

England Hockey League 2019-20 - Update



ENGLAND
HOCKEY

England Hockey is announcing a number of key changes to the England Hockey Men's League and Investec Women's Hockey League for 2019-20.

Over the past few months the England Hockey Elite Domestic Game Panel (EDG Panel) has been discussing improvements that can be made to the leagues. The Panel is a group of club representatives that were selected by clubs participating in the league chaired by Andy Tapley, a member-elected England Hockey Board member.

The Elite Domestic Game Panel was chosen via a vote of England Hockey League clubs in September 2018, it includes representatives from the following clubs. Brooklands MU, Bowdon, Canterbury, Clifton Robinsons, East Grinstead, Hampstead and Westminster, Holcombe, Loughborough University, Reading and Team Bath Buccaneers.

The panel was set up to ensure that clubs and England Hockey work closely to promote the success of elite clubs, working on mutual aims to ensure that there is an alignment to create long-term systemic success for both England Hockey and English clubs. This group is the primary consultative body that England Hockey uses to engage effectively with the clubs playing at the highest levels domestically.

Aside to discussing a long-term vision for domestic hockey the group has identified some immediate changes for next season. The first set of which are announced here, with more improvements to follow.

The most significant changes are as follows:

- For the 2019-20 season the Premier Division will play 12 games before Christmas and 6 after with the intent of allowing more international player availability for club hockey.
- League Semi-Finals will be held at home club venues and the Finals Day at Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre.
- The number of non-EU players a club can register will increase from 2 to 3.
- Changes have been made to simplify relegation and promotion arrangements at the end of 2019-20. For consistency in all divisions the 9th placed team will have a chance to stay in their league.

A number of other smaller changes have also been made relating to the minimum player age and second team regulations. Detailed changes are available in Appendix One.

Further work is being undertaken on the approach to the new FIH rules and the wider communications surrounding the league, these will be announced soon.

Appendix One on page 2

Appendix One:

There are number of amendments to EHL regulations that were included in the league structure paper of March 2018 as set out by the Elite Domestic Game Panel and approved by the England Hockey Board.

1. ENGLAND HOCKEY LEAGUE 2019-20 – PLAY-OFFS

There are minor revisions to the process for EHL promotion and relegation within the three tiers of the new league in 2019-2020. These will be incorporated into Regs 5.3, 5.4.

The processes were originally set out in the overall league structure paper in March 2018 as follows

i. Premier > < Division One North & South

- *10th Premier relegated. Div1 1N&S winners play off for 1 place. Loser of this game plays 9th Premier for a 2nd place in Premier*

ii. Division One North & South > < Conference North West East

- *9th & 10th Div1N&S relegated. 1st Conference NWE promoted. 2nd Conference NWE play off for another place in Div1N&S.*

iii. Conference North West East > < Regional Premier Divisions - South North East Midlands West.

- *10th Conference NWE relegated. 1st Regional Premier SNEWM promoted. 9th Conference NWE play off for another place in Conference NEW*

The revised processes are as follows

i. Premier > < Division One North & South

- *The 10th placed team in the Premier Division is relegated to Division One North & South.*
- *The Division 1 North & South winners play off at a neutral venue for a place in the Premier Division.*
- *The loser of this game plays the 9th placed team in the Premier Division over two matches, home and away, for a place in the Premier Division. The aggregate score will determine the winner.*

ii. Division One North & South > < Conference North West East

- *The two 10th placed teams in Division One North & South are relegated to the Conference East, North, West.*
- *The 9th placed team in Division One North & South with the highest number of points retain their position in Division One North & South. The other 9th placed team is relegated to the Conference East, North, West.*
- *The three Conference East, North, West winners are promoted to Division One North & South*

iii. Conference North West East > < Regional Premier Divisions - South North East Midlands West.

- *The three 10th placed teams in Conference East, North, West are relegated.*
- *The 9th placed team in Conference East, North, West with the highest number of points retain their Conference position. The other two 9th placed team are relegated to the Regional Leagues*
- *The 5 Regional Premier Division winners are promoted to Conference East, North, West.*

The rationale for these revisions is

- It means that for all teams in the Premier / Division One N&S play offs relegation or not getting promoted does not rest on one game.
- This removes the need for three team play-offs which are time consuming and challenging logistically for clubs
- In Division One North & South and Conference East North West this will reward the 9th placed teams who perform the best during the league season.

