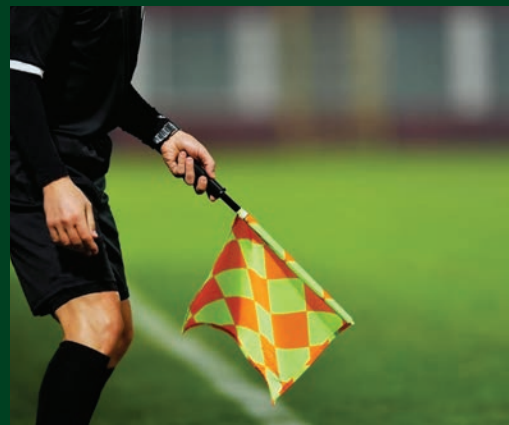
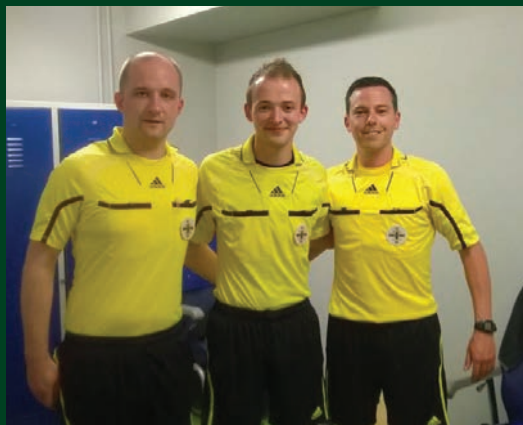




IRISH FA REFEREE STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020



Every Referee - a Better Referee

FOREWORD



Refereeing is at the heart of every area of the footballing world. A much debated and talked about part of this wonderful game. Having a panel of referees who consistently produce the

required level of performance at all levels is key to delivering a flourishing domestic game.

This strategy sets out six key objectives on how to develop referees in Northern Ireland at Junior, Intermediate and Senior level for the next four years. The biggest goal for this strategy is to integrate refereeing at the heart of the footballing family. We often hear the phrase “without a referee there would be no game” and indeed that is true. However, our goal is to ensure that every referee appointed has the right level of knowledge, fitness, respect and education to bring every game to a satisfactory conclusion.

Jim Shaw, Irish FA President



At the heart of this strategy is development – it sets out a clear pathway from the moment a referee signs up to be a new referee, all the way through to our top FIFA officials. Not every referee

will have the ambition to reach the very top – nor would we want them to. This strategy sets the goal of ensuring every referee who picks up the whistle reaches their maximum potential both in grading and performance.

This will done by creating strong development at regional level within the four regional associations of the Northern Ireland Referee Association. Having four regional centres of excellence will guarantee that we are developing referees at all levels of the game from Junior to Senior.

This is just the start of our work – a panel of 750 referees all of whom live by the Association’s values and expectations will no doubt foster a flourishing domestic game and improve football for all of our stakeholders.

Patrick Nelson, CEO, Irish FA

IRISH FA PARTNERS:

NI REFEREES’ ASSOCIATION
LOCAL REFEREE ASSOCIATIONS

NIFL

NIBFA

NISFA

NIWFA

LEAGUES

SCHOOLS



EVERY REFEREE - A BETTER REFEREE

VISION

“EVERY REFEREE - A BETTER REFEREE”

To improve refereeing standards throughout the game by recruiting, educating, developing and supporting match officials. Helping them to realise their potential, and support their roles as ambassadors and leaders in promoting the values of fair play and respect, to protect both the players and the game.

Sport Matters

“...a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport...”

Participation - Performance - Places

Values:

Equity, Honesty
Integrity, Respect

IFA Vision and Values

To promote, foster and develop football for all in Northern Ireland

**Professional
Inclusive
Team
Caring and Confident
Honesty**

Let Them Play

“To promote, foster and develop youth football for all in Northern Ireland, creating a fun, safe and inclusive culture which inspires a lifelong love of the game. Creating opportunities, inspiring change and helping young people fulfil their potential on and off the pitch. Serving the community through football and education”.

