Robert Markel Cup Bylaws

2026

RMC BYLAWS 2026

ARTICLE 1. ORGANIZATION NAME

1.1. The name of this organization shall be the Robert Markel Cup (RMC), and the common name of this organization shall be the RMC.

ARTICLE 2. ORGANIZATION PURPOSE

2.1. The RMC is organized exclusively for fostering regional amateur Rugby Union competition.

2.2. The objective of the RMC is to develop, promote, and administer the game of Rugby Union in the Gulf South, consistent, but not affiliated with, the policies and procedures of USA Rugby, at the Men's Club level of play.

2.3. To foster an environment in which participation in the sport is encouraged for all those with an interest, regardless of race, sexual orientation, religion or gender.

2.4. To develop the financial resources and disperse the funds necessary to carry out these stated objectives.

ARTICLE 3. TERMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP

3.1. Participation in the RMC shall be extended by invitation to any club in the Gulf South area, deemed competitively appropriate, that agrees to conform to the policies, procedures and requirements of the RMC as set forth by these bylaws. The participation period is for one season only, per invitation, annually.

3.2. Initial application or acceptance for membership shall be submitted electronically (via email) to the President of the RMC (robertmarkelcup@gmail.com).

The RMC Executive Committee (see Article 4) shall decide approval of membership by a simple majority. Termination of membership shall be decided by a two-thirds majority vote of the RMC Executive Committee.

3.3. RMC is not officially affiliated with USA Rugby South, however, all players and teams MUST be fully enrolled in the current USA Rugby CIPP Program to be permitted to play, and each team MUST have a level 200 coach appointed in connection with their club, as required by USA Rugby, also to be permitted to

play. More information can be found at https://education.usarugby.org/educators-page/pathways/coaching/#

3.4. Full Membership in the RMC shall be reserved for clubs actively involved in playing rugby and in good standing. Good standing requires all of the following:

3.4.1. Formal acceptance into each season's RMC competition: Email confirmation via an email of such from the RMC President is sufficient.

3.4.2. The weekly electronic submittal to the RMC President, and opposing team match secretary, of **both the signed game day roster sheet, and an excel spreadsheet with player/ eligible spectator names mirroring the same,** in line with the player Finals Eligibility requirements listed in Article 7, below.

3.4.3. Member clubs are responsible for paying referee fees at their home matches.

3.4.4. Compliance with these bylaws and RMC requirements for member renewal, as determined by the RMC Executive Committee.

3.4.5. Full compliance with RMC Bylaws and Executive Committee decisions.

3.4.6. Maintenance of up-to-date contact information for 2 club officials with the RMC Executive Committee, annually. Specifically, each new season each club/ team shall submit (via email) to the RMC President, that seasons updated contact information for its club, providing two points of contact.

3.4.7. Each team is responsible for supplying a sound, even and safe playing surface for each of their home matches, with the size, dimensions and set-up of the field (goal post position, goal post pads, corner posts, marked boundary lines, etc.) in line with both the USA and World Rugby requirements.

3.4.8. Each hosting **team is to set-up their player bench area on the opposite side to that of the spectators.** Additionally, a reasonable sized area is to be demarcated and sectioned off with rope, where the bench players are permitted (the player demarcation area), before entering the field of play.

Players are not permitted to roam up and down the sidelines during a match and are to be confined to the player demarcation area before entering the field of play as a substitution.

3.4.9. Team coaches are not permitted onto the field of play during game play at any time, nor to roam outside the demarcation area. This includes

following tries, during conversion attempts, or at any stage other than before the games, at half time or at the conclusion of a match.

3.4.10.

Members are required to pay all fees associated with match play, including but not limited to: referee fees, field fees, transportation costs.

3.4.11.

Each club is required to pay a $200 RMC competition entrance fee no later than three weeks following the season commencement date (for the 2026 season this date will be no later than October 10th). Fees will be used for expenses associated with operational costs during the competition season and Grand Final day costs associated with the RMC Committee responsibilities. All funds (if any) not used during the season will remain in the RMC Bank Account for use the following year. The details of any remaining funds at the conclusion of the season will be communicated to all clubs via email as necessary.

