



**McComb's**  
Coach Travel

## IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

### MCCOMB'S COACH TRAVEL INTERMEDIATE CUP COMPETITION RULES SEASON 2026-27

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## 1 – Annual Competition

- a) This competition shall be called the 'Irish Football Association Intermediate Cup' competition and shall be governed by the Intermediate Cup Committee, herein after known as the Committee.
- b) The Competition shall be annual and open to the Intermediate clubs in membership of the Association subject to the approval of the Committee.
- c) Only those clubs playing in Intermediate Leagues whose registered ground has been approved by the Irish FA are eligible to participate in the Intermediate Cup.
- d) All Intermediate Cup games must be played on the clubs' registered League ground. Matches will be permitted to be played on Artificial Turf (3G) pitches which have been approved by the Intermediate Cup Committee.

## 2 – Date of Application

Application for permission to compete in the competition shall be made online via Comet FMS, not later than 30 June 2026 and shall be accompanied by an entry fee of £30.00. It shall be the sole responsibility of clubs to enter in order to participate in the competition. The Competition shall be conducted under the Articles of Association, the Laws of the Game and these Rules. The Committee may at its discretion accept sponsorship for the Competition or any part thereof.

## 3 – Committee may call upon players or clubs objected to for proof of qualification

Notwithstanding anything in any rule, if the Committee, has any doubt at any time and whether arising out of a Protest or otherwise as to the qualification of any player taking part in a competition, they shall have the power to call upon such player and/or club to which he belongs, or for which he played to prove he is qualified according to the rules. Any club found guilty of fielding an ineligible player in any round of the competition and prior to the next round being played, up to and including the semi-final tie may be fined up to a maximum sum of £100.00. Furthermore, the said club will be dismissed from the competition and the club losing the tie in such circumstances shall replace the dismissed club and progress to the next round.

## 4 – Qualification of Players

- a) The competing teams should consist of eleven players each. While the players in each team may be changed, no individual shall play for more than one Club in the Intermediate Cup in the same season.
- b) A player shall be construed as taking part in the game for which he was nominated only if he has actually played in the game. For the avoidance of doubt, an unused substitute shall not be construed as having played in the game.
- c) To be eligible to participate in the Intermediate Cup all players must be registered by their clubs, in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations.
- d) For the avoidance of doubt to be eligible to play in this competition a player must also be eligible to participate for his club in the relevant league competition.
- e) Clubs who play in a purely amateur league competition and who are permitted to register players to participate in such purely amateur competition outside the following registration periods shall not be permitted to play any player so registered in this competition until the commencement of the subsequent registration period. The registration periods are:

First registration period – 15 June 2026 – 1 September 2026

Second registration period – 1 January 2027 – 1 February 2027

- f) No player who is registered by his club after 1 February shall be eligible to participate in this competition in that same season. For the avoidance of doubt any player signed after 1 February in the current season (including 'Out of Contract Professional') shall not be eligible to participate in the competition.

## 5 - Ineligible Players

An ineligible player shall be a player who has:

- i. Played in the current or previous 3 seasons in a senior International Match
- ii. Played more than 12 Senior Matches (a senior match being a match in one of the recognised 'senior' competitions – i.e. NIFL Premiership and Championship, Irish Challenge Cup, NIFL League Cup, Co Antrim Shield, Mid Ulster Cup, North West Challenge Cup) during the current season except if player has taken part in such senior match/es as a player for an Intermediate club.
- iii. Played in the winning team in the final tie of a National Association Senior Cup competition during the current or previous season, except for a player who has played in a winning team which had qualified from an Intermediate Competition

## 6 - Completion of Team Lineup

- a) Each Club shall complete the official team lineup by including the names of players and Team officials (a maximum of 6 officials) and their functions taking part in each match (including the name of the nominated substitutes) and confirm the lineup via Comet FMS 45 minutes prior to kick-off for matches from qualifying rounds one to the quarter finals and 1 hour prior to kick-off in the semi-finals and final tie.
- b) Players' names must correspond with the numbers assigned on the official team lineup. The Club Comet user shall be considered to verify the accuracy of the information provided on the team lineup via Comet FMS.
- c) Any club failing to provide such confirmation by the stipulated deadlines will be fined in the sum of £25 for each offence. Fines for Late Team Lineups will be administered via COMET FMS.

