



Women's Premiership Rules & Regulations

Season 2022

CONSTITUTION

1. Title
2. Membership Fees
3. Dual Interests in Clubs
4. Clubs Ceasing to be Members
5. Notices
6. League Competitions
7. Ranking of Teams

NIFL PREMIERSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

8. NIFL Women's Premiership Committee
9. NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee Powers

OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

10. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences
11. Commissions and Reports
12. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL matches
13. Protests
14. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee

MATCHES

15. Matches and kick-off times
16. Postponed or Abandoned Matches
17. International duty
18. Substitute Players
19. Player Identification
20. Completion of Team Sheet
21. Kit Approval
22. Late Start
23. Objection to Ground, etc
24. Medals
25. Trophies

FINANCE

26. Admission to Grounds
27. Gate Receipts
28. Fines

REGISTRATIONS AND TRANSFERS

29. NIFL Player Registration/Eligibility Guidelines
30. Undisclosed payments
31. Ineligibility of Players
32. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

MISCELLANEOUS

33. Conditions of Membership of Clubs comprising the NIFL Premiership
34. Registration of Ground
35. Technical Areas

- 36. Referees
- 37. Official Match Ball
- 38. Half-time Interval
- 39. Processional Entry and Fair Play Handshake
- 40. Match Observers
- 41. League Structure
- 42. Alterations to Rules

APPENDICES

- 1. 2022 Curtailment Policy

DEFINITIONS

League	The Northern Ireland Football League
NIFL Women's Premiership	The Women's section of the Northern Ireland Football League
IFA	The Irish Football Association
Articles of Association	Means the Articles of Association of the Irish Football Association
Close Season	Means the period of the year outside the Season
WADA	World Anti Doping Agency
UKAD	United Kingdom Anti Doping
Member Club	Means any club which from time to time is a member of NIFL Women's Premiership
NIWFA Championship	Means the 2 nd tier of the Women's League Pyramid Structure.
Laws of the Game	Means the Laws of the Game of Association Football as approved by the International FA Board
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Associations
Participation Agreement	The annual agreement entered into by the member clubs with the NIFL

In all NIFL Rules & Regulations unless the context otherwise requires words denoting any gender include all genders.

CONSTITUTION

1. Title

- (a) For the purposes of Football Competitions the NIFL Women's Premiership shall be composed of:
- (i) A Premiership Section which shall consist of no more than 8 clubs who achieve and maintain minimum operating standards as set out by the Women's Premiership Management Committee, and to be known as the NIFL Women's Premiership
 - (ii) A Premiership League Cup Section which shall consist of no more than 8 clubs
 - (iii) A Women's Premiership Academy League (U19) which shall consist of representative teams of the clubs in the NIFL Premiership
- (b) Membership of the NIFL Women's Premiership shall constitute an agreement between the NIFL Premiership 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 Women's Premiership
 - (iv) The Rules and Articles of the Irish Football Association,
 - (v) Comply with IFA Licensing Scheme (if applicable),
 - (vi) The Laws of the Game,
 - (vii) The Rules and Regulations of any body of which the NIFL Women's Premiership is a Member,
 - (viii) The relevant Participation Agreement to be determined by the NIFL Board.
 - (ix) The terms of any commercial or broadcast agreement entered into by the NIFL, and the terms of any Cup or other Competitions conducted or controlled by the League, each of the aforesaid as altered, revoked or added to from time to time.
 - (x) WADA/UKAD Code
- (c) A member (club) shall be a legal entity fully responsible for the football team participating in the NIFL and such entity (which may be a legal company, limited liability company, private members club (Registration of clubs order 1996) or other like unincorporated association) shall have been in membership of the Irish Football Association for a period of at least one year.
- (i) **Procedures for club to change its legal entity**
- If any club wishes to change its legal entity, which is the recognised member of the Irish Football Association and the NIFL, it must submit full details of the proposed change to the IFA Football Committee and the NIFL Board.
- All of the following rules apply in order to change a legal entity:
- (a) Any application to transfer a club's membership of the Irish Football Association to a new entity must be submitted in writing and by Special Delivery post to the Chief Executive, Irish Football Association, and the Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Football League, at the registered offices of the IFA and the NIFL.

