

MERSEYSIDE VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE (MVL) COMPETITION RULES

A. ANNUAL MEN'S & WOMEN'S LEAGUES

1. DIVISIONS:

- a. The number and size of Divisions will be decided at the Annual Fixture Meeting (AFM).

2. SEASON:

- a. The Winter Leagues will run from October to 15th May inclusively.
- b. Fixtures may begin immediately after the AFM as teams agree.
- c. Matches not completed by 15th May will be declared void.

3. FORMAT OF MATCHES:

- a. Matches will be played to FIVB Rules, except where stated differently in these rules. Matches will be best of 5 sets. The first four (4) sets being played first to 25 points, with 2 clear points; and the fifth (5th) set being played first to 15 points, with 2 clear points.
- b. Teams should book a minimum of 2 hours of court time for a home match.
- c. Teams will play one another once at home and once away, unless agreed differently at the Annual Fixture Meeting.
- d. Unfinished matches
 - i. Any match, which starts on time, but is unfinished when the 2 hour court booking ends, should be replayed on another date. The costs will be met by the home team if the match started on time, but by the away team if they arrived more than 30 minutes late. (see rule 4.c. for coping with late arrivals).
 - ii. Replayed matches will be best of 3 sets, starting at 1 set all (25 – 0; 0 – 25), but should be recorded on the scoresheet as best of 5 sets.
- e. Double Headers
 - i. If both teams agree in advance, then the 'home' and 'away' fixtures may be played as a "Double Header" at the same venue on the same evening.
 - ii. "Double Headers" will be best of 3 sets, starting at 1 set all (25 – 0; 0 – 25), but scores will be recorded as best of 5 sets (as in d.ii. above).
 - iii. The home team must book enough time for the "Double Header" (at least 2.5 hours is recommended).

4. START TIMES:

- a. Teams are not obliged to accept fixture start times before 7.00 pm on weekdays.
- b. Earlier starts will be allowed if both teams agree at the Annual Fixture Meeting or in advance of the match.
- c. The 'start time' arranged at the Fixture Meeting is the time at which the venue becomes available for warm-up.
 - i. The 'match start time' should be 15 minutes after this to allow for warm-up.
 - ii. Teams should be changed and ready to play at the 'match start time'
 - iii. Any team not ready to play 15 minutes after the 'match start time' shall lose the first set
 - iv. Teams not ready to play 30 minutes after the 'match start time' shall lose the second set
 - v. Team not ready to play 45 minutes after the 'match start time' shall lose the match 3–0: 25-0, 25-0, 25-0

5. SCORESHEETS:

- a. All matches must be scored on one of the two 'MVL SCORESHEETS' provided on the Info>Downloads section of the MVL website. Standard or Rotation Scoresheets are available:
https://www.merseyvolley.co.uk/Scoresheet_Standard.pdf
https://www.merseyvolley.co.uk/ScoreSheet_Rotation.pdf
- b. After the match the scoresheet must be signed by the referee and both captains.
- c. The fixture secretary of the WINNING team is responsible for ensuring that the scoresheet is correctly completed.
- d. Both fixture secretaries must relay the result electronically to the league Results Secretary together with a photograph of the scoresheet. All results must be submitted electronically by clicking on 'SUBMIT RESULTS' on the MVL website:
<https://www.merseyvolley.co.uk/submit-results/>

