

IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



Football Regulations

Updated 17th December 2020

DEFINITIONS

1. These Regulations have been made by the Association in general meeting pursuant to Article 11.5 of the Articles of Association. In these Regulations, except where the context otherwise requires, the definitions and explanations contained in Articles 1 and 2.1 of the Articles of Association shall apply mutatis mutandis. Changes to these Regulations may be made by ordinary resolution of the Association in general meeting.

FOOTBALL COMMITTEE

2. The Football Committee shall consist of the following members:
 - (a) The Office Bearers of the Association
 - (b) Four members of Council nominated by the Divisional Associations, one by each Association
 - (c) A member of Council representing a Women's Club, nominated under Article 8.2.3
 - (d) A member of Council nominated by NIBFA
 - (e) A member of Council nominated by NISFA
 - (f) A member nominated by the Junior Committee
 - (g) A member nominated by the Intermediate Committee
 - (h) Three members nominated from the Senior Division of the NIFL who are members of Council.

Each body nominating members of the Football Committee must do so by 1st June in any year.

3. The Football Committee shall appoint, from amongst its members, one to serve as an observer to the Referees' Committee, to ensure that the Committee is operating in line with the UEFA Convention on Refereeing.
4. The Football Committee shall meet at least bi-monthly to deal with the following:
 - (a) Sanctioning of the format of any Club, Association, League or other organisation and the annual approval of rules of such bodies
 - (b) Appointment of six members to the Referees Committee in accordance with Regulation 19
 - (c) Administrative matters including player registrations, affiliations, compensation cases and regulations
 - (d) Oversight of Members' facilities and of football development at all levels of the game
 - (e) Review of the annual financial statements of the Divisional Associations
 - (f) Responsibility for coaching structures and development programmes
 - (g) Responsibility of all arrangements for Junior International Matches and the UEFA Regions cup matches, including selection of players and team officials. This function will be delegated to the Junior and Youth Cup Committee.

- (h) Responsibility for the process and when necessary the competition to decide Promotion to and Relegation from NIFL and other Intermediate Leagues
- (i) Overseeing the allocation of referees to leagues at Intermediate level.
- (j) The promotion and control of Women's Football
- (k) All other matters delegated by the Board.

The Chairman of the Board shall be entitled to attend meetings of the Football Committee. A report from each meeting of the Football Committee shall be presented to the Board.

- 5. The Football Committee may appoint sub-committees and may delegate responsibilities to such sub-committees. The Football Committee may co-opt a maximum of two members of Council with the appropriate skills onto any such sub-committee.

CHALLENGE CUP COMMITTEE

- 6. The Challenge Cup Committee shall consist of
 - (a) The President, who shall act as Chairman
 - (b) Five members nominated by Council, (including no less than three from the Senior Division of the NIFL). All five members must represent clubs which participate in the competition.
- 7. The Committee shall deal with
 - (a) The organisation and management of the Irish FA Challenge Cup Competition including drafting of competition rules, selection of Clubs to participate, the drawing of ties, and organisation of the semi-final and final ties. It shall submit reports of its meetings to the Football Committee.
 - (b) All reports, protests, complaints and other matters relating to the playing and conduct of the Challenge Cup Competition (other than referee reports).
- 8. The Challenge Cup Committee shall submit reports of its meetings to the Football Committee.

INTERMEDIATE CUP COMMITTEE

- 9. The Intermediate Cup Committee shall consist of seven members nominated from and by Council. All members must represent clubs which participate in the Intermediate Challenge Cup Competition.

The Intermediate Cup Committee shall appoint one member to serve on the Football Committee.

- 10. The Committee shall deal with
 - (a) The organisation and management of the Intermediate Challenge Cup Competition including drafting of competition rules, selection of clubs to participate, the drawing of ties, and the organisation of the semi-final and final ties.

- (b) All reports, protests, complaints and other matters relating to the playing and conduct of the Intermediate Challenge Cup Competition (other than Referee Reports).
11. The Intermediate Cup Committee shall submit reports of its meetings to the Football Committee.

