



2026 Lightning Cup and Challenge Cup Competition Rules

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LAWS SUMMARY FOR U13 to U17 BOYS (LIGHTNING CUP)

	U13	U15	U17
Playing Numbers	10 (plus reserves up to 16 total)	10 (plus reserves up to 16 total)	10 (plus reserves up to 16 total)
Rolling Replacements	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Playing Time	2 x 20 mins	2 x 20 mins	2 x 20 mins
Ball Size	Size 5	Size 5	Size 5
Lifting teammate in Lineout	Can pre-grip on shorts Lifting on legs - not permitted	Can pre-grip on shorts Lifting on legs not permitted	Can pre-grip on shorts Lifting on legs permitted
Scrum	1.5m push (maximum) Crotch-bind - not permitted	1.5m push Crotch-bind - not permitted	1.5m push
Foul Play (Yellow Card)	5 minutes Sit within team area No replacement	5 minutes Sit within team area No replacement	5 minutes Sit within team area No replacement

LAWS SUMMARY FOR U13 to U17 GIRLS (LIGHTNING CUP)

	U13	U15	U17
Playing Numbers	10 (plus reserves up to 16 total)	10 (plus reserves up to 16 total)	10 (plus reserves up to 16 total)
Rolling Replacements	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Playing Time	2 x 20 mins	2 x 20 mins	2 x 20 mins
Ball Size	Size 4	Size 4	Size 4
Lifting teammate in Lineout	Can pre-grip on shorts Lifting on legs - not permitted	Can pre-grip on shorts Lifting on legs not permitted	Can pre-grip on shorts Lifting on legs not permitted
Scrum	1.5m push (maximum) Crotch-bind - not permitted	1.5m push (maximum) Crotch-bind - not permitted	1.5m push (maximum) Crotch-bind - not permitted
Foul Play (Yellow Card)	5 minutes Sit within team area No replacement	5 minutes Sit within team area No replacement	5 minutes Sit within team area No replacement

OTHER LAWS TO NOTE FOR U13 to U17 (LIGHTNING CUP)

Scrum Cadence	Scrum engagement sequence is CROUCH – BIND – SET. When crouched, the distance between opposing front row should be close enough that players' heads are interlinked approximately ear-to-ear. Must be a clear, non-verbal pause between "BIND" and "SET"
Contested Scrums	The following scrum patterns apply when one (or both) team(s) are playing with less than 14 players on the pitch. The opposition team are required to match these numbers in the contested scrum: 10 players = 5 in the scrum = 3-2 formation (i.e. no flankers or #8)
Uncontested Scrums	<p>Uncontested Scrums as a result of sending off, temporary suspension or injury must be played with eight (5) players from each team in the scrum (unless Game On Rules are being applied).</p> <p>The team feeding the ball must win the ball. Number 8 can pick from the base of the scrum.</p> <p>Where only one team is required to nominate uncontested scrums, then the team concerned must play with one player fewer on the pitch than would otherwise be.</p> <p>If, subsequently, a qualified front rower becomes available so that scrums can be contested then that player will be allowed onto the field and the team may return to the appropriate complement of players.</p> <p>If neither team has a suitably training front row available to commence the match, then the match will be played entirely with uncontested scrums, even if suitably trained front row players for either team subsequently become available. Both teams will be permitted to play with their full complement of players.</p>

LAWS SUMMARY FOR CHALLENGE CUP

	Women	Men
Playing Numbers	10 (plus reserves up to 16 total)	15 (plus reserves up to 23 total)
Rolling Replacements	Unlimited -no more than 3 substitutions at any one time	12 movements (maximum)
Playing Time	2 x 20 mins Finals to include Injury Times	2 x 40 min <i>plus</i> injury time
Foul Play (Yellow Card)	5 minutes Sit on allocated chair on half-way	10 minutes Sit on allocated chair on half-way
Contested/Uncontested Scrums	Permitted to commence match with uncontested scrums (where required)	Must commence match with contested scrums and meet Contested Scrum policy

