

S&D TENNIS LEAGUE RULES – 2026 SEASON

THE SUMMER LEAGUE

A. STRUCTURE

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.**

B. COMPETITION

1. **Clubs are responsible** for highlighting any irregularities in relation in the Rules and should notify them to the League Match Secretary as a formal complaint in writing, by letter or by e-mail, within 7 days of the match being played. If email is used then the complaint must be on a **separate attachment and not in the body of the email**. If the complaint is about another club then a copy will be sent to them and they must provide a response within 7 days (later responses will not be considered). The League Match Secretary will forward the complaint and any response to the LMRSC for consideration.
2. Clubs must notify the General Secretary of any changes they would like to make to the number of teams entered into the Summer League by at least 14 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for that year. Any new clubs wishing to enter the league must also apply by at least 14 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting for the year in which they wish to enter. If there are too many teams for the number of divisions then the AGM will vote on a proposal of which teams to include/exclude, the exact content of the proposal shall be decided by the Executive Committee.
3. The team scoring the most points in each division shall be the champion team of that division and shall be entitled to the custody of the Championship Trophy of that division from the League Presentation Evening until they are due to be presented at the next year's final. Clubs are responsible for any damage or loss of trophies awarded to them and must return them, **polished**, to the League. Immediately after the final they must be returned to the league for engraving prior to being re-presented at the League Presentation Evening.
4. The two teams at the head of the second and lower divisions shall be promoted to the next highest division. The teams at the foot of each division may be relegated to the next lower division with the two teams at the foot of the bottom division being required to re-apply. This shall always apply except when the divisions are reconstituted by the EC/LMRSC. No more than two teams from any one club can play in Division 1 at any time.
5. Ties for promotion and relegation, if level on points, sets won will decide. If level on sets, games will decide. If teams are level on games, then head to head will decide. If still level, a coin will be tossed. League tables should include sets for and against.
6. 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.**
7. Each match shall consist of four Mixed doubles, two Ladies doubles and two Gents doubles with a tie-break operative at 6 games all. Therefore, each of the eight **events** shall be worth 2 points and the completed match 16 points. Points awarded should be as follows: 2 points for a win; 1 point for a draw. Clubs must make every effort to field complete teams. However, if this is genuinely not possible then a match may go ahead so long as each team contains a minimum of two men and two ladies and the shortage of players has been notified to the opposing team at least two hours before the match is due to take place. Any gaps in a team must be in the lowest positions in the team and must only be in the club's lowest team.

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8. 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.
9. All players wishing to take part in any League competitions must be registered members of the Lawn Tennis Association, have obtained a World Tennis Number and must have nominated the club for which they wish to play. Clubs may register additional players with the LTA at any time and use them in a team but they must be played in order of strength. Clubs agree that the names of all registered players will be shown on the League results.
10. Each club with more than one team in the League shall nominate **two** men and **two** ladies for each team, excluding the lowest team, who will be known as 'starred players' by no later than the Friday before the **first** week of the season. 'Starred players' may not play for a team which is lower than the one for which they have been 'starred' and must be regular League players in the team for which they are starred. **Starred players must be indicated on score sheets by an asterisk, and the number of the team for which they are starred, being added to the surname of the player.** Lists of starred players will be placed on the league website. Team Captains are responsible for checking their opponent's team against these lists.
11. Clubs may request a change to 'starred' players between the 8th and 9th week of the season. Any change requests must be sent to the League Match Secretary in writing or email to arrive no later than the Friday of the 8th week. Apart from these changes no other changes to 'starrings' may be made except in the case of injury or as directed by the League Match Secretary.
12. Any team that concedes a match will suffer a two-point penalty in addition to the loss of points from the conceded match. This rule will not apply to the lowest team in clubs with more than one team.
13. **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 (**plus an indication if a player is starred**) 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.**
14. 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.**

