

UCU STANDING RULE NO. 6
BELFAST & DISTRICT LEAGUE RULES
UCU BOARD

v2.0.4 15th September 2021

These rules govern the management of the *Belfast and District Chess League*, an annual team event running from Autumn to Spring usually concluding before Easter. The results of this competition determine:

- **Silver King Trophy:** which team shall receive the Silver King Trophy and player medals as winners of a first Division
- **Divisional awards:** which teams shall receive a trophy and player medals as winners of lower Divisions
- **Board Prizes:** medals awarded to the players who performed best on each board in each division through the league competition

All awards are presented at the Ulster Chess Union's *Annual General Meeting*

1.a) The League will be divided into the number of divisions deemed appropriate by the League Controller, with Division 1 playing for the Silver King, Division 2 playing for the John Strawbridge Cup and Division 3 playing for The Plate.

b) Newly formed teams will be placed in an appropriate division of the League Controller's choosing. Any challenge to such placements shall be decided by the Executive Board.

c) For each match a team will score the number of game points, and the winning team will gain a bonus of 2 points, and in the event of a draw each team will gain 1 point.

For example: A team winning 5-0 will get 7 points, the losers 0 points. A team winning 3-2 will get 5 points, the loser 2 points. Teams drawing 2.5 each will get 3.5 points etc.

d) All matches shall be played on the date, in the venue and at the time specified by the UCU, unless otherwise approved by League Controller.

e) Club Captains shall be informed of all their club's team(s) fixtures for the year.

f) Matches shall be played over 5 boards. Additional boards can be arranged but this won't impact the overall result for league purposes.

g) In matches where neither team contests bottom order boards, such games will be valued as a non-scores for both teams.

h) A player must complete a minimum of 50% of their games on a specific board to be eligible for a Board Prize. It is only possible to win one board prize.

i) In the event of a tie for a Board Prize, then head-to-head results will determine the winner, if a tie still persists then higher board scores will be added to determine winner. If the result is still tied, the Board Prize will be shared.

2. a) The winners of each Division will be the team with the most points.

b) In the event of a tie for first place in any Division, the title will be decided by the following. First tie-break is head-to-head results, followed by the sum of the individual scores in the head-to-head matches. If further tie-break criteria are required then it will be total number of league wins. In the event of the above not selecting the winner then a tie break event will be held at a suitable venue approved by the League Controller with a two round Championship match played over 5 boards using rapid-play timings and rules. 30 minutes per player per round, with zero increments. If a further action is required then it will be followed by 2 blitz rounds of 5 minutes per player with zero increments. The League Controller or Vice-League Controller will be present to act as Arbiter for the tie-break event.

3. a) Any affiliated chess club may enter a team or teams.

b) All players, Team Captains (or acting Team Captains) must be registered members of the Ulster Chess Union.

c) All club affiliation fees must be paid to the UCU Treasurer by the end of the calendar year, i.e. 10 weeks from the commencement of the league which begins mid-October.

d) Individual membership registration fees must be paid to UCU before the start of week 3 of the league, i.e. players are only permitted to play 2 matches before league fees are due. Any player competing in a 3rd league match without having paid their UCU fees will be deemed ineligible.

e) Players are not allowed to receive reward for playing in the League.

f) A player shall not represent more than one club in any one League season. Unless with the permission of the League Controller and endorsed by the UCU President/Chair.

g) The Secretary/Captain of each club must submit to the League Controller 4 weeks in advance of the start of the League season (i.e. 15 September) a list of players for each team they are submitting (to be called the squad list) who will play for the club. Any team failing to submit squad list(s) by the League Controller's deadline of 15 September will be penalised 5 League points, (A delay may be granted by the League Controller due to extenuating circumstances).

h) Based on the submission of squad lists a month before the beginning of the season, the League Controller will decide on the appropriate division for each team. Any team in Div 2 or Div 3 which is deemed too top heavy for that division, may have limitations placed upon the squad in terms of the number of high rated players that can play at the same time. Such limitations will be communicated to Team Captains in an email from the League Controller/Vice-League Controller or UCU Secretary and will only apply for the current league season.

i) Players may be added to the squad list throughout the year, so long as the new player hasn't played for any other team in the same league season. No new player can play for a team without prior consent from the League Controller.

