

AMERICAN FOOTBALL – THREE TIERS

PRODUCED BY BUCS IN COLLABORATION WITH BAFA & THE SAG CHAIR

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This document illustrates and explains the move from two tiers of competition in 2014/15 to three tiers of competition in the upcoming 2015/16 season for American Football, taking in to account feedback and suggestions from the SAG Chair.

BACKGROUND

2014/15 – Last season

Following its second full year, there was a consultation process to move the BUCS American Football competition from a single tier into a tiered structure. The consultation process involved BUCS, BAFA and representatives from every institution entered into the BUCS American Football programme at the time of the consultation. A compromise was reached to move to a two-tiered structure, whereby two Premier Leagues were created, pulling the 5 strongest Northern teams into Premier North and the five strongest Southern teams into Premier South. As the two Premier leagues both contained 5 teams it enabled all teams to face each opposition twice, both home and away. In the second tier, the same 8 leagues still existed, but all ranged between 8 and 9 teams, thus allowing for each team to face every other opposition once and have an 8 or 7 fixture league season. The transition between the single tiered structure used in 2013/14 to the two-tiered structure used in 2014/15 is illustrated below:

| BUCS AMERICAN FOOTBALL 2013-14 | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|---------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|----|----|
| TIER ONE | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Scottish | North West | North East | Midlands | Western | South | South Eastern A | South Eastern B | | |
| T I E R O N E | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |

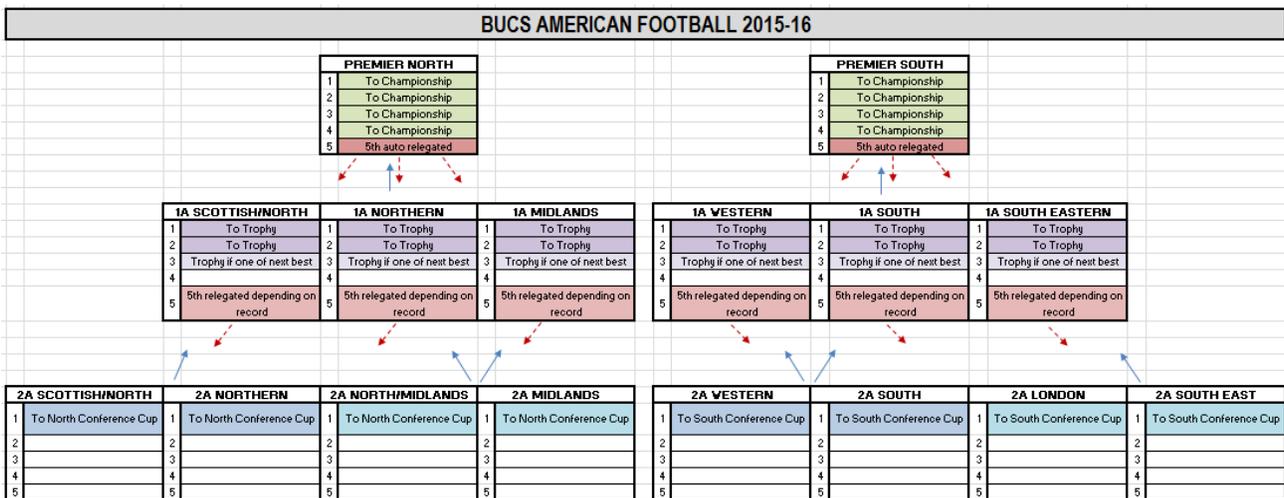
| BUCS AMERICAN FOOTBALL 2014-15 | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------|------|---|---|
| P R E M I E R | PREMIER NORTH | | | | | PREMIER SOUTH | | | | |
| | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| TIER ONE | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Border | North West | Yorkshire | East Midlands | South West | South East | London | East | | |
| T I E R O N E | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |

In 2014/15, three knockouts were run – a Championship and two ‘Divisional’ cups (one North and one South). The [Championship](#) pulled in the top 2 finishing teams from Premier North and Premier South into a simple semi-final and final format. Below that, every tier 1 league winner was pulled in to a Divisional Cup. The 4 more ‘Northern’ leagues fed their league winners in to the ‘[North Divisional](#)’ Cup, and the 4 more ‘Southern’ leagues fed their league winners in to the ‘[South Divisional](#)’ Cup. As these cups were not equivalent to either a Trophy (did not pull in teams from the whole tier) nor to conference cups (were drawn from tier 1 and were not regional enough), it posed BUCS a problem in terms of how to allocate BUCS Points. A compromise was reached whereby BUCS Points were allocated in between the Trophy level and the Conference Cup level. BUCS viewed these points as a temporary fix in a transitional year, and that the knockouts at this level would be resolved to be more in line with other BUCS sports for the next season.

