

SFAI Cup rules for season 2016-17

1(a) The abbreviated title of SFAI is used, where appropriate, in these rules with the same meaning as Schoolboys Football Association of Ireland.

(b) The official address for the Association is:

SFAI General Secretary, National Sports Campus, Abbotstown, Dublin 15, Ireland.

(c) The entire control, ownership, and management of the competitions is vested in the Schoolboys Football Association of Ireland Executive Committee and that control and management is designated to the SFAI General Secretary whose decision/s are final.

SFAI national cup competitions are played for trophies by teams from U-12 up to U-16: the age eligibility being the first day of January relevant to the year in which the season concludes.

(d) In order to be entered into any SFAI national cup competition each team must be registered to play in a division of a SFAI affiliated League, have completed the on-line entry process and paid the appropriate entry fee to the SFAI. If for any reason the League from where any team entered these competitions fails or ceases to be affiliated to the SFAI all such team/s participation in these competitions shall cease with immediate effect irrespective of whether or not that team/s had played or are due to play any fixture/s in any of these competitions.

(e) The closing date for receipt of fully completed entries and fees is 10th August each year, the level of entry fee shall be determined by the SFAI Council at its meeting following the most recent SFAI AGM and all such entry fees shall be non-refundable in all circumstances.

(f) Each team is obliged to play its fixtures without relying on player/s from any other team/s within the same club.

(g) Each team entered into these competitions must be registered to and playing in a division no higher than the U-16 age group within their own SFAI affiliated League, any team in breach of this rule will be excluded or removed from or any further participation in the relevant season's competition.

(h) Team entries are accepted and processed in advance of the team and League affiliation fees due to be paid to the SFAI by their respective League for the season relevant to that SFAI Cup entry.

(i) Any team which is not affiliated to the SFAI by way of such team affiliation fee payment may be denied any or continued participation in any SFAI Cup for that season at the discretion of the SFAI Executive Committee.

(j) All teams playing their fixtures as scheduled by the SFAI.

(k) All entries and fees are completed and forwarded to the SFAI by 10th August each year.

(l) All teams are aware of and accept that no SFAI affiliated League can grant any team a postponement of any fixture scheduled by the SFAI in these competitions.

(m) Clubs with multiple team entries at any single age group are required to play their fixtures in such fashion so as not to deviate from or delay the completion of fixtures on the scheduled date. Where deemed necessary for the running of these competitions, clubs may be required to play their fixture/s in advance of the scheduled weekend.

(n) The details provided on the entry form will be used by the SFAI and its affiliated Leagues for the purposes of running these competitions.

(o) The completion and return of the on-line entry form acknowledges each club's awareness of and compliance with the above stipulations.

(p) Compliance with Data Protection requirements on the entry form is a condition of entry acceptance.

(q) These and all rules pertaining to the SFAI or its competitions are the sole property of the SFAI and are not to be reproduced by any other body or organization in any form including printed and or posting on the internet.

(r) The SFAI and its committees will not recognize or deal with any item where rules are accessed or quoted from any source other than the current SFAI Rules for trophy Competitions (National Cups) rules and or the current SFAI Constitution and Rules which have been issued/published by the SFAI itself. Any directions issued via information on SFAI Cups match cards have the same power and carry the same effect as any of the rules contained herein.

(s) The season referred to in these rules is from 1st August to 30th June annually.

(t) The SFAI Executive Committee has the power to deal with any situation or circumstances which arises and may not be specifically covered within these rules.

(u) Each club entered into these competitions is responsible for the conduct and behavior of its players, managers, coaches, assistants, parents and supporters, reports of misconduct against any such personnel will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter by the SFAI and be subject to sanction/s the level of which will be determined by the investigating committee.

2(a) The competitions are drawn on a regional basis and then an open national draw from the round of 32 onwards.

(b) The Leagues comprising any region are determined by the SFAI Executive Committee

(c) The SFAI Council will appoint regional coordinators, who, under the jurisdiction of the SFAI Executive Committee are bound by these rules, he/she will coordinate fixtures and assist with the administration of the competitions. Any vacancy which arises in the role of a regional coordinator shall be filled for the remainder of the relevant season by a person appointed by the SFAI Executive Committee.

(d) All regional draws are to be completed at a venue/s to be determined by the SFAI General Secretary and those completed draws will be published on the SFAI web site. From the round of 32 onwards fixtures will be set by direct liaison between League officials under the control of the SFAI General Secretary, who will decide on any dispute and all such decisions are final.

