



**SAPLING
CUP**

— 2023-24 —

**SAPLING CUP
COMPETITION REGULATIONS**

2023-24 SAPLING CUP



Competition Regulations

Name of the Competition

1. The Competition shall be officially called the “2023-24 Sapling Cup”. The Football Association of Hong Kong, China Limited (hereinafter referred to as the “HKFA”) reserves the rights to add the name of the Title Sponsor or to change the entire competition name into the name of the Title Sponsor.

Governance of the Competition

2. The Sapling Cup shall be wholly governed by HKFA.

General Provisions

3. Unless otherwise stated in these Regulations, 2023-24 Hong Kong Premier League Competition Regulations shall apply.
4. Unless otherwise stated in these Regulations, the current HKFA Constitution, rules, regulations, codes, guidelines, circulars or directives in force at the time of the Competition are binding for all parties participating and involving in the Competition (including but not limited to the players, team officials, referees or competition staff, etc).

Club Entry & Participation

5. The participating teams of 2023-24 Hong Kong Premier League shall participate in Sapling Cup. Each participating club shall not send more than one team to participate. The HKFA Board has the right to invite local or foreign teams to participate in the Competition.
6. With the approval of at least two-thirds of attending directors, the HKFA Board may reject the application filed by any team for participation in the Competition.

Playing Format and Related Arrangement

7. Each participating team shall send its best team to play. Otherwise, it shall submit a report specifying the reason to the Secretariat of HKFA.

2023-24 SAPLING CUP

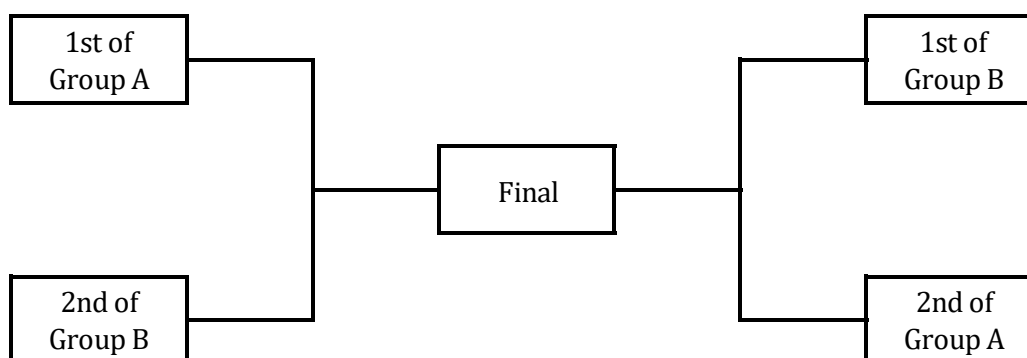


Competition Regulations

8. The Sapling Cup shall be divided in two stages.

The first stage is the group stage, all participating teams will be divided into two groups (Group A & B) consisting of six and five teams respectively by lot drawing. Each group will be played under a double round robin system. The first-placed team and second-placed team of each group shall be qualified for the knockout stage (second stage) after the completion of Group stage.

The second stage is the knockout stage, four qualified teams will be played under the single knock-out format.



9. Each Match shall last ninety (90) minutes, comprising two (2) periods of forty-five (45) minutes, with a half-time interval of fifteen (15) minutes. During the knockout stage of the competition, when a match ends in a tie after completion of the 90-minute period, the match shall go into extra time which is comprising two (2) periods of fifteen (15) minutes. If the result is still draw, a penalty shoot-out as defined in the Laws of the Game will be applied to determine the winner of the match.

2023-24 SAPLING CUP



Competition Regulations

10. The Competition shall allow each playing team to nominate up to twelve (12) substitutes in a match.

The substitution arrangement will be applied as follows:

During the match, each team:

- has 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 between full-time and 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. Multiple substitutions by a team during the same stoppage in play count as one used substitution opportunity.

11. Except the participating club "Hong Kong Football Club", **a minimum of three (3) local youth players (born on 1st January 2002 or after)** must be fielded at any one time of a Sapling Cup match. (including the local youth player being sent-off by referee with red card). As for the participating club "Hong Kong Football Club", **a minimum of three (3) local or non-resident (foreign) youth players (born on 1st January 2002 or after)** must be fielded at any one time of a Sapling Cup match. (including the local or non-resident (foreign) youth player being sent-off by referee with red card).
12. HKFA has the right to change or alter the competition system based on the number of participating teams or other special reasons and reserves the right to modify the competition system if necessary.
13. If any team withdraws from the Competition during group stage, the related match record (except all disciplinary record) which its playing team has participated shall be expunged from the group table.

