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FOOTBALL
CANTERBURY

27th July 2026

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FINALS FOOTBALL – 2026

Premiership finals will commence from the end of this week with 8-team divisions having completed their rounds for the season. Other divisions will follow in the coming weeks. The Association seeks the cooperation of member clubs, and the Canterbury Referees Association, in ensuring the Rules of Association (and any other directives/policies) are followed and understood by those responsible for the conduct and management of participating teams in finals.

At this time of the year the Association Office receives many unsolicited calls from coaches, managers, parents, and players around matters that impact upon the conduct of championship series fixtures. Clubs are to ensure they communicate clearly with their respective teams on all finals matters.

Finals for a particular division will commence once all round fixtures have been completed. Different sized divisions are scheduled to commence on different weekends. Should weather impact the conduct of finals, be prepared for changes to the structure/schedule.

Listed below are items the Association seeks to remind Clubs of, and it is respectfully suggested the content of this Communication be shared with team officials of teams participating in finals.

DETERMINATION OF POSITIONS ON THE COMPETITION TABLE

Rule 1.8 is the point of reference. Each Club should read this section of the Rules before contacting the Association if you genuinely consider there has been an error in allocating teams to semi-final games.

DRAWN OR INCOMPLETE MATCHES IN FINALS SERIES

Rule 1.7 is the point of reference.

- 1.7.1 There will be no replays of matches in any finals series except as outlined in Rule 1.7.6, irrespective of format. Where matches requiring a winner are drawn at full-time, they shall be decided on the day by the playing of the appropriate duration of extra time, followed by a penalty shoot-out if necessary – as set out below.
- 1.7.2 If any finals series match is drawn at full time of ordinary playing time then teams shall re-toss for choice of end, and play extra time as follows:
 - for up to and including the under 14 age group, five minutes each way of extra time will be played.
 - for all other ages and grades, ten minutes each way of extra time will be played.
- 1.7.3 If scores are still equal after the extra time periods are played, then there shall be a penalty shoot-out, based on FIFA rules, to determine the winner of the match.

The interchanging of players will cease at the completion of normal time and extra time. If, at this time, penalty kicks are required to obtain a result, then the eleven (11) players on the field at the end of extra time are the only players permitted to participate in the penalty kicks. No interchanging of players is permissible at this time.

However, if during the taking of penalty kicks the goalkeeper is injured, he/she may be replaced with another goalkeeper provided the replacement was listed on the team sheet.

1.7.4 Stoppage time will be played in all finals series matches.

1.7.5 There shall be "golden goal" in any period of extra time.

1.7.6 In the event that a finals series match cannot be completed due to external factors (e.g. failing light, serious injury to player or referee causing prolonged delay, dangerous weather or ground conditions) then the match is to be rescheduled and only that period of time not played shall be played.

(The rescheduling of an incomplete fixture will be determined by Management, and may be set down for a midweek evening fixture.)

1.7.7 In the event that a match is replayed under rule 1.7.6 the following conditions shall apply:-

- a player sent off in the original (incomplete) match will be required to serve whatever suspension is given to that player by the Association, as if the match had been completed.
- a yellow card received by a player in the original (incomplete) match shall be counted in any aggregation of yellow cards applicable to that player's ongoing eligibility to play.
- the original (incomplete) match shall not be counted as part of any suspension then being served by a player in either of the two teams concerned.

1.7.8 In any semi-final or preliminary final game, other than in the BBPL and/or GMPL competition, where a game is washed out and cannot be rescheduled the highest ranked team entering the game shall progress.

Where a Grand Final is not played because of weather and cannot be rescheduled to the following weekend the team ranked highest on entering the Grand Final shall be declared the winner.

For the purpose of this rule, team ranking shall be according to the team's position on the league table at the completion of the league competition.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY FOR FINALS AND REQUIREMENT FOR MOVEMENT IN DRIBL

Rule 5.2.10 is the point of reference.