OTHER LAWS TO NOTE FOR SENIORS

Scrum Cadence	<p>Scrum engagement sequence is CROUCH – BIND – SET.</p> <p>Engagement When both sides are square, stable and stationary, the referee calls “crouch”. 1. The front-rows then adopt a crouched position if they have not already done so. Their heads and shoulders are no lower than their hips, a position that is maintained for the duration of the scrum. 2. The front-rows crouch with their heads to the left of their immediate opponents', so that no player's head is touching the neck or shoulders of an opponent. 3. Hookers must have a 'brake' foot positioned to help stability and to avoid axial loading. Must be a clear, non-verbal pause between “BIND” and “SET”</p>
Contested Scrums	<p>When a team is reduced to fewer than 10 (Challenge Cup Women) or 15 (Challenge Cup Men) for any reason, then the number of players in each team in the scrum may be similarly reduced. Where a permitted reduction is made by one team, there is no requirement for the other team to make a similar reduction. However, a team must not have fewer than five players in the scrum.</p>
Mayday Procedure	<p>The Mayday Safety Procedure has been developed to enable players and referees to take prompt action to relieve the pressure if this situation occurs in a scrum.</p>
Uncontested Scrums	<p>Uncontested Scrums as a result of sending off, temporary suspension or injury must be played with five (5) players in Challenge Cup Women or eight (8) players in Challenge Cup Men from each team in the scrum. See the NTRU <i>Player Numbers and Contested + Uncontested Scrums</i> policy for more information where teams turn up with less than 15 players for the match. The team feeding the ball must win the ball. Number 8 can pick from the base of the scrum.</p> <p>Where one team is required to nominate uncontested scrums, then the team concerned must play with one player fewer on the pitch than would otherwise be allowed (i.e., play with a maximum of 14 players on the pitch). If, subsequently, a suitably trained front row player becomes available so that scrums can be contested then that player will be allowed onto the field and the team may return to the appropriate complement of on-field players.</p> <p>If neither team has a suitably trained front row available to commence the match, then the match will be played entirely with uncontested scrums, even if suitably trained front row players for either team subsequently become available. Both teams will be permitted to play with their full complement of players.</p>

OPERATIONAL POLICY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area:	2026 Challenge Cup and Lightning Cup Competition Rules
Procedure Title:	Team Forfeit Policy
Date Last Modified:	17 December 2025

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

- This procedure is to be implemented when a team has no alternative but to concede a scheduled match
- The purpose of this procedure is to address the actions and outcomes associated with a match forfeit
- This procedure is applicable to matches in the Junior, Senior, and Women's competitions

STEPS – Forfeit BEFORE match commences

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	Team Coaches and Managers become aware of insufficient players to field a Team shall inform their Club President as soon as possible, but not later than 24 hours prior to a scheduled fixture	Players Team Manager
2	As soon as possible upon the decision to forfeit the Club President or Coach must notify the following by Email. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Competition Manager – fraser.brydon@rugby.com.au• The Opposing Club President• The NTRU General Manager – danila.lochrin@nt.rugby• The President of NTRRA - ntrugbyreferees@gmail.com	Club President Coach
3	Five (5) competition points for the forfeit match shall be awarded to non-offending team based on a winning margin of twenty eight (28) to nil (4 converted tries 28-0). While the offending team will be charged minus two (-2) competition points for the forfeiture of the match. Only the opposing team shall be permitted to submit a team sheet for the forfeited match. Submitted Team Sheet must have a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 23 players for A Grade, B Grade, Women and Juniors (U13s and above), 17 for Girls (u13-u17).	NTRU

STEPS – Forfeit AFTER match commences

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	<p>After a match commences, if a team is unable to have at least 10 players participating in the match, then the team will be deemed to have forfeited the match.</p> <p>Participating players includes players on the field, reserve players and temporarily unavailable players (e.g., yellow card, blood injury)</p> <p>Participating players excludes players who are injured and unable to return to play or sent off (red card)</p>	Players Team Manager
2	<p>Forfeit after match commences, but before Half Time</p> <p>Only the opposing team will be permitted to submit a team sheet for the forfeited match. Submitted Team Sheet must have a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 23 players for A Grade, B Grade, Women and Juniors (U13s and above), 17 for Girls (u13-u17).</p>	NTRU
3	<p>Forfeit after match commences, during or after half time</p> <p>Both teams will be permitted to submit their team sheets accordingly</p>	Team Manager NTRU
4	<p>Abandonment of Match</p> <p>If a team walks off, or abandons a match without significant reason the match will be deemed as a forfeit. The opposition team will be deemed the winner and five (5) competition points for the forfeit match shall be awarded to the opposing team based on a winning margin of twenty eight (28) to nil (4 converted tries 28-0)</p>	