JUNIOR AND YOUTH CUP COMMITTEE

12. The Junior and Youth Cup Committee shall consist of 14 members nominated by Council made up as follows:
- (a) Six members from the North East Ulster Football Association
 - (b) Three members from the Mid Ulster Football Association
 - (c) Three members from the North West of Ireland Football Association
 - (d) Two members from the Fermanagh and Western Football Association
- All members must represent clubs which participate in one of the two competitions.
13. The Junior and Youth Cup Committee shall appoint one member to serve on the Football Committee.
14. The Committee shall deal with the following:
- (a) The management of the Junior Challenge Cup Competition including the drafting of Competition rules, selection of Clubs to participate, drawing of ties and organisation of the semi-final and final ties
 - (b) The management of the Harry Cavan Youth Challenge Cup Competition including the drafting of Competition rules, selection of Clubs to participate, drawing of ties and organisation of the semi-final and final ties
 - (c) All reports, protests, complaints and other matters relating to the playing and conduct of the Junior Challenge Cup and the Harry Cavan Youth Challenge Cup (other than referee reports).
15. The Junior and Youth Cup Committee shall submit reports of its meetings to the Football Committee.

WOMEN'S CHALLENGE CUP COMMITTEE

16. The Women's Challenge Cup Committee shall consist of five members nominated by Council.
17. This Committee shall deal with the following
- (a) The organisation and management of the Irish FA Women's Challenge Cup Competition including drafting of Competition rules, selection of Clubs to participate, the drawing of ties, and the organisation of the semi-finals and final tie.
 - (b) All reports, protests, complaints and other matters relating to the playing and conduct of the Women's Challenge Cup Competition (other than referee reports).

18. The Women's Challenge Cup Committee shall submit reports of its meetings to the Football Committee.

REFEREES' COMMITTEE

19. The Referees' Committee shall consist of:
 - (a) Six former referees appointed by the Football Committee, at least three of whom shall have served on the FIFA list of International Referees or Assistant Referees at some stage.
 - (b) The Council representative of the NIRA
 - (c) One independent person, who is not a Referee, appointed by the Football Committee who brings appropriate skills to the operation of the Committee, such as knowledge of the Law, education, marketing or people management. Such person shall act as Chair of the Committee and shall be appointed for a term of three years which may be extended by the Football Committee to allow for a maximum period of nine years.
20. The Referees' Committee shall be responsible for all matters pertaining to referees (other than the payment of fees and expenses to referees) including but not limited to recruitment, training, grading, dealing with complaints concerning the application of the Laws of the Game, instruction, appointment of international referees, other relevant appointments and assessment. It shall also annually produce a strategy for the development of refereeing and maintain a register of qualified referees and shall be entitled to remove a referee from the register or suspend him. It shall submit reports of its meetings to the Football Committee and will act on behalf of the Football Committee on any refereeing matter as delegated to it.
21. No person under the age of 16 shall be registered as a referee. Any such applicants shall be deemed to be "youth referees" and shall only referee matches between Clubs made up of players who are aged less than sixteen. Referees Under the age of 18 will only be permitted to officiate at youth matches and must have parental consent to do so.
22. Referees who wish to referee Association Football in Northern Ireland shall apply annually via the Divisional Association for the geographical area in which they reside. Each referee shall pay an annual subscription of £15, and each youth referee £5, 50% of which shall be retained by the Divisional Association registering such referee and the balance shall be forwarded by such Divisional Association to the Association. Subscriptions shall be paid to the Association no later than 1st September in each year. Club Referees (that is qualified referees who are members of a club), who may only officiate at matches involving a club of which they are a member where there is no appointed referee or where the appointed referee does not appear, may affiliate annually directly to the Association by paying a fee of £5. Referees may not be permitted to officiate in any football match played under the jurisdiction of the Association until such times as they have registered and their subscriptions are received by the Association.

23. Referees shall be required to satisfy the Referees' Committee as to their qualifications for the role, and professional referees shall be remunerated as determined by the Board. Amateur referees shall only receive their traveling expenses. No professional referee can play or hold office in any affiliated club or league, or represent any Member, at any meeting of the Association or of any Organisational member whilst refereeing simultaneously in the same season. On registering referees must declare any interest they have in any affiliated club or league within the Association.

A professional referee shall only be eligible to serve on the IFA Council, subject to Article 8.2 (i) and the Referees' Committee and shall not be eligible to serve on any other Association Committee.

