




# THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOTBALL LEAGUE HANDBOOK SEASON 2024/25





## **NIFL BOARD**

Chris Brindley (Chair) (Independent member)

Keith Boyd

Peter Clarke

Andy Conn

Nigel Lecky

Jonny Madill (Independent member)

Colin McKendry

Ciara McReynolds (Independent member)

Hubert Watson



## **NIFL COMPETITIONS COMMITTEE**

David Begley

Carla Dallas


Timmy Dixon

Elaine Junk

Gabriella Lowe

Roy McGivern

Tommy Whiteside



## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY – CLUB REPRESENTATIVES**

### **Premiership**

Ballymena United

Carrick Rangers

Cliftonville

Coleraine

Crusaders

Dungannon Swifts

Glenavon

Glentoran

Larne

Chris Selwood

Peter Clarke

David Begley

Colin McKendry

Thomas Whiteside

Keith Boyd

Frazer Follis

Paul Millar

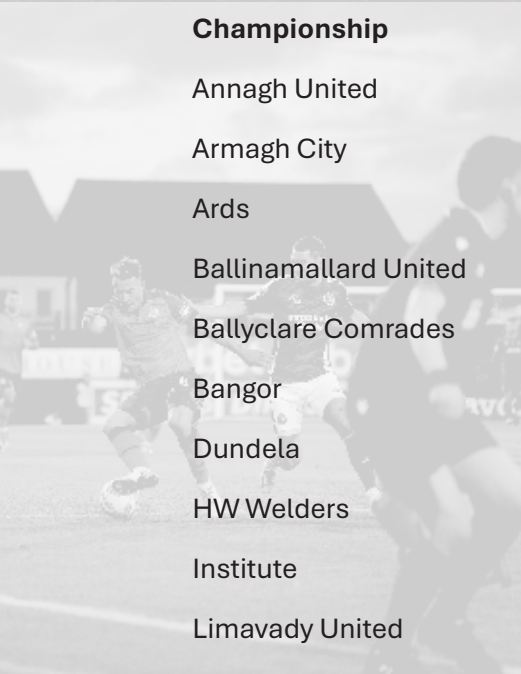
Neil Clarke



Linfield  
Loughgall  
Portadown



Roy McGivern  
David Johnston  
Mark Beattie

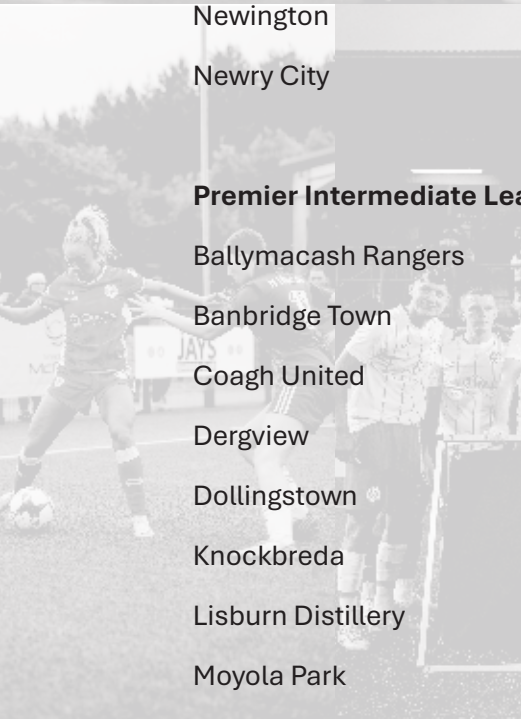


**Championship**

Annagh United  
Armagh City  
Ards  
Ballinamallard United  
Ballyclare Comrades  
Bangor  
Dundela  
HW Welders  
Institute  
Limavady United  
Newington  
Newry City

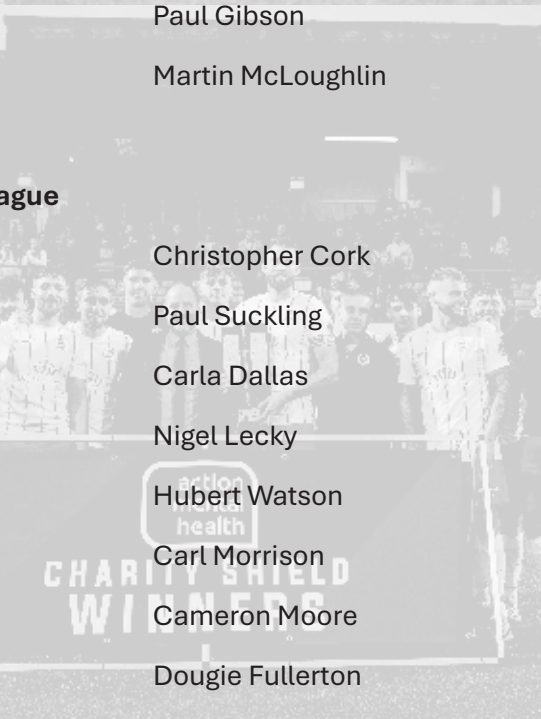


Noel Walker  
Aidan Murphy  
Warren Patton  
James Fallis  
Wayne Lewis  
Gerald Watson  
Gabriella Lowe  
Norman Downey  
Bill Anderson  
Timmy Dixon  
Paul Gibson  
Martin McLoughlin

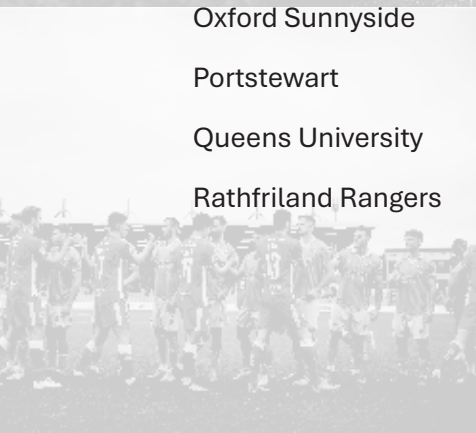


**Premier Intermediate League**

Ballymacash Rangers  
Banbridge Town  
Coagh United  
Dergview  
Dollingstown  
Knockbreda  
Lisburn Distillery  
Moyola Park  
Oxford Sunnyside  
Portstewart  
Queens University  
Rathfriland Rangers



Christopher Cork  
Paul Suckling  
Carla Dallas  
Nigel Lecky  
Hubert Watson  
Carl Morrison  
Cameron Moore  
Dougie Fullerton  
Brian Magee  
Niall Quinn  
Denis Clarke  
Lindsay Bronte





Tobermore United  
Warrenpoint Town

**Women's Premiership**



Cliftonville Ladies  
Crusaders Strikers  
Derry City Women  
Glentoran Women  
Larne Women  
Linfield Women  
Lisburn Ladies  
Lisburn Rangers  
Mid Ulster Ladies



Jonathan Black  
Connaire McGreevy



Martin Douglas  
Sue O'Neill  
John Hegarty  
Billy Clarke  
Andrew Scullion  
Andrew Conn  
Stephen Bingham  
Alistair Dickson  
Elaine Junk





**nifl**  
NORTHERN IRELAND  
FOOTBALL LEAGUE

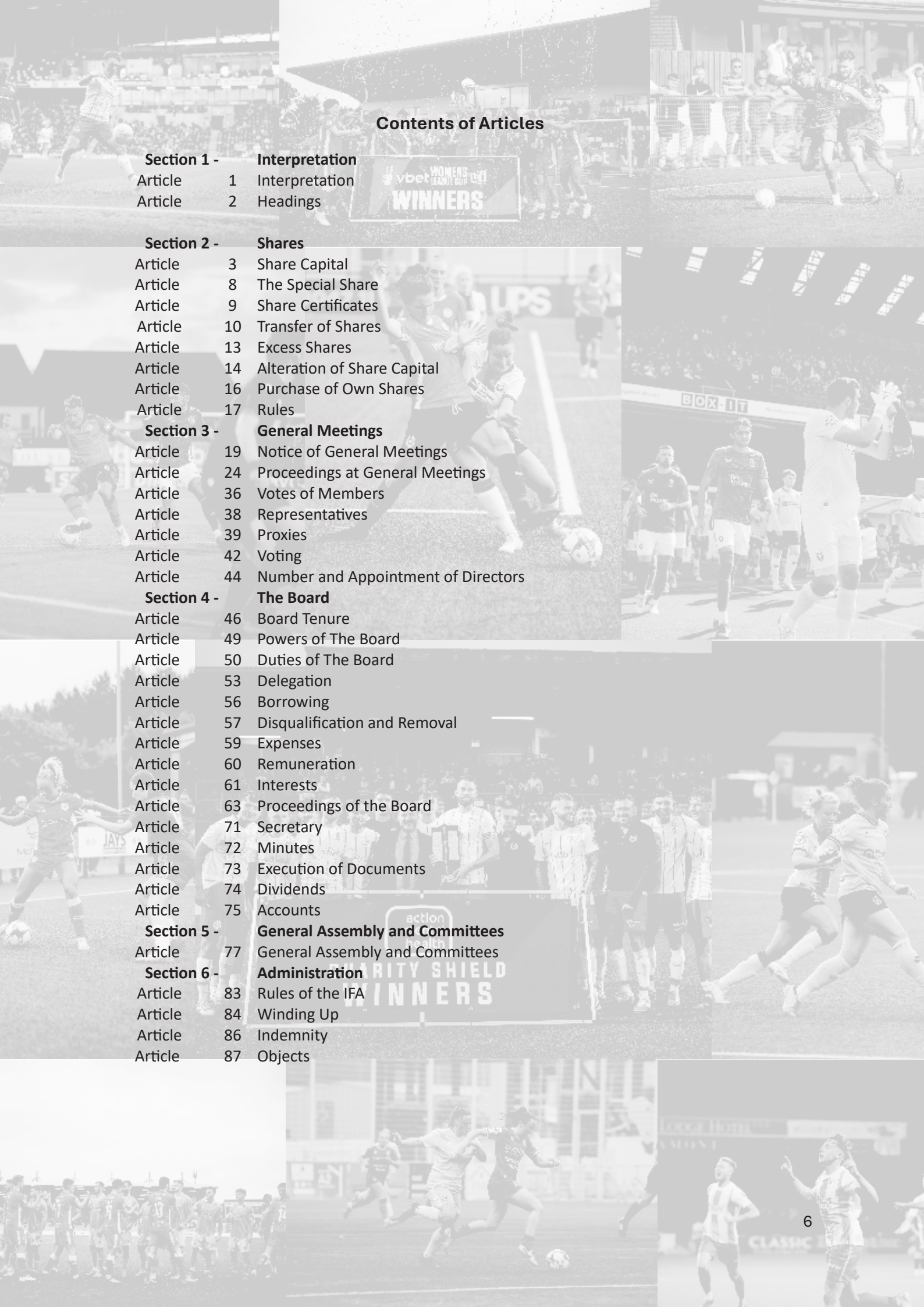
CONTENTS

Page 5	ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOTBALL LEAGUE LIMITED
Page 42	SPORTS DIRECT PREMIERSHIP RULES AND REGULATIONS SEASON 2024/25
Page 79	PLAYR-FIT CHAMPIONSHIP RULES AND REGULATIONS SEASON 2024/25
Page 111	PLAYR-FIT PREMIER INTERMEDIATE RULES AND REGULATIONS SEASON 2024/25
Page 141	BET McCLEAN LEAGU CUP RULES AND REGULATIONS SEASON 2024/25
Page 157	DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMY LEAGUE RULES AND REGULATIONS SEASON 2024/25
Page 173	PLAYER REGISTRATION REGULATIONS SEASON 2024/25



**ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION of  
THE NORTHERN IRELAND FOOTBALL  
LEAGUE LIMITED**





## Contents of Articles

<b>Section 1 -</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Article 1	Interpretation
Article 2	Headings
<b>Section 2 -</b>	<b>Shares</b>
Article 3	Share Capital
Article 8	The Special Share
Article 9	Share Certificates
Article 10	Transfer of Shares
Article 13	Excess Shares
Article 14	Alteration of Share Capital
Article 16	Purchase of Own Shares
Article 17	Rules
<b>Section 3 -</b>	<b>General Meetings</b>
Article 19	Notice of General Meetings
Article 24	Proceedings at General Meetings
Article 36	Votes of Members
Article 38	Representatives
Article 39	Proxies
Article 42	Voting
Article 44	Number and Appointment of Directors
<b>Section 4 -</b>	<b>The Board</b>
Article 46	Board Tenure
Article 49	Powers of The Board
Article 50	Duties of The Board
Article 53	Delegation
Article 56	Borrowing
Article 57	Disqualification and Removal
Article 59	Expenses
Article 60	Remuneration
Article 61	Interests
Article 63	Proceedings of the Board
Article 71	Secretary
Article 72	Minutes
Article 73	Execution of Documents
Article 74	Dividends
Article 75	Accounts
<b>Section 5 -</b>	<b>General Assembly and Committees</b>
Article 77	General Assembly and Committees
<b>Section 6 -</b>	<b>Administration</b>
Article 83	Rules of the IFA
Article 84	Winding Up
Article 86	Indemnity
Article 87	Objects

**SECTION 1 Interpretation**

**Article 1 Interpretation**

**1.1** The Model Articles for Private Companies Limited by Shares (as prescribed by Section 20 of the Companies Act 2006) in force at the date of adoption of these Articles shall not apply to the Company but the regulations contained in the following clauses (as originally adopted or as from time to time altered by Special Resolution) shall be the Articles of Association of the Company.

**1.2** In these Articles:

<b>“The Act”</b>	The Companies Act 2006 including any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force.
<b>“Agreed form”</b>	A form agreed by resolution of the Company from time to time.
<b>“The Articles”</b>	The Articles of Association of the Company and reference to a number following the word “Article” is a reference to an article so numbered in the Articles.
<b>“Association Football”</b>	The game of football as played in accordance with the rules and regulations of, or adopted by, the Irish Football Association Limited.
<b>“The Board”</b>	The board of directors for the time being of the Company.
<b>“Chairperson”</b>	The person appointed as the Chairperson pursuant to Article 47 or any acting Chairperson appointed pursuant to Article 58.1.
<b>“The Championship”</b>	A combination of Clubs playing in the division directly below the Premiership which is operated or managed by the Company.
<b>“Chief Executive Officer”</b>	The person appointed as the Chief Executive pursuant to Article 47 or any acting General Manager appointed pursuant to Article 58.1.
<b>“Club”</b>	An Association Football club or a Women’s Association Football Club which is for the time being a Member.
<b>“The Company”</b>	The Northern Ireland Football League Limited.
<b>“Clear Days”</b>	The period of a notice means that period excluding the day when the notice is given or deemed to be given and the day for which it is given or on which it is to take effect.
<b>“Director”</b>	A director of the Company.
<b>“The IFA”</b>	The Irish Football Association Limited.
<b>“The IFA Rules”</b>	The articles of association, rules and regulations for the time being of the IFA.



**“Irish Cup”**

The Irish Challenge Cup competition as organised by the IFA.

**“The League”**

The Premiership and any other league which may from time to time be operated or managed by the Company.

**“Former Companies Acts”**

Meaning set out in Section 1171 of the Act.

**“General Meeting”**

Any meeting of the Members and shall include for the purpose of the Articles (except where expressly stated) the annual general meeting and a separate class meeting of the holders of Ordinary Shares in the Company.

**“League Office”**

The registered office for the time being of the Company.

**“Member”**

An Association Football club, the name of which is entered in the register of Members as the holder of an Ordinary Share.

**“The Members’ Directors”**

The directors appointed pursuant to Article 44.

**“The Memorandum”**

The Memorandum of Association of the Company.

**“Ordinary Share”**

An ordinary share of £1 in the capital of the Company.

**“The Premiership”**

A league formed and consisting of Clubs authorised from time to time by the Rules to participate in a league formed for that purpose managed by the Company and consisting of Association Football Clubs which are from time to time Members.

**“The Premier Intermediate League”**

A combination of Clubs playing in the division below the Championship (3rd tier) which is operated or managed by the Company.

**“Representative”**

Any director or the secretary of a Club or any person who has been authorised to act as the representative of a Club as referred to in Article 38.1.

**“Resolution”**

A resolution of the Company which has been passed at a General Meeting by a majority of Members as specified in Article 29 or a resolution of the Members passed pursuant to the provisions of Article 35.

**“The Rules”**

The rules of the League as made, adopted or amended from time to time pursuant to the provisions of Article 17.

**“The Seal”**

The common seal of the Company.

**“Secretary”**

The secretary of the Company or any other person appointed to perform the duties of the secretary of the Company, including a joint, assistant or deputy secretary.

**“Special Share”**

The one special rights preference share of £1 referred to in Article 3.

**“Successor”**

Any manager, receiver, administrative receiver or liquidator appointed in any of the circumstances referred to in Article 11.1.

**“The Special Shareholder”**

The holder of the Special Share.

**“The United Kingdom”**

Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

**“Women’s Premiership”**

A Women’s League formed and consisting of clubs authorised from time to time by the rules to participate in a league formed for that purpose managed by the company.

**“Written” or “in writing”**

shall include without limitation telex telegram cable facsimile transmission or other means of telecommunication in permanent written form.

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**“The Seal”**  
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The common seal of the Company.  
The secretary of the Company or any other person appointed to perform the duties of the secretary of the Company, including a joint, assistant or deputy secretary.

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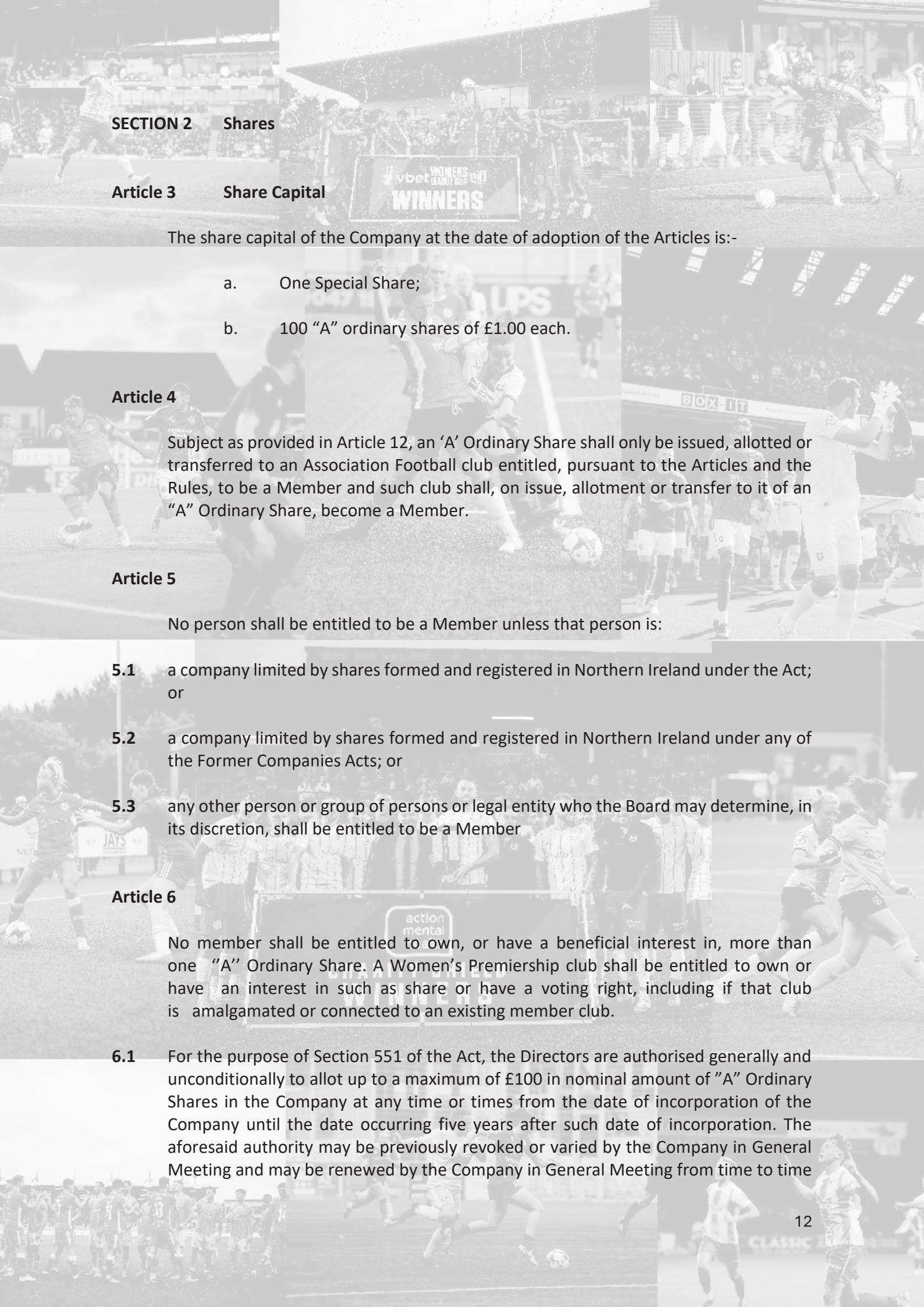
shall include without limitation telex telegram cable facsimile transmission or other means of telecommunication in permanent written form.

A reference to a person includes a body corporate and an unincorporated body of persons.

Unless the context otherwise requires, words or expressions contained in the Articles bear the same meaning as in the Act but excluding any statutory modification or re-enactment thereof not in force when the Articles or the relevant parts thereof are adopted.

## **Article 2**      **Headings**

The headings in the Articles are for the convenience only and shall not affect the interpretation of the Articles.



**SECTION 2    Shares**

**Article 3        Share Capital**

The share capital of the Company at the date of adoption of the Articles is:-

- a.        One Special Share;
- b.        100 "A" ordinary shares of £1.00 each.

**Article 4**

Subject as provided in Article 12, an 'A' Ordinary Share shall only be issued, allotted or transferred to an Association Football club entitled, pursuant to the Articles and the Rules, to be a Member and such club shall, on issue, allotment or transfer to it of an "A" Ordinary Share, become a Member.

**Article 5**

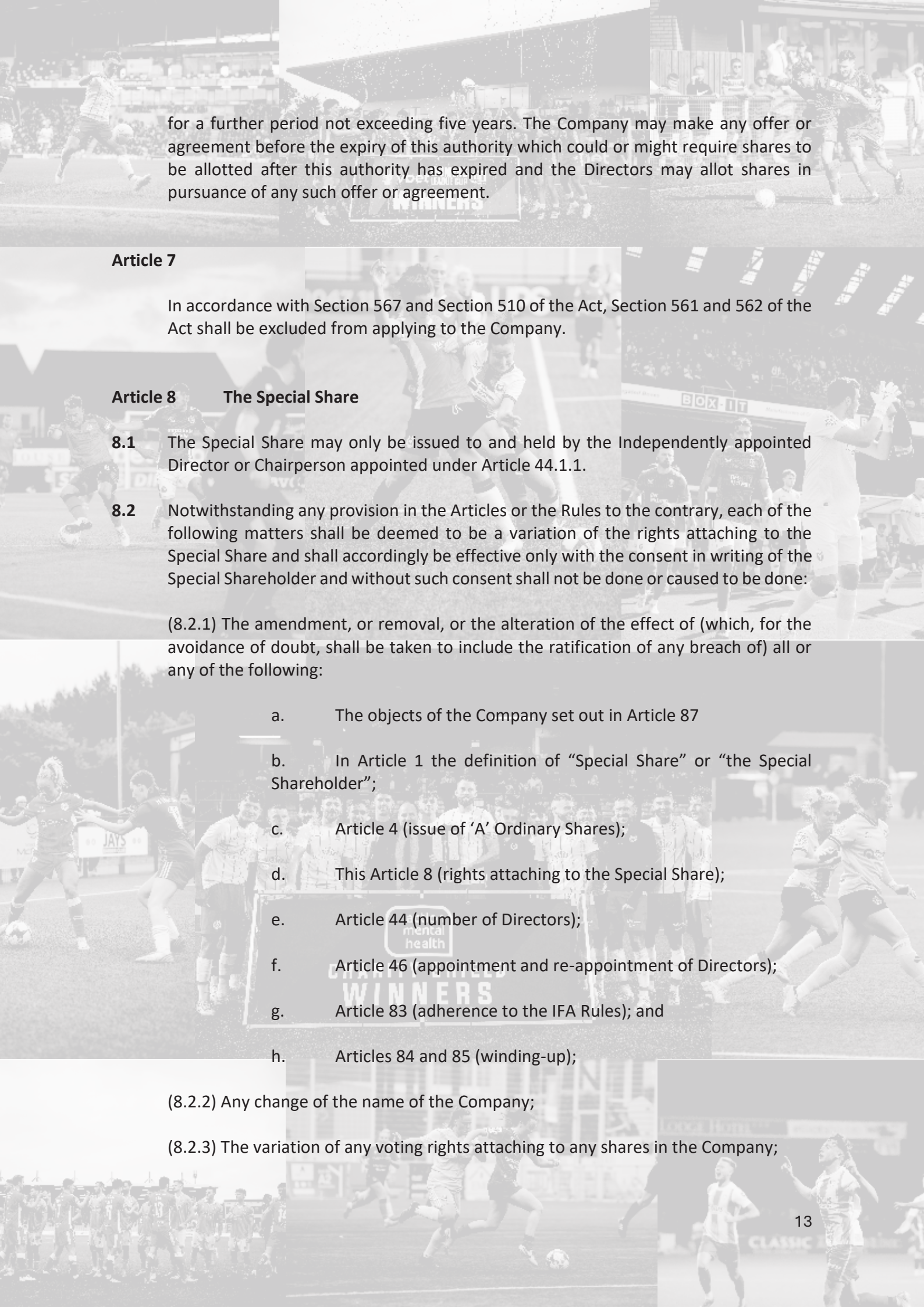
No person shall be entitled to be a Member unless that person is:

- 5.1**     a company limited by shares formed and registered in Northern Ireland under the Act; or
- 5.2**     a company limited by shares formed and registered in Northern Ireland under any of the Former Companies Acts; or
- 5.3**     any other person or group of persons or legal entity who the Board may determine, in its discretion, shall be entitled to be a Member

**Article 6**

No member shall be entitled to own, or have a beneficial interest in, more than one "A" Ordinary Share. A Women's Premiership club shall be entitled to own or have an interest in such as share or have a voting right, including if that club is amalgamated or connected to an existing member club.

- 6.1**     For the purpose of Section 551 of the Act, the Directors are authorised generally and unconditionally to allot up to a maximum of £100 in nominal amount of "A" Ordinary Shares in the Company at any time or times from the date of incorporation of the Company until the date occurring five years after such date of incorporation. The aforesaid authority may be previously revoked or varied by the Company in General Meeting and may be renewed by the Company in General Meeting from time to time



for a further period not exceeding five years. The Company may make any offer or agreement before the expiry of this authority which could or might require shares to be allotted after this authority has expired and the Directors may allot shares in pursuance of any such offer or agreement.

## Article 7

In accordance with Section 567 and Section 510 of the Act, Section 561 and 562 of the Act shall be excluded from applying to the Company.

## Article 8 The Special Share

**8.1** The Special Share may only be issued to and held by the Independently appointed Director or Chairperson appointed under Article 44.1.1.

**8.2** Notwithstanding any provision in the Articles or the Rules to the contrary, each of the following matters shall be deemed to be a variation of the rights attaching to the Special Share and shall accordingly be effective only with the consent in writing of the Special Shareholder and without such consent shall not be done or caused to be done:

(8.2.1) The amendment, or removal, or the alteration of the effect of (which, for the avoidance of doubt, shall be taken to include the ratification of any breach of) all or any of the following:

- a. The objects of the Company set out in Article 87
- b. In Article 1 the definition of “Special Share” or “the Special Shareholder”;
- c. Article 4 (issue of ‘A’ Ordinary Shares);
- d. This Article 8 (rights attaching to the Special Share);
- e. Article 44 (number of Directors);
- f. Article 46 (appointment and re-appointment of Directors);
- g. Article 83 (adherence to the IFA Rules); and
- h. Articles 84 and 85 (winding-up);

(8.2.2) Any change of the name of the Company;

(8.2.3) The variation of any voting rights attaching to any shares in the Company;

(8.2.4) The making and adoption of or any amendment to, removal of or waiver of any of the provisions of the Rules which relate to:

- a. The name of the “Northern Ireland Football League Limited”
- b. The number of Members and promotion to and relegation from the “Northern Ireland Football League”;
- c. The criteria for membership of the League;
- d. The arranging of fixtures on or prior to specified international match dates and commitment to support the IFA in relation to international matches;
- e. The obligation of each Club to enter the Irish Challenge Cup / Intermediate Challenge Cup as required;
- f. The ownership of more than one Club.

**8.3** The Special Shareholder shall have all the rights of a Member in relation to receiving notice of and attending and speaking at General Meetings and to receiving minutes of General Meetings. The Special Shareholder shall have the right to vote at General Meetings.

**8.4** On any distribution of capital on a winding up of the Company, the Special Shareholder shall be entitled to repayment of the capital paid up or treated for the purposes of the Act or the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 as paid up on the Special Share in priority to any repayment of capital to any Member. The Special

Share shall carry no other right to participate in the capital, and no right to participate in the profits, of the Company.

## **Article 9 Share Certificates**

**9.1** Every Club, upon being registered as the holder of an Ordinary Share, shall be entitled without payment to one certificate for the Ordinary Share so held. Every certificate shall be sealed with the Seal and shall specify the distinguishing number of the Ordinary Share to which it relates and the amount paid up thereon.

**9.2** If a share certificate is defaced, worn-out, lost or destroyed, it may be renewed on such terms (if any) as to evidence and indemnity and payment of the expenses reasonably incurred by the Company in investigating such evidence as the Board may determine but otherwise free of charge, and (in the case of defacement or wearing-out of the share certificate) subject to delivery up of the old certificate.

## **Article 10      Transfer of Shares**

**10.1** The instrument of transfer of an Ordinary Share may be in any usual form or in any other form which the Board may approve and shall be executed by or on behalf of the transferor and, unless the share is fully paid, by or on behalf of the transferee.

**10.2** The Board shall refuse to register the transfer of an Ordinary Share to a person who is not entitled, pursuant to the Articles or the Rules, to be a Member.

**10.3** The Board may also refuse to register the transfer of an Ordinary Share unless:

**10.3.1** The instrument of transfer relating thereto is lodged at the League Office or at such other place as the Board may appoint and is accompanied by the certificate for the Ordinary Share to which it relates and such other evidence as the Board may reasonably require to show the right of the transferor to make the transfer; and

**10.3.2** It is in respect of only one Ordinary Share.

## **Article 11**

**11.1** If a Member;

(11.1.1) Becomes unable to pay its debts as they fall due within the meaning of Article 103 of the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, or

(11.1.2) Enters into any arrangement or composition with its creditors, or

(11.1.3) Goes into administration or suffers an administrator to be appointed to it, or

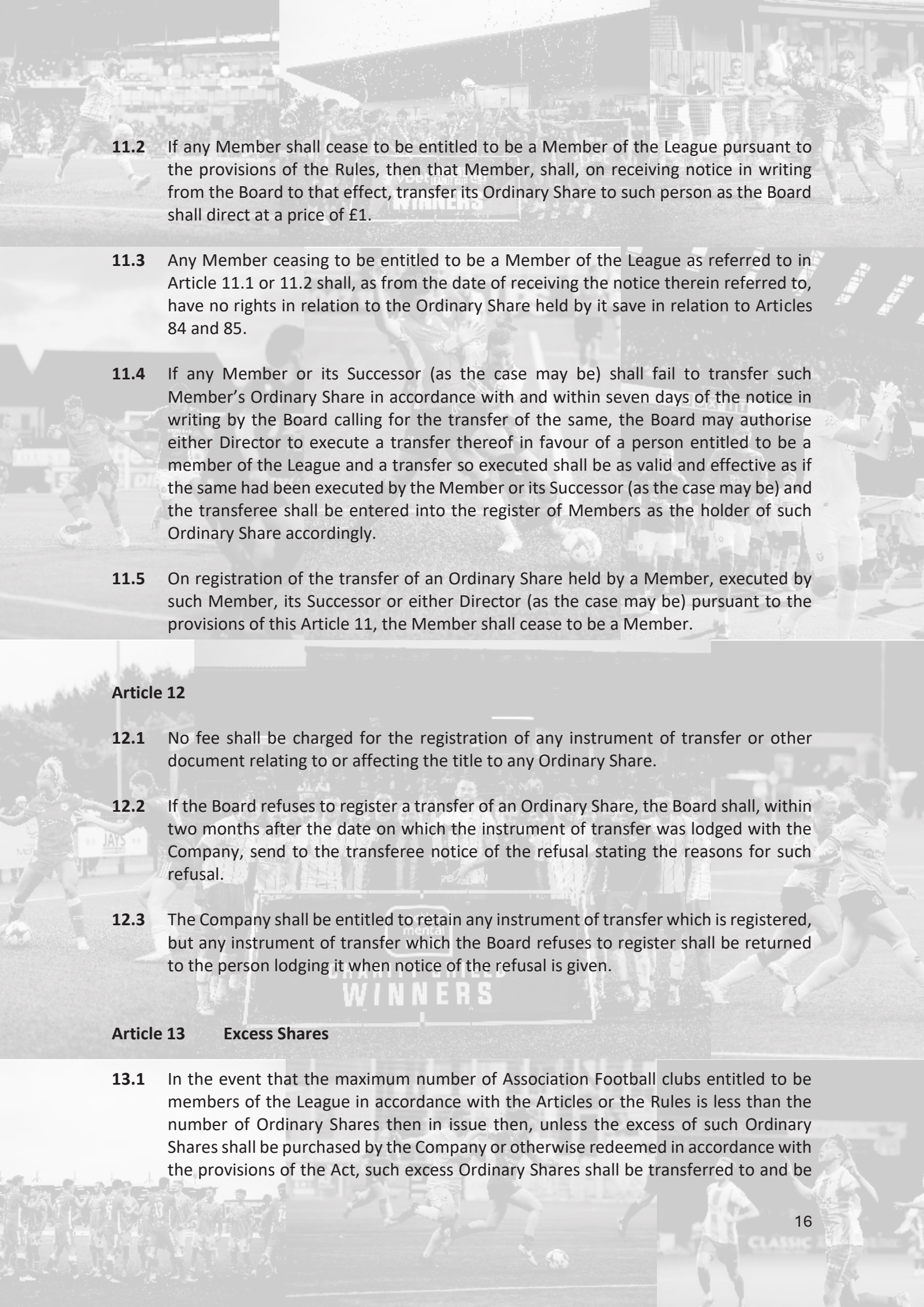
(11.1.4) Suffers a receiver or administrative receiver to be appointed to its undertaking or any part thereof, or

(11.1.5) Goes into liquidation, either or compulsory or voluntary, save for the purpose of reconstruction or amalgamation, or

(11.1.6) Suffers an insolvency process in any other jurisdiction analogous to those referred to in paragraphs 11.1.1 to 11.1.5 (inclusive), or

(11.1.7) Ceases or forms an intention to cease wholly or substantially to carry on its business (save for the purpose of reconstruction or amalgamation in accordance with a scheme of proposals previously submitted to the Board and approved by it in writing) then the Board may at any time thereafter by notice in writing call upon the relevant Successor to transfer the Ordinary Share held by such Member to such person as the Board shall direct at a price of £1 and on receipt of such notice the Member shall thereupon cease to be entitled to be a Member of the League.





**11.2** If any Member shall cease to be entitled to be a Member of the League pursuant to the provisions of the Rules, then that Member, shall, on receiving notice in writing from the Board to that effect, transfer its Ordinary Share to such person as the Board shall direct at a price of £1.

**11.3** Any Member ceasing to be entitled to be a Member of the League as referred to in Article 11.1 or 11.2 shall, as from the date of receiving the notice therein referred to, have no rights in relation to the Ordinary Share held by it save in relation to Articles 84 and 85.

**11.4** If any Member or its Successor (as the case may be) shall fail to transfer such Member's Ordinary Share in accordance with and within seven days of the notice in writing by the Board calling for the transfer of the same, the Board may authorise either Director to execute a transfer thereof in favour of a person entitled to be a member of the League and a transfer so executed shall be as valid and effective as if the same had been executed by the Member or its Successor (as the case may be) and the transferee shall be entered into the register of Members as the holder of such Ordinary Share accordingly.

**11.5** On registration of the transfer of an Ordinary Share held by a Member, executed by such Member, its Successor or either Director (as the case may be) pursuant to the provisions of this Article 11, the Member shall cease to be a Member.

## **Article 12**


**12.1** No fee shall be charged for the registration of any instrument of transfer or other document relating to or affecting the title to any Ordinary Share.

**12.2** If the Board refuses to register a transfer of an Ordinary Share, the Board shall, within two months after the date on which the instrument of transfer was lodged with the Company, send to the transferee notice of the refusal stating the reasons for such refusal.

**12.3** The Company shall be entitled to retain any instrument of transfer which is registered, but any instrument of transfer which the Board refuses to register shall be returned to the person lodging it when notice of the refusal is given.

## **Article 13 Excess Shares**

**13.1** In the event that the maximum number of Association Football clubs entitled to be members of the League in accordance with the Articles or the Rules is less than the number of Ordinary Shares then in issue then, unless the excess of such Ordinary Shares shall be purchased by the Company or otherwise redeemed in accordance with the provisions of the Act, such excess Ordinary Shares shall be transferred to and be



registered in the name of the Secretary and, whilst so registered, such Ordinary Shares shall carry no voting, dividend or other rights, including on any winding up of the Company.

- 13.2** On any change of the Secretary, any Ordinary Shares so registered in the name of the Secretary shall forthwith be transferred into the name of the person holding such office following such change and in the event that such shares shall not be so transferred within fourteen days of the change of the Secretary, the Board may authorise either the Director to execute a transfer of such shares in favour of the Secretary for the time being of the Company and a transfer so executed shall be as valid and effective as if the same had been executed by the holder of such shares and the transferee Secretary shall be entered in the register as the holder of such Ordinary Shares accordingly.

#### **Article 14      Alteration of Share Capital**

The Company may by Resolution cancel Ordinary Shares which, at the date of the passing of the Resolution, have not been issued and allotted or agreed to be issued and allotted to any Association Football club entitled thereto and diminish the amount of its share capital by the amount of the Shares so cancelled.

#### **Article 15**

Subject to the provisions of the Act, the Company may by special resolution reduce its share capital, any capital redemption reserve and any share premium account.

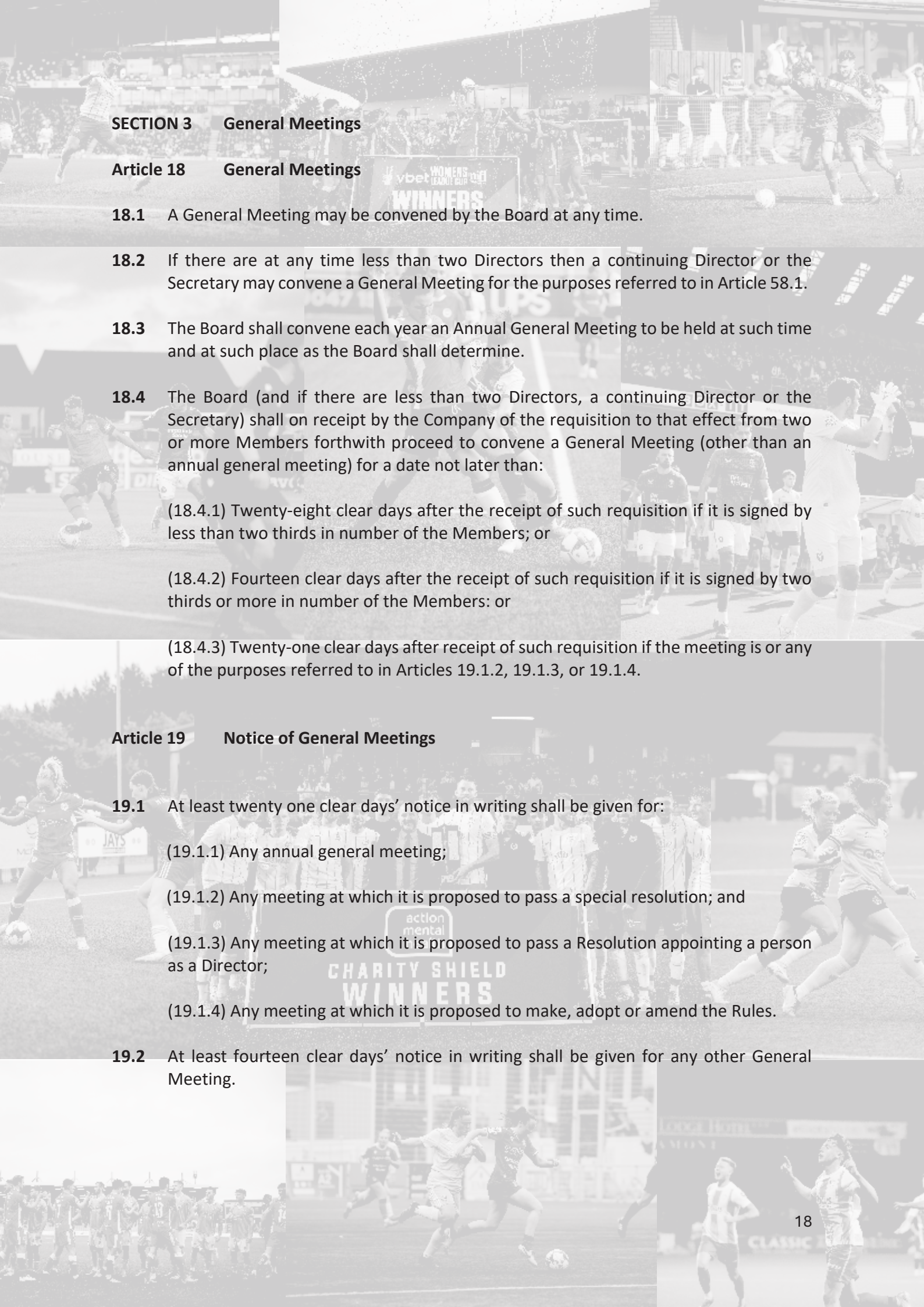
#### **Article 16      Purchase of Own Shares**

Subject to the provisions of the Act, the Company may purchase its own shares (including any redeemable shares) and make a payment in respect of the redemption or purchase of its own shares otherwise than out of distributable profits of the Company or the proceeds of a fresh issue of shares.

#### **Article 17      Rules**

- 17.1** The Company may by Resolution make and adopt and from time to time amend the Rules for the purpose of regulating all matters affecting the organisation and management of the League to the extent not provided for in, and so far as the same do not conflict with, the provisions of the Articles.

- 17.2** Unless otherwise stated in the Articles or the Rules, the provisions of the Articles shall prevail in the event of any conflict with any of the provisions of the Rules.



**SECTION 3    General Meetings**

**Article 18    General Meetings**

**18.1** A General Meeting may be convened by the Board at any time.

**18.2** If there are at any time less than two Directors then a continuing Director or the Secretary may convene a General Meeting for the purposes referred to in Article 58.1.

**18.3** The Board shall convene each year an Annual General Meeting to be held at such time and at such place as the Board shall determine.

**18.4** The Board (and if there are less than two Directors, a continuing Director or the Secretary) shall on receipt by the Company of the requisition to that effect from two or more Members forthwith proceed to convene a General Meeting (other than an annual general meeting) for a date not later than:

(18.4.1) Twenty-eight clear days after the receipt of such requisition if it is signed by less than two thirds in number of the Members; or

(18.4.2) Fourteen clear days after the receipt of such requisition if it is signed by two thirds or more in number of the Members: or

(18.4.3) Twenty-one clear days after receipt of such requisition if the meeting is or any of the purposes referred to in Articles 19.1.2, 19.1.3, or 19.1.4.

**Article 19    Notice of General Meetings**

**19.1** At least twenty one clear days' notice in writing shall be given for:

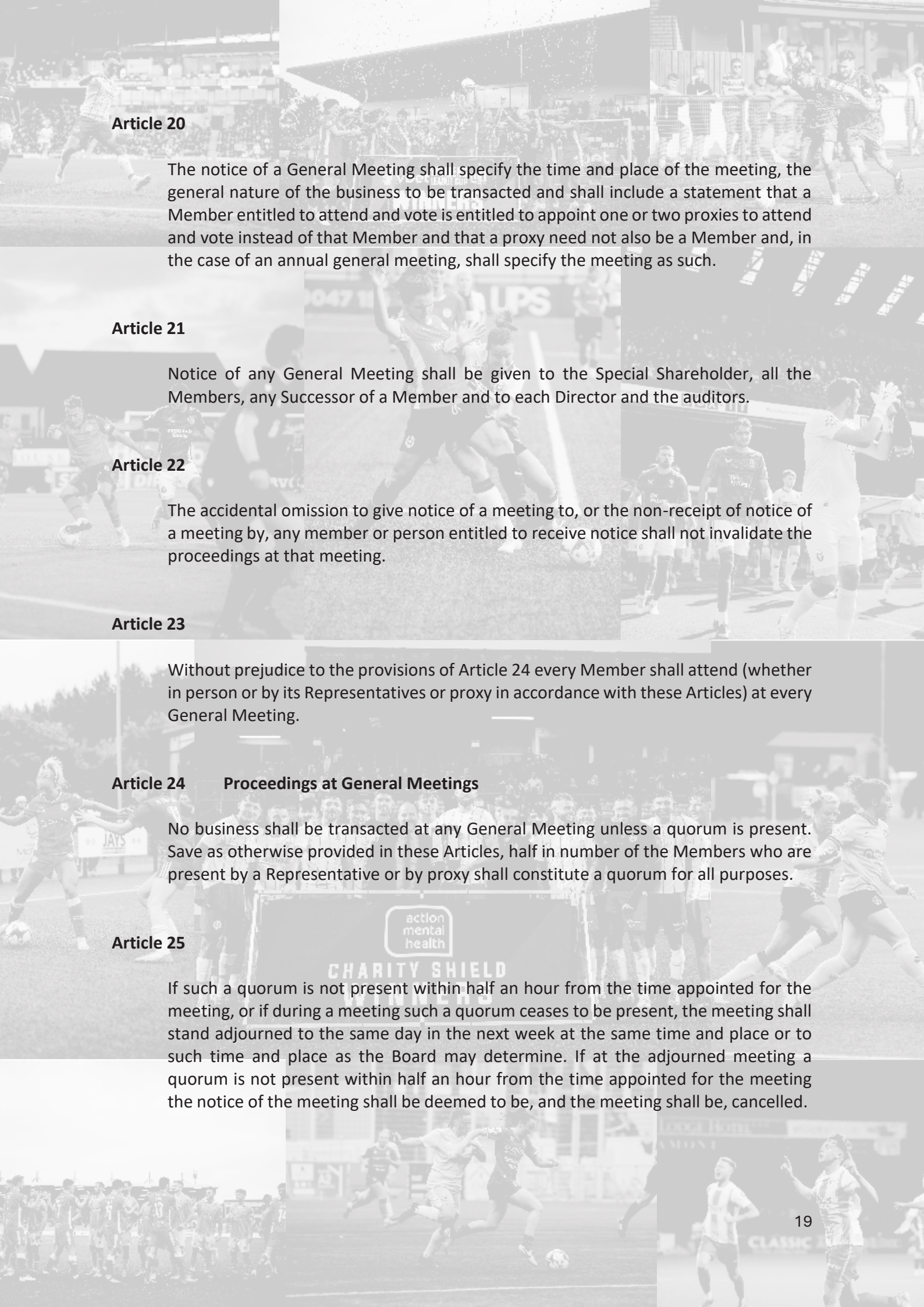
(19.1.1) Any annual general meeting;

(19.1.2) Any meeting at which it is proposed to pass a special resolution; and

(19.1.3) Any meeting at which it is proposed to pass a Resolution appointing a person as a Director;

(19.1.4) Any meeting at which it is proposed to make, adopt or amend the Rules.

**19.2** At least fourteen clear days' notice in writing shall be given for any other General Meeting.



## Article 20

The notice of a General Meeting shall specify the time and place of the meeting, the general nature of the business to be transacted and shall include a statement that a Member entitled to attend and vote is entitled to appoint one or two proxies to attend and vote instead of that Member and that a proxy need not also be a Member and, in the case of an annual general meeting, shall specify the meeting as such.

## Article 21

Notice of any General Meeting shall be given to the Special Shareholder, all the Members, any Successor of a Member and to each Director and the auditors.

## Article 22

The accidental omission to give notice of a meeting to, or the non-receipt of notice of a meeting by, any member or person entitled to receive notice shall not invalidate the proceedings at that meeting.

## Article 23


Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 24 every Member shall attend (whether in person or by its Representatives or proxy in accordance with these Articles) at every General Meeting.

## Article 24 Proceedings at General Meetings

No business shall be transacted at any General Meeting unless a quorum is present. Save as otherwise provided in these Articles, half in number of the Members who are present by a Representative or by proxy shall constitute a quorum for all purposes.

## Article 25

If such a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting, or if during a meeting such a quorum ceases to be present, the meeting shall stand adjourned to the same day in the next week at the same time and place or to such time and place as the Board may determine. If at the adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting the notice of the meeting shall be deemed to be, and the meeting shall be, cancelled.



## Article 26

The Chairperson shall preside as chairperson of the meeting. If the Chairperson is unable to act as chairperson or is not present within fifteen minutes after the time appointed for holding the meeting, the Members present shall elect one of the Representatives who is present to be the chairperson of the meeting.

## Article 27

Notwithstanding that they are not a Member, a Director shall be entitled to attend and speak at any General Meeting.

## Article 28

The chairperson of the meeting may, with the consent of a General Meeting at which a quorum is present (and shall, if so directed by the meeting), adjourn the meeting from time to time and from place to place but no business shall be transacted at an adjourned meeting other than business which might properly have been transacted at the meeting had the adjournment not taken place. When a meeting is adjourned for thirty days or more notice shall be given in accordance with Article 19 specifying the time and place of the adjourned meeting and the general nature of the business to be transacted. Otherwise it shall not be necessary to give any such notice.

## Article 29

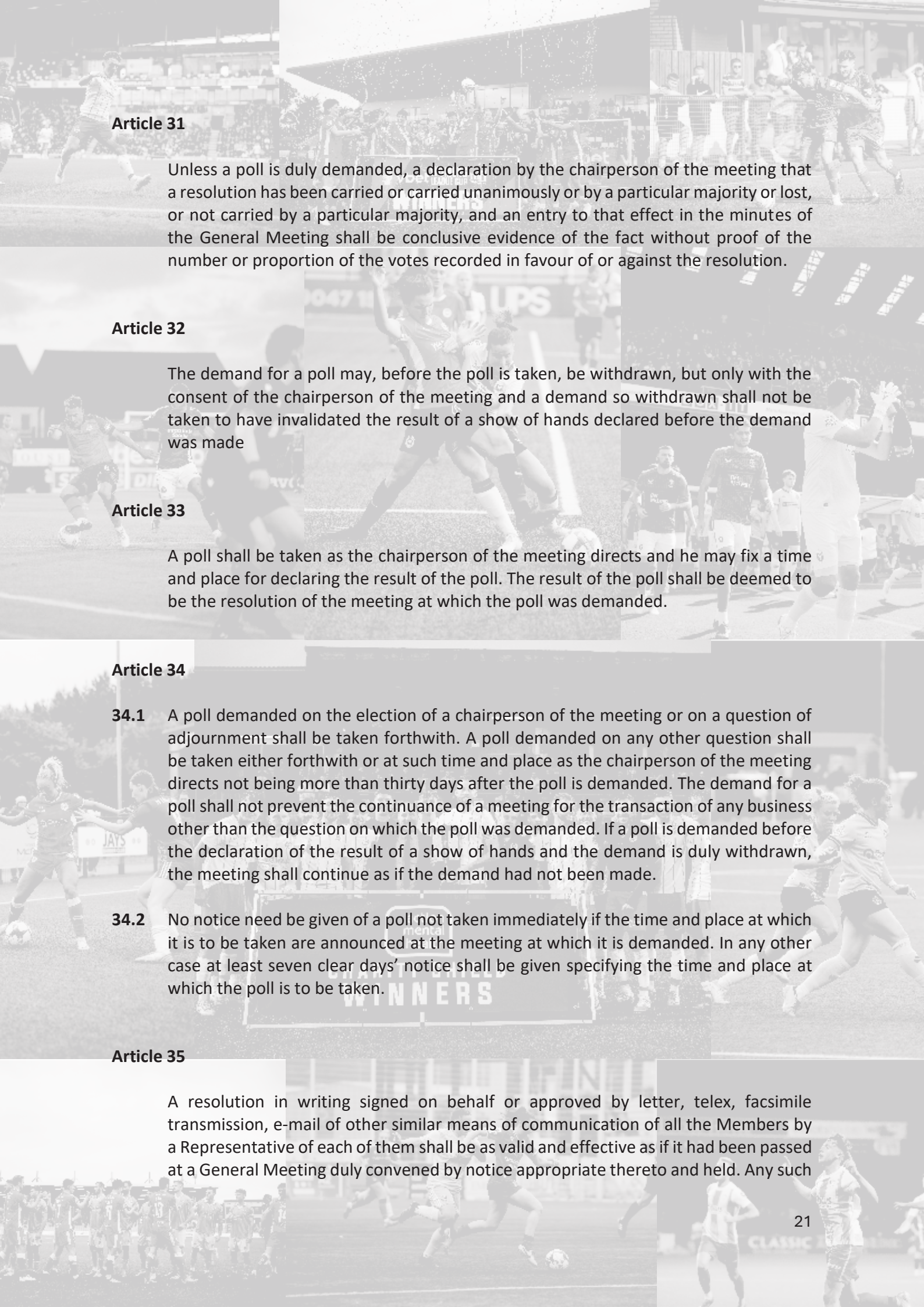
Except where the Act specifies that a particular resolution of the Company requires a greater majority, two-thirds of such Members who are present and who vote by their Representative or by proxy at a General Meeting of which notice has been duly given shall be required for the passing of all resolutions of the Company.

## Article 30

**30.1** A resolution put to the vote of a General Meeting shall be decided on a show of hands unless before, or on the declaration of the result of, the show of hands, a poll is duly demanded. Subject to the provisions of the Act, a poll may be demanded:

(30.1.1) By the chairperson of the meeting; or

(30.1.2) By at least two Members;  
and a demand by a person as Representative of or proxy for a Member shall be the same as a demand by the Member.

A collage of grayscale photographs from various soccer matches, showing players in action, goalkeepers, and spectators. The images are layered and semi-transparent, creating a textured background for the text.

### Article 31

Unless a poll is duly demanded, a declaration by the chairperson of the meeting that a resolution has been carried or carried unanimously or by a particular majority or lost, or not carried by a particular majority, and an entry to that effect in the minutes of the General Meeting shall be conclusive evidence of the fact without proof of the number or proportion of the votes recorded in favour of or against the resolution.

### Article 32

The demand for a poll may, before the poll is taken, be withdrawn, but only with the consent of the chairperson of the meeting and a demand so withdrawn shall not be taken to have invalidated the result of a show of hands declared before the demand was made

### Article 33

A poll shall be taken as the chairperson of the meeting directs and he may fix a time and place for declaring the result of the poll. The result of the poll shall be deemed to be the resolution of the meeting at which the poll was demanded.

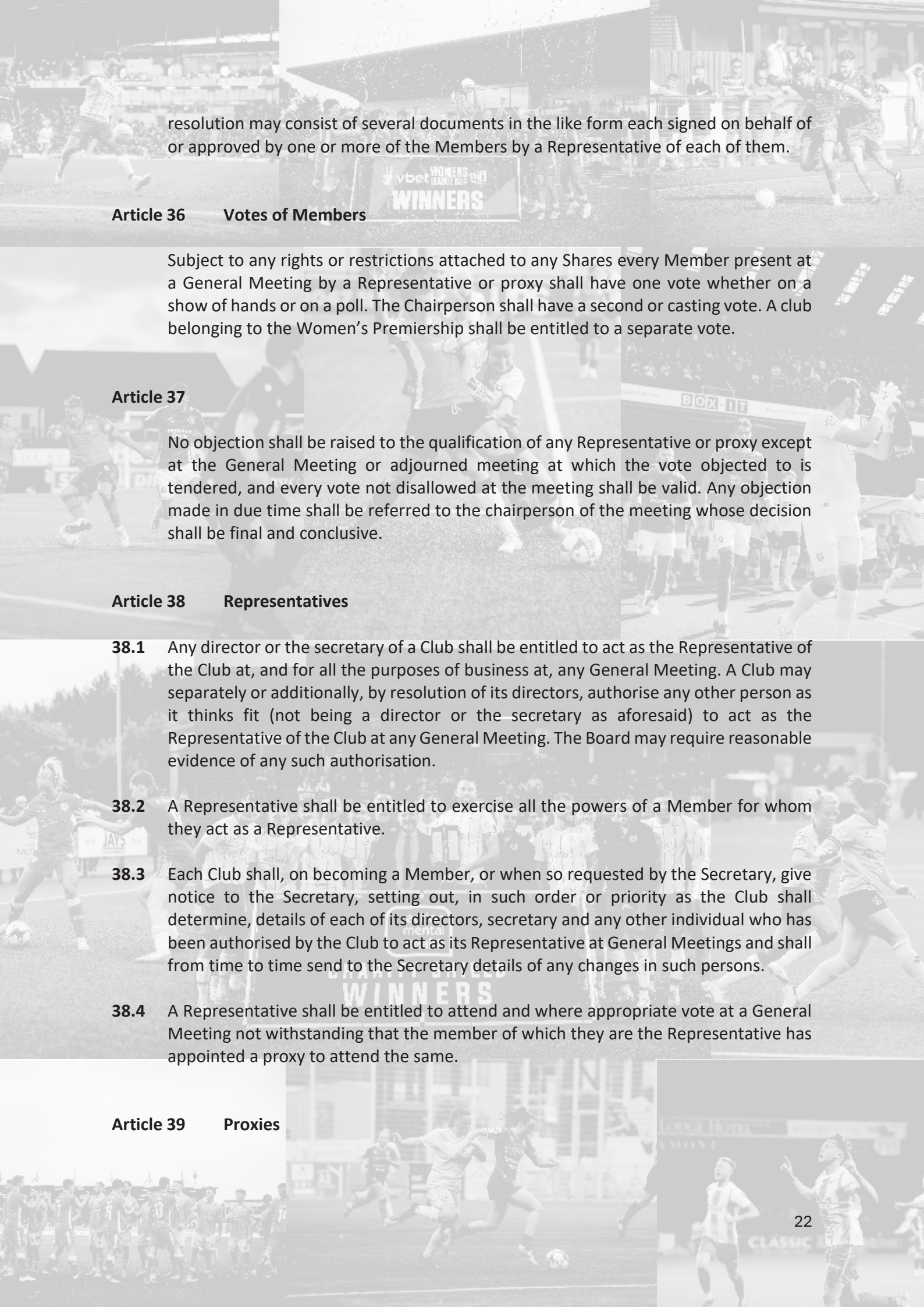
### Article 34

**34.1** A poll demanded on the election of a chairperson of the meeting or on a question of adjournment shall be taken forthwith. A poll demanded on any other question shall be taken either forthwith or at such time and place as the chairperson of the meeting directs not being more than thirty days after the poll is demanded. The demand for a poll shall not prevent the continuance of a meeting for the transaction of any business other than the question on which the poll was demanded. If a poll is demanded before the declaration of the result of a show of hands and the demand is duly withdrawn, the meeting shall continue as if the demand had not been made.