- (b) A club's membership of the Irish Football Association may only be transferred to the new entity with the advance written permission of the Football Committee. Each case will be considered on its own individual merits.

2. Membership Fees

- a) The Annual Subscription of each Club to the NIFL Women's Premiership shall be £300.
- b) All Annual Subscriptions shall be paid on or before the 9th April in each year to the NIFL who shall have notified each Club that the subscription is due.
- c) Any Club whose subscription is not paid by 9th April shall not be entitled to participate in any competition organised by the NIFL Women's Premiership or be represented at any meeting until same shall have been paid.

3. 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 any body 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 Constitution and Rules of the NIFL and those bodies to which the NIFL is affiliated.
- (e) For the purposes of this Rule an 'Associate' means:-

- (a) If the person referred to in Paragraph (b) of this Rule is an individual:
 - (i) 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 Premiership is or is likely to be acting in conjunction with the individual.
 - (ii) Any Company of which the individual is a director or over which the individual is able to exercise control or influence.
 - (iii) Any individual who is an employee or partner of that individual or a close relative of any such employee or partner.
- (b) If the person referred to in Paragraph (b) of this Rules or any associate of that person is a body corporate:
 - (i) 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
 - (ii) Any director or employee of that body corporate or any close relative of such director or employee, and
 - (c) 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, that other person.
 - (d) For the purposes of Paragraph (c) above, the word 'person' shall fall to be defined under reference to Paragraph (c) above.

4. Clubs Ceasing to be Members

If any club is expelled, or resigns from the NIFL Women's Premiership without the consent of the NIFL Premiership the players who are registered with that club shall be granted 'free agent' status in accordance with the FIFA regulations governing the Status and Transfer of Players. Clubs failing to notify the NIFL Managing Director on or before 1st December of their intention to discontinue membership of the NIFL Women's Premiership shall forfeit the sum of £250 from any monies due to the funds of the NIFL and shall also be liable as the NIFL Board shall determine to pay their proportional share of any loss that may result to the League in the ensuing season by reason of the failure of such Club to give notice of withdrawal by the date aforementioned.

5. Notices

A notice may be given by the NIFL Women's Premiership to any Club or any Club representative either personally or by sending it by email or by post to the registered address supplied by the club or representative for the giving of notices. Where a notice is sent by post service 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 the same was posted.

6. League Competitions

The NIFL shall, each Season, conduct and in every respect control a football competition to be called the NIFL Women's Premiership, the Women's League Cup, and the Women's Premiership Academy League.

i. Women's Premiership

The NIFL Premiership shall consist of 8 teams who shall play each other;

- (a) Two times (one 'home' and one 'away') then;
- (b) When all teams have completed 14 matches, or when standings permit, the league shall be split into two sections. Teams ranked in positions 1 to 4 shall comprise Section A and teams ranked in positions 5 to 8 shall comprise Section B. Points achieved during the first phase of 14 matches are carried forward to the second phase. Teams shall then compete in a further 3 matches (i.e., one match against all other teams within their respective sections).
- (c) The venues for these final matches shall be decided using a predetermined formula, and will result in teams having either two 'home' matches and one match 'away' against the teams in their respective sections or visa versa.

ii. Women's Premiership League Cup

The competition shall comprise of the Women's Premiership teams and be played on a knockout basis. All ties shall be played to a finish. If at the end of normal playing time the scores are equal then two periods of ten (10) minutes each way will be played. If there are no goals scored during extra time the tie shall be decided by kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the conditions set out in the International FA Board's.

All other rules will mirror that of the Women's Premiership with control and organisation of the competition vested in the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee.

iii. Women's Academy League

Control and organisation of the Women's Academy League will be vested in the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee.

