

Update on the 2024-25 BUCS-UPC Snooker Championships (8 February)



Dear all,

I write to you off the back of comments and messages received based on our Facebook post on 3 February 2025 on the upcoming BUCS-UPC Snooker Championships. This will detail the decisions we have taken subsequently as regards rules and tournament format.

It quickly became clear from the reaction to our announcement that these were unpopular changes, hence we have moved quickly to reconsider our decisions and make further changes that we hope will satisfy the vast majority. Accordingly, there will be no ball in hand (except for in the 'D' when breaking or following an in off) and there will be no six-red snooker, as part of the upcoming BUCS Snooker Championships 2024-25.

Context

The scheduling of our events is an ever-important necessity of what we do as UPC staff. The balance between length of matches is a fine one to ensure play does not go on too long each day. A complaint we heard from our 2023 snooker event was that fatigue was becoming a factor in players not producing their best snooker at the most important times such as on Saturday evening.

Without such adjustments as we are making here, it would be likely we would have to significantly reduce the cap on entries. However, this is certainly not ideal for students in non-first teams, as well as for BUCS and the Snooker Championships in general to ensure inclusivity.

As part of my role, I talk to our existing venues and explore opportunities with new venues as has been the case for this year's snooker competition after Woking decided to not host us this season. A common misconception I've read is that venues are willing to hold our event at the right price. This is not the case. Many clubs' priorities focus on their regular members and ensuring they have table time for them as their regular income streams. This is unfortunately a limitation which means the number of clubs we can host events at is very limited. You can hopefully see the work we put in to build-up strong working relationships with some of our other venues, including the Northern Snooker Centre for our BUCS Nine-ball event, Antrim Sports Club for our Irish Intervarsities event, and with our three venues (Plaza, Longton, and Players) at our BUCS Eight-ball event. These changes will ensure we can keep the consistency in rules and tournament format with different schedules in the future if we need to move venue(s) to ones with fewer tables and still make the event viable for the number of entries we want to accept.

The 'miss rule'

We accept that reflecting on our proposed miss rule which involved a 'ball-in-hand' scenario, many players found this change not to be reflective of the current rules of snooker. Therefore, we have decided to remove the 'miss rule' entirely for this season's event. This means the failure to hit a ball 'on' will not result in the option to be put back to attempt the shot again.

The initial thinking behind ball-in-hand following any 'miss' was less motivated by time than may have been realised. It was felt by the Board that earning as much as eighteen points (three 'misses', if on the pink) from one shot was grossly disproportionate for higher education-level snooker and could have too much of an effect on a frame. At the same time, we still wanted to deter a snookered player from attempting a harder escape in order that should they fail to hit a ball 'on' then they did not leave the snookering player an opportunity to begin a break. We believed that ball-in-hand was a neat solution to these issues; the snookering player can only gain one set of foul points and the snookered player has no incentive whatsoever not to try his absolute best to hit a ball 'on'. Two former world champions and (at least) two current top-32 professional snooker players share this view, so it must be noted that it is far from an outrageous or unqualified position.

We do accept on reflection though that this is a position too far away from the traditional values of snooker as they are currently written. We have decided on this 'no miss' option rather than keeping with the previous miss rule primarily for scheduling reasons: We are not saying that scheduling is the most important factor, but we were approximating that every frame was being lengthened at an average of 5-10 minutes per frame, where over the length of the event, could add over 7 hours of play time. We understand this will not be universally accepted, and some people may even want the full 'miss' rule to be introduced say, but we hope this is an acceptable decision for all parties.

Trophy formats

The six-red format we previously intended to use was a time-saving measure based off previous data we had collected from the Trophy stage last year. In team play, the six-red format would only have applied to the Team Trophy knock-out matches (all group-stage matches and Team Championship knock-out matches would have remained fifteen-red), and in general we believe that these frames would still be of sufficient time to determine which team/individual deserves to progress to the next round.

It has been clear from the reaction though that snooker without starting with fifteen reds is not preferred by the wide number of players on social media, regardless of six-red snooker being a commonly played variant. Therefore, we have made these decisions:

1. For the Individual Trophy, we are firstly removing the double elimination format as it was found to be confusing at previous events. It will move to a single elimination format where the frames will start with fifteen reds but will instead be best of two frames, with a single re-spotted black to decide the outcome if a match reaches 1-1. This was a format tried in a recent university regional snooker event in their individual competition, and is consistent with other UPC events where the race lengths are slightly reduced in the Individual Trophy compared to the Individual Championship. Please remember that everyone eligible for the Individual Trophy can choose to 'play up' into the Individual Championship if they wish without additional cost.
2. For Team Trophy knock-out matches, the frames will start with fifteen reds but will instead be over the best of five frames.

Entries for the BUCS-UPC Snooker Championship are now open on BUCS Play. These decisions are now reflected in the new competition regulation and entry documents on our website.

Contact

For more details about our events, please see the [UPC website](#) or the [UPC Facebook](#) group for the latest information. Any general queries should be directed to Executive Chair, Ben Hubbard, at ben.hubbard@upc-pool.org.uk, or to the Snooker Championships Tournament Director, Jon Shapland, at jon.shapland@upc-pool.org.uk.