

4NCL Rules 2023-24

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1 Format of the League

- 1.1 The format of the League shall be:
Division 1, consisting of 12 eight-board teams;
Division 2, consisting of 12 eight-board teams;
Division 3, consisting of two pools each of 12 six-board teams;
Division 4, consisting of six-board teams.

New teams may only enter Division 4. Dates and venues will be published on the 4NCL website. Each division will be contested over 11 rounds, played over five weekends, including the Early May Bank Holiday weekend.

- 1.2 Each team in Division 1 and Division 2 must contain representatives from both of the following categories:
a. male players;
b. female players.
- 1.3 There is no such restriction on the composition of teams in the other divisions.

2 Entry of teams

- 2.1 To enter the League, a manager of a club submitting a team or teams should confirm the name of each team and its expected division. The entry fees are listed in the [guidelines](#) and are payable at the same time as the entry is made. If a manager enters more than one team, the teams may play as split squads (where the teams may not interchange players) or as combined squads (where some movement between teams in a squad is allowed subject to the requirements of section 8 of these rules). The decision to play as combined or split squads is irrevocable for the season.
- 2.2 No team will be allowed to re-enter the League until outstanding fees for that team or any other team under the same management have been settled.
- 2.3 A team, once it has had its entry accepted, is not entitled to a refund of entry fees should it subsequently withdraw.
- 2.4 A fee of £150 will be payable where a change to a club or team name is made during the season unless otherwise agreed by the Management Board.

3 Initial registration of players

- 3.1 The deadline for initial registrations will be announced in the entry guidelines. Squads failing to meet this deadline will be subject to a fine of 5% of their total entry fee per day overdue, which must be paid prior to the deadline specified in rule 4.2.
- 3.2 A manager may register a squad of up to 16 players per eight-board team and up to 12 players per six-board team, without further fees. These registrations should be made via the 4NCL online registration system. If a manager has received explicit permission in accordance with Rule 3.7 to list a player, this should also be stated at the time of registration via the 4NCL online registration system.

- 3.3 Players registered with FIDE other than through the English Chess Federation (ECF) are not required to be members of the ECF.
- 3.4 It is the manager's responsibility to ensure that all players other than those covered by rule 3.3 become Gold or Platinum members of the ECF before the team list in which they are named is published. Players who do not meet this requirement will not be permitted to play and default penalties will apply.
- 3.5 The Management Board may at its absolute discretion refuse to accept a player's registration.
- 3.6 All participants in the League shall consent to their name, gender, nationality, title and rating being shown on the 4NCL website. Those wishing to withhold their consent shall not be permitted to play in the League. Managers and any team captains they appoint are also expected to have their contact details shown on the 4NCL website.
- 3.7 It is the responsibility of the manager of a squad wishing to retain the registration of a player who has agreed to be listed for that squad to obtain firm evidence of explicit agreement (which should be in writing or by email and should record that the player has been informed of the consequences of giving explicit consent), such evidence to be made available to the Chief Arbiter and the 4NCL Board if required.
A player who has explicitly consented to be listed for a particular squad may not move to another squad unless:
- a. the manager of that squad voluntarily deregisters the player; or
 - b. the Chief Arbiter considers that it would be inequitable to hold the player to the previous commitment, taking into account the circumstances in which the commitment had been given and any relevant evidence subsequent to the giving of that commitment.
- A player who has given explicit consent to be listed for a squad but who wishes to withdraw that consent must contact the Chief Arbiter before the registration deadline for the first weekend.
- 3.8 No player should be registered for more than one squad. Should a player be registered for more than one squad, neither captain claiming explicit consent, the Chief Arbiter need take no action until the player plays for a squad, at which point his registration for all other squads shall be cancelled.

4 Additions to the registration list

- 4.1 Additional names of players expected to play during the season may be added to a squad's list of registered players via the online registration system. The information required is the same as for the initial registration process. The date of registration shall be taken as the date when the registration is received.
- 4.2 To play as a registered player at a particular weekend the player must be registered no later than midnight of the Thursday nine days before the first round of the weekend for the division in which the player is to play.
- 4.3 A fee of £5 shall be due for each registration above a squad's allocation (see rule 3.2), to be paid after the following weekend in accordance with Rule 14.4. Players previously registered for a team may not be deregistered to avoid payment of this fee unless such deregistration takes place by the end of the week following the first playing weekend.
- 4.4 If a player has not been registered by the deadline, that player will only be permitted to play as a wildcard and must satisfy the requirements of section 6 of the rules.