In order to accommodate a further transition to a three-tier structure, league notes were added to all tier 1 leagues at the beginning of year three: *“Please be aware that all tier 1 leagues are subject to a split in 2015/16 in order to accommodate a third tier of competition, depending on ongoing competition review and changes in team entries.”*

2015/16 – Next season

Using the caveats that were put in place to allow for another review ahead of the 2015/16 season, BUCS has been working closely with the BUCS American Football SAG Chair and the NGB (BAFA) to transition the structure to a three-tier structure (more in line with standard BUCS structures). The proposed structure for the upcoming 2015-16 season can be seen below:



This structure has moved all leagues to 5 team leagues, thus enabling every team in every league to face each opposition twice. This was an important requirement for both BUCS and the SAG Chair, particularly following previous feedback we have received relating to teams not getting to play every opposition within their own league. Furthermore, as the SAG Chair and BAFA have consistently recommended an 8 game league season where possible, this format allows for this preferred number of league fixtures, and still allows for some knockout games to follow the league season without too much impact.

Whilst BUCS wants to reach a standardised three tier structure more in line with other BUCS sports (IE with the five standard tier 1 leagues of Scottish, Northern, Midlands, Western and South Eastern), BUCS agrees with BAFA on the benefits of the transitional 6 league Tier 1 format in this instance. By adopting 6 leagues at Tier 1 instead of the more standard 5, it allows for a better spread of teams into three largely ‘Northern’ leagues and

three largely 'Southern' leagues, whilst maintaining a standard size of Tier 1 (usually 29-32 teams). By keeping the clear North/South division, it allows for a Trophy competition that can be drawn as a 'Northern' half and a 'Southern' half, ensuring the two teams that reach the final can be given promotion to each respective Premier League, whilst still being able to play a final fixture to determine the Trophy winner and be allocated appropriate BUCS Points. This Trophy also uses qualifying teams from across the whole of tier 1, allowing usual Trophy BUCS Points to be adopted (which was not possible when keeping clearly separate North Divisional and South Divisional cups in the 2014-15 season).

Conference Cups are possible to introduce in the lowest tier (Tier 2), by drawing the teams finishing 1st in each Tier 2 league into a last 4 format, for the 'North' Conference Cup and 'South' Conference Cup respectively. This allows an extra opportunity for competition and BUCS Points for the highest finishing teams in Tier 2, and allows a clear way to determine which teams from Tier 2 will gain promotion into Tier 1 for the following season.

Teams will be positioned within the three tier structure according to their finishing position and record from the previous season, whilst trying to maintain standard BUCS geographical placings where possible. This has not been achievable in every league through the structure however (for example Oxford and Cambridge appear in the South East, rather than the more usual Midlands playing conference where they would usually play for other BUCS sports). On the whole, the structure is split into a largely 'North' side and largely 'South' side, with the two Premier Leagues at the top of each three tier pyramid. A more detailed description of how each tier of competition is formed and how each knockout is expected to be drawn is given on the following page.

PREMIER LEAGUES 2015-16

Leagues = Premier North (5 teams) Premier South (5 teams). Each team faces each opposition home and away (8 fixture league season). BUCS Points available for league positions: 50-42-38-36-34

| PREMIER NORTH | | PREMIER SOUTH | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 | Durham | 1 | Birmingham |
| 2 | Stirling | 2 | Hertfordshire |
| 3 | Loughborough | 3 | Bath |
| 4 | Derby | 4 | Imperial |
| 5 | Sheffield Hallam | 5 | Kingston |

Knockouts = Top four teams in each league pulled in to the Championship knockout. Eight teams total. Last 8 format, with seeding depending on finishing position in the league. Three extra fixture dates required (maximum 11 fixture season for 2 teams). BUCS Points available for knockout progression: 50 Winner, 35 Runner Up, 24 Losing Semi-Finalist, 16 Losing Quarter Finalist.



