

(FINAL VERSION)

Southport & District Tennis League Proposed Rule Changes for 2026 Season.

1. Introduction

The S&D League Executive Committee has carried out a review of the 2025 league season. As in previous years, a few issues were found during the season, it is hoped that the proposed rule changes in this document will address these.

By 2026 we had hoped to be able to introduce further rule changes to make use of the World Tennis Number (WTN) and use this to replace a number of current rules including those on “starring”. However, having investigated current Southport & District League players WTNs, we believe that the WTNs still need at least one more year to settle down. Additionally, the LTA have not yet made changes to the new League Planner to make the WTN easily visible, although we understand that they intend to do this. For these reasons we will postpone change proposals related to the WTN until after the 2026 season.

All proposed changes from the previous rules are shown in red text or by strike out. Rules will be renumbered appropriately after changes are approved by the AGM.

2. General changes

Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
3(b)(i)	clubs that are Lawn Tennis Association registered, of which at least one of the objects is lawn tennis and which have their headquarters and courts in Southport and District. The Executive shall determine the effective district boundary. All new clubs shall have a minimum of 4 courts marked out clearly for tennis , suitable for match play and meet the criteria for applications as determined by the EC.	Added following a request from a couple of clubs who were concerned about multi-use courts.
6 E & F	E. The rate of subscriptions shall be: (i) Team Tournaments £10; Spartans £10 (ii) Annual subscription per club £30.00 (iii) Private members annual subscription £1.00 F. The rate of registration shall be: Bulk registration per team £20.00 for the summer league and £10 for the Autumn league.	Increase to <u>partly</u> cover the losses expected in 2026. (Team tournaments and Spartans were £5 each.)

3. Summer league changes

Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
A	The League shall consist of such one or more divisions as the Executive should determine. The EC will form each division prior to the date of the AGM or as soon as possible afterwards.	Provides a little more flexibility in case decisions at the AGM affect the league structure.

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Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
B6	<p>All matches shall be played under the laws of Lawn Tennis in the particular week appointed by EC/LMRSC and on the night submitted to the League at the beginning of each season. (This night shall be Monday for 1st and 2nd teams). Home nights must be on a weekday, alternate nights may be weekdays or weekends.</p>	<p>A couple of requests have been received for weekend home nights but this is unpopular with other teams and also makes it difficult to fit in alternate nights.</p>
B7 (part)	<p>... Therefore, each of the eight matches events shall be worth 2 points and the completed match 16 points....</p>	<p>Minor correction of wording from matches to events.</p>
B8	<p>No player shall play more than one like event in the same match. A player may play for more than one team in the same week up to 3 times in a Summer League season. This rule is intended to allow players to move up to replace a missing player in a higher team and still play for their regular team. Anyone playing multiple times in a week will only be an eligible player for a team if, at the date of that team's match, they have played at least 50% of their league matches for that team or below. Appearances as a substitute for an injured player or in cup matches will not count towards the total. Starring (Rule 10) also still applies. Breaches of this rule will result in the player being treated as an "Ineligible Player" (see Summer League rule B17 for an explanation of Ineligible Players).</p> <p>No player may play for more than one team in the same League round, unless playing as an injury substitute. Any player breaking this rule will be treated as an ineligible player for the lower team.</p>	<p>Removal of the "playing twice in a week" rule which has been found to lead to unfair advantages for some teams and caused an unsustainable amount of work for the league.</p>
B10 (part)	<p>Each club with more than one team in the League shall nominate 3 men and 3 ladies for each team, excluding the lowest team, who will be known as 'starred players' by no later than the Friday before the fourth first week of the season. ...</p>	<p>Change requested by a number of clubs at the recent general league meeting.</p>
B13	<p>Before the start of every match, team captains must complete their teams on their copies of the match scoresheet. Having done so, exchange match scoresheets and complete their teams, as now arranged, on their opponent's match scoresheet.</p> <p>Before the start of a match the home team captain must provide a scoresheet showing the names of their team. The away team captain must then add the names of their team to the scoresheet before the match begins. Names given on paper score sheets must be the same as those registered with the LTA otherwise, if the paper form has to be requested by the League for clarification of a match, they will be treated as Unknown Players. If a player's name cannot be found on the online League Planner system their name and LTA number must be sent to the League Match Secretary using the Match Comments form that can be found on the league website at: https://www.southporttennisleague.org.uk/wp/match-comments/ (or by hovering over the Contact Us option on the league website) otherwise they will be treated as an "Ineligible Player". At the end of the match the scoresheet must be signed by both team captains and retained by the home team until the start of the following season in case of dispute. The away team captain may take an electronic copy of the scoresheet if they wish.</p>	<p>Removes the need for separate home and away scoresheets as they are often now completed by one team and photographed by the other.</p>

