



SAPPHIRE CUP REGULATIONS 2026



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SECTION 1: SAPHIRE CUP ORGANISATION & ADMISSION

1. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

- a. All Clubs participating in the Sapphire Cup are bound by the Sapphire Cup Competition Regulations as promulgated by Football NSW from time to time.
- b. These Competition Regulations (Regulations) shall apply to all Sapphire Cup matches administered by FNSW and may be amended by FNSW at any time.
- c. Where these regulations are silent on any particular aspect, then all Clubs, affiliated bodies and organisations shall first have regard to the Constitution, By-Laws, FA Rules and Regulations and where applicable rules and regulations of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and FIFA
- d. Terms defined in the Sapphire Cup Competition Regulations and Football NSW (FNSW) Rules of Competition shall have the same meaning in these Regulations unless otherwise stated.

2. CONTROL OF COMPETITIONS

- a. The administrative control and conduct of the Sapphire Cup by FNSW are vested in the Executive subject to any resolution by the Board to the contrary.

3. CONSEQUENCES FOR BREACH

- a. Any breach of these Regulations or failure to comply with any direction therein may result in a fine issued by FNSW or other sanction pursuant to the FNSW Grievance and Disciplinary Regulations.

4. OUTSTANDING DEBTS

- a. Treatment of outstanding debts will be as per the FNSW By-laws.
- b. For the avoidance of doubt, failure to comply with outstanding debts in accordance with the FNSW By-Laws may result in ineligibility to participate in Sapphire Cup Matches or forfeiture of completed Sapphire Cup Matches.
- c. This article applies to all Sapphire Cup Matches conducted by FNSW.

5. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

- d. The Executive will have the power to consider individual circumstances outside the prescribed limits of the Regulations should it be clear those special considerations are in the interests of the game.
- e. The decision by the Executive to review and consider individual circumstances under this section is not subject to appeal or review.

6. DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS AND PROCEEDINGS

- a. All Clubs, Players, Team Officials, Match Officials, spectators, or any person participating in any manner at a Sapphire Cup Match, or any associated event, will submit exclusively to the jurisdiction of the Grievance and Disciplinary Regulations and the Sapphire Cup Competition Regulations as applicable.
- b. Any and all disciplinary sanctions and related proceedings will be administered in accordance with the FNSW Grievance and Disciplinary Regulations.

7. UNFORESEEABLE CIRCUMSTANCE

- a. Nothing in these Regulations will prevent the Board from approving a course of action to meet unforeseeable circumstances not covered by the Regulations.

8. CUP FORMAT AND INFORMATION

- a. Entry is optional for 1st Grade teams of the NPL Womens NSW and Football NSW League One Women's for the 2026 Sapphire Cup.
- b. The Sapphire Cup will follow a gradual entry progression at the following stages:
 - i. Association Clubs will enter the Sapphire Cup in Round 2;

- ii. All Clubs in Football NSW League One Women's and NPL Womens NSW will enter the Sapphire Cup in Round 3.
- c. FNSW may amend the seeding of any Club within the draw as it deems necessary.
- d. All Round winners will proceed to the next Round.
- e. All Round draws will be random with no separation of seeds within each round.
- f. Where required, a bye round will fill any vacant slots in the draw process.
- g. FNSW may alter fixture kick off times and dates as it deems necessary.
- h. The competition progression of the Sapphire Cup will be as follows:

Round Number	Participant	Progression
Round 2	All Clubs outlined in Section 1 art. 8 b) i	All winners from Round 2 matches progress to Round 3
Round 3	All Clubs outlined in Section 1 art. 8 b) ii and winning teams from Round 2	All winners from Round 3 matches progress to Round 4
Round 4	All winning Clubs from Round 3 matches	All winners from Round 4 matches progress through to Round 5
Round 5	All winning Clubs from Round 4 matches	All winners from Round 5 matches progress through to Round 6
Round 6	All winning Clubs from Round 5 matches	All winners from Round 6 matches progress through to the Final.
Round 7	All winning Clubs from Round 6 matches	

SECTION 2: TECHNICAL REGULATIONS

1. MATCHES PLAYED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS OF THE GAME

- a. All Fixtures will be played in compliance with the Sapphire Cup Competition Regulations and these Regulations in force at the time and in accordance with Football Australia and FNSW By-Laws, regulations, codes and directives, and under the FIFA Laws of the Game.

