



Hong Kong Football Association 2021-2022 Sapling Cup Competition Regulations

(Updated on 13th August, 2021)

Name and Nature of the Competition

1. The competition shall be officially called the “Sapling Cup”. Hong Kong Football Association (hereinafter referred to as the “HKFA”) reserves the rights to add the name of the Title Sponsor or its product name. The competition is governed by HKFA, all playing teams shall be HKFA members (Voting Members or Non-voting Members) except as otherwise stated in this Regulation, shall be implemented in consistence with the Articles issued by HKFA.

Management of the Competition

2. The Sapling Cup shall be wholly governed by HKFA.
3. HKFA reserves the right to alter or modify the Rules and Regulations of the Sapling Cup if necessary.
4. The Sapling Cup shall comply with the Laws of the Game as laid down by The International Football Association Board (IFAB).

Ownership of Sapling Cup

5. Sapling Cup trophy is the property of HKFA and will be awarded to the champion team.
6. The champion team is awarded with the Sapling Cup trophy as the prize and shall keep it in its custody during the year until the designated date of next year or 3 months prior to the final match of the Sapling Cup whichever is earlier. The trophy should be returned in good condition to HKFA.
7. If Sapling Cup trophy is lost or damaged while being kept by the champion team and such loss or damage is cannot be covered by the insurance acquired by HKFA, the champion team shall be liable for the expenses necessary of replacement or repair.

Eligibility

8. Hong Kong Premier League teams shall participate in Sapling Cup. Each member club shall not send more than one team to participate. The board of directors has the right to invite local or foreign teams to participate in the competition.
9. With the approval of at least two-thirds of attending directors, the board of directors may reject the application filed by any team for participation in the competition.

Playing Format and related arrangement

10. The competition shall be held in accordance with this Regulation and the rules of Hong Kong Premier League. Each participating team shall send its best team to play. Otherwise, it shall submit a report specifying the reason to the Secretariat of HKFA.
11. The match duration is 90 minutes with two halves of 45 minutes each. There will be no more than 15 minutes from whistle to whistle.
12. A minimum of Three (3) local youth players (**born in 1st January 2000 or after**) must be fielded at any one time of a Sapling Cup match. A player being sent-off by referee (red card or two yellow cards) shall be deemed to be a player on the field.
13. **The Competition shall be played in double round league format** Teams obtain points in a match based on the following situations:
 - a. Three points are assigned to the winning team.
 - b. One point is assigned to each team when the match ends in a tie.
 - c. No point is assigned to the losing team.
14. Final ranking is determined based on the accumulated points of each team acquiring from all matches. The more points a team has obtained, the higher the team ranks. The fewer points a team has, the lower the team ranks.
15. If Two (2) or more teams have the same number of points after all competitions in the first stage are played, the teams are ranked in the following order:
 - a. The team to which more points are assigned shall be ranked higher.
 - b. The team whose goal difference is better than others shall be ranked higher.
 - c. The team that scores more goals shall be ranked higher.
 - d. In case 2 or more teams are ranked the same after being ranked in the aforementioned order from a to c, such teams will be ranked again in the aforementioned order from a to c. If no result is generated even after the teams are ranked in the aforementioned order again, such teams will be ranked in the following order from e to h.
 - e. The team whose goal difference in the group is better than others shall be ranked higher.
 - f. The team that scores more goals in the group shall be ranked higher.
 - g. A designated number of points corresponding to a yellow card and a red card is assigned to each team as follows:
 - i. One point is acquired for a yellow card.
 - ii. Three points are acquired for a red card forming from 2 yellow cards.
 - iii. Three points are acquired for a red card shown directly.
 - iv. Four points are acquired for a red card shown immediately after a yellow card.
 - v. The team that acquires less such points than the other shall be ranked higher.
 - h. Lot drawing is used to determine the ranking of the teams.
16. The Competition shall allow each playing team to nominate up to twelve (12) substitutes in a match. According to the temporary amendment for the Law 3 of the Laws of the Game, the substitution arrangement will be applied as follows:

