



**JOHANNESBURG
METRO CHESS**

JOHANNESBURG METRO CHESS PRESENTS

RULES OF THE JMC CLUB LEAGUE 2026

THE BATTLE FOR JOHANNESBURG

**Official Championship Regulations governing
the inaugural JMC Club League season.**

This document sets out the complete rules of participation, format, scoring, conduct and administration for the 2026 JMC Club League Chess Championship, a pilot season for structured club team chess in Johannesburg.

■ **16 AUGUST - 8 NOVEMBER 2026**

Organising Body: Johannesburg Metro Chess (JMC)
Applicable Leagues: Adult League & Junior League



FOUR LEAGUE DAYS

August to November 2026



SIX BOARDS

Adult and Junior teams



RATED CHESS

ChessSA / CHESSA rated



TEAM ENTRY

From R600 per team

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SEASON AT A GLANCE

16 August · 13 September · 11 October · 8 November 2026 — Round 1 at 09h00, Round 2 at 13h00, each League day. Registration opens 1 July 2026; final squad lists and payment due 12 August 2026.

1 PURPOSE OF THE LEAGUE

1.1 The 2026 JMC Club League Chess Championship is introduced as a pilot league under Johannesburg Metro Chess.

1.2 The purpose of the League is to:

- a. strengthen the club chess ecosystem within Johannesburg Metro Chess;
- b. create a regular, structured team competition for clubs;
- c. increase club identity, rivalry, pride and player retention;
- d. provide meaningful long-format chess opportunities for adult and junior players;
- e. support the development of players into regional, provincial and national events;
- f. encourage club affiliation and active participation within JMC; and
- g. establish a foundation for future divisions, promotion and relegation.

1.3 The 2026 season shall be treated as a pilot season. The final structure, standings and lessons from the 2026 season may be used to inform the structure of the 2027 JMC Club League.

2 LEAGUE ADMINISTRATION

2.1 The 2026 JMC Club League is organised under the authority of Johannesburg Metro Chess and supported by the JMC Executive Committee.

2.2 The League shall be administered as follows:

League Project Lead: Jay van der Berg, JMC Club Coordinator

Assistant League Coordinator: Adrian Chapel

Organising Body: Johannesburg Metro Chess

Chief Arbiter: To be appointed by JMC

Ratings Officer / Ratings Submission: To be appointed or confirmed by JMC

Appeals Committee: To be appointed before Round 1

2.3 The League Project Lead and Assistant League Coordinator shall be responsible for coordinating the operational planning of the League, including communication with clubs, registration, team lists, league documentation, and liaison with the JMC Executive Committee.

2.4 The Chief Arbiter shall be responsible for the application of the Laws of Chess, rulings during play, default matters, score sheet control, and rating-related requirements.

2.5 Financial administration, including receipt of entry fees, budgeting and expenditure, shall be handled under the authority of Johannesburg Metro Chess.

2.6 The JMC Executive Committee shall retain final oversight over the League.

3 LEAGUE PARTICIPATION

3.1 The 2026 JMC Club League shall commence on Sunday, 16 August 2026 and conclude on Sunday, 8 November 2026.

3.2 Participation is open to:

- a. JMC affiliated clubs; and
- b. non-affiliated clubs, subject to availability, waitlist status and the non-affiliated entry fee.

3.3 The League shall have a maximum cap of 20 teams across both the Adult League and Junior League.

3.4 The initial team allocation shall be:

- a. Adult League: maximum 10 teams;
- b. Junior League: maximum 10 teams.

3.5 JMC affiliated clubs shall receive preferential entry until 31 July 2026.

3.6 Non-affiliated clubs may submit a request to join the League during the registration period, but shall initially be placed on a waitlist.

3.7 After 31 July 2026, if available slots remain, JMC may admit:

- a. additional teams from affiliated clubs;
- b. waitlisted non-affiliated clubs; and/or
- c. additional teams into either the Adult League or Junior League, depending on demand and available capacity.

3.8 Where entries exceed the available capacity, JMC may prioritise entries based on:

- a. JMC affiliation status;
- b. date of registration;
- c. payment status;
- d. completeness of submitted information;
- e. the aim of maximising the number of clubs represented; and
- f. venue and operational capacity.

