

**IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**  
**APPEALS COMMITTEE**

***In the matter of an appeal by CRUSADERS FC (“the appellant”) against a decision taken by the TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT SUB- COMMITTEE IFA (“Respondent”)***

**Appeals Board:**

Rachel Best KC (Chair)

Leona Gillen BL

Mervyn Wheatley

**The Appellant** was represented by Bernard Thompson (General Secretary).

**The Respondent** were represented by Neill Jardine (Chair of the Training and Development Sub Committee/First Deputy President IFA) and Andrew Johnston (Head of Competitions IFA).

**DECISION**

The Appeal Board wishes to express its thanks to those that appeared before it and for the written documents that were submitted in advance outlining both parties' positions. The submissions were very helpful in narrowing the issues to be determined.

For reasons set out in this decision, the unanimous decision of the Board is to uphold the appeal, quash the original calculation and to substitute the figure of £10,500 for the following amount:

3 Seasons as Professional: £1500 per season

4 Seasons as Amateur: £275 per season

Total: **£5600**

## **BACKGROUND**

The appeal related to the calculation of “*training compensation*” payable to Carrick Rangers, following the registration of player X, with Crusaders Football Club. Player X had played as an Amateur for 4 seasons and 3 seasons as a Professional before transferring to Crusaders FC.

In accordance with the *Domestic Training and Development Compensation Regulations*, compensation is payable to clubs that have contributed to the training and development of a player. The recognised training period runs from the calendar year of the player’s 12<sup>th</sup> birthday to the calendar year of the player’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Player X fell within the age requirements for the Regulations.

Under the Regulations the amount of compensation payable to a club or clubs is calculated by multiplying the applicable compensation category rate by the number of full seasons of training provided by that club or clubs within the recognised training period.

According to the Regulations compensation to training clubs is activated upon the first professional registration of a player provided that such professional registration is confirmed prior to the conclusion of the calendar year of the player’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

There are three compensation types provided for in the Regulations:

1. **Basic compensation** – upon completion of the first professional registration of a player a basic initial compensation payment at a flat rate of £275.00 for a full season paid to all training clubs who have provided training during the training period.
2. **Conditional compensation** – conditional compensation payments shall be due to the training club or clubs upon the player reaching particular milestones as provided for in the Regulations. This is not relevant to the current proceedings.
3. **Solidarity contributions** – when a professional player transfers domestically for the first time before or during the calendar year of his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday and where a transfer fee of £20,000 or more has been paid for the player, five percent of the transfer fee, not including training compensation paid to his former club, shall be identified as a solidarity contribution. This is not relevant to the current situation.

In the present case the Respondent relies upon the paragraph titled “*Subsequent Transfers*” to support its calculation. This paragraph provides as follows: *Transfers in the event of a subsequent transfer of the professional player before the end of the calendar year of the player’s 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday (where the player is registered as a professional with the new club) compensation is only due to the player’s former club.*

*In such cases when compensation is due it shall be payable at a rate of £1500 per full season.*

Advice and guidance from FIFA were also opened to the panel and appeared to be influential in the decision by the Respondent.

The relevant extract from the FIFA guidance is as follows:

*“As a general rule, when a player registers as a professional in the same club where the player has trained their whole career, this registration does not break the chain as the player is simply promoted through the ranks. Should training compensation be triggered by a subsequent transfer of the player, the club is able to claim training compensation for the entire period over which it trained the player as both an amateur and a professional”.*

### **THE APPEAL**

The Appeal is submitted by Crusaders Football Club against the decision of the Respondent, communicated by email dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026, concerning a training compensation claim submitted by Carrick Rangers in respect of the registration of player X with Crusaders Football Club.

Crusaders, correctly, did not dispute that Carrick Rangers would be entitled to training compensation. Indeed, it was expressly agreed in the Appeal that Crusaders were not challenging the compensation principles.

According to the player’s registration history as recorded by the Association, he played 3 seasons as a professional with Carrick Rangers and 4 seasons as an amateur.

As outlined above Crusaders accepted that compensation was due for the entire period the player was registered with Carrick Rangers but contended that the rates applied were incorrect. Accordingly, the FIFA guidance was not challenged.

The Respondent relied upon the wording of the “*Subsequent Transfers*” paragraph to support its decision that for 7 seasons the applicable rate was £1500 per season. No distinction was made between player X playing as an Amateur and when he played as a Professional.

The issue before the Appeals Board was what were the correct rates applicable in these circumstances?

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

The Board found the *Domestic Training and Compensation Development Regulations* prescribe different rates for amateur and professional training seasons. It was clearly the intention of those drafting the Regulations to make such a distinction. The Board finds that such a distinction is fair and equitable and reflects the reality of the training programmes.

The Board considered that the reliance on the paragraph (*Subsequent Transfers*) in this circumstance, was incorrect. The use of the word *subsequent* in the paragraph means that a situation is envisaged where the player moves from Club A to Club B as a professional and then moves onwards from Club B to Club C. The paragraph states that the compensation is only due to the “player’s former club”. If it was to include the current situation when it was from Club A to Club B there would be no need for the words “*only*” and “*former club*”. Accordingly, the Board finds this paragraph is of limited assistance in assessing the appropriate rates of training compensation.

It does not that the Regulations clearly intend that for professional seasons the amount payable should be £1500 per full season.

The Board concludes that one of the purposes of the Regulations was to distinguish between a player’s registration as an Amateur and a player’s registration as a Professional. It therefore concludes that the Sub Committee were incorrect in their calculations and accordingly quashes their Decision. Rather a substituted calculation, is submitted in the form of:

- 3 Professional seasons at £1500.00 per season
- 4 Amateur seasons at £275.00 per season.

Therefore the appropriate amount of training compensation payable by Crusaders FC to Carrick Rangers is **£5600**.

As the appeal has been upheld the Appellant are entitled to the return of their fee of £100.

The Board notes that the *Domestic Training and Development Compensation Regulations* are due to be reviewed ahead of the commencement of Season 2026/27 and would recommend that the distinction between seasons as an Amateur and seasons as a Professional are more clearly defined to ensure fairness and equity in situations such as this.

**Rachel Best KC**

**Chair of Appeals Committee**