Payment details for the RMC Account are as follows:

- Payment to be made via Venmo
- Venmo Pay-to Details: @mikegibbynz27
- Alternate payment options are available upon early email request to robertmarkelcup@gmail.com
- All payments made will be transferred to the RMC bank account.

For the 2026 season, payment of the competition entrance fee is required from all clubs by no later than October 10, 2026. After this time, non-payment of fees will result in the loss of all accrued win points on the competition table. Once fees are paid in full, the club in question will be eligible to accrue competition points again from that time onwards. Lost points will not be reinstated.

ARTICLE 4. ORGANIZATION OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

4.1. Day to day business of RMC shall be conducted and directed by the RMC Executive Committee as described in this Article. The Executive Committee shall function as the equivalent of a Board of Directors. The Executive Committee shall have full governing authority, including but not limited to the authority to establish policy and procedures and other reasonable actions deemed to be in the interest

of the RMC, in furtherance of the RMC purpose and consistent with these bylaws. The Executive Committee's authority shall include the authority to amend these by-laws.

4.2. The Executive Committee shall be comprised of a President and associated officers.

4.3. For the 2026 RMC Competition the President role will be filled by Michael Gibbs.

4.4. The Executive Committee shall have the additional responsibility for taking appropriate action against individuals that do not comply with these bylaws, and/or teams that:

4.4.1. Do not honor season and schedule commitments

4.4.2. Act in any manner which is detrimental to the competition or the spirit of rugby

4.4.3. Attempt to play any ineligible players or to deceive or manipulate player eligibility in any way

ARTICLE 5. RMC SEASON SCHEDULE

5.1 The regular season matches are to commence on September 19th, 2026 and conclude no later than October 24, 2026. The play off for 3rd and 4th place and the Grand Final (i.e., the championship match to determine first place and the 2026 season RMC winner) will take place on the same day, respectively, that being the **21st of November, 2026**. Places in the finals will be determined sequentially based on the accumulation of competition points (as tabulated on the points table) during the regular season.

The 2026 RMC Grand Final day will be held at a venue to be communicated beforehand by the RMC Committee. In determining the host venue for the Grand Final, primary consideration will be given to the home ground of the team that finishes the regular season positioned higher on the competition ladder. The quality of the playing surface and the overall standard of the venue will also be regarded as paramount.

5.2 An additional copy of the schedule and Bylaws of the 2026 RMC season will be accessible through-out the season on the official RMC website http://robertmarkelcup.com

5.3 Any agreed upon changes between teams to the date of a scheduled game day match is to be decided and agreed upon (with confirmation via email), no later than one (1) week prior to the originally scheduled match date. All changes are to

be communicated in writing (via email) to the RMC President no later than 1 week before the originally scheduled game in question.

ARTICLE 6. RULES OF COMPETITION

6.1. RMC matches will conform to the rules and guidelines of USA Rugby, except where otherwise noted as follows:

6.1.1. A maximum of twenty-five (25) open age players are permitted to compete per game, for all games of the RMC season, including the RMC Finals. In addition, if a club has additional players capable of doing so, two players aged 45 years of age or over, will be permitted additionally per team, per game.

To clarify, clubs are permitted an unlimited number of registered players for their club, but only 25 open age players are allowed to take the field in any given RMC match, with an additional two players permitted per game, who are 45 years of age and over. i.e. A potential for 27 total players.

6.1.2 To allow additional players to be considered eligible for the RMC Finals who are not named in their club's 25-man team roster each week, players who are available for each RMC game and are present before the conclusion of each match can be listed on the game day roster sheet (as an "eligible spectator") in the same manner as those of the rostered 27. These players are not permitted however to compete in the match. **Players MUST be present at the game no later than the conclusion of the game (final whistle) and must both sign the game day sheet as being in attendance AND list their up-to-date (this season's), CIPP number.** If all eligibility requirements are met for these players at the conclusion of the regular season, these players will be considered eligible for selection in the RMC Finals.