3.9 Clubs may enter multiple teams, but JMC reserves the right to limit the number of accepted teams per club in order to maximise club representation during the pilot season.

3.10 All admitted teams shall be eligible to compete for the relevant League title, unless a team is expressly admitted as a guest or exhibition team by JMC.

4 LEAGUE FEES

4.1 The participation fee for JMC affiliated clubs shall be:

R600 per team

4.2 Players representing JMC affiliated clubs must also be in good standing with JMC, including any applicable individual player registration fees.

4.3 The participation fee for non-affiliated clubs shall be:

R2,200 per team

4.4 The non-affiliated club fee is calculated to reflect the equivalent minimum contribution of an affiliated club entering a team, including club affiliation equivalent, minimum player registration equivalent and league entry fee.

4.5 Payment of the non-affiliated club fee does not grant full JMC affiliation status, voting rights, or any other rights reserved for JMC affiliated clubs.

4.6 Fees must be paid by the published payment deadline.

4.7 A team that has not paid the required fees by the payment deadline may be excluded from the League and replaced by a waitlisted team.

5 LEAGUE FORMAT

5.1 The 2026 JMC Club League shall consist of two independent leagues:

- a. Adult League; and
- b. Junior League.

5.2 A player may only participate in one league during the 2026 season.

5.3 Both the Adult League and Junior League shall be played over six boards per team.

5.4 The final format of each league shall depend on the number of teams accepted.

5.5 Where a league has 4 to 8 teams, JMC may use a single round-robin format.

5.6 Where a league has 9 to 16 teams, JMC may divide teams into pools.

5.7 Where pools are used:

- a. teams shall be allocated to pools using team average rating and serpentine allocation where practical;
- b. teams from the same club may be separated where practical, unless an early pairing is required;
- c. all teams must have a clear route to compete for the section title; and
- d. final placement matches, championship matches or crossover matches may be used to determine final standings.

5.8 Where a league has 17 or more teams, JMC may use a Swiss team format.

5.9 The final format, number of rounds and pairing structure shall be confirmed after registrations close.

5.10 Because 2026 is a pilot season, JMC reserves the right to adapt the format in a fair and practical manner once the final number of accepted teams is known.

6 LEAGUE CALENDAR & PLAYING SESSIONS

6.1 The proposed League dates are:

- a. Sunday, 16 August 2026
- b. Sunday, 13 September 2026
- c. Sunday, 11 October 2026
- d. Sunday, 8 November 2026

6.2 The standard playing schedule shall be:

Round 1: 09h00 · Round 2: 13h00

6.3 On the final League day, the final round or rounds shall be followed by prizegiving.

6.4 Players should be seated at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start of each round.

6.5 Clocks shall start at the scheduled round time unless the Chief Arbiter announces a delay.

6.6 The League shall use a centralised venue model for the 2026 pilot season.

6.7 The proposed host venue for the 2026 pilot season is Wanderers, subject to final venue confirmation and logistical arrangements.

6.8 Future seasons may allow other clubs to host League days, subject to venue suitability and approval by JMC.

7 RATING OF CLUB LEAGUE 2026

7.1 All games shall be submitted for ChessSA / CHESSA rating, subject to the requirements of the rating system.

7.2 JMC may investigate and, where practical, apply for FIDE rating of the League or specific sections, subject to the Chief Arbiter confirming compliance with FIDE rating requirements.

7.3 The Chief Arbiter or appointed ratings official shall be responsible for rating submissions.

7.4 Results shall be submitted for rating purposes within seven days of completion of the League, unless circumstances outside JMC's control prevent this.

