavailability of a suitable pitch or other facilities the CCMG will decide as to what action will be taken, the CCMG having the power to take such decision as it deems appropriate pursuant to clause 2.11.2.

- 2.3.4.2.** Subject to any agreement, contract, lease, licence, local bye law or planning restriction or condition that confers responsibility for the matter on a third party, only the Match Official or, if the Match Official is unavailable, a suitably qualified referee of the Union in whose territory the Match is to be played may decide whether or not to postpone or abandon a Match because of the unsuitability of venue.
- 2.3.4.3.** Unsuitability of a venue may include but is not limited to the state of the pitch, floodlights or electricity failure, health and safety concerns or adverse weather or condition of the pitch on the day and time in question having consulted with a duly authorised representative from both teams and such other persons or parties as he/she deems appropriate. Such decision will be final and binding on each participating Team. Where possible, a decision to postpone a Match will be made sufficiently in advance of the Match to prevent unnecessary travelling, particularly where the Visiting Team is travelling from the territory of another Union.
- 2.3.4.4.** In the event that a Match has begun but then has to be abandoned (as determined by the Match Official) because of the unsuitability of the venue at the time in question as outlined in 2.3.4.3 the following will apply:
- a) The first half has been played – If a Match is abandoned after the half time whistle or more have been played, then the score at the time of abandonment will stand and be deemed the final score in the Match. The Match Official's decision as to the necessity of the abandonment and the number of minutes played at the time of abandonment will be final.
  - b) Less than half of the Match has been played, whistle to whistle – If a Match is abandoned before the half time whistle, then the Match will be replayed on such date and time as determined by the CCMG, unless the CCMG decides that due to exceptional circumstances the result of the Match at the time of abandonment should stand. In each case the decision of the CCMG will be final.
- 2.3.4.5.** In the event that a Match has begun but then has to be abandoned (as determined by the Match Referee) for any other reason other than the reasons set out in Regulation 2.3.4.3 above, then irrespective of the number of minutes played, the result of that Match will be reviewed and determined by the CCMG. The CCMG may determine if the result at the time of abandonment stands or may order the match to be replayed and/or impose such sanction as it considers appropriate.
- 2.3.4.6.** Without prejudice to the all reasonable endeavours obligation imposed on Teams pursuant to Regulation 2.3.4.1 above, the CCMG may decide in its absolute discretion, in the week leading up to a Match, to switch the venue of the Match from the originally-designated venue, if the CCMG or Competition Manager considers that actual or anticipated adverse venue or ground conditions at the originally designated venue pose an unacceptable risk of postponement or abandonment of the Match.



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- 2.3.4.7.** Subject to the provisions of this Regulation 2.3.4, all Matches must be played. If a Team fails to fulfil a Match, the matter will be referred to the CCMG, which will decide, in its absolute discretion, what the consequences of such failure will be.

## **2.4. Eligibility of Players**

Subject to Regulations 2.4.2 and 2.4.4 below, a Team in a Match may only play or select as a replacement, a player who;

- 2.4.1.** On the date of the Match, has been identified on the Teams Squad Declaration or Transitional Players list;
- 2.4.1.1.** Each Team will submit a Squad Declaration of up to 35 named players, by no later than 14 days before the beginning of the Competition using the online template provided by the Competition Manager, and in accordance with the instructions of the CCMG; and;
- 2.4.1.2.** A further 10 Transitional Players can be nominated from outside the squad, to support in training and Matches on a voluntary ad-hoc basis.
- 2.4.1.2.1.** A Transitional Player must be nominated using the online Declaration form, or by emailing the Competition Manager at least 48 hours prior to a Match.
- 2.4.1.3.** In exceptional circumstances or in the event of a player sustaining an injury, a Team may request dispensation to replace or select players from outside of their original Squad Declaration;
- 2.4.1.3.1.** A written request should be made to the Competition Manager no less than 2 days prior to a Match with details of the proposer, proposed player, injury details (if applicable), and reason for selection;
- 2.4.1.3.2.** The Competition Manager will provide a written response within 48 hours which will be final and binding (in exceptional circumstances an expedited response of 24 hours will be applicable);
- 2.4.2.** does not have a contract and/or registration with any other rugby union body, entity, or club such as would prevent the player from playing in the Competition at the date of the Match; and;
- 2.4.3.** is selected in the spirit of the competition.
- 2.4.4.** A Team may not be represented in the Competition by any person who has played or been a replacement (i.e., included in the Match squad) for another Team in the Competition in the current season, except that Teams participating in the same Union who can seek dispensation from the Competition Manager to