To be eligible to play for a team in any finals series match(es) a player must have played a minimum of three (3) competition matches for that particular team during the premiership rounds of the competition leading up to that finals series.

Where a player is eligible and wishes to play for a higher team under this Rule, the player must apply for and obtain a regrade into their new team [i.e., transferred and activated in Dribl] prior to taking the field in that finals match. Failure to do so will deem the player ineligible and the game forfeited automatically.

[When seeking to move a player Clubs are to list games played for verification and audit purposes. Moving requests MUST be into the Office no later than 5pm Wednesday preceding the game noting all relevant information.]

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a player may only play for one team in any finals series, including that player's original team of registration.

NOTE: There are NO "borrowed" players to be listed on a Match Sheet. Any player must be moved into the team. A Borrowed player in Finals is an ineligible player and the game will result in Forfeit.

GAME DAY PROCEDURE – DRIBL MATCH SHEETS AND RESULTS

No later than ten (10) minutes prior to the scheduled start time each Team needs to have "Submitted" their playing list.

No later than five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled start time each Team need to have "Confirmed" their opposition and raised any eligibility issues at that time. By Confirming the team, you have accepted who is playing in the fixture.

No later than five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled start time the Referee will check the entered team lists for the game AND that a Ground Official is named and listed.

Both teams are to continue to enter their game result at the conclusion of the game as per the season to date. Delays in entering results will delay the ongoing scheduling of finals.

REQUIREMENT FOR GROUND OFFICIALS TO BE LISTED ON THE MATCH SHEET

In February 2024 Clubs and CRA were provided with the Association's Ground Officials Policy. A copy will be attached to this Communication. In brief, as it relates to finals (and was implemented in 2024 finals): **Each Club is to have listed on the Match Sheet it's designated Ground Official. This is mandatory. The Ground Official MUST be a responsible Adult and attired in the hi-vis Orange Vest.** They are to be known to the Referee prior to the commencement of the fixture.

PERMITTED PERSONS ON BENCHES / TECHNICAL AREA

Only registered Team Officials (*coaches & managers*) displaying Association ID cards and wearing the Hi-Vis Yellow Team Official Vests and substitute players, listed on the team sheet AND in playing strip who are actually participating in the game are permitted inside the ropes or inside an enclosed playing field AND on the bench.

The match officials and ground officials will be required to remove any team official who is not wearing the Association ID card and Team Official Hi-Vis vest.

The Referee has the right to stop the match and remove any person from within the roped or enclosed area, if in the opinion of the referee it is deemed necessary for the efficient conduct of the game. Therefore, it is important for those team officials and players to be cognisant they should not behave in an unsporting manner, which would give the Referee cause to have them removed.

Please note, injured players who are not participants in the game are not permitted in the technical area. Clubs will incur a financial penalty fee for teams that ignore this requirement.

A maximum of two (2) registered team officials are permitted at any one time in the technical area.

A team official MUST NOT act as Ground Official, in an Orange Hi-Vis Ground Official's vest to gain access to the restricted areas, to act in a capacity as an additional team official. Ground Officials who in the opinion of the referee are acting as team officials will be removed.

DO NOT DELAY THE START OF A GAME

Teams are to be prepared to commence play at the designated Start Time. Where a preceding game extends due to extra time/penalties, teams should be prepared to commence their game when the match officials seek to do so without further delay.

DISCIPLINE

As occurs at this time in most seasons there has been a significant increase in players being sent from the field of play for violent behaviour and a spike of incident reports relating to other forms of misconduct, including melees. There is a need to address and change the ongoing negative attitudes and abusive behaviour on the side lines and on the field of play in community football. This is especially prevalent in finals football, and more notably from teams that are on the verge of elimination.

There is an obligation for the leadership at Club level to work with fellow Clubs and the Association to tackle unacceptable behaviour of any kind.

Clubs have expressed concerns regarding the level of match official coverage in recent years. There has been a growing shortage of referees again this season. A major contributing factor is due to the abuse from players, team officials and spectators. **Far too many players, team officials and spectators cross the line.** Clubs, and their members, need to start dealing more with this immediately and not always leave it to match officials or Association officials to step in. Call out your peers and stand up where its required.