2. MATCH BALLS

- a. The Home Club shall provide the Match Official with three (3) match balls (size 5) no later than 30 minutes prior to the start of the Sapphire Cup Match.
- b. Only licensed balls approved by FNSW may be used as match balls for Sapphire Cup Matches and warming up.
- c. Where directed by FNSW, Clubs must use the Official Sapphire Cup Match Ball.
- d. Failure to supply match balls will result in a fine of \$100 per match they are not supplied.

3. DURATION OF MATCH

- a. Each Sapphire Cup Match must consist of two (2) equal halves of forty-five (45) minutes to total a "full" regular period Sapphire Cup Match time of ninety (90) minutes, excluding any injury time played as determined by the Referee.
- b. The half-time break for each Sapphire Cup Match will be fifteen (15) minutes.

4. EXTRA TIME AND PENALTIES

- a. If at the conclusion of the regular period in any Sapphire Cup Match (including injury time), the scores between the two (2) Clubs are tied, then extra time of two (2) equal periods of fifteen (15) minutes will be played. The conditions of Law 10 of the FIFA Laws of the Game will apply.

5. SUBSTITUTION RULES

- a. Each team will be permitted to use a maximum of five (5) substitutes:
 - i. a maximum of 18 Players will be permitted on the digital team sheet, the 18th Player must be a substitute goalkeeper. If a Team does not have a substitute goalkeeper, that Team will be capped at 17 Players on the digital team sheet.
 - ii. To reduce disruption to the match, each team will have a maximum of three (3) opportunities to make substitutions during the match; substitutions may also be made at half time (do not count as one (1) of the three (3)).
 - iii. If both teams make a substitution at the same time, this will count as one (1) of the three (3) opportunities for each team.
 - iv. Unused substitutions and opportunities are carried forward into extra time.
 - v. each team will have one (1) additional substitution opportunity during Extra Time of a match up until the conclusion of Extra Time (whether or not the team has already used the full number of permitted substitution opportunities in normal time.
- b. A substitution can be made upon a Match Official being notified. A substitute Player must only enter the field of play:
 - i. after the Player being replaced has left the field of play
 - ii. after he receives a signal from the Referee; and
 - iii. at the half-way line and during a stoppage in the Sapphire Cup Match.
- c. The Player leaving the field must leave the field at the nearest point on the boundary line, unless otherwise directed by the referee

6. TECHNICAL AREA

- a. Only currently registered and eligible Players and Team Officials can occupy the technical area, at all times.
- b. A maximum of twelve (12) people are permitted in the technical area. These twelve (12) are up to seven (7) substitute Players (inclusive of a goalkeeper) and five (5) registered Team Officials.
- c. Seating will be supplied and placed in position by the home Club in sufficient quantity to seat twelve (12) personnel from each Club.

7. LIGHTING

- a. For Clubs that wish to play under lights must ensure that the facility lighting complies with the following:

Fixture	Average Horizontal Illumination
Association v Association	50 Lux
Association v Football NSW League One Womens	100 Lux
Football NSW League One Womens v Football NSW League One Womens	100 Lux
Association v NPL NSW Womens	200 Lux
Football NSW League One v NPL NSW Womens	200 Lux

- b. Portable lighting will not be permitted to bring the LUX rating up to 200
- c. Should a Club use a council ground, they must provide confirmation what time the lights turn off
 - i. If a Club cannot provide sufficient time the fixture will be reversed
- d. In the event of lighting failure:
 - i. The Home Club must immediately send a text message via the Football NSW after hours contact line, requesting a phone call for guidance, including whether the Match should be postponed;
 - ii. The Home Club must use its best endeavours and take all reasonable steps to enable the lights to be turned on, including but limited to, contacting the hirer of the Stadium (venue) to seek support and assistance, and allowing access for a qualified person to investigate the light switch box; and
 - iii. If, notwithstanding the actions of the Home Club, there is insufficient lighting for the Match to be played, the Match will be Abandon.

8. COLOURS

- a. Where colours clash in the opinion of the referee, The Away team must change.
- b. The Away team is second team indicated in draw unless otherwise advised by FNSW.
- c. All teams must wear numbered strip with no duplication of numbers.
- d. All teams must have with them at each match a complete official and reserve playing strip.

