



SFAI SUBWAY National Cup
COMPETITION RULES
Season 2024-25

1. RULE ONE

- a. The abbreviated title of SFAI is used, where appropriate, in these rules.
- b. The address for the Association is: **Schoolboys-girls Football Association of Ireland, SFAI Secretary, Anthony Phelan, SFAI Secretary Coalbrook, Thurles, Co Tipperary, E41 N6F9**
- c. All entries are subject to acceptance by the SFAI Executive Committee, the entire control, ownership, and management of the competitions is vested in the SFAI Executive Committee and that control and management is delegated to relevant coordinators whose decision/s are final. These rules shall also apply to any regional cup element of the SFAI National Cups for those teams which have qualified to the national rounds draw.

SFAI National Cups/Trophy are played for trophies from U-12 up to U-16 (where team entry levels allow for a competition at each age group) the age eligibility for players being the first day of January relevant to the year in which the standard season concludes. While registered to a National League club no player can play in any SFAI national Cup/Trophy. Teams that lose in either round 1 and round 2 of the Cup are entered into the Trophy Competition.

- d. In order to be entered into any SFAI national Cup/Trophy competition each team must be registered to play in a division of a SFAI affiliated League, have completed the on-line entry process and paid the appropriate entry fee to the SFAI. If for any reason the League from where any team entered these competitions fails or ceases to be affiliated to the SFAI all such team/s participation in these competitions shall cease with immediate effect irrespective of whether or not that team/s had played or are due to play any fixture(s) in any of these competitions.
- e. The closing date for receipt of fully completed entries and fees will be as set out in the entry form each year, the level of entry fee shall be determined by the SFAI Council at its meeting following the most recent SFAI AGM and all such entry fees shall be non-refundable in all circumstances.
- f. Each team is required to play its fixtures without relying on player/s from any other team(s) within the same club, namely from team(s) which have not been entered into any SFAI Cup/Trophy for the relevant season.
- g. Each team entered into these competitions must be registered to and playing in a division no higher than the U-16 age group within their own SFAI affiliated League, any team in breach of this rule will be excluded or removed from or any further participation in the relevant season's competition.
- h. Team entries are accepted and processed in advance of the team and League affiliation fees due to be paid to the SFAI by their respective League for the season relevant to that SFAI National Cup/Trophy entry.
- i. Any team which is not affiliated to the SFAI by way of such team affiliation fee payment may be denied any or continued participation in any SFAI National Cup/Trophy for that season at the discretion of the SFAI Executive Committee.
- j. All teams playing their fixtures as scheduled by the SFAI.
- k. All entries and fees are completed and forwarded to the SFAI by the scheduled date each year.
- l. All teams are aware of and accept that no SFAI affiliated League can grant any team a postponement of any fixture scheduled by the SFAI in these competitions.

- m. Clubs with multiple team entries at any single age group are required to play their fixtures in such fashion so as not to deviate from or delay the completion of fixtures on the scheduled date. Where deemed necessary for the running of these competitions, clubs may be required to play their fixture/s in advance of the scheduled weekend.
- n. The details provided on the entry form will be used by the SFAI and its affiliated Leagues for the purposes of running these competitions. The completion and return of the entry form confirms each club's awareness of and compliance with this stipulation.
- o. Compliance with Data Protection requirements on the entry form is a condition of entry acceptance.
- p. These and all rules pertaining to the SFAI or its competitions are the sole property of the SFAI and are not to be reproduced by any other body or organization in any form including printed and or posting on the internet.
- q. The SFAI and its committees will not recognize or deal with any item where rules are accessed or quoted from any source other than the current SFAI Rules for Competitions (National Cup/Trophy) rules and or the current SFAI Constitution and Rules which have been issued/published by the SFAI itself. Any directions issued via information on SFAI Cups/Trophy match cards have the same power and carry the same effect as any of the rules contained herein.
- r. The standard season referred to in these rules is from 1st August to 30th June annually.
- s. The SFAI Executive Committee has the power to deal with any situation or circumstances which arises and may not be specifically covered within these rules.
- t. Each club entered into these competitions is responsible for the conduct and behavior of its players, managers, coaches, assistants, parents and supporters, reports of misconduct against any such personnel will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter by the SFAI and be subject to sanction/s the level of which will be determined by the investigating committee.
- u. Players, teams and all relevant persons, are obliged to cooperate with and participate in any videography or photography authorised by the SFAI for the purposes of the promotion of these competitions, any and all such videography or photography will be published under the authorisation of the SFAI on digital media and or any other form of public media consumption. By entering these competitions all relevant clubs and teams grant permission to the SFAI on behalf of all persons who will be subject to this rule, including all under-age players. Failure to comply with this rule may lead to those responsible for any such failure liable to sanction by the SFAI, the level of any such sanction shall be determined by the SFAI investigating committee.
- v. Players, teams and all relevant persons, are obliged to cooperate with and participate in any trophy and medal presentation ceremony relevant to these competitions. Failure to comply with this rule may lead to those responsible for any such failure liable to sanction by the SFAI, the level of any such sanction shall be determined by the SFAI investigating committee.