Please refer to Women's Development League Rules

7. Ranking of Teams

- a) 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:

Records in the head-to-head matches in the following order;

- i. Most points in the head-to-head duels between the sides
 - ii. Goal Difference (Goals scored less goals conceded in all head-to-head matches)
 - iii. Goals scored in all head-to-head matches
 - iv. Most goals scored away from home in the head-to-head matches
- Only if the clubs remain level in the table after this will a playoff be arranged, at a neutral ground, with the format, timing and venue being determined by NIFL Chief Operating Officer.
- b) There shall be no relegation from the Premiership in 2022
- c) The winners of the NIWFA Championship shall be awarded promotion into the NIFL Women's Premiership, if they have applied for membership and confirm their ability to meet the required Women's Premiership criteria by 31 July
- d) Where any club believes that it will be in a position to qualify for promotion from the Championship to the NIFL Women's Premiership at the end of the current season they must apply to the NIFL Chief Operating Officer on the prescribed application form which will be available for download on the NIFL website (or on request) by 31st July along with advance payment of their league fee (returned if promotion not secured)
- e) If the Championship winners, do not apply or confirm their ability to meet the required Women's Premiership criteria by 31 July, the highest ranked club in the Championship that has applied shall be awarded a promotion
- f) Notwithstanding the above criteria in respect of promotion the NIFL Board shall consult with the NIWFA if alternative methods are required ensure full membership for the 2023 season

THE NIFL WOMEN'S PREMIERSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

8. NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee

- a) The NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee shall be formed in accordance with the appropriate Articles of the Association and shall have powers to deal with all matters delegated to it by the Board.
- b) The Committee shall appoint annually a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson who may serve for a period not exceeding two years. A Chairperson retiring after a period of two years may not seek election either to the office of chairperson or that of Vice-Chairperson until a further period of two years has elapsed.
- c) A club which is entitled to appoint one representative to the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee shall do so not later than the 31st March in each year and the

Secretary of the club shall notify such appointment, including dates of birth, in writing to the NIFL within one week from election. Clubs shall also be entitled to appoint an additional representative who will be permitted to attend any meeting of the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee in the event of the regular representative, for whatever reason, being unable to attend. Such additional representative must be notified no later than 31st March. Any representatives so appointed may only retain their position as long as they remain a representative of the club that appointed them.

- d) 50% of any members present at any meeting of any Committee or Sub-Committee shall form a quorum.
- e) The NIFL Women's Premiership 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.
- f) The chairperson of any meeting under the auspices of the NIFL Women's Premiership shall have a casting vote.
- g) The NIFL Women's Premiership may call upon clubs, members, and players of clubs to produce any books, letters, documents, and other evidence the Committee may require.
- h) If a club misses 2 consecutive Management Committee meetings, they will be fined £25.

9. NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee Powers

- a) The NIFL Women's Premiership 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 a criminal offence, misconduct, infringing or failing to observe the Rules of the NIFL Women's Premiership or acting in a manner which could be construed as bringing the game into disrepute and contrary to the best interests of the NIFL Women's Premiership as a whole. The NIFL Women's Premiership 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 appropriate Divisional Association or in the case of two teams playing from different Divisional Associations, by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.

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

OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

10. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences

- a) The NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee, and any Commission or Sub-Committee duly appointed by the Board 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 Women's Premiership, and they shall be entitled for that purpose to require the attendance of all officials, players and other persons and for the production of all books, letters and other documents.
- b) The NIFL Women's Premiership 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 Women's Premiership, 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 appropriate Divisional Association or in the case of two teams playing from different Divisional Associations, by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.

11. Commissions and Reports

- a) The NIFL Women's Premiership 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 Women's Premiership or its affairs.
- b) The NIFL Women's Premiership 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 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 Women's Premiership may think fit.

12. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Women's Premiership matches

- a) Any club, official or player offering or receiving a payment or any form of 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 £500 and shall be subject to such further sanction as the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee shall see fit.

- b) All players, technical staff and club officials are forbidden from taking part, either directly, or indirectly, in betting, gambling, lotteries and similar events and transaction connected with football matches under the control and organisation of the NIFL Women's Premiership.
- c) The NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee shall have the power to investigate any such allegations brought to their attention and to impose such sanctions as they consider appropriate.