(e) All teams from all regions will be included in their respective regional first round draw, no seeding of teams shall be allowed in any regional or subsequent draws.

(f) The allocation of qualifying places from each region to the Round of 32 draw is done on a proportional basis relevant to the number of teams entered at all age groups in the various regions for the current season, the ratio of round of 32 qualifying places shall be applied across all age groups within each region.

(g) It is the responsibility of all SFAI affiliated Leagues to assist in every way with the smooth running and operation of these competitions and all entries are accepted on the basis that each club/s affiliated League will provide its complete cooperation and assistance in the operation of the competitions and completion of the fixtures as determined by the SFAI Executive Committee. Where such cooperation and assistance is not provided, or is withdrawn, the SFAI Executive Committee has the sole right to refuse to accept or delete the entries from the relevant teams including those teams which have commenced playing their fixtures.

(h) Where clubs have more than one team entry at any age group the relevant teams, upon completion of the entry form and payment of the entry fees, will be admitted and listed with the name of the club and, if supplied to the SFAI, a divisional pre-fix. Where the entrant club has not supplied such a pre-fix on its entry form the SFAI will list each team as A, B, C, etc. and those prefixes will apply for the purposes of carrying out the Cups draws, no club is allowed to enter teams under more than one club name.

3(a) All match cards will be issued by the SFAI to its affiliated Leagues which, following the completion of fixtures, must be returned to the office of the SFAI General Secretary, referee's reports and all disciplinary matters will only be dealt with by way of a disciplinary committee convened by the SFAI General Secretary, comprising of three current SFAI Council members, a disciplinary committee has the power to impose sanctions and fines as it deems fit.

(b) No regional coordinator or League official can partake in any disciplinary hearing/s or decision making on behalf of the SFAI Executive Committee where any report concerns a club from within his/her own affiliated League.

(c) Decisions taken and sanctions imposed by a disciplinary committee cannot be appealed to the SFAI and any such appeal must in the first instance be directed to the FAI subject to the rules governing any such appeal.

(d) Players sent off in an SFAI Cup game are automatically suspended from the next game in the SFAI Cup in which he/she was sent off. If that player's team has been eliminated from that SFAI Cup the automatic suspension will take effect for his/her next competitive game at the age group where he/she is registered. Subject to a review of the referee's report the sanction may be increased by the disciplinary committee. It is not the responsibility of the SFAI, or any other football body, to notify any club/s regarding the compulsory serving of the automatic one game suspension by any player for being sent off.

(e) Players who are under an automatic one match suspension for being sent off in a domestic League competition are eligible to play in the SFAI Cup on the basis that the suspension is served for a domestic competition game directly following the SFAI Cup game.

(f) Player's serving a suspension, greater than the automatic one match ban, which has been imposed by an affiliated League are not eligible to play in the SFAI Cups during this suspension on the basis that being suspended from the SFAI Cups shall count as game/s served under that suspension.

(g) In cases where players are likely to receive more than the automatic one match suspension a copy of the referees report, if available, shall be communicated to the players club and the player, accompanied by his/her club shall be offered the opportunity to attend a hearing by a SFAI disciplinary committee. Failure by the player or his/her club to attend this hearing shall result in the case being heard and dealt with in his/her absence.

(h) It is the responsibility of all clubs to ensure that any suspension/s is served by the relevant person/s, this shall include automatic suspensions for being sent off in any SFAI cup game and any additional sanction imposed by the SFAI.

4 The SFAI is the sole owner of all SFAI Cup trophies, each club is responsible for the safe keeping of trophies whilst in their possession and all trophies shall be returned when requested and in good condition. Clubs returning damaged trophies, or responsible for lost trophies, will be liable for the repair or replacement of same. Medals shall be awarded to the winners and runners-up of all SFAI Cup competitions.

5(a) SFAI affiliated League player registration forms are the official player registration forms for teams playing in SFAI national cup competitions. Clubs wishing to view a League's player registration form, as part of the protest process, can do so by submitting a request in writing to the SFAI General Secretary who shall procure a copy of same on behalf of the club. A player must be properly registered to his/her affiliated League no later than the day before his/her competing in an SFAI national cup game. Proof of date of postage of relevant documentation will suffice in order to comply with this rule.

(b) SFAI affiliated Leagues must submit to the General Secretary, or the SFAI Executive Committee or any of its sub-committees any and all team and player registration records and details requested relating to any team registered to such League/s.