**34.2** No notice need be given of a poll not taken immediately if the time and place at which it is to be taken are announced at the meeting at which it is demanded. In any other case at least seven clear days' notice shall be given specifying the time and place at which the poll is to be taken.

### Article 35

A resolution in writing signed on behalf or approved by letter, telex, facsimile transmission, e-mail or other similar means of communication of all the Members by a Representative of each of them shall be as valid and effective as if it had been passed at a General Meeting duly convened by notice appropriate thereto and held. Any such



resolution may consist of several documents in the like form each signed on behalf of or approved by one or more of the Members by a Representative of each of them.

#### **Article 36      Votes of Members**

Subject to any rights or restrictions attached to any Shares every Member present at a General Meeting by a Representative or proxy shall have one vote whether on a show of hands or on a poll. The Chairperson shall have a second or casting vote. A club belonging to the Women's Premiership shall be entitled to a separate vote.

#### **Article 37**

No objection shall be raised to the qualification of any Representative or proxy except at the General Meeting or adjourned meeting at which the vote objected to is tendered, and every vote not disallowed at the meeting shall be valid. Any objection made in due time shall be referred to the chairperson of the meeting whose decision shall be final and conclusive.

#### **Article 38      Representatives**

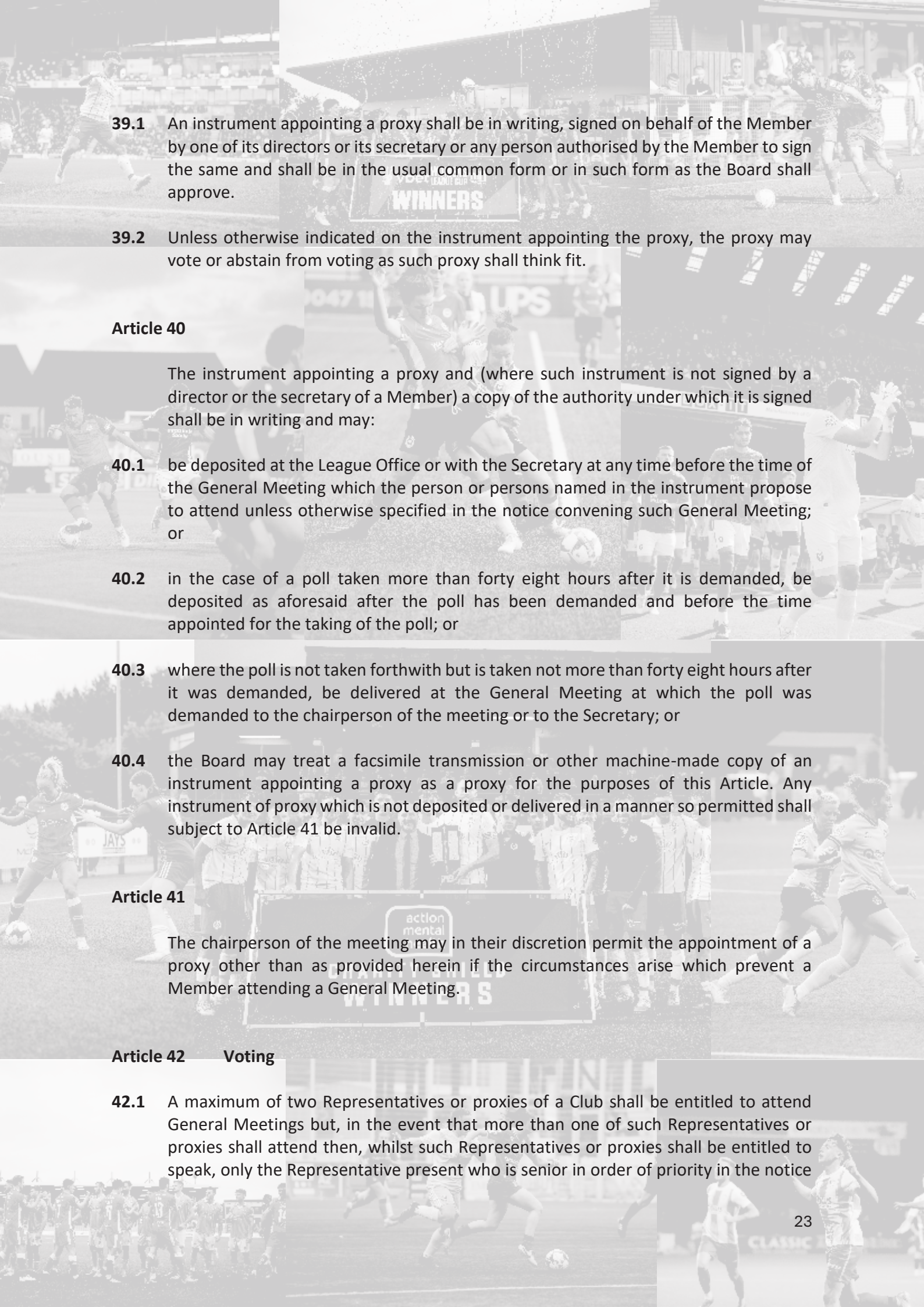
**38.1** Any director or the secretary of a Club shall be entitled to act as the Representative of the Club at, and for all the purposes of business at, any General Meeting. A Club may separately or additionally, by resolution of its directors, authorise any other person as it thinks fit (not being a director or the secretary as aforesaid) to act as the Representative of the Club at any General Meeting. The Board may require reasonable evidence of any such authorisation.

**38.2** A Representative shall be entitled to exercise all the powers of a Member for whom they act as a Representative.

**38.3** Each Club shall, on becoming a Member, or when so requested by the Secretary, give notice to the Secretary, setting out, in such order or priority as the Club shall determine, details of each of its directors, secretary and any other individual who has been authorised by the Club to act as its Representative at General Meetings and shall from time to time send to the Secretary details of any changes in such persons.

**38.4** A Representative shall be entitled to attend and where appropriate vote at a General Meeting notwithstanding that the member of which they are the Representative has appointed a proxy to attend the same.

#### **Article 39      Proxies**



**39.1** An instrument appointing a proxy shall be in writing, signed on behalf of the Member by one of its directors or its secretary or any person authorised by the Member to sign the same and shall be in the usual common form or in such form as the Board shall approve.

**39.2** Unless otherwise indicated on the instrument appointing the proxy, the proxy may vote or abstain from voting as such proxy shall think fit.

#### **Article 40**

The instrument appointing a proxy and (where such instrument is not signed by a director or the secretary of a Member) a copy of the authority under which it is signed shall be in writing and may:

**40.1** be deposited at the League Office or with the Secretary at any time before the time of the General Meeting which the person or persons named in the instrument propose to attend unless otherwise specified in the notice convening such General Meeting; or

**40.2** in the case of a poll taken more than forty eight hours after it is demanded, be deposited as aforesaid after the poll has been demanded and before the time appointed for the taking of the poll; or

**40.3** where the poll is not taken forthwith but is taken not more than forty eight hours after it was demanded, be delivered at the General Meeting at which the poll was demanded to the chairperson of the meeting or to the Secretary; or

**40.4** the Board may treat a facsimile transmission or other machine-made copy of an instrument appointing a proxy as a proxy for the purposes of this Article. Any instrument of proxy which is not deposited or delivered in a manner so permitted shall subject to Article 41 be invalid.

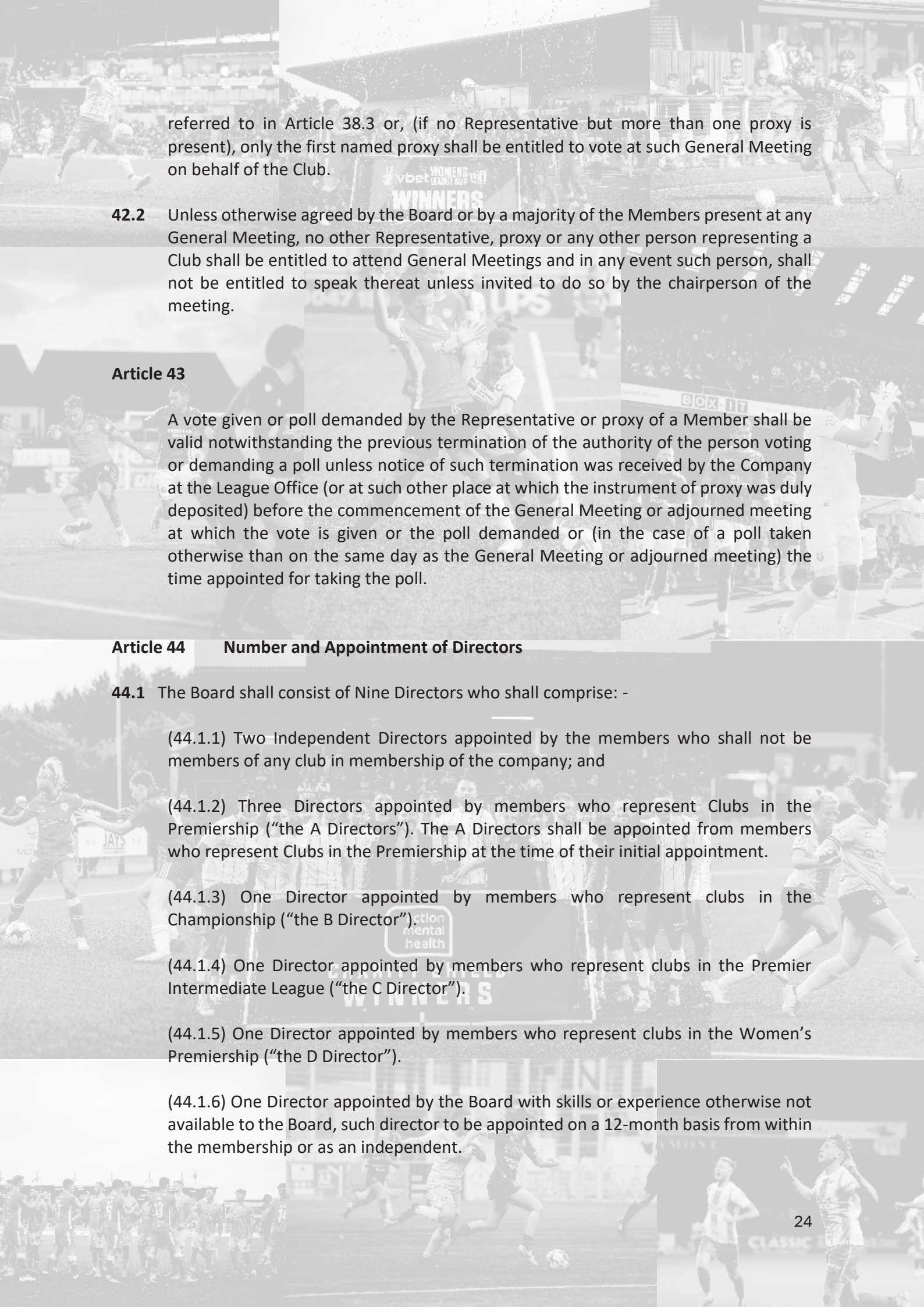
#### **Article 41**

The chairperson of the meeting may in their discretion permit the appointment of a proxy other than as provided herein if the circumstances arise which prevent a Member attending a General Meeting.

#### **Article 42 Voting**

**42.1** A maximum of two Representatives or proxies of a Club shall be entitled to attend General Meetings but, in the event that more than one of such Representatives or proxies shall attend then, whilst such Representatives or proxies shall be entitled to speak, only the Representative present who is senior in order of priority in the notice





referred to in Article 38.3 or, (if no Representative but more than one proxy is present), only the first named proxy shall be entitled to vote at such General Meeting on behalf of the Club.

**42.2** Unless otherwise agreed by the Board or by a majority of the Members present at any General Meeting, no other Representative, proxy or any other person representing a Club shall be entitled to attend General Meetings and in any event such person, shall not be entitled to speak thereat unless invited to do so by the chairperson of the meeting.

#### **Article 43**

A vote given or poll demanded by the Representative or proxy of a Member shall be valid notwithstanding the previous termination of the authority of the person voting or demanding a poll unless notice of such termination was received by the Company at the League Office (or at such other place at which the instrument of proxy was duly deposited) before the commencement of the General Meeting or adjourned meeting at which the vote is given or the poll demanded or (in the case of a poll taken otherwise than on the same day as the General Meeting or adjourned meeting) the time appointed for taking the poll.

#### **Article 44 Number and Appointment of Directors**

**44.1** The Board shall consist of Nine Directors who shall comprise: -

(44.1.1) Two Independent Directors appointed by the members who shall not be members of any club in membership of the company; and

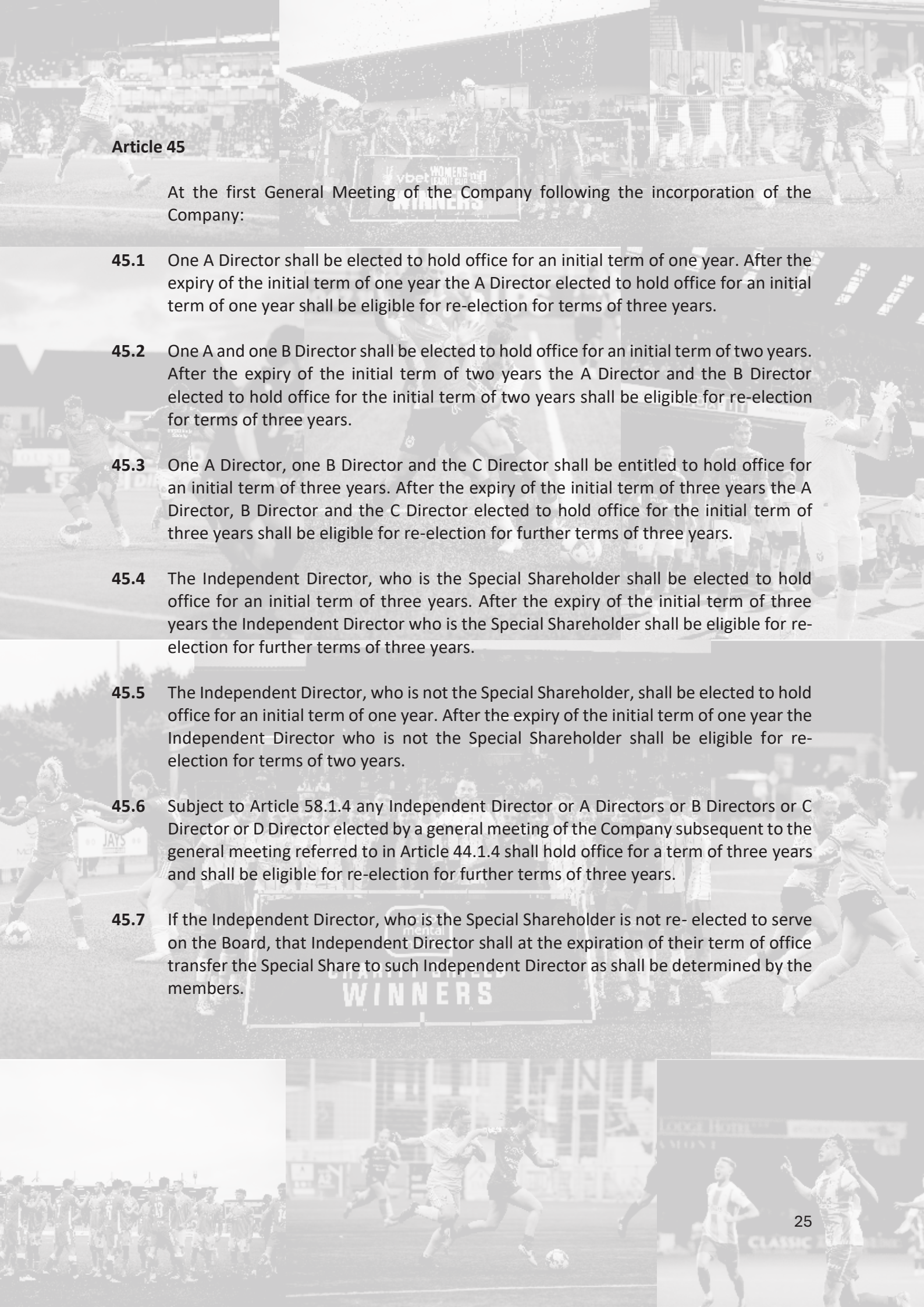
(44.1.2) Three Directors appointed by members who represent Clubs in the Premiership ("the A Directors"). The A Directors shall be appointed from members who represent Clubs in the Premiership at the time of their initial appointment.

(44.1.3) One Director appointed by members who represent clubs in the Championship ("the B Director").

(44.1.4) One Director appointed by members who represent clubs in the Premier Intermediate League ("the C Director").

(44.1.5) One Director appointed by members who represent clubs in the Women's Premiership ("the D Director").

(44.1.6) One Director appointed by the Board with skills or experience otherwise not available to the Board, such director to be appointed on a 12-month basis from within the membership or as an independent.



**Article 45**

At the first General Meeting of the Company following the incorporation of the Company:

- 45.1** One A Director shall be elected to hold office for an initial term of one year. After the expiry of the initial term of one year the A Director elected to hold office for an initial term of one year shall be eligible for re-election for terms of three years.
- 45.2** One A and one B Director shall be elected to hold office for an initial term of two years. After the expiry of the initial term of two years the A Director and the B Director elected to hold office for the initial term of two years shall be eligible for re-election for terms of three years.
- 45.3** One A Director, one B Director and the C Director shall be entitled to hold office for an initial term of three years. After the expiry of the initial term of three years the A Director, B Director and the C Director elected to hold office for the initial term of three years shall be eligible for re-election for further terms of three years.
- 45.4** The Independent Director, who is the Special Shareholder shall be elected to hold office for an initial term of three years. After the expiry of the initial term of three years the Independent Director who is the Special Shareholder shall be eligible for re-election for further terms of three years.
- 45.5** The Independent Director, who is not the Special Shareholder, shall be elected to hold office for an initial term of one year. After the expiry of the initial term of one year the Independent Director who is not the Special Shareholder shall be eligible for re-election for terms of two years.
- 45.6** Subject to Article 58.1.4 any Independent Director or A Directors or B Directors or C Director or D Director elected by a general meeting of the Company subsequent to the general meeting referred to in Article 44.1.4 shall hold office for a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-election for further terms of three years.
- 45.7** If the Independent Director, who is the Special Shareholder is not re-elected to serve on the Board, that Independent Director shall at the expiration of their term of office transfer the Special Share to such Independent Director as shall be determined by the members.



## SECTION 4 The Board

### Article 46 Board Tenure

No Director shall serve more than nine years as a director.

- 46.1** A Director need not hold any shares of the Company to qualify them as a Director but they shall be entitled to attend receive notice of and speak at all General Meetings.

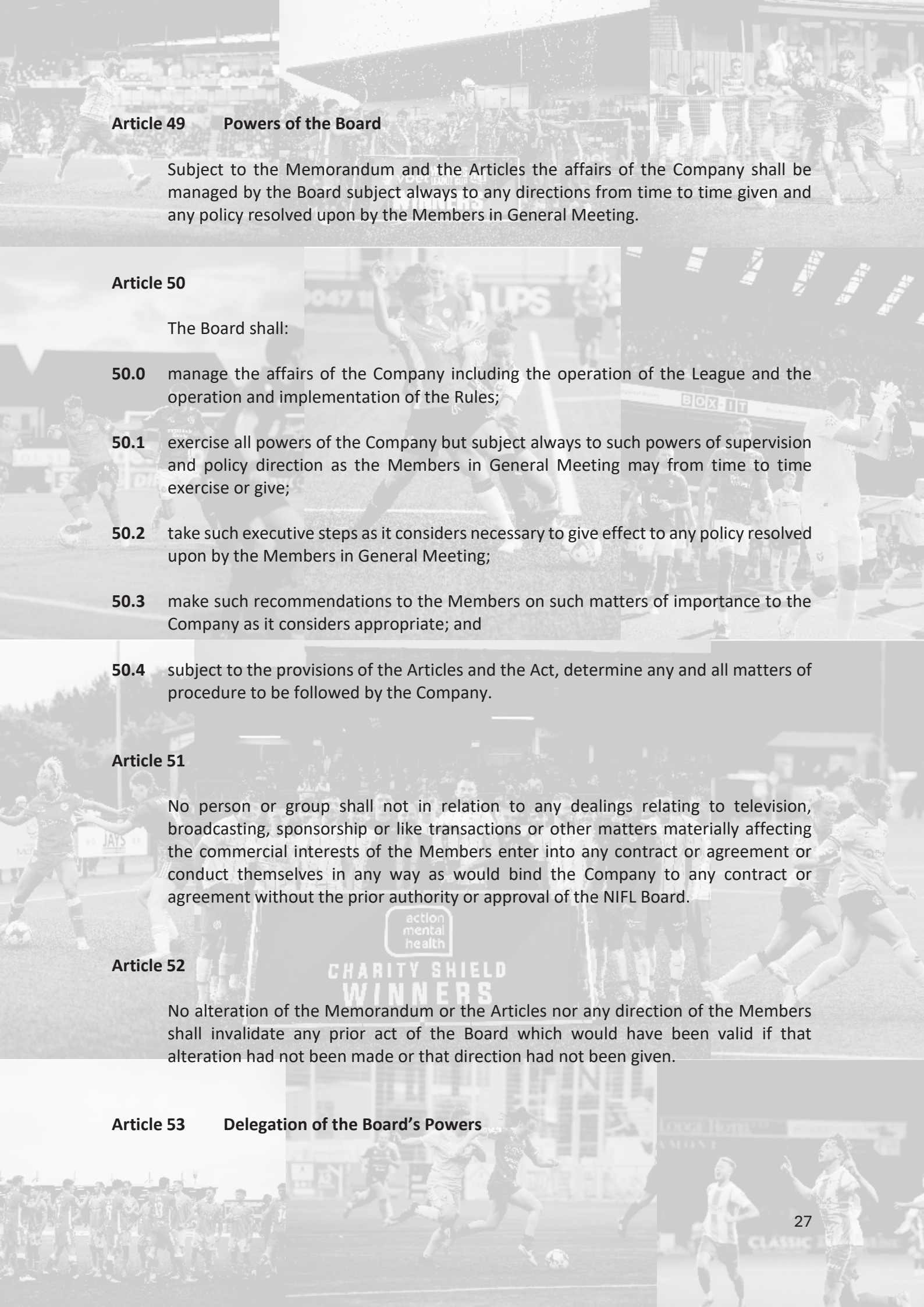
### Article 47

The Chairperson shall be appointed from amongst the Directors. No person shall be appointed or re-appointed as Chairperson or as Chief Executive Officer except pursuant to a Resolution and unless:

- 47.1** such person is proposed by the Board and notice of intention to propose such person is included in the notice of the General Meeting at which the Resolution is to be proposed; or
- 47.2** where the General Meeting has already been convened, not less than fourteen and, where the General Meeting has not already been convened, not less than twenty two and, in any case not, more than thirty five clear days before the date appointed for a General Meeting, a notice signed by a Member has been given to the Company of the intention to propose that person for appointment or re-appointment; and
- 47.3** in either case, their appointment or re-appointment has been or is endorsed by the Special Shareholder (such endorsement not to be unreasonably withheld, refused or delayed).
- 47.4** The terms and conditions relating to the appointment or re-appointment of, and the remuneration and other terms and other conditions of service of, the Chief Executive Officer shall be determined or confirmed by The Chair and NIFL Board.
- 47.5** The appointment or re-appointment of the Chairperson shall be determined or confirmed by Resolution.

### Article 48

Subject to the requirements of the Act, and without prejudice to any claim or rights in respect of any breach of contract between the Company and such person, the Members may by Resolution terminate the appointment of the Chairperson or Chief Executive Officer (as the case may be).



## **Article 49 Powers of the Board**

Subject to the Memorandum and the Articles the affairs of the Company shall be managed by the Board subject always to any directions from time to time given and any policy resolved upon by the Members in General Meeting.

## **Article 50**

The Board shall:

- 50.0** manage the affairs of the Company including the operation of the League and the operation and implementation of the Rules;
- 50.1** exercise all powers of the Company but subject always to such powers of supervision and policy direction as the Members in General Meeting may from time to time exercise or give;
- 50.2** take such executive steps as it considers necessary to give effect to any policy resolved upon by the Members in General Meeting;
- 50.3** make such recommendations to the Members on such matters of importance to the Company as it considers appropriate; and
- 50.4** subject to the provisions of the Articles and the Act, determine any and all matters of procedure to be followed by the Company.

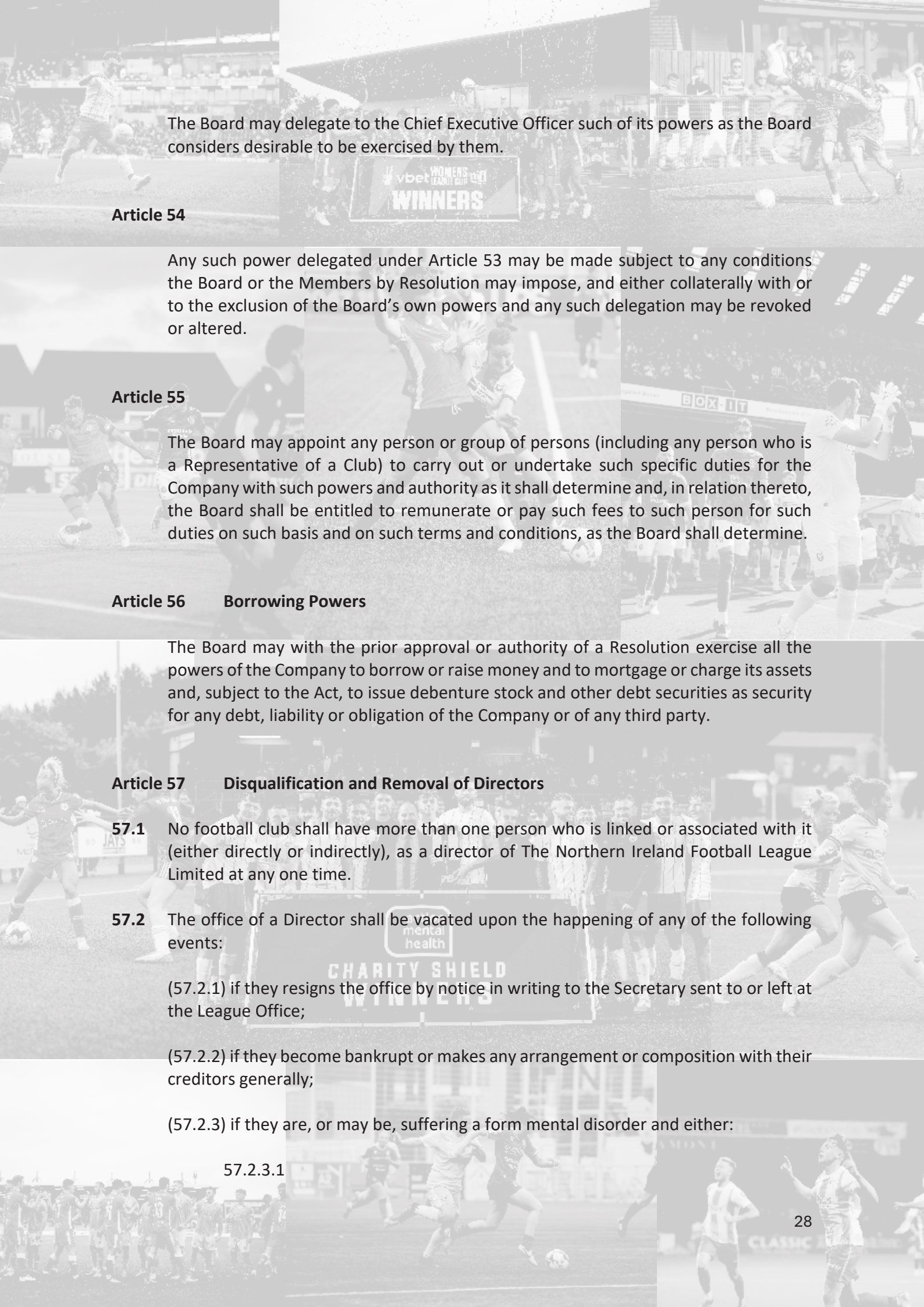
## **Article 51**

No person or group shall not in relation to any dealings relating to television, broadcasting, sponsorship or like transactions or other matters materially affecting the commercial interests of the Members enter into any contract or agreement or conduct themselves in any way as would bind the Company to any contract or agreement without the prior authority or approval of the NIFL Board.

## **Article 52**

No alteration of the Memorandum or the Articles nor any direction of the Members shall invalidate any prior act of the Board which would have been valid if that alteration had not been made or that direction had not been given.

## **Article 53 Delegation of the Board's Powers**



The Board may delegate to the Chief Executive Officer such of its powers as the Board considers desirable to be exercised by them.

#### **Article 54**

Any such power delegated under Article 53 may be made subject to any conditions the Board or the Members by Resolution may impose, and either collaterally with or to the exclusion of the Board's own powers and any such delegation may be revoked or altered.

#### **Article 55**

The Board may appoint any person or group of persons (including any person who is a Representative of a Club) to carry out or undertake such specific duties for the Company with such powers and authority as it shall determine and, in relation thereto, the Board shall be entitled to remunerate or pay such fees to such person for such duties on such basis and on such terms and conditions, as the Board shall determine.

#### **Article 56      Borrowing Powers**

The Board may with the prior approval or authority of a Resolution exercise all the powers of the Company to borrow or raise money and to mortgage or charge its assets and, subject to the Act, to issue debenture stock and other debt securities as security for any debt, liability or obligation of the Company or of any third party.

#### **Article 57      Disqualification and Removal of Directors**

**57.1** No football club shall have more than one person who is linked or associated with it (either directly or indirectly), as a director of The Northern Ireland Football League Limited at any one time.

**57.2** The office of a Director shall be vacated upon the happening of any of the following events:

(57.2.1) if they resigns the office by notice in writing to the Secretary sent to or left at the League Office;

(57.2.2) if they become bankrupt or makes any arrangement or composition with their creditors generally;

(57.2.3) if they are, or may be, suffering a form mental disorder and either:

57.2.3.1

If they are admitted to hospital in pursuance of an application for admission for treatment under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986, or

57.2.3.2

an order is made by a court having jurisdiction (whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere) in matters concerning mental disorder for their detention or for the appointment of a receiver, curator bonis or other person to exercise powers with respect to their property or affairs;

(57.2.4) if they die;

(57.2.5) if they cease to be a Director by virtue of any provision of the Act or becomes prohibited by law from being a director;

(57.2.6) if they attains the age of 70;

(57.2.7) if they are removed from office by written notice signed by all of the other Directors for the time being;

(57.2.8) if they are for the time being participating as a professional player or as a referee in Association Football;

(57.2.9) if they are listed in the official return of more than one Club in full and associate membership of the IFA or in the case of the Chairperson, they are listed in the official return of any such Club.

(57.2.10) if they are one of the Six Directors nominated by the members, and the Club which they represent serves notice on the Company that he no longer represents that Club.

(57.2.11) if the Club that is represented by that Director is relegated from the PIL or Women's Premiership.

## Article 58

(58.1.1) In the event of a vacancy occurring on the Board from amongst the Independent Directors the continuing directors shall forthwith convene a General Meeting for the purpose of appointing an Independent Director to fill that vacancy in accordance with Article 44.1.0.

(58.1.2) In the event of a vacancy occurring on the Board from amongst either the A Directors, B Directors C Director or the D Director the continuing Directors shall forthwith convene a Meeting of either clubs in membership of the Premiership or clubs in membership of the Championship, PIL or Women's Premiership for the purpose of appointing a Director to fill that vacancy.

58.1.2.1

If the vacancy arises from amongst the A Directors, the Members from Clubs in the Premiership shall appoint a director to such vacancy

58.1.2.2

If the vacancy arises from amongst the B or C Directors, the Members from Clubs in the Championship or the Premier Intermediate League shall appoint a director to such vacancy. If the vacancy arises regarding the D Director the clubs in the Women's Premiership shall appoint a Director to such a vacancy.

(58.1.3) In the event that a vacancy arises from amongst the Independent Directors the director appointed to fill such vacancy shall hold office for the remainder of the term of office of the director whom they have replaced.

(58.1.4) In the event that a vacancy arises from amongst the A B, C Directors or D Director the director appointed to fill such vacancy shall hold office for remainder of the term of office of the director whom they replaced.

**58.2** Pending such General Meeting an acting Chairperson (as the case may be) appointed by the Board shall be treated as and shall have all the powers and duties of the Chairperson (as the case may be) for all the purposes of the Articles.

## **Article 59 Directors' Expenses**

A Director and any person appointed by the Board under Article 55 may be paid all reasonable travelling, hotel, and other expenses properly incurred by them in connection with their attendance at meetings of the Board or otherwise in connection with the discharge of their duties.

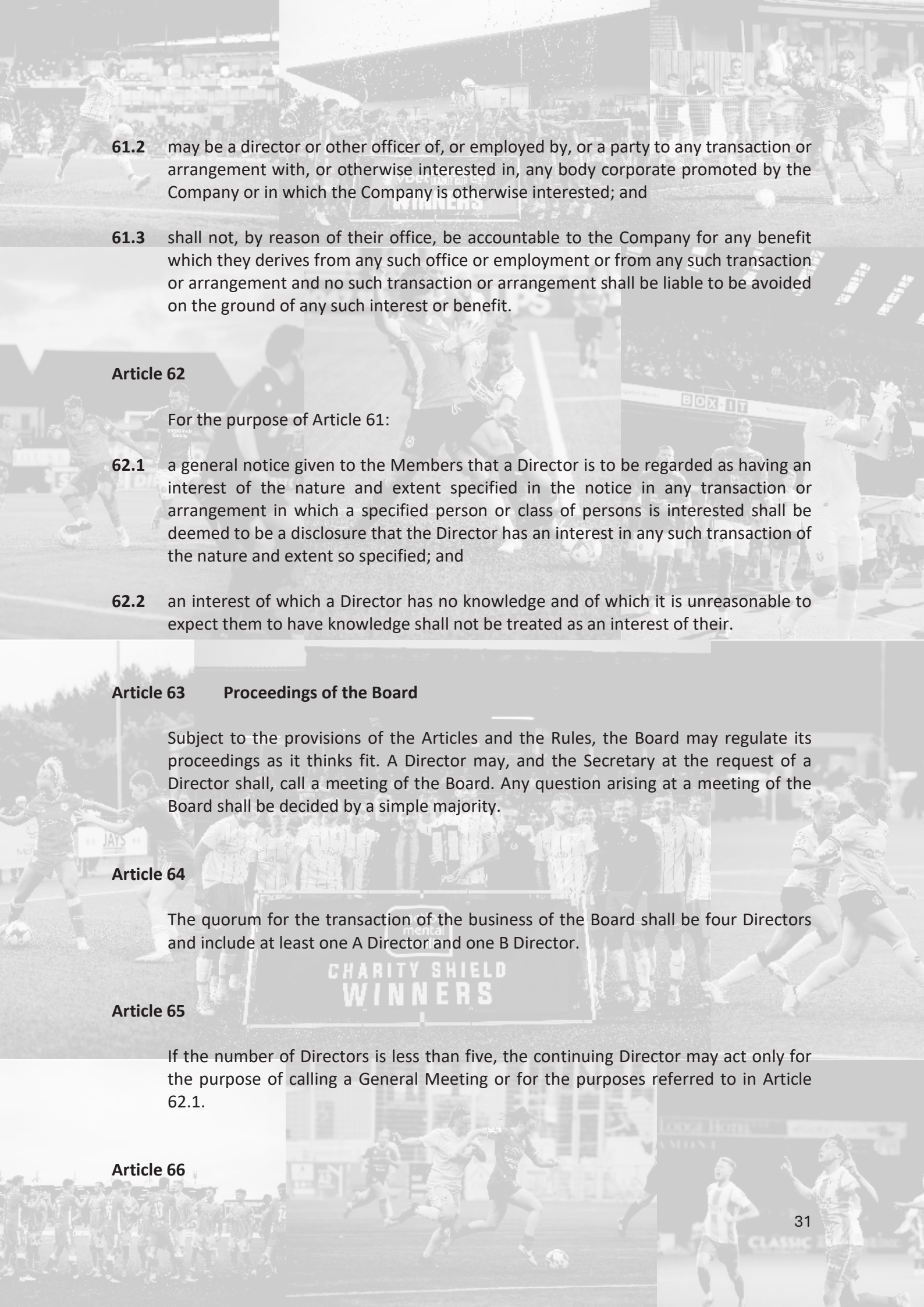
## **Article 60 Directors' Remuneration**

The Directors shall be entitled to remuneration if the Members by Resolution so determine and, unless such Resolution provides otherwise, the remuneration shall be deemed to accrue from day to day.

## **Article 61 Directors' Interests**

Subject to the provisions of the Act and provided that they have disclosed to the Members the nature and extent of any material interest which they have, and obtained the consent of the Members by Resolution, a Director notwithstanding their office:

**61.1** may be a party to, or otherwise interested in, any transaction or arrangement with the Company or in which the Company is otherwise interested;



**61.2** may be a director or other officer of, or employed by, or a party to any transaction or arrangement with, or otherwise interested in, any body corporate promoted by the Company or in which the Company is otherwise interested; and

**61.3** shall not, by reason of their office, be accountable to the Company for any benefit which they derives from any such office or employment or from any such transaction or arrangement and no such transaction or arrangement shall be liable to be avoided on the ground of any such interest or benefit.

## **Article 62**

For the purpose of Article 61:

**62.1** a general notice given to the Members that a Director is to be regarded as having an interest of the nature and extent specified in the notice in any transaction or arrangement in which a specified person or class of persons is interested shall be deemed to be a disclosure that the Director has an interest in any such transaction of the nature and extent so specified; and

**62.2** an interest of which a Director has no knowledge and of which it is unreasonable to expect them to have knowledge shall not be treated as an interest of their.

## **Article 63 Proceedings of the Board**

Subject to the provisions of the Articles and the Rules, the Board may regulate its proceedings as it thinks fit. A Director may, and the Secretary at the request of a Director shall, call a meeting of the Board. Any question arising at a meeting of the Board shall be decided by a simple majority.

## **Article 64**


The quorum for the transaction of the business of the Board shall be four Directors and include at least one A Director and one B Director.

## **Article 65**

If the number of Directors is less than five, the continuing Director may act only for the purpose of calling a General Meeting or for the purposes referred to in Article 62.1.

## **Article 66**





The Chairperson shall be the chairperson of all meetings of the Board.

**Article 67**

All acts done by a quorate meeting of the Board, or by a person acting as a Director (as provided by the Articles) shall, notwithstanding that it be afterwards discovered that there was a defect in the appointment of the Director or such other person or that any of them was disqualified from holding office, or if a Director, had vacated office, or was not entitled to vote, be as valid as if every such person had been duly appointed and was qualified and, if a Director, had continued to be a Director and had been entitled to vote.

**Article 68**

A resolution in writing signed by the Directors shall be as valid and effective as if it had been passed at a meeting of the Board and may consist of several documents in the like form each signed by one of the Directors.

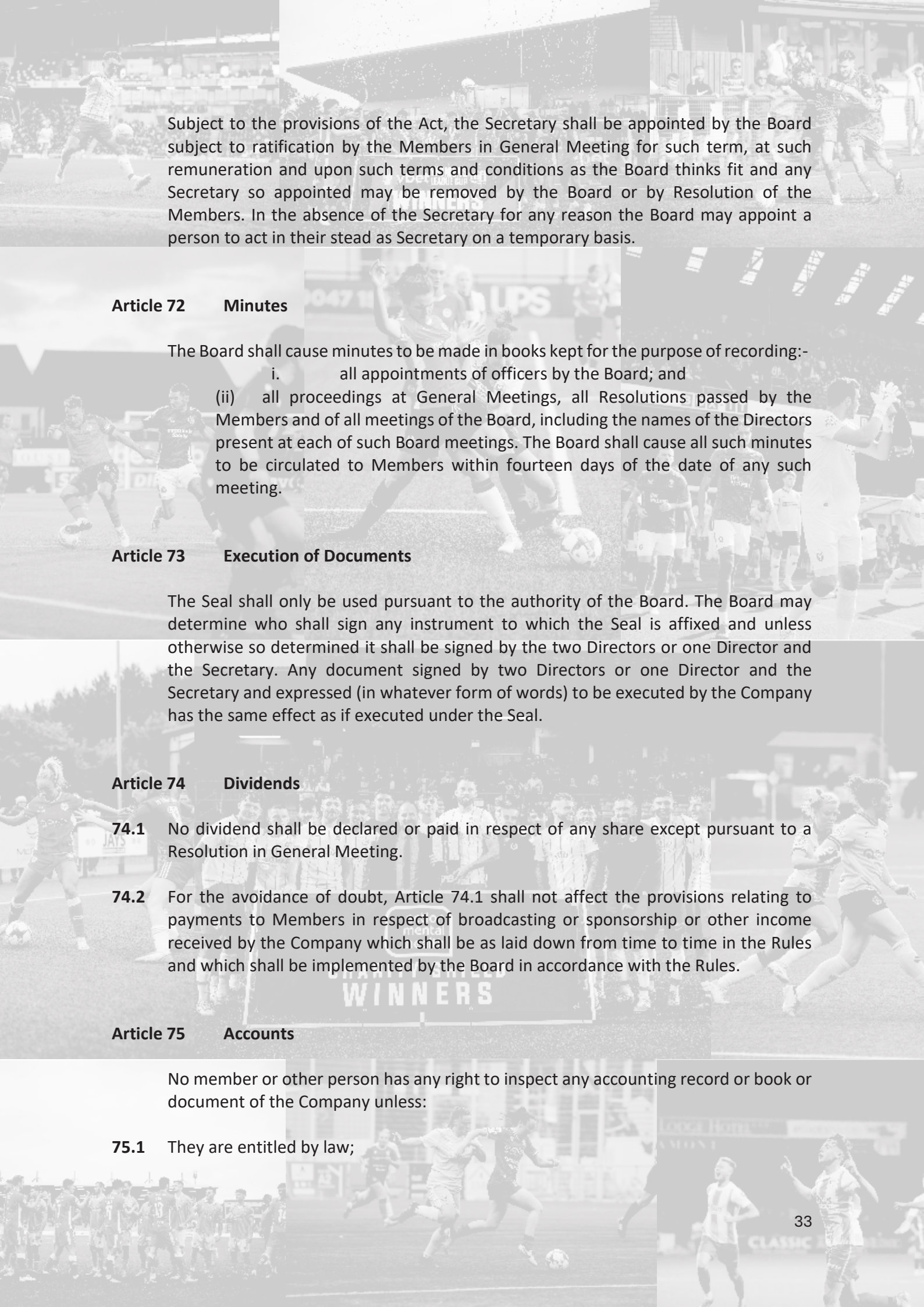
**Article 69**

Without prejudice to Article 68, a meeting of the Board may consist of a conference between the Directors who are not all in one place, but where each is able (directly or by telephonic communication) to speak to the other, and to be heard by the other simultaneously. A Director taking part in such a conference shall be deemed to be present in person at the meeting and shall be entitled to vote or be counted in a quorum accordingly. Such a meeting shall be deemed to take place where the Chairperson then is and they shall be required to prepare a minute of such meeting. In relation to any meeting of the Board reference to the word "meeting" in the Articles shall be construed accordingly.

**Article 70**

Unless authorised by a Resolution to do so, a Director shall not vote at any meeting of the Board or on any resolution concerning a matter in which they have, directly or indirectly, an interest or duty which is material and which conflicts or may conflict with the interests of the Company but shall nevertheless be counted in the quorum of Directors present at that meeting.

**Article 71     Secretary**



Subject to the provisions of the Act, the Secretary shall be appointed by the Board subject to ratification by the Members in General Meeting for such term, at such remuneration and upon such terms and conditions as the Board thinks fit and any Secretary so appointed may be removed by the Board or by Resolution of the Members. In the absence of the Secretary for any reason the Board may appoint a person to act in their stead as Secretary on a temporary basis.

#### **Article 72 Minutes**

The Board shall cause minutes to be made in books kept for the purpose of recording:-

- i. all appointments of officers by the Board; and
- (ii) all proceedings at General Meetings, all Resolutions passed by the Members and of all meetings of the Board, including the names of the Directors present at each of such Board meetings. The Board shall cause all such minutes to be circulated to Members within fourteen days of the date of any such meeting.

#### **Article 73 Execution of Documents**

The Seal shall only be used pursuant to the authority of the Board. The Board may determine who shall sign any instrument to which the Seal is affixed and unless otherwise so determined it shall be signed by the two Directors or one Director and the Secretary. Any document signed by two Directors or one Director and the Secretary and expressed (in whatever form of words) to be executed by the Company has the same effect as if executed under the Seal.

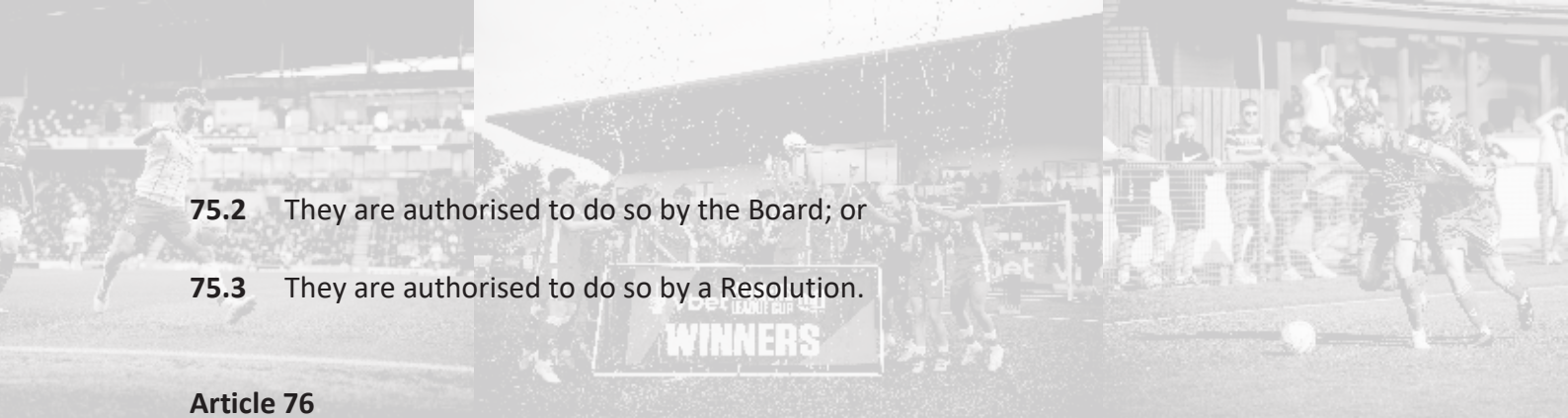
#### **Article 74 Dividends**

- 74.1** No dividend shall be declared or paid in respect of any share except pursuant to a Resolution in General Meeting.
- 74.2** For the avoidance of doubt, Article 74.1 shall not affect the provisions relating to payments to Members in respect of broadcasting or sponsorship or other income received by the Company which shall be as laid down from time to time in the Rules and which shall be implemented by the Board in accordance with the Rules.

#### **Article 75 Accounts**

No member or other person has any right to inspect any accounting record or book or document of the Company unless:

- 75.1** They are entitled by law;



**75.2** They are authorised to do so by the Board; or

**75.3** They are authorised to do so by a Resolution.

### Article 76

In the event that a member is so entitled or authorised, they shall keep such knowledge as they acquire as to the contents thereof confidential save where required by statute law or any regulatory body (including the London Stock Exchange or by the IFA) to make disclosures of same.





## SECTION 5 General Assembly and Committees

### Article 77 NIFL General Assembly

**77.1.1** The NIFL General Assembly shall consist of one representative of each club (male and female) in membership of NIFL.

The General Assembly shall be consultative and advisory and shall meet at least three times each year – normally in September, January and June

The Chair of the NIFL Board shall act as Chair of the General Assembly. Independent members of the NIFL Board may attend and speak at General Assembly meetings but shall have no vote.

The General Assembly shall fulfil the following functions;

- To discuss matters of mutual interest to all clubs in membership
- To consider and advise on specific questions which may be addressed to it by the Board or any League Committee
- To provide a forum for discussion about, and consideration of, significant issues for the development of the League
- To receive a report from the Chair of the Board as to the state of the League and the latest issues being dealt with by the Board
- To appoint (in their meeting in June) members to serve on the Competition Committee, and any other committees or commissions required from time to time

The Board shall decide on the date and venue of any NIFL General Assembly meeting

### Competition Committee

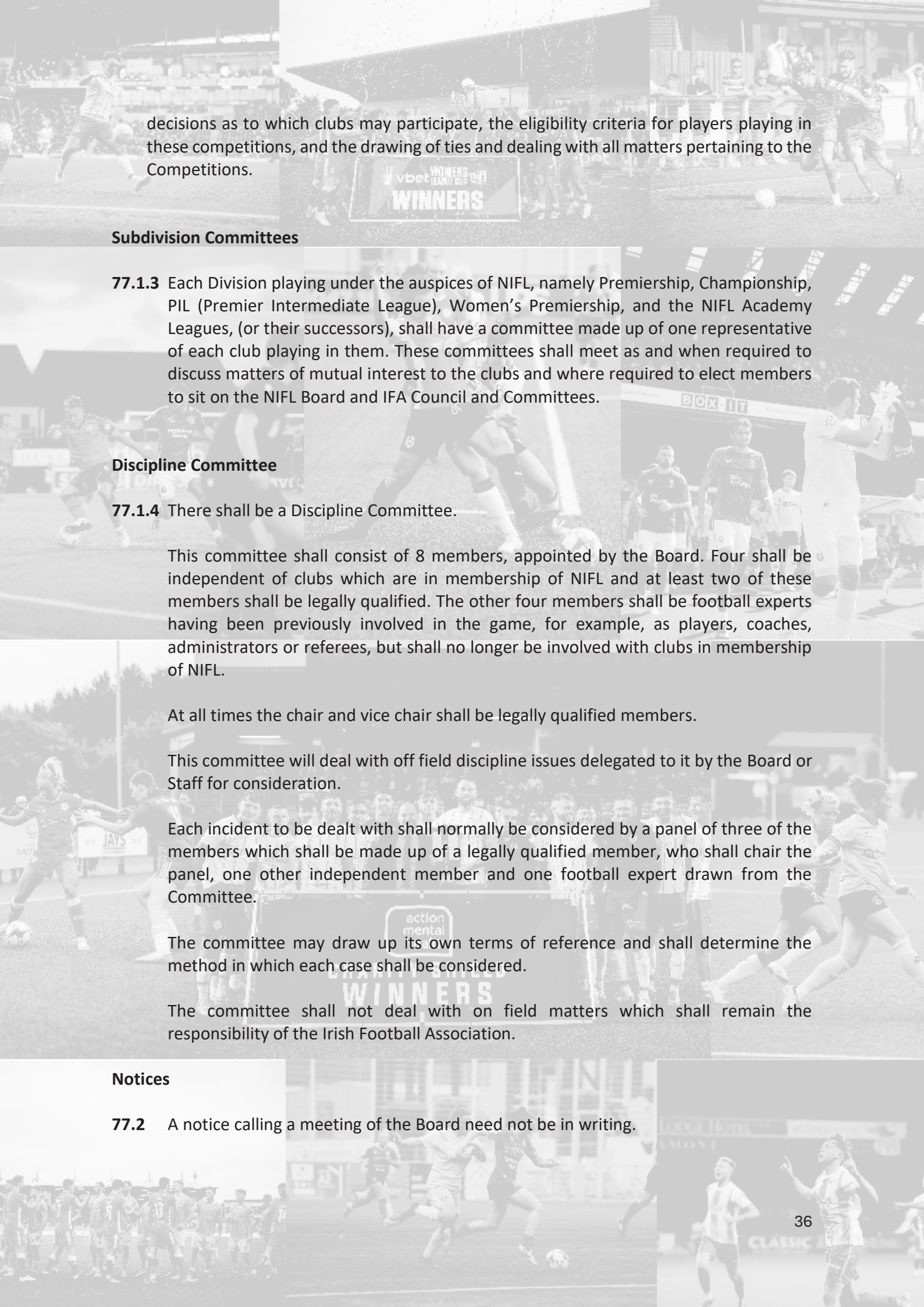
2. The Committee will consist of 7 members as follows –

- Three representatives from clubs playing in the Premiership
- Two representatives from clubs playing in the Championship
- One representative from clubs playing in the PIL
- One representative from clubs playing in the Women's Premiership

The quorum shall be Four.

The members shall elect a Chair and a Vice Chair for each season.

The Committee will be responsible for the drafting of competition rules and for the organisation of all the cup competitions played within the League, this will include



decisions as to which clubs may participate, the eligibility criteria for players playing in these competitions, and the drawing of ties and dealing with all matters pertaining to the Competitions.

### **Subdivision Committees**

**77.1.3** Each Division playing under the auspices of NIFL, namely Premiership, Championship, PIL (Premier Intermediate League), Women's Premiership, and the NIFL Academy Leagues, (or their successors), shall have a committee made up of one representative of each club playing in them. These committees shall meet as and when required to discuss matters of mutual interest to the clubs and where required to elect members to sit on the NIFL Board and IFA Council and Committees.

### **Discipline Committee**

**77.1.4** There shall be a Discipline Committee.

This committee shall consist of 8 members, appointed by the Board. Four shall be independent of clubs which are in membership of NIFL and at least two of these members shall be legally qualified. The other four members shall be football experts having been previously involved in the game, for example, as players, coaches, administrators or referees, but shall no longer be involved with clubs in membership of NIFL.

At all times the chair and vice chair shall be legally qualified members.

This committee will deal with off field discipline issues delegated to it by the Board or Staff for consideration.


Each incident to be dealt with shall normally be considered by a panel of three of the members which shall be made up of a legally qualified member, who shall chair the panel, one other independent member and one football expert drawn from the Committee.

The committee may draw up its own terms of reference and shall determine the method in which each case shall be considered.

The committee shall not deal with on field matters which shall remain the responsibility of the Irish Football Association.

### **Notices**

**77.2** A notice calling a meeting of the Board need not be in writing.



**77.3** Any other notice to be given to or by any person pursuant to the Articles shall be in writing.

**77.4** Where it is decided to give written notice of Board Meetings, a Director shall be entitled to receive written notice thereof notwithstanding that they are temporarily outside the United Kingdom provided they shall have informed the Company by written notice to the office of the address to which such notice should be sent.

#### **Article 78**

Any notice or other document may be served or delivered by the Company on or to any Member or any Director either personally, or by sending it by post addressed to the Member or Director at their registered address or by facsimile transmission or electronic mail or other instantaneous means of transmission to the number or other transmission address or identification provided by the Member or the Director for this purpose, or by leaving it at its registered address addressed to the Member or the Director, or by any other means authorised in writing by the Member or Director concerned.

#### **Article 79**


Any notice or other document, which is sent by post, shall be deemed to have been served or delivered twenty four hours after posting and, in proving such service or delivery, it shall be sufficient to prove that the notice or document was properly addressed, stamped and put in the post. Any notice or other document left at a registered address otherwise than by post, or sent by facsimile transmission or electronic mail or other instantaneous means of transmission, shall be deemed to have been served or delivered when it was left or sent.

#### **Article 80**

Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 79 relating to service or delivery of any notice or document any notice or document not posted or delivered personally shall also be confirmed by sending or delivering a copy thereof by post or personally as provided in Article 78 but so that, in any such case, the accidental omission to so post or serve the same or non receipt of the same shall not invalidate the due service or delivery of the notice or other document in question

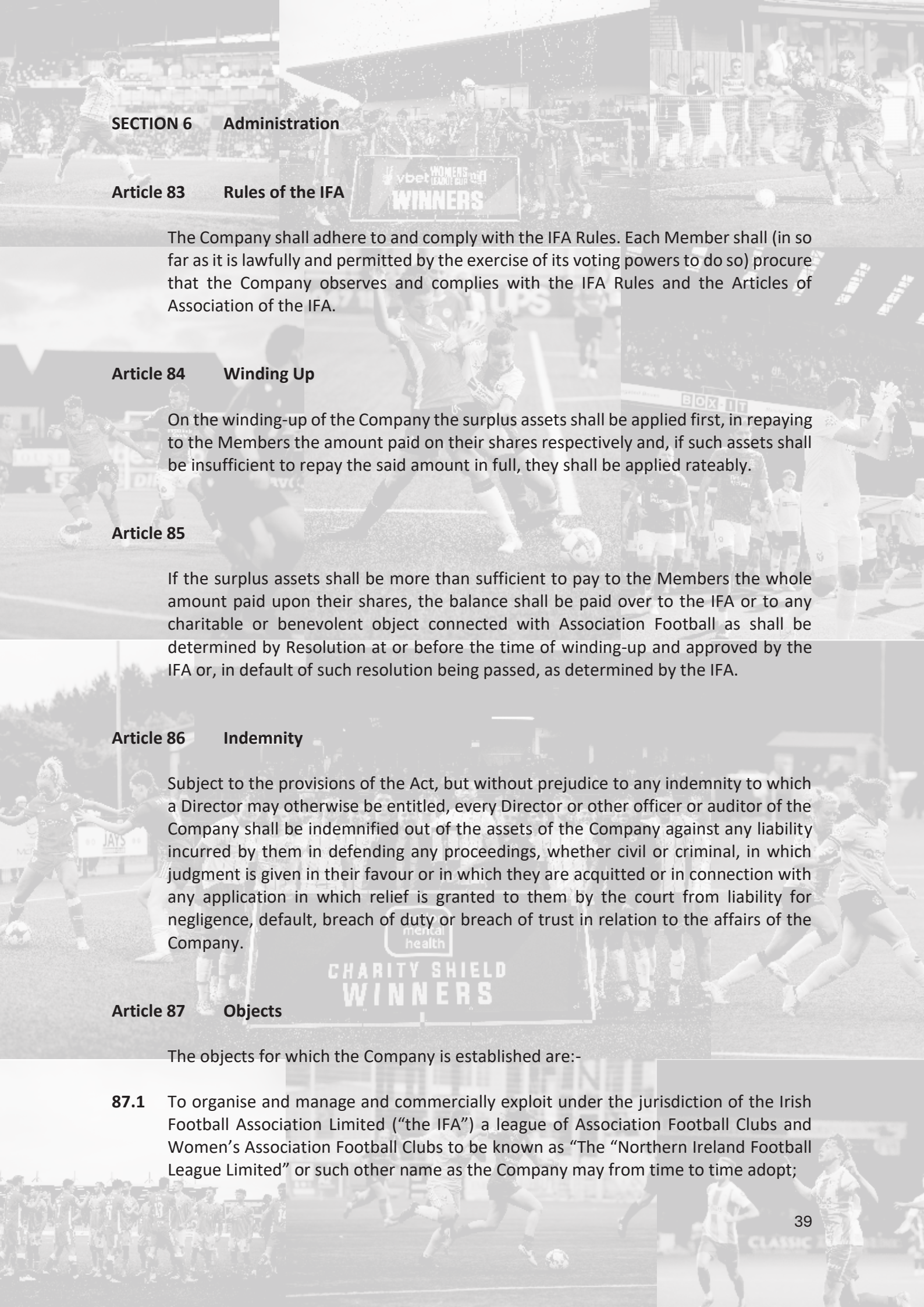
#### **Article 81**

A Member present, either by Representative or by proxy, at any General Meeting shall be deemed to have received notice of the meeting and, where requisite, of the purposes for which it was called.