9. POSTPONED MATCHES AND FIXTURES

- a. If a Sapphire Cup Match is abandoned due to adverse weather conditions or a cause outside the reasonable control of either Club (including its Players and Officials) or 70% or more of the regular period being played and where, at the time of the Sapphire Cup Match being abandoned, the scores are not level, the result at the time of abandonment will be declared the final result.
- b. If a Sapphire Cup Match is abandoned due to adverse weather conditions or a cause outside the reasonable control of either Club (including its Players and Officials) either:
 - i. at the time of the Sapphire Cup Match being abandoned, the scores are level; or
 - ii. Less than 70% of the regular period having been played,

- c. The Sapphire Cup Match must be rescheduled by FNSW. Such rescheduling will require the Sapphire Cup Match to either restart from the beginning or recommence at the minute at which play was interrupted (to be determined at the sole and absolute discretion of FNSW. The following principles will apply to the recommencement of the Sapphire Cup Match:
- i. The Match will recommence with the same Players on the pitch and substitutes available as when the Sapphire Cup Match was initially postponed unless a player has received a suspension in matches conducted between the postponed match and the rescheduling of that match.
 - ii. Should a player have received a suspension in a match conducted between the postponed match and the rescheduling of that match that player:
 - a. Will not be eligible to participate in the rescheduled match
 - b. Will not be able to count the match as a stand down in relation to any fixture suspension
 - c. The Club will not be permitted to replace the player on the team sheet
 - d. If the player was on the field of play at the time of the postponement the player may be replaced by a substitute listed on the team sheet as long as the team has available substitutions as per the Regulations
 - e. If the Player was a substitute the number of available Players to substitute will decrease as they player cannot be replaced
 - iii. No additional substitutes may be added to the list of Players on the team sheet
 - iv. The Teams can make only the number of substitutions to which they were still entitled when the Match was postponed
 - v. Players sent off during the abandoned Match cannot be replaced
 - vi. FNSW will endeavour to appoint the same Match Officials to the completion of the Match, however, may appoint replacements should any or all of the Match Officials be unavailable
 - vii. The referee is the sole arbiter of elapsed time, and no protest may be lodged against the actual elapsed time as recorded by the referee
 - viii. Should a Match be abandoned due to the fault of one (1) Team, or should it be determined by FNSW that one (1) Team / Club is responsible for the delay to the Match, the remaining minutes will not be rescheduled for completion, and the Match will be determined as a forfeit against the Team / Club that is deemed guilty of the abandonment or responsible for the delay
 - ix. Where a fixture is incorrectly reported as abandoned by the Referee where circumstances show clearly that the match was postponed, FNSW will treat the Match as postponed

10. FORFEITS

- a. Should a Sapphire Cup Match not commence within 10 minutes of the start time in the match schedule or amended by FNSW, the Sapphire Cup Match will be forfeited by the team that has caused the delay to the start of the Sapphire Cup Match.
- b. Forfeits prior to the scheduled match day will result in a fine of \$500.
- c. Forfeits on the day of the scheduled match or without notice will result in a fine of \$500 per forfeited match plus relevant match official's fees.

11. MATCH SCHEDULE AND KICK-OFF TIMES

- a. Football NSW will communicate the official Match schedule for all Competitions
- b. Football NSW will determine the Stadiums of all Premiership, Championship and Cup Matches
- c. Final match dates and kick-off times for all Matches will be determined by the Executive
- d. All Matches must be conducted on the scheduled day and commence at the stipulated kick-off time.
- e. Failure to do so may result in a fine of \$200

