

To GMCL clubs

This has been a difficult season for us all with the really bad weather at the start of the season and the large number of player registration issues that came to light in July which brought us so much work and led to some other tasks not being completed for which we apologise.

The work involved in determining the player ineligibility issues due to dual registrations could not be done on a club by club basis because each breach by a team could affect the other teams in the division because of overturned games and changing positions in the table, therefore other than the top two divisions we have delayed until now when our final determinations have all been issued.

We have not reached agreement with clubs on a unilateral basis, we have set a level for determining a breach and set a level for the penalties that must be applied, and we have applied those consistently across all the clubs having a player breach.

We would like to thank those clubs and their officials who came forward with details of their own players who had committed a breach and those who resolved the matter at their club quickly to confirm the breach.

It was disappointing that some warriors took to social media to abuse our team working to resolve this and to abuse some players thought to be involved. Sadly, we have lost two key volunteers this year who have given so much time for the league, due to a combination of abuse, accusations and challenges which have led to far more work than it should. Our team are applying our rules as they are published and the key role is to apply them equally and fairly across the league irrespective of standard and treat everyone equally.

Despite the difficulties, it has been pleasing that the majority of our clubs have dealt with our contact and questions fairly and honestly and some have taken the time to say that they have appreciated our work and the way we have dealt with it. It is hoped that the goodwill will continue as we work through the matters at hand.

Player Registration - Summary of Events

At the end of June, it came to our attention that there were players in our league who were playing in other weekend leagues. We were not expecting this after a successful implementation of player photos in cricHQ and we were certainly not expecting the number of reviews we have had to carry out.

From that time, we received further information at different times, and we had to build our response to deal with this issue; the summary of this and our actions and reasoning is given below.

Our rule on registrations with more than one club is simple, "No player may be registered with a club or play for that club where registered for more than one club in open age competition in any league in any season".

We have broken down the activity into stages.

Play-Cricket Registrations

1. At the end of June, it was brought to our attention that there was a list published within the administration section of the play-cricket web site for the league that identified a number of players at a few GMCL clubs who used their GMCL play-cricket account to register at another club.
 - 1.1. We were new to play-cricket and were unaware of this list until highlighted by one of our administrators.
 - 1.2. It is the correct process for a player, every player should only have one play-cricket account,
 - 1.3. GMCL rules do not allow multiple simultaneous registrations in more than one open age league but the process with this list allowed us to identify and deselect players who were not ineligible e.g. over 40s. Wednesday League, Sub Pros, Juniors etc
 - 1.4. E-Mails were issued to the clubs on this play-cricket list on 4th July where their player could not be easily deselected.

Ineligible Player Form

2. At around the same time, we received allegations from some clubs on our “ineligible player form” that clubs had played ineligible players in games against them because they were registered at more than one club in open age competition. This procedure is laid down in our rules for all player ineligibility claims and the clubs completing the form understood that the penalty can include the mandatory overturning of results.
 - 2.1. Our penalty process works across all our ineligibility rules, it means that clubs / captains cannot play ineligible players without expectation of a penalty which is a minimum of the loss of any points gained.
 - 2.1.1. We cannot have a penalty system where the penalty is less than the points gained from winning a game, otherwise clubs would simply take the net gain of points. Points won in a game must be deducted.
 - 2.1.2. our red card process set up for 2024 ensures that the clubs do not repeat the offence because the red card penalty increases with each card applied.
 - 2.1.3. The addition of the card penalty also makes sure that the defaulting club cannot benefit from having no points awarded for the game.
 - 2.1.4. In the past we have had a rule regarding a player making a “material difference” to the result, but our experience found that this was an arbitrary rule that became an arguable point for both sides. We were unable to manage the scale of those decisions and despite several attempts we were not able to provide a definitive rule to determine “material difference” across all aspects of bowling, batting, fielding and keeping. This element of the rule was removed some time ago to provide clarity for all involved.
 - 2.2. The challenge here in implementing the rules and specifically the red card regulations is that a lot of clubs found to have a breach claimed that they were not aware that players were also playing elsewhere at the same time as they were playing for the GMCL club.
 - 2.2.1. It is impossible for us to determine if they did or did not know
 - 2.2.2. Our new penalty regulations had an increasing scale of penalties for a red card but by design this was to prevent the club from doing the same thing again after a penalty had been issued but because we were not aware of the breach to this point, we had not had the opportunity to notify clubs and so the opportunity prevent the breach repeating was not given to the clubs.

