

# SENIOR PLAY-OFFS, 2008

17/01/08

The formats for the play-offs were announced this week, enabling us to produce our annual guide to the way they work.

In the top two Men's divisions, and the top Women's, the system is very straightforward.

## EBL Division 1 Men, EBL Division 2 Men and EBL Division 1 Women.

In the Men's Division 1 and Division 2, and Women's Division 1, the top eight qualify for the play-offs. The team finishing first in the league (the top seed) plays (at home) against the lowest qualifier (8th place) in the Quarter Finals, second plays seventh, and so on.

This year, with the Finals being held separately from the BBL event (and, I'm glad to say, on a different weekend!), EB have taken the opportunity to implement a Final Fours weekend, with these top divisions all playing at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield in the **Sportscover Final Fours**, sponsored by Insurance Underwriters Sportscover.

I'm pleased to see that, in keeping with tradition, the semi-finals retain the usual pairings, with the top seed (or the team that beat the top seed in the previous round) meeting the fourth seed (or the team that beat them). This differs from the system used by BBL, where the top surviving seed plays the lowest qualifying seed.

Quarter Finals 5 or 6 April	Semi Finals 12-April	Final 13 April @ EIS Sheffield	
1st _____ } 8th _____ }	_____ }	_____ }	_____ }
4th _____ } 5th _____ }	_____ }	_____ }	_____ }
2nd _____ } 7th _____ }	_____ }	_____ }	_____ }
3rd _____ } 6th _____ }	_____ }	_____ }	_____ }

## EBL Division 3 Men:

The system is equally simple in Men's Division 3

The top four from the North section and the top four from the South qualify, with the quarter finals consisting of "crossover" matches, with the top seed from the North hosting the fourth seed from the South (and 1st South hosting 4th North), while the runners up in each region play host to the third placed team from the opposite region.

The semi-finals are designed to keep teams from the same region apart (unless, of course, a lower seed triumphs in the previous round), and if results go according to seeding, the Final would feature the top team from the North against the top team in the South.

These play-offs begin earlier than those for the higher divisions, as the Finals are to be held in early April, at Derby's Moorways Centre (along with the Women's Division 2 and Men's Division 4 Finals).

Quarter Finals 22 or 23 March	Semi Finals 29 or 30 March	Final @ Derby; 5 April
North 1 } South 4 }	_____ }	_____ }
South 2 } North 3 }	_____ }	_____ }
South 1 } North 4 }	_____ }	_____ }
North 2 } South 3 }	_____ }	_____ }

## EBL Division 2 Women:

Division 2 Women has now expanded to three divisions, and thus poses the same problems of complexity as Division 4 Men. With three sections, there is no simple formula either for selection of qualifiers or, when selected, for pairing them up.

The system adopted is probably the fairest possible under the circumstances, although it means that final seedings are unlikely to be determined until the very last league game has been played.

The qualifiers will be the **top two** teams from each division, together with the **best two of the three third placed teams**, giving the required eight competitors.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the three divisions do not have the same number of teams as each other, and so they play a different number of games. In the North there are ten teams, while in the South there are nine and in the Midlands/South-West only seven.

So, teams from different regions are separated not by the *number* of games won, but by the **percentage** of wins. Teams with the same percentage are then separated according to their **points difference per game**.

This enables a "seeding" table to be compiled, thus:

1. League winner with highest percentage of wins (then highest points difference per game)
2. 2nd best League winner
3. 3rd best League winner
4. Best League runner-up
5. 2nd best League runner-up
6. 3rd best League runner-up
7. Best 3rd placed team
8. 2nd best 3rd placed team

The format of the play-offs then becomes the more recognisable 1v8, 2v7 etc. However, in this case it is perfectly possible for two teams from the same league to meet in the Quarter Finals!

<b>Quarter Finals</b> <b>22 or 23 March</b>	<b>Semi Finals</b> <b>29 or 30 March</b>	<b>Final @ Derby;</b> <b>5 April</b>
1 Best League winner } 8 2nd best 3rd placed team }	_____ }	_____ }
4 Best League runner-up } 5 2nd best League runner-up }	_____ }	_____ }
2 2nd best League winner } 7 Best 3rd placed team }	_____ }	_____ }
3 3rd best League winner } 6 3rd best League runner-up }	_____ }	_____ }

## EBL Division 4:

Division 4 Men uses the same 3-division system as Women's Division 2 (and the same as they used last year).

<b>Quarter Finals</b> <b>22 or 23 March</b>	<b>Semi Finals</b> <b>29 or 30 March</b>	<b>Final @ Derby;</b> <b>5 April</b>
1 Best League winner } 8 2nd best 3rd placed team }	_____ }	_____ }
4 Best League runner-up } 5 2nd best League runner-up }	_____ }	_____ }
2 2nd best League winner } 7 Best 3rd placed team }	_____ }	_____ }
3 3rd best League winner } 6 3rd best League runner-up }	_____ }	_____ }

To illustrate one of the points made above, last year Oxford won the Midlands/South Section, with the second best percentage record, while the best third-placed team were West Herts, so these two played each other despite being from the same section.

You can see how the system worked in practice from the League Tables for 2006-2007, [here](#).