During the match, each team:

 - may use a maximum of five substitutes
 - has a maximum of three substitution opportunities*
 - may additionally make substitutions at half-time

Where extra time is played, each team:

- may use an additional substitute (whether or not the team has used its maximum number of substitutes)
- has one additional substitution opportunity* (whether or not the team has used its maximum number of substitution opportunities)
- may additionally make substitutions:
 - in the period before the start of extra time
 - at half-time in extra time
- If a team has not used its maximum number of substitutes or substitution opportunities, the unused substitutions and opportunities may be used in extra time.

* Where both teams make a substitution at the same time, this will count as a used substitution opportunity for each team.

17. If the match still ends in a tie after completion of the extra time, a penalty shoot-out will be applied in accordance with the Laws of the Game established by IFAB in order to determine the winner of the match.

Competition Venue and Date

18. HKFA is responsible for the venue arrangement.
19. Competition fixtures will be sent to each team prior to the commencement of the competition. All matches must be played as scheduled. If any team fails to comply with the rule, HKFA will impose disciplinary action on the violating team, including a fine, deduction of the score obtained in the competition, and deduction of the points acquired in the Division. If any team not only fails to take part in a scheduled match, but also found with any of the following situations, including (but not limited to) withdrawals from the league, or does not report for a match or refuses to continue a match, then HKFA will impose disciplinary action based on each occurrence, including but not limited to:
 - 1) Withdraws from the competition during the period between its confirmation of participation and commencement of its first scheduled match:
 - A fine of not more than HK\$20,000
 - 2) Withdraws from the competition after the first match has been held in the division to which its team belongs to:
 - A fine of not more than HK\$50,000
 - 3) Withdraws from the competition after its team plays the first scheduled match:
 - A fine of not more than HK\$80,000
 - 4) Withdraws from a scheduled match within 24 hours before the match:
 - A fine of not more than HK\$100,000 and relevant expenses
 - 5) Does not report for a scheduled match on the date of the match or before:
 - A fine of not more than HK\$150,000 and relevant expenses
 - 6) Refuses to continue a match or incompletes the match:
 - A fine of not more than HK\$200,000 and relevant expenses
20. Any request for changing the date of a competition due to special reasons must be made to the Secretariat in written notification. HKFA shall examine the application in accordance with the rules of Hong Kong Premier League.
21. Unless teams are informed by HKFA 2.5 hours prior to the time scheduled for a match, the match shall be played as scheduled.

22. Failure to start or finish a match due to a force majeure incident (such as unusual weather, floods, lightning, storm, fire, explosion, earthquake, sag, structure destruction, epidemics, others natural disaster, power breakdown or shortage, war, military action, riot, civil commotion, strike, business suspension or other industrial actions, terrorist attack, civil unrest, implementation of any law or regulation, state of anarchy, or lack of local or international power with authorization)(which delays or prevents anyone from performing the contents of the agreement) shall be handled in accordance with Rule 26. The date of the match to be re-scheduled will be decided by HKFA and shall not affect other fixture.
23. Each match lasts for 90 minutes. If a match cannot continue to the end, HKFA has the right to decide whether the match is completed or needs to be replayed for another 90 minutes. All matches to be replayed shall be done in accordance with the General Rules of the League provided by HKFA and the latest Laws of the Game issued by IFAB.
24. Notices issued by HKFA are delivered to registered mail address, fax number and email address. The notice is regarded as fully given after HKFA has delivered or sent the notice in any of the aforementioned communication ways.