24. In respect of breaches of the Laws of the Game, a referee shall deal with any player or players as specified within those Laws and shall report such players or players to the Association or a Divisional Association as appropriate.
25. All referees are forbidden from taking part, either directly or indirectly, in betting and similar events or transactions connected with football matches in which they are officiating or otherwise involved.

PLAYERS

26. (a) The FIFA Statutes governing the status and transfer of players will have precedence over anything in these Regulations in relation to, but not limited to, player registration, training compensation and contractual stability.
- (b) The IFA shall annually publish Player Registration Regulations, approved by the Football Committee. Such regulations shall set out all conditions of player registration (notwithstanding Regulations 26 (a)) and must be adopted by all members.

All Clubs required to register amateur players must do so in accordance with the IFA Player Registration Regulations and the regulations of their relevant leagues and such players details will be recorded centrally with the Association.

There shall be no direct cost to clubs or affiliated leagues resulting from registration.

27. The word 'play' shall be understood to mean, engage in a match or competition in which the number of players a side is more than five.
28. A professional player shall not be allowed to serve on the Council or any other Association Committee or Commission or on the Council or Committee of any Organisational Member, League or Club or represent any such body at any meeting of the Association or any Organisational Member.

29. A player shall play only for the club with which he is registered and shall not play for any other Club without permission of the Association, but he may play for any team in connection with the Club by which he is registered subject to Competition Rules.
30. It shall be the responsibility of clubs playing in any match to be played under the jurisdiction of the Association to ensure that its players are eligible to play in such a match.
31. Benefit matches may, under special circumstances, be sanctioned by the Football Committee for amateur players. Benefit matches shall not be provided for amateur players unless sanctioned in writing by the Football Committee prior to the match taking place.
32. All players and officials are forbidden from taking part, either directly or indirectly, in betting and similar events or transactions connected with football matches within their own League or competition in which they or their Club are involved.

MATCHES

33. Each Club shall, when required, place its players and ground at the disposal of the Association. Members of such Clubs will not be admitted without payment to International Matches, Cup Semi-Finals or Finals.
34. Any player selected to play in an International or other match arranged by the Association, and without good or sufficient cause refusing to comply with the arrangements of the Football Committee for the playing of the match, or failing to play in such match, may be adjudged by the Football Committee to be guilty of misconduct, and such player, and any Club which may be deemed to have caused, encouraged, aided or abetted such player to refuse to comply with the arrangements, may be dealt with as the Football Committee shall think just.
35. (a) All receipts in respect of International Matches shall be retained by the Association
(b) All receipts for other matches shall be allocated between the Association and those Clubs engaged in the relevant matches, in such proportions as the Board shall decide.
36. (a) No match (other than matches in women's football) shall be played between 31st May and 1st August of each year, and in the case of the women's football between 1st November and the following 28th February, without written permission of the Football Committee, or where a league has designated that it shall play in a summer season and has received Board permission to do so, except for competitions limited to five or less players on each side and friendly matches including two clubs affiliated to the Association

- (b) No match shall be played within Northern Ireland on a Sunday, unless the two participating clubs and competition organisers agree to do so. No sanction may be taken against any Club, combination of Clubs or individual player not agreeing to participate in Sunday Football. Any complaint or allegation of discrimination shall be referred to the Board for determination
 - (c) No match shall be played involving a club from outside the jurisdiction of the Association without written permission of the Football Committee, except for matches in official competitions organised by UEFA or FIFA
 - (d) No match shall be played commencing less than 5 hours prior to the kick-off of an "A" International, where the same are being played in Northern Ireland, or (in the town or city in which it is being played) an Irish Cup Semi-Final or Final or Women's Challenge Cup Final, without written permission of the Football Committee.
37. The Association will organise six National Challenge Cup Competitions
- (a) The Irish Challenge Cup Competition
 - (b) The Intermediate Challenge Cup Competition
 - (c) The IFA Women's Challenge Cup Competition
 - (d) The Junior Challenge Cup Competition
 - (e) The Harry Cavan Youth Challenge Cup Competition
 - (f) The Irish FA Girls' Challenge Cup
- The competitions shall be organised and managed within the committee structure of the Association and shall in all circumstances take precedence over any Divisional Association fixture or any League fixture. Divisional Association competition fixtures will in all circumstances take precedent over any League fixture.