Note: It is required that a team's starting 25-man roster be filled first before "eligible spectators" can be listed. If a playing roster is not full for a particular match, it is expected that any eligible spectator's will already be participating in the match. In the event that a game day roster is not full and an eligible spectator is still listed, only those documented as injured (to the RMC Board) will count as eligible for said match.

The same eligibility requirements detailed above apply to 45 and over age players.

6.1.3 Rolling subs are permitted.

6.1.4. In the event that one team does not have sufficient numbers to field a full fifteen's side (i.e. 15 players), that team forfeits the match and points are awarded commensurately.

6.1.5. To be eligible to perform conversion kicks at goal either following a penalty or a try, the player nominated to take the kick must have been on the field, as a participating player, at the time of said penalty or try.

ARTICLE 7. ON FIELD RED-CARD PROCESS & DISCIPLINARY ACTION

7.1 In the event of an RMC player being awarded a red card during an RMC match the following disciplinary action/ suspension process will be followed[1]:

DURING A MATCH:

7.1.3. When a player is red carded during a match they are to leave the field immediately and are not permitted to enter the field of play again for the remainder of the match.

7.1.4. After a 20-minute period, the offending team is permitted to enter a substitute player back onto the field of play to replace the infringing (red-carded) player. i.e. back to 15 on 15.[2]

7.1.5. The on-field referee will keep time of the 20-minute period and communicate to the team when the time has elapsed.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOLLOWING A MATCH:

7.2 Suspension of players following Red card infringements will also follow the rules and guidelines as outlined by USA Rugby. Specifically:

7.2.1 Any player who is red carded will immediately be suspended from RMC competition until further notice and their incident sent to the Disciplinary Committee (DC) for adjudication.

7.2.2. The DC shall adjudicate the players conduct and determine what/ or if, sanctions and suspensions are warranted

[1] All processes and procedures are in line with USA and World Rugby Guidelines and have been adopted in consultation with the True South Referee Executive Director.

[2] The RMC is composed of players with many varying degrees of skill and experience. The predominant form of Red Card infringements come through accidents and careless play, as opposed to malicious intent.

7.2.3. Suspension from the competition will be decided based on the severity of each incident, mitigating circumstances in the incident, and in consultation with the match referee of the match in question.

7.2.4. The decision will be communicated in written form (email) to the relevant club president and contact before the next prevailing RMC match.

7.2.5. Billy Goodall, USA Rugby Judicial Officer, has been appointed as the DC for the RMC competition. The DC's determination of each incident shall be shared with the RMC Board and a decision subsequently disseminated to the relevant club.

ARTICLE 8. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY FOR RMC COMPETITION

8.1. Must be a registered player in good standing with USA Rugby.

8.2. Must be registered to the club you are wishing to play for with USA Rugby. Note: The RMC competition is not a USA Rugby competition and this provision pertains to the club you will (or would) CIPP and play for in your regular "matrix" competition season.

8.3. To play in the RMC competition a player must be 18 years of age or over or have an approved waiver signed by the players parent or legal guardian, if between the ages of 16 and 18.

8.4. Any player who has played Rugby Union professionally in the previous year/ season (i.e. specifically stepped onto the field for a professional team in a professional competition) or has been selected to represent their country is ineligible for this tournament.

8.5. Any and all players who are listed or rostered to the New Orleans (NoLa) Gold professional Rugby club, or who have moved from out of state to join the NoLa Gold team, are ineligible to compete in the RMC competition.

8.6. All players (and eligible spectator's) must be enrolled in CIPP prior to the start of the RMC season. Each team and club is responsible for checking the USA Rugby CIPP database, for policing their player eligibility, and for disallowing anyone to play (or sign the game day roster sheet) who is not CIPP enrolled. Games will be considered forfeited and competition points awarded and deducted accordingly (including retroactively) for allowing any "un-CIPPed" players to sign the game day match sheet or to play during a match, during an RMC competition game or season.

