

NIFL Championship/PIL Development League

Rules and Regulations – Season 2019/20

CONSTITUTION

1. Title
2. Dual Interest in Clubs
3. Notices

NIFL CHAMPIONSHIP/PIL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

4. NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee
5. NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Powers

OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THERON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

6. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences
7. Commissions and Reports
8. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Matches
9. Protests
10. Appeals against decisions of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League

COMPETITION

11. Matches
12. Kick-Off Times
13. Pitch Inspections
14. Referees Fees
15. Ranking of Clubs
16. Resignation
17. Substitute Players
18. Player Identification
19. Completion of Team Sheet on IFA Comet System
20. Late Start
21. Objection to Ground
22. Medals

FINANCE

23. Fines

PLAYERS, SQUADS AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

24. NIFL Player Registration/Eligibility Guidelines
25. Ineligibility of Players
26. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

MISCELLANEOUS

27. Condition of Membership
28. Registration of Ground
29. Playing Kit
30. Goal Nets
31. Half-Time Interval
32. League Structure
33. Alterations to Rules

CONSTITUTION

1. Title

- a) For the purposes of Football Competitions, the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League shall be comprised of one division including sixteen teams.

- b) Membership of the League shall constitute an agreement between the League and each Club to be bound by and comply with:
 - I. FIFA Regulations
 - II. The NIFL Articles of Association
 - III. The Rules of the NIFL Championship.,
 - IV. The Rules of the Irish Football Association,
 - V. The Laws of the Game,
 - VI. The Rules and Regulations of any body of which the League is a member,
 - VII. The terms of any commercial or broadcast agreement entered into by the League,
 - VIII. The relevant Participation Agreement to be determined by the NIFL Board.
 - IX. The terms of any Cup or other Competitions conducted or controlled by the League, whether each of the aforesaid is altered, revoked or added to from time to time.
 - X. WADA/UKAD Code

- c) Words importing any gender shall include all genders.

2. Dual Interests in Clubs

This rule should be read in conjunction with the IFA Football Regulation 44.

- (a) Except with prior written consent of the NIFL Board, no club, or nominee of a Club, may at one time either directly or indirectly:
 - (i) Hold or acquire or deal in the securities or shares of another Club, or
 - (ii) Be a member of another Club, or
 - (iii) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of another Club, or
 - (iv) Have any power whatsoever to influence the management or administration of another club.

- (b) Except with the prior written consent of the NIFL Board, no person, whether absolutely or as a trustee either alone or with one or more associates, may at one time, either directly or indirectly:
 - (i) Hold or acquire or deal in the securities or shares of more than one club, or
 - (ii) Be a member of more than one Club, or
 - (iii) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of more than one Club, or
 - (iv) Have any power whatsoever to influence the management or administration of more than one Club.

- (c) For the purposes of Paragraph (b) of this Rule 'person' includes anybody corporate and a partnership.
- (d) In considering whether to give any such consent the NIFL Board shall have regard to the need to promote and safeguard the interests and public profile of Association Football, its players, spectators and others concerned with the game and shall have regard also to the Articles and Rules of the NIFL and those bodies to which the NIFL is affiliated.
- (e) For the purposes of this Rule an 'Associate' means: -
1. If the person referred to in Paragraph (b) of this Rule is an individual:
 - a. A close relative of that individual, including that individual's spouse, parents, step-parent, child, step-child, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece, or a child or step-child, of such parent or spouse or anyone else of close relationship to the individual who in the opinion of the NIFL Board is or is likely to be acting in conjunction with the individual.
 - b. Any Company of which the individual is a director or over which the individual is able to exercise control or influence.
 - c. Any individual who is an employee or partner of that individual or a close relative of any such employee or partner.
 2. If the person referred to in Paragraph (b) of this Rule or any associate of that person is a body corporate:
 - a. Any other body corporate associated with either through the holding of shares in it or by reason of control by contact or other form of agreement and
 - b. Any director or employee of that body corporate or any close relative of such director or employee, and
 3. Where any person has an agreement or arrangement, whether legally binding or not, with any other person in relation to the exercise of their voting power in a Club or in relation to the holding or disposal of the interest of the Club.
 4. For the purposes of Paragraph (c) above, the word 'person' shall fall to be defined under reference to Paragraph (c) above.