**Article 82**

A notice may be given by the Company to a Successor of a Member in consequence of the insolvency, administration or receivership of a Member, by sending or delivering it, in any manner authorised by the Articles for the giving of notice to a Member, addressed to the Member by name or to the Successor at the address, if any, within the United Kingdom supplied for that purpose by the Successor. Until such an address has been supplied, a notice may be given in any manner in which it might have been given if the insolvency, administration or receivership had not occurred.



**SECTION 6 Administration**

**Article 83 Rules of the IFA**

The Company shall adhere to and comply with the IFA Rules. Each Member shall (in so far as it is lawfully and permitted by the exercise of its voting powers to do so) procure that the Company observes and complies with the IFA Rules and the Articles of Association of the IFA.

**Article 84 Winding Up**

On the winding-up of the Company the surplus assets shall be applied first, in repaying to the Members the amount paid on their shares respectively and, if such assets shall be insufficient to repay the said amount in full, they shall be applied rateably.

**Article 85**

If the surplus assets shall be more than sufficient to pay to the Members the whole amount paid upon their shares, the balance shall be paid over to the IFA or to any charitable or benevolent object connected with Association Football as shall be determined by Resolution at or before the time of winding-up and approved by the IFA or, in default of such resolution being passed, as determined by the IFA.

**Article 86 Indemnity**

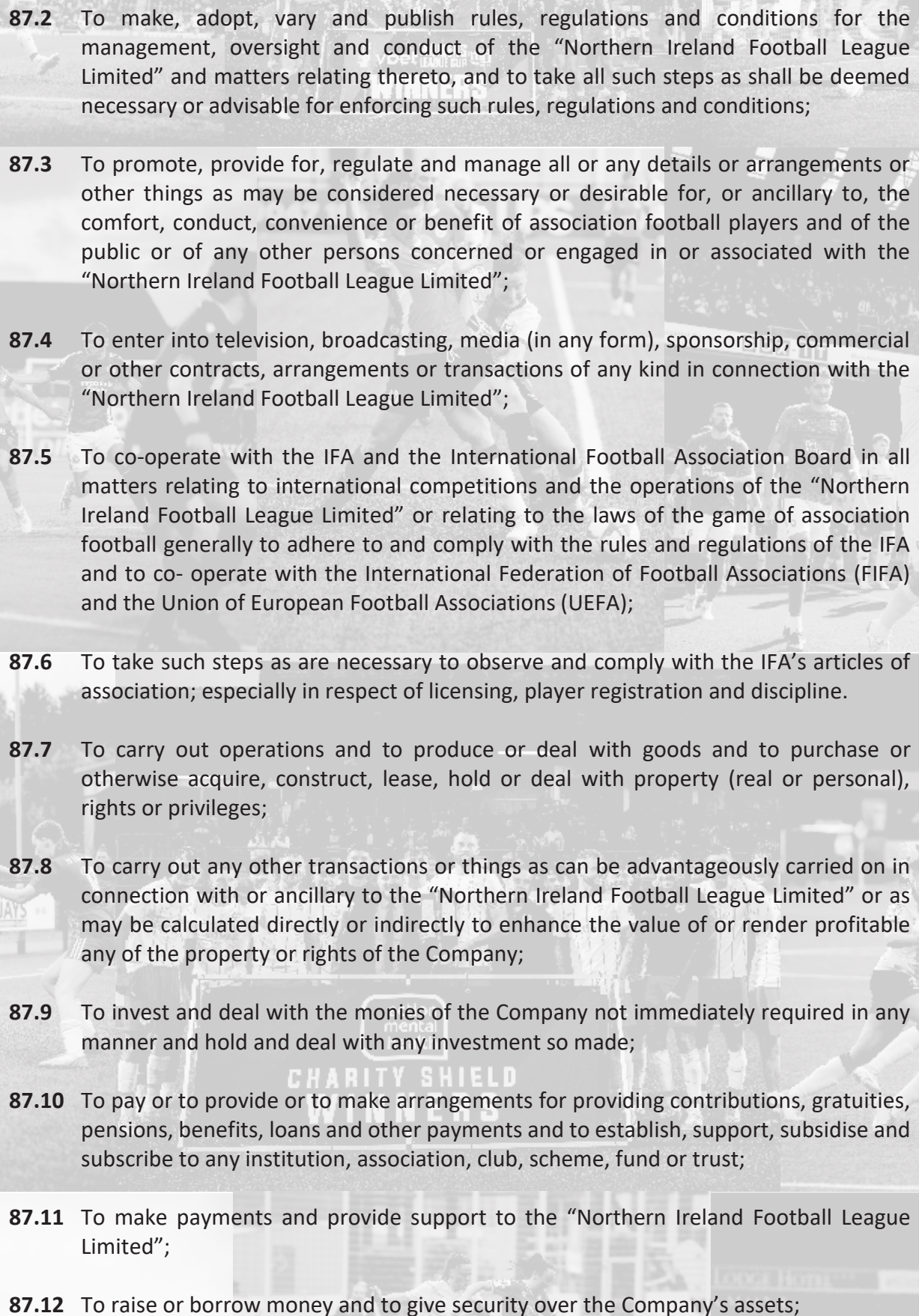
Subject to the provisions of the Act, but without prejudice to any indemnity to which a Director may otherwise be entitled, every Director or other officer or auditor of the Company shall be indemnified out of the assets of the Company against any liability incurred by them in defending any proceedings, whether civil or criminal, in which judgment is given in their favour or in which they are acquitted or in connection with any application in which relief is granted to them by the court from liability for negligence, default, breach of duty or breach of trust in relation to the affairs of the Company.

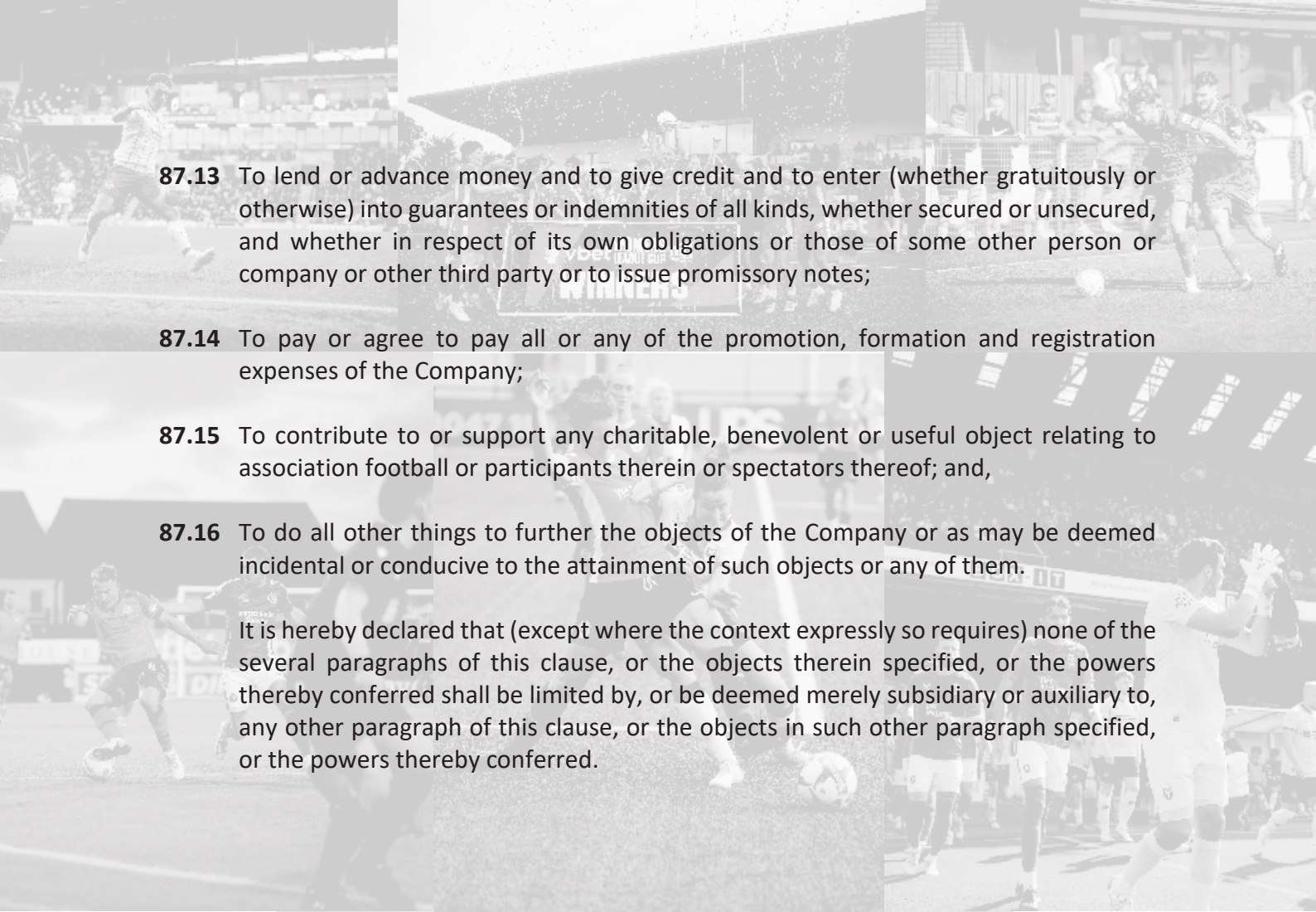
**Article 87 Objects**

The objects for which the Company is established are:-

- 87.1** To organise and manage and commercially exploit under the jurisdiction of the Irish Football Association Limited (“the IFA”) a league of Association Football Clubs and Women’s Association Football Clubs to be known as “The “Northern Ireland Football League Limited” or such other name as the Company may from time to time adopt;



- 
- The background of the page is a collage of various football match scenes. It includes images of players in action on a pitch, a crowd of spectators in a stadium, and a player celebrating a goal. The images are in grayscale and semi-transparent, creating a textured backdrop for the text.
- 87.2** To make, adopt, vary and publish rules, regulations and conditions for the management, oversight and conduct of the “Northern Ireland Football League Limited” and matters relating thereto, and to take all such steps as shall be deemed necessary or advisable for enforcing such rules, regulations and conditions;
- 87.3** To promote, provide for, regulate and manage all or any details or arrangements or other things as may be considered necessary or desirable for, or ancillary to, the comfort, conduct, convenience or benefit of association football players and of the public or of any other persons concerned or engaged in or associated with the “Northern Ireland Football League Limited”;
- 87.4** To enter into television, broadcasting, media (in any form), sponsorship, commercial or other contracts, arrangements or transactions of any kind in connection with the “Northern Ireland Football League Limited”;
- 87.5** To co-operate with the IFA and the International Football Association Board in all matters relating to international competitions and the operations of the “Northern Ireland Football League Limited” or relating to the laws of the game of association football generally to adhere to and comply with the rules and regulations of the IFA and to co-operate with the International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA);
- 87.6** To take such steps as are necessary to observe and comply with the IFA’s articles of association; especially in respect of licensing, player registration and discipline.
- 87.7** To carry out operations and to produce or deal with goods and to purchase or otherwise acquire, construct, lease, hold or deal with property (real or personal), rights or privileges;
- 87.8** To carry out any other transactions or things as can be advantageously carried on in connection with or ancillary to the “Northern Ireland Football League Limited” or as may be calculated directly or indirectly to enhance the value of or render profitable any of the property or rights of the Company;
- 87.9** To invest and deal with the monies of the Company not immediately required in any manner and hold and deal with any investment so made;
- 87.10** To pay or to provide or to make arrangements for providing contributions, gratuities, pensions, benefits, loans and other payments and to establish, support, subsidise and subscribe to any institution, association, club, scheme, fund or trust;
- 87.11** To make payments and provide support to the “Northern Ireland Football League Limited”;
- 87.12** To raise or borrow money and to give security over the Company’s assets;



**87.13** To lend or advance money and to give credit and to enter (whether gratuitously or otherwise) into guarantees or indemnities of all kinds, whether secured or unsecured, and whether in respect of its own obligations or those of some other person or company or other third party or to issue promissory notes;

**87.14** To pay or agree to pay all or any of the promotion, formation and registration expenses of the Company;

**87.15** To contribute to or support any charitable, benevolent or useful object relating to association football or participants therein or spectators thereof; and,

**87.16** To do all other things to further the objects of the Company or as may be deemed incidental or conducive to the attainment of such objects or any of them.

It is hereby declared that (except where the context expressly so requires) none of the several paragraphs of this clause, or the objects therein specified, or the powers thereby conferred shall be limited by, or be deemed merely subsidiary or auxiliary to, any other paragraph of this clause, or the objects in such other paragraph specified, or the powers thereby conferred.





**SPORTS  
DIRECT**

**PREMIERSHIP**

**nifl** NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
FOOTBALL  
LEAGUE

**RULES AND REGULATIONS  
SEASON 2024/25**



action  
mental  
health  
**CHARITY SHIELD  
WINNERS**

## CONTENTS

### DEFINITIONS

#### NIFL PREMIERSHIP

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

#### NIFL COMMITTEES

8. NIFL Competition Committee
9. NIFL Discipline Committee
10. NIFL Subdivision Committee

#### OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

11. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences
12. Commissions and Reports
13. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL matches
14. Protests
15. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL or any NIFL Committee

#### GROUNDS

16. Registration of Ground
17. Objection to Field of Play etc
18. Technical Areas
19. Zoned Access

#### MATCHES

20. Matches and kick-off times
21. International duty
22. Kit Approval
23. Kit Advertising Regulations
24. Kit Numbering
25. Kit Names
26. Player Identification
27. Pitch Inspections
28. Postponed or Abandoned Matches
29. Completion of Team Line up
30. Substitute Players
31. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet
32. Late Start
33. Referee to wait before abandoning a match
34. Official Match Ball & Goal Nets
35. Half-time Interval
36. Ball Tenders
37. Referees

#### FINANCE

38. Admission to Grounds
39. Gate Receipts
40. Season Tickets
41. Fines

#### PLAYER REGISTRATIONS

42. Player Registration Regulations
43. Squad Size Limits
44. Undisclosed Payments
45. Ineligibility of Players
46. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

#### MISCELLANEOUS

47. Conditions of Membership of Clubs comprising the NIFL Premiership
48. Medals
49. Trophies
50. League Structure
51. Alterations to Rules



## DEFINITIONS

**League**

The Northern Ireland Football League

**NIFL Premiership**

The top tier of the Northern Ireland Football League

**IFA**

The Irish Football Association

**Articles of Association Football**

Means the Articles of Association of the Irish 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 Premiership

**NIFL Championship**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

**NIFL Premier Intermediate League**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

**NIFL Women's Premiership**

The top women's tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

**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**

An agreement entered into by the member clubs with the NI Football League

**IFA FMS System**

the Irish Football Association Football Management System which all clubs will be required to be registered for (Comet).

## NIFL PREMIERSHIP

### 1. Title

(a) For the purposes of Football Competitions, the NIFL Premiership shall consist of no more than 12 clubs who have obtained a Premiership Licence, or in the case of a promoted club a Promotion Licence which will be acceptable for the first season following promotion from the NIFL Championship, in accordance with the IFA Articles of Association, and to be known as the NIFL Premiership.

(b) Membership of the NIFL 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 Premiership
- (iv) The Rules and Articles of the Irish Football Association
- (v) IFA Club Licensing Scheme
- (vi) The Laws of the Game
- (vii) The Rules and Regulations of any body of which the NIFL 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 Board, 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 and any Doping Control testing introduced to the League.

(c) Each member (club) shall be the 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 club's 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 copied to the Chief Operating Officer, 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.

(ii) **Sanction for club experiencing an Insolvency Event**

If any club in membership of the NIFL Premiership, Championship or Premier Intermediate League formally suffers, undergoes or enters into one of the following insolvency events that club shall be deducted 10 points:

1. Administration (Creditor Driven) – normally Bank or large unsecured creditor.
2. Administration (Club Driven) – appointment by the Directors to avoid other legal action e.g., Winding up order.
3. Fixed Charge Receivership – appointment by secured creditor only on fixed assets e.g., property.
4. Have a winding up order made in respect of the club e.g., HM Revenue & Customs.
5. Company Voluntary Arrangement – proposed in advance of or as a response to legal action by an unsecured creditor.
6. Have any proceeding or step taken or any court order made which has a substantially similar effect to any of the foregoing.

(iii) **Where a club takes or suffers such action set out in Rules (ii) above.**

- (a) Prior to 1st March the points deduction shall apply immediately.
- (b) After 1st March but before the completion of all league matches rule (iv) shall apply:
- (c) When the league has been completed, the points deduction shall apply to the following season and said club shall commence that season on minus 10 points.

(iv) **Where the circumstances set out in Rule (iii) (b) apply and at the end of that Season, having regard to the number of points awarded (ignoring any potential deduction):**

- (a) Should the club be relegated the points deduction will apply in the next following season; or
- (b) Should the club not be relegated the points deduction will apply in that season and that club's points total and final league position for that season shall be recalculated accordingly.

For the avoidance of doubt, when a club is subject to more than one of the events in (ii) during a process of compromising its creditors (for example Administration followed by a Company Voluntary Arrangement), the club shall only be deducted one set of 10 points, such deduction to apply with effect from the first insolvency event.

Notwithstanding the above, if a club suffers, undergoes or enters into a separate, distinct and further insolvency event as per (ii) above, a further 10-point deduction shall be applied.

- (v) The League shall serve a club with written notice of the points deduction.
- (vi) A club may appeal against an automatic deduction of points in accordance with the IFA Articles of Association.

## 2. HMRC Reporting

### a) Provision of Authority

Each club must have provided to the Irish Football Association prior to the commencement of the season, an original irrevocable authority (which shall not be time constrained) in the form prescribed by the Irish Football Association and signed by a director and the company secretary of the Club (Chairman and Club Officer for Member's Clubs), addressed to HMRC authorising HMRC to provide to the Irish Football Association information relating to amounts of PAYE, NIC and VAT payable, paid and overdue from the Club to HMRC from time to time including, by way of example and without limitation, the amount of Arrears (if any), the existence of and current position in respect of any Time to Pay Agreement and if a club defaults on any such agreement. The Irish Football Association shall be entitled to forward to HMRC the Authority without having to seek the consent of the club.

### b) Current HMRC Debt

Any Club which has not within 28 (twenty-eight) days of the relevant due date paid to HMRC the amounts due to be paid to HMRC to discharge:

- (i) The Club's full liability for PAYE & NIC due in respect of all employees or former employees of the Club for the immediately preceding payment period.
- (ii) The Club's full liability for VAT due in respect of goods and services charged to the Club for the immediately preceding payment period; and/or
- (iii) Defaults on the terms of any Time to Pay Agreement.

That club shall be subject to a registration embargo such that it shall not be permitted to register, re-register or change the status of any professional player with that Club without the prior written permission of the Northern Ireland Football League CEO for the period that the club is subject to a default event.

Additionally, should a club fail to clear its full liability within a 56-day (8 weeks) period from the first due date and bring ALL amounts fully up to date within the time frame, the club will face a sanction of a 3-point deducted and a further 3-point for each 28-day period that initial amount is outstanding hereafter until fully cleared.

i, ii, iii above are all classed as default events.

The Northern Ireland Football reserves the right to make public statements should a default take place.



c) Disputed Amounts

Any amount which HMRC claims to be due to it, but which has been formally contested by the Club shall not be considered as due to HMRC for the purposes of these regulations until such time as a final determination is made on HMRC's claim.

### 3. Dual Interests in Clubs

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

(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:

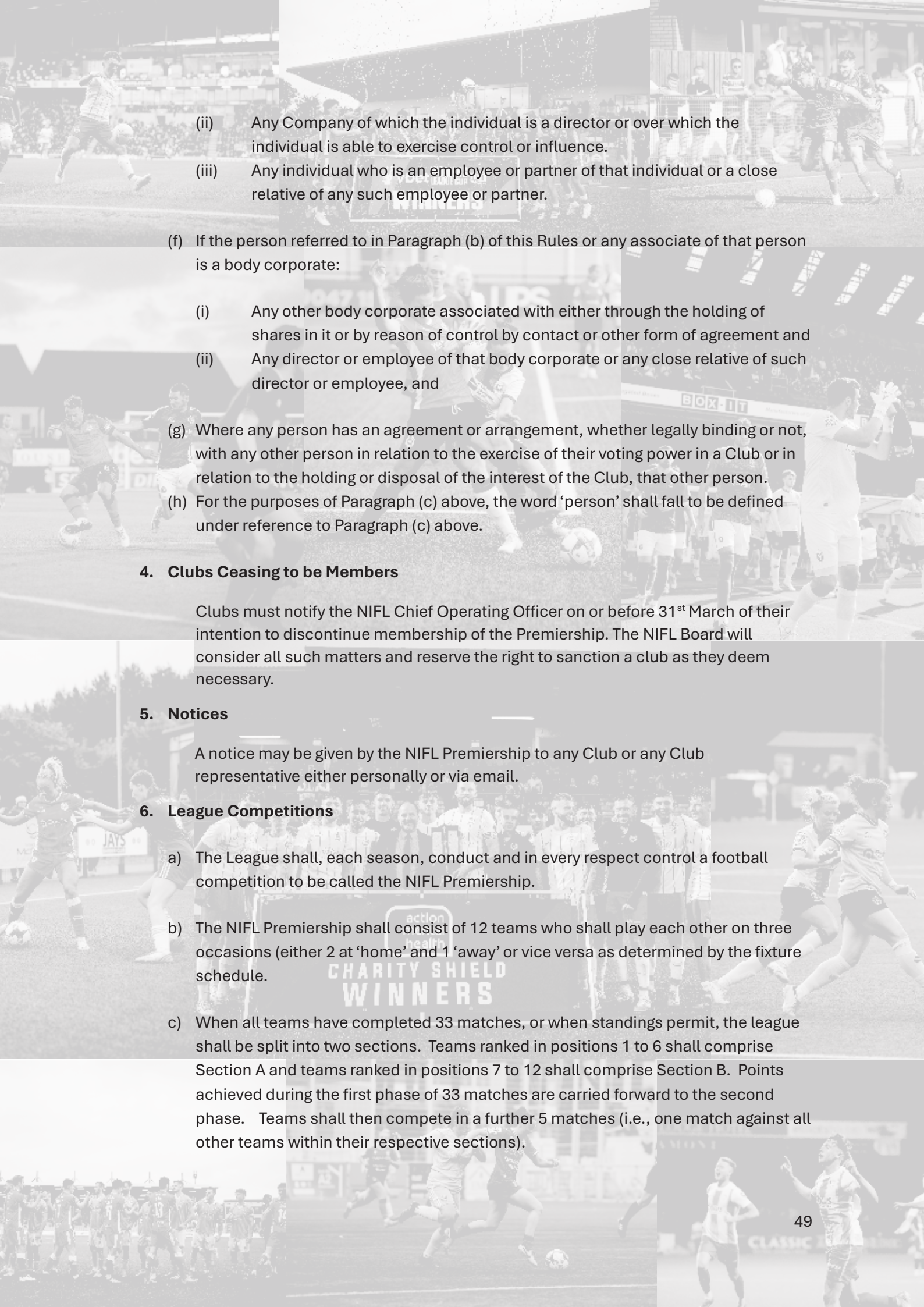
- (i) Hold or acquire or deal in the securities or shares of more than one club, or
- (ii) Be a member of more than one Club, or
- (iii) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of more than one Club, or
- (iv) Have any power whatsoever to influence the management or 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 Constitution and Rules of the NIFL and those bodies to which the NIFL is affiliated.

(e) 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, stepparent, child, stepchild, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece, or a child or stepchild, of such parent or spouse or anyone else of close relationship to the individual who in the opinion of the NIFL 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.
- (f) 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
- (g) 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.
- (h) 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**

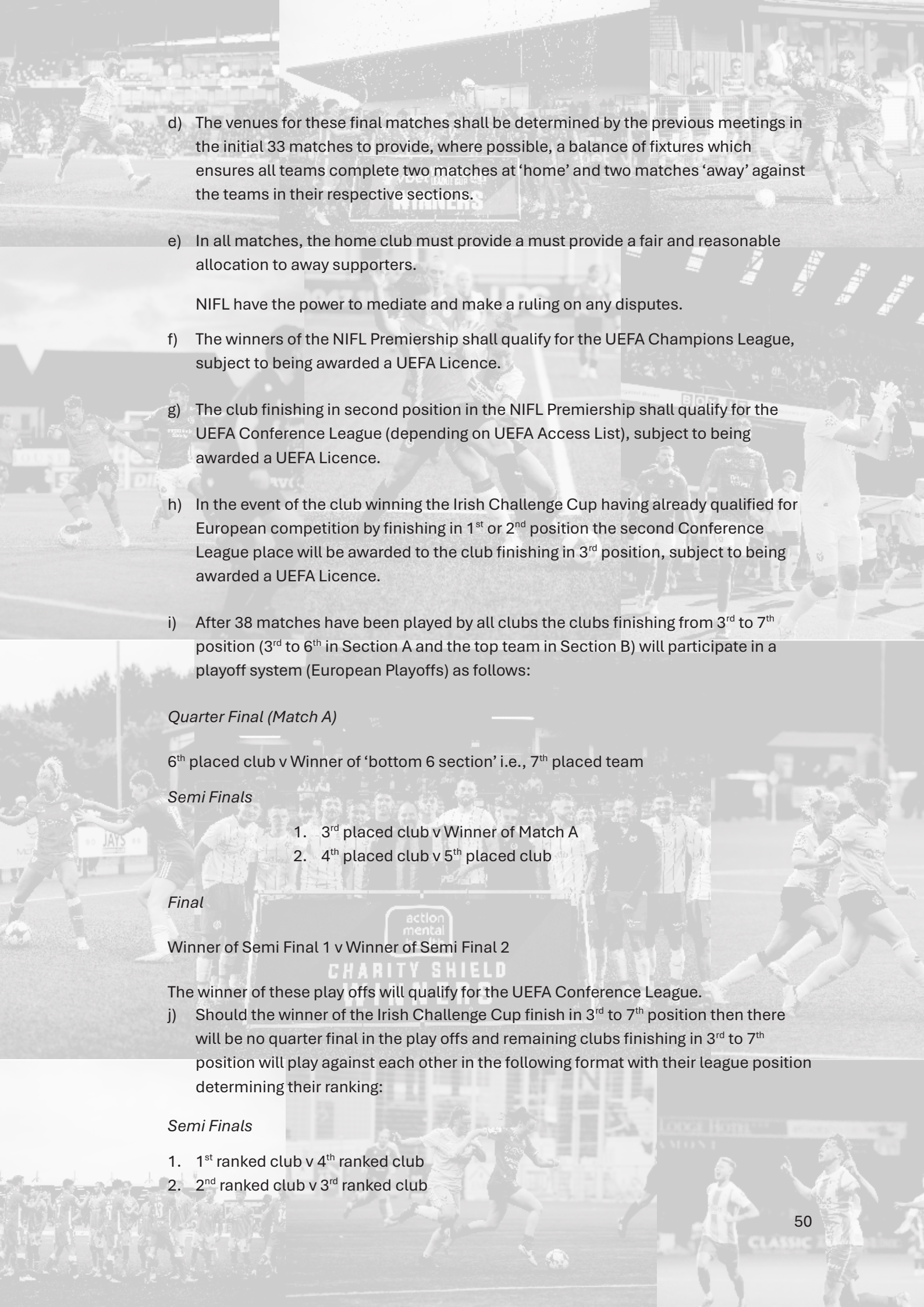
Clubs must notify the NIFL Chief Operating Officer on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March of their intention to discontinue membership of the Premiership. The NIFL Board will consider all such matters and reserve the right to sanction a club as they deem necessary.

#### **5. Notices**

A notice may be given by the NIFL Premiership to any Club or any Club representative either personally or via email.

#### **6. League Competitions**

- a) The League shall, each season, conduct and in every respect control a football competition to be called the NIFL Premiership.
- b) The NIFL Premiership shall consist of 12 teams who shall play each other on three occasions (either 2 at 'home' and 1 'away' or vice versa as determined by the fixture schedule).
- c) When all teams have completed 33 matches, or when standings permit, the league shall be split into two sections. Teams ranked in positions 1 to 6 shall comprise Section A and teams ranked in positions 7 to 12 shall comprise Section B. Points achieved during the first phase of 33 matches are carried forward to the second phase. Teams shall then compete in a further 5 matches (i.e., one match against all other teams within their respective sections).

- 
- d) The venues for these final matches shall be determined by the previous meetings in the initial 33 matches to provide, where possible, a balance of fixtures which ensures all teams complete two matches at 'home' and two matches 'away' against the teams in their respective sections.
- e) In all matches, the home club must provide a fair and reasonable allocation to away supporters.
- NIFL have the power to mediate and make a ruling on any disputes.
- f) The winners of the NIFL Premiership shall qualify for the UEFA Champions League, subject to being awarded a UEFA Licence.
- g) The club finishing in second position in the NIFL Premiership shall qualify for the UEFA Conference League (depending on UEFA Access List), subject to being awarded a UEFA Licence.
- h) In the event of the club winning the Irish Challenge Cup having already qualified for European competition by finishing in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> position the second Conference League place will be awarded to the club finishing in 3<sup>rd</sup> position, subject to being awarded a UEFA Licence.
- i) After 38 matches have been played by all clubs the clubs finishing from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> position (3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> in Section A and the top team in Section B) will participate in a playoff system (European Playoffs) as follows:

#### *Quarter Final (Match A)*

6<sup>th</sup> placed club v Winner of 'bottom 6 section' i.e., 7<sup>th</sup> placed team

#### *Semi Finals*

1. 3<sup>rd</sup> placed club v Winner of Match A
2. 4<sup>th</sup> placed club v 5<sup>th</sup> placed club

#### *Final*

Winner of Semi Final 1 v Winner of Semi Final 2

The winner of these play offs will qualify for the UEFA Conference League.

- j) Should the winner of the Irish Challenge Cup finish in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> position then there will be no quarter final in the play offs and remaining clubs finishing in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> position will play against each other in the following format with their league position determining their ranking:

#### *Semi Finals*

1. 1<sup>st</sup> ranked club v 4<sup>th</sup> ranked club
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> ranked club v 3<sup>rd</sup> ranked club



*Final*

Winner of Semi Final 1 v Winner Semi Final 2

- k) Should a club finishing in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> position not receive a UEFA licence then they will not be permitted to participate in the play offs for UEFA Conference League qualification. In this event there will be no quarter final in the play offs and the remaining clubs finishing in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> position will play against each other in the following format with their league position determining their ranking:

*Semi Finals*

3. 1<sup>st</sup> ranked club v 4<sup>th</sup> ranked club
4. 2<sup>nd</sup> ranked club v 3<sup>rd</sup> ranked club

*Final*

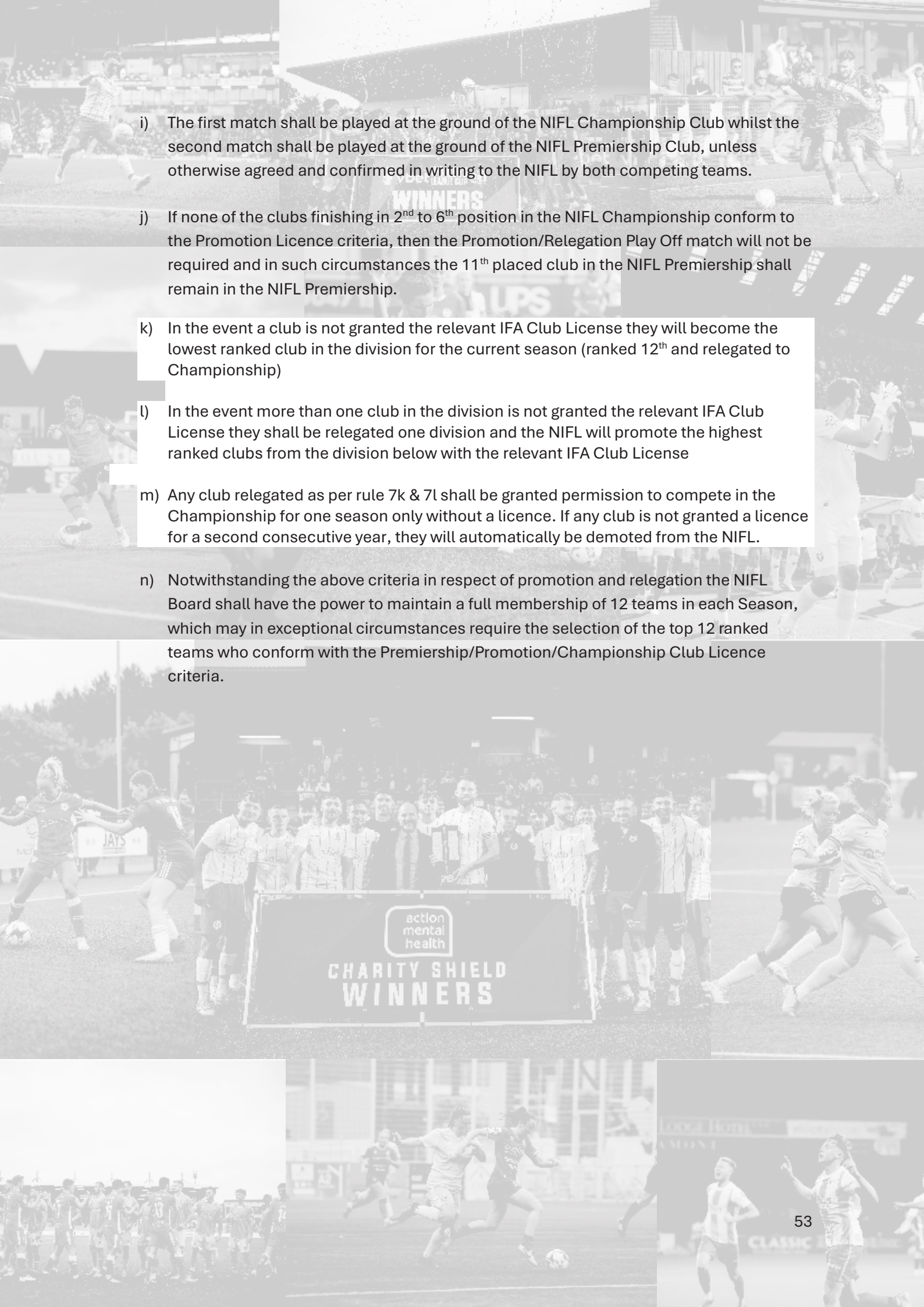
Winner of Semi Final 1 v Winner Semi Final 2

*For any final the highest ranked club in the regular season will be at home.*

- l) In the event of any other scenario the NIFL Competitions Committee shall schedule the playoff competition as it considers appropriate.
- m) The playoffs will be treated as a standalone 'cup' competition from the league from a disciplinary perspective in accordance with the Irish FA Disciplinary Code.
- n) The play offs for the UEFA Conference League shall 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 fifteen (15) 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 approved by the International FA Board.
- o) For all European playoff ties the gate receipts after payment of the costs pertaining to referees, professional security company, turnstiles, ambulance/first aid cover, hospitality and ticketing shall be equally divided between the two (2) competing clubs. (The home club shall ensure that copies of the receipts for such costs are furnished to the away team upon request)
- p) In the event that the season should be required to halt due to unforeseen circumstances, and it is deemed not possible by government authorities, the Irish FA or NIFL Board to complete the season, the final standings will be determined in accordance with the Curtailment Policy as directed by the NIFL Board.

## 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:
  - i. Goal Difference (Goals scored less goals conceded in all matches)
  - ii. Goals scored in all matches
  - iii. Superior points gained in matches between the teams in question
  - iv. Superior goal difference in matches between the teams in question
  - v. Drawing of lots by the NIFL Competition Committee
- b) At the end of the season the winners of the NIFL Championship shall be promoted to the NIFL Premiership and the club finishing in bottom position of the NIFL Premiership shall be relegated to the NIFL Championship.
- c) The club finishing in 11th position in the NIFL Premiership shall be obliged to play in a play-off against the highest ranked club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> place in the NIFL Championship who has been awarded a Promotion Licence and the winner of the play-off will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Premiership.
- d) The playoffs will be treated as a standalone 'cup' competition from the league from a disciplinary perspective in accordance with the Irish FA Disciplinary Code.
- e) If the winners of the NIFL Championship do not conform with the Promotion Licence criteria they will not be promoted to the NIFL Premiership, in this instance the highest ranked club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> place in the NIFL Championship who has been awarded a Promotion Licence would then play against the team finishing bottom of the NIFL Premiership and the winner of that play-off, which will be on a 'home' and 'away' basis', will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Premiership.
- f) If this procedure does not produce a result, i.e., if both teams score the same number of goals at home and away, two 15-minute periods of extra time will be played at the end of the second leg. If the score is still level after extra time, penalty kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the Laws of the Game shall determine which team is declared the winner.
- g) The loser of the play-off will be relegated to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Championship.
- h) The play-off matches to determine the final composition of the NIFL Premiership and the NIFL Championship shall be played on a date to be determined by NIFL Competitions Committee who will be responsible for all arrangements in respect of the play-off matches which will be played under the jurisdiction of the NIFL Premiership.

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- i) The first match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL Championship Club whilst the second match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL Premiership Club, unless otherwise agreed and confirmed in writing to the NIFL by both competing teams.
  - j) If none of the clubs finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> position in the NIFL Championship conform to the Promotion Licence criteria, then the Promotion/Relegation Play Off match will not be required and in such circumstances the 11<sup>th</sup> placed club in the NIFL Premiership shall remain in the NIFL Premiership.
  - k) In the event a club is not granted the relevant IFA Club License they will become the lowest ranked club in the division for the current season (ranked 12<sup>th</sup> and relegated to Championship)
  - l) In the event more than one club in the division is not granted the relevant IFA Club License they shall be relegated one division and the NIFL will promote the highest ranked clubs from the division below with the relevant IFA Club License
  - m) Any club relegated as per rule 7k & 7l shall be granted permission to compete in the Championship for one season only without a licence. If any club is not granted a licence for a second consecutive year, they will automatically be demoted from the NIFL.
  - n) Notwithstanding the above criteria in respect of promotion and relegation the NIFL Board shall have the power to maintain a full membership of 12 teams in each Season, which may in exceptional circumstances require the selection of the top 12 ranked teams who conform with the Premiership/Promotion/Championship Club Licence criteria.

## NIFL COMMITTEES

### 8. NIFL Competition Committee

- a) The NIFL Competition 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 Competition Committee will be responsible for the drafting of competition rules and for the organisation of all the cup competitions played within the League, this will include decisions as to which clubs may participate, the eligibility criteria for players playing in these competitions, and the drawing of ties and dealing with all matters pertaining to the Competitions. The Competition Committee has the power to deal with any relevant matters not covered by League rules.
- c) The Competition Committee will be appointed annual by the NIFL General Assembly and consist of 7 members:
  - (i) Three representatives from clubs playing in the Premiership
  - (ii) Two representatives from clubs playing in the Championship
  - (iii) One representative from clubs playing in the PIL
  - (iv) One representative from clubs playing in the Women's Premiership

The Committee shall appoint annually a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who may serve for a period not exceeding two years. A Chairman retiring after a period of two years may not seek election either to the office of chairman or that of Vice-Chairman until a further period of two years has elapsed. Notwithstanding the above, the Committee reserve the right to extend the terms of the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman by one year on an annual basis.

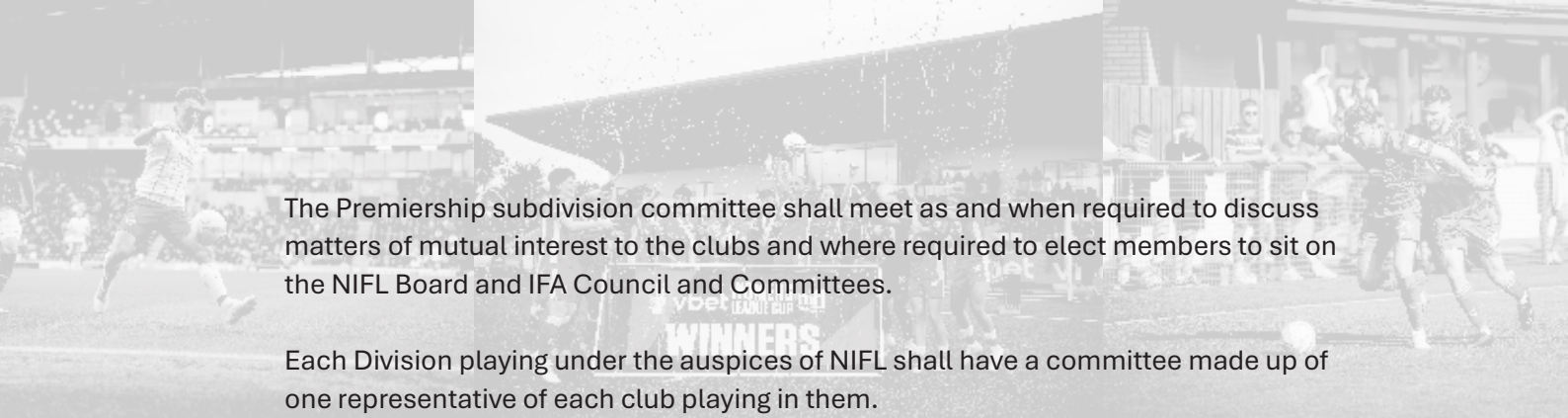
### 9. NIFL Discipline Committee

- a) The NIFL Discipline 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 NIFL Discipline Committee will deal with off field discipline issues delegated to it by the Board or Staff for consideration.

The committee shall not deal with on field matters which shall remain the responsibility of the Irish Football Association.

- c) 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.

### 10. Subdivision Committees



The Premiership subdivision committee shall meet as and when required to discuss matters of mutual interest to the clubs and where required to elect members to sit on the NIFL Board and IFA Council and Committees.

Each Division playing under the auspices of NIFL shall have a committee made up of one representative of each club playing in them.





## OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

### 11. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences

- a) The NIFL, and any Committee duly appointed by the Board or relevant 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 Premiership, and they shall be entitled for that purpose to require the attendance of all officials, players and other persons (as defined in Rule 4.e.a) and for the production of all books, letters and other documents.
- b) The NIFL irrespective of whether or not it shall have appointed a Commission or 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 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.

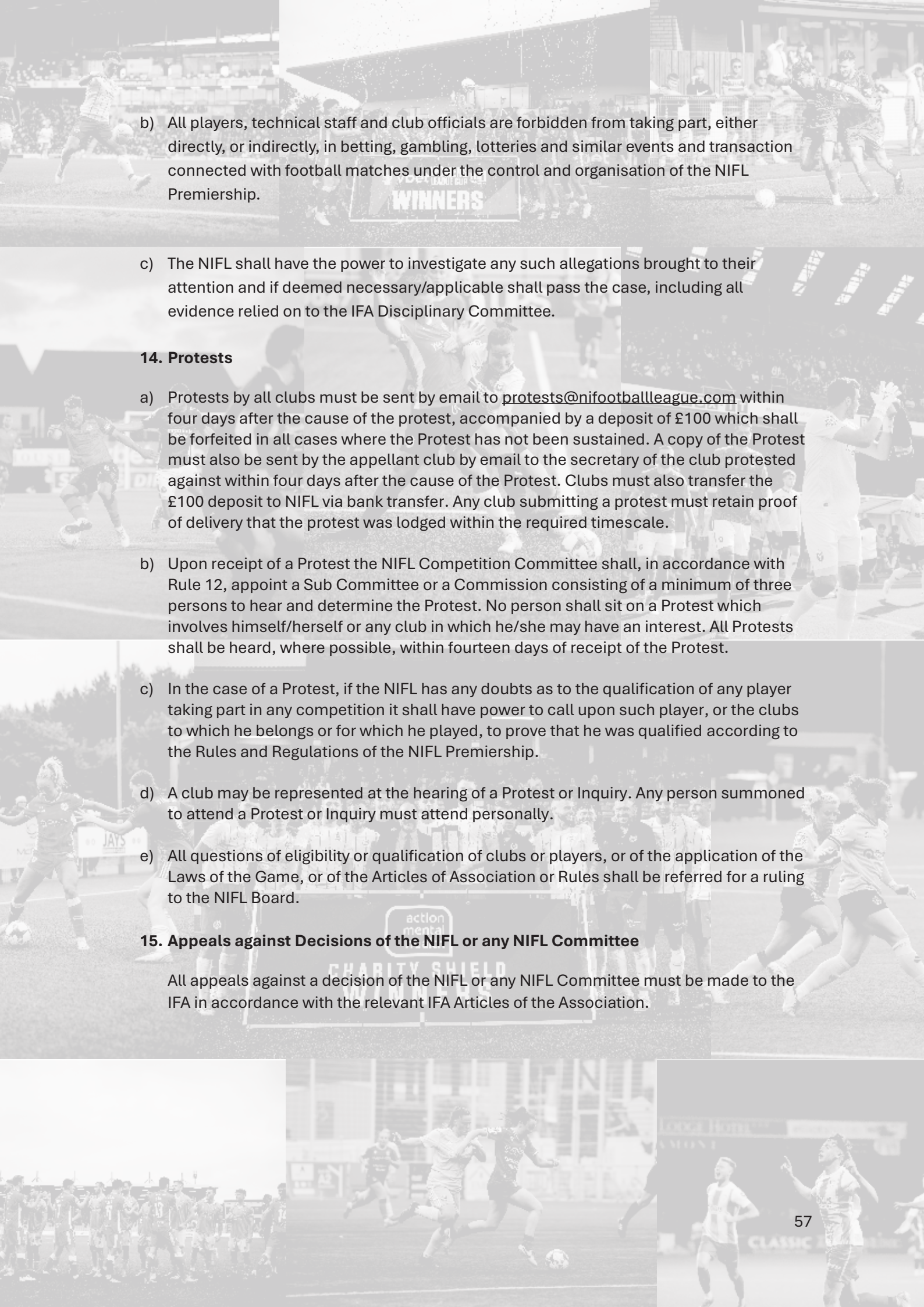
*Note – This rule will not apply to any field offences or any other matter which would normally be dealt with by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.*

### 12. Commissions and Reports

- a) The NIFL, and any 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 Premiership or its affairs.
- b) The NIFL, and any 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 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 Premiership may think fit.

### 13. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Premiership 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 un-sportingly influence the result of a match shall be referred to the IFA Disciplinary Committee. If deemed guilty of misconduct the club, official or player shall be liable to a fine of £5000 and shall be subject to such further sanction as the NIFL Competition 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 Premiership.

c) The NIFL 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.

#### **14. Protests**

a) Protests by all clubs must be sent by email to [protests@nifootballleague.com](mailto:protests@nifootballleague.com) 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 email to the secretary of the club protested against within four days after the cause of the Protest. Clubs must also transfer the £100 deposit to NIFL via bank transfer. Any club submitting a protest must retain proof of delivery that the protest was lodged within the required timescale.

b) Upon receipt of a Protest the NIFL Competition Committee shall, in accordance with Rule 12, 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 belongs or for which he played, to prove that he was qualified according to the Rules and Regulations of the NIFL Premiership.

d) 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.

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.

#### **15. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL or any NIFL Committee**

All appeals against a decision of the NIFL or any NIFL Committee must be made to the IFA in accordance with the relevant IFA Articles of the Association.

## GROUNDS

### 16. 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 Competitions Committee not later than 31 March for the following season.
- c) All facilities (including playing facilities and changing rooms) must be available to both competing clubs and referees on match days at least 90 minutes prior to kick off and 30 minutes following the completion of the match.
- d) Where clubs have the provision of a pitch watering system the pitch watering schedule must be provided by the home club and communicated to the referee and away team on arrival. The pitch must be watered evenly and not only in certain areas. As a general rule, pitch watering must finish 60 minutes before kick-off.

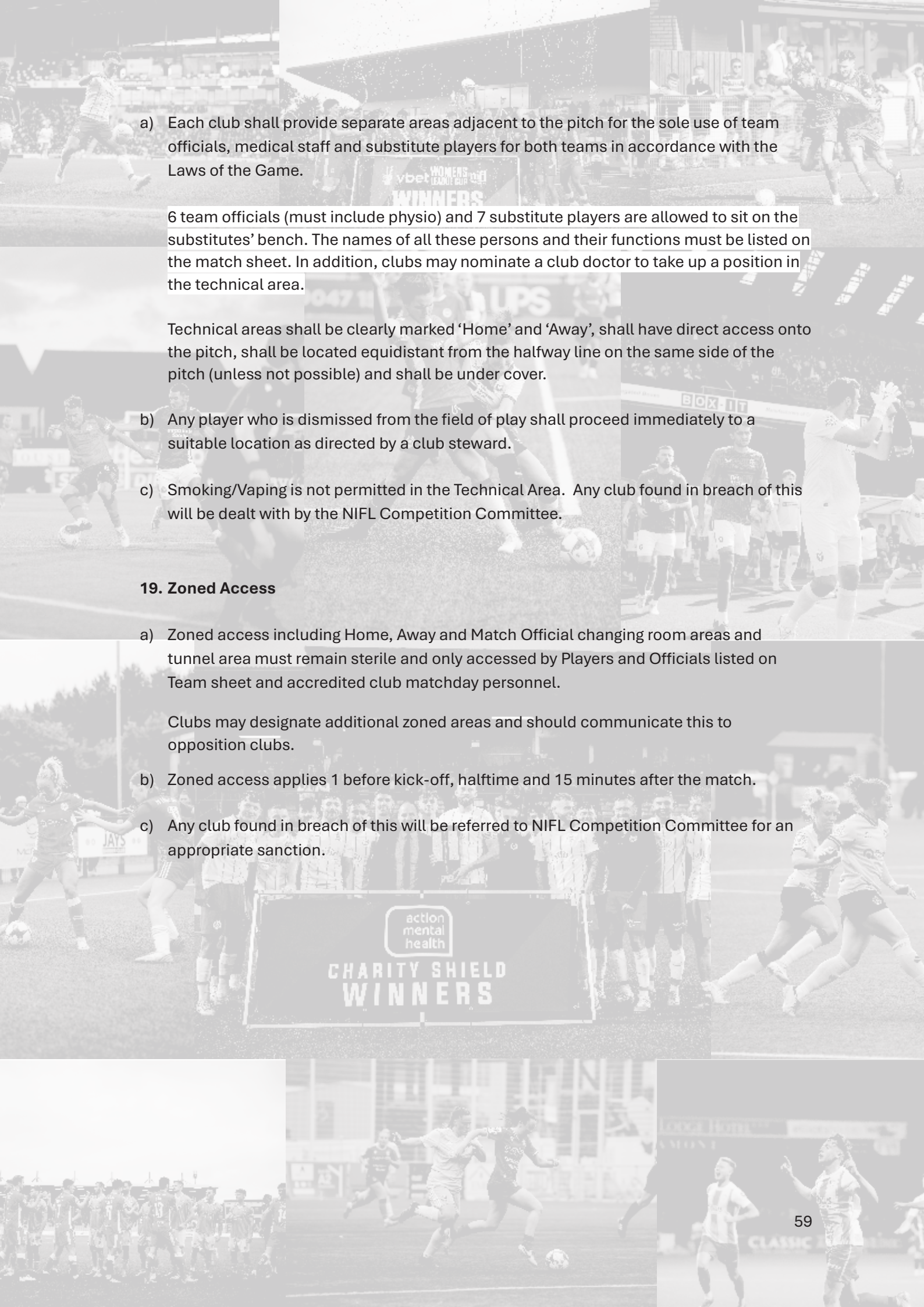
No further watering is permitted. Clubs to be sanctioned £500 for first breach and increased sanctions for any further breaches.

- e) Clubs must register their pitch dimensions with the NIFL prior to the start of each Season, which must adhere to the Laws of the Game. The registered pitch dimensions must not be altered during the course of a season, without the consent of the NIFL Competition Committee. Such request for consent can only be made in exceptional circumstances and must be served in writing to the NIFL Chief Operating Officer. The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected. Should a club make such alterations without the required consent and a should a match or matches take place that 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. Notwithstanding the above the winning team shall not be disadvantaged if the original score line was of greater benefit to that team's goal difference. A fine of up to £500 per match played will also be levied.

### 17. Objection to Field of Play etc.

Any objection to the field of play or field equipment 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.

### 18. Technical Areas

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- 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.

6 team officials (must include physio) and 7 substitute players are allowed to sit on the substitutes' bench. The names of all these persons and their functions must be listed on the match sheet. In addition, clubs may nominate a club doctor to take up a position in the technical area.

Technical 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) and shall be under cover.

- b) Any player who is dismissed from the field of play shall proceed immediately to a suitable location as directed by a club steward.
- c) Smoking/Vaping is not permitted in the Technical Area. Any club found in breach of this will be dealt with by the NIFL Competition Committee.

## 19. Zoned Access

- a) Zoned access including Home, Away and Match Official changing room areas and tunnel area must remain sterile and only accessed by Players and Officials listed on Team sheet and accredited club matchday personnel.

Clubs may designate additional zoned areas and should communicate this to opposition clubs.

- b) Zoned access applies 15 minutes before kick-off, halftime and 15 minutes after the match.
- c) Any club found in breach of this will be referred to NIFL Competition Committee for an appropriate sanction.

## MATCHES

### 20. Matches and Kick-off times

- a) Matches may be played on natural turf or artificial turf, provided that such artificial turf meets 'FIFA Pro' or 'FIFA Quality' standard with the venue owner and the home club in receipt of a valid FIFA Certificate.


The NI Football League cannot be held responsible for any damages to third parties resulting from the use of artificial turf.

Each Club is under an obligation to ensure that the pitch at its Registered Ground is level and in good condition and repair and that it has an efficient and effective drainage system so that it does not become unplayable due to flooding.

The NIFL Competitions Committee is entitled to direct a Club to take such steps as considered necessary in order that the pitch is put into and maintained in good condition and repair.

A club whose pitch is deemed to be unfit for play shall then be responsible for arranging an alternative venue(s) which meets all League requirements, until such time as the work deemed necessary to make the pitch suitable for play has been carried out, the pitch has been re-inspected and the NIFL Competition Committee has given approval for matches to take place on the pitch.

- 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 Premiership. All NIFL Premiership matches shall be played on the dates scheduled at the commencement of the season, except:
- i. When otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee; or when
  - ii. A club is engaged in a competitive fixture under the auspices of UEFA (either 'home' or 'away') and receives permission after making application to rearrange its fixture to provide 3 days between fixtures
  - iii. National and regional association senior cup ties take precedence.
- c) In the event of a home club wishing to change from the date or time of a scheduled fixture, advance notice must be served in writing to both the Secretary of the away club and the NIFL Chief Operating Officer six (6) weeks prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.
- d) However, notwithstanding the above, no match shall be played on a Sunday unless the two (2) participating clubs are in agreement.
- e) The kick-off time for all Saturday matches shall be 3.00pm unless otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee or agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Competition Committee.



NIFL Competition Committee shall consider any request to change kick-off times for Saturday matches and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.