2. LEAGUE FINALS

The league finals will retain their existing format - Semi finals 1st v 4th and 2nd v 3rd, followed by a final. However the semi finals will be played at the home venues of the first named team scheduled for 29 March 2020 with the final scheduled a week later, Sunday 5 April 2020, at a neutral venue. If players are not available for the league semi final and final due to senior international commitments the tournament will be rescheduled to slip dates of 18-19 April 2020 played over one weekend at one venue.

3. MINIMUM AGE OF PLAYERS

Regulation 4.2.4, 2018-19 version reproduced below, will be amended so that for 2019-20 the minimum age for participation in the EHL is 13 in Conferences and Division One but remains 15 for the Premier Division.

4.2.4 A player must be aged 15 to be eligible to participate in the EHL. If a player is under the age of 15 prior to the registration deadline set out in Regulation 4.2.9 they may be registered and their eligibility to participate post-dated to the date upon which the player becomes 15.

4. NON-EU PLAYERS

As agreed in the league structure paper of March 2018, Reg 4.2.13, 2018-19 version reproduced below, will be amended so that for 2019-20 the maximum number of players registered in line with this regulation is increased from two to three. It is a club's responsibility to ensure that any player registered under this regulation and who plays in the EHL does so in line with the terms of any visa used for entry into UK.

4.2.13 An EHL team shall not be allowed to register more than two players who do not:

- (1) Hold a European Union or UK Passport, or*
- (2) Have a permanent right of abode, or indefinite leave to remain, as defined by Sections 1 and 2 of the Immigration Act 1971 (as amended from time to time), or*
- (3) Hold a current valid Ancestry Visa or Family of a Settled Person Visa, for a right to remain in the United Kingdom.*

A player wishing to register for an EHL team must indicate in the appropriate section on their registration, the option relevant to them as specified above.

4.2.13.1 Players from the UK, Isle of Man, Channel Islands and Gibraltar together with those holding dual passport eligibility where one such eligibility is that of a European Union member state will be considered to have no limitation as to their ability to be registered.

4.2.13.2 A player who does not hold any passport must be eligible to hold a passport of the UK or a European Union State.

4.2.13.3 The onus of proof regarding eligibility is on the registering team.

4.2.13.4 The EHCD shall decide any dispute regarding eligibility and shall be entitled to request such written or oral evidence, as it considers necessary.

5. PLAYER REGISTRATIONS

There will be no limit to Player Registration numbers however clubs will be required to register a minimum of 25 players and clubs with a 2nd XI in the EHL will be required to register 50 players.

The regulations relating to player eligibility for clubs with two teams in the EHL will be based on the following principles

- i. Where a club has two teams in the EHL a player can only play for one team in a weekend (for the purpose of the regulations in order to cover midweek matches a weekend shall be deemed to be from Monday to Sunday in any one week). Save that where a club has two 1st team matches and one 2nd team in a weekend a player may play one 1st team match and one 2nd team match subject to the points below.
- ii. Where a club has a 2nd team match(es) on a weekend and no 1st team match a player who has played in 75% or more of a club's 1st team matches in the EHL up to that time, may not play for a club's 2nd team.
- iii. A club's 1st XI and 2nd XI will each be able register a maximum of three "overseas" players. See Reg 4.2.13. However these players will not be interchangeable. Any movement of players between teams will be undertaken in a similar process with the requirements of EHL transfers.
- iv. For the purpose of the regulations i. where a percentage of matches played is shown this relates to the time since a player's registration to play in the EHL for that club in that current season and ii. any matches that a player has played for a different EHL club prior to a transfer shall not be counted.
- v. After 10 rounds of 1st team matches of the season and at any time after that, a player who has played in 75% or more of a club's 1st team matches in the EHL, may not play for a club's 2nd team in the EHL. (regular season or play offs).
- vi. To be eligible to participate for a club 2nd team in their last three matches of the regular season or any end of season play offs, a player who has played for a club's 1st team (ie in 1 game or more) must have played in 50% or more of a club's 2nd team matches during the regular season prior to the match.
- vi. Clubs may declare a player unavailable due to injury. This must be certified by a doctor or physiotherapist. Such players may count matches where they are unavailable as "games played for a club's 2nd XI" in line with point v. outlined above.