CLUBS AND COMBINATIONS

38. The formation of any league or other organisation that includes a Club requires the prior approval of the Board.
39. All Clubs shall play under the Articles and all Clubs playing under any articles or rules other than those of the Association, or playing with clubs not members of the Association, without the permission of the Association shall be liable to be expelled, suspended, fined or otherwise dealt with as the Association shall think fit. This Regulation shall not apply to individual amateur players.
40. Any Member shall have the right to obtain the opinion of the Board on any point connected with these Articles (or any rules and regulations made thereunder) or the Laws of the Game on payment of such fee as the Board may from time to time prescribe.
41. Resolutions and decisions of the Board shall be binding upon Members.

42. All League and Organisational Members shall be composed of Clubs (who shall be members). Their rules shall be approved by the Board annually. Such rules shall be submitted before the 30th June (with the exception of Women's football where the submission date shall be 31st January) in each year or such later date as the Board may approve, and if not so submitted the then existing rules shall be deemed to have continued until the Board shall otherwise direct. The Board shall have the power at any time to make enquiries into the working of such Leagues and Organisational Members, and to deal with them as they may consider necessary.
All members must meet all safeguarding standards as set down by the Association from time to time.
43. Any Club taking part in a competition not authorized by its League or organizational Member will be liable to be fined, suspended, expelled or otherwise dealt with as the Board shall think just.

DUAL INTEREST IN CLUBS

44. (a) Except with the prior written consent of the Board no person, being a member of a Member club of the Association, may at the same time, either directly or indirectly
- (i) Be a member of another club
 - (ii) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of another club
 - (iii) Have any power whatsoever to influence the management or administration of another club provided such written consent shall not be required in the circumstances where a person is a member of two or more connected Member Clubs or is involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of two or more connected Member Clubs or has any power whatsoever to influence the management or administration of two or more connected Member Clubs.
- (b) In exercising their authority to consider any such request the Board shall have regard to the need to promote and safeguard the interests, integrity and public profile of Association Football, its players, spectators and others concerned with the game, and shall have regard to the Articles, Regulations and Rules of the Association and to the constitution and rules of FIFA and UEFA, and accordingly any such consent shall be subject to such conditions as the Board shall consider appropriate in the circumstances.
- (c) For the purpose of this regulation 44 "connected Member Clubs" means clubs that are governed by or under the control of the same legal entity or clubs that are governed by the rules and/or constitution of or under the control of the same unincorporated association.

INTEGRITY OF MATCHES AND COMPETITIONS AND MATCH-FIXING

45. All persons bound by IFA's rules and regulations must refrain from any behaviour that damages or could damage the integrity of matches and competitions and must cooperate fully with IFA at all times in its efforts to combat such behaviour.
46. The integrity of matches and competitions is violated, for example, by anyone:
- a) who acts in a manner that is likely to exert an unlawful or undue influence on the course and / or result of a match or competition with a view to gaining an advantage for himself or a third party;
 - b) who participates directly or indirectly in betting or similar activities relating to competition matches or who has a direct or indirect financial interest in such activities;
 - c) who uses or provides others with information which is not publicly available, which is obtained through his position in football, and damages or could damage the integrity of a match or competition;
 - d) who does not immediately and voluntarily inform IFA if approached in connection with activities aimed at influencing in a unlawful or undue manner the course and/or result of a match or competition;
 - e) who does not immediately and voluntarily report to IFA any behaviour he is aware of that may fall within the scope of this article.
47. If filed after the relevant competition stage has finished, complaints regarding match-fixing can have no impact on the sporting result of the competition or match in question and, therefore, the match cannot be replayed, unless the competent disciplinary body decides otherwise.
48. The Anti-Doping rules of the Irish Football Association are the UK Anti-Doping Rules, published by UK Anti-Doping, as amended from time to time. Such rules shall take effect and be construed as rules of the Irish Football Association.
- Persons participating in the sport of Football under the jurisdiction of the Irish Football Association are bound by and must comply in all respects with the Anti-Doping Rules.
- The Irish Football Association shall recognise and take all necessary steps to give full force and effect within its jurisdiction to the Anti-Doping Rules and to any sanction(s) imposed under the Anti-Doping Rules.