- f. Football NSW, in setting down kick-off times, may start Matches at 8:00 am for any daytime Fixture which may include Saturday, Sunday or any Public Holiday
- g. Football NSW may also schedule midweek evening Matches to accommodate Premiership washed out or deferred Fixtures as well as Cup Competitions
- h. Should serious delays be experienced in Matches scheduled prior to a 1st grade Match, any number of Matches will be reduced in time, whilst retaining the principle of equal halves, to ensure that the 1st Grade Match commences on time
- i. Clubs will not arrange other Matches or Fixtures until after the official Matches and Fixtures are settled
- j. Clubs will not arrange other Matches or Fixtures that improperly interfere with other Clubs' home Competition Matches or Fixtures
- k. Any disputes between two (2) or more Clubs as to the arrangement of Fixtures will be referred to and decided by the Executive
- l. Notwithstanding any other Regulation on the same subject matter, the Executive reserves the right to alter or amend any Fixture after it has been nominated in the official Match schedule. The alterations could be to the date, Stadium, kick-off times or a combination of all providing the Clubs involved are given seven (7) days prior notice
- m. Changes to the official Match schedule for all Leagues will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Any application for a change of Stadium, Fixture and/or Match must be submitted to Football NSW, along with reasoning documentary proof of the "exceptional circumstance" validating the requirements for a Stadium change, Fixture and or Match change along with details of the rescheduled Stadium, Fixture and or Match, no later than seven (7) days prior to the scheduled Match
- n. Any application for a change to the official Match schedule within seven (7) days will only be considered by the Executive if in its absolute discretion it is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist, including if a Stadium has become unavailable at no fault of the Club. Details of the rescheduled Stadium, Fixture and or Match, must be submitted at the time of the request for a change to the official Match schedule.—

SECTION 3: ELIGIBILITY & DISCIPLINARY

1. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

a. Eligible Players:

- i. An eligible Player is one who has completed an online registration through National Registration System, either direct with a FNSW or with a FNSW Member Association.
- ii. No player shall be permitted to play for more than one Club in the Sapphire Cup and can only represent the Club to which they are currently registered to.

b. Ineligible Players:

An Ineligible Players is;

- i. Unregistered Players.
 - ii. Suspended Players.
 - iii. Football NSW may decide, in its absolute discretion, whether a Suspension or part thereof may be served in an abandon, cancelled or forfeited Match and any such decision is final and not subject to any challenge or appeal.
 - iv. A Player that has been expelled from a Match on the day/s prior to a Sapphire Cup Match but after the regular Disciplinary Committee hearing date.
 - v. A Player that has been expelled from a Match on the same day as the Sapphire Cup Match but played early in the day.
 - vi. A Player that is deemed ineligible due to any article of these Regulations or pursuant to the Sapphire Cup Competition Regulations, these Regulations and/or FNSW Grievance and Disciplinary Regulations.
- c. Any Team that fields an ineligible Player will automatically lose that Sapphire Cup Match on forfeit and be fined \$250.
- d. Additionally, the Club, Team Official/s and / or Player may further be sanctioned in accordance with the Sapphire Cup Competition Regulations and/or FNSW Grievance and Disciplinary Regulations.
- e. For clarity, it is the Clubs absolute responsibility to ensure that it fields eligible players in any Sapphire Cup Match

2. PLAYER AND TEAM REGISTRATIONS

- a. All teams must be registered online for their FNSW Association or FNSW Competition using the National Online Registration system, Play Football or in a system as approved by Football NSW
- b. For Clubs that participate in FNSW Associations or FNSW Competitions using the Dribl Competition Management system, Players will need to be allocated to the Sapphire Cup specific team, as provided for in the circulated guidelines for players to be deemed as registered for the Sapphire Cup and therefore eligible to participate.
- c. For FNSW Associations not using the Dribl Competition Management system, Players will need to be allocated to the Sapphire Cup specific team in Play Football or in a system as approved by Football NSW as provided in the circulated guidelines, to be deemed as registered for the Sapphire Cup and therefore eligible to participate.

3. PLAYER ROSTER

- a. All Clubs participating in the FNSW Sapphire Cup must nominate a max of 40 players registered in Play Football or in a system as approved by Football NSW.
- b. Dribl Associations must nominate players via Dribl
- c. Non Dribl associations must allocate players to FNSW Sapphire Cup team on Play Football or in an approved system by FNSW, no less than 48 hours prior to the day scheduled for the Club's FNSW

Sapphire Cup Match. Contained in the table are the maximum players permissible for registration in the Sapphire Cup:

Squad Total	Team Sheet
Maximum of 40 players	A maximum of eighteen (18) Players only may be listed on the team sheet, in accordance with section 4 art. 1 f)

d. A Club may add players to the squad total however a Club may not remove a player from the submitted squad total

4. DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

a. Yellow Cards:

- i. For the Sapphire Cup, three (3) Yellow Cards equate to a one (1) Match Suspension. Suspensions incurred due to the accumulation of Yellow Cards will apply to the next Sapphire Cup Match in which the suspended Player's Club competes in.
- ii. If a Club is eliminated from the Sapphire Cup and a player has received a third Yellow Card in the match that the Club was eliminated, the suspension will apply for the players next Sapphire Cup Match in which the Player competes in. Yellow Card suspensions are Sapphire Cup specific and are required to be served in the Sapphire Cup.

b. Red Cards:

- i. For the Sapphire Cup, the Minimum Sanctions set out in the Table of Offences (as outlined in the FNSW 2026 Grievance and Disciplinary Regulations) must be applied by FNSW to Red Card Offences and to Expulsion Offences.
- ii. Red Card suspensions incurred in a Sapphire Cup Match are to be served in the Club's next competitive fixture(s). Red Card suspensions incurred in a Local Competition fixture will apply to the next Match in which the suspended Player's Club competes in, including the Sapphire Cup.

SECTION 4: TEAM SHEETS, RESULTS, MATCH OFFICIALS & VENUE ENTRY

1. TEAM SHEETS

- a. All digital team sheets for all Matches are to be completed online via Dribl
- b. Clubs are required to note the shirt number of each Player in Dribl. This information appears automatically next to the Player's name on the digital team sheet.
- c. The Home and Away Club must make their Player selection in Dribl and click on Submit team (at this point you can still make changes after submitting your team if need be) no later than thirty (30) minutes prior to the scheduled Fixture.
- d. No later than 10 minutes before kick off – Click on Confirm team (no more changes can be made to match sheet. If you do need to make any last minute change to the match sheet this must be communicated to the referee)
 - i. Should a listed starting Player be removed from the starting line-up, that Player may only be replaced by a Player listed as a substitute on the digital team sheet. The former starting Player may then be listed as a replacement. However, no other Player may be added to the digital team sheet to replace the former substitute Player.
 - ii. Should a listed substitute Player be removed from the digital team sheet, the Team will not be permitted to name another Player in his/her place, and the number of available substitutes will be decreased by one (1)
- e. The numbers on the back of the Players' jerseys will correspond to the numbers on the digital team sheet handed to the Referee before the commencement of a Match. There must be no change of numbers from ten (10) minutes prior to or during a Match (this includes goalkeepers)
- f. A maximum of eighteen (18) Players only may be listed on the team sheet 18th Player must be a substitute goalkeeper.
- g. At the completion of the Match, the Match Official is to enter the match data, which includes: the half time and full time scores, cautions, send offs, substitutions and any other Match incident that is deemed worthy of inclusion in the post-Match reporting
- h. The Home Club and Away Club must, within thirty (30) minutes of the Match, validate the Match Official data to ensure all records are accurate. If a discrepancy is identified by either Club that cannot be resolved on the day of the Match, notification must be issued to Football NSW: matchreports@footballnsw.com.au within 24 hours of the Match taking place. Football NSW will review and adjudicate on the alleged discrepancy within a workable time frame.

2. RESULTS OF MATCHES

- a. For all Sapphire Cup Matches referees will enter the results into Dribl.

3. MATCH OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS

- a. The appointment of all Match Officials will be made by FNSW, who may utilise such other persons as deemed necessary to assist in the carrying out of this responsibility.

4. REFEREE'S FEES

- a. The Home Club is responsible for paying the Match Official Fees in accordance with the Sapphire Cup Match Official Fees:

b.

Round	Referees	AR1	AR2	4 th Official	Total
1	\$100	\$50	\$50		\$200
2	\$110	\$55	\$55		\$220
3	\$120	\$60	\$60		\$240
4	\$140	\$70	\$70		\$280
5	\$150	\$75	\$75		\$300
Semi Final	\$265	\$140	\$140		\$545
Final	\$265	\$140	\$140	\$100	\$645

5. ADMITTANCE TO CUP FIXTURES

a. In electing to operate a ticket gate, Admittance prices for the Sapphire Cup Rounds shall be up to the following maximums:

	Adult	Student or Concession	Child Under 16
Round 2 - 3	\$5	\$3	Free
Round 4 - 7	\$10	\$5	

b. FNSW's conditions of entry to venues apply to all matches in the Cup. Each hosting Club shall display those conditions at each entry point to the venue.