8.7. As of season 2026, the Loyola University Rugby Program (the "Wolfpack") is in effect at Loyola University. This team is comprised of rugby players selected from

programs located both domestically and internationally and are welcomed in the RMC competition. For the 2026 season, however, due to the infancy of the Wolfpack program and their intention to prioritize the program's success, no Loyola Rugby players will be released to play for the RMC clubs. As such, no Wolfpack players are eligible to be rostered in any RMC match and the rostering of these players will result in the match being considered forfeit and points deducted and awarded, commensurately with these RMC bylaws.

The Wolfpack's involvement in future RMC seasons will be welcomed but decided upon prior to these season(s).

8.8. Revisions to the eligibility rules for the upcoming seasons shall be communicated by the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE 9. PLAYER ELIGIBILITY FOR RMC FINALS

9.1 To be eligible to play in the RMC Grand Final Day (in either the Grand Final or the playoff for 3rd place), or the 4th Vs 5th Elimination final, all players must have played the following through-out the regular season:

A minimum number of regular season matches.

- For the 2026 season, this equates to a minimum of **THREE (3)** regular season games required for a player to be deemed eligible for ALL of the RMC Finals, including the Elimination (4th Vs 5th), Preliminary and Grand Final matches, respectively.

9.2. Exceptions to the above Final's eligibility requirements will be considered based on injury, other extenuating circumstances, and participation in the season(s) prior to a submission request for exception (see submission requirements below).

9.3. Exceptions to the player eligibility requirements will be assessed on a game by game basis and will require a formal eligibility waiver request (with supporting documentation as relevant) sent from the club representative, per team member. Requests are initially to be detailed (including reason and evidence) and submitted in writing electronically (**via email only**) to the RMC President (robertmarkelcup@gmail.com) for final determination. **Submittals sent later than 2 days after the game in question will not be considered** and the player in question determined to have not played in said game. **No form of initial submittal other than email will be considered acceptable**. **No retroactive or late submissions outside of the 2-day window will be considered for a waiver.**

9.4. It is a requirement of each club, for each game, that players (and eligible spectators) have their name recorded on a game day player roster sheet with each player and spectator's individual (up-to-date) CIPP number recorded

adjacent to their name. The rostered 25 players and two 45+ age players who partake in the game are to be clearly marked on the sheet as such and those outside the playing 25 ("eligible spectator"), as such.

9.5. At the conclusion of each game the captain of each side must sign both their own teams roster sheet and that of the opposing team, as validation of the authenticity and honesty of the players listed, their attendance, and the CIPP numbers listed. The signature is to be placed immediately adjacent to and below the final player listed on both the player and eligible spectator columns. This dual captain signature per sheet acts as the final confirmation as to the validity and eligibility of the players listed in line with the RMC bylaws.

Each club's game day sheet is additionally to be signed by the match day referee, authenticating the score-line and quality of field condition and set-up.

9.6. The signed game day roster sheets are to be scanned and sent electronically (via email) to the RMC President (robertmarkelcup@gmail.com)**, no later than the close of business (5pm central time) on the Monday following each match.** No form of submittal other than the scanned and attached roster sheet, sent via email, will be considered acceptable. Penalties for not submitting completed game day roster sheets by the required date/ time will include loss of competition points and subsequent ineligibility for the season finals.

An additional electronic submission is required from each team via email, each week, that matches the game day roster sheet. **This is to be sent in the form of an excel spreadsheet (an excel spreadsheet file itself, not a PDF of it),** listing the exact players, eligible spectators (and their associated CIPP numbers) as those listed on the signed game day sheet.

To be clear, **an electronic excel spreadsheet** is additionally required each week that mirrors the listed players, eligible spectators and CIPP numbers, of the game day roster sheet.

The quality of submission to the RMC of the game day roster sheet should be considered of the highest priority by all RMC clubs. Only clear and legible submissions will be accepted. Continued submission of illegible or blurry game day roster sheets WILL result in penalties that WILL include a loss of a single competition point on each occasion. **Only a single warning will be provided in this instance.**

9.7. Which players participate will be tabulated weekly by the RMC Board, based on the weekly player roster submittal(s) and will be used to determine player eligibility for the finals, as dictated by the requirements listed above.