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select a player from an opposing Team from the same Union as may be required from time to time and in exceptional circumstances the CCMG may agree that other cases be considered;

- 2.4.4.1.** A written request should be made to the Competition Manager no more than 7 days prior to a Match with details of the proposer, proposed player, previous Team, and reason for selection;
- 2.4.4.2.** The Competition Manager will provide a written response within 48 hours which will be final and binding (in exceptional circumstances an expedited response of 24 hours will be applicable);
- 2.4.5.** Any player selected for a Match squad for any match must not have played 36 minutes of rugby or more in any game in the period 24 hours prior to kick off of the Match. For the avoidance of doubt, any player who has played 35 minutes rugby or less in the 24 hours prior to kick off is available to be selected in the Match.
- 2.4.6.** It is the Union's responsibility to ensure that all eligible and selected players are compliant with the World Rugby Anti-Doping regulations, and their relevant National Anti-Doping Policy. The Team will confirm in writing to CCMG immediately upon becoming aware of any breach, or potential breach, by a player and/or member of Team staff of the World Rugby and/or UK or Irish National Anti-Doping Policy, and acknowledges and agrees to any relevant information being provided to the CCMG by UKAD or Sport Ireland Anti-Doping (or vice versa) on request from the other, for the purposes of monitoring compliance and / or enforcing the rights of the Competition in relation to this Regulation. Any breach by a Team, or non-compliance with, the World Rugby and/or UK or Irish National Anti-Doping Policy will be determined solely in accordance with the process set out the UK National Anti-Doping Policy for players in Scotland and Wales, or Sport Ireland's Anti-Doping Rules for players in Ireland. A Team's breach of, or non-compliance with, any part of their relevant National Anti-Doping Policy will be deemed a non-remediable material breach of this Competition's Rule and Regulations which shall be investigated by the Discipline Team of their respective Union. Should the breach be deemed to have materially affected the outcome of a game, CCMG reserve the right to seek a recommendation from the respective Discipline Team and rule on the outcome of the game.
- 2.4.7.** Notwithstanding any other provision in these Regulations, no player may participate in the Competition whilst serving a disciplinary suspension imposed under the Disciplinary Regulations or by her Team, the Union with jurisdiction over her Team, or any other competent party, whether such suspension has been imposed pursuant to these Rules, the rules of that Team or Union, the rules of any other rugby union competition, or World Rugby Laws and Regulations relating to the game.

## **2.5. Match Day Squad**

In all Matches in the Competition replacements and substitutions are permitted in accordance with Law 3 of the Laws of the Game published by World Rugby and World Rugby Regulations relating thereto.  
Each Team will:

- 2.5.1.** Subject to the provisions of Regulations 2.5.4 and 2.5.6 play its strongest possible first fifteen team in all Matches and will not field an under-strength team without good cause such as allowance for player



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rotation requirements in the Teams' squads, the reasonable and customary need to rest players or the exigencies of injury;

- 2.5.2. agree that it will act reasonably and in good faith in taking any decision which results in the playing of a Team other than its strongest possible first fifteen;
- 2.5.3. announce the Team selected to represent it in a particular Match (numbered in accordance with World Rugby Regulations as if the Match were an international match) to the Competition Manager and CCMG and/or their designee and to the media no later than 11 am on Friday before Saturday, Sunday or Monday Matches and, in the case of Matches taking place on any other day, no later than 11 am on the day immediately prior to such Match;
- 2.5.4. ensure that the Match squad contains 23 players all of whom must be eligible under Regulation 2.4 above and meet one or more of the following criteria;
  - 2.5.4.1. the player qualifies for the Senior National Team of a member Union;
  - 2.5.4.2. be contracted with the Scottish, Irish, or Welsh Senior National Team;
  - 2.5.4.3. the player is a Foreign Player who makes up part of the Team's Foreign Player allowance;
- 2.5.5. provide accurate team sheets to the Match Manager, Match Official, the opposition team manager, broadcast commentators (where present) and all media at least one hour prior to the scheduled kick off of the Match.