- j) If a club enters more than one team, the Secretary of that club must specifically allocate 5 named players from the club's squad list for each team. Players specifically allocated to a team within a club shall not represent any other team of that club within the same division.
- k) Any player competing in a lower division can play on a team in a higher division within the same club. There is no limit to the number of times a player can play up a division. No player can play on a team in a division below the squad they are listed on (i.e. a player in a squad list for a Division 1 team cannot play in Division 2 team).
- l) Players may not play in more than one team within the same calendar week.
- m) Any team playing an ineligible player will be defaulted on that board, and Rule 5g will also be applied.
- n) If a club has multiple teams across several divisions but has two teams in the same division, a player from a lower division can only play up to one of the teams, not both. The first team they play up to, will be the team they are locked into 'up-playing' for duration of the season. Therefore it is not permitted to have any floating players.
- o) The eating of food at the chess board is strictly forbidden due to the distracting nature of this activity. However, if a player wishes to eat, they are welcome to step away from their board and eat at the side of the room, as long as it only occurs during their opponent's thinking time.
4. a) All League matches will be played according to the FIDE rules of chess.
- b) Team Captains and players will respect the authority of the League Controller as Arbiter of the Belfast and District Chess Leagues. All correspondence with League Controller should be done so in a polite, respectful and non-aggressive tone. A disciplinary process will be initiated for any offending players/Team Captains/Club officials.
- c) During a match, if any issue arises about the application of the FIDE Rules of Chess, the Team Captains of the two teams involved must act jointly to reach a resolution of the issue. In doing so, they must act as impartial arbiters and not as representatives of their teams. If they are unable to agree, the game involved shall not be continued and the captains must refer the matter to the UCU League Controller and if needed the League Controller may call upon the Captains' Committee for final and binding arbitration.
- d) Each player shall have one hour and thirty minutes to make all their moves unless the provisions at e) or f) apply or the League Controller authorises a shorter period for any reason. FIDE Quickplay finish rules shall apply.
- Note:** A score of the game must be kept by each player until they have less than five minutes remaining on their clock.
- e) To encourage new younger players to enter our league, for games in the lowest division, if at least one player is a child (i.e. under the age of 18), the child and their opponent shall both play with a 60-60 time control unless the child player elects to play a full length game

of 90-90. Team captains should make all possible efforts to inform opposing Team Captains a week beforehand if there is likely to be a change to the time control. Furthermore, on the night of the match, Team Captains need to ensure the clocks are set correctly and all affected players are aware that they only have one hour to complete all their moves.

f) Because the League does not use increments to allow for the recording of moves, the time allocated for recording moves is deemed a fraction of the 90 minute (or 60 minute) time control. Therefore, if a player is exempt from keeping a score of the game due to reasons approved by League Controller, the time the player has to make all their moves will be reduced by one sixth, e.g. one hour and fifteen minutes instead of one hour and thirty minutes. This adjustment of the clock shall not apply to a player with a disability.

g) Unless exempt by the League Controller, for example if the player's ability to keep score is affected by a disability or illness, a score of the game must be kept by each player until they have less than five minutes remaining on their clock.

h) It is the responsibility of the home Team Captain (acting as arbiter) to ensure the current time control is in place on each of the 5 boards of the match. If a Team Captain, other than by accident, causes a game to be played with an incorrect time control, the game will be scored as a loss to the offending team.

i) In the case of an illegal move being played, the clock should be paused, and a team Captain should be called to the board to act as Arbiter. 2 minutes is awarded to a player who's opponent makes an illegal move. The player restarts his opponent's clock and asks the player to take back their illegal move and play a legal move instead. If the opponent makes a second illegal move in the same game, then the game is claimed as a win provided the claimant still has mating material remaining on the board, otherwise a draw is declared.

j) No-one is permitted to interfere in a league game and such interference can be punished by a one point deduction to the offending team.

