

Breaches of Area League Regulations – Case Studies

Introduction

This document illustrates the kinds of regulatory breach that the London Area League Management Committee (ALMC) has sanctioned in the London Leagues, and its approach to reaching a decision.

- **Its purpose is educational:** to help clubs understand what conduct can lead to a sanction and how to avoid it.
- **These summaries are illustrative and do not create binding precedents;** each matter is determined on its own facts, including any aggravating or mitigating circumstances.
- Regulation references in each case study refer to the Regulations in force at the time the breach was sanctioned; **numbering in the current edition may differ.**
- **Every decision carries a right of appeal** under the process set out in the Area League Regulations.
- **Clubs should use these examples as a practical compliance guide** and refer to the current Regulations where a similar issue arises.

Most Common Types of Breach

Breach Type	Case #	Typical Issue	Best Preventative Action
Eligibility, Registration and Transfers	1, 2	Player not validly registered or transferred	Check GMS and obtain approval before selection
Team Sheet Falsification	3–6	Player omitted or another name substituted	Reconcile the sheet with the players who actually took part
Doubling Up and SXP	7–10	Second appearance without prior approval	Submit an SXP request before the match
Fixture Fulfilment	11, 12	Late concession or repeated forfeiture	Inform the Divisional Secretary immediately
Administrative Failures	13	Players, umpires or bench personnel not recorded	Complete all GMS match-day records; check any SXP need

Terms used: GMS = Game Management System; SXP = Selection Exemption Pass

Appeals

Appeals against ALMC decisions are uncommon and must be based on a recognised ground for appeal specified under Regulation 16. A club should therefore identify clearly the alleged error of fact, serious procedural irregularity, manifestly unreasonable sanction or significant new evidence, rather than relying only on disagreement with the outcome.. Refer to Case 14.

Anonymised Case Studies

The following **case studies are grouped by type of breach**; each sets out the facts and the outcome, followed by the practical lesson in bold.

Identifying details have been removed or generalised. Some examples combine closely related matters where necessary to preserve anonymity, without changing the regulatory principle illustrated.

Eligibility, Registration and Transfers

1. Unregistered player concealed through team sheet falsification.

In an early-season fixture, a club fielded a player who was not registered to it in GMS and who had no transfer in progress. The player was left off the team sheet, and goals were credited to other players.

The ALMC found breaches of the registration and team sheet rules (Regulations 7 and 9), awarded the match to the opponents, applied a points deduction, and imposed the minimum standard-tariff fines for fielding an ineligible player and for team sheet falsification.

Key lesson: A player must be validly registered before taking part, and every participant must be recorded accurately on the team sheet.

Club action: Confirm each selected player's registration status in GMS before the match and correct the team sheet before the submission deadline.

2. Player fielded without a valid, completed transfer.

Related examples. In two separate matters, a club fielded a player whose transfer position had not been properly resolved (Regulation 7).

In one, the player completed a transfer after the transfer deadline had passed, without any request to the ALMC to permit a late transfer, and then played in a league fixture; the result stood, but the ALMC applied a fine and a points deduction, and warned that any future late transfer or new registration must be approved before the player concerned participates.

In the other, a player took part in two fixtures without having completed a transfer from a previous club, having begun and then cancelled a transfer request before registering as a new player; the ALMC accepted mitigating circumstances and applied reduced sanctions, changing one of the two results to a walkover and imposing a reduced points deduction and fine, while holding the club responsible for fielding an improperly registered player.

Key lesson: Starting, cancelling or completing a transfer after the deadline does not make a player eligible unless any required ALMC approval has also been obtained.

Club action: Check that the transfer is fully completed and that any necessary late approval has been granted before selecting the player.

Team Sheet Falsification

An inaccurate team sheet may constitute a breach regardless of intent. Where a player has been deliberately omitted, or another person's name has been substituted, the circumstances may also support a finding of deliberate concealment and a more serious sanction.

3. Participating player omitted from team sheet, constituting team sheet falsification.

Following an opponent's complaint, the ALMC found that a player had taken part without being entered on the team sheet, with his goals credited to other players. At that stage, he also appeared not to be registered to the club in GMS, and the ALMC imposed sanctions for both ineligibility and team sheet falsification (Regulations 7 and 9).