*Note: For the avoidance of doubt, it is the responsibility of the Team participating in the Match to ensure that its players are eligible to participate in the match in accordance with Regulation 2.4 above.*

- 2.5.6. In the interest of safety each Team playing in each Match must have at least six players in their nominated match squad who are suitably trained and experienced to be capable of playing in the front row of a scrum to ensure (whether due to injury or consequent to a player(s) being temporarily suspended or ordered off) that the team can comply with Law 3.8 of the Laws of the Game published by World Rugby. In extenuating circumstances, Teams can write to the Competition Manager no more than 7 days before a Match to request a reduction in squad size in line with World Rugby Law 3.8. The Competition Manager will review the request and determine if appropriate and provide a written outcome within 48 hours of receipt.
- 2.5.7. If on any occasion where uncontested scrums are ordered by the Match Official as a result of there being no suitably trained and experienced front row replacement for any reason (which includes injury, temporary blood injury, temporary exclusion (i.e., following a yellow card) or permanent exclusion (i.e., following a sending off)), the Team concerned will not be entitled to replace the player whose departure caused the uncontested scrums. On return to the field of play of the front row player who has been temporarily excluded or injured the Match will continue with contested scrums.
- 2.5.8. The CCMG will in its absolute discretion (but is under no obligation despite any representations made to it by any person or Team) have the right to review the circumstances in every case where a Match is completed with uncontested scrums. The CCMG will be entitled to take any such action as it deems appropriate (such action may include the alteration or reversal of the Match result, the awarding of Competition Points (as defined in Regulation 2.2) or any other action pursuant to clause 2.11.2).

*Note: The intention of Regulation 2.5.8 is to penalise Teams who try to improperly to take advantage of a situation to ensure a match is played (or finished) with uncontested scrums. For the avoidance of doubt any aggrieved person or Team has a right of appeal under Regulation (Breach of Regulations) against any decision taken under this Clause 2.5.8.*



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## **2.6. Match Kit**

### **2.6.1. Playing Kit and Colours**

- 2.6.1.1.** The Competition Manager will determine which colours a Team wears in any Match, although the Competition Manager will, where appropriate but in their absolute discretion, endeavour to allow a Home Team to wear their first-choice colours.
- 2.6.1.2.** No later than 1 December prior to the commencement of the Competition, each Team will give to the Competition Manager written details of its first and if applicable, second choice of colours in relation to jerseys shorts and socks. The first and second choices of colours must be distinctly different colours. The CCMG will approve such colours subject to the proviso that all potential colour clashes can be managed within these Regulations and to the satisfaction of any sponsor or broadcaster. The Competition Manager will notify the Teams of the jerseys shorts and socks to be worn for each Match at least 7 days in advance of each Match. For the avoidance of doubt no changes in the submitted colours will be permitted during the course of the Competition.

### **2.6.2. Numbering of Jerseys**

- 2.6.2.1** The jerseys of Teams competing in the Competition should be numbered in accordance with any World Rugby requirements to ensure the correct identification of all players and replacements during a Match.

## **2.7. Referees, Reserve Referees, and Assistant Referees**

- 2.7.1.1.** Each Match will be played in accordance with World Rugby Laws of the Game, as varied or supplemented by agreement between the Unions and World Rugby. Match Officials will be appointed by the Union of the Home Team, whose role will be to enforce the World Rugby Laws of the Game.
- 2.7.1.2.** The Match Officials will be appointed by the Union of the Home Team following consultation with the respective Unions Referees Managers from a panel of appropriately experienced Officials. As soon as practicable before a Match, the Union of the Home Team will notify the relevant Team(s) of the Match Official, Assistant Referees, and Reserve Referee for such Match. There will be no Television Match Official (TMO) provision in the Regular season of the Competition in 2025/26, unless required as a provision of any broadcast, in which case both Teams will be notified in writing by the Competition Manager as soon as is possible. During the play-off stage, the Competition may in its sole discretion, include the use of a Television Match Official (TMO), in which case all Teams will be notified in writing as soon as is possible.
- 2.7.1.3.** When on duty at a Match, the Match Official, Reserve Referee, and the Assistant Referees will be required to wear such match kit (including footwear) as may from time to time be determined by CCMG.

### **2.7.2. Match Organisation**

At each venue at which a Match is played:

- 2.7.2.1.** Each Team must ensure that Team replacements and coaching staff are not permitted pitch side except within structures specifically provided for them or within the



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boundaries of the 'Technical Area' or at and for the extent of half-time and, in the case of team replacements for the purpose of warming up only, at the end of the pitch towards which such replacements' Team is attacking.