6(a) Only players registered to a team entered into a national cup may play for that team, younger players from within the same club can play on an older age group team provided the team he/she is registered to has entered the SFAI Cups for that season.

(b) Player's can play for only one team in any one SFAI Cup competition in the same season.

(c) No player can play at the same age group for different teams within the same club in any SFAI Cup in the same season.

(d) Player transfers will only be allowed up to 15th October in each season.

(e) Player's registered to any League other than a SFAI affiliated League are not eligible to play in any SFAI Cup.

7(a) Referees match cards are to be filled in before the game commences by the official in charge of each team, he/she shall append his/her signature as verification of the correct eligibility of his/her team's players and accepts responsibility for any eligibility irregularities regarding his/her team's players details entered on the match card.

(b) Games are played at 11-a-side at all age groups other than U/12 which is played at 9-a-side.

(c) The pitch, and goal sizes for the U/12 competition will be those as laid down in the current FAI Player Development Plan implementation operational booklet.

(d) A maximum of 16 players can be named on the match card for U/12 age group games, all players named on the match card are entitled to be used as part of the roll on-roll off substitution system.

(e) A maximum of 18 players can be named on the referee's match card for any 11-a-side game, all players named on the match card are entitled to be used as part of the roll on-roll off substitution system.

Girls can play on boy's teams at all age groups and can also play one year below the girl's nominal age group, for example a girl, eligible to play at U/14, can play on an U/13 boys team.

(f) All substitution can only be made following notification to the match referee, it is the sole responsibility of each team's management to ensure that only the maximum number of players allowed at the appropriate age group are playing for their team at any one time in any game.

(g) Where a clash of playing colours occurs it is the responsibility of the home team to change to an alternative set of playing colours.

8(a) Any club in doubt as to the eligibility of its opponents players can, by making representations to the match referee at half time and/or full time, obtain the signature and dates of birth of a total of any three (3) opposition players entered on the match card. Any team's refusal to accede to such a request will be regarded as an effort to conceal an irregularity in registration and/or over-age of its player/s and is a breach of this rule.

(b) All such signatures and dates of birth must form the basis of any protest regarding player/s eligibility and be produced at any subsequent protest hearing.

(c) Where a team is found guilty of playing an over-age player/s, and had won the relevant game, it shall forfeit that game to the opposing team and be removed from the competition from that stage. The offending team mentor/s may be suspended and their club fined, the levels of which suspension and fine will be determined by the committee dealing with the case.

(d) Where a team, having won the relevant game, is found guilty of playing an ineligible but not overage player/s, the game will be forfeited to the opposing team. The offending team mentor/s may be suspended and their club liable to a fine, the levels of which suspension and fine will be determined by the committee dealing with the case.

(e) Where a team, having lost the relevant game, is found guilty of playing an ineligible or overage player/s, the offending team mentor/s may be suspended and his/her club liable to a fine, the levels of which suspension and fine will be determined by the committee dealing with the case.

(f) Any player named on the match card is deemed to be subject to this rule regardless of whether he/she played in the relevant game.

9(a) Protest as to over age player/s, or any other reason, must be sent by registered post to the office of the SFAI General Secretary within three (3) days after the date of the game and be accompanied by the appropriate fee as determined by the SFAI Council at its first meeting of the season, for the purposes of this rule Saturdays, Sundays and Bank/Public Holidays and the day of the game are excluded.

(b) An exact copy of the protest must also be sent by registered post within the same time frame to the club against whom the protest is being lodged.

(c) Protest fee/s must be in the form of postal order or bank draft only, to the office of the General Secretary of the Association, any such fees sent in any other form or by any other method will be declared invalid and nullify the protest. Protests received from any source other than either or both of the two clubs involved in the relevant game will not be dealt with.

10. Protests are dealt with by a committee of three current members of the SFAI Council, protest committees decisions shall be final and binding subject to the right to appeal onwards to the FAI. A protest committee has the power to rule on matters of whether or not any protest was submitted according to rule and is therefore in or out of order.

11(a) Clubs and teams are expressly forbidden to make or agree fixtures arrangements between themselves without the approval of the relevant SFAI authority, any such arrangements can and will be nullified by the SFAI Executive Committee or those acting on its behalf.