5 Transfers during the season

- 5.1 A player who is named on a squad's list of players may transfer to another squad provided that the player has not played during the current season and has not given explicit consent to be listed for that player's original squad.
- 5.2 The Chief Arbiter will inform the player and the managers of the relevant squads whether or not the transfer has been accepted.
- 5.3 The squad to which the player is moving must fulfil all the requirements for additional registrations, plus the payment of a £5 administration charge (see rules 4.1-4.4 above).
- 5.4 The player must be registered for the new squad no later than midnight of the Thursday nine days before the first round of the weekend for the division in which the player is to play. Transfers later than this deadline will be subject to the wildcard rules. In this instance, a wildcard fee is payable in addition to a £5 administration charge.
- 5.5 If a team withdraws from the League, players who have played only for that team become free agents and may choose to play either for other teams in the squad if applicable or to join another squad. In such cases no transfer

fees are payable, but wildcard and additional registration fees will apply if appropriate.

6 Wildcards

- 6.1 A wildcard is a player who is not registered for any squad in the League. No player whose registration has been refused may be a wildcard.
- 6.2 Wildcards must provide a FIDE identification number (FIN) before the weekend at which they will be playing if they are not English. In the absence of a FIN a player will be registered with FIDE as English and allocated a FIN by the ECF when the appropriate rating file is submitted. The player may incur costs from FIDE to have this subsequently changed.
- 6.3 A fee of £10 (Divisions 1 and 2) or £5 (all other Divisions) shall be incurred for each wildcard, payable by the deadline laid down in rule 14.4. There is no fee for each subsequent game played by the wildcard over the course of a weekend.
- 6.4 A wildcard is not required to be a member of the ECF, but players registered with FIDE as English must take out ECF Gold or Platinum membership before playing at any subsequent weekends. With this exception, a player will become fully registered after the weekend at which the player appears as a wildcard.
- 6.5 A team in Division 1 may play one wildcard in each match.
- 6.6 A team in Division 2 may play up to two wildcards in each match provided not more than one of the wildcards plays in the top half of the team.
- 6.7 A team in any other division may play up to four wildcards in each match provided not more than one of the wildcards plays in the top half of the team.
- 6.8 Except when a transfer has been allowed, a player named on a squad's list of players is not available as a wildcard for other squads.
- 6.9 No player may play as a wildcard on more than one weekend during the season.

7 Organisation of the divisions

- 7.1 Divisions 1, 2 and each pool of Division 3 will be played as all-play-all divisions.
- 7.2 Division 4 will be played as a Swiss tournament with pairings based on pairing guidelines as determined and published by the Chief Arbiter which may be amended from time to time if deemed in the best interests of the League. If there is an odd number of teams playing in a round, a triangular pairing will be used.

8 Team lists and board order

- 8.1 In all divisions, FIDE ratings will be used to determine the order of strength of a team. For a player without a FIDE rating, a national rating will be used in place of an equivalent FIDE rating. Managers may elect to use the latest published national rating in place of a FIDE rating for any player. This decision may be varied between weekends, but the same rating must be used for a player for all rounds of a single weekend, including both halves of a split weekend. For the purposes of this rule, for players on the ECF list only ratings in categories A and K will be regarded as official.
- 8.2 A player who has no official national or FIDE rating will be assigned an estimate by the Chief Arbiter.
- 8.3 The average rating of a team is calculated as the average of the top seven boards in Divisions 1 and 2. In the other divisions the average rating is calculated using all six players. A higher team in a squad must have an average rating greater than that of a lower team in that squad for each round.
- 8.4 Within a team, if any two players are rated more than 100 points apart, the higher rated player must play on the higher board. Between teams in a combined squad, if any two players are rated more than 100 points apart, the higher rated player must play in the higher team.
- 8.5 Exceptionally, if there is a conflict between the 100-point rule and the gender requirements of Divisions 1 and 2, a single player may be lower rated than would otherwise have been necessary. However, no player may break the 100-point rule when compared with another player of the same gender.
- 8.6 The Chief Arbiter is empowered to require a change to team lists if there is a breach of the spirit of rule 8.4.