OTHER INFORMATION

- This document supports the 2025-26 Darwin Club Competition Rules
- Where this document and the Competition Rules do not align, the Competition Rules will take precedence

OPERATIONAL POLICY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area:	2026 Challenge Cup and Lightning Cup Competition Rules
Procedure Title:	Wet Weather & Lightning Guidelines
Date Last Modified:	17 December 2025

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The sound of thunder should serve as an immediate warning of lightening danger. The Club Official / Ground Marshall is responsible for monitoring weather and should notify all team management and referees prior to any fixture if a weather enforced stoppage is likely. In the event of lightening and storms the Match Manager is to notify the referee to halt games by sounding an air horn with 3 blasts before moving all persons to shelter (players, staff, and spectators).

PROCEDURE

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	In the event of a Severe Weather or Cyclone Warning being issued by the Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au/nt , games will be cancelled. Notification will be made via the NTRU Facebook Page and NTRU General Manager shall phone Club Presidents	NTRU General Manager
2	If prior to or during games, lightning is visible, apply the; "30 - 30 Rule" ie Count the time from seeing lightning to when accompanying thunder clap is heard. If less than 30 seconds (storm is less than 10kms away) go immediately to a safer place. Wait 30 minutes after the last thunder clap before continuing play.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
3	In the event of thunderstorm/lightning, without official warning in place, where player/officials/spectator welfare is deemed unsafe by either team coach (or referee), play should be suspended.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
4	If the conditions improve (abiding by 30-30 rule) i.e. rain stops or eases to what is considered a safe level by coaches/referees and the playing surface can be cleared or has drained sufficiently to enable play to safely re-commence, games should then be completed. Modification to the duration of the game may be required. A Referee retains the right to stop play at any time should they deem playing conditions unsafe.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall Referee
5	If weather prevents play from resuming, then the current score will stand and competition points scoring should apply. If the time elapsed hasn't reach half time, the fixture is to be rescheduled. If rescheduling cannot take place prior to the final round, the match will result in a draw (2 points) with no points awarded on For/Against.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall

OTHER INFORMATION

- [See World Rugby Lightning Guidelines](#)
- This document supports the 2025-26 Darwin Club Competition Rules
- Notwithstanding any of the provisions contained in these rules, the referee has the right to declare the match will not be played and therefore any of the provisions of these rules is subject to the referee's final say pursuant to the Laws of the Game on whether the match will be played.
- As the top NTRU Competition, A-Grade Matches – should be given every opportunity to be played. Pursuant to this, A-Grade Matches will take priority of scheduling and timing.
- Where this document and the Competition Rules do not align, the Competition Rules document will take precedence.

OPERATIONAL POLICY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area:	2026 Challenge Cup and Lightning Cup Competition Rules
Procedure Title:	Match Day Procedure
Date Last Modified:	17 December 2025

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

NTRU have introduced this policy to standardise the Match Day experience for all participants involved. This procedure is to be implemented and followed by all Clubs and Teams for each Match to be played at their home ground.

PROCEDURE

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	<p>Each 'Home' Club is responsible for providing a Club Official for every match that is conducted at their venue excluding Skyring Rugby Park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ball Boys for A-Grade fixtures (must provide at Rugby Park)• Each facility is responsible for providing an appointed Club Official for all matches played at the venue.• The Club Official is the point of contact for all Ground Marshalls, Match Officials and appointed staff.• The Club Official is responsible for all facility issues, safety of patrons, any escalated behaviour issues.• The Club Official should have keys with full access to the facility in particular but not limited to ambulance access.• NTRU shall ensure an appointed Club Official is present for all NTRU hosted fixtures.• The Club Official must be clearly identifiable and be known to key Club Delegates.	<p>Club President NTRU</p>
2	<p>Each Club is responsible for providing at least one (1) Ground Marshall for every match day who has completed the mandatory training and is ready, willing and able to fulfill their role.</p> <p>On games scheduled at Skyring Rugby Park which are not considered a Club's 'home game'. The NTRU Match Day Manager will also ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Each club supplies a Ground Marshall for their team playing at the venue on that day.▪ Each Ground Marshall is aware of their responsible for managing the off field environment of their members, supporters and guests. <p>Visiting Clubs/Teams will also provide a Ground Marshall. In this case, the Ground Marshall's are required to work together in managing the off-field environment.</p>	<p>NTRU General Manager Match Day Manager Ground Marshall Clubs</p>
3	<p>Each Ground Marshall will be responsible for completing the Ground Marshall course BEFORE being appointed as a Ground Marshall.</p> <p>The Ground Marshall course is an online course via the Rugby Learning Centre (30 min).</p> <p>A referee will not commence a match until he has identified a Ground Marshall is appointed for the match they are officiating.</p>	<p>Match Day Manager Ground Marshall Referee</p>
4	<p>Set up the ground correctly in accordance World Rugby Laws of the Game including field markings, flags and corner posts (as documented on the Match Day Inspection report).</p>	<p>Match Day Manager Ground Marshall</p>