(b) SFAI Cup games take precedence over affiliated League domestic fixtures, SFAI inter-League fixtures and club/s or League/s arranged tournament/s and or fixture/s of any kind. The home team will choose whether the game will be played on Saturday or Sunday for weekend fixtures except the Finals.

12(a) No club, team or affiliated League can cancel, postpone or alter the issued date and or kick off time of any SFAI Cup fixture without the consent of the regional coordinator in the regional rounds, any such alterations from the round of 32 onwards must have the consent of the SFAI General Secretary.

Any club, team or affiliated League which makes any such alterations without the required consent shall be deemed to be in breach of this rule and may be subject to sanction by the SFAI Executive Committee the extent of which sanction shall be at the sole discretion of that Committee.

(b) Emergencies will be dealt with by the regional coordinator in the regional rounds only, the SFAI General Secretary will deal with emergencies from the round of 32 onwards and all decisions issued in such circumstances are final.

(c) An application for a postponement for a school tour, or school entrance exam, may only be approved by the SFAI General Secretary in consultation with the relevant affiliated League Hon. Secretary. Clubs can be required to provide written confirmation, from the organizing body of any such tour or entrance exam, before any postponement application will be considered.

(d) Included with that confirmation must be the names of the players involved in the school tour or entrance exam. A minimum of two (2) or more such players, per individual team, are required to be affected by the school tour or entrance exam before any such application will be dealt with.

(e) Postponements where players are involved in International duties will only be granted when any single team has, at the same time, two outfield players or its goalkeeper on International duties, any player/s placed on any form of "standby" situation will not be taken into account for the purposes of this rule.

(f) The appointed referee (or his/her substitute) will decide if pitches are playable. If pitch or weather conditions cause a postponement the home team must find an alternative pitch or the fixture will revert to their opponents' ground, the arrangements for any such fixture reversal are under the control of the SFAI General Secretary.

(g) Any game started and later abandoned for weather or pitch conditions results in loss of home advantage and reversal of the venue, the arrangements for any such fixture reversal are under the control of the SFAI General Secretary.

(h) All weather playing surfaces, where available, shall be used for SFAI national cup games provided these are in complete compliance with, and certified as such, the current FAI standards/codes. This certification shall be available for inspection on demand.

(i) All visiting clubs must be notified by home clubs at least two days in advance of the fixture date should there be the possibility that an artificial surface of the required standard and certification will be used. This notification is to include details of any restrictions on the type of footwear allowed to be used on that particular pitch. This rule applies solely to notification of the type of pitch to be used and does not relate to notification of the actual fixture details.

(j) Walkovers will incur a 3 – 0 score line against the offending team, any team which concedes a walkover may be sanctioned by the SFAI Executive Committee.

(k) Claims for the award of a game must be sent in writing by registered post and signed by the relevant club Hon. Secretary to the SFAI General Secretary within three (3) days following the fixture date, for the purposes of this rule Saturdays, Sundays and Bank/Public Holidays and the day of the relevant game are excluded.

13(a) Games must commence at the appointed kick off time, any team unable to or failing to start a game within fifteen minutes after the kick off time may be deemed to have conceded a walk-over subject to investigation of the circumstances by the Executive Committee or its sub-committee. The late starting of any game shall be reported by the match referee to the SFAI General Secretary.

- (b) All SFAI national cup fixtures from the semi-final stage onwards must be refereed by three match officials.
- (c) SFAI national cup semi-final fixtures cannot be played on a local authority owned pitch.
- (d) All SFAI national cup finals shall be played at a neutral venue.
- (e) Referees fees will be paid by the home team in all SFAI Cups games except the finals.

14(a) The home team in all fixtures is responsible for stewarding at grounds and the marking of pitches etc.

- (b) Each team is responsible for supplying one football, of the regulation size and quality, at the game venue.

- (c) Match durations;
 - U/12 and U/13 age groups – 30 minutes per half
 - U/14 and U/15 age groups – 35 minutes per half
 - U/16 age group – 40 minutes per half

- (d) Ball size: All games in all age groups are to be played with the size and weight of ball as those are laid down in the current FAI Player Development Plan implementation operational booklet.

- (e) Pitch and goal sizes at the U/12 age group shall be as laid down in the current FAI Player Development Plan.

15. All games are to be played in accordance with the laws of the game, including Fifa derogations, relevant to the particular age group, if any game at the end of normal time ends in a draw, ten minutes each way extra time will be played and if following the use of extra time the game then ends in a draw, the current FIFA penalty kicks rule will be used to decide the game.