A later enquiry established that the player had in fact been validly registered throughout but had not appeared in the expected GMS selection list because of an administrative error. The eligibility concern therefore fell away, but the team-sheet breach remained because the player had taken part without being recorded.

Key lesson: A player missing from the expected GMS list may reflect a registration data error rather than ineligibility. Omitting that player from the team sheet is itself a falsification breach, regardless of the player's actual status.

Club action: If a registered player does not appear in GMS, query it with England Hockey's GMS Support team before the match and ensure that the player is nevertheless recorded accurately on the team sheet.

4. Higher-team players fielded without SXP and concealed through team sheet omission.

An opponent's complaint led the ALMC to find that regular players from a higher team had also played for a lower team at the same club on the same day, without an SXP, and were not recorded on the team sheet (Regulations 8 and 9). The omission was treated as deliberate because the club had been given an opportunity to disclose the players' participation.

The ALMC recorded a walkover, applied a points deduction, and imposed a higher-tier falsification fine deferred against any repeat.

Key lesson: A player who requires an SXP must not play without prior approval, and omitting that player from the team sheet may support a finding of deliberate concealment.

Club action: Check the appearance history of any player moving between teams, obtain an SXP where required and record the player accurately.

5. Ineligible player concealed through deliberate team sheet substitution.

Composite example. In two separate matters, each following an opponent's complaint, the ALMC found that an ineligible player had taken part in league fixtures and had been omitted from the team sheet, with a different, specific player's name recorded in their place (Regulations 7 and 9).

In one, the player was not registered to the club; in the other, the player had left the club and joined another yet took part in two further fixtures.

In both, the substitution of a named individual was treated as deliberate concealment rather than an oversight. Sanctions included walkovers, points deductions and falsification fines; in one matter part of the fine was suspended against a repeat, and in the other the sanctions for the earlier fixture were suspended in full.

Key lesson: Recording one person's name in place of the player who actually took part is deliberate falsification and will be treated more seriously than an accidental omission.

Club action: Record only the individuals who actually participated and correct any error openly before the team sheet deadline.

6. Selection of an ineligible player concealed by inaccurate team sheet.

An opponent's complaint alleged that regular players from a higher team, whose own fixture had not gone ahead that day, had played for a lower team, and that the team sheet did not reflect who had played. A team official first confirmed that the sheet was accurate, then gave a fuller, corrected account once pressed (Regulations 8, 9 and 15).

The ALMC recorded a walkover and imposed points deductions for both the ineligible selections and the falsification. It also imposed a higher-tier fine and suspended a substantial further deduction. The later correction was treated as strong mitigation, and automatic relegation was not imposed.

Key lesson: Providing an inaccurate assurance about a team sheet aggravates a breach, while a prompt and complete correction may be treated as mitigation.

Club action: Verify the facts before responding to an enquiry and disclose any error fully as soon as it is identified.

Doubling Up and Selection Exemption Passes

7. Dual appearances recorded without approved Selection Exemption Pass.

A player was recorded as appearing for both a higher and a lower team at the same club on the same match day, which is not permitted without an approved SXP. The club explained that the player had in fact withdrawn after selection but that the team sheet had not been updated to reflect this.

The ALMC applied a fine and a points deduction but declined the walkover otherwise available, as this was the club's first selection breach of the season.

Key lesson: A team sheet must reflect who actually played, and an uncorrected entry may be treated as evidence of participation.

Club action: Remove any selected player who withdraws and update the team sheet before the submission deadline.

8. Goalkeeper doubling up without approved Selection Exemption Pass.

Related examples. Several early-season cases involved a goalkeeper doubling up for two teams at the same club on the same day, at grades where doubling up requires an approved SXP (Regulation 8). The circumstances varied: in some the club acknowledged the oversight at once; in one, sanction was limited to a formal warning because the player's regular team was not yet established so early in the season; in others a standard fine and points deduction followed.

The consistent principle is that an SXP requested in advance either legitimises the selection or tells the club clearly that it is not permitted.

Key lesson: A goalkeeper is subject to the SXP requirements in the same way as any other player where the Regulations require prior approval.

Club action: Submit an SXP request before the goalkeeper covers a second team and do not rely on genuine availability difficulties as retrospective justification.