E-Mail allegations

3. In addition to the entries on our ineligible player form we also began to receive lists from GMCL clubs showing players at other clubs that they believed were breaching the league rules on dual registration, several of which were sent in to us in response to our email challenges sent to clubs on 4th July.
 - 3.1. These lists from clubs were generated by their players who were playing against other GMCL players, social media extracts and scorecards produced.

GMCL Executive Rules Panel

4. We recognised that this issue was likely far larger than we thought and the rules panel (Mike, Alan, Richard, Simon) had to respond promptly so held a meeting on 8th July at which we agreed how the league would deal with this matter.
 - 4.1. It was agreed at that meeting that:
 - 4.1.1. Our first action was to notify everyone at clubs in the league that the issue had arisen and had been identified.
 - 4.1.1.1. On 12th July the Club-Director issued an email to all clubs in the league notifying them explaining the full rules and that we were reviewing several ineligible players. Therefore, by 12th July all clubs had been notified.
 - 4.1.2. Our rule on dual registration was simple and straightforward and would be upheld.

- 4.1.3. Our penalty rules clearly identified the process for dealing with ineligible players and new rules would not need to be proposed, considered, tested and published for the purpose of dealing with this issue.
- 4.1.3.1. One of the key points was that at this stage of a season, it was considered that generating new rules could lead to unintentional bias dependent on the results of the options to be considered and so it was better to stick with what was agreed pre-season, thus ensuring no one had influence over the penalties applied.
- 4.1.4. It was agreed that our new penalty regime, introduced at the start of the season (i.e. red cards etc.) was robust enough for the process however it was recognised that within that process it had not been anticipated that there would be many breaches in one season.
- 4.1.4.1. The penalty rules provide that a red card is issued for each game an ineligible player plays in GMCL competition so our red card system with increasing penalty for each subsequent card would quickly create a very large penalty (e.g. 8 games played would lead to a penalty of $1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8=36$ points, 10 games 57, 12 games 80) on top of the games overturned.
- 4.1.4.2. This increasing scale was introduced as a deterrent to stop clubs committing the same breach once they had been penalised for it. Unfortunately, in this situation, the clubs will not have had the opportunity to correct the situation to prevent subsequent red cards and whilst it could be said that this is the club's own fault, in many cases we were being told that clubs did not actually know that their players were playing in another league as well as GMCL until we told them.
- 4.1.4.3. If players had used the correct play-cricket procedure of using their one play-cricket account to register at the other club this may have been identified earlier but they did not, we have examples of players using another email address to register, an amended name, or having their other club create a temporary record. Sadly, these are all processes that play-cricket seems to permit without any checks. How this affects their statistics on number of players in the game and the segmentations they apply we do not know, if similar issues arise across the country, we must believe that their numbers are significantly inflated.
- 4.1.4.4. Therefore, in respect of the red cards, the panel decided using our rule at 1.1.2.1.3 "All decisions regarding the interpretation and implementation of the rules lie with the Board and the Executive" that we would mitigate the red card penalty, where there is valid reason and where we were able to apply the mitigation consistently.
- 4.1.4.4.1. The decision made was that if we applied the maximum penalties in all cases we would end up with a host of arguments with clubs and this would lead to more denials, delays and prevarication and therefore we agreed that where clubs and players cooperated with our review where there was a default with no denial or prevarication, we would reduce the penalties to a single red card per player added to any overturned games.
- 4.1.4.4.2. Where there was a denial which resulted in a delay due to further enquiries having to be made which subsequently established that the player had played the red cards would be 3 cards up to a maximum of one card per game played at their GMCL club for excessive denials and delay.
- 4.1.5. It was identified early in our review work that whilst our rule referred to the breach arising when a player registers at another club it was difficult and hugely time consuming for us to make requests and for ECB to extract the data of the date that registration took place.
- 4.1.5.1. Therefore, the panel decided to use our rule at 1.1.2.1.3 "All decisions regarding the interpretation and implementation of the rules lie with the Board and the Executive" that we use easily available information to determine the period of breach and apply that consistently. The only information available to us across the board is the date of games played at other clubs and
- 4.1.5.2. therefore, we agreed that the first date we would apply penalties would be the date of the first league game with the club in the other league.

4.1.5.3. This is not arbitrary, it would be fairly close to the registration date, based on GMCL's own regulation on registering to play in GMCL which while requesting at least two days for registrations for admin purposes we have, following the bulk of the registrations at the start of the season, approved players up to the day of their first game and have done this for several years.