- 8.7 A complaint about the composition of a team must be made at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the round.
- 8.8 Where both managers agree in advance and the Chief Arbiter consents, the requirements of the 100-point rule within a team may be waived, if this is in the best interests of the League.
- 8.9 Known defaults must be on the lowest boards of the lowest possible team having regard to the gender requirements of Divisions 1 and 2.

9 Submission of team lists

- 9.1 For all fixtures in a given weekend, team lists must be submitted using the online registration system by midnight of the previous Thursday (i.e., 38 hours before the scheduled start of play of the Saturday match), with any defaults declared to the opposing manager by the same deadline.
- 9.2 Submission of team lists after the deadline will result in the imposition of a penalty of £10 per team per round, payable by the deadline laid down in rule 14.4.
- 9.3 Any changes to these lists may be made without penalty (provided they do not introduce further defaults) up to midnight of the day before the fixture. Such changes should be made using the online registration system. All team lists must give the full names of the players clearly in board order.
- 9.4 Team lists may be amended without penalty (providing further defaults are not introduced) for circumstances beyond captains' control provided this is done at least two hours before the scheduled start of play.
- 9.5 For split weekends (when some divisions play on different weekends from others) team lists for squads with fixtures on both weekends must be submitted by the Thursday midnight immediately before the earlier of the two weekends. If subsequent amendments render the composition of a team or teams illegal, the Chief Arbiter may apply game point penalties to correct for any injustice caused. No players may play on both Saturdays of a split weekend, nor on both Sundays.

10 Reserves

- 10.1 Up to two players, who must be registered or eligible to play as a wildcard, may be nominated as reserves for each team when the team list is submitted.
- 10.2 A player who has not been nominated as a reserve may be used as such provided they are registered or eligible to play as a wildcard, and are rated at least 100 points lower than the player they replace.
- 10.3 The substitution must meet any applicable gender requirements, and must occur not more than 55 minutes after the scheduled start of the round or such later time as the two captains concerned and the Sector Arbiter at the venue may have agreed before commencement of the game.
- 10.4 The clock of the reserve shall be adjusted to show the elapsed time subject to a minimum reduction in available time of 30 minutes.
- 10.5 The improper use of reserves may result in the Chief Arbiter imposing a penalty as he deems appropriate on the offending team.

11 Default penalties

- 11.1 A team will incur half a game point penalty per default in addition to scoring zero on each affected board if the information about the defaults is communicated to the Chief Arbiter and, when the pairings are known at that time, to the opposing manager at or before midnight of the Thursday before the round. When the pairings are not known in advance notified defaults for later in the weekend will be published with the team lists for the first round of the weekend. It is permissible for the player affected by the notified default not to appear for the round in which the default occurs.
- 11.2 A team will incur one game point penalty per default in addition to scoring zero on each defaulting board for each player, having been named on a team list, who fails to appear for the match in question within one hour after the start of play or arrives but is not prepared to play, or if a default is not notified until after the deadline.
- 11.3 Any players without an opponent will wherever possible be offered a FIDE rated and ECF rated game against another

player in a similar position. Pairings for these games will be matched in strength as far as possible. Pairings will be made one hour after the start of play, and the time control for these games will be all moves in 90 minutes plus 30 seconds per move.