Participation and Football For All
Schools, Colleges and Universities
Club and Volunteer Development
Youth Football Coach Education
Elite Player Pathways

Main Aims of the Strategy

- 1 750 referees annually tested on their fitness and laws of the game competence by 2020
- 2 40 national and 80 regional development referees on programmes annually
- 3 Strategic succession planning for senior officials using development groups & quarterly performance reviews
- 4 Recruitment drive for observers, coaches and tutors operating at Senior, Intermediate and Junior level.
- 5 Referee modules in Safeguarding, Disciplinary report writing and diversity delivered annually
- 6 Regional Panel of Coaches fully trained & implemented by 2018
- 7 Create 4 regional centres of excellence within the divisional referee's associations

UEFA Convention

- Promote the role of match officials and refereeing specialists in football at both international and national level
- Improve the quality of match officials and refereeing specialists at all levels of the game
- Define the legal and professional status of match officials and ensure that the refereeing organisations within the UEFA member associations remain uninfluenced by other bodies such as governments, leagues or clubs
- Recognise the essential role that match officials and refereeing specialists have to play in football in order to uphold the values of fair play
- Maintain and improve refereeing from grassroots level upwards, wherever possible
- Recognise the responsibility of the UEFA member associations to appoint reliable and suitably qualified match officials and refereeing specialists for their competitions and education and development programmes

OBJECTIVE 1

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF REFEREES

One of the most important aspects of Referee Development is how new referees are supported within their first 6 months as a referee. This is viewed as a key opportunity to deliver best practice and prepare them for their career ahead. Recruitment is equally important as retention and our vision is to recruit the right referees, equip them with all of the vital tools within the first 6 games and give them access to a support structure through mentors, coaches and development leads.

BY 2020 WE WILL:

- 1 Ensure every referee is completing a fitness test and laws of the game test on an annual basis before re-affiliating as a referee
- 2 Ensure development leagues are established within Youth football supported by Referee coaches
- 3 Deliver a redesigned beginners programme including modules on Child Protection, Football for All, Assistant Refereeing and Dealing with Conflict
- 4 Recruit enough referees annually to ensure 750 registered referees
- 5 Ensure that retention of referees is a key priority for each divisional association
- 6 Coordinate specialised courses for Youth, Small Sided Games and Futsal referees
- 7 Deliver annual recruitment initiatives for female referees
- 8 Provide 100% coverage of games in Northern Ireland by 2018



OUR TARGETS ARE:

- 750 referees annually tested on their fitness and laws of the game competence by 2020
- Minimum of 1 development league in each divisional area by 2018
- New beginners course designed and rolled out by 2017
- 750 referees registered by 1st May each year
- Referee retention to be above 80% by 2020
- 100 new Youth/Small Sided Games Referees per year
- 50 new Futsal referees per year
- 80 registered female referees by 2020

OBJECTIVE 2

REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

Once a referee has qualified, completed their first 6 games and completed the beginners programme, they should automatically be enrolled within a development programme. Although it is important to have clear development pathways, it must also be remembered that every referee is different – they have different goals, needs and aspirations. A strong emphasis must be placed on upskilling regional development groups which feed into the National system. Talent ID is vital, as is developing target groups such as female referees, Small Sided Games officials and meeting the fast paced development of Futsal.

BY 2020 WE WILL:

- 1 Have a clearly defined pathway from junior football to senior football
- 2 Deliver a structured 2 year development programme at Junior & Intermediate level
- 3 Coordinate specialised development for Youth & Futsal referees
- 4 Have formed partnerships with schools, colleges & universities and be running formalised qualifications for referees
- 5 Have strongly invested in regional centres of excellence and have a part time development league in each regional association
- 6 Offer a higher potential development scheme for potential senior referees of the future
- 7 Deliver educational training at every regional meeting
- 8 Provide every development official with quarterly performance reviews measured against set Key Performance Indicators
- 9 Dedicated development group for Young & Female referees