There are some key areas/roles that need to be addressed to ensure the various final series are conducted in a safe and respectful environment. These are listed below:

TEAM OFFICIALS

Coaches and Managers have a hugely important role to play in respecting the game. They are not only responsible for their own behaviour, but they can also influence that of their players and spectators. This is particularly the case with junior age groups.

On match days team officials are expected to work with their players (and parents) to allow the referee to manage the game without being the subject of abuse and negative behaviour.

CAPTAINS

Team captains in **adult age groups** should work with the referee to manage the players and game effectively. The referee is the arbiter on the application of the Laws of the Game.

This includes the referee dealing with any open show of dissent. The type of behaviour that often gives rise to problems. The two most frequent forms of dissent can be described as "harassment" and "challenging behaviour". Descriptions of both are as follows:

Harassment

- A player or players running towards the referee in an aggressive manner
- Players surrounding the referee to protest a decision
- Repeatedly moaning /complaining to the referee about decisions

Challenging

- Passing comment to other players about the referee's decision making
- Making gestures that obviously are made in a derogatory manner, such as shaking of the head or waving the hands etc
- Repeatedly asking questions about decisions in an attempt to influence the referee or undermine his/her responsibilities

PLAYERS

Whether a player is in the starting eleven or on the bench, each player is crucial to how a game is conducted. Players are expected to work with their coach and team captain to allow the referee to manage the game without being the subject of abuse from individual players. All players are subject to the FA Code of Conduct for Players as part of the condition of their registration in the Association.

Members of the Canterbury Referees Association have been instructed to deal with any transgressions to the player's code of conduct during the final series.

FOUL & ABUSIVE LANGUAGE

Match Officials have an authority (and are obliged to respond) under the Laws of the Game (Law 12) to act on any incident of a participant identified as "showing dissent by word or action" or the use of "offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures". The referee's interpretation of the seriousness of the words or actions will determine whether one of the two following actions occurs;

- Yellow Card issued (i.e. caution);
- Red Card issued (i.e. Send-Off)

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Foul or abusive language uttered is NOT able to be defended based on reasons such as a claim that such language was “only uttered to myself, my team-mates or was unable to be heard by others.” Despite some expectations that ALL referees will make the SAME interpretation on DIFFERENT incidents, participants are advised that action taken by “any” referee in “any” match, will NOT set a precedent or provide immunity for any other incident where a referee determines that dissent was shown or offensive, insulting or abusive language/gestures was used.

The CRA has been instructed to inform its members to deal with any audible swearing; given there are families with children attending Association finals fixtures.

Sanctions imposed by the Association can be anticipated as being more severe when offensive, insulting or abusive language/gestures are reported as being made against a match official.

PRESENTATIONS

At the conclusion of Grand Finals, a presentation will occur to the Champions and Grand Finalists. It is expected that both teams will participate in the presentation.

Where a perpetual trophy is assigned to a division, the **Champion team is not to take the trophy with them**. It is to remain with the venue hosts. **Alcohol or other beverages, etc are NOT to be poured over or into any trophy**. Should it be found this has occurred, the Club from which the offending team originates will incur any costs associated with the cleaning/repair of the trophy.

Champion teams will be provided a gold medallion and the Grand Finalist a silver medallion.

Individual competition plaques are no longer presented. Clubs will receive an overall plaque outlining a list of teams from the club are the season Premiers or Champions.

Teams that do not attend a presentation ceremony will see the Club incur a \$220.00 penalty.

CONCLUSION

The Association wishes every team that qualifies for the final series the best of success. The final series needs to be conducted in a proper sporting environment. This will only occur if all participants respect the game, their club and themselves.

It's recommended member clubs **circulate this Communication to all teams** within your club that qualify for the semi-final, final and grand final series.

~

Trent Thomas
Chief Executive