



Regional Academy U18 competition **Frequently Asked Questions**

What is the purpose of the competition?

The quality of playing programmes has been identified as a key area of weakness in our system and it is hoped this initiative will make a positive impact on talent development in England.

There will be no trophy, grand final or even overall winner. Instead, the purpose of these matches will be to provide a learning and development opportunity for players in the academy system. Secondly, these matches will provide an environment to assess the abilities and potential of players to progress within both the academy and England age-grade pathway.

How was this competition developed?

Following discussions with Regional Academy Managers in August 2011 it was unanimously felt a competitive programme for the best 16-18 year olds was required. The Professional Game Board (PGB) Player Performance Group appointed a sub-group of RFU and PRL staff to devise and plan a competition programme that would:

- a) Provide the leading domestic talent development opportunity for England Academy Scholars and
- b) A competitive talent confirmation opportunity for EPDG and AASE players.
- c) Consider implications on key stakeholders

The proposals of this group, which form the basis of this competition, were accepted by the PGB Player Performance Group in January 2012.

When will the matches be held?

These matches will seek to replace existing sporting activity rather than add to the programme. Thus, matches will be played on Saturday afternoons and six matches will be organised from seven dates:

Round 1	15th December 2012
Round 2	22nd December 2012
Round 3	12th January 2013
Round 4	19th January 2013
Round 5	2nd February 2013
Round 6	9th February 2013
Round 7	16th February 2013

What age grouping are the matches?

Matches will be under 18s but up to three under 19s may be included. When a player has reached their 19th birthday they are no longer permitted to be selected.

How many players are likely to be involved in the six match competition?

Each Regional Academy's playing squad is expected to be approximately 30-35

Where will these players be drawn from?

Feedback from the academies suggest squads for the six match competition will typically be comprised of:

- 38% Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE)
- 50% Elite Player Development Group (EPDG)
- 12% U19s

**Will these matches disrupt school sport during this period?**

EPDG players are likely to form half the playing squads and will be drawn from over one hundred schools nationally. Most schools concerned will have 1-2 players involved and only twelve schools are expected to have four or more players involved in the programme.

Will players from outside the academy system be drawn into these matches?

Only one academy (Harlequins) has indicated that they will draw players from outside their existing academy EPDG programme. Others will only do so in the event of an unforeseen run of injuries.

Will these matches result in significantly greater training commitments?

In almost all cases match preparation will be done in existing EPDG sessions (rather than additional sessions). Some EPDG sessions may however be rescheduled to bring different geographic groupings together.

How will this programme of matches be communicated to players and parents?

Players and parents will be informed of these matches either at an annual EPDG induction evening at start of the season or by email.

Who will communicate with the schools?

Academies are currently in the process of contacting each school from which players will be drawn. Academy staff will be able to identify which players they wish to participate and begin a process of dialogue to ascertain availability.

Matches clash with exam commitments – what do I do?

All academies are committed to developing the individual and their educational attainment is key to this. If a parent, player or school master is concerned that these matches place a strain on the individuals learning then they should contact their Academy Manager.

A match clashes with another commitment – what do I do?

Match dates have been selected to avoid clashes with the winter term school matches, Daily Mail commitments and the England U18s programme. However, clashes with school sport or other commitments are inevitable. In this event you should contact the Academy Manager to discuss.

What format will the review process take?

The Professional Game Board Player Performance Group (PGB PPG) will develop terms of reference for the review. The group will commence at the end of match programme and will include stakeholders to represent both the professional and community game (to include RFU, PRL, Regional Academies and schools). Their findings will be reported to both PGB PPG and the Community Game Board Player Development Committee by April 2013.

If I have concerns who should I contact?

In the first instance concerns should be brought to the attention of the Academy Manager. If your concerns persist please contact Alun Powell on alunpowell@rfu.com or 07872 465429.

What is the next step?

Academies are currently in the process of consulting with schools regarding these matches and thereafter will bring the programme to the attention of players and parents. In the meantime, please consider any potential concerns and raise with the appropriate partners.