5	In ground set-up, include a referee table/chairs set-up on half way line (between home/away team areas) and at least 5m back from the touch-line. Chairs are for yellow carded players, and 4th match official (if available).	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
6	Wherever practical, provide facilities for the accurate and legible display of scores during each Match.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
7	Wherever practical, ensure that the scoreboard is constantly maintained to reflect the current score during each Match.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
8	Home team must provide three (3) match balls all of which must comply with the specifications and requirements set down in the World Rugby Laws of the Game. For all fixtures in the Darwin Senior Competitions, Gilbert Barbarian branded balls or equivalent must be used for the following matches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Grade ▪ B Grade ▪ Women's 	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
9	Provide First Aid facilities and equipment to the extent required to comply with any Player safety directives issued from time to time by Rugby Australia and notified to the Club by the Union, and including those items listed in the Match Day Inspection report.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
10	Provide a clearly visible and safe barrier around the Playing Enclosure, at minimum 5 meters from the sideline (per the Match Day Inspection report).	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
11	Mark an area 6 meters x 3 meters (Technical Zone) which may be utilized by Trainers and Water Runners only. Other match participants (including Coach, Manager and Reserve Players) should be in the designated "Team Bench" location at least 5 meters from the touch line. Refer to diagram below.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
12	Ensure at least one qualified first aid trainer is present at the commencement of the Match	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall
13	Liaise with the appointed referee to ensure matches commence as scheduled.	Match Day Manager Ground Marshall

OTHER INFORMATION

- This document supports the 2025-26 Darwin Club Competition Rules
- Where this document and the Competition Rules do not align, the Competition Rules document will take precedence.
- Team Sheet and scoring procedure: Team sheets are to be uploaded to Rugby Xplorer prior to kick off to ensure all players match records are submitted. This allows time for teams to ensure players have registered correctly. All scoring will be done in the Match Day Manager application / program.
 - Growing the game of rugby in the Northern Territory is a foundation requirement of the NTRU. One element used to achieve this foundation is through assisting media and livestreaming opportunities.
- Scores are to be finalised within 15 minutes of game completion. Teams MUST consult with the referee who will confirm the correct score and details of any carded players are recorded. The referee will be responsible for finalizing the game in Rugby Xplorer.
- It is the responsible of each Club to ensure the data in the Rugby Match Day application / program is accurate and correct.
 - Where technical problems are experienced on game day with Rugby Xplorer, the referee will be responsible for ensuring both teams agree on the correct score. Teams have until 1200hrs, of the next working day to ensure Rugby Match Day program is updated and correct. This correct information

includes a Team Sheet and match details (Yellow cards, Red cards, correct score including player numbers of who scores tries, conversions and penalties).

- Teams who fail to meet this requirement within the designated timeframe will be allocated the score recorded in Rugby Xplorer. This may mean:
 - The points scored may be zero (0) affecting a teams for and against end of season total;
 - The Team Sheet from the game may not count for player eligibility purposes; and
 - Individual players may miss out accumulating points for tries scored, conversions and penalties kicked which count towards end of season awards.
- Rugby Australia Medical & First Aid Requirements are outlined in a document accessible here: <http://www.rugbyau.com/about/codes-and-policies/safety-and-welfare/first-aid-and-medical>

MEDICAL PROCEDURES

Concussion Management

There are separate “on day” and “post day” procedures that must be adhered to as part of the concussion management guidelines. All club coaches, trainers and committee members must annually revise the guidelines and procedures for Concussion Management. There are three separate checklists to be adhered to for different persons involved. The Concussion Management Checklist includes “players, club/team manager, and competition manager.” These lists are available through the link provided below.