OUR TARGETS ARE:

- Pathway distribution to 100% of new referees
- FIFA Futsal referee by 2020
- All Small Sided Games officiated by qualified officials
- Recognised higher education referee based qualification by 2020
- Regional Centre of Excellence for every association in place by 2017
- Annual enrolment of 20 Junior & 20 Intermediate referees to development groups
- 4 referees per year graduating from Higher Potential scheme by 2018
- 100% of regional Referees' Association meetings with IFA tuition by 2017
- 200 performance reviews completed annually by 2020
- 20 Young Referees & 15 Females enrolled annually



OBJECTIVE 3

REFEREEING WITHIN THE SENIOR GAME

The Senior game is often the focal point of refereeing and is where the success of referee development is judged. Whilst this strategy focuses strongly on development of referees to Senior level, it is also acknowledged that referees at the top flight of the domestic game have a responsibility to ensure that it is flourishing, protected and entertaining. We will focus on specialised training for the Senior panel, rigorous succession planning and transparent accountability for all referees at this level. Not only should Senior Referees be the best 'on field' performers, they should also be role models and ambassadors for other referees and actively involved in the development of aspiring officials.

BY 2020 WE WILL:

- 1 Establish a panel of 24 Senior Referees (split into 2 panels) to officiate the senior game
- 2 Provide specialised training & development for Assistant Referees
- 3 Provide quarterly gradings & performance reviews for all 24 Senior Referees
- 4 Hold monthly development sessions & deliver an annual residential
- 5 Senior Officials to perform ambassador roles at regional level
- 6 Provide strategic succession planning for Senior Officials using development groups
- 7 Develop female officials within the Senior men's and women's game.
- 8 Continue to build a strong and prospering panel of FIFA Referees & Assistants in Northern Ireland



OUR TARGETS ARE:

- Senior Panel established by 2016/2017 season
- New Assistant Referee development programme written & rolled out by 2017
- Gradings & performance reviews commenced by 2016/2017 season
- 90% attendance at Senior Development meetings by 2017
- Ambassador role established including involvement with grassroots and development officials launched 2017
- 75% of National Development group members eligible for promotion annually by 2018
- Female Assistant Referee at Senior level by 2018
- Referee team from Northern Ireland at a major tournament by 2020



OBJECTIVE 4

REFEREE SUPPORT TEAM

The Referee Support Team, both paid and voluntary, are a key component in referee development. When supporting the development of referees, we need to be educating our observer panels, both senior and grassroots, ensuring that they are delivering a consistent message and working closely with the referees they are observing. We need to establish a qualified pool of Referee Coaches at every level of the game and train them to coach, inspire and develop. Our tutors should be experts in technical and practical delivery, fully confident in providing the highest level of training particularly at grassroots level.

BY 2020 WE WILL:

- 1 Implement a recruitment drive for observers, coaches and tutors operating at Senior, Intermediate and Junior level
- 2 Provide comprehensive training for Observers based on feedback, report writing and coaching skills
- 3 Provide a tailored course for Referee Coaches designed to improve mentoring & coaching skills
- 4 Deliver an accredited tutor training course with modules in presentation skills, learning styles and technical analysis
- 5 Source a fully qualified and trained Fitness Coach on an annual basis
- 6 Hold joint observer & referee technical courses twice annually
- 7 Provide regional development for mentors who will be operating at the heart of grassroots football

OUR TARGETS ARE:

- Double the number of observers & coaches at Senior & Grassroots level to 50 by 2020
- Two joint (with referees) and two standalone development modules annually for observers by 2016/2017 season to develop and improve Referee Observers in Northern Ireland
- Develop technology & analysis to support the development of referees and observers
- Referee Tutor & Coach courses designed and implemented by 2017
- Ensure UEFA fitness requirements are met every year between 2016-2020
- Observer Courses to be organised and delivered annually



OBJECTIVE 5

REFEREE EDUCATION

Referee education is not only about providing top class education to referees at all levels of the game, it is also about educating players, coaches, schools and administrators on the laws of the game. Education should start at, and be a key component of all monthly referee meetings. A strong focus should be placed on child protection and safeguarding, and diversity awareness to ensure that referees live and breathe the Association's 'Football For All' ethos. Online training is a priority to ensure a wider reach of education.