9. Ineligible lower-team selection without approved Selection Exemption Pass.

A club fielded a player for a lower team without an approved SXP at a point in the season when the player's appearance record required one. The club initially attributed this to a misunderstanding about when SXPs applied and later queried whether the player had in fact taken part; the ALMC treated the team sheet as the record of participation and applied the standard fine.

Key lesson: The need for an SXP is determined by the player's appearance record and does not depend on how early or late in the season the fixture occurs.

Club action: Review the player's appearance history. If an SXP is needed, it must be requested before the match, not clarified afterwards.

10. Downgraded player fielded without prior approved Selection Exemption Pass.

A club disclosed, after a match, that a player moved down from a higher team might have required an administrative step. The ALMC confirmed that an SXP was required on the date in question (Regulation 8 and Appendix 5, Regulation 8), asked for a retrospective request, and applied a points deduction and a standard fine, noting that the sanction was itself lenient because an SXP requested in advance would probably have been approved.

Key lesson: Self-reporting may mitigate a sanction but does not remove a breach where prior SXP approval was required.

Club action: Raise any uncertainty before the fixture and obtain the SXP before the match.

Fixture Fulfilment

11. Fixture unfulfilled without advance notification to Divisional Secretary.

A club failed to fulfil a scheduled league fixture and did not tell its Divisional Secretary in advance that the match would not proceed. The ALMC imposed the standard fine for failing to fulfil a fixture, recorded a walkover to the opponents, and applied a points deduction.

Key lesson: A club that cannot fulfil a fixture must notify the Divisional Secretary in advance, although notification does not itself remove any sanction for the concession.

Club action: Contact the Divisional Secretary as soon as a risk to fixture fulfilment becomes apparent. Where a club cannot field a team repeatedly, withdrawing that team in good time is preferable to conceding fixtures.

12. Forfeited fixtures exceeding permitted limit at team's Grade.

A club's higher team conceded a second league fixture in the same season, exceeding the number of forfeited matches permitted at its Grade (Regulation 4). The ALMC recorded that it had seriously considered withdrawing the team from the league and had decided not to do so only out of fairness to the other clubs in the division at that stage of the season, not because it regarded the breach as minor. It applied a points deduction carried into the following season, with a conditional increase should a further fixture be conceded, and a formal warning.

Key lesson: Repeated fixture concessions may place a team's continued league membership at risk, particularly where the permitted limit for its Grade is exceeded.

Club action: Escalate recurring availability problems within the club early and put documented measures in place to protect future fixture fulfilment.

Administrative Failures

13. Multiple administrative and team-sheet failures.

A complaint alleged serious wrongdoing in a lower-grade fixture. After a full enquiry, the ALMC found a series of administrative failures rather than any deliberate breach: a player missing from the submitted team sheet, umpires not named on GMS, bench personnel not recorded, and a goalkeeper from a higher team playing without the required SXP (Regulations 8 and 9, and Appendix 5, Regulation 8). It was satisfied that there had been no deliberate attempt to field an ineligible player or gain an unfair advantage and that the failures reflected gaps in administrative awareness. It applied a formal warning, a points deduction, and standard fines, and allowed the result to stand.

Key lesson: Multiple administrative failures may attract sanctions even where the ALMC accepts that there was no deliberate attempt to gain an advantage.

Club action: Confirm that all players, umpires and bench personnel are recorded correctly and that any required SXP has been approved.

Appeals

14. Appeal against ALMC sanctions.

In one matter, a club appealed several sanctions imposed for an eligibility and team sheet breach to the Area Appeal Panel. The Panel confirmed that the ALMC had applied the discretionary sanctions correctly and upheld every appealed sanction; nothing was overturned or varied. It separately offered a non-binding suggestion, for a future review of the Regulations, that the points-deduction options for team sheet breaches be specified more precisely.

Key lesson: An appeal will succeed only where one of the permitted grounds stated in Regulations 16 is established, such as a material error of fact, serious procedural irregularity, manifestly unreasonable sanction or significant new evidence.

Club action: Before appealing, identify the specific permitted ground for appeal and the evidence supporting it, rather than relying only on disagreement with the outcome.

Checklist Before Every Fixture

1. Confirm player registration and transfer status
2. Check whether any SXPs are required
3. Record everyone who participates
4. Notify the Divisional Secretary immediately if a fixture is at risk