## 7 – Substitute Players

- a) A club may at its discretion use five substitute players at any time in any tie, except to replace a player who has been expelled from the game by the referee. The substitutions can only be made when play is stopped and the referee has given permission. Substitute players shall be nominated prior to the commencement of the tie.
- b) Clubs may nominate a maximum of seven substitute players, from which five substitutions shall be permitted.
- c) Exceptionally, a sixth substitute may take part exclusively during extra time in all rounds of the competition.
- d) Substitutions may only be made on at most three occasions during the game. One additional substitution window will be granted to each club should a match proceed to extra time.
- e) Substitutions made during half-time, and between the end of normal playing time and the start of extra time, and at half-time during extra time do not reduce the number of stoppages in play that can be used.

## 8 – Replacement of Players on the Team Lineup

After the team lineups have been completed and submitted to the Comet Football Management System, and before the match has kicked off, the following shall apply:

- a) If any of the first eleven players named on the team lineup are not able to start the match due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced only by any of the

seven (7) substitutes named on the confirmed team lineup. The substitute(s) in question can then be replaced by a player(s) not named on the initial team lineup, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team lineup and not be available for selection for this fixture.

- b) If any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the team lineup are not able to be fielded due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced by any player not named on the confirmed team lineup, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team lineup and not be available for selection for this fixture.
- c) Any amendments to the team lineup in accordance with points a) and b) above must be communicated to the opposing team manager by one of the Match Officials as soon as possible prior to the commencement of the match.

## 9 - Players must wear registered colours

- a) The players in each competing team must wear the registered colours of the club for which they are playing, except when opposing teams have similar colours in which case the home club shall change.
- b) In a semi-final or final tie, or any other tie played on neutral ground, where opposing teams have similar colours both teams will change unless they are agreed that only one need to do so.
- c) Referees shall have power to instruct a player to change any part of their playing kit if he considers the colour not quite distinctive from that of his opponents, and the Referee shall have power to deal with any player refusing to comply with this instruction.

## 10 – The duration of a match

- a) The duration of each match shall be 90 minutes. The match must be started at the time appointed by the Committee, but no protest will be upheld for late starting, unless the Committee is satisfied that the result of the match was affected by such delay.
- b) The referee shall have power to allow additional time for stoppages.
- c) If a match has been stopped by the referee, before the completion of the time specified, for any reason stated in Law 5 of the Laws of the Game, the Committee shall have power to deal with the matter as they may determine.

## 11 – Kicks from the Penalty Mark

In the event of any match resulting in a draw extra time of ten minutes each way shall be played, and should the score be equal at the end of this period of extra time, the match shall be decided by penalties (penalty shoot-out) in accordance with the conditions approved by the International FA Board.

## 12 – Competition Format

- a) The Committee shall determine the competition format.
- b) There shall be one entry level in the competition.

## 13 – Clubs shall be drawn in lots

- a) The lots shall be drawn, and the competition matches played as the Committee may determine, and immediately after each draw the Secretary shall intimate to each of the clubs drawn the name and the colours of the club it is drawn against and the date upon which the tie is to be played.
- b) Matches will be played on or before the date set by the Intermediate Cup Committee. Any alterations to the date or kick-off time must be submitted in writing by both clubs and approved by the Intermediate Cup Committee.

## 14 - Byes may be given

- a) The Committee may draw subsequent round or rounds before the winners of the previous rounds have been declared, and the winners according to such draw shall compete against each other as in the previous round.
- b) The Committee shall have the power to exempt any number of clubs from any number of rounds, and byes may be given so that four clubs shall compete in the Semi Finals.

## 15 – Draw after a bye

In the event of a club getting a bye in any of the drawings the Committee at the subsequent drawing shall first draw a club to play against it from the lot, the two shall again be put in the ballot box and again drawn, and the club first out of the box shall have choice of ground; but the Committee may so arrange that four clubs compete in the semi-finals.

