



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024 Season



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As the Down Area Winter Football League Season comes to an end, as always, I look back and reflect on how things have gone this season. We got off to a bumpy start when **Comber Star** folded, **Groomsport II** moved back to NAFL, **Belvoir FC** secured a position within the NAFL just as our season was about to start followed by **Greenwell Star** and **Clonduff FC**. The impact of losing so many Clubs, and two after the season started was difficult to navigate but as ever, member Clubs, and league officials found a way to uphold the values of the League and move forward in a way suitable to all impacted by the changes.

I currently represent the League on the IFA Council, IFA Disciplinary Committee and until recently was the Co Antrim Junior Challenge Shield Chair, but still remain a member of the Co Antrim Junior Challenge Shield Committee. We have two Down Area committee members on the board of the IFA and four on the Co Antrim FA. This demonstrates our strong commitment to junior football and ensures we are well represented at the highest levels of football in Northern Ireland



Secretary Dean Gray – informed us at the beginning of the season that due to his own work commitments he would be stepping down as secretary and fixtures secretary. Dean has delivered this vital role with professionalism and dedication unequalled within the Committee. Dean regularly liaised with our Clubs and Referee Convenor to provide a weekly update ensuring as many games as possible can take place. Dean has also assisted me in all the semi-finals and finals. I would like to convey my personal

thanks to Dean for all his efforts over the last few years, I wish him well and commend him for his commitment to the roles and going that extra mile when necessary.



- **Treasurer Simon McCoy** - also informed me of his intention to step down as Treasurer at the end of the season, but he intends to remain as his Clubs representative. The league accounts remain in a healthy position due to Simon's hard work as he ensures the bills are paid and monies are collected. Simon represents the league at County Antrim meetings and is currently on the IFA Board.

- **Michael Wilson** - is a very hard-working committee member, the current County Antrim Treasurer and an IFA Board member. Michael assists Simon with the



account audit and assists at most semi-finals and finals. Michael has been instrumental in arranging trophies and medals this season.

- **Alan Robinson** – continues to spend many hours promoting our member Clubs whether the results are good or bad on both social media and the local press. Alan's detailed reports are eagerly awaited on a weekly basis, and they give an outstanding overview of what's happening within our league and cup competitions. Alan assisted at most semi-finals and finals and also represents the league on the Co Antrim FA and is an IFA Council member. Alan has also been assisting Dean with the secretary role which with the members support he hopes to take up at the end of this season.
- **Peter Lindsay** - as Vice Chair has aided me when I haven't been available to Chair a meeting, or a conflict of interest arose is also stepping down this season. Peter has been a dedicated officer for the league over the years and I wish him well with his future as he takes up the sessions clerk position within his Church.
- **Archie Walls, Dessie Adams and Bill Smith** – who are all dedicated League Council members assist with their vast experience in footballing spheres and always around to help in any way.
- **DAWFL Chaplin - Stephen Thompson** continues to provide support to all Clubs and members within the league which includes essential signposting to services when required.
- **Referee Convenor- Jimmy Fegan** and his team of officials have been outstanding yet again this season. Despite the continuing difficulties of encouraging new officials into the game, Jimmy always makes sure most games are covered.

I would like to thank **Comber Rec FC** and **Ards Rangers FC** for the use of their grounds and facilities for finals and **Sam Sittlington** for his generous sponsorship.

My sincere thanks to Dennis Nash who continued to promote the league in both social media and the local papers. Dennis chosen charity this season was the NI Air Ambulance with the game and Clubs raising £550.



The league continued their sponsorship partnership with Andy Neill and his team at 442 Teamwear. Andy has provided many of our member Clubs with discounts and offers as well as supporting our competitions.

With the changes required within the league structure it's in all member Clubs interest to ensure they look within their own Clubs to see if they have anyone to be nominated for roles as League Secretary, Fixtures Secretary, Treasurer and Vice Chair at our AGM. I have put measures in place for member Clubs to consider which will ensure the league can function moving forward but we are now in a position where we need others to step up and assist with the running of the league.



Many congratulations to all the winners and the runners up of all the competitions and my sincere thanks to all for their contribution and continued assistance as we all look forward to another great season in local football.

IAN FRAZER
Chairman



SECRETARY'S REPORT

It gives me great pleasure to deliver the Secretary's Report for the Down Area Winter Football League for the 2023/24 season.

The following report highlights the main aspects of the League's business.