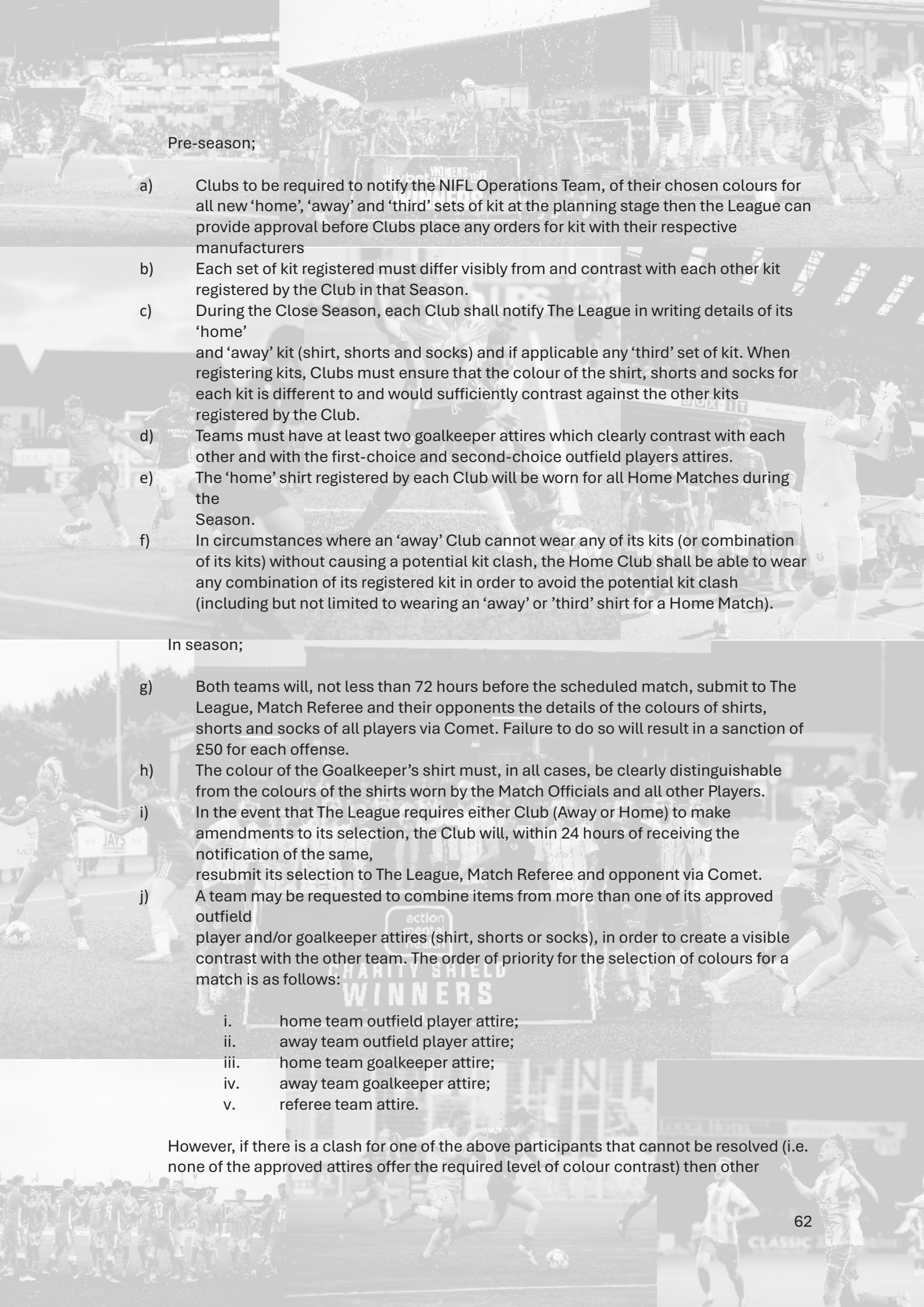
- f) The kick-off time for all midweek matches (including Friday fixtures) shall be 7.45 pm unless otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee or agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL. This does not include Public Holidays or Bank Holidays.
- g) Matches shall not be played out of sequence unless with the prior approval of the NIFL Competition Committee.
- h) In the event of a club failing to fulfil an arranged fixture the NIFL Premiership Fixtures Sub Committee shall be empowered to grant compensation to the other club for actual expenses incurred for such match.

## **21. International Duty**

- a) In the event of a club having two or more players, who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup, or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s), in matches recognised by the FIFA International Calendar, 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, and who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup, or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.
- b) In the event of a club having three or more players, who have made appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s) in matches not recognised on the FIFA International Calendar or Development and Schools FA squads, 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, and who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.
- c) The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.

## **22. Kit Approval**

The NIFL Kit Approval Regulations are made pursuant to Irish FA Football Regulations and to the Laws of the Game. Clubs participating in other International competitions, such as UEFA Cup Competitions, must also comply with all relevant regulations.



Pre-season;

- a) Clubs to be required to notify the NIFL Operations Team, of their chosen colours for all new 'home', 'away' and 'third' sets of kit at the planning stage then the League can provide approval before Clubs place any orders for kit with their respective manufacturers
- b) Each set of kit registered must differ visibly from and contrast with each other kit registered by the Club in that Season.
- c) During the Close Season, each Club shall notify The League in writing details of its 'home' and 'away' kit (shirt, shorts and socks) and if applicable any 'third' set of kit. When registering kits, Clubs must ensure that the colour of the shirt, shorts and socks for each kit is different to and would sufficiently contrast against the other kits registered by the Club.
- d) Teams must have at least two goalkeeper attires which clearly contrast with each other and with the first-choice and second-choice outfield players attires.
- e) The 'home' shirt registered by each Club will be worn for all Home Matches during the Season.
- f) In circumstances where an 'away' Club cannot wear any of its kits (or combination of its kits) without causing a potential kit clash, the Home Club shall be able to wear any combination of its registered kit in order to avoid the potential kit clash (including but not limited to wearing an 'away' or 'third' shirt for a Home Match).

In season;

- g) Both teams will, not less than 72 hours before the scheduled match, submit to The League, Match Referee and their opponents the details of the colours of shirts, shorts and socks of all players via Comet. Failure to do so will result in a sanction of £50 for each offense.
- h) The colour of the Goalkeeper's shirt must, in all cases, be clearly distinguishable from the colours of the shirts worn by the Match Officials and all other Players.
- i) In the event that The League requires either Club (Away or Home) to make amendments to its selection, the Club will, within 24 hours of receiving the notification of the same, resubmit its selection to The League, Match Referee and opponent via Comet.
- j) A team may be requested to combine items from more than one of its approved outfield player and/or goalkeeper attires (shirt, shorts or socks), in order to create a visible contrast with the other team. The order of priority for the selection of colours for a match is as follows:
  - i. home team outfield player attire;
  - ii. away team outfield player attire;
  - iii. home team goalkeeper attire;
  - iv. away team goalkeeper attire;
  - v. referee team attire.

However, if there is a clash for one of the above participants that cannot be resolved (i.e. none of the approved attires offer the required level of colour contrast) then other

participants may have to change (in reverse order) until a suitable contrast can be found.

If the referee decides on the spot (matchday) that the two teams' selected colours could lead to confusion, the home team must change playing attire, for practical reasons.

For a final, both teams should wear their first-choice outfield player attire. If this would create a colour clash, the designated away team must wear its second-choice (or other approved alternative) outfield player attire. If that too would create a colour clash, the administration decides on the playing attire to be worn by each team in consultation with the referee.

Disciplinary action in accordance with the Rules may be taken against a Club for any breach of these regulations.

### 23. Kit Advertising Regulations

- Club sponsorship/advertising on team kit must receive the prior approval of NIFL before each season commences.
- A Club shall observe all recognised Advertising standards and in particular those of the Advertising Standards Authority.
- Clubs must adhere to NIFL sponsorship/advertising requirements on team kits are described

in the League Commercial Rights section of the NIFL Participation Agreement. The below locations and sizes are the only permitted areas for sponsor advertising on playing kits:

Permitted club advertisement locations	Size
1 front of shirt	Maximum size of 250cm <sup>2</sup>
2 back of shirt	Maximum size of 150cm <sup>2</sup> for the one above name/number, and 100cm <sup>2</sup> for the one below name/numbers
2 (on left for Prem and 1 on each for C/PIL)	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup> .
2 on shorts (1 front, 1 back)	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup>
1 on sock	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup>
Max 8	

*Please note: for clubs competing in UEFA Club Competitions the maximum size for front of shirt is 200cm<sup>2</sup> and other restrictions may apply depending on the stage of competition*

To calculate the total area of logos, the widest part of the logo or patch containing the logo is measured from edge to edge.



## 24. Kit Numbering

- a) A number must be centred on the back of each shirt. Only whole numbers may be used, no number higher than 99 may be used and the number 1 may only be used by a goalkeeper.
- b) Numbers must be of a single colour that contrasts with the number zone.
- c) Numbers must be clearly legible. The stroke width of each digit must be 2–5cm and the digits themselves must be:
  - i. 25–35cm high on men's shirts;
  - ii. 20–35cm high on women's shirts
- d) Numbers must be clearly legible to the referee team, commentators, spectators and TV viewers, in daylight and under floodlights, from at least 50m away.

## 25. Kit Names

- a) Players may be identified on their shirts by means of their surname.
- b) The name by which a player is identified on their shirt must correspond with the name entered on the team sheet (unless prior approval).
- c) When player names are displayed on shirts, they must be placed on the back of the shirt, above the number.
- d) Names must be written in a single colour.
- e) Each letter must be no more than 7.5cm high.
- f) The letters must clearly contrast with the background colour(s) of the shirt

## 26. Player Identification

- a) NIFL Premiership - Squad numbers must be assigned to all players. These numbers must be retained and used, and not reallocated, on shirts throughout the season. The players shirts must be clearly named and 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 his status.
- c) All clubs must have the availability of a 'blood shirt' which is clearly numbered and is not a number that has been allocated to any squad player.
- d) Clubs shall be fined a minimum of £200, for each offence, where they fail to observe this rule.

## 27. Pitch Inspections

- a) In case of unfavourable weather conditions or concerns regarding the playing surface the Home Club must request the NIFL for an early inspection not later than five hours before kick-off. The Match Referee or an alternative Referee appointed by the NIFL

must inspect the ground at least three hours or more previous to the advertised time of kick-off and shall decide as to the fitness of the ground not later than three hours prior to the pre-arranged time of kick-off, his decision being final after consultation with the Club Secretary and the NIFL.

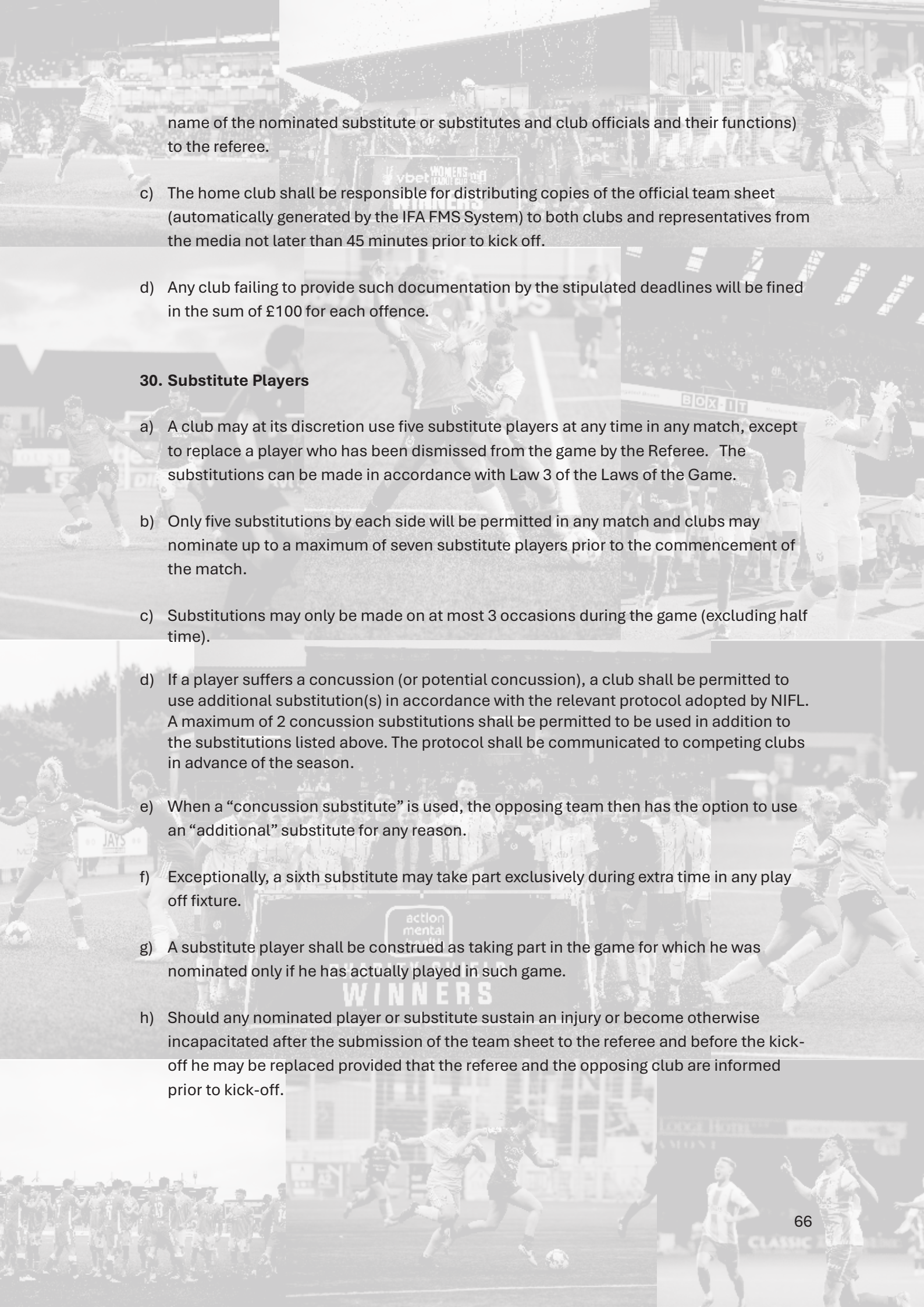
- b) No game shall be postponed without an inspection by a referee appointed by the NIFL, who shall take due cognizance of local advice and the travelling supporters.
- c) Notwithstanding the above, in the event of extreme weather conditions and forecasts the NIFL Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the NIFL Competition Committee Chair, may declare any match or matches postponed without a formal pitch inspection.
- d) 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.
- e) It is agreed that in addition to the £5 fee an allowance of £5 per hour be paid up until 2pm when the referee would be due to arrive at the ground in normal circumstances. This will only apply when the match referee has had to travel 30 miles or more (single journey/one way). Any distances shorter than this would result in the match referee returning home following the inspection and travel back to the ground at the normal time and he would of course be entitled to add this extra travel and £5 inspection fee onto his expenses for the game.
- f) The Referee, Assistant Referees and 4<sup>th</sup> Official shall be paid half match fee and expenses for a postponed match which they have arrived at and inspected.

## **28. Postponed or Abandoned Matches**

Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee. The NIFL Competition Committee shall have the power to direct clubs to play on the following day following the original date of the fixture if required to maintain the fixture schedule.

## **29. Completion of Team Line up**

- 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 the name of the nominated substitutes) via the IFA Football Management System not later than 75 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 60 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) The home club shall be responsible for distributing copies of the official team sheet (automatically generated by the IFA FMS System) to both clubs and representatives from the media not later than 45 minutes prior to kick off.
- d) Any club failing to provide such documentation by the stipulated deadlines will be fined in the sum of £100 for each offence.

### 30. 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 dismissed from the game by the Referee. The substitutions can be made in accordance with Law 3 of 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) If a player suffers a concussion (or potential concussion), a club shall be permitted to use additional substitution(s) in accordance with the relevant protocol adopted by NIFL. A maximum of 2 concussion substitutions shall be permitted to be used in addition to the substitutions listed above. The protocol shall be communicated to competing clubs in advance of the season.
- e) When a “concussion substitute” is used, the opposing team then has the option to use an “additional” substitute for any reason.
- f) Exceptionally, a sixth substitute may take part exclusively during extra time in any play off fixture.
- g) A substitute player shall be construed as taking part in the game for which he was nominated only if he has actually played in such game.
- h) 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.

### 31. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet

After the team sheets have been completed and submitted to the Football Management System to the Referee and if the match has not yet kicked off, the following shall apply:

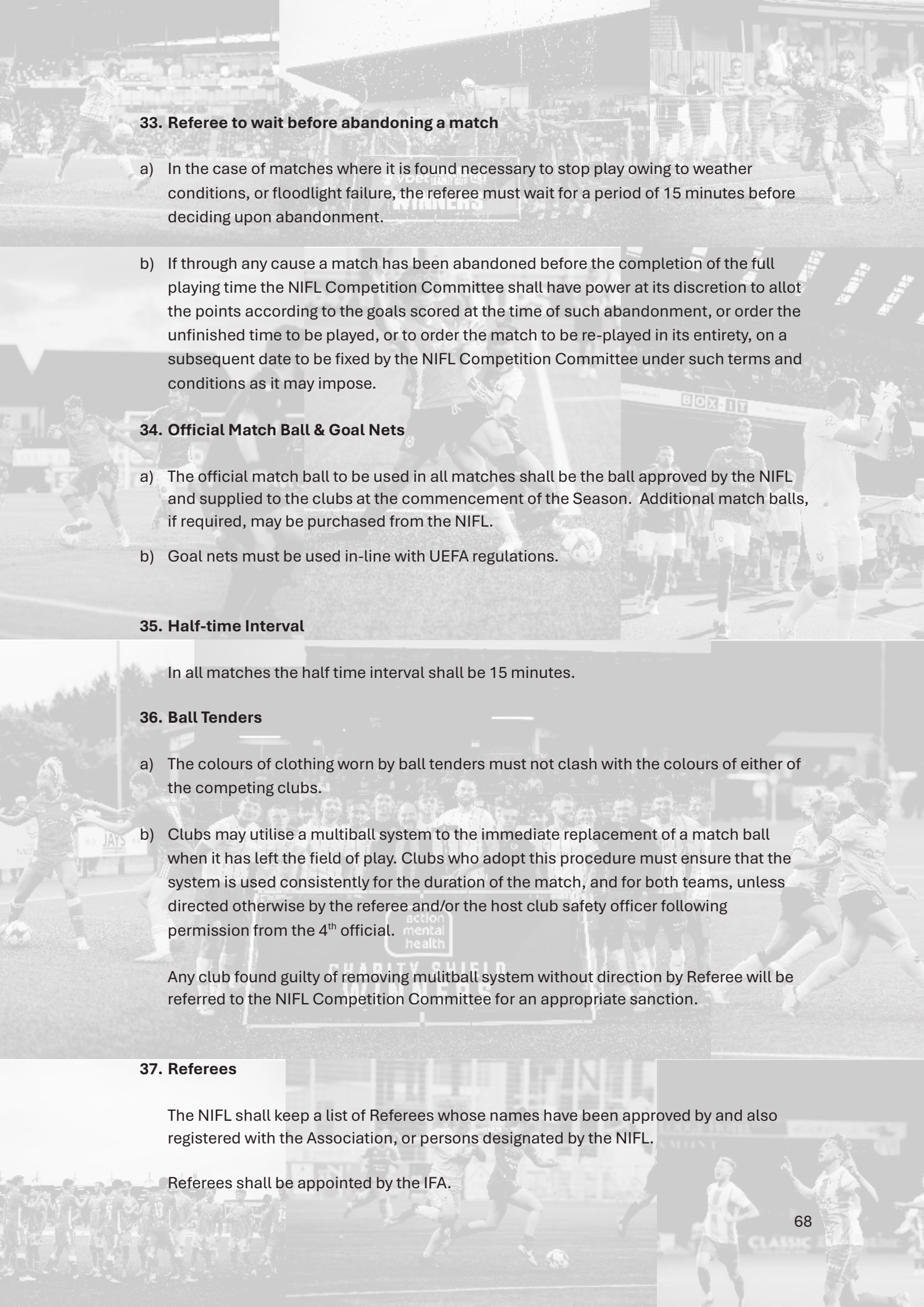
- a) If any of the first eleven players named on the team sheet are not able to start the match due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced only by any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the initial team sheet. The substitute(s) in question can then be replaced by a player(s) not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.
- b) If any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the team sheet are not able to be fielded due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced by any player not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.

Any amendments to the team sheet in accordance with points (a) and (b) above must be communicated by a named person on the official teamsheet to the match referee who will make the changes. The referee or another match official must communicate the change to the opposing team manager as soon as possible prior to the commencement of the match.

### 32. Late Start

The NIFL Competitions Committee may fine clubs up to £500 for late start of matches except in exceptional circumstances.

- a) Clubs must request permission for any pre-match commemoration including minutes silence/applauds no later in 24hrs before kickoff, unless in exceptional circumstance. All requests must be clearly communicated and agreed in advance with opposition clubs and match officials to ensure timings are built into pre-match plans. All requests must be sent to NIFL Chief Operating Officer.
- b) All pre-match activity must be built into official match countdown and not encroach on kick-off time.
- c) Match officials and Observers to report late starts to the NIFL.



### 33. Referee to wait before abandoning a match

- a) In the case of matches where it is found necessary to stop play owing to weather conditions, or floodlight failure, the referee must wait for a period of 15 minutes before deciding upon abandonment.
- b) If through any cause a match has been abandoned before the completion of the full playing time the NIFL Competition 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 Competition Committee under such terms and conditions as it may impose.

### 34. Official Match Ball & Goal Nets

- a) 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.
- b) Goal nets must be used in-line with UEFA regulations.

### 35. Half-time Interval

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

### 36. Ball Tenders

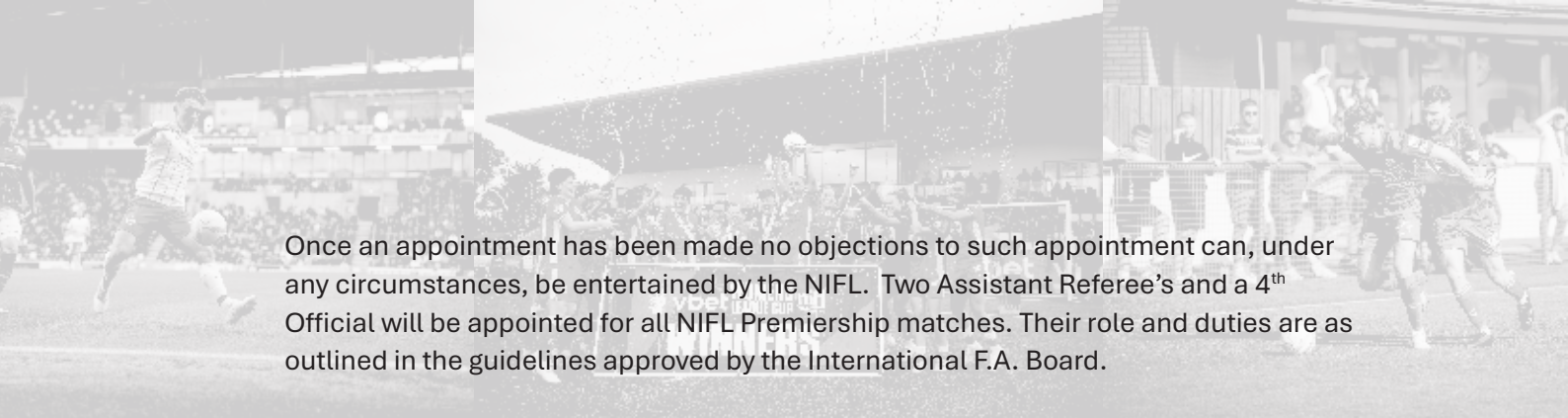
- a) The colours of clothing worn by ball tenders must not clash with the colours of either of the competing clubs.
- b) Clubs may utilise a multiball system to the immediate replacement of a match ball when it has left the field of play. Clubs who adopt this procedure must ensure that the system is used consistently for the duration of the match, and for both teams, unless directed otherwise by the referee and/or the host club safety officer following permission from the 4<sup>th</sup> official.

Any club found guilty of removing multiball system without direction by Referee will be referred to the NIFL Competition Committee for an appropriate sanction.

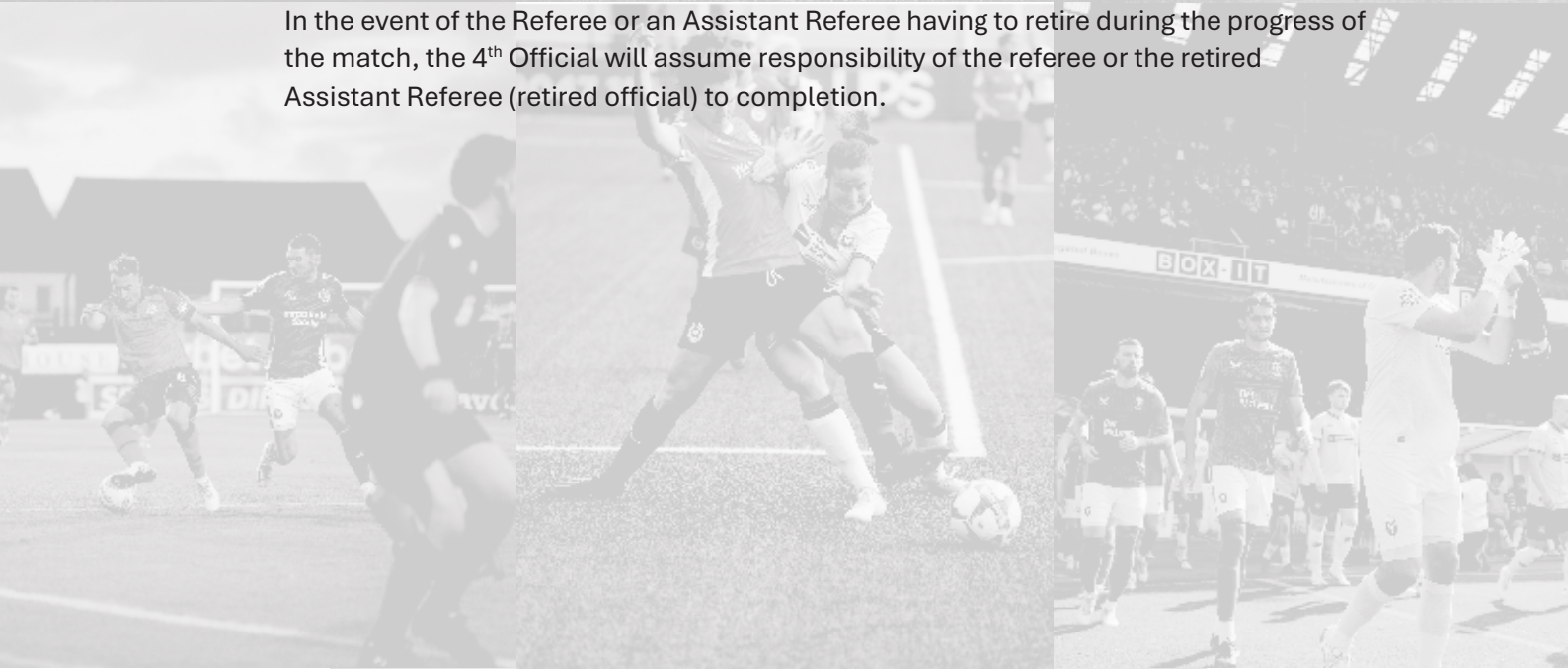
### 37. Referees

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 IFA.



Once an appointment has been made no objections to such appointment can, under any circumstances, be entertained by the NIFL. Two Assistant Referee's and a 4<sup>th</sup> Official will be appointed for all NIFL Premiership matches. Their role and duties are as outlined in the guidelines approved by the International F.A. Board.



In the event of the Referee or an Assistant Referee having to retire during the progress of the match, the 4<sup>th</sup> Official will assume responsibility of the referee or the retired Assistant Referee (retired official) to completion.



## FINANCE

### 38. Admission to Grounds

- a) The admission policy for all NIFL Premiership matches shall be determined by the NIFL Premiership Sub-division annually.
- b) Each club shall furnish the NIFL a list of no more than 15 directors that shall receive a Director's pass. The bearer shall be entitled to admission to the ground, Director's Box and Board Rooms at matches in which their club are participating under the jurisdiction of the NIFL, excluding semi-finals and finals.
- c) The NIFL Premiership at its discretion may issue passes to any other persons as it sees fit.

### 39. Gate Receipts

- a) The admission charges to the ground in all NIFL Premiership matches shall be retained by the home clubs, unless otherwise determined by the NIFL Competition Committee.
- b) In any match where admission to the ground is by ticket, all revenue generated from the sale of tickets by the away team shall be paid to the home team within 7 days following the date on which the match was played together with a reconciliation of unsold tickets.
- c) Non-payment shall result in an automatic increase of 10% of the monies due to the home club for up to 7 days late payment and 20% between 7 to 14 days late payment. All other cases shall be referred to the Committee who will deal with the matter as they consider appropriate.

### 40. Season Tickets

Clubs may issue season tickets for admission to all home "League" matches, unless otherwise directed.

### 41. Fines

- a) All fines imposed by the NIFL 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 20% of the fine per week or part of a week that a fine is outstanding.
- c) If any club fails to make any payment to the NIFL Premiership 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.

## PLAYER REGISTRATIONS

### 42. Player Registration Regulations

- a) All players must be registered in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations and the NIFL Player Registration Regulations.
- b) Where a Professional or amateur player is paid expenses, then payments are to be supported by 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.

### 43. Squad Size Limits

- a) Clubs will be permitted to register a maximum of 20 (twenty) players aged 21 and over to play in the NIFL Premiership.
- b) An Under 21 player means a Player under the age of 21 as at the 1 January in which the Season concerned commences
- c) The following exceptions may apply:
  - (i) Neither a "club-trained player" nor an "association trained player" will be classified as an over-age player in the squad calculations.
  - (ii) A "club-trained player" is a player who, between the age of 15 (or the start of the season during which he turns 15) and 21 (or the end of the season during which he turns 21), and irrespective of his nationality and age, has been registered with his current club for a period, continuous or not, of three entire seasons.
  - (iii) An "association-trained player" is a player returning from another jurisdiction and under 21 at the date of registration with their current club. They will be viewed as 'association-trained' if they have previously been registered with a club or with other clubs affiliated to the Irish FA for a period, continuous or not, of three entire seasons or of 36 months between the age of 15 (or the start of the season during which he turns 15) and 21 (or the end of the season during which he turns 21), and irrespective of his nationality and age.
- d) Clubs are permitted to register an unlimited number of players under the age of 21.
- e) Clubs must submit a copy of their first team playing squad, using the appropriate form, to the NIFL before the first match of the season.



Thereafter the clubs must submit the changes to their squad, using the appropriate form, each time they register, transfer, loan or cancel a player.

- f) Long term injury – if a player suffers a long-term injury, the player may be removed from the squad but only within registration periods e.g

- 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024
- 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025

All requests to remove such a player must be supported by medical evidence and is subject to NIFL approval.

#### 44. 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, lodged with the Irish Football Association, or at variance to the requirements of Regulation 41b.
- b) 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 players must be documented by the club in writing to the NIFL Board.

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 a club director, management committee or staff members
- Payments made to players by sponsors
- Payments made to players by supporters clubs, trusts or organisations

A club may at any time submit a written request to the NIFL to put all instances of doubt or uncertainty to the NIFL Board for decision. Any practice or procedure which, in the opinion of the NIFL, is calculated to defeat in anyway the overriding objective of these requirements will be deemed to have been deliberately concealed unless previously documented by the club in writing.

Clubs and players must declare that any other paid employment and the duration of such employment either within the club or via a related party transaction, is not dependent on the individual's engagement as a player for the club in question.

- c) The Board or Chief Executive Officer 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 and shall be entitled to take such action and award such punishments as detailed in Rule 36(i) 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:

- provide the NIFL or its appointees with all information, documents and/or records that the NIFL or its appointees considers relevant to an investigation.
- cooperate fully with any interview process carried out by the NIFL or its appointees.
- verify the accuracy (or otherwise) of any information or document provided.
- 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.

d) 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.

e) An investigation into any suspected breach must be initiated within a period of two seasons from the suspected season of any such breach.

f) 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.

g) 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.

h) The standard of proof to be applied is that of the balance of probabilities. That is to say that the Committee that the Committee is satisfied an event occurred if the Committee considers that, on the evidence, the occurrence of the event was more likely than not.

i) Any club found to have breached Rules 34(b) and 36 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*
- *Withdrawal of any future competition place earned*
- *Suspension / disqualification of individuals from involvement in the running of a football club*
- *Removal of any competition title wins*
- *Reporting of club to HMRC*

#### **45. Ineligibility of Players**

Failure to comply with any of the conditions relating to the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations, the NIFL Player Registration Regulations or the rules of the NIFL Premiership will render the player ineligible to play for the club concerned as not being a bona-fide player.

#### **46. 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 Premiership shall be fined a sum of £500 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.
- b) 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. 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 Premiership then both clubs will be fined, in the case of each Premiership club a sum of £500 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.
- d) Nothing in these Regulations shall entitle the NIFL Premiership to deduct points or impose fines for registration committed by any club during any previous season. (For the purpose of all NIFL Premiership regulations a season will be deemed to end on 31<sup>st</sup> May in each year, or any other date determined by the Irish FA for the end of the football season).





## MISCELLANEOUS

### 47. Condition of Membership of Clubs comprising the NIFL Premiership

- a) All clubs in membership of the NIFL Premiership acknowledge that they are bound by the rules of the NIFL 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.

### 48. Medals

The NI Football League shall award up to 20 medals to the winning clubs for presentation to their players each of whom shall have taken part in a minimum of 12 games constituting the NIFL Premiership. Additional medals may be purchased by the clubs concerned, if so warranted and the Committee shall consider all such requests.

### 49. 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.

### 50. 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.

## 51. Alterations to Rules

Alterations to these rules shall only be considered during the closed season, except in the case of exceptional circumstances as determined by the NIFL Board. Any club wishing to have a proposal considered, must forward same in writing to the NIFL Competitions Committee no later than 1<sup>st</sup> March.





**PLAYR-FIT**  
TEAMWEAR

**CHAMPIONSHIP**

**nifl**

**RULES AND REGULATIONS**  
**SEASON 2024/25**

action  
mental  
health  
**CHARITY SHIELD**  
**WINNERS**

## Content

### DEFINITIONS

#### NIFL CHAMPIONSHIP

1. Title
2. Dual Interest in Clubs
3. Clubs Ceasing to be Members
4. Notices
5. League Competitions
6. Ranking of Clubs

#### NIFL COMMITTEES

7. NIFL Competition Committee
8. NIFL Discipline Committee
9. NIFL Subdivision Committee

#### OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THERON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

10. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences
11. Commissions and Reports
12. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Championship Matches
13. Protests
14. Appeals against decisions of the NIFL or any NIFL Committee

#### GROUND

15. Registration of Ground
16. Objection to Field of Play etc
17. Technical Areas
18. Zoned Areas

#### MATCHES

19. Matches
20. International Duty
21. Kit Approval
22. Kit Advertising Regulations
23. Kit Numbering
24. Kit Names
25. Player Identification
26. Pitch Inspections
27. Postponed or Abandoned Matches
28. Completion of Team Line Ups
29. Substitute Players
30. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet
31. Late Start
32. Referee to wait before abandoning a match
33. Official Match Ball and Goal Nets
34. Half-Time Interval
35. Ball Tenders
36. Referees

#### FINANCE

37. Admission to Grounds
38. Gate receipts
39. Season tickets
40. Fines

#### PLAYERS, SQUADS AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

41. NIFL Player Registration Regulations
42. Undisclosed Payments
43. Ineligibility of Players
44. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

#### MISCELLANEOUS

45. Condition of Membership
46. Medals
47. Trophies
48. League Structure
49. Alterations to Rules





## DEFINITIONS

### League

The Northern Ireland Football League

### NIFL Premiership

The top tier of the Northern Ireland Football League

### IFA

The Irish Football Association

### Articles of Association Football

Means the Articles of Association of the Irish 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

### NIFL Championship

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

### NIFL Premier Intermediate League

The 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

### NIFL Women's Premiership

The top women's tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

### 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

An agreement entered into by the member clubs with the NI Football League

### IFA FMS System

The Irish Football Association Football Management System which all clubs will be required to be registered for (Comet).

## NIFL CHAMPIONSHIP

### 1. Title

- a) For the purposes of Football Competitions, the NIFL Championship shall be comprised of twelve clubs.
- 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. Comply with the IFA Club Licensing Scheme,
  - VI. The Laws of the Game,
  - VII. The Rules and Regulations of any body of which the League is a member,
  - VIII. The terms of any commercial or broadcast agreement entered into by the League,
  - IX. The relevant Participation Agreement to be determined by the NIFL Board.
  - X. 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.
  - XI. WADA/UKAD Code
- c) Each member (club) shall be the 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 sent by Special Delivery post to the Chief Executive, Irish Football Association, and copied to the Chief Operating Officer, 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 IFA Football Committee. Each case will be considered on its own individual merits.

#### II. Sanction for club experiencing an Insolvency Event

If any club in membership of the NIFL formally suffers, undergoes, or enters into one of the following insolvency events that club shall be deducted 10 points:

1. Administration (Creditor Driven) – normally Bank or large unsecured creditor.
2. Administration (Club Driven) – appointment by the Directors to avoid other legal action e.g winding up order.
3. Fixed Charge Receivership – appointment by secured creditor only on fixed assets e.g property.
4. Have a winding up order made in respect of the club e.g HM Revenue & Customs.
5. Company Voluntary Arrangement – proposed in advance of or as a response to legal action by an unsecured creditor.
6. Have any proceeding or step taken or any court order made which has a substantially similar effect to any of the foregoing.

**III. Where a club takes or suffers such action set out in Rule (II) above;**

- (a) Prior to 1st March the points deduction shall apply immediately;
- (b) During the normal playing season but after 1st March, but before completion of all league fixtures, rule (IV) shall apply;
- (c) When all league fixtures have been concluded the points deduction shall apply in respect of the following season such that the club commences that season on minus 10 points

**IV. Where the circumstances set out in Rule (III) (b) apply and at the end of that season, having regard to the number of points awarded (ignoring any potential deduction):**

- (a) Should the club be relegated the points deduction will apply in the following season; or
- (b) Should the club not be relegated the points deduction will apply in that season and that club's points total for that season shall be recalculated accordingly and the final league position determined.

For the avoidance of doubt, when a club is subject to more than one of the events in (II) during a process of compromising its creditors (for example Administration followed by a Company Voluntary Arrangement), the club shall only be deducted one set of 10 points, such deduction to apply with effect from the first insolvency event.

Notwithstanding the above, if a club suffers, undergoes or enters into a separate, distinct and further insolvency event as per (II) above, a further 10- point deduction shall be applied.

- V. The league shall serve a club with written notice of the points deduction.
- VI. A club may appeal against an automatic deduction of points in accordance with Article 14 of the IFA Articles of Association.

## 2. Dual Interests in Clubs

**This rule should be read in conjunction with the IFA Football Regulations.**

- (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:
  - (v) Hold or acquire or deal in the securities or shares of another Club, or
  - (vi) Be a member of another Club, or
  - (vii) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of another Club, or
  - (viii) 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:
  - (v) Hold or acquire or deal in the securities or shares of more than one club, or
  - (vi) Be a member of more than one Club, or
  - (vii) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of more than one Club, or
  - (viii) 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: -
  - (a) 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.

(b) 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

(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.

(d) For the purposes of Paragraph (c) above, the word 'person' shall fall to be defined under reference to Paragraph (c) above.

### **3. Clubs Ceasing to be Members**

Clubs must notify the NIFL Chief Operating Officer on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March of their intention to discontinue membership of the Championship. The NIFL Board will consider all such matters and reserve the right to sanction a club as they deem necessary.

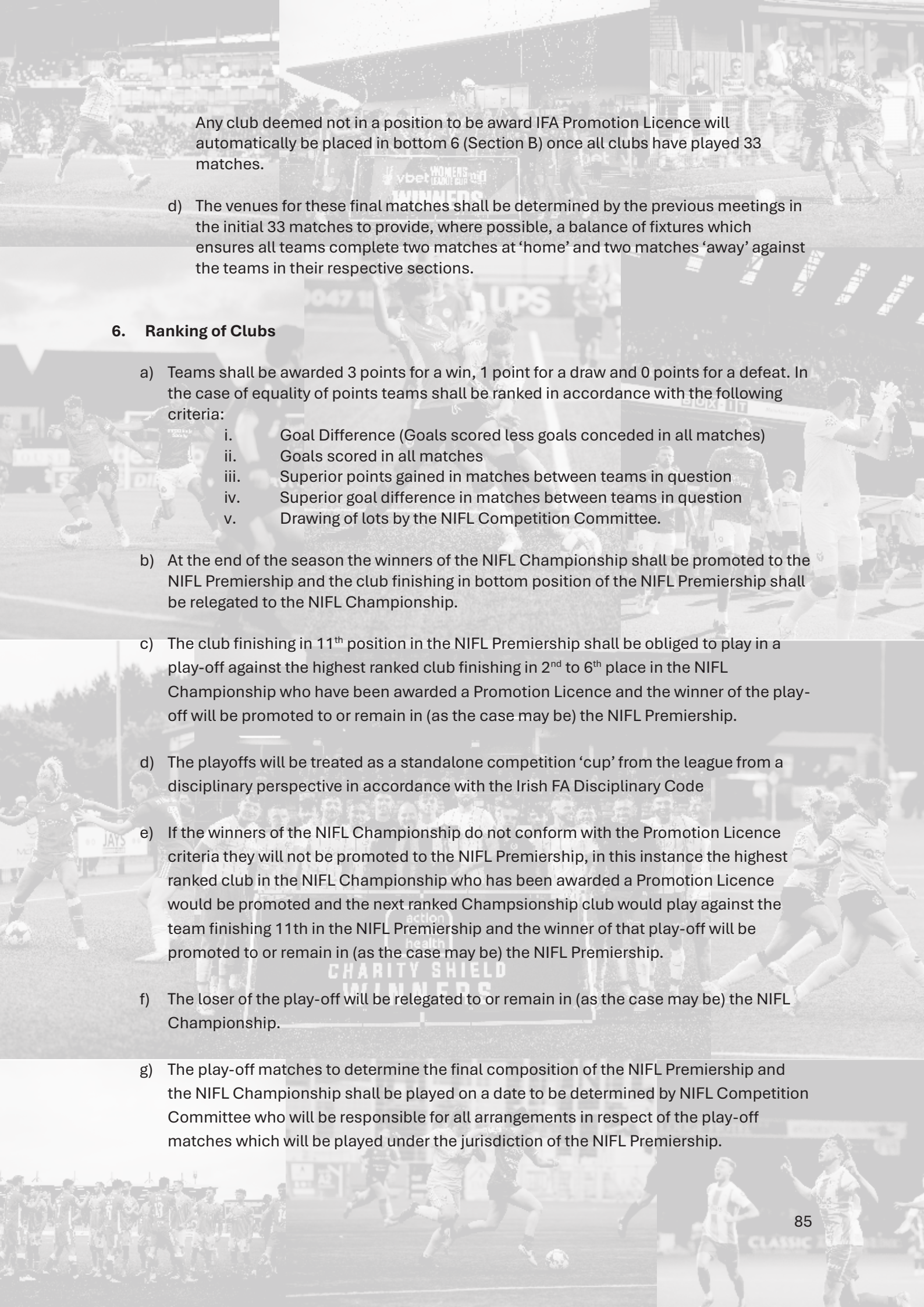
### **4. Notices**

A notice may be given by the NIFL or relevant Committee to any Club or any Club representative either personally or via email.

### **5. League Competitions**

- a) The League shall, each Season, conduct and in every respect control a football competition to be called the NIFL Championship.
- b) The NIFL Championship shall consist of 12 teams who shall play each other on three occasions (either 2 at 'home' and 1 'away' or vice versa) as determined by the fixture schedule.
- c) When all teams have completed 33 matches, or when standings permit, the league shall be split into two sections. Teams ranked in positions 1 to 6 shall comprise Section A and teams ranked in positions 7 to 12 shall comprise Section B. Points achieved during the first phase of 33 matches are carried forward to the second phase. Teams shall then compete in a further 5 matches (i.e. one match against all other teams in their respective sections).

Following the completion of 33 matches all clubs in a top 6 position (Section A) must have applied for and be in a position to be awarded an IFA Promotion Licence.

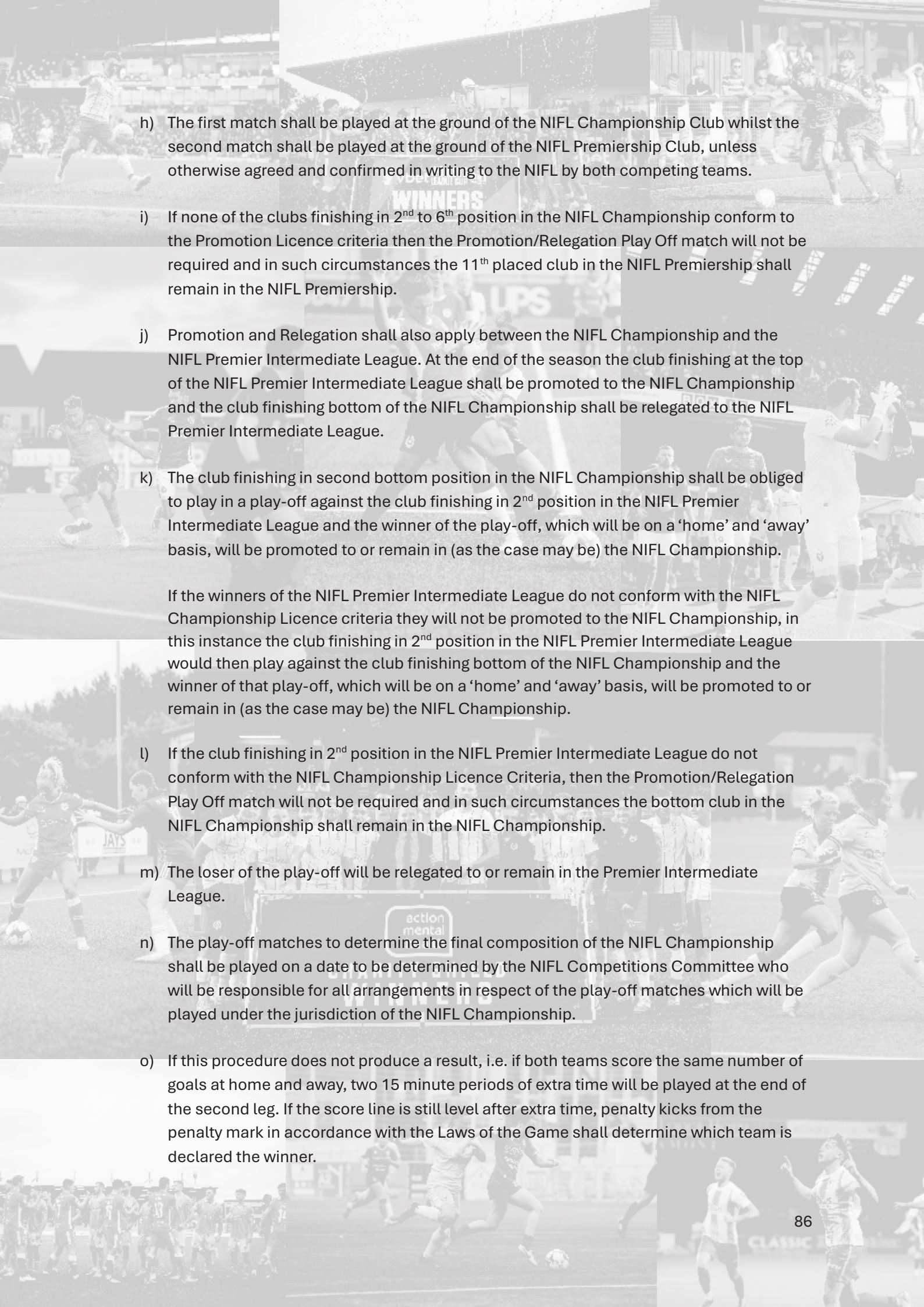


Any club deemed not in a position to be awarded IFA Promotion Licence will automatically be placed in bottom 6 (Section B) once all clubs have played 33 matches.

- d) The venues for these final matches shall be determined by the previous meetings in the initial 33 matches to provide, where possible, a balance of fixtures which ensures all teams complete two matches at 'home' and two matches 'away' against the teams in their respective sections.

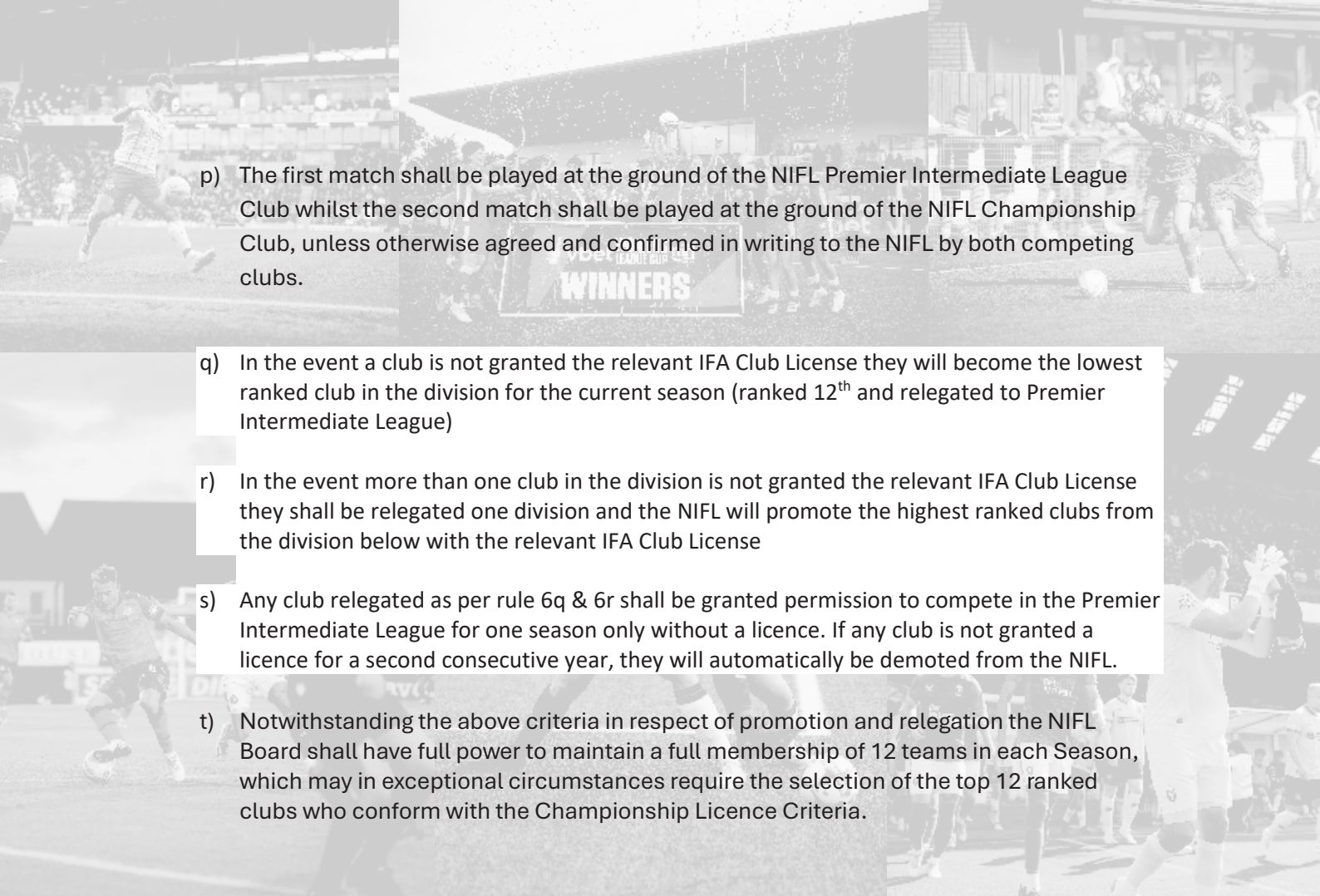
## 6. Ranking of Clubs

- 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:
  - 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 Competition Committee.
- b) At the end of the season the winners of the NIFL Championship shall be promoted to the NIFL Premiership and the club finishing in bottom position of the NIFL Premiership shall be relegated to the NIFL Championship.
- c) The club finishing in 11<sup>th</sup> position in the NIFL Premiership shall be obliged to play in a play-off against the highest ranked club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> place in the NIFL Championship who have been awarded a Promotion Licence and the winner of the play-off will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Premiership.
- d) The playoffs will be treated as a standalone competition 'cup' from the league from a disciplinary perspective in accordance with the Irish FA Disciplinary Code
- e) If the winners of the NIFL Championship do not conform with the Promotion Licence criteria they will not be promoted to the NIFL Premiership, in this instance the highest ranked club in the NIFL Championship who has been awarded a Promotion Licence would be promoted and the next ranked Championship club would play against the team finishing 11<sup>th</sup> in the NIFL Premiership and the winner of that play-off will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Premiership.
- f) The loser of the play-off will be relegated to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Championship.
- g) The play-off matches to determine the final composition of the NIFL Premiership and the NIFL Championship shall be played on a date to be determined by NIFL Competition Committee who will be responsible for all arrangements in respect of the play-off matches which will be played under the jurisdiction of the NIFL Premiership.

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- h) The first match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL Championship Club whilst the second match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL Premiership Club, unless otherwise agreed and confirmed in writing to the NIFL by both competing teams.
  - i) If none of the clubs finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> position in the NIFL Championship conform to the Promotion Licence criteria then the Promotion/Relegation Play Off match will not be required and in such circumstances the 11<sup>th</sup> placed club in the NIFL Premiership shall remain in the NIFL Premiership.
  - j) Promotion and Relegation shall also apply between the NIFL Championship and the NIFL Premier Intermediate League. At the end of the season the club finishing at the top of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League shall be promoted to the NIFL Championship and the club finishing bottom of the NIFL Championship shall be relegated to the NIFL Premier Intermediate League.
  - k) The club finishing in second bottom position in the NIFL Championship shall be obliged to play in a play-off against the club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the NIFL Premier Intermediate League and the winner of the play-off, which will be on a 'home' and 'away' basis, will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Championship.

If the winners of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League do not conform with the NIFL Championship Licence criteria they will not be promoted to the NIFL Championship, in this instance the club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the NIFL Premier Intermediate League would then play against the club finishing bottom of the NIFL Championship and the winner of that play-off, which will be on a 'home' and 'away' basis, will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Championship.

- l) If the club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the NIFL Premier Intermediate League do not conform with the NIFL Championship Licence Criteria, then the Promotion/Relegation Play Off match will not be required and in such circumstances the bottom club in the NIFL Championship shall remain in the NIFL Championship.
- m) The loser of the play-off will be relegated to or remain in the Premier Intermediate League.
- n) The play-off matches to determine the final composition of the NIFL Championship shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competitions Committee who will be responsible for all arrangements in respect of the play-off matches which will be played under the jurisdiction of the NIFL Championship.
- o) If this procedure does not produce a result, i.e. if both teams score the same number of goals at home and away, two 15 minute periods of extra time will be played at the end of the second leg. If the score line is still level after extra time, penalty kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the Laws of the Game shall determine which team is declared the winner.



p) The first match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League Club whilst the second match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL Championship Club, unless otherwise agreed and confirmed in writing to the NIFL by both competing clubs.

q) In the event a club is not granted the relevant IFA Club License they will become the lowest ranked club in the division for the current season (ranked 12<sup>th</sup> and relegated to Premier Intermediate League)

r) In the event more than one club in the division is not granted the relevant IFA Club License they shall be relegated one division and the NIFL will promote the highest ranked clubs from the division below with the relevant IFA Club License

s) Any club relegated as per rule 6q & 6r shall be granted permission to compete in the Premier Intermediate League for one season only without a licence. If any club is not granted a licence for a second consecutive year, they will automatically be demoted from the NIFL.

t) Notwithstanding the above criteria in respect of promotion and relegation the NIFL Board shall have full power to maintain a full membership of 12 teams in each Season, which may in exceptional circumstances require the selection of the top 12 ranked clubs who conform with the Championship Licence Criteria.





## THE NIFL COMMITTEES

### 7. NIFL Competition Committee

- d) The NIFL Competition 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.
- e) The Competition Committee will be responsible for the drafting of competition rules and for the organisation of all the cup competitions played within the League, this will include decisions as to which clubs may participate, the eligibility criteria for players playing in these competitions, and the drawing of ties and dealing with all matters pertaining to the Competitions. The Competition Committee has the power to deal with any relevant matters not covered by League rules.
- f) The Competition Committee will be appointed annual by the NIFL General Assembly and consist of 7 members:
- (v) Three representatives from clubs playing in the Premiership
  - (vi) Two representatives from clubs playing in the Championship
  - (vii) One representative from clubs playing in the PIL
  - (viii) One representative from clubs playing in the Women's Premiership

The Committee shall appoint annually a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who may serve for a period not exceeding two years. A Chairman retiring after a period of two years may not seek election either to the office of chairman or that of Vice-Chairman until a further period of two years has elapsed. Notwithstanding the above, the Committee reserve the right to extend the terms of the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman by one year on an annual basis.

### 8. NIFL Discipline Committee

- d) The NIFL Discipline 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.
- e) The NIFL Discipline Committee will deal with off field discipline issues delegated to it by the Board or Staff for consideration.

The committee shall not deal with on field matters which shall remain the responsibility of the Irish Football Association.

- f) 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.

## 9. Subdivision Committees

The Championship subdivision committee shall meet as and when required to discuss matters of mutual interest to the clubs and where required to elect members to sit on the NIFL Board and IFA Council and Committees.

Each Division playing under the auspices of NIFL shall have a committee made up of one representative of each club playing in them.



## OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

### 10. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences

- c) The NIFL, and any Committee duly appointed by the Board or relevant 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, 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.
- d) The NIFL irrespective of whether or not it shall have appointed a Commission or 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, 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.

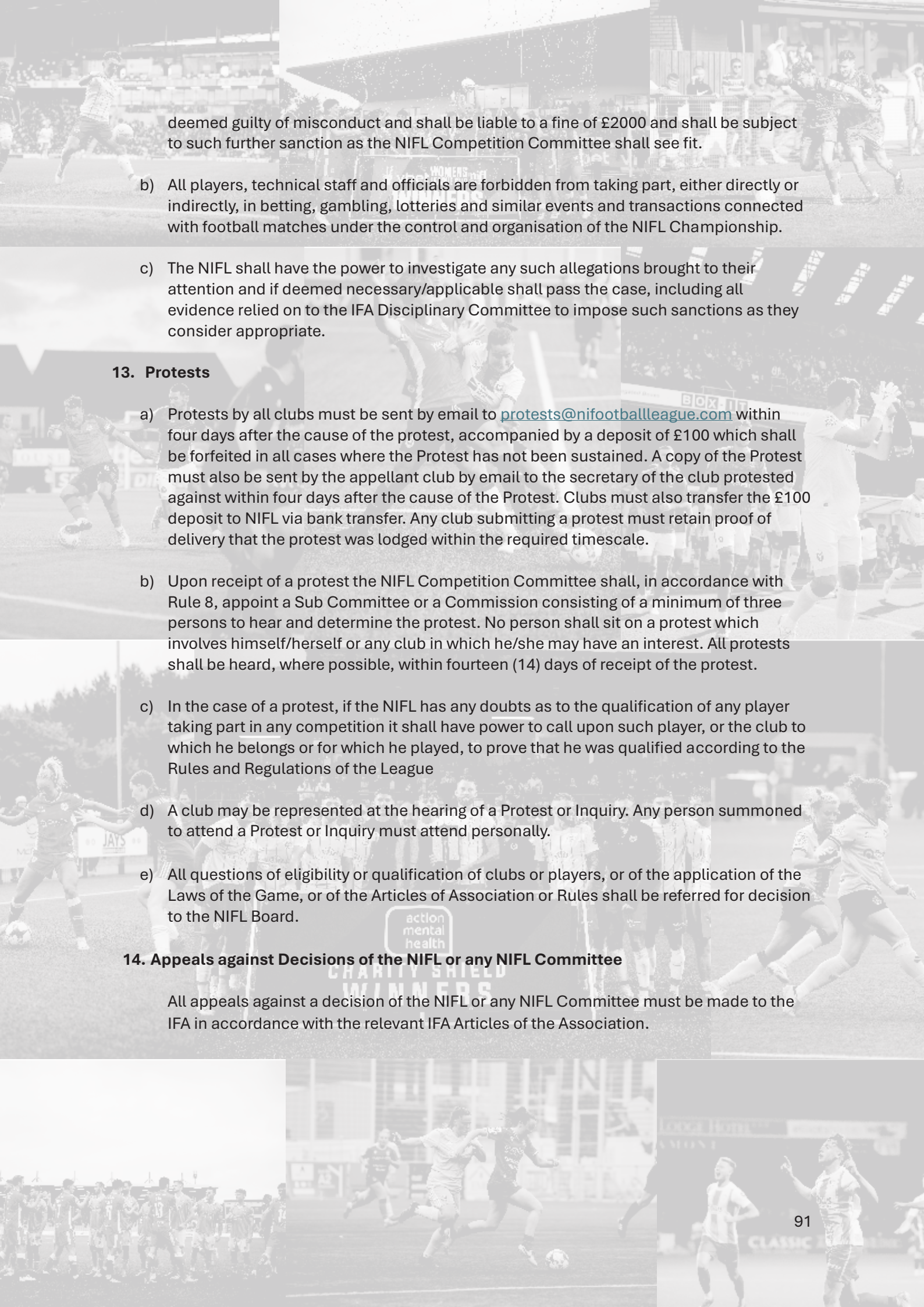
*Note – This rule will not apply to any field offences or any other matter which would normally be dealt with by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.*

### 11. Commissions and Reports

- c) The NIFL, and any 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 or its affairs.
- d) The NIFL, and any 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 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 Competition Committee may think fit.