3. Notices

A notice may be given by the League or the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee to any Club or any Club representative either personally or by sending it by email or by post to the registered postal or email address supplied by the Club or representative for the giving of notices. Where a notice is sent by post, service of the notice shall be deemed to be effected by properly addressing, prepaying and posting a letter containing the notice, and to have been effected at the expiration of 24 hours after the letter containing same was posted.

NIFL CHAMPIONSHIP/PIL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

4. NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee

- (a) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall be formed in accordance with the appropriate Articles of Association and shall have powers to deal with all matters delegated to it by the Board.
- (b) The Committee shall be comprised by two representatives from the NIFL Championship Management Committee and two representatives from the NIFL Premier Intermediate League Management Committee who will be nominated at the commencement of each season.
- (c) 50% of any members present at any meeting of any Committee or Sub-Committee shall form a quorum.
- (d) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee may appoint Sub-Committees as appropriate and delegate power to them. Any Sub Committee so formed shall, in the exercise of the power so delegated, conform to any regulations that may be imposed upon them by the Committee appointing them.
- (e) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee may call upon clubs, members and players of clubs to produce any books, letters, documents and other evidence the Committee may require.
- (f) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall cause Minutes to be made in books provided for the purpose:
 - I. Of all the names of members of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee present at each meeting thereof and of any Committee appointed by the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee, and
 - II. Of all resolutions and proceedings at all meetings of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee and of any Committee appointed by the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee.

5. NIFL Championship/PIL Development Powers

- a) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall have full power to act as it thinks fit, including power to suspend, fine or expel any club, club official or player guilty of misconduct, infringing or failing to observe the Rules of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League or acting in a manner which could be construed as bringing the game into disrepute and contrary to the best interests of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League as a whole. The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall also have powers to deal with any other matter not provided for in the rules.

This rule will not apply to any field offences or any other matter which would normally be dealt with by the Irish Football Association.

- b) All clubs participating in any Competition under the auspices of the NIFL shall as a prerequisite of entry into such Competitions agree to be bound by this rule.

OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

6. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences

- a) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee, and any Commission or Sub Committee duly appointed by the Board or Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall have power of enquiry into all financial arrangements between clubs and players, and into all matters constituting or pertaining to breaches or a breach of regulations of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League, and they shall be entitled for that purpose to require the attendance of all officials, players and other persons (as defined in Rule 2.c.) and for the production of all books, letters and other documents.
- b) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League irrespective of whether or not it shall have appointed a Commission or Sub-Committee to hold an inquiry shall have full power to deal with all clubs, officials and players which they shall deem guilty of having offended against or committed a breach of the Regulations of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League, and they shall be entitled to take such action and award such punishments either by way of reprimand, fine, suspension, expulsion or any other form of punishment as they may think fit in the circumstances.

Note – This rule will not apply to any field offences or any other matter which would normally be dealt with by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.

7. Commissions and Reports

- a) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee may at any time appoint a Commission or Sub-Committee consisting of such number of persons as they deem the circumstances warrant for the purpose of inquiring into any matter appertaining to the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League or its affairs.
- b) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee or any duly appointed Commission or Sub-Committee shall be entitled to publish in the public press or in any other manner they shall think fit a report of their proceedings, acts, resolutions, and findings whether the same shall or shall not reflect on the character or conduct of any club, official or player and all evidence tendered on such inquiries, and all such inquiries and reports shall be privileged and every such club, official, player or spectator shall be deemed to have assented to such inquiry and to such publication, and to regard the same as privileged in law. On any inquiry such order may be made as to payment of expenses by clubs, players, or officials as the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League may think fit.