- e. The online form offers provision to rate the match referee using a star rating and comments box. Please complete this as it will count towards the league's Annual Award for best Referee. Negative comments should not be included here, if you have a complaint about the referee, you should use the complaints procedure set out in rule G5.
 - f. Results should be returned as soon as possible after the match and certainly within 48 hours.
 - g. Teams failing to return the result within one week of the match will be sanctioned. The sanction will be determined by the results secretary or the committee and may involve the deduction of points or the match being declared void.
 - h. Any complaints and disputes or red / yellow cards shown during the match, should be noted in the Comments / Sanctions section of the scoresheet by the referee with an accompanying explanation.
 - i. Submission of incomplete scoresheets or those showing illegal players will incur a sanction at the discretion of the league results secretary – usually a deduction of points.
- 6. MATCH OFFICIALS:**
- a. First Referee: Home teams must provide a competent First Referee.
 - b. Scorer: In all divisions, home teams must also provide a competent Scorer.
 - c. If possible, a Second Referee & 2 line judges should also be provided.
 - d. If the First Referee is ALSO the coach of the home team, this must be made known to the away team before the match. He/she may call time-outs & substitutions, but may not otherwise coach during the match.
- 7. LEAGUE POINTS:**
- a. Teams will be awarded:
 - 3 league points for a win or claimed match (if claim has been agreed by the results secretary)
 - 2 league points for a win with only 5 players in the team. (See Rule 13 below).
 - 1 league point for a lost match (if played),
 - 0 league points for a conceded or void match.
- 8. FINAL LEAGUE POSITIONS:**
- a. Final League Positions are decided on 16th May. Positions will be decided using the following formula:
 - i. The team with the most League Points gained will be the Champion/ Division winner.
 - ii. If two or more teams are equal on League Points, the winner will be decided on sets difference then on points difference in the head-to-head matches between the teams involved.
N.B. This is to end the unfairness if one team has claimed or been awarded matches 3 – 0; or if a double-header has been played.
- 9. TEAMS THAT WITHDRAW FROM THE LEAGUE OR FAIL TO COMPLETE THEIR FIXTURES:**
- a. All the results of any team that withdraws from the MVL during the season or plays fewer than 75% of its fixtures (including void and conceded matches) will be discarded. The team will be placed at the bottom of its division.
- 10. PROMOTION AND RELEGATION:**
- a. Promotion and relegation between all Divisions will normally operate on a 2 up, 2 down basis.
 - b. Teams finishing 1st or 2nd in each division will be promoted by right, but the MVL accepts that in exceptional circumstances clubs should be allowed to remain in a lower division if they can offer a strong case to stay in the lower division.
 - c. The merits of both the teams that do not wish to be relegated, and those finishing below 2nd place in a lower division but wishing to be promoted, will be considered in filling any vacancies which arise in higher divisions. Other teams in the relevant divisions may be asked to consider these promotion and relegation issues at the Annual Fixture Meeting.
- 11. CANCELLATIONS AND REARRANGEMENTS:**
- a. Dates of fixtures arranged at the AFM should be adhered to and only be re-arranged IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES.
 - b. Home teams should confirm fixtures with their opponents at least three days before the fixture.
 - c. If both teams agree to change the date in advance, they may do so if the Results Secretary is informed and agrees to the change.

- d. If one team disagrees to the change of date, the matter should be referred to the League Chair for arbitration.
- e. Fixtures may only be rearranged once by each of the teams involved. If a rearranged match cannot be played on the agreed date due to factors beyond the control of the teams concerned a 3rd date may be agreed by both parties. If the match cannot be completed on that date it will be declared void.
- f. Rearranging double headers. Teams may not decide on the day that they would prefer to play a single header rather than the double header as arranged. At least 2 days' notice must be given and the approval of the other team and the Results Secretary obtained.
- g. Games cancelled less than 72 hours before the date agreed at the AFM will be automatically conceded by the cancelling team.
- h. Both teams should inform the Results Secretary of the cancellation.
- i. The team causing the late cancellation will be responsible for meeting any irretrievable costs of the fixture (e.g. sports hall hire, referee's fees, unnecessary travel, etc.)
- j. Claims for reimbursement should be submitted in writing or by e-mail to the League Chair.

12. COURTS AND EQUIPMENT:

- a. The Executive Committee may rule on the suitability of courts and equipment and may decide that courts are:
 - i. suitable for all League & K.O. Cup matches.
 - ii. suitable only for League matches below the First Division.
- b. New teams may be required to demonstrate their courts/ equipment meet the required standard.

