



BIRMINGHAM & DISTRICT FOOTBALL LEAGUE

MATCH DAY GUIDANCE FOR 2020/21 SEASON AND CORONA VIRUS

1. Introduction

1.1 As a result of the corona virus, the Birmingham & District Football League (BDFL) declared the 2019/20 League Divisions and Cup Competitions 'null and void'. However, challenges for the BDFL, and its clubs and teams, will persist in the 2020/21 Season, as the corona virus continues to have impacts on 'grass roots' football (defined by the Football Association as below Step 7, and which includes the BDFL), requiring changes to how games of competitive football can be played in the BDFL.

1.2 This guidance document, for all BDFL clubs, and their respective teams, provides specific guidance in terms of the corona virus and the arrangements necessary for match days, where the BDFL has also produced an Action Plan and a Framework for the 2020/21 Season. It has been prepared by the Principal Officers and the Management Committee and has been issued to all BDFL clubs, with the 2020/21 Season due to commence on Saturday 5 September 2020. The guidance serves as an addendum to the BDFL rules (as set out on the BDFL's website), specifically in terms of the corona virus.

1.3 A framework was considered important, with a view to giving the BDFL's clubs visibility about how it is intended to commence and progress the 2020/21 Season and assist clubs in planning for the 2020/21 Season. The framework considers the League, the Divisions and the Cup Competitions for the 2020/21 Season. It also provides a timeline for the 2020/21 Season, with options for various scenarios, together with other issues considered important to the BDFL's 2020/21 Season.

1.4 Following, the Football Association issuing guidelines for the corona virus and the return of 'grass roots' football, an action plan was considered important, with a view to advising clubs on what was required of them, and their teams, in order to play in the BDFL's 2020/21 Season, particularly in terms of preparing and maintaining Risk Assessments and having Match Day Protocols in place (for both home and away teams).

1.5 Clubs are advised to read the Action Plan and Framework documents, as essential background information in preparing for the 2020/21 Season. In addition, clubs should also refer to the Football Association and Birmingham County Football Association websites (or other county football associations, as relevant), where there is more detailed information for 'grass roots' clubs in terms of the corona virus and the 2020/21 Season.

2. BDFL Action Plan for 2020/21 Season

2.1 In order to play in the BDFL's 2020/21 Season, all BDFL clubs, and their respective teams, must comply with the BDFL's Action Plan, and :

- the Government's requirements for the corona virus.
- the Football Association's guidelines and protocols for the corona virus and 'grass roots' football, as available on the Football Association's website.

- the Birmingham County Football Association's (or other county football associations, as relevant) guidelines and protocols for the corona virus and 'grass roots' football, as available on the Birmingham County Football Association's website (or other county football association websites, as relevant).

2.2 As set out in the BDFL's Action Plan, all BDFL clubs, and their respective teams, are responsible for Risk Assessments and protocols for playing home matches and away matches in the BDFL.

2.3 Before commencing the 2020/21 Season, all BDFL clubs, and their respective teams, must prepare Risk Assessments (and maintain and update them, as appropriate) in terms of the corona virus, and also have protocols in place, otherwise they will not be allowed to play matches in the BDFL's 2020/21 Season. Such Risk Assessments and protocols must comply with Government requirements, Football Association guidelines and Birmingham County Football Association guidelines (or other county football associations, as relevant), using templates provided by the Football Association and/or the Birmingham County Football Association (or other county football associations, as relevant). Copies of the Risk Assessments and protocols should be provided on the club's website (or their Facebook or their Twitter account, as alternates), with copies also being emailed to the BDFL's Secretary. Otherwise, the clubs, and their respective teams, will not be allowed to play matches in the BDFL's 2020/21 Season.

3. BDFL Rules

3.1 The BDFL's Rules (for League and Cup competitions, and as available on the BDFL's website) will apply, except for specific match day arrangements necessary in terms of the corona virus, as set out in Section 4 of this guidance, with clubs, and their respective teams, needing to comply with their respective Risk Assessments and protocols for playing matches (either as the 'home team' or the 'away team') in the BDFL.

4. Match Day Arrangements

4.1 Competitive matches in the BDFL for the 2020/21 Season are permitted by the Football Association and Birmingham County Football Association (to which the BDFL is an affiliated league), but with social distancing required before and after the match and during any breaks in play. All BDFL clubs must ensure they are affiliated with the Birmingham County Football Association (or other county football associations, as relevant).