If any team withdraws from the Competition during knockout stage, the completed match record will not be affected and the remaining match schedule will continue according to the fixture.

2023-24 SAPLING CUP



Competition Regulations

Ranking System in Group Stage

14. During the group stage, the winner of a match shall be awarded three (3) points. Each team participating in a match which ends in a draw shall be awarded one (1) point. The losing team of a match shall not get any point.
15. Participating teams' positions in the group table shall be determined by the number of points obtained in the group stage matches, the team obtained the highest number of points being at the top of the table while the team obtained the lowest number of points being at the bottom.
16. If any two (2) or more participating teams have obtained the same number of points, the positions of the teams concern shall be determined as follows by order of priority:
 1. number of points obtained in the matches of the group between/among the teams concerned, higher or highest placed team shall be the team with the higher or highest number of points;
 2. goal difference, which means, the difference between the total number of goal scored by and against a team in the matches of the group between/among the teams concerned, and higher or highest placed team shall be the team with the higher or highest goal difference;
 3. number of goals scored by a team in the matches of the group between/among the teams concerned, and higher or highest placed team shall be the team with more or most goals scored;
 4. if, after having applied Art.16.(1) to 16.(3), playing teams still have an equal ranking, Art.16.(1) to 16.(3) are reapplied exclusively to the matches between the participating teams in question to determine their final rankings. If this procedure does not lead to a decision, Art.16.(5) to 16.(8) will be applied;
 5. goal difference, which means, the difference between the total number of goal scored by and against a team in all its matches of the group, and higher or highest placed team shall be the team with the higher or highest goal difference;
 6. number of goals scored by a team in all its matches of the group, and higher or highest placed team shall be the team with more or most goals scored;
 7. the score calculated according to the number of yellow and red cards received in the group matches, and higher or highest placed team shall be the team with the lower or lowest score. The point system for each yellow and red card is as follow:
 - i) Each yellow card (1 point);
 - ii) Each red card as a consequence of two yellow cards (3 points);
 - iii) Each direct red card (3 points);
 - iv) Each yellow card followed by a direct red card (4 points).
 8. drawing of lots.

Match Venue and Fixture

17. HKFA is responsible for the venue arrangement.
18. HKFA shall be responsible for drawing up the fixtures of the Competition and the Participating Clubs shall play in all their matches so arranged. The fixture list containing match information including but not limited to: the dates, kick-off times, venues, Home Teams (first-named) and Visiting Teams (last-named) shall be disseminated by HKFA to participating clubs before the commencement of a season as soon as it is fixed. The fixture may change at the discretion of the HKFA.

2023-24 SAPLING CUP



Competition Regulations

Match Balls and Equipment Regulations

19. HKFA reserves right of ball deals and provide the official balls for matches.
20. All participating clubs in the Competition shall comply strictly with the HKFA Equipment Regulations in force at the time of the Competition.

Eligibility of Players

21. The same player shall only participate in this Competition for one club in the same season. (The player who is fielded in the match will be counted as participation. It will not be counted as participation if the player is only listed in the start list but not be fielded in the match)

Trophy and Medal

22. The Sapling Cup trophy is the property of HKFA.
23. The Champion shall receive the Sapling Cup trophy, and the trophy shall return to HKFA in good condition two months before the final match of 2024-25 Sapling Cup. HKFA reserves the right to recourse to the champion team for related repair costs if the trophy is damaged during the retention period.
24. The Champion shall be awarded a replica of the trophy for retention, and forty-five (45) commemorative medals.
25. The Runners-up shall be awarded forty-five (45) medals.
26. The player of the match in the final shall be awarded a trophy.

Violation of the Regulations

27. If any participating club and its team officials or players violate these Regulations or other misconduct, the relevant matter will be referred to the Disciplinary & Ethics Committee for handling.

Languages

28. In the case of any discrepancy in the interpretation of the English and Chinese version of these Regulations, the Chinese version shall be authoritative.

Amendment and Interpretation of the Regulations

29. HKFA Board shall have the right to make amendments, additions, deletions and to interpret any articles in these Regulations.

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