13. TEAMS WITH ONLY 5 (FIVE) PLAYERS:

- a. IN UNAVOIDABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, teams may play matches with ONLY 5 players BUT
- b. 5 player teams will be awarded ONLY 2 league points for a win.
- c. The match scoresheet should clearly show any team with only 5 players and this should be noted in the comments box on the scoresheet.
- d. If a team knows in advance that it will have ONLY 5 players, its opponents should be advised before the game.
- e. If a team (through injury) is reduced to 5 players, it may continue to play but receive ONLY 2 league points for a win.

14. CLUBS WITH TEAMS IN THE SAME DIVISION:

- a. If 2 or more teams from the same club are in the same Division, both head-to-head matches between these teams MUST be played before matches against any other teams.

15. CLUB CONTACTS:

- a. All teams must provide details of their FIXTURE SECRETARY and a SECOND CONTACT, by completing the Club Registration form on the MVL website. Ideally, this should be completed before the Annual Fixture Meeting but must in any case be submitted at the AFM or the club will not be accepted into the league.
- b. Teams wishing to change their Fixture Secretary or second contact during the season may do so but must ensure that the relevant Results Secretary and every other team in their division is informed of the change. Teams not informing the league of their fixture secretary change will be sanctioned.

B. TEAM REGISTRATION & ELIGIBILITY OF PLAYERS:

1. All teams must be represented at the Annual Fixture Meeting. In exceptional circumstances teams that cannot send a representative must provide a list of available dates for their home fixtures even if this has to be done by phone or e-mail on the night. Failure to do so will mean the team will not be accepted into the league.
2. **TEAM REGISTRATION:**
 - a. All teams must submit the Team Registration form on the website, including team name(s), fixture secretary details, venue, match times etc. before the Annual Fixture meeting.
3. **PLAYER REGISTRATION:**
 - a. All teams must submit the Player Registration form on the website, including player names, photo & NVL status within 7 days of the fixture meeting, or before their first match – whichever is the soonest.

- b. During the season, clubs may subsequently register new players using the online Player Registration form. Providing the fully completed form has been submitted prior to the start of any match, and the opponents have been made aware of this, the player is allowed to play.
- c. Unregistered players are considered illegal and clubs fielding them will normally be sanctioned.
- d. Clubs that enter 2 or more teams in the league must register separate A, B, C (etc.) squads.
- e. Clubs that enter 2 or more teams in the league must 'STAR' 4 players in each team except the lowest team. 'STARRED PLAYERS' may play only for the team for which they are starred.
- f. Clubs WILL be allowed to enter 2 teams in one division but must identify separate squads and starred players on their registration forms. Unstarred players may play for the other team in the same division but only to make up a maximum of 7 players when the other team is short.
- g. If opposing clubs consider their opponents have unreasonably strengthened their team by using substitute players in this way they may appeal to the Results Secretary.
- h. If clubs have a second (or third) team in a lower division players from that team may 'play-up' for teams in the higher division. In this case there will be no restriction on the number of players allowed.
- i. Clubs may only re-register 'STARRED' players for a different team within the same club IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, and with the prior approval of the Results Secretary (who may refer the decision to the full Executive Committee).
- j. No player may register for more than one team in Merseyside League, with one exception: women may play for team in a Men's Division, (even if that team is from a different club) but must register as players for that club/team in the normal way.
- k. National League Registered Players may play as of right in Division 1 of the MVL.
- l. National League Registered Players may play in Division 2 (or lower) of the MVL. However only players from the lowest NVL division will be permitted and will be limited to one senior player and a maximum of two juniors (U18). NVL players should be identified on the scoresheet.
- m. All National League Registered Players must be identified on the online Player Registration form. This information must also be made available at the AFM.
- n. Any National League Registered Players, (or players who become National League Registered during the season) who wish to register for an MVL team must have the prior approval of the Results Secretary (who may refer the decision to the full Executive Committee).
- o. New NVL players may not be brought in at the end of the season to strengthen teams competing for honours. Teams will be allowed to register new NVL players without further approval only if they have 3 or more games left to play.