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Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
B14	<p>Pairs must be played in order of strength. Players in the 1st Mixed event must play in 1st Ladies or 1st Gents doubles. Players in the 4th Mixed event must play in the 2nd Ladies or 2nd Gents doubles. Teams as well as individual players within a team must be played in order of strength. Breaches of this rule will result in the players concerned being treated as ineligible.</p>	Makes clear what the penalty will be for breaking this rule.

4. Summer League weather related changes

The following rules have been reorganised into a more logical sequence and improved for consistency.

Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
19	<p>The cancellation of matches due to weather shall be made by 6.00pm to the person nominated on the League Planner website (note: you must be signed in to see this), or by 5.45pm in the matches due to start at 6.30pm.</p> <p>Either team captain may insist a match is postponed if they consider conditions (for example, heavy rain or extreme heat) are dangerous for their players. Postponements before the designated (or otherwise agreed) start time of the match must be made at least one hour before. If there is a dispute between the team captains as to whether conditions are safe to play, then (unless directed otherwise by the League Match Secretary) both teams must attend the match venue but either captain may then require the match to be postponed. (Team captains may be viewed on League Planner once you are signed in.)</p>	
20	<p>Postponed matches due to adverse weather conditions shall be played on the alternative date and time as shown on the League website (not the League Planner website). Where two or more teams in a club have the same nominated alternative night/day the higher/highest team will take precedence at all times. The home team must use the "Reschedule button" in League planner to show the revised date of the match.</p> <p>Either team captain may insist a match is abandoned during play, if they consider conditions (for example, heavy rain, extreme heat or bad light) have become dangerous for their players. If insufficient sets have been completed for the result to stand (see the following rule) then the match must be rearranged.</p>	Order of rules changed to a more logical sequence and to improve clarity. Also now includes procedure in cases of dispute.
21	<p>In the event of inclement weather or bad light during a match When matches are abandoned, the match shall be deemed to have been completed if eight sets have been completed. All sets not completed or begun shall be deemed void and recorded 'not played' on the system. In the event of eight sets not having been completed, the match shall be treated as a postponed match and replayed as a new match. The scoresheet must show the actual date played.</p>	

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Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
22 (was rule 20)	<p>Either team captain may insist the match is abandoned, either before or during play, if they consider conditions (for example, heavy rain or extreme heat) are dangerous for their players. If insufficient sets have been completed for the result to stand then the match must be rearranged.</p> <p>Postponed matches due to adverse weather conditions shall be played on the alternative date and time as shown on the League website (not the League Planner website) wherever possible. Where two or more teams in a club have the same nominated alternative night/day the higher/highest team will take precedence at all times. The home team must reschedule the match in League Planner, by clicking on the cogwheel at the top right of the results entry screen, to show the revised date of the match.</p>	Rule moved from the old rule 20 and updated for the new League Planner.
23	<p>In the event of a match not being completed on the first or alternative night a further 14 days are allowed. Failing completion in that time (unless directed otherwise by the League Match Secretary/EC), the match will be halved. It will be recorded on the League Planner system as a “tie” with no sets or games being awarded to either team. The League Match Secretary/EC may, at their discretion, extend the 14-day window if the outcome will decide whether either of the participating teams, or another team will be promoted or relegated. They may also extend the 14-day window pending the outcome of any formal complaint procedures.</p>	Allows the EC to direct that a match must be played even after the usual 14 day period if it will affect relegations or promotions or if it is subject to a formal complaint.

