



Castlebar 9s Festival 2026

Official Format & Rules

Welcome to the Castlebar 9s! All the fixtures, results, league tables, entertainment details, and other information for the weekend can be found on the official festival hub: weekend.castlebar9s.ie

The Official Playing Rules of Gaelic Football (LGFA and GAA) will apply for the respective tournaments with the following local exceptions and formatting rules.

1. Tournament Overview

- **Format:** All games will be 9-a-side.
- **Total Games:** 81 games over the weekend.
- **Match Duration:**
 - Standard matches: 7 minutes per half (14 minutes total).
 - Cup & Shield Finals: 10 minutes per half (20 minutes total).

Points System & Group Stage (Saturday)

Each gender plays in a single league table, with every team playing 3 games on Saturday.

- **Win:** 2 points
- **Draw:** 1 point
- **Loss:** 0 points

Tiebreakers:

If teams are tied on points at the end of the group stages, the following criteria apply:

- *Two teams level:* Head-to-head result.
- *More than two teams level:* Points difference, followed by points scored, then points conceded, and finally a coin toss if necessary.

2. Participating Teams

Ladies Competition (20 Teams)

Ballymachugh (Cavan)

MacHale Rovers (Mayo)

CLG Cuchulainns (Cavan)

Tourlestrane (Sligo)

Carrickedmond (Longford)

Parke Keellogues Crimlin 1 (Mayo)

Parke Keellogues Crimlin 2 (Mayo)

Longford Slashers (Longford)

Eastern Harps (Sligo)

Breaffy (Mayo)

Taras London (London)

Killygary (Cavan)

Carnacon (Mayo)

Ballyboden (Dublin)

Charlestown (Mayo)

Westport (Mayo)

Ballyhaunis (Mayo)

Castlebar Mitchels 1 (Mayo)

Castlebar Mitchels 2 (Mayo)

Thomas Davis (Dublin)

Men's Competition (14 Teams)

Courtwood (Laois)

Curry (Sligo)

Shannonbridge (Offaly)

Parke Keellogues Crimlin (Mayo)

Islandeady (Mayo)

St. Annes (Dublin)

Burrishoole (Mayo)

Westport 1 (Mayo)

Westport 2 (Mayo)

Naas (Kildare)

Castlebar Mitchels 1 (Mayo)

Castlebar Mitchels 2 (Mayo)

Castlebar Mitchels 3 (Mayo)

Balla (Mayo)

3. Club & Registration Rules

- **Membership:** Clubs must provide proof that all registered players are members of their club.
- **Jerseys:** Clubs must register all players before the tournament, indicating their jersey number. Players must wear the same jersey number for the duration of the
- **Clash of Colours:** Clubs are encouraged to bring bibs or alternative jerseys in case of a colour clash.
- **Equipment:** Clubs must supply their own footballs.
- **Facilities:** Clubs are requested to leave dressing rooms clean and tidy.

4. Playing Rules & Local Exceptions

Pitch Zones & Positioning (Breach Rule)

During play, a team must have:

- At least **three players** (which may include the goalkeeper) in their own half.
- At least **two outfield players** in the opposition's half.
- *Exceptions:* Unintentional breaches within 4m of the halfway line that do not interfere with play, opponents, or gain an advantage.
- **Penalty for Breach:** Free to the opposition on the attacking 13m line (score from this is worth two points). If breached by carrying/intercepting over the halfway line, the free is from the place the player crossed the line.

Kick-Outs

- Taken from within the small rectangle. Can be kicked from open hands or off the ground (must be stationary). **Penalty: Free kick to opposition.**
- Does not have to travel 13m, but attackers must be 13m away. **Penalty: Free kick to defending team.**
- **No Back-Pass:** Players may NOT pass back to the goalkeeper after the initial kick-out. **Penalty: Free kick to defending team.**

No Returning Ball

Once a team enters the opposition's half, the ball cannot be played back into their own half.

- **Penalty:** Free kick to opposition from where the line was crossed. Scoring is allowed from this free kick.

Scoring

- **Two-Point Scores:** Two points are awarded for any ball kicked behind the halfway line during "open play" that goes over the crossbar without touching an attacking player.

Free Kicks & Marks

- **Marks:** Do not apply in this tournament.
- **Free Kicks:** Can be taken immediately.
- **Solo and Go:** Allowed in all areas *except* inside the attacking 13m.
- **45s:** Taken from the designated line, off the ground.
- **Impeding:** If the opposition impedes a free, sideline, 45, or solo-and-go, a free is awarded against them on their defending 13m line, and the resulting score is worth two points.

Substitutions (Baton System)

- Unlimited substitutions, and multiple can occur at once.
- Must enter from the designated area marshalled by the Pitch Manager.
- No referee notification needed, provided players don't interfere with play. ***Penalty for interference: Free to opposition (from foul or 45m line).***
- **Baton Rule:** The ongoing sub must hand their baton to the departing player. Batons cannot be thrown. A player holding a baton is deemed not part of the game. ***Penalty for throwing: Free kick to opponent.***

Infractions & Cards

- **Yellow Card:** 3-minute sin-bin. Player cannot be replaced.
- **Black Card:** Sin-binned for the remainder of the game, but may be replaced by a different player after 5 minutes.
- **Red Card:** Sent off, cannot be replaced, and suspended for at least one game (duration depends on referee report).

5. Knockout Stage Format (Sunday)

All knockout fixtures are predetermined based on final Saturday league standings.

Knockout Tiebreakers (Extra Time & Penalties):

If a match is tied after normal time, 5 minutes of straight Extra Time will be played. If still level:

- 1v1 Penalties (Goals only) from the halfway line.
- 5 kicks per team, taken by 5 different players.
- If level after 5 kicks, Sudden Death applies. In Sudden Death, the original sequence of takers does not need to be followed.

Cup Competition (Mens & Ladies Top 8)

- **Quarter-Finals (QF):** QF1 (1st vs 8th), QF2 (2nd vs 7th), QF3 (3rd vs 6th), QF4 (4th vs 5th).
- **Semi-Finals (SF):** SF1 (Winner QF1 vs Winner QF4), SF2 (Winner QF2 vs Winner QF3).
- **Final:** Winner SF1 vs Winner SF2.

Mens Shield Competition (9th to 14th)

- **Byes:** 9th & 10th receive byes to the Semi-Finals.
- **Quarter-Finals (QF):** QF1 (11th vs 14th), QF2 (12th vs 13th).
- **Semi-Finals (SF):** SF1 (9th vs Winner QF2), SF2 (10th vs Winner QF1).
- **Final:** Winner SF1 vs Winner SF2.

Ladies Shield Competition (9th to 20th)

- **Byes:** 9th to 12th receive a bye to the Quarter-Finals.
- **Preliminary Round (PR):** P1 (13th vs 20th), P2 (14th vs 19th), P3 (15th vs 18th), P4 (16th vs 17th).

- **Quarter-Finals (QF):** QF1 (9th vs Winner P4), QF2 (10th vs Winner P3), QF3 (11th vs Winner P2), QF4 (12th vs Winner P1).
- **Semi-Finals (SF):** SF1 (Winner QF1 vs Winner QF4), SF2 (Winner QF2 vs Winner QF3).
- **Final:** Winner SF1 vs Winner SF2.