- 2.7.2.2. Each Home Team must make provision for two technical areas as outlined in Appendix 1 and will comply and will ensure that all coaching and playing personnel comply with the Laws of the Game and the requirements contained therein.
- 2.7.2.3. Any player temporarily suspended when playing in a Match must remain in the "Technical Area" or leave the playing enclosure and be clearly and readily identifiable to the Match Officials.
- 2.7.2.4. Any player sent off must leave the playing enclosure.
- 2.7.2.5. Communications with Match Officials in relation to substitutions must take place as per the Laws of the Game and in accordance with the protocol set out in Appendix 2 to these Regulations.

## 2.8. Medical Matters

### 2.8.1. Suitably qualified Medical Personnel

- 2.8.1.1. A Match Doctor must be present pitch-side for all Matches to assist Team Therapists in the care of the players. To be considered appropriately qualified the Match Doctor must meet the Medical Personnel standards as set out in the Competition's Minimum Operating Standards.
- 2.8.1.2. It is the responsibility of each of the Teams in a Match to ensure that they each have at least one appropriately qualified Therapist present throughout the Match to attend to their respective players and if necessary, to the Match Officials. To be considered appropriately qualified as a medical practitioner the Therapist must meet the Medical Personnel standards as set out in the Competition's Minimum Operating Standards.

### 2.8.2. Head Injuries

- 2.8.2.1. Any player who has suffered a head impact incident in any Match or training session must be managed according to the Competition's Minimum Operating Standards for managing Head Injuries, and World Rugby's Medical Regulation 10 and Concussion Guidelines.
- 2.8.2.2. The Competition will adopt the Recognise and Remove protocol when dealing with Head Injuries.
- 2.8.2.3. Each Union must comply with the Medical Minimum Operating Standards relating to Head Injuries as set out by the Competition.
- 2.8.2.4. In the event of the Teams failing to comply with the provisions of this Regulation 2.8.2, the matter will be referred to the CCMG to investigate further and to determine in their discretion any sanction for noncompliance, which may include sanctioning one or both Teams as they consider appropriate.



## 2.9. Home Team Responsibilities

In respect of each Match, the Home Team:

- 2.9.1. will ensure that any designated venue allocated to host a Match meets or exceeds the Match Day Ground Standards in the Competition Minimum Operating Standards and as such complies with all applicable laws, bye laws rules and regulations applicable to its use for and the staging of a Match including health and safety laws and regulations and is safe for the purpose of admitting persons to the venue to assist in the organisation of and/or to attend at the Match;
- 2.9.2. will be responsible for organising the logistics involved in the staging of the Match, subject to any directions of the CCMG or the Competition Manager with respect thereto;
- 2.9.3. will be responsible for contacting the Visiting Team and advising it of the names of a media liaison officer, referee liaison officer and Match medical officer appointed by the Home Team for the Match;
- 2.9.4. will, where the CCMG designates that a Match will be broadcast, ensure that the designated venue is fit for the purpose of staging the Match, including (without limitation) that it has floodlights giving an agreed average lux value sufficient for Broadcasting and other purposes. If requested by the CCMG, the Team will supply a report signed by a chartered electrical engineer, certifying compliance with this requirement. Teams who use floodlights for Matches in the Competition are required to have them turned on at the start of the Match;
- 2.9.5. will take all necessary steps, including implementing appropriate operational policies and procedures (including appropriate safety measures and risk management policies), in relation to the staging of the Match at the designated venue to ensure that persons admitted to the venue for purposes relating to the Match (whether as spectators or for any other purpose), as well as persons adjacent to the venue, are safe and do not suffer injuries or losses as a result of the staging of the Match at the venue. The Home Team will indemnify the Home Union and their directors, officers, members, shareholders, employees and any engaged contractors against any and all liabilities, costs and expenses in respect of claims (including but not limited to claims in negligence or nuisance or claims arising under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957) arising out of injuries or losses suffered by persons admitted to the venue for purposes relating to the Match, by persons adjacent to the venue, and/or by persons involved in any way in the organisation and staging of the Match, as a result of the Home Team's failure to perform the obligations set out in this paragraph; or imposed by any statute law, bye law or any statutory instrument regulation rule or order pursuant thereto;
- 2.9.6. will obtain and maintain in force at its expense at all relevant times appropriate insurance with a reputable insurer to cover its liabilities under clause 2.9.5 above and upon request will provide to the CCMG full written details of all policies taken out for this purpose. The CCMG may at any point require a