2. RULE TWO

- a. The competitions are drawn on a regional basis and then an open national draw from the round of 32 onwards, for Boys and Girls.
- b. The Leagues comprising any region are determined by the SFAI Executive Committee.
- c. Regional and national coordinators, under the jurisdiction of the SFAI Executive Committee, will coordinate fixtures and assist with the administration of the competitions.
- d. All draws shall be completed at a venue(s) to be determined by the SFAI and those completed draws will be published on the SFAI web site. Following the completion of regional rounds, national fixtures will be set by direct liaison between League officials and the national coordinator - whose decisions are final.
- e. All teams from all regions will be included in their respective regional first round draw, no seeding of teams shall be allowed in any regional or subsequent draws.
- f. The allocation of qualifying places from each region to the national draw is made on a proportional basis relevant to the number of teams entered across all age groups in the various regions for the current season, the ratio of national round qualifying places shall be applied across all age groups within each region.
- g. It is the responsibility of all SFAI affiliated Leagues to assist in every way with the smooth running and operation of these competitions and all entries are accepted on the basis that

each club/s affiliated League will provide its complete cooperation and assistance in the operation of the competitions and completion of the fixtures as determined by the SFAI Executive Committee. Where such cooperation and assistance is not provided, or is withdrawn, the SFAI Executive Committee has the sole right to refuse to accept or delete the entries from the relevant teams including those teams which have commenced playing their fixtures.

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

3. RULE THREE

- a. All match cards will be issued by the SFAI to its affiliated Leagues which, following the completion of fixtures, must be returned to the SFAI secretary, referee's reports and all disciplinary matters will only be dealt with by way of a hearing by a disciplinary committee comprising of three current and neutral SFAI Council members, a disciplinary committee has the power to require reports summon witnesses and impose sanctions and fines as it deems fit, it shall have sole discretion on whomever it require to attend any such hearing as witness(es) or defendant(s).
- b. No coordinator or League official can partake in any disciplinary hearing/s or decision making on behalf of the SFAI Executive Committee where any report or pending concerns a club from within his/her own affiliated League.
- c. Decisions taken, and sanctions imposed by a disciplinary committee cannot be appealed to the SFAI and any such appeal must in the first instance be directed to the FAI subject to the rules governing any such appeal.
- d. Players sent off in an SFAI National Cup/Trophy game are automatically suspended from the next game in the SFAI National Cup/Trophy in which he/she was sent off. If that player's team has been eliminated from that SFAI National Cup/Trophy the automatic suspension will take effect for his/her next competitive game at the age group where he/she is registered. Subject to a review of the referee's report the sanction may be increased by the disciplinary committee. It is not the responsibility of the SFAI, or any other football body, to notify any club/s regarding the compulsory serving of the automatic one game suspension by any player for being sent off.
- e. Players who are under an automatic one match suspension for being sent off in a domestic League competition are eligible to play in the SFAI National Cup/Trophy on the basis that the suspension is served for a domestic competition game directly following the SFAI National Cup/Trophy game.
- f. Player's serving a suspension, greater than the automatic one match ban, which has been imposed by an affiliated League are not eligible to play in the SFAI National Cup/Trophy during this suspension on the basis that being suspended from the SFAI National Cup/Trophy shall count as game(s) served under that suspension.
- g. In cases where players are likely to receive more than the automatic one match suspension a copy of the referee's report, if available, shall be communicated to the player's club and the player, accompanied by his/her club shall be offered the opportunity to attend a hearing by a SFAI disciplinary committee. Failure by the player or his/her club to attend this hearing shall result in the case being heard and dealt with in his/her absence.
- h. It is the responsibility of all clubs to ensure that any suspension(s) is served by the relevant person(s), this shall include automatic suspensions for being sent off in any SFAI National Cup/Trophy game and any additional sanction imposed by the SFAI.