4.1.6. The second part of the determining the breach period is the end date.

4.1.6.1. The rule says "No player registered in another league can play open age cricket for a GMCL team in any season" therefore the breach occurs whilst the player is registered in the other league and the rule says "in any season" therefore this is not defined as the whole season.

4.1.6.2. Just like the start date it would be difficult and hugely time consuming for us and for ECB to determine exactly when registration ended.

4.1.6.3. Therefore, our interpretation given the authority at rule 1.1.2.1.3. was that we follow the same pattern as the start date and therefore use the date of the final game played at the other club but recorded that we would notify the player's GMCL club that they must have confirmation in writing from the breaching player that they have revoked their registration at the other club / other league.

4.1.7. Where a player played only one game at another club, there was therefore no period defined and so there could be no games played in GMCL within a period and so no games overturned, the penalty would therefore be a single red card.

4.1.7.1. We are satisfied that this single red card for a single game elsewhere is an appropriate penalty. We have statement from clubs that say they tell their players that they cannot play elsewhere, unfortunately the system allows them to play elsewhere and they do it against club wishes and club knowledge but one club has clearly shown that where players play a game elsewhere then their registration at the GMCL club is revoked and they do not play again in our league.

4.2. Whilst 1.1.2.1.3. gives the league officers the ability to determine how we apply rules. As our check and balance that we always carry out for fairness in all our activity, the panel subsequently cleared the process with the full Board and their approval and authority to continue on the basis set out above was given.

4.3. A further e-mail was issued to all clubs on 22nd August summarising the state of play and gave clubs until 26th August to notify us of any ineligible players that they were aware of.

4.3.1. It transpired that this e-mail hit home because almost every GMCL player found to have played elsewhere did not play at another club after 22 August, so 18 August 2024 was the final game for most.

4.3.2. This actually helped with our enquiries into denials, because why would a player have stopped playing if they were not a GMCL player.

Additional Information

5. To aid our checking procedure, we sought out further sources of information to support or debunk challenges made.

5.1. Our IT team carried out some data extraction work on the internet / play-cricket and compared the names of all players playing in GMCL with all players playing in the following leagues: NWCL, Halifax Comp, Huddersfield League, LCL, Liverpool Comp, Derby & Cheshire, GMACL, Quaid, T35, Cheshire CL and finally looked for duplicates within GMCL.

5.1.1. This is not perfect as it was a name match only (the only data field available to us) but it gave us a base dataset to work to.

5.1.2. We have no control over the players choosing to play in these leagues, no control over the leagues' own restrictions on players who can play in their league, no control over the standard of those leagues or their affiliation to regional or national bodies but we know that they all use play-

cricket to score their games and display scorecards and it therefore is a reasonable belief that the scorecards and the data created are generally accurate, give or take the odd error.

Communications

6. From the allegations made, we began issuing emails during August to clubs where a breach was likely to all clubs with a player who was alleged to have played at two clubs and not easily deselected.
7. After issuing the emails for the play-cricket list and the players for whom allegations and challenges had been made this left us with those on our league comparison list that had not attracted a challenge.
 - 7.1. In the interest of fairness to the whole league, those where there were matches in the data extracted all had to be reviewed.
 - 7.2. All we had was a name so in many instances we also sought out further evidence such as pictures or news items on social media where available,
8. By following the procedure above, we responded as early as we could to each group of names where a breach was possible.

Numbers

9. In total, across the four groups we have reviewed 145 players at 54 GMCL clubs and of these 27 GMCL clubs have been found to have 45 players that breach GMCL rules on dual registration. (Therefore 100 player reviews / allegations found no provable breach or no breach but the work on those still had to be carried out).
 - 9.1. Each of those reviews followed the same procedure but generally the circumstances of each was different to the next.
 - 9.2. The penalties allocated to each club will differ based on the length of the period of the breach, the level of denial, delay and prevarication by player or club and the number of players breaching at each club, there are many factors to the final value of the penalty to be applied

Other matters

10. Cups and GMCL20

- 10.1. The 20 over games in other competitions were not included in our review. The prime reason for this is that most of the games in 20 over competitions will be played midweek, as are our own 20 over competitions, it was felt that the rule was not intended to cover such midweek competitions, we have therefore not included GMCL20 games in our penalty determinations.
- 10.2. At the time that the reviews began, the majority of our knockout cup competitions were near completion and it was likely to be some time before we would likely have sufficient information to determine if there had been any breaches in cup games so the panel felt that it would be impossible to go back at this stage and change competitions and replay games and so decided using our rule at 1.1.2.1.3 “All decisions regarding the interpretation and implementation of the rules lie with the Board and the Executive” that we could not practically replay the cup games and therefore would not take these games into this review. To balance this out we would not include cup matches played at other clubs when determining the period of breach or penalties.