Registrations



Unfortunately before the new season commenced the DAWFL lost three teams this season, with long standing member **Comber Star** withdrawing both their teams as they were about to embark on their 40th anniversary year, **Belvoir** and **Groomsport II** departing for pastures new in the NAFL, which saw **Groomsport III** moving from the Reserve Divisions into Division 2, then as the season kicked off, we had two further withdrawals, as both **Clonduff** and **Greenwell Star** joined Belvoir in the NAFL, impacting on the numbers

of teams within the Premier Division.

The league did have a couple of new clubs enter the ranks for the 2023/24 season, with **Blackstaff**, **Ballyhalbert United** and **Tullycarnet III** joining the league.

It has always been the desire in previous seasons to maintain 36 Clubs, allowing us to form 3 'senior' divisions of 12 teams each. With the loss of the clubs aforementioned above and subsequently the new additions for this season, the total number in the 'senior' teams at the end of the season numbered 33, albeit with 9 teams in the Premier Division and 12 each in Division One and Division Two, while 20 teams competed in the Reserve divisions, bringing us to a total of 53 teams. With the Premier Division teams reduced down to just 9 teams, after much deliberation the League Council agreed for each of the teams to face each other three times this season to give them adequate games throughout the season on an equal home/away basis.

Jimmy Fegan as always has excelled in his role of Referee's Convenor, despite the challenges of not having a full complement of Referee's to select from each week. As a League we acknowledge this is not ideal for our members and we will continue to work with the Irish FA to try and address, but clubs can also do their bit by making our games a more friendly and respectable environment to attract new official referees to come on board, which would go a long way to alleviating the frustrations from time to time that we know our clubs encounter.

Representatives to the County Antrim FA/IFA

The DAWFL continued to be represented this season on the County Antrim FA Council and County Antrim Junior Shield Challenge Shield Committee by **Ian Frazer**, **Simon**



McCoy and Alan Robinson. Michael continues to do a sterling job as Treasurer of the Association and is very well respected for the efficiency he displays in undertaking that role.

Ian and Alan both also sit on the Irish FA Council, whilst Simon and Michael are both on the Board of the Irish FA.

Sponsorship

This season we continued our teamwear sponsorship with 442 Teamwear. 442 Teamwear has provided many of our member Clubs with discounts and offers as well as supporting our competitions by providing match balls for our Cup Finals. We are, as always, grateful to **Sam Sittlington** for his continued sponsorship of the Sittlington Cup.

Any further contacts that can be provided for potential sponsorship initiatives, which ultimately help keep League fees down, should be forwarded to the Secretary for follow-up.

League Chaplaincy

It's 7 years since the DAWFL appointed their first Sports Chaplain, **Stephen Thompson**, who continues to fulfil the role and providing a very important point of contact for any player or coaching staff who has a personal crisis, needs prayer or other pastoral support. Other clubs have since appointed their own Sports Chaplain, highlighting the growing need of support within our clubs as well as enhancing those clubs with such a service.

I am sure everyone will agree that this is a vital service for our members, and I ask that our Clubs continue to engage with Stephen and their chaplains and assist them as much as possible.

Competitions



The traditional Dennis S. Nash Charity Shield season opener took place at the beginning of the 2023/24 season, and saw 2022/23 Premier Division champions **Greenwell Star**, playing before their departure to the NFL, up against Sittlington Cup winners **Ballynaveigh Breda Star**, with an entertaining game seeing Greenwell Star claiming a narrow 3-2 win to claim it for the fifth time, albeit in torrential weather.

Whilst the fixture programme proved hectic and difficult at times, bearing in mind adjustments for Junior Shield/Cup matches, free weeks, pitch sharing, postponed fixtures etc, once again a full league campaign has been completed and all cup competitions were played and concluded.

Congratulations to all those who lifted silverware, especially **Newtownards RBL**, who won both the Premier Division and Reserve Division 1 titles for the first time in their history,



Lagan Swifts winning their first league title since joining the DAWFL and **Willowfield Parish 10th OB Athletic**, who won the clubs first league title in their history, so a lot of firsts during this season.

Acknowledgements

It would be remiss of me not to echo our Chairman's comments once again and thank the League Council for all their continued hard work and support throughout the season. While they do not seek out praise it should be remembered that their efforts to provide our 1300+ members with a weekly sporting effort are completely voluntarily and can often impact on their family and work life, with many hours spent conducting work in the best interests of member clubs.



I would like to pass on my thanks to our **Chairman Ian Frazer**, whose Leadership skills are second to none, as he deals with matters in a calm and dignified manner, while ensuring all our Clubs are treated in a fair and just manner, also **Alan Robinson**. Ian and Alan have been very helpful and provided significant support to me in my role as Secretary this year.

