

IRISH FA ELITE PERFORMANCE UPDATE *October 2017*



Elite Performance Schools Launch

On the 28th of September the Irish FA launched its first performance school at Integrated College Dungannon. The performance schools are an important part of our five-year strategy to help meet the key objective to challenge every time, qualify every other time. Around 60 guests attended the launch at the school which in its first year will see 13 players participating in sessions 4 days a week, after school, as we move towards this new model to allow for increased contact time for young players.



We were also delighted to host Mr Sleeth, Principal, and Mrs Tate, Chair of the Board of Governors, along with other members of staff at the Northern Ireland v Czech Republic game with players from the school undertaking ball boy duties at the game as we work to develop our cooperation. The feedback from parents and the school has been extremely positive and we look forward to developing a long-term relationship with them. Our next step will be working with other schools to help develop the performance school model to provide better geographical coverage.

Games Programme

Our active games programme continues to provide elite quality games and development experience for our talented young players with 20 trips taking place in 2017. The games programme is also proving to be an important means of showcasing players to professional clubs.

Liverpool Cup, U16s	Rangers FC, U15s/U14s/U12s/U11s
Rotterdam Cup, U16s	Mediterranean International Cup, U15s
Northern Ireland v Slovakia, U16s	Lennart Johansson Trophy U15s/U14s
Austria v Northern Ireland, U16s	Super Cup NI, U15s
Northern Ireland v Estonia, U16s	Hibernia Cup, U15s
Finland v Northern Ireland, U16s	JD Club NI Cup, U14s
Northern Ireland v Brazil, U16s	Madrid Cup, U14s
Victory Shield, U16s	Westend Cup, U13s
Northern Ireland v Poland, U16s	Selis Cup, U13s
English Club Games, U16s	Sligo Super Cup, U13s



Player Pathway

In July, we were pleased to see ten players start with their professional clubs. It is extremely positive to see the impact of Club NI on the performance pathway with players now getting signed to higher quality and premiership clubs. The new signings were as follows:

- Harry Robinson, 2000, Oldham
- Ethan Galbraith, 2001, Manchester United
- Barney McKeown, 2001, Everton
- Ethan Warnock, 2001, Everton
- Ben Wilson, 2001, Sunderland
- Tiarnan Parker, 2001, Luton Town
- Callum Ferris, 2001, Middlesbrough
- Connor Farrelly, 2001, Celtic
- Christopher Conn, 2001, Burnley
- Jordan McEneff, 2001, Arsenal



JD Club NI Cup

We were pleased to host the third year of our signature tournament, the JD Club NI Cup, from the 25th -27th August at Ulster University in Coleraine with three visiting teams: Rangers; Swansea; and Excelsior Rotterdam. There was a good turnout over the weekend with Rangers coming out as the eventual winners. The feedback proved to be extremely positive and we hope to develop the tournament further in 2018 to an eight-team tournament.



Victory Shield

The 72nd Victory Shield tournament will be staged in Northern Ireland and organised by the Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association (NISFA). The Under-16 Schoolboys international competition is run by the Schools' Association Football International Board.

This year, three U15 Club NI players will have the opportunity to play a year up due to five of our U16s having been selected to play a year up for the U17s UEFA European Qualifiers taking place at the same time. The school boys will play against Scotland, Wales and Republic of Ireland.

International Caps

Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association held their annual presentation of International Honours Caps at La Mon Hotel on 26th May. Thirty-six U16 players from Club NI were present on the evening to be awarded their first caps. Elite Performance Coach and U16s Manager, Darren Murphy, and Jim Magilton, Elite Performance Director, presented the awards on the evening highlighting the commitment of the young players and wished them every success for the future.

Player Welfare

Our player welfare service is a hugely important element of our work to help prepare and support our young players as they settle in to their new lives with professional clubs. Visits and regular contact with players, parents and their clubs are essential to help support our young players as they settle in and adjust. A lot of background work has also been undertaken to eliminate delays with international clearance so our players can start playing for their new clubs straight away. We aim to continue to develop in this area through better resilience building of players in Club NI along with the development of a mentor programme to help reduce drops out rates further so our talented young players have better chances of success in the professional game.

UEFA Elite Performance Visit

In June, we hosted a visit from Eric Deletang, UEFA Elite Youth Consultant. Eric had the opportunity to visit the Club NI centres, learn more about the elite youth development pathway in Northern Ireland and visit the site of the Irish FA's first performance school at Integrated College Dungannon. This was a valuable opportunity to directly update UEFA on the extensive work that is being undertaken within Club NI. Feedback from UEFA was extremely positive and ensuring an active games programme was highlighted as a key area that they would like to see continue as part of their support through the Hat Pro programme.



JD trials

In March this year, we were honoured to win the Special Award for Effective Use of a Smaller Budget Category at the UK Sponsorship Awards for our JD Trials process. From April to June the third year of the JD trials process took place with over 800 young people participating in one of the 4 trials taking place in Derry~Londonderry, Belfast, Dungannon and Cookstown in a bid to gain a place in Club NI. A second round of trails followed and then a residential weekend for shortlisted players took place at Ulster University in Coleraine. The trials process culminated with the top 30 trialists being invited to the National Football Stadium to take on existing Club NI squads. This year a total of 6 players were selected to make their way into Club NI where they will be monitored and developed along with our other young footballers.

Erasmus+

We are pleased to have successfully secured funding through the Erasmus+ programme to support two projects: a youth mobility project and a coach education project. The Erasmus+ youth mobility project will allow for 32 of our young Club NI players to visit the Oliva Nova internationally recognised centre of excellence in Spain for a two-week mobility project as part of their on-going development. There will also be a coach education mobility to centres of excellence which will support the continued professional development of 42 coaching staff.

Coach Education

2017 has seen an increase again compared to previous years in coach education activity, both in terms of the number of courses being delivered and the numbers of coaches enrolled on the courses. The increase referred to is across the board, being reflected both in the Regional courses and the annual National Coaching Courses Programme (Residential block) held in Belfast. In fact, the annual National Coaching Courses Programme has had to be increased in duration to 8 weeks, such has been the growth in demand for places on courses.

2017 Overview

Courses	No. of Courses	No. of Coaches
Grassroots courses	46	764
Futsal Level One	2	38
Level One	38	720
Irish FA C Cert	6	170
GK Diploma	1	8
UEFA A Goalkeeping	1	11
UEFA B Licence	4	114
UEFA A Licence	2	45
UEFA Pro Licence	1	20

The Irish FA Coach Education Department continues to improve the content of the courses, and has added new courses such as the UEFA Goalkeeper A Licence Course, as well as an International UEFA B Licence Course for those coaches enrolling from outside of Europe.

The Irish FA has been at the forefront in using modern IT technology to deliver its coach education programmes and its administration. We have also been using drone technology over the last 2 years to support the learning process of coaches on the UEFA A and Pro Licence courses.

As a consequence of our progress in delivering high quality courses and incorporating new technology such as drone recording, UEFA selected the Irish FA to host its 2017 Coach Education Conference in Belfast 16th – 19th October. All European countries attend this prestigious UEFA event, and the Irish FA will deliver a number of lecture and pitch presentations during the 4 days. This Conference is biennial, and we are the smallest country to have been asked to host it!

In December we will also be hosting delegates from 6 European countries for a 4 day Study Visit to observe how the Irish FA delivers “Reality Based Learning” and “Tutor Mentoring” as part of our programme.



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