4.2 All League and Cup competition matches in the BDFL shall be played in accordance with the Laws of the Game, as determined by the International Football Association Board. Clubs, and their respective teams, should ensure that (together with all their players, team managers, coaches and club officials) they are aware of, and familiar with, any amendments or changes to the Laws of the Game for the 2020/21 season, including any specifically concerning the corona virus.

4.3 For the home team, the normal arrangements for providing a venue to play home matches (either as a League fixture or as a Cup fixture) and the rules for confirming the match with the opposition (as the away team) and match official(s) will apply, as set out in

the BDFL's rules on the BDFL's website, subject to any specific requirements necessary in terms of the corona virus, as set out in this section.

4.4 For home matches, all BDFL clubs, and their respective teams, must have a Risk Assessment (or Risk Assessments, as appropriate) and protocols in place for the corona virus in terms of the ground, pitch, changing and shower facilities and clubhouse (and associated car parking) at which they intend to host and play home matches (i.e. the home team). In addition, the Risk Assessment (or Risk Assessments) and protocols must be made available to each opposing team (the away team) and the match official (and assistant match officials, as necessary) to ensure they are aware of them and will be able to comply with them, otherwise the match cannot take place. The Risk Assessments for home matches must include the permission of the facility providers (or owners) for the ground, pitch, changing and shower facilities and clubhouse at which it is intended to host home matches, including permissions concerning the corona virus, with such permissions provided in writing (and retained for inspection, as required).

4.5 For away matches, all BDFL clubs, and their respective teams, must have a Risk Assessment (or Risk Assessments, as appropriate) and protocols for the corona virus in terms of travelling to and playing away matches (i.e. the away team). In addition, the Risk Assessment (or Risk Assessments) and protocols must be made available to the opposing team (the home team) to ensure they are aware of them and will be able to comply with them, otherwise the match cannot take place.

4.6 All players, team managers, coaches, club officials and supporters/spectators should self-assess for COVID-19 corona virus symptoms before every match. For each match, if any player, team manager, coach, club official or supporter/spectator is symptomatic or living in a household with possible or actual COVID-19 corona virus infection, they cannot not participate in or attend the match.

4.7 All clubs, and their teams, should ensure that they are familiar with, and comply with, the Football Association's First Aid Guidance for Returning to Outdoor Competitive Grass Roots Football, as available on the Football Association's website.

4.8 All clubs should ensure that their home venue for matches is compliant with Government requirements, the Football Association guidelines and the Birmingham County Football Association guidelines (or other county football associations, as relevant) for the corona virus, including the on the pitch arrangements (before, during and after the match); the off the pitch clubhouse arrangements, including car parking and the use of changing and shower facilities (before, during and after the match); the arrangements for players (for both home and away teams, before, during and after the match); the arrangements for club officials, team managers and coaches (for both home and away teams, before, during and after the match); the arrangements for match officials (i.e. referees and assistant referees, before, during and after the match); and the arrangements for supporters/spectators (for both home and away teams, together with non-affiliated spectators, before, during and after the match).

4.9 Players, team managers and coaches, together with match officials, should arrive separately and should not travel in a car together, unless they are from the same household or family.

4.10 Unless a club, or team, can demonstrate that their clubhouse changing and shower facilities comply with the Government requirements for the corona virus and social distancing, the clubhouse and shower facilities should not be used for BDFL matches. Players, team managers, coaches and match officials should arrive changed, wearing their kit, and shower at home after the match, with the use of changing and shower facilities subject to Government requirements in terms of indoor facilities.

4.11 The BDFL rules for the numbering of players' shirts are suspended for the 2020/21 Season and do not apply, so players can arrive changed and wearing their kit, but the Match Sheet needs to identify each player against the number of the shirt worn during the match.

4.12 All players, team managers, coaches and club officials, together with the match officials (referees and assistant referees), should sanitise their hands before and after a match, as well as during any scheduled breaks, including at half time. No supporters/spectators should touch the match balls.

4.13 Players, team managers, coaches and club officials should provide their own drinks for consumption before, during or after a match, and should not share drinks.