9.8. The game day player roster sheet template will be supplied to the clubs, electronically, via email at the start of the competition, and will be additionally made available for download on the RMC website throughout the season.

9.9. It is considered fundamentally against the spirit of the game and RMC competition to forge player's and eligible spectator's names and CIPP numbers on the game day roster sheet, or to list names of players who do not play during a match, other than as allowed and outlined above.

9.10 The "Tony Breaux" Clause: Players are not permitted to play for more than one (1) club for the remainder of the season, following the second (2nd) competition round of the season. For the 2026 RMC season, this date will be September 26th, 2026. To clarify, after September 26th, 2026, all players are to remain at their club of choice at that time for the remainder of the RMC season. Before this time, players are free to change clubs if they so desire. Penalties for playing for a different team after this date will be the immediate forfeiture of each match that the player in question plays in, and the potential removal from the competition for the club in question, for the following season.

- The reasoning behind this clause is to allow clubs with a large player roster initially, to give players who aren't getting a significant amount of game playing time, an opportunity to relocate to another club with lesser numbers and therefore a greater potential to play rugby for the remainder of the season.

9.11 Players wishing to move clubs after the second round of the competition schedule are required to submit a formal request to the RMC President (via email at robertmarkelcup@gmail.com) detailing the specifics and reasoning for the desired move. The submittal, RMC President response via email, and FINAL ruling is required before the player in question can take the field for the new club, if permitted.

9.12 Players will not be permitted to play in the Finals if they do not satisfy all of the requirements as listed above.

9.13 In the lead up to the Grand Final Day, all team rosters (ie the 25 players from each club who will be listed to participate in the Grand Final match(es) plus two 45+ age players) **are required to be submitted electronically to the RMC president no later than the Tuesday prior to the Grand Final day.** For the 2026 season this date will be **Tuesday November 17th.**

It should be kept in mind that the eligibility rules (including the 3-game minimum) apply to all of the Final's to be played, including the Elimination Final, the Preliminary Final and the Grand Final, and that it is the responsibility of the clubs to police this requirement within their own team roster.

Playing of ineligible players in any Final's matches is immediate cause for forfeiture of that match and team eligibility for future finals matches.

9.14 The above eligibility requirements have been drafted with three specific objectives in mind:

- To eliminate the ability and desire for clubs to bring in “ringers” for any game, with specific emphasis on the RMC Finals match(es);
- To encourage clubs to have a strong, permanent and local team roster for each season; and
- To eliminate players from playing for multiple teams during a season, and in so doing, diluting the value of their club and winning the RMC competition.

9.15 Any attempt to deceive, counterfeit or manipulate the above eligibility rules will be dealt with severely including ineligibility from this season’s finals and probable expulsion from future RMC seasons. It is the responsibility of each club to uphold the values of the player eligibility rules and fairness of the competition.

ARTICLE 10. COMPETITION POINTS TABLE (THE “LADDER”) AND FORFIETURE’S

10.1 The competition is designed to discourage forfeitures and to encourage the playing of all matches, especially “away” games.

Competition Points will be awarded or subtracted in the following manner:

- 2 points will be awarded for a win
- 1 point will be awarded to each team for a draw
- No points will be awarded to the losing team for a loss
- 2 points will be subtracted for a forfeited game with the points being awarded to the non-forfeiting team
- A tally of game points scored for and of points scored against, for each game, will be kept. In the event of multiple teams being equal on competition points positions on the ladder will be determined based on the for and against differential of each team (i.e., the team with the superior for and against will be placed higher on the ladder)
- In the event of a forfeit, the non-forfeiting team will be awarded 25 game points to their “for” column and the forfeiting team will be awarded 25 game points to their “against” column

- In the unlikely event that teams are equal in both competition points and points differential at the conclusion of the regular season, standings for the Final's matches will be determined via the following hierarchy of criteria:
    - The team with the lowest accrual in their "points against" column shall progress; and
    - If equal in "points against", it will be decided by a simple coin toss.