### 12. Misconduct in pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Championship 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 Competition 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.
- c) The NIFL 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.

### 13. Protests

- a) Protests by all clubs must be sent by email to [protests@nifootballleague.com](mailto:protests@nifootballleague.com) 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 email to the secretary of the club protested against within four days after the cause of the Protest. Clubs must also transfer the £100 deposit to NIFL via bank transfer. Any club submitting a protest must retain proof of delivery that the protest was lodged within the required timescale.
- b) Upon receipt of a protest the NIFL Competition 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.
- 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 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
- d) 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.
- 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 decision to the NIFL Board.

### 14. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL or any NIFL Committee

All appeals against a decision of the NIFL or any NIFL Committee must be made to the IFA in accordance with the relevant IFA Articles of the Association.

## GROUNDS

### 15. Registration of Ground

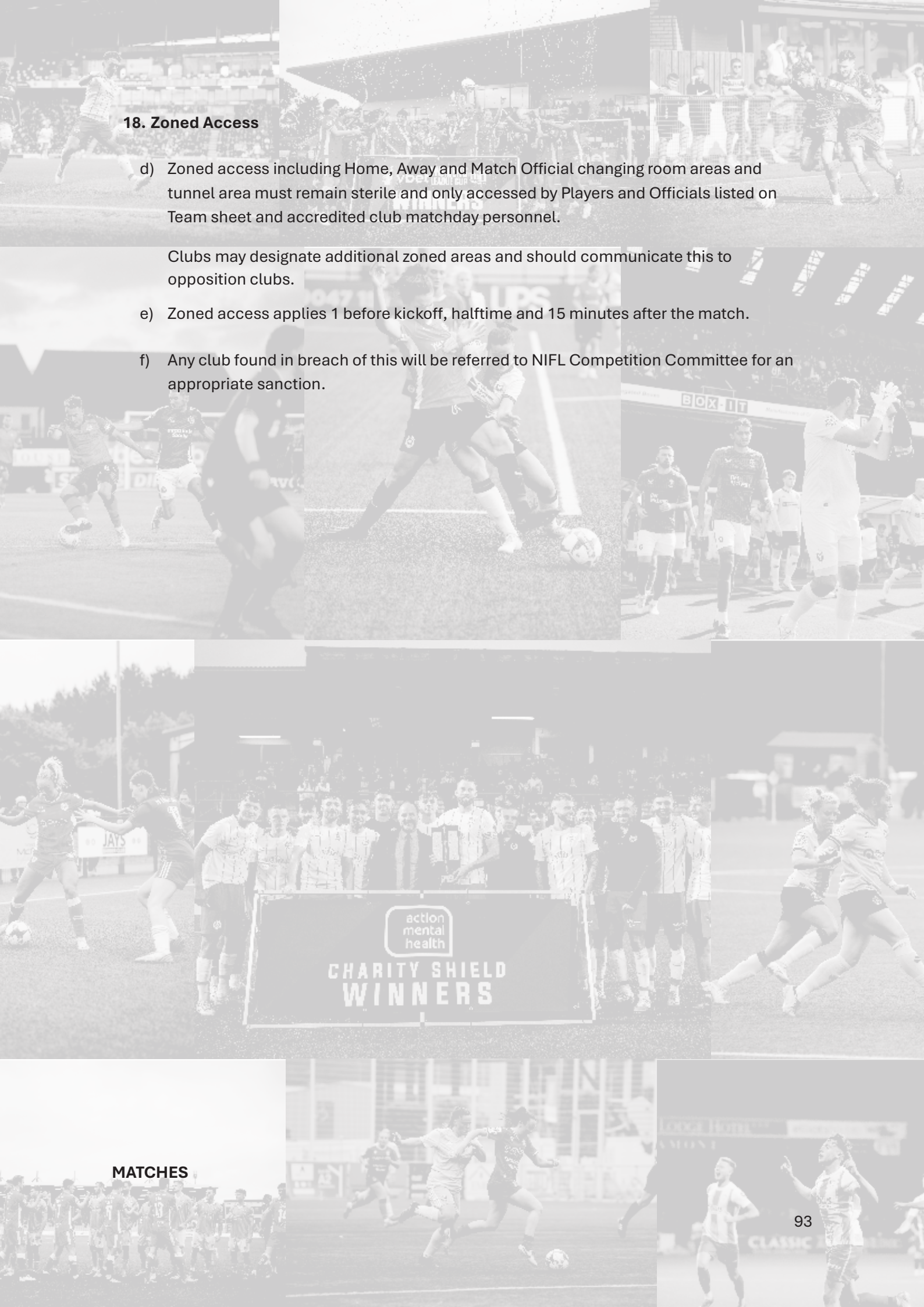
- a) Each club shall register its ground with the NIFL, and no club shall register another ground without first obtaining the consent of the NIFL.
- b) Any club which requires a ground share agreement should provide written notice to the NIFL Competitions Committee no later than 31 March of the preceding season.
- c) Clubs must register their pitch dimensions with the NIFL prior to the start of each season, which must adhere to the Laws of the Game. The registered pitch dimensions must not be altered during the course of a season, without the consent of the NIFL Competition Committee. Such request for consent can only be made in exceptional circumstances and must be served in writing to the NIFL Chief Operating Officer. The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected. Should a club make such alterations without the required consent and a match or matches take place that 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. Notwithstanding the above the winning team shall not be disadvantaged if the original score line was of greater benefit to that team's goal difference. A fine of up to £250 per match played will also be levied.

### 16. Objection to Field of Play etc

Any objection to the field of play or field equipment 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.

### 17. Technical Areas

- a) Each club shall provide separate areas adjacent to the pitch 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 13 persons (seven substitute players and six club officials) only shall be permitted.
- b) Any player/official who is dismissed from the field of play shall proceed immediately to the dressing room for a minimum of 10 minutes until they are directed to a suitable location by a club steward.
- c) Smoking/Vaping is not permitted in the Technical Area. Any club found in breach of this shall be dealt with by the NIFL Championship.



## 18. Zoned Access

- d) Zoned access including Home, Away and Match Official changing room areas and tunnel area must remain sterile and only accessed by Players and Officials listed on Team sheet and accredited club matchday personnel.

Clubs may designate additional zoned areas and should communicate this to opposition clubs.

- e) Zoned access applies 1 before kickoff, halftime and 15 minutes after the match.
- f) Any club found in breach of this will be referred to NIFL Competition Committee for an appropriate sanction.



action  
mental  
health

CHARITY SHIELD  
WINNERS

## MATCHES

## 19. Matches

- i) Matches may be played on natural turf or artificial turf, provided that such artificial turf meets 'FIFA Pro' or 'FIFA Quality' standard with the venue owner and the home club in receipt of a valid FIFA Certificate.

The NI Football League cannot be held responsible for any damages to third parties resulting from the use of artificial turf.

Each Club is under an obligation to ensure that the pitch at its Registered Ground is level and in good condition and repair and that it has an efficient and effective drainage system so that it does not become unplayable due to flooding.

The NIFL Competitions Committee is entitled to direct a Club to take such steps as considered necessary in order that the pitch is put into and maintained in good condition and repair.

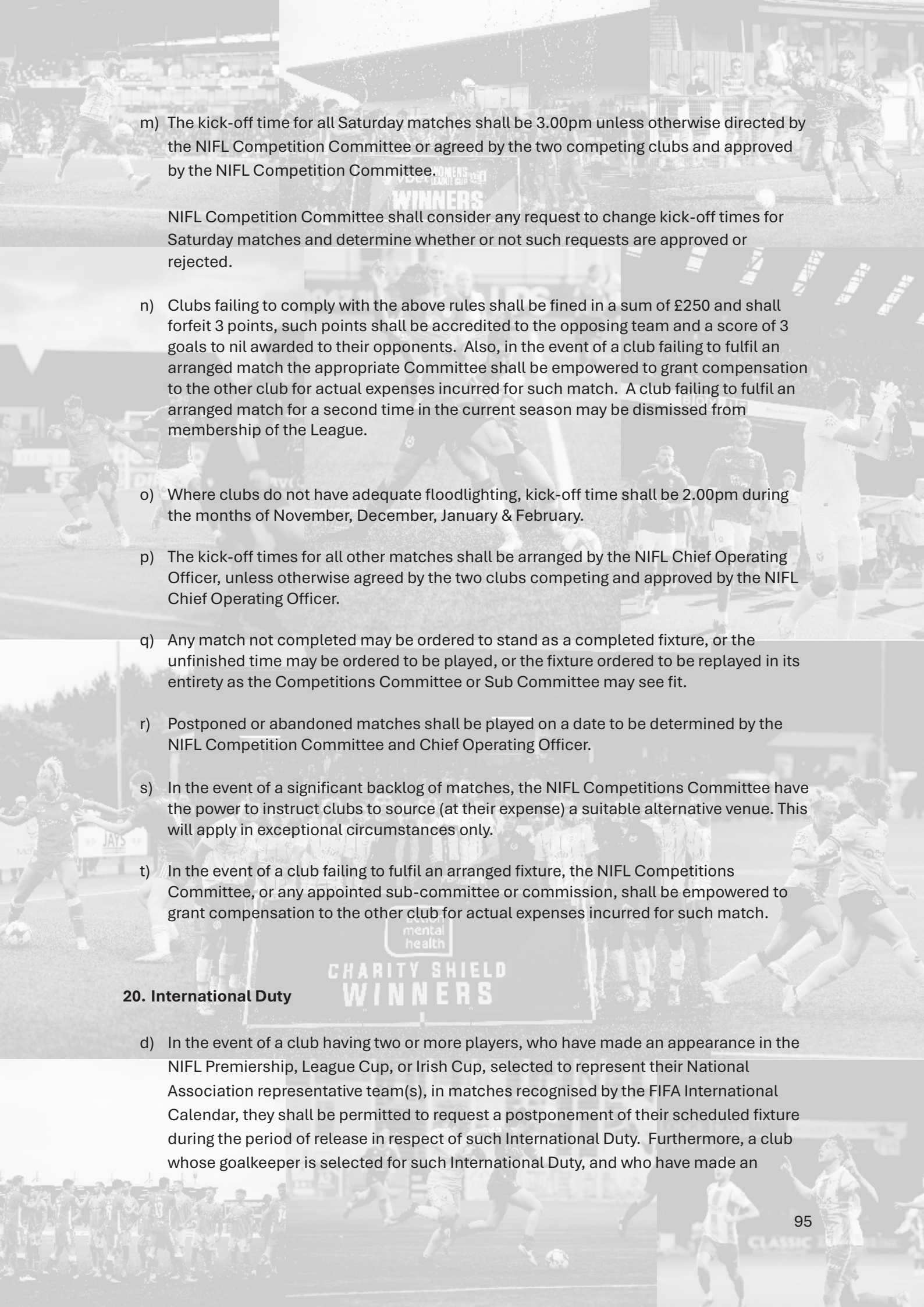
A club whose pitch is deemed to be unfit for play shall then be responsible for arranging an alternative venue(s) which meets all League requirements, until such time as the work deemed necessary to make the pitch suitable for play has been carried out, the pitch has been re-inspected and the NIFL Competition Committee has given approval for matches to take place on the pitch.

- j) 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. All NIFL Championship matches shall be played on the dates scheduled at the commencement of the season, except:

- I. When otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee; or
- II. National and divisional association senior cup ties take precedence; or when
- III. Agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer.

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 Chief Operating Officer.

- k) In the event of a home club wishing to change from the date or time of a scheduled fixture, advance notice must be served in writing to both the Secretary of the away club and the NIFL Chief Operating Officer six (6) weeks prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.
- l) However, notwithstanding the above, no match shall be played on a Sunday unless the two (2) participating clubs are in agreement.

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- m) The kick-off time for all Saturday matches shall be 3.00pm unless otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee or agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Competition Committee.

NIFL Competition Committee shall consider any request to change kick-off times for Saturday matches and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.

- n) Clubs failing to comply with the above rules shall be fined in a sum of £250 and shall forfeit 3 points, such points shall be accredited to the opposing team and a score 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.
- o) Where clubs do not have adequate floodlighting, kick-off time shall be 2.00pm during the months of November, December, January & February.
- p) The kick-off times for all other matches shall be arranged by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer, unless otherwise agreed by the two clubs competing and approved by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer.
- q) 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 Competitions Committee or Sub Committee may see fit.
- r) Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee and Chief Operating Officer.
- s) In the event of a significant backlog of matches, the NIFL Competitions Committee have the power to instruct clubs to source (at their expense) a suitable alternative venue. This will apply in exceptional circumstances only.
- t) In the event of a club failing to fulfil an arranged fixture, the NIFL Competitions Committee, or any appointed sub-committee or commission, shall be empowered to grant compensation to the other club for actual expenses incurred for such match.

## 20. International Duty

- d) In the event of a club having two or more players, who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup, or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s), in matches recognised by the FIFA International Calendar, 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, and who have made an



appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup, or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.

- e) In the event of a club having three or more players, who have made appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s) in matches not recognised on the FIFA International Calendar or Development and Schools FA squads, 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, and who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.
- f) The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.

## 21. Kit Approval

The NIFL Kit Approval Regulations are made pursuant to Irish FA Football Regulations and to the Laws of the Game. Clubs participating in other International competitions, such as UEFA Cup Competitions, must also comply with all relevant regulations.

Pre-season;

- k) Clubs to be required to notify the NIFL Operations Team, of their chosen colours for all new 'home', 'away' and 'third' sets of kit at the planning stage then the League can provide approval before Clubs place any orders for kit with their respective manufacturers
- l) Each set of kit registered must differ visibly from and contrast with each other kit registered by the Club in that Season.
- m) During the Close Season, each Club shall notify The League in writing details of its 'home' and 'away' kit (shirt, shorts and socks) and if applicable any 'third' set of kit. When registering kits, Clubs must ensure that the colour of the shirt, shorts and socks for each kit is different to and would sufficiently contrast against the other kits registered by the Club.
- n) Teams must have at least two goalkeeper attires which clearly contrast with each other and with the first-choice and second-choice outfield players attires.
- o) The 'home' shirt registered by each Club will be worn for all Home Matches during the Season.
- p) In circumstances where an 'away' Club cannot wear any of its kits (or combination of its kits) without causing a potential kit clash, the Home Club shall be able to wear any combination of its registered kit in order to avoid the potential kit clash (including but not limited to wearing an 'away' or 'third' shirt for a Home Match).

In season;

- q) Both teams will, not less than 72 hours before the scheduled match, submit to The League, Match Referee and their opponents the details of the colours of shirts, shorts and socks of all players via Comet. Failure to do so will result in a sanction of £50 for each offense.
- r) The colour of the Goalkeeper's shirt must, in all cases, be clearly distinguishable from the colours of the shirts worn by the Match Officials and all other Players.
- s) In the event that The League requires either Club (Away or Home) to make amendments to its selection, the Club will, within 24 hours of receiving the notification of the same, resubmit its selection to The League, Match Referee and opponent via Comet.
- t) A team may be requested to combine items from more than one of its approved outfield player and/or goalkeeper attires (shirt, shorts or socks), in order to create a visible contrast with the other team. The order of priority for the selection of colours for a match is as follows:
  - vi. home team outfield player attire;
  - vii. away team outfield player attire;
  - viii. home team goalkeeper attire;
  - ix. away team goalkeeper attire;
  - x. referee team attire.

However, if there is a clash for one of the above participants that cannot be resolved (i.e. none of the approved attires offer the required level of colour contrast) then other participants may have to change (in reverse order) until a suitable contrast can be found.

If the referee decides on the spot (matchday) that the two teams' selected colours could lead to confusion, the home team must change playing attire, for practical reasons.

For a final, both teams should wear their first-choice outfield player attire. If this would create a colour clash, the designated away team must wear its second-choice (or other approved alternative) outfield player attire. If that too would create a colour clash, the administration decides on the playing attire to be worn by each team in consultation with the referee.

Disciplinary action in accordance with the Rules may be taken against a Club for any breach of these regulations.

## 22. Kit Advertising Regulations

- d) Club sponsorship/advertising on team kit must receive the prior approval of NIFL before each season commences.
- e) A Club shall observe all recognised Advertising standards and in particular those of the Advertising Standards Authority.
- f) Clubs must adhere to NIFL sponsorship/advertising requirements on team kits are described in the League Commercial Rights section of the NIFL Participation Agreement. The below locations and sizes are the only permitted areas for sponsor advertising on playing kits:

Permitted club advertisement locations	Size
1 front of shirt	Maximum size of 250cm <sup>2</sup>
2 back of shirt	Maximum size of 150cm <sup>2</sup> for the one above name/number, and 100cm <sup>2</sup> for the one below name/numbers
2 (on left for Prem and 1 on each for C/PIL)	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup> .
2 on shorts (1 front, 1 back)	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup>
1 on sock	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup>
	Max 8

*Please note: for clubs competing in UEFA Club Competitions the maximum size for front of shirt is 200cm<sup>2</sup> and other restrictions may apply depending on the stage of competition*

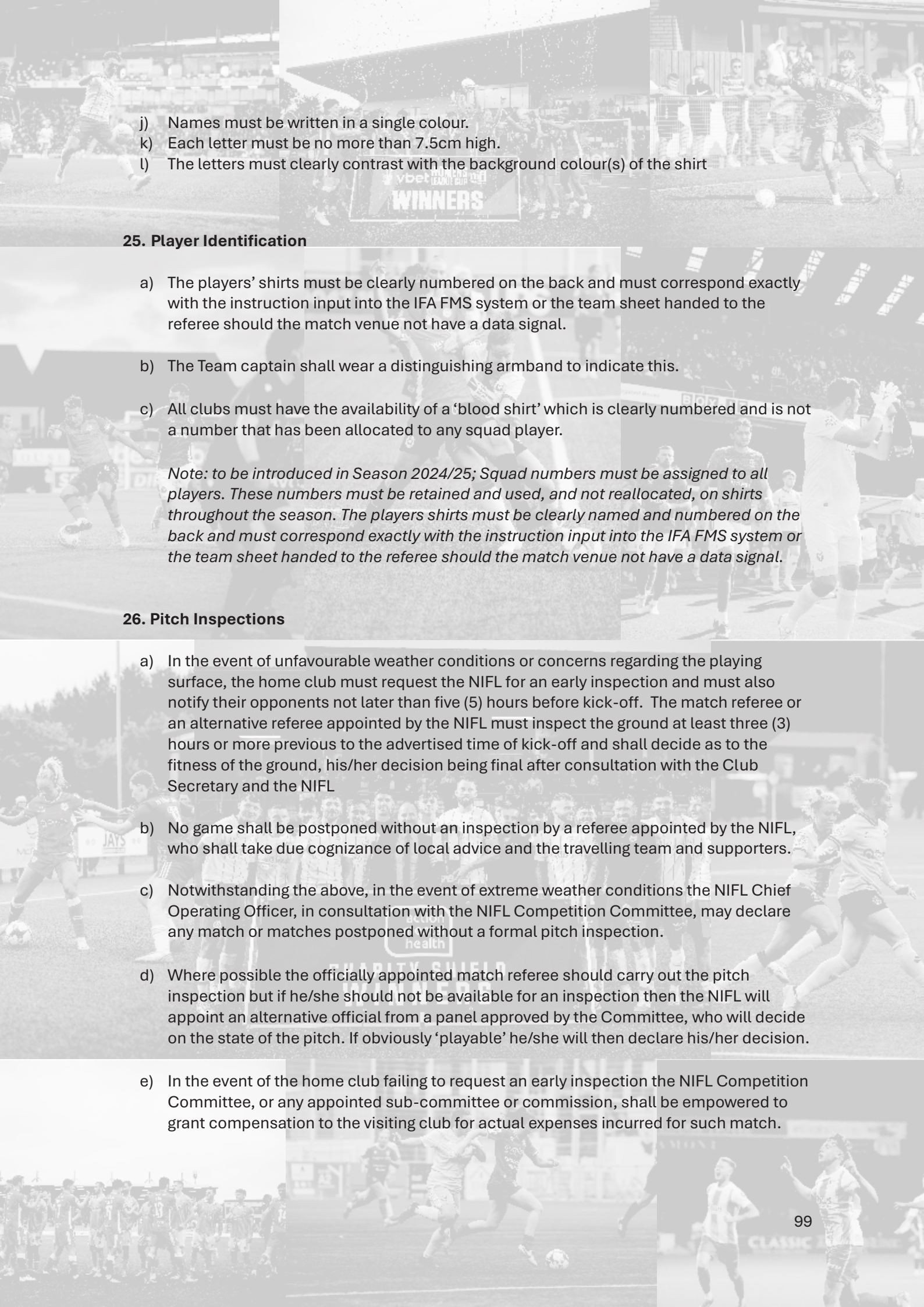
To calculate the total area of logos, the widest part of the logo or patch containing the logo is measured from edge to edge.

### 23. Kit Numbering

- e) A number must be centred on the back of each shirt. Only whole numbers may be used, no number higher than 99 may be used and the number 1 may only be used by a goalkeeper.
- f) Numbers must be of a single colour that contrasts with the number zone.
- g) Numbers must be clearly legible. The stroke width of each digit must be 2–5cm and the digits themselves must be:
  - iii. 25–35cm high on men's shirts;
  - iv. 20–35cm high on women's shirts
- h) Numbers must be clearly legible to the referee team, commentators, spectators and TV viewers, in daylight and under floodlights, from at least 50m away.

### 24. Kit Names

- g) Players may be identified on their shirts by means of their surname.
- h) The name by which a player is identified on their shirt must correspond with the name entered on the team sheet (unless prior approval).
- i) When player names are displayed on shirts, they must be placed on the back of the shirt, above the number.

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- j) Names must be written in a single colour.
  - k) Each letter must be no more than 7.5cm high.
  - l) The letters must clearly contrast with the background colour(s) of the shirt

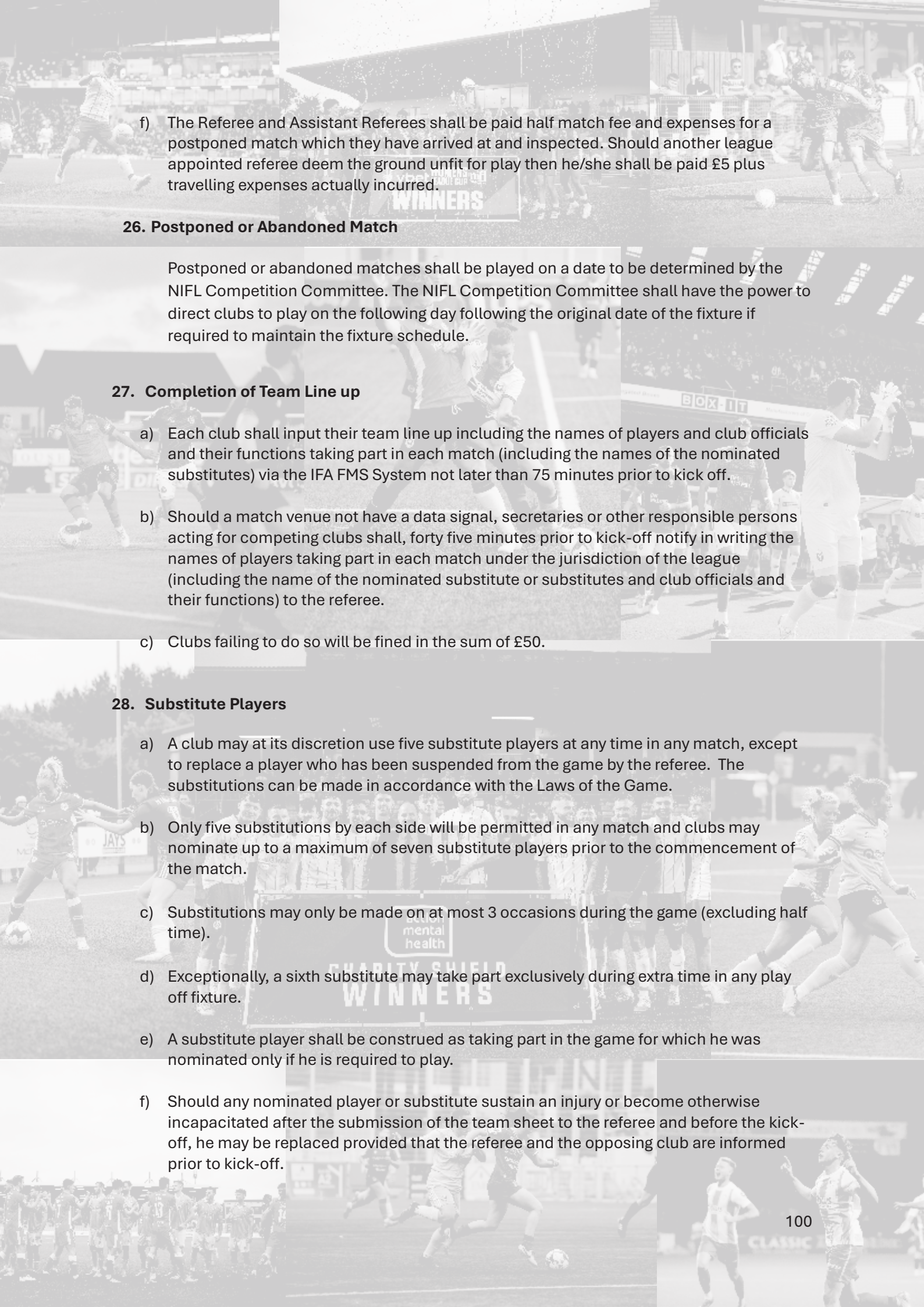
## 25. Player Identification

- 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.
- c) All clubs must have the availability of a 'blood shirt' which is clearly numbered and is not a number that has been allocated to any squad player.

*Note: to be introduced in Season 2024/25; Squad numbers must be assigned to all players. These numbers must be retained and used, and not reallocated, on shirts throughout the season. The players shirts must be clearly named and 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.*

## 26. 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 and must also notify their opponents not later than five (5) hours before kick-off. 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) No game shall be postponed without an inspection by a referee appointed by the NIFL, who shall take due cognizance of local advice and the travelling team and supporters.
- c) Notwithstanding the above, in the event of extreme weather conditions the NIFL Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the NIFL Competition Committee, may declare any match or matches postponed without a formal pitch inspection.
- d) 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/she will then declare his/her decision.
- e) In the event of the home club failing to request an early inspection the NIFL Competition Committee, or any appointed sub-committee or commission, shall be empowered to grant compensation to the visiting club for actual expenses incurred for such match.

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- f) The Referee and Assistant Referees 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.

## 26. Postponed or Abandoned Match

Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee. The NIFL Competition Committee shall have the power to direct clubs to play on the following day following the original date of the fixture if required to maintain the fixture schedule.

## 27. Completion of Team Line up

- 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 the names of the nominated substitutes) via the IFA FMS System not later than 75 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.

## 28. 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 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.

## 29. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet

After the team sheets have been completed and submitted to the Football Management System to the Referee and if the match has not yet kicked off, the following shall apply:

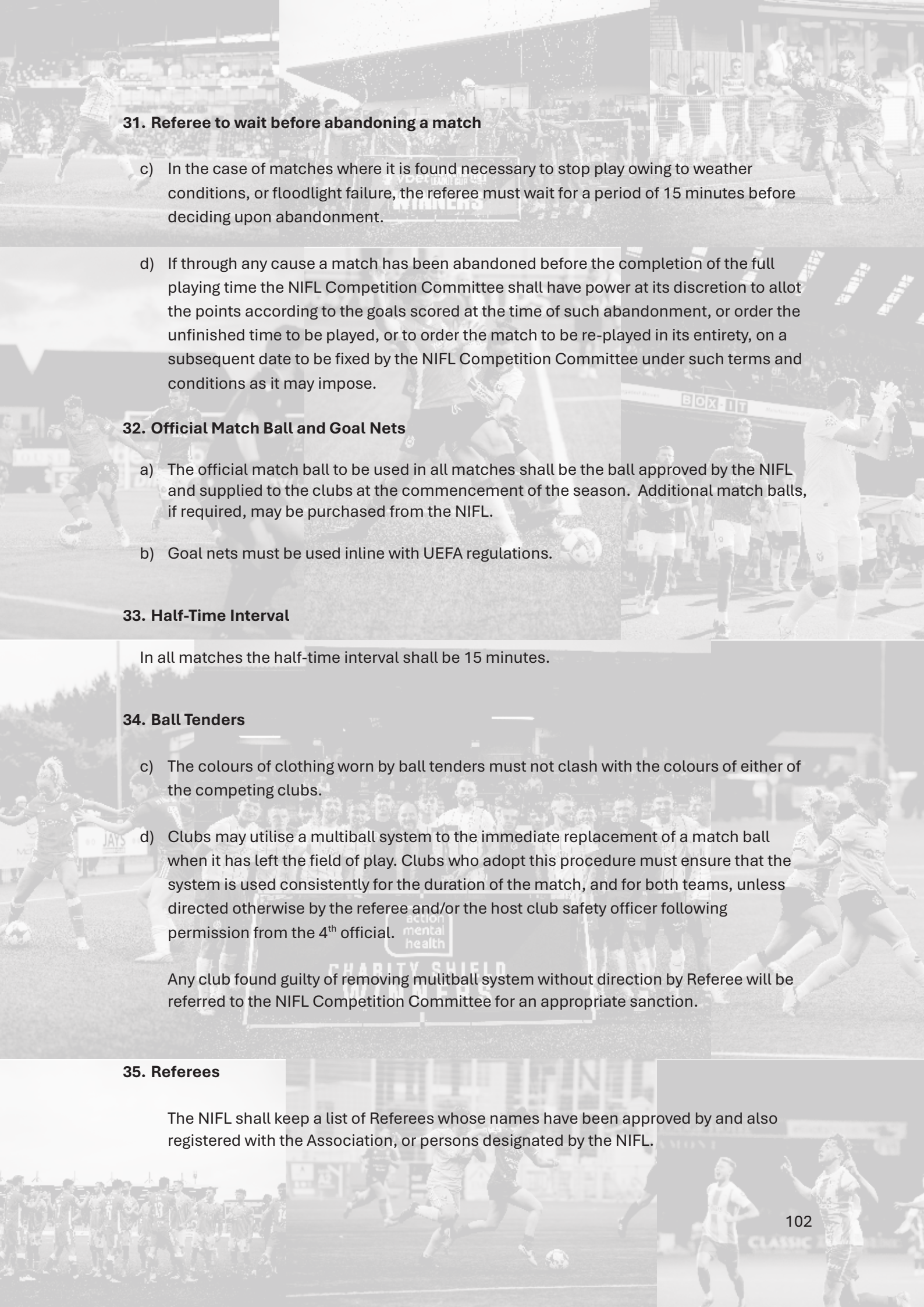
- (a) If any of the first eleven players named on the team sheet are not able to start the match due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced only by any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the initial team sheet. The substitute(s) in question can then be replaced by a player(s) not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.
- (b) If any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the team sheet are not able to be fielded due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced by any player not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.

Any amendments to the team sheet in accordance with points (a) and (b) above must be communicated by a named person on the official teamsheet to the match referee who will make the changes. The referee or another match official must communicate the change to the opposing team manager as soon as possible prior to the commencement of the match.

## 30. Late Start

The NIFL Competitions Committee shall fine clubs for late start of matches in the sum of £250 except in exceptional circumstances.

- d) Clubs must request permission for any pre-match commemoration including minutes silence/applauds no later in 24hrs before kickoff, unless in exceptional circumstance. All requests must be clearly communicated and agreed in advance with opposition clubs and match officials to ensure timings are built into pre-match plans. All requests must be sent to NIFL Chief Operating Officer.
- e) All pre-match activity must be built into official match countdown and not encroach on kick-off time.
- f) Match officials to report late starts to the NIFL.



### 31. Referee to wait before abandoning a match

- c) In the case of matches where it is found necessary to stop play owing to weather conditions, or floodlight failure, the referee must wait for a period of 15 minutes before deciding upon abandonment.
- d) If through any cause a match has been abandoned before the completion of the full playing time the NIFL Competition 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 Competition Committee under such terms and conditions as it may impose.

### 32. Official Match Ball and Goal Nets

- a) 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.
- b) Goal nets must be used inline with UEFA regulations.

### 33. Half-Time Interval

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

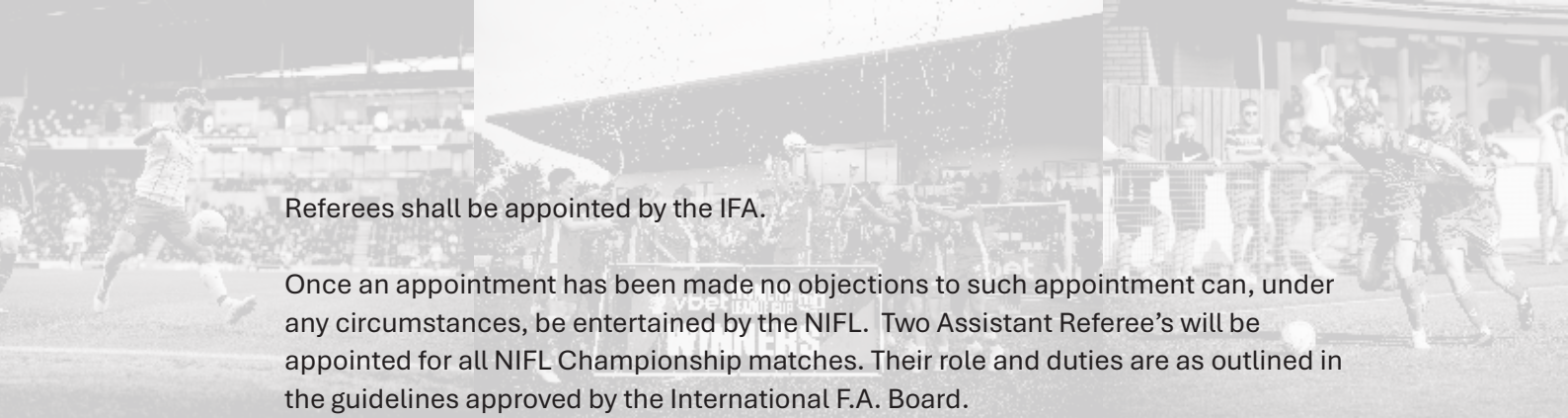
### 34. Ball Tenders

- c) The colours of clothing worn by ball tenders must not clash with the colours of either of the competing clubs.
- d) Clubs may utilise a multiball system to the immediate replacement of a match ball when it has left the field of play. Clubs who adopt this procedure must ensure that the system is used consistently for the duration of the match, and for both teams, unless directed otherwise by the referee and/or the host club safety officer following permission from the 4<sup>th</sup> official.

Any club found guilty of removing multiball system without direction by Referee will be referred to the NIFL Competition Committee for an appropriate sanction.

### 35. Referees

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 IFA.

Once an appointment has been made no objections to such appointment can, under any circumstances, be entertained by the NIFL. Two Assistant Referee's will be appointed for all NIFL Championship matches. Their role and duties are as outlined in the guidelines approved by the International F.A. Board.







## FINANCE

### 36. Admission to Grounds

- a) The admission policy for all NIFL Championship matches shall be determined by the NIFL Championship Subdivision Committee annually.
- b) Each club may furnish the NIFL Championship a list of no more than 12 directors that shall receive a Directors pass. The bearer shall be entitled to admission to the ground and Directors Box at matches in which his/her club are participating under the jurisdiction of the NIFL Championship, excluding semi-finals and finals.

### 37. Gate receipts

The admission charges to the ground in all League matches shall be retained by the home club, unless otherwise stated.

### 38. Season Tickets

Clubs may issue season tickets for admission to all home “League” matches, unless otherwise directed.

### 39. Fines

- a) All fines imposed by the NIFL Competition 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 20% of the fine 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

### 40. Player Registration Regulations

- a) All players must be registered in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration regulations and the NIFL Player Registration Regulations.
- b) Where a Professional or 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.

### 41. Undisclosed Payments

- d) 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 40b).

- e) 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 partners; 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 Chief Operating Officer 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;

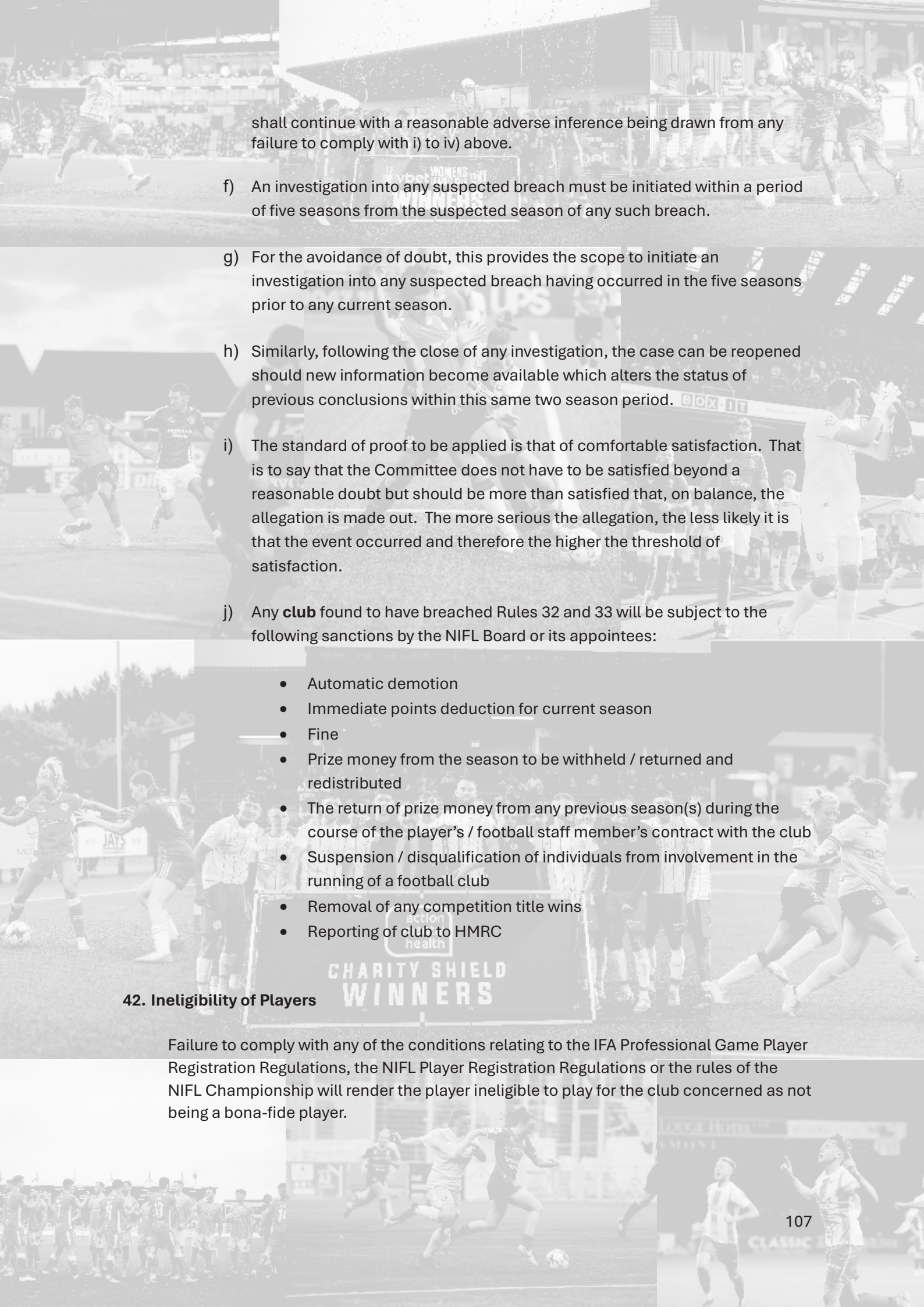
and / or to

- 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 and shall be entitled to take such action and award such punishments as detailed in Rule 33j 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:

- v) provide the NIFL or its appointees with all information, documents and/or records that the NIFL or its appointees considers relevant to an investigation;
- vi) cooperate fully with any interview process carried out by the NIFL or its appointees;
- vii) verify the accuracy (or otherwise) of any information or document provided;
- viii) 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



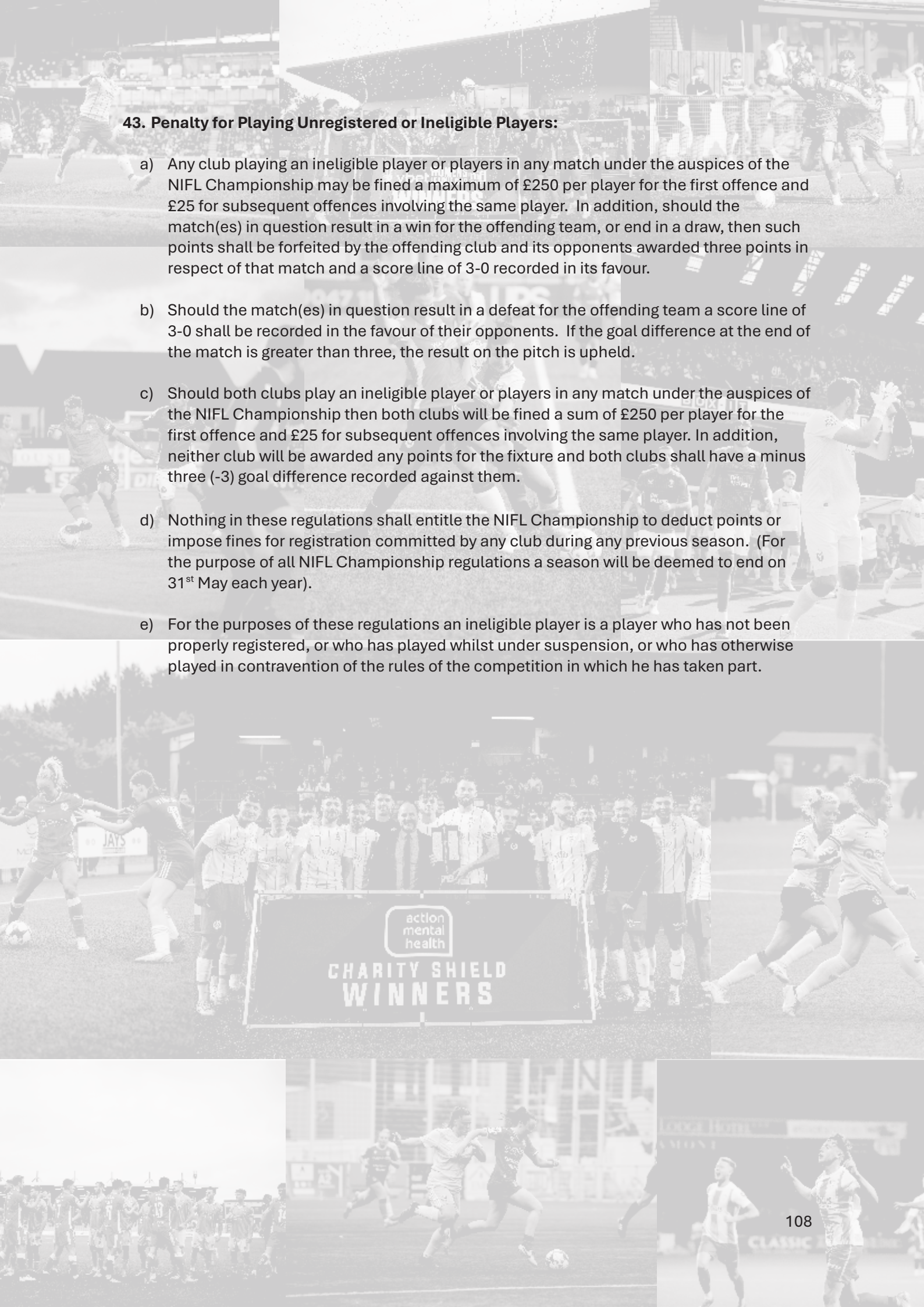
shall continue with a reasonable adverse inference being drawn from any failure to comply with i) to iv) above.

- 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 32 and 33 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

## 42. Ineligibility of Players

Failure to comply with any of the conditions relating to the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations, the NIFL Player Registration Regulations or the rules of the NIFL Championship will render the player ineligible to play for the club concerned as not being a bona-fide player.



### 43. 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 may be fined a maximum of £250 per player for the first offence and £25 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.
- b) 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. 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 then both clubs will be fined a sum of £250 per player for the first offence and £25 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 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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

### 44. Condition of Membership of Clubs comprising the NIFL Championship

- a) All clubs in membership of the NIFL Championship acknowledge that they are bound by the rules of the NIFL Championship 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.

### 45. Medals

The NI Football League shall award up to 20 medals to the winning clubs for presentation to their players each of whom shall have taken part in a minimum of 12 games constituting the NIFL Championship. Additional medals may be purchased by the clubs concerned, if so warranted and the Committee shall consider all such requests.

### 46. 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.

### 47. 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 Competitions Committee no later than 1<sup>st</sup> March.



**PLAYR-FIT**  
TEAMWEAR

**PREMIER** INTERMEDIATE

**nifl**

**RULES AND REGULATIONS**  
**SEASON 2024/25**

## Contents

### DEFINITIONS

#### NIFL PREMIER INTERMEDIATE LEAGUE

50. Title
51. Dual Interest in Clubs
52. Clubs Ceasing to be Members
53. Notices
54. League Competitions
55. Ranking of Clubs
56. PIL entry

#### NIFL COMMITTEES

57. NIFL Competition Committee
58. NIFL Discipline Committee
59. NIFL Subdivision Committee

#### OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THERON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

60. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences
61. Commissions and Reports
62. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Championship Matches
63. Protests
64. Appeals against decisions of the NIFL or any NIFL Committee

#### GROUND

65. Registration of Ground
66. Objection to Field of Play etc
67. Technical Areas
68. Zoned Areas

#### MATCHES

69. Matches
70. International Duty
71. Kit Approval
72. Kit Advertising Regulations
73. Kit Numbering
74. Kit Names
75. Player Identification
76. Pitch Inspections
77. Postponed or Abandoned Matches
78. Completion of Team Line Ups
79. Substitute Players
80. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet
81. Late Start
82. Referee to wait before abandoning a match
83. Official Match Ball and Goal Nets
84. Half-Time Interval
85. Ball Tenders
86. Referees

#### FINANCE

87. Admission to Grounds
88. Gate receipts
89. Season tickets
90. Fines

#### PLAYERS, SQUADS AND ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

91. NIFL Player Registration Regulations
92. Undisclosed Payments
93. Ineligibility of Players
94. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

#### MISCELLANEOUS

95. Condition of Membership
96. Medals
97. Trophies
98. League Structure
99. Alterations to Rules



## DEFINITIONS

### League

The Northern Ireland Football League

### NIFL Premiership

The top tier of the Northern Ireland Football League

### IFA

The Irish Football Association

### Articles of Association Football

Means the Articles of Association of the Irish 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

### NIFL Championship

The 2<sup>nd</sup> tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

### NIFL Premier Intermediate League

The 3<sup>rd</sup> tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

### NIFL Women's Premiership

The top women's tier of the Northern Ireland Football League.

### 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

An agreement entered into by the member clubs with the NI Football League

### IFA FMS System

The Irish Football Association Football Management System which all clubs will be required to be registered for (Comet).

## NIFL PREMIER INTERMEDIATE LEAGUE

### 1. Title

- d) For the purposes of Football Competitions, the NIFL Premier Intermediate League shall be comprised of fourteen clubs.
- e) Membership of the League shall constitute an agreement between the League and each Club to be bound by and comply with:
- XII. FIFA Regulations
  - XIII. The NIFL Articles of Association
  - XIV. The Rules of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League,
  - XV. The Rules of the Irish Football Association,
  - XVI. Comply with the IFA Club Licensing Scheme,
  - XVII. The Laws of the Game,
  - XVIII. The Rules and Regulations of any body of which the League is a member,
  - XIX. The terms of any commercial or broadcast agreement entered into by the League,
  - XX. The relevant Participation Agreement to be determined by the NIFL Board.
  - XXI. 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.
  - XXII. WADA/UKAD Code
- f) Each member (club) shall be the 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

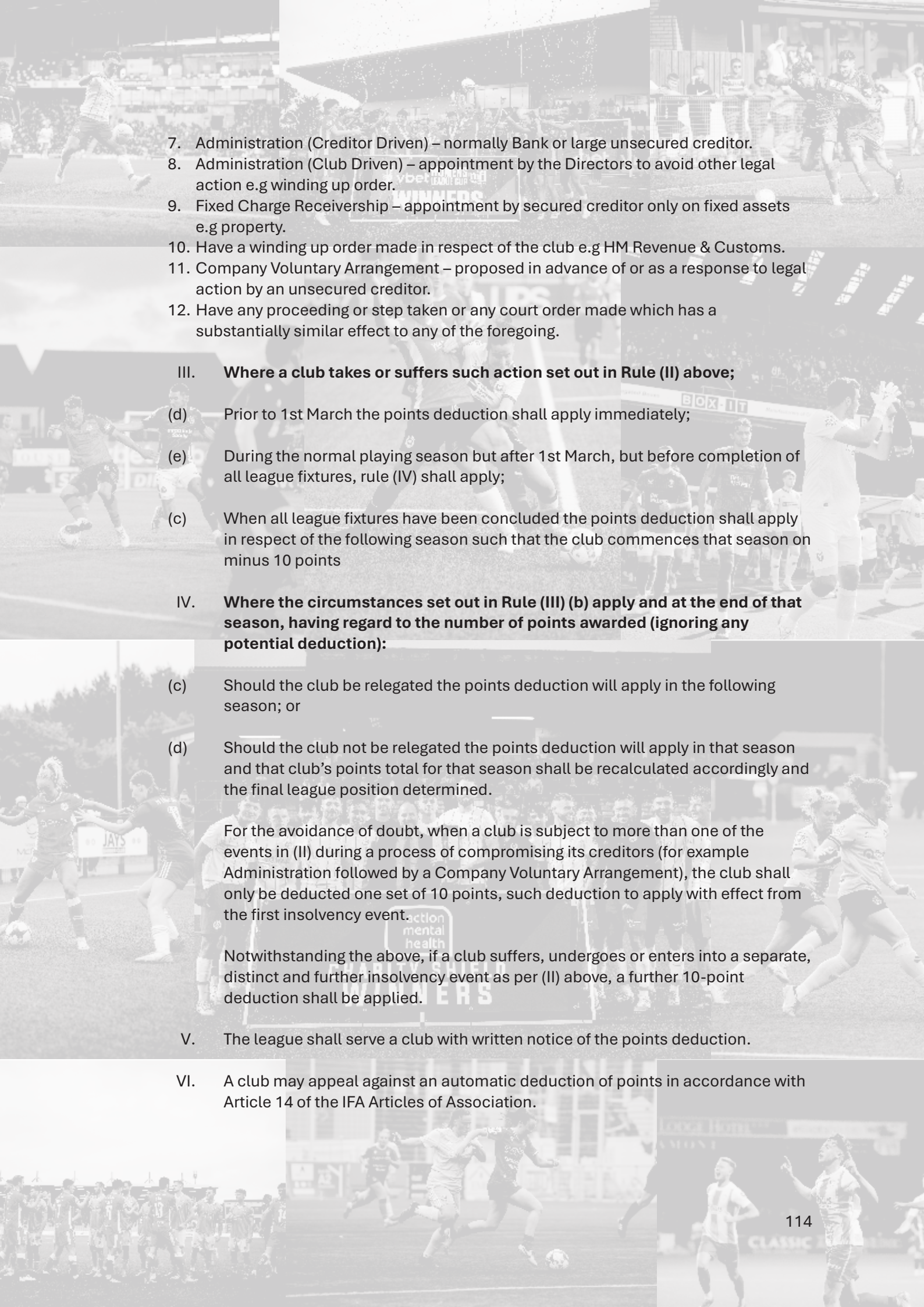
If any club wishes to change its legal entity, which is the recognised member of the Irish Football Association and the NIFL, it must submit full details of the proposed change to the IFA Football Committee and the NIFL Board.

All of the following rules apply in order to change a legal entity:

- (c) Any application to transfer a club's membership of the Irish Football Association to a new entity must be submitted in writing and sent by Special Delivery post to the Chief Executive, Irish Football Association, and the Chief Operating Officer, Northern Ireland Football League, at the registered offices of the IFA and the NIFL.
- (d) A club's membership of the Irish Football Association may only be transferred to the new entity with the advance written permission of the IFA Football Committee. Each case will be considered on its own individual merits.

#### II. Sanction for club experiencing an Insolvency Event

If any club in membership of the NIFL formally suffers, undergoes, or enters into one of the following insolvency events that club shall be deducted 10 points:

- 
7. Administration (Creditor Driven) – normally Bank or large unsecured creditor.
  8. Administration (Club Driven) – appointment by the Directors to avoid other legal action e.g winding up order.
  9. Fixed Charge Receivership – appointment by secured creditor only on fixed assets e.g property.
  10. Have a winding up order made in respect of the club e.g HM Revenue & Customs.
  11. Company Voluntary Arrangement – proposed in advance of or as a response to legal action by an unsecured creditor.
  12. Have any proceeding or step taken or any court order made which has a substantially similar effect to any of the foregoing.

**III. Where a club takes or suffers such action set out in Rule (II) above;**

- (d) Prior to 1st March the points deduction shall apply immediately;
- (e) During the normal playing season but after 1st March, but before completion of all league fixtures, rule (IV) shall apply;
- (c) When all league fixtures have been concluded the points deduction shall apply in respect of the following season such that the club commences that season on minus 10 points

**IV. Where the circumstances set out in Rule (III) (b) apply and at the end of that season, having regard to the number of points awarded (ignoring any potential deduction):**

- (c) Should the club be relegated the points deduction will apply in the following season; or
- (d) Should the club not be relegated the points deduction will apply in that season and that club's points total for that season shall be recalculated accordingly and the final league position determined.

For the avoidance of doubt, when a club is subject to more than one of the events in (II) during a process of compromising its creditors (for example Administration followed by a Company Voluntary Arrangement), the club shall only be deducted one set of 10 points, such deduction to apply with effect from the first insolvency event.

Notwithstanding the above, if a club suffers, undergoes or enters into a separate, distinct and further insolvency event as per (II) above, a further 10-point deduction shall be applied.

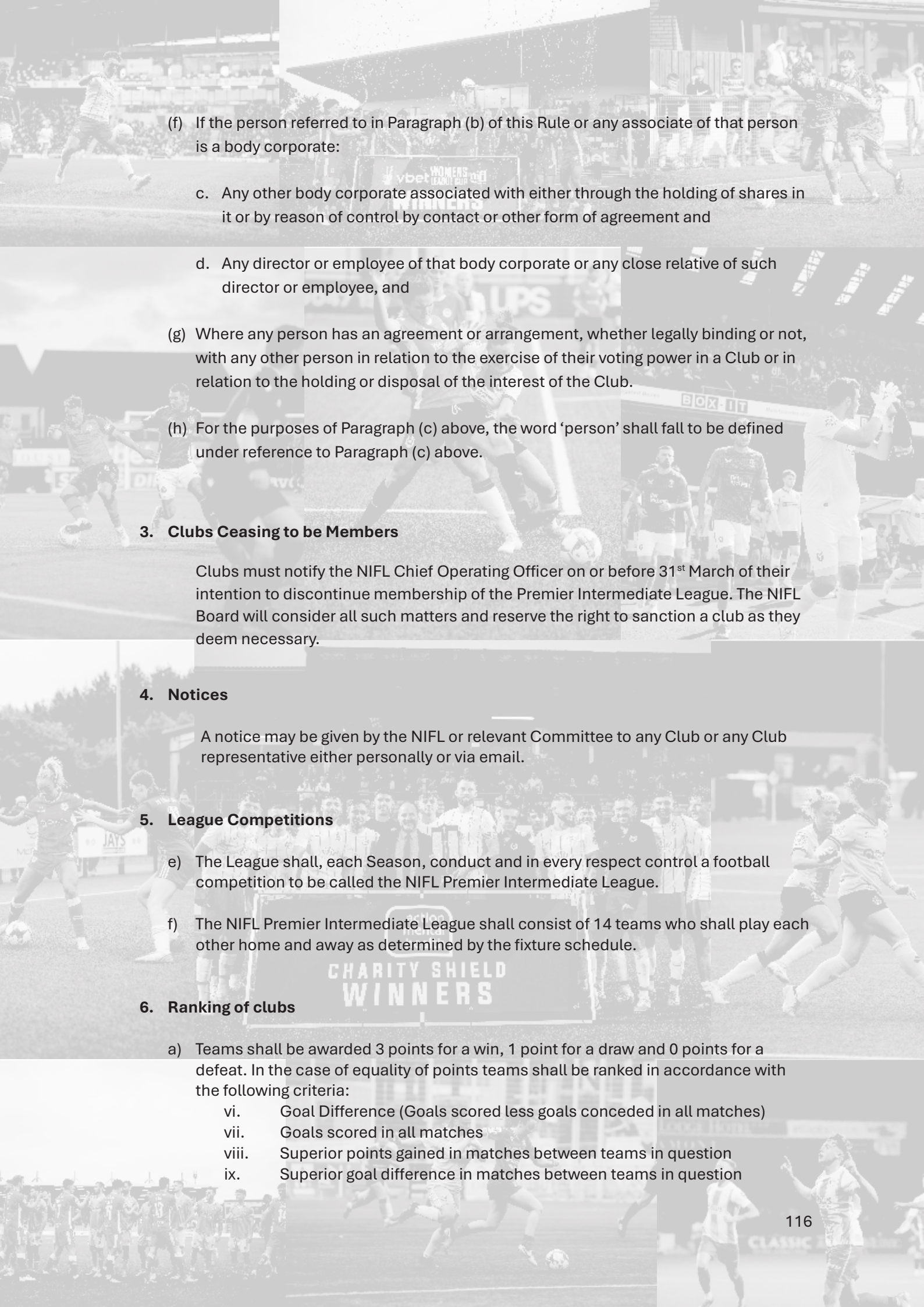
- V. The league shall serve a club with written notice of the points deduction.

