

4NCL Rules 2021-22

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1 Format of the League

1.1 The format of the League shall be:

Division 1 & 2, consisting of up to 32 eight-board teams,
Division 3 North, consisting of six-board teams,
Division 3 Central, consisting of six-board teams,
Division 3 South, consisting of six-board teams.

The designations "North", "Central" and "South" refer to the relative location of the events. New teams may enter only Division 3 North, Division 3 Central or Division 3 South. 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. In the event that covid-19 forces the cancellation of one or more weekends for any reason, the 4NCL will make every effort to reschedule the cancelled weekend. The season will be deemed complete on Monday, 1st August regardless of whether or not the cancelled weekends have been played.

1.2 Each team in Division 1 & 2 must contain representatives of at least two of the following categories:

- a. adult male players;
- b. adult female players;
- c. junior players, born after 3rd May 2004.

1.3 There are no such restrictions on the composition of teams in the other divisions.

1.4 In the event of existing Division 1 or Division 2 teams not renewing their entry from 2019-20, such that the total number of teams is fewer than 32, the provisions of rule 13.3 will apply to this season using the final standings at the end of the 2018-19 season, but only to the extent that the minimum possible number of teams will be invited to Division 1 & 2 such that the number of teams in the division will be 24 or the smallest even number greater than 24.

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 £100 will be payable where a change to a club or team name is made during the season.

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.

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 If a squad has one or more teams in Division 3 North, the Manager may designate one or more players as "Division 3 North only." Equivalent provisions for squads with one or more teams in Division 3 Central and Division 3 South, with the designations "Division 3 Central only" and "Division 3 South only" respectively. Once such a player has played, the designation cannot be withdrawn during the season.

3.4 Players registered with FIDE through federations other than England are not required to be members of the ECF.

3.5 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 they are selected to play.

3.6 The 4NCL Board may at its absolute discretion refuse to accept a player's registration.

3.7 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.

3.8 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.

3.9 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 paid for each registration above a squad's allocation (see rule 3.2). 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 rule 6.

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 rule 12.3).
- 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 wild card rules. In this instance, a wild card 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 wild card 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 deemed to be English and allocated a FIN by the ECF when the appropriate rating file is submitted.
- 6.3 A fee of £10 (Divisions 1 and 2) or £5 (all other Divisions) shall be paid for each wild card, no later than the start of play of the match in which the wild card first plays. There is no fee for each subsequent game played by the wild card over the course of a weekend.
- 6.4 A wildcard is not required to be a member of the ECF, but English players 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 & 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.
- 6.6 A team in any other division may play up to four wildcards in each match provided not more than one of the wild cards plays in the top half of the team.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 No player may play as a wildcard on more than one weekend during the season.

7 Organisation of the divisions

- 7.1 All Divisions will be played as Swiss tournaments 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 converted to an equivalent FIDE rating. Managers may elect to use the latest published national rating in place of a FIDE rating for any player, provided this is declared prior to the player playing in that season. If, however, a player first gains a FIDE rating or a national rating during the season, the manager may then elect to use it provided this decision is communicated before the player next plays. Such an election is irrevocable for the season.

- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 Exceptionally, if there is a conflict between the 100-point rule and the gender or age requirements of Divisions 1 & 2, a single player may be lower rated than would otherwise have been necessary. However, no junior player may break the 100-point rule when compared with another junior and no adult player may break the 100-point rule when compared with adult players of the same gender.
- 8.5 The Chief Arbiter is empowered to require a change to team lists if there is a breach of the spirit of rule 8.4.
- 8.6 The ratings of players who have been geographically designated need not be compared with the ratings of players at other venues.
- 8.7 Any complaint about the composition of a team must be made 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 or age requirements of Divisions 1 & 2 and geographical necessity.

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 weekend.
- 9.3 The penalty imposed on a team for late submission of its team list must be paid within seven days of the relevant weekend, or within seven days of an appeal being unsuccessful. Failure to pay will result in the exclusion of the team from future weekends until the fine is paid (see rule 14.2).
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 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.
- 9.6 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 wild card, and are rated at least 100 points lower than the player they replace.
- 10.3 The substitution must meet any applicable age or 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 Senior 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 shall be 40 moves in 1 hour 30 minutes plus 30 seconds per move, followed by the rest of the game in 30 minutes plus 30 seconds per move.
- 11.4 Appeals against game point penalties 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 If both teams default on the same board, no default penalties will be incurred.
- 11.7 A team defaulting a game for whatever reason will incur a penalty of £20 per defaulted game unless a successful appeal has been made. This penalty will not apply to the first game defaulted by a team during the season.
- 11.8 A 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.
- 11.9 If a team defaults an entire match for whatever reason in any other circumstances it will incur a fine of £50 unless a successful appeal has been made. In all instances where a team defaults a match other teams will be re-paired as necessary.
- 11.10 The default fines of a team must be paid within seven days of the default, or within seven days of an appeal being unsuccessful, unless the Chief Arbiter determines otherwise. Failure to pay will result in the exclusion of the team from future weekends until the fine is paid (see rule 14.2).
- 11.11 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 £250 for a team in Divisions 1 and 2 or £100 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 [Anti-Cheating Policy](#) will apply to the event.
- 12.2 The starting times shall normally be 2pm on the first day of the weekend, 12 noon 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 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 30 seconds per move, followed by the rest of the game in 50 minutes plus 30 seconds per move.
- 12.7 The failure of a player to appear within one hour after the start of play will be treated as a default.
- 12.8 When asked about a player's possible offer or acceptance of a draw, a captain may agree, refuse or tell the player to refer to the match result sheet. In no circumstances may the captain look at any game between receiving the request and giving a decision.
- 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.
- 12.10 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.
- 12.11 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.

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 The teams finishing in 1st to 12th place in Division 1 & 2 will compose Division 1 in the 2022-23 season. The teams finishing in 13th to 21st place will compose Division 1 & 2 in the 2022-23 season. The remaining teams in Division 1 & 2 will be relegated to Division 3 in 2022-23.

The team finishing in 1st place in each of Division 3 South, Division 3 Central and Division 3 North will be promoted to Division 2 in 2022-23.

The remainder of Division 3 South, Division 3 Central and Division 3 North in 2022-23 will be filled by the teams based on their final placing in the corresponding divisions in 2021-22 until the number of teams in each division is 12. The remaining teams in Division 3 South, Division 3 Central and Division 3 North will be placed in Division 4 South, Division 4 Central and Division 4 North in 2022-23, unless the Chief Arbiter decides the number of entries at that venue is too few to organise such a division.

- 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 For the 2022-23 season, in Divisions 1, 2, 3 South, 3 Central and 3 North, no more than one team from any club will be permitted to play in the same division. If it is not possible to organise a Division 4 at a venue, then this rule will not apply to Division 3 at that venue. 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 club 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, 3 South, 3 Central and 3 North is maintained.
- 13.5 If extra teams are needed to be promoted to Division 2, the teams which are in second place in each of Division 3 South, Division 3 Central and Division 3 North are to be ranked by rating performance. If extra teams are still needed, this process will apply to the teams which are in third place in each of Division 3 South, Division 3 Central and Division 3 North, and so on.

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 4NCL 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 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.
- 14.5 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.
- 14.6 In all cases the decisions of the Management Board shall be final.

15 Website Terms and Conditions

- 15.1 The Four Nations Chess League does not accept responsibility for the content of other websites to which the site links.
- 15.2 In addition to the information referred to in rule 3.7 the website will include names, telephone numbers, and email addresses of 4NCL Officials and Arbiters, and team captains and managers.