4. RULE FOUR

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

5. RULE FIVE

- a. The FAI Connect system will serve as the official player registration platform for teams playing in SFAI National Cup/Trophy competitions.
A player must be properly registered on the FAI Connect system no later than the day before competing in an SFAI National Cup/Trophy game.
Proof of date of registration will suffice in order to comply with this rule.
Clubs may request to view a player's registration form/status as part of a protest process.
Such requests must be submitted in writing to the SFAI, who will obtain a copy on behalf of the requesting club.
- b. SFAI affiliated Leagues must ensure that all team and player registration records and details are submitted to the SFAI Executive Committee, or any of its sub-committees as requested.

6. RULE SIX

- a. Only players registered to a team entered into an SFAI National Cup/Trophy may play for that team, younger players from within the same club can play on an older age group team provided the team he/she is registered to, has entered the SFAI National Cup/Trophy for that season.
- b. Players can play for only one team in any one SFAI National Cup/Trophy competition in the same season.
- c. No player can play at the same age group for different teams of the same gender, within the same club in any SFAI National Cup/Trophy in the same season.
- d. Player's registered to any League other than a SFAI affiliated League are not eligible to play in any SFAI National Cup/Trophy

7. RULE SEVEN

- a. Referees match cards are to be filled in before the game commences by the adult official in charge of each team, he/she shall append his/her signature as verification of the correct eligibility of his/her team's players and accepts responsibility for any eligibility irregularities regarding his/her team's players details entered on the match card.
- b. All games durations, pitch sizes, ball sizes and numbers of players formats are as laid out in the prevailing FAI PDP, each team is responsible for supplying one football of the regulation size and quality, at the game venue.
- c. A maximum of 16 players can be named on the match card for U-12 age group games, all players named on the match card are entitled to be used as part of the roll off-roll on substitution system.
- d. A maximum of 18 players can be named on the referee's match card for any 11-a-side game, all players named on the match card are entitled to be used as part of the roll on-roll off substitution system.
- e. All substitution can only be made following notification to the match referee, it is the sole responsibility of each team's management to ensure that only the maximum number of players allowed at the appropriate age group are playing for their team at any one time in any game.
- f. Girls can play on boy's teams at all age groups and can also play one year below the girl's nominal age group, for example a girl, restricted by date of birth to play at U/14, can play on an U/13 boys team.
- g. The home team is responsible for changing to an alternative set of playing colours if there is a colour clash in all rounds except the Final.
- h. In the Final, the nominated away team must change kit if there is a colour clash.

8. RULE EIGHT

- a. Any club in doubt as to the eligibility of its opponent's players can make representations to the match referee at half time and/or full time to request the signatures and dates of birth of any three (3) opposition players entered on the match card. Any team's refusal to comply

with such a request will be regarded as an effort to conceal an irregularity in registration and/or the over-age status of its player(s) and constitutes a breach of this rule.

- b. While signatures and dates of birth may be used as part of any protest regarding player(s) eligibility, they may not be the sole basis for a protest, and their absence will not preclude the filing of a protest. All evidence, including but not limited to the signatures and dates of birth, can be presented at any subsequent protest hearing. However, this evidence cannot include photographs or videos.
- c. Where a team is found guilty of playing an over-age player/s, and had won the relevant game, it shall forfeit that game to the opposing team and be removed from the competition from that stage. The offending team mentor/s may be suspended and their club fined, the levels of which suspension and fine will be determined by the committee dealing with the case.
- d. Where a team, having won the relevant game, is found guilty of playing an ineligible but not overage player/s, the game will be forfeited to the opposing team. The offending team mentor/s may be suspended and their club liable to a fine, the levels of which suspension and fine will be determined by the committee dealing with the case.
- e. Where a team, having lost the relevant game, is found guilty of playing an ineligible or overage player/s, the offending team mentor/s may be suspended and his/her club liable to a fine, the levels of which suspension and fine will be determined by the committee dealing with the case.
- f. Any player named on the match card is deemed to be subject to this rule regardless of whether he/she played in the relevant game.

9. RULE NINE

- a. Protest as to over age player/s, or any other reason, must be sent by registered post to the SFAI Secretary within three (3) days following the date of the game and be accompanied by the appropriate fee as determined by the SFAI Council at its first meeting of the season, for the purposes of this rule Saturdays, Sundays and Bank/Public Holidays and the day of the game are excluded.
- b. An exact copy of the protest must also be sent by registered post within the same time frame to the club against whom the protest is being lodged.
- c. Protest fees must be in the form of postal order or bank draft only, any such fees sent in any other form or by any other method will be declared invalid and nullify the protest. Protests received from any source other than either or both of the two clubs involved in the relevant game will not be dealt with.

10. RULE TEN

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

Any team removed from any SFAI National Cup/Trophy as a result of a protest shall by default be automatically removed from any regional cup element of that competition for the relevant season.

