**Question: Is this the earliest that you could have released the fixtures?**

**Answer:** Yes, in fact, we’ve managed to get them out a week earlier than last year with even more rounds completed (up to Round 20).

There is a long list of criteria that our fixture list needs to fulfil and there are a wide range of factors that impact on the time it takes to put it all together and this year it is available 72 days ahead of kick-off.

**Q:** What kind of factors do you have to consider?

**A:** All of our clubs and broadcasters are major stakeholders in this process and we have to balance their needs as best we can in a way that is beneficial to the success of the tournament.

Firstly, the Guinness PRO14 is an international tournament which spans the UK, Ireland, Italy and South Africa and in almost every ‘out of country fixture’ our teams must travel by air. This means the logistics are far greater for our teams than they are for competitions which take place within just one country.

Tours to and from South Africa also require a 7-day turnaround and, in many instances, teams are playing two games per tour meaning that these fixtures cannot span a break in game rounds (gaps for internationals or European games). Beyond that, we have a number of clubs who have traditional kick-off times, i.e. Fridays at 19:35, that we work hard to maintain.

Some teams are based in cities and others in more rural areas, as such each club has travel routes unique to them which can impact on how fans get to the game and what kick-off times are more likely to make it easier for them to attend.

Two of our clubs (Ospreys and Dragons) share their venues with football clubs which can create availability clashes so to avoid this, this year, advance information allowed us to plan ahead before the Football League fixtures were announced to ensure venue availability is not affected where possible.

Other venues across the Championship may also be impacted by entertainment and sporting events taking place in their cities at different times of the year.

Time zones also come into play with Italy and South Africa one hour ahead of the UK and Ireland. In the winter months (October 27 to March 31) South Africa are two hours ahead of the UK and Ireland.

Additionally, around certain fixtures (including derbies) some clubs may request to use a different venue as their home ground. Again, these venues may have operations criteria that impact on the timing of kick-offs and this also has to be taken into account.

**Question:** When will you confirm R21 and the Final date and venue?

**Answer:** In early 2020 we will meet with our broadcast partners and review club requests for R21 in order to ensure the final weekend of action gets the schedule that works best. The venue for the final and the date will be announced soon, so keep following PRO14 Official on all of your social media platforms.

**Question:** How can I access the fixtures?

**Answer:** The fixtures can be viewed on our website [www.pro14rugby.org/match-centre/fixtures](http://www.pro14rugby.org/match-centre/fixtures) or on the Guinness PRO14 App available on the App Store and Google Play Store. You can also download the fixture list straight to your calendar by visiting [www.pro14rugby.org/downloadable-fixture-list/](http://www.pro14rugby.org/downloadable-fixture-list/)

**Q: How does the Championship format work?**

**A:** The Guinness PRO14 uses a two-conference model which will allowed for the expansion to South Africa without without needing to add extra rounds from the old 22-game regular season. Since the 2017/18 season the Championship has had 21 regular season games in the following format:

* Each conference will contain 7 teams with an equal split of teams from each union
* Every team plays 21 regular season games
* Every team to play each other at least once
* Italian, Scottish and South African teams will play an additional derby fixture to even out the schedule (e.g. Edinburgh will play Glasgow Warriors three times)
* The Guinness PRO14 Final Series includes Quarter-Finals allowing six clubs to reach the knock-out stages
* The top 3 clubs from each conference will qualify for the Champions Cup while the 4th placed teams will face each other in a Play-Off (South African teams are ineligible for EPCR tournaments)

**Q: How many matches will my team play?**

**A:** The regular season will consist of 21 Rounds. These Rounds will be made up from a combination of:

* 12 Home **&** Away games in your team’s conference
* 7 Home **OR** Away games against each team from the other conference
* An additional 2 Derby Round games to ensure all Derby fixtures are played home & away (this means Scottish, Italian, South African clubs play three Derbies)
* Teams will alternate between 10 or 11 home games each season

**Q:** When will all of the FreeSports UK fixtures be confirmed?

**A:** The Guinness PRO14 sits alongside a number of international sports on FreeSports UK and Premier Sports. Once all of their properties have their season fixtures announced they will be able to confirm their Guinness PRO14 picks which is likely in to be in August.

**Q:** When do you start planning the fixture list for the following season?

**A:** This year planning commenced after the board had signed off on the make-up of the new Conference line-ups that will operate until the end of the 2020/2021 season. A list of criteria, more extensive than listed above, is placed into a software program and a rough draft is created. Tours to and from South Africa must be balanced up against the dates for European Rounds and International weekends. We must also take into account that December is mostly a non-playing month in South Africa and as such the Toyota Cheetahs and Southern Kings have their derby fixtures moved to January and/or February.

**Q:** How are games selected for television?

**A:** Once the provisional fixture list has been shared with the teams and requests or clashes have been flagged, the fixtures are sent to our broadcasters ahead of a selection meeting. Generally, the broadcaster hosting the fixture (Premier Sports in the UK, eir sport & TG4 in Republic of Ireland or Super Sport in South Africa or DAZN in Italy) will select a time slot for the game and PRO14 Rugby will work to ensure that (where possible) it meets the traditional KO preferences of the home team.

Once this process is complete the updated fixture list is distributed to our clubs to allow them time to book their travel and accommodation before the fixtures are made public which would affect the costs involved. Once all clubs have confirmed that their arrangements are in place then PRO14 Rugby can publish the fixture list.

**Q:** How can you speed up this process in future seasons?

**A:** With the Conferences set for the next two seasons and efficiencies introduced into this year’s scheduling, we are confident that we can aim for an earlier release date next year thanks to the support of our broadcasters.

The primary factor around the release date is ensuring that all of our clubs have their travel and accommodation booked before the fixtures go public. We understand that supporters and clubs are always keen to have this information as early as possible and we will always aim to get the fixtures published finalised as quickly as we can.

**Q:** I can see there are some Sunday games scheduled across the first 20 rounds, why is this?

**A:** The primary slots for Guinness PRO14 games are Friday evenings and Saturday afternoon and evenings, however, in order to avoid clashes with international games at certain points of the season it is necessary to play games on Sundays.

Additionally, clubs who share their ground football teams can end up with fixture clashes and although we have worked to avoid as often as possible there are some parts of the calendar where it was not possible to do so.

ENDS