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15. In the event of a player being incapacitated after play in a match that has begun, so that he or she cannot continue playing, the remainder of that event will be forfeit. A captain shall be entitled to include a substitute in any subsequent events in which the incapacitated player should have taken part, provided that the injury or other incapacity was caused after play in the match had begun and was not due solely to tiredness. If the substitute arrives more than 20 minutes after the court and players are ready to commence the subsequent event then they will forfeit the first set and if they still have not arrived after 40 minutes they will forfeit the entire event. The substitute's name must be shown in the match results on League Planner for the events in which they have played and an email sent to the League Match Secretary using the Match Comments form on the league website at:

<https://www.southporttennisleague.org.uk/wp/match-comments/>. If no substitute is found the injured player's name must not be shown on the scoresheet for any sets that they have failed to complete.

16. If a player is injured during a match or has been included on the team sheet but does not arrive in time for the second half of the match and no substitute has been found then for the remainder of the match the gap will be left in the position that the missing player would have occupied.

17. Any team playing a player made ineligible under any of these rules shall forfeit all games and points won by that player whilst he or she was ineligible. Ineligible players must play in the lowest position in the team otherwise any pairings playing below the ineligible player will also forfeit all games and points. Breaches of the rules by a higher team will not penalise other teams playing on different nights.

18. The captain of the home team shall have submitted the results of the match, using the on-line system, within 48 hours of the match being completed. Missing this deadline will result in a one match point penalty for the home team unless a problem has been reported to the League Match Secretary before the deadline. However, the match results remain valid and must be entered into the online (League Planner) system. The captain of the away team shall have verified the results within 72 hours of the completion of the match. Missing this deadline will result in the match being confirmed by the League Match Secretary. Any appeals against these actions must be directed to the LMRSC/EC via the League Match Secretary.

19. **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.*)**

20. **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.**

21. **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.

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22. 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.

23. 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.

24. All matches should start at 7.00pm apart from the first three and last two which should start at 6.30pm. Courts must be made available for play 15 minutes before the official start time to allow players to “warm up”. All players in a team should be available to play at the appointed time. All warm ups must be completed by 10 minutes after the official start time. Any player not ready to play 20 minutes after the appointed starting time shall concede the first set 6-0. Or if 40 minutes after the appointed starting time shall concede the first event 6-0, 6-0, or if after 60 minutes of the appointed starting time shall also concede the second event, 6-0, 6-0. The order of play in all matches shall be MIXED events first.

25. THREE COURT CLUBS: all matches will commence at 6.30pm. The order of play MUST be 1st, 2nd and 3rd MIXED. The 4th mixed pair must arrive by 7.15pm whether a court is available or not. If they arrive after 7.15pm they will forfeit the first set, after 7.35 they will forfeit the second set and after 7.55pm they will forfeit the second event.

26. The home team shall provide three new LTA approved tennis balls for each of the first four events.

27. All league matches have precedence over cup matches except for the team or individual cup finals. If either team playing in a cup final has a league match scheduled for that night, the league match shall be rearranged for the alternative night of the home team.

28. All communication by clubs with the League Match Secretary must be made via CLUB Match Secretaries only.

29. Any problems arising from the on-line system should be notified to the League Match Secretary and/or the League Planner Manager immediately by the Club Match Secretary.

30. Players may only be registered for one Southport & District League club at any one time. They may be transferred between clubs no more than once during the season which must be before week 8 of the league season. Before a player plays a match for their new club they must have added the new club to their LTA registration and the new club must have informed the League Match Secretary by email (at lms@southporttennisleague.org.uk) or letter. No player may play for two different clubs in the same week.

31. The League Match Secretary shall report any irregularity in relation to the Rules to the LMRSC. Failure to comply with these Rules shall be subject to an LMRSC enquiry. The LMRSC shall have the power to impose any penalty or fine.

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

The following experimental structure is 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.

The differences to the standard rules, for the bottom division only are:

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 the combined Hightown 2A and 2B teams.**
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.

Highlighted sentence above has been amended slightly for clarification but with no change of meaning.