13. Protests

- a) Protests by all clubs must be received by the Chief Operating Officer of the NIFL per via email within four days after the cause of the protest, accompanied with a deposit of £100, payable via e-banking, 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 email to the club protested against, if appropriate, within four days after the cause of the Protest.
- b) Upon receipt of a Protest the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee shall, in accordance with Rule 11, 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 days of receipt of the Protest.
- c) 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 clubs to which he/she belongs or for which he/she played, to prove that he/she was qualified according to the Rules and Regulations of the NIFL Women's Premiership, and failing satisfactory proof shall deduct three points in the competition from the offending club or may disqualify it from the competition, and may expel, fine or otherwise deal with the offending player as they think fit.
- d) A club may be represented at the hearing of a Protest or Inquiry by one or more of its members. Any person summoned to attend a Protest or Inquiry must attend personally.
- e) 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 a ruling to the NIFL Board.

14. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL Women's Premiership

All appeals against a decision of the NIFL Women's Premiership must be made to the IFA in accordance with the relevant IFA Articles of the Association.

MATCHES

15. Matches and Kick-off times

- a) Matches may be played on natural turf or artificial turf, provided that such artificial turf meets the "FIFA Recommended 1-Star Standard" or alternative standard approved by the IFA.

The owner of the artificial turf must be in receipt of a valid FIFA Certificate or approval from the IFA.

The NIFL Women's Premiership 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 of the NIFL Women's Premiership. All NIFL Women's Premiership matches shall be played on the dates scheduled at the commencement of the season, except:
- i. When otherwise directed by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer
 - ii. IFA Women's Challenge Cup or Divisional Association Cups take precedence
 - iii. Agreed by the two competing clubs and agreed by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer
- c) Clubs failing to comply with the above (15b) shall be fined in a sum of £250 and shall forfeit three points, such points shall be accredited to the opposing team and a score line of 3 goals to nil awarded to their opponents.
- d) In the event of a home club wishing to change from the date of a scheduled fixture, advance notice must be served in writing to both the Secretary of the away club and the NIFL Managing Director two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Chief Operating Officer shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.
- e) However, notwithstanding the above, any request to change fixture must be agreed by the two (2) participating clubs.
- f) Matches shall not be played out of sequence unless with the prior approval of the NIFL Chief Operating Officer.

- g) NIFL Women's Premiership matches will have a common kick-off time 7:45pm for evening games unless otherwise directed by the NIFL Women's Premiership or agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Women's Premiership. This does not include Public Holidays or Bank Holidays.

All evening games must be played at venues with floodlights and teams should have access to the pitch a minimum of 30 minutes before kick-off.

Weekend games with a kick off time no later than 3pm can play on grounds without floodlights but the ground must meet Intermediate standard.

- h) In the event of a club failing to fulfil an arranged fixture 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 the second time in the current season shall be dismissed from membership of the NIFL Women's Premiership.

16. Pitch Inspection, Postponed or Abandoned Matches

- a) If a club uses a Local Authority/Council or pitch owned by a 3rd party and the venue owner has declared the pitch unfit for play the home club must notify the NIFL, and their opponents. For all other pitches, only a referee can declare a pitch unfit for play.
- b) In the case of matches where it is found necessary to stop play owing to weather conditions the referee must wait for a period of 15 minutes before deciding upon abandonment.
- c) If through any cause a match has been abandoned before the completion of the full playing time the Committee shall have power at its discretion to allot the points according to the goals scored at the time of such abandonment, or order the unfinished time to be played, or to order the match to be re-played in its entirety, on a subsequent date to be fixed by the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee under such terms and conditions as it may impose.
Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Managing Director.
- d) The Referee and Assistant Referees shall be paid half match fee and expenses for a postponed match which they have arrived at and inspected.
- e) Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer.

17. International Duty

- a) In normal circumstances International Duty applies only to Full International and Under 19 International call up.

- b) A club whose goalkeeper is selected for International Under 17 duty and has made first team debut in a senior NIFL competition may also be considered.
- c) In the event of a club having two (2) or more players selected and/or on standby to represent their National Association representative team(s), they shall be permitted to request a postponement of their scheduled fixture during the period of release in respect of such International Duty. Furthermore, a club whose goalkeeper is selected for such International Duty shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.
- d) The NIFL Chief Operating Officer shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.
- e) International Duty does not apply for the 2022 NIFL Women's League Cup.

