

Rule Notification FY2526-3 – Forfeits, penalties and related matters

At its meeting on 2 March 2026 the AFA committee accepted the recommendation of the rules subcommittee to make changes to the rules to ensure consistency of approach to breaches of rules by teams and penalties flowing from those breaches. Full details are set out below. The rule changes will be effective from 1 July 2026 and will be included in the next published version of the rules.

Background

Following several incidents over recent years the rules sub-committee decided to conduct a review of the rules focussing on:

- forfeits - of heats, placement at race meetings and title points
- the concept of 'just cause'
- breakout teams, non-competitive teams and teams excluded from a race meeting
- penalties for breach of rules.

The sub-committee noted the following:

- an inconsistency of language used, for example, some references to teams not being able to place and other references to teams forfeiting placement
- the narrowness of the examples given of 'just cause' leading to inconsistent interpretations and applications by judges
- a lack of understanding by many members of the distinction between breakout teams, non-competitive teams and excluded teams, particularly a tendency to describe breakout teams as non-competitive causing confusion because of different rules applying to each
- some inconsistency of penalties for breach of various rules
- the arguable harshness of penalties in some instances
- the absence of express provision for the AFA committee to determine the appropriate penalty when a rule breach is not discovered until after a race meeting.

The sub-committee resolved to recommend to the AFA committee a number of changes to the rules to:

- include a definition of 'forfeit' and ensure the term is used consistently throughout
- stipulate that for most rule breaches discovered during a race meeting the penalty is forfeit of relevant heats rather than forfeit of the right to place
- remove the concept of 'just cause' and provide simply that a team that forfeits five consecutive heats voluntarily or as a consequence of a rule breach becomes a non-competitive team
- include directions for dealing with the forfeit of a prior heat including when the forfeiture results in the team becoming a non-competitive team
- clarify that a breakout team 'loses' rather than 'forfeits' all subsequent heats unless it forfeits a heat for breach of another rule
- confirm that results of heats completed before a team becomes a breakout team stand

- clarify the position with title points earned before a team becomes a breakout team or a non-competitive team or is excluded
- clarify that teams will not be recalled to the ring to run additional heats if it is discovered that the required number of heats was not run in a race.

The specific rule changes can be viewed here [Forfeiting Amendments.pdf](#)

A table summarising relevant provisions can be viewed here [Penalty Matrix for Updated Rules.pdf](#)