8. Misconduct in pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL

Championship/PIL Development Matches

- a) Any club, official or player offering or receiving a payment or any form of undeclared inducement from any other person or organisation to win, lose or draw a match shall be deemed guilty of misconduct and shall be liable to a fine of £2000 and shall be subject to such further sanction as the NIFL Championship/PIL Development Management Committee shall see fit.
- b) All players, technical staff and officials are forbidden from taking part, either directly or indirectly, in betting, gambling, lotteries and similar events and transactions connected with football matches under the control and organisation of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League.
- c) The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall have the power to investigate any such allegations brought to their attention and if deemed necessary/applicable shall pass the case, including all evidence relied on to the IFA Disciplinary Committee to impose such sanctions as they consider appropriate.

9. Protests:

- a) Protests by all clubs must be received by the Managing Director of the NIFL per Special Delivery, bearing postmark, within four days after the cause of the protest, accompanied by a deposit of £100 which shall be forfeited in all cases where the protest has not been sustained. A copy of the protest must also be sent by the appellant club by Special Delivery to the club protested against, if appropriate, bearing postmark within four days (excluding Sundays) after the cause of the protest. In order to expedite the process clubs may submit their protest via email and transfer the £100 deposit to NIFL via bank transfer.

Upon receipt of a protest the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall, in accordance with Rule 8, appoint a Sub Committee or a Commission consisting of a minimum of three persons to hear and determine the protest. No person shall sit on a protest which involves himself/herself or any club in which he/she may have an interest. All protests shall be heard, where possible, within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the protest.

- b) In the case of a protest, if the NIFL has any doubts as to the qualification of any player taking part in any competition it shall have power to call upon such player, or the club to which he belongs or for which he played, to prove that he was qualified according to the Rules and Regulations of the League
- c) A club may be represented at the hearing of a Protest or Inquiry. Any person summoned to attend a Protest or Inquiry must attend personally.
- d) All questions of eligibility or qualification of clubs or players, or of the application of the Laws of the Game, or of the Articles of Association or Rules shall be referred for decision to the NIFL Board.

10. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League

All appeals against a decision of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League must be made to the IFA in accordance with the relevant IFA Articles of Association.

COMPETITION

11. Matches

(a) Matches may be played on natural turf or artificial turf.

The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League cannot be held responsible for any damages to third parties resulting from the use of artificial turf.

(b) All matches shall be played under the Laws of the Game as approved by the International Football Association Board and in accordance with the Articles and Rules of the IFA and also the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League. All NIFL Championship/PIL Development League matches shall be played on the dates scheduled at the commencement of the season, except:

1. When otherwise directed by the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee; or when
2. National and divisional association cup ties take precedence; or when
3. Agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Managing Director.

(c) All requests to forward games to mid-week must be submitted 14 (fourteen) days before game in question.

(d) No club shall be permitted to request a free Saturday except in the case of exceptional circumstances which must be notified to and approved by the NIFL Managing Director.

(e) Each club shall play home and away fixtures in the League Competition and all matches shall be played under the rules and regulations of the League and in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

(f) Clubs failing to comply with this rule shall be fined in a sum of £250 and shall forfeit 3 points, such points shall be accredited to the opposing team and a scoreline of 3 goals to nil awarded to their opponents. Also, in the event of a club failing to fulfil an arranged match the appropriate Committee shall be empowered to grant compensation to the other club for actual expenses incurred for such match. A club failing to fulfil an arranged match for a second time in the current season may be dismissed from membership of the League.

(g) Any match not completed may be ordered to stand as a completed fixture, or the unfinished time may be ordered to be played, or the fixture ordered to be replayed in its entirety as the Management Committee may see fit.

(h) Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Managing Director.

12. Kick Off Times

a) The hour of kick-off for all Saturday fixtures shall be between 12.00pm-2pm (as dictated by home club with confirmation sent to the NIFL no later than the previous Wednesday, in order to facilitate referee appointment) unless otherwise directed by the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee, or agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Managing Director.

