



Leinster Ladies' Hockey

Season 2020/21 Protocol – as at 26/08/2020

Following the shutdown of Leinster Leagues in March 2020 due to COVID-19, the Ladies Committee have been working on plans for the 2020/21 season. It is certain that this will be a season like none before and all clubs will need to be alert, agile and flexible to ensure the hockey community can continue to participate in our sport safely and fairly.

This document describes the protocol that will be used for managing the 2020/21 season for Ladies Hockey in Leinster. These provisions are only in place for this season and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis through the season as required.

The risks that have been identified that this document hope to mitigate are:

- The resurgence of COVID-19 and consequent further lockdowns on sports and life. Lockdowns may be full or limited and may be short or long in duration.
- A new variant of COVID-19 or another virus emerging in early 2021.
- Where hockey is played, it is envisaged that it will be under very strict controls.
- The possibility that at any point in the season everything will shut down as in March 2020.
- The lack of availability of pitches. In the weekly cycle this is a possibility with school-based pitches, either being heavily restricted or not available at all. For our highlight matches (e.g. cup final), we see limits on our prime site pitches, such as TRR/Grange Road.
- The development of EYHL 2 as a full national league. COVID-19 has done serious damage to the integrity of EYHL 2 and resulted in a number of unavoidable upsets and has complicated the planning processes of Leinster. This has been seen by the Leinster Board, with the unequivocal support of most Leinster clubs, as a clear indicator that EYHL 2 needs to be separated from the provincial domain.

Please acquaint yourself with Hockey Ireland statement on COVID-19: https://sportlomo-userupload.s3.amazonaws.com/uploaded/galleries/8089_uploaded/29a6be8450c52fb197ed5c87e05222898db6a099.pdf

Plans

The following options have been developed for the most likely scenarios. Only the first is fully detailed here as it is the current active option. The others have been discussed internally and will be elaborated upon as it is seen necessary.

Important: Plan A is the current and hoped for solution here.



Plan A - Business as Usual (Mostly)

This is based on the assumption that for the most part Hockey can be played in much the same manner as in previous years - but with contingency in place for the likely risks.

For ladies that means 13 League Divisions, 10 teams in Divisions 1 to 11, at present it is looking like 9 teams each in Div 12 and 13 but we are awaiting clubs to confirm teams in these divisions.

For season 2020/2021, there was promotion/relegation based on the final league tables for 2019/2020, under the percentage method.

The season will be divided into 3 distinct parts:

1. League Part 1 (pre-Christmas)
2. League Part 2 (post-Christmas)
3. Cups (post-Christmas)

These will be played in sequence. If for any reason a repeat of the 2020 season happens, then the current running and future parts will be voided but all previous completed parts will stand. (For example, if we are in the middle of "League Part 2" and we are locked down - then only "League Part 1" will stand, and "League Part 2" and "Cups" will be voided).

Cups will be played in the second half of the season, so long as there is not a significant backlog of matches/lockdown/other conditions that mean cup competitions cannot go ahead.

Cup finals for 2019-20 will be played on 19th September, with the named home team hosting (or an agreed alternative). Registrations from March 2020 are still valid for these matches only.

The new 2020-21 season will start on the 26th September for Divisions 1 & 2. This will allow for 2 league games before teams are expected to participate in Irish competitions scheduled for 10th October.

Matches will be scheduled to run every weekend, with the exception of October bank holiday and Christmas (3 weeks). There is a contingency weekend 19/20th December and leagues should be played in full by 13th March.

Cup semi-finals will be played after leagues finish on 20th/21st March, with Leinster Cup Finals provisionally scheduled to take after Easter.

The season will finish on the 18th April.

By entering a team into Leinster competitions, clubs are undertaking to travel to away games throughout the province and will take necessary steps to ensure player safety and transport to and from matches.



Plan B - Delayed Start

This is where we cannot start until November/December.

In this case, teams will play each other once as per first half of season fixtures.

All Cups from last season will be voided and this season's cups will be reviewed.

Plan C - Severe Restrictions

This is where play is not possible until January/early February

The same league structure from Plan A will be used, but only one half of the fixtures will be played.

All Cups from last season will be voided and this season's cups will be reviewed.

Plan D - Season Cancelled

The 2020/21 season is cancelled and no hockey is played until 2021/22.