## 16 - Method of drawing

- a) The clubs which are in each instance first drawn in the ballot shall have the choice of ground subject to the approval of the Committee.
- b) The first drawn club may forfeit home advantage (in exceptional circumstances) with the agreement of their opponents and the approval of the Committee.
- c) In such circumstances written confirmation of same must be notified to [competitions@irishfa.com](mailto:competitions@irishfa.com) by both clubs not later than 5 days prior to the date of the match.
- d) Should a club having a registered home ground which, for whatever reason be unavailable (excluding inclement weather conditions) be drawn at home they must travel to the ground of their opponents.
- e) If neither team's registered home ground is available, the first drawn team must procure another ground where the facilities comply with Rule 1.
- f) Notification of a non-available ground must be received by [competitions@irishfa.com](mailto:competitions@irishfa.com) not later than 5 days prior to the date of the tie.

## 17 – Private Ground

A private ground shall be taken to be a ground over which the Club has sole control during the match, properly enclosed so as to prevent spectators entering the ground except by admission gates, and in which the dressing rooms and other appurtenances shall be up to standard required by the Committee. A fee must be charged for all Cup Tie matches and the minimum admission prices shall be fixed annually by the Committee.

## 18 – Venues for Semi Finals and Final

- a) In the semi-finals the grounds shall be chosen by the Committee and shall be neutral unless otherwise determined by the Committee who may, upon request, permit the match or matches to be played at the registered home venue of either of the participating teams.
- b) The final tie shall be played at the Clearer Twist National Football Stadium at Windsor Park unless otherwise determined by the Committee. Should any club participate in the final tie at their registered ground no ground rent will be payable.

## 19 – Club Information

Each club must ensure that the following details are submitted and kept up to date on the Comet FMS:

- i. Name/Situation of Ground.
- ii. Colours of Club shirt, shorts and socks.
- iii. The name and contacts details of Secretary.

## 20 – Clubs failing to play

- a) Any club refusing or failing to play against the club against which it has been drawn on the date fixed by the Committee and without sufficient reasons for so doing, shall be adjudged to have lost the match and will be otherwise dealt with as the Committee may determine. Also, any club leaving the ground before the expiration of the game must be adjudged to have lost the match and shall be liable to be dealt with by the Committee.
- b) The Association reserves the right to implement a protocol in the event of exceptional circumstances.

## 21 – When postponed games must be played

- a) In the event of a postponed match, due to inclement weather, in any round prior to the semi-finals the clubs must forthwith arrange to play on or before the following Saturday.
- b) In the event of the match not taking place on or before the second Saturday the club which was first drawn away will have the choice of venue for on or before the subsequent Saturday.
- c) If there are any further postponements the Clubs will alternate for choice of venue on a weekly basis.
- d) In the case of protested ties, the Committee shall decide the dates and venues. Should either club refuse to compete, the club shall be removed from the competition, and otherwise dealt with as the Committee may determine.

## 22 – Match Officials

- a) In all matches the match officials shall be appointed by the IFA administration.
  - i. In matches up to the Semi Finals only a Referee shall be appointed.
  - ii. In the semi-finals and final a Referee, two Assistant Referees and a 4th Official shall be appointed.

- b) On points of fact connected with the play over which the Assistant Referees have control, their decision should be given by flags. The Referee must use a whistle. In the question of interpretation of these rules or the laws of the game, an appeal may be made to the Committee, but the Referee's decision must be acted on in the field.
- c) From Round 1 to the Quarter Finals it will be the responsibility of the home team to pay the match officials fees and expenses on the day of the match.
- d) In the semi-final and final matches, the Association will be responsible for making payment to the match officials.

## 23 – Protests

- a) Protests, along with a fee of £100, must be submitted and paid via MyComet within 2 days after the cause of the protest. The fee will be forfeited in all cases where the protest has not been sustained.
- b) Once a protest has been received the Irish FA will forward a copy of the protest to the club protested against.
- c) Protests against ineligible players must give the names of players protested against, and cause of protest.
- d) The deposit will not be returned after received by the Association unless the protest is upheld.