- b) The kick-off times for all other matches shall be arranged by the NIFL Managing Director, unless otherwise agreed by the two clubs competing and approved by the NIFL Managing Director.
- c) Clubs failing to start at the appointed time may be fined at the discretion of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development Management Committee.

13. Pitch Inspections

- a) In the event of unfavourable weather conditions or concerns regarding the playing surface the home club must request the NIFL for an early inspection, or notify the NIFL that the venue has been closed by the venue owner, and must also notify their opponents not later than four (4) hours before kick-off. Where applicable the match referee or an alternative referee appointed by the NIFL must inspect the ground at least three (3) hours or more previous to the advertised time of kick-off and shall decide as to the fitness of the ground, his/her decision being final after consultation with the Club Secretary and the NIFL
- b) Notwithstanding the above, in the event of extreme weather conditions the NIFL Managing Director, in consultation with the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Chairman, may declare any match or matches postponed without a formal pitch inspection.
- c) Where possible the officially appointed match referee should carry out the pitch inspection but if he/she should not be available for an inspection then the NIFL will appoint an alternative official from a panel approved by the Committee, who will decide on the state of the pitch. If obviously 'playable' he will then declare his decision.
- d) In the event of the home club failing to request an early inspection, or failing to provide notice of pitch closure, the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall be empowered to grant compensation to the visiting club for actual expenses incurred for such match.
- e) The Referee shall be paid half match fee and expenses for a postponed match which they have arrived at and inspected. Should another league appointed referee deem the ground unfit for play then he/she shall be paid £5 plus travelling expenses actually incurred.

14. Referees Fees

- a) The fee payable to referees shall be such sum as decided by the IFA Board together with the appropriate rate for travelling expenses actually incurred. In all league fixtures the home club shall retain the gate receipts and shall be responsible for all expenses including the referees' fees and travelling expenses properly incurred.

15. Ranking of clubs

Teams shall be awarded 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw and 0 points for a defeat. In the case of equality of points teams shall be ranked in accordance with the following criteria:

- i. Goal Difference (Goals scored less goals conceded in all matches)
- ii. Goals scored in all matches
- iii. Superior points gained in matches between teams in question

- iv. Superior goal difference in matches between teams in question
- v. Drawing of lots by the NIFL Championship Management Committee.

16. Resignation

Any club who resigns from the league during the current season (including after fixture schedule has been announced) will be liable to a £500 fine.

17. Substitute Players

- a) A club may at its discretion use 5 (five) substitute players at any time in any match, except to replace a player who has been suspended from the game by the referee. The substitutions can be made in accordance with the Laws of the Game.
- b) Only 5 (five) substitutions by each side will be permitted in any match and clubs may nominate up to a maximum of five substitute players prior to the commencement of the match.
- c) A substitute player shall be construed as taking part in the game for which he was nominated only if he is required to play.
- d) Should any nominated player or substitute sustain an injury or become otherwise incapacitated after the submission of the team sheet to the referee and before the kick-off he may be replaced provided that the referee and the opposing club are informed prior to kick-off.

18. Player Identification

- a) The players' shirts must be clearly numbered on the back and must correspond exactly with the team sheet as submitted via the IFA Comet System before any match under the jurisdiction of the League, and the team captain shall wear a distinguishing armband to indicate this.

19. Completion of team sheet on IFA Comet System

- a) Secretaries or other responsible persons acting for competing clubs shall forty five minutes prior to kick-off notify (via IFA Comet System) the names of players taking part in each match under the jurisdiction of the league (including the name of the nominated substitute or substitutes and club officials and their functions) to the referee.
- b) Clubs failing to do so may be fined in the sum of £50.

20. Late Start

The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee may fine clubs for late start of matches in the sum of £100 except in exceptional circumstances. Referees must report late starts to the League.

21. Objection to Ground

Any objection to the field of play or goal posts, which must include adequate goal nets, must be lodged with the referee before the game is started and the referee shall have power to have such objections made right before the match is started.

22. Medals

The NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee may, at its discretion, award 16 medals to the winning clubs for presentation to their players each of whom shall have taken part in at least 50% of the games constituting the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League. Additional medals may be purchased by the clubs concerned, if so warranted and the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee shall consider all such requests.