Financial and Administrative Arrangement

25. The ticket prices are determined after negotiation of participating teams, and shall be applied to HKFA in written notification 14 days before the match. Otherwise, it shall follow the suggestion by HKFA as the final ticket price. Suggested ticket price of each stages by HKFA are as follows:

Other Stage:	HK\$80 for regular ticket & HK\$30 for concession ticket price
Semi-Final:	HK \$120 for regular ticket & HK\$40 for concession ticket price
Final:	HK \$150 for regular ticket & HK\$50 for concession ticket price
26. A fee imposed at a certain percentage on the income of the tickets to all matches shall be paid to HKFA. The aforementioned percentage shall be determined by the board of directors prior to commencement of Sapling Cup and the fee at the determined percentage shall be given to HKFA within 14 days after the match. Profit and/or loss of the competition shall be shared in accordance with the agreement made by playing teams or the rules of HKFA. Profit and/or loss shall be distributed as follows:
 - 1) Net profit or loss of a match where two teams are playing shall be shared equally by two teams.
 - 2) If four teams are playing in the form of double entertainment, net profit or loss of the game shall be shared equally by all playing teams unless relevant member clubs agree otherwise.
27. In calculation of net profit and/or loss of a match, relevant expenses shall be deducted, including (but not limited to) referees' fee, expense for police officers, wages to staff and personnel, ticket printing expense, billboard expense, floodlight expense, tea and snack expense, expense of the ball used in the match (if any), rent of the playing field, insurance and other expenses and charges relevant to the match, or such expenses and charges as the board of directors decide to be collected.
28. Except the billboards designated by HKFA and the locations of such billboards, the rest of the billboards are shared equally by playing teams and the location of each billboard is decided through negotiation of the playing teams; however, such location shall be agreed by HKFA in advance.

29. HKFA is responsible for venue operation, competition arrangement and assists football teams in managing and recruiting on-site workers.
30. The amount of prize money granted in Sapling Cup shall be determined by the board of directors annually.

Football Used in Competitions and Basic Equipment

31. HKFA will provide match ball if there is commercial sponsorship obtained, if not, the match ball used in a competition shall be provided by team named first in the fixture. In case of any match to be played, the opposing team shall provide the match ball to be used in the match.
32.
 - 1) Every club that participates in the competitions organized by HKFA is required to register at least 2 sets of kit for the Outfield Players and at least 3 sets of kit for the Goalkeeper (kits including shirt, shorts and socks) 7 working days before the first match of the respective competition. The colours of the shirts and socks of home kit and reserve kit of outfield player and goalkeeper must have a clear colour contrast.
 - 2) To avoid a clash in colours, each team must prepare at least 2 sets of registered kits for the Outfield players and 3 sets of registered kits for the Goalkeeper (kits including shirt, shorts and socks) in every match. When playing in the matches, the players of the playing teams shall wear shirts and socks which in the opinion of the referee is of a sufficient contrast that the refereeing officials shall be able to distinguish clearly between the two playing teams. Teams may need to wear the kit of the combination colour of their home and away kits. The following order of precedence shall apply for the selection of the choice of shirts and socks by the referee:
 - i. 1st priority: the outfield players of the [home] team (except the goalkeeper);
 - ii. 2nd priority: the outfield players of the [away] team (except the goalkeeper);
 - iii. 3rd priority: the goalkeeper of the [home] team;
 - iv. 4th priority: the goalkeeper of the [away] team.Referee takes the final decision regarding to the kits colours of the teams
 - 3) A number must appear clearly on the shirt and shorts, and a player must wear a shirt and shorts with the same number printed on his shirt and shorts whenever he participates in a match. The location of the number on the shirt and shorts of the same team must be identical.
 - 4) The number appearing on the shirt and shorts must be between from 1 to 99, and number 1 must be worn by a goalkeeper.
 - 5) Apart from the goalkeeper, the shirts, shorts and socks worn by the outfield players of the same team must be identical. The colours of the shirts and socks (including the goalkeepers) of home kit and reserve kit must have a clear colour contrast of dark and light.
 - 6) All advertisement regarding the equipment or kits of the football teams / players shall be done in accordance with the 2021/22 Equipment Regulation.
 - 7) All protection equipment being used in matches by players, such as masks and goggles, a written request must be submitted forty-eight (48) hours before the kick-off of the match. All protection equipment shall only be used during the match after an approval of HKFA.