Examples of interference:

- Speaking to a player about their game while they are still competing
- Alerting a player that they have not pressed their clock
- Alerting a player that they are short of time

Only the Team Captain, acting as arbiter, may step in if there is an issue with the correct time control of the clocks or the malfunctioning of a clock. The Team Captain, in a similar respect to any other player or spectator in the playing hall, is not permitted to announce when a flag has fallen. Only the players in the game can announce when a flag has fallen. If there is a disturbance at a board, the Team Captain is permitted to step in as arbiter to try to resolve the issue. In all other cases, the Team Captain may not step in unless called forward by one of the players at the board.

k) In a tournament, the Arbiter has the authority to terminate a game when a player's flag has fallen or step in when the arbiter witnesses an illegal move has been played. In both of these cases in the league, the Team Captain does not have this same authority, only the players in the game can announce the flag drop or illegal moves, at which point the Team Captain can then step in after being called upon.

l) If there is a time scramble at the end of a game whereby the two players are in an endgame which is deemed to be a clear textbook draw (e.g. both players only have a King and one Rook remaining), a player can claim the draw, i.e. preventing the other player from flagging them to take victory.

m) Mobile phones must be switched off during league games. If a player's phone makes a noise during their game (either by phone call, text message or any other audio distraction), the opponent is automatically awarded the win. Unless pre-arranged by both captains, for instance for a doctor on call, there are no exceptions to this rule so the players can not over-ride this rule and allow play to continue.

n) After the league begins, the League Controller has the authority to distribute additional guidelines/rules by email to all team captains should any issues arise in the league which are not covered by the existing rules. It is the responsibility of Team Captains to relay this new info to all players (both regular and occasional players) on their team.

o) Default time for league matches is 45 minutes. The game is declared won by the player present at the board. The absent player is recorded as a NO SHOW. No rating points and no board prize points can be allocated in these situations.

p) The League Controller has the authority to deny any team entry into the league (irrespective of division) if there is previous evidence that suggests the club does not have enough available players to ensure the team can compete regularly. As a guide, a single team will need 8-9 players to cover illness/holidays/players working etc. Therefore two teams require a pool of 16-17 players. Three teams require a commitment from 24-25 players. No club should overstretch as this leads to forfeits or matches played with several absent boards.

q) All communication in relation to league matches may only be conducted by the designated Team Captain for the particular squad. Players from a squad may not engage in formal communications with another team captain to arrange/re-arrange/complain about fixtures. Any such actions will be unrecognised by League Controller and may also be subject to disciplinary procedures if the tone is deemed harassing/bullying in nature.

5 a) Players in the away team shall have white on the odd numbered boards, and the home team shall have white on even numbered boards.

b) The Team Captain of the home team shall start all the clocks (of the players who have the white pieces) at the specified start time. Should the Team Captain fail to do so: the home team shall forfeit any time lost.

c) No player may commence play before their Team Captain has made their team list available.

d) Board order shall be arranged in order of playing strength i.e. in grading order using the most recently published grading list i.e. The highest graded player shall play on board 1. The lowest graded player shall play on board 5. However, player(s) may play out of grading order where there is less than 100 grading points difference between the players(s), or with the express permission of the League Controller

- e) Any board played out of such grading order will be defaulted.
- f) If a team does not have 5 players available; the remaining players must fill the top boards, and wherever possible the captain should inform the opposing team two hours before the start time for the match.
- g) All games played below a defaulted board are scored as a loss, unless exceptional circumstances exist.
- h) New unrated players must play below rated players unless the League Controller has issued the newcomer with a provisional rating prior to the match commencing.
- i) All games in a match must be played at the same time. Any game not so played will be defaulted. Unless approved beforehand by the League controller.
- j) The default of two matches in any one season shall result in the forfeiture of all that team's matches for the year and the team may be suspended from participating in the following season.