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Team to increase the value and/or extend the scope of such cover as a condition of continued participation in the Competition;

- 2.9.7. will properly and clearly mark out the pitch and mark out the Technical Areas referred to in clause 2.7.2 and as outlined in World Rugby's Law 1 and/or as designated by the CCMG or its nominee;
- 2.9.8. make available to the Match Officials separate suitable changing room facilities, which may need to include changing room facilities for both male and female Match Officials;
- 2.9.9. if not Broadcasting, will capture the full Match from a minimum of 3 angles and make available to the Visiting Team and Match Officials, via the agreed online file sharing solution (as determined by the CCMG), the un-edited copies of the Match footage within 12 hours of the completion of the Match. This will include the 3 angles and the Match Officials' voiceover. Failure by the Home Team to provide the required footage within the agreed time-limits will incur sanctions as determined by the CCMG;
- 2.9.10. will comply with the minimum medical standards and medical facilities set out in the Competition's Minimum Operating Standards; and
- 2.9.11. will use its reasonable endeavours to control the behaviour of its players and staff and of all Home Team spectators so as to ensure that players and staff of the Visiting Team and other spectators are free from injury, provocation, or offence. This will include (without limitation) taking all reasonable steps to ensure that no spectators or other unauthorised persons are permitted to encroach on the playing enclosure area (save for reasons of crowd safety) or to throw missiles, bottles or other potentially harmful or dangerous objects at or on to the playing enclosure area. The Team's responsibility pursuant to this regulation applies before, during (including the half-time interval) and after a Match and extends to all areas of a venue and its vicinity, including, but not limited to, bars within a ground, clubhouses, or similar reception areas.

## 2.10. Notification of Results

- 2.10.1. The Home Team will be responsible for informing the Competition Manager of the result of the Match within 60 minutes of the final whistle and the Match result card (or other communication) in the form specified by the CCMG must have arrived to the Competition Manager within 12 hours of the final whistle.

## 2.11. Breach of Regulations or Minimum Operating Standards and Discipline

- 2.11.1. Any matters alleged to be a breach of these Regulations, the Competition's Minimum Operating Standards and/or any other matters in dispute under these Regulations or Minimum Operating Standards, will be referred immediately to the CCMG in writing or by telephone if necessary. In any event written confirmation must be sent to the Competition General Manager within 48 hours setting out the grounds of the complaint/breach in full. The CCMG will, in its absolute discretion and using such procedures as it deems appropriate, resolve any such dispute and if a breach has taken place, may implement a sanction outlined in Regulation 2.11.2 or in extenuating circumstances refer this to the home Unions discipline Team to investigate.
- 2.11.2. The CCMG has power within these Regulations including, but not limited to;
  - a) deduct or award points in a Match;
  - b) alter the result of a Match;
  - c) require a Match to be played or replayed;
  - d) impose a fine or penalty and / or disqualify a Team from the Competition; or
  - e) impose any other such sanction as it deems appropriate.





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2.11.2.1. The CCMG also may decline to accept a protest validly made if it considers doing so to be in the interests of the game of rugby football or the Competition generally. Subject only to the provisions of Regulation 2.11.3 the decision of the CCMG will be final and binding on all parties.

2.11.3. Where any party having an interest in the matter is aggrieved by any decision of the CCMG taken pursuant to Regulation 2.11.1 and 2.11.2 above or otherwise in relation to the Competition it will have the right to appeal.

## Discipline

2.11.4. All allegations of foul play on the pitch and all allegations of misconduct either on or off the pitch will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Regulations set out in Appendix 3.

## 2.12. Terms and Conditions of Participation

2.12.1. Participation in the Competition is subject to the granting of a License by CCMG to each Team to participate;

2.12.2. CCMG reserves the right to revoke, amend, or suspend any licence, if in its opinion a Team has failed to comply with any of the contents of the **Celtic Challenge Regulations, Minimum Operating Standards,** or **other** ancillary documents relating to a Teams proper performance of their duties as a participant within the Competition;

2.12.3. Teams no longer wishing to participate in the Competition should write to CCMG no later than 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 stating their intention to withdraw from the Competition;

2.12.4. CCMG will not improperly withhold or delay acceptance of a request made under Regulation 2.12.3, but is entitled to investigate the reason of any withdrawal request before accepting a Teams request.