8 TEAM REPRESENTATION

- 8.1** A player may only represent one club during the 2026 JMC Club League.
- 8.2** Each team shall submit a fixed ordered squad before the start of the League.
- 8.3** Each squad must contain a minimum of six players and a maximum of eight players.
- 8.4** There shall be no separate "main player" and "reserve player" list. All listed players form part of the team squad.
- 8.5** The initial squad order shall be submitted at registration.
- 8.6** The initial squad order shall be used for administrative purposes and as the default order if a captain fails to submit a round line-up.
- 8.7** Clubs with multiple teams must clearly identify each team, for example:
- a. Club Name A
 - b. Club Name B
 - c. Club Name Junior A
 - d. Club Name Junior B
- 8.8** A player may not move downward between teams from the same club during the season.
- 8.9** A player may be promoted upward to a higher team from the same club only with approval from the League Administration, and only if the move does not create unfairness or breach rating, eligibility or squad rules.
- 8.10** Once a player has played for a higher team, that player may not return to a lower team during the same season.

9 BOARD ORDER & ROUND LINE-UPS

9.1 The 2026 JMC Club League shall use a flexible captain-selected board order system.

9.2 Captains may determine the board order for each round from the registered squad.

9.3 The board order does not have to follow strict rating order.

9.4 Each team captain must submit the board order and playing line-up for each round by the published deadline.

9.5 For normal League days, the line-up deadline shall be:

Friday at 20h00 before the relevant League day

9.6 Because two rounds are scheduled on each League day, captains must submit a line-up for each round.

9.7 A team may use a different line-up and board order for Round 1 and Round 2 on the same day, provided both line-ups are submitted by the deadline.

9.8 Submitted line-ups may be published to participating teams before the League day.

9.9 If a team fails to submit its round line-up by the deadline, the initial squad order shall apply.

9.10 Where the initial squad order applies, the first six available players in the registered squad order shall be deemed to be the team line-up.

9.11 After the line-up deadline, changes shall only be allowed with the approval of the Chief Arbiter or League Administration.

9.12 Emergency substitutions may be allowed where a player is unavailable due to illness, emergency or other valid reason, provided the replacement player is part of the registered squad.

9.13 A player may not be added to a squad after the registration deadline without approval from the League Administration.

9.14 There shall be no board prizes in the 2026 pilot season. The flexible board order system is intended to prioritise team strategy, club participation and squad rotation.

10 PLAYERS & ELIGIBILITY

10.1 Players representing JMC affiliated clubs must be registered with JMC and must be in good standing.

10.2 Players must comply with all applicable ChessSA / CHESSA registration requirements for rating purposes.

10.3 A player may only play for one club during the 2026 League season.

10.4 For the purposes of the Junior League, a junior player is a player who is under 18 years old on 1 January 2026.

10.5 Junior players must play in the Junior League unless they qualify under the elite junior exception.

10.6 The elite junior exception shall apply as follows: a junior player may elect to play in the Adult League if the player:

- a. is 16 years or older on or before the first scheduled League day; and
- b. has a published ChessSA / CHESSA rating of 1700 or higher at the registration deadline.

10.7 A junior player who elects to play in the Adult League may not also play in the Junior League during the same season.

10.8 The elite junior exception must be declared at registration.

10.9 JMC may request proof of rating, age or registration status.

10.10 Junior teams and junior players must be accompanied by a responsible adult, coach, manager or club representative at each League day.

10.11 The responsible adult must remain available during the playing session and shall serve as the point of contact for the junior team.

11 TRANSFERS

11.1 A player may not transfer between clubs during the League season.

11.2 The transfer deadline shall close before Round 1.

11.3 After Round 1, all players are locked to the club and team structure under which they are registered, subject only to the upward movement rule for multiple teams from the same club.

11.4 Any transfer dispute must be submitted in writing to the League Administration before the first round in which the player is due to participate.

11.5 JMC may refuse a player's participation if there is an unresolved dispute regarding club representation, unpaid membership fees, or eligibility.

12 TIME CONTROL

12.1 The time control for both the Adult League and Junior League shall be:

60 minutes + 30 seconds increment per move from move one

12.2 Notation is required for all games unless the Laws of Chess provide otherwise.

12.3 The Chief Arbiter shall confirm the final playing conditions and notation requirements before Round 1.

12.4 The default time shall be 30 minutes.

13 DEFAULT & LATE ARRIVAL RULES

13.1 A player arriving more than 30 minutes after the scheduled start of the round shall lose the game by default, unless the Chief Arbiter decides otherwise.