<http://www.rugbyau.com/about/codes-and-policies/safety-and-welfare/concussion-management>

Players suspected of concussion must not drive until proven otherwise.

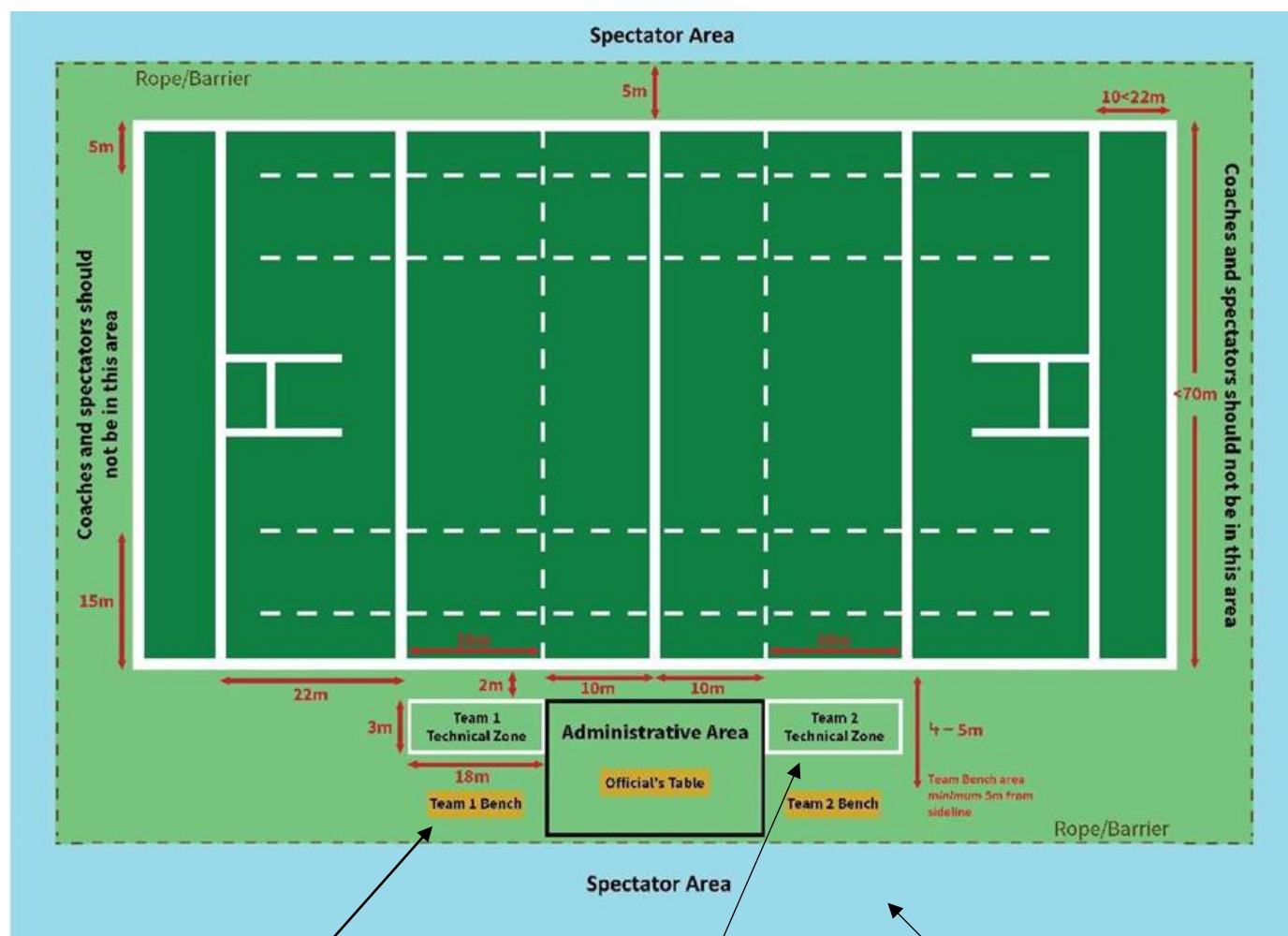
First Aid

The [Rugby Australia Medical and First Aid Requirements](#) outline the medical and safety guidelines for the management of injury and the first aid requirements for community Rugby matches including the below:

- Minimum accreditation requirements for first aid personnel
- Mayday call, procedure and flowchart
- Risk Management
- Smart Rugby

In the case of serious injury (ie suspected spinal injury or fatality), the Rugby Australia Serious Injury Protocol MUST be followed <https://www.rugbyau.com/about/codes-and-policies/safety-and-welfare/serious-injuries>. In the first instance, the Serious Injury Case Manager (SICM) must be notified on 1800 036 156.

FIELD MARKING PLAN



TEAM BENCHES

- One area for each team
- Minimum 5m from touch line
- Located behind team "Technical Zone"
- The following should be in the team bench area:
 - Team Officials (Coaches/Manager)
 - Reserve Players

TECHNICAL ZONES

- A zone for each team
- Only the following are permitted in the Technical Area during a match:
 - Trainer / Physio
 - Water Runners
 - NO COACHES

SPECTATOR AREA

- This area is for anyone not directly involved in the match. This area should be roped or barricaded at least 5m from the playing area.
- Coaches are permitted to be situated in the Spectator Area.

OPERATIONAL POLICY

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area:	2026 Challenge Cup and Lightning Cup Competition Rules
Procedure Title:	Conduct of Finals Series
Date Last Modified:	17 December 2025

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The following provides clarity on the NTRU finals series, and what happens in the case of a draw at full-time of a match during the final's series.

Finals format will be determined on an annual basis by NTRU having sought consultation with the Competition Committee. This format will be promulgated to Members as soon as reasonably practicable. No Player or Match Official who is Financially Indebted to NTRU (particularly where that debt is not being actively serviced) will be eligible to participate in any Match in a Finals Series

FINALS SERIES FORMAT

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	ALL Competitive Matches (U13 – Seniors) will play the following finals series format based on final competition ladder positions; GRAND FINALS Grand Final – 1 st vs 2 nd	NTRU General Manager

DRAW IN ANY MATCH IN FINALS SERIES

STEP	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
1	In any Challenge Cup Match conducted in a Finals Series (including a Grand Final) where the scores: 1) are equal at the end of the allotted period of play (including any injury time) then: i) an extra period of ten (10) minutes playing time each way, without an interval, will be played, being a total of twenty (20) minutes; ii) Teams will change ends before the start of extra time and at the half-way point of extra time; and iii) the period of extra time must commence not later than five (5) minutes after the end of the ordinary period of play. 2) remain equal at the end of extra time then; i) an extra period of up to five (5) minutes playing time, without an interval, will be played until one (1) team scores (Sudden Death Time); ii) Teams will change ends before the start of Sudden Death Time; iii) Sudden Death Time must commence not later than five (5) minutes after the end of extra time; and iv) the first team to score during Sudden Death Time will be the winner. 3) remain equal at the end of Sudden Death Time the Team participating in that Game which was allocated the highest position in the Minor Round points table will be declared the winner.	NTRU General Manager Match Day Manager Ground Marshall Clubs
3	In any other Competitive Match (U13, U15, U17) (including a Grand Final) where the scores: 1) are equal at the expiration of the ordinary period of play (excluding injury time) then an extra period of five (5) minutes playing time each way will be played as follows: i) Teams will change ends at the expiration of ordinary time; ii) extra time will commence not later than five (5) minutes after the expiration of ordinary time;	NTRU General Manager Match Day Manager Ground Marshall Clubs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) one (1) period of five (5) minutes will be played; iv) the Teams will change ends at the expiration of the five (5) minutes without an interval; and v) a second period of five (5) minutes will be played. <p>2) remain equal at the expiration of extra time, the Team participating in that Game which was allocated the highest position in the Minor Round points table will be declared the winner.</p>	
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OTHER INFORMATION

- For eligibility to participate in NTRU Finals Series, refer to Appendix F – NTRU Player Eligibility Policy.
- This document supports the 2025-26 Darwin Club Competition Rules
- Where this document and the Competition Rules do not align, the Competition Rules document will take precedence.