18. Substitute Players

- a) A club may at its discretion use 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 five substitutions by each side will be permitted in any match and clubs may nominate up to a maximum of seven substitute players prior to the commencement of the match.
- c) Substitutions may only be made on at most 3 occasions during the game (excluding half time).
- d) Exceptionally, a sixth substitute may take part exclusively during extra time in any play off or League Cup fixture.
- e) A substitute player shall be construed as taking part in the game for which he was nominated only if he is required to play.
- f) 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.

19. Player Identification

- a) The players' shirts must be clearly numbered on the back and must correspond exactly with the instruction input into the IFA FMS system or the team sheet handed to the referee should the match venue not have a data signal.
- b) The team captain shall wear a distinguishing armband to indicate this.

20. Completion of Team Sheet

- a) Each club shall input their team line up including the names of players and club officials and their functions taking part in each match (including names of the nominated substitutes) via the IFA FMS System not later than 30 minutes prior to kick off.
- b) Should a match venue not have a data signal secretaries or other responsible persons acting for competing clubs shall forty five minutes prior to kick-off notify in writing 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.
- c) Clubs failing to do so will be fined in the sum of £50.

21. Kit Approval

- a) Clubs must have a home and away kit.
- b) Details of club playing kit(s), including the goalkeeper's kit(s), colours shall be notified by clubs to the NIFL on the official club information questionnaire which shall be completed annually and returned not later than 31 March.
- c) Home teams are requested to wear their nominated home kit and any clashes of colour should be considered by the away team in advance of the fixture. In the case of a clash of colours the referee shall have the right to request clubs to change any item of their presented kit. In such cases the away team shall change as directed by the referee.
- d) In accordance with the Laws of the Game clubs must have the availability of additional kit should any item of the kit sustain blood coverage.

22. Late Start

The NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee may fine clubs for late start of matches in the sum of £25 except in exceptional circumstances. Referees must report late starts to the NIFL

Should a team not turn up in "Reasonable Time", they shall forfeit their fixture and the points, and a score line of three goals to nil, shall be awarded to opposing club. "Reasonable Time"

should be understood to mean that the kick off time will not be delayed more than 20 minutes after the fixed kick off time.

23. Objection to Ground, etc.

Any objection to the field of play or goal posts, which must include adequate netting, 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.

24. Medals

The NIFL Women's Premiership shall award up to eighteen (18) medals to the winning clubs for presentation to their players each of whom shall have taken part in a minimum of 50% of games constituting the NIFL Women's Premiership. Additional medals may be purchased by the clubs concerned, if so warranted and the NIFL Chief Operating Officer shall consider all such requests.

25. Trophies

The club declared Champions shall receive a trophy, which shall at all times remain the property of the NIFL and must be returned in good order when requested by the NIFL. It is the responsibility of the Champion Club to abide by the conditions imposed by the NIFL Insurers in respect of the safe keeping of the trophy throughout the period it is held by the club and arrange appropriate insurance cover for the trophy throughout the period when it is held by the Club.

FINANCE

26. Admission to Grounds

The admission policy for all NIFL Women's Premiership matches shall be determined by the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee annually.

27. Gate Receipts

The admission charges to the ground in all NIFL Women's Premiership matches shall be retained by the home clubs, unless otherwise determined by the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee.

28. Fines

- a) All fines imposed by the NIFL Women's Premiership, unless appealed against, shall be paid within 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 NIFL in accordance with the requirements of these rules NIFL shall be empowered to deduct the amount of any such payment(s) from any money payable to the debtor club.

REGISTRATIONS AND TRANSFERS

29. NIFL Player Registration/Eligibility Guidelines

- a) All players must be registered in accordance with the IFA Amateur Game Player Registration regulations and the NIFL Player Registration Regulations.
- b) Where an amateur player is paid expenses, then payments are to be supported by an expenses claim form, signed by the player and club official/accountant, in a format acceptable to HMRC and that such forms are retained by the Club; Such payments must comply with HMRC "Tax treatment of Association footballers".

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/eimanual/EIM64100.htm> Expenses paid to a player of amateur status must not exceed HMRC scales that would render such status invalid. Claim forms must be retained for 2 complete seasons and may be requested for inspection by NIFL at any time.