Registration and Qualification

33. The registration procedure shall be completed in accordance with the Rules of the Association and the HKFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players. Except as otherwise provided herein, all regulations and rules provided by HKFA for player identity and team transfer shall be applicable to the competitions. Staff and players of the team shall complete the registration procedure through the online registration system “HK Football Connect”. The team has to log in the system to complete the registration.
34. Player shall only play for one team in the competition in the same football season. (only player who was fielded in the match will be counted).
35. If a match is abandoned by the Referee for any other reason after kick-off and the match shall be re-scheduled, only the players that are submitted in the “Participating Players List” as of the date of the match are allowed to play the re-scheduled match.
36. The registration procedure shall be completed in the time frame specified in the rules of Hong Kong Premier League.
37. The restrictions on non-local players are provided in the rules of Hong Kong Premier League.

Ineligible Players

38. A player that is found with any of the following situations shall be deemed as ineligible player:
 1. The team fails to register the player in accordance with the Regulations of HKFA and Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players by FIFA.
 2. The player failed to be included the “Participating Players List” of the team.
 3. The name of the player is not in the team list (Form B) provided by HKFA.
 4. Personal information given during referee inspection is inconsistent with that specified in the “List of Registered Players”.
 5. A player disguises the player whose identity check has been completed to play a competition.
 6. The player should have not played the competition due to any kind of suspension.
 7. The player is suspended from that match for his violation of any regulations of the competition or of any provision of disciplinary code.

If a team allows any ineligible player to participate in a competition, the board of directors of HKFA or relevant committee shall impose proper disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Code, including but not limited to:

- Fine;
- Replay of the match, or issuance of the judgment having the violating football team lose the point in the match; and
- Decision issued by the board of directors or relevant committee.

Referees and Assistant Referees

39. HKFA will appoint referees and assistant referees from the list of registered referees.
40. The board of directors has the right to decide the remuneration to referees and assistant referees if necessary.

41. Unless the consent of the HKFA is acquired prior to a match, the match shall be played as scheduled. The referee on the site must report to HKFA any incident resulting in delay of the match and any lateness or absence of any assistant referee or oneself. The assistant referee who is late or absent must explain the reason.
42. The referee must hand in the referee's report to HKFA after the match immediately. Incidents regarding red cards resulting in players ejected from the field, and the report on misconduct of relevant people, including players, staff or audience must be sent out to HKFA within 48 hours after the match.

Team List [Form B]

43. 1) Before the competition begins, the Game Supervisor and the captain of each team must fill out Form B (teams could make copy of Form B, but cannot amend any content of Form B), which is issued by HKFA and shall be confirmed and signed by the game supervisor and the captain. Players in the competition and the registration number and jersey number of each player shall be specified in the Form B. The Form B together with the list of game supervisors and players shall be given to the referee for inspection. The manager or the coach of the team must deliver the player cards of all players and the team sheet (Form B) to a referee during the provided period prior to the match.

The referee and duty officer must:

- a. check the identity of each player to play the competition; and
 - b. The referee must submit the team list and player substitution sheet within after the match immediately.
- 2) If the referee or the duty officer suspects any player's identity, he has the right to ask the player to show the ID certificate and sign on the team list.
 - 3) If it is proved that a team sends an un-registered or ineligible player to play, it shall be deemed to have violated regulations and the case will refer to Disciplinary Committee according to disciplinary procedure.
 - 4) The team list shall specify the registration number of each player and the number printed on the player's jersey, and the contents of the team sheet shall be confirmed by the game supervisor and the captain of the team by signing on the list prior to the match.
 - 5) The names of assistant referees and any 4th official for the match shall be indicated in the referee's report.