## Appendix 1: Technical Area

### 1. Dimensions of the Technical Area

- a. For all Matches two technical areas will be provided within the playing enclosure on the same side of the pitch, each one on either side of the half-way line and outside the field-of-play. The technical zones must be positioned and marked in accordance with Law 1. (<https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/law/1>)
- b. Wherever practically possible the areas should be behind advertising hoardings with easy access to the field of play.

### 2. Personnel permitted in the Technical Area

- a. **Five** persons, including as per the Laws of the Game kicking tee carrier, are permitted inside the Technical Area. No more than **two** medically trained persons (certified doctors or therapists only) and **two** water carriers (who may not be the Head Coach or Director of Rugby) per Team are permitted to operate from the technical areas. One of these medically trained people is free to “track” play on the side of the playing area containing the technical areas to provide immediate medical assistance when required.
- b. **One** Team Manager (who may be coaching personnel) is permitted within the Technical Area and will identify themselves as the Team Manager to the Match Officials.
- c. No other person (including other team officials) is permitted in the technical area.
- d. **One** other medically trained person (in addition to those identified in a) above, may be positioned on the far side of the playing area on the touch line opposite the technical area and is free to “track” play to provide immediate medical assistance when required.
- e. Where practically possible any medical person operating on the far side of the field from the technical area must stay outside the advertising hoardings. The medical personnel may keep up with play but must pay due regard to the needs and rights of players, match officials, spectators, broadcasters, and commercial partners.
- f. All medical personnel may enter the field of play in accordance with the Laws of the Game at any time a player is injured. They must not obstruct, interfere, or aim comments at Match Officials.

### 3. Roles of personnel in the Technical Area

- a. Water may only be taken on the field in accordance with the Laws of the Game and World Rugby Regulations (including such other regulations, variations and trials as may be agreed by the CCMG and World Rugby).



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## **4. Management of the Technical Area**

- a. All personnel permitted in the technical area must have some distinguishing mark e.g., arm bands/bibs.
- b. The Match Officials will manage the technical areas. If there is a transgression of the protocol, the matter will be reported to the Match referee.
- c. The Match referee may caution any offender or at his or her discretion expel the person(s) from the playing enclosure for any breach of the protocol.

## **5. Personnel outside of the Technical Area**

- a. The replacement bench and the location of any Teams coaching teams should, wherever possible, be in a designated area within the stand and in close proximity to the halfway line and the technical area. In circumstances where this is not possible, each Team will ensure that the replacements will remain seated within the technical area at all times, except when warming up.
- b. If replacements are required to warm up and there is not an area outside the playing enclosure, they may warm up in the opposition in-goal area, however, must wear bibs, and may be supported by a warmup coach. Balls and equipment will not be permitted within the in-goal area for use in any warm-up.

## Appendix 2: Substitution Protocol & Form

1. Before the Match begins, each participating Team must advise the Match Officials of its nominee to fill in and sign the substitution cards. The nominee should be a team official, who must be in the Technical Area throughout the Match.
2. When a Team decides to replace a player on the field of play, the Team's nominee fills in the appropriate details on the substitution card and signs it. The numbers of the player leaving the field of play and the player replacing them must be written in the appropriate box on the substitution card.
3. When a player leaves the field of play for a bleeding/open wound, the blood box will be ticked, and the numbers of the leaving player and the replacement player will be entered in the appropriate box. The process is repeated when the first player returns to the field of play.
4. The sin bin box is ticked when a front row player has been sinbinned and another front row player must enter the field of play in order to ensure non-contested scrums do not occur. The numbers of the player leaving the field of play to accommodate the replacement front row player and the replacement front row player must be written in the appropriate box on the substitution card.
5. The card does not represent a valid request until it is signed.
6. The card is then handed to the Match Official, who will check the details and then proceed with the substitution.
7. The Match Official will add the details to their substitution form which will form part of the Match Card.
8. Once the card has been passed to the Match Official, a substitution is only effective when the referee signals for the player to be replaced. A Team may amend details on the card given to the Match Official until the replacement takes place. Any amendments to the card must be authorised by signature by the Team's nominated person.