13.2 The Chief Arbiter may exercise discretion where a player has a valid reason for late arrival and where allowing the game to continue does not unfairly affect the event.

13.3 All clocks shall be started at the scheduled round time unless the Chief Arbiter announces a delay.

13.4 If a player is absent at the start of the round, that player's clock shall be started.

13.5 The absence of one player shall not prevent the other boards in the match from starting.

13.6 There shall be no requirement that 50% of the team be present before the match can begin.

13.7 There shall be no automatic shifting of players after the line-up has been finalised.

13.8 If a listed player is absent and no approved substitution has been made, that board shall remain the responsibility of the absent player.

13.9 If a team fails to appear for a round without valid notice, the matter may be referred to the League Administration and Chief Arbiter.

13.10 A team that defaults twice may be removed from the League.

13.11 JMC may impose further sanctions for repeated team defaults, including removal from the League, loss of future entry preference, or seeding consequences for 2027.

14 SCORING

14.1 Match points shall determine the primary standings.

14.2 Match points shall be awarded as follows:

- a. Match win: 2 points
- b. Match draw: 1 point
- c. Match loss: 0 points

14.3 Game points shall be awarded as follows:

- a. Game win: 1 point
- b. Game draw: 0.5 points
- c. Game loss: 0 points

14.4 A team wins a match by scoring more game points than the opposing team across the six boards.

14.5 A match is drawn if both teams score the same number of game points.

14.6 Game points shall be used as a tiebreak and for performance calculation where required.

14.7 The official result sheet must be completed and signed by both captains after each match.

14.8 Any result correction request must be submitted before the start of the next round, unless the Chief Arbiter permits otherwise.

15 TIEBREAK SYSTEMS

15.1 The following tiebreaks shall apply for round-robin sections, unless amended by the Chief Arbiter before the start of the section:

1. Match Points
2. Game Points
3. Direct Encounter
4. Sonneborn-Berger
5. Board Count / Board Points, where applicable

15.2 The following tiebreaks shall apply for Swiss sections, unless amended by the Chief Arbiter before the start of the section:

1. Match Points
2. Game Points
3. Direct Encounter, where applicable
4. Buchholz
5. Sonneborn-Berger
6. Board Count / Board Points, where applicable

15.3 The Chief Arbiter shall publish or confirm the applicable tiebreaks before the start of Round 1.

15.4 Where a format includes pools and finals, the League Administration shall publish the final ranking method before the relevant final or crossover matches are played.

16 PROMOTION & RELEGATION: 2027 ONWARDS

16.1 The 2026 League shall serve as the pilot season.

16.2 No automatic promotion or relegation shall apply during the 2026 season.

16.3 Final 2026 standings may be used to seed 2027 divisions.

16.4 The proposed 2027 structure may include:

- a. Premier Division;
- b. Division 1;
- c. further divisions, depending on entries.

16.5 The 2027 structure shall be confirmed by JMC after the 2026 season.

16.6 The 2026 Adult League winner shall receive free entry for one team into the 2027 JMC Club League.

16.7 The 2026 Adult League runner-up shall receive a 50% discount for one team entry into the 2027 JMC Club League.

16.8 The 2026 Junior League winner shall receive free entry for one junior team into the 2027 JMC Club League.

16.9 The 2026 Junior League runner-up shall receive a 50% discount for one junior team entry into the 2027 JMC Club League.

16.10 The free entry and discount incentives apply to the team entry fee only and do not waive any required club affiliation fees, player registration fees or other membership obligations.

17 PAIRINGS & TEAMS

17.1 Pairings shall be generated or approved by the Chief Arbiter or appointed pairing official.

17.2 Round-robin sections shall use official Berger tables where applicable.

17.3 Pairing numbers shall be randomly assigned after the final section or pool composition has been determined.

17.4 Where pools are used, teams shall first be allocated to pools and only then assigned pairing numbers.

17.5 Where possible, teams shall be allocated to pools using team average rating and serpentine allocation.

17.6 Team average rating shall be calculated as follows:

- a. use the latest published ChessSA / CHESSA rating as at the registration deadline;
- b. where a player has no ChessSA / CHESSA rating but has a FIDE standard rating, the FIDE rating may be used for seeding purposes;
- c. unrated players shall be assigned a provisional rating of 1000 for seeding purposes only;
- d. the team average shall be calculated using the six highest-rated players in the registered squad;
- e. the final average shall be rounded to the nearest whole number.