- 11.4 Appeals against game point penalties and any resulting fines will be considered only in exceptional circumstances. Car breakdowns, traffic delays, public transport delays or cancellations, bad weather (except where a severe weather warning can be shown to have been issued by the Meteorological Office) etc. will not normally be considered exceptional circumstances. Appeals against game point penalties must be made not later than the default time in the game or games in question to the Sector Arbiter at the venue, whose decision, in the interests of providing certainty to the teams involved, will be final and not subject to referral to the Management Board or the Appeals Committee.
- 11.5 When a team indicates that it has a default, the opposing team may adjust its board order, but not the overall composition of the team, to minimise any inconvenience caused.
- 11.6 A team defaulting a game for whatever reason will incur a penalty of £30 per defaulted game unless a successful appeal has been made. See rule 14.2 for the appeals process, and 14.4 for the payment deadline. A team will be exempt from paying a default fine if: (a) for a team in Division 1 or 2 the default is due to the team not containing a representative from both categories in a match as specified in rule 1.2, and if they are able to provide an eighth player of the same category to play a game against the opponent under the provisions of rule 11.3; or (b) the opposing team defaults on the same board; or (c) the game is the first one defaulted by a team during the season that does not arise because of either (a) or (b).
- 11.7 A Division 4 team may withdraw from an entire weekend without financial penalty so long as the intention to do so is notified to the Chief Arbiter no later than one week before the team list submission deadline.
- 11.8 If a team defaults an entire match for whatever reason in any other circumstances it will incur a fine of £250 (Divisions 1 and 2), £125 (Division 3), or £75 (Division 4), unless a successful appeal has been made. See rule 14.2 for the appeals process, and 14.4 for the payment deadline. Where a Division 4 team defaults a match other teams will be re-paired as necessary.
- 11.9 In the event that a team in the view of the 4NCL Board has an unsatisfactory default performance during a season, the 4NCL Board may at its discretion insist that that team post a bond in the amount of £300 for a team in Divisions 1 and 2 or £150 for a team in any other division as a condition of its entry being accepted in the following season. The bond, which will be held by the League, shall be used at the 4NCL Board's discretion to defray any financial costs incurred by opposing teams should the team, or any other team under the same management, default games in that following season. The bond will be returned to the team once in the Board's view sufficient evidence has been provided that the team's default performance has improved to an appropriate standard.

12 Rules governing play

- 12.1 The FIDE Laws of Chess will apply to all games and the [4NCL Fair Play Policy](#) will apply to the event.
- 12.2 The starting times shall normally be 2pm on the first day of the weekend, 1 pm on the middle day of a three-day weekend and 11am on the final day of the weekend. Captains and Managers should make their team colleagues aware of these start times and any changes to venues, should they arise.
- 12.3 The Sector Arbiter at a venue will endeavour to publish individual pairings both in the venue and online ninety minutes before the start of play, and in any event no later than one hour before the start of play.
- 12.4 If the late submission of all or part of a team list causes one or more pairings to be published late, the Sector Arbiter may, at his discretion, deduct time from the clock of each member of the team whose name was not published on time.
- 12.5 The first-named team in each pairing shall have the white pieces on the odd-numbered boards and black on the even-numbered boards.
- 12.6 The time control shall be 40 moves in 1 hour 40 minutes plus 50 minutes for the rest of the game, with a 30 second increment per move from the start of the game.
- 12.7 The failure of a player to appear at the board within one hour after the start of play will be treated as a default.
- 12.8 A player may ask their captain or an arbiter for any score in any match at any time. No other information may be

provided by a captain to any player. Players must not ask their team managers about whether or not they should offer, or accept the offer of, a draw.

- 12.9 Players are assumed to consent to having their photographs taken; if they object to this they should raise the matter either with the arbiters or the photographer concerned. Copyright to photographs remains with the photographer.

13 Promotion and relegation

- 13.1 End of season team placings will be decided in the first instance on match point totals. If at the end of the season teams are tied on match points, the tie shall be broken using:

- a. the game points totals;
- b. provided all possible matches between teams still tied have been played,
 - (i) the match point totals in the results between the teams which remain tied;
 - (ii) the game point totals in the results between the teams which remain tied;
 - (iii) the lower board count in the results between the teams which remain tied;
 - (iv) the game points remaining after elimination of the bottom board or boards as necessary.If at any stage the number of tied teams is reduced this rule is reapplied, starting with (i), to the reduced number of teams;
- c. the average rating of the opposition;
- d. the toss of a coin.

Tie breaks shall be applied in this order until all ties are broken.