This is self-explanatory and would have dire consequences for Hockey in Ireland at National, Provincial and Club level.

Plan E – Localised Lockdown

In the event of a localised lockdown shutting down clubs for a period greater than 8 days:

1. Clubs allowed one month after lockdown ends to complete their back matches or a period determined by the fixtures committee. (all matches must be completed before 18/04/21)
2. If Scenario 1 is not possible, the reverse fixture from the other half of season is counted twice
3. If Scenario 2 is not possible, points equalisation method is used (so long as 50% of matches in that Division have been played)
4. If Scenario 3 is not possible, Division is null and void for the season

Playing Format

A number of changes are being introduced to ensure the smooth running of the Hockey season (as best we can) and to ensure the Hockey Community are Covid compliant with Government requirements and safe.

Health and Safety Obligations / Contact Tracing re COVID

- Match cards will be accepted as list for contact tracing purposes, but **all** players must be registered with Hockey Ireland before club registrations can be uploaded and accepted onto the LHA Registration and Match-card system.
- Match cards **must** be filled in by all teams **by 5pm Friday evening**, otherwise a reminder will go to Registration Secretary to chase teams with no match card submitted



- Match cards can still be amended on match day
- Match squads remains at 16 players for ladies leagues and cups
- Match card must contain details of Umpire, Team Coach and Team Manager (use notes section as required)
- Only players, team manager, coach and umpire, as listed on the match card, are allowed inside the playing area
- Each team is to have a Covid Officer/Rep who is part of their club Covid Committee
- Each team is to ensure, as far as possible, that its players and team management are Covid-free prior to travelling for a match. This relies on Personal Responsibility.
- Travelling to matches - car-pooling is not recommended but if it cannot be avoided then be consistent and travel in pods to matches to avoid cross-over contact and wear face masks in cars.
- All pitches must have an entry and exit point which are clearly marked and communicated to the visiting team on their arrival at the pitch.
- Teams may not enter a pitch until all players from the previous match have left the pitch.
- It is recommended that you allow a minimum of 90 minutes per match, ideally 105 minutes per match. Time management is of the essence to avoid cross-over /crowd scenarios at pitches so please stress this to all club members.
- The Leinster policy of fielding your teams from the top down still applies for this season.
- The LHA encourage all hockey players to download the Covid Tracker app to assist with contact tracing.

Postponements

The coming season must be run very tightly - there is no room for postponed fixtures to build up as rolling or localised lockdowns may affect ability to fulfil fixtures at a later date.

Where there is a postponement, the normal 22 day rule applies however the refix date must be agreed between the clubs within 8 days of the original fixture date and the Fixtures Committee informed of refix date. If pitch availability is a problem, the fixture may be reversed.

Matches may be played earlier by agreement. Clubs are strongly encouraged to avail of this facility.

Hockey Ireland Registration

For contact tracing purposes, being able to uniquely identify players is of vital importance. The Hockey Ireland registrations provide this exactly.

All registration secretaries are required to ensure that **every** player registered has a Hockey Ireland membership ID listed on their registration. If you are not HI registered, you cannot play in Leinster. Match cards must be filled out in full (including coach and umpire) by 5pm the night before the match.



Spectators

As per current government guidance, all matches and training sessions must be held behind closed doors with no spectators.

Personal Responsibility

We all have a duty of care to ourselves, our family, friends, team-mates, club-mates, the list is endless but the point is simply “**stop and think**” - how your actions affect you and others during this pandemic. Please follow the Government guidelines:

- Social-Distance
- Wash your hands
- Wear face masks where necessary

COVID information on Leinster Hockey website

All club members, players, coaching staff and anyone present at a hockey club must be fully aware of the HI protocols regarding their attendance and participation.

There is an extensive section on the Leinster Hockey website with all the relevant links and information available to clubs:

<https://www.leinsterhockey.ie/COVID19/>

Useful links re COVID-19:

<https://www.leinsterhockey.ie/news-detail/10065257/>

Adoption and Adaptation

The LHA board will adopt these recommendations after the AGM as an extension of the Bye-Laws for the duration of the 2020/21 season for the Ladies’ Section. Any changes that will be made permanent will be presented at a future AGM.

If there is a problem that arises during the year, a club will be entitled to request a clarification from the LHA board without it being treated like an appeal. The Board’s decision will be final.