17.7 Team average rating is used for seeding and pool allocation only. It does not determine board order.

17.8 Where a club has multiple teams in the same section or pool, those teams may be paired against each other as early as possible, subject to the pairing system and fairness of the competition.

17.9 JMC may separate teams from the same club into different pools where practical.

17.10 Final pairings shall be published after registration closes and after the final team list is confirmed.

18 APPEALS

- 18.1** JMC shall appoint an Appeals Committee before the start of Round 1.
- 18.2** The Appeals Committee shall deal with appeals against arbiter decisions or the application of League rules.
- 18.3** Appeals must be submitted in writing within 30 minutes of the conclusion of the relevant match or ruling.
- 18.4** An appeal must be accompanied by an appeal deposit of R200.
- 18.5** The appeal deposit shall be refunded if the appeal is upheld.
- 18.6** If the appeal is dismissed, the appeal deposit shall be retained by JMC.
- 18.7** The Appeals Committee shall consist of persons who are not directly involved in the dispute where possible.
- 18.8** The decision of the Appeals Committee shall be final for the purposes of the League.
- 18.9** Appeals are separate from disciplinary matters.

19 CONDUCT & DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

19.1 All games shall be played in accordance with the FIDE Laws of Chess, unless otherwise stated in these League rules.

19.2 Players, captains, spectators, coaches, parents and club representatives must conduct themselves respectfully.

19.3 Abuse, intimidation, harassment, disruptive conduct, offensive language or unsporting behaviour toward players, arbiters, officials, spectators or venue staff may result in disciplinary action.

19.4 The Chief Arbiter may remove any person from the playing area if that person disrupts the event.

19.5 Cheating allegations must be reported formally to the Chief Arbiter or League Administration.

19.6 Players and spectators must not make public accusations of cheating during the playing session.

19.7 Mobile phones and electronic devices shall be regulated in accordance with the Laws of Chess and the instructions of the Chief Arbiter.

19.8 Alcohol is not permitted at the board or inside the playing hall.

19.9 A player who appears impaired, behaves disruptively, or is unable to conduct themselves appropriately may be removed from the playing area by the Chief Arbiter.

19.10 Responsible conduct outside the playing hall remains the responsibility of each player and club.

19.11 Illegal substances are prohibited.

19.12 JMC may take disciplinary action against a player, captain, team or club for misconduct.

19.13 Possible sanctions may include:

- a. warning;
- b. removal from the playing hall;
- c. game default;
- d. match default;
- e. deduction of match or game points;
- f. removal from the League;
- g. referral to JMC Exco or the relevant disciplinary structure.

19.14 The League shall promote sportsmanship, fair play, club pride and respect for all participants.

20 EQUIPMENT

20.1 JMC shall provide, where available:

- a. boards;
- b. pieces;
- c. clocks;
- d. score sheets;
- e. result sheets; and
- f. other necessary playing equipment.

20.2 Players may bring personal clocks if approved by the Chief Arbiter.

20.3 JMC equipment shall be used for the League unless the Chief Arbiter approves otherwise.

20.4 Clubs and players are expected to treat all equipment with care.

20.5 Any damaged or missing equipment may be referred to the League Administration.

21 AWARDS, TITLES & PRIZES

21.1 The 2026 JMC Club League shall focus on club pride, team achievement and the prestige of being JMC Club League Champions.

21.2 No cash prizes shall be awarded for the 2026 pilot season.

21.3 League awards may include trophies, medals, certificates and floating trophies.

21.4 Adult League awards:

- a. Adult League Champions
- b. Adult League Runner-up
- c. Adult League Third Place

21.5 Junior League awards:

- a. Junior League Champions
- b. Junior League Runner-up
- c. Junior League Third Place

21.6 A floating trophy may be awarded to the winning team in each league.

21.7 The League may award a Sportsmanship Award in each league.

21.8 The Sportsmanship Award may be awarded to a player, team, captain or club that best represents fair play, respect and the spirit of the League.