## 24 – Protest – objection to ground

- a) In the event of one of the competing clubs protesting that the ground of their opponents is not private, or fit and proper to be played upon, a committee of inspection shall be appointed by the Committee to investigate and decide the question. The protest must be lodged with the [competitions@irishfa.com](mailto:competitions@irishfa.com) at least 5 days previous to the date fixed for the match together with a fee of £100 (paid via cheque or bank transfer).
- b) In the event of a protest not being sustained the expenses will be forfeited, but should the protest be sustained, the club protested against shall be required to refund the same, through the Association previous to the tie being played. No protest will be entertained after a match as to the privacy of a ground provided there has been sufficient time to enable the clubs to take advantage of this rule.

## 25 – Objections to ground etc.

Goal nets must be used in all cup ties. Any objection to ground, goal posts, goal nets or ball must be lodged in writing by a responsible Club official with the referee before the game has started, and the referees shall have the power to have such objections made right before the game starts.

## 26 – Referee to inspect Ground

- a) In case of unfavourable weather conditions or concerns regarding the playing surface, the Home Club must request the Association for an early inspection not later than four hours before kick-off.
- b) The Match Referee or an alternative Referee appointed by the Association shall inspect the ground at least three hours or more previous to the advertised time of kick-off and shall decide as to the fitness of the ground not later than three hours prior to the pre-arranged time of kick-off, their decision being final.
- c) No game shall be postponed without an inspection by a referee appointed by the Association, who shall take due cognizance of local advice and the travelling supporters.
- d) Notwithstanding the above, in the event of extreme weather conditions the Association reserves the right to declare any match or matches postponed without a formal pitch inspection.
- e) In the event of a Referee not arriving at the ground by the time of kick off the match shall be postponed, and the clubs must agree to re-arrange the match for the next available Saturday.
- f) In the event of the home club failing to request an early inspection the committee shall be empowered to grant compensation to the other club for actual expenses incurred for such match. Should the match referee deem the ground unfit for play then they shall be paid half the match fee and travelling expenses actually incurred by the home club. Should another association appointed referee deem the ground unfit for play then he/she shall be paid £5 plus travelling expenses actually incurred.

## 27 – Agreement for Cup

- a) The original trophy, which is used for the official presentation ceremony at the final and at other official events approved by the Association, remains in the Association's keeping and ownership at all times. An alternative trophy will be provided by the Association for the winning club to keep throughout the following season.
- b) The winning club shall return the original trophy in good or like condition and shall be liable for any costs in the event that the cup is destroyed by fire, or lost, or damaged by any other accident whilst in the possession of the winning club.

## 28 – Medals

The Association shall present 25 medals to playing staff and officials of both Clubs competing in the Final tie. For the avoidance of any doubt this shall include the 18 players, 6 backroom staff and the Secretary of each club.

## 29 – Admission to Matches

- a) The Committee will determine the admission policy for the competition on an annual basis.
- b) In all competition matches, with the exception of the semi-finals and final, the receipts after payment of the referees' charges shall be kept by the home club. The home club shall be considered to be the club who host the match.

## 30 – Division of Receipts for Semi Finals and Final

- a) In the Semi Finals ties the receipts after all expenses are paid, shall be divided as follows: 10% to the Association and the balance divided equally amongst the competing clubs.
- b) If the Final tie is held at the National Football Stadium, 10% of the net gate receipts to be retained by the Association and the remaining 90% to be divided equally between the 2 finalists with the IFA bearing the cost of all match expenses.
- c) If the Final tie is held at an alternative venue the receipts after all expenses are paid shall be divided as follows: the Association to take 20% and the remaining balance to be equally divided between competing clubs.

## 31 – Powers of Committee

- a) All questions of eligibility or qualification of competitors, or of application of these rules or the laws of the game, shall be referred to the committee and they shall have power to withhold the cup and medals or mementoes.
- b) The Committee shall also have the power to deal with any other matter not provided for in these rules.

## 32 – Committee may alter Rules

The Committee shall, except as to the returns by Clubs, have power to alter these Rules, but in no case shall they do so until after the Final Tie has been played in any year.



Clearer Twist National Stadium at Windsor Park  
Donegall Avenue, Belfast  
BT12 6LU

Telephone: 0333 188 1880

Email: [competitions@irishfa.com](mailto:competitions@irishfa.com)

Web: [www.irishfa.com](http://www.irishfa.com)