### Appendix 3: Disciplinary Regulations

Due to the practical/logistical difficulties in host Unions having to deal with visiting players that have been sent-off or cited and have subsequently returned to the territory of their home Union, it is agreed (as per World Rugby Core Principle (n) Regulation 17) that the following principles will apply:

#### 1. Procedure

The disciplinary regulations, procedures, and sanctions applicable to the Competition are those set out in World Rugby Regulation 17, save insofar as they are amended by these Disciplinary Regulations.

#### 2. Hearings

Players ordered-off the field of play or cited (see Annex attached) in a Match will have their cases dealt with by a Disciplinary Panel organised by the player's home Union (IRFU Disciplinary Committee, SRU Disciplinary Panel, and/or WRU Professional Disciplinary Panel respectively) and according to the Home Union disciplinary procedures. A player ordered-off may not take part or be selected for any further match until their case has been dealt with by the player's home Union Disciplinary Panel.

#### 3. Ordering Off and Match Officials – Report Writing

Match Officials are required to forward a copy of their ordering-off report and/or their temporary suspension (illegal and/or foul play yellow card) report to the player's respective Union within **24 hours of the conclusion of the match**. Match Official is to use the appropriate host Union form.

Where a visiting player is ordered-off, the Host Union will ensure that all relevant information/evidence (for example, the Match Official's red card report, match footage etc.) is provided to the home Union of the player in question in order to ensure that the home Union's disciplinary body is in a position to deal with the case effectively;

The disciplinary body's decision and the reasons for its decision will be communicated to the CCMG via the Competition Manager.

#### 4. Citing

The citing procedures applicable to the Competition are set out below:

- 4.1 These procedures apply only to incidents occurring during Matches. A citing complaint can only be made by Teams participating in the relevant Match, as well as their Union or the CCMG.
- 4.2 A citing may be initiated where there is an allegation that a Player committed an act of illegal/foul play but was not awarded a red card for that act. The citing must be in writing using the designated form (see Appendix 3), stating:

- a) The date, venue and Teams participating in the Match;



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- b) Details of the alleged act(s) of foul play, including as accurately as possible, the point of time in the Match, score at the time and position on the field when and where the incident is alleged to have occurred;
- c) The identity of (or means of identifying) the player(s) alleged to have committed the act(s); and
- d) Sufficient evidence to establish a prima facie case.

## 4.3 The citing must be:

- a) Signed by the Team Manager or nominated person authorised to act on behalf of the Team;
- b) Addressed to the Competition Manager, citing F.A.O Discipline Team of the player's home Union;
- c) Accompanied by any Match footage that the complainant intends to adduce in support of the citing; and
- d) Received by the Competition Manager not later than **48 hours** immediately following full time of the Match.

4.4 Any additional evidence supporting the citing will be sent to the cited player's home Union at least 2 days before the hearing. However, in the interests of ensuring the fairness of the proceedings the chair of the Disciplinary Panel appointed to deal with the matter has the discretion to admit any evidence that has not been served within this timescale if it is in the interests of justice to do so.

4.5 A citing, once validly made, may not be withdrawn without the consent of the respective Chair of the Disciplinary Panel.

4.6 The Home Union's Disciplinary team may, in its sole discretion, refer the citing complaint to a duly nominated Citing Gatekeeper which it considers to be appropriately experienced for review, in order to establish whether the citing complaint received satisfies the evidential and/or the red card threshold, before any disciplinary proceedings are commenced.

4.7 If the Disciplinary team elects to refer such a citing complaint through the gatekeeper process, the Union's Disciplinary team will provide all relevant materials to the Union's nominated citing gatekeeper, the citing gatekeeper will determine whether or not the evidence presents a case for the Player to answer (as to whether the Player committed an act or acts of Foul Play that warranted a red card) and accordingly whether or not the citing complaint should proceed, and will communicate their decision, in writing, to the Competition Manager and Union's Disciplinary Team as soon as reasonably practicable.

4.8 Consistent with World Rugby Regulation 17, a Team citing can only be made, by the Team or any of its authorised officials, or its Union, (or CCMG for the purpose of these regulations), if the act of alleged foul play committed during the Match was not detected by the Match Officials. Where a Match Official did not detect the act of foul play cited, then it must be shown that had the Match Official had seen the act, a red card should have been awarded.

4.9 Save as set out in clause 4.6, the cited player's home Union will convene a Disciplinary Panel and will conduct the disciplinary process in accordance with that Unions disciplinary process.