- 13.2 Three teams will be relegated from Division 1, three teams will be promoted from Division 2, four teams will be relegated from Division 2, and two teams will be promoted from each pool of Division 3. Two teams will be relegated from each of the Division 3 pools, and four teams will be promoted from Division 4. The allocation of teams promoted or relegated into the two Division 3 pools will be at the discretion of the Management Board. Arrangements for Divisions 3 and 4 for the 2024-2025 season may be subject to review later in the season should venue constraints require it.

- 13.3 In the event that existing teams decide not to renew their entries, teams in the relevant division that would otherwise have been relegated at the end of the season will not be relegated (starting with the relegated team finishing in the highest position, and so on down the relegated teams). In the event that the number of teams not renewing their entries exceeds the number of relegated teams, extra teams will be promoted from the lower division after applying the provisions in the first section of this rule, and so on down the divisions as necessary.

- 13.4 If an extra team is needed to be promoted to Division 2, the teams which are in third place in each of the Division 3 pools are to be ranked by rating performance. If extra teams are still needed, this process will apply to the teams which are in fourth place in each of the Division 3 pools, and so on.

- 13.5 In Divisions 1, 2 and the two Division 3 pools no more than one team from any squad will be permitted to play in the same division. Where this situation is caused by a team finishing in a promotion place, the next eligible team will be promoted instead. Where this situation is caused by a team being relegated into a lower division, the necessary number of teams from that squad will be relegated from that division and the highest placed team that would otherwise have been relegated will escape relegation. The top placed eligible teams will be offered promotion as required to ensure that the complement of twelve teams in Divisions 1, 2 and each pool of Division 3 is maintained.

14 Chief Arbiter, appeals and management

- 14.1 The Chief Arbiter, Deputy Chief Arbiter and the Sector Arbiter at the relevant venue shall be empowered to administer the rules of the League.

- 14.2 An appeal against an arbiter's decision must be made to the Chief Arbiter, or the Deputy Chief Arbiter if the Chief Arbiter made the decision. If permitted by the rules, a review of the outcome of the appeal may be made to an Appeals Committee consisting of a third-party arbiter and two independent players chosen from a panel on payment of a £50 deposit. The decision of the Appeals Committee will be final. The £50 deposit will be returned if the Appeals Committee finds in favour of the party requesting the review. Any review request accompanied by a £50 deposit must be made to the Management Board within seven days of the weekend in question.

- 14.3 The Management Board may apply penalties as it sees fit for any flagrant or premeditated breaches of the spirit as well as the letter of the rules.

- 14.4 All fines and fees due by a team must be paid within 28 days of the weekend in which they are incurred, or not later than the registration deadline for the following weekend if that is earlier. This period may be extended at the discretion of the Chief Arbiter if an appeal is permitted under the rules and has been made in accordance with the rules. Teams failing to pay any fines or additional payments by the due date will (a) be excluded from the pairings for that following weekend; (b) be deemed to have defaulted on that weekend; and (c) incur the resulting match default fines. Failure to pay any fines or fees due will also result in the exclusion of teams from future weekends until they are paid.
- 14.5 The Chairman of the 4NCL shall arrange meetings for captains and managers, as and when required, at which matters of current interest and future policy shall be discussed.
- 14.6 The Management Board shall announce the arrangements for the following season including the entry fees, the official closing dates for the receipt of entries and registration lists and the name and contact details of the Chief Arbiter.
- 14.7 In all cases the decisions of the Management Board shall be final.

15 Miscellaneous Provisions

- 15.1 Food and drink may not be consumed within the hotel buildings or the hotel car park unless it has been purchased from the hotel, or is being consumed in the guest's bedroom. This applies both to players and any accompanying persons.
- 15.2 The 4NCL accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to personal property. Players are requested to take sensible precautions to avoid losing personal items or leaving them behind at the conclusion of each weekend. If necessary contact should be made with the hotel in the first instance.
- 15.3 4NCL Ltd do not accept responsibility for the content of other websites to which the site links.
- 15.4 In addition to the information referred to in rule 3.6 the website will include names, telephone numbers, and email addresses of 4NCL Officials and Arbiters, and team captains and managers.