11. RULE ELEVEN

- a. SFAI National Cup/Trophy games take precedence over affiliated League domestic fixtures, SFAI Inter-League fixtures and club(s) or League(s) arranged tournament(s) and/or fixture(s) of any kind. For weekend matches, excluding Finals, the home team's League will determine whether the game will be played on Saturday or Sunday, in alignment with the League's normal schedule to minimize disruption to overall fixture scheduling.
- b. Clubs and teams are expressly forbidden to make or agree fixtures arrangements between themselves without the approval of the relevant SFAI authority, any such arrangements can and will be nullified by the SFAI Executive Committee or those acting on its behalf who in turn shall be liable for any consequences from the nullifying of such unofficial arrangements.

- c. No club, team or affiliated League can cancel, postpone or alter the issued date and or kick off time of any SFAI National Cup/Trophy fixture without the consent of the regional coordinator in the regional rounds, any such alterations from the round of 32 onwards must have the consent of the relevant SFAI coordinator.
- d. Any club, team or affiliated League which makes any such alterations without the required consent shall be deemed to be in breach of this rule and may be subject to sanction by the SFAI Executive Committee the extent of which sanction shall be at the sole discretion of that Committee.
- e. Emergencies will be dealt with by the regional coordinator in the regional rounds only, the national coordinator will deal with emergencies from the round of 32 onwards and all decisions issued in such circumstances are final.
- f. An application for a postponement for a school tour, or school entrance exam, may only be approved by the relevant coordinator in consultation with the relevant affiliated League Hon. Secretary. Clubs can be required to provide written confirmation, from the organizing body of any such tour or school entrance exam, before any postponement application will be considered.
- g. Included with that confirmation must be the names of the players involved in the school tour or entrance exam. A minimum of two (2) or more such players, per individual team, are required to be affected by the school tour or entrance exam before any such application will be dealt with.
- h. Postponements where players are involved in International duties will only be granted when any single team has, at the same time, two outfield players or its goalkeeper on International duties, any player(s) placed on any form of "standby" situation will not be taken into account for the purposes of this rule.
- i. The appointed referee (or his/her substitute) will decide if pitches are playable. If pitch or weather conditions cause a postponement the home team must find an alternative pitch or the fixture will revert to their opponents' ground, the arrangements for any such fixture reversal are under the control of the relevant coordinator.
- j. Any game started and later abandoned for weather or pitch conditions shall result in loss of home advantage and reversal of the venue, the arrangements for any such fixture reversal are under the control of the relevant coordinator.
- k. All weather playing surfaces, where available, shall be used for SFAI National Cup/Trophy games provided these are in complete compliance with, and certified as such, the current FAI standards/codes. This certification shall be available for inspection on demand.
- l. All visiting clubs must be notified by home clubs at least two days in advance of the fixture date should there be the possibility that an artificial surface of the required standard and certification will be used. This notification is to include details of any restrictions on the type of footwear allowed to be used on that particular pitch. This rule applies solely to notification of the type of pitch to be used and does not relate to notification of the actual fixture details.
- m. Walkovers will incur a 3 – 0 score line against the offending team, any team which concedes a walkover may be sanctioned by the SFAI Executive Committee or a sub-committee appointed to deal with the matter. Except in circumstances acceptable to the SFAI Executive Committee, any team which concedes a walkover shall by default be automatically excluded from participation in any regional cup element of any SFAI National Cup for the relevant season. A team that concedes a walkover in either round 1 or round 2 of the SFAI National Cup Competition is excluded from entry to the SFAI Trophy Competitions.
- n. Claims for the award of a game must be sent in writing by registered post and be signed by the relevant club Hon. Secretary to the SFAI Secretary within three (3) days following the fixture date, for the purposes of this rule Saturdays, Sundays and Bank/Public Holidays and the day of the relevant game are excluded.

12. RULE TWELVE

All games must commence at the appointed kick off time, any team unable to or failing to start a game within fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled kick-off time may be deemed to have conceded a walk-over subject to investigation of the circumstances by the SFAI Executive Committee or its sub-committee. The late starting of any game shall be reported by the match referee.

13. RULE THIRTEEN

All SFAI national cup fixtures from the semi-final stage onwards must be refereed by three match officials.

14. RULE FIFTEEN

All SFAI national cup finals shall be played at a suitable venue, selected by the executive committee or its sub-committees.

15. RULE SIXTEEN

Referee's fees will be paid by the home team in all SFAI National Cup/Trophy games except the finals.

16. RULE SEVENTEEN

The home team in all fixtures is responsible for ensuring that all pitch requirements are in place to enable the game to be played including stewarding of the pitch and its surrounding areas.