- VI. A club may appeal against an automatic deduction of points in accordance with Article 14 of the IFA Articles of Association.

## 2. Dual Interests in Clubs

**This rule should be read in conjunction with the IFA Football Regulations.**

- (f) Except with prior written consent of the NIFL Board, no club, or nominee of a Club, may at one time either directly or indirectly:
  - (ix) Hold or acquire or deal in the securities or shares of another Club, or
  - (x) Be a member of another Club, or
  - (xi) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of another Club, or
  - (xii) Have any power whatsoever to influence the management or administration of another club.
- (g) 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:
  - (ix) Hold or acquire or deal in the securities or shares of more than one club, or
  - (x) Be a member of more than one Club, or
  - (xi) Be involved in any capacity whatsoever in the management or administration of more than one Club, or
  - (xii) Have any power whatsoever to influence the management or administration of more than one Club.
- (h) For the purposes of Paragraph (b) of this Rule ‘person’ includes anybody corporate and a partnership.
- (i) 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.
- (j) For the purposes of this Rule an ‘Associate’ means: -
  - (e) If the person referred to in Paragraph (b) of this Rule is an individual:
    - d. 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.
    - e. Any Company of which the individual is a director or over which the individual is able to exercise control or influence.
    - f. Any individual who is an employee or partner of that individual or a close relative of any such employee or partner.

- 
- (f) If the person referred to in Paragraph (b) of this Rule or any associate of that person is a body corporate:
- c. 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
  - d. Any director or employee of that body corporate or any close relative of such director or employee, and
- (g) 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.
- (h) For the purposes of Paragraph (c) above, the word 'person' shall fall to be defined under reference to Paragraph (c) above.

### **3. Clubs Ceasing to be Members**

Clubs must notify the NIFL Chief Operating Officer on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March of their intention to discontinue membership of the Premier Intermediate League. The NIFL Board will consider all such matters and reserve the right to sanction a club as they deem necessary.

### **4. Notices**

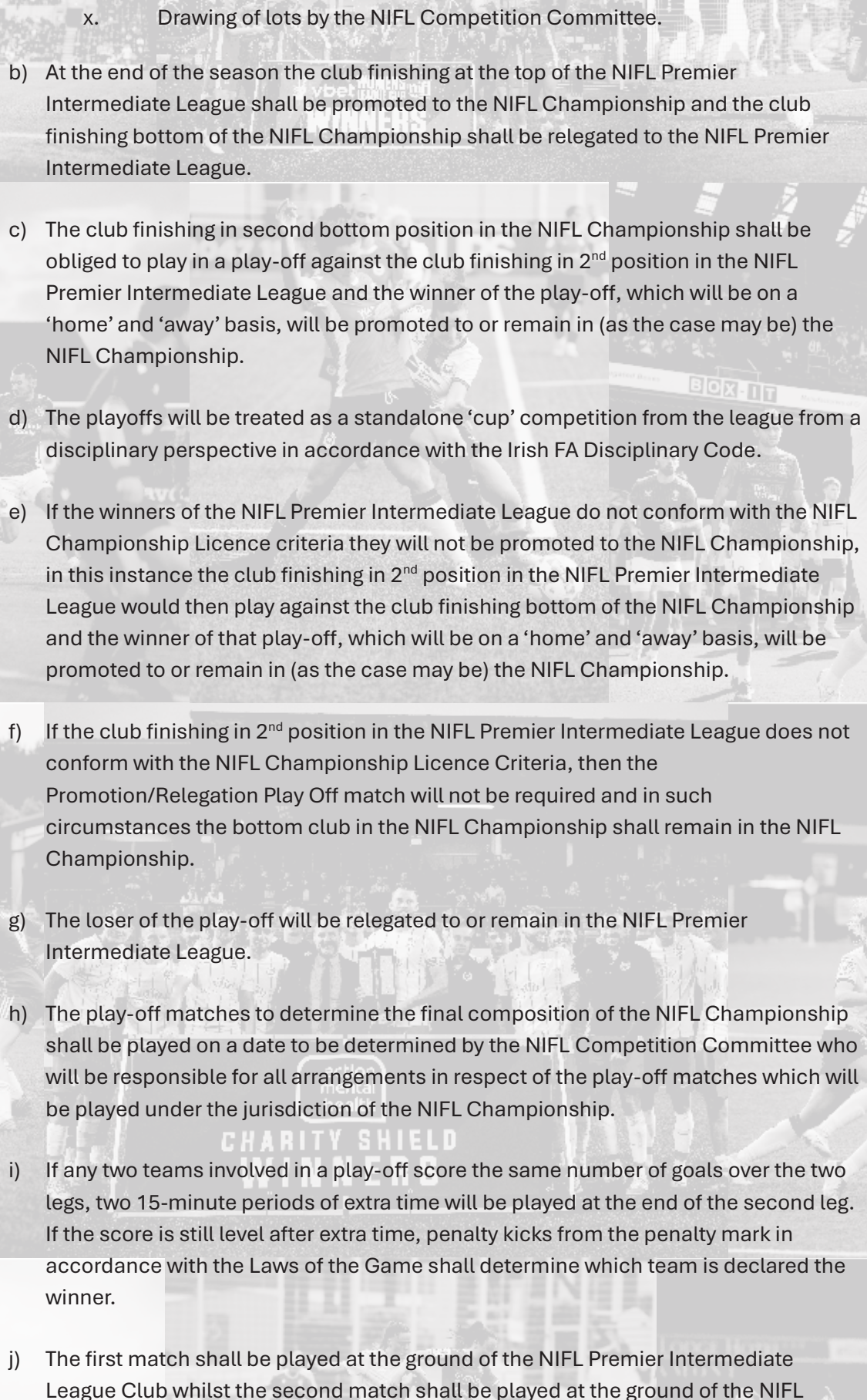
A notice may be given by the NIFL or relevant Committee to any Club or any Club representative either personally or via email.

### **5. League Competitions**

- e) The League shall, each Season, conduct and in every respect control a football competition to be called the NIFL Premier Intermediate League.
- f) The NIFL Premier Intermediate League shall consist of 14 teams who shall play each other home and away as determined by the fixture schedule.

### **6. Ranking of clubs**

- 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:
  - vi. Goal Difference (Goals scored less goals conceded in all matches)
  - vii. Goals scored in all matches
  - viii. Superior points gained in matches between teams in question
  - ix. Superior goal difference in matches between teams in question

- 
- x. Drawing of lots by the NIFL Competition Committee.
- b) At the end of the season the club finishing at the top of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League shall be promoted to the NIFL Championship and the club finishing bottom of the NIFL Championship shall be relegated to the NIFL Premier Intermediate League.
- c) The club finishing in second bottom position in the NIFL Championship shall be obliged to play in a play-off against the club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the NIFL Premier Intermediate League and the winner of the play-off, which will be on a 'home' and 'away' basis, will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Championship.
- d) The playoffs will be treated as a standalone 'cup' competition from the league from a disciplinary perspective in accordance with the Irish FA Disciplinary Code.
- e) If the winners of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League do not conform with the NIFL Championship Licence criteria they will not be promoted to the NIFL Championship, in this instance the club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the NIFL Premier Intermediate League would then play against the club finishing bottom of the NIFL Championship and the winner of that play-off, which will be on a 'home' and 'away' basis, will be promoted to or remain in (as the case may be) the NIFL Championship.
- f) If the club finishing in 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the NIFL Premier Intermediate League does not conform with the NIFL Championship Licence Criteria, then the Promotion/Relegation Play Off match will not be required and in such circumstances the bottom club in the NIFL Championship shall remain in the NIFL Championship.
- g) The loser of the play-off will be relegated to or remain in the NIFL Premier Intermediate League.
- h) The play-off matches to determine the final composition of the NIFL Championship shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee who will be responsible for all arrangements in respect of the play-off matches which will be played under the jurisdiction of the NIFL Championship.
- i) If any two teams involved in a play-off score the same number of goals over the two legs, two 15-minute periods of extra time will be played at the end of the second leg. If the score is still level after extra time, penalty kicks from the penalty mark in accordance with the Laws of the Game shall determine which team is declared the winner.
- j) The first match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League Club whilst the second match shall be played at the ground of the NIFL

Championship Club, unless otherwise agreed and confirmed in writing to the NIFL by both competing clubs.

- k) Notwithstanding the above criteria in respect of promotion and relegation the NIFL Competition Committee shall have full power to maintain a full membership of 14 teams in each Season, which may in exceptional circumstances require the selection of the top 14 ranked clubs who conform with the Championship Licence Criteria.
- l) In the event that the season should be required to halt due to unforeseen circumstances, and it is deemed not possible by government authorities, the Irish FA or NIFL Board to complete the season, the final standings will be determined in accordance with the 2022/23 Curtailment Policy as directed by the NIFL Board in advance of the season commencing.
- m) The club finishing bottom of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League shall be relegated provided at least one club is eligible for promotion to the NIFL Premier Intermediate League according to the procedures set out below.

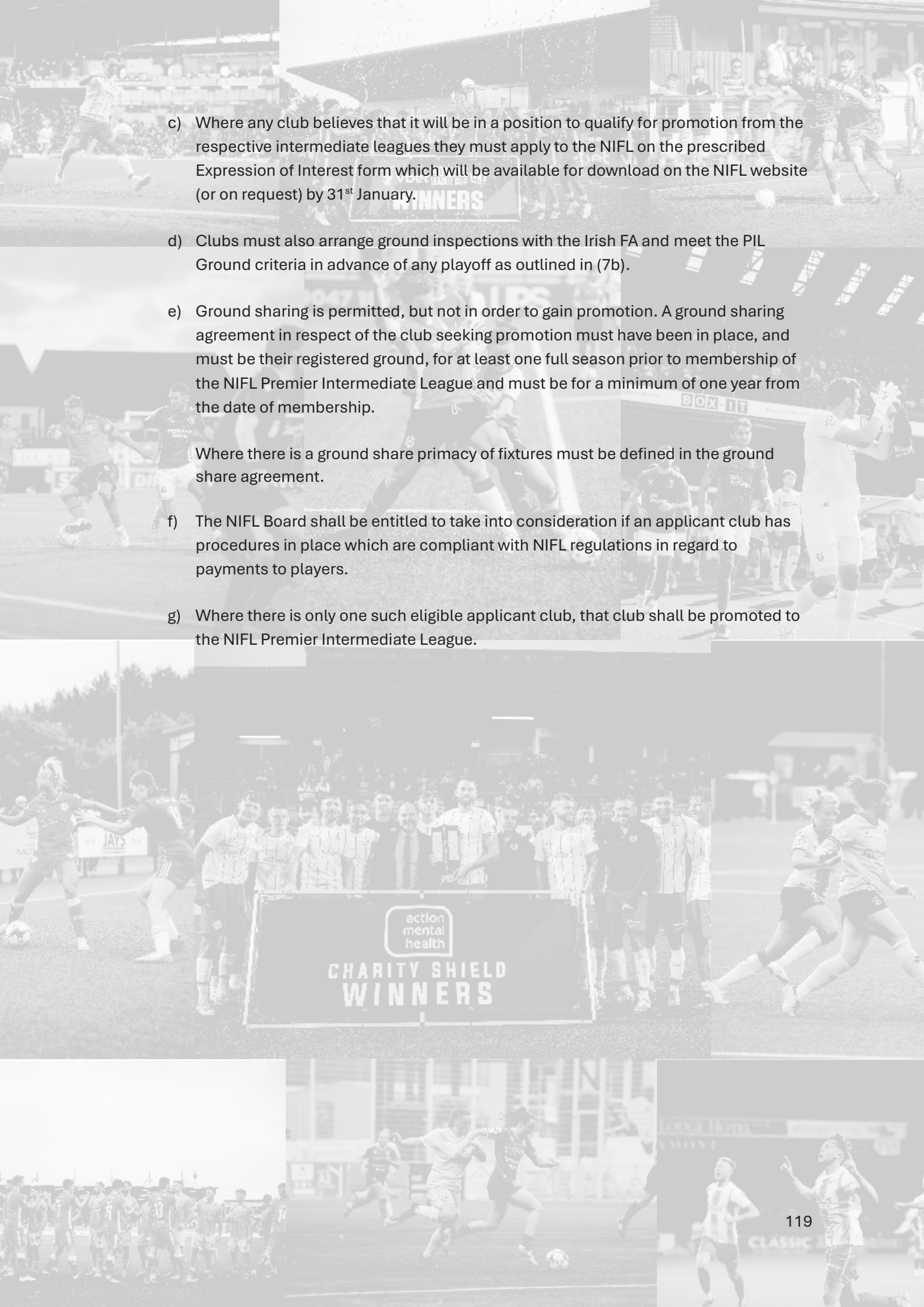
In this instance the relegated club will assume the vacant position, in the relevant Premier Division, created by the Promoted club which shall be guaranteed.

- n) Alternatively, the relegated club shall be at liberty to make an application for membership of another intermediate league of their choice
- o) In the event a club is not granted the relevant IFA Club License they will become the lowest ranked club in the division for the current season (ranked 14<sup>th</sup> and relegated from Premier Intermediate League)
- p) Notwithstanding the above criteria, in the event more than one club in the division is not granted the relevant IFA Club License, the NIFL Board shall have full power to maintain a membership of 14 teams in each Season, which may in exceptional circumstances require an alternative process.

## 7. PIL entry

- a) There shall be one place available for promotion into the NIFL Premier Intermediate League.
- b) The place shall be determined by means of a playoff between clubs that have won their respective intermediate leagues highest division (Northern Amateur Football League, Ballymena & Provincial League or the Mid Ulster Football League) in the year seeking promotion.

The format and scheduling of the playoff between applicant clubs shall be organised by the IFA Football Committee and all matches must be complete by 31 May.



c) Where any club believes that it will be in a position to qualify for promotion from the respective intermediate leagues they must apply to the NIFL on the prescribed Expression of Interest form which will be available for download on the NIFL website (or on request) by 31<sup>st</sup> January.

d) Clubs must also arrange ground inspections with the Irish FA and meet the PIL Ground criteria in advance of any playoff as outlined in (7b).

e) Ground sharing is permitted, but not in order to gain promotion. A ground sharing agreement in respect of the club seeking promotion must have been in place, and must be their registered ground, for at least one full season prior to membership of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League and must be for a minimum of one year from the date of membership.

Where there is a ground share primacy of fixtures must be defined in the ground share agreement.

f) The NIFL Board shall be entitled to take into consideration if an applicant club has procedures in place which are compliant with NIFL regulations in regard to payments to players.

g) Where there is only one such eligible applicant club, that club shall be promoted to the NIFL Premier Intermediate League.



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## NIFL COMMITTEES

### 8. NIFL Competition Committee

- g) The NIFL Competition 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.
- h) The Competition Committee will be responsible for the drafting of competition rules and for the organisation of all the cup competitions played within the League, this will include decisions as to which clubs may participate, the eligibility criteria for players playing in these competitions, and the drawing of ties and dealing with all matters pertaining to the Competitions. The Competition Committee has the power to deal with any relevant matters not covered by League rules.
- i) The Competition Committee will be appointed annual by the NIFL General Assembly and consist of 7 members:
  - (ix) Three representatives from clubs playing in the Premiership
  - (x) Two representatives from clubs playing in the Championship
  - (xi) One representative from clubs playing in the PIL
  - (xii) One representative from clubs playing in the Women's Premiership

The Committee shall appoint annually a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who may serve for a period not exceeding two years. A Chairman retiring after a period of two years may not seek election either to the office of chairman or that of Vice-Chairman until a further period of two years has elapsed. Notwithstanding the above, the Committee reserve the right to extend the terms of the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman by one year on an annual basis.

### 9. NIFL Discipline Committee

- g) The NIFL Discipline 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.
- h) The NIFL Discipline Committee will deal with off field discipline issues delegated to it by the Board or Staff for consideration.

The committee shall not deal with on field matters which shall remain the responsibility of the Irish Football Association.

- i) 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.

## 10. Subdivision Committees

The Championship subdivision committee shall meet as and when required to discuss matters of mutual interest to the clubs and where required to elect members to sit on the NIFL Board and IFA Council and Committees.

Each Division playing under the auspices of NIFL shall have a committee made up of one representative of each club playing in them.





## OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS

### 11. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences

- e) The NIFL, and any Committee duly appointed by the Board or relevant 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, 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.
- f) The NIFL irrespective of whether or not it shall have appointed a Commission or 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, 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.

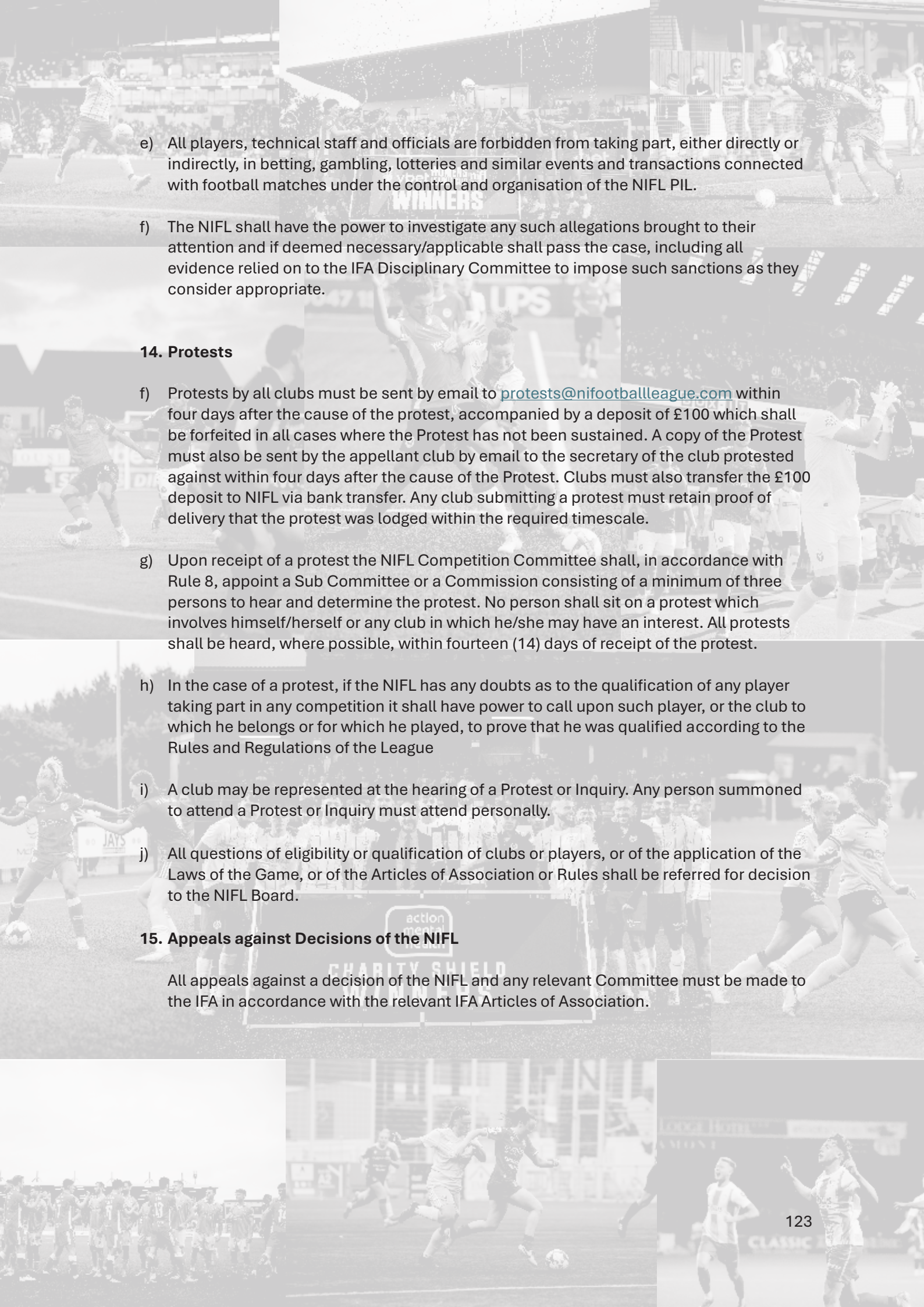
*Note – This rule will not apply to any field offences or any other matter which would normally be dealt with by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.*

### 12. Commissions and Reports

- e) The NIFL, and any 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 PIL or its affairs.
- f) The NIFL, and any 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 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 Competition Committee may think fit.

### 13. Misconduct in pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL PIL Matches

- d) 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 Competition Committee shall see fit.

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- e) 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 PIL.
  - f) The NIFL 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.

#### 14. Protests

- f) Protests by all clubs must be sent by email to [protests@nifootballleague.com](mailto:protests@nifootballleague.com) 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 email to the secretary of the club protested against within four days after the cause of the Protest. Clubs must also transfer the £100 deposit to NIFL via bank transfer. Any club submitting a protest must retain proof of delivery that the protest was lodged within the required timescale.
- g) Upon receipt of a protest the NIFL Competition 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.
- h) 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
- i) 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.
- j) 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.

#### 15. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL

All appeals against a decision of the NIFL and any relevant Committee must be made to the IFA in accordance with the relevant IFA Articles of Association.

## GROUNDS

### 16. Registration of Ground

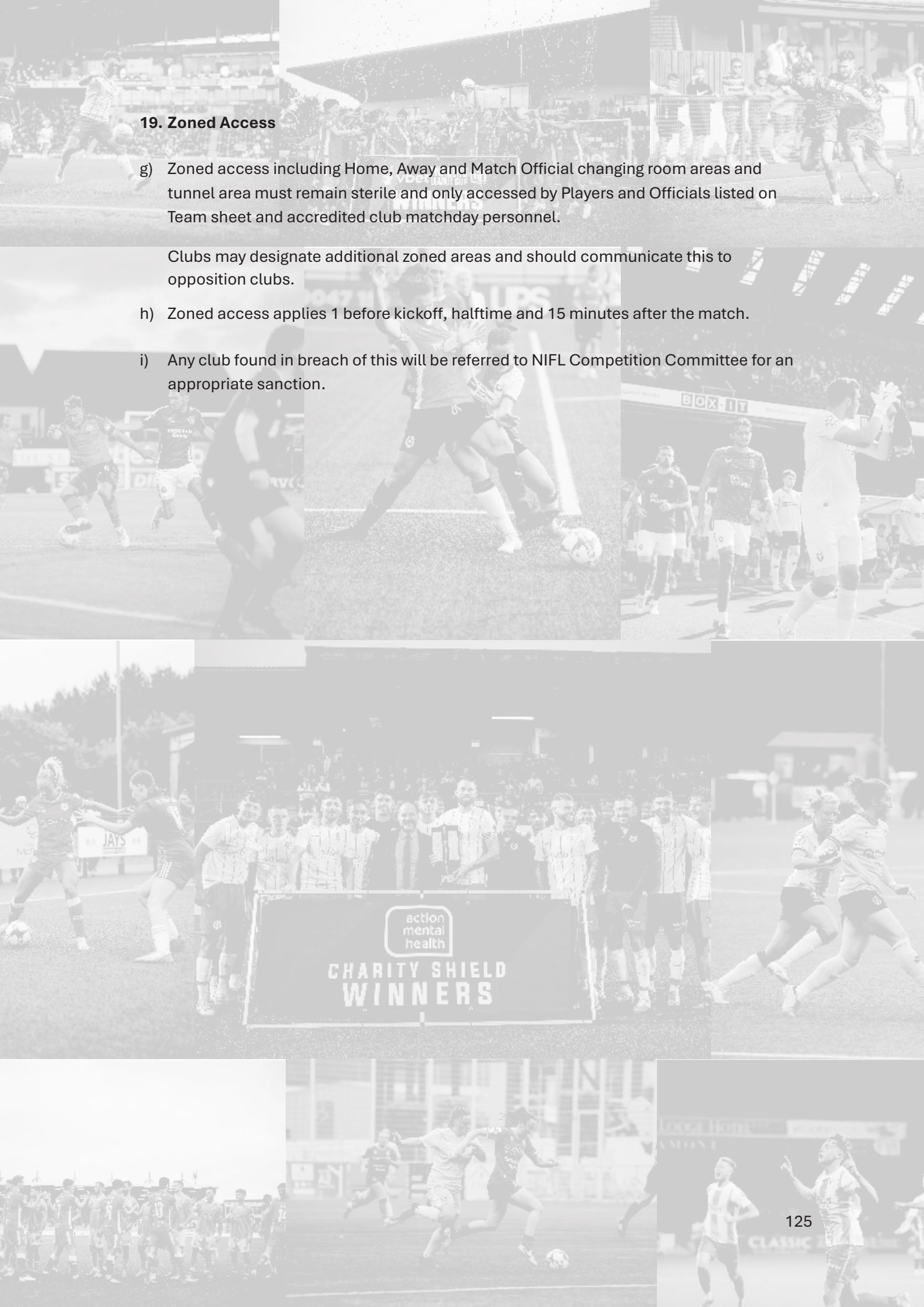
- d) Each club shall register its ground with the NIFL and no club shall register another ground without first obtaining the consent of the NIFL
- e) Any club which requires a ground share agreement should provide written notice to the NIFL Competition Committee no later than 31 March of the preceding season.
- f) Clubs must register their pitch dimensions with the NIFL prior to the start of each Season, which must adhere to the Laws of the Game. The registered pitch dimensions must not be altered during the course of a season, without the consent of the NIFL Competition Committee. Such request for consent can only be made in exceptional circumstances and must be served in writing to the NIFL Chief Operating Officer. The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected. Should a club make such alterations without the required consent and a match or matches take place that 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 of 3-0 recorded in its favour. Notwithstanding the above the winning team shall not be disadvantaged if the original score was of greater benefit to that teams goal difference. A fine of up to £250 per match played will also be levied.

### 17. Objection to Field of Play etc

Any objection to the field of play or field equipment , 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.

### 18. 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 13 persons (seven substitute players and six club officials) only shall be permitted.
- b) Any player/official who is dismissed from the field of play shall proceed immediately to the dressing room.
- c) Smoking/Vaping is not permitted in the Technical Area. Any club found in breach of this shall be dealt with by the NIFL Premier Intermediate League.



## 19. Zoned Access

- g) Zoned access including Home, Away and Match Official changing room areas and tunnel area must remain sterile and only accessed by Players and Officials listed on Team sheet and accredited club matchday personnel.

Clubs may designate additional zoned areas and should communicate this to opposition clubs.

- h) Zoned access applies 15 minutes before kickoff, halftime and 15 minutes after the match.
- i) Any club found in breach of this will be referred to NIFL Competition Committee for an appropriate sanction.



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## MATCHES

### 20. Matches

- u) Matches may be played on natural turf or artificial turf, provided that such artificial turf meets 'FIFA Pro' or 'FIFA Quality' standard with the venue owner and the home club in receipt of a valid FIFA Certificate.

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

Each Club is under an obligation to ensure that the pitch at its Registered Ground is level and in good condition and repair and that it has an efficient and effective drainage system so that it does not become unplayable due to flooding.

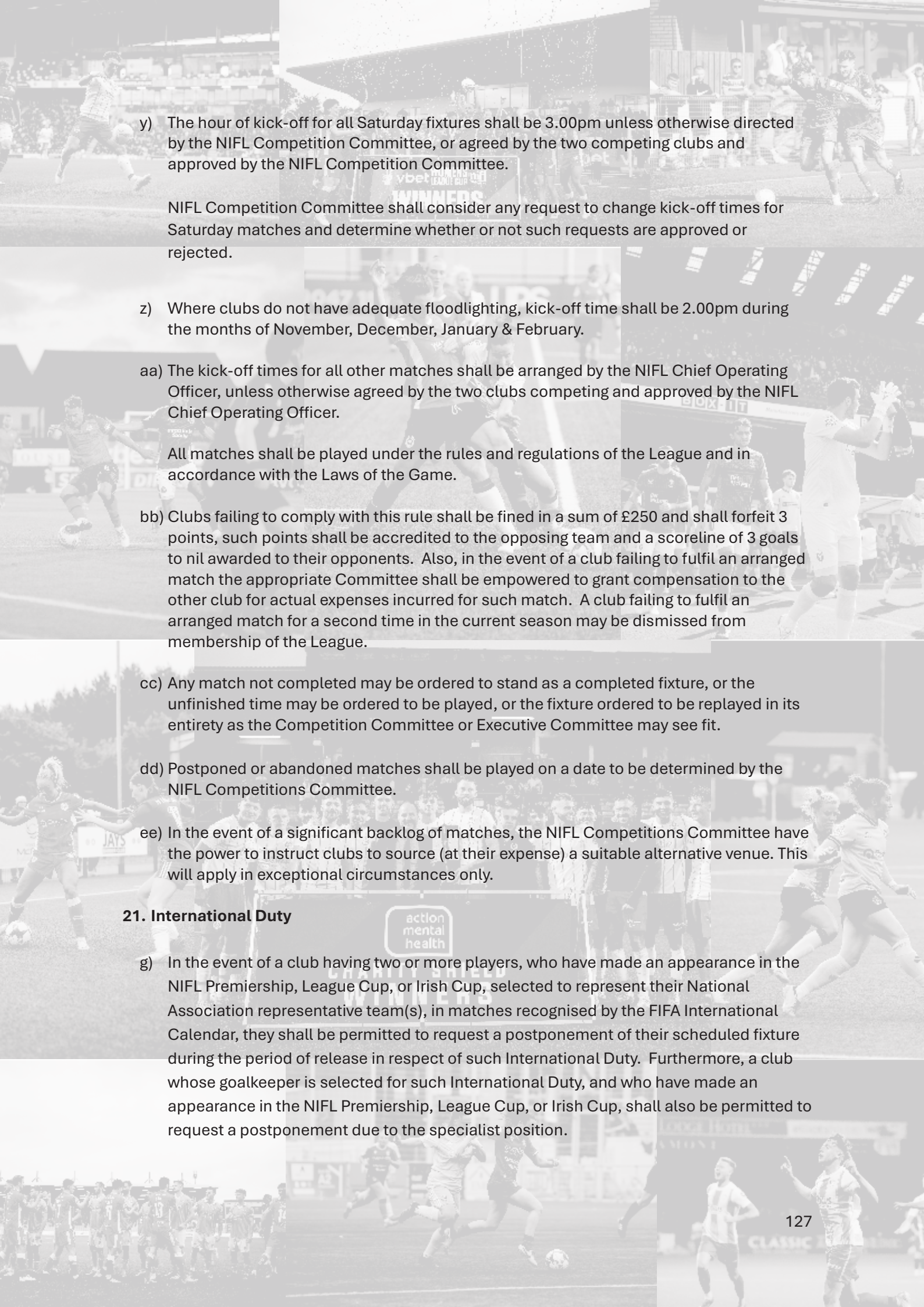
The NIFL Competitions Committee is entitled to direct a Club to take such steps as considered necessary in order that the pitch is put into and maintained in good condition and repair.

A club whose pitch is deemed to be unfit for play shall then be responsible for arranging an alternative venue(s) which meets all League requirements, until such time as the work deemed necessary to make the pitch suitable for play has been carried out, the pitch has been re-inspected and the NIFL Competition Committee has given approval for matches to take place on the pitch.

- v) 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 Premier Intermediate League. All NIFL Premier Intermediate League matches shall be played on the dates scheduled at the commencement of the season, except:
- I. When otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee; or when
  - II. National and divisional association cup ties take precedence; or when
  - III. Agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer.

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 Chief Operating Officer.

- w) In the event of a home club wishing to change from the date or time of a scheduled fixture, advance notice must be served in writing to both the Secretary of the away club and the NIFL Chief Operating Officer six (6) weeks prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.
- x) However, notwithstanding the above, no match shall be played on a Sunday unless the two (2) participating clubs are in agreement.

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- y) The hour of kick-off for all Saturday fixtures shall be 3.00pm unless otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee, or agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Competition Committee.

NIFL Competition Committee shall consider any request to change kick-off times for Saturday matches and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.

- z) Where clubs do not have adequate floodlighting, kick-off time shall be 2.00pm during the months of November, December, January & February.

- aa) The kick-off times for all other matches shall be arranged by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer, unless otherwise agreed by the two clubs competing and approved by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer.

All matches shall be played under the rules and regulations of the League and in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

- bb) 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.

- cc) 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 Competition Committee or Executive Committee may see fit.

- dd) Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competitions Committee.

- ee) In the event of a significant backlog of matches, the NIFL Competitions Committee have the power to instruct clubs to source (at their expense) a suitable alternative venue. This will apply in exceptional circumstances only.

## **21. International Duty**

- g) In the event of a club having two or more players, who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup, or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s), in matches recognised by the FIFA International Calendar, 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, and who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup, or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.



h) In the event of a club having three or more players, who have made appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s) in matches not recognised on the FIFA International Calendar or Development and Schools FA squads, 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, and who have made an appearance in the NIFL Premiership, League Cup or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.

i) The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.

## 22. Kit Approval

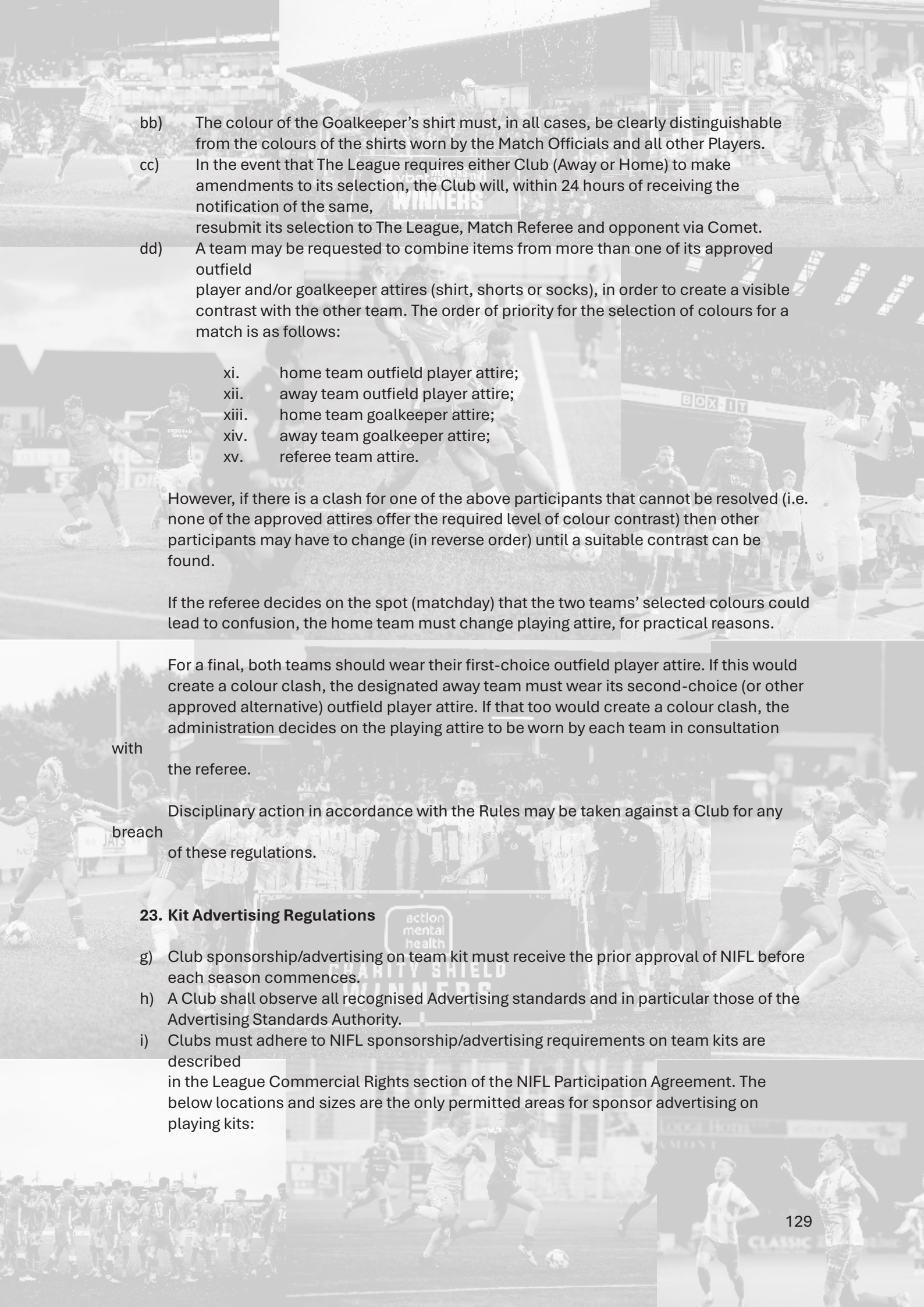
The NIFL Kit Approval Regulations are made pursuant to Irish FA Football Regulations and to the Laws of the Game. Clubs participating in other International competitions, such as UEFA Cup Competitions, must also comply with all relevant regulations.

Pre-season;

- u) Clubs to be required to notify the NIFL Operations Team, of their chosen colours for all new 'home', 'away' and 'third' sets of kit at the planning stage then the League can provide approval before Clubs place any orders for kit with their respective manufacturers
- v) Each set of kit registered must differ visibly from and contrast with each other kit registered by the Club in that Season.
- w) During the Close Season, each Club shall notify The League in writing details of its 'home' and 'away' kit (shirt, shorts and socks) and if applicable any 'third' set of kit. When registering kits, Clubs must ensure that the colour of the shirt, shorts and socks for each kit is different to and would sufficiently contrast against the other kits registered by the Club.
- x) Teams must have at least two goalkeeper attires which clearly contrast with each other and with the first-choice and second-choice outfield players attires.
- y) The 'home' shirt registered by each Club will be worn for all Home Matches during the Season.
- z) In circumstances where an 'away' Club cannot wear any of its kits (or combination of its kits) without causing a potential kit clash, the Home Club shall be able to wear any combination of its registered kit in order to avoid the potential kit clash (including but not limited to wearing an 'away' or 'third' shirt for a Home Match).

In season;

- aa) Both teams will, not less than 72 hours before the scheduled match, submit to The League, Match Referee and their opponents the details of the colours of shirts, shorts and socks of all players via Comet. Failure to do so will result in a sanction of £50 for each offense.

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- bb) The colour of the Goalkeeper's shirt must, in all cases, be clearly distinguishable from the colours of the shirts worn by the Match Officials and all other Players.
  - cc) In the event that The League requires either Club (Away or Home) to make amendments to its selection, the Club will, within 24 hours of receiving the notification of the same, resubmit its selection to The League, Match Referee and opponent via Comet.
  - dd) A team may be requested to combine items from more than one of its approved outfield player and/or goalkeeper attires (shirt, shorts or socks), in order to create a visible contrast with the other team. The order of priority for the selection of colours for a match is as follows:

- xi. home team outfield player attire;
- xii. away team outfield player attire;
- xiii. home team goalkeeper attire;
- xiv. away team goalkeeper attire;
- xv. referee team attire.

However, if there is a clash for one of the above participants that cannot be resolved (i.e. none of the approved attires offer the required level of colour contrast) then other participants may have to change (in reverse order) until a suitable contrast can be found.

If the referee decides on the spot (matchday) that the two teams' selected colours could lead to confusion, the home team must change playing attire, for practical reasons.

For a final, both teams should wear their first-choice outfield player attire. If this would create a colour clash, the designated away team must wear its second-choice (or other approved alternative) outfield player attire. If that too would create a colour clash, the administration decides on the playing attire to be worn by each team in consultation

with

the referee.

breach

Disciplinary action in accordance with the Rules may be taken against a Club for any of these regulations.

### 23. Kit Advertising Regulations

- g) Club sponsorship/advertising on team kit must receive the prior approval of NIFL before each season commences.
- h) A Club shall observe all recognised Advertising standards and in particular those of the Advertising Standards Authority.
- i) Clubs must adhere to NIFL sponsorship/advertising requirements on team kits are described in the League Commercial Rights section of the NIFL Participation Agreement. The below locations and sizes are the only permitted areas for sponsor advertising on playing kits:

Permitted club advertisement locations	Size
1 front of shirt	Maximum size of 250cm <sup>2</sup>
2 back of shirt	Maximum size of 150cm <sup>2</sup> for the one above name/number, and 100cm <sup>2</sup> for the one below name/numbers
2 (on left for Prem and 1 on each for C/PIL)	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup> .
2 on shorts (1 front, 1 back)	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup>
1 on sock	Maximum size of 100cm <sup>2</sup>
Max 8	

*Please note: for clubs competing in UEFA Club Competitions the maximum size for front of shirt is 200cm<sup>2</sup> and other restrictions may apply depending on the stage of competition*

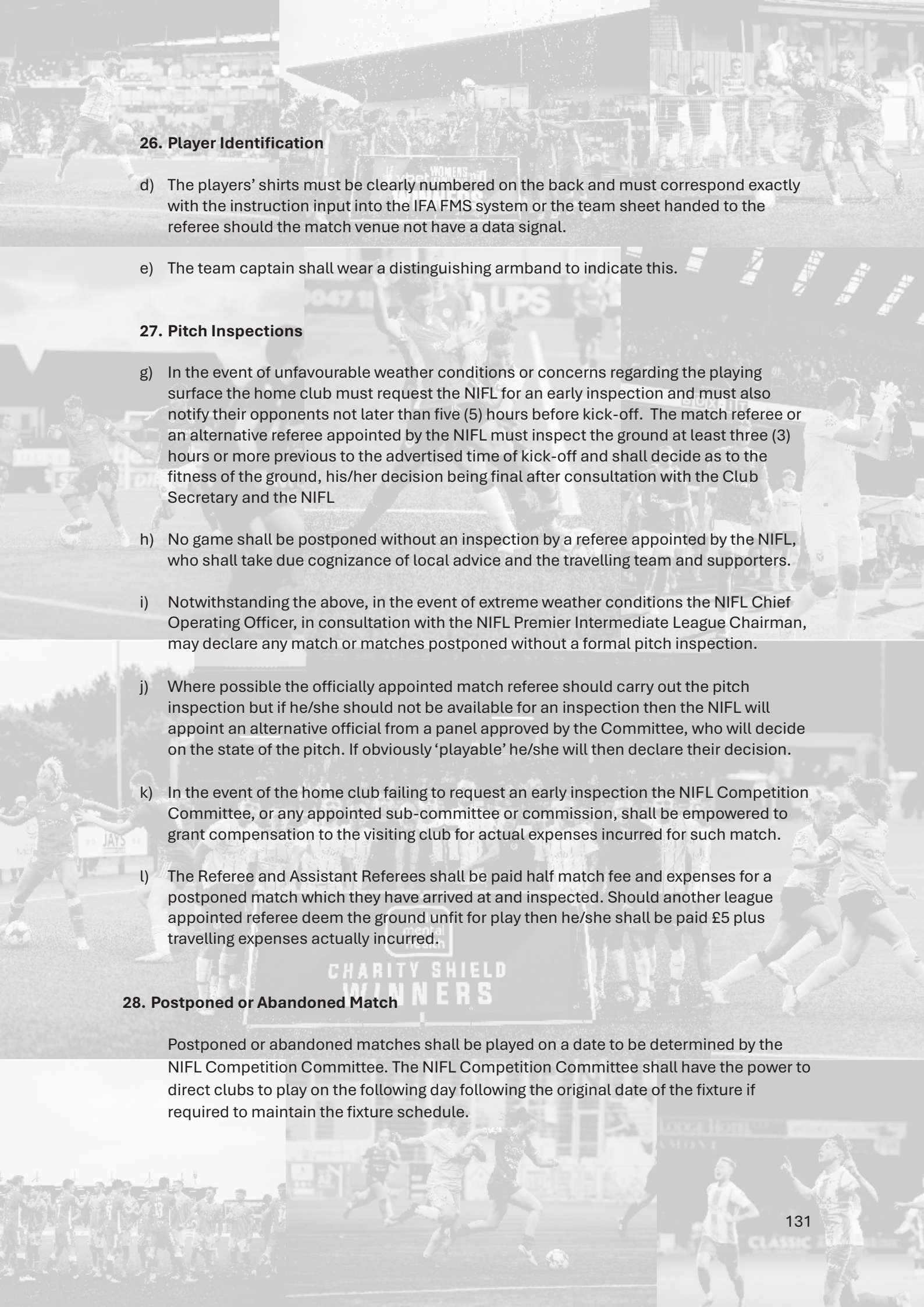
To calculate the total area of logos, the widest part of the logo or patch containing the logo is measured from edge to edge.

## 24. Kit Numbering

- i) A number must be centred on the back of each shirt. Only whole numbers may be used, no number higher than 99 may be used and the number 1 may only be used by a goalkeeper.
- j) Numbers must be of a single colour that contrasts with the number zone.
- k) Numbers must be clearly legible. The stroke width of each digit must be 2–5cm and the digits themselves must be:
  - v. 25–35cm high on men's shirts;
  - vi. 20–35cm high on women's shirts
- l) Numbers must be clearly legible to the referee team, commentators, spectators and TV viewers, in daylight and under floodlights, from at least 50m away.

## 25. Kit Names

- m) Players may be identified on their shirts by means of their surname.
- n) The name by which a player is identified on their shirt must correspond with the name entered on the team sheet (unless prior approval).
- o) When player names are displayed on shirts, they must be placed on the back of the shirt, above the number.
- p) Names must be written in a single colour.
- q) Each letter must be no more than 7.5cm high.
- r) The letters must clearly contrast with the background colour(s) of the shirt



## 26. Player Identification

- d) 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.
- e) The team captain shall wear a distinguishing armband to indicate this.

## 27. Pitch Inspections

- g) In the event of unfavourable weather conditions or concerns regarding the playing surface the home club must request the NIFL for an early inspection and must also notify their opponents not later than five (5) hours before kick-off. 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
- h) No game shall be postponed without an inspection by a referee appointed by the NIFL, who shall take due cognizance of local advice and the travelling team and supporters.
- i) Notwithstanding the above, in the event of extreme weather conditions the NIFL Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the NIFL Premier Intermediate League Chairman, may declare any match or matches postponed without a formal pitch inspection.
- j) 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/she will then declare their decision.
- k) In the event of the home club failing to request an early inspection the NIFL Competition Committee, or any appointed sub-committee or commission, shall be empowered to grant compensation to the visiting club for actual expenses incurred for such match.
- l) The Referee and Assistant Referees 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.

## 28. Postponed or Abandoned Match

Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee. The NIFL Competition Committee shall have the power to direct clubs to play on the following day following the original date of the fixture if required to maintain the fixture schedule.

## 29. Completion of Team Line up

- d) 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 75 minutes prior to kick off.
- e) 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,.
- f) Clubs failing to do so will be fined in the sum of £50.

## 30. Substitute Players

- g) 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.
- h) 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.
- i) Substitutions may only be made on at most 3 occasions during the game (excluding half time).
- j) Exceptionally, a sixth substitute may take part exclusively during extra time in any play off fixture outlined in Rule 19.
- k) A substitute player shall be construed as taking part in the game for which he was nominated only if he is required to play.
- l) 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.

## 31. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet

After the team sheets have been completed and submitted to the Football Management System to the Referee and if the match has not yet kicked off, the following shall apply:

- (c) If any of the first eleven players named on the team sheet are not able to start the match due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced only by any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the initial team sheet. The substitute(s) in question can then be replaced by a player(s) not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes

is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.

- (d) If any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the team sheet are not able to be fielded due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced by any player not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.

Any amendments to the team sheet in accordance with points (a) and (b) above must be communicated by a named person on the official teamsheet to the match referee who will make the changes. The referee or another match official must communicate the change to the opposing team manager as soon as possible prior to the commencement of the match.

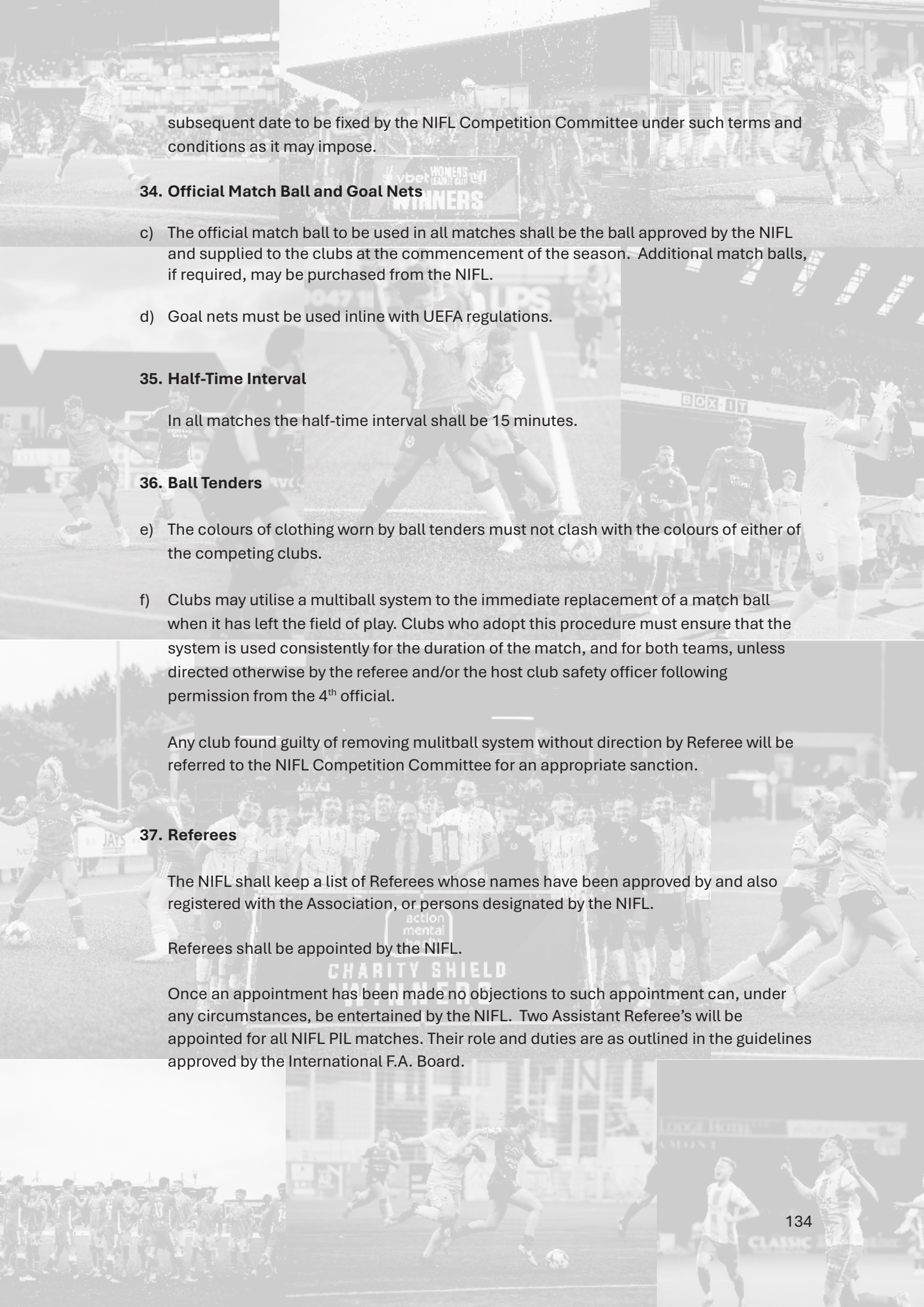
### **32. Late Start**

The NIFL Competition Committee shall fine clubs for late start of matches in the sum of £250 except in exceptional circumstances. Referees must report late starts to the League.

- g) Clubs must request permission for any pre-match commemoration including minutes silence/applauds no later in 24hrs before kickoff, unless in exceptional circumstance. All requests must be clearly communicated and agreed in advance with opposition clubs and match officials to ensure timings are built into pre-match plans. All requests must be sent to NIFL Chief Operating Officer.
- h) All pre-match activity must be built into official match countdown and not encroach on kick-off time.
- i) Match officials to report late starts to the NIFL.

### **33. Referee to wait before abandoning a match**

- e) In the case of matches where it is found necessary to stop play owing to weather conditions, or floodlight failure, the referee must wait for a period of 15 minutes before deciding upon abandonment.
- f) If through any cause a match has been abandoned before the completion of the full playing time the NIFL Competition 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 Competition Committee under such terms and conditions as it may impose.

#### **34. Official Match Ball and Goal Nets**

- c) 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.
- d) Goal nets must be used inline with UEFA regulations.

#### **35. Half-Time Interval**

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

#### **36. Ball Tenders**

- e) The colours of clothing worn by ball tenders must not clash with the colours of either of the competing clubs.
- f) Clubs may utilise a multiball system to the immediate replacement of a match ball when it has left the field of play. Clubs who adopt this procedure must ensure that the system is used consistently for the duration of the match, and for both teams, unless directed otherwise by the referee and/or the host club safety officer following permission from the 4<sup>th</sup> official.

Any club found guilty of removing multiball system without direction by Referee will be referred to the NIFL Competition Committee for an appropriate sanction.

#### **37. Referees**

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. Two Assistant Referee's will be appointed for all NIFL PIL matches. Their role and duties are as outlined in the guidelines approved by the International F.A. Board.



## FINANCE

### 38. Admission to Grounds

- c) The admission policy for all NIFL Premier Intermediate League matches shall be determined by the NIFL Premier Intermediate League Subdivision Committee annually.
- d) Each club may furnish the NIFL Premier Intermediate League a list of no more than 12 directors that shall receive a Directors pass. The bearer shall be entitled to admission to the ground and Directors Box at matches in which his/her club are participating under the jurisdiction of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League, excluding semi-finals and finals.

### 39. Gate Receipts

The admission charges to the ground in all League matches shall be retained by the home club, unless otherwise stated.

### 40. Season Tickets

Clubs may issue season tickets for admission to all home "League" matches, unless otherwise directed.

### 41. Fines

- d) All fines imposed by the NIFL Competition 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.
- e) Otherwise, offending clubs will be fined 20% of the fine per week or part of a week that a fine is outstanding.
- f) 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

### 42. Player Registration Regulations

- c) All players must be registered in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration regulations and the NIFL Player Registration Regulations.
- d) Where a Professional or 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.

### 43. Undisclosed Payments

- f) 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 32b).
- g) A party is related to a club/entity if:
  - viii) directly or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, the party:
    - d) controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with, the entity (this includes parents, subsidiaries and fellow subsidiaries;
    - e) has an interest in the entity that gives it significant influence over the entity; or
    - f) has joint control over the entity;
  - ix) the party is an associate of the entity;
  - x) the party is a joint venture in which the party is a venture;
  - xi) the party is a member of a key management personnel of the entity or its parent;
  - xii) the party is a close member of the family of any individual referred to in i) or iv)
  - xiii) 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
  - xiv) 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:

- k) The individual’s domestic partners and children;
- l) Children of the individual’s domestic partner; and

m) 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.

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

n) The Board or Chief Operating Officer of the NIFL or its appointees may at any time, in order to:

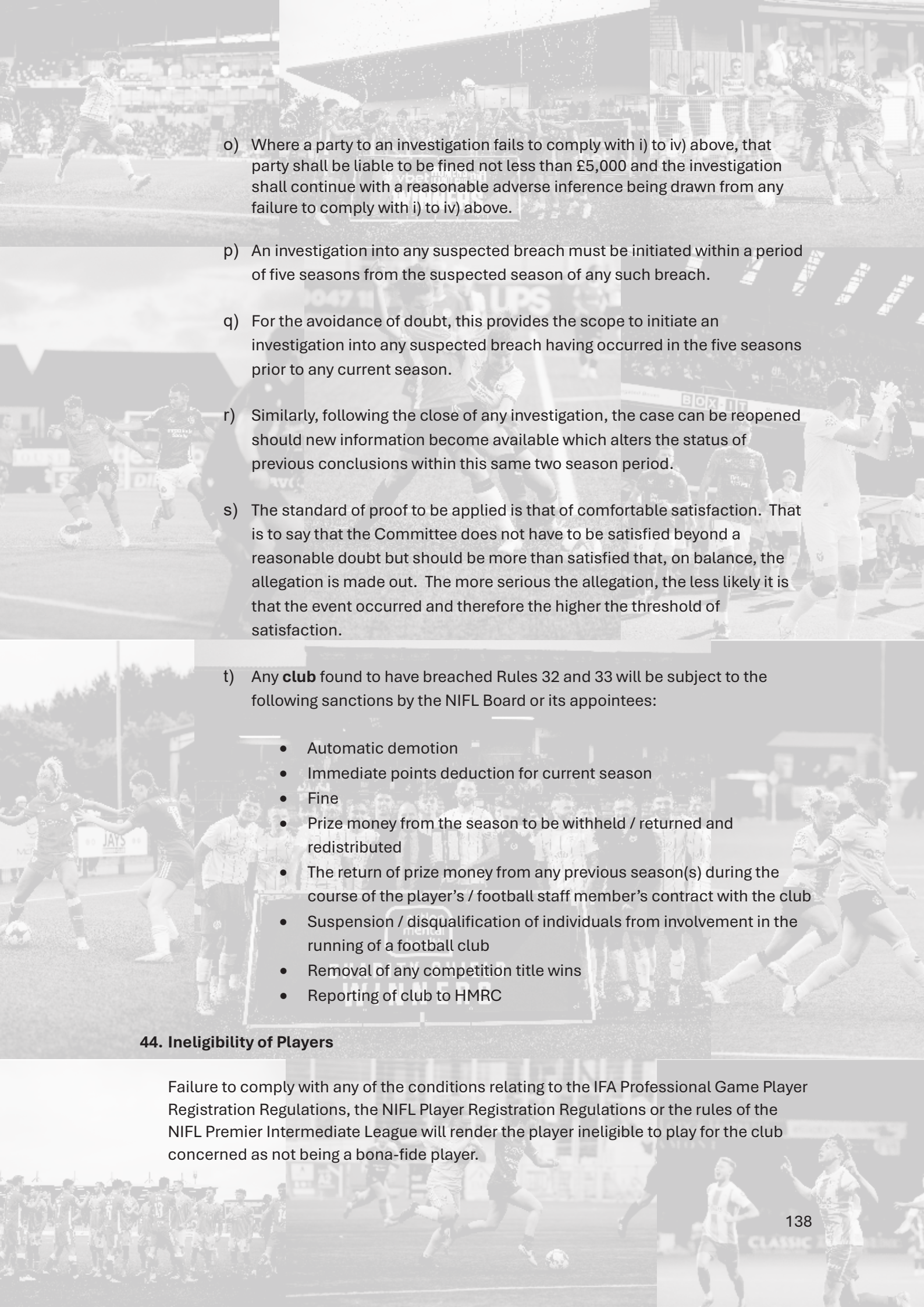
- satisfy itself as to the accuracy of the contractual / registration information provided to it by a club;

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 and shall be entitled to take such action and award such punishments as detailed in Rule 33j 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:

- ix) provide the NIFL or its appointees with all information, documents and/or records that the NIFL or its appointees considers relevant to an investigation;
- x) cooperate fully with any interview process carried out by the NIFL or its appointees;
- xi) verify the accuracy (or otherwise) of any information or document provided;
- xii) 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.