4.14 Ball handling should be kept to a minimum, with at least two match balls 'fit for play' being needed for each match (as the BDFL rules, and, ideally, four match balls, any of which should be 'fit for play' and use in the match, with one behind each goal and one on the touch-line). The match balls need to be disinfected in breaks of play.

4.15 Goal celebrations should be avoided.

4.16 The home team and away team should not share the same Match Sheet and should not share Match Sheets with the match official(s), to avoid any unnecessary contact. Both teams should complete a Match Sheet for their team for each match (including substitutes and the result) and send it, as a photograph image, to the Match Secretary as an email or text. Before the match commences each team should verbally inform the match official(s) of the names of any substitutes.

4.17 The match official is not responsible for providing flags to any club representative designated to 'run the line' and, therefore, the home team and away team should provide a flag each (or alternative, such as a bib, club shirt, scarf or tee-shirt) for 'running the line'. For the toss of the coin, the players should not touch the coin, which should be supplied and tossed by the match official(s).

4.18 The match official(s) should be paid either by online bank transfer or, if not acceptable to the match official(s), in cash before the kick-off with the correct and exact money (£32 Match Official or £22 Assistant Match Official, and with no change required) sanitised and placed in a plastic bankers money bag/envelope. No match official should be paid in cash after the kick-off or in cash directly by hand.

4.19 Clubs should keep a record of their respective attendees at each match (including supporters/spectators), to include contact details to support any NHS Test and Trace required. It is the responsibility of the club to collate and retain the record of their respective attendees at a match, and their contact details, in a safe and secure manner, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

4.20 There is no requirement for the home team to provide hospitality in the form of food and/or drinks to either their own players, team managers, coaches and club officials, the away team's players, team managers, coaches and club officials or supporters/spectators.

4.21 The reporting of the match result should be as set out in the BDFL's rules on the BDFL's website.

4.22 For any club or team not complying with the Match Day Guidance set out in this document, or the Action Plan, the match cannot take place and the club or team will be fined by the BDFL, where the match official(s) can decide that a match shall not take place for non-compliance.

4.23 A BDFL assessor or observer attending a match can report a club or team for non-compliance with the BDFL's Match Day Guidance, or the Action Plan, and the team will be fined by the BDFL.

4.24 No 'hard copy' handbooks will be produced by the BDFL for the 2020/21 Season, with all the relevant handbook details available on the BDFL's website (including all the club and match official contact details and the BDFL rules).

4.25 Clubs should be aware that the this BDFL Guidance for Match Days, and also the Action Plan, could be amended or changed in response to changes in Government requirements or Football Association guidance and protocols concerning the corona virus. Should there be any such changes, the BDFL will inform clubs of any amendments to the Guidance for Match Days or the Action Plan, and clubs will need to act accordingly.

5. Conclusions

5.1 In response to the impacts of the corona virus, the BDFL has, previously, issued to the BDFL clubs a Framework, to assist clubs in planning for the 2020/21 Season, and an Action Plan, in terms of preparing and maintaining Risk Assessments and having match day protocols in place for the 2020/21 Season. This Match Day Guidance document serves as an addendum to the BDFL rules (as set out on the BDFL's website), in terms of the corona virus, to assist all clubs, and their respective teams, in terms of specific arrangements necessary for match days.

5.2 In order to play in the BDFL's 2020/21 Season, all BDFL clubs, and their respective teams, must comply with the Government's requirements for the corona virus, the Football Association's guidelines and protocols for the corona virus and 'grass roots' football and the Birmingham County Football Association's (or other county football associations, as relevant) guidelines and protocols for the corona virus and 'grass roots' football and, in particular, the need to prepare and maintain Risk Assessments and have match day

protocols in place. If a BDFL club, or one of its teams (as the 'home team' or as the 'away team'), does not have the necessary Risk Assessments and match day protocols in place, the match cannot take place.

5.3 In addition, there are specific match day arrangements, in terms of the corona virus, which the BDFL expects clubs, and their teams, to comply with for the 2020/21 Season, otherwise the match cannot take place and the club or team will be fined by the BDFL. The Match Day Guidance is specific to the 2020/21 Season and the corona virus. Although the BDFL looks forward to being able to return to its normal arrangements, including those for match days, at the earliest opportunity, this may not be possible during the 2020/21 Season.