21.9 No board prizes shall be awarded during the 2026 pilot season.

21.10 The removal of board prizes is intended to support the squad system, flexible board order and team-first nature of the League.

21.11 JMC may publish notable performances, team highlights and player achievements after each League day.

22 TEAM WITHDRAWAL / REMOVAL

22.1 Any team withdrawing from the League must notify JMC in writing as soon as possible.

22.2 If a team withdraws before completing half of its scheduled matches, its results may be declared null and void.

22.3 If a team withdraws after completing half of its scheduled matches, its results may stand and unplayed matches may be scored as defaults.

22.4 The Chief Arbiter and League Administration may adjust the treatment of withdrawn teams where necessary to preserve fairness, especially in Swiss, pool or crossover formats.

22.5 JMC may remove a team from the League for:

- a. repeated defaults;
- b. repeated misconduct;
- c. use of ineligible players;
- d. failure to pay required fees;
- e. serious breach of League rules; or
- f. bringing the League, JMC or the venue into disrepute.

22.6 A removed team may lose eligibility for 2027 entry preference.

23 BERGER TABLES

23.1 Official Berger Tables shall be used for round-robin sections where applicable.

23.2 Berger Tables shall be published or made available after the final number of teams in each section is confirmed.

23.3 Where the final structure uses pools, Swiss pairings or crossover matches, the Chief Arbiter shall publish the applicable pairing method before play begins.

24 REGISTRATION

24.1 Clubs must register through the official JMC registration process.

24.2 Registration opens on 1 July 2026.

24.3 JMC affiliated clubs shall receive preferential entry until 31 July 2026.

24.4 Non-affiliated clubs may apply during the registration period but shall be placed on a waitlist until JMC confirms available capacity.

24.5 After 31 July 2026, JMC may allocate remaining spaces to waitlisted teams, additional affiliated club teams, or non-affiliated club teams.

24.6 Final team acceptance shall be confirmed by JMC.

24.7 Required registration information shall include:

- a. club name;
- b. team name;
- c. league entered: Adult or Junior;
- d. player names and surnames;
- e. dates of birth;
- f. ChessSA / CHESSA IDs;
- g. FIDE IDs, where applicable;
- h. latest known ratings;
- i. captain or manager details;
- j. responsible adult details for junior teams;
- k. proof of payment;
- l. confirmation that players are in good standing; and
- m. acceptance of the League rules and code of conduct.

24.8 The final squad list and payment deadline shall be 12 August 2026, unless amended by JMC.

24.9 Round 1 and Round 2 line-ups must be submitted by Friday, 14 August 2026 at 20h00.

24.10 For later League days, line-ups must be submitted by Friday at 20h00 before the relevant League day.

24.11 No cash payments shall be accepted at the venue unless expressly approved by JMC.

24.12 Incomplete registrations may be rejected or placed on hold.

25 FINAL AUTHORITY

25.1 These rules are intended to support the fair and smooth running of the 2026 JMC Club League.

25.2 Any matter not covered by these rules shall be decided by the Chief Arbiter, League Administration or JMC Executive Committee, depending on the nature of the matter.

25.3 JMC reserves the right to amend, clarify or supplement these rules where necessary for the fair and practical running of the League.

25.4 Any amendments shall be communicated to participating clubs as soon as reasonably possible.

25.5 By entering the League, clubs, teams, captains and players agree to be bound by these rules.

END OF DOCUMENT

By entering the 2026 JMC Club League Chess Championship, clubs, teams, captains and players agree to be bound by these rules, as confirmed and, where necessary, amended by Johannesburg Metro Chess.

For registration and enquiries, contact the League Project Lead or Assistant League Coordinator through Johannesburg Metro Chess.

Rules of the 2026 JMC Club League Chess Championship
16 August 2026 – 8 November 2026
Version note: Draft v2

DRAFT V2