BY 2020 WE WILL:

- 1 Provide a formalised development programme for all National & Regional development referees
- 2 Provide mandatory training in diversity awareness to be completed by all referees
- 3 Provide structured training for all regional leads, coaches, observers and tutors. This will be rolled out at regional level
- 4 Design and deliver accredited referee qualification in higher education for schools, colleges and universities
- 5 Provide compulsory child protection/ safeguarding training to be delivered to all referees
- 6 Place strong emphasis on disciplinary report writing, match fixing & social media awareness delivered on an annual basis
- 7 Educate tutors to deliver quality regional and national training to referees, observers and mentors
- 8 Design and implement community workshops
- 9 Launch online referee training portal for all referees



OUR TARGETS ARE:

- 4 regional centres of excellence established by 2017
- Diversity training to all referees 2018
- 4 regional coach courses completed by 2017
- Schools/University referee modules piloted by 2020
- All referees to have completed safeguarding module by 2017
- Module on report writing, match fixing and social media completed annually
- Higher potential course launched by 2017
- Tailored course on referee awareness delivered to 300+ candidates per year by 2018
- Online portal launched 2017



OBJECTIVE 6

REFEREE FITNESS & WELFARE

The welfare of referees should encompass all of the other objectives within this strategy. Once we have recruited, trained and developed our referees, it is vital that we look after them. We need to ensure they are physically prepared for the level of football they are officiating at, have access to specialist advice when injured and have a support network to provide their educational and development needs. We need to be operating as one team to ensure that all referees, coaches, observers work closely together as a support network.

BY 2020 WE WILL:

- 1 Operate regional and national fitness tests operated bi-annually
- 2 Develop a network of fitness coaches to support referees at all levels of the game
- 3 Provide a physio referral scheme for all senior referees and regional training on injury prevention and fitness delivered
- 4 Produce a Referee Newsletter on a quarterly basis supported by social media channels
- 5 Deliver Mental Health training to all referees
- 6 Develop an online referee forum developed and launched
- 7 Develop a support network for first year referees

OUR TARGETS ARE:

- All referees fitness tested by 2020
- Fitness coach assigned in each divisional area by 2020
- Injury prevention training completed in each divisional association by 2018
- Referee quarterly newsletter launched by 2016
- Mental Health training delivered to all referees by 2020
- Develop and launch an online referee portal
- Bank of fitness coaches established, trained and developed by 2017



EVERY REFEREE - A BETTER REFEREE



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CONCLUSION

At the Irish Football Association, we have a passion to ensure that our match officials represent the values of the Association.

We want every referee to;

- Be professional in everything that they do – we want to see a referee who has the right level of fitness, is knowledgeable on the laws of the game, commands respect by their behaviour and is passionate about the development of football at grassroots level
- Have an inclusive approach on and off the field of play. We have the desire to educate coaches, players, spectators and administrators on the laws of the game, and be a key and respected part of the football family – every referee should live, breathe and be committed to the **‘Football For All Ethos’**
- Be part of OUR team – although every referee will be totally neutral they will command respect through their behaviours and be a valued part of the wider team.

- Be caring & confident – they will be ambassadors for the respect message, they will be confident about upholding the laws of the game and providing reports and administration in an accurate and timely manner. They will have knowledge of diversity, never discriminate or intimidate and protect the national game.
- Always perform with honesty and integrity, in return we will be valued and respected by others irrespective of the result.

We will strive to develop these officials from day one of their refereeing career. We will educate them to a high level, support them in their early career, provide development opportunities to maximize their potential and ensure they have all the tools, knowledge and support to maximize their enjoyment and performance levels.

Our goal is to make every referee a better referee, by doing this we will be protecting and improving OUR game in Northern Ireland.







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