Discipline has been discussed regularly throughout the season, but despite constant talk, it is a worry that fines incurred by member clubs has reached a peak this season, highlighting that a lot of education still needs to be done around this aspect of football. I would strongly recommend that clubs now start taking this seriously to save themselves, not only a lot of money, but also the impact issues such as misconduct has had on various silverware challenges, which can all be avoided with better awareness and understanding of the laws of the game. This is something that needs to be addressed internally by Clubs, as I am sure all will agree the money could be better spent else were, opposed to haemorrhaging it away needlessly.

Ensuring that all money received and paid out by the League is accounted for is **Simon McCoy**, who gives up a great deal of his personal time ensuring that cheques are cashed and the accounts balance. Thanks, should also be passed to **Michael Wilson** who uses his specialised skillset to ensure that the accounts are audited to a high standard.





As well as the League Council itself there are a number of other individuals we continue to be indebted to for the supporting role they play in helping the league operate. These include the ever present **Jimmy Fegan** in his role as the Referee's Convenor and his team of referees. In addition to the official referee team, I must also acknowledge the dedication and willingness of the numerous Club Referee's, who stepped up for their clubs and gave their time to referee fixtures without an official referee. We all know the difficulties official referees can face, but to do this on a voluntary basis for your club is commendable. I sincerely thank all club referees for their contribution this season, without them there is no doubt the league campaigns would not have run as smoothly as they

did.

On the media front, we get a large amount of exposure, not only via the **Dennis S Nash Sporting Snippets** page, but from the **Newtownards Chronicle**, with a two-page spread regularly produced from the reports written by League Council member **Alan Robinson**, which puts the league and our member clubs at the forefront of peoples minds, week in, week out, unmatched by any other competitive league. The DAWFL are still very fortunate to gain use of **Dennis S. Nash's** expertise, with his coverage and attendance at local games when time permits in his full and busy schedule.

We are indebted to the skills of a number of photographers, who's skills supplement the written reports published each week, with the excellent photographic skills of **Bob Torrens, Nigel Williamson** and **Jonathan Coates** helping to bring the games to life.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank every member of the League Council for their help and support this season, as with work commitments impacting on my ability to dedicate adequate time to the role, I've relied heavily on them this season. I would also like to note a special thanks to the Clubs, as on occasions you as Secretaries have been very helpful to me and the League and deserve any credit you receive. I acknowledge and understand the vast amount of effort it takes to run a football club. The thankless hours of volunteering, giving up your time to make football the wonderful game it is.

With the 2023/24 season now concluded, I reflect on the ups and downs throughout the season across all competitions and the excitement it has produced. Preparations for the 2024/25 are underway, but as I step down from the role I've been doing for the past number of years, I wish you all the very best of luck for the new season.

DEAN GRAY
DAWFL Secretary



Accounts

Jan 2023 – Dec 2023

Income		Expenses	
League Fees	£4,482.00	Admin	£2802.71
Fines	£2,050.00	Pitches	£899.00
Guarantee Fees	£300.00	Trophies	£7889.34
Co Antrim FA	£2,168.87	Corporate	£160.00
GBBonds	£450.00	Refs	£960.00
Sponsorship	£500.00	Website	£840.00
Gate receipts	£1,892.10	Phones	£316.13
Appeals	£150.00	Charity	£0.00
Charity	£503.00	Misc	£381.25
Match ball purchase	£75.00	Bank charges	£73.04
Misc	£5.00	Insurance	£1,708.52
Total	£12,575.97	Total	£16029.99

Balance Sheet

Bank statement @ 01.01.2023	£27,754.22	Bank statement @ 31.12.2023	£24,259.31
Cash in hand @ 01.01.2023	£20.79	Cash in hand @ 31.12.2023	£61.68
Opening Balance	£27,775.01	Closing Balance	£24,320.99
Income 2023	£12,575.97	Closing Balance	£24,320.99
Expenses 2023	£16,029.99	Opening Balance	£27,775.01
Balance	£3,454.02	Balance	£3,454.02

2023 Loss	£3,454.02
2023 Assets-Medals	£2,771.19
Actual Loss	£682.83



Audit Report

The DAWFL accounts are audited by Michael Wilson

I can confirm that I have audited the accounts of the DAWFL for the year to 31 December 2023 and can confirm they are in good order. All transactions have been checked and there are no issues to report.

Simon manages the finances of the League in a diligent manner and is to be commended for the work he does as Treasurer. The League continues to be in safe hands financially.