11. Transfers

- 11.1. In this situation of dual registration, transfer is not relevant; the player is already registered at the GMCL club so there is no requirement to transfer back.

12. Imbalance in overturned games, where defaulting team plays another team twice in the default period.

- 12.1. In a “normal” season the same teams would only meet twice where the breach exceeded 11 weeks but this season, because of the rearrangement of our first two weeks fixtures, teams played each other twice over a short period, in fact on the same weekend
 - 12.1.1. There is an “imbalance” as perceived, in some divisions, because of these rearranged games, but this is seen as an unintended consequence of events, which was not planned or arranged and when those fixtures were rearranged the dual registration issue was not known to be an issue,

12.2. We could have considered alternative solutions to overturn the issue of the “imbalance” of overturned games.

12.2.1. To do this we would have to test options, but we would have had to look at the live results with those solutions applied to the matches at issue in order to see the impact and if it corrected the perceived imbalance.

12.2.1.1. By doing so, the results review could carry a bias based on the impact of the option results, particularly where there is a wide consultation for a decision.

12.2.1.2. Had we changed the rules then other clubs would be negatively impacted, whether defaulting clubs or non-defaulting clubs, we do not know, and we would expect that other clubs negatively impacted would be then become complainants.

12.2.2. We would not normally make rule changes during the season, and we would normally carry out testing of options on historical results to avoid any accusations of bias. We had already received claims to ineligible players and clubs are expecting the points awarded in accordance with the rules in place

13. Why overturn if the breaching player had little impact?

13.1. We accept with our rule there may be games where the ineligible player did not have an impact on the result but there will be games where the player did. In the leagues early years, the rules did have a “material impact” clause but this became impossible to manage, monitor and rule on, for batting, bowling, keeping and fielding, taking up lots of time and created many arguments.

13.2. It is not appropriate to revert back to this midway through a season, there are many ineligible players who have played, and results have already been ruled on, we would have to go back and reevaluate all of those.

14. Impact on clubs with no breaches

14.1. Unfortunately, whilst the overturning of games benefits the opponent it can as a consequence negatively affect clubs not involved in the match, because teams will move up the table as a result of the additional points.

14.2. This is an extremely difficult situation particularly where this may lead to relegation or loss of promotion due to the change of positions. It has been considered at great length, but the determination is that where the points have been overturned in accordance with the rules, the recipients rightly have those points just as others rightly have penalties deducted.

14.3. We cannot now bring in a system to aid the clubs that have lost their position, we would be wrongly punishing clubs that have been wronged in the first place.

14.4. To find clubs with no breaches and conforming to the rules relegated because the actions of unconnected players is not acceptable and we understand the frustration, it doesn't mean the rules are wrong, but the scale of the defaults and circumstances have led to this storm. The Board must now determine going forward if there is a solution to prevent relegation created by the action of unconnected players.

15. Examples of penalties in emails received.

15.1. Assumptions have been made on the penalties applied at certain clubs.

15.2. A suggestion has been made that “the only fair way” to handle this is to treat every single game played by defaulting clubs in the division as void, disregarding the points scored

15.2.1. There are different periods of breach, a different number of games and a different number of players, the fair way suggested benefits the suggesting club, so the proposal is inherently biased.

15.2.2. Our process applies the same rules to all clubs. How could this be fair on a team that had a one game breach, a six game breach or an 8 or more game breach? our base position is that the penalties applied are relevant to the scale of the breach.