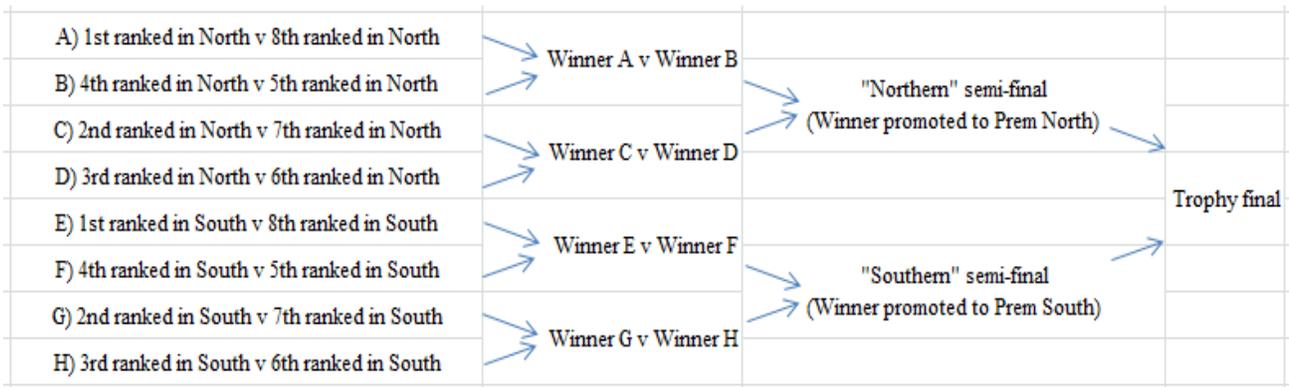
Relegation = Bottom team in each Premier League automatically relegated in to Tier 1.

TIER ONE 2015-16

Leagues = 6 leagues across Tier 1 (3 'North' and 3 'South'), each containing five teams. Each team faces each opposition home and away (8 fixture league season). BUCS Points available for league positions: 30-26-24-23-22.

| 1A SCOTTISH/NORTH | | 1A NORTHERN | | 1A MIDLANDS | | 1A WESTERN | | 1A SOUTH | | 1A SOUTH EASTERN | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|------------|-------------|----------|--------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Glasgow | 1 | Sheffield | 1 | Nottingham Trent | 1 | Aberystwyth | 1 | Royal Holloway | 1 | Brighton |
| 2 | Sunderland | 2 | UCLAN | 2 | Warwick | 2 | Swansea | 2 | Surrey | 2 | Cambridge |
| 3 | Newcastle | 3 | Hull | 3 | Nottingham | 3 | Cardiff | 3 | Southampton Solent | 3 | East Anglia |
| 4 | Lancaster | 4 | Huddersfield | 4 | Staffordshire | 4 | Exeter | 4 | Reading | 4 | Kent |
| 5 | Northumbria | 5 | Leeds Beckett | 5 | Worcester | 5 | UWE | 5 | Kings | 5 | Sussex |

Knockouts = Top two teams in each Tier 1 league automatically in to Trophy knockout (12 teams total) – plus next best two teams from the 'North' tier 1 leagues and the next best two teams from the 'South' tier 1 leagues (4 more teams = 16 teams total). Last 16 format. Some seeding involved – teams ranked 1st-8th in North and 1st-8th in South. Teams ranked 1st-4th guaranteed home fixture in first round. Draw kept as two halves – one 'North' half and one 'South' half. The two teams reaching the final (one North and one South team) gain promotion into Prem North and Prem South respectively. They still play in the final to determine Trophy winner and associated Trophy BUCS Points. Four extra fixture dates required (maximum 12 fixture season for 2 teams). We would be able to allocate standard Trophy BUCS points: 30 Winner, 21 Runner Up, 14 Losing Semi-Finalist, 10 Losing Quarter-Finalist



Promotion = Both teams that have reached the Trophy final (one from 'North' half of draw and one from 'South' side of draw) to gain promotion into Premier Leagues – replacing the two teams automatically relegated from Premier Leagues.

Relegation = The two worst records from each of the (3) North Tier 1 leagues to be automatically relegated, and the two worst records from each of the (3) South tier 1 leagues automatically relegated. Allowing four positions to be available in tier 1 for teams to be promoted in to (see * below).