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- o) 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.
- p) An investigation into any suspected breach must be initiated within a period of five seasons from the suspected season of any such breach.
- q) 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.
- r) 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.
- s) 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.
- t) Any **club** found to have breached Rules 32 and 33 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

#### 44. Ineligibility of Players

Failure to comply with any of the conditions relating to the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations, the NIFL Player Registration Regulations or the rules of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League will render the player ineligible to play for the club concerned as not being a bona-fide player.

#### 45. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players:

- f) Any club playing an ineligible player or players in any match under the auspices of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League may be fined a maximum of £250 per player for the first offence and £25 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 of 3-0 recorded in its favour.
- g) Should the match(es) in question result in a defeat for the offending team a score 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.
- h) Should both clubs play an ineligible player or players in any match under the auspices of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League then both clubs will be fined a sum of £250 per player for the first offence and £25 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.
- i) Nothing in these regulations shall entitle the NIFL Premier Intermediate League to deduct points or impose fines for registration committed by any club during any previous season. (For the purpose of all NIFL Premier Intermediate League regulations a season will be deemed to end on 31<sup>st</sup> May each year).
- j) 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

### 46. Condition of Membership of Clubs comprising the NIFL Premier Intermediate League

- d) All clubs in membership of the NIFL Premier Intermediate League acknowledge that they are bound by the rules of the NIFL Premier Intermediate 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.
- e) Clubs shall be obliged to sign a participation agreement and to abide by the conditions contained therein.
- f) Any club not adhering to this rule, or the terms of the agreement shall be dealt with as the NIFL Board consider appropriate.

### 47. Medals

The NI Football League shall award up to 20 medals to the winning clubs for presentation to their players each of whom shall have taken part in a minimum of 12 games constituting the NIFL Premier Intermediate League. Additional medals may be purchased by the clubs concerned, if so warranted and the Committee shall consider all such requests.

### 48. 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.

### 49. 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.

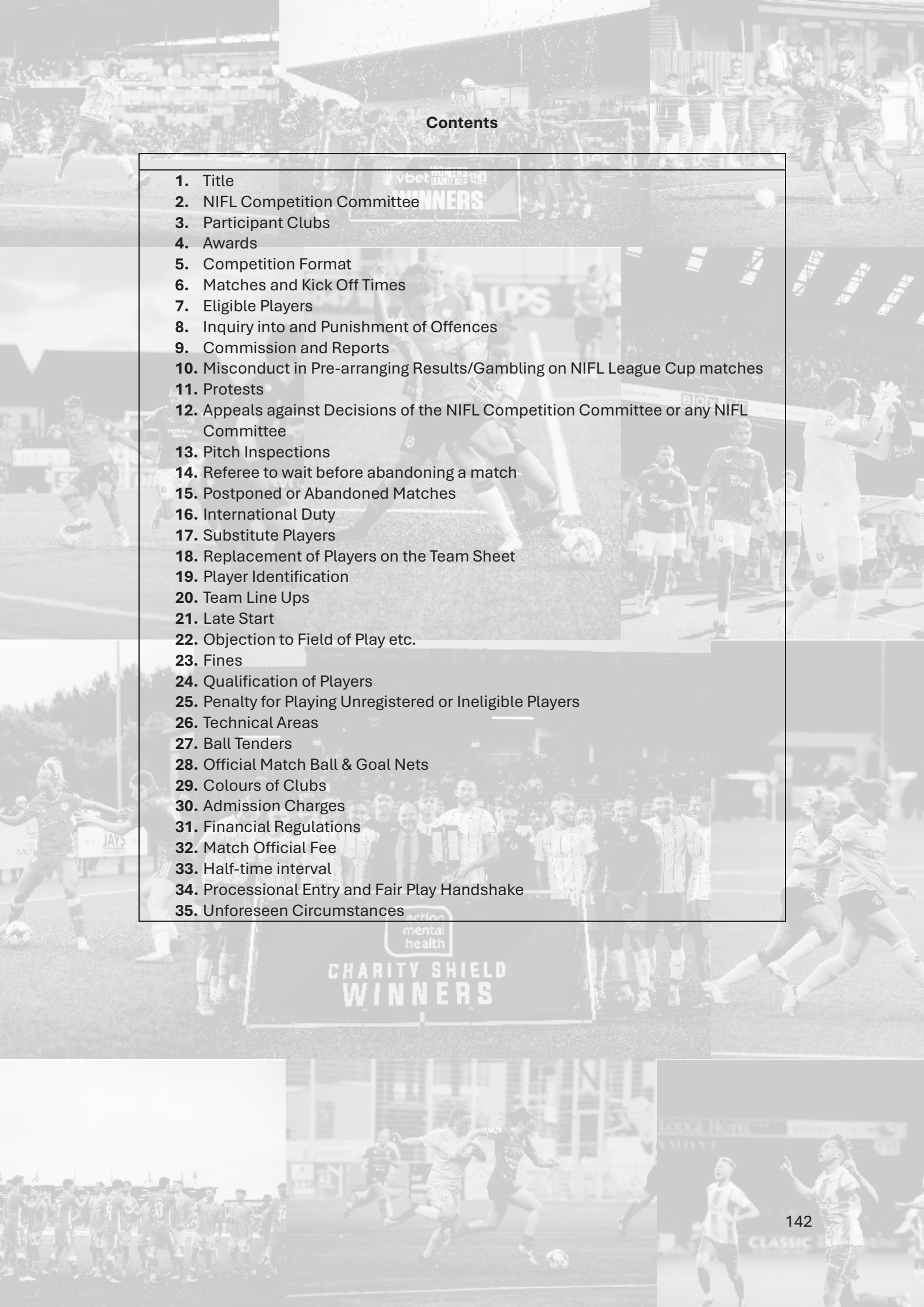
### 50. Alterations to Rules

Alterations to these rules shall only be considered during the closed season, except in the case of exceptional circumstances as determined by the NIFL Board. Any club wishing to have a proposal considered, must forward same in writing to the NIFL Competitions Committee no later than 1<sup>st</sup> March.



## RULES AND REGULATIONS

SEASON 2024/25



## Contents

1. Title
2. NIFL Competition Committee
3. Participant Clubs
4. Awards
5. Competition Format
6. Matches and Kick Off Times
7. Eligible Players
8. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences
9. Commission and Reports
10. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL League Cup matches
11. Protests
12. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL Competition Committee or any NIFL Committee
13. Pitch Inspections
14. Referee to wait before abandoning a match
15. Postponed or Abandoned Matches
16. International Duty
17. Substitute Players
18. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet
19. Player Identification
20. Team Line Ups
21. Late Start
22. Objection to Field of Play etc.
23. Fines
24. Qualification of Players
25. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players
26. Technical Areas
27. Ball Tenders
28. Official Match Ball & Goal Nets
29. Colours of Clubs
30. Admission Charges
31. Financial Regulations
32. Match Official Fee
33. Half-time interval
34. Processional Entry and Fair Play Handshake
35. Unforeseen Circumstances



## NIFL LEAGUE CUP

### 1. Title

The competition shall be called the NI Football League (NIFL) Cup.

On occasion a sponsor may be included in the title.

### 2. NIFL Competition Committee

- a. The control and organisation of the competition shall be vested in the NIFL Competition Committee.
- b. The NIFL Competition 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.
- c. The Competition Committee will be responsible for the drafting of competition rules and for the organisation of all the cup competitions played within the League, this will include decisions as to which clubs may participate, the eligibility criteria for players playing in these competitions, and the drawing of ties and dealing with all matters pertaining to the Competitions.

### 3. Participant Clubs:

All clubs in membership of the NIFL shall be invited to participate in the Competition.

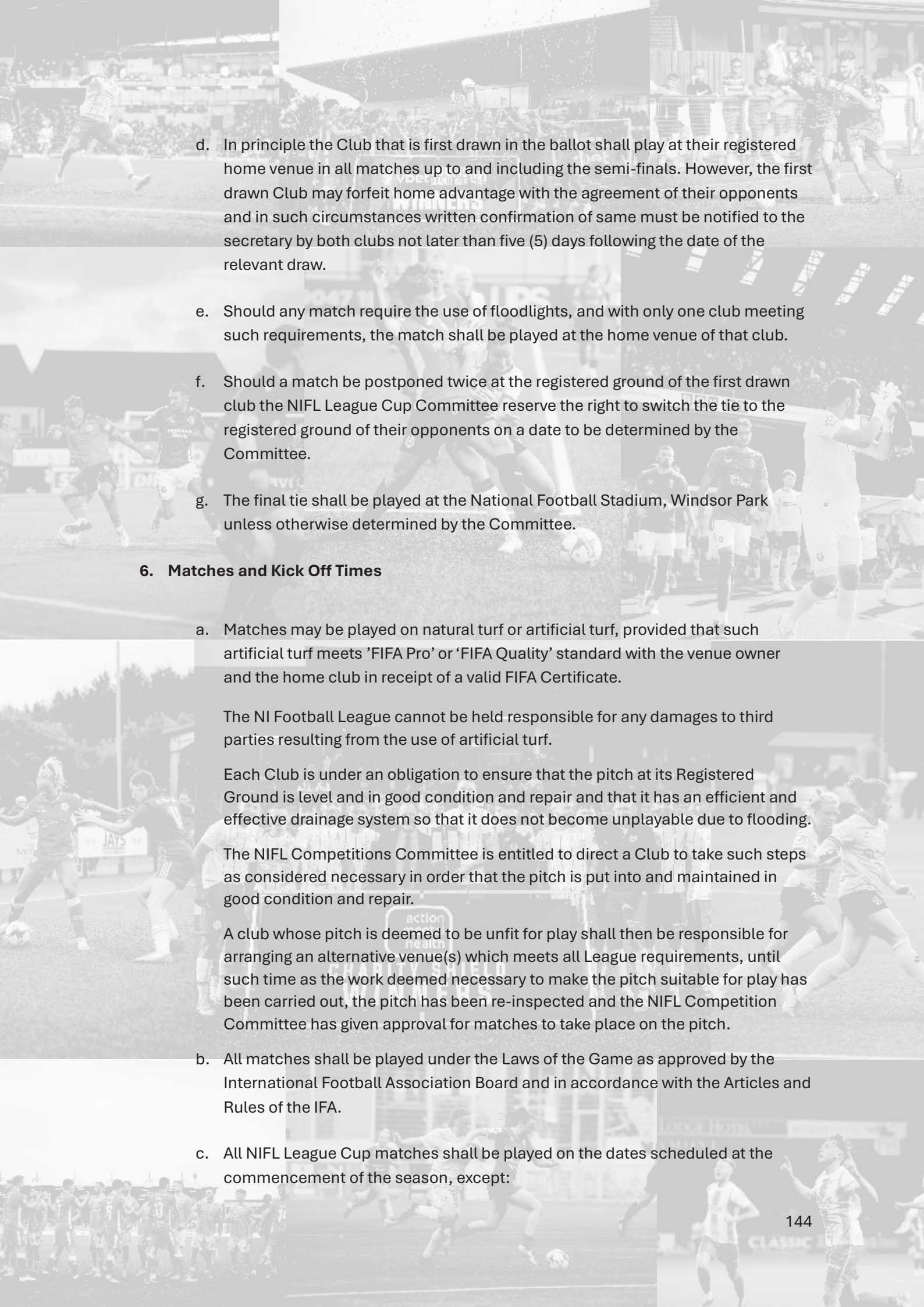
### 4. Awards:

Prize money shall be distributed to participating clubs as determined by the NIFL Board annually and shall be subject to sponsorship being secured for the Competition. The Club winning the trophy will retain it for one year. The trophy shall remain the property of the NIFL.

### 5. Competition Format

- a. The competition shall 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 fifteen (15) 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 laws of the game.
- b. There shall be two (2) entry levels;
  - i. Preliminary Round – the draw will consist of all clubs from Premier Intermediate League only
  - ii. Round 1 – will consist of 32 clubs from the Premiership, Championship and the remaining Premier Intermediate League
- c. The twelve (12) NIFL Premiership Clubs and the top four (4) NIFL Championship Clubs from the previous season shall be seeded in Round 1.



- 
- d. In principle the Club that is first drawn in the ballot shall play at their registered home venue in all matches up to and including the semi-finals. However, the first drawn Club may forfeit home advantage with the agreement of their opponents and in such circumstances written confirmation of same must be notified to the secretary by both clubs not later than five (5) days following the date of the relevant draw.
  - e. Should any match require the use of floodlights, and with only one club meeting such requirements, the match shall be played at the home venue of that club.
  - f. Should a match be postponed twice at the registered ground of the first drawn club the NIFL League Cup Committee reserve the right to switch the tie to the registered ground of their opponents on a date to be determined by the Committee.
  - g. The final tie shall be played at the National Football Stadium, Windsor Park unless otherwise determined by the Committee.

## 6. Matches and Kick Off Times

- a. Matches may be played on natural turf or artificial turf, provided that such artificial turf meets 'FIFA Pro' or 'FIFA Quality' standard with the venue owner and the home club in receipt of a valid FIFA Certificate.

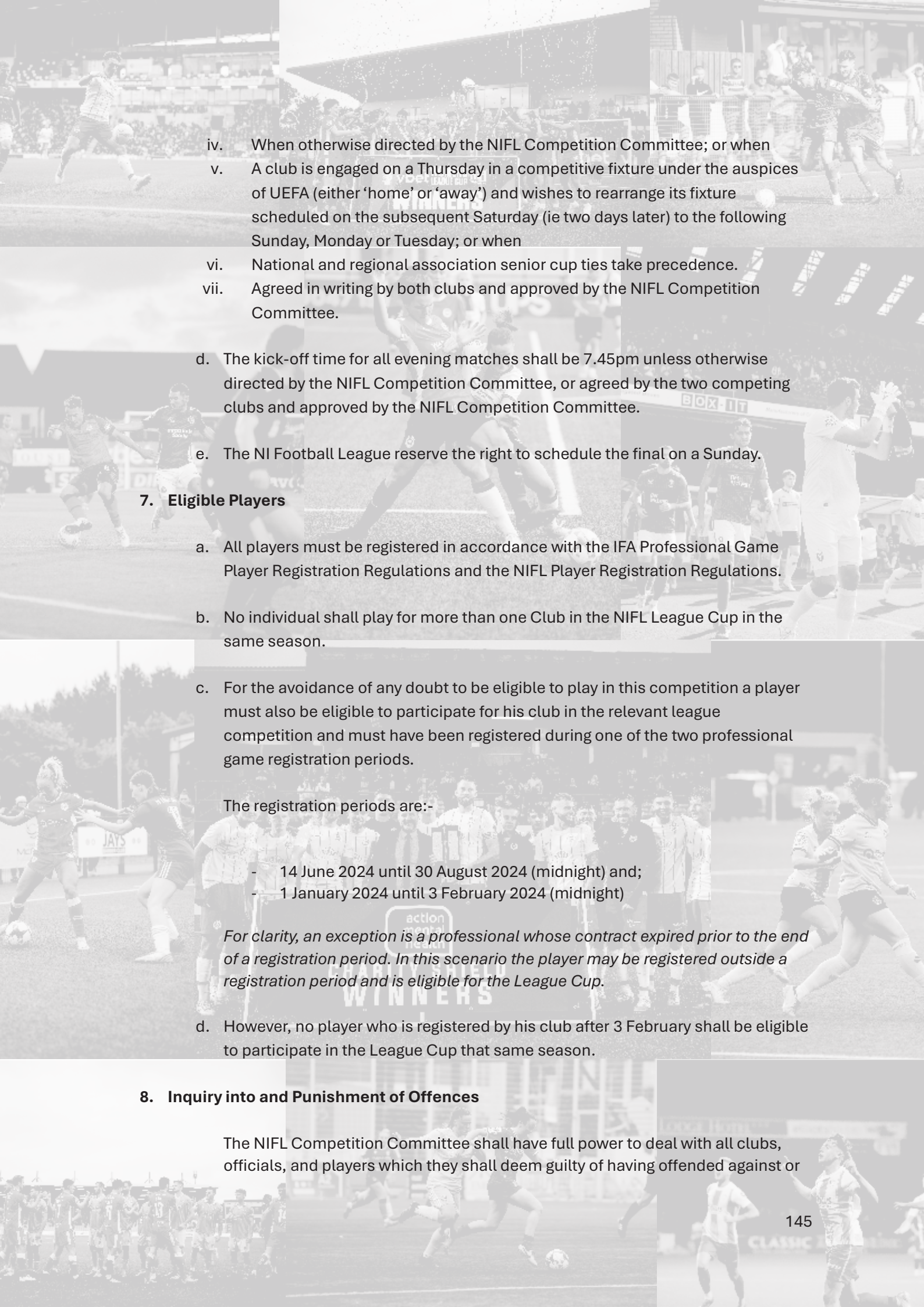
The NI Football League cannot be held responsible for any damages to third parties resulting from the use of artificial turf.

Each Club is under an obligation to ensure that the pitch at its Registered Ground is level and in good condition and repair and that it has an efficient and effective drainage system so that it does not become unplayable due to flooding.

The NIFL Competitions Committee is entitled to direct a Club to take such steps as considered necessary in order that the pitch is put into and maintained in good condition and repair.

A club whose pitch is deemed to be unfit for play shall then be responsible for arranging an alternative venue(s) which meets all League requirements, until such time as the work deemed necessary to make the pitch suitable for play has been carried out, the pitch has been re-inspected and the NIFL Competition Committee has given approval for matches to take place on the pitch.

- 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.
- c. All NIFL League Cup matches shall be played on the dates scheduled at the commencement of the season, except:

- 
- iv. When otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee; or when
  - v. A club is engaged on a Thursday in a competitive fixture under the auspices of UEFA (either 'home' or 'away') and wishes to rearrange its fixture scheduled on the subsequent Saturday (ie two days later) to the following Sunday, Monday or Tuesday; or when
  - vi. National and regional association senior cup ties take precedence.
  - vii. Agreed in writing by both clubs and approved by the NIFL Competition Committee.
- d. The kick-off time for all evening matches shall be 7.45pm unless otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee, or agreed by the two competing clubs and approved by the NIFL Competition Committee.
- e. The NI Football League reserve the right to schedule the final on a Sunday.

## 7. Eligible Players

- a. All players must be registered in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations and the NIFL Player Registration Regulations.
- b. No individual shall play for more than one Club in the NIFL League Cup in the same season.
- c. For the avoidance of any doubt to be eligible to play in this competition a player must also be eligible to participate for his club in the relevant league competition and must have been registered during one of the two professional game registration periods.

The registration periods are:-

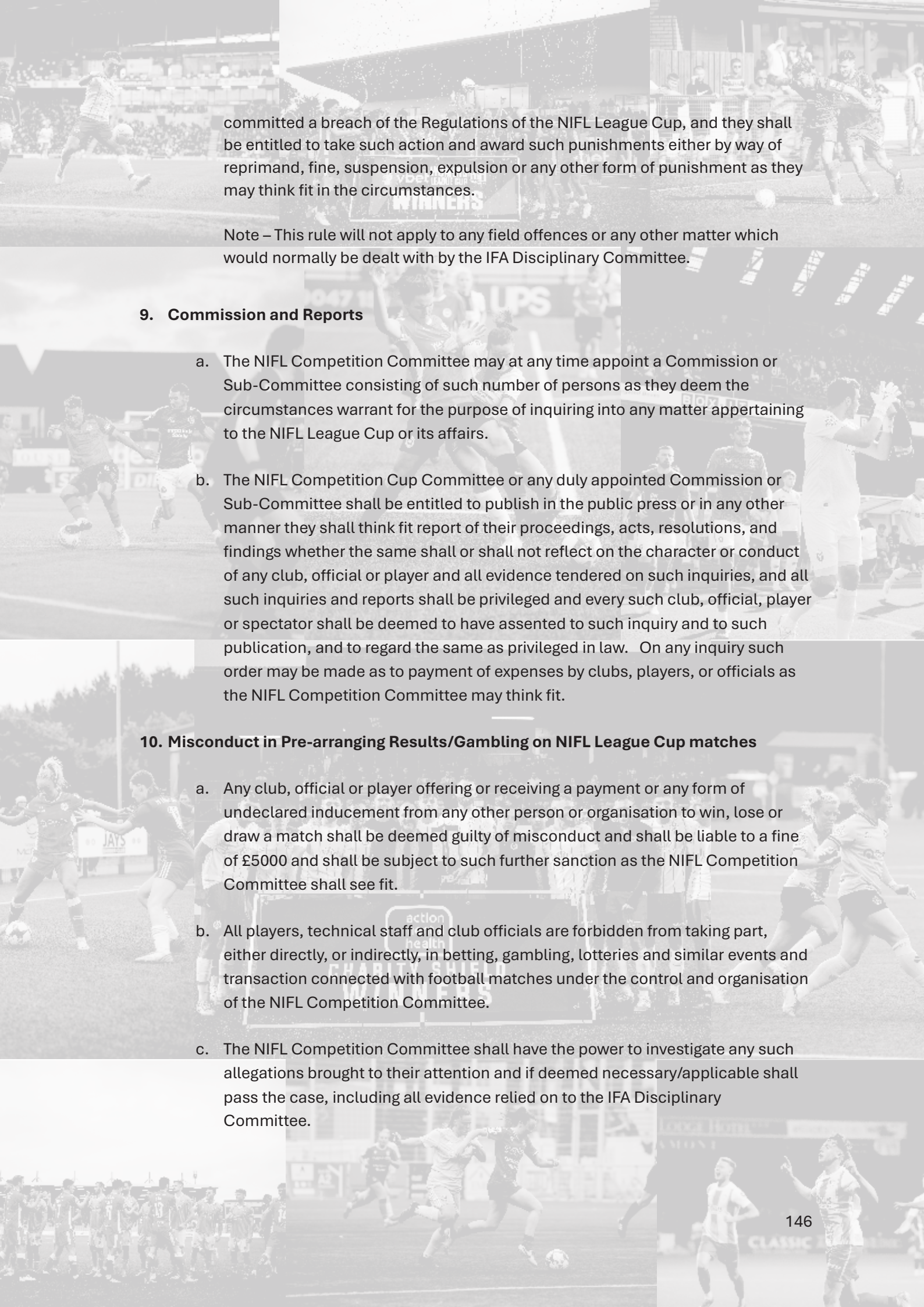
- 14 June 2024 until 30 August 2024 (midnight) and;
- 1 January 2024 until 3 February 2024 (midnight)

*For clarity, an exception is a professional whose contract expired prior to the end of a registration period. In this scenario the player may be registered outside a registration period and is eligible for the League Cup.*

- d. However, no player who is registered by his club after 3 February shall be eligible to participate in the League Cup that same season.

## 8. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences

The NIFL Competition Committee 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 League Cup, 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.

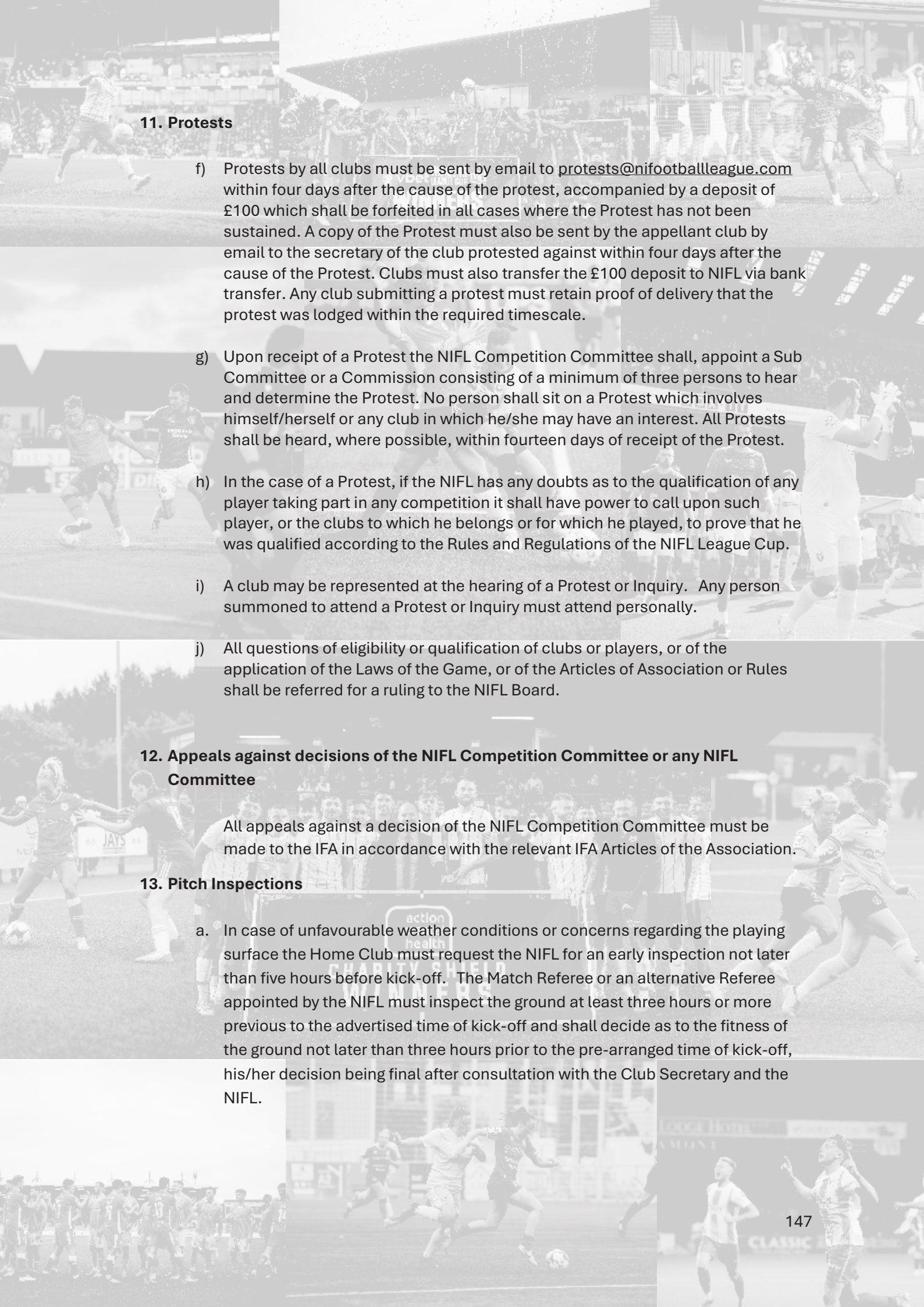
Note – This rule will not apply to any field offences or any other matter which would normally be dealt with by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.

## **9. Commission and Reports**

- a. The NIFL Competition 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 League Cup or its affairs.
- b. The NIFL Competition Cup 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 Competition Committee may think fit.

## **10. Misconduct in Pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL League Cup 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 £5000 and shall be subject to such further sanction as the NIFL Competition 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 Competition Committee.
- c. The NIFL Competition 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.



## 11. Protests

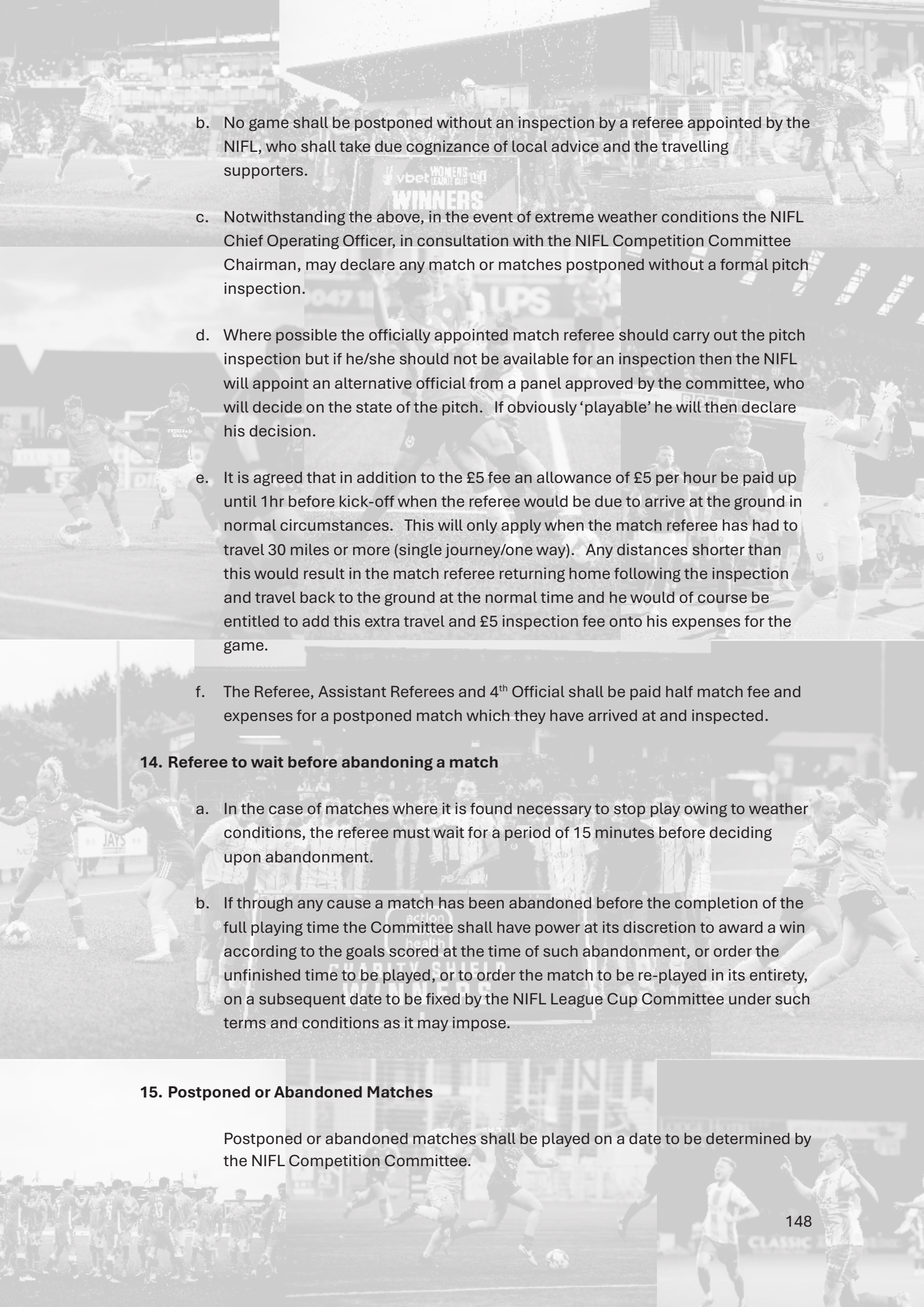
- f) Protests by all clubs must be sent by email to [protests@nifootballleague.com](mailto:protests@nifootballleague.com) within four days after the cause of the protest, accompanied by a deposit of £100 which shall be forfeited in all cases where the Protest has not been sustained. A copy of the Protest must also be sent by the appellant club by email to the secretary of the club protested against within four days after the cause of the Protest. Clubs must also transfer the £100 deposit to NIFL via bank transfer. Any club submitting a protest must retain proof of delivery that the protest was lodged within the required timescale.
- g) Upon receipt of a Protest the NIFL Competition Committee shall, 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.
- h) 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 belongs or for which he played, to prove that he was qualified according to the Rules and Regulations of the NIFL League Cup.
- i) 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.
- j) 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.

## 12. Appeals against decisions of the NIFL Competition Committee or any NIFL Committee

All appeals against a decision of the NIFL Competition Committee must be made to the IFA in accordance with the relevant IFA Articles of the Association.

## 13. Pitch Inspections

- a) In case of unfavourable weather conditions or concerns regarding the playing surface the Home Club must request the NIFL for an early inspection not later than five hours before kick-off. The Match Referee or an alternative Referee appointed by the NIFL must inspect the ground at least three hours or more previous to the advertised time of kick-off and shall decide as to the fitness of the ground not later than three hours prior to the pre-arranged time of kick-off, his/her decision being final after consultation with the Club Secretary and the NIFL.

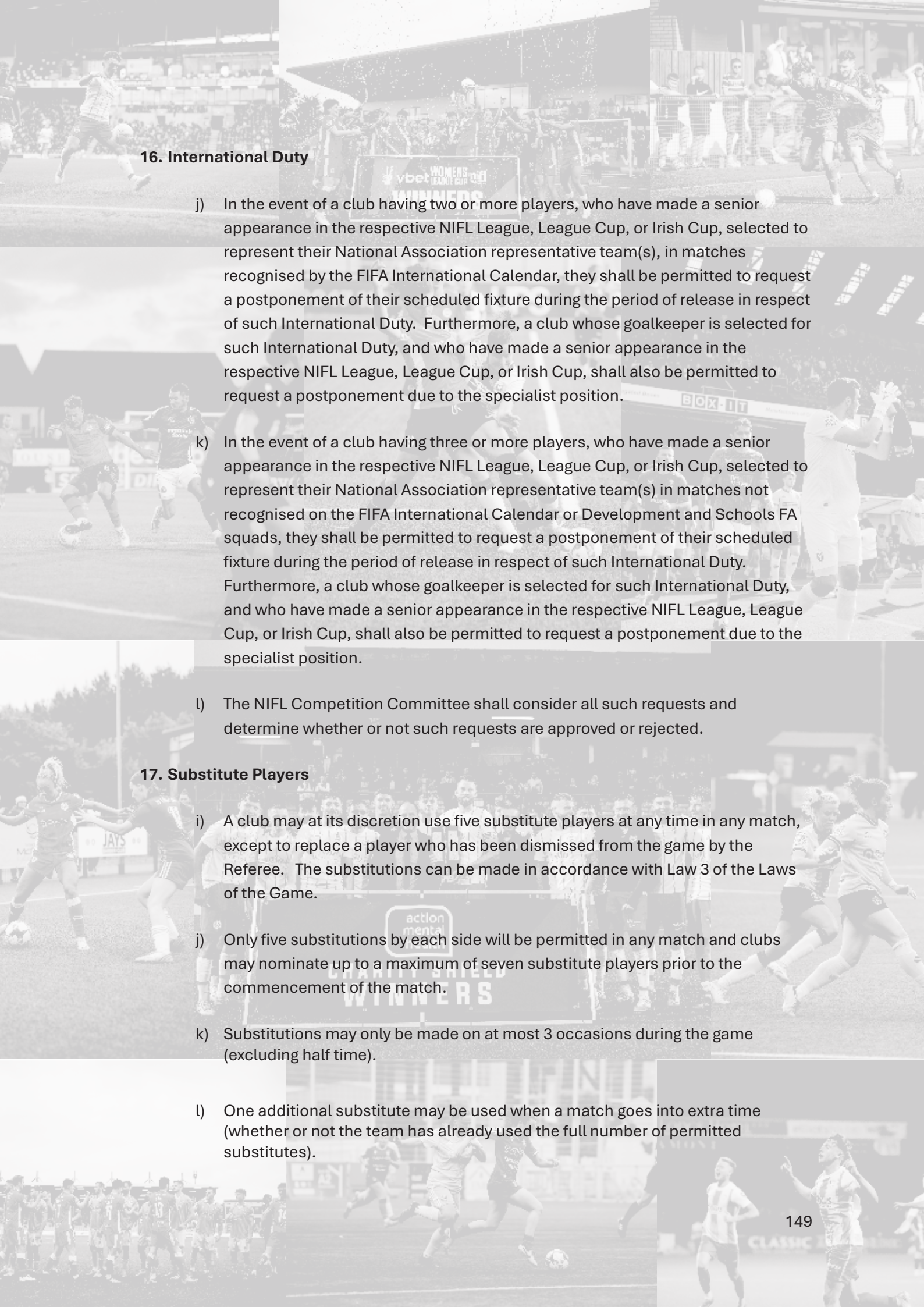
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- b. No game shall be postponed without an inspection by a referee appointed by the NIFL, who shall take due cognizance of local advice and the travelling supporters.
- c. Notwithstanding the above, in the event of extreme weather conditions the NIFL Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the NIFL Competition Committee Chairman, may declare any match or matches postponed without a formal pitch inspection.
- d. 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.
- e. It is agreed that in addition to the £5 fee an allowance of £5 per hour be paid up until 1hr before kick-off when the referee would be due to arrive at the ground in normal circumstances. This will only apply when the match referee has had to travel 30 miles or more (single journey/one way). Any distances shorter than this would result in the match referee returning home following the inspection and travel back to the ground at the normal time and he would of course be entitled to add this extra travel and £5 inspection fee onto his expenses for the game.
- f. The Referee, Assistant Referees and 4<sup>th</sup> Official shall be paid half match fee and expenses for a postponed match which they have arrived at and inspected.

#### **14. Referee to wait before abandoning a match**

- a. 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.
- b. 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 award a win 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 League Cup Committee under such terms and conditions as it may impose.

#### **15. Postponed or Abandoned Matches**

Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee.

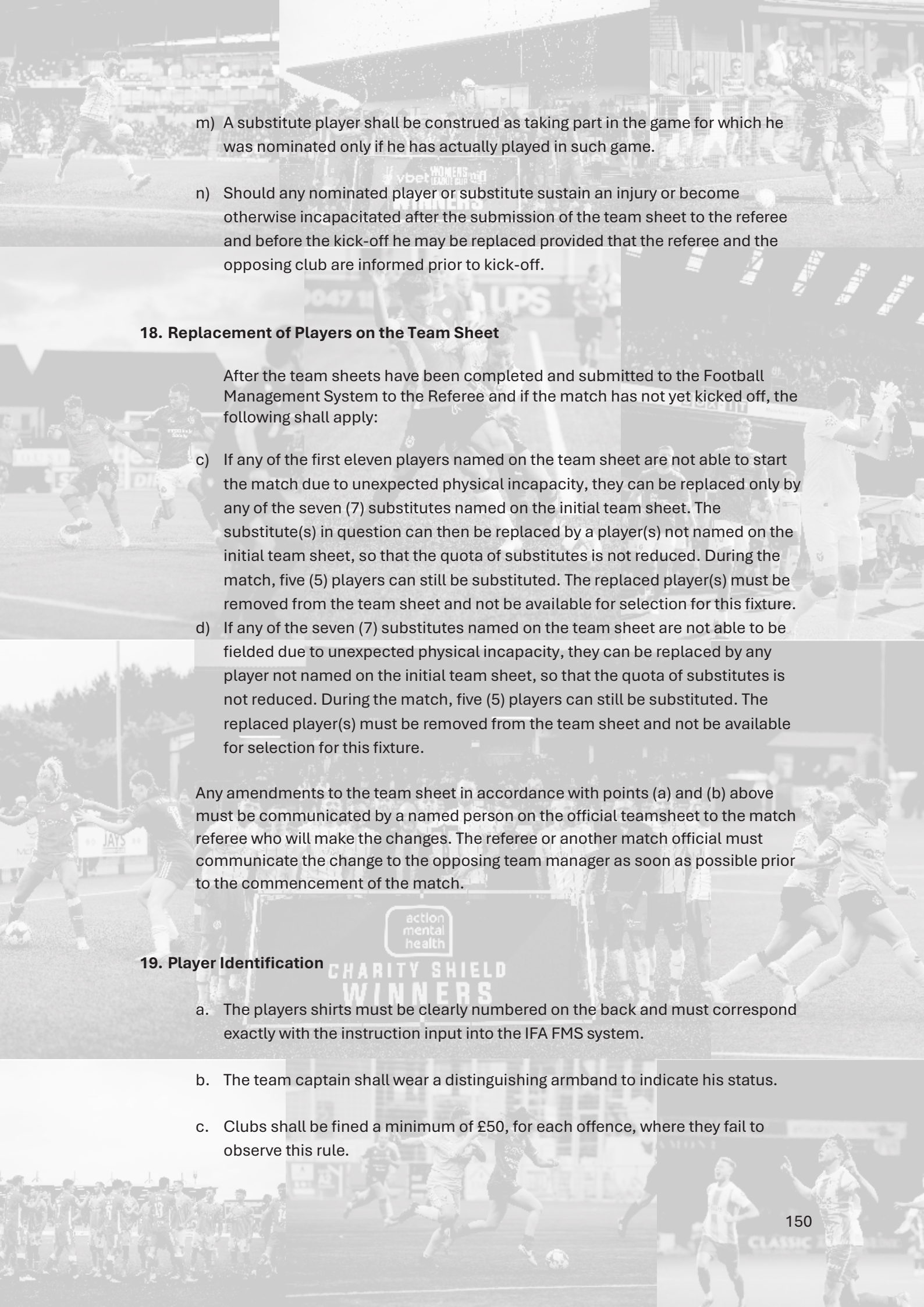


## 16. International Duty

- j) In the event of a club having two or more players, who have made a senior appearance in the respective NIFL League, League Cup, or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s), in matches recognised by the FIFA International Calendar, 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, and who have made a senior appearance in the respective NIFL League, League Cup, or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.
- k) In the event of a club having three or more players, who have made a senior appearance in the respective NIFL League, League Cup, or Irish Cup, selected to represent their National Association representative team(s) in matches not recognised on the FIFA International Calendar or Development and Schools FA squads, 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, and who have made a senior appearance in the respective NIFL League, League Cup, or Irish Cup, shall also be permitted to request a postponement due to the specialist position.
- l) The NIFL Competition Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.

## 17. Substitute Players

- i) A club may at its discretion use five substitute players at any time in any match, except to replace a player who has been dismissed from the game by the Referee. The substitutions can be made in accordance with Law 3 of the Laws of the Game.
- j) 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.
- k) Substitutions may only be made on at most 3 occasions during the game (excluding half time).
- l) One additional substitute may be used when a match goes into extra time (whether or not the team has already used the full number of permitted substitutes).

- 
- m) A substitute player shall be construed as taking part in the game for which he was nominated only if he has actually played in such game.
  - n) 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. Replacement of Players on the Team Sheet

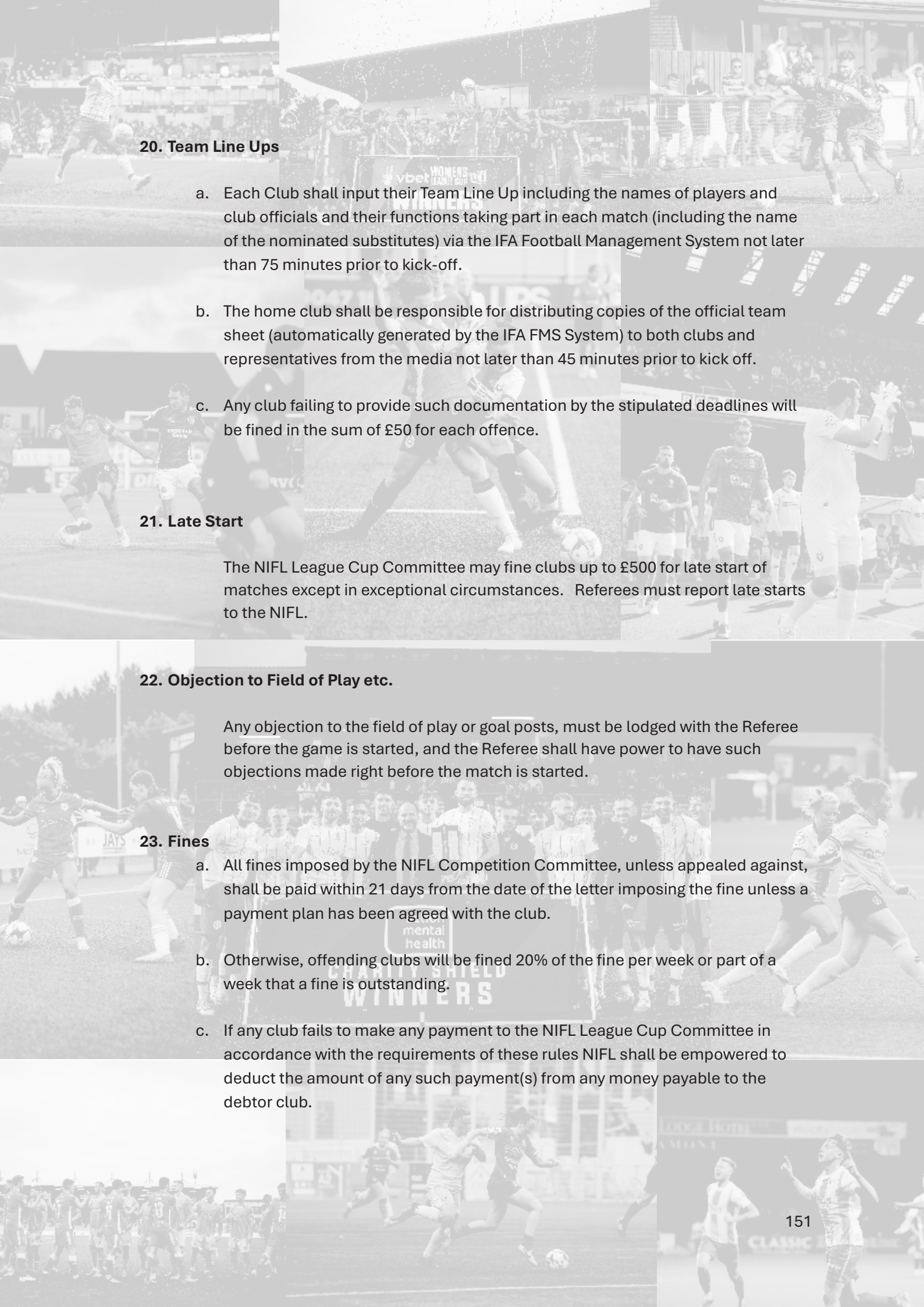
After the team sheets have been completed and submitted to the Football Management System to the Referee and if the match has not yet kicked off, the following shall apply:

- c) If any of the first eleven players named on the team sheet are not able to start the match due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced only by any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the initial team sheet. The substitute(s) in question can then be replaced by a player(s) not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.
- d) If any of the seven (7) substitutes named on the team sheet are not able to be fielded due to unexpected physical incapacity, they can be replaced by any player not named on the initial team sheet, so that the quota of substitutes is not reduced. During the match, five (5) players can still be substituted. The replaced player(s) must be removed from the team sheet and not be available for selection for this fixture.

Any amendments to the team sheet in accordance with points (a) and (b) above must be communicated by a named person on the official teamsheet to the match referee who will make the changes. The referee or another match official must communicate the change to the opposing team manager as soon as possible prior to the commencement of the match.

## 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.
- b. The team captain shall wear a distinguishing armband to indicate his status.
- c. Clubs shall be fined a minimum of £50, for each offence, where they fail to observe this rule.



## 20. Team Line Ups

- 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 the name of the nominated substitutes) via the IFA Football Management System not later than 75 minutes prior to kick-off.
- b. The home club shall be responsible for distributing copies of the official team sheet (automatically generated by the IFA FMS System) to both clubs and representatives from the media not later than 45 minutes prior to kick off.
- c. Any club failing to provide such documentation by the stipulated deadlines will be fined in the sum of £50 for each offence.

## 21. Late Start

The NIFL League Cup Committee may fine clubs up to £500 for late start of matches except in exceptional circumstances. Referees must report late starts to the NIFL.

## 22. Objection to Field of Play etc.

Any objection to the field of play or goal posts, 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.

## 23. Fines

- a. All fines imposed by the NIFL Competition Committee, 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 20% of the fine per week or part of a week that a fine is outstanding.
- c. If any club fails to make any payment to the NIFL League Cup Committee 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.



## 24. Qualification of Players

Only players who have been registered by their clubs in accordance with the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations and the NIFL Player Registration/Eligibility Guidelines shall be eligible to compete in the competition and no player will be eligible to play for more than one club at any stage in the competition.

## 25. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

Notwithstanding anything in any Rule, if the NIFL Competition Committee, has any doubt at any time and whether arising out of a protest or otherwise as to the qualification of any player taking part in the Competition, they shall have the power to call upon such player, and or Club to which he belongs, or for which he played, to prove that is qualified according to the rules. Any club found guilty of fielding an ineligible player in any round of the competition and prior to the next round being played, up to and including the semi final tie may be fined up to a maximum sum of £250. Furthermore, the said club will be dismissed from the competition and the club losing the game in such circumstances shall replace the dismissed club and progress to the next round.

## 26. 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.


6 team officials (must include physio) and 7 substitute players are allowed to sit on the substitutes' bench. The names of all these persons and their functions must be listed on the match sheet. In addition, clubs may nominate a club doctor to take up a position in the technical area.

Technical 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) and shall be under cover.

- b) Any player who is dismissed from the field of play shall proceed immediately to a suitable location as directed by a club steward.
- c) Smoking/Vaping is not permitted in the Technical Area. Any club found in breach of this will be dealt with by the NIFL Competition Committee.

## 27. Ball Tenders

- g) The colours of clothing worn by ball tenders must not clash with the colours of either of the competing clubs.

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- h) Clubs may utilise a multiball system to the immediate replacement of a match ball when it has left the field of play. Clubs who adopt this procedure must ensure that the system is used consistently for the duration of the match, and for both teams, unless directed otherwise by the referee and/or the host club safety officer following permission from the 4<sup>th</sup> official.

Any club found guilty of removing multiball system without direction will be referred to the NIFL Competition Committee for an appropriate sanction.

### **28. Official Match Ball & Goal Nets**

- a. 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.
- b. Goal nets must be used.

### **29. Colours of Clubs**

In the event of a clash of colours in matches prior to the semi finals the visiting club shall change.

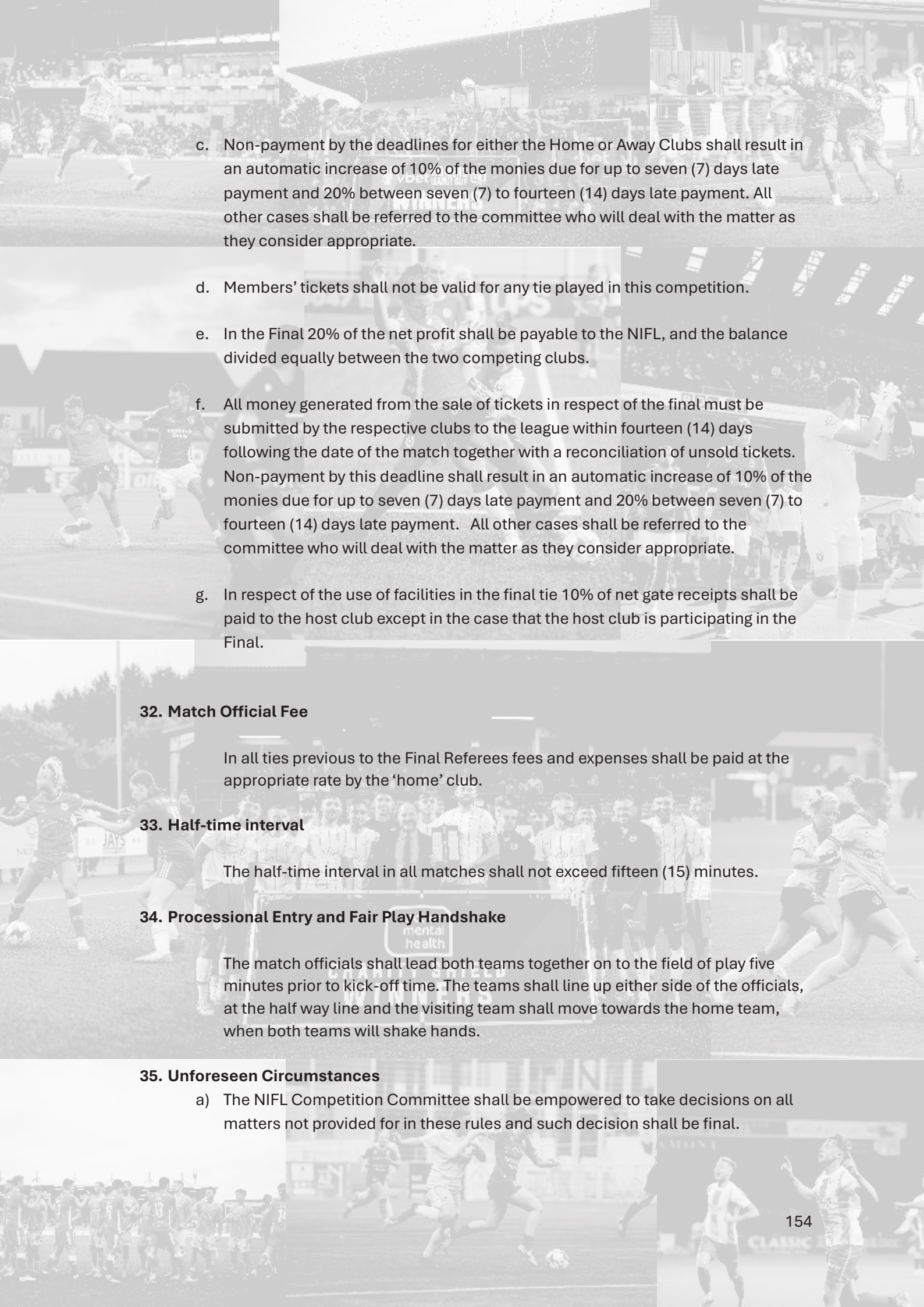
In the semi finals and final ties both clubs shall change unless otherwise agreed by the clubs concerned or as directed by the NIFL Cup Committee.

### **30. Admission Charges**

Attendance admission fee to be set by the home club but should be no greater than the maximum admission fee for league matches of the opposition team.

### **31. Financial Regulations**

- a. In all ties previous to the Final, the gate receipts after payment of the costs pertaining to referees, hospitality, professional security company, turnstiles, ambulance/first aid cover and ticketing shall be equally divided between the two (2) competing clubs. (The home club shall ensure that copies of the receipts for such costs are furnished to the away team upon request)
- b. Payment shall be made to the away team within 7 days following the date on which the match was played, except when the match has been designated as an 'all ticket' match. In such circumstances, all revenue generated from the sale of tickets by the away Club shall be paid to the home Club within 7 days following the date on which the match was played together with a reconciliation of unsold tickets (the Home Club shall then make payment to the Away Club within seven (7) days of receiving such revenue.

- 
- c. Non-payment by the deadlines for either the Home or Away Clubs shall result in an automatic increase of 10% of the monies due for up to seven (7) days late payment and 20% between seven (7) to fourteen (14) days late payment. All other cases shall be referred to the committee who will deal with the matter as they consider appropriate.
- d. Members' tickets shall not be valid for any tie played in this competition.
- e. In the Final 20% of the net profit shall be payable to the NIFL, and the balance divided equally between the two competing clubs.
- f. All money generated from the sale of tickets in respect of the final must be submitted by the respective clubs to the league within fourteen (14) days following the date of the match together with a reconciliation of unsold tickets. Non-payment by this deadline shall result in an automatic increase of 10% of the monies due for up to seven (7) days late payment and 20% between seven (7) to fourteen (14) days late payment. All other cases shall be referred to the committee who will deal with the matter as they consider appropriate.
- g. In respect of the use of facilities in the final tie 10% of net gate receipts shall be paid to the host club except in the case that the host club is participating in the Final.

### **32. Match Official Fee**

In all ties previous to the Final Referees fees and expenses shall be paid at the appropriate rate by the 'home' club.

### **33. Half-time interval**

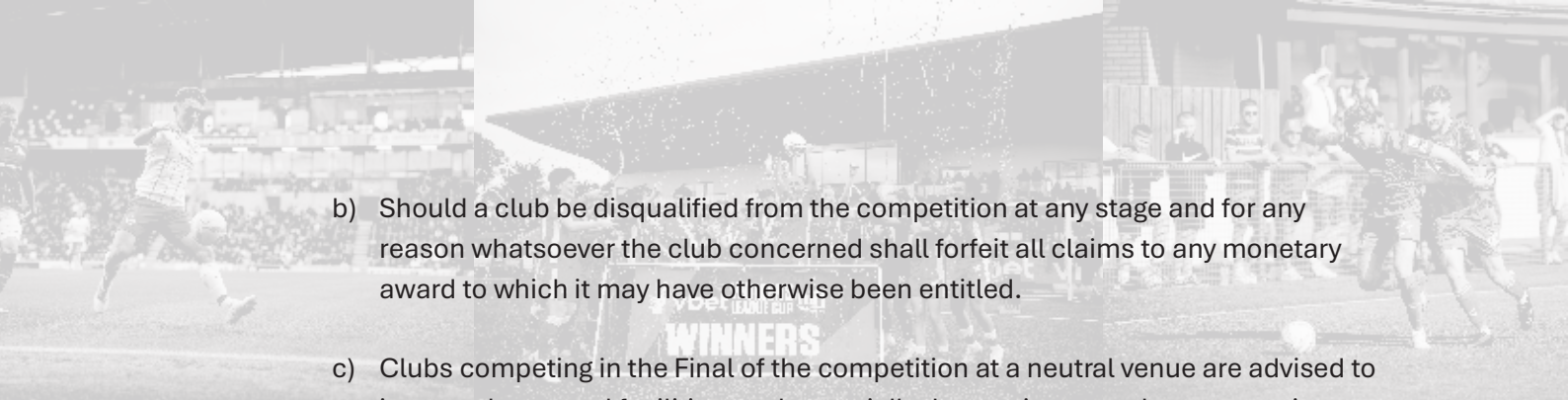
The half-time interval in all matches shall not exceed fifteen (15) minutes.