An example of the Competition Points Ladder is illustrated below:

Position on Ladder	Team	Games Played	W	L	D	Forfeited Games	Forfeited Against	Points For	Points Against	Points Differential	Competition Points
1	Dragons	3	2	0	1	0	2	175*	134	41	**9**
2	Dogs	5	4	0	1	0	0	163	133	30	**9**
3	Panthers	5	4	0	1	0	0	126	120	6	**9**
4	Cowboys	2	0	2	0	0	3	136	145	-9	**6**
5	Bunnies	3	2	0	1	2	0	53	76**	-23	**1**
6	Bronco's	2	2	0	0	3	0	43	185**	-142	**-2**

*Note: "Points For" added for forfeits against team. **Note: "Points Against" added for forfeiting games.

W = Wins. L = Losses. D = Draws

10.2 The actual competition point's ladder will be tabulated weekly and updated on the RMC website http://robertmarkelcup.com

10.3 If a team forfeits a match during an RMC season, they will be automatically ruled ineligible for all of that seasons finals matches. The forfeiting of any games is highly discouraged and will result in heavy scrutiny of acceptance into the following RMC season(s).

ARTICLE 11. GRAND FINAL DAY HOSTING REQUIREMENTS

11.1 Expectations: The Grand Final day is a culmination of the RMC season and is expected to be a gala day for local Rugby Union. An additional game, to be

played first on the day, will be organized by the RMC committee. Following this game, the play off for 3rd and 4th place will commence, with the Grand Final match following this match to conclude the day and season.

11.2 The location of the ground to be used for the 2026 RMC Grand Final day will be communicated by the RMC President well in advance of the Grand Final day. Hosting rights and responsibilities for the 2026 RMC Grand Final day will be split between the two Grand Final playing teams and the RMC Committee.

11.3 The organization and communication of the two initial matches on the Grand Final Day, prior to the Grand Final itself - (including referees and teams) - will be coordinated by the RMC Committee. All responsibilities for the actual RMC Grand Final Match will be the responsibility of the Grand Final Day Hosting club, in consultation of the RMC Executive Committee.

11.4 Playing Field and surface: It is the responsibility of the Hosting Club to prepare the RMC Grand Final Day field and surface in line with the requirements listed in article 3.4.7 above. It is expected that the line marking and set up of the Grand Final day field (including all corner posts, demarcation roping, and goal post pads) are completed no later than 2 hours prior to the kick-off time of the initial pre-matches of the Grand Final day, but ideally completed the day prior.

11.5 The awarding of the RMC trophy (the Cup) to the 2026 season winning club will be held at the ground at the conclusion of the Grand Final Match. Prior to this, the Cup is to be brought to the ground in time for the first match kick-off time.

11.6 The RMC Cup will be annually engraved and updated with the details of the winning club, by the RMC Board, only. It is reasonably expected that no individual, club or organization, other than the RMC Board, will alter the Cup in any way or manner.

11.7 To ensure the correct level of preparedness and to allow The Grand Final day to be adequately communicated and advertised to the local rugby community it is expected that the Grand Final Hosting teams will communicate with the RMC President consistently and well ahead of time in regards to the specifics of the Grand Final day including (but not limited to) the venue, referees and touch judges assigned for the Grand Final, and plans for the after-match celebrations and hosting (if any).

ARTICLE 12. INDEMNIFICATION

12.1 Any person who is or was an Executive Committee member of RMC (and the heirs estate, executors, administrators and personal representatives of such persons) shall be indemnified to the fullest extent now or hereafter permitted by law in connection with any actual or threatened action or proceeding (including civil, criminal, administrative or investigative proceedings) arising out of their

service to the RMC, Louisiana Rugby, or USA Rugby or to another organization at RMC's, Louisiana or USA Rugby's request. Persons who are not Executive Committee members, committee leaders or members may be similarly indemnified in respect of such service to the extent authorized at any time by the board members.