C. CLUB MERGERS

1. In order to enable clubs with a limited number of players to continue to compete in the league a club may apply to 'MERGE' with another specified club at the AFM.
2. In this case the same rules will apply as to clubs with two teams in one division (rule B6). Each club must identify its squads at the fixture meeting and 'star' 4 players. Unstarred players from either team may play for the other but only to make up a maximum of 7 when one team is short.
3. Opposing clubs will have the right to appeal if they consider the rule is being abused and teams are being strengthened unreasonably (particularly for significant matches).

D. TRANSFERS

1. Transfer of players between teams must be agreed by both clubs and teams must obtain the permission of the Results Secretary.
2. Players may normally transfer ONLY ONCE during a season.
3. IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, a second transfer may be allowed; but only with the prior permission of the Results Secretary (who may refer the decision to the full Executive Committee).

E. OTHER COMPETITIONS

1. MENS /WOMENS/MIXED CUP COMPETITIONS will be arranged in response to demand. These may be traditional knock-out cups or 'Handicap' cups. Teams will be canvassed for interest and the preferred format at the Annual Fixture Meeting.

2. The League will organise annual 'Des Jeffers' tournaments for men and women. These will be open to MVL registered and other invited teams. These tournaments will normally be arranged as 'curtain raiser' tournaments at the beginning of the season.
3. The league may organise other tournaments or competitions as required.

F. SANCTIONS, FINES AND PENALTIES

1. Sanctions, fines and penalties will be set annually by the Executive Committee and published on the MVL Website.
2. Late or non-arrival of a home or visiting team, which results in a loss of money for the hire of sports hall, unnecessary travel or officials' fees (etc.) should be claimed in writing or by email to the League Chair to claim reimbursement from the offending team.
3. Other rule breaches including fielding illegal players, failure to register players, failure to inform the results secretary and other teams in the same division of a change in fixture secretary, non-attendance at arranged fixtures, etc. will be sanctioned and teams will be fined or docked points according to the list of sanctions set out on the website.

G. DISPUTES AND APPEALS

1. Late arrival, non-arrival, incompleteness of teams and/or match officials or any other contravention of MVL rules should be reported to the League Results Secretary by the match referee or team captains.
2. Teams wishing to claim matches should complete and return the online Claim Form to the Results Secretary with a copy to the opposing team. This must be completed within 7 days of the date of the fixture.
3. Claims will be decided initially by the Results Secretary.
4. Teams or individuals not satisfied by the findings of the Results Secretary may appeal to the full Executive Committee by submitting a written statement of the grounds for their appeal to the League Chair, who will respond within 7 days. If the Chair is not able to satisfactorily resolve the issue the complainant may appeal to the full committee. The complainant must inform any other clubs involved in the dispute in writing, enclosing a copy of their submission to the League Chair.
5. Appeals will be heard by the Executive Committee. The League Results Secretary may be present but may not vote on appeal decisions. The Chair will conduct the proceedings but will not have a vote unless a casting vote is required.
6. Interested clubs will be asked to nominate a representative to attend the appeal hearing at which the matter is discussed.
7. The Executive Committee's decision is final.
8. **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE TIMETABLE**
 - a. Submit complaint form from MVL website by email to MVL Chair within 7 days.
 - b. Committee to adjudicate & reply within 14 days.
 - c. Committee to decide if appeal can be allowed within 7 days.
 - d. The Appeal Decision to be issued within 14 days (i.e. further 7 days).

H. REPRESENTATIVE TEAMS

1. The MVL may organise County and Area Representative Teams (i.e. Merseyside and Cheshire Men's and Women's teams) if there is enough interest.
2. The division between the two counties / areas will follow the River Mersey. The county / area to the north and east of the river will be 'Merseyside' and the county / area to the south and west will be 'Cheshire'.
3. Coaching Organisers will be appointed to the MVL Executive Committee to be responsible for each County / Area.
4. Players will be selected for County / Area squads at trials or selection tournaments organised by the Coaching Organisers.
5. The County / Area Squads will be self-financing.
6. The MVL will organise Merseyside & Cheshire Junior Squads if suitable competitions arise.