30. Undisclosed Payments

- a) It is strictly forbidden to make any payment to a player, either directly or via a related party, which has not been detailed in the official players' contract or registration, lodged with the Irish Football Association or the NIFL, or not documented in line with related party transactions outlined in b) and c) below, or at variance to the requirements of Regulation 29b).
- b) A party is related to a club/entity if:
 - i) directly or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, the party:

- a) controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the entity (this includes parents, subsidiaries and fellow subsidiaries;
- b) has an interest in the entity that gives it significant influence over the entity; or
- c) has joint control over the entity;
- ii) the party is an associate of the entity;
- iii) the party is a joint venture in which the party is a venture;
- iv) the party is a member of a key management personnel of the entity or its parent;
- v) the party is a close member of the family of any individual referred to in i) or iv)
- vi) the party is an entity that is controlled, jointly controlled, or significantly influenced by, or for which significant voting power in such entity resides with, directly or indirectly any individual referred to in iv) or v); or
- vii) the party is a post-employment benefit plan for the benefit of employees of the entity, or of any entity that is a related party of the entity.

Close members of the family of an individual are those family members who may be expected to influence, or be influenced by, that individual in their dealings with the entity. They may include:

- a) The individual's domestic partners and children;
- b) Children of the individual's domestic; and
- c) Dependents of the individual or the individual's domestic partner.

Control is the power to govern the financial and operating policies of an entity so as to obtain benefits from its activities.

Key management personnel are those persons having authority and responsibility for planning, directing, and controlling the activities of the entity, directly or indirectly, including any director (whether executive or otherwise) of that entity.

c) A related party transaction is a transfer of resources, services, or obligations between related parties, regardless of whether a price is charged.

Any related party transaction involving partners must be documented by the club in writing to the IFA and NIFL. These shall include, but not be limited to:

- A player in any other paid service within the club (e.g. coach, barman)
- Payments made to players by club directors, management committee or staff members
- Payments made to players by companies or organisations owned or controlled by club directors, management committee or staff members
- Payments made to players by sponsors
- Payments made to players by supporters clubs, trusts or organisations

d) The Board or Managing Director of the NIFL or its appointees may at any time, in order to:

- satisfy itself as to the accuracy of the contractual / registration information provided to it by a club;

and / or to

- consider any suspicion of undisclosed payments made by or on behalf of a club carry out such investigations, interviews and/or audits it considers (in its sole and absolute discretion) appropriate shall be entitled to take such action and award such punishments as detailed in Rule 30(j) where a player and/or club has acted contrary to the best interests of the league and its member clubs.

In any investigation, any person if requested shall:

- i) provide the NIFL or its appointees with all information, documents and/or records that the NIFL or its appointees considers relevant to an investigation;
- ii) cooperate fully with any interview process carried out by the NIFL or its appointees;
- iii) verify the accuracy (or otherwise) of any information or document provided;
- iv) provide written confirmation of all offers made to a player regardless of whether the player subsequently concludes a professional contract or amateur registration with the club.
 - e) Where a party to an investigation fails to comply with i) to iv) above, that party shall be liable to be fined not less than £5,000 and the investigation shall continue with a reasonable adverse inference being drawn from any failure to comply with i) to iv) above.
 - f) An investigation into any suspected breach must be initiated within a period of five seasons from the suspected season of any such breach.
 - g) For the avoidance of doubt, this provides the scope to initiate an investigation into any suspected breach having occurred in the five seasons prior to any current season.
 - h) Similarly, following the close of any investigation, the case can be reopened should new information become available which alters the status of previous conclusions within this same two season period.
 - i) The standard of proof to be applied is that of comfortable satisfaction. That is to say that the Committee does not have to be satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt but should be more than satisfied that, on balance, the allegation is made out. The more serious the allegation, the less likely it is that the event occurred and therefore the higher the threshold of satisfaction.
 - j) *Any **club** found to have breached Rules 29(b) and 30(a) will be subject to the following sanctions by the NIFL Board or its appointees:*
 - *Automatic demotion*
 - *Immediate points deduction for current season*
 - *Fine*
 - *Prize money from the season to be withheld / returned and redistributed.*

- *The return of prize money from any previous season(s) during the course of the player's / football staff member's contract with the club.*
- *Suspension / disqualification of individuals from involvement in the running of a football club*
- *Removal of any competition title wins*
- *Reporting of club to HMRC*

31. Eligible Players

Any player shall not be eligible to play competitive football in the NIFL Women's Premiership or associated cup competitions until they reach the age of 16.