FINANCE

23. Fines

- a) All fines imposed by the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee, unless appealed against, shall be paid within twenty one (21) days from the date of the letter imposing the fine unless a payment plan has been agreed with the club.
- b) Otherwise offending clubs will be fined £50 per week or part of a week that a fine is outstanding.
- c) If any club fails to make any payment to the League in accordance with the requirements of these rules the League shall be empowered to deduct the amount of any such payment(s) from any money payable to the debtor club.

PLAYERS, SQUADS AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

24. NIFL Player Registration/Eligibility Guidelines

- a) All players must be registered in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration regulations and the NIFL Player Registration Guidelines.
- b) Players born on 1st January 2000 and after will be eligible to play in the U20 Championship/PIL Development League for season 2019/20. However, each match day squad is allowed 5 (five) overage players.

25. Ineligibility of Players

Failure to comply with any of the conditions relating to a registration or competition rules will render the player ineligible to play for the club concerned as not being a bona-fide player. Any club wishing to lodge a protest may do so in accordance with Rule 9.

26. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players:

- a) Any club playing an ineligible player or players in any match under the auspices of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League will be fined £100 per player for the first offence and £20 for subsequent offences involving the same player. In addition, should the match(es) in question result in a win for the offending team, or end in a draw, then such points shall be forfeited by the offending club and its opponents awarded three points in respect of that match and a scoreline of 3-0 recorded in its favour.

- b) Should the match(es) in question result in a defeat for the offending team a scoreline of 3-0 shall be recorded in the favour of their opponents. If the goal difference at the end of the match is greater than three, the result on the pitch is upheld.
- c) Should both clubs play an ineligible player or players in any match under the auspices of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League then both clubs will be fined a sum of £100 per player for the first offence and £20 for subsequent offences involving the same player. In addition, neither club will be awarded any points for the fixture and both clubs shall have a minus three (-3) goal difference recorded against them.
- d) Nothing in these regulations shall entitle the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League to deduct points or impose fines for registration committed by any club during any previous season. (For the purpose of all NIFL Championship regulations a season will be deemed to end on 31st May each year).
- e) For the purposes of these regulations an ineligible player is a player who has not been properly registered, or who has played whilst under suspension, or who has otherwise played in contravention of the rules of the competition in which he has taken part.

MISCELLANEOUS

27. Condition of Membership of Clubs comprising the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League

- a) All clubs in membership of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League acknowledge that they are bound by the rules of the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League and the decisions of its committees which are final and binding, except insofar as an appeal may lie to the appropriate committee of the IFA.

28. Registration of Ground

Each club shall register its ground with the NIFL and also an alternative venue.

29. Playing Kit

- a) Each club in the NIFL Championship/Development League Management Committee shall register its playing kit colours with the NIFL. In all cases the first choice (home) kit and the second choice (away) kit must provide an alternative colour of all garments. All clubs must also observe the sponsor advertising regulations which may be revised annually by the NIFL Championship/PIL Development League Management Committee. In the event of a clash of playing kit the away team shall change. In accordance with the Laws of the Game if tape or similar material is applied externally it must be the same colour as that part of the stocking it is applied to.
- b) In accordance with the Laws of the Game the clubs must have the availability of additional kit should any item of the kit sustain blood coverage.

30. Goal Nets

- a) Goal nets must be used.

31. Half-Time Interval

In all matches the half-time interval shall not exceed 15 minutes.

32. League Structure

The NIFL Board may at any time during the present season implement and make changes to the league format and structure which would then become affective prior to the commencement of the following playing season and nothing in these rules and regulations will so prevent the board from introducing and formulating any such structure provided that the board hereby undertakes to enter into a full consultation exercise with the member clubs of the league before any such changes are made.

33. Alterations to Rules

Alterations to these rules shall only be considered during the closed season. Any club wishing to have a proposal considered, must forward same in writing to the NIFL Managing Director no later than 31st May.