16. Sharing of Reviews carried out

- 16.1. We will not be sharing details of the player reviews carried out with everyone in the league, this is a matter for each club. The league does not publish the names of players found to be ineligible for any breach because to do so would lead to abuse (as already seen) and unnecessary communications and ongoing suggestions of wrongdoing with those players which will run and run. We would have no control over information shared and so will not sanction this.
- 16.2. We will discuss individual cases only with a player's club.
- 16.3. We gave all clubs a date by which to submit ineligibility claims for the 2024 season so we will not engage with any new claims or amending of existing claims after the publication of this review and amending of the tables. We now draw the line on the season.
- 16.4. We will not be publishing names of players who have been reviewed and no action taken. In many cases the player's club have not been notified either where clubs have no resulting breaches, if we did publish there will be people across the league trying to prove us wrong and leading to unfair attention on the players involved when there only default may be having the same name as someone else or having a false allegation levied at them.
- 16.5. Each club has been provided with details of all the players where a review finds a probable breach.
- 16.6. It has been suggested that there are perceived injustices, without saying why that is suggested. We can deal with facts we hold, and we do. We carried out all reviews with equal gusto and equal application of the rules. The Board will judge the panel on the process, it is not required that everyone at the clubs in the league, connected to the league, playing in the league, officiating in the league has an opinion.
- 16.7. Rules are changed annually, rule amendments can be suggested 24/7 365 through the website, members of the Board can be amended annually, officers and executive jobs can be reallocated at any time.

17. Overall Summary

- 17.1. Whenever any rule is applied, and a penalty applied there can always be clubs that are negatively or positively impacted. Our role is to ensure that the penalties applied are in accordance with the rules.
- 17.2. We are dismayed that there are so many players found to have breached a rule that the clubs knew to exist and a rule that has been in place since the league started and we are distraught that we have had to adjust tables at the end of the season and so impact many clubs' positions in divisions.
- 17.3. It is stated that clubs have cheated so should be strongly punished. There is little evidence that all clubs have cheated, what we have is players who have ignored our league rules on playing elsewhere without knowledge of their GMCL club. We even have a player who played elsewhere whilst under a league / ECB ban. We are not judging clubs' actions, it is not possible to do so accurately. We hope that the consequences of this review will bring about greater checking of players in future seasons, we will certainly be reinforcing the message for new players joining the league.
- 17.4. It is the players that have created this problem, whether they played 1 game elsewhere or 15 games elsewhere, they were not concerned with the consequences of their actions, your clubs and our admin team have had to deal with the consequences. That is why we cannot publish their names and details; it will lead to so much trouble for everyone.
- 17.5. It has been said that the players should be penalised. Players found to be in breach of our rules were suspended until their registration elsewhere was revoked but, in several cases, led to appeals so the players could not be suspended until the appeal was resolved, some players have continued to deny the allegation, some clubs have said that it is not fair that they lose a player when the club have done nothing wrong. We cannot fine players. The Disciplinary rules do not cover playing as an ineligible player and therefore a ban cannot be applied. Perhaps we can look at the situation for rules and disciplinary bans going forward but as it stands, we cannot penalise players. Suggestions and practical solutions can be submitted on our feedback form online.

18. Penalty calculations

- 18.1. Red cards are issued for every player breaching the rules, to their team.

18.1.1. Where there is a breaching player in the 1st XI and a player in the 2nd XI then each team will receive a red card.

18.1.2. Where a single player has played multiple games in both teams, the team where the player played most in the breaching period will receive the red card.

18.1.3. Where a player continues to deny allegations and prevaricates but is still believed to have breached the penalties can be up to a maximum of one red card for every GMCL game played in the breaching period, dependent on the amount of work caused for the league administrators.

18.1.4. Where a player is not found to be in breach or has proved he did not play elsewhere then no red cards are issued on that player's team unless there are other breaching players in that team.

18.2. Match Points

18.2.1. The matches considered for points deduction will be those within the breaching period only.

18.2.2. The team will lose any points gained from the game (but not abandoned games) and the other team will be awarded 5 points in total from the game. So for a tied game, the team with the defaulting player will lose 3 points and the opponent will then have 5 points not 3.

18.3. Single game played elsewhere

18.3.1. Where only a single game was played elsewhere there is no breaching period so no games can be overturned, and the minimum single red card is applied.

19. Other changes to Divisions

19.1. In reviewing the tables, please note that Glossop CC have unfortunately failed to obtain Clubmark / safeguarding in time, as is required by the ECB for Premier League Clubs, and therefore cannot compete at this level in 2025 so will be in the Championship for 2025. This means that only the 2 other lowest clubs will be relegated.

19.2. As previously advised Stalybridge CC will join the league in 2025 having followed our process to transfer leagues, their 1st XI will play in Division 4.

19.3. Micklehurst 1st XI have requested a move to Division 4 in 2025 to rebuild their team.

19.4. To manage these changes the promotion and relegation numbers may be slightly impacted.

The GMCL Board

11 October 2024