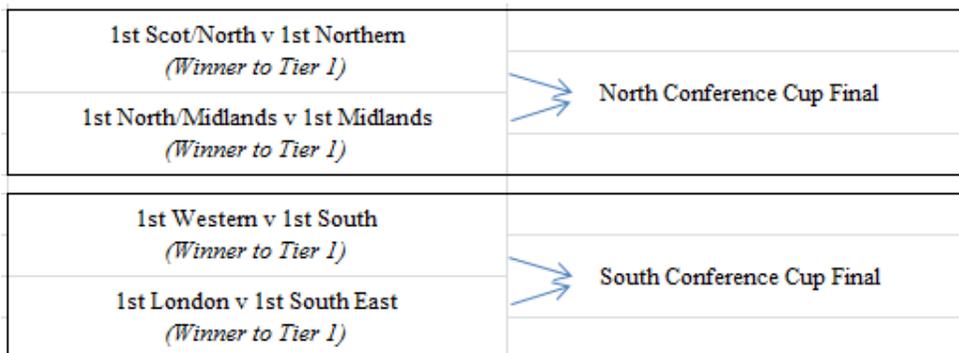
TIER TWO 2015-16

Leagues = 8 leagues across Tier 2 (4 'North' and 4 'South'), each containing five teams. Each team faces each opposition home and away (8 fixture league season). BUCS Points available for league positions: 20-16-14-13-12

| 2A SCOTTISH/NORTH | | 2A NORTHERN | | 2A NORTH/MIDLANDS | | 2A MIDLANDS | | 2A WESTERN | | 2A SOUTH | | 2A LONDON | | 2A SOUTH EAST | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|----------|----------------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | Edinburgh Napier | 1 | Liverpool JM* | 1 | Manchester* | 1 | Coventry | 1 | Plymouth | 1 | Southampton | 1 | City | 1 | Oxford |
| 2 | Edinburgh | 2 | Bangor | 2 | Bradford | 2 | Leicester | 2 | Bristol | 2 | Brunel | 2 | Westminster | 2 | Oxford Brookes |
| 3 | Teeside | 3 | Keele* | 3 | Manchester Met* | 3 | Northampton | 3 | Gloucestershire | 3 | Portsmouth | 3 | Greenwich | 3 | Essex |
| 4 | West of Scotland | 4 | Edge Hill | 4 | York | 4 | Lincoln* | 4 | Bournemouth | 4 | Buckingham New | 4 | London South Bank | 4 | Anglia Ruskin |
| 5 | Heriot Watt | 5 | Liverpool | 5 | Leeds | 5 | De Montfort | 5 | Bath Spa | 5 | Chichester | 5 | East London | 5 | Canterbury CC |

* Tier 2 teams reshuffled from original provisional structure

Knockouts = The recommendation from the SAG Chair & BAFA is to pull all teams finishing 1st in each Tier 2 league into Conference Cups in this first year of a three tier structure, with a 'North' Conference Cup and a 'South' Conference Cup. Each knockout would be made up of four teams, with the semi-final winners receiving automatic promotion to Tier 1 above. The Final fixture would then be played to determine appropriate BUCS Points. Therefore BUCS Points available would be: 20 Winner, 13 Runner Up, 9 Losing Semi-Finalist.



Promotion = Both teams reaching the final of each of the Conference Cups to gain automatic promotion in to Tier 1 (IE two teams from the North and two teams from the South)*.

MOVING THE STRUCTURE FORWARD IN FUTURE SEASONS:

The proposed three tier structure takes in to account the SAG Chair and NGB's recommendation that teams should play no more than 12 fixtures in a season. Consequently, the team finishing bottom in each Premier league is automatically relegated, as an extra playoff fixture at the end of the season would not be possible (in terms of fairness or safety) for the relevant Tier 1 team looking to be promoted.

BUCS, the SAG Chair and BAFA agree that the move to three tiers for 2015/16 is a step in the right direction in order to improve the BUCS American Football structure, enabling clear opportunities for promotion and relegation between the tiers, and allowing teams opportunity to progress through improved Championship, Trophy and Conference Cup knockout competitions post-season.

The three tier structure will be trialled for 2015-16, with a view to conduct a feedback period (March/April 2016) with all institutions involved to determine if the structure is a success or if it needs further review (possibly to bring more in line with standardised BUCS league structures). Following this feedback, the current three tier structure may be adopted for a further season, if it has proven to be successful.