4.10 The citing Team may be required to present the case for the citing (for example, if the citing is contested) (either by attending in person or by tele/video conference) and the cited player's home Union will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place (including, if required translation facilities) to facilitate this.

4.11 The cited player's Union will distribute the outcome of the disciplinary process to the CCMG, Competition Manager, and the citing Team within 24 hours of the conclusion of the process.

## 5. Appeals

5.1 Any notice of appeal against the decision of a Disciplinary Panel must be served upon the player's home Union within 48 hours of receipt of the Disciplinary Panel's written decision. Appeals will be heard by an Appeal Panel as soon as practically possible.

## 6. Totting-up and Two on-field yellow cards

### 6.1 Totting-Up

6.1.1 A totting-up process will be established for the Competition and relate only to yellow cards awarded for foul play within the Competition. A player who receives three yellow cards for foul play in the Competition will have their case referred to their respective Disciplinary Panel.

6.1.2 An appeal against a yellow card for foul play is only valid where the appellant alleges that there was mistaken identity or that no act of illegal and/or foul play took place. The appeal must be lodged within 7 days of the date of the Match with the player's home Union and the appeal will be dealt with at any the hearing that is subsequently arranged to deal with the totting up. **Any appeal that is lodged after the 7-day period will not be valid and will not be considered by the player's home Union Disciplinary Panel.**

### 6.2 Two Yellow Cards in a match

6.2.1 A player who receives two yellow cards (for technical and/or illegal/foul play) in a match and is ordered-off the field of play will have their case referred to her home Union's Disciplinary Panel.

6.2.2 If one or both of the yellow cards was awarded for illegal and/or foul play, then the player may challenge one or both of the illegal and/or foul play yellow cards. If the Disciplinary Panel allows an appeal against one or both of the illegal and/or foul play yellow cards (i.e., mistaken identity or no act of foul play took place) the red card will be expunged from the player's record. There is no right of appeal against the award of a yellow card for a technical offence.

## 7. Misconduct

7.1. The Unions (upon their own volition or upon referral from each other or the CCMG) will have the power to bring charges of misconduct against a person, player, or Team in relation to or in connection with the Competition or breach of its respective Regulations. Any charge of misconduct will be heard by the respective Disciplinary Panel convened pursuant to these Disciplinary Regulations.

7.2. A non-exhaustive list of examples of misconduct is set out in World Rugby Regulation 20.

7.3. Unions have the right to refer misconduct hearings to World Rugby.



## CELTIC CHALLENGE – OFFICIAL CITING COMPLAINT FORM

Details of Person and Club Making the Citing Complaint			
Name			
Position in Club			
Contact Details			

The Match			
Match		v	
Date of match			
Venue			
Name of Referee			

The Cited Player			
Name of Cited Player			
Position			
Shirt Number			
Team Sheet	Y/N		

Details of the Incident	
Period of Play	1 <sup>st</sup> Half / 2 <sup>nd</sup> Half
Time in Match	
Nature of Offence	<i>Please provide the Law(s) of the Game it is alleged to have been breached.</i>
Description of incident	<i>Please provide full details of incident and full description of the offence</i>
Effect of Incident	Was the victim player injured? Yes/No
	<i>(If yes, please state the nature of injury and whether the Player had to leave the field of play/receive medical treatment)</i>



## Video Evidence:

Time of incident on match  
footage:

## Witness Evidence:

Witness Statements: Yes/No (please list below)

	Name	Position/Role	Attached?
1			Yes/No
2			Yes/No
3			

## Photographic Evidence:

Yes/No (please list below)

Please provide a description to accompany the photographic evidence:



#### **Appendix 4: Foreign Player Allowance**

Foreign Player Allowance Protocol.

For the 2025/2026 season, the Foreign Player Allowance applies as detailed below.

1. The Foreign Player Allowance is the percentage of Foreign Players a Team may have actively involved in any one season who can participate in the Competition.
2. Foreign Players should be clearly identified as part of a Team's Foreign Player allowance within their Squad Declaration, as set out in the Minimum Operating Standards.
3. For the 2025/2026 Season, the Foreign Player Allowance is set at 20% of the total, meaning a Registered Squad must not exceed a maximum of 7 Foreign Players.
4. Foreign players named within a Team's Foreign Player Allowance that are primarily based overseas require CCMG approval before being registered with a Celtic Challenge Team.