6 a) Irrespective of the reason a Team Captain must contact the League Controller (to seek their approval) before altering a fixture: either to the date or to the start time of the match. Failure to do so will result in the deduction of two points from the offending team(s).

b) Postponement of matches will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Any team that postpones a fixture will be deducted 1 point per postponement. However, if the game is still played in the same league week but on a different day, no penalty will apply, provided both Team Captains agree to compete on a different night during the same league week.

c) If a host venue becomes unavailable at short notice, the League Controller must be notified immediately for guidance on how to proceed.

d) In extenuating circumstances beyond the control of a club, the team will not be penalised, i.e. there will be no point deduction. Extenuating circumstances include extremely bad weather, sudden loss of venue, sudden bereavement of the person responsible for opening a club/setting up boards.

e) If a team wishes to postpone a fixture, they must contact the League Controller and the opposing team captain before 24 hours of a match commencing for a new date to be set. Failure to notify before the 24 hour deadline entitles the opposing team to claim the full 7 points.

f) Any postponed match must be played within one month of the original date of the fixture, or on a date specified by the League Controller.

g) Teams are not permitted to agree not to contest a fixture. In such cases, the League Controller may suspend offending teams from competing the following season.

h) Any fixture that is forfeited by a team, i.e., the offending team supplies zero players to compete will incur a 5 point deduction.

7 a) All teams must supply League Controller with two working phone numbers, preferably mobile numbers, and two working email addresses belonging to team members.

b) One of these e-mail contacts shall be responsible for communicating the result of the team's matches to the UCU Rating Officer via league@ulsterchess.org and to the UCU League Controller (email will be supplied at beginning of each season) within 48 hours of the completion of the match. It is compulsory to submit results to both email addresses of the UCU officials. The League Controller will archive all results for board prize calculations and for use in any disputed results whereby teams captains submit conflicting results.

c) Teams failing to report results within 48 hours will lose 1 point from their team's score; a point will be deducted for each offence.

8 a) Masks or visors, that cover the mouth and nose, must be worn at all times whilst seated at the chess board.

b) Medical exemptions will not be accepted as a reason not to wear face coverings.

c) If a player is found to be in breach of rule 8a, the team captains must act as arbiters to resolve the situation. If the player continues to break the rule, the game will be scored as a default win for the opposing team and rule 5g will come into effect.

d) When spectating games, masks or visors that cover the mouth and nose must be worn at all times.

e) No more than one person from each team can spectate a game at any one time. Where possible, these spectators must stand at least 2 metres away from all players.

f) If a team is in breach of rules 6d and 6e, club captains must act as arbiters to resolve the situation. If a team continues to break these rules a complaint must be submitted to the league controller. Teams will be deducted 2 league points if the complaint is upheld.

9 a) Any matter arising out of these rules or not covered by these rules shall be referred to League Controller for ruling as Arbiter. Following League Controller's decision, an appeal in writing can be submitted to UCU President who will chair a Captain's Committee of available captains.

b) The captain(s) of the team(s) and clubs involved in the dispute will not be part of the disputes panel.

c) Failure to comply with any of these rules will result in penalties being imposed on the offending team.

d) In the event of a dispute at a league match, it is the role of the Team Captain to act as impartial arbiter on behalf of the UCU and therefore it is compulsory that a Team Captain (or acting Team Captain) must be a paid-up member of the UCU. Non-UCU members are

classed as spectators and thus not permitted to touch the clocks or make any arbiter decisions at league matches.

e) Following non-acceptance of the League Controller's decision(s), a Captains' Committee will be arranged by the UCU President and this rules/disputes panel will make their decision and inform the captains verbally.

f) Ignorance or misinterpretation of any of these rules is no excuse.

Notes & Guidance

1. The affiliation fee is £50 for each club, there is no additional charge for entering more than one team.

2. UCU Player Registration fee is £25 for Adults, £15 for members of ICU and £10 for Under 18s.

3. The UCU Executive Board may apply a surcharge of up to 20% if fees are received after the specified date. A club will not be allowed to play in the following League season if it has not paid all the fees, including surcharges, due from it.