5. Autumn League Changes

The following changes are proposed for the Autumn League rules to bring them into line with the proposed changes for the Summer League.

Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
7 (part)	... Therefore, each of the four matches events shall be worth 2 points and the completed match 8 points....	Minor correction of wording from matches to events.

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Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
B8	<p>No player shall play more than one like event in the same match. A player may play for more than one team in the same week up to 3 times in an Autumn League season. This rule is intended to allow players to move up to replace a missing player in a higher team and still play for their regular team. Anyone playing multiple times in a week will only be an eligible player for a team if, at the date of that team's match, they have played at least 50% of their league matches in the Summer and Autumn Leagues for that team or below. Appearances as a substitute for an injured player or in cup matches will not count towards the total. Breaches of this rule will result in the player being treated as an "Ineligible Player" (see Autumn League rule B15 for an explanation of Ineligible Players). No player may play for more than one team in the same League round, unless playing as an injury substitute. Any player breaking this rule will be treated as an ineligible player for the lower team.</p>	Removal of the "playing twice in a week" rule which has been found to lead to unfair advantages for some teams and caused an unsustainable amount of work for the league.
B11	<p>No scoresheets will be used and all results must be entered online. The away team must give the names of the players to the home team at the time of the match to enable them to be recorded later.</p> <p>Before the start of a match the home team captain must provide a scoresheet showing the names of their team. The away team captain must then add the names of their team to the scoresheet before the match begins. Names given on paper score sheets must be the same as those registered with the LTA otherwise, if the paper form has to be requested by the League for clarification of a match, they will be treated as Unknown Players. If a player's name cannot be found on the online League Planner system their name and LTA number must be sent to the League Match Secretary using the Match Comments form that can be found on the league website at: https://www.southporttennisleague.org.uk/wp/match-comments/ (or by hovering over the Contact Us option on the league website) otherwise they will be treated as an "Ineligible Player". At the end of the match the scoresheet must be signed by both team captains and retained by the home team until the start of the following season in case of dispute. The away team captain may take an electronic copy of the scoresheet if they wish.</p>	Arrange for scoresheets brought in line with those for the Summer League. It is intended that separate score sheets will be provided for the Autumn League to reduce confusion.
B12	<p>Pairs must be played in order of strength. Teams as well as individual players within a team must be played in order of strength. Breaches of this rule will result in the players concerned being treated as ineligible.</p>	Makes clear what the penalty will be for breaking this rule.

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Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
B17	<p>When entering match results, clubs may add additional players to any team as long as they are not unreasonably strengthening the team. A comment giving the full name of the additional player must be recorded by the club on the League Planner system. An email giving the full name of the additional player must be sent to the League Match Secretary using the form on the League website at:</p> <p>https://www.southporttennisleague.org.uk/wp/match-comments/</p>	Updated as comment system not usable on new League Planner.

6. Autumn League weather related changes

The following rules have been reorganised into a more logical sequence and improved for consistency.

Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
18	<p>The cancellation of matches due to adverse weather conditions shall be made by 6.00pm to the person nominated on the League Planner website (note: you must be signed in to see this), or by 5.45pm in the matches due to start at 6.30pm.</p> <p>Either team captain may insist a match is postponed if they consider conditions (for example, heavy rain or extreme heat) are dangerous for their players. Postponements before the designated (or otherwise agreed) start time of the match must be made at least one hour before. If there is a dispute between the team captains as to whether conditions are safe to play, then (unless directed otherwise by the League Match Secretary) both teams must attend the match venue but either captain may then require the match to be postponed. (Team captains may be viewed on League Planner once you are signed in.)</p>	
19	<p>(Autumn/Winter League) Postponed matches due to weather conditions may be played on an alternative night to be agreed by both teams. The alternative night must be within 1 week of the original appointed match night. Any matches not completed within one week of the appointed match night will be assumed drawn. They will be recorded on the League Planner system as a "tie" with no sets or games being awarded to either team.</p> <p>Either team captain may insist a match is abandoned during play, if they consider conditions (for example, heavy rain, extreme heat or bad light) have become dangerous for their players. If insufficient sets have been completed for the result to stand (see the following rule) then the match must be rearranged.</p>	Order of rules changed to a more logical sequence and to improve clarity. Also now includes procedure in cases of dispute.