32. Ineligibility of Players

Failure to comply with any of the conditions relating to a registration will render the player ineligible to play for the club concerned as not being a bona-fide player.

33. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

- Any club playing an ineligible player or players in any match under the auspices of the NIFL Women's Premiership shall be fined a sum of £50 per player for the first offence and £50 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 score-line of 3-0 recorded in its favour.
- Should the match(es) in question result in a defeat for the offending team a score line of 3-0 shall be recorded in the favour of their opponents. Notwithstanding the above the winning team shall not be disadvantaged if the original score line was of greater benefit to that teams goal difference.
- Should both clubs play an ineligible player or players in any match under the auspices of the NIFL Women's Premiership then both clubs will be fined £50 per player for the first offence and £50 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.
- Nothing in these Regulations shall entitle the NIFL Women's Premiership to deduct points or impose fines for registration committed by any club during any previous season. (For the purpose of all NIFL Women's Premiership regulations a season will be deemed to end on 31st October in each year).

MISCELLANEOUS

34. Condition of Membership of Clubs comprising the NIFL Women's Premiership

- a) All clubs in membership of the NIFL Women's Premiership acknowledge that they are bound by the rules of the NIFL Women's Premiership 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.
- b) Clubs shall be obliged to sign a participation agreement and to abide by the conditions contained therein.
- c) Any club not adhering to this rule or the terms of the agreement shall be dealt with as the NIFL Board consider appropriate.

35. Registration of Ground

- a) Each club shall register its ground with the NIFL and no club shall register another ground without first obtaining the consent of the NIFL.
- b) Ground sharing will only be approved at the discretion of the NIFL Women's Premiership.

36. Technical Areas

- a) Each club shall provide separate areas adjacent to the pitch for the sole use of team officials, medical staff and substitute players for both teams in accordance with the Laws of the Game. Such areas shall be clearly marked 'Home' and 'Away', shall have direct access onto the pitch, shall be located equidistant from the halfway line on the same side of the pitch (unless not possible), shall be under cover and a maximum of 11 persons (five substitute players and six club officials) only shall be permitted.
- b) Any player who is dismissed from the field of play shall proceed immediately to the dressing room.
- c) Smoking is not permitted in the Technical Area. Any club found in breach of this will be dealt with by the NIFL Women's Premiership.

37. Referees

- a) The NIFL shall keep a list of Referees whose names have been approved by and also registered with the Association, or persons designated by the NIFL. Referees shall be appointed by the NIFL. Once an appointment has been made no objections to such

appointment can, under any circumstances, be entertained by the NIFL Women's Premiership.

- b) A Referee appointed to act in a match must notify the NIFL of his or her acceptance or otherwise in writing within three days after the notification of his or her appointment and shall return the official team sheet and details of the match to the NIFL immediately following the match as directed by the NIFL.

38. Official Match Ball

The match ball shall be supplied by the Home club.

The official match ball to be used in all matches shall be the ball approved by the NIFL and supplied to the clubs at the commencement of the Season. Additional match balls, if required, may be purchased from the NIFL.

39. Half-time Interval

In all matches the half time interval shall be 15 minutes.

40. Processional Entry and Fair Play Handshake

The match officials shall lead both teams on to the field of play five minutes prior to kick-off time. The teams shall line up either side of the officials, at the half way line and the visiting team shall move towards the home team, when both teams will shake hands with all match officials and players

41. Match Observers

The NIFL Women's Premiership may appoint match observers to any match played under its jurisdiction and such match observers shall be required to complete a report as determined by the NIFL Women's Premiership. All match observers must be independent of any club in membership of the NIFL Women's Premiership or NIWFA Championship, and must not hold a position in another football organisation which may be deemed a conflict of interest. A list of Match Observers approved annually by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer. The NIFL shall provide guidelines to each club on how Match Observers should be facilitated at matches.

42. 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.

43. 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 Women's Premiership no later than 1 January.