### **34. Processional Entry and Fair Play Handshake**

The match officials shall lead both teams together 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.

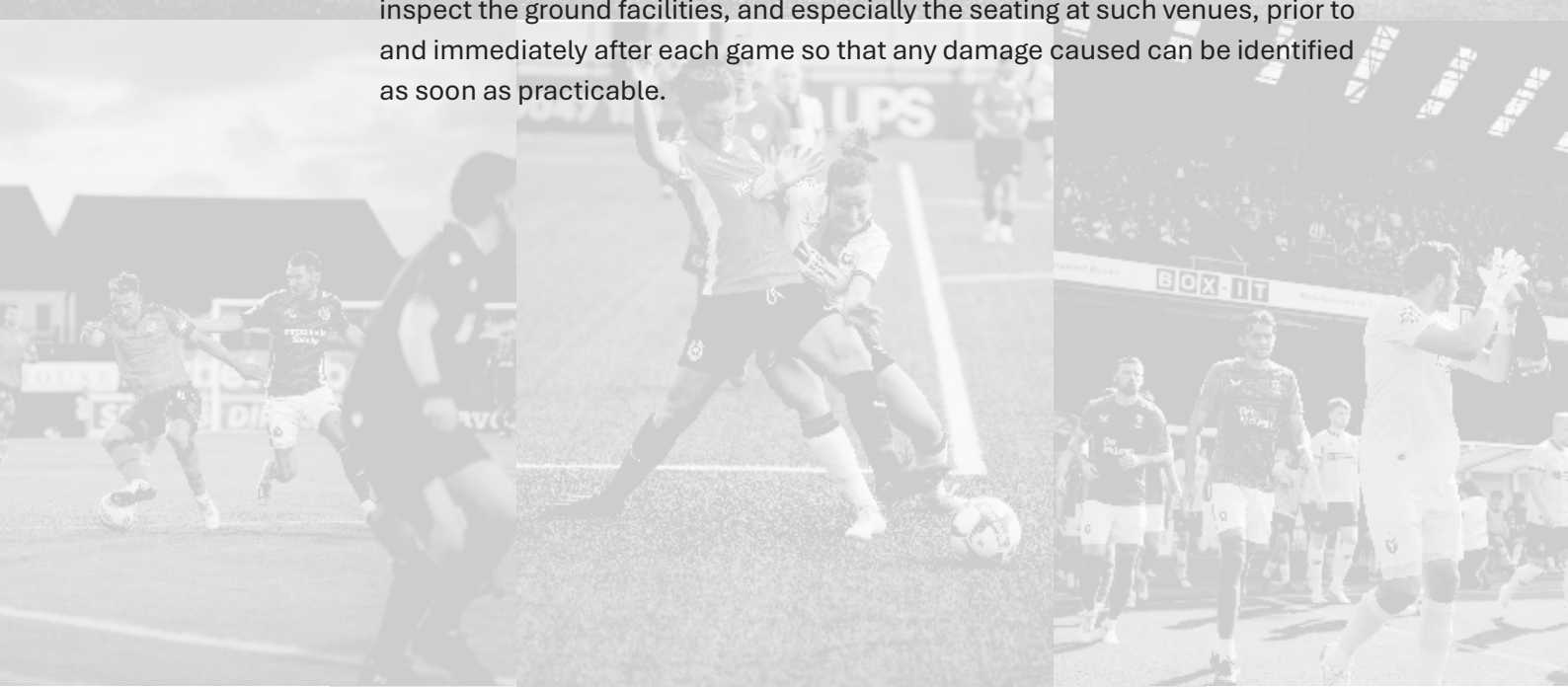
### **35. Unforeseen Circumstances**

- a) The NIFL Competition Committee shall be empowered to take decisions on all matters not provided for in these rules and such decision shall be final.



b) Should a club be disqualified from the competition at any stage and for any reason whatsoever the club concerned shall forfeit all claims to any monetary award to which it may have otherwise been entitled.

c) Clubs competing in the Final of the competition at a neutral venue are advised to inspect the ground facilities, and especially the seating at such venues, prior to and immediately after each game so that any damage caused can be identified as soon as practicable.





**nifl** NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
FOOTBALL  
LEAGUE

**DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMY**  
**RULES AND REGULATIONS**  
**SEASON 2024/25**

## Contents

### **NIFL DEVELOPMENT & ACADEMY LEAGUES**

1. Title
2. Membership Fees
3. League Competition
4. Ranking of Teams

### **NIFL COMMITTEES**

5. NIFL Competition Committee
6. NIFL Discipline Committee

### **OFFENCES, INQUIRIES AND COMMISSIONS THEREON, DISPUTES AND APPEALS**

7. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences
8. Commissions and Reports
9. Misconduct in pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Development & Academy Matches
10. Protests
11. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL

### **MATCHES**

12. Matches & Kickoff times
13. Pitch Inspections/Match Postponements
14. International Duty
15. Substitute Players
16. Player Identification
17. Completion of Team Sheet
18. Kit Approval
19. Results
20. Referees

### **FINANCES**

21. Expenses

### **REGISTRATIONS**

22. Registrations
23. Squads
24. Ineligibility of Players
25. Penalty for Playing Unregistered or Ineligible Players

### **MISC**

26. Registration of Grounds
27. Alterations to these Rules

## NIFL DEVELOPMENT & ACADEMY LEAGUES

### 1. TITLE

- a) For the purposes of the football competitions the NIFL Development & Academy Leagues shall comprise;
  - i. Premiership U-20 division which will consist of the 12 teams from clubs competing in the 2024/25 Premiership
  - ii. Championship U-21 division which will consist of teams from clubs competing in the 2024/25 Championship
  - iii. Premier Intermediate League U-21 division which will consist of teams from clubs competing in the 2024/25 Premier Intermediate League
  - iv. Academy U-18 & U-16 divisions will consist of up to 16 teams from clubs that competed in the 2024/25 Premiership & Championship
- b) Membership shall constitute an agreement between the NIFL 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 Development & Academy League
  - iv. The Rules and Articles of the Irish Football Association
  - v. The Laws of the Game
  - vi. The Rules and Regulations of any body of which the NIFL AL is a member
  - vii. The IFA Premiership Licence (if applicable)
    - Approved Youth Development Programme
    - Suitably qualified youth coaches and staff who adhere to recognised Safeguarding & First Aid requirements

### 2. MEMBERSHIP FEES

- a) The annual membership fee for each division;
  - i. Premiership U-20 division is £150 per club
  - ii. Championship/PIL U-21 division is £150 per club
  - iii. Academy U18 division is £150 per club
  - iv. Academy U16 division is £150 per club
- b) All teams must be affiliated through their respective divisional association for the upcoming season by the required deadline.



### 3. LEAGUE COMPETITION

#### a) Premiership U-20

Shall consist of 12 teams who shall play each other on three occasions (either 2 at 'home' and 1 'away' or vice versa as determined by the fixture schedule).

#### b) Championship U-21

Shall consist of 10 teams who shall play each other on three occasions (either 2 at 'home' and 1 'away' or vice versa as determined by the fixture schedule).

#### c) PIL U-21

Shall consist of 9 teams who shall play each other on three occasions (either 2 at 'home' and 1 'away' or vice versa as determined by the fixture schedule).

#### d) Academy U18 & U16

Each division shall consist of a maximum of 16 teams who shall play each other on two occasions (1 at 'home' and 1 'away').

### 4. RANKING OF TEAMS

Teams shall be awarded 3 points for a win, 1 point for a draw and 0 points for a defeat.

At the end of all competitions the team scoring the largest number of points shall be declared the champion club of the league. 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 the teams in question
- iv. Superior goal difference in matches between the teams in question



## NIFL COMMITTEES

### 5. NIFL Competition Committee

- j) The NIFL Competition 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.
- k) The Competition Committee will be responsible for the drafting of competition rules and for the organisation of all the cup competitions played within the League, this will include decisions as to which clubs may participate, the eligibility criteria for players playing in these competitions, and the drawing of ties and dealing with all matters pertaining to the Competitions. The Competition Committee has the power to deal with any relevant matters not covered by League rules.
- l) The Competition Committee will be appointed annual by the NIFL General Assembly and consist of 7 members:
  - (xiii) Three representatives from clubs playing in the Premiership
  - (xiv) Two representatives from clubs playing in the Championship
  - (xv) One representative from clubs playing in the PIL
  - (xvi) One representative from clubs playing in the Women's Premiership

The Committee shall appoint annually a Chairman and Vice-Chairman who may serve for a period not exceeding two years. A Chairman retiring after a period of two years may not seek election either to the office of chairman or that of Vice-Chairman until a further period of two years has elapsed. Notwithstanding the above, the Committee reserve the right to extend the terms of the Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman by one year on an annual basis.

### 6. NIFL Discipline Committee

- j) The NIFL Discipline 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.
- k) The NIFL Discipline Committee will deal with off field discipline issues delegated to it by the Board or Staff for consideration.

The committee shall not deal with on field matters which shall remain the responsibility of the Irish Football Association.

- l) 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

### 7. Inquiry into and Punishment of Offences

- g) The NIFL, and any Committee duly appointed by the Board or relevant 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, 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.
- h) The NIFL irrespective of whether or not it shall have appointed a Commission or 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 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.

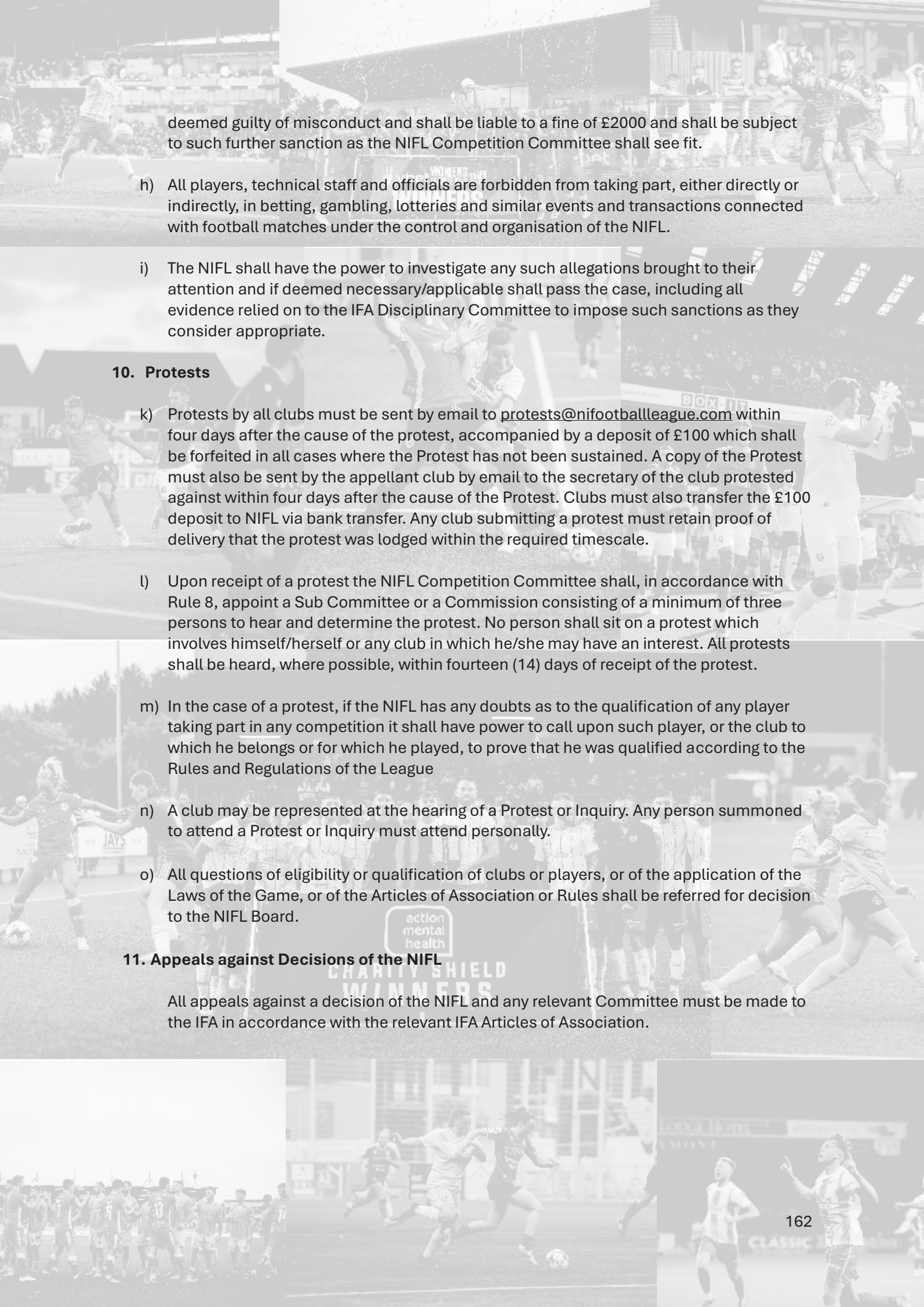
*Note – This rule will not apply to any field offences or any other matter which would normally be dealt with by the IFA Disciplinary Committee.*

### 8. Commissions and Reports

- g) The NIFL, and any 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 or its affairs.
- h) The NIFL, and any 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 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 Competition Committee may think fit.

### 9. Misconduct in pre-arranging Results/Gambling on NIFL Development & Academy Matches

- g) 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 Competition Committee shall see fit.

- h) 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.
- i) The NIFL 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.

## 10. Protests

- k) Protests by all clubs must be sent by email to [protests@nifootballleague.com](mailto:protests@nifootballleague.com) 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 email to the secretary of the club protested against within four days after the cause of the Protest. Clubs must also transfer the £100 deposit to NIFL via bank transfer. Any club submitting a protest must retain proof of delivery that the protest was lodged within the required timescale.
- l) Upon receipt of a protest the NIFL Competition 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.
- m) 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
- n) 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.
- o) 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.

## 11. Appeals against Decisions of the NIFL

All appeals against a decision of the NIFL and any relevant Committee must be made to the IFA in accordance with the relevant IFA Articles of Association.

## MATCHES

### 13. MATCHES & KICK OFF TIMES

- a) Matches may be played on natural turf or artificial turf. In the U-20 Development League artificial turf must meet FIFA approved standard or equivalent. The owner of the artificial turf and the home club must be in receipt of a valid approved standard certificate. The NIFL 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. All NIFL matches shall be played on the dates scheduled at the commencement of the season, except:
  - i. When otherwise directed by the NIFL Competition Committee; or when
  - ii. A club requests in writing a postponement of a fixture for exceptional circumstances.
  - iii. National Cup and/or Divisional Association Cup ties take precedence.
- c) Matches shall not be played out of sequence unless with the prior approval of the NIFL Competition Committee.
- d) **Premiership U-20** fixtures will be scheduled for a Monday or Wednesday night. In advance of the season clubs must inform NIFL of their home match night.

*Any club requesting to reschedule a Premiership U-20 game which incurs a round trip in excess of 90 miles to a Saturday must make the request in writing to [fixtures@nifootballleague.com](mailto:fixtures@nifootballleague.com) fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Competitions Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.*

Match duration for Premiership U-20 fixtures shall be 90 minutes.

- p) **Championship & PIL U-21** will be designated as a Saturday morning league.

*In the event of clubs wishing to change from a Saturday 11am, a written request must be served in writing to [fixtures@nifootballleague.com](mailto:fixtures@nifootballleague.com) fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Competitions Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.*

Match duration for Championship U-21 fixtures shall be 90 minutes.

- q) **Academy U-18** will be designated as a Friday night league.

*In the event of clubs wishing to change from a Friday, the written agreement of both clubs must be served by both clubs to [fixtures@nifootballleague.com](mailto:fixtures@nifootballleague.com) fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Competitions Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.*

Match duration for Academy U-18 fixtures shall be 80 minutes.

- r) **Academy U-16** will be designated as a Saturday morning league.

*In the event of clubs wishing to change from a Saturday 11am, a written request must be served in writing to [fixtures@nifootballleague.com](mailto:fixtures@nifootballleague.com) fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled date of the tie. The NIFL Competitions Committee shall consider all such requests and determine whether or not such requests are approved or rejected.*

Match duration for Academy U-16 fixtures shall be 70 minutes.

- s) Clubs failing to comply with the above kick off rules shall be fined in a sum of £500 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. Also, 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 a match.

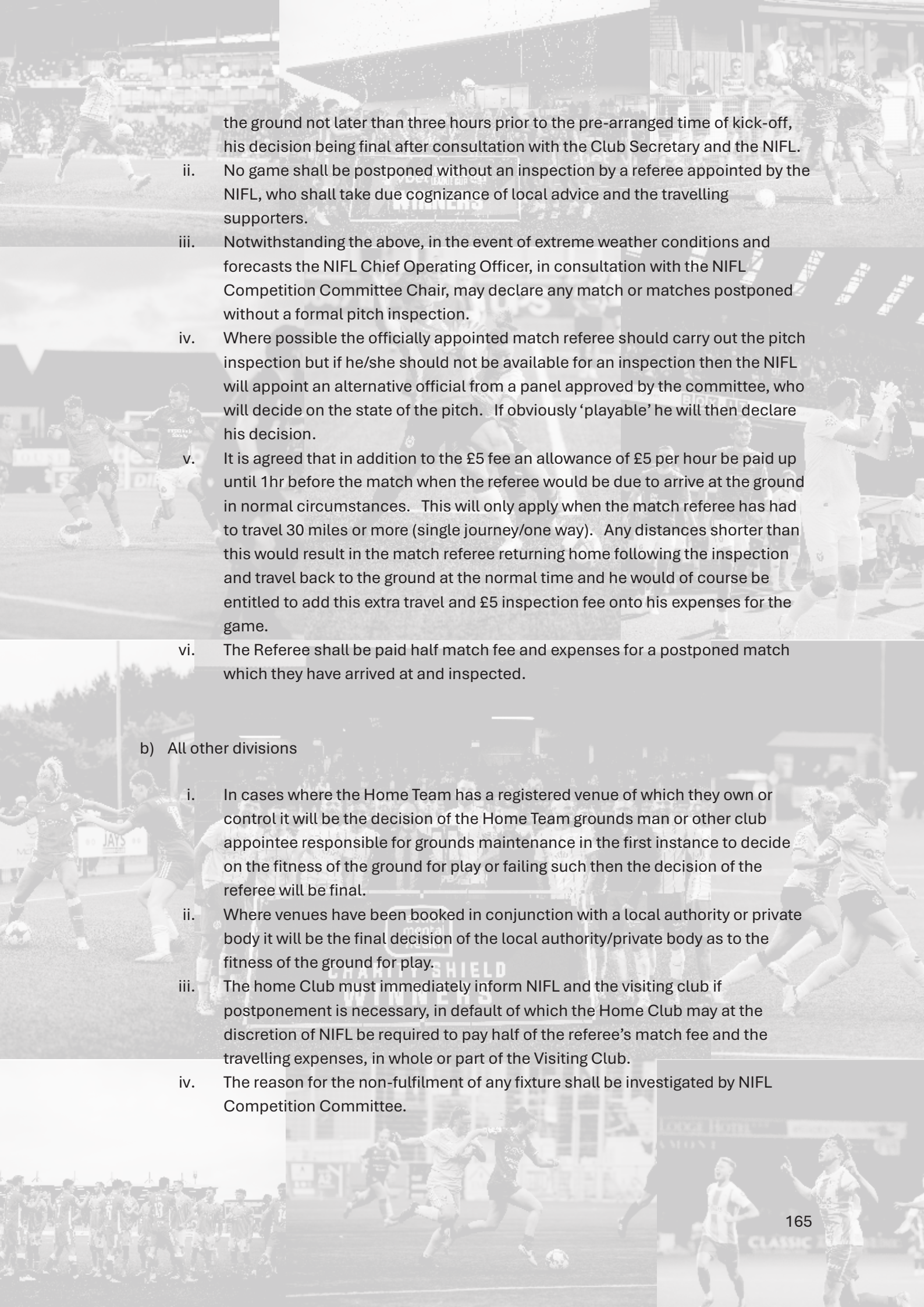
A team failing to fulfil an arranged match for a second time in the current season shall be dismissed from membership and fined at the level set by NIFL Competitions Committee.

- t) 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.
- u) Postponed or abandoned matches shall be played on a date to be determined by the NIFL Chief Operating Officer.

#### 14. PITCH INSPECTIONS/MATCH POSTPONEMENTS

- a) **Premiership U-20**

- i. In case of unfavourable weather conditions or concerns regarding the playing surface the Home Club must request the NIFL for an early inspection not later than five hours before kick-off. The Match Referee or an alternative Referee appointed by the NIFL must inspect the ground at least three hours or more previous to the advertised time of kick-off and shall decide as to the fitness of



the ground not later than three hours prior to the pre-arranged time of kick-off, his decision being final after consultation with the Club Secretary and the NIFL.

- ii. No game shall be postponed without an inspection by a referee appointed by the NIFL, who shall take due cognizance of local advice and the travelling supporters.
- iii. Notwithstanding the above, in the event of extreme weather conditions and forecasts the NIFL Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the NIFL Competition Committee Chair, may declare any match or matches postponed without a formal pitch inspection.
- iv. 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.
- v. It is agreed that in addition to the £5 fee an allowance of £5 per hour be paid up until 1hr before the match when the referee would be due to arrive at the ground in normal circumstances. This will only apply when the match referee has had to travel 30 miles or more (single journey/one way). Any distances shorter than this would result in the match referee returning home following the inspection and travel back to the ground at the normal time and he would of course be entitled to add this extra travel and £5 inspection fee onto his expenses for the game.
- vi. The Referee shall be paid half match fee and expenses for a postponed match which they have arrived at and inspected.

b) All other divisions

- i. In cases where the Home Team has a registered venue of which they own or control it will be the decision of the Home Team grounds man or other club appointee responsible for grounds maintenance in the first instance to decide on the fitness of the ground for play or failing such then the decision of the referee will be final.
- ii. Where venues have been booked in conjunction with a local authority or private body it will be the final decision of the local authority/private body as to the fitness of the ground for play.
- iii. The home Club must immediately inform NIFL and the visiting club if postponement is necessary, in default of which the Home Club may at the discretion of NIFL be required to pay half of the referee's match fee and the travelling expenses, in whole or part of the Visiting Club.
- iv. The reason for the non-fulfilment of any fixture shall be investigated by NIFL Competition Committee.

## 15. INTERNATIONAL DUTY

- a) In the event of a club having two or more players selected to represent their National Association representative team(s), in matches recognised by the FIFA International Calendar, 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.
- b) In the event of a club having three or more players selected to represent their National Association representative team(s) in matches not recognised on the FIFA International Calendar or Development and Schools FA squads, 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.

## 16. SUBSTITUTE PLAYERS

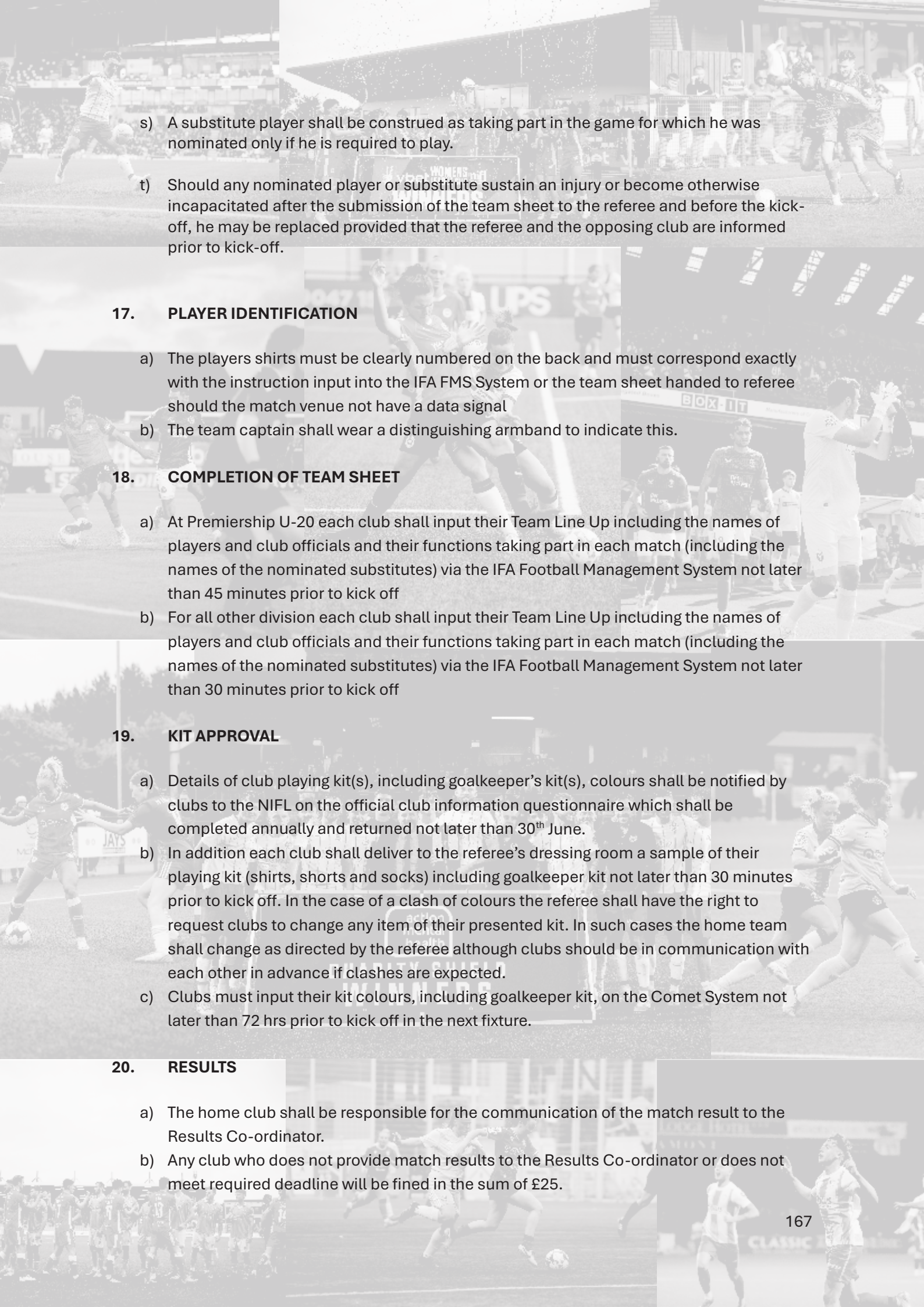
### Premiership U20 & Championship & PIL U21

- m) 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.
- n) 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.
- o) Substitutions may only be made on at most 3 occasions during the game (excluding half time).

### Academy U18 & U16

- p) 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.
- q) Only 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.
- r) In Academy U-18 & U-16 rolling substitutes are permissible.

### All divisions

- 
- s) A substitute player shall be construed as taking part in the game for which he was nominated only if he is required to play.
  - t) 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.

## **17. 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 referee should the match venue not have a data signal
- b) The team captain shall wear a distinguishing armband to indicate this.

## **18. COMPLETION OF TEAM SHEET**

- a) At Premiership U-20 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 the names of the nominated substitutes) via the IFA Football Management System not later than 45 minutes prior to kick off
- b) For all other division 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 the names of the nominated substitutes) via the IFA Football Management System not later than 30 minutes prior to kick off

## **19. KIT APPROVAL**

- a) Details of club playing kit(s), including 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 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- b) In addition each club shall deliver to the referee's dressing room a sample of their playing kit (shirts, shorts and socks) including goalkeeper kit not later than 30 minutes prior to kick off. 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 home team shall change as directed by the referee although clubs should be in communication with each other in advance if clashes are expected.
- c) Clubs must input their kit colours, including goalkeeper kit, on the Comet System not later than 72 hrs prior to kick off in the next fixture.

## **20. RESULTS**

- a) The home club shall be responsible for the communication of the match result to the Results Co-ordinator.
- b) Any club who does not provide match results to the Results Co-ordinator or does not meet required deadline will be fined in the sum of £25.

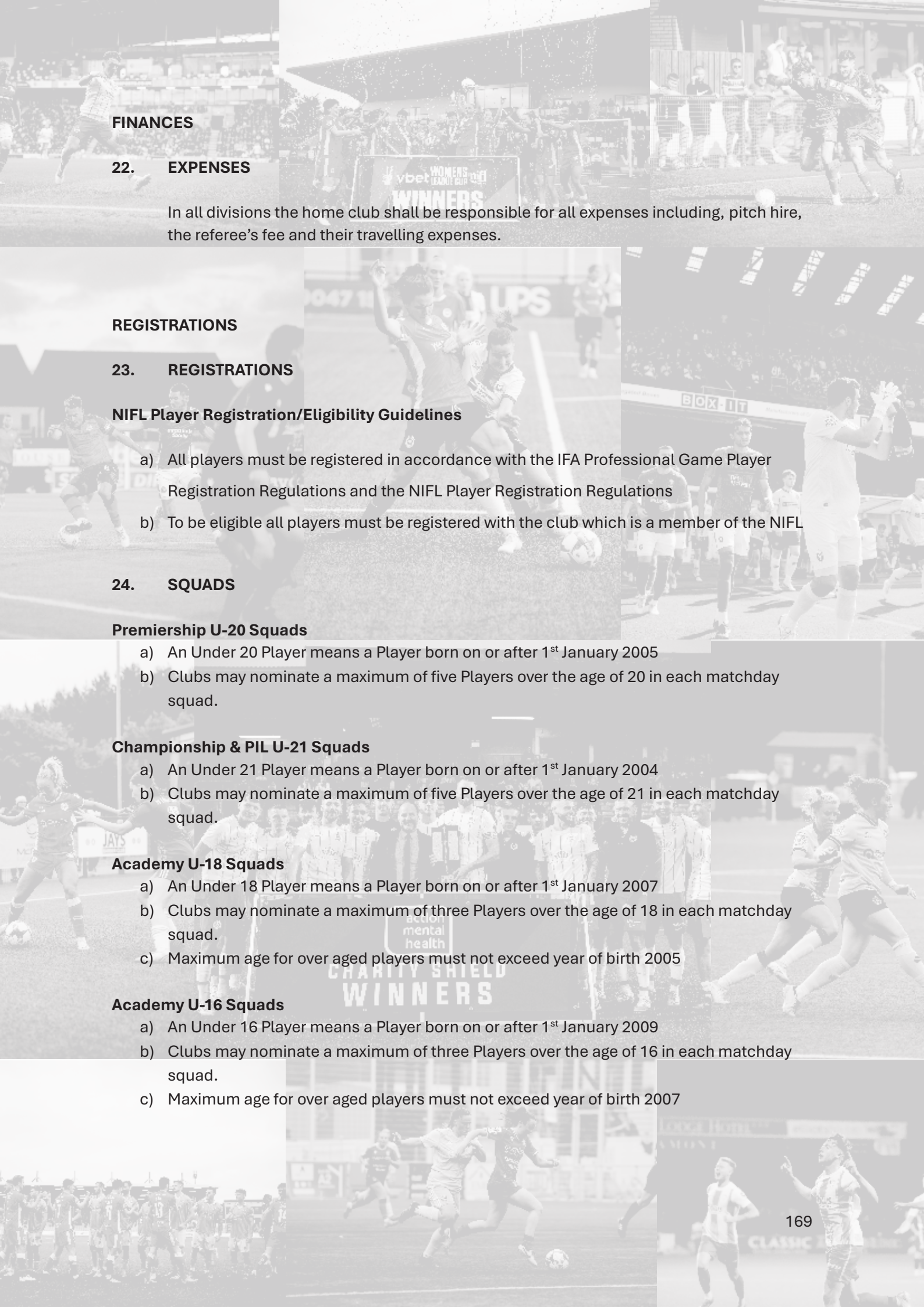


c) All results must be communicated to results co-ordinator within 1hr of the match in question.

**21. REFEREES**

All competitive matches must be officiated by an official referee.





## FINANCES

### 22. EXPENSES

In all divisions the home club shall be responsible for all expenses including, pitch hire, the referee's fee and their travelling expenses.

## REGISTRATIONS

### 23. REGISTRATIONS

#### 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 Regulations
- b) To be eligible all players must be registered with the club which is a member of the NIFL

### 24. SQUADS

#### Premiership U-20 Squads

- a) An Under 20 Player means a Player born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005
- b) Clubs may nominate a maximum of five Players over the age of 20 in each matchday squad.

#### Championship & PIL U-21 Squads

- a) An Under 21 Player means a Player born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2004
- b) Clubs may nominate a maximum of five Players over the age of 21 in each matchday squad.

#### Academy U-18 Squads

- a) An Under 18 Player means a Player born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007
- b) Clubs may nominate a maximum of three Players over the age of 18 in each matchday squad.
- c) Maximum age for over aged players must not exceed year of birth 2005

#### Academy U-16 Squads

- a) An Under 16 Player means a Player born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009
- b) Clubs may nominate a maximum of three Players over the age of 16 in each matchday squad.
- c) Maximum age for over aged players must not exceed year of birth 2007

## 25. 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.


## 26. PENALTY FOR PLAYING UNREGISTERED OR ELIGIBLE PLAYERS

- a) Any club playing an ineligible player or players in any match under the jurisdiction of the Development & Academy League shall be fined in a sum of £50 per player for the first offence and £10 per player for subsequent offences.
- 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. Notwithstanding the above the winning team shall not be disadvantaged if the original scoreline was of greater benefit to that teams goal difference.
- c) Should both clubs play an ineligible player or players in any match under the auspices of the Development & Academy League then both clubs will be fined, in a sum of £50 per player for the first offence and £10 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 Competition Committee to deduct points or impose fines for registration committed by any club during any previous season. (For the purpose of all the regulations a season will be deemed to end on 31<sup>st</sup> May in each year).

## MISC

### 27. REGISTRATION OF GROUND

- a) At Premiership U-20 each club shall register its ground (IFA Intermediate standard with floodlighting, (300 Lux) as a minimum) with the NIFL and no club shall register another ground without first obtaining the consent of the NIFL. Clubs will be permitted to register an additional venue for such matches which must be of the above standard.
- b) In all other divisions clubs, where possible, will register venues. If venues change week to week clubs must notify NIFL by Monday of match week.
- c) In the event of the league appointing a match venue the notification of the venue will be received via Comet. If a Club makes a venue booking then the NIFL and travelling Club MUST be notified as soon as possible before the scheduled date for the fixture to enable the website notices to be verified or updated.
- d) The NIFL will have the power to decide whether facilities are suitable for matches in the competition, and to order the Club concerned to play its fixtures on another ground. The NIFL reserves the right to move any game to a neutral venue.

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- e) In all matches played under the jurisdiction of the NIFL the accommodating authority or home team will try to ensure that suitable changing accommodation facilities are available for all teams.
  - f) Technical areas should be clearly marked out.

## 28. ALTERATIONS TO THESE RULES

Alterations to these rules shall only be considered during the closed season, except in the case of exceptional circumstances as determined by the NIFL Board. Any club wishing to have a proposal considered, must forward same in writing to the NIFL Chief Operating Officer no later than 1<sup>st</sup> March.



**nifl** NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
FOOTBALL  
LEAGUE

**PLAYER REGISTRATION REGULATIONS  
SEASON 2024/25**

## Content

	Page
<b>1. Restrictions on all except bona-fide Players</b>	2
<b>2. Registration of Players</b>	2 4 5
<b>3. Licence for Migrant Workers</b>	
<b>4. Registration Procedure</b>	6
a. Professional Players	6
b. Amateur Players	7
<b>5. Reacquisition of Amateur Status</b>	7
<b>6. Transfers</b>	7
<b>7. Transfer Fees</b>	8
<b>8. Loan of Professional Players</b>	8
<b>9. Cancellation of a Registration</b>	8
a. Professional Players	
b. Amateur Players	
<b>10. Right of Approach</b>	
<b>11. Registration Disputes</b>	

## 1. Restrictions on all except bona-fide Players

A bona-fide player (amateur or professional) of a club is one who has registered via the IFA Comet Football Management System (FMS). No player may play in any competition under the auspices of the NIFL unless and until he/she has been so registered, and it shall be the responsibility of all clubs playing in any match organised by the NIFL to ensure that its players are eligible to play in any such match.

Failure to do so constitutes misconduct and the defaulting club(s) shall be liable to such penalties as indicated in the respective league rules.

## 2. Registration of Players

### (a) Female Registrations

The registration period from;

- 12 February 2024 until 5pm on 30 April 2024 and;
- 1 July 2024 until 5pm on 31 July 2024.

Registration periods apply to the;

- NIFL Women's Premiership
- NIFL Women's Academy League (U19)

All players, both professional and amateur must be registered during one of the official registration periods.

### (b) Male Registrations

The registration period from;

- 14 June 2024 until 30 August 2024 (midnight) and;
- 1 January 2025 until 3 February 2025 (midnight)

Registration periods apply to the;

- Premiership
- Championship
- Premier Intermediate League
- Premiership Development League (U20)
- Championship Development League (U21)
- Premier Intermediate League Development League (U21)
- Academy League (U18 & U16)

All players, both professional and amateur must be registered during one of the official registration periods.

(c) Professional players who were not bound by an employment contract before expiry of the registration period may be registered outside the aforementioned registration period provided that such player has not made more than the permitted number of moves as per (d) below and their registration has been input and confirmed on the IFA CRS prior to;

- 12 noon on 31<sup>st</sup> March of the current season (Men)
- 12 noon on 31<sup>st</sup> August of the current season (Women)

An exception to the above applies to a female player that has taken maternity leave.

For more information please refer to the IFA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations.

(d) Players may be registered for a maximum of three clubs during the season.

During this period, the player is eligible to play in official matches for two clubs only. Players returning to their former clubs after a loan period must leave and return in the registration periods in order to be eligible to play in the NIFL.

(e) No player under 16 years of age may be registered as a professional player.

(f) Players wishing to be transferred to another country may do so at any time provided that the registration period is open in that Country.

Similarly, players cannot be registered for senior clubs in Northern Ireland unless the registration period is open.

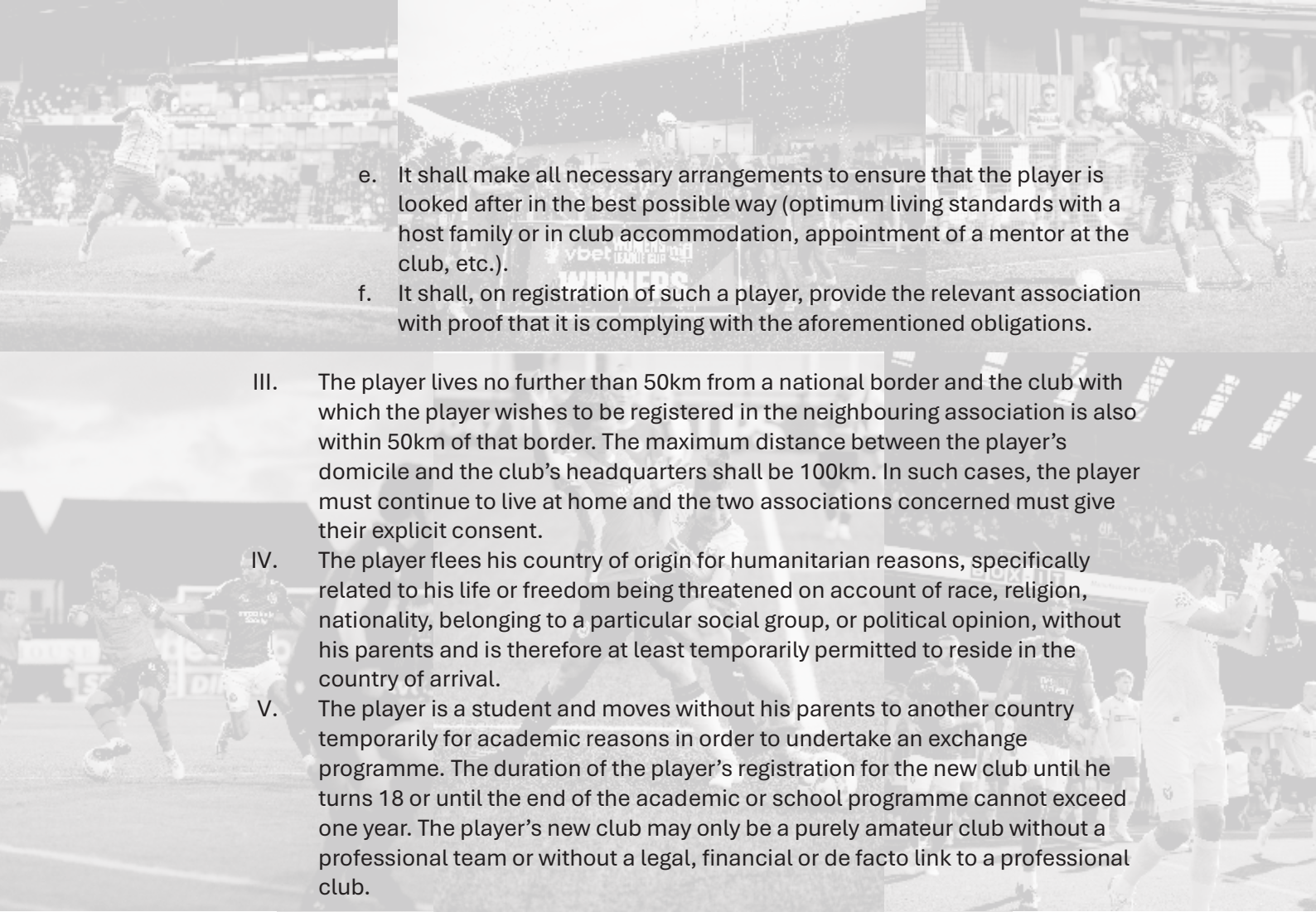
The IFA is not permitted to request an International Transfer Certificate outside a registration period and clubs must submit properly completed registration forms in order to affect a request for an International Transfer Certificate.

International transfers of players are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18. The following five exceptions to this rule apply:

- I. The player's parents move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football.
- II. The player is aged between 16 and 18 and:
  - a. the transfer takes place within the territory of the European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA); or
  - b. the transfer takes place between two associations within the same country.

The new club must fulfil the following minimum obligations:
  - c. It shall provide the player with an adequate football education and/or training in line with the highest national standards (cf. Annexe 4, article 4).
  - d. It shall guarantee the player an academic and/or school and/or vocational education and/or training, in addition to his football education and/or training, which will allow the player to pursue a career other than football should he cease to play professional football.



- 
- e. It shall make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the player is looked after in the best possible way (optimum living standards with a host family or in club accommodation, appointment of a mentor at the club, etc.).
  - f. It shall, on registration of such a player, provide the relevant association with proof that it is complying with the aforementioned obligations.

III. The player lives no further than 50km from a national border and the club with which the player wishes to be registered in the neighbouring association is also within 50km of that border. The maximum distance between the player's domicile and the club's headquarters shall be 100km. In such cases, the player must continue to live at home and the two associations concerned must give their explicit consent.

IV. The player flees his country of origin for humanitarian reasons, specifically related to his life or freedom being threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group, or political opinion, without his parents and is therefore at least temporarily permitted to reside in the country of arrival.

V. The player is a student and moves without his parents to another country temporarily for academic reasons in order to undertake an exchange programme. The duration of the player's registration for the new club until he turns 18 or until the end of the academic or school programme cannot exceed one year. The player's new club may only be a purely amateur club without a professional team or without a legal, financial or de facto link to a professional club.

### 3. Licence for Migrant Workers

For any player who is a national of a country outside of the United Kingdom or Ireland (migrant), a club require a Governing Body Endorsement (GBE) in order to play/manage in professional or semi-professional clubs within the United Kingdom.

Clubs in the NI Football League are bound by the professional registration windows and the Irish FA Professional Game Player Registration Regulations therefore they are considered by the Home Office as semi-professional or professional clubs.

A migrant can register for a club without a GBE but, in order to play/ manage any football, he must have obtained a GBE, been assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship by that club and secured permission to stay under the International Sports person route (ISP) of the PBS (subject to satisfying any other eligibility requirements of the IFA and any competitions the club participates in).

Details of the criteria and application procedures for migrant workers are available upon request from the IFA.

It is the responsibility of each club to determine the nationality of each player in relation to this rule.

#### 4. Registration Procedure

##### Professional Players

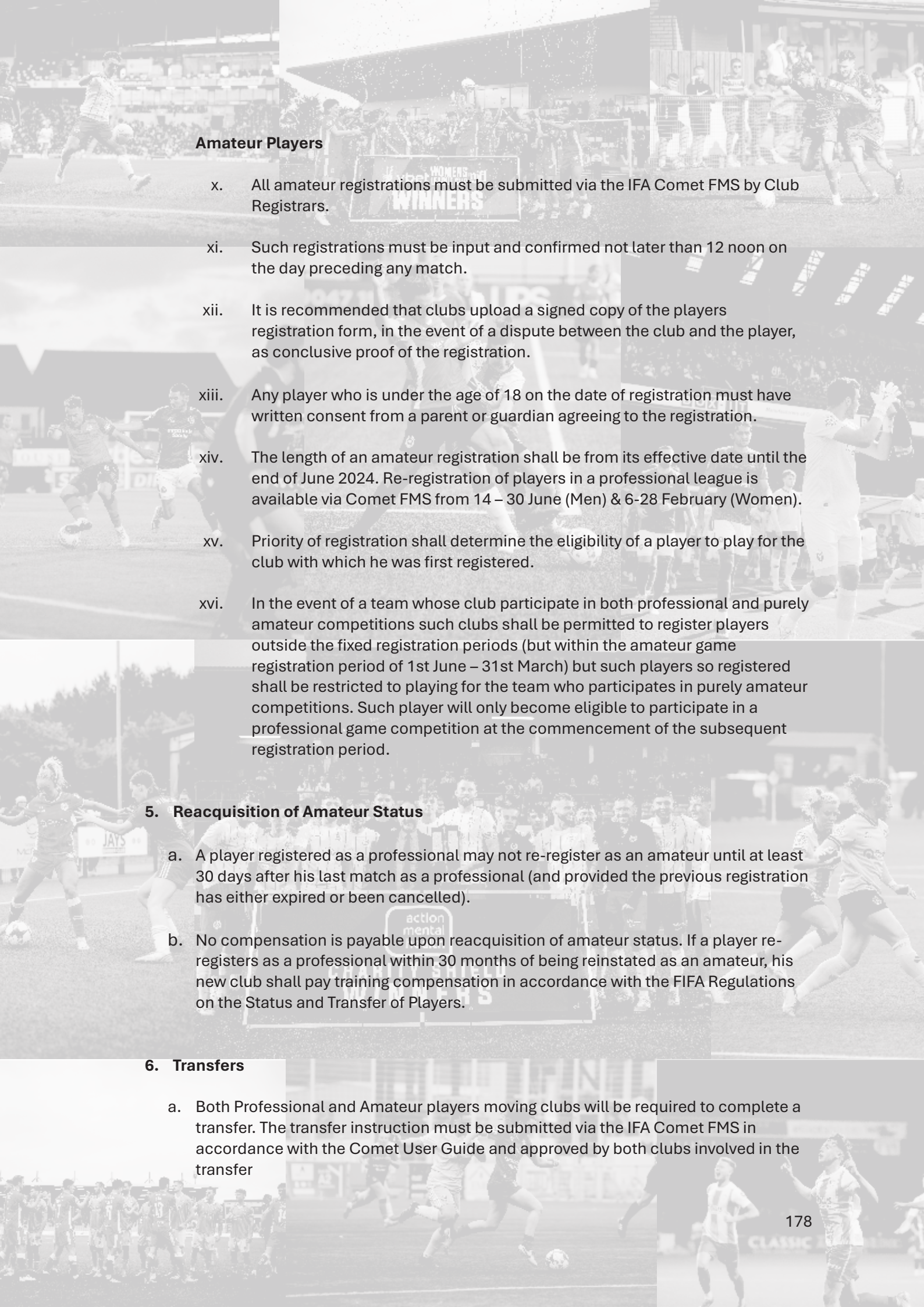
- i. All Standard Professional Contracts must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS by Club Registrars.
- ii. Such Standard Professional Contract's must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- iii. Clubs must simultaneously upload a copy of the Standard Professional Contract to the IFA Comet FMS.
- iv. Any player who is under the age of 18 on the date of registration must have written consent from a parent or guardian agreeing to the registration.
- v. The national minimum basic rates of weekly remuneration (as of 1 April 2024) shall apply to all professional registrations as follows:
  - **21 year old and over: £80.08**
  - **18-20 year olds: £60.20**
  - **Under 18: £44.80**

In the event of these minimum thresholds not being observed the relevant registration documents shall be considered null and void.

- vi. If a FIFA Agent is involved in the negotiation of a contract, he/she shall be named in that contract.
- vii. The minimum length of a Standard Professional Contract shall be from its effective date until the end of the season, while the maximum length shall be five years. Contracts of any other length shall only be permitted if consistent with national laws. Players under the age of 18 may not sign a professional contract for a term longer than three years. Any clause referring to a longer period shall not be recognised.
- viii. Professionals who end their careers upon expiry of their contracts and amateurs who terminate their activity shall remain registered at the association of their last club for a period of 30 months.

This period begins on the day the player made his last appearance for the club in an official match.

- ix. Priority of registration shall determine the eligibility of a player to play for the club with which he was first registered.



## Amateur Players

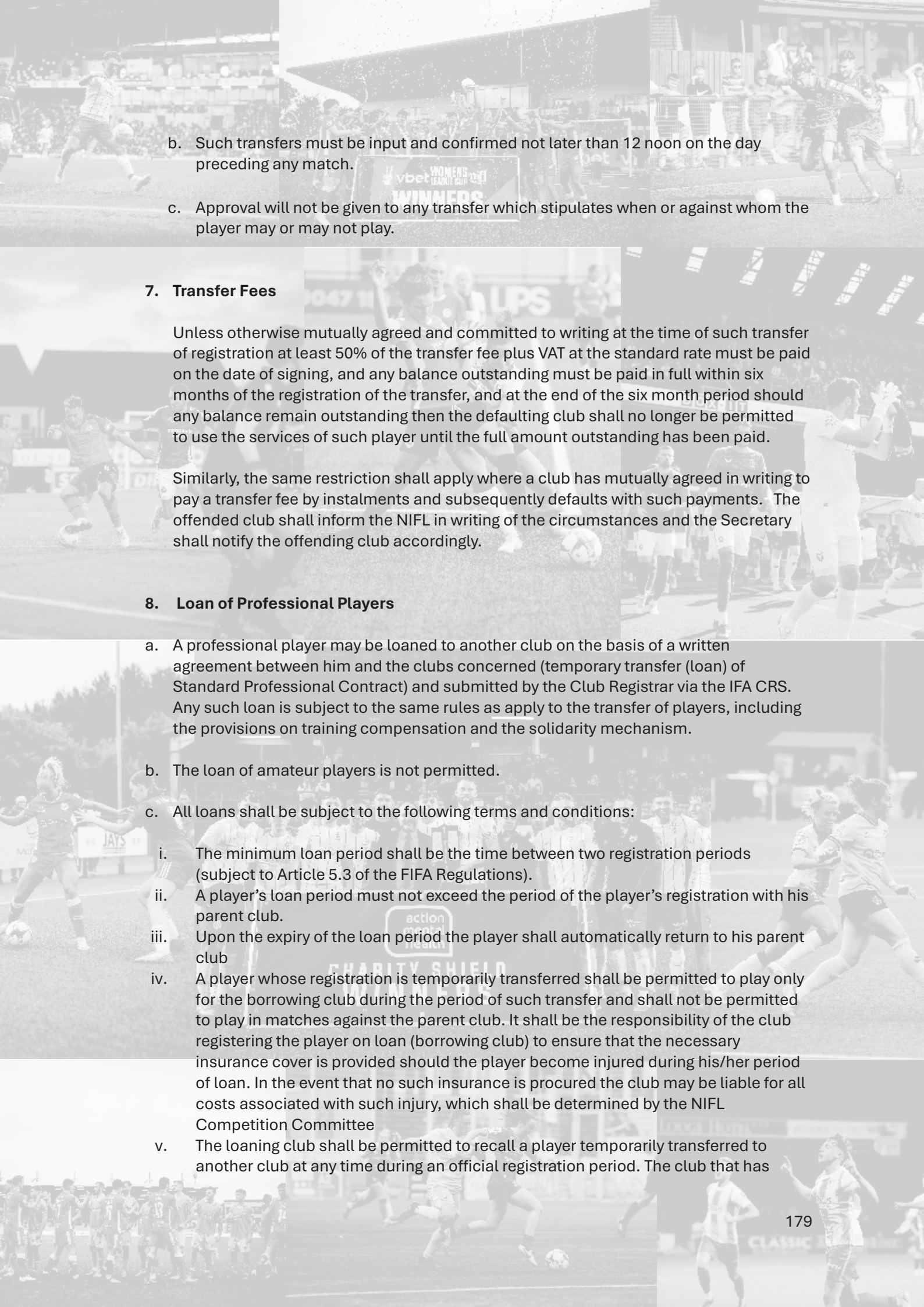
- x. All amateur registrations must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS by Club Registrars.
- xi. Such registrations must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
- xii. It is recommended that clubs upload a signed copy of the players registration form, in the event of a dispute between the club and the player, as conclusive proof of the registration.
- xiii. Any player who is under the age of 18 on the date of registration must have written consent from a parent or guardian agreeing to the registration.
- xiv. The length of an amateur registration shall be from its effective date until the end of June 2024. Re-registration of players in a professional league is available via Comet FMS from 14 – 30 June (Men) & 6-28 February (Women).
- xv. Priority of registration shall determine the eligibility of a player to play for the club with which he was first registered.
- xvi. In the event of a team whose club participate in both professional and purely amateur competitions such clubs shall be permitted to register players outside the fixed registration periods (but within the amateur game registration period of 1st June – 31st March) but such players so registered shall be restricted to playing for the team who participates in purely amateur competitions. Such player will only become eligible to participate in a professional game competition at the commencement of the subsequent registration period.

## 5. Reacquisition of Amateur Status

- a. A player registered as a professional may not re-register as an amateur until at least 30 days after his last match as a professional (and provided the previous registration has either expired or been cancelled).
- b. No compensation is payable upon reacquisition of amateur status. If a player re-registers as a professional within 30 months of being reinstated as an amateur, his new club shall pay training compensation in accordance with the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players.

## 6. Transfers

- a. Both Professional and Amateur players moving clubs will be required to complete a transfer. The transfer instruction must be submitted via the IFA Comet FMS in accordance with the Comet User Guide and approved by both clubs involved in the transfer

- 
- b. Such transfers must be input and confirmed not later than 12 noon on the day preceding any match.
  - c. Approval will not be given to any transfer which stipulates when or against whom the player may or may not play.

## 7. Transfer Fees

Unless otherwise mutually agreed and committed to writing at the time of such transfer of registration at least 50% of the transfer fee plus VAT at the standard rate must be paid on the date of signing, and any balance outstanding must be paid in full within six months of the registration of the transfer, and at the end of the six month period should any balance remain outstanding then the defaulting club shall no longer be permitted to use the services of such player until the full amount outstanding has been paid.

Similarly, the same restriction shall apply where a club has mutually agreed in writing to pay a transfer fee by instalments and subsequently defaults with such payments. The offended club shall inform the NIFL in writing of the circumstances and the Secretary shall notify the offending club accordingly.

## 8. Loan of Professional Players

- a. A professional player may be loaned to another club on the basis of a written agreement between him and the clubs concerned (temporary transfer (loan) of Standard Professional Contract) and submitted by the Club Registrar via the IFA CRS. Any such loan is subject to the same rules as apply to the transfer of players, including the provisions on training compensation and the solidarity mechanism.
- b. The loan of amateur players is not permitted.
- c. All loans shall be subject to the following terms and conditions:
  - i. The minimum loan period shall be the time between two registration periods (subject to Article 5.3 of the FIFA Regulations).
  - ii. A player's loan period must not exceed the period of the player's registration with his parent club.
  - iii. Upon the expiry of the loan period the player shall automatically return to his parent club
  - iv. A player whose registration is temporarily transferred shall be permitted to play only for the borrowing club during the period of such transfer and shall not be permitted to play in matches against the parent club. It shall be the responsibility of the club registering the player on loan (borrowing club) to ensure that the necessary insurance cover is provided should the player become injured during his/her period of loan. In the event that no such insurance is procured the club may be liable for all costs associated with such injury, which shall be determined by the NIFL Competition Committee
  - v. The loaning club shall be permitted to recall a player temporarily transferred to another club at any time during an official registration period. The club that has

accepted a player on a loan basis is not entitled to transfer him to a third club without the written authorisation of the club that released the player on loan and the player concerned.



## 9. Cancellation of a Registration

### Professional

a. A professional registration may be cancelled at any time by mutual consent on the submission of the official cancellation form via the IFA CRS.

### Amateur

b. Cancellation of an amateur player shall only be administered by the Irish Football Association to cancel an amateur player's registration where he/she is moving to another national association.

## 10. Right of Approach

A Club intending to conclude a contract with a player who is at present under written contract with another club is obliged to inform the club and the player in writing before commencing negotiations with either of them.

The player shall only be free to conclude a contract with another club if his contract with his present club has expired or will expire within six months.

All correspondence in this regard must be sent by email to the player, the club and to the Irish Football Association.

Any club wishing to register a player whose contract with his current club will expire within six months shall be permitted to register such player under a pre contract agreement to commence on the day following the expiry of his current contract, in accordance with the procedures detailed in Rule 4. Club secretaries shall be permitted to request details of the expiry dates of any player's registration.

Any club wishing to lodge a complaint with the League regarding an alleged illegal approach shall submit such complaint in writing via email to the League Chief Executive accompanied by a fee of £250. At the same time, a copy of the complaint must be forwarded by email to the club complained against.

The NIFL Board will deal with such complaints and any club found guilty of making an illegal approach to a player of another club, will face a sanction from the NIFL board.

The NIFL Board will have such powers to impose either a mandatory or points deduction sanction to the guilty club.

## 11. Registration Disputes

- a. In the event of a dispute between a player (professional or amateur) and a club, details should be submitted, by the aggrieved party, to the IFA Player Status Committee, who shall act as the Dispute Resolution Body.

b. In any dispute between the player and the club the remuneration and any other benefits contained in the Agreement shall be deemed to be the player's complete entitlement.