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Rule	Proposed rule change	Comments on change
20	<p>In the event of inclement weather or bad light during a match, the match shall be deemed to have been completed if four sets have been completed. All sets not completed or begun shall be deemed void and recorded 'not played' on the system. In the event of four sets not having been completed, the match shall be treated as a postponed match and replayed as a new match. The match must be "rescheduled" on League Planner by the home team before it is re-played.</p> <p>When matches are abandoned, the match shall be deemed to have been completed if four sets have been completed. All sets not completed or begun shall be deemed void and recorded 'not played' on the system. In the event of four sets not having been completed, the match shall be treated as a postponed match and replayed as a new match. The scoresheet must show the actual date played.</p>	
21	<p>Either team captain may insist the match is abandoned, either before or during play, if they consider conditions (for example, heavy rain or extreme heat) are dangerous for their players. If insufficient sets have been completed for the result to stand then the match must be rearranged.</p> <p>Postponed matches due to adverse weather conditions shall be played on an alternative night to be agreed by both teams. The alternative night must be within 1 week of the original appointed match night. Any matches not completed within one week of the appointed match night will be assumed drawn. They will be recorded on the League Planner system as a "tie" with no sets or games being awarded to either team. Where two or more teams in a club have the same nominated alternative night/day the higher/highest team will always take precedence. The home team must reschedule the match in League Planner, by clicking on the cogwheel at the top right of the results entry screen, to show the revised date of the match.</p>	Rule moved from the old rule 19 and updated for the new League Planner.

7. Appendix to Summer League Rules (new structure for bottom division)

As in the paper on league structure that was sent to all club Match Secretaries and Chairmen and then discussed at the general league meeting it is proposed that an experimental structure be adopted for the bottom division of the summer league in 2026. If this works well the experimental rules below will be merged into the standard league rules in 2027.

If this proposal is approved by the AGM then the differences to the standard rules for the bottom division only will be:

1. If there are too many teams for a single division, the bottom division will be split into two or more “groups” which will be at an equal level. The number of teams in each group and the allocation of teams to groups will be determined by the Executive Committee (EC).
2. During the main season teams will play home and away matches only against the other teams in the same group.
3. At the end of the season there will be a “play-off” between the winners, and possibly runners up, of each group to determine which teams are promoted to the higher division. The EC will have discretion to decide on which teams take part in the play-offs, based on their results.
4. All teams in the bottom division will consist of two men and two ladies but if clubs have sufficient players they may enter two 4-player teams that would become an A and a B team and will be put into different groups if possible.
5. A and B teams must have the same home night.
6. Clubs may enter more than two 4-player teams in the bottom division, for example Hightown might enter Hightown 2A, Hightown 2B and Hightown 3A.
7. Teams with the same number (e.g. Hightown 2A and 2B) will be treated as a single combined team in the rest of the summer league rules. For example, starred players will still be required for Hightown 2.
8. If a club has an A and a B team with the same number, players who are eligible may play for either, but only for one in any given week.
9. In the end of season play-offs all teams must have four men and four ladies. If a club has an A and a B team they will be combined into a single 8-player team for the play-offs.
10. In a play-off match the winner will be determined by the number of sets won and, if that results in a draw, then by the number of games won. If that still results in a draw, each team will select one man and one lady to play a deciding mixed doubles tie-break (first to 7 points with a 2-point advantage).
11. A and B teams will be treated as a single combined team for the purpose of league subscriptions.