Number of Players

44. If the number of players of a team is less than 11 upon commencement, the match shall continue as according to the number of players as stipulated in the Laws of the Game. As the aforementioned situation affects the operation of the match and the image of the competition and makes the match unable to continue in the spirit of fair play, the team shall be punished for its violation of this rule by the board of directors of HKFA or a committee under the board. The sanction may include but is not limited to the following:

Fines:

- 1st time HK\$1,500
- 2nd time HK\$3,000
- 3rd time HK\$5,000
- 4th time Suspension to be considered by the board of directors

Protest, Claim or Complaint

45. No protests can be made against the referee's decisions. Such decisions are final and not subject to appeal, unless otherwise stipulated in the HKFA Disciplinary Code. Any and all protest, claims or complaints in connection with a match shall be made in written notification and delivered together with a deposit of HK\$2,000 to the Secretariat within 48 hours after the match. The protest, claim or complaint will be dealt with within 7 days after the receipt by HKFA. No protest, claim or complaint shall be withdrawn without the consent of HKFA. If the protest, claim or complaint is not successful, all or part of the deposit paid will be forfeited.

Protest Against Facilities or Objects Used in a Match

46. Any protests in connection with facilities, goalposts or other objects used in a match shall be made in writing and delivered together with a deposit of HK\$2,000 to the Secretariat within 48 hours after the match. The protest will be dealt with within 7 days after the receipt of the protest. No protest, claim or complaint shall be withdrawn without the consent of HKFA. If the protest, claim or complaint is not successful, all or part of the deposit paid will be forfeited.

Trophies and Medals

47. Sapling Cup and medals shall be awarded in the following situations:
- 1) The champion is awarded a replica trophy and 45 medals.
 - 2) The runner-up is awarded 45 medals.

If any team or player refuses to receive medals at the awarding ceremony, HKFA has the right to hold a discipline meeting and impose proper disciplinary action upon the team or player. HKFA has the right to withhold the medals to be awarded to the player who has been ejected from the field due to misconduct in a match.

Violation of the Regulations

48. If any team or its staff or player violates this regulation or commits any misconduct, HKFA shall have the Disciplinary Committee to deal with the violation or misconduct. HKFA has the right to expel the violating football team, staff or player from the competition, suspend its membership, suspend it from the game, or impose on it a fine or other proper penalties. If any team is temporarily suspended from the match, HKFA has the right to award to its rival in the match all the points assigned for the match during such suspension of the team.
49. If a player is warned by the referee showing a yellow card or is sent off from the field by the referee showing a red card, or the referee or assistant referee reports or complains in writing about the player for misconduct, the player will be examined by the Disciplinary Committee or other relevant committee assigned by Board for proper punishment.
50. Any complaint made in writing by a Director of HKFA, staff of a team or a referee will be reviewed by the HKFA. If the complaint is in the scope of the duties of the Disciplinary Committee, it shall be dealt with by the Disciplinary Committee. The board of directors or the selected committee of the board only deals with the complaints beyond the scope of the duties of the Disciplinary Committee and the incidents regarding violation of the Regulations.
51. When a protest, claim or complaint is dealt with by the Disciplinary Committee or any committee of the board of directors, the members of the committee shall not attend the meeting on behalf of any team, except for submitting evidence and relevant information to the committee.

Code of Ethics

52. All participating clubs, its Officials and Players, Match Officials are responsible to comply with the FIFA, AFC or HKFA Code of Ethics and all relevant circulars and directives in force at the time of the Competition, and agree in particular to respect the fighting against discrimination, racism and match-fixing activities.

All participating clubs, its Officials and Players, Match Officials are responsible to ensure the fairplay of all games. Any violated behavior will be examined by the Disciplinary Committee, or further examine by AFC or other related authorities.

Language

53. The Chinese version (of the rules) should have priority over the English version should there be any inconsistency or contradiction in between.

Modification and Interpretation of the Regulations

54. The board